

## Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas Survey Summary

This summary is based on a survey conducted between July 10-August 1. A total of 3,919 responses were received, a response rate of 23.6% among the 16,586 records with valid addresses contacted. By level, Introductory Sommelier certifications (20.0%) had the lowest response rate and comprised almost 80% of the surveyed universe. Response rates were higher among Certified (30.7%), Advanced (42.2%), and Master Sommeliers (68.7%).

### A. About You and Your Experiences

#### What is your current professional role/position?

- In a multiple choice-question, the most common positions reported include Floor Sommelier in a restaurant (20%), Server or Bartender, Educator/Instructor or Trainer, or Purchaser/Buyer (15% each).
- At least 10% each indicated being Owner/Proprietor, General Manager, Assistant Manager or Supervisor, Retail Sales, and Consultant.
- The 16% who are inactive include our recoded responses of 7% who left the industry, 5% who indicate not being in the industry, and 3% who are retired or not currently employed.
- The positions show a remarkable variety of roles and status across and even outside the wine industry.
- By CMS-A certification status, there are patterns that reflect both the professional starting point of those who pursue and earn certification, and their subsequent effect on the evolution of their careers.
- Those who passed the **Introductory** level report the fewest average positions (1.25) and have the highest proportion in server/bartender roles, but they also have one-fourth in senior management roles, and almost one-fifth are inactive in the industry.
- Those who passed the **Certified** level report far more average positions (1.67) and show a sharp increase in the proportion who are Floor Sommeliers (33%), Purchaser/Buyers (22%), and Education/Instructor/Trainers (19%) along with more in positions such as Owner, Retail Sales, Brand Representative, and Consultant.
- Those who passed the **Advanced** level report even more positions (1.90) and show a sharp increase relative to Certified among those who are Purchaser/Buyers (35%), Owners (17%), and Executives (12%), and smaller increases in the proportion who are Floor Sommeliers, Educators, and Consultants. At the same time, the proportion who are Servers/Bartenders decline sharply from their proportion among Introductory level.
- Those who passed the **Master** level report fewer average positions (1.64) than the two preceding levels, with half reporting an Owner or Executive role, one-third an Educator/Instructor/Trainer, and one-sixth a Consultant role while the proportion who work as Floor Sommeliers (11%) declines sharply from the preceding CMS-A levels.

	Overall	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Owner/Proprietor	12%	11%	13%	17%	29%
Executive	7%	6%	6%	12%	21%
General Manager	10%	10%	11%	9%	5%
Assistant Manager, Supervisor	11%	11%	10%	9%	1%
Purchaser/Buyer	15%	10%	22%	35%	21%
Restaurant, Floor Sommelier	20%	15%	33%	37%	11%
Server, Bartender	15%	18%	12%	4%	0%
Educator, Instructor or Trainer	15%	11%	19%	23%	34%
Retail sales	10%	9%	13%	10%	7%
Consultant	10%	9%	12%	15%	16%
Brand Representative	6%	5%	7%	6%	7%
Inactive	16%	19%	11%	5%	5%
Other	9%	9%	9%	14%	13%

- “Other” positions reported in the survey were recategorized when appropriate. The most common active roles included distributor/wholesale, chef, and winemaker (3.7% combined). A total of 3.4% indicated being retired or unemployed, while 7.3% left the industry and 5.3% were not in industry (and appeared to never be).

### Which best summarizes your current work setting?

- Overall, about one-third (32%) work in a restaurant (either free-standing, independent, or chain). Other common settings include retail or distributor (21% combined) or a hotel, club, or restaurant (16%).
- One-sixth are enthusiasts not in hospitality, and 10% are beverage/wine consultants.
- By CMS-A certification status, **Introductory** resemble this overall profile, logically since they comprise almost 70% of participants. The biggest variances compared to those who passed more advanced levels are a tendency for Introductory to be the enthusiasts (21% of Intro) who rarely advance beyond Certified; fewer consultants, reps, retail or distributors; and slightly fewer in restaurants.
- **Certified** are more likely to be in restaurants (38%), retail or distributor (25%), consultants (13%), or in academics (9%) and far fewer are enthusiasts (9%).
- Almost half (49%) of **Advanced** are in restaurants, or are in distributors (22%) rather than retail (9%), and work as consultants (19%).
- **Masters** are roughly split between restaurants (23%), distributors (22%), wineries/production (19%), academic (17%), consultants (16%), and retail (12%). They are considerably less likely to work in hotel/club/resorts or wine/cocktail bar/nightclubs (only 12% combined) and only 3% are enthusiasts not in the industry.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Free standing, independent, chain restaurant	32%	29%	38%	49%	23%
Hotel/Club/Resort	16%	16%	16%	15%	8%
Wine, cocktail bar, nightclub	9%	9%	9%	7%	4%
Foodservice, stadiums, arenas	2%	3%	2%	1%	0%
Wine Production/Winery	7%	7%	7%	5%	19%
Retail	10%	9%	13%	9%	12%
Distributor	12%	10%	12%	22%	22%
Education/academic setting	7%	5%	9%	10%	17%
Beverage or wine consultant	10%	9%	13%	19%	16%
Brand representative	4%	3%	4%	5%	8%
Enthusiast not in the hospitality industry	17%	21%	9%	3%	3%
Other	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%

### What is your level of decision-making in purchasing wine within your work setting?

The most common response is that of primary decision-maker (38%) with the remainder split between secondary decision-maker/influencer (26%) or being inapplicable (21%). Very few are not involved in the decision (14%).

