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Lockdown worship in the Church of England: predicting affect responses to leading or accessing online and in-church services

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ABSTRACT

This study draws on data provided to the *Covid-19 & Church-21 Survey* by 2,017 Anglicans (clergy and laity) living in England to explore the experiences of those leading and those accessing online (pre-recorded and live-streamed) and in-church services within the Church of England between January and July 2021. The data demonstrated that for both those leading services and those accessing services, online worship was less rewarding than in-church worship, even as expressed within the context of Covid restrictions. Moreover, pre-recorded online services were less rewarding than live-streamed services both for those leading and for those accessing services. Among leaders, the return to in-church services was most rewarding for older leaders, lay ministers, Anglo-Catholics, those working in rural churches, extraverts and the emotionally stable.

Introduction

Covid-19 had profound impact on all aspects of life in England, and the life of the Established Church was no exception. On 23 March 2020, the Government imposed a national lockdown. On the following day, the Church of England closed all its churches, including for private prayer and including for access by the clergy. The only grounds on which churches could remain open was for providing vital services, like food banks (Cranmer and Pocklington 2020; McGowan 2020; Marshall 2022). The stark choice was either for worship to cease or for worship to migrate quickly to online platforms or to some other form of delivery to people in their homes. When churches were reopened after the lockdown, what was on offer was far-removed from what had been the case before the pandemic. Services in churches were arranged within a Covid-safe environment. Participants were required to maintain social distancing, to wear face masks and to refrain from singing. Communion, if given at all, usually involved just the bread and not the wine.

In response to the changing landscape, the research community was not slow to explore the impact on faith communities. Four different strands of empirical research emerged from such initiatives in respect of the Christian churches: exploring the levels of provision of online services, exploring the new accessibility of online services to the wider public, exploring the responses of church members to accessing online services and exploring the responses of church leaders to providing online services.

In terms of the provision of online services, Eames (2021) reported on data gathered in 2020 by the Church of England Research and Statistics Unit, focusing on what services were offered by local churches to people at home during 2020. Responses were obtained from over 12,700 Church of England churches (82% response). From these data, Eames (2021, 3) distilled five key points regarding the provision of 'church at home', that includes online services among other forms of delivery. First, according to this analysis, 'church at home services' were offered in a variety of ways, including by email, post and telephone, alongside online provision. Second, according to this definition, during the lockdown between March and July 2020, 78% of churches, 80% of parishes and 91% of benefices offered church at home. Within this mixed provision, 69% of churches offered live-streamed or pre-recorded online services. Third, the majority of churches were continuing to offer church-at-home provision in October 2020, although by this time most churches were also open for off-line in-person services. Fourth, church-at-home provision was related to the pre-pandemic size of the congregation, but not to geographical location. Large churches were more likely than small churches to have offered church-at-home provision. Once church size was taken into account, there was no difference between rural and urban churches in the church-at-home provision offered. Fifth, although church-at-home attendances were collected by many churches, these data were not recorded in a sufficiently systematic way to facilitate useful aggregated data.

Drawing on data from the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey*, that was live between 8 May 2020 and 23 July 2020, Village and Francis (2020) compared the online provision offered by 274 stipendiary parochial clergy serving in rural areas and that offered by 507 stipendiary parochial clergy serving elsewhere. In both areas, about three-quarters of clergy reported that their church offered online services every Sunday. In rural areas, 26% offered services every weekday, compared with a significantly higher figure of 36% for churches elsewhere. Combining these figures, 23% of rural clergy were offering services every day of the week, compared with 32% elsewhere. Rural churches seemed more likely to offer Services of the Word on Sundays, but less likely to offer Sunday or weekday Communion.

In terms of the accessibility of virtual church to the wider public, surveys reported that more people were now engaging with online services than had previously attended church services and that online services were attracting a younger audience. For example, Sherwood (2020) reported on a survey of more than 2,000 people, undertaken by Tearfund in April 2020. This survey found that one in five of those who had tuned into an online or broadcast service had previously not attended church services. Moreover, one in three young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 had accessed an online or broadcast religious service during the previous 4 weeks, compared with one in five adults over the age of 55.

