

THE SALISBURY DIOCESE

WELLBEING SURVEY

2025

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November 2025

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

S1. The survey was carried out during the months of June and July 2025 and continued the series begun in 2008 and repeated in 2012, 2016 and 2020. The same format was used as in previous surveys, though the questions in the 2020 survey relating specifically to the impact of the COVID pandemic were omitted.

S2. 140 responses were received, corresponding to a 71% return rate. The respondents represent clergy from all roles, though the proportion of incumbents is higher than in the 2020 survey. The response rate is also higher than in the 2020 survey (61%).

S3. The average wellbeing recorded in the 2025 survey is 3.7 overall, with 48% of respondents recording a positive state of wellbeing. This is significantly worse than in the 2020 survey, when the average wellbeing was 4.0 and 61% recorded positive states.

S4. The overall wellbeing conceals considerable variation between different groups of clergy, depending on role, years since ordination and type of parish, for those in parish ministry.

- a. The wellbeing of parish priests (incumbents, team rectors, team vicars, etc.) is substantially worse than the overall average (3.4) and has fallen by a significant amount since 2020.
- b. The wellbeing of associate priests and curates is well above the average (4.2 and 4.5 respectively) and has fallen by only a small amount since 2020.
- c. The wellbeing of priests in non-parish ministry is also well above the average (4.0) and has increased slightly since 2020.
- d. The wellbeing of clergy ordained less than three years (all but one being curates) is better than other clergy, whilst the wellbeing of those ordained over 25 years is worse than others.
- e. Clergy in suburban parishes enjoy the best wellbeing, while those in mixed parishes have the worst wellbeing.

S5. There is no significant difference between the wellbeing of female and male clergy.

S6. The morale of half the respondents is worse now than it was five years ago and that of a further 10% is worse than it was three years ago. However, morale also is not uniform across all respondents, with the proportion whose morale is best now decreasing as the years since ordination increases. Thus, whilst the morale of 75% of respondents ordained for less than three years is best now, the proportion decreases to only 35% of priests ordained over 25 years ago.

S7. Approximately a third of parish priests believe that bullying is an issue and their wellbeing is significantly worse than that of other parish priests. Approximately a quarter of other clergy see bullying as an issue, but it has no impact on their wellbeing. Only a third of those who perceive bullying to be an issue know what steps to take. Comments stress the importance of appropriate action being taken when cases are reported to the relevant authority.

S8. Of the 118 respondents who commented on the value of CMD, 44 considered it to be of value, whilst 34 considered it to be of no, or negative, value. These figures are worse than in 2020, when 59 of 120 respondents considered CMD to be of value, whereas 19 considered it to be of no, or negative, value. Several respondents commented on the lack of wellbeing items in

the CMD programme, whilst others said that it lacked anything of interest. The most frequent positive comments relate to courses on practical issues that help the participant with such things as: liturgy and sermon preparation, safeguarding and dealing with trauma. A second major positive category relates to bible studies and a third to clergy days and the ability to meet with others. However, there is no correlation between the perceived value of CMD and wellbeing.

S9. Seventy percent of the respondents provided a comment on practical measures to improve wellbeing and on other matters. They cover a wide range of topics, of which the principal categories are:

- a. Thanking the Diocese for wellbeing support.
- b. Seeking improved communication and reduced administration.
- c. Seeking greater understanding and responsiveness from Senior Staff.
- d. Questioning the future of the Church of England in terms of both structure and cohesion, including attitudes to sexuality.
- e. Stating the inadequacy of church pay and housing.
- f. Seeking recognition of the challenges facing clergy during extended vacancies and the special challenges facing part-time clergy.

S10. The analysis has identified a number of factors which are likely to have contributed to the lower wellbeing in 2025 than in 2020:

- a. A smaller proportion of those priests with roles that, historically and in the current survey, enjoy better wellbeing (associate priests, curates, priests in non-parish ministry).
- b. A more adverse influence on wellbeing of:
  - trends in the national church,
  - relations with the Diocese,
  - workload,
  - housing issues (for the 75% of respondents who considered this to be an issue).
- c). Greater difficulty in being able to take time off.

Most of these have been reinforced by comments that have been made. None of these factors accounts for the lower wellbeing individually, but collectively they may well do so.

S11. Despite considerable variability in wellbeing between different surveys between 2008 and 2025, the long term trend of the wellbeing of associate priests and curates is slightly positive over time, whilst that of priests in non-parish ministry is essentially flat. In contrast, the wellbeing of parish priests remained constant until 2016 before taking a small drop in 2020 and a much larger drop in 2025.

## INTRODUCTION

### The Wellbeing Survey

1. The survey was carried out during the months of June and July 2025 and continued the series begun in 2008 and repeated in 2012, 2016 and 2020. The same format was used as in previous surveys, though the questions in the 2020 survey relating specifically to the impact of the COVID pandemic were omitted.

### Purpose of the Report

2. The purpose of this report is to:

- a. Set out the responses to the questionnaire.
- b. Present the findings of the analysis with regard to clergy wellbeing
- c. Assess how different factors may be influencing wellbeing.
- d. Compare the findings of this survey with those from earlier surveys, particularly 2020.

### The Responses to the Survey

3. 140 responses were received, corresponding to a 71% return rate. One further response was received several weeks later, after the analysis was well underway, and this response has not been taken into account in this report. The return rate is higher than in the previous survey where the rate was only 61% and 158 responses were received, though only 140 provided useful data. It implies that the number of ordained priests in the Diocese has reduced by about 25% since the previous survey.

### The Respondents

4. The stated roles of the different respondents are shown below. Some respondents have identified themselves as having a secondary role. All these respondents have been included under their primary role only, as the numbers are too small to treat them as a separate category and it could also prejudice anonymity. Respondents who provided a specific description of their parish role have been grouped as “other parish” for the same reason. One respondent did not specify a role.

Associate priests	18
Staff and cathedral	4
Chaplains	11
Curates	13
Incumbents	61
Other parish	4
Team rectors	13
Team vicars	15

## CLERGY WELLBEING

### Wellbeing of the Respondents as a Whole

5. As in the previous surveys, a numerical ranking system has been adopted for responses to the question on state of wellbeing. Thus

<u>Response</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Extremely stressed	1
Very stressed	2
Mildly stressed	3
Mild state of wellbeing	4
Good state	5
Very positive state	6

6. The average wellbeing recorded in the 2025 survey is 3.7 overall. Four respondents recorded multiple wellbeing states and could not be included in the analysis. However, three of these imply a wellbeing state corresponding to the average, though the other implies a more negative state.

### Comparison of Wellbeing with Previous Surveys

7. Table 1 compares the wellbeing of the respondents as a whole from the 2025 survey with that from previous surveys. It shows, for each survey:

The average wellbeing

The percentage of respondents recording negative and positive wellbeing (ratings 1 to 3 and 4 to 6 respectively)

The percentage of respondents recording a high wellbeing (ratings 5 and 6)

The percentage of respondents recording a low wellbeing (ratings 1 and 2), and

The number of respondents.

