

COVID-19 Pandemic

National Synagogue Survey of Ritual Activities and Programming

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I. OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic, which struck our country and the world in late 2019 to early 2020, has been a life-changing phenomenon. As of this writing, the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, respectively, report 105,805,951 confirmed cases, and 2,312,278 deaths globally, with 26,852,809 cases and 462,037 deaths in the United States alone.¹ Thankfully, multiple vaccines look promising to stem the tide of this tsunami of a pandemic.

No one could have imagined what a profound impact the pandemic would have on our everyday lives. Although the virus has disproportionately infected poor communities, people of color, first responders, prisoners, nursing home residents, essential workers, and the homeless, it has also sickened presidents, princes, prime ministers, senators and governors. It hits the young and the old; people in good health and those with underlying conditions that place them at greater risk. We are as yet to fully understand its long-term effects on physical and mental health. The COVID-19 virus can spread directly or indirectly from an infected person to another person through the air, from mouth and nose secretions, and from contaminated objects or surfaces.² It has impacted not just our health, but almost every other aspect of our lives. The very nature

¹ “WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard,” The World Health Organization, accessed February 8, 2021, <https://covid19.who.int>; “CDC COVID Data Tracker,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed February 8, 2021, https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcases-updates%2Fcases-in-us.html#cases_casesinlast7days.

² “Q&A: How is COVID-19 Transmitted?,” The World Health Organization, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-how-is-covid-19-transmitted>.

of work and domestic life, the educational system, the economy, interpersonal relations, transportation, entertainment, communications, politics, communal living in nursing homes, how we shop for food and eat in restaurants, personal services such as doctor visits, gyms and hair salons, and how we practice religion, have all been changed dramatically within a brief ten-month period.³

The original subject of this capstone project for a Master of Jewish Studies, with an emphasis on music in Jewish life, “The Kabbalat Service: Past, Present and Future,” was proposed in January of 2020. But that was not to happen. When the pandemic hit in early 2020 and we were suddenly on lock down, synagogue doors were shuttered, Jewish Community Centers ceased operations, Purim carnivals were cancelled, and we found ourselves with stay at home orders, and having Zoom seders for Passover. It was a “game changer” for all of us.

The profound impact of the pandemic on synagogue ritual services and programming became the new focus of my project. It represented a much more pressing issue to explore as we try to cope today and plan for the future of life in a pandemic that has, as yet, no end in sight.

Purpose

The purpose of this Capstone Project is to conduct a national survey to determine the impact of the pandemic on synagogue ritual services and programming.

³ Abid Haleem and Mohd Javaid, “Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic in Daily Life,” *Current Medicine Research and Practice* 10:2 (2020): 78–79, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7147210/>.

The learnings from the survey will assist in current and future pandemic planning by clergy, lay leadership, and staff members. It will examine best practices in providing virtual ritual services and programs, from technical as well as spiritual standpoints. It will allow a sharing of experiences on what services and programs have been better received than others during pandemic-necessitated lock downs, what challenges people face, and how they have overcome them. It will assess the roles and responsibilities of the clergy before and during the pandemic, along with their emotional state and coping capabilities in these difficult times. The information will be helpful to cantors and music directors to help them better understand how the practice of using musical enhancements changed during the pandemic, and how to optimize the musical experience.

Thesis

There is no specific argument or hypothesis that has been tested in this work. This capstone project is exploratory in nature. If anything is being tested, it is the utility of the survey instrument to demonstrate that it can be used to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on synagogue ritual activities and programming. If it is successful, then it could be used again, with some minor modifications, to conduct future research.

This survey will provide insight into several key areas of inquiry with regard to the impact of the pandemic on synagogue life, including:

- Religious Services and Programming - Before Pandemic
- Religious Services and Programming - During Pandemic
- Pandemic Challenges
- Assessment of Virtual Experience
- Experiences and Reflections

II. BACKGROUND

Historical Perspective

In an article by Elon Gilad for *Haaretz*, he chronicles how Jews have handled epidemics from biblical times to the present and how our views of disease and religion have changed over time.⁴ Gilad states that the ancient writers, when describing epidemics in the Hebrew Bible, associated them with “divine punishment for sin” and believed God decided who would recover and live, or die.

כָּל־הַמִּחֲלָה כָּל־חֲקָיו וְשִׁמְרָתָהּ לְמִצְוֹתָיו וְהִאֲזִינָה תַעֲשֶׂה בְּעֵינָיו וְהִיָּשֶׁר אֱלֹהֶיךָ יְהוָה לְקוֹל תִּשְׁמָע אִם־שָׁמוּעַ וַיֹּאמֶר
רַפָּאֵד: יְהוָה אֲנִי כִי עָלֶיךָ לֹא־אֲשִׁים בְּמִצְרִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי

G-d said, “If you will heed the LORD your God diligently, doing what is upright in His sight, giving ear to His commandments and keeping all His laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the LORD am your healer.” (Exod. 15:26)

According to this passage, it is clear that following God’s commandments and obeying his laws may be the Israelites’ best preventative against diseases and plagues. Another prophylactic or possibly curative practice, burning incense, was illustrated in the story of Aaron, who helped to curb an epidemic that killed over 14,000 Israelites after Korah’s rebellion against Moses.

וַיִּקַּח אַהֲרֹן כֹּאשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּרֶץ אֶל־תוֹךְ הַקֹּהֵל וְהִנֵּה הַחֹל הַנֶּגֶף בָּעָם וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־הַקִּטְרֶת וַיִּכַּפֵּר עַל־הָעָם:
וַיַּעֲמֵד בֵּין־הַמֵּתִים וּבֵין הַחַיִּים וַתַּעֲצֹר הַמִּגֵּפָה:

⁴ Elon Gilad, “How Judaism Handled Epidemics Down the Ages,” *Haaretz*, March 31, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/science-and-health/.premium-coronavirus-epidemic-history-jewish-1.8724141>.

Aaron took it, as Moses had ordered, and ran to the midst of the congregation, where the plague had begun among the people. He put on the incense and made expiation for the people; he stood between the dead and the living until the plague was checked. (Num. 17:11-13)

After the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 C.E., and animal sacrifices were phased out, penitence in the form of communal prayer and fasting, and abstention from bathing and intercourse were ways in which the ancient Israelites asked for forgiveness. Group assemblies for prayer most likely worked against them in the case of contagious epidemics, and, according to Gilad, the early rabbis did not appear to have an awareness that such practices may facilitate spread of an infectious illness.⁵

The Midrash describes a terrible plague during the reign of King David, which claimed the lives of 70,000 people, with 100 people dying a day.⁶ King David and the sages realized the plague was divinely inflicted and instituted a rule that everyone recite at least 100 blessings a day, “measure for measure.” Centuries later, in a letter to the people of Israel during a cholera outbreak in the year 1848, the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, known as the Tzemach Tzedek, wrote that although we are accustomed to reciting 100

⁵ Gilad, “How Judaism Handled Epidemics Down the Ages.”

⁶ Midrash Rabba, Numbers 18:17; Tur 46, quoting Rav Netrunoi Gaon. David B. Levy, “Lessons from Pandemics in Jewish History,” *The Library Blog for the Touro College Community*, March 31, 2020, <https://tclibraryblog.wordpress.com/2020/03/31/lessons-from-pandemics-in-jewish-history/>.

blessings throughout the day, nevertheless during an epidemic one needs to go a step further and to understand the meaning of the words.⁷

In the Talmudic text of Bava Kama 60b the rabbis advise people to stay home during a plague. (Sound advice!)

ת"ר דבר בעיר כנס רגליך שנאמר ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר ואומר
לך עמי בא בחדריך וסגור דלתיך בעדך ואומר

The Sages taught: "If there is plague in the city, gather your feet, i.e., limit the time you spend out of the house, as it is stated in the verse: And none of you shall go out of the opening of his house until the morning." And it says in another verse: "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself for a little moment, until the anger has passed by." (Isa. 26:21)

Rava, a fourth-century Babylonian rabbi, would close his windows at the time of a plague.⁸

כי עלה מות בחלונינו 'רבא בעידן רתחא הוי סכר כוי דכתי

At a time when there was a plague, Rava would close the windows of his house, as it is written: "For death is come up into our windows..." (Jer. 9:20)

⁷ Yehuda Shurpin, "Jewish Responses to Epidemics Throughout History," *Chabad.org/News*, accessed September 20, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4682766/jewish/Jewish-Responses-to-Epidemics-Throughout-History.htm.

⁸ Gilad, "How Judaism Handled Epidemics Down the Ages."

Another bit of advice offered by the sages to avoid catching the plague was to stick to the sides of the road when traveling during an epidemic, the logic being that the Angel of Death has free roam in the middle of the road at the time of a plague.⁹ (It's also a good social distancing tactic if the middle of the road is more crowded!)

ת"ר דבר בעיר אל יהלך אדם באמצע הדרך מפני שמלאך המות מהלך באמצע הדרכים דכיון דיהיבא ליה רשותא מסגי להדיא שלום בעיר אל יהלך בצדי דרכים דכיון דלית ליה רשותא מחבי חבויי ומסגי

The Sages taught: "If there is a plague in the city, a person should not walk in the middle of the road, due to the fact that the Angel of Death walks in the middle of the road as, since in Heaven they have given him permission to kill within the city, he goes openly in the middle of the road. By contrast, if there is peace and quiet in the city, do not walk on the sides of the road, as, since the Angel of Death does not have permission to kill within the city, he hides himself and walks on the side of the road." (Bava Kama 60b)

In later writings there appeared to be more of a recognition that some diseases could be contagious. The Zohar, which first appeared in the thirteenth century, describes a fourth-century Palestinian rabbi called Aha, who advised the people in a town ravaged by an epidemic to assemble their forty sages in the synagogue to study Talmudic passages on incense, but to do so in groups of ten in the four corners of the synagogue. The epidemic stopped after this action.¹⁰ This sounds like an early example of the benefit of working in small pods and social distancing, practices we employ today.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Yehuda Shurpin describes several other ways in which the rabbis reduced their risk of contracting infectious diseases:

Rabbi Yochanan would announce: Be careful of the flies found on those afflicted with *ra'atan* (a type of infectious disease), as they are carriers of the disease. Rabbi Zeira would not sit in a spot where the wind blew from the direction of someone afflicted with *ra'atan*. Rabbi Elazar would not enter the tent of one afflicted with *ra'atan*. Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi would not eat eggs from an alley in which someone afflicted with *ra'atan* lived.¹¹

These rabbis' actions of avoidance of a perceived source of infection illustrate the uncertainty that often surrounds the beliefs about the source and means of spread of a pandemic. This kind of uncertainty can breed a secondary side effect, that of fear and distrust within a society. Often, an indirect result of a pandemic is the targeting of minorities and other scapegoats who are falsely blamed for the calamity. Gilad cautions, "Epidemics to this day often lead to the persecution of minorities."¹² The Black Death, bubonic plague, was one of the most horrific epidemics in history and "decimated much of the world population in the 14th century."¹³ It killed an estimated 75 to 200 million people in Eurasia, a third to two-thirds of the population, between 1347 and 1351. The plague also resulted in the death of Jews in great numbers, but less so than their Christian neighbors. The perception by others of reduced susceptibility to the disease among Jews resulted in their indiscriminate slaughter, affecting over 500 Jewish communities.¹⁴ The Jews (among other social outcasts) were accused of poisoning the food supplies, wells and streams with the plague. They were tortured into confessions, rounded up in town

¹¹ Shurpin, "Jewish Responses to Epidemics Throughout History."

¹² Gilad, "How Judaism Handled Epidemics Down the Ages."

¹³ Shurpin, "Jewish Responses to Epidemics Throughout History."

¹⁴ Ibid. and Gilad, "How Judaism Handled Epidemics Down the Ages."

squares or synagogues, and exterminated, many “butchered and burned,” *en masse*, comprising the bloodiest moment in European Jewish history until the Holocaust.¹⁵ Martin J. Blaser, a historian and professor of medicine and microbiology at Rutgers University, commented that the comparatively lower death rates of the Black Death among Jewish communities may have been due to the fact that once a year, Jews cleaned out their grain supply for Passover, lowering the risk of exposure to rats, carriers of the plague.¹⁶ Others have suggested that because Jews had to live in ghettos away from the general population there was less exposure to others infected in the population. Jews were compelled by law to ritually wash and bathe so they were much more hygienic than their non-Jewish neighbors and were thus less likely to contract the disease. However, many saw this as evidence that the Jews had caused the plague.¹⁷

Interestingly, when the Black Death returned in late medieval and Renaissance Europe, it did not set off waves of hatred against Jews or any other minorities. Others were blamed, including high-ranking officers and doctors, low level health workers, plague cleaners, cartmen and grave diggers for a variety of reasons, including “self-interested gain,” i.e., that they would stand to profit or gain if the pandemic continues.¹⁸

¹⁵ Aviya Kushner, “Pandemics Have Always Incited Anti-Semitism: Here’s the History You Need to Know,” *Forward*, May 4, 2020, <https://forward.com/culture/445419/pandemic-anti-semitism-coronavirus-black-death-typhus-cholera-immigrants/>.

¹⁶ Gabriel Greschler, “How Jews Have Fared During Pandemics throughout History,” *J- Jewish News of Northern California*, March 19, 2020, <https://www.jweekly.com/2020/03/19/how-jews-have-fared-during-times-of-pandemic/>.

¹⁷ Shurpin, “Jewish Responses to Epidemics Throughout History.”

¹⁸ Samuel K. Cohn, “Pandemics: Waves of Disease, Waves of Hate from the Plague of Athens to A.I.D.S.,” *Hist J.* November 1, 2012, 535–555, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4422154/>.

As we have seen happen in today's contentious pandemic and political environment, governmental officials often try to shift the blame to others (including health organizations, other countries or political parties, state and local leaders) to preserve their own reputation and to cover up for their own lack of leadership to engage effective disease mitigation strategies and methods.

Similar actions were taken against Jews and immigrants during the typhus and cholera epidemics of 1892 in the United States. Russian Jewish immigrants of the time were quarantined upon their arrival in New York City and forced to live for twenty days in extremely unsanitary conditions.¹⁹

In some cases, placing blame upon a particular subpopulation is warranted based upon their actions or lack thereof. More recently, Jews in New York City were held responsible for the 2019 outbreak of measles, primarily within Orthodox Jewish communities. Health officials stated that the disease is spread more easily within this concentrated community because of large family sizes, an abundance of international travel, and low vaccination rates. This in turn resulted in a reported spike in anti-Semitic incidents related to the outbreak. The ultra-orthodox populations in New York and Israel have been hard hit by the coronavirus in 2020 and yet continue to resist government and law enforcement restrictions placed upon them to slow down the spread. Similarly, Asian Americans have experienced racist attacks and a reduction in customers of Chinese businesses during the current coronavirus pandemic, as they are being blamed for the outbreak.²⁰

¹⁹ Kushner, "Pandemics Have Always Incited Anti-Semitism."

²⁰ Greschler, "How Jews Have Fared During Pandemics throughout History."

The sixteenth century brought more scientific methods and a greater awareness of the potential for spread of infectious disease in some communities. For example, the requirement to visit the sick was “lifted in cases of infectious disease.” Moses Isserles, a highly respected rabbi in sixteenth-century Krakow, ruled that one should leave a city when an epidemic appears, and not rely on miracles or risk one’s life. He fled Krakow in 1555 when an epidemic started there.²¹

עוד כתבו שיש לברוח מן העיר כשדבר בעיר ויש לצאת מן העיר בתחילת הדבר ולא בסופו
(תשובת מהרי"ל סי' ל"ה) וכל אלו הדברים הם משום סכנה ושומר נפשו ירחק מהם ואסור
לסמוך אנס או לסכן נפשו בכל כיוצא בזה ועיין בחושן משפט סימן תכ"ז

They also wrote to flee from the city when a plague is in the city, and one should leave at the beginning of the plague and not at the end. And all of these things are because of the danger, and a person who guards his soul will distance himself from them and it is prohibited to rely on a miracle in all of these matters. (Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 116:5)

Early social distancing recommendations were offered during a cholera outbreak in 1831 in Europe. People turned to one of the leading rabbis of the generation, -Akiva Eiger, for advice regarding large gatherings. He said that “assembling in a small place is incorrect, but it is permissible to pray group after group, each time a little, about fifteen people.” He suggested a police officer be allowed to guard the

²¹ Gilad, “How Judaism Handled Epidemics Down the Ages.”

entrance to synagogues to enforce the crowd limitation rules. He later received a commendation from the government for his help.²²

Rabbi Israel Salanter, founder of the Mussar movement and a revered Talmudic scholar, waged his own battle against the Jewish establishment of his community to try to save lives during the cholera pandemic. He enlisted his yeshiva students to care for the sick, rented a building as a hospital, raised funds to care for the ill, advocated relaxing certain mourning laws to avoid weakening mourners and making them susceptible to illness. He urged members of the community to follow medical advice. During the High Holy Days of 1848, he urged people not to fast on Yom Kippur, argued for the shortening of services, recommended taking walks, and implored people to help each other in all ways. To make sure people followed his instructions, he walked to the front of the synagogue on Yom Kippur morning with wine and cake in hand, made kiddush, ate in front of everyone, and then waited until all had eaten as well. His actions caused a major upheaval in the community, and he was eventually forced to leave Vilna. He, however, remained proud of his life-preserving efforts for the rest of his days.²³

The influenza pandemic of 1918 resulted in many regions of the world prohibiting gatherings, including some synagogues holding outdoor services or completely suspending services at its peak.²⁴ Many of the same warnings and suggested behavioral changes to limit the spread of the virus we hear today dominated the newspapers of the

²² Ibid.

²³ Elisha Friedman, “How One 19th-Century Rabbi Responded to a Worldwide Cholera Epidemic,” *My Jewish Learning*, 2020, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-one-19th-century-rabbi-responded-to-a-worldwide-cholera-epidemic/>.

²⁴ Gilad, “How Judaism Handled Epidemics Down the Ages.”

day. For example, people were urged to wash their hands often, avoid crowds, cover coughs and sneezes, and not touch the face. Citizens were instructed to stay home as much as possible, while movie theaters, restaurants, and other businesses, along with churches and synagogues, were also limiting or ceasing their services. People were very worried and did not know how long the virus would be active.²⁵

Gilad notes that the current “closing of synagogues in such a large scale, including in Israel and in the U.S., by far the two largest Jewish communities in the world, is completely unprecedented.” An analysis of the Israeli Health Ministry’s coronavirus contact tracing studies revealed that a third of those “infected in public spaces had visited synagogues and yeshivas or were exposed there to the virus.” Israeli rabbis who are compliant with government containment efforts are “admitting the sad fact that communal prayer and penance, the method used by Jews for millennia in the face of epidemics, is not only ineffective, it is counterproductive.”²⁶

For many, the pandemic and the restrictions it has placed upon our society, and particularly on community religious practices, has resulted in a major upheaval in our everyday ritual and programmatic activities. Navigating this uncharted territory has been and continues to be very challenging. Various guidelines have been set forth to assist houses of worship and specifically synagogues in dealing with the challenges of practicing religion during the pandemic and mitigating the risks of group gatherings.

²⁵ Mike Smith, “Looking Back: Pandemics Throughout History,” *The Jewish News*, March 27, 2020, <https://thejewishnews.com/2020/03/27/looking-back-pandemics-throughout-history/>.

²⁶ Gilad, “How Judaism Handled Epidemics Down the Ages.”

These guidelines have also addressed issues associated with re-opening and how to do so safely.

Guidelines

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offered guidance in May 2020 entitled, “Considerations for Communities of Faith.”²⁷ The CDC’s “suggestions” for faith communities are for organizations to “accept, reject, or modify,” consistent with their own traditions. They are not intended to infringe upon First Amendment rights or any other federal or state law. The CDC guidance offers tips on “Scaling Up Operations,” paying particular attention to offer options for congregants at higher risk of severe illness that limit their exposure such as remote participation in services. It promotes “healthy hygiene practices,” such as washing hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, having adequate hygiene supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), tissues, and no-touch trashcans on hand. They recommend posting signs in highly visible locations that describe how to stop the spread, promote everyday protective measures, and properly wearing a mask. They encourage use of masks among staff and congregants, especially when social distancing is difficult. They offer recommendations on intensifying cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation, social distancing, steps to minimize community sharing of worship materials and other items. If a nursery, childcare

²⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Considerations for Communities of Faith,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 23, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fphp%2Ffaith-based.html.

or summer camp is offered, the CDC urges that precautions be taken to avoid viral spread such as frequent hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, covering cough and sneezes. Children above the age of two should wear a mask, sick children and staff should be required to stay home and have a plan if someone is or becomes sick. Clergy and staff should be trained (virtually or in person but properly distanced) in the above safety measures. They also offer guidance on monitoring of staff members or congregants who become sick and preparing for the handling of those individuals who exhibit symptoms or test positive, including separation into a designated area, notification of health officials, safe transport to home or a healthcare facility and establishing sick leave policies that are flexible to allow work from home. Staff or congregants who are sick or have had possible exposure to a person with COVID-19 should stay home and not return to the facility until they have satisfied CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation.

The World Health Organization (WHO) published a similar guidance for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19.²⁸ The document opens with a discussion of the major role that faith-based organizations and communities play in saving lives and reducing illness related to COVID-19. The guidance states, “They are a primary source of support, comfort, guidance, and direct health care and social services,

²⁸ World Health Organization, “Practical Considerations and Recommendations for Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Communities in the Context of COVID-19: Interim Guidance,” April 7, 2020, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19?gclid=CjwKCAjw-5v7BRAmEiwAJ3DpuPrzpXm6UAI9s58w-DA_je-kUg0y2F26tbrJYDT7Ilie9vEwCGfKahoCcsEQAvD_BwE.

for the communities they serve.” Religious leaders can share health information to protect their own members and broader communities because they are trusted, and their advice is “more likely to be accepted than from other sources.” They can provide pastoral and spiritual support during such public health crises and advocate for those in need of assistance. They can promote helpful information, reduce fear and stigma, provide reassurance and promote health-preserving practices. The WHO guidance also advised proper distance for gatherings (if allowed), preventing touching between people and touching or kissing of ceremonial objects, encouraging health hygiene, and to clean places of worship frequently. They addressed the need for conducting faith activities remotely/virtually (as long as required) using advanced technology and for those where technology is not available to use “low-technology” methods, such as telephone calls and encouraging household observances as a means to maintain faith-based practices in the community. The guidance provides advice for conducting safe burial practices and other ceremonies; to help manage the onslaught of worrying news, respond to domestic violence situations, and offer prayers for the sick along with messages of hope and comfort. It offers recommendations on how to communicate health protection information and the need to uphold human rights and address stigma and discrimination.

Jewish Organizational Guidelines

Another type of guidance has been offered by Jewish organizations for its members for regular and holiday services, the High Holy Days, and other aspects of Jewish ritual life. The Orthodox Union, Conservative Rabbinical Assembly, Union for Reform Judaism, Jewish Federations of North America, and Women’s League for Conservative Judaism have all published COVID-19 guides or offered helpful links to

resources for use by synagogues.²⁹ The most recent guidance from the Orthodox Union addresses sixteen aspects of worship pertaining to the *Yamim Noraim* (High Holy Days).

²⁹ Orthodox Union, “Orthodox Union Guidance Regarding Coronavirus,” August 14, 2020, <https://www.ou.org/covid19/>; Rabbinical Assembly, “Practical Resources,” 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/resources-ideas/covid-19-resources/practical-resources>; Rabbinical Assembly, “Prayers and Reflections,” 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/resources-ideas/covid-19-resources/prayers-reflections>; Rabbinical Assembly, “Publications,” 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/resources-ideas/covid-19-resources/publications>; Rabbinical Assembly, “Solidarity with Chinese Americans,” April 24, 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/resources-ideas/covid-19-resources/social-justice>; Rabbinical Assembly, “Reopening,” 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/resources-ideas/covid-19-resources/reopening>; Rabbinical Assembly, “Preparing for Pesach During a Time of Pandemic,” March 25, 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/preparing-pesach-during-time-pandemic>; Rabbinical Assembly and Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, (Not official response). “Halakhic Guidance from CJLS about Coronavirus,” March 4, 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/halakhic-guidance-cjls-about-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR3qN14D44clpGRgm-fjqJ7JvAbIM-Bvd6NmCusQyufRQY09igFFYLTpPe4>; Rabbinical Assembly and Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, “CJLS Guidance for Remote Minyanim in a time of COVID-19,” March 17, 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/cjls-guidance-remote-minyanim-time-covid-19>; Joshua Heller (Rabbinical Assembly), “Streaming Services on Shabbat and Yom Tov,” May 13, 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Streaming%20on%20Shabbat%20and%20Yom%20Tov%20Heller.pdf>; Rabbinical Assembly: Steven Kane, Deborah Silver, and Scott Sokol (Rabbinical Assembly), “Abbreviating Prayer Services for the High Holy Days of 5781/2020,” June 12, 2020, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/abbreviating-prayer-services-high-holy-days-57812020>; Union for Reform Judaism, “Resources and Guidelines for the Consideration of Re-Opening,” 2020, <https://urj.org/resources-and-guidelines-consideration-re-opening>; Union for Reform Judaism, “COVID-19 Resources for Congregations,” 2020, <https://urj.org/what-we-do/congregational-life/covid-19-resources-congregations>; The Secure Community Network (Jewish Federations of North America), “Back to Business: A Jewish Community Guide for Reopening Facilities and Resuming Operations in the Age of COVID-19,” July, 2020, https://mcusercontent.com/0b3c7e1421bd2734b0610a1fb/files/28ffd436-3983-4fce-83cb-c67b7ac18e16/BackToBusiness_06282020_1_.pdf; and Women’s League for Conservative Judaism, “Letter to Membership Concerning Covid-19,” March 6, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/WLCJ1/posts/dear-friends-with-the-increase-in-cases-of-coronavirus-covid-19-many-of-our-sist/10158036911331597/>

A few of these suggestions include the need to be in compliance with public health recommendations, develop seating plans that maintain six feet of social distancing between non-family members, reach out to members to know their specific plans and be able to meet their needs, provide adequate ventilation and shorten the *davening* time, place a surgical mask over the wide end of the shofar or point it out an open window or door, maintain distancing during Torah reading and/or create a barrier with placement of plexiglass shields, care for those at home and for singles who may be without a family, and provide some safe outdoor programming for children.³⁰

The Rabbinical Assembly offered a “Guide for Virtual Tefillah,” developed by Rabbi Sam Blustin.³¹ The purpose of this extensive document is to “offer a framework to help you review the ritual offerings you currently offer in order to gather more meaningfully through the lenses of ritual and gathering theory.” Blustin’s section on “Learnings From Online Ritual Gatherings” discusses that people are seeking meaning and connection now more than ever and are looking for that in their congregations. Religion continues to be a source of comfort for individuals in these trying and anxiety-filled times. Often, ritual practices “suffer from lack of intentional gathering and coast on inertia based on previous habits.” He states that online religious services are much less compelling than normal services and that they expose weaknesses, such as a lack of understanding of who is in the community; poor leader to congregant and congregant to

³⁰ Orthodox Union, “Orthodox Union Guidance Regarding Coronavirus.”

³¹ Sam Blustin, “A Ritual Guide for Virtual Services,” June 2020, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a-Wigtyf1mkys-Vmqp36VEezQjTqI4ewhaf-wWliIQ/edit?pli=1>.

congregant interpersonal communications; and ill-defined sense of purpose and intentionality, more so than are noticed in person. He suggests: “Take the opportunity to gather in deeper and more intentional ways.” This applies to interpersonal connections as well, where he urges to think deeply about ways to connect with each other socially and emotionally. He notes that many communities have eliminated their Torah service and Musaf, so we need to find alternative ways to bring meaning to the service. He suggests synagogues continue to use organized call banks to check in on congregants and especially those who might not have the technology to connect and be part of online gatherings or teaching opportunities.

The Rabbinical Assembly has offered a variety of resources on worship and coronavirus-related hygiene, tips on setting up the computer for Shabbat and Yom Tov, for community members experiencing food insecurity, such as lack of access to kosher meals and charitable food resources, and support for families with children, teachers, and students. The resources also address perspectives on infection control in the *taharah* room. They offer options for livestreaming and Zoom video conferencing, including discounts for synagogues and schools.³² Another resource from the Rabbinical Assembly lists prayers appropriate to this time including for a memorial, healing, cleansing one’s hands, and travel, for healthcare workers, and when there is no minyan to say *Kaddish*.³³ They offer ways to gain access to PDF files of key services from *Siddur Lev Shalem* and *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Weekdays*,³⁴ and on “Preparing for Pesach During a

³² Rabbinical Assembly, “Practical Resources.”

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Rabbinical Assembly, “Publications.”

Time of Pandemic.”³⁵ A very important *halakhic* guidance states, “...we urge those who are ill to stay home, and those whom medical authorities have recommended for quarantine or self-quarantine to follow medical advice and stay in quarantine. *Pikuah nefesh*, protecting human life, overrides almost every other Jewish value.” At the same time, “Every attempt should be made to reduce potential violations of Shabbat (for example, activating the [video] stream before Shabbat or holiday, or having the stream activated in an unusual way, or by someone who is not of the Jewish faith).”³⁶ Additional guidance is provided for remote minyanim³⁷; streaming services on Shabbat and Yom Tov³⁸; abbreviating prayer services for the High Holy Days³⁹; and finally, a document and letter expressing solidarity with Chinese Americans was provided.⁴⁰ The Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Federations of North America, in conjunction with the Secure Community Network, also provide guidance on how to reopen Jewish institutions safely.⁴¹

³⁵ Rabbinical Assembly, “Preparing for Pesach During a Time of Pandemic.”

³⁶ Rabbinical Assembly and Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (not official response). “Halakhic Guidance from CJLS about Coronavirus.”

³⁷ Rabbinical Assembly and Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, “CJLS Guidance for Remote Minyanim in a time of COVID-19.”

³⁸ Heller, “Streaming Services on Shabbat and Yom Tov.”

³⁹ Kane, Silver, and Sokol, “Abbreviating Prayer Services for the High Holy Days of 5781/2020.”

⁴⁰ Rabbinical Assembly, “Solidarity with Chinese Americans.”

⁴¹ Rabbinical Assembly, “Reopening”; The Secure Community Network (Jewish Federations of North America), “Back to Business”; and Security Community Network, “Considerations for Reopening and Resumption of Operations,” 2020, <https://cdn.fedweb.org/fed-91/2/SCN%2520-%2520Resumption%2520of%2520Operations%2520Summary%2520Guidance%2520-%252010%2520May%25202020.pdf>

Shiva.com offers two guides for families, friends, and comforters pertaining to COVID-19 and social distancing as it relates to funerals, burials, *shiva minyanim*, and ways to express condolences during the pandemic: “Mourners will now experience a new type of grief, when the traditional and common practices observed surrounding end-of-life are abruptly changed.” The grieving family will not receive the direct kind of emotional and physical support (hugs and embraces) that are built into traditional Jewish mourning practices, including the funeral service, internment, *shiva*, and more. They suggest several ways to comfort the mourner from a distance using technology, i.e., phone, text, FaceTime, or traditional methods of communication such as writing a sympathy note or condolence card or sending an email. If allowed, offering a bereavement meal or planting a tree in Israel are both ways of expressing condolences and showing support during their time of need.⁴²

Feature Articles about the Pandemic and Its Impact on Jewish Life

The next category of highlighted articles in this literature review chronicles the many abrupt and dramatic changes that have taken place in synagogue and Jewish community life in general since the start of the pandemic. One of the earliest of these types of articles was written by Gabriel Greschler for the *J. Weekly*.⁴³ He lists sixty

⁴² Shiva.com. “COVID-19 Coronavirus - Social Distancing and Jewish Mourning, Shiva,” 2020, <https://www.shiva.com/learning-center/visiting-shiva/covid-19-coronavirus-social-distancing-and-jewish-mourning-shiva/>; and Shiva.com. “How to Express Condolences During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 2020, <https://www.shiva.com/learning-center/what-to-bring-or-send/how-to-express-condolences-during-covid-19-pandemic/>.

⁴³ Gabriel Greschler, “Coronavirus Updates: Local Jewish Groups Cancel Trips, Services, Other Events,” *J- Jewish News of Northern California*, March 6, 2020, <https://www.jweekly.com/2020/03/06/coronavirus-bay-area-jewish-groups-cancel-trips-services-other-events/>.

organizational, school, library, synagogue, Jewish Community Center, and museum closures in the San Francisco Bay Area after the stay in place policy was established in early March 2020. He also mentions flight cancelations by El Al Airlines to San Francisco and a number of European cities.

In a Tablet.com publication entitled, “Shul in the Time of Coronavirus,” David Zvi Kalman discusses the impact of adapting the virtual space to religious practice when many synagogues preemptively canceled services and suspended schools “out of an abundance of caution.”⁴⁴ Streaming options were ramped up for megillah readings and major events like a bar mitzvah. He states that “the dilemma of virtual religious congregation is not a purely logistical problem.” The purpose of going to synagogue is “simply to be present” in the performance of ritual. To date, most religious virtual spaces have existed only to “supplement some real-world experience.” Some, like Project Zug (projectzug.org), have served as an online text-study program. Many synagogues have livestreamed services to accommodate both aging members and those reluctant to come inside a real synagogue. Kalman states that these virtual “experiments” have had marginal success in the past. *Halakhic* restrictions have limited the possibility of “constituting a minyan through radio transmissions.” He notes that the Conservative movement’s Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has ruled that “a person may recite Kaddish while connected to a synagogue via a live feed—but only if someone in the synagogue is reciting it at the same time.” He likens this ruling to a women’s balcony of

⁴⁴ David Zvi Kalman, “Shul in the Time of Coronavirus,” *Tablet Magazine*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/belief/articles/shul-in-the-time-of-coronavirus>.

an Orthodox synagogue, where the women are more onlookers than participants and unable to constitute a quorum in and of itself. Some people may find a “level of community” in virtual spaces that they previously had not thought possible and may want to remain virtual even after real-world meetings resume. Kalman points out that despite their many good qualities, virtual services cannot replace all of the functionality of physical spaces and may in some cases make users feel more isolated. For example, virtual services lack the live interpersonal interaction of being able to talk to people and pray together in a common physical space; they do not allow touching (i.e., kissing of the Torah, hugging a friend at Kiddush, comforting a mourner); they tend to feel more distant and less engaging. He expresses the need to better define and articulate what it means to be present in virtual space, “and what it would mean—if it is possible at all—for spaces to retain a modicum of sanctity.”

