

WESTLAKE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



4/2/2021

2021 Congregational COVID-19 Survey

This paper reports the results of a congregation-wide survey executed March 26-30 regarding the impact, concerns, and plans for Westlake UMC to re-open as the COVID-19 crisis continues. 136 responses were received from 374 contacted for the survey.

Westlake United Methodist Church

2021 CONGREGATIONAL COVID-19 SURVEY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2020, Westlake United Methodist Church (“WUMC”) closed its buildings for all activities, e.g., pre-school, small group, Sunday school, worship services, in compliance with state and local guidance to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. In May 2020, a survey was conducted to gauge the hopes, fears, and concerns with re-opening.

In August 2020, Church Council prepared and approved WUMC’s Covid-19 Reopening Policy to provide a pathway for gatherings based on [Austin/Travis County guidelines](#). As the Covid-19 vaccine has been rolled out and Austin/Travis County has entered Stage 3, it was decided that a follow up survey of the congregation would be a useful tool in assessing changes in attitudes. The purposes of the survey include:

- Identify and quantify the concerns of the congregation regarding re-opening WUMC;
- Identify and quantify expectations for resuming worship on campus by Austin/Travis County Stage;
- Quantify vaccination rates;
- Gauge congregational feedback on existing online services;
- Provide the congregation with a mechanism to voice their concerns; and
- Provide the congregation with a mechanism to share what they see/feel WUMC is doing right.

Questions were grouped into the following segments:

- Demographics
- Current Participation
- Perceived Risk
- Vaccination Status
- Reopening Attitudes
- Online Participation

As this is an update of the 2020 survey, not all questions were reused, and new questions were created based on knowledge gained over the past year.

A committee including Rev. Tracey Beadle, Senior Pastor; Ellen Balthazar, Church Council Chair; Jim Burke, Outgoing Church Council Chair; and John Walters, Trustee Committee Co-chair, began work on a survey instrument to develop, execute and tabulate the survey and its results. The team wishes to thank the WUMC congregation for participating in the survey and providing honest feedback regarding their expectations and concerns related to the COVID crisis and the path forward to re-opening the church for activities. We honor those who completed the survey as we have learned much from your candid

responses. A special thanks to the WUMC staff for their herculean work during the Covid19 crisis to develop new ways to worship, engage the congregation to stay connected, and strive to keep the church operating.

Survey Response

WUMC received 136 responses to the survey, a 36.4% response rate for the population of 374. Statistically, these results represent an overall confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 6.71%. These terms are defined as:

The **confidence level** tells you how sure you can be. It is expressed as a percentage and represents how often the true percentage of the population who would pick an answer that lies within the confidence interval. The 95% confidence level means you can be 95% certain; the 99% confidence level means you can be 99% certain. Most researchers use the 95% confidence level.

The **confidence interval** (also called margin of error) is the plus-or-minus figure usually reported in newspaper or television opinion poll results. For example, if you use a confidence interval of 4 and 47% percent of your sample picks an answer you can be "sure" that if you had asked the question of the entire relevant population between 43% (47-4) and 51% (47+4) would have picked that answer.¹

To reach 5% and 4% confidence intervals, 190 and 231 responses respectively would be required. The team believes the effort required to achieve these results outweighs the benefits.

¹ (Creative Research Systems, 2012)

SURVEY RESULTS

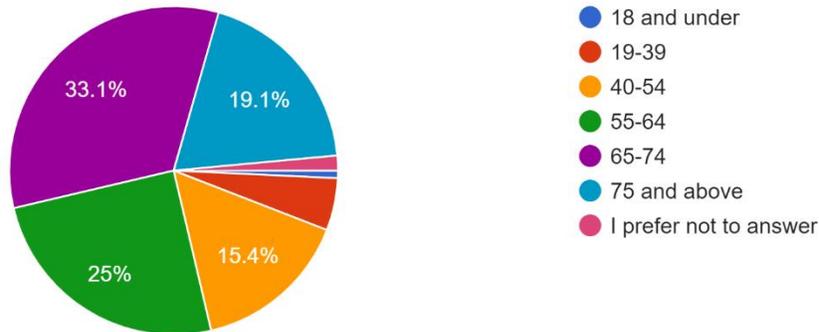
The charts and lists below detail the survey results by question, grouped by the categories defined above, rather than the order presented in the survey.

