

# American Evaluation Association

## 2001 Member Survey Report

### Survey Highlights:

- The three highest priority areas in terms of use and desired emphasis are:
  - a. The AEA Journals (see Tables 2 & 3)
  - b. The AEA Conference (see Tables 2, 3 & 9)
  - c. The AEA website (see Tables 2& 3)
- Of the policy areas listed, the highest level of emphasis desired is for advocating for the use of guiding principles for evaluators, while the lowest level of emphasis desired is for developing position statements on public policy issues. (see Table 4)
- Just under half of the members have ever attended one or more professional development sessions at the annual conference. (see Table 5) Thirteen percent of the members attended a professional development session in Hawaii. (see Table 2) Less than 3% of members have no interest in attending professional development sessions. (see Table 7)
- Approximately 40% of members read EVALTALK in the last year and, of those, approximately 40% posted to the listserv with long term members both more likely to subscribe and more likely to post. (see Table 2)
- Many members do not know if a local affiliate is in their area. For those who do know of an affiliate, more are active in that affiliate than are not active. (see Table 6)
- There is more interest in single workshops or smaller institute-type events than a mid-year conference. (see Table 8)
- Financial issues, and whether or not a potential attendee is presenting are important considerations when determining whether to attend the annual conference. (see Table 9).
- The membership is open to both large and midsize cities for the conference. (see question C-3)
- There is a strong preference for increasing the rejection rate of proposals over increasing efforts to accommodate proposals, given the constraints specified in the survey. (see Table 10)
- Overall, the membership is satisfied with service from the AEA office. (see Question 0-1)

# American Evaluation Association

## 2001 Member Survey Report

**Purpose:** The 2001 Member Survey was conducted in order to inform the Association about use of member services, member priorities, and concerns.

**Dates:** The 2001 Member Survey was conducted in August through October of 2001.

**Population:** All current members were included.

**Process:** Members could either fill out the survey online or completed a hardcopy survey. Two rounds of email requests to complete the survey online and one round of mailed hardcopy surveys were conducted.

**Methodology Concerns:** Factors affecting the study methodology:

1. Some members using AOL email and/or a Macintosh computer running the Netscape browser experienced difficulty accessing the online survey.

Recommendation: For future surveys, note in email solicitations that the URL for the survey may need to be typed directly into the respondent's browser.

2. Some members using a Macintosh computer running the Netscape browser could not see all online headings that had been developed in reverse type. These were changed within 2 hours of distribution.

Recommendation: Do not use reverse type for online surveys.

3. In the middle of data collection, on September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks occurred. Effects on response are undetermined.

4. Asking for password that was on envelope proved problematic for some. Many threw out envelope or secretary threw out envelope. Resulted in approximately 35 unusable surveys. Others did not like being asked for password at all due to confidentiality issues.

**Response Rate:**

TOTAL SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED = 3105  
TOTAL RETURNED USABLE SURVEYS = 1375  
RESPONSE RATE = 44%

## YEARS BELONGING TO THE ASSOCIATION

For analysis, we selected the date that each member joined the association from his or her member profile and then separated the respondents into three categories as per the table below. The breakdown is somewhat arbitrary but was chosen to differentiate brand new members who may not have had a chance to use the services of the Association, from those with a short term commitment to the Association, from those with a long term commitment to the Association.

**TABLE 1: Year of Joining in the populations and among respondents.**

| YEAR JOINED                       | IN THE POPULATION<br>N=3105 | AMONG RESPONDENTS<br>n=1375 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| NEW - 2001                        | 494 (16%)                   | 225 (16%)                   |
| SHORT TERM 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 | 1599 (51%)                  | 650 (47%)                   |
| LONG TERM 1996 or before          | 1012 (33%)                  | 500 (36%)                   |

The breakdown of years of membership for respondent is roughly parallel to that found in the population of AEA members.

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## AEA MEMBER SURVEY: PRIORITIES

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**P-1 QUESTION: Which of the following have you used, read, participated in, filled out or attended in the past year?  
(please check all that apply)**

