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Back to Normal? The Mixed Messages of Congregational Recovery Coming Out of the Pandemic



EXPLORING THE
PANDEMIC IMPACT
ON CONGREGATIONS

Back to Normal?

The Mixed Messages of Congregational Recovery Coming Out of the Pandemic

“It is so good to be back!” a church member exclaimed to her pastor who was having a conversation with a member of our team recently. By that she didn’t mean they were back to gathering in person, they had been doing that for well over a year, she was rather suggesting they had finally arrived at normalcy – attendance was up, the Sunday school had recovered, and new visitors were showing up every week. The church was settling into familiar routines from her perspective. The interesting thing was that her interruption disturbed a discussion in which her pastor was describing his apprehensiveness and uncertainty about what the church should be doing in the, from his point of view, unpredictable and continuing unsettled post-pandemic reality.

This woman is not alone in her assessment; an increasing number of articles (including [this](#) and [this](#)) recently imply that churches have recovered from pandemic stresses and have arrived at the “new normal.” However, this report analyzes survey results from several thousand congregational leaders, which indicate that doesn’t seem to be the case yet.

In many ways the nation’s churches are better off than they were a year or two ago. This latest research has uncovered a few positive rebounding changes, several persistent challenges, and the existence of new realities brought about by the pandemic. Clergy are bearing the brunt of these alterations with some indication of stress and exhaustion, but more detailed analysis reveals a mixed message.



This report, based on data from the fourth key informant survey of the Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations: Innovation Amidst and Beyond COVID-19 (EPIC) project, includes an over-sampling of 20 denominational groups and a random sampling of congregations in other denominations for a total of 58 Christian denominational groups and 4,809 responses. This online survey was fielded throughout the spring of 2023 (January-May) and the resulting dataset was weighted to improve its national representativeness (see methodology section below).

This 2023 survey report focuses solely on Christian congregations. To track change over time, the report also draws on three prior EPIC surveys from summer 2021 (2,074 responses), winter 2021 (820 responses), and spring 2022 (615 responses). The analysis also includes data from the 2020 Faith Communities Today survey, which included multifaith responses from 15,278 congregations, presenting a pre-lockdown baseline. However, only the Christian responses from FACT 2020 are used in this report for consistency of results. Although this report focuses only on Christian congregations, an upcoming Faith Communities Today report (available at www.faithcommunitiestoday.org) will address changes between the pre- and post-pandemic realities in US congregations across many faith traditions.

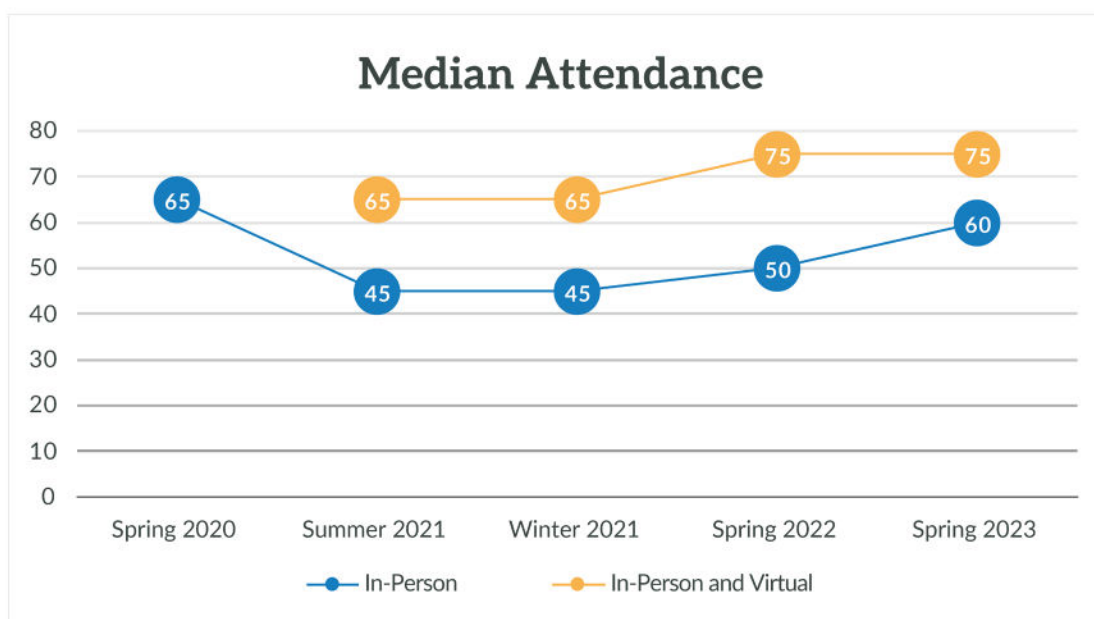
This present report tracks changes over time as the nation’s churches rebound from the trauma, loss, and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, it offers a mixed message--some evidence of rebounding positive trends, with other continuing negative characteristics, and a few new dynamics in congregational functioning because of lingering adaptation in this time of uncertainty. Evidently, this period of disruption and unsettledness has weighed heavily on the clergy. But this too is a rather unclear reality. In some ways, clergy sound hopeful and resilient, but many of them are also expressing thoughts of resignation and exhaustion. However, what is abundantly clear from these latest results is that the societal and religious alterations of the post-pandemic reality are still in flux; the unsettledness is still with us. Churches have not arrived at a place of stasis and normalcy, no matter what members wish for.

Indications of a positive rebound

Attendance is rising

The question asked most often of our research team is “what does in-person attendance presently look like?” Whether for good or not, this is the barometer used to judge congregational recovery. Attendance continues to rebound – but how and what you count makes some difference. In-person worship attendance is generally still below pre-pandemic levels. Looking at in-person figures only, the Faith Communities Today 2020 pre-pandemic worship attendance showed a median of 65 people, whereas the 2023 survey had a median of 60 attendees. However, taking into account virtual attendance combined with in-person numbers, total worship attendance shows a median of 75, which is 15% above pre-pandemic worship figures (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



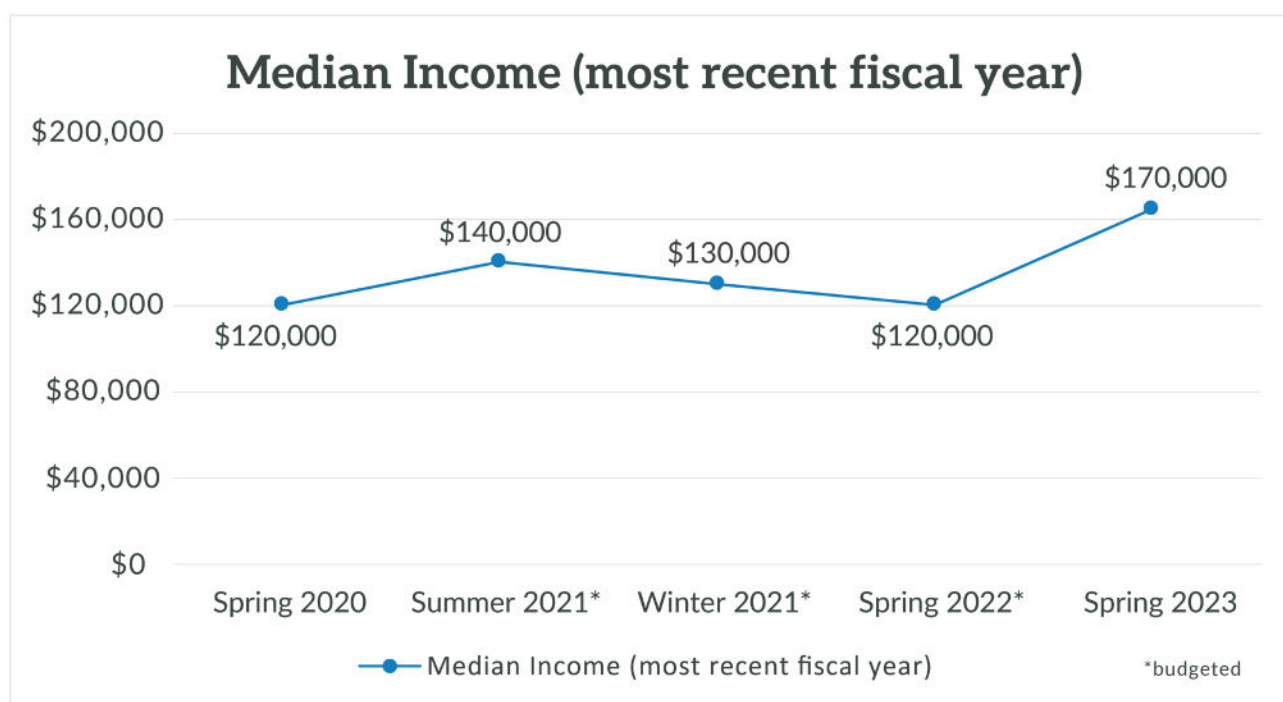
Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

Using a different way of measuring by looking at attendance change from 2020 to 2023, and overall, these churches are on average 9% below their pre-pandemic worship size. But, attendance patterns vary widely across the surveyed congregations. In over 50% of churches, combined worship attendance (both in person and virtual) is down considerably, but 33% of churches are now above where they were pre-pandemic. Additionally, 16% of current attendees are new to the congregation since 2020 – this follows a decades long pattern that showed an increase of, on average, about 5% of new attenders each year.

