



V ENCUENTRO

DISCÍPULOS MISIONEROS: TESTIGOS DEL AMOR DE DIOS
MISSIONARY DISCIPLES: WITNESSES OF GOD'S LOVE

REPORT



REGION 1 CATHOLIC POPULATION BY RACE / ETHNICITY

SUMMARY OF REGIONAL AND DIOCESAN ESTIMATES

Based on 2021 Survey Data and Census Estimates



V Encuentro Catholic Population Update for 2021

With the arrival of data from the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, there has been widespread interest within the Church for an update on the V Encuentro Catholic population estimates that were published for 2016. Because the U.S. Census Bureau does not track religious affiliation, Catholic population estimates must rely on either sacramental records or large social surveys. With the increasing phenomena of religious switching and disaffiliation among the baptized, social surveys are seen by most sociologists today as the preferred way to develop estimates. The 2016 work for the V Encuentro was pioneering¹ in its development of a statistical model for the Catholic population at the diocesan level, based on several large social surveys that were conducted between 2013 and 2016, and taking into account variations in the demographics of religious affiliation by age, race/ethnicity, and geographic location.

The 2020 Census provides an important update on the underlying population in each diocese. However, it is clear from recent data on attendance at church services that the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on the way Catholics live their faith. This begs the question whether it has also impacted their sense of religious identity and their faith commitment to a religious institution. In order to update the statistical model, it would be ideal to rely on a very large survey that employs best practices in establishing a representative sample of the U.S. population, such as the 2014 Religious Landscape Survey (RLS), which included over 35,000 responses. Unfortunately, no such survey data are currently available. However, the Pew Research Center and the Public Religion Research Institute both produced research from less robust 2021 surveys that showed a significant increase in the Catholic adult population, reversing the long-standing trend of decline.²

Did the Self-Identifying Catholic Population Grow in 2020-2021?

Both studies showed that this growth among Catholics took place in sharp contrast to a continuing decline in the Mainline and Evangelical Protestant populations. Although the size and quality of these two studies are not ideal, their close agreement on these data points lend credence that there may be something more than random fluctuations and sampling error here. A closer look at the Pew survey data, which were kindly made available to the V Encuentro research team, reveals:

- The population of older white Catholics experienced a large increase, especially among the 65+ population, which more than offset significant declines among younger white Catholics.

¹ See the full methodological explanation at: <https://vencuentro.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/VE-Statistical-Reports-Methodology-EN.pdf>.

² See <https://www.prrri.org/spotlight/prri-2021-american-values-atlas-religious-affiliation-updates-and-trends-white-christian-decline-slows-unaffiliated-growth-levels-off/> and <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/>.

- In contrast, the Hispanic/Latino Catholic population saw roughly proportional losses across all age groups, continuing the trend of gradual disaffiliation over the last 30 years, offset by even faster growth in the overall Hispanic/Latino population, resulting in continued numeric growth.
- Declines in the Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and other Catholic populations did appear, but the differences from the 2014 RLS survey were within the statistical margin of error.

A Tentative Update to the V Encuentro Statistical Model

While it is not ideal to make broad changes to a national statistical model based on a survey with less than 4,000 responses, the shifts in the white and Hispanic/Latino Catholic populations did meet the standard of statistical significance. However, there were not sufficient data to attempt a full revision of the statistical model accounting for racial/ethnic, geographic, and age-related factors. Instead, the following was done:

- The statistical model from the 2016 V Encuentro analysis was incorporated as the starting point.
- The diocesan coefficients for Hispanic/Latino catholicity were multiplied by 0.95 (a 5% reduction).
- The dioceses were ranked according to the age profile of the underlying white, non-Hispanic population from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS 2021) by taking the geometric mean of their rankings in each of the four main age categories (18 to 29, 30 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65+). Coefficients were then applied to the original statistical model, ranging from 0.91 to 1.15, resulting in an overall 3.5% increase in white catholicity, in keeping with the 2021 Pew data.
- No changes were made in the model for the Black, Asian, and other Catholic populations.