Several articles address the planned innovations of synagogue worship for the High Holy Days. Many of these innovations that have been created “without a roadmap” and include prerecorded services with “slick, professional video production,” livestreamed services with a “homey feel,” outdoor services with very limited attendance, a drive-in program, a Rosh Hashanah seder on Zoom, audio recordings, gift baskets with *yahrtzeit* candles, *machzorim*, honey, honey cake, games for kids, and Yizkor fund-raising envelopes.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ David A. M. Wilensky, “Prerecorded Services, Backyard Worship, a Drive-In: Finding New Ways to Uphold Tradition this High Holiday Season,” *J Weekly*, August 20, 2020, <https://www.jweekly.com/2020/08/20/prerecorded-services-backyard-worship-a-drive-in-finding-new-ways-to-uphold-tradition-this-high-holiday-season/>.

Those who have decided to “go for it” and have in-person services are putting together small outdoor services at multiple locations, with multiple shifts, spaced-out seating, minimal singing, and service length as abbreviated as possible. One Orthodox synagogue has decided to livestream *Kol Nidre*, but will do so before sundown, when the prayer customarily starts. Some are doing “microservices,” “a parking lot experience,” providing the “greatest hits” of the season, including shofar blowing, *Avinu Malkeinu* and *Unetaneh Tokef*. Clergy will be seated apart on risers at one end of a parking lot with plexiglass barriers. Attendees will remain in their cars, spaced evenly throughout the parking lot, download an app that will connect them by Bluetooth to the service, which will be under an hour. Congregation Beth Sholom in San Francisco will offer a variety of livestream and prerecorded services from traditional, to family, to meditative to “a soul music experience.” Congregational lay leaders will prerecord full-length audio of traditional renditions of the main services and Torah readings. There are many other creative approaches to the High Holy Days that synagogues will use to fill the gap of live services caused by the pandemic.⁴⁶

Related Surveys and Research

The final category of literature in this review consists of studies of synagogue and ritual life, programs, and activities that have been done since the pandemic began. These are presented to form a basis of comparison for the data I have collected.

⁴⁶ Steve Rabinowitz, “What Synagogues Streaming High Holiday Services Can Learn from the Political Conventions,” *J Weekly*, August 31, 2020, <https://www.jweekly.com/2020/08/31/what-synagogues-streaming-high-holiday-services-can-learn-from-the-political-conventions/>, and Shira Hanau, “Streaming Services to Dominate the High Holidays, but are they also a Future Glimpse into the New Normal?” *J- The Jewish News of Northern California*, August 21, 2020.

Nishma Research recently published results from an “opt-in” survey conducted May 4-19, 2020 across denominations, with 860 U.S.-based respondents.⁴⁷ The survey sought to address the gap of knowledge pertaining to the impact of COVID-19 on the Jewish community. Focusing specifically on their findings that pertain to synagogues, online group prayer services were offered in 90% of non-Orthodox vs. 38% of Orthodox synagogues (including 67% of Modern Orthodox and 20% of Haredi); online classes were similar at 88% vs. 82% respectively; online social programs 65% vs. 48%; assistance with food or other delivery was almost the same at 59% vs. 58%; and checking up on members by phone or other means was 76% vs. 70%. Given that Orthodox practice prohibits electronic devices on Shabbat and holy days, it is understandable that the percentage of respondents who attended online prayer services in this group is lower. The authors did not specify or break down what types of online prayer services were included in the overall category. Modern Orthodox respondents attended online prayer services more than three times as frequently as Haredi.

About three-fourths of people who participate in online worship services are at least “somewhat satisfied,” according to the survey measurement of “Satisfaction with Support by Synagogue and Overall Jewish Community.” Respondents were generally highly “satisfied” (about 50% “very satisfied,” and 80% “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied”). About a third of respondents looked beyond their home location at online offerings of other synagogues and Jewish institutions. Most felt that the value of

⁴⁷ Nishma Research, “Health, Emotional, Financial & Religious Impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic in the Jewish Community,” 2020, <http://nishmaresearch.com/assets/pdf/Nishma%20Research%20Coronavirus%20Survey%2006-10-20.pdf>.

synagogue membership had not lessened in their minds, and some now see more value in their membership. Fewer than a third of Modern Orthodox respondents feel that rabbis should be open to greater *halakhic* flexibility in terms of technology. The rest are either opposed to or unsure about this issue. Finally, about 20% of respondents across denominations feel isolated to a great extent, and two thirds feel some sense of isolation.

A March 2020 survey by the American Enterprise Institute, which mainly focused on Christian denominations, found that only 12% of members of a church, temple, synagogue or mosque reported that worship services were being offered as usual.⁴⁸ Almost 60 percent said they were only being offered online, while a third said they were not being offered any longer. They found that less than a third of Americans were actually participating in online worship services or had watched a sermon online.

The Coronavirus Congregation Report, a pandemic-related survey conducted by the Synagogue Council of Massachusetts, focused on many of the same key points as in this survey.⁴⁹ Their survey found that the majority of respondents felt that receiving technical guidance on using virtual platforms would be helpful. Livestreaming Shabbat services is happening in most congregations and some have also included daily *minyanim* and Havdalah services in their virtual offerings. Zoom is used predominantly, but some use Streamspot, Facebook, or YouTube. Other programming includes: “Torah study and adult education; meditation; storytelling; virtual coffees and informal chats; religious

⁴⁸ Daniel A. Cox, et al., “American Perspectives Survey: Fear, Frustration, and Faith: Americans Respond to the Coronavirus Outbreak,” 2020, <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/APS-Mar-2020-Report-PDF-Online-Version.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Synagogue Council of Massachusetts, “Coronavirus Congregation Report,” 2020, <https://www.synagoguecouncil.org/coronavirus-congregation-report>.

school classes, Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring and preschool programs; Board and Committee meetings; knitting; Synagogue annual meetings; Social activities; Daily video messages from the clergy; and Virtual seders are planned.” A number of modalities are being used by congregations to reach out to their memberships, including email, Facebook, Constant Contact, Zoom, and telephone calls. Other meeting platforms are Facetime, GoToMeeting, and synagogue websites.

Congregational leaders are using a variety of mechanisms to connect with the vulnerable, such as delivering food and supplies, phoning all congregants, writing notes of encouragement and wishing them well, and even having children send videos. Life cycle events such as b’nei mitzvah are being customized to the needs and desires of the family, and involve everything from conducting virtual services, reading *haftarot* on Monday mornings using Zoom to avoid Shabbat broadcast restrictions and assisted by clergy with guest participation, or just to limit the service to immediate family. Funerals are being held at gravesides with restrictions on attendance, and *shiva minyanim* are being canceled or being held virtually. In-person communal seders were canceled, but virtual “Best of Passover” seders have been live-streamed. Religious school education is primarily done online, and various special arrangements have been made for preschoolers and their families. Most of the respondent synagogues indicated they were seeking a workshop on “Strategic Planning Post Covid-19.”

The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), as part of their Congregational Benchmarking and Assessment Project, conducted a COVID-19 Impact Survey with the goal of better understanding how congregants feel about their synagogue’s services

during the pandemic and to envision its reopening, “safely and comfortably.”⁵⁰ They received participation from 47 congregations, 6,776 total respondents, comprising 40 percent of households that were sent the survey. Survey recipients had two weeks to complete it during June and July.

According to the authors, “The results were clear: Despite being physically distant from the building, synagogues were still engaging their members – and their members were “very satisfied.” While two thirds of respondents were neutral about their likelihood to recommend their synagogue to others, nearly one-third said they were more likely to recommend their congregation to others now than before the pandemic. Most respondents said they plan to stay members for the near future, and this response was slightly higher than before the pandemic.

The authors comment that what they are hearing from their leaders and respondents themselves about “packed Zoom Rooms and increased attendance at synagogue programming” do not seem to be supported by the survey data. The survey includes categories of programming respondents attended at least once monthly before and since the pandemic: social and social justice programming, services/worship, family experiences, and education and/or learning experiences. Their data seems to show that attendance at these types of programs was down to some extent since the pandemic began. They offer two reasons for this observation. First, the perception of increased numbers may be skewed by people who are nonmembers. However, this creates an

⁵⁰ Amy Asi and Maxie Kalish, “Examining New COVID-19 Data from Reform Congregations: Engagement is Up, Finances are Challenged,” Union for Reform Judaism, September 15, 2020, <https://urj.org/blog/examining-new-covid-19-data-reform-congregations-engagement-finances-are-challenged>.

opportunity to “bring these people closer to the community, possible as members or donors.” Second, the authors comment that more programming does not necessarily lead to greater satisfaction. Synagogues are selecting programs and doing other things that they feel will do a better job at meeting the needs of congregants, including personal outreach. They claim that the “great relationship-building” that has occurred in congregations for years before the pandemic is also paying off.

Speaking of paying, the authors point out that one major challenge they have noted is that many are hurting financially from the economic impact of the pandemic. Almost half of respondents said they either cannot financially support the congregation at the level they have in the past or that they would prefer not to answer. This trend, they note, is particularly troubling in the face of new reopening costs related to personal protective equipment, Zoom, and more. The authors want to address this problem head on: “The challenge now is to build on these good feelings and be transparent about the financial situation with those who can give.” They ask, “How can the connections and meaning that people feel when they engage with the synagogue turn into increased investment, spiritual, communal, and financial?”

III. METHODOLOGY

Given the wide scope of the pandemic's effect, a national electronic survey of synagogues was created. Google Forms was used. The survey had 52 questions divided into sections labeled: Background Information; Religious Services and Programming – Before and During the Pandemic; Pandemic Challenges (personal and professional); Assessment of Virtual Experience; and Experiences and Reflections. Most questions were objective in nature, except for a few which allowed for answer expansion, shared learnings, and additional comment.

The initial cohort was comprised of 320 geographically dispersed and demographically varied students, faculty, alumni, and staff of the transdenominational Academy for Jewish Religion California (AJRCA). The survey was also sent to the Cantors Assembly (CA) list serve that reached 600 of its members. Similarly, it was sent to the Rabbinical Assembly listserv, but that did not yield any respondents. It was also offered to but was declined by the Union for Reform Judaism (they were already involved with several other surveys at the time) and the Orthodox Union (who wanted prior approval by an Ethics Review Committee, which was not planned). Finally, the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund (JCF) sent out the survey to 95 of its synagogue partners within the San Francisco Bay Area. Overall, there were 80 respondents from the AJRCA/CA survey and another 19 from the JCF survey. The above respondent groups provided a cross section of a national, Jewishly involved cohort of individuals that was multi-denominational.

The two surveys (AJRCA/CA and JCF) were analyzed separately, and the results of the two surveys were then pooled for a final count of 99 respondents, representing an overall response rate of approximately 99/1,015 or 9.8%. The somewhat low response rate may have been due to a number of factors: the survey was somewhat lengthy, although was timed to be completed within twenty minutes; it was sent out electronically, in one case to a listserv, which tends to be less personal than a individually directed mailed survey; and the very fact that a pandemic was going on, and there were other critical priorities for potential respondents to address.

The survey begins with queries about respondents' demographics and is followed by establishing a baseline of the "normal" practices of the congregation including what types of services it offers, other types of programming, clergy roles and responsibilities, use of musical enhancements, congregant satisfaction, and more. A similar set of questions follow about the adaptation of the synagogue and clergy to the pandemic and how their virtual services and programming worked out. It explores the emotional toll the pandemic has taken on clergy, lay and professional leaders, and congregants, and the benefits and challenges of conducting religious practices virtually. The complete survey is available in the Appendix.

IV. RESULTS

Note: Respondents were requested for some multiple-choice questions to “Check all that apply.” and for others to “Check one.” The former was analyzed such that each individual sub-response within the question constituted its own domain, i.e., out of 100%. The latter was analyzed looking at all possible sub-responses to that question adding up to 100%.

A. Demographics

Location of Respondents

The 83 respondents who answered the optional question about the name and location of their synagogue were located in sixteen states, three quarters of which were in the western half of the country: Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. The remaining respondents to this question were from eastern states: Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Two-thirds of respondents overall were from California.

AJRCA Affiliation (Only asked in the AJRCA/CA Survey)

Almost two-thirds of those who responded to this question were affiliated in some way with the AJRCA, either as alumni (28%), student (19%), or other (20%), including board member or board member/alumni, faculty, administration, not specified, or other.

Cantors or Rabbinical Assembly Affiliation (Only asked in the AJRCA/CA Survey)

Almost half of respondents to this question indicated they are members of the Cantors Assembly, whereas only six percent indicated they were affiliated with the Rabbinical Assembly or similar organization. Note: This question was not on the survey when sent out to the Federation.

Respondent Identification

The largest category of respondents indicated they were a cantor, cantorial soloist or musical director at 37% and rabbi or spiritual leader at 19%. Some indicated more than one role. Other respondents identified as lay leader, congregant, rabbinical student, executive director, staff, chaplain, and other combinations of roles.

Synagogue Denomination

Almost half of respondents to this question considered their affiliation Conservative. Almost a third of respondents were Reform. Almost a quarter were either independent or “other,” including Reconstructionist, Humanist, Renewal, Trans or Multi-denominational, or Orthodox.

Synagogue Size

36% of respondents were from synagogues with under 300 member families. Almost a third of question respondents were from synagogues with 300-499 families. 29% were from large synagogues, with 500 or more member families. In other words, each category—small, medium and large synagogues—comprised about of a third of the respondents. Grouped together, those from 100-499 family member congregations accounted for about half; 16% were in the 1-99 (small category) and 29% were in the 500+ category.

Synagogue Closure and Reopening During Pandemic

Almost all respondents’ synagogues closed starting in March 2020 for in-person religious services and programming due to the pandemic. The only exception were two synagogues with very limited programs or summer camp. Most synagogues (81%) had not yet reopened as of the time they completed the survey. For those congregations that

have reopened, there are a number of restrictions and adjustments, such as: online services; sitting outdoors with a 25-person limit or via reservation with limited number of people and no children; just the leader is on site to lead occasionally; only for outdoor socially distant services; Friday services only, with no programs on site; very limited to fewer than 5 people; summer camp and nursery school only. A few synagogues opened in June and July, only to be shut down again. Another site intended to reopen in June 2020 but we do not know if that occurred.

B. Religious Services and Programming Before the Pandemic

Service Offerings

Respondents were asked about the kinds of religious services they normally offer (before the pandemic). The top five service offerings by the collective respondents were: High Holy Days, Kabbalat Shabbat, Shalosh Regalim, minor holidays, and Shabbat Morning. Ten percent of respondents indicated “All of the above.” Two-thirds of respondents did not offer their religious services virtually before the pandemic. A third of respondents did, although some only on High Holy Days, only audio, only on occasion, or through another synagogue’s broadcast facilities.

Other Program Offerings

The most common “other” programs offered normally by the respondents’ synagogues were adult education, religious school, sick visitation, cultural programs, and women’s group. Other programs offered by over a third of congregations included preschool, meditation, Purim carnival, men’s group and gift shop. Some of the more unique offerings included, “Torah and Ski or Hike,” “Cultural School,” choirs, book club, bingo, “Minyan Tzedek” (community organizing through one of four paths: Feeding Our

Neighbors, Green Action, IKAR Community Organizing and Global Partnership, [<https://ikar.org/act/do-justice/>]), social action, and young adult programs. The majority of these programs were not offered virtually before the pandemic.

Congregational Attendance

- ***Daily Minyan***

More than half of respondents' synagogues do not have a daily *minyan*. Among those that do, most are attended by 11-20 people.

- ***Kabbalat Shabbat***

A little more than half of respondents indicated they have a Kabbalat Shabbat service that is attended by 1-49 people. Almost a quarter of respondents' Kabbalat Shabbat services are attended by 50-99 people.

- ***Shabbat Morning***

Respondents' synagogues that have Shabbat morning services were equally distributed between 1-49 attendees (38%), and 50-299 (38%), with the bulk of those in the 50-99 attendee grouping.

- ***Shalosh Regalim (Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot)***

Almost half of respondents who indicated they had services for Shalosh Regalim had attendance in the 1-49 numbers. The remaining respondents indicated equal attendance in the 50-99 and 100-299 categories, with about a tenth indicating they had no services for Shalosh Regalim.

- ***High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur)***

Almost two-thirds of respondents' synagogues have large turnouts for the High Holy Days, in the 500 and up ranges. The remainder are, in descending order, the 100-

299 (19%), 50-99 (7%), and 1-49 (2%) attendee groupings. One respondent commented that they expect to have more attendees with virtual services.

Musical Instruments and Enhancements

Almost two thirds of respondents indicated that their synagogues used musical instruments during Kabbalat Shabbat. Approximately half of respondents reported their synagogues used instruments during the High Holy Days, minor holidays, and family/children's services, respectively. About a third of respondents said musical instruments are used during Shabbat Morning, Havdalah, Shalosh Regalim, and community Seder. Musical instruments are rarely used during daily *minyan* and Shabbat *mincha*.

The top three musical enhancements normally used in the respondents' synagogues were guitar (71%), Piano (52%), and a choir (28%). Other instruments mentioned were violin, flute, percussion, clarinet, saxophone, mandolin, ukulele, oboe, cello, base, band, harmonic, handbells, and more. Some synagogues rarely or never use musical enhancements.

Clergy Roles and Responsibilities

- ***Rabbi or Spiritual Leader***

The top five responsibilities of the respondents' synagogue rabbi or spiritual leader under normal conditions were: conducts life cycle events; pastoral care; delivers sermon; adult education; and service leader. Twenty-four respondents (24%) stated "All of the above" responsibilities. One synagogue splits the tasks among four rabbis, others have volunteer clergy, some work part time, conducting services which are led by

congregants, and delivering the *d'var Torah* every eight weeks. A few synagogues have no rabbi or spiritual leader.

- ***Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director***

The top five responsibilities of the respondents' synagogue cantor, cantorial soloist or musical director were: service leader; song leader; conducts life cycle events; youth education; and pastoral care. Approximately 40% listed Torah reading and adult education as responsibilities. Other responsibilities included serving as a dual rabbi and *hazzan*, leading choirs for adults and children, assigning Torah readers and training them. In one case, the cantor only leads services once a month and lay people lead the other weeks.

Overall Congregant Satisfaction Level with Religious Services and Other Programs and How They Assess It

Three quarters of respondents indicated their congregants were “very satisfied” with their religious services and other programs under normal circumstances. Another 13% reported they were “satisfied.” One respondent indicated the congregants seem to enjoy services, but they did not have enough information to answer the question; one noted “mixed reactions,” both good and bad; and one thinks they are satisfied, but, as the rabbi, felt awkward answering the question.

Word of mouth is the most common mechanism by which the synagogues assess congregant satisfaction, indicated by almost three-quarters of the respondents. About half of respondents assess satisfaction based upon attendance, while about a third base it on periodic surveys or all of the mechanisms, respectively. Others use a major congregational survey or feedback at board and annual meetings to assess satisfaction.

C. Religious Services and Programming During the Pandemic

Religious Services

The majority of respondents indicated that they conducted religious services during the pandemic. Some did it only outdoors by RSVP only, with limited numbers and no children under twelve. Two respondents did not conduct the services themselves, but another clergy did and two indicated they did so virtually. One can assume that the services conducted were done virtually, but that was not asked specifically in this question.

Types of Virtual Services Offered

Eighty-five percent of respondents offered virtual Kabbalat Shabbat services during the pandemic. Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated their synagogue offered Shabbat Morning services virtually. About half offered virtual Havdalah and family/children's services, respectively, during the pandemic. About a third indicated they offered virtual High Holy Day services. (That would not make sense given that the High Holy Days are not until middle of September, after the survey was answered. People were presumably *planning* to offer those services, as a few respondents also indicated that in the "other" category.) About a third of respondents offered a daily *minyan*, minor holidays. Almost 45% offered community seders.

Virtual Service Attendance vs. Normal Service Attendance

Half of respondents indicated that the attendance at virtual services during the pandemic was greater than their regular services before the pandemic. 20% said it was about the same or less. About 20% of respondents said it was variable, sometimes more,

sometimes less; other indicated higher attendance in the beginning of the pandemic, then it tapered off.

Use of Musical Enhancements for Virtual Services

Almost two thirds of respondents have continued to use musical enhancements for virtual religious services during the pandemic as they did before the pandemic. Some have used pre-recorded music; some use it more frequently at Kabbalat Shabbat services; some say it is too soon to know, as we have not yet reached the High Holy Days. Of those that mentioned a particular instrument being used, guitar, and percussion were identified.

Respondents were asked to comment on best practices they found in using musical instruments during virtual services. Key themes are highlighted in **bold** below.

Please share any learnings or best practices you found in using musical instruments during virtual services. Or if not applicable, say N/A. (Optional question.)

AJRCA/CA: (55 Responses)

- It is **important to us to hold our services live**, seeing all the faces of our community, rather than provide pre-recorded “content.” So, our regular pianist plays solo before and after the service and the cantor plays guitar while singing during the service.
- Our **equipment is poor** so most is done **A Capella**
- Don’t know—I’m not the musical director
- Guitar accompanies most tefilah except when prerecorded piano tracks are used for cantor to sing over. Pianist also provides weekly **solo piano** music after a silent meditation during Amidah on Shabbat eve.
- **Using guitar for Kabbalat Shabbat and Havdalah** was effective.
- **Sound is important, singing with others is not great online**
- Original Sound, **not having the mike automatically adjust**, having **everyone else muted...**
- The problems are a **lack of technological adeptness** and needing to be knowledgeable

- **Original sound setting on Zoom.** Making sure to **sound check** with another person listening via Zoom to get balance right. Making sure all others are muted when you make music.
- **Pre-recorded music seems to work much better for zoom - however, people miss singing communally**
- **Social distancing** was implemented by musicians.
- A **good sound system** is more important than a camera online.
- **Some pre-recorded music, some “live”** via Zoom
- **So sad not to sing.**
- Keep trying to improve sound system for better quality
- I make sure that the Zoom account is set up to **original sound**, and there are a few other **settings** that make the sound better.
- Need **strong enough computer and internet** to broadcast well
- We have not used any musical instruments in our virtual services.
- **Only one musician** at a time
- Our cantor worked hard on "**garage band**" skills
- **Prerecording**
- There are **fewer live musical instruments** in the virtual services.
- We have only used **guitar & percussion**, played by myself (the cantor) or my family.
- We have **not been able** to play music virtually.
- Must have the proper audio interface equipment to use instruments. **Technical acumen must be acquired** and new skills learned if no IT person is on staff.
- Having an **individual play is better than a band** of people.
- **Guitar and prerecorded piano** accompaniment
- Musical instruments enhanced everything for me
- Using the **Blue Yeti microphone** has helped with sounds tremendously
- **Instruments were a great addition**, but over Zoom, you have to be very cautious with noise levels and had to **mute everyone; no singing together**.
- I play guitar as usual, but **couldn't have choir** for special holidays, Yom HaShoah, Israel Independence Day
- **Prerecorded music from the same folks who normally play live.**

FEDERATION: (11 responses)

- We had to **pre-record some music tracks** because our pianist was not able to participate (in a risk group).
- **Only one instrument at a time, plugged into sound system**
- Either **live from homes with the singer present or prerecorded** with multiple inputs
- We used **YouTube and Facebook** accounts not Zoom to allow for both the music and voice to come through properly.
- Can only do one at a time
- We played some recorded music and specially developed **religious mantra for relaxation**
- We find **services better streamed directly rather than via Zoom.**

Virtual Clergy Responsibilities

- ***Rabbi or Spiritual Leader***

Almost three-quarters of respondents indicated that the responsibilities of their rabbi or spiritual leader provided virtually were “Service leader” and “Delivered sermons” during the pandemic. The next two most frequently mentioned virtual responsibilities of the rabbi or spiritual leader during the pandemic were pastoral care, including visiting the sick (67%) and adult education (59%). Approximately a third of respondents listed “Reads Torah,” “Conducts life cycle events,” and “Youth education,” including bar/bat mitzvahs. The Other category included organization for community care and outreach, lay leader participation, *daf yomi shiur*, teaching Rambam every night, and calling congregants to check in with them.

- ***Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director***

The virtual responsibilities of the cantor/cantorial soloist/musical director during the pandemic indicated by about half of respondents were: “Service leader,” “Song leader,” “Youth education,” followed by “Conducts life cycle events,” “Pastoral care,” and “Adult education.” Among the “other” responsibilities were conducting online concerts, visiting the sick by phone, infrequent service leading, and coordinating volunteers. 17% of respondents did not have a cantor, soloist, or music director.

Other Virtual Program Offerings

Adult education was the most frequently mentioned “other program” offered virtually during the pandemic, mentioned by three-quarters of respondents. Religious school (66%) came in a close second, followed by “Cultural programs,” “Sick visitation,” “Women’s group,” and “Meditation and other non-traditional spiritual programs,”

mentioned by about half of respondents. The “other” answers included Facebook support groups, “Share and Care,” various preschool programs, book club and bingo, Torah study with Havdalah, Torah and yoga, “Minyan Tzedek,” community calls, and virtual Shivah.

Accommodations Made for Special Planned and Unplanned Life Cycle Events

Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they had to conduct life cycle events virtually during the pandemic; a similar number combined, indicated the events had to be either cancelled (25%) or postponed (46%). Other responses included “only needing to postpone their annual meeting”; “everything is different”; “socially distanced funeral”; and “indoor/outdoor Zoom B’nei Mitzvot”

D. Pandemic Challenges

Ability to Handle Congregants’ Spiritual Challenges

A little more than half of respondents reported they were able to handle meeting the spiritual challenges of their congregation during the pandemic. A quarter of respondents expressed they feel overwhelmed. A fifth of respondents were mainly focusing their spiritual care efforts on those with greatest needs. The “not applicable” answers consisted mainly of people who were not clergy.

Ability to Personally Cope with the Emotional Stresses of Clergy Life

Almost half of respondents said they were personally coping fairly well with the emotional stresses of clergy life during the pandemic. About a quarter of respondents indicated they were coping “extremely well” or “very well.” Only 4% said they were not coping well.

Set Up a Special Pandemic Committee or Task Force

Three quarters of respondents indicated their synagogues have set up a special committee or task force to deal with the various aspects of the pandemic. 16% have not. The “other” responses indicated that these issues were handled and discussed by their board and committees, or by a core group. One person indicated that they asked that such a committee be established but the request went unanswered. Another respondent noted that an emergency committee had been previously set up for other disasters, and this committee reached out to all congregants. Others were handling it informally as issues arise.

Potential High Holy Day Plans

Two-thirds of respondents said they were planning on having virtual High Holy Day services in real time. A third will pre-record all or parts of the service for later playback. About a quarter of respondents will do live services in the usual or an alternative space. Among the “other” responses were “I am retiring” and “I will leave it up to the next rabbi!” Several respondents are still figuring it out.

Congregational Sentiments Regarding the Pandemic

Three-quarters of respondents indicated that their congregants had a feeling of isolation and longing for community. Half of respondents said their congregants are scared to come back even if social distancing is enforced. Other sentiments included confusion, only wanting to consider virtual services and programs for the foreseeable future, anger, and “all of the above.” Some responded that congregants wanted to come back into the building, others that they were pleased to see how well the community has remained connected. Two had a split, with a few wanting to return ASAP with masks and

social distancing and others not ready at all, or at least for a while. One respondent felt that “Virtual services are a nice alternative for members who cannot come to shul due to illness, age, or distance. We may keep them available for increased accessibility.” One person added, “People have been really grateful and many report feeling more connected through Zoom and breakout rooms.”

E. Assessment of Virtual Experience

Video Conferencing Application Used

Almost all of respondents used Zoom as their video conferencing application during the pandemic. About half of respondents used Facebook Live. The third most used application was StreamSpot. Facetime was used for b’nei mitzvah lessons.

Congregational Satisfaction with Virtual Religious Services and Other Programming and How It is Assessed

About half of respondents indicated the overall satisfaction level of congregants with their virtual religious services and other programming as “very satisfied.” About a third of respondents were “somewhat satisfied” and one respondent said they were “dissatisfied.” Among the “other” answers were comments such as “the rabbis do a great job, but we miss the social aspects of seeing each other and making kiddush together, etc.”; “not sure but grateful.” One respondent commented that “those who attend are satisfied but the others do not attend”; one felt his congregation was “somewhat to very satisfied”; another wrote, “people seem happy to connect, and it provides comfort to those who have not been able to attend in the past.”

Three-quarters of respondents use word of mouth/informal feedback as a mechanism to assess congregant satisfaction with their virtual religious services and

programs. Two-thirds assess satisfaction based on attendance. 15% use periodic surveys to assess satisfaction or answered, “All of the above.” Other responses included assessing satisfaction based upon YouTube views and calls to congregants.

Desire to or Plans for Offering Virtual Religious Services and Programming After the Pandemic and Your Synagogue Opens

Half of respondents indicated that they want or plan to continue offering virtual services and other programming after the pandemic is over and their synagogue reopens. About 20% said either “Maybe” or “unknown,” in answer to this question.

Greatest Fears and Hopes in Continuing to Use Virtual Technology for Religious Services and Programming in the Future, Even After Your Synagogue Opens

The following are the top respondent fears and hopes regarding continued use of virtual technology for religious services and other programming going forward, even after synagogues are open: It will allow participation of congregants who cannot attend in person (82%); It will allow us to offer services and programs while maximizing congregant safety (74%); It goes against Halakhic principles (65%); and It will discourage congregants from attending in person (44%). Of lesser importance to respondents, and indicated by 30% or fewer of those surveyed, were: Halakhic principles can be adapted and/or accommodated (30%); It will allow non-members to gain access to our offerings without paying dues (26%); We will lose existing members (24%); and We will not offer virtual religious services and other programs once we are open (8%). Respondent comments included: “We will not have quality youth education” and “Folks will not see the benefit of membership if we are not meeting in person.”

Greatest Obstacles to Conducting Virtual Religious Services and Other Programming

“Sound problems (e.g., garbled voice, delay didn’t allow group singing)” and “Connectivity problems (e.g., dropped line, frozen screen, poor understanding of how to connect)” were the two categories comprising the greatest obstacles to conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic, accounting for about two-thirds of respondents. About a third of respondents said congregants were uncomfortable or unhappy with using this technology for religious services; and congregant “burnout” from virtual offering overload were the greatest obstacles. Staff not being tech savvy was an obstacle for about 16% of respondents.

Other responses included: Communal singing (can’t sing together); obstacles in religious education for youth; several commented that some older congregants struggle with linking in; “We do not do religious services, but we do other educational programs, but it has not always been easy to hear or see sometimes”; “Initial issues with the ‘how to’ of it all, but those were quickly ameliorated and now all is well”; “I was lucky to have the means to buy great equipment...but not everyone can buy lights, sound system, etc.”; and “Typically need to do a shorter, more focused service. Long service is not necessarily compatible with sitting at a screen unless it is very interactive. Lastly, some members simply don’t like it or want it.”

Greatest Benefits to Conducting Virtual Religious Services and Other Programming

The greatest benefits identified by respondents of conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic were that congregants were very grateful and relished seeing friends and family online (79%); enhanced congregational community and spiritual comfort in face of the crisis (74%); attracted congregants and

non-congregants that do not normally come to synagogue (72%); and helped illustrate versatility, flexibility, and creativity of clergy (64%). 30% to 40% of respondents said virtual services and programming encouraged family participation and was easy for most to grasp technology. About 20% of respondents indicated “All of the above.” Among the “other” comments were “Bringing the technology resistant to new skill level so that participation is greater and continue after the pandemic”; “Facilitated elderly members who don’t like to drive to attend minyanim”; and “We do not do religious services but doing other programing did allow for one to see people who one did not get to see often, and that was fun.”

F. Experiences and Reflections

Respondents were asked to provide more detail on their synagogue’s religious services, programming, and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic. They were also asked to share learnings, best practices, positive and negative experiences about their synagogue’s religious services, programming, and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic that might be helpful for other clergy to know. They were asked what they would do or not do differently if faced with shut down orders again in the future. The comments are listed below in **bold** to bring out some of the major themes.

AJRCA/CA:

Please feel free to tell us in more detail about your synagogue's religious services, programming and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic. If you don't have enough room to write, please send your response to Linda Bernstein, Pharm.D., at lbernstein@ajrca.edu. (Optional question.)25 responses

- Our community has really enjoyed being able to see each other’s faces during our services and activities. It has done a lot to **keep our community together**. More families have shown up for services. We are now beginning to include **more**

congregant participation in our services. We are clear about our mission to hold our congregants and provide something **interesting and high quality for them to tune into without it becoming a show.**

- We are the **Tree of Life of Pittsburgh. A second trauma 16 months after the first** has created unique challenges.
- We set up "**Shelter in Shul**" program with **weekly events**, a Friday afternoon pre-Kabbalat Shabbat program and Havdalah. We also had a Yizkor service at the end of Pesach.
- We decided to approach **Shabbat services as Torah study** rather than a traditional Torah service (reading from the Chumash rather than the scroll, some differences in prayers). I don't know the proper terms and I was not part of the decision-making conversations, but no attendees have complained and most seem to like it very much.
- The survey covered it. A request from a group of congregants to initiate new program was responded to, and we are both doing this. **The technology not a deterrent.**
- Our **caring committee** has been very active, delivering food and masks and other things to homebound congregants and making phone calls to people who live alone. The rabbi has also been **contacting congregants by phone**. Before the pandemic, we streamed our Kabbalat Shabbat services, but we didn't do anything to make the service more accessible online. Now, **we stream every service from our homes**, and we have made a lot of **adaptations** to the way we run our services to cater to that online presence.
- Core group came to my **daily**, Monday thru Thursday, 4 pm **zoom sessions**. Had full minyan plus every Wednesday morning, had former members who had moved away joining us for Friday evening live-streaming. Did early 5:30 so shomer shabbat members could participate. Started doing Havdalah on zoom from home. **Worry** that members who only come rarely or for high holy days **might not come this year**. We **called every single member at least twice** to check in. Delivered food to those who needed.
- **B'nei Mitzvah have been the trickiest** point due to the variety of family needs / situations, the way we pair our b'nei mitzvah students.
- The community I serve consists of **seniors** who are both extra **concerned about leaving their homes** during the pandemic, and are also **not comfortable viewing virtual services**. I have kept in touch with them mainly through weekly prerecorded videos, phone, and email. The board has also set up a **phone tree**, where each of them calls a number of congregants each week.
- Being a congregant, I have enjoyed my synagogues' services etc. very much at Temple Beth Am
- I think we are starting to experience some sort of **burn out**. But I can't identify what it is exactly. I'm struck that people don't come on time, but rather, exactly as late as they did in person. We still **struggle with our Fri night minyan**. Why is that? Can't say. I don't think it's me.
- The Board of Directors periodically check-in with all congregants. We have a small group of volunteers who shop for those unable to do so. The "**Caring**

Community" touches base twice monthly with high-risk congregants. The office staff, rabbi, and Chair of the "Caring Community" send out cards acknowledging life-cycle events (births, deaths, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, etc.).

