

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

Health and Wellness Study

Saint Paul Catholic Church
San Antonio, Texas

January 2021
(For Data Collected from October to December 2020)

THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY
OF AMERICA

The crest of The Catholic University of America, featuring a shield with a cross, a crescent moon, and a star, with the motto "DEUS MEA LUX EST" on it.

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Health and Wellness Study Saint Paul Catholic Church San Antonio, Texas

Introduction

Considerable research establishes a strong positive relationship between religiosity and health. Physical and mental health are also strongly linked. And when it comes to mental health in particular, faith leaders tend to be the first recourse for most Americans. In this study, we set out to examine physical, mental, and spiritual health and wellness within a diverse sample of faith communities in the Washington DC and San Antonio, Texas areas. The survey was conducted in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, and many of the questions reflect the circumstances congregants found themselves in during that period. This study is funded through a grant from the John Templeton Foundation (# 61107, Brandon Vaidyanathan PI).

This report will highlight key findings from the Health and Wellness survey at St. Paul Catholic Church. The survey was designed by researchers at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and replicates questions asked in major national surveys. The instrument was further refined by Dr. Brandon Vaidyanathan at The Catholic University of America in consultation with leaders from various faith communities. Participating religious congregations were awarded \$1,000 for participation in this study.

This present report was written by a partnering contractor, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. The link to the online survey was distributed by congregational leaders at St. Paul Catholic Church from October to December 2020. Altogether, there were 141 valid respondents from the congregation.

Major Findings

Respondents range in age from 19 to 89, with an average age of 51. Eighty-six percent identify as female and 13% as male. Some 84% identify as Hispanic or Latino, with the next highest identification being white (10%). Two in three are married (66%), with 17% having never married and 12% divorced or separated. A quarter have completed a postgraduate or professional degree (26%), with another 32% having completed college. Thirty-five percent report annual household incomes of \$50,000 or less, 38% report incomes of \$50,001 to \$100,000, and 27% report incomes of \$100,001 or more.

Major findings for those responding to the survey at St. Paul Catholic Church are summarized in the topic areas below.

Indicators and Awareness of Respondents' Health and Wellness

- On a scale of 0 to 10, responding congregants rate their satisfaction with their lives as a whole as 8.1. Some 79% rate their satisfaction on the positive end of that scale. Similarly, on a scale of 0 to 10, responding congregants rate their physical health as 8.0, with 75% rating it on the positive end of that scale.
- Between 9% and 22% report having at least “some” difficulty meeting some of their financial needs. Non-essential expenses (22%) are the most common difficulty, followed by medical expenses (18%) and other necessities (18%).
- Concerning their mental health overall, responding congregants were asked to rate it on a scale of 0 to 10. Their average rating is 8.3, with 84% rating it on the positive end of the scale. In a related finding, 12% say they have ever been diagnosed with a mental illness by a medical professional or psychologist.

Impact of and their Attitudes about the Pandemic

- Thirteen percent report an increase in their use of alcohol since the pandemic started, with 2% to 6% indicating an increase in any of the other addiction-related behaviors asked about on the survey.
- Concerning their spiritual lives, 47% report that how often they pray or meditate has increased since the start of the pandemic, with 28% reporting an increase in how often they read sacred texts or scriptures and 37% saying the importance they place on their religious faith in their daily lives has increased.
- None have either had Covid-19 or currently have symptoms of it. About a quarter (23%-28%) report that they or someone they live with has a chronic health condition that puts them at high risk if they get Covid-19.
- Sixty percent indicate that they regularly worry about their family or friends becoming sick with Covid-19, with 45% regularly worrying that they themselves will get it. Concerning other impacts of the pandemic on them, they are especially likely to report that their quality of sleep has suffered (23%), that they often feel lonely (21%), and that they often feel helpless (17%).
- Fifty-seven percent believe that the Covid-19 pandemic has created a unique opportunity for expressing compassion to others.
- If a vaccine was available today, 30% say they would definitely get it, 44% report they would probably get it, 19% say they probably would not get it, and 7% say they definitely would not get it.

Experiences of their Faith Communities

- Thirty-five percent “strongly agree” that they trust the leaders of their faith community, with another 59% “agreeing” they do. In addition, 30% “strongly agree” that they feel very close to other members of their faith community, with another 49% “agreeing” they do.
- Concerning whether they feel cared for by their fellow members, 73% say that other members provide meals and other practical support for members who are sick or injured “fairly often” or “very often,” combined. In a related finding, 63% say that other members let them know they love and care for them “fairly often” or “very often,” combined.
- About six in ten say their faith community has been doing the following since the start of the pandemic: their leaders have made themselves easy to access (68%), the faith community has been in regular contact with members (60%), and the faith community has helped elderly members to stay connected (55%).
- Anticipating how they will or will not participate in their faith community after the end of the pandemic, 60% say they most likely will attend in-person religious services only, 36% say they will most likely attend a mix of online and in-person religious services, and 2% say they will most likely attend religious services online only. Two percent says they most likely will not attend religious services at all.

