



2024 BYM Treasurers Survey

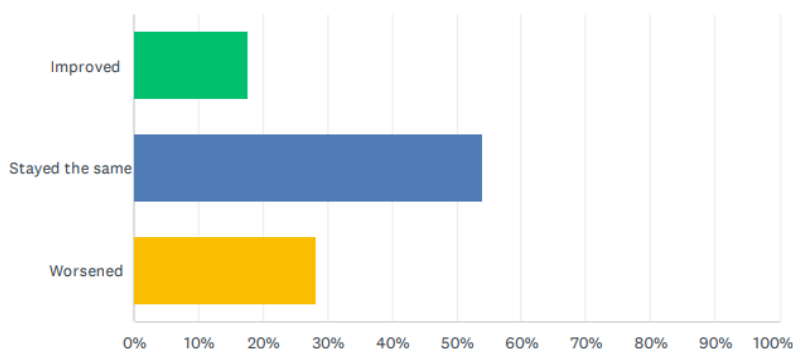
Background

This year's survey was sent out in June 2024 to all 476 treasurers. The response rate for this survey was approximately 35% with 164 out of 476 treasurers responding.

We are grateful for everyone's input in helping us understand their meeting circumstances and the challenges they might face ahead. Your input also helps BYM improve how we communicate with Treasurers and Friends across Britain. The findings are presented below.

Q1 Compared with this time last year, have your meeting finances?

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



54% of meetings reported their meeting finances stayed the same, compared to last year's 45%.

Over half of the meetings reported their meeting finances stayed the same. Although speculative, this might imply a sense of financial stability, but it's important to note that this group did not experience growth, and may not have been in a strong financial position to begin with.

18% of meetings reported their finances improved, compared to 32% in 2023.

Significantly fewer meetings saw their finances improve this year, compared to 2023. This could be due to several meetings were using their reserve levels to cover the expenses, or because of increased revenue from room lettings.

Some comments from meetings who reported their finances stayed the same or improved:

- *We are planning to let the meeting house as a way of increasing income.*
- *We took a deliberate and carefully considered decision a few years ago to reduce our reserves significantly.*
- *Finances have now settled following a period of redevelopment of the Meeting House*
- *Our meeting has been stable for some time.*

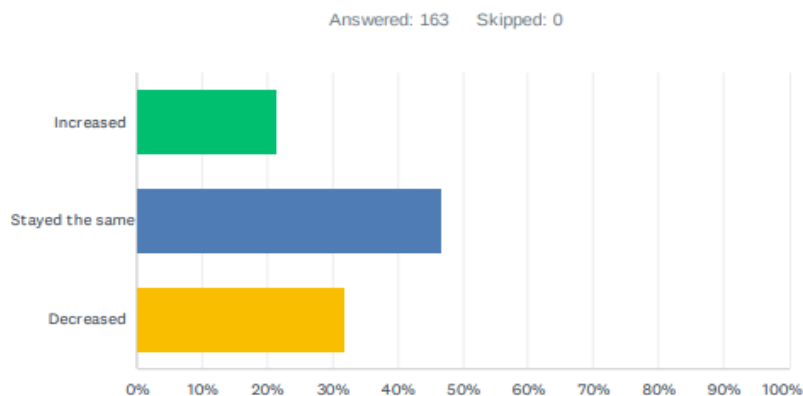
Around 28% of meetings reported that their meetings' finances worsened compared to last year's 23%.

A decrease in finances might be attributed to various factors such as building repairs, declining membership, and increased cost of living and expenses. Some local meetings seem to be feeling the pressure from their AM to contribute more. Wales AM is undergoing major development that will have a great impact on other Area Meetings and their finances.

Some comments from meetings who reported their meeting finances worsened:

- *“Necessary maintenance works this year decimated our reserves and required Area Meeting to obtain a loan from BYM. We have begun the process of selling the MH and looking to relocate to a rental venue with no overheads.”*
- *“Welsh Meetings now have an extra body to fund, and this may have a knock-on effect on other areas of giving.”*
- *“The reason our finances worsened this year were because we had a major expense in building repair and a request from area meeting for contributions to help their financial difficulties.”*

Q2 Have total contributions from members in your meetings in the last 12 months:



21% answered that contributions from members increased.

This suggests that a significant number of meetings experienced growth in contribution from their members, and this could be due to factors such as improved engagement, or concerted effort by treasurers to make members aware of the needs of the meeting, and to make sure everyone is asked to contribute.