In a press release on 16 March 2021, the Church of England celebrated the way in which 'Millions join worship online as churches bring services into the home in pandemic year'. The Church of England's national online service alone attracted more

than 3.7 million views since the Covid restrictions first closed churches. In this celebration, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby said, 'God has been with us and has done something new which we could not have imagined a year ago. We have sung the Lord's song in a virtual foreign land'. The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, was more explicit saying:

> Many churches report that they have more people participating in their online services than used to meet in person. Of course, I hope these new online worshippers will join us in person one day. But even if they don't, we must carry on nurturing these online communities and seeing it as a way of reaching out to new people and building new communities of faith.

In terms of exploring the responses of church members, surveys reported that there had been a lively response to the availability of online services. For example, Nye and Lobley (2020) reported on a survey of 288 Christians undertaken between August and September 2020. This survey found that prior to the lockdown over 95% of the participants had attended church services, with very few making any use of online provision. By September 2020, two-fifths of the participants were using YouTube and a quarter were using Facebook. Nye and Lobley (2020) concluded that 'overall, the response to questions regarding novel or previously unused means of worship was positive' (18). The survey undertaken by the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture (CSCC, 2021) reported that 63% of their participants had positively mentioned online provision as helping them to remain connected with their worshipping community (71). In terms of positive benefits, the report noted specifically how in some rural areas online services had provided a new way to unite multiple congregations across a benefice within a single service (71). In terms of negative implications of the move to online services, the report suggests that online provision is unable to mitigate isolation or loneliness (49) and that 'digital poverty' limits involvement (26), while low-level skills limit effectiveness.

A series of papers emerging from the quantitative data generated by the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey* drew attention to the effect of a range of individual differences in shifting attitudes towards online worship among Church of England laity. In terms of sex differences, Francis and Village (2021a) found that, while nearly two-thirds (63%) of women agreed that online worship is a great liturgical tool, the proportion fell to half among men (49%). In terms of psychological differences, Francis and Village (2021b) found that, while 65% of feeling types agreed that online worship is a great liturgical tool, the proportion fell to 56% among thinking types.

Also, drawing on the quantitative data generated by the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey*, Village and Francis (2020) reported on the experiences of 2,824 members of the Church of England who received ministry during lockdown, comparing the responses of those who lived in rural areas with those living elsewhere. They reported that 90% of rural participants and 92% of other participants accessed services online, and did so often using multiple sources. Of those living in rural areas 79% accessed online services from their own church, 40% from another church in the Church of England, 17% from another denomination, 24% from a diocesan service and 31% from the Church of England at a national level.

Drawing on the qualitative data generated by the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey*, McKenna (2022) analysed the comments made by 133 lay members of the Church of England residing in rural areas who voiced their views on the move to online services.

McKenna drew the following conclusions from her analysis. The move to online services was, overall, positively received. Appreciation was shown for what local clergy had achieved and for the ministry that they had provided, especially in the light of the challenges they faced. For some participants, the potential of online services engendered a new-found engagement with faith. Among committed churchgoers, there was greater participation in the daily offices of morning and evening prayer, in compline and in prayer groups. There was also a sense that the local church was making itself more accessible for fringe members and in that way increasing levels of participation.

McKenna also noted the reservations voiced by these rural churchgoers. For some, Holy Communion did not translate well into an online format. For some there was a deep sense of loss and deprivation when they could not access their local church, when they could not physically engage as part of the local worshipping community, and when they could not sing. For some, the provision of online services was hampered by poor Wi-Fi, inadequate technology and a lack of professional delivery.

Reviewing the responses of participants in online rituals across a wide range of faith communities, Edelman et al. (2021) concluded that there had been 'considerable innovation' in digital worship during the pandemic and that some of these innovations 'will strengthen British religious life in the long term' (133). At the same time, Edelman et al. (2021) noted 'deep dissatisfaction' with online rituals, observed that 'for most people, the move to online ritual had been one of loss, not gain' (133) and concluded that 'by almost every metric, the experience of pandemic rituals had been worse than those that came before them. They are perceived as less meaningful, less communal, less spiritual and less effective' (7). Another core finding from this project concerned the age effect on appreciation of online worship. Younger respondents under the age of 40 had a consistently less positive experience of online worship than people in the older age group.

In terms of exploring the responses of church leaders, surveys reported a high uptake of digital facilities. For example, the survey undertaken by the Centre for the Study of Christianity & Culture (CSCC 2021) reported that 91% of church leaders had been able to provide online services and teaching and 73% had been able to provide online prayer and pastoral support (25).

