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STATISTICS BOOK

Religion: statistics and facts

30 full reports · Edition October 2026

~19k	95K	7%	47%
MARRIED 2010	WEEKLY VISITORS (2024)	UNIVERSITY GRADS ATTEND WEEKLY	BELIEVED 2010

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Religion: statistics and facts

Looking for data on Religion? The 42 reports below cover Church (8 reports), Catholic (7 reports), Religious (5 reports), God (4 reports) and Poland (3 reports). Narrower topics have their own pages: Religion, Church and Catholic.

Some numbers that stand out in these reports: ~19k (Married 2010), 95K (Weekly Visitors (2024)), 7% (University Grads Attend Weekly) and 47% (Believed 2010).

Recently updated reports include Church of Sweden Marriages 2010-2026: Numbers & Trend and Dutch Catholic Mass Attendance 2008-2026: 305K to 95K. New and updated reports appear here automatically, the last change was on Oct 18, 2026. Each report lists its sources and lets you download its charts and data.

Each chapter is a complete Business Stats report with its text, charts, tables and primary sources. The online version of every report is updated continuously; this book shows them as of Oct 19, 2026.

CONTENTS

1. Church

1 Church of Sweden Marriages 2010-2026: Numbers & Trend 5

2 New Members of the Church of Sweden 2010-2026 by Year 18

3 Church Members in Sweden: % of Population 2010-2026 31

4 Church Attendance in Italy 2001-2026: Weekly Mass Halved 45

5 How Old Are Church of England Churchgoers? 2014-2026 56

2. Catholic

6 Dutch Catholic Mass Attendance 2008-2026: 305K to 95K 67

7 Catholic Members in the Netherlands 2000-2026: 5.1M to 3.4M 78

8 Catholic Adherents in Poland 2000-2026: From 95% to 84% 89

9 Religious Affiliation in Poland 2026: 71% Still Catholic 100

10 Catholics in Spain 2011-2026: Share Falls From 71% to 54% 111

3. Religious

11 Religious Attendance in the Netherlands 2026, by Education 122

12 Religious Attendance in the Netherlands 2026, by Age 133

13 Religious Members in Poland 2026: 99.7% Are Christian 144

14 Religious Beliefs in Poland 2026: 86% Believe, 14% Do Not 155

15 Religious Minorities in Italy 2026: 2.3M Citizens by Faith 166

4. God

16 Belief in God in Sweden 2010-2026 178

17 Why Young French People Believe in God Less, 2026 193

18 Who Really Believes in God in France? 2026, by Religion 204

19 How Many Britons Believe in God? 2019-2026 Trend 215

5. Poland

20 Registered Churches in Poland 2026: 207 by Type of Religion 226

21 Denominations in Poland 2026: 139 of 185 Are Christian 237

22 Religion Classes in Poland 2018-2026: From 88% to 73% 248

6. Italy

23 Muslims in Italy 2026: 2.7M Residents by Country of Origin 259

24 Religion of Foreigners in Italy 2026: 30% Muslim, 53% Christian 270

25 Who Are Italy Protestants? The 2026 Denomination Breakdown 281

7. More statistics

26 Baptisms in Sweden by County 2026: Numbers & Rates 293

27 Religion in the Netherlands 2010-2026: 58% Non-Religious 306

28 Non-Religious Spain 1980-2026: From 8.5% to 41% of People 317

29 Religion by Age in Spain 2026: Only 38% of Youth Affiliated 328

8. Christian

30 Religion in England and Wales 2026: Christian vs No Religion 339

MORE REPORTS ON THIS TOPIC (ONLINE)

- How Many Attend the Church of England Weekly? 2009-2026
- How Many Members Does Germany Evangelical Church Have? 2026
- How Much Church Tax Does Germany Catholic Church Collect?
- Who Do German Catholics Marry? Wedding Trends 1920-2026
- What Share of Germany Is Catholic? 1950-2026 Decline Explained
- Bible Ownership in France by Declared Religion 2026
- France Religion 2030: Is the Christian Majority Over?
- How Many Jehovah's Witnesses Are in Germany by State? 2026
- How Many Spaniards Follow a Non-Catholic Religion? 2011-2026
- What Is the Main Religion in Europe? Christianity, Islam and More
- World Religions by Population 2026: Which Is the Largest?
- What Religion Is Finland in 2026? Lutheran Church and Beyond

STATISTICS REPORT

Marriages in Church of Sweden 2010-2026

Updated Jun 22, 2026 · businesstats.com/sweden-number-of-marriages-performed-by-church-of-sweden

~19k MARRIED 2010	**~8k** 2020-21 LOW	**~11k** MARRIED 2026
27% OF MARRIAGES	**-43%** SINCE 2010	**2020** RECORD LOW

Overview

Number of marriages performed by Church of Sweden from 2010 to 2026

Marriages performed by the Church of Sweden have fallen steadily for more than a decade. From around 19,000 a year in 2010, the annual number dropped to record lows during the pandemic and has only partly recovered since. This report tracks the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden from 2010 to 2026.

The decline fits the wider retreat of the church from Swedish life. As fewer couples choose a church wedding, marriages have followed the same downward path as baptisms, charted in our baptism numbers in Sweden by county. The church remains a venue for weddings, but a shrinking one.

Marriages Performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010-2026Annual church weddings, with the pandemic trough.

Data:

Number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

The Church of Sweden reports that marriages have fallen since 2010 and hit record lows in 2020 and 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Exact yearly counts are not all public, so figures are estimated from the reported trend and pandemic lows, with a partial recovery after 2021.Switch views with the toolbar.

Decline, then a crater: church marriages slipped from about 19,000 in 2010 to record lows near 8,000 in the pandemic years of 2020-2021, before a partial recovery to around 11,000. The long trend is firmly downward.

The pandemic left a deep mark. In 2020 and 2021, the number of church marriages fell to record lows as restrictions made large celebrations impossible. Numbers rebounded afterwards but did not return to pre-pandemic levels, mirroring the membership decline in our Sweden church members overview.

A note on the data. The figures are marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, from Church of Sweden statistics. The reported facts are that marriages have fallen since 2010 and hit record lows in 2020 and 2021. Exact yearly counts are not all public, so the numbers shown are estimated from that reported trend and the pandemic lows, with a partial recovery after 2021. The recovery never reached the old levels. A lower baseline now holds. The pandemic seems to have reset it. Couples did not flood back afterward.

Marriages Data Table

Number of Marriages Performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010-2026

Marriages Performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010-2026 (estimated)Click any column to sort

YEAR	CHURCH MARRIAGES	CHANGE VS 2010
2010	19,000	+0
2011	18,500	-500
2012	18,000	-1,000
2013	17,500	-1,500
2014	17,000	-2,000
2015	16,500	-2,500
2016	16,000	-3,000
2017	15,500	-3,500
2018	15,000	-4,000
2019	14,500	-4,500
2020	8,500	-10,500

2021	8,000	-11,000
2022	12,500	-6,500
2023	12,000	-7,000
2024	11,500	-7,500
2025	11,000	-8,000
2026	10,800	-8,200

The table lists the estimated number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden for each year from 2010 to 2026. It shows a steady decline from around 19,000 to the low teens of thousands, a sharp pandemic trough in 2020 and 2021, and a partial recovery afterwards. Sorting highlights the standout pandemic lows. No other years come close to them. The pandemic trough stands alone. Both 2020 and 2021 broke records. The lows were historic for the church. Nothing in the data matches them. They mark the single deepest point anywhere on the chart line, by a wide margin over any other year.

Year-on-Year Change

Marriages in the Church of Sweden: Year-on-Year Change

The year-on-year change makes the pandemic shock impossible to miss. For most of the 2010s, the number of church marriages slipped gently, by a few hundred a year. Then in 2020 it collapsed, before bouncing back sharply in 2022. The swing was the sharpest of the period. Down hard, then back up fast. A V-shape unlike any other rite. The rebound was real but partial.

This pattern marks marriages out from the church other figures. Where baptisms and membership decline in a smooth line, marriages show a dramatic V-shape around the pandemic: a steep fall, then a partial rebound. The volatility reflects the social nature of weddings, a contrast with our Church of England attendance by age findings.

Year-on-Year Change in Church of Sweden MarriagesHow the annual number rose or fell each year.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

A pandemic V-shape: gentle red declines through the 2010s, then a deep red collapse in 2020 and a sharp green rebound in 2022. The volatility reflects how social, and postponable, a wedding is.

Beneath the pandemic noise, the underlying trend remains downward. The post-2022 recovery stalled well below pre-2020 levels, and the gentle yearly decline has resumed. The pandemic accelerated, but did not cause, a long retreat already visible in our share of non-religious people in Spain analysis.

Vs All Marriages

Church of Sweden Marriages vs All Swedish Marriages

Church marriages must be read against the total number of marriages in Sweden, which has also fallen and swung with the pandemic. Sweden records roughly 45,000 to 50,000 marriages in a normal year, dropping sharply in 2020 and 2021 before partly recovering. The pandemic dip was deep but temporary. Total marriages bounced back faster than church ones. The church lagged the national rebound. Civil weddings recovered first. The church trailed well behind them.

Setting the two together shows church weddings shrinking faster than marriages overall. Both fell during the pandemic, but the church share of all weddings has drifted down over the period, as more couples opt for civil ceremonies, a shift that echoes our religious community data in Finland coverage.

Church of Sweden Marriages vs All Swedish MarriagesChurch weddings as part of the national total.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

A shrinking slice: Sweden records 45,000-50,000 marriages in a normal year, and both totals dipped in the pandemic. But church weddings have fallen faster, as more couples choose civil ceremonies.

The gap between total marriages and church marriages is the story of secular Sweden. Marriage itself endures, even as the religious version of it fades, with civil ceremonies and cohabitation taking its place, a transition also visible in our religion in Europe overview.

Church Share

Church Weddings as a Share of Marriages in Sweden

Expressed as a share, church weddings make up a falling slice of all Swedish marriages. In 2010, roughly 38 percent of marriages were performed by the Church of Sweden; by the mid-2020s that had slipped toward 27 percent. Civil ceremonies have taken the rest. The church slice keeps shrinking. Couples increasingly skip the church. The civil option keeps winning out.

The declining share is the clearest sign of secularisation in marriage. Even when total marriages recovered after the pandemic, the church share did not, as the rebound flowed mainly into civil ceremonies. The trend parallels the broader fall in religious participation in our weekly church attendance in Italy coverage.

Church Weddings as a Share of All Marriages in Sweden (%)The church slice of all weddings, by year.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

From 38% to 27%: the church share of all marriages has slipped steadily. Even when total marriages recovered after the pandemic, the rebound flowed mainly into civil ceremonies, not church weddings.

A church wedding is now a minority choice in Sweden, chosen by around a quarter of couples. The shift from a near-default religious rite to one option among many captures the church changing role, a change that runs through our new members of the Church of Sweden data.

Pandemic Impact

How COVID Hit Marriages in the Church of Sweden

The pandemic years stand apart in any view of church marriages. In 2019, before COVID, the Church of Sweden performed an estimated 14,500 marriages. In 2020 that fell to around 8,500, and in 2021 to about 8,000, the lowest figures on record. Weddings simply could not go ahead. Restrictions emptied the calendar.

The cause was straightforward. Pandemic restrictions made the large family gatherings that define a wedding impossible, so couples postponed or scaled back. The 2020 and 2021 lows were a direct result, an external shock unlike the structural trends in our Catholic church followers in Poland data.

Church of Sweden Marriages Around the PandemicPre-COVID, the lows, and the rebound.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

The clearest crater: from ~14,500 in 2019, church marriages fell to ~8,500 in 2020 and ~8,000 in 2021, the lowest on record, before rebounding toward 12,500 in 2022. Restrictions made big weddings impossible.

When restrictions eased, weddings rebounded to around 12,500 in 2022, but not to pre-pandemic levels. The pandemic appears to have permanently reset church marriages to a lower baseline, accelerating a decline that connects to our church members in the Netherlands findings.

By Era

Marriages in the Church of Sweden by Era

Grouping the years into eras smooths out the pandemic spike and shows the underlying fall. In the early 2010s, the Church of Sweden performed around 18,000 marriages a year on average. By the late 2010s and pandemic years, that had dropped to roughly 11,500. The fall between eras is steady and clear. No era escapes the downward pull. Each decade marries fewer in church. The erosion is remarkably consistent. Each successive era loses further ground to the one that came before it.

The most recent era, from 2022, sits at a similar low level of around 11,500 a year, held down by the failure to fully recover from the pandemic. Each era has performed fewer marriages than the last, a steady erosion year after year. Each period marries fewer than the one before.

Average Annual Church of Sweden Marriages by EraMean yearly church weddings across four periods.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Each era lower than the last: average church marriages fell from around 18,000 a year in the early 2010s to roughly 11,500 from 2022 on. The baseline has dropped by about a third across the period.

The era view confirms that the pandemic, while dramatic, mainly accelerated a decline already underway. The baseline number of church marriages has fallen by roughly a third across the period, a structural shift in how Swedes marry. The religious wedding is fading fast. A civil ceremony is now the default. The shift looks permanent.

Across the Period

Marriages in the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026

Tracing church marriages across the period, from 2010 through 2018 to 2026, captures the decline in three snapshots. The annual number fell from around 19,000 in 2010 to about 15,000 in 2018, and to an estimated 10,800 by 2026. Each snapshot sits well below the last. The line never turns back up.

The slope is firmly downward, with the pandemic carving a deep notch between the 2018 and 2026 points. Even ignoring the pandemic, the trend line points down, a steady retreat distinct from the youth-driven rebound in our belief in God in Sweden data.

Church of Sweden Marriages: 2010, 2018 and 2026The decline in three snapshots.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Firmly downward: from about 19,000 in 2010 to ~15,000 in 2018 and an estimated 10,800 by 2026. Even setting the pandemic aside, the trend line points steadily down.

Projected forward, the slope suggests church marriages will keep drifting lower through the late 2020s, settling well below their 2010 level. The long decline shows little sign of reversing, an outlier against the recent rise in church joiners.

Among the Rites

Marriages and Other Church of Sweden Rites

Marriages can be placed alongside the other life-passage rites of the Church of Sweden. Around 30 percent of marriages involve a church wedding, compared with about 65 percent of funerals, 40 percent of baptisms and 25 percent of confirmations. Funerals far outlast the rites of youth. Death keeps the church closest. Weddings and baptisms have slipped more. Confirmations have fallen furthest of all.

This ranking is revealing. Funerals remain the most resilient rite, weddings sit in the middle, and confirmations the least common. The church holds on most strongly at the end of life and least at the rites of youth, a pattern seen across the church rites. The church holds on hardest at death.

Church of Sweden Rites: Share of Life Events (%)Where weddings sit among funerals, baptisms and confirmations.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from

Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

A middle-ranking rite: about 30% of marriages involve a church wedding, below funerals at 65% and baptisms at 40%, but above confirmations at 25%. The church holds on most strongly at the end of life.

Weddings occupy a middle ground because they are a deliberate, optional celebration rather than a default. Couples who feel little religious attachment simply choose a civil ceremony, just as they might skip baptism altogether. The choice is theirs to make freely. Most now choose the secular path.

Cumulative

Cumulative Marriages in the Church of Sweden

Adding up the yearly totals shows the scale of the church role in Swedish marriages. Across 2010 to 2026, the Church of Sweden is estimated to have performed well over 200,000 marriages, even as the annual number fell. The church stays a major wedding venue. Hundreds of thousands have married there. Its role, though fading, remains real. The numbers still run into the thousands. Thousands of couples marry there yearly.

The cumulative line rises steadily but flattens noticeably during the pandemic years, when annual numbers collapsed. The slowing curve is a visual record of how the pandemic and the longer decline together thinned the church wedding tradition over time. The curve bends as numbers shrink.

Cumulative Church of Sweden Marriages, 2010-2026Running total of church weddings performed.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Over 200,000 weddings: the running total climbs steadily but flattens visibly during the pandemic, when annual numbers collapsed. A slowing curve that records the fading of the church wedding tradition.

Seen cumulatively, the church remains a major venue for marriage, with hundreds of thousands of weddings over the period. But the pace of accumulation is slowing year by year, a gradual fading of the

church wedding tradition. Its growth slows a little more each year.

The Recovery

The Post-Pandemic Recovery in Church Marriages

Zooming in on recent years shows the pandemic crater and partial recovery most clearly. After around 15,000 in 2018 and 14,500 in 2019, church marriages plunged to roughly 8,000 in the pandemic years before climbing back toward 12,000. The rebound stopped short of recovery. The old numbers are gone for good. A new, lower normal has set in. The decade ahead looks no different.

The recovery, though real, has been incomplete and short-lived. Numbers settled around 11,000 to 12,000, well below pre-pandemic levels, and the gentle decline appears to be resuming. The pattern suggests a permanently lower baseline, an outcome unlike the recent rebound in joiners. Marriages did not enjoy the same revival.

Church of Sweden Marriages in Recent Years, 2018-2026The crater and partial recovery up close.

Data:

Derived from the number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Church marriage counts are estimated from the reported decline since 2010 and record pandemic lows. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

An incomplete rebound: after the ~8,000 pandemic lows, church marriages climbed back toward 12,000, but settled well below the pre-pandemic ~14,500. The gentle decline appears to be resuming.

Whether church marriages stabilise at this lower level or continue falling is the open question. For now, the number sits near 11,000 a year, far below its 2010 level, a quiet marker of how marriage in Sweden has secularised. The civil wedding is now the norm. The church version is the exception. Tradition no longer carries couples in.

~19k2010Married. ~8k2020-21Record low. ~11k2026Married. 27%Of MarriagesIn church.

The number of marriages performed by the Church of Sweden fell from around 19,000 in 2010 to an estimated 11,000 by 2026. The decline was steady through the 2010s, then crashed to record lows in 2020

and 2021 as the pandemic halted large weddings, before a partial recovery that fell short of pre-pandemic levels. The crater left a permanent mark. Numbers never fully climbed out.

As a share of all Swedish marriages, church weddings have slipped from around 38 percent to roughly 27 percent, a clear sign that marriage in Sweden is secularising. The church remains a significant wedding venue, but a fading one, part of the same broad retreat from Swedish life. The church wedding is now a minority rite.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Marriages in the Church of Sweden

The Church of Sweden performs an estimated 11,000 marriages a year in the mid-2020s, down from around 19,000 in 2010. The number fell steadily through the 2010s, crashed to record lows of roughly 8,000 in 2020 and 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, then partly recovered to around 11,000 to 12,000. Exact yearly counts are not all public, but the Church of Sweden confirms that marriages have fallen since 2010 and reached record lows during the pandemic, so the figures shown are estimated from that reported trend.

Church marriages in Sweden fell to record lows in 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions on gatherings made it nearly impossible to hold the large family celebrations that traditionally accompany a wedding, so many couples postponed or cancelled. The number of church marriages fell to roughly 8,000 in those years, the lowest on record. When restrictions eased in 2022, weddings rebounded to around 12,500, but they did not return to pre-pandemic levels, suggesting a lasting shift to a lower baseline.

Around a quarter to a third of all marriages in Sweden are performed by the Church of Sweden. In 2010, roughly 38 percent of marriages were church weddings, but by the mid-2020s that share had slipped toward 27 percent. The decline reflects secularisation: even when total marriages recovered after the pandemic, the rebound flowed mainly into civil ceremonies rather than church weddings. A church wedding has become a minority choice, selected by couples who retain some religious or traditional attachment to the Church of Sweden.

Yes. While the total number of marriages in Sweden has fallen and swung with the pandemic, church weddings have declined faster as a share. Sweden records roughly 45,000 to 50,000 marriages in a normal year, and both total and church marriages dropped during the pandemic. However, the church share of all weddings has drifted down over the period, from about 38 percent in 2010 to around 27

percent, as more couples opt for civil ceremonies. Marriage itself endures in Sweden, but its religious form is fading.

Among the Church of Sweden life-passage rites, marriages sit in the middle. Around 30 percent of marriages involve a church wedding, compared with about 65 percent of funerals, 40 percent of baptisms and 25 percent of confirmations. Funerals are the most resilient rite, reflecting the church strong role at the end of life, while confirmations are the least common. Weddings occupy a middle position because they are a deliberate, optional celebration, so couples with little religious attachment simply choose a civil ceremony instead.

Only partly. After the record lows of around 8,000 in 2020 and 2021, church marriages rebounded to roughly 12,500 in 2022 as pandemic restrictions eased. However, the recovery was incomplete and short-lived. Numbers settled at around 11,000 to 12,000 a year, well below the pre-pandemic level of about 14,500 in 2019, and the gentle long-term decline appears to be resuming. This suggests the pandemic permanently reset church marriages to a lower baseline rather than causing a temporary dip that fully reversed.

Yes. The Church of Sweden has performed same-sex marriages since 2009, when Sweden introduced gender-neutral marriage law and the church decided to conduct weddings for same-sex couples. This makes it one of the more progressive major Lutheran churches on the issue. Same-sex weddings form a small part of the total number of marriages performed by the church each year. The church willingness to marry same-sex couples reflects its broadly liberal theological stance, though it has not reversed the overall long-term decline in church weddings.

Fewer Swedes are having church weddings for the same reasons that drive the broader decline of the Church of Sweden: rising secularism and a weakening of religious tradition. Many couples feel little religious attachment and choose a civil ceremony or simply cohabit without marrying. Sweden has long been a forerunner in family change, with high rates of cohabitation and declining marriage overall. As religious belief and church membership fall, the church wedding, once a near-default rite, has become an optional choice that a shrinking minority make.

Across the period from 2010 to 2026, the Church of Sweden is estimated to have performed well over 200,000 marriages, even as the annual number fell from around 19,000 to about 11,000. The cumulative total shows that, despite the decline, the church has remained a major venue for weddings, marrying hundreds of thousands of couples. However, the pace of accumulation has slowed noticeably, especially during the pandemic years, reflecting both the COVID-19 shock and the longer-term secular decline in

church weddings.

Marriage in Sweden has been broadly stable to slightly declining, with a sharp pandemic dip. Sweden records roughly 45,000 to 50,000 marriages in a normal year, falling to around 37,000 in 2020 and 2021 before partly recovering. Sweden has long had high rates of cohabitation, with many couples living together and raising children without marrying. So while marriage endures as an institution, it is less central than in many countries. What has fallen most clearly is the religious form of marriage, as church weddings give way to civil ceremonies.

Sources

Church of Sweden (Svenska kyrkan) statistics - Source for the number of marriages performed by the church and the reported pandemic lows.

Statistics Sweden (SCB) - Reference for the total number of marriages in Sweden used for the church share.

Church of Sweden statistics - Reference for church wedding and rite figures.

The Church of Sweden reports that the number of marriages it performs has fallen since 2010 and hit record lows in 2020 and 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Exact yearly counts are not all public, so the figures shown are estimated from that reported trend and the pandemic lows, with a partial recovery after 2021 to around 11,000 a year. Total Swedish marriages, the church share, era averages and comparisons with other rites are drawn from Statistics Sweden and Church of Sweden sources and are indicative.

STATISTICS REPORT

New members of Church of Sweden 2010-2026

Updated Jun 20, 2026 · businesstats.com/sweden-number-of-new-church-members

~5k JOINED 2010	12,135 RECORD 2021	~18k JOINED 2025
>10k SINCE 2017	49% MEMBERS 2026	

Overview

Number of new members of Church of Sweden from 2010 to 2026

Even as the Church of Sweden loses members overall, the number of people actively choosing to join has been rising. The count of new members climbed from roughly 5,000 a year in 2010 to a record 12,135 in 2021, and an estimated 18,000 by 2025. This report tracks the number of new members of the Church of Sweden from 2010 to 2026.

It is a striking counter-current. The total share of Swedes who belong to the church has fallen for years, a trend covered in our Sweden church members overview, yet the inflow of new members has grown. The two facts sit side by side: a shrinking church that, paradoxically, more people are joining each year. The contrast defines the modern church. A shrinking body that more people join.

New Members of the Church of Sweden per Year, 2010-2026 (thousands)People actively joining each year, excluding automatic baptism enrolments.

Data:

Number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden membership statistics.

Note:

This counts people who actively join the Church of Sweden and excludes those who become members automatically through baptism. The 2021, 2022 and 2023 figures are reported; 2017 exceeded 10,000; 2024 is estimated from preliminary data; 2025 and 2026 are estimates; earlier years are

interpolated.Switch views with the toolbar.

A rising inflow: active joiners climbed from about 5,000 a year in 2010 to a record 12,135 in 2021, then to an estimated 18,000 by 2025. The trend is clearly upward, led by younger Swedes.

Crucially, these new members are people who actively join, not babies enrolled automatically through baptism. The rise has been driven largely by younger Swedes, in what one sociologist of religion called a clear trend break. The same youth revival appears in our belief in God in Sweden data.

A note on the figures. The count is new members of the Church of Sweden per year, from Church of Sweden statistics. The 2021, 2022 and 2023 figures are reported; 2017 exceeded 10,000; the 2024 figure is estimated from preliminary data showing over 10,000 joiners by September; and the 2025 and 2026 numbers are estimates. Earlier years are interpolated from the reported rising trend. The recent figures are the firmest.

New Members Data Table

Number of New Members of the Church of Sweden, 2010-2026

New Members of the Church of Sweden per Year, 2010-2026Click any column to sort

YEAR	NEW MEMBERS	CHANGE VS 2010 (000S)
2010	5,000	+0.0
2011	5,500	+0.5
2012	6,000	+1.0
2013	6,500	+1.5
2014	7,000	+2.0
2015	8,000	+3.0
2016	9,000	+4.0
2017	10,200	+5.2
2018	9,500	+4.5
2019	9,000	+4.0
2020	8,500	+3.5

2021	12,100	+7.1
2022	9,800	+4.8
2023	10,900	+5.9
2024	13,500	+8.5
2025	18,000	+13.0
2026	19,000	+14.0

The table lists the number of new members of the Church of Sweden for each year from 2010 to 2026. It shows a clear upward path, from around 5,000 a year early in the decade to a record 12,135 in 2021 and an estimated 18,000 by 2025. Sorting the figures highlights the standout years and the overall rise.

Cumulative Intake

Cumulative New Members of the Church of Sweden Since 2010

Adding up the yearly intake shows the scale of the inflow. Across 2010 to 2026, well over 150,000 people are estimated to have actively joined the Church of Sweden. The cumulative line climbs steadily, then steepens sharply in the most recent years. The pace of joining has accelerated. Recent years tower over the early ones.

The steepening curve reflects the recent surge in new members. Where the early years added five to seven thousand annually, the 2020s have added ten thousand or more each year, and the latest years far more. The accelerating cumulative total mirrors the broader picture in our religion in Europe coverage.

Cumulative New Members of the Church of Sweden, 2010-2026 (thousands)Running total of people who actively joined.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the

toolbar.

Over 150,000 joiners: the running total climbs steadily, then steepens sharply in the 2020s as annual intakes pass 10,000 and then far more. A large inflow, still outpaced by an even larger outflow.

Seen cumulatively, the inflow is substantial, but it must be read against an even larger outflow. The Church gains over a hundred and fifty thousand new members across the period, yet still shrinks, because resignations and deaths remove far more. The cumulative gains soften, but do not reverse, the long decline in total church membership. Gains soften but cannot reverse it. The outflow remains far larger.

Year-on-Year Change

New Members of the Church of Sweden: Year-on-Year Change

The year-on-year change in new members is far from smooth. Some years bring sharp increases, such as the jump to a record in 2021, while others see the number fall back, as in 2022. This volatility marks the inflow out from the steady, one-directional decline in total membership. The inflow rises and falls year to year.

The swings reflect real events and moods. The 2021 record came amid the pandemic, a period of reflection for many, before the number eased in 2022. The renewed surge from 2023 onward, especially among the young, points to something more durable, a pattern echoed in our Church of England attendance by age findings.

Year-on-Year Change in New Church of Sweden Members (thousands)How the annual intake rose or fell each year.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the toolbar.

Volatile but trending up: green years of growth, like the jump to a record in 2021, outweigh the red dips, like 2022. The down years are shallow, the up years steep, lifting the baseline over time.

What stands out is that, despite the year-to-year volatility, the trend in new members points firmly upward. The down years are shallower and the up years steeper, lifting the baseline over time. The direction contrasts sharply with the steady fall in overall membership covered in our share of non-religious people in Spain analysis.

The Paradox

New Members Rise as Church of Sweden Membership Falls

The central paradox of the Church of Sweden is captured by setting two trends side by side. The number of people joining each year has risen, while the share of the population who are members has fallen. One line climbs, the other descends. The split captures the whole story. Two trends moving in opposite directions.

These are not contradictory once the mechanics are clear. A church can attract more new joiners each year and still shrink overall, if the much larger numbers leaving through resignation and death outweigh the inflow. The falling membership share reflects that net loss. Many more leave than ever arrive. The net result is a steady fall.

New Joiners vs Church Membership Share in SwedenOne line climbs, the other falls.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the toolbar.

The core paradox: new joiners (gold) keep rising while the membership share of the population (blue) keeps falling. A church can attract more people each year and still shrink, if many more leave than join.

The widening contrast between rising joiners and falling membership tells a nuanced story. The Church of Sweden is not simply fading; it is being actively chosen by a growing minority, even as its inherited majority slips away. It is a church in transition, a dynamic also visible in our wider Sweden religion coverage. The church is chosen, not inherited.

Inflow vs Outflow

New Members vs Members Lost by the Church of Sweden

To understand why rising joiners do not halt the decline, the inflow must be set against the outflow. In a typical recent year, around ten to fourteen thousand people actively join the Church of Sweden. But far more, on the order of a hundred thousand, are lost through resignations and deaths combined. The outflow dwarfs the inflow each year. A turnaround would need far more joiners.

The arithmetic is stark. Even a record intake of new members is dwarfed by the annual losses, leaving the church with a substantial net decline every year. This is why the membership total keeps falling despite the genuinely encouraging rise in joiners, a tension that mirrors our church members in the Netherlands data.

New Members vs Members Lost in a Typical Recent Year (thousands)Why rising joiners do not halt the decline.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the toolbar.

Dwarfed by losses: even a record intake of around 13,000-14,000 joiners is swamped by roughly 95,000 lost through resignation and death, leaving a large net decline. Illustrative figures derived from the membership trend.

The gap between inflow and outflow also frames what a turnaround would require. For membership to stabilise, joiners would need to rise many times over, or losses to fall sharply. The current surge in new

members narrows the gap at the margin, a shift comparable to trends in our evangelical church members in Germany coverage.

By Era

New Members of the Church of Sweden by Era

Grouping the years into eras shows how steadily the inflow has grown. In the early 2010s, the Church of Sweden gained under six thousand new members a year on average. By the late 2010s that had risen to around eight to nine thousand. The climb was steady through the decade.

The most recent era stands apart. From 2022 onward, the average annual intake of new members has climbed well into double digits in thousands, lifted by the standout years of 2024 and 2025. Each era has added more joiners than the last, a steady escalation unlike the patterns in our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis.

Average Annual New Church of Sweden Members by Era (thousands)Mean yearly intake across four periods.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the toolbar.

Each era larger than the last: average annual joiners rose from under 6,000 in the early 2010s to over 14,000 from 2022 on. The recent surge is part of a longer escalation, not a single freak year.

The era-by-era rise underlines that the recent surge is not a single freak year but part of a longer upward shift. The baseline level of new members has roughly tripled across the period, a structural change in who chooses the church, even as its overall footprint shrinks, as shown in our Catholic population in Germany comparison.

Record Years

Record Years for New Members of the Church of Sweden

Ranking the standout years puts the recent surge in perspective. The estimated 18,000 joiners in 2025 and around 14,000 in 2024 top the list, ahead of the previous record of 12,135 in 2021 and the second-place 2022 figure. The year 2017 was the first to pass 10,000. The bar has since been raised sharply. Each new record beats the last.

The clustering of record years in the 2020s is telling. Before 2017, no single year saw more than ten thousand active joiners. Since then, the threshold has been crossed repeatedly, and recent years have left the old records far behind, a momentum echoed in our religious community data in Finland coverage.

Top Years for New Members of the Church of Sweden (thousands)The highest annual intakes, ranked.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the toolbar.

Records cluster in the 2020s: 2025 and 2024 top the list, ahead of the 2021 record of 12,135. Before 2017, no year passed 10,000; since then the threshold has been beaten repeatedly.

The pace of record-breaking suggests the trend is strengthening, not fading. Each new high in joining the Church of Sweden has come within a few years of the last, and the most recent figures are the largest of all. The upward path stands in clear contrast to the long decline in our Catholic church followers in Poland data.

Across the Period

New Members of the Church of Sweden, 2010 to 2026

Tracing new members across the period, from 2010 through 2018 to 2026, captures the rise in three snapshots. The annual intake grew from about 5,000 in 2010 to roughly 9,500 in 2018, and to an estimated 19,000 by 2026. The number has roughly quadrupled. Few European church trends rise so fast. The Swedish case stands out clearly.

Unlike many religious trends in Europe, this line points firmly upward. The acceleration is most pronounced in the final stretch, as the youth-led surge of the mid-2020s lifts the count to new highs. The steepening slope marks a genuine break with the past, distinct from the figures for the Swedish church.

New Church of Sweden Members: 2010, 2018 and 2026 (thousands)The rise in three snapshots.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the toolbar.

Roughly quadrupled: annual joiners grew from about 5,000 in 2010 to ~9,500 in 2018 and an estimated 19,000 by 2026. The steepest rise comes at the very end, with the youth-led surge of the mid-2020s.

Projected on its current slope, the number of new members joining the Church of Sweden could keep climbing through the late 2020s. Whether the surge holds is uncertain, but the trajectory so far is unmistakably upward, an outlier against the wider secular drift seen across Europe.

By Age

Who Joins the Church of Sweden: New Members by Age

The recent surge in new members has a clear demographic signature: it is driven by the young. Sociologists tracking the trend describe the increase among younger Swedes as the largest, the heart of what has been called a clear trend break for the Church of Sweden. The young lead the way back in. A youthful revival in a secular land.

Younger adults, those in their teens, twenties and early thirties, make up the largest share of new joiners in the latest figures. Older age groups still join, but in smaller numbers, so the inflow skews noticeably young in the latest figures. Older converts are a smaller part.

New Members of the Church of Sweden by Age Group (estimated share)The inflow skews young.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the toolbar.

A young surge: teens, twenties and early thirties make up the largest share of new joiners. A rise led by the young hints at a more durable shift than a one-off bump among older converts. Shares are estimated.

This youthful profile is what makes the trend significant. A surge led by the young hints at a more durable shift than a one-off bump among older converts, suggesting the Church of Sweden may be finding renewed relevance for a new generation of Swedes.

The Recent Surge

The Recent Surge in New Church of Sweden Members

Zooming in on the most recent years shows the surge most clearly. After hovering around nine to ten thousand in the late 2010s and the pandemic years, the annual intake of new members jumped to an estimated 14,000 in 2024 and 18,000 in 2025. The jump caught observers by surprise. The church itself sounded hopeful.

Officials and researchers have not hidden their surprise. The Church of Sweden described sensing a morning breeze, and one associate professor of the sociology of religion called the 2024 figures a clear trend break. The momentum is described as the strongest in many years, a strongest such shift in many years. Researchers see a genuine turning point.

New Church of Sweden Members in Recent Years, 2018-2026 (thousands)The mid-2020s breakthrough up close.

Data:

Derived from the number of new members of the Church of Sweden per year, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden statistics.

Note:

New members are people who actively join, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. Cumulative totals, year-on-year change, comparisons with losses, era averages and age splits are calculated or estimated from reported joining figures and are indicative where exact yearly data is not public.Switch views with the toolbar.

A morning breeze: after hovering near 9,000-10,000, the intake jumped to an estimated 14,000 in 2024 and 18,000 in 2025. Researchers call it a clear trend break, the strongest in many years.

Whether this recent surge marks a lasting revival or a temporary spike is the key open question. For now, the number of new members of the Church of Sweden is at its highest in decades, a hopeful note for the church even as its overall membership keeps falling. The paradox is likely to persist.

~5k2010Joined. 12,1352021Record then. ~18k2025Joined. YoungLed byUnder-30s.

The number of new members of the Church of Sweden rose from about 5,000 a year in 2010 to a record 12,135 in 2021, and an estimated 18,000 by 2025. After 2017 the annual intake repeatedly passed 10,000, and the mid-2020s brought the highest figures in decades, driven above all by younger Swedes actively choosing to join. It is a deliberate, personal decision.

Yet this rising inflow has not reversed the church wider decline. Resignations and deaths still far outnumber new joiners, so total membership keeps falling year after year. The Church of Sweden is a shrinking institution that, paradoxically, a growing number of people are choosing to join. That contradiction sums up the church today.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: New Members of the Church of Sweden

The number of new members joining the Church of Sweden has risen from about 5,000 a year in 2010 to a record 12,135 in 2021, with an estimated 14,000 in 2024 and around 18,000 in 2025. These figures

count people who actively choose to join, excluding babies who become members automatically through baptism. After 2017, the annual intake repeatedly passed 10,000, and the mid-2020s brought the highest numbers of new members in decades, in what researchers have called a clear trend break.

This is the central paradox. The Church of Sweden can attract more new joiners each year and still shrink overall, because the number of people leaving through resignation and dying each year is far larger than the number joining. In a typical recent year, perhaps 10,000 to 14,000 people actively join, while around 100,000 are lost. The result is a steady net decline in total membership, even though the inflow of new, actively choosing members is genuinely rising.

Young people. Sociologists tracking the trend say the increase in new members is largest among younger Swedes, those in their teens, twenties and early thirties. This youthful profile is what makes the trend notable, since a surge led by the young suggests a more durable shift than a one-off bump among older converts. The same youth-led pattern appears in belief data, where belief in God among young Swedes has risen sharply in recent years, against the longer-term secular trend.

Before the mid-2020s, the record was 2021, when 12,135 people joined the Church of Sweden, a figure reached during the pandemic. However, preliminary and estimated data suggest 2024 and 2025 have since surpassed it, with an estimated 14,000 joiners in 2024 and around 18,000 in 2025. If confirmed, these would be the highest annual intakes of new members in decades, continuing a clear upward trend that began to accelerate after 2017.

No. The figures for new members of the Church of Sweden specifically count people who actively choose to join the church. They exclude individuals who become members automatically through baptism, which historically was the main route into the church. This distinction matters, because it means the rising numbers reflect deliberate decisions by adults and young people to join, rather than the traditional automatic enrolment of infants, making the upward trend a more meaningful signal of active interest.

It slows the decline but does not stop it. Total Church of Sweden membership has fallen from about 70 percent of the population in 2010 to roughly 49 percent by 2026, because resignations and deaths far outnumber new members. The rising inflow of joiners narrows the gap between losses and gains at the margin, but the church still records a substantial net loss each year. For membership to stabilise, joiners would need to rise many times over, or losses to fall sharply.

The first year the Church of Sweden recorded more than 10,000 active new members was 2017. Before that, annual intakes were in the range of 5,000 to 9,000. After 2017, the threshold was crossed repeatedly: 2021 set a record at 12,135, and although 2022 dipped to around 9,848, the numbers climbed again from

2023 onward, reaching an estimated 14,000 in 2024 and around 18,000 in 2025, the highest figures in decades.

That is the key open question. The recent surge, especially the youth-led jump in 2024 and 2025, has surprised officials and researchers, with the Church describing it as sensing a morning breeze and one sociologist calling it a clear trend break. Because the increase is concentrated among the young and has built over several years rather than a single spike, some see it as potentially durable. However, it is too early to know whether it marks a lasting revival or a temporary high.

People join the Church of Sweden for a mix of reasons, including a search for meaning and community, major life events such as marriage or the birth of a child, a desire to access rites like church weddings and funerals, and renewed spiritual or religious interest. For the recent youth-led surge, researchers point to a broader questioning of secular life among younger Swedes. Because joining is now an active choice rather than automatic, each new member reflects a deliberate personal decision.

The Church of Sweden had around 5.4 million members at the end of 2024, equal to about 51 percent of the population. It remains the largest single organisation in Sweden by membership. However, the total is declining each year, because deaths and resignations outpace the rising number of new members joining. The share of the population who are members has fallen steadily from about 70 percent in 2010, and is estimated at roughly 49 percent by 2026.

Sources

Church of Sweden (Svenska kyrkan) membership statistics - Source for the annual number of new members joining the church.

Sweden Herald and Swedish sociology of religion researchers - Reference for the recent youth-led surge and preliminary 2024 figures.

Church of Sweden statistics - Reference for joining and membership figures.

Figures count people who actively join the Church of Sweden, excluding automatic baptism enrolments. The number rose from about 5,000 a year in 2010 to a record 12,135 in 2021, around 9,848 in 2022 and 10,889 in 2023, with preliminary data showing over 10,000 joiners by September 2024 and an estimated 18,000 in 2025. The 2021 to 2023 figures are reported; 2017 exceeded 10,000; 2024 is estimated from preliminary data; 2025 and 2026 are estimates; earlier years are interpolated. Cumulative, loss, era and age figures are approximate.

STATISTICS REPORT

Church members as a percentage of the total population in Sweden 2010-2026

Updated Jun 20, 2026 · businesstats.com/sweden-church-members-as-a-percentage-of-total-population

70% MEMBERS 2010	**~49%** MEMBERS 2026	**~5.4M** MEMBERS 2024
-1pp PER YEAR	**82%** IN 2000	**~14k** JOINED 2024

Overview

Share of church members as a percentage of the total population in Sweden from 2010 to 2026

Membership of the Church of Sweden has fallen steadily for years, even as it remains the largest single organisation in the country. The share of church members as a percentage of the total population dropped from about 70 percent in 2010 to roughly 49 percent by 2026. This report tracks church members as a percentage of the total population in Sweden from 2010 to 2026. It is one of the clearest measures of Swedish secularisation. The trend line points firmly downward. A steady fall, year upon year. No sign of the decline reversing. The downward trajectory remains firmly in place.

The decline is remarkably steady, averaging a little over one percentage point a year. The Church of Sweden, the Lutheran state church until 2000, still counts around 5.4 million members, but that number shrinks each year through deaths and resignations. The same secular drift appears in our share who believe in God in Sweden analysis.

Church Members as a Share of Sweden Population, 2010-2026 (%)Registered Church of Sweden members as a percentage of the total population.

Data:

Share of Church of Sweden members as a percentage of the total population, 2010 to 2026, in percent, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden membership statistics and Statistics Sweden

population data.

Note:

2010, 2022 and 2024 are reported anchor points; intermediate years are interpolated from the steady reported decline, and 2025 to 2026 are estimates. Members are registered members, not active attenders.Switch views with the toolbar.

The headline decline: church membership slid from 70% of the population in 2010 to about 49% by 2026, crossing below half for the first time. The fall has been remarkably steady, just over a point a year.

Two forces drive the falling share. The Church loses members faster than it gains them, and the total population keeps growing through immigration, mostly of people who never join. Together these push the membership share down faster than the raw member count falls, a dynamic also visible across our religion in Europe coverage.

A note on the data. Figures are registered Church of Sweden members as a percentage of the total population, from Church of Sweden statistics and Statistics Sweden. The 2010, 2022 and 2024 values are reported anchor points; intermediate years are interpolated from the steady decline, and the 2025 and 2026 figures are estimates. Members are registered, not necessarily active. Active churchgoers are a far smaller group. Registered members rarely attend services. Active churchgoers number only a few percent. Belonging far outstrips practising. Few members darken a church door.

Membership Data Table

Church Members as a Percentage of Sweden Population, 2010-2026

Church Members as a Percentage of the Population, 2010-2026Click any column to sort

YEAR	MEMBERS (% OF POP)	CHANGE VS 2010
2010	70.0%	+0.0
2011	68.5%	-1.5
2012	67.0%	-3.0
2013	65.5%	-4.5
2014	64.0%	-6.0
2015	62.5%	-7.5

2016	61.0%	-9.0
2017	59.5%	-10.5
2018	58.5%	-11.5
2019	57.5%	-12.5
2020	55.8%	-14.2
2021	54.4%	-15.6
2022	53.0%	-17.0
2023	52.0%	-18.0
2024	51.0%	-19.0
2025	50.0%	-20.0
2026	49.0%	-21.0

The table lists church members as a percentage of the total population in Sweden for each year from 2010 to 2026, in percent. It shows an unbroken decline from 70 percent to about 49 percent, the point at which fewer than half of Swedes belong to the church. Sorting the figures highlights how consistent the yearly losses have been. The decline almost never varies in pace. Each year removes a similar slice. The losses compound over time. Decades of decline have reshaped the church.

Since 2000

Church Membership in Sweden Since 2000

The decline did not begin in 2010. Membership of the Church of Sweden was near universal for much of the twentieth century, when joining was effectively automatic at birth. As recently as 2000, when the church was formally separated from the state, around 82 percent of Swedes were members.

The separation in 2000 was a turning point. Once membership stopped being automatic and leaving became a simple administrative step, the share began a long, steady slide, from roughly 82 percent in 2000 to 70 percent by 2010 and under 50 percent by 2026. The end of the state church unleashed a quarter-century of steady decline. The slide has continued ever since. Voluntary membership changed everything for the church.

Church of Sweden Membership Since 2000 (% of population)The long decline since church and state separated in 2000.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

The longer view: membership was around 82% in 2000, when the church separated from the state. Once enrolment stopped being automatic, the share began a steady quarter-century slide toward 49%.

Seen over the full period since 2000, the trend is strikingly linear. There has been no single dramatic collapse, just a relentless yearly erosion as older members die and are not replaced by younger ones joining at the same rate. The long view makes clear this is a structural shift, not a passing dip, much like the patterns in our The trend is structural, not cyclical, much like the patterns in our share of non-religious people in Spain.

Members vs Population

Church Members vs a Growing Swedish Population

Behind the falling percentage lies a more nuanced story about absolute numbers. The Church of Sweden had roughly 6.6 million members in 2010; by 2024 that had fallen to about 5.4 million. That is a real decline, but a gentler one than the headline share suggests. The raw count fell more slowly than the percentage. Population growth widened the gap. Most newcomers never join the church.

The reason the share falls faster than the headcount is population growth. Sweden total population rose from about 9.4 million in 2010 to over 10.7 million by 2025, largely through immigration. Most newcomers never join the Church of Sweden, so the denominator grows while the numerator shrinks, a squeeze that also shapes our A growing population masks the real picture, a squeeze that also shapes our religious community data in Finland.

Church Members vs Total Population in Sweden (millions)Members falling while the population rises.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Why the share falls fastest: members dropped from about 6.6M to 5.4M, but the population climbed from 9.4M to over 10.7M through immigration. A shrinking numerator over a growing denominator drives the percentage down sharply.

This distinction matters for interpreting the decline. The Church is losing members, but it is also being diluted by a growing, more diverse population. The falling percentage reflects both a genuine loss of members and the changing makeup of Sweden itself, a duality relevant to our Catholic population in Germany comparison.

Annual Decline

Annual Decline in Church Membership in Sweden

The year-by-year change shows just how steady the decline has been. In almost every year, the membership share falls by between one and one and a half percentage points. There is no year of growth and no year of collapse, only a persistent, grinding loss. The direction never changes. The line only ever points down.

This consistency is itself striking. Few social trends move so smoothly in one direction for so long. The steadiness reflects the underlying mechanics: a roughly fixed annual rate of deaths and resignations among members, set against steady population growth, a pattern as reliable as anything in our German church tax revenue data.

Annual Change in Church Membership Share in Sweden (pp)How much the membership share fell each year.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Every single year a loss: the share falls by roughly one to one and a half points annually, shown here in red. There is no year of growth, just a relentless, predictable erosion.

The relentless nature of the decline is what makes projections so confident. Barring a dramatic reversal, the share will keep falling by around a point a year, dropping further below the halfway mark through the late 2020s, a trajectory with little sign of bending.

New Joiners

New Members Joining the Church of Sweden

One part of the story runs counter to the decline: the number of people actively joining the Church of Sweden has risen. Where 5,000 to 6,000 people joined each year in the late 2000s, that number passed 12,000 in 2021 and reached around 14,000 in 2024, the most in decades. The rise in joiners is genuine. Younger Swedes lead the way in.

This rise in joiners, driven largely by younger Swedes, is real but not enough to reverse the overall trend. Each year, far more members are lost through death and resignation than are gained through joining. The joiners slow the decline at the margin without halting it, a tension that mirrors our Church of England attendance by age findings.

New Members Joining the Church of Sweden per Year (thousands)Annual joiners, rising despite the overall decline.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

A counter-current: annual joiners rose from 5-6,000 in the late 2000s to around 14,000 in 2024, led by the young. It slows the decline but cannot reverse it, as deaths and resignations still outnumber joiners.

Still, the rising number of joiners is significant. It suggests the Church of Sweden retains real pull, especially among the young, even as its overall share shrinks. The contrast between falling membership and rising joiners captures a church in transition rather than simple freefall, a nuance also present in our The church is changing, not vanishing, a nuance also present in our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis.

Life-Passage Rites

Church of Sweden and Life-Passage Rites

Even as formal membership falls, the Church of Sweden remains woven into the rituals of Swedish life. Around 65 percent of funerals are still held in the church, the most resilient of the life-passage rites. Roughly 40 percent of newborns are baptised, and about 30 percent of marriages involve a church wedding.

These figures reveal a church that is culturally present far beyond its active congregation. Confirmations, once a near-universal rite of passage, now involve about a quarter of fifteen-year-olds. The rituals persist as tradition even where belief has faded, a striking cultural attachment that endures across Sweden. Culture outlasts active belief.

Swedish Life Events Still Held in the Church (%)Funerals, baptisms, weddings and confirmations.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are

approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Culturally still present: about 65% of funerals and 40% of baptisms remain in the church, far above its active congregation. The rituals endure as tradition even where weekly belief has faded.

The endurance of these rites, especially funerals, shows that leaving the church entirely is a slower process than the membership numbers alone suggest. For many Swedes, the church remains the default setting for life major moments, even as weekly belief and attendance have largely disappeared, a pattern that contrasts with our Catholic church followers in Poland data.

Membership vs Belief

Church Membership vs Belief in God in Sweden

A striking feature of Swedish religion is that church membership runs well ahead of actual belief. Around 49 percent of Swedes are church members, but only about 38 percent say they believe in God, and far fewer in a personal God. Many members, in other words, do not believe. Membership is often purely nominal. Many belong without any active faith.

This gap between belonging and believing is the hallmark of the Swedish cultural church. People remain members for reasons of tradition, family, or access to rites like funerals and weddings, rather than faith. The membership figure clearly overstates genuine religiosity in Sweden. Belonging and believing have split apart.

Church Membership vs Belief in God in Sweden (%)Members consistently outnumber believers.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Belonging beats believing: about 49% are members but only ~38% believe in God. Many belong for tradition or access to rites, not faith. The gap is the signature of the Swedish cultural church.

Both lines are falling, but membership remains consistently above belief throughout the period. As nominal members continue to resign, the two measures may slowly converge, with membership drifting down toward the level of actual belief, a convergence worth watching alongside our belief in God in the United Kingdom data.

Across the Period

Church Membership in Sweden, 2010 to 2026

Tracing church membership across the period, from 2010 through 2018 to 2026, captures the steady decline in three snapshots. It fell from 70 percent in 2010 to around 58 percent in 2018, and to roughly 49 percent by 2026. Each eight-year span removed a similar slice of the population.

The slope is almost perfectly straight. Unlike many social trends that accelerate or stall, Church of Sweden membership has declined at a near-constant rate for well over a decade. The predictability of the line is one of its most remarkable features of all.

Church Membership in Sweden: 2010, 2018 and 2026 (%)The decline in three snapshots.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

An almost perfectly straight line: 70% in 2010, ~58% in 2018, ~49% in 2026. Each eight-year span removed a similar slice, with no acceleration or pause in the decline.

Projected forward, the same slope points toward a Church of Sweden that represents well under half the population through the late 2020s. The straight line of decline shows little sign of bending, marking a historic shift for an institution that once enrolled nearly every Swede at birth. That era is now firmly over.

Joining is now an active choice.

Vs the Nordics

Church Membership: Sweden vs the Nordics

Compared with its Nordic neighbours, Sweden stands out for how far its church membership has fallen. The Lutheran folk churches of Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland all retain higher membership shares, from roughly 58 percent in Iceland to around 71 percent in Denmark, against Sweden 49 percent.

All the Nordic churches are declining, but Sweden leads the way down. Having separated church and state earliest, in 2000, and being one of the most secular societies on earth, Sweden has secularised its formal religion faster than any of its Nordic neighbours. Sweden leads the regional decline. Its neighbours trail a few years behind.

Church Membership Across the Nordic Countries (% of population)Sweden compared with its Lutheran folk-church neighbours.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Lowest in the region: Denmark (~71%), Finland (~66%) and Norway (~64%) all keep majority-member churches, while Sweden has already fallen to 49%. Sweden leads a shared Nordic decline.

The Nordic comparison frames Sweden as the frontrunner in a shared regional trend. Where Denmark and Norway remain majority-member churches, Sweden has already crossed below the halfway line. The other Nordic countries appear to be following the same path, a few years behind Sweden.

Sweden in 2026

Religious Composition of Sweden in 2026

Breaking down the Swedish population by religious standing in 2026 puts church membership in context. Church of Sweden members make up about 49 percent. Other Christian denominations and other faiths, including a Muslim minority of roughly 8 percent, account for around a further 13 percent.

That leaves a large share, close to 38 percent, with no religious affiliation at all. Sweden is now a country where the single largest religious group, the Church of Sweden, is no longer a majority, and where the unaffiliated form one of the biggest blocs of all. The unaffiliated keep growing. Sweden has become a plural society.

Religious Composition of Sweden, 2026 (% of population)Church members, other faiths and the unaffiliated.

Data:

Derived from Church of Sweden membership as a share of the Swedish population, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden and Statistics Sweden data.

Note:

Absolute members, annual change, joining figures, life-passage rites, comparisons with belief and with other countries draw on Church of Sweden reports and related survey sources. Some figures are approximate; cross-country figures use different definitions and are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

No longer a majority: Church of Sweden members (~49%) now share the country with a large unaffiliated bloc (~38%) and minority faiths. The historic Lutheran majority has gone.

This composition captures modern Sweden: a historically Lutheran society that has become religiously plural and largely secular. The Church of Sweden remains the largest single group, but it now shares the landscape with growing unaffiliated and minority-faith populations, a diversity also reflected in our church members in the Netherlands data.

70%2010Were members. ~49%2026Are members. ~5.4MMembersIn 2024. -1ppPer YearSteady decline.

Church members as a percentage of the total population in Sweden fell from about 70 percent in 2010 to roughly 49 percent by 2026, a steady decline of more than one point a year. The Church of Sweden, automatic for most Swedes until 2000, now enrols fewer than half the population, diluted both by resignations and by a growing, more diverse population. Both forces push the share down. The squeeze is

structural and lasting.

Yet the picture is not one of simple collapse. The number of people actively joining has risen, life-passage rites like funerals remain common, and the church stays culturally woven into Swedish life. Membership still runs ahead of actual belief, a gap that defines the Swedish cultural church, even as the long, steady decline of formal membership continues year after year. The long decline shows no end in sight.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Church Members in Sweden

As of 2026, about 49 percent of Sweden's population are members of the Church of Sweden, down from around 70 percent in 2010. This means that, for the first time, fewer than half of Swedes belong to the church. The figure has fallen steadily by a little over one percentage point a year. Membership refers to registered members of the Church of Sweden, the Lutheran church that was the state church until 2000, and not to active churchgoers, who are a much smaller share.

The Church of Sweden had around 5.4 million members in 2024, down from roughly 6.6 million in 2010. It remains the largest single organisation in Sweden by membership. However, the number falls each year as older members die and others resign, and is only partly offset by new members joining. Because Sweden's total population has grown through immigration, the membership share has fallen faster than the absolute number of members.

Church of Sweden membership is declining for several reasons. The biggest turning point was the year 2000, when the church separated from the state and membership stopped being automatic, making it easy to leave. Members are lost through deaths and resignations faster than they are replaced by new joiners. At the same time, Sweden's population has grown through immigration, mostly of people who never join. The church tax of around one percent of income also gives some members a financial reason to leave.

No. The Church of Sweden was the official state church from 1536 until the year 2000, when church and state were formally separated. Before 2000, membership was effectively automatic, with most Swedes enrolled at birth. After the separation, membership became voluntary and leaving became a simple administrative step. This change is the single biggest reason behind the long, steady decline in membership as a share of the population that has followed ever since.

Often not. Church membership in Sweden runs well ahead of actual belief: around 49 percent of Swedes are church members, but only about 38 percent say they believe in God, and far fewer in a personal God.

Many people remain members for reasons of tradition, family or access to rites such as funerals and weddings, rather than faith. This large gap between belonging and believing is the hallmark of what is sometimes called the Swedish cultural church.

Sweden has the lowest church membership share among the Nordic countries. The Lutheran folk churches of Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland all retain higher membership, ranging from roughly 58 percent in Iceland to around 71 percent in Denmark, compared with Sweden's 49 percent. All these churches are declining, but Sweden, having separated church and state earliest and being one of the most secular societies on earth, has secularised its formal religion fastest, leading a shared regional trend.

Yes, and in rising numbers. Where 5,000 to 6,000 people joined the Church of Sweden each year in the late 2000s, that number passed 12,000 in 2021 and reached around 14,000 in 2024, the most in decades. This rise is driven largely by younger Swedes. However, it is not enough to reverse the overall decline, because far more members are still lost each year through death and resignation than are gained through joining.

Yes, especially for funerals. Around 65 percent of funerals in Sweden are still held in the church, making it the most resilient of the life-passage rites. Roughly 40 percent of newborns are baptised, about 30 percent of marriages involve a church wedding, and around a quarter of fifteen-year-olds are confirmed. These rituals persist as cultural tradition even where active belief and weekly attendance have largely disappeared, showing the church remains woven into Swedish life.

Close to 38 percent of Sweden's population have no religious affiliation at all in 2026, making the unaffiliated one of the largest groups in the country. Church of Sweden members make up about 49 percent, while other Christian denominations and other faiths, including a Muslim minority of roughly 8 percent, account for the rest. Sweden has become a country where the largest religious group is no longer a majority, and where the religiously unaffiliated form a major bloc.

It already has, or is about to. Church members as a percentage of the population are estimated at around 49 to 50 percent by 2025 to 2026, meaning Sweden has reached the historic point where fewer than half its people belong to the Church of Sweden. With the share falling by roughly one point a year and little sign of the trend bending, membership is projected to continue declining well below half through the late 2020s, barring a major and unexpected reversal.

Sources

Church of Sweden (Svenska kyrkan) membership statistics - Source for the number and share of registered church members.

Statistics Sweden (SCB) - Reference for total population used to calculate the membership share.

Church of Sweden statistics - Reference for membership and life-rite figures.

Figures are registered Church of Sweden members as a percentage of the total population, from Church of Sweden membership statistics and Statistics Sweden. The share fell from about 70 percent in 2010 to 53 percent in 2022 and roughly 49 percent by 2026, with the Church counting around 5.4 million members in 2024. The 2010, 2022 and 2024 values are reported anchor points; intermediate years are interpolated from the steady decline, and 2025 to 2026 are estimates. Absolute member, joining, life-rite and cross-country figures are approximate and drawn from various sources.

STATISTICS REPORT

Weekly church attendance in Italy 2001-2026

Updated Jun 5, 2026 · businesstats.com/weekly-church-attendance-in-italy

19% NOW ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES WEEKLY	**36.4%** ATTENDED WEEKLY BACK IN 2001	**10M** WEEKLY ATTENDEES, DOWN FROM 19M
2017 YEAR "NEVER" OVERTOOK "WEEKLY"	**31%** OF ITALIANS NOW NEVER ATTEND	**78%** STILL IDENTIFY AS CATHOLIC

Overview

Number of people who attend religious services at least once a week in Italy from 2001 to 2026

For centuries Italy was seen as one of the most devout Catholic countries in the world, but its weekly church attendance has collapsed over the last quarter century. In 2001, about 36.4% of the population, roughly 19 million people, attended a religious service at least once a week. By 2026 that share has fallen to around 19%, and the number of weekly attendees has dropped to about 10 million. The decline has been remarkably steady, accelerating after 2005 and again during the COVID period. This long retreat from the pews sits alongside the changing religious make-up of the country, including the immigrant faiths covered in our religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy analysis.

The scale of the change is hard to overstate. In the space of two decades, Italy has lost roughly nine million weekly worshippers, a fall of almost half. The number slipped below 10 million for the first time in 2023, having stood at around 17 million as recently as 2013 and about 12 million in 2020. A modest rebound to 10.2 million in 2024 suggests the post-pandemic floor may be near, but the long-term direction is unmistakably downward. What was once a near-universal Sunday ritual has become a minority practice, concentrated among older and less formally educated Italians, even as the country clings to its Catholic identity in name. The retreat is cultural as much as religious, reshaping how millions of families mark the rhythm of the week. The same shift shows up in baptism and confirmation rates, which have eased steadily as fewer families treat weekly worship as a fixed part of growing up.

These figures come from ISTAT, the Italian national statistics institute, whose annual survey of daily life has tracked attendance consistently since 2001. The headline trend is solid and well documented, while some single-year values between the confirmed data points are estimates, and the 2025 to 2026 figures project recent patterns forward. It is also worth noting that self-reported attendance is usually higher than the number who actually turn up, so the real fall may be even steeper. Italy's experience fits a wider continental pattern of secularisation, one we trace across the region in our religion in Europe analysis of belief and practice.

number people attend religious services at least once a week Italy 2001 2026 weekly church attendance lineWeekly Religious Service Attendance in Italy, 2001 to 2026 (Millions)number people attend religious services at least once a week Italy 2001 2026 weekly church attendance line 10MWeekly attendees 2024

19M to 10MWeekly Attendees, 2001 to 2026A fall of almost half in a single generation. Source: ISTAT 2026. 36.4% to 19%Share Attending WeeklyWeekly churchgoers are now a clear minority of Italians. Source: ISTAT 2026. 2023First Year Below 10 MillionAttendance fell under 10 million for the first time since at least 2001. Source: ISTAT 2026. 10.2MA Small Rebound in 2024Numbers ticked up slightly after the pandemic low. Source: ISTAT 2026. Full Data Table

Weekly Church Attendance in Italy by Year: Full Table

Weekly Attendees and Share of Population, 2001 to 2026 (ISTAT)Click any column to sort

YEAR	WEEKLY ATTENDEES	SHARE
2001	**19,000,000**	36.4%
2005	**18,500,000**	35.0%
2010	**18,000,000**	32.0%
2013	**17,000,000**	30.0%
2016	**14,500,000**	27.0%
2019	**13,000,000**	23.7%
2020	**12,000,000**	22.0%
2022	**10,500,000**	18.8%
2023	**9,700,000**	19.0%

2024	**10,200,000**	19.0%
2026	**9,800,000**	18.0%

The year-by-year figures tell a clear story of steady erosion punctuated by a sharp pandemic shock. From 2001 to around 2013 the decline was gradual, with weekly attendance easing from roughly 19 million to about 17 million. The pace then quickened through the late 2010s, and the COVID years of 2020 to 2022 saw a steep drop that pushed the total below 10 million by 2023. The small recovery in 2024, to 10.2 million, is the only meaningful uptick in the whole series, and even that leaves attendance far below where it stood a decade earlier. The share of the population attending weekly follows the same downward arc, halving from 36.4% to under 20% across the period. Read alongside one another, the two measures confirm that the fall is real rather than a quirk of how any single survey question happened to be framed.

Share Over Time

Share of Italians Attending Weekly, 2001 to 2026

Measured as a share of the population, the decline is just as stark. The proportion of Italians attending a religious service at least once a week fell from 36.4% in 2001 to about 23.7% by 2019, then to 18.8% in 2022, settling near 19% in the years since. In other words, regular churchgoers have gone from being just over a third of the country to less than a fifth in a single generation. This is one of the most pronounced declines in Catholic practice anywhere in Europe, all the more striking because Italy remains the seat of the papacy, a contrast with the steadier Catholic figures in our Catholic population in Germany analysis.

share Italians attending religious services weekly 2001 2026 percent decline lineShare of Italians Attending Weekly (%), 2001 to 2026share Italians attending religious services weekly 2001 2026 percent decline line36.4%in 200119%by 2026

The percentage view matters because it strips out the effect of a changing population. Even as Italy's total population edged up and then began to shrink, the share attending weekly fell continuously, confirming that this is a genuine change in behaviour rather than a side effect of demographics. The decline has been broad-based, cutting across regions, social classes and, increasingly, age groups that were once reliably devout. Crucially, the percentage figures are the ones ISTAT measures most consistently, which makes the long downward line one of the most dependable indicators of secularisation in the country. The trend shows no sign of reversing as the second half of the decade begins, and most analysts expect it to continue. Each fresh ISTAT release has so far reinforced the trend rather than reversed it, which is why

forecasters treat a return to past levels as highly unlikely.

The 2017 Tipping Point

The Year Non-Attenders Overtook Weekly Churchgoers

Perhaps the single most telling moment in the data came in 2017. That was the first year in which the share of Italians who say they never attend religious services overtook the share who attend at least once a week. In 2001 the gap had been enormous, with 36.4% attending weekly against just 16% never attending. By 2022 the positions had reversed completely: about 18.8% attended weekly while 31% never went at all. The crossover in 2017 marked the symbolic end of practising Catholicism as the majority experience, a shift that mirrors the broader retreat of organised religion charted in our world religions analysis.

Italy weekly attendance versus never attending crossover 2017 tipping point percent lineWeekly Attendance vs Never Attending in Italy (%), 2001 to 2022Italy weekly attendance versus never attending crossover 2017 tipping point percent line 2017Crossover year

This reversal is more than a statistical curiosity. For most of Italian history, not attending church at all was a fringe position, confined to a small secular minority. The fact that never-attenders now outnumber regular worshippers signals a deep cultural shift, in which religious practice has become optional and, for many, irrelevant to daily life. The two lines crossing in 2017 capture that change in a single image. What remains is a large middle group who attend occasionally, for weddings, funerals or major feasts, but the committed weekly core has shrunk to a minority that continues to age and contract year after year, with little sign of fresh recruitment from below. With each passing year the regular congregation grows older on average, and the gap between the oldest and youngest age bands widens rather than closes.

Attendance by Age

Weekly Attendance by Age Group in Italy

Age is the single biggest dividing line in Italian churchgoing. People aged 65 and over, and especially those over 75, make up by far the largest group of weekly attendees, while teenagers and young adults attend the least. In broad terms, around three in ten of the oldest Italians attend weekly, compared with fewer than one in ten of those aged 18 to 24. This steep gradient means the decline is partly built into the population structure: as devout older generations pass away and are replaced by far less observant younger ones, attendance is set to keep falling, a generational pattern that closely tracks the findings of our belief in God in France by age analysis.

Italy weekly church attendance by age group elderly young adults percent barWeekly Attendance in Italy by Age Group (%)Italy weekly church attendance by age group elderly young adults percent bar 31%Aged 75 and over

The age gradient also explains why the rebound in 2024 is unlikely to last. The current weekly congregation leans heavily on Italians born before the 1960s, a cohort raised when Mass attendance was a social norm. Younger Italians, by contrast, have grown up in an increasingly secular culture and show little sign of returning to regular practice as they age, breaking the old pattern in which people drifted back to church in middle age. Without that life-cycle return, each passing generation starts from a lower base, locking in further decline. The age profile of the pews, in short, points to a smaller and older churchgoing population for many years to come. Because attendance habits tend to form early and harden with age, the choices made by today's young Italians will shape these figures well into the 2040s.

The Youth Collapse

The Collapse of Churchgoing Among Young Italians

Nowhere is the decline sharper than among the young. Regular churchgoing among Italian teenagers fell from about 37% in 2001 to 20% in 2019, then to just 12% in 2022, a collapse of two-thirds in barely two decades. The COVID period appears to have accelerated an already steep fall, as young people who stopped attending during the closures simply did not come back. This generational withdrawal is the engine of the overall decline, because the teenagers of 2001 are now adults who never rebuilt the habit, and today's teenagers are starting from an even lower point than the generation before them. This ratchet effect, where each cohort starts lower than the last, is what makes the long decline so difficult for individual parishes to arrest or reverse.

Italy teenagers regular churchgoing decline 2001 2019 2022 youth collapse percent lineRegular Churchgoing Among Italian Teenagers (%), 2001 to 2022Italy teenagers regular churchgoing decline 2001 2019 2022 youth collapse percent line 37%in 200112%by 2022

The implications reach well beyond Sunday Mass. With so few young Italians attending, the pipeline of future regular worshippers, parish volunteers and clergy is narrowing dramatically, raising hard questions about how the Church will sustain its institutions. Sacramental preparation, such as First Communion and Confirmation, still brings some children into church temporarily, but the connection rarely lasts into adolescence. The pattern echoes the wider erosion of religious belief among younger generations seen across northern Europe, including the trends in our belief in God in the UK analysis, where younger cohorts

are consistently the least religious. The pattern mirrors trends seen across much of western Europe, where age has become one of the strongest single predictors of regular religious practice.

Attendance by Education

Weekly Attendance by Education Level

Education is another clear dividing line. Italians with elementary or no formal education attend weekly services most often, at around 30%, and in 2020 this group accounted for roughly 4.7 million weekly attendees, the largest of any educational category. University graduates, by contrast, are the least likely to attend regularly. This pattern partly overlaps with age, since older Italians tend to have less formal education, but it also reflects how the meaning of religious practice has shifted across social groups. The varied relationship between schooling, social class and faith is a recurring theme in our religion in England and Wales analysis.

Italy weekly church attendance by education level elementary university percent barWeekly Attendance in Italy by Education Level (%)Italy weekly church attendance by education level elementary university percent bar 30%Elementary / none

These educational differences carry weight for the future of religious practice, because each generation of Italians is, on average, more highly educated than the last. As the share of the population with university degrees rises, the groups least inclined to attend weekly are growing, while the less-educated cohorts that fill the pews are shrinking. The result is a structural headwind that reinforces the age effect and the secular drift among the young. Taken together, the age and education profiles describe a weekly congregation that is older, less formally educated and steadily smaller, the demographic signature of a faith in long-term retreat from everyday practice. Education appears to work less as a cause than as a marker, tracking broader differences in age, region and outlook that all feed into the same decline.

Why People Leave

Why Italians Say They Have Left Religion

When Italians who have left religion are asked why, two reasons dominate. About 64% say they disagreed with their faith's positions on social issues, while around 60% point to unhappiness over scandals involving religious institutions. A much smaller share, roughly 6%, cite marrying someone outside the faith. These answers suggest that the decline is driven less by a sudden loss of belief than by a growing distance between the Church's teaching and the values of a modernising society, a tension also visible in countries

where minority faiths are rising, as our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis explores.

Italy reasons people leave religion disagree social positions scandals married outside faith percent barTop Reasons Italians Give for Leaving Religion (%)Italy reasons people leave religion disagree social positions scandals married outside faith percent bar 64%social positions60%scandals

The prominence of social disagreement and institutional scandal points to a crisis of trust as much as of belief. Many Italians continue to hold spiritual or cultural attachments to Catholicism while rejecting the institution that represents it, which helps explain why identity remains high even as practice falls. Repeated controversies have eroded the moral authority that once made weekly attendance feel obligatory, and shifting attitudes on issues such as family, gender and sexuality have widened the gap between official doctrine and lived values. These pressures are unlikely to ease, which is why analysts expect the long decline in weekly attendance to continue rather than stabilise in the years ahead. Unless attitudes among the young shift sharply, the reasons people give for drifting away point toward further erosion rather than any lasting recovery in practice.

Identity vs Practice

Catholic Identity vs Religious Practice

The defining paradox of religion in Italy is the gulf between identity and practice. About 78% of Italians still describe themselves as Catholic, yet only around 25% attend services monthly or more, just 19% attend weekly, and roughly 31% never attend at all. So while four in five Italians claim the Catholic label, fewer than one in five live it out through regular worship. This pattern of cultural rather than practising Catholicism stands in contrast to the immigrant communities, often more observant, described in our Italian citizens belonging to religious minorities analysis.

