

In Your Words: Working Together

Married and Single Disciplemakers Advancing the Gospel

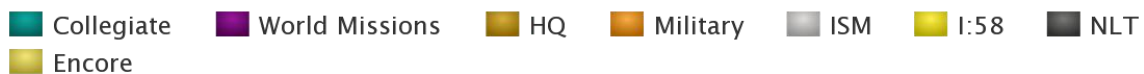
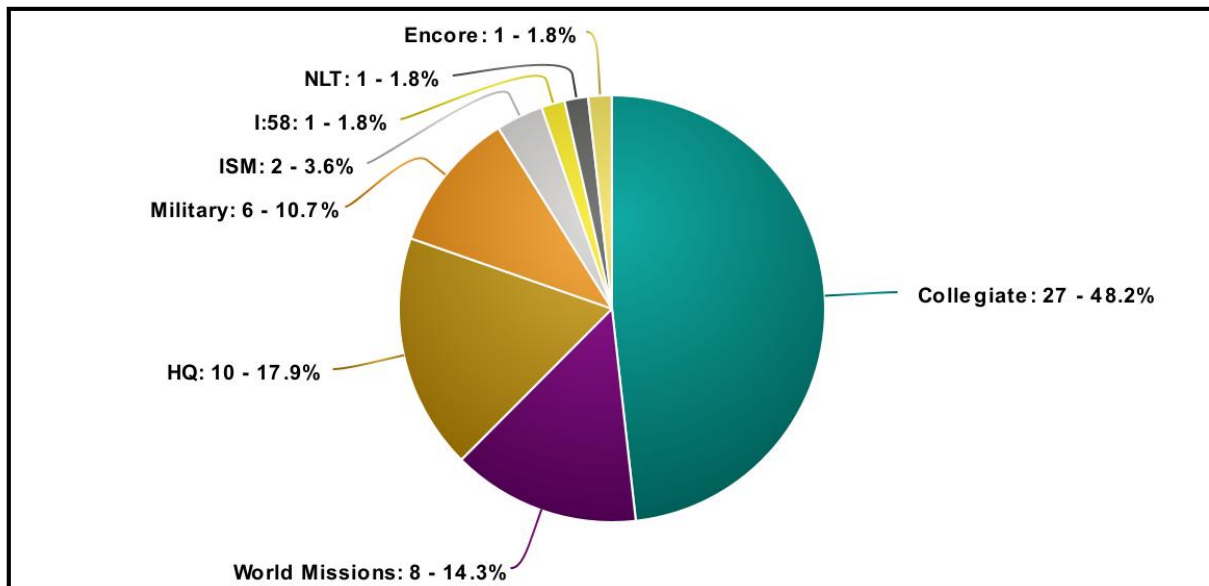
In April, we asked for your engagement in a survey to open a discussion on singles and marrieds working well together in ministry. You shared deeply so many stories close to your hearts! In compiling these here, we hope to steward well each contributor's story of their journey and life stage.

So... Who Answered?

Total Responses	62 (42 female; 20 male)
Single	37
Married	22
Divorced	1
Widowed	1
Remarried	1

