

SURVEY OF U3A MEMBERS (PART 1)

Introduction

To provide a satisfactory service to its member U3As, The Third Age Trust recognised that it needs to be aware of the diversity of individual U3A members and their views of the services which the Trust provides and it therefore initiated a survey which was carried out in the spring of 2009. The last such survey was conducted in 2001 and, where available, comparative figures are provided in this report, though the wording of the questions was not always identical.

The objectives of the survey were:

1. to update basic knowledge of membership to include such data as age range, gender distribution, length of membership, experience of formal education, the ways in which the members participate in various activities;
2. to find out how the individual members view the services provided for them and for the U3As to which they belong by the Third Age Trust;
3. to know what, if anything, members would like the Trust to provide which is not already provided, and how they would like to see the future development in general.

This purpose is being addressed by a two-stage survey. First a sample of members has been invited to provide basic details about themselves, their involvement in their U3A and their use of Third Age Trust services (objectives 1 and 2). They were invited to give names and contact details so that the first survey could be followed up by further approaches in which they will be asked to give more specific comments and suggestions (objectives 2 and 3).

In November 2008, when there were 698 U3As and 207,307 members, a sample of U3As was selected at random with the objective of producing statistics at (a) regional level and (b) size of U3A. There are 12 Regions in the UK. The total was divided into those termed Small (under 300 members), Medium (300-599) and Large (600 and more), though the terms are used in a relative sense. Questionnaires were issued to a sample of U3A Chairmen with a request that they should be issued to a sample of members. Instructions were included on how to select at random 10 (small), 15 (medium) and 20 (large) individual members.

The number of useable responses, excluding those received too late for inclusion and those returned blank, was 2,819 representing 66% of those issued. The main report includes differences by U3A size. Regional analyses for Part 1 are shown in Annex 1 where the smaller size of some regional samples (see below) is reflected in the data. Full details of the sampling frame and methodology are provided in Annex 2.

Number of useable replies by Region and Size of U3A

Region	Size of U3A			
	Small	Medium	Large	All sizes
East of England	61	115	191	367
East Midlands	78	103	52	233
London	62	76	108	246
North East	71	54	0	125
Northern Ireland	70	0	35	105
North West	60	115	142	317
Scotland	62	14	12	88
South East	67	108	251	426
South West	64	127	154	345
Wales	72	78	0	150
West Midlands	70	77	53	200
Yorkshire & Humberside	64	85	68	217
ALL REGIONS	801	952	1,066	2,819

Thanks are extended to all those who participated in the exercise, those who selected the samples within U3As, those who completed the questionnaires and the staff at National Office who worked very hard to organise the work. The second part of the exercise will gather suggestions on how the Trust may improve its services and it is hoped that this will receive the support of those contacted.

PART 1: ABOUT MEMBERS

Gender

Table 1s: Distribution of membership by gender and by U3A size

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Females (%)</i>	<i>Males (%)</i>
Small	74	26
Medium	70	30
Large	68	32
All sizes 2009	71	29
<i>All sizes 2001</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>26</i>

Latest UK estimates published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicate a mid-2007 population over 60 (females) or 65 (males) of 11.562m. of whom 63% are female and 37% male (ONS). U3A membership represents 1.8% of that age group (see Table 8r in Annex 1 for a regional breakdown).

Age

Table 2s: Distribution of membership by age and by U3A size

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Age of members</i>						
	<i>Under 60 (%)</i>	<i>60-64 (%)</i>	<i>65-69 (%)</i>	<i>70-74 (%)</i>	<i>75-79 (%)</i>	<i>80-84 (%)</i>	<i>85 and over (%)</i>
Small	3	16	18	26	20	12	4
Medium	3	16	22	21	23	11	4
Large	3	13	24	25	20	10	5
All sizes 2009	3	15	21	24	21	11	5
<i>All sizes 2001</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>13</i>	

Disability

Table 3s: Percentage of members with a disability

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity that has troubled you over a period of time or is likely to affect you over a period of time?</i>		
	<i>Yes, and this limits activities</i>	<i>Yes, and this does not limit activities</i>	<i>No</i>
	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Small	22	11	68
Medium	22	12	66
Large	20	9	71
All sizes 2009	21	11	68

The wording of this question was designed to be comparable with the General Household Survey (Bejekal et al, 2004). The 2007 GHS indicated that 58% of those aged 65-74 and 65% of those aged 75 or over reported that they had a long-standing illness as worded above (compared with 32% of U3A members in this survey) and that 37% of those aged 65-74 and 48% of those aged 75 or over had a limiting disability (compared with 21% of U3A members). (ONS, 2007, Table 7.2)

Living alone

Table 4s: Percentage of members who live alone

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Do you live alone? (including alone in a "granny flat"/sheltered housing)</i>	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Small	44	56
Medium	39	61
Large	38	62
All sizes 2009	40	60
<i>All sizes 2001</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>61</i>

The GHS 2007 estimated that 25% of those aged 65-74 live alone and 51% of those aged 75 and over (ONS, 2007, Table 3.2).