- Primary responsibility grows sharply by and peaks among Advanced (61%) while slightly fewer Masters are presumably due to being in higher general management and more diverse roles such as consultant or academic where it would be inapplicable.
- Although the proportion uninvolved with the purchase decisions decreases from 17%, even among Masters a small number (4%) are not involved. The proportion who are secondary/influencers decreases by roughly half but the sharp drop occurs among those who are Masters, compared to Advanced.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Primary decision-maker	38%	33%	45%	61%	58%
Secondary decision-maker/influencer	26%	26%	28%	25%	14%
Not involved in decisions	14%	17%	11%	5%	4%
Not applicable	21%	24%	16%	10%	24%

### What was your most recent experience with CMS-A examinations?

- The most recent experience among **Introductory** was earning that certification (84%) and 11% took but did not pass Certified and 5% say they did earn Certified (we continue to classify respondents according to their status within CMS-A although perhaps there is a time lag between notification and change in the database).
- Among **Certified**, 85% earned it, 14% took but did not pass Advanced, and 1% indicate earning it.
- Among **Advanced**, 43% earned it while 54% attempted but did not attain the Master Sommelier Diploma; about 0.5% indicate taking but not passing Advanced and 2% indicate earning Master status.

### Personal History

Total years in the wine/hospitality industry are a mean of 13.8 and a median (midpoint) of 12 years. Medians are often regarded as the “typical” response given that means/numeric averages can be distorted by outliers (a few typically much higher values).

- There is little difference between experience levels at the Introductory and Certified levels, but Advanced have a mean of almost five more years than Introductory and a median of seven more years.
- Masters have a mean of 10 more years than Advanced and 15 more years than Introductory.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Mean	13.8	13.0	13.7	17.9	28.2
Median	12.0	10.0	12.0	17.0	25.5

The overall group of survey takers indicates considerable recent experience, with a mean Introductory examination in 2016 and their most recent examination in 2018.

- Those who are at the **Introductory** level first took an exam in 2018 and took an exam most recently in 2019.
- **Certified** took their Intro first in 2015 and their most recent exam in 2018.
- **Advanced** took their Intro more than ten years ago, in 2011, and also took their most recent exam in 2018.
- **Masters** began the process much longer ago, on average taking their Intro first in 2001, and their most recent/final exam in 2008.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
First took Introductory Sommelier examination	2016	2018	2015	2011	2001
Took most recent CMS-A examination	2018	2019	2018	2018	2008

- Doing several simple calculations shows that the “average” individual entered the industry late 2008/early 2009, took their first exam 7 years later and completed their process (at least for now) around the 9<sup>th</sup> year of their wine career/hobby.
- Today’s **Introductory** level had more experience or waited longer to take a first exam, with about 9 years, compared to Advanced and Masters, who each waited about 7 years before their first exam.
- The length of time spent preparing for and taking exams is also of course longer for the higher levels; the average Introductory level has spent 1-2 years ending about 3 years ago; Certified has spent 3 years and Advanced and Masters spent 7 years in their process.

### How did you take your Introductory sommelier exam?

13% of Introductory level individuals took the examination virtually rather than in-person.

**Which best summarizes your future goals with regard to the CMS-A's credentials?**

- A majority (62%) of **Introductory** level plan to sit for a higher-level examination. This includes 51% of the total who intend to sit for Certified, 15% for Advanced, and 6% for Master. There is also 3% (compared of the 11% who already took and failed it) who plan to take Certified again.
- About half (53%) of **Certified** plan to sit for a high examination, including 43% who plan to sit for Advanced the first time, and 14% for Master, while 9% (compared to 14% who failed it) plan to take Advanced again.
- Most (73%) of **Advanced** plan to pursue Master Sommelier in the future, with 34% planning to sit for the first time and 42% (compared to 54% who failed) plan to sit again for Master status.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced
Stop at my current level	40%	38%	47%	27%
Sit for my Certified Sommelier	35%	51%	0%	0%
Sit again for my Certified Sommelier	2%	3%	0%	0%
Sit for my Advanced Sommelier	22%	15%	43%	0%
Sit again for my Advanced Sommelier	2%	0%	9%	0%
Sit for my Master Sommelier	9%	6%	14%	34%
Sit again for my Master Sommelier	2%	0%	0%	42%

**Are you currently, actively preparing and studying for a CMS-A examination?**

- Only 29% of Introductory level and 33% of Certified are actively preparing, logical given the number who failed and/or intend to remain at their current level. Advanced is an exception with 55% actively preparing.

### What were the primary factors that led you to pursue your CMS-A credential(s)?

- Gaining deeper knowledge in their professional field (78%) and general credibility and prestige in the wine field (63%) are the two factors that led a majority to pursue CMS-A credentials. Combined, they account for about 40% of the total responses to this question.
- Fewer indicate they pursued them to qualify for career advancement and promotions at work (43%), to meet/interact with other prominent wine professionals (38%), or to increase income (31%).
- The least likely factors were to help them prepare for a change in professional roles such as from restaurant to winery or to higher-end dining (24%), they were encouraged by work colleagues or friends (21%) or an employer to pursue (15%), or they were inspired by media such as the SOMM documentary (16%).
- Almost no one was required by their employer to gain it (2%).

