



V ENCUENTRO

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

REPORT



REGION 12 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!

EPISOCPAL REGION 12

Episcopal Region XII 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	10,916,296	10,879,486	-0.3%	1,288,000	1,273,000	-1.2%	11.7%	52.1%
Hispanic/Latino	1,722,340	2,005,671	16.5%	776,000	859,000	10.7%	42.8%	35.2%
Black/African American	521,563	609,203	16.8%	22,500	26,000	15.6%	4.3%	1.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	1,688,820	2,228,354	31.9%	217,000	285,000	31.3%	12.8%	11.7%
Total***	14,849,019	15,722,714	5.9%	2,303,000	2,443,000	6.1%	15.5%	

* 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 Anchorage-Juneau
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	370,298	318,331	-14.0%	47,000	38,000	-19.1%	11.9%	48.1%
Hispanic/Latino	38,944	39,372	1.1%	19,000	18,000	-5.3%	45.7%	22.8%
Black/African American	24,075	27,800	15.5%	1,200	1,400	16.7%	5.0%	1.8%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	139,823	162,730	16.4%	18,000	21,000	16.7%	12.9%	26.6%
Total***	573,140	548,233	-4.3%	85,000	79,000	-7.1%	14.4%	

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Diocese of Baker
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	422,290	439,897	4.2%	43,000	50,000	16.3%	11.4%	53.2%
Hispanic/Latino	78,956	92,636	17.3%	35,000	39,000	11.4%	42.1%	41.5%
Black/African American	5,370	6,570	22.3%	175	200	14.3%	3.0%	0.2%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	30,916	42,781	38.4%	3,500	5,000	42.9%	11.7%	5.3%
Total***	537,532	581,884	8.3%	81,000	94,000	16.0%	16.2%	

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Diocese of Boise
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	1,387,525	1,497,385	7.9%	126,000	135,000	7.1%	9.0%	51.7%
Hispanic/Latino	206,444	251,431	21.8%	95,000	110,000	15.8%	43.7%	42.1%
Black/African American	16,878	21,730	28.7%	450	600	33.3%	2.8%	0.2%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	72,293	130,377	80.3%	9,000	16,000	77.8%	12.3%	6.1%
Total***	1,683,140	1,900,923	12.9%	231,000	261,000	13.0%	13.7%	

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Diocese of Fairbanks
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	84,144	105,488	25.4%	11,500	13,000	13.0%	12.3%	50.0%
Hispanic/Latino	12,300	13,028	5.9%	3,900	4,000	2.6%	30.7%	15.4%
Black/African American	6,047	6,609	9.3%	300	350	16.7%	5.3%	1.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	66,263	59,315	-10.5%	9,500	8,500	-10.5%	14.3%	32.7%
Total***	168,754	184,440	9.3%	25,000	26,000	4.0%	14.1%	

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Diocese of Great Falls-Billings
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	366,403	366,474	0.0%	52,000	55,000	5.8%	15.0%	73.3%
Hispanic/Latino	17,718	22,433	26.6%	9,000	11,000	22.2%	49.0%	14.7%
Black/African American	4,438	3,406	-23.3%	100	75	-25.0%	2.2%	0.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	51,353	61,252	19.3%	7,500	9,000	20.0%	14.7%	12.0%
Total***	439,912	453,565	3.1%	69,000	75,000	8.7%	16.5%	

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Diocese of Helena
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	535,065	556,061	3.9%	79,000	89,000	12.7%	16.0%	80.9%
Hispanic/Latino	18,978	24,975	31.6%	10,000	13,000	30.0%	52.1%	11.8%
Black/African American	2,751	5,712	107.6%	75	150	100.0%	2.6%	0.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	45,814	63,958	39.6%	5,500	8,000	45.5%	12.5%	7.3%
Total***	602,608	650,706	8.0%	95,000	110,000	15.8%	16.9%	

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**Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon
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	2,694,841	2,616,723	-2.9%	274,000	269,000	-1.8%	10.3%	50.7%
Hispanic/Latino	443,562	504,020	13.6%	191,000	206,000	7.9%	40.9%	38.8%
Black/African American	98,773	115,862	17.3%	4,500	5,000	11.1%	4.3%	0.9%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	318,757	427,666	34.2%	38,000	51,000	34.2%	11.9%	9.6%
Total***	3,555,933	3,664,271	3.0%	506,000	531,000	4.9%	14.5%	

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Archdiocese of Seattle
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	3,967,053	3,880,255	-2.2%	510,000	480,000	-5.9%	12.4%	51.9%
Hispanic/Latino	551,054	656,673	19.2%	246,000	278,000	13.0%	42.3%	30.1%
Black/African American	331,876	386,750	16.5%	14,500	17,000	17.2%	4.4%	1.8%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	867,151	1,142,637	31.8%	114,000	150,000	31.6%	13.1%	16.2%
Total***	5,717,134	6,066,315	6.1%	884,000	925,000	4.6%	15.2%	

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Diocese of Spokane
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	694,972	712,553	2.5%	87,000	88,000	1.1%	12.3%	55.7%
Hispanic/Latino	105,132	122,477	16.5%	53,000	58,000	9.4%	47.4%	36.7%
Black/African American	21,184	24,208	14.3%	800	900	12.5%	3.7%	0.6%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	61,498	89,255	45.1%	7,000	10,000	42.9%	11.2%	6.3%
Total***	882,786	948,493	7.4%	148,000	158,000	6.8%	16.7%	

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Diocese of Yakima
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	393,705	386,319	-1.9%	57,000	55,000	-3.5%	14.2%	29.7%
Hispanic/Latino	249,252	278,626	11.8%	116,000	123,000	6.0%	44.1%	66.5%
Black/African American	10,171	10,556	3.8%	400	450	12.5%	4.3%	0.2%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	34,952	48,383	38.4%	5,000	6,500	30.0%	13.4%	3.5%
Total***	688,080	723,884	5.2%	178,000	185,000	3.9%	25.6%	

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