# 2023 CPA Membership Survey Summary Report

#### Introduction:

To better understand the needs of our members and how CPA may better serve them, the CPA Service Board commissioned the first-ever CPA Membership Survey in 2018. We continue to conduct this survey every few years, to keep members informed on current trends in membership characteristics. It 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.

The 2023 survey builds on the 2018 and 2020 surveys, but maintains the same essential goals:

- Determine the demographics and socioeconomic profiles of CPA members
- Measure the impact of chronic pain and chronic illness on members' quality of life
- Assess and evaluate the impact of CPA on members' lives

## Methods:

The first CPA Membership Survey was conducted in 2018, in order to help assess the demographics of CPA and its potential impact on members' lives. Utilizing similar surveys conducted by other Twelve Step communities as a reference, the CPASB (then the Board of Trustees) developed the first CPA Membership Survey. For the 2020 Membership Survey the questions were reviewed and updated, removing some questions and adding others.

Based on feedback received from the fellowship, and from the results of previous surveys, the questions were again reviewed and updated, adding a significant amount of questions in order to provide a more comprehensive view of our membership demographics, program engagement, and the impact of chronic pain and chronic illness on quality of life and CPA's impact as well. All new questions are noted in the *Results and Analysis* portions.

After the questions were finalized, a survey was made using Google Docs, and posted on the front page of the CPA website. The survey was available from January 27-March 23,2023, to be completed at the member's leisure.

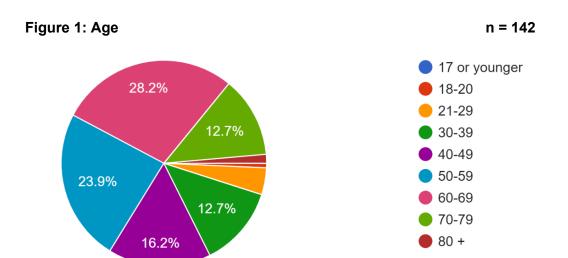
# Results, Analysis and Discussion:

We had a total of 144 participants. All answers were anonymous and questions were not required to be answered, so the number of responses ranged from 72-142, with the number (n) noted in the figure headings. The write-in answers had the smallest number of participants (72-82) while the multiple choice questions showed much higher participation (119-142).

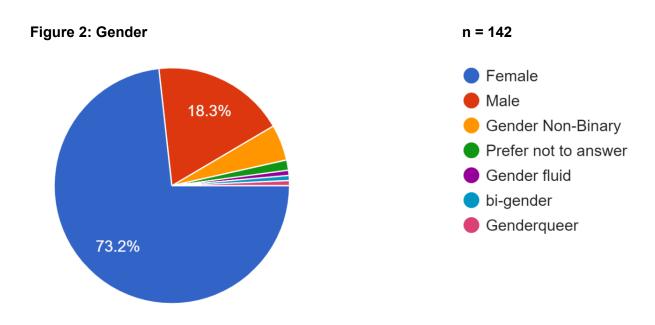
## **General Demographics**

#### Results and Analysis:

Age: According to the 2023 CPA Membership Survey, 34% of our members are under 50 years old, 52% of our members are between ages 50-69, and about 15% over 69 years of age. This was our first time collecting this data, so there is no comparison available.

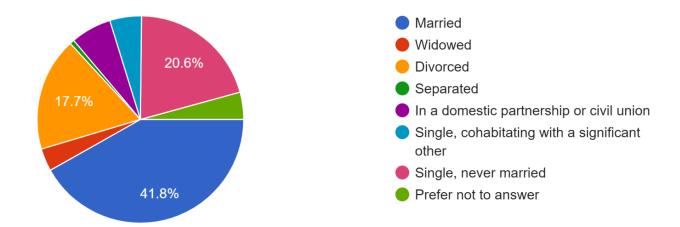


Gender: In 2020, our membership survey stated that 74% of our fellowship identify as female, and in 2023 this went down slightly to 73.2%. Those who identify as male now represent 18.2%, a small drop from 2020's report of 20%. While we saw the percentages drop in these two areas, those who identify as non-binary has increased from 4% in 2020 to 4.9% in 2023. So while there hasn't been much change in this demographic, it's nice to see the marginalized groups grow.



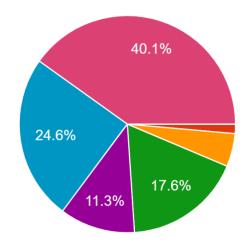
Relationship Status: This is our first time collecting this data. As of 2023, about 50% of our members are presently in a serious relationship i.e., married, cohabitating, domestic partnership), while the other 50% are not. 21.2% of members are currently either divorced or separated. 20.6% of members identify as single and never married.

