

1 Background

As part of the SGS@40 project, the Scottish Glass Society (SGS) is examining the future of the SGS to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose. As a membership organisation, the views of its membership are key. By asking them what they value about the society, how they feel about the way it currently conducts its business, and how they would like to see its role develop, we can ensure that the wishes and needs of members remain at the heart of the society.

The online survey was made available to members for 6 weeks in spring of 2019 and will be used as the basis for further discussions on the society's future.

SGS gratefully acknowledges support from Creative Scotland's Open Project Fund for the SGS@40 project which has allowed them to conduct this survey.

2 Survey responses

2.1 Membership

The survey elicited 32 responses from SGS members, representing 30% of paying members at the time of the analysis, which is a fairly standard sample size for surveys of this nature.

There was a mix of established and new members taking the survey (*table 1*), with the newest member having joined 8 months ago, and the longest-serving members having been with SGS for the full 40 years.

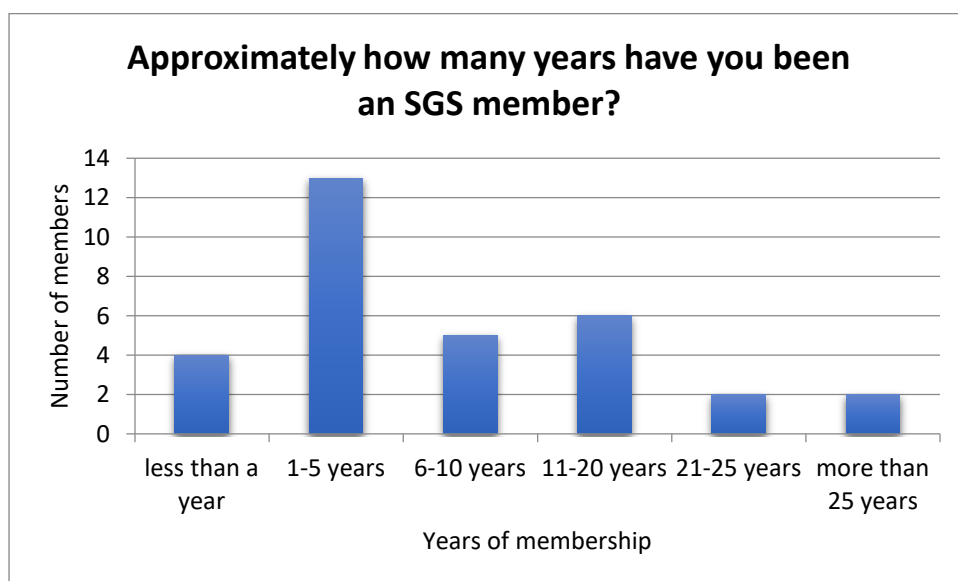


Table 1

Reflecting the make-up of the membership, 77% of respondents were 'Professional' members – individuals actively working with glass; 16% were student members actively working with glass; 7% were 'Friends of SGS' including collectors (*table 2*). No corporate members responded to the survey, though these form a small percentage of the membership and will be contacted separately for comment.

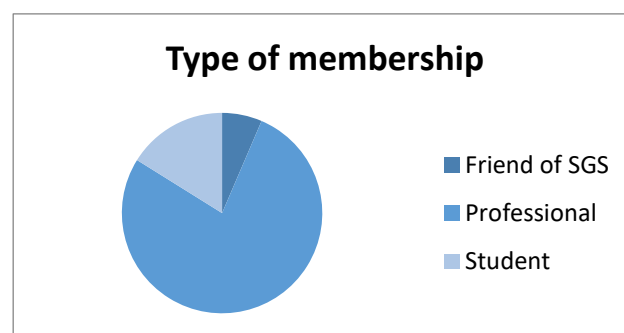


Table 2

Members were asked why they first joined the society and were allowed to select multiple reasons (*table 3*). Whilst there was a strong emphasis on applying for an exhibition (70% of those with eligible membership) there was also strong evidence of a shared desire to be a part of the SGS community and network with others (97%). This possibly reflects the fact that many members work alone in studios and use the society to seek support and camaraderie from others working in the field.

