

### Catholic Population

On the night of the 2021 Census, Our Lady's Parish Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park, in the outer north of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, became the largest parish in Australia, with around 31,149 Catholics living within its geographical boundaries. The Catholic population in the parish increased by around 7,300 people since the 2016 Census. The parish of Burleigh Heads in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, previously ranked first in both 2011 and 2016, was a close second in 2021 with 29,576 Catholics.



**Table 1: Top Five parishes - Catholic population**

Rank	Catholics (N)	Parish (Diocese)
1.	31,149	Craigieburn (Melbourne)
2.	29,576	Burleigh Heads (Brisbane)
3.	22,475	Werribee (Melbourne)
4.	22,419	Maroochydore (Brisbane)
5.	22,135	Caloundra (Brisbane)

Another Melbourne parish, Werribee, in the Archdiocese's southwest, was included in the 'Top Five' for the first time after increasing by over 2,500 Catholics since the 2016 Census. Two other Brisbane parishes, Maroochydore (22,419) and Caloundra (22,135), rounded out the top five.

When it came to the **proportion** of Catholics, as Table 2 shows, three parishes in the Diocese of Darwin and two parishes in the Diocese of Broome had the highest proportion of Catholics in Australia in 2021. Just over eight out of ten people (83.1%) were Catholic in the parishes of Santa Teresa, 80km south-east of Alice Springs, and Bathurst Island (81.3%), 80km north of Darwin. Melville Island parish in Darwin ranked third (74.1%), followed by Kalumburu in Broome (57.4%). Another Broome parish, Balgo- Kutjungka (56.6%), entered the Top Five list taking the final place in 2021.

**Table 2: Top Five parishes - Percentage Catholic**

Rank	Catholic (%)	Parish (Diocese)
1.	83.1	Santa Teresa (Darwin)
2.	81.3	Bathurst Island (Darwin)
3.	74.1	Melville Island (Darwin)
4.	57.4	Kalumburu (Broome)
5.	56.6	Balgo - Kutjungka (Broome)

**Table 3: Top Five parishes - Percentage of Catholic population aged under 15**

Rank	Per cent aged 0-14	Parish (Diocese)
1.	34.6	Palm Island (Townsville)
2.	34.3	Wyndham (Broome)
3.	31.0	Santa Teresa (Darwin)
4.	30.3	Dampier Peninsula (Broome)
5.	29.5	Jugiong (Canberra-Goulburn)

Parishes from remote and rural regions had the highest proportion of Catholics under 15 in 2021 (Table 3). Palm Island (34.6%), in the north-east of the Diocese of Townsville and Wyndham (34.6%), located in the Diocese of Broome, recorded the highest proportions of Catholics aged under 15, with approximately one in three Catholics in this age group. In the remaining three parishes in the 'Top Five' list, nearly three in every ten Catholics were aged under 15. These included Santa Teresa parish (31%) in Darwin, Dampier Peninsula (30.3%) in Broome and Jugiong parish (29.5%) in the Canberra & Goulburn Archdiocese.

**Table 4: Top Five parishes - Percentage of Catholic population aged 65 and over**

Rank	Per cent aged 65 +	Parish (Diocese)
1.	49.1	Victor Harbor/Goolwa (Adelaide)
2.	43.0	Narooma (Canberra-Goulburn)
3.	41.7	Flinders Island (Hobart)
4.	41.7	Myall Coast (Maitland-Newcastle)
5.	41.3	Rosebud (Melbourne)

In contrast to a younger age profile in rural and remote areas, Table 4 reveals that five parishes with a high proportion of Catholics aged 65 and over were all located largely in coastal or beachside areas. This is a slight change from 2016, when two suburban Melbourne parishes (Reservoir North and Hadfield) were included in the Top Five list. In 2021, nearly half the Catholic population of Victor Harbor/Goolwa, a coastal parish southeast in the Archdiocese of Adelaide, was aged 65 and over. Victor Harbor/Goolwa parish topped this list in 2016 as well. Other parishes in the current Top Five, with over four in ten Catholics aged 65 and older, were: Narooma (43%), located in the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn on the NSW south coast, Flinders Island (41.7%), northeast of Tasmania in the Bass Strait (Hobart), Myall Coast (41.7%) in Maitland-Newcastle, and Rosebud (41.3%), on Melbourne's Mornington Peninsula. The proportion of the Catholic population aged 65 and over in these five parishes was more than twice the national average of Catholics aged 65 and over (19.9%) in 2021.

## Population Growth

According to the 2021 Census, the parishes with the largest numerical increases in Catholic population were concentrated in parishes located in the growth corridors surrounding the Melbourne and Sydney metropolitan areas. Table 5 shows that Oran Park (Wollongong), in Sydney's outer southwest, recorded the largest numerical increase in the Catholic population between 2016 and 2021, growing by 9,800 persons in that period. Craigieburn, in Melbourne's north, was the sole Top Five parish from 2016 to appear again in 2021, with its Catholic population increasing by over 7,300 people. Clyde North (Sale) increased by 6,472 persons, Rouse Hill (Parramatta) in Sydney's northwest by 4,196, and Grovedale in Melbourne's west by 2,921, rounding out the Top Five.