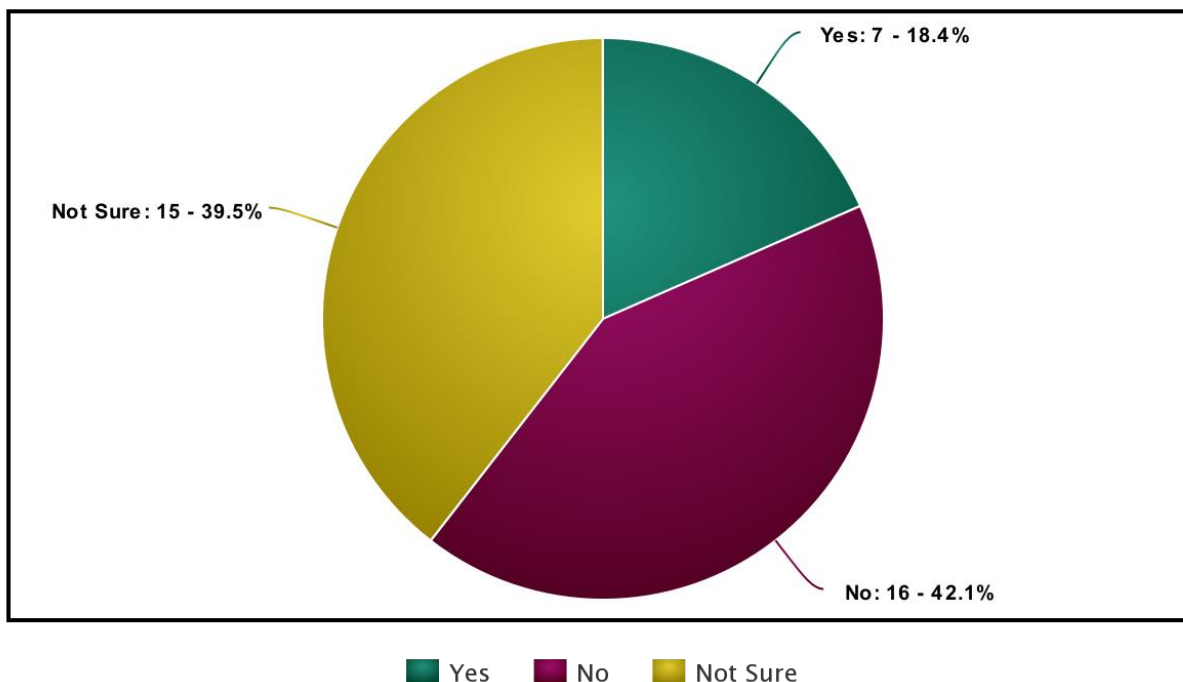
Age Group	April 2019	When Married (% of 22)
25-34	47%	46%
35-44	23%	0
Over 45	16%	4% (1 person)
18-24	11%	50%

of Navigators Missions Represented in Responses
NavWeekly Survey, April 2019



meta-chart.com

If You're Single, Do You Want to Be?
NavWeekly Survey, April 2019



meta-chart.com

What Is the Primary Obstacle for Married and Single Staff Working Together?

Key Words: Expectations, misunderstanding, assumptions (about availability, priorities, time management, needs), comparison, life stages, men and women working together

Hierarchal structure—when those who are married take on roles as leaders and shepherds, and singles largely remain as laborers. This is largely due to the belief that marrieds are more “complete” and “whole” than singles; therefore, married people are more capable of shepherding.
—**Kyle Klekamp (married)**

Staff Development and Care Suggests

Most of these obstacles could be diminished significantly by intentional conversation between staff in different life stages. Check out *Upfront's* Summer 2019 issue for some conversation starters.

“Different life stages = different challenges.”
—**Jeff Wiegel (married)**

“Envy. Marrieds may envy the perceived freedom that singles have... Singles may envy the companionship, partnership that marrieds have. Clear, honest communication is needed.”
—**Ruth Knutson (single)**

Expectations for sharing life together and personal convictions. Depending on the convictions of married staff, a married man might hesitate to spend time training his single, female staff. As a single woman, I often felt “dangerous” or “wrong” for just being single and showing up to ministry and team events—in an extreme case long ago, like I could cause adultery.
—**Anonymous (married)**

What Is the Most/Least Helpful Thing You Have Ever Heard About Singleness? How Did That Make You Feel?

Key Concepts: Identity in Christ, close friendships, “grass is not greener,” singleness is not a problem to be fixed.

Most Helpful

When single, I was told to identify 3-5 key friends—couples or singles—and protect regular (monthly) time with them. This proved to be the greatest source of my own vitality and flourishing while also being ultimate protection against despair and loneliness.

–**Jeff Wiegel (married)**

The goal is to increasingly find our complete identity in Christ (Col. 2:9,10), not in marital status. –**Ruth Knutson (single)**

“Don’t look for the right person to marry, but become the right person.” –**Dave Nickerson (married)**

Both marriage AND singleness portray the completion of the gospel.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ shows singleness as a legitimate means of living in the fullest expression of humanity. This made me feel free to live fully for Christ in the state I was in, and released me from one of the biggest idols for single Christians: marriage.

