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Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal

But COVID-19 pandemic still a major presence in houses of worship as many Christians plan to stay home on Easter

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this survey to help track how the evolving coronavirus outbreak is affecting the religious lives and worship habits of Americans. For this report, we surveyed 12,055 U.S. adults from March 1 to 7, 2021. All respondents to the survey are part of Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education, religious affiliation and other categories. For more, see the [ATP's methodology](#) and the [methodology for this report](#).

The questions used in this report [can be found here](#).

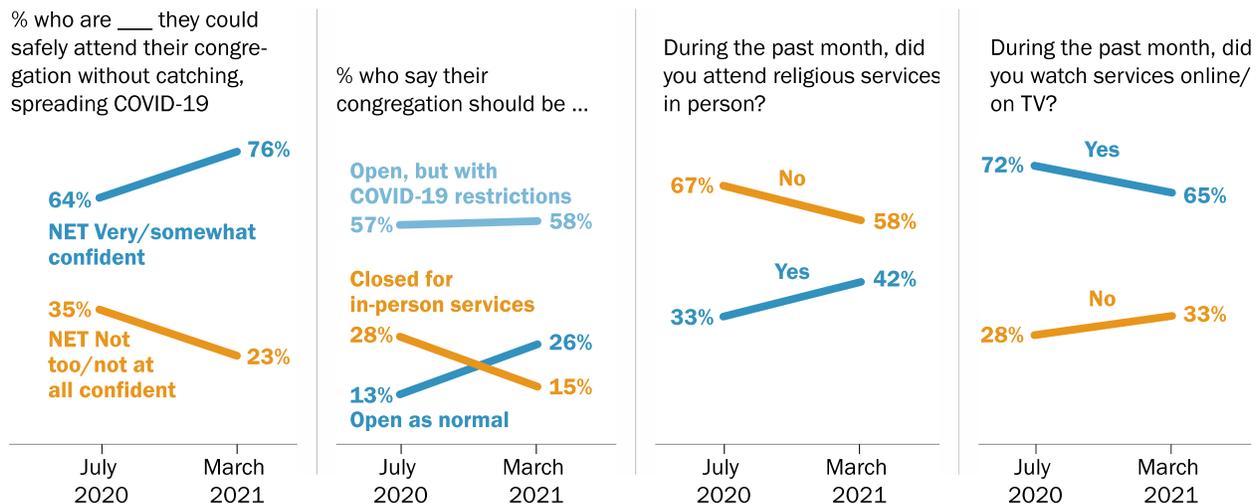
Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal

But COVID-19 pandemic still a major presence in houses of worship as many Christians plan to stay home on Easter

As [coronavirus](#) cases, hospitalizations and deaths decline and vaccination rates rise across the United States, life in religious congregations is showing signs of slowly returning to normal. A new Pew Research Center survey finds that Americans are increasingly confident they can safely go to services at a church, temple, mosque or other house of worship. And the percentage who say they actually have attended religious services – in person – in the past month is slightly higher than it was last summer. Still, the situation in U.S. congregations remains far from ordinary, and this promises to be the second consecutive highly atypical Easter season for Christians.

In U.S., growing numbers confident they can safely attend religious services

Among U.S. adults who regularly attend religious services ...



Note: Figures reflecting confidence in ability to attend safely and about views of congregation's operating status are based on those who said in a previous survey that they generally attend religious services at least monthly or said in the current survey they had attended in-person services in the last month. Figures reflecting recent in-person attendance and having watched online are based only on those who said in a previous survey that they generally attend religious services at least monthly. Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

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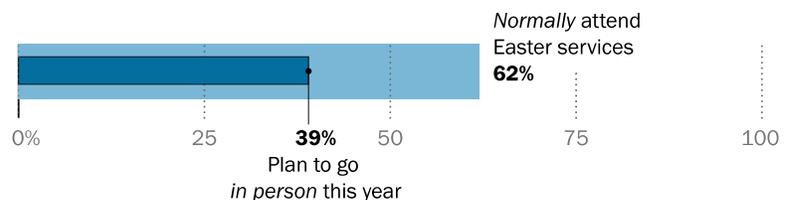
Three-quarters of U.S. adults who normally attend religious services now say they are “very” or “somewhat” confident they can do so safely, without spreading or catching the coronavirus – up 12 percentage points from when this question was last asked in July 2020. Over that period, there also has been a considerable drop in the share who say they think their congregation should be closed to help stop the spread of the virus.

Roughly four-in-ten people who *typically* attend religious services at least once or twice a month say they *actually* have done so, in person, during the past month – up 9 points since last summer. And as in-person attendance has trended upward, there has been a corresponding decline in the share of regular religious attenders who recently have watched services streamed online or on television.

But while in-person religious attendance has begun to rebound, it still is far from normal. Most people who say they generally attend religious services at least once or twice a month (58%) say they have *not* attended during the past month. And just four-in-ten U.S. Christians (39%) plan to go in person to church services this Easter Sunday, which is sharply lower than the 62% who say they typically go to church on Easter.

Roughly four-in-ten U.S. Christians plan to attend Easter services in person this year

% of U.S. Christians who say they ...