Figure 3: Relationship status n = 141



Education Level: This is the first time collecting information regarding educational history, so we used the 2022 US Census as a base of comparison. 75% of CPA members have a college degree including 2-year, 4-year and Graduate level degrees, versus only 48% of the US population. More specifically 40% of our members have a graduate degree, compared to only 14% of the US population. And an astounding 98% of CPA members have completed high school.

Figure 4: Education Level

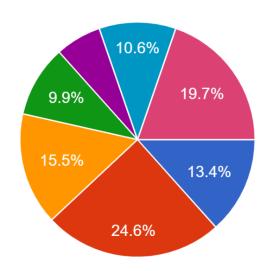


#### n = 142



*Income:* This is the first time we asked for income information. 20% of the members preferred not to answer. Of those who did, two-thirds reported an annual income of less than \$50,000, and 33.3% have an income greater than that. We lean towards those with smaller incomes. This data may be used to assess annual and legacy contribution limits.

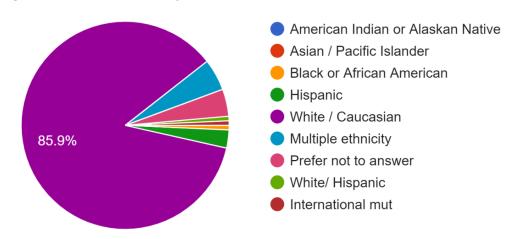




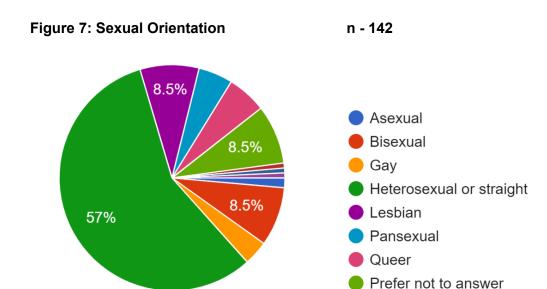


*Ethnicity:* We collected this information for the first time in this survey. 85.9% of members identify as white. The second largest group, at 4.9% identify as being of multiple ethnicities. Respondents were also able to write in their personal way of identifying.

Figure 6: Race or Ethnicity



**Sexual Orientation**: This question was asked for the first time in this survey, so no comparison is available. The majority of members, 57%, identify as heterosexual; 34.5% identify as part of the LGBTQ2S spectrum and 8.5% preferred not to answer.



**Location**: CPA is an international organization, and has members from around the world. However, 83.8% of members are located in the United States, which has slightly decreased from 85.8% in 2020. Our next largest group of 9.2% live in Canada, an increase from 8.7% reported in 2020. Followed by Europe/UK and Australia at 4.2% and 2%, respectively. International members have increased since 2020, but mostly in English speaking countries.

Specifically regarding members in the United States, regional information was collected for the first time. "East South Central" was listed twice, so we combined them into one during analysis. 18% declined to answer this question. Of those who answered, 44% of US members are on the east coast, 25% in the pacific, 15% in the central United States and 15% in the mountain region.

Figure 8: Country of residence n = 142

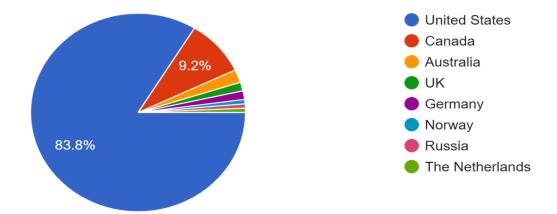
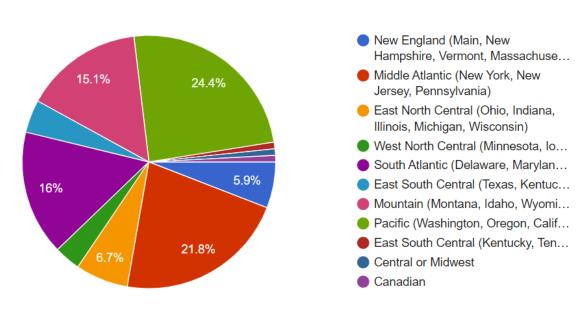