Income is Up

Another positive sign of rebound can be seen in overall giving based on congregational income figures. In 2020, the average church had a median income of \$120,000, but income has been at or above that mark throughout the past three years. This year's survey showed median income to be \$170,000 (see Figure 2), up nearly 42% from three years ago. Even adjusting for inflation, this still represents a remarkable increase of over 25% since 2020.

Figure 2



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

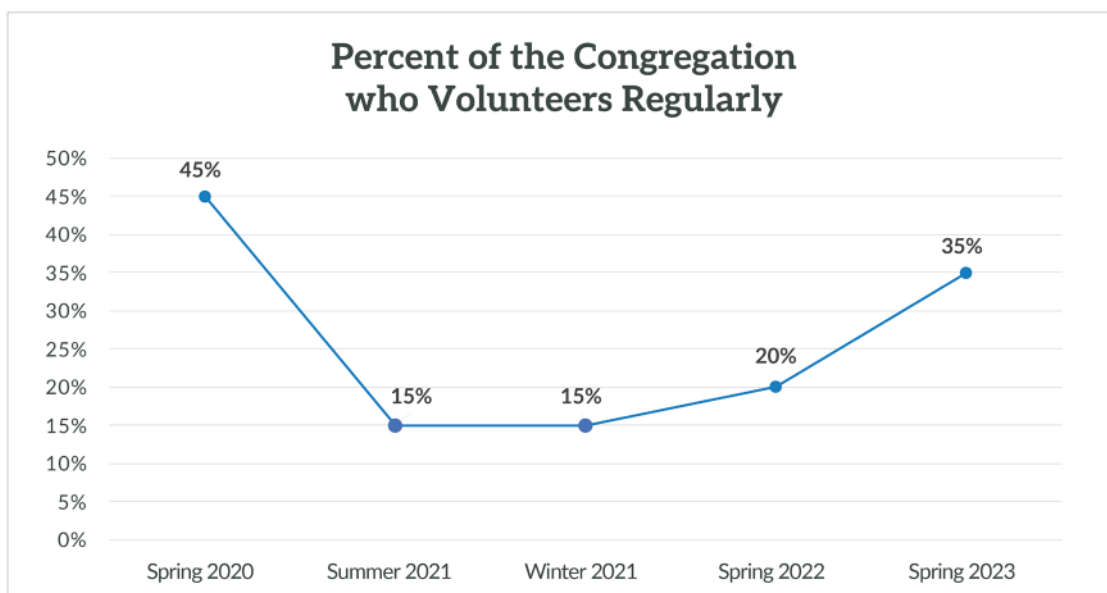
These income patterns parallel national giving trends. [Giving USA data released in June 2023](#) showed the pandemic needs of 2020 and 2021 to have propelled giving totals for those years to record-setting levels, while 2022 displayed a drop in giving. It will be interesting to see if other research on giving will find a similar increase in 2023.

We do not know for sure what accounts for the significant uptick in the 2023 economic results, but analysis of previous Faith Communities Today surveys found that the more a church emphasized online and electronic giving, the greater their per capita giving rose. This is also true with the 2023 survey. Congregations without online giving have a per capita annual giving of \$1,809, those with “a little use” see giving rise to \$2,052, “some use” jumps to \$2,388, and “a lot of use” results in per capita giving of \$2,428 – almost a 30% increase over those not using it. Not only are more churches using electronic or online giving now than before the pandemic, but they are also using it with greater emphasis. Only 31% of churches reported using online giving in 2015 and just 8% did so a lot, whereas now 67% do so and nearly half (48%) use this method a lot. Additionally, it is likely that capital campaigns and fund-raising events that were postponed over the past few years were undertaken in the early part of 2023. Whatever the reasons for the rise, it will be interesting to watch this trend in future surveys. This is especially true since the growth in income did not translate into a significantly more positive assessment of the church’s financial health compared to their self-perception of five years earlier.

Volunteer figures are rising

Another reassuring bright spot is the rebound in the percentage of the congregation that volunteers regularly. Previously, the significant dip in volunteer rates apparent in the past few surveys was worrisome because volunteers are critical to a church’s functioning. Figure 3 shows a significant recovery of the percent of volunteers over the past year to an average of 35% of regular participants. This percent-age is now much closer to the pre-pandemic level of 40%.

Figure 3

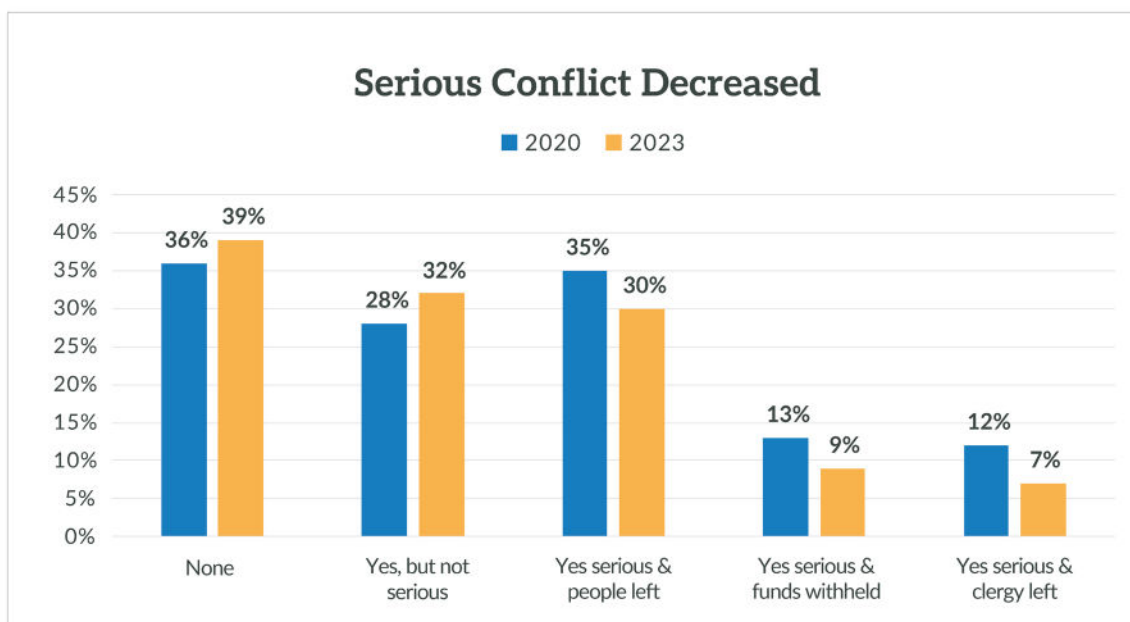


Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

Conflict Levels are decreasing

Given the level of tension and dissent within the United States, the finding that serious conflict in congregations seems to have decreased in the past few years is somewhat surprising. Yet, all three categories of serious conflict decreased between 5 and 25 percent (See Figure 4). Instead, the percentage of churches experiencing less serious levels of conflict, and those reporting no conflict, rose during this time. One possible implication of these seemingly counterintuitive findings might be that people in contention with their existing church might have left prior to, or early in, the pandemic. Therefore, the result might be that the last three years have created congregations with attenders that are more homogeneous and of one mind which leads to less serious moments of conflict.

