

# Four in 10 Christians plan to attend in-person Easter services

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—Americans are becoming more confident they can attend in-person religious services, but church attendance at Easter services will still be far lower than usual this year, a new Pew Research poll finds.

The poll, conducted in early March among 12,055 Americans, finds the percentage of regular attenders who say they actually have attended religious services—in person—in the past month is slightly higher than it was in June, about 17 percent.

Among Christians, only 39 percent said they planned to go in person to church services on Easter Sunday, April 4.

White evangelicals are the most likely to say they planned to attend in-person Easter services—52 percent. That's still far lower than the 62 percent of Christians of all kinds who typically attend services at Easter, the holiest day of the Christian year.

The poll also found people who attend religious services favor keeping a lot of the COVID-19 restrictions, such as social distancing and mask-wearing, in place.

Catholics, more than any other group, say their churches are open but operating with virus-related precautions in place. Eight out of 10 (79 percent) are open but require social distancing, masking and attendance limits.

Overall, half of Christians say their congregations are open to in-person

services while enforcing social distancing and mask-wearing.

The return to pre-pandemic levels of in-person religious attendance is much slower among Black Protestants. Only 21 percent said they are attending in-person services now, and only 31 percent plan to attend at Easter—far lower than the 68 percent who typically attend. The pandemic has hit Black Americans especially hard.

About 80 percent of all religious attenders said their place of worship offers online services.

The poll also found a political divide: Republicans who regularly attend services are more than twice as likely as Democrats who regularly attend services to say they recently attended in-person religious services (57 percent vs. 26 percent).