

Christian Worker Survey: the results summarised

We are grateful to those who took the time and trouble to respond to our survey on the needs of full time Christian workers. Over 200 completed the survey and the main findings give some interesting insights on being 'out there in the mission field', especially where money is concerned.

Firstly, some background statistics –the age range of respondents was approximately: 30% aged 30-40, 25% aged 40-50, 15% aged 50-60 and 15% below 30, 15% over 60 roughly split equally between those with dependants and those without. Most have been in their ministry over a decade with the average being 12 years.

key findings

- ➔ **Money is the biggest worry in ministry** – twice as many people (33%) said this kept them awake at night than any other subject. The next largest group (15%) had concerns over work or work pressures. Within these groups, only one third spoke to the mission or their sending church about them – for most it was spouse, family or close friends. For a small percentage - only 3% – there was no-one!
- ➔ **Retirement needs are the most difficult thing to communicate** to supporters according to the survey: 40% found it 'difficult' with a further 25% finding it 'quite difficult' to discuss this issue and only 50% able to set aside anything for future needs.

Other areas of difficulty expressed:

- Personal expenses: 20% 'difficult' and 35% 'quite difficult'
 - Emotional needs: 8% 'difficult' and 39% 'quite difficult'
 - Practical needs: 6% 'difficult' and 22% 'quite difficult'
 - Ministry expenses: 4% 'difficult' and 20% 'quite difficult'
- ➔ **The 'greatest challenge in support raising' showed a range of issues.** Most commonly:
 - 20% expressed difficulties in making new contacts
 - 20% felt they lacked confidence to get across their support needs
 - 18% felt under-equipped to get the message across
 - 16% identified issues around the economic climate and the recession in the UK

This bears out our thoughts that money remains a major issue that is only partly addressed in the mission work of full-time Christian workers. It is a broad issue and not one for which there are quick fixes but it is an area in which we believe there should be greater and different emphasis if the effectiveness of Christian ministry is not going to be hindered. We know that some workers are well prepared by their mission agency and some not. We will be running training days in this area and also wish to be able to serve our supported workers more in other ways. If you want to be involved in this please email education@stewardship.org.uk

Sadly, as our experience suggests, it is in the area of retirement that the needs of workers are most unmet and the big concern is that people have real difficulty knowing what to do about it. We want to see workers well served and equipped in this area and hope to put together a team of personal advisors; coming both from the perspective of those with ministry experience and also those with professional expertise, but also develop ways of helping workers to think through this most difficult area and communicate with their churches and supporters.

Finally, many took the opportunity to say something about Stewardship and whilst many of these were words of encouragement, some indicated areas where more information was needed (some of which we are already part-way through). We have indeed heard those and will be acting on them; so a big 'thank you!' to all who participated/

Stephen Mathews
Senior consultant, Stewardship

Christian Worker Survey: the results in detail

background data

213 responses collected

Age ranges:

18-30 = 31
31-40 = 60
41-50 = 52
51-60 = 38
61-70 = 29
71-80 = 3

Average number of years in full time Christian ministry – 12 years

Number of dependants:

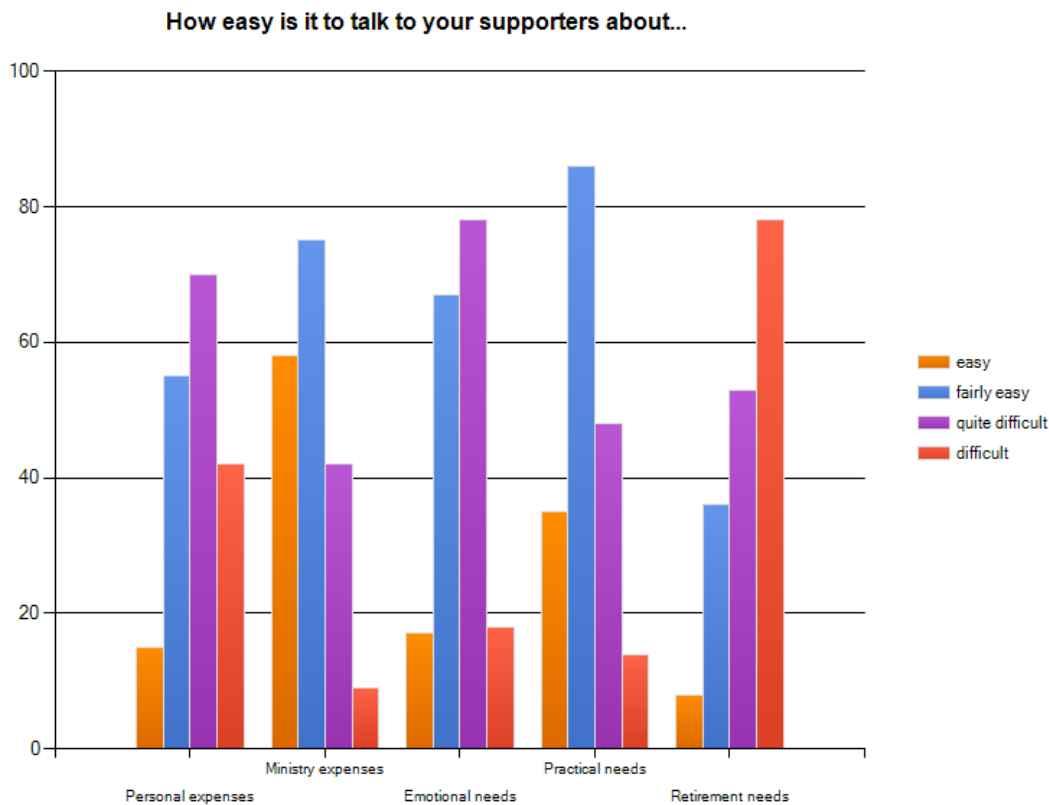
None - 48%
One - 17%
Two - 11%
Three - 13%
Four - 7%
5 or more - 4%

Income

The quality of the responses here was variable. A small percentage did not answer the question. It was also unclear whether some responses were for single or joint ministry – some were clearer indicating that the total figure was to cover both partners.

4% said they received no income
7% £5k or less
22% Between £5-£10k
20% Between £10-£15
11% Between £15-£20k
13% Between £20-£25k
5% Between £25-£30k
4% Between £30-£35k
3% Over £35k

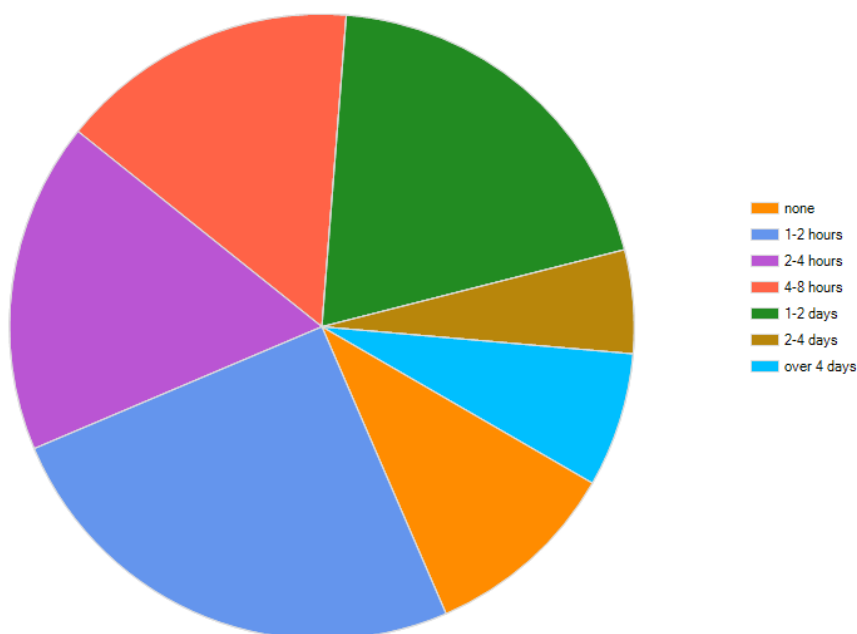
Advocacy Section



Clearly, the subject that most respondents find difficult to discuss with supporters is retirement needs. This is in line with our own experience which is that this is an extremely under-resourced area of ministry and one that causes pain and confusion to many workers.