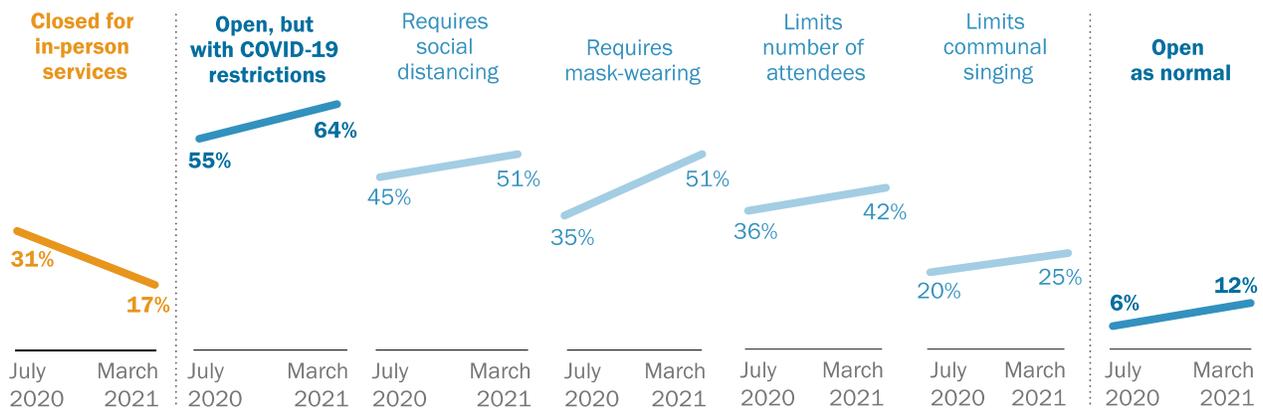
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 “Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal”

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Furthermore, while growing numbers of religious attenders think their congregations should be open, the clear majority continues to say that various modifications and restrictions – such as social distancing, mask-wearing and limiting the number of people who can attend at any one time – are needed to continue the fight against the spread of the virus. And these kinds of modifications remain widespread. In addition to the 17% of U.S. attenders who say their congregation currently is closed, another two-thirds say their congregation is now open but only on a modified basis due to the pandemic. Just 12% say their congregation is open and operating as usual – double the number who said this in July 2020, but still a far cry from normal.

Fewer U.S. religious attenders now say their congregation is closed, but most say COVID-19-related modifications remain in place

Among U.S. adults who regularly attend religious services, % who say their congregation is currently ...



Note: Based on those who said in a previous survey that they generally attend religious services at least once or twice a month or said in the current survey that they had attended in-person services in the last month. Those who did not answer or said they are not sure are not shown. Respondents could name more than one kind of specific modification in place at their congregation.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

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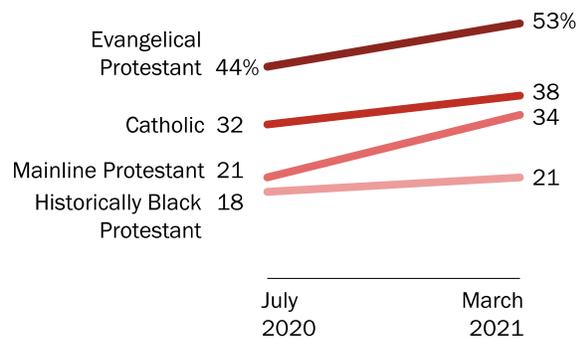
These are among the key findings of a new Pew Research Center survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among 12,055 U.S. adults on the Center's online, nationally representative American Trends Panel. More information on how the survey was conducted is available in the methodology.

The study was designed to gauge how the coronavirus outbreak is affecting the way Americans participate in their religious congregations. It finds that congregational life is returning to normal most rapidly among evangelical Protestants. Overall, half of evangelicals who typically attend religious services at least monthly say they have attended church *in person* during the past month. And half of all evangelicals (not just those who normally attend) say they plan to attend Easter Sunday services in person this year.

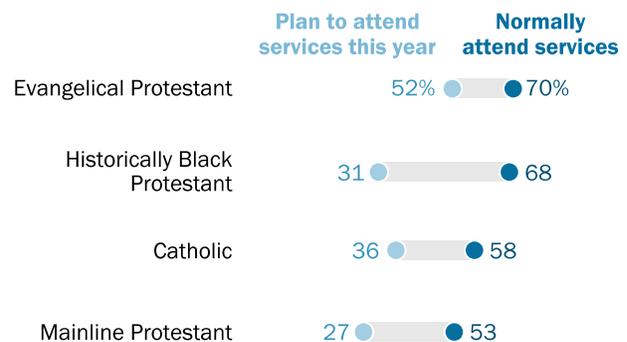
Still, even among evangelicals, there continues to be a large gap between the share who typically attend religious services and the smaller share who have done so recently or plan to do so soon (i.e., for Easter).