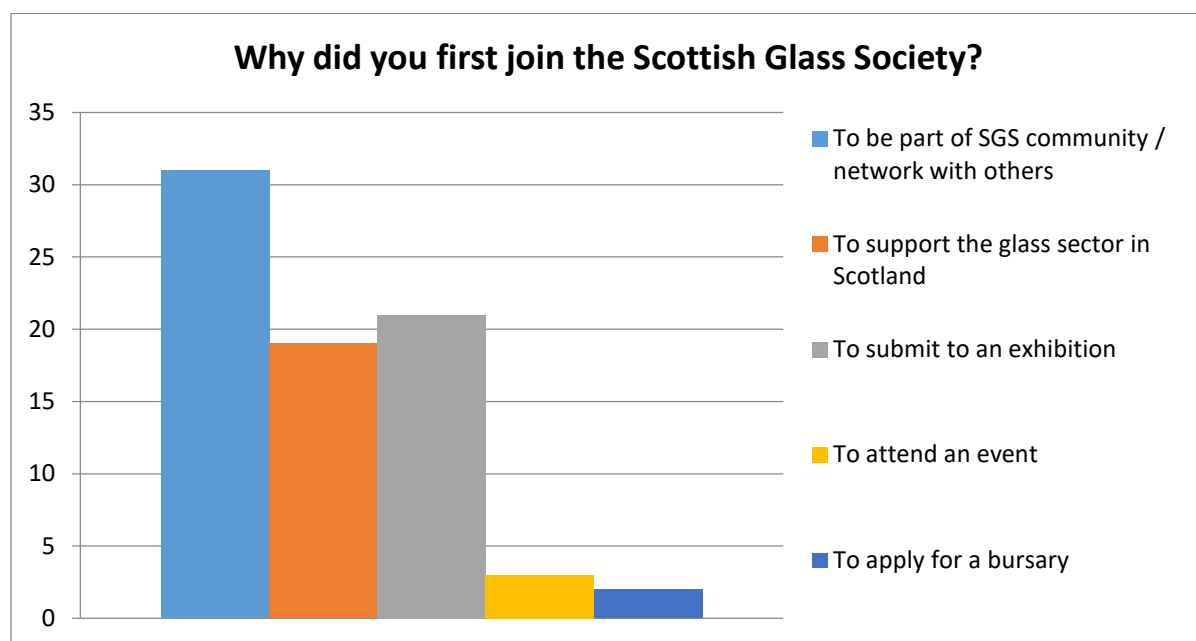


Table 3

When asked why they continue to be members of SGS (*table 4*), the desire to be a part of the SGS community and network with others increased to 100%. There was also an increase in those who value the role their membership plays in supporting the wider glass community and in giving them access to SGS events, supporting anecdotal evidence that there is a strong desire for cross-sector collaboration to strengthen the sector as a whole.

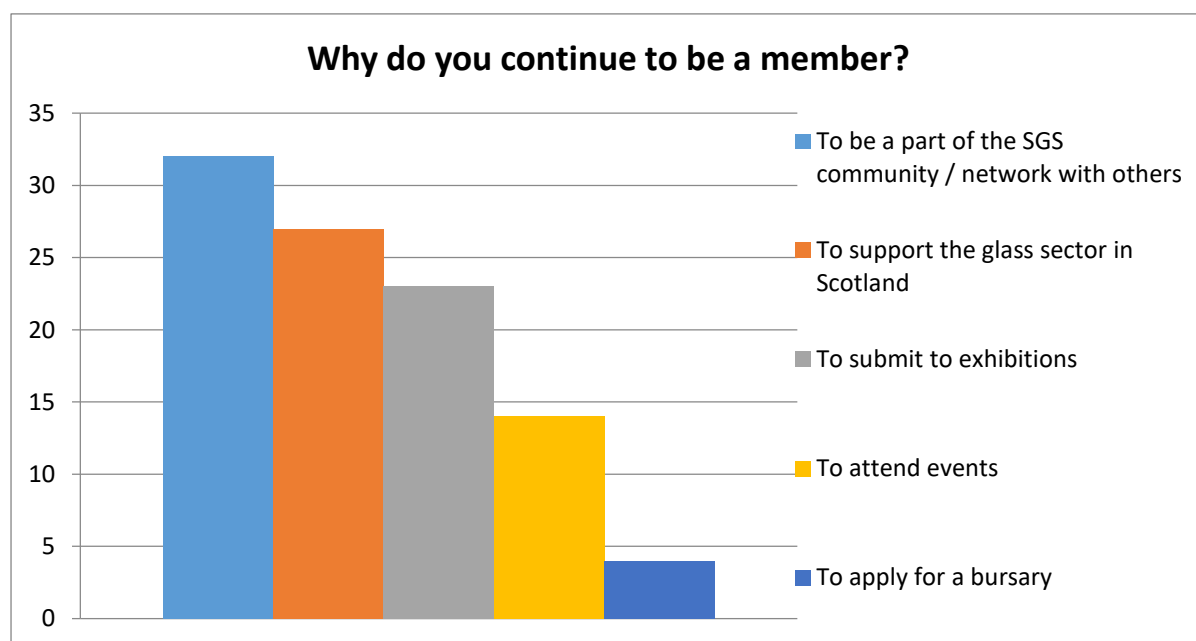


Table 4

Six respondents (19%) indicated that they had been involved in the wider work of the society in a range of ways including logistical support for exhibitions, serving on the committee, writing funding bids, providing prizes for exhibitions, and distributing information to promote exhibitions and events.