A series of papers from the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey* drew attention to the effect of a range of individual differences in shaping attitudes towards online worship among Church of England clergy. For example, Francis and Village (2021c) found that, while 57% of stipendiary clergy agreed that online worship is a great liturgical tool, the proportion fell to 46% among retired clergy. Francis and Village (2021d) found that, while 62% of Evangelical clergy agreed that online worship is a great liturgical tool, the proportion fell to 46% among Anglo-Catholic clergy.

Taking a different perspective on data provided by the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey*, Village and Francis (2021a) combined the responses of clergy and laity to explore the effects of personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (extraversion, sensing, thinking and judging), social location (ordained, education, geographical area), theological stance (traditional worship, conservative doctrine, conservative morality) and church tradition (Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical, Broad Church, Charismatic) on scores recorded on a six-item Pro Virtual Church Scale (α = .79). These data demonstrated that women were more positive than men; that there was a curvilinear relationship with age, with positivity to virtual church peaking among those in their 40s and 50s, and with

younger and older people being less positive. The strongest effect of psychological type was that feeling types recorded a more positive attitude to virtual church than thinking types. Among social location variable, ordination had no significant effect, but those with higher education tended to be less favourably disposed towards virtual church, as were those living in inner cities. Among theological variables, liberals were more favourably disposed than conservatives towards virtual church. Anglo-Catholics tended to be less favourable towards virtual church, while Evangelicals and Charismatics were more favourable towards virtual church.

Edelman et al. (2021) reported a large gap within the Church of England between the experience reported by clergy and by their congregations. This gap was not found within other religious groups. For Church of England clergy, 'their experience of ritual during the pandemic was only marginally worse than that of ritual before the pandemic' (114), while their congregations reported that it was much worse.

Research question

Initially, the attention of the research community on lockdown worship was focused on the provision and reception of online services. However, as churches were reopened and Covid rules were applied to reshape conventional in-church services, attention was extended to focus on the provision and reception of in-church services during the pandemic.

Faced with the third lockdown in England in January 2021, we designed a new survey to follow-on from the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey* that had been live between 8 May and 23 July 2020. Now 9 months from the beginning of the first lockdown, we were able to focus on affect responses to leading or to accessing both online worship and in-church services during the pandemic. Drawing on these data, the present paper addresses the following four research questions concerned with assessing:

- the proportions of the participants leading and accessing services during the pandemic
- the types of services led and accessed during the pandemic
- the affect responses to leading and to accessing pre-recorded online services, live-streamed online services and in-church services during the pandemic
- the predictors of individual differences in affect responses to leading and to accessing online services and in-church services during the pandemic

Method

Procedure

During the third lockdown in England, an online survey was promoted through the online and paper versions of the *Church Times*, the main newspaper of the Church of England, as well as directly through Church of England dioceses. The survey, named *Covid-19 & Church-21*, was delivered through the Qualtrics XM platform and was available from 22 January to 23 July 2021. It was designed to be used by various denominations, and the total response was 5,853, of whom 2,017 were Anglicans living in England who completed sufficient responses to be included in the study.

Participants

The final sample comprised 55% women and 45% men, the majority (54%) were in their 50s or 60s, and 34% were clergy active in ministry (Table 1). Just over half (51%) of the sample was not in active authorised ministry (ordained or lay), and nearly all of these were lay people, plus a few retired clergy who were no longer licenced to officiate. Just under a fifth (19%) of the sample were stipendiary clergy working in parishes. Although there are no accurate independent measures of the profile of the Church of England members as a whole, similar surveys suggest the procedure captures a broad spectrum of the clergy and laity in the denomination (Francis, Robbins, and Astley 2005; Village 2018a). There was an oversampling of clergy, and an underrepresentation of younger adults and Evangelicals, which reflects the readership of the *Church Times* newspaper.

Instruments

Experience of services scales

The survey contained six blocks of items related to leading online pre-recorded services, leading online live-streamed services and leading in-church services; accessing online pre-recorded services, accessing online live-streamed services and accessing in-church services. Each block was headed by a question that asked respondents if they had done the relevant activity, and only those who had were shown the corresponding items. For example, the leading in-church services block was headed with the following rubric: 'This section is for those who have led in-church services (leading liturgy, presiding at Eucharist, preaching, or leading singing) since the lockdowns began in March 2020. Have you been responsible for leading in-church services since the pandemic began?' The accessing in-church services block was headed by the following rubric: 'This section is for

Table 1. Participant profile.

