



# V ENCUENTRO

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

# REPORT



## REGION 13 CATHOLIC POPULATION BY RACE / ETHNICITY

## SUMMARY OF REGIONAL AND DIOCESAN ESTIMATES

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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 pioneering<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

### **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.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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 13

### Episcopal Region XIII 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	11,316,449	11,316,944	0.0%	1,385,000	1,357,000	-2.0%	12.0%	31.7%
Hispanic/Latino	4,814,067	5,260,105	9.3%	2,540,000	2,628,000	3.5%	50.0%	61.3%
Black/African American	721,794	814,423	12.8%	24,500	27,000	10.2%	3.3%	0.6%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	1,337,039	1,729,568	29.4%	215,000	272,000	26.5%	15.7%	6.3%
<b>Total***</b>	18,189,349	19,121,040	5.1%	4,164,000	4,285,000	2.9%	22.4%	

\* 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 Cheyenne**  
**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	493,453	470,779	-4.6%	52,000	52,000	0.0%	11.0%	59.1%
Hispanic/Latino	56,875	61,427	8.0%	29,000	30,000	3.4%	48.8%	34.1%
Black/African American	8,255	7,811	-5.4%	225	200	-11.1%	2.6%	0.2%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	26,918	38,786	44.1%	3,600	5,000	38.9%	12.9%	5.7%
<b>Total***</b>	585,501	578,803	-1.1%	86,000	88,000	2.3%	15.2%	

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**Diocese of Colorado Springs**  
**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	838,814	863,394	2.9%	106,000	104,000	-1.9%	12.0%	50.7%
Hispanic/Latino	153,822	187,638	22.0%	74,000	85,000	14.9%	45.3%	41.5%
Black/African American	60,803	66,029	8.6%	2,000	2,100	5.0%	3.2%	1.0%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	63,407	100,662	58.8%	8,500	14,000	64.7%	13.9%	6.8%
<b>Total***</b>	1,116,846	1,217,723	9.0%	190,000	205,000	7.9%	16.8%	

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**Archdiocese of Denver**  
**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	2,465,127	2,441,674	-1.0%	309,000	283,000	-8.4%	11.6%	35.8%
Hispanic/Latino	851,704	922,295	8.3%	441,000	454,000	2.9%	49.2%	57.5%
Black/African American	196,889	209,260	6.3%	7,000	7,000	0.0%	3.3%	0.9%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	203,729	303,213	48.8%	31,000	47,000	51.6%	15.5%	5.9%
<b>Total***</b>	<b>3,717,449</b>	<b>3,876,442</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>788,000</b>	<b>790,000</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	

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**Diocese of Gallup**  
**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	119,784	110,566	-7.7%	22,000	22,000	0.0%	19.9%	21.0%
Hispanic/Latino	62,512	66,295	6.1%	38,000	38,000	0.0%	57.3%	36.2%
Black/African American	5,217	6,666	27.8%	125	150	20.0%	2.3%	0.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	216,879	213,372	-1.6%	46,000	45,000	-2.2%	21.1%	42.9%
<b>Total***</b>	404,392	396,899	-1.9%	106,000	105,000	-0.9%	26.5%	

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**Diocese of Las Cruces**  
**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	213,031	200,975	-5.7%	34,000	33,000	-2.9%	16.4%	14.5%
Hispanic/Latino	320,065	340,860	6.5%	185,000	188,000	1.6%	55.2%	82.5%
Black/African American	13,047	14,075	7.9%	500	600	20.0%	4.3%	0.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	17,193	24,117	40.3%	4,500	6,500	44.4%	27.0%	2.9%
<b>Total***</b>	563,336	580,027	3.0%	225,000	228,000	1.3%	39.3%	

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**Diocese of Phoenix**  
**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	2,794,753	2,770,700	-0.9%	466,000	456,000	-2.1%	16.5%	35.8%
Hispanic/Latino	1,400,777	1,551,310	10.7%	708,000	745,000	5.2%	48.0%	58.5%
Black/African American	272,951	318,966	16.9%	9,000	10,000	11.1%	3.1%	0.8%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	366,464	482,101	31.6%	47,000	62,000	31.9%	12.9%	4.9%
<b>Total***</b>	4,834,945	5,123,077	6.0%	1,230,000	1,273,000	3.5%	24.8%	

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**Diocese of Pueblo**  
**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	494,083	483,465	-2.1%	64,000	70,000	9.4%	14.5%	40.7%
Hispanic/Latino	175,067	184,100	5.2%	96,000	96,000	0.0%	52.1%	55.8%
Black/African American	10,953	11,538	5.3%	400	400	0.0%	3.5%	0.2%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	26,147	38,801	48.4%	4,000	6,000	50.0%	15.5%	3.5%
<b>Total***</b>	706,250	717,904	1.7%	165,000	172,000	4.2%	24.0%	

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**Diocese of Salt Lake City**  
**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	2,400,503	2,533,386	5.5%	77,000	75,000	-2.6%	3.0%	24.0%
Hispanic/Latino	420,634	493,775	17.4%	181,000	202,000	11.6%	40.9%	64.5%
Black/African American	46,708	57,217	22.5%	1,300	1,600	23.1%	2.8%	0.5%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	183,372	253,597	38.3%	24,500	34,000	38.8%	13.4%	10.9%
<b>Total***</b>	3,051,217	3,337,975	9.4%	284,000	313,000	10.2%	9.4%	

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**Archdiocese of Santa Fe**  
**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	501,263	472,949	-5.6%	80,000	81,000	1.3%	17.1%	16.3%
Hispanic/Latino	630,968	654,204	3.7%	391,000	385,000	-1.5%	58.9%	77.6%
Black/African American	30,880	36,100	16.9%	1,300	1,600	23.1%	4.4%	0.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	103,960	119,303	14.8%	26,000	29,000	11.5%	24.3%	5.8%
<b>Total***</b>	1,267,071	1,282,556	1.2%	498,000	496,000	-0.4%	38.7%	

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**Diocese of Tucson**  
**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	995,638	969,056	-2.7%	174,000	182,000	4.6%	18.8%	29.6%
Hispanic/Latino	741,643	798,201	7.6%	396,000	405,000	2.3%	50.7%	66.0%
Black/African American	76,091	86,761	14.0%	2,800	3,000	7.1%	3.5%	0.5%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	128,970	155,616	20.7%	19,500	24,000	23.1%	15.4%	3.9%
<b>Total***</b>	1,942,342	2,009,634	3.5%	592,000	614,000	3.7%	30.6%	

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