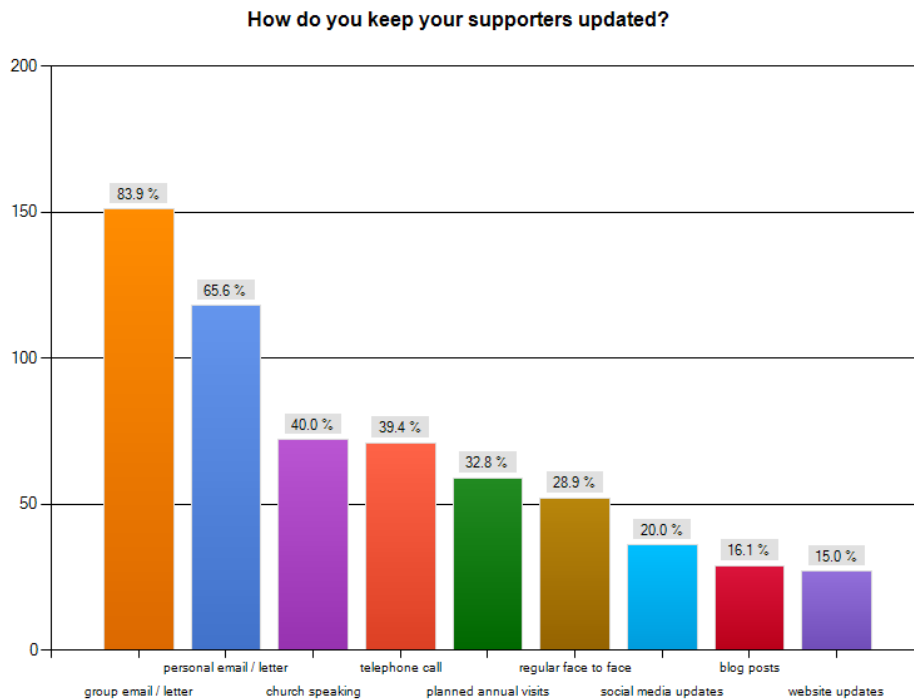
We have found a large number of long-term ministry workers reaching their late 40s and 50s and having very little or even nothing in place for the time when they expected to wind down their ministries. There is often a link between this and the message the worker communicates with their financial supporters – are they seeking funding for the ministry, the worker and their life, and what are the real needs the worker has?

In the last month, how much time have you spent keeping your supporters updated?



The largest percentage at 25% only spent 1-2 hours keeping their supporters updated. However, the second largest percentage (20%) spent 1-2 days.

This is in line with what we expected; for some, relationship with supporters is an incidental aspect of the ministry, even a 'necessary evil'. Others realise it is a crucial and central part of the ministry – seeing supporters as their key 'ministry partners' with benefits of both sustained financial support and also emotional and prayer support. A key factor in the amount of time spent is connected to the worker's underlying thoughts and emotional feelings about this area of ministry – if they view 'asking' as being 'wrong' or if they find it embarrassing and difficult, less time will be spent.



What is the greatest challenge to you in increasing your financial support?

- 20% said making new contacts was a difficulty. For many this was exacerbated by the limited time they spent in the UK.
- 20% felt they either lacked the courage to ask supporters/approach new supporters or felt somehow that their needs did not have sufficient value in order to make a request. Holidays or provision of personal expenses in particular were a sticking point.
- 18% felt they weren't sufficiently equipped or able to get the message across to potential supporters when they were in the UK or that there wasn't an appreciation of the difficulties they were encountering on a daily basis.
- 16% identified issues around the economic climate and the recession in the UK having had an effect on the amounts supporters were giving. There were a number of comments around getting the message across to UK based supporters that the economic crisis in the west was nothing compared to poverty in many of the countries the CWs were based in.
- 8% felt that time and making raising support a priority was an issue.
- 7% said that they accepted how things were or trusted God to provide.
- 11% said that they faced no particular challenges.

