

Accessibility & Belonging in Places of Worship in Connecticut

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Hypothesis

What kind of physical accessibility options are available for places of worship in CT?

Background

Aim of study: Determine physical accessibility options that are available for individuals with disabilities in places of worship in CT

Data from this survey will help us to understand the general level of physical accessibility that an individual with disabilities faces in a place of Worship

Background: Why is this Important?

- Physically accessibility for access to faith communities
- Equal access to faith communities and places of worship
- Hinderance of participation in meaningful activities for individuals with disabilities

Background

- Lack of awareness to disability accessibility
- “Apart from the physical inaccessibility of buildings, persons with disability experience a general lack of awareness of their needs regarding the physical environment of the faith community” (p. 158).

Moller, E (2012)

Background

- Low levels of physical accessibility are often cited in places of worship
- “Several participants noted it was difficult or impossible to sing with the choir, read scripture, speak from the pulpit, or use the baptismal in the absence of ramps to the stage. A second strand related to the physical layout of the sanctuary, which made it challenging for some people with visual impairments to navigate” (pg. 201)

Moller, E. (2012).

Background

“...although many people with disabilities want to participate in faith-communities, they often do not feel encouraged to participate. And though some congregations may make some accommodations, there are many churches, synagogues, and mosques that are still not accessible” (p. 57).

Larocque & Eigenbrood (2005)

Background

- Previous studies show gaps in the attendance of individuals who are Christians with disabilities and actively attend church
- Church attendance of those with disabilities is considerably lower than others
 - “65% of Americans attend religious services at least once per month, only 47% of Americans with disabilities do so” - Larocque & Eigenbrood (2005)
- “Historically, efforts to promote “accessible worship” have focused on three main areas: architecture, attitudes, and communication”

Carter et al., (2023)

Larocque & Eigenbrood (2005)

Methods

Subject Characteristics:

- Age: Adults aged 18+
- Ethnicity: Individuals of all ethnicities are invited to participate
- Gender: Individuals of all genders are invited to participate
- Inclusion Criteria: Adult participants over the age of 18 who have knowledge of accommodations their specific place of worship in CT
- Exclusion criteria: Individuals under the age of 18 and who do not have knowledge of accommodations in their specific place of worship in CT.

Methods

Qualitative Survey

- Participants were emailed the link to the survey and completed the survey at their leisure remotely.
- No in-person interaction with participants.
- Participants were asked several questions regarding physical and intellectual accommodations and sense of belonging within their church setting.
- Only one session of survey distribution took place. Participants took as long as necessary completing the survey.