**TABLE 2: Participation in relevant Association activities by length of membership**

| ACTION   | NEW<br>n=225 | SHORT<br>n=650 | LONG<br>n=500 | TOTAL<br>n=1375 |
|--|--------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Read American Journal of Evaluation (AJE)        | 119 (53%)    | 538 (83%)      | 437 (87%)     | 1094 (80%)      |
| Read New Directions for Evaluation (NDE)         | 66 (29%)     | 459 (71%)      | 439 (88%)     | 964 (70%)       |
| Submitted work for publication in AJE or NDE     | 5 (2%)       | 33 (5%)        | 64 (13%)      | 102 (7%)        |
| Accessed the AEA website                         | 176 (78%)    | 509 (78%)      | 359 (72%)     | 1044 (76%)      |
| Attended AEA annual conference in Hawaii         | 2 (1%)       | 241 (37%)      | 182 (36%)     | 425 (31%)       |
| Attended professional dev. session at conference | 2 (1%)       | 109 (17%)      | 67 (13%)      | 178 (13%)       |
| Presented at annual conference <sup>1</sup>      | 4 (2%)       | 164 (25%)      | 191 (38%)     | 359 (26%)       |
| Read EVALTALK, the AEA listserv                  | 72 (32%)     | 263 (40%)      | 210 (42%)     | 545 (40%)       |
| Posted to EVALTALK, the AEA listserv             | 27 (12%)     | 107 (16%)      | 107 (21%)     | 241 (17%)       |
| Read AEA Newsletter, EvalNews                    | 47 (21%)     | 226 (35%)      | 220 (44%)     | 493 (36%)       |
| Read Newsletter or listserv from a TIG           | 14 (6%)      | 151 (23%)      | 173 (34%)     | 338 (24%)       |

<sup>1</sup> Some confusion over this question is apparent. For both New and Long Term members, more people indicated that they presented at the annual conference than indicated that they attended the annual conference.

**P-2 QUESTION: What level of emphasis should AEA place on each of the following initiatives?**

**TABLE 3: Level of emphasis desired for AEA initiatives**

| <b>INITIATIVE FOCUS</b>   | <b>Low Emphasis</b> | <b>Moderate Emphasis</b> | <b>High Emphasis</b> | <b>Don't Know</b> |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Supporting and developing AEA local affiliates (n=1325)   | 301 (23%)           | 574 (43%)                | 287 (22%)            | 163 (12%)         |
| Developing web-based resources such as an instrument database and annotated links (n=1347)                  | 77 (6%)             | 314 (23%)                | 906 (67%)            | 50 (4%)           |
| Developing and disseminating high-quality professional journals (n=1353)                                    | 21 (2%)             | 243 (18%)                | 1054 (78%)           | 35 (3%)           |
| Providing training opportunities, such as workshops or institutes, to build evaluation skills (n=1352)      | 71 (5%)             | 451 (33%)                | 802 (59%)            | 28 (2%)           |
| Informing members about educational, professional, and training opportunities (n=1349)                      | 56 (4%)             | 520 (39%)                | 749 (56%)            | 24 (2%)           |
| Supporting and developing AEA Topical Interest Groups (TIGs) (n=1349)                                       | 179 (13%)           | 793 (59%)                | 307 (23%)            | 70 (5%)           |
| Providing an electronic forum, such as EVALTALK, for evaluators to share knowledge and expertise (n=1347)   | 170 (13%)           | 571 (42%)                | 562 (42%)            | 44 (3%)           |
| Providing a live forum, such as annual conference, for evaluators to share knowledge and expertise (n=1347) | 65 (5%)             | 316 (23%)                | 935 (69%)            | 31 (2%)           |
| Providing customized insurance to meet the needs of evaluation professionals (n=1341)                       | 738 (55%)           | 308 (23%)                | 134 (10%)            | 161 (12%)         |
| Developing a voluntary evaluator's certification program (n=1348)   | 551 (41%)           | 439 (33%)                | 258 (19%)            | 100 (7%)          |

**P-3 What level of emphasis should AEA place on each of the following policy areas?**

**TABLE 4: Level of emphasis desired for AEA policy areas**

| <b>POLICY FOCUS</b>  | <b>Low Emphasis</b> | <b>Moderate Emphasis</b> | <b>High Emphasis</b> | <b>Don't Know</b> |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Fostering the growth of evaluation internationally (n=1349)      | 338 (25%)           | 608 (45%)                | 328 (24%)            | 75 (6%)           |
| Creating and disseminating a directory of members (n=1349)       | 262 (19%)           | 666 (49%)                | 393 (29%)            | 28 (2%)           |
| Increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the field (n=1344) | 212 (16%)           | 554 (41%)                | 510 (38%)            | 68 (5%)           |
| Developing position statements on public policy issues (n=1348)  | 428 (32%)           | 535 (40%)                | 317 (24%)            | 68 (5%)           |
| Advocating for use of guiding principles for evaluators (n=1348) | 63 (5%)             | 400 (30%)                | 857 (64%)            | 28 (2%)           |
| Mentoring novice evaluators (n=1345)                             | 158 (12%)           | 585 (43%)                | 563 (42%)            | 40 (3%)           |

