



# Clergy Partner Respondent Findings Report

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## **Preface**

This brief report sets out some of the headline findings from the Clergy Partner extension to the 2015 Experiences of Ministry Survey. It would not have been possible to produce without the participation of survey respondents, the preliminary work of the advisory group and ongoing analysis conducted by Dr Mike Clinton. Thank you to all.

This work is part of a five-year process of research and consultation that aims to find out what helps clergy to become and remain both faithful and effective in ministry. The changing role of Clergy Partners in this context is something that is recognised but not well studied. This study makes an important contribution to the development of a better understanding.

Like the findings from the previous reports emerging from the Experiences of Ministry research the insights from this report will be widely shared in formal committees, e.g. the Ministry Council, and networks of officers responsible for the care and support of clergy.

Thank you once again for taking part.

**Dr Tim Ling**  
Head of Ministry Development  
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## 1. Introduction to the Clergy Partner Experiences of Ministry Survey

The Experiences of Ministry Project is a five-year process of research and consultation that seeks to inform national strategies for supporting ministry and shape the future emphasis of continuing ministerial education and development by asking clergy and their partners to share their personal experiences and views. The EMP is an independent piece of research conducted by Dr Michael Clinton, a Senior Lecturer in Work Psychology and HRM at Kings College London. The project has been supported by Dr Tim Ling, Head of Ministry Development, and an Advisory Group of national clergy. In 2011, 2013 and in 2015, the Experiences of Ministry Survey (EMS; an online clergy attitude survey) has formed a core part of this project.

As an extension to the EMS series in 2015, a survey of clergy partners was conducted. Clergy who responded to the EMS 2015 were invited to supply contact details of their partner to the King's researcher. The EMS Partner survey seeks to better understand who clergy partners are, what their experience of being a clergy partner is and their own perspectives on the impact of ministry on clergy.

Ethical approval for the Partner Survey for EMS was granted by a KCL Ethics Panel (ref: MR/14/15-136). An EMS webpage can be found at the following location: [www.experiencesofministry.org](http://www.experiencesofministry.org)

### 1. Who Responded?

Of the 524 clergy partners invited to take part in the survey, 339 did so. 110 were men and 218 were women (11 respondents did not indicate their gender). The average age of the partner sample was 57 years (SD=10 years) and the average length of relationship was 32 years (SD=13 years). 305 (90%) clergy partners frequently attend church services. Four respondents never attended church services, 11 did so rarely and 17 did so occasionally. 333 of the responses could be matched to clergy responses from the EMS15 survey. Of these, 233 were stipendiary clergy, 71 were self-supporting and 29 were active retired.

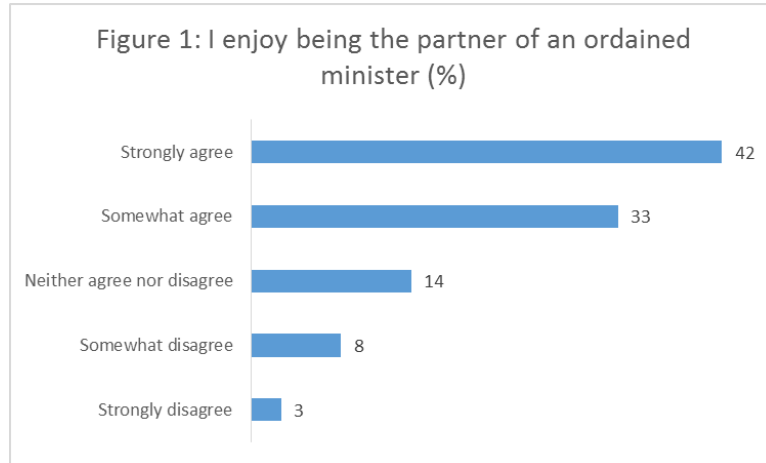
### 2. What do Clergy Partners do during a normal week?

The survey asked partners to indicate what they do during a 'normal week', asking about paid and voluntary work outside of the Church, formal and informal roles within the Church, care of adult and child dependents, domestic and household activities and other activities. The findings are summarised below:

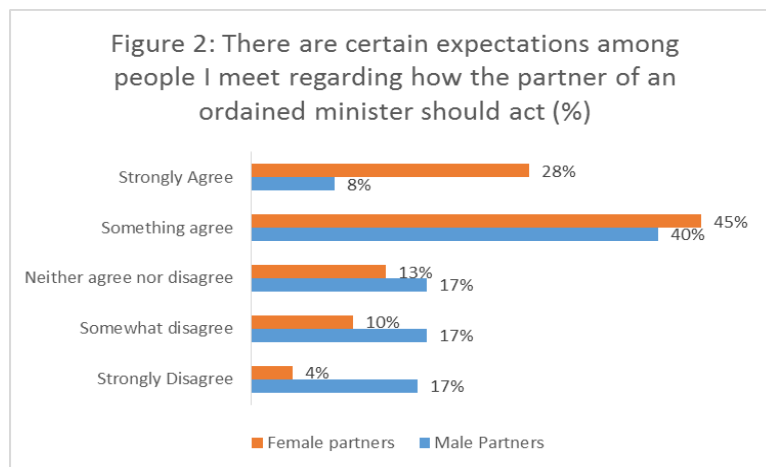
- Just over half of clergy partners have paid work outside the church and for around 25% this seems to be full-time work.
- Just under half of clergy partners perform voluntary work outside the Church.
- Around 40% of clergy partners have a formal role within the church and around 80% have an informal role within the Church, which for the large majority take up 10 hours or less per week.
- Around 24% of clergy partners provide care for a dependent adult and 29% provide care for dependent children.