- We've had several **outdoor B'nei Mitzvah** services, in the backyard of the B/M family, with social distancing. It has been very meaningful to daven in nature and the experience has felt very poignant. The services have been **shortened** since we're on Zoom and it has often been cold outside... after the pandemic we may continue to offer outdoor and shorter B/M services.
- They have **gone well** and we **will continue virtually until** there is either a wonderful therapeutic or vaccine that is really successful.
- I have been doing **Kabbalat Shabbat services so we can end before candle lighting**. At first, I was very **uncomfortable compromising Halachah**, but have come to learn that being in community is the most important thing, really almost a matter of **pikuach nefesh** you could say. So, I **added Festival services** for Pesach and Shavuot, and felt that it was worth feeling a little ill at ease with it. Especially when I visited other colleagues and saw how they were approaching it. As for **spiritual care**, I've made calls and people are always surprised and grateful to hear that they are being thought of.
- Thank you, Linda! Our **Chabad** has tried to hold us together with **virtual classes and limited services**. It's very hard. We were really like a family... Saw each other every Saturday morning, had lunch together... **People stopped paying their monthly donations** and that is really hard for our rabbis. We are mobilizing to get money but unlike traditional synagogues where dues are paid upfront, Chabad is more of a "on your honor", "when you can", "as much as you can" kind of a place...
- These issues are still under discussion; I am chairing an **ad hoc committee** to address them
- We have been livestreaming our services for several years. We are now trying to **upgrade the quality due to the large response**. We have also tried **outdoor programs** and services using a local wifi so that people can **stay in their cars** and listen.
- **People were very happy to have the time to see each other**; glad they were able to fulfill observing a **Yahrzeit**; and happy that we were able to offer worship services during this crisis.
- The spiritual leader addresses this and is looking to add a "Caring Community."
- We began to develop small groups that met in people's backyards. It could have been handled better had those who were having the services just informed their neighbors. However, many **small minyans sprang up** and this seemed to satisfy the peoples' need to have prayer and still to be six feet apart, be outdoors and they **should have worn masks, but not all did**. They did make rules that made sure that no one went up to the Torah and that only that one person read the Torah and handled it. Otherwise **each person brought their own Siddur and Chumash** to read and **did not touch anyone else's books**. The same person who read the Torah conducted the services. **Same people came to the same minyan** all the time.

FEDERATION:

Please feel free to tell us in more detail about your synagogue's religious services, programming and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic. If you don't have enough room to write, please send your response to Linda Bernstein, Pharm.D., at lbernstein@ajrca.edu. (Optional question.)5 responses

- While **numbers have increased**, the experience of seeing and the variety of programs and response has been **positive** - there are **many we are not seeing (despite reaching out) and many for whom the medium does not connect them.**
- We are Karaite Jews and we have some strict requirements
- More volunteers than people in need, but we **thrive on community and socializing**, which represents a **long-term problem** for us. Board has really stepped up to help.
- The services are conducted by either our **part-time rabbi or by lay-leaders**. I think it's a great experience!! (I give the drash several times a month) and our congregant-cantor gives some drashes and people love his singing!

AJRCA/CA:

Please share learnings, best practices, positive and negative experiences about your synagogue's religious services, programming and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic that might be helpful for other clergy to know. If you don't have enough room to write, please send your response to Linda Bernstein, Pharm.D., at lbernstein@ajrca.edu. (Optional question.)22 responses

- As soon as **Safer At Home** went into effect, our Temple established a **centralized website** with all the information and links to our online offerings including services, adult ed, Arts & Culture events. I think **clergy burnout is more of an issue than congregant burnout**. Our congregation feels cared for even if they feel isolated. They prefer safety over opening up too soon. I advocated for and added a Havdalah service at first but after a month it became too much because I was not left with one day out of the week where I was obligated to someone for something. So, I **recorded the Havdalah service** and put it on our website for access.
- It is so important to **listen**. Have done a sufficient review to have a **comprehensive plan** in place.
- Our synagogue has been doing **Zoom programming**, but there is a strong **reluctance to do it live and one Shabbat; as well as pre-record**. The rabbi doesn't feel comfortable with that for several reasons.
- We **screen share the siddur and the parsha** with live pointing so congregants without these textual resources at home can see where we are in the service and can participate both **actively with readings and passively in their homes**.

- In person far better, and yes, there is a **strong feeling of** isolation as our members are from all over. **Especially older members**, who may not have the adequate technology such as cameras.
- Led services on **live-streamed closed group on Facebook**. Board concerned with **security** so link not on website. Had to be member or invited by member. Very time consuming for the one tech savvy congregant who coordinated all our zoom and live-streaming efforts. **Hubbetzin** acted as stand in for whole congregation. Singing, drumming, saying Torah blessings, giving responses to Barchu etc. handy!!
- Folks really **enjoy the opportunity to "gather"** with one another - to interact online when they can't in person. Using the **chat function** and/or being able to talk to one another has been a good thing. I've been leading a weekly **"lunch and schmooze"** for congregants who live alone and that's been very helpful for those who attend weekly. **Balancing accessibility, interactivity, and security has been an issue.**
- With much programming for example on shavuot it was very **complicated** to know which was live streamed, what on zoom and what in chat rooms. **Hard to access**
- Overall, the **response has been very positive to the intentionality** behind spiritual care during the pandemic.
- We installed **new live-streaming equipment** (new high def camera which connects to a laptop along with the sound system and a big screen) to be able to have multiple clergy on the bimah, in the main sanctuary, leading virtual services, but we have not yet had more than one clergy in the space at a time for fear of how it might be perceived.
- I've **gotten comfortable using this technology**, and feel that it has **brought us closer** as a congregation. People really love seeing each other.
- Not sure I can answer this
- personally, I find that **virtual BBM lessons are less productive and less satisfying** than in person
- Congregants **prefer to see our services from our sanctuary, not someone's home**. Also necessitates a lot of personal contact by phone. We try to keep people informed and we don't want them to feel forgotten.
- Not applicable, do not have a synagogue
- **People needed a time when they could socialize**, which was even more important than offering the opportunity to pray. I made sure that people could come on early before the actual service start time.
- **Great music is a real draw.**
- One of the AJRCA summer classes was on Halacha in the digital age. As a class, we're putting together a publication on online minyan. It may be useful to you. Good luck!
- Regarding **religious school, we pivoted immediately** to online. Parents really appreciated the **consistency**. **Kids reported feeling they had learned more than before pandemic.** They also felt connected and seen. And some said they learned more than in other learning settings.

FEDERATION:

Please share learnings, best practices, positive and negative experiences about your synagogue's religious services, programming and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic that might be helpful for other clergy to know. If you don't have enough room to write, please send your response to Linda Bernstein, Pharm.D., at lbernstein@ajrca.edu. (Optional question.)5 responses

- Much **learning about best way to use zoom** - when to mute/unmute, how to instruct people, how to involve people. **Spiritual care** has been enhanced by number of people **reaching out** and **support given via classes and group** - while also **feeling the loss of in person**
- We have been trying to serve the community as best as we can with **volunteers** - no paid staff. It is **challenging** in many ways - from books to redesigning the service, duration of time, people can be in front of the **screen for only a certain time**.
- We find **Zoom great for education, lousy for services and discussion**.
- We have a variety of **classes** that are generally well-attended and very popular.

AJRCA/CA:

What would you do or not do differently if you were faced again with shut down orders in the future? (Optional question.)25 responses

- I would continue to **add more elements of interest** to our services - other musicians, congregant participation. I would **call more congregants** on the phone to check in with them.
- I am so glad that my synagogue **started livestream before the pandemic** and we had **worked through the Halacha beforehand**.
- I would like to see Zoom Shabbat services, but our **rabbi is against doing it on Shabbat due to Halakhic purposes**.
- Make sure to **equip the elderly** with cameras and microphones. Create a **contact tree**, less on the two professionals.
- I think we've done everything we've needed to do.
- I'd be better prepared with **tech knowledge** based on this experience. The two major problems are how seamlessly share pages of siddur and how to arrange for choir when we don't have equipment to **synchronize voices** if we had people sing separately and then combine the voices.
- Find a way to have interaction during services earlier on. **Start virtual oneg** right away.
- It is difficult with a **large congregation with many needs**
- Nothing. We are doing this well.
- Since the **general response has been overwhelmingly positive** I anticipate following the same or similar actions.

- I would **continue to enhance our offerings** and look to improve in any way possible.
- I would probably **offer both Friday and Saturday services**. So far, we've only had Friday night.
- Ignore them :) Just kidding. **Look at Taiwan** -- masks and social distancing only. Those at risk were encouraged to remain at home. No shut down at all, including schools. Approximately 700 cases, 8 deaths and hit the 0 mark a couple of weeks ago....
- See if we could find a way to **meet even MORE congregants needs**
- I think our current response is as good as possible, under the circumstances; I am impressed with the **clergy's creativity** in this regard
- **Be better prepared**, if that's possible
- Would offer **virtual daily minyanim**. Shacharit and Mincha/Ma'arav
- start zooming services on shabbat and yom tov sooner
- I believe that the best we can do for congregants is to **make them feel that we are still there for them**. They always appreciate that their synagogue is thinking of them.
- Thanks for doing this!
- Status quo as during the pandemic.
- They probably would continue to do the same thing.

FEDERATION:

What would you do or not do differently if you were faced again with shut down orders in the future? (Optional question.)4 responses

- Would **continue regular outreach**.
- **We will be much better prepared due to all the efforts** that have been put in and all the work that is being done. Also, the **community is yearning for seeing each other** and participating and waiting for the day when we all can meet in person.
- nothing

V. DISCUSSION

This 52-question national survey gives an overview of synagogue practices surrounding ritual services and programming before and during the current pandemic. The survey provided views from 99 clergy, lay leaders, staff and congregants from sixteen states, but primarily concentrated in the western U.S., and particularly California. Half the synagogues, equally balanced between small, medium, and large sizes, were Conservative, but there was also representation from Reform synagogues and those of the other denominations. The picture painted by the survey is one of almost complete shutdown of in person synagogue services and programming starting in March of 2020, along with many institutions, schools, businesses, and other services across the nation. The Jewish community was not spared in any way as illustrated by the more than sixty institutional and program closures in the San Francisco Bay area alone.

Synagogue Services and Program Offerings

Synagogue service and program offerings before the pandemic were as one would expect, with High Holy Days, Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbat Morning, Shalosh Regalim, and minor holidays as the usual offerings. Virtual services before the pandemic were more the exception than the rule. Adult education, religious school, sick visitation, cultural programs and women's group were the most common programmatic offerings.

Most respondents indicated that they conducted religious services during the pandemic, but under unique conditions, such as virtually or outdoors. Virtual Kabbalat Shabbat and, to a lesser extent, Shabbat Morning services predominated as service offerings during the pandemic. Many respondents were planning on having High Holy Day services, some will pre-record portions, some will do live services in the usual or

other space, and others are still figuring it out as of the time they filled out the survey. Programmatic offerings during the pandemic were similar to those offered before the pandemic but done virtually. Many indicated they had to conduct life cycle events virtually, or they had to be cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic.

Attendance at Synagogue Service

Attendance at services before the pandemic ranged from between 11-20 congregants for daily *minyan* to over 500 for High Holy Days. Half of respondents said attendance at virtual services was greater than at regular services before the pandemic. Others said it went down, stayed the same, was variable or has tapered off.

Musical Enhancements

Musical enhancements, especially using guitar, piano, and choir, were used frequently under normal conditions, especially during Kabbalat Shabbat, High Holy Days, minor holidays, and family/children services. Almost two-thirds of respondents have continued to use musical enhancements for virtual services, though some have added pre-recorded music as needed. Comments by respondents emphasized the importance of muting the congregation, not singing at the same time, using solo instruments, incorporating prerecorded music as needed, becoming savvy about the technology, using “Original Sound” and other advanced settings on Zoom, and considering Facebook or YouTube as alternatives to Zoom. Guitar, piano and percussion were used most often.

Clergy Roles and Responsibilities

Rabbi or spiritual leader responsibilities before the pandemic are predominated by conducting life cycle events, pastoral care, delivering a sermon, adult education, and

leading services. Cantor, cantorial soloist, or musical director responsibilities were: service leader, song leader, conducting life cycle events, youth education, and pastoral care. These roles and responsibilities shifted somewhat during the pandemic. The rabbi or spiritual leader role during the pandemic for two-thirds of respondents were virtual service leader and delivered sermons, followed by pastoral care and adult education. Reading Torah, conducting life cycle events, and youth education were mentioned in only a third of cases. As for cantor, cantorial soloist, or musical director during the pandemic, the roles and responsibilities in about half of cases were virtual service leader, song leader, and youth educator, followed by conducting life cycle events, pastoral care, and adult education. It appears that the pandemic shifted responsibilities of both rabbis and cantors to more of a service leader role, and one which included pastoral care and adult education. The conducting of life cycle events was somewhat less of a need because people were not gathering to celebrate as much.

Congregational Satisfaction

While three-quarters of respondents indicated their congregants are “very satisfied” under normal conditions, only about half of respondents indicated their congregants were “very satisfied” with their virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic. Word of mouth continues during the pandemic to be the most common mechanism by which synagogues assess congregant satisfaction.

Pandemic Challenges

- *Spiritual Challenges:* About half of respondents said they were able to handle meeting the spiritual challenges of their congregation, while a quarter said they

felt overwhelmed. Some indicated they were prioritizing their spiritual care to focus on those most in need.

- *Coping with Emotional Stresses of Clergy Life:* Similarly, about half of respondents answered they were personally coping fairly well, with a quarter saying they were coping extremely or very well. It appears that while the clergy were able to cope with their own personal stresses, some felt overwhelmed at times in dealing with the spiritual care needs of their congregants during the pandemic. Most of the respondents indicate that their synagogue has set up a special committee to deal with the pandemic, and others have consulted their board, committees or other core group.
- *Congregational Sentiments:* While the clergy seem to be coping fairly well with the spiritual and emotional challenges placed upon them by the pandemic, as in previous studies, the congregants themselves are suffering from feelings of isolation and longing for community. Half indicated that congregants are scared to return to synagogue even when social distancing is enforced, some are feeling confused and only want to consider virtual services and programs for the foreseeable future.
- *Plans for the Future:* Many appreciate the ability to connect through Zoom and other means, especially those who cannot come to synagogue due to illness, age or distance, and would want to see virtual offerings continue to afford them greater accessibility. Half of respondents indicated they would want to see virtual services and programs continue after the pandemic. Continuing virtual religious services and programming even after the synagogue reopens has its potential

benefits and drawbacks, as indicated by half of the respondents, including allowing people to attend services who normally would not be able to participate in person and maximizing congregant safety, but also potentially going against Halakhic principles and possibly discouraging congregants from attending in person or paying dues. Other obstacles noted in conducting virtual religious services and programming were sound and connectivity issues, being uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfamiliar with the technology, and burnout. The greatest benefits were being able to see friends and family online, enhanced congregational community, and spiritual comfort. Respondents also said they liked that online services attracted congregants and non-congregants, showed off the versatility of the clergy, and encouraged family participation.

Other comments, experiences shared, and lessons learned included the need for synagogues to quickly adapt to the stay-at-home orders, and ramping up their technological capabilities, service offerings, and programming variety. There is a strong feeling that outreach via phone trees or other methods is important, especially to the elderly who are isolated and do not have the technological know-how or equipment to participate in Zoom calls. This task is done by care committees, volunteers, board members, and clergy. While some feel participation has increased, others feel there is congregant and/or clergy burnout. Some have set up small group in-person *minyanim* to maintain social distancing, but mask use is not always consistent. “Bring your own books” is the rule to minimize touching. Some have opted for virtual “Torah study” from a book rather than traditional Torah reading from a scroll during Shabbat services. Some have daily *minyanim*, others weekly or bi-weekly. Many want to increase the variety,

frequency, and interest level of their virtual ritual services and programming. One person commented, “Balancing accessibility, interactivity, and security has been an issue.”

Cessation of financial support has been a problem for a Chabad congregation. Besides the services, congregants value the time to just socialize before or afterwards.

Although this project was exploratory in nature, the potential thesis presented was whether the survey itself has utility in determining the impact of the pandemic on synagogue ritual practices and programming, and the many aspects associated with it. It is clear from our results that the survey did capture important trends, feelings of respondents, positive and negative experiences, and the benefits and challenges of virtual offerings. Future research can take advantage of and build on these findings. Of note is that many of our findings were similar to that of other researchers who have conducted similar surveys, but on a much larger scale.

Where do these findings lead us in the future? Certainly no one knows how long it will take for the pandemic to be contained and when we can resume our normal lives. One wonders, is this the “new normal”? What does the future hold for the synagogue of the near and distant future? Will brick and mortar synagogues as we know them today become historical relics? How can clergy best support their congregations during this difficult and challenging time that could extend for years?

Clearly, the respondents indicated that they have made huge strides in adapting to virtual religious service and programming needs on very short notice. They have had to rethink their entire way of fulfilling their responsibilities, both as clergy and as laypeople, while experiencing major disruptions in how they normally conduct their religious lives and professional services, from virtual *b’nei mitzvot*, to *minaynim* to *shivah*.

We still have work to do to answer the call for increased spiritual support for our remotely placed congregants. Congregants are feeling isolated and disconnected from their community. It is not enough to simply schedule a full roster of services and programs on Zoom, when many of the less tech savvy and able elderly are being left behind, unable to take advantage of these offerings. We must be actively engaged in community outreach, assessing the varied and ongoing needs of congregants , and use low technological methods such as phone calls, home food delivery, and other forms of spiritual support to bolster the spirits and ensure the well-being of the elderly, infirmed and isolated.

Can we do more to train and support our clergy who are on the front lines every day, often twenty-four hours a day? As mentioned, clergy have a valuable role to play as conveyors of accurate and trusted pandemic information. Certainly, there are many guidelines that have been published and listservs for sharing experiences. Will our clergy-in-training need to be schooled differently in terms of technological know-how, *tefillah* and Torah, pastoral care, and other subjects to meet the unique and challenging requirements of providing virtual religious services and programs? Curricula that may have worked in “normal” times may not be optimal for a pandemic or its aftermath.

Will there be ritual service and programming attrition over time, based on “survival of the fittest” offerings and struggling to find the most effective and compelling types of services and programs to present to our congregants? Are we overloading congregants with eclectic choices or underwhelming them with run-of-the-mill services and programs that have, under normal circumstances, a low level of attendance and dwindling interest and when offered online are failing? Can we do better to engage youth,

young adults, families, seniors, and other populations in our services and programs offered virtually? If this world of “virtual religion” is to continue, can we do more to upgrade the broadcast quality of our productions? Will our *halakhic* organizational bodies have to further adapt to meet the ongoing and ever-changing needs our communities?

Future research in this area would benefit from a larger sample size and a more diverse population that would allow for more in-depth queries into the ritual service and programming practices of synagogues in denominations such as Reform, Orthodox, and others. This study had a predominance of Conservative synagogues represented along with a lesser variety of others. It would be interesting to do a follow up study in six months to see how things have changed for synagogues as the pandemic rages on or begins to diminish. What further adaptations have been made, what types of services and programs have proven successful, and which have been eliminated due to a lack of interest or effectiveness? Which innovations are still ongoing post pandemic? One essential question to ask in future studies would be to determine the long-term impact of virtual ritual services and programs on congregational participation, satisfaction, and on meeting spiritual needs.

This was a survey that was distributed within three to four months of the initial lock down. It was a time of uncertainty and experimentation for many. Now that we have learned more about how to provide virtual services and programs, what has been the impact of these efforts? Are we on the right track? Can we do better?

We look forward to continuing study in this important area and to further ascertaining how we can best support and learn from each other in this challenging time.

VI. EPILOGUE

It has been a year since we first heard about COVID-19...and what a year it has been! Given that the survey was distributed in late spring of 2020, there is value in trying to gain some perspective on the year that was and projecting how COVID-19 might shape the future of synagogue life. Rabbi Joshua M. Davidson, senior rabbi of Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York, has attempted to do just that in his opinion piece entitled, “How the Lessons of Covid will Shape the Synagogue of Tomorrow.”⁵¹ Rabbi Davidson, not in favor of formal surveys—particularly as a measure of Jewish life—convened small groups of congregants for a series of Zoom chats he optimistically titled, “Jewish Life After Covid.” Davidson hoped that by looking ahead, it will “lift our spirits today and better prepare for tomorrow.” He also wanted to learn from our experiences to “strengthen our Jewish future, and specifically “the synagogue’s role in shaping it.”

The key question he asked was, “How have these last 10 months shaped your Jewish identity and experience?” The conversations revealed several common themes, the first of which was a renewed love of Judaism, respect for its beauty, and reconnection to faith facilitated through online Jewish ritual and learning. Many gained a greater appreciation of taking time out for Shabbat, as they connected with family via Zoom, lit candles on Friday nights and, most importantly, distinguished between work time and private time—not an easy thing to do when working from home. Congregants found it easier to access ritual, educational, social, and cultural offerings virtually than having to

⁵¹ Joshua M. Davidson, “How the Lessons of Covid will Shape the Synagogue of Tomorrow.” *New York Jewish Week*. January 14, 2021, <https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/how-the-lessons-of-covid-will-shape-the-synagogue-of-tomorrow/>.

get “dressed up” and go to shul, even if they lived close by to the synagogue. Some enjoyed the convenience of being able to “late-stream” programs rather than livestream. More people were tuning in, and “regulars” were tuning in more frequently. The virtual format provided less of a barrier to newcomers as it offered a “comfortable, non-threatening way to taste what synagogues are all about.” Technology also makes it easier for synagogues to reach out to “any Jew anywhere.” This creates an environment where institutions must compete with each other, “up their game,” discover what makes them stand out from the crowd, and capitalize on those strengths.

Online education can be effective and allows for several creative approaches to promote student-student and student-teacher interactions, such as screen sharing and breakout rooms. Rabbi Davidson suggests that when we are able to return to in-person learning, we should continue to offer online learning opportunities both for convenience for families who live at a distance from the synagogue, and also to “boost American Jewish literacy.” The future generation of “digital natives,” “whose lives will be lived online – will expect it.”

Online worship, rituals, and lifecycle events offer the advantage of allowing those who would not be able to attend a bris, wedding, or funeral in person, to actively participate, offer blessings, and receive honors, but at a distance. Many synagogues use tablets and phones to achieve this. Following the lead of “megachurches,” larger synagogues have found value in offering small group opportunities for congregants with common interests to meet one another and interact. Keeping the groups small enough allows people to see everyone at once on the screen and offer a more intimate experience. Zoom rooms avoid the cliques which tend to form among longstanding friends. Those

trying to “break in” find it easier, as everyone is on equal footing and cannot group in a corner of the social hall.

The pandemic has also caused synagogue leaders to realize firsthand and more actively address the painful isolation faced by the elderly or sick who cannot attend services and programs. They learned the importance of acts of *gemilut chasadim*, “lovingkindness,” as “expressions of Jewish identity and commitment.” Davidson reminds us that despite the use of new technologies to facilitate outreach and “in-reach,” “There is no place like home.” We must never lose sight of the importance of assembly among our fellow Jews.

Finally, Rabbi Davidson emphasizes that some synagogues might have the technological sophistication to share worship and learning globally, while others are finding it tough financially to keep their doors open. There are the “haves,” synagogues who have the means to create high production value services, but also synagogues at the other end of the spectrum, who can only offer small scale, “hamish,” or more homey types of services. He encourages better resourced congregations to partner with struggling ones “for the sharing of worship, educational and other programming.” Congregations should “embrace the challenge” of utilizing what we have learned this year to make our outreach even more effective to support our own members, the unaffiliated and many Jewish communities that have felt the brunt of the pandemic. He ends with the statement, “Necessity is the mother of invention. The necessity will pass; the inventiveness must not.”

No one knows what the future will hold. We all hope that the vaccines will be effective against the ever-increasing number of variant strains of the virus and enough

people will take them to make a difference. Will congregations be able to resume in person services and programming any time soon? The United States Supreme Court ruled on February 5, 2021 that California can no longer continue with a ban on indoor church services established to reduce the spread of the coronavirus.⁵² The court also ruled that, for now, the state can continue to restrict singing and chanting inside but cannot bar in-person services completely, though it can restrict attendance to 25% of capacity. It appears that the court is willing to overrule epidemiologists and elected officials for the sake of “religious liberty.” Stay tuned for more uncertainty.

As we approach the holidays of Purim and Pesach in year two of COVID-19, we are more experienced now with Zoom and Facebook Live and how to set up our microphones and cameras. We should be proud of our ingenuity that has allowed us to continue our religious practices and reach out to our community and beyond. Let us hope that by next year, we will again be able to schmooze at *kiddush*, provide a hug to the mourner, and bless our grandchildren in person. The Jewish people have survived worse calamities and this too we hope shall pass soon. That said, clergy and leaders of our synagogue communities have a special role to play in providing support and comfort to those who need it and finding all means possible to keep the faith in these difficult times among congregants and the wider world.

⁵² Jason Breslow. "Supreme Court Rules Against Calif., Doubles Down On Religious Rights Amid Pandemic." NPR.org. February 6, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/06/964822479/supreme-court-rules-against-california-ban-on-in-person-worship-amid-the-pandemi>.

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VIII. APPENDIX

A. Detailed Results of AJRCA/CA and Federation Survey

PART ONE:
DEMOGRAPHICS

Please provide the name and location of your synagogue. (Optional)

Respondent States	Number of Respondents AJRCA/CA: 64/81 (79.0%)	Number of Respondents Federation: 19/19 (100%)	Total Number of Respondents: 83/100 (83%)	Total % of 83 Respondents
Arizona	2		2	2.4
California	35	19	54	65.1
Connecticut	2		2	2.4
Florida	3		3	3.6
Illinois	1		1	1.2
Kentucky	1		1	1.2
Massachusetts	3		3	3.6
New Jersey	1		1	1.2
Nevada	2		2	2.4
New York	2		2	2.4
Ohio	1		1	1.2
Oregon	1		1	1.2
Pennsylvania	3		3	3.6
Texas	2		2	2.4
Virginia	1		1	1.2

Washington	1		1	1.2
No Synagogue	2		2	2.4
Unknown	1		1	1.2

Findings: Of those that responded: 16 states represented. Western states accounted for almost three quarters of respondents. Two-thirds of respondents were from California.

35/64 or 54.7% from California

Western States: AZ, CA, NV, OR, TX, WA = 74.7%

Eastern States: CT, FL, IL, KY, MA, NJ, NY, OH, PA, VA = 21.6%

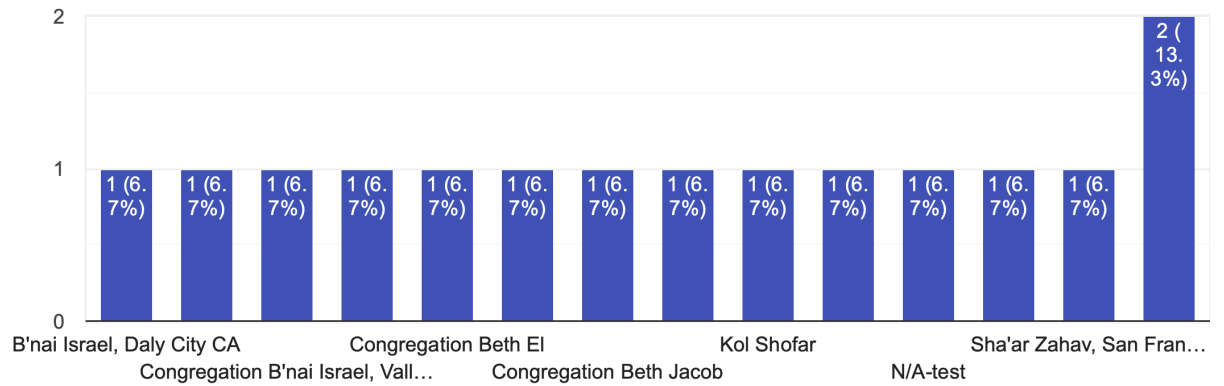
Unknown or No Synagogue = $3/64 = 3.6\%$

Total: 100%

FEDERATION:

Please provide the name and location of your synagogue. (Optional)

15 responses



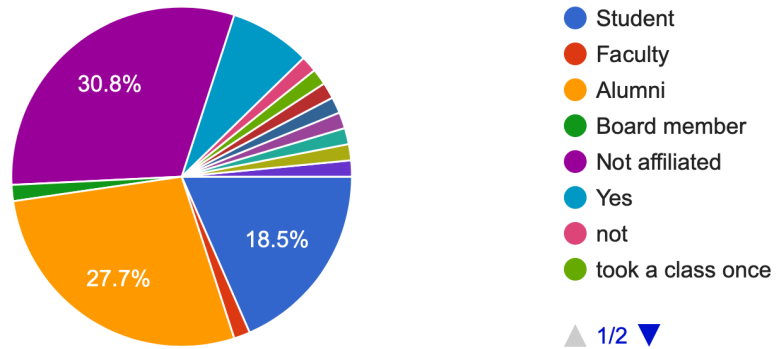
Synagogue 15/19 (79%)	Location	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
B’Nai Israel	Daly City	1	6.7
B’Nai Israel		1	6.7
B’Nai Israel	Vallejo	1	6.7
Beth Am		1	6.7
Beth El		1	6.7
Beth Israel Judea	San Francisco	1	6.7
Beth Jacob		1	6.7
Rodef Sholom	San Rafael	1	6.7
Kol Shofar		1	6.7

Kol Shofar	Tiburon	1	6.7
Peninsula Temple Beth El	San Mateo	1	6.7
Sha'Ar Zahav	San Francisco	1	6.7
Beth Abraham		2	13.3
Test		1	
Total		15	

AJRCA/CA:

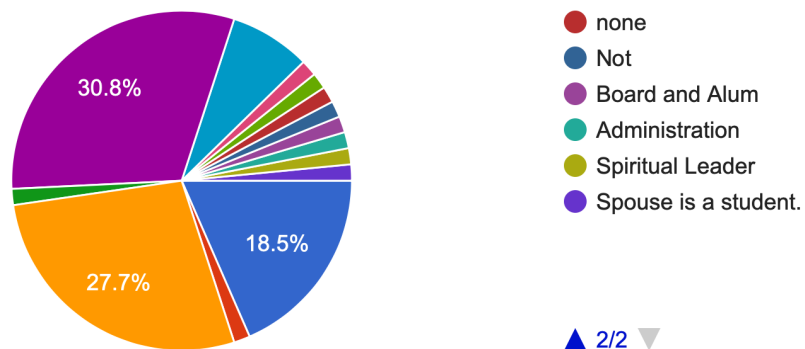
How are you affiliated with the Academy for Jewish Religion in California? (Check one.)

65 responses



How are you affiliated with the Academy for Jewish Religion in California? (Check one.)

65 responses



AJRCA Affiliation: 65/81 (80.2%)	Number	%
Not affiliated	23	35.4
Alumni	18	27.7
Students	12	18.5
Affiliated but not specified	5	7.7
Board Member or Board/Alumni	2	3.1
Faculty	1	1.5
Administration	1	1.5
Other	3	4.6

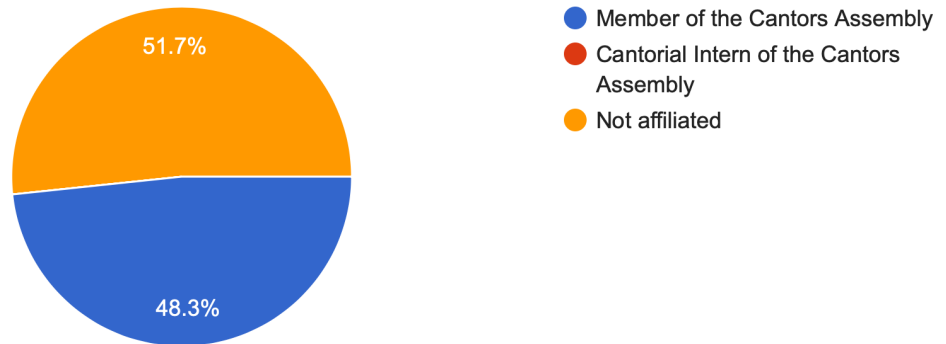
Findings: Almost two-thirds of those who responded to this question were affiliated in some way with the AJRCA.

Note: This question was not asked in the Federation Survey.

AJRCA/CA:

How are you affiliated with the Cantors Assembly? (Check one.)

60 responses



Cantors Assembly Affiliation: 60/81 (74.2%)	Number	%
Member of Cantors Assembly	29	48.3
Cantorial Intern of Cantors Assembly	0	0
Not affiliated	31	51.7

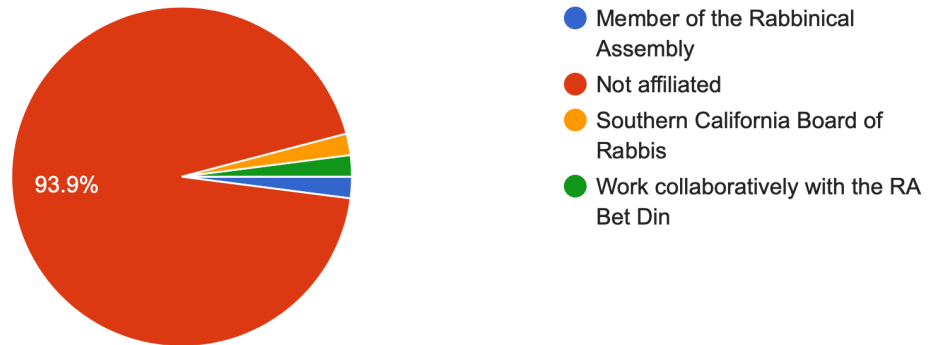
Findings: Almost half of respondents to this question are members of the Cantors Assembly. Note: This question was not on the survey when sent out to the AJRCA.

Note: This question was not asked in the Federation Survey.

AJRCA/CA:

How are you affiliated with the Rabbinical Assembly? (Check one.)

