MASONIC MARKETING SERIES

NOT JUST A MAN. A MASON.®

From I to We:

Freemasonry and the Next Civic Upswing



CANADIAN EDITION · LINDA R. PATCH

WHY MEN STOPPED JOINING EVERYTHING, WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR NOW, AND WHY CANADIAN FREEMASONRY IS READY TO LEAD THE RENEWAL.

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About the data. This ebook draws on research from the United States and Canada. Each finding is labeled U.S. DATA or CANADIAN DATA so you always know where it comes from.

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INTRODUCTION

From Sea to Sea

Freemasonry has an extraordinary history. But this ebook is less about looking back than looking forward, because I believe we are at a remarkable moment for the Craft.

The world is changing in ways that make what Freemasonry offers not less relevant, but more relevant. And we now have the research to prove it. The question is whether we recognize the opportunity in front of us, and what we are prepared to do about it.

Canada's motto is *A Mari Usque Ad Mare*: "From Sea to Sea." The Craft in Canada has long worked across those same vast distances, bringing men together from very different communities through shared values and a common purpose. That, in many ways, is the idea behind *From I to We*.

Again and again, our research has shown that what is happening inside Freemasonry cannot be understood in isolation. The decline in membership is part of a much larger shift in civic life, one that has received far too little attention. The data kept pointing us back to it, and this ebook is the result.

It draws on three bodies of evidence:

- **Ten years of research led by the Scottish Rite, NMJ**, including our 2016 and 2025 national studies of Freemasonry and its relevance today.
- **More than 160,000 inquiries to join** submitted through BeAFreemason.org.
- **The broader social research** in Robert D. Putnam's *The Upswing*, a statistical history of the long decline in civic life, and of the possibility of renewal.

Where a finding comes from the United States, it is labeled **U.S. data**. Where we have Canadian evidence, it is labeled **Canadian data** and set alongside. As you will see, the story is the same on both sides of the border.

Taken together, the evidence tells a story that is at once sobering and deeply hopeful.

> ***"The decline in membership was not Freemasonry's failure. The recovery, however, is Freemasonry's responsibility.***
>
> ***The time is now.***

CHAPTER 1

The Big Question: Why Did Freemasonry Decline?

Ask that question in almost any lodge and you will hear the same answers:

"People don't join anymore."	*"Men are too busy."*	*"The culture has changed."*

All of that is true. None of it is the complete story.

These answers feel right, but they treat the decline as a problem inside Freemasonry. The fuller explanation lies outside the lodge, in a shift that reshaped every organization built on the idea of "we." Once you see how our findings fit into that wider civic context, you cannot unsee it.

> *"This is not about persuasion. It is about revelation.*

CHAPTER 2

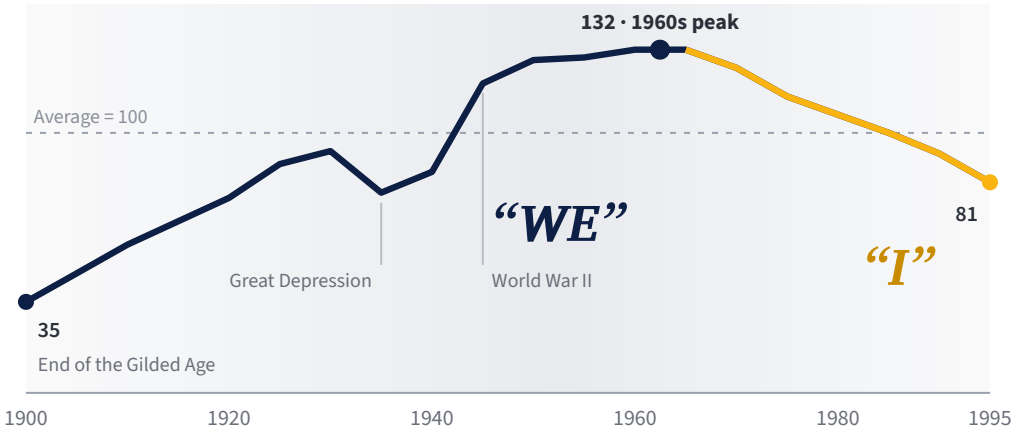
The Civic Context: From "We" to "I"

In *The Upswing*, Robert D. Putnam documents what he calls the I-We-I curve. Civic life, he shows, moves in a long arc: from individualism, to community, and back again.

