

Living Sober

Website Members' Survey Summary Report 2015-2016

www.livingsober.org.nz



Contents

Living Sober, launched in August 2014, is an online website that is:

- Specifically for people who are not able to moderate their drinking
- Provide a safe and supportive online community and tools to support problem drinkers to stop drinking

The objective of the service is to increase the number of adult, medium to high-risk drinkers who receive help to stop drinking.

To help measure the success of Living sober an online member survey was run between November 2015 and January 2016 and received 151 responses. The survey used both closed and open-ended questions to gather in-depth information from members. Three main sections were used to get a well-rounded picture of Living Sober members.

- 1 Website Demographics**
- 2 Website Usage**
- 3 Impact**

Living Sober is a collaborative initiative between, Lotta Dann, and the partners NZ Drug Foundation, Matua Raki and Health Promotion Agency.

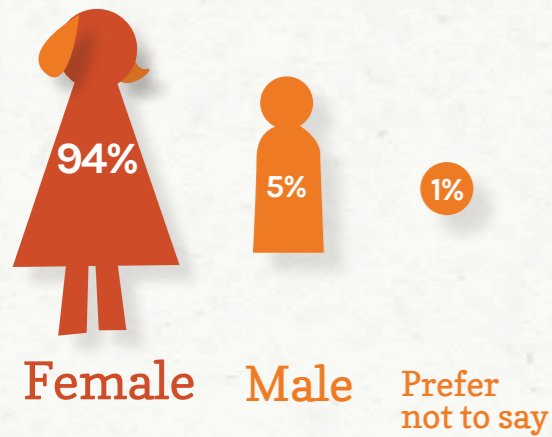
1. Website Demographics	4
User profile	4
Drinking status	4
Location	5
2. Website Usage	6
Duration of membership	6
Reasons for using Living Sober	6
Members' participation	7
Key features members interact with	8
Percentage of members who actively interact	8
Frequency of members' interaction	9
How people first hear of Living Sober	10
3. Impact	12
"Has Living Sober helped you make positive changes to your alcohol use?"	14
"Would you participate in any offline Living Sober activities?"	14
"Has Living Sober helped you through a situation where you may have potentially used alcohol?"	15
"Do you currently use any other support services other than Living Sober to help you with your alcohol use?"	16
"How important is it to you that Living Sober retains a dedicated moderator?"	17
Benefits of Living Sober	18
Overall experience of Living Sober	20
Likelihood of members recommending Living Sober to others	20
"Is there anything you would like to add about Living Sober or this survey?"	21