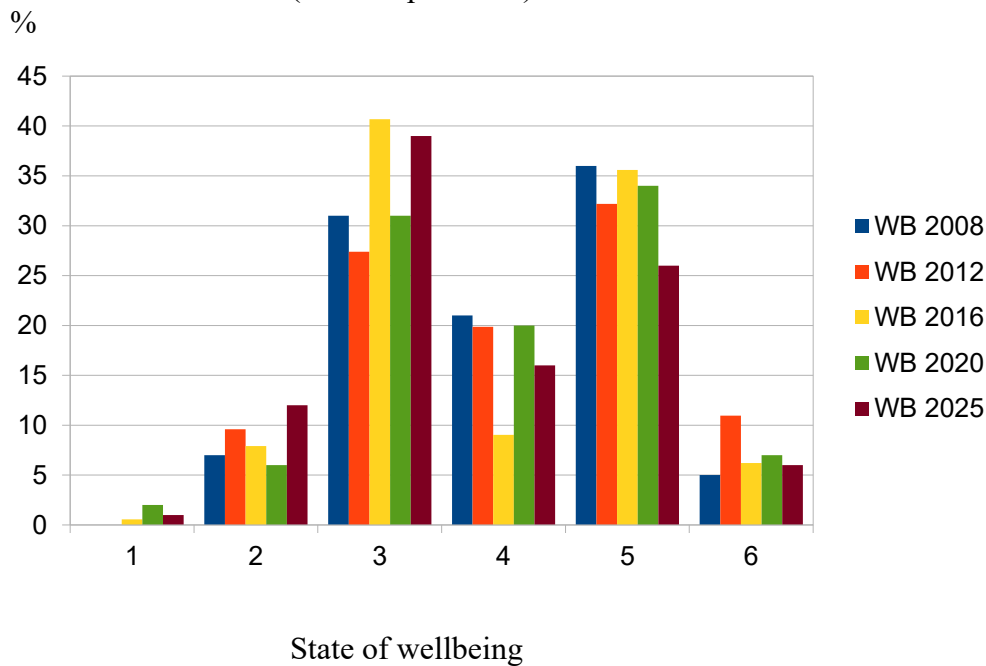
Table 1: Wellbeing over the Different Surveys

Year	2008	2012	2016	2020	2025
Average wellbeing	4.0	4.1	3.8	4.0	3.7
% negative/positive	39/61	37/63	52/48	39/61	52/48
% high wellbeing	41	48	39	41	32
% low wellbeing	7	10	8	8	13
Number of Respondents	133	146	181	140	136

8. It can be seen that the wellbeing states reported in the most recent survey are the lowest of all five. They are even lower than in 2016, though the difference is not statistically significant.

9. The proportions of respondents recording different wellbeing states in each survey are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Distribution of Wellbeing States in Each Survey  
(% of respondents)



10. The figure shows that the lower average wellbeing in 2025 stems from a substantial shift of those reporting a good state of wellbeing (5) and, to a lesser extent, a mild positive state (4), to a substantial increase in mildly stressed (3) and very stressed state (2). In this sense, the shift is more pronounced than in 2016, when a similar low average wellbeing state was recorded, but in that case it resulted from a shift of mildly positive to mildly stressed states. Overall wellbeing in 2025 is significantly lower than in 2020, due to a general shift to lower wellbeing states, rather than a significant shift in extreme states. Possible causes of this lower wellbeing are explored in later sections of this report.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING WELLBEING

### Influence of Different Factors

11. As in previous surveys, the 2025 survey has examined the influence that a range of factors have on the respondent's wellbeing. A numerical ranking system has again been used.

<u>Response</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Strong adverse influence	1
Moderate adverse influence	2
Weak adverse influence	3
Weak positive influence	4
Moderate positive influence	5
Strong positive influence	6

12. For some unknown reason, the 2025 survey omitted the option of recording a weak positive influence (factor rating 4). This means that anyone who might have recorded a weak positive



influence was obliged to record a moderate positive influence (or skip the question). This has the effect of artificially inflating the average value for each factor rating. However, the percentage of negative and positive influences is unaffected.

13. Table 2 shows, for each factor examined and for all those who provided a rating: the average rating, the percentage of negative and positive ratings and the percentage of all respondents who considered the factor irrelevant to their wellbeing in the 2020 and 2025 surveys. The lower number given for the average rating in 2025 assumes that all of those who recorded a moderate positive rating (5) would have recorded a weak positive (4) had it been available, whilst the higher number assumes that all would have recorded a moderate positive rating regardless. Based on previous surveys, the true average is likely to lie about half-way between the two.

Table 2: Ratings for Factors Influencing Wellbeing in the 2020 and 2025 surveys

Factor	Average Rating of Factor	Average Rating of Factor	Balance of Influence for Factor adverse/positive %	Balance of Influence for Factor adverse/positive %	% Not Applicable	% Not Applicable
	2020	2025	2020	2025	2020	2025
Trends in the national church	2.9	2.4 – 2.5	75/25	87/13	6	8
Relations with Diocese	4.2	3.8 – 4.3	25/75	36/64	2	4
Relations with clergy colleagues	4.9	4.7 – 5.2	12/88	10/90	<1	1
Relations with other lay colleagues	5.1	5.0 – 5.3	10/90	9/91	2	<1
Relations with those minister to	5.3	5.2 – 5.4	7/93	8/92	1	<1
Relations with wider community	5.1	4.8 – 5.4	7/93	3/97	3	3
Relations with family members	5.5	5.4 – 5.6	7/93	8/92	3	2
Workload	3.1	2.7 – 2.9	63/37	76/24	<1	0
Housing Issues	4.1	3.3 – 3.6	35/65	54/46	21	24
Sense of Vocation	5.3	5.3 – 5.5	7/93	7/93	4	3
Follow up to Ministry Review	4.1	3.8 – 4.3	26/74	34/66	19	31
Satisfaction with role	4.8	4.6 – 4.9	15/85	20/80	2	1

14. Taking into account both the average values and the balance of negative and positive ratings, it is clear that, for most factors, there is little difference between the two years. Indeed, there are only four factors where the difference is statistically significant and, in each case, the influence is more negative in 2025. They are:

- Trends in the national church
- Relations with the Diocese
- Workload
- Housing issues, for the 76% of respondents who considered it relevant

15. The first three were identified in the report on the 2020 survey as showing particularly strong correlation with wellbeing, implying that they are likely to influence the wellbeing of the individual adversely or positively, depending on the rating. The more adverse rating for these three factors is likely therefore to have contributed to the lower wellbeing rating in 2025.

16. Housing issues were found to have little correlation with wellbeing in all previous surveys. In the current survey, there is again little correlation between housing issues and wellbeing, except for the 13 respondents who recorded a strong negative influence. With one exception, this group recorded poor states of wellbeing. The comments of these respondents also stress the

adverse effects of housing issues. However, whilst housing is clearly important for this group, the relatively small number involved does not impact substantially on the overall wellbeing. If this group is excluded, then average wellbeing would only rise from 3.7 to 3.8.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL GROUPS OF PRIESTS

### Gender Differences in Wellbeing

17. Table 3 shows the difference in wellbeing between female and male clergy.

Table 3: Wellbeing of Female and Male Clergy

Wellbeing	Overall	Female	Male
Average wellbeing	3.7	3.7	3.8
% negative/positive	52/48	57/43	47/53
% high wellbeing	32	33	31
% low wellbeing	13	13	12
Number	135	67	68

Note: One respondent did not record gender

18. The table shows that there are some differences, with female clergy indicating slightly lower wellbeing. However, statistically, the differences are not significant and female and male clergy can, therefore, be grouped together for the purpose of this analysis.