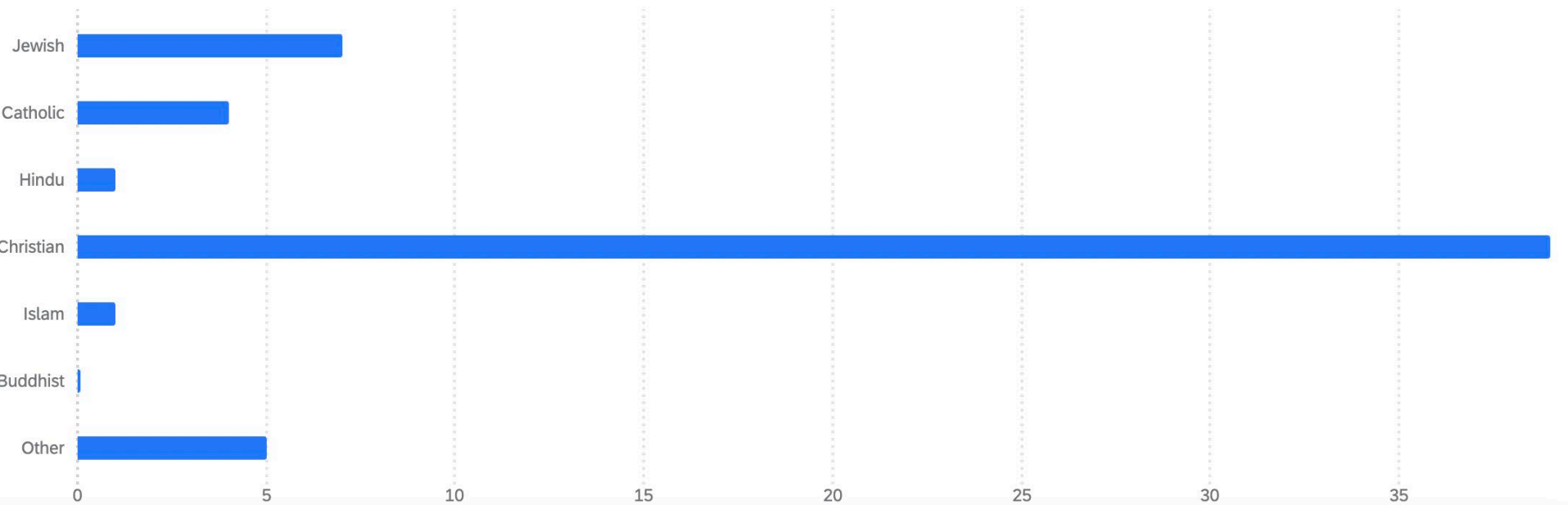
Methods

Sample size and justification: The sample size was a selection of places of Worship in CT from a list that includes all places of worship with a valid email address available in CT including Jewish, Catholic, Hindu, Christian, Islam, and Buddhist congregations.

Method(s) of data analysis: Data was collected in the format of a multiple choice survey and was analyzed based on the number of these responses. The survey responses were summarized using graphs to depict these results.

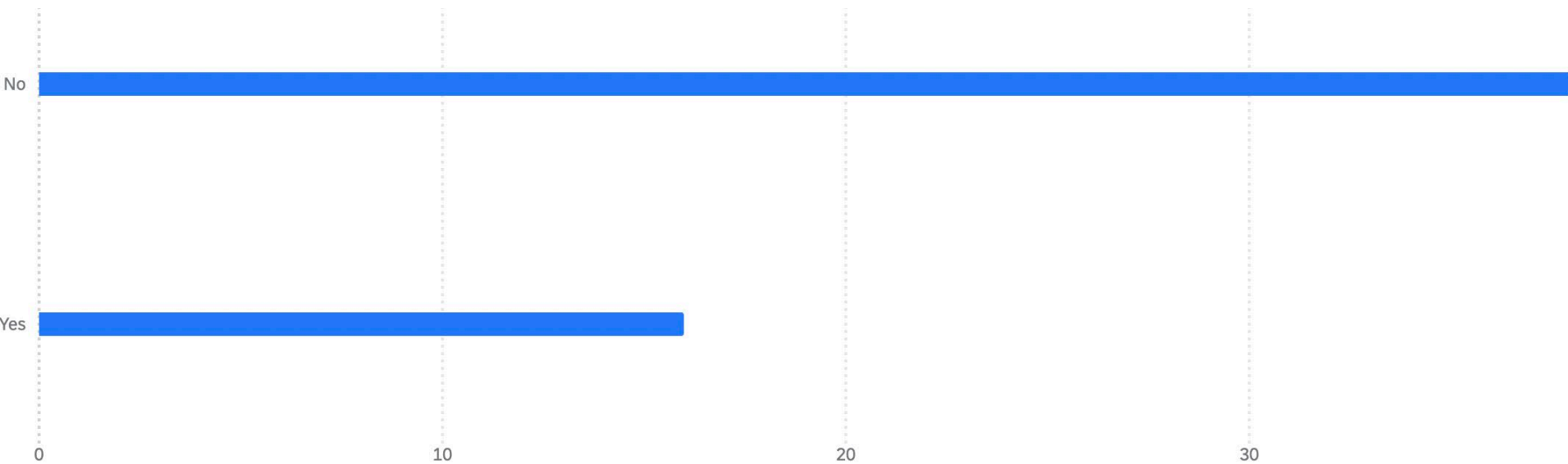
Population Data

What is your religious affiliation for which you are completing this survey?



Physical Accessibility Data

Do you have a visible sign in the general area of gathering that states which accommodations you have available?



Physical Accessibility Data

If someone is unsteady on their feet, do they have access to handrails when using stairs or a ramp?

If someone needs assistance in the restrooms, is there at least one handicap accessible bathroom?

