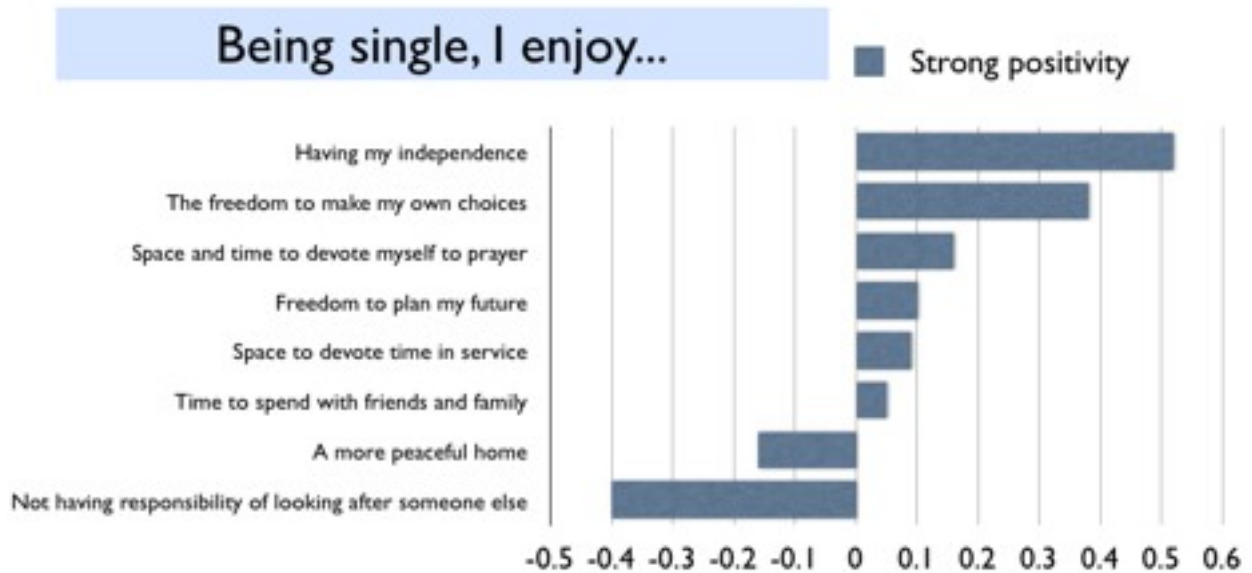


# BEING SINGLE, I ENJOY...

## Summary



Single people value their independence and freedom to make own choices when possible.

However single people don't have more time than those married. One reason is that everything has to be done alone.

The other is that many are single parents and many more are carers. There are few positive comments about their churches' support for them.

## Overview

The mode, the commonest answer, for all questions was 'Agree'. The lack of use of a balanced scale around a 'Neutral/Don't know' and, as several commented, the leading nature of the questions, (The questions have a bias towards agreeing... 391) and that they were all asked positively, means that the mode cannot be relied upon as a stand-alone conclusion. Comments also suggest that making a choice was hard to do:

- *'Sometimes agree' means for me - 'very often don't agree, but sometimes do!' (341)*
- *Sometimes I would strongly agree with some of these suggestions, whereas other times I would disagree. It seems to me that how people feel about their singleness goes in 'waves' - sometimes you're fine with it, sometimes you can rejoice in it, other times you hate it! (278)*

## You cannot compare...

Many took issue with the implied comparisons inherent in the question or the wording of the question. Either they didn't answer or challenged the view that one would lose many of the assertions if one was married:

- *I have never had a different marital status with which to compare my current marital status so I am not answering this question. (505)*
- *As I've never been married it is hard to assess a comparative such as spending more time with people, in prayer etc. (433)*
- *I am a single Christian woman who has been a Christian since early childhood. I have never been in a relationship so I don't know what it's like. Many of my friends are in the same position. (484)*
- *You can be marriage and still enjoy your freedom , go on holiday and spend time with your family etc. (320)*
- *It's hard being single has many positive aspects but I don't think you lose independence or being able to develop a ministry when married. (116)*

Others argued about the underlying premise which seemed to them about having more time, which was a prevailing theme in many of the comments:

- *These questions are all based on the premise that single people have more time on their hands, which is, quite frankly, [wrong]. As a single person, you have to do your own shopping, cooking, cleaning and ironing, mow your own lawn, sort out your own financial affairs etc. etc., as well as arranging your own social life, because it's not waiting at home for you when you get back from work. There is nobody to help share this load. And you have to do all this on a single income, so you can't afford any paid help with domestic chores that you might be able to if you were in a couple. ...So, no, actually, I don't have any extra spare time to devote to prayer and ministry... (537)*
- *Having been married, I believe there are more benefits and that being married could actually enhance all the above statements. It is a misnomer that singles have more time and freedom. I find because I have to think of and do everything (work and home) my time is quite committed. Also not having partner can restrict holiday opportunities etc. e.g. no one to go with, single supplements, safety aspects of being a single woman on holiday etc. (589)*