### Clergy in Different Roles

19. Differences in wellbeing recorded by different groups of clergy are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Wellbeing of Clergy in Different Roles

Wellbeing	Overall	Incumbents	Team Rectors	Team Vicars	Other Parish	Curates	Associate Priests	Chaplains	Staff & Cathedral
Average wb	3.7	3.3	3.5	3.8	3.5	4.5	4.2	4.1	3.8
% neg/pos wb	52/48	67/33	55/45	43/57	75/25	31/69	22/78	45/55	50/50
% high wb	32	22	27	21	25	62	50	45	25
% low wb	13	22	27	0	0	0	11	0	0
Number	136	60	11	14	4	13	18	11	4

Note: “Other Parish” includes respondents who have described themselves as “house for duty”, “priest in charge” and “pioneer priest”. Where respondents have described themselves as having two roles, e.g. team rector and chaplain, the one first stated has been used. One respondent did not specify a role. Some respondents did not provide a wellbeing.

20. The wellbeing states recorded by incumbents, team rectors, team vicars and other parish priests are broadly similar and the differences are not statistically significant. They can therefore be grouped together under the general heading of “parish priests”, as in the previous survey. (It is, of course, recognised that curates and associate priests also work in parishes, but the distinction is made in view of the significantly different wellbeing states recorded.)

21. Similarly, there is no significant difference in the wellbeing states of chaplains and priests in staff or cathedral appointments and they have been grouped together as “priests in non-parish ministry”, again as was done in the analysis of the 2020 survey.

22. The wellbeing data for the four resultant groups are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Wellbeing of Different Groups of Clergy in 2025

Wellbeing	Parish Priests	Curates	Associate Priests	Priests in Non-Parish Ministry
Average wellbeing	3.4	4.5	4.2	4.0
% negative/positive	62/38	31/69	22/78	47/53
% high wellbeing	22	62	50	40
% low wellbeing	18	0	11	0
Number	89	13	18	15

Comparison of Different Roles Between 2025 and 2020

23. Table 6 compares the data from the recent survey with that from the previous survey.

Table 6: Comparison of Wellbeing in 2025 with that Recorded in 2020

Wellbeing	Parish Priests		Curates		Associate Priests		Priests in Non-Parish Ministry		All Priests	
	2020	2025	2020	2025	2020	2025	2020	2025	2020	2025
Average wellbeing	3.7	3.4	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.2	3.6	4.0	4.0	3.7
% negative/positive	50/50	62/38	17/83	31/69	23/77	22/78	50/50	47/53	39/61	52/48
% high wellbeing	28	22	71	62	58	50	29	40	41	32
% low wellbeing	12	18	0	0	0	11	14	0	8	13
Number of Responses	76	89	24	13	26	18	14	15	140	136
% of all responses	54	65	17	10	19	13	10	11		

24. The table illustrates, at least in numerical terms, why wellbeing overall is worse in 2025 than in 2020. Two different factors are involved.

- a. First, the proportion of parish priests, who generally record worse wellbeing than other clergy, is much higher in 2025 than in 2020. This naturally lowers the average wellbeing, even if the wellbeing recorded by each category were unchanged.
- b. Secondly, with the exception of the small number of priests in non- parish ministry, the wellbeing of all categories of clergy, is lower than in 2020, and is particularly so for parish priests.

Stipendiary Status

25. Examination of the wellbeing states recorded by stipendiary and non-stipendiary priests appears to indicate that the latter enjoy much better wellbeing than the former (average wellbeing of 4.2 as opposed to 3.5). However, the difference is primarily due to the composition of the two groups. The overwhelming majority of stipendiary clergy are parish priests, whilst the vast majority of non-stipendiary clergy are in roles that enjoy better wellbeing (curates, associate

priests, priests in non-parish ministry). It seems far more likely that the difference is due to role than to stipendiary status. For example, there is no significant difference between the wellbeing of the few non-stipendiary parish priests and their stipendiary colleagues.

Influence of Years Since Ordination

26. Table 7 shows how wellbeing varies with the years since the priest was ordained.

Table 7: Wellbeing of Priests Ordained for Different Periods

Years Ordained	0 to 3 years	3 to 10 years	10 to 25 years	Over 25 years
Average wellbeing	4.5	3.7	3.7	3.4
% negative/positive	29/71	50/50	50/50	69/31
% high wellbeing	57	31	32	21
% low wellbeing	0	11	16	14
Number	14	39	57	29
% which are parish priests	7	66	75	79

Note: One respondent did not answer this question.

27. Priests who have been ordained less than three years enjoy significantly better wellbeing than other clergy. This group corresponds, with one exception, to curates and it is unclear whether the high level of wellbeing is due primarily to recent ordination or to the role of curate.

28. Priests ordained over 25 years suffer from significantly lower wellbeing than those ordained for between three and 25 years. Although the former group includes a somewhat higher proportion of parish priests than those ordained for fewer years, the difference is not large enough on its own to explain the lower wellbeing of those ordained for over 25 years. Part of the reason for this lower wellbeing probably lies in the much lower ratings recorded for “trends in the national church”, “workload” and “housing issues”, as shown in Table 8. It is not clear from the evidence in the survey why these ratings are so much lower.

Table 8: Differences in Factor Ratings for Clergy Ordained Over 25 Years

Average Rating For:	Ordained 3 to 25 years	Ordained over 25 years
Trends in National Church	2.6	2.1
Workload	2.9	2.5
Housing Issues	3.8	3.1

29. This finding is in marked contrast to that in 2020, when there was no significant difference in wellbeing between priests ordained for different periods, other than for less than three years (curates). However, these low ratings from clergy ordained over 25 years are insufficient to explain the overall low rating for wellbeing compared with 2020. Excluding them would increase wellbeing overall only from 3.7 to 3.8.

### Influence of Type of Parish

30. Table 9 shows how wellbeing varies with type of parish for those in parish ministry.

Table 9: Variation of Wellbeing with Type of Parish

Type of Parish	Number of Parishes	Average wellbeing	% Neg/pos wellbeing	% High wellbeing	% Low wellbeing	% of Curates & Associates	% Priests ordained over 25 years
Urban	16	3.8	44/56	31	6	31	19
Suburban	14	4.4	21/79	57	0	43	7
Rural	58	3.7	52/49	28	14	22	29
Mixed	30	3.4	70/30	27	23	23	10
All Parishes	118	3.7	52/48	31	14	31	

31. Clergy in suburban parishes appear to enjoy significantly better wellbeing than those in other types of parish. This can be explained partly by the fact that suburban parishes have a much higher proportion of curates and associate priests than other types of parish, and a lower proportion of priests ordained over 25 years. However, neither factor is sufficient to explain individually or combined the much higher wellbeing rating. For example, the average wellbeing of parish priests in suburban parishes, who have been ordained between 3 and 25 years, is much higher than such priests in other parishes (average wellbeing 4.3 cf 3.5). Furthermore, clergy in suburban parishes receive similar levels of support to other parishes and are no better able to take time off (see below), but they also report a much better rating for workload. It can be noted that exactly the same phenomenon (i.e. inexplicably good wellbeing in suburban parishes) occurred in the responses to the 2020 survey. Hence, it would appear that there is some other factor, not addressed in the questionnaire, that makes suburban parishes particularly conducive to good wellbeing.