### 3. How do Clergy Partners feel about being a ‘Clergy Partner’?

- Most clergy partners agree quite strongly that they are satisfied with being a ‘clergy partner’ (see Figure 1). Interestingly most clergy partners, but not all, tend to agree that they have a calling to be a clergy partner.



- However many clergy partners, and especially women, tend to agree that social expectations exist as to how one should behave as a clergy partner. See Figure 2.



### 4. How do Clergy Partners view Sacrifices?

In the survey, we asked five questions about sacrifices made by clergy and five parallel questions about sacrifices made by clergy partners. We asked the same five questions in the EMS15 of clergy about themselves.

Table 1 presents a more detailed comparison of the five sacrifice questions. In summary:

- Clergy and clergy partners’ views of clergy sacrifice are fairly similar: sacrifice as a result of ministry is frequent, quite often substantial, occasionally forced, but mostly engaged in willingly and viewed as being worthwhile.

- There are consistent small differences that are worthy of note; relative to clergy, clergy partners suggest that clergy make more frequent sacrifices for ministry, that these sacrifices are larger, that clergy make these sacrifices more willingly, and that these sacrifices are less worthwhile.
- Clergy partners' own sacrifices also seem quite frequent, but also viewed as less 'forced' and more willing and worthwhile.

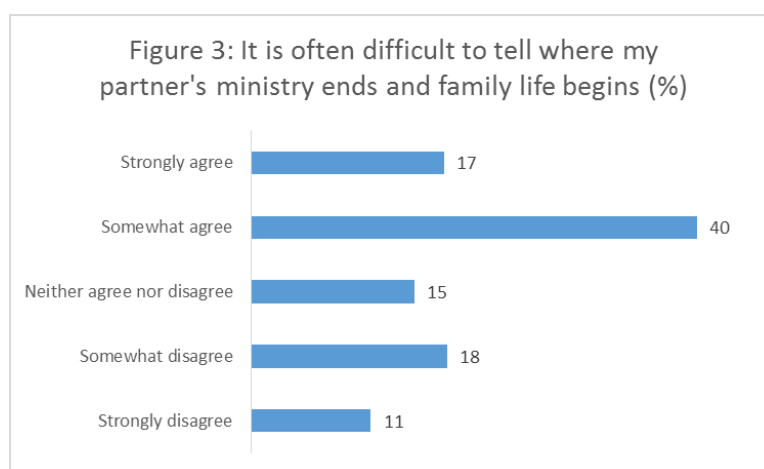
**Table 1. Views on sacrifice of clergy and clergy partners**

	Clergy-rated Clergy Sacrifice		Partner-rated Clergy Sacrifice		Partner's Own Sacrifice	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
How often do you feel you(they) make personal sacrifices as part of ministry? (1-7)	5.14	1.20	5.35	1.25	4.25	1.45
How often are these sacrifices large or very significant to you(them)? (1-7)	4.06	1.32	4.25	1.44	3.41	1.44
How often are sacrifices forced upon you(them), rather than something you chose to do/not do? (1-7)	3.63	1.47	3.79	1.49	3.32	1.52
How often do you(they) make sacrifices willingly? (1-7)	4.79	1.24	5.14	1.26	4.02	1.34
How often do you feel that the sacrifices you(they) make are ultimately worthwhile? (1-7)	4.74	1.35	4.57	1.41	4.14	1.55

Each of the questions were asked on a 1-7 frequency scale (the following might be helpful to interpret the figures above: 3=Now and then[once a month], 4=Regularly[a few times a month], 5=Often[once a week], 6=Very often[a few times a week]).

## 5. Life Outside of Ministry

- Clergy who report low levels of emotional exhaustion tend to have partners who themselves report low levels of emotional exhaustions, and *vice versa*.
- Many clergy partners report that clergy tend to integrate rather than separate their working lives from their lives away from ministry (see Figure 3).



- The majority of clergy spend at least 7 hours with their partner during an average week doing things unrelated to ministry (not including sleep), although around 20% spend less than 6 hours.
- Clergy partners report that clergy have only moderate levels of post-ministry energy. The majority of clergy do not spend large amounts of time engaged in personal leisure activities. Just over half of clergy spend less than 6 hours a week doing such activities.

## 6. Summary

While there is variation, overall clergy partners present a picture of a very involved but ultimately fulfilling role. The vast majority of clergy partners have a role that they perform within the Church, very often informally rather than formally. Social expectations do exist as to how one should behave in this role, and most acutely for women.

It is clear that the majority are satisfied being a partner of clergy and very much enjoy this part of their lives. However this role does not come without its challenges and often the demands of ministry are shared by both clergy and their partners. Sacrifices are made by both clergy and their partners on a regular basis and often clergy lives spill-over into the personal sphere. There is some evidence that the emotional well-being of couples is found to be linked.

Therefore it seems that the experience of ministry extends beyond just clergy and touches others that share this life. Hopefully the research will help to raise awareness of this important issue.