Physical Accessibility Data

If someone is in a wheelchair...

- Would they have access to handicap parking that is close to the building?
- Would they have access to an entrance that does not require the use of stairs?
- Could properly maneuver around the inside of the building and have adequate space for seating?
- Do they have access to multiple floors within the building via elevator or wheelchair lift?

Physical Accessibility Data

If someone is hearing impaired...

- Do they have access to live captioning?
- Do they have access to a hearing loop system to connect their hearing aids too?
- Do they have access to a sign language interpreter?
- If someone is hearing impaired, will they be protected in the case of fire by having a fire alarm with both flashing lights and audible signals?

Physical Accessibility Data

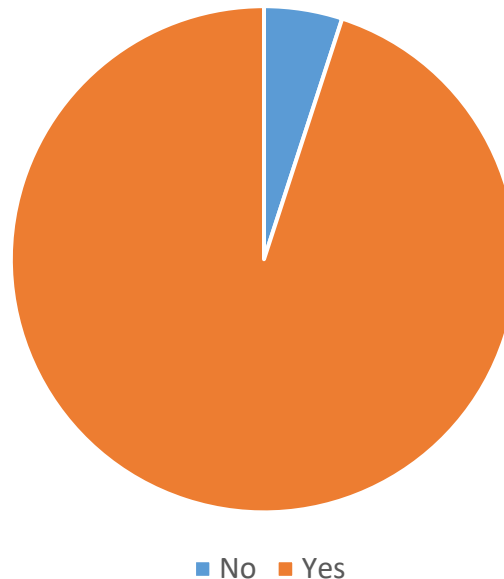
If someone is visually impaired...

- Do they have access to braille in places such as the restrooms?
- Would they have access to materials with large print?

Results

Wheelchair accessibility is above 95% in places of worship in CT in regard to maneuvering in the place of worship, handicap parking and ability to enter the building without using stairs

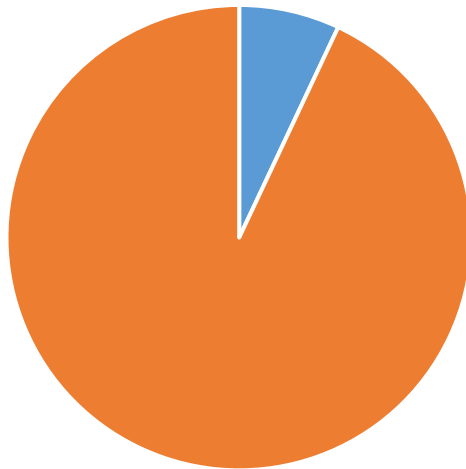
Wheelchair Accessible



Results

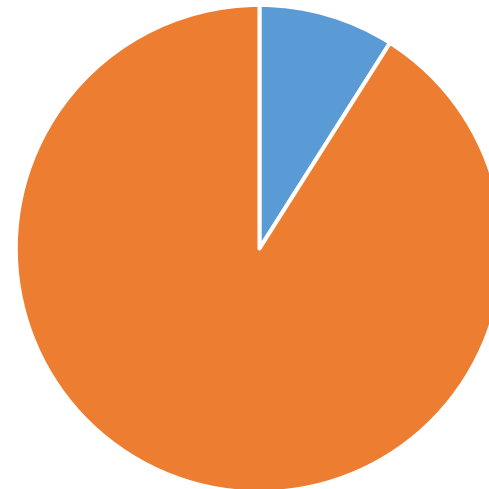
- 93% of locations have handrails available
- 91% of locations have a handicap accessible bathroom

Handrails



■ No ■ Yes

HA Bathroom



■ No ■ Yes

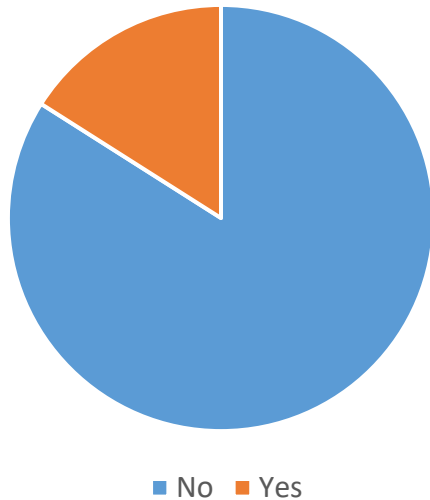
Results

Accessibility for those who are hearing impaired is low in places of Worship in Connecticut.