Figure 9: North American region of residence



n = 119

#### **Discussion:**

Analyzing the demographics has led to some questions and suggestions for the future. CPA members are predominantly white, female, and from the United States. There are established German speaking meetings, and there was a French-speaking meeting in the past. Spanish-speaking meetings have been requested, but are not currently available. How can we specifically encourage more male, BIPOC, genderqueer, international, and multilingual membership? Some ways to increase interest may include special interest meetings and having literature and meetings available in multiple languages. Another improvement would be, when asking about gender or ethnic identity to have the available options accurately reflect the possible identities of a person, which can include providing an option where a member can type in their own answer. These answers are simply how a person identifies, and may not use language that CPA as a program uses or endorses. To avoid controversy it would help to have these labeled as "self-identified" or "write-in" as a reminder.

Overall, CPA members are a highly educated group of people. When considering why we may have such a large percentage of members with post-secondary education, we may want to consider that school may be more accessible, and necessary, for accessible career options. We should also consider the impact of white privilege and wealth, making post-secondary education more attainable. Some members may go back to school, when they are no longer able to do labor jobs. Conversely, these percentages may not be as high as they could be, as some members may not have been able to finish, or pursue their degrees due to chronic pain, illness or disability. Income may also be a barrier, as many of our members experience financial insecurity due to limited income, high medical bills, prescription costs, etc.

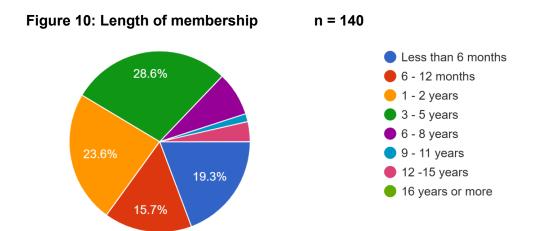
We asked our members to report "your income" but it was not clear if they should report the household income, which would include that of a spouse, if disability insurance counted, trust payments, etc. The phrasing of this question should be addressed to clarify what information we are seeking. Having a better understanding here, could help explain other fields.

Another question that caused some confusion during analysis, was the US Location question. Members were unsure of which area they should choose. A suggestion is to use time zones, instead of areas. This information would be more relevant to our needs, such as scheduling events at times where most people could attend.

## **CPA-Specific Demographics**

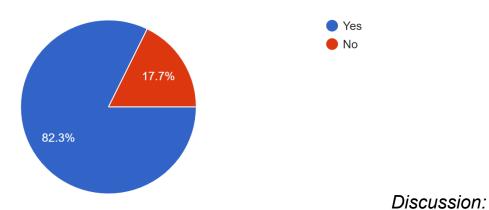
#### **Results and Analysis:**

*Membership Length*: 35% of survey participants have been here less than a year, and could be considered newcomers. 23.6% of members have been here 1-2 years, staying steady with 22.3% in 2020. Those here for 3-5 years increased by 10%, from 18% in 2020 to 28% in 2023. Members with 6-8 years increased by 1.8% from 6% in 2020 to 7.9% in 2023, while 9-11 years dropped by 4% from 5.4 in 2020 to 1.4 in 2023. And over 12 years stays steady at 3.6% compared to 3.3% in 2020. As a whole that means a little over 50% of our members have been here between 1-5 years, but at the same time 58% of us have been here less than 2 years.



Attended other Twelve Step programs: 83% of members reported they have attended another Twelve Step program in their life, and 17.7% reported they have not. These are both within one percentage point of 2020's data.

Figure 11: Attended other Twelve Step programs



According to these results, over half (58%) of the fellowship have been members for

less than two years, indicating we have a fair amount of "newcomers" who may need the support and experience of members who have been here longer. Retention has improved significantly in the three to five year range, increasing by 10% since 2020. This may indicate that the fellowship is doing a decent job of instituting our primary purpose, but there is always room for improvement. How can we encourage people to stay? To feel connected? There does seem to be a dropoff after five to eight years, which could be due to the current older demographic of CPA, disease and/or disability progression, or death. It may become harder for members to access CPA as conditions worsen. One way we can make CPA more accessible is by having more audio options available of CPA literature.

Although about 80% of members report they have attended another Twelve Step program, this does not mean they are working or actively involved in other programs, just that they have attended another program at some point in their lives. However, it may indicate that many members may learn about CPA from members in other programs. Additionally those who are already familiar with Twelve Step programs may be more likely to seek and use other Twelve Step programs.