**AEA MEMBER SURVEY: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**W-1 QUESTION: How many professional development workshops, held in conjunction with the annual conference, have you attended (include all years)? (n=1366)**

**TABLE 5: Attendance at professional development workshop by length of membership**

| <b>YEARS</b> | <b>NEW<br/>n=221</b> | <b>SHORT<br/>n=646</b> | <b>LONG<br/>n=499</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>n=1366</b> |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 0            | 200 (90%)            | 373 (58%)              | 194 (39%)             | 767 (56%)               |
| 1-2          | 14 (6%)              | 177 (27%)              | 154 (31%)             | 345 (25%)               |
| 3-4          | 5 (2%)               | 63 (10%)               | 84 (17%)              | 152 (11%)               |
| 5 or more    | 2 (1%)               | 33 (5%)                | 67 (13%)              | 102 (7%)                |

**W-2 QUESTION: Which of the following characterizes your relationship to an AEA local affiliate? (please select the ONE best response)**

**TABLE 6: Participation in local affiliates by length of membership**

| <b>AFFILIATE PARTICIPATION</b>   | <b>NEW<br/>n=219</b> | <b>SHORT<br/>n=639</b> | <b>LONG<br/>n=495</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>n=1353</b> |
|--|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| There is a local affiliate in my area AND I am an active member.               | 27 (12%)             | 104 (16%)              | 105 (21%)             | 236 (17%)               |
| There is a local affiliate in my area BUT I choose not to be an active member. | 10 (5%)              | 83 (13%)               | 70 (14%)              | 163 (12%)               |
| There is not a local affiliate in my area.                                     | 43 (20%)             | 149 (23%)              | 139 (28%)             | 331 (24%)               |
| I don't know if there is a local affiliate in my area.                         | 139 (63%)            | 303 (47%)              | 181 (37%)             | 623 (46%)               |

**W-3 QUESTION: Even if you have not attended any of the professional development workshops, which of the following factors are your priorities when deciding whether or not to attend?**

**TABLE 7: Priorities when considering attendance at professional development workshops**

| <b>PRIORITY</b>                               | <b>Not a consideration</b> | <b>Somewhat a consideration</b> | <b>Important Consideration</b> | <b>Highest Consideration</b> | <b>No interest in attending</b> |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Workshop Topic (n=1339)                       | 23 (2%)                    | 36 (3%)                         | 341 (26%)                      | 906 (68%)                    | 33 (2%)                         |
| Workshop Presenter (n=1338)                   | 88 (7%)                    | 325 (24%)                       | 626 (47%)                      | 264 (20%)                    | 35 (3%)                         |
| Workshop Level (n=1335)                       | 87 (7%)                    | 294 (22%)                       | 713 (53%)                      | 205 (15%)                    | 36 (3%)                         |
| Cost of workshop registration (n=1343)        | 153 (11%)                  | 402 (30%)                       | 470 (35%)                      | 289 (22%)                    | 29 (2%)                         |
| Time Constraints (other obligations) (n=1340) | 83 (6%)                    | 290 (22%)                       | 505 (38%)                      | 433 (32%)                    | 29 (2%)                         |

**W-4 QUESTION: AEA is considering expanding its professional development opportunities. Assuming presentations are available on topics of interest to you, which, if any, of the following would you be likely to attend? (Check all that you would be likely to attend.)**

**TABLE 8: Likelihood of attending development event by type and length of membership**

| <b>TYPE OF EVENT</b>  | <b>NEW<br/>n=225</b> | <b>SHORT<br/>n=650</b> | <b>LONG<br/>n=500</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>n=1375</b> |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Smaller, workshop-based, two day mid-year conference with 20 or more workshop opportunities, approximately 500 attendees. | 80 (35%)             | 246 (38%)              | 174 (35%)             | 500 (36%)               |
| Two to three day event held in your region with 5 or more workshop opportunities, approximately 100 attendees.            | 132 (59%)            | 384 (59%)              | 220 (44%)             | 736 (54%)               |
| One or two day single workshops in a nearby large city, each with approximately 25 attendees.                             | 134 (60%)            | 370 (57%)              | 267 (53%)             | 771 (56%)               |

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**AEA MEMBER SURVEY: ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

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**C-1 QUESTION: Which, if any, of the following conferences did you attend? (Please check all that apply.) (n=1375)**

- 553 of 1375 (40%)      Attended one or more conference prior to 1998
- 383 of 1375 (28%)      1998 Chicago, IL
- 400 of 1375 (29%)      1999 Orlando, FL
- 425 of 1375 (31%)      2000 Honolulu, HI
- 478 of 1375 (35%)      Never attended an AEA annual conference