	Total	Intro- ductor y	Certi- fied	Advan- ced	Master
To gain deeper knowledge in my professional field	78%	75%	83%	94%	82%
For general credibility and prestige in the wine field	63%	60%	68%	75%	65%
To qualify for career advancement and promotions at work	43%	38%	53%	62%	45%
To meet/interact with other prominent wine professionals	38%	35%	42%	58%	38%
To increase my income	31%	25%	39%	57%	30%
To help me prepare for a change in professional roles	24%	24%	27%	22%	16%
I was encouraged by work colleagues or friends to pursue it	21%	19%	21%	35%	26%
I was inspired by media, such as the SOMM documentary	16%	16%	17%	14%	4%
I was encouraged by my employer to pursue it	15%	17%	12%	8%	12%
I was required by my employer to gain the certification	2%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Other reasons	11%	11%	10%	12%	17%

- By level, **Introductory** had slightly fewer pursuing for any of the listed reasons, except for media and to prepare for a change in roles (where the proportion was the same for overall respondents), employer encouragement (slightly more likely), or expecting to increase income (somewhat less likely).
- **Certified** are somewhat more likely to pursue for deeper knowledge, general credibility/prestige, considerably more likely to pursue for career advancement/promotions, increased income, and meetings/interactions with other prominent professionals.
- **Advanced** have almost all pursuing for deeper knowledge and 75% for credibility and prestige. These factors and career advancement/promotion, meeting/interacting with prominent professionals, increasing income, and encouragement by colleagues/friends are all peaks among the CMS-A certification levels.
- **Masters** show almost the same ranking, but there is a substantial drop in the proportion who pursue for career advancement/promotion, increased income, meeting/interacting with prominent professionals, and a change in professional roles; consistent with a segment that have now achieved a stable career aligned with their goals, and a high level of professional success.

### How well have you been able to realize benefits that led you to pursue CMS-A credentials?

On a five-point scale ranging from extremely, very and somewhat well to somewhat and very poorly, with an additional option for no opinion/unsure, individuals report that they have been most able to realize the benefit of gaining deeper knowledge—this has a 4.27 score, reflecting 44% extremely, 38% very, and 15% somewhat well.

- In descending order, other benefits well-realized include satisfying their employer’s request (4.04), and general credibility and prestige (3.94).
- Meeting/interacting with peers (3.84), preparing for changing roles (3.80), and qualifying for promotions (3.69) are rated a little lower, with fewer than 10% each feeling they were met poorly.
- Receiving promotions (3.54) and increasing income (3.45) are rated the lowest, with only 21% and 24%, and 20% and 23%, respectively, feeling they were met extremely or very well, and at least 33% each feeling they were met somewhat well.
- It is important to note that most of these questions use “unbalanced scales” so that the 3 or midpoint is still somewhat positive, so there are three positive and two negative possible responses. Even a 3.5 score is the numeric equivalent of falling between very and somewhat well.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Gaining deeper knowledge	4.27	4.18	4.34	4.55	4.86
Satisfying my employer’s requests	4.04	3.99	4.19	4.00	4.33
General credibility and prestige	3.94	3.85	4.00	4.12	4.73
Meeting/interacting with peers	3.84	3.70	3.94	4.25	4.76
Preparing me for changing roles	3.80	3.76	3.85	4.10	4.13
Qualifying for promotions	3.69	3.61	3.73	3.78	4.40
Receiving promotions	3.54	3.47	3.57	3.66	4.30
Increasing my income	3.45	3.44	3.36	3.55	4.47

- Comparing average scores shows that realization of benefits steadily increases by level.
- In aggregate (averaging all scores) Introductory report a mean of 3.75, compared to 3.85 among Certified, 4.00 among Advanced, and 4.50 among Masters.
- **Introductory** report all benefits as being less well-met, although they are very close to the overall average for increasing income and satisfying their employer’s requests when applicable. (Note: each of these factors were rated only if the survey-taker indicated them as primary factors leading them to pursue CMS-A credentials in the previous question).
- **Certified** report satisfying employer’s requests and meeting/interacting with peers as being better met than the average respondent, and were less likely to see an increase in income.
- **Advanced** report that meeting/interacting with peers, preparing for changing roles, and gaining deeper knowledge are much better met than the average respondent does, and they see that credibility and prestige, qualifying for and receiving promotions, and therefore increased income are somewhat better met.
- **Masters** report that increasing their income, meeting/interacting with peers, receiving and qualifying for promotions, and credibility and prestige are all met at least 20% higher than the average respondent, although the only other factors rated, preparing for changing roles and satisfying employer’s requests, are also rated higher by them.

**What factors do you believe limited or impeded your ability to pass your most recent examination?**

- **Introductory** level who indicated failing to pass the Certified examination in their most recent experience were most likely to blame insufficient time to study (39%), insufficient prep materials (37%), and some questions irrelevant to their work experience (32%).
- Fewer Introductory level felt that answers to some questions differing from learning materials (24%), lacking access to all prep materials (19%), not taking the process seriously enough (18%), and inconvenient in-person participation at the time (12%) limited/impeded their ability to pass the Certified exam.
- One question that we believe was flagged for deletion during the edit process but was not—some questions seemed to have wrong answers (8%) was rarely a factor at their level.

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Intro</b>	<b>Certified</b>
I had insufficient time to study	45%	39%	55%
The prep materials were not sufficient	36%	37%	36%
Not all questions were relevant to my work experience	33%	32%	36%
Answers to questions differed from learning materials used for the exam	23%	24%	21%
I did not have access to all prep materials	19%	19%	19%
I did not take the process seriously enough	16%	18%	11%
Some questions seemed to have wrong answers	10%	8%	14%
In-person participation at the time was inconvenient	10%	12%	7%

- At the **Certified** level, insufficient time to study for the Advanced exam (55%) was an issue for the majority.
- An equal number felt that insufficient prep materials and questions irrelevant to their work experience (36% each) were also limitations/impediments.
- Relatively few but similar proportions to the Introductory felt that answers to some questions differed from learning materials used for the exam (21%) and they lacked access to all prep materials (19%).
- More of them relative to Introductory felt that some questions seemed to have wrong answers (14%) and fewer did not take the process seriously enough (11%) or found the in-person participation inconvenient at the time (7%).