A further three respondents indicated that they would be happy to become more widely involved in the work of the society, though two noted issues with their location. This indicates that there remains opportunity for wider participation in the core work of the society, though geographical barriers need to be addressed.

2.2 Membership benefits

There was generally a good level of awareness of the benefits on offer to SGS members (table 5) though more could be done to highlight the opportunities for bursaries and discounts, with only 59% and 63% awareness respectively.

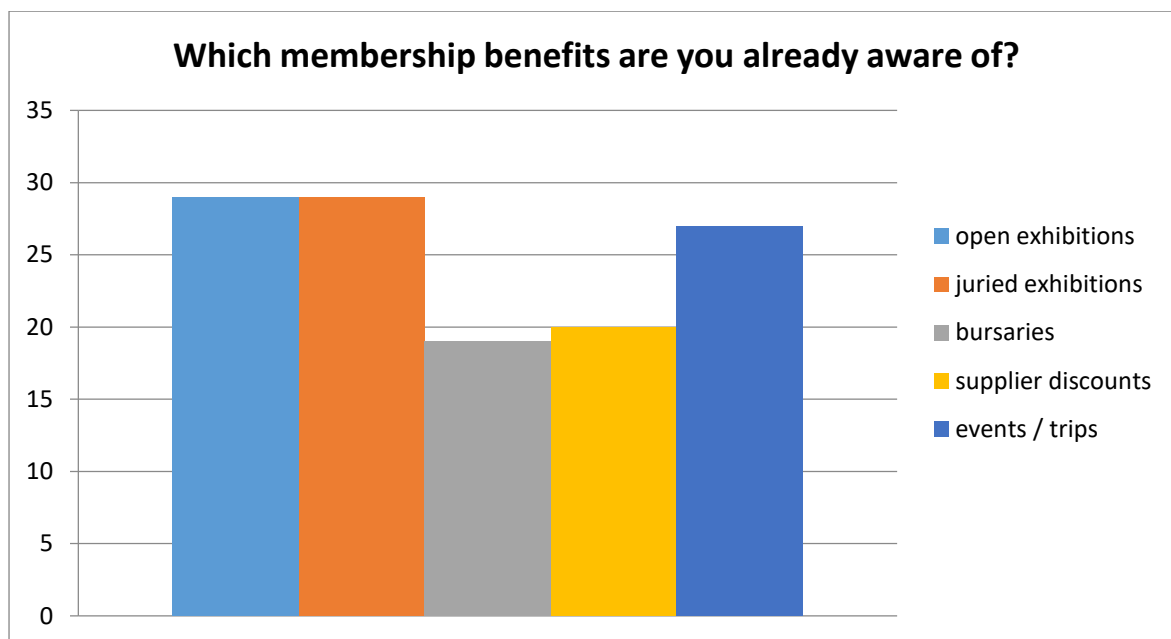


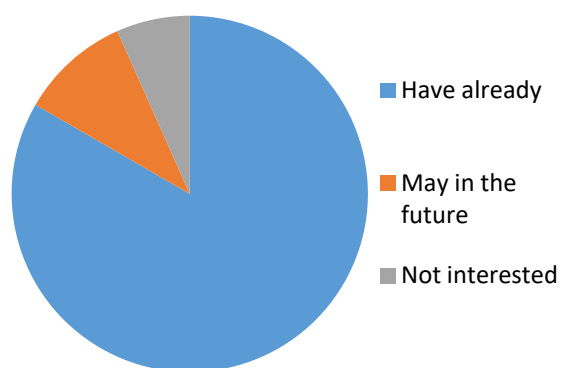
Table 5

This is reflected in the uptake of membership benefits. When asked ‘which of these have you taken advantage of as an SGS member?’:

- 83% of eligible members had entered an open exhibition;
- 67% of eligible members had entered a juried exhibition;
- 20% of eligible members had applied for a bursary;
- 43% of eligible members had used supplier discounts;
- 59% of members had attended trips or events.

Whilst the majority of respondents have already taken advantage of membership benefits or may do so in the future (tables 6-10), 31% of respondents indicated they were not interested in bursaries. Further investigation may reveal if this is due to the fact that they do not require financial assistance or whether they have assumed they are not eligible to apply – i.e. believed they are only available to students.

