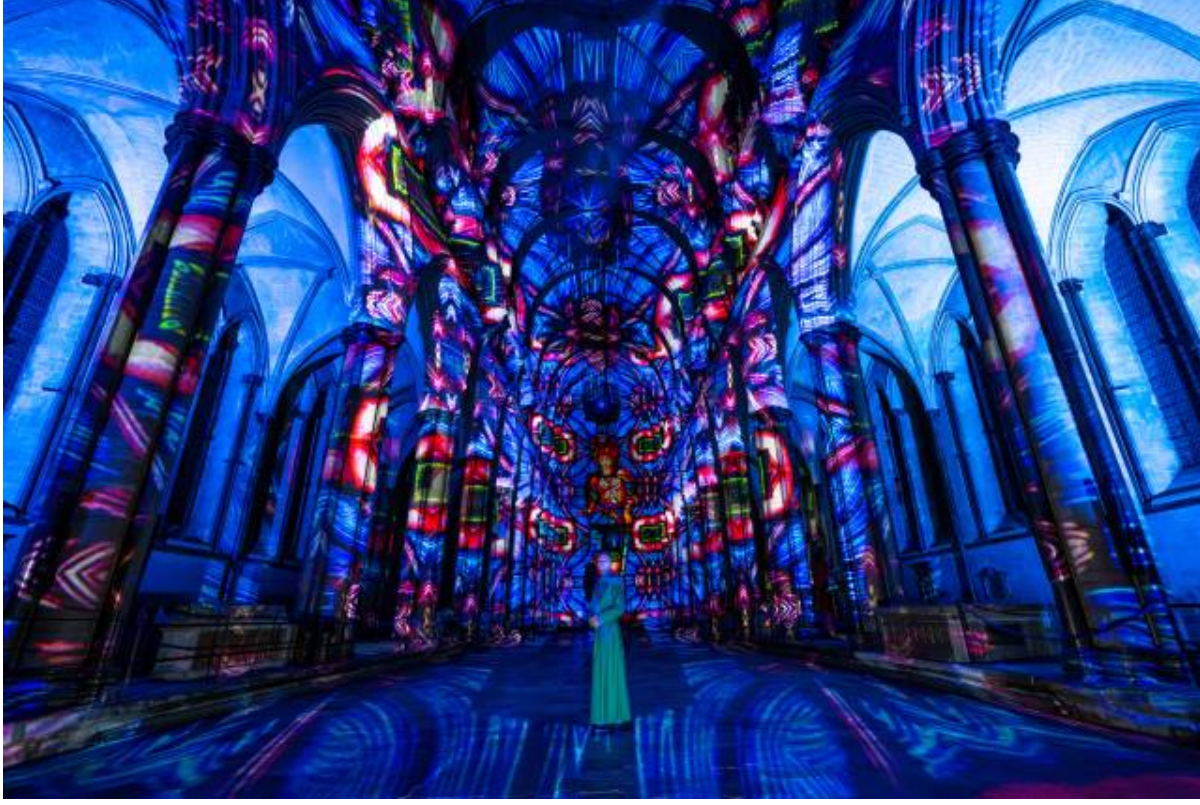


 THE CHURCH



ght year of positive change.

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The Church of England's latest [cathedral attendance statistics](#) reveal continued recovery in 2023, with a five per cent increase in weekly service attendance. Attendance at Christmas services was up 20 per cent year on year and the rise was also reflected in Easter services, where attendance was up by 10 per cent.

Cathedrals also experienced a resurgence in visitor numbers, with 9.35 million people visiting in 2023, a 17 per cent increase from 2022. This marks a significant recovery, although overall numbers remain slightly below pre-pandemic levels.

The year was marked by celebrations of King Charles III's coronation, with cathedrals hosting special services and community events. In addition to worship and national events, cathedrals made notable strides in cultural and sustainability efforts, with exhibitions, civic events and significant energy-saving initiatives and biodiversity projects across the country.

