

The Largest Catholic Communities

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The Catholic Church is the world's largest religious body. The lists below indicate places that are "most Catholic" or places with large numbers of Catholics.

The complete data sets that these "Top 10" lists are derived from are available in the main [Adherents.com](#) database under "C" for "Catholic." But because there are so many records for the Catholic Church it may be faster to look in the Adherents.com [Location index](#) if you're looking for a statistic for a particular country, state, or province.

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- [Some Catholic Demographics](#)
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Catholics as a percentage of state populations. Click [here](#) or on [map](#) to see a larger version.

Top 10 Nations with Most Catholics

Nation	Percent	Number of baptized Catholics
Brazil	86.50%	134,818,000
Mexico	95.30	86,305,000
USA	26.00	~61,000,000
Philippines	83.60	58,735,000
Italy	97.20%	55,599,000
France	82.10	47,773,000
Spain	94.20	36,956,000
Poland	95.40	36,835,000
Colombia	91.90	32,260,000
Argentina	90.70	31,546,000
Germany	34.80	28,403,000

Source: 1998 *Catholic Almanac: Our Sunday Visitor*: USA (1997), pg. 333-367. Except U.S. figures, which are from general sources.

Top 20 Nations with Highest Percentage of Catholics

Nation	Number of Catholics	Percent of population that are baptized Catholics
Vatican City	850	100.00%
San Marino	24,714	99.83

Saint Pierre and Miquelon	6,000	99.36
Wallis and Futuna Islands	15,000	99.02
Italy	55,599,000	97.20
Cape Verde	390,000	96.00
Poland	36,835,000	95.40
Mexico	86,305,000	95.30
Ireland	3,372,500	95.00
Guadeloupe	391,000	95.00
Spain	36,956,000	94.20
Luxembourg	386,000	94.00
Paraguay	4,531,000	93.80
Ecuador	10,729,000	93.60
El Salvador	5,399,000	93.50
Costa Rica	3,009,000	93.00
Honduras	5,517,000	92.70
Venezuela	19,922,000	92.00
Portugal	9,948,000	92.00

Source: 1998 Catholic Almanac: Our Sunday Visitor: USA (1997), pg. 333-367; Adherents.com.

The Catholic Church is the largest religious body in the United States, with over 60 million adherents (4 times as large as the second largest church).

Top 10 U.S. States with Highest Proportion of Catholics in the Population, 1990

State	Number	Percent
Rhode Island	633,427	63.12%
Massachusetts	2,961,359	49.22
Connecticut	1,374,747	41.82
New Jersey	3,189,315	41.26
New York	7,280,488	40.47
Louisiana	1,369,154	32.44
Wisconsin	1,554,278	31.77
Illinois	3,611,033	31.59
Pennsylvania	3,675,250	30.93
New Mexico	467,356	30.85

Top 10 U.S. States with Most Catholics, 1990

State	Number	Percent
New York	7,280,488	40.47%
California	7,142,067	24.00
Pennsylvania	3,675,250	30.93
Illinois	3,611,033	31.59
Texas	3,574,728	21.04

New Jersey	3,189,315	41.26
Massachusetts	2,961,359	49.22
Michigan	2,338,608	25.16
Ohio	2,141,777	19.75
Florida	1,598,457	12.35

States on both lists (Highest Number and Highest Percent): Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Illinois, and Pennsylvania.

Top 25 U.S. Counties with Highest Proportion of Catholics, 1990

County	Number of Catholics	Number of Parishes	Percent of Population
Kenedy, TX	440	2	95.65%
Mora, NM	4,370	20	94.86
Reeves, TX	20,207	6	94.63
Guadalupe, NM	4,149	19	91.43
La Salle, TX	5,815	2	86.41
St. James, LA	22,725	7	84.18
Harding, NM	1,011	6	81.16
Starr, TX	34,669	15	81.00
Cameron, TX	248,470	33	81.00
Hidalgo, TX	360,833	51	81.00
Willacy, TX	18,537	8	81.00
Wade Hampton, AK	4,692	12	79.55
Plymouth, MA	427,177	45	79.10
Jim Hogg, TX	4,637	6	78.10
Jeff Davis, TX	2,121	2	77.60
Maverick, TX	30,743	6	76.69
Taos, NM	20,379	29	75.81
Webb, TX	107,333	20	75.14
St. Landry, LA	78,578	35	74.57
Vermilion, LA	42,974	17	73.22
St. Martin, LA	36,728	13	72.54
Kewaunee, WI	18,022	16	72.38
Pointe Coupee, LA	22,098	8	71.49
Franklin, MA	60,205	19	71.47
Greeley, NE	3,236	5	71.26
Providence, RI	505,030	102	71.04