Organization of this Report

This report consists of six sections:

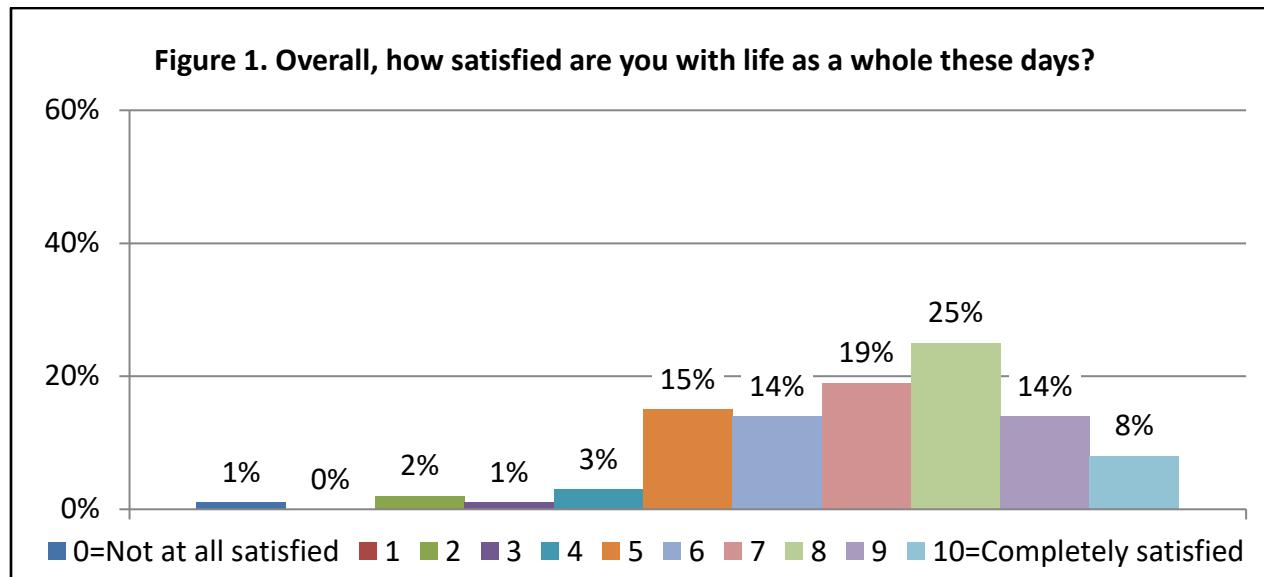
- Indicators and awareness of health and wellness
- Impact of and their attitudes about the pandemic
- Their experiences of their faith communities
- Religious characteristics, behaviors and beliefs of respondents
- Demographic characteristics of respondents
- Open-ended response transcription: Largest challenges facing congregants

Section I: Indicators and Awareness of Health and Wellness

This section presents findings about responding congregants' general health and wellness, the amount of stress they experience, and their attitudes about various mental health conditions.

Life Satisfaction and General Health

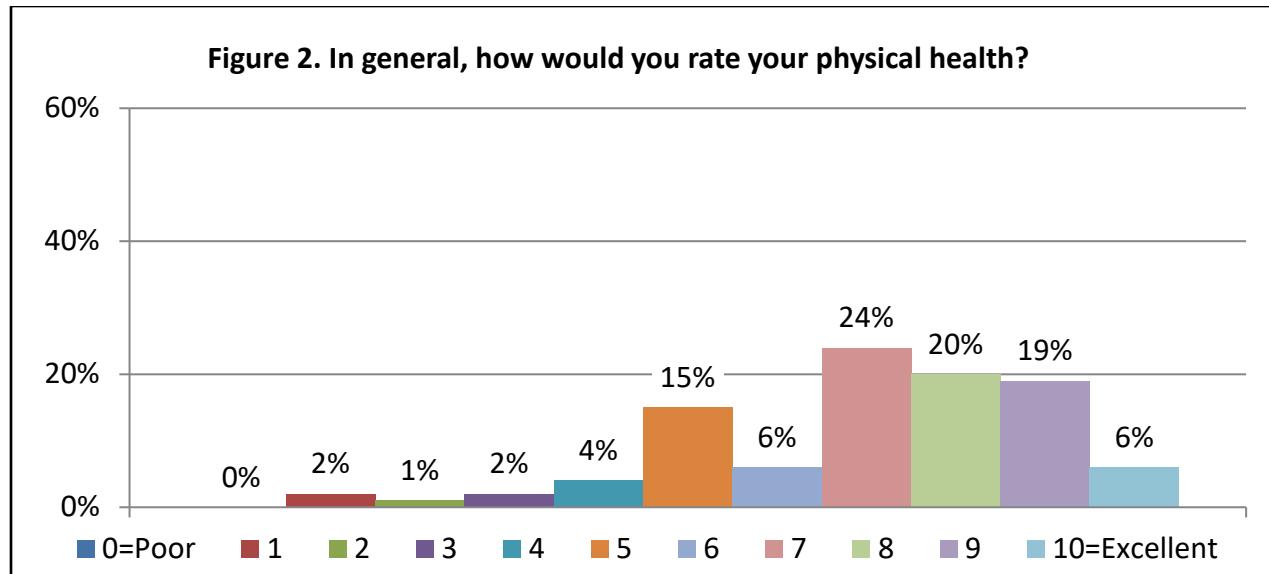
Respondents indicated how satisfied they are with their life on a scale from 0 (for "not satisfied at all") to 10 (for "completely satisfied"). Their average rating is 8.1. Using the rating of "5" as a midpoint, 79% rate their satisfaction with their lives as 6 or above (the positive end of the scale) and 21% rate it as 5 or below (the negative end of the scale). A more detailed display of their responses is shown in Figure 1 below.¹ ²



¹ These results are only for those who responded to the question. Some 1% did not provide a response to this question.

² Due to rounding error, the percentages in figures and tables throughout this report may not sum up to exactly 100%.

