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47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism

A closer look at Catholic life in the U.S.

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to estimate how many Americans have connections with Catholicism, to measure religious beliefs and practices among U.S. Catholics, and to explore what Catholics consider essential to their Catholic identity.

We analyzed two surveys: the 2023-24 [U.S. Religious Landscape Study \(RLS\)](#) and a smaller, but more recent, survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025, which included many questions designed specifically for Catholics.

This report relies mostly on the 2025 survey, which was conducted among a sample of 9,544 U.S. adults, including 1,787 Catholics. All the respondents were members of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), a group of people who have agreed to take surveys regularly and who were recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This kind of recruitment gives nearly all U.S. adults a chance of selection. ATP surveys are conducted either online or by telephone with a live interviewer. The survey data is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education, and other factors. [Read more about the ATP's Methodology.](#)

In addition to the 1,787 respondents who self-identify as Catholic, the 2025 survey included 782 interviews with people who are not Catholic (by religion) but who consider themselves culturally Catholic, 836 respondents who are former Catholics, and 878 people who have other Catholic connections (i.e., they have a Catholic parent or spouse/partner, or they say "yes" when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass).

Here are the [questions](#) from the 2025 survey used in this report, the [topline](#) and the [survey methodology](#).

For some estimates, this report relies on the [2023-24 RLS](#), an extremely large survey with 36,908 respondents, including 6,958 Catholics. The RLS asked a few of the same questions as the 2025 survey (for example, about religious attendance, political party identification and demographic characteristics such as age and race). Because of the much larger sample and greater statistical precision available in the RLS, we have relied on RLS data when analyzing responses by Catholics to questions that appeared in both the RLS and the 2025 survey.

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47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism

A closer look at Catholic life in the U.S.

Catholicism's roots in the United States run deep. Nearly half of U.S. adults (47%) claim some connection to the Catholic faith. A new Pew Research Center survey finds that:

- **20% of U.S. adults are Catholics:** They say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion.
- **9% of U.S. adults are “cultural Catholics”:** They don't identify with Catholicism religiously, but they say “yes” when asked whether “*aside* from religion” they consider themselves Catholic in any way (for example, ethnically, culturally, or because of their family background).
- **9% are former Catholics:** They neither identify as Catholic religiously nor consider themselves culturally Catholic, but they say they were raised in the Catholic faith.
- **9% are connected to Catholicism in other ways:** They are not Catholic, culturally Catholic or formerly Catholic, but they have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner or they say “yes” when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass.¹

¹ Pew Research Center asked similar questions in a 2015 survey. However, the results of the 2015 survey and the new survey are not directly comparable because the new survey was conducted mainly online, while the 2015 survey took place by telephone. Additionally, we changed the wording of some of the questions. Still, the earlier survey resulted in similar estimates of the size of key groups (20% Catholic, 9% culturally Catholic, 9% former Catholic, 8% with other Catholic connections). Compared with the new survey, the Center's 2015 U.S. Religious Landscape Study (RLS) found a slightly higher share of cultural Catholics (12%) and a slightly lower share of former Catholics (6%). The RLS found roughly the same share of U.S. adults who say Catholicism is their present religion (19%), but the RLS did not include all the questions necessary to identify people in the “Other Catholic-connected” category.

Terminology

Throughout this report, when we use the term **Catholic**, we are referring to U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their religion.

We use the following terms when referring to people who are *not* Catholic by religion, but *are* connected to the faith in other ways:

Cultural Catholics say they consider themselves Catholic “aside from religion” (e.g., ethnically, culturally, or because of their family background).

Former Catholics were raised Catholic but no longer identify as Catholic, religiously or culturally.

People who are connected to Catholicism in other ways are not Catholic by religion or culture, nor are they former Catholics. But they report having a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say yes when asked if they ever attend Mass.

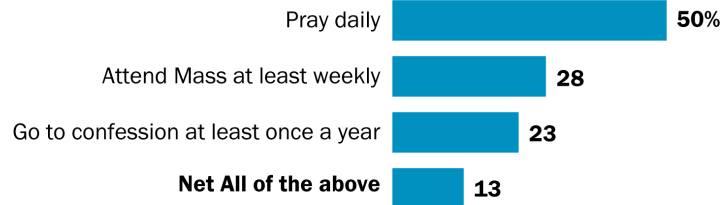
Among the 20% of U.S. adults who are Catholic, some are deeply observant. For example:

- 50% say they pray daily.
- 28% attend Mass at least weekly.
- 23% go to confession with a Catholic priest at least once a year.

Altogether, 13% of American Catholics say they do *all three* of these things.

13% of Catholics pray daily *and* attend Mass weekly *and* go to confession at least yearly

% of U.S. Catholics who say they ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.
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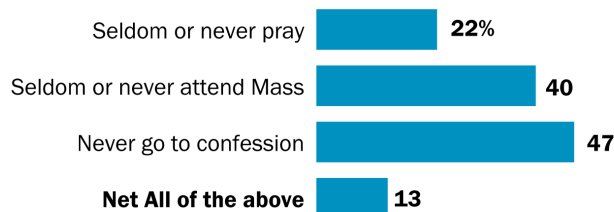
On the other hand, many U.S. Catholics are relatively nonobservant. For instance:

- 22% seldom or never pray.
- 40% seldom or never attend Mass.
- 47% never go to confession with a Catholic priest.

In total, 13% of U.S. Catholics by religion seldom or never pray *and* seldom or never attend Mass *and* never go to confession.

13% of U.S. Catholics seldom or never pray, and seldom or never attend Mass, and never go to confession

% of U.S. Catholics who say they ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.
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The largest share of Catholics (74%) fall somewhere in the middle of this spectrum of observance. They may pray. They may attend Mass. They may go to confession. But they don’t regularly do *all three* (pray daily, attend Mass weekly and go to confession annually).²

These are among the key findings of a Pew Research Center survey conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025, among a nationally representative sample of 9,544 U.S. adults, including 1,787 Catholics. The survey was designed to explore Catholic life in the United States. It was completed prior to the hospitalization of Pope Francis on Feb. 14 and his death in April, and well before the conclave that elected his successor, Pope Leo XIV.

Throughout this report, “Catholics” refers to U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, regardless of their level of observance. The terms “cultural Catholic,” “former Catholic” and “other connections to Catholicism” refer to people who do not consider Catholicism to be their religion but who have other connections to Catholic life.

The Center previously released two reports based on the same survey, one focusing on U.S. Catholics’ [opinions about Francis](#) and another on [what Catholics say they want from the church](#).

² Throughout this report, we rely mainly on the [2023-24 RLS](#) for estimates of Mass attendance and prayer frequency. The RLS is a massive survey with 36,908 respondents, including 6,958 Catholics. For this analysis, however, we rely on the smaller survey of U.S. Catholics we conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025, because the 2025 survey asked about confession (and makes it possible to combine data on confession with data on Mass attendance and prayer frequency). The RLS did not ask about confession. Compared with the RLS, the 2025 survey produces somewhat higher estimates of the share of Catholics who say they seldom or never attend Mass and seldom or never pray.

The rest of this Overview covers:

- [Essentials of Catholic identity](#)
- [Catholic parish life](#)
- [Converts to Catholicism](#)
- [Hispanic Catholics](#)
- [‘Cultural Catholics’](#)
- [Leaving Catholicism](#)
- [Other key findings](#)

Essentials of Catholic identity

The survey asked American Catholics what “being Catholic” means to them. It offered 14 items and asked respondents to say whether each one is an “essential,” an “important but not essential,” or “not an important” part of what being Catholic means to them.

In response, the item most commonly selected as *essential* was “having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

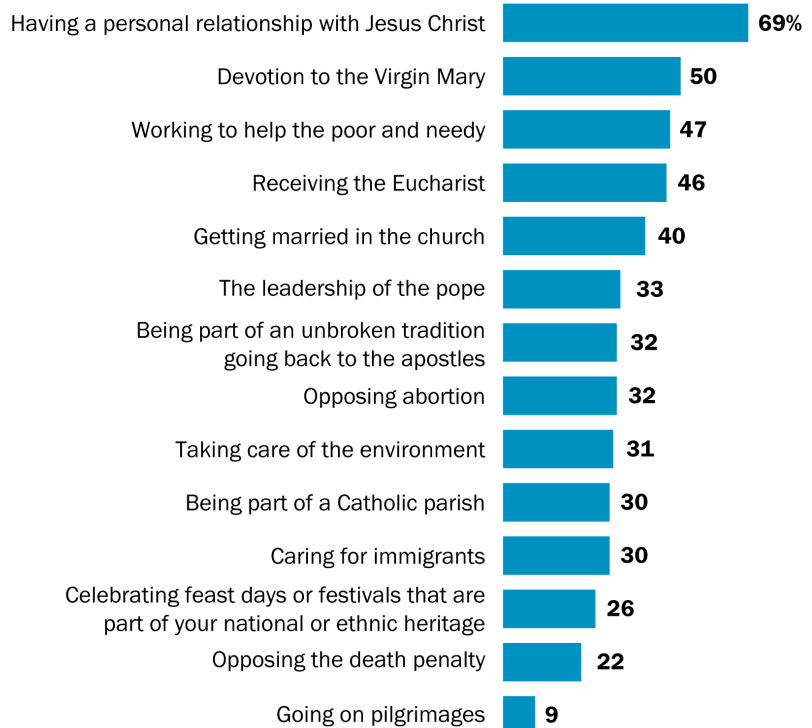
Overall, 69% of U.S. Catholics say having a personal relationship with Jesus is an essential part of what being Catholic means to them, while 21% say it is important but not essential, and 8% say it’s not an important part of their Catholic identity.

Other frequently selected essential items are:

- Devotion to the Virgin Mary (50% of Catholics say this is an essential part of what being Catholic means to them)
- Working to help the poor and needy (47%)
- Receiving the [Eucharist](#) (46%)

Most Catholics say having a relationship with Jesus is essential to what being Catholic means to them

*% of U.S. Catholics who say ___ is an **essential** part of what “being Catholic” means to them*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.
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Differences by Mass attendance

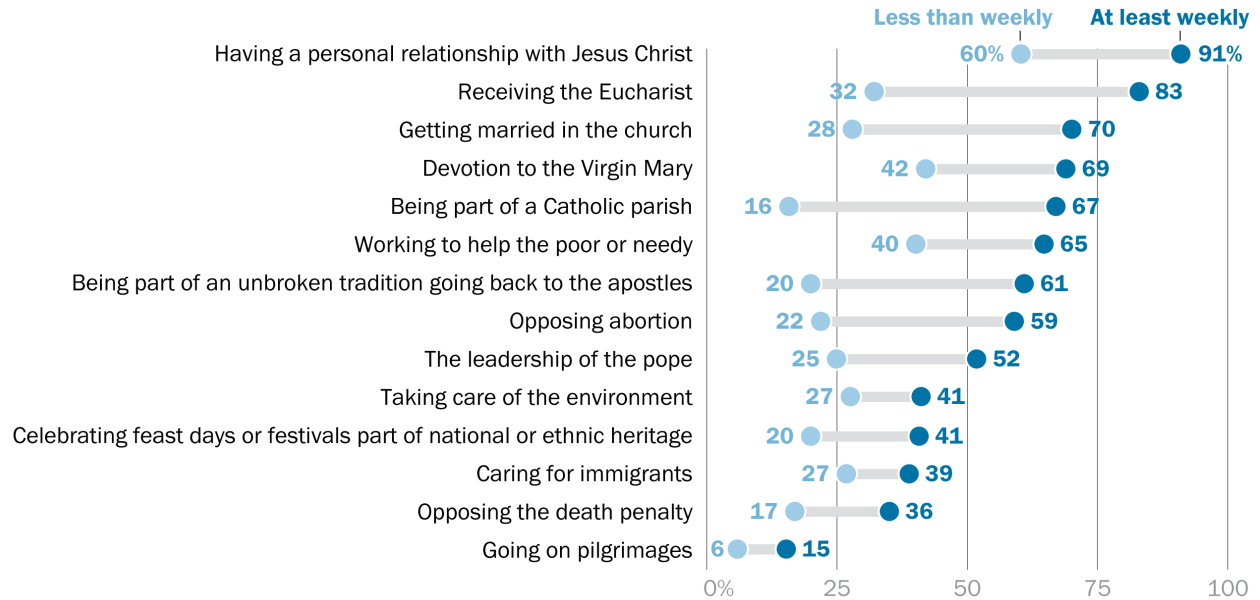
On many questions, the survey finds large differences between Catholics who attend Mass at least once a week and those who don't.

Roughly three-in-ten Catholics say they attend Mass weekly. Compared with Catholics who go less frequently, they are more likely to express [support for the church's teachings](#) on a variety of issues, [more involved in their parishes](#), and more likely to say they [participate in a variety of distinctively Catholic practices](#), such as praying the rosary or practicing devotions to Mary or the saints.

Additionally, Catholics who attend Mass weekly are more likely than those who go less often to affirm that all 14 items offered in the survey are essential to their Catholic identity. For instance, 91% of weekly Mass-attending Catholics say having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is essential to what being Catholic means to them, compared with 60% of Catholics who attend Mass less often. And 83% of weekly Mass attenders say that receiving the Eucharist is essential, compared with 32% of Catholics who attend Mass less often.

91% of weekly Mass-going Catholics say a relationship with Christ is key to their faith; 83% say same about receiving the Eucharist

% of U.S. Catholics who say each of the following is an **essential** part of what “being Catholic” means to them, among those who attend Mass ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.
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Catholic parish life

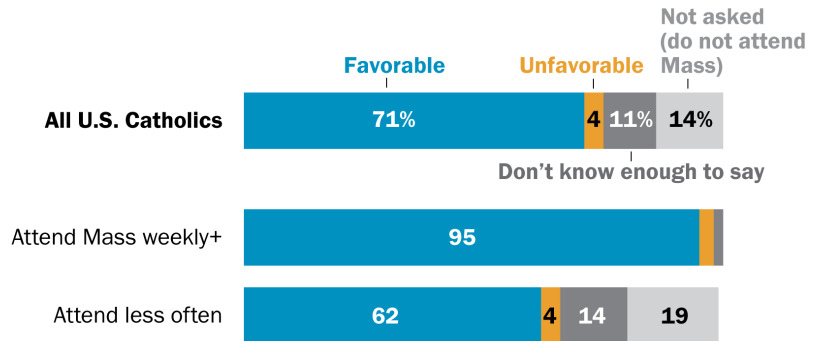
A large majority of U.S. Catholics express favorable views of their parish priests. Overall, 71% view their priests favorably, compared with 4% who view them unfavorably. About one-in-ten Catholics say they “don’t know enough” to express an opinion about their parish priests, and 14% were not asked the question because they said they don’t go to Mass.

