

# SERVICES

[HOME](#)
[ABOUT CARA](#)
[SERVICES](#)
[PUBLICATIONS](#)
[NEWS AND PRESS](#)
[CARA RESEARCH](#)

## 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 *Annuario 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:


[caracatholic](#)

### UNITED STATES DATA OVER TIME:

<b>Clergy, Religious, and Lay Leaders; Leaders in Formation</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
Total priests	58,632	59,192	58,909	58,398	57,317	52,124	49,054	45,699	41,399	39,993	38,275
Diocesan priests	35,925	37,272	36,005	35,627	35,052	34,114	32,349	30,607	28,094	27,182	26,265
Religious priests	22,707	21,920	22,904	22,771	22,265	18,010	16,705	15,092	13,305	12,811	12,010
Priestly ordinations	994	805	771	593	533	595	511	442	454	459	494
Graduate-level seminarians	8,325	6,602	5,279	4,197	4,063	3,658	3,172	3,474	3,308	3,483	3,631
Permanent deacons	na	na	898	4,093	7,204	9,356	10,932	12,378	14,574	16,649	17,464
Permanent deacon candidates	na	na	2,243	2,514	2,263	1,980	2,026	2,497	2,342	2,445	2,018
Religious sisters	179,954	160,931	135,225	126,517	115,386	102,504	90,809	79,814	68,634	57,544	49,883
Religious brothers	12,271	11,623	8,625	7,941	7,544	6,721	6,535	5,662	5,451	4,690	4,318
Lay professional ministers (lay persons; excluding vowed religious)	--	--	--	--	--	--	10,674	17,315	20,379	20,660	21,424
Lay Ecclesial Ministers in parish ministry (most recent survey-based 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	22,791
<b>Parishes and the Catholic Population</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
Parishes	17,637	18,224	18,515	18,794	19,244	19,620	19,331	19,236	18,891	17,958	17,483
Parishes without a resident priest pastor	549	571	702	791	1,051	1,812	2,161	2,843	3,251	3,353	3,496
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	388
Percentage of diocesan priests active in ministry	94%	90%	88%	85%	84%	80%	76%	74%	70%	68%	68%
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	66.6m
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	79.7m
Foreign-born adult Catholics (survey-based estimate)	--	--	4.7m	4.1m	4.8m	5.6m	7.0m	10.9m	15.8m	13.2m	21.5m
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 <a href="#">reverts</a> ). Catholicism has a higher retention rate than most other religions in the U.S. (including <a href="#">all</a> Protestant denominations).	--	--	7.5m	8.6m	8.0m	10.3m	17.3m	17.9m	19.1m	26.8m	28.9m
<b>Religious Education</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
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	2.695m
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	631,943
Catholic elementary schools	10,667	9,366	8,414	8,022	7,764	7,395	6,964	6,793	6,122	5,889	5,368
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	1.360m
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	579,605
Catholic colleges and universities	305	279	245	235	243	228	231	230	229	234	225
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	787,574
<b>Sacraments and Rites</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
Baptisms of infants in previous year. The number of infant baptisms year-to-year is closely correlated to the <a href="#">number of births</a> .	1.310m	1.089m	894,992	943,632	953,323	986,308	981,444	996,199	929,545	806,138	713,302
Baptisms of other minors in previous year	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	60,927	64,121
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	38,042
Receptions into full communion in previous year	--	--	--	--	--	--	76,176	95,003	73,402	70,318	66,413

Confirmations in previous year	--	--	--	--	--	491,360	555,767	630,465	610,282	597,402	568,344
First Communion in previous year	--	--	--	--	--	849,919	794,576	881,321	807,066	802,300	758,034
Marriages in previous year	352,458	426,309	369,133	350,745	348,300	326,079	294,144	261,626	207,112	168,400	154,450
Annulments initiated in previous year						60,691	72,308	57,018	49,973	33,727	26,025
Funerals in previous year	387,739	417,779	406,497	417,047	446,822	452,526	455,477	472,789	445,616	417,387	402,632
Mass Attendance. Prior to 2000, CARA reports Gallup estimates of the % attending in any given week 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 every week. For more background information on measurement, see: <a href="#">The Nuances of Accurately Measuring Mass Attendance</a> .	55%	48%	42%	41%	41%	39%	35%	22%	23%	24%	24%
<b>Social and Health Services</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
Catholic hospitals	800	727	657	642	631	633	600	594	571	553	549
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	88.8m
Value of services provided by Catholic Charities in previous year	--	--	\$361m	--	\$514m	\$1.150b	\$1.655b	\$1.968b	\$2.696b	\$3.818b	\$3.696b
Persons served by Catholic Charities in previous year	--	--	--	2.452m	4.146m	9.123m	11.129m	9.530m	12.007m	9.165m	9.035m

Note: *The Official Catholic Directory*, 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 data in these volumes is collected in the previous year. Sacramental numbers represent totals from the year prior to this data collection year. Thus, the 2014 OCD sacraments totals were collected in 2013 and represent the previous year (i.e., 2012).