On average, respondents from the congregation rate their physical health as 8.0 on a scale of 0 (for “poor”) to 10 (for “excellent”). Using the rating of “5” as the midpoint, 75% rate their general physical health as 6 or above (the positive end of the scale) and 25% rate it as 5 or below (the negative end of the scale). A more detailed display of responses is shown in Figure 2 below.³



³ These results are only for those who responded to the question. Some 1% did not provide a response to this question.

Stressors and Difficulties

Responding congregants told of their recent stressful events and financial difficulties in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Statistics Related to Stressors and Difficulties (Total N=141)

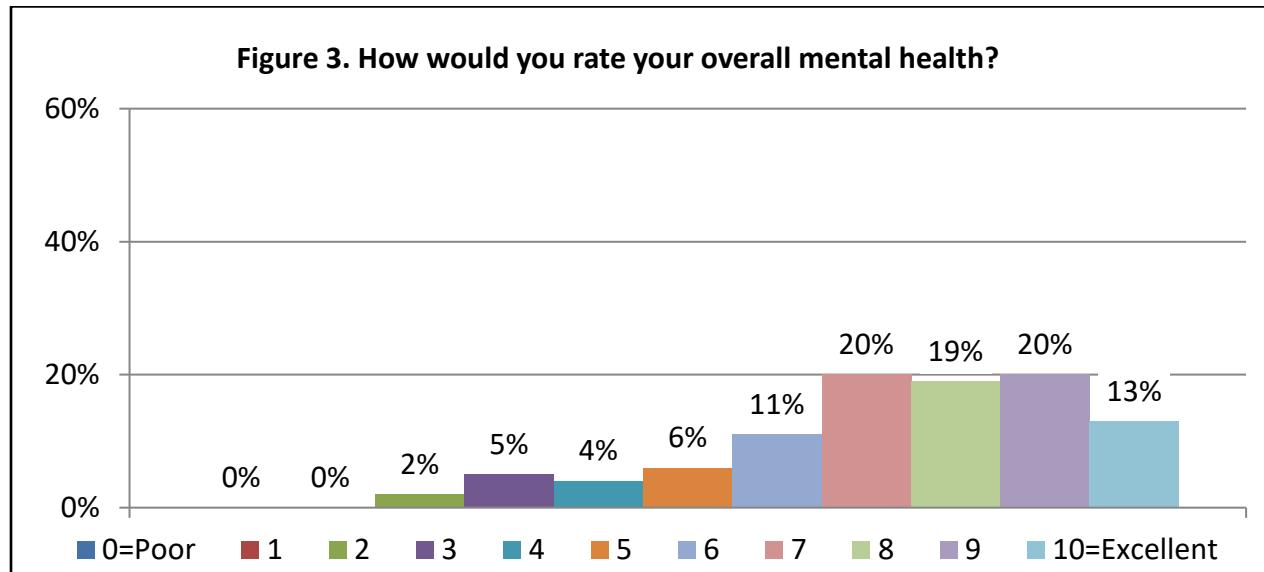
<u>Situations that Have Happened to You Since January 2019</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
An unexpected death of a loved one	39	28%
Considerable loss of income	22	16%
Considerable loss of financial savings	17	12%
A serious illness	12	9%
An unwanted loss of a job	11	8%
Loss of health insurance	10	7%
A serious accident or injury	9	6%
A robbery or break-in	4	3%
Trouble with drug/alcohol addiction	3	2%
Going out of business	3	2%
Domestic violence	1	1%
A marital separation or divorce	0	0%

<u>Situations that Have Happened to You Since March 1, 2020</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
An unexpected death of a loved one	26	18%
Considerable loss of income	15	11%
Considerable loss of financial savings	14	10%
A serious illness	8	6%
An unwanted loss of a job	8	6%
Loss of health insurance	7	5%
A serious accident or injury	3	2%
Trouble with drug/alcohol addiction	3	2%
A robbery or break-in	2	1%
Domestic violence	1	1%
A marital separation or divorce	0	0%
Going out of business	0	0%

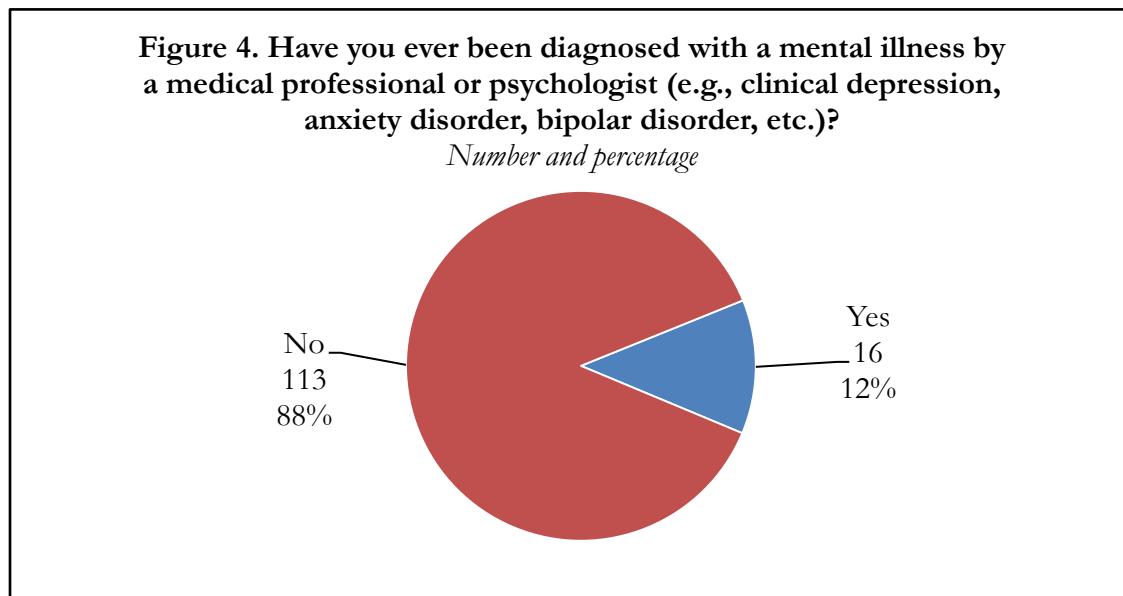
<u>When You Think of Your Financial Situation Overall, How Difficult Is It for You to Meet the Following Needs?</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage Responding</u>
	<u>Responding “Somewhat” or “Very” Difficult</u>	<u>“Somewhat” or “Very” Difficult</u>
Non-essential expenses	28	22%
Medical expenses	22	18%
Other necessities	22	18%
Housing	20	16%
Food	13	10%
Transportation	11	9%