From the 1890s to the 1960s, the United States moved steadily toward shared institutions, shared responsibility, and civic participation. Since the 1960s, it has been moving back toward radical individualism.

The I-We-I curve U.S. DATA

Average membership rate in national chapter-based associations, index (20th-century average = 100)



Values read from the published chart. Source: Robert D. Putnam with Shaylyn Romney Garrett, *The Upswing* (2020).

EVERY "WE" ORGANIZATION FEELS IT

When that shift happens, it affects every institution built on the idea of "we": civic, fraternal, religious, and volunteer organizations alike.

Culturally, we are now in a deep "I" period. Four words describe it:

Disconnected ***Isolated*** ***Distrustful*** ***Polarized***

For an institution like Freemasonry, which depends on shared obligation, shared identity, and shared meaning, that culture creates tremendous pressure. It elevates the self over the collective, which is the opposite of what Freemasonry asks of a man.

ASSOCIATION LIFE, BY THE NUMBERS U.S. DATA

Researchers tracked more than 106,000 people over 30 years. This is not a Masonic statistic. It is association life in general.

12

1975: club or association meetings the average person attended a year

4

2005: meetings a year, a drop of two-thirds in 30 years

< 40%

2006 to the present: of people in the study attend four meetings a year

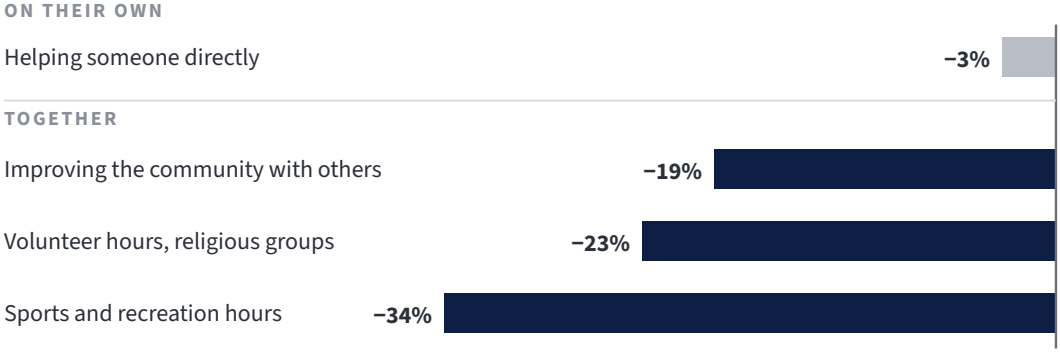
Source: DDB Worldwide and the Civic Health Index.

IT IS HAPPENING IN CANADA, TOO CANADIAN DATA

Before anyone concludes this is only an American story, look at what Statistics Canada has documented about how Canadians give their time.

Canadians still help one another. They are doing far less together.

Change in time given, 2018 to 2023



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

Helping another person directly declined by just 3%. But when Canadians were asked to work together, the declines were far steeper.

Canadians have not stopped caring about one another. But they are spending far less time coming together in community. That distinction matters enormously, because it is not simply a decline in volunteering. It is an erosion of the organizations, relationships, and shared experiences that bring people together. Volunteer Canada has called attention to the seriousness of this decline and the need for a national strategy to reverse it.

For generations, organizations like Freemasonry benefited from a culture in which people naturally joined, participated, and built relationships in their communities. We

can no longer assume that culture will sustain itself. The connections that once happened almost automatically now have to be created intentionally.

That is where Freemasonry has an extraordinary opportunity. Bringing men together around shared values, common purpose, and service to others is not something we need to invent. It is what Freemasonry was built to do.

A DIAGNOSIS, NOT A VERDICT

> *"The drop in membership was not Freemasonry's failure. It was a cultural shift.*

Freemasonry did not decline because the ritual failed, because its values weakened, or because its leaders forgot how to lead. It declined because the entire civic ecosystem around it collapsed, as the culture moved from "We" to "I."

That is a diagnosis, not an assignment of blame. But it is not a get-out-of-jail-free card, either. It does not remove the responsibility for rebuilding. And as the next section shows, the case for rebuilding is strong, both in practical terms and in moral ones.