Among Catholics who attend Mass weekly, 95% express a favorable view of their parish priests.

About half of weekly Mass attenders say they participate at least yearly in parish activities outside of Mass (such as prayer groups, Eucharistic adoration or community meals) or that they volunteer at their parish (for example, as an usher, lector or extraordinary minister of the Eucharist).

71% of Catholics view their parish priests favorably

% of U.S. Catholics who have a(n) ___ view of the priests at their parish



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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51% of weekly Mass attenders say they also participate in their parish in other ways

% of U.S. Catholics who say they do the following

	Volunteer at parish (as an usher, lector, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, etc.)	Participate at least yearly in parish activities other than Mass (e.g., prayer groups, adoration, meals, etc.)	Net Does either one or the other (or both)
All U.S. Catholics	17%	16%	22%
Attend Mass weekly+	34	41	51
Attend less often	8	7	11

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Converts to Catholicism

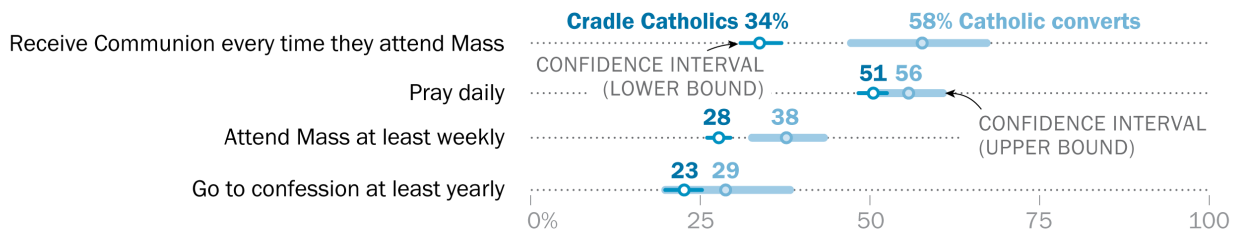
Overall, 1.5% of U.S. adults are converts to Catholicism. That is, they say they are Catholics when asked about their present religion, but – when asked in a separate question about the religion in which they were raised – they say they were not raised Catholic.³

Catholic converts tend to be at least as religiously active as “cradle Catholics” (by which we mean adults who were raised Catholic and currently identify as Catholic). In some ways, converts to the faith exhibit *higher* rates of religiousness than cradle Catholics do.

For instance, the share who say they attend Mass at least weekly is 10 percentage points higher among converts than among cradle Catholics (38% vs. 28%). Converts also are far more likely than cradle Catholics to say they receive Communion every time when they attend Mass (58% vs. 34%).

Compared with ‘cradle Catholics,’ more converts go to Mass weekly and receive Communion when they go

% who say they do each of the following, among U.S. Catholics who are ...



Note: “Catholic converts” are people who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, but who say they were not raised Catholic. “Cradle Catholics” are adults who were raised Catholic and currently identify as Catholic. Estimates for receiving Communion and going to confession are based on interviews with 148 converts to Catholicism, with an effective sample size of 94 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.1 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50. Source: Estimates for Mass attendance and prayer frequency are from the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study; estimates for receiving Communion and going to confession are from a survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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On the other hand, the shares of converts saying they pray every day and go to confession at least once a year is about the same as among cradle Catholics.

³ The survey did not ask respondents whether they’d formally converted to Catholicism or whether they have participated in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) or the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA).

The survey asked converts to Catholicism to explain, in their own words, the main reason why they became Catholics. The most commonly offered reason is marriage: 49% of converts say they became Catholic because of a spouse or partner, and/or to get married in the church.

(The 2025 survey included 148 interviews with converts to Catholicism, and results based on this relatively small sample of converts have a correspondingly large margin of error: plus or minus 10.1 percentage points.)

Roughly half of converts to Catholicism mention their spouse or getting married as the main reason for converting

Among Catholic converts, % who say, in their own words, ___ is the main reason they became Catholic

Because of spouse or partner/To get married in the church	49%
Came to believe in the teaching or historical foundations of the Catholic Church	13
Felt called to Catholicism or found it spiritually fulfilling	12
Influence of family and friends	12
Made sense/Aligned with values	7
Liked the Mass, the community or style of worship	6
Described returning to the church after a time away	3
Disillusionment or dissatisfaction with previous religious affiliation	3
Influence of Catholic institutions, such as schools	1
Other	1
Unclear	5
Don't know/Refused/Not asked	5

Note: This is an open-ended question. Estimates are based on interviews with 148 converts to Catholicism, with an effective sample size of 94 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.1 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50. Results do not sum to 100% because more than one response was permitted. Up to three responses were coded for each respondent. Refer to the Topline for a full list of categories. "Catholic converts" are people who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, but who say they were not raised Catholic.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Catholic connections among Hispanics

The survey shows that Hispanic Catholics participate in a variety of devotional practices at above-average rates. For instance,

- 56% of Hispanic Catholics wear or carry religious items at least monthly.
- 46% participate in devotions to the Virgin Mary or other saints at least monthly.
- 37% pray the rosary at least monthly.
- 26% light candles or incense for spiritual or religious reasons at least monthly.

Close ties to Catholicism are more common among Hispanics than among other racial and ethnic groups. In the 2025 survey, fully 40% of Hispanic respondents are Catholic by religion. That number has been [declining in recent years](#), but it is still at least double the shares of White, Black and Asian Americans who are Catholic.

An additional 15% of Hispanics are “cultural Catholics.” They do *not* say they are Catholic when asked about their religion; instead, they identify religiously with something other than Catholicism or with no religion. But they say “yes” when asked whether they think of themselves as Catholic “aside from religion” (e.g., ethnically, culturally, or because of their family background). Overall, 12% of U.S. Hispanics are “cultural Catholics” who were raised Catholic or had a Catholic parent.

82% of Hispanic Americans have some connection to Catholicism

% who are ...

	Among __				
	All U.S. adults	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian
Net Catholic or Catholic-connected	47%	82%	43%	21%	40%
Catholic	20	40	19	3	16
Cultural Catholic	9	15	8	7	7
Former Catholic	9	18	7	4	4
Other Catholic-connected	9	9	9	8	13
Not Catholic-connected	53	18	57	79	60
	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative only of English speakers. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. “Catholics” are respondents who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion. “Cultural Catholics” are those who do not identify as Catholic religiously but say that *aside* from religion they consider themselves Catholic in some other way (for example, ethnically, culturally or because of their family’s background). “Former Catholics” say they were raised Catholic but do not identify as Catholic today, either religiously or aside from religion. The “Other Catholic-connected” category includes adults who are not Catholic by religion, culturally Catholic, or formerly Catholic, but who have a Catholic spouse, partner or parent or say yes when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Roughly one-in-five Hispanics are “former Catholics” (18%). They say they were raised Catholic, but they do not identify as Catholic today, either religiously *or* aside from religion.

Finally, 9% of Hispanics have other Catholic connections. They don’t describe themselves as cultural or former Catholics, but they *do* have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or they say “yes” when asked if they ever attend Mass.

For more information on the beliefs and practices of Hispanic Catholics, refer to [Chapter 4](#). For additional information about the demographics of Hispanic Catholics, refer to “[10 facts about U.S. Catholics](#).”

Cultural Catholics

Among the 9% of U.S. adults categorized as cultural Catholics – people who do not identify as Catholic religiously but who say “yes” when asked whether they think of themselves as Catholic aside from religion – relatively few indicate that they *practice* the faith. Indeed, among cultural Catholics:

- 83% say they seldom or never attend Mass.
- 81% say they never go to confession.

Additionally, 85% say they seldom or never practice devotion to the Virgin Mary or to a favored saint. And an identical share say they seldom or never pray the rosary.

This raises the question – in what sense are cultural Catholics actually Catholic? To help provide an answer, the survey asked cultural Catholics, “In your own words, could you please describe in what way you consider yourself Catholic?”

The most common type of answer referred to having some Catholic background, such as having been raised Catholic, having an ethnic connection to Catholicism, or having attended Catholic schools. About one-third of respondents (32%) said this.

Cultural Catholics also cite various other types of family or social relationships with Catholics (such as having Catholic friends or extended family members) as the reason they identify as Catholic aside from religion (27% say this).

Many (23%) also mention Catholic beliefs, teachings or values they like or share. About one-in-ten (12%) mention participating in Catholic practices, such as celebrating holidays.

Many cultural Catholics reference upbringing, relationships as the reason they identify as Catholic ‘aside from religion’

Among U.S. adults who say they consider themselves Catholic “aside from religion,” % who say it’s because (of) ...

They have a Catholic background	32%
They have relationships with Catholics	27
Catholic beliefs	23
Catholic practices	12
Commonalities with Catholicism	2
Other reasons	4
Unclear	5
Don’t know/No answer	24

Note: This is an open-ended question. Results do not sum to 100% because more than one response was permitted. Up to three responses were coded for each respondent. Refer to the Topline for a full list of categories. “Cultural Catholics” are U.S. adults who do not identify as Catholic religiously but say that *aside from religion* they consider themselves Catholic in some other way (for example, ethnically, culturally or because of their family’s background). Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025. “47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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Leaving Catholicism

Many people who were raised Catholic leave the faith as adults. Indeed, 43% of all U.S. adults who were raised as Catholics no longer identify, religiously, as Catholic today (though some of them still identify as Catholic aside from religion).

The new survey asked people who have left the faith the following question: “Just in your own words, what is the main reason you are no longer Catholic?”

Respondents offer a wide variety of answers, the most common of which relate to disagreements with the church’s teachings. Overall, 18% of U.S. adults who have left Catholicism say that they changed their beliefs or that their values no longer align with the church’s values.

An additional 10% say that although they were raised in the faith, they were never very committed to Catholicism.

Another 9% of U.S. adults who have left Catholicism say they stopped believing in God or in religion more broadly. And 8% cite scandals in the church as the main reason for leaving.

For more on why some people choose to leave the Catholic Church, refer to [Chapter 7](#).

Other key findings

The survey also asked about other topics, including Eucharistic practices, the importance of receiving the anointing of the sick (one of the sacraments “[involved in the last rites](#)”), the Traditional Latin Mass, sex abuse scandals in the church, and more. Key findings include:

- 82% of Catholics who go to Mass weekly say they receive Communion every time or most of the time they go.
- 62% of weekly Mass attenders say they prefer to receive Communion in the hand, while 21% prefer to receive on the tongue; the remainder either have no preference or say they don’t receive Communion (and thus were not asked about their preferences).
- 58% of Catholics say it would be *extremely* or *very* important to them to receive the anointing of the sick if they were seriously ill.
- 13% of Catholics say they have attended a Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) at least once in the last five years, including 2% who say they attend a TLM weekly today.
- 42% of U.S. Catholics say it would bother them either a lot (13%) or a little (29%) if they had a grown child who was not a practicing Catholic; 58% of U.S. Catholics say this would not bother them at all.
- 62% of U.S. Catholics say that reports of sexual abuse and misconduct by priests and bishops reflect “ongoing problems” rather than “things that happened in the past and mostly don’t happen anymore.”
- At the same time, 68% of U.S. Catholics say sexual abuse and misconduct are no more common among Catholic priests and bishops than among leaders in other religious traditions.

For more, jump to the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 – [Essentials of Catholic identity](#)
- Chapter 2 – [Catholic practices and devotions](#)
- Chapter 3 – [Catholic parish life, culture and community](#)
- Chapter 4 – [Profile of Hispanic Catholics in the U.S.](#)
- Chapter 5 – [Profile of U.S. converts to Catholicism](#)
- Chapter 6 – [Views of sexual abuse and misconduct in the Catholic Church](#)
- Chapter 7 – [Catholic connections](#)

1. Essentials of Catholic identity

How we define Catholics in this chapter

This chapter exclusively explores views and experiences among U.S. Catholics (i.e., the 20% of U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion).

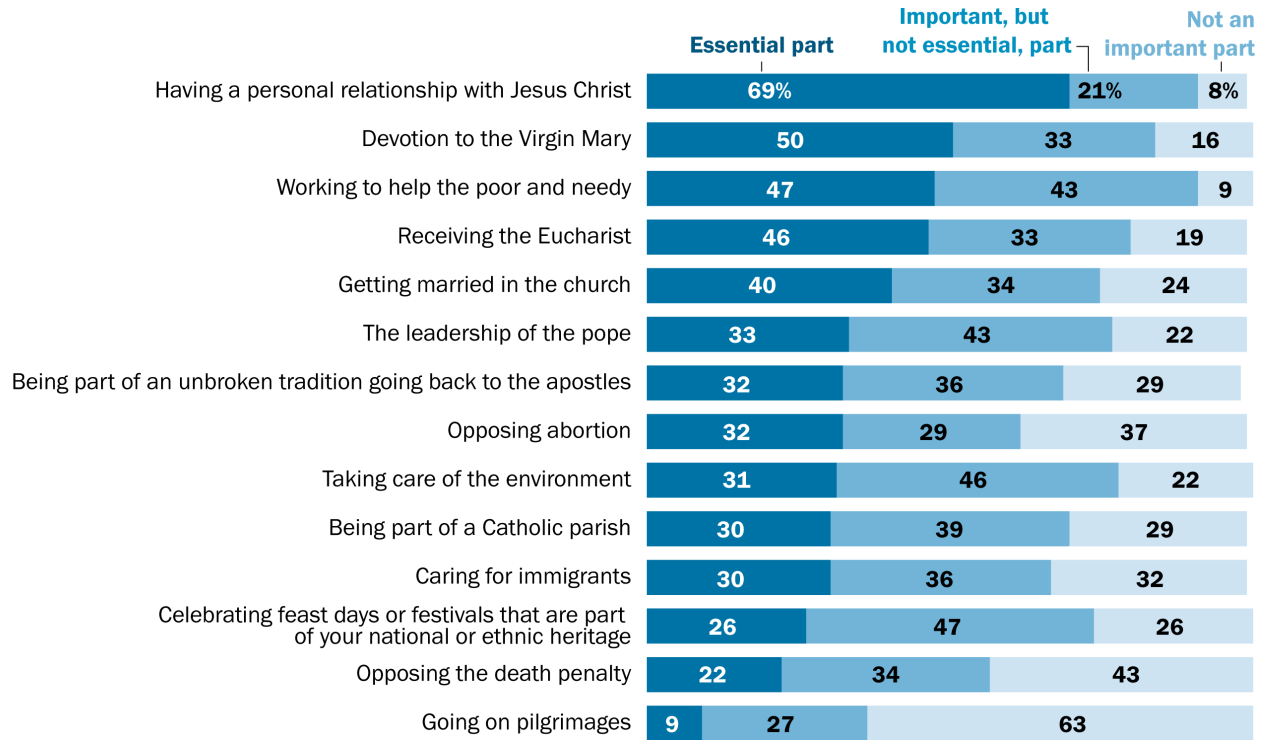
Many Americans who are *not* Catholic are still connected to the faith in other ways. Read more about these “cultural Catholics,” former Catholics, and people with other Catholic connections (i.e., those who have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say “yes” when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass) in [Chapter 7](#) and the [Overview](#).