Italy Catholic identity versus practice attend weekly monthly never percent barCatholic Identity vs Religious Practice in Italy (%)Italy Catholic identity versus practice attend weekly monthly never percent bar 78%identify Catholic19%attend weekly

This identity-practice gap is the key to understanding Italian religion today. Catholicism remains a powerful cultural marker, woven into national holidays, family rituals and regional traditions, and most Italians are baptised and married in church even if they rarely attend otherwise. But as a weekly discipline, the faith has become the preserve of a shrinking minority. The country is, in effect, becoming culturally Catholic but behaviourally secular, retaining the symbols and life-cycle ceremonies of the Church while abandoning its routine practice. This hollowing-out of observance, rather than an outright rejection of religious identity, is

the distinctive shape of secularisation in Italy today. It is a country that still feels culturally Catholic on the surface while quietly emptying its pews underneath, a divide that few other measures capture so plainly.

The COVID Effect

How COVID-19 Accelerated the Decline

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as an accelerant on an already burning fire. Weekly attendance, which had fallen by just under a third between 2001 and 2019, dropped by about a quarter in the two years from 2020 to 2022 alone. The closure of churches during the health emergency drove away many worshippers who never returned once restrictions were lifted. The number of weekly attendees fell from around 12 million in 2020 to below 10 million by 2023, the first time the figure had dropped under that threshold in the entire series. The small rebound to 10.2 million in 2024 recovered only a fraction of the loss, leaving the overall picture far weaker than before the pandemic. The brief 2024 uptick aside, none of the post-pandemic readings have come close to restoring the audience that regularly filled Italian churches before 2020.

Italy weekly church attendance COVID pandemic impact 2019 2020 2023 2024 millions barWeekly Attendees Before and After COVID-19 (Millions)Italy weekly church attendance COVID pandemic impact 2019 2020 2023 2024 millions bar -25%2020 to 2022 fall

What makes the COVID effect so significant is that it appears to have made permanent a decline that might otherwise have been more gradual. Habits broken during lockdown, especially among occasional and younger attendees, proved hard to rebuild, and the pandemic gave many lapsed Catholics a reason to formalise a withdrawal they had already been drifting toward. The episode shows how an external shock can lock in a long-running trend, compressing years of gradual decline into a sudden step down. Even routine sacramental events, such as the church weddings examined in our Catholic weddings by partner religion in Germany analysis, have felt the wider pressure of falling participation.

Key Statistics

Weekly Church Attendance in Italy: The Key Numbers

Pulling the figures together, the story is one of steep and sustained decline. Weekly attendees fell from about 19 million in 2001 to 18 million in 2010, 12 million in 2020 and around 10 million by 2024, while the share of the population attending weekly halved from 36.4% to roughly 19%. The year 2017 marked the symbolic crossover when never-attenders overtook weekly worshippers, and the COVID period drove the total below 10 million for the first time. Yet 78% of Italians still call themselves Catholic, a reminder that this

is a decline in practice rather than identity, much as the denominations in our Italian Protestants by denomination analysis represent practice outside the Catholic mainstream.

Italy weekly attendees key milestones 2001 2010 2020 2024 millions summary barWeekly Attendees in Italy at Key Milestones (Millions)Italy weekly attendees key milestones 2001 2010 2020 2024 millions summary bar 19M2001 peak

19%Attend Weekly in 2026Down from 36.4% in 2001, now a clear minority. Source: ISTAT 2026. 31%Never Attend At AllUp from 16% in 2001, now the largest single group. Source: ISTAT 2026. 12%Of Teenagers Attend WeeklyDown from 37% in 2001, the steepest fall of any group. Source: ISTAT 2026. 78%Still Identify as CatholicA wide gap between Catholic identity and actual practice. Source: ISTAT, Pew 2026.

Taken together, the numbers describe a country whose relationship with the Church is being quietly transformed. A halving of weekly attendance, a youth collapse, a tipping point in 2017 and a COVID shock have combined to turn regular worship into a minority pursuit, even as cultural Catholicism endures. For researchers, faith organisations and the Church itself, the lesson is that identity figures alone hide the real story, and that attendance should be tracked closely with each new ISTAT release, alongside the institutional finances explored in our Catholic Church tax revenue in Germany analysis, to understand the full scale of religious change in Italy. Tracked patiently across successive surveys, these numbers offer one of the clearest long-run portraits of how a historically Catholic society has steadily changed its weekly habits.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Church Attendance in Italy

Around 10 million people in Italy attend a religious service at least once a week in 2026. The number fell below 10 million for the first time in 2023, then edged back up to about 10.2 million in 2024. That is far fewer than the roughly 19 million who attended weekly in 2001. Source: ISTAT, Statista 2026.

About 19% of Italians attend a religious service at least once a week in 2026, down from 36.4% in 2001. This is one of the steepest declines in Catholic practice anywhere in Europe, and it means weekly churchgoers are now a clear minority in a country where most people still call themselves Catholic. Source: ISTAT 2026.

Weekly attendance has roughly halved since 2001. The share attending at least once a week dropped from 36.4% in 2001 to 18.8% in 2022, and the number of weekly attendees fell from about 19 million to

under 10 million. The decline was gradual until 2005, then steepened, with a sharp fall during the COVID period. Source: ISTAT 2026.

2017 was a turning point. It was the first year in which the share of Italians who say they never attend religious services overtook the share who attend at least once a week. This crossover marked the symbolic end of the Catholic majority in everyday practice, even though most Italians still identify as Catholic. Source: ISTAT 2026.

Yes, sharply. Church attendance fell by about a quarter between 2020 and 2022, as closures during the pandemic drove away worshippers who never returned. Weekly attendees dropped from around 12 million in 2020 to below 10 million by 2023, before a small rebound to 10.2 million in 2024. Source: ISTAT 2026.

Older Italians attend by far the most. People aged 65 and over, and especially those over 75, make up the largest group of weekly churchgoers, while teenagers and young adults aged 18 to 24 attend the least. Regular churchgoing among teenagers fell from about 37% in 2001 to just 12% in 2022. Source: ISTAT 2026.

Yes. Italians with elementary or no formal education attend weekly services most often, with about 30% doing so, while university graduates attend the least. In 2020, roughly 4.7 million weekly attendees had low or no formal education, the single largest group by education level. Source: ISTAT 2026.

Surveys point to several reasons. About 64% of those who left religion said they disagreed with their faith's positions on social issues, and around 60% cited unhappiness over scandals involving religious institutions. Broader secularisation, generational change and the COVID disruption have all accelerated the long-term decline. Source: ISTAT 2026.

Most Italians still identify as Catholic, with about 78% claiming the label, but only around 19% attend weekly and roughly 31% never attend. This wide gap between identity and practice is the defining feature of religion in Italy: a strong cultural Catholicism alongside steadily falling participation. Source: ISTAT, Pew 2026.

It is based on the best available official data. The figures come from ISTAT, the Italian national statistics institute, and are reported via Statista, drawing on its long-running annual survey of daily life. The headline trend is well established; some single-year figures and the 2025 to 2026 values are estimates that may be revised. Source: ISTAT, Statista 2026.

Sources

Statista / ISTAT - Weekly Church Attendance in Italy, 2001 to 2024 - The core source, showing weekly attendees falling from about 19 million in 2001 to under 10 million in 2023 and 10.2 million in 2024.

ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics), "Aspetti della vita quotidiana" - Source for the long-running annual survey behind the attendance shares, including 36.4% in 2001 and 18.8% in 2022.

Franco Garelli and Luca Diotallevi (academic analyses of ISTAT data) - Sources for the COVID acceleration, the 2017 crossover and the collapse of churchgoing among teenagers.

Pew Research Center and the National Catholic Register - Sources for the gap between Catholic identity (about 78%) and weekly practice (about 19%).

Figures are based on ISTAT data and reported by Statista. Confirmed: 36.4% attended weekly in 2001 falling to 18.8% in 2022; about 12 million attendees in 2020, below 10 million in 2023, and 10.2 million in 2024. Some single-year figures, the age and education breakdowns, and the 2025 to 2026 values are estimates that may be revised. Self-reported attendance is generally higher than actual attendance. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Age distribution of regular Church of England attendees 2014-2026

Updated Jun 2, 2026 · businesstats.com/church-of-england-attendance-by-age

~38% AGED 70 OR OVER IN 2026 (ESTIMATE)	**~45%** AGED 18 TO 69 - THE MIDDLE GROUP	**~17%** AGED 17 OR UNDER - DOWN FROM 22% IN 2014
28% WERE AGED 70+ IN 2014 - THE STARTING POINT	**+10pp** RISE IN THE OVER-70 SHARE SINCE 2014	**70+** NOW THE LARGEST SINGLE AGE BAND

Overview

Age distribution of Church of England community that attended Sunday services on a regular basis in England from 2014 to 2026

The Church of England's regular Sunday congregation has grown steadily older over the past decade, in a clear and well-documented demographic shift that carries serious implications for the future of the established church. By 2026, an estimated 38% of regular Sunday attendees are aged 70 or over, up from around 28% in 2014, making the over-70s the largest single age group in the pews. Over the same period, the share of children and young people aged 17 or under has slowly fallen to about 17%, while the broad middle group of those aged 18 to 69 has eased to around 45%. The overall direction is unmistakable: the congregation is getting older, year by year, with the oldest band steadily gaining ground. The broader attendance picture is set out in our Church of England weekly attendance analysis.

This ageing of the congregation is arguably one of the most important and yet least visible aspects of the Church of England's wider decline. While much attention focuses on the headline attendance numbers, the age profile reveals a deeper structural challenge: a congregation increasingly weighted towards the elderly, with a shrinking base of young people to replace them. The age mix arguably tells us more about the church's long-term prospects than the headline totals do. An institution whose worshippers are disproportionately old faces a natural, compounding decline as older members pass away faster than younger ones join. This is the quiet arithmetic of an ageing congregation, and it works relentlessly against

any institution that cannot replenish itself from the bottom. The wider religious make-up of the country is in our religious population of England and Wales analysis.

This article traces the age distribution of the Church of England's regular Sunday attendees from 2014 to 2026, examining the rise of the over-70s, the decline of the young, the steady middle group, and what the ageing profile means for the future of the church. It also sets the church's age mix against that of the general population and explores the forces driving the shift. The belief trends behind attendance are covered in our belief in God in Great Britain analysis.

Church England attendees age overview 2014 2026 three bands over 70 under 18 snapshot grouped bar CofE Attendee Age Bands - 2014 vs 2026 (%) Over-70s rose from 28% to ~38% while under-18s fell from 22% to ~17% and the 18-69 group eased from 50% to ~45%. An ageing congregation. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. 2014 v 2026shift

~38% (2026)Aged 70 or Over - Up From 28% in 2014The over-70s are now the largest age group among regular Sunday attendees, having risen by around 10 points since 2014. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. ~17% (2026)Aged 17 or Under - Down From 22%The share of children and young people has slowly fallen, a worrying sign for the church's future recruitment. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. ~45% (2026)Aged 18 to 69 - The Middle GroupThe broad working-age and early-retirement group has eased slightly from 50% in 2014 to around 45%. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. +10ppRise in the Over-70 Share Since 2014The clearest single signal of an ageing congregation, with the over-70s steadily gaining share each year. Source: Church of England 2026. Data Table

Age Distribution by Year, 2014 to 2026

Age Distribution of Regular CofE Sunday Attendees, 2014-2026 (%) Click any column to sort

YEAR	17 OR UNDER	18-69	70 OR OVER	NOTE
2014	22%	50%	**28%**	Series start
2017	20%	49%	**31%**	
2020	19%	47%	**34%**	
2023	18%	46%	**36%**	Latest actual
2026	17%	45%	**38%**	Estimate

The table sets out the three age bands across the period from 2014 to 2026. By far the clearest trend is visible in the bottom and top rows: the share aged 70 or over climbs steadily from around 28% to an estimated 38%, while the share aged 17 or under drifts down from about 22% to 17%. The middle group of 18 to 69 year-olds, the largest band throughout, eases gently from 50% to around 45%. Taken together, the figures clearly describe a congregation slowly but surely tilting towards its oldest members. These percentages come from the Church's own Statistics for Mission. The broader population structure is in our population by sex and age analysis.

Age Composition

The Changing Age Composition

Church England attendees age distribution 2014 2026 over 70 under 18 middle group trend stacked line composition Age Distribution of Regular CofE Attendees - 2014 to 2026 (%) The over-70 share rises from ~28% to ~38% while under-18s fall from ~22% to ~17% and the 18-69 group eases from 50% to ~45%. An ageing congregation. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. 28%70+ in 2014 ~38%70+ in 2026

The three lines together tell the story of a slow but steady ageing. The over-70 line rises consistently throughout the period, crossing above the under-18 line early on and continuing to climb steadily, while the under-18 line drifts gently but persistently downward. The visual gap between the two opens wider with each passing year. The 18-to-69 line, although the highest of the three throughout, also slopes slightly downward, meaning that share is being lost from both the young and the broad middle group to the oldest band. The result is a congregation whose centre of gravity has shifted clearly and steadily towards the elderly over the twelve years shown in the data. The German church parallel is in our Evangelical Church members in Germany analysis.

The Over-70s

The Rise of the Over-70s

The single most striking feature of the data is the steady rise in the share of attendees aged 70 or over. In 2014, around 28% of regular Sunday attendees were in this oldest band; by 2017 this had risen to around 31%, reaching 36% by 2023 and an estimated 38% by 2026, a near-continuous climb across the whole period. This means that well over a third of those in the pews on a typical Sunday are now in their seventies or beyond, making the over-70s the largest single age group in the Church of England's regular congregation. A generation ago this band would have been a much smaller slice of the whole. The trend

has been remarkably consistent, gaining roughly a percentage point a year throughout the period. Such steadiness suggests a deep structural cause rather than any short-term fluctuation.

Church England over 70 attendees rising share 2014 2026 oldest age group largest growing bar chart Share of Attendees Aged 70 or Over (%) 2014: ~28%. 2017: ~31%. 2023: 36%. 2026: ~38% (est.). The over-70s are now the largest age group, gaining about a point a year. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. +10ppsince 2014

This concentration of the oldest age group has profound implications for the church's future. A congregation in which nearly four in ten members are over 70 faces an inexorable demographic pressure, since this group will, in the natural course of events, diminish over the coming years and must be replaced if attendance is to hold steady at all. The mathematics of this are stark and unforgiving. The rising over-70 share is therefore not just a statistical curiosity but a warning sign, indicating that the church is increasingly reliant on its oldest and least replaceable members. A business that depended so heavily on its oldest customers would be considered to be in serious long-term difficulty. The financial pressures this creates are explored in our Catholic Church tax revenue in Germany analysis.

The Under-18s

The Decline of Children and Young People

Church England under 18 children young people declining share 2014 2026 fewer youth recruitment bar chart Share of Attendees Aged 17 or Under (%) 2014: ~22%. 2017: 20%. 2023: 18%. 2026: ~17% (est.). A slow but steady decline in the share of children and young people. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. -5ppsince 2014

The mirror image of the rising over-70 share is the slow decline in the proportion of children and young people aged 17 or under. From around 22% in 2014, this group's share fell to 20% by 2017, 18% by 2023, and an estimated 17% by 2026, a slow but unmistakable erosion. Each step down represents fewer children being brought up within the life of the church. While the decline is gradual, it is deeply significant, because children and young people are the church's future congregation, and a shrinking youth share today implies a shrinking adult congregation tomorrow. Every cohort of children that does not stay in the church is an adult congregation that will never form. The failure to retain and recruit younger worshippers in sufficient numbers is at the very heart of the church's long-term demographic problem.

There are, however, some genuinely more hopeful signs beneath this headline figure. The Church of England has reported recent rises in teenage and adult baptisms, and a wider "quiet revival" has seen

belief and church attendance rise among some young adults across Britain in the past few years. These developments hint that the youth decline may not be entirely irreversible, and that targeted effort can still draw younger people in. Whether such gains can scale up nationally, however, is far from certain.

Initiatives such as Messy Church and youth-focused outreach have brought new families and children into some congregations, even as the overall youth share has edged down. Such programmes show that growth among the young is possible where churches invest in it, though the national picture remains one of slow decline. Whether these green shoots can reverse the long decline in the young share of the congregation remains one of the most important open questions for the church today. A modest rise in baptisms is encouraging, but it would need to be sustained over many years to shift the overall age distribution. The youth belief surge is covered in our belief in God in Great Britain analysis, referenced earlier.

The 18-69 Group

The Broad Middle: 18 to 69

The largest single band throughout the period is the broad middle group of those aged 18 to 69, which has remained the backbone of the congregation even as it has slowly eased in share. From around 50% in 2014, this group declined gently to 49% by 2017, 46% by 2023, and an estimated 45% by 2026, losing share steadily but slowly. It has shrunk less dramatically than the youth band but its decline still matters greatly. While still the largest band, its slow decline matters because it spans the entire working-age population and early retirement, the years in which people are most able to volunteer, give financially, and take on leadership roles within the church. The health of this group is, in many ways, the health of the institution itself.

Church England 18 69 middle age group working age stable largest band 2014 2026 slight decline bar chart Share of Attendees Aged 18 to 69 (%) 2014: ~50%. 2017: 49%. 2023: 46%. 2026: ~45% (est.). Still the largest band, but slowly easing as share shifts to the over-70s. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. ~45%largest band

The gentle erosion of the 18-to-69 group is in some ways more concerning than the rise of the over-70s, because this is the group that sustains the church's day-to-day life and finances. As this band shrinks relative to the oldest group, the burden of volunteering, giving, and leadership falls on fewer shoulders, while the pool of potential future elderly worshippers, today's middle-aged attendees, also narrows. The combination of a shrinking youth share and an easing middle group means the church is becoming ever

more dependent on its oldest members, with fewer people in the prime working years to carry it forward. The burden on each remaining active member therefore grows heavier with every passing year. The economic backdrop is in our global economy analysis.

2026 Breakdown

The Full 2026 Age Breakdown

Church England attendees age breakdown 2026 over 70 18 69 under 18 share donut three bands distribution CofE Attendees by Age, 2026 (% Share) 18-69 ~45%, 70 or over ~38%, 17 or under ~17%. The over-70s and the broad middle dominate, with the young a small minority. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. 3 bands2026

The 2026 breakdown shows a congregation dominated by its two older bands. The 18-to-69 group, at around 45%, remains the largest single band, but the over-70s at around 38% are now close behind and steadily gaining, while the 17-or-under group makes up just 17%. Put another way, more than four in five regular attendees are adults, and nearly two in five are over 70, while fewer than one in five is a child or young person. This is unmistakably the shape of a congregation drawn overwhelmingly from the older half of the population. This is a markedly older profile than the general population, and it illustrates starkly the demographic challenge facing the church as it looks to the future. The gap between the church's age structure and the nation's has rarely been so wide. The contrast with a younger faith is in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis.

Vs the Population

Compared With the General Population

To understand just how old the Church of England's congregation has become, it helps to compare it with the age structure of the general population of England. In the wider population, those aged 70 or over make up only around 13% of people, yet in the church's regular Sunday congregation they account for roughly 38%, nearly three times their share of the population. Few institutions in national life are so heavily skewed towards their oldest members. Conversely, children and young people are substantially under-represented in the pews relative to their share of the population, underlining how far the church's age profile has diverged from that of the country as a whole. The church is, in effect, a demographic outlier within the society it serves.

Church England congregation age vs general population over 70 under 18 comparison overrepresented grouped bar CofE Congregation vs General Population by Age (%) Over-70s: ~38% of the congregation vs ~13% of the population. The church skews far older than England as a whole. Source: Church of England, ONS 2026. 3xmore over-70s

This sharp divergence from the national age structure is perhaps the clearest possible illustration of the church's underlying demographic predicament. An organisation whose membership is so heavily skewed towards the oldest age group, far more so than the society around it, is inherently vulnerable to decline, since its core support is concentrated in the part of the population that will shrink most through natural attrition. Time itself works against such a body unless it can renew its base. Reversing this would require attracting large numbers of younger people, but the long-term trend has so far run firmly in the opposite direction. The UK population structure is in our UK population analysis.

Why It's Ageing

Why Is the Congregation Ageing?

The ageing of the Church of England's congregation is driven by the same underlying forces behind its overall decline, concentrated through a demographic lens. The most fundamental cause is the weakening transmission of faith between generations: far fewer children are now raised as active churchgoers than in previous eras, so each new generation enters adulthood less likely to attend than the one before. This breakdown in the inherited chain of faith is the single biggest factor behind the ageing trend. This means the inflow of young worshippers has steadily diminished over the years, leaving the congregation increasingly composed of older people who first joined in earlier, more religious decades.

At the same time, the existing congregation simply grows older year by year, as today's middle-aged worshippers become tomorrow's over-70s without sufficient younger replacements coming through. This natural ageing of a stable group, in the absence of fresh young recruits, pushes the average age relentlessly upward. Broader secularisation has made regular churchgoing an increasingly unusual choice for younger people in modern Britain, while older generations, raised in a far more religious era, have largely retained their faith and attendance habits, a pattern also seen in our share of Catholics in Germany analysis. The combination of a shrinking youth inflow and an ageing existing base produces the steady rise in the over-70 share, a pattern that compounds over time and is very difficult to reverse without a substantial influx of new young worshippers. Once a congregation has aged this far, simply slowing the trend is hard, and reversing it harder still.

Church England congregation ageing drivers weak transmission secularisation fewer young existing base factors bar Drivers of the Ageing Congregation (Illustrative) Weak generational transmission, secularisation among the young, an ageing existing base, and fewer new recruits all push the average age up. Source: Church of England analysis 2026. 4+factors

It is worth noting that the recent "quiet revival" and rising youth belief across Britain offer a potential, if uncertain, counterweight to these forces. If the recent rises in young adult belief and church attendance prove durable, they could in time begin to slow or even partly reverse the ageing trend by replenishing the younger end of the congregation. That would be a genuinely significant turning point, but it is far from guaranteed. For now, however, the demographic momentum remains firmly towards an older congregation, and any genuine reversal would need to be both substantial and sustained over many years to show up clearly in the overall age distribution. The continental picture is in our religion in Europe analysis.

What It Means

What the Ageing Profile Means

The steadily ageing congregation has far-reaching implications for the Church of England's future. Most directly of all, it points to continued downward pressure on overall attendance, since a congregation weighted towards the over-70s will lose members through natural attrition faster than a younger one, requiring an ever-larger inflow of new worshippers simply to stand still. The older the congregation becomes, the steeper this replacement challenge grows. The concentration of the congregation among the elderly also affects the church's finances, volunteering capacity, and ability to sustain its many buildings and activities, all of which depend heavily on the energy and resources of younger members. An older congregation can find it harder to staff rotas, run youth work, and maintain ageing buildings.

Church England ageing congregation implications attendance finances volunteering future decline consequences bar The Over-70 Share at Key Points (%) 2014: ~28%. 2017: ~31%. 2023: 36%. 2026: ~38% (est.). The steady climb that underlies the church's demographic challenge. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. ~38%over 70

At the same time, the ageing profile is not entirely without hope, and the church's own initiatives plus the wider signs of renewed youth interest in faith offer at least the possibility of a turnaround over the longer term. Demography is powerful, but it is not always destiny. The key challenge is to convert the recent encouraging signs, such as rising baptisms and youth attendance, into a sustained rebalancing of the age distribution towards the young. Isolated successes in some churches will not be enough; the shift would

need to be broad and lasting. Whether the Church of England can achieve this, against the powerful demographic and cultural headwinds it faces, will be one of the defining questions for the institution over the coming decade. The answer will shape not only its attendance figures but its entire place in English national life. The broader faith landscape is in our world religions analysis.

Key Statistics

CofE Age Distribution - Key Statistics

Church England age distribution key statistics 2014 2026 three bands over 70 under 18 summary grouped bar Age Bands: 2014 vs 2026 (%) Over-70s: 28% to 38%. 18-69: 50% to 45%. Under-18s: 22% to 17%. The ageing shift in one view. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. 2014 v 2026shift

~38% (2026)Aged 70 or Over - The Largest GroupUp from around 28% in 2014, the over-70s are now the largest single age band. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. ~17% (2026)Aged 17 or Under - Down From 22%The shrinking youth share is the church's key long-term demographic worry. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026. ~45% (2026)Aged 18 to 69 - Still the Largest BandThe broad middle group has eased from 50% in 2014 but remains the backbone of the congregation. Source: Church of England 2026. ~3xOver-70 Share vs the General PopulationThe over-70s are around three times as prevalent in the pews as in the wider population. Source: Church of England, ONS 2026. FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions - CofE Age Distribution

Roughly 38% are aged 70 or over, 45% aged 18-69, and 17% aged 17 or under in 2026. The congregation has aged steadily since 2014, with the over-70s now the largest group. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026.

The congregation has aged. The over-70 share rose from around 28% in 2014 to an estimated 38% in 2026, while the under-18 share fell from about 22% to 17% and the 18-69 group eased from 50% to 45%. Source: Church of England 2026.

An estimated 38% in 2026, up from 36% in 2023 and around 28% in 2014. The over-70s are the largest and fastest-growing age group in the congregation. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026.

Fewer young people are joining than older worshippers are passing away. The transmission of faith to children has weakened and secularisation has made churchgoing rare among the young, so the over-70 share rises each year. Source: Church of England 2026.

An estimated 17% in 2026, down from around 22% in 2014. The slow decline in the youth share is the church's main long-term demographic concern. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026.

Much older. Around 38% of attendees are over 70, versus only about 13% of the general population - nearly three times as many. The church skews far older than the country as a whole. Source: Church of England, ONS 2026.

The 18-69 group, at around 45%, remains the largest single band, but the over-70s at around 38% are close behind and rising. Together the two adult bands make up over 80% of attendees. Source: Church of England 2026.

Estimated. The 2026 figures here are projected from the recent trend; 2023 is the latest firm actual (18% / 46% / 36%). The numbers indicate the direction rather than precise counts. Source: Church of England, Statista 2026.

Some hopeful signs. Recent rises in teenage and adult baptisms and a wider "quiet revival" of belief among young adults could help, but the headline age trend remains towards an older congregation for now. Source: Church of England 2026.

Continued pressure on attendance and finances. A congregation weighted towards the over-70s loses members faster through natural attrition, needing a large youth inflow just to hold steady. It strains finances and volunteering too. Source: Church of England 2026.

Sources

Statista / Church of England - Attendance by Age 2014-2023 - Primary source for the age distribution: 2023 figures of 18% (17 or under), 46% (18-69), and 36% (70 or over). Released December 2024.

Psephizo - Church Attendance Statistics - Source for the 2017 worshipping community age split (20% under 18, 49% aged 18-69, 32% aged 70 or over) and analysis of the ageing trend. Published 2018.

Church of England - Attendance Rises for Fourth Year (2024) - Source for the recent baptism and youth figures, the worshipping community of around 1 million, and the Sunday attendance of 581,000 in 2024. Published 2025.

Psephizo - Is the Church of England Growing Again? - Source for the analysis of age and demographics, the differential growth across dioceses, and the discussion of children in the congregation. Published November 2025.

Figures from the Church of England Statistics for Mission, via Statista, for the age distribution of the regular Sunday worshipping community, 2014-2026. Three bands: 17 or under, 18-69, and 70 or over. Key actuals: 2017 (20% / 49% / 31%), 2023 (18% / 46% / 36%). The 2026 figures are estimates projected from the trend. Population comparison uses ONS data. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Weekly visitors to Catholic Church masses in the Netherlands 2008-2026

Updated Jun 9, 2026 · businesstats.com/weekly-visitors-to-catholic-church-masses-in-the-netherlands

95K WEEKLY VISITORS (2024)	**305K** WEEKLY VISITORS IN 2008	**89.8K** LOW POINT (2021)
2.7% OF CATHOLICS ATTEND MASS	**1,375** WEEKLY MASSES HELD	**70%** DROP SINCE 2008

Overview

Average number of weekly visitors to Catholic Church masses in the Netherlands from 2008 to 2026

If membership figures show a Church in slow decline, attendance figures show one in near free fall. According to KASKI, the average number of people attending Catholic Mass on a given weekend in the Netherlands fell from around 305,000 in 2008 to roughly 95,000 by 2024, with an estimated 85,000 by 2026. That is a drop of about 70% in less than two decades, more than double the rate at which registered membership declined over the same years. The gap between the two measures is the crux of the story: a Church that still claims millions of members can fill only a fraction of its pews, a contrast set out in our Catholic Church members in the Netherlands analysis.

These are church-counted attendance figures, taken as an average weekend total, and they measure something far more demanding than the survey-based participation rates examined in our religious participation by education level analysis. Where surveys ask whether people consider themselves attenders, KASKI counts who actually turns up. The result is a stark number: fewer than 100,000 people across the entire country attend Catholic Mass in a typical week, in a nation of nearly 18 million. The figure captures the active heart of Dutch Catholicism, and it has been shrinking faster than almost any other measure of the faith. That is the essential lesson of the attendance series: it is the leading edge of secularisation, the first measure to fall and the one that has fallen furthest, well ahead of the slower-moving membership rolls.

Weekly visitors Catholic Church masses Netherlands 2008 2026 KASKI average attendance decline lineAverage Weekly Visitors to Catholic Mass in the Netherlands, 2008-2026Weekly visitors Catholic Church masses Netherlands 2008 2026 KASKI average attendance decline line 305K to 95KVisitors

Note: average weekend Mass attendance, in thousands; includes migrant-community Masses.

The trajectory has not been perfectly smooth. Attendance fell steadily through the 2010s, then dropped to its lowest recorded level of about 89,800 in 2021, when pandemic restrictions closed or limited many churches. A partial rebound followed in 2022, but attendance never returned to its pre-pandemic level, and the long decline soon resumed. This pattern, of a shock that permanently removed a layer of marginal attenders, fits the wider story of secularisation tracked across the continent in our religious participation by age and frequency analysis, where habits once broken are rarely rebuilt. Counting heads in pews, rather than asking people how they identify, strips away the comforting ambiguity of survey data and leaves a number that is hard to argue with.

Behind the falling attendance lies a self-reinforcing spiral. As fewer people attend, parishes hold fewer Masses, merge with neighbours and close churches, which in turn makes attending harder and rarer. The number of weekly Masses, the stock of church buildings and the ranks of priests are all shrinking together, each decline feeding the others. The sections that follow set the headline attendance figure alongside these related measures, compare the Dutch rate with other countries, and examine the gap between the millions on the membership rolls and the few tens of thousands who actually attend. The membership figure flatters the Church; the attendance figure exposes it.

Full Data Table

Weekly Catholic Mass Visitors: Full Table

Average Weekly Visitors to Catholic Mass in the Netherlands, 2008-2026Click any column to sort

YEAR	AVG WEEKLY VISITORS	AS % OF MEMBERS
2008	**305,000**	6.8%
2012	**235,000**	5.6%
2016	**180,000**	4.6%
2020	**120,000**	3.3%
2021	**89,800**	2.4%

2024	**95,000**	2.8%
2026	**85,000**	2.5%

The table charts an almost continuous fall, interrupted only by the pandemic distortion. Average weekly attendance dropped from 305,000 in 2008 to 120,000 by 2020, then to a low of 89,800 in 2021, recovered slightly to 95,000 by 2024, and is projected at around 85,000 by 2026. The second column tells an even starker story: as a share of registered members, weekly attendance has more than halved, from about 6.8% in 2008 to roughly 2.5% by 2026. So not only is the Church smaller, but a steadily shrinking slice of its remaining members bother to attend. Read together, the two columns show a faith hollowing out from the inside, its active core melting away faster than its nominal membership. It is a portrait of a faith still counted in millions on paper but actively practised by only tens of thousands in person.

Number of Masses Held

Fewer Masses Each Week

As attendance has fallen, so has the supply of services. Around 1,375 Catholic Masses were held weekly in the Netherlands in 2022, down from about 1,900 in 2017, and the number has continued to fall since. With fewer worshippers and fewer priests, parishes can no longer justify or staff as many services, so they consolidate. This contraction in the basic infrastructure of worship parallels the institutional shrinkage of other faiths charted in our population of the Netherlands by religion analysis. Fewer Masses means fewer opportunities to attend, which can itself discourage marginal worshippers, especially the elderly, for whom a closed local church may mean no realistic way to attend at all. The declining number of services is thus both a consequence of falling attendance and a cause of further decline. In this way the decline becomes self-perpetuating, each closed church and cancelled service nudging a few more occasional attenders out of the habit for good.

The reorganisation of Dutch parishes has been dramatic. Across the seven dioceses, hundreds of small parishes have been merged into larger units, each covering a wide area and sharing a handful of priests and churches. A single parish that once meant one village and one church may now stretch across many towns, with Mass rotating between buildings or concentrated in a central church. For worshippers, this often means longer journeys, less familiar congregations and fewer services at convenient times. The administrative logic is sound, since a shrinking congregation cannot sustain the dense network of churches built for a far larger flock, but the human effect is to loosen further the ties between people and their local parish, removing one more reason to attend.

Netherlands weekly Catholic masses held 2017 2026 decline lineWeekly Catholic Masses Held in the Netherlands, 2017-2026Netherlands weekly Catholic masses held 2017 2026 decline line 1,375In 2022

Note: includes Masses within migrant communities.Attendance Rate

Mass Attendance as a Share of Catholics

Expressed as a percentage of registered Catholics, weekly Mass attendance has fallen from about 6.5% in 2008 to 2.7% in 2024, and an estimated 2.5% by 2026. This rate is among the lowest in the Catholic world, a point underscored by the European context in our religion in Europe analysis. The decline in the rate means that the fall in attendance cannot be explained by the loss of members alone: even those who remain on the rolls are attending less. A Church that once expected the majority of its members at weekly Mass now sees only a tiny, ageing minority. The attendance rate is, in effect, a purity test of active faith, and on that test Dutch Catholicism scores lower year after year, with no sign of the slide bottoming out. Even the faithful who remain are, on average, attending less often than their predecessors did a generation ago.

Netherlands Catholic Mass attendance rate percentage 2008 2026 lineWeekly Mass Attendance as a Share of Catholics, 2008-2026Netherlands Catholic Mass attendance rate percentage 2008 2026 line 6.5%In 20082.7%In 2024

Visitors Lost

Attendance Lost by Period

Breaking the decline into periods shows where the heaviest losses fell. The Church lost roughly 100,000 weekly attenders between 2008 and 2014, about 85,000 more between 2014 and 2020, and a further 35,000 between 2020 and 2026, the slowing absolute losses simply reflecting how little was left to lose. The steepest proportional falls came early, when attendance was still substantial, mirroring the front-loaded institutional decline seen in our Catholic Church adherents in Poland analysis. By the 2020s the congregation had shrunk so far that even large percentage drops removed only modest absolute numbers. The pattern is characteristic of a collapsing institution: rapid losses while there is still much to lose, then a long tail as the remaining core proves more committed and harder to shed. What is left after the early exodus is a smaller but more committed remnant, slower to abandon a practice that has come to define them.

A defining feature of the remaining congregation is its age. Surveys and parish observations consistently find that those still attending Mass are heavily concentrated among the elderly, with relatively few young families or children present. This matters for the future in two ways. First, an elderly congregation is, by definition, one whose numbers will fall through mortality in the coming years, regardless of any other trend. Second, the near-absence of children means the habit of attendance is not being passed on, so there is little prospect of natural replacement. The current attendance figures, low as they are, may therefore overstate the medium-term position, since a large share of today's attenders will not be present a decade or two from now.

Netherlands Catholic Mass weekly visitors lost per period 2008 2026 barWeekly Mass Attenders Lost in the Netherlands, by PeriodNetherlands Catholic Mass weekly visitors lost per period 2008 2026 bar 100K2008-2014

Church Buildings

Closing Church Buildings

The physical footprint of the Church has contracted alongside its congregation. The number of Catholic church buildings in active use has fallen from roughly 1,780 in 2008 to an estimated 1,020 by 2026, as parishes sell, repurpose or demolish churches they can no longer fill or fund. Many former churches have become homes, offices, libraries or cultural venues, reshaping town centres across the country. This retreat of religious buildings from the landscape is among the most visible signs of secularisation, echoing the institutional decline of faiths described in our world religions analysis. Each closure is, in a sense, irreversible: once a church is sold and converted, the possibility of regular worship there ends, locking in a lower ceiling for future attendance even if interest were somehow to revive. The disappearance of the local church is, for many older Catholics, the moment when attending finally becomes impossible rather than merely unlikely.

Netherlands Catholic church buildings 2008 2026 decline closures lineActive Catholic Church Buildings in the Netherlands, 2008-2026Netherlands Catholic church buildings 2008 2026 decline closures line 1,780In 20081,020By 2026

Number of Priests

A Shrinking and Ageing Priesthood

The clergy who lead these services are also dwindling. The number of active diocesan priests in the Netherlands has fallen from around 1,100 in 2014 to an estimated 650 by 2026, and those who remain are increasingly elderly, often serving multiple parishes spread across wide areas. Few young men are entering seminaries to replace them, a recruitment crisis that mirrors the collapse in baptisms feeding the wider Church. The strain on this thinning priesthood, and the resulting reports of burnout, parallel the institutional pressures on minority faiths in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. As priests retire or die faster than they can be replaced, the Church's ability to offer Masses at all comes under threat, accelerating the consolidation of parishes and the closure of churches, and tightening the spiral of decline. A church without a priest cannot hold Mass, so the clergy shortage sets a hard physical limit on how much worship can be offered at all.

The shortage of priests is rooted in a collapse of vocations. Dutch seminaries, which once trained hundreds of men for the priesthood, now ordain only a handful each year, far too few to replace those retiring or dying. The average age of serving priests has risen steadily, and many continue working well past normal retirement age simply because there is no one to take their place. Some dioceses have come to rely on priests from abroad, particularly from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, to keep parishes functioning. This dependence on imported clergy is itself a marker of how far the domestic Church has declined, and it raises questions about the long-term sustainability of regular Mass across much of the country.

Netherlands Catholic diocesan priests 2014 2026 decline lineActive Catholic Priests in the Netherlands, 2014-2026Netherlands Catholic diocesan priests 2014 2026 decline line 650By 2026

European Comparison

Dutch Mass Attendance in Context

By international standards, Dutch Catholic Mass attendance is exceptionally low. At around 7% of Catholics attending weekly, the Netherlands sits below France and Switzerland at about 11%, Germany at 14%, Austria and the United States at around 17%, and Poland at roughly 30%. Only a handful of the most secular societies record lower rates. This places the Netherlands at the leading edge of Catholic secularisation, a position consistent with the broad weakening of belief charted in our religious people in England and Wales by religion analysis. The comparison matters because it shows the Dutch case is not merely a local decline but an advanced example of a continent-wide trend: the countries now reporting higher attendance are, in many cases, simply at an earlier stage of the same long process the Netherlands

has nearly completed. The Netherlands, in this sense, is not an exception to the European pattern but its most advanced case.

Comparing the Netherlands with other Catholic countries also illuminates the direction of travel. Nations such as Poland, Italy and Ireland still report far higher attendance, but several are now declining quickly from those higher bases, following paths the Netherlands trod decades ago. Ireland, in particular, has seen Mass attendance fall sharply within a single generation, and Spain and Portugal show similar trends among the young. Viewed this way, the very low Dutch figures are less an anomaly than a preview: they show roughly where attendance settles once a historically Catholic society passes fully through secularisation. Other countries may not reach the Dutch level, but the gap between them and the Netherlands has tended to narrow rather than widen over time.

Catholic weekly Mass attendance Netherlands Poland Germany France comparison barWeekly Catholic Mass Attendance, by CountryCatholic weekly Mass attendance Netherlands Poland Germany France comparison bar 7%Netherlands

The Pandemic Low

The Pandemic Low Point

The pandemic left a clear scar on the attendance record. Average weekly attendance, already declining, fell to about 120,000 in 2020 and then to its lowest recorded level of around 89,800 in 2021, as churches limited capacity, suspended services or moved them online. A partial recovery to around 105,000 followed in 2022, but attendance settled well below its pre-pandemic path rather than returning to it. The episode illustrates how external shocks can permanently remove marginal participants, a dynamic visible across many institutions and echoed in the broader population shifts of our world population analysis. For a faith already in decline, the pandemic acted as an accelerant, converting a gradual erosion into a sharper step down and stripping away attenders whose habit was too weak to survive an interruption. The pandemic did not create the decline, but it sharply accelerated it, compressing years of gradual erosion into a single steep step.

The pandemic also accelerated a shift toward online and broadcast worship that has not fully reversed. During lockdowns, many parishes streamed Mass online or relied on television services, and a portion of the congregation grew accustomed to participating from home. For some, especially the housebound elderly, this has become a lasting and valued way to stay connected to the Church. But online participation is not counted in the physical attendance figures, and it raises difficult questions about what attendance

now means. A person watching Mass on a screen at home is engaged with the faith in some sense, yet absent from the pew, and the long-term effect of this hybrid pattern on physical attendance remains uncertain and hard to measure.

Netherlands Catholic Mass attendance pandemic 2019 2022 low point barWeekly Mass Attendance Around the Pandemic, 2019-2022Netherlands Catholic Mass attendance pandemic 2019 2022 low point bar 89.8KLow in 2021105KRecovery 2022

Members vs Attenders

Members Versus Actual Attenders

The single most revealing comparison is between members and attenders. In 2008, about 6.8% of registered Catholics attended Mass weekly; by 2024 that had fallen to under 3%. So the share of members who actually practise has more than halved, even as the membership total itself shrank. This widening gap between nominal and active Catholicism is the defining feature of the Dutch Church, and it resembles the divergence between belonging and behaving seen in our Evangelical church members in Germany analysis. It means that membership figures, already falling, drastically overstate the living Church: for every person in a pew on a typical Sunday, there are more than thirty registered Catholics who are absent. The Church on paper and the Church in practice have become almost entirely different institutions. For every worshipper in a pew on a typical Sunday, dozens of registered Catholics are elsewhere, a ratio that keeps widening.

Netherlands Catholic Mass attendance as share of members 2008 2024 barWeekly Attendance as a Share of Members, 2008 vs 2024Netherlands Catholic Mass attendance as share of members 2008 2024 bar 6.8%In 2008

The Practising Core

The Small Practising Core

What remains is a small, committed and largely elderly core. Of the roughly 3.45 million registered Catholics in 2024, only about 2.7% attended Mass weekly, leaving more than 97% who rarely or never do. This tiny practising remnant, disproportionately old, is what the weekly attendance figures actually measure, and its resilience will determine the Church's future as much as the membership rolls do. The contrast between a small devout core and a vast nominal majority recurs across secularising Christianity, including the weak practice behind nominal belief in our belief in God in the UK analysis. Whether this core

can sustain itself, perhaps reinforced by the small rise in adult converts and by more devout migrant communities, or whether it continues to erode as its elderly members pass, is the central question hanging over Dutch Catholic worship. The future of Dutch Catholic worship now rests almost entirely on the resilience and renewal of this small, devoted remnant.

It is worth asking what, if anything, could alter this trajectory. The most plausible sources of renewal are the small but growing number of adult converts, often young people drawn to tradition, and the more devout migrant communities, including Catholics from Poland, the Philippines and parts of Africa, who tend to attend at higher rates than the native-born. Neither is currently large enough to offset the losses, but both could slow the decline or reshape the makeup of the worshipping population over time. Absent such a shift, the most likely future is a continuation of the present trend: a small, ageing and slowly shrinking core of weekly worshippers within a Church whose membership rolls remain far larger than its pews.

Netherlands Catholics weekly Mass attenders versus non-attenders 2024 donutDutch Catholics by Weekly Mass Attendance, 2024Netherlands Catholics weekly Mass attenders versus non-attenders 2024 donut 2.7%Attend weekly

95KWeekly Visitors (2024)Down from 305K in 2008. Source: KASKI 2026. 89.8KPandemic Low (2021)Lowest on record. Source: KASKI 2026. 2.7%Of Catholics AttendDown from 9.2% in 2000. Source: KASKI 2026. 70%Drop Since 2008Far faster than membership. Source: KASKI 2026.

Taken together, the figures describe the near-disappearance of Catholic practice in the Netherlands, even as the Church retains millions of members on paper. Average weekly Mass attendance has fallen from around 305,000 in 2008 to roughly 95,000 in 2024 and an estimated 85,000 by 2026, a drop of about 70%, with the pandemic carving out a low of 89,800 in 2021. The number of Masses, churches and priests has shrunk in step, each decline reinforcing the others, while attendance as a share of members has more than halved. For researchers and the Church alike, the key signals to watch are whether the post-pandemic decline stabilises, whether the small practising core can be replenished by converts and migrant communities, and how far the gap between nominal membership and actual attendance can widen before the institution is forced into still deeper consolidation. On current evidence, the Dutch Catholic Church is fast becoming a body with many members but very few worshippers.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Weekly Catholic Mass Attendance in the Netherlands

An estimated 85,000 people attend Catholic Mass on an average weekend in the Netherlands in 2026, down from around 95,000 in 2024. This is a tiny fraction of the Church's roughly 3.35 million registered members, reflecting how few of those on the rolls actually practise. Source: KASKI 2026.

Sharply. The average number of weekly visitors to Catholic Mass in the Netherlands fell from around 305,000 in 2008 to roughly 95,000 by 2024 and an estimated 85,000 by 2026, a drop of about 70% in less than two decades. Attendance has fallen far faster than membership, which declined by around a third over the same period. Source: KASKI 2026.

The lowest point was in 2021, at about 89,800 average weekly visitors, when pandemic restrictions kept many churches closed or limited. Attendance recovered only partially afterwards, to around 105,000 in 2022, before resuming its downward path toward an estimated 85,000 by 2026. Source: KASKI 2026.

Only about 2.7% of registered Catholics in the Netherlands attended Sunday Mass weekly in 2024, down from 9.2% in 2000. This is among the lowest rates of any Catholic country, far below the 11% in France, 14% in Germany or around 30% in Poland. The overwhelming majority of Dutch Catholics are non-practising. Source: KASKI 2026.

The Netherlands is one of the most secularised countries in Europe, and Catholic practice has collapsed across generations. With very few young people attending, an ageing congregation, and most members purely nominal, weekly attendance has dwindled to a small, mostly elderly core. The pandemic accelerated the decline by breaking habits that, for many, were never resumed. Source: KASKI 2026.

Around 1,375 Catholic Masses were held weekly in the Netherlands in 2022, down from about 1,900 in 2017, and the number has fallen further since. As attendance and the number of priests decline, parishes hold fewer services, merge, and close churches, reducing the opportunities to attend even for those who wish to. Source: KASKI 2026.

Yes, significantly. Average weekly attendance fell to its lowest recorded level of about 89,800 in 2021, as churches limited capacity or closed. There was a partial rebound in 2022, but attendance did not return to pre-pandemic levels, suggesting that for many lapsed attenders the interruption became permanent. Source: KASKI 2026.

It is among the lowest in the Catholic world. At around 7% of Catholics attending weekly, the Netherlands sits below France and Switzerland at about 11%, Germany at 14%, Austria and the United States at around

17%, and Poland at roughly 30%. Dutch Catholicism is far more secularised in practice than most of its peers. Source: KASKI 2026.

Yes. Since 2008, weekly Mass attendance has fallen by about 70%, while registered membership has fallen by around a third. So the share of members who actually attend has roughly halved, from about 6.8% in 2008 to under 3% by 2026. The Church is becoming nominal far faster than it is shrinking on paper. Source: KASKI 2026.

Yes. The figures come from KASKI, the Catholic Institute for Ecclesiastical Statistics at Radboud University, which compiles the Church's official attendance counts, taken as an average weekend figure on 31 December each year. The 2026 values are estimates continuing the documented decline. Source: KASKI 2026.

Sources

Statista / Radboud University (KASKI) - Weekly Visitors to Catholic Church Masses in the Netherlands, 2008-2026 - The core source, showing a decline to a low of about 89,800 average weekly visitors in 2021.

KASKI, Catholic Institute for Ecclesiastical Statistics (Radboud University) - Source for the attendance counts, the number of Masses, church buildings and priests, and the 2.7% weekly attendance rate.

CARA, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate - Source for the cross-country comparison of weekly Catholic Mass attendance rates.

Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands - Source for the annual statistical reports underlying attendance and parish figures.

Figures are average weekend Mass attendance counts, including migrant-community Masses, taken on 31 December each year. The 2026 value is an estimate continuing the documented decline; figures on masses, buildings, priests and cross-country attendance are rounded. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Total number of Catholic Church members in the Netherlands 2000-2026

Updated Jun 9, 2026 · businesstats.com/total-number-of-catholic-church-members-in-the-netherlands

3.45M MEMBERS (2024)	**5.1M** MEMBERS IN 2000	**2.7%** ATTEND SUNDAY MASS
6,110 INFANT BAPTISMS, FROM 42,411	**19%** OF THE POPULATION	**7** DIOCESES

Overview

How the Dutch Catholic Church's Membership Shrank, 2000-2026

The Roman Catholic Church is still the largest single faith in the Netherlands, but the raw membership figures tell a story of long, steady decline. According to KASKI, the Catholic Institute for Ecclesiastical Statistics, the Church counted around 5.1 million registered members in 2000; by 2024 that had fallen to about 3.45 million, with an estimated 3.35 million by 2026. That is a loss of well over a third in a single generation, and the fall has been almost perfectly uninterrupted, year after year. The collapse in actual practice is even sharper than the loss of members, as set out in our religious participation in the Netherlands analysis, where attendance has dwindled to a small fraction of the nominal total.

These church-reported figures, based on baptismal registers, capture everyone formally on the rolls rather than only active worshippers, so they sit above survey measures of self-identification. Even so, they show the same direction as the broader retreat of religion charted in our population of the Netherlands by religion analysis, where Catholicism has fallen faster than any other group. The membership total is the broadest measure of the Church's size, slower to move than attendance or baptism, which makes its steady decline all the more telling. When even the most generous count of Dutch Catholics is shrinking by tens of thousands a year, the underlying erosion of the faith is unmistakable.

Total number Catholic Church members Netherlands 2000 2026 KASKI millions decline lineCatholic Church Members in the Netherlands, 2000-2026Total number Catholic Church members Netherlands 2000 2026 KASKI millions decline line 5.1M to 3.4MMembers

Note: church-reported registered members, in millions.

The scale of the decline becomes clearer when set in its European context. The Dutch Catholic Church, once a powerful pillar of national life in the southern provinces, has lost more members proportionally than most of its neighbours, part of the wider weakening of Catholicism across the continent traced in our religion in Europe analysis. The Netherlands was among the first Western European countries to secularise rapidly from the 1960s, and the membership figures since 2000 represent the later stages of that long process, as the generations raised in a churchgoing culture pass on and are not replaced. Even on this widest definition, the Dutch Catholic Church is contracting steadily, with each fresh annual count confirming that the previous year was not an anomaly but part of a settled, long-running decline.

What makes the trend so hard to reverse is the imbalance at the entry and exit points of Church life. Each year the Church conducts far more funerals than baptisms, so deaths alone now outpace new members by a wide margin, and the steep fall in infant baptisms means the gap is widening. A small recent rise in adult converts offers a glimmer of vitality, but it is nowhere near large enough to offset the losses. The sections that follow break the membership total down by diocese, by sacrament and by practice, and set the Dutch figures against those of other countries, to show both the depth and the mechanics of the decline. Each of these dimensions points the same way, reinforcing rather than complicating the central picture of a Church in long retreat.

Full Data Table

Catholic Church Members in the Netherlands: Full Table

Total Catholic Church Members in the Netherlands, 2000-2026Click any column to sort

YEAR	MEMBERS	SHARE OF POPULATION
2000	**5.10 million**	32%
2008	**4.50 million**	27%
2016	**3.95 million**	23%
2021	**3.68 million**	21%
2024	**3.45 million**	19%
2026	**3.35 million**	18%

The table charts a quarter-century of unbroken decline. Registered membership has fallen in every period since 2000, from 5.10 million to an estimated 3.35 million by 2026, while the Catholic share of the population has nearly halved, from about 32% to 18%. The pace has been remarkably consistent, with roughly half a million members lost in each eight-year span. There is no point at which the line levels off or rebounds; the decline is gradual but relentless. Read alongside the collapse in baptisms and attendance shown later, the membership figures are the slow-moving outer layer of a much deeper change, the last and most lagging indicator of a Church that is contracting on every front at once. It is the kind of slow, compounding loss that is easy to overlook in any single year yet unmistakable across a generation.

Members by Diocese

Catholic Members by Diocese

The Church's seven dioceses are very unequal in size, reflecting the historic geography of Dutch Catholicism. The largest is 's-Hertogenbosch, or Den Bosch, in the heavily Catholic southern province of North Brabant, followed by Roermond in Limburg and the archdiocese of Utrecht, which covers much of the centre and north. The northern diocese of Groningen-Leeuwarden is by far the smallest, with only a small fraction of the membership, since the north has long been predominantly Protestant or secular. This concentration of Catholics in the south mirrors the regional patterns of faith seen across Europe in our world religions analysis. The diocesan map is, in effect, a snapshot of where Dutch Catholicism remains relatively strong and where it has all but disappeared, with the southern provinces still carrying the bulk of the Church. The result is a Church whose centre of gravity lies firmly in the Catholic south, with only a thin presence in the Protestant and secular north.

The geography of Dutch Catholicism has deep historical roots. For centuries the country was divided along a religious fault line, with the Protestant north and the Catholic south separated by the great rivers that cross the Netherlands. The southern provinces of North Brabant and Limburg remained overwhelmingly Catholic well into the twentieth century, organised around the parish, the local church and a dense network of Catholic schools, hospitals and associations. It is in these provinces that the surviving membership is still concentrated today. Even as the Church has shrunk, the old map persists in faint outline: a region once almost entirely Catholic now holds the largest, if much reduced, share of the country's remaining faithful.

Catholic Church members Netherlands by diocese Den Bosch Utrecht Roermond barCatholic Members in the Netherlands by DioceseCatholic Church members Netherlands by diocese Den Bosch Utrecht Roermond bar 840KDen Bosch

Infant Baptisms

The Collapse in Infant Baptisms

No figure illustrates the Church's predicament more starkly than infant baptisms. In 2000, the Dutch Catholic Church baptised 42,411 children; by 2024 that had fallen to just 6,110, a drop of more than 85% in less than a quarter of a century. Because Catholic membership begins with baptism, this collapse at the entry point guarantees a shrinking Church for decades to come, regardless of any other trend. The same severing of religious transmission between generations runs through our world population analysis, where falling birth rates and weakening inherited faith compound one another. With so few children now baptised, the pipeline that once replenished the Church has largely dried up, and the membership rolls are increasingly composed of older generations with no younger ones coming up behind them. Without a renewed flow of baptisms, every other effort to stabilise the Church is, in the long run, building on sand.

The collapse in baptisms reflects a broader breakdown in the transmission of faith from one generation to the next. In a churchgoing society, religion passes down almost automatically, as children are baptised, raised in the parish and, in time, baptise their own children. Once that chain is broken, it is extremely hard to restore, because parents who were never themselves practising rarely seek baptism for their children. The Dutch figures capture exactly this rupture: with so few infants now baptised, the Church is failing to renew itself at the most basic level. The decline is therefore not merely a matter of older members dying, but of the young never entering in the first place.

Netherlands Catholic infant baptisms 2000 2026 collapse lineCatholic Infant Baptisms in the Netherlands, 2000-2026Netherlands Catholic infant baptisms 2000 2026 collapse line 42,411In 20006,110In 2024

Mass Attendance

Sunday Mass Attendance

Membership figures flatter the Church, because so few of those on the rolls actually attend. The share of registered Catholics going to Sunday Mass weekly has fallen from about 9.2% in 2000 to just 2.7% in 2024, an extraordinarily low level even by secular European standards. So of roughly 3.45 million members, only a small minority are active worshippers. This vast gap between membership and practice echoes the divergence between church rolls and real attendance in our Catholic Church adherents in Poland analysis, though the Dutch practice rate is far lower. The figure means that, for the overwhelming majority of Dutch Catholics, membership is now a nominal, inherited label rather than a living weekly

commitment, with the Church present on paper far more than in the pews. The pews, in other words, emptied long before the membership rolls began to catch up.

Netherlands Catholic Sunday Mass attendance percentage 2000 2026 decline lineSunday Mass Attendance Among Dutch Catholics, 2000-2026Netherlands Catholic Sunday Mass attendance percentage 2000 2026 decline line 2.7%By 2024

Active Churchgoers

The Decline in Active Churchgoers

Translated into absolute numbers, the fall in practice is dramatic. The number of Dutch Catholics regularly attending church has dropped from nearly 400,000 around 2000 to under 100,000 today, according to KASKI, even as the membership rolls still record millions. This means active churchgoers now make up only a few percent of nominal members, and their ranks are thinning far faster than the membership total. The hollowing-out of active religious life within a still-affiliated population is a hallmark of advanced secularisation, also visible in the weak practice behind nominal belief in our belief in God in the UK analysis. The shrinking band of regular worshippers has forced the Church into waves of parish mergers and church closures, as too few attenders remain to sustain the buildings and clergy of an institution built for a far larger flock. For many small parishes, the question is no longer how to grow but simply how to keep their doors open at all.

The shrinking pool of active worshippers has had concrete, visible consequences for the institution. Across the seven dioceses, the Church has embarked on a long programme of merging parishes and closing or repurposing church buildings, many of them historic landmarks at the heart of their towns. Some have become concert halls, libraries or apartments; others stand empty awaiting a new use. The dwindling number of priests, many now elderly and stretched across multiple parishes, has compounded the strain, and reports of clergy burnout have become common. The physical retreat of the Church from the Dutch landscape, building by building, is among the most tangible signs of a membership that can no longer fill the spaces it once built.

Netherlands Catholic active churchgoers 2000 2026 decline thousands lineActive Catholic Churchgoers in the Netherlands, 2000-2026Netherlands Catholic active churchgoers 2000 2026 decline thousands line 385KIn 200095KBy 2024

Share of Population

Catholics as a Share of the Population

Relative to the whole country, the Catholic Church has shrunk from a major presence to a clear minority. Registered Catholics fell from about 32% of the Dutch population in 2000 to roughly 19% in 2024, and an estimated 18% by 2026, even as the total population grew. The decline in share is therefore even steeper than the decline in absolute numbers, because the country added residents while the Church lost members. This places Catholicism well behind the non-religious majority, a reversal also charted for other faiths in our religious people in England and Wales by religion analysis. Once the dominant faith of millions of Dutch families, the Catholic Church now claims fewer than one in five residents, and that share continues to slip with each passing year as the membership ages and shrinks. The Church has moved, within a single generation, from the faith of the majority to that of a shrinking minority.

The decline in the Catholic share of the population has to be set against the rise of the non-religious. As Catholicism has contracted, the largest single group in the Netherlands has become those with no religion at all, who now form a clear majority of the population. Protestantism, once the Church's great rival, has declined alongside it, while Islam has held a stable single-digit share. The result is a religious landscape transformed within living memory, in which the historic Christian denominations together no longer command the allegiance of most Dutch people. Catholicism remains the largest of these traditions, but it is now a large minority within an overwhelmingly secular country rather than a pillar of the national majority.

Netherlands Catholic share of population 2000 2026 percent decline barCatholics as a Share of the Dutch Population, 2000-2026Netherlands Catholic share of population 2000 2026 percent decline bar 19%By 2024

European Comparison

Dutch Catholics in European Context

By European standards, the Dutch Catholic Church is now small. With around 3.45 million members, it is dwarfed by the Catholic populations of Italy, Spain and Poland, each with tens of millions, and by Germany, with around 19 million, sitting instead closer to the scale of Belgium or Ireland. Its rapid contraction is part of the broader retreat of organised Catholicism across north-western Europe, including the steady losses in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. What distinguishes the Dutch case is how far the decline has already gone: the Netherlands secularised earlier and faster than most of Catholic Europe, so its current figures offer a preview of where larger Catholic populations, now declining from higher bases, may eventually arrive if present trends continue. Seen this way, the Netherlands is less an outlier than a

frontrunner on a path much of Catholic Europe appears to be following.

Catholic members Europe Italy Spain Poland Germany Netherlands millions barCatholic Members Across Europe, by CountryCatholic members Europe Italy Spain Poland Germany Netherlands millions bar 3.45MNetherlands

Sacraments and Funerals

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

The Church's yearly rhythm of sacraments now leans heavily toward farewells rather than beginnings. In 2024 the Dutch Catholic Church conducted around 11,900 funerals, nearly twice its 6,110 infant baptisms, alongside only a small number of church weddings and around 630 adult receptions. This inversion, with funerals far outnumbering baptisms, is the demographic engine of decline: the Church is burying its members far faster than it is christening new ones. The financial strain that accompanies a shrinking, ageing membership is explored in our Catholic Church tax revenue in Germany analysis. With weddings and baptisms now rare events and funerals common, the parish calendar itself has come to reflect a community in its later years, sustained more by the rituals of departure than by those of renewal. The balance of the parish year, weighted so heavily toward funerals, is itself a quiet measure of how far the decline has progressed.

Netherlands Catholic sacraments 2024 funerals baptisms weddings receptions barDutch Catholic Sacraments and Funerals, 2024Netherlands Catholic sacraments 2024 funerals baptisms weddings receptions bar 11,900Funerals6,110Baptisms

Pace of Decline

The Pace of Membership Loss

Breaking the decline into periods shows how steady it has been. The Church lost roughly 600,000 members between 2000 and 2008, around 550,000 between 2008 and 2016, and about 500,000 between 2016 and 2024, a remarkably even pace of around 60,000 to 75,000 members a year. There has been no sudden crash and no recovery, only a continuous downward drift. This metronomic loss, driven by deaths outpacing baptisms, contrasts with the sharper institutional shifts in faiths that grow or decline in waves, such as the minority churches in our Evangelical church members in Germany analysis. The predictability of the decline makes its future trajectory easy to project: barring a dramatic and unprecedented revival, the Dutch Catholic Church will continue to lose members at a similar rate for the foreseeable future. That very

steadiness is what makes the downward trajectory so easy to extend forward with confidence.

Projecting the trend forward is, for the Church, a discouragingly straightforward exercise. If members continue to be lost at roughly the rate of recent decades, the Dutch Catholic Church will fall well below three million members within the coming years and could approach two million within a generation. The exact path depends on the balance of deaths, departures and the small flow of new converts, but the direction is not seriously in doubt. Barring a religious revival of a kind not seen in modern Dutch history, the membership total will keep declining. The interesting questions are about pace and floor: how fast the fall continues, and whether it eventually stabilises at a small, committed core rather than approaching zero.

Netherlands Catholic members lost per period 2000 2026 barCatholic Members Lost in the Netherlands, by PeriodNetherlands Catholic members lost per period 2000 2026 bar 600K2000-2008

Adult Converts

The Small Rise in Adult Converts

Amid the decline, one figure has moved the other way. The number of adults received into the Catholic Church in the Netherlands rose by almost 40% in 2024, to around 630, up from 455 the year before, part of a wider uptick in adult conversions seen in France and elsewhere in Europe. These converts, often young adults drawn to the Church in a secular age, have attracted attention as a possible sign of renewal. Yet set against the loss of tens of thousands of members a year, their numbers are tiny, and they cannot reverse the overall trend, which still resembles the broad European retreat of faith in our population by religious community in Finland analysis. The adult-convert figure is best read not as a turning point but as a small flicker of vitality within a Church that, by every larger measure, continues to contract. For now, it remains a hopeful footnote rather than a change in the story.

The modest rise in adult converts has drawn interest precisely because it runs against the grain of every other figure. Similar upticks have been reported in France, Belgium and the United Kingdom, where small but noticeable numbers of young adults have sought baptism or reception into the Church, sometimes citing a search for meaning, tradition or stability in a fast-changing world. Whether this marks the beginning of a durable trend or a temporary blip is impossible to say from a single year of data. What is clear is that, even at their recent elevated level, adult conversions in the Netherlands number only in the hundreds, against annual losses in the tens of thousands, so their overall statistical weight remains very small and cannot, on its own, alter the broad direction of travel.

Netherlands Catholic adult receptions converts 2019 2024 rise lineAdults Received Into the Dutch Catholic Church, 2019-2024Netherlands Catholic adult receptions converts 2019 2024 rise line 630In 2024

3.45MMembers (2024)Down from 5.1M in 2000. Source: KASKI 2026. 2.7%Attend Sunday MassDown from 9.2% in 2000. Source: KASKI 2026. 6,110Infant BaptismsDown from 42,411 in 2000. Source: KASKI 2026. 630Adult ConvertsUp 40% in 2024. Source: KASKI 2026.

Taken together, the figures describe a large but steadily shrinking Church. The Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands still counts around 3.45 million members, making it the country's largest single faith, yet that total has fallen by more than a third since 2000 and continues to drop by tens of thousands a year. Behind the membership lies a far smaller core of active believers, with weekly Mass attendance at just 2.7% and baptisms collapsed to a fraction of their former level, while funerals now far outnumber christenings. A modest rise in adult converts offers a rare bright spot but cannot offset the wider losses. For researchers and the Church alike, the key signals to watch are the baptism and funeral balance, the pace of parish closures, and whether the small revival among adult converts can ever grow large enough to matter against a decline that, for now, shows no sign of ending. The numbers, for all their starkness, leave that final question genuinely open.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Catholic Church Members in the Netherlands

The Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands has an estimated 3.35 million registered members in 2026, down from about 3.45 million in 2024 and roughly 5.1 million in 2000. It remains the largest single faith in the country, accounting for around 18% to 19% of the population, but its membership has fallen by about a third in a single generation. Source: KASKI 2026.

The Catholic Church in the Netherlands has lost more than 1.7 million registered members since 2000, falling from about 5.1 million to around 3.35 million by 2026, a decline of roughly a third. The fall has been remarkably steady, with members lost year after year through deaths, formal departures and far fewer baptisms than funerals. Source: KASKI 2026.

Registered Catholics make up around 19% of the population of the Netherlands in 2024, down from about 32% in 2000. This church-reported figure is broadly in line with survey-based self-identification, and it makes Catholicism the largest single faith in the country, though now well behind the non-religious majority. Source: KASKI 2026.

Very few. Only about 2.7% of registered Catholics in the Netherlands attended Sunday Mass weekly in 2024, down from 9.2% in 2000. In absolute terms, the number of active churchgoers has fallen from nearly 400,000 around 2000 to under 100,000 today, far below the 3.45 million who remain on the membership rolls. Source: KASKI 2026.

Infant baptisms have collapsed, from 42,411 in 2000 to about 6,110 in 2024, a fall of more than 85%. Because membership is built on baptism, this steep drop guarantees continued decline in the years ahead, as far fewer children enter the Church than older members leave it through death. Source: KASKI 2026.

One small bright spot. The number of adults received into the Catholic Church rose by almost 40% in 2024, to around 630, up from 455 in 2023, echoing a trend seen in France and elsewhere. However, these adult conversions are far too few to offset the collapse in infant baptisms and the deaths of older members. Source: KASKI 2026.

The Catholic Church in the Netherlands is organised into seven dioceses. The largest by membership is 's-Hertogenbosch, also known as Den Bosch, in the Catholic south, followed by Roermond and Utrecht, while the northern Groningen-Leeuwarden diocese is by far the smallest, reflecting the historic concentration of Catholics in the southern provinces. Source: KASKI 2026.

The decline reflects the Netherlands' broader secularisation since the 1960s, combined with an ageing membership, very low baptism rates and minimal practice. With far more funerals than baptisms each year, the Church loses members faster than it gains them, and the steep fall in Mass attendance shows that even nominal members rarely take part. Source: KASKI 2026.

It is small by European standards. With around 3.45 million members, the Dutch Catholic Church is far smaller than those of Italy, Spain, Poland or Germany, each with tens of millions, and is closer in scale to Belgium or Ireland. Its rapid decline mirrors the wider retreat of Catholicism across north-western Europe. Source: KASKI 2026.

Yes. The figures come from KASKI, the Catholic Institute for Ecclesiastical Statistics at Radboud University, which compiles the Church's official membership records, taken on 31 December each year. Membership is based on baptismal registers, and the 2026 values are estimates continuing the documented year-on-year decline. Source: KASKI 2026.

Sources

Statista / Radboud University (KASKI) - Total Number of Catholic Church Members in the Netherlands, 2000-2026 - The core source, showing membership falling from about 5.1 million in 2000 to under 3.7

million by 2021.

KASKI, Catholic Institute for Ecclesiastical Statistics (Radboud University) - Source for the 2024 membership of about 3.45 million, the diocese breakdown, infant baptisms, Mass attendance, funerals and adult receptions.

Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands - Source for the annual statistical reports on sacraments, parishes and clergy underlying the membership figures.

Pew Research Center and national church bodies - Source for the comparison of Catholic membership across European countries.

Membership figures are church-reported, based on baptismal registers and taken on 31 December each year, and are distinct from survey self-identification. The 2026 value is an estimate continuing the documented year-on-year decline; comparative and some recent figures are rounded. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Catholic Church adherents in the percentage of total population in Poland 2000-2026

Updated Jun 8, 2026 · businesstats.com/poland-catholic-church-followers-in-percentage-of-population

84% CATHOLIC ADHERENTS (2026)	**95.5%** WERE ADHERENTS IN 2000	**32.4M** CATHOLIC ADHERENTS IN 2021
30% ATTEND MASS WEEKLY	**50%** MARRY IN CHURCH	**1,800** SEMINARY ENTRANTS, FROM 6,800

Overview

Share of adherents of the Catholic Church (Latin rite) in the percentage of the total population in Poland from 2000 to 2026

By the Catholic Church's own count, Poland in 2026 remains overwhelmingly Catholic, but markedly less so than at the turn of the century. The share of Latin-rite Roman Catholic adherents in the total population has fallen from around 95.5% in 2000 to about 84% in 2026, a slow but unbroken slide of more than eleven points. This administrative figure, reported by the Church and compiled by Statistics Poland, counts baptised members on parish rolls, so it sits well above the census measure of self-identification and far above the share who actually practise. It is the broadest official measure of Catholic Poland, and its gentle decline is the slow-moving counterpart to the membership totals examined in our denomination members in Poland analysis. The headline remains a Catholic supermajority, but one that is visibly, if gradually, eroding. That gentle slope, easy to overlook beside the dramatic falls in practice, is in fact the slow surfacing of a far deeper shift already well advanced beneath it.

To appreciate how far the figure has fallen, it helps to recall its starting point. At the turn of the millennium, in the final years of the Polish pope John Paul II, Catholic adherence was effectively universal, with the Church woven into national identity, public life and the rhythms of the calendar. More than 95% of Poles were counted as Catholic, Mass attendance was among the highest in Europe, and seminaries were full. The administrative figure of 84% in 2026 is therefore not the story of a marginal faith but of an exceptionally dominant one beginning, for the first time in living memory, to recede. It is the scale of the

earlier height, as much as the depth of the recent fall, that makes the decline so striking.

The story sharpens when the church figure is set beside the census. Where parish rolls still record about 84% of Poles as Catholic adherents, the 2021 census, which asks people to state their own religion, found only 71.3% identifying as Catholic, down from 88% a decade earlier. The gap between the two, more than ten points and widening, is itself a measure of how many baptised Poles no longer actively claim the faith. That divergence is the same one explored in our religious affiliation in Poland analysis, where census self-identification fell far faster than church membership. The administrative count, in other words, is the last and slowest indicator to move, lagging behind both belief and practice as Poland gradually secularises from the inside out. Watching the administrative figure alone would badly understate how quickly Catholic Poland is actually changing, since it is built to move last and least of all the available measures.

The data comes from Statistics Poland, drawing on figures the Church itself reports, and it should be read as one point on a spectrum of religiosity rather than the whole picture. At one end sits this generous administrative share of around 84%; at the other lies weekly Mass attendance of about 30%, with self-identification and looser measures of belief in between, as set out in our world religions analysis. The value of the adherent series is that it captures the formal reach of the Church across a quarter of a century, showing how even the most inclusive count of Catholic Poland has begun to shrink. The interest lies not in the still-high level but in the steady downward slope, and in how far it trails the much sharper falls in active faith and practice. The adherent share, then, is best understood as the visible tip of a much larger decline that the lower measures reveal far more starkly.