CHAPTER 3

What Men Are Telling Us

Against this backdrop of civic fragmentation, our 2025 national survey tells a powerful story. Freemasonry still operates as a "We" institution in an "I" age, and that distinction matters more now than ever.

The data shows that Freemasonry is not a relic of a bygone era. It is one of the few institutions still aligned with the conditions that restore trust, connection, and shared responsibility. Moments of fragmentation are also moments of possibility. Men are actively searching for what Freemasonry has to offer.

ABOUT THE 2025 NATIONAL SURVEY U.S. DATA

3,500
respondents from diverse backgrounds

1.7%
margin of error

Men
U.S. adults not affiliated with Freemasonry

Purpose
Awareness and perception of Freemasonry

The 2025 study was a complete update of our 2016 research. It asked what men think of Freemasonry, what would motivate them to join, which messages resonate most, and how a decade of social change has shaped their views. The full findings are published in *The Path Forward*, available on Amazon.

THE RESULTS ARE CLEAR

It is time to cast aside the pessimism and the laments about the state of the Craft. The 2025 research reaffirms the key finding of 2016: when Freemasonry is presented authentically, its values align seamlessly with the values and needs of today's man.

> ***"Freemasonry's core values and principles are resonant and timeless.***

MEN TODAY: LONELINESS AND DISCONNECTION U.S. DATA

When a society moves from "We" to "I," one of the first casualties is connection. Our survey found it everywhere:

57%
of men identified as lonely or disconnected

60%
have not made a new friend in the past two years

1 in 4
see close friends face-to-face two or fewer times a month

The *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* cites loneliness and a lack of friendship among the most harmful things to human health. Good and worthy men are lonely. That is not good for them, not good for our society, and it represents lost opportunities for the Craft.

CANADIAN MEN TODAY

CANADIAN DATA

This is not an American problem projected across the border. In April 2025, the Canadian Men's Health Foundation surveyed 2,000 Canadian men, and the findings are sobering.

Two in three young Canadian men are at risk of social isolation

Share of Canadian men at risk of social isolation



Source: Canadian Men's Health Foundation and Intensions Consulting, survey of 2,000 Canadian men, April 2025.

Think about that middle number. These are young men at a time in life when we might expect them to be building friendships, finding community, and establishing relationships that last a lifetime. Two out of every three are at risk of isolation.

Statistics Canada adds to the picture: in 2024, **17%** of Canadians aged 15 to 24 said they feel lonely always or often.

Why does this matter to Freemasonry? Because our research tells us younger men are among the most receptive to what the Craft offers. They are searching for genuine friendship, shared values, a sense of belonging, and a purpose larger than themselves. The very things these young men may be missing are the things Freemasonry has offered for centuries.

The need is here.
The opportunity is here.

The question is whether we are making it possible for these men to find the Craft, and whether the Craft is ready to welcome them when they do.

MEN WANT MORE CONNECTION U.S. DATA

63%

"I would be happier if I spent more time in person with other people."

Share of men who agree

Now set that widespread disconnection beside the Lodge. The Lodge exists to create real connection among men who share values and purpose. Our data shows that this missing sense of connection is precisely what attracts men to Freemasonry, particularly Millennials.

WHAT MEN WANT FROM AN ORGANIZATION

The top three things men look for in an organization have not changed since 2016:

1. Helping others	2. Forming friendships	3. Self-improvement

If only there were a place that offered all three! Men are asking for exactly what Freemasonry already is.

THE HEADLINE FINDING: ARE MEN INTERESTED IN JOINING? U.S. DATA

We asked men a simple question, cold, with no prompting or explanation. Based only on what they think they know about Freemasonry today, would they consider joining?

46% said yes.

Nearly half of men, on first impression alone, are already open to the idea.

But the real question was what happens when men actually understand what Freemasonry is. So we presented each participant with a set of simple, factual statements. There was no marketing language, no slogans, and no recruiting pitch. Just the fundamentals:

- Tolerance, respect, and kindness toward others; high moral standards
- Self-control, respect for others, honor, and integrity
- Charity and selfless giving
- Improving the quality of life for others
- Deep and lasting friendships
- A 500-year unbroken tradition

Learning about Freemasonry moves interest from 46% to 64%

Share of men who would consider joining Freemasonry



> *"After learning about Freemasonry, the share of men who would consider joining rises from 46% to 64%.*
>
> ***Nearly two in three.***

The takeaway is critical. You do not have to embellish, spin, or exaggerate what you stand for.