Demographic Questions

Question responses:

What is your age:

136 responses



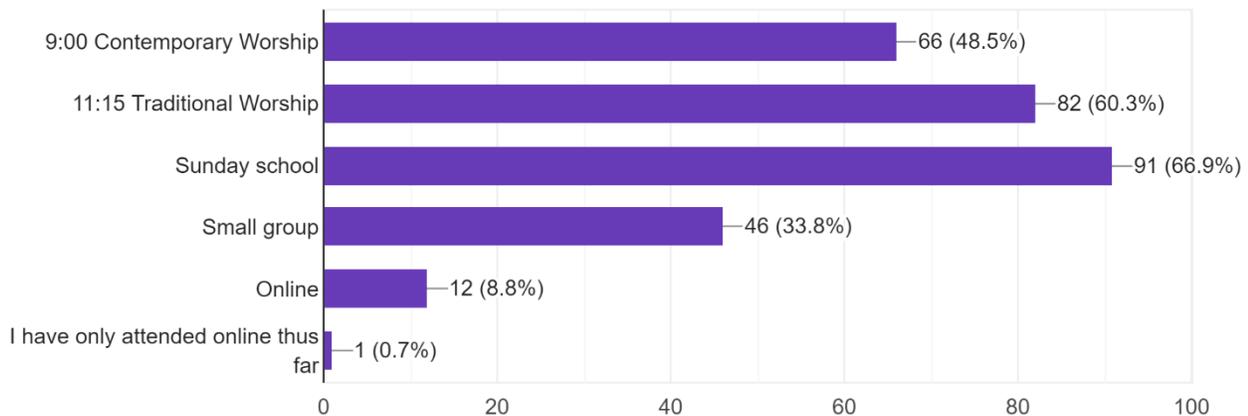
Current Participation

Question responses:

Prior to beginning online-only services, which church activities did you attend or participate?

Select as many as apply:

136 responses



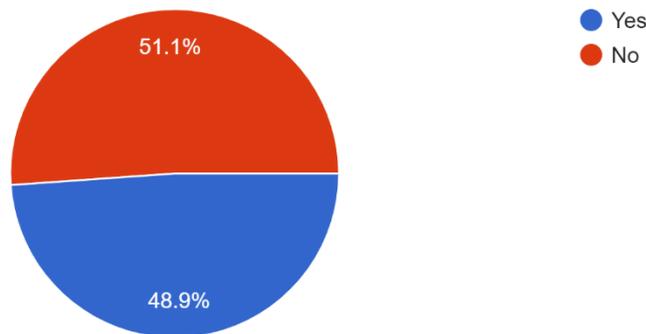
Survey respondents were about equally split between those who attended the 9:00 service, pre-COVID, and those who regularly attended the 11:15 service. Consistent with previous surveys, over half of worshippers also regularly attended a Sunday fellowship group (Sunday School).

Perceived Risks

Question response:

Do you consider yourself or someone in your home to be in one of the "high risk" categories for COVID-19?

133 responses



Count of Do you consider yourself or someone in your home to be in one of the "high risk" categories for COVID-19?	2021				2020			
	No	Yes	Grand Total	% Yes	No	Yes	Grand Total	% Yes
18 and under	1		1	0%		1	1	100%
19-39	7		7	0%	13	11	24	46%
40-54	16	4	20	20%	33	13	46	28%
55-64	19	14	33	42%	13	48	61	79%
65-74	16	29	45	64%	7	22	29	76%
75 and above	9	16	25	64%	1	1	2	50%
I prefer not to answer		2	2	100%	1	1	2	50%
Grand Total	68	65	133	48.9%	68	97	165	58.8%

Comparing the 2021 survey with the 2020, the percentage of respondents who feel at risk declined from 58.8% to 48.9%. This could be attributed to a number of factors including the response rate, the respondents' definition of perceived risk in 2020 versus 2021, having already been infected, or the number receiving the vaccine.