1. Website Demographics

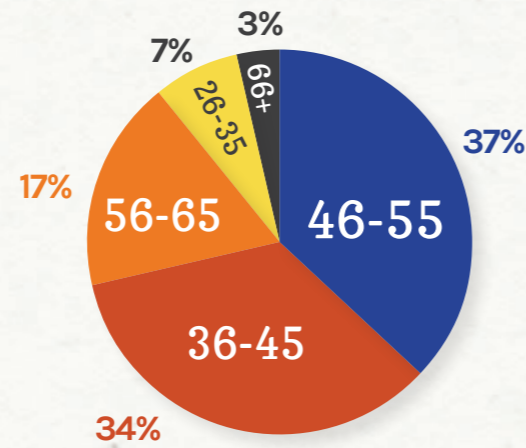


User Profile

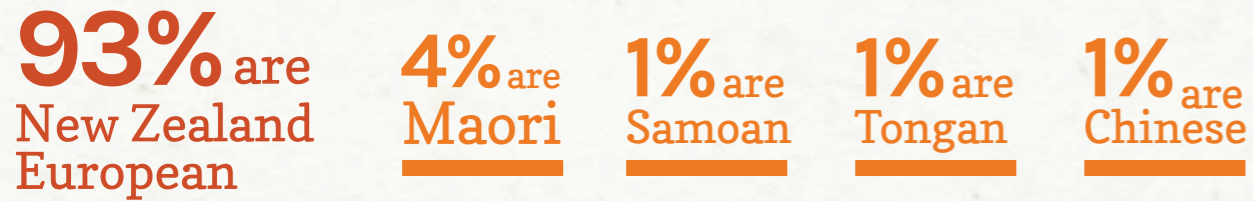
Gender



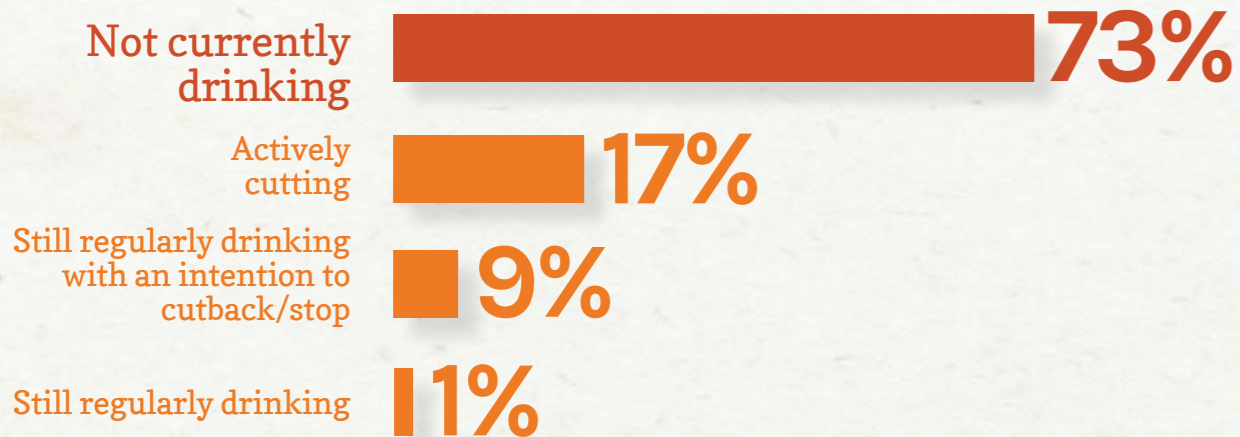
Age



Ethnicity

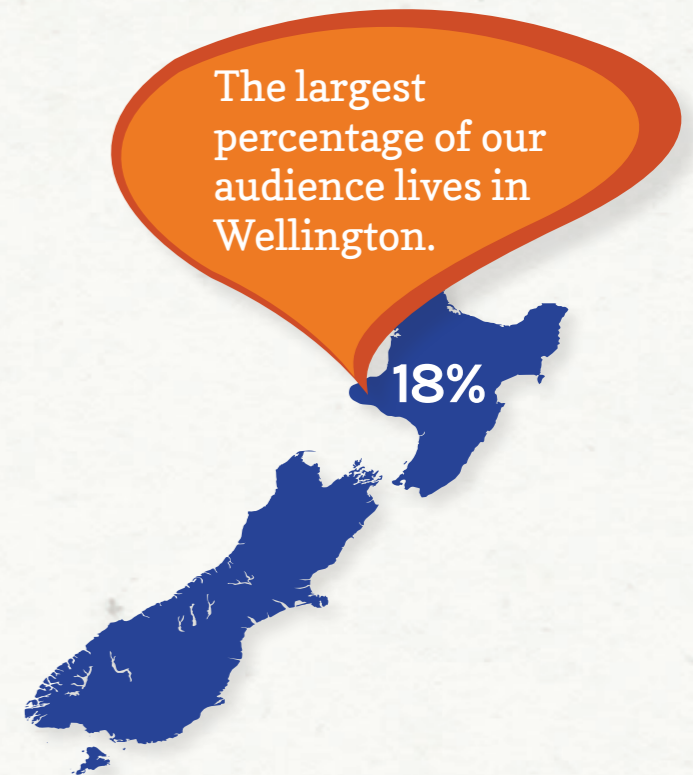
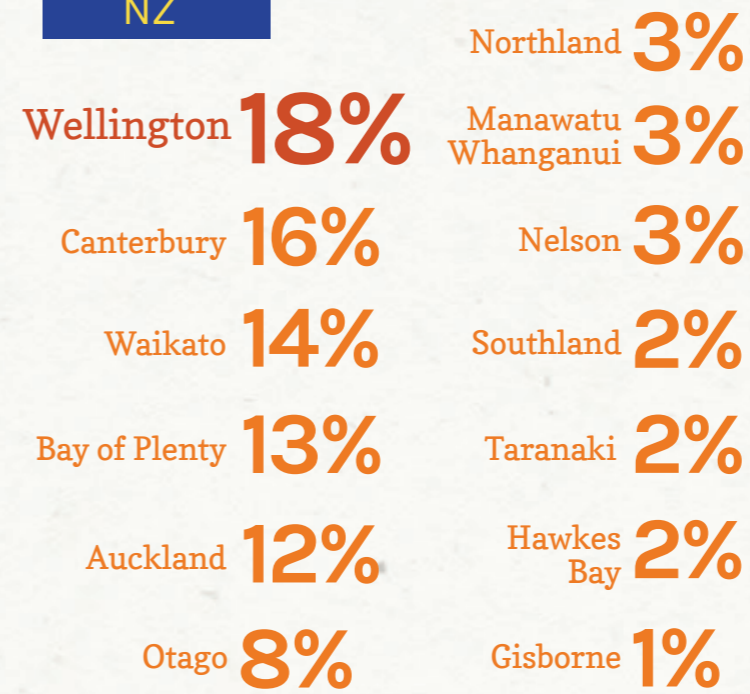


Drinking Status

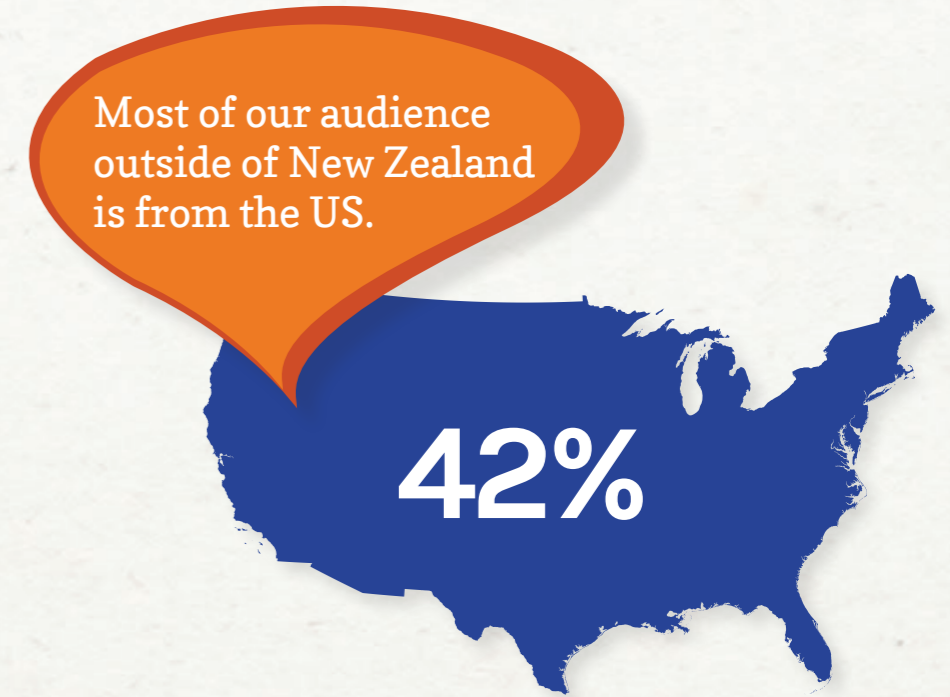
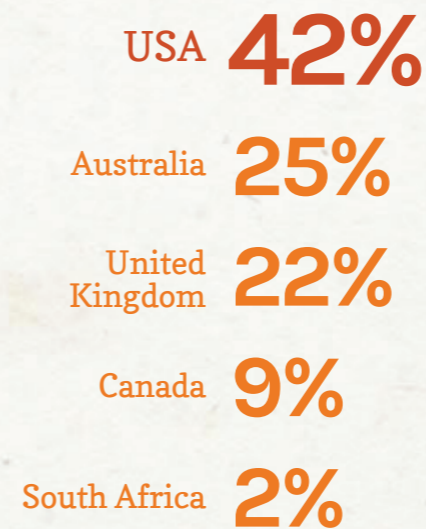


