

Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers

# International Membership Survey

To build a stronger membership.

Carmen L. Z. Gress & Chris Lobanov-Rostovsky



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# International Membership Survey 2013

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## Executive Summary

The ATSA Board members compiled and administered an online survey (see Appendix A) that was sent to all international members (any non-US based member) in the fall of 2013 to explore and identify the needs of international members, with an aim to strengthen membership. Of the over 250 international members (approximately 10% of the whole membership), 24% responded to the survey.

## Key qualitative results

International members join ATSA and see the most beneficial aspects of ATSA in a similar manner as all ATSA members: to gain colleagues, have access to advice and consultation, and be part of a strong organization. The main methods of accomplishing these goals are the conference, access to the journal and the list-serve.

Respondents to the survey provided a range of benefits from having an international issues representative on the board. The position suggests to international members that (a) ATSA acknowledges that sexual abuse is a problem across the world, an international issue, (b) ATSA will take positions on international issues (not just US ones), (c) ATSA will broaden the scope and perspective of ATSA, making it more informed on world issues and diversity, and (d) ATSA will increase its ability to promote international collaboration. This will result, respondents suggest, in ATSA international members feeling less marginalized by ATSA's current US focus due to a better connection in research, knowledge translation (especially important for non-English language members) and public policy work based on international experiences as well as a stronger and more respected organization.

International members suggested many deliverables for the position, the international committee and the board as a whole such as linking with other international organizations, increasing international membership, and knowledge of international research, treatment practices, policy and legislation, and international ethics, and advocating for and informing others of international issues. There appeared to be a significant interest by international members to get involved in meeting these deliverables and a large number of suggestions on how to do this work was provided.

When asked to define success, the respondents provided various ways to determine if the position and international committee are successful. This included ATSA providing more information from an international perspective, specifically in public policy and a higher prominence for international work. Another mark of success suggests the respondents, would be an increase in the international membership, international members on all committees, and the requirement that a proportion of the board/executive be international members.

In summary, the international members who responded to this survey appreciated the opportunity to become more involved in defining ATSA's direction, especially to broaden ATSA's ability to be more inclusive of international members and international strengths, successes, and challenges.

## Introduction

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence based practice, public policy and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are at risk to abuse. There are over 2600 members, 10% of whom are from outside the United States.

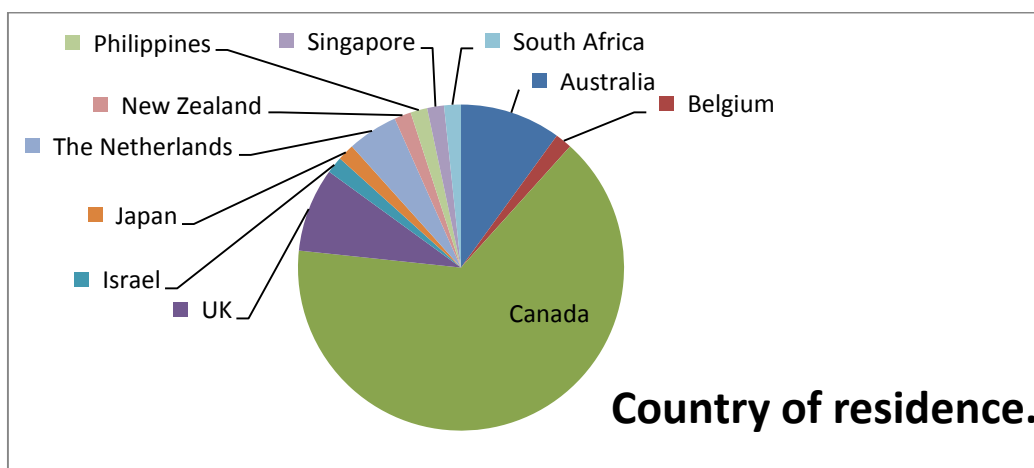
In the current strategic plan (2009–2014), a key objective is to promote a strong and healthy membership (see <http://www.atsa.com/atsa-strategic-plan>). One way of accomplishing that objective is the exploration and identification of the needs of international members. The ATSA Board members compiled and administered an online survey (see Appendix A for the survey) that was sent to all international members (any non-US based member) in the fall of 2013. The following is an overview of the results.