		%
Sex	Male	45
	Female	55
Age	20s	2
	30s	4
	40s	10
	50s	20
	60s	34
	70s	26
	80s+	5
Location	Rural	37
	Town	31
	Suburban	24
	Inner city	8
Church tradition	Anglo-Catholic	28
	Broad Church	52
	Evangelical	20
Ministry status	Stipendiary parochial	19
	Stipendiary extra-parochial	2
	Active SSM/retired clergy	13
	Lay minister	14
	Not licenced	51

Note. N = 2,017. SSM, self-supporting ministry.

those who have accessed in-church services led by others since the pandemic began. Have you accessed in-church services led by other people during the pandemic?' This excluded from the access sample those who led online or church services, but who had not accessed services led by others.

Each block contained a set of Likert items assessing affect response to leading or accessing three types of service: online pre-recorded, online live-streamed and socially distanced services in church. Each item had a five-point response scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each set of items was introduced with questions or statements relevant to the activity. Those who led services were asked 'How would you rate the process of producing the [pre-recorded/live-streamed/in-church] services you helped to lead? (Please click a button for EACH item)'. Those who accessed services were given this statement 'During or after these [pre-recorded/live-streamed/in-church] services I usually felt: (Please click a button for EACH item)'. Items were slightly different for leading versus accessing services, reflecting the likely differences in those two sorts of activity, but each included affect that was positive (e.g. energising, satisfying or fulfilling) or negative (e.g. detached, spiritually draining or distracted).

Summated rating scales were developed from these items as measures of affective response to leading or accessing worship services during the pandemic. Item responses were initially examined by factor analyses (principal components extraction and varimax rotation) and items removed to produce two groups of scales of six items each, one set for leading services and the other for accessing services (Tables 2 and 3). All scales were unidimensional and had high internal consistency reliability as measured by Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach 1951).

Psychological type and emotional temperament

Psychological variables were assessed using the revised version of the Francis Psychological Type and Emotional Temperament Scales (FPTETS), a development of the instrument proposed by Village and Francis (in press). This 50-item instrument comprises four sets of 10 forced-choice items related to each of the four components of psychological type: orientation (extraversion or introversion), perceiving process (sensing or intuition), judging process (thinking or feeling) and attitude towards the outer world (judging or perceiving), and 10 items related to emotional temperament (calm or volatile). The parent instrument, the Francis Psychological Type Scales (containing the four measures of psychological type) has been shown to function as an appropriate measure of psychological-type preferences in a range of church-related contexts (see, for example, Francis, Laycock, and Brewster 2017; Francis and Village 2012; Payne, Lewis, and Francis 2021; Village 2021). In this sample, the alpha reliabilities were .84 for the EI scale, .79 for the SN scale, .76 for the TF scale, .82 for the JP scale and .84 for the CV scale. Scores (rather than binary preferences) were used to indicate inclinations for extraversion, sensing, thinking, judging and emotional volatility.

Church tradition

Church tradition was assessed using a seven-point bipolar scale labelled 'Anglo-Catholic' at one end and 'Evangelical' at the other. It is a good indication of differences in belief and practice in the Church of England (Randall 2005; Village 2012) and was used to identify Anglo-Catholic (scoring 1–2), Broad Church (3–5) and Evangelical (6–7) respondents. In

the Church of England, Anglo-Catholics tend to be liturgical traditionalists but more liberal on moral issues, while the reverse is true for Evangelicals (Village 2012, 2018b). Anglo-Catholic and Broad Church were used as dummy variables in the regression analyses with Evangelicals as the reference group.

Contextual variables

Location was measured by a single item with three responses: 'rural', 'town/suburb' and 'inner city'. The first and last categories were used as dummy variables in regression analyses.

Ordination status was considered a proxy for different roles and status within the church context (1 = clergy, 0 = laity). A more detailed variable, ministry status, was determined by separate follow-up questions for ordained and lay respondents and combined into a single variable with five categories: stipendiary parochial clergy, stipendiary extra-parochial clergy, self-supporting ministers (SSM) or retired clergy with permission to officiate, lay people in authorised ministries and lay people or clergy who were not licenced for ministry.

Analysis

The first stage of analysis was to examine patterns of leading and accessing different sorts of services, and frequencies of responses to individual items related to affect response. The second stage was to explore predictors of affect response. Bivariate correlations were used to indicate associations between the predictor variables before independent effects were tested with linear multiple regressions. Regressions were done stepwise initially, but only the final models are presented in the table. All analyses employed procedures in SPSS 28 (IBM_Corporation 2021).