Mental Health Indicators

Concerning their overall mental health, respondents give an average rating of 8.3 on a scale of 0 (for “poor”) to 10 (for “excellent”). Using the rating of “5” as a midpoint, 84% rate their overall mental health as 6 or above (the positive end of the scale) and 16% rate it as 5 or below (the negative end of the scale). A more detailed display of their responses is shown in Figure 3 below.⁴



In addition, responding congregants were asked if they had ever been diagnosed with a mental illness by a medical professional or psychologist. Twelve percent report that they have.



⁴ These results are only for those who responded to these questions. One percent of respondents did not provide a response to the question in Figure 3 and 9% did not respond to the question in Figure 4.

Section II: Impact of and their Attitudes about the Pandemic

The impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on respondents and their attitudes about it are discussed in this section.

Changes in Addictive Behaviors

Responding congregants were asked if their use of the substances presented in Table 4 below has changed since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, they were asked if their use had increased, stayed about the same, or decreased.

Table 4. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, has your use of the following changed?

	Increased Since the Pandemic	Stayed about the Same	Decreased Since the Pandemic	Does Not Use It	Non- Response*
Alcohol	13%	47%	5%	36%	12%
Prescription medications for depression, insomnia, or any other type of mental illness	6%	15%	1%	78%	13%
Tobacco	5%	3%	2%	90%	12%
Non-prescription drugs	4%	30%	0%	66%	12%
Pornography	3%	5%	2%	90%	12%
Marijuana	2%	1%	2%	96%	11%

*Non-response is separately calculated, with the other four columns totaling 100%.

Changes in Spiritual Behaviors

Responding congregants were asked if the spiritual behaviors shown in Table 5 below has changed since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, they were asked if these behaviors had increased, stayed the same, or decreased.

Table 5. Overall, how have the following changed (if at all) since the Covid-19 pandemic started?

	Decreased Since the Pandemic	Same as Before	Increased Since the Pandemic	Non- Response*
How often you pray or meditate	8%	45%	47%	6%
How important your religious faith is to you in your everyday life	1%	63%	37%	7%
How often you read sacred texts or scriptures	11%	62%	28%	8%
The sense of connection or closeness you feel towards your local faith community	33%	42%	25%	6%
How often you attend religious services	56%	34%	10%	6%

*Non-response is separately calculated, with the other three columns totaling 100%.

Their Experiences of the Pandemic

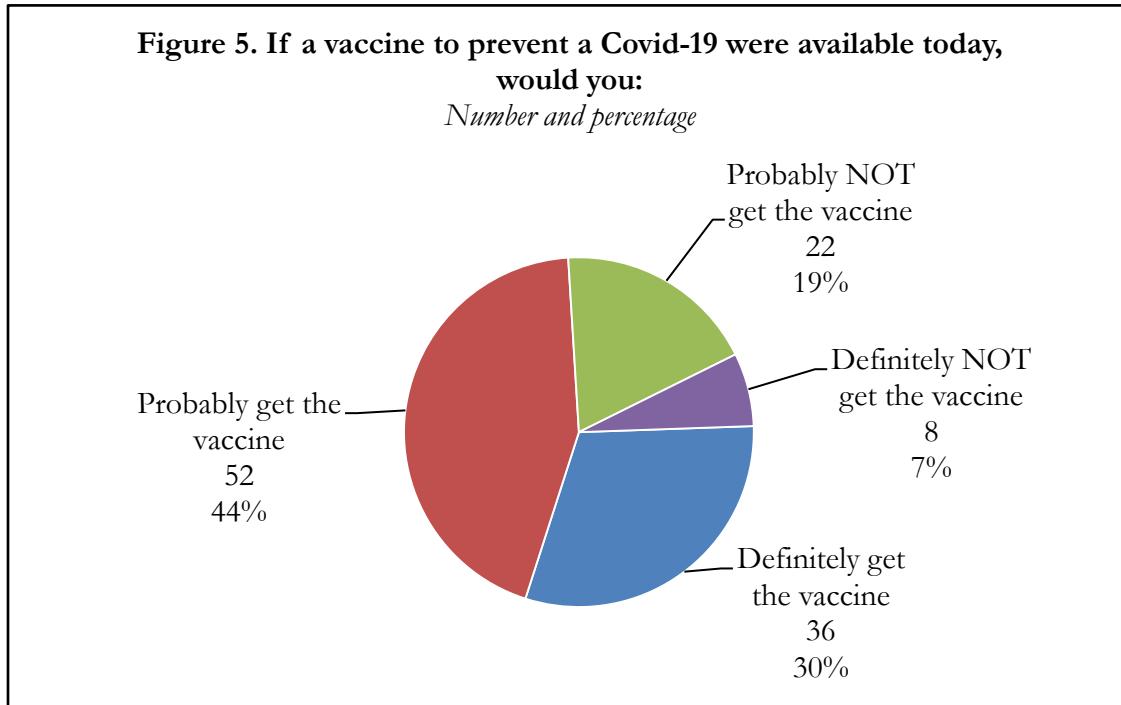
Respondents were asked which of the statements shown in Table 6 below concerning the pandemic apply to them. The percentage selecting each statement is presented.