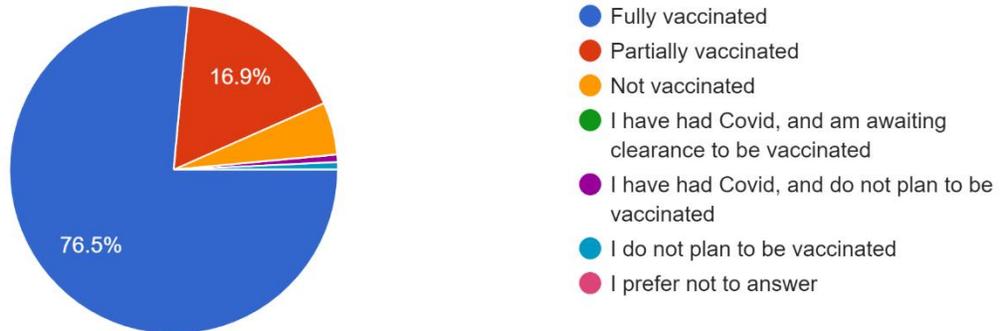
Vaccination Status

Question responses:

With the advent of vaccines to prevent/reduce spread of the virus, the survey asked participants to self-report the vaccination status for two time periods, Easter and May 1.

As of Easter Sunday, APRIL 4, what will be your vaccination status?

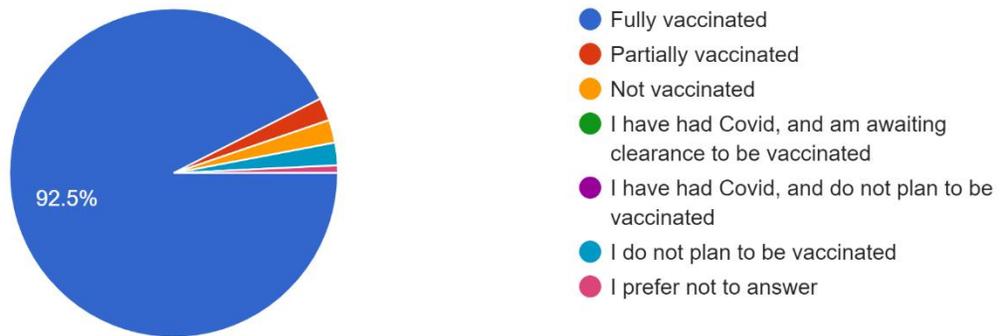
136 responses



Count of What is your age by vaccination status	18 and						75 and above	I prefer not to answer	Grand Total	%
	under	19-39	40-54	55-64	65-74					
Fully vaccinated		5	12	17	44	24	2	104	76.5%	
I do not plan to be vaccinated			1					1	0.7%	
I have had Covid, and do not plan to be vaccinated				1				1	0.7%	
Not vaccinated	1	1	2	2		1		7	5.1%	
Partially vaccinated		1	6	14	1	1		23	16.9%	
Grand Total	1	7	21	34	45	26	2	136	100%	

As of MAY 1, what will be your vaccination status?

134 responses



Count of What is your age by vaccination status	18 and						75 and above	I prefer not to answer	Grand Total	%
	under	19-39	40-54	55-64	65-74					
Fully vaccinated		6	17	31	45	23	2	124	91.2%	
I do not plan to be vaccinated			1	2				3	2.2%	
I prefer not to answer		1						1	0.7%	
Not vaccinated	1		1			1		3	2.2%	
Partially vaccinated			1	1		1		3	2.2%	
(blank)			1			1		2	1.5%	
Grand Total	1	7	21	34	45	26	2	136	100.0%	

The vaccination rate among the respondents is very high, with 76% being fully vaccinated by Easter and an anticipated 92% by May 1. This is in comparison to Travis County's rate of 10.6% for those age 16 and above.² These percentages may be skewed based on the number of respondents who are above 55.