Half of evangelicals say they plan to attend church in person this Easter

Among those who typically attend religious services at least monthly, % who say they attended in person in the past month



Among all respondents, % who _____ on Easter



Note: The survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of non-Christian religious groups who said in a previous survey that they typically attend religious services monthly or more often to analyze those groups' answers separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

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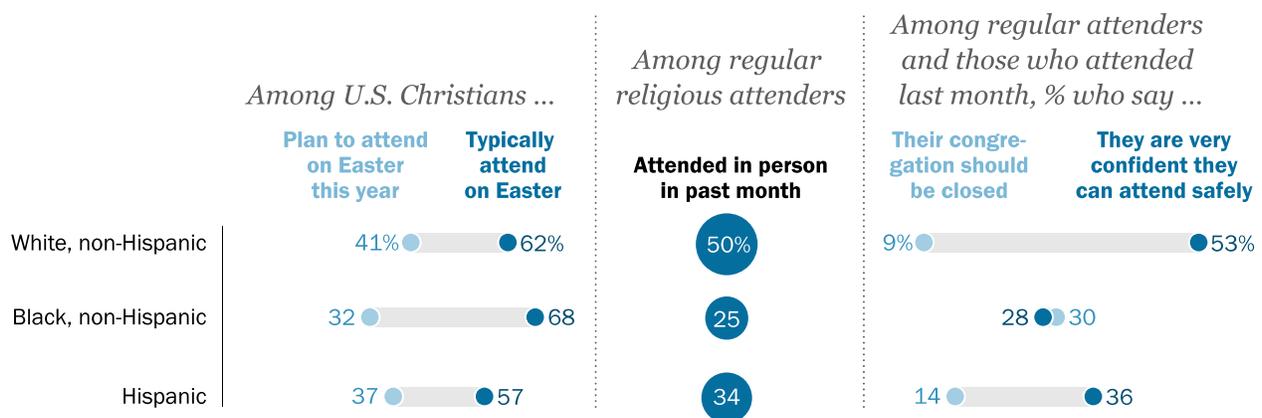
And at the opposite end of the spectrum from evangelicals, the return to pre-pandemic levels of in-person religious attendance is occurring much more slowly among those in the historically Black Protestant tradition.

In general, this group is highly observant: Among respondents in the current survey, for instance, 56% of those in the historically Black Protestant tradition say they typically attend religious services at least once or twice a month, far higher than the share of Catholics (39%) and mainline Protestants (37%) who do so.

But just 21% of those in the historically Black Protestant tradition who typically go to religious services at least monthly say they went, physically, to in-person religious services in the past month, which is little changed from last summer. And just 31% of people in the historically Black Protestant tradition say they plan to attend Easter services in person this year, compared with two-thirds (68%) who say they go to church on Easter in a typical year.

More broadly, [other surveys](#) show that the coronavirus pandemic has hit communities of color especially hard. And the current survey finds that Black Americans, in particular, are cautious about returning to their congregations. For example, Black Americans are less likely than non-Hispanic White adults to say they attended religious services in person during the past month or that they are “very confident” they can now attend religious services safely. Black Christians are less likely than White Christians and no more likely than Hispanic Christians to say they plan to go to Easter services this year, even though they are the group *most* likely to attend on Easter in a typical year. And fully three-in-ten Black religious attenders say their congregation should be closed altogether because of the outbreak, far higher than the share of White (non-Hispanic) and Hispanic adults who feel the same way.

Black Americans more likely than others to say their congregations should be closed because of coronavirus



Note: Figures reflecting confidence in ability to attend safely and about views of congregation's operating status are based on those who said in a previous survey that they generally attend religious services at least monthly or said in the current survey they had attended in-person services in the last month. Figures reflecting recent in-person attendance are based only on those who said in a previous survey that they generally attend religious services at least monthly.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

"Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal"

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Other key findings from the new study include:

- Just as in July 2020, eight-in-ten U.S. religious attenders – ranging from 73% among Catholics to 87% among those in the evangelical and mainline Protestant traditions – say their congregation is currently recording or streaming its services so that people can watch online or on TV.
- Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party are far more comfortable than Democrats and Democratic leaners with returning to normal congregational life sooner rather than later. Among those who typically attend religious services on a monthly basis (or more), Republicans are more than twice as likely as Democrats to say they have attended services *in person* during the past month (57% vs. 26%). Six-in-ten Republican and Republican-leaning religious attenders say they are very confident they can safely attend in-person services at their congregation right now (61%), compared with 25% of Democratic attenders. And about seven-in-ten Republicans who say they typically attend Easter services also say they intend to do so in person this year (71%), while fewer than half of Democrats who typically go to church on Easter plan to go in person this year (42%).
- Compared with the summer of 2020, in-person religious attendance – and confidence that it is safe – is up in all regions of the country. For instance, the share of religious attenders who say they are “very confident” they can attend services safely, without catching or spreading COVID-19, has grown by 13 percentage points in both the Northeast and the West (where the shares who are now “very confident” stand at 47% and 44%, respectively), by 12 points in the Midwest (to 49% now) and by 7 points in the South (where 42% are now “very confident” they can attend services safely).