The Craft itself is the key.

Nearly two-thirds of men would consider becoming Freemasons once they understand what Freemasonry actually is.

WHY THE JUMP HAPPENS U.S. DATA

We asked men to rate the values most important to them in their day-to-day lives:

75%
Truth rated important

70%
Friendship rated important

67%
Charity rated important

That sounds an awful lot like Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

Freemasonry's values are not outdated. They are already alive in the hearts of the men you are trying to reach.

MILLENNIALS ARE LEADING THE WAY U.S. DATA

77%
of Millennials say Freemasons sound like a group they would like to join, particularly after learning more. That is more than any other generation.

3 in 4
Millennials want to spend more time participating in local groups. That, too, is higher than any other generation.

This is a completely receptive audience. The signal is loud and clear.

CHAPTER 4

The Challenge Is Operational, Not Spiritual

The national signal is not only visible in surveys. It shows up every day at BeAFreemason.org, the digital "front door" to Freemasonry supported by the Scottish Rite, NMJ, the Southern Jurisdiction, and Shriners International.

A LEAD SYSTEM THAT WORKS

160,000+

leads delivered to Grand Lodges across North America

10,000+

leads delivered to Canadian Grand Lodges

CANADIAN DATA

Those men did not respond because the site is slick or clever, or because an algorithm baited them into clicking. They responded because the messaging articulates Freemasonry's true core, and it strikes at the heart of the modern man.

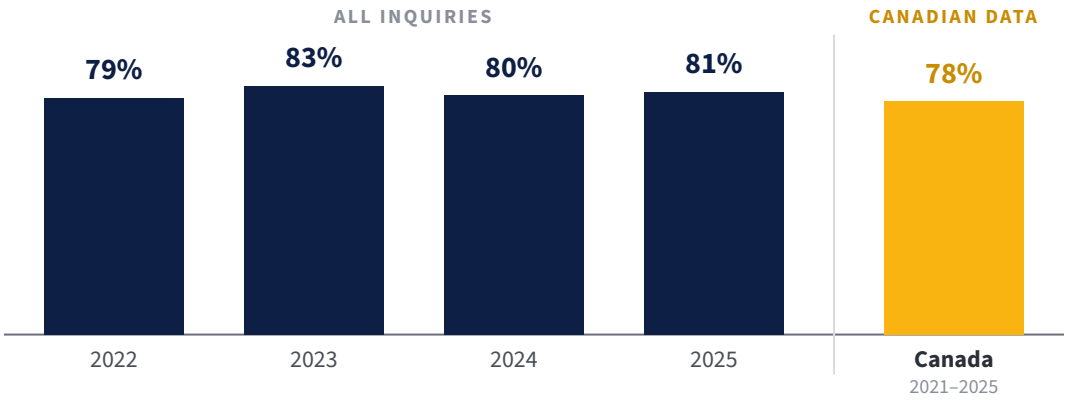
Year after year, the data tells the same story: growth is not only possible but achievable. Men want to join. They just need help finding their way.

THE HEADWIND: FOLLOW-UP

Every year, we survey men who inquired through BeAFreemason.org. Every year, most of them tell us no one ever contacted them.

Four in five men who inquire never hear back

Share of BeAFreemason.org inquirers surveyed who had not been contacted



Source: Scottish Rite, NMJ, BeAFreemason.org lead follow-up surveys.

It is the same story in Canada. From 2021 to 2025, 78% of men who inquired through BeAFreemason.org had not been contacted.

THE DOOR IS STILL OPEN

Here is the remarkable part.

98% From 2022 to 2025, **98%** of the men who did not receive follow-up said they **still want to hear back**. That number has held at 98% for four straight years.

> *"I have never seen that level of sustained openness in any business environment. In most industries, that door closes. Yours is still open.*

I say this with total conviction: if we fix follow-up, and make the path to joining unmistakably clear, we will unlock membership growth.

NOT A MARKETING FAILURE

Left as it is, a lead system without reliable follow-up will continue to:

- Raise expectations
- Disappoint men seeking belonging
- Quietly erode trust in Freemasonry

That is not a marketing failure. It is a process in need of improvement.

> *"The challenge is operational, not spiritual.*

We know Grand Lodges are working to improve follow-up on these inquiries. The NMJ will help. Our shared goal can be stated in four words:

From Lead to Lodge.