Location

NZ



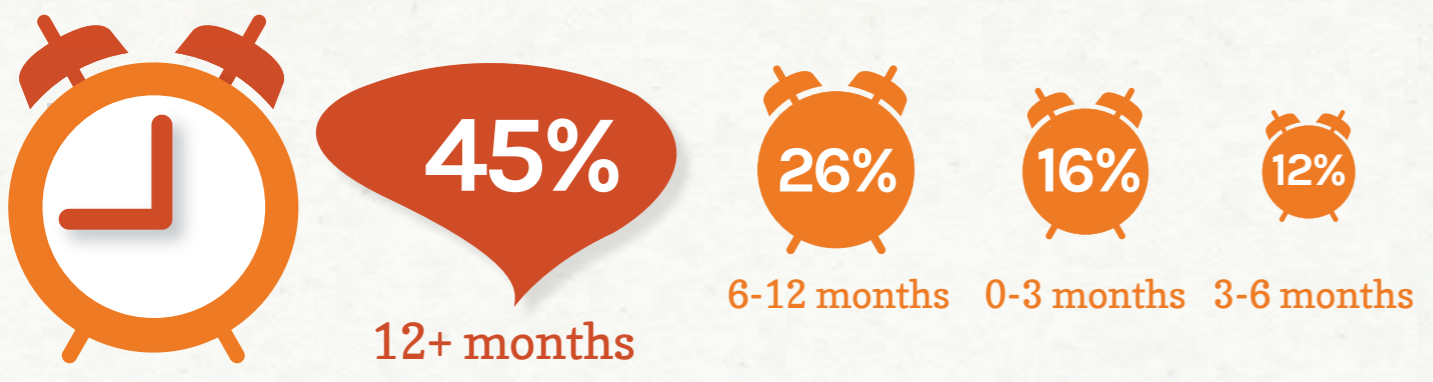
Outside NZ



2. Website Usage



Duration of membership



* 10% Other Reason

“To offer ‘wise words of comfort’ to others.”

- Because I did not want to go to AA and this was the best alternative
- To give others hope
- To help other people who are trying to get or stay sober
- To provide support for others who are struggling or looking for help
- It has really helped me realise I am not alone with very similar people to me going through the same thing
- Because it is easy to connect, don't have to travel to meetings
- To share my successes.
- To increase my empathy for those who seriously struggle far more than I do. To encourage them.
- For the warmth and friendship found here
- To give back the support that others have given me in a mainly positive safe environment
- To feel “normal”!
- To cope with mental health issues

Reasons for using Living Sober

*Correspondents ticked multiple choices that applied



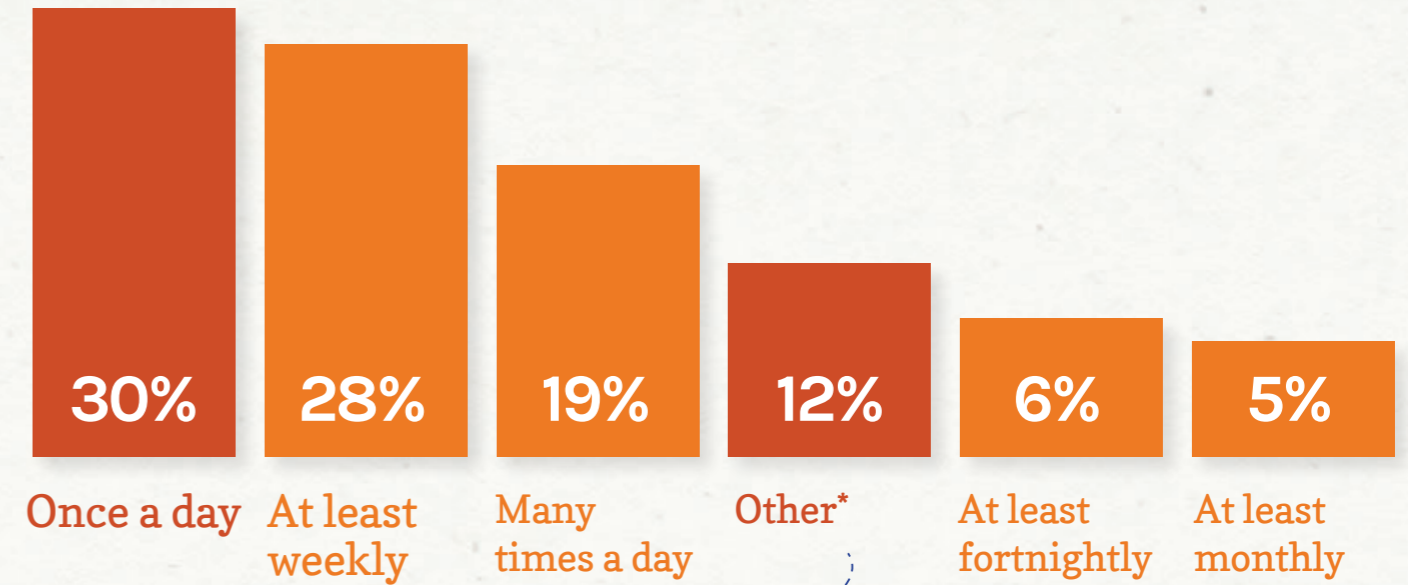
Members' participation



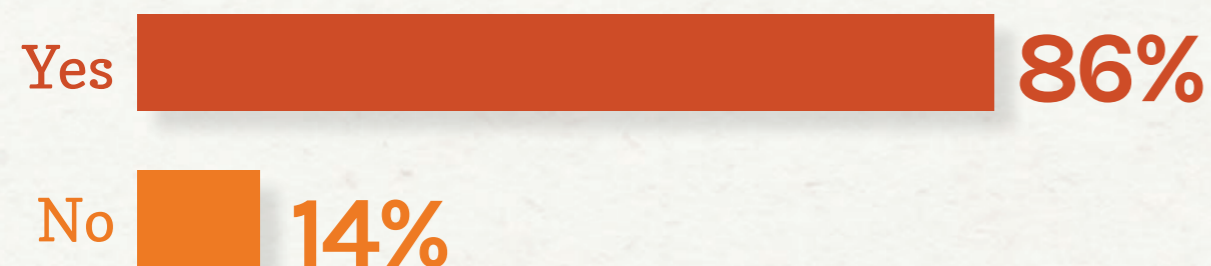
Key features members interact with



Frequency of members' website interaction



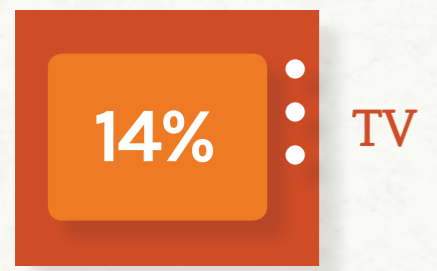
Percentage of members who actively interact



How people first hear of Living Sober



“Found this by looking on Google. It was the perfect solution for me.”