Most religious attenders say their congregations are still streaming or recording services

Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in person in the past month, % who say the house of worship they attend most often is currently streaming or recording its services so that people can watch them online or on TV

	July 2020	March 2021
	%	%
All U.S. adults	79	82
Christian	80	83
Protestant	86	87
<i>Evangelical</i>	88	87
<i>Mainline</i>	82	87
<i>Historically Black</i>	83	83
Catholic	68	73

Note: The survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of non-Christian religious groups who said in a previous survey that they typically attend religious services monthly or more often or who said in the new survey that they attended religious services in person in the last month to analyze those groups' answers separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults. “Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal”

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- In addition to its questions about congregational involvement, the new survey also asked Americans whether their own faith has grown stronger, weaker, or not changed much as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. It finds that roughly one-quarter of U.S. adults say their religious faith has grown stronger as a result of the pandemic, while 4% say their faith has been weakened; the remainder say that their faith has not changed much, including those who say they were not religious to begin with and still are not. These findings are on par with results from a survey conducted in April 2020, during the early weeks of the outbreak. The new survey and the April 2020 survey both show, furthermore, that those whose religious faith was strongest *before* the pandemic are most likely to say their faith has been strengthened because of the pandemic. Very few people who were not particularly religious to begin with say they have become more religious because of the coronavirus outbreak.

- While Black Americans are among the groups least inclined to return to religious life as normal in their congregations right now (before they think it is safe to do so), they are the *most* inclined to say their own religious faith has grown stronger as a result of the pandemic. Overall, 38% of Black adults say their faith has grown stronger as a result of the pandemic, compared with 27% of Hispanic adults and 19% of non-Hispanic White adults who say this.

These and other findings are discussed in more detail below.

American congregants gradually returning to in-person religious attendance

As of early March 2021, 17% of U.S. adults indicate that they have attended religious services in person during the past month, up modestly but significantly from the 13% who said this in July 2020. Among those who said in a prior survey that they typically attend religious services at least monthly, 42% say they have done so over the past month, up from 33% who said this in July 2020.

While in-person religious attendance is ticking upward, watching religious services online or on TV is edging downward. Among those who typically attend services at least monthly, 65% now say they have recently watched services online or on TV, down from 72% in the summer of 2020.

Roughly half of evangelical Protestants who normally attend church regularly (53%) say they attended religious services *in person* over the past month. About four-in-ten Catholic attenders (38%) have

Regular religious attenders are returning to in-person religious services

% of U.S. adults who say they have done each of the following in the last month

	Attended religious services in person		Watched religious services online or on TV	
	July 2020	March 2021	July 2020	March 2021
	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	13	17	36	33
Typically attend at least monthly	33	42	72	65
Attend less often	3	5	17	16
<i>Among those who typically attend at least monthly ...</i>				
Christian	33	43	74	67
Protestant	35	44	78	71
<i>Evangelical</i>	44	53	80	71
<i>Mainline</i>	21	34	68	69
<i>Historically Black</i>	18	21	84	76
Catholic	32	38	63	51
White, non-Hispanic	39	50	71	65
Black, non-Hispanic	19	25	77	73
Hispanic	24	34	68	57
Northeast	35	46	68	63
Midwest	34	44	75	66
South	32	42	72	68
West	31	37	71	62
Republican/lean Rep.	42	57	73	64
Democrat/lean Dem.	19	26	70	67

Note: Figures for all U.S. adults are based on those respondents who participated in both the July 2020 and the March 2021 surveys. The survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of non-Christian religious groups who said in a previous survey that they typically attend religious services monthly or more often to analyze those groups' answers separately. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

"Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal"

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gone to church recently, as have roughly one-third of mainline Protestants who typically go to services at least once or twice a month (34%). All three of these figures are up since last July.

One-in-five regular churchgoers in the historically Black Protestant tradition say they recently attended religious services *in person*, lower than among other religious groups analyzed in the survey. But adults in the historically Black Protestant tradition are no less likely than members of other Christian traditions to have watched religious services recently online or on TV. (There were not enough interviews with Jews, Muslims or members of other non-Christian groups who say they normally attend religious services at least monthly to allow for separate analysis of their responses to these survey questions.)

Among those who typically attend religious services, Republicans are more than twice as likely as Democrats (including those who lean to each party) to say they recently attended in-person religious services (57% vs. 26%).

On second Easter of the pandemic, four-in-ten U.S. Christians plan to go to services in person

Overall, 62% of U.S. Christians say they normally attend religious services on Easter Sunday. Even one-in-ten religiously unaffiliated Americans (who, by and large, rarely or never go to religious services), say they typically go to church on Easter. But this year, just four-in-ten Christians (39%), along with 5% of adults who do not identify as Christian – equivalent to about a quarter of all U.S. adults (27%) – say they plan to attend Easter services in person.

The gap between what Americans typically do to commemorate Easter and what they plan to do this year is especially striking among members of the historically Black Protestant tradition. In a typical year, roughly two-thirds of people in this group say they would attend Easter services. This year, in stark contrast, only about one-third say they plan to attend church on Easter in person.

