

# Easter Attendance 2022

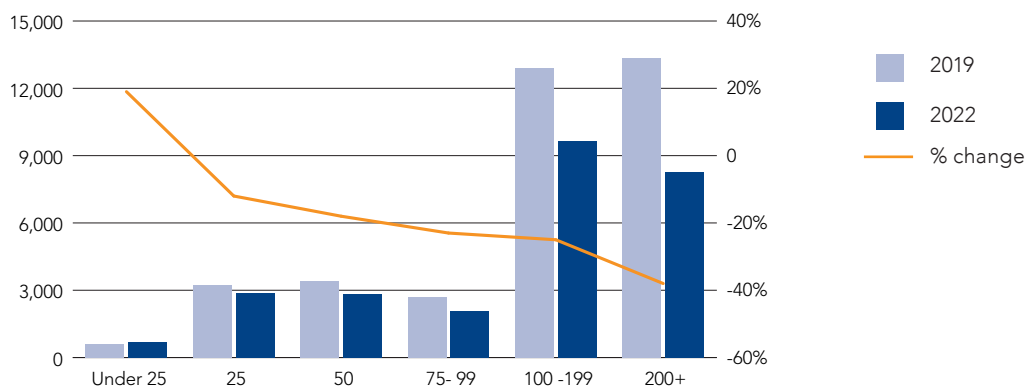
Thank you to the many churches who responded to our request to add your Easter 2022 figures to the Parish Return System. This leaflet is an analysis of the results of the survey. From the smallest to the largest congregation, we reflect on how the figures can help us going forwards.



## What did we find out?

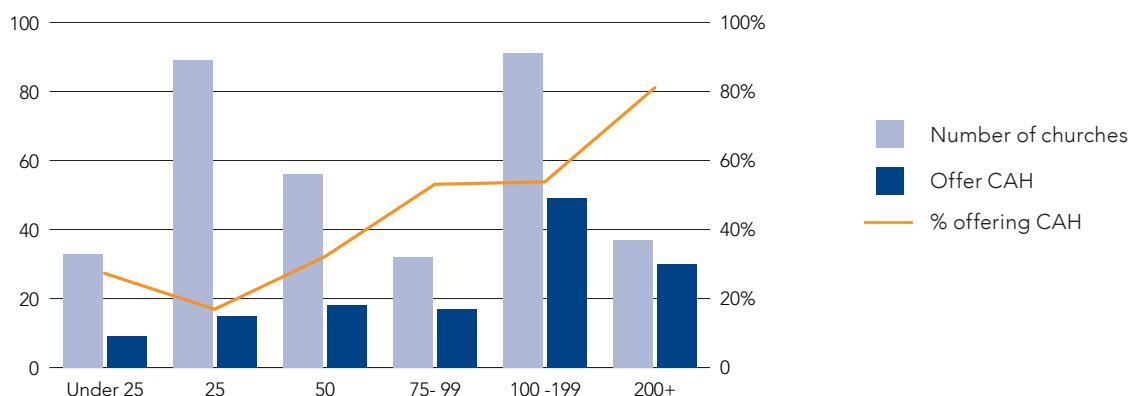
- Onsite attendance at Easter 2022 was better than feared, at about three quarters (73%) of 2019 numbers.
- Recovery was stronger in smaller churches than larger ones.
- Recovery was very variable – some churches had far fewer people in the building at Easter 2022, others had far more.

### Easter onsite attendance and percentage change 2019 and 2022 by attendance size group in 2019



- Two in five (40%) churches offered Church at Home (CAH) at Easter 2022.
- Almost all the CAH offerings were online and most of those were YouTube.
- Churches with no CAH had a slightly better onsite attendance recovery than those with a CAH element. But mostly online appears to be additional to onsite rather than detracting from it.

### Number and percentage of churches in survey offering CAH at Easter 2022, by attendance size group in 2019



## What should my church do now?

- Revisit your Easter 2019 and 2022 figures and assess whether this change is reflected in your services week by week.
- Do you know who is missing now from your 2019 congregation?
- Do you also provide CAH – if so, how many people are joining your congregation online? Do you know who they are?
- If you do not provide CAH, consider offering livestreaming of your service (although it may not be the right choice for every church). [The Development Fund](#) is open to applications for funding to set up livestreaming.

- As you think about planning for the future [Emerging from Coronavirus](#) is a useful resource. It is based on the Anglican Five Marks of Mission. It invites parish leadership teams to reflect on 'what has been lost through the pandemic which we need to grieve, what has been reduced that we need to let go of or to build up again, and what has emerged that we need to respond to?'

For parishes/benefices looking to go deeper, the [Parish Planning Tool](#) is designed to help PCCs and local leadership teams explore God's call for your church and to move forward in new and transformed ways.

## Why did we do this exercise?

In early 2022, it appeared that Easter 2022 would mark both the end of Covid restrictions and of Covid-induced reluctance to attend church services.

The main purpose of this exercise was to compare Easter 2022 with the last 'normal' year of 2019 and to see what could be learned about how church attendance has changed over this period.

In the event, a late resurgence of a Covid sub-variant meant that England was not free of Covid at Easter 2022. The ONS estimated that 6% of the population of England had Covid during the week running up to Easter. This would delay the full return to the buildings, both because some churchgoers would be isolating at home due to their own illness or that of a family member, and because others would be sheltering from the risk of catching Covid. In addition, the first Easter for three years free of Government-imposed restrictions is likely to have tempted more people than usual to go away for a break. Nevertheless, it was still valid to ask by how much church attendance had recovered and how much was there still to go.

## How has Church at home affected attendance?

Church attendance changed considerably between 2019 and 2022 with the introduction of CAH arrangements as a result of various lockdowns and restrictions of the Covid era.

Two in five (40%) of our churches reported that they offered a CAH option on Easter Sunday 2022, down from 59% in October 2021. Larger churches were more likely to be offering CAH (81%).

CAH attendance cannot easily be counted, only estimated. However, it is important to make estimates to try to make sense of what is happening.

At Easter 2022 churches with no CAH offering had 79% of their 2019 attendance. However, while churches with CAH had 68% onsite, they are estimated to have had closer to 91% when including CAH. This is perhaps not surprising. Many of the online participants might either be too frail or ill to attend onsite or be unavailable on the Sunday morning and catching up later, or live too far away, or naturally relate online, or are entering church membership online and may attend onsite in the future.

It seems that CAH is mainly not acting as a substitute for onsite attendance; it is in addition to it. Churches should not expect that stopping their CAH will cause a balancing increase in onsite attendance.

Online looks here to stay, both as part of the ministry of local parish churches and as part of the ministry of large churches with an area, national or international reach.

## Conclusions

It was always likely that the shock of Covid lockdowns would be a blow to all churches but an opportunity to some. Decline was not inevitable. There could be lessons to be learned from those churches that appear to have grown their congregations since 2019.

There is still hope that more people will return to onsite congregations as Covid becomes less of a threat. We do not yet know whether some churches' attendance is lower because their people are more hesitant in returning in person or because they have left their congregation.

The October 2022 figures should give us a much fuller picture of the size of the post-Covid church.