To find out what U.S. Catholics see as the core elements of their own religion, we presented respondents with 14 items and asked them to say whether each one is an “essential,” an “important but not essential,” or “not an important” part of what “being Catholic means to you.”

Respondents had the option to describe more than one item as essential – or to say that none of the items are essential – to what being Catholic means to them. They also had a chance, at the end of this section of the survey, to mention anything else they view as essential to their Catholic identity.

About 7 in 10 Catholics say having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is an essential part of what being Catholic means to them

% of U.S. Catholics who say each of the following is a(n) ___ of what “being Catholic” means to them



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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(Pew Research Center previously has asked similar questions of a wide variety of religious groups, including in surveys of [Jewish Americans in 2020](#) and [2013](#); a [2017 survey of Muslims](#); a [2015 survey of Catholics](#); a [2012 survey of members](#) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who are widely known as Mormons; and a [2016 survey](#) of the general U.S. public.⁴)

In the present survey, about seven-in-ten U.S. Catholics say that “having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ” is an essential part of being Catholic for them.

⁴ There is some overlap between the questions asked in the new survey and the 2015 survey of Catholics. However, many of the items in the new survey were not included in the 2015 survey. Additionally, the new survey was conducted mainly online, whereas the 2015 survey was conducted entirely by telephone, which complicates making comparisons between the new results and the earlier estimates. Details about how [changes in survey mode](#) (e.g., from phone to web) can make it difficult to make comparisons across surveys are provided in the RLS.

Meanwhile, about half say that devotion to the Virgin Mary (50%), working to help the poor and needy (47%) and receiving the Eucharist (46%) are essential to their Catholic identity.

Some other beliefs and practices are viewed as essential by roughly a third of U.S. Catholics. Between 30% and 33% say the leadership of the pope, being part of an unbroken tradition going back to the apostles, opposing abortion, taking care of the environment, being part of a Catholic parish, and caring for immigrants are essential to what being Catholic means to them.

Answers to these questions tend to vary according to how often Catholics go to Mass. Those who attend weekly are generally more inclined than other Catholics to say that the 14 items we asked about are essential to their Catholic identity. For example, 83% of weekly Mass-attending Catholics say that receiving the Eucharist is essential, compared with 56% of Catholics who attend Mass once or twice a month, 31% who attend a few times a year or less often, and 15% who say they never attend Mass.

There are also differences between Hispanic Catholics and White Catholics on these questions. For example, compared with White Catholics, far more Hispanic Catholics say a personal relationship with Jesus, devotion to the Virgin Mary, caring for immigrants, and celebrating national or ethnic feast days are essential parts of what being Catholic means to them. (The survey sample did not include enough Black or Asian Catholics to allow their answers to be analyzed and reported separately.)

After presenting respondents with all 14 items, the survey asked whether there is anything else that is essential to what being Catholic means to them, inviting them to elaborate in their own words.

Most respondents (70%) did not volunteer any additional answers. Among those who gave additional answers, some of the more common responses were:

- Being kind to others (5% of all Catholics volunteered this as an essential component of what being Catholic means to them)
- Following the teachings of Jesus and/or the Bible (4%)
- Being ethical/moral (4%)
- Believing in God or Jesus (3%)

While the analysis in this chapter focuses mostly on what Catholics say is *essential* to their Catholic identity, the survey also gave respondents the option to say that various beliefs and practices are *important but not essential* to what being Catholic means to them.

When the *essential* and *important but not essential* categories are combined, it becomes clear that **a majority of Catholics view 13 of the 14 items listed in the survey as either essential or important.** The lone exception is “going on pilgrimages,” which roughly a third of U.S. Catholic adults view as essential (9%) or important but not essential (27%) to their Catholic identity.

For details on how subgroups of Catholics answered these questions, refer to the [detailed tables](#).

For additional information on what Hispanic Catholics see as essential to being Catholic, jump to [the relevant section in Chapter 4](#).

Read on about essentials of Catholic identity by:

- [Mass attendance](#)
- [Party identification](#)

Essentials of Catholic identity by Mass attendance

Weekly Mass attenders are generally more likely than Catholics who attend less frequently to say the items we asked about are essential to being Catholic for them.⁵

For example, 91% of Catholics who go to Mass at least weekly say that having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is essential to what being Catholic means to them, compared with 67% of Catholics who go to Mass monthly and 63% of Catholics who go to Mass a few times a year or less often. Among Catholics who never go to Mass, 45% say having a personal relationship with Jesus is essential to their Catholic identity.

83% of weekly Mass attenders say receiving the Eucharist is an essential part of what being Catholic means to them

% of U.S. Catholics who say each is an **essential** part of what “being Catholic” means to them

	Among Catholics who attend Mass ...			
	At least weekly	Once or twice a month*	A few times a year/Seldom	Never
Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ	91%	67%	63%	45%
Receiving the Eucharist	83	56	31	15
Getting married in the church	70	42	28	18
Devotion to the Virgin Mary	69	49	44	26
Being part of a Catholic parish	67	34	15	7
Working to help the poor and needy	65	55	39	31
Being part of an unbroken tradition going back to the apostles	61	31	18	17
Opposing abortion	59	30	21	17
The leadership of the pope	52	30	25	22
Taking care of the environment	41	39	27	19
Celebrating feast days or festivals that are part of your national or ethnic heritage	41	29	20	13
Caring for immigrants	39	33	27	22
Opposing the death penalty	36	28	17	9
Going on pilgrimages	15	10	7	2

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who say they attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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⁵ Overall, about three-in-ten U.S. Catholics say they go to Mass weekly or more often, while one-in-ten go monthly, half go a few times a year or seldom, and roughly one-in-ten never go to Mass. For more on attendance rates, read “[10 facts about U.S. Catholics](#).”

And 83% of weekly attenders say receiving the Eucharist is essential to their Catholic identity, compared with 56% of Catholics who go to Mass once or twice a month and less than half of Catholics who go to church a few times a year or less often.⁶

⁶ The [Catholic Church teaches](#) the following: “In the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. The whole Christ is truly present – body, blood, soul, and divinity – under the appearances of bread and wine, the glorified Christ who rose from the dead.”

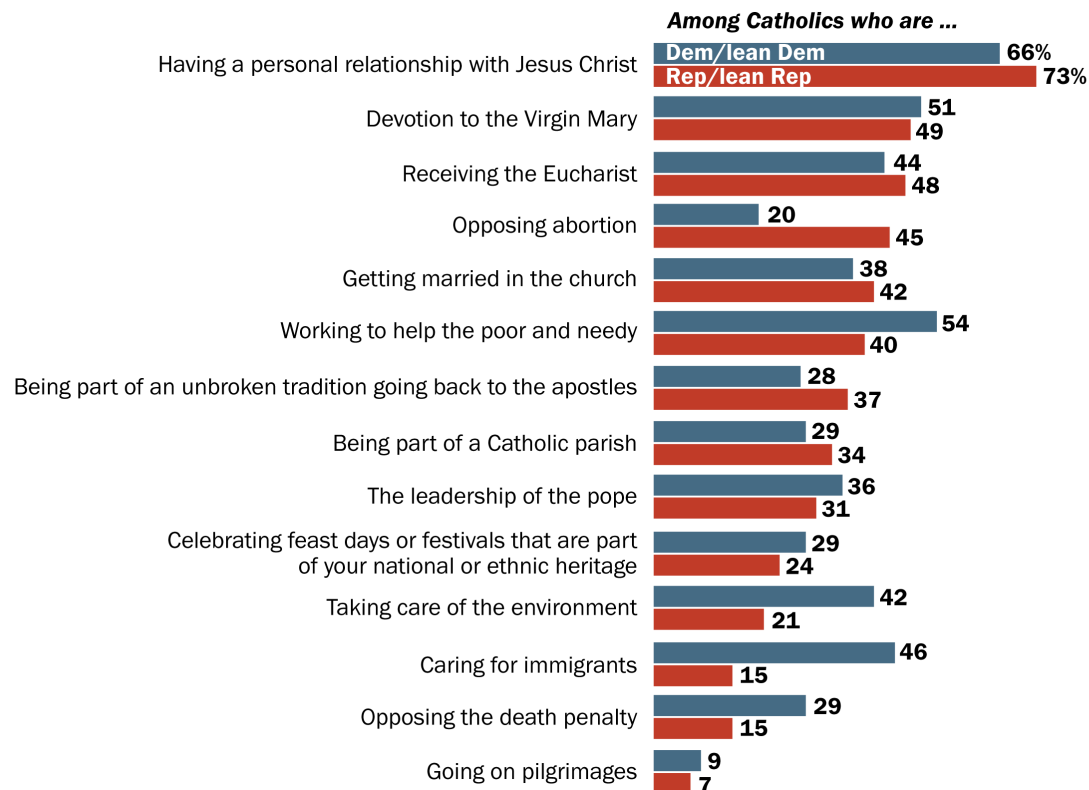
Essentials of Catholic identity by party identification

Catholic Democrats and independents who lean Democratic are more likely than Catholic Republicans and Republican leaners to view the following items as essential to their Catholic identity:

- Working to help the poor and needy (54% among Catholic Democrats vs. 40% among Catholic Republicans)
- Caring for immigrants (46% vs. 15%)
- Taking care of the environment (42% vs. 21%)
- Opposing the death penalty (29% vs. 15%)

Most Catholic Democrats *and* Republicans say a personal relationship with Jesus is essential to their Catholic identity; larger partisan gaps on other questions

% of U.S. Catholics who say each is an **essential** part of what “being Catholic” means to them



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Meanwhile, Catholic Republicans and Republican leaners (45%) are more likely than Catholic Democrats and Democratic leaners (20%) to say that opposing abortion is essential to what being Catholic means to them.

Majorities of Catholics in both parties say that having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is essential to being Catholic for them, though Catholic Republicans are slightly more likely than Catholic Democrats to say this (73% vs. 66%).

2. Catholic practices and devotions

How we define Catholics in this chapter

This chapter exclusively explores views and experiences among U.S. Catholics (i.e., the 20% of U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion).

Many Americans who are *not* Catholic are still connected to the faith in other ways. Read more about these “cultural Catholics,” former Catholics, and people with other Catholic connections (i.e., those who have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say “yes” when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass) in [Chapter 7](#) and the [Overview](#).

There is a wide spectrum of religious observance among U.S. Catholics. Some are quite devout by a variety of traditional measures:

- 50% of U.S. Catholic adults in our 2025 survey say they pray daily.
- 28% say they go to Mass weekly.⁷
- 23% say they go to confession at least once a year.⁸

In total, **13% of U.S. Catholics say they engage in *all three* of these practices. An additional 15% say they do two of them.**

Meanwhile, 31% say they do just one of these things. And 40% *don’t do any of them* – they do not go to Mass each week, do not go to confession at least once a year, and do not pray every day.

13% of U.S. Catholics go to Mass weekly and go to confession yearly and pray daily

% of U.S. Catholics who ...

Pray daily	50%
Attend Mass weekly	28
Go to confession at least once a year	23
Net Do all three of these	13
Do two of these	15
Do one of these	31
Don’t do any of these	40

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.
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⁷ According to the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Catholics are “bound to participate in the Mass” on “Sundays and other holy days of obligation” unless there is a serious reason for not attending, such as illness or “the care of infants.”

⁸ The Catechism also says Catholics are “bound by an obligation faithfully to [confess serious sins](#) at least once a year.” Although it is not “strictly necessary,” the church “nevertheless strongly” recommends that Catholics should confess “[everyday faults \(venial sins\)](#)” as well.

Read on for additional information about Catholic practices such as:

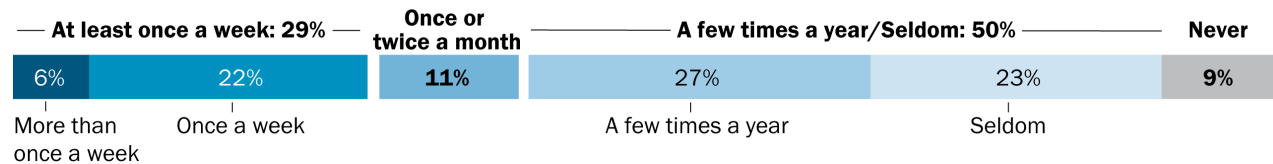
- [Receiving Communion at Mass](#)
- [Confession](#)
- [Wearing religious symbols, devotions and other practices](#)
- [Traditional Latin Mass](#)
- [Anointing of the sick](#)

Going to Mass and receiving Communion

Overall, about three-in-ten U.S. Catholics say they go to religious services at least once a week, according to Pew Research Center's [2023-24 U.S. Religious Landscape Study \(RLS\)](#). An additional 11% say they attend Mass once or twice a month.⁹ And roughly six-in-ten U.S. Catholics say they go to Mass a few times a year or less often (50%) or not at all (9%). (For details on how rates of Mass attendance vary across subgroups based on data from the RLS, refer to the accompanying [detailed tables](#).¹⁰)

Mass attendance among U.S. Catholics

% of U.S. Catholics who attend religious services ...



Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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⁹ Respondents in the survey were asked, "Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services in person?" Though the question asked about religious services broadly and did not ask specifically about "church attendance" or "Mass attendance," we assume that Catholic respondents answered this question with reference to how often they attend Mass.

¹⁰ This discussion (and the accompanying [detailed table](#)) rely on estimates of Mass attendance from the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) because the RLS had a much larger sample than the survey of Catholics conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025. The two surveys produce similar estimates of the share of Catholics who attend church weekly or a few times a month. The RLS finds somewhat higher estimates of the share who attend a few times a year, while the 2025 survey finds somewhat larger numbers saying they seldom or never attend.