## Meeting Demographics

#### Results and Analysis:

Influence and Importance of First Meeting: 46.8% of members report online searches as the major influence to attend their first meeting. This increased from 30% in 2020. Next, 36.2% of members report being influenced by other 12-Step programs and/or members. However, this may be closer to 40% if we include some of the write-in answers that could apply here. Only 7.8% reported being influenced through a professional organization such as recovery houses, counseling agencies, healthcare professionals, etc. This was cut in half from reports in 2020 of 16%. The "other" option also dropped by about 50% which includes friends, desperation, In The Rooms, Facebook, HP, etc.

No one, 0%, reported their first meeting as "not at all important". A few, 4.3% said it's "not so important" followed by 12% saying their first meeting was "somewhat" important. But 83.7% of members reported that their first meeting was either "very" or "extremely" important with 31.2% and 52.5%, respectively.

Figure 12: Who or what influenced you to attend your first meeting n = 141

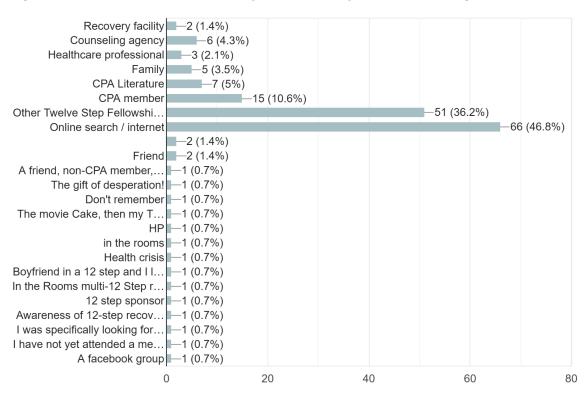
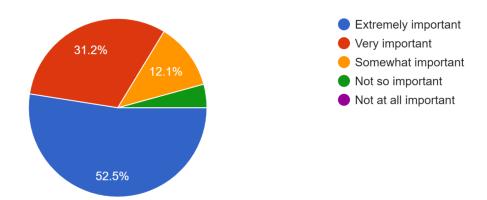


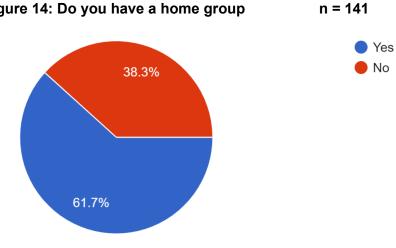
Figure 13: How important was your first meeting

n = 141



Home Group: This is the first time including this question, and no definition of "home group" was provided. 61.7% of CPA members report having a home group, while 38.3%do not currently identify as having a home group.

Figure 14: Do you have a home group



Meeting Attendance- Type and Frequency: According to the 2023 results the majority of members, 81.7%, attend video meetings. As shown in the figure below, this option was listed twice. However, after review of the individual responses, it was clear no one chose it twice, allowing us to add the total together. Face-to-face and telephone meeting attendance were both down, but only 1.5% of members reported attending in-person meetings down from 9.4% in 2020. Less members also report attending telephone meetings, down from 31.5% to 16.1%. There was however an increase from 8% to 25.5% of members report being involved in online meetings. Hybrid meeting attendance also slightly increased by 1.3%.

The majority of members, 58.6%, report attending between one and five meetings per week, followed by 23.6% attending between six and ten meetings, 9.2% attending more than ten and lastly, 8.6% attending less than one meeting per week. This follows the same distribution trend seen in 2020. It was not defined how continuous online meetings should be counted.

Figure 15: How do you attend CPA meetings n = 137

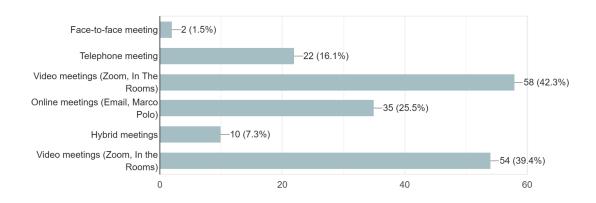
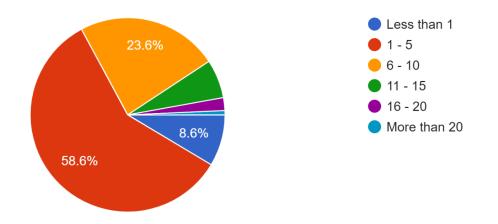


Figure 16: Number of CPA meetings attended per week n = 140



#### Discussion:

Members influenced to attend their first meeting through online searches increased dramatically from 2020. That could be due to the effort of the Web Design Team and our webmaster in increasing our online presence, through search engine optimization and making our site easy to find and use. In contrast, those influenced by a professional organization, such as recovery houses, counseling agencies, Healthcare professionals, etc., dropped in half. This could be useful information, and used as an area of focus for the Public Information Committee, or the Communications with Professionals Committee.