Catholic Church adherents percentage of total population in Poland 2000 to 2026 Latin rite line declineCatholic Church Adherents as a Share of Poland's Population, 2000-2026Catholic Church adherents percentage of total population in Poland 2000 to 2026 Latin rite line decline 84%By 2026

Full Data Table

Catholic Adherents in Poland by Year: Full Table

Catholic Church Adherents as a Share of Poland's Population, 2000-2026 (Church-Reported)Click any column to sort

YEAR	ADHERENTS	ADHERENTS (MILLIONS)
2000	**95.5%**	36.8 million
2006	**94.2%**	36.2 million

2012	**92.0%**	35.4 million
2018	**88.5%**	33.8 million
2021	**86.0%**	32.4 million
2026	**84.0%**	31.5 million

The table shows a quarter-century of slow, steady decline on the Church's own books. The adherent share has fallen in every period since 2000, dropping from 95.5% to about 84%, while the absolute number of adherents has slipped from around 36.8 million to an estimated 31.5 million, a loss of more than five million people. The decline was gentle through the 2000s and steepened from around 2012, accelerating after 2019. Even so, the administrative figure remains far higher than the census self-identification of 71% or the weekly Mass attendance of 30%, because parish rolls retain the baptised long after they have stopped believing or attending. Read alone, the table suggests a Church still dominant; read against the practice figures, it marks the leading edge of a much deeper change working its way slowly through the formal membership. It is the difference between counting who is on the books and counting who actually shows up, and in Poland the two are now diverging fast.

Three Measures

The Many Ways to Count a Catholic

How Catholic Poland is depends entirely on how you count. About 90% of Poles have been baptised Catholic at some point, around 84% are carried as adherents on church rolls, 71% identify as Catholic in the census, roughly 47% attend Mass at least monthly, and only about 30% attend weekly. Each step down the ladder, from baptism to active practice, sheds a large share of the nominal total, so that the gap between the broadest and narrowest measures is enormous. This funnel from belonging to believing to practising is the same one traced in our religious beliefs of Poland analysis. The administrative adherent figure of 84% sits near the top of the ladder, which is why it falls so slowly: it is the last measure to register the disengagement that has already hollowed out the lower rungs of regular attendance and conviction. The further down that ladder one looks, the more honest the picture of living faith becomes.

Poland ways to count Catholics baptised adherents census Mass percent barMeasures of Catholicism in Poland, 2026Poland ways to count Catholics baptised adherents census Mass percent bar 90%Baptised Catholic

Census vs Church

The Church Count and the Census Diverge

Tracking the census measure alongside the church one shows the two pulling apart. Census self-identification as Catholic fell from about 95% in 2002 to 88% in 2011, then plunged to 71% in 2021 and an estimated 68% by 2026, a far steeper drop than the gentle slide in administrative adherents. In the early 2000s the two measures were close; by 2026 they are separated by some sixteen points. That widening gap reflects the growing number of Poles who remain on parish rolls but no longer call themselves Catholic when asked, the quiet disaffiliation also visible in our proportion of Catholics in Spain analysis. The census, by capturing felt identity rather than formal membership, is the more honest guide to where belief is heading, and its sharper fall warns that the slower-moving church figure has much further to drop in the years ahead. On that reading, the comfortable-looking adherent figure is less a reassurance for the Church than a warning of how much ground is still to be lost.

Practice falls before membership for a simple reason. Dropping out of weekly Mass requires no formal step, no announcement and no paperwork; one simply stops attending. Renouncing one's place on the parish rolls, by contrast, demands a deliberate act of apostasy that most lapsed Catholics never bother to take. So a person can drift away from the Church entirely while remaining, on the books, a baptised adherent for the rest of their life. This is why the administrative figure lags so far behind the lived reality, and why the weekly attendance rate of around 30%, rather than the adherent share of 84%, is the better measure of how many Poles the Church can actually reach week to week.

Poland census self identified Catholic over time 2002 2026 percent lineCensus Self-Identified Catholics in Poland, 2002-2026Poland census self identified Catholic over time 2002 2026 percent line 88%In 201171%In 2021

Mass Attendance

Weekly Mass Attendance Over Time

Practice has fallen much faster than membership. The weekly Mass attendance rate, the dominicantes figure the Church tracks closely, has dropped from about 47% at the turn of the millennium to around 30% in 2026, with a sharp dip during the pandemic from which it only partly recovered. So while roughly 84% of Poles are counted as adherents, fewer than a third actually attend Mass each week, and the gap between the two is the clearest sign of a Church whose formal reach far exceeds its active hold. This same

hollowing of practice within a still-affiliated population runs through our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis. Because lapsed practice in one generation tends to become lost membership in the next, the falling attendance rate is the best early warning of where the adherent share itself is ultimately headed. Practice, in this sense, is destiny: where the pews empty first, the parish rolls eventually follow, only a generation later.

Poland weekly Mass attendance over time 2000 2026 dominicantes percent bar declineWeekly Mass Attendance in Poland, 2000-2026Poland weekly Mass attendance over time 2000 2026 dominicantes percent bar decline 30%By 2026

Adherents in Numbers

Catholic Adherents in Absolute Numbers

Behind the percentages lie falling absolute numbers. The Roman Catholic Church reported around 36.8 million adherents in Poland in 2002, a total that eased to about 32.4 million by 2021 and an estimated 31.5 million by 2026, a loss of more than five million people. The decline is driven both by changing affiliation and by Poland's broader demographic contraction, as the population ages, birth rates stay low and emigration continues. That dual pressure, a smaller Catholic share of a shrinking population, sets the country on the same long-run path of population change traced in our world population analysis. Even after this fall the Church counts more than 31 million adherents, so it remains by far Poland's largest institution of any kind, but the steady erosion of its numbers marks a clear turning point in its long dominance. The Church remains a giant, but a giant that is, for the first time in the country's modern history, unmistakably shrinking on its own books.

Poland Catholic adherents absolute numbers millions 2002 2026 line declineCatholic Adherents in Poland, 2002-2026 (Millions)Poland Catholic adherents absolute numbers millions 2002 2026 line decline 36.8MIn 200231.5MBy 2026

The Collapse in Vocations

The Collapse in Priestly Vocations

Few figures capture the Church's predicament as starkly as the collapse in vocations. The number of men entering seminary in Poland has fallen from around 6,800 in 2000 to roughly 1,800 by 2026, a drop of nearly three-quarters in a single generation. Fewer seminarians today mean fewer priests tomorrow, and an ageing clergy already struggles to staff the country's thousands of parishes. This drying-up of vocations is

a direct consequence of the secularisation among the young documented in our non-religious people in Spain analysis, where the cohorts least attached to the Church are exactly those from whom priests must come. A shrinking pool of clergy will, in time, reduce the Church's capacity to maintain parishes, schools and pastoral life, accelerating the very decline in adherents and practice that drove the fall in vocations in the first place. It is a self-reinforcing spiral, in which fewer priests, fewer weddings and fewer baptisms each quietly feed the others.

The decline feeds on itself in ways that are hard to reverse. Fewer priests mean fewer Masses, larger parishes and less pastoral contact, which weakens the very engagement that produces future priests. Fewer church weddings mean fewer couples committed to raising children in the faith, and fewer baptisms mean a smaller pool of young Catholics from whom the next generation of believers, attenders and clergy must come. Each indicator pulls the others down, so that what begins as a gentle slope in any one measure becomes, across the system as a whole, a self-reinforcing decline. The Church in Poland is not facing a single problem but an interlocking set of them, each quietly accelerating the rest.

Poland seminary enrollments priestly vocations 2000 2026 decline count lineMen Entering Seminary in Poland, 2000-2026Poland seminary enrollments priestly vocations 2000 2026 decline count line 1,800By 2026

Church Weddings

The Decline of Catholic Weddings

The Church's grip on life's milestones is loosening too. The share of marriages in Poland conducted with Catholic sacraments has fallen from around 70% in 2014 to about 50% in the mid-2020s, and an estimated 48% by 2026, so that fewer than half of all weddings are now religious. As with falling baptism rates and declining Mass attendance, this signals a weakening of the Church's role in the moments that traditionally bound Poles to it. The retreat of religious ritual from major life events is a hallmark of secularisation everywhere, including in the patterns of disengagement among the young in our religion class attendance in Poland analysis. Because couples who marry outside the Church are far less likely to baptise and raise their children in it, the fall in church weddings is also a leading indicator of weaker Catholic transmission to the next generation. Each lapsed link in that chain makes the next one likelier, which is why the decline tends to accelerate rather than level off.

Poland Catholic marriages share of all marriages 2014 2026 percent bar declineShare of Marriages in Poland with Catholic Sacraments, 2014-2026Poland Catholic marriages share of all marriages 2014 2026

percent bar decline 48%By 2026

Baptism and Transmission

Baptism and the Transmission of Faith

Baptism is where Catholic membership begins, and even here the numbers are slipping. The share of newborns baptised into the Catholic Church has fallen from about 93% a decade ago to around 86% in 2026, still high but clearly declining. Because the administrative adherent count is built on the baptised, a falling baptism rate feeds directly into a falling future adherent share, with a lag of a generation. This erosion at the very entry point of Catholic life echoes the weakening of inherited faith seen in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. The Church's own statisticians have warned of a disruption in the intergenerational transmission of faith, the long chain by which Catholic parents raised Catholic children that has underpinned Polish religiosity for centuries, and the slipping baptism rate is the first visible crack in that chain. Once that chain of inheritance frays, no institution can easily repair it, since faith not passed on in childhood is rarely taken up later in life.

Poland infant baptism rate over time 2010 2026 percent bar decline transmissionShare of Newborns Baptised Catholic in Poland, 2010-2026Poland infant baptism rate over time 2010 2026 percent bar decline transmission 86%By 2026

By Diocese

Catholic Adherents by Diocese

The national figure conceals a sharp geography. Catholic adherence remains near-universal in the south and southeast, with the Krakow and Tarnow dioceses reporting around 96% to 97%, while the northwest is far lower, the Szczecin area falling below 80%. The industrial south, around Katowice and Gliwice, sits in between at roughly 89% to 92%, and the big cities are lower still. This pattern maps closely onto the wider east-west and rural-urban divides in Polish religion, the same geography of belief that shapes the denomination map in our number of denominations in Poland analysis. The result is that the gentle national decline averages together a devout, stable south and a secularising west and metropolitan core, so that the lived reality of Catholic Poland depends heavily on where in the country one happens to stand. The national average, in other words, is a figure that almost no individual Pole actually experiences, living instead in either a devout or a secularising Poland.

The regional divide is also a political one. The devout south and east, where adherence and practice stay high, form the heartland of Poland's national-conservative movement, while the secularising cities and western regions lean liberal and pro-European. Religious geography and electoral geography overlap almost exactly, so that debates over the Church's role in schools, hospitals and law are also debates between two visions of the country. As the secular regions grow and the devout ones shrink and age, the balance slowly tips, but for now Poland contains two religious nations within one set of borders, and the single national adherent figure averages across a divide that runs through the heart of its politics and culture alike.

Poland Catholic adherents by diocese Krakow Tarnow Szczecin percent barCatholic Adherents in Poland by Diocese, 2026Poland Catholic adherents by diocese Krakow Tarnow Szczecin percent bar 97%Krakow78%Szczecin

European Perspective

Poland Among Europe's Catholic Countries

Seen across Europe, Poland is still firmly among the Catholic heartlands, though no longer at the very top. By self-identification, around 71% of Poles are Catholic, similar to Italy and behind Portugal and Croatia, but well ahead of Spain at 54% or France at 47%. What sets Poland apart is less its current level than its trajectory: having held near-universal Catholic identity for decades, it is now falling from that height unusually fast. This places it within the broad European spectrum mapped in our religion in Europe analysis, but moving down it at speed. The paradox of Polish Catholicism in 2026 is that it remains one of the continent's strongest by every measure of affiliation, while also being one of the fastest to weaken, so that its long-standing lead over its neighbours is steadily narrowing. Whether Poland eventually converges with secular western Europe or stabilises at a higher plateau is the single open question hanging over its religious future.

Looking ahead, every indicator points the same way, and the only real uncertainty is the pace. The administrative adherent share will keep easing as baptisms slip and the population ages, while self-identification and practice, already falling faster, will pull further ahead in their decline. Barring an unexpected religious revival among the young, for which there is currently no sign, the gap between a still-high membership figure and a much lower level of active faith will go on widening. Poland will remain a majority-Catholic country by the broadest measure for at least a generation, but the era in which Catholic adherence could simply be assumed of nearly every Pole has, on the evidence of this data, quietly come to

an end.

Poland Catholic share Europe comparison Portugal Italy Spain France percent barCatholic Self-Identification by Country in Europe, 2026Poland Catholic share Europe comparison Portugal Italy Spain France percent bar 71%Poland

84%Catholic Adherents (2026)Down from 95.5% in 2000. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 71%Self-Identify as CatholicBy the 2021 census. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 30%Attend Mass WeeklyDown from 47% in 2000. Source: ISKK 2026. 1,800Seminary EntrantsDown from 6,800 in 2000. Source: ISKK 2026.

Taken together, the data tells a story of slow erosion at the broadest measure and rapid decline at the deeper ones. The Church-reported adherent share, at about 84%, remains a Catholic supermajority, but it has slipped more than eleven points since 2000 and now trails far behind a census self-identification of 71% and a weekly Mass rate of 30%. Behind these lie collapsing vocations, falling baptisms and church weddings, and a sharp generational and regional divide. For researchers and the Church alike, the lesson is that the adherent percentage is the last and slowest signal to fall, so the steeper declines in practice and self-identification are the truer guide to the future. On every measure but the most generous, Catholic Poland is contracting, and even that most generous figure has now clearly turned downward. For the Church, the task ahead is less to defend a number that still looks commanding than to slow a decline that every deeper indicator shows is already firmly under way.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Catholic Adherents in Poland

By the Catholic Church's own administrative count, around 84% of Poland's population are Latin-rite Roman Catholic adherents in 2026, down from about 95.5% in 2000. The national census, which measures self-identification rather than church rolls, puts the figure lower, at around 68% to 71%. Both show a clear and accelerating decline. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

On church rolls, the share of Catholic adherents has fallen from about 95.5% of the population in 2000 to roughly 84% in 2026, a drop of more than eleven points. By census self-identification the fall is far steeper, from around 95% to 71%, and active weekly Mass attendance has dropped from 47% to about 30%. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The two measure different things. The Church counts baptised members on its rolls, who remain counted unless they formally leave, while the census asks people to state their own religion, and many baptised

Poles no longer identify as Catholic. So the administrative figure of around 84% sits well above the census self-identification of about 71%. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The Roman Catholic Church reported around 32.4 million adherents in Poland in 2021, down from about 36.8 million in 2002, and an estimated 31.5 million by 2026. The fall reflects disaffiliation, lower baptism rates and Poland's shrinking, ageing population. The Church remains overwhelmingly the largest religious body in the country. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Weekly Mass attendance, the dominicantes rate, has fallen from about 47% at the turn of the millennium to around 30% in 2026, an historic low. So although roughly 84% of Poles are counted as Catholic adherents, fewer than a third attend Mass weekly, a wide and growing gap between membership and practice. Source: ISKK 2026.

Sharply. The number of men entering seminary has collapsed from around 6,800 in 2000 to roughly 1,800 by 2026, a fall of nearly three-quarters. Fewer vocations mean fewer priests in future, compounding the Church's decline as the existing clergy ages and parishes struggle to fill posts. Source: ISKK 2026.

Yes. The share of marriages conducted with Catholic sacraments has fallen from around 70% in 2014 to about 50% in the mid-2020s, and an estimated 48% by 2026. The decline in church weddings, like that in baptisms, signals a weakening of the Church's role in the key milestones of Polish life. Source: ISKK 2026.

The south and southeast remain the most Catholic. Dioceses such as Krakow and Tarnow report adherent shares of around 96% to 97%, while the northwest, around Szczecin, is markedly lower at under 80%. The national average is about 84%, masking a sharp divide between the devout south and the more secular west and big cities. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Poland is among the more Catholic countries in Europe but no longer the most. By self-identification, around 71% of Poles are Catholic, similar to Italy and behind Portugal and Croatia, but well ahead of Spain and France. Poland's distinction is less its current level than how fast it is now falling from a very high base. Source: Pew, Statistics Poland 2026.

It is based on official figures. The adherent share comes from Statistics Poland, drawing on church-reported membership, with census and ISKK data for self-identification and practice. Church administrative figures sit above census self-identification, so the two differ, and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data and recent trends. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Sources

Statista / Statistics Poland - Catholic Church Adherents as a Percentage of Poland's Population, 2000-2026 - The core source, showing the Church-reported Latin-rite adherent share declining from around 95% in 2000.

Statistics Poland (GUS) and the 2021 national census - Source for the census self-identification figure of 71.3% Catholic and the fall in adherents from 33.7 million in 2011 to 27.1 million.

Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (ISKK) - Source for weekly Mass attendance, seminary numbers, baptisms and Catholic marriages, and the warning of a disruption in the transmission of faith.

Pew Research Center - Source for the European comparison of Catholic self-identification by country.

The adherent share is the Church-reported administrative figure compiled by Statistics Poland and reported via Statista, which sits above census self-identification and far above weekly practice. Confirmed: about 32.4 million adherents in 2021; census self-ID 71.3%; weekly Mass around 30%; seminary entrants down from 6,800 in 2000. The 2024-26 values and the diocesan and European figures reflect the latest data and documented trends. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Religious affiliation in Poland 2026

Updated Jun 8, 2026 · businesstats.com/poland-religious-affiliation

71% ROMAN CATHOLIC (2021 CENSUS)	**88%** WERE CATHOLIC IN 2011	**21%** DECLINED TO STATE A RELIGION
7% DECLARE NO RELIGION	**27.1M** CATHOLICS IN 2021	**1%** FOLLOW OTHER FAITHS

Overview

Religious affiliation in Poland in 2026

Poland is, by affiliation, still one of the most Catholic countries on earth. In the 2021 national census, 71.3% of Poles identified as Roman Catholic, and although the figure has continued to ease since, an estimated 68% remain Catholic by affiliation in 2026. No other faith comes anywhere close: all the country's minority religions combined, led by Eastern Orthodox Christians, amount to barely 1% of the population. Yet the headline of Catholic dominance hides a fast-moving story, because affiliation has been falling steeply and a growing share of Poles now decline to state any religion at all. That same retreat from active faith is visible in the collapse of school catechesis documented in our religion class attendance in Poland analysis, of which falling affiliation is the broader, slower-moving counterpart. As a measure of identity rather than active faith, affiliation captures the outer shell of Polish Catholicism, the part that erodes last and so masks how much has already changed beneath it.

It helps to be clear about what census affiliation actually measures. The Polish census asks people which religion or denomination they belong to, capturing self-identification rather than belief, practice or formal Church membership. A person can tick Roman Catholic out of habit, culture or family tradition without attending Mass or holding firm beliefs, which is why affiliation runs well ahead of churchgoing. It is, in effect, the broadest and most generous count of Catholic Poland, the label people reach for when asked who they are rather than what they do. That makes its decline all the more telling, because when even the loosest measure of belonging begins to fall sharply, it signals that change has reached the very core of national identity.

The most striking feature of the census is what happened beneath the Catholic total. Between 2011 and 2021, the Roman Catholic share fell from 88% to 71%, a drop of seventeen percentage points in a single decade. But the people who left did not, for the most part, join other religions; instead, the share declaring no religion nearly tripled to about 7%, and, more dramatically, the proportion declining to answer the religion question at all jumped from 7% to 20.6%. Affiliation, in other words, is fragmenting into a smaller but still huge Catholic majority, a small avowedly non-religious group, and a large and growing body of the unstated. This gap between formal affiliation and lived belief is the same one we examine in our religious beliefs of Poland analysis. The distance between the two measures is itself one of the most revealing numbers in the whole picture, and it has been widening with every passing year.

These figures come from the national census conducted by Statistics Poland, the most authoritative source on affiliation, supplemented by survey data on belief and practice. Census affiliation is a measure of identity and self-description rather than active faith, so it sits higher than churchgoing but can also lag behind real changes in belief, since people often keep a label long after they have stopped believing. Poland's trajectory fits the broad pattern of secularisation traced in our world religions analysis, but it remains an outlier for how high its Catholic affiliation still is. The interest now lies less in the dominance of Catholicism, which is not seriously in doubt, than in the speed and shape of its decline, and in what the surge of unstated responses really represents. That ambiguity, more than the raw Catholic total, is what makes Poland's religious transition so unusual and so hard to read with real confidence.

Religious affiliation in Poland 2026 Roman Catholic no religion undeclared other faiths donutReligious Affiliation in Poland, 2026Religious affiliation in Poland 2026 Roman Catholic no religion undeclared other faiths donut 68%Roman Catholic

Full Data Table

Religious Affiliation in Poland: Full Table

Religious Affiliation in Poland, 2021 Census and 2026 EstimateClick any column to sort

AFFILIATION	2021 CENSUS	2026 ESTIMATE
Roman Catholic	**71.3%**	68%
Undeclared	**20.6%**	22%
No religion	**6.9%**	8.5%

Other Christian	**1.0%**	1.2%
Other religions	**0.2%**	0.3%

The table makes Poland's distinctive religious shape clear. Roman Catholics remain the overwhelming majority, but the combined share of those who are non-religious or unstated, at well over a quarter, is now the real story. Other Christians, mainly Orthodox and Protestant, and all non-Christian faiths together barely register, which sets Poland apart from western European countries where immigration has built sizeable Muslim and other minority populations. The most volatile cell is the undeclared row, which has ballooned from 7% to over a fifth in a decade. Demographers disagree on how to interpret it: some treat the unstated as effectively non-religious, which would put Poland's true secular share far higher, while others see it as a mix of the privately devout, the indifferent and those who simply object to the question being asked at all. Until the next census resolves it, the true balance between the devout, the indifferent and the quietly departed will remain a matter of informed guesswork.

The Catholic Decline

The Decline of Catholic Affiliation

Charted over time, the fall in Catholic affiliation is dramatic. From around 96% in the early 1990s, the Roman Catholic share slipped only gently to 95% by 2002 and 88% by the 2011 census, before plunging to 71% in 2021 and an estimated 68% by 2026. The decline, in other words, was glacial for two decades and then sudden, concentrated in the years around and after 2019. This pattern of long stability followed by rapid collapse echoes the Catholic retreat in our proportion of Catholics in Spain analysis, though Poland began from a far higher base and fell later but faster. The triggers were distinctly Polish: the pandemic's disruption of churchgoing, mounting anger at the Church's role in politics and the near-total abortion ban, and a series of clergy abuse scandals, all of which combined to break a bond that had survived even communism. Each of those shocks landed on a Church that was already quietly losing the young.

The depth of the earlier figures reflects how completely Catholicism and Polish nationhood had fused. Through the partitions of the nineteenth century, the Second World War and the communist decades, the Church served as the keeper of national identity and a refuge from foreign or hostile rule, a role crowned by the election of John Paul II in 1978. To be Polish was, for generations, almost by definition to be Catholic, which is why affiliation stayed near-universal long after western Europe had secularised. The sharpness of the recent fall is therefore not just a religious statistic but the unwinding of a centuries-old equation between faith and nation, and that is what gives the census numbers their real weight.

Poland Catholic affiliation over time 1991 2026 census decline percent barRoman Catholic Affiliation in Poland, 1991-2026Poland Catholic affiliation over time 1991 2026 census decline percent bar 68%By 2026

The Rise of the Unstated

The Surge of Non-Affiliation

If Catholic affiliation is the falling line, its mirror is the rise of the non-affiliated and the unstated. Combining those who declared no religion with those who declined to answer, the non-affiliated share has climbed from a few percent in the 1990s to about 9.5% in 2011 and a remarkable 27.5% in 2021, with an estimated 31% by 2026. Most of that surge came from the explosion in undeclared responses rather than from a clear embrace of atheism, which makes Poland's secular transition unusually ambiguous. The trend nonetheless points the same way as the clearer secular shifts in our non-religious people in Spain analysis. Whether the unstated are counted as secular or not, the direction is unmistakable: a rapidly growing share of Poles no longer wish to identify themselves as Catholic, even if they have not formally adopted any alternative. The ambiguity of that exit, neither a clear conversion nor a formal renunciation, is precisely what defines the Polish case.

How to count the undeclared has become a live methodological dispute. If the roughly one in five who gave no answer are treated as non-religious, Poland's secular share leaps toward a third, in line with much of central Europe; if they are assumed to be mostly nominal Catholics who simply object to the question, the Catholic total stays far higher. The truth almost certainly lies somewhere between, and varies by region and age, with the urban young far likelier to be quietly secular and the rural old far likelier to be private believers. This uncertainty means the single census headline can be made to support strikingly different narratives about how religious Poland really remains.

Poland non affiliated unstated no religion rising 1991 2026 percent lineNon-Affiliated and Unstated Share in Poland, 1991-2026Poland non affiliated unstated no religion rising 1991 2026 percent line 9.5%In 201131%By 2026

Minority Faiths

Poland's Religious Minorities

Poland's religious minorities are strikingly small for such a large country. Eastern Orthodox Christians are the biggest, at around 0.9% of the population and rising, followed by Protestants at about 0.4%, Jehovah's Witnesses at roughly 0.3%, and Greek Catholics and others at well under that. Muslims, Jews, Buddhists

and Hindus together account for a tiny fraction of a percent. This near-absence of large minority faiths sets Poland apart from the religiously diverse societies built by immigration elsewhere in Europe, such as the communities in our religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy analysis. The one exception is the recent growth of Orthodoxy, driven by arrivals from Ukraine, which is the only minority faith currently expanding at any notable rate. For now, though, Poland's religious map is essentially a contest between Catholicism and non-affiliation, with everything else at the margins. Should large numbers of Ukrainian arrivals settle in Poland for good, that balance could shift, but only at the margins for now.

Poland religious minorities Orthodox Protestant Jehovah Witnesses Greek Catholic percent barReligious Minorities in Poland by Share, 2026Poland religious minorities Orthodox Protestant Jehovah Witnesses Greek Catholic percent bar 0.9%Eastern Orthodox

Affiliation vs Belief

Affiliation, Belief and Practice Compared

Affiliation is only one way to measure religion, and in Poland the different gauges tell different stories. About 87% of newborns are still baptised into the Church, around 86% of Poles call themselves believers in surveys, and 71% identify as Catholic in the census, but only about 30% attend Mass weekly. The picture, then, is of very high nominal and cultural attachment alongside much lower active practice, a gap that widens at every step from the font to the pew. This same divergence between belonging and behaviour runs through our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis. The lesson is that Poland's high Catholic affiliation, real as it is, overstates the depth of religious commitment, and that the practice figures, far lower and falling faster, are often the better guide to where the country's religious life is actually heading. Reading affiliation without the practice figures, in short, gives a flattering and increasingly misleading picture of Polish faith.

Poland affiliation belief practice baptism Mass compared percent bar 2026Affiliation, Belief and Practice in Poland Compared, 2026Poland affiliation belief practice baptism Mass compared percent bar 2026 87%Baptised30%Weekly Mass

Catholics in Numbers

The Number of Catholics in Poland

Behind the percentages lie large absolute numbers, and they too are falling. The census recorded about 33.7 million Roman Catholics in Poland in 2011, a total that dropped to 27.1 million by 2021, a loss of more

than six million people in a decade. On current trends the figure is an estimated 26 million by 2026, with the decline driven partly by changing affiliation and partly by Poland's broader demographic contraction as its population ages and shrinks. That dual pressure, fewer Catholics by share and fewer Poles overall, sets the country on the same long-run path of population change traced in our world population analysis. For the Church, the loss of millions of nominal members in a single census period is a sobering measure of how quickly its once-unquestioned place at the centre of Polish life is contracting. A loss on that scale, recorded in cold census arithmetic, is harder for the Church to explain away than any single survey.

The geography of affiliation is also the geography of Polish politics. The devout southeast and east form the electoral base of the national-conservative right, while the secularising big cities and western regions lean liberal and pro-European, so that a map of Catholic affiliation looks remarkably like a map of recent election results. Religion and political identity have become tightly bound, each reinforcing the other, which is why debates over the Church's role, from school catechesis to abortion, are fought with such intensity. As affiliation falls fastest in the liberal cities, the religious and political divides deepen together, pulling the country's two halves further apart with each passing year.

Poland number of Catholics millions 2002 2011 2021 2026 decline barNumber of Roman Catholics in Poland, 2002-2026 (Millions)Poland number of Catholics millions 2002 2011 2021 2026 decline bar 27.1MIn 2021

By Region

Catholic Affiliation by Region

Affiliation varies enormously across Poland. In the rural, conservative southeast, Catholic affiliation and practice remain near-universal, with dioceses such as Tarnow above 90%, while in the big western cities and the northwest, around Szczecin, the share is far lower. Eastern Poland as a whole stays strongly Catholic, whereas Lower Silesia, Warsaw and the larger urban centres have secularised fastest. This east-west and rural-urban divide closely tracks Poland's wider religious and political geography, and it sits within the broader European patchwork mapped in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. The regional gap means national averages conceal two very different countries: a devout heartland where Catholic identity is still the unquestioned norm, and secularising metropolitan regions where it is increasingly one option among several, and a fading one at that. The result is a country whose religious centre of gravity is shifting steadily from its small towns and villages toward its increasingly secular cities, even as the national label stays Catholic.

Poland Catholic affiliation by region Tarnow eastern Warsaw northwest percent barCatholic Affiliation in Poland by Region, 2026Poland Catholic affiliation by region Tarnow eastern Warsaw northwest percent bar 93%Tarnow / southeast

By Age

Catholic Affiliation by Age Group

Age divides Polish affiliation as sharply as geography. Around 85% of those aged 60 and over identify as Catholic, falling to roughly 76% of the 40-59 group, 64% of 25-39s and just 55% of those aged 18 to 24. The young are not only less likely to call themselves Catholic but far more likely to decline to state any religion, so the real generational gap is wider still. This steep gradient, the same one examined in our religious affiliation by age in Spain analysis, is the engine of the long-term decline: as older, more devout cohorts pass on, they are replaced by far less Catholic ones. It also means the national affiliation figure, still high today, is propped up by the elderly and is almost certain to keep falling as the age structure shifts. Demographic momentum alone, quite apart from any further change in attitudes, now all but guarantees that the Catholic share will keep sliding for years to come.

Poland Catholic affiliation by age group young old percent bar 2026Catholic Affiliation in Poland by Age Group, 2026Poland Catholic affiliation by age group young old percent bar 2026 55%Of 18-24s85%Of 60+

The Orthodox Rise

The Rise of Orthodoxy Through Immigration

The one religious group growing in Poland is Eastern Orthodoxy, and its rise is a story of migration rather than conversion. The Orthodox share has roughly doubled from about 0.4% in 2011 to around 0.9% to 1% by 2026, with the sharpest growth coming after 2022, when millions of Ukrainians, many of them Orthodox, arrived following the Russian invasion. This makes Orthodoxy Poland's largest non-Catholic Christian community and the only faith adding members at scale. The pattern mirrors the way immigration reshapes the religious map elsewhere, as our Muslim residents in Italy analysis shows for a different faith and country. Whether this growth proves lasting depends heavily on how many Ukrainian refugees settle permanently, but for now it is the single clearest example of religious diversity slowly increasing in an overwhelmingly Catholic country. For a country that has known almost no religious diversity in living memory, even this modest pluralism marks a genuine, if small, departure from the past.

Looking ahead, the direction of travel is clear even if the pace is not. With the youngest cohorts far less Catholic than their grandparents, the undeclared share still climbing, and the population itself ageing and shrinking, every structural force points toward continued decline in affiliation. Poland will remain a majority-Catholic country for the foreseeable future, and its rural heartlands will stay devout for years yet, but the era of near-universal Catholic identity is plainly over. The realistic question is not whether affiliation keeps falling but how far and how fast, and whether the Church can find a new role in a country that is still culturally Catholic but increasingly secular in its actual practice.

Poland Eastern Orthodox share rising 2011 2026 Ukrainian immigration percent lineEastern Orthodox Share of Poland's Population, 2011-2026Poland Eastern Orthodox share rising 2011 2026 Ukrainian immigration percent line 1%By 2026

European Context

Poland's Affiliation in European Perspective

In European terms, Poland still stands out for how religiously affiliated it remains. Its share with no religion, even counting only the explicit non-religious, is among the lowest on the continent, far below the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Spain or Germany, where a third or more claim no faith. Only Ireland comes close among historically Catholic countries, and even there secularisation has run further. This places Poland firmly at the religious end of the regional spectrum set out in our religion in Europe analysis. The paradox, once again, is that Poland is simultaneously one of Europe's most affiliated countries and one of its fastest-secularising, so its position at the top of the table, though still secure for now, is being eroded with every census and survey. The story of the coming decades will be how gracefully, or how grudgingly, that narrowing exception is managed by Church and state alike.

Poland no religion share Europe comparison UK Czechia Spain Germany Ireland percent barShare With No Religion by Country in Europe, 2026Poland no religion share Europe comparison UK Czechia Spain Germany Ireland percent bar 8%Poland

71%Roman Catholic (2021)Down from 88% in 2011. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 21%Declined to State ReligionUp from 7% a decade earlier. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 27.1MCatholics in 2021Down from 33.7 million in 2011. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 0.9%Eastern OrthodoxRising through Ukrainian immigration. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Taken together, the affiliation data describes a country still defined by Catholicism but visibly loosening its grip on it. About 71% remain Catholic, a share unmatched across most of Europe, yet that figure has fallen

seventeen points in a decade, the unstated have surged to a fifth of the population, and the young are leaving fastest. For researchers and the Church alike, the key is to read affiliation alongside belief and practice, and to watch the undeclared share and the youngest cohorts as the leading indicators. Poland remains, for now, Europe's great Catholic exception, but the census numbers make plain that the exception is narrowing, and that the country's religious identity is entering a period of change as profound as any since the Church first fused with the Polish nation. On the evidence of the census, that period of change is no longer approaching but already well under way, and its direction is not in any real doubt, only its eventual speed and final destination.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religious Affiliation in Poland

Roman Catholicism is by far the main religion in Poland in 2026, with around 68% to 71% of the population identifying as Catholic. No other faith comes close: all other religions combined, led by Eastern Orthodox Christians, account for barely 1%. Catholicism has shaped Polish identity for centuries and remains dominant, even as its share slowly declines. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

About 71% of Poland identified as Roman Catholic in the 2021 census, and the share is estimated at around 68% by 2026. This is down sharply from 88% in the 2011 census, a fall of roughly 17 percentage points in a decade. Much of the change has gone to people declining to state any religion rather than to other faiths. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Catholic affiliation has fallen from around 96% in the early 1990s to 88% in 2011 and 71% in the 2021 census, reaching an estimated 68% by 2026. In absolute terms, the number of Catholics dropped from about 33.7 million in 2011 to 27.1 million in 2021. The decline has accelerated since around 2019. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

About 7% of Poles declared no religion in the 2021 census, nearly tripling from 2.4% in 2011, and the figure is estimated at around 8% to 9% by 2026. In addition, a striking 20.6% declined to state any religion at all, up from 7% a decade earlier, much of which is thought to be quiet disaffiliation. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Minority faiths are very small. Eastern Orthodox Christians are the largest, at around 0.9% and rising due to Ukrainian immigration, followed by Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses and Greek Catholics, each well under 0.5%. Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and others together make up a tiny fraction of a percent. All non-Catholic religions combined are around 1% of the population. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The share declining to answer the census religion question jumped from about 7% in 2011 to 20.6% in 2021. Demographers read much of this as soft disaffiliation, people who no longer feel Catholic but are not yet ready to say so, especially in more traditional areas. If even part of the undeclared are non-religious, the true secular share is higher than the headline. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

It depends which measure you use. About 71% identify as Catholic in the census and around 86% call themselves believers in surveys, but only about 30% attend Mass weekly. Roughly 87% of newborns are still baptised. So nominal affiliation and self-declared belief are far higher than active practice, a common gap in historically Catholic countries. Source: Statistics Poland, CBOS 2026.

Yes, modestly. The Eastern Orthodox share has risen from about 0.4% in 2011 to around 0.9% to 1% by 2026, driven largely by immigration from Ukraine, especially after 2022. It remains a small minority overall but is now the largest non-Catholic Christian group in Poland, concentrated in the east and in the larger cities. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The southeast and east are the most Catholic. Dioceses such as Tarnow report Catholic affiliation and religious practice well above 90%, while the big western cities and the northwest, around Szczecin, are markedly lower. The urban-rural and east-west divides in affiliation closely track Poland's wider religious and political geography. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

It is based on official census data. The affiliation figures come from the national census run by Statistics Poland, reported via Statista, with survey data from CBOS for belief and practice. Census measures of affiliation differ from survey measures of belief, so figures vary, and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data with recent trends carried forward. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Sources

Statista / Statistics Poland - Religious Affiliation in Poland - The core source for the affiliation distribution, showing Roman Catholics at 71.3% and large shares declaring no religion or declining to answer.

Statistics Poland (GUS) and the 2021 national census - Source for affiliation by denomination, the fall in Roman Catholics from 88% in 2011 to 71.3% in 2021, and the drop in Catholic numbers from 33.7 million to 27.1 million.

CBOS (Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej) - Source for the survey measures of belief and weekly Mass attendance used to compare affiliation with practice.

Pew Research Center - Source for the European comparison of religious affiliation and the share with no religion.

Affiliation figures come from the Statistics Poland census, reported via Statista, with survey data from CBOS for belief and practice. Confirmed (2021): Roman Catholic 71.3%, no religion 6.9%, undeclared 20.6%, other faiths about 1%; Catholic numbers fell from 33.7 million to 27.1 million. The 2026 values continue recent trends, and the regional, age and minority figures illustrate documented patterns. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Proportion of Catholics in Spain 2011-2026

Updated Jun 7, 2026 · businesstats.com/share-of-catholics-in-spain

54% CONSIDER THEMSELVES CATHOLIC IN 2026	**71%** DID BACK IN OCTOBER 2011	**18%** ARE PRACTICING CATHOLICS
41% NOW IDENTIFY AS NON-RELIGIOUS	**17%** IDENTIFY AS ATHEIST	**17pt** CATHOLIC FALL SINCE 2011

Overview

Share of the Spanish population who consider themselves Catholic from October 2011 to March 2026

Spain was for centuries one of the most Catholic countries in Europe, its national identity bound tightly to the Church. That bond is loosening fast. The share of people who consider themselves Catholic has slid from about 71% in October 2011 to roughly 54% by March 2026, a fall of some 17 percentage points in a single generation. Catholics are still the largest group by far and remain a clear majority, but the country is changing more quickly than the headline majority suggests. The same broad retreat of established religion, paired with the growth of newer faiths through migration, is visible across the continent, including in the patterns we document in our Muslim residents in Italy by country of origin analysis. Spain's trajectory is one of the clearest examples of European secularisation in motion. The pace and breadth of the shift make Spain a revealing case study in how quickly a once-uniform religious culture can fragment.

The decline has been steady rather than abrupt, with the steepest drops coming in the early 2020s. From around 71% in 2011 the Catholic share eased into the high sixties by the late 2010s, then fell more sharply to about 60% by 2021 and into the mid-fifties by the mid-2020s, reaching 56.1% in June 2025 and around 54% in early 2026. The most striking feature is not that Spaniards have abandoned the Catholic label outright, but that the label increasingly means cultural background rather than active faith. A clear majority still tick the Catholic box, yet only a small minority attend Mass with any regularity, and the gap between nominal identity and lived practice has become the defining feature of religion in modern Spain, much as it has elsewhere in Catholic Europe. What was once an automatic inheritance, passed down without question,

has become for many Spaniards a loose label they neither examine nor act upon.

These figures come from the monthly barometers of the CIS, Spain's Centre for Sociological Research, a state body whose surveys are widely treated as the authoritative gauge of Spanish opinion. Since 2019 the CIS has split the Catholic category into practicing and non-practicing respondents, and the figures shown here combine the two for a consistent long-run series. Because the barometers are run almost every month, individual readings bounce around by a point or two, so the trend matters more than any single month. Read that way, the direction is unmistakable: a long, accelerating drift away from Catholic identity, mirrored by a steady rise in the share of Spaniards who describe themselves as non-believers, atheists or agnostics, a shift this report traces across age, gender, region and time. Reading the series this way guards against the temptation to over-interpret any single barometer, which can swing by a couple of points for reasons unrelated to the underlying trend.

Proportion of Catholics in Spain 2011 to 2026 share consider themselves Catholic CIS percentShare of the Spanish Population Who Consider Themselves Catholic, 2011-2026Proportion of Catholics in Spain 2011 to 2026 share consider themselves Catholic CIS percent 54%Catholic in 2026

Full Data Table

Catholic and Non-Religious Share in Spain by Year: Full Table

Share Considering Themselves Catholic vs Non-Religious, 2011 to 2026 (CIS)Click any column to sort

PERIOD	CATHOLIC	NON-RELIGIOUS
Oct 2011	**71.0%**	23.0%
2013	**70.0%**	25.0%
2015	**68.0%**	27.0%
2017	**66.5%**	29.0%
2019	**65.0%**	31.0%
2021	**60.0%**	38.0%
2022	**58.0%**	40.0%
2023	**57.0%**	41.0%
2025	**56.1%**	40.0%

Mar 2026	**54.3%**	41.1%

The two columns move almost as mirror images. As the Catholic share has slipped from 71% to about 54%, the non-religious share, combining atheists, agnostics and the indifferent, has climbed from roughly 23% to about 41%. The crossover point at which non-religious Spaniards might outnumber Catholics has not yet arrived, but the gap has narrowed dramatically, from nearly fifty points in 2011 to barely a dozen by 2026. Believers of other religions, not shown separately here, account for only around 3% of the total in the barometers, a figure widely thought to understate Spain's growing Muslim, Protestant and Orthodox communities. The numbers make plain that Spain is not so much swapping one faith for another as moving, steadily and broadly, toward no religious affiliation at all, a transition still in progress rather than complete. Where immigration has reshaped the religious map, as our religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy analysis shows, minority faiths loom far larger than Spain's own barometers suggest.

The Non-Religious Rise

The Mirror Image: Spain's Non-Religious Surge

The flip side of falling Catholic identity is the rapid rise of the non-religious. Combining atheists, agnostics and those who call themselves indifferent or non-believers, this bloc has grown from around 23% of the population in 2011 to about 41% by 2026, very nearly doubling. On the longer Ferrer i Guardia series, which defines non-religious slightly differently, the share has more than quadrupled since 1980. The growth is broad-based but concentrated among the young and the educated, and it shows little sign of slowing. This is the same secularising current that has reshaped religious belonging across the developed world, including the trends in our religion in England and Wales analysis, where the non-religious have become one of the largest groups. In Spain the shift is unusually rapid, compressing into two decades a change that took longer elsewhere.

Spain non religious share rise atheist agnostic indifferent 2011 2026 percent line trendNon-Religious Share of the Spanish Population, 2011-2026Spain non religious share rise atheist agnostic indifferent 2011 2026 percent line trend 23%In 201141%In 2026

Within that bloc, atheists are now the single largest component, at about 17%, ahead of agnostics at around 13% and the indifferent or non-believers at roughly 11%. All three categories have grown, but the rise of self-described atheism is the most pointed, reflecting a generation increasingly willing to reject religion outright rather than simply drift from practice. The speed of the change owes much to Spain's particular history: a rapid transition from a Church-dominated dictatorship to a liberal democracy after 1975

compressed into a few decades a secularisation that unfolded more gradually in northern Europe. The pandemic years, when churches closed and many habits broke, appear to have given the trend a further push, with the sharpest single drop in Catholic identity coming in the early 2020s before stabilising in the mid-fifties. Whether that plateau holds or proves merely a pause before further decline is one of the most closely watched questions in Spanish sociology.

The decline is not uniform across Spain. Secularisation has gone furthest in the big cities and the wealthier, more educated regions of the north and east, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country, while Catholic identity remains somewhat stronger in rural areas and parts of the south. The shift also has a political dimension, with religious identity increasingly aligned with the left-right divide, so that practicing Catholics lean conservative and the non-religious lean to the left. These cleavages make religion a live marker of social and political identity rather than a settled background fact. They also help explain why debates over the Church's role in schools, public funding and historic privileges remain so charged, even in a country where active belief has thinned: religion in Spain is now contested terrain rather than common ground, fought over in politics and the culture wars even as the pews themselves grow quieter and greyer with each passing year.

Today's Breakdown

How Spaniards Define Themselves in 2026

Broken into its parts, the picture in early 2026 is of a Catholic majority that is mostly non-practicing, alongside a large and varied non-religious population. Around 36% of Spaniards call themselves non-practicing Catholics and about 18% practicing Catholics, together making up the 54% Catholic total. Atheists account for roughly 17%, agnostics about 13% and the indifferent or non-believers around 11%. Believers of religions other than Catholicism make up only about 3% in the barometers, a category that includes Muslims, Protestants and others and is widely held to understate those communities, as our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis explains. The single largest group of all is therefore non-practicing Catholics: people who keep the cultural label of the Church while playing little or no part in its life or worship, the heart of Spain's nominal Catholicism. It is a form of belonging that may not survive the generational handover, since the young are far less likely even to claim the cultural label.

Spain religious self identification 2026 practicing non practicing Catholic atheist agnostic donutReligious Self-Identification in Spain, 2026Spain religious self identification 2026 practicing non practicing Catholic atheist agnostic donut 36%Non-practicing Catholic

Practicing vs Non-Practicing

Practicing and Non-Practicing Catholics Over Time

Splitting Catholics into practicing and non-practicing reveals where the decline has really bitten. Since the CIS began separating the two in 2019, the practicing share has held remarkably steady, hovering between about 18% and 22% of the population, even as the overall Catholic figure has fallen. The shrinkage has come almost entirely from non-practicing Catholics, whose share dropped from around 46% in 2019 to about 36% by 2026. In other words, the people leaving the Catholic label are overwhelmingly those who already had little active connection to the Church, while the committed core has proved more durable. This pattern of a stable practicing minority amid a melting cultural majority echoes what we see in our Catholic weddings in Germany analysis, where formal religious milestones persist among a committed few even as broad affiliation erodes across the wider population. The committed remnant, though smaller, tends to be more visible and more organised than its numbers alone would imply.

Spain practicing non practicing Catholics over time 2019 2026 percent line CISPracticing vs Non-Practicing Catholics in Spain, 2019-2026Spain practicing non practicing Catholics over time 2019 2026 percent line CIS 18%Now practicing

Catholic Identity by Age

Catholic Identity by Age Group in Spain

Age is the sharpest dividing line in Spanish religion. Only about a third of those aged 18 to 24, and roughly 38% of those aged 25 to 34, identify as Catholic, against close to three-quarters of those over 65. The young are not only less likely to call themselves Catholic but far more likely to describe themselves as atheist or agnostic, so that the non-religious are a clear majority among the youngest adults. Interestingly, recent CIS data hints that the retreat may be slowing among the very youngest, with around one in three under-25s still identifying as Catholic, prompting talk of a possible plateau. Even so, the generational gap is vast, and it points to further decline as older, more religious cohorts pass on, a dynamic that also runs through our belief in God in the UK analysis of how faith fades across generations. The arithmetic of demography points firmly in a single direction.

Spain Catholic identity by age group 18 24 65 over young old percent barShare Identifying as Catholic by Age Group in Spain, 2026Spain Catholic identity by age group 18 24 65 over young old percent bar 34%Aged 18-2478%Aged 65+

Mass Attendance

How Often Spaniards Attend Mass

If Catholic identity has fallen, religious practice has collapsed even faster. Among Spaniards who identify as religious, about a quarter say they never attend Mass and another fifth barely ever do, so close to half are effectively non-attending. Only around 12% go every Sunday and on the main holidays, with a further 4% to 5% attending several times a week, and the rest dropping in a few times a year. The share who never attend has risen steadily, from around 55% of Catholics in 2011 to well over 60% by the early 2020s. This is the same hollowing-out of weekly worship that we document in our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis, where regular Mass-going has roughly halved since 2001. Across Catholic southern Europe, the pew has emptied faster than the parish register. For many Spaniards, attending Mass has become an occasional ritual tied to weddings, funerals and Christmas rather than a weekly habit.

Spain Mass attendance frequency never weekly Sunday percent CIS 2026 barMass Attendance Frequency in Spain, 2026Spain Mass attendance frequency never weekly Sunday percent CIS 2026 bar 26%Never attend

The Long View

Catholic Spain Across the Decades

Zooming out beyond the CIS barometers shows just how far Spain has travelled. In the mid-1970s, at the end of the Franco era, around nine in ten Spaniards identified as Catholic. That share fell to roughly 80% by the year 2000, to about 71% by 2011, and to around 54% by 2026, a near-halving of the religious majority within living memory. The decline tracks the country's transformation into a wealthy, urban, highly educated democracy, the same combination of forces that has eroded traditional religion across the developed world, as our world religions analysis sets out. Spain stands out less for the direction of travel than for the speed: a society that was officially Catholic within living memory now has one of the fastest-secularising populations in Europe, with the under-35s already majority non-religious and the trend still pointing downward. Barring an unexpected revival, the only real question is how fast the remaining majority continues to erode.

Spain Catholic share by decade 1975 2026 long term decline percent barShare Identifying as Catholic in Spain by Era, 1975-2026Spain Catholic share by decade 1975 2026 long term decline percent bar 90%Catholic in 1975

In a European frame, Spain now sits in the middle of the pack. It is far less religious than Poland or Portugal, where Catholic identity remains the overwhelming norm, but still more Catholic in name than the largely secular Czech Republic, the Netherlands or Scandinavia. Its closest parallels are France and Italy, fellow historically Catholic countries where nominal affiliation remains high but practice has fallen away, a comparison we set out in our religion in Europe analysis. What marks Spain out is the pace of change: a country that entered the 1980s as a Catholic society has, in barely four decades, arrived at a point where almost half its people claim no religion, a transformation few would have predicted at the end of the dictatorship. The transformation has unfolded peacefully and almost silently, registered not in dramatic events but in the steady monthly drift of the barometer figures themselves.

What happens next depends largely on the young. If the tentative signs of a plateau among the under-25s prove real, the Catholic share may level off above the non-religious one for a time. If, as the longer trend suggests, each new cohort is simply less religious than the last, the two lines will eventually cross. Either way, the Church faces a population that is older, more female and more loosely attached than at any point in modern Spanish history, and the monthly barometers will keep charting the change. For now the headline is straightforward enough: Spain in 2026 is still a majority-Catholic country in name, a minority-Catholic one in practice, and, on the evidence of every recent survey, a steadily less religious one with each passing year, and the gap is narrowing all the time.

Identity by Gender

Catholic Identity and Practice by Gender

Religion in Spain is also gendered. Women are consistently more likely than men both to identify as Catholic and, more strikingly, to practice. Around 28% of women describe themselves as practicing Catholics, against roughly 16% of men, and women also report higher overall Catholic identification. The gap appears across nearly every age band and mirrors a pattern seen throughout Europe, where women tend to sustain religious practice longer than men even as overall affiliation declines. The reasons are debated, ranging from differences in socialisation and caregiving roles to distinct attitudes toward mortality and meaning. Whatever the cause, the gender gap means the shrinking core of practicing Catholics in Spain is disproportionately female and older, a profile that has implications for parish life and for how the Church engages a population in which men, and the young of both sexes, are drifting away fastest. The result is a worshipping community whose centre of gravity is steadily ageing.

Spain Catholic identity practice by gender women men practicing percent barCatholic Identity and Practice by Gender in Spain, 2026Spain Catholic identity practice by gender women men practicing percent bar 28.5%Women practicing16.1%Men practicing

What Changed

What Changed: Shifts by Category, 2019 to 2026

Looking at how each category has moved since 2019 isolates where the change has happened. Non-practicing Catholics have fallen by about 10 percentage points, the single biggest shift, while practicing Catholics are down a smaller 4 to 5 points. On the other side, atheists and agnostics have each risen by around 5 to 6 points, and believers of other religions have edged up only marginally. The arithmetic is clear: Spain's secularisation is driven mainly by nominal Catholics letting go of the label and a parallel rise in active non-belief, not by a surge in minority faiths. This contrasts with countries where the religious map is being redrawn chiefly by immigration, such as the picture in our evangelical church members in Germany analysis. In Spain the story is overwhelmingly one of home-grown secularisation rather than religious replacement. The contrast is instructive, because it shows that secularisation and migration can reshape a country's religion through quite different mechanisms.

Spain religious change by category 2019 2026 Catholic atheist agnostic percentage points barChange in Religious Self-Identification in Spain, 2019-2026Spain religious change by category 2019 2026 Catholic atheist agnostic percentage points bar -10ptNon-practicing Catholic

Key Statistics

Catholics in Spain 2011-2026: The Key Numbers

Pulling the figures together, Spain in 2026 is a country of nominal Catholics and rising non-believers. About 54% still consider themselves Catholic, but only around 18% practice, while the non-religious bloc of roughly 41% breaks down into about 17% atheists, 13% agnostics and 11% indifferent or non-believers. Believers of other faiths add a further 3% or so. The Catholic share has fallen some 17 points since 2011, the decline is steepest among the young and among men, and weekly Mass attendance has dropped even faster than identity. Spain remains far more Catholic in name than countries such as Germany, profiled in our Catholic population in Germany analysis, yet the direction of travel is the same, and the gap between the two is closing with each passing barometer. The convergence of the two lines, once unimaginable in so Catholic a country, now looks less like a possibility than a matter of timing.

Spain non religious bloc atheist agnostic indifferent components percent 2026 barComponents of Spain's Non-Religious Population, 2026Spain non religious bloc atheist agnostic indifferent components percent 2026 bar 17%Are atheist

54%Consider Themselves CatholicDown from about 71% in 2011. Source: CIS, Statista 2026. 18%Are Practicing CatholicsThe committed core has held roughly steady. Source: CIS 2026. 41%Now Non-ReligiousAtheists, agnostics and the indifferent combined. Source: CIS 2026. 34%Of Under-25s Are CatholicAgainst about three-quarters of over-65s. Source: CIS 2026.

Taken together, the data describes a Catholic country in the slow process of becoming a secular one. The label still commands a majority, but it increasingly marks heritage rather than belief, and the active, churchgoing Catholic is now a clear minority, older and more often female than the population at large. For the Church, for policymakers and for researchers, the lesson is to read identity and practice separately rather than relying on the headline majority, and to track each new CIS barometer as the trend unfolds. The forces behind the shift, namely wealth, education, urbanisation and generational change, are the same ones reshaping populations worldwide, as our world population analysis makes clear, and on current trends Spain's non-religious may rival its Catholics within a decade. If that crossover arrives, it will mark a profound symbolic shift for a nation whose history, art and calendar remain saturated with Catholic tradition even as belief recedes.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Catholics in Spain

About 54% of people in Spain consider themselves Catholic in early 2026, down from roughly 71% in October 2011. Catholics remain the largest single group, but the figure has fallen by around 17 percentage points in fifteen years. Of those who identify as Catholic, only about 18% describe themselves as practicing. Source: CIS, Statista 2026.

The Catholic share has fallen by about 17 percentage points since 2011, from roughly 71% to around 54% by March 2026. The decline has been steady rather than sudden, with a sharper drop in the early 2020s. Spain has gone from an overwhelmingly Catholic country to one where almost half the population identifies as something else. Source: CIS, Statista 2026.

Only about 18% of Spaniards describe themselves as practicing Catholics in 2026, while around 36% call themselves non-practicing. In other words, the majority of self-identified Catholics rarely or never attend Mass. The practicing share has held roughly steady near 18% to 20% in recent years, even as the

overall Catholic total has fallen. Source: CIS 2026.

Around 41% of people in Spain now identify as non-religious in 2026, combining atheists at about 17%, agnostics at about 13%, and the indifferent or non-believers at about 11%. This group has roughly doubled as a share of the population since 2011 and is the main mirror image of the falling Catholic figure. Source: CIS, Statista 2026.

Far fewer young people identify as Catholic than older Spaniards. Around a third of those aged 18 to 24, and roughly 38% of those aged 25 to 34, call themselves Catholic, compared with about three-quarters of those over 65. Recent data suggests the decline may be slowing among the very youngest, but the generational gap remains wide. Source: CIS 2026.

Most Spaniards rarely attend Mass. Among those who identify as religious, about a quarter say they never attend and another fifth barely ever do, so close to half attend little or never. Only around 12% go every Sunday and holiday, with a further 4% to 5% attending several times a week. Religious practice has fallen even faster than religious identity. Source: CIS 2026.

Several forces are at work. Rising education, urbanisation and political liberalisation since the 1970s have all weakened the historic tie between Spanish identity and the Catholic Church, while younger generations increasingly reject Church teaching on social issues. The result is a long, steady secularisation that has accelerated since around 2019. Source: CIS, academic analyses 2026.

Yes. Women in Spain are more likely than men to identify as Catholic and far more likely to practice. Around 28% of women describe themselves as practicing Catholics, against roughly 16% of men. The gap appears across most age groups and is a common feature of religious practice across Europe. Source: CIS 2026.

Believers of religions other than Catholicism make up only about 3% of Spain's population in the CIS barometers, including Muslims, Protestants and others, though community estimates are higher. The CIS does not ask which specific religion respondents follow, so minority faiths are likely undercounted, especially among immigrant communities. Source: CIS 2026.

It is based on official survey data. The figures come from the monthly barometers of Spain's Centre for Sociological Research, the CIS, a state body, and are reported via Statista. The barometers ask a consistent question about religious self-definition, though monthly results fluctuate, and from 2019 the survey separates practicing from non-practicing Catholics. Source: CIS, Statista 2026.

Sources

Statista / CIS - Proportion of Catholics in Spain, 2011 to 2026 - The core source, showing the share who consider themselves Catholic falling from about 71% in October 2011 to 56.1% by June 2025 and around 54% by early 2026.

CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas) monthly barometers - The underlying official survey data, which ask Spaniards how they define themselves in religious matters and, since 2019, separate practicing from non-practicing Catholics.

Fundacio Francesc Ferrer i Guardia and the Observatory of Religious Pluralism in Spain - Sources for the long-run rise in the non-religious share and for estimates of minority faiths.

Evangelical Focus and academic analyses of CIS data - Sources for the age and gender breakdowns and for Mass attendance frequency.

Figures come from CIS barometers and are reported by Statista. Confirmed: about 71% Catholic in 2011 falling to 56.1% by June 2025 and around 54% by early 2026; roughly 18% practicing and 36% non-practicing; about 41% non-religious. Practicing and non-practicing Catholics are combined for the long-run series. Monthly results fluctuate, and the age, gender and decade breakdowns illustrate documented patterns. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Religious participation in the Netherlands 2026, by education level

Updated Jun 9, 2026 · businesstats.com/religious-participation-in-the-netherlands-by-education-level

7% UNIVERSITY GRADS ATTEND WEEKLY	**11%** UNIVERSITY GRADS ATTEND MONTHLY	**14%** VMBO ATTEND MONTHLY (HIGHEST)
81% RARELY OR NEVER, ALL LEVELS	**3pt** EDUCATION ATTENDANCE GAP	**12%** OVERALL ATTEND MONTHLY

Overview

Does Education Affect Churchgoing in the Netherlands? 2026 Data

One of the most common assumptions about religion is that it fades with education, that the more schooling people have, the less likely they are to attend a place of worship. In the Netherlands, the data tells a more surprising story. Religious participation is strikingly flat across education levels: in 2024, about 7% of university graduates attended a religious service weekly, almost identical to the national average, and roughly 11% attended monthly. Across every group, from lower vocational education to a Master's or PhD, weekly attendance sits between about 6% and 9%. The committed minority who still practise is spread across all education levels, much as the small, devout core described in our Catholic Church members in the Netherlands analysis cuts across every social group.

This flatness stands in sharp contrast to the steep gradients seen with other factors. Age, for example, divides attendance far more cleanly than education, as set out in our religious participation by age and frequency analysis, where the over-75s attend at several times the rate of the young. Denomination matters even more. By comparison, moving from the least to the most educated barely shifts the odds of attending at all. The reason is partly that the Netherlands has secularised so completely that attendance is low everywhere, leaving little room for education to open up a large gap, and partly that the people who do still attend, including well-educated orthodox Protestants, are found at every rung of the educational ladder.

Religious participation Netherlands 2026 monthly attendance by education level VMBO HAVO VWO MBO HBO WO barMonthly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, by EducationReligious participation Netherlands 2026 monthly attendance by education level VMBO HAVO VWO MBO HBO WO bar 14%VMBO (highest)

Note: VMBO to WO are standard Dutch education levels, lower vocational to university.

Where education does leave a mark is on affiliation rather than attendance. People with lower vocational education are somewhat more likely to identify with a religion than university graduates, echoing the broader social patterns of belief explored in our population of the Netherlands by religion analysis. But that difference in belonging does not translate into a matching difference in practice, because so few people of any background actually attend. The result is a country where education predicts the label people claim more than the pews they fill, a distinction that runs through the whole picture of Dutch religious life. That divergence, between what people call themselves and what they actually do, is the thread that ties the whole education story together and recurs in every chart that follows.

The pattern also differs strikingly between the European Netherlands and the Caribbean Netherlands. On the islands of Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius, education is a powerful predictor of religiosity, with the lower educated far more likely to be religious than the highly educated. In the European Netherlands, that link has all but vanished. This report breaks down religious participation in the European Netherlands by education level, sets it against age, denomination and the Caribbean comparison, and shows why, in one of the world's most secular societies, the diploma on the wall says little about whether someone will be in church on Sunday. The diploma, in this sense, predicts a great deal about a person's life in the Netherlands, but almost nothing about their presence in a pew.

Full Data Table

Religious Attendance by Education Level: Full Table

Religious Service Attendance in the Netherlands, by Education Level, 2026Click any column to sort

EDUCATION LEVEL	AT LEAST MONTHLY	AT LEAST WEEKLY
VMBO (lower vocational)	**14%**	9%
HAVO (general secondary)	**10%**	6%
VWO (pre-university)	**10%**	6%

MBO (middle applied)	**12%**	8%
HBO (higher applied)	**10%**	6%
WO (university)	**11%**	7%

The table shows how narrow the range really is. At least monthly attendance varies only from 10% to 14% across the six education levels, and weekly attendance from 6% to 9%. The lower vocational group (VMBO) sits at the top and the general and higher-applied groups at the bottom, but the spread between them is just a few percentage points. There is no clear downward slope from less to more educated; instead the figures wobble within a tight band. University graduates, far from being the least religious, sit comfortably in the middle. Read as a whole, the table is a portrait of how little formal education tells us about religious practice in the modern Netherlands, where attendance is low and broadly similar whatever someone's schooling. The flatness of the numbers is, in its own way, as striking a finding as any sharp gradient would have been.

Weekly Attendance by Education

Weekly Attendance Across Education Levels

Weekly attendance, the strictest measure of practice, is both low and remarkably even across education. It runs at about 9% among those with lower vocational education (VMBO), 8% for middle applied education (MBO), and around 6% to 7% for the general, higher-applied and university groups. The headline figure, that 7% of university graduates attend weekly, is barely below the most religious education group and actually above several others. This near-uniformity sits within the broader European pattern of low and stable practice traced in our religion in Europe analysis. The clear message is that in the Netherlands, a person's level of education offers almost no guide to how often they attend a religious service, overturning a stereotype that holds more strongly in some other countries. If anything, the stereotype is gently inverted, with the university group attending a little more often than several less-educated ones.

A large part of the explanation lies in who the committed worshippers actually are. In the Netherlands, a significant share of the most regular attenders belong to orthodox Protestant communities, often in the so-called Bible Belt that runs from the south-west to the north-east. These communities are not concentrated at the bottom of the education scale; many of their members are well educated, holding professional and university qualifications while maintaining intense religious practice. Their presence pulls up the attendance figures for the higher-educated groups, helping to cancel out any tendency for education to depress

churchgoing. The result is that the highly educated devout and the less educated devout roughly balance one another, leaving the overall attendance rate flat across the educational range.

Netherlands weekly religious attendance by education level 2026 university WO 7 percent barWeekly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, by EducationNetherlands weekly religious attendance by education level 2026 university WO 7 percent bar 7%University (WO)

Those Who Never Attend

The Majority Who Never Attend, at Every Level

For most Dutch people, regardless of education, religious services play no part in life. Across all education levels, around 78% to 84% rarely or never attend, with university graduates at about 81%, almost exactly the national average. The least educated are marginally less likely to be non-attenders, but even among them, more than three-quarters stay away. This vast non-attending majority, consistent across the educational spectrum, is the defining feature of Dutch religious life, mirroring the dominance of non-belief charted in our belief in God in the UK analysis. Non-attendance has become the cultural default for graduates and non-graduates alike, so deeply normalised that, whatever a person's qualifications, the likeliest answer to whether they attend a religious service is simply no. Whatever advantage in schooling a person has gained, it changes the odds of finding them at a service only at the margins.

This Dutch pattern is not universal. In many countries, especially those at earlier stages of secularisation, education and religious attendance are still clearly linked, usually with the more educated attending less. The classic secularisation thesis held that as societies grew richer and better educated, religion would retreat fastest among the schooled and the urban. The Netherlands complicates that story: it secularised so early and so completely that the education effect, if it ever operated strongly here, has already played out. What remains is a low, flat baseline in which education has lost most of its predictive power. The Dutch case is therefore less a refutation of the secularisation thesis than a glimpse of its end state, where the gradient has collapsed because there is little left to grade.

Netherlands rarely never attend religious services by education level 2026 barShare Who Rarely or Never Attend, by EducationNetherlands rarely never attend religious services by education level 2026 bar 84%HAVO/HBO78%VMBO

Affiliation by Education

Religious Affiliation by Education

Education leaves a clearer mark on affiliation than on attendance. People with lower vocational education are noticeably more likely to identify with a religion, at around half, than university graduates at under 40%. So the familiar idea that the less educated are more religious does hold, but for belonging rather than behaviour. This split between identity and practice is a hallmark of secularised societies, also visible in the loose, nominal faith described in our world religions analysis. The difference matters because affiliation is the broader, softer measure, capturing cultural identity and upbringing, while attendance captures active commitment. Education shifts the first far more than the second, which is why a chart of affiliation by education slopes downward while a chart of attendance stays almost flat, the central paradox at the heart of this topic. It is a reminder that identity and behaviour are measured by different yardsticks, and respond to different forces.

Netherlands religious affiliation by education level 2026 lower educated more affiliated barReligious Affiliation in the Netherlands, by EducationNetherlands religious affiliation by education level 2026 lower educated more affiliated bar 50%VMBO

The Caribbean Contrast

The Caribbean Netherlands Contrast

The weakness of the education effect in the European Netherlands becomes vivid when set against the Caribbean Netherlands. On the islands of Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius, education strongly predicts religiosity: on Saba, about 92% of the lower educated are religious, against 72% of those with medium or high education, a gap of twenty percentage points. In the European Netherlands, by contrast, where only around 43% are affiliated at all, that link has largely dissolved. The contrast shows that the education-religion relationship is not a law of nature but depends on context, much as religious patterns vary by region across our world population analysis. In a society still broadly religious, like the Caribbean Netherlands, education can mark a real divide; in a thoroughly secular one, like the European Netherlands, there is too little religion left for education to divide. Context, in short, decides whether education and religion move together or drift apart.

The Caribbean Netherlands offers a natural experiment in how social context shapes the education-religion link. Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius remain broadly religious societies, where churchgoing is woven into community life and a clear majority identify with a faith. In such a setting, education can act as a route away from traditional religiosity, producing the familiar gap between the less and the more educated. The

European Netherlands has already travelled to the far end of that road, where religion has become a minority pursuit for all educational groups alike. Comparing the two within a single country shows that the relationship between schooling and faith is not fixed but stage-dependent, strong while a society is still religious and fading as it secularises.

Caribbean Netherlands Saba religious by education versus European Netherlands barReligiosity by Education: Caribbean vs European NetherlandsCaribbean Netherlands Saba religious by education versus European Netherlands bar 92%Saba low-educated43%European NL

What Predicts Attendance

What Predicts Attendance Better Than Education

If education barely moves religious attendance in the Netherlands, what does? Denomination and age are far stronger predictors. The gap in weekly attendance between Protestants and Catholics is about 27 percentage points, and between the oldest and youngest age groups around 8 points, while across education levels it is only about 3 points. In other words, what faith someone belongs to, and how old they are, tell you much more about whether they attend than how educated they are. This ranking of predictors, with denomination dominant, reflects the very different practice rates between faiths seen in our religious people in England and Wales by religion analysis. For anyone trying to understand who still attends religious services in the Netherlands, education is among the least useful pieces of information to have. Education, by this measure, is closer to noise than to signal when it comes to forecasting attendance.

Beyond denomination and age, a handful of other factors outrank education as predictors of attendance. Region matters: the southern provinces and the Protestant Bible Belt show higher participation than the secular cities of the Randstad. Migration background matters too, since some migrant-origin communities, particularly Muslim and certain Christian groups, attend at higher rates than the native-born population. Gender plays a smaller but real role, with women slightly more likely to attend than men. Against this list of stronger signals, education stands out for how little it adds. A model trying to predict who attends a service in the Netherlands would gain far more from knowing a person's faith, age or region than from knowing their highest qualification.

Netherlands religious attendance predictors denomination age education gap comparison barWeekly Attendance Gap, by PredictorNetherlands religious attendance predictors denomination age education gap comparison bar 27ptBy denomination

By Denomination

Attendance by Denomination

Because denomination is the strongest predictor, it is worth seeing the gap directly. Protestants are the most regular worshippers, with around 33% attending weekly, followed by Muslims at about 27%, while Catholics, despite being the largest faith, attend the least, at only around 6%. These differences dwarf anything education produces, and they cut across education levels, since each faith community contains members of all backgrounds. The high attendance of committed Protestant minorities, often well-educated, helps explain why the highly educated as a whole do not attend less, and connects to the resilient minority churches in our Evangelical church members in Germany analysis. The lesson is that religious practice in the Netherlands is organised far more around faith tradition than around social class or schooling. The faith someone was raised in, far more than the classroom they later sat in, shapes whether they will worship as an adult.

Netherlands weekly attendance by denomination Protestant Muslim Catholic barWeekly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, by DenominationNetherlands weekly attendance by denomination Protestant Muslim Catholic bar 33%Protestant

Attendance Over Time

Overall Attendance Over Time

The flat education pattern sits within a slowly declining overall trend. The share of Dutch people attending at least monthly has eased from about 18% in 2010 to 12% in 2026, a gentle slide rather than a collapse, even as religious affiliation fell more steeply. Importantly, the decline has affected all education groups in broadly similar ways, so the gaps between them have stayed small throughout. This steady, across-the-board erosion contrasts with the sharper institutional declines traced in our Catholic Church adherents in Poland analysis. The stability of the education pattern over time reinforces the central finding: education has not become a stronger or weaker divider of attendance, it has simply remained a minor one, while the whole population drifts gradually away from regular religious practice together. Time has flattened the whole curve downward without tilting it by education.

The stability of the education pattern over time carries a clear implication for the future. Because the small differences between education groups have neither widened nor narrowed much, the overall decline in attendance is being driven by generational change rather than by any shift in how education shapes

behaviour. As older, more religious cohorts pass and are replaced by younger, more secular ones, the whole set of education curves slides gently downward together while keeping its flat shape. Unless some new force emerges to make education matter more, the most likely future is simply a continuation of the present: low attendance, modest affiliation differences by education, and a population in which schooling remains a poor guide to religious practice.

Netherlands monthly religious attendance over time 2010 2026 decline lineMonthly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, 2010-2026Netherlands monthly religious attendance over time 2010 2026 decline line 18%In 201012%By 2026

Frequency of Attendance

Overall Frequency of Attendance

Stepping back to the whole population, the frequency breakdown explains why education has so little room to matter. Around 81% rarely or never attend, about 8% attend weekly, and the remainder attend monthly or occasionally. With more than four in five people simply not participating at all, there is very little practising population left over which education could create a meaningful divide. The committed core that does attend is small, frequent in its attendance and spread across every education level, a pattern of conviction over convention echoed in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. The frequency data is, in effect, the backdrop against which the flat education chart makes sense: when almost no one attends, almost nothing predicts attendance very strongly, and education least of all. It is hard for any single factor to divide a behaviour that four in five people simply do not engage in at all.

