



Community survey on attitudes to membership in the LMS

Background

In December 2010 the LMS launched a Membership survey and invited members and non-members to participate. The aim was to gain an understanding of the community's feelings about the Society's activities, aims and benefits.

778 people completed the survey by the deadline of 21 January 2011, including 577 (25%) of current LMS members; of those 68% had been members for over 10 years. 50% of all respondents were over 50 (compared with 55.5% of current members) and 9.5% were under 30 (compared with 4.4% of current members). 17% of those taking part were female (compared with 11% of current members).

Summary of findings

The Society is pleased to hear that:

- 80% of members responding stated they joined 'to feel part of the mathematics community'.
- 43% of non-members who completed the survey said they 'intend to join but haven't got around to it', suggesting there are many potential new members.
- 64% of all respondents are in favour of keeping a printed version of the *Newsletter* (either monthly or quarterly).
- Particular comments from respondents included, '*The LMS is, in my view, doing well as it is. Thanks and keep up the good work!*' and '*LMS is a very active and excellent organisation.*'

The Society needs to give further thought and consideration to the following:

- 30% of non-members selected the option 'application process onerous and unclear' as one of the reasons they had not joined.
- 40% of previous members stated they left the LMS due to 'dissatisfaction with Society's activities'.
- A number of comments make it clear the Society does not appear to advertise or promote its activities sufficiently. (One such comment '*The LMS does many very good things, but has been poor at publicising these activities.*')
- There were a number of comments suggesting the LMS should do more for young mathematicians and be more open. The AMS was suggested as a model to be emulated.

Responses to questions

1 Membership status

Are you a member of the LMS?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	74.2%	577
No, never considered joining	13.2%	103
No, but did consider joining	10.9%	85
Previous member	1.7%	13
answered question		778

2. Length of membership

For current and previous members, the breakdown for length of membership was:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
under a year	4.0%	23
1-9 years	27.0%	158
10-19 years	24.0%	142
20-29 years	19.5%	115
30+	24.0%	142
Do not know	1.5%	8
answered question		588

3. Age and gender

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
under 25	2.5%	20
25-29	7.0%	56
30-39	18.0%	140
40-49	22.0%	171
50-59	20.5%	160
60-69	21%	165
70+	8.5%	66
answered question		778

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	17.0%	133
Male	83.0%	645
answered question		778

4. Current occupation

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
University Professor	32.0%	250
University research or teaching	30.5%	236
Retired	14.5%	113
Postgraduate student	8.0%	62
Other (see below)	7.5%	58
Postdoc	4.5%	34
Other research or teaching	2.5%	21
Not currently working	0.5%	4
answered question		778

The 'other' respondents broadly covered:

- maths background but not working in academia (13)
- Emeritus Professor/semi-retired (11)
- maths promotion or similar (10)
- academic not covered by list above (10)
- undergraduate (5)
- Publishing (4)
- Actuary (2)
- teacher (2)

5. Location

84% of respondents were from the UK; 7% from the USA and Canada, 5% from mainland Europe and the remainder from other locations.

6. Reasons for joining the Society (current and previous members)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
To feel part of the mathematics community	79.9%	469
To reinforce connections with UK mathematics	54.2%	318
To belong to a learned society	45.3%	266
To become involved with LMS activities	33.0%	194
To subscribe to LMS journals and books at a discounted rate	16.7%	98
For career development	16.5%	97
Other reasons (please give details)	14.3%	84
answered question		587

84 people gave other reasons and these broadly covered:

- to apply/make it easier to apply for LMS grants (15)
- joined on recommendation of colleague/PhD supervisor (14)
- to use library facilities at UCL (9)
- joined as a PhD student (EPSRC scheme where fees were paid) (5)

7. Reasons for previous members discontinuing membership

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Other reasons (please give details)	53.3%	8
Dissatisfaction with Society's activities	40.0%	6
Membership fees too high	33.3%	5
No longer interested in Society's activities	13.3%	2
No longer working in mathematics	6.7%	1
answered question		15