## Survey Results

### 1. Respondents country of residence

Sixty persons responded out of a possible 250, equaling a 24% response rate 65% of whom identified Canada as their country of residence. This low rate will not allow us to generalize results across all international members. Instead, these results will be viewed as qualitative data, used to inform discussions. In addition, not all respondents answered all questions.

Figure 1



### 2. Initial reason for ATSA membership

Fifty-eight respondents identified why they became a member of ATSA. The following table summarizes the results, the shaded lines speak to 20% or more respondents identified that item. The respondents could choose as many options as they determined applicable.

Table 1

Why did you become a member of ATSA?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Access to colleagues with similar work roles	81%	47
Access to advice/consultation with colleagues in the field of sex offender research and/or treatment	74%	43
Membership required by state or other governing body	0%	0
Membership encouraged by state or other governing body	3.4%	2
List serve	27.6%	16
Access to Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment	70.7%	41
Access to other criminology journals through Sage	20.7%	12
Assists in expert testimony	8.6%	5
Conference	81%	47
Practice Guidelines	44.8%	26
Code of Ethics	32.8%	19
Other (please specify)		6

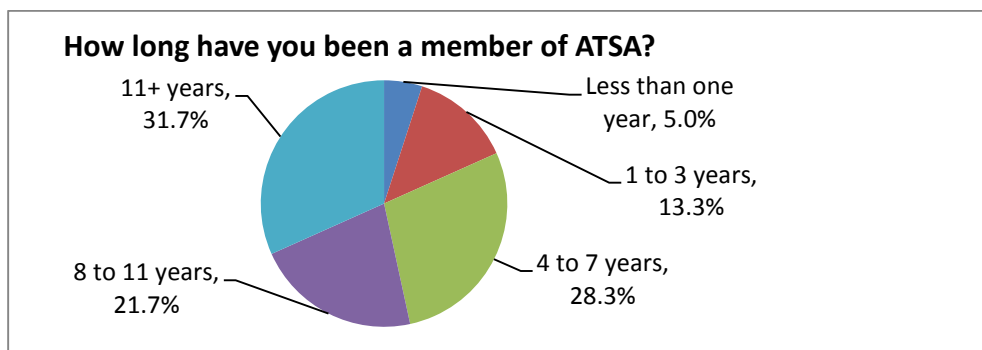
The 'other' category included the following:

- Access to research (stated twice);
- To define means of innovation and break stagnation;
- Stay current with advances in treatment and research;
- To assistance in implementing risk assessment procedures; and
- Membership adds credibility to reports.

### 3. Length of ATSA membership

The next question spoke to the length of membership of the survey respondents. As can be seen in the figure below, 32% of the 60 respondents have been a member for more than 11 years, 50% between four and 11 years, and 18% three years or less.

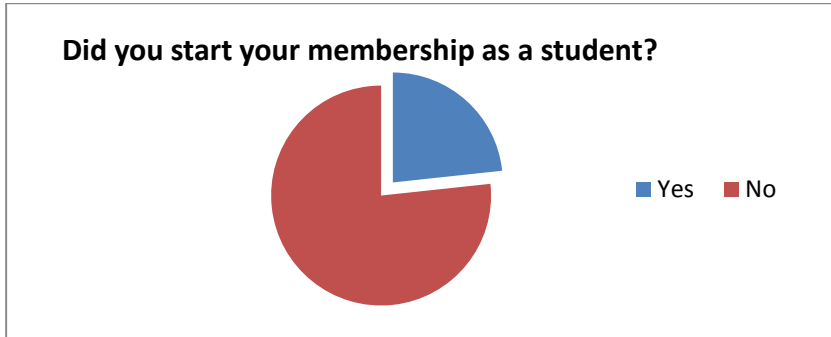
Figure 2



#### 4. ATSA membership: did you start as a student?

Of those individuals who responded to this survey (60), nearly a quarter (23.3%) started their membership as a student.