Democrats are less likely than Republicans to attend Easter services even in a typical year, partly reflecting the larger shares of religious “nones” (people who describe themselves, religiously, as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular”) and members of non-Christian faiths among Democrats than among Republicans. This year, 40% of Republicans (and those who lean toward the GOP) intend to go to in-person Easter services, compared with 18% of Democrats.

In U.S., 39% of Christians say they plan to attend Easter services in person this year, down from 62% who normally go

% of U.S. adults who say they ...

	Plan to attend Easter services in person this year	Normally attend in-person Easter services
	%	%
All U.S. adults	27	44
Christian	39	62
Protestant	41	65
<i>Evangelical</i>	52	70
<i>Mainline</i>	27	53
<i>Historically Black</i>	31	68
Catholic	36	58
White, non-Hispanic	29	43
Black, non-Hispanic	26	58
Hispanic	30	45
Republican/lean Rep.	40	53
Democrat/lean Dem.	18	37

Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults. “Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal”

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Most who normally attend services say their congregations are open, but with precautions

Compared with July 2020, more U.S. adults who attend religious services (either in a typical month or during the past month) say their congregations now are open, at least in a limited way, and fewer say their congregations are closed due to the coronavirus. Most people whose congregations are open say there are a variety of coronavirus-related precautions or modifications in place. Just 12% of U.S. religious attenders say their congregations are currently open and operating normally, just as they were before the pandemic hit.

Members of the historically Black Protestant tradition and mainline Protestants are more likely than people in other large U.S. religious groups to say their congregations remain closed. Evangelical Protestants are more likely than the other groups to say their congregations are open and operating normally, with no coronavirus-related modifications – although still, just one-in-five evangelicals (19%) say this. Catholics stand out for the relatively large numbers who say their churches are open but with virus-related modifications in place.

Fewer than one-in-five religious attenders now say their congregation is closed due to the coronavirus, down from 31% in July

Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in person in the past month, % who say the house of worship they attend most often is currently ...

	July 2020				March 2021			
	Open to public and holding services in same way as before outbreak	Open to public for services, but with changes as result of outbreak	NOT open for in-person services	Not sure	Open to public and holding services in same way as before outbreak	Open to public for services, but with changes as result of outbreak	NOT open for in-person services	Not sure
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. attenders	6	55	31	7	12	64	17	6
Christian	5	57	31	7	11	66	17	6
Protestant	7	56	31	6	14	62	18	5
<i>Evangelical</i>	7	64	24	4	19	67	9	4
<i>Mainline</i>	4	45	45	6	6	58	31	5
<i>Historically Black</i>	9	35	41	15	6	49	36	9
Catholic	3	65	23	9	5	79	8	8
White, non-Hispanic	5	65	25	4	14	70	11	4
Black, non-Hispanic	7	37	42	14	7	50	36	6
Hispanic	6	41	41	12	11	61	20	9
Northeast	4	67	24	4	10	64	17	8
Midwest	5	64	24	7	13	71	13	3
South	7	51	33	9	15	63	17	4
West	5	47	40	7	8	59	23	10
Republican/lean Rep.	7	66	23	5	17	71	7	5
Democrat/lean Dem.	5	43	42	10	6	59	28	7

Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

"Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal"

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When asked which (if any) virus-related precautions are in place at their congregation, half of U.S. religious attenders say their congregations are currently open but with social distancing measures or mask-wearing requirements in place. Four-in-ten say their congregations are open but with limited capacity. And one-quarter say their congregations have imposed limits on communal singing. Each of these kinds of precautions has edged up, at least marginally, since July 2020, reflecting the fact that there are now more congregations that are open with modifications in place and fewer congregations that are closed entirely.

Catholics are more likely than those in other groups to say each of these precautionary measures has been adopted in their parishes. Indeed, seven-in-ten Catholics say their parishes are requiring social distancing and/or mask wearing, and six-in-ten say there are limits on the number of people who can attend Mass at any one time. These patterns reflect the fact that Catholics, more than any other group, say their churches are open but operating with virus-related precautions in place.

Half of those who attend religious services say their congregation is requiring social distancing, mask-wearing

Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in person in the past month, % who say the house of worship they attend most often currently ...

	July 2020					March 2021				
	Requires social distancing	Requires masks	Restricts capacity	Limits communal singing	Is closed altogether	Requires social distancing	Requires masks	Restricts capacity	Limits communal singing	Is closed altogether
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. attenders	45	35	36	20	31	51	51	42	25	17
Christian	47	36	38	20	31	53	52	43	25	17
Protestant	45	30	33	16	31	47	46	36	18	18
<i>Evangelical</i>	52	32	38	16	24	49	47	36	15	9
<i>Mainline</i>	35	30	26	21	45	47	48	34	21	31
<i>Hist. Black</i>	28	23	22	12	41	40	43	36	26	36
Catholic	58	54	53	32	23	69	69	61	41	8
White	54	38	42	23	25	57	54	43	25	11
Black	31	28	25	15	42	41	43	34	26	36
Hispanic	33	33	29	16	41	47	53	46	24	20
Northeast	60	55	51	26	24	56	56	49	32	17
Midwest	51	33	41	22	24	57	56	43	24	13
South	41	31	31	19	33	47	48	38	23	17
West	39	32	33	17	40	50	48	42	22	23
Rep./lean Rep.	55	38	42	21	23	55	53	43	22	7
Dem./lean Dem.	34	32	30	20	42	49	51	43	29	28

Note: Respondents could name multiple precautions that are in place at their congregations, although those who said their houses of worship are closed entirely did not receive any of the other questions. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

"Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The precautions that are in place in many U.S. congregations are largely in line with the desires of the associated congregants. While the share of religious attenders who think their congregations should be closed altogether has declined since last summer (from 28% to 15%), the majority think that at least some virus-related modifications are in order (58%). One-quarter of U.S. religious attenders are in favor of fully opening up their congregations without any restrictions.