## Rating CMS-A: Examinations and Credentials

### How would you rate the CMS-A's credentials for the following characteristics?

- On a 5-point scale ranging from strongly or somewhat agreeing to somewhat or strongly disagreeing, individuals rate CMS-A credentials highest for providing a good way for professionals to signal their commitment to the field. This has a 4.37 average score, driven by 54% strongly and 35% somewhat agreeing.
- Being well-recognized credentials (4.17) has 41% strongly and 43% somewhat agreeing.
- Being highly valued by supervisors, owners, and others who hire people like them (4.09) and being something they value in others when hiring for appropriate positions (4.08) are rated almost identically with 40% strongly and 38% somewhat agreeing and 16% neither agreeing or disagreeing.
- Ratings are lower for being reasonably priced given the quality and probable cost of administering (3.69) and pursuing CMS-A credentials has had a strong return on investment for the money and time they spent (3.51). For these statements, 16% and 19% disagree, respectively, although 62% and 52% agree, so the ratio is favorable, just rated lower than other characteristics.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
They provide a good way for professionals to signal their commitment to the field	4.37	4.39	4.31	4.27	4.66
They are well-recognized credentials—I rarely have to explain to customers, clients, or diners	4.17	4.20	4.10	4.04	4.39
They are valued highly by supervisors, owners, and others who hire people like me	4.09	4.12	4.01	3.91	4.42
They are something that I value in others when I am hiring for appropriate positions	4.08	4.07	4.17	3.75	4.16
They are reasonably priced given the quality and probable cost of administering	3.69	3.70	3.59	3.71	4.28
Pursuing CMS-A credentials has had a strong return on investment for money and time I spent	3.51	3.47	3.52	3.52	4.45

- By level, **Introductory** level individuals actually rate a number of qualities higher than Certified and Advanced. Their ratings for showing commitment, being well-recognized, and valued by people who hire are all higher. Reasonable cost is rated higher than by Certified, while the ROI is rated slightly lower.
- **Certified** rate most qualities lower although they rate the ROI close to the overall average, and they rate it higher for being something they value in others when hiring.
- **Advanced** show the same ranking as overall, but they rate it slightly lower for signaling commitment, being well-recognized, being valued by supervisors and being something they value in others when hiring.
- **Masters** rate everything higher, particularly the ROI and reasonable price, which are rated 27% and 16% higher than the average respondent.
- They also rate CMS-A credentials a little higher for being valued by supervisors and owners who hire people like them, providing a good way to signal commitment, and being well-recognized. The one area where they almost see eye-to-eye with the average respondent is being something they value in others when hiring.



### How would you rate the CMS-A's examinations for the following characteristics?

The examination process was rated on the same scale and, while Masters rated it the same, the aggregate scores among the other three levels was 8%-10% higher than they were for the actual credential.

- Preparation substantially increased their base of knowledge (4.59) and their personal passion for and interest in wine (4.51), and examination(s) had an appropriate degree of difficulty to make credentials meaningful (4.44) and were fair tests of relevant knowledge (4.39) were all rated very highly.
- Many (70% and 66%) strongly agreed with the statements regarding preparation, and more than 55% each strongly agreed with the statements regarding the examinations.
- Even the lowest-rated features, feeling good about their engagement with examiners and fellow classmates, and available materials used helped them prepare for examination(s) very well, had average 4.1 ratings, reflecting at least 45% strongly agreeing and few disagreeing.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Preparation substantially increased my base of wine knowledge	4.59	4.55	4.64	4.77	4.85
Preparation increased my personal passion for and interest in wine	4.51	4.53	4.46	4.41	4.62
Examination(s) had an appropriate degree of difficulty to make credentials meaningful	4.44	4.43	4.44	4.34	4.77
Examination(s) was/were fair tests of relevant knowledge	4.39	4.46	4.28	4.02	4.49
I felt good about my engagement with examiners	4.13	4.16	4.08	4.03	4.23
Available materials I used helped me prepare for examination(s) very well	4.11	4.29	3.78	3.75	3.68
I felt good about my engagement with fellow classmates	4.11	4.08	4.08	4.39	4.48

- By level, the Introductory level has higher aggregate agreement with these qualities than either Certified or Advanced, and that is only 2% lower than how Masters rate them. We realize that Masters generally have little recent experience taking, and far more experience proctoring or administering them, of course.
- By characteristic, **Introductory** rate available prep materials and the exam as a fair test of relevant knowledge higher than the overall average.
- **Certified** rate preparation increasing their knowledge base slightly higher than the overall average, and rate the available prep materials, the exam as a fair test of relevant knowledge, and to a lesser extent engagement with examiners a little lower than overall.
- **Advanced** rate preparation increasing their knowledge base and how they felt about their engagement with fellow classmates much higher than the average, but rated the exam for being a fair test of relevant knowledge and available prep materials much lower.
- **Masters** rated engagement with classmates and appropriate degree of difficulty somewhat higher, and almost everything else slightly higher, except for available prep materials, which they rated more than 10% lower than the overall average.