- Google search for advice on living a sober lifestyle
- Googled 'living sober' and found the site by chance
- Was looking for support/counselling services in my area that were free. Found this by looking on Google. It was the perfect solution for me.
- I was thinking about doing dry July. Lotta came on TV and that was my deciding moment.
- Through Lotta
- Mrs D's story on Sunday TV
- Read about the website in her book Mrs D is Going Without
- Looking for books on alcohol dependency on my kindle and the search came up with Lotta's book. Read it and identified from the first page
- Belle might have recommended the board because I really needed daily interaction
- Alcohol Helpline
- Unpickled's web site
- Tired of Thinking about Drinking blog (Belle's blog)
- Magazine North n South perhaps? It was a book review
- National Radio interview I think

“Read about the website in her book Mrs D is Going Without.”

3. Impact

aroha

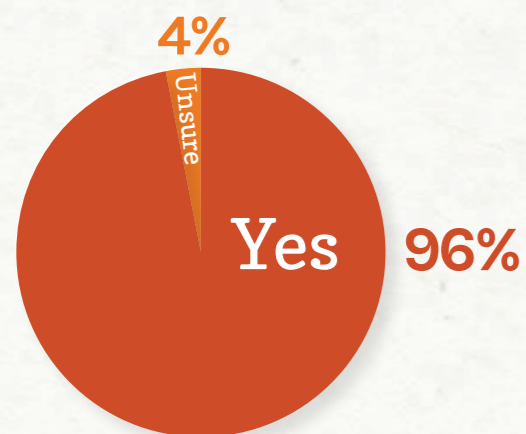
take control

it's part of the journey

community that cares

your decisions

“Has Living Sober helped you make positive changes to your alcohol use?”



“ABSOLUTELY! I can say with conviction that I would not be still sober today if it were not for the Living Sober site.”

- Hearing Mrs D's and others stories plus commentary to posts made it entirely achievable to give up
- Lots of helpful tips and advice. Nice to know you're not alone
- Encouraging reading stories off people who have years under their belt of being sober
- It gave me an anonymous support system and it helped knowing others were or had gone through the same things
- Meeting others like me, made me feel much better, I wasn't a freak, lots of others
- Have cut down
- Living sober is very supportive, leading people to a positive, alcohol free life
- Omg yes the support is brilliant
- Helped me identify that I had a problem
- Everyone here is always supportive, and nice to have somewhere to go and feel accepted
- Peer support, have met local people, resources and tools, heaps of great information. I started with drinking up to 3 bottles of wine a week, sometimes almost a bottle in a sitting, to have now been alcohol free for 6 months. Having a real time support and channel for meeting like minded people is really important. Also

MrsD is an amazing resource and support. None of this would have happened without her vision and input. Awesome impact.

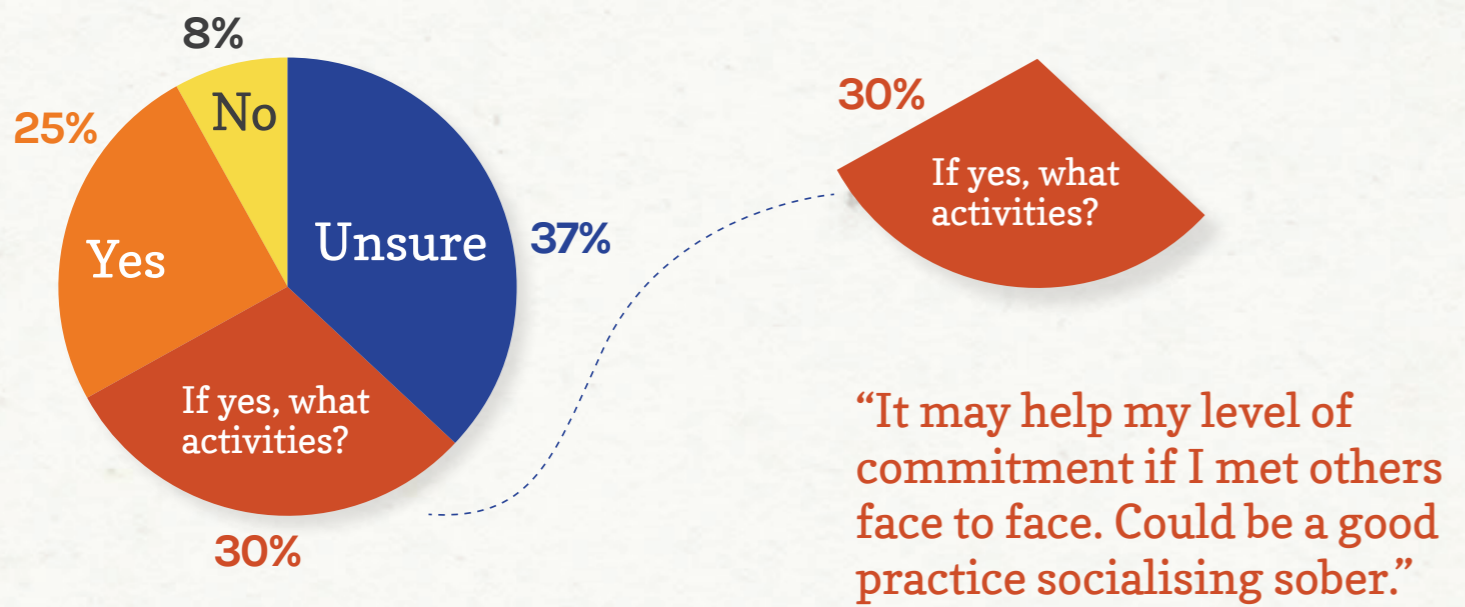
- I am still trying to keep sober. It has helped me in that I don't feel alone with this struggle and I know I have people I can talk to who understand me. Plus it has excellent help tools/links to info/blogs etc. which all are helping me towards my goal... Good health and well being / Sobriety.
- Participating regularly keeps me focused on not drinking.
- How to have a plan
- ABSOLUTELY! I can say with conviction that I would not be still sober today if it were not for the Living Sober site. The accessibility of 24/7 to information or someone to share with is invaluable to someone in the grip of alcohol addiction.
- When you can't sleep there is always someone on line. It doesn't matter that we are not trained addiction counsellors.
- Whether you are addicted or are wanting to understand someone who is, you can find support and understanding here. That's gold!
- Having a community of others also not drinking has been invaluable in a drinking world

“I realised others were like me but the major thing was learning that living without alcohol can be a very very positive thing.”