**C-2 QUESTION: Even if you have not attended an AEA conference, which of the following factors are your priorities when deciding whether or not to attend?**

**TABLE 9: Factors considered when deciding whether to attend annual conference**

| <b>PRIORITY</b>  | <b>Not a consideration</b> | <b>Somewhat a consideration</b> | <b>Important Consideration</b> | <b>Highest Consideration</b> | <b>No interest in attending</b> |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Conference theme (n=1325)                              | 587 (44%)                  | 384 (29%)                       | 274 (21%)                      | 69 (5%)                      | 11 (1%)                         |
| Whether or not you are presenting (n=1320)             | 399 (30%)                  | 227 (17%)                       | 357 (27%)                      | 317 (24%)                    | 20 (2%)                         |
| Sleeping room costs (n=1320)                           | 322 (24%)                  | 540 (41%)                       | 346 (26%)                      | 98 (7%)                      | 14 (1%)                         |
| Past experience at AEA conferences (n=1267)            | 402 (32%)                  | 277 (22%)                       | 397 (31%)                      | 140 (11%)                    | 51 (4%)                         |
| Slate of pro. development workshops (n=1312)           | 360 (27%)                  | 375 (29%)                       | 404 (31%)                      | 155 (12%)                    | 18 (1%)                         |
| Travel Costs (n=1333)                                  | 144 (11%)                  | 387 (29%)                       | 493 (37%)                      | 297 (22%)                    | 12 (1%)                         |
| City in which event is held (n=1332)                   | 221 (17%)                  | 507 (38%)                       | 440 (33%)                      | 151 (11%)                    | 13 (1%)                         |
| Work/personal responsibilities (n=1329)                | 45 (3%)                    | 200 (15%)                       | 506 (38%)                      | 567 (43%)                    | 11 (1%)                         |
| Whether or not funding is available to attend (n=1321) | 222 (17%)                  | 240 (18%)                       | 400 (30%)                      | 437 (33%)                    | 22 (2%)                         |

**C-3 QUESTION: Although there are a few destinations that do not fall into the following two categories, often we are faced with choosing between these options when selecting sites for the annual conference. All else being equal, which of the following would you prefer:**

- 356 of 1364 (26%) A large city with many activities available outside the conference (New Orleans, LA; Chicago, IL), but also higher sleeping room rates (\$180+ in 2001).
- 331 of 1364 (24%) A mid-size city with fewer activities available outside the conference (Greensboro, NC; Columbus, OH), but also lower sleeping room rates (\$110 or less in 2001).
- 522 of 1364 (38%) A mix of large and mid-size cities.
- 155 of 1364 (11%) No Opinion.

**C-4 QUESTION: As the number of people attending AEA's conference grows, it has become increasingly difficult to accommodate all of the proposed sessions on the conference program. Which of the following two options would you prefer?**

- \_\_\_ **ACCOMMODATE:** AEA should make every attempt to accommodate as many proposals as possible. This would likely necessitate, a. contracting for increased conference space (e.g., sessions at two or more nearby hotels), b. increasing the conference registration fees, and c. running more sessions concurrently (we currently run 18-22).
  
- \_\_\_ **HIGHER REJECTION RATE:** AEA should accept a higher rejection rate for proposals. This would likely necessitate, a. maintaining our current limit on the number of times a person may appear on the program at two, b. rejecting greater proportions of sessions that the program reviewers rank poorly, and c. increasing the chances that some people cannot attend the conference because they are not scheduled to present (since some must present in order to receive funding to attend).

**TABLE 10: Preference for accommodating versus rejecting proposals**

| <b>PREFERENC</b>             | <b>NEW<br/>n=212</b> | <b>SHORT<br/>n=624</b> | <b>LONG<br/>n=481</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>n=1317</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Accommodate</b>           | 59 (28%)             | 129 (21%)              | 132 (27%)             | 320 (24%)               |
| <b>Higher Rejection Rate</b> | 153 (72%)            | 495 (79%)              | 349 (73%)             | 997 (76%)               |

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**AEA MEMBER SURVEY: SUPPORT AND FINAL FEEDBACK**

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**O-1 QUESTION: Overall, how would you characterize your interactions with the AEA office?**

- 641 of 1364 (47%) Very Positive
- 214 of 1364 (16%) Somewhat Positive
- 8 of 1364 (1%) Somewhat Negative
- 0 of 1364 (0%) Very Negative
- 501 of 1364 (37%) I have never dealt directly with the AEA office