### How would you rate the CMS-A as an organization for each quality, based on your observations/experiences?

- On a 5-point scale ranging from excellent to poor, individuals rate the organization behind the credential and exam process much lower. The aggregate is only 3.55 with a similarly balanced scale (i.e., “neither agree or disagree” and “average” have roughly similar semantics as midpoints of the scale).
- Having a fair and unbiased examination process (3.99) is the highest-rated quality driven by 44% rating it excellent and 30% good. Maintaining the prestige and elite connotation of its credentials (3.72, 31% each excellent/good) is the one other quality rated near “good” on average.
- Below this is a set of qualities that are tightly clustered including commitment to diversity in the wine profession (3.53), adapting to changing norms/practices in wine service/industry (3.52), transparency of sharing results and feedback and being an effective and well-governed organization (3.48 each), having an inclusive culture that is welcoming to newcomers (3.46), reacting well to and addressing recent incidents as they arise (3.42).
- Feeling like they belong and am acknowledged within the CMS-A (3.36) is rated lowest, with 21%-24% each rating CMS-A excellent, good, or average, and a combined 24% rating it fair or poor.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Having a fair and unbiased examination process	3.99	4.17	3.66	3.28	4.27
Maintaining the prestige and elite connotation of its credentials	3.72	3.86	3.48	3.18	3.77
Commitment to diversity in the wine profession	3.53	3.72	3.21	3.02	3.51
Adapting to changing norms/practices in wine service/industry	3.52	3.68	3.27	3.07	3.24
Transparency of sharing results and feedback	3.48	3.77	3.07	2.39	2.77
Being an effective and well-governed organization	3.48	3.69	3.13	2.82	3.31
Having an inclusive culture that is welcoming to newcomers	3.46	3.63	3.10	3.15	3.65
Reacting well to and addressing recent incidents as they arise	3.42	3.61	3.20	2.66	3.27
I feel like I belong and am acknowledged within the CMS-A	3.36	3.42	3.13	3.50	4.04

- By level, **Introductory** (3.73) reports a much higher rating for CMS-A as an organization than Certified (3.25), Advanced (3.01), and Masters (3.54) do. This alone suggests that the organization is going through an inflection point or turning a corner, with a much more positive impression among relatively new entrants to the certification process.
- The fair/unbiased exam process (4.17, 51%/28% excellent/good) is very positive, while maintaining prestige/elite connotation of credentials (3.86, 35%/31% excellent/good) also has a majority rating it well.
- Transparency of sharing results/feedback (3.77, 38%/28% excellent/good) and commitment to diversity (3.72, 34%/21% excellent/good) are also rated highly, almost certainly reflecting recent positive changes.
- Below these, other qualities are rated reasonably high, including being effective and well-governed, having an inclusive culture, reacting well to and addressing recent incidents are all rated at least 3.6.
- Feeling like they belong/are acknowledged (3.42, 26%/21% excellent/good) is a weak spot with newer entrants to the CMS-A certification process, as 21% rate the organization average and 22% rate it fair or poor.
- In contrast, **Certified** rate each quality between 3.1 and 3.7, or 6%-12% lower than the overall average.
- **Advanced** rate each quality between 2.4 and 3.5, with all qualities rated 9% to 31% lower than overall. Only feeling like they belong/are acknowledged is rated slightly higher than the overall average.
- **Masters** have generally been strong supporters of CMS-A in the survey but this wavers particularly in some points they perceive as weaknesses. Transparency of sharing results/feedback (2.77) is rated 20% lower than the overall average; adapting to changing norms/practices, reacting well to/addressing recent incidents, and being effective and well-governed are rated slightly lower than the average.
- However, like Advanced, Masters rate belonging/being acknowledged (4.04) 20% higher than the average. Having a fair/unbiased exam and inclusive culture are also seen very positively.

### How likely are you to recommend a Court of Master Sommeliers credential to peers in the industry?

Following the Net Promoter Score framework commonly used in corporate and association settings, the question invited participants to indicate their likelihood of recommendation on an 11-point scale ranging from extremely likely to not at all likely. The NPS was created to serve as a “one question survey” of customers to measure their theoretical loyalty—not measuring if they DO encourage participation, but rather if they would given an opportunity.

Almost three-fourths rated their likelihood at 7 or greater, with 33% rating it extremely likely, 12% a 9, and 14% each a 7 or 8. The survey has been validated over the years to segment populations as Promoters (rating 9 or 10), Passive (rating 7 or 8), or Detractors (rating 6 or lower), and an NPS for loyalty is calculated by subtracting Detractors from Promoters.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Promoter	45%	47%	38%	37%	63%
Passive	27%	27%	28%	29%	26%
Detractor	28%	26%	34%	34%	12%
NPS score	17	21	5	3	51

- Overall, CMS-A has a modest NPS of 17, which is much lower than what we see with associations that are typically in the high 20s or low 30s. These scores are in turn much lower than the publicly-released corporate scores for Southwest Airlines and its rabid fanbase, but also entities with less-visible supporters such as Bank of America.
- This figure is driven by a considerable number of Detractors clustered near the top of its scale, with 7% and 9% rating their likelihood a 6 or 5. It also reflects many reasonably-satisfied individuals falling into the Passive category, for whom their classification might be a surprise, but it also feels consistent with how they talk about CMS-A even when asked why they are more likely to recommend it (included in our detailed comments section).
- By level, Introductory (21) rate CMS-A much higher than the Certified (5) or Advanced (3), while Masters (51) show the strong support we often see from long-time members or high dollar donors in associations or charities.

### How satisfied are you with your overall quality of experience with the CMS-A?

CMS-A receives a 3.84 average score overall for quality of experience, reflecting 40% very satisfied and an almost equal number rating their satisfaction a point higher or lower, and few indicating dissatisfaction.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Extremely Satisfied	27%	31%	21%	17%	24%
Very Satisfied	40%	41%	38%	38%	47%
Somewhat Satisfied	25%	22%	31%	33%	22%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	6%	5%	8%	7%	4%
Not satisfied at all	2%	2%	3%	5%	3%
Average Score (5-pt)	3.84	3.93	3.66	3.55	3.84

- By level, Introductory (3.93) indicate a higher level even than Masters (3.84), while Certified (3.66) and Advanced (3.55) fall in between them.
- Normally we expect to see a high degree of correlation between these various high-level metrics, but satisfaction reflects perception shaped by expectations. We suspect Introductory began their mostly-recent experiences without defined expectations and have welcomed CMS-A decisive response to several crises, and process improvements in examinations particularly with regard to transparency lead them to rate CMS-A higher.
- More experienced (mostly) professionals with a longer history with CMS-A may remain disgruntled with the knowledge of past process flaws, knowing or feeling it is too late to do anything about it. Masters may also feel some disenchantment but, at the highest possible level of achievement, would not stand to gain from any retro actions by CMS-A and remain relatively positive.

