



V ENCUENTRO

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

REPORT



REGION 2 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 2

Episcopal Region II 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	10,958,551	10,598,484	-3.3%	3,811,000	3,921,000	2.9%	37.0%	58.5%
Hispanic/Latino	3,749,158	3,866,818	3.1%	2,064,000	2,019,000	-2.2%	52.2%	30.1%
Black/African American	3,021,676	2,997,887	-0.8%	395,000	392,000	-0.8%	13.1%	5.9%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	2,015,904	2,372,724	17.7%	314,000	366,000	16.6%	15.4%	5.5%
Total***	19,745,289	19,835,913	0.5%	6,584,000	6,698,000	1.7%	33.8%	

* 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.

Diocese of Albany
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	1,115,273	1,083,176	-2.9%	384,000	415,000	8.1%	38.3%	87.9%
Hispanic/Latino	64,417	73,599	14.3%	33,000	35,000	6.1%	47.6%	7.4%
Black/African American	90,276	99,052	9.7%	10,000	11,000	10.0%	11.1%	2.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	62,682	96,534	54.0%	7,000	11,000	57.1%	11.4%	2.3%
Total***	1,332,648	1,352,361	1.5%	434,000	472,000	8.8%	34.9%	

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Diocese of Brooklyn
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	1,519,552	1,496,793	-1.5%	509,000	495,000	-2.8%	33.1%	33.7%
Hispanic/Latino	1,159,425	1,153,603	-0.5%	671,000	634,000	-5.5%	55.0%	43.2%
Black/African American	1,244,983	1,209,776	-2.8%	166,000	161,000	-3.0%	13.3%	11.0%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	1,038,692	1,112,685	7.1%	165,000	177,000	7.3%	15.9%	12.1%
Total***	4,962,652	4,972,857	0.2%	1,510,000	1,467,000	-2.8%	29.5%	

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Diocese of Buffalo
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	1,237,981	1,208,818	-2.4%	430,000	467,000	8.6%	38.6%	86.8%
Hispanic/Latino	72,837	81,343	11.7%	37,000	39,000	5.4%	47.9%	7.2%
Black/African American	158,959	162,938	2.5%	19,500	20,000	2.6%	12.3%	3.7%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	63,203	93,857	48.5%	8,000	12,000	50.0%	12.8%	2.2%
Total***	1,532,980	1,546,956	0.9%	494,000	538,000	8.9%	34.8%	

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Archdiocese of New York
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	2,648,357	2,528,420	-4.5%	919,000	867,000	-5.7%	34.3%	42.4%
Hispanic/Latino	1,780,735	1,818,870	2.1%	978,000	949,000	-3.0%	52.2%	46.4%
Black/African American	983,226	969,236	-1.4%	137,000	135,000	-1.5%	13.9%	6.6%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	488,393	579,903	18.7%	82,000	97,000	18.3%	16.7%	4.7%
Total***	5,900,711	5,896,429	-0.1%	2,116,000	2,047,000	-3.3%	34.7%	

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**Diocese of Ogdensburg
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	429,446	413,219	-3.8%	152,000	157,000	3.3%	38.0%	92.4%
Hispanic/Latino	18,240	17,672	-3.1%	8,500	8,000	-5.9%	45.3%	4.7%
Black/African American	20,538	20,794	1.2%	2,100	2,200	4.8%	10.6%	1.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	17,738	26,213	47.8%	2,200	3,000	36.4%	11.4%	1.8%
Total***	485,962	477,898	-1.7%	165,000	170,000	3.0%	35.6%	

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Diocese of Rochester
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	1,201,329	1,166,358	-2.9%	417,000	445,000	6.7%	38.2%	85.2%
Hispanic/Latino	91,934	101,392	10.3%	45,000	47,000	4.4%	46.4%	9.0%
Black/African American	149,870	148,782	-0.7%	17,500	17,000	-2.9%	11.4%	3.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	64,053	87,794	37.1%	9,000	12,000	33.3%	13.7%	2.3%
Total***	1,507,186	1,504,326	-0.2%	488,000	522,000	7.0%	34.7%	

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Diocese of Rockville Centre
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	1,835,409	1,770,085	-3.6%	656,000	712,000	8.5%	40.2%	66.7%
Hispanic/Latino	512,417	561,327	9.5%	267,000	278,000	4.1%	49.5%	26.0%
Black/African American	279,674	295,398	5.6%	33,000	35,000	6.1%	11.8%	3.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	225,476	290,407	28.8%	33,000	43,000	30.3%	14.8%	4.0%
Total***	2,852,976	2,917,217	2.3%	990,000	1,068,000	7.9%	36.6%	

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Diocese of Syracuse
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	971,204	931,615	-4.1%	344,000	363,000	5.5%	39.0%	87.7%
Hispanic/Latino	49,153	59,012	20.1%	26,000	29,000	11.5%	49.1%	7.0%
Black/African American	94,150	91,911	-2.4%	10,000	10,000	0.0%	10.9%	2.4%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	55,667	85,331	53.3%	7,500	11,000	46.7%	12.9%	2.7%
Total***	1,170,174	1,167,869	-0.2%	388,000	414,000	6.7%	35.4%	

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