



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

National Centre for Pastoral Research

2021 National Count of Attendance at Mass and Sunday Assemblies



Background Information

The National Count of Attendance will again be conducted throughout Australia during 2021. All dioceses and parishes are urged to take part.

Church attendance is perhaps the most basic measure of religious practice. Most dioceses conduct counts of attenders, but not every diocese does it with the same frequency, in the same way or at the same time.

According to the most recent national count, conducted in 2016, about 11.8 per cent of Australia's Catholic population, or 623,400 people, went to church on a typical weekend. Most of those attended Mass in a parish, but the figure also included people attending Mass in non-parish centres, such as migrant centres, hospitals, gaols and boarding schools, and also some who were not attending Mass at all, but rather a Sunday assembly in the absence of a priest. A report based on the 2016 National Count of Attendance can be downloaded free of charge from the NCPR website: <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/national-count-of-attendance/>

The National Count is conducted in the same year as the Australian Census (to be held on 10 August 2021) so that the information collected can most effectively be used in association with results from the other project.

It is intended that the 2021 count will be conducted in all parishes and other Mass centres, such as migrant community centres, throughout Australia. The count will be as comprehensive as possible and include people of all ages at Mass (including babies), and other types of Sunday Assemblies. It will be a simple headcount: no other information about individual attenders will be collected. The exercise does not disrupt Mass; it can be done, for example, while the collection is being taken up, or as people are arriving at or leaving the service.

The count is conducted over the first four consecutive Sundays (and Saturday evenings) in May. Counting over four Sundays ensures that fortnightly and monthly Masses are not overlooked. This is particularly important for many country towns and migrant communities.

The method used for the count enables reporting of actual numbers attending on any particular weekend of the count and also the calculation of the total number likely to be in attendance on a typical weekend after special events, like Confirmations, have been considered.

This year, parishes will also be asked to provide estimates of the age and sex of those who attend Mass and Sunday assemblies. As well, in light of ongoing COVID-19 restrictions in some areas, parishes will be invited to provide the number of 'views' of Masses or Sunday assemblies streamed online.

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