² (Garcia-Buckalew, 2020)

Re-opening Attitudes

Question responses:

When the 2020 survey was released, the concept of having indoor versus outdoor services had not been contemplated. The previous survey did not make a distinction and the Austin/Travis County staging system provided a structure for guiding Church Council's policy for outdoor (Stage 3) and indoor (Stage 2) gatherings.

The 2020 survey asked:

When bans are lifted and social distancing measures are implemented by WUMC, which best describes your attitude toward returning to a worship service at church? Select one:

164 responses



In this survey, the question was broken out based on outdoor and indoor gatherings:

Austin/Travis County is currently at STAGE 3 which allows WUMC to follow its re-opening policy for outdoor gatherings. Which best describes your attitude regarding outdoor worship services? Select one:

135 responses



Count of What is your age by attitude:	18 and under	19-39	40-54	55-64	65-74	75 and above	I prefer not to answer	Grand Total	%
I will remain online-only indefinitely due to health or distance constraints					3	2		5	3.7%
I will return the first opportunity we have, understanding safety precautions will be in place.	1	7	17	24	28	12	1	90	66.2%
I will wait several additional weeks before I attend.			2	3	2	2		9	6.6%
It may be quite a while before I return.				4	6	3	1	14	10.3%
Not sure			2	3	5	7		17	12.5%
(blank)					1			1	0.7%
Grand Total	1	7	21	34	45	26	2	136	100.0%

When Austin/Travis County reaches STAGE 2, WUMC's re-opening policy allows for indoor gatherings. When available, which best describes your attitude regarding indoor worship services? Select one:

134 responses



Count of What is your age by attitude:	18 and under	19-39	40-54	55-64	65-74	75 and above	I prefer not to answer	Grand Total	%
I will remain online-only indefinitely due to health or distance constraints				2	1	1		4	3.0%
I will return the first opportunity we have, understanding safety precautions will be in place.	1	5	13	22	28	18	1	88	65.7%
I will wait several additional weeks before I attend.		2	2	4	3	2		13	9.7%
It may be quite a while before I return.			2	3	8	1	1	15	11.2%
Not sure			4	3	3	4		14	10.4%
Grand Total	1	7	21	34	45	26	2	134	100.0%

This area has the largest change from the previous survey, where 15.9% in 2020 said they would return at the first opportunity versus 66.7% and 65.7% for outdoor and indoor gatherings, respectively, in 2021.

Online Participation

Question responses:

2020 Survey:

After we resume in-person worship, how likely are you to participate in online worship as an alternative to in-person worship?

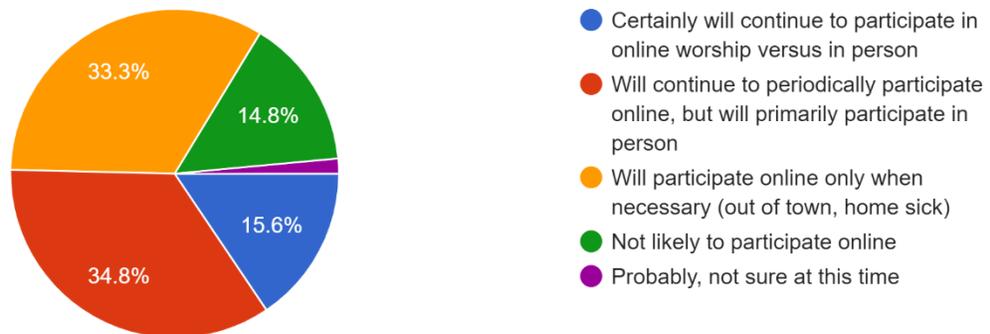
163 responses



2021 Update Survey, with simplified responses:

After we resume in-person worship, how likely are you to participate in online worship as an alternative to in-person worship?

135 responses



Comparing surveys, the anticipated online participation moves very little from 2020 to 2021.

METHODOLOGY

Survey Development and Publication

The survey instrument is an update to the original 2020 survey which was crafted from a sample COVID-19 church survey from Lifeway Church, with additional questions coming from other sample church surveys identified by committee members and WUMC staff. A mass email from the church was sent to 374 addresses on file which included members and non-members alike. A preliminary deadline for responses was set for March 30.

