

Frequently Requested Church Statistics

CARA gets many inquiries from Church agencies and the media about the numbers for vocations, seminary enrollments, priests and vowed religious, parishes, Mass attendance, schools and the Catholic population. Below are some comparative statistics from 1965. Generally, these data reflect the situation at the beginning of the calendar year listed. The sources for this information include *The Official Catholic Directory (OCD)*, the Vatican's *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae (ASE)*, and other CARA research and databases. All data are cross checked as much as possible. For the U.S, the numbers reported here include only figures for those 195 dioceses or eparchies who belong to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This includes the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and all U.S. military personnel stationed overseas. Entries reading "--" have no data available at this time and "na" is not applicable. Following the U.S. and World data tables below CARA provides link to CARA research about other Frequently Asked Questions. For more information about CARA research and statistics, including our national and parish surveys, demographic studies, trend analyses and projections, and focus groups visit [CARA Services](#). For more information about CARA's beginnings read the following *Review of Religious Research* article from 1967 by Francis X. Gannon entitled, "[Bridging the Research Gap: CARA, Response to Vatican II](#)." Follow up-to-the-minute updates about CARA research here:

- [United States Data Over Time](#)
- [World Data Over Time](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

| Clergy, Religious, and Lay Leaders; Leaders in Formation | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total priests | 58,632 | 59,192 | 58,909 | 58,398 | 57,317 | 52,124 | 49,054 | 45,699 | 41,399 | 39,993 | 37,578 |
| Diocesan priests | 35,925 | 37,272 | 36,005 | 35,627 | 35,052 | 34,114 | 32,349 | 30,607 | 28,094 | 27,182 | 25,868 |
| Religious priests | 22,707 | 21,920 | 22,904 | 22,771 | 22,265 | 18,010 | 16,705 | 15,092 | 13,305 | 12,811 | 11,710 |
| Priestly ordinations | 994 | 805 | 771 | 593 | 533 | 595 | 511 | 442 | 454 | 459 | 515 |
| Graduate-level seminarians | 8,325 | 6,602 | 5,279 | 4,197 | 4,063 | 3,658 | 3,172 | 3,474 | 3,308 | 3,483 | 3,650 |
| Permanent deacons | na | na | 898 | 4,093 | 7,204 | 9,356 | 10,932 | 12,378 | 14,574 | 16,649 | 18,082 |
| Permanent deacon candidates | na | na | 2,243 | 2,514 | 2,263 | 1,980 | 2,026 | 2,497 | 2,342 | 2,445 | 2,051 |
| Religious sisters | 179,954 | 160,931 | 135,225 | 126,517 | 115,386 | 102,504 | 90,809 | 79,814 | 68,634 | 57,544 | 48,546 |
| Religious brothers | 12,271 | 11,623 | 8,625 | 7,941 | 7,544 | 6,721 | 6,535 | 5,662 | 5,451 | 4,690 | 4,200 |
| Lay professional ministers (lay persons; excluding vowed religious) | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 10,674 | 17,315 | 20,379 | 20,660 | 23,448 |
| Lay Ecclesial Ministers in parish ministry (most recent estimates; including vowed religious and other lay persons) | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 21,569 | 29,146 | -- | 30,632 | 37,929 | 39,651 |
| Enrollment in Lay Ecclesial Ministry formation programs | -- | -- | -- | -- | 10,500 | -- | 21,800 | 31,168 | 16,037 | 17,935 | 22,145 |
| Parishes and the Catholic Population | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 |
| Parishes | 17,637 | 18,224 | 18,515 | 18,794 | 19,244 | 19,620 | 19,331 | 19,236 | 18,891 | 17,958 | 17,337 |
| Parishes without a resident priest pastor | 549 | 571 | 702 | 791 | 1,051 | 1,812 | 2,161 | 2,843 | 3,251 | 3,353 | 3,533 |

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|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Canon 517.2 parishes where a bishop has entrusted the pastoral care of the parish to a deacon or some other person (e.g., a religious sister, religious brother, or other lay person) | na | na | na | na | 93 | 249 | 314 | 447 | 553 | 469 | 431 |
| Percentage of diocesan priests active in ministry | 94% | 90% | 88% | 85% | 84% | 80% | 76% | 74% | 70% | 68% | 66% |
| Active diocesan priests per parish | 2.0 | 1.8 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Catholic population (<i>The Official Catholic Directory</i> ; parish-connected Catholics) | 46.3m | 47.9m | 48.7m | 50.5m | 52.3m | 55.7m | 57.4m | 59.9m | 64.8m | 65.6m | 68.1m |
| Catholic population (self-identified, survey-based estimate) | 48.5m | 51.0m | 54.5m | 56.8m | 59.5m | 62.4m | 65.7m | 71.7m | 74.0m | 74.6m | 81.6m |
| Foreign-born adult Catholics (survey-based estimate) | -- | -- | 4.7m | 4.1m | 4.8m | 5.6m | 7.0m | 10.9m | 15.8m | 13.2m | 22.8m |