Results and discussion

Proportions leading and accessing services

Of the 2,017 people in the sample, half indicated that they had led services of some kind, and nearly all (94%) has accessed services led by others (Table 2). The 113 people who accessed neither online nor church services were clergy or lay ministers who led services but did not access services led by others. Of the 836 who led online services (41% of the total sample), 64% had led pre-recorded services and 77% had led live-streamed services. Of the 1,917 who accessed online services (95% of the total sample), 65% had accessed pre-recorded services and 78% had accessed live-streamed services. Thus, live-streamed services were more frequently identified than pre-recorded services both by those who led online services and those who accessed online services. The proportion of individuals within different ministry groups that led online worship varied, as might be expected: 93% of 380 stipendiary parish clergy, 67% of self-supporting or retired clergy with permission to officiate, 54% of licenced lay ministers and 10% of those not licenced. Equivalent figures for leading services in church were 99%, 78%, 53% and 10%, so participation in leading was slightly higher among stipendiary parish clergy for in-church than online services, but about the same for lay people.

Table 2. Proportions of the participants leading and accessing services during the pandemic.

	Leading services				Accessing services		
	N	% of total sample	% of those leading		*N*	% of total sample	% of those accessing
Online only	126	6	13	Online only	568	28	30
Church only	165	8	17	Church only	89	4	5
Both	710	35	71	Both	1,247	62	66
Sub-total	**1,001**	**50**	**100**	**Sub-total**	**1,904**	**94**	**100**
Neither	1,016	50		Neither	113	6	
Total	**2,017**	**100**		**Total**	**2,017**	**100**	
	Type of online service led				**Type of online service accessed**		
	N	%	%		*N*	%	%
Not specified	36	2	4	Not specified	138	7	7
PR only	155	8	19	PR only	285	14	15
LS only	266	13	32	LS only	538	27	28
Both	379	19	45	Both	956	47	50
Sub-total	**836**	**41**	**100**	**Sub-total**	**1,917**	**95**	**100**
Neither	1,181	59		Neither	100	5	
Total	**2,017**	**100**		**Total**	**2,017**	**100**	

Note. PR, pre-recorded; LS, live-streamed.

Table 3. Types of services led and accessed during the pandemic.

	Led	Accessed
N =	836	1815
Online services	%	%
Service of the Word: pre-recorded	50	54
Service of the Word: live-streamed	61	59
Holy Communion: pre-recorded	30	39
Holy Communion: live-streamed	46	61
Children/Youth/Family worship: pre-recorded	23	17
Children/Youth/Family worship: live-streamed	25	16
	Led	Accessed
N =	875	1336
In-church services	%	%
BCP matins/evensong	17	12
BCP Communion	23	20
Common Worship Service of the Word	51	36
Common Worship Communion	78	77
Children/Youth/Family worship	21	12

Where people specified the type of services that they led or attended, online live-streamed seemed to be slightly more frequent for both Services of the Word and Holy Communion (Table 3). Services that specifically included younger age groups were less frequent, and live-streamed and pre-recorded were more evenly matched. Of the 1,815

who reported the type of online service accessed, 73% had accessed pre-recorded and/or live-streamed Holy Communion. Of 1,336 who reported the type of in-church service attended, 86% had accessed Book of Common Prayer and/or Common Worship Holy Communion. Online may have reduced access to communion, but only slightly in this sample.

Affect responses to leading and accessing worship services

The proportions agreeing or disagreeing with items in the experience of services scales gives an indication of how different sorts of engagement were received within the sample. According to Table 4, leading live-streamed worship emerged as a more rewarding activity than creating pre-recorded services, with a higher proportion agreeing that it was more energising (55% versus 47%), spiritually rewarding (61% versus 48%) or fulfiling (62% versus 51%), and fewer agreeing that it left them feeling more detached (27% versus 47%). Leading in-church worship emerged as more rewarding than either of the online types of service, with higher proportions agreeing it was energising (56%), satisfying (71%), spiritually rewarding (74%) or fulfiling (66%).

A similar picture emerged among those accessing rather than leading services (Table 5), with higher reported levels for being energised (45% pre-recorded, 50% live-streamed and 55% in-church), inspired (51% pre-recorded, 50% live-streamed and 60% in-church) and fulfilled (36% pre-recorded, 38% live-streamed and 56% in-church). For negative responses, the pattern was reversed for feeling detached (41% pre-recorded, 33%

Table 4. Scale properties for leading services affect response.

