

Timmy King's Position Paper on Membership

Background Data

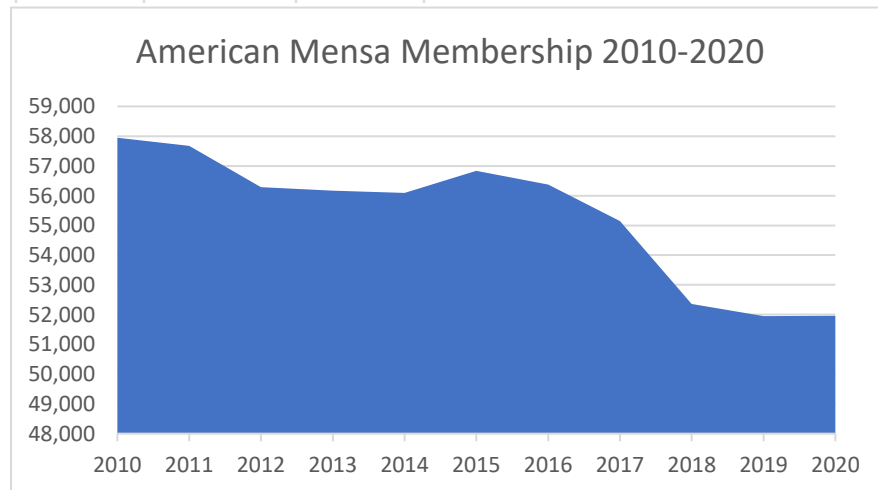
The American Mensa website has a complete membership history available to all members.

<https://www.us.mensa.org/lead/planning/historical-membership-dues-analysis>

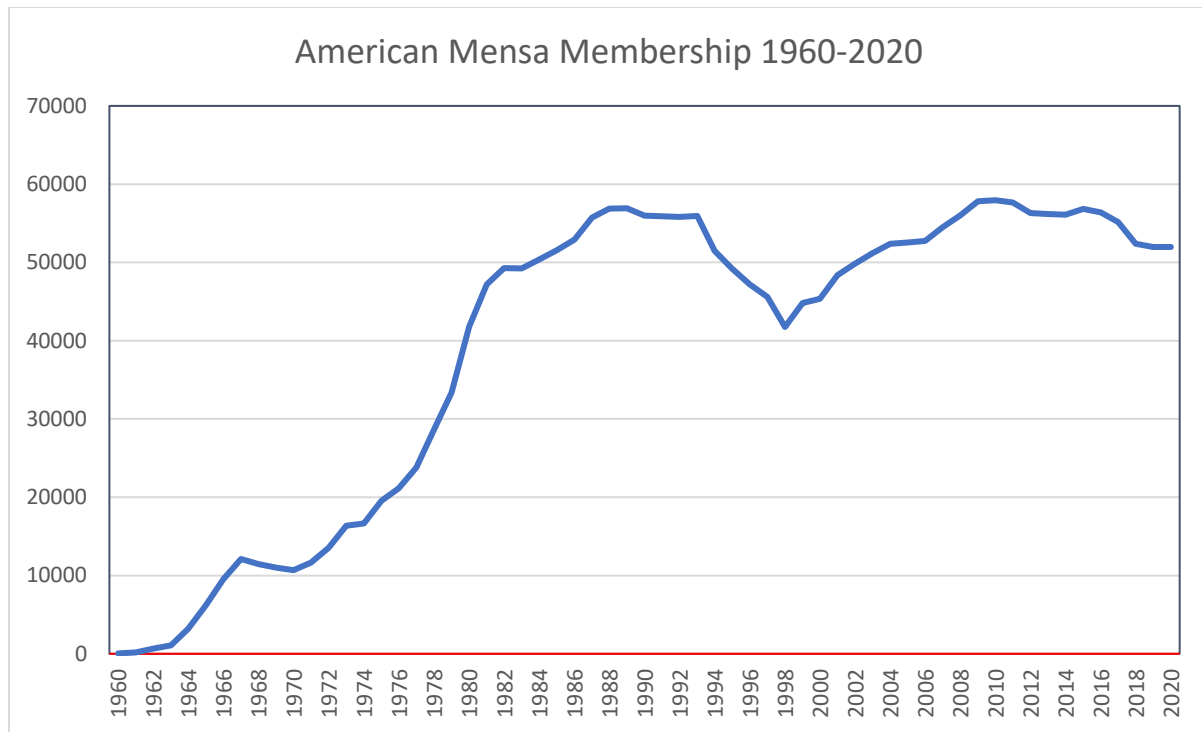
That is wonderful. We need more data like this available to all members.

Here is a summary of the last 10 years...

Year	Members	Dues
2010	57,947	\$59
2011	57,670	\$63
2012	56,291	\$63
2013	56,172	\$70
2014	56,091	\$70
2015	56,831	\$70
2016	56,374	\$70
2017	55,142	\$70
2018	52,364	\$79
2019	51,953	\$79
2020	51,962	\$79



Below is a complete picture of our membership from 50 members to 50,000 members. If you look at our history, we had a much worse drop starting in 1989, and it took us a 2 decades to recover.