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|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Former Catholic adults: Those raised Catholic (native- and foreign-born) who no longer self-identify as Catholic (survey-based estimate). As the largest religion in the U.S., Catholicism has the largest number of former members (some later return as reverts). Catholicism has a higher retention rate than most other religions in the U.S. (including all Protestant denominations). | -- | -- | 7.5m | 8.6m | 8.0m | 10.3m | 17.3m | 17.9m | 19.1m | 26.8m | 25.0m |
| Religious Education | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 |
| Primary school-age children in parish religious education | 3.448m | 4.175m | 3.880m | 3.417m | 3.106m | 3.144m | 3.287m | 3.592m | 3.438m | 2.952m | 2.631m |
| Secondary school-age teens in parish religious education | 1.357m | 1.280m | 1.009m | 959,935 | 831,331 | 736,188 | 749,377 | 760,644 | 787,033 | 656,722 | 635,170 |
| Catholic elementary schools | 10,667 | 9,366 | 8,414 | 8,022 | 7,764 | 7,395 | 6,964 | 6,793 | 6,122 | 5,889 | 5,302 |
| Students in Catholic elementary schools | 4.431m | 3.359m | 2.557m | 2.227m | 2.005m | 1.983m | 1.815m | 1.800m | 1.559m | 1.508m | 1.358m |
| Catholic secondary schools | 1,527 | 1,986 | 1,624 | 1,549 | 1,425 | 1,324 | 1,280 | 1,297 | 1,325 | 1,205 | 1,200 |
| Students in Catholic secondary schools | 689,264 | 1.008m | 884,181 | 838,136 | 774,216 | 606,000 | 638,440 | 653,723 | 653,226 | 611,723 | 583,885 |
| Catholic colleges and universities | 305 | 279 | 245 | 235 | 243 | 228 | 231 | 230 | 229 | 234 | 226 |
| Students in Catholic colleges and universities | 409,471 | 411,111 | 432,597 | 536,799 | 545,461 | 619,300 | 653,927 | 683,768 | 752,718 | 783,407 | 784,790 |

| Sacraments and Rites | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Baptisms of infants in previous year. The number of infant baptisms year-to-year is closely correlated to the number of births . | 1.310m | 1.089m | 894,992 | 943,632 | 953,323 | 986,308 | 981,444 | 996,199 | 929,545 | 806,138 | 693,914 |
| Baptisms of other minors in previous year | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 60,927 | 66,458 |
| Baptisms of adults in previous year | 126,209 | 84,534 | 80,035 | 88,942 | 87,996 | 85,600 | 66,886 | 77,578 | 76,605 | 41,600 | 42,751 |
| Receptions into full communion in previous year | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 76,176 | 95,003 | 73,402 | 70,318 | 67,140 |
| Confirmations in previous year | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 491,360 | 555,767 | 630,465 | 610,282 | 597,402 | 566,143 |
| First Communion in previous year | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 849,919 | 794,576 | 881,321 | 807,066 | 802,300 | 726,887 |
| Marriages in previous year | 352,458 | 426,309 | 369,133 | 350,745 | 348,300 | 326,079 | 294,144 | 261,626 | 207,112 | 168,400 | 148,134 |
| Annulments initiated in previous year | | | | | 60,691 | 72,308 | 57,018 | 49,973 | 33,727 | 26,025 | 23,302 |
| Funerals in previous year | 387,739 | 417,779 | 406,497 | 417,047 | 446,822 | 452,526 | 455,477 | 472,789 | 445,616 | 417,387 | 391,131 |

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|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mass Attendance. Prior to 2000, CARA reports Gallup estimates of the % attending in <i>any given week</i> adjusted for the effects of social desirability bias . From 2000 on the data are from the CARA Catholic Poll (CCP) and represents the % of U.S. adult Catholics who say they attended Mass <i>every week</i> . For more background information on measurement, see: The Nuances of Accurately Measuring Mass Attendance . | 55% | 48% | 42% | 41% | 41% | 39% | 35% | 22% | 23% | 24% | 24% |
| Social and Health Services | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 |
| Catholic hospitals | 800 | 727 | 657 | 642 | 631 | 633 | 600 | 594 | 571 | 553 | 541 |
| Patients served in Catholic hospitals in previous year | 16.9m | 21.5m | 29.9m | 36.5m | 36.6m | 43.4m | 56.4m | 79.0m | 84.7m | 89.9m | 87.9m |
| Value of services provided by Catholic Charities in previous year | -- | -- | \$361m | -- | \$514m | \$1.150b | \$1.655b | \$1.968b | \$2.696b | \$3.818b | \$3.831b |
| Persons served by Catholic Charities in previous year | -- | -- | -- | 2.452m | 4.146m | 9.123m | 11.129m | 9.530m | 12.007m | 9.165m | 8.547m |
| Note: <i>The Official Catholic Directory</i> , from which the sacraments data is drawn, is based on the state of the Church as of January 1 of the year it is published. The sacramental data in these volumes are totals from the previous year. | | | | | | | | | | | |