Some comments related to why contributions from members increased.

- *“We had one conversation where I set out costs, asked for contributions and EVERYONE set up a direct debit. I don't think Treasurers actually ask Members / Attenders for money. When you do, in my experience they do give and give generously.*
- *“On the whole, Friends are responsive to the needs of the meeting and if asked to increase their contributions some would do so. Friends like to know and help choose where we make donations from our contributions.”*
- *Overall we have seen giving increase, however, there are some Friends (a small minority) who are not inclined to give for a variety of reasons.*

46% answered that contributions from members stayed the same.

Nearly half of meetings experienced stability in the contributions provided by members. While not experiencing growth, this group maintains a consistent level of support which is a positive outcome.

Some comments related to why contributions from members remained the same.

- *“Most Friends who pay by monthly standing orders do not increase them.”*
- *“More Friends are contributing but the cost of living has meant that amounts donated are smaller.”*
- *“On the whole Friends are responsive to the needs of the meeting and if asked to increase their contributions some would do so. Not all Friends could do this. Friends like to know and help choose where we make donations from our contributions.”*

32% answered that contributions from members decreased.

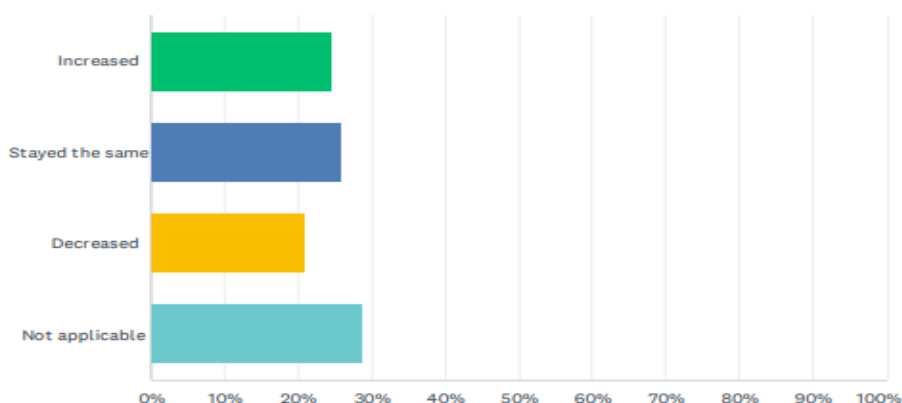
A decline in contributions could be attributed to factors such as declining membership, low member participation, and economic hardships.

Some comments explaining why:

- *“Most of our members & attenders have died or are now too frail to come to Meeting. Because of this a big change has happened in the last twelve months, it's very possible that our Meeting will have to close.”*
- *“Decrease is purely due to a member moving away and contributing to another LM”*
- *“Contributions have been impacted, three members have died and several have moved out of the area and transferred to another more local meeting. The remaining few give what they can afford.”*

Q3 Has income from lettings in the last 12 months:

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



24% reported an increase in their income from lettings, compared to 45% in 2023.

Last year, many meetings saw lettings improve because things weren't fully back open in 2022 and by 2023, they were, hence the jump in this response group. However, some meetings are still seeing improvements without being back to pre-Covid levels.

Some comments related to why income from lettings increased:

- *“We have recently had a scare when our account balance was very low, but donations since have restored it, and the membership/attenders are now more knowledgeable, through business meetings and notices, of our financial incomings and outgoings.”*
- *“Lettings increased, we invested in improving one room with new furniture, blinds, and lights”.*
- *“Certainly, income from lettings has gone up as we return to pre-Covid levels (not yet there)”*

26% stated their income from lettings remained the same, last year was 16%

An uptick in this group compared to last year’s results. This suggests respondents may have experienced stability in their lettings income and it might be because businesses are in full operation post Covid, resulting in an uptick in some meeting houses lettings.