But no matter how they learned of CPA, they decided to come to a meeting. Not one person said it wasn't important. This really emphasizes the need for every meeting to keep a welcoming environment, especially combined with over 30% of the fellowship being here less than a year. But even with that, over 60% of members report having a home group, which can be hard to find and choose one home group meeting in CPA since many of us attend and are involved in multiple meetings. However, in matters affecting CPA as a whole, it is important to adhere to the one-person/one-vote ideal. Also, no definition of a home group was given, which may be helpful in future surveys. The idea of a homegroup is often only discussed around the World Service Conference in CPA, and some members may be confused by the term.

Over 80% of members report attending between one and ten meetings each week. Due to there being more meetings in general, but also specifically daily meeting availability increasing since the 2020 survey, it seems logical to see a slight rise in the amount of meetings members attend. One concern for this question, is that it wasn't defined how to count online meetings attendance, considering they are continually running meetings. This is something that should be addressed in future research.

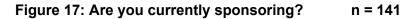
Most members report attending video and online meetings, 81.7% and 25.5%, respectively. Combined with the finding that most members find us through online searches, it seems reasonable that most members would also attend through online formats.

A restriction of this survey was that it was conducted totally online, and may not have been as accessible or announced as regularly to members who only attend face-to-face or telephone meetings. Lastly, it would be irresponsible to not state that the 2020 pandemic had an influence in this sector as well. Different platforms became more readily available and accessible that were not beforehand, and started being used more.

## Sponsorship and Stepwork:

#### Results and Analysis:

Sponsorship: 21% of members stated they were acting as sponsors to other members, down slightly from 23% in 2018. 40.4% of respondents reported not having a sponsor, co-sponsor, study group, etc. Of those 59.4% who are working the Steps with another, 52.3% are doing it with a sponsor, while the other 47.7% chose an alternative route such as working with a fellow traveler, study group, step-buddy or co-sponsor, 15.4%, 14.2%, 11.9%, and 5.9%, respectively.



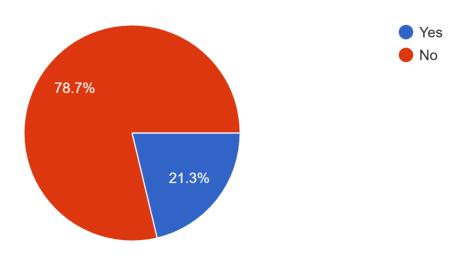
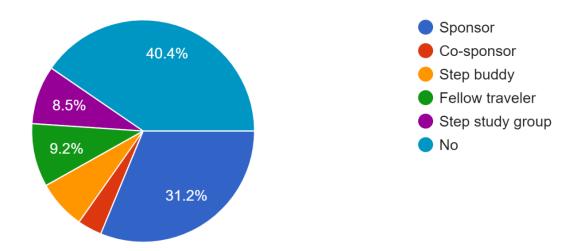


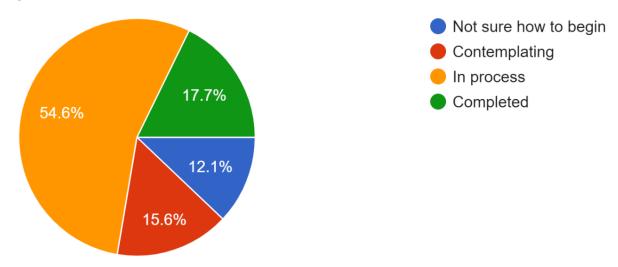
Figure 18: Methods CPA members use to work the steps



n = 141

Step-work: Over 70% of members indicated they were working, or have worked the CPA Steps: 18% were completed, 55% were in process, while 28% were contemplating or unsure where to begin. These percentages are similar to those observed in 2018, although "Not sure how to begin" increased by 4%.