States on this list: Texas (12), Louisiana (5), New Mexico (4), Massachusetts, Alaska, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Rhode Island

NOTE: It's possible that some of the counties on this list with small populations have Catholic parishes which draw members from *adjoining* counties. Because these numbers are based on parish reports and not census counts, this would mean the actual proportion of Catholics in such a county might seem higher in this list than it actually is.

Okay, there are actually 26 counties on this list. I added one more so that Rhode Island could make an appearance on this list. It is interesting to note that Rhode Island, the state with the highest proportion of Catholics, does **not** actually have any counties among the nation's counties with the high proportion of

Catholics. This is because Catholics must be very evenly spread throughout Rhode Island, but they are not evenly spread through other states which have high numbers of Catholics. In Texas, for instance, the predominantly Catholic counties are along the Mexican-American border, while the north of Texas is predominantly Protestant, especially Baptist.

Source: *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1990*, published by the Glenmary Research Center, P.O. Box 507, Mars Hill, NC 28754. Principle investigator: Church Growth Research Center, Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, MO. This data source was obtained from the **American Religion Data Archive**.

Some Catholic Demographics

The purpose of this page is **not** to be a clearinghouse for Catholic demographic data. But as we come across some interesting statistics, we may add them here.

Catholic countries have **lower suicide rates** than Protestant ones and "even within Protestant countries those areas with Catholic populations [have] lower rates." It is worth noting that "the reduced suicide rate of Catholics relative to Protestants is independent of their minority status."

[Sources: Study by Emile Durkheim, cited in Robert Alun Jones. *Emile Durkheim: An Introduction to Four Major Works*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1986. Pg. 82-114.; John Hood-Williams (Department of Social Science, University of Greenwich, [London](#), UK). "Studying Suicide" in *Health & Place* (Vol. 2. No. 3; 1996), pg. 167-177.]

A national survey conducted by the Barna Research Group (Ventura, California), determined that in the U.S., Catholics and Lutherans have the **lowest divorce rate** among major Christian denominations. (Baptists had the highest divorce rate).

[Sources: [Barna report online](#); Greg Garrison. "Survey: Baptists lead in divorces" in *The Birmingham News*, 30 Dec. 1999.]

"Catholic countries **consume significantly more alcohol** than Protestant (or neither religion dominant) countries."

[Source: Stanton Peele (Fellow, The Lindesmith Center, New York). "[Utilizing Culture and Behaviour in Epidemiological Models of Alcohol Consumption and Consequences for Western Nations](#)" in *Alcohol & Alcoholism* (vol. 32; 1997), pg. 51-64.]

More science fiction and fantasy writers belong to the Catholic Church than to any other religious body. Notable among these are G.K. Chesterton, Andrew Greeley, J.R.R. Tolkien, R.A. Lafferty, Anthony Boucher, Clifford Simak, Walter M. Miller, Jr. and Gene Wolfe. On a per capita basis, there are more practicing Catholics than practicing Protestants among mainstream sf/f writers. However, there are some specific religious bodies other than the Catholic Church which are better represented on a per capita basis. In the introduction to *Sacred Visions*, Andrew Greeley (the famed priest-sociologist-novelist) suggests Catholicism fits better with science fiction than Protestantism. The Jesuit priest/scientist is one of the most common types of religious characters in science fiction literature.

[Source: [Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of Various Faiths](#).]

See Also:

- [Largest Religious Groups in the U.S.A.](#) - See how the Catholic Church compares in size to other major religious groups in the United States. (Includes some maps.)
- [Religious Affiliation of History's 100 Most Influential People](#) - Catholicism is represented more than any other religion on this list.