Some comments related to why income from lettings remained the same:

- *“Our only hirer is a pre-school nursery which is struggling financially so we have been quite lenient over payments.”*
- *“We put the rent up for the flat (investment property) but the bills and maintenance costs also went up.”*

20% responded income from lettings decreased, compared to last year’s 32%

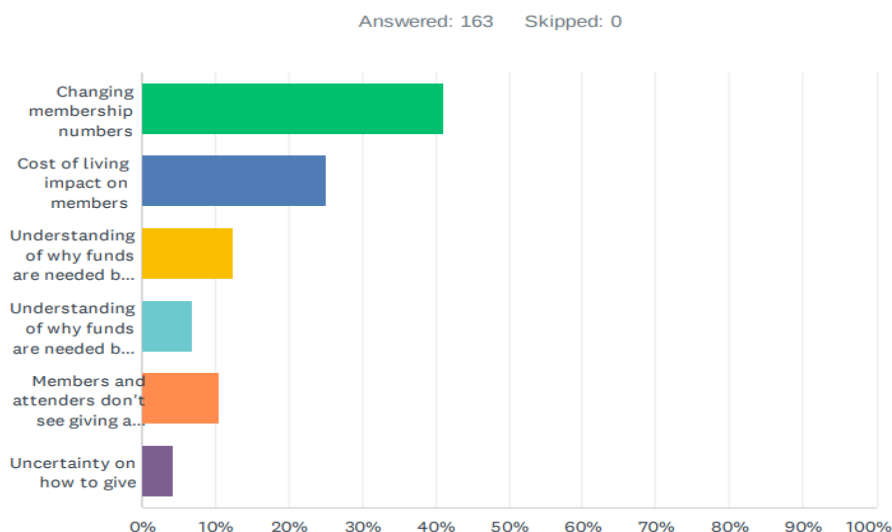
Twenty percent of meetings saw a decline in letting income, often because of the loss of a particular hirer, or because of closing their lettings business.

Some comments related to why income from lettings decreased:

- *“The loss of a major hirer has had an impact too.”*
- *“We no longer have rental income from tenants and almost all money received as donations to the LM goes to the AM as a yardstick contribution.”*
- *Our Meetings finances are quite unstable at the moment because of the closure of one of our lettings businesses last year, and our failure, to replace that income in the long term.*

29% responded this question was not applicable.

Q4 What factors influenced giving the most in your meeting?

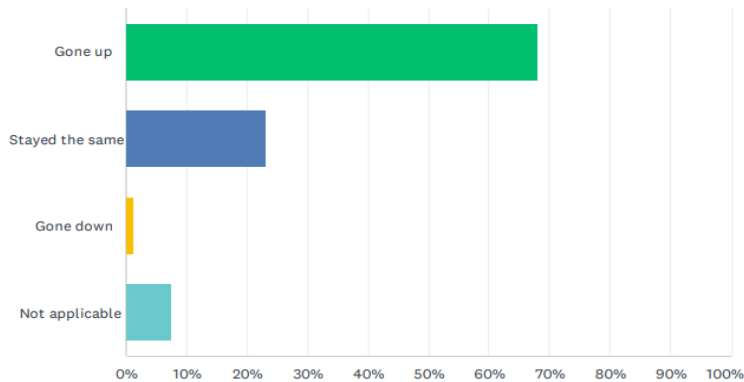


In this question, respondents could choose one answer. (We know that some respondents would have liked to choose more than one, so for future surveys we should take this in consideration). They are categorised as follow:

- 41% said that **changing membership numbers** influenced giving the most in their meeting. Some comments explaining why:
 - *“Ageing membership = loss of a number of Friends to contribute, plus the cost of living implications.”*
 - *“It’s hard enough making ends meet at a local level without paying to AM or BYM with an ageing and poor membership.”*
- 25% stated that **the impact of the cost of living on members** influenced giving in their meetings. Some comments explaining why:
 - *It’s hard enough making ends meet at a local level without paying to AM or BYM with an ageing and poor membership.”*
 - *“More Friends are contributing but the cost of living has meant that amounts donated are smaller.”*
- 12% answered that the most important factor that influenced giving in their local meeting was **understanding why funds are needed by Area Meeting**. Some comments explaining why:
 - *“Trealaw LM is very small (3-5 people) and we currently only make an annual donation to our Area Meeting.”*
 - *“Our meeting houses are owned by London Quakers Property Trust who maintain them from pooled funds received from our area meeting and the six other participating area meetings.”*
- 10% of respondents said that **members and attenders don’t see giving** as an important part of belonging to the Society of Friends. Comments explaining why:
 - *“The most important thing for the Society of Friends in Britain is the Worshipping Communities and their spiritual life – all the rest will follow.”*
- 7% of respondents felt that **understanding why funds are needed by the Yearly Meeting** (or lack such understanding) was the largest factor in giving at their meeting. Some comments explaining why:
 - *I don’t think direct requests to Friends about giving to BYM is effective. Friends who engage with or identify with BYM tend to give significantly more to BYM than those who don’t. The issue is really to meaningfully engage more local Friends with the activities of BYM.”*
 - *“I think that most of our meeting identify much more with Lancaster than the area or yearly meeting.”*
- 5% of respondents said there was **uncertainty on how to give**. Comments explaining why:
 - *““We’ve fallen behind with contributing to Area and Yearly Meeting, so I’m raising this at the MfB and will need to ask for higher contributions from Members.”*

