



V ENCUENTRO

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

REPORT



REGION 8 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.ppri.org/spotlight/ppri-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 8

Episcopal Region VIII 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	5,803,256	5,732,792	-1.2%	1,369,000	1,396,000	2.0%	24.4%	81.1%
Hispanic/Latino	340,423	402,280	18.2%	181,000	203,000	12.2%	50.5%	11.8%
Black/African American	432,755	528,703	22.2%	15,500	19,000	22.6%	3.6%	1.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	566,925	713,939	25.9%	83,000	104,000	25.3%	14.6%	6.0%
Total***	7,143,359	7,377,714	3.3%	1,649,000	1,722,000	4.4%	23.3%	

* 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 Bismarck
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	281,950	281,797	-0.1%	65,000	62,000	-4.6%	22.0%	83.8%
Hispanic/Latino	10,699	17,214	60.9%	5,000	7,500	50.0%	43.6%	10.1%
Black/African American	8,695	9,679	11.3%	125	150	20.0%	1.5%	0.2%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	28,248	32,450	14.9%	3,700	4,000	8.1%	12.3%	5.4%
Total***	329,592	341,140	3.5%	74,000	74,000	0.0%	21.7%	

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Diocese of Crookston
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	229,422	222,250	-3.1%	55,000	59,000	7.3%	26.5%	85.5%
Hispanic/Latino	7,702	10,507	36.4%	4,000	5,500	37.5%	52.3%	8.0%
Black/African American	4,618	4,517	-2.2%	100	100	0.0%	2.2%	0.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	26,341	32,043	21.6%	4,000	5,000	25.0%	15.6%	7.2%
Total***	268,083	269,317	0.5%	63,000	69,000	9.5%	25.6%	

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Diocese of Duluth
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	407,419	395,971	-2.8%	100,000	111,000	11.0%	28.0%	93.3%
Hispanic/Latino	7,809	8,936	14.4%	3,400	3,500	2.9%	39.2%	2.9%
Black/African American	7,095	9,103	28.3%	250	300	20.0%	3.3%	0.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	24,103	34,178	41.8%	3,500	5,000	42.9%	14.6%	4.2%
Total***	446,426	448,188	0.4%	107,000	119,000	11.2%	26.6%	

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Diocese of Fargo
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	363,047	356,317	-1.9%	89,000	83,000	-6.7%	23.3%	86.5%
Hispanic/Latino	13,671	14,926	9.2%	6,000	6,000	0.0%	40.2%	6.3%
Black/African American	14,674	22,086	50.5%	300	450	50.0%	2.0%	0.5%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	36,969	40,479	9.5%	5,500	6,000	9.1%	14.8%	6.3%
Total***	428,361	433,808	1.3%	101,000	96,000	-5.0%	22.1%	

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Diocese of New Ulm
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	252,918	243,904	-3.6%	63,000	69,000	9.5%	28.3%	85.2%
Hispanic/Latino	16,678	19,128	14.7%	9,500	10,000	5.3%	52.3%	12.3%
Black/African American	5,924	7,153	20.7%	150	200	33.3%	2.8%	0.2%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	6,828	10,837	58.7%	950	1,500	57.9%	13.8%	1.9%
Total***	282,348	281,022	-0.5%	73,000	81,000	11.0%	28.8%	

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Diocese of Rapid 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	193,367	192,965	-0.2%	38,000	42,000	10.5%	21.8%	73.7%
Hispanic/Latino	10,872	11,603	6.7%	5,000	5,000	0.0%	43.1%	8.8%
Black/African American	4,684	3,806	-18.7%	75	75	0.0%	2.0%	0.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	63,568	56,401	-11.3%	10,500	9,500	-9.5%	16.8%	16.7%
Total***	272,491	264,775	-2.8%	54,000	57,000	5.6%	21.5%	

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Diocese of Sioux Falls
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	520,250	522,511	0.4%	109,000	113,000	3.7%	21.6%	83.7%
Hispanic/Latino	21,377	25,725	20.3%	10,500	12,000	14.3%	46.6%	8.9%
Black/African American	14,396	20,177	40.2%	450	600	33.3%	3.0%	0.4%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	36,940	62,188	68.3%	6,000	10,000	66.7%	16.1%	7.4%
Total***	592,963	630,601	6.3%	126,000	135,000	7.1%	21.4%	

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Diocese of St. Cloud
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	523,122	528,858	1.1%	127,000	138,000	8.7%	26.1%	90.8%
Hispanic/Latino	14,879	20,335	36.7%	7,500	10,000	33.3%	49.2%	6.6%
Black/African American	19,461	26,464	36.0%	450	600	33.3%	2.3%	0.4%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	14,597	28,932	98.2%	2,000	4,000	100.0%	13.8%	2.6%
Total***	572,059	604,589	5.7%	137,000	152,000	10.9%	25.1%	

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**Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis
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	2,526,013	2,487,905	-1.5%	597,000	588,000	-1.5%	23.6%	75.5%
Hispanic/Latino	199,370	229,343	15.0%	111,000	121,000	9.0%	52.8%	15.5%
Black/African American	334,051	400,679	19.9%	13,000	16,000	23.1%	4.0%	2.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	302,009	375,840	24.4%	43,000	54,000	25.6%	14.4%	6.9%
Total***	3,361,443	3,493,767	3.9%	764,000	779,000	2.0%	22.3%	

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Diocese of Winona-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	505,748	500,314	-1.1%	126,000	132,000	4.8%	26.4%	82.5%
Hispanic/Latino	37,366	44,563	19.3%	19,500	22,000	12.8%	49.4%	13.8%
Black/African American	19,157	25,039	30.7%	700	900	28.6%	3.6%	0.6%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	27,322	40,591	48.6%	3,200	5,000	56.3%	12.3%	3.1%
Total***	589,593	610,507	3.5%	149,000	160,000	7.4%	26.2%	

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