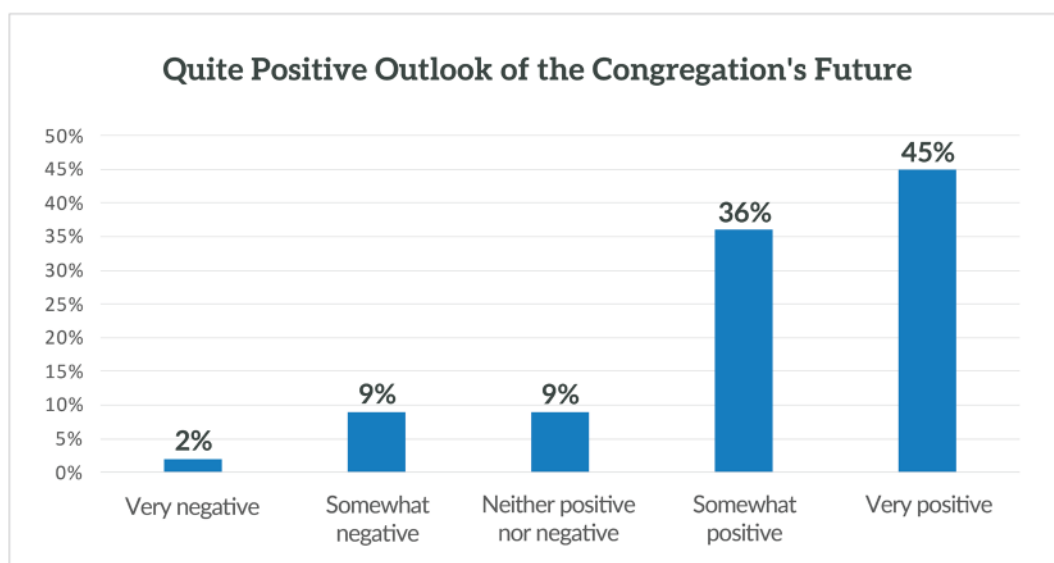
Figure 4



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

All these signs of rebound – increased attendance, giving, and volunteering, along with fewer serious conflicts – primarily reflect increasing attendee commitment levels, which is a good sign for congregational recovery. Combining these trends with a steady influx of new participants at roughly 5% a year may suggest that while churches have lost former members, those who remained, alongside recent arrivals, seem to be rising to the occasion and filling in the gaps with a greater sense of commitment. Additionally, when church leaders responded to a question about their church’s future, they generally seemed very optimistic and expressed thoughts of a bright outlook (see Figure 5). In total, over 80% of congregations surveyed expressed a positive outlook on their future, with almost half (44%) expressing a very positive view. Perhaps this is optimism born out of surviving through the pandemic, or wishful thinking, or even indication of a social desirability bias around this question implying that no leader wants to verbalize that their church has little hope for the future. Whatever attitudes lie behind this quite optimistic response, other aspects of the survey make it clear that, even in this hopefulness, several challenges continue to face congregations and their leadership.

Figure 5



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

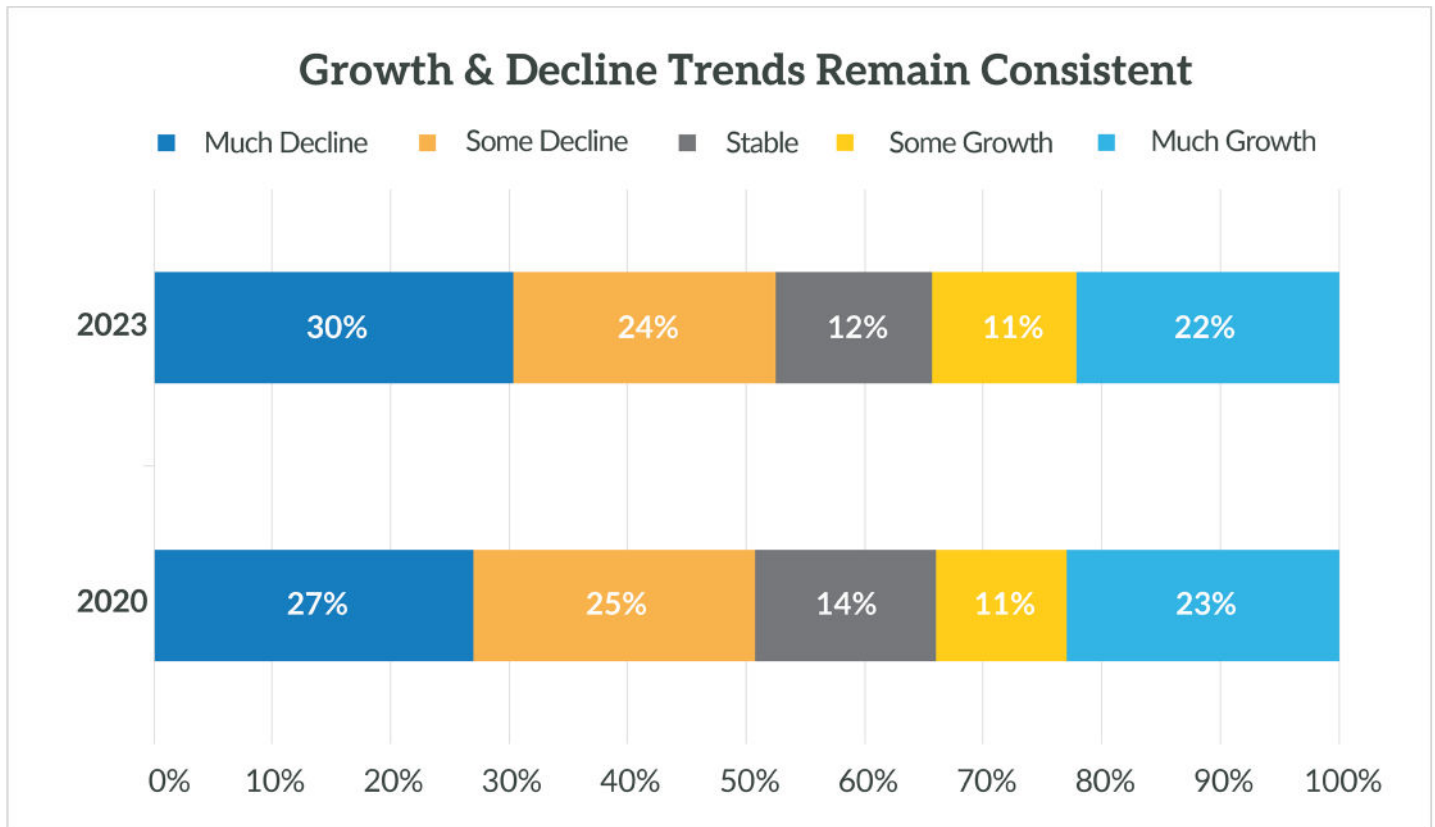
Continuing Challenges

Amid these positive signs remain some structural and organizational challenges that indicate all is not entirely rosy. Even given the rebounding attendance and level of optimism, the broad pattern of considerable membership decline remains ever-present. Even prior to the pandemic, many congregations faced a series of obstacles. The 2020 Faith Communities Today report highlighted challenging trends such as declining size, aging membership and leaders, and less appeal with younger generations. Likewise, the pandemic might well have intensified these pressures for some churches, especially those who were already struggling to survive. It must also be remembered that this survey measures only those churches still in existence, not those which may have already closed or merged. Although at this point, there is very little accurate data on the number of closures in the past three years.

Figure 6 indicates that the basic growth and decline profile across the religious landscape hasn’t greatly changed and if anything, has slightly worsened in three years. Essentially, the pre-pandemic and current patterns are nearly identical. One-third of the 4,809 churches indicate they have grown in attendance since 2020, while just over 50% report a slight or severe decline from where they were

pre-pandemic. This latest survey shows a slight increase of 3% for churches in the “much decline” category (those showing a decline of more than 25% from their pre-pandemic attendance) with corresponding declines in a few of the other categories.