Q5 Have the running costs changed in the last 12 months (e.g, energy bills, maintenance,)?

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



68% of respondents answered that the running costs increased in their meetings.

More than two thirds of meetings have seen their cost go up over the past year, which is unsurprising in this time of inflation. Furthermore, most respondents (111 treasurers) expect a significant rise in costs to their meeting in the coming year. The reasons include major maintenance work, increased energy bills, and anticipated increases in room rates for those without a Meeting House.

Here are some comments highlighting this:

- *"We are budgeting for a reduced contribution to BYM because we need to prioritise some renovation costs this year."*
- *"We put the rent up for the flat (investment property) but the bills and maintenance costs also went up. We need a new boiler - alternatives to gas are very pricey."*
- *"We manage our meeting finances pretty well but have some potentially big costs coming up for maintenance and development work on the MH building that may cause us problems."*

23% of respondents said the running cost remained the same in their meetings.

In this group, the respondents appear to have a stable control of the costs in their meeting.

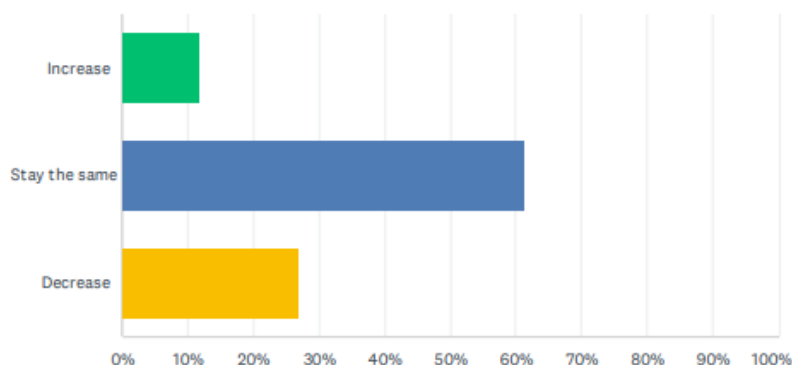
Some comments explaining why:

- *"No, our meeting has been stable for some time."*
- *"Whilst donations have decreased, our finances have improved overall, following the sale of Bath MH, generating more investment income."*

1% of respondents said their running cost has gone down, and 7% said this question is not applicable.

Q6 Compared to last year, do you expect your meeting's contribution to BYM this year to:

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



12% of respondents expect to increase their contribution to BYM

This group represents a minority of the respondents, indicating that only a small portion of meetings anticipate increasing their financial support for BYM.

Here are some comments highlighting it:

- *“Overall, we have seen giving increase, I see things quite positively. Certainly however, there are some Friends (a small minority) who are not inclined to give for a variety of reasons.”*

61% of respondents expect their contribution to BYM to stay the same

The majority of respondents fall into this category, suggesting that most meetings are stable in their financial commitment to BYM. Some comments explaining why:

- *“We do not donate directly to BYM but are encouraging Friends to divert their donations in that direction.”*
- *“We’ll give less to BYM this year... our average giving to BYM will still be above average, even if less than the previous year.”*

27% of respondents expect to decrease their contribution to BYM

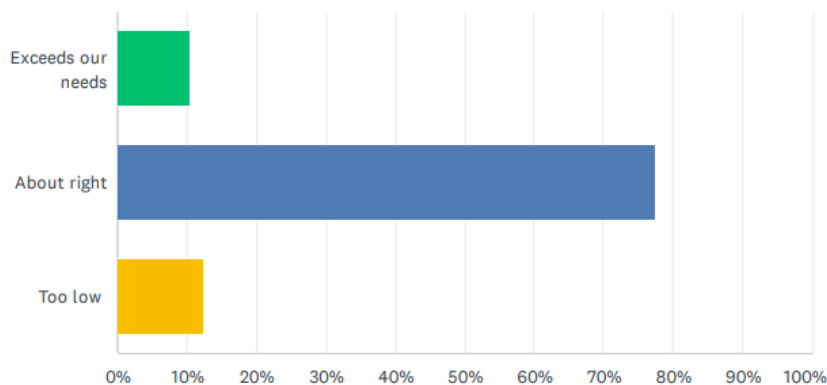
Over a quarter of respondents anticipate reducing their contributions. This could be due to financial challenges within the meetings, changes in membership, or other financial priorities.

