
RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN A LOCKDOWN

Findings from an Iona Institute
/Amarach Research poll



Introduction

The lockdown presented the Churches with a situation unprecedented in modern times. Places of worship across the country were closed for weeks on end, in some cases even for private prayer. What would happen to religious practice during such a period?

The Iona Institute commissioned the polling company, Amarach Research to find out. Were people tuning into Masses and other religious ceremonies online? Were they praying more than usual, the same, or less than usual? What were they praying for?

What follows are the findings of our poll. We hope you find them of interest.

(The poll was conducted in mid-April, shortly after the country went into full lockdown on March 28. Just over 1,000 people were surveyed online. The sample was nationally representative).

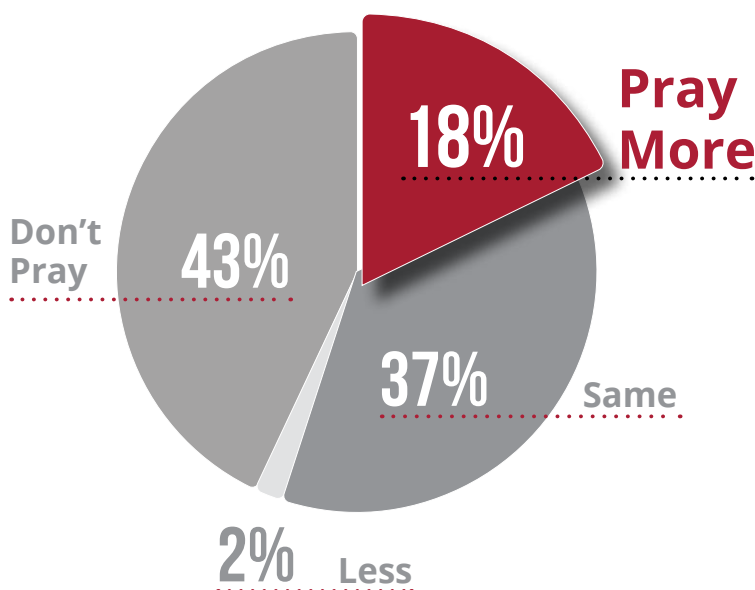
Have you watched a religious service since lockdown began?

This figure of 27pc is very similar to the roughly 30pc who attend Mass or other religious services in Ireland each week. The figure includes those who watched religious ceremonies on TV, or online, or listened on the radio.

27%



Have you prayed more or less or the same as usual during the lockdown?



The figure for 'don't pray' is striking, but out of the whole population, almost one in five said they were praying more. This was at a time when the country did not know how severe the Coronavirus outbreak would be.

Interestingly, a quarter of 18-24 year olds said they were praying more than usual, which was the same figure for the over 55s. Only 9pc of those aged 25-34 said they were praying more than usual. Although few go to church, perhaps 18-24 years olds are somewhat more 'spiritual' than their slightly older counterparts?

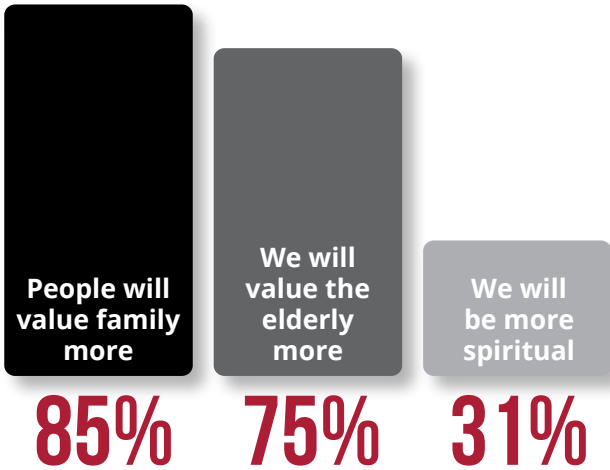
What did you pray for?



The above findings are what you would expect. In mid-April, people would have been more worried than usual about friends and family and in addition to their own health.

Lasting positive effects of lockdown?

The lockdown has the potential to act as a sort of 'reset' button for many people, a time to decide what really matters in life. As we can see, there is a widespread hope that we value family and the elderly more, with a significant minority hoping we will be more 'spiritual' in the aftermath of Covid-19.



Conclusion

It is encouraging that so many people were still taking part in religious services in whatever way they could during the lockdown and that almost one in five people said they were praying more.

It remains to be seen what further adjustments the pandemic will force on us and whether we will have further (probably localised) lockdowns.

It also remains to be seen how the Churches bounce back from the lockdown and how many will return to Mass and other ceremonies as before. Nonetheless, the poll shows that religious practice continues, even in a lockdown.

About the Iona Institute

The Iona Institute promotes the place of marriage and religion in society. We defend the continued of publicly-funded denominational schools. We also promote freedom of conscience and religion.



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