## How have you paid for the costs related to the most recent credential you pursued/earned?

As expected, a substantial majority paid their own way for the costs of certification.

- Overall, 69% pay for course fees, 67% exam fees, and 79% preparation materials and resources fully on their own. The corresponding shares who had fees paid fully by their employer were only 20%, 21%, and 12%, while another 6%-7% each reported that their employer shared expenses.
- Scholarships paid for 2%-3% of expenses for each.

<b>Course fees</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Intro</b>	<b>Certified</b>	<b>Advanced</b>	<b>Master</b>
Paid fully on my own	69%	66%	76%	72%	65%
Paid fully by employer	20%	24%	12%	7%	15%
Shared expense	6%	4%	8%	16%	11%
Scholarship	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%
<b>Examination fees</b>					
Paid fully on my own	67%	66%	73%	58%	58%
Paid fully by employer	21%	25%	15%	13%	13%
Shared expense	7%	4%	9%	21%	17%
Scholarship	3%	3%	3%	9%	10%
<b>Preparation materials/resources</b>					
Paid fully on my own	79%	75%	88%	91%	86%
Paid fully by employer	12%	17%	4%	0%	2%
Shared expense	6%	4%	7%	8%	10%
Scholarship	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%

By level we can see how patterns have changed over time.

- Certified are most likely to pay their own course and exam fees, while Advanced are most likely to pay for prep materials/resources.
- Both Introductory and Masters have lower proportions who pay course fees fully on their own, but at 65% it is still a majority. Masters are also more likely to report all three areas of expense as a shared expense.
- Scholarships were used to pay exam fees at a higher rate for Advanced and Masters, 9%-10% compared to just 3% among Introductory and Certified.

## C. Recommendations and Strategic Priorities

### How supportive would you be of the following *potential* changes in the CMS-A's programs and operations?

- Among potential changes, making exam preparation materials/other content available to those who already hold credential(s) as a form of continuing education/upgrading knowledge (4.62) had the highest support on a 5-point scale ranging from extremely, very, and somewhat supportive to somewhat or very unsupportive.
- However, there was quite an appetite for change in general, as every change had at least a 4.2 average score. Even the lowest-rated, more outreach regarding examination opportunities, had 41% extremely, 35% very, and 16% somewhat supportive.
- Often, we can be somewhat skeptical of individuals who want “more of everything” but in the context of the other survey findings, this feels very encouraging. The NPS suggested relatively modest word of mouth/grassroots support in the short term, satisfaction is not terribly high, and the organization is rated considerably lower for most qualities than its certification and examination processes are.
- These changes, focused on an expansion of the CMS-A structure, developing a more positive experience and increasing the audience/community size, are all seen in a positive light as people believe in the organization’s mission and its potential for future growth and improvement.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Make exam preparation materials/content available to those who already hold credential(s) as form of CE/upgrading knowledge	4.62	4.62	4.64	4.69	4.21
Creating an accessible mentoring program between candidates and sommeliers	4.51	4.50	4.54	4.64	4.18
Creating a membership structure with local/regional networking programs	4.48	4.46	4.53	4.59	4.18
Expanding the availability of virtual/online courses	4.41	4.46	4.36	4.27	3.99
Improving how the CMS-A prepares candidates for examinations	4.41	4.40	4.43	4.54	4.18
More outreach focused on diverse candidates/marginalized communities	4.34	4.33	4.35	4.43	4.38
Increasing number of scholarships available for Introductory Courses/Examinations	4.32	4.37	4.21	4.36	4.11
More encouragement to those who hold at least one/not all levels	4.31	4.35	4.24	4.20	4.36
More promotion of value of credentials to employers nationwide	4.23	4.23	4.21	4.27	4.34
More outreach regarding examination opportunities to new potential candidates	4.19	4.20	4.15	4.18	4.33

By level, there are few cases of significant differences of opinion.

- In aggregate, Advanced (4.42) have a slightly higher aggregate than Introductory (4.39) or Certified (4.37), and Masters (4.23). The desire for change is enough to override a natural tendency for long-term participants to prefer the status quo.
- The differences are very small, but Masters express more support for outreach and promotion of value, and they are far less supportive of mentoring, a membership structure, expanded virtual courses, improving candidate preparation, and more scholarships.
- Certified and Advanced show less support for more encouragement for those who don't hold all levels.
- Ordinarily we might think of these variations as reflecting less concern for actions that don't directly benefit them, or actually make it “easier” for new candidates to attain their levels, but in this respect the lack of variation is heartening; most respondents looked at each of these options in a collective spirit, helping to grow community.

### What do you regard as the most important priorities for the CMS-A?

- Given the tight clustering in the previous question, it was helpful to ask individuals to prioritize between the many things that respondents thought was important.
- Candidate mentoring (32%) was most likely to be rated as the top or second priority followed by improving exam preparation by candidates (25%).
- More promotion of the value of credentials to nationwide employers and encouraging those who hold one but not all levels (20% each), and more outreach to diverse candidates and marginalized communities (16%), round out the top priorities.
- Both adding a membership structure and making exam prep materials and other content available as continuing ed and upgrading knowledge (22% each) have fewer who regard it as top priority and more who regard them as second.