Entered an open exhibition



Entered a juried exhibition

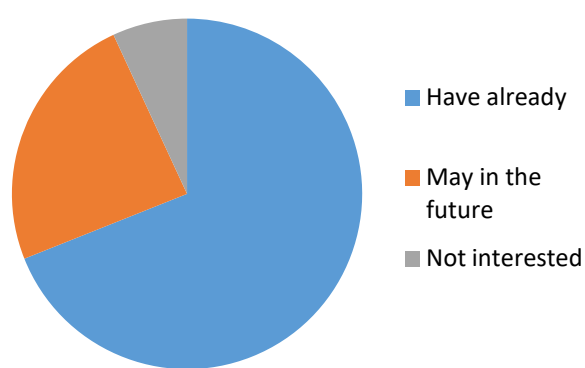
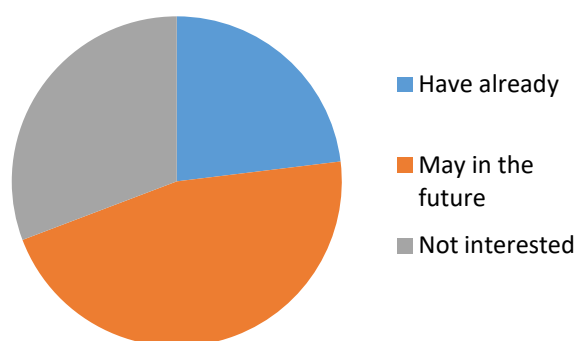


Table 6

Table 7

Applied for a bursary



Used supplier discounts

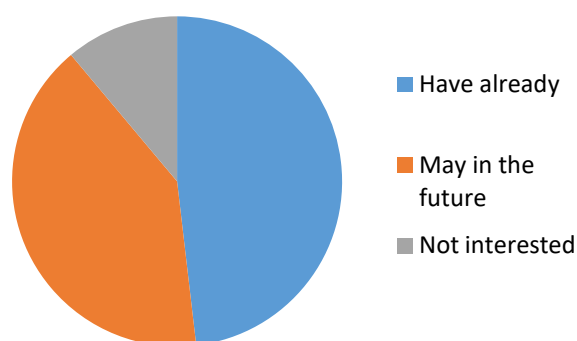


Table 8

Table 9

Attended a trip / event

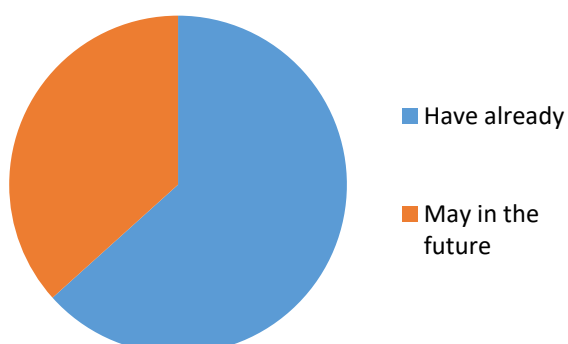


Table 10

2.2.a Additional benefits

When asked which additional membership benefits they would like us to explore (*table 11*) 83% of professional / student members indicated that they would welcome further professional development opportunities such as workshops and resources. Wider discount on materials was the second most popular answer (72%) whilst exploring opportunities for online exhibitions; showcases of work outside of Scotland; professional insurance; opportunities to promote artwork; discounts on tools and discounts on courses also received support from 60% of all respondents.

53% of respondents would welcome further networking events and opportunities to promote glass businesses.

Whilst only 38% of respondents said they would like SGS to explore opportunities for mentoring, this rose to 50% amongst student members and professional members with a membership of 5 years or less.

47% of respondents would welcome discounts on wider services such as photography, 41% would like to see more organised trips; 38% would like to see legal assistance and 16% would like to see other discounts.

In written responses to the question, the following additional suggestions were noted:

- Our own glass trade show.
- Try to also attract non-artist/student to join the Society, such as collector/buyers, museum curators, schools/colleges, dealers/galleries.
- Outdoor, one day events/exhibitions.
- Some form of online chat group.
- Links with other visual arts organisations.