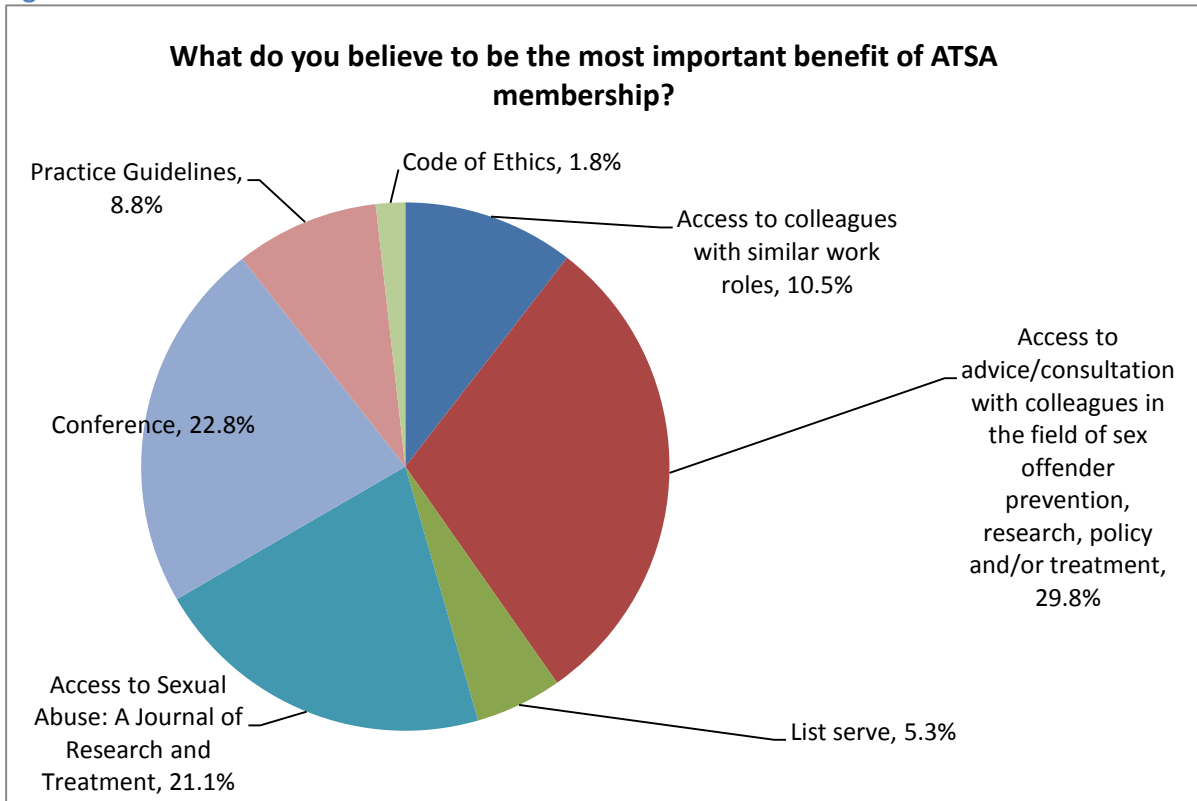
Figure 3



#### 5. The most important ATSA benefit

Fifty-seven respondents identified what they considered to be the most important benefit of ATSA membership. Respondents were only permitted to choose one option. As can be seen in the figure below, 30% indicated access to advice and consultation as the most important benefit. Next were the conference and access to the association’s journal. Although the list serve was identified by only 5%, it is the main communication channel for access to advice and consultation.

Figure 4





Comments in the ‘other’ option included seeing ATSA as a platform for advancing the field of sexual offender assessment and treatment, access to research, adds credibility to reports and the support of ATSA’s influence in policy and public education.

### 6. Colleague referrals

Question six asked the respondents whether they had referred a colleague to ATSA. Eight-two percent of the 60 respondents stated yes.

### 7. Colleague referrals – if not, why not?

Of the 11 respondents who answered question seven, their responses are summarized as follows:

- Not relevant, don’t know anyone, or don’t work directly with others in the field;
- New member themselves or didn’t think to refer;
- Have discussed ATSA but not specifically about their membership; and
- Colleagues with similar research interests are already members.