Making Sense of the New Data

An important question for the V Encuentro research team in this analysis is: does the change in the white Catholic population make sense? The clear external factor that could have played into the trend reversal was the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the white Catholic population has a much older profile than other Catholic racial/ethnic groups and most other Christian denominations, it does make sense that those who may have been most at risk of Covid-19 would do some religious introspection and perhaps return to identifying with the faith of their younger years. This begs the question: will that change last? That is unknown. It is certainly possible that the proportion of white Catholics will soon revert to the historical trendline, reversing the apparent gains seen in 2021. In any case, the trend among younger white Catholics continues to be one of significant disaffiliation. If the overall trends continue, the future Catholic Church in the United States will be smaller and more diverse.

The new diocesan-level Catholic population tables should therefore be taken with a degree of caution. The underlying Census data and the comparative data from 2016 are both shown in

order to help in that process. Keep in mind that the Catholic numbers do not represent people who attend Mass regularly—it is just those who would have identified themselves as Catholic if asked in 2021. They may or may not continue to do so today or next year. Some dioceses may show a large increase in their white Catholic population; that is due to the fact that they have a substantial elderly population that at least at the national level was more likely to identify as Catholic in 2021. That may or may not have been true locally.

Similarly, given the rapid increase in the Asian population throughout the country, some dioceses may see significantly larger numbers in their table for “Asian/Native Am./Other” Catholics. However, if the reality was that a sizeable Chinese or Japanese population arrived, it would have a far smaller impact in the shape of the local Catholic community than if those who arrived had been of Filipino origin.

The bottom line is that the new data provide an essential reference point for pastoral leaders as they develop programs and activities to serve the Church in their area. It is important to take stock of the changes revealed in the Census 2020 data. However, such leaders should understand that these numbers represent a snapshot in time, and the community they are called to serve will continue to change in its demographic composition and numerical size as the years pass. May God bless their efforts!

EPISCOPAL REGION 1

Episcopal Region I Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	11,144,249	10,762,169	-3.4%	3,950,000	4,056,000	2.7%	37.7%	78.5%
Hispanic/ Latino	1,579,247	1,818,547	15.2%	776,000	849,000	9.4%	46.7%	16.4%
Black/ African American	1,056,533	1,143,920	8.3%	75,000	81,000	8.0%	7.1%	1.6%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	955,496	1,368,103	43.2%	127,000	180,000	41.7%	13.2%	3.5%
Total***	14,735,525	15,092,739	2.4%	4,928,000	5,166,000	4.8%	34.2%	

* The surveys on which the Catholic population are based were not large enough to generate reliable estimates of the Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, and "Other" Catholic populations separately, so they are grouped together here.

** Overall population estimates are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Surveys (ACS) for each corresponding year.

*** The Catholic Totals may not add up exactly due to rounding errors. Round numbers are used because these are statistical estimates, not actual population counts.

Archdiocese of Boston
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	2,993,286	2,835,225	-5.3%	1,138,000	1,051,000	-7.6%	37.1%	73.5%
Hispanic/ Latino	509,580	572,298	12.3%	246,000	262,000	6.5%	45.8%	18.3%
Black/ African American	392,505	419,839	7.0%	28,000	29,000	3.6%	6.9%	2.0%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	449,251	606,061	34.9%	64,000	87,000	35.9%	14.4%	6.1%
Total***	4,344,622	4,433,423	2.0%	1,476,000	1,430,000	-3.1%	32.3%	

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Diocese of Bridgeport
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	585,996	547,667	-6.5%	234,000	240,000	2.6%	43.8%	68.2%
Hispanic/ Latino	183,694	204,549	11.4%	86,000	91,000	5.8%	44.5%	25.9%
Black/ African American	108,039	115,201	6.6%	8,500	9,000	5.9%	7.8%	2.6%
Asian/ Native Am./Other *	66,556	91,907	38.1%	8,500	11,000	29.4%	12.0%	3.1%
Total***	944,285	959,324	1.6%	336,000	352,000	4.8%	36.7%	

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Diocese of Burlington
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	581,601	583,634	0.3%	130,000	147,000	13.1%	25.2%	93.6%
Hispanic/ Latino	12,188	13,257	8.8%	5,500	6,000	9.1%	45.3%	3.8%
Black/ African American	10,232	11,098	8.5%	550	600	9.1%	5.4%	0.4%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	20,573	37,581	82.7%	1,900	3,500	84.2%	9.3%	2.2%
Total***	624,594	645,570	3.4%	138,000	157,000	13.8%	24.3%	