Table 6. Please indicate whether any of the following statements apply to you?

	Percentage Selecting
Symptoms, Diagnoses, and Health Conditions	
I currently have symptoms of Covid-19, but I have not yet been tested	0%
I was diagnosed with Covid-19 and my health still suffers because of it	0%
I had Covid-19 and I have successfully recovered	4%
I have a chronic health condition (e.g., heart disease, lung disease, severe asthma, etc.) that puts me at high risk for Covid-19	23%
Someone living in my household has a health condition (e.g., heart disease, lung disease, etc.) that puts them at high risk for Covid-19	28%
Impact on their Mental Health	
I regularly worry about becoming sick with Covid-19	45%
I regularly worry that my family or friends will become sick with Covid-19	60%
Since the Covid-19 pandemic, my quality of sleep has worsened	23%
Since the Covid-19 pandemic, I often feel lonely	21%
Since the Covid-19 pandemic, I often feel helpless	17%
Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, my mental health has worsened	10%
Since the Covid-19 pandemic, my sense of purpose in life has weakened	8%
I have medical issues that have gone untreated due to Covid-19	6%
Since the Covid-19 pandemic started, I have needed specialized mental health services (e.g., psychiatrists, therapists, counselors)	3%
I am unhappy with my faith community's response to the Covid-19 pandemic	2%
Since the Covid-19 pandemic, I have been unable to access specialized mental health services (e.g., psychiatrists, therapists, counselors)	1%
Attitudes about the Pandemic	
I believe that the Covid-19 pandemic is a punishment from God	2%
I believe that the Covid-19 pandemic has created a unique opportunity for expressing compassion to others	57%

Likelihood They Will Get Vaccinated

In addition, responding congregants were asked if they would get a vaccine for Covid-19 should one be available today. The results are shown in Figure 5.⁵



⁵ These results are only for those who responded to the question. Some 16% did not provide a response to this question.

Section III: Their Experiences of Their Faith Communities

Section III summarizes respondents' experiences and perceptions of their faith community.

Awareness of Congregation's Provision of or Referral to Counseling Services

The two figures below summarize congregants' perceptions of the kinds of counseling services or outside referrals provided by their congregations.⁶

Figure 6. Does your faith community normally provide counseling services (e.g., support groups, pastoral counseling)?
Number and percentage

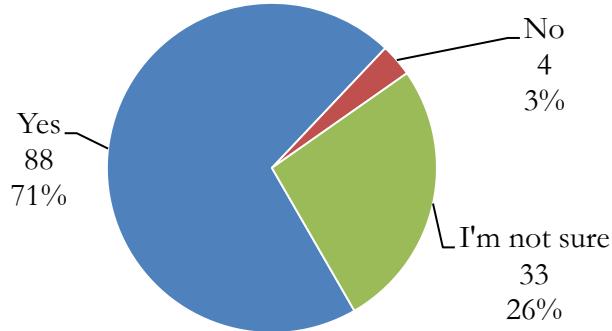
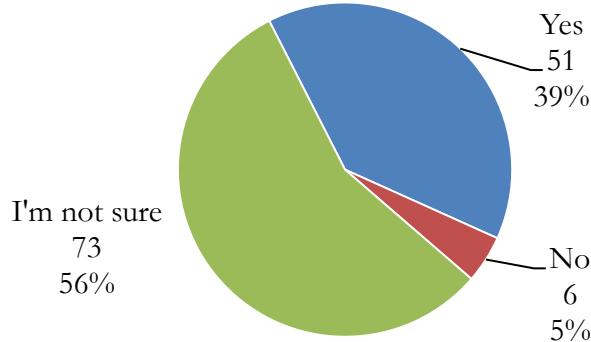


Figure 7. Does your faith community normally provide a referral list of counseling services outside the church, such as hotline numbers or contact information of mental health professionals?

Number and percentage



⁶ These results are only for those who responded to these questions. Eleven percent of respondents did not provide a response to the question in Figure 6 and 8% did not respond to the question in Figure 7.

Faith Community's Level of Encouragement to Seek Outside Counseling Services

The two figures below summarize congregants' perceptions of the kinds of counseling services or referrals provided by their congregations.⁷

Figure 8. Have leaders or staff members from your faith community ever referred you to a mental health professional (e.g., psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, counselor)?

Number and percentage

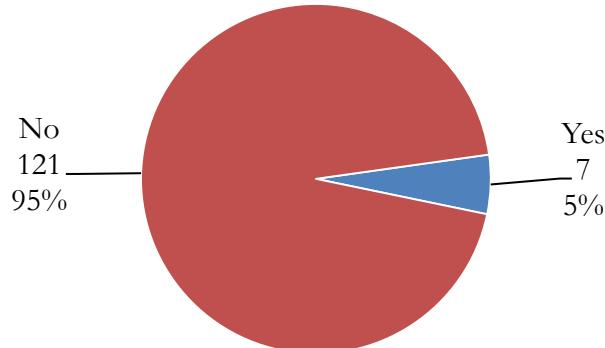
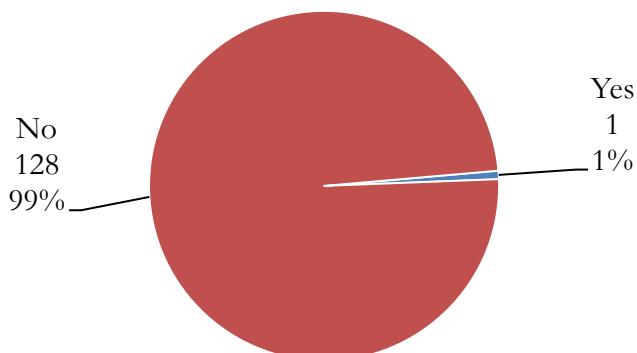


Figure 9. Have leaders or staff members from your faith community ever discouraged you from seeking help from a mental health professional (e.g., psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, counselor)?