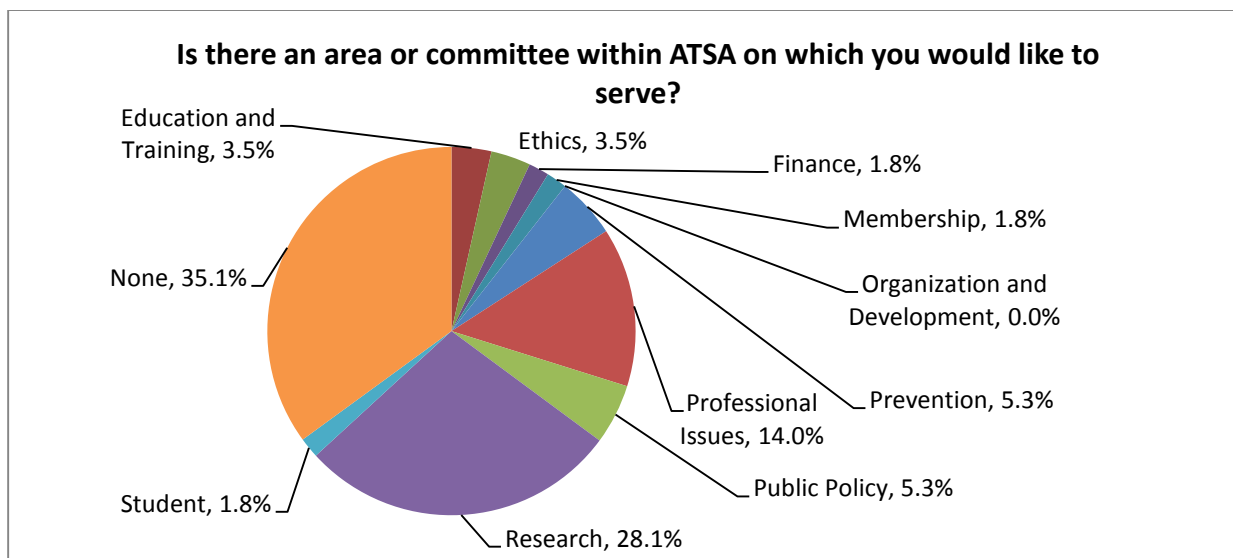
### 8. ATSA committee membership

Eighty percent of the 60 respondents stated they are not currently part of an ATSA committee.

### 9. Interested committee areas

Thirty-seven of the 57 respondents for this question indicated a committee area of interest. The most common choice was research, following by professional issues, prevention and public policy.

Figure 5



### 10. International representative on board – the purpose

Question 10 asked respondents “What does it mean to you to have an International Issues representative appointed position on the ATSA Board?” Fifty-one responded. There were a number of

themes presented in various individual statements. In summary, the respondents feel that an International Issues representative means the following:

- ATSA acknowledges that sexual abuse is a problem across the world, an international issue, and will take positions on international issues (not just US ones).
- ATSA will see big picture issues such as policy development, addressing public concerns, implementing interventions, and acknowledging/incorporating cultural diversity as common across countries, regardless of geography;
- ATSA will broaden the scope and perspective of ATSA, making it more informed on world issues and diversity, and increase its ability to promote international collaboration;
- ATSA international members will feel less marginalized by ATSA's current US focus, as there will be a better connection in research, knowledge translation (especially important for non-English language members) public policy work based on international experiences, and a specific person to liaise with; and
- ATSA will, in the long term, not need an International position on the board as the principles of an international association will be imbedded into the organization.

### **11. International representative on board – the role**

In question 11, respondents were asked to define the International Issues role on the ATSA board. Of the 47 responses, many complimented or repeated responses made to question 10. Additional comments focused on specific actions this role could take, such as

- Proactively recruit international members into committees, profile international members at conferences, promote international research, and increase international consultation;
- Provide international lens to board discussions;
- Increase communication and knowledge transfer between countries to share and learn from different strengths and weaknesses; and
- Represent issues unique to outside the US or are more relevant to non-US members.

