The first and most important group of variables are what I call the core variables. These are the ones that directly explain or shape whether people attended worship online or in person.
My dependent variables are ATTENDONLINE and ATTENDMONTH, which simply define the behavior I'm comparing.

Then, I include variables about congregational context, such as whether a church streamed services online — COVIDCONG2 — and whether it was open for in-person worship — COVIDCONG3. I also look at the restrictions in place, like mask or distancing rules — CONGRESTRICT1abc. These factors matter because people's choices depend heavily on what opportunities actually existed in their congregations.

Next, I consider COVID safety attitudes and restrictions, for example CONGRESTRICT2abc/d, which measures people's beliefs about limiting certain practices such as singing. These show people's comfort level and perception of risk, which are central to understanding behavior.

Technology access is another major piece. Variables like F_ASCWEB for internet access and SNSUSE for social-media use tell us whether people had the resources and digital familiarity to worship online.

Finally, I include measures of perceived COVID risk, such as COVIDTHREAT and ATTENDCONF, which capture how serious people thought the pandemic was and how confident they felt about attending safely.

Together, these variables have strong interpretive power: they help explain why people made a choice — because of access, safety attitudes, risk perception, or technology.

The second group contains variables that don't directly cause worship behavior but help us understand who was more likely to act one way or another.

I start with religious background, using F_ATTEND for pre-pandemic attendance and denomination information to separate Catholics from Protestants. These show baseline religious commitment and structural differences in worship style.

Next, I include political orientation, measured by F_PARTYSUMIDEO. Politics influenced people's perceptions of COVID restrictions and personal risk, so it's an important contextual factor.

Finally, I look at demographic controls — age, sex, race, education, income, metro area, and census region. These help describe overall patterns, such as older adults or urban residents being more likely to attend online.

Overall, these contextual variables help frame the conclusions. For example, even controlling for age and income, people in congregations that streamed services were much more likely to attend online.

The third and final group adds nuance but is less essential. These are information–exposure variables, like whether respondents heard a sermon about COVID (SERMONISSUEc) or heard about contact tracing (CTKNOW1). They capture awareness and external cues that might influence worship decisions, but they measure information exposure rather than actual behavior. I treat these as supporting variables — useful for interpretation if sample size allows, but not central to the main analysis.