These responses highlight the issues that workers face in this are: the difficulty of workers knowing how to bridge the gap with those that are not yet supporters but could be, how to do this without embarrassment or offence, the lack of understanding by supporters and potential supporters of the world that the workers live in and the practical difficulty of not being able to develop face-to-face relationships easily. We will be looking further at how we can help practically with these issues.

Accountability Section

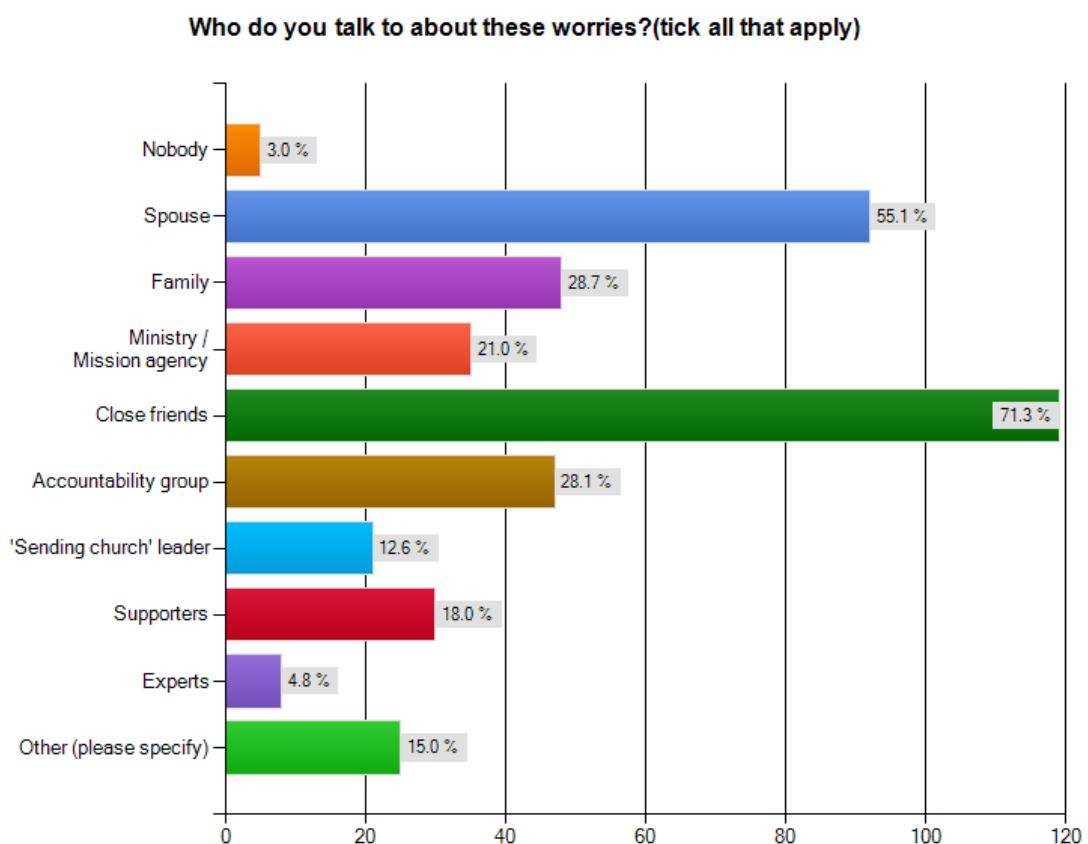
What, if any, are the three things that 'keep you awake at night'?

Some respondents (around 15%) interpreted the question interestingly and gave answers ranging from 'eating late' to 'cats fighting in the street'! However, of those who interpreted it as their areas of concern the main categories of answer were as follows:

- 33% Money and the future
- 15% Pressure of work/work related worries
- 11% Specific worries (including health)
- 7% Spiritual matters
- 7% Nothing
- 6% Children's needs
- 6% Relationship issues

Money and the future was by far the biggest single category and this included answers such as: how am I going to afford to replace my car, pay bills or staff salaries, can I afford to marry or have children, to more general concerns about the future and funding retirement.