- *I think it is a myth that single people have more time. I am the breadwinner, the cook, cleaner, shopper, gardener, painter, decorator, and I am expected to serve in the church, which I do, and I am expected to be hospitable and social! (617)*
- *Having my own home I actually feel that in a lot of ways I have less free time than I would if I was married - I have to do all the chores, there is no one to share the load with. I get exhausted working full-time and looking after the home, let alone trying to fit in a social life and church. (307)*

For this reason the analysis looked only at the ends of the scale, those who Strongly Agreed and those who Disagreed. We looked at a positivity measure between these two (the difference over the sum). Here differences start to emerge:

Being single, I enjoy...

0.52	Having my independence
0.38	The freedom to make my own choices (e.g. Holidays, when to see friends, etc.)
0.16	The space and time to devote myself to faith/prayer
0.10	The freedom to plan my future as I like
0.09	Having the space to devote time to help others or to pursue a ministry
0.05	The chance to spend more time with friends and family
-0.16	A more peaceful home life, free from conflict as there is no one to argue with
-0.40	Not having the responsibility to look after someone else

The two aspects that single people value are having their independence and the freedom to make their own choices. At the other end, they don't enjoy not having the responsibility to look after someone else - first because many are single parents through divorce or death of spouse, or that they are carers in their own home or others. In particular, many felt that it is single people are are more expected to care for others:

- *Your questions pre-suppose singletons have more time than others this is not true - we often are expected to do more because we are single; for example care for elderly relatives, a responsibility our married siblings seem to feel empowered to duck because they are "busier" (491)*
- *Am a carer for my father who has Alzheimer's but would love a family of my own. My married sister does nothing for my Dad. You feel much more responsible for your parents when you are single. I do however have lovely christian parents!! (562)*
- *Looking after elderly parents has been described as the "single woman's burden" if you are single there is often a perception that you have more time than your married siblings to care for your parents - robbing you of time to put your own need for intimacy in relationship first and making finding someone less likely as you are worn out by weekends away looking after elderly relatives. (623)*

For similar reasons, they don't enjoy a more peaceful home life - partly because they have people to care for and partly because many share homes.

- *I live with my twin sister so our home is definitely not free of arguing and conflict! (348)*
- *Sharing a home with flatmates is not more conflict-free than sharing with family! (667)*

Being single....

- *I don't have a peaceful home life even though I am single - one of my adult daughters lives with me and she can argue for England! Also, I need to spend quite a lot of time with my elderly parents - my father is now very disabled - so I have little time for myself. (636)*

Respondents had been given the opportunity to add comments in response to:

**We want to acknowledge, how you answer the questions above may depend on your specific circumstances e.g. if you are a single parent or carer, please feel free to add your further comments.**

681 made comments. Many responded by simply giving their particular circumstances. For example:

- *Single mum of two preschoolers (77)*
- *I am a mum to an 11 year old daughter who lives with her father. (363)*
- *Single (379)*
- *I am a widow with 3 children 11-15 years old (282)*
- *63 YEAR OLD DIVORCED BLOKE..... Now meeting someone through CC. I am blissfully happy. Really ecstatically happy !!!!!!! (634)*

Others took the opportunity not only to say something about their situation but also to express their feelings about them.

- *I am an independent person but I would rather share my life with someone else. (404)*
- *To be honest... my faith is weaker than ever, as I am angry with God for the situation that I am in. I feel like I'm a stroppy teenager having a sulk because I haven't got what I want, and although I know that God doesn't work like that, I find it hard to change how I feel. I do appreciate some aspects of being independent, but I would much rather be in a relationship. (409)*
- *God has taught me to really enjoy and embrace my singleness...and to try and seek my affirmation from Him because, regardless of other people's perceptions, I am a whole and complete woman WITHOUT a husband. Even though I feel ignored or undervalued at church, God values me very much. (274)*
- *I am 49 and I cope well with being single 99% of time. All of a sudden, it hits that I am single, always have been so, am still a virgin and feel like a freak! Other single friends have similar experience. God helps me to get through these times (358)*

Given the invitation was to note specific circumstances and many were very specific, the answers have not been analysed in the same way as all other comments. Instead we note here some of the broader categories: single parents, carers, the disabled and those widowed.

