



National Centre for Pastoral Research

2026 National Count of Attendance at Mass and Other Assemblies

REVISED – 18 MARCH 2026
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The National Count of Attendance will again be conducted throughout Australia during 2026. 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 2021, about 8.2 per cent of Australia's Catholic population, or 417,000 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, jails and boarding schools, and also some who were not attending Mass at all, but rather an assembly in the absence of a priest. A report based on the 2021 National Count of Attendance is available on 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 11 August 2026) so that the information collected can most effectively be used in association with results from the other project.

The 2026 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 Count will be conducted at all Sunday Masses (including Saturday Vigil Masses, other Masses permitted by the Holy See to fulfil Sunday obligations and Other assemblies in the absence of a priest). This does not include other liturgical services such as prayer group liturgies, funerals, weddings or other Saturday Masses.

The 2026 Count will be conducted in all parishes and other Mass centres, such as migrant community centres, throughout Australia. It will be as comprehensive as possible and include people of all ages (including babies and celebrants) at Mass and Other assemblies. 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 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.

As we did in 2021, parishes will also be asked to provide information on the age and sex of those who attend Mass and other assemblies. Parishes will also be invited to provide the number of 'views' of Masses or other assemblies streamed online.

For further information, please contact:

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