Members of the historically Black Protestant tradition and mainline Protestants are more inclined than evangelical Protestants and Catholics to say their congregations should remain closed for the time being – though this sentiment is down from July 2020 among all these groups, just as it is among religious attenders as a whole. Evangelical Protestants are far more supportive than those in other groups of opening up their congregations; 35% now say their congregations should be operating normally, roughly double the share who said this last summer (18%). Catholics occupy a middle ground and stand out for the relatively high share who say their churches should be open but with precautions in place.

Currently, 15% of U.S. religious attenders say their congregation should be closed because of the coronavirus, down from 28% who said this last July

Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in person in the past month, % who say the house of worship they attend most often **should** currently be ...

	July 2020			March 2021		
	Open to public and holding services in same way as before outbreak	Open to public for services, but with changes as result of outbreak	NOT open for in-person services	Open to public and holding services in same way as before outbreak	Open to public for services, but with changes as result of outbreak	NOT open for in-person services
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. attenders	13	57	28	26	58	15
Christian	13	59	27	26	59	14
Protestant	15	58	26	28	57	14
<i>Evangelical</i>	18	64	18	35	56	8
<i>Mainline</i>	9	49	40	20	57	22
<i>Historically Black</i>	10	46	41	11	60	28
Catholic	8	62	27	21	67	10
White, non-Hispanic	15	63	21	32	58	9
Black, non-Hispanic	10	44	42	9	59	30
Hispanic	10	51	37	22	61	14
Northeast	7	69	19	21	60	16
Midwest	16	61	22	29	59	11
South	14	53	31	25	60	13
West	12	51	35	27	53	19
Republican/lean Rep.	19	64	16	40	55	4
Democrat/lean Dem.	6	48	44	7	64	26

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

"Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal"

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The most common kinds of precautions Americans say they would like their congregations to take are social distancing measures and mask requirements (both 50%). Roughly four-in-ten religious attenders say they support limiting capacity at religious services, and three-in-ten want limits on communal singing.

Half of U.S. Christian churchgoers say their congregations should be enforcing social distancing, mask-wearing

Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in person in the past month, % who say the house of worship they attend most often **should** currently ...

	July 2020					March 2021				
	Require social distancing	Require masks	Restrict capacity	Limit communal singing	Be closed altogether	Require social distancing	Require masks	Restrict capacity	Limit communal singing	Be closed altogether
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. attenders	51	44	41	29	28	50	50	42	29	15
Christian	53	45	43	29	27	51	51	43	29	14
Protestant	51	42	38	25	26	48	47	37	24	14
<i>Evangelical</i>	55	43	41	23	18	45	43	34	19	8
<i>Mainline</i>	44	40	32	28	40	49	51	39	29	22
<i>Hist. Black</i>	44	42	34	32	41	55	56	48	36	28
Catholic	61	56	56	39	27	60	64	58	44	10
White	56	45	44	29	21	49	49	40	26	9
Black	40	39	33	29	42	54	55	43	32	30
Hispanic	47	46	42	27	37	54	54	48	35	14
Northeast	65	62	56	37	19	57	57	52	34	16
Midwest	53	44	43	33	22	50	51	42	28	11
South	47	40	38	26	31	50	49	38	29	13
West	47	41	38	24	35	47	46	43	29	19
Rep./lean Rep.	56	44	43	26	16	43	43	33	20	4
Dem./lean Dem.	46	45	41	33	44	61	61	54	42	26

Note: Respondents could name multiple precautions that they would like to see at their congregations, although those who said their houses of worship should be closed entirely did not receive any of the other questions. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

"Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal"

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The new survey asked U.S. adults for the first time about outdoor religious services: Is their congregation holding religious services outside because of the pandemic, and is this something that Americans think their congregations should be doing?

Overall, 23% of religious attenders say they think their congregations *should* be holding services outdoors, including 31% of Catholics who say this. Fewer – just 13% of all religious attenders – say their congregations currently *are* holding services outdoors.

Of course, the new survey was conducted during winter. Outdoor services may have been more common last summer (and may be more common this spring and summer) than they are at present.