The Center's Feb. 3-9, 2025, survey finds that half of U.S. Catholics say they receive Communion every time (36%) or most of the time (15%) they attend Mass. Roughly one-in-five say they receive Communion about half the time (6%) or less than half the time (13%). An additional 16% say they never receive Communion when they go to Mass, and 14% of Catholics in the survey say they never attend Mass in the first place (and thus were not asked how often they receive Communion).

Half of American Catholics say they receive Communion most or all the time when they attend Mass

% of U.S. Catholics who receive Communion ___ when they go to Mass

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who attend Mass ...			
		Net Ever	At least weekly	Once or twice a month*	A few times a year/Seldom
Net Every time/Most of the time	50%	58%	82%	63%	43%
Every time	36	41	66	41	27
Most of the time	15	17	17	22	16
About half the time	6	7	4	10	7
Less than half the time	13	15	5	10	21
Never	16	18	6	15	27
No answer	2	2	2	1	2
Not asked (do not attend Mass)	14	0	0	0	0
	100	100	100	100	100

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Roughly eight-in-ten weekly Mass attenders receive Communion all or most of the times they go (82%). Lower shares of less frequent attenders say they receive Communion all or most of the time. Still, even among those who go to Mass a few times a year or less often, 43% say they typically receive Communion when they go.

Catholics typically have the option at Mass to receive Communion either in their hand, or placed directly onto their tongue. More Catholics say they prefer to receive Communion in the hand (44%) than on the tongue (14%). An additional 11% say they have no preference. The remainder either don't receive Communion or don't attend Mass (and thus were not asked this question).

More Catholics prefer to receive Communion in the hand than on the tongue

% of U.S. Catholics who prefer to receive Communion ...

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who attend Mass __			
		Net Ever	At least weekly	Once or twice a month*	A few times a year/ Seldom
In the hand	44%	51%	62%	62%	42%
On the tongue	14	16	21	14	13
No preference	11	13	9	8	16
Not asked (don't receive Communion/do not attend Mass)	<u>31</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>28</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

"47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism"

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Confession

Overall, 23% of U.S. Catholics say they go to confession at least once a year, while 30% say they go less often. About half of Catholics (47%) say they never go to confession.

Catholics who go to Mass weekly also tend to go to confession more frequently than those who don't attend weekly Mass; 53% of weekly attenders say they go to confession at least once a year.

23% of U.S. Catholics say they go to confession at least once a year

% of U.S. Catholics who go to confession ...

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who attend Mass __				
		Net Ever	At least weekly	Once or twice a month*	A few times a year/Seldom	Never
Net At least once a year	23%	26%	53%	32%	8%	7%
At least once a month	3	3	8	1	<1	0
Several times a year	9	10	24	12	2	1
Once a year	12	13	21	19	6	6
Less than once a year	30	33	30	35	35	5
Never	47	40	16	30	57	88
No answer	1	1	1	3	<1	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Wearing religious symbols, devotions and other practices

The survey asked Catholics how often they engage in practices such as wearing or carrying religious items; practicing devotions to Mary or a favorite saint; praying the rosary; reading the Bible; and lighting candles or incense for spiritual or religious reasons.

The most common of these practices is wearing or carrying religious items, which 44% of Catholics do monthly. Meanwhile, 36% say they practice devotion to Mary or a favorite saint that often. The least common of these practices is lighting candles or incense for spiritual reasons, which 17% of Catholics say they do monthly.

59% of weekly Mass attenders say they regularly practice devotion to the Virgin Mary or a favorite saint

% of U.S. Catholics who do each of the following **at least monthly** (table reads across)

	Wear/Carry religious items	Practice devotion to Mary or a favorite saint	Pray the rosary	Read the Bible	Light candles/ incense for spiritual/religious reasons
All U.S. Catholics	44%	36%	28%	23%	17%
Net Ever attend Mass	48	40	31	26	18
Attend weekly	62	59	55	45	21
Once or twice a month*	54	49	35	33	25
A few times a year/Seldom	38	26	15	12	14
Never attend Mass	22	10	8	4	8

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who say they attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Weekly Mass attenders are generally more inclined than Catholics overall to engage in these practices. For example, around six-in-ten Catholics who attend Mass at least once a week (62%) say they regularly wear or carry religious items with them, compared with 44% of Catholics overall. Meanwhile, 59% of weekly attenders say they practice devotion to Mary or a favorite saint, compared with 36% of Catholics overall.

The survey also finds that several of these practices are far more common among Hispanic Catholics than White Catholics. For example:

- 56% of Hispanic Catholics say they **wear or carry religious items** with them at least monthly, compared with 39% of White Catholics.
- 46% of Hispanic Catholics **practice devotions to the Virgin Mary or a favorite saint** at least monthly, compared with 31% of White Catholics.
- 37% of Hispanic Catholics **pray the rosary** at least monthly, versus 22% of White Catholics.
- 26% of Hispanic Catholics say they **light candles or incense** for spiritual or religious reasons at least monthly, compared with 11% among White Catholics.

Refer to [Chapter 4](#) for additional details about the distinctiveness of religious practices among Hispanic Catholics.

Traditional Latin Mass

Overall, 13% of U.S. Catholics (including 22% of those who attend weekly Mass) say they have attended a Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) at least once in the last five years. To help avoid confusion and ensure respondents understood what we meant by “Traditional Latin Mass,” the survey described it as a Mass where “the entire Mass is said in Latin and where the priest faces the altar with his back to the people in the pews.”

People who say they have attended at least one TLM in recent years were then asked how often they attend one “these days.” Very few Catholics report regularly attending a TLM today.¹¹ Overall, 2% of Catholics say they do this at least weekly, 1% do so once or twice a month, and 2% do so a few times a year. An additional 8% say they either seldom or never attend a TLM “these days,” while 87% of U.S. Catholics have not attended one at any point in the last five years.

87% of Catholics haven’t attended a Traditional Latin Mass in the last 5 years

“In the last five years, have you ever attended a Traditional Latin Mass (also known as the Extraordinary Form of the Mass), where the entire Mass is said in Latin and the priest faces the altar with his back to the people in the pews? [IF YES] These days, how often do you attend a Traditional Latin Mass?” (%)

	Have attended Traditional Latin Mass at least once in last five years	These days, attends Traditional Latin Mass ...					Have not attended Traditional Latin Mass in last five years	No answer
		At least once a week	Once or twice a month	A few times a year	Seldom/ Never	No answer		
All U.S. Catholics	13%	2%	1%	2%	8%	<1%	87%	<1%=100%
Net Ever attend Mass	14	2	1	2	8	<1	86	<1
Attend Mass at least weekly	22	4	2	3	13	1	78	0
Once or twice a month*	15	1	5	3	6	0	85	0
A few times a year/Seldom	8	<1	<1	2	6	0	91	1
Never attend Mass	7	1	0	1	5	0	93	0

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who say they attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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¹¹ In July 2021, Pope Francis issued *Traditionis Custodes*, which “[reimposed restrictions on celebrating the Latin Mass](#).” The Center has not previously asked about attendance at the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM). It is possible that the share of Catholics who attend a TLM may have declined in recent years because the TLM is less widely available now than before *Traditionis Custodes* took effect.

Anointing of the sick

Most Catholics, including 84% of those who attend Mass at least once a week, say it would be “extremely important” or “very important” to them to receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick if they were seriously ill.

The importance Catholics attach to this sacrament seems to rise with age. Among Catholics who are ages 65 and older, 64% say it would be extremely or very important to them to receive this element of what is commonly known as last rites, compared with 50% among Catholics ages 18 to 34.

Most Catholics say it would be important to them to receive the anointing of the sick if they were very ill

% of U.S. Catholics who say it would be ___ important to them to receive the anointing of the sick if they were seriously ill

	Extremely/ Very	Somewhat	Not too/ Not at all	Not sure/ No answer
All U.S. Catholics	58%	20%	15%	7=100%
Net Ever attend Mass	63	20	13	5
Attend at least weekly	84	12	3	1
Once or twice a month*	72	17	8	4
A few times a year/Seldom	48	25	19	8
Never attend Mass	26	22	32	20
Ages 18-34	50	23	19	8
35-49	55	24	15	5
50-64	59	18	15	8
65+	64	17	13	6

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who say they attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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3. Catholic parish life, culture and community

How we define Catholics in this chapter

This chapter exclusively explores views and experiences among U.S. Catholics (i.e., the 20% of U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion).

Many Americans who are *not* Catholic are still connected to the faith in other ways. Read more about these “cultural Catholics,” former Catholics, and people with other Catholic connections (i.e., those who have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say “yes” when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass) in [Chapter 7](#) and the [Overview](#).

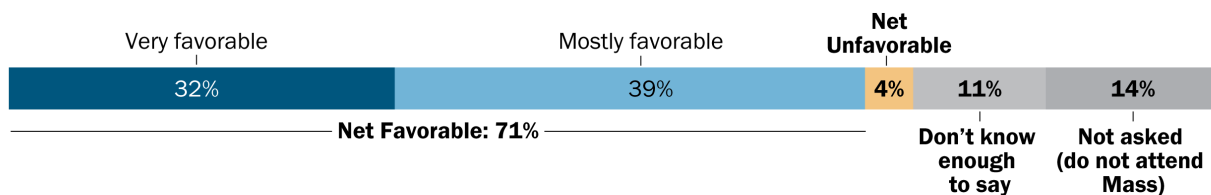
The survey asked Catholics about various aspects of their parish and experiences at their church.

About seven-in-ten Catholics (71%) express favorable views of their parish priests, including 32% who express a very favorable opinion of their priests and 39% who express a mostly favorable view. Just 4% of U.S. Catholics say they have an unfavorable impression of their parish priests.

When asked to describe the atmosphere at their parish, half of U.S. Catholics say their church is formal and traditional, while 35% say it is casual and contemporary.

Most American Catholics view their parish priests favorably

Among U.S. Catholics, % who have a ___ view of the priests at their parish



Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

“47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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Roughly half of U.S. Catholics (54%) say that when they go to Mass, they are surrounded by people who mostly share their race or ethnicity. The vast majority of White Catholics say they typically go to a Mass conducted in English, while most Hispanic Catholics say they go to a Mass in Spanish at least some of the time.

Overall, about one-fifth of U.S. Catholics say they are involved in their parish in some way in addition to attending Mass. This includes 14% who say they volunteer at their parish, and 16% who say they participate at least yearly in parish activities outside of Mass.

Read on for more information about:

- [Views of local parish priests](#)
- [Race, language and where Catholics go to Mass](#)
- [Involvement in Catholic parishes](#)
- [Parish atmosphere and growth](#)
- [Awareness of National Eucharistic Congress, Synod on Synodality](#)

54% of U.S. Catholics say that when they attend Mass, most other attendees have the same race or ethnicity as them

Among U.S. Catholics, % who say that typically when they attend Mass, most other people are ...

The same race/ethnicity as them	54%
A different race/ethnicity than them	10
No one race/ethnicity makes up a majority	21
Not asked (do not attend Mass)	14
No answer	2
	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

"47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism"

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Catholics' views of their parish priests

Overall, 71% of all U.S. Catholics (including 82% who ever attend Mass) say they have a positive view of their parish's priest or priests. This figure rises to 95% among Catholics who attend Mass at least once a week. Just 3% of weekly Mass-attending Catholics say they have an *unfavorable* view of their parish priests.

To put these numbers in some perspective, the survey also found that 80% of weekly Mass-attending Catholics had a [favorable view of Pope Francis](#), while 18% viewed him unfavorably. (The survey was conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025, prior to Francis' most recent hospitalization and death.)

95% of weekly Mass attenders have a favorable view of their parish priests

% of Catholics who have a ___ view of the priests at their parish

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who attend Mass ...			
		Net Ever	At least weekly	Once or twice a month*	A few times a year/Seldom
Net Favorable	71%	82%	95%	89%	74%
Very favorable	32	37	54	49	24
Mostly favorably	39	45	40	40	50
Net Unfavorable	4	5	3	6	5
Don't know enough to say	11	12	2	4	20
No answer	<1	1	<1	0	1
Not asked (do not attend Mass)	14	0	0	0	0
	100	100	100	100	100

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

"47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism"

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Race, language and where Catholics go to Mass

Most Catholics who ever attend Mass say they typically go to their local parish (68%), while 10% say they mostly go somewhere other than their local parish. Two-in-ten say they do some of both.

Most Catholics say that, when they attend Mass, it's typically at their local parish

"Where do you typically attend Catholic Mass?" (%)

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who attend Mass ...			
		Net Ever	At least weekly	Once or twice a month*	A few times a year/Seldom
My local parish	59%	68%	78%	63%	64%
Somewhere else	9	10	4	13	13
Some of both	17	20	16	23	22
No answer	1	2	2	1	1
Not asked (do not attend Mass)	<u>14</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

"47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism"

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Racial, ethnic composition of Catholic parishes

When asked to describe the racial and ethnic composition of the parish they attend, 58% of White Catholics say most other people at the Masses they attend are also White. And 55% of Hispanic Catholics say that when they attend Mass, most of the other people in the pews are also Hispanic.

58% of White Catholics say they attend Masses where most others are White; 55% of Hispanic Catholics say they attend Masses where most others are Hispanic

“Typically when you attend Mass, what is the race or ethnicity of most of the other people attending?” (%)

	White	Hispanic or Latino	Another race/ethnicity	No one racial group makes up a majority	No answer	Not asked (do not attend Mass)
All U.S. Catholics	40%	21%	3%	21%	1%	14%=100%
Net Ever attend Mass	46	25	4	24	2	0
At least weekly	50	20	4	25	2	0
Once or twice a month*	36	29	9	26	0	0
A few times a year/ Seldom	45	26	3	23	2	0
White, non-Hispanic	58	3	1	20	2	16
Hispanic	13	55	1	17	1	12
Other race	24	7	25	37	1	5
Northeast	52	10	<1	16	2	20
Midwest	64	10	2	12	<1	12
South	33	26	4	23	2	11
West	14	37	8	30	<1	12

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: “Other race” includes Asian Catholics, Black Catholics, Catholics of other races (including those who are multiracial), and those who did not answer the questions about their race/ethnicity. The survey did not include enough respondents from these categories to be able to report on them individually.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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The racial and ethnic composition of Catholic parishes also varies a lot by region. Nearly two-thirds of Catholics in the Midwest (64%) and 52% of Catholics in the Northeast say most of their fellow parishioners at Mass are White. By comparison, just 33% of Catholics in the South and 14% of those in the West say, when they go to Mass, most of the people there are White.