WORLD DATA OVER TIME:

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
Total priests	419,728	404,783	413,600	403,480	403,173	404,750	405,178	406,411	412,236	414,313
Diocesan priests	270,924	259,331	257,409	253,319	257,696	262,418	265,781	269,762	277,009	279,561
Religious priests	148,804	145,452	156,191	150,161	145,477	142,332	139,397	136,649	135,227	134,752
Diocesan priestly ordinations	4,622	4,140	3,860	4,822	5,938	6,444	6,814	6,614	6,863	6,577
Graduate-level seminarians	--	24,183	33,731	43,476	51,603	54,154	55,968	58,538	58,140	56,924
Permanent deacons	309	2,686	7,654	12,541	17,525	22,390	27,824	33,391	39,564	42,104
Religious sisters	1,004,304	968,526	960,991	917,432	882,111	837,961	801,185	760,529	721,935	705,529
Religious brothers	79,408	70,388	73,090	65,208	62,526	59,515	55,057	54,708	54,665	55,314
Parishes	191,398	200,116	206,503	212,021	215,805	220,077	218,196	217,616	221,055	221,740
Parishes without a resident priest pastor	39,431	46,074	50,469	55,343	57,664	60,705	55,729	52,509	49,172	49,153
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	1,635	3,786	3,278	3,373	3,122	3,819	3,485
Catholic population	653.6m	709.6m	783.7m	852.0m	928.5m	989.4m	1.045b	1.115b	1.196b	1.229b
Percent of world population	18%	17%	18%	18%	18%	17%	17%	17%	18%	17%
Catholic elementary schools	89,112	79,424	75,454	78,160	78,548	85,043	89,457	91,480	92,847	95,246
Students in Catholic elementary schools	20.396m	19.584m	20.661m	22.390m	24.145m	25.246m	26.097m	28.084m	31.151m	32.300m
Catholic secondary schools	25,552	27,542	29,637	30,404	31,200	33,349	35,559	39,096	43,591	43,783
Students in Catholic secondary schools	7.667m	9.522m	11.015m	12.066m	12.441m	13.232m	14.027m	16.232m	17.794m	18.869m
Baptisms of infants to age 7	14.795m	15.553m	16.410m	16.119m	16.252m	15.867m	15.690m	14.448m	14.283m	13.713m
Baptisms of those ages 8 and older	1.120m	990,727	1.131m	1.580m	1.879m	2.173m	2.718m	2.554m	2.667m	2.696m
Marriages between two Catholics	3.306m	3.725m	3.821m	3.707m	3.633m	3.322m	3.433m	2.791m	2.712m	2.486m
Marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic	360,466	353,702	335,802	328,457	347,206	311,287	297,915	262,230	247,228	243,540
Confirmations	--	--	--	--	8.033m	8.493m	9.257m	8.878m	8.793m	8.583m
First Communion	--	--	--	--	11.329m	11.600m	12.237m	11.611m	10.728m	10.551m
Catholic hospitals	--	--	6,700	6,056	5,675	5,482	5,853	5,246	5,305	5,167
Catholic orphanages	--	--	6,185	6,988	6,650	7,554	8,695	9,616	9,882	10,124
Mass attendance (by selected country <a href="#">click here</a> )	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Note: The ASE, upon which the world data above is based, is released two years after the most current year measured. Thus, the ASE 2012, which was released in 2014, represents 2012 totals. All previous years in the world table above measure the actual year listed. For 2014, there are no more current world data sources available.

ADDITIONAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- [Can you provide some context and analysis of the figures in the table above?](#)
- [Is the U.S. Catholic population growing? How about in Europe?](#)
- [How many Catholics go to Mass weekly? How many are involved with their parish other than Mass?](#)
- [How much has Mass attendance declined since the 1950s?](#)
- [How many Catholics will attend Mass this week?](#)
- [How many Catholics go to Mass at their territorial parish?](#)
- [What is Mass attendance like outside of the United States?](#)
- [Why do so many Catholics not believe in the Real Presence?](#)
- [Do Catholic schools make a difference? What about Catholic colleges? \(1, 2\)](#)
- [What is happening in American parish life?](#)
- [Are U.S. Catholic seminaries "full" again?](#)
- [How are the numbers of religious sisters in the U.S. declining so rapidly?](#)

*What is happening with religious life and vocations in the United States?*

*What are trends like for the Jesuits? (1, 2)*

*Do converts stay active in the Church?*

*Globally, are Catholics baptizing their children? ... Are they still having many children?*

*What do Catholic teenagers think about their faith?*

*What do Catholics do during Lent? (1, 2)*

*Why are so many Catholic parishes closing? (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)*

*What does the "average" parish look like?*

*What do people in the pews think about their parishes?*

*What do we know about Catholics considering a clerical or religious vocation? (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)*

*What is the "Francis Effect" (1, 2)?*

*Who are Catholic "reverts"? (1, 2)*

*Are the Church's finances "an unholy mess"?*

*What is the impact of immigration on the number of Catholics in the United States? (1, 2, 3)*

*How many people raised Catholic stop considering themselves Catholic later in life?*

*Who do Catholics vote for?*

*Are advertisements brining Catholics back to the Church?*

*Are Catholics looking for Catholic things online?*

*How many Hispanics and Latino(a)s self-identify as Catholic? (1, 2)*

*What do we know about Hispanic Ministry in Catholic parishes?*

*Where can I find data for numbers of allegations and costs related to clergy sex abuse in the U.S.?*

*Is the Church becoming more diverse? (1, 2)*

*Are married Catholics less likely than those of other religions to divorce?*

*Are Catholics marrying non-Catholics more often?*

*Do people lie about going to church in surveys?*

*What is the difference between the Church's estimates for the number of Catholics and what surveys find?*

Copyright © 2015  
Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
2300 Wisconsin Ave, NW  
Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20007  
(202) 687-8080  
CARA@Georgetown.edu