

Attracting Younger Members in Their Twenties and Thirties

Having a diverse branch membership is important for fresh perspectives and ideas to advance AAUW's mission as you strengthen your branch. Is your branch wondering how to attract and retain younger members? If your branch has made strides in gaining some members in their 40's and 50's, it's time to reach out to even younger women.

There are six overarching categories of women in this age range:

***Recent grads** who have not yet formally entered the work force.

***Young professionals** - new to the work force, in their first or second job, who may have student debt, possibly considering graduate school and looking for opportunities to network.

***New moms** – may overlap with the first two categories but with added responsibilities and time commitments. Work/life balance is a priority.

***Working moms** – have even more commitments as their children age and are looking for resources for family support, career growth opportunities and intellectual stimulation.

***Graduate students**, most likely on a tight budget, but still committed to activism and community. This category likely overlaps with several prior categories.

***Working professionals** who have been in the work force for 5 to 10 years looking for career development, networking and opportunities for activism and volunteering.

Where are these prospective members? Get involved with the alumni network for your alma mater. Many younger women are health conscious. Try flyering or tabling at local fitness clubs, farmers markets and community centers. Many communities offer festivals, fairs, picnics or parades which attract women in this targeted demographic.

There are two types of recruitment tactics.

***Direct recruitment** often includes tabling, flyering, sending individual emails, calling national members and making announcements and having a sign-up sheet at other events. Organize membership events that are open to the public. Invest in college/university partnerships. Direct recruitment helps you build a personal connection and gives you a firm yes, no or next-time reply.

***Indirect recruitment** could include posting on social media, emailing your branch's listserv, emailing the networks or listservs of other organizations, contacting local newspapers and radio/TV stations, submitting a blurb to newsletters and hanging posters. Indirect tactics get the message about your branch and programs out to a wider audience, but they don't let you make personal connections.

Programming is very important to recruitment. Younger women have different interests and priorities which branch members must understand in order to engage them. AAUW research tell us that younger women value our research on gender equity issues and on fellowships and grants. They also value local career networking and development of leadership skills. And finally younger women are interested in pay equity, preventing violence against women and improving college affordability. Reinvigorate your branch programming and community engagement projects to complement your recruitment efforts with younger women. Survey your membership regularly. As your membership changes, your programs and engagement must also change. Leave space in your planning calendar for new events. Make intersectionality a priority. Diversify your guest speakers to include ones who speak to a plurality of experiences. Make sure your topics appeal to a diverse range of community members, not just your current members. Design your programs to promote participation.

Remember that it takes planning, time and determination to make your branch more diverse. But with conscientious effort YOU CAN DO IT!

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Much of the content of this article was taken from the AAUW Recruitment Webinar, *Attracting Members in Their Twenties and Thirties*, presented together by the AAUW Membership Staff and Membership Committee on which I serve as Co-Chair.