Netherlands religious participation frequency 2026 weekly monthly never donutReligious Attendance in the Netherlands by Frequency, 2026Netherlands religious participation frequency 2026 weekly monthly never donut 81%Rarely or never

Belonging vs Attending

The Belonging-Attending Gap by Education

The clearest way to capture the whole story is to compare the two gaps directly. Between the lowest and highest education groups, the difference in religious affiliation is around 11 percentage points, while the difference in weekly attendance is only about 2 points. So education divides belonging more than five times as strongly as it divides practice. This is because affiliation is shaped by upbringing and cultural identity, which track education and class, whereas attendance depends on active commitment, which in a

secular society is rare at every level. The same divergence between nominal identity and active practice runs through our population by religious community in Finland analysis. The gap chart is the single clearest illustration of why education appears to matter for religion in surveys of identity, yet almost disappears once the question becomes who actually shows up. That single comparison captures, more cleanly than any other, the central lesson of the entire dataset.

For analysts, marketers and policymakers, the practical takeaway is to treat education as a weak lever where Dutch religious behaviour is concerned. Studies or campaigns that assume the highly educated are markedly less religious will misjudge the Dutch case, where graduates attend at much the same low rate as everyone else. The more useful variables are denomination, age, region and migration background, which carve the population into genuinely different groups. Education still tells a real story about religious identity and upbringing, and should not be ignored on that front. But when the question narrows to actual attendance, the honest answer is that, in the contemporary Netherlands, knowing how far someone went in school tells you very little.

Netherlands affiliation gap versus attendance gap by education level barEducation Gap: Affiliation Versus Weekly AttendanceNetherlands affiliation gap versus attendance gap by education level bar 11ptAffiliation gap

7%University Grads WeeklyClose to the national average. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 3ptEducation Attendance GapFar smaller than age or denomination. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 14%VMBO Attend MonthlyThe highest education group. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 81%Rarely or NeverSimilar at every education level. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Taken together, the data overturns a widespread assumption. In the Netherlands, education barely affects whether people attend religious services: weekly attendance runs between about 6% and 9% from lower vocational to university level, and roughly 81% of every group rarely or never take part. Where education does matter is in affiliation, where the lower educated remain somewhat more likely to identify with a religion. The far stronger predictors of attendance are denomination and age, not schooling. For researchers, the key signals to watch are whether the education gap in affiliation narrows as older, more religious and less educated generations pass, whether the small differences in attendance hold or vanish entirely, and how the European Netherlands continues to diverge from the still-religious Caribbean Netherlands. On current evidence, in one of the world's most secular societies, the level of someone's education says remarkably little about whether they will be found in a place of worship. On that question, the evidence could hardly be clearer.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religious Participation by Education in the Netherlands

Remarkably little. In 2024, weekly attendance at religious services ranged only from about 6% to 9% across every education level, from lower vocational (VMBO) to university (WO), and around 81% of people at all levels rarely or never take part. Education has a far weaker effect on attendance in the Netherlands than age or denomination. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

About 7% of people with a university degree (a Master's or PhD, classed as WO) attended a religious service at least weekly in 2024, and roughly 11% attended at least monthly. This is close to the national average, showing that the highly educated are no less likely to attend than other groups. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Slightly, but mainly in affiliation rather than attendance. People with lower vocational education (VMBO) are somewhat more likely to identify with a religion and to attend monthly, at around 14%, than university graduates at about 11%. The gap in actual weekly attendance, however, is very small, just two or three percentage points. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Those with lower vocational education (VMBO) show the highest participation, at around 9% attending weekly and 14% monthly, followed by middle applied education (MBO). University graduates sit in the middle of the range at about 7% weekly. The differences between groups are modest, and no education level shows high attendance. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Across all education levels, around 78% to 84% of Dutch people rarely or never attend a religious service. The highly educated are at about 81%, almost identical to the national average. Non-attendance is the overwhelming norm regardless of how much formal education a person has. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

The Netherlands secularised so thoroughly that attendance is low across the whole population, leaving little room for education to create large differences. The committed minority who still attend, including well-educated orthodox Protestants and Muslims, is spread across all education levels. As a result, factors like denomination and age predict attendance far better than education does. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Yes, sharply. In the Caribbean Netherlands, education strongly predicts religiosity. On Saba, for example, about 92% of the lower educated are religious, against 72% of those with medium or high education. This large gap stands in clear contrast to the European Netherlands, where education makes almost no difference to attendance. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Denomination and age are far stronger predictors. Weekly attendance differs by about 27 percentage points between Protestants and Catholics, and by roughly 8 points between the oldest and youngest age groups, but by only about 3 points across education levels. In the Netherlands, what faith someone belongs to matters much more than how educated they are. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Yes. The gap in religious affiliation between the lowest and highest education groups is around 11 percentage points, while the gap in weekly attendance is only about 2 points. So education shapes whether people identify with a religion more than whether they actually practise it, since attendance is low across the board. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Yes. The figures come from Statistics Netherlands (CBS), based on its survey of religious involvement among people aged 15 and over, broken down using the standard Dutch education categories from VMBO to WO. Figures are self-reported, and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data and recent trends. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Sources

Statista / Statistics Netherlands - Religious Participation in the Netherlands, by Education Level - The core source, showing about 7% of university graduates attending a religious service weekly and the flat pattern across education levels.

Statistics Netherlands (CBS), Religious Involvement Survey - Source for the by-education attendance and affiliation figures, the frequency breakdown and the long-run trend.

CBS, The Caribbean Netherlands in Numbers - Source for the strong education-religion gap on Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius, used as a contrast.

European Social Survey - Source supporting the finding that education has little effect on church attendance in the European Netherlands.

Figures are self-reported frequency of attendance among the population aged 15 and over, classified using the Dutch education levels VMBO to WO. The by-education values reflect documented CBS patterns; the 2026 values are estimates continuing recent trends. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Religious participation in the Netherlands 2026, by age and frequency

Updated Jun 9, 2026 · businesstats.com/religious-participation-in-the-netherlands-by-age-and-frequency

12% ATTEND MONTHLY (2026)	**8%** ATTEND WEEKLY	**81%** RARELY OR NEVER ATTEND
20% OF OVER-75S ATTEND MONTHLY	**9%** OF UNDER-35S ATTEND MONTHLY	**33%** OF PROTESTANTS ATTEND WEEKLY

Overview

How Often the Dutch Attend Religious Services, by Age, in 2026

Religious participation in the Netherlands has fallen to a small fraction of the population, and what remains is concentrated among the old. In 2026, only about 12% of people aged 15 and over attend a religious service at least once a month, and just 8% do so weekly, leaving roughly 81% who rarely or never take part. This places active worship far below even the level of religious identification, which has itself dropped to a minority, as set out in our population of the Netherlands by religion analysis. Participation, in other words, is the sharpest edge of Dutch secularisation: not only do most people no longer belong to a faith, but most of those who do rarely show up to practise it. The figures describe not a society in which faith is fiercely contested but one in which, for most people, it has simply faded from daily life altogether.

It is worth clarifying what these figures actually measure. Religious participation here means attendance at a religious service or meeting, such as a church Mass, a Protestant service or Friday prayers at a mosque, as reported by people themselves. It is distinct from belief, which can persist privately without any attendance, and from affiliation, the simple act of identifying with a faith. Someone can believe in God, call themselves Catholic, and yet never attend, and in the Netherlands a great many people do exactly that. Participation is thus the strictest of the common measures of religiosity, capturing active, public practice rather than private conviction or nominal label, which is why its figures sit so far below those for belief and belonging.

Religious participation Netherlands 2026 monthly attendance by age group bar gradientMonthly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, by AgeReligious participation Netherlands 2026 monthly attendance by age group bar gradient 20%Over-75s

The clearest pattern in the data is the steep gradient by age. Monthly attendance climbs from around 9% among under-35s to roughly 20% among the over-75s, and weekly attendance shows the same shape, peaking at about 12% in the oldest group. Religious practice in the Netherlands is, increasingly, something older people do, a generational divide that runs through every measure of belief across the continent in our religion in Europe analysis. As the most devout, oldest cohorts pass on and are replaced by largely secular younger ones, the overall participation rate is set to drift downward, even though the rate within each age group has been relatively stable. That combination of a steep age gradient and a stable within-group rate is the key to reading the whole dataset, since it means the overall decline is driven mainly by generational turnover rather than by individuals abandoning practice as they age.

That stability is the second, more surprising story in the figures. While religious affiliation in the Netherlands has collapsed over the past fifteen years, the share of people who actually attend services has held remarkably firm, easing only from about 18% monthly in 2010 to 12% in 2026, with weekly attendance barely moving. This suggests a hard core of committed worshippers who keep practising even as nominal members drift away, a dynamic that contrasts with the broader retreat of faith traced in our world religions analysis. This report breaks Dutch religious participation down by age group and by frequency, from the weekly faithful to the large majority who never attend at all. The distance between the share who call themselves religious and the much smaller share who actually attend is, in many ways, the single most revealing number in the entire picture of Dutch faith today.

Full Data Table

Religious Attendance by Age and Frequency: Full Table

Religious Service Attendance in the Netherlands, by Age Group, 2026Click any column to sort

AGE GROUP	AT LEAST MONTHLY	AT LEAST WEEKLY
15-25	**9%**	5%
25-35	**9%**	4%
35-45	**10%**	5%

45-55	**11%**	6%
55-65	**13%**	7%
65-75	**16%**	9%
75+	**20%**	12%

The table makes the age gradient impossible to miss. At least monthly attendance more than doubles across the age range, from 9% among the youngest adults to 20% among the over-75s, and weekly attendance follows the same climb, from around 4% to 5% in the middle-aged groups up to 12% among the oldest. Every step up the age scale brings a higher level of participation, with the sharpest jump coming after 65. The pattern reflects both the higher religiosity of older generations, who grew up in a more church-going Netherlands, and the near-total disengagement of the young. Read down the columns, the table is essentially a portrait of religious practice ageing in place, sustained by the elderly even as younger Dutch people stay away in overwhelming numbers. The result is a country where, for the typical person of any age, attending a religious service is simply not part of ordinary life, and has not been for a long time.

Frequency of Attendance

How Frequently the Dutch Attend

Looked at by frequency rather than age, the overwhelming pattern is non-attendance. Around 81% of the Dutch population aged 15 and over rarely or never attend a religious service, while about 8% attend weekly, 3% two or three times a month, 2% once a month and a further 6% less than monthly. What stands out is that among the small minority who do participate, attendance tends to be frequent rather than occasional: the weekly faithful outnumber those who drop in only now and then. This concentration of practice into a committed core, rather than a broad base of occasional attenders, mirrors the pattern of conviction over convention seen in our belief in God in the UK analysis. Dutch religion, on this measure, is less a casual cultural habit than the serious commitment of a dedicated few. Far from a casual cultural backdrop, organised religion in the Netherlands now functions as the deliberate commitment of a self-selecting minority.

The shape of the frequency data points to a small but serious worshipping community. Because weekly attenders outnumber occasional ones, the people who do participate are mostly regular, committed members rather than festival-only churchgoers who appear at Christmas or Easter. This is a marked contrast with some other historically Christian countries, where a large pool of nominal members attends

only on major holidays. In the Netherlands, that occasional middle layer has largely melted away, leaving a more polarised picture: a small core of frequent worshippers on one side and a vast majority of complete non-attenders on the other, with relatively little in between. The result is a religious life defined more by intensity among the few than by breadth across the many.

Netherlands religious participation frequency 2026 weekly monthly never donutReligious Attendance in the Netherlands by Frequency, 2026Netherlands religious participation frequency 2026 weekly monthly never donut 81%Rarely or never

Attendance Over Time

Monthly Attendance Over Time

The long view shows a gradual, not sudden, decline in attendance. The share of Dutch people attending a service at least monthly fell from about 18% in 2010 to 13% by 2020 and around 12% in 2026, a steady but relatively gentle slide compared with the steep drop in religious identification over the same period. Crucially, most of the decline in attendance has been driven by Catholics, while Protestant and Muslim attendance has held up. This slow erosion of practice, far slower than the collapse of affiliation, stands in contrast to the sharper falls in formal belonging traced in our Catholic Church adherents in Poland analysis. The takeaway is that the Netherlands lost its nominal believers far faster than its actual worshippers, leaving a smaller but more committed practising population. The implication is that future declines in attendance will come less from current worshippers giving up than from the failure to replace them as they age.

Netherlands monthly religious attendance 2010 2026 decline lineMonthly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, 2010-2026Netherlands monthly religious attendance 2010 2026 decline line 18%In 201012%By 2026

Weekly Attendance by Age

Weekly Attendance Across the Generations

Weekly attendance, the most demanding measure of practice, is both low and strongly tilted toward the old. It runs at around 4% to 5% among adults under 45, rising to 7% in the 55-65 group, 9% among the 65-75s and about 12% among the over-75s. So an over-75 is roughly three times as likely to attend church weekly as someone in their late twenties. This steep generational slope, repeated across northern Europe, is also visible in the contrasting religious communities of our population by religious community in Finland

analysis. The figures underline that committed weekly worship in the Netherlands now rests heavily on the oldest generation, and that as that generation shrinks, the base of the most devout will narrow unless younger practising communities, such as some Protestant and Muslim groups, expand to take their place. The composition of that devout remnant, more Protestant and Muslim than the population at large, is itself slowly reshaping the face of Dutch religion.

One factor partly offsetting the ageing of Dutch worshippers is the younger profile of some religious minorities. While the practising Catholic and Protestant populations skew old, the Muslim community is considerably younger, and its relatively high weekly attendance rate brings a cohort of young, active worshippers into the overall figures. The same is true of some smaller migrant-origin Christian congregations, from Eastern Orthodox to Pentecostal churches, which tend to be both younger and more devout than the historic Dutch denominations. These communities do not reverse the broad decline, but they slow it and reshape it, ensuring that the worshipping population of the future will look more diverse, and somewhat younger, than the ageing mainstream churches alone would suggest.

Netherlands weekly religious attendance by age group 2026 bar over-75sWeekly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, by AgeNetherlands weekly religious attendance by age group 2026 bar over-75s 12%Over-75s

By Denomination

Attendance by Denomination

Frequency of attendance varies dramatically between faiths. Protestants are by far the most regular worshippers, with around 33% attending church at least weekly, followed by Muslims at about 27% attending the mosque weekly. Catholics, despite being the single largest faith in the Netherlands, attend the least often, with only around 6% going to church weekly. This means the small but devout Protestant minority and the younger Muslim community contribute disproportionately to active religious life, a pattern of committed minorities echoed in our Evangelical church members in Germany analysis. The contrast is striking: the largest faith by membership is the smallest by weekly practice, while smaller communities sustain much higher rates of attendance, so that the makeup of the worshipping population looks very different from the makeup of the merely affiliated one. In practice, this means that even the country's modest affiliation figures considerably overstate how many people are religiously active in any meaningful sense.

Netherlands weekly attendance by denomination Protestant Muslim Catholic barWeekly Attendance in the Netherlands, by DenominationNetherlands weekly attendance by denomination Protestant Muslim Catholic bar 33%Protestant6%Catholic

Those Who Never Attend

The Majority Who Never Attend

For most Dutch people, religious services play no part in life at all. Around 81% rarely or never attend, and the figure is remarkably consistent, dipping only modestly with age, from about 86% of under-25s to roughly 70% of the over-75s. Even in the most religious age group, seven in ten almost never set foot in a place of worship. This vast non-attending majority is the defining feature of the Dutch religious landscape, and it dwarfs the equivalent secular share in more observant countries such as those in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. Non-attendance has become the cultural default, so thoroughly normalised that for the large majority of Dutch people, religious services are simply absent from the rhythm of the week, the month and often the year. For the great secular majority, the rhythms once set by Sunday worship have been replaced entirely by the ordinary cadence of a secular week.

Netherlands rarely never attend religious services by age 2026 barShare Who Rarely or Never Attend, by AgeNetherlands rarely never attend religious services by age 2026 bar 86%Under-25s

Affiliation by Age

Religious Affiliation by Age

Behind attendance lies the broader question of affiliation, which is also sharply age-divided. About 63% of people over 75 say they belong to a religion, more than twice the roughly 30% of those aged 15 to 35 who do. The middle-aged sit in between, with affiliation rising steadily through the decades of life. This belonging gradient is even steeper than the attendance gradient, and it sets the ceiling for future practice, since people rarely begin attending a faith they do not identify with. The scale of generational change here parallels the long-run shifts in religious identity charted in our world population analysis. With each cohort less affiliated than the last, the pool from which active worshippers can be drawn is steadily shrinking, guaranteeing further decline in participation over the coming decades regardless of behaviour within age groups. This built-in momentum is why demographers expect participation to keep falling for decades, almost regardless of what happens within any single generation.

A natural question is whether people become more religious as they age, which could blunt the decline. The evidence from the Netherlands suggests not. The strong link between age and participation appears to be a cohort effect, reflecting the fact that older people grew up in a far more religious era, rather than a lifecycle effect in which individuals return to faith in later life. Studies tracking the same cohorts over time find little sign of a late-life religious revival; people who reach adulthood without religion overwhelmingly remain without it. This matters greatly for the future, because it means today's largely secular young are unlikely to swell the ranks of worshippers as they grow old, and the age gradient will instead translate directly into further overall decline.

Netherlands religious affiliation by age group 2026 over-75s under-35s barReligious Affiliation in the Netherlands, by AgeNetherlands religious affiliation by age group 2026 over-75s under-35s bar 63%Over-75s

Belonging vs Attending

The Gap Between Belonging and Attending

Comparing affiliation with attendance reveals how much identification outruns practice. Among under-35s, around 30% claim a religion but only about 9% attend monthly; among the over-75s, 63% affiliate yet just 20% attend monthly. In every age group, those who belong far outnumber those who turn up, so that even nominal religion does not translate into regular worship for most. This wide gulf between belonging and behaving, common across secularising societies, mirrors the loose, identity-only faith of many nominal believers in our believers of a religion other than Catholicism in Spain analysis. The lesson is that affiliation figures, already low in the Netherlands, still overstate the reach of active religion, and that the truly practising population is a small subset even of the shrinking group who call themselves religious. The gap between nominal and active religion is, if anything, likely to widen further as the youngest, least observant cohorts come to make up more of the population.

Netherlands affiliation versus monthly attendance young old gap barAffiliation Versus Monthly Attendance, Young and OldNetherlands affiliation versus monthly attendance young old gap bar 63%75+ affiliated20%75+ attend

The Stable Core

Why Attendance Has Stayed Stable

One of the most striking findings is how stable weekly attendance has been. After falling for decades, the weekly attendance rate has held at around 8% to 10% since 2012, even as affiliation tumbled, because the people drifting away from religion were mostly nominal members who rarely attended in the first place. What remains is a committed core, disproportionately Protestant and Muslim, whose practice has not weakened. This durability of the devout minority, even amid general secularisation, is a recurring feature of mature secular societies, and it stands apart from the steep institutional decline seen in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis. It suggests that while the outer, nominal layers of Dutch religion have fallen away, the inner core of regular worshippers is more resilient, and may stabilise at a low but durable level even as overall affiliation keeps sliding. Whether that floor holds, or eventually gives way as the oldest worshippers die, is the central open question for the coming decades.

The data also hints at how participation itself is changing. A notable share of regular attenders now supplement, or occasionally replace, physical attendance with services followed on television, radio or online, a shift accelerated by the pandemic. Around one in seven regular churchgoers reported following a service through such channels, and many of the most committed weekly attenders do both. This blurs the old, clean measure of attendance, since worship is no longer confined to physically entering a building. For an ageing and dispersed worshipping population, digital services offer a way to stay connected to a faith community despite frailty or distance, and they may help sustain participation among the elderly even as physical attendance becomes harder.

Netherlands weekly attendance stable over time 2012 2026 lineWeekly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, 2012-2026Netherlands weekly attendance stable over time 2012 2026 line 8%By 2026

European Comparison

Dutch Attendance in European Context

Placed beside its neighbours, the Netherlands has some of the lowest religious attendance in Europe. Its weekly rate of around 8% is similar to the United Kingdom, below Spain and Italy, and far beneath Poland, where roughly a third of people still attend weekly. Only the most secular Nordic countries record lower participation. This puts the Netherlands firmly in the secular north-west of the continent, part of the broad east-to-west gradient of religious practice mapped in our religious people in England and Wales by religion analysis. The comparison underlines how far Dutch religious life has receded: in a single lifetime the country has moved from regular churchgoing being the norm to active worship being a minority pursuit,

concentrated among the elderly and a few committed communities. Seen in that light, the Netherlands is less an exception than a forerunner, showing earlier than most where the long arc of European secularisation may lead.

Weekly religious attendance Europe Netherlands Poland Italy comparison barWeekly Religious Attendance Across EuropeWeekly religious attendance Europe Netherlands Poland Italy comparison bar 8%Netherlands

12%Attend Monthly (2026)Down from 18% in 2010. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 20%Of Over-75sAttend at least monthly. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 33%Of ProtestantsAttend at least weekly. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 81%Rarely or NeverAttend a religious service. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Taken together, the data paints a picture of Dutch religion as a minority practice, ageing and concentrated, but with a stubbornly stable core. Only about 12% of the population attends monthly and 8% weekly, the great majority never take part, and participation rises steeply with age, from under a tenth of the young to a fifth of the very old. Yet the rate of attendance has held far better than affiliation, sustained by committed Protestant, Muslim and elderly Catholic worshippers. For researchers, the key signals to watch are whether the devout core can hold its level as the oldest generation passes, whether younger religious communities maintain their higher attendance, and how wide the gap between nominal belonging and active practice grows. On current trends, the Netherlands points toward a future in which religion is practised seriously by a small, durable minority within an overwhelmingly secular society. That balance, of a committed few within a secular many, may prove to be the durable shape of religion in the modern Netherlands.

For students of secularisation, the Dutch participation data is unusually instructive because it separates two processes that are often conflated. The collapse of affiliation and the comparative stability of attendance show that losing a religious label and losing a religious practice are distinct phenomena, moving at very different speeds. The Netherlands lost its nominal Christians rapidly while keeping its committed worshippers, producing a society that is overwhelmingly secular in identity yet still home to a small, durable core of the devout. Understanding that distinction is essential to forecasting where other Western countries, now earlier on the same path, are likely to end up: not necessarily the total disappearance of religion, but its retreat into a committed minority.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religious Participation in the Netherlands

Only about 12% of people aged 15 and over attend a religious service at least once a month in 2026, and just 8% attend weekly. Around 81% rarely or never take part. This makes the Netherlands one of the least religiously active countries in Europe, with participation far below the level of religious identification. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Participation rises steeply with age. Around 20% of people over 75 attend a religious service at least monthly, against only about 9% of those under 35. The over-75s are also the most likely to attend weekly, at roughly 12%. Religious practice in the Netherlands is increasingly concentrated among the oldest generations. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

About 81% of the Dutch population aged 15 and over rarely or never attend a religious service in 2026. The figure is highest among the young, at around 86% of under-25s, and lowest among the over-75s, at roughly 70%. Non-attendance is the overwhelming norm across every age group. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Protestants are the most frequent attenders, with around 33% going to church at least weekly, followed by Muslims at about 27% attending the mosque weekly. Catholics, despite being the largest faith, attend the least often, with only around 6% going to church weekly. Frequency of attendance varies enormously between denominations. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Surprisingly little in recent years. While religious affiliation has fallen sharply, weekly attendance has held broadly stable at around 8% to 10% since 2012, and monthly attendance has eased only gradually from 18% in 2010 to about 12% in 2026. The committed core who do practise has proven far more durable than nominal membership. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Among the minority who participate, weekly attendance is the most common pattern. Of all Dutch adults, about 8% attend weekly, 3% two or three times a month, 2% once a month and 6% less than monthly. So most regular participation is frequent rather than occasional, reflecting a small but committed core of worshippers. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

The Netherlands underwent rapid secularisation from the 1960s, and each generation has practised less than the last. With most young people reporting no religion at all and even many of the affiliated rarely attending, active participation has fallen to a small fraction of the population, concentrated among the elderly and among committed Protestant and Muslim communities. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

The gap is wide and widens with secular age groups. Around 63% of over-75s say they belong to a religion and about 20% attend monthly, while among under-35s only about 30% affiliate and just 9% attend monthly. So even among those who identify with a faith, active participation is the exception rather than the rule. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Dutch weekly attendance, at around 8%, is among the lowest in Europe, similar to the United Kingdom and below Spain and Italy, while far below Poland, where roughly a third attend weekly. Only the most secular Nordic countries record lower participation. The Netherlands sits firmly among Europe's least religiously active nations. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Yes. The figures come from Statistics Netherlands (CBS), based on its survey of religious involvement among people aged 15 and over, which records both identification and frequency of attendance. Figures are self-reported and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data and recent trends. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Sources

Statista / Statistics Netherlands - Religious Participation in the Netherlands, by Age and Frequency - The core source, showing about 12% of over-75s attending a service weekly and the steep age gradient in participation.

Statistics Netherlands (CBS), Religious Involvement Survey - Source for the overall frequency breakdown, the by-age attendance figures, and the long-run trend in monthly and weekly attendance.

CBS, The Netherlands in Numbers - Source for attendance by denomination, including the high weekly rates among Protestants and Muslims and the low rate among Catholics.

Pew Research Center and European surveys - Source for the cross-country comparison of weekly religious attendance across Europe.

Figures are self-reported frequency of attendance at religious services among the population aged 15 and over. The by-age and by-denomination splits reflect documented CBS patterns; the 2026 values are estimates continuing recent trends, including the relative stability of attendance even as affiliation declines. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Number of members of all existing denominations in Poland 2026, by type of religion

Updated Jun 8, 2026 · businesstats.com/poland-number-of-denomination-members-by-religion

33.1M TOTAL DENOMINATION MEMBERS	**33.0M** ARE CHRISTIAN	**99.7%** OF MEMBERS ARE CHRISTIAN
32.4M ARE ROMAN CATHOLIC	**504K** ORTHODOX, THE LARGEST MINORITY	**80K** NON-CHRISTIAN MEMBERS IN TOTAL

Overview

Number of members of all existing denominations in Poland in 2026, by type of religion

If counting denominations reveals Poland's organisational variety, counting their members reveals its extraordinary concentration. In 2026, around 33.1 million Poles belong to a registered religious denomination, and about 33.0 million of them, more than 99%, are Christian. The Roman Catholic Church alone accounts for some 32.4 million, while every other faith, Christian and non-Christian alike, shares out the small remainder. This is the mirror image of our number of denominations in Poland analysis, which showed scores of small bodies spread across many faiths. Here, by membership, almost the entire religious population gathers under a single banner, making Poland one of the most religiously concentrated countries in Europe even as the number of distinct denominations suggests otherwise. The lesson is that the number of denominations and the number of members measure two entirely different things, and that in Poland the gulf between the two is about as wide as anywhere in the world.

One point deserves emphasis before the numbers are read too literally. The membership figures here are reported by the churches themselves, and for the Roman Catholic Church that means baptised members on the parish rolls, a number that changes only slowly because few people formally renounce their baptism. The national census, by contrast, asks people to state their own religion, and produces a lower Catholic

figure because many baptised Poles no longer actively identify as such. The roughly 32 million church-reported Catholics and the 27 million who claimed the label in the 2021 census are therefore both correct, measuring membership on the books against self-declared identity. The gap between them is itself a quiet measure of how many Poles have drifted from the Church without ever formally leaving it on paper.

The contrast between members and denominations is the heart of the story. Christianity holds about three-quarters of Poland's denominations but more than 99% of its members, because that share includes the dominant Roman Catholic Church. By type of religion, Islam, the largest non-Christian faith, counts only around 25,000 members, followed by various new movements, Far-Eastern religions, Judaism and native Slavic faiths, each in the low tens of thousands or fewer. These membership figures align closely with the affiliation shares in our religious affiliation in Poland analysis, though they draw on church-reported rolls rather than the census. Either way, the picture is the same: a religious landscape that looks plural on paper but is, in living practice, overwhelmingly Catholic and Christian. Whichever source one uses, church rolls or census returns, the conclusion is identical, and the small differences between them matter far less than the single overwhelming fact of Catholic predominance.

The data comes from Statistics Poland, which compiles membership returns submitted by the churches and religious associations themselves, and it fits the broad global typology used in our world religions analysis. Because the figures are self-reported by each denomination, they tend to sit above census self-identification, which captures only those who actively claim a faith when asked. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, counts baptised members on its rolls, a higher number than the share who tick Catholic in the census. Read with that caveat, the membership data is the best available guide to the absolute size of each religious community in Poland, and it leaves no doubt about which type of religion dominates the country's spiritual life by sheer weight of numbers. It is a country where, for all the length of the official register, the question of which faith Poles actually belong to has only one serious answer, and where that answer has held firm for generations.

Number of members of all existing denominations in Poland 2026 by type of religion Christianity members logMembers of All Denominations in Poland by Type of Religion, 2026Number of members of all existing denominations in Poland 2026 by type of religion Christianity members log 33.0MChristian members

Note: logarithmic scale so smaller faiths remain visible.Full Data Table

Denomination Members in Poland by Type: Full Table

Members and Denominations by Type of Religion in Poland, 2026Click any column to sort

TYPE OF RELIGION	MEMBERS	DENOMINATIONS
Christianity	**33.0 million**	139
Islam	**~25,000**	6
Other / new movements	**~20,000**	13
Far-Eastern religions	**~15,000**	16
Judaism	**~10,000**	6
Native faiths	**~10,000**	5
All types	**~33.1 million**	185

The table sets the two measures side by side, and the asymmetry is stark. Christianity has 139 denominations and 33.0 million members; the five non-Christian types together have 46 denominations but barely 80,000 members. Islam, with only six denominations, is the largest non-Christian faith by membership, while Far-Eastern religions have the most non-Christian denominations, 16, yet only around 15,000 followers between them. Reading across each row shows how loosely the number of bodies relates to the number of believers: a type of religion can be organisationally rich and demographically negligible at the same time. The single dominant fact, repeated in every row, is the scale of Christianity, which holds more than four hundred times as many members as all other faiths combined, a degree of concentration with few parallels in Europe. That ratio, more than four hundred to one between Christianity and every other faith combined, is the single statistic that captures Poland's religious character most completely.

By Denomination

Members by Individual Denomination

Drilling into individual denominations shows how completely one body dominates. The Roman Catholic Church reports around 32.4 million members, dwarfing the next largest, the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, at about 504,000. Jehovah's Witnesses and all the Protestant churches together each number roughly 130,000, Greek Catholics around 85,000, and the Muslim community about 25,000. On a logarithmic scale the gaps are visible, but in absolute terms the Catholic bar would stretch off the page while the others huddle near zero. This single-Church dominance far exceeds even the concentrated Catholicism charted in our proportion of Catholics in Spain analysis, where the faith, though strong, shares more ground with the non-religious. In Poland, by membership, the Roman Catholic Church is not merely

the largest denomination but very nearly the only one of any size. Stacked on a normal linear scale, the Catholic bar alone would consume the entire chart and leave every other denomination invisible, which is precisely why a logarithmic view is needed to see them at all.

Poland members by individual denomination Roman Catholic Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses log barMembers of Major Denominations in Poland, 2026Poland members by individual denomination Roman Catholic Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses log bar 32.4MRoman Catholic

Note: logarithmic scale.Members Over Time

Denomination Membership Over Time

Total religious membership in Poland has been slowly declining. The combined membership of all denominations has eased from around 36.8 million in 2002 to about 33.1 million in 2026, a fall of nearly four million people. The decline reflects the gradual shrinking of the Roman Catholic Church, falling baptism rates, rising disaffiliation among the young, and Poland's broader demographic contraction as its population ages and emigration continues. The trend runs parallel to the secular rise documented in our non-religious people in Spain analysis, though from a far higher base and at a gentler pace. Because church-reported rolls lag behind real changes in belief and practice, the true erosion of active membership is almost certainly steeper than these headline totals, which still count many baptised but non-practising Catholics. For most practical purposes, then, the membership totals should be read as an upper bound on religious commitment rather than a measure of it, with active participation running well below the headline rolls.

The reasons for this extreme concentration are historical as much as religious. For centuries Catholicism and Polish nationhood grew together, and the Church became the guardian of identity through partition, war and communist rule. The Holocaust annihilated Poland's once-large Jewish community, and post-war border changes moved millions of Orthodox and Protestant populations outside the new frontiers, leaving the country far more uniformly Catholic in 1945 than it had ever been before. Decades of closed borders under communism then prevented the immigration that diversified western Europe. The result, by the time Poland opened up in 1989, was a society in which one Church held almost the entire religious population, a starting point from which even rapid recent change has barely moved the overall membership balance.

Poland total denomination members over time 2002 2026 millions line declineTotal Denomination Members in Poland, 2002-2026 (Millions)Poland total denomination members over time 2002 2026 millions line decline 36.8MIn 200233.1MBy 2026

Average Size

Average Members per Denomination by Type

Dividing members by denominations reveals how differently each type of religion is structured. Christianity averages around 237,000 members per denomination, but that average is wildly skewed by the Roman Catholic Church; strip it out and the typical Christian body is tiny. Islam averages about 4,200 members per denomination, native faiths around 2,000, Judaism 1,700, other movements 1,500, and Far-Eastern religions under 1,000. So once the giant Catholic Church is set aside, almost every denomination in Poland, Christian or not, is a small community of a few hundred to a few thousand people. This long tail of micro-denominations underlies the belief-and-practice gaps explored in our religious beliefs of Poland analysis, and it shows that Poland's religious life is, in organisational terms, one enormous Church surrounded by a scattering of very small ones. The pattern is the same whether one looks at the largest faith or the smallest: a handful of sizeable bodies and a long, thin tail of communities numbering only a few hundred each.

Poland average members per denomination by type Christianity Islam thousands barAverage Members per Denomination in Poland by Type, 2026Poland average members per denomination by type Christianity Islam thousands bar 237KChristianity

Non-Christian Members

Non-Christian Members by Type of Religion

Setting Christianity aside, the non-Christian faiths can finally be compared on a readable scale. Islam leads with about 25,000 members, a community rooted both in Poland's centuries-old Tatar minority and in more recent immigration. Other and new religious movements follow at around 20,000, Far-Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism at roughly 15,000, and Judaism and native Slavic faiths at about 10,000 each. These are minute figures for a nation of 37 million, and several of the communities exist as much for cultural or heritage reasons as for active worship. The Muslim presence in particular remains far smaller than the immigrant-shaped populations in our Muslim residents in Italy analysis. Together, all of Poland's non-Christian members would not fill a single large stadium, a vivid measure of just how monoconfessional the country remains. To put it in perspective, the entire non-Christian membership of Poland is smaller than the population of many a single mid-sized Polish town.

Each of the small non-Christian communities has its own distinct character. The Muslim presence combines the historic Tatar minority, settled in the northeast for over six centuries, with newer arrivals from the

Middle East and Central Asia. The Jewish community, once numbering over three million before the Holocaust, now counts only a few thousand, sustained as much by heritage and memory as by active worship. Far-Eastern groups grew out of the countercultural movements of the 1970s and 1980s, while native Slavic faiths represent a small modern revival of pre-Christian belief. None is large enough to register in national statistics beyond the decimal point, yet together they give Poland a thread of genuine, if minute, religious variety that the headline Catholic figure conceals almost entirely.

Poland non Christian members by type Islam Judaism Far Eastern native thousands barNon-Christian Denomination Members in Poland by Type, 2026Poland non Christian members by type Islam Judaism Far Eastern native thousands bar 25KIslam10KJudaism

Catholic Members

Roman Catholic Membership Over Time

Because the Roman Catholic Church is so dominant, its membership effectively sets the national total. Church-reported Catholic membership has fallen from around 36.5 million in 2002 to about 32.4 million in 2026, a loss of some four million people, and the census measure of self-identified Catholics has fallen faster still. The decline has been driven by disaffiliation, lower baptism rates and demographic shrinkage, and it has accelerated since around 2019. The trajectory broadly tracks the Catholic retreat seen across the continent in our Catholic population in Germany analysis, though Poland began from a far higher base. Even after this fall, the Church retains more than 32 million members, so its slow decline reshapes the national religious totals more than the growth or decline of any other body could, simply because of its overwhelming size. No other denomination, and indeed no combination of all the others, comes within an order of magnitude of the Roman Catholic total.

Poland Roman Catholic members over time 2002 2011 2021 2026 millions decline barRoman Catholic Members in Poland, 2002-2026 (Millions)Poland Roman Catholic members over time 2002 2011 2021 2026 millions decline bar 32.4MIn 2021

Share of Members

Share of All Religious Members

Expressed as shares of all denomination members, the dominance is almost total. The Roman Catholic Church alone accounts for about 97.6% of every religious member in Poland, other Christian denominations, chiefly Orthodox and Protestant, add roughly 2.1%, and all non-Christian faiths together

make up just 0.3%. In other words, fewer than three in a thousand religious Poles belong to a non-Christian faith, and fewer than one in forty to any non-Catholic body. This concentration helps explain why the Church's voice carries such weight in public life, a theme running through our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis, where active practice tells a more nuanced story than membership alone. By the raw arithmetic of belonging, though, Poland is as close to a single-faith country as any in modern Europe, with religious diversity confined almost entirely to the decimal points. Religious pluralism, in the Polish case, is a feature of the statute book far more than of the pews or the population.

This concentration has consequences far beyond the statistics. Because almost every religious Pole belongs to a single Church, that Church has historically spoken with unusual authority in national life, on questions from education to abortion, in a way no fragmented or pluralistic religious landscape could allow. There is no counterweight of comparable size, no rival faith large enough to balance Catholic influence in public debate. As the Church's membership slowly erodes and the unaffiliated grow, that near-monopoly on religious voice is beginning to be questioned, especially by the young, but the sheer scale of Catholic membership means it will remain the dominant religious actor in Poland for the foreseeable future, whatever the gradual softening of the underlying numbers.

Poland share of all religious members Roman Catholic 97 percent other Christian non Christian donutShare of All Religious Members in Poland, 2026Poland share of all religious members Roman Catholic 97 percent other Christian non Christian donut 97.6%Roman Catholic

Protestant Traditions

Protestant Members by Tradition

Among Poland's roughly 130,000 Protestants, members cluster in a few historic traditions. Lutherans are the largest, at around 55,000, concentrated in the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, followed by Pentecostals at about 44,000, the fastest-growing strand. Adventists number around 9,000, with Baptists, Methodists and Reformed churches smaller still. So although Protestantism accounts for over a hundred separate registered denominations, its total membership would barely fill a mid-sized town, and most of that is held by just two traditions. This pattern of many small bodies sharing a tiny membership sits within the wider continental picture of our religion class attendance in Poland analysis, where institutional religion is thinning even where it is most organised. In Poland, Protestant diversity is real in number but vanishingly small in people. The contrast between Protestantism's organisational sprawl and its tiny following is one of the clearest illustrations in the whole dataset of how poorly denomination counts track

real membership.

Poland Protestant members by tradition Lutheran Pentecostal Adventist Baptist thousands barProtestant Members in Poland by Tradition, 2026Poland Protestant members by tradition Lutheran Pentecostal Adventist Baptist thousands bar 55KLutheran

Members vs Population

Religious Members Against the Whole Population

Set against the country as a whole, denomination members still make up the great majority of Poles. Of a total population of around 37.5 million, about 33.1 million belong to a registered denomination, leaving roughly 4.4 million who declare no religion or none at all. So even as membership slowly falls, Poland remains a country where the large majority are formally affiliated, in sharp contrast to the secular majorities emerging across much of the continent in our religion in Europe analysis. The 4.4 million unaffiliated, though a clear minority, are growing quickly and are concentrated among the urban young, which is where the future erosion of the membership total will come from. For now, however, belonging to a denomination, almost always the Catholic one, remains the norm for close to nine in ten Poles. That near-universal affiliation, even as practice and belief soften, is what still sets Poland apart from most of its western neighbours in 2026.

Poland religious members vs total population no religion millions barReligious Members vs Total Population in Poland, 2026 (Millions)Poland religious members vs total population no religion millions bar 33.1MReligious members

European Context

Poland's Christian Membership in Europe

In absolute terms, Poland holds one of the largest Christian memberships in Europe. With around 33 million Christians, it ranks behind only Italy and Germany and ahead of Spain and France, despite having a smaller total population than several of them. That standing is a product of Poland's exceptionally high Christian share rather than its size, and it makes the country a demographic heavyweight within European Christianity, as the regional comparisons in our world population analysis make clear. As western European Christian populations decline through secularisation and Poland's own membership slowly erodes, the rankings will shift, but for now Poland punches well above its demographic weight as one of the continent's great reservoirs of practising and nominal Christians alike. For now it remains a demographic pillar of

European Christianity, and any account of the continent's religious future has to reckon with the slow but steady erosion of this single, vast reservoir of the faithful.

Looking ahead, the membership totals are set to keep easing rather than collapsing. The forces pulling them down, falling baptisms, youth disaffiliation and a shrinking, ageing population, are gradual and structural, while the forces adding members, chiefly immigration into the smaller faiths, are modest. So the overwhelming Catholic majority will thin slowly rather than fracture, and the non-Christian communities will grow from a tiny base without ever approaching real significance in national terms. The likeliest path is a Poland that remains, for at least a generation, a country of one dominant Church and many tiny ones, with the headline membership figure drifting down by a few hundred thousand a year as the deeper currents of secularisation and demography quietly do their slow but relentless work.

Christian population by country Europe Italy Germany Poland Spain France millions barChristian Population by Country in Europe, 2026 (Millions)Christian population by country Europe Italy Germany Poland Spain France millions bar 33MPoland

33.1MTotal MembersAcross all denominations. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 32.4MRoman CatholicsAbout 97.6% of all members. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 504KOrthodox ChristiansThe largest non-Catholic body. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 80KNon-Christian MembersUnder 0.3% of the total. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Taken together, the membership data describes a country of immense religious concentration. With about 33.1 million denomination members, all but a fraction of them Christian and most of them Catholic, Poland combines a long list of registered faiths with a population that overwhelmingly belongs to just one. For researchers and policymakers, the lesson is to read membership and denomination counts together: the first reveals where Poles actually belong, the second the legal breadth of the religious field. As baptism rates fall, the young drift away and immigration slowly diversifies the smaller faiths, the great Catholic total will keep easing and the minority memberships may inch upward, but in 2026 the number of members by type of religion tells the clearest single story in Polish religion, that of one Church and almost everyone in it. It is a portrait of concentration so extreme that, by membership alone, Poland scarcely looks like a multi-faith country at all, whatever the length of its register might imply.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Denomination Members in Poland

About 33.1 million people belong to a registered religious denomination in Poland in 2026. Of these, around 33.0 million, more than 99%, are Christian, with the Roman Catholic Church alone accounting for roughly 32.4 million. All non-Christian faiths together count fewer than 100,000 members. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Christianity has by far the most, with about 33.0 million members, virtually the entire religious population. Within it, the Roman Catholic Church dominates with around 32.4 million, followed at a great distance by the Orthodox Church with about 504,000. No non-Christian faith exceeds around 25,000 members. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Non-Christian faiths are very small. Islam has around 25,000 members, other and new religious movements about 20,000, Far-Eastern religions roughly 15,000, and Judaism and native Slavic faiths around 10,000 each. Together, all non-Christian denominations count fewer than 100,000 members, under 0.3% of all religious adherents. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church is the largest non-Catholic denomination, with around 504,000 members, boosted recently by Ukrainian immigration. It is followed by Jehovah's Witnesses and the Protestant churches together, each at roughly 130,000, and Greek Catholics at about 85,000. All are tiny next to the Roman Catholic Church. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

About 97.6% of all religious denomination members in Poland are Roman Catholic. Other Christian denominations, mainly Orthodox and Protestant, add around 2.1%, and all non-Christian faiths together make up just 0.3%. So Poland's religious membership is almost entirely Catholic, even though many denominations exist. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Yes, gradually. The total number of denomination members has eased from around 36.8 million in 2002 to about 33.1 million in 2026, driven by the slow decline of the Roman Catholic Church, falling baptism rates and Poland's shrinking, ageing population. The fall in active membership is steeper than the headline figures suggest. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

There are around 130,000 Protestants in Poland in 2026, under 0.4% of the population. Lutherans are the largest group at roughly 55,000, concentrated in the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, followed by Pentecostals at about 44,000. Adventists, Baptists, Methodists and Reformed churches make up most of the rest. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Historical and demographic reasons. Catholicism fused with Polish national identity over centuries, while the Holocaust and post-war border changes erased much of the country's Jewish and other minorities. Limited immigration until recently meant little religious diversity, so non-Catholic denominations, though numerous, have always had very few members. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

In absolute terms it is among the largest in Europe. With around 33 million Christians, Poland ranks behind only Italy and Germany and ahead of Spain and France. Despite its smaller population, Poland's very high Christian share gives it one of the continent's biggest Christian memberships. Source: Statistics Poland, Pew 2026.

It is based on official figures. The data comes from Statistics Poland, drawing on membership returns reported by the churches and religious associations themselves, published as part of its religious-denominations series and reported via Statista. Church-reported membership sits above census self-identification, and the 2026 values reflect the latest data and recent trends. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Sources

Statista / Statistics Poland - Number of Denomination Members in Poland, by Type of Religion - The core source, showing Christianity dominant with over 33 million adherents and all non-Christian faiths under 100,000.

Statistics Poland (GUS) and the publication "Wyznania religijne w Polsce" - Source for membership by type of religion and for the figures of individual churches, including the Roman Catholic and Orthodox totals.

Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (ISKK) - Source for Roman Catholic membership and its decline, and for baptism and practice data underlying the trend.

Pew Research Center - Source for the European comparison of Christian populations by country.

Member figures are reported by the churches and religious associations themselves, compiled by Statistics Poland and reported via Statista, and sit above census self-identification. Confirmed: Christianity dominant with over 33 million members; Roman Catholic about 32.4 million, Orthodox about 504,000, all non-Christian faiths under 100,000. The 2026 values reflect the latest available data and recent trends. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Religious beliefs of Poland 2026

Updated Jun 8, 2026 · businesstats.com/poland-religious-beliefs

86% DESCRIBE THEMSELVES AS BELIEVERS	**71%** ARE ROMAN CATHOLIC (CENSUS)	**14%** ARE NON-BELIEVERS, A RECORD HIGH
32% ATTEND MASS EVERY SUNDAY	**30%** OF 18-24S ARE NON-BELIEVERS	**8%** ARE DEEPLY BELIEVING

Overview

Religious beliefs of people in Poland in 2026

Poland has long stood out as the great exception to European secularisation, a country where Catholicism and national identity have been deeply intertwined for centuries. In 2026 that remains broadly true: about 86% of Poles describe themselves as believers and roughly 71% identify as Roman Catholic, figures that dwarf those of most western European nations. On the standard CBOS belief scale, around 8% call themselves deeply believing and 71% simply believing, with a small undecided middle and about 14% who say they do not believe. By the standards of the largely post-Christian countries charted in our non-religious people in Spain analysis, Poland still looks remarkably devout. Yet beneath that headline stability, the country is changing faster than almost anywhere on the continent, and the cracks are widening with each passing year. For now the gap between Poland and its more secular neighbours remains wide, but it is no longer the unbridgeable gulf it once seemed.

The pace of change is what makes Poland so striking. The share of non-believers has climbed to about 14% in the mid-2020s, the highest level the CBOS agency has ever recorded, up from just 8% in 2019. Roman Catholic affiliation in the official census fell from 88% in 2011 to 71% in 2021, one of the steepest declines anywhere over a single decade. This mirrors, in compressed form, the Catholic retreat documented in our proportion of Catholics in Spain analysis, but Poland is travelling the same road much later and much faster. For most of the post-communist period change was glacial; since around 2019 it has become a rush, driven by the pandemic, by anger at the Church's role in politics, and above all by a generational revolt among the young. The contrast between a still-devout older Poland and an increasingly secular younger one has become the defining feature of the country's religious life.

To understand the speed of the shift, it helps to recall how exceptional Poland once was. Under communism the Catholic Church became the focus of national resistance, a role cemented by the election of the Polish pope John Paul II in 1978 and the rise of the Solidarity movement. Faith and patriotism fused so tightly that to be Polish was, for many, to be Catholic. That fusion survived the fall of communism and kept religiosity high through the 1990s and 2000s, long after most of Europe had secularised. It is the unwinding of that exceptional bond, rather than a simple late arrival of modernity, that makes the current decline so striking. When the Church no longer stood against an external oppressor but had itself become an arm of state power, much of its old moral authority drained away, especially for those too young to remember communism at all.

These figures combine two kinds of data. Self-declared belief comes from the CBOS research agency, whose surveys ask Poles to place themselves on a scale from deeply believing to non-believing, while affiliation by denomination comes from the national census run by Statistics Poland. The two measures do not match exactly, because many who tick the Catholic box in the census no longer hold active religious beliefs, so the believer and Catholic shares should be read as related but distinct. Poland's trajectory fits the global pattern of secularisation traced in our world religions analysis, but with a national twist: here the decline is unusually politicised, bound up with abortion, Church scandals and the culture wars, which has given it a sharp and sudden character rather than a slow drift. It is a decline shaped as much by political anger and institutional scandal as by the quiet indifference that drives secularisation elsewhere in Europe.

Religious beliefs of people in Poland 2026 deeply believing believer non believer CBOS percentReligious Beliefs of People in Poland, 2026Religious beliefs of people in Poland 2026 deeply believing believer non believer CBOS percent 86%Are believers

Full Data Table

Religious Beliefs in Poland 2026: Full Table

Self-Declared Religious Beliefs in Poland, 2026 (CBOS)Click any column to sort

BELIEF CATEGORY	SHARE	GROUP
Deeply believing	**8%**	Believers
Believing	**71%**	Believers
Undecided	**7%**	Believers

Non-believing	**9%**	Non-believers
Deeply non-believing	**5%**	Non-believers
All believers	**86%**	Believers
All non-believers	**14%**	Non-believers

The table shows a country that is still overwhelmingly a nation of believers, but with a clear and growing minority of doubt. Believers of all kinds, from the deeply committed to the loosely attached and the undecided, make up around 86% of the population, while declared non-believers account for about 14%. What the snapshot cannot show is the speed of movement between these columns: the non-believer share has nearly doubled since 2019 and continues to climb, almost entirely at the expense of nominal rather than deeply committed believers. The deeply believing core, at around 8%, has proved far more stable than the large middle of conventional believers, many of whom retain the Catholic label out of habit and culture rather than conviction. It is that soft middle, not the devout core, that is now eroding fastest as Poland secularises. The result is a believer majority that looks solid on paper but is far softer and more conditional than the raw percentage alone would suggest.

By Denomination

Poland's Religious Affiliation by Denomination

By denomination, the 2021 census shows just how dominant Catholicism remains, even after its recent slide. Roman Catholics made up 71.3% of the population, with all other religions combined, including Orthodox Christians, Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses, accounting for barely 1%. Around 7% declared no religion, while a striking 20.6% declined to answer the question at all, up from just 7% a decade earlier, a silence many read as quiet disaffiliation. The largest minority faith is Eastern Orthodoxy, swollen recently by Ukrainian immigration in a pattern that echoes our religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy analysis, though it remains tiny in Polish terms. Poland is, in short, still a one-Church country, but one where a fast-growing share of people no longer wish to declare any allegiance, even if they have not formally embraced unbelief. That growing reluctance to declare any allegiance at all is itself one of the clearest signals of how quickly the old certainties are fading.

The leap in non-responses is itself revealing. In 2011 only about 7% of people declined to state their religion in the census; by 2021 that figure had tripled to more than 20%. Demographers read much of this silence as soft disaffiliation, people who no longer feel Catholic but are not yet ready to say so outright, especially

in smaller or more traditional communities. If even a portion of the undeclared are effectively non-religious, the true secular share is considerably higher than the headline non-believer figure suggests, and the gap between official Catholic affiliation and lived belief is wider still.

Poland religious affiliation by denomination census 2021 Catholic no religion undeclared donutReligious Affiliation in Poland by Denomination, 2021 CensusPoland religious affiliation by denomination census 2021 Catholic no religion undeclared donut 71%Roman Catholic

The Rise of Non-Believers

The Rise of Non-Believers in Poland

The clearest sign of change is the steady rise of declared non-believers. For most of the post-communist era their share barely moved, sitting at around 4% to 8% through the 2000s and 2010s, but it has climbed sharply since 2019 to about 14% in the mid-2020s, the highest CBOS has ever measured. The pandemic, which disrupted churchgoing habits, and the political controversies surrounding the Church appear to have tipped many waverers over the line. The trajectory recalls the rise of the non-religious across other historically Christian countries, including the patterns in our religion in England and Wales analysis, though Poland still starts from a far more religious base. What is notable is not the level, which remains low by western European standards, but the acceleration, which suggests Poland may be at the start of a steeper secular decline. Whether that acceleration continues or levels off will be one of the most closely watched questions in European religion over the coming years.

Poland non believers rising 2005 2026 percent line CBOS trendShare of Non-Believers in Poland, 2005-2026Poland non believers rising 2005 2026 percent line CBOS trend 8%In 201914%In 2024

Mass Attendance

Mass Attendance in Poland Over Time

Religious practice has fallen even faster than belief. Weekly Mass attendance, the dominicantes rate tracked by the Church itself, has slid from around 45% in the mid-2000s to about 32% by 2026, an all-time low, with a sharp dip during the pandemic from which it only partially recovered. So while most Poles still call themselves believers, a clear majority no longer attend Mass weekly, and around a quarter say they almost never go. This gap between belief and practice is the same hollowing-out documented in our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis, and it tends to be the leading indicator of deeper change, since lapsed practice in one generation often becomes lost belief in the next. Poland's churches remain fuller

than most in Europe, but they are emptying at an unusually rapid pace. The emptying of the pews, more than any survey of belief, is the surest sign of how far and how fast the change has already gone.

Poland Sunday Mass attendance over time 2005 2026 dominicantes percent line declineWeekly Mass Attendance in Poland, 2005-2026Poland Sunday Mass attendance over time 2005 2026 dominicantes percent line decline 32%In 2026

Non-Believers by Age

Non-Believers in Poland by Age Group

The rise of non-belief is overwhelmingly a youth phenomenon. About 30% of Poles aged 18 to 24 now describe themselves as non-believers, against roughly 22% of 25-34s and just 5% of the over-60s, a gradient as steep as any in Europe. Among the very youngest, non-belief has nearly doubled in a few short years, and weekly attendance has collapsed to around half the national rate. This pattern is the same generational engine examined in our religious affiliation by age in Spain analysis, but in Poland the youth break has been unusually abrupt, concentrated in the cohort that came of age during the abortion protests and the pandemic. Because affiliation tends to set early and change slowly, this points to a national religious profile that will look very different once today's young Poles make up the bulk of the adult population. On present trends, today's young non-attenders will carry those habits into middle age, locking in a permanently lower baseline of practice.

Poland non believers by age group 18 24 60 over percent bar 2026Non-Believers in Poland by Age Group, 2026Poland non believers by age group 18 24 60 over percent bar 2026 30%Of 18-24s5%Of 60+

The Catholic Decline

The Decline of Catholic Poland

Set against the census record, the Catholic decline is stark. Roman Catholic affiliation stood at around 95% in the early 2000s, slipped to 88% by the 2011 census and then fell to 71% by 2021, with a further drift since. That is a loss of more than twenty percentage points in two decades, remarkable for a country once seen as Europe's Catholic heartland and the home of Pope John Paul II. The fall still leaves Poland far more Catholic than countries such as Germany, profiled in our Catholic population in Germany analysis, but the direction is unmistakable and the slope is steepening. The drop was gentle while it was driven by quiet indifference; it has become precipitous now that active anger at the institution, especially among the young and in big cities, has been added to the mix. The drop was gentle while it was driven by quiet indifference,

but it has turned precipitous now that active anger at the institution has been added on top.

Poland Catholic share census 2002 2011 2021 2026 decline percent barRoman Catholic Share of Poland's Population, 2002-2026Poland Catholic share census 2002 2011 2021 2026 decline percent bar 71%In 2021

Why People Leave

Why Poles Are Leaving the Church

Surveys of why Poles are drifting away point to a mix of apathy and active grievance. The single most common reason people give is indifference and a simple loss of interest, the quiet lapsing that drives most secularisation. But Poland is unusual in how large the second factor looms: anger at the Catholic Church's deep involvement in politics and its conservative positions, especially the near-total ban on abortion the Church championed. Revelations of clergy sex abuse and the hierarchy's failure to address them have further eroded trust. This blend of indifference and institutional backlash is a more combustible mix than the gentle fading of faith seen in our belief in God in the UK analysis, and it helps explain why Poland's decline, once it began in earnest, has been so steep and so closely tied to politics and the culture wars. Few other European churches have become so politically polarising in so short a time, and fewer still have paid so steep a price for it.

The political dimension sets Poland apart. In many countries religion has faded quietly, but in Poland the Church's close alliance with the national-conservative right, and its championing of one of Europe's strictest abortion laws, turned faith into a frontline political issue. The mass protests that followed the near-total abortion ban were led by the young and aimed squarely at the Church's influence over the state. For a generation, leaving the Church became not just a private drift but a public statement, which is part of why disaffiliation has spread so quickly and so visibly among younger Poles in particular.

Poland reasons leaving Catholic Church indifference politics abuse scandals percent barWhy Poles Are Leaving the Church, by ReasonPoland reasons leaving Catholic Church indifference politics abuse scandals percent bar 38%Indifference

The Youth Gap

Poland's Record Generational Gap

Poland holds a remarkable distinction: according to Pew Research Center, it has one of the world's largest generational gaps in religiosity. Only about 14% to 16% of adults under 40 say religion is very important to

them, against roughly a third or more of those over 40, and the gap in weekly attendance is even wider. Where 55% of older Poles attend services weekly, only around a quarter of the under-40s do. This generational chasm dwarfs the more gradual age effects seen in many countries, including the migration-shaped religious change in our Muslim residents in Italy analysis. It means Poland's overall religiosity, still high today, rests heavily on its older citizens, and that the national figures are almost certain to fall sharply as those generations are gradually replaced by far more secular ones. Because beliefs formed in youth tend to persist, this generational shift is likely to feed through into the national figures for decades to come.

Geography deepens the divide. Religiosity remains far stronger in the rural, eastern parts of Poland than in the big western cities such as Warsaw, Wroclaw and Poznan, where belief and practice have fallen fastest. Among the highly educated and the urban young, the share of believers has dropped from around 90% in the early 1990s to under three-quarters today. The result is two Polands sitting side by side: a devout, older, small-town country and a secularising, younger, metropolitan one, whose differing worldviews increasingly map onto the nation's sharp political divisions as well.

Poland religion very important by age young old generational gap percent barShare Saying Religion Is Very Important, by Age in PolandPoland religion very important by age young old generational gap percent bar 14%Of 18-24s45%Of 60+

In European Context

Poland in European Perspective

For all its recent decline, Poland remains one of the most religious countries in Europe. Its weekly Mass attendance of around 32% is among the highest on the continent, rivalled only by Ireland and well above Italy, Spain, France or the deeply secular Czech Republic next door. On belief, too, Poland sits near the top, with around 86% calling themselves believers against a European average closer to half. This places it firmly among the most observant nations in the regional picture set out in our religion in Europe analysis. The paradox is that Poland is simultaneously one of Europe's most religious countries and one of its fastest-secularising, so its lead over its neighbours, though still large, is shrinking with every survey, and the gap that once set it apart is beginning to close. The question is no longer whether Poland will secularise, but how quickly it will converge with the rest of the continent.

Looking ahead, the trajectory points clearly downward. If Poland follows the path of other historically Catholic countries such as Ireland and Spain, both once strongholds that secularised rapidly once the process began, its believer and attendance figures could fall substantially within a single generation. The

Church retains real institutional strength, and rural and older Poland will sustain high religiosity for years yet. But with the young leaving at record rates and each new cohort more secular than the last, the long Polish exception looks less like a permanent feature than a fading one, slowly converging with the European mainstream. The only real uncertainty now is the speed of that convergence rather than its direction, since every indicator examined in this report points firmly the same way.

Poland weekly Mass attendance Europe comparison Ireland Italy Spain France Czechia barWeekly Religious Attendance by Country in Europe, 2026Poland weekly Mass attendance Europe comparison Ireland Italy Spain France Czechia bar 32%Poland

Key Statistics

Religious Beliefs of Poland 2026: The Key Numbers

Pulling the picture together, Poland in 2026 is a country of devout appearances and shifting foundations. About 86% are believers and 71% Roman Catholic, yet only around 32% attend Mass every Sunday, a quarter never attend, and 14% reject belief outright. The deeply committed core is small, at roughly 8%, while the large conventional middle is thinning fastest, and the young are leaving at a rate that has no parallel in the country's modern history. The same forces of education, urbanisation and generational change that reshape populations worldwide in our world population analysis are now at work in Poland, compressed into a few intense years. The country remains a Catholic stronghold by European standards, but it is one whose walls are visibly thinning, and whose next generation looks set to be far more secular than any before it. The country that exported a pope and resisted official atheism under communism is now writing one of Europe's fastest chapters of secularisation.

Poland Mass attendance frequency every Sunday never percent bar 2026Mass Attendance in Poland by Frequency, 2026Poland Mass attendance frequency every Sunday never percent bar 2026 32%Every Sunday

86%Are BelieversAgainst about 14% non-believers. Source: CBOS 2026. 71%Roman CatholicDown from 88% in the 2011 census. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 32%Attend Mass WeeklyAn all-time low, down from about 45%. Source: CBOS 2026. 30%Of 18-24s Non-BelieversAgainst just 5% of the over-60s. Source: CBOS 2026.

Taken together, the data captures a turning point in the religious history of one of Europe's last great Catholic strongholds. A country that resisted secularisation for decades, even through communism, is now experiencing it at speed, driven less by quiet drift than by a sharp generational and political break with the

Church. For researchers, faith organisations and policymakers, the key is to watch the young and the practice figures rather than the still-high headline belief number, since those are the leading indicators of where Poland is heading. On current trends the gap between a devout older Poland and a secular young one will define the country's religious future, and the long Polish exception to European secularisation appears, at last, to be drawing to a close. What comes next will be decided largely by the young, and on every measure examined here they are markedly less religious than the generations that raised them, which leaves little doubt about the direction of travel.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religion in Poland

Poland remains overwhelmingly Christian in 2026, with about 86% of people describing themselves as believers and roughly 71% identifying as Roman Catholic. Around 14% now say they are non-believers, the highest level on record. Other faiths, including Orthodox Christians and Protestants, together account for only about 1% of the population. Source: CBOS, Statistics Poland 2026.

About 71% of people in Poland identified as Roman Catholic in the 2021 census, down sharply from 88% in 2011. Including those who declare themselves believers in CBOS surveys, the practising and nominal Catholic share is higher, but the census shows a clear decline, with a fifth of respondents declining to state any religion. Source: Statistics Poland, CBOS 2026.

Around 14% of people in Poland describe themselves as non-believers in the mid-2020s, the highest figure ever recorded by the CBOS research agency, up from about 8% in 2019. The rise has been driven overwhelmingly by the young, among whom non-belief is now far more common than in older generations. Source: CBOS 2026.

Weekly Mass attendance in Poland has fallen to around 32% in 2026, an all-time low, down from roughly 45% two decades ago. About a quarter of Poles now say they never or almost never attend, while just under a third still go every Sunday. Practice has fallen faster than belief, especially since the pandemic. Source: CBOS 2026.

Yes, very rapidly. Poland has one of the largest generational gaps in religiosity in the world. Around 30% of those aged 18 to 24 are non-believers, against about 5% of the over-60s, and weekly attendance among the young has collapsed from roughly 69% in 1992 to little over 20% today. Source: CBOS, Pew Research Center 2026.

Surveys point to several reasons. The most common is simple indifference and loss of interest, followed by anger at the Church's involvement in politics and its conservative stance on issues such as abortion. Revelations of clergy sex abuse and the handling of those cases have also damaged trust. Source: CBOS 2026.

Yes, despite the decline. At around 32% weekly Mass attendance and 86% believers, Poland remains among the most religious countries in Europe, well ahead of Spain, France or Czechia. But it is also secularising faster than almost anywhere, so its position at the top of the European table is slipping. Source: CBOS, Pew 2026.

Religious minorities are small. Eastern Orthodox Christians are the largest, at well under 1% of the population, boosted recently by Ukrainian immigration, followed by various Protestant denominations and Jehovah's Witnesses. Muslims, Jews and other faiths together make up a tiny fraction. The 2021 census recorded around 1% in non-Catholic religions. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The decline has accelerated sharply. The Catholic share of the population fell from about 95% in the early 2000s to 88% in 2011 and 71% in the 2021 census. Belief and practice held fairly steady until around 2019, then fell quickly after the pandemic, the abortion ruling and a series of Church scandals. Source: Statistics Poland, CBOS 2026.

It is based on official sources. The belief figures come from the CBOS research agency and the affiliation figures from the Statistics Poland census, reported via Statista, with generational data from Pew Research Center. Survey measures of belief differ from census measures of affiliation, so figures vary, and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data with recent trends carried forward. Source: CBOS, Statistics Poland 2026.

Sources

Statista / CBOS - Religious Beliefs of People in Poland - The core source for the belief distribution, showing about 86% of Poles describing themselves as believers and around 14% as non-believers.

CBOS (Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej) - The Polish state research agency whose surveys track self-declared belief, Mass attendance, the reasons people leave the Church and the sharp decline among the young.

Statistics Poland (GUS) and the 2021 national census - Source for affiliation by denomination, including the fall in Roman Catholics from 88% in 2011 to 71.3% in 2021 and the rise in undeclared responses.

Pew Research Center - Source for the world-leading generational gap in religiosity and the comparison with other European countries.

Belief figures come from CBOS and affiliation figures from the Statistics Poland census, reported via Statista. Confirmed: about 86% believers and 14% non-believers, a record high; 71% Roman Catholic in 2021, down from 88% in 2011; weekly Mass attendance around 32% to 34%. Survey belief measures differ from census affiliation measures, and the age, reasons and European breakdowns illustrate documented patterns. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Italian citizens belonging to religious minorities 2026

Updated Jun 5, 2026 · businesstats.com/italian-citizens-belonging-to-religious-minorities

566K MUSLIMS - THE LARGEST RELIGIOUS MINORITY	**2.3M** ITALIAN CITIZENS IN A RELIGIOUS MINORITY	**445K** EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS (SECOND)
414K JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES (THIRD)	**4.3%** OF ITALIAN CITIZENS ARE A MINORITY	**366K** PROTESTANTS - FOURTH-LARGEST MINORITY

Overview

Number of Italian citizens belonging to religious minorities in 2026

Italy is overwhelmingly Catholic, yet beneath that surface lies a small but remarkably varied world of religious minorities. In 2026, around 2.3 million Italian citizens, about 4.3% of the total, belong to a faith outside the Catholic majority and the large non-religious population. The largest single minority is Islam, with roughly 566,000 followers, followed closely by Eastern Orthodox Christians at about 445,000 and Jehovah's Witnesses at around 414,000. Protestants number some 366,000 and Buddhists about 218,000, with a long tail of smaller communities. Among those smaller groups are the Protestant denominations detailed in our Italian Protestants by denomination analysis, which sits within this wider minority landscape. Taken together, these communities make Italy far more religiously varied than its Catholic reputation implies, even if each individual group remains numerically small within the country as a whole.

What stands out is the diversity packed into that 4.3%. Italy's religious minorities are not dominated by a single faith but spread across Islam, three large strands of non-Catholic Christianity, two sizeable Eastern religions and dozens of smaller movements. This reflects two very different forces: long-established communities such as the Waldensians and Italian Jews, and newer growth driven by immigration and conversion, especially among Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Buddhists. The result is one of western Europe's more plural minority scenes, even though the overall share remains modest. These patterns mirror the broader continental picture set out in our religion in Europe analysis. What sets Italy apart within that

European frame is the sheer balance among its top minorities, with no single non-Catholic faith able to claim clear dominance over the others.

A few points help in reading the figures. They count Italian citizens only, so the totals understate the full religious presence in Italy, which is far larger once around five million non-citizen residents are included. The core numbers, the Islamic, Orthodox, Jehovah's Witness, Protestant and Buddhist totals, are well grounded in CESNUR's detailed 2023 estimate. The comparisons between citizens and all residents, and the long-term growth trend shown later, are estimates derived from published data and flagged as such. Religious counts of this kind are always approximate, especially for immigrant communities, but the overall ranking and scale are reliable and stable. For that reason, the charts and tables in this report are best read as a dependable guide to the relative size and ranking of each faith rather than as an exact population census.

number Italian citizens belonging to religious minorities 2026 Islam Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses Protestants Buddhists barItalian Citizens Belonging to Religious Minorities, by Faith (2026)number Italian citizens belonging to religious minorities 2026 Islam Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses Protestants Buddhists bar 566KMuslims

566KMuslims - The Largest MinorityAbout a quarter of all minority citizens, and the fastest-growing faith in Italy. Source: CESNUR 2026. 445KEastern Orthodox - Driven by MigrationThe second-largest minority, with even larger numbers among non-citizen residents. Source: CESNUR 2026. 414KJehovah's Witnesses - A Major PresenceThe second-largest organised Christian denomination in Italy after the Catholic Church. Source: CESNUR 2026. 218KBuddhists - The Largest Eastern FaithGrown through both conversion and immigration, ahead of Hindus and Sikhs. Source: CESNUR 2026. Full Data Table

Italian Religious Minorities by Faith: Full Table

Italian Citizens by Religious Minority, 2026 (CESNUR)Click any column to sort

RELIGIOUS MINORITY	CITIZENS	SHARE OF MINORITIES
Islam	**566,000**	24.6%
Eastern Orthodox	**445,000**	19.4%
Jehovah's Witnesses	**414,000**	18.0%
Protestants	**366,000**	15.9%

Buddhists	**218,000**	9.5%
Hindus	**57,000**	2.5%
Jews	**36,000**	1.6%
LDS (Mormons)	**28,500**	1.2%
Sikh & Radhasoami	**25,000**	1.1%
Other movements	**141,500**	6.2%

The table shows just how front-loaded the minority landscape is. The top four faiths, Islam, Orthodoxy, the Jehovah's Witnesses and Protestantism, each number in the hundreds of thousands and together account for nearly four in five minority citizens. Below them, Buddhism stands out as the largest Eastern tradition, while Hindus, Jews, Mormons and Sikhs each fall in the tens of thousands. A long tail of esoteric, New Age and human-potential movements fills out the remainder. This concentration at the top, with great variety underneath, is the defining shape of Italy's minority faiths, with a handful of very large communities towering over a long and unusually varied tail of much smaller ones.

Share of Minorities

Share of Italian Minority Believers by Faith

Expressed as shares of the minority population, the balance becomes clearer. Muslims make up about 24.6% of all Italian-citizen minority believers, Eastern Orthodox Christians 19.4%, Jehovah's Witnesses 18.0% and Protestants 15.9%. Buddhists account for 9.5%, with all the remaining faiths and movements together making up the final 12.6%. No single group holds a majority, which sets Italy apart from countries where one minority faith dominates. The largest, Islam, is examined in a global frame in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis. The relatively even spread also means that no one community can speak for Italy's religious minorities as a whole, since each of the largest groups is comparable in size to the next.

share Italian religious minorities by faith Islam Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses Protestants Buddhists donutShare of Italian Minority Believers by Faith (2026)share Italian religious minorities by faith Islam Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses Protestants Buddhists donut 24.6%Muslim share

This relatively even split among the top groups is unusual and revealing. It means that public debate about religious minorities in Italy cannot focus on Islam alone, since Orthodox Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses

and Protestants are each comparable in size. It also means the minority scene is genuinely multi-religious rather than a single large community plus fragments. For policymakers and researchers, the practical implication is that recognition, funding and integration questions touch many groups at once, not just the most visible. The contrast with more lopsided minority landscapes is sharp, as our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis shows for another Catholic country. In Italy, the minority field is shared more evenly, which arguably makes integration and recognition a broader and more collective question than in countries dominated by a single minority faith.

Faith Families

Minorities by Broad Faith Family

Grouping the minorities into broad families produces a surprising result: most of Italy's religious-minority citizens are themselves Christian. Adding the Orthodox, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Protestants, the Mormons and smaller Christian-origin groups gives roughly 1.29 million people, well over half of all minority believers. Non-Christian religions, led by Islam and Buddhism, together number around 914,000. A further 91,000 or so belong to spiritual and new religious movements, from New Age and human-potential groups to esoteric traditions. So the headline minority story is as much about non-Catholic Christianity as about other world faiths, a nuance often missed, and one that echoes the Christian focus of our evangelical church members in Germany analysis.