Number and percentage



⁷ These results are only for those who responded to these questions. Nine percent of respondents did not provide a response to the question in Figure 8 and 9% did not respond to the question in Figure 9.

Attitudes about the Faith Community

Responding congregants were asked how much they trust and feel close to the leaders and members of their faith community, with their responses displayed in the two figures below.⁸

Figure 10. I trust the leaders of my faith community
Number and percentage

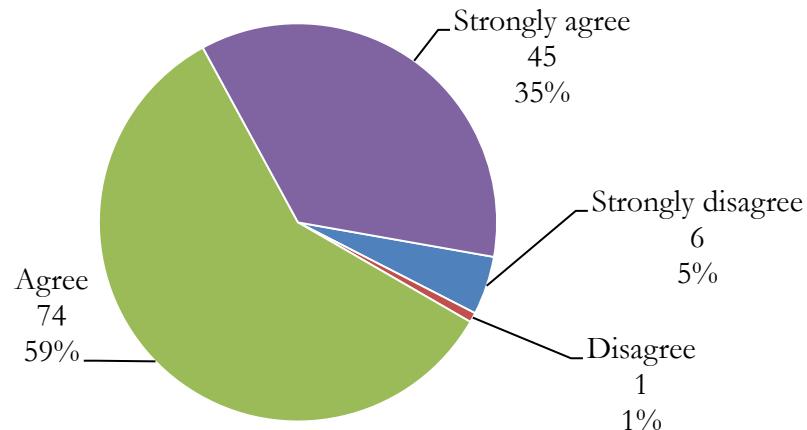
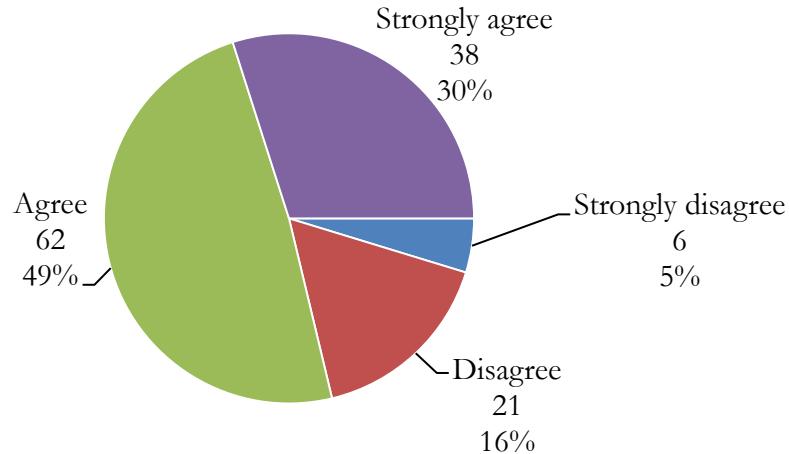


Figure 11. I feel very close to other members of my faith community
Number and percentage



⁸ These results are only for those who responded to these questions. Eight percent of respondents did not provide a response to the question in Figure 10 and 8% did not respond to the question in Figure 11.

Experiences of Feeling Cared for at their Faith Community

Congregants were asked how often members of the faith community engage in the caring-related behaviors shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. In general, how often do members of your faith community do the following?

	Never	Once in a While	Fairly Often	Very Often	Non-Response*
Provide meals and other practical support for members who are sick or injured	6%	22%	41%	32%	11%
Let you know they love and care for you	8%	29%	38%	25%	9%
Provide meals and other practical support for members struggling with mental health issues	12%	27%	40%	21%	14%
Talk with you about your private problems and concerns	28%	39%	25%	8%	8%

*Non-response is separately calculated, with the other three columns totaling 100%.