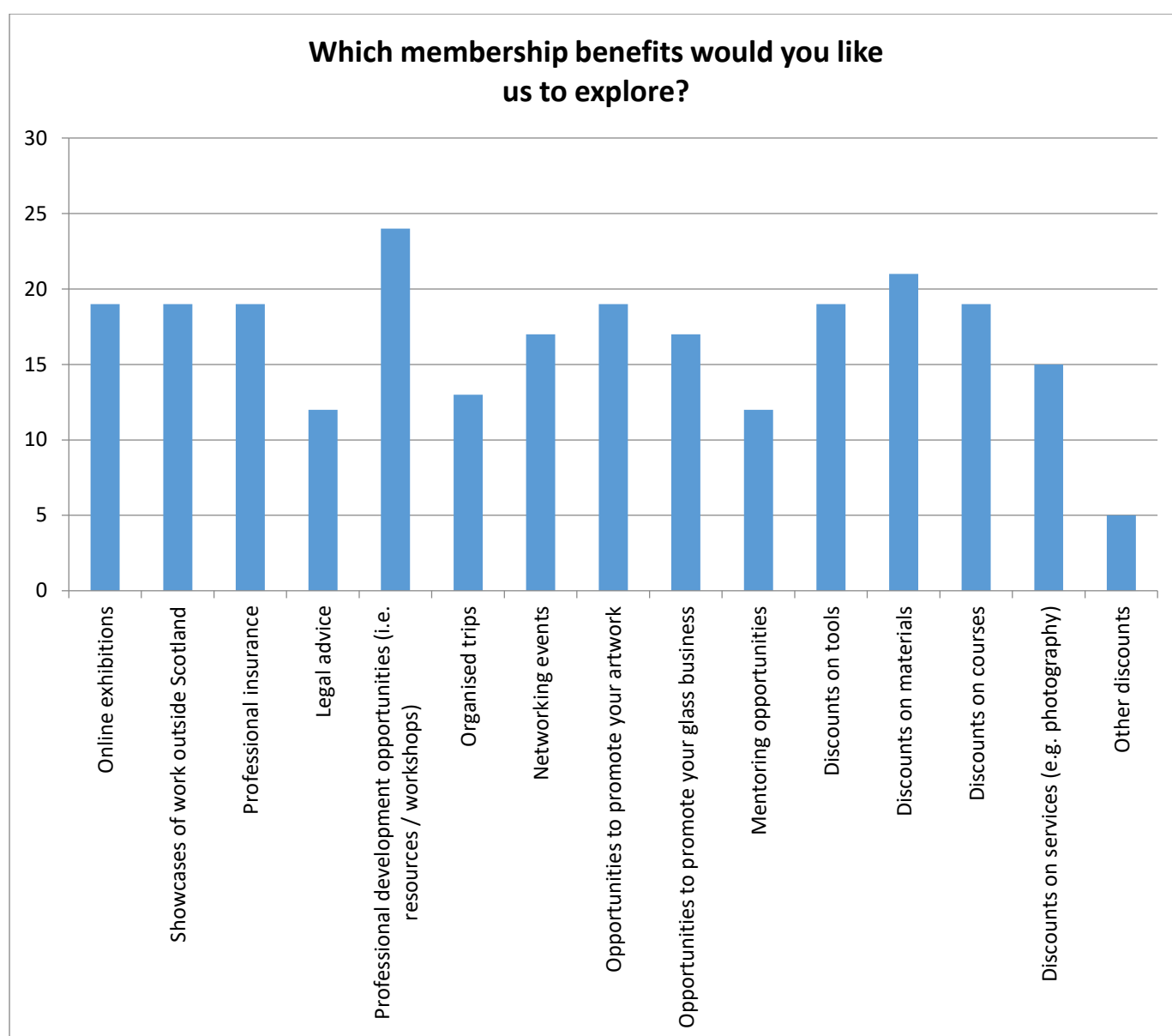


Table 11

3 Fees

3.1 Membership fees

Thoughts on the current membership fees shows general support for the current system (*tables 12-15*), though a number of members feel that professional, student and corporate memberships especially are too low (16%, 15% and 26% respectively).

In the written responses it was noted that:

- fees for practicing artists could well be covered by the supplier discounts offered;
- current fees 'did not generate sufficient revenue to offer member benefits, run events, support the website';
- fees seem low in comparison to other comparable organisations;
- collectors should be being encouraged to donate at higher levels;
- marginal increases (e.g. £5 for individual membership and £20 for corporate membership) may have little impact on membership numbers;
- corporate membership could be based on number of staff;
- there seemed to be a disparity between student membership at £17 (which has access to all benefits) and Friends membership at £25 (which does not allow access to discounts or entry to exhibitions).