	CITC	Agree %	Not certain %	Disagree %
Leading pre-recorded				
Alpha = .87				
Energising	.68	47	23	30
Satisfying	.73	66	18	16
Spiritually rewarding	.78	48	25	27
Fulfiling	.82	51	25	24
Spiritually draining[a]	.62	27	28	45
Detached[a]	.59	47	19	33
Leading live-streamed				
Alpha = .88				
Energising	.69	55	22	23
Satisfying	.77	66	17	17
Spiritually rewarding	.79	61	21	18
Fulfiling	.78	62	23	15
Spiritually draining[a]	.55	28	24	48
Detached[a]	.57	27	23	50
Leading in-church				
Alpha = .89				
Energising	.70	56	23	21
Satisfying	.80	71	15	14
Spiritually rewarding	.82	74	14	12
Fulfiling	.80	66	20	14
Spiritually draining[a]	.51	26	20	54
Detached[a]	.65	23	16	60

Note. [a]These items were reverse coded. CITC, corrected item-total correlation.

Table 5. Scale properties for accessing services affect response.

	CITC	Agree %	Not certain %	Disagree %
Accessing pre-recorded				
Alpha = .90				
Energised	.78	45	28	27
Inspired	.76	51	27	22
Fulfilled	.75	36	35	30
Detached[a]	.75	41	19	41
Unmoved[a]	.76	24	22	54
Distracted[a]	.63	33	25	43
Accessing live-streamed				
Alpha = .91				
Energised	.79	50	25	25
Inspired	.78	50	28	22
Fulfilled	.76	38	33	29
Detached[a]	.73	33	20	47
Unmoved[a]	.79	23	20	57
Distracted[a]	.68	31	24	45
Accessing in-church				
Alpha = .92				
Energised	.80	55	27	18
Inspired	.79	60	25	15
Fulfilled	.76	56	27	17
Detached[a]	.75	18	13	69
Unmoved[a]	.77	12	17	71
Distracted[a]	.71	14	20	66

Note. [a]These items were reverse coded. CITC, corrected item-total correlation.

live-streamed and 18% in-church), unmoved (24% pre-recorded, 23% live-streamed and 12% in-church) and distracted (33% pre-recorded, 31% live-streamed and 14% in-church).

In general, it seemed that the experience of live-streamed online worship was slightly poorer than the experience of worshipping in church, and the experience of pre-recorded worship was less good than the experience of live-streamed worship.

Predictors of service affect responses

The independent variables showed some correlations with one another (Table 6), which may partly have been due to the profile of the sample, and partly to known contingencies within the Church of England or the wider population. For example, the proportion of women among clergy was lower than among laity, reflecting the historic bar of women from ordination. Age profiles varied with location, with slightly more older people in rural areas and younger people in inner cities. There were also correlations among the psychological variables: women tended to score lower on thinking than on feeling (a trend within the wider population according to Kendall 1998), and also score higher on emotional volatility (also a trend within the wider population according to Eysenck and Eysenck 1991). These correlations were small, but suggested multiple regression was needed to test the independent effects of predictor variables on service affect responses.

Table 6. Correlation matrix of predictor variables.

		12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
1	Female	.14***	.00	−.19***	.08***	.02	.13***	−.08***	−.07***	−.02	−.16***	−.01
2	Age	−.19***	−.01	−.01	.09***	.01	.04*	.03	−.17***	.15***	−.15***	
3	Ordained	−.08***	−.11***	−.10***	−.24***	.07**	−.07**	.04	.03	.01		
4	Rural	−.08***	−.07**	−.06*	−.06*	.07**	.07**	−.05*	−.22***			
5	Inner city	−.02	−.02	.01	.00	.03	−.10***	.10***				
6	Anglo-Catholic	.04	.04	.02	−.01	−.09***	−.65***					
7	Broad Church	.01	−.05*	−.05*	.00	.02						
8	Extraversion	−.14***	−.21***	−.18***	−.18***							
9	Sensing	.06**	.43***	.12***								
10	Thinking	.06*	.28***									
11	Judging	.07**										
12	Emotional volatility											

Note. N = 2,017. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

There was no difference between men and women in the affect responses to leading or accessing any type of online or in-church services (Table 7). It seemed that the affect response to worship online or in church during the lockdown was not strongly gendered. There was a more consistent variation with age however, with older people tending to have a more positive affect experience in leading and accessing online worship than did younger people. This was less apparent in leading in-church services and there was no difference for those accessing services in church.