Ethnicity

Members were asked "To which ethnic group do you feel you belong?" and given the choice of "White" or "Other". Of the 2,743 replies to this question only 23 were "Other", i.e. 0.8%. This compares with 0.3% in 2001.

Internet and E-mail access

Table 5.1s: Percentage of members with household access to the internet

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Does anyone in your household have access to the internet?</i>	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Small	68	32
Medium	76	24
Large	76	24
All sizes 2009	73	27

Table 5.2s: Percentage of members with individual access to the internet

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Do you personally access the internet?</i>			
	Most days (%)	Weekly (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)
Small	42	11	19	28
Medium	47	11	17	26
Large	51	9	17	23
All sizes 2009	47	10	17	26

Table 6s: Percentage of members who can be contacted by e-mail

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>How often do you check e-mails?</i>			
	Most days (%)	Weekly (%)	Occasionally/Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Small	46	9	7	38
Medium	53	10	7	31
Large	54	9	6	31
All sizes 2009	51	9	7	33

Education

Table 7s: Percentage of members by formal education

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>At which levels have you experienced formal education? (If the terms do not apply exactly please use equivalents)</i>			
	Postgraduate	College/University (no postgrad.)	School, not college, but with other formal education*	School, not college, with no other formal education*
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Small	14	47	27	12
Medium	16	43	32	10
Large	15	47	29	9
All sizes 2009	15	46	29	10

*Other formal education of one year or more

In 2001 20% reported Institute membership, 4% second degree, 18% first degree, 22% teaching qualification, 6% HNC/HND, 9% ONC/OND, 29% nursing, secretarial, social, 6% other and 23% no qualifications obtained since leaving school.

PART 2: ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN THE U3A

Membership

Table 8.1s: Percentage of members by duration of membership

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>For how many years have you been a member of a U3A?</i>			
	Less than 1 (%)	1 to 5 (%)	6 to 10 (%)	11 or more (%)
Small	11	55	20	14
Medium	10	49	25	16
Large	8	44	30	18
All sizes 2009	10	50	25	16

In 2001 46% joined between 1998 and 2001, 26% between 1995 and 1975 and 26% before 1995 (6 or more years).

Table 8.2s: Percentage of members who are members of more than one U3A

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Are you a member of more than one U3A?</i>	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Small	9	91
Medium	7	93
Large	6	94
All sizes 2009	7	93
<i>All sizes 2001</i>	12	88

Participation

Table 9s: Percentage of members by number of U3A events attended per month

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>On average over the year, how many U3A meetings or events, including general meetings, classes, study group meetings or outings, do you attend in a month?</i>				
	None (%)	1 or 2 (%)	3 or 4 (%)	5 to 9 (%)	10 or more (%)
Small	1	30	31	23	15
Medium	4	31	28	23	15
Large	6	28	25	23	16
All sizes 2009	4	30	28	23	16
<i>All sizes 2001</i>		31	34	32	4

Table 10s: Percentage of members by participation in interest groups

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>In how many different interest groups do you regularly participate?</i>					
	None (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 or more (%)
Small	13	31	29	16	5	6
Medium	11	32	26	15	8	9
Large	8	33	28	15	9	6
All sizes 2009	11	32	27	15	7	7
<i>All sizes 2001</i>	8	26	25	19	10	11

Roles

Table 11s: Percentage of members with office bearer experience

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Have you at any time been a committee member of a U3A? If so are you currently a committee member?</i>			
	Never	Yes, at some time	Yes, now	Yes, not now
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Small	78	22	15	7
Medium	86	14	7	7
Large	89	11	4	7
All sizes 2009	84	16	9	7
<i>All sizes 2001</i>	84	16		

Table 12s: Percentage of members with group leader experience

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Have you at any time been a group leader/convenor/facilitator for a U3A? (i.e. the person in charge of a group activity) If so are you currently a "group leader"?</i>			
	Never	Yes, at some time	Yes, now	Yes, not now
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Small	73	27	19	8
Medium	76	24	18	7
Large	78	22	13	9
All sizes 2009	76	24	17	8
<i>All sizes 2001</i>	89	11		