Italian religious minorities Christian origin non-Christian spiritual new movements faith family barItalian Minority Believers by Broad Faith Family (2026)Italian religious minorities Christian origin non-Christian spiritual new movements faith family bar 1.29MChristian-origin914Knon-Christian

This Christian-heavy structure matters for how Italy thinks about religious diversity. Much public attention falls on Islam, yet in citizen terms the larger story is the spread of non-Catholic Christianity, through Orthodox immigration, the long Jehovah's Witness presence and the Pentecostal surge among Protestants. The non-Christian religions, though smaller in citizen numbers, are growing fast, especially Islam and Buddhism. The spiritual and new-movement category, while modest, signals the same Western turn toward individual spirituality seen across Europe. Together these families show a minority landscape that is Christian at its core but increasingly plural at its edges. That combination of a Christian-majority core and a fast-diversifying fringe is precisely what makes the Italian minority landscape so distinctive among the historically Catholic nations of southern Europe today.

Italy's Religion

The Wider Religious Landscape of Italy

The minorities only make sense against Italy's overall religious profile. By CESNUR's estimate, about 74.5% of people in Italy are Catholic, while roughly 15.3% are atheist or agnostic. Non-Catholic Christians make up around 4.1%, Muslims about 3.7%, and followers of other religions, including Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Baha'is and Sikhs, around 2.2%. In other words, religious minorities and the non-religious together account for roughly a quarter of the country, with Catholicism still the clear majority. This is the backdrop against which every minority community operates, a deeply Catholic society also explored in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. Against that overwhelmingly Catholic and increasingly secular backdrop, even a minority numbering several hundred thousand registers as only a thin sliver of the national whole, which is exactly what the figures confirm.

Italy religious landscape 2026 Catholic atheist agnostic non-Catholic Christian Muslim other donutItaly's Religious Landscape, 2026 (% of Population)Italy religious landscape 2026 Catholic atheist agnostic non-Catholic Christian Muslim other donut 74.5%Catholic

Two features stand out from this landscape. First, the non-religious bloc, at over 15%, is now far larger than any single religious minority, a sign of the secularisation reshaping Catholic Europe. Second, the religious minorities, though only a few percent each, are growing while Catholic practice declines, so their relative weight is rising over time. This means that Italy's religious future is likely to be both more secular and more plural, with minorities playing a larger role even as the Catholic label remains dominant on paper. Understanding this dual trend is essential to interpreting the minority figures that follow. It also explains why small shifts among the minorities draw attention well beyond their size, since they signal the slow reshaping of a religious order that went effectively uncontested for centuries.

Christian Minorities

Italy's Largest Non-Catholic Christian Communities

Because so many minorities are Christian, it is worth looking at the largest non-Catholic Christian bodies on their own. Eastern Orthodox Christians lead with about 445,000 citizens, followed by Jehovah's Witnesses at around 414,000 and Protestants at 366,000, with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormons, adding roughly 28,500. Each of these is larger than most non-Christian minorities, and together they form the backbone of religious diversity in Italy. Their growth, especially Orthodox immigration and the Pentecostal expansion within Protestantism, is reshaping the Christian map of a country long defined solely by Catholicism, a shift comparable to changes traced in our religion in England and Wales analysis. The rise

of these communities means that, for the first time in centuries, non-Catholic Christianity is a meaningful presence in Italian religious life rather than a historical footnote confined to a few Alpine valleys.

Italy largest non-Catholic Christian communities Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses Protestants Mormons barItaly's Largest Non-Catholic Christian Communities (2026)Italy largest non-Catholic Christian communities Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses Protestants Mormons bar 445KOrthodox414KWitnesses

These communities differ sharply in character. The Orthodox are largely an immigrant population from Romania, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries, the Jehovah's Witnesses are a long-established and tightly organised movement active in Italy since 1903, and the Protestants range from historic Waldensians to fast-growing Pentecostal congregations. Despite their differences, all three have benefited from formal or informal recognition that allows them to operate openly. Their combined presence means non-Catholic Christianity, once almost invisible in Italy, is now a significant and varied part of the religious landscape, even if it remains far smaller than the Catholic mainstream. Their visibility in public life, through schools, charities and recognised places of worship, now far exceeds what their relatively modest membership figures alone would once have suggested was possible in Italy.

Non-Citizens

The Bigger Picture: Religion Among Non-Citizens

The citizen figures tell only part of the story, because Italy is home to around five million non-citizen residents whose religious profile is very different. By CESNUR's estimate, about 34% of these residents are Muslim and 27% Orthodox Christian, with roughly 16% Catholic and the rest spread across other faiths. This immigrant population dramatically enlarges the Muslim and Orthodox communities in particular, turning what look like modest citizen minorities into major religious presences nationwide. The link between migration and religious change here is part of a global pattern explored in our world religions analysis of shifting faith demographics. Without accounting for this large immigrant population, any portrait of religion in Italy would badly understate just how Muslim and Orthodox the country has quietly become over the past two decades.

religion among non-citizens Italy Muslim Orthodox Catholic share five million residents donutReligion Among Italy's Non-Citizen Residents (% of 5 Million)religion among non-citizens Italy Muslim Orthodox Catholic share five million residents donut 34%Muslim

This non-citizen profile explains why headline numbers for Islam and Orthodoxy in Italy vary so widely. Counting citizens alone, Muslims number around 566,000; counting all residents, the Muslim population

rises to well over two million. The same is true of Orthodoxy, which is far larger once immigrant worshippers are added. For Catholicism, the effect runs the other way, since most immigrants are not Catholic, gradually diluting the Catholic share of the resident population. Anyone interpreting Italian religious statistics therefore needs to be clear about whether the figures cover citizens, residents or both, since the answers differ enormously. The practical takeaway is that any responsible figure for Islam or Orthodoxy in Italy should state its basis, because the citizen count and the all-resident count can differ by a factor of three or more.

Citizens vs Residents

Citizens vs All Residents: How the Numbers Change

Setting citizen and resident figures side by side shows how migration transforms the picture. Among citizens alone, there are about 566,000 Muslims and 445,000 Orthodox Christians. Once non-citizen residents are added, the Muslim total climbs to an estimated 2.3 million and the Orthodox to around 1.8 million, several times their citizen counts. These resident totals are estimates, combining the citizen figures with CESNUR's breakdown of the five million foreign residents, but the direction is unmistakable: immigration is the single biggest driver of religious diversity in modern Italy. This dynamic of migration reshaping a Catholic society also features in our belief in God in France by age analysis of generational and demographic change. The same forces of migration and generational turnover reshaping faith elsewhere in Europe are clearly visible in Italy, where the gap between citizen and resident religion is unusually wide.

Italy Muslims Orthodox citizens versus all residents comparison migration religious minorities barMuslims and Orthodox: Citizens vs All Residents in Italy (Est.)Italy Muslims Orthodox citizens versus all residents comparison migration religious minorities bar 2.3MMuslim residents

The gap between citizen and resident figures is not a contradiction but a reflection of Italy's recent history of immigration. Many Muslim and Orthodox residents are first-generation migrants who have not acquired citizenship, so they fall outside the citizen counts even though they are a visible religious presence. Over time, as second generations are born and naturalised, more of these believers will appear in the citizen statistics, gradually enlarging the recorded minorities. For now, the citizen and resident views are best read together, since each captures a real but partial slice of religious life in contemporary Italy. As naturalisation continues and the Italian-born children of migrants come of age, the citizen figures will steadily converge toward the resident totals, making the official statistics look far more diverse than they do today.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Spotlight: Jehovah's Witnesses in Italy

One of the most striking findings is the scale of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Italy. Counting adherents, around 414,000 Italian citizens are linked to the movement, of whom about 250,000 are baptised full members. That makes the Witnesses the second-largest organised Christian denomination in the country after the Catholic Church, and gives Italy one of the largest Witness communities in the world. Active in Italy since 1903 and recognised by the state, the movement has built a substantial, tightly organised presence that far outstrips most other minorities. Its sheer size, backed by formal state recognition, sets it apart from most other minorities and recalls the church-and-state funding arrangements in our Catholic Church tax revenue in Germany analysis.

Jehovah's Witnesses Italy full members adherents 414000 250000 second largest Christian denomination barJehovah's Witnesses in Italy: Full Members vs Total (2026)Jehovah's Witnesses Italy full members adherents 414000 250000 second largest Christian denomination bar 414Kwith adherents250Kfull members

The Witnesses' prominence reshapes how we should think about Italian Christianity. While public attention focuses on the Catholic Church and, increasingly, on Islam, the quiet growth of a 400,000-strong Witness community has made it a major religious actor in its own right. The gap between full members and total adherents reflects the movement's distinctive structure, in which baptised members form a committed core surrounded by a wider circle of participants. Recognised by the state and active in every region, the Jehovah's Witnesses illustrate how Italy's religious minorities include not only immigrant faiths but also large, home-grown alternative Christian movements. The contrast between the quiet, organised expansion of the Witnesses and the louder public debate around immigrant faiths is one of the more revealing features of how religious change is perceived in modern Italy.

Growth Over Time

The Growth of Italy's Religious Minorities

Italy's religious minorities have grown steadily over recent decades, driven mainly by immigration and, to a lesser extent, conversion. An illustrative reading of the trend would show the citizen minority population rising from somewhere around 1.8 million in 2010 to about 2.3 million by 2023, a steady climb even as the Catholic share has slipped. The fastest growth has come among Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Buddhists, reflecting both new arrivals and the naturalisation of earlier migrants. This expansion is reshaping the religious character of a country once almost uniformly Catholic, part of the broader European

story told in our religious communities in Finland analysis. Italy's path, from near-uniform Catholicism toward a more plural and partly secular society, broadly tracks the wider European pattern, even though it began that journey later than most of its northern neighbours.

Italy religious minorities growth 2010 2015 2020 2023 citizens trend rising line illustrativeGrowth of Italy's Religious-Minority Citizens (Illustrative, to 2023)Italy religious minorities growth 2010 2015 2020 2023 citizens trend rising line illustrative 1.8M to 2.3M2010 to 2023risingtrend

The exact path of this growth is illustrative rather than precise, since consistent long-run figures are scarce, but the direction is well documented. As immigration continues and second generations are born in Italy, the recorded minority population is likely to keep rising, even if net migration slows. At the same time, secularisation is eroding the Catholic majority from within. The combined effect points to a future Italy that is both less Catholic in practice and more religiously diverse, with minorities, especially Muslim and Orthodox communities, accounting for an ever larger share of the believing population over the coming decades. Whether that growth accelerates or levels off will depend heavily on future migration patterns, on naturalisation rates, and on whether the spiritual energy now visible among some communities can be sustained across generations.

Key Statistics

Italian Religious Minorities: The Key Numbers

Drawing the threads together, the key numbers describe a small but diverse and growing minority population. Islam leads at around 566,000 citizens, followed by Eastern Orthodox Christians at 445,000, Jehovah's Witnesses at 414,000, Protestants at 366,000 and Buddhists at 218,000. Together with smaller communities of Hindus, Jews, Mormons and Sikhs, they bring the total to about 2.3 million Italian citizens, some 4.3% of the population, a figure that swells dramatically once non-citizen residents are counted. This blend of established and immigrant faiths is the essence of the story, set within the Catholic context detailed in our interfaith Catholic weddings in Germany analysis.

key Italian religious minorities Islam Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses Protestants Buddhists summary barKey Italian Religious Minorities by Citizens (2026)key Italian religious minorities Islam Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses Protestants Buddhists summary bar 566KMuslims

566KMuslims - The Largest MinorityAround 24.6% of minority citizens, and far larger once residents are included. Source: CESNUR 2026. 1.29MChristian-Origin MinoritiesOrthodox, Witnesses, Protestants and Mormons together, a majority of all minority believers. Source: CESNUR 2026. 2.3MTotal Minority

CitizensAbout 4.3% of all Italian citizens, spread across dozens of faiths. Source: CESNUR 2026. 4.3%Of Italy's CitizensA small share in a country where about 74.5% are Catholic. Source: CESNUR 2026.

Taken together, the figures show that Italy, while still overwhelmingly Catholic on paper, hosts a genuinely plural minority landscape that is quietly expanding. A near-even spread among the largest groups, a Christian-heavy core, and a fast-growing immigrant dimension all combine to make religious diversity a more important feature of Italian life than the headline Catholic majority would suggest. For researchers, journalists and faith organisations, the lesson is that the breakdown by faith matters more than any single total, and these counts should be revisited as each new CESNUR survey refines the map of religious minorities in Italy. For now, the headline is easy to state: Italy remains a Catholic country by identity, but beneath that label lies a small, diverse and steadily growing patchwork of faiths that is quietly redrawing its religious map.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religious Minorities in Italy

Islam is the largest. About 566,000 Italian citizens are Muslim, roughly a quarter of all citizens belonging to a religious minority. It is followed by Eastern Orthodox Christians at around 445,000 and Jehovah's Witnesses at about 414,000. Together these three groups make up well over half of Italy's minority believers. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

Around 2.3 million Italian citizens belong to a religious minority, about 4.3% of all citizens. This counts those outside the Catholic majority and the large non-religious population, spanning Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestants, Buddhists and many smaller groups. The figure rises sharply once non-citizen residents are included. Source: CESNUR 2026.

About 566,000 Italian citizens are Muslim in 2026, the single largest religious minority. This counts citizens only; the total Muslim population in Italy is far higher, well over two million, once the large non-citizen and immigrant community is included. Islam is the fastest-growing faith in the country. Source: CESNUR 2026.

Around 414,000 Italian citizens are linked to Jehovah's Witnesses when adherents are counted, of whom about 250,000 are full members. This makes the Witnesses the second-largest organised Christian denomination in Italy after the Catholic Church, and one of the largest Witness communities in the world. Source: CESNUR 2026.

About 445,000 Italian citizens are Eastern Orthodox in 2026, the second-largest minority overall. Orthodoxy is even larger among non-citizens, since roughly 27% of Italy's five million foreign residents are Orthodox, mostly from Romania, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries. Source: CESNUR 2026.

Protestants are the fourth-largest minority among Italian citizens, at around 366,000, behind Muslims, Orthodox and Jehovah's Witnesses. Within Protestantism, Pentecostals dominate, with the historical Waldensian, Methodist, Lutheran and Baptist churches forming a much smaller group. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

CESNUR counts about 36,000 Italian citizens of Jewish faith, while the Union of Italian Jewish Communities registers around 27,000 members. Though small in number, Italy's Jewish community is one of the oldest in Europe, with deep historical roots in cities such as Rome, Milan and Florence. Source: CESNUR, UCEI 2026.

Among Italian citizens, CESNUR counts about 218,000 Buddhists and 57,000 Hindus in 2026. Buddhism in particular has grown through Western converts as well as immigration, and is now the largest of Italy's non-Abrahamic minority faiths, ahead of Hinduism, Sikhism and smaller Eastern traditions. Source: CESNUR 2026.

These figures count Italian citizens only. The picture changes dramatically once the roughly five million non-citizen residents are added, of whom about 34% are Muslim and 27% Orthodox. Counting all residents, Islam and Orthodoxy are far larger than the citizen-only numbers suggest. Source: CESNUR 2026.

They are the best available estimates. The breakdown is compiled by the research centre CESNUR and reported via Statista, drawing on community and church records that are hard to keep exact, especially for immigrant groups. The main figures are well grounded; the resident-versus-citizen totals and the long-term trend are estimates derived from published data. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

Sources

Statista / CESNUR - Italian Citizens Belonging to Religious Minorities - The core source, giving Islam about 566,000, Eastern Orthodox 445,000, Jehovah's Witnesses 414,000 and Protestants 366,000 among minority citizens.

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), "Le Religioni in Italia" and The Journal of CESNUR (2024) - Source for the detailed denomination-by-denomination breakdown and shares used throughout.

US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report on Italy - Source for the wider religious landscape, the roughly 74.5% Catholic share and the religion of non-citizen residents.

Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI) - Source for the size of the Italian Jewish community (about 27,000 registered members).

Figures are compiled by CESNUR and reported by Statista. Counts cover Italian citizens unless stated otherwise. Confirmed (CESNUR 2023): Islam 566,000, Eastern Orthodox 445,000, Jehovah's Witnesses 414,000, Protestants 366,000, Buddhists 218,000. The resident-versus-citizen totals and the long-term growth trend are estimates derived from published data. Counts are approximate, especially for immigrant communities. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Share of people that believe in God in Sweden 2010-2026

Updated Jun 20, 2026 · businesstats.com/share-of-people-that-believe-in-god-in-sweden

47% BELIEVED 2010	**~38%** BELIEVE 2026	**34%** YOUNG, 2024
15-18% PERSONAL GOD	**-9pp** SINCE 2010	**1st** MOST SECULAR EU

Overview

Share of people that believe in God in Sweden from 2010 to 2026

Sweden is often called the most secular country in the world, and the numbers explain why. The share of people in Sweden who say they believe in God fell from about 47 percent in 2010 to roughly 38 percent by 2026. This report tracks the share of people that believe in God in Sweden from 2010 to 2026, drawing on long-running survey data. The trend is one of the most studied in the sociology of religion. Sweden is a key test case for the whole field. Its data shapes global theories of secularisation. Researchers worldwide watch the Swedish numbers. The country is a bellwether for secular trends. What happens in Sweden is studied everywhere. Its trajectory informs debates far beyond its borders. Sweden serves as the world reference point for secular trends.

The headline is a clear, long decline. For most of the 2010s, belief in God in Sweden fell almost every year, as each generation proved less religious than the one before. By the early 2020s the figure had dropped to its lowest level on record, fitting Sweden reputation, a pattern set out in our religion in Europe overview.

Share Who Believe in God in Sweden, 2010-2026 (%)Percentage of Swedes saying they believe in God, by year.

Data:

Share of people in Sweden who say they believe in God, 2010 to 2026, in percent, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet (University of Gothenburg) survey data and related sources.

Note:

Based on the survey question Tror du pa gud (Do you believe in God). 2010 and 2016 are reported anchor points; intermediate years are interpolated from the reported continuous decline, and 2025 to 2026 are estimates.Switch views with the toolbar.

The whole story in one chart: belief among all Swedes (gold) drifted down from 47% to the high 30s, while belief among the young (blue) collapsed to 20% by 2020 then surged back to 34% by 2024. The two lines are converging.

But the most recent years hold a surprise. Since around 2022, belief in God among young Swedes has risen sharply, halting and even slightly reversing the overall decline. This unexpected turn, part of a wider revival in church attendance, complicates the simple story of endless secularisation, a shift explored further in our world religions overview.

A note on the data. Figures are the share of people in Sweden answering that they believe in God, in percent, mainly from SOM-institutet at the University of Gothenburg. The 2010 and 2016 figures are reported anchor points; intermediate years are interpolated from the documented continuous decline, and the 2025 and 2026 values are estimates based on recent survey trends. The direction of the recent figures, however, is well documented. The recent uptick is supported by multiple sources. SOM, the Church and independent polls all agree. The convergence of evidence is hard to dismiss.

Belief Data Table

Share Who Believe in God in Sweden, 2010–2026

Share of People Who Believe in God in Sweden, 2010-2026Click any column to sort

YEAR	BELIEVE IN GOD	CHANGE VS 2010
2010	47%	+0
2011	46%	-1
2012	45%	-2
2013	43%	-4
2014	42%	-5
2015	41%	-6

2016	40%	-7
2017	39%	-8
2018	38%	-9
2019	38%	-9
2020	37%	-10
2021	36%	-11
2022	37%	-10
2023	37%	-10
2024	38%	-9
2025	38%	-9
2026	38%	-9

The table lists the share of people in Sweden who believe in God for each year from 2010 to 2026, in percent. It shows a steady decline from 47 percent to a low around 36 percent in the early 2020s, followed by a modest recovery to about 38 percent. Sorting the figures highlights both the long downward trend and the recent uptick. The two phases are clearly visible in the numbers. Decline first, then an unexpected pause. The shape of the curve tells the whole story. A long fall, then a sudden levelling off. The second act surprised almost everyone. Few predicted belief would climb again. The rebound defied decades of expectation. No mainstream theory had predicted such a youth revival here.

Year-over-Year

Belief in God in Sweden: Year-over-Year Change

Looking at the year-over-year change makes the two phases of the story clear. Through most of the 2010s, the share believing in God fell by roughly one percentage point a year, a slow but relentless decline. The losses were largest in the middle of the decade, around 2013 to 2016. Each year chipped away at the believing share. The cumulative loss over the decade was large. Roughly one in five believers fell away. The losses concentrated in the middle years.

Then the pattern flips. From around 2022, the annual change turns slightly positive, as a rise in belief among young Swedes outweighs continued decline among older groups. The shift from steady losses to

small gains is the single most striking feature of the recent data, and the core of the current secularisation debate. Few expected the trend to stall so soon. The reversal among the young drove the change. A single generation shifted the whole trend. Gen Z is rewriting the Swedish story. The youngest Swedes broke the long pattern. For the first time on record, the young grew steadily more believing.

Belief in God in Sweden: Year-over-Year Change (pp)How the share believing in God rose or fell each year.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

Read the colours: red bars mark the years belief fell, green bars the years it rose. After more than a decade of red, the recent green is the first sustained gain on record.

The change chart shows that secularisation in Sweden was never a straight line, but a series of yearly steps that have now paused. Whether the recent small gains mark a genuine turning point or a temporary blip is the central question, one that connects to wider trends like the share of non-religious people in Spain .

By Age Group

Belief in God in Sweden by Age Group

Broken down by age, belief in God in Sweden follows a clear generational gradient, but one that is shifting. In 2010, about 60 percent of those aged 65 to 85 believed in God, compared with far fewer among younger Swedes. Older Swedes have always been the most religious group, a pattern common in almost every country studied. Age remains the strongest predictor of belief. Older Swedes believe far more than the young once did. That long-standing gap is now shrinking. The generations are moving closer together.

Over time, belief fell across every age group, but fastest among the old. The share of believers aged 65 to 85 dropped from around 60 percent in 2010 to about 44 percent by the mid-2020s. Middle-aged Swedes, historically the least religious, hovered in the mid-30s, well below their elders throughout the period. The

age gradient was steep and persistent. For years, every cohort was less religious than the last.

Belief in God in Sweden by Age Group (%)Share believing in God among older, middle and younger Swedes.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

Lines drawing together: older Swedes have always believed most, but as the youngest group climbs the age gap that long defined Swedish religion is closing fast.

Change in Belief in God by Age Group, 2010 to 2024 (pp)How belief rose or fell in each age group over the period.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

The reversal, isolated: since 2010 belief fell sharply among the old (-16pp) and the middle-aged (-8pp) but actually rose among the young (+1pp). The generations moved in opposite directions.

The youngest group tells the most interesting story. After falling through the 2010s, belief among Swedes under 30 rebounded sharply after 2022, narrowing the long-standing gap with older generations. For the first time in the data, the young are not simply the least believing group, a reversal that echoes patterns in belief in God by age in France.

The Youth Revival

Young Swedes' Belief in God: A Surprising Revival

The revival of belief among young Swedes is the headline of the latest data. Belief in God among those aged 16 to 24 fell to a low near 20 percent around 2020, then climbed to about 34 percent by 2024, its highest level since the survey began in 2010. That is a remarkable swing in just a few years.

This youth revival is not just about belief. Church attendance among young Swedes roughly doubled between 2020 and 2024, and applications to join the Church of Sweden reached their highest in decades. The trend is strong enough that researchers have ruled out immigration as the main cause, a finding that parallels our data on Church of England attendance by age.

Belief in God Among Young Swedes Aged 16-24 (%)The decline and sharp rebound in youth belief.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

The headline twist: belief among 16 to 24 year olds slid to a low of 20% around 2020, then jumped to 34% by 2024, its highest level since records began in 2010.

Why young Swedes are turning back toward belief is debated. Some point to a search for meaning, community and stability in an uncertain world; others to a reaction against rigid secularism. Whatever the cause, it runs directly counter to the secularisation theory that long defined Sweden, and stands out even next to religious communities in Finland.

By Education

Belief in God in Sweden by Education Level

Education has long shaped belief in God in Sweden, with the more highly educated less likely to believe. In 2010, about 46 percent of Swedes with a university education believed in God, compared with 52 percent

of those with the least formal education. The gap was real but not enormous.

Belief fell across all education levels through the 2010s, but the decline was steeper among the highly educated. By 2019, belief among university-educated Swedes had dropped to around 34 percent, while among the least educated it held closer to 46 percent. The education gap in belief therefore widened over the decade. Schooling and belief moved further apart. The university-educated led the secular shift. Higher learning and lower belief went together.

Belief in God in Sweden by Education, 2010 vs 2019 (%)Share believing in God by education level, then and now.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

Schooling still divides belief: university-educated Swedes believe least and secularised fastest, so the gap between education levels actually widened over the decade.

This education gradient mirrors patterns seen across the developed world, where higher education correlates with lower religious belief. In Sweden, with its near-universal access to higher education, this helps explain why overall belief sits so low, a gradient also seen in religious participation by education level abroad.

Across the Period

Belief in God in Sweden, 2010 to 2026

Tracing belief in God in Sweden across three snapshots, 2010, 2016 and 2024, captures the arc of the story. It fell from about 47 percent in 2010 to 40 percent in 2016, then continued down before settling near 38 percent by 2024. The steepest decline came in the first half of the period.

The slope flattens markedly in the later years. The sharp drop of the early 2010s gave way to a gentler decline and then a slight recovery, as the youth revival began to register in the overall figure. The line that

once pointed steadily downward has, for now, levelled off, a pause few forecasters anticipated.

Belief in God in Sweden: 2010, 2016 and 2024 (%)The arc of belief in three snapshots.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

The arc in three points: a steep fall from 2010 to 2016, then a gentler slide that has now flattened as the youth revival feeds into the overall figure.

This flattening is what makes the Swedish case so closely watched. A country long held up as the model of inevitable secularisation has seen its decline stall, raising the question of whether other secular nations might follow, a possibility weighed against our religious beliefs in Poland data.

Types of Belief

How Swedes Believe: God, Higher Power or Neither

How Swedes believe matters as much as whether they believe. Surveys that separate types of belief find that only a small minority, around 15 to 18 percent, believe in a personal God as described in scripture. A larger group believes in some kind of spirit or life force, while the largest group rejects both. Sweden splits three ways on belief. Believers, the spiritual, and non-believers each now form a sizeable bloc. No single group any longer holds a clear majority of Swedes.

This three-way split explains why headline belief figures vary so much by survey. Broad questions that count any belief in God, like the SOM survey, yield figures near 38 percent; narrower questions about a personal God yield figures closer to 15 percent. Both are correct; they simply measure different things, a nuance often lost in headlines. The question wording drives the numbers. Broad and narrow measures tell different stories.

How People in Sweden Believe (%)Personal God, a higher power, or no belief at all.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

How, not just whether: only about 18% believe in a personal God as in scripture. The largest slice believes in a vague spirit or life force, and the rest in nothing at all.

From Belief to Practice: Religiosity Ladder in Sweden (%)Believing, identifying as religious and attending compared.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

Belief far outruns practice: 38% say they believe in God, 27% call themselves religious, but under 5% attend church regularly. Stated belief is much softer than behaviour.

The large middle group, those who believe in a vague spirit or higher power but not a traditional God, is characteristically Swedish. It reflects a society that has moved away from organised religion without becoming uniformly atheist, a spiritual-but-not-religious pattern that is distinctively Scandinavian.

Vs Other Countries

Belief in God: Sweden Compared with Other Countries

Compared with other countries, Sweden sits near the very bottom for belief in God. Where roughly 65 percent of Americans and 49 percent of Britons say they believe in God, as shown in our belief in God in the United Kingdom data, the Swedish figure of around 38 percent is far lower, and lower still on narrower measures of belief in a personal God.

Within Europe, only a handful of countries rival Sweden secularism. Belief tends to be lowest in the Nordic and Western European nations and higher in the south and east. Sweden consistently ranks among the least religious, a position confirmed across decades of international surveys. The ranking has been remarkably stable. Sweden sits near the bottom year after year. Its secular status is deeply entrenched. Decades of data confirm the pattern. Sweden has long led the secular world.

Belief in God by Country (%)Share believing in God in Sweden versus other nations.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

Near the global bottom: at about 38%, Sweden sits far below the United States (65%) and Poland (58%), and is one of the least believing nations surveyed.

Belief in God Across the Nordic Countries (%)Sweden compared with its Nordic neighbours.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

Most secular even at home: among its Nordic neighbours Sweden is the least believing, with Finland believing far more on comparable measures.

These cross-country comparisons come with caveats, as different surveys ask different questions. Still, the broad picture is consistent: Sweden is one of the most secular societies on earth, even after the recent uptick, a standing few other nations share. Sweden remains a global outlier on belief. Only a few nations

are less religious.

Church Attendance

Church Attendance Among Young Swedes

The clearest sign of the Swedish religious shift is in church attendance, not just stated belief. The share of young Swedes who attended a church service during the year roughly doubled between 2020 and 2024, rising from around 17 percent to 34 percent, the highest in nearly two decades.

Membership trends point the same way. Where 5,000 to 6,000 people joined the Church of Sweden each year in the late 2000s, that number passed 10,000 in the early 2020s and reached around 14,000 in 2024, the most in decades. The institutional revival tracks the attitudinal one, much like trends in weekly church attendance in Italy.

Young Swedes: Church Attendance and Belief, 2020 vs 2024 (%)The doubling in youth church-going and belief.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

Behaviour backs the revival: both church attendance and belief among young Swedes roughly doubled between 2020 and 2024, so this is more than just a shift in survey answers.

These attendance and membership figures matter because behaviour can be a firmer signal than stated belief. People may report belief loosely, but choosing to attend services or formally join a church is a more deliberate act, making the youth-led revival in Sweden harder to dismiss as mere survey noise.

The Generational Gap

The Generational Gap in Swedish Belief in God

The generational gap in belief, long a defining feature of Swedish religion, is now narrowing. In 2010, the gap between the most believing older group and the least believing younger group was roughly 27 percentage points. By 2024, that gap had shrunk to around 10 points as the young moved back toward belief. The convergence between generations is unprecedented. The young and old are converging fast. The historic age gap is closing quickly. The young are catching up to their elders.

This narrowing matters for the future. For decades, secularisation in Sweden was driven by generational replacement, as more religious older cohorts were replaced by less religious younger ones. If the youngest generation is now more believing, that engine of decline weakens, reshaping long-held projections of future belief. Forecasts may need a serious rethink. The old assumptions no longer hold cleanly. Secularisation may not be a one-way street. Sweden could yet defy the textbooks.

Generational Gap in Belief in God in Sweden (pp)The gap between older and younger believers, narrowing.

Data:

Derived from the share of people in Sweden who believe in God, 2010 to 2026, compiled by BusinessStats from SOM-institutet survey data and related sources.

Note:

Age, education, generational and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey data. Some figures are approximate and drawn from different surveys, so direct comparison is indicative rather than exact.Switch views with the toolbar.

The gap is closing fast: the distance between the most believing old and least believing young shrank from about 27 points in 2010 to roughly 10 by 2024.

Whether the narrowing gap signals a lasting change or a temporary fluctuation is the key uncertainty. A single generation bucking the trend could either fade or mark a genuine inflection. Either way, it makes Sweden one of the most closely watched cases in the global study of religion and belief.

47%2010Believed in God. ~38%2026Believe today. 20%->34%Young SwedesBelief, 2020-2024. 15-18%Personal GodNarrow measure.

The share of people that believe in God in Sweden from 2010 to 2026 tells a story in two acts. First, a long secular decline, from about 47 percent in 2010 to a low near 36 percent in the early 2020s, as Sweden cemented its place among the least religious nations on earth. Belief fell across every age and education

group, fastest among the old and the highly educated. No group was untouched by the decline. Belief fell across the whole of society.

Then, an unexpected second act. Since 2022, a revival of belief and church attendance among young Swedes has halted the decline and nudged the overall figure back toward 38 percent. Whether this marks a true turning point or a passing moment, it has made the world model of secularisation one of the most fascinating religious stories anywhere, a case that complements our wider belief in God in France coverage.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Belief in God in Sweden

As of 2026, around 38 percent of people in Sweden say they believe in God, according to long-running survey data from SOM-institutet at the University of Gothenburg. This is down from about 47 percent in 2010, though it has recovered slightly from a low near 36 percent in the early 2020s. The figure depends heavily on how the question is asked: broad questions about believing in God yield around 38 percent, while narrower questions about a personal God as described in scripture yield closer to 15 to 18 percent.

Sweden is consistently ranked as one of the least religious countries in the world, and often the least religious in Europe. With only around 38 percent saying they believe in God, and just 15 to 18 percent believing in a personal God, Sweden ranks far below countries like the United States or Poland. Only a few nations, such as Japan, China, South Korea and the Czech Republic, typically rank as less religious on common measures. Even so, recent gains in belief among young Swedes have complicated this picture.

Belief in God in Sweden declined for most of the period from 2010 onward due to long-running secularisation. The main driver was generational replacement: each younger cohort was less religious than the one before, so as older, more believing Swedes passed on, average belief fell. High levels of education, a strong welfare state, and a culture that increasingly viewed religion as outdated all reinforced the trend. The decline was steepest among older and university-educated Swedes through the 2010s.

Yes, surprisingly. After falling to a low near 20 percent around 2020, belief in God among young Swedes aged 16 to 24 rose to about 34 percent by 2024, the highest since the survey began in 2010. Church attendance among the young roughly doubled between 2020 and 2024. Researchers have found this youth revival is not mainly driven by immigration, and it runs directly counter to the secularisation theory that long defined Sweden. The causes are debated, but a search for meaning and community is often cited.

Only about 15 to 18 percent of Swedes believe in a personal God as described in scripture, according to surveys such as Eurobarometer. A larger group, around 45 percent, believes in some kind of spirit or life force without a traditional God, while the rest do not believe in any God or spirit. This is why headline belief figures vary: the broad share who believe in God in some form is around 38 percent, but the share believing in a personal God is far smaller.

Sweden has one of the lowest rates of belief in God among developed countries. Around 38 percent of Swedes say they believe in God, compared with roughly 65 percent in the United States, 58 percent in Poland, and 49 percent in the United Kingdom. Within Europe, belief is generally lowest in the Nordic and Western European countries and higher in the south and east. Sweden consistently ranks among the most secular societies, though cross-country comparisons depend on how each survey phrases its questions.

The most cited long-running source is the SOM Institute (SOM-institutet) at the University of Gothenburg, which has run an annual national survey since 2010 asking Swedes the question Tror du pa gud, meaning Do you believe in God. Other sources include Eurobarometer, the World Values Survey, Ipsos and Demoskop. These surveys ask slightly different questions and so produce different figures, but all point to Sweden being highly secular with a recent uptick in belief among the young.

Yes, particularly among young people. The share of young Swedes who attended a church service during the year roughly doubled between 2020 and 2024, rising from around 17 percent to 34 percent, the highest level in nearly two decades. Applications to join the Church of Sweden also rose, from 5,000 to 6,000 a year in the late 2000s to around 14,000 in 2024, the most in decades. This institutional revival mirrors the rise in stated belief among the young.

Christianity, specifically the Lutheran Church of Sweden, is the largest religion in Sweden, with a little over half the population still registered as members, though active participation is far lower. Around a third of Swedes are unaffiliated, describing themselves as agnostic, atheist or nothing in particular. Islam is the second largest religion, at roughly 2 percent. Despite this Christian heritage, Sweden remains highly secular, with most members of the Church of Sweden rarely attending services.

This is now genuinely uncertain. For years, projections assumed Sweden would keep secularising as religious older generations were replaced by secular younger ones. But the recent revival of belief and church attendance among young Swedes has weakened that engine of decline. If the trend among the young proves lasting, the long secularisation of Sweden could stall or even reverse. If it fades, the decline may resume. Sweden has become one of the most closely watched cases in the global study of religion.

Sources

SOM-institutet, University of Gothenburg - Primary source for the annual share of people in Sweden who believe in God (Tror du pa gud).

Eurobarometer, Ipsos and World Values Survey - References for belief type, cross-country comparison and age and education detail.

SOM Institute - Reference for the Swedish survey of belief in God.

Figures are the share of people in Sweden answering that they believe in God, in percent, mainly from SOM-institutet at the University of Gothenburg. The 2010 figure of about 47 percent and the 2016 figure of about 40 percent are reported anchor points; intermediate years are interpolated from the documented continuous decline, and the 2025 and 2026 values are estimates based on recent survey trends. Age, education, belief-type and cross-country figures draw on SOM-institutet, Eurobarometer, Ipsos and the World Values Survey, ask different questions, and are indicative rather than exactly comparable.

STATISTICS REPORT

Share of people believing in God in France 2026, by age

Updated Jun 5, 2026 · businesstats.com/people-belief-in-god-by-age-france

36% OF 18-24 YEAR OLDS BELIEVE - THE LOWEST	**50%** OF THOSE AGED 65+ BELIEVE - THE HIGHEST	**14pt** GENERATIONAL GAP, YOUNGEST TO OLDEST
44% NATIONAL AVERAGE BELIEF IN GOD IN FRANCE	**47%** OF 25-34 YEAR OLDS BELIEVE IN GOD	**43%** OF UNDER-30S STILL BELIEVE, LED BY MINORITIES

Overview

Percentage of people believing in God in France in 2026, by age

Age is one of the most powerful predictors of belief in God in France, and the pattern is strikingly consistent: the older the French person, the more likely they are to believe. According to the IFOP survey, only about 36% of 18 to 24 year olds say they believe in God, rising to 47% among 25 to 34 year olds and around 50% among those aged 50 and over. That is a gap of roughly 14 points between the youngest and oldest adults. The young are not only less believing but also less affiliated and less likely to practise, which is why this generational divide matters so much. The same age effect appears when belief is broken down by religious group, set out in our belief in God in France by religious affiliation analysis.

The importance of the age pattern lies in what it implies for the future. Because belief tends to form early in life and then persist, the low rates among today's young adults are likely to stay with them as they grow older. As the more religious older generations gradually pass on and are replaced by these younger, more secular cohorts, the national average is mathematically pushed downward, even if no single person ever changes their mind. This generational replacement is the engine behind the long decline in belief in God in France over time, and it makes the trend unusually predictable compared with most social attitudes.

A few points help in reading the figures. They record self-declared belief in God by age band, not religious practice, which is lower across every generation. The most solidly grounded numbers are 18-24 at about 36%, 25-34 at about 47%, and the 50-plus groups at around 50%, against a national average near 44%.

The 35-49 band, the broad middle-generation value used later, and the forward projection are estimates derived from published data and flagged as such. The 2026 values reflect the latest available wave and the continuation of a clear downward trend rather than a brand-new reading. With those caveats in mind, the age gradient is clear, consistent and consequential. More than almost any other social statistic, it lets us read the religious future of France directly off the present, simply by watching which generations are growing and which are shrinking.

percentage believing in God France 2026 by age 18-24 25-34 35-49 50-64 65 plus generational barBelief in God in France by Age Group, 2026 (%)percentage believing in God France 2026 by age 18-24 25-34 35-49 50-64 65 plus generational bar 36%youngest (18-24)

36%18-24 Year Olds - The Least Likely to BelieveNearly two-thirds of the youngest adults are non-believers, the most secular generation France has produced. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 47%25-34 Year Olds - A Step Up From the YoungestBelief climbs as people enter their thirties, though it stays below the rate seen among older generations. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 50%Aged 50 and Over - The Most Believing GroupsOlder French people grew up in a more religious era and have largely kept the faith of their youth. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 14ptThe Generational Gap in BeliefThe distance between the youngest and oldest adults, and the clearest sign of further decline ahead. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. Full Data Table

Belief in God in France by Age Group: Full Table

Share Believing in God by Age, France 2026 (IFOP)Click any column to sort

AGE GROUP	BELIEVE IN GOD (%)	VS NATIONAL AVG (PTS)
18-24	**36%**	-8
25-34	**47%**	+3
35-49	**45%**	+1
50-64	**50%**	+6
65+	**50%**	+6

The table shows belief climbing almost step by step with age. The youngest band sits eight points below the national average, while every group over 50 sits six points above it. The middle bands form a bridge between these extremes. What the numbers capture is not a sudden break at any particular age but a

smooth gradient, the cumulative result of decades of secularisation working through successive generations. Each cohort has been a little less religious than the one before, so that age and belief now move together in a remarkably orderly way. This same orderly, generational character defines the wider European retreat of faith explored in our religion in Europe analysis.

Above & Below Average

Which Age Groups Sit Above or Below the National Average?

Measuring each age group against the national average of 44% sharpens the generational story. The 18 to 24 group falls eight points below the average, the only band clearly in negative territory, while those aged 50 and over rise six points above it. The 25 to 34 and 35 to 49 groups hover just around the line. This above-and-below view makes plain that the national figure is essentially an average of a below-average young and an above-average old, with the balance tipping further toward the young, and therefore lower, with each passing year. Comparable generational splits appear across the Channel in our UK belief in God analysis.

France belief in God age groups above below national average points 18-24 65 plus diverging barBelief in God by Age: Points Above or Below the National AverageFrance belief in God age groups above below national average points 18-24 65 plus diverging bar -8 to +6youngest to oldest

Seeing the gaps rather than the raw rates highlights how much of France's falling belief is really a story about the young. The older groups remain comfortably above the national norm, holding belief at levels that were once typical of the country as a whole. It is the youngest adults, sitting well below average, who pull the national figure down, and their weight in the population only grows over time. This is why the headline decline in belief is so closely tied to generational change rather than to mass loss of faith among existing believers, a distinction that runs through every recent survey of religion in France.

Believe vs Not by Age

Believers vs Non-Believers Within Each Age Group

Splitting each age group into believers and non-believers reveals just how secular the young have become. Among 18 to 24 year olds, non-believers outnumber believers by nearly two to one, with around 64% saying they do not believe. By the 25 to 34 band the split is closer, and among those aged 50 and over it is roughly even, with believers and non-believers each accounting for about half. No age group is now strongly believing in the way the country as a whole once was, but the contrast between a heavily sceptical

young and a evenly divided old is stark. This pattern of belief thinning fastest among the young mirrors the decline in religious practice seen in our French Bible owners by declared religion analysis.

France believers non-believers by age group 18-24 65 plus grouped comparison barBelievers vs Non-Believers in God in France, by Age (%)France believers non-believers by age group 18-24 65 plus grouped comparison bar 36% / 64%18-2450% / 50%65+

The within-group split underlines that secularisation is not uniform but generational. Among the oldest French people, belief and non-belief are roughly balanced, a legacy of an era when faith was the norm. Among the youngest, non-belief is clearly dominant, reflecting an upbringing in a society where religion is the exception. As the population ages and these younger cohorts move up the age ladder, the even split of the old will be replaced by the lopsided split of the young, steadily lowering belief overall. The same generational mechanism is reshaping faith across Europe, including the patterns documented in our religion in England and Wales analysis.

The Young

A Closer Look at Belief Among Young French People

Because the young hold the key to France's religious future, their profile deserves a closer look. In a survey of 18 to 30 year olds, a majority, around 52%, reported no religious affiliation at all, while 18% identified as Roman Catholic, 12% as Muslim, and small shares as Protestant, Orthodox or other. Despite this heavily secular profile, about 43% of young French people still said they believe in God, a figure held up substantially by young Muslims and committed young Catholics. The young are therefore more polarised than any older cohort: a large secular majority alongside a smaller but often intensely believing minority drawn from minority faiths and the practising young, as our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis helps explain.

young French people 18 30 religious affiliation no religion Catholic Islam share barReligious Affiliation of Young French People (18-30), % of Groupyoung French people 18 30 religious affiliation no religion Catholic Islam share bar 52%no religion

This youth profile carries a double message. On one hand, the large secular majority among the young guarantees continued overall decline, since these cohorts will increasingly define the national average. On the other, the persistence of strong belief among young Muslims and practising young Catholics shows that faith is not vanishing so much as concentrating into committed, and increasingly diverse, communities. France's religious future therefore looks less like uniform unbelief and more like a small, devout minority

within a broadly secular society. The same concentration of belief within active communities, even amid wider decline, appears in our Catholic population in Germany analysis.

By Generation

Belief in God Across the Generations: Young, Middle and Old

Grouping the age bands into broad generations makes the trajectory easy to grasp. Among the young, under 30, around 43% believe in God. Among the middle generation, roughly 35 to 64, belief sits a little under half. Among seniors aged 65 and over, about 50% believe. Each older generation is modestly more religious than the one beneath it, with no sharp cliff but a steady, reliable rise. This generational ladder is the human shape of secularisation: not a single event but a slow handover, in which each cohort carries slightly less faith into old age than the cohort before it did. The cumulative effect over decades is the dramatic national decline traced elsewhere in this series.

France belief in God by generation young middle seniors comparison bar 43 50 percentBelief in God in France by Broad Generation (%)France belief in God by generation young middle seniors comparison bar 43 50 percent 43%Young 18-3050%Seniors 65+

The generational view also clarifies why a revival would be so hard to achieve. To reverse the decline, belief would have to rise sharply among the young, against the grain of an upbringing that is overwhelmingly secular. The modest pockets of strong faith among young Muslims and practising Catholics show this is not impossible within communities, but across society as a whole there is little sign of it. Instead, the orderly generational ladder points in one direction, with each new cohort of young adults likely to start from an even lower base of belief than the last, deepening the secular trend rather than reversing it.

Who the French Are

The Religious Backdrop: Affiliation in France

The age pattern in belief sits against a backdrop of shifting religious affiliation. Around half of French people (50%) still describe themselves as Christian, while roughly 42% report no religion, 3% are Muslim, 3% follow another faith and 1% are Jewish. Crucially, affiliation itself varies sharply by age: older people are far more likely to claim a religion, while the young are the most likely to have none. Because affiliation and belief move together, the youthfulness of the unaffiliated reinforces the age gradient in belief. The full make-up and forecast of French belief is set out in our population distribution by religion in France analysis.

France religious affiliation 2026 Christian no religion Muslim Jewish share donut age backdropDeclared Religious Affiliation in France, 2026 (% of Population)France religious affiliation 2026 Christian no religion Muslim Jewish share donut age backdrop 50%Christian

The interaction between age and affiliation is what makes the decline so durable. As the large, mostly older Christian group shrinks and the younger, mostly unaffiliated group grows, both affiliation and belief fall together. This is why France's secularisation is best understood not as believers losing their faith but as a generational handover from an affiliated, believing older population to an unaffiliated, sceptical younger one. The two trends, the ageing of the faithful and the secularism of the young, point the same way, and their combined momentum is far harder to reverse than either would be alone, as the broader sweep of belief worldwide in our world religions analysis underlines.

The Long Decline

Belief by Age Within the Long National Decline

The age snapshot sits inside a long national decline that gives it meaning. Belief in God in France has fallen from a clear majority earlier this century to a minority today: around 55% believed in 2004, 56% in 2011, 49% in 2021, 44% in 2023, and roughly 40% by 2026. The age data explain the mechanism behind this fall. It is not that older believers are abandoning their faith, since belief among the over-50s remains around 50%, but that each new generation of young adults enters with a lower starting level of belief, steadily lowering the average. The two perspectives, the time trend and the age gradient, are two views of the same process.

belief in God France decline 2004 2011 2021 2023 2026 national trend line age contextNational Belief in God in France, 2004 to 2026 (%)belief in God France decline 2004 2011 2021 2023 2026 national trend line age context 55% to 40%2004 to 202644%2023

Reading the age breakdown against the time trend confirms that France's falling belief is driven by generational replacement rather than by mass loss of faith. As long as the youngest cohorts continue to start from a low base, the national line will keep drifting downward each time an older, more believing generation is replaced by a younger, more secular one. This makes the future relatively predictable: the age structure of belief today is, in effect, a preview of the national average tomorrow. The same generational mechanics shape secularisation across historically Catholic Europe, as our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis shows.

France Today

Belief in God in France Today: The National Picture

Aggregating across all ages, the national picture in 2026 is clear: a minority of French people believe in God. Around 40% say they do, while roughly 60% identify as non-believers, atheist or agnostic. This national figure is the weighted blend of the age groups examined above, a relatively believing older population set against a heavily secular young one. Seen this way, the headline number is not a single mood but the arithmetic result of a society in generational transition, where the religious habits of the past survive mainly among the old. Understanding that age structure is essential to interpreting any single statistic about faith in France.

France 2026 believers non-believers in God national share majority doubt donut ageBelievers vs Non-Believers in God in France, 2026 (% of Population)France 2026 believers non-believers in God national share majority doubt donut age 60%non-believers

A non-believing majority does not mean a faithless country, but it does mean that, taken as a whole, France now leans secular, and leans that way more with every passing year of generational turnover. The believing minority remains real and, among the committed, deeply held, but it is increasingly an older and a minority-faith phenomenon rather than a feature of the population at large. This balance, between a secular and ageing mainstream and pockets of committed belief, defines contemporary France and frames its debates over religion, identity and the place of faith in public life. It is a balance that tilts a little further toward the secular with each generational handover, even as the believing minority that remains grows more committed and more diverse.

The Future

What the Age Gap Means for the Future of Belief

The clearest practical use of the age data is to glimpse the future. If today's young adults carry their low belief rates with them through life, and if each new cohort starts from a similar or lower base, the national average can be expected to keep falling. A simple illustrative projection, extending the current generational pattern, would see belief in God in France drifting from around 40% in 2026 toward the low-to-mid thirties by 2050. This is not a forecast in the strict sense but a direction of travel implied by the age structure, and it should be read as illustrative rather than precise. Even so, the underlying logic, that the young of today become the average of tomorrow, is hard to escape.

France belief in God projection 2026 2035 2050 illustrative generational decline line futureBelief in God in France: Illustrative Projection to 2050 (%)France belief in God projection 2026 2035 2050 illustrative generational decline line future ~31%by 2050 (est.)

Such projections come with heavy caveats and are offered only to illustrate the momentum built into the age structure. Real outcomes will depend on migration, on whether the modest religious vitality among some young communities spreads, and on cultural shifts that no model can foresee. What is far more certain is the direction rather than the exact level: barring an unexpected revival among the young, belief in God in France is likely to keep declining for the foreseeable future. The age gap is, in effect, a built-in downward pressure on the national figure, and it is this structural momentum, more than any single event, that will shape the religious France of the coming decades.

Key Statistics

Belief in God in France by Age: The Key Numbers

Set within the wider measures of French religiosity, the age data complete a consistent picture. Around 50% of French people identify as Christian, about 40% believe in God, only 27% own a Bible, and just 19% read it, each rung of this ladder narrower than the last. The age breakdown shows where belief is concentrated along that ladder: among the old far more than the young. Together, these figures describe a country whose religiosity is thinning fastest at the youngest end, a pattern with a clear and lasting trajectory. A comparable European case, with its own age and affiliation mix, appears in our religious communities in Finland analysis.

France religiosity ladder Christian identity belief in God Bible ownership reading share bar ageFrance's Ladder of Religiosity: From Identity to Engagement (%)France religiosity ladder Christian identity belief in God Bible ownership reading share bar age 50% to 19%the ladder

36% vs 50%Youngest vs Oldest Belief in GodA 14-point generational gap, the clearest single driver of long-term decline. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 43%Of Under-30s Still Believe in GodA secular majority, but with strong belief surviving among young Muslims and practising Catholics. Source: IFOP 2026. 44% to 40%National Average, Still FallingPulled down over time as younger, more secular cohorts make up a larger share of adults. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. ~31%Illustrative Belief Level by 2050An estimate based on continued generational turnover, offered to show the direction of travel. Source: BusinessStats projection.

Taken together, the key numbers describe a France whose belief in God is defined by generation. Faith remains relatively common among the over-50s but is the exception among the young, and the national average of around 40% is simply the meeting point of these age groups, weighted by their size. Because that weighting shifts toward the young each year, the figure is set to keep falling. For researchers, religious organisations and anyone seeking to understand modern France, the message is that the future of belief is being written by today's young adults, and the figures should be revisited as each new IFOP wave refines this generational map of faith.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Belief in God in France by Age

Belief rises steadily with age. Only about 36% of 18 to 24 year olds say they believe in God, rising to 47% of 25 to 34 year olds and around 50% of those aged 50 and over. The youngest adults are the least likely to believe, and the oldest the most, a gap of roughly 14 points. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

The youngest adults. Just 36% of 18 to 24 year olds in France say they believe in God, the lowest of any age band and well below the national average of around 44%. Nearly two-thirds of this group describe themselves as non-believers, atheist or agnostic. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Older people. Around 50% of French people aged 50 and over, including the 65-plus group, say they believe in God, the highest of any age band. They grew up in a more religious France and have largely kept the faith of their youth, sitting six points above the national average. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

About 14 percentage points. Belief in God runs from roughly 36% among 18 to 24 year olds to around 50% among those aged 65 and over. This steady gradient across the generations is one of the clearest signs that overall belief will keep falling as older cohorts are replaced by younger ones. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

They have grown up in a deeply secular society. Younger French people are far more likely to have no religious affiliation, to never attend services and to be raised in non-practising homes, all of which reduce belief. Disaffiliation, rather than active rejection of God, is the main driver of low youth belief. Source: IFOP 2026.

Yes, within faith communities. Although a majority of under-30s report no religion, about 43% still say they believe in God, and belief remains strong among young Muslims and practising young Catholics. The youth picture is one of a secular majority alongside a committed, often diverse, believing minority. Source:

IFOP 2026.

About 44% in the most recent comparable survey, easing toward 40% by 2026. This average sits between the low belief of the young and the higher belief of older generations, and it is being pulled down over time as younger, more secular cohorts make up a larger share of adults. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Almost certainly. Because belief tends to form early and persist, the low rates among today's young are likely to follow them through life, dragging the national average down as older believers pass on. Barring an unexpected revival among the young, generational turnover points to continued decline for decades. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Both matter, and they reinforce each other. Older people are both more likely to be affiliated and more likely to believe, while the young are more secular on both counts. Religious commitment is the strongest single predictor, but age compounds it, since the most believing groups are also the oldest. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Yes. They come from an IFOP survey on belief in God in France broken down by age, run on a representative sample and reported by Statista. The 2026 values reflect the latest available wave and the continuation of the documented trend; the 35-49 figure, the middle-generation value and the future projection are estimates derived from published data. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Sources

Statista / IFOP - Belief in God in France by Age - The core source, giving about 36% of 18-24s and around 50% of those aged 65 and over believing in God.

Statista / IFOP - Belief in God in France 1947-2023 - Source for the national average (around 44%) and the long-term decline that frames the age breakdown.

Statista / IFOP - Belief in God in France by Religious Affiliation - Source for how belief varies by religious group, which reinforces the age pattern.

Statista - Religion in France, Statistics & Facts - Source for religious affiliation shares and the wider context of secularisation in France.

Figures are based on IFOP surveys on belief in God in France by age, affiliation and over time, as compiled by Statista. +-3%. Confirmed: 18-24 about 36%, 25-34 about 47%, 50-64 and 65+ about 50%, national average around 44%. The 35-49 band, the middle-generation value and the 2050 projection are estimates derived from published data; 2026 values reflect the latest wave and the continuation of the trend. Based

on self-declared belief. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Share of people believing in God in France 2026, by religious affiliation

Updated Jun 3, 2026 · businesstats.com/people-belief-in-god-religious-affiliation-france

94% PRACTISING CATHOLICS WHO BELIEVE IN GOD	**80%** OTHER (NON-CATHOLIC) FAITHS WHO BELIEVE	**61%** NON-PRACTISING CATHOLICS WHO BELIEVE
44% NATIONAL AVERAGE BELIEF IN GOD IN FRANCE	**~18%** OF THE NON-RELIGIOUS WHO STILL BELIEVE	**50pt** GAP: PRACTISING CATHOLICS VS NATIONAL AVERAGE

Overview

Percentage of people believing in God in France in 2026, by religious affiliation

Ask the French whether they believe in God and the answer depends almost entirely on one thing: their religious affiliation. The IFOP survey shows belief ranging from near-universal among the committed to marginal among the secular. About 94% of practising Catholics say they believe in God, alongside roughly 80% of people who belong to a religion other than Catholicism and around 61% of non-practising Catholics. Among the large and growing share of French people who report no religion, belief is rare, on the order of one in five at most. The national average, pulled in opposite directions by these groups, sits at about 44%. This affiliation gap is the hidden structure behind the headline decline in belief in God in France over time.

What this breakdown reveals is that France is not simply becoming uniformly less religious; it is polarising. On one side stands a committed minority, practising Catholics and members of minority faiths, among whom belief in God remains the overwhelming norm. On the other stands a secular majority, including most of the non-practising and the unaffiliated, for whom God has become a distant or rejected idea. The national figure is therefore a blend of two very different Frances. The same split runs through the country's wider religious make-up, set out in our population distribution by religion in France analysis, where a Christian plurality and a near-equal secular bloc increasingly define the landscape.

A few points of interpretation matter before reading the chart. The figures record self-declared belief in God by self-declared affiliation, not religious practice, which is far lower across every group. The most solidly grounded numbers are practising Catholics at 94%, non-Catholic faiths at around 80%, non-practising Catholics just above 60%, and the national average near 44%. The belief rate among the unaffiliated, the regular church-attendance figure used later, and one age band are estimates derived from published data, and are flagged as such. The 2026 values reflect the latest available wave and the continuation of a clear downward trend rather than a brand-new reading. With those caveats noted, the affiliation pattern is striking and consistent. Read alongside the practice and age breakdowns that follow, the data leave little doubt that affiliation, far more than any single demographic trait, governs who in France still believes in God today.

percentage believing in God France 2026 by religious affiliation practising Catholics other religion non-practising no religion bar Belief in God in France by Religious Affiliation, 2026 (%) percentage believing in God France 2026 by religious affiliation practising Catholics other religion non-practising no religion bar 94%practising Catholics

94%Practising Catholics - Belief Is Near-UniversalMore than double the national average. Within active Catholic communities, faith in God remains the clear norm. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 80%Other (Non-Catholic) Faiths Also Believe StronglyA group dominated in France by Muslims, with belief well above the national average. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 61%Non-Practising Catholics - A Big Step DownStill a majority, but 33 points below practising Catholics, showing practice matters more than label. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. ~18%The Non-Religious - Belief Is MarginalMost of the unaffiliated are atheist or agnostic, dragging the national average down to around 44%. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. Full Data Table

Belief in God in France by Religious Affiliation: Full Table

Share Believing in God by Affiliation, France 2026 (IFOP) Click any column to sort

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION	BELIEVE IN GOD (%)	VS NATIONAL AVG (PTS)
Practising Catholics	**94%**	+50
Other (non-Catholic) religion	**80%**	+36
Non-practising Catholics	**61%**	+17
National average	**44%**	0

No religion	**18%**	-26

The table makes the affiliation hierarchy unmistakable. Practising Catholics sit fifty points above the national average, non-Catholic faiths thirty-six points above, and even non-practising Catholics remain seventeen points clear of it. The unaffiliated, by contrast, fall well below. Reading down the column, belief does not fade gradually; it drops in steep steps tied to how religious a person considers themselves to be. This step pattern is the essence of the affiliation story: faith in God in France is now concentrated within identifiable communities rather than spread evenly across society. The same concentration appears when belief is set against the wider European backdrop, explored in our religion in Europe analysis, where committed minorities everywhere hold faith while the mainstream drifts away.

The Practice Divide

Practice, Not Label: The Catholic Belief Divide

The single clearest lesson from the affiliation data is that practice matters far more than nominal identity. Among Catholics, the gap between the practising and the non-practising is enormous: 94% of those who actively practise believe in God, against just over 60% of those who identify as Catholic but rarely or never attend. That 33-point chasm tells us that calling oneself Catholic, in a country shaped by centuries of Catholic culture, says relatively little about whether a person actually believes. Active participation, prayer, attendance and community, is what keeps belief alive. The pattern reflects the broader weakening of nominal Catholicism documented in our Catholic population in Germany analysis.

France Catholic belief divide practising versus non-practising national average gap bar chart Belief in God: Practising vs Non-Practising Catholics in France (%) France Catholic belief divide practising versus non-practising national average gap bar chart 33ptpractice gap

This practice divide explains much of France's religious trajectory. As regular attendance has collapsed over the decades, the population has shifted from practising believers toward nominal, non-practising members and then, in the next generation, toward no affiliation at all. Each step down that ladder is associated with a sharp fall in belief. The implication is that the decline in faith is not mainly about people consciously rejecting God, but about the slow erosion of the religious practice that once sustained belief. Without the reinforcing rhythm of services, festivals and shared ritual, belief quietly fades, generation by generation, which is exactly what the long-term figures show. In that sense, the practice divide is less a separate cause of decline than its clearest symptom, marking the precise point at which inherited religious identity stops translating into living, personal belief.

Identity to Practice

From Christian Identity to Active Faith: The Funnel

Belief in God sits in the middle of a wider funnel that runs from loose cultural identity down to active religious practice. Around 50% of French people still identify as Christian, a label often inherited rather than chosen. Of the whole population, only about 40% actually say they believe in God, and far fewer, perhaps under one in ten, attend church regularly. Each stage of this funnel is narrower than the last, illustrating how thinly genuine, active faith is spread beneath the surface of nominal Christian identity. The same narrowing appears in everyday religious habits, such as Bible ownership and reading, detailed in our French Bible owners by declared religion analysis.

France religiosity funnel Christian identity belief in God church attendance narrowing bar chart From Identity to Practice in France: The Religiosity Funnel (%) France religiosity funnel Christian identity belief in God church attendance narrowing bar chart 50%Identify Christian40%Believe in God

The funnel is the clearest single illustration of cultural versus committed religion in France. A broad outer layer of people carry a Christian label as part of their heritage; a smaller core actually believe in God; and a smaller core still translate that belief into regular practice. The distance between the top and bottom of the funnel measures the gap between France's religious past and its secular present. For institutions trying to gauge the real strength of faith, the lesson is to look past affiliation figures to belief and, above all, to practice, where the numbers are smallest and the decline sharpest. This is why nominal affiliation consistently overstates how religious the country truly is.

Who the French Are

Who the French Are: Religious Affiliation in 2026

To understand belief by affiliation, it helps to know how the affiliations themselves are distributed. Around half of French people (50%) still describe themselves as Christian, mostly Catholic, while roughly 42% report no religion at all. Muslims make up about 3%, other religions another 3%, Jews around 1%, and a small share decline to answer. The crucial point is that the two largest groups, Christians and the unaffiliated, pull belief in opposite directions: the Christian half contains most of the country's believers, while the unaffiliated bloc is overwhelmingly non-believing. This balance of affiliations is what sets the national average, and it is shifting steadily toward the secular side.

France religious affiliation 2026 Christian no religion Muslim Jewish share declared donut Declared Religious Affiliation in France, 2026 (% of Population) France religious affiliation 2026 Christian no religion Muslim Jewish share declared donut 50%Christian

The near-even split between Christians and the unaffiliated is the demographic engine behind the belief figures. As the no-religion share grows and the Christian share shrinks, the national belief rate is dragged steadily downward, even though belief within each committed group stays high. This is why the affiliation breakdown is so revealing: it shows that France's falling belief is driven less by believers losing their faith than by the rising number of people who never had a religious affiliation to begin with. The Muslim community, though small in share, is the most strongly believing large minority, a point explored further alongside global patterns in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis.

The Young

Belief and Affiliation Among Young French People

Young people offer a preview of where French religion is heading, and the affiliation data among them are stark. In a survey of 18 to 30 year olds, a majority, 52%, reported no religious affiliation at all. Among those who did identify with a religion, 18% were Roman Catholic, 12% Muslim, and small shares Protestant, Orthodox or other. Despite this heavily secular profile, about 43% of young French people still said they believe in God, a figure held up substantially by young Muslims and committed young Catholics. The young are thus both more secular overall and, within their faith communities, often strongly believing, a polarisation sharper than in any older cohort. It is a pattern that hints at a more fragmented religious future, one in which intense devotion and complete indifference increasingly sit side by side within the very same generation of young French people.

young French people 18 30 religious affiliation no religion Catholic Islam Protestant share bar Religious Affiliation of Young French People (18-30), % of Group young French people 18 30 religious affiliation no religion Catholic Islam Protestant share bar 52%no religion

The youth picture confirms that affiliation, not vague spirituality, is what carries belief forward. The large secular majority among the young points to continued overall decline, since these cohorts will shape the national average for decades. Yet the persistence of strong belief among young Muslims and practising young Catholics shows that faith is not vanishing so much as concentrating into committed communities. France's religious future therefore looks less like uniform unbelief and more like a small, devout and increasingly diverse believing minority within a broadly secular society. The wider global context for these

shifting patterns of faith is set out in our world religions analysis.

Belief by Age

Belief in God in France by Age Group

Affiliation interacts powerfully with age, and the two together explain most of the variation in belief. Older French people are far more likely both to claim a religion and to believe in God: around half of those aged 65 and over say they believe, compared with just 36% of 18 to 24 year olds. Belief rises steadily across the age bands, reflecting the fact that older cohorts grew up in a more religious France and have largely retained the faith of their youth. This generational gradient means the affiliation effect is reinforced by age: the groups with the highest belief are also the oldest, while the most secular groups are the youngest.

belief in God France by age 18-24 25-34 35-49 50-64 65 plus generational bar chart Belief in God in France by Age Group (%) belief in God France by age 18-24 25-34 35-49 50-64 65 plus generational bar chart 36%18-2450%65+

Because age and affiliation pull in the same direction, the decline in belief is effectively locked in. As older, more religious and more affiliated cohorts pass on, they are replaced by younger people who are both less affiliated and less believing, steadily lowering the national average even if no individual changes their mind. Only a strong religious revival among the young, of the kind glimpsed within some Muslim and Catholic communities but not across society, could reverse the trend. Comparable generational gradients in belief appear across the Channel, as our UK belief in God analysis shows, underlining that France is part of a wider Western pattern.

Above the Average

How Far Each Group Sits Above the National Average

Another way to see the affiliation effect is to measure how far each believing group rises above the national average of 44%. Practising Catholics sit a remarkable 50 points above it, at 94%. Members of non-Catholic faiths are 36 points above, at around 80%, and non-practising Catholics 17 points above, at 61%. These gaps quantify just how much affiliation and practice shape belief: belonging to an active faith community can more than double a person's likelihood of believing in God compared with the national norm. The chart makes plain that the believing core of France is not average at all; it is far more religious than the country as a whole.

France belief in God points above national average practising Catholics other religion non-practising bar Belief in God: Points Above the National Average, by Group France belief in God points above national average practising Catholics other religion non-practising bar +50ptpractising Catholics

Looking at the gaps rather than the raw rates highlights the scale of religious polarisation. The committed groups are not merely a little more devout than average; they occupy a different religious world, with belief rates that would have been typical of France as a whole decades ago. Meanwhile the secular majority sits well below the average, anchoring the national figure near 40%. This widening distance between the devout and the secular is the defining feature of contemporary French religion, and it mirrors the resilience of committed Protestant communities documented in our evangelical church members in Germany analysis, where active believers retain strong faith amid a secularising society.

France Today

Belief in God in France Today: The National Picture

Aggregating across all affiliations, the national picture in 2026 is clear: a minority of French people believe in God. Around 40% say they do, while roughly 60% identify as non-believers, atheist or agnostic. This national figure is the weighted sum of the affiliation groups examined above, a near-universal believing minority of practising Catholics and minority faiths, set against a large, mostly non-believing secular bloc. Seen this way, the headline number is not a single mood but the arithmetic result of a deeply divided religious landscape. Understanding that division is essential to interpreting any single statistic about faith in France. Every group examined in this report ultimately feeds into this one national figure, which is precisely why it can only be understood by taking the affiliation breakdown carefully apart rather than reading it alone.

France 2026 believers non-believers in God national share majority doubt donut Believers vs Non-Believers in God in France, 2026 (% of Population) France 2026 believers non-believers in God national share majority doubt donut 60%non-believers

Yet a non-believing majority does not mean a country without strong faith. Within the believing minority, conviction runs deep, sustained by practice and community, and that minority is increasingly diverse, spanning committed Catholics, Muslims, Protestants and others. France in 2026 is therefore best understood as a secular society containing vibrant pockets of intense religiosity, rather than a uniformly faithless one. This coexistence of a secular mainstream and devout communities shapes debates over religion, identity and public life, and it echoes patterns seen in other historically Catholic societies, such as

those in our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis.

The Bigger Trend

Belief by Affiliation Within the Long Decline

The affiliation snapshot sits inside a long-running national decline that gives it context. Belief in God in France has fallen from a clear majority earlier this century to a minority today: around 55% believed in 2004, 56% in 2011, 49% in 2021, 44% in 2023, and roughly 40% by 2026. Crucially, this fall has not been driven by believers within committed communities losing their faith, since belief among practising Catholics and minority faiths has stayed high. Instead, it reflects the shrinking size of those communities and the growth of the unaffiliated. The affiliation data and the time trend therefore tell one coherent story from two angles.

belief in God France decline 2004 2011 2021 2023 2026 national trend line affiliation context National Belief in God in France, 2004 to 2026 (%) belief in God France decline 2004 2011 2021 2023 2026 national trend line affiliation context 55% to 40%2004 to 202644%2023

Reading the affiliation breakdown against the national trend clarifies what is really happening to faith in France. The country is not so much losing belief within its religious communities as losing the communities themselves, as fewer people are raised in, or stay within, any faith. This is why the most secular groups, the unaffiliated and the non-practising, keep expanding while the devout core slowly shrinks. The result is a falling national average built on stable group rates but shifting group sizes. A similar dynamic of high in-group belief amid overall decline appears in our religion in England and Wales analysis.

Key Statistics

Belief by Affiliation in France: The Key Numbers

Pulling the threads together, the religiosity of France can be read as a descending ladder of commitment. Around 50% identify as Christian, about 40% believe in God, only 27% own a Bible, and just 19% read it. Each rung is narrower than the one above, and the affiliation data show exactly where the believers are concentrated: among practising Catholics and minority faiths, not across the population. This ladder, from broad cultural identity down to active engagement, captures the texture of French secularisation more fully than any single figure. A comparable European case, with its own mix of affiliation and belief, appears in our religious communities in Finland analysis.

France religiosity ladder Christian identity belief in God Bible ownership reading share bar France's Ladder of Religiosity: From Identity to Engagement (%) France religiosity ladder Christian identity belief in God Bible ownership reading share bar 50% to 19%the ladder

94%Practising Catholics Believe in GodThe most believing group by far, more than double the national average. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 80%Of Non-Catholic Faiths Believe in GodA group dominated by Muslims, with belief well above the national norm. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 44% to 40%National Average, Still FallingPulled down by the large, mostly non-believing share of French people with no religion. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026. 50% vs 40%Christian by Identity, Fewer by BeliefMore French people call themselves Christian than actually believe in God, a sign of cultural faith. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Taken together, the key numbers describe a France whose belief in God is defined by affiliation and practice rather than by the population as a whole. Faith remains near-universal among practising Catholics, very strong among minority faiths, and solid among non-practising Catholics, but it is marginal among the unaffiliated who now make up a large share of the country. The national average of around 40% is simply the meeting point of these very different groups. For researchers, religious organisations and anyone seeking to understand modern France, the message is that belief has not disappeared but concentrated, and the figures should be revisited as each new IFOP wave refines this affiliation map of faith.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Belief in God in France by Religion

It varies enormously. About 94% of practising Catholics believe in God, alongside roughly 80% of people belonging to a religion other than Catholicism and around 61% of non-practising Catholics. Among those with no religion, belief is marginal, on the order of one in five. The national average sits at about 44%. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Around 94% of practising Catholics in France say they believe in God, the highest of any group and more than double the national average of 44%. Within committed Catholic communities, belief in God remains close to universal, even as it collapses across the wider population. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Many do, but far fewer than practising Catholics. Just over 60% of non-practising Catholics say they believe in God, compared with 94% of those who practise. The 33-point gap shows that active religious practice, not nominal Catholic identity, is what most strongly predicts belief. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Very. Around 80% of people who belong to a religion other than Catholicism, a group that in France is dominated by Muslims, say they believe in God. This is well above the national average and second only to practising Catholics, reflecting strong belief within France's minority faith communities. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Mostly not. Among the large share of French people who report no religious affiliation, belief in God is marginal, estimated at around one in five at most, with the rest identifying as atheist or agnostic. This secular bloc is the main reason the national belief figure has fallen to around 40%. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Belief is sustained by practice and community. Those who attend services, pray and belong to active congregations are continually reinforced in their faith, whereas nominal members who never practise gradually drift toward doubt. The result is a France split between a devout, believing minority and a secular majority. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Yes, though with nuance. Only about 43% of 18 to 30 year olds say they believe in God, and a majority report no religious affiliation, yet belief remains strong among young Muslims and practising Catholics. Overall, the young are far less religious than those aged 65 and over, of whom around half believe. Source: IFOP 2026.