- It gives me hope that I can eventually do it
- Just reading about other everyday people, getting on with their life safe and sober. Also been sober is difficult at times, and is good to know you are not alone
- Extremely helpful in early days (read all the time and learned so much/felt not alone) and still check site daily/ has been a big part of my recovery
- Reading thru the posts lets me know I'm not alone and gives me hope that I can become a 'happy' non-drinker.
- I no longer drink.
- Living sober has in effect saved my life and my marriage due to the damage I was doing to both my physical and mental health whilst drinking, now with the help of LS, I am back to being a wonderful sober me!
- Positive support
- I'm newly sober so I am not sure yet.
- Living sober is a tool I can use at home to occupy my mind and get into the sobriety zone.
- I have had less relapses and much longer periods of sobriety, with this support it has enabled me to come off the medication I was using to stop me drinking. This included antabuse, antidepressant.
- I would still be drinking if I hadn't joined Living Sober
- Keeps me active, accountable, and engaged in sober community.
- Makes me feel I'm not alone in this, that other people go through same struggles as me.
- I didn't know anyone who didn't drink in real life so connecting and being supported by other sober people has kept me sober. It has saved my marriage!
- It is of use now that I am in a good head space regarding living sober. I need to visit each day - out of sight - out of mind :-)
- I couldn't have become alcohol free without it. At the beginning it was such a struggle that I was constantly on the site, seeking support every time I wanted a drink.
- It helps me remember how seriously bad things got & drinking for me is life threatening.. Knowing that I'm not alone & life is amazing without booze in it
- Among people who understand, are not judgemental, are supportive and you have accountability to not let you or them down.
- It keeps me motivated. Someplace to go everyday, even though I haven't really quit. Still trying.
- Following LS is the only way I've been able to sustain periods of sobriety.
- I have been sober 3 years and it helps so much to connect with other sober people
- As mentioned earlier, I realised others were like me but the major thing was learning that living without alcohol can be a very very positive thing - you do not miss out on anything and I attribute this directly to Lotta and her positive outlook and making me realise giving up is a positive thing
- Helps to have the support from others
- I have been able to live sober

“Whether you are addicted or are wanting to understand someone who is, you can find support and understanding here. That's gold!”

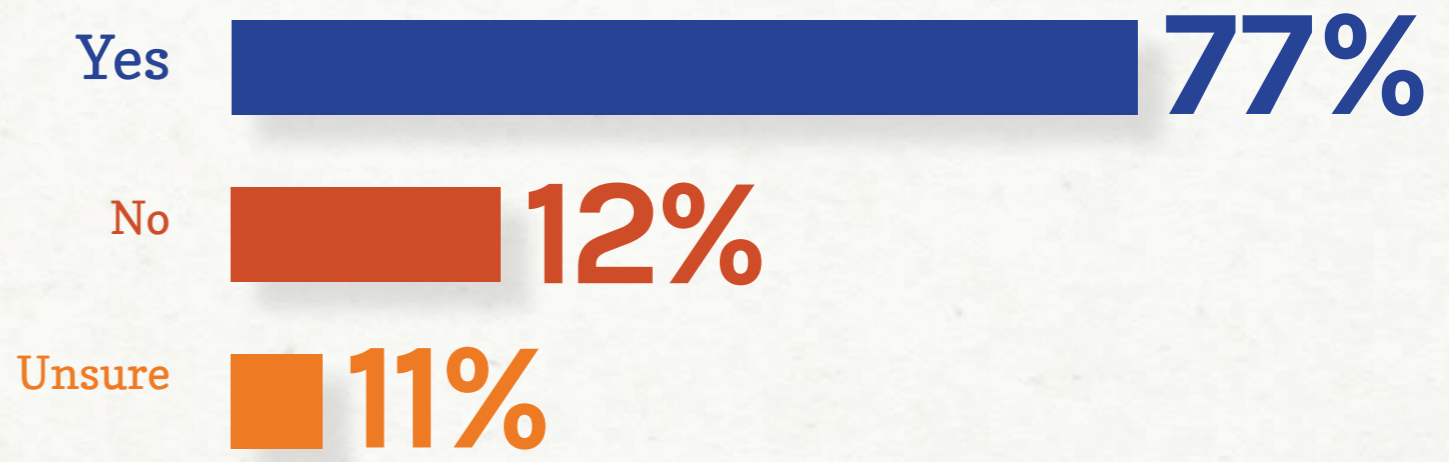
“Would you participate in any offline Living Sober activities?”



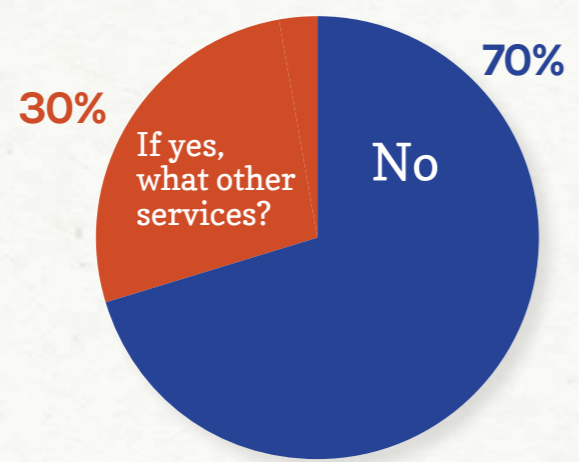
- Sharing my experience as motivation to others
- Face to face meetups
- Casual meet ups at restaurants or cafes
- Walks, yoga classes, or day hikes
- Lunches
- Group sports activities
- Sober parties
- Annual get-togethers
- Casual get-togethers with others in same locality
- A & D conference

“Meeting those who you have connected online with is a powerful tool!”

“Has Living Sober helped you through a situation where you may have potentially used alcohol?”



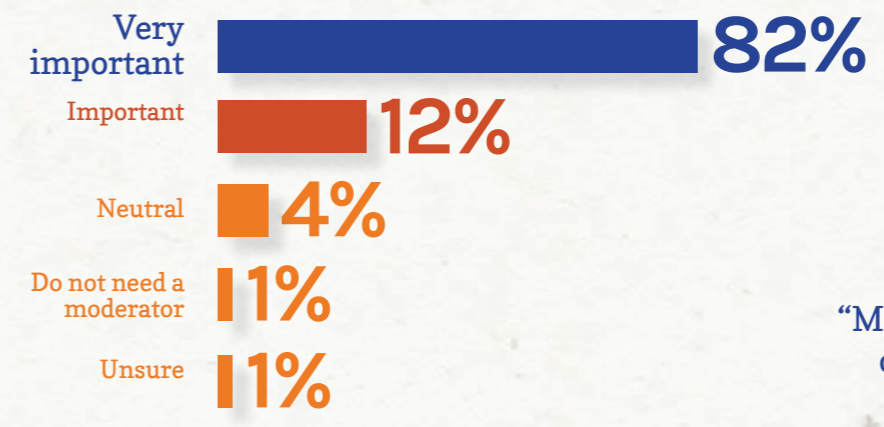
“Do you currently use any other support services other than Living Sober to help you with your alcohol use?”