Year	Members	Dues		Year	Members	Dues		Year	Members	Dues
1960	50	\$3		1980	41,810	\$20		2000	45,363	\$49
1961	157	\$3		1981	47,203	\$30		2001	48,393	\$49
1962	649	\$5		1982	49,267	\$30		2002	49,837	\$49
1963	1,071	\$5		1983	49,227	\$30		2003	51,208	\$49
1964	3,193	\$5		1984	50,370	\$30		2004	52,398	\$49
1965	6,189	\$8		1985	51,546	\$33		2005	52,554	\$49
1966	9,521	\$8		1986	52,914	\$33		2006	52,741	\$52
1967	12,116	\$8		1987	55,746	\$33		2007	54,503	\$52
1968	11,451	\$10		1988	56,888	\$33		2008	56,006	\$52
1969	10,992	\$10		1989	56,929	\$36		2009	57,835	\$59
1970	10,680	\$10		1990	55,988	\$39		2010	57,947	\$59
1971	11,668	\$10		1991	55,886	\$39		2011	57,670	\$63
1972	13,554	\$15		1992	55,808	\$39		2012	56,291	\$63
1973	16,368	\$15		1993	55,930	\$39		2013	56,172	\$70
1974	16,642	\$15		1994	51,498	\$45		2014	56,091	\$70
1975	19,537	\$15		1995	49,198	\$45		2015	56,831	\$70
1976	21,144	\$15		1996	47,209	\$45		2016	56,374	\$70
1977	23,823	\$20		1997	45,581	\$45		2017	55,142	\$70
1978	28,621	\$20		1998	41,771	\$45		2018	52,364	\$79
1979	33,367	\$20		1999	44,825	\$45		2019	51,953	\$79
								2020	51,962	\$79

Thoughts and ruminations

Whenever we talk about membership, we must remember that there are 2 classes of members in American Mensa.

- 95% of our members do not go to the Annual Gathering, Regional Gatherings, or local group meetings.
95% of our members do not vote in elections, are not active in our on-line communities, do not respond to surveys.
95% of our members are seemingly happy to pay their dues in exchange for a membership card and a magazine 10 times/year.

95% of our members provide the bulk of our revenue and demand very little in return.

- 5% of our members are very active in American Mensa.
5% of our members are the lifeblood of the organization. They are the volunteers working tirelessly to make our Mensa community wonderful.
Each member in the 5% contribute in their own way. They build a society of like minds.

Without the 5%, American Mensa has no real purpose.

When we discuss membership, it is natural for us to focus on the 5%.

They are the people who voice their passionate opinions about our future.

My thoughts about the 95%

It would be amazing if we could find a way to get the 95% people to express their thoughts about American Mensa.

It would be wonderful to send out a survey and get even 50% of the members to respond.

I suppose that the lack of response is, in a way, its own response.

If most of our members continually pay their dues and do not participate, then they are telling us that all they want is what they currently receive.

And it is natural to assume that membership dues are the driving factor in their decision.

In support of the 95%, I completely and wholeheartedly believe that American Mensa dues should not increase in the next 10 years.

We must establish a foundation of fiscal responsibility that will last us for decades. It is our best hope to keep the 95% invested American Mensa.

My thoughts about the 5%

These people are my friends. They volunteer thousands of hours because they are passionate about our Mensa family.

They should be considered the 95% for their effort.

They are the heart and soul of American Mensa.

Without the 5%, American Mensa would be an empty shell of ideas.

We need to find a balance between the 5% and the 95%

How can we fix declining membership?

There is no magic solution.

Other organizations similar to American Mensa are experiencing a similar drop in membership.

Social organizations are being replaced with virtual communities.

Recent surveys tell us that one of the primary reasons people are leaving is because they are not getting value for their dues.

The second most common reason is the lack of diversity and inclusion.

At the risk of stating the obvious, we need to:

- Freeze membership dues for many, many years.
- Make it easier to join Mensa (without - in any way - lowering our standards).
- Make the Mensa experience a positive experience for all members.

The existing AMC has done a great job of rolling out the new testing center program.

It's important that we finish the process to make the testing center program as good as live proctor testing.

We should expect that the new testing program will bring in a lot of members that are outside of major metropolitan areas.

These new members might not have access to a strong local network with lots of activities.

They will naturally turn to our on-line communities (Mensa Connect, Facebook, Discord, MeWe, etc.).

Our on-line communities are far from perfect!

There are definitely days when I am embarrassed to read some comments posted by Mensa members.

A founding goal of Mensa was to have spirited debates on important issues. But too many of our on-line members are unable to engage in honest discussion without turning it into a personal attack.

I think we can fix this – I think we have to fix this.

Currently there is a great deal of discussion about establishing an on-line code of conduct. I will write a separate position paper on the matter, but I do not think a code of conduct will accomplish what its proponents think it will.

I don't know how we will solve this. I assume we will need some de-escalation tools or processes to help members prevent conflict. Beyond that I would love to hear your ideas.

It's awesome that we have a committee focused on diversity and inclusion. I am excited hear their ideas and findings.

I strongly believe that there are many, many ways to make American Mensa more welcoming to all members.

And I am 100% positive that we can implement measurable positive change – and do it in a way that is supported by ALL of our members.

Just in case that last sentence was too subtle I will say it in a different way:

- I fully support and will champion change to make American Mensa more diverse and more inclusive.
- I know we have many members who have serious and valid concerns about this type of change.

You probably don't believe me – but we can do this together without any of the negative effects that you fear.

What else can we do?

We have to accept our reality.

We can't keep budgeting as if membership numbers are going to turn around next year.

We've been through this before, from 1989 – 2009 (see chart above).

We will survive this as long as we keep a realistic perspective on our finances and we continually challenge ourselves to be a strong, united community.