There were no significant differences between clergy and laity in the affect response to leading online worship, whether pre-recorded or live-streamed. Clergy did, however, report less positive experience for leading in-church worship and experiencing pre-recorded, live-streamed and in-church services led by others. Examination of more detailed ministry status showed it was generally stipendiary parochial clergy who had the poorest experiences, with lay ministers and those not licenced who reported the best experiences. Perhaps, those most used to leading worship pre-pandemic found it hardest to engage with worship led by others during the pandemic.

Table 7. Multiple linear regressions of service affect response variables.

	Leading services			Accessing services		
	PR	LS	CH	PR	LS	CH
N =	496	601	823	1145	1371	1213
Female	−.05	.06	.00	.01	.02	−.01
Age	.26***	.22***	.07*	.19***	.14***	−.02
Ordained	−.07	−.04	−.10**	−.11***	−.16***	−.14***
Rural	.02	−.02	.09**	−.02	.01	−.01
Inner city	−.01	.04	.04	−.02	−.03	.05
Anglo-Catholic	−.07	−.13**	.12**	−.11**	−.16***	.07
Broad Church	−.02	−.05	.04	−.03	−.08*	−.02
Extraversion	.06	.01	.07*	.04	.07*	.06*
Sensing	−.08	−.14**	.04	−.01	.00	.03
Thinking	−.04	−.03	−.03	−.09**	−.08**	−.03
Judging	.02	.04	.03	.05	.01	−.05
Emotional volatility	−.09*	−.08*	−.13***	−.03	−.05	−.13***

Note. N = 2,017. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. PR, pre-recorded; LS, live-streamed; CH, in-church.

There were few differences in affect responses among those in difference locations, either for leading or accessing worship. The only significant difference was that those leading in-church services in rural areas reported slightly better experiences than those leading in-church services elsewhere. Perhaps, the generally lower numbers in rural churches meant that socially distanced worship was less disruptive from the previous patterns.

The main difference among church traditions was that Anglo-Catholics seemed to have poorer experiences when accessing online services (both pre-recorded and live-streamed) than did Anglican Evangelicals, although there was no difference when accessing in-church services. Anglo-Catholics leading in-church services reported more positive affect responses, while Anglo-Catholics leading live-streamed services reported less positive affect responses.

There were a few differences in affect responses associated with psychological-type scores. Those scoring higher on extraversion seemed to fare slightly better than introverts when it came to leading in-church services and when it came to accessing live-streamed or in-church services. There were no differences with pre-recorded services, which may have required less direct interactions. Those with higher sensing scores reported lower affect when leading live-streamed worship, but this was not apparent for those accessing this sort of worship. Higher thinking scores were associated with lower affect response when accessing both pre-recorded and live-streamed online worship, but not with leading services or accessing in-church services.

Emotional volatility predicted poorer experience of leading pre-recorded, live-streamed and in-church services, suggesting that each of these activities may have generated anxiety. On the other hand, emotional volatility predicted poorer experience of accessing in-church services but not of accessing pre-recorded or live-streamed services, suggesting that attending in-church services may have generated anxiety.

Conclusion

Drawing on data from 2,017 Anglicans living in England, generated by the *Covid-19 & Church-21 Survey* that was available online from 27 January to 23 July 2021, the present paper was designed to address four specific research questions.

The first research question concerned assessing the proportions of the participants leading and accessing three styles of services during the pandemic: pre-recorded online services, live-streamed online services and in-church services. The data demonstrated that the majority of those involved in leading services engaged with offering online provision (83%), with only 17% offering only in-church services. Of those offering online services, 45% had provided both pre-recorded services and live-streamed services. Live-streamed services were offered by slightly more leaders (77%) than pre-recorded services (64%). The majority of those involved in accessing services engaged with both online services and in-church services (66%). Very few only accessed in-church services (5%), and 30% only accessed online services. Of those accessing online services, 50% had accessed both live-streamed and pre-recorded services. Live-streamed services were accessed by slightly more participants (78%) than pre-recorded services (65%).

The second research question concerned assessing the type of services led and accessed during the pandemic. In terms of online services, the data demonstrated that more people were engaged in delivering Services of the Word than Holy Communion services. There was nonetheless an appetite among those accessing online services for Holy Communion. While 30% of the leaders offered pre-recorded services of Holy Communion, these were accessed by 39% of those accessing online services. While 46% of the leaders offered live-streamed services of Holy Communion, these were accessed by 61% of those accessing online services. In terms of in-church services, Common Worship Communion services was offered by 78% of the leaders and accessed by 77% of those accessing in-church services. Furthermore, BCP Communion was offered by 23% of the leaders and accessed by 20% of those accessing in-church services.