How Well the Faith Community Has Kept Members Connected

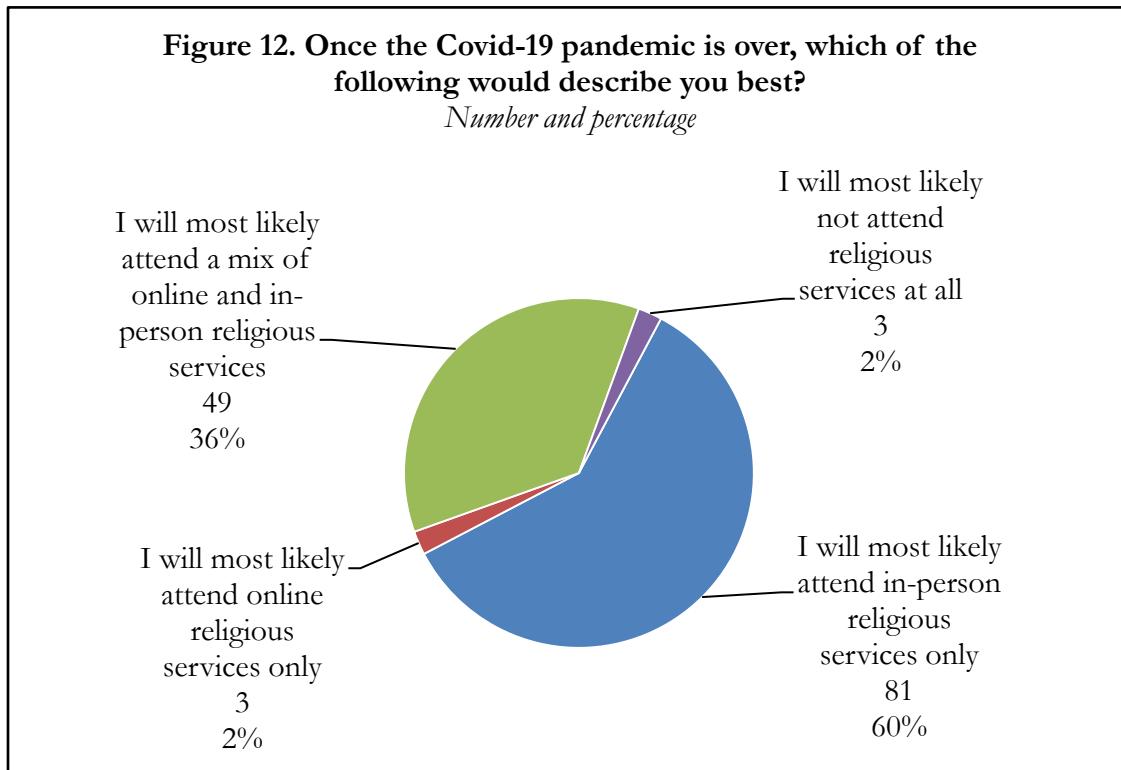
Congregants were asked how much their faith community has helped keep members connected during the pandemic, with the results shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Since the Covid-19 pandemic started, has your local faith community been doing any of the following?

	Percentage Selecting
My faith community leaders have made themselves easy to access (by phone, online consultations, etc.)	68%
My faith community has been in regular contact with members	60%
My faith community has helped elderly members to stay connected	55%

Anticipated Participation in Faith Community After the Pandemic

In addition, responding congregants were asked how they plan to participate in their faith community after the pandemic is over, with the results shown in Figure 12 below.⁹



⁹ These results are only for those who responded to the question. Some 4% did not provide a response to this question.

Section IV: Religious Characteristics, Behaviors and Beliefs of Respondents

Table 9 below describes some characteristics of the 141 valid respondents to the survey related to their religious attributes, behaviors, and beliefs.

Table 9. Religious Statistics (Total N=141)

Years Attending This Faith Community	Range (years)	Most Common Response (years)
	1 – 20+	20 or more years (35%)
Frequency Pre-Pandemic Attending Religious Services	Number	Percentage
Once a week or more	99	71%
Once to three times a month	22	16%
A few times a year or less	18	13%
Total	<u>139</u>	<u>100%</u>
Frequency Praying or Meditating Alone	Number	Percentage
Never or on rare occasions	10	7%
Once a week or less	15	11%
A few times a week	19	14%
Daily	47	35%
More than once a day	45	33%
Total	<u>136</u>	<u>100%</u>
How Important Is Your Religious Faith in Your Everyday Life?	Number	Percentage
Not at all important	0	0%
Not too important	2	2%
Somewhat important	12	9%
Very important	72	53%
Most important thing in my life	50	37%
Total	<u>136</u>	<u>100%</u>

Section V: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 10 reports demographic and other descriptive data for the 141 valid respondents to this survey. These data may be helpful in considering who responded to the survey and which populations are represented in the data.

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents (N=141)

<u>Age</u>	<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Average age</u>
	19-89	51
Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	102	86%
Male	16	13%
Other or prefer not to answer	1	1%
Total	119	100%
Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White	12	10%
Black or African American	0	0%
Hispanic or Latino	98	84%
Asian/Asian American	2	2%
All others or Multiple	5	4%
Total	117	100%
Marital Status	Number	Percentage
Married	79	66%
Divorced or Separated	14	12%
Widowed	4	3%
Cohabitating (not legally married)	6	5%
Single/Never Married	20	17%
Total	119	100%
Annual Household Income	Number	Percentage
\$35,000 or less	17	15%
\$35,001-\$50,000	23	20%
\$50,001-\$100,000	44	38%
\$100,001 or more	31	27%
Total	115	100%
Education	Number	Percentage
Less than high school	0	0%
High school graduate (GED or diploma)	17	15%
Some college	33	28%
College	37	32%
Postgraduate or professional degree	30	26%
Total	117	100%

Section VI: Largest Challenges Facing Congregants

At the end of the survey, congregants were asked: Finally, what is the biggest challenge you are currently facing that you would like your faith community leaders to know? Their responses are presented verbatim below (with minor editing for punctuation and spelling).

Social distancing from family and friends.

Fear of attending mass and getting COVID.

While not applicable here, there is nowhere to put general comments of what you would like to see changed in our current faith community. There should be a section for general comments and changes needed.

Fear to travel.

Support to continue religious retreats and evangelization.

Not feeling comfortable in attending in person church services.

Need prayers.

Yes, more talk on Coronavirus and violence in the USA.

I don't feel connected to my young adults' community. I don't feel welcomed to join the young adults' community so much so that I have started to reach out to other churches to join their young adult community.

None. I just pray.

Fear of the future.

Encourage the youth to be more involved.

Caring for our homeless brothers and sisters.