Who do you talk to about these worries?

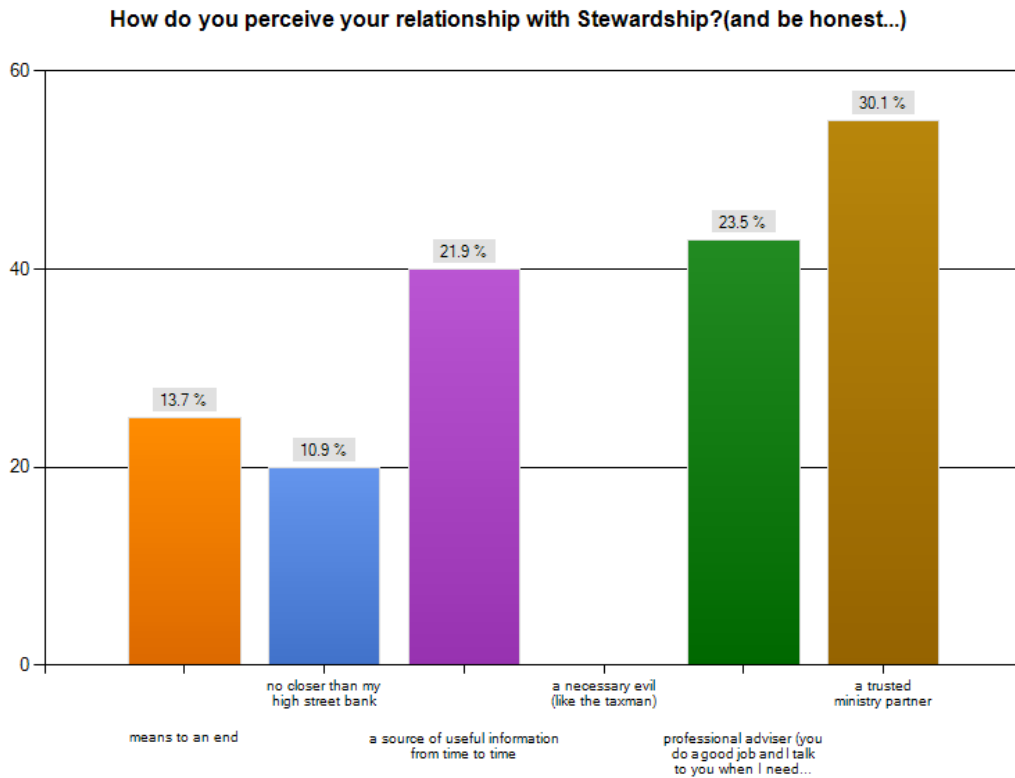


The 'other' category included work colleagues, spiritual director/mentor and, of course, God.

Spouse, family and close friends seem to be by far the most relied upon for advice. For the small percentage that didn't discuss the issues with anyone that is a real concern. There is considerably lower use of more formal 'advisors' (i.e. ministry/mission agency, accountability group, church leaders or experts) than in the possibly equivalent secular arena of the family business where professionals are readily used.