49 responses



Rabbinical Assembly Affiliation: 49/81 (60.6%)	Number	%
Member of Rabbinical Assembly	1	2
Southern California Board of Rabbis	1	2
Work collaboratively with the RA Bet Din	1	2
Not affiliated	46	93.9

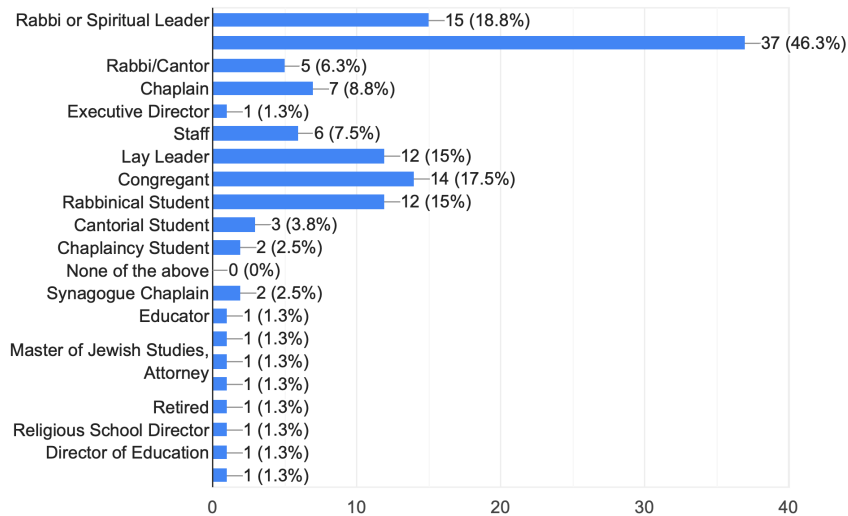
Findings: Most respondents to this question are not affiliated with the Rabbinical Assembly. Note: This question was not on the survey when sent out to the AJRCA.

Note: This question was not asked in the Federation Survey.

AJRCA/CA:

Please identify yourself: (Check all that apply.)

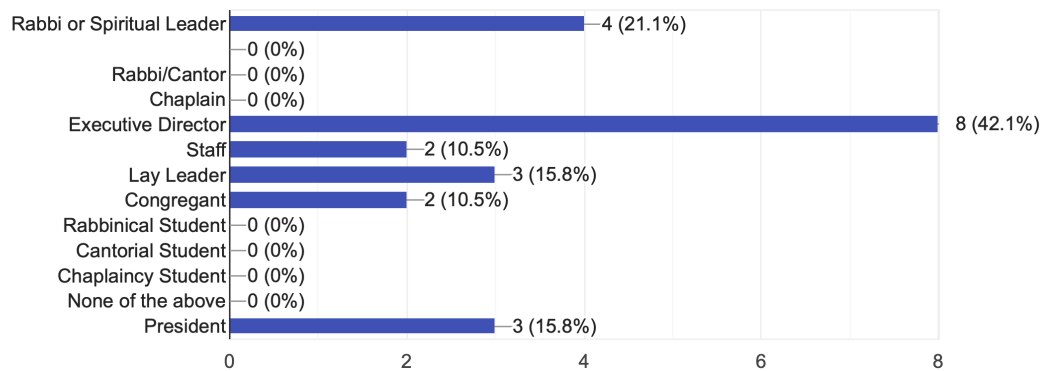
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Please identify yourself: (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Respondent Identification	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Rabbi or Spiritual Leader	15	18.8	4	21.1	19	19.2
Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director	37	46.3	0	0	37	37.4
Rabbi/Cantor	5	6.3	0	0	5	5.1
Chaplain	7	8.8	0	0	7	7.1
Synagogue Chaplain	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Executive Director	1	1.3	8	42.1	9	9.1
Staff	6	7.5	2	10.5	8	8.1
Lay Leader	12	15.0	3	15.8	15	15.2
Congregant	14	17.5	0	0	14	14.1
Rabbinical Student	12	15.0	0	0	12	12.1
Cantorial Student	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0
Chaplaincy Student	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Other	8	10.0	0	0	8	8.1
Executive Director, Congregant, President	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0

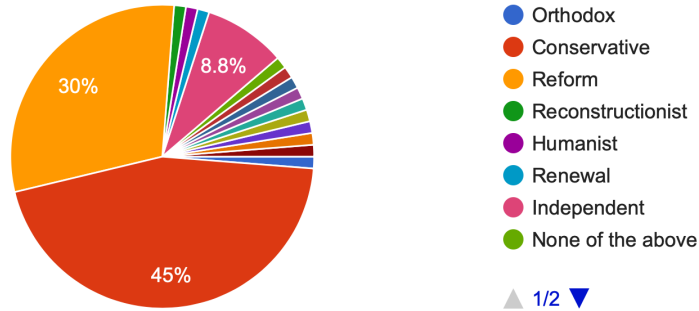
President	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
Congregant, President	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0

Findings: The largest category of respondents was Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director at 38% and Rabbi or Spiritual Leader at 19%. Some indicated more than one role, so the numbers add up to 144%.

AJRCA/CA:

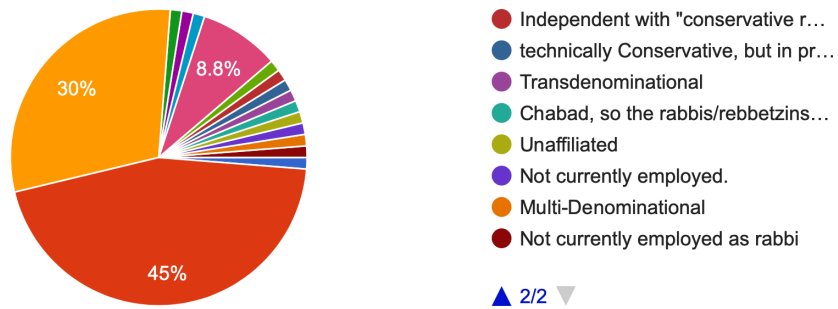
What denomination is your synagogue? (Check one.)

80 responses



What denomination is your synagogue? (Check one.)

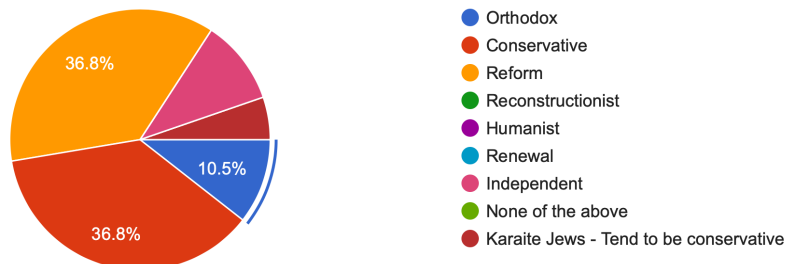
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What denomination is your synagogue? (Check one.)

19 responses



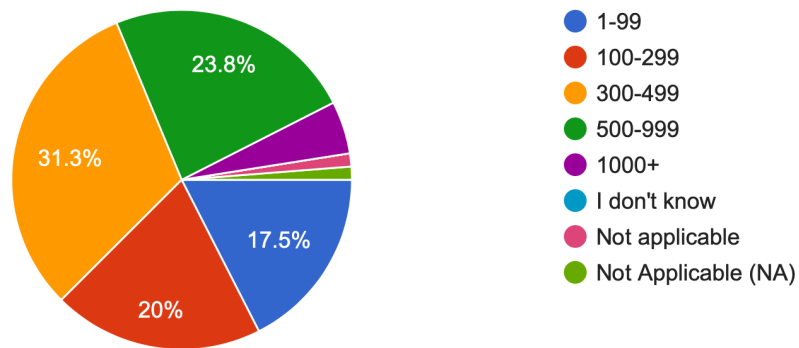
Synagogue Denomination	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Orthodox	3	3.8	2	10.5	5	5.1
Conservative	36	45	8	42.1	44	44.4
Reform	24	30	7	36.8	31	31.3
Independent	8	10.0	2	10.5	10	10.1
Other	7	8.8	0	0	7	7.1
Unaffiliated	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0
None of the above	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0

Findings: Almost half of respondents to this question considered their affiliation Conservative. Almost a third of respondents were Reform. Almost a quarter were either independent or “other” including Reconstructionist, Humanist, Renewal, Trans or Multi-denominational or Orthodox.

AJRCA/CA:

What is the size of your congregation in terms of the number of member families?
(Check one.)

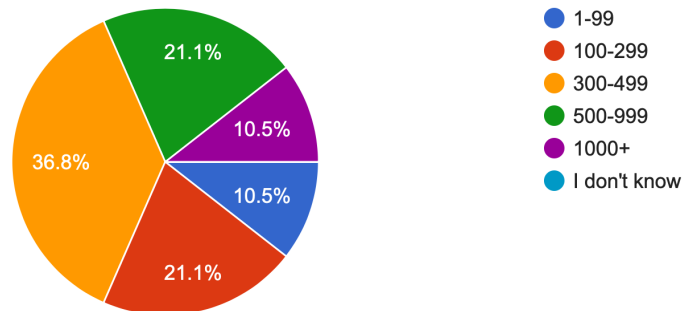
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What is the size of your congregation in terms of the number of member families? (Check one.)

19 responses



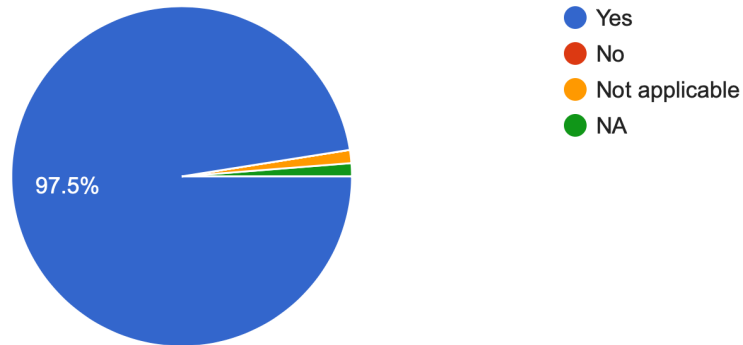
Synagogue Size (Number of Families)	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
1-99	14	17.5	2	10.5	16	16.2
100-299	16	20.0	4	21.1	20	20.2
300-499	25	31.3	7	36.8	32	32.3
500-999	19	23.8	4	21.1	23	23.2
1000+	4	5.0	2	10.5	6	6.1
I don't know	0	0			0	0.0
Not applicable	2	2.4			2	2.0

Findings: Thirty six percent of respondents were from synagogues with under 300 member families. Almost a third of question respondents were from synagogues with 300-499 families. Twenty-nine percent were from large synagogues, with 500 or more member families. In other words, about a third of respondents were from small, medium and large synagogues, respectively. If one groups the 100-499 member group together, then that accounts for about half; 16 percent were in the 1-99 (small category) and 29% were in the 500+ category.

AJRCA/CA:

Has your synagogue been closed for in person religious services and programming during the pandemic? (Check one.)

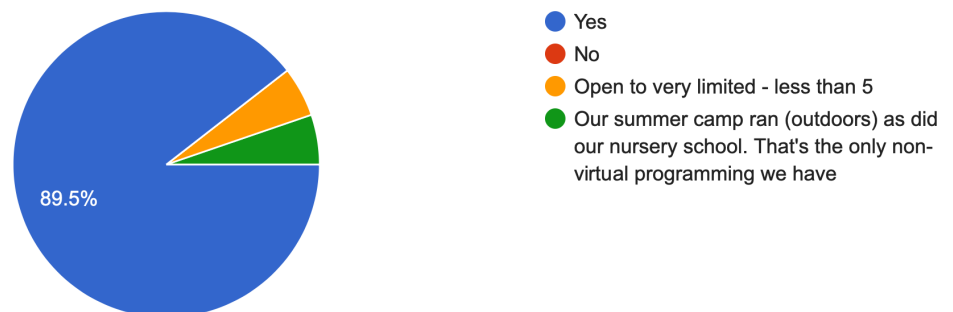
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Has your synagogue been closed for in person religious services and programming during the pandemic? (Check one.)

19 responses



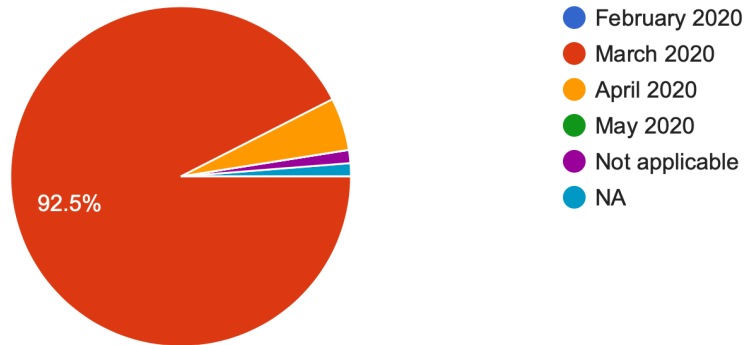
Synagogue Closed During Pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Yes	78	97.5	17	89.5	95	96.0
No	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other			2	10.5	2	2.0
N/A	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: Almost all respondents' synagogues have been closed for in person religious services and programming during the pandemic. The only exception were two synagogues with very limited programs or summer camp.

AJRCA/CA:

If you have been closed during the pandemic, what month did your synagogue shut down? (Check one.)

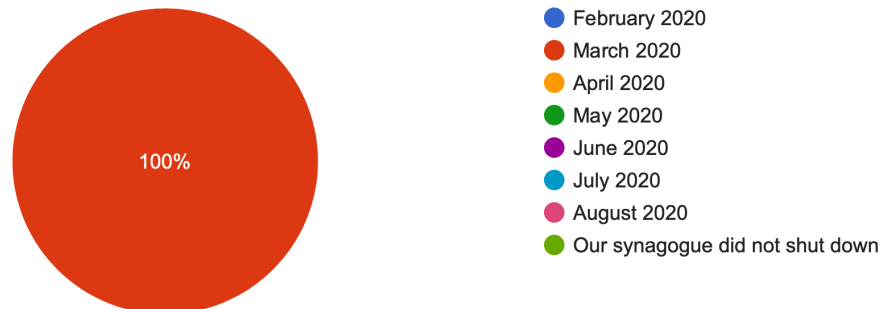
80 responses



FEDERATION:

If you have been closed during the pandemic, what month did your synagogue shut down? (Check one.)

19 responses



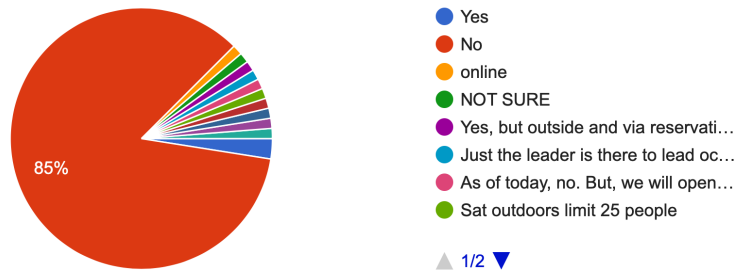
Month Synagogue Closed During Pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
March 2020	74	92.5	19	100	93	94.0
April 2020	4	5.0	0	0	4	4.0
N/A	2	2.5			2	2.0

Findings: Almost all respondents indicated that their synagogue closed down during the pandemic in March 2020.

AJRCA/CA:

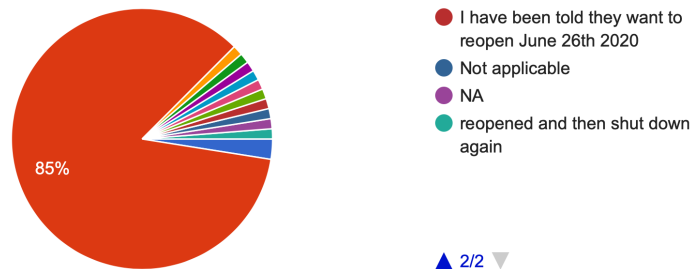
Has your synagogue reopened for in person religious services and programming?
(Check one.)

80 responses



Has your synagogue reopened for in person religious services and programming?
(Check one.)

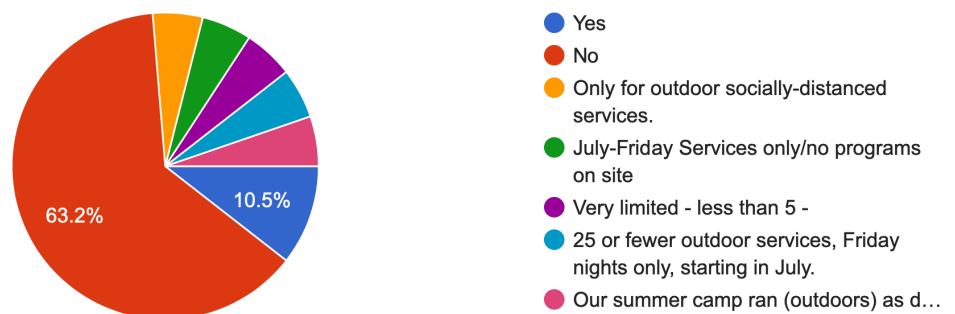
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Has your synagogue reopened for in person religious services and programming? (Check one.)

19 responses



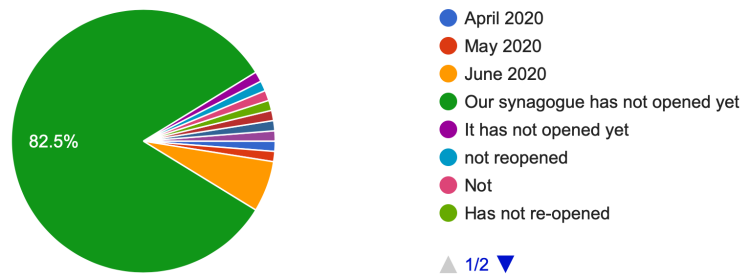
Synagogue Has Reopened for In Person Religious Services and Programming	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Yes	2	2.5	2	10.5	4	4.0
No	68	85.0	12	63.2	80	80.8
Other	8	10.0	5	26.3	13	13.2
N/A	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: Most synagogues have not yet reopened. The “other category” of answers included: Went online; they intend to reopen in June; sat outdoors with a 25-person limit or via reservation with limited number of people and no children; reopened and then shut down again; just the leader is there to lead occasionally; only for outdoor socially distant services; July - Friday services only, with no programs on site; very limited to less than 5 people; 25 or fewer outdoor services, Friday night only starting in July; summer camp and nursery school only.

AJRCA/CA:

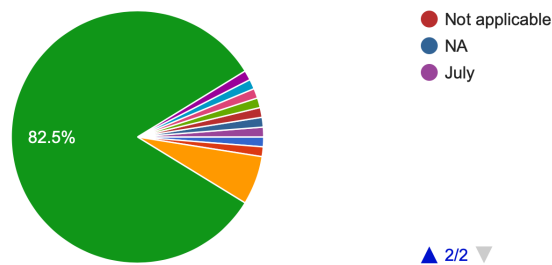
If your synagogue has reopened for in person religious services and programming since the pandemic began, what month did your synagogue re-open? (Check one.)

80 responses



If your synagogue has reopened for in person religious services and programming since the pandemic began, what month did your synagogue re-open? (Check one.)

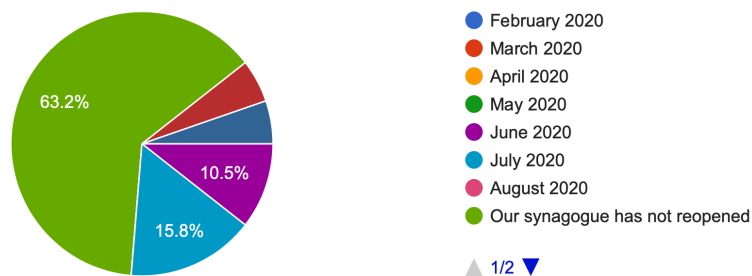
80 responses



FEDERATION:

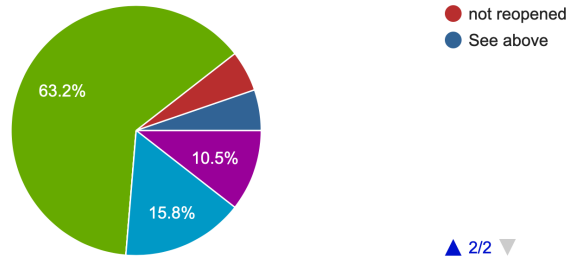
If your synagogue has reopened for in person religious services and programming since the pandemic began, what month did your synagogue re-open? (Check one.)

19 responses



If your synagogue has reopened for in person religious services and programming since the pandemic began, what month did your synagogue re-open? (Check one.)

19 responses



Month Synagogue Reopened for In Person Religious Services and Programming Since Pandemic Began	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Not reopened yet	70	87.5	13	68.4	83	84.0
April 2020	1	1.3			1	1.0
May 2020	1	1.3			1	1.0
June 2020	5	6.2	2	10.5	7	7.0
July 2020	1	1.2	3	15.8	4	4.0
N/A	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Other	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0

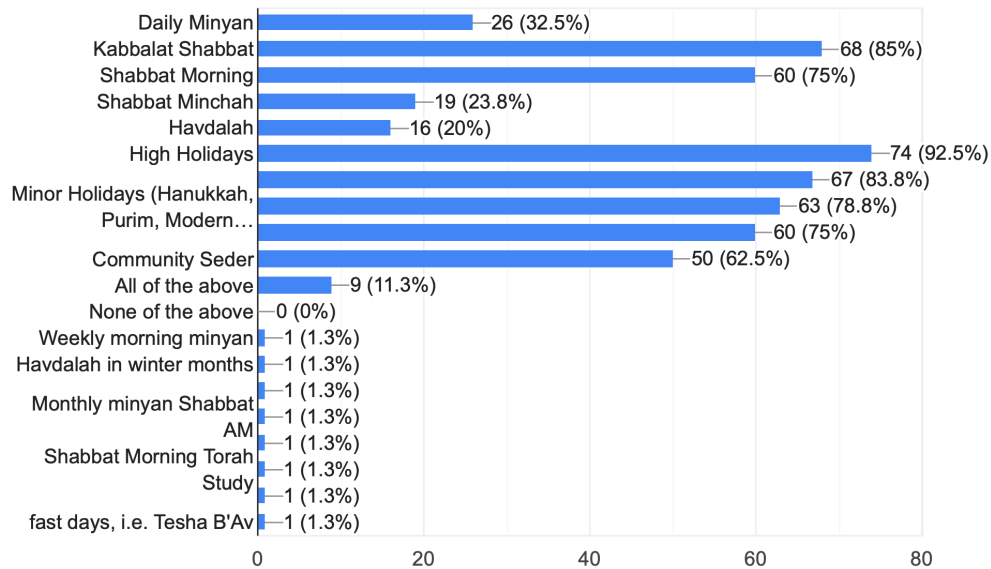
Findings: The majority of respondents' synagogues have not reopened yet as of the time the survey was completed. A few synagogues opened in June and July.

PART TWO:
RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING
BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

AJRCA/CA:

What religious services are normally offered by your synagogue? (Check all that apply.)

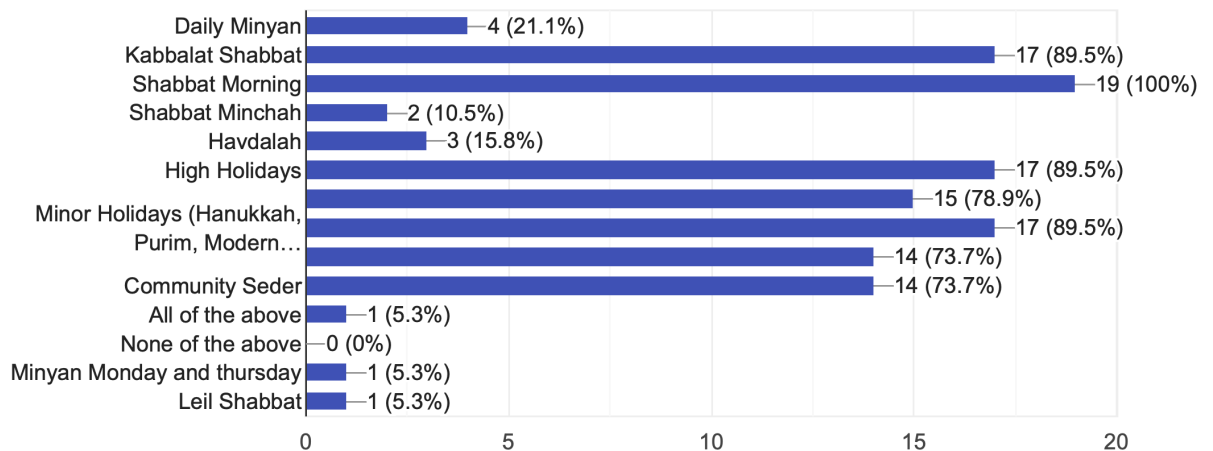
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What religious services are normally offered by your synagogue? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Religious Services Normally Offered	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Daily Minyan	26	32.5	4	21	30	30.3
Kabbalat Shabbat	68	85	17	89.5	85	85.9
Shabbat Morning	60	75	19	100	79	79.8
Shabbat Mincha	19	23.8	2	10.5	21	21.2
Havdalah	16	20	3	15.8	19	19.2
High Holidays	74	92.5	17	89.5	91	91.9
Shalosh Regalim	67	83.8	15	78.9	82	82.8
Minor Holidays (Hanukkah, Purim, Modern...)	63	78.8	17	89.5	80	80.8
Family/Children's Services	60	75	14	73.7	74	74.7
Community Seder	50	62.5	14	73.7	64	64.6
All of the above	9	11.3	1	5.3	10	10.1
Monthly Minyan Shabbat AM	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Havdalah in winter months	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Fast days, i.e. Tisha B'Av	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Sunday Morning Minyan/Shabbat Mincha	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Shabbat Morning Torah Study	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Weekly Morning	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0

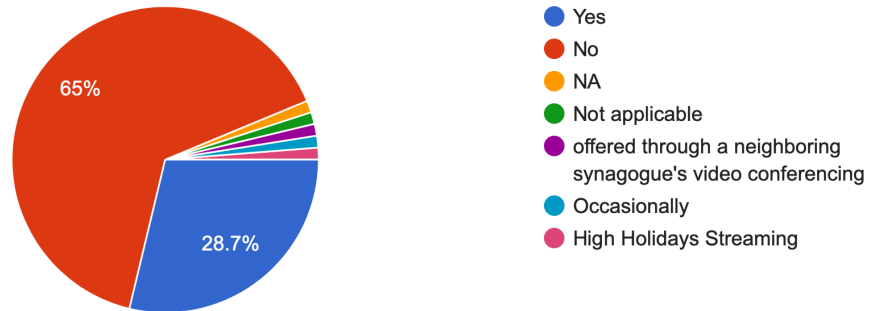
Minyan						
Minyan Monday and Thursday	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
Leil Shabbat	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
None of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
N/A	2	2.6	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: The top five service offerings by the collective respondents were: High Holidays, Kabbalat Shabbat, Shalosh Regalim, Minor Holidays and Shabbat Morning. Ten percent of respondents indicated “All of the above”.

AJRCA/CA:

Were any of your religious services offered virtually before the pandemic started? (e.g., video conferencing or live streaming) (Check one.)

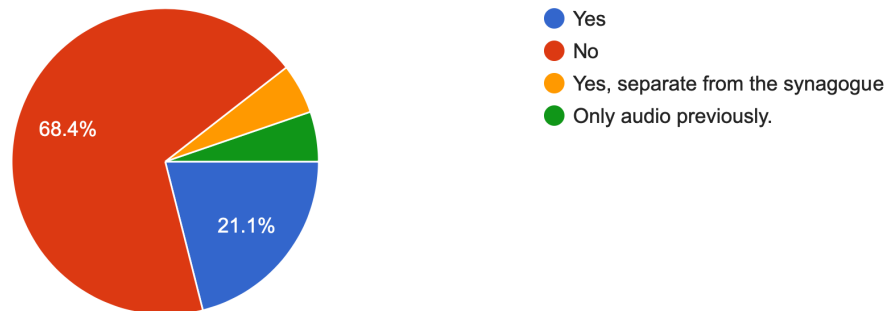
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Were any of your religious services offered virtually before the pandemic started? (e.g., video conferencing or live streaming) (Check one.)

19 responses



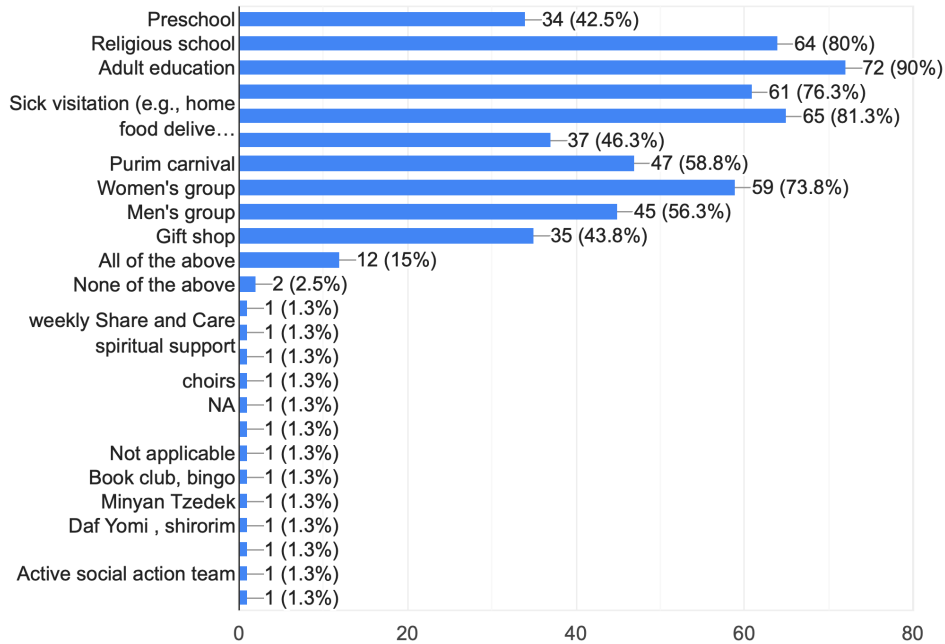
Religious Services Offered Virtually Before the Pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Yes	23	28.7	4	21	27	27.3
No	52	65	13	68.4	65	65.7
Offered through neighboring synagogue's set up	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0
Occasionally	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0
High Holiday streaming	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0
Separate from synagogue	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
Only audio previously	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
N/A	2	2.4			2	2.0

Findings: Two-thirds of respondents did not offer their religious services virtually before the pandemic. A third of respondents did, although some only on High Holidays, only audio, only on occasion or through another synagogue's broadcast facilities.

AJRCA/CA:

What other programs does your synagogue normally offer? (Check all that apply.)

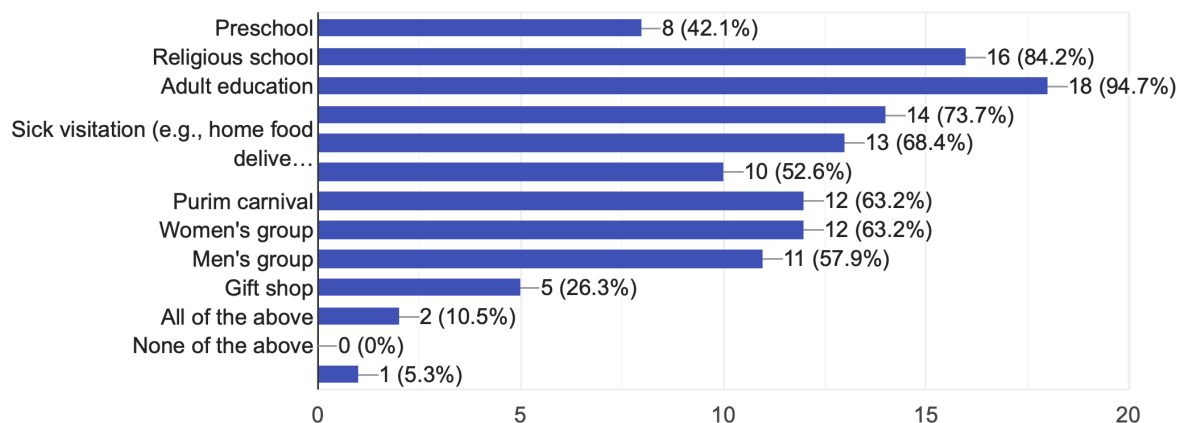
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What other programs does your synagogue normally offer? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



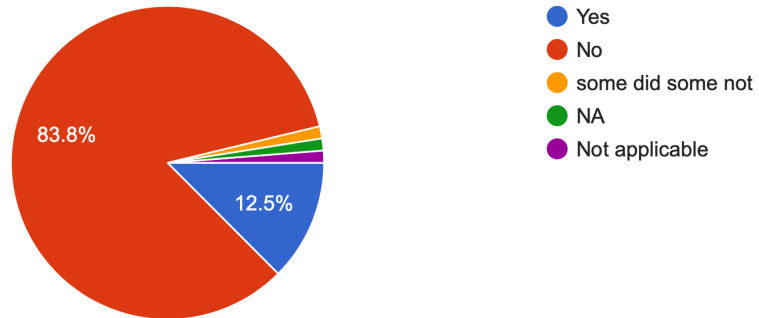
Other Programs Normally Offered	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Preschool	34	42.5	8	42.1	42	42.4
Religious School	64	80	16	84.2	80	80.8
Adult Education	72	90	18	94.7	90	90.9
Cultural Programs	61	76.3	14	73.7	75	75.8
Sick Visitation	65	81.3	13	68.4	78	78.8
Meditation and other Nontraditional Spiritual Programs	37	46.3	10	52.6	47	47.5
Purim Carnival	47	58.8	12	63.2	59	59.6
Women's Group	59	73.8	12	63.2	71	71.7
Men's Group	45	56.3	11	57.9	56	56.6
Gift Shop	35	43.8	5	26.3	40	40.4
Other	11	13.8	1	5.3	12	12.1
All of the Above	12	15	2	10.5	14	14.1
None of the Above	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Not Applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: The most common “other” programs offered normally by the respondents’ synagogues were Adult Education, Religious School, Sick Visitation, Cultural Programs and Women’s Group. Other programs offered by over a third of congregations included Preschool, Meditation, Purim Carnival, Men’s Group and Gift Shop. Some of the more unique offerings included Torah and Ski or Hike, Cultural School, Choirs, Book Club, Bingo, Minyan Tzedek, Social Action and Young Adult programs.

AJRCA/CA:

Were any of these programs offered virtually before the pandemic? (Check one.)