### **Single parents**

- *I am a single parent to a five, three and one year old so don't have much spare time to do any of the things above but I would love to :) (29)*
- *Church struggles to be sensitive to needs of single parents. Practical needs, role model needs of children, emotional...(185)*

- *As a single parent due to being widowed when my son was 10, I have found singleness to be a challenging status - especially working full-time. I am in a position not of my choosing. (204)*
- *The demands of single parenting really difficult, all responsibility on my shoulders, finances stretched, working hard and running home on my own exhausting nobody to share life and responsibilities with, nobody to pray with, feel lonely, isolated, and unloved. (273)*
- *I am a single parent so have very little personal free time . I had more when I was married with the children's father helping me. (327)*
- *I have had absolutely no support as a single parent from church. I get more support from non christians. Being extremely shy means asking for help is difficult. (364)*
- *Being single with children and no assistance from church family to help me look after my children means i cannot attend church events in evenings and some other times. I have no time for myself or opportunities for developing my ministry/calling as I am always at home with my children in the evenings. (524)*
- *I am a single never been married adoptive mother. I have huge responsibilities but am sometimes saddened that whilst other members of church are supported in order to allow couples to take time out to be with each other no one ever thinks I might like to have some help to be able to go out occasionally! I cannot attend a house group as it is too expensive to get a babysitter and cannot host as my house is too small and my daughter too unsettled to be able to cope anyway. However attending a house group is almost seen as being indicative of one's commitment to Jesus. I am very limited in what I can offer in terms of ministry to church as my daughter's needs are very great and can be made to feel quite guilty about this. (191)*
- *I divorced my husband following his departure to another woman however I still run a home for my grown-up university student daughters so I am single but not single. With the added problems of support to build a new life but resistance to any change, consequently any new relationship I enter into is viewed with suspicion and not accepted. They want me to be happy but can't take further change in their lives..... I am still working on the solution to this. (315)*

## **Carers**

- *I am a carer for my elderly mother. (243)*
- *I am a single carer and feel these comments reflect the average christian's views. I chose to adopt my daughter as a single carer and found we fitted in more when she was younger. Now the church doesn't know what to do with either of us! (34)*
- *I have the responsibility to look after my mother - as a single I feel I have no support in that (639)*
- *I was a PT carer for my mum and being single, and not having anyone to support me was very hard indeed. (627)*
- *I am a full time working woman, for a few years I had extra responsibility of looking after parents every weekend but they are now in a residential home. However, I am now left with no close family and am on my own. I have spent the last two Christmas Days on my own with nobody from my church even asking my circumstances. I am independent and can cope but it's a bit of a lonely life sometimes and I would not wish to be invited to somebody's for the sake of it, in fact if they do not embrace me most of the year I would rather they did not bother at Christmas. (601)*
- *I choose to be a carer of a sibling, so I have those responsibilities. My life is still very busy at times. It is a myth that the single life is care-free. (130)*

## **The disabled**

There are some who noted one disability or another.

- *I'm disabled and so can't get out much socially. I feel very alone at times and it's difficult to face the thought that you might end up in the future with no-one around you, if you don't have a husband and kids. As soon as friends get married, they don't have as much time for you, as they want to do stuff with other couples. (303)*
- *Single disabled Divorced One daughter grown up and married living 2hrs away. Both of us in very rural areas (33)*
- *I'm disabled and so can't get out much socially. I feel very alone at times and it's difficult to face the thought that you might end up in the future with no-one around you, if you don't have a husband and kids. As soon as friends get married, they don't have as much time for you, as they want to do stuff with other couples (303)*

## **Widows and widowers**

- *Being a widow my past experience has taught me that marriage suits me best. (592)*
- *I have been widowed for 20 years and my children are grown up. I can be happy in any situation (452)*
- *I have answered the above in respect to the fact I was widowed, and have enjoyed a happy marriage, and the situation I am in is not through choice. (360)*
- *As a widow, I hate being single and feel unloved sometimes. My husband was gorgeous and loving. If I didn't believe in God, I would have killed myself by now/ God had been good. (292)*
- *Myself am a widower. Had to care for my wife the last few months before she died It is seen now as a fresh start the problem no one to talk too anymore or discuss joys and problem one has (221)*
- *As a single parent due to being widowed when my son was 10, I have found singleness to be a challenging status - especially working full-time. I am in a position not of my choosing. (204)*
- *There are certainly positive aspects of being single and indeed accepting one's life as it is. As a widow I miss the companionship and holidays, cultural life so much easier as a couple (171)*
- *I have been widowed for nearly two years after 34 years of a wonderful marriage, but I don't feel old. I would love to find someone to share the rest of my life with. It's been a lonely time these past two years, but I have found a lovely person on Network Christians and hope that we may have a future together. (158)*
- *Widow. spent 7 year looking after ill husband. much loved. strong faith, 4 small children, (94)*