

# Class Matters

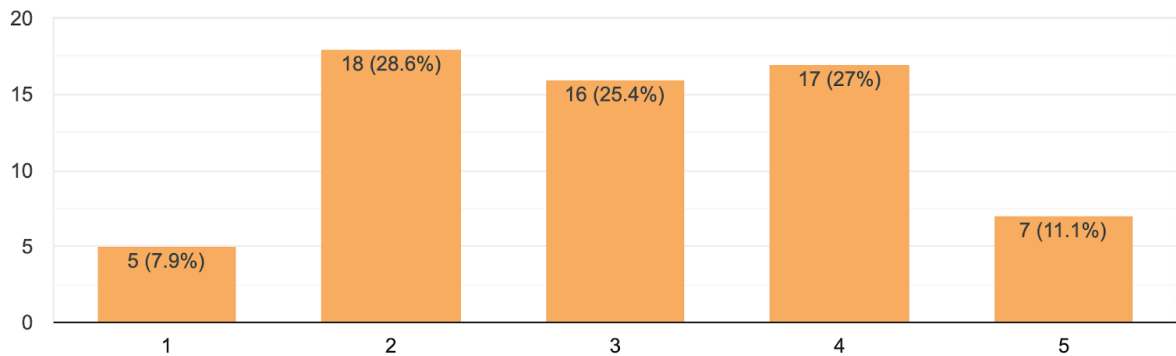
Difficult to form useful questions regarding class.

Generated much comment which included polar opposite responses from “not an issue” to:

- “I sometimes find messages in meeting to be coming from a place of privilege and/or place of white cultural point of view...”
- “...There is an expectation that I will have a certain level of access and lifestyle because I’m a member of CHMM....definite perception that CH is a rich peoples meeting...”
- “I have some background anxiety that I won’t be able to keep up with my financial commitment to the meeting

How big a role does class (socioeconomic level) play in the culture and spiritual life of our meeting?

63 responses



(1=Huge; 5=Not Much)

How does this affect your sense of belonging (inclusion) in the life of the meeting?<sup>53</sup>

responses

- It is not something that I think about.
- No problem
- we all tend to congregate with like minded souls
- Our meeting is diverse on the "economic" part but not the "socio" part of socioeconomic. Our POC attenders and members are, like everyone else, mostly from the teacher/healthcare/ education sliver of society.
- can't meet people who are different from me on this dimension
- I have felt included in CHQM, but I have yet to feel a sense of belonging. As a middle, working class individual, I see that there is privilege that is not acknowledged and, moreso, perhaps not even recognized, by our meeting. This unpacking and acknowledgment as an organization will be difficult, as it seems that much of our meeting is of the same class/socioeconomic level: a privileged class. It would be unwise of me to ignore that \*I\* am also privileged. I go to the same place everyday to sleep: my home. I do not worry whether I'll eat or not. I worry just the tiniest bit about my physical and mental safety, and that's more likely just city-instincts kicking in.
- People see me as upper middle class, but really my spouse holds the purse strings. I wish I could give more monetarily, but there are other ways I can give. I wish to pursue this.
- It helps me because it reflects a lot of my values and sensibilities, but I think there are a lot of people it doesn't work for.
- comfort
- I feel that I belong, but I wonder if others would.