Languages spoken at Mass

The survey also finds that most Hispanic Catholics usually (38%) or sometimes (23%) go to Mass in Spanish. Attending Spanish Masses is more common in the West and South than among Catholics in the Northeast and Midwest.

This reflects regional patterns in the [racial and ethnic composition](#) of U.S. Catholics. Hispanics account for [45% of Catholics in the South](#) and [58% of Catholics in the West](#), but they make up just 20% of the Catholic population in the Northeast and 15% of the Catholic population in the Midwest.

35% of U.S. Catholics in West say they usually or sometimes go to Mass in Spanish

“When you attend Mass, do you usually go to Mass in ...” (%)

	English	Spanish	Sometimes English, sometimes Spanish	Another language	No answer	Not asked (do not attend Mass)
All U.S. Catholics	62%	13%	9%	2%	1%	14%=100%
Net Ever attend Mass	72	15	10	2	1	0
At least weekly	75	16	8	2	0	0
Once or twice a month*	65	17	17	1	0	0
A few times a year/Seldom	71	15	10	2	1	0
White, non-Hispanic	80	1	1	2	1	16
Hispanic	26	38	23	1	<1	12
Other race	83	0	4	7	1	5
Northeast	67	7	4	1	1	20
Midwest	74	7	6	<1	1	12
South	60	18	10	1	<1	11
West	49	20	15	4	<1	12

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. “Other race” includes Asian Catholics, Black Catholics, Catholics of other races (including those who are multiracial), and those who did not answer the questions about their race/ethnicity. The survey did not include enough respondents from these categories to be able to report on them individually.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

“47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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Involvement in Catholic parishes

Overall, 14% of Catholics say they volunteer at their parish, such as by serving as an usher, lector, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, or in another capacity. And 16% say they participate in parish activities other than Mass – like Eucharistic adoration, prayer groups or community meals – at least several times a year.

In total, 22% of U.S. Catholics say they do one or the other (volunteer or participate in activities other than Mass) or both at their parish.

And among Catholics who attend Mass weekly, 51% say they also either volunteer at their church or participate in activities other than Mass.

51% of weekly Mass-attending Catholics say they either participate in parish activities at least yearly, or volunteer at their parish

“Outside of Mass, how often do you participate in other activities at your parish, like prayer groups, Eucharistic adoration, or community meals?” (%)

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who attend Mass ...			
		Net Ever	At least weekly	Once or twice a month*	A few times a year/Seldom
Net At least several times a year	16%	19%	41%	19%	6%
At least once a week	3	4	11	2	<1
Once or twice a month	4	4	10	5	<1
Several times a year	9	11	20	11	5
Seldom/Never	70	81	59	81	93
No answer	<1	<1	0	0	1
Not asked (do not attend Mass)	14	0	0	0	0
	100	100	100	100	100

“Do you volunteer at your parish, such as by serving as an usher, lector, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, or in some other way?” (%)

Yes	14	17	34	19	6
No	71	82	65	78	93
No answer	1	1	1	3	<1
Not asked (do not attend Mass)	14	0	0	0	0
	100	100	100	100	100

Net Either participate at least yearly in parish activities OR volunteer in parish	22	26	51	28	10
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* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Parish atmosphere and growth

U.S. Catholics are more likely to describe the atmosphere at their parish as formal and traditional (50%) than casual and contemporary (35%). This pattern is similar in all the regions of the country.

Half of U.S. Catholics say their parish has a formal and traditional atmosphere; 35% say their parish is casual and contemporary

% of U.S. Catholics who say their parish has a ___ atmosphere

	Formal and traditional	Casual and contemporary	No answer	Not asked (do not attend Mass)
	50%	35%	1%	14%=100%
All U.S. Catholics				
Net Ever attend Mass	58	41	1	0
At least weekly	66	33	1	0
Once or twice a month*	56	43	1	0
A few times a year/ Seldom	54	45	2	0
Northeast	49	30	1	20
Midwest	49	38	1	12
South	52	36	1	11
West	50	37	1	12

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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However, there are larger regional differences on the survey's question about whether parishes are experiencing growth or decline. The share of Catholics who say their parish is growing is higher in the South than in other regions of the country.

20% of Catholics say the parish they attend is growing; 15% say it's shrinking

Among U.S. Catholics, % who say the parish they attend most often is ...

	Growing	Shrinking	Staying relatively stable in size	Not sure	No answer	Not asked (do not attend Mass)
All U.S. Catholics	20%	16%	36%	14%	1%	14%=100%
Net Ever attend Mass	23	18	42	16	1	0
At least weekly	36	14	43	6	0	0
Once or twice a month*	38	19	35	8	0	0
A few times a year/Seldom	12	20	42	24	1	0
Northeast	11	23	33	12	1	20
Midwest	20	20	32	16	1	12
South	28	10	34	15	1	11
West	20	11	44	13	0	12

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Meanwhile, the share of Catholics in the Northeast and Midwest who say their parish is shrinking is higher than the share of Catholics who say this in the South or West.

Awareness of National Eucharistic Congress, Synod on Synodality

Roughly three-in-ten U.S. Catholics say they have heard at least a little about the [2024 National Eucharistic Congress](#), which was “the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) initiative to renew the Catholic Church through the Eucharist.” And 23% say they’ve heard at least a little about the church’s recent [Synod on Synodality](#), which included events in dioceses around the world and concluded in 2024.

Awareness of these recent events is higher among weekly Mass-attending Catholics than among Catholics who don’t go to Mass regularly. Still, even among Catholics who go to Mass weekly, 43% say they haven’t heard anything about the National Eucharistic Congress and 60% say they have heard nothing at all about the Synod on Synodality.

31% of U.S. Catholics say they heard at least a little about the 2024 National Eucharistic Congress; 23% heard at least a little about the Synod on Synodality

% of U.S. Catholics who say they have heard ___ about ...

... the National Eucharistic Congress held in July 2024	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who attend Mass __				
		Net Ever	At least weekly	Once or twice a month*	A few times a year/Seldom	Never
Net Heard at least a little	31%	33%	55%	39%	18%	15%
Heard a lot	6	6	16	6	1	3
Heard a little	25	27	39	34	18	12
Heard nothing at all	69	66	43	61	81	85
No answer	1	1	2	0	<1	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100
... the Synod on Synodality, which concluded in October 2024						
Net Heard at least a little	23	24	40	31	14	13
Heard a lot	4	4	10	4	1	3
Heard a little	19	20	30	27	13	10
Heard nothing at all	77	75	60	69	86	87
No answer	<1	<1	1	0	<1	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

“47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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4. Profile of Hispanic Catholics in the U.S.

How we define Catholics in this chapter

This chapter exclusively explores views and experiences among U.S. Catholics (i.e., the 20% of U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion).

Many Americans who are *not* Catholic are still connected to the faith in other ways. Read more about these “cultural Catholics,” former Catholics, and people with other Catholic connections (i.e., those who have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say “yes” when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass) in [Chapter 7](#) and the [Overview](#).

The share of U.S. Catholic adults who are Hispanic is growing.¹² **Today, 36% of all Catholic adults in the United States are Hispanic**, up from 29% in 2007.¹³

Hispanic Catholics are a distinctive part of American Catholic religious life in numerous ways. They are more likely than White Catholics to say they participate in a variety of Catholic devotional practices. For example, compared with White Catholics in the U.S., Hispanic Catholics are more likely to:

- Regularly wear or carry religious items with them (56% vs. 39%)
- Practice devotions to the Virgin Mary or a favorite saint (46% vs. 31%)
- Pray the rosary (37% vs. 22%)
- Regularly light candles or incense for spiritual or religious reasons (26% vs. 11%)

Also, not surprisingly, Hispanic Catholics are far more likely than White Catholics to say they usually go to a Mass conducted in Spanish.

The share of Catholics who say they attend Mass at least weekly is similar among Hispanic and White Catholics. But the share of Catholics who say they receive Communion at least most of the time they attend Mass is *lower* among Hispanic Catholics than among White Catholics.

¹² At the same time, the share of U.S. Hispanics who are Catholic is declining. Refer to “[Among U.S. Latinos, Catholicism Continues to Decline but is Still the Largest Faith](#)” for additional details. Still, in the current survey, 40% of Hispanic adults are Catholic – that is, they say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion. That figure is at least double the share of White, Black and Asian Americans who are Catholic. Additionally, among those who are not Catholics themselves, Hispanics are more likely than White Americans or Americans of other races (including respondents who didn’t answer survey questions about race) to have some Catholic connection (as “cultural Catholics,” former Catholics, or other Catholic-connected people). Refer to this report’s [Overview](#) for additional details.

¹³ The estimate that 36% of U.S. Catholics are Hispanic comes from Pew Research Center’s 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS). In this chapter, we use data from the RLS where possible, because the RLS has a larger sample than the Feb. 3-9, 2025, survey of Catholics. We use data from the 2025 survey to analyze questions that were asked in that survey but not in the RLS.

Hispanic Catholics also have a distinctive social and demographic profile. For instance, eight-in-ten Hispanic Catholics were born outside the U.S. (58%) or are the children of immigrants (22%). Most Hispanic Catholics live in the West (41%) or the South (37%). And Hispanic Catholics are more likely to say they are Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party than to say they are Republicans or Republican leaners.

By contrast, most White Catholics were born in the U.S. to U.S.-born parents, live in the Northeast or the Midwest, and are Republicans or lean Republican. (For additional information about how Hispanic Catholics compare with other U.S. Catholics with respect to age, immigration, region, party identification and education, refer to “[10 facts about U.S. Catholics](#).”)

Read on for more about Hispanic Catholics’ beliefs and practices related to:

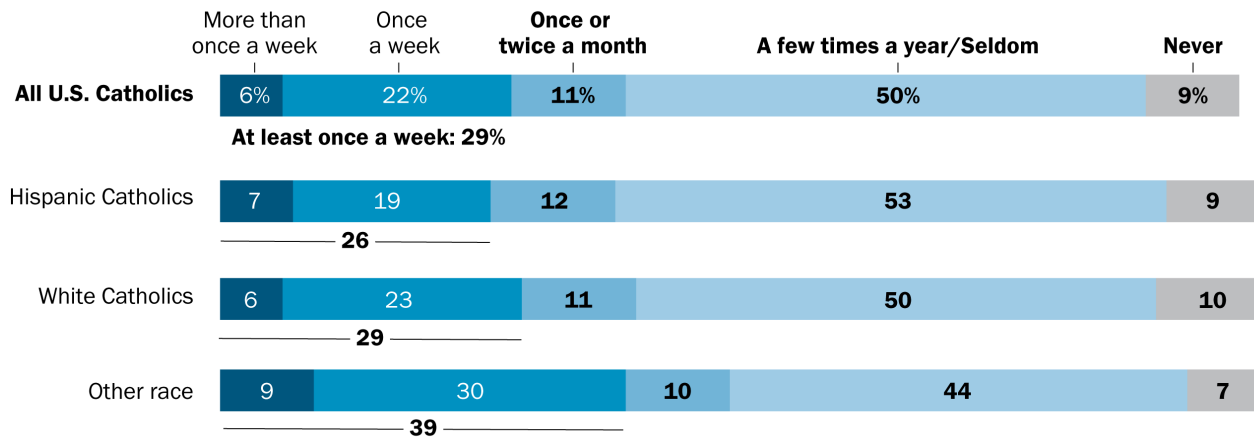
- [Mass attendance, Communion and confession](#)
- [Religious devotions](#)
- [Essentials of Catholic identity](#)
- [Spanish Mass](#)

Mass attendance, Communion and confession among Hispanic Catholics

About a quarter of Hispanic Catholics say they attend religious services at least once a week (26%), according to the 2023-24 U.S. Religious Landscape Study – on par with the share of White Catholics who say this. An additional 12% say they go to Mass once or twice a month, while 53% go a few times a year or “seldom.” One-in-ten Hispanic Catholics say they never go to church.

Mass attendance among Catholics, by race and ethnicity

% of U.S. Catholics who attend religious services ...



Note: Figures may not sum to subtotals indicated due to rounding. White adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. “Other race” includes Asian Catholics, Black Catholics, Catholics of other races (including those who are multiracial), and those who did not answer questions about their race/ethnicity. Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

“47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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Receiving Communion at Mass

Compared with other Catholics, fewer Hispanic Catholics in the Feb. 3-9, 2025, survey say they receive Communion most or all of the time when they attend Mass. About a third of Hispanic Catholics say they receive Communion every time (21%) or most of the time (13%).

34% of Hispanic Catholics receive Communion most or all the time when at Mass

% of U.S. Catholics who receive Communion ___ when they go to Mass

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who are ...		
		Hispanic	White	Other race
Net Every time/Most of the time	50%	34%	58%	61%
Every time	36	21	44	40
Most of the time	15	13	14	21
About half the time	6	8	4	8
Less than half the time	13	21	9	7
Never	16	24	11	15
No answer	2	1	2	3
Not asked (does not attend Mass)	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. White adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. "Other race" includes Asian Catholics, Black Catholics, Catholics of other races (including those who are multiracial), and those who did not answer questions about their race/ethnicity. The survey did not include enough respondents from these categories to be able to report on them individually.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Going to confession

Hispanic Catholics are slightly more likely than White Catholics to say they go to confession at least once a year. Overall, 28% of Hispanic Catholics say they go to confession at least once a year, compared with 20% of White Catholics.

28% of Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. say they go to confession at least once a year

% of U.S. Catholics who go to confession ...

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who are __		
		Hispanic	White	Other race
Net At least once a year	23%	28%	20%	27%
At least once a month	3	4	2	3
Several times a year	9	10	8	8
Once a year	12	14	9	15
Less than once a year	30	31	28	31
Never	47	39	52	41
No answer	1	1	<1	<1
	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. White adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. "Other race" includes Asian Catholics, Black Catholics, Catholics of other races (including those who are multiracial), and those who did not answer questions about their race/ethnicity. The survey did not include enough respondents from these categories to be able to report on them individually.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Religious devotions among Hispanic Catholics

Overall, 56% of Hispanic Catholics say they wear or carry religious items with them at least monthly. About half say they practice devotions to the Virgin Mary or a favorite saint at least monthly, and 37% say they pray the rosary monthly.

In addition, about a quarter of Hispanic Catholics say they light candles or incense for religious or spiritual reasons at least once a month. Hispanic Catholics report doing all these things at higher rates than White Catholics do.