The report, released today, shows a weekly total of 30,300 individuals attended cathedral services each week, reflecting a continued return to in-person worship.

Special services in cathedrals, including those during Easter and Christmas, saw particularly strong attendance. Easter services in 2023 attracted 45,000 attendees, a 10 per cent increase from 2022. Christmas services were even more popular, with 124,500 attendees, marking a 20 per cent rise from the previous year.

Cathedrals continue to play a crucial role in public life, hosting 5,000 public and civic events in 2023, with an impressive total attendance of 1.59 million. This includes 430 graduation ceremonies and numerous other significant cultural and civic gatherings.

By most measures, attendance, participation, and engagement were higher in 2023 than in 2022, but marginally lower than they were in 2019.

While many areas showed growth, occasional offices such as baptisms and marriages experienced a decline in 2023, suggesting that the post-pandemic surge in ceremonies, which were postponed during lockdowns, has now stabilised. Baptisms decreased by three per cent, and marriages saw a 19 per cent decrease compared to 2022.

In 2023 English cathedrals played a significant role in marking the historic coronation of King Charles III, contributing to national celebrations and marking this important event in the life of the nation. Many cathedrals held special services of thanksgiving and prayer, offering communities a space to come together.

Westminster Abbey, where the coronation service took place, was at the heart of these celebrations, hosting the official event attended by global dignitaries and members of the public.

Many other cathedrals played their part by ringing bells, hosting commemorative exhibitions, and organising community events. In addition to

continuing and developing the regular patterns of prayer and worship, cathedrals ran successful community engagement and cultural initiatives in 2023.

Coventry Cathedral continued its legacy of reconciliation and peacebuilding with the "Rising from the Ruins" exhibition, which featured powerful artworks and installations exploring themes of hope and recovery in the context of global conflicts. The cathedral also hosted several interfaith dialogues and peace-focused events.

Salisbury Cathedral continued its programme of events and exhibitions, including the annual 'Sarum Lights' event featuring large-scale projections, and an exhibition exploring the theme of freedom which drew in thousands of visitors throughout the year. Artists represented included Ai Weiwei, Yinka Shonibare, and Cornelia Parker.

York Minster made significant progress in the construction of its ground-breaking 'Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management' which will establish the York Minster Precinct as a world class campus facility for research, education and training in ancient craft skills. The Minster also received approval to install solar panels, which will be installed later in 2024.

Canterbury Cathedral improved its educational outreach, expanding its Schools Department to offer a wider range of programs for students of all ages. These programs included immersive history workshops, guided tours, and interactive sessions on topics such as medieval life and the role of the cathedral in English history.

The year also saw most cathedrals across England make strides in sustainability, supporting the Church of England's wider Net Zero and biodiversity targets. Salisbury Cathedral installed LED lighting throughout the building while Liverpool completed the installation of energy-efficient heating systems. Durham Cathedral brought down overall energy usage by 53 per cent by utilising and improving the building management system within the Cathedral and its precincts.

Winchester and Lichfield Cathedrals were among those to promote wildflower meadows in parts of their grounds, assisting pollinators and promoting biodiversity.

Responding to the figures, the Dean of Canterbury, David Monteith, who chairs the College of Deans, said: "Over the past year, we have witnessed a revival in attendance and engagement, underscoring the resilience of our cathedrals and the enduring significance of their rich patterns of worship and prayer.

"These statistics not only highlight a return to regular and festival services but also emphasise our commitment to serving both our local communities and the nation with renewed vitality and purpose through bringing people together, promoting peace and fostering unity.

"I extend my sincere thanks to all who minister, work, and volunteer to support and enhance the life of our cherished cathedrals."

More information

- [Read the 2023 cathedrals statistics](#)
- [Story: Programme of public events boosts Cathedral Sunday worship numbers](#)

Image: Sarum Lights - Illuminating Art, Salisbury Cathedral 2023. (© Luxmuralis)

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/cathedral-statistics-show-continued-recovery-2023>