One-in-five Protestants, three-in-ten Catholics say their congregations should be holding services outside

Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in person in the past month, % who say the house of worship they attend most often _____ as a result of the coronavirus outbreak

	Is holding services outdoors	Should hold services outdoors
	%	%
All U.S. attenders	13	23
Christian	12	22
Protestant	10	20
<i>Evangelical</i>	9	17
<i>Mainline</i>	13	23
<i>Historically Black</i>	10	26
Catholic	20	31
White, non-Hispanic	10	16
Black, non-Hispanic	10	29
Hispanic	21	35
Northeast	10	22
Midwest	7	18
South	10	23
West	23	28
Republican/lean Rep.	11	16
Democrat/lean Dem.	16	33

Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults. "Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal"

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Growing confidence about attending religious services safely

Three-quarters of U.S. adults who typically attend religious services (or attended in person in the last month) say they are at least somewhat confident they now could attend services at their congregation safely without catching or spreading the virus, including 45% who are “very” confident and an additional 32% who are “somewhat” confident. This constitutes a significant change since July 2020, when fewer (64%) expressed at least some confidence, including one-third (34%) who were “very” confident they could attend religious services safely.

The share of adults who say they are “very” confident they could attend services safely is up in most religious groups, with one notable exception. The share of people in the historically Black Protestant tradition who say they are “very” confident is little different today (31%) than it was during the summer of 2020 (30%). Over that period, however, there has been a significant increase in the share of members of the historically Black Protestant tradition who say they are “somewhat” confident it is safe to attend religious services (from 20% to 33%).

People who have actually attended religious services recently are far more likely to say that doing so is safe, compared with people who are normally regular attenders but who have *not* gone to in-person services recently. Of course, the causal connection could go both ways. Having gone to services recently may inspire more confidence that it is safe to do so; or, having confidence that it is safe to attend may lead to higher rates of actual attendance. It may also be that both things are happening.

Three-quarters of religious attenders now at least somewhat confident they could attend in-person services without catching, spreading coronavirus

Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in person in the past month, % who say they are ___ confident they could safely attend in-person religious services right now without spreading or catching the coronavirus

	July 2020				March 2021			
	NET Very/ somewhat %	Very %	Somewhat %	NET Not too/ not at all %	NET Very/ somewhat %	Very %	Somewhat %	NET Not too/ not at all %
All U.S. attenders	64	34	29	35	76	45	32	23
Christian	65	35	29	35	77	46	31	22
Protestant	67	37	30	32	78	47	31	22
Evangelical	75	42	32	25	82	52	30	17
Mainline	56	26	30	43	75	45	30	24
Historically Black	50	30	20	49	63	31	33	34
Catholic	59	31	28	40	77	43	34	21
Attended in person in last month	89	59	30	11	93	66	27	7
Have not attended	50	20	29	49	62	26	36	37
White, non-Hispanic	72	40	32	27	82	53	29	17
Black, non-Hispanic	49	29	20	49	60	28	32	39
Hispanic	51	24	27	48	73	36	38	25
Northeast	68	34	34	30	78	47	31	20
Midwest	69	37	32	31	80	49	31	19
South	62	35	27	38	76	42	34	23
West	60	31	30	38	73	44	29	27
Republican/lean Rep.	79	47	32	21	89	61	27	11
Democrat/lean Dem.	44	18	26	55	63	25	38	36

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

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Pandemic has strengthened the faith of many who were highly religious to begin with

Overall, roughly one-quarter of U.S. adults say their faith has been strengthened by the coronavirus pandemic, while 4% say their faith has grown weaker. The remainder say their faith has not changed much (including 23% who say they were not religious to begin with and still are not religious).

More than four-in-ten people in the historically Black Protestant tradition (43%) say their faith has been strengthened by the pandemic, as do 37% of evangelical Protestants. Fewer Catholics, mainline Protestants and Jews say their faith has grown stronger, and just one-in-twenty religiously unaffiliated Americans (6%) say their faith has been strengthened by the coronavirus crisis.

These patterns partly reflect another key finding of the survey. People who were

highly religious to begin with, before the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S., are also the most likely to say their faith has grown because of the pandemic. Evangelical Protestants and people in the historically Black Protestant tradition are, on average, among the most highly religious groups in the U.S. population, while the religiously unaffiliated are among the least religious by a variety of conventional measures, including the self-assessed importance of religion in their lives.

Those who said they were highly religious to begin with most likely to say their faith has been strengthened due to pandemic

% of U.S. adults who say that as a result of coronavirus outbreak ...

	Their faith has become stronger	Their faith has become weaker	Their faith has not changed much	N/A - I am not a religious person and this hasn't changed
	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	23	4	51	23
Christian	31	5	59	5
Protestant	33	4	58	4
<i>Evangelical</i>	37	3	57	2
<i>Mainline</i>	20	4	68	8
<i>Historically Black</i>	43	6	48	3
Catholic	24	5	63	8
Jewish	16	1	62	21
Unaffiliated	6	2	29	63
<i>Among respondents who said in August 2019 that religion is ___ important in their lives</i>				
Very	42	4	52	2
Somewhat	17	5	71	6
Not too/not at all	5	2	33	60
White, non-Hispanic	19	3	53	25
Black, non-Hispanic	38	4	46	11
Hispanic	27	6	49	19

Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 1-7, 2021, among U.S. adults.