Figure 6

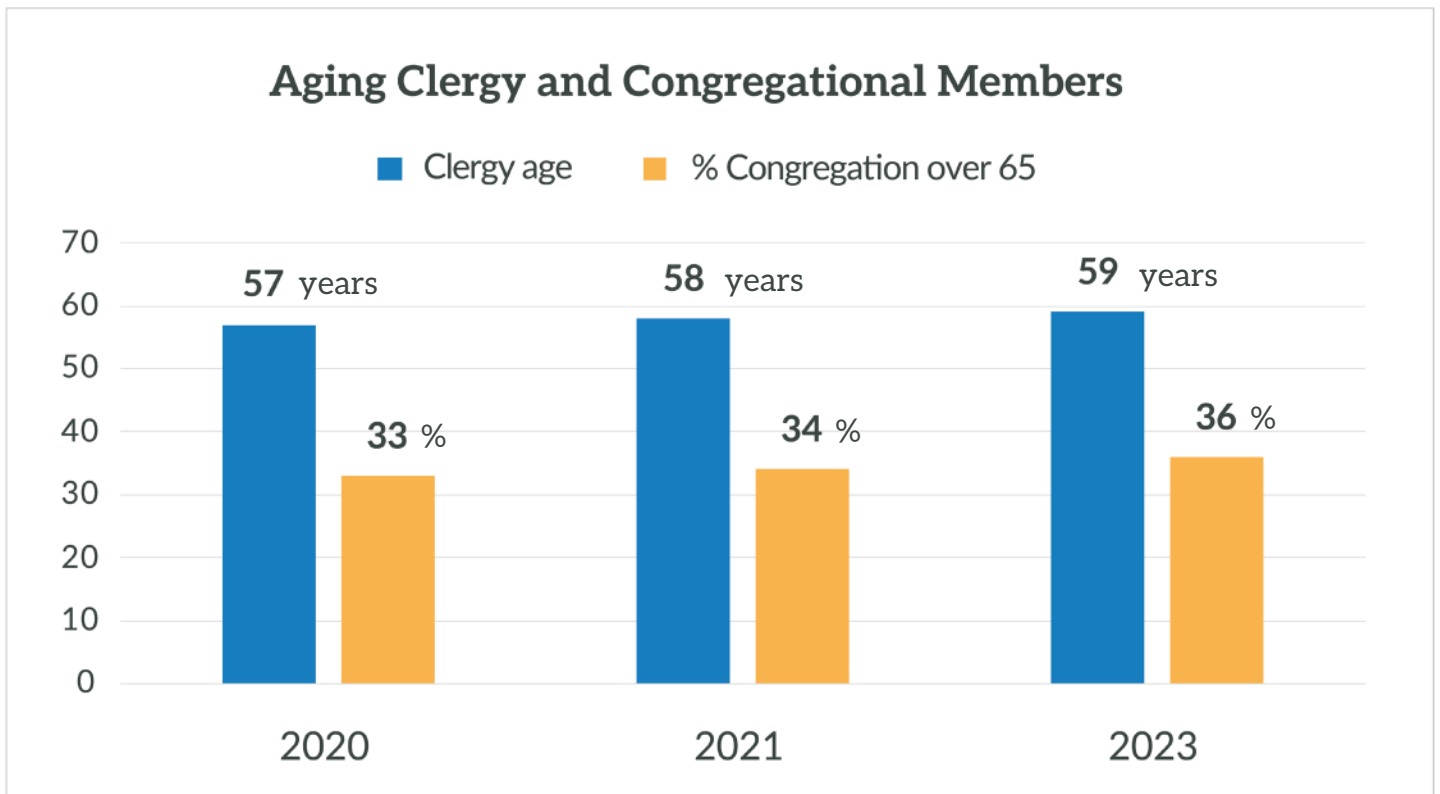


Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

This finding raises the question of what impact the pandemic has had on congregational growth and decline trajectories. While the pattern of decline isn't dramatic at this point, neither is the pandemic impact over. Congregations remain optimistic about their future, but it is also apparent they are continuing to wrestle with the troubling conditions that were in existence long before COVID-19 arrived.

One such preexisting condition was the two-fold combination of an aging clergy population and a growing percentage of congregational members over the age of 65 years. In 2020, the average senior leader age was 57 years old, and the typical church had 33% of attenders over 65 years of age. While not a highly dramatic rise, the 2021 and 2023 surveys show these trends continuing (see Figure 7). The average age of clergy has increased by one year at each of these survey points. Likewise, the percentage of attenders over the age of 65 continues to increase from 33% in 2020 to 36% in 2023. This participant aging is the most evident among Mainline Protestant churches where nearly 50% of the average congregation is now over 65 years of age. This aging trend parallels that of the US population as a whole, which reached its highest median age ever in 2022 of 38.9 years, up from 35 in 2000 and 30 in 1980. Nevertheless, Christian churches and their leaders are significantly older as a result of having insufficient representation from younger generations. During these three time periods, the percentage of attendees under the age of 35 (all children, youth, and young adults) decreased from 37% in 2020, to 35% in 2021, and to 32% in 2023.

Figure 7



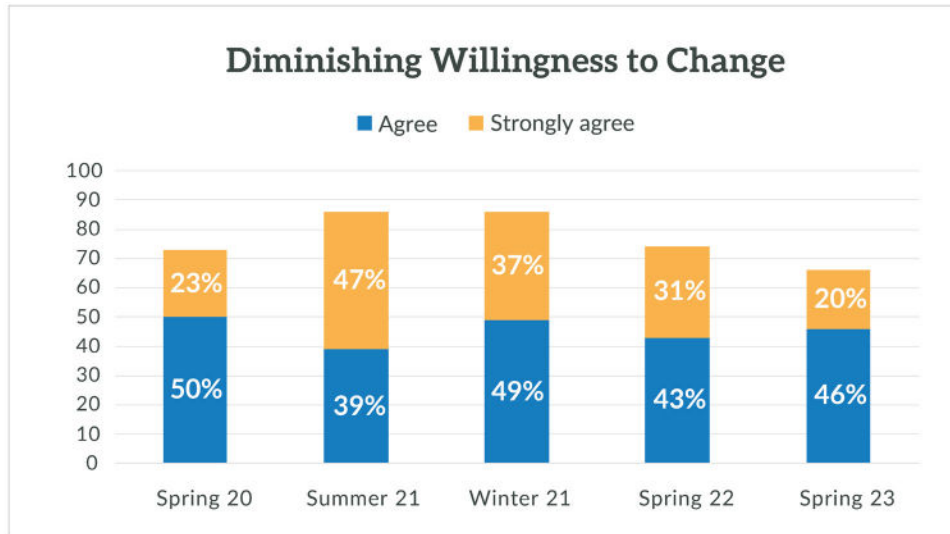
Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research



A less obvious but equally disturbing pattern emerges when looking at a congregation’s “willingness to change to meet new challenges” as a key health measure. Since the first survey in spring 2021, this important indicator of adaptation and innovation has been trending downward both in terms of overall agreement and the percentage of churches strongly agreeing with this statement. This is especially troubling because this measure indicated a greater inclination in 2021 post-pandemic churches to do what was necessary to adapt compared to pre-pandemic

responses, with nearly 50% strongly agreeing to that attitude (Figure 8). But by 2023, both the total congregations in agreement and those strongly in agreement had dropped significantly and are now below where they were in early 2020. Obviously, congregational dynamics and worship patterns have changed in many churches in the past three years, but this finding seems to indicate that their earlier flexibility and creativity in response to the pandemic is beginning to diminish.

Figure 8



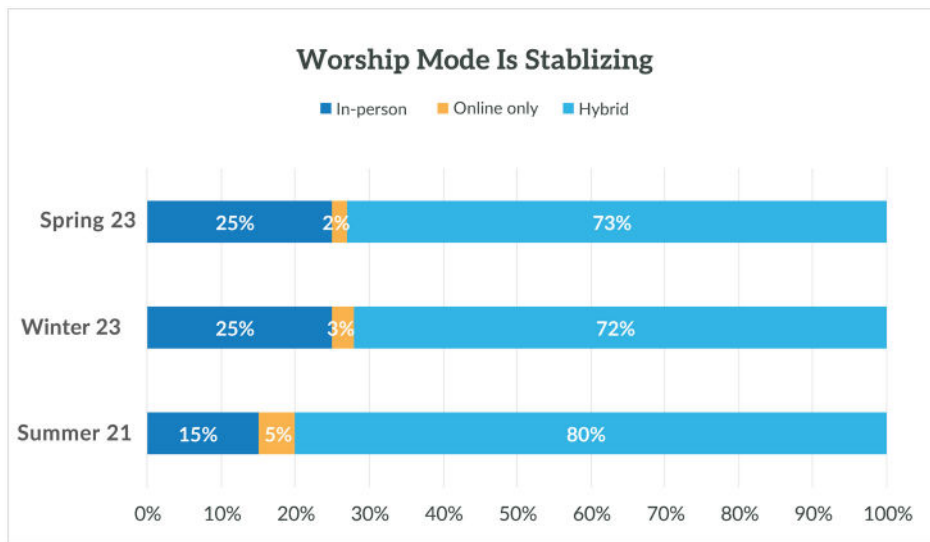
Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

The Influence of a New Technological Reality

Even with these long-established organizational challenges and a diminishing willingness to adapt, the pandemic period initiated at least one major change into the dynamics of congregational life – the technological advancement of hybridity. This dramatic alteration has the potential to reform a static place and time-based physical worshipping community into a congregation beyond the walls with the potential for revolutionary adaptation.