### **12. Defining success for ATSA's international membership**

In question 12, respondents were asked to define success for ATSA's international members. The respondents could choose any of the pre-determined responses or provide additional information. Of the 56 who responded, many defined success as ATSA providing more information from an international perspective, specifically in public policy and a higher prominence for international work. Another mark of success was an increase in the international membership. Additional comments included the following:

- Support and encourage international research (e.g.: encourage/support international samples to be included in prominent research);
- Be aware of culture specific factors that impact child abuse internationally and among migrants;
- Encourage subgroups for various jurisdictions as needed, similar to state chapters; and
- Recruit international members on all committees, and require that a proportion of the board/executive be international members.

Figure 6



### 13. International committee focus

The purpose of question 13 was to generate ideas for the new international committee, should the Board determine there is one. Of the 37 respondents, many comments complimented or repeated information from question 10 and 11. Additional specific tasks proposed for the committee included the following:

- Link with other international organizations;
- Improve the sense of belonging for ATSA's international members;
- Increase international membership, and knowledge of international research, treatment practices, policy and legislation, and international ethics;
- Develop a strategic plan and establish key issues of shared importance;
- Encourage international student membership and work with the other ATSA committees; and
- Advocate for and inform others of international issues.

### 14. International needs and existing committees

Question 14 asked the respondents to determine if the items mentioned in question 13, were items that could be addressed by existing committees. Of the 37 who responded, 57% said yes and 34 of the 37 provided additional comments.

- Could be addressed by existing committees, but might take away focus from other important issues and would depend on committee membership.
- An international committee would provide recognition and more focus to international issues and support the other committees.
- An international committee would be a good short term measure to ensure (a) all committees have international members, (b) international issues become imbedded in other committees, and (c) ATSA becomes a truly international organization long term.
- An international committee would ensure a less US centric focus.

### **15. International committee participation**

Twenty-three of the 60 survey respondents stated they would like to participate in the international committee. Another 25 respondents stated not right now, indicating they may be interested at a later date.

### **16. International committee project volunteer**

Thirty-four of the 60 survey respondents stated they would be interested in volunteering for small projects (with 14 stating not right now), which indicates that an opportunity to occasional work on a small project that informs the international committee and thus the board, is more preferable for some members than becoming a standing member of a committee.

### **17. International member's forum at conference**

Of the 52 respondents who provided an answer to question 17, 34 (65%) stated they would like to see an international forum or social event at the annual conference.

### **18. International member's forum – define success**

Twenty-six survey respondents provided some thoughts on how to determine a successful international forum or social event. In summary, success indicators include:

- Attendance by international members and attendance by key ATSA members (such as the president, board and other key researchers);
- Interesting speakers;
- An event such as the student next generation event;
- An increase of networking, collaboration, and brainstorming;
- Improved membership numbers; and
- Improved feelings of welcome and acceptance to ATSA.

### **19. International members as a benefit to ATSA**

Question 19 asked respondents to identify three key ways ATSA benefits from an international membership. The summary of the statements are presented here:

- Broadening of the professional practice base, increased awareness of practice & research worldwide, and enhanced professional standing of work with sex offenders;
- Worldwide prevention;
- Knowledge of how other countries resolved problems that may be perplexing to ATSA or the US members;
- More credibility with international governments and enter the world stage where ATSA could have more impact on government(s) policies and views;
- More information sharing on international research, applied and legal journals;
- Challenges North American mindset, provides new perspectives, diversity in education, cultural perspectives, ethnical sensitivities; and
- Increase information and research on how culture impacts issues related to sexual abuse.

## 20. Expanding those benefits to ATSA

Question 20 asked respondents to identify how ATSA could expand the role discussed in question 19. Thirty respondents provide idea, some complimentary or a repeat of the answer provided in the previous question. Additional comments are as follows:

- Invite more international speakers for symposium and keynotes;
- Communicate the benefits to the membership and media;
- Network with international organizations;
- Highlight/provide dedicated space to international research, publications and conferences on the website, in the newsletter and at the conference;
- Seek input from international members on committees or task forces where international perspectives are critical;
- Offer corporate memberships to stakeholder organizations;
- Develop the international committee and focus on key issues;
- Employ a person to focus on international issues, much like ATSA did with public policy; and
- Recognize that a significant portion of research in this field is from international members.

