

CORPORATE PRESS KIT

April, 2021

What is MENSA ?

Mensa is the world's largest and oldest high IQ society. It was founded in England in 1946 by a barrister named Roland Berrill, and Dr. Lance Ware, a scientist and lawyer. The society now has around 143,500 members throughout the world, and there are active Mensa organisations on every continent except Antarctica.

Is there such a thing as a typical member of Mensa?

No, there certainly isn't! There is simply no single prevailing characteristic of Mensa members, other than a high IQ - and that's where the similarities between them end! Mensans have ranged in age from 2 to more than 100, but most are aged between 20 and 60. In education they range from pre-schoolers to high school dropouts to people with multiple doctorates. And, as far as Mensans' occupations go, the range is staggering: police officers and professors, truck drivers and taxidermists, manual labourers and military personnel, doctors and delivery drivers, farmers and firefighters, scientists and singers, government officials and glassblowers - the diverse list goes on and on.

Why do people join Mensa?

Every Mensan has their own personal reason for joining. For some, Mensa provides a sense of family, while for others it's a casual social activity. Many people have found their life partners through Mensa, and many more have found lifelong friends. But most would agree that being in Mensa provides you with wonderful opportunities to stimulate the mind.

Activities include:

- The lively exchange of ideas through lectures, journals, and special-interest groups;
- Stimulating discussions and debates at local, regional, national and international gatherings;
- Thought-provoking surveys and investigations of members' opinions and attitudes;
- Valuable assistance to researchers, inside and outside Mensa, in projects dealing with intelligence and Mensa.

What are Mensa's three stated purposes?

The three stated purposes of Mensa are always the same, no matter where in the world your national Mensa organisation happens to be:

- to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity;
- to encourage research into the nature, characteristics, and uses of intelligence;
- to provide a stimulating intellectual and social environment for its members.

Who can join Mensa ?

Membership of Mensa is open to persons who have attained a score within the upper two percent of the general population on an approved intelligence test, one that has been properly administered and supervised. There is no other qualification for initial membership eligibility.

Generally, there are two ways to prove that you qualify for Mensa: either take a test administered by Mensa, or submit a qualifying test score from another approved test. More information on whether a test you have taken (or plan to take) is approved, as well as information on the procedure for taking the Mensa test, can be obtained from your nearest Mensa office.

A Brief History of Mensa's International Structure

1946 - 1964: from British Club to International Organisation

Mensa was, for all intents and purposes, an exclusively British club from its beginnings in 1946 up until 1960. The establishment of a branch in America in the fall of 1960, with its subsequent rapid growth, brought forth the inevitable issue of co-existing national Mensa groups versus one international group (with many branches).

At the November 1963 Annual General Meeting in London, the membership approved a policy on the structuring of an 'international' Mensa, and a separation of the international board - what was to become the International General Committee (IGC) - from the British board. This policy provided for the drafting and membership approval of a constitution, with subsequent elections to fill the posts created by it. The first 'formal' International Mensa Constitution was approved in June 1964, and it provided for eight officers: Chairman, General Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Officer, Developments Officer, Editorial Committee Chair, Research Committee Chair, and Premises Committee Chair. It further provided for one representative from each of the recognized national Mensa groups (United Nations-style, without regard to group size). The first international Mensa election was held in September 1964.

Mensa Gains Corporate Status

Another provision of the 1964 Constitution was the establishment of Mensa as a legal entity. After considerable work, Intermensa Ltd was incorporated as a 'holding company' on May 7, 1965. It is interesting to note that in 1965, the name 'Mensa' was already in use in another corporate name and thus the preferred 'Mensa International Ltd' could not be used. In 1976, when the name became available once more, Mensa International Ltd (MIL) was incorporated in England. For several years, MIL and Intermensa Ltd were both in use until, in May 1985, Intermensa Ltd became dormant.

Major Changes

By 1980, the inequities of the U.N.-style system had generated serious problems. For example, the US, with over 30,000 members (and a large financial obligation to MIL), had but one vote, the same as the Ivory Coast, which had only ten members and virtually no financial obligation. The major players gathered in Miami and, in October 1981, a compromise ('The Miami Pact') was agreed; it provided for a weighted voting system that continues to this day: the number of votes allocated to each national Mensa is based on its membership total, with no group carrying more than 40% of the votes and no National Representative (Nat Rep) carrying more than three votes.