When it comes to reading the Bible, 26% of Hispanic Catholics say they do this at least monthly, and 21% of White Catholics say the same.

Compared with White Catholics, more Hispanic Catholics wear or carry religious items, practice devotions to Mary or favored saints

% of U.S. Catholics who say they do each of the following at least monthly

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who are ...		
		Hispanic	White	Other race
Wear/Carry religious items	44%	56%	39%	37%
Practice devotion to Mary or a favorite saint	36	46	31	31
Pray the rosary	28	37	22	30
Read the Bible	23	26	21	22
Light candles/incense for spiritual/religious reason	17	26	11	16

Note: White adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. "Other race" includes Asian Catholics, Black Catholics, Catholics of other races (including those who are multiracial), and those who did not answer questions about their race/ethnicity. The survey did not include enough respondents from these categories to be able to report on them individually.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Essentials of Catholic identity among Hispanics

To explore what “being Catholic” means to U.S. Catholics, the survey gave respondents a list of items and asked them to say whether each is an “essential,” an “important but not essential,” or “not an important” part of what being Catholic means to them. Respondents could say that more than one item is essential, and they also could indicate that none of the items is essential.

Compared with White Catholics, Hispanic Catholics were more likely to cite many of the items as essential to their Catholic identity. For example, the share of Hispanics who say “having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ” is essential to what being Catholic means to them is 11 percentage points higher than among White Catholics (76% vs. 65%). And the share of Hispanics who say “devotion to the Virgin Mary” is essential to their Catholic faith is 21 points higher than among White Catholics (63% vs. 42%).

Hispanic Catholics also are far more inclined than White Catholics to say that essential elements of their Catholic identity include caring for immigrants (47% vs. 20%), taking care of the environment (43% vs. 24%), celebrating feast days that are part of their national or ethnic heritage (36% vs. 20%), going on pilgrimages (18% vs. 2%), working to help the poor and needy (55% vs. 41%), and opposing the death penalty (30% vs. 16%).

Most Hispanic Catholics say relationship with Jesus Christ, devotion to Virgin Mary are ‘essential’ to their Catholic identity

*% of U.S. Catholics who say each is an **essential** part of to what “being Catholic” means to them*

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who are ...		
		Hispanic	White	Other race
Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ	69%	76%	65%	69%
Devotion to the Virgin Mary	50	63	42	44
Working to help the poor and needy	47	55	41	52
Receiving the Eucharist	46	49	44	47
Getting married in the church	40	46	37	38
The leadership of the pope	33	37	29	35
Being part of an unbroken tradition going back to the apostles	32	34	31	31
Opposing abortion	32	36	32	24
Taking care of the environment	31	43	24	35
Being part of a Catholic parish	30	33	29	28
Caring for immigrants	30	47	20	32
Celebrating feast days or festivals that are part of your national or ethnic heritage	26	36	20	28
Opposing the death penalty	22	30	16	30
Going on pilgrimages	9	18	2	11

Note: White adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. “Other race” includes Asian Catholics, Black Catholics, Catholics of other races (including those who are multiracial), and those who did not answer questions about their race/ethnicity. The survey did not include enough respondents from these categories to be able to report on them individually.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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For more on what U.S. Catholics (of all races and ethnicities) say being Catholic means to them, and for breaks by Mass attendance and political party, refer to [Chapter 1](#) of this report.

Mass in Spanish

Roughly four-in-ten Hispanic Catholics say that when they go to Mass, they usually go to one said in Spanish. About a quarter say they typically go to English Masses, and 23% say they sometimes go to English Masses and sometimes go to Spanish Masses.

By comparison, just 1% of White Catholics say they typically go to Spanish Mass; another 1% say they sometimes go to Mass said in Spanish.

Most Hispanic Catholics go to Spanish-language Masses at least some of the time

“When you attend Mass, do you usually go to Mass said in ...?” (%)

	All U.S. Catholics	Among Catholics who are __		
		Hispanic	White	Other race
English	62%	26%	80%	83%
Spanish	13	38	1	<1
Sometimes English, sometimes Spanish	9	23	1	4
Another language	2	1	2	7
No answer	1	<1	1	1
Not asked (does not attend Mass)	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. White adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. “Other race” includes Asian Catholics, Black Catholics, Catholics of other races (including those who are multiracial), and those who did not answer questions about their race/ethnicity. The survey did not include enough respondents from these categories to be able to report on them individually.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

“47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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5. Profile of U.S. converts to Catholicism

How we define Catholics in this chapter

This chapter exclusively explores views and experiences among U.S. Catholics (i.e., the 20% of U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion).

Many Americans who are *not* Catholic are still connected to the faith in other ways. Read more about these “cultural Catholics,” former Catholics, and people with other Catholic connections (i.e., those who have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say “yes” when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass) in [Chapter 7](#) and the [Overview](#).

In the U.S., 92% of Catholics are “cradle Catholics” – people who say they were raised Catholic and also say they are Catholic when asked about their religion today. The remaining 8% are converts to Catholicism – people who say their religion is Catholicism today but that they were not brought up Catholic.¹⁴ **Overall, 1.5% of all U.S. adults are converts to Catholicism.**

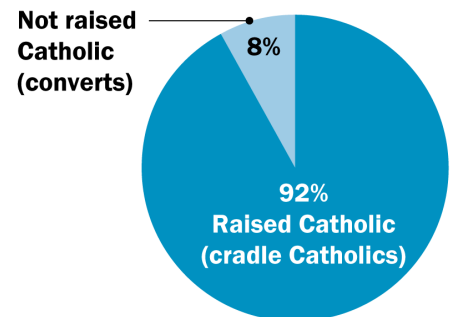
On average, converts to the faith attend Mass weekly at somewhat higher rates than cradle Catholics. Higher shares of converts than cradle Catholics also say they receive Communion every time they attend Mass.

But the percentages of Catholics who say they pray daily and go to confession at least once a year are similar among converts and cradle Catholics. And the share of converts who say they have attended a Traditional Latin Mass in the last five years is not much different from the share of cradle Catholics who say this (18% and 13%, respectively).

Politically, converts are somewhat more Republican than cradle Catholics and are about as likely to describe themselves as conservatives, ideologically.

8% of U.S. Catholics are converts to the faith

% of U.S. Catholics who were ...



Note: “Not raised Catholic” are people who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, but who say they were not raised Catholic. “Raised Catholic” are adults who were raised Catholic and currently identify as Catholic. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023–March 4, 2024. “47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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¹⁴ The estimate that 92% of Catholics are “cradle Catholics” and 8% are converts comes from Pew Research Center’s 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS). The more recent (Feb. 3-9, 2025) survey produces similar estimates of the balance of cradle Catholics and converts (93% and 7%, respectively). In this chapter, we use data from the RLS where possible, because the RLS has a larger sample than the 2025 survey. We use data from the 2025 survey to analyze questions that were asked on that survey but not in the RLS.

When asked why they became Catholic, the most common response offered by converts is because of a spouse, or to get married in the church. Others say becoming Catholic aligned with their values or that Catholicism made sense to them.

The rest of this chapter looks at deeper comparisons of Catholic converts with cradle Catholics. Our analysis includes results from both the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) and Pew Research Center's survey of Catholics conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025. The RLS has a larger sample size than the 2025 survey, and so on questions where we have data from both, we use the RLS. That said, the 2025 survey includes a number of questions about Catholicism that were not asked as part of the RLS.

Converts to Catholicism represent a small group in the broader U.S. public (1.5% of U.S. adults), and so both the RLS and the 2025 survey have relatively modest samples of members of this group. The RLS includes 662 interviews with converts to Catholicism, and results based on this group have a margin of error of plus or minus 5.5 percentage points. The 2025 survey of Catholics includes 148 interviews with converts to Catholicism, and results based on this group have a margin of error of plus or minus 10.1 percentage points.

Read about the following on Catholic converts:

- [Religious practices](#)
- [Demographics](#)
- [Political composition](#)
- [Why they joined the church](#)

Religious practices among converts to Catholicism

About four-in-ten converts to Catholicism (38%) say they attend Mass at least once a week, which is somewhat higher than the share of cradle Catholics who say this (28%).

Converts also are more likely than cradle Catholics to say they receive Communion every time they go to Mass (58% vs. 34%).

Compared with ‘cradle Catholics,’ converts are more likely to go to Mass weekly, take Communion when they go

% who attend Mass ___, among ...

	All U.S. Catholics	Catholic converts	Cradle Catholics
Net Ever	90%	91%	90%
At least once a week	29	38	28
More than once a week	6	10	6
Once a week	22	28	22
Once or twice a month	11	11	11
A few times a year/Seldom	50	42	51
Never	9	8	10
No answer	<1	<1	<1
	100	100	100

% who receive Communion ___ when they attend Mass, among ...

	All U.S. Catholics	Catholic converts*	Cradle Catholics
Every time	36%	58%	34%
Most of the time	15	12	15
Half the time or less often	18	11	19
Never/Not asked (do not attend Mass)	30	18	30
No answer	2	2	2
	100	100	100

* Estimates for receiving Communion among converts are based on interviews with 148 converts to Catholicism, with an effective sample size of 94 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.1 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. “Catholic converts” are people who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, but who say they were not raised Catholic. “Cradle Catholics” are adults who were raised Catholic and currently identify as Catholic.

Source: Data on religious attendance is from the Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024; data on receiving Communion is from a survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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However, the shares of converts and cradle Catholics who say they pray every day are similar. (The gap between the 56% of converts who say this and the 51% of cradle Catholics is not statistically significant.)

And there is little evidence that attending the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) is more common among converts than among cradle Catholics. Among converts, 18% say they have attended a TLM at least once in the last five years, which is similar to the 13% of cradle Catholics who say the same. (The difference is not statistically significant.) Large majorities of both groups say they have not been to a TLM in the last five years.

Converts and cradle Catholics also report going to confession at similar rates. Large majorities in both groups say they go to confession less than once a year or not at all.

Converts and ‘cradle Catholics’ pray, go to confession, attend Traditional Latin Mass at similar rates

% who do each of the following, among ...

<i>Pray __</i>	All U.S. Catholics	Catholic converts*	Cradle Catholics
Daily	51%	56%	51%
Weekly/Once or twice a month	31	29	31
Seldom/Never	18	13	18
No answer	1	2	<1
	100	100	100
<i>Go to confession __</i>			
Net At least once a year	23	29	23
At least once a month	3	3	3
Several times a year	9	15	9
Once a year	12	11	12
Less than once a year	30	25	30
Never	47	46	47
No answer	1	0	1
	100	100	100
<i>Traditional Latin Mass</i>			
Have been in the last five years	13	18	13
Now go a few times a year or more often	5	5	5
Now seldom/never go	8	13	8
No answer	<1	0	<1
Have not been in the last five years	87	82	87
No answer	<1	0	<1
	100	100	100

* Estimates on confession and Traditional Latin Mass attendance are based on interviews with 148 converts to Catholicism, with an effective sample size of 94 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.1 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. “Catholic converts” are people who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, but who say they were not raised Catholic. “Cradle Catholics” are adults who were raised Catholic and currently identify as Catholic.

Source: Data on prayer frequency comes from the Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023–March 4, 2024; data on confession and Traditional Latin Mass attendance comes from a survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3–9, 2025.

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Demographics of converts to Catholicism

Roughly two-thirds of converts to Catholicism in the United States are White (67%) and 20% are Hispanic. By comparison, the population of cradle Catholics in the U.S. includes a smaller share of White people (53%) and more Hispanics (37%).

About six-in-ten converts to Catholicism were raised as Protestants (59%), while 22% were raised with no religion.¹⁵ The remainder were raised in other religions or declined to answer the question about their childhood religion.

Most converts to Catholicism are White

Based on U.S. Catholics

	All U.S. Catholics	Catholic converts	Cradle Catholics
White	54%	67%	53%
Black	2	3	2
Hispanic	36	20	37
Asian	4	4	4
Other/Multiracial	2	3	2
No answer	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100
Ages 18-34	19	16	20
35-49	21	21	22
50-64	29	28	29
65+	28	33	28
No answer	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100
% who were raised ...			
Protestant	5	59	0
Catholic	92	0	100
Other Christian	1	9	0
Other religion (not Christian)	<1	4	0
No religion	2	22	0
No answer	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>
	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. White, Black and Asian Americans, as well as adults of other races, include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. "Catholic converts" are people who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, but who say they were not raised Catholic. "Cradle Catholics" are adults who were raised Catholic and currently identify as Catholic.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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¹⁵ Compared with the 2023-24 RLS, there are more converts in the Feb. 3-9, 2025, survey of Catholics who say they were raised Protestant (78%); 18% of converts in the 2025 survey were raised as "nones."

Politics of converts to Catholicism

Among Catholic registered voters, converts to Catholicism are a bit more likely than “cradle Catholics” to describe themselves as Republicans or to lean toward the Republican Party (60% vs. 52%).

There is little difference between the share of Catholic converts and cradle Catholics who describe their political views as conservative. (The difference between the 41% of converts who are conservative and the 36% of cradle Catholics is not statistically significant.)

Partisanship and ideology among Catholic converts and ‘cradle Catholics’

Based on U.S. Catholics

	All U.S. Catholics	Catholic converts	Cradle Catholics
Rep/lean Rep	53%	60%	52%
Dem/lean Dem	43	35	43
No lean	4	4	4
	100	100	100
Conservative	36	41	36
Moderate	42	34	42
Liberal	18	19	18
No answer	4	6	4
	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Party identification estimates based on registered voters. “Catholic converts” are people who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, but who say they were not raised Catholic. “Cradle Catholics” are adults who were raised Catholic and currently identify as Catholic.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Why converts joined the church

To better understand why they joined the Catholic Church, Catholic converts were asked an open-ended question: “Just in your own words, what is the main reason you became Catholic?”

By far the most common response was that the decision was driven by their spouse or partner being Catholic. Nearly half of responses (49%) referenced this as a reason, saying things like, “married into a Catholic family” or “I married a Catholic and became Catholic after that time.”