Table 12

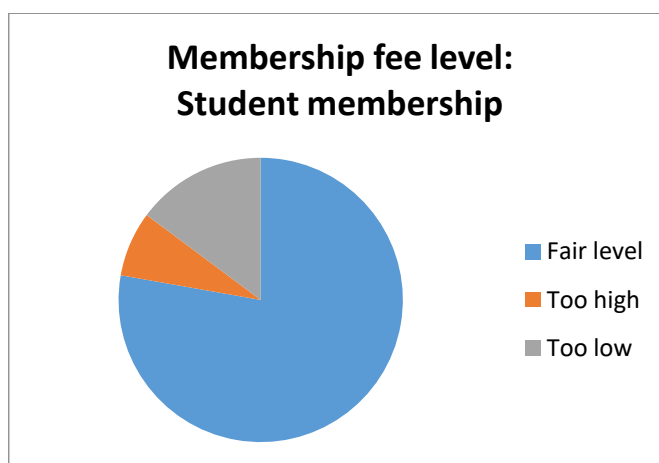


Table 13

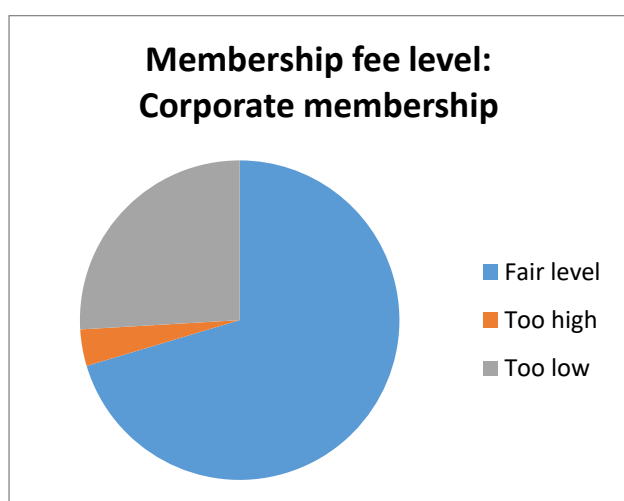


Table 14



Table 15

When asked how they would like to pay for their membership (*table 16*), there was a clear preference for annual membership with a split between those who would like payments to be taken automatically (58%) and those who

would like to be prompted to make a manual payment (32%). This reinforces the understanding that both options should be being offered.

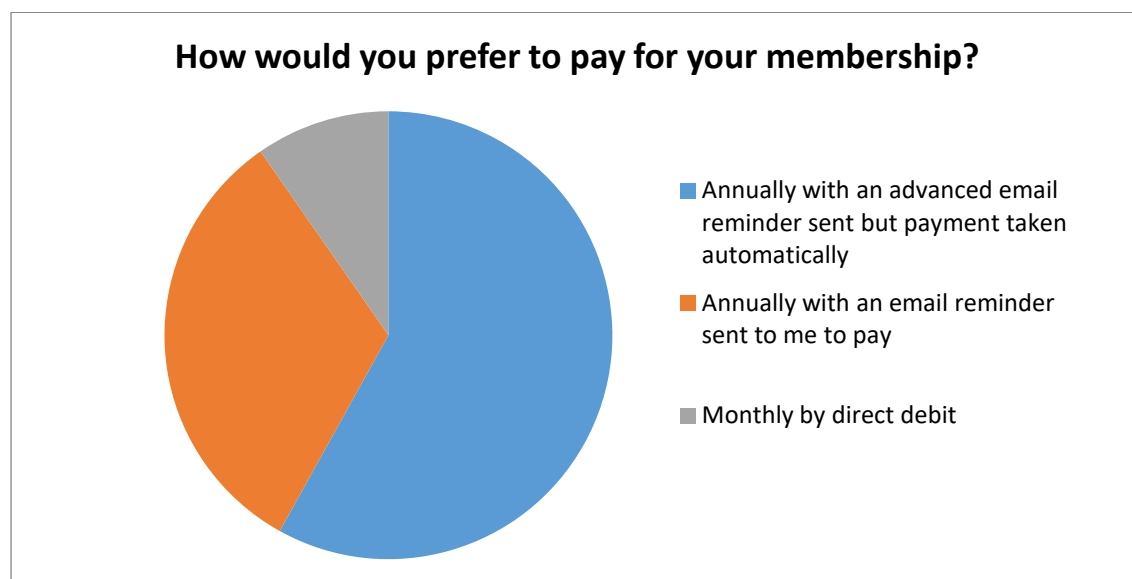


Table 16

3.2 Exhibition fees

Referring to tables 17-19, whilst there is broad support for the standard submission and student submission fees for exhibitions charged in 2018, with 66% and 75% respectively believing this was a 'fair level', a significant proportion of respondents felt that the fees were too low (31% and 21% respectively).

Similar sentiment was expressed for invigilation fees where members who were not able to offer support for the exhibition by providing at least one half-day of invigilation cover were asked to pay towards the costs of covering this, with 89% believing that the fee if £15 was a fair level and % believing that this was too low.

Further comments on this topic included:

- A request for further context in terms of how much commission is taken on any sale.
- Consideration could be given to creating a cost for each item above the first item, e.g. second and/or third at £10 each - with the half price structure continuing through for students.
- This was fair and a good way of ensuring invigilation cover. The 2019 exhibition cost is a lot higher - possibly too high in comparison.
- Unusually low to have three entries for £25. Normally £20 per item I think.
- You're displaying your work, advertising getting yourself known and maybe selling an expensive piece of work. It would be far more costly to do it by yourself.