Benefits of U3A membership

Table 13s: Percentage of members agreeing with statements about U3A membership

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>With which of the following statements do you agree?</i>		
	<i>U3A membership has improved my social life (%)</i>	<i>U3A membership has given me new interests (%)</i>	<i>U3A membership has enhanced my interests (%)</i>
Small	71	55	66
Medium	68	54	67
Large	62	54	66
All sizes 2009	67	54	66

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>With which of the following statements do you agree?</i>		
	<i>U3A membership has improved my physical or mental health (%)</i>	<i>U3A membership has given me new skills (%)</i>	<i>U3A membership has enhanced my skills (%)</i>
Small	29	15	22
Medium	33	19	24
Large	37	21	28
All sizes 2009	33	18	25

PART 3: ABOUT USE OF THIRD AGE TRUST SERVICES

U3A News

Table 14.1s: Percentage of members by how they receive U3A News

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Do you receive U3A News? (The Third Age Trust Magazine)</i>			
	<i>Not received (%)</i>	<i>Delivered by post (%)</i>	<i>Collected from U3A (%)</i>	<i>Other means (%)</i>
Small	7	42	47	4
Medium	10	58	29	4
Large	11	68	18	3
All sizes 2009	9	56	31	3
<i>All sizes 2001</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>13</i>

Table 14.2s: Percentage of members who receive U3A News by how thoroughly they read it

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>How thoroughly do you read U3A News?</i>					
	<i>Delivered by post</i>		<i>Collected</i>		<i>All who receive</i>	
	<i>Thoroughly (%)</i>	<i>Skim* (%)</i>	<i>Thoroughly (%)</i>	<i>Skim* (%)</i>	<i>Thoroughly (%)</i>	<i>Skim* (%)</i>
Small	53	47	51	49	52	48
Medium	53	47	57	43	54	46
Large	55	45	58	42	56	44
All sizes 2009	54	46	54	46	54	46

*includes a small number (14 replies) who said they received but did not read

Sources

Table 15s: Percentage of members who receive Sources

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Do you receive Sources? (The Trust's Educational Journal)</i> <i>If yes how thoroughly do you read Sources?</i>		
	<i>Not received</i> (%)	<i>Received and read thoroughly</i> (%)	<i>Received and skimmed*</i> (%)
Small	73	12	14
Medium	81	7	12
Large	80	7	13
All sizes 2009	78	9	13

*includes a small number (13 replies) who said they received but did not read

Resource Centre

Table 16s: Percentage of members who know about and have used the Resource Centre

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Have you heard of the Resource Centre of the Trust?</i> <i>If yes, have you used material from it?</i>		
	<i>Not heard</i> (%)	<i>Heard</i> (%)	<i>Used material</i> (%)
Small	56	44	6
Medium	59	41	6
Large	61	39	4
All sizes 2009	59	41	5

Online Courses

Table 17s: Percentage of members who know about and have used Online Courses

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Have you heard of the Trust's Online Courses?</i> <i>If yes, have you ever taken any course?</i>		
	<i>Not heard</i> (%)	<i>Heard</i> (%)	<i>Taken a course</i> (%)
Small	58	42	3
Medium	63	37	2
Large	67	33	2
All sizes 2009	63	37	2

Shared Learning

Table 18s: Percentage of members by awareness of Shared Learning Projects

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>Have you heard of Shared Learning Projects?</i> <i>If yes, have you ever participated in one?</i>		
	<i>Not heard</i> (%)	<i>Heard</i> (%)	<i>Participated</i> (%)
Small	73	27	4
Medium	77	23	2
Large	79	20	1
All sizes 2009	76	23	2

Those who said that they had heard of Shared Learning Projects but not participated in one were asked why not and lack of time was the main reason given.

PART 4: ABOUT USE OF OTHER EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Table 19s: Percentage of members who have used other educational services

<i>Size of U3A</i>	<i>During the past 2 years have you taken part in any of these learning activities?</i>				
	WEA (%)	Local college (certified) (%)	Local college (uncertified) (%)	Other (%)	None (%)
Small	9	3	10	19	65
Medium	8	3	11	17	68
Large	7	4	9	14	72
All sizes 2009	8	3	10	17	69

Specific questions were asked about Open University and Open Learn and, from the sample of 2,819 responses, 38 had studied with the Open University in the past 2 years and 30 with Open Learn.

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References:

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ONS (2009) 'Mid-Year Population Estimates', <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15106> accessed 19/04/09.