Figure 19: Where members are in their step-work



#### Discussion:

About 40% of members currently report they are not working the Steps presently, which may seem a little jarring at first, but isn't too shocking when we add some context. Only 20% of CPA members are currently acting as a Sponsor, while 31% of members report

having a CPA Sponsor. We are still a new fellowship composed largely of newcomers, who have yet to complete the Steps for the first time in CPA and may feel uncomfortable becoming a Sponsor beforehand. However, our longer-term membership is rising so we hope to see more members sponsoring in the future. Also, in CPA it is common to take some time to decide how you want and are able to work the Steps. This could be due to members having changing abilities, and still learning how to adapt. Additionally, many members have worked the Steps in other fellowships, which may influence this decision in CPA.

About 60% of members report that they are working the steps, but only about 30% report having a sponsor. Others have found different ways to work the Steps. The most popular alternative seems to be fellow-travelers, followed by Step study groups and Step buddies. These paths can seem less intimidating or hierarchical than a traditional Sponsor-Sponsee relationship, and may be more appealing and accessible for some.

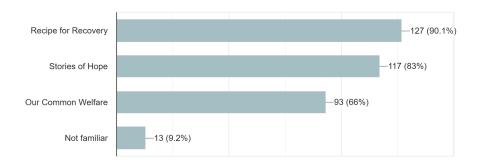
It is a bit disconcerting that 12% of members are interested in Step work, but don't know where to begin. This could be due to the large number of newcomers, lack of available Sponsors and alternatives and member abilities. Additionally, many members come from other fellowships, and may have preconceived notions of what Step work entails. The 2023 WSC approved the *All About Sponsorship* brochure, which may help mitigate this; however, it is still important that we address making ways of initiating Step work more accessible to our members, particularly highlighting the various ways members work their Steps in this unique program.

#### Literature

## Results and Analysis:

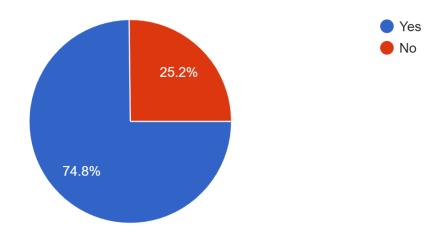
Familiarity of Books: 90% of members were familiar with Recipe for Recovery (CPA's Steps, published in 2015) and 66% were familiar with Our Common Welfare (CPA's Traditions, published in 2021. 9.2% of members reported that they were not familiar with any of CPA's books. This is down by 13.8% from the 2020 survey.

Figure 20: Are you familiar with the books CPA has published? n = 141



Future Literature: 75% of members indicated that they would like additional CPA literature, and 25% indicated they would not. A daily reader was the top response. Other suggestions for future literature topics included the Fourth Step, Eleventh Step, love and relationships, death, and special interest groups.

Figure 21: Would you like to see additional pieces of literature? n = 135



#### Discussion:

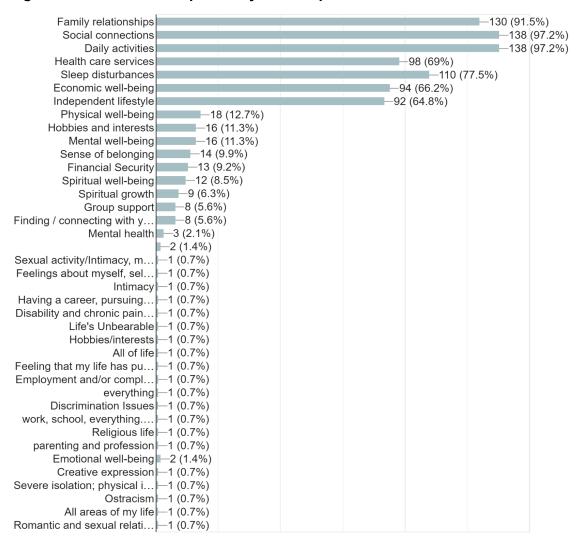
Literature is CPA's largest expense and is essential to carrying the CPA message of recovery. Since the 2020 survey, all three books have become available in print, audio and e-book formats, available through multiple retailers, increasing accessibility and potentially familiarity. CPA is constantly putting out new literature, brochures, service documents, bookmarks, and will soon be publishing a fourth book, a daily reader. This has been causing a lot of excitement in the fellowship, and will hopefully generate new involvement by members in the literature process. CAL (Conference Approved Literature) is by the fellowship, for the fellowship.

#### **Impacts**

#### Results and Analysis:

Areas of Life Impacted by Chronic Pain and Chronic Illness: The top three reported areas of impact were social connections (97.2%), daily activities (97.2%), and family relations (91.5%). Sleep disturbances (78%), health care services (69%), economic well-being (66%), and independent lifestyle (65%) were also impacted for the majority of members. Participants could choose as many areas they related to, as well as write in their own answers. The top seven answers were the provided options and over 60% of participants selected all seven areas of their life being impacted. Some common write-ins were physical, mental and spiritual well being, hobbies and interests, sense of belonging, financial security,and intimacy and romantic relationships.