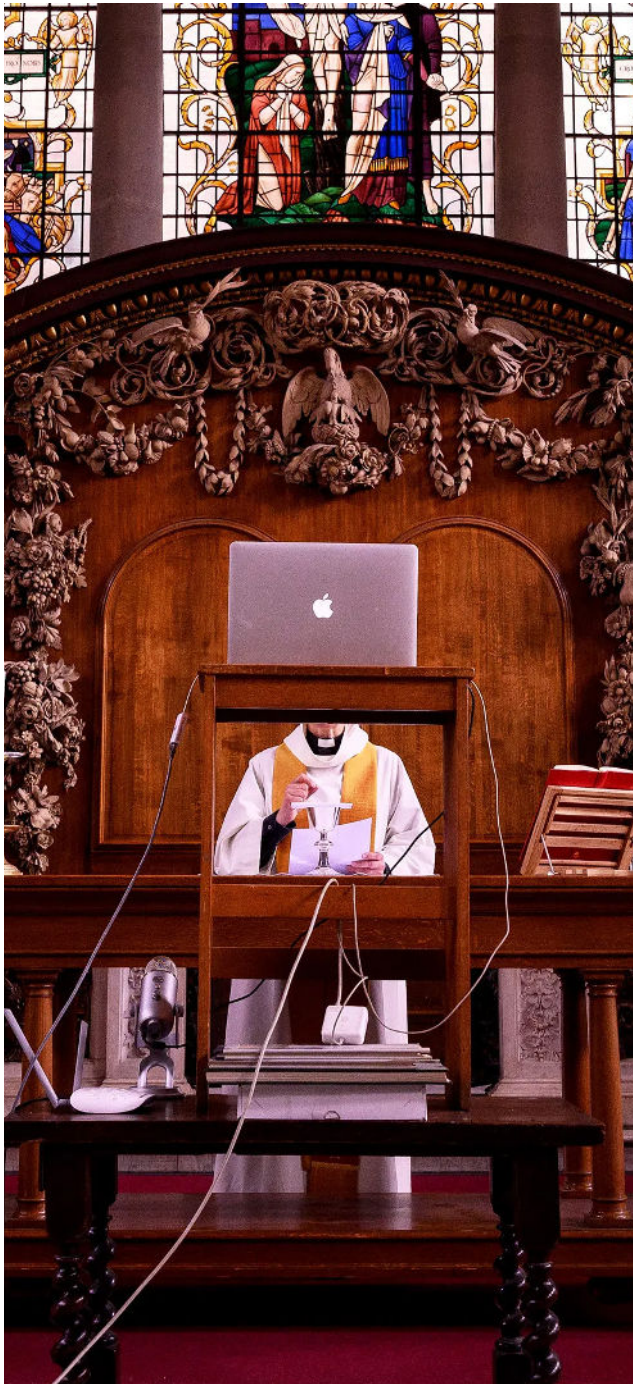
Hybrid worship with its virtual participation is one such innovative adaptation. This model of offering worship services both in-person and virtually across multiple platforms is here to stay in many congregations. The recent data suggests that nearly three-quarters of churches have adopted this model, and that percentage seems to be stabilizing (see Figure 9). A very small percentage of churches (2%) are entirely online but 73% offer both in person and virtual worship. This is an astonishing change in a very short time given that only 20% of these churches said they offered online streaming worship in 2019.

Figure 9



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

It isn't surprising that a majority of churches have opted for a hybrid worship reality. Some of their members are demanding it and it is simple to do at a basic level. A similar situation can be seen in education, medicine, business, and other spheres of life. Likewise, there is a distinct advantage to hybrid worship, both to address the needs of the membership and to enhance the health of the church itself in terms of attendance and giving.



A church that chooses to offer only in-person worship averages a median attendance of 35 and per capita giving of \$2,048. This sounds reminiscent of a small, traditional pre-pandemic church. The small percentage of churches (2%) that only provide worship online have a median size of 10 persons and per capita giving of \$691. These congregations often resemble a house church or small group fellowship on a virtual platform such as Zoom. However, a hybrid congregation with both in-person and virtual worship has an average size of 90 in worship and per capita giving of \$2,350. Therefore, in terms of strengthening the congregation with attendance and giving, hybridity is the strategic best choice.

When these congregations with virtual worship were asked if they saw themselves continuing to offer services in this manner for the coming five years, 81% of them said yes, 17% were unsure, and only 3% said no. Nearly all these churches (96%) offer virtual worship opportunities every week, with 18% of them having multiple virtual services every week.

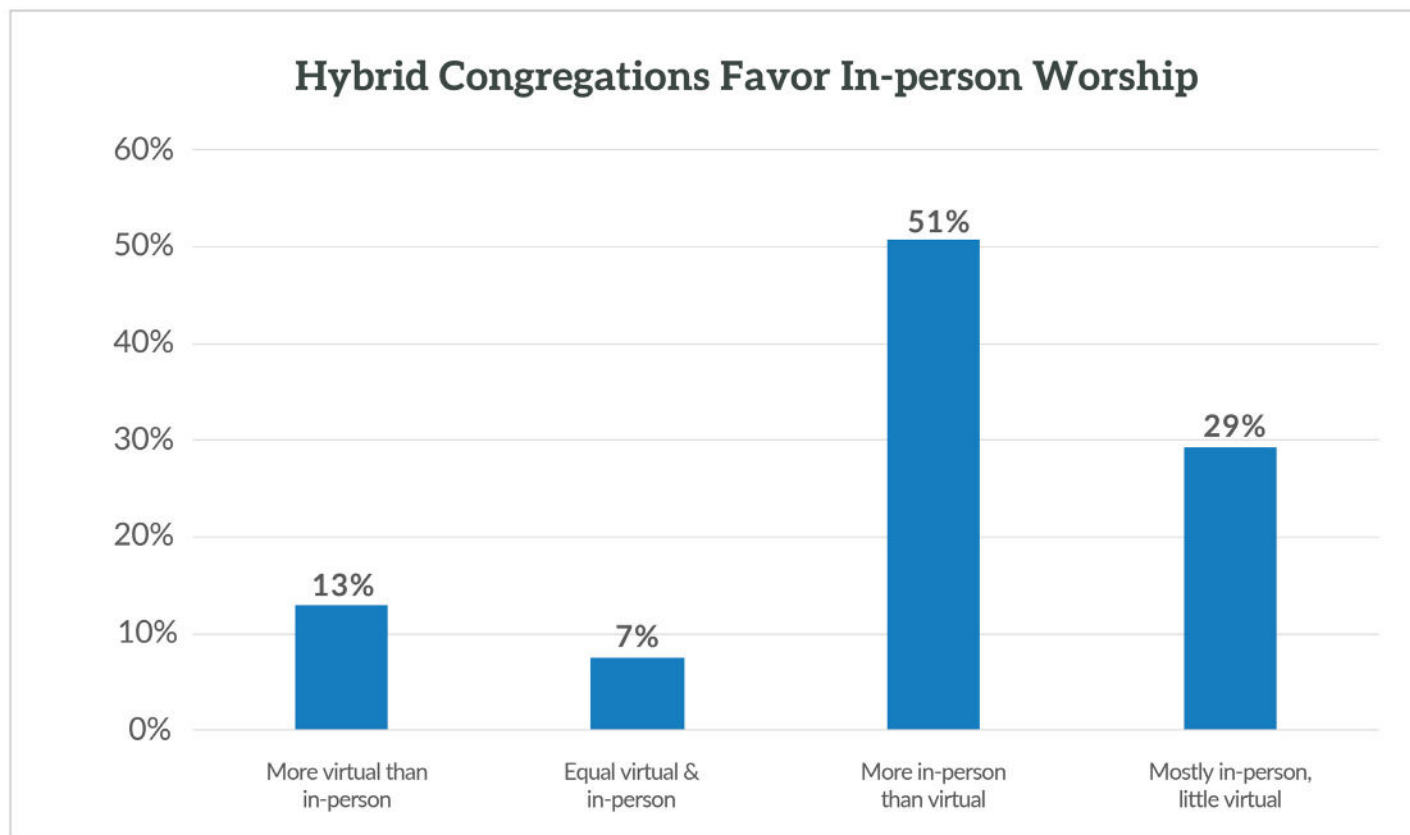
Hybrid congregations use a variety of platforms, and often several of these simultaneously, to deliver their virtual content. Over half (53%) use a social media host like Facebook Live, followed closely by 47% of churches that employ a video hosting platform such as YouTube, and a third using a conferencing service like Zoom (32%). A very small percentage have experimented with other methods such as radio and television.