Other common responses converts give for having joined the church include:

- Coming to believe in church teachings or in the church’s historical foundation (13%)
- Feeling called to Catholicism, or finding it spiritually fulfilling (12%)
- The influence of relatives and friends (12%)

Roughly half of converts to Catholicism mention their spouse or getting married as the main reason for converting

Among Catholic converts, % who say, in their own words, ___ is the main reason they became Catholic

Because of spouse or partner/To get married in the church	49%
Came to believe in the teaching or historical foundations of the Catholic Church	13
Felt called to Catholicism or found it spiritually fulfilling	12
Influence of family and friends	12
Made sense/Aligned with values	7
Liked the Mass, the community or style of worship	6
Described returning to the church after a time away	3
Disillusionment or dissatisfaction with previous religious affiliation	3
Influence of Catholic institutions, such as schools	1
Other	1
Unclear	5
Don’t know/No answer/Not asked	5

Note: This is an open-ended question. Estimates are based on interviews with 148 converts to Catholicism, with an effective sample size of 94 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.1 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50. Results do not sum to 100% because more than one response was permitted. Up to three responses were coded for each respondent. Refer to the Topline for a full list of categories. “Catholic converts” are people who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion, but who say they were not raised Catholic.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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6. Views of sexual abuse and misconduct in the Catholic Church

How we define Catholics in this chapter

This chapter exclusively explores views and experiences among U.S. Catholics (i.e., the 20% of U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion).

Many Americans who are *not* Catholic are still connected to the faith in other ways. Read more about these “cultural Catholics,” former Catholics, and people with other Catholic connections (i.e., those who have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say “yes” when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass) in [Chapter 7](#) and the [Overview](#).

More than two decades after the clergy sex abuse scandal gained national attention in 2002, most U.S. Catholics think sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops is an ongoing problem in the church.

In our February 2025 survey, 62% of U.S. Catholics say clergy sex abuse is an ongoing problem, while 31% say these reports “reflect things that happened in the past and mostly don’t happen anymore.”

While most view it as an ongoing problem, most also think the problem is not unique to Catholic clergy.

Indeed, about two-thirds of Catholics surveyed (68%) say sexual abuse and misconduct is equally as common among other religious leaders as it is among Catholic priests and bishops. Far fewer (19%) think it is *more* of a problem among Catholic clergy than among other religious leaders.

[Since 2019](#), the share of Catholics who say they think sexual misconduct by clergy is an ongoing problem has declined from 69% to 62%. And the share who say they think clergy misconduct in other religions is equally as common as in the Catholic Church has increased from 61% to 68%.

Read on for more about Catholics' attitudes toward sexual abuse and misconduct in the church, including:

- [How much they've heard about it](#)
- [Views on whether it is an ongoing problem](#)
- [Views on whether it's as common among other religious leaders](#)

62% of U.S. Catholics say sexual abuse and misconduct by priests and bishops is an ongoing problem

% of U.S. Catholics who say the following

<i>Reports of sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops ...</i>	2019	2025
Reflect ongoing problems	69%	62%
Reflect things that happened in the past and mostly don't happen anymore	24	31
No answer	2	1
Not asked (have not heard about reports of sex abuse by priests/bishops)	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100
<i>Sexual abuse and misconduct is ...</i>		
Equally common among other religious leaders as among Catholic priests	61	68
More common among Catholic priests than other religious leaders	33	19
Less common among Catholic priests than other religious leaders	4	10
No answer	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100
<i>Sexual abuse of children is ...</i>		
Equally common among other adults who work with children (e.g., teachers, coaches, etc.) as among clergy	68	65
More common among clergy than among other people who work with children	22	16
Less common among clergy than among other people who work with children	7	17
No answer	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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How much Catholics have heard about clergy sexual abuse and misconduct

The vast majority of Catholics (94%) have heard at least a little about sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops. This includes 57% who say they have heard a lot about the topic and 37% who say they have heard a little about it.

Among U.S. adults as a whole, 93% say they have heard about sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic clergy, including 55% who have heard *a lot* about this.

94% of U.S. Catholics have heard at least a little about sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops

% who have ___ about sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops

	Among U.S. Catholics		Among all U.S. adults	
	2019	2025	2019	2025
Net Heard A lot/A little	95%	94%	92%	93%
Heard a lot	62	57	58	55
Heard a little	32	37	34	38
Heard nothing at all	5	5	8	7
No answer	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. The Feb. 3-9, 2025, survey asked respondents how much they have heard “about sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops.” The 2019 survey asked respondents how much they had heard about “recent reports of sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops.”

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Views on whether clergy sexual abuse is an ongoing problem

About six-in-ten Catholics say that sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops is an ongoing problem, while roughly three-in-ten say this is something that happened in the past and mostly doesn't happen anymore.

Among Catholics who attend Mass weekly, 51% say sexual abuse and misconduct by priests and bishops is an ongoing problem, while 44% say it is something that happened in the past. By contrast, 70% of Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less often say the problem is ongoing.

(Catholics who say they attend Mass once or twice a month are more likely than other Catholics to say they haven't heard anything at all about the issue; the survey did not ask respondents who said they were unaware of the issue whether they think it is ongoing.)

62% of Catholics say sexual abuse and misconduct by priests and bishops is an ongoing problem

% of U.S. Catholics who say sexual abuse and misconduct by Catholic priests and bishops reflect ...

	Ongoing problems	Things that happened in the past and mostly don't happen anymore	No answer	Not asked (have not heard of sex abuse by priests/bishops)
All U.S. Catholics	62%	31%	1%	6%=100%
Net Ever attend Mass	61	32	1	6
At least weekly	51	44	<1	5
Once or twice a month*	43	37	3	17
A few times a year/Seldom	70	25	1	4
Never attend Mass	75	21	0	4

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Views on whether sexual abuse and misconduct among Catholic clergy is unique

Most Catholics (68%) say that sexual abuse and misconduct by leaders is equally as common among other religious groups as in the Catholic Church. A similar share (65%) say this kind of abuse is just as common among other people who work with children (like teachers and coaches) as it is among religious leaders.

Catholics who attend Mass at least weekly are a bit more inclined than Catholics who attend a few times a year or less often to say they think sexual abuse of children is rarer among religious leaders than among other people who work with children. Still, majorities of Catholics at every level of Mass attendance say they think sexual abuse is equally common in the Catholic Church as in other religions, and equally common among clergy as among lay people who work with children.

68% of Catholics say that sexual abuse and misconduct is equally as common among other religious leaders as it is among Catholic priests and bishops

% of U.S. Catholics who say ...

	... sexual abuse and misconduct is __ among Catholic priests than/as it is among leaders in other religious traditions			... sexual abuse of children is __ among clergy and other religious leaders than/as it is among other adults who work with children		
	More common	Less common	Equally as common	More common	Less common	Equally as common
All U.S. Catholics	19%	10%	68%	16%	17%	65%
Net Ever attend Mass	19	11	68	16	17	64
At least weekly	13	16	69	13	25	59
Once or twice a month*	16	18	66	15	23	61
A few times a year/Seldom	23	7	69	18	12	69
Never attend Mass	23	5	70	19	10	69

* The survey included 166 interviews with Catholic respondents who attend Mass once or twice a month, with an effective sample size of 90 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. This margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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7. Catholic connections

Terminology

Throughout this report, when we use the term **Catholic**, we are referring to U.S. adults who say they are Catholic when asked about their religion.

We use the following terms when referring to people who are *not* Catholic by religion, but *are* connected to the faith in other ways:

Cultural Catholics say they consider themselves Catholic “aside from religion” (e.g., ethnically, culturally, or because of their family background).

Former Catholics were raised in the faith tradition but no longer identify as Catholic, religiously or culturally.

People who are connected to Catholicism in other ways are not Catholic by religion or culture, nor are they former Catholics. But they report having a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say yes when asked if they ever attend Mass.

In the United States, there are almost as many “cultural Catholics” and former Catholics, combined, as there are people who identify religiously as Catholic. In our Feb. 3-9, 2025, survey, 20% of U.S. adults are Catholic by religion, meaning they say they are Catholic when asked about their religion. Throughout this report, we refer to this group simply as “Catholic.”

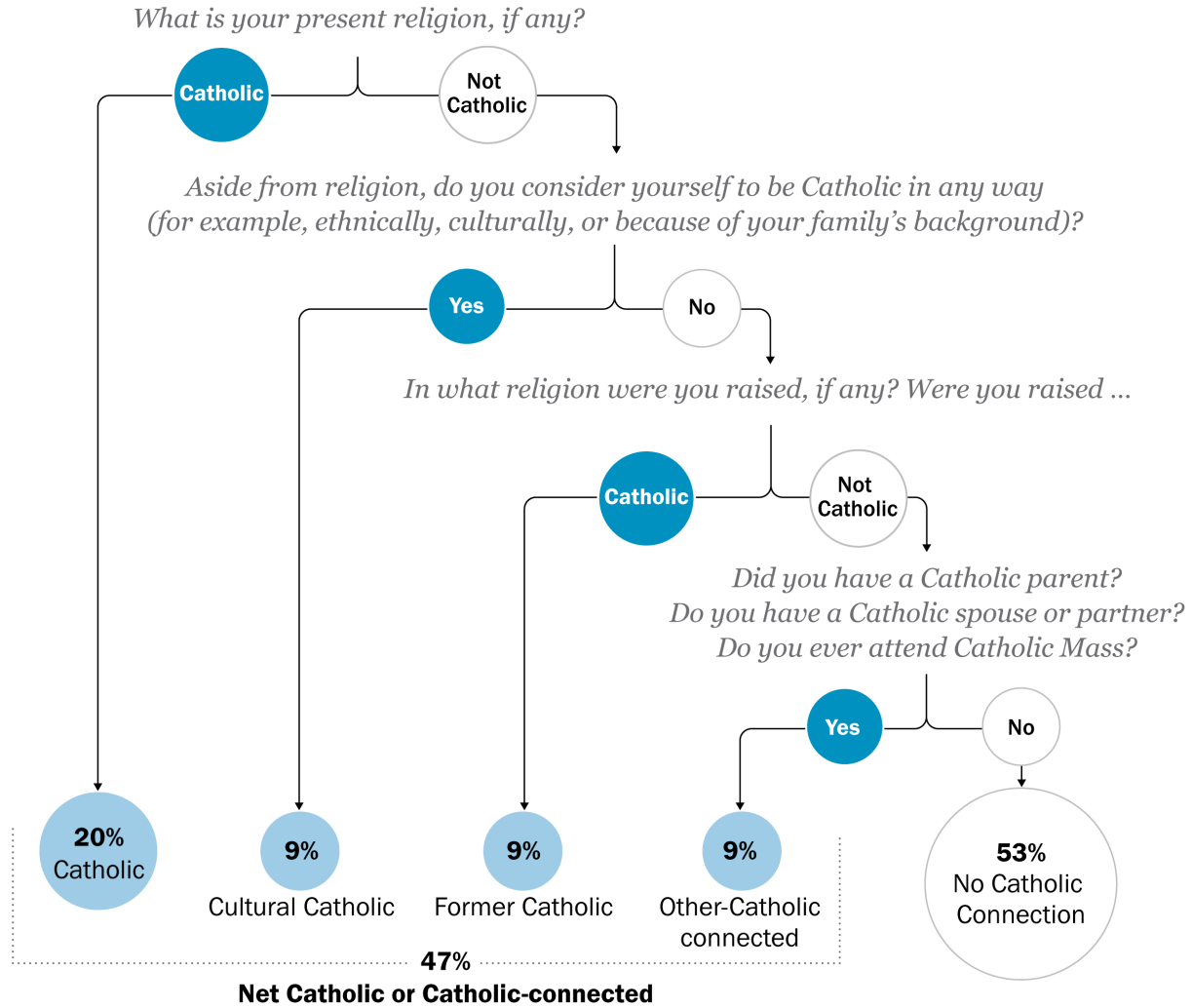
Meanwhile, 18% of U.S. adults are *not* Catholics by religion, but they *are* either cultural Catholics (9%) or former Catholics (9%). By “cultural Catholics,” we mean people who say in the survey that they are Catholic “aside from religion,” for example, ethnically, culturally, or because of their family background, but who do *not* say they are Catholic when asked directly about their religion. We define “former Catholics” as people who were raised Catholic but who don’t identify as Catholic today, either religiously or “aside from religion.”

Additionally, another 9% of U.S. adults are connected to Catholicism in other ways. These are people who don’t fit into the Catholic, cultural Catholic or former Catholic categories, but who have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say “yes” when asked whether they ever attend Catholic Mass.

About half of both cultural Catholics and former Catholics are religious “nones,” meaning they describe themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” when asked about their present religion. The remainder of people in these groups identify with a religion other than Catholicism (mostly with other Christian groups).

Nearly half of Americans have Catholic connections

% of U.S. adults who are (a) ...



Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. "Catholics" are respondents who say they are Catholic when asked about their present religion. "Cultural Catholics" are those who do not identify as Catholic religiously but say that *aside* from religion they consider themselves Catholic in some other way (for example, ethnically, culturally or because of their family's background). "Former Catholics" say they were raised Catholic but do not identify as Catholic today, either religiously or aside from religion. The "Other Catholic-connected" category includes adults who are not Catholic by religion, culturally Catholic, or formerly Catholic, but who have a Catholic spouse, partner or parent or say "yes" when asked if they ever attend Catholic Mass.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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The rest of this chapter provides more information about:

- ['Cultural Catholics' and former Catholics](#)
- [Why 'cultural Catholics' say they identify as Catholic 'aside from religion'](#)
- [Other Catholic connections](#)
- [Reasons people give for leaving the Catholic Church](#)

Cultural Catholics and former Catholics

Today, 53% of “cultural Catholics” identify with religions other than Catholicism, including 47% who are part of other Christian traditions and 7% who identify with non-Christian religions. The remainder of cultural Catholics (47%) are religiously unaffiliated.

Looking at former Catholics, 46% identify with religions other than Catholicism, including 37% who are in other Christian traditions and 8% who identify with other (non-Christian) religions. About half of former Catholics (54%) are religiously unaffiliated.

How they were raised

Among cultural Catholics, 44% say they were raised Catholic, while 37% were raised in other Christian traditions and 16% were raised religiously unaffiliated.

By definition, 100% of former Catholics were raised Catholic.

Their religious practices today

The vast majorities of cultural Catholics and former Catholics are not involved in Catholic practices today. Indeed, 83% of cultural Catholics and 96% of former Catholics say they seldom or never attend Catholic Mass. Eight-in-ten cultural Catholics and 94% of former Catholics say they seldom or never pray the rosary or participate in devotions to Mary or other saints.