**Table 5: Top Five parishes - Largest numerical increase in Catholic population 2016-2021**

Rank	2016	2021	Change	Parish (Diocese)
1.	10,502	20,302	9,800	Oran Park (Wollongong)
2.	23,815	31,149	7,334	Craigieburn (Melbourne)
3.	7,432	13,904	6,472	Clyde North (Sale)
4.	7,570	11,766	4,196	Rouse Hill (Parramatta)
5.	10,796	13,717	2,921	Grovedale (Melbourne)

*Note: Some parishes whose boundary changes between 2016 and 2021 resulted in numerical increases in their population have not been included in the above list.*

Table 6 shows the Top Five parishes with the largest proportional increase in the Catholic population between 2016 and 2021. Campbell Town parish, northwest of Hobart, recorded the largest proportional change of 104.2 per cent. South Brisbane parish's Catholic population doubled from 1,088 to 2,181 over the five-year period. The Catholic population of Oran Park, in Wollongong, increased by 93.3 per cent, while Clyde North in Sale and Bowen Hills in Brisbane had slightly smaller increases of 87.1 per cent and 74.7 per cent respectively.

**Table 6: Top Five parishes - Largest percentage increase in Catholic population 2016-2021**

Rank	Catholics 2016	Catholics 2021	% change	Parish (Diocese)
1.	165	337	104.2	Campbell Town (Hobart)
2.	1,088	2,181	100.5	South Brisbane (Brisbane)
3.	10,502	20,302	93.3	Oran Park (Wollongong)
4.	7,432	13,904	87.1	Clyde North (Sale)
5.	842	1,471	74.7	Bowen Hills (Brisbane)



## Ethnicity and Birthplace

Multiculturalism is the norm for many Australian parishes, while others continue to increase in cultural diversity each year. Table 7 shows the Top Five parishes with the percentage of Catholics born in non-English-speaking countries (NESC). NESC's are defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as being all countries other than Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland, United States, Canada and South Africa. As the table shows, the top two parishes with the greatest proportion of Catholics born in NESC's were Fairfield (Sydney) at 68.9 per cent and Melbourne – Bourke St (Melbourne)

**Table 7: Top Five parishes - Percentage of Catholics born in non-English speaking countries (NESC)**

Rank	cent born NESC	Parish (Diocese)
1.	68.9	Fairfield (Sydney)
2.	66.0	Melbourne – Bourke St (Melbourne)
3.	60.9	Noble Park (Melbourne)
4.	60.3	Auburn (Sydney)
5.	60.2	Smithfield, including Fairfield West (Sydney)

at 66 per cent. In each of these parishes, approximately two in every three Catholics were born in a non-English-speaking country. The Melbourne parish of Noble Park and two Sydney parishes, Auburn and Smithfield, recorded figures between 60 and 61 per cent each, placing them in the Top Five list.

Table 8 shows the Top Five list of recently arrived Catholics in Australia from non-English-speaking countries. These are Catholics who arrived in the three years prior to, and including, the Census year, between the start of 2018 to August 2021, when the Census was held. As in 2016, Craigieburn parish, in Melbourne's north, had the largest number of recent arrivals of Catholics from NESC countries (1,880), from countries such as Iraq, the Philippines and India to name a few. Smithfield including Fairfield West, in western Sydney, ranked second with 1,452 new arrivals, and the centrally located parish of Brisbane Cathedral ranked third with 1,168 new arrivals. The parish of Rockdale, in Sydney's southern suburbs, entered the Top Five list with 1,003 recent arrivals from countries such as Columbia, Brazil, and the Philippines. A second Brisbane parish, Surfers Paradise, ranked fifth with 982 new arrivals.

**Table 8: Top Five parishes - Catholics from non-English speaking countries who arrived 2018-2021**

Rank	Number that arrived 2018-2021	Parish (Diocese)
1.	1,880	Craigieburn (Melbourne)
2.	1,452	Smithfield, including Fairfield West (Sydney)
3.	1,168	Brisbane Cathedral (Brisbane)
4.	1,003	Rockdale City (Sydney)
5.	982	Surfers Paradise (Brisbane)

The Top Five parishes with the highest proportion of Catholics who use a language other than English (LOTE) at home are shown in Table 9. In all parishes in this list, the LOTE used at home was an Australian Indigenous language. Bathurst Island ranked first at 95.3 per cent. In the two other Darwin parishes, Wadeye and Santa Teresa, approximately nine out of 10 Catholics recorded that they used a LOTE at home. In Melville Island in Darwin and Balgo-Kutjungka in Broome, a slightly lower proportion (8 of every 10 Catholics) used a LOTE at home.