32. In contrast, clergy in mixed parishes appear to suffer from significantly worse wellbeing. In this case, they benefit from similar levels of support to other clergy and find it no more difficult to take time off. There is no obvious issue stemming from the mix of clergy, which is similar to that in urban and rural parishes. The only significant difference between these priests and others is that they have reported much more negative impact of workload. This is illustrated below in Table 10. No reason can be offered for this phenomenon, which was not apparent in the previous survey and which undoubtedly contributes to the lower wellbeing in 2025 than in 2020, though it does not fully account for it.

Table 10: Differences in Ratings for Workload Between Parishes

Parish	Average rating for workload	% adverse/positive
Urban	2.8 – 2.9	75/25
Suburban	3.1 – 3.6	57/43
Rural	2.7 – 3.0	73/27
Mixed	2.1 – 2.2	91/9
All	2.7 – 2.9	76/24

## TIME OFF

### The Influence of Time Off

33. The extent to which respondents are able to take time off during the day, week and month is compared with corresponding data from previous surveys in Tables 11a – 11c. The tables also show how the average wellbeing in 2025 varies with time off.

Table 11a: Time Off per Day  
Percentage of respondents in each year

Year	Less than 1 hour	Between 1 and 3 hours	Over 3 hours
2012	10	66	24
2016	26	28	46
2020	9	57	34
2025	10	64	26
Average wellbeing in 2025	2.9	3.7	4.1

Table 11b: Ability to Take a 24-Hour Break per Week  
Percentage of Respondents in Each  
Year

Year	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
2012	4	15	81
2016	9	12	80
2020	5	9	86
2025	9	23	68
Average wellbeing in 2025	3.1	3.5	3.9

Table 11c: Ability to Take a 48-Hour Break per Month  
Percentage of Respondents in Each Year

Year	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
2012	50	28	22
2016	39	34	27
2020	41	33	26
2025	47	31	22
Average wellbeing in 2025	3.4	3.8	4.2

34. The tables show clearly the correlation between time off, be it per day, week or month, and wellbeing, implying that ability to take time off has a significant impact on wellbeing. The tables also show that the ability to take time off during the day, week and month all show considerable variability over the different surveys, but it is interesting to note that, in each case,

it is less in 2025 than it 2020. The lesser ability to take time off is likely to have contributed to the lower overall wellbeing in 2025 than in 2020. It is also likely to have contributed to the more adverse rating for “workload” noted above.

35. The ability to take all the allocation of annual leave and to go on annual retreat is compared with previous surveys in Tables 12a and 12b respectively. The tables also show the average wellbeing in 2025.

Table 12a: Ability to Take Annual Leave  
Percentage of Respondents in Each Year

Year	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
2012	14	13	73
2016	21	17	62
2020	21	24	55
2025	17	27	56
Average wellbeing in 2025	3.7	3.7	3.7

Table 12b: Ability to go on Annual Retreat  
Percentage of Respondents in Each Year and Combined

Year	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
2016	X	26	28	46	X
2020	X	29	32	39	X
2025	7	16	24	30	23
Average wb 2025	4.2	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.6

Note: X indicates that this option was not included in the questionnaire

36. The ability to take the full allocation of annual leave and to go on annual retreat has varied from survey to survey, as has its impact on wellbeing. However, in 2025, neither have a significant impact, nor does the ability to take either differ significantly from the results in 2020. Hence, the ability to take annual leave or go on annual retreat is highly unlikely to have contributed to the lower wellbeing in 2025.

## SUPPORT FOR CLERGY

### Practical Support for Clergy

37. The support that clergy receive from different sources has also been ranked on a six point scale:

<u>Response</u>	<u>Rating</u>
None	1
Very Little	2
Little	3
Some	4
Significant	5
Extensive	6

38. The average ratings for support received from various sources is shown in Table 13, together with the corresponding data for 2020. Also shown is the balance between those receiving poor support (none, very little or little) and those receiving positive support (some, significant and extensive).

Table 13: Practical Support for Diocesan Clergy

Support	Average Rating	Average Rating	Balance of Responses (poor/positive) 2020	Balance of Responses (poor/positive) 2025
	2020	2025		
From clergy colleagues	4.0	4.0	27/73	26/74
From Chapter	3.1	3.0	54/46	60/40
From the Diocesan Staff	3.4	3.2	45/55	52/48
From Bishop’s Staff <sup>1</sup>	3.2	3.0	50/50	56/44
From lay colleagues	4.4	4.5	12/88	12/88
From family members	4.6	4.5	15/85	20/80

39. The table shows clearly that there is little difference between the data for the two years. In particular, the detailed analysis included in the report on the 2020 survey showed that support from clergy and lay colleagues and from Diocesan Staff are particularly important in maintaining good wellbeing. The data for the first two are identical in the two surveys, and the third is only marginally lower in 2025. Thus, support for clergy is unlikely to be a factor in the lower wellbeing in 2025.

Access to Staff

40. Respondents were asked whether they had sufficient access to both Bishop’s Staff and Diocesan Staff. The responses are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Access to Bishops’ and Diocesan Staff

	Bishop's	Staff	Diocesan	Staff
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Sufficient Access				
Number	22	113	20	116
% of respondents	16	84	15	85
Average wellbeing	3.5	3.7	3.2	3.8
% Negative/Positive wellbeing	64/36	50/50	75/25	48/52
% High wellbeing rating	27	32	20	34
% Low wellbeing rating	18	12	35	9

Note: 13 of those saying “no” were common to both

41. For the Bishop’s Staff, the wellbeing of those having insufficient access is lower than those who do not, but the difference is relatively small. In contrast the difference in wellbeing for those who do not have sufficient access to Diocesan Staff is larger. Note that the number of respondents stating “insufficient access” is small in both cases and most of these respondents are common to both.

42. Those with insufficient access to Diocesan Staff include a disproportionately large number of parish priests, whose wellbeing is significantly lower than that of other parish priests, both of



which will have contributed to the lower wellbeing of this group. They have also recorded more adverse ratings for: trends in the national church, workload, relations with the Diocese and support from Diocesan Staff. The last two are perhaps understandable as insufficient access may well be related to poor relations and lack of support, and possibly also to workload, but no explanation can be offered for the lower rating for trends in the national church.

43. These findings regarding the impact of insufficient access differ somewhat from those in the 2020 survey, as shown in Table 15. In 2020 insufficient access to Bishop’s Staff was more detrimental to wellbeing than insufficient access to Diocesan Staff, but again the total number reporting insufficient access was small.

Table 15: Different Influence of Access to Staff in 2020 and 2025

	Bishop's	Staff	Diocesan	Staff
Survey	2020	2025	2020	2025
Average wellbeing: Access no/yes	3.4/4.1	3.5/3.7	3.5/4.0	3.2/3.8

In practice, the differences between the two surveys are not large and primarily reflect the generally lower wellbeing in 2025. Given the small numbers reporting insufficient access in either case, it is highly unlikely that access to staff is a major cause of the lower wellbeing in 2025.