- The Bubble Hour
- AA
- I blog and read other blogs
- Counselor
- My bible
- CareNZ
- AA sponsor...although not attending AA meetings anymore
- Drug and alcohol addiction clinic and AA
- AA, NA, churchA
- Belle’s Tired of Thinking about Drinking Blog
- Have used soberistas
- Helpline, A&D, Psychologist, Psychiatrist
- UK Drinkaware app
- Recovery themed podcasts.
- I’m taking Campral to help with the cravings, and in the past have seen a counsellor
- I see a therapist

“I blog and interact with other bloggers, I have started going to AA meetings, I sometimes see a counsellor and I have one sober acquaintance from all this online stuff.”

“How important is it to you that Living Sober retains a dedicated moderator?”



“I think it’s crucial that someone ‘gatekeeps’ and makes sure that people are being kind. I also believe it is essential to the integrity and honesty of the site.”

“Mrs D has created a positive, supportive culture. I’m very concerned that if she goes, our “tribe” will fall apart.”

- Mrs D is the bees knees obviously but there is a culture of self moderation on Living Sober. It is the most respectful space on the internet I have ever encountered. It is an amazingly supportive vibe, shit just doesnt hit the fan. However the reality is that the culture is set and modelled by Mrs.D. She set the original tone and it is maintained by her presence, of that I am sure.
- I think this is vital. Whether it is Mrs D or someone else who understands how this site works. Obviously Mrs D has the respect of our members because she had the idea of the site, wrote the book, walked the walk and talks the talk. But if she wants to pursue other things, I think it is imperitive that the site has a moderator who is vocal daily & keeps the comments in check. To maintain the ethos of Living sober.
- If not her, then another person who builds a relationship with the site, Eg is Mrs D wants to cut back bring someone in and they build a relationship first before Mrs D steps back
- A lot of fragile people are using this site. Moderation is essential. Seems to be working well as is.
- Having a moderator keeps it safe for us!
- This site needs a dedicated moderator just to keep it non judgmental and honest. I honestly think if it wasn't moderated then there would be loads of negative or even abusive 'members' arrive. Mrs D and her helpers do an amazing job at keeping this site a joy to be on! For me, if someone wasn't moderating I don't think I would cope if there was a negative comment on my feed.
- Mrs D is an invaluable part of this community. She has had to intervene when members opinions have clashed and had the potential to derail this nonjudgement community. She was also very quick to pickup on a problem with bogus member registrations. In the early days especially, I found her comments to my posts and encouragement made me feel very special and a real part of this community. Her role is invaluable, the site has the potential to become a bun fight without her supervision. This is the third site I have tried, the others are US based, and I firmly believe the difference here is the moderators role.
- I think Mrs D is SO important at LS! She is not intrusive, but will quietly remind people if their comments are not constructive that this is in essence a support group, and her wisdom and experience is what began this whole wonderful site!

Benefits of Living Sober

“Being part of a community of people who understand me...connecting with people who know EXACTLY the turmoil in your mind alcohol has created is LIBERATION in itself.”

“Being a part of LS has helped me feel not so alone, not so isolated. I feel I am part of a tribe, a community. I don’t need to explain myself/ my decisions to LS people – they just get it.”

- Staying away from alcohol
- The support from other members, knowing that I’m not alone in my journey
- Support and encouragement to stay sober
- Insight, support, connectedness, a circuit breaker
- It makes me more mindful of my drinking
- Staying sober. It’s been 6 days so far and I would not have had the courage or constant support from people that understand to do that otherwise. This site saved my life and my family!!
- If it wasn’t for living sober I’d be drinking heavily every day. LS is a great source of information, support, and inspiration. I’d be lost without it, lost in a spiral of unhealthy living.
- Gaining a group of people with no pressure, there when you need them for support and being sober of course
- Learning, sharing, finding support
- Not feeling alone Understanding the effects of alcohol Helping others getting support
- More confidence in myself, a feeling of belonging to a group without any obligation to the group as far as paying a fee to belong, or having to log on so many times, etc....
- Support, help, encouragement..... the list goes on
- Part of a tribe
- Good for working through own issues, support to give up.
- I want to hear about others experiences and interact with other members for encouragement.
- Am beginning to think a life without booze may be possible.

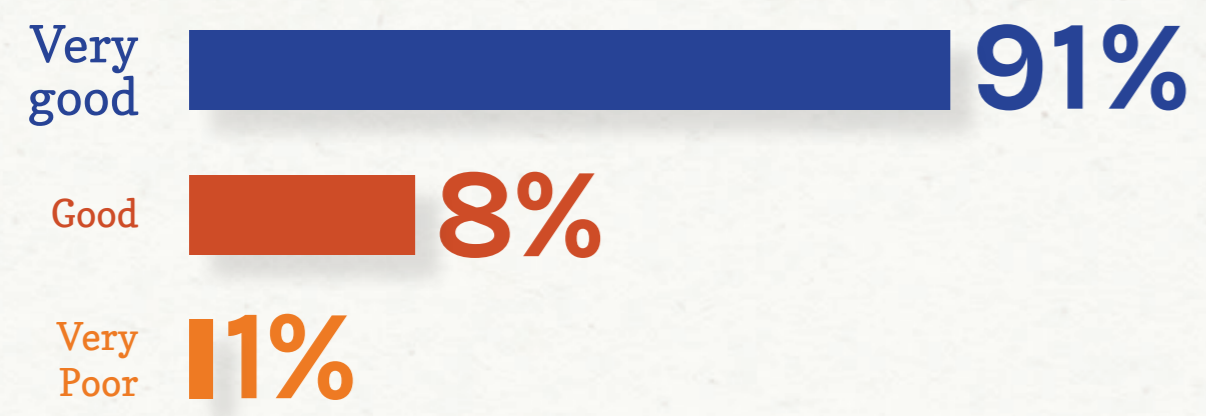
- Support which motivates me to kick alcohol out of my life and improve my wellbeing
- The sober from people is excellent and makes me feel much less alone
- Has been life changing
- I have found real friends. I feel helped and motivated to stay sober. I feel understood and supported.
- I am female and Living Sober has a female slant to it that I really like.
- Keeps me sober. grounds me. i know i am not alone
- Confidence - I have never been a part of an online community before support advice welcoming atmosphere, like minded and friendly people
- Being part of a community of people who understand me whom I did not know existed until I saw Mrs D on TV and followed her to here. Connecting with people who know EXACTLY the turmoil in your mind alcohol has created is LIBERATION in itself. It stops me hating myself and helps me see the that the real villain is alcohol, marketing, our culture. You can’t get sober when you are hating yourself. It doesn’t work. Reading posts from successful sober warriors helps me believe that I CAN do this/self-belief. TEAM SPIRIT boosts my positive thinking. All of the information, recipes, mocktails, reading referrals. I slipped off the wagon and apart from feeling horrible I missed this place so I am back. Checking in helps me become mindful of my mission to stay sober so that I make the right decisions in my day.
- A feeling of community and understanding that others have similar struggles, feelings. Support to maintain sobriety.Education.
- Strength from there being a community like this.