CHAPTER 5

The Path Forward: A 21st-Century Moral Movement

It is striking how closely our data tracks with Putnam's findings. The forces behind the "I" era are the same forces that have pressed on Freemasonry:

- An emphasis on personal gain over the common good
- Distrust in institutions and collective action
- Rising inequality and disengagement

> *"Men didn't stop joining Masonry.*
> ***Men stopped joining everything.***

And this is crucial: understanding why the decline happened is not a get-out-of-jail-free card. It tells us what has to be rebuilt.

VALUES MADE VISIBLE

Freemasonry's values are timeless. That is not the problem. The problem is that most people never see them. Values kept behind closed doors cannot change a community.

This is not about opening up secrets. It is about showing the world who you are. To move from "I" to "We," Freemasonry's values must be:

Seen	***Experienced***	***Shared***
in public, by our neighbors	by men who are not yet Masons	across generations, through mentorship

IT HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE

Putnam shows that society has made this turn before. The last civic upswing from "I" to "We" did not start with a policy or an ad campaign. It started with people who built something visible. They brought forth:

1. Institutions that build belonging
2. Organizations rooted in honor and integrity
3. Places where mentorship thrives
4. Movements that turn individualism into community
5. Leaders who model service above self

Look at that list: belonging, honor, mentorship, community, service. These are values people could see, experience, and share. They are also, line for line, what a lodge is supposed to be.

> ***"In Masonic language, supported by the data: this is who you already are.***

A MORAL MOVEMENT FOR OUR TIME

Imagine Freemasonry not simply working to build its numbers, but as a 21st-century moral movement. Not one built on nostalgia, or on heritage alone, but on living, breathing values made visible:

LEADERSHIP **BROTHERHOOD** **SERVICE** **CHARACTER**
CHARITY **INTEGRITY**

Freemasonry is a living, needed force in our communities. This is your moment to claim that identity again.

CHAPTER 6

Three Changes to Consider

To fulfill this role, Freemasonry must do three things.

1

CHANGE 1 OF 3

Ensure timely follow-up

> *"No man's knock goes unanswered.*

Every inquiry is a man who has already raised his hand. The most important thing a Grand Lodge or lodge can do is answer him, and answer him quickly. In practice, that means:

- **Respond within 24 to 48 hours** of an inquiry, while his interest is fresh.
- **Assign ownership.** Name the Brothers responsible for monitoring inquiries and reaching out, so that no one assumes someone else has it covered.
- **Track every lead** from first contact to petition, so nothing falls through the cracks and progress can be measured.

For a step-by-step guide, see the companion ebook in this series, *Follow-Up: Freemasonry's Not-So-Secret Weapon*. It is available at **scottishritenmj.org/best-practices/masonic-marketing-series**.

2

CHANGE 2 OF 3

Improve how Freemasonry welcomes and supports men inquiring to join

> *"Consistent, timely, hospitable, reliable.*
> *Everywhere. For every man.*

A prompt reply is the beginning, not the end. The experience a man has between his first inquiry and his initiation tells him whether the promise he read about is real. Make the promise real:

- Explain clearly what happens next, and when.
- Invite him in: to a dinner, a brotherhood event, or a conversation before a lodge meeting.
- Make sure the welcome he receives is the same in every lodge, not dependent on which door he happens to knock on.

CHANGE 3 OF 3

3 Reassert Freemasonry's public identity

Freemasonry should be known in its communities for what it truly is:

Principled	***Accessible***	***A noble path*** for men seeking purpose and community

That means making your values visible: seen in public, experienced by men who are not yet Masons, and shared across generations.

CONCLUSION

Restoration, Not Reinvention

> *"This is not reinvention.*
> ***This is restoration. This is reclamation.***

You are part of one of the last great civic institutions. The data is clear. The need is great. The opportunity is historic.

Freemasonry did not cause its own decline. But it can lead its renewal: not simply by adding members, but by meeting a deep, unmet need in men's lives, and by helping turn a fractured civic culture back toward the common good.

SOCIETY NEEDS FREEMASONRY

Freemasonry has always been about making good men better. At its best, it has helped a country find its moral center: one man at a time, one lodge at a time, one act of integrity at a time.