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted March 1 to March 7, 2021. A total of 12,055 panelists responded out of 13,545 who were sampled, for a response rate of 89%. This does not include two panelists who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 4%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 12,055 respondents is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points.

Panel recruitment

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample of households selected

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,183
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,243
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	621
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	5,900
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS/web	5,900	4,720	2,329
June 1 to July 19, 2020	ABS/web	1,865	1,636	1,269
	Total	36,879	25,076	13,545

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Across these three address-based recruitments, a total of 17,161 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 15,134 (88%) agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. Of the 25,076 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 13,545 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.¹ The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was non-institutionalized persons ages 18 and older, living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data which was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

¹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.](#)"

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was March 1 to March 7, 2021. Postcard notifications were mailed to all ATP panelists with a known residential address on March 1, 2021.

On March 1 and March 2, invitations were sent out in two separate launches: Soft Launch and Full Launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on March 1, 2021. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on March 2, 2021.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists that consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to two SMS reminders.

Invitation and reminder dates

	Soft Launch	Full Launch
Initial invitation	March 1, 2021	March 2, 2021
First reminder	March 4, 2021	March 4, 2021
Final reminder	March 6, 2021	March 6, 2021

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center’s researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for very high rates of leaving questions blank, as well as always selecting the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, two ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey (and the probability of being invited to participate in the panel in cases where only a subsample of respondents were invited). The base weights for panelists recruited in different years are scaled to be proportionate to the effective sample size for all active panelists in their cohort. To correct for nonresponse to the initial recruitment surveys and gradual panel attrition, the base weights for all

active panelists are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table to create a full-panel weight.

For ATP waves in which only a subsample of panelists are invited to participate, a wave-specific base weight is created by adjusting the full-panel weights for subsampled panelists to account for any differential probabilities of selection for the particular panel wave. For waves in which all active panelists are invited to participate, the wave-specific base weight is identical to the full-panel weight.

In the final weighting step, the wave-specific base weights for panelists who completed the survey are again calibrated to match the population benchmarks specified above. These weights are trimmed (typically at about the 1st and 99th percentiles) to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age x Gender	2019 American Community Survey
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metro/Non-metro	2019 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	2020 National Public Opinion Reference Survey
Frequency of internet use	
Religious affiliation	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. The 2016 CPS was used for voter registration targets for this wave in order to obtain voter registration numbers from a presidential election year. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population. The 2020 National Public Opinion Reference Survey featured 1,862 online completions and 2,247 mail survey completions.

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The following tables show the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...	
All U.S. adults	12,055	1.5 percentage points	
Christian	7,652	1.9 percentage points	
Protestant	4,773	2.3 percentage points	
Evangelical	2,487	3.1 percentage points	
Mainline	1,763	3.9 percentage points	
Historically Black	523	6.4 percentage points	
Catholic	2,497	3.4 percentage points	
Jewish	332	9.9 percentage points	
Unaffiliated	3,557	3.0 percentage points	
White	8,298	1.7 percentage points	
Black	947	4.9 percentage points	
Hispanic	1,921	4.6 percentage points	
		Unweighted sample size	Weighted %
Republican/lean Rep.	4,796	43	2.3 percentage points
Democrat/lean Dem.	6,988	52	2.1 percentage points

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
<i>Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in-person in the last month</i>		
Total	4,569	2.4 percentage points
Christian	4,258	2.5 percentage points
Protestant	2,827	3.0 percentage points
Evangelical	1,730	3.7 percentage points
Mainline	769	6.2 percentage points
Historically Black	328	8.2 percentage points
Catholic	1,157	5.0 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	3,028	2.8 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	510	6.8 percentage points
Hispanic	727	7.2 percentage points
Northeast	616	6.3 percentage points
Midwest	1,040	5.1 percentage points
South	1,974	3.8 percentage points
West	939	5.4 percentage points
Republican/lean Rep.	2,462	3.2 percentage points
Democrat/lean Dem.	2,007	3.8 percentage points
<i>Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly</i>		
Total	4,295	2.5 percentage points
Christian	4,037	2.6 percentage points
Protestant	2,731	3.0 percentage points
Evangelical	1,677	3.8 percentage points
Mainline	735	6.4 percentage points
Historically Black	319	8.2 percentage points
Catholic	1,040	5.3 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	2,866	2.9 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	495	6.9 percentage points
Hispanic	649	7.7 percentage points
Northeast	567	6.6 percentage points
Midwest	986	5.2 percentage points
South	1,861	3.9 percentage points
West	881	5.6 percentage points
Republican/lean Rep.	2,317	3.3 percentage points
Democrat/lean Dem.	1,885	3.9 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	12,055
Logged onto survey; broke-off	2.12	119
Logged onto survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	72
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	1,297
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality		2
Screened out		0
Total panelists in the survey		13,545
Completed interviews	I	12,055
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	1,490
Non-contact	NC	0
Other	O	0
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		13,545
AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$		89%

Cumulative response rate	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	73%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 84	57%
Response rate to Wave 84 survey	89%
Cumulative response rate	4%

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