Religious profile of cultural Catholics and former Catholics

<i>% who say their present religion is ...</i>	Among cultural Catholics	Among former Catholics
Religiously affiliated	53%	46%
Christian	47	37
Protestant	42	34
Catholic	--	--
Orthodox Christian	1	2
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	3	1
Other religions	7	8
Jewish	1	<1
Muslim	1	1
Buddhist	1	1
Hindu	<1	<1
Other	4	6
Religiously unaffiliated	47	54
Atheist	7	13
Agnostic	14	14
Nothing in particular	27	27
<i>% who say they were raised ...</i>		
Religiously affiliated	84	100
Christian	82	100
Catholic	44	100
Other Christian tradition	37	0
Other religions	2	0
Religiously unaffiliated	16	0
<i>% who ...</i>		
Seldom/Never attend Mass	83	96
Seldom/Never pray the rosary or participate in devotion to a saint	80	94
Say it's not important to them to receive the anointing of sick	54	82

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. “Cultural Catholics” are those who do not identify as Catholic religiously but say that aside from religion they consider themselves Catholic in some other way (for example, ethnically, culturally or because of their family’s background). “Former Catholics” were raised Catholic but do not identify as Catholic today, either religiously or aside from religion. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025. “47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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Furthermore, 82% of former Catholics say it would be “not too important” or “not at all important” to them to receive the anointing of the sick if they were seriously ill. This figure is somewhat lower among cultural Catholics (54%). Among cultural Catholics, 8% say receiving the anointing of the sick would be “extremely” or “very” important to them, while 18% say it would be “somewhat” important and 19% say they are not sure.

Why do cultural Catholics say they identify as Catholic ‘aside from religion’?

The survey asked cultural Catholics to describe, in their own words, in what way they consider themselves Catholic. The most common type of response describes having some sort of Catholic background (32%), such as having been raised Catholic, having cultural or ethnic ties to Catholicism, or having attended Catholic school.

Many cultural Catholics also describe relationships with Catholics (27%) as contributing to why they consider themselves Catholics. For instance, these respondents point to having Catholic parents, extended family members, friends or spouses.

Additionally, 23% of cultural Catholics mention beliefs that connect them to Catholicism, such as belief in God or elements of Catholic teaching. And 12% mention practices related to Catholicism, such as celebrating holidays, attending Mass or prayer.

Background, relationships contribute to ‘cultural Catholic’ identity

Among U.S. adults who say they consider themselves Catholic “aside from religion,” % who say, in their own words, it’s because of the following

Net Their own background	32%
Raised Catholic	17
Cultural or ethnic ties	9
Catholic school/college/education	4
Previously attended Catholic Church	4
Habit or familiarity	2
Net Relationships with Catholics	27
Family connection other than parents	19
Catholic parent(s)	6
Catholic or Catholic-connected spouse	3
Net Catholic beliefs	23
Retain teachings/values/morals	9
Belief in God, Jesus or higher power	7
Belief in elements of Catholic doctrine	5
Respect or appreciation for Catholic teachings	3
Net Catholic practices	12
Celebrate Catholic holidays/traditions	5
Attend Catholic services	3
Prayer	2
Devotion to Mary or saint(s)	2
Practice Catholicism in some way	2
Net Commonalities with Catholicism	2
Other	4
Unclear	5
Don’t know/No answer	24

Note: This is an open-ended question. Results do not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated because more than one response was permitted and because only answers mentioned in at least 2% of responses are shown here. Up to three responses were coded for each respondent. Refer to the Topline for a full list of subcategories. “Cultural Catholics” are those who do not identify as Catholic religiously but say that *aside from religion* they consider themselves Catholic in some other way (for example, ethnically, culturally or because of their family’s background). Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025. “47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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44% of cultural Catholics say having a personal relationship with Jesus is essential to their idea of Catholic identity; 41% say this about helping the poor

% of “cultural Catholics” in the U.S. who say each of the following is (an) ___ of what “being Catholic” means to them

	Essential part	Important, but not essential, part	Not an important part
Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ	44%	22%	32%
Working to help the poor and needy	41	40	17
Caring for immigrants	28	35	34
Taking care of the environment	28	42	28
Devotion to the Virgin Mary	20	27	49
Opposing abortion	20	27	51
Receiving the Eucharist	17	24	54
Being part of an unbroken tradition going back to the apostles	16	28	53
Celebrating feast days or festivals that are part of your national or ethnic heritage	16	45	38
Getting married in the church	16	30	51
Opposing the death penalty	16	28	52
The leadership of the pope	13	31	52
Being part of a Catholic parish	11	27	58
Going on pilgrimages	6	25	67

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. “Cultural Catholics” are those who do not identify as Catholic religiously but say that *aside* from religion they consider themselves Catholic in some other way (for example, ethnically, culturally or because of their family’s background).

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

“47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism”

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The survey also asked cultural Catholics whether each of a series of beliefs, practices and other traits are “essential” to what being Catholic means to them, “important but not essential,” or “not an important part” of what being Catholic means to them.

Overall, 44% say having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is essential to what being Catholic means to them, and 41% say the same about “working to help the poor and needy.” Roughly three-in-ten (28%) say caring for immigrants is “essential” to their Catholic identity, and an identical share mention “taking care of the environment.”

Compared with Catholics by religion, smaller shares of cultural Catholics say most of the items asked about in the survey are essential to what being Catholic means to them. (For a description of how people who identify religiously as Catholic answered this question, jump to [Chapter 1](#).)

Other Catholic connections

Overall, the survey finds that 9% of U.S. adults are connected to Catholicism in ways *other* than being Catholic by religion, culturally Catholic, or formerly Catholic. To put it another way, people in this group do not fit into any of those three categories but they do have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner or they say “yes” when asked whether they ever attend Catholic Mass.

More than half (57%) of the people in this group have a Catholic parent. Roughly one-third say “yes” when asked whether they ever attend Catholic Mass. And 25% have a Catholic spouse or partner.

In total, 13% of people in this group have more than one of these kinds of connections to the faith.

Reasons people give for leaving the Catholic Church

Overall, [13% of all adults in the U.S. population](#) say they were raised Catholic but that they no longer religiously identify as Catholic. The survey asked people in this group an open-ended question: “What is the main reason you are no longer Catholic?”

Overall, 18% of the people answering this question cite changed beliefs as the main reason they left Catholicism or say they hold different beliefs than the church. An additional 10% say they were never particularly committed to the church to begin with, and/or that they grew away from it. Another 9% say they stopped believing in God or left religion altogether, and 8% mention abuse scandals in the church as the key factor.

Reasons people give for leaving the Catholic Church

% who mention each of the following as the main reason they are no longer Catholic, among U.S. adults who were raised Catholics and are ...

	Among all U.S. adults who were raised Catholic but no longer identify religiously as Catholic	... now culturally Catholic (still identify as Catholic aside from religion)	... now former Catholics (do not identify as Catholic religiously or aside from religion)
Changed beliefs, hold different beliefs, or values do not align with church	18%	14%	19%
Was never committed in the first place or grew away from it	10	8	11
Stopped believing in God/Gave up or disavowed religion broadly	9	9	9
Church abuse scandals	8	7	8
Catholicism not based in Bible/Do too many things that are not in the Bible	6	3	8
Started going to a different type of church/Switched/Prefer other denomination	6	8	5
Church is too outdated/judgmental/strict/rigid	6	6	6
Negative opinion of organized religion in general	6	6	6
Do not feel they need the church/Have own beliefs about God or spirituality	5	6	4
Misogyny/Role of women/Abortion issues	4	5	4
Hypocrisy	4	4	4
Disinterest in religion	4	3	4
Negative opinion about Catholicism specifically	4	3	4
Church is corrupt/obsessed with money	3	3	3
Spouse is not Catholic/Could not get married in the church	3	5	2
Catholicism did not fulfill spiritual needs	3	2	3
Bad experience with Catholics or the church	3	4	2
Church's stance on LGBTQ issues	3	5	2
Born-again/Found Jesus/Personal relationships with Jesus	2	1	2
Saw Catholicism as incompatible with science or reason	2	3	1
Life circumstances	2	<1	2
Too involved with politics	1	2	<1
Pushed out/Shunned	1	1	<1
Disagreements on social or political issues with Catholic Church	1	1	1
Historical events (Inquisition, treatment of Indigenous people, etc.)	<1	<1	1
Other	3	3	3
Don't know/Refused/Unclear/Not asked	16	17	16

Note: This is an open-ended question. Results do not sum to 100% because more than one response was permitted. Up to three responses were coded for each respondent. Refer to the Topline for a full list of categories.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

"47% of U.S. Adults Have a Personal or Family Connection to Catholicism"

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

Most of the data in this report comes from Wave 162 of the American Trends Panel (ATP), Pew Research Center’s nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. The survey was conducted from Feb. 3 to 9, 2025. A total of 9,544 panelists (including 1,787 Catholics) responded out of 10,594 who were sampled, for a survey-level response rate of 90%.

The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 9,544 respondents is plus or minus 1.3 percentage points; the margin of sampling error for the sample of 1,787 Catholic respondents is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

SSRS conducted the survey for Pew Research Center via online (n=9,273) and live telephone (n=271) interviewing. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the ATP, read “[About the American Trends Panel](#).”

Panel recruitment

Since 2018, the ATP has used address-based sampling (ABS) for recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service’s Computerized Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover 90% to 98% of the population.¹⁶ Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is selected to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.¹⁷ Prior to 2018, the ATP was recruited using landline and cellphone random-digit-dial surveys administered in English and Spanish.

A national sample of U.S. adults has been recruited to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an “oversample”) to improve the accuracy of data for underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

¹⁶ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. “[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling](#).”

¹⁷ Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the United States. All active panel members were invited to participate in this wave.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with SSRS. The web program used for online respondents was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the SSRS project team and Pew Research Center researchers. The SSRS project team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or gift code to Amazon.com, Target.com or Walmart.com. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was Feb. 3 to 9, 2025. Surveys were conducted via self-administered web survey or by live telephone interviewing.

For panelists who take surveys online: Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset on Feb. 3.¹⁸ Survey invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on Feb. 3. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled online panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Feb. 4.

¹⁸ The American Trends Panel (ATP) does not use routers or chains in any part of its online data collection protocol, nor are they used to direct respondents to additional surveys. Postcard notifications for web panelists are sent to 1) panelists who were recruited within the last two years and 2) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

Invitation and reminder dates for web respondents, ATP Wave 162

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	Feb. 3, 2025	Feb. 4, 2025
First reminder	Feb. 6, 2025	Feb. 6, 2025
Final reminder	Feb. 8, 2025	Feb. 8, 2025

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Panelists participating online were sent an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages were sent an SMS invitation with a link to the survey and up to two SMS reminders.

For panelists who take surveys over the phone with a live interviewer: Prenotification postcards were mailed on Jan. 31. Soft launch took place on Feb. 3 and involved dialing until a total of 15 interviews had been completed. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled phone panelists' numbers were dialed throughout the remaining field period. Panelists who take surveys via phone can receive up to six calls from trained SSRS interviewers.

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, Center researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, three ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the panel survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of recruitment into the panel. These weights are then calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 1st and 99th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed)	2023 American Community Survey (ACS)
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Race/Ethnicity x Gender	
Race/Ethnicity x Age	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metropolitan status	2023 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Volunteerism	
Voter registration	2020 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Frequency of internet use	2024 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Religious affiliation	
Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity	
Party affiliation x Age	
Party affiliation among registered voters	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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The table below shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the Feb. 3-9, 2025, survey.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 162

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
All U.S. adults	9,544	1.3 percentage points
All U.S. Catholics	1,787	3.1 percentage points
<i>Among U.S. Catholics</i>		
Attend Mass weekly or more often	531	5.9 percentage points
Less often	1,254	3.6 percentage points
Monthly	166	10.3 percentage points
A few times a year or seldom	844	4.3 percentage points
Never	244	8.1 percentage points
Raised Catholic	1,639	3.2 percentage points
Catholic convert	148	10.1 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	1,220	3.5 percentage points
Hispanic	400	6.3 percentage points
Other race/ethnicity	167	9.8 percentage points
Men	784	4.7 percentage points
Women	999	4.0 percentage points
Ages 18-34	226	8.2 percentage points
35-49	367	6.2 percentage points
50-64	545	5.4 percentage points
65+	643	5.1 percentage points
Northeast	492	5.5 percentage points
Midwest	402	6.6 percentage points
South	516	5.6 percentage points
West	375	6.8 percentage points
Rep/lean Rep	923	4.2 percentage points
Dem/lean Dem	830	4.4 percentage points
<i>Among U.S. adults who are not Catholic but who are ...</i>		
Culturally Catholic	782	4.7 percentage points
Formerly Catholic	836	4.6 percentage points
Other Catholic-connected	878	4.5 percentage points

Note: "Catholics" are those who say they are Catholic when asked about their religion. "Cultural Catholic" includes those who do not identify as Catholic religiously but say they think of themselves as Catholic "aside from religion" (e.g., ethnically, culturally, or because of their family background). "Formerly Catholic" includes those who were raised Catholic but do not identify as Catholic religiously or aside from religion today. The "Other Catholic-connected" category includes those who are neither Catholic by religion or culture, nor are they formerly Catholic, but they have a Catholic parent, spouse or partner, or say yes when asked whether they ever attend Catholic Mass.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 3-9, 2025.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 162

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	9,544
Logged in (web)/Contacted (CATI), but did not complete any items	2.11	207
Started survey; broke off before completion	2.12	67
Never logged on (web)/Never reached on phone (CATI)	2.20	773
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Other non-interview	2.30	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.90	3
Total panelists sampled for the survey		10,594
Completed interviews	I	9,544
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	274
Non-contact	NC	773
Other	O	3
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		10,594
AAPOR RR1 = I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)		90%

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Cumulative response rate, ATP Wave 162

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	73%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 162	35%
Response rate to Wave 162 survey	90%
Cumulative response rate	3%

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The U.S. Religious Landscape Study Methodology

Some of the data in this report comes from Pew Research Center's 2023-24 U.S. Religious Landscape Study (RLS). The RLS was conducted in English and Spanish from July 17, 2023, to March 4, 2024, among a nationally representative sample of 36,908 U.S. adults. Complete details about how the RLS was conducted are available in the study's [Methodology](#).

The accompanying table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the RLS.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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Sample sizes and margins of error, 2023-24 U.S. Religious Landscape Study

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
All U.S. adults	36,908	0.8 percentage points
All U.S. Catholics	6,958	1.7 percentage points
<i>Among U.S. Catholics</i>		
Raised Catholic	6,296	1.8 percentage points
Catholic convert	662	5.5 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	4,759	2.0 percentage points
Hispanic	1,528	3.5 percentage points
Other race/ethnicity	671	5.5 percentage points

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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