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Diocese of Fall River
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	690,301	688,190	-0.3%	260,000	295,000	13.5%	42.9%	88.3%
Hispanic/ Latino	49,415	66,825	35.2%	24,000	31,000	29.2%	46.4%	9.3%
Black/ African American	38,753	49,230	27.0%	1,900	2,500	31.6%	5.1%	0.7%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	42,855	66,083	54.2%	3,700	5,500	48.6%	8.3%	1.6%
Total***	821,324	870,328	6.0%	290,000	334,000	15.2%	38.4%	

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Archdiocese of Hartford
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	1,258,349	1,172,976	-6.8%	519,000	526,000	1.3%	44.8%	71.9%
Hispanic/ Latino	318,230	362,792	14.0%	153,000	166,000	8.5%	45.8%	22.7%
Black/ African American	248,445	263,518	6.1%	19,500	21,000	7.7%	8.0%	2.9%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	106,738	146,506	37.3%	14,000	20,000	42.9%	13.7%	2.7%
Total***	1,931,762	1,945,792	0.7%	705,000	732,000	3.8%	37.6%	

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Diocese of Manchester
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	1,209,570	1,214,737	0.4%	336,000	379,000	12.8%	31.2%	90.9%
Hispanic/Latino	47,466	59,616	25.6%	22,500	27,000	20.0%	45.3%	6.5%
Black/African American	23,795	28,640	20.4%	1,300	1,500	15.4%	5.2%	0.4%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	53,858	85,999	59.7%	6,000	9,500	58.3%	11.0%	2.3%
Total***	1,334,689	1,388,992	4.1%	365,000	417,000	14.2%	30.0%	

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Diocese of Norwich
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	567,201	538,811	-5.0%	228,000	244,000	7.0%	45.3%	85.9%
Hispanic/ Latino	58,745	68,379	16.4%	27,000	30,000	11.1%	43.9%	10.6%
Black/ African American	39,750	38,925	-2.1%	2,600	2,600	0.0%	6.7%	0.9%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	34,709	54,366	56.6%	5,000	7,500	50.0%	13.8%	2.6%
Total***	700,405	700,481	0.0%	263,000	284,000	8.0%	40.5%	

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Diocese of Portland in Maine
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	1,243,580	1,231,691	-1.0%	263,000	297,000	12.9%	24.1%	92.8%
Hispanic/L atino	20,044	25,498	27.2%	10,500	13,000	23.8%	51.0%	4.1%
Black/Afric an American	24,294	28,120	15.7%	1,300	1,500	15.4%	5.3%	0.5%
Asian/Nati ve Am./Other *	43,561	86,938	99.6%	4,500	8,500	88.9%	9.8%	2.7%
Total***	1,331,479	1,372,247	3.1%	280,000	320,000	14.3%	23.3%	

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Diocese of Providence
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	768,390	755,332	-1.7%	361,000	372,000	3.0%	49.2%	76.9%
Hispanic/ Latino	157,949	187,451	18.7%	86,000	97,000	12.8%	51.7%	20.0%
Black/ African American	73,516	80,784	9.9%	5,000	5,500	10.0%	6.8%	1.1%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	56,571	72,043	27.3%	7,000	9,000	28.6%	12.5%	1.9%
Total***	1,056,426	1,095,610	3.7%	459,000	484,000	5.4%	44.2%	

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**Diocese of Springfield in Massachusetts
Overall Population and Catholic Pop. Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	610,097	577,958	-5.3%	240,000	250,000	4.2%	43.3%	75.3%
Hispanic/ Latino	132,877	146,973	10.6%	68,000	71,000	4.4%	48.3%	21.4%
Black/ African American	53,761	56,351	4.8%	4,000	4,500	12.5%	8.0%	1.4%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	31,479	42,935	36.4%	5,000	6,500	30.0%	15.1%	2.0%
Total***	828,214	824,217	-0.5%	316,000	332,000	5.1%	40.3%	

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Diocese of Worcester
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/ Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non- Hispanic	635,878	615,948	-3.1%	243,000	256,000	5.3%	41.6%	78.5%
Hispanic/ Latino	89,059	110,909	24.5%	46,000	55,000	19.6%	49.6%	16.9%
Black/ African American	43,443	52,214	20.2%	2,800	3,500	25.0%	6.7%	1.1%
Asian/ Native Am. /Other*	49,345	77,684	57.4%	7,500	12,000	60.0%	15.4%	3.7%
Total***	817,725	856,755	4.8%	299,000	326,000	9.0%	38.1%	

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