Because many French people are Christian by culture rather than conviction. Around 50% identify as Christian, but only about 40% actually believe in God, and far fewer attend church. This gap between nominal identity and genuine belief, the phenomenon of cultural Catholics, is central to French secularisation. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

About 44% in the most recent comparable survey, falling to around 40% by 2026. This average masks huge differences by affiliation: it is pulled up by near-universal belief among practising Catholics and pulled down by the large, mostly non-believing share of French people who report no religion. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Yes. They come from an IFOP survey on belief in God in France broken down by declared religious affiliation, run on a representative sample and reported by Statista. The 2026 values reflect the latest available wave and the continuation of the documented trend; the no-religion belief rate and church-attendance figure are estimates. Source: IFOP, Statista 2026.

Sources

Statista / IFOP - Belief in God in France by Religious Affiliation - The core source, giving 94% of practising Catholics, about 80% of non-Catholic faiths, and over 60% of non-practising Catholics believing in God.

Statista / IFOP - Belief in God in France 1947-2023 - Source for the national average (around 44%) and the long-term decline that frames the affiliation breakdown.

Statista / IFOP - Belief in God in France by Age - Source for the generational pattern (about 36% of 18-24s versus around 50% of those aged 65 and over).

Statista - Religion in France, Statistics & Facts - Source for religious affiliation shares and the wider context of secularisation in France.

Figures are based on IFOP surveys on belief in God in France by religious affiliation, age and over time, as compiled by Statista. +-3%. Confirmed rates: practising Catholics 94%, non-Catholic faiths about 80%, non-practising Catholics just over 60%, national average around 44%. The no-religion belief rate, the regular church-attendance figure, and the 35-49 age value are estimates derived from published data; 2026 values reflect the latest wave and the continuation of the trend. Based on self-declared belief. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Belief in God in Great Britain 2019-2026

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~34% BELIEVE IN GOD IN GREAT BRITAIN, 2026 (ESTIMATE)	**27%** THE SHARE IN AUGUST 2019 - THE STARTING POINT	**35%** THE RECENT PEAK, REACHED IN JANUARY 2025
+8pp RISE IN BELIEF SINCE 2019	**37%** OF 18-24S BELIEVE - UP FROM 16% IN 2021	**~33%** SAY THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IN ANY GOD

Overview

Share of people who believe in God in Great Britain from August 2019 to May 2026

Great Britain has long been regarded as one of the most secular societies in the Western world, with belief in God in steady decline for decades, but recent polling suggests an unexpected turn. The share of people in Great Britain who say they believe in God rose from around 27% in August 2019 to about 34-35% by 2026, an increase of some eight percentage points overall that has surprised many observers and challenged the long-held assumption that British religiosity could only ever continue its decline. After holding flat in the mid-20s from 2019 through 2022 with no clear direction, belief climbed notably in 2023 and 2024 before surging to around 35% by early 2025, a pattern that contrasts with the steady decline shown in our share of Catholics in Germany analysis. The wider continental picture of faith is explored in our religion in Europe analysis.

The most striking feature of this rise is that it has been led by young adults, the very group long assumed to be leading and driving Britain's secularisation. Belief in God among 18-to-24-year-olds reportedly rose from about 16% in 2021 to 37% by 2025, more than doubling in just four years and reversing the usual pattern in which older people are the most religious. This is precisely the opposite of what decades of secularisation theory would predict, which is why it has attracted so much attention from researchers and commentators alike. This generational shift, together with rising church attendance among the young, has prompted talk of a "quiet revival" in British religious life, though researchers urge caution in interpreting the

figures. Whether this represents a genuine spiritual reawakening or a quirk of how the surveys are conducted remains hotly debated among those who study religion. The German church decline that contrasts with this is covered in our members of the Evangelical Church in Germany analysis.

This article traces the share of Britons who believe in God from August 2019 to May 2026, examining the apparent reversal of the secular trend, the dramatic youth surge, the breakdown by age, and the possible reasons behind the change. It also looks at the important caveats around the data, since much of it comes from online opt-in polling with known limitations, and at how belief in God fits into Britain's broader, complex religious landscape. The global context of faith is discussed in our world religions analysis.

Great Britain belief God overview believers non believers 2019 2026 shift summary comparison grouped bar Believers vs Non-Believers in Great Britain, 2019 vs 2026 (%) Believers in God rose from ~27% to ~34% while committed non-believers fell from ~41% to ~33% - the two moving in opposite directions. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. 2019 vs 2026shift

~34% (2026)Believe in God - Up From 27% in 2019Around 34-35% of Britons say they believe in God in 2026, up about 8 points from 2019, reversing the long secular decline. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. 35% (Jan 2025)The Recent Peak - Highest in Recent TimesBelief in God reached around 35% in January 2025, the highest recorded in the recent YouGov series. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. 16% to 37%Youth Surge - Belief Among 18-24sBelief in God among 18-24 year-olds rose from about 16% in 2021 to 37% by 2025, more than doubling in four years. Source: YouGov 2026. ~33% don'tNon-Believers - Down From 41% in 2019The share saying they do not believe in any God fell from around 41% in 2019 to about 33% by 2025. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. Data Table

Belief in God in Great Britain by Survey Wave

Share Who Believe in God in Great Britain, Aug 2019 - May 2026 (%) Click any column to sort

SURVEY WAVE	BELIEVE IN GOD	NOTE
Aug 2019	**27%**	Series start
2020	**26%**	
2021	**27%**	
2022	**28%**	
Feb 2023	**29%**	

Jan 2024	**30%**	
Jan 2025	**35%**	Recent peak
May 2026	**34%**	Latest (est.)

The table tracks the share of Britons believing in God across the survey waves from August 2019 to May 2026. The figures held steady in the mid-to-high 20s through 2019 to 2022, then began climbing: 29% by early 2023, 30% by January 2024, and a notable jump to 35% by January 2025, before settling around 34% in the latest estimate for 2026. The upward path is unmistakable across the second half of the period. This represents a clear break from the long-running secular trend, even allowing for the margin of error in survey data, and stands in contrast to the marriage patterns in our Catholic weddings in Germany by partner religion analysis. These percentages come from YouGov's tracker polling for Great Britain. The broader population context is in our world population analysis.

The 2019-2026 Trend

The Belief Trend From 2019 to 2026

Great Britain belief in God share 2019 2026 rise trend YouGov percentage line chart secular reversal Share Who Believe in God in Great Britain - 2019 to 2026 (%) Flat in the mid-20s from 2019 to 2022, then rising: 29% (2023), 30% (2024), 35% (2025 peak), ~34% (2026 est.). A reversal of the secular trend. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. 27%2019 ~34%2026 (est.)

The trend line shows two distinct phases. From August 2019 through to early 2022, belief in God was essentially flat, drifting between 26% and 28% with no clear direction, consistent with the long-standing picture of Britain as a stable, secular society in which religion played an ever-diminishing role. Nothing in this early part of the series hinted at the change that was to come. Then, from late 2022 and into 2023, the line begins to climb, gently at first and then more steeply, reaching its recent peak of 35% in January 2025. This upward turn, after years of stagnation or gentle decline, is what has drawn so much attention, since it runs counter to the assumption that British religiosity could only keep falling. The German contrast is in our Evangelical Church members in Germany analysis, referenced earlier.

The 2023 Turning Point

The Turning Point Around 2023

Great Britain belief God turning point 2022 2023 2024 2025 rise acceleration recent waves bar chart Belief in God - The Recent Climb (%) 2022: 28%. Feb 2023: 29%. Jan 2024: 30%. Jan 2025: 35% (peak). 2026: 34% (est.). The sharp jump to 2025 stands out. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. 35%2025 peak

The turning point appears to have come around 2022 to 2023, when the long-flat figures began to rise in earnest. The increase from 28% in 2022 to 29% in early 2023 might have been dismissed as noise, but the continued climb to 30% in 2024 and the sharp jump to 35% in early 2025 established a clear upward trend that is harder to explain away as mere statistical fluctuation. A single year's rise could be chance, but a sustained multi-year climb demands a more substantial explanation.

The 2025 figure in particular represents the highest level of belief in God recorded in the recent series, marking a genuine departure from the pattern of the previous decade. For a country so often held up as a textbook case of advanced secularisation, even a modest reversal of this kind is striking and worthy of close attention. Whether this proves to be a lasting shift or a temporary blip remains easily one of the most interesting open questions in the study of British religion today. Only several more years of consistent data will reveal whether 2025 marked the start of a genuine trend or simply an unusual peak.

The Youth Surge

The Striking Surge Among Young Adults

The single most remarkable element of the data is the dramatic rise in belief in God among young adults, the group long assumed to be leading Britain's march towards secularism. According to YouGov tracking, the share of 18-to-24-year-olds who say they believe there is a God or gods rose from just 16% in August 2021 to 37% by August 2025, more than doubling in only four years. Over the same period, the proportion of young adults describing themselves as non-believers fell from 49% to 42%, confirming a genuine shift in the beliefs of the youngest cohort rather than a simple movement between undecided categories. Both ends of the spectrum moved in the same direction, towards belief and away from outright non-belief.

Great Britain young adults 18 24 belief God surge 2021 2025 doubling generational reversal line chart Belief in God Among 18-24 Year-Olds (%) Belief among young adults rose from ~16% in 2021 to ~37% by 2025, more than doubling - the steepest rise of any age group. Source: YouGov 2026. x2+since 2021

This youth surge is genuinely extraordinary because it inverts one of the most reliable patterns in the sociology of religion, in which each younger generation tends to be less religious than the one before it. If

the figures hold, Britain's youngest adults would be among its most likely to believe in God, a reversal that has prompted intense debate about what is driving it. Such a finding would overturn assumptions that have guided the sociology of religion for generations, which is why it is being scrutinised so closely. Some researchers link it to rising immigration from more religious parts of the world, others to a search for meaning and community among a generation facing economic and social uncertainty, and still others to a backlash against an aggressively secular culture. The truth likely involves a mix of these explanations, and disentangling them is far from straightforward given the limitations of the available data. This places Britain within a wider, shifting global landscape of faith and belief.

Belief by Age

Belief in God by Age Group

Great Britain belief God age groups young old comparison 18 24 over 60 generational pattern grouped bar Belief in God by Age - 2021 vs 2025 (%) 18-24s: 16% (2021) to 37% (2025), a huge jump. 25-49s: 21% to 25%. Older groups more stable. The young drove the change. Source: YouGov 2026. 18-24biggest rise

The breakdown by age shows just how concentrated the rise has been among the young. While belief among 18-to-24-year-olds more than doubled from 16% to 37% between 2021 and 2025, the increase among 25-to-49-year-olds was much more modest, rising from around 21% to 25% over the same period. Older age groups, who have traditionally been the most likely to believe in God, showed more stable figures, meaning the overall national rise was driven disproportionately by the youngest adults. This concentration among the young is precisely what makes the trend so notable, since it cannot be explained simply by an ageing, more religious population gradually coming to dominate the figures. The change is being driven by the young becoming more religious, not merely by older believers making up a larger share. The demographic patterns are in our US population by sex and age analysis.

The Non-Believers

The Decline of the Non-Believers

The mirror image of rising belief in God is the shrinking share of confirmed non-believers. The proportion of Britons who say they do not believe in any God or higher power fell from around 41% in 2019 to about 32-33% by 2025, a meaningful decline over the period. This shift suggests that the rise in belief is not merely people moving from "don't know" into belief, but a genuine reduction in committed non-belief, which makes the trend more significant and harder to dismiss. A fall in confirmed atheism is a more meaningful

signal than a simple reshuffling of the undecided. The categories in between, such as those who believe in "a higher spiritual power" but not a God, have remained relatively stable throughout the period, neither growing nor shrinking much. This suggests the action has been concentrated at the two ends of the belief spectrum rather than in the middle.

Great Britain religious belief categories God higher power non believer dont know breakdown 2026 donut Britain's Belief Categories, 2026 (% Share) Believe in God ~34%, higher power not God ~20%, don't believe ~33%, don't know ~13%. A mixed, hybrid picture. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. 4 groupsof belief

It is worth noting that British belief remains a complex, hybrid picture rather than a simple split between believers and atheists. Alongside the roughly third who believe in God and the third who reject any higher power, a substantial group of around a fifth believe in some kind of spiritual power without calling it God, and others are simply unsure. Even among self-identified Christians, only just over half say they believe in God in the conventional sense, with many holding vaguer spiritual beliefs, a complexity also seen in our religious change in Spain analysis. This complexity means the headline "belief in God" figure captures only one part of a rich and varied national picture of faith and doubt. Britain is neither straightforwardly religious nor straightforwardly secular, but rather a society in which a wide spectrum of beliefs, half-beliefs, and uncertainties coexist.

Why the Rise

Why Is Belief in God Rising?

The reasons behind the apparent rise in belief in God, especially among the young, are the subject of considerable debate, and no single explanation has emerged as definitive. One leading factor is immigration: Britain has seen substantial immigration in recent years from regions of the world that are far more religious than the native population, which adds believers to the overall total and is particularly visible among younger age groups. This demographic effect alone could account for a meaningful part of the rise, since new arrivals from more religious societies add believers to the totals without any change in the beliefs of the existing population, much as recorded in our population of Finland by religious community analysis.

Beyond immigration, many commentators point to a search for meaning and community among a younger generation that has faced the pandemic, economic insecurity, social isolation, and a pervasive sense of anxiety amplified by social media. For some young people, religion may offer a sense of structure, purpose, and belonging that secular culture has failed to provide in an age of fragmentation and uncertainty. Faith

communities can supply social connection and a framework of meaning that many young adults find lacking elsewhere in modern life. Others suggest a backlash against an aggressively secular and materialist culture, or simply a renewed openness to spirituality after decades in which religion was seen as unfashionable. Rising church attendance among the young, documented separately, lends some support to the idea of a genuine shift rather than a mere statistical artefact, since attending a service is a far more demanding commitment than answering a survey. When behaviour changes alongside stated belief, the case for a real shift grows stronger.

Great Britain belief God rise reasons immigration meaning community backlash secularism factors bar chart Suggested Drivers of Rising Belief (Illustrative) Commentators point to immigration, a search for meaning/community, rising youth church attendance, and a backlash against secularism. No single cause dominates. Source: YouGov, Pew analysis 2026. 4+factors

It is likely that several of these factors are working together rather than any one acting alone, combining to produce the aggregate rise visible in the headline figures. No single explanation captures the full picture, and the relative weight of each remains a matter of active research. Immigration adds believers to the population, while social and cultural shifts may be changing the attitudes of young Britons born in the country, and the two effects reinforce one another in the aggregate figures. What is clear is that the simple narrative of inexorable secular decline no longer fits the recent data, even if the deeper causes remain contested. Disentangling the demographic effect of immigration from any genuine change in belief among the native-born population is one of the key challenges for researchers trying to make sense of the trend.

Church Attendance

Rising Church Attendance Among the Young

Supporting the picture of a possible religious revival is separate evidence of rising church attendance, particularly among young people. Survey data suggests that the share of British adults attending a church service at least once a month rose from around 8% in 2018 to about 12% in 2024, an increase of more than half over just six years. This translates into millions of additional monthly worshippers, a meaningful change in the religious behaviour of the population. Among 18-to-24-year-olds specifically, monthly church attendance reportedly rose from just 4% in 2018 to around 16% in 2024, a striking fourfold increase that echoes the rise in belief in God among the same age group.

Great Britain church attendance rise 2018 2024 young adults monthly quiet revival increase grouped bar Monthly Church Attendance - 2018 vs 2024 (%) All adults: 8% (2018) to 12% (2024). 18-24s: 4% to 16%, a

fourfold rise. The "Quiet Revival" pattern matches the belief data. Source: Bible Society, YouGov 2026. 4xyoung attend

This rise in attendance, dubbed the "Quiet Revival" by some researchers, is significant because actually going to church is a much stronger commitment than simply ticking a box in a survey, making it harder to dismiss as a mere change in how people answer questions. Behaviour is generally a more reliable indicator than stated opinion, so the attendance data carries particular weight. The increase has been particularly pronounced within Catholicism among young adults, echoing patterns in our Finland religious community data and the German church tax trends in our Catholic Church tax revenue in Germany analysis. Together with the belief figures, the attendance data strengthens the case that something real is happening in British religious life, even if its scale and durability remain uncertain. The broader economic and social backdrop is in our global economy analysis.

A Note of Caution

Important Caveats About the Data

For all the excitement about a possible religious revival, it is essential to treat these figures with caution, as several respected researchers have warned. Much of the headline data comes from online opt-in polls rather than rigorous probability-based surveys, and such polls can be unrepresentative in ways that are hard to correct, potentially exaggerating trends. The Pew Research Center and others have specifically cautioned that some of the surveys showing a Christian revival among young Britons were commissioned by faith-based organisations and may not reflect the wider population accurately. When a survey is funded by a group with an interest in the result, its findings deserve extra scrutiny before being taken at face value.

Great Britain belief God data caveats online opt in polls reliability caution different sources comparison bar Belief Estimates Vary by Source and Question (%) Different surveys give different figures (27-38%) depending on wording, method, and timing - a reminder to read any single number with caution. Source: YouGov, BRIN, Statista 2026. Variesby source

There is also the perennial difficulty that survey answers about belief depend heavily on exactly how questions are worded, and small differences in phrasing can produce quite different results between otherwise similar polls. The very concept of "belief in God" means different things to different people, which complicates any precise measurement and makes cross-survey comparison hazardous. One person's firm belief and another's vague sense of something greater may both be captured by the same tick-box, blurring what the headline number really represents.

The category "believe in God" sits alongside softer options like "believe in a higher power", and people may move between these depending on the precise phrasing. The makeup of global faith is set out in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis. None of this means the rise is illusory, but it does mean the precise figures should be treated as indicative rather than definitive, and the longer-term picture will only become clear with more years of consistent, high-quality data from rigorous, probability-based surveys. Until then, a degree of healthy scepticism is warranted alongside genuine interest in the trend. Prudent observers therefore speak of a possible or apparent revival rather than a confirmed one, reserving judgement until more robust evidence accumulates. The honest position is that something appears to be changing in British religious life, but its true scale and durability cannot yet be stated with confidence.

Key Statistics

Belief in God in Britain - Key Statistics

Great Britain belief God milestones 2019 2023 2025 2026 rise summary key percentage comparison bar chart Belief in God at Key Points (%) Aug 2019: 27%. Feb 2023: 29%. Jan 2025: 35% (peak). 2026: 34% (est.). A clear upward shift since 2019. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. +8ppsince 2019

~34% (2026)Believe in God - Up From 27% in 2019Around 34-35% of Britons believe in God in 2026, up about 8 points from 2019. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. 37% (18-24s)Youth Belief - More Than Doubled Since 2021Belief among 18-24 year-olds rose from 16% in 2021 to 37% by 2025, the steepest rise of any group. Source: YouGov 2026. 8% to 12%Church Attendance - Rising Since 2018Monthly church attendance rose from 8% of adults in 2018 to 12% in 2024, and fourfold among the young. Source: Bible Society 2026. ~33% don'tNon-Believers - Down From 41% in 2019The share rejecting any God fell from around 41% in 2019 to about 33% by 2025. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026. FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions - Belief in God in Britain

Around 34-35% in 2026, up from about 27% in 2019. The rise has been driven mainly by a surge in belief among young adults, reversing Britain's long secular trend. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026.

It has risen. After hovering in the mid-20s from 2019 to 2022, belief climbed to 29% in early 2023, 30% in 2024, and around 35% by early 2025 - a notable reversal of the long secular trend. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026.

Several factors are likely at work. Belief among 18-24s rose from 16% (2021) to 37% (2025). Researchers point to immigration, a search for meaning and community, rising church attendance, and a backlash

against secularism. Source: YouGov 2026.

The young are now among the most likely to believe. Belief among 18-24s nearly tripled since 2021, reversing the usual pattern where older people are most religious. This generational shift is the most striking feature of the data. Source: YouGov 2026.

About 27% in August 2019. Belief then held in the mid-to-high 20s through 2022 before beginning its rise, reaching the recent peak of 35% in early 2025. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026.

Yes, especially among the young. Monthly church attendance rose from 8% of adults in 2018 to 12% in 2024, and from 4% to 16% among 18-24s - a fourfold rise dubbed the "Quiet Revival". Source: Bible Society 2026.

Treat them with some caution. Much of the data comes from online opt-in polls, which can be unrepresentative, and figures vary by question wording. Researchers including Pew urge care, so the rise is best called "apparent" rather than confirmed. Source: Pew 2026.

Around 33% in 2025, down from 41% in 2019. The decline in committed non-believers mirrors the rise in belief, suggesting a genuine shift rather than just movement among the undecided. Source: YouGov, Statista 2026.

No. Great Britain covers England, Wales, and Scotland. Northern Ireland, home to about 3% of the UK population and notably more religious, is part of the United Kingdom but not Great Britain. Source: Pew 2026.

Not necessarily. The survey asks about belief in "a God or gods" without specifying a religion, so it includes all faiths. Belief in God is also distinct from believing in "a higher spiritual power", which around a fifth of Britons hold without describing it as God. Source: YouGov 2026.

Sources

YouGov - Belief in God and Higher Power in Britain - Source for the belief categories (believe in God, higher power, don't believe, don't know) and the breakdown by age and Christian identity. Accessed 2026.

Pew Research Center - Christian Revival Among Young Adults in the UK - Source for the caveats about online opt-in polling, the youth figures (16% to 45% in some surveys), and the Great Britain definition. Published January 2026.

Christian Post - Young People's Belief in God Surges in UK - Source for the 18-24 surge (16% to 37%, 2021-2025), the decline in youth atheism (49% to 32%), and the 25-49 figures. Published August 2025.

Catholic Herald - Surge in Belief Among Gen Z Britons - Source for the church attendance figures (8% to 12% of adults, 4% to 16% of 18-24s, 2018-2024) and the "Quiet Revival" framing. Published August 2025.

Figures from YouGov tracker polling compiled by Statista, covering the share in Great Britain who believe in "a God / gods" from August 2019 to 2026. Key verified points: ~27% (2019), 29% (Feb 2023), 30% (Jan 2024), 35% (Jan 2025). The 2026 figure (~34%) is an estimate. Great Britain = England, Wales, Scotland. Much of the data comes from online opt-in polls with known limitations; figures are indicative. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Number of Churches and religious associations in Poland 2026, by type of religion

Updated Jun 8, 2026 · businesstats.com/poland-number-of-churches-and-religious-associations

207 REGISTERED BODIES	**104** PROTESTANT, THE LARGEST	**161** CHRISTIAN BODIES
46 NON-CHRISTIAN BODIES	**115** REGISTERED IN THE 1990S	**6** CATHOLIC BODIES, 97% OF MEMBERS

Overview

Registered Churches and Religious Associations in Poland by Type, 2026

Poland is among the most Catholic countries in Europe, but its official register of faiths tells a more surprising story. As of the latest data there were 207 registered churches and religious associations in the country, and the largest single category by number was not the Catholic Church but Protestantism. This is the formal, legal map of religion in Poland, counting recognised bodies rather than believers, and it sits in sharp contrast to the membership picture, where the Catholic Church utterly dominates, as set out in our Catholic Church adherents in Poland analysis. The register reveals a long tail of small churches and associations coexisting with one overwhelming majority faith, a structure that defines how religious life in Poland is organised in law. It is a register built from the bottom up by free association, yet topped by an institution whose scale dwarfs everything beneath it.

The legal foundation for all of this is a single landmark law. The 1989 Act on the Guarantees of Freedom of Conscience and Religion, passed in the final months of communist rule, swept away decades of state control and gave any group meeting a modest threshold of adult founders the right to register as a religious association. Almost overnight, faiths that had operated quietly or underground could seek formal recognition, and many did. The Act drew a line between this open registration route and the special statutory status reserved for a few large historic churches. Understanding the register therefore means understanding that single piece of legislation, which set the rules under which Poland's entire modern religious landscape took legal shape.

The 207 figure captures every body that has secured legal recognition, from the Roman Catholic Church with its tens of millions of members down to tiny associations with only a few hundred. Protestant denominations make up around half of all registered bodies, reflecting the many small, independent churches that registered after 1989, while non-Christian faiths add further variety. Set against the global picture in our world religions analysis, Poland looks unusually concentrated in membership yet quietly plural in its register. The contrast between the handful of bodies that hold almost all believers and the scores that hold very few is the single most important feature of the data, and the thread that runs through this report. That single contrast, between the few bodies that matter for membership and the many that matter for diversity, is what makes the register worth reading carefully rather than at a glance.

This legal diversity is a product of Poland's recent history. Under communism, religious registration was tightly restricted, but the collapse of the old system in 1989 brought a new law on freedom of conscience and religion that opened the door to a wave of registrations. The result places Poland within the broader European pattern of formally plural but practically concentrated religion described in our religion in Europe analysis. The register today is therefore best read as a snapshot of both deep historic continuity, in the dominance of the Catholic Church, and rapid recent change, in the proliferation of small Protestant and other bodies. The sections that follow break the 207 registered churches and religious associations down by type, by history and by membership. Each layer of the data, from broad type down to individual tradition, reinforces the same underlying shape of one giant surrounded by many small bodies.

Number of registered churches religious associations Poland 2026 by type of religion bar ProtestantRegistered Churches and Religious Associations in Poland, by TypeNumber of registered churches religious associations Poland 2026 by type of religion bar Protestant 207Total bodies

Full Data Table

Registered Churches and Religious Associations by Type: Full Table

Registered Churches and Religious Associations in Poland, by Type of ReligionClick any column to sort

TYPE OF RELIGION	REGISTERED BODIES	SHARE
Protestant	**104**	50.2%
Other Christian	**38**	18.4%
Far-Eastern	**18**	8.7%

Orthodox	**13**	6.3%
Other	**10**	4.8%
Judaism	**7**	3.4%
Catholic	**6**	2.9%
Islam	**6**	2.9%
Native faith	**5**	2.4%
Total	**207**	100%

The table lays out the full hierarchy of registered bodies. Protestant churches lead by a wide margin at around 104, just over half of the total, followed by other Christian bodies at 38 and a spread of smaller categories. The single most striking entries are the smallest: the Catholic Church, with just six registered bodies, sits near the bottom of the list by number, despite accounting for the overwhelming majority of Poland's religious members. Far-Eastern religions, with around 18 bodies, are the largest non-Christian group, ahead of Judaism, Islam and native faiths, each represented by only a handful of associations. Read down the column, the table is a near-perfect inversion of the membership ranking, where the order would be almost exactly reversed, with Catholicism first and the many Protestant bodies far behind. The table, in effect, can be read in two directions at once, and each direction tells a completely different story about religion in Poland.

Internationally, Poland's pattern of one dominant church amid many tiny registered bodies is common across formerly communist Catholic countries, though the degree of concentration here is unusual. Few nations combine such a high membership share for a single church with such a long list of legally recognised minority faiths. That combination makes the Polish register a revealing case study in how legal pluralism and religious reality can drift apart, recognised fully in law yet barely felt in everyday life across most of the country.

Christian and Non-Christian

Christian and Non-Christian Bodies

Grouped into the broadest categories, around 161 of the 207 registered bodies, roughly 78%, are Christian, while about 46, or 22%, are non-Christian. The Christian share spans Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic traditions along with smaller Christian movements, while the non-Christian bodies include Far-Eastern

religions, Islam, Judaism and native faiths. This three-to-one Christian majority among registered bodies is far less lopsided than the membership picture, where Christianity accounts for well over 99% of all adherents, much as the Catholic share dominates in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. In other words, non-Christian faiths are more visible in the register than in the pews, because even very small communities can and do register as formal associations, giving them a legal presence out of proportion to their numbers. The register, in this sense, rewards minorities with visibility, recording faiths that would barely register at all in a simple count of the population's believers.

It is worth being precise about what each registered body actually is. A church or religious association in this sense is a legal entity, recognised by the state, with the right to own property, run institutions and conduct religious activity. It is not the same as a congregation or a place of worship; a single registered body may run hundreds of parishes, as the Catholic Church does, or it may amount to little more than one small community. This is why a count of 207 bodies says nothing direct about how many churches, temples or mosques stand across the country. The register measures legal organisations, and the gap between that and lived religious activity is exactly what makes the by-type breakdown so easy to misread.

Poland registered religious bodies Christian non-Christian split 2026 donutChristian and Non-Christian Registered Bodies in PolandPoland registered religious bodies Christian non-Christian split 2026 donut 78%Christian

Growth Over Time

Growth in Registered Faiths Over Time

The number of registered churches and religious associations has grown dramatically since the end of communism, then levelled off. In the late 1980s only a few dozen bodies held legal recognition; by the early 2000s that figure had climbed past 150, and it has since edged up to 207, with very few new registrations in recent years. The curve is one of a sudden opening followed by stabilisation, the legal echo of a society that gained religious freedom and then settled into a steady state. Compared with the orderly, state-linked registers of countries like Finland in our population by religious community in Finland analysis, Poland's register grew quickly and from a low base, producing the long tail of small bodies that characterises it today. The flattening since 2000 suggests the religious map is now largely set. What growth remains now comes almost entirely from very small new associations rather than any major new tradition taking root.

Poland registered churches religious associations growth 1989 2026 line cumulativeRegistered Churches and Religious Associations in Poland, 1989-2026Poland registered churches religious associations growth

1989 2026 line cumulative 30In 1989207By 2021

The 1990s Boom

The Registration Boom of the 1990s

The single decade that shaped Poland's register was the 1990s. Around 115 churches and religious associations, roughly 57% of all those registered, gained legal status between 1990 and 1999, in the rush of freedom that followed the fall of communism. Before 1990 only a small number of bodies were recognised, and after 2000 the pace slowed to a trickle, with just a handful added in each subsequent decade. This concentration of registrations in a single ten-year window explains the shape of the whole register, and it mirrors the surge in expressed belief and affiliation seen across the former Eastern Bloc, a pattern that contrasts with the steadier trends in our belief in God in the UK analysis. The 1990s, in short, created the modern religious landscape of Poland almost in one go. Everything in the register since has been a matter of consolidation and fine detail rather than fundamental change to that 1990s settlement.

The fragmentation visible in the register is not unique to Poland, but its scale here is striking. Protestantism worldwide tends to splinter into many independent bodies, because new churches can form around a single congregation or leader without central authority, whereas Catholicism and Orthodoxy are organised as single, hierarchical institutions. When religious freedom arrived in 1989, this difference expressed itself immediately: dozens of small Protestant and evangelical groups registered as separate associations, while the Catholic Church remained one body. The register, then, is partly a map of how different traditions organise themselves, not just of how many followers they have. Its lopsided shape reflects deep structural differences between the faiths as much as the actual distribution of religious Poles.

Poland religious bodies registered by decade 1990s boom barWhen Poland's Religious Bodies Were Registered, by PeriodPoland religious bodies registered by decade 1990s boom bar 115In the 1990s

Christian Bodies by Tradition

Christian Bodies by Tradition

Within the 161 Christian bodies, the breakdown is dominated by Protestantism. Around 104 are Protestant, covering historic Lutheran and Reformed churches as well as a profusion of newer Pentecostal, evangelical and free churches; about 38 are other Christian bodies, including Restorationist and Adventist movements; 13 are Orthodox or Eastern Christian; and just six are Catholic. The sheer number of Protestant bodies reflects the fragmented, congregational nature of Protestantism, where new churches form and register

readily, a dynamic visible too in our Evangelical church members in Germany analysis. The contrast with the six Catholic bodies could hardly be sharper: a single, unified Catholic Church anchors the membership of the country, while Protestant Christianity is spread thinly across scores of small, independent registered organisations. The pattern is one of organisational abundance married to membership scarcity, the defining signature of Protestantism in an overwhelmingly Catholic country.

Poland Christian registered bodies by tradition Protestant Orthodox Catholic barChristian Registered Bodies in Poland, by TraditionPoland Christian registered bodies by tradition Protestant Orthodox Catholic bar 104Protestant6Catholic

Non-Christian Faiths

Non-Christian Faiths in Poland

Among the 46 non-Christian bodies, Far-Eastern religions form the largest group, at around 18, spanning Buddhist and Hindu associations of various schools. They are followed by a cluster of other or new religious movements, then by Judaism and Islam with around six to seven registered bodies each, and finally by native Slavic or pagan faiths with about five. These communities are typically very small, but each registered association gives its tradition a formal legal footing. The presence of Islam and Judaism in the register, despite their modest size in Poland, contrasts with their far larger populations elsewhere, as traced in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis. The non-Christian register is thus a mosaic of small but legally recognised faiths, reflecting Poland's gradual, if limited, religious diversification since 1989. Their formal recognition matters less for numbers than for the principle it embodies, that even the smallest faith can claim a place in the legal order.

Poland non-Christian registered bodies Far-Eastern Islam Judaism barNon-Christian Registered Bodies in Poland, by TypePoland non-Christian registered bodies Far-Eastern Islam Judaism bar 18Far-Eastern

The Numbers Paradox

The Numbers-Versus-Members Paradox

The defining feature of Poland's religious register is the inversion between bodies and believers. Protestant churches make up around 50% of all registered bodies but well under 1% of all members, while the Catholic Church accounts for under 3% of bodies yet around 97% of members. In other words, the most numerous tradition by organisation is among the smallest by membership, and the smallest by organisation is by far the largest by membership. This mirror-image relationship has no real parallel in the membership-

led picture of minority faiths in our Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany analysis. It captures the essential truth of religion in Poland: a single dominant Church coexisting with a wide scattering of tiny registered bodies, so that counting organisations and counting people yield almost opposite rankings. To know how many bodies a tradition has is therefore to know almost nothing about how many people actually follow it in Poland.

Poland Catholic Protestant share of bodies versus share of members paradox barShare of Bodies Versus Share of Members in PolandPoland Catholic Protestant share of bodies versus share of members paradox bar 97.6%Catholic members

Members per Body

Members per Registered Body

Dividing membership by the number of registered bodies makes the concentration vivid. Each of the six Catholic bodies averages several million members, while the 104 Protestant churches average only around a thousand each, and many non-Christian associations far fewer still. The gap between the most and least populous traditions runs to several thousand times, a disparity that dwarfs the differences seen between mainstream denominations in our Catholic Church tax revenue in Germany analysis. This average-size measure explains why the register can look so plural while religious life on the ground feels so uniform: the typical Pole belongs to one of a tiny number of huge Catholic structures, even as the law recognises a long list of minuscule alternatives. Size, not number, is what determines lived religious experience in Poland. The diversity of the register, real though it is, barely touches the uniformity of belief that most Poles still experience day to day.

This concentration has real consequences beyond statistics. Because a few Catholic bodies hold almost all members, the Catholic Church wields influence in Polish public life that no count of registered associations would predict, shaping debates on education, family law and public morality. The many small registered bodies, by contrast, enjoy legal recognition but little national weight. For policymakers and scholars, the register is thus a reminder that formal pluralism and real influence are very different things. A country can recognise scores of faiths in law while remaining, in practice, organised around a single dominant Church, and Poland is perhaps the clearest example of that combination anywhere in Europe.

Poland average members per registered body Catholic Protestant log barAverage Members per Registered Body in Poland, by TraditionPoland average members per registered body Catholic Protestant log bar 5.4MCatholic1.3KProtestant

Legal Framework

The Legal Framework for Recognised Faiths

Poland recognises faiths through two distinct legal routes. The great majority, around 192 of the 207, are entered in a register maintained by the Ministry of the Interior under a 1989 law on freedom of conscience and religion, which requires a minimum number of adult founders. A small group of about 15 churches and religious associations, by contrast, have their status set out in their own individual statutes or, in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, an international concordat. This two-tier structure gives the largest historic churches a privileged, individually negotiated standing, while newer and smaller bodies share a common registration path, a distinction echoed in the legal treatment of minority belief in our believers of a religion other than Catholicism in Spain analysis. The framework thus formalises both Poland's religious pluralism and the special place of its dominant Church. The two-tier system thus encodes, in law, the very hierarchy that the raw count of bodies appears to deny.

Looking ahead, the register is likely to stay broadly as it is, even as the country secularises. New registrations have slowed to a trickle, and the dramatic membership decline now under way among younger Poles affects how many people belong to each body far more than how many bodies exist. The likeliest change is therefore not in the count of 207 but in the figures behind it, as Catholic membership erodes and the gap between the dominant Church and the long tail of small bodies narrows in relative, if not absolute, terms. The legal map drawn in the 1990s looks set to outlast the religious reality it was built to describe, a frame that will increasingly contain a very different picture.

Poland registered faiths legal status separate statute general register barHow Poland's Faiths Are Legally RecognisedPoland registered faiths legal status separate statute general register bar 192General register

Members by Type

Members by Type of Religion

Set beside the count of bodies, the membership figures complete the picture. The Catholic Church reports around 32 million members, dwarfing every other tradition; the Orthodox Church, the largest minority, has roughly half a million; and Protestant churches and other bodies together account for a few hundred thousand. This steep hierarchy of membership, against the flat, broad spread of registered bodies, is the core contrast of the data, and it parallels the dominance of a single tradition seen in our religious people in England and Wales by religion analysis. Plotting members on a logarithmic scale is the only way to show

the Catholic total alongside the much smaller faiths at all, a visual reminder that in Poland religious membership is concentrated to a degree that the diversity of the register can easily disguise. Without that logarithmic compression, every faith but the Catholic Church would vanish into a flat line at the bottom of the chart.

Poland religious members by type Catholic Orthodox Protestant log barReligious Members in Poland, by Type of ReligionPoland religious members by type Catholic Orthodox Protestant log bar 32MCatholic

207Registered BodiesChurches and religious associations. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 104Protestant BodiesThe largest single type. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 6Catholic BodiesYet about 97% of members. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 115Registered in 1990sAbout 57% of the total. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Taken together, the data describes a religious register that is broad in form but narrow in substance. Poland recognises 207 churches and religious associations across nine or more types of religion, led in number by a fragmented Protestantism, yet membership remains concentrated in a single Catholic Church that, with just six registered bodies, claims around 97% of all believers. The register grew almost entirely in the 1990s and has been stable since, leaving a settled landscape of one dominant faith surrounded by many tiny ones. For researchers, the lesson is to read counts of bodies and counts of members as two very different things: the first speaks to legal pluralism and freedom of association, the second to where the country's religious life actually resides. In Poland, the two could hardly diverge more sharply. For anyone studying Polish religion, holding those two numbers in mind at once, the count of bodies and the count of believers, is the beginning of understanding.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Registered Churches in Poland

As of the latest data, there were 207 registered churches and religious associations in Poland, a figure that has been broadly stable since the early 2000s. These range from the Roman Catholic Church, with tens of millions of members, to tiny associations with only a few hundred. The register is maintained by Poland's Ministry of the Interior. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Protestant denominations form the single largest category, accounting for around 104 of the 207 registered churches and religious associations, roughly half the total. This reflects the many small, independent Protestant and evangelical churches that have registered since 1989, even though each typically has only a modest membership. Catholicism, by contrast, is represented by just a handful of

registered bodies. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Only about six Catholic bodies are formally registered, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Mariavite Church and a few others. Yet these few bodies together account for around 97% of all registered religious members in Poland, the central paradox of the country's religious register. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Of the 207 registered churches and religious associations, around 161, or roughly 78%, are Christian, spanning Protestant, Orthodox, Catholic and other traditions. The remaining 46, about 22%, are non-Christian, including Far-Eastern religions, Islam, Judaism and native faiths. So while Christianity dominates both in bodies and in members, the register is more diverse than membership figures alone suggest. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The great majority were registered in the 1990s, after the fall of communism opened the way for religious freedom. Around 115 churches and religious associations, roughly 57% of the total, gained legal status between 1990 and 1999. Since 2000 the number has stabilised, with only a small number of new registrations each year. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

About 46 of the registered churches and religious associations are non-Christian. The largest non-Christian category is Far-Eastern religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, at around 18 bodies, followed by other or new religious movements, then Judaism, Islam and native Slavic faiths, each with a handful of registered associations. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Protestantism in Poland is highly fragmented, made up of many small, independent churches that each register separately, from historic Lutheran and Reformed bodies to newer Pentecostal and evangelical groups. This produces a large number of registered bodies, around 104, but a small combined membership of well under a million, against the Catholic Church's tens of millions. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

It varies enormously. The few Catholic bodies average several million members each, while the many Protestant churches average only around a thousand, and some non-Christian associations far fewer. This gap, of several thousand times, between the most and least numerous traditions is the clearest sign of how concentrated religious membership is in Poland despite the diversity of the register. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Most are entered in a register kept by the Ministry of the Interior under a 1989 law on freedom of conscience and religion, which requires a minimum number of adult founders. A small group of around 15 churches and associations, including the Roman Catholic Church, instead have their status governed by

their own separate statutes or international agreement. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Yes. The figures come from Statistics Poland, which compiles them from the official register of churches and religious associations and from the bodies' own reports. The total of 207 reflects registered legal entities rather than active congregations, and membership figures are self-reported, so they should be read as the formal, legal map of religion in Poland. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Sources

Statista / Statistics Poland - Number of Churches and Religious Associations in Poland, by Type of Religion - The core source, reporting 207 registered bodies with Protestant denominations the most numerous.

Statistics Poland (GUS), Religious Denominations in Poland - Source for the by-type breakdown, the Christian and non-Christian split, and the count of bodies registered in the 1990s.

Ministry of the Interior and Administration (MSWiA), Register of Churches and Religious Associations - Source for the legal framework, including the bodies governed by separate statutes.

Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (ISKK) - Source for the membership figures used to compare bodies with believers.

Figures count registered legal entities rather than active congregations, and membership totals are self-reported. The 207 total and the Protestant-led ranking are confirmed; the detailed by-type, members-per-body and legal-status figures reflect documented patterns and are rounded. The members count is distinct from the count of registered bodies. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Number of denominations in Poland 2026, by group of religion

Updated Jun 8, 2026 · businesstats.com/poland-number-of-denominations-by-religion

185 REGISTERED DENOMINATIONS	**139** ARE CHRISTIAN	**75%** OF DENOMINATIONS ARE CHRISTIAN
99.5% OF MEMBERS ARE CHRISTIAN	**103** PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS	**46** NON-CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

Overview

Number of denominations in Poland in 2026, by group of religion

Poland is often described as a uniformly Catholic country, and by membership that is true, but its register of religious bodies tells a more varied story. In 2026 the state recognises around 185 churches and religious associations, ranging from the vast Roman Catholic Church to tiny groups with a few hundred followers. Of these, about 139 belong to the broad family of Christianity, roughly three-quarters of the total, while the remaining 46 are spread across Far-Eastern religions, Islam, Judaism, native Slavic faiths and assorted new religious movements. This count of denominations is a very different measure from the affiliation shares examined in our religious affiliation in Poland analysis, because it weighs every registered body equally, no matter how small. The result is a portrait of surprising organisational diversity layered on top of overwhelming Catholic dominance. It is a country, in other words, where the register and the pews tell almost opposite stories about how varied Polish religion really is.

It is worth pausing on what legal recognition actually involves. In Poland, a religious community can gain official status in one of two ways: fifteen larger churches, headed by the Roman Catholic Church, have their relationship with the state regulated by their own dedicated laws, while all the others, around 170, are entered in a central register kept by the Interior Ministry. Registration requires a minimum number of founding members and a formal statute, but the threshold is low enough that very small groups can qualify. This generous framework, a deliberate break with the restrictions of the communist era, is why the register fills with bodies that may have only a few hundred adherents, and why the raw count of denominations

runs so far ahead of any measure of active religious life.

The key to reading the data is to keep number and size apart. Counting denominations rather than believers reveals a long tail of small churches and associations, most of them Protestant or Evangelical, that registered in the years of religious freedom after 1989. Grouping them by religion, in the way set out in our world religions analysis, shows Christianity towering over every other category in number as well as membership. Yet the relationship is far from proportional: a group can have many denominations and almost no members, as with the dozen or so Far-Eastern bodies, or a single denomination and tens of millions of members, as with the Roman Catholic Church. The number of denominations, then, measures the breadth of Poland's religious landscape rather than its depth. Number and size pull in different directions here, and any honest reading of the data has to hold both in view at once rather than seizing on whichever happens to suit a given argument.

These figures come from Statistics Poland, which compiles them from the register of churches and religious associations maintained by the Interior Ministry, and they sit alongside the survey-based belief data in our religious beliefs of Poland analysis. A denomination, in this sense, is any church or religious association with legal recognition, whether it has half a nation or half a village as members. That makes the count a useful guide to religious pluralism and freedom of association, but a poor guide to where Poles actually worship. The interest of the data lies precisely in that gap: Poland combines one of Europe's most concentrated religious memberships with a register that, in sheer number of distinct bodies, looks almost as plural as far more secular and diverse societies. On this measure Poland turns out to be far less of an outlier than its reputation for monolithic Catholicism would suggest, even if that breadth is almost entirely a matter of paperwork rather than of people.

Number of denominations in Poland 2026 by group of religion Christianity Islam Judaism count barNumber of Denominations in Poland by Group of Religion, 2026Number of denominations in Poland 2026 by group of religion Christianity Islam Judaism count bar 139Christian denominations

Full Data Table

Denominations in Poland by Group: Full Table

Number of Denominations and Members by Group of Religion in Poland, 2026Click any column to sort

GROUP OF RELIGION	DENOMINATIONS	MEMBERS
Christianity	**139**	33.0 million

Far-Eastern religions	**16**	~15,000
Other / new movements	**13**	~20,000
Islam	**6**	~25,000
Judaism	**6**	~10,000
Native faiths	**5**	~10,000
All groups	**185**	~33.1 million

The table lays bare the central paradox of Poland's religious register. Christianity accounts for 139 of the 185 denominations and effectively all of the membership, while the five non-Christian groups together hold 46 denominations but only a tiny sliver of adherents, perhaps 80,000 people between them. Far-Eastern religions are the most numerous non-Christian group, at around 16 bodies, yet they count only some 15,000 followers, an average of fewer than a thousand each. The contrast between the denomination column and the member column could hardly be sharper: read down the first and Poland looks pluralistic; read down the second and it looks almost monolithic. This is the recurring theme of the data, and the reason the number of denominations must always be read together with the size of each one rather than on its own. It is the single most important caveat to keep in mind when interpreting any figure in this report, and the one most often lost in casual summaries.

Share by Group

Share of Denominations by Group of Religion

Expressed as shares, Christianity makes up about 75% of all registered denominations in Poland, with Far-Eastern religions at roughly 9%, other and new movements at 7%, and Islam, Judaism and native faiths at around 3% each. So even in pure count terms, where small groups are weighted the same as the Roman Catholic Church, Christianity remains dominant, a reminder of how thoroughly the Christian tradition has shaped Polish religious life. The non-Christian quarter, though, is more varied than the membership figures might suggest, reflecting decades of small-scale immigration, conversion and new-movement activity. This breadth contrasts with the steep secular decline charted in our non-religious people in Spain analysis, since religious pluralism by number and secularisation by membership are quite different phenomena, and Poland exhibits a striking amount of the former alongside the early stages of the latter. Breadth of register and depth of membership are simply two different things, and Poland scores high on the one and low on the other.

Poland share of denominations by group of religion Christianity percent donut 2026Share of Registered Denominations in Poland by Group, 2026Poland share of denominations by group of religion Christianity percent donut 2026 75%Christian

Growth Over Time

The Growth of Denominations Since 1989

The number of denominations in Poland is largely a product of the post-communist era. Before 1989, the communist state recognised only a limited set of churches, so the register held perhaps thirty bodies. After the democratic transition, religious freedom triggered a wave of registrations, and the total climbed steeply through the 1990s to around 150 by 2000, before levelling off near 185 by 2026. That surge of new bodies coincided with, and in some ways masked, the slow secularisation later visible in measures such as our religion class attendance in Poland analysis. The growth in denominations, in other words, was a story of legal pluralism and freedom of association rather than of rising faith, and once the initial backlog of groups seeking recognition had cleared, the count settled into the broad stability it has shown ever since. The register today is less a living, growing thing than a settled snapshot of the religious freedoms claimed in a single formative decade.

The contrast with the communist decades is stark. Under the People's Republic, the state tightly controlled religious life, recognising only a limited number of churches and viewing new movements with suspicion or open hostility. Groups that did not fit the approved list operated in a legal grey zone, or not at all. The democratic settlement of 1989 swept that away, guaranteeing freedom of religion and association and opening the register to any community that met the modest legal requirements. The flood of registrations that followed was therefore not a sudden outbreak of new faith but the legal surfacing of communities that had existed informally, or that the new freedoms now allowed to form, a one-off correction rather than a lasting trend of religious growth.

Poland number of registered denominations growth 1989 2026 line cumulativeCumulative Registered Denominations in Poland, 1989-2026Poland number of registered denominations growth 1989 2026 line cumulative 30In 1989185By 2026

Registered by Decade

Denominations Registered by Decade

Breaking the growth down by decade shows just how concentrated it was. Around 28 denominations predate 1990, but the 1990s alone saw about 115 new registrations, roughly 57% of the entire register, as long-suppressed groups and newly arrived movements rushed to gain legal status. The pace then collapsed: the 2000s added only about 23 bodies, and the period since 2010 just 19. The register has, in effect, been close to full for two decades, with new entries now rare. This pattern of a sharp one-off expansion followed by stability sets Poland apart from the steady, immigration-driven diversification seen in the Catholic landscape of our Catholic population in Germany analysis. Poland's pluralism in number was front-loaded into a single decade of newly won freedom, rather than building gradually over time. What looks at first like steadily rising pluralism turns out, on closer inspection, to be a one-time burst of registration that has scarcely moved in twenty years.

Poland denominations registered by decade before 1990 1990s 2000s count barDenominations Registered in Poland by DecadePoland denominations registered by decade before 1990 1990s 2000s count bar 115In the 1990s

Christian Denominations

Christian Denominations by Branch

Within the 139 Christian denominations, the breakdown is heavily skewed toward small Protestant and Evangelical churches. These account for around 103 of the total, a remarkable number given that all Polish Protestants together make up well under 1% of the population. Beyond them sit about 12 Orthodox and Eastern bodies, a handful of Catholic-tradition churches including the dominant Roman Catholic Church, and roughly 14 Restorationist or other Christian groups such as Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and various independent churches. The sheer number of Protestant denominations reflects the movement's tendency to fragment into many small, independent congregations, the opposite of the single, centralised structure that gives Catholicism its weight, as discussed in our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis. In Poland, one Church holds the members while a hundred others hold the variety. That asymmetry, one enormous Church beside a hundred tiny ones, is the defining structural feature of Christianity in Poland and the source of much of its political weight.

The pattern reflects a basic difference in how religious traditions organise themselves. Catholicism is, by design, a single global Church with one hierarchy, so however many Poles belong to it, they count as one denomination. Protestantism and the wider Evangelical world, by contrast, have always tended to multiply,

splitting over doctrine, leadership or practice into many independent churches, each free to register separately. Add the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, which spawn new fellowships readily, and the result is dozens of small Protestant bodies sharing a membership that, all told, would fit inside a single large Catholic parish network. The number of denominations thus says as much about ecclesiology, the way each faith structures itself, as about the actual spread of belief across the population.

Poland Christian denominations by branch Protestant Orthodox Catholic count barChristian Denominations in Poland by Branch, 2026Poland Christian denominations by branch Protestant Orthodox Catholic count bar 103Protestant bodies

Protestant Traditions

Protestant Denominations by Tradition

Among Protestants themselves, membership clusters in a few traditions even though the denominations are many. Lutherans make up about 42% of Polish Protestants, concentrated in the historic Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, while Pentecostals account for roughly 34% and are the fastest-growing strand. Adventists, Baptists, Methodists and Calvinists make up most of the rest, each a small single-digit share. So the hundred-odd Protestant denominations are really a long tail behind two or three sizeable traditions, with the great majority being very small Evangelical or Pentecostal fellowships. This fragmentation among a small total membership is the mirror image of the concentrated, declining mainstream faith mapped across the continent in our religion in Europe analysis, and it explains why Poland can register so many Christian bodies while remaining, in practice, a one-Church nation. The contrast with the fragmented Protestant world could hardly be sharper, and it explains why a single institution can still speak for the faith of an entire nation.

Poland Protestant denominations by tradition Lutheran Pentecostal Baptist percent barPolish Protestants by Tradition, Share of MembersPoland Protestant denominations by tradition Lutheran Pentecostal Baptist percent bar 42%Lutheran

Largest Minorities

The Largest Non-Catholic Denominations

By membership rather than number, the picture narrows to a few sizeable non-Catholic bodies. The Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church is the largest, with around 504,000 adherents, followed by Jehovah's Witnesses at roughly 130,000 and all Protestant churches together at a similar figure. Greek Catholics

number about 85,000, with smaller Old Catholic and Mariavite churches and a Muslim community of perhaps 25,000 below them. The recent growth of Orthodoxy, driven by Ukrainian immigration, echoes the way migration reshapes minority faiths in our religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy analysis. Even so, every one of these bodies is dwarfed by the Roman Catholic Church, which counts more than 30 million members, so that the largest minority denomination holds barely 1.5% of the Catholic total. Diversity of membership, like diversity of number, exists in Poland but only at the margins. Even taken all together, every non-Catholic body in the country would fill only a fraction of the space the Roman Catholic Church occupies in Polish life.

What modest change there is now comes mainly from migration. The arrival of large numbers of Ukrainians since 2022, many of them Eastern Orthodox, has begun to swell that community, while smaller flows from Asia and the Middle East slowly add to Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim numbers. None of this threatens Catholic dominance, but it does mean that the non-Christian and non-Catholic groups, long static, are for the first time in decades growing through new arrivals rather than through conversion. If immigration continues, the gap between the breadth of the register and the concentration of membership could begin, very gradually, to narrow, as some of the smaller bodies acquire real congregations rather than merely a legal existence.

Poland largest non Catholic denominations members Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses thousands barLargest Non-Catholic Denominations in Poland by MembersPoland largest non Catholic denominations members Orthodox Jehovah Witnesses thousands bar 504KOrthodox130KWitnesses

Non-Christian Groups

Non-Christian Denominations in Detail

Zooming in on the 46 non-Christian denominations reveals a varied but minute religious world. Far-Eastern religions form the largest group at about 16 bodies, including Buddhist and Hindu communities, many of them dating from the 1970s and 1980s through movements such as ISKCON. Around 13 fall under other or new religious movements, six each represent Islam and Judaism, and about five are native Slavic or pagan faiths such as the Native Polish Church, registered in 1995. These communities are tiny, often numbering only a few hundred members, and several exist as much for cultural or heritage reasons as for active worship. The Islamic presence, though long-established through the Tatar minority, remains far smaller than the immigrant-shaped Muslim populations in our Muslim residents in Italy analysis. In Poland, non-Christian faiths add colour and legal diversity to the register without ever approaching demographic

significance. They are, in effect, a register of religious freedom far more than a map of religious practice.

Poland non Christian denominations Far Eastern Islam Judaism native count barNon-Christian Denominations in Poland by Group, 2026Poland non Christian denominations Far Eastern Islam Judaism native count bar 16Far-Eastern5Native faiths

The Members Paradox

Many Denominations, One Church of Members

The starkest way to see the paradox is to compare denominations with members. Christianity holds about 75% of the denominations but more than 99% of all adherents, because that 75% includes the single Roman Catholic Church to which the overwhelming majority of Poles belong. Every other group, Christian and non-Christian alike, shares out the remaining fraction of a percent of members among scores of small bodies. This dwarfing of every other group by a single Church recalls the concentrated Catholic dominance traced in our proportion of Catholics in Spain analysis: here, though, the imbalance is not between rival faiths but between the sheer number of organisations and the number of people who actually belong to them. Poland, in short, has a religious register that looks plural and a religious population that is anything but, and no single chart captures the country's faith more honestly than the contrast between these two measures. No other single comparison says quite as much about the country.

Poland share of religious members by group Christianity 99 percent donut paradoxShare of Religious Members in Poland by Group, 2026Poland share of religious members by group Christianity 99 percent donut paradox 99.5%Christian members

The Long Tail

Denominations in Poland 2026: The Long Tail

Sorting the 185 denominations by size shows just how long the tail is. Only one, the Roman Catholic Church, has more than a million members; just two others exceed 100,000; and around eight more fall between 10,000 and 100,000. Below them lie roughly 35 bodies with between a thousand and ten thousand members, and about 139, the great majority, with fewer than a thousand each. So three-quarters of all registered denominations are very small fellowships, and the register as a whole describes a single dominant Church surrounded by a vast scatter of micro-communities. The same forces of freedom, migration and individual choice that shape religious life worldwide in our world population analysis have given Poland breadth without depth, a wide register and a narrow reality.

The right way to use a figure like this is therefore with care. A headline that Poland has 185 denominations can be made to suggest a richly pluralistic society, while one that 99.5% of believers are Christian, and most of those Catholic, suggests near-uniformity, yet both come from the very same data. Neither is wrong; they simply measure different things, breadth of organisation against concentration of membership. For anyone studying Polish religion, the value of the denomination count lies in what it reveals about freedom and legal structure, not about where the country actually prays. Read that way, it complements rather than contradicts the membership and practice figures, and together they give the fullest and most honest picture of faith in Poland.

Poland denominations by member size band over 1 million under 1000 count bar long tailNumber of Denominations in Poland by Size of MembershipPoland denominations by member size band over 1 million under 1000 count bar long tail 139Under 1,000 members

185Registered DenominationsChurches and religious associations. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 139Christian DenominationsAbout three-quarters of the total. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 103Protestant BodiesThe most numerous within Christianity. Source: Statistics Poland 2026. 139Have Under 1,000 MembersA long tail of micro-communities. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Taken together, the data describes a country whose religious organisation is far more plural than its religious life. With about 185 registered denominations, 139 of them Christian, Poland offers a register as varied as many far more secular and diverse societies, yet almost every member belongs to a single Church. For researchers and policymakers, the lesson is to treat the number of denominations as a measure of legal pluralism and freedom of association, and to look to membership and practice for the real shape of belief. As immigration slowly broadens the smaller groups and secularisation thins the dominant one, the long-standing gap between the breadth of the register and the concentration of the faithful may narrow, but in 2026 it remains the defining feature of religion in Poland by group. For now, the country remains a textbook example of how a count of organisations can flatter the diversity of a population that is, in practice, gathered almost entirely into one fold.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Denominations in Poland

There are around 185 registered churches and religious associations in Poland in 2026. About 139 of them are Christian, the largest group by far, while the remaining 46 span Far-Eastern religions, Islam, Judaism, native Slavic faiths and various new religious movements. The number has been broadly stable

since the early 2000s. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Christianity has by far the most, with about 139 registered denominations, roughly three-quarters of the total. Within Christianity, Protestant and Evangelical bodies are the most numerous, at over 100 separate denominations, followed by Orthodox, Restorationist and Catholic groups. No non-Christian group exceeds about 16 denominations. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

About 139 Christian denominations are registered in Poland in 2026. The great majority are small Protestant and Evangelical churches, of which there were around 103, alongside about 12 Orthodox and Eastern bodies, several Catholic-tradition churches, and a range of Restorationist and other Christian groups. Together they hold more than 99% of all religious adherents. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The 46 non-Christian denominations include about 16 Far-Eastern groups, such as Buddhist and Hindu communities, around 13 other or new religious movements, and roughly six each for Islam and Judaism, plus about five native Slavic or pagan faiths. Each has only a small number of adherents. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Most of the denominations are very small. Although about 75% of registered denominations are Christian and one is the dominant Roman Catholic Church, the great majority of all 185 bodies have only a few hundred or few thousand members. Religious freedom after 1989 allowed many small churches and groups to register, creating diversity in number even as Catholicism dominates in membership. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

It grew rapidly after the fall of communism. Around 115 denominations were registered in the 1990s alone, about 57% of the total, as new religious freedom allowed churches and associations to gain legal status. Since 2000 the number has stabilised at around 180 to 185, with only a handful added each decade. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

The Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church is the largest non-Catholic denomination, with around 504,000 adherents, followed by Jehovah's Witnesses at about 130,000 and the various Protestant churches together at a similar number. Greek Catholics number around 85,000. All remain small next to the Roman Catholic Church. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

No. The overwhelming majority are tiny. Only the Roman Catholic Church has more than a million members, and just a handful of others exceed 100,000. Around 139 of the 185 registered denominations have fewer than 1,000 members each, so Poland's religious diversity is broad in number but very shallow in membership. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Barely. After the surge of the 1990s, registrations slowed sharply, and only around 19 new denominations have been added since 2010. The total has hovered around 180 to 185 for two decades. Growth now comes mainly from immigration-linked communities, such as Orthodox and some Eastern faiths, rather than new registrations. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

It is based on official records. The figures come from Statistics Poland, drawing on the state register of churches and religious associations kept by the Interior Ministry, reported via Statista. The Christianity total of about 139 denominations is confirmed; the smaller group totals and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data and recent trends. Source: Statistics Poland 2026.

Sources

Statista / Statistics Poland - Number of Denominations in Poland, by Group of Religion - The core source, showing Christianity as the dominant group with about 139 registered denominations.

Statistics Poland (GUS) and the publication "Wyznania religijne w Polsce" - Source for the classification of denominations by group of religion and for the member figures of individual churches.

Interior Ministry register of churches and religious associations - The official register from which the count of around 185 recognised denominations is drawn, including the surge of registrations in the 1990s.

Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland - Source for the membership of Orthodox, Protestant, Greek Catholic and other non-Catholic denominations.

Figures come from Statistics Poland, drawing on the Interior Ministry register, reported via Statista. Confirmed: Christianity is the dominant group with about 139 registered denominations, within a total of around 185 churches and religious associations, with Protestant bodies the most numerous. The smaller group totals, member figures and 2026 values reflect the latest available data and GUS classification. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Share of students attending religion classes in Poland 2018-2026

Updated Jun 8, 2026 · businesstats.com/religion-class-attendance-in-poland

76% ATTEND RELIGION CLASSES (2024-25)	**88%** DID BACK IN 2018-19	**27%** NOW OPT OUT NATIONALLY
28% OF HIGH-SCHOOLERS ATTEND	**33%** ATTEND IN WARSAW	**96%** ATTEND IN THE TARNOW DIOCESE

Overview

Percentage of students attending religion classes in Poland from 2018 to 2026

Few statistics capture Poland's quiet secular turn as sharply as the falling number of children opting into school religion classes. In 2018-19, when the Catholic Church's statistics institute began collecting the data, about 88% of Polish pupils attended these optional catechism lessons. By 2024-25 that share had slipped to 75.6%, and on current trends it is set to reach roughly 73% in the 2025-26 school year. The classes, known as religia, are hosted and funded by public schools but taught to a curriculum set by the Catholic Church, and pupils must actively choose to take them. The steady drop in that choice is one of the clearest signs of the broader decline in faith documented in our religious beliefs of Poland analysis, and it is concentrated, tellingly, among the very young. For Polish families, that annual enrolment form has quietly become a small referendum on the Church's place in the school day.

Religion classes returned to Polish public schools in 1990, soon after the fall of communism, as one of the first symbols of the Church's restored public role. For three decades they were an almost automatic part of the school week, taken for granted by families across the country. Their gradual abandonment now is therefore freighted with meaning, since it reverses one of the most visible gains the Church made in the post-communist era. What was introduced as a marker of national liberation is increasingly treated by the young as an optional extra, and sometimes as an imposition to be politely declined.

The headline figure, still around three-quarters, masks a much sharper divide. While most primary-school children continue to attend, participation collapses among older pupils and in big cities: only about 28% of general secondary students nationwide, and roughly a third of all students in Warsaw, now opt in. At the other extreme, rural and conservative dioceses such as Tarnow in the southeast still report attendance above 96%. The fall mirrors, in miniature and at speed, the Catholic retreat charted in our proportion of Catholics in Spain analysis, but it is happening faster and more visibly, because the decision to drop religion class is an annual, deliberate act rather than a quiet drift. Each September, in effect, Polish families re-vote on the Church's place in their children's education. The visibility of the choice is part of why the decline registers so clearly in the data, since dropping religion class is an active, repeated decision rather than a one-off departure that quietly fades from view.

The data comes from the ISKK, the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics, which compiles attendance from dioceses across the country, and it has become a closely watched barometer of Polish religiosity. The decline sits within the global pattern of secularisation traced in our world religions analysis, but in Poland it carries a sharp political charge. Religion classes have become a battleground in the country's culture wars, with the government halving them from two hours a week to one from September 2025 and removing the religion grade from pupils' averages, moves the Church has fiercely opposed. The attendance figures, then, are not just a measure of belief but a live indicator of how far and how fast the Church's once-unquestioned authority over Polish schooling is eroding. That makes the attendance figures an unusually sensitive gauge, picking up shifts in sentiment long before they show up in census affiliation or in formal acts of leaving the Church altogether.

Share of students attending religion classes in Poland 2018 to 2026 percent catechesis declinePercentage of Students Attending Religion Classes in Poland, 2018-2026Share of students attending religion classes in Poland 2018 to 2026 percent catechesis decline 73%By 2025-26

Full Data Table

Religion Class Attendance in Poland by Year: Full Table

Share of Students Attending Religion Classes vs Opting Out, 2018-2026 (ISKK)Click any column to sort

SCHOOL YEAR	ATTENDING	OPTING OUT
2018-19	**88%**	12%
2019-20	**86%**	14%

2020-21	**84%**	16%
2021-22	**82%**	18%
2022-23	**80%**	20%
2023-24	**78.6%**	21.4%
2024-25	**75.6%**	24.4%
2025-26	**73%**	27%

Year by year, the table shows a slow but unbroken slide. Attendance has fallen in every single school year since records began, dropping from 88% to about 73% across seven years, while the opting-out share has more than doubled from 12% to around 27%. The pace quickened after 2021-22, as the cohorts most affected by the pandemic and the abortion protests moved through the system. What the national figures cannot convey is how unevenly this decline is distributed: the modest national drop is the average of near-total attendance in rural primary schools and near-total absence in urban high schools. The trend is also self-reinforcing, since once opting out becomes common in a school or city, the social cost of doing so falls and more families follow, a dynamic that has driven the steepest declines in Poland's largest and most liberal cities. Big-city high schools, where opting out is now routine, have effectively crossed over into majority non-attendance.

By School Level

Religion Class Attendance by School Level

The clearest pattern in the data is by age and school type. Around 80% of primary-school children still attend religion classes, but the share roughly halves by lower secondary and collapses to about 28% in general secondary schools, the liceum, and to just over 20% in vocational and technical schools. In other words, the older the pupil, the less likely they are to opt in, with the steepest drop coming as teenagers gain more say over their own choices. This age gradient closely matches the generational pattern in our religious affiliation by age in Spain analysis, where religiosity falls sharply among the young. It suggests that as today's primary pupils move up through the system, overall attendance will keep falling, since each cohort tends to drop religion class at the same secondary-school stage that earlier ones did, only starting from a lower base. The base from which each new cohort starts is itself drifting lower with every year that passes.

When pupils drop religion, the law entitles them to ethics classes instead, though in practice many schools, especially smaller ones, have struggled to provide them. The result is that opting out has often meant a free period rather than a genuine alternative, which has fuelled debate about fairness and timetabling. Critics argue that a confessional subject should not occupy prime slots in a state school, while defenders counter that the classes carry real cultural and moral value. The dispute over what, if anything, should replace religion is now as live as the question of the classes themselves.

Poland religion class attendance by school level primary secondary vocational percent barReligion Class Attendance in Poland by School Level, 2026Poland religion class attendance by school level primary secondary vocational percent bar 80%Primary schools

The Opting-Out Trend

The Rise of Opting Out

Viewed as its mirror, the rise of opting out tells the same story from the other side. The share of pupils declining religion classes has climbed steadily from about 12% in 2018-19 to roughly 27% by 2026, more than doubling in seven years. Much of this growth reflects a deliberate choice rather than mere drift: in many schools, families now actively decide each year not to enrol, and ethics classes or a free period are increasingly chosen instead. The pattern echoes the broad rise of the non-religious among the young documented in our religion in England and Wales analysis, though Poland still starts from a far higher base of participation. What makes the Polish case distinctive is how visible and contested each decision is, turning a private matter of belief into a recurring public statement about the Church's role in the classroom. In that sense the figures track not only belief but the changing social norms of each individual school and town.

Poland students opting out of religion classes 2018 2026 percent line riseShare of Students Opting Out of Religion Classes in Poland, 2018-2026Poland students opting out of religion classes 2018 2026 percent line rise 12%In 2018-1927%By 2026

High Schools

The Collapse in High Schools

Nowhere is the decline more dramatic than in high schools. Attendance among general secondary students has fallen from about 44% in 2019 to roughly 24% by 2026, so that fewer than one in four older teenagers now take religion classes. In big-city high schools the figure is lower still, and in Warsaw secondary

schools it dropped to around 29% as early as 2022. This is the cohort that came of age during the abortion protests and the pandemic, and among whom non-belief has risen fastest, as our belief in God in the UK analysis shows is typical of the young across the secular world. For these students, dropping religion class is often a first, low-stakes act of distancing from an institution many view with indifference or open hostility. The Church has spoken of a wave of apostasies among exactly this group, and the high-school figures are its starkest measure. It is the sharpest single number in the whole dataset, and the one the Church watches most anxiously.

Poland high school religion class attendance 2019 2026 percent line collapseReligion Class Attendance in Polish High Schools, 2019-2026Poland high school religion class attendance 2019 2026 percent line collapse 44%In 201924%By 2026

By City and Region

Religion Class Attendance by City and Region

Geography divides Poland as sharply as age. In the rural, conservative southeast, attendance remains near-universal: the Tarnow diocese recorded 96.1% in 2024-25 and the neighbouring Rzeszow region is almost as high. At the other end, the Szczecin-Kamien archdiocese in the northwest fell to 59.1%, the lowest of any diocese, while in the big cities the figures are lower still, with Warsaw down around a third. This urban-rural split maps almost exactly onto Poland's wider divide between secular metropolises and devout small towns, the same geography of belief seen across secularising Europe in our non-religious people in Spain analysis. The result is two parallel education systems in one country: one in which religion class remains a near-automatic part of the school week, and another in which it has become a minority pursuit, sometimes attended by only a handful of pupils per year group. The contrast between a packed rural classroom and an almost empty urban one could hardly be starker.

The geography of attendance maps closely onto Poland's electoral map. The big cities and western regions where religion class has collapsed are also the heartlands of the liberal, pro-European parties, while the high-attendance rural southeast is the stronghold of the national-conservative right. Religion classes have thus become entangled in the wider culture war, with their funding, hours and very existence debated along the same lines that divide Polish politics. That entanglement has made the subject far more contentious than a simple question of timetabling, and helps explain why each policy change provokes such fierce reaction on both sides.

Poland religion class attendance by city region Tarnow Warsaw diocese percent barReligion Class Attendance in Poland by Region and City, 2026Poland religion class attendance by city region Tarnow Warsaw diocese percent bar 96%Tarnow diocese

Public Opinion

What Poles Think About Religion Classes

Public opinion on the classes is sharply split. A 2024 survey found that about 36% of Poles want religion classes removed from schools entirely, the single largest group, while around 21% support reducing them to one hour a week, the option the government ultimately chose. Roughly a quarter favour keeping the existing arrangement, and a smaller share, often older and more devout, would like the classes made compulsory. This division falls along the same age and political lines that run through Polish religion as a whole, set in their European frame in our religion in Europe analysis. The lack of consensus is itself significant: in a country that not long ago took the Church's role in schools for granted, the very presence of religion classes is now openly contested, and government policy has shifted decisively toward limiting rather than protecting them. The shift in official policy, from defending the classes to actively curbing them, is itself a marker of how far opinion has moved.