The third research question concerned assessing affect responses to leading and to accessing pre-recorded online services, live-streamed online services and in-church services during the pandemic. From the perspective of those leading lockdown worship, it was clear that leading online worship was less rewarding than leading in-church worship, even as expressed within the context of Covid restrictions. Moreover, it was also clear that leading pre-recorded online services was less rewarding than leading live-streamed online services. For example, while 74% of those leading services found leading in-church services to be spiritually rewarding, the proportions fall to 62% among those leading live-streamed services and to 48% of those leading pre-recorded services. This same pattern was repeated among those who accessed lockdown worship. For example, while 18% of those accessing in-church services reported that they had felt detached from the service, the proportions rose to 33% among those accessing live-streamed services and to 41% among those accessing pre-recorded services.

The fourth research question concerned identifying the predictors of individual differences in affect responses to leading and to accessing online services and in-church services during the pandemic. We found no evidence that experience of either leading or accessing online services was gendered, which was unexpected given that in the first lockdown survey men were significantly less in favour of virtual church than were women (Village and Francis 2021a). That survey measured general attitude towards virtual church, whereas this study assessed experience of actually taking part in services. It may be that men who overcame their reluctance to take part in online worship found it better than they had expected.

The trend for older people who led or accessed online services to report better experience is in line with results from the first lockdown survey (Village and Francis 2021a). In that survey, it was people in their 40s and 50s who were more in favour of virtual church. When it came to experiencing services, the trends for both pre-recorded and live-streamed services were linear, with positive affect increasing across the full age range. In this study, there was no correlation between positive affect and age for those accessing in-church services. It seemed that the generations most used to accessing the internet may have preferred to attend worship in-church, perhaps because this offered something different from their day-to-day lives.

In terms of personality variables, extraverts seemed to have more positive experiences of accessing live-streamed or in-church services than did introverts. They may have appreciated more the greater spontaneity and personal connectivity of connecting to live worship, especially in church. Sensing types found it harder to lead live-streamed worship, which is

consistent with the wider view that sensing types find change more difficult to handle than do intuitive types (Ross and Francis 2020). Thinking types seemed to have poorer experience of accessing online worship than did feeling types, but there was no difference when it came to services in church. This echoed the same trend found in the first survey for the Pro Virtual Church Scale (Village and Francis 2021a), and suggests that online worship may particularly alienate those with this psychological-type preference. Those with higher emotional volatility tended to have poorer experiences of leading all types of service, and in accessing in-church services. The trends for in-church services were the strongest, perhaps because of the heightened levels of stress associated with socially distanced gatherings after the lockdowns were eased. Accessing online services seemed unaffected by tendency to emotional volatility, and these services might have provided a better emotional environment for some.

Compared to Evangelicals, the experience of leading live-streamed services (but not pre-recorded services) was less good for Anglo-Catholics, but leading in-church services was better. This is consistent with findings from the first survey, where Anglo-Catholic clergy found it harder to adapt to leading worship separated from their churches and from the people who inhabited those churches (Francis and Village 2021d). Anglo-Catholics also reported less positive affect when accessing online services, but not church services, which highlights the importance of being in churches for this tradition. In the first lockdown survey, Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics showed more positive attitudes towards church buildings than did more Protestant traditions (Village and Francis 2021b).

The data reported in this paper were collected between 22 January and 23 July 2021. The effects of the pandemic on the Church of England have persisted well beyond the time when the *Covid-19 & Church-21 Survey* was closed. Churches have continued to offer online services (pre-recorded or live-streamed). In-church services have continued to be impacted by changing implementation and interpretation of Covid-related public engagement. Meanwhile, there seems to have been haemorrhaging among levels of off-line attendance. In order to monitor shifting trends into post-lockdown worship, it may be time to launch a new survey, *Covid-19 & Church-22 Survey*.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Author contributions

Both authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Andrew Village. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Andrew Village and Leslie J. Francis and both authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee for the School of Humanities, Religion and Philosophy at York St John University (approval code: HRP-RS-AV-04-20-01). All participants had to affirm they were 18 or over and gave their informed consent by ticking a box that gave access to the rest of the survey.

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