ONS(2007) 'General Household Survey 2007', <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=5756> accessed 19/04/09

ANNEX 1: REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Gender

Table 1r: Distribution of membership by gender

<i>Region</i>	<i>Females (%)</i>	<i>Males (%)</i>
East of England	71	29
East Midlands	71	29
London	73	27
North East	79	21
Northern Ireland	71	29
North West	70	30
Scotland	76	24
South East	72	28
South West	68	32
Wales	75	25
West Midlands	64	36
Yorks & Humberside	68	32
UK	71	29

Age

Table 2r: Distribution of membership by age

<i>Region</i>	<i>Age of members</i>						
	<i>Under 60 (%)</i>	<i>60-64 (%)</i>	<i>65-69 (%)</i>	<i>70-74 (%)</i>	<i>75-79 (%)</i>	<i>80-84 (%)</i>	<i>85 and over (%)</i>
East of England	5	11	24	26	22	9	3
East Midlands	2	17	25	25	19	7	4
London	3	11	14	25	25	16	6
North East	6	19	22	27	17	7	3
Northern Ireland	6	20	23	35	11	2	2
North West	3	18	22	20	18	13	5
Scotland	6	17	12	23	22	15	5
South East	2	12	21	24	21	14	5
South West	2	20	20	22	22	8	6
Wales	2	19	21	23	23	7	4
West Midlands	3	16	17	30	20	11	3
Yorks & Humberside	2	16	23	23	21	11	4
UK	3	15	21	24	21	11	5

Disability

Table 3r: Percentage of members with a disability

<i>Region</i>	<i>Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity that has troubled you over a period of time or is likely to affect you over a period of time?</i>		
	<i>Yes, and this limits activities</i>	<i>Yes, and this does not limit activities</i>	<i>No</i>
	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>
East of England	18	11	70
East Midlands	23	9	68
London	25	14	61
North East	14	14	72
Northern Ireland	17	7	76
North West	22	8	70
Scotland	26	9	65
South East	21	11	67
South West	20	9	71
Wales	28	10	61
West Midlands	23	10	66
Yorks & Humberside	17	14	70
UK	21	11	68

Living alone

Table 4r: Percentage of members who live alone

<i>Region</i>	<i>Do you live alone? (including alone in a "granny flat"/sheltered housing)</i>	
	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
East of England	43	57
East Midlands	39	61
London	47	53
North East	47	53
Northern Ireland	37	63
North West	37	63
Scotland	54	46
South East	40	60
South West	39	61
Wales	40	60
West Midlands	35	65
Yorks & Humberside	37	63
UK	40	60

Internet and E-mail access

Table 5.1r: Percentage of members with household access to the internet

<i>Region</i>	<i>Does anyone in your household have access to the internet?</i>	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
East of England	79	21
East Midlands	74	26
London	71	29
North East	70	30
Northern Ireland	83	17
North West	76	24
Scotland	71	29
South East	72	28
South West	73	27
Wales	73	27
West Midlands	68	32
Yorks & Humberside	70	30
UK	73	27

Table 5.2r: Percentage of members with individual access to the internet

<i>Region</i>	<i>Do you personally access the internet?</i>			
	Most days (%)	Weekly (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)
East of England	48	11	18	22
East Midlands	45	11	16	28
London	47	10	17	27
North East	46	6	23	25
Northern Ireland	58	11	12	20
North West	46	13	19	23
Scotland	48	9	12	30
South East	49	9	15	27
South West	44	11	19	26
Wales	40	12	22	26
West Midlands	45	9	19	27
Yorks & Humber.	46	11	15	29
UK	47	10	17	26

Table 6r: Percentage of members who can be contacted by e-mail

<i>Region</i>	<i>How often do you check e-mails?</i>			
	Most days (%)	Weekly (%)	Occasionally/Rarely (%)	Never (%)
East of England	52	11	8	29
East Midlands	54	6	8	32
London	51	7	7	35
North East	47	10	6	37
Northern Ireland	54	17	5	24
North West	49	12	10	30
Scotland	52	7	5	36
South East	54	8	3	35
South West	50	10	8	32
Wales	44	8	9	39
West Midlands	50	8	5	37
Yorks & Humber.	47	9	7	37
UK	51	9	7	33

Education

Table 7r: Percentage of members by formal education

<i>Region</i>	<i>At which levels have you experienced formal education? (If the terms do not apply exactly please use equivalents)</i>			
	Postgraduate	College/University (no postgrad.)	School, not college, but with other formal education*	School, not college, with no other formal education*
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
East of England	13	41	34	12
East Midlands	12	50	27	12
London	16	43	31	10
North East	18	58	19	5
Northern Ireland	32	42	18	8
North West	15	45	32	7
Scotland	21	48	21	10
South East	12	43	32	12
South West	15	48	29	9
Wales	17	45	24	13
West Midlands	15	51	25	10
Yorks & Humber.	18	50	24	8
UK	15	46	29	10