## 21. Marketing ATSA to an international audience

Question 21 asked respondents to provide an example of how ATSA could better market itself to an international audience. Thirty-four responded. In addition to comments made elsewhere, respondents had the following ideas:

- Connect with allied professions, such as psychology, nursing, prevention, sexology in different counties;
- Advertise with other associations and organizations, such as in psychiatric hospitals, correctional facilities, universities;
- Provide parts of ATSA website in other languages;
- Have an ATSA booth at other conferences;
- Encourage ATSA members to present at other conferences;
- Joint media releases and publications with international organizations on sexual abuse treatment issues as well as other issues such as policy, sociology, etc.;
- Sponsor training outside the US; and
- In conference submissions, as authors to identify if the submission would be of interest to international members, and how.

## 22. ATSA and defining international membership

Question 22 asked respondents to define 'international.' Thirty-eight replied, and of those 38, 33 provided a categorical response that fit into one of three groups: (1) anyone outside the US is international, (2) anyone outside of North America is international, and (3) ATSA should not identify international. Each category received the same amount of support, 11 each. One of the reasons provided that Canada should not be included as international is that there is a strong Canadian representation in research, speakers, and authors. Stated reasons for not identifying international

members include (a) if ATSA is or wants to be international, then providing recognition by way of the ATSA ribbons seems counter-intuitive and (b) many international organizations are based in a single country.

### **23. ATSA's international member and chapters**

Question 23 asked respondents whether they thought international members would benefit from forming local sub-groups, similar to state chapters. Forty-seven respondents answered and 75% of them said yes.

### **24. Challenges to groups or chapters for international members**

Question 24 was a follow up to question 23, to identify any potential challenges to setting up groups similar to local chapters. The 25 responses could be grouped into three main challenges:

- Organizations with similar purpose, such as NOTA or IATSO
- Get enough active members, geographical restraints, and time zone challenges
- Resistance to what is perceived to be a US focused association

### **25. Strengthening international membership in ATSA by ATSA**

Question 25 was an opportunity to provide additional information as to how ATSA could support and strengthen international membership. In addition to comments made elsewhere in the survey, specific ideas were presented:

- Ask for mailing lists of different organizations to recruit and advertise;
- Offer scholarships or grants for students outside US;
- Increase visibility at different conferences or (co) host/sponsor events outside the US;
- Ask the international members, the survey was a great start;
- Be clear on how ATSA benefits and represents members beyond the conference and journal; and
- Expand focus of public policy committee.

### **26. ATSA and language barriers**

Question 26 asked respondents if language is a challenge for international members when they engage with ATSA. Forty-six respondents answered and 41% of them said yes.

### **27. Strengthening international membership in ATSA by international members**

The final question asked the survey respondents, all international members, how they could strengthen international membership in ATSA. Twenty-seven provide responses, mostly aimed at international members, although some felt that this was a board responsibility. For international members, here are the summarized responses. International members should

- Start local chapters, attend the conferences and contribute more to the research literature;
- Be proactive, contribute to the list-serve and get onto and active on committees;

- Promote ATSA; and
- Assist ATSA in defining a position that is separate from IATSO, which is considered to be international as it is not dominated by any one geographical group.

## Conclusions

The international members of ATSA appear to be engaged with the organization very similarly to non-international members, with similar reasons for joining and having made a long-term commitment to the organization. However, it does appear as if international members wish greater involvement with ATSA including representation on the Board and in Committees. There is a desire to create a greater connectedness between the work of international members and the larger organization, and to share information across different countries, particularly in sharing information from international strategies and models with the U.S. There also appears to be support for striving towards an increase in international membership.

There appears to be fairly strong support for an international committee to be a bridge for international members to become more engaged with ATSA and provide a sense of belonging. Sponsorship of presentations and a meeting at the conference were of interest, as well as the development of sub-groups within countries or regions similar to chapters.

Finally, the issue of who is an international member continues to be ambiguous. It appears as if there is a difference of opinion as to who are international members, and some note that an international organization doesn't typically identify both national and international membership. However, there does also appear to be an interest on the part of certain international members (however that is defined) to join together and feel a sense of belonging.

## Recommendations:

- 1) Revive the international committee as a standalone committee;
- 2) Meet at the conference and perhaps sponsor a presentation or two at the conference; and
- 3) Identify international representation on the Board and on committees.