Access to Other Forms of Support

44. The questionnaire also invited respondents to say whether they had sufficient access to other forms of support, specifically:

- Work consultant/mentor/coaches
- Spiritual Directors
- Cell Groups
- Any other form of support

45. Respondents were asked to state whether their access was:

- Too little
- About right
- Too much, or
- Not applicable

46. Table 16a shows the number of respondents in each category, whilst Table 16b shows the corresponding average wellbeing.

Table 16a: Number of Respondents with Access to Support

Access to:	Too little	About Right	Too much	N/A
Mentor	22	40	0	78
Spiritual Director	29	87	0	24
Cell Group	18	44	3	75
Other	0	40	6	94

Table 16b: Average Wellbeing for Each Category

Access to:	Too little	About Right	Too much	N/A
Mentor	3.8	4.0	-----	3.6
Spiritual Director	3.8	3.7	-----	3.7
Cell Group	3.6	3.7	5.3	3.7
Other	-----	3.6	4.2	3.7

47. Nearly half of the respondents make use of a mentor/work consultant/coach, whilst over 80% make use of a spiritual director. Cell groups are used by about half the respondents, whilst about a third use other forms of support. Examination of Table 16b indicates that there is little correlation between access to these aspects of support and wellbeing.

#### CLERGY NEW TO THE SURVEY

##### Differences in Wellbeing

48. Of the 140 respondents, 70 had taken part in the 2020 survey, 68 had not and two did not answer this question. The wellbeing of the two groups is compared in Table 17.

Table 17: Wellbeing of those who did and did not take part in the 2020 Survey

	Number	Average Wellbeing	% Negative/Positive	% High Wellbeing	% Low Wellbeing
Took part in 2020 and 2025	70	3.5	59/41	26	19
Took part in 2025 only	68	3.9	45/55	38	8

49. It is possible that some of those who only took part in the 2025 survey had actually been in the Diocese in 2020, but did not take part. However, the presumption is that the majority of those new to the survey are also new to the Diocese as ordained priests. Superficially, it would seem that these clergy enjoy a better wellbeing than those who have been in the Diocese for some time. However, the difference can be traced to the composition of the two groups, as shown in Table 18.

Table 18: Participants in the Two Surveys

	Parish Priests %	Associate Priests %	Curates %	Priests in Non-Parish Ministry %
Took part in 2020 and 2025	82	11	0	7
Took part in 2025 only	51	15	19	15

50. Nearly half of those new to the survey comprise clergy in roles with a generally better wellbeing than the majority of those who also took part in the previous survey and the higher

average wellbeing of the former is thus to be expected. In fact, there is no difference between the wellbeing of parish priests who did, or did not, take part in the previous survey.

## MORALE

### Morale and Wellbeing

51. Respondents were asked to rank in order the state of their morale now, 3 years ago and 5 years ago. One hundred and twenty-four respondents answered this question. Table 19 shows the average wellbeing for each of the three groups and the average change in wellbeing since the previous survey five years ago.

Table 19: Relationship Between Morale and Wellbeing

	Number of answers (Total 124)	% of those answering question	Average wellbeing	Change in wellbeing over last 5 years
Morale best now	58	47	4.3	Much better
Morale best 3 years ago	20	16	3.5	A little better
Morale best 5 years ago	46	37	3.3	Worse

52. Morale is not the same as wellbeing, but the two are certainly related and this can be seen in Table 19. Those whose morale is best now have also recorded the highest state of wellbeing and, reassuringly, the most positive change in wellbeing over the last five years. Their wellbeing is significantly better than that of the other respondents in 2025.

53. Those whose morale was better five years ago have recorded the lowest state of wellbeing and this is significantly lower than that of the other respondents. The wellbeing of those whose morale was best three years ago lies between the two extremes and is lower than the overall average, but the relatively small number involved imply that the difference is not statistically significant.

### Dependence of Morale on Years Since Ordination

54. Table 20 shows how the three groups (morale best now, three years ago and five years ago) relate to the years that the respondent has been ordained.

Table 20: Relationship Between Years Since Ordination and Morale

Years Ordained	Less than 3	3 to 10	10 to 25	Over 25	All
Morale best now	9	19	21	9	58
Morale best 3 years ago	3	4	9	4	20
Morale best 5 years ago	0	11	22	13	46
All	12	34	53	26	124
Total respondents	14	39	57	29	139
% responding to question	86	87	90	91	89

55. The table presents a number of interesting features. First, the number of respondents answering the question is very high and consistent across all periods since ordination. Hence the data can be considered as being representative. Secondly, the balance between morale being best now and five years ago shifts steadily towards the latter as the period since ordination increases.

<u>Period since Ordination</u>	<u>% best now/3 years ago/ 5 years ago</u>
Less than 3 years	75/0
3 to 10 years	56/32
10 to 25 years	40/42
Over 25 years	35/50

These data broadly reflect the pattern seen in Table 7, showing how wellbeing varies with years ordained, except that here the distinction between those ordained for 3 to 10 years and those ordained for 10 to 25 years is more pronounced.

56. It is not entirely clear from the data why those ordained for longer should show this deterioration in morale and wellbeing, but there are some clues. As for wellbeing, there are differences in responses to other questions between those whose morale was better 5 years ago and now. In particular, they currently report more adverse impact of:

- Trends in the National Church
- Relations with the Diocese
- Relations with clergy and lay colleagues
- Workload
- Job satisfaction

They are also unable to take as much time off. Most of these factors have been shown to have a significant impact on wellbeing and it is not surprising therefore that their morale was better five years ago.

#### Morale of All Respondents

57. Of the 20 respondents whose morale was best three years ago, eight stated that their morale was also better five years ago than now. Sixteen respondents skipped this question so we know nothing about their state of morale. However, their average state of wellbeing is significantly worse than those that did answer. They have also recorded more adverse impacts for every factor that has been examined, and have indicated that their wellbeing is worse than five years ago. This tends to suggest that their morale is also likely to be lower than five years ago. Thus, the morale of half the clergy who responded to this survey is worse than it was five years ago, and a further 10% is worse than it was three years ago..

## THE DIOCESAN WELLBEING PROGRAMME

#### Awareness of the Programme

58. 76 respondents stated that they were aware that the Diocese had a wellbeing programme, whilst 63 did not. In practice, this may reflect more a question of formal definition than actual lack of awareness, since most were aware of, or had taken part in, a wellbeing activity. As discussed later, the question was raised as to whether CMD could be included under the category of a wellbeing programme, as many comments regretted the omission of wellbeing activities from the current listings.

### Reflective Practice Groups

59. Of the 140 respondents, 45 had taken part in a reflective practice group (RPG) and 95 had not, of whom 14 were ineligible.

60. Of the 45 who had taken part, 28 (62%) had found it useful, 9 (20%) had found it partly useful and 8 (18%) had not found it useful. There is nothing to distinguish those who did not find it useful from their colleagues and whilst their average wellbeing appears to be slightly better, it is not statistically different from the others.