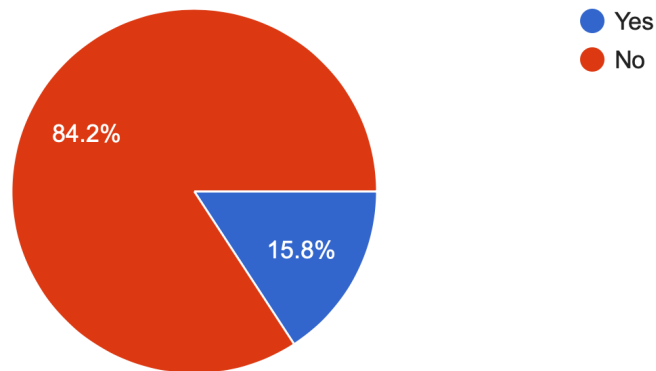
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Were any of these programs offered virtually before the pandemic? (Check one.)

19 responses



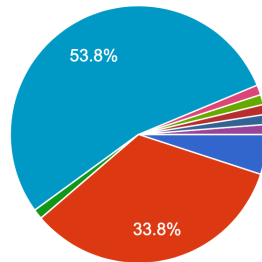
Were any of these programs offered virtually before the pandemic?	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Yes	10	12.5	3	15.8	13	4.0
No	67	83.8	16	84.2	83	83.8
Other	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0
N/A	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: In the majority of synagogues “other” programs were not offered virtually before the pandemic.

AJRCA/CA:

On average, how many congregants attend your Daily Minyan services? (Check one.)

80 responses

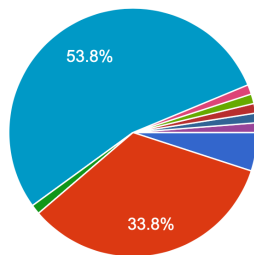


- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-50
- 51+
- Not applicable - we do not offer this service
- NA
- We are part of a community-wide egalitarian minyan

1/2

On average, how many congregants attend your Daily Minyan services? (Check one.)

80 responses



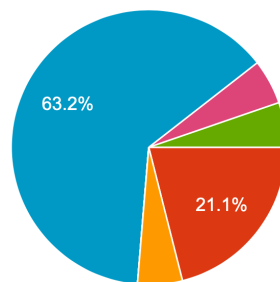
- One weekday minyan on wednesdays. About 12-20 average
- Not applicable, don't have synagogue
- Sunday morning only

2/2

FEDERATION:

On average, how many congregants attend your Daily Minyan services? (Check one.)

19 responses



- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-50
- 51+
- Not applicable - we do not offer this service
- Minyan Monday and Thursday attendance is between 11-20
- twice weekly ~20 people

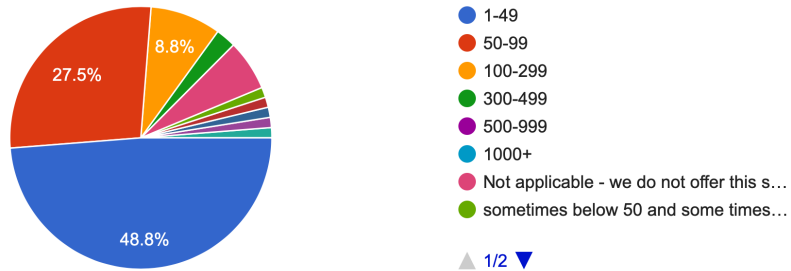
Number of Daily Minyan Attendees	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
1-10	4	5	0	0	4	4.0
11-20	27	33.8	6	31.6	33	33.3
21-30	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
31-50	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
51+	4	5.0	0	0	4	4.0
Other	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Not applicable	45	56.3	13	68.4	58	58.6

Findings: More than half of respondents' synagogues do not have a daily minyan. Among those that do, most are attended by 11-20 people.

AJRCA/CA:

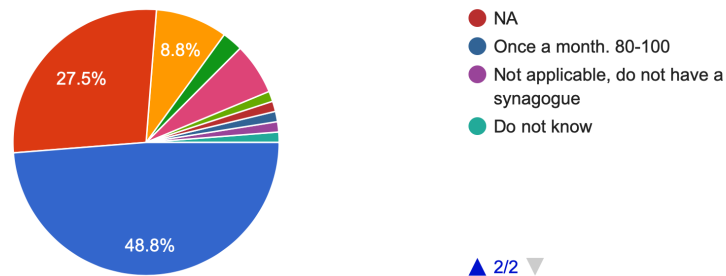
On average, how many congregants attend your Kabbalat Shabbat services? (Check one.)

80 responses



On average, how many congregants attend your Kabbalat Shabbat services? (Check one.)

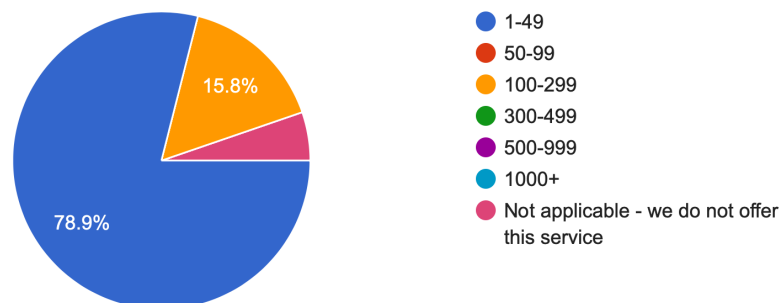
80 responses



FEDERATION:

On average, how many congregants attend your Kabbalat Shabbat services?
(Check one.)

19 responses



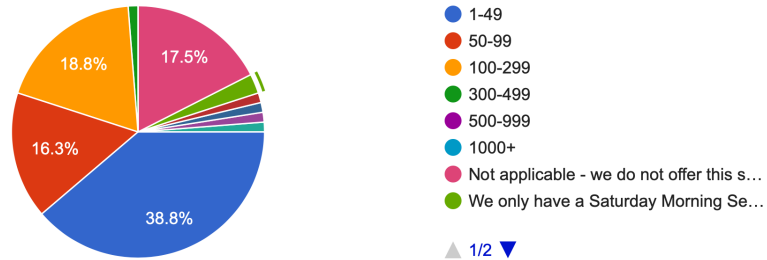
Number of Kabbalat Shabbat Attendees	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
1-49	39	48.8	15	78.9	54	54.6
50-99	22	27.5	0	0	22	22.2
100-299	7	8.8	3	15.8	10	10.1
300-499	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
500-999	0	0	0	0		
1000+	0	0	0	0		
Other	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Not applicable	7	8.8	1	5.3	8	8.1
Unknown	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0

Findings: A little more than half of respondents indicated they have a Kabbalat Shabbat service that is attended by 1-49 people. Almost a quarter of respondents's Kabbalat Shabbat services are attended by 50-99 people.

AJRCA/CA:

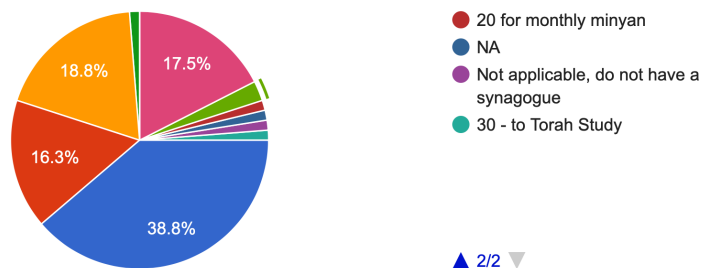
On average, how many congregants attend your Shabbat Morning services (when there is no Bar/Bat Mitzvah)? (Check one.)

80 responses



On average, how many congregants attend your Shabbat Morning services (when there is no Bar/Bat Mitzvah)? (Check one.)

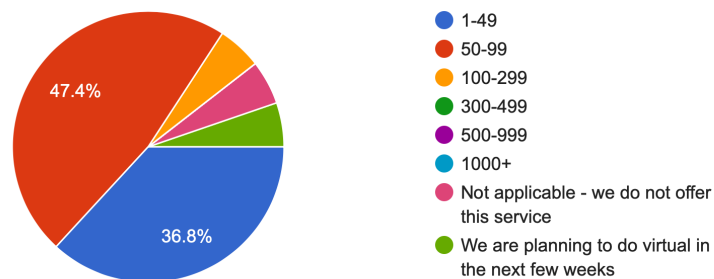
80 responses



FEDERATION:

On average, how many congregants attend your Shabbat Morning services (when there is no Bar/Bat Mitzvah)? (Check one.)

19 responses



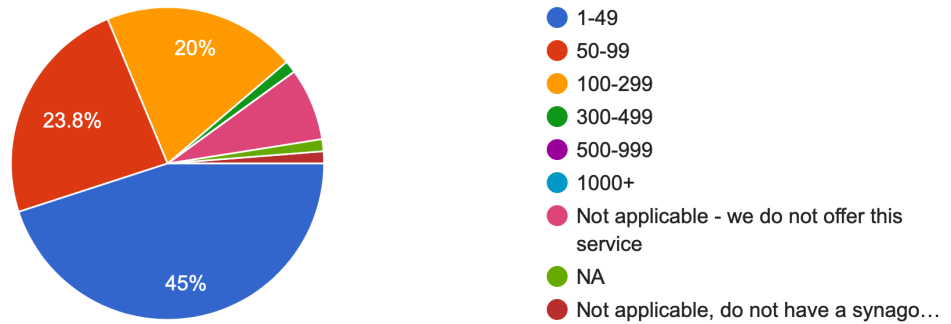
Number of Shabbat Morning Attendees (No Bar/t Mitzvah)	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
1-49	31	38.8	7	36.8	38	38.4
50-99	13	16.3	9	47.4	22	22.2
100-299	15	18.8	1	5.3	16	16.2
300-499	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0
500-999	0	0	0	0	0	0
1000+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	4	5.0	1	5.3	5	5.1
Not applicable	16	20.0	1	5.3	17	17.2

Findings: Respondents' synagogues that have Shabbat Morning services (non-Bar Mitzvah) were equally distributed between 1-49 attendees, and 50-299, with the bulk of those in the 50-99 attendee grouping.

AJRCA/CA:

On average, how many congregants attend your Shalosh Regalim (Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot) services? (Check one.)

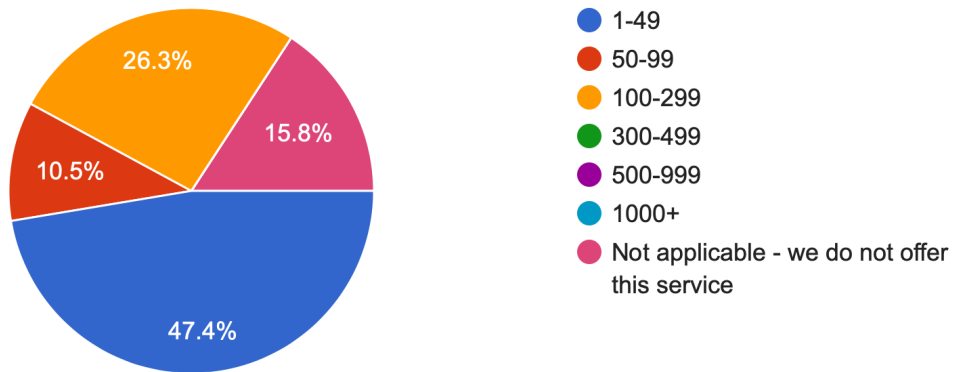
80 responses



FEDERATION:

On average, how many congregants attend your Shalosh Regalim (Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot) services? (Check one.)

19 responses



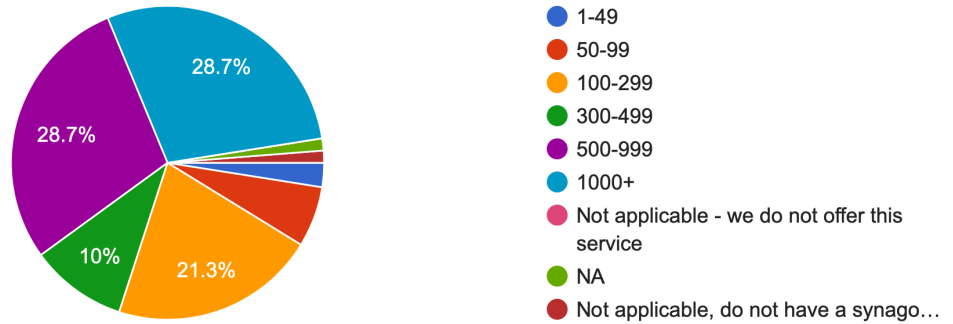
Number of Shalosh Regalim (Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot) Attendees	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
1-49	36	45	9	47.4	45	45.5
50-99	19	23.8	2	10.5	21	21.2
100-299	16	20	5	26.3	21	21.2
300-499	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.0
500-999	0	0	0	0	0	0
1000+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not applicable	8	10.0	3	15.8	11	11.1

Findings: Almost half of respondents who indicated they had services for Shalosh Regalim had attendees in the 1-49 numbers. The remaining respondents indicated equal attendance in the 50-99 and 100-299 category, with about a tenth indicating they had no services for Shalosh Regalim.

AJRCA/CA:

On average, how many congregants attend your High Holiday services? (Check one.)

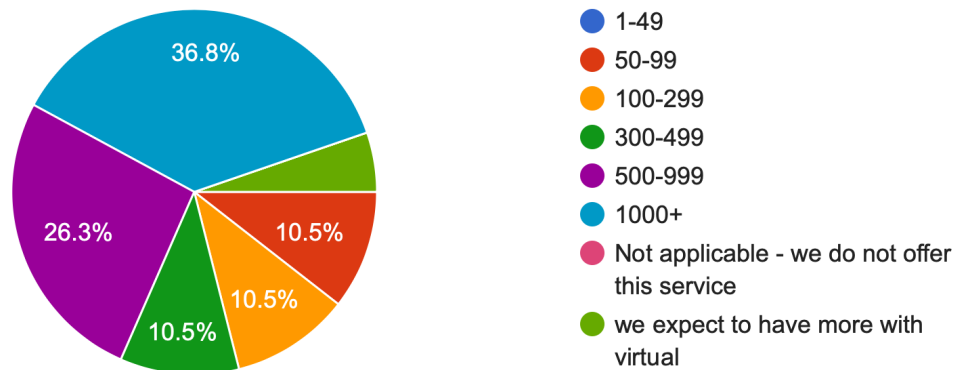
80 responses



FEDERATION:

On average, how many congregants attend your High Holiday services? (Check one.)

19 responses



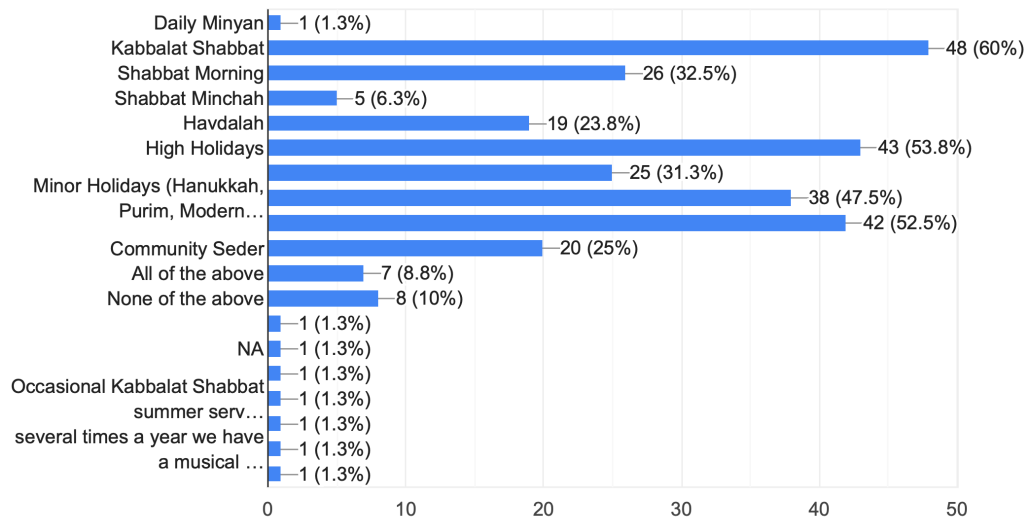
Number of High Holiday Service Attendees	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
1-49	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
50-99	5	6.2	2	10.5	7	7.1
100-299	17	21.3	2	10.5	19	19.2
300-499	8	10.0	2	10.5	10	10.1
500-999	23	28.7	5	26.3	28	28.3
1000+	23	28.7	7	36.8	30	30.3
Other	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
Not applicable	3	3.8	0		3	3.0

Findings: Almost two-thirds of respondents' synagogues have large turnouts for the High Holidays, in the 500 and up categories. The remainder are in descending order, the 100-299, 50-99 and 1-49 attendee groupings. One respondent commented that they expect to have more attendees with virtual services.

AJRC/CA:

During which religious services are musical instruments normally played? (Check all that apply.)

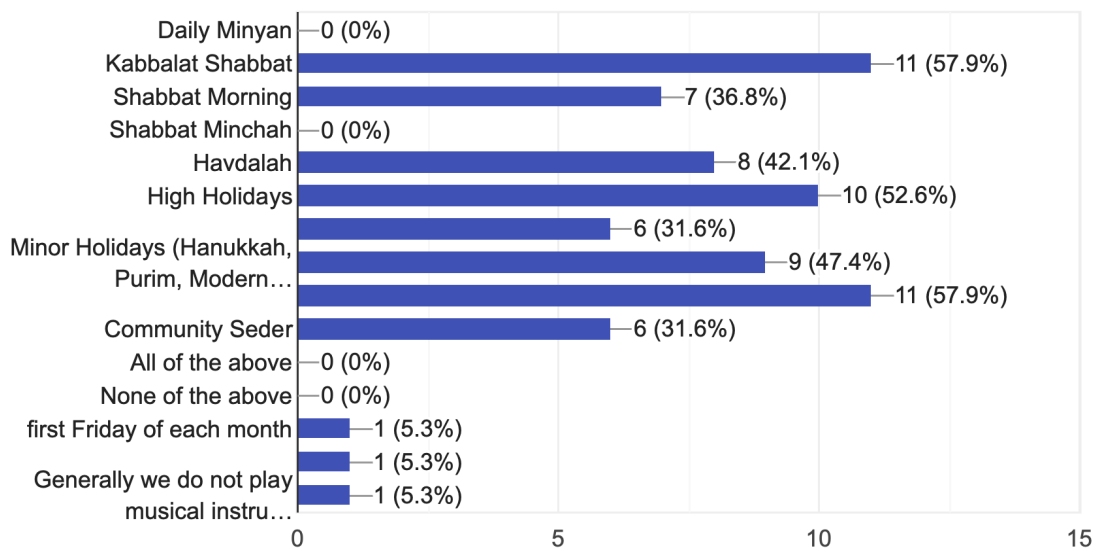
80 responses



FEDERATION:

During which religious services are musical instruments normally played? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



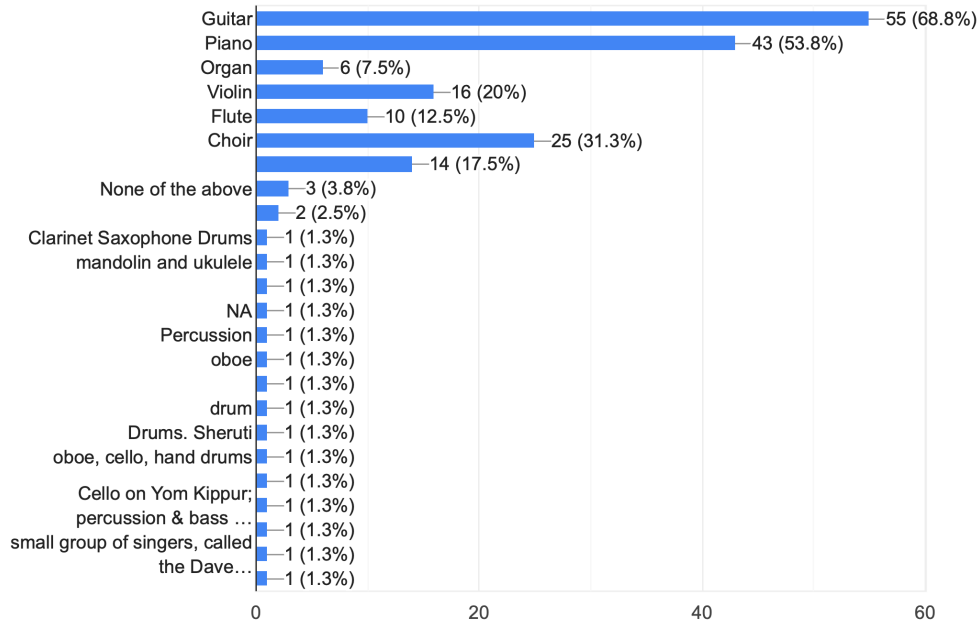
Religious Services during which Musical Instruments are Normally Played	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Daily Minyan	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Kabbalat Shabbat	51	63.8	11	57.9	62	62.6
Shabbat Morning	26	32.5	7	36.8	33	33.3
Shabbat Mincha	5	6.3	0	0	5	5.1
Havdalah	19	23.8	8	42.1	27	27.3
High Holidays	43	53.8	10	52.6	53	53.5
Shalosh Regalim	25	31.3	6	31.6	31	31.3
Minor Holidays (Hanukkah,Purim, Modern...)	38	47.5	9	47.4	47	47.5
Family/Children's Services	42	52.5	11	57.9	53	53.5
Community Seder	20	25.0	6	31.6	26	26.3
All of the above	7	8.8	0	0	7	7.1
Other	1	1.3	2	10.5	3	3.0
Not Applicable	2	2.5	1	5.3	3	3.0

Findings: Almost two thirds of respondents indicated that their synagogues used musical instruments during Kabbalat Shabbat. Approximately half of respondents said their synagogues used instruments during the High Holidays, Minor Holidays and Family/Children's services, respectively. About a third of respondents said musical instruments are used during Shabbat Morning, Havdalah, Shalosh Regalim and Community Seder. Musical instruments are rarely used during Daily Minyan and Shabbat Mincha.

AJRCA/CICA:

What musical enhancements are used normally during religious services? (Check all that apply.)

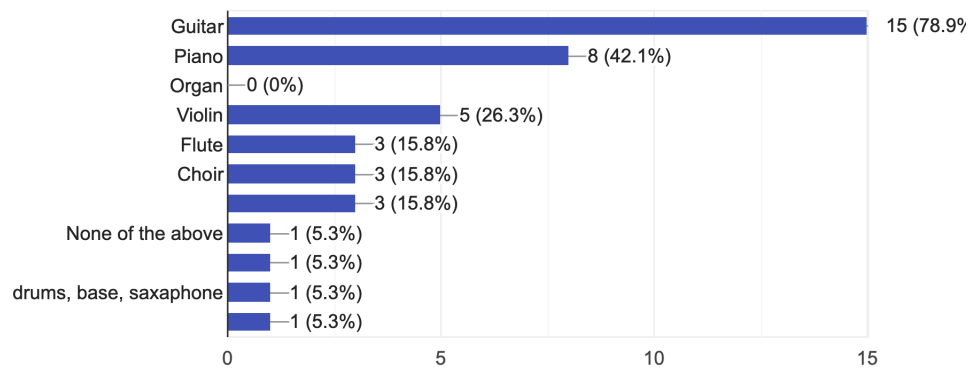
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What musical enhancements are used normally during religious services? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



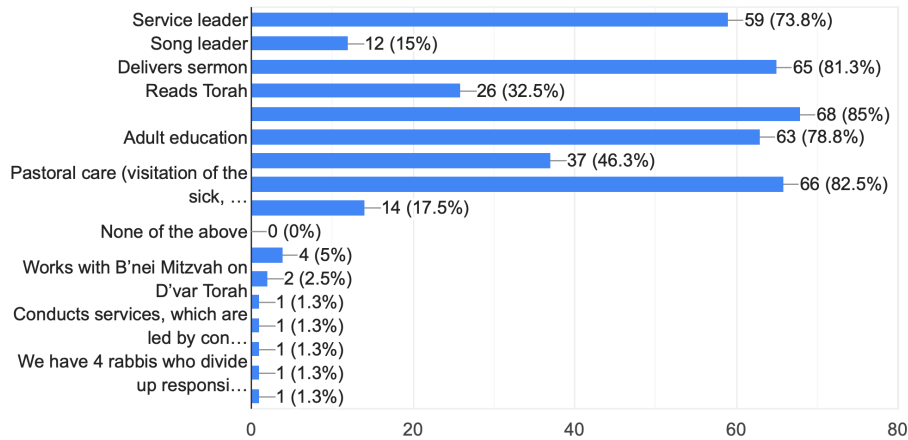
Musical Enhancements Used Normally During Religious Services	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Guitar	55	68.8	15	78.9	70	70.7
Piano	43	53.8	8	42.1	51	51.5
Organ	6	7.5	0	0	6	6.1
Violin	16	20	5	26.3	21	21.2
Flute	10	12.5	3	15.8	13	13.1
Choir	25	31.3	3	15.8	28	28.3
Other	15	18.8	3	15.8	18	18.2
None of the Above	2	2.5	1	5.3	3	3.0
Not Applicable	3	3.8	1	5.3	4	4.0

Findings: The top three musical enhancements normally used in the respondents' synagogues were guitar (71%), Piano (52%) and a choir (28%). Other instruments mentioned were violin, flute, percussion, clarinet, saxophone, mandolin, ukulele, oboe, cello, base, band, harmonic, handbells, and more. Some synagogues rarely or never use musical enhancements.

AJRCA/CA:

Which of the following responsibilities does your Rabbi or Spiritual Leader normally have? (Check all that apply.)

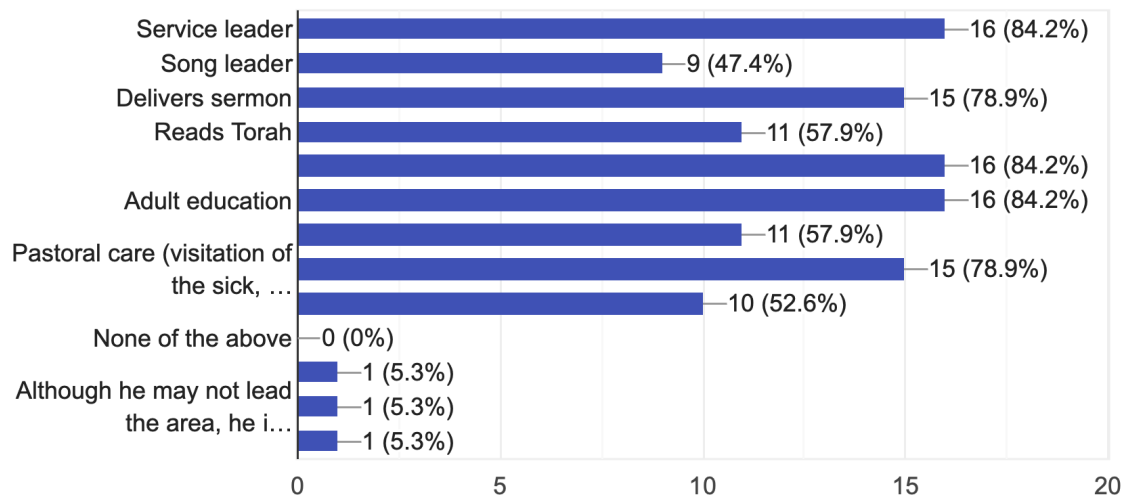
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Which of the following responsibilities does your Rabbi or Spiritual Leader normally have? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



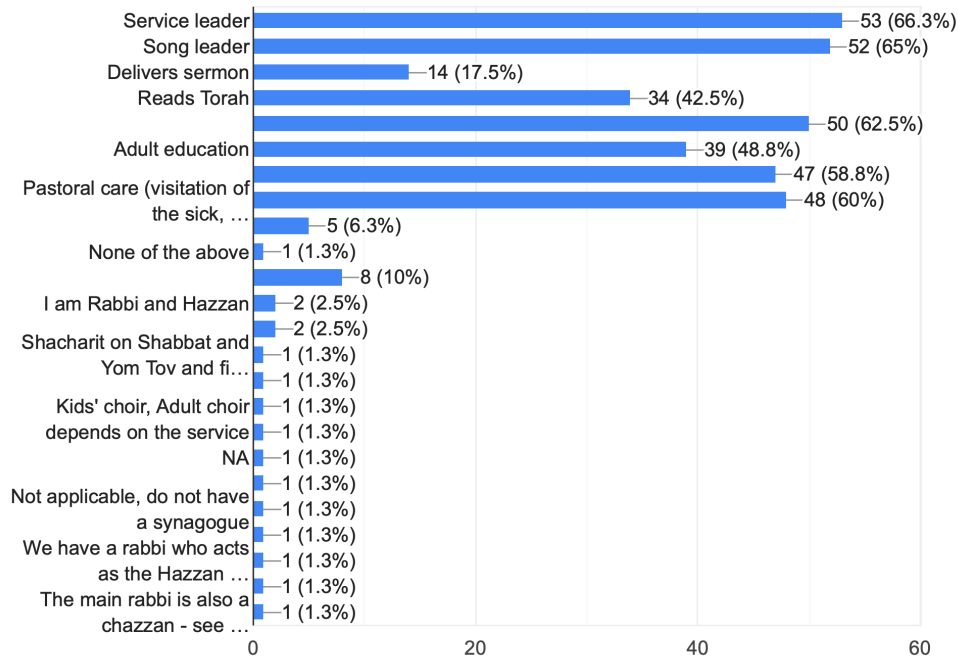
Responsibilities of Rabbi or Spiritual Leader Under Normal Conditions	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Service leader	59	73.8	16	84	75	75.8
Song leader	12	15.0	9	47.4	21	21.2
Delivers sermon	65	81.3	15	78.9	80	80.8
Reads torah	26	32.5	11	57.9	37	37.4
Conducts life cycle events	68	85.0	16	84.2	84	84.8
Adult education	63	78.8	16	84.2	79	79.8
Youth education, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs	39	48.8	11	57.9	50	50.5
Pastoral care, including visiting sick	66	82.5	15	78.9	81	81.8
All of the above	14	17.5	10	52.6	24	24.2
Other	3	3.8	2	10.5	6	6.1
Not Applicable	3	3.8	1	5.3	4	4.0

Findings: The top five responsibilities of the respondents' synagogue Rabbi or Spiritual Leaders under normal conditions were: Conducts life cycle events, Pastoral care, Delivers sermon, Adult education and Service leader. Twenty-four respondents (24%) stated "All of the above" responsibilities. One synagogue splits the tasks among 4 rabbis, others have volunteer clergy, some work part time, conducting services which are led by congregants, delivers D'var torah every 8 weeks. A few synagogues have no rabbi or spiritual leader.

AJRCA/CICA:

Which of the following responsibilities does your Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director normally have? (Check all that apply.)

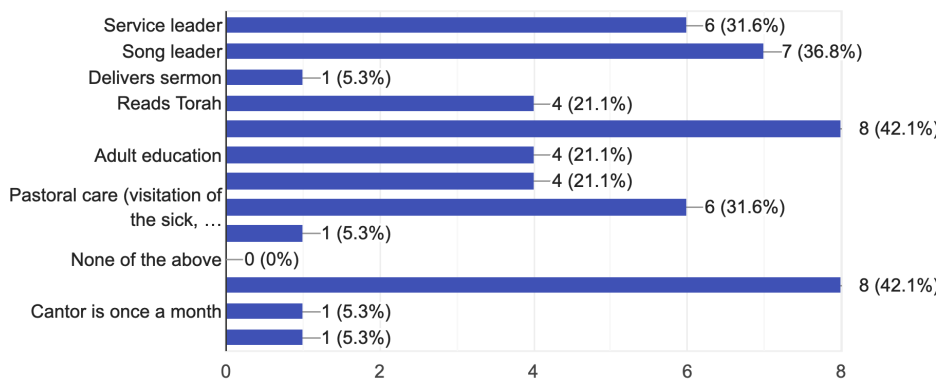
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Which of the following responsibilities does your Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director normally have? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



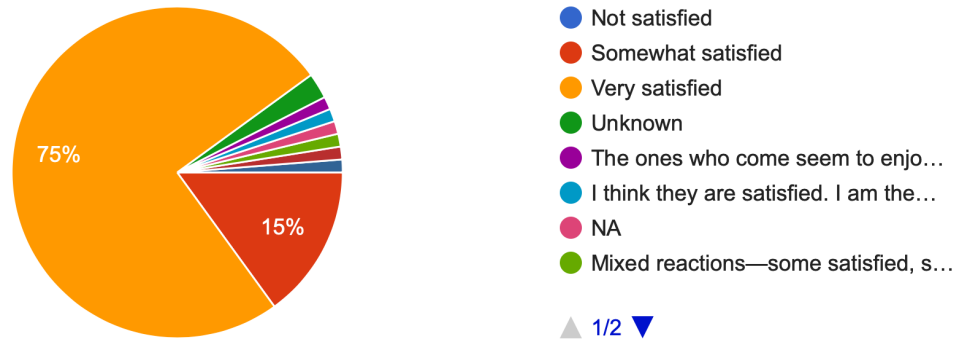
Responsibilities of Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director Under Normal Conditions	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Service leader	53	66.3	6	31.6	59	59.6
Song leader	52	65.0	7	36.8	59	59.6
Delivers sermon	14	17.5	1	5.3	15	15.2
Reads torah	34	42.5	4	21.1	38	38.4
Conducts life cycle events	50	62.5	8	42.1	58	58.6
Adult education	39	48.8	4	21.1	43	43.4
Youth education, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs	47	58.8	4	21.1	51	51.5
Pastoral care, including visiting sick	48	60	6	31.6	54	54.5
All of the above	5	6.3	1	5.3	6	6.1
Other	13	16.25	2	10.5	15	15.2
Not Applicable	2	2.5	8	42.1	10	10.1
None of the above	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0

Findings: The top five responsibilities of the respondents' synagogue Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director were: Service leader, Song leader, Conducts life cycle events, Youth education and Pastoral care. Approximately 40 percent listed Reads torah and Adult education as responsibilities. Other responsibilities included serving as a dual rabbi and hazzan, leading choirs for adults and children, assigns torah readers and trains them, the cantor only serves once a month and they have several individuals that lead.

AJRCA/CA:

What is normally the overall satisfaction level of congregants with your religious services and other programs? (Check one.)

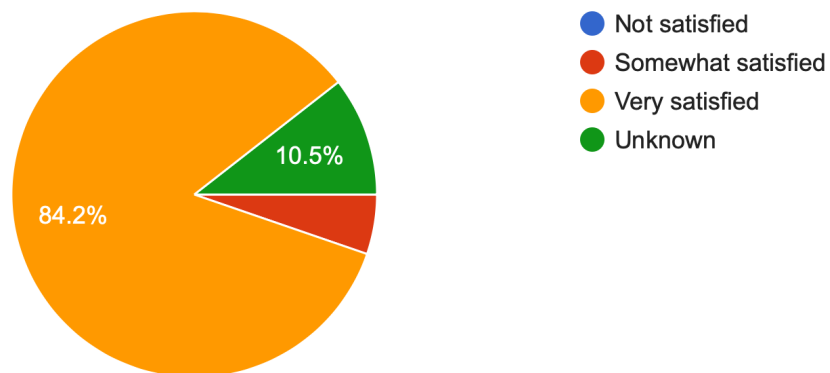
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What is normally the overall satisfaction level of congregants with your religious services and other programs? (Check one.)