–**Kyle Klekamp (married)**

Least Helpful

“Your life will be more complete when you’re married.” –**Ruth Knutson (single)**

“Your standards are too high.” Made me feel cheap and unworthy. “Have you tried changing ____?” “Why are you still single?” Made me feel like singleness was my fault. –**Vivian Christmas (single)**

“Going as a single to the mission field is going with the check-engine light on. You can still go and serve, but you won’t function properly without a spouse.” I am not sure I have words to describe how that made me feel because I was so shocked. –**Elizabeth Davies (single)**

Single people are often treated with pity or encouraged that they’ll find the right person eventually instead of being celebrated for who they are and what they contribute right now. –**Jana Parsons (married)**

After seven years, a young woman finally broke up with her physically abusive boyfriend. The girl’s mother was disappointed. “Who knows? Maybe you’ll never get another boyfriend!” This mama cared more about this unbiblical “shame of singleness” than about her daughter’s life. –**Lydia Klingforth (married)**

What Challenges Lie in Becoming Single Again?

Becoming single after being widowed became an identity crisis for me. But coming to understand my union with Christ and that the Lord is my Husband, according to Isaiah, has made all the difference. **–Anonymous (single)**

A divorced friend told me that once you are single again, you are increasingly not included with couples for social engagements. This is deeply hurtful. **–Lindy Black (married)**



What Do You Wish Married People Understood about Being Single? OR What Do You Wish Single People Knew About Being Married?

Key Concepts: We need each other. Everyone is different. Don't always wait for the other person to reach out to include you! Intimate community is important.

Seek to understand. Open up and let others into your life.

Be friends with singles, and be friends with married people. Ask questions, lean in, don't assume.

–Elizabeth Davies (single)

For Singles

"I want single people to know that married people need them. We need their perspective and wisdom. Sometimes they have focus and intimacy with God that is hard for us. Our kids need them, too. They need godly 'aunties' and 'uncles' to be nearby."

–Lydia Klingforth (married)

I wish my single friends understood what our married friends are working through, trying to figure out how to love their spouses/families, how to co-labor with another person, and how to trust God in the midst of it. **–Vivian Christmas (single)**

For Marrieds

Just because we're single doesn't always mean that we have infinite time or energy. Also: being seen and valued and advocated for what we uniquely and personally contribute as an individual who bears the image of God, profoundly ministers to us in ways that are hard to express in words. **–Leihlyn Tinio (single)**

We singles want to be included in more situations that include both men and women. **–Connie Ekberg (single)**

Life feels heavy lived alone—having to be the one to work, fundraise, make dinner, clean, take the car in... it can be a lot. **–Vivian Christmas (single)**

I would wish that married people understood the desires of singles for intimate community. We long for close relationships and a sense of belonging, which in my experience is very difficult to find when most of your network is married.

--Scott Rivenburg (single)

What Myths Do Singles and Marrieds Believe About Each Other?

Key Concepts Compiled:

Myths about Marriage

- **Adulthood (and leadership)** start at marriage
- Married **couples have “made it”** and left singles behind
- Getting married **solves all emotional problems/hurts**
- Being married is **God’s will** for everyone
- Marriage is basically a **sexual bonanza**.
- Married people are **never lonely** and always **blissfully in love**
- Married people **have no time**, because they only want to spend time with each other

Myths about Singleness

- Being single is a **problem** to be fixed
- All singles **want to get married**
- Singles are always **lonely or sad**
- Singles have way **more time** on their hands
- Singles are **immature and selfish**
- Singleness is probably **the single’s fault**
- Singles have **more fun** because they’re unencumbered by another person



“I have nothing to offer them.”

“You have to be in the same life stage or emulate the other’s life stage to spend time with them.”



What Have You Learned Through Singleness or Working with Someone Single?

Key Concepts: Unmet longings. The gospel reflected in singleness. Intimate, non-sexual friendships and community. Contentment. Identity in Christ. Christ’s love for the church. New perspective.

Hearing the stories of disrespect from single teammates is deeply moving. This closely resembles eye-opening conversations about “white privilege.” In the church, married people have privileged status.

–**Lydia Klingforth (married)**

A single staff woman, a full-time Nav Rep, worked at our campus years ago. I was a mom with 3 kids but very engaged. Because I was the campus director’s wife, she felt I had leadership and authority that should have been hers. It was eye-opening. I’ve never looked at ministry teams the same since.

–**Lindy Black (married)**

It is easy to try to find our worth in other people. That fellowship will always fall short. Regardless of our marital status, God has called us to love sacrificially and vulnerably, and to help push each other into Jesus’ arms. –**Kate Zweber (single)**

Singleness helps me better understand the love Christ has for me and his church. In the times when I most desire marriage, I remember that Christ is waiting for the day when he will be united with his bride (Ephesians 5). This brings me comfort and encouragement that I’m not the only one waiting.

–**Anonymous (single)**