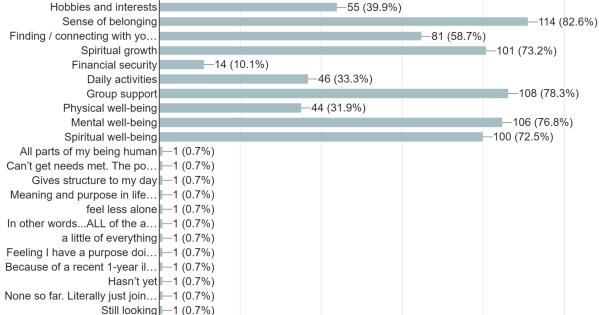
Areas in which CPA has Improved Quality of Life: Members were asked to identify any areas of life that have been improved since coming to CPA. Overall, the five greatest improvements were: an improved sense of belonging (83%); improved group support (78%), improved mental well-being (77%), improved spiritual well-being (73%); and improved social connections (72%). Remarkably, 31.9% of members reported improved physical well-being, and 33.3% report improvement in daily activities. All of the available options showed an increase from 2020, possibly due to members staying in the program, and, over time, improving quality of life in other areas as well. However it is important to note that this research only shows a correlation between the two, and does not imply causation. For example, 97.2% of members reported an impact on social connections, but 72% reported an improvement in this area, a 9% increase from 2020; 97.2% reported impacted daily living activities, but since coming to CPA, this has improved for a third of our members, a 7% increase from 2020; and 91.5% have had family relationships impacted by their pain and illness, but 59% of members have found improvement in this area as well, an 8% increase from 2020.

Other write-in answers included: everything, purpose, structure, or it hasn't yet.

Figure 23: Areas in which CPA has improved quality of life

Family relationships -81 (58.7%) Social connections **--**99 (71.7%) Hobbies and interests 55 (39.9%) Sense of belonging Finding / connecting with yo... 81 (58.7%) Spiritual growth -101 (73.2%)

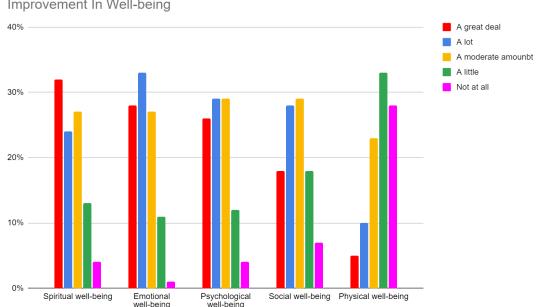
n = 138



Well-Being: For the first time, members were asked how their well-being had improved in various areas, since attending CPA. "A great deal" or "a lot" of improvement was reported in emotional well-being (61%), spiritual well-being (56%), psychological well-being (55%), and social well-being (46%). While only 15.2% reported "a lot" or "a great deal" of improvement in their physical well-being, 71.7% experienced at least "a little" improvement in this area after coming to CPA. It is also notable that over 50% of participants saw a "great deal" or "a lot" of improvement, concurrently, in all three areas of emotional, spiritual and psychological well-being.

well-being n = 138Improvement In Well-being 40% A great deal A lot A moderate amounbt

Figure 24: Improvement in spiritual, emotional, psychological, social and physical



#### Discussion:

These questions were included to help determine and measure the impact of chronic pain and chronic illness on members' quality of life, and the influence CPA has had, if any, in these areas. In the future, it would make it easier to make these determinations if the language was consistent with all the relevant questions. For example, the questions "What areas of your life have been impacted by chronic pain and chronic illness?" and "What areas of your life have been improved since coming to CPA?" should have the same available answers. Over 60% of respondents chose all the available options, so if some of the more frequent written-in options had been provided as an available answer, the percentages may have been much higher, and suggest doing this in the future. Additionally, it must be noted that there will inherently be a strong bias, as all survey

respondents are CPA members, and generally speaking if something isn't beneficial in some way, people don't stay involved. It does however help us as an organization see the areas we could do better in, focus on, and where we are potentially succeeding. And based on these numbers, it seems we are doing a decent job of helping people improve their spiritual, emotional and psychological well-being (over 50% of members report "a lot" or "a great deal" of improvement in all three of these areas).