19 responses



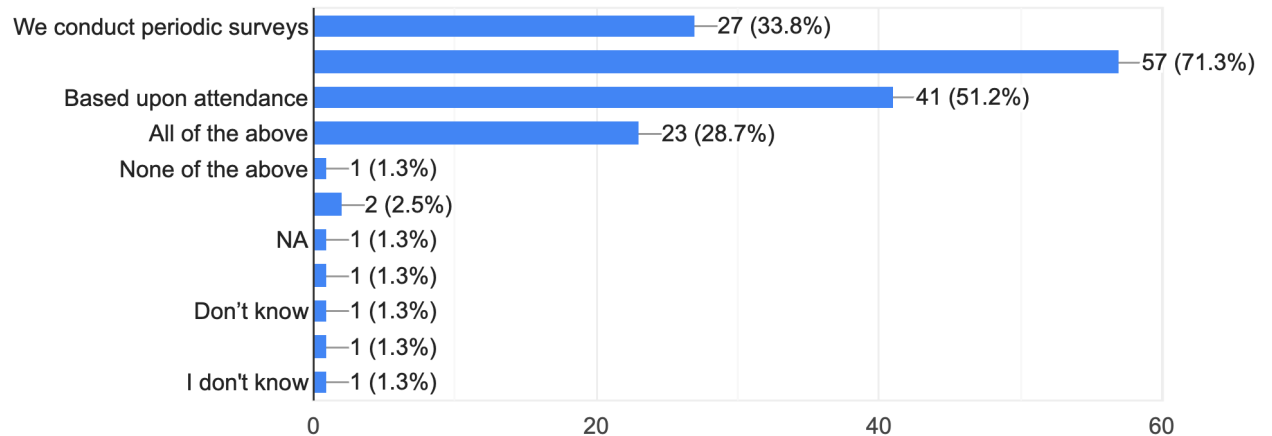
Overall Satisfaction Level Normally of Congregants with Your Religious Services and Other Programs	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Very Satisfied	60	75	16	84.2	76	76.8
Somewhat Satisfied	12	15	1	5.3	13	13.13
Not Satisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	2	2.5	2	10.5	4	4.0
Other	4	5.0	0	0	4	4.0
Not Applicable	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0

Findings: Three quarters of respondents indicated their congregants were very satisfied with their religious services and other programs under normal circumstances. Another 13 percent said they were satisfied. One respondent indicated the congregants who come seem to enjoy services, but they have not conducted a survey; one noted mixed reactions, both good and bad; and one thinks they are satisfied, but as the rabbi, felt awkward answering the question.

AJRCA/CA:

What mechanism(s) do you use normally to assess congregant satisfaction with your religious services and other programs? (Check all that apply.)

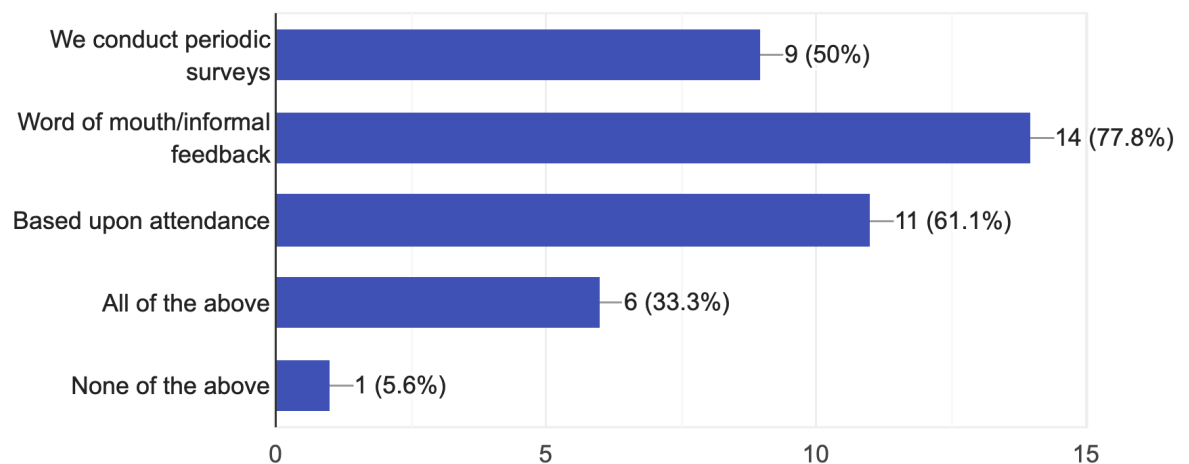
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What mechanism(s) do you use normally to assess congregant satisfaction with your religious services and other programs? (Check all that apply.)

18 responses



Mechanism Used Normally to Assess Congregant Satisfaction with your Religious Services and Programs	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 18/19 (94.7%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 18/19 (94.7%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 98/100 (98%)	% TOTAL Respondents 98/100 (98%)
We conduct periodic surveys	27	33.8	9	50	36	36.7
Word of mouth/informal feedback	57	71.3	14	77.8	71	72.5
Based upon attendance	41	51.2	11	61.1	52	53.1
All of the above	23	28.7	6	33.3	29	29.6
None of the above	1	1.3	1	5.6	2	2.0
Other	3	3.8	0	0	0	0
Unknown	2	2.5	0	0	0	0
Not Applicable	2	2.5	0	0	0	0

Findings: Word of mouth is the most common mechanism by which the synagogues assess congregant satisfaction, indicated by almost three-quarters of the respondents. About half of respondents assess satisfaction based upon attendance, while about a third base it on periodic surveys or all of the mechanisms, respectively. Others use a major congregational survey or feedback at Board and Annual meetings to assess satisfaction.

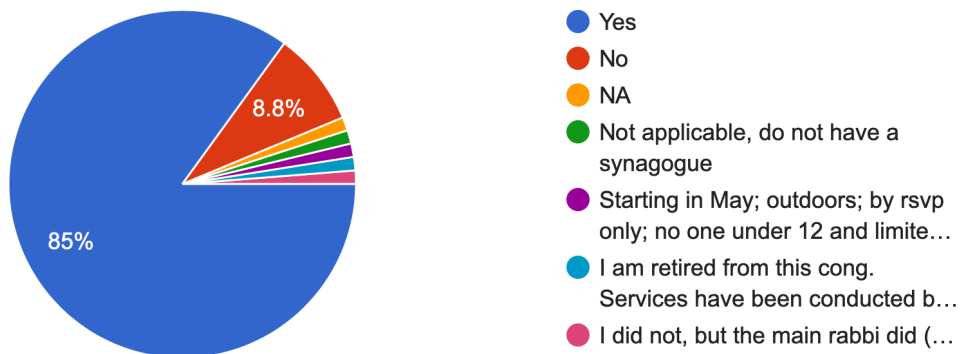
PART THREE:

**RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING
DURING PANDEMIC**

AJRCA/CA:

Did you conduct religious services during the pandemic? (Check one.)

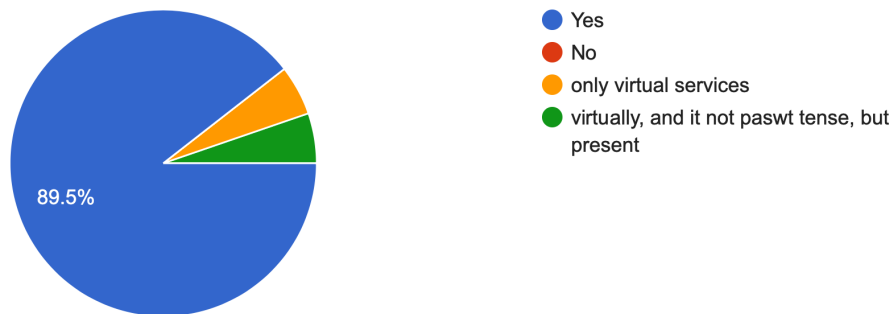
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Did you conduct religious services during the pandemic? (Check one.)

19 responses



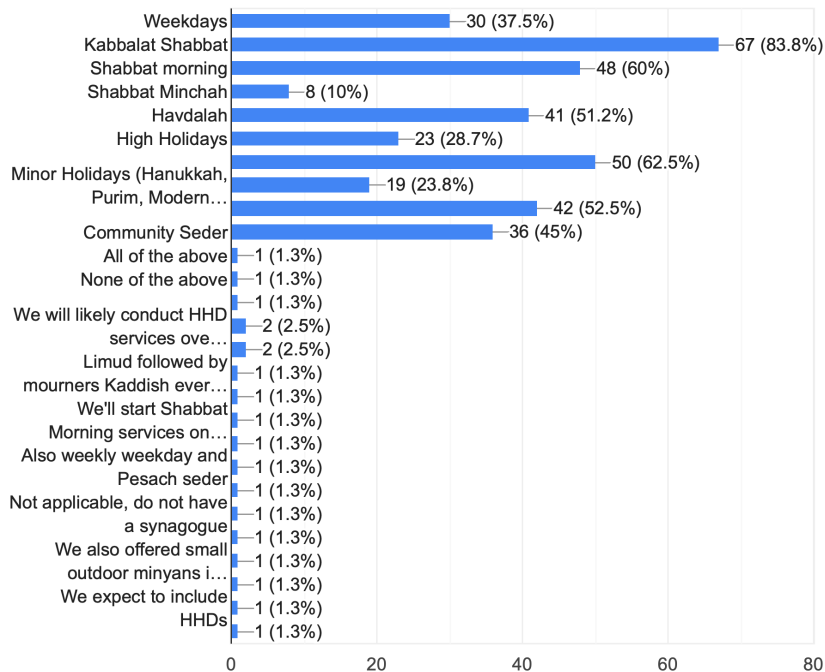
Did you conduct religious services during the pandemic?	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Yes	68	85	17	89.5	85	85.6
No	7	8.8	0	0	7	7.1
Other	3	3.8	2	10.5	5	5.1
N/A	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: The majority of respondents indicated that they conducted religious services during the pandemic. Some did it only outdoors by rsvp only, with limited numbers and no children under 12; two did not conduct the services themselves but other clergy did and two indicated they did it virtually. One can assume that the services conducted were done virtually, but that was not asked specifically in this question.

AJRC/CA:

What religious services were/are offered virtually by your synagogue during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

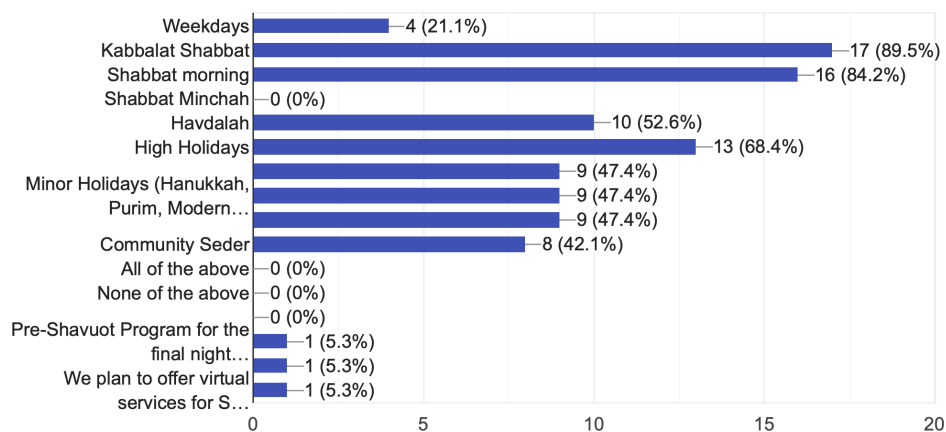
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What religious services were/are offered virtually by your synagogue during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



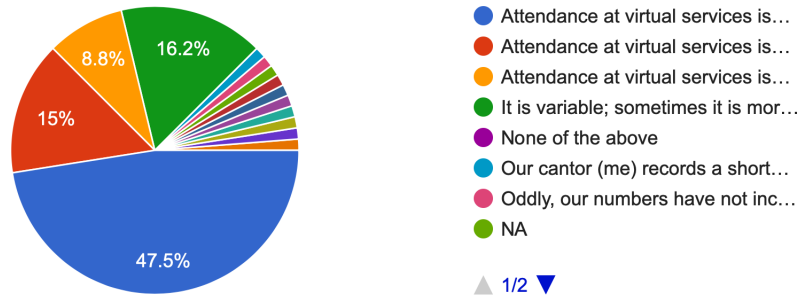
Religious Services were/are Offered Virtually During the Pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Daily Minyan	30	37.5	4	21.1	34	34.3
Kabbalat Shabbat	67	83.8	17	89.5	84	84.8
Shabbat Morning	48	60	16	84.2	64	64.6
Shabbat Mincha	8	10	0	0	8	8.1
Havdalah	41	51.2	10	52.6	51	51.5
High Holidays	23	28.7	13	68.4	34	34.3
Shalosh Regalim	50	62.5	9	47.4	59	59.6
Minor Holidays (Hanukkah,Purim, Modern...)	19	23.8	9	47.4	28	28.3
Family/Children's Services	42	52.5	9	47.4	51	51.5
Community Seder	36	45.0	8	42.1	44	44.4
All of the above	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
None of the above	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Not applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Other	12	15.0	3	15.8	15	15.2

Findings: Eighty-five percent of respondents offered virtual Kabbalat Shabbat services during the pandemic. Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated their synagogue offered Shabbat Morning services virtually. About half offered virtual Havdalah and family/children's services, respectively, during the pandemic. About a third indicated they offered virtual High Holy Day services. (That would not make sense given that the High Holy Days are not until middle of September, after the survey was answered. People were presumably *planning* to offer those services, as a few respondents also indicated that in the "other" category.) About a third of respondents offered a daily *minyan*, minor holidays. Almost 45% offered community seders.

AJRCA/CA:

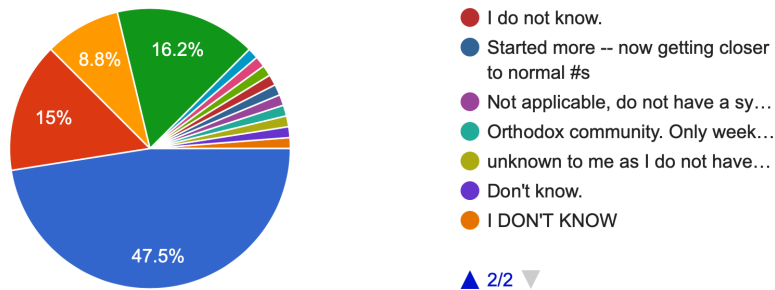
If you offered virtual religious services during the pandemic, how does/did attendance compare to regular services before the pandemic? (Check one.)

80 responses



If you offered virtual religious services during the pandemic, how does/did attendance compare to regular services before the pandemic? (Check one.)

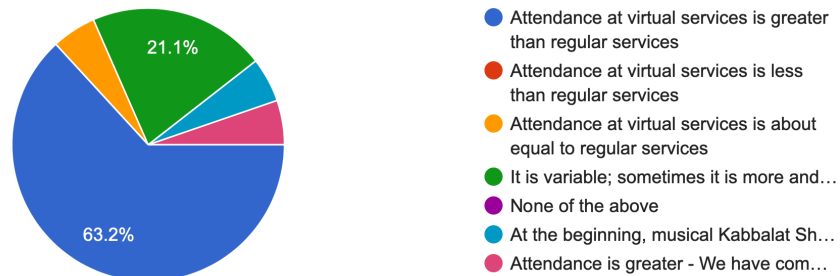
80 responses



FEDERATION:

If you offered virtual religious services during the pandemic, how does/did attendance compare to regular services before the pandemic? (Check one.)

19 responses



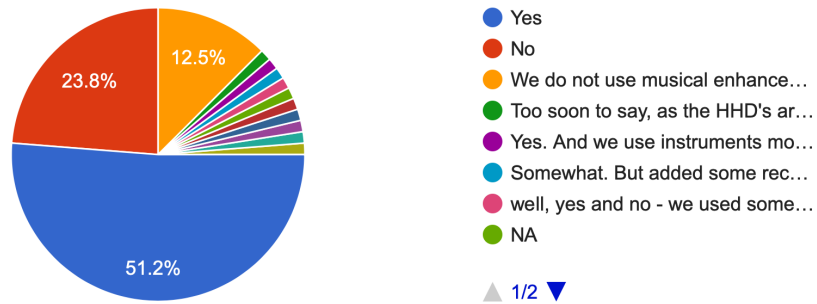
How does attendance at virtual religious services during the pandemic compare to regular services before the pandemic?	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Attendance at virtual is greater than regular	38	47.5	13	68.4	50	50.5
Attendance at virtual is less than regular	12	15	0	0	12	12.1
Attendance at virtual is about equal to regular	7	8.8	1	5.3	8	8.1
It's variable; sometimes more, sometimes less	13	16.2	4	21.1	17	17.2
Other	3	3.8	1	5.3	4	4.1
Not applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Unknown	4	5.0	0	0	4	4.1

Findings: Half of respondents indicated that the attendance at virtual services during the pandemic was greater than their regular services before the pandemic. Twenty percent said it was about the same or less. About twenty percent of respondents said it was variable, sometimes more, sometimes less; other indicated higher attendance in the beginning of the pandemic, then it tapered off.

AJRCA/CA:

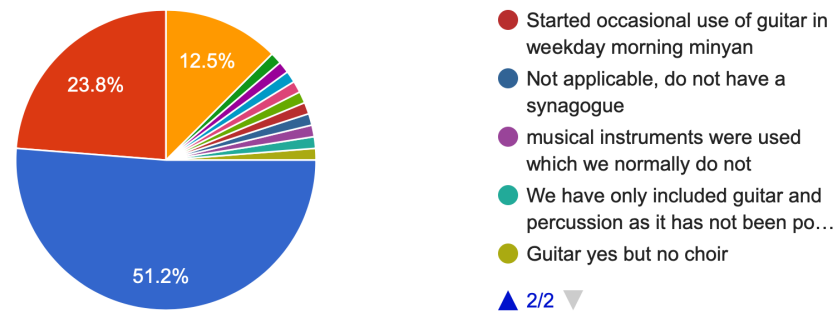
Did you continue to use musical enhancements in the same way for virtual religious services during the pandemic? (Check one.)

80 responses



Did you continue to use musical enhancements in the same way for virtual religious services during the pandemic? (Check one.)

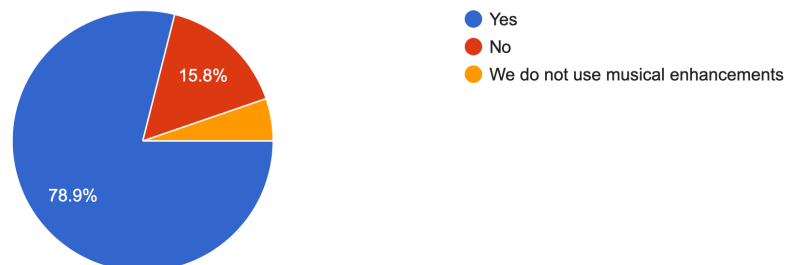
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Did you continue to use musical enhancements in the same way for virtual religious services during the pandemic? (Check one.)

19 responses



Did you continue to use musical enhancements in the same way for virtual religious services during the pandemic?	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Yes	42	52.5	15	78.9	57	57.6
No	19	23.8	3	15.8	22	22.2
Other	7	8.8	0	0	7	7.1
Do not use musical enhancements	10	12.5	1	5.3	11	11.1
Not applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: Almost two thirds of respondents have continued to use musical enhancements for virtual religious services during the pandemic as they did before the pandemic. Some have used pre-recorded music; some use it more frequently at Kabbalat Shabbat services; some say it is too soon to know as we have not yet reached the High Holidays. Of those than mentioned a particular instrument being used, guitar and percussion were identified.

Please share any learnings or best practices you found in using musical instruments during virtual services. Or if not applicable, say N/A. (Optional question.)

AJRCA/CA: (55 Responses)

- It is important to us to hold our services live, seeing all the faces of our community, rather than provide pre-recorded “content.” So, our regular pianist plays solo before and after the service and the cantor plays guitar while singing during the service.
- Our equipment is poor so most is done A Capella
- Don’t know—I’m not the musical director
- Guitar accompanies most tefilah except when prerecorded piano tracks are used for cantor to sing over. Pianist also provides weekly solo piano music after a silent meditation during Amidah on Shabbat eve.
- Using guitar for Kabbalat Shabbat and Havdalah was effective.
- Sound is important, singing with others is not great online
- Original Sound, not having the mike automatically adjust, having everyone else muted...
- The problems are a lack of technological adeptness and needing to be knowledgeable
- Original sound setting on Zoom. Making sure to sound check with another person listening via Zoom to get balance right. Making sure all others are muted when you make music.
- Pre-recorded music seems to work much better for zoom - however, people miss singing communally
- Social distancing was implemented by musicians.
- A good sound system is more important than a camera online.
- Some pre-recorded music, some “live” via Zoom
- So sad not to sing.
- Keep trying to improve sound system for better quality
- Not applicable
- I make sure that the Zoom account is set up to original sound, and there are a few other settings that make the sound better.
- Need strong enough computer and internet to broadcast well
- We have not used any musical instruments in our virtual services.
- Only one musician at a time
- Our cantor worked hard on "garage band" skills
- Pre recording

- There are fewer live musical instruments in the virtual services.
- We have only used guitar & percussion, played by myself (the cantor) or my family.
- We have not been able to play music virtually.
- Must have the proper audio interface equipment to use instruments. Technical acumen must be acquired and new skills learned if no IT person is on staff.
- Having an individual play is better than a band of people.
- Guitar and pre recorded piano accompaniment
- Musical instruments enhanced everything for me
- Using the Blue Yeti microphone has helped with sounds tremendously
- Instruments were a great addition, but over Zoom, you have to be very cautious with noise levels and had to mute everyone; no singing together.
- I play guitar as usual, but couldn't have choir for special holidays, Yom haShoa, Israeli In-dependence day
- Prerecorded music from the same folks who normally play live.

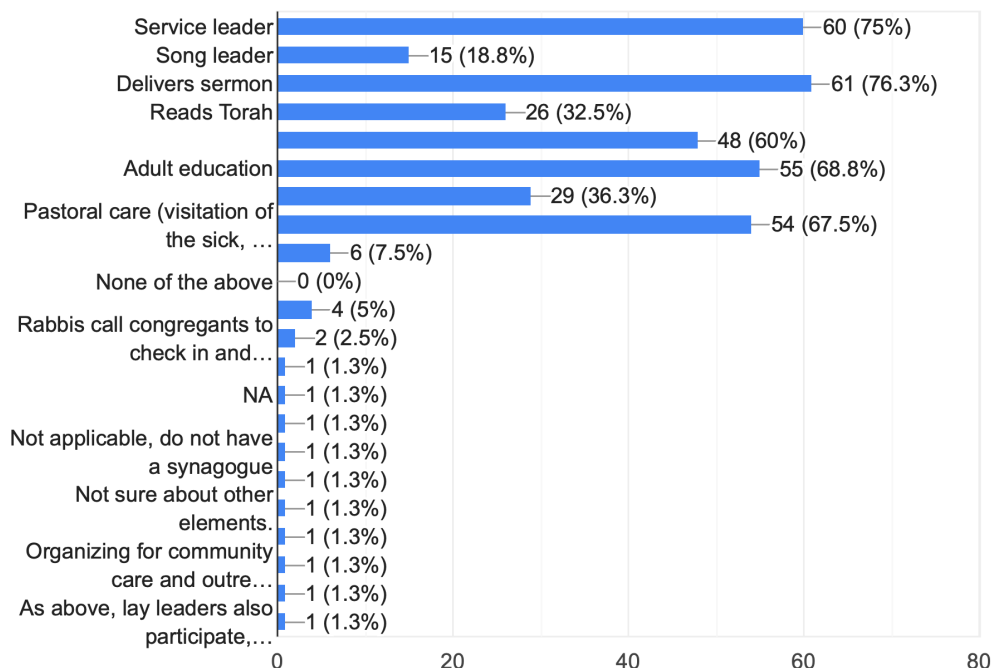
FEDERATION: (11 responses)

- We had to pre-record some music tracks because our pianist was not able to participate (in a risk group).
- Only one instrument at a time, plugged into sound system
- Either live from homes with the singer present or prerecorded with multiple inputs
- We used Youtube and Facebook accounts not Zoom to allow for both the music and voice to come through properly.
- Can only do one at a time
- We played some recorded music and specially developed religious mantra for relaxation
- We find services better streamed directly rather than via Zoom.

AJRCA/CA:

Which of the following responsibilities did/does your Rabbi or Spiritual Leader provide virtually during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

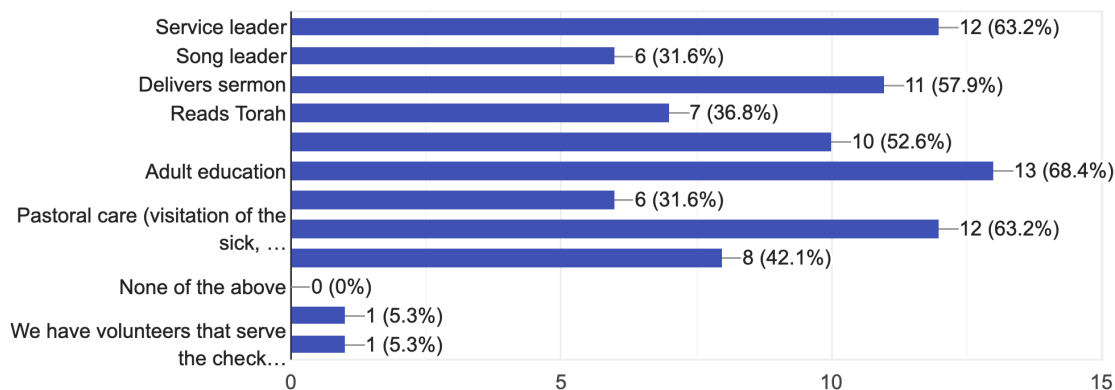
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Which of the following responsibilities did/does your Rabbi or Spiritual Leader provide virtually during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Responsibilities of Rabbi or Spiritual Leader Provided Virtually During the Pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Service leader	60	75	12	63.2	72	72.7
Song leader	15	18.8	6	31.6	21	21.2
Delivers sermon	61	76.3	11	57.9	72	72.7
Reads torah	26	32.5	7	36.8	33	33.3
Conducts life cycle events	48	60.0	10	52.6	58	33.3
Adult education	55	68.8	13	68.4	68	58.6
Youth education, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs	29	36.3	6	31.6	35	35.4
Pastoral care, including visiting sick	54	67.5	12	63.2	66	66.7
All of the above	6	7.5	8	42.1	14	14.1
Other	9	11.3	1	5.3	10	10.1
Not Applicable	3	3.8	1	5.3	4	4.0

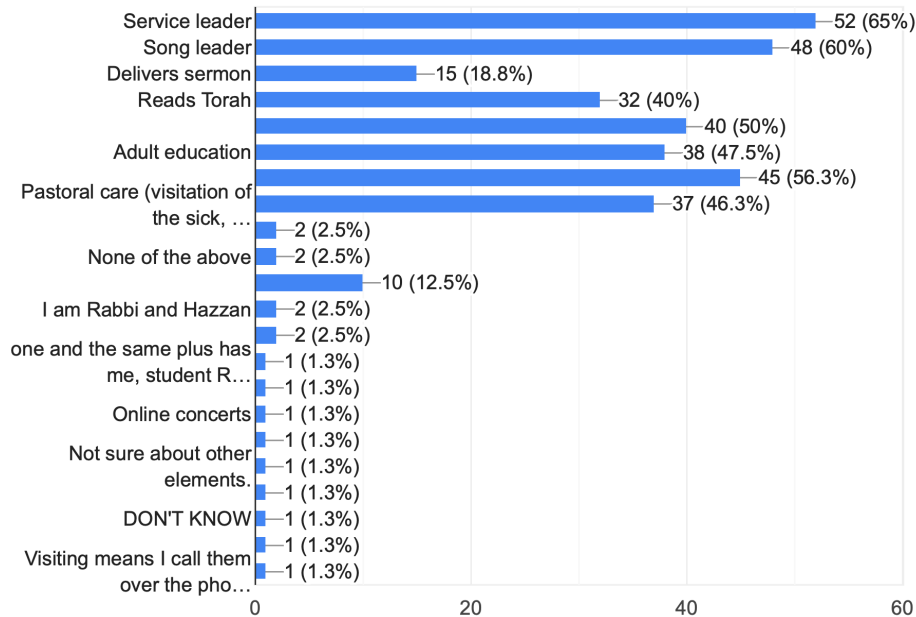
Findings: Almost three-quarters of respondents indicated that the responsibilities of their Rabbi or Spiritual Leader provided virtually were” Service leader” and “Delivered sermons” during the pandemic. The next two most frequently mentioned virtual responsibilities of the Rabbi or Spiritual Leader during the pandemic were Pastoral care, including visiting the sick (67%) and Adult Education (59%). Approximately a third of respondents listed Reads torah, Conducts life cycle events and Youth education, including Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. The Other category included organization for community care and outreach, lay leader participation, daf yomi shiur, taught Rambam every night, and calling congregants to check in with them.

Comparison to Normal Conditions (page 49): The top five responsibilities of the respondents’ synagogue Rabbi or Spiritual Leaders under normal conditions were: Conducts life cycle events, Pastoral care, Delivers sermon, Adult education and Service leader.

AJRCA/CA:

Which of the following responsibilities did/does your Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director provide virtually during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

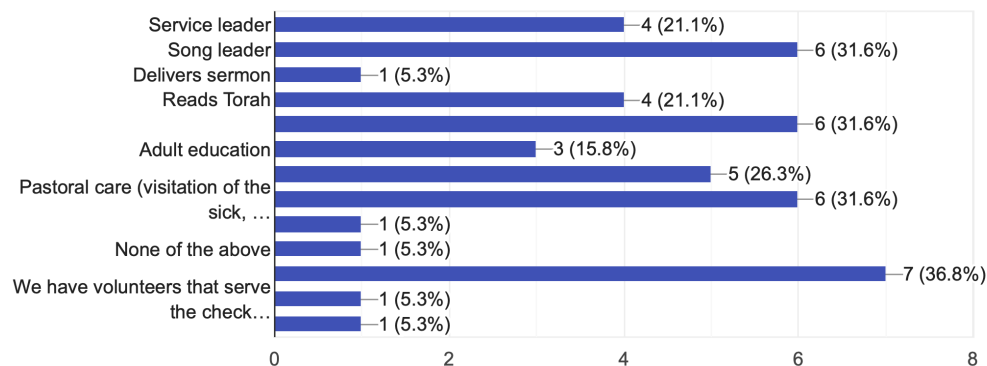
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Which of the following responsibilities did/does your Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director provide virtually during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Responsibilities of Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director Provided Virtually During the Pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Service leader	52	65.0	4	21.1	56	56.6
Song leader	48	60	6	31.6	54	54.5
Delivers sermon	15	18.8	1	5.3	16	16.2
Reads torah	32	40	4	21.1	36	36.4
Conducts life cycle events	40	50	6	31.6	46	46.5
Adult education	38	47.5	3	15.8	41	41.4
Youth education, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs	45	56.3	5	26.3	50	50.5
Pastoral care, including visiting sick	37	46.3	6	31.6	43	43.4
All of the above	2	2.5	1	5.3	3	3.0
None of the above	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
We do not have a cantor, cantorial soloist or musical director	10	12.5	7	36.8	17	17.2
Other	7	8.8	2	10.5	9	9.1
Not Applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Unkown	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: The virtual responsibilities of the Cantor/Cantorial Soloist/Musical Director during the pandemic indicated by about half of respondents were: Service leader, Song leader, Youth education, followed by Conducts life cycle events, Pastoral care and Adult education. Among the “Other” responsibilities were conducting online concerts, visit the

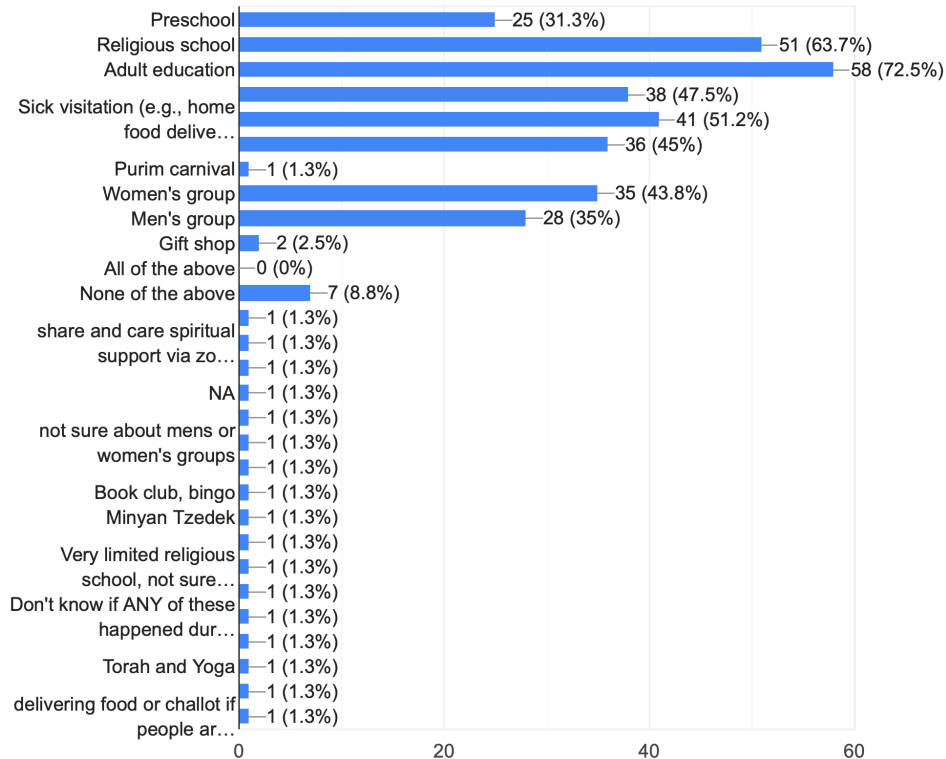
sick by phone, infrequent service leader and volunteers help. Seventeen percent of respondents do not have a cantor, soloist or music director.