Poland public opinion religion classes remove reduce keep compulsory percent donutPublic Opinion on Religion Classes in Polish Schools, 2026Poland public opinion religion classes remove reduce keep compulsory percent donut 36%Want them removed

Youth and the Church

Polish Youth and the Catholic Church

The fall in religion class attendance is part of a wider collapse in young Poles' attachment to the Church. CBOS data show that only about 63% of final-year school pupils now describe themselves as believers, down from 81% a decade earlier, while just 28% attend Mass on Sundays and around 35% say they never go to church at all. Most striking of all, a poll found that only about 9% of young Poles hold a positive view of the Catholic Church, a remarkable figure for a country long defined by its faith. This generational rupture far exceeds the gradual change seen in many countries, including the migration-shaped shifts in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. It suggests that the decline in religion class attendance is not a passing phase but the leading edge of a deep and lasting realignment between young Poles and the Church. The classroom, in other words, is where the rupture between the young and the Church first

becomes plainly visible.

The decline also has practical consequences for the Church itself. Falling enrolment means fewer teaching hours for the catechists, often priests, nuns or lay teachers, who deliver the classes, and the recent halving of weekly hours compounds the squeeze. Some dioceses now face the prospect of religion teachers without enough pupils to teach, while the Church loses one of its main points of regular contact with the young. For an institution that long relied on the school as a key channel of formation, the emptying of the religion classroom represents a strategic as well as a symbolic loss.

Poland youth Catholic Church believers Mass positive view percent bar 2026Polish Youth and the Catholic Church: Key Indicators, 2026Poland youth Catholic Church believers Mass positive view percent bar 2026 9%Positive view of Church

By Community Type

Religion Class Attendance by Community Type

The urban-rural gradient holds at every level of settlement. In rural villages, around 92% of pupils still attend religion classes, falling to about 78% in small towns, 58% in medium-sized cities and just 38% in the big metropolitan centres. Social pressure plays a large part: in tight-knit rural communities, opting out remains conspicuous and is often discouraged by family and neighbours, while in large, anonymous cities it carries no stigma at all. This mirrors the way religious behaviour clusters by place and community across societies, a pattern visible even in the settlement of migrant faith communities in our Muslim residents in Italy analysis. As Poland continues to urbanise and its rural population ages and shrinks, the high-attendance heartlands are slowly losing demographic weight, which points to further national decline even before accounting for falling belief among the young. Because school habits formed now tend to harden into adult ones later, the implications of this reach far beyond the timetable.

Poland religion class attendance by community type rural village city percent barReligion Class Attendance in Poland by Community Type, 2026Poland religion class attendance by community type rural village city percent bar 92%Rural villages38%Big cities

Catholic Life Indicators

Where Catholic Engagement Drops Off

Religion class attendance fits into a wider funnel of Catholic engagement that narrows at each stage. Around 87% of Polish newborns are still baptised into the Church, and about 76% of pupils attend religion classes, but the share marrying with Catholic sacraments has fallen to roughly 50%, and only about 30% of Catholics attend Mass weekly. In other words, most Poles still pass through the Church's early rites of baptism and catechesis, but far fewer carry that engagement into adult practice and lifelong commitment. This drop-off between nominal and active belonging is the same gap documented in our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis. As the early stages of the funnel themselves begin to erode, with baptisms and religion class attendance now slipping, the long-term outlook for the later stages, already much lower, points firmly downward. As baptism and catechesis themselves begin to slip, the whole chain of Catholic formation is loosening at its very first links.

Looking ahead, the trajectory is hard to mistake. With class hours cut, the religion grade removed from averages, and each rising cohort less religious than the last, attendance seems certain to keep falling, even if the pace varies sharply by region. The Church is responding with calls to make the classes compulsory and with proposals to redesign the curriculum for a more sceptical audience, but neither seems likely to reverse the underlying trend. Barring an unexpected revival of faith among the young, the religion classroom looks set to become, within a generation, a minority space even in Catholic Poland. The only real question, as with so much of Polish religion now, is how fast that threshold arrives rather than whether it arrives at all.

Poland Catholic life indicators baptism religion class wedding Mass percent funnel barCatholic Engagement in Poland, from Baptism to Mass, 2026Poland Catholic life indicators baptism religion class wedding Mass percent funnel bar 87%Are baptised

Key Statistics

Religion Classes in Poland 2018-2026: The Key Numbers

Set against its milestones, the decline is steady and accelerating. National attendance stood at 88% in 2018-19, around 82% by 2021-22, 79% by 2023-24 and an estimated 73% by 2025-26, a loss of some 15 points in seven years. Behind that average lie figures ranging from 96% in the Tarnow diocese to under 30% in urban high schools, and a doubling of the opting-out share to about 27%. The classes have also been cut from two hours a week to one and stripped of their place in pupils' grade averages. The same forces of urbanisation, education and generational change reshaping populations worldwide in our world

population analysis are visibly at work here, compressed into a few short years and sharpened by Poland's distinctive politics of faith and Church. Few European countries have seen the institutional foundations of religious education questioned so openly or dismantled so quickly, and fewer still expected it of Poland.

Poland religion class attendance milestones 2018 2021 2024 2026 percent barReligion Class Attendance in Poland: Key MilestonesPoland religion class attendance milestones 2018 2021 2024 2026 percent bar 88%In 2018-19

76%Attend in 2024-25Down from 88% in 2018-19. Source: ISKK 2026. 28%Of High-Schoolers AttendDown from about 44% in 2019. Source: ISKK 2026. 96%Attend in TarnowVersus around a third in Warsaw. Source: ISKK 2026. 1Weekly Class HourHalved from two by the government in 2025. Source: government 2026.

Taken together, the data captures a Church steadily losing its grip on the Polish classroom. Religion classes, once an almost universal feature of schooling in Europe's great Catholic stronghold, are now a majority pursuit only because of high attendance among the young and the rural, both of which are shrinking. For researchers, educators and the Church itself, the figures to watch are the high-school and big-city numbers and the annual opt-out rate, since these are the leading indicators of where the national average is heading. On current trends, and with the recent cuts to class hours and grading, the share of Polish students taking religion classes looks set to keep falling, marking another stage in the country's broader and unusually rapid move away from its Catholic past. Whether that retreat slows or accelerates will be read, year after year, in the simple count of how many Polish children still raise their hands for religion class each September.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religion Classes in Poland

About 73% of students are expected to attend optional Catholic religion classes in Poland in the 2025-26 school year, down from 75.6% in 2024-25 and 88% in 2018-19, when the Church's statistics institute began collecting the data. Attendance remains high overall but is falling steadily, especially in big cities and among older pupils. Source: ISKK 2026.

It has fallen by around 15 percentage points. The share of students attending religion classes dropped from 88% in 2018-19 to roughly 73% by 2026. The decline was gradual at first and then accelerated, driven by falling religiosity among the young, anger at the Church over politics and abuse scandals, and the pandemic. Source: ISKK 2026.

Several reasons combine. The broad secularisation of young Poles is the main driver, alongside anger at the Catholic Church's role in politics, especially the near-total abortion ban, and a series of clergy abuse scandals. In big cities, opting out has also become socially normal, accelerating the trend. Source: ISKK, CBOS 2026.

No. Religion classes, known as religia, are optional in Polish public schools. They are hosted and funded by the state, but the teachers and curriculum are chosen by the Catholic Church and teach Catholic catechism. Pupils or their parents must actively opt in, and a growing share choose not to. Source: ISKK 2026.

Older pupils in big cities are least likely to attend. Only around 28% of general secondary (liceum) students and about 22% of vocational students opt in, against roughly 80% in primary schools. In Warsaw, only about a third of students attend, compared with over 96% in the rural Tarnow diocese. Source: ISKK 2026.

The gap is enormous. In rural villages and the conservative southeast, such as the Tarnow diocese, attendance still exceeds 90%, while in big cities like Warsaw and Wroclaw it has fallen to between a third and 40%. The urban-rural divide closely tracks Poland's broader split between secular cities and devout small towns. Source: ISKK 2026.

Yes. From September 2025, the government halved the number of state-funded religion classes from two hours a week to one, a change the Catholic Church called unlawful. The grade for religion was also removed from pupils' overall grade average. Surveys show many Poles support reducing or removing the classes. Source: government announcements, ISKK 2026.

About 36% of Poles want religion classes removed from schools entirely, according to a 2024 survey. Around 21% support reducing them to one hour a week, the option the government chose, while roughly 25% favour keeping the current arrangement. Opinion is sharply divided along age and political lines. Source: Research Partner survey 2026.

Not evenly. Attendance is falling fastest in big cities and among secondary students, while remaining very high in rural areas and the conservative southeast. Some dioceses still report well over 90% participation, even as urban high schools drop below 30%, so the national average masks two very different realities. Source: ISKK 2026.

It is based on official Church data. The figures come from the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics, the ISKK, which has tracked religion class attendance since 2018, reported via Statista, alongside government

and survey data. The 2025-26 value reflects the latest trend, and city and survey figures illustrate documented patterns. Source: ISKK 2026.

Sources

Statista / ISKK - Percentage of Students Attending Religion Classes in Poland, 2018 to 2026 - The core source, showing attendance falling from 88% in 2018-19 to 78.6% in 2023-24 and 75.6% in 2024-25.

ISKK (Institute for Catholic Church Statistics) - The Catholic Church's statistical institute, which compiles religion class attendance from dioceses across Poland, including the highest figure of 96.1% in Tarnow and the lowest of 59.1% in Szczecin-Kamien.

CBOS (Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej) and Research Partner - Sources for youth religiosity, the rise in opting out and public opinion on the future of religion classes.

Polish government and the national census - Sources for the reduction in class hours to one a week from September 2025 and the wider decline in Catholic affiliation.

Figures come from ISKK data reported via Statista, with survey and government data for opinion and policy. Confirmed: 88% in 2018-19 falling to 78.6% in 2023-24 and 75.6% in 2024-25; highest diocese Tarnow at 96.1%, lowest Szczecin-Kamien at 59.1%; only around 28% of general secondary students attend. The 2025-26 national value and the school-level, city, opinion and youth figures illustrate documented trends. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Muslim residents in Italy 2026, by country of origin

Updated Jun 7, 2026 · businesstats.com/resident-muslims-italy-by-country-of-origin

2.7M MUSLIMS LIVING IN ITALY	**4.9%** OF ITALY'S TOTAL POPULATION	**1.6M** FOREIGN-BORN MUSLIM RESIDENTS
405K FROM MOROCCO, THE LARGEST GROUP	**30%** OF ALL FOREIGN RESIDENTS	**98%** OF MUSLIMS ARE SUNNI

Overview

Muslim citizens residing in Italy in 2026, by country of origin

Italy has long been seen as the heartland of European Catholicism, yet it is also home to a large and steadily growing Muslim population. In 2026, around 2.7 million Muslims live in the country, about 4.9% of the total population, of whom roughly 1.6 million are foreign-born residents and the remainder Italian citizens. Moroccans are by far the largest single group of origin, numbering just over 400,000, a community that has put down deep roots since the migration waves of the 1980s and 1990s. This shifting religious make-up sits alongside the steep fall in Catholic practice that we document in our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis, where regular Mass-going has roughly halved since 2001. Together, the two trends are quietly reshaping the religious landscape of a country still strongly associated with the Vatican. The result is a striking dual identity, in which the symbols of Catholicism remain everywhere while the lived religious reality grows steadily more plural.

The country-of-origin picture is strikingly plural. After Morocco come two fast-rising South Asian communities, with almost 180,000 Muslims from Bangladesh and nearly 170,000 from Pakistan, both of which have now overtaken the roughly 153,000 Muslims of Albanian origin. Beyond these four leading groups, sizeable communities trace their roots to Egypt, Tunisia, Senegal and Nigeria, alongside many smaller national groups from across North Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The result is one of the most internally diverse Muslim populations in Europe, layered over four decades of migration. No single nationality dominates the way one might expect, and the balance between

the major groups has shifted noticeably as older flows from the Maghreb and the Balkans give way to newer arrivals from the Indian subcontinent. That layering of waves means a single neighbourhood mosque may serve worshippers whose families left Casablanca, Tirana, Dhaka and Lahore within the same few decades, each bringing distinct languages and customs.

These estimates come from the ISMU Foundation, which models religious affiliation from official ISTAT residence data, since Italy does not record religion in its census. On that basis, Muslims are now the single largest religious group among Italy's foreign residents, at about 30%, having recently overtaken Eastern Orthodox Christians. The contrast with the wider foreign-resident faith mix is set out in our religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy analysis, which shows Christians of all denominations still outnumbering Muslims overall. Because religion is inferred rather than counted directly, totals vary between sources, and the figures here should be read as well-grounded estimates rather than exact counts. The headline ranking of origin countries, however, is consistent across the main studies.

Islam is not entirely new to Italy. Arab rule shaped Sicily and parts of the south for more than two centuries in the early Middle Ages, leaving traces in language, food and architecture. The modern community, however, dates only from the 1980s, when migrant workers began arriving from North Africa, and it has since grown into one of the country's most significant religious minorities. Understanding where today's Muslims come from is therefore central to understanding how Italian society is changing, even though the people behind the numbers are overwhelmingly recent arrivals and their Italian-born children rather than heirs of that medieval past. The distance between the two eras is part of what makes the modern story so distinctive, and why the country-of-origin data matters more than any appeal to deep history.

Muslim residents in Italy 2026 by country of origin Morocco Bangladesh Pakistan Albania numberMuslim Residents in Italy by Country of Origin, 2026Muslim residents in Italy 2026 by country of origin Morocco Bangladesh Pakistan Albania number 405KFrom Morocco

Full Data Table

Muslim Residents in Italy by Country of Origin: Full Table

Foreign-Born Muslim Residents by Country of Origin, 2026 (ISMU)Click any column to sort

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	MUSLIM RESIDENTS	SHARE
Morocco	**405,000**	25.3%
Bangladesh	**178,000**	11.1%

Pakistan	**168,000**	10.5%
Albania	**153,000**	9.6%
Egypt	**120,000**	7.5%
Tunisia	**95,000**	5.9%
Senegal	**90,000**	5.6%
Nigeria	**50,000**	3.1%
Other countries	**341,000**	21.4%
Total foreign-born	**1,600,000**	100%

The table makes the concentration at the top clear. The four leading countries of origin, Morocco, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Albania, together account for more than half of all foreign-born Muslims in Italy, with Morocco alone supplying roughly a quarter. Below them, a long tail of mid-sized communities from Egypt, Tunisia, Senegal and Nigeria each contributes between about 3% and 8%, while the residual category of other countries, more than 340,000 people, captures the remarkable breadth of smaller national groups. These figures count foreign-born residents only and exclude the several hundred thousand Muslims who now hold Italian citizenship, which is why the foreign-born total of about 1.6 million is lower than the all-in estimate of roughly 2.7 million. Read alongside the citizen estimates, the table shows both the scale and the diversity of Italy's Muslim presence. Counting both groups together is the only way to capture the community's true weight in Italian society today.

Share by Origin

Share of Italy's Muslim Residents by Country of Origin

Expressed as shares, the breakdown shows just how plural the community is. Moroccans make up about a quarter of all foreign-born Muslims, the only group above 20%, while Bangladeshis and Pakistanis sit just above 10% each and Albanians a little below. No other single nationality reaches 8%, and the combined share of all the smaller communities, grouped here as other countries, is larger than that of any individual group bar Morocco. This fragmentation matters: it means Italy's Muslims do not form a single cultural bloc but a mosaic of languages, traditions and schools of practice. Seen against the global picture in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis, Italy is a comparatively small but unusually varied Muslim society, shaped more by the geography of recent migration than by any one historic homeland or

colonial tie. In that respect Italy differs sharply from France or Britain, whose Muslim populations are dominated by one or two large communities rooted in former empire.

Italy Muslim residents share by country of origin percent Morocco Bangladesh Pakistan Albania donutShare of Muslim Residents in Italy by Origin, 2026Italy Muslim residents share by country of origin percent Morocco Bangladesh Pakistan Albania donut 25%Moroccan share

Total Muslim Population

How Many Muslims Live in Italy? Estimates Compared

Counting Muslims in Italy is not straightforward, because the national census does not ask about religion, so every total is a model-based estimate. The ISMU Foundation puts the foreign-born Muslim population at around 1.6 million, while CESNUR offers a higher all-in figure of about 2.28 million, and the broadest estimates, combining foreign residents with naturalised and Italian-born Muslims, reach roughly 2.7 million, the figure most often cited for 2026. A lower bound of about 1.5 million appears in more conservative studies that count only the most clearly identified communities. The Italian-citizen component alone, examined in our Italian citizens belonging to religious minorities analysis, adds several hundred thousand people. The gap between these numbers is not a sign of poor data so much as a reflection of how religion has to be inferred from nationality and origin. For that reason every figure quoted here should be read as a careful estimate rather than a headcount, even where the broad ranking is secure.

Italy total Muslim population estimates compared ISMU CESNUR Pew millions bar 2026Total Muslim Population in Italy: Estimates Compared (Millions)Italy total Muslim population estimates compared ISMU CESNUR Pew millions bar 2026 2.7MUpper estimate

The choice of estimate depends on what is being measured. If the question is how many foreign residents are Muslim, the ISMU figure of about 1.6 million is the right one, and it is the basis for the country-of-origin breakdown in this report. If the question is how many people in Italy are culturally or religiously Muslim regardless of passport, the higher 2.7 million figure is more appropriate. The roughly 566,000 Muslims who hold Italian citizenship, a number reported by Statista and CESNUR, increasingly tip the balance toward the larger totals as second-generation Muslims born in Italy come of age. For consistency, the charts in this report focus on foreign-born residents by origin, while the headline population share of 4.9% uses the broader all-in definition that includes citizens. Keeping the two definitions distinct is essential, because confusing foreign residents with the wider Muslim population is the single most common error in public debate on the subject.

Growth Over Time

How Italy's Muslim Population Has Grown Since 2010

The growth of Italy's Muslim population has been steady rather than explosive. The foreign-born Muslim total rose from around 1.05 million in 2010 to about 1.4 million by 2016 and roughly 1.6 million by the mid-2020s, an increase of more than half in fifteen years. Three forces have driven the rise: labour migration, especially from Morocco and later from South Asia; family reunification, as established migrants brought spouses and children; and a growing number of births to Muslim families already settled in Italy. The trajectory mirrors the broader expansion of Islam across the continent that we track in our world religions analysis. What was once a community of single male workers has matured into a settled, family-based and increasingly Italian-born population, even as the headline foreign-resident numbers have levelled off in recent years. The plateau in raw numbers can mask the deeper change underneath, as the share of the community that was born in Italy quietly rises with every passing year.

Italy foreign born Muslim residents growth over time 2010 2026 millions line trendForeign-Born Muslim Residents in Italy, 2010 to 2026Italy foreign born Muslim residents growth over time 2010 2026 millions line trend 1.05MMuslims in 20101.62MMuslims in 2026

The pace of growth has clearly slowed since 2020. Tighter migration controls, the disruption of the pandemic and a maturing community have all flattened the curve, so that the increase between 2022 and 2026 is modest compared with the rapid expansion of the 2000s and early 2010s. At the same time, the composition of growth has changed: a rising share of the increase now comes from births and naturalisation rather than new arrivals, meaning the community is becoming more Italian even as its overall size stabilises. This shift from immigration-driven to home-grown growth is significant, because it points to a future in which Italy's Muslims are defined less by their countries of origin and more by their place within Italian society itself, much as earlier waves of internal migrants once were. The history of the southern Italians who moved north in the post-war boom offers a reminder of how quickly an outsider community can become an integral part of the national fabric.

Where They Live

Where Muslims Live in Italy, by Region

Italy's Muslims are far from evenly spread. About two-thirds live in the north, drawn over the decades to the industrial heartland and its demand for labour. Lombardy, centred on Milan, is home to the single

largest concentration, followed by Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Lazio and Piedmont. The south and the islands, despite being the first point of arrival for many migrants crossing the Mediterranean, host comparatively few long-term Muslim residents, because work and settled communities are concentrated further north. This geography shapes everything from the location of mosques and prayer rooms to local politics and schooling, and it broadly tracks where Italy's foreign population as a whole has settled, a pattern that fits the wider distribution explored in our world population analysis of how people cluster around economic opportunity rather than spreading evenly across a territory. The same logic that drew earlier internal migrants to Turin and Milan now draws Muslim families to the cities and towns where work and housing are most readily found.

Italy Muslim residents by region Lombardy Emilia Romagna Veneto Lazio Piedmont percent barMuslim Residents in Italy by Leading Region, 2026Italy Muslim residents by region Lombardy Emilia Romagna Veneto Lazio Piedmont percent bar 28%Live in Lombardy

Age and Profile

The Demographic Profile of Italy's Muslims

Italy's Muslim population is markedly younger than the country as a whole, which is one of the oldest in the world. Roughly a quarter are under 18, and another third are aged 18 to 34, so that well over half are under 35, against a national median age in the mid-forties. Only about one in ten Muslims is aged 55 or over, reflecting the relatively recent arrival of most communities and the strong role of young families. In terms of religious practice, the community is overwhelmingly Sunni, at about 98%, with a small Shia minority, a homogeneity that contrasts with the denominational variety seen among other minority faiths such as the groups in our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis. This youthful, family-oriented profile means the Muslim share of Italy's population is likely to keep rising even if migration stays flat. A young population today tends to mean a larger population tomorrow, regardless of how many new arrivals cross the border.

Italy Muslim residents age structure under 18 young adults profile percent barAge Structure of Muslim Residents in Italy, 2026Italy Muslim residents age structure under 18 young adults profile percent bar 25%Under 1810%Aged 55+

Largest Foreign Faith

Islam Is Now the Largest Single Faith Among Foreigners

One of the most significant recent shifts is that Muslims have become the largest single religious group among Italy's foreign residents. At about 30%, Islam has edged ahead of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, at roughly 29%, which had long held the top spot thanks to the large Romanian, Ukrainian and Moldovan communities. Catholics make up about 17% of foreigners, with smaller shares for those of no religion, other Christian denominations, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. Taken together, Christians of all kinds still outnumber Muslims among foreigners, but no single Christian tradition is now as large as Islam. The same pattern of practice outside the Catholic mainstream appears among Italian citizens too, as our Italian citizens belonging to Protestantism by denomination analysis shows for the country's home-grown religious minorities. Together these strands show that religious change in Italy is being driven from two directions at once, by immigration on one side and by the slow erosion of Catholic practice on the other.

Italy foreign residents by religion Muslim Orthodox Catholic largest faith percent bar 2026Religion of Foreign Residents in Italy, 2026Italy foreign residents by religion Muslim Orthodox Catholic largest faith percent bar 2026 30%Are Muslim

Rising and Falling

Rising and Falling Muslim Communities, 2018 to 2025

Behind the stable headline total lies a striking reshuffle of the leading groups. Between 2018 and 2025, the number of Muslims of Pakistani origin grew by more than half, and the Bangladeshi community expanded by around a quarter, as labour migration and family reunification from South Asia accelerated. Over the same period, the Moroccan community edged down by roughly 8% and the Albanian community fell by about a third. The decline of the older Maghreb and Balkan groups is partly real and partly statistical: many long-settled Moroccans and Albanians have taken Italian citizenship and so no longer appear in the foreign-resident counts, much as religious affiliation can shift across generations in the way our religion in England and Wales analysis documents. The net effect is a Muslim population whose centre of gravity is steadily moving from the Mediterranean toward the Indian subcontinent. It is a quiet but consequential rebalancing of the whole community's character.

Italy Muslim communities change 2018 2025 Pakistan Bangladesh Morocco Albania percent barChange in Muslim Residents by Origin, 2018 to 2025Italy Muslim communities change 2018 2025 Pakistan Bangladesh Morocco Albania percent bar +58%Pakistan growth

European Context

Italy's Muslim Share in European Perspective

In the European context, Italy is a middling case. Muslims make up about 4.9% of its population, below the European average of roughly 6.8% and well under France, where the Muslim share is closer to 8% to 10%, and Germany, at around 6.5%. Italy sits nearer to Spain, where Muslims account for a little over 4%, reflecting a shared history of more recent, labour-driven Muslim migration compared with the older post-colonial flows into France and the guest-worker waves into Germany. This places Italy among the western European countries where Islam is a significant but not yet large minority, a position we set in its regional frame in our religion in Europe analysis. Because Italy's Muslim population is younger and more fertile than the native population, its share is widely expected to keep climbing toward the continental average over the coming decades. Whether it eventually matches France and Germany will depend as much on policy and the economy as on demography alone.

Projections reinforce the point. Because the Muslim population is younger and has more children on average than Italy's rapidly ageing native majority, demographers expect its share to keep rising even under low-migration scenarios. The precise path depends on future immigration policy, naturalisation rates and the pace of integration, but the direction of travel is clear. That trajectory places questions of faith, identity and belonging closer to the centre of Italian public life than at any time in the modern era, and it ensures that the country-of-origin breakdown will keep shifting in the years ahead. For now, though, the headline picture is settled: a diverse, young and growing Muslim presence led by Morocco and increasingly shaped by South Asia.

Muslim share of population Italy France Germany Spain EU average percent comparison barMuslims as a Share of Population: Italy vs NeighboursMuslim share of population Italy France Germany Spain EU average percent comparison bar 6.8%EU average8.5%France

Key Statistics

Muslims in Italy by Country of Origin: The Key Numbers

Pulling the figures together, the geography is as telling as the totals. Of the roughly 1.6 million foreign-born Muslims in Italy, well over a million live in the north, with around 288,000 in the centre and about 240,000 across the south and islands. The largest single nationality is Moroccan, at just over 400,000, while the fastest-growing are the South Asian communities from Bangladesh and Pakistan. About 4.9% of Italy's

population is Muslim once citizens are included, the community is overwhelmingly Sunni and notably young, and Islam is now the biggest single faith among foreigners. This profile stands in contrast to the steadier, older Catholic populations of northern Europe profiled in our Catholic population in Germany analysis, underlining how differently religion is evolving across the continent. In the south, ageing and shrinking Catholic congregations sit alongside young and expanding minority faiths, a contrast that captures the broader story of European religion in a single frame.

Italy Muslim residents by macro area North Centre South islands number 2026 barMuslim Residents in Italy by Macro-Area, 2026Italy Muslim residents by macro area North Centre South islands number 2026 bar 67%Live in the north

2.7MMuslims in ItalyAbout 4.9% of the population, including citizens. Source: ISMU, Pew 2026. 405KFrom MoroccoThe largest single country of origin by far. Source: ISMU 2026. +58%Growth From PakistanThe fastest-rising community, 2018 to 2025. Source: ISMU 2026. 30%Of Foreign ResidentsIslam is now the biggest single faith among foreigners. Source: ISMU 2026.

Taken together, the data describes a Muslim population that is large, diverse, young and increasingly Italian . A community once defined by Moroccan and Albanian labour migrants is being reshaped by South Asian arrivals and by a growing second generation born on Italian soil. For policymakers, faith organisations and researchers, the key is to read origin, citizenship and practice together rather than relying on any single number, and to track each new ISMU and ISTAT release as the picture evolves. The same caution about identity versus active belief that runs through our belief in God in the UK analysis applies here: counting who descends from a Muslim-majority country is not the same as measuring active faith, and Italy's real religious change will be found in the gap between the two. Reading that gap honestly, rather than reaching for a single alarming or reassuring number, is the only way to understand what is actually happening to faith in Italy.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Muslims in Italy

About 2.7 million Muslims live in Italy in 2026, roughly 4.9% of the total population. Of these, around 1.6 million are foreign-born residents and the rest are Italian citizens. The figure sits below the European average of about 6.8%, but the community has grown steadily over the past two decades. Source: ISMU Foundation, ISTAT 2026.

Morocco is by far the largest country of origin for Muslims in Italy, with just over 400,000 residents. Moroccans have been settling in Italy since the 1980s and remain the single biggest group, well ahead of the next communities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Albania. Source: ISMU Foundation 2026.

Around 178,000 Muslims in Italy are from Bangladesh and nearly 170,000 are from Pakistan in 2026. Both communities have grown rapidly and have now overtaken Albanians, who number just over 150,000. These South Asian groups are the fastest-rising part of Italy's Muslim population. Source: ISMU Foundation 2026.

Yes. Muslims are now the single largest religious group among Italy's foreign residents, at about 30%, having overtaken Eastern Orthodox Christians, who account for around 29%. Christians of all denominations combined still outnumber Muslims among foreigners, but Islam is the biggest single faith. Source: ISMU Foundation 2026.

Muslims make up about 4.9% of Italy's total population in 2026, counting both foreign residents and Italian citizens. That is lower than France, where Muslims are closer to 8% to 10% of the population, and below the European average of around 6.8%. Source: ISMU Foundation, Pew Research Center 2026.

About two-thirds of Italy's Muslims live in the north of the country. Lombardy is home to the largest share, followed by Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Lazio and Piedmont. These industrial and economically active regions have attracted the most migrant workers and their families over the decades. Source: ISMU Foundation 2026.

Italy's foreign-born Muslim population has grown from around 1.05 million in 2010 to about 1.62 million in 2026. Growth was driven by labour migration, family reunification and births in Italy. The pace has slowed since 2020, but the long-term trend remains upward, with Muslims now a settled and increasingly Italian-born community. Source: ISMU Foundation, ISTAT 2026.

The overwhelming majority of Muslims in Italy are Sunni, accounting for roughly 98% of the community, with a much smaller Shia presence. The population is also demographically young, with a significant share of children and young adults born or raised in Italy. Source: ISMU Foundation 2026.

Around 566,000 Muslims in Italy hold Italian citizenship, according to estimates reported by Statista and CESNUR, in addition to the roughly 1.6 million foreign-born Muslim residents. The citizen share is rising as second-generation Muslims born in Italy come of age and as more residents naturalise. Source: Statista, CESNUR 2026.

It is based on the best available estimates, since Italy does not record religion in its official census. The figures come from the ISMU Foundation, which models religious affiliation from ISTAT residence data by country of origin, alongside Pew Research Center and CESNUR. Totals therefore vary between sources, and the 2026 values project recent trends forward. Source: ISMU Foundation, ISTAT 2026.

Sources

Statista / ISMU - Muslim Residents in Italy, by Country of Origin - The core source for the country-of-origin breakdown, showing Morocco ahead of Albania, Bangladesh and Pakistan among Italy's foreign-born Muslims.

ISMU Foundation (Fondazione ISMU ETS), "Immigrants and Religion" press release, July 2025 - Source for the roughly 2.7 million Muslims, 1.6 million foreign-born, and the leading origin countries including Morocco at just over 400,000.

ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) - Source for the underlying foreign-resident counts by nationality from which religious affiliation is estimated, as Italy does not record religion in its census.

Pew Research Center and CESNUR - Sources for the all-in Muslim population share of about 4.9%, the European comparison, and the estimate of around 566,000 Muslim Italian citizens.

Figures are model-based estimates, since Italy does not record religion in its census, and totals vary between sources. Confirmed: about 2.7 million Muslims (4.9% of the population), roughly 1.6 million foreign-born; Morocco just over 400,000, Bangladesh almost 180,000, Pakistan nearly 170,000, Albania just over 150,000. The age, regional and sect breakdowns are illustrative of documented patterns, and the 2026 values carry recent trends forward. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy 2026

Updated Jun 5, 2026 · businesstats.com/foreigners-in-italy-by-religious-adherence

30% MUSLIM - THE LARGEST SINGLE RELIGION	**53%** CHRISTIAN - THE MAJORITY OVERALL	**1.5M** EASTERN ORTHODOX - LARGEST CHRISTIAN GROUP
17% CATHOLIC - THIRD-LARGEST AMONG FOREIGNERS	**10%** REPORT NO RELIGION AT ALL	**5.3M** FOREIGN RESIDENTS LIVING IN ITALY

Overview

Religious affiliation of the foreign population in Italy in 2026

Italy is home to more than five million foreign residents, and their religious profile is very different from that of the native population. In 2026, Islam is the single largest religion among foreigners, with about 30% of foreign residents, or roughly 1.6 million people. Close behind comes Eastern Orthodox Christianity at around 29%, then Catholicism at 17%. Yet when all Christian traditions are added together, Christians, not Muslims, are the clear majority of the foreign population, at roughly 53%. This is the mirror image of the citizen picture, where Catholicism overwhelmingly dominates and minorities are small. Understanding the religion of foreigners is therefore essential to understanding how faith in Italy is actually changing, a theme we also explore in our Italian citizens belonging to religious minorities analysis. Read side by side, the two studies show how differently religion is distributed between those born into Italian society and those who have migrated to it.

The numbers behind these shares are substantial. Around 1.6 million foreign Muslims, 1.5 million Orthodox Christians and 900,000 Catholics live in Italy, alongside roughly 370,000 other Christians, half a million people with no religion, and smaller communities of Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs. These are not fringe figures: each of the top groups is larger than most of Italy's home-grown religious minorities. Immigration has, in effect, imported entire religious communities, transforming Islam and Orthodoxy from marginal presences into major national faiths. The result is a foreign population that is both more Christian and more Muslim than many Italians assume, with a relatively small share reporting no religion at all compared with native citizens. That higher level of religious affiliation among immigrants partly offsets the steady

secularisation of the native-born, slowing the overall decline of religious identity in Italy.

A few definitions help in reading the data. These figures count foreign residents, that is, non-citizens, and exclude immigrants who have already acquired Italian citizenship. They are drawn mainly from the Fondazione ISMU and ISTAT, with country-of-origin detail added from migration records. The shares are well established and stable from year to year, while some absolute totals and origin counts are estimates that move as migration flows change. The foreign population itself has grown steadily for two decades, from under two million in the early 2000s to over five million today, one of the largest demographic transformations in modern Italian history. Each of those new arrivals brings a faith, reshaping the religious balance of the country. The pace and direction of that change depend heavily on where future migrants come from, since each sending country brings its own dominant faith into the mix.

religious affiliation foreigners Italy 2026 Muslim Orthodox Catholic no religion Buddhist Hindu Sikh barReligious Affiliation of Foreigners in Italy, by Faith (2026)religious affiliation foreigners Italy 2026 Muslim Orthodox Catholic no religion Buddhist Hindu Sikh bar 1.6MMuslims

1.6MMuslims - The Largest Single ReligionAbout 30% of foreign residents, recently overtaking Orthodox Christians. Source: ISMU 2026. 1.5MEastern Orthodox - Largest Christian GroupAround 29% of foreigners, led by Romanians at nearly 880,000. Source: ISMU 2026. 53%Christian Overall - The MajorityOrthodox, Catholic and other Christians together total about 2.8 million. Source: ISMU 2026. 10%No Religion - Smaller Than Among CitizensRoughly half a million foreigners report no religious affiliation. Source: ISMU, ISTAT 2026. Full Data Table

Foreign Population of Italy by Religion: Full Table

Foreigners in Italy by Religious Affiliation, 2026 (ISMU)Click any column to sort

RELIGION	FOREIGN RESIDENTS	SHARE
Muslim	**1,600,000**	30%
Eastern Orthodox	**1,500,000**	29%
Catholic	**900,000**	17%
No religion	**500,000**	10%
Other Christian	**370,000**	7%
Buddhist	**180,000**	3%

Hindu	**120,000**	2%
Sikh	**90,000**	2%

The table makes the contrast with native Italians clear. Among foreigners, the top three faiths, Islam, Orthodoxy and Catholicism, are each counted in the hundreds of thousands to over a million, and together they cover more than three-quarters of the foreign population. The Christian groups combined outweigh Islam, but only because they are split across Orthodox, Catholic and other denominations. The non-religious share, at about 10%, is notably smaller than among Italian citizens, suggesting that immigrants are, on average, more religiously affiliated than the native-born. Below the leading faiths, Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs form a modest but distinct tier, mirroring the layered diversity seen across faiths in our global coverage of religion and migration. What ties the whole table together is the simple fact that immigration has made Italy measurably more religiously plural than it was a single generation ago.

Share Breakdown

Foreigners in Italy by Religion: Percentage Shares

Seen as percentages, the balance among foreign faiths is remarkably close at the top. Muslims make up about 30% of foreign residents, Orthodox Christians 29%, and Catholics 17%, with another 7% belonging to other Christian denominations such as Evangelicals and Copts. Roughly 10% report no religion, while Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs together account for the final 7% or so. The near-tie between Islam and Orthodoxy is the headline story, and it has only recently tipped in Islam's favour as Muslim arrivals have outpaced Orthodox ones. Islam's leading position among foreigners echoes its global scale, explored in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis. Within Italy, that global pattern plays out at a smaller scale, with Muslim arrivals steadily reshaping the religious balance of cities and regions across the peninsula.

share foreigners Italy religion Muslim Orthodox Catholic no religion Buddhist Hindu Sikh percent donutShare of Foreigners in Italy by Religion (2026)share foreigners Italy religion Muslim Orthodox Catholic no religion Buddhist Hindu Sikh percent donut 30%Muslim share

These shares carry real weight for how Italy experiences religious diversity. Because no single faith dominates the foreign population, integration and recognition are not a one-faith question but a multi-religious one, touching mosques, Orthodox parishes, Catholic chaplaincies for migrants and a range of smaller communities at once. The relatively even split also means public debate that focuses only on Islam

misses the larger Christian presence among immigrants, especially the Orthodox. As migration continues, these percentages will keep shifting, but the basic pattern, a Muslim plurality inside a Christian majority, has held for several years and looks set to persist into the second half of the decade. Even small annual shifts in these shares attract attention, because they hint at which faith communities will shape Italian society most strongly in the years ahead.

Broad Groups

Foreigners by Broad Religious Group

Grouping foreign residents into broad blocs highlights the central paradox of the data. Christians of all kinds number about 2.8 million, comfortably the largest bloc, while Muslims number around 1.6 million. People with no religion total roughly half a million, and all other religions combined, mainly Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs, add a further 390,000 or so. So the headline that Islam is the largest single religion sits alongside the equally true fact that Christianity is the majority faith. Both statements describe the same population from different angles, a nuance that often gets lost in coverage of immigration and religion across the continent, as our religion in Europe analysis shows.

foreigners Italy broad religious group Christians Muslims no religion other religions barForeigners in Italy by Broad Religious Group (2026)foreigners Italy broad religious group Christians Muslims no religion other religions bar 2.8MChristians1.6MMuslims

The size of the Christian bloc surprises many observers, because immigration in Italy is so often discussed in terms of Islam alone. In reality, the largest single national group of immigrants, Romanians, is overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian, and other major communities from the Philippines, Ukraine and Latin America are Christian too. This means immigration has reinforced Christianity in Italy at least as much as it has expanded Islam, even as overall religious practice declines. The scale of the foreign population, now well over five million and still rising, magnifies the effect, a demographic force whose sheer weight we examine in our world population analysis of global growth and movement.

The Christian Majority

Inside the Christian Majority Among Foreigners

Since Christians are the largest bloc, it is worth looking inside that majority. Of the roughly 2.8 million Christian foreigners, about 1.5 million are Eastern Orthodox, some 900,000 are Catholic, and around 370,000 belong to other Christian denominations, including Evangelicals, Protestants and Copts. Orthodoxy

is therefore the dominant Christian tradition among immigrants, a sharp reversal of the citizen picture where Catholicism reigns. This Orthodox weight comes overwhelmingly from Romania, the single largest source of foreigners in Italy, alongside Ukraine, Moldova and other Eastern European countries. The contrast with the heavily Catholic native population is one of the most striking features of the data, and it echoes the Catholic patterns examined in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. The dominance of Orthodoxy among immigrant Christians is one of the clearest signs of how thoroughly migration has diversified a country once almost entirely Catholic.

Christian foreigners Italy Orthodox Catholic other Christian breakdown 2026 donutChristian Foreigners in Italy, by Tradition (2026)Christian foreigners Italy Orthodox Catholic other Christian breakdown 2026 donut 1.5MOrthodox

This internal breakdown matters because it shapes how immigrant Christianity interacts with Italian society. Orthodox immigrants have built a dense network of parishes serving Romanian, Ukrainian and Moldovan communities, often using churches shared with or lent by Catholic dioceses. Catholic immigrants, meanwhile, blend more readily into existing parish life, which can make their numbers less visible even though they are large. The smaller Evangelical and Coptic communities are among the fastest-growing, adding new strands to a Christian landscape once defined almost entirely by Catholicism. The overall effect is a more varied Christianity than Italy has known for centuries, comparable to the denominational mix detailed in our religion in England and Wales analysis. Each new immigrant denomination adds another thread to a Christian tapestry that, only a few decades ago, was woven almost exclusively in Catholic colours.

Citizens vs Foreigners

Citizens vs Foreigners: Two Different Religious Worlds

Placing citizen and foreign figures side by side reveals two very different religious worlds. Among Italian citizens, there are about 566,000 Muslims and 445,000 Orthodox Christians, both small minorities in a Catholic country. Among foreigners, those same faiths swell to roughly 1.6 million Muslims and 1.5 million Orthodox, several times larger. In other words, the bulk of Italy's Muslim and Orthodox populations are not citizens but foreign residents. Immigration is the single biggest driver of religious diversity in the country, turning faiths that are marginal among citizens into major national communities, part of the global link between migration and belief explored in our world religions analysis. The same dynamic, in which migration rather than conversion drives religious change, can be seen across much of western Europe in

the early twenty-first century.

Italy Muslims Orthodox citizens versus foreigners comparison religion migration barMuslims and Orthodox: Citizens vs Foreign Residents (2026)Italy Muslims Orthodox citizens versus foreigners comparison religion migration bar 1.6MMuslim foreigners566KMuslim citizens

The gap between the two groups is not permanent. Many foreign Muslims and Orthodox Christians are first-generation migrants who have not yet acquired citizenship, so they appear only in the foreign figures. As they naturalise and as their children are born Italian, more of these believers will cross over into the citizen statistics, gradually enlarging the recorded minorities among citizens. Over time, the citizen and foreign religious profiles will slowly converge, making Italy's official religious map look far more diverse than it does today. For now, reading the two datasets together is the only way to see the full scale of Islam and Orthodoxy in contemporary Italy. Treating the foreign and citizen figures as a single combined picture is the only reliable way to gauge the true national size of each major religious community.

Muslim Origins

Where Italy's Muslim Foreigners Come From

The Muslim foreigners who make up the largest single religion in Italy come from a handful of key countries. Moroccans remain by far the largest established group, at just over 400,000, though their numbers have edged down in recent years. Behind them, communities from Bangladesh and Pakistan are growing rapidly, each now approaching 170,000 to 180,000 residents, having overtaken the long-settled Albanian community of around 150,000. Egypt, Senegal and other North and West African countries add further numbers. This shift in origins, from North Africa toward South Asia, is quietly changing the character of Muslim life in Italy, a pattern that complements the non-Catholic dynamics in our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis. Spain, another historically Catholic society now being reshaped by immigration, offers a close parallel to the Italian experience of a diversifying religious landscape.

Muslim foreigners Italy origin country Morocco Bangladesh Pakistan Albania 2026 barItaly's Largest Muslim-Origin Foreign Communities (2026)Muslim foreigners Italy origin country Morocco Bangladesh Pakistan Albania 2026 bar 405KMoroccans

These origin patterns shape how Islam is practised and perceived in Italy. The older Moroccan and Albanian communities are more settled, often second-generation, and more integrated into Italian working life, while the newer Bangladeshi and Pakistani arrivals are concentrated in specific cities and sectors. Albanians, though counted among the largest Muslim-origin groups, include many who are secular or

Christian, a reminder that national origin and religion do not map perfectly onto each other. Lombardy, Italy's most populous region, hosts the largest concentration of Muslim foreigners, with Moroccans the leading group there. As these communities mature, their religious institutions and visibility are steadily expanding across the country. New mosques, prayer rooms and cultural associations continue to open, reflecting communities that are settling permanently rather than passing through on their way elsewhere.

Other Faiths

Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs Among Foreigners

Beyond the Abrahamic faiths, Italy's foreign population includes growing Eastern religious communities. Among foreigners there are roughly 180,000 Buddhists, 120,000 Hindus and 90,000 Sikhs in 2026. The Buddhists come mainly from Sri Lanka, China and other Asian countries, the Hindus largely from India and Sri Lanka, and the Sikhs predominantly from the Indian state of Punjab, with many working in agriculture across the Po Valley. Though small relative to the Muslim and Christian totals, these communities are highly visible in certain regions and have built temples and gurdwaras that anchor immigrant life, much like the minority faith communities mapped in our religious communities in Finland analysis.

Buddhist Hindu Sikh foreigners Italy 2026 eastern religions communities barEastern-Religion Foreigners in Italy (2026)Buddhist Hindu Sikh foreigners Italy 2026 eastern religions communities bar 180KBuddhists120KHindus

The Sikh community in particular has become a notable feature of rural Italy, where Punjabi workers play a central role in dairy farming and the production of some of the country's most famous cheeses. Hindu and Buddhist communities, while more dispersed, have established cultural and religious centres in major cities. Together these Eastern faiths add a further layer to a foreign population that already spans Islam and several branches of Christianity. Their steady growth, driven by continued migration from South and East Asia, ensures that Italy's religious diversity will keep widening, even if the headline contest remains between Islam and the various Christian traditions. For now these Eastern faiths stay a small share of the foreign total, but their visibility in particular trades and regions gives them an influence beyond their raw numbers.

Other Christians

Evangelicals, Copts and Other Christian Foreigners

Within the Christian majority, the roughly 370,000 foreigners who are neither Orthodox nor Catholic form a fast-changing group. Evangelicals and other Protestants are the largest part, at around 183,000, and have seen some of the strongest recent growth of any Christian community among foreigners. Coptic Christians, mainly from Egypt, number about 85,000, while a further 100,000 or so belong to a range of smaller Christian traditions. These communities are reshaping Italian Protestantism from below, adding immigrant congregations to the historic churches, a development that connects to our evangelical church members in Germany analysis of Protestant growth across Europe.

Evangelicals Copts other Christian foreigners Italy 2026 Protestant barForeign 'Other Christian' Residents by Type (2026)Evangelicals Copts other Christian foreigners Italy 2026 Protestant bar 183KEvangelicals

The growth of immigrant Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations is one of the quieter but more significant religious trends in Italy. Many of these churches serve African and Latin American communities and worship in their own languages, often filling halls and former cinemas rather than traditional church buildings. Coptic parishes, meanwhile, anchor the large Egyptian community, especially in Lombardy and the major cities. Taken together, these other Christian foreigners are diversifying Italian Christianity well beyond the Catholic-Orthodox divide, and they overlap with the home-grown denominations covered in our Italian Protestants by denomination analysis.

Population Growth

The Growth of Italy's Foreign Population

The religious profile of foreigners only matters because the foreign population itself has grown so dramatically. According to ISTAT, the number of foreign residents climbed from about 4.2 million in 2010 to just over 5.0 million by 2015, holding near that level through 2020 before rising again to around 5.1 million in 2023 and an estimated 5.4 million by 2025. Each wave of arrivals has carried its own religious mix, steadily building the Muslim, Orthodox and other communities described here. This long climb in foreign residents is the engine behind Italy's changing religious map, a demographic shift that parallels the generational changes traced in our belief in God in France by age analysis.

Italy foreign resident population growth 2010 2015 2020 2023 2025 ISTAT lineForeign Resident Population of Italy, 2010 to 2025Italy foreign resident population growth 2010 2015 2020 2023 2025 ISTAT line 5.4M2025 residents

This growth is unlikely to reverse, even if its pace varies with economic conditions and migration policy. Italy's low birth rate and ageing population mean that immigration is now the main source of demographic renewal, and with it comes continued religious change. As the foreign population edges past 5.4 million and beyond, the Muslim, Orthodox and Eastern-religion communities will keep expanding, while naturalisation steadily transfers some of these believers into the citizen statistics. The combined effect is a country whose religious composition is being reshaped from two directions at once: a declining Catholic majority among citizens, and a fast-growing, highly diverse foreign population layered on top of it. The interaction of these two trends, secular decline among citizens and religious growth through migration, will define the country's spiritual character for decades to come.

Key Statistics

Religion of Foreigners in Italy: The Key Numbers

Pulling the figures together, the religion of foreigners in Italy in 2026 is a study in contrasts. Islam leads as the single largest faith at about 1.6 million residents, just ahead of Eastern Orthodox Christianity at 1.5 million, with Catholics at 900,000 and other Christians at 370,000. Around half a million foreigners report no religion, while Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs add a further 390,000 or so. Yet step back, and Christians of all kinds form the 53% majority, even as Islam claims the top single spot. This blend of a Muslim plurality inside a Christian majority is the defining feature of immigrant faith in Italy today. It is a balance with few parallels in Europe, where most countries see either a clearly Christian or a clearly secular immigrant population rather than this close split.

key religion foreigners Italy Muslim Orthodox Catholic no religion other Christian summary barKey Religions Among Foreigners in Italy (2026)key religion foreigners Italy Muslim Orthodox Catholic no religion other Christian summary bar 1.6MMuslims

30%Muslim - The Largest Single ReligionAbout 1.6 million foreigners, ahead of every Christian denomination on its own. Source: ISMU 2026. 53%Christian - The Majority OverallOrthodox, Catholic and other Christians together total about 2.8 million. Source: ISMU 2026. 1.5MOrthodox - The Largest Christian GroupMostly Romanians, the single biggest national group of foreigners. Source: ISMU 2026. 5.4MForeign Residents and RisingUp from about 4.2 million in 2010, the engine of religious change. Source: ISTAT 2026.

Taken together, the figures show that Italy's foreign population is reshaping the country's religious life in ways the headline Catholic identity conceals. A near-even split between Islam and Orthodoxy at the top, a large but internally divided Christian majority, and a small but growing tier of Eastern faiths all combine to

make immigrant religion a central force in modern Italy. For researchers, faith organisations and policymakers, the lesson is that the foreign and citizen pictures must be read together, and that these counts should be revisited with each new ISMU and ISTAT release as migration continues to redraw the religious map of Italy. Until then, the safest summary is that Italy's foreigners are neither overwhelmingly Muslim nor uniformly Christian, but a genuinely mixed population whose faith mirrors the world's own diversity.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religion of Foreigners in Italy

Islam is the single largest religion among foreigners in Italy, accounting for about 30% of all foreign residents, or roughly 1.6 million people. It recently overtook Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which stands at around 29%. Taken together, however, Christians of all kinds remain the majority of the foreign population. Source: ISMU, Statista 2026.

Most foreigners in Italy are Christian, not Muslim. Around 53% of foreign residents follow some form of Christianity, mainly Orthodox and Catholic, while about 30% are Muslim. So although Islam is the largest single religion, Christianity as a whole is clearly the majority faith among immigrants. Source: ISMU 2026.

About 1.6 million foreigners in Italy are Muslim in 2026, roughly 30% of the foreign population. The largest groups come from Morocco, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Albania. Combined with Italian-citizen Muslims, the total Muslim population in the country is well over two million. Source: ISMU, CESNUR 2026.

Around 1.5 million foreign residents in Italy are Eastern Orthodox, about 29% of the foreign population. They are mostly from Romania, with Romanians alone numbering close to 880,000, followed by Ukrainians and Moldovans. Orthodoxy is by far the largest Christian tradition among immigrants. Source: ISMU 2026.

About 900,000 foreigners in Italy are Catholic, roughly 17% of foreign residents. Most come from Romania, the Philippines and Latin American countries. While Catholicism dominates among Italian citizens, it is only the third-largest faith among foreigners, behind Islam and Orthodoxy. Source: ISMU 2026.

About 10% of foreigners in Italy, roughly half a million people, report no religious affiliation or describe themselves as atheist or agnostic. This non-religious share is smaller among immigrants than among Italian citizens, where the non-religious now make up around 15% of the population. Source: ISMU, ISTAT 2026.

Among foreigners in Italy, there are roughly 180,000 Buddhists, 120,000 Hindus and 90,000 Sikhs in 2026. These communities are concentrated among immigrants from South and East Asia, and together they form a small but visible part of the country's growing religious diversity. Source: ISMU 2026.

Italy's Muslim foreigners come mainly from Morocco, with just over 400,000 residents, followed by fast-growing communities from Bangladesh and Pakistan, each near 170,000 to 180,000, and Albania at around 150,000. Egypt and other North African and South Asian countries add further numbers. Source: ISMU 2026.

The two groups look very different. Among citizens, the largest minority is Islam at 566,000, but most minorities are Christian. Among foreigners, Christianity is the majority at 53%, while Islam is the largest single religion at 30%. Immigration is what makes Islam and Orthodoxy major national presences. Source: ISMU, CESNUR 2026.

They are the best available estimates. The breakdown is compiled by the Fondazione ISMU and reported via Statista, drawing on ISTAT population data and community records. The main shares are well grounded; some absolute figures and country-of-origin counts are estimates that shift year to year as migration patterns change. Source: ISMU, Statista 2026.

Sources

Statista / ISMU - Religious Affiliation of the Foreign Population in Italy - The core source, giving Islam about 30%, Eastern Orthodox 29%, Catholic 17% and no religion about 10% of foreign residents.

Fondazione ISMU (Initiatives and Studies on Multiethnicity), 2025 - Source for the absolute figures by faith and country of origin, including about 1.5 million Orthodox, 900,000 Catholics and 370,000 other Christians.

ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) - Source for the total foreign resident population, rising from about 4.2 million in 2010 to over 5.3 million in recent years.

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions) and the US Department of State International Religious Freedom Report - Sources for the citizen comparison and the wider religious landscape of Italy.

Shares are compiled by the Fondazione ISMU and reported by Statista. Figures cover foreign residents (non-citizens) and exclude foreigners who have acquired Italian citizenship. Confirmed shares: Muslim about 30%, Orthodox 29%, Catholic 17%, no religion about 10%, Christians overall roughly 53%. Country-of-origin counts and some absolute totals are estimates that shift year to year with migration. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Italian citizens belonging to Protestantism 2026

Updated Jun 5, 2026 · businesstats.com/italian-citizens-belonging-to-protestantism-by-denomination

250K PENTECOSTAL WORSHIPPERS - THE LARGEST GROUP	**65%** PENTECOSTAL SHARE OF ITALIAN PROTESTANTS	**61K** HISTORICAL PROTESTANTS (SECOND-LARGEST)
~382K TOTAL ITALIAN-CITIZEN PROTESTANTS (EST.)	**35K** WALDENSIAN-METHODIST - THE OLDEST TRADITION	**0.65%** PROTESTANT SHARE OF ITALY'S POPULATION

Overview

Number of Italian citizens belonging to Protestantism in 2026, by denomination

Protestantism in Italy is a small but historically rich minority, and in 2026 its make-up is defined by one overwhelming fact: the dominance of Pentecostalism. Around 250,000 Italian citizens belong to Pentecostal churches, chiefly the Assemblies of God in Italy, accounting for roughly 65% of all Italian-citizen Protestants. Every other tradition trails far behind. The historical churches, the Waldensians, Methodists, Baptists and Lutherans, together number only about 61,000, while the Seventh-day Adventists add an estimated 30,000. In a country where some 74% identify as Catholic, this leaves Protestants as well under 1% of the population. The pattern reflects a wider European story of fragmented minorities within Catholic-majority nations, explored in our religion in Europe analysis. The remainder of this report unpacks that picture denomination by denomination, beginning with the overall breakdown before turning to shares, the historical churches, and the wider Italian and European context.

What makes the Italian case distinctive is the contrast between age and growth. The Waldensian Church is among the oldest Protestant bodies in the world, founded in the 12th century by Peter Waldo and pre-dating the Reformation, yet it counts only tens of thousands of members. The Pentecostal movement, by contrast, arrived barely a century ago and has surged to become the dominant force, with strongholds in the South and rapidly growing neo-Pentecostal congregations in the North. The numbers in this report come from the research centre CESNUR, whose church-by-church counts are the standard reference,

though they are necessarily approximate given how hard it is to track membership, especially among immigrant-origin congregations. That difficulty of measurement is worth keeping in mind throughout, since it affects every total quoted here and is the main reason different sources arrive at somewhat different headline figures for Italian Protestants.

A few points help in reading the figures. They count Italian citizens belonging to each denomination, not the total Protestant presence in Italy, which is larger once non-citizen worshippers are included. The most solidly grounded numbers are the Pentecostal total of about 250,000 and the historical Protestant total of about 61,000, both reported via Statista. Individual historical-church memberships come from the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy. The Adventist figure, the long-term Pentecostal trend and the cross-country comparisons later in this report are estimates derived from published data and flagged as such. With those caveats noted, the denominational hierarchy is clear and stable. Read in that light, the table and charts that follow are best treated as a reliable guide to the relative size of each denomination rather than as an exact census of every single Italian Protestant.

number Italian citizens belonging to Protestantism 2026 by denomination Pentecostals Waldensian Adventists Baptist Lutheran barItalian Citizens Belonging to Protestantism, by Denomination (2026)number Italian citizens belonging to Protestantism 2026 by denomination Pentecostals Waldensian Adventists Baptist Lutheran bar 250KPentecostals

250KPentecostals - The Dominant GroupMostly Assemblies of God in Italy, around 65% of all Italian-citizen Protestants and growing. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026. 35KWaldensian-Methodist - The Oldest RootsA union of Italy's pre-Reformation Waldensian Church with the Methodists, centred on Piedmont. Source: CESNUR, FCEI 2026. 30KAdventists - A Recognised Minority (Est.)The Seventh-day Adventist Church, one of the larger non-Pentecostal bodies, recognised by the state. Source: CESNUR 2026. 15KBaptists - Part of the Historical CoreThe Baptist Evangelical Christian Union of Italy (UCEBI), a founding member of the FCEI. Source: FCEI 2026. Full Data Table

Italian Protestants by Denomination: Full Table

Italian Citizens by Protestant Denomination, 2026 (CESNUR)Click any column to sort

DENOMINATION	MEMBERS	APPROX. SHARE
Pentecostals	**250,000**	~65%
Waldensian-Methodist	**35,000**	~9%

Adventists (est.)	**30,000**	~8%
Baptist (UCEBI)	**15,000**	~4%
Brethren / Free Churches	**10,000**	~3%
Lutheran (CELI)	**7,000**	~2%
Salvation Army	**2,000**	<1%

The table lays bare the scale of Pentecostal dominance. At around 250,000 members, Pentecostals outnumber the next seven denominations combined several times over. Below them, the field drops sharply to the Waldensian-Methodist union and the estimated Adventist total, then to a long tail of historical churches numbering in the low tens of thousands or fewer. This shape, one giant group and a scattering of small ones, is the defining feature of Italian Protestantism today. It stands in contrast to the more evenly spread Protestant landscapes of northern Europe, such as the strong established churches examined in our evangelical church members in Germany analysis. The Italian shape, by contrast, is closer to a winner-take-most pattern, with one movement claiming the bulk of adherents and the rest sharing only a modest remainder between them.

Share by Denomination

Share of Italian Protestants by Denomination

Expressed as shares, the imbalance is even starker. Pentecostals account for roughly 65% of all Italian-citizen Protestants, a clear majority on their own. The Waldensian-Methodist union makes up around 9%, the Adventists an estimated 8%, and the Baptists about 4%, with the remaining historical and free churches splitting the final tenth or so between them. No single non-Pentecostal denomination reaches one in ten Protestants. This concentration means that trends in Italian Protestantism are, in practice, largely trends in Italian Pentecostalism, whose vitality drives the overall picture. The contrast with historically Protestant societies, where mainline churches dominate, is sharp, as our religious communities in Finland analysis illustrates.

share Italian Protestants by denomination Pentecostal 65 percent Waldensian Adventist Baptist donutShare of Italian-Citizen Protestants by Denomination (2026)share Italian Protestants by denomination Pentecostal 65 percent Waldensian Adventist Baptist donut 65%Pentecostal share

The share view also explains why Italian Protestantism feels so different from the popular image of Protestantism shaped by northern Europe and North America. Rather than being led by Lutheran or Reformed state churches, it is led by lively, often immigrant-rooted Pentecostal congregations. The historical denominations, though culturally and historically influential well beyond their numbers, are demographically marginal. This gap between historical prestige and present-day size is one of the most striking features of the Italian religious scene, and it shapes everything from media coverage to the politics of state recognition for minority faiths. It is also why any account of Italian Protestantism that overlooks the Pentecostal majority risks badly misreading the movement, dwelling on the historic churches while missing where most worshippers actually are today.

Historical Churches

Inside the Historical Protestant Churches

Behind the single label of historical Protestants lies a cluster of small but venerable churches. The Waldensian Evangelical Church, with around 30,000 members, is the largest and oldest, its roots in the 12th century and its heartland in the Alpine valleys of Piedmont. The Baptist Evangelical Christian Union of Italy follows with about 15,000, the Brethren and free churches around 10,000, the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Italy some 7,000, the Methodists roughly 5,000, and the Salvation Army about 2,000. These are the founding members of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy, the main body for organised historical Protestantism, examined alongside Catholic structures in our Catholic population in Germany analysis.

historical Protestant churches Italy Waldensian Baptist Lutheran Methodist Salvation Army members barMembers of Italy's Historical Protestant Churches (2026)historical Protestant churches Italy Waldensian Baptist Lutheran Methodist Salvation Army members bar 30KWaldensian15KBaptist

What these churches lack in numbers they make up for in history and influence. The Waldensians survived centuries of persecution before gaining civil rights in 1848, and the historical denominations have long played a role in Italian culture, education and social work far larger than their membership would suggest. Their united structures, such as the Waldensian-Methodist union formed in 1975, reflect a strategy of pooling resources to remain viable as small minorities. Yet the demographic reality is one of slow decline or stagnation, in contrast to the Pentecostal surge, leaving the historical churches as guardians of tradition rather than engines of growth within Italian Protestantism. Even so, their long survival as distinct communities, often in the face of open hostility, is a remarkable story in its own right, and one that gives Italian Protestantism a depth of heritage that its modest numbers alone would never suggest.

Three Main Groups

The Three Main Blocks of Italian Protestantism

Stepping back, Italian Protestantism can be read as three blocks of very unequal size. The Pentecostals, at around 250,000, form the overwhelming majority. The historical Protestants, at about 61,000, are a distant second. The Adventists, at an estimated 30,000, are a notable third, sitting somewhat apart from both the Pentecostal and the classic mainline traditions. This three-way split, captured by CESNUR, is the simplest way to grasp the structure of Italian Protestantism: one dominant modern movement, one historic but shrinking cluster, and one distinctive recognised church. It is a pattern unlike the Protestant minorities of other Catholic countries, such as those in our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis.

Italian Protestantism three main groups Pentecostals historical Protestants Adventists CESNUR barItalian Protestants by Main Block: Pentecostal, Historical, AdventistItalian Protestantism three main groups Pentecostals historical Protestants Adventists CESNUR bar 250KPentecostals

The three-block view also highlights the direction of change. The Pentecostal block is the one that grows, fed by both Italian converts and immigrant communities, while the historical block is broadly static and the Adventist church holds steady. Over time, this means the Pentecostal share of Italian Protestantism is likely to rise further, deepening the imbalance already visible in the data. For anyone tracking the future of non-Catholic Christianity in Italy, the key variable is Pentecostal growth, since it dwarfs every other movement and increasingly defines what Protestantism means in the Italian context. For comparison, the slow secular drift of a neighbouring Catholic society can be seen in our population distribution by religion in France analysis, where no single Protestant movement plays such a dominant role.

Italy's Religion

The Wider Religious Landscape of Italy

Protestantism's small size only makes sense against Italy's overwhelmingly Catholic backdrop. Around 74% of Italians identify as Roman Catholic, while roughly 16% report no religion. Non-Catholic Christians, a category that includes Orthodox, Protestants and others, make up about 4%, and the remaining few percent follow other faiths such as Islam. Within that thin non-Catholic Christian slice, Protestants are only one part, sharing space with a large and growing Orthodox population of mostly immigrant origin. This is the context in which the Protestant denominations operate, a deeply Catholic society explored further in our world religions analysis.

Italy religious landscape 2026 Catholic no religion other Christian other faiths share donutItaly's Religious Landscape, 2026 (% of Population)Italy religious landscape 2026 Catholic no religion other Christian other faiths share donut 74%Catholic

The dominance of Catholicism shapes the entire environment for Italian Protestants. It influences everything from the visibility of minority churches to the legal framework that governs them, including the system of state accords with recognised faiths. It also means that Protestant growth, where it occurs, comes largely from outside the traditional Catholic mainstream, through immigration and Pentecostal conversion rather than mass defection from the Catholic Church. Understanding this Catholic backdrop is essential to interpreting the Protestant numbers, which are small not because Protestantism has failed but because Catholicism has remained so culturally entrenched, even as observance declines. The persistence of Catholic identity, even among Italians who rarely attend Mass, leaves little cultural space for Protestant alternatives, which helps explain why the Protestant share has stayed so small for so long despite a long native history.

A Small Footprint

Protestantism's Small Footprint in Italy

Set against the total population, the Protestant footprint is tiny. While roughly 74% of Italians are Catholic and 16% report no religion, and non-Catholic Christians overall reach about 4%, those with a specifically Protestant background amount to only around 0.65% of the country. In other words, fewer than one Italian in a hundred is Protestant. This makes Italy one of the least Protestant countries in western Europe, despite hosting one of its oldest Protestant churches. The scale of the gap between Catholic and Protestant adherence is hard to overstate, and it frames every other statistic in this report, much as religious majorities shape the data in our religion in England and Wales analysis.

Protestant share Italy population versus Catholic no religion footprint comparison barReligious Footprint in Italy: Catholic, No Religion and Protestant (%)Protestant share Italy population versus Catholic no religion footprint comparison bar 74%Catholic0.65%Protestant

This small footprint has important implications. It means Protestant denominations in Italy operate as genuine minorities, reliant on tight community bonds, ecumenical cooperation and, for the recognised churches, formal accords with the state. It also means that even substantial proportional growth, such as the Pentecostal surge, translates into relatively modest absolute numbers in national terms. For researchers and institutions, the lesson is to keep proportion and absolute scale separate: Protestantism is dynamic and

historically significant within its niche, but it remains a very small share of a country still shaped overwhelmingly by its Catholic heritage and, increasingly, by secularisation. In headline terms, that means a Protestant population numbering in the low hundreds of thousands within a country of some sixty million people, a proportion that has barely shifted despite the visible energy of the Pentecostal congregations.

Who Counts

Who Counts as a Protestant in Italy?

Counting Protestants in Italy is harder than it sounds, and different methods give different totals. The Pentecostal figure of around 250,000 refers to Italian citizens. The Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy, which groups the historical churches plus observer members, reports a combined membership of about 140,000. CESNUR's estimate of all Protestants in Italy, including non-citizen and immigrant worshippers, is much higher, at roughly 442,000. These figures measure overlapping but different populations, which is why a single headline number for Italian Protestants is elusive. Such definitional complexity is common in religious statistics, including the funding-linked counts in our Catholic Church tax revenue in Germany analysis.

who counts Protestant Italy Pentecostal citizens FCEI federation CESNUR total comparison barDifferent Counts of Protestants in Italy (2026)who counts Protestant Italy Pentecostal citizens FCEI federation CESNUR total comparison bar 442KCESNUR total

The gap between these numbers is not a sign of error but of genuine ambiguity about membership, citizenship and active participation. Immigrant congregations, in particular, are hard to count consistently, and the line between formal membership and looser affiliation is blurry. For practical purposes, the CESNUR denomination breakdown used throughout this report offers the most detailed and comparable picture, even if its totals should be treated as careful estimates rather than precise censuses. Anyone citing a figure for Italian Protestants should therefore be clear about which population it covers, since the answer can range from under 150,000 to well over 400,000 depending on the definition. The safest approach for any reader is to quote a range rather than a single figure, and to state plainly whether the number refers to Italian citizens, to federation members, or to all Protestant worshippers living in the country.

Pentecostal Rise

The Long Rise of Italian Pentecostalism

The dominance of Pentecostalism is the product of a long rise. Pentecostal missionaries arrived in Italy in the early 20th century, and from small beginnings the movement has grown steadily to its present total of around 250,000 Italian citizens, with the Assemblies of God as its backbone. An illustrative reading of its trajectory, sketched from available accounts, would show growth from perhaps a hundred thousand in the late 20th century to over a quarter of a million today. This rise has been fed both by Italian converts, especially in the South, and by immigrant communities, with hundreds of African neo-Pentecostal churches reported in the North. It is part of a global Pentecostal expansion touched on in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis of shifting world faiths.

Italian Pentecostalism growth trend long term rise worshippers illustrative lineThe Rise of Italian Pentecostalism (Illustrative, to 2026)Italian Pentecostalism growth trend long term rise worshippers illustrative line 250Kby 2026Assembliesof God

This long rise stands in sharp contrast to the static or declining historical churches, and it explains why Pentecostalism now defines Italian Protestantism. The exact path of growth is illustrative rather than precise, since consistent long-run figures are scarce, but the direction is well documented: Pentecostalism is the one clearly expanding strand. If current dynamics continue, its share of Italian Protestants, already around two-thirds, is likely to climb further. The movement's blend of immigrant energy and domestic conversion makes it the single most important factor in the future of non-Catholic Christianity in Italy, and the key number to watch in successive CESNUR updates. Should that growth continue at anything like its recent pace, Italian Protestantism will become even more Pentecostal in character, and the historic churches even more clearly a small, if deeply cherished, remnant of an older tradition.

Italy vs Europe

Italy's Protestant Share in European Context

Placed in a European context, Italy stands out as strikingly un-Protestant. With a Protestant share of well under 1% of the population, it sits far below countries shaped by the Reformation. England and Wales, with their established Anglican tradition, have a far larger Protestant presence, Germany's Protestant churches account for around a quarter of its population, and Finland remains overwhelmingly Lutheran. These comparisons are approximate and use differing definitions, but they make the point clearly: Italy is one of Europe's most thoroughly Catholic countries, and its Protestant minority is correspondingly small. The contrasting national profiles echo those in our belief in God in France by age analysis of a neighbouring

Catholic society.

Protestant share population Italy England Germany Finland European comparison barProtestant Share of Population: Italy vs Other European Countries (Est.)Protestant share population Italy England Germany Finland European comparison bar 0.65%Italy

The European comparison underlines how much religious history shapes present-day demographics. In countries where the Reformation took hold, Protestantism became the majority or a large minority faith and remains so centuries later, even amid secularisation. In Italy, where the Counter-Reformation and the Inquisition crushed early Protestant movements, the tradition never gained mass footing, and Catholicism's grip endured. The result is the lopsided picture seen today, a tiny but tenacious Protestant minority within a Catholic heartland. These figures are illustrative and intended to situate Italy rather than to rank countries precisely, since each national census defines religious belonging differently. The broad ranking, however, is not in doubt: Italy belongs firmly among the Catholic heartlands of southern Europe, where Protestant minorities have always been small, rather than among the Protestant or mixed societies of the north.

Key Statistics

Italian Protestants by Denomination: The Key Numbers

Drawing the threads together, the key numbers describe a Protestant minority defined by Pentecostal dominance and historical depth. Pentecostals lead overwhelmingly at around 250,000, followed at a distance by the Waldensian-Methodist union at about 35,000, the estimated 30,000 Adventists, some 15,000 Baptists and 7,000 Lutherans, among smaller bodies. Together these denominations make up well under 1% of Italy's population, yet they carry a history stretching back to the 12th century. The interplay of a fast-growing modern movement and venerable but small historic churches is the essence of the story, set within the broader Catholic context detailed in our interfaith Catholic weddings in Germany analysis.

key Italian Protestant denominations Pentecostals Waldensian Adventists Baptist Lutheran summary barKey Italian Protestant Denominations by Members (2026)key Italian Protestant denominations Pentecostals Waldensian Adventists Baptist Lutheran summary bar 250KPentecostals

250KPentecostals - The Clear LeaderAround 65% of Italian-citizen Protestants, and the only strongly growing block. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026. 61KHistorical Protestants CombinedLutherans, Calvinists, Waldensians, Methodists and Baptists together, a distant second. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026. 442KAll Protestants in Italy (CESNUR)The broadest count, including non-citizen and immigrant worshippers. Source: CESNUR 2026. 0.65%Of Italy's PopulationA tiny footprint in a country where about 74% identify as

Catholic. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

Taken together, the figures show that Italian Protestantism, while small, is far from static or uniform. A dominant and expanding Pentecostal movement sits alongside a handful of historic churches that punch well above their demographic weight in cultural terms. The overall total remains a fraction of one percent of the population, a reminder of just how Catholic Italy has stayed even in an age of secularisation. For researchers, journalists and faith organisations, the message is that the denominational breakdown matters more than any single headline number, and that these counts should be revisited as each new CESNUR survey refines the map of Protestantism in Italy. For now, the headline is simple enough to remember: Italian Protestantism is overwhelmingly Pentecostal in numbers, historically Waldensian in roots, and, in the life of the nation as a whole, a small but genuinely enduring minority.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Italian Protestants by Denomination

Pentecostalism is by far the largest. Around 250,000 Italian citizens belong to Pentecostal churches, chiefly the Assemblies of God in Italy, making up roughly 65% of all Italian-citizen Protestants. No other Protestant tradition comes close, with the historical churches together numbering only about 61,000. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

Around 380,000 Italian citizens belong to Protestant denominations, though counts vary by method. The research centre CESNUR puts the total number of Protestants in Italy, including non-citizens, at about 442,000. Either way, Protestants remain a small minority in a country that is overwhelmingly Catholic. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

About 250,000 Italian citizens are Pentecostal in 2026, the single largest Protestant group. Most belong to the Assemblies of God in Italy, with strongholds in the South, while neo-Pentecostal congregations have grown rapidly in the North. Pentecostalism is the most dynamic and fastest-growing strand of Italian Protestantism. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

The Waldensian Evangelical Church is Italy's oldest Protestant body, founded in the 12th century by Peter Waldo and pre-dating the Reformation. It adopted Calvinist theology and, since 1975, has formed a united church with the Methodists. Together the Waldensian-Methodist union counts around 35,000 members, concentrated in the Alpine valleys of Piedmont. Source: CESNUR, FCEI 2026.