It is clear from the data that there is a strong correlation between improvements in overall well-being and coming to CPA. Specifically, Hobbies and Interests had a 13% increase of reported improvement from 2020, and we expect to see that increase continue with the recent addition of a creativity based meeting, the continuance of the Creativity Workshop, and the special place that creativity holds in CPA and in living with chronic pain and chronic illness. In addition, psychological and social improvement often occur as well. 71.7% experienced at least a little improvement in physical well-being after coming to CPA, with 15.2% reporting "a lot" or "a great deal" of improvement. This may seem small, especially compared to the other areas, but even a little relief can be a huge deal. And while this is not CPA's primary purpose, it certainly is a nice side-effect. Our purpose is to help with the "spiritual and emotional debilitation of chronic pain and chronic illness." And over 50% of members reported improvements in their psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Improvements in any area individually, but certainly in combination, can lead to meaningful improvements in quality of life.

## Final Conclusions and Discussion:

The single most asked question when evaluating any program: Does it work? Do we help provide relief from the "emotional and spiritual debilitation of chronic pain and chronic illness"?

The results discussed under "Impacts" show a high correlation between involvement in CPA and experiencing improvements in personal well-being, not only spirituality and emotionally but also socially and psychologically as well. And while this makes us want to jump to a "yes!" we must remember this survey only indicates a correlation of the two, it does not show any causation. There may be other factors in a person's improvement, such as medication, treatments, other support systems, etc., that we cannot control for in this survey. It also doesn't include those who are not in CPA, or came but did not stay. This survey has a strong internal bias that cannot be discounted. More so, it was only available online, which could have restricted or discouraged participation by those without access to technology for health, financial, or other reasons.

This is actually becoming a CPA-wide issue, as the majority of our resources and gatherings are based online and most easily accessed through modern technology. For many members this has been a blessing, but we need to acknowledge that it can also be a barrier. There are many people who cannot afford a computer, regular internet access, more often encountered by marginalized communities, many of which are massively underrepresented amongst our membership. We need to remember to support and involve the already established phone and face-to-face meetings, as well as help develop other resources that could improve access to these groups.

One of the most striking findings, in the Demographics, was the homogeneity of the reported racial and gender trends. And while the minorities are slightly growing, and we have seen an increase in membership among younger people and in the LGBTQ+ community, we still remain overwhelmingly white and female. It really emphasizes the need for CPA to focus on diversity. This could be a special focus for a Public Information project, or perhaps even creating a Diversity Committee to strictly focus on ways we can make CPA more inclusive and accessible to these communities.

In the future, we hope to see CPA reaching more diverse communities, and working on ways to include those with little to no access to technology.

Specifically regarding the future research of our membership we strongly suggest providing clear and consistent definitions and phrasings of questions, as well as encouraging more participation from members who primarily participate through offline avenues.

## Voices of our Members:

I have been involved with CPA for 2 weeks. I have found my hope again. Thank you!

I am incredibly grateful for CPA. Thank you for being a safe, understanding, and inspiring Fellowship.

I owe my sanity to CPA for helping me to learn to live with the reality of my limitations due to physical pain. Thank you.

CPA has been a life saver. My mentality towards my chronic pain and disability has changed. I no longer beat myself up for it. I'm learning to LIVE my life and LOVE myself with it.

It has given me a life, new spirituality, new perspectives, a will to be alive.

I am very grateful for this program and for all of our trusted servants who do so much work to keep this going.

I love CPA and doing service work.

It has increased my level of gratitude

Doing Step work on my pain and illness in CPA with a wonderful sponsor was life changing and transformational in all areas of my life.

Finding CPA helped me to understand and accept what I thought was unacceptable. It quelled the anger and despair and offered me another option to loneliness and self-isolation. I now focus more on what I have - not what I have lost, I am kinder to myself. I am living a life today that two years ago I could not have imagined possible.

I am not alone

It's changed my life immensely for the better

Finally feeling accepted as I am.

I am so thankful to everyone who gives service and keeps this program going, it brings peace and serenity to so many people, myself included! 💜

It saved my life, literally!

Remarkable how we have grown and keep on keeping on despite health challenges. I am so proud of CPA.

# 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
- Every member who took the time and effort to fill out the survey

#### References:

2018 CPA Membership Survey Summary Report
2020 CPA Membership Survey Summary Report
2018-2023 CPA Membership Survey Results Comparisons, Internal CPA
Document
CPA Website