The 'other reasons' given included:

- retired
- membership of AMS greater value and ideologically preferable
- subscription fees can't be paid in Euros

8. Member benefits

Please rate each of the current member benefits (1 most useful - 5 least useful)			
Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Newsletter	1.91	1,097	575
Involvement with Society activities	2.61	1,381	530
Full voting rights	2.96	1,543	522
Subscribing to Society's journals and books at a discounted rate	3.26	1,679	515
Society's Library at UCL	3.70	1,856	502
Use of De Morgan House facilities	3.74	1,888	505
answered question			577

9. Reasons non-LMS members did not join the Society

For Non LMS members only. If you have considered joining the LMS, please indicate reasons you chose not to (tick all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not got round to it but intend to join	43.2%	41
Other reasons (please give details)	29.5%	28
Application process onerous and unclear	21.1%	20
Membership subscription too high	18.9%	18
The Society appears not to cover the area of mathematics that I am interested in	17.9%	17
The LMS journals do not contain enough articles in my area of mathematics	14.7%	14
answered question		95

28 respondents gave other reasons and these broadly covered:

- dissatisfaction with the LMS/seeing the Society as elitist
- application process
- lack of useful membership benefits

10. Attracting and retaining new members

Which of the following do you think would help attract new and retain current members? (Tick all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Offering more grants to support mathematics	56.3%	438
Running more meetings/events	46.7%	363
Online payment for subscriptions	41.4%	322
Supporting more activities in applied mathematics	34.7%	270
Members' blogs/forums on new LMS website	32.5%	253
Subscription rates banded according to pay/grade	27.1%	211
Other suggestions (see below)	23.5%	183
answered question		778

183 people filled out the 'other suggestions' box and although the responses covered a wide variety of topics the most popular themes were:

- commenting on and/or wanting to see a change to perceived current activities/attitudes of the Society (28)
- open up membership (14)
- unification with the IMA (14)
- make the membership application process easier (9)
- better advertising of the Society and its activities (8)
- Automatic reduced subscription rates after retirement (3)

11. Purposes of the LMS

What do you consider the important purpose(s) of the LMS to be? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Influencing national policy on mathematics	85.3%	656
Improving university mathematics, both teaching and research	76.6%	589
Awarding grants to support mathematics	75.7%	582
Organising meetings and events	72.3%	556
Encouraging early career mathematicians	70.2%	540
Publishing mathematical journals	69.2%	532
Promoting mathematics to young people and the general public	67.5%	519
Improving school mathematics	42.8%	329
Awarding prizes	41.4%	318
Providing access to mathematical library and archives	32.0%	246
Others (see below)	8.7%	67
answered question		769

67 people filled out the 'other suggestions' box and the recurring themes were:

- public engagement/promotion (6)
- to work with other organisations where/when appropriate (4)

12. Membership categories

If the criteria for membership were to change, which of the following, if any, would you support?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Drop the requirement for ordinary/associate members to be based in the UK	56.5%	379
Create an affiliate membership category open to anyone interested in maths	53.8%	361
Open associate membership to undergraduates	48.6%	326
Open membership to everyone with a genuine interest in advanced mathematics	37.7%	253
Open membership to anyone who pays a subscription	16.5%	111
Others (see below)	8.0%	54
answered question		671

Of those that selected the 'other' option, 12 stated that they did think the current criteria should be changed.

13. Newsletter format

10. Please state your preferred format for the Society's Newsletter		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Printed monthly Newsletter, contents also available online (current set up)	46.5%	347
Available online only: continuous updates, plus a monthly or quarterly PDF of content	33.4%	249
Printed quarterly Newsletter, contents also available online	17.0%	127
No Newsletter, but items of interest and forthcoming events listed on the LMS website	3.1%	23
answered question		746