Question Formats

Questions for the survey used a variety of formats, including yes/no, multiple choice, and short/long text responses. The formats used were selected to generate both quantitative and qualitative answers, as well as provide a basis for cross tabulation, e.g., tabulating the results of a question based on the results of another question. For example, tabulating the perceived risk in relation to the age range of the respondent.

Tabulation and Report

After the closing date, the team met to review the survey results and create cross-tabulations as needed to identify relationships between the questions in an effort to better “read between the lines,” and provide WUMC leadership with as much information as possible beyond the raw data in order to plan and make decisions regarding the re-opening effort.

Survey Questions

The survey questions selected offered the opportunity to capture the following information and provide a basis for cross-tabulation. The question main segments included:

- Demographics
- Current Participation
- Perceived Risk
- Vaccination Status
- Reopening Attitudes
- General Feedback

Online Participation Questions related to children’s Sunday school and youth programs were not included in this survey. Additional targeted surveys will be used to engage and collect responses from those congregants later.

Demographic Questions

Demographic questions were included to capture information related to the congregants. The questions were distributed throughout the survey. Questions included:

What is your age:

- 18 and under
- 19-39
- 40-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 and above
- I prefer not to answer

Current Participation

Current participation questions were included to gauge the relative level the respondents were actively engaged in activities at WUMC. Questions included:

Prior to beginning online-only services, which church activities did you attend or participate? Select as many as apply:

- 9:00 Contemporary Worship
- 11:15 Traditional Worship
- Sunday school
- Small group
- Online
- I have only attended online thus far

Perceived Risks

A single perceived risk question allowed the respondents to self-identify their level of risk in relation to the COVID-19 crisis.

Do you consider yourself or someone in your home to be in one of the "high risk" categories for COVID-19?

Yes

No

Vaccination Status

Two questions allowed the respondents to self-identify their vaccination status for Easter Sunday and May 1st.

As of Easter Sunday, APRIL 4, what will be your vaccination status?

Fully vaccinated

Partially vaccinated

Not vaccinated

I have had Covid, and am awaiting clearance to be vaccinated

I have had Covid, and do not plan to be vaccinated

I do not plan to be vaccinated

I prefer not to answer

As of MAY 1, what will be your vaccination status?

- Fully vaccinated
- Partially vaccinated
- Not vaccinated
- I have had Covid, and am awaiting clearance to be vaccinated
- I have had Covid, and do not plan to be vaccinated
- I do not plan to be vaccinated
- I prefer not to answer

Re-opening Attitudes

Questions regarding re-opening attitudes were created to gauge the respondent's willingness to return to activities on the WUMC campus based on Austin/Travis County Covid-19 Stage and outdoor versus indoor gatherings. Questions included:

Austin/Travis County is currently at STAGE 3 which allows WUMC to follow its re-opening policy for outdoor gatherings. Which best describes your attitude regarding outdoor worship services? Select one:

- I will return the first opportunity we have, understanding safety precautions will be in place.
- I will wait several additional weeks before I attend.
- It may be quite a while before I return.
- I will remain online-only indefinitely due to health or distance constraints
- Not sure

When Austin/Travis County reaches STAGE 2, WUMC's re-opening policy allows for indoor gatherings. When available, which best describes your attitude regarding indoor worship services? Select one:

- I will return the first opportunity we have, understanding safety precautions will be in place.
- I will wait several additional weeks before I attend.
- It may be quite a while before I return.
- I will remain online-only indefinitely due to health or distance constraints
- Not sure

Online Participation

An online participation question was included to quantify the respondent's attitude toward participating online in the future.

After we resume in-person worship, how likely are you to participate in online worship as an alternative to in-person worship?

- Certainly will continue to participate in online worship versus in person
- Will continue to periodically participate online, but will primarily participate in person
- Will participate online only when necessary (out of town, home sick)
- Not likely to participate online
- Probably, not sure at this time

General Feedback

Last, a general feedback question was included to allow the respondent to provide feedback not covered in the survey questions. This question will provide an additional avenue to identify risks, concerns, and expectations from the congregation.

Any comments or suggestions?

Long answer text

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