61. Of the 81 eligible respondents who had not taken part 34 (42%) did not know how to do so. Over half of the latter are in roles other than parish priest and nearly half of the parish priests had not taken part in the previous survey and, hence, may be relatively new to the Diocese. The average wellbeing of those who did not take part in an RPG is not significantly different from those that did so.

62. It must be noted that the lack of difference in wellbeing between those who, or did not, take part cannot be taken as an indication of a lack of positive impact from participation, since it is impossible to know what the wellbeing of the participants would have been, had they not taken part. Indeed, nine comments specifically mention the beneficial value of RPGs.

### CMD

63. Most respondents had taken part in some form of CMD activity in the last five years, including some in a former Diocese, but the balance in perception of the value of CMD has deteriorated significantly since the previous survey in 2020, as shown in Table 21. There is no correlation between wellbeing and the perceived value of CMD.

Table 21: Perception of the Value of CMD

Perception of Value	2020	2025
Positive Impact	59	44
Mixed Impact	42	40
No Impact	16	31
Negative Impact	3	3
Total Number of Responses	120	118

64. Many respondents provided comments on CMD, either under the section of the questionnaire which asked which CMD events were most helpful, or under the sections seeking practical steps to improve wellbeing, or more general comments. The most frequent positive comments relate to courses on practical issues that help the participant with such things as: liturgy and sermon preparation, safeguarding and dealing with trauma. A second major category relates to bible studies and a third to clergy days and the ability to meet with others. However, a dozen respondents have found nothing to interest or inspire them in the current CMD programme, and others regret the passing of the previous specifically wellbeing items and would like them to be restored. A further complaint concerns the lack of sufficient advance notice for events, bearing in mind that diaries may fill up several months ahead, whilst there are a number of requests for access to specific types of support, e.g. a psychotherapist, coaching for chaplains.

### Counselling

65. All respondents answered this question, 106 of whom (55%) are aware that counselling is available through the Diocese and all know how to access it when needed. Of the remaining thirty-four, there are: 17 parish priests, 7 curates, 4 each of associate priests and chaplains, and 2 in staff appointments. There is no correlation between wellbeing and awareness, or not, of the availability of counselling.

### The Impact of Wellbeing Activities

66. Respondents were asked whether any wellbeing activity or counselling, in which they had taken part, had made a difference and, if so how. The breakdown of their answers is compared with those from the 2016 and 2020 surveys in Table 22. The respondents not answering the question may not have taken part in a wellbeing activity, or may simply have skipped the question.

Table 22: Breakdown of Impact of Wellbeing Programme

Year	2016	2020	2025
Total of Responses	161	140	140
Number Answering Question	146	92	84
% Answering Question	91	66	60
Number answering "yes"	74	29	37
Number answering "no"	72	63	47
% of answers "yes"	51	32	44
% of answers "no"	49	68	56

67. The proportion of positive answers is significantly higher in 2025 than in 2020, though is significantly lower than in 2016, and the proportion of all respondents who answered the question is much lower in both years than in 2016

68. Of the 37 respondents who answered "yes" in 2025:

22 valued the fellowship of meeting with others and sharing experiences, including five which specifically mentioned RPGs and two which specifically mentioned the spiritual support they had received.

7 mentioned personal development

1 reminisced about a sailing wellbeing event when all the pressures of priestly life were left behind for a while.

Of the two negative comments, one regretted the passing of wellbeing elements in CMD and one resented the time spent at clergy days.

69. There is no difference between the wellbeing of those who answered "yes", "no", or did not answer the question.

### Wellbeing Provision Other Than Through The Diocese

70. 53 respondents stated that they were aware of other wellbeing provision, 75 that they were not, and 12 skipped the question. Of those who are aware, many cited formal organisations such as St Luke's, the Sheldon Retreat Centre, the Clergy Support Trust and the CPAS; whilst

chaplains cited support through their profession. Others cited a variety of informal sources such as privately arranged counselling, mentoring and exercise.

71. 38 respondents had made use of other wellbeing support sources, essentially the same as those cited in the previous paragraph. The wellbeing of this group is not significantly different from other clergy

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

### The Scale and Impact of Bullying

72. The responses to the questions on bullying are shown in Table 23.

Table 23: Perception of Bullying in the Diocese

Bullying an Issue	Total Number	% of Respondents	Aware of Steps to Take	Partly Aware of Steps to Take	Not Aware of Steps to Take	Average Wellbeing
Yes	45	32	16	9	19	3.3
Partly	6	4	1		4	3.8
No	77	55	9	2	5	3.9
Skipped Question	12	9				4.3

Note: Not all respondents who answered the question as to whether bullying is an issue also answered the question on steps to take.

73. Nearly a third of Diocesan clergy believe that bullying is an issue and barely a third of these know what steps to take. The wellbeing of those who believe that bullying is an issue is significantly worse than that of other clergy. However, neither the roles nor wellbeing of those who believe that bullying is an issue are evenly spread across all clergy, as shown in Table 24

Table 24: Difference in Perception of Bullying

Role	Bullying an Issue	Number of Respondents	Average Wellbeing
Parish Priests	Yes	34	2.9
Parish Priests	No	52	3.9
Parish Priests	All	93	3.4
Other Clergy	Yes	11	4.3
Other Clergy	No	25	4.2
Other Clergy	All	46	4.2

74. Approximately a third of parish priests believe that bullying is an issue and approximately a quarter of other clergy. The average wellbeing of parish priests who see bullying as an issue is very much worse than those who do not and the average for all parish priests lies midway between the two extremes. In contrast, for other clergy, a belief that bullying is an issue has no impact at all on wellbeing. (The slightly better wellbeing of those who said “yes” is not statistically significant.)

## COMMENTS MADE BY RESPONDENTS

### Categories of Comment

75. Respondents were invited to suggest practical steps that the Diocese could take to improve wellbeing and to make any other comments that they wished. In practice, the two categories tend to address similar issues and are dealt with together here.

76. Ninety-five respondents commented under “Practical Steps”, 51 of whom also commented under “General Comments”. A further four respondents commented under the latter category only. However, many respondents made several different points within their comment and the total number of points raised is over 200. Clearly, it is impracticable to list every comment in detail in this report; apart from any other consideration, it could seriously compromise anonymity and confidentiality. The comments have therefore been grouped into a number of categories.

77. As in previous surveys, the largest category, of 34 separate items, covers a range of positive comments, thanking the Diocese and Senior Staff for what they already do and not seeking more from them, with some comments expressing thanks for the questionnaire.

78. The next largest category of 33 items concerns communications and administration.

Thirteen comments request improved communications, including those relating to what is available, what decisions and changes have been made, and to include all clergy.

Twelve comments relate to admin staff, asking that they be reduced and dead wood removed, whilst asking for more support, including for faculties. A particular issue is the challenge of contacting the right person without a proper directory, when people “hot desk” and work from home.

Eight comments seek to reduce the administrative burden on clergy, including by reducing the number of forms and new policies, and by not requesting information during busy periods such as Hoy Week and Christmas.

79. Twenty-nine comments relate to Senior Staff. These comments are very similar to those reported in the 2020 and 2016 Surveys, though the first one listed below is new. They can be broadly summarised as:

Stop telling us to pay our Share and to grow our congregation. Everyone is doing their best, but the money and people are not there (12 comments).