Highest	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Creating accessible candidate-sommeliers mentoring	16%	15%	17%	21%	9%
Improving how CMS-A prepares candidates for exams	14%	12%	18%	19%	16%
More promotion of value to employers nationwide	13%	11%	14%	21%	35%
Encourage those who hold one but not all levels	11%	14%	7%	2%	3%
More outreach: diverse candidates/marginalized comm.	9%	9%	10%	11%	9%
Membership structure local/regional networking pgms.	9%	9%	10%	7%	3%
Make exam prep materials/content available to credential holders as a form of CE/upgrading knowledge	9%	8%	10%	8%	6%
Expanding the availability of virtual/online courses	8%	11%	3%	1%	6%
Potential candidate outreach re: exam opportunities	4%	5%	3%	1%	9%
Increasing scholarships available: Intro courses/exams	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%
<b>Second-highest</b>					
Creating accessible candidate-sommeliers mentoring	16%	15%	18%	21%	15%
Improving how CMS-A prepares candidates for exams	11%	10%	11%	19%	9%
More promotion of value to employers nationwide	7%	7%	7%	7%	14%
Encourage those who hold one but not all levels	9%	10%	7%	4%	14%
More outreach: diverse candidates/marginalized comm.	7%	6%	8%	12%	13%
Membership structure local/regional networking pgms.	13%	13%	14%	12%	11%
Make exam prep materials/content available to credential holders as a form of CE/upgrading knowledge	13%	12%	16%	13%	6%
Expanding the availability of virtual/online courses	11%	13%	8%	4%	3%
Potential candidate outreach re: exam opportunities	5%	5%	4%	2%	11%
Increasing scholarships available: Intro courses/exams	5%	6%	3%	3%	3%

- By level, **Introductory** are most likely to regard accessible mentoring (31%), more encouragement to those who hold one level (25%), expanding virtual/online availability (24%), improving candidate preparation (22%), membership structure (22%), and making exam prep materials/other content available as CE (20%) among their top two priorities. We see this basically reflecting a lack of priorities with roughly equal value for all initiatives other than mentoring.
- More **Certified** are supportive of mentoring (35%) and improved candidate preparation (30%), while they are also keener on sharing exam prep materials (27%) and a membership structure (24%).
- Advanced** express even more support for mentoring (42%) improved candidate preparation (38%), and also promotion of value to employers (27%). They are rarely supportive of more encouragement, expanded virtual/online programs, more scholarships, and more outreach for exam opportunities.
- Masters** have 48% regarding more promotion of value to employers as a top-two priority. Only improved candidate preparation (25%) and mentoring (24%) have support above 20%, but they are supportive of most potential changes in the 10%-21% range.

## D. Your Personal Profile

### In what country do you currently live?

Overall, 89% are based in the U.S., with 4% in Canada, 2% in Mexico, and 5% in other countries.

- By level, Masters (95%) and Introductory (91%) are most likely to be based in the U.S. while 84% of Certified and 88% of Advanced are domestic.
- Canadians are more common among Certified (7%) and Advanced (8%) than Masters or Intro (3% each).
- Mexico (2%), Argentina and South Korea (1% each) have a larger proportion of Intro and Certified.

### In what state or province do you currently live?

- Within the U.S., more individuals are located in the West (37%) and South (33%) Census Regions, with far lower representation in the Northeast (15%) or Midwest (14%).
- This is driven by a substantial proportion in California (20%), Florida (9%) and Texas (7%) in the top two regions, and almost half in the Northeast are located in New York (7%).
- By level, Masters have 31% in California and 55% in the West region, and another 26% in the South.
- In contrast, only 19% of Introductory in the U.S./Canada are in California, while 37% of U.S.-based are in the West and 36% are in the South.
- Certified have 36% in the West and 31% in the South, and 20% in California.
- Advanced have 48% in the West and 21% in South; 27% are currently based in California and 11% in New York.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
NE	15%	14%	20%	18%	12%
MW	14%	14%	14%	14%	7%
S	33%	36%	31%	21%	26%
W	37%	37%	36%	48%	55%

### How would you describe the demographics of the area where you live and work?

- A slight majority (53%) are in major metropolitan areas with more than 1 million population.
- Most of the remainder are split between smaller metro areas of 250,000-1 million and smaller cities with 20,000 up to 250,000, at 23% and 21%. Only 7% are in a smaller city or rural area.
- By level, Advanced are far more likely to be in a major metro area (67%) with 30% in smaller metro or cities.
- Masters are in either a major metro area (59%) or smaller metro area (26%), while certified are almost as likely to be in a major metro area (58%), or are split between smaller metro (21%) or smaller city (19%).

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Major metropolitan area	53%	50%	58%	67%	59%
Smaller metro area (250,000-1 million)	23%	23%	21%	17%	26%
Smaller city (20,000 up to 250,000)	21%	22%	19%	13%	9%
Smaller city or rural	7%	8%	5%	5%	8%

### What is your approximate age?

- Overall, few are under 25 (1%) or 65 and older (4%); 28% are 25-34, 35% are 35-44, 21% are 45-54, and 11% are 55-64. Interpolating from ranges shows an approximate mean age of 42 years and a median of 39 years.
- Introductory (40) are actually slightly older than Certified (37) or Advanced (36), while Masters (52) show a much higher median age.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Under 25	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%
25-34	28%	28%	32%	22%	2%
35-44	35%	32%	39%	51%	34%
45-54	21%	21%	20%	19%	26%
55-64	11%	13%	7%	4%	22%
65 or older	4%	5%	1%	1%	14%