Some comments explaining why:

- *“We are budgeting for a reduced contribution to BYM because we need to prioritise some renovation costs this year.”*
- *“Our contribution to BYM will be lower in 2024 than in previous years, as our LM has run down reserves over recent years.”*
- *“BYM must cut its Coat according to its cloth”*
- *“We are currently trying to build up an earmarked reserve within Meeting... for this reason, we do not anticipate being able to support AM/BYM for some time.”*
- *“Uncertainty about repairs needed means we can’t commit to giving more at this stage.”*

Q7 How do you view the level of reserves in your Area Meeting?

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



10% answered that reserves level in their Area Meeting exceeded their needs.

A relatively small proportion (ten percent) of respondents felt that their Area Meeting is holding more than necessary, potentially at the expense of other areas where funds could be better utilised. Some relevant comments explaining why:

- *"We are a small local meeting. We took a deliberate and carefully considered decision a few years ago to reduce our reserves significantly. I think our AM reserves are high."*

77% of respondents, expressed that the level of reserves is about right.

This group represents a majority of the respondents. This suggests a general sense of satisfaction and stability regarding the current reserve levels in their Area Meeting.

Some relevant comments explaining why:

- *"I think we have sufficient reserves at the moment but not enough if there is a prolonged downturn"*
- *"We have been advised by Area Meeting that our reserves should cover 6 months of room hire for meetings (we have no premises)"*

12% of respondents felt that the level of reserves in their Area Meeting is "too low."

This group may perceive a potential risk in financial instability or insufficient resources for unexpected future needs. Some relevant comments explaining why:

- *"Main reason for a reduction in reserves are due to structural maintenance costs of Meeting Houses"*
- *"Necessary maintenance works this year decimated our reserves and required Area Meeting to obtain a loan from BYM."*
- *"Our Meetings finances are quite unstable...the overall situation wasn't helped when a previous treasurer committed us to a significant expense from reserves, without putting in place a means of replenishing those reserves."*
- *"We're expecting considerable expenses this year as we are refurbishing part of our premises. Most of our reserves will be spent."*

Some comments about the Fundraising Team

- *"We would appreciate a session at the Area Meeting, led by the BYM Fundraising Team - probably during Spring 2025."*
- *"I appreciate the emails sent by the fundraising team to me as AM Treasurer, especially the summaries of Giving by LMs and AM."*

- *“A visit of the Fundraising team is being arranged by our LM Clerk.”*
- *“I’m aware of the fundraising team, but have never approached them for assistance.”*
- *“Apologies, but the BYM fundraising team doesn't play a big part in my field of vision: we struggle on as before. But it's very good to know you exist, for questions.”*

Other miscellaneous comments:

- *“Some participants are concluding that finances are our primary concern in Quaker life, which is very unfortunate.”*
- *“We have always donated to BYM, but this year a Friend who donates directly by standing order was conflicted about “giving twice”. Hope to revisit this soon.”*
- *“In general Jersey meeting finances follow a steady path. We did have an exceptional individual donation which largely covered a large bill for the quinquennial survey.”*
- *“Finances have been hit by a major building project, now complete, and reduced communication about finance owing to the pandemic, now being remedied, but will take time.”*
- *“Uncertainty about repairs needed means we can't commit to giving more at this stage. Also I would comment that few local Friends feel very connected to BYM. We have a local peace education project that some relate to, so that connects directly with staff. But staff are so dispersed now.”*
- *“The trend is undeniably towards a community less committed to funding Quaker work and at the same time shrinking in numbers.”*
- *“Our finances are affected by the lack of volunteers to undertake tasks which we are now paying professionals to undertake. We doubt this is sustainable in the long term.”*
- *“The annual get-together on Zoom is helpful ish... not a proper conversation though, top-down, agenda created by the staff, feedback on those meetings is never requested, needs to be more of an open space I think.”*