That is the essence of a moral, social movement. Not a slogan. Not a campaign. A quiet, steady force that lifts a nation by lifting the character of its citizens.

When a man becomes a Mason, he does not just join a fraternity. He joins a lineage of builders: builders of trust, of community, of compassion, of civic courage. He becomes part of something that does not rise and fall with membership numbers, but with the strength of your commitment to one another.

BRING IT TO LIFE

Not Just a Man. A Mason. is more than a tagline. It is a promise to the world: that when a man enters Freemasonry, he leaves better equipped to heal division, build belonging, serve with humility, and lead with integrity.

If Freemasonry embraces this moment fully, boldly, and unapologetically, it will not simply survive the challenges of our age. It will help transform them.

The next civic upswing will not be led by institutions alone. It will be led by men who choose character over cynicism, brotherhood over isolation, and service over self. Men who choose to be Masons.

> ***Not Just a Man. A Mason.***
>
> ***This is your moment. The time is now to meet it.***

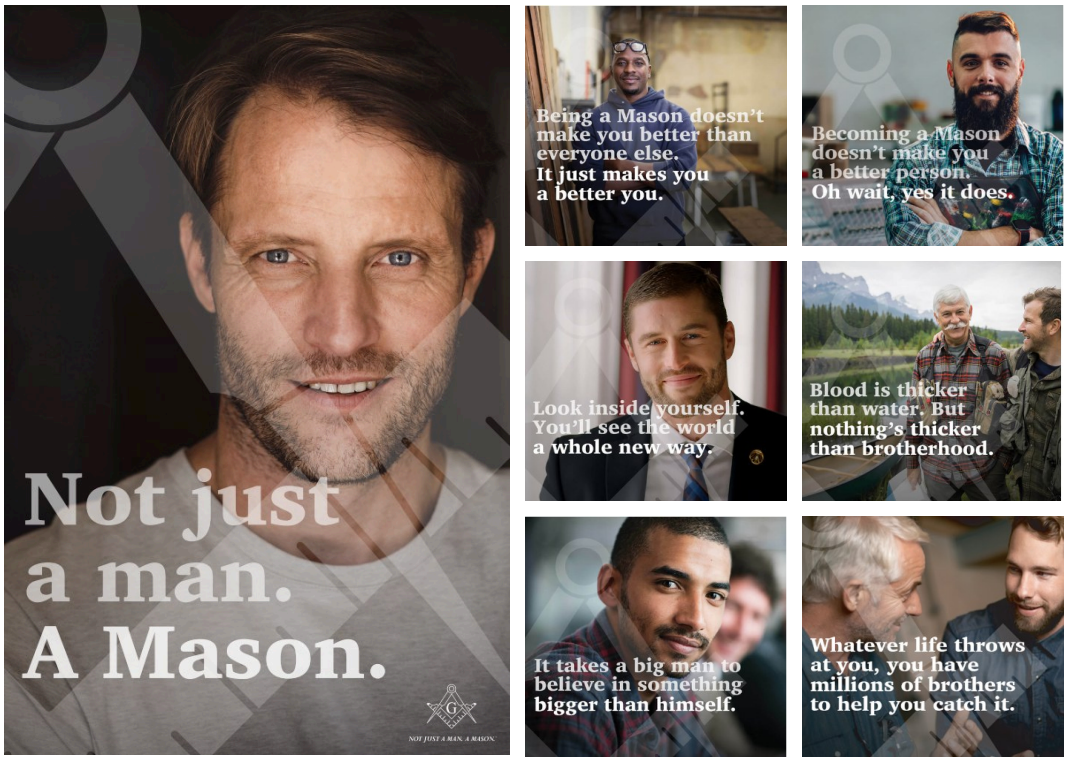
RESOURCES

Resources Available to You

In 2016, the NMJ sponsored and I led, in partnership with Len Cercone of CerconeBrownCompany, what was then the largest national study of Freemasonry ever undertaken.

That research gave us a way of understanding the fraternity we had never had before. Two resources grew directly from it, and both are available to Canadian Grand Lodges and lodges today, in English, French, and Spanish.

NOT JUST A MAN. A MASON.



The revolution, in six words. The *Not Just a Man. A Mason.* campaign and its videos remain vibrant, vital, and effective, and the campaign has not begun to reach market saturation. There is still significant life in it for further expansion and impact.