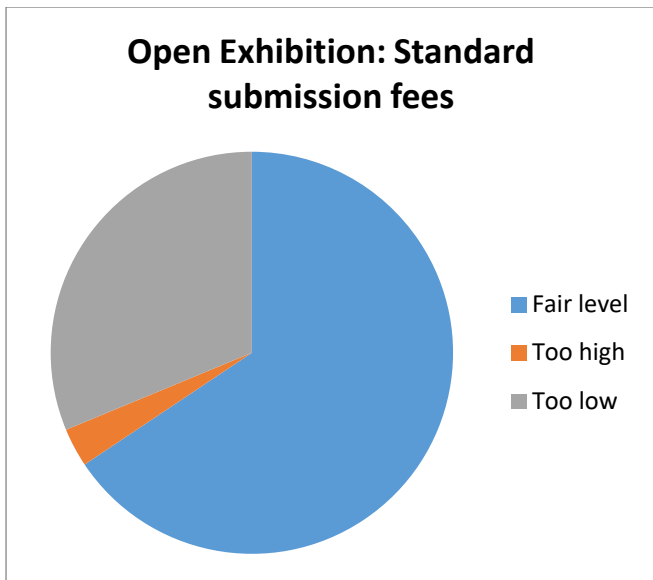


Table 17

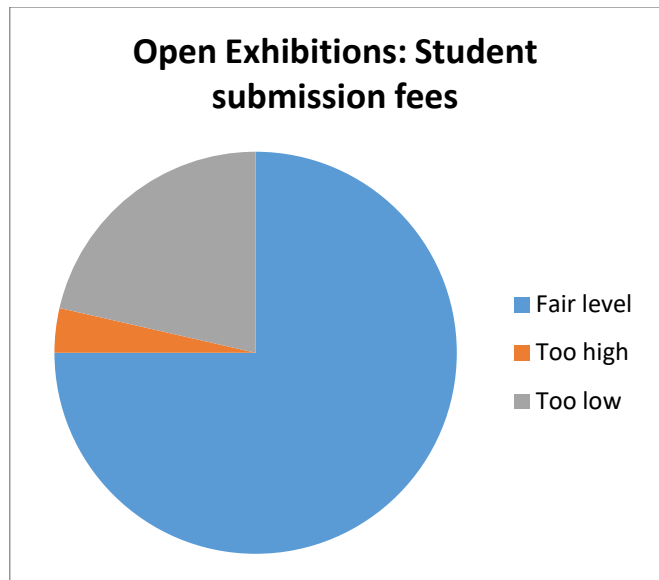


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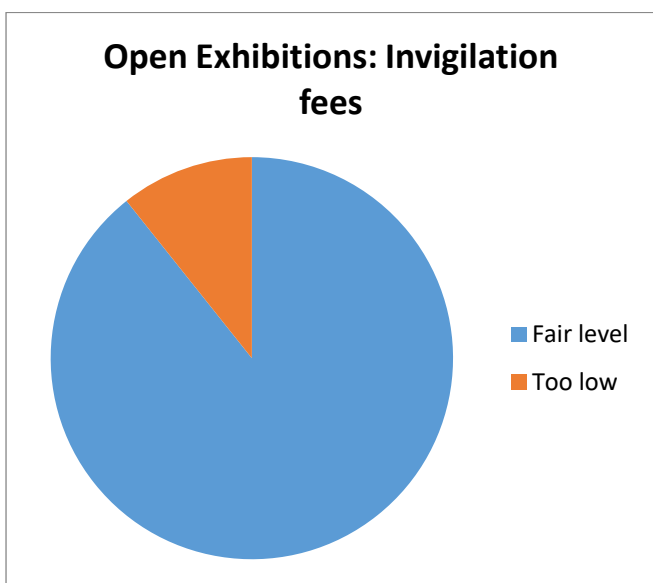


Table 19

4 Supporting the wider glass sector

84% of respondents indicated that supporting the wider glass sector is a key reason for continuing their membership with SGS. When asked how the society should be supporting the sector (*table 20*) there was wide support for a range of measures including:

- promoting opportunities to explore contemporary glass in Scotland (88%);
- working with institutions to promote formal learning (81%);
- partnering with international organisations to promote the Scottish glass scene (78%);
- creating new projects which involve commissioning new glass works (71%).

In addition, 50% of respondents supported developing opportunities to explore historic glass in Scotland and 47% supported the idea of bringing international artists to Scotland.

How should we be supporting the wider glass sector?