- Valued and given support from and to ‘real’ people with ‘real lives’. The interaction between members has been heartening to see and be part of. Here are a lot of good people who have had their lives in tatters because of booze. Their sharing of their experiences helps put my own life and past drinking habits into some sort of perspective too.
- Gives me somewhere to go when I question why I am not drinking and brings me back to reality. Lots of tips and support from others on here.
- Makes me feel like I’m not the only person living /trying to be happily alcohol free
- Support and insight leading to reduction of alcohol consumption
- There’s always something new to learn. I’ve never read one mean or negative response to anything anyone has posted which is awesome. It makes it a totally safe, supportive site for members to vent, bare their souls, whatever. It’s a privilege to be part of such a community
- It has helped me stay sober, particularly in the early days. The support and tips were amazing. It’s one thing to read information about being/staying sober, but it’s another level entirely being able to interact with others who get it. Another thing is, the incredible amount of information shared from other members. Different websites, blogs, podcasts, articles, books etc etc. The members are fantastic at sharing!
- Being part of a wonderful community and knowing that I can come on here if I’m feeling overwhelmed and know I will have unconditional support.
- Ability to talk to others in the same boat. It isn’t

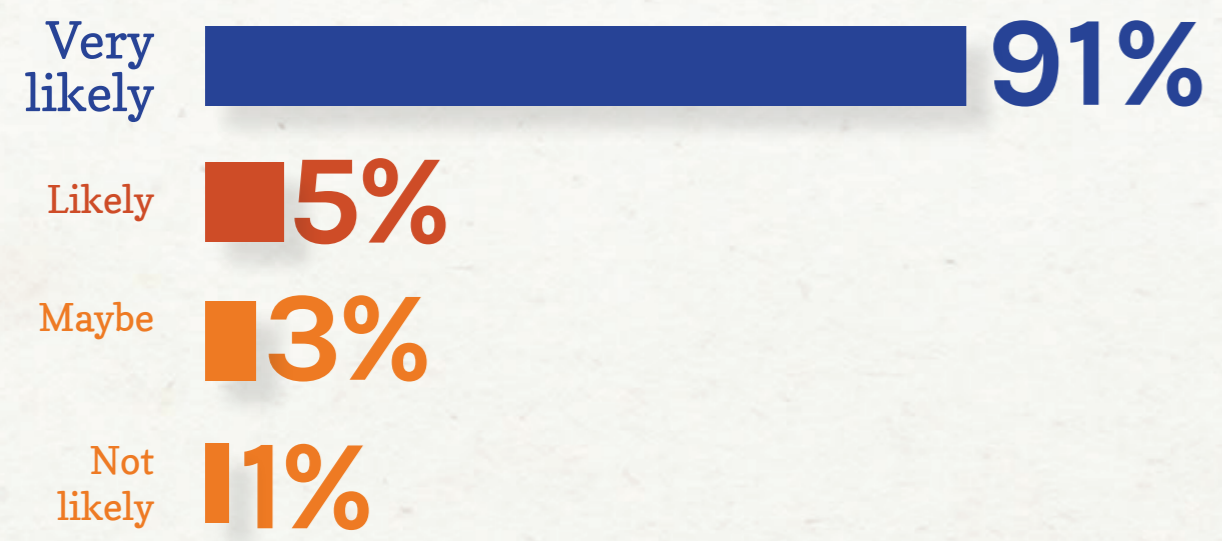
- “top down” preachy help, it isn’t “ambulance at the bottom of the cliff” stuff that does not appeal to high functioning alcoholics. It is “bottom up” stuff, people in the same boat helping each other.
- Learning a lot about how other people manage to stay sober and quit. Feeling not so isolated and such a loser for having this ‘secret shame’.

“Support! When I feel like I am missing out by not drinking alcohol, I find assurance that I really am not missing out on anything. My life has improved in every area possible. The benefits are enormous and too many to detail. Alcohol takes away my authenticity. I’m a better person without it. Therefore I am a better mother, wife, sister, daughter, citizen.”

Overall experience of Living Sober



Likelihood of users recommending Living Sober to others



Is there anything you would like to add about Living Sober or this survey?

“This is a great site and a national treasure. I think there should be pamphlets or posters in every doctors waiting room advertising it. And the doctors should refer this site to those who raise concerns over their need to drink.”

- LS is a safe place where you can get much needed support from like minded people. It's completely anonymous so you don't have the worry of anyone knowing who you are without you wanting to.
- I tried to get sober 8 years ago, I lasted 6 months, I had no idea what to do to be successful. With Living Sober – I get it. I will never drink again - all thanks to Living Sober and Mrs D.
- I think this site is the most honest and real support group I have been involved in for a good while; it's for people who are choosing to make big changes in their lives. Mental. Emotional. Physical. Spiritual. It's for anyone and everyone who is realising and saying that 'booze is crap' and adds nothing to a life or a person's self worth. It's been an enlightening process for me. I wasn't doing any regular social media until joining LS. The point of difference is that the people here are 'real' about their drinking issues and their lives. And how they have made their changes. And are willing to bare their souls in an honest way without embellishment. I don't see that on other SM sites. LS also provides a very important service to people who are unable to get support for many reasons; location and availability, a certain level of anonymity if wished (avatar and name), and or other services don't/haven't work for them. Thanks for doing this survey. Have fun collating the information. You need to run some facts and figures on the financial health savings in NZ because X amount of us have given up drinking? So less projected health issues in the future? What will that add up to?
- Please keep this site free & accessible to the national & global community. Please keep the moderator, whom ever that should be. And thank you for giving me a chance to voice my opinions. Living Sober is a massive credit to the NZ drug foundation, HPA and Matua Raki. Please continue to support this wonderful site. And of course a big loving thanks to the fabulous Lotta Dann. Kia ora
- Alcohol is such a massive problem and this site is testimony to how many people are concerned about their drinking. It gives them a place to be anonymous but get the positive support so without a moderator, I honestly think this would not work as well. My heartfelt response is that we need this site, we need the funding and we need Mrs D.