What exactly this hybrid worship reality looks like is even more diverse than the platforms used. Some churches have invested in online worship with a virtual pastoral team and significant support staff whereas others just set up a camera and stream the sermon. In

our research, we found quite a variety of approaches, from several churches that gave up meeting in person and became entirely online church ([See the EPIC blog post that discusses these churches](#)) to others offering an online worship video feed as an afterthought and giving it very little attention. The current survey identified 11% of hybrid congregations with five or fewer online participants while 2% of churches had a thousand or more virtual members, in addition to their in-person attenders. What is clear is that most churches only think of hybridity in terms of streaming the worship service and replicating the model of a face to face in-person worship in a virtual format.

In an effort to explore the difference that hybrid worship makes in congregational dynamics, we constructed a ratio scale of the number of persons attending worship virtually compared to those in-person. This scale was categorized into four groups – more virtual than in-person, roughly equal percentages of virtual and in-person, more in-person than virtual, and mostly in-person with little virtual attendance. Figure 10 shows that significantly larger percentages of hybrid congregations are more likely to be comprised predominantly of in-person worship attendees.

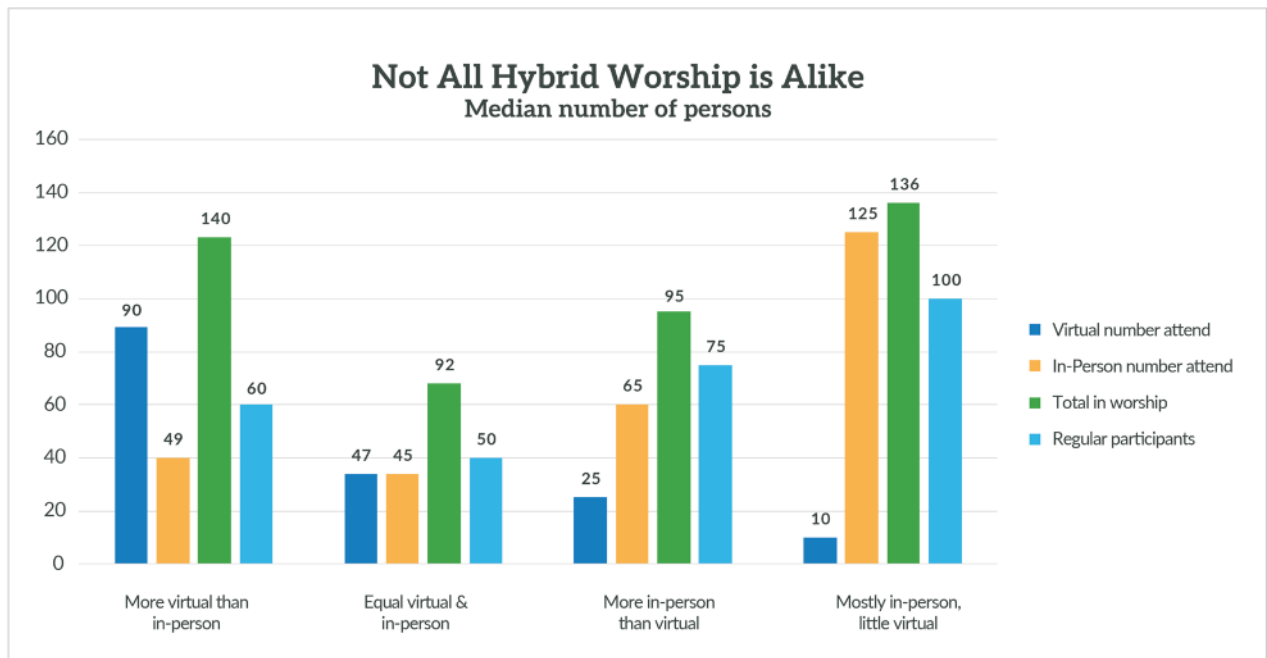
Figure 10



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

The exact benefits or costs of a hybrid congregational reality can be complicated to assess and these dynamics are still in flux. However, having many more virtual worship participants than in-person attendees resulted in a high total number (140) of attendees, but fewer than half of these attendees were considered active participants (60). At the other end of the hybrid spectrum, the churches with a greater in person to virtual worship attendee ratio had, on average, nearly as high total attendance (136) but a significantly greater number of regular, active participants (100) equaling nearly three quarters of total attendees (see Figure 11).

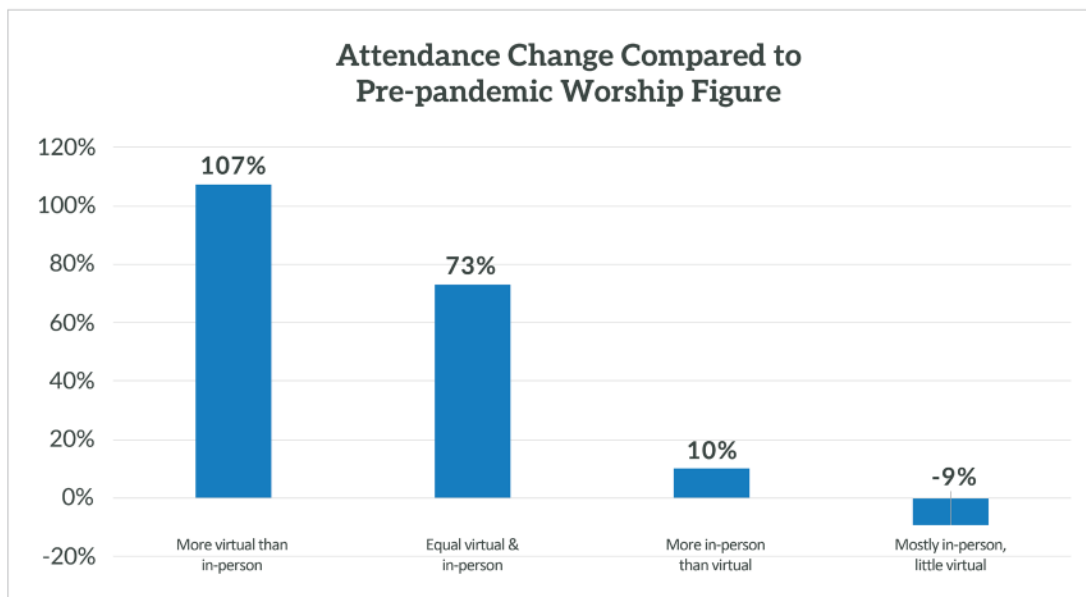
Figure 11



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

A look at growth and giving patterns further complicates the hybrid picture. As noted above, hybrid churches are generally larger than those with only in-person or only online services. Within this group of hybrid congregations, it appears that the presence of virtual attendees significantly benefits overall growth and post-pandemic attendance recovery. Hybrid churches with more virtual than in-person attendees have grown incredibly well in the past three years compared to those with fewer virtual attendees in relation to their in-person congregants. Comparing the change in attendance to pre-pandemic worship figures shows these congregations have more than doubled in size (107% increase), thanks in large part to virtual participation (See Figure 12). As the ratio of virtual worshippers to in-person attenders diminish, so does the percentage of growth in relation to 2019 worship size.