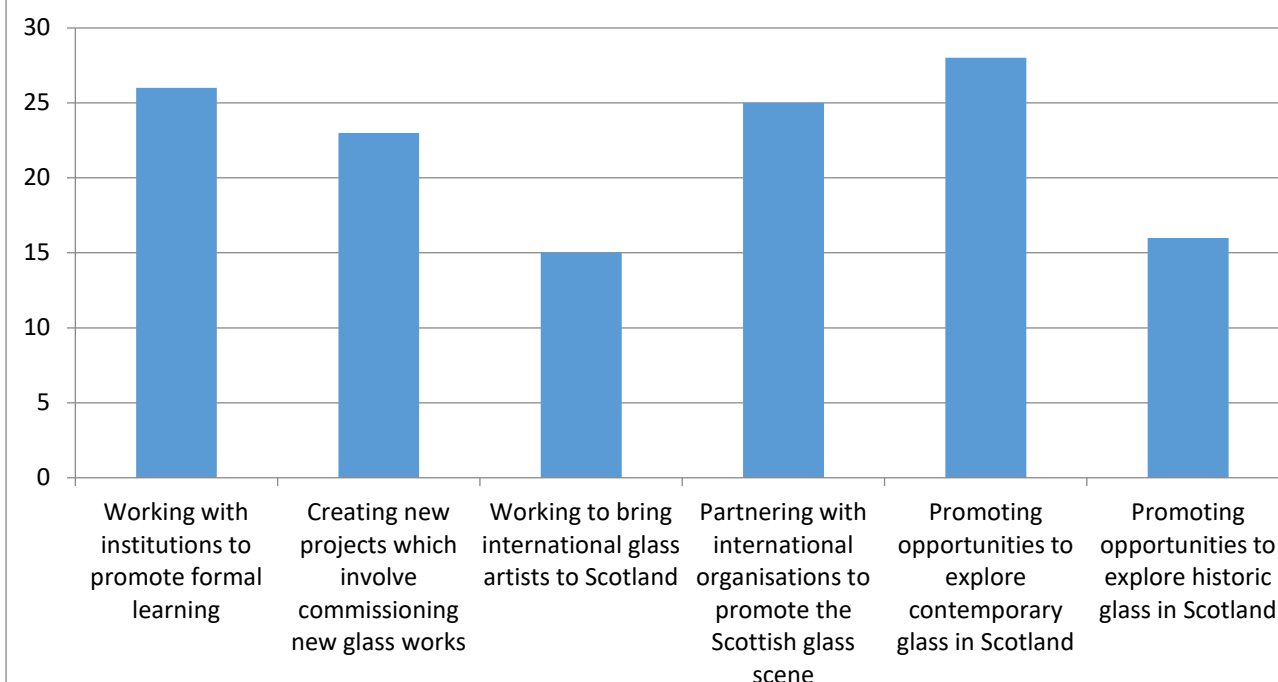


Table 20

Responses to the question about wider support SGS should consider offering included:

- The SGS could create a further and higher education network so that the delivery of education in Scotland is better understood which in turn creates opportunities to invite new members and assist in the promotion of those courses.
- A member's forum on the website would be useful as a professional place to post questions about glass etc - a step up from facebook
- As you know, the 'International Festival of Glass' happens every two years, and includes their own exhibition, the 'British Glass Biennale'. There are always several other exhibitions taking part at this time, and most are in relatively the same location or district. It is the one time, every two years, that many of our glass community are in the same place over a Bank Holiday Weekend, and feel that the S.G.S. is missing out on a wonderful opportunity here to showcase its Members work (one way or another). C.G.S. and the Guild of Glass Engravers have regularly shown at this event, and it just seems such a pity that other main glass group in the UK isn't there (aside from the S.G.S. Members that either get selected for the 'Biennale' and are also Members of C.G.S. and apply for their 'Open Exhibition'. ... However, I do appreciate that things cost money and Members would have to be willing to help out/set up/invigilate for it to all work. :-)
- Perhaps some kind of informal meeting for members/artists to come together to chat about projects/ issues/ techniques new advances or suppliers etc. Up to 4 times a year. Maybe a loose agenda but primarily informal. The venue could move around the country so that everyone is included.
- Sharing articles in Journals of other glass organisations such as BSSG.
- I'm a more recent member and so far the opportunity to exhibit has been invaluable to me, so thank you for that! As my practice develops I would hope to become more involved with other aspects of the society.

5 Next steps

This survey was undertaken as part of the SGS@40: Future of SGS project, which is supported by Creative Scotland's Open Project Fund.

Further feedback will be gathered from corporate members, non-members (including lapsed members and those working in the sector in Scotland who have never been members) to gain a wider picture of the way the society can support individuals, organisations and the sector as a whole.

The information gathered will be used to prioritise the work carried out throughout the remainder of the project, and to inform recommendations for the society's work going forward.

If you have any comments or would like to provide feedback on the work of the SGS, please contact Kirsten Gow, Project Manager for SGS@40: The Future of SGS at kirstensgs@yahoo.com.

The Scottish Glass Society gratefully acknowledges the support it has received from Creative Scotland's Open Project Fund for the SGS@40 project.



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