Comparison to Normal Conditions (page 51): The top five responsibilities of the respondents' synagogue Cantor, Cantorial Soloist or Musical Director were: Service leader, Song leader, Conducts life cycle events, Youth education and Pastoral care.

AJRCA/CA:

What other programs did/does your synagogue offer virtually during the pandemic?
(Check all that apply.)

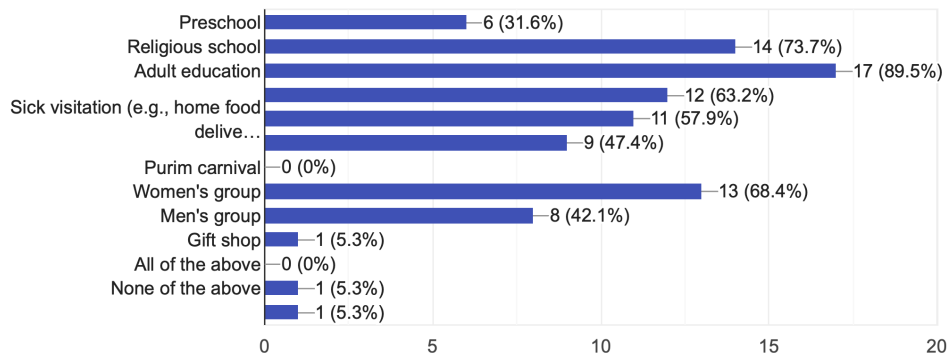
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What other programs did/does your synagogue offer virtually during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Other Programs Offered Virtually during the Pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Preschool	25	31.3	6	31.6	31	31.3
Religious School	51	63.7	14	73.7	65	65.7
Adult Education	58	72.5	17	89.5	75	75.8
Cultural Programs	38	47.5	12	63.2	50	50.5
Sick Visitation	41	51.2	11	57.9	52	52.5
Meditation and other Nontraditional Spiritual Programs	36	45	9	47.4	45	45.5
Purim Carnival	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Women's Group	35	43.8	13	68.4	48	48.5
Men's Group	28	35.0	8	42.1	36	36.4
Gift Shop	2	2.5	1	5.3	3	3.0
Other	13	13.1	1	5.3	14	14.1
All of the Above	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
None of the Above	7	8.8	1	5.3	8	8.1
Not Applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

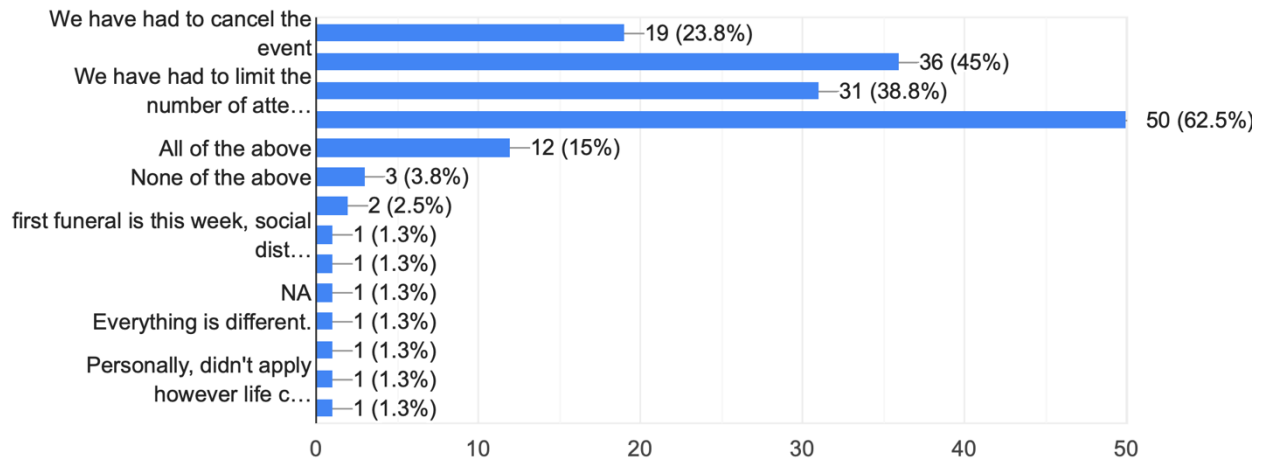
Findings: Adult education was the most frequently mentioned other program offered virtually during the pandemic mentioned by three-quarters of respondents. Religious school (66%) came in a close second, followed by Cultural programs, Sick visitation, Women's group and Meditation and other non-traditional spiritual programs, mentioned by about half of respondents. The "Other" answers included Facebook support groups, Share and Care, various preschool programs, book club and bingo, Torah study with Havdalah, Torah and yoga, minyan Tzedek, community calls and virtual Shiva.

Comparison to Normal Conditions (page 31: The most common "other" programs offered normally by the respondents' synagogues were Adult Education, Religious School, Sick Visitation, Cultural Programs and Women's Group.

AJRCA/CA:

What kind of accommodations have you had to make for special planned and unplanned life cycle events during the pandemic, including funerals/shiv...ngs, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, etc. (Check all that apply.)

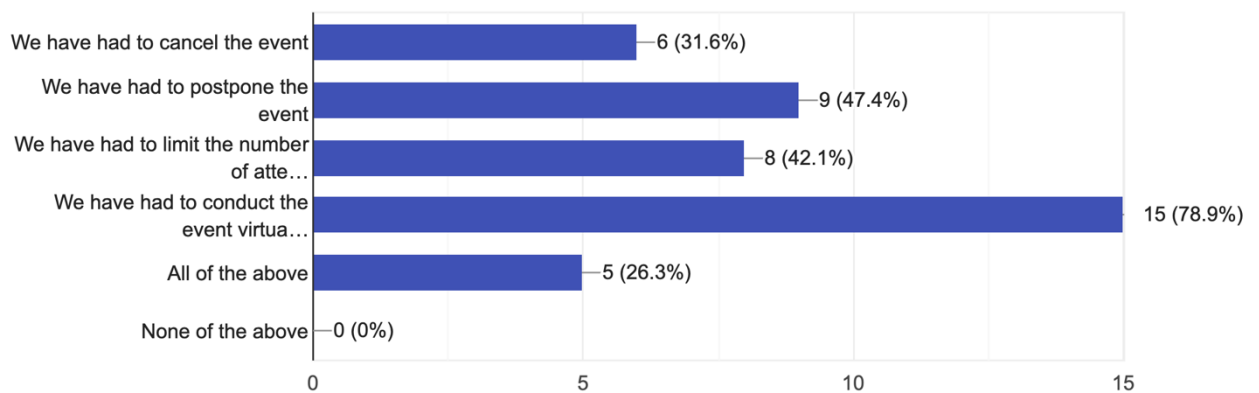
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What kind of accommodations have you had to make for special planned and unplanned life cycle events during the pandemic, including funerals/shiv...ngs, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, etc. (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Accommodations have you had to make for special planned and unplanned life cycle events during the pandemic.	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Event cancellation	19	23.8	6	31.6	25	25.3
Event postponement	36	45	9	47.4	45	45.5
Limit number of participants	31	38.8	8	42.1	39	39.4
Conducted virtually	50	62.5	15	78.9	65	65.6
All of the Above	12	15.0	5	26.3	17	17.2
None of the Above	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0
Other	5	6.3	0	0	5	5.1
Not Applicable	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0

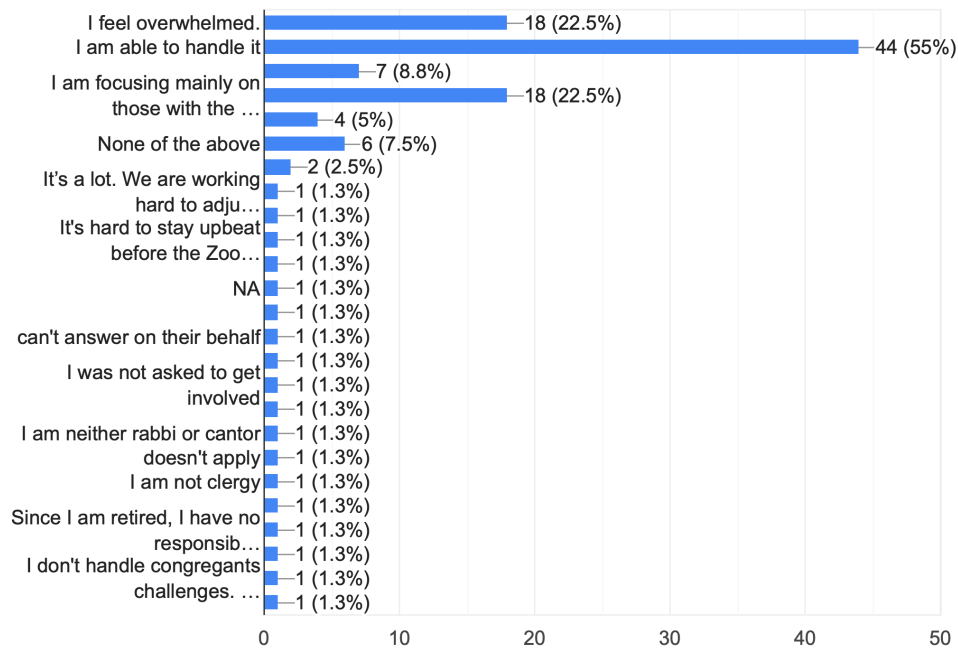
Findings: Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they had to conduct life cycle events virtually during the pandemic; a similar number combined, indicated the events had to be either cancelled (25%) or postponed (46%). Other responses included only needing to postpone their annual meeting; everything is different; socially distanced funeral; indoor/outdoor Zoom Bar Mitzvahs.

PART FOUR:
PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

AJRCA/CA:

How would you best describe your ability to handle your congregants' spiritual challenges during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

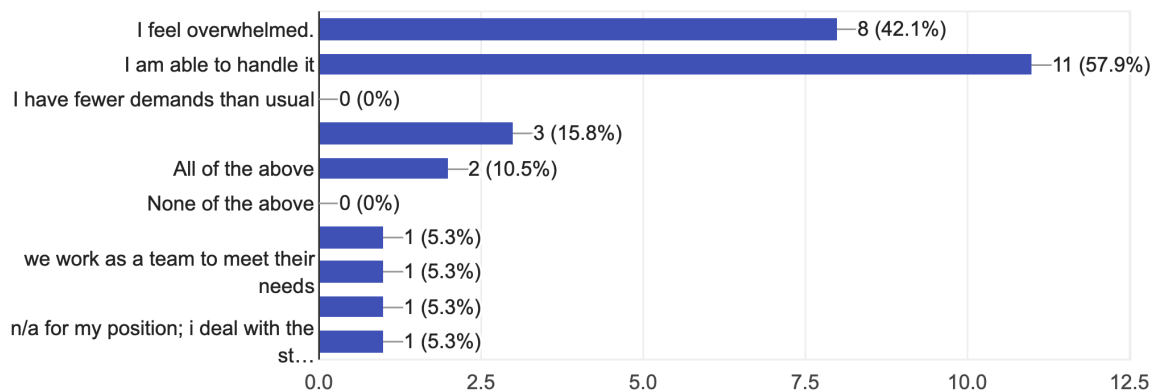
80 responses



FEDERATION:

How would you best describe your ability to handle your congregants' spiritual challenges during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



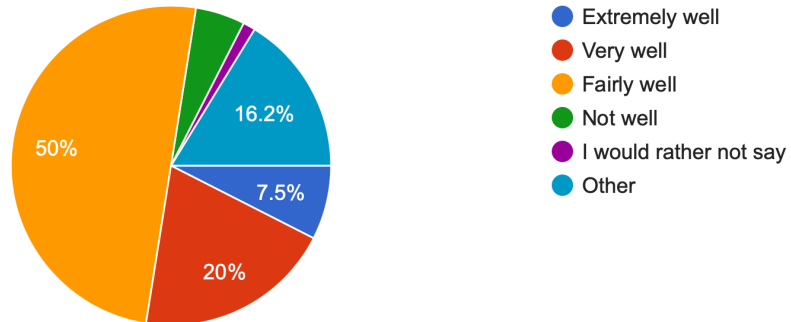
Describe your ability to handle congregant's spiritual challenges during the pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
I feel overwhelmed	18	22.5	8	42.1	26	26.3
I am able to handle it	44	55.0	11	57.9	55	55.6
I have fewer demands than usual	7	8.8	0	0	7	7.1
I am focusing mainly on those with the greatest needs, such as the sick, and mourners	18	22.5	3	15.8	21	21.2
All of the Above	4	5.0	2	10.5	6	6.1
None of the Above	6	7.5	0	0	6	6.1
Other	6	7.5	2	10.5	8	8.1
Not Applicable	14	17.5	2	10.5	16	16.2

Findings: A little more than half of respondents said they are able to handle meeting the spiritual challenges of their congregation during the pandemic. A quarter of respondents said they feel overwhelmed. A fifth of respondents are mainly focusing their spiritual care efforts on those with greatest needs. The “not applicable” answers consisted mainly of people who were not clergy.

AJRCA/CA:

Rate how well you have been able to personally cope with the emotional stresses of clergy life during the pandemic? (Select one.)

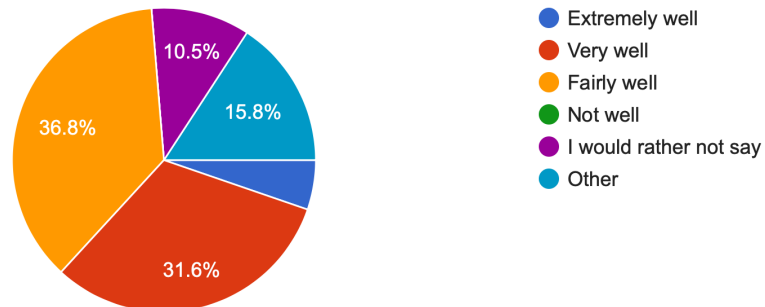
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Rate how well you have been able to personally cope with the emotional stresses of clergy life during the pandemic? (Check one.)

19 responses



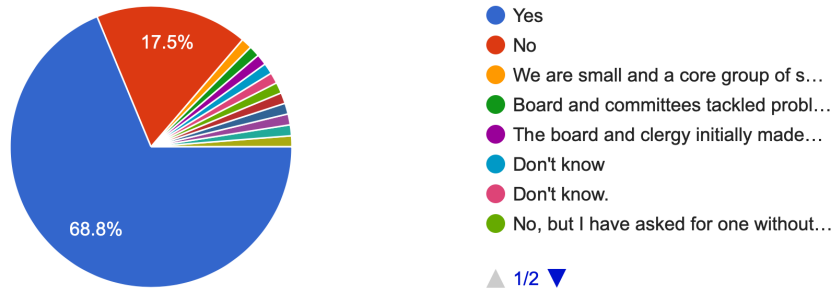
How well have you been able to personally cope with the emotional stresses of clergy life during the pandemic?	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Extremely well	6	7.5	1	5.3	7	7.1
Very well	16	20.0	6	31.6	22	22.2
Fairly well	40	50.0	7	36.8	47	47.5
Not well	4	5.0	0	0	4	4.0
I would rather not say	1	1.2	2	10.5	3	3.0
Other	13	16.2	3	15.8	16	16.2

Findings: Almost half of respondents said they were personally coping fairly well with the emotional stresses of clergy life during the pandemic. About a quarter of respondents indicated they were coping extremely or very well. Only 4 percent said they were not coping well.

AJRCA/CA:

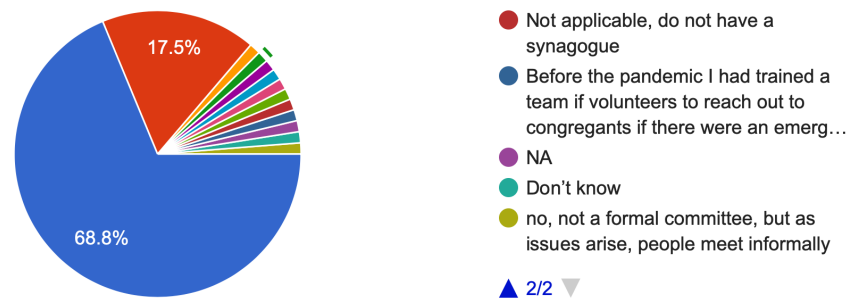
Has your synagogue set up a special committee or task force to deal with various aspects of the pandemic?

80 responses



Has your synagogue set up a special committee or task force to deal with various aspects of the pandemic?

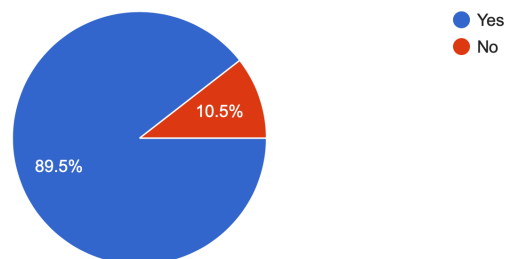
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Has your synagogue set up a special committee or task force to deal with various aspects of the pandemic? (Check one.)

19 responses



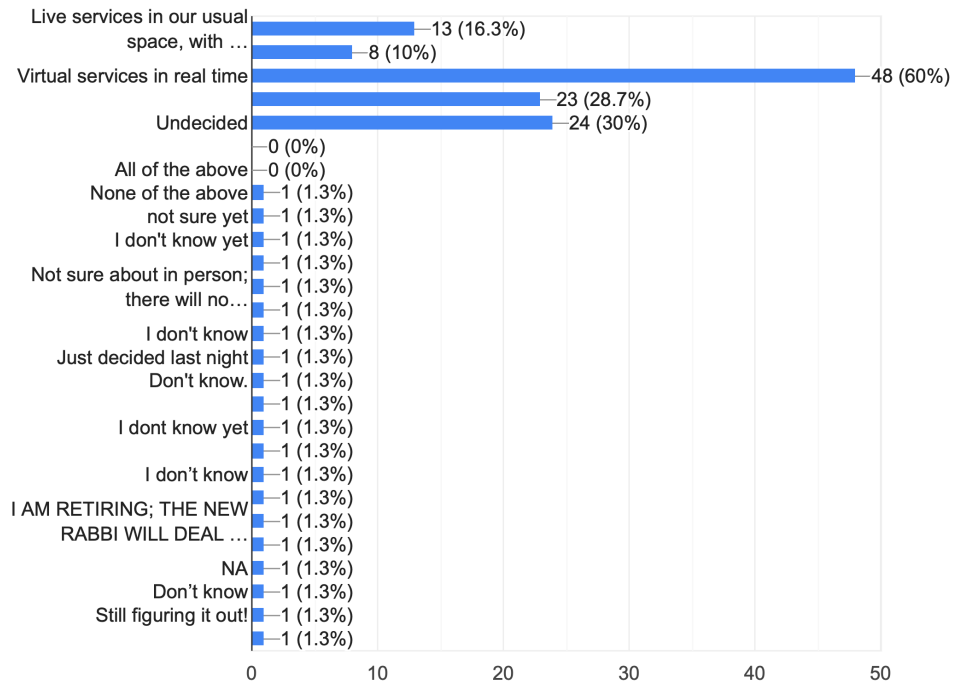
Has your synagogue set up a special committee or task force to deal with various aspects of the pandemic?	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Yes	55	68.8	17	89.5	72	72.7
No	14	17.5	2	10.5	16	16.2
Unknown	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0
Other	6	7.5	0	0	6	6.1
Not applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: Three quarters of respondents indicated their synagogues have set up a special committee or task force to deal with the various aspects of the pandemic. Sixteen percent have not. The “other” responses indicated that these issues were handled and discussed by their Board and committees, or by a core group. One person indicated that they asked that such a committee be established but the request went unanswered. Another respondent said that an emergency committee had been previously set up for other disasters, and this committee reached out to all congregants. Others are handling it informally as issues arise.

AJRCA/CA:

What are your potential plans for the High Holidays? (Check all that apply.)

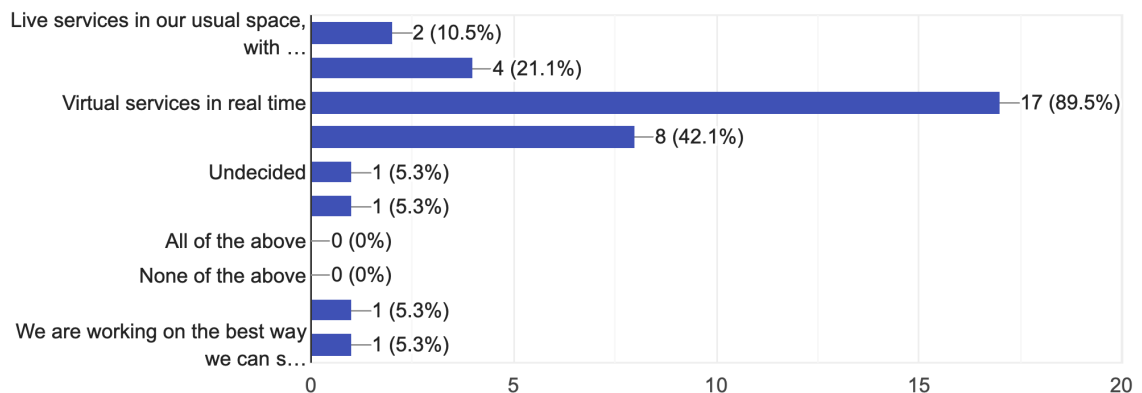
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What are your potential plans for the High Holidays? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



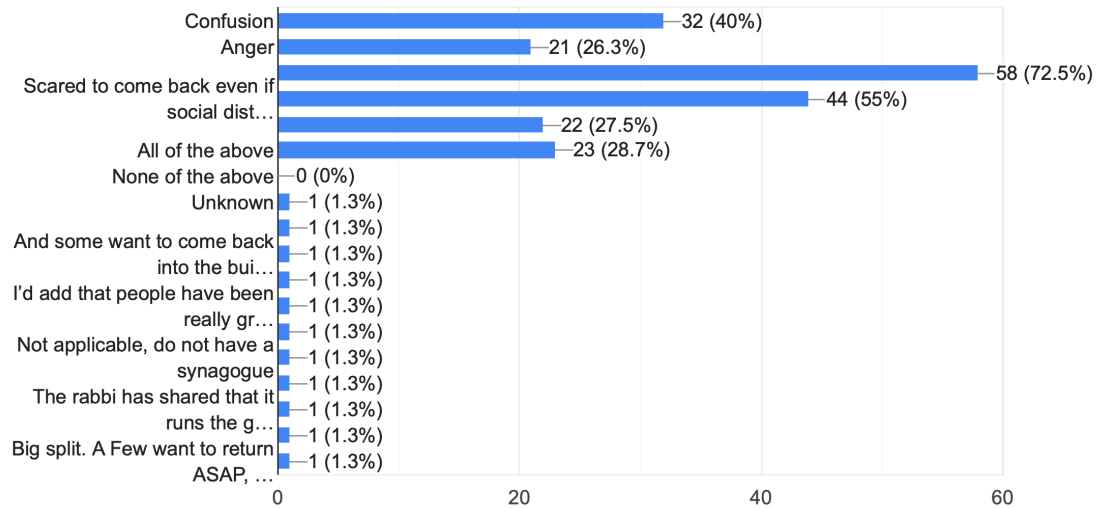
Potential Plans for the High Holidays	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Live services in our usual space	13	16.3	2	10.5	15	15.2
Live services in an alternate space	8	10.0	4	21.1	12	12.1
Virtual services in real time	48	60	17	89.5	65	65.6
Pre-record parts or all of the service for later playback	23	28.7	8	42.1	31	31.3
Undecided/Don't know yet	8	10.0	1	5.3	9	9.1
Other	9	11.3	2	10.5	11	11.1
All of the Above	0	0	0	0	0	0
None of the Above	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Not Applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: Two-thirds of respondents said they are planning on having virtual High Holiday services in real time. A third will pre-record all or parts of the service for later playback. About a quarter of respondents will do live services in the usual or an alternative space. Among the “other” responses were “I am retiring” and I will leave it up to the next rabbi! Several respondents are still figuring it out.

AJRCA/CA:

What are some of the sentiments of your congregation regarding the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

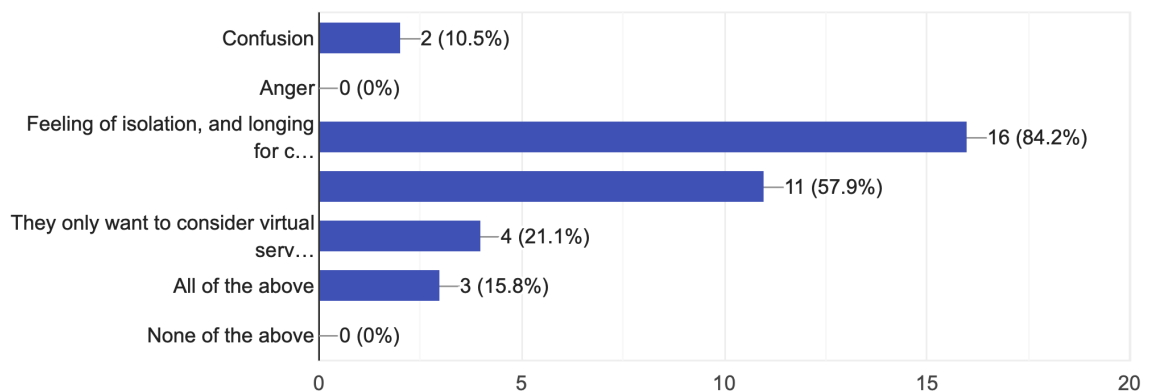
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What are some of the sentiments of your congregation regarding the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Sentiments of Your Congregation Regarding the Pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Confusion	32	40	2	10.5	34	34.3
Anger	21	26.3	0	0	21	21.2
Feeling of isolation and longing for community	58	72.5	16	84.2	74	74.7
Scared to come back even if social distancing is enforced	44	55.0	11	57.9	55	55.6
They only want to consider virtual services and programs for the foreseeable future	22	27.5	4	21.1	26	26.3
Other	6	7.5	0	0	6	6.1
Unknown	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0
All of the Above	23	28.7	3	15.8	26	26.3
Not Applicable	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0

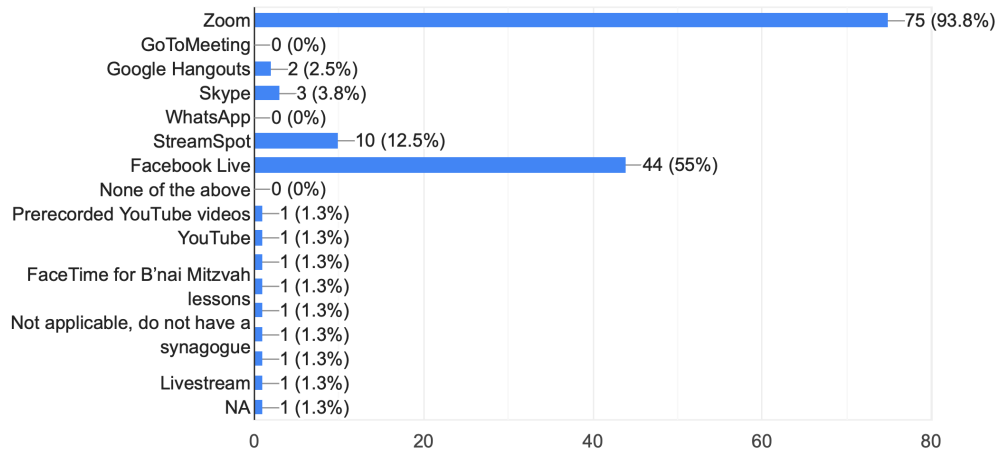
Findings: Three-quarters of respondents indicated that their congregants had a feeling of isolation and longing for community. Half of respondents said their congregants are scared to come back even if social distancing is enforced. Other sentiments included confusion, only wanting to consider virtual services and programs for the foreseeable future, anger and “all of the above”. Some said congregants wanted to come back into the building, others that they were pleased to see how well the community has remained connected. Two had a split; with a few wanting to return ASAP with masks and social distancing and others not ready at all, or at least for a while. One respondent felt that “Virtual services are a nice alternative for members who cannot come to shul due to illness, age, or distance. We may keep them available for increased accessibility.” One person added, “People have been really grateful and many report feeling more connected through zoom and breakout rooms.”

PART FIVE:
ASSESSMENT OF VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE

AJRCA/CA:

If you are offering virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic, what video conferencing application do/did you use? (Check all that apply.)

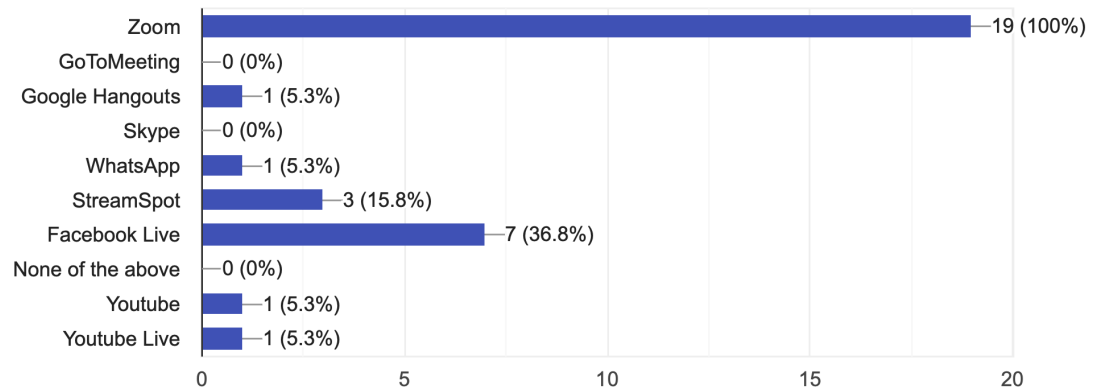
80 responses



FEDERATION:

If you are offering virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic, what video conferencing application do/did you use? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



If offering virtual services and other programming during the pandemic, what video conferencing application do/did you use?	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Zoom	75	93.8	19	100	94	94.9
GoToMeeting	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Google Hangouts	2	2.5	1	5.3	3	3.0
Skype	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0
WhatsApp	0	0	1	5.3	1	1.0
StreamSpot	10	12.5	3	15.8	13	13.1
Facebook Live	44	55.0	7	36.8	51	51.5
You Tube/You Tube Live	2	2.5	2	10.5	4	4.0
Livestream/Vimeo	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Facetime	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Unknown	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Other	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Not applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: Almost all of respondents used Zoom as their video conferencing application during the pandemic. About half of respondents used Facebook Live. The third most used application was StreamSpot. Facetime was used for B’Nai Mitzvah lessons.

AJRCA/CA:

What is the overall satisfaction level of congregants with your virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check one.)

80 responses



What is the overall satisfaction level of congregants with your virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check one.)

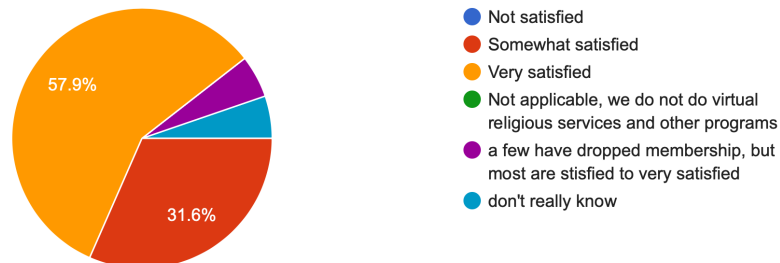
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What is the overall satisfaction level of congregants with your virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check one.)

19 responses



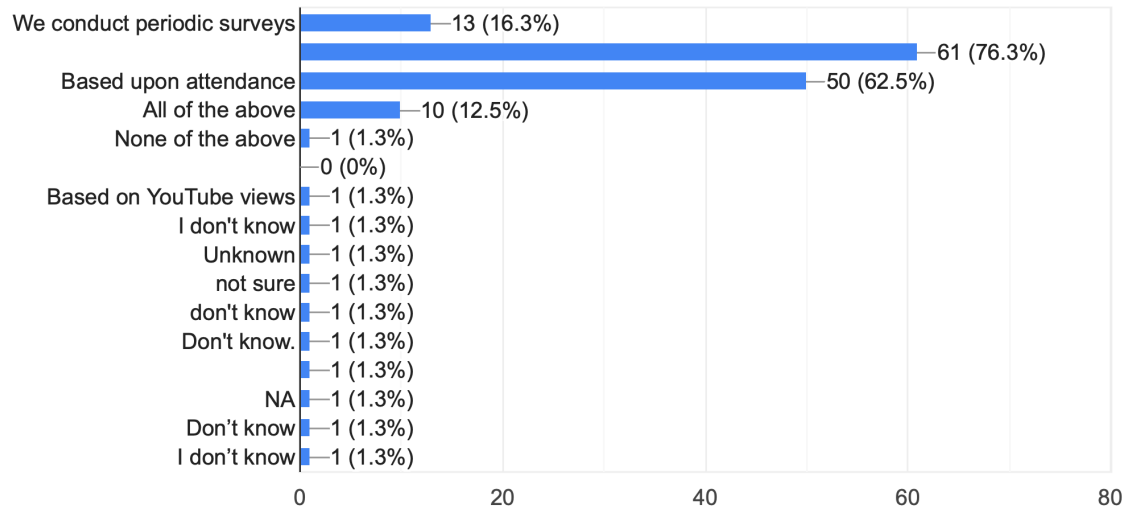
Overall satisfaction level of congregants with your virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Not satisfied	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Somewhat satisfied	30	37.5	6	31.6	36	36.4
Very satisfied	38	47.5	11	57.9	49	49.5
Not applicable, we do not do virtual religious services and programs	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0
Unknown	3	3.8	1	5.3	4	4.0
Other	5	6.3	1	5.3	6	6.1

Findings: About half of respondents indicated the overall satisfaction level of congregants with their virtual religious services and other programming is very satisfied. About a third of respondents were somewhat satisfied and one said they were dissatisfied. Among the “other” answers were comments such as the rabbis do a great job but we miss the social aspects of seeing each other and making kiddush together, etc.; not sure but grateful; a few have dropped membership but most are satisfied to very satisfied. One respondent commented that those who attend are satisfied but the others do not attend; one felt his congregation was somewhat to very satisfied; people seem happy to connect, and it provides comfort to those who have not been able to attend in the past.