- Feel we as a Meeting need to be more aware of these issues and of systemic problems and take more actions to counteract them - try to make systemic changes
- Virtually not at all.
- I feel that I belong here but also think I would feel that way if I had fewer economic resources.
- Our meeting is largely made up of owning class & priveleged folks, which I am, and so I feel quite comfortable there. But I'm aware of how that fact of our makeup affects a wide variety of interactions in our corporate worship and activities, such as the type and level of language used in vocal ministry, the types of foods prevalent at shared meals, and implicit expectations about education choices.
- I fit easily into the predominant middle/upper class profile of the meeting.
- I feel I belong
- A bit "less than." I have comparable education and social entree, however.
- There have been times when I felt financially unable to participate in activities. There was no pressure, I just wanted to and couldn't.
- I suppose collectively we are on the middle-upper to upper rungs of the socioeconomic ladder as a meeting. That is also about where I am so I feel as though I am among my socioeconomic peers.
- I fit in somewhere
- I have a lot of class privilege. But I have other differences that can get in the way, in similar ways. I do feel very included and welcome, partly because I have always used the class advantage to help me past the other barriers. I do not think our meeting "owns" its class privilege very fully.
- It doesn't affect my own sense of belonging to any great degree, but I am conscious of class as a thing that separates members of the meeting community from one another.
- It does not affect my sense of belonging, there are other aspects that affect that more for me, e.g. Christ centeredness.
- does not affect my sense of belonging
- My sense of inclusion derives from my involvement in the life of the meeting and with the people in the meeting.
- I've never considered it to be a part of my inclusion.
- I get the sense that the meeting consists of people from different socioeconomic levels. What seems fairly consistent is a high level of education. Everyone seems to be fairly highly educated.
- I have some background anxiety that I won't be able to keep up my financial commitment to the meeting, and my sense is that most members of the community do not have this anxiety.
- I feel very comfortable and my sense is that others do as well.
- Less than when we first attended. Still aware of a "better than thou" attitude.
- not at all
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- While I admire how Quakers work to act on their intentions and try to focus on how finances reflect spiritual values, I don't consider myself one of the more affluent members of our meeting, and I sometimes find it challenging to communicate authentically across socioeconomic lines about matters of faith. While it's an unwelcome divide, it's hardly unique

to our just our meeting. But I'm not currently aware of conversation in our meeting about how faith can bridge class.

- I feel comfortable
- not much
- I feel like our meeting is fairly diverse on a socioeconomic scale. I don't see it as a factor in my sense of inclusion.
- I don't have nearly as much money as many members in the meeting. The meeting has several times supported me to go to conferences in the past, but compared to other meetings where I've been a member I found the process of applying more difficult to navigate. First I had to know that it was even an option (which I couldn't find information about on the website), then ask, then follow up with the right person, then fill out a form, then check in along the way when the matter got dropped by whatever committee has care of it... At my previous meeting, I sent an email, they took care of their end, I got an email back with a yes or a no. There is also an expectation that I will have a certain level of access and lifestyle because I'm a member of Chestnut Hill. I don't. I feel this in the ministry given about "those poor and needy" other people who live elsewhere, with the definite understanding that we should all be on the giving and not the receiving end of charity. This was especially difficult when I was living on less than a thousand dollars a month, had Medicaid, and was more involved in doing actual work on social problems than anyone else I knew at the meeting. It really grated. I give to the meeting regularly, but it feels strange when we have budget discussions about cutting what small donations we are making when I know how much more we could do for our community if we were all giving in proportion to our incomes. And there's a definite perception that Chestnut Hill is a rich people's meeting. A Quaker fundraiser of my acquaintance observed that it's the only meeting she's ever been to where people sit by income bracket.
- I sometimes find messages in meeting to be coming from a place of privilege and/or place of white cultural pov. It makes me want to address it with the person providing the message, but feel that is super inappropriate. I feel that education/recognition of such viewpoints would benefit the group as a whole, but am at a standstill on conveying that thought.
- not.much
- I feel at home within the meeting because there is a clear desire to be inclusive without being fake.
- I have a strong sense of belonging and welcome the diversity in our community.
- I probably "belong" as part of the predominant socioeconomic class
- I don't know
- I feel like I belong
- As a middle-class person, I feel like I fit in with the life of the meeting.
- I'm aware of others in the meeting who are not as fortunate and struggle to find ways to include them in activities that won't break their budgets.
- not at all
- Sometimes it's been ... interesting.
- Not at all
- No problem at all for me, but I am concerned that it could affect low-income people even in situations such as joining a committee where the unsaid practice is to contribute food or goods or time ( a problem if you work F/T and have no private transport).

- not being able to donate larger amounts of money
  - I believe class plays a huge role at meeting but not intentionally. There is a (mistaken) presumption that every member shares a similar world view, has the same perceptions of about race/racism, and holds the same political opinions. The meeting wants diversity and inclusiveness in a narrowly defined way. For example I do not feel the meeting would welcome my Republican friends or those who see "racism" as a two way street. Until we include the full spectrum of ideas my sense of belonging at meeting will be tenuous.
  - It is not something that I think about when I think about the meeting
  - I feel included. CHMM does not strike me as a diverse group regarding the economic and educational background.
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