No challenges.

Preach about scripture and not what psychologists think.

Family members with illness and unable to be close to them and visit them.

N/A.

Don't try to overdo it. Keep things simple!

Not able to provide sufficient monetary donations. Not able to volunteer and help our Pastor and staff due to COVID 19.

Having a newborn grandchild and not being able to hold/visit the baby and family due to practicing COVID 19 safety measures.

That good communication is vital on all levels. I am greatly frustrated about who gets information and who does not. If we all do the work of the Church, all should be included in the process.

The biggest challenge I am facing is raising a child in this world with so much disinformation easily spread with more concern for sensationalism than proper public behavior.

It's nothing they can fix, but I miss being with, hugging, kissing my extended family! We see each other every week from a distance and call and text, but I especially miss my great nieces and nephews whom I would babysit during the week. That is what I miss!!!!

Financial stability for our Church.

I wish we could receive the Eucharist in a drive by setting. Never would this be a permanent circumstance. I watch the mass daily but I feel not receiving the Eucharist is sad and incomplete in my daily life.

Discuss feelings of helplessness when it comes to the pandemic. Also, I am frustrated with President Trump's comments disregarding the seriousness of the pandemic—it is inexcusable and inappropriate.

Many in my faith community are supporting Trump, an unethical and immoral man. My faith community is intolerant and unaccepting of LGBTQ. Address and support Black Lives Matter. I left questions in this survey blank because the questions were too ambiguous.

Adjusting in day-to-day activities changed by the pandemic.

I have some difficulty keeping away from other people. I like my solitude up to a point. My wife and I are alone, not lonely. She gets excessively excited about the rare visits we have with the children and grandchildren. I am pretty indifferent.

Everyone can always improve in life.

Praying for my Disability to be confirmed on Jan. 27, 2021 and as of now hoping my ARBITRATION on my car will follow through, along with a car accident that has put me in pain it would be in my favor to get compensated for it. It has been hard for me not working and not having enough money for food and committing to my bills and pay my medication. I also pray for my one and only sister who is very ill. I also pray for the safety of my son and daughter in law. I pray I will marry my partner and that we can make our life together and that neither one of us contract the COVID 19 virus or any other illness.

I believe that the faith community is doing the best they can in trying to keep up with this surprise & terrifying virus. I hope they can maintain the resources that are available and the

energy to continue. This has been a thoughtful & excellent barometer of current life of the community in these extraordinary times.

I would dearly love to receive Holy Communion since I am home-bound due to medical issues.

The pandemic has not been dealt with properly, aggressively or sufficiently by the current leadership at the national and state levels. Luckily, our local leaders have stepped in quickly and with purpose. This also applies to our many social justice issues (discrimination, civil rights, immigration, fair wages, access to quality education, housing, health care, and our standing in the world stage).

I miss the way life was before the pandemic but I understand that things will not be the same.

People don't show respect anymore.

Reach out to the poorest people.

Nothing. My faith community provides everything I need.

It would be helpful for members to have a list of resources for members dealing with anxiety or other mental issues due to job loss, loss of income, and virtual learning during this time of the pandemic.

Marital struggles with trust and unfaithfulness.

Help me get closer to God and understand His ways and His plan and why so many are suffering due to others selfishness and greed.

Not having physical contact with other non-family members and not being able to go to Church activities and not having enough social contact. Need more communication with church through social media. More Holy Hours.

Not being able to gather.

Social gatherings, (face to face) with the intention of setting goals as well as fraternity with our members.

Dealing with fear and the unknown.

Health problems.

I want our community leaders to be bolder about the truth of God and what is the church stance on social issues.

It's not easy to remain strong in our faith during these times, but it's good to know that there is some effort being made to keep everybody involved. This is temporary, and soon we will all be reunited once again to praise the Lord together.

I have been struggling with my happiness and feeling like I have had enough. I have also been struggling with energy and being able to spend time with God.

Lack of finances for mental health service.

My husband lost his job and just trying to keep faith that God will see us through this.

My most concern at this time is the search for the truth and the future of this country. Some of the leaders in my own faith are causing great confusion. I do not understand how the hierarchy in my Church can ignore the loss of morality in our country, including well-known so-called members of my faith, and say and do nothing to condemn it. If the negligence isn't bad enough, some even promote these people to high office. It makes me so sad to see our country and our freedoms wither away. I just have to continue to pray and remind myself often that the Almighty is in charge!

Staying healthy.

I feel that religious organizations should stay out of politics.

Parents of children in Catholics schools should be included MORE in the church. If families were affected in any way from COVID, we as families of the schools should be given a break in tuition.

The loneliness from the circumstances of the pandemic.

How to prepare my non-white children for this current world.

None at the moment. All thanks to God.

My marriage is struggling.

The sense of community is not there.

Lack of money.

It's been a real struggle and I am slowly trying to get myself up to date. It's not easy and it's an ongoing situation in all the world. We are not there 100% mentally and physically sorry for any distance.

Travel restrictions, decreased income.

Attending Mass in person is challenging. The mask is hard to breathe in. Father takes off his mask and talks, but we are masked the whole time and the service is long. We need short,

to the point homilies and quick announcements. We are there for Eucharist and want to receive it. That's why we are there. We can lift it up, but we have elderly still going to Mass and I feel bad for them. We also need to respect the time of our parishioners by starting our services on time.

Making sure our elderly community is taken care of during this time.

Feeling safe to attend Mass.

El engano y el miedo que provocan a la sociedad respecto a la salud por ende a la religión.
[The deceit and fear that they provoke to society regarding health and therefore to religion.]