AJRCA/CA:

What mechanism(s) do you use to assess congregant satisfaction with your virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

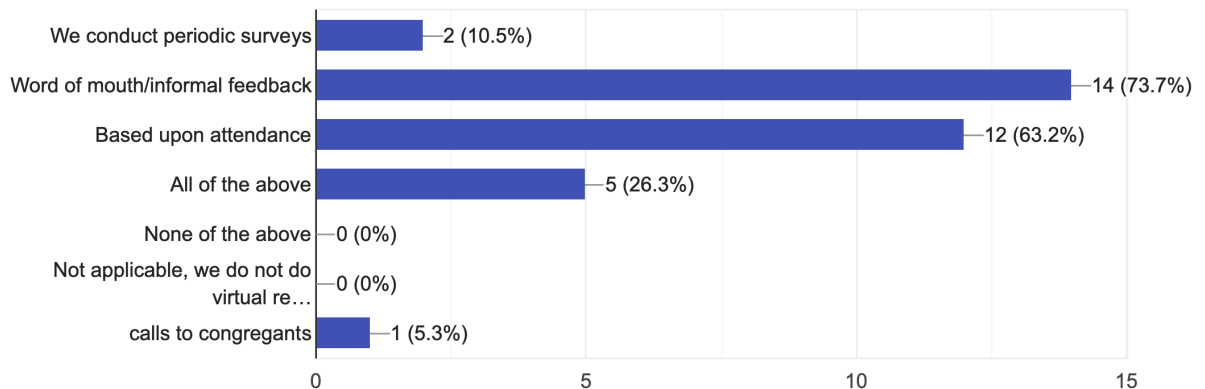
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What mechanism(s) do you use to assess congregant satisfaction with your virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



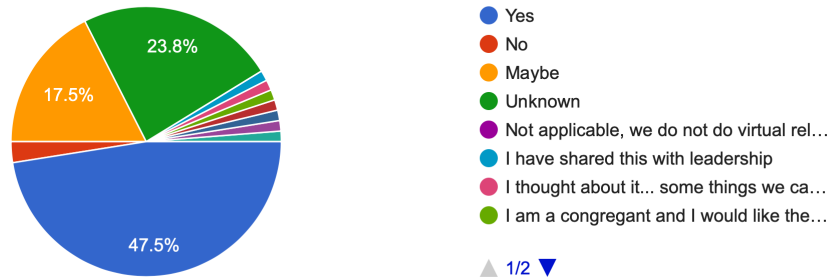
Mechanism Used Normally to Assess Congregant Satisfaction with your Virtual Religious Services and Programs	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 18/19 (94.7%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 18/19 (94.7%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 98/100 (98%)	% TOTAL Respondents 98/100 (98%)
We conduct periodic surveys	13	16.3	2	10.5	15	15.2
Word of mouth/informal feedback	61	76.3	14	73.7	75	75.8
Based upon attendance	50	62.5	12	63.2	62	62.6
All of the above	10	12.5	5	26.3	15	15.2
None of the above	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.0
Other	1	1.3	1	5.3	2	2.0
Unknown	7	8.8	0	0	7	7.1
Not Applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: Three-quarters of respondents use word of mouth/informal feedback as a mechanism to assess congregant satisfaction with their virtual religious services and programs. Two-thirds assess satisfaction based upon attendance. Fifteen percent use periodic surveys to assess satisfaction or answered “All of the above”, respectively. Other responses included assessing satisfaction based upon You Tube views and calls to congregants.

AJRCA/CA:

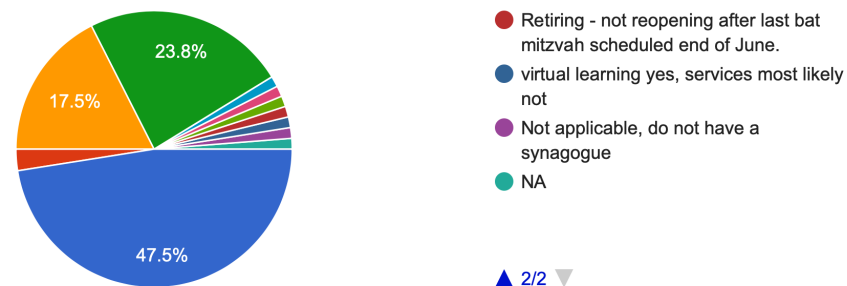
Would you like to or do you plan to continue offering virtual services and other programming after the pandemic is over and your synagogue reopens? (Check one.)

80 responses



Would you like to or do you plan to continue offering virtual services and other programming after the pandemic is over and your synagogue reopens? (Check one.)

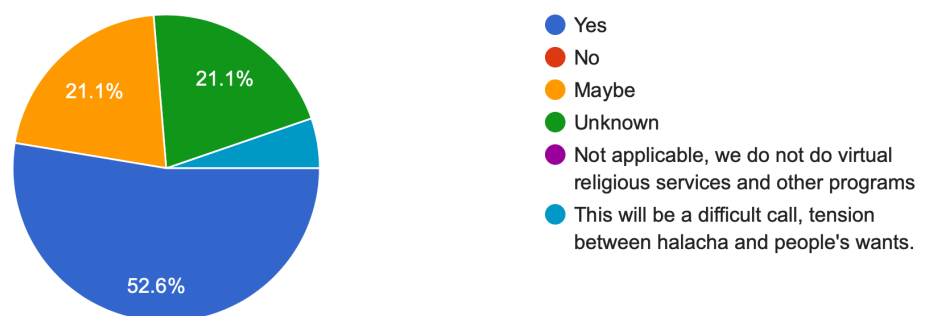
80 responses



FEDERATION:

Would you like to or do you plan to continue offering virtual services and other programming after the pandemic is over and your synagogue reopens? (Check one.)

19 responses



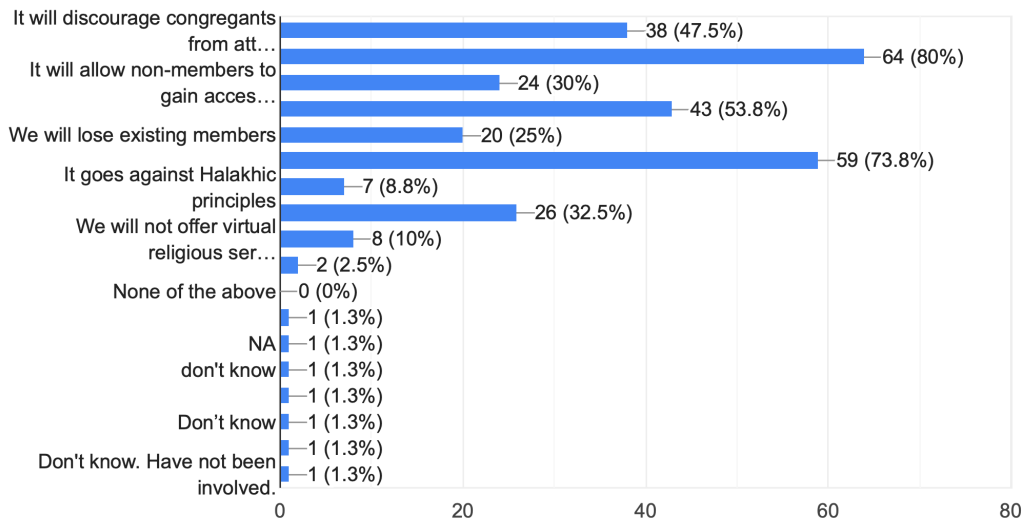
Would like to or plan to continue offering virtual religious services and programs after the pandemic and your synagogue reopens?	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Yes	38	47.5	10	52.6	48	48.5
No	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Maybe	14	17.5	4	21.1	18	18.2
Other	4	5	1	5.3	5	5.1
Unknown	19	23.8	4	21.1	23	23.2
N/A	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0

Findings: Half of respondents indicated that they want or plan to continue offering virtual services and other programming after the pandemic is over and their synagogue reopens. About 20 percent said either Maybe or Unknown, respectively in answer to this question.

AJRCA/CA:

What are your greatest fears and hopes in continuing to use virtual technology for religious services and other programming going forward, even... your synagogue is open? (Check all that apply.)

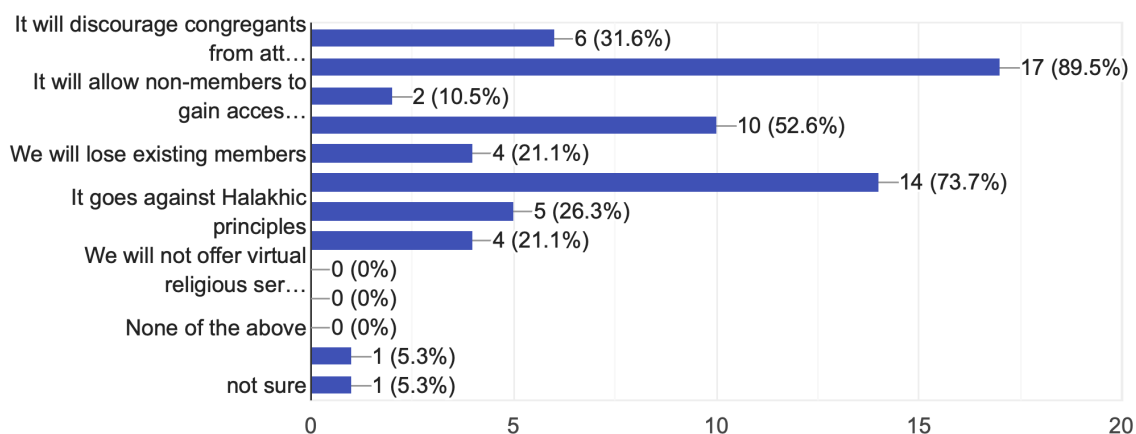
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What are your greatest fears and hopes in continuing to use virtual technology for religious services and other programming going forward, even... your synagogue is open? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Greatest fears and hopes in continuing to use virtual technology for religious services and other programming going forward, even after your synagogue is open	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
It will discourage congregants from attending in person	38	47.5	6	31.6	44	44.4
It will allow participation of congregants who cannot attend in person	64	80.0	17	89.5	81	81.8
It will allow non-members to gain access to our offerings without paying dues	24	30.0	2	10.5	26	26.3
It will bring in new members to our synagogue	43	53.8	10	52.6	53	53.5
We will lose existing members	20	25.0	4	21.1	24	24.2
It will allow us to offer services and programs while maximizing congregant safety	59	73.8	14	73.7	73	73.7
It goes against Halakhic principles	59	73.8	5	26.3	64	64.6
Halakhic principles can be adapted and/or accommodated	26	32.5	4	21.1	30	30.3

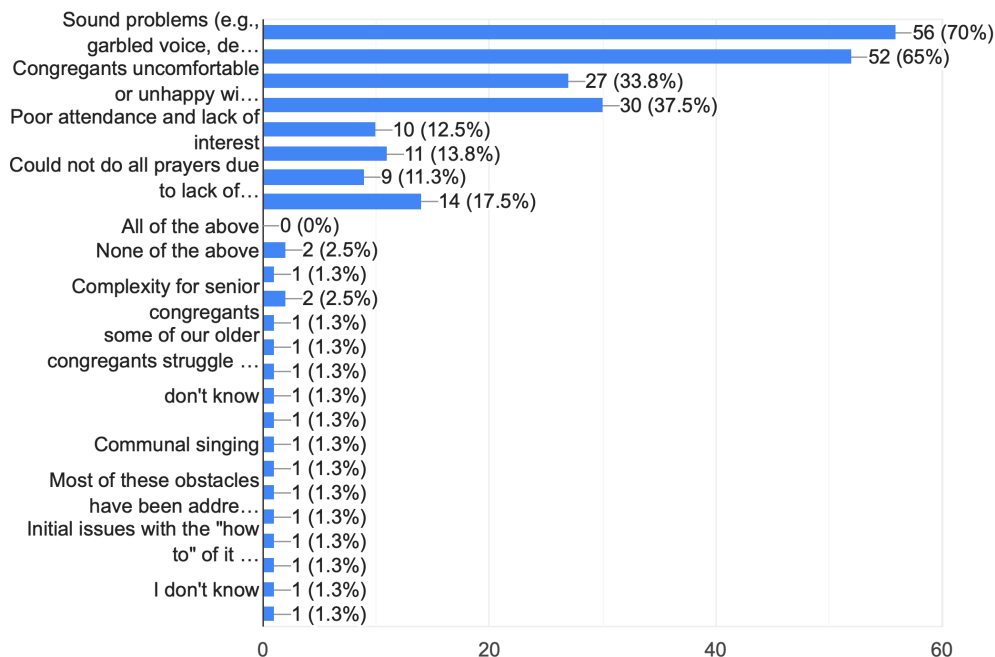
We will not offer virtual religious services and other programs once we are open	8	10.0	0	0	8	8.1
Other	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Unknown	3	3.8	2	10.5	5	5.1
All of the Above	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0
Not Applicable	2	2.5	0	0	2	2.0

Findings: The top respondent fears and hopes regarding continuing to use virtual technology for religious services and other programming going forward, even after your synagogue is open indicated by at least half of those surveyed were: It will allow participation of congregants who cannot attend in person (82%); It will allow us to offer services and programs while maximizing congregant safety (74%); It goes against Halakhic principles (65%) and It will discourage congregants from attending in person (44%). Of lesser importance to respondents, and indicated by 30 percent or less of those surveyed were: Halakhic principles can be adapted and/or accommodated (30%); It will allow non-members to gain access to our offerings without paying dues (26%); We will lose existing members (24%); and We will not offer virtual religious services and other programs once we are open. (8%). Respondent comments included, “We will not have quality youth education.” and “Folks will not see the benefit of membership if we are not meeting in person.”

AJRCA/CA:

What have been the greatest obstacles to conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

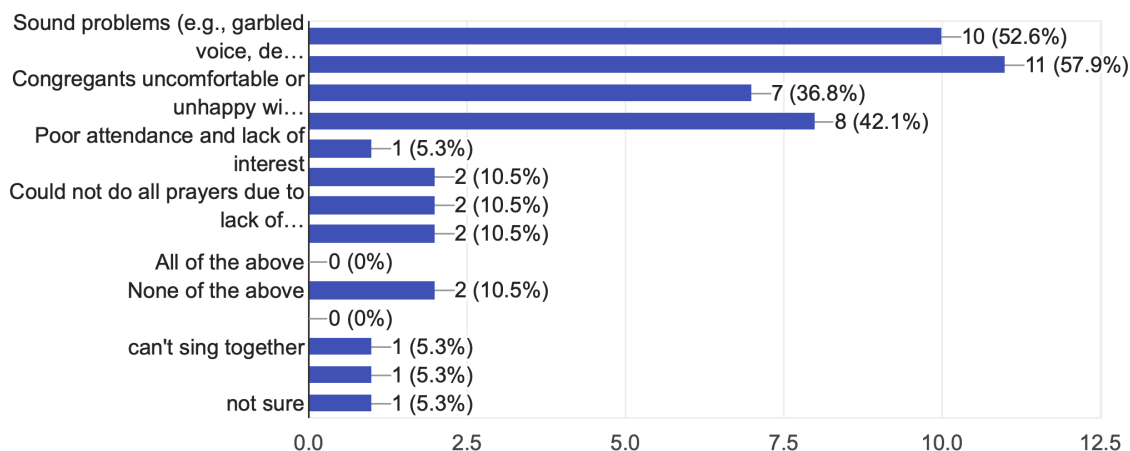
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What have been the greatest obstacles to conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Greatest obstacles to conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Sound problems (e.g., garbled voice, delay didn't allow group singing)	56	70.0	10	52.6	66	66.7
Connectivity problems (e.g., dropped line, frozen screen, poor understanding of how to connect)	52	65.0	11	57.9	63	63.6
Congregants uncomfortable or unhappy with using this technology for religious services	27	33.8	7	36.8	34	34.3
Congregant "burnout" from virtual offering overload	30	37.5	8	42.1	38	38.4
Poor attendance and lack of interest	10	12.5	1	5.3	11	11.1
Halakhic conflicts (e.g., no electronics on Shabbat and Yom Tov)	11	13.8	2	10.5	13	13.1

Could not do all prayers due to lack of live minyan	9	11.3	2	10.5	11	11.1
Staff not tech savvy	14	17.5	2	10.5	16	16.2
All of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0
None of the above	2	2.5	2	10.5	4	4.0
Other	10	12.5	2	10.5	12	12.1
Unknown	3	3.8	1	5.3	4	4.0
Not Applicable	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0

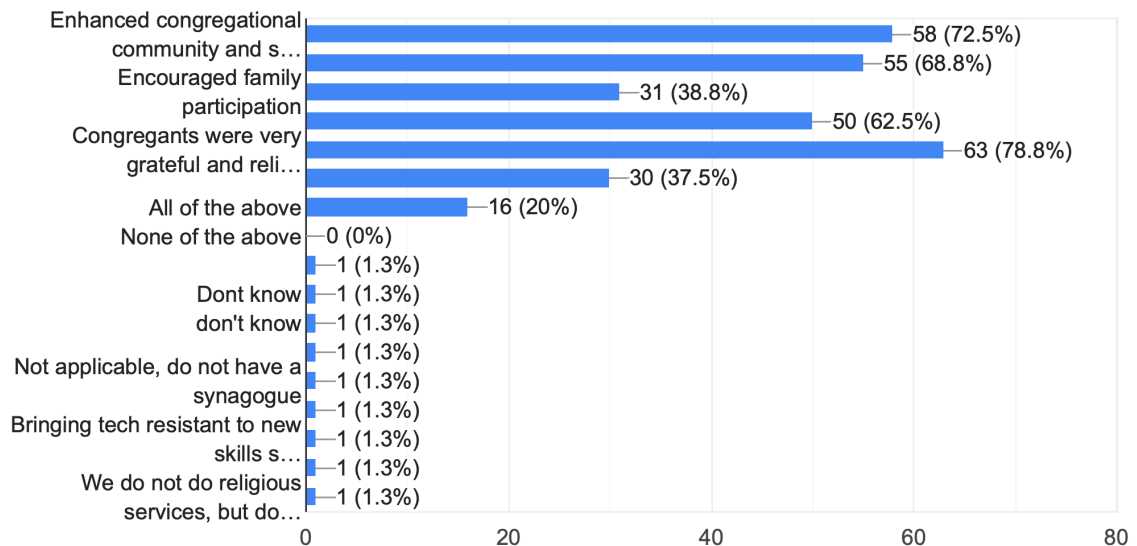
Findings: The two categories which constituted the greatest obstacles to conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic for about two-thirds of respondents were Sound problems (e.g., garbled voice, delay didn't allow group singing) and Connectivity problems (e.g., dropped line, frozen screen, poor understanding of how to connect). About a third of respondents said Congregants uncomfortable or unhappy with using this technology for religious services; and Congregant "burnout" from virtual offering overload were the greatest obstacles. Staff not being tech savvy was an obstacle for about 16 percent of respondents.

Other responses included: Communal singing (can't sing together); obstacles in religious education for youth; several commented that some older congregants struggle with linking in; We do not do religious services, but we do other educational programs, but it has not always been easy to hear or see sometimes; Initial issues with the "how to" of it all, but those were quickly ameliorated and now all is well; I was lucky to have the means to buy great equipment...but not everyone can buy lights, sound system, etc.; Typically need to do a shorter, more focused service. Long service is not necessarily compatible with sitting at a screen unless it is very interactive. Lastly, some members simply don't like it or want it.

AJRCA/CA:

What have been the greatest benefits in conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

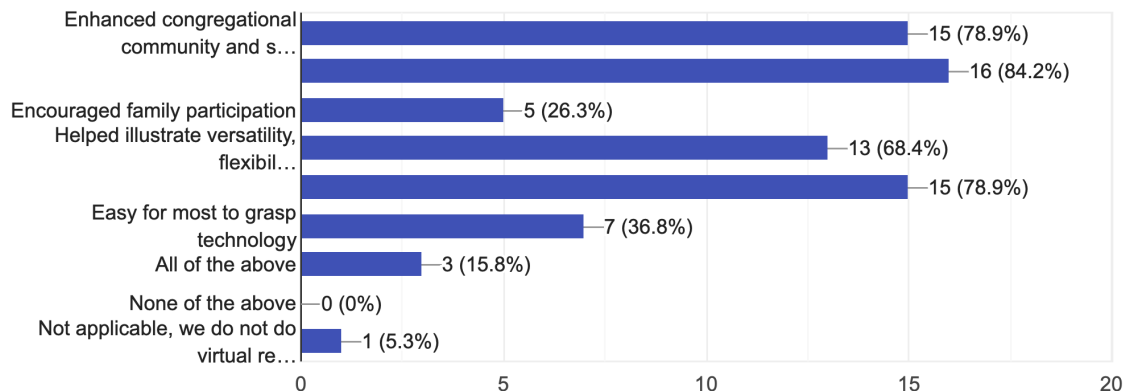
80 responses



FEDERATION:

What have been the greatest benefits in conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic? (Check all that apply.)

19 responses



Greatest benefits in conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic	No. AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	% AJRCA/CA Respondents 80/81 (98.8%)	No. FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	% FEDERATION Respondents 19/19 (100%)	No. TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)	% TOTAL Respondents 99/100 (99%)
Enhanced congregational community and spiritual comfort in face of the crisis	58	72.5	15	78.9	73	73.7
Attracted congregants and non-congregants that do not normally come to synagogue	55	68.8	16	84.2	71	71.7
Encouraged family participation	31	38.8	5	26.3	36	36.4
Helped illustrate versatility, flexibility, and creativity of clergy	50	62.5	13	68.4	63	63.6
Congregants were very grateful and relished seeing friends and family online	63	78.8	15	78.9	78	78.8
Easy for most to grasp technology	30	37.5	7	36.8	37	37.4
All of the above	16	20.0	3	15.8	19	19.2
Other	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0
Unknown	3	3.8	0	0	3	3.0
Not Applicable	3	3.8	1	5.3	4	4.0

Findings: The greatest benefits identified by respondents of conducting virtual religious services and other programming during the pandemic were Congregants were very grateful and relished seeing friends and family online (79%); Enhanced congregational

community and spiritual comfort in face of the crisis (74%); Attracted congregants and non-congregants that do not normally come to synagogue (72%) and Helped illustrate versatility, flexibility, and creativity of clergy (64%). Thirty to 40 percent of respondents said virtual services and programming Encouraged family participation and was Easy for most to grasp technology. About 20 percent of respondents indicated “All of the above”. Among the “other” comments were Bringing tech resistant to new skills so that participation is greater and continue after the pandemic; Facilitated elderly members who don't like to drive to attend minyan; We do not do religious services, but doing other programing did allow for one to see people who one did not get to see often, and that was fun.

PART SIX:
EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTIONS

AJRCA/CA:

Please feel free to tell us in more detail about your synagogue's religious services, programming and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic. If you don't have enough room to write, please send your response to Linda Bernstein, Pharm.D., at lbernstein@ajrca.edu. (Optional question.)25 responses

- Our community has really enjoyed being able to see each other's faces during our services and activities. It has done a lot to keep our community together. More families have shown up for services. We are now beginning to include more congregant participation in our services. We are clear about our mission to hold our congregants and provide something interesting and high quality for them to tune into without it becoming a show.
- We are the Tree of Life of Pittsburgh. A second trauma 16 months after the first has created unique challenges.
- We set up "Shelter in Shul" program with weekly events, a Friday afternoon pre-Kabbalat Shabbat program and Havdalah. We also had a Yizkor service at the end of Pesach.
- We decided to approach Shabbat services as Torah study rather than a traditional Torah service (reading from the Chumash rather than the scroll, some differences in prayers). I don't know the proper terms and I was not part of the decision-making conversations, but no attendees have complained and most seem to like it very much.
- The survey covered it. A request from a group of congregants to initiate new program was responded to, and we are both doing this. The technology not a deterrent.
- Our caring committee has been very active, delivering food and masks and other things to homebound congregants and making phone calls to people who live alone. The rabbi has also been contacting congregants by phone. Before the pandemic, we streamed our Kabbalat Shabbat services, but we didn't do anything to make the service more accessible online. Now, we stream every service from our homes, and we have made a lot of adaptations to the way we run our services to cater to that online presence.

- Core group came to my daily, Monday thru Thursday, 4 pm zoom sessions. Had full minyan plus every Wednesday morning, had former members who had moved away joining us for Friday evening live-streaming. Did early 5:30 so shomer shabbat members could participate. Started doing Havdalah on zoom from home. Worry that members who only come rarely or for high holy days might not come this year. We called every single member at least twice to check in. Delivered food to those who needed.
- B'nai Mitzvah have been the trickiest point due to the variety of family needs / situations, the way we pair our b'nai mitzvah students.
- The community I serve consists of seniors who are both extra concerned about leaving their homes during the pandemic, and are also not comfortable viewing virtual services. I have kept in touch with them mainly through weekly prerecorded videos, phone, and email. The board has also set up a phone tree, where each of them calls a number of congregants each week.
- Being a congregant I have enjoyed my synagogues' services etc. very much at Temple Beth Am
- I think we are starting to experience some sort of burn out. But I can't identify what it is exactly. I'm struck that people don't come on time, but rather, exactly as late as they did in person. We still struggle with our Fri night minyan. Why is that? Can't stay. I don't think it's me.
- The Board of Directors periodically check-in with all congregants. We have a small group of volunteers who shop for those unable to do so. The "Caring Community" touches base twice monthly with high-risk congregants. The office staff, Rabbi, and Chair of the "Caring Community" send out cards acknowledging life-cycle events (births, deaths, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, etc.).
- We've had several outdoor B'nai Mitzvah services, in the backyard of the B/M family, with social distancing. It has been very meaningful to daven in nature and the experience has felt very poignant. The services have been shortened since we're on Zoom and it has often been cold outside... after the pandemic we may continue to offer outdoor and shorter B/M services.
- They have gone well and we will continue virtually until there is either a wonderful therapeutic or vaccine that is really successful.

- I have been doing Kabbalat Shabbat services so we can end before candle lighting. At first, I was very uncomfortable compromising Halachah, but have come to learn that being in community is the most important thing, really almost a matter of *pikuach nefesh* you could say. So I added Festival services for Pesach and Shavuot, and felt that it was worth feeling a little ill at ease with it. Especially when I visited other colleagues and saw how they were approaching it. As for spiritual care, I've made calls and people are always surprised and grateful to hear that they are being thought of.
- Thank you, Linda! Our Chabad has tried to hold us together with virtual classes and limited services. It's very hard. We were really like a family... Saw each other every Saturday morning, had lunch together... People stopped paying their monthly donations and that is really hard for our rabbis. We are mobilizing to get money but unlike traditional synagogues where dues are paid upfront, Chabad is more of a "on your honor", "when you can", "as much as you can" kind of a place...
- These issues are still under discussion; I am chairing an ad hoc committee to address them
- We have been livestreaming our services for several years. We are now trying to upgrade the quality due to the large response. We have also tried outdoor programs and services using a local wifi so that people can stay in their cars and listen.
- Not applicable, do not have a synagogue
- People were very happy to have the time to see each other; glad they were able to fulfill observing a Yahrzeit; and happy that we were able to offer worship services during this crisis.
- I will email you.
- The spiritual leader addresses this and is looking to add a "Caring Community."
- We began to develop small groups that met in people's backyards. It could have been handled better had those who were having the services just informed their neighbors. However, many small minyans sprang up and this seemed to satisfy the peoples' need to have prayer and still to be six feet apart, be outdoors and they should have worn masks, but not all did. They did make rules that made sure that

no one went up to the Torah and that only that one person read the Torah and handled it. Otherwise, each person brought their own Siddur and Chumash to read and did not touch anyone else's books. The same person who read the Torah conducted the services. Same people came to the same minyan all the time.

FEDERATION:

Please feel free to tell us in more detail about your synagogue's religious services, programming and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic. If you don't have enough room to write, please send your response to Linda Bernstein, Pharm.D., at lbernstein@ajrca.edu. (Optional question.)5 responses

- n/a
- While numbers have increased, the experience of seeing and the variety of programs and response has been positive - there are many we are not seeing (despite reaching out) and many for whom the medium does not connect them.
- We are Karaite Jews and we have some strict requirements
- More volunteers than people in need, but we thrive on community and socializing, which represents a long-term problem for us. Board has really stepped up to help.
- The services are conducted by either our part-time rabbi or by lay-leaders. I think it's a great experience!! (I give the drash several times a month) and our congregant-cantor gives some drashes and people love his singing!

AJRCA/CA:

Please share learnings, best practices, positive and negative experiences about your synagogue's religious services, programming and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic that might be helpful for other clergy to know. If you don't have enough room to write, please send your response to Linda Bernstein, Pharm.D., at lbernstein@ajrca.edu. (Optional question.)22 responses

- As soon as Safer At Home went into effect, our Temple established a centralized website with all the information and links to our online offerings including services, adult ed, Arts & Culture events. I think clergy burnout is more of an issue than congregant burnout. Our congregation feels cared for even if they feel isolated. They prefer safety over opening up too soon. I advocated for and added a Havdalah service at first but after a month it became too much because I was not left with one day out of the week where I was obligated to someone for something. So I recorded the Havdalah service and put it on our website for access.
- It is so important to listen. Have done a sufficient review to have a comprehensive plan in place.
- Our synagogue has been doing Zoom programming, but there is a strong reluctance to do it live and one Shabbat; as well as pre-record. The rabbi doesn't feel comfortable with that for several reasons.
- We screen share the siddur and the parsha with live pointing so congregants without these textual resources at home can see where we are in the service and can participate both actively with readings and passively in their homes.
- In person far better, and yes, there is a strong feeling of isolation as our members are from all over. Especially older members, who may not have the adequate technology such as cameras.
- Led services on live-streamed closed group on Facebook. Board concerned with security so link not on website. Had to be member or invited by member. Very time consuming for the one tech savvy congregant who coordinated all our zoom and live-streaming efforts. Hubbetzin acted as stand in for whole congregation.

Singing, drumming, saying Torah blessings, giving responses to Barchu etc. handy!!

- Folks really enjoy the opportunity to "gather" with one another - to interact online when they can't in person. Using the chat function and/or being able to talk to one another has been a good thing. I've been leading a weekly "lunch and schmooze" for congregants who live alone and that's been very helpful for those who attend weekly. Balancing accessibility, interactivity, and security has been an issue.
- With much programming for example on shavuot it was very complicated to know which was live streamed, what on zoom and what in chat rooms. Hard to access
- Overall, the response has been very positive to the intentionality behind spiritual care during the pandemic.
- We installed new live-streaming equipment (new high def camera which connects to a laptop along with the sound system and a big screen) to be able to have multiple clergy on the bimah, in the main sanctuary, leading virtual services, but we have not yet had more than one clergy in the space at a time for fear of how it might be perceived.
- I've gotten comfortable using this technology, and feel that it has brought us closer as a congregation. People really love seeing each other.
- Not sure I can answer this
- personally, I find that virtual BBM lessons are less productive and less satisfying than in person
- Congregants prefer to see our services from our sanctuary, not someone's home. Also necessitates a lot of personal contact by phone. We try to keep people informed and we don't want them to feel forgotten.
- Not applicable, do not have a synagogue
- People needed a time when they could socialize, which was even more important than offering the opportunity to pray. I made sure that people could come on early before the actual service start time.
- I'll email you
- Great music is a real draw.

- One of the AJRCA summer classes was on Halacha in the digital age. As a class, we're putting together a publication on online minyan. It may be useful to you. Good luck!
- Regarding religious school, We pivoted immediately to online. Parents really appreciated the consistency. Kids reported feeling they had learned more than before pandemic. They also felt connected and seen. And some said they learned more that in other learning settings.

FEDERATION:

Please share learnings, best practices, positive and negative experiences about your synagogue's religious services, programming and approach to spiritual care during the pandemic that might be helpful for other clergy to know. If you don't have enough room to write, please send your response to Linda Bernstein, Pharm.D., at lbernstein@ajrca.edu. (Optional question.)5 responses

- n/a
- Much learning about best way to use zoom - when to mute/unmute, how to instruct people, how to involve people. Spiritual care has been enhanced by number of people reaching out and support given via classes and group - while also feeling the loss of in person
- We have been trying to serve the community as best as we can with volunteers - no paid staff. It is challenging in many ways - from books to redesigning the service, duration of time, people can be in front of the scree for only a certain time.
- We find Zoom great for education, lousy for services and discussion.
- We have a variety of classes that are generally well-attended and very popular.

AJRCA/CA:

What would you do or not do differently if you were faced again with shut down orders in the future? (Optional question.)25 responses

- I would continue to add more elements of interest to our services - other musicians, congregant participation. I would call more congregants on the phone to check in with them.
- I am so glad that my dad synagogue started livestream before the pandemic and we had worked through the Halacha beforehand.
- I would like to see Zoom Shabbat services, but our rabbi is against doing it on Shabbat due to Halakhic purposes.
- Make sure to equip the elderly with cameras and microphones. Create a contact tree, less on the two professionals.
- I think we've done everything we've needed to do.
- I'd be better prepared with tech knowledge based on this experience. The two major problems are how seamlessly share pages of siddur and how to arrange for choir when we don't have equipment to synchronize voices if we had people sing separately and then combine the voices.
- Find a way to have interaction during services earlier on. Start virtual oneg right away.
- It is difficult with a large congregation with many needs
- Nothing. We are doing this well.
- Since the general response has been overwhelmingly positive I anticipate following the same or similar actions.
- I would continue to enhance our offerings and look to improve in any way possible.
- I would probably offer both Friday and Saturday services. So far, we've only had Friday night.
- Ignore them :) Just kidding. Look at Taiwan -- masks and social distancing only. Those at risk were encouraged to remain at home. No shut down at all, including schools. approximately 700 cases, 8 deaths and hit the 0 mark a couple of weeks ago....

- See if we could find a way to meet even MORE congregants needs
- I think our current response is as good as possible, under the circumstances; I am impressed with the clergy's creativity in this regard
- Be better prepared, if that's possible
- Would offer virtual daily minyanim. Shacharit and Mincha/Ma'arav
- start zooming services on shabbat and yom tov sooner
- Not applicable, do not have a synagogue
- I believe that the best we can do for congregants is to make them feel that we are still there for them. They always appreciate that their synagogue is thinking of them.
- Thanks for doing this!
- Status quo as during the pandemic.
- They probably would continue to do the same thing.

FEDERATION:

What would you do or not do differently if you were faced again with shut down orders in the future? (Optional question.)4 responses

- n/a
- Would continue regular outreach.
- We will be much better prepared due to all the efforts that have been put in and all the work that is being done. Also, the community is yearning for seeing each other and participating and waiting for the day when we all can meet in person.
- nothing

VIII. APPENDIX

B. AJRCA/CA Survey – See Attached

C. Jewish Community Federation Survey – See Attached