### Which best describes your highest level of formal education?

- A Bachelor's degree or equivalent (41%) is much more common than a Master's degree/equivalent or higher (21%). Very few attended some graduate school without a degree (5%) or have a high school diploma or GED (4%), but a substantial proportion either attended some college without a degree (17%) or hold an Associate degree or equivalent (12%).
- By level, Masters (48%) and Advanced (54%) are more likely to have Bachelor's degrees as their highest attainment, while Masters (22%) and Introductory (23%) are most likely to have a Master's degree or higher. Introductory (38%) and Certified (38%) have far fewer with completed degrees.
- Masters are least likely to have either an Associate or college without a completed degree (22%), compared to 28%-30% at each of the three lower levels.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
High school or equivalent (such as a GED)	4%	4%	4%	5%	3%
Attended some college without a degree	17%	18%	15%	20%	12%
Associate degree or equivalent	12%	12%	13%	8%	10%
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	41%	38%	44%	54%	48%
Attended some graduate school without degree	5%	5%	4%	3%	3%
Master's degree/equivalent or higher	21%	23%	20%	10%	22%

### What is your current annual income?

The annual income question was important to collect, and yielded only 8% who checked that they preferred not to indicate.

- By range, the most common levels of income were \$50,000-\$74,999 (23%) and \$75,000-\$99,999 (21%). The survey included more granular detail at the higher levels but these were collapsed below given the relatively small percentages indicating higher incomes.
- Using the original ranges to calculate an interpolated mean (assuming everyone in a category earned the midpoint of the range). This showed that Introductory level individuals have a slightly higher average annual income of \$103,000 compared to \$101,000 among Advanced and \$92,000 among Certified.
- Masters report the highest mean annual income at \$150,000 with 10% earning \$300,000 or more and 9% earning \$200-\$299k.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
<\$50k	13%	14%	12%	2%	3%
\$50k-\$74k	23%	24%	25%	18%	2%
\$75k-\$99k	21%	21%	25%	26%	4%
\$100k-\$124k	13%	11%	15%	24%	22%
\$125,000-\$199k	12%	12%	9%	20%	40%
>\$200k	10%	11%	7%	4%	19%
Interpolated mean	\$102	\$103	\$92	\$101	\$150



## Do you hold other hospitality or beverage credentials? If so, which ones?

Just under half (46%) of individuals report holding other credentials.

- This is much more common among Certified (59%) and Advanced (57%) than among Introductory (40%) and Masters (42%) and if this reflects “defection” to other credentials after a given point in the certificant’s journey, it may both reflect and feed the interesting patterns of lower satisfaction and ratings for CMS-A that we saw by level earlier in the survey.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Yes	46%	40%	59%	57%	42%
No	54%	60%	41%	43%	58%
Wines & Spirits Education Trust (WSET)	65%	64%	66%	60%	68%
Society of Wine Educators Certified Specialist	22%	16%	26%	40%	45%
Wine Scholar™ certifications (French, Italian, Spanish)	14%	10%	20%	18%	21%
Other	35%	36%	33%	38%	34%

- Among those who hold them, WSET (65%) is much more common than Society of Wine Educators (22%) or Wine Scholar™ (14%). Wine Scholar Guild Master-Level Programs (3%) and Institute of Masters of Wine (1%) were also included in the survey but have very few pursuing them; also 35% of those reporting them held some other credential(s).
- By level, there is little variation in the proportion who hold at least one WSET Level, but Advanced and Masters are more likely to hold an SWE Certified Specialist.
- Adoption of Wine Scholar certifications is only 10% among Introductory, and is approximately twice that among the three higher CMS-A levels.

## What WSET levels have you earned?

The most common levels earned are Levels 2 (46%) and 3 (52%), with fewer holding Level 1 (18%) or 4 (9%).

- By CMS-A level, **Introductory** (24%) are much more likely than others to hold Level 1 and a majority of them (59%) hold a Level 2.
- Similar proportions of Certified (65%) and Advanced (68%) hold Level 3, while Masters (76%) are most likely to hold this level and more of them (28%) hold Level 4 compared to those at other CMS-A levels.

WSET	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Level 1	18%	24%	11%	4%	8%
Level 2	46%	59%	33%	18%	8%
Level 3	52%	40%	65%	68%	76%
Level 4	9%	4%	13%	23%	28%

## What resources have you used that were most helpful when studying and preparing for exams?

### What is your gender?

Overall, 61% are male, 38% female, and 0.4% each indicated being non-binary or preferred not to disclose.

- By level, Introductory (42%) and Certified (36%) show a strong trend toward a higher proportion of females.
- In contrast, females are a much smaller proportion of Advanced (20%) and Masters (13%).

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
Female	38%	42%	36%	20%	13%
Male	61%	58%	64%	79%	85%

### What is your race and ethnicity?

- The profile shows 77% White/Caucasian, 14% Hispanic/Latino(a), and 7% Asian as the most common races/ethnicities.
- Recategorizing the multiple-choice question showed that 70% are White, 7% Mixed, and 23% were some other race or mix of races.
- By level, there has been a small reduction in the proportion who are White from Masters and Advanced (about 80%) to 76% of Introductory or Certified, but the Masters (10%) and Advanced (7%) also have more who preferred not to disclose their race/ethnicity.
- While the percent who are Asian has remained relatively constant, the proportion who are Hispanic/Latinx increased from 1% of Masters to 15% of Introductory, and Black/African American increased from 1% to 4% among the two CMS-A levels.

	Total	Intro	Certified	Advanced	Master
White/Caucasian	77%	76%	76%	80%	81%
Hispanic or Latino(a) of any race	14%	15%	15%	10%	1%
Asian	7%	6%	8%	9%	8%
Black or African American	3%	4%	3%	1%	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Middle Eastern or North African	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Prefer not to disclose	4%	4%	5%	7%	10%