Provide more personal contact and feedback (7).

Be more visibly supportive (4).

Respond to requests (4).

Listen and take us seriously.

Be more understanding of stresses in the parishes.

80. A related category of nine comments concerns the Church of England’s and Diocese’s changing attitude to sexuality in the church.

81. The next largest category of 19 comments addresses the structure of the Diocese and Church of England as a whole. This is a rather heterogeneous category and not all comments point in the same direction. One major theme, however, is whether the current structure, in terms of both



parishes and buildings, is sustainable in view of dwindling church membership and income. A related comment questions whether the role of stipendiary clergy is sustainable. A second, though smaller theme questions the current hierarchical structure of the CofE and proposes a more collegiate style from top to bottom, with individual roles being less precisely defined, though other comments oppose a trend towards a business culture, with its focus on management skills and productivity. Some comments suggest that the Diocese focuses too much on specific areas, e.g. urban parishes. It is not the first time that this category has appeared in the comments, but it is larger than previously.

82. Eighteen comments concern CMD and the provision of wellbeing support. These have been discussed in the section of the report dealing with CMD.

83. Thirteen comments relate to housing issues, as discussed above in paragraph 16. This group is larger than in previous surveys and focusses particularly on the management of the Diocese's property estate.

84. Ten comments relate to the inadequacy of current levels of pay. This category has not appeared in earlier surveys.

85. Ten comments refer to the challenges facing the remaining clergy when a parish is in extended vacancy and encourage the Diocese to recruit more.

86. Eight comments relate to self-supporting and associate priests and part-time working:  
The Diocese does not always recognise and accommodate the competing demands on those who also have secular jobs and cannot always prioritise parish work.  
They often feel left out and do not receive communications.  
Part-time stipendiary clergy are disadvantaged.

87. Seven comments concerned bullying, including requests that appropriate action be taken when referred to the relevant authority.

88. Five comments concern ministry review:  
That they should happen regularly;  
With a senior member, not a peer;  
That there should be feedback.

89. Five comments reflect on wellbeing and ministry today:  
That the individual priest must take some responsibility for his, or her, own wellbeing.  
That wellbeing is related to the situation at international, national and church level, all of which are at a low ebb.  
That the job of the priest is too stressful today.  
That wellbeing has seriously declined since the pandemic.  
That the current state of affairs encourages early retirement

90. The remaining eight comments cover a wide range of topics.  
Guidelines on how many sermons, meetings, etc., a priest should provide in a week  
There should be provision of support for clergy families.  
A photo id lanyard for priests would be useful.

Chaplains still feel that they are on the margins, though things have improved.  
Holding the Chrism Service on Maundy Thursday is awkward as this is a very busy time.  
Clergy should be told to take the time off that is allotted.  
Be more aware of women's issues and experience.  
Be more supportive of disability awareness.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### Differences in Wellbeing between 2020 and 2025

91. The analysis presented above shows clearly that the wellbeing of the Diocesan clergy overall, as represented by the 71% of clergy who responded to the questionnaire, has fallen significantly since the previous survey in 2020 at the height of the COVID pandemic. However, the change is not uniform across all groups of clergy. In particular, the average wellbeing of parish priests has fallen much further than that of associate priests and curates, whilst the average wellbeing of priests in non-parish ministry has risen slightly.

92. Even amongst parish priests, wellbeing is not uniform.

- a. The wellbeing of parish priests in suburban parishes is better than their colleagues, whilst the wellbeing of those in mixed parishes is worse. The former was also evident in the 2020 survey, whereas the latter was not.
- b. Parish priests ordained for more than 25 years have worse wellbeing than their colleagues, whereas there was no difference in 2020 with regard to years since ordination.

93. The responses to the question on morale are fully consistent with the findings regarding wellbeing. Half of all respondents considered their morale to be better five years ago than today and the morale of a further 10% was better three years ago. Morale also decreases as years since ordination increase, from 75% better now for those ordained for less than three years, to 35% better now for those ordained over 25 years ago. This result is also consistent with the lower wellbeing of those ordained over 25 years.

### Possible Causes of the Difference in Wellbeing

94. The survey does not directly answer the question: "why is your wellbeing worse in 2025 than in 2020?", but there are some clues in the answers to other questions. Historically, it has been found that some factors examined are strongly correlated with wellbeing and, hence, by inference, are likely to have an important impact of wellbeing. Comparison of the data from the 2020 and 2025 surveys indicates that the answers for some of these factors are substantially more adverse in 2025 than in 2020. In particular, these are:

- Trends in the national church
- Relations with the Diocese
- Workload
- Housing issues, for the 75% of respondents who considered it relevant.
- Ability to take time off

95. The first three have been shown to have particularly strong correlation with wellbeing and the more adverse rating for these three factors is likely therefore to have contributed to the lower wellbeing rating in 2025.

96. The lower rating for trends in the national church is fully consistent with the comments summarised in paragraphs 80 -81 with regard to the future of the Church of England in its present form and attitudes to sexuality; whilst the latter paragraph, together with some comments in paragraph 79, are consistent with the lower rating for relations with the Diocese. The nature of these comments is not new, but the emphasis appears to be greater.

97. Housing issues were found to have little correlation with wellbeing in all previous surveys. In the current survey, there is again little correlation between housing issues and wellbeing, except for the 13 respondents who recorded a strong negative influence. With one exception, this group recorded poor states of wellbeing. The comments of these respondents also stress the adverse effects of housing issues. However, whilst housing is clearly important for this group, the relatively small number involved does not impact substantially on the overall wellbeing. If this group is excluded, then average wellbeing would only rise from 3.7 to 3.8.

98. A further important difference between the findings of the 2020 and 2025 surveys is that clergy have been less able to take time off during the day, week and month in 2025 than in 2020, and time off has a significant impact on wellbeing

99. The greater impact of workload and inability to take time off may well be related, amongst other things, to there being fewer clergy in the Diocese. As noted in the summary of the comments made by respondents, ten comments refer specifically to the impact on workload of extended vacancies, and a desire to recruit more clergy. There are also comments on the administrative burden, though these have been made in previous surveys and it is not clear whether they have increased over the last five years.

100. There are, of course, many factors that may influence wellbeing that have not been examined in the questionnaire, including: personal health, family issues, environmental issues and world affairs. Whilst some of these will only affect an individual priest, others may affect all priests to a degree, and the survey was carried out during a period when the daily news headlines were particularly disturbing.

#### Long Term Trends

101. As overall wellbeing is lower in 2025 than in 2020, whilst that in 2020 was better than in 2016, the question arises as to whether 2025 is low, or 2020 was high, despite being in the middle of the pandemic. (The report on the impact of the pandemic on clergy wellbeing and morale concluded that it had been modest.)

102. In order to illuminate this question, Table 25 amplifies Table 1 by showing the average wellbeing recorded in each survey since the first in 2008, broken down by role.