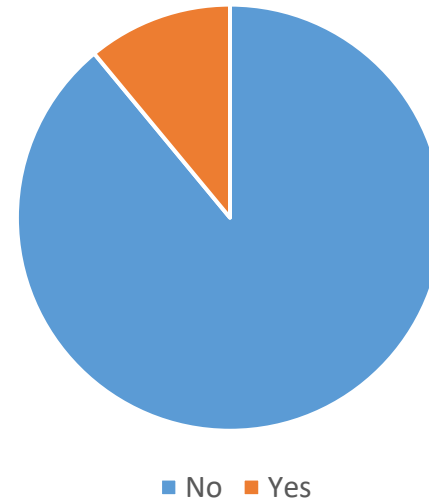
Results

- 84% of locations do not have access to live captioning
- 89% of locations do not have access to an ASL Interpreter

Live Captioning



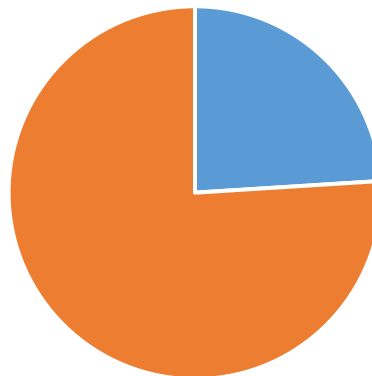
ASL Interpreter



Results

- 76% of locations have fire alarms that have both sound and flashing lights

Safe Fire Alarms



■ No ■ Yes

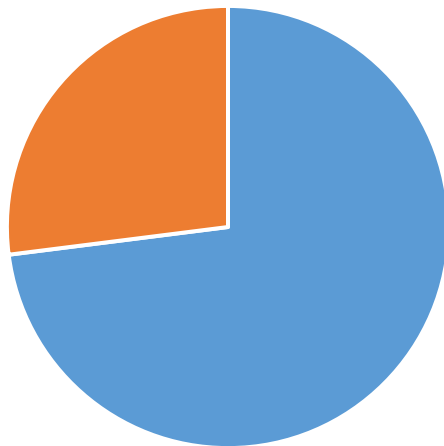
Results

Accessibility for those who are vision impaired is moderate in places of Worship in Connecticut

Results

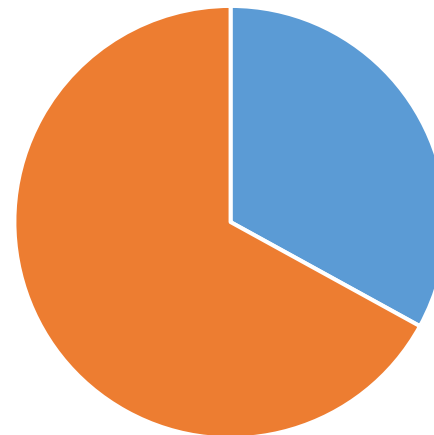
- 27% of locations offer materials and signage in Braille
- 67% of locations offer materials in large print

Braille



■ No ■ Yes

LG Print Materials



■ No ■ Yes

Discussion

2005 “Accessible Congregations Survey”

- Accommodations
 - 25.3% cite “getting started”
 - 54.9% cited “well on our way”
 - 14.3% cited “We’re there”
- “Hurdles”
 - 41.8% cite “getting started”
 - 39.6% cite “well on our way”
 - 12.1% cite “We’re there”

Larocque & Eigenbrood (2005)

Discussion

- Places of worship in CT overall seem to be more accessible for individuals with physical disabilities than previous research states
- However, due to religious affiliations being exempt from ADA, there is still more work to do
- “Mostly” accessible is not good enough

Future Research

- Better understanding in where we can further improve accessibility in places of worship
- More research aimed at individuals with disabilities to include those with lived experience
- Advocacy for greater accessibility in places of worship
- Assisting worship leaders in improving accessibility

Hughes, D. K. (1995).
Carter et al., (2023)

References

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