*Other formal education of one year or more

Regional membership of U3As

Table 8r: U3A membership (2008) as a proportion of the population over pension age (2007)

<i>Region</i>	<i>Population over pension age*</i> <i>(thousands)</i>	<i>U3A membership</i> <i>(persons)</i>	<i>U3A membership as % population over pension age</i>
North East	508.7	6,197	1.2
North West	1,315.4	20,540	1.6
Yorkshire & Humberside	979.2	12,757	1.3
East Midlands	853.0	15,233	1.8
West Midlands	1,045.7	14,366	1.4
East of England	1,127.2	29,723	2.6
London	1,042.4	13,562	1.3
South East	1,628.4	48,279	3.0
South West	1,145.0	31,847	2.8
Wales	626.6	7,773	1.2
Scotland	1,000.8	3,714	0.4
Northern Ireland	289.8	3,316	1.1
UK	11,561.5	207,307	1.8

Source: Office for National Statistics, accessed 19/04/09

* Over 65 for males, over 60 for females

ANNEX 2: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

At national level the objective was to give 95% confidence of averages within +/- 2% and the sample size was designed with this in mind. In addition a comparison by region and by size of U3A was required so the sample was stratified. The database with each U3A and the number of members, as held in November 2008, was divided into those with under 300 members, those with 300-599, and those with 600 or more – a broadly even distribution of total members.

For the second level survey, of committee members and group leaders, the results will be analysed by size only.

The basis of the selection is shown below.

A1: Distribution of U3As by Region and by U3A Size, Nov. 2008

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of members per U3A</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Small <300</i>	<i>Medium 300-599</i>	<i>Large 600+</i>	
East of England	44	22	14	80
East Midlands	53	10	4	67
London	17	8	8	33
North East	29	5	0	34
N. Ireland	11	0	3	14
North West	43	14	10	67
Scotland	23	1	1	25
South East	78	45	19	142
South West	59	26	12	97
Wales	37	8	0	45
West Midlands	46	9	4	59
Yorks & Humber.	21	9	5	35
UK	461	157	80	698

A2: Distribution of U3A Members by Region and by U3A Size, Nov. 2008

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of members per U3A</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Small <300</i>	<i>Medium 300-599</i>	<i>Large 600+</i>	
East of England	7,367	9,517	12,839	29,723
East Midlands	8,508	4,081	2,644	15,233
London	2,188	3,240	8,134	13,562
North East	4,266	1,931	0	6,197
N. Ireland	1,309	0	2,007	3,316
North West	5,822	5,748	8,970	20,540
Scotland	2,377	411	926	3,714
South East	12,458	18,724	17,097	48,279
South West	9,516	10,753	11,578	31,847
Wales	4,204	3,569	0	7,773
West Midlands	6,938	4,388	3,040	14,366
Yorks & Humber.	3,419	3,732	5,606	12,757
UK	68,372	66,094	72,841	207,307

Sampling strategy:

- Max 10 U3As per region in Small Group, 10 per U3A selected
- Max 12 U3As per region in Medium Group, 15 per U3A selected
- All U3As in Large Group, 20 per U3A selected

A3: Number of U3As Sampled by Region and by U3A Size, Nov. 2008

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of members per U3A</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i><300</i>	<i>300-599</i>	<i>600+</i>	
East of England	10	12	14	36
East Midlands	10	10	4	24
London	10	8	8	26
North East	10	5	0	15
N. Ireland	10	0	3	13
North West	10	12	10	30
Scotland	10	1	1	12
South East	10	12	19	41
South West	10	12	12	34
Wales	10	8	0	18
West Midlands	10	9	4	23
Yorks & Humber.	10	9	5	24
UK	120	96	80	296

A4: Number of Members Sampled by Region and by U3A Size, Nov. 2008

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of members per U3A</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i><300</i>	<i>300-599</i>	<i>600+</i>	
East of England	100	180	280	560
East Midlands	100	150	80	330
London	100	120	160	380
North East	100	75	0	175
N. Ireland	100	0	60	160
North West	100	180	200	480
Scotland	100	15	20	135
South East	100	180	380	660
South West	100	180	240	520
Wales	100	120	0	220
West Midlands	100	135	80	315
Yorks & Humber.	100	135	100	335
UK	1,200	1,470	1,600	4,270

Analysis

In the above tables there are 36 cells (12 regions by 3 sizes) of which 33 are populated. The results presented have been analysed within each cell and weighted and raised accordingly to give totals for each of the 12 regions, the 3 size bands and the UK total.