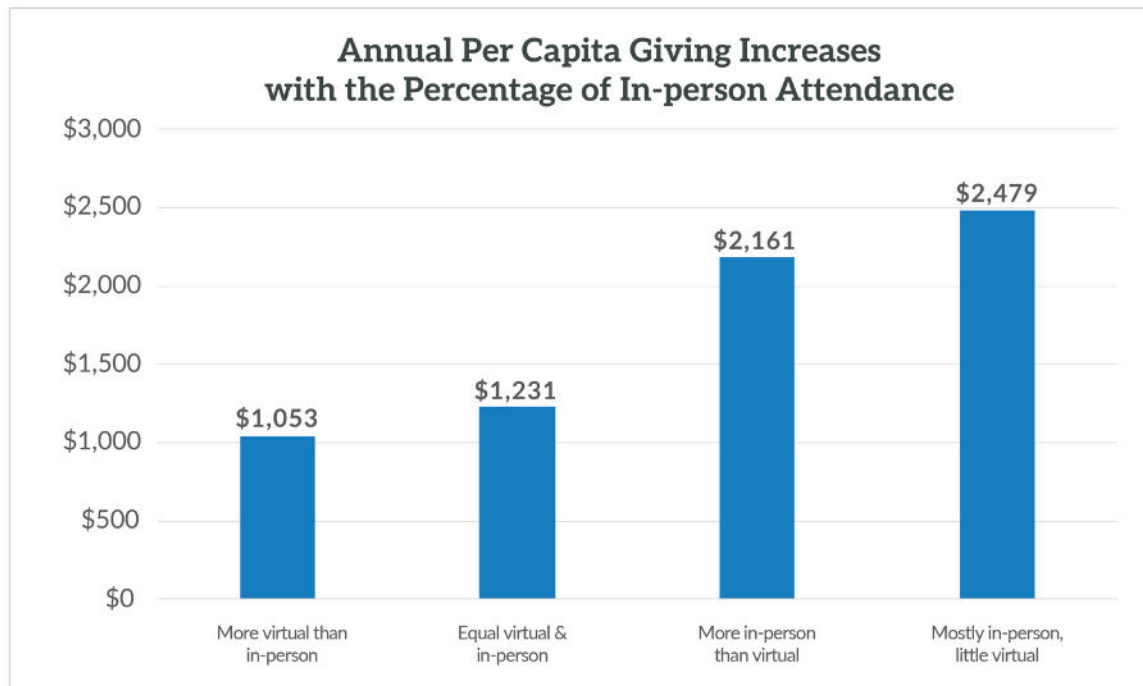
Figure 12



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

Additionally, hybrid churches have a higher per capita giving rate for participants. But looking at the per capita giving rates across this hybrid church spectrum shows considerable variation. The greater the in-person over virtual ratio, the larger the per capita giving amount. In other words, in-person attendees give more than their virtual counterparts (see Figure 13). This finding, along with the varying levels of volunteering and regular participation, indicates that virtual attendees are more spectators than active and engaged participants in the church's life.

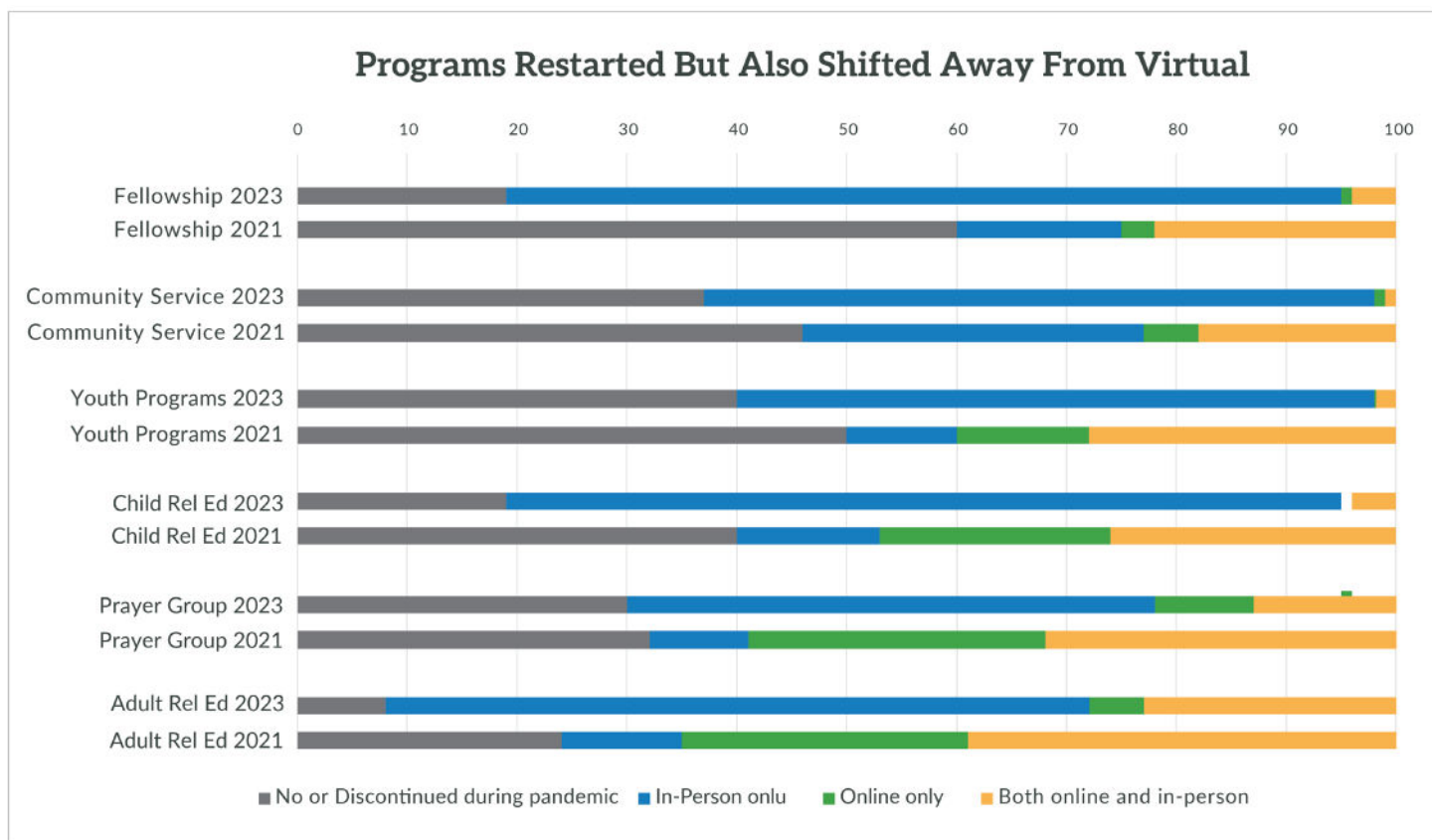
Figure 13



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

Finding ways to enhance the commitment of virtual attendees remains a challenge for congregational leadership, yet it holds great promise both to grow and strengthen churches. Embracing a hybrid church model means that leadership must look beyond minimal efforts to livestream services and begin to find virtual ways to provide fellowship, stimulate volunteering and service, and deliver discipleship, education, and pastoral care to online participants. Unfortunately, even though nearly three quarters of churches use hybrid worship practices, most congregational programs have gone back to an in-person only model (See Figure 14). The only exception to this pattern is that some churches are providing hybrid or online offerings for religious education for adults and prayer groups.

Figure 14



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

This shift back to an in-person model for programs is quite striking, given that so many churches are using online worship. While only roughly half (48%) of churches track online attendance, the median online participation is 25 persons, which is approximately a third of overall attendance. This implies that many churches are content with these worship participants to be virtual spectators and only experience a small segment of what the church could offer.

Not surprisingly, additional technological use of all sorts is up, but in many situations, it is employed less than one might think. Half of churches are not holding any small groups or Bible studies online, 40% do not use online platforms for their administrative and committee meetings, and 40% have no e-newsletter. On the other hand, virtual communication with texting or social media platforms and video projection is used by nearly 80% of churches. The Faith Communities Today 2023 report goes into greater detail on the technological changes and use patterns evident in this survey. Nevertheless, it is apparent that technology is not uniformly or consistently being used to redefine the nature and functioning of the typical congregation.