Is there anything you would like to add about Living Sober or this survey?

“It is the best! If you follow this site you will know it is getting incredible results in reducing alcohol harm. Not sure where I would be without it - certainly not 80 days without drinking that if for sure! Hope it will receive lots of support and by the way, Mrs D is THE BEST!”

- As I’m personally not a fan of the AA approach (though I appreciate it’s great for some) this to me is an invaluable resource. I hope it continues for a very long time. Thank you MrsD for having the enormous courage to “go it alone” and in the process created something of incalculable benefit to so many. You’re a national treasure.
- I think this site has helped thousands of people to learn how to live without alcohol and not miss it. ...not one little drop!
- I love, love, love this site. I wouldn’t be where I am without it. I needed to do something about my destructive binge drinking ways and this site helped me. I’ve gone from a heavy or problem drinker to a non drinker. I couldn’t have done that without this site. I’m an introvert so the idea of attending AA or CADS terrified me. It just added to the anxiety. Having this site, with fellow Kiwis, has saved my marriage. And now my kids have their Mum back. Honestly, I can’t thank you and Mrs D enough. You are changing lives for the better.
- I just love it. It is more support and info than I feel I could get in the real world and I love the anonymity!
- I have recommended this site to my Doctor knowing there will be other women like me who really need help to stop drinking but would never go to AA. One of the best thinks about this site is you can be brutally honest with people and remain

anonymous, you are able to voice things you have probably only thought and you can be brutally honest about the crap you have got into drunk ! This has worked for me ! I consider myself one of the very very lucky ones

- Mrs D is a fantastic role model, and I recommend that she continue as the moderator. You could possibly employ a professional in addiction counselling to help moderate the site. Thank you.
- Mrs D was the reason why I joined and have stayed with Living Sober. Her personal experience, positive outlook, honesty, passion, her ‘down to earth’ ‘cut the bullshit’ way, enthusiastic drive and ‘good ole kiwi girl’ way, makes this a very special and safe place to beat this horrid evil. I want to add....I think, it would definitely NOT be the same having someone else as moderator. Mrs D connected with the addict in me and no one else had managed to do that in all my years drinking! I’m sure there would be may others who gave up because she is a honest and trusted role model! I am very grateful for this site, Mrs D and it’s sponsors. Thank you all for giving me hope again!
- Living Sober has given me confidence to talk about how alcohol has effected me, and I have referred several people to this site, with great results. Kiwis are special people, we are basically a caring, friendly group of people, and this site works so well because it is based here, full of

“I think Living Sober is unique. I think it is the most truly genuine group of people helping each other to get sober and stay sober.”






Kiwis happy to welcome anyone struggling with alcohol problems, non judgement, supportive, funny, frank and just sooo special. Mrs D is one very brave woman who probably never envisaged the effect her book and her appearance on TV would have on the lives of thousands of people. Living Sober has also helped save the life of at least one member, she gets lots of support, and she now regularly posts comments of support for others. Living Sober is preventing alcohol problems escalating and referrals to mental health services which must be good for us all.

- I would like to Strongly Thank Mrs D for setting up LS. She has saved many of our lives by doing so! I would like to see LS get more recognition. A lot of us think that it is much better than AA as it can be totally anonymous. This survey is a brilliant idea!
- I love it and think that Mrs D and the team are doing a fantastic job in helping people with this terrible disease/addiction/problem - whatever you want to call it. You are very welcoming to foreigners and it would be wonderful if it could be expanded (although actually that often is the beginning of the downfall - maybe not!)
- It is an amazing experience to be supported and cared for both by cyber friends and increasingly real life friendships as many of us meet up to continue supporting each other. I have been on other such sites, and none are anything like LS. The centrality of the moderator/inspirer and creator of the culture, makes it different, very special, and I am sure far more successful than most, if not all. The safety aspect, having it non commercial, and overseen by such a positive,

caring, warm, wise person is of inestimable value. Thank you so much Lotta, it is impossible to fully express what you mean to so many, and how great your effect on our lives is

- I think Living Sober is unique. I think it is the most truly genuine group of people helping each other to get sober and stay sober. I think the reason it works so well is because of the selflessness shown to us by Mrs D. I am very grateful to belong to LS and my goal is to be a life long member. I would feel lost without this site. I have been on it every day since it began. Thank you.
- I joined LS after seeing Lotta Dann on Sunday programme and reading about the website on her blog. I am not an alcoholic, but I was keen to take a complete break from booze. Participating in LS has been the catalyst to remain completely abstinent, rather than returning to moderate/ occasional use of alcohol after a break. Life is actually better without wine. Thank you LS and Lotta Dann.
- Just please don’t add a ‘like’ button that would cheapen posts that brave souls have bared. Oh and Living Sober has saved my life!
- I don’t contribute a lot but love to lurk. I a very private person and don’t feel alone on here. Very happy with it, has taught me to moderate.
- In terms of the moderator question - there are other members that are as much the heart and soul of LS as Mrs D is. Is there a place for a “Community Leader” role that some of these people might like to step into. They already do in a way, not sure if this is a good idea or not, but just chucking it out there.

Key Learnings

-  Living Sober's audience is largely female, New Zealand European and sober.
-  The website is very much active 24/7 with the majority of members interacting with all of the website features and on a regular basis.
-  Living Sober has built credibility amongst members who use the website. Feedback overwhelmingly points to Lotta Danns moderation, websites anonymity, useful content, and a safe community to achieving this.
-  Members are largely alcohol –free with the majority attributing this positive change to Living Sober alone. Members also highlight times when they may have potentially used alcohol but Living Sober prevented this event from occurring.
-  Members largely use Living Sober as their only support service and with great success. Other traditional treatment options and international online communities do not stand close to the support received from Living Sober. For the majority they may not be happy and sober if it wasn't for Living Sober and Mrs D being a central part of their lives.

“I think this site has helped thousands of people to learn how to live without alcohol and not miss it.”

aroaha

take
control

it's part of
the journey

your
decisions

community
that cares

Living Sober

www.livingsober.org.nz