## Appendix A

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence based practice, public policy and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are at risk to abuse. There are over 2600 members, 10% of whom are from outside the United States.

In the current strategic plan, a key objective is to promote a strong and healthy membership (2009 – 2014, see <http://www.atsa.com/atsa-strategic-plan>). One way of accomplishing that objective is the exploration and identification of the needs of international members. The ATSA Board members hope you will assist this work by completing this online survey.

As you may know, the Board is adding a new appointed board position for International Issues. Taking part in this survey provides a unique opportunity for international members to inform the development of this appointed role.

All responses will be anonymous and kept confidential. Reporting of the responses will be in aggregate form only.

### General Questions

1. Please identify your country of residence.
2. Why did you become a member of ATSA? You have an option to choose all that apply.
  - Access to colleagues with similar work roles
  - Access to advice/consultation with colleagues in the field of sex offender research and/or treatment
  - Membership required by state or other governing body
  - Membership encouraged by state or other governing body
  - List serve
  - Access to Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment
  - Assists in expert testimony
  - Conference
  - Practice Guidelines
  - Code of Ethics
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been a member? \_\_year(s)
4. Did you start your membership as a student? Y/N
5. What do you believe to be **the** most important benefit of ATSA membership?
  - Access to colleagues with similar work roles
  - Access to advice/consultation with colleagues in the field of sex offender prevention, research, policy and/or treatment



- List serve
  - Forum
  - Access to Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment
  - Conference
  - Practice Guidelines
  - Code of Ethics
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you ever attended an ATSA conference? How many in the last five years? If not, please indicate all the reasons why you were unable to attend.
- no funding
  - a conflict
  - do not plan to attend every year
  - topics didn't appeal to me
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you referred a colleague to ATSA? If not, why not?
8. Are you currently on an ATSA committee?
9. Is there an area or committee within ATSA on which you would like to serve? If yes, which area/committee? (Follow this link to see a full list of committees <http://www.atsa.com/atsa-standing-committees>).
- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Awards                       | • Prevention          |
| • Education and Training       | • Professional Issues |
| • Ethics                       | • Public Policy       |
| • Finance                      | • Research            |
| • Membership                   | • Student             |
| • Organization and Development |                       |

#### International Questions

10. What does it mean to you to have an International Issues appointed position on the ATSA Board? What do you see as the role of that appointee?
11. What do you see as their (the International Issues position) role?
12. How would you define success for ATSA's international members? What should be in place 1, 2 or 5 years from now? For example,
- a. Should it have a larger international membership?
  - b. Should it identify international sources of information for new international members?
  - c. Should it provide information from an international perspective?
  - d. Should international perspectives be more prominent in ATSA policy and/or practice?
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
13. ATSA anticipates that the International Issues appointed position would chair a committee, what should be its focus? Please provide up to three key points that you would recommend as the focus for this committee.

14. If ATSA had an international committee, would you be interested in participating? Y/Not right now/No
15. If ATSA had an international committee, would you be willing to volunteer for small projects, including information gathering or communication? Y/Not right now/No
16. Would you like to see ATSA have an international members' forum or social event at the annual conference? Y/N – If yes, what would make it a successful event? Please include your definition of success.
17. What do you consider to be the three main needs of international members, needs that the ATSA membership (as a whole) may be able to address?
18. For question #16, are these needs something that could be addressed by existing ATSA committees? Please provide a brief explanation for your yes or no.
19. What do you consider to be the three main ways ATSA benefits from an international membership? How could we expand our role in this area and communicate that benefit?
20. Please provide an example of how ATSA could better market to an international audience.
21. ATSA's home office is in the United States but its membership is worldwide. How do you think ATSA should define international membership?
22. ATSA has several state chapters which provide a forum for U.S. members to organize on a local basis. Do you think there is a need or advantage for international members to establish more local groups, similar to state chapters? If so, what challenges do you think this might present and what are some possible solutions to these challenges?
23. In general, what additional steps could ATSA take to support and strengthen international membership?
24. Is language a challenge for international members to engage with the ATSA?
25. In general, what additional steps could international members take to support and strengthen ATSA?