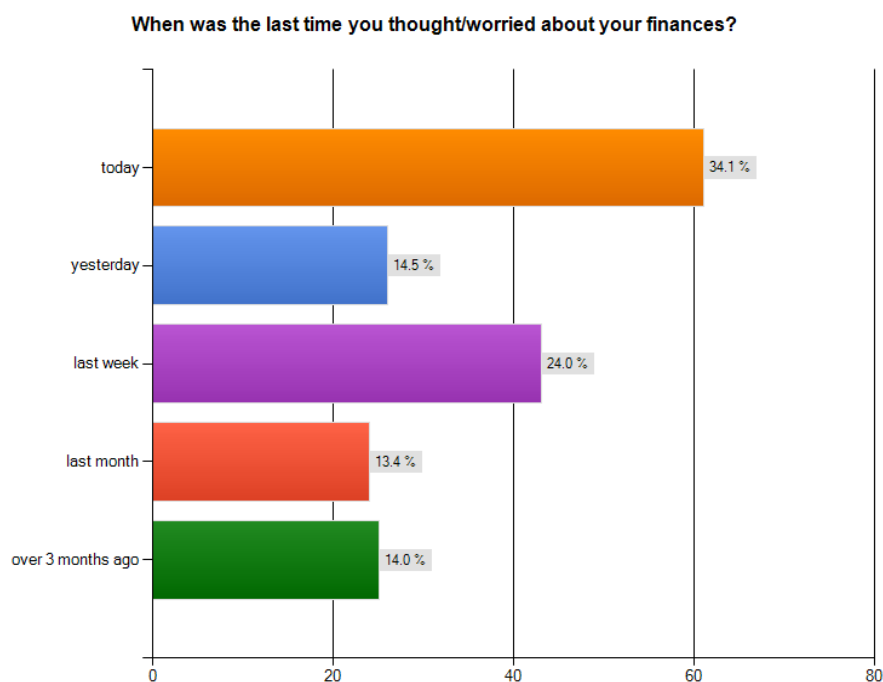
The combination of these two responses suggests that having a good environment to discuss issues, especially that of money, with those that are trusted and have experience of the issue is a major benefit not available to many.

How do you perceive your relationship with Stewardship?



Administration Section

When was the last time you thought about your finances?



Thoughts or concerns over finances seem to feature in most respondents' thinking at least once a week and for a third, on a daily basis.

Are you 'setting aside' financially for the future?

51 % Yes

49% No

Of those who said yes, only 4% felt that it was sufficient.

The average annual contribution was £1,000.

Of those who said no, 64% said that this was due to insufficient income; 16% said that it wasn't a priority or they hadn't thought about it; 13% felt that God would provide and 7% gave no reason.

If there was one thing you could say to Stewardship on the subject of money & your Christian work, what would it be?

156 responded to this question in a variety of ways.

Most comments (around 60%) were very much about expressing thanks:

- *We are very grateful, you save us masses of time, and really add value to how we connect with supporters.*
- *It's fantastic that Stewardship exists. With no actually official mission organisation behind me it is very daunting trying to work out all the financial & tax implications. Having an organisation such as this is such a reassurance and so useful! Thank you.*
- *Thanks for what you do. Over the past 3-5 years your service has become increasingly excellent, and I am really encouraged by recent improvements on an already good service. (E.g. on-line access to account, spiritual input through various publications, etc.)*
- *Thank you - I really feel like you've been taking care of us in more than just being a source for christian workers to receive money. The articles in your magazine are great and really helpful.*

Some observations indicated a possible disconnect between the money and the 'calling':

- *It is an area that I do not like to think about and devote time to, a necessary evil! I am most happy when things just work in this area.*
- *I could not do what I'm doing without the help of Stewardship and my supporters. It makes such a difference not having to worry about the management of the money that I need.*

Some comments were revealing an underlying concern:

- *There is a mismatch between the church's missional mandate and the way we use our collective funds... missions and outreach, particularly those relating to the poor, are hugely underfunded. People will give for projects (and they will also happily buy things or take trips themselves), but the needs of missionaries, both practical and emotional, on the field and back home, are overlooked in a way that does not seem to be the case for church based workers. Mission workers have to find their own support, as well as struggle with the issues of cross cultural working in often isolated situations; church workers are usually salaried and have a far larger support network...I very much chose this life, but as I see so many missionaries under intense pressure and financial hardship I can't help thinking that something is wrong.*

Some comments (around 15%) were requesting further help or training from Stewardship:

- *Thanks for producing excellent support raising materials (and promoting them). Thanks for encouraging people to give and enabling them to do so easily. If you ever have plans to provide more info on how to save for future, advice for permanent overseas workers re tax / pensions / National Insurance contributions, and how to approach trust funds and other non-family/friend/church support sources, then I'd be interested.*
- *As a finance manager for a missionary organisation, one of the major problems I encounter with other missionaries is a lack of basic financial management skills. I think it would be great if Stewardship could produce some basic materials on personal finances aimed at Christian workers on areas such as budgeting, retirement, saving, keeping track of expenses etc.*