Table 25: Average Wellbeing of Different Groups of Clergy over All Years

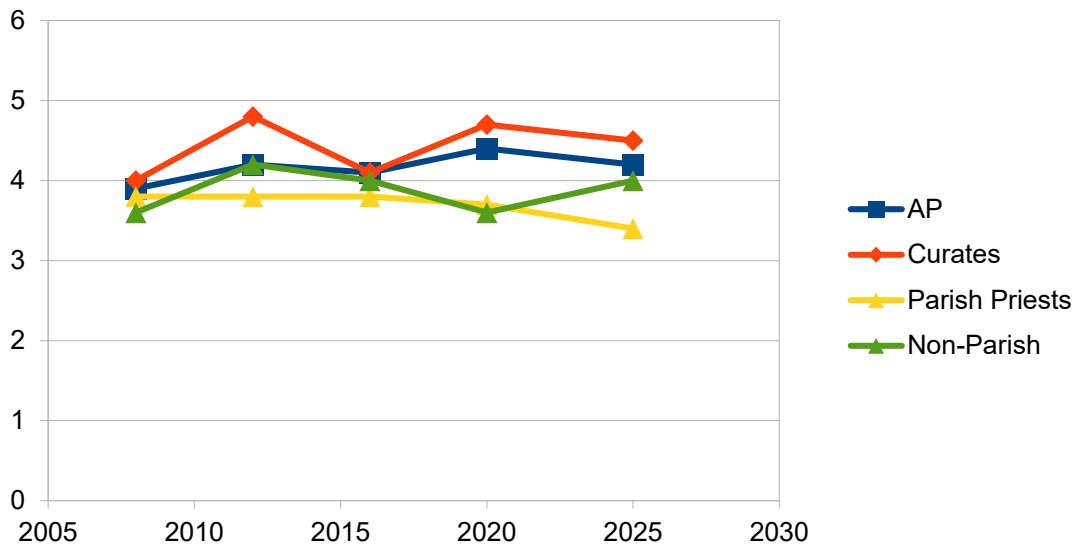
Year	Parish Priests	Curates	Associate Priests	Priests in Non-Parish Ministry	All Priests
2008	3.8	4.0	3.9*	3.6	4.0
2012	3.8	4.8	4.2	4.2	4.1
2016	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.8
2020	3.7	4.7	4.4	3.6	4.0
2025	3.4	4.5	4.2	4.0	3.7

\*Note: In 2008 there was no category of Associate Priest, but a category of Ordained Local Ministry, which has been taken to be equivalent.

103. The table shows firstly that, for parish priests, wellbeing remained steady for the first three surveys, took a small drop during COVID, but has taken a large drop since, probably for reasons including those discussed above.

104. In contrast, the wellbeing of other priests displays considerable variability year-on-year. This is not surprising. Wellbeing is a highly subjective parameter and a person may assess it differently on different days, depending on the circumstances of the moment. Whilst some priests will take part in more than one survey, many of the participants will change, and different participants may assess the same feeling differently, for example between a mild state and a good state. Furthermore, unlike parish priests, where there is a relatively large number of respondents, the numbers involved in other roles tend to be much smaller, which inevitably implies greater variability in the average. Although no clear trend is obviously apparent in these cases, it becomes clearer in Figure 2, which presents the same data as Table 25 graphically.

Figure 2: Average Wellbeing of Different Groups of Clergy over All Years



105. The accelerating downward trend in the wellbeing of parish priests after 2016 is clearly visible. In contrast, a gradual upward trend in the wellbeing of both associate priests and curates can be seen through the scattered points, whilst the trend for priests in non-parish ministry is flat, or nearly so.

## Conclusions

106. The wellbeing of Diocesan clergy as a whole is worse in 2025 than that recorded in 2020. However, the change in wellbeing is not uniform across all clergy.

- a. Parish priests (incumbents, team rectors, team vicars and other priests in parish ministry) have recorded the worst wellbeing, which is significantly lower than that recorded in 2020.
- b. Associate priests and curates have both recorded much better wellbeing than parish priests, and whilst both are worse than in 2020, the difference is smaller and not statistically significant.
- c. Priests in non-parish ministry (chaplains, staff and cathedral posts) have recorded a slight improvement in wellbeing since 2020, but, again, the difference is not statistically significant.

107. The morale of half the respondents is worse now than it was five years ago and that of a further 10% is worse than it was three years ago. However, morale also is not uniform across all respondents, with the proportion whose morale is best now decreasing as the years that the priest has been ordained increases. Thus, whilst the morale of 75% of respondents ordained for less than three years is best now, the proportion decreases to only 35% of priests ordained over 25 years ago.

108. The wellbeing of priests ordained less than three years, all bar one of whom are curates, is also significantly better than other priests, whilst the wellbeing of those ordained over 25 years is significantly worse.

109. Clergy in suburban parishes enjoy significantly better wellbeing than in other parishes, whilst those in mixed parishes suffer from significantly worse wellbeing.

110. There is no significant difference between the wellbeing of female and male clergy.

111. Of the 118 respondents who commented on the value of CMD, 44 considered it to be of value, whilst 34 considered it to be of no, or negative, value. These figures are worse than in 2020, when 59 of 120 respondents considered CMD to be of value, whereas 19 considered it to be of no, or negative, value. Several respondents commented on the lack of wellbeing items in the CMD programme, whilst others said that it lacked anything of interest. The most frequent positive comments relate to courses on practical issues that help the participant with such things as: liturgy and sermon preparation, safeguarding and dealing with trauma. A second major positive category relates to bible studies and a third to clergy days and the ability to meet with others. However, there is no correlation between the perceived value of CMD and wellbeing.

112. Approximately a third of parish priests believe that bullying is an issue and their wellbeing is significantly worse than that of other parish priests. Approximately a quarter of other clergy see bullying as an issue, but it has no impact on their wellbeing. Only a third of those who perceive bullying to be an issue know what steps to take. Comments stress the importance of appropriate action being taken when cases are reported to the relevant authority.

113. Seventy percent of the respondents provided a comment on practical measures to improve wellbeing and other matters. They cover a wide range of topics, some of which are noted above, but the remaining principal categories are:

- a. Thanking the Diocese for wellbeing support.
- b. Seeking improved communication and reduced administration.
- c. Seeking greater understanding and responsiveness from Senior Staff.
- d. Questioning the future of the Church of England in terms of both structure and cohesion, including attitudes to sexuality.
- e. Stating the inadequacy of church pay and housing.
- f. Seeking recognition of the challenges facing clergy during extended vacancies and the special challenges facing part-time clergy.

114. Several factors have been identified which are likely to have contributed to the worse wellbeing in 2025 than in 2020:

- a. A smaller proportion of those priests with roles that, historically and in the current survey, enjoy better wellbeing (associate priests, curates, priests in non-parish ministry).
- b. A worse ability to take time off.
- c. A more adverse impact on wellbeing of:
  - Trends in the national church
  - Relations with the Diocese
  - Workload
  - Housing issues (for the 75% of respondents who considered it relevant).

None of these factors accounts for the lower wellbeing individually, but collectively they may well do so.

115. Despite considerable variability in wellbeing between different surveys between 2008 and 2025, the long term trend of the wellbeing of associate priests and curates is slightly positive over time, whilst that of priests in non-parish ministry is essentially flat. In contrast, the wellbeing of parish priests remained constant until 2016 before taking a small drop in 2020 and a much larger drop in 2025.