**Table 9: Top Five parishes - Percentage of Catholics speaking a Language other than English at home (LOTE)**

Rank	Per cent speaking LOTE	Parish (Diocese)
1.	95.3	Bathurst Island (Darwin)
2.	92.9	Wadeye (Darwin)
3.	92.6	Santa Teresa (Darwin)
4.	88.2	Melville Island (Darwin)
5.	81.6	Balgo – Kutjungka (Broome)

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

Table 10 shows the Top Five parishes for Catholics who identified themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in the 2021 Census. The parish of Dubbo in Bathurst had the highest number of Catholics (1,824) who identified themselves in as such. Broome Cathedral parish had the second-highest population of 1,549. Two Darwin parishes, Alice Springs (1,461) and Bathurst Island (1,137), together with the Ministerial Region of the Good Shepherd (1,212) in the Townsville Diocese, complete the Top Five.

**Table 10: Top Five parishes - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics**

Rank	Number of Indigenous Catholics	Parish (Diocese)
1.	1,824	Dubbo (Bathurst)
2.	1,549	Broome Cathedral (Broome)
3.	1,461	Alice Springs (Darwin)
4.	1,212	Ministerial Region of the Good Shepherd (Townsville)
5.	1,137	Bathurst Island (Darwin)

## Education

Table 11 shows the Top Five parishes of Catholics aged 15 or older with a degree qualification or higher. Three parishes are in the Sydney Archdiocese, and two are from the Archdiocese of Melbourne. In all these parishes, approximately six in 10 Catholics aged 15 or over held a degree or higher qualification, placing them well above the national Catholic average of 24.6 per cent. Paddington parish in Sydney topped the list at 61.9 per cent.



**Table 11: Top Five parishes - Percentage of Catholics with a degree qualification or higher (aged 15 and over)**

Rank	Per cent with a degree or higher	Parish (Diocese)
1.	61.9	Paddington (Sydney)
2.	59.8	North Sydney-Kirribilli-Lavender Bay (Sydney)
3.	59.4	Melbourne Cathedral (Melbourne)
4.	59.1	South Yarra (Melbourne)
5.	58.0	Church Hill (Sydney)

Tables 12 and 13 show the Top Five parishes of Catholic school students attending Catholic schools. These categories are driven by the availability of Catholic schools in a particular area as well as the engagement of local Catholics with the school. It is important to note that these figures refer to the home location of the students and not necessarily to the location of the school that they attended.

Looking at primary schools in Table 13, two Darwin parishes ranked first—Bathurst Island and Santa Teresa—with 100 per cent of their Catholic students attending Catholic schools. Catholic Schools are the sole type of primary schools on Bathurst Island<sup>1</sup> and in Santa Teresa/Ltyentye Apurte<sup>2</sup> which may account for the high attendance rates.

Both the third and fourth ranked parishes were from Victoria: Bungaree parish (93.4%) from the Ballarat diocese and Niddrie parish (91.3%) in Melbourne's northwestern suburbs. Balgo – Kutjungka parish (89.2%) from the Broome diocese completes the Top Five.

**Table 12: Top Five parishes - Percentage of Catholic primary students attending Catholic schools**

Rank	% of primary students	Parish (Diocese)
1.	100.0	Bathurst Island (Darwin)
1.	100.0	Santa Teresa (Darwin)
3.	93.4	Bungaree (Ballarat)
4.	91.3	Niddrie (Melbourne)
5.	89.2	Balgo – Kutjungka (Broome)

*Note: Parishes with populations of secondary school students above 50 are used to calculate the top 5. ABS rounding creates anomalous results for smaller data sets.*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tiwilandcouncil.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&p=214&id=69>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/145>

Table 13 looks at Catholic secondary school students attending Catholic schools. The picture is somewhat different here than with the primary school students, which may reflect factors such as the availability of both Catholic and Government schools in a parish or the costs of secondary education.

<b>Table 13: Top Five parishes - Percentage of Catholic secondary students attending Catholic schools</b>		
<b>Rank</b>	<b>% of secondary students</b>	<b>Parish (diocese)</b>
1.	90.7	Bathurst Island (Darwin)
2.	90.0	Attadale (Perth)
3.	88.1	Dorrington (Brisbane)
4.	86.2	Tatura (Sandhurst)
5.	85.9	Granville (Parramatta)

*Note: Parishes with populations of secondary school students above 50 are used to calculate the top 5. ABS rounding can create anomalous results for smaller data sets.*

Bathurst Island in the Darwin diocese took the top-ranking spot, with 90.7 per cent of Catholic secondary students attending Catholic schools. Attadale parish (Perth) came in second with 90 per cent, followed by Dorrington (Brisbane) with 88.1 per cent. Tatura (Sandhurst) was fourth at 86.2 per cent, and Granville (Parramatta), with 88.9 per cent, completed the Top Five.



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