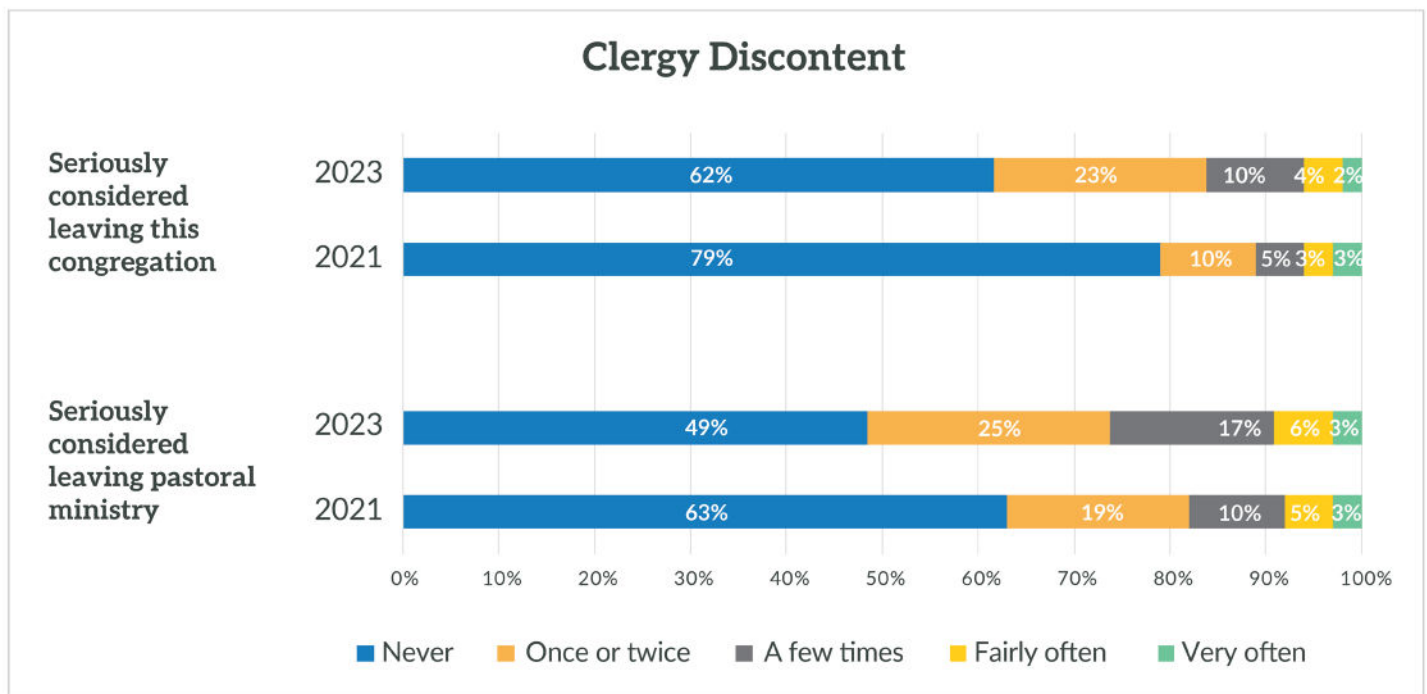
The Clergy - Resilience Amid Exhaustion

Creative uses of technology, the continued burden of hybrid worship, and ongoing adaptations to a shifting post-pandemic reality rest squarely on the shoulders of church leaders. This comes at a time when the loss of members is still being felt and the level of volunteering while growing is still less than in the past. The inertia of fatigue and three years of survival are taking their toll on clergy. Survey results point to evidence that many faith leaders are exhausted and disillusioned. They are increasingly

entertaining thoughts of leaving the ministry, though fewer often think about quitting, leaving their current placement, or doubting their overall call to ministry.

In summer of 2021, the project asked clergy if they seriously considered leaving their present church and while some had considered it, very few thought about it often (See Figure 15). Unfortunately, this thought has cropped up a good bit more two years later, with almost 40% having thought about departing their current position. Still, relatively few often pondered this idea. A similar pattern can be seen regarding those clergy who have thought seriously of leaving the pastoral ministry. Two years ago, 37% of clergy had thought this but very few considered this option with any frequency. In 2023, the percent of clergy entertaining this thought at all has grown to over half of clergy (51%). This increase is quite concerning and should be considered a serious warning sign. While relatively few of these clergy dwell on this thought often, over a quarter have considered it more than once or twice in moments of stress. Likewise, this survey doesn't capture those ministers who may have already left their congregations or the pastoral ministry. While there are no clear figures on how many are departing their church or profession, it certainly is happening. The data from this study shows that those who might have left are not alone in their exhaustion.

Figure 15



Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

An in-depth look at who is most likely to think about quitting the pastoral ministry shows it is more likely clergy with any of the following traits: younger, female, parttime, bi-vocational, more recently hired, and those who see a poor fit between themselves and the membership. Ministers in more challenging circumstances are also more prone to consider quitting. Those clergy in congregations that are financially challenged, less willing to change, have a negative outlook on the future, and have higher conflict are more likely to consider leaving the ministry.

The fact that over 50% of clergy have thought at least once or twice about leaving indicates that many are carrying some level of stress and exhaustion, but even with this finding there are some mixed messages regarding pastoral resilience within the survey. Only 15% have doubted a few times or more

since 2020 that they are called by God to ministry. Likewise, clergy indicate their mental, spiritual, and relational health is quite strong, scoring an 8.1 out of 10-point rating scale, while their physical and financial averages slightly lower at 7.5 and 7.4 respectively. Fewer than 10% of clergy scored a 5 or below. Regarding their sense of the “fit” with the membership, 67% reported it was “very good,” 29% said “good” and only 4% described it as “just okay” or “not good.” Additionally, their hopefulness about the church’s future is quite high – 80% somewhat or very positive, and only 11% somewhat or very negative. While showing warnings signs of stress and fatigue among the clergy, the present data does not indicate they have given up hope and while discontented at times, ministers still seem resilient, healthy, and generally hopeful.

A Mixed Message

It is always helpful when a new study or survey paints a consistent picture that points in a clear and unambiguous direction. However, such is not the character of the times we are living in currently. Much of society is still unsettled and remains in flux. This varying reality is evident in the results of this survey. Clearly, there are indications of positive dynamics for Christian churches – attendance is rebounding, income is up, volunteering is on the rise, and conflict has diminished. These are all indications that commitment levels are climbing within the congregation and new people are engaging with the churches either in-person or virtually.

On the other hand, not all congregations are experiencing these gains equally. Many report attendance below where it was prior to the pandemic. The average size of the in-person attendance is a median of 60. Most congregations are still suffering from a lack of participation by younger generations, with aging clergy and growing percentages of older members. Additionally, at a time when churches need to continue to adapt and innovate, the data indicates that a greater percentage of congregations are less willing to change.

The pandemic era did usher in one great alteration in terms of new congregational dynamics – increased use of technology, livestreaming, and hybrid worship. This hybridity has the potential to expand the life and scope of congregational ministry. Aspects of hybrid worship allow for greater attendance growth of the worship service while addressing needs of congregational members who cannot be physically present. Conversely, virtual worship seems to diminish engagement and create more of a spectator mentality. This is especially true given that many congregations preference the in-person worship experience and are diminishing the programs they previously offered virtually or in hybrid form.

Finally, the unsettled reality of these changes continues to weigh heavily on religious leaders. The evidence of discontent and dissatisfaction with the ministry continues to increase, though in most cases it is not at a severe stage. Likewise, there are indications that many clergy are still resilient, healthy, and hopeful.

Overall, this 2023 glimpse into the present congregational dynamics is one of uncertainty and unsettledness, much like society itself. The country, as well as its congregations, is still feeling its way out of the pandemic era challenges. This uncertainty is reflected in congregational life even while showing positive signs of recovery and vitality. Churches may not “be back” yet to a state of normalcy and settledness, but they are further along this path than they have been in the last two years.



About This Study

The Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study is generously funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and led by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (formerly Hartford Seminary). We will continue to release targeted analyses of more specific findings from our surveys breaking down how Mainline/Evangelical, multiracial, Black congregations, Latinx, Asian congregations, and churches of differing sizes are navigating the pandemic. Sign up to receive our newsletter and like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter to make sure you receive our reports as soon as they are released.

Methodology

This Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study is the result of a collaborative venture of 20 denominations from the Faith Communities Today (FACT) cooperative partnership and Hartford Institute for Religion Research staff. Together a common core questionnaire was crafted by this group. A copy of this questionnaire is available at www.covidreligionresearch.org and should be consulted for the exact wording of items used in this report and the question's general frequencies. Using this common questionnaire, partner groups conducted an online survey of a representative, random national sample of their congregations supported by Hartford Institute during the period of January to May 2023. The survey wording was customized slightly for individual faith groups. Additionally, a national sample of congregations from non-FACT partner denominations was drawn from a random sample sourced from a national marketing company list. This key informant questionnaire was completed about the congregation by its primary leader, a staff member, or lay leader. For purposes of the overall national analysis, the 20 sub-surveys were individually weighted by region and attendance size to better approximate their faith group's profile. Then responses from each partner denomination and the random sample were combined into an aggregated dataset. Using statistical weighting, this data was adjusted to be proportionate to a group's representation in the total population of congregations in the United States as well as adjusted for size and regional distribution using a combination of the 2020 US Religion Census, the 2018/19 National Congregations Study, and the 2020 Faith Communities Today research. The aggregated dataset includes responses from a total of 4,809 Christian congregations from 57 denominations. The response rate and sampling error for a survey using this methodology can only be roughly estimated. An estimate for the margin of error is +/- 3% at the 95% confidence level. For more information about this study, its methods, or to participate in future surveys, contact Scott Thumma at sthumma@hartfordinternational.edu.