The International Board of Directors (IBD)

In the 1982 Mensa Constitution, an International Board of Directors (IBD) was introduced, and the International General Committee (renamed as the International General Council) became an 'advisory only' body to the IBD. In effect, the IBD now became the actual decision-making body of Mensa International. The IBD consisted of the International Chairman, Director of Administration, Director of Development and Treasurer (the four elected International Officers), along with the Nat Reps chosen by each recognized national Mensa meeting a specified minimum membership level.

Initially, the IGC was comprised of a lot more countries than the IBD, with the IBD being limited to the larger national Mensas. However, as national groups increased in size, more and more countries became eligible to join the IBD. Over time, the two groups became almost identical with regard to their composition of representatives, and the need for two separate bodies was brought into question. Consequently, the last ever IGC meeting was held in Oslo in 2004.

The Executive Committee (ExComm)

The 1984 Articles of Association made provision for a group of 'Ex-Officio Directors' to take over the day-to-day functioning of Mensa International. The four internationally elected officers were joined by the chief executive officer (now "Chair") of each national Mensa which is entitled to four or more votes on the IBD (only American Mensa and British Isles Mensa qualified at this time). In 2005, this group became officially known as the Executive

Committee, or ExComm, and the 6 representatives were joined by the newly created Director of Smaller National Mensas. Later, in 2012, seven became eight when the chair of Mensa Germany joined due to that national group reaching the milestone of 10,000 members. Therefore, currently, the Mensa chairs (or their proxies) of the three largest National Mensas (America, British Isles, and Germany) each have a seat on ExComm.

Mensa Publications & Communications with the Membership

- Members worldwide receive the Mensa World Journal (MWJ), containing information about Mensa around the world.
- Members regularly receive their national magazine with contributions by Mensans on a wide variety of subjects. The national magazine also features articles from the MWJ.
- Mensa International provides a monthly newsletter for the international membership which includes announcements of special interest, updates on important events in the international calendar, Mensa news stories, and surveys.
- In some countries, in addition to the national magazine, members may receive lively newsletters informing members of local activities and events, as well as other absorbing items.
- 'Isolated M' is also a popular and informative newsletter, sent to those members who are geographically or otherwise isolated.
- The Mensa Research Journal (MRJ) is available to both members and the public via subscription. Published three times a year, the MRJ is one of the lowest priced journals on the market due to a grant from Mensa International Limited (MIL). The scholarly research articles in each issue are selected from a wide array of research journals, both nationally and internationally.
- Mensa has had an active Facebook community for many years, and it's still thriving. It also has a new and exciting online Workplace community which is growing rapidly. It's a place where members can meet likeminded Mensans from all over the world, and in this Mensans-only space, no subject is too deep, no joke is too high-brow. And there's a mind-boggling array of groups that Mensans can sign up to.

Facts and Figures

Creation: 1946, Oct. 1st.

Headquarters: United Kingdom.

Membership: as of March 2021 - approx. 143,500 members in 48 countries (39 Full National Mensas, 2 Provisional National Mensas, and 7 Emerging National Mensas). Mensa also has Direct International Members in another 48 countries.

Largest National Groups – Top 5:

1. USA (around 47,600 members)
2. British Isles (around 17,800 members)
3. Germany (around 15,700 members)
4. Sweden (around 7,200 members)
5. Netherlands (around 4,200 members)

Executive Committee

- International Chairman: **Björn Liljeqvist**
- International Director – Administration: **Isabella Holz**
- International Treasurer: **Jacek Cywinski**
- International Director – Smaller National Mensas: **Mark Dettinger**
- Chair of American Mensa: **LaRae Bakerink**
- Chair of British Isles Mensa: **Chris Leek**
- Proxy for Chair of Mensa Germany: **Peter Fröhler**

Milestones

- 1946: creation of British Mensa.
- 1960: American Mensa started forming.
- 1964: The first 'formal' International Mensa Constitution was approved.
- 1965: American Mensa topped 4400 members and overtook British Mensa.

- 1971: creation of the [Mensa Foundation](#) to encourage research into the nature, characteristics and uses of intelligence.
- 1982: IBD (International Board of Directors) becomes the decision-making body of Mensa International.
- 1985: Mensa International reaches 70,000+ members worldwide.
- 1991: Mensa International reaches 100,000+ members worldwide.
- 2008: first European Mensa Annual Gathering (EMAG) held in Cologne, Germany.
- 2011: first Asian Mensa gathering in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This event is now known as the Asia-Pacific Mensa Gathering (AMG) due to the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand.
- 2018: Mensa International reaches 140,000+ members worldwide.

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