Each image and headline in the campaign carefully interprets a critical finding from the research, in modern, compelling, and inspirational ways. The campaign has been translated into French and Spanish.

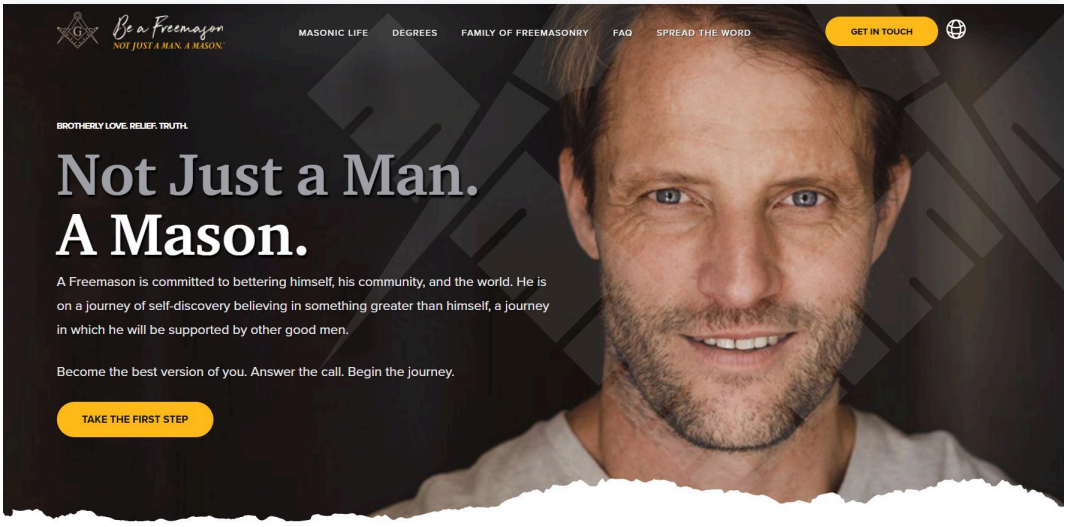
MAKE THE CAMPAIGN YOUR OWN, FREE OF CHARGE

The NMJ offers a complimentary service to customize the *Not Just a Man. A Mason.* campaign for your Grand Lodge or lodge, at no cost to you. We will:

- Add your logos
- Add your website URLs
- Add your calls to action
- Add custom end cards to the campaign videos

To get started, email **communications@srnmj.org**. If you need help, please call us at **781-465-3316**.

BEAFREEMASON.ORG



BeAFreemason.org is the digital front door to Freemasonry, built in conjunction with the Southern Jurisdiction and Shriners International. It has proven to be an extremely effective tool in helping men begin their journey into Freemasonry, with more than 160,000 leads delivered to Grand Lodges across North America.

The site also gives us tremendous data, which corroborates the national signal and the opportunity before us. BeAFreemason.org is available in French and Spanish.

MORE FROM THE SUPREME COUNCIL

- ***The Path Forward: Empowering the Future of Freemasonry*:** the full findings of our 2025 national study, available on Amazon.
- ***Follow-Up: Freemasonry's Not-So-Secret Weapon*:** a practical guide to answering every inquiry, from the *Masonic Marketing Series*.
- **The *Masonic Marketing Series*:** free, beginner-friendly ebooks on everything from email to social media.

Have a question, or a success story to share? Email us at **communications@srnmj.org**, or call us at **781-465-3316**.

FOR YOUR LODGE

Questions for Discussion

Use these at your next lodge meeting, district gathering, or Grand Lodge committee.

1. Where do you see the shift from “We” to “I” in your own community, beyond Freemasonry?
2. If a man submitted an inquiry to your Grand Lodge today, how long would it take for someone to contact him? Who would that be?
3. What would it take for your lodge to guarantee that no man’s knock goes unanswered?
4. Two-thirds of Canadian men aged 19–29 are at risk of social isolation. What could your lodge offer a young man looking for connection?
5. How visible are your lodge’s values to neighbors who are not Masons? Where could they be seen, experienced, and shared?
6. What would it look like for your lodge to act as part of a 21st-century moral movement?

Sources

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NOT JUST A MAN. A MASON.™

Men didn't stop joining Masonry.
Men stopped joining everything.
Freemasonry can lead them back.

Supreme Council, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite
Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, U.S.A.

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