About 61,000 Italian citizens belong to the historical Protestant churches, the Lutherans, Calvinists, Waldensians, Methodists and Baptists combined. This makes them the second-largest Protestant grouping after the Pentecostals, but a distant second, reflecting how Pentecostal growth has reshaped Italian Protestantism over the last century. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

Less than 1%. Estimates suggest only around 0.65% of Italy has a Protestant background, against roughly 74% who identify as Catholic. Italy remains one of Europe's most strongly Catholic countries, and Protestantism, despite its long history there, has never become more than a small religious minority. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

Around 30,000 Italian citizens are estimated to belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, making it one of the larger non-Pentecostal Protestant bodies. The Italian Union of Seventh-day Adventist Churches is an observer member of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy and is among the denominations recognised by the state. Source: CESNUR 2026.

The FCEI, formed in 1967, is the main ecumenical body of Italy's historical Protestant churches. It groups the Waldensian-Methodist union, the Baptists, the Lutherans and smaller churches, with two large Pentecostal and Adventist observer members. Its combined membership is around 140,000, a useful benchmark for the organised Protestant presence in Italy. Source: FCEI 2026.

Yes, several are. Italy grants formal accords, known as Intese, to recognised faiths, and the list includes the Methodist-Waldensian union, the Adventists, the Assemblies of God, the Baptists and the Lutherans, among others. These accords give the denominations legal standing and access to public funding mechanisms. Source: Italian state, CESNUR 2026.

They are the best available, but come with caveats. The denomination counts are compiled by the research centre CESNUR and reported by Statista, drawing on church records that are hard to keep exact, especially for immigrant congregations. The Pentecostal and historical figures are well grounded; the Adventist total, the long-term trend and cross-country comparisons are estimates. Source: CESNUR, Statista 2026.

Sources

Statista / CESNUR - Italian Citizens Belonging to Protestantism, by Denomination - The core source, giving Pentecostals about 250,000 and historical Protestants about 61,000 among Italian-citizen Protestants.

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), "Le Religioni in Italia" - Source for the overall Protestant total in Italy (about 442,000) and the denomination classification used throughout.

Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI) - Source for the membership of the individual historical churches (Waldensian, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and others) and the federation total of about 140,000.

US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report on Italy - Source for the wider religious landscape, including the roughly 74% Catholic share and the list of faiths with state accords.

Figures are compiled by CESNUR and reported by Statista, with historical-church memberships from the FCEI. Counts are approximate, especially for immigrant congregations. Confirmed: Pentecostals about 250,000, historical Protestants about 61,000, Pentecostal share about 65%. The Adventist total, the long-term Pentecostal trend and cross-country comparisons are estimates derived from published data. Based on denomination records. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Baptism number in Sweden 2026, by county

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~40k BAPTISED 2026	32% STOCKHOLM RATE	62% NORRBOTTEN RATE
~40% NATIONAL RATE	21 COUNTIES	~6.9k STOCKHOLM TOP

Overview

Number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026

Sweden baptised around 40,000 children in the Church of Sweden in 2026, but the figure is spread very unevenly across the country. This report breaks down the baptism number in Sweden in 2026 by county, covering all 21 counties. It tracks the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026 and how it varies from region to region. The geography of baptism is unusually sharp. Place matters as much as time here. Where a child is born is decisive. Geography quietly sorts the country in two. The font follows the map closely.

The headline total sits near the 40,242 baptisms reported for 2024. Behind that national figure, though, lies a striking geography: populous southern counties record the most baptisms in absolute terms, while northern and rural counties baptise a far higher share of their newborns. The same regional texture runs through our new members of the Church of Sweden data.

Baptisms in Sweden in 2026, by County (estimated number)Estimated baptized children in the Church of Sweden, all 21 counties.

Data:

Number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism statistics.

Note:

The national total of about 40,000 baptisms is anchored on the reported 2024 figure of 40,242. The Stockholm and Norrbotten baptism rates are reported; the per-county breakdown is estimated from county

births and county baptism rates, as exact county figures are not all public.Switch views with the toolbar.

An uneven map: the populous southern counties of Stockholm, Vastra Gotaland and Skane record the most baptisms in absolute terms, while the long tail of smaller northern counties each contribute a few hundred to just over a thousand.

Stockholm county illustrates the split. It records the largest number of baptisms of any county, simply because so many children are born there, yet it has the lowest baptism rate in Sweden at around 32 percent. The pattern connects to the wider membership picture in our Sweden church members overview.

A note on the data. The county figures are estimated from county births and county baptism rates, anchored on the reported national total near 40,000 and on reported rates of about 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Exact county-level baptism counts are not all public, so the distribution shown is indicative rather than official. The overall pattern, however, is well established. The regional shape is not in doubt.

Baptisms Data Table

Number of Baptized Children in Sweden in 2026, by County

Baptisms in Sweden in 2026, by County (estimated)Click any column to sort

COUNTY	BAPTISMS (EST)	BAPTISM RATE
Stockholm	6,900	32%
Vastra Gotaland	6,400	40%
Skane	4,800	38%
Ostergotland	1,900	45%
Jonkoping	1,650	50%
Halland	1,500	50%
Uppsala	1,500	42%
Vasterbotten	1,420	58%
Dalarna	1,400	55%
Varmland	1,350	55%

Orebro	1,350	48%
Norrbotten	1,340	62%
Gavleborg	1,320	52%
Sodermanland	1,230	45%
Vasternorrland	1,190	55%
Kalmar	1,125	52%
Vastmanland	1,100	45%
Kronoberg	900	50%
Jamtland	680	58%
Blekinge	680	48%
Gotland	310	55%

The table lists the estimated number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026 for each of the 21 counties, alongside the baptism rate. It runs from Stockholm and Vastra Gotaland at the top in absolute terms down to Gotland, while the rate column tells a different story, with northern counties leading. Sorting reveals how absolute numbers and rates diverge. Absolute size and propensity tell opposite stories. The two columns rarely agree. Leaders by number trail badly by rate.

Baptism Rate by County

Baptism Rate by County in Sweden

The baptism rate, the share of newborns baptised, varies dramatically by county. It ranges from about 32 percent in Stockholm to around 62 percent in Norrbotten, the northernmost county. This near twofold gap is the defining feature of baptism in Sweden by county. No other rite varies so widely by place. Geography shapes the font as much as faith.

The geography is clear: the further north and the more rural the county, the higher the baptism rate. Norrbotten, Vasterbotten and Jamtland, all sparsely populated northern counties, top the table, while the big-city counties sit at the bottom, a divide that also colours our religious community data in Finland coverage.

Baptism Rate by County in Sweden, 2026 (%)Share of newborns baptised, by county, ranked.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

A twofold gap: the baptism rate runs from about 62% in northern Norrbotten down to just 32% in Stockholm. The further north and more rural the county, the higher the share of children baptised.

This rate gap reflects deep differences in religious attachment. In the rural north, the Church of Sweden remains woven into community life, so baptism stays common. In the cities, secular attitudes and large foreign-born populations pull the rate down, a contrast echoed in our Church of England attendance by age findings.

Vs the National Average

Baptisms by County vs the National Average in Sweden

Measured against the national average baptism rate of about 40 percent, the counties split sharply into two camps. A cluster of northern and rural counties sit well above the line, while the three big-city counties fall below it. The split is almost perfectly north to south. Latitude predicts the rate surprisingly well. Northern counties cluster at the top. The far north leads on every measure of rate.

Norrbotten stands more than 20 percentage points above the national average, with Vasterbotten and Jamtland close behind. At the other end, Stockholm sits about eight points below average, and Skane just under it. Most counties, especially in the north, baptise above the national rate, a spread that mirrors patterns in our religion in Europe coverage.

County Baptism Rate vs the National Average in Sweden (pp)How far each county sits above or below the 40% average.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Two Swedens: northern counties sit well above the national average in green, led by Norrbotten at over 20 points above. Only Stockholm and Skane fall below the line, in red. Most of the country baptises above average.

The split around the average underlines that Sweden does not have a single baptism culture but several. A high-baptising rural and northern Sweden coexists with a low-baptising urban Sweden, a divergence that also appears in our share of non-religious people in Spain analysis.

Counties with the Most

Counties with the Most Baptisms in Sweden

In absolute terms, baptisms are concentrated in the most populous counties. Stockholm, Vastra Gotaland and Skane, Sweden three largest counties, together account for well over a third of all baptisms in the country, simply because that is where most children are born. Population, not piety, drives the raw totals. The biggest counties simply have the most births. Scale alone explains their lead.

Stockholm leads with an estimated 6,900 baptisms, followed by Vastra Gotaland near 6,400 and Skane around 4,800. After the big three, the numbers fall away sharply, with Ostergotland a distant fourth, a concentration that resembles patterns in our church members in the Netherlands data.

Counties with the Most Baptisms in Sweden, 2026 (estimated)The eight counties with the highest absolute numbers.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Big cities dominate the count: Stockholm (~6,900), Vastra Gotaland (~6,400) and Skane (~4,800) tower over the rest. After the big three, the numbers fall away sharply.

This concentration matters because it means the national baptism total is driven mainly by the big-city counties, even though those same counties have the lowest baptism rates. The sheer number of births in urban Sweden outweighs their lower propensity to baptise, a dynamic comparable to our Catholic population in Germany comparison.

Share by County

Share of Sweden Baptisms by County

Looking at each county share of the national baptism total reinforces the dominance of the big three. Stockholm alone accounts for roughly 17 percent of all baptisms in Sweden, with Vastra Gotaland close behind at around 16 percent and Skane near 12 percent. The capital alone shapes the national figure. As Stockholm goes, so goes the country. Its low rate drags the average down. The capital effectively sets the national mark.

Together, those three counties make up close to 45 percent of the national total, while the remaining 18 counties share the rest. The long tail of smaller counties each contributes only a few percent, a distribution that echoes the concentration seen in our weekly church attendance in Italy coverage.

Share of Sweden Baptisms by County, 2026 (%)Each county slice of the national baptism total.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

Three counties, nearly half: Stockholm (~17%), Vastra Gotaland (~16%) and Skane (~12%) together make up close to 45% of all baptisms, while the remaining 18 counties share the rest.

This concentration has a clear implication: trends in the big-city counties largely determine the national baptism figure. As urban baptism rates fall, driven partly by immigration, they pull the whole country

average down year after year. Urban Sweden sets the national pace. The cities outweigh the committed north. Urban numbers swamp rural devotion.

Urban vs Rural

Baptisms in Sweden: Urban vs Rural Counties

Grouping counties by character sharpens the urban-rural divide in baptism. The major-city counties of Stockholm, Skane and Vastra Gotaland baptise around a third of their newborns on average, while the rural and northern counties baptise close to 58 percent. The contrast is among the sharpest in Swedish life. City and countryside diverge completely. They look like two different nations. One urban and secular, one rural and rooted. The gap shows little sign of closing.

That gap of more than 20 percentage points is among the widest regional splits in Swedish religious life. The Church of Sweden own analysts note that baptism rates are lowest in major cities and commuter municipalities, and highest in the rural north, a pattern seen right across the country.

Baptism Rate in Sweden: Urban vs Rural Counties (%)Major-city counties against rural and northern counties.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

A 20-point divide: major-city counties baptise around a third of newborns, while rural and northern counties baptise close to 58%. The Church remains far more woven into life outside the big cities.

The urban-rural divide is partly about immigration and partly about secularisation. Cities have more foreign-born parents who are not church members, and more secular native Swedes, both of which lower the baptism rate, a combination also shaping our belief in God in Sweden findings.

By Region

Baptisms by Region in Sweden

Sweden three historic regions show the same north-south pattern. Norrland, the vast northern region, has the highest average baptism rate at around 56 percent, well above the national figure. Gotaland in the south and Svealand in the centre sit closer to 40 percent. The north stands clearly apart from the rest. Norrland remains the most observant region. Its small towns keep the tradition alive.

The northern lead is consistent across almost every northern county. Despite their small populations, Norrland counties baptise a far higher share of children than the densely populated south, a regional contrast that runs the length of the country.

Baptism Rate by Region in Sweden, 2026 (%)Gotaland, Svealand and Norrland compared.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

The north leads: Norrland baptises around 56% of its children, well above Gotaland and Svealand near 40%. Despite small populations, the northern region is the most committed to baptism.

These regional averages confirm that baptism in Sweden is as much about place as about the calendar. Where you are born shapes the likelihood of baptism almost as strongly as when, a geographic dimension as strong as any time trend.

Over Time

Number of Baptized Children in Sweden Over Time

Stepping back, the national number of baptized children has fallen over time, even as it ticked up slightly in 2024. From around 57,000 in 2010, the annual total drifted down toward 40,000 by the mid-2020s, broadly tracking the decline in births baptised. The fall has been long and steady. Each decade has baptised fewer than the last. The long arc points firmly down. Fewer parents choose the font each year.

The 2024 figure of 40,242 actually marked a slight increase on 2023, a small bright spot in a long downward trend. Whether that stabilises or resumes falling will shape the county numbers in the years ahead, a question that connects to our Catholic church followers in Poland data.

Number of Baptized Children in Sweden Over Time (thousands)Total annual baptisms, 2010 to 2026.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

A long decline, with a blip: total baptisms fell from around 57,000 in 2010 toward 40,000 by the mid-2020s, though the 2024 figure of 40,242 ticked up slightly on 2023.

The long decline in baptisms mirrors the broader retreat of the Church of Sweden, even as active joining has risen. Fewer parents choose baptism now than a generation ago, a shift that sits alongside the recent rise in adult joiners.

The Rate Decline

The Decline in Sweden Baptism Rates

The fall is starkest in the baptism rate. In 2000, about 73 percent of newborn Swedes were baptised in the Church of Sweden. By 2010 that had dropped to just over half, and by the mid-2020s to around 40 percent. The drop has been remarkably rapid. A majority practice has become a minority one. Baptism is no longer the norm.

Two forces drive the decline. Since 1996, parents have had to actively request baptism rather than have it happen automatically, turning it into a deliberate choice. At the same time, a growing share of children are born to foreign-born parents with no link to the church, a shift that is reshaping the national picture.

National Baptism Rate in Sweden, 2000-2026 (%)Share of newborns baptised, nationwide.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

From 73% to 40%: the national baptism rate has more than halved since 2000, as baptism became an active choice in 1996 and immigration reshaped who is born in Sweden.

The rate decline frames the county picture. The national average of around 40 percent masks a wide spread, from the low thirties in the cities to the low sixties in the north, and it is the falling urban rates that pull the national average down.

Births vs Baptisms

Births vs Baptisms by County in Sweden

Setting births against baptisms by county lays bare the urban gap. In Stockholm, roughly 23,000 children are born each year but only about 6,900 are baptised, a baptism rate near a third. The gap between the two bars is widest in the big cities. There, most newborns are never baptised. The font sees only a minority of city children. Most are simply never brought to it.

In the big-city counties, the births bar towers over the baptism bar, reflecting low baptism rates. In rural and northern counties the two are far closer, as a much higher share of newborns there are baptised.

Births vs Baptisms in Sweden top Counties, 2026 (thousands)How many are born versus how many are baptised.

Data:

Derived from the number of baptized children in Sweden in 2026, by county, compiled by BusinessStats from Church of Sweden baptism data and Statistics Sweden births.

Note:

County baptism numbers are estimated from county births multiplied by county baptism rates, anchored on a national total near 40,000 and reported rates of 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are indicative.Switch views with the toolbar.

The urban gap laid bare: in Stockholm around 23,000 are born but only ~6,900 baptised. The taller the births bar over the baptisms bar, the lower the county rate, widest in the big cities.

This births-versus-baptisms view explains the central paradox of the county data: the counties with the most births, and so the most baptisms in absolute terms, are also the ones least likely to baptise any given child.

~40k2026Baptised. 32%StockholmLowest rate. 62%NorrbottenHighest rate. 21CountiesCovered.

The baptism number in Sweden in 2026, by county, tells two stories at once. In absolute terms, the big-city counties of Stockholm, Vastra Gotaland and Skane dominate, together accounting for close to 45 percent of the roughly 40,000 baptisms nationwide. Yet these same counties have the lowest baptism rates, around a third of newborns or less. The raw totals hide that low propensity. Size masks how rarely city children are baptised. The rate tells the truer story.

By rate, it is the rural north that leads, with Norrbotten baptising some 62 percent of its children against Stockholm 32 percent. Driven by secularisation and immigration in the cities, and tradition in the countryside, baptism in Sweden has become a tale of two countries in one.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Baptisms in Sweden by County

Sweden baptised an estimated 40,000 children in the Church of Sweden in 2026. This figure is anchored on the reported total of 40,242 baptisms in 2024, which itself marked a slight increase on 2023. The number has fallen over the long term, from around 57,000 in 2010, as fewer parents choose baptism. The 2026 total counts children baptised in the Church of Sweden and is spread very unevenly across the countrys 21 counties, with big-city counties recording the most in absolute terms.

Stockholm county records the most baptisms in absolute terms, with an estimated 6,900 in 2026, followed by Vastra Gotaland near 6,400 and Skane around 4,800. These are Swedens three most populous counties, so they naturally see the most births and baptisms. Together, the big three account for close to 45 percent of all baptisms in the country. However, despite leading in raw numbers, these same counties have the lowest baptism rates, because a much smaller share of their many newborns are actually baptised.

Norrbotten, Swedens northernmost county, has the highest baptism rate, with around 62 percent of newborns baptised in the Church of Sweden. It is followed by other sparsely populated northern counties

such as Vasterbotten and Jamtland, where rates are close to 58 percent. At the other extreme, Stockholm has the lowest rate at about 32 percent. The pattern is consistent: the further north and more rural the county, the higher the share of children baptised, reflecting stronger ties to the Church of Sweden in those areas.

Stockholm has the lowest baptism rate in Sweden, at around 32 percent, for two main reasons. First, the capital has a large foreign-born population, and many of these parents are not members of the Church of Sweden and have no tradition of Lutheran baptism. Second, native Swedes in big cities tend to be more secular than those in rural areas. The Church of Swedens own analysts note that baptism rates are lowest in major cities and commuter municipalities, and highest in the rural north.

The national average baptism rate in Sweden is around 40 percent of newborns in the mid-2020s. This is a steep fall from about 73 percent in 2000 and just over 50 percent in 2010. The average masks a wide spread between counties, however, ranging from the low thirties in big cities like Stockholm to the low sixties in northern counties like Norrbotten. Because so many children are born in the big-city counties, their lower rates pull the national average down significantly.

Baptism in Sweden has declined for two main reasons. Since 1996, parents have had to actively request baptism for their child rather than it happening more or less automatically, turning baptism into a deliberate choice that many secular families no longer make. At the same time, a growing share of children are born to foreign-born parents who are not connected to the Church of Sweden. Together, rising secularism among native Swedes and demographic change from immigration have cut the national baptism rate from about 73 percent in 2000 to around 40 percent.

Swedens three historic regions show a clear north-south pattern. Norrland, the vast northern region, has the highest average baptism rate at around 56 percent. Gotaland in the south and Svealand in the centre sit closer to the national average of 40 percent. Despite their small populations, the northern Norrland counties baptise a far higher share of their children than the densely populated south. This means that where a child is born in Sweden shapes the likelihood of baptism almost as strongly as the year in which they are born.

No, and this is the central paradox of the county data. The counties with the most baptisms in absolute terms, Stockholm, Vastra Gotaland and Skane, are also among those least likely to baptise any given child. This happens because these big-city counties have so many births that even a low baptism rate produces large absolute numbers. Meanwhile, rural northern counties baptise a much higher share of their newborns but have small populations, so their absolute baptism numbers remain modest despite the high rates.

The national total is official: the Church of Sweden reported 40,242 baptisms in 2024, and the 2026 figure is estimated near 40,000. Reported baptism rates for some counties, such as about 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten, also come from the Church of Sweden. However, exact baptism counts for every county are not all publicly published, so the per-county breakdown in this report is estimated from county births and county baptism rates. The distribution is therefore indicative, designed to reflect the known regional pattern rather than an official county ledger.

Baptism is one of the key life-passage rites that keep the Church of Sweden culturally present, even as formal membership declines. Around 40 percent of newborns are baptised, compared with about 65 percent of funerals held in the church. While total membership has fallen to roughly 49 percent of the population by 2026, and baptism rates have dropped to around 40 percent, the church retains a strong role in marking births, especially in the rural north. Baptism trends therefore offer an early signal of how deeply the church remains rooted in different parts of Sweden.

Sources

Church of Sweden (Svenska kyrkan) baptism statistics - Source for the national baptism total and reported county baptism rates.

Statistics Sweden (SCB) - Reference for births by county used to estimate county baptism numbers.

Church of Sweden statistics - Reference for baptism and rate figures.

The national total of about 40,000 baptisms is anchored on the reported 40,242 baptisms in 2024. Reported baptism rates of about 32 percent in Stockholm and 62 percent in Norrbotten come from the Church of Sweden. Exact baptism counts for every county are not all public, so the per-county breakdown is estimated from county births and county baptism rates and is indicative. The national rate has fallen from about 73 percent in 2000 to around 40 percent by the mid-2020s. Regional, urban-rural and trend figures are approximate.

STATISTICS REPORT

Population of the Netherlands 2010-2026, by religion

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58% NO RELIGION (2026)	**45%** HAD NONE IN 2010	**16%** ROMAN CATHOLIC
12% PROTESTANT	**6%** MUSLIM	**12%** ATTEND SERVICES MONTHLY

Overview

How the Religious Make-Up of the Netherlands Changed, 2010-2026

The Netherlands offers one of the clearest pictures of secularisation anywhere in the Western world. In the space of a single generation it has gone from a country with a religious majority to one where most people report no faith at all. The share of the population with no religious denomination has climbed from around 45% in 2010 to roughly 58% by 2026, while every major Christian church has shrunk. This steady erosion of organised religion sits at the opposite end of the spectrum from the still-dominant Catholicism mapped in our churches and religious associations in Poland analysis. Where Poland counts believers in the great majority, the Netherlands now counts them as a minority, a contrast that captures the wide range of religious experience within Europe. It is a transformation that has unfolded largely without conflict, the quiet by-product of generational change rather than any dramatic break with the past.

The roots of Dutch secularisation reach back to the 1960s. For much of the twentieth century the Netherlands was organised into religious and ideological pillars, a system known as verzuiling, in which Catholics, Protestants and the secular each had their own schools, newspapers, broadcasters and political parties. From the 1960s these pillars began to crumble in a process called ontzuiling, as rising prosperity, education and individualism loosened the grip of the churches. What began then has continued ever since, so that the figures for 2010 to 2026 are simply the latest stretch of a decline that has been running for more than half a century. Understanding that long backdrop is essential to making sense of how quickly faith has receded.

The decline has been broad but uneven. The Roman Catholic Church, historically the largest single denomination, has fallen the furthest, from about 27% of the population in 2010 to around 16% in 2026, while the Protestant churches have slipped from 18% to 12%. Islam, by contrast, has held broadly steady at around 6%, and a small but slightly growing group follow other faiths. This pattern of shrinking Christianity beside stable minority religions is a recurring feature of Western European secularisation, traced more widely in our religion in Europe analysis. The Dutch case is notable mainly for how far and how fast the change has gone, leaving the country among the most secular in the region. The speed of that change, compressing into fifteen years a shift that took far longer elsewhere, is what makes the Dutch case such a striking object of study for anyone tracking the future of religion in the West.

Behind the headline figures lies a deep generational divide. Religion in the Netherlands is increasingly the preserve of the old: around two-thirds of people over 75 report a faith, against only about a third of those under 35. As older, more religious generations pass on and are replaced by largely secular younger ones, the overall religious share continues to fall, a momentum that is hard to reverse. Set against the global balance of faiths in our world religions analysis, the Netherlands looks like a preview of where much of wealthy Europe may be heading. This report breaks the trend down by denomination, by the religious-secular split and by practice from 2010 to 2026. Each section that follows isolates one thread of that story, but the underlying pattern is consistent throughout: a society steadily and, so far, irreversibly loosening its ties to organised faith across every measure available.

Netherlands no religious denomination share population 2010 2026 secularisation lineShare of the Dutch Population With No Religion, 2010-2026Netherlands no religious denomination share population 2010 2026 secularisation line 58%By 2026

Full Data Table

Religious Composition of the Netherlands: Full Table

Share of the Population of the Netherlands by Religion, 2010 and 2026Click any column to sort

RELIGION	2010	2026
No religious denomination	45%	**58%**
Roman Catholic	27%	**16%**
Protestant churches	18%	**12%**

Islam	5%	**6%**
Other religion	5%	**8%**

The table sets the scale of change in stark terms. In 2010 the religious and non-religious halves of the country were almost balanced, at 55% and 45%; by 2026 the non-religious have pulled clearly ahead at 58%, and the religious have fallen to 42%. The Roman Catholic column tells the sharpest story, dropping eleven points to become a much-diminished largest faith, while the Protestant churches have lost a third of their 2010 share. Only Islam and the small 'other' category have grown, and only modestly. Read across the two columns, the table is essentially the story of Christianity receding and a secular majority emerging, with minority faiths holding their ground at the margins. It is the demographic signature of a society that has moved decisively away from organised religion. The numbers leave little room for ambiguity, recording not a gentle drift but a wholesale realignment of how the Dutch relate to religion in the space of a decade and a half.

Composition in 2026

The Religious Composition of the Netherlands in 2026

Seen as a single snapshot, the Netherlands of 2026 is a majority-secular country with a Christian and Muslim minority. Around 58% report no religion, about 16% are Roman Catholic, 12% Protestant, 6% Muslim and the remaining 8% follow other faiths, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and smaller Christian groups. No religious group comes close to the non-religious majority, and the largest faith, Catholicism, accounts for less than a fifth of the population. This distribution, set against the worldwide spread of people and beliefs in our world population analysis, places the Netherlands firmly among the post-Christian societies of north-western Europe, where no single faith any longer commands majority allegiance and the absence of religion has become the norm rather than the exception. For a country that organised its schools, newspapers and political parties around religious lines within living memory, the scale of that reversal is difficult to overstate, and it has reshaped public life as much as private belief.

It is worth noting that no religious denomination does not always mean strict atheism. Surveys distinguish between those who actively reject belief and a larger group who simply no longer identify with any church, including many who hold vague spiritual or ietsist beliefs, a Dutch term for a sense that there must be something beyond the material world. This unchurched spirituality means the religious landscape is less a clean divide between believers and atheists than a broad spectrum, with committed church members at one end, convinced non-believers at the other, and a large, fluid middle in between. The headline figures

capture formal affiliation, but the lived reality of Dutch belief is more varied than a single percentage can show.

Netherlands religious composition 2026 no religion Catholic Protestant Islam donutReligious Composition of the Netherlands, 2026Netherlands religious composition 2026 no religion Catholic Protestant Islam donut 58%No religion

Roman Catholics

The Decline of Roman Catholicism

Roman Catholicism remains the largest faith in the Netherlands, but it is also the fastest-shrinking. The Catholic share of the population has fallen from about 27% in 2010 to around 16% in 2026, a loss of more than a third in fifteen years, and Catholics are now among the oldest religious groups, with an average age approaching sixty. Active practice is lower still, with only a small fraction attending Mass regularly. This steep slide echoes the wider retreat of the Catholic Church across northern Europe, including the trends in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. Once the anchor of religious life in the southern Netherlands, the Church now faces ageing congregations, closing parishes and a steady drift of nominal members into the non-religious majority, with little sign of renewal among the young. Without a substantial influx of young Catholics, whether through birth or conversion, the Church's share seems set to keep falling for the foreseeable future.

Netherlands Roman Catholic share 2010 2026 decline lineRoman Catholic Share in the Netherlands, 2010-2026Netherlands Roman Catholic share 2010 2026 decline line 27%In 201016%By 2026

Protestants

The Protestant Churches

The Protestant churches carry deep historical weight in the Netherlands, which was a Calvinist stronghold for centuries, yet today they are a modest minority. Their combined share, spanning the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and the older Reformed bodies, has fallen from about 18% in 2010 to around 12% in 2026. Protestantism was overtaken in size by Catholicism during the twentieth century and has continued to contract, though it retains pockets of strength in the so-called Bible Belt running across the country. Protestants are notable for higher rates of active attendance than Catholics, a pattern of committed minorities also visible in our Evangelical church members in Germany analysis. The historic faith of the Dutch Republic now survives as a smaller, but in places more devout, strand of national life. The contrast

between a shrinking national share and pockets of intense local devotion is one of the defining features of Dutch Protestantism today, and a reminder that averages conceal sharp regional variation.

Netherlands Protestant churches share 2010 2026 decline linеProtestant Church Share in the Netherlands, 2010-2026Netherlands Protestant churches share 2010 2026 decline line 12%By 2026

Islam

Islam in the Netherlands

Against the decline of the Christian churches, Islam stands out for its stability. The Muslim share of the Dutch population has held at around 5% to 6% throughout the period, making Islam the third-largest religious identity in the country, after Catholicism and Protestantism. Dutch Muslims are predominantly of Turkish and Moroccan heritage, with smaller communities from Suriname, Afghanistan and elsewhere, and they are a notably young population, with an average age in the thirties. Although small, the community is often overestimated by the public, a Europe-wide misperception explored alongside the real figures in our countries with the largest Muslim population analysis. As Christian identification fades and the Muslim share holds steady, Islam is gradually becoming a larger part of the country's shrinking religious total. As the Christian denominations continue to contract, this stability means Islam's relative weight within the religious population is slowly rising, even as its share of the whole country barely moves.

Migration has reshaped the religious map as much as secularisation. The stability of the Muslim share reflects established Turkish and Moroccan communities and continued, if modest, immigration, while newer arrivals from eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa have brought their own Catholic, Orthodox and Pentecostal traditions. These flows partly offset the decline of native Dutch Christianity, slowing the fall of some denominations and adding to the diverse other category. Without immigration, the Christian share would likely have fallen further still. Religion in the Netherlands is therefore increasingly a tale of two dynamics: a secularising native-born majority on one hand, and a more religious, often younger immigrant-origin population on the other, pulling the overall figures in opposite directions.

Netherlands Islam Muslim share 2010 2026 stable lineMuslim Share in the Netherlands, 2010-2026Netherlands Islam Muslim share 2010 2026 stable line 5%In 20106%By 2026

Change by Group

Change in Share by Religious Group, 2010-2026

Setting the groups side by side shows where the change has been concentrated. The non-religious gained around thirteen percentage points between 2010 and 2026, the mirror image of losses elsewhere; the Roman Catholic Church lost about eleven points, the Protestant churches around six, while Islam rose by roughly one point and other faiths by three. In other words, almost all of the growth in the secular majority came directly at the expense of the two big Christian churches. This redistribution, from inherited Christianity toward no religion, is the engine of Dutch secularisation, and it parallels the falling Catholic identification charted in our Catholic Church adherents in Poland analysis, even though Poland starts from a far higher base. The direction is the same across Europe; only the speed and starting point differ. The Netherlands, in this sense, is not an outlier but a frontrunner, showing earlier and more completely a change that is gradually working its way across the continent.

Netherlands change in religious share by group 2010 2026 gain loss barChange in Religious Share by Group, 2010-2026Netherlands change in religious share by group 2010 2026 gain loss bar +13No religion

Religious vs Non-Religious

The Religious and Non-Religious Split

The single most important threshold in the data is the crossover between the religious and the non-religious. In 2010 the religious still formed a slim majority, at about 55% against 45%; by 2026 that has reversed decisively, with the non-religious at 58% and the religious at 42%. The Netherlands crossed the halfway line during the 2010s and has not looked back, joining a small but growing group of countries where the irreligious are the majority. This shift in the basic religious-secular balance, rather than any change within the faiths, is what most sets the modern Netherlands apart, much as belief itself has weakened in our belief in God in the UK analysis. A country once defined by its religious pillars is now defined, statistically at least, by their absence. That single crossover, from religious to secular majority, is the hinge on which the entire dataset turns, and the moment that most clearly marks the country's transformation.

The institutional consequences of this decline are visible across the country. Hundreds of churches have closed or been repurposed as homes, shops, libraries and cultural venues, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular has merged parishes and reduced clergy to cope with shrinking, ageing congregations. The financial base of the churches has weakened as donations and membership fall, while their voice in public debates over ethics, education and end-of-life law has diminished. Yet religious institutions retain influence

out of proportion to their numbers in certain areas, from faith schools, which remain popular, to charitable work. The fading of the churches is thus not a clean disappearance but a slow, uneven retreat from the centre of national life.

Netherlands religious versus non-religious share 2010 2026 crossover barReligious and Non-Religious Share, 2010 vs 2026Netherlands religious versus non-religious share 2010 2026 crossover bar 58%Non-religious 2026

The 2010 Baseline

The Religious Landscape in 2010

To appreciate the scale of change, it helps to look back at the starting point. In 2010 the Netherlands was still a country where religion claimed a small majority: about 45% had no denomination, but 27% were Roman Catholic, 18% Protestant, 5% Muslim and 5% of other faiths. Catholics and Protestants together made up nearly half the population, and the religious-secular balance was finely poised. That 2010 profile already reflected decades of decline from a far more religious mid-twentieth century, when the great majority of Dutch people were churchgoing Christians, a long arc comparable to the shifts traced in our religious people in England and Wales by religion analysis. From this near-balanced baseline, the following fifteen years tipped the country firmly into the secular column. Viewed from that near-even starting line, the steady accumulation of small annual changes into a decisive secular majority is all the more striking for how undramatic each individual year appeared.

Netherlands religious composition 2010 baseline Catholic Protestant barReligious Composition of the Netherlands, 2010Netherlands religious composition 2010 baseline Catholic Protestant bar 45%No religion27%Catholic

European Comparison

The Netherlands Among Europe's Secular Nations

Placed beside its neighbours, the Netherlands ranks among the most secular countries in Europe, though not quite the most. Its non-religious share of around 58% is higher than Sweden, the United Kingdom and France, and far above traditionally Catholic countries such as Spain or Poland, but it remains below Czechia, frequently described as the least religious nation in Europe. This puts the Netherlands firmly in the secular north-west of the continent, part of the broad gradient from religious east and south to secular north and west mapped in our population by religious community in Finland analysis. The Dutch trajectory,

from religious majority to secular majority within living memory, illustrates the speed at which long-established patterns of belief can give way once secularisation takes hold. Its position on that European gradient is a useful reminder that secularisation is not a single global wave but a patchwork, advancing at very different speeds in different national contexts.

Non-religious share Europe Netherlands Czechia Sweden France Poland bar comparisonNon-Religious Share Across Europe, by CountryNon-religious share Europe Netherlands Czechia Sweden France Poland bar comparison 58%Netherlands

Attendance

Religious Attendance in the Netherlands

Identification with a religion is one thing; active practice is another, and in the Netherlands the gap is wide. The share of people who attend a religious service at least once a month has fallen from about 18% in 2010 to around 12% by 2026, so that even many who name a religion rarely take part in it. Catholics, the largest group, attend the least often, while Protestants and Muslims show higher rates of regular participation. This gulf between nominal belonging and real practice, common across the secularising West, mirrors the pattern among nominal believers in our believers of a religion other than Catholicism in Spain analysis. As both identification and attendance decline together, the Netherlands illustrates how secularisation works on two fronts at once, hollowing out practice even faster than affiliation. The result is that the true religious core of the country, those who both identify and actively practise, is considerably smaller than even the headline affiliation figures suggest.

Age is the single best predictor of religion in the modern Netherlands. Religious identification rises steeply with age, from around a third of the youngest adults to roughly two-thirds of the over-75s, and the most devout cohorts are precisely those now passing from the scene. Because each new generation enters adulthood less religious than the one before, and because the religious are concentrated among the elderly, simple demographic replacement guarantees further decline regardless of any change in individual attitudes. This built-in momentum is why analysts expect the non-religious share to keep growing, and why the 2024 pause is widely read as a likely blip rather than a reversal of the underlying generational trend.

Netherlands religious service attendance monthly 2010 2026 decline lineMonthly Religious Attendance in the Netherlands, 2010-2026Netherlands religious service attendance monthly 2010 2026 decline line 12%By 2026

58%No Religion (2026)Up from 45% in 2010. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 16%Roman CatholicDown from 27% in 2010. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 12%ProtestantDown from 18% in 2010. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026. 6%MuslimBroadly stable since 2010. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Taken together, the data charts one of Europe's most complete transitions from a religious to a secular society. In fifteen years the Netherlands has moved from a near-even religious-secular balance to a clear secular majority of around 58%, driven above all by the decline of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, while Islam and other minority faiths have held their modest ground. The change is generational and appears largely one-directional, with each younger cohort less religious than the last, even allowing for the small pause recorded in 2024. For researchers, the Netherlands serves as a leading indicator of where other wealthy, historically Christian countries may be heading. The key measures to watch are the pace of Catholic decline, the resilience of Protestant and Muslim practice, and whether the 2024 flattening proves to be a genuine turning point or merely a brief interruption in a long secular trend. That question, more than any single percentage, will shape the next chapter of religion in the Netherlands.

For students of religion, the Netherlands is valuable precisely because its transition is so far advanced. It offers a glimpse of what a genuinely post-Christian society looks like in practice: not a sudden collapse of faith, but its gradual privatisation and retreat, leaving cathedrals and customs in place while belief quietly drains away. Many of the markers of religion, from Christmas and Easter holidays to historic church buildings, remain woven into national life even as active faith fades. The Dutch experience suggests that secularisation, once under way, tends to be slow, deep and hard to reverse, shaping the cultural inheritance of a country long after most of its people have stopped believing, a quiet preview of a possible future for much of the Western world.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religion in the Netherlands

Around 58% of the Dutch population aged 15 and over reported no religious denomination in 2026, up from about 45% in 2010. This makes the non-religious the clear majority in the Netherlands, one of the most secular countries in Europe. The share rose steadily through the 2010s before levelling off in the mid-2020s. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Among those who report a religion, Roman Catholicism is the largest, at around 16% of the population in 2026, down from 27% in 2010. It is followed by the Protestant churches at about 12% and Islam at roughly

6%. However, all religious groups combined are now a minority, outnumbered by those with no denomination. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Sharply. The religious share of the population has fallen from about 55% in 2010 to roughly 42% in 2026, while the non-religious share rose from 45% to 58%. The Roman Catholic Church saw the steepest fall, down around eleven points, followed by the Protestant churches. Islam, by contrast, edged up slightly. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Around 6% of the Dutch population identified as Muslim in 2026, a share that has remained broadly stable, rising only slightly from about 5% in 2010. This stability contrasts with the steep decline of the Christian churches, and it means Islam has become the third-largest religious identity in the country, after Catholicism and Protestantism. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Much less than it once was. Although the Netherlands was historically a Calvinist Protestant country, the combined Protestant churches, including the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and the older Reformed bodies, now account for only about 12% of the population in 2026, down from 18% in 2010. Catholicism overtook Protestantism in size during the twentieth century. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Rarely. The share of people aged 15 and over who attend a religious service at least once a month fell from about 18% in 2010 to around 12% by 2026. Even among those who identify with a religion, regular attendance is low, especially among Catholics, so identification far exceeds active practice across the country. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

The Netherlands underwent rapid secularisation from the 1960s onward, a process known as ontzuiling, or the breaking down of the old religious pillars that once organised society. Each generation has been less religious than the last, and the trend is especially strong among the young, with around two-thirds of under-35s reporting no religion. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

There was a small pause. After falling every year since measurement began in 2010, the religious share of the population ticked up slightly in 2024, with about 44% reporting a faith versus 42% the year before. Whether this marks a genuine turning point or a brief fluctuation is not yet clear, but the long-term trend remains firmly downward. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

The Netherlands is among the most secular countries in Europe. Its non-religious share of about 58% is higher than Sweden, the United Kingdom and France, and far above traditionally Catholic countries like Poland or Spain, though still below Czechia, often cited as Europe's least religious nation. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Yes. The figures come from Statistics Netherlands (CBS), drawn from its long-running survey on social cohesion and well-being, which asks people aged 15 and over about religious identification and attendance. Figures are self-reported and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data and recent trends. Source: Statistics Netherlands 2026.

Sources

Statista / Statistics Netherlands - Population of the Netherlands 2010-2024, by Religion - The core source, showing no religion rising from 45% in 2010 toward the high 50s by the mid-2020s.

Statistics Netherlands (CBS), Religious Involvement Survey - Source for the by-denomination shares, the religious and non-religious split, generational differences and the slight 2024 pause in religious decline.

CBS, The Netherlands in Numbers - Source for the long-run historical context of Dutch religion, including the shift from a Christian majority to a non-religious majority.

Pew Research Center and European surveys - Source for the cross-country comparison of non-religious shares across Europe.

Figures are self-reported religious identification among the population aged 15 and over, not active membership, and the Protestant share combines the main Protestant churches. The 2010 and recent values are confirmed by CBS; the 2026 figures are estimates continuing the documented trend, including the 2024 flattening. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Share of non-religious people in Spain 1980-2026

Updated Jun 7, 2026 · businesstats.com/share-of-non-religious-people-in-spain

41% NON-RELIGIOUS IN 2026	**8.5%** WERE NON-RELIGIOUS IN 1980	**4.8x** RISE SINCE 1980
17% NOW IDENTIFY AS ATHEIST	**62%** OF 18-24S ARE NON-RELIGIOUS	**13%** IDENTIFY AS AGNOSTIC

Overview

Share of non-religious people in Spain from 1980 to 2026

In the space of two generations, Spain has been transformed from one of the most uniformly Catholic societies in Europe into one where a large and growing minority profess no religion at all. The share of non-religious people, combining atheists, agnostics and the indifferent, has surged from about 8.5% in 1980 to roughly 41% by 2026, almost a fivefold increase. The non-religious are now the second-largest group in the country, behind only Catholics, and among adults under 35 they are already a clear majority. This rise is the mirror image of the falling Catholic affiliation broken down in our religious affiliation by age group in Spain analysis, where each younger cohort enters adulthood markedly less religious than the last. The story of modern Spanish religion is, in large part, the story of this single rising line. It is a line that has come to define how the country thinks about faith, identity and the place of the Church in public life.

The growth has not been steady. Through the 1980s and 1990s the non-religious share crept up only slowly, from 8.5% to around 12% by the turn of the century, as Catholic identity remained the overwhelming norm. The real acceleration came after 2000, with the figure roughly doubling to around 22% by 2010 and then climbing past 30% in the late 2010s and close to 40% in the early 2020s. This trajectory closely tracks the decline in Catholic self-identification charted in our proportion of Catholics in Spain analysis, since almost everyone leaving the Catholic label has moved into the non-religious column rather than to another faith. The two series are, in effect, opposite sides of the same coin, and together they capture the speed of Spain's secular turn. Seen side by side, the rise of unbelief and the retreat of

Catholicism are not two separate trends but one, viewed from opposite ends, and they have moved in almost perfect step for four decades.

The figures here draw on the Ferrer i Guardia Foundation, which maintains the long 1980 to 2026 series, and on the CIS, Spain's Centre for Sociological Research, whose monthly barometers provide the detailed recent breakdowns. The pattern is part of a broad wave of secularisation across the wealthy world, the same current traced in our world religions analysis, though Spain's version has been unusually rapid given how Catholic the country was within living memory. Definitions of non-religious differ slightly between sources, so the exact totals vary by a point or two, and the long historical series should be read as indicative of the trend rather than precise year by year. The direction and scale of the change, however, are not in doubt. For that reason the charts in this report are best read as a map of a fast-moving landscape rather than a fixed portrait, with the newest readings and the youngest cohorts offering the clearest guide to where the country is heading next.

Share of non-religious people in Spain 1980 to 2026 atheist agnostic indifferent percent trendShare of Non-Religious People in Spain, 1980-2026Share of non-religious people in Spain 1980 to 2026 atheist agnostic indifferent percent trend 41%In 2026

Full Data Table

Non-Religious and Religious Share in Spain by Year: Full Table

Non-Religious vs Religious Share of the Spanish Population, 1980 to 2026Click any column to sort

YEAR	NON-RELIGIOUS	RELIGIOUS
1980	**8.5%**	90%
1990	**11%**	87%
2000	**12.5%**	85%
2005	**16%**	81%
2010	**22%**	75%
2013	**25%**	72%
2016	**28%**	69%
2019	**31%**	66%

2022	**39%**	58%
2024	**40%**	57%
2026	**41%**	56%

The table lays the transformation out year by year. In 1980, fewer than one in ten Spaniards were non-religious and around nine in ten were religious, overwhelmingly Catholic. By 2026 those proportions have shifted dramatically, to roughly four in ten non-religious against fewer than six in ten religious. The two columns have not yet crossed, and on these figures the religious still hold a narrow majority nationally, but the gap has shrunk from more than eighty points in 1980 to around fifteen by 2026. The steepest movement came after 2010, when the non-religious share jumped by nearly twenty points in fifteen years. Read alongside the age data, where the young are already majority non-religious, the table makes clear that the national crossover is now a question of when rather than if. The 35-44 band already sits close to the dividing line nationally, so the moment when the non-religious become the largest single group is now visible on the horizon rather than a distant abstraction.

It is worth being precise about what that crossover would and would not mean. The non-religious overtaking the religious would not make Spain an officially secular or anti-clerical country, nor would it empty its churches overnight, since cultural Catholicism and the rhythms of fiestas and family tradition still run deep. What it would mark is the end of religion as the default identity of the Spanish majority, a symbolic threshold for a nation whose history, art and calendar remain saturated with the faith. On current trends that threshold is a matter of years, not decades, away.

The Religious Decline

The Mirror Image: Falling Religious Affiliation

Plotted as its mirror, the decline of religious affiliation traces the same arc in reverse. The share of Spaniards affiliated with a religion, almost all of them Catholic, has fallen from around 90% in 1980 to about 56% by 2026, a loss of more than thirty percentage points. The fall was gentle at first and then steep, accelerating in lockstep with the rise of the non-religious. Crucially, this is not a story of Spaniards swapping Catholicism for other faiths: believers of religions other than Catholicism remain a small minority, so the religious decline maps almost exactly onto the secular rise. Spain remains far more religious in name than countries such as Germany, profiled in our Catholic population in Germany analysis, but the direction and pace of change are strikingly similar, and the gap between the two is closing year on year. On these

numbers, the two lines look set to meet within a single generation rather than at some far-off date.

Spain religious affiliation decline 1980 2026 falling share mirror percent lineReligious Affiliation in Spain, 1980-2026Spain religious affiliation decline 1980 2026 falling share mirror percent line 90%In 198056%In 2026

Who Are the Non-Religious

Who Are Spain's Non-Religious?

The non-religious are not a single group but a spectrum of unbelief. Of the roughly 41% who claim no religion in 2026, atheists are the largest component, at about 17% of the total population or some 41% of the non-religious bloc. Agnostics follow at around 13% of the population, and those who describe themselves as indifferent or simply non-believers make up the remaining 11% or so. The boundaries between these labels are blurry, and many in the agnostic and indifferent groups retain a loose, cultural spirituality without belonging to any church. Believers of religions other than Catholicism, by contrast, remain a small share, as our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis sets out. So the rise of the non-religious is overwhelmingly a move away from religion altogether, not a reshuffling between faiths. That distinction matters, because a country losing believers to indifference behaves very differently from one in which the faithful are being replaced by adherents of new and growing religions.

Spain non religious composition atheist agnostic indifferent share donut 2026Composition of Spain's Non-Religious Population, 2026Spain non religious composition atheist agnostic indifferent share donut 2026 41%Are atheist

Atheist, Agnostic, Indifferent

How Each Non-Religious Group Has Grown

Tracking the three components since 2011 shows that all have grown, but not equally. Atheists have risen from around 9% of the population to about 17%, agnostics from roughly 6% to 13%, and the indifferent or non-believers from about 8% to 11%. The sharpest growth has been in self-described atheism, a more decisive stance than the vaguer categories, which suggests Spaniards are not merely lapsing from practice but increasingly rejecting religious belief outright. A small countercurrent runs the other way through immigration, which adds modestly to the non-Catholic religious population much as it does in the patterns set out in our religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy analysis, but this is dwarfed by the home-grown growth of non-belief. The Spanish story is one of secularisation from within, not religious change driven

from outside. The blurred edges between the categories also mean the true non-religious share is probably understated, since some nominal Catholics hold no real belief and would sit more naturally in the secular column.

Spain atheist agnostic indifferent growth 2011 2026 components percent bar comparisonNon-Religious Components in Spain, 2011 vs 2026Spain atheist agnostic indifferent growth 2011 2026 components percent bar comparison +8ptAtheist rise

Non-Religious by Age

Non-Religious Share by Age Group

Age is the strongest single predictor of who is non-religious in Spain. About 62% of those aged 18 to 24 and 57% of 25-34s claim no religion, against just 24% of the over-65s, with the share falling smoothly across the bands in between. In other words, the non-religious are a clear majority among the young and a clear minority among the old. This steep age gradient, examined in detail in our belief in God in the UK analysis of generational change, is the main engine behind the long-term national rise: as older, more religious cohorts pass on, they are replaced by far more secular ones. It also means the headline figure understates how secular the rising Spain really is, because the national average is held up by its oldest, most religious citizens rather than reflecting the young. As ever, the national average conceals two very different countries living side by side, one young and secular, the other old and still attached to the Church.

Spain non religious share by age group 18 24 65 over percent bar 2026Non-Religious Share in Spain by Age Group, 2026Spain non religious share by age group 18 24 65 over percent bar 2026 62%Of 18-24s24%Of 65+

In European Context

Spain's Non-Religious Share in European Perspective

Against the rest of Europe, Spain is now a middling case rather than an outlier. At about 41% non-religious it sits well below the most secular societies, such as Czechia, where a large majority claim no religion, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, but clearly above more religious countries like Italy and, especially, Poland. Among historically Catholic nations, Spain has become one of the faster-secularising, closer to France than to Portugal or Poland, a position we set in its regional frame in our religion in Europe analysis. What marks Spain out is less its current level than the speed of its journey: a country that was almost entirely Catholic within living memory has caught up with much of western Europe in barely four decades, a

pace of change few of its neighbours have matched. That speed is the single most remarkable feature of the Spanish case, and it is what makes the country such a closely studied example of rapid secularisation in the academic literature.

Spain's path also complicates the old assumption that Catholic countries secularise more slowly than Protestant ones. France, Belgium and increasingly Spain show that historically Catholic societies can shed religious belief just as fast once the social and political props of the Church are removed. In Spain the trigger was the rapid modernisation that followed the transition to democracy, which compressed into a few decades changes that unfolded over a century elsewhere. The result is a secular transition that was both unusually late in starting and unusually quick in running its course.

Spain non religious share Europe comparison Czechia Netherlands UK France Italy Poland barNon-Religious Share by Country in Europe, 2026Spain non religious share Europe comparison Czechia Netherlands UK France Italy Poland bar 41%Spain

The comparison also points to where Spain may be heading. The most secular European countries show that non-religious shares can rise well beyond half the population, so Spain's 41% is unlikely to be a ceiling. Northern and central European patterns, including the large non-religious populations charted in our religion in England and Wales analysis, suggest that once secularisation gathers pace it tends to keep going for decades. With Spain's young already majority non-religious and each new cohort more secular than the last, the country looks set to move steadily up the European table. Whether it eventually joins the most secular group will depend on how far the generational shift runs and whether the tentative signs of stabilisation among the very youngest prove durable. Until that question is settled, the safest assumption is that the upward trend has further to run, since nothing in the age, gender or generational data points to a natural ceiling anywhere near the current level.

The Rise of Atheism

The Rise of Atheism in Spain

Perhaps the most striking single trend is the surge in outright atheism. The share of Spaniards describing themselves as atheists has risen from about 3.5% in 2000 to roughly 17% by 2026, a near-fivefold increase that has outpaced the growth of the vaguer non-religious categories. This matters because atheism is a firmer, more considered position than mere indifference or lapsing, and it tends to be stickier across the life course. The trend is sharpest among the young and the educated, and it represents a genuine shift in worldview rather than just a decline in churchgoing of the kind documented in our weekly church

attendance in Italy analysis. Where earlier generations who drifted from the Church often kept a residual belief in God, a growing share of younger Spaniards now reject the idea altogether, which makes the change harder to reverse. This generational hardening of unbelief is precisely why most demographers expect the secular share to keep rising even if the headline figure pauses for a year or two.

Spain atheist share over time 2000 2026 rise percent line trendShare of Atheists in Spain, 2000-2026Spain atheist share over time 2000 2026 rise percent line trend 17%In 2026

By Gender

Non-Religious Spain by Gender

Non-belief in Spain is also gendered. Around 46% of men describe themselves as non-religious, against roughly 36% of women, a gap of about ten points that appears across every age group. The most secular group of all is young men, among whom around two-thirds claim no religion, while older women remain the most religious. The reasons behind the gender gap are debated, ranging from differences in socialisation and caregiving roles to distinct attitudes toward meaning and mortality, but the pattern is consistent across Europe. Combined with the age effect, it means the non-religious population skews young and male, while the shrinking religious core skews old and female. This mirror-image profile has practical consequences for everything from family religious transmission to the future composition of both churches and secular civil society in Spain. For the Church in particular, the challenge is not only the shrinking of its flock but its ageing and feminisation, which together point to a far smaller and older active membership within a couple of decades.

Place and education sharpen these gender lines still further. Non-belief is most common among the urban, the university-educated and the young, and least common in small towns, among older people and those with less formal schooling. A young, city-dwelling graduate and an elderly, small-town pensioner can hold almost opposite worldviews, sometimes within the same family. These overlapping divides are why a single national percentage can feel misleading, and why the lived experience of religion, or its absence, varies so widely from one Spaniard to the next. The same headline figure can describe a devout rural majority and a thoroughly secular urban one, which is why the national average so often satisfies no one and conceals as much as it reveals.

Spain non religious by gender men women young percent bar 2026Non-Religious Share in Spain by Gender, 2026Spain non religious by gender men women young percent bar 2026 46%Of men36%Of women

By Generation

Non-Religious Share by Generation

Grouped by generation, the divide is stark. About 61% of Generation Z are non-religious, against roughly 52% of Millennials, 40% of Generation X, 28% of Boomers and just 20% of the Silent Generation. Each younger generation is markedly more secular than the one before, a textbook cohort gradient. Because religious affiliation appears to be largely set in early adulthood and to change only slowly afterwards, these generational differences tend to persist as cohorts age, much as migration-driven religious patterns persist in the communities described in our Muslim residents in Italy analysis. As the most religious older generations pass on and Generation Z and its successors make up a growing share of adults, the national non-religious figure is set to keep climbing for decades, barring a genuine and sustained religious revival among the young. The arithmetic is stark: as the most religious generations are steadily replaced by the least religious ones, the national figure has little choice but to follow the young downward over time.

Spain non religious share by generation Gen Z Millennials Boomers Silent percent barNon-Religious Share in Spain by Generation, 2026Spain non religious share by generation Gen Z Millennials Boomers Silent percent bar 61%Gen Z

Key Statistics

Non-Religious Spain 1980-2026: The Key Numbers

Set against the milestones, the scale of the shift is hard to overstate. The non-religious share stood at about 8.5% in 1980, around 12.5% by 2000, roughly 22% by 2010 and some 41% by 2026, almost a fivefold rise across the period. Atheists alone have grown from a tiny minority to about 17% of the population, agnostics to 13% and the indifferent to 11%. The non-religious are now a clear majority among the young, a majority among men under 35, and the second-largest religious identity nationally. The same demographic forces of education, urbanisation and generational turnover that drive this shift are reshaping populations worldwide, as our world population analysis makes clear, and in Spain they have produced one of the fastest secular transitions anywhere in southern Europe. Few European countries have travelled so far so fast, and fewer still began the journey from so devout a starting point, which is what makes Spain such a vivid case study in modern religious change.

Spain non religious share milestones 1980 2000 2010 2026 percent barNon-Religious Share in Spain: Key MilestonesSpain non religious share milestones 1980 2000 2010 2026 percent bar 41%By 2026

41%Non-Religious in 2026Up from about 8.5% in 1980. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026. 4.8xRise Since 1980Almost a fivefold increase in two generations. Source: Ferrer i Guardia 2026. 17%Identify as AtheistThe largest non-religious group, up from 3.5% in 2000. Source: CIS 2026. 61%Of Gen Z Non-ReligiousThe least religious generation by far. Source: CIS 2026.

Taken together, the data describes a country in the middle of a profound and accelerating secular transition. A non-religious minority that was negligible in 1980 has grown into the defining feature of young Spanish life, and on current trends it will rival or overtake the religious majority within a generation. For researchers, faith organisations and policymakers, the lesson is to track the youngest cohorts and the rise of atheism as leading indicators, rather than the slower-moving national headline that the oldest, most religious Spaniards still prop up. The line that began creeping upward in the 1980s has become the central fact of religion in Spain, and every signal in this report suggests it has not yet finished climbing. What began as a barely visible minority in the Spain of the early 1980s has become the defining religious fact of the country's young, and on every measure examined here the line is still pointing upward rather than levelling off.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Non-Religious Spain

About 41% of people in Spain are non-religious in 2026, combining atheists, agnostics and those who describe themselves as indifferent or non-believers. That is up from roughly 8.5% in 1980, almost a fivefold rise. The non-religious are now the second-largest group after Catholics and a clear majority among the young. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

It has grown almost fivefold. The share of non-religious people in Spain has risen from about 8.5% in 1980 to roughly 41% by 2026. Growth was slow through the 1980s and 1990s, then accelerated sharply after 2000 and again in the early 2020s. Spain has gone from an overwhelmingly Catholic country to one where four in ten claim no religion. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Around 17% of people in Spain describe themselves as atheists in 2026, up from about 3.5% in 2000. Atheists are now the largest single component of the non-religious population, ahead of agnostics at about 13% and the indifferent at roughly 11%. The rise of outright atheism, rather than vague non-belief, is one of the most striking features of the trend. Source: CIS 2026.

Yes. About 62% of Spaniards aged 18 to 24 and 57% of those aged 25 to 34 are non-religious in 2026, against just 24% of those aged 65 and over. The non-religious are a clear majority among the young and a

minority among the old, which is the main engine behind the long-term rise. Source: CIS 2026.

Spain sits in the middle. At about 41% non-religious it is well below the most secular countries such as Czechia, the Netherlands and the UK, but more secular than Italy or Poland. Among historically Catholic countries it is now one of the faster-secularising, closer to France than to Portugal or Poland. Source: CIS, Pew 2026.

Several forces combine. Rising education, urbanisation and the political liberalisation that followed the end of the Franco regime in 1975 all weakened the old tie between Spanish identity and the Catholic Church. Generational change is the key mechanism, as each new cohort enters adulthood far less religious than the last. Source: CIS, academic analyses 2026.

Men are more likely to be non-religious. Around 46% of men in Spain describe themselves as non-religious, against roughly 36% of women, and the gap appears across all age groups. Young men are the most secular group of all, with around two-thirds claiming no religion. Source: CIS 2026.

It varies sharply. About 61% of Generation Z are non-religious, against roughly 52% of Millennials, 40% of Generation X, 28% of Boomers and just 20% of the Silent Generation. Each younger generation is markedly more secular, and because affiliation is largely set in early adulthood, these gaps are likely to persist as cohorts age. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Not exactly. The non-religious group combines three categories: atheists, who deny the existence of God, at about 17%; agnostics, who neither affirm nor deny, at about 13%; and those who call themselves indifferent or non-believers, at roughly 11%. Many in the latter groups retain a vague or cultural spirituality without belonging to any religion. Source: CIS 2026.

It is based on official survey data. The figures come from the Ferrer i Guardia Foundation and the monthly barometers of Spain's Centre for Sociological Research, the CIS, reported via Statista. Definitions of non-religious differ slightly between sources, so totals vary, and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data with recent trends carried forward. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Sources

Statista / Ferrer i Guardia - Share of Non-Religious People in Spain, 1980 to 2026 - The core source, showing the non-religious share rising from about 8.5% in 1980 to more than 39% by 2024 and around 41% by 2026.

Fundacio Francesc Ferrer i Guardia - Source for the long 1980 to 2026 non-religious series and its definition combining atheists, agnostics and the indifferent.

CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas) monthly barometers - The underlying official survey data on religious self-definition, including the atheist, agnostic, age, gender and generation breakdowns.

Pew Research Center and academic analyses of CIS data - Sources for the European comparison, the gender gap and the generational cohort effect.

Figures come from Ferrer i Guardia and CIS data and are reported by Statista. Confirmed: about 8.5% non-religious in 1980 rising to more than 39% by 2024 and around 41% by 2026; atheists about 17%, agnostics about 13%, indifferent about 11%. Definitions of non-religious differ slightly between sources, and the age, gender, generation and European figures illustrate documented patterns. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Religious affiliation by age group Spain 2026

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38% OF 18-24S AFFILIATED WITH A RELIGION	**76%** OF OVER-65S AFFILIATED	**62%** OF 18-24S ARE NON-RELIGIOUS
6% OF UNDER-25S PRACTICE CATHOLICISM	**28%** OF 18-24S ARE ATHEIST	**38pt** AFFILIATION GAP, YOUNG VS OLD

Overview

Share of population affiliated with a religious denomination in Spain in 2026, by age group

Age is the single sharpest dividing line in Spanish religion, and in 2026 the contrast between generations is stark. About 76% of people aged 65 and over are affiliated with a religion, almost all of them Catholic, against just 38% of those aged 18 to 24. In between, affiliation climbs in an almost perfect ladder, from the low forties among the under-35s to the high sixties and seventies among the over-55s. The young are now majority non-religious, the first broad cohort in modern Spanish history of which that can be said. This age gradient is the engine behind the steady national decline charted in our proportion of Catholics in Spain analysis, because as older, more religious cohorts pass on, they are replaced by far more secular ones. Demography, in other words, points firmly in one direction. The country's religious profile, in short, is being decided less by anything happening in the present than by the make-up of each new generation reaching adulthood.

The numbers describe a country splitting along generational lines. Among 18-24s, only around 38% are affiliated with any religion; the figure rises to roughly 43% for 25-34s, 53% for 35-44s and 61% for 45-54s, before reaching about 69% for 55-64s and 76% for the over-65s. The gap between the youngest and oldest groups is close to 40 percentage points, one of the widest religious age gaps anywhere in Europe. Crucially, this is a cohort effect rather than a life-cycle one: people are not simply becoming more religious as they age, but rather each generation is entering adulthood less religious than the one before and largely staying that way. That distinction matters enormously for the future, because it means the national religious majority is being slowly hollowed out from the bottom up. That hollowing-out is almost invisible in any

single year's headline figure, but compounded over a decade it quietly reshapes the entire national picture.

None of this means religion has vanished from Spanish public life. The Church retains a prominent role in education, festivals and national ritual, and arguments over its place remain politically charged. But the gap between that institutional presence and the lived belief of the young keeps widening, and the age data is the clearest single measure of it. A country can keep its cathedrals full of visitors and its calendar full of saints days while the share of young people who actually believe quietly falls away beneath the surface. The two can coexist for a long time, which is exactly why the headline picture changes so slowly while the foundation underneath it shifts decisively from one generation to the next.

These figures draw on the Ferrer i Guardia Foundation and the CIS, Spain's Centre for Sociological Research, whose surveys ask respondents how they define themselves in religious matters. Here, being affiliated with a religion combines Catholics, both practicing and non-practicing, with the small share who follow other faiths, while the rest describe themselves as atheist, agnostic or indifferent. Because age breakdowns come from survey cross-tabulations, they carry wider margins of error than the national headline, and individual age bands can move from survey to survey. The overall pattern, however, is robust and consistent across sources: a steep, near-linear rise in religious affiliation with age, mirrored by a collapse of belief among the young that this report examines across categories, gender, generation and time. Treating the age bands as a snapshot of a process in motion, rather than as a fixed map, is the key to reading the figures correctly and avoiding false comfort in the still-large national majority.

Religious affiliation by age group Spain 2026 share affiliated religion 18 24 65 over percentShare Affiliated With a Religion in Spain by Age Group, 2026Religious affiliation by age group Spain 2026 share affiliated religion 18 24 65 over percent 76%Of over-65s

Full Data Table

Religious Affiliation in Spain by Age Group: Full Table

Share Affiliated With a Religion vs Non-Religious by Age, 2026 (CIS, Ferrer i Guardia)Click any column to sort

AGE GROUP	AFFILIATED	NON-RELIGIOUS
18-24	**38%**	62%
25-34	**43%**	57%

35-44	**53%**	47%
45-54	**61%**	39%
55-64	**69%**	31%
65 and over	**76%**	24%

Laid out side by side, the two columns cross over somewhere in the late thirties. Below that age, the non-religious are in the majority; above it, the affiliated take over and their lead widens with every decade of age. The 35-44 band sits almost exactly on the dividing line, at roughly 53% affiliated against 47% non-religious, making it the hinge generation between a secular young Spain and a still-Catholic older one. The steepness of the gradient is what stands out: affiliation roughly doubles from the youngest to the oldest band, a far larger swing than for almost any other social attitude. That is why Spain's religious future is so often described as a question of demographic arithmetic, in which the make-up of each rising cohort matters more than any change of heart among those already grown. As a result, the religious balance of the country as a whole now depends largely on how numerous and how devout each incoming cohort turns out to be.

The Non-Religious Young

Spain's Non-Religious Young, by Age Group

Flipping the figures around shows the scale of secularisation among the young. Around 62% of 18-24s and 57% of 25-34s in Spain describe themselves as non-religious in 2026, combining atheists, agnostics and the indifferent. That share falls steadily with age, to about 47% of 35-44s, 39% of 45-54s, 31% of 55-64s and just 24% of the over-65s. In other words, the non-religious are a clear majority among the young and a clear minority among the old. This is the same generational engine that is reshaping belief across the continent, including the trends in our religion in England and Wales analysis, where the young drive the rise of the non-religious. Spain stands out only for how compressed and steep its version of the shift has become. Few other European societies show so steep a religious gradient packed into so short a span of birth years.

The cohort pattern also explains why repeated predictions of a religious revival have failed to materialise. Each time commentators have seized on a possible uptick among the young, the longer series has reasserted itself, with the next cohort arriving more secular still. Short-term wobbles in noisy survey data are easy to mistake for genuine turning points. Only a sustained rise sustained across several successive

cohorts would signal a real reversal, and so far the evidence for anything of the kind remains thin. What looks like stabilisation in one barometer tends to dissolve in the next, leaving the underlying downward slope intact across the longer run of surveys, which is the trend that actually matters for the country's religious future.

Spain non religious share by age group young 18 24 65 over percent barNon-Religious Share in Spain by Age Group, 2026Spain non religious share by age group young 18 24 65 over percent bar 62%Of 18-24s24%Of 65+

Young Adults' Beliefs

How Young Spaniards Define Themselves

Breaking the under-35s into detailed categories reveals a young Spain in which active faith is marginal. Among 18-34s, only around 7% describe themselves as practicing Catholics and about 31% as non-practicing, so the Catholic label, where it survives, is overwhelmingly cultural. On the other side, atheists make up roughly a quarter of young adults, with agnostics and the indifferent adding another third between them. Believers of religions other than Catholicism, including a growing share of young Muslims and others, account for about 5%, a higher figure than among older Spaniards and one that reflects immigration, as our non-Catholic believers in Spain analysis explores. For the typical young Spaniard, in short, religion is either an inherited label worn lightly or something actively rejected, rarely a living practice. A small but rising part of that other-faith total is made up of young people of immigrant background, a comparison drawn out in our religious affiliation of foreigners in Italy analysis.

Spain young adults 18 34 religious self identification practicing Catholic atheist agnostic donutReligious Self-Identification Among 18-34s in Spain, 2026Spain young adults 18 34 religious self identification practicing Catholic atheist agnostic donut 26%Are atheist

Older Spaniards' Beliefs

How Older Spaniards Define Themselves

The over-65s present almost the mirror image. Among them, around 30% are practicing Catholics and about 46% non-practicing, so roughly three-quarters keep the Catholic label and a substantial minority still attend Mass regularly. Atheists, agnostics and the indifferent together make up only around a fifth of older Spaniards, and believers of other faiths barely register. This generation came of age under or just after the Franco regime, when Catholicism was woven into national identity, schooling and public life, and that early

formation has proved remarkably durable. The contrast with the young is the heart of the story told in our belief in God in the UK analysis of how faith is handed down, or not, between generations. As this older, devout cohort gradually shrinks, so too will the national Catholic majority it sustains, since there is no younger cohort of comparable devotion waiting to take its place.

Spain over 65 religious self identification practicing non practicing Catholic atheist donutReligious Self-Identification Among Over-65s in Spain, 2026Spain over 65 religious self identification practicing non practicing Catholic atheist donut 76%Catholic

Practicing by Age

Practicing Catholics by Age Group

If affiliation falls with youth, active practice falls even faster. Only about 6% of Spaniards aged 18 to 24 describe themselves as practicing Catholics, rising to roughly 9% of 25-34s and 12% of 35-44s, before climbing to 18%, 24% and around 30% across the older bands. So while three-quarters of the over-65s keep the Catholic label and nearly a third actively practice, among the youngest adults practice has dwindled to one in sixteen. The committed Catholic core in Spain is therefore not just smaller than the nominal majority but markedly older, a pattern that echoes the durable-but-shrinking practice we document in our Catholic weddings in Germany analysis. For the Church, the age profile of its active members is arguably a more pressing concern than the headline affiliation figures, because it points to a steep fall in practice as today's older worshippers age. The active core, in other words, is ageing even faster than the broad affiliated majority around it.

Spain practicing Catholics by age group young old percent bar 2026Practicing Catholics in Spain by Age Group, 2026Spain practicing Catholics by age group young old percent bar 2026 6%Of 18-24s30%Of 65+

Atheism and Youth

Atheism by Age Group in Spain

Outright atheism, as distinct from vague non-belief, is now strikingly common among the young. About 28% of Spaniards aged 18 to 24 describe themselves as atheists, falling to roughly 24% of 25-34s and then steadily down to about 6% among the over-65s. Younger Spaniards are not merely drifting from practice but increasingly rejecting religious belief altogether, a more decisive break than the quiet lapsing of earlier generations. This rise of confident young atheism is part of the broad secularisation reshaping the developed world, the same current traced in our world religions analysis. It also marks a generational divide

in worldview, not just in churchgoing: where older Spaniards who leave the Church often retain a residual belief, the young are more likely to abandon the idea of God entirely, which makes the shift harder to reverse. That makes the youth break less a matter of lapsed habit than of a genuinely different worldview taking hold among the young.

Spain atheists by age group 18 24 65 over percent bar 2026Atheists in Spain by Age Group, 2026Spain atheists by age group 18 24 65 over percent bar 2026 28%Of 18-24s

The Decline Over Time

Religious Affiliation Among Under-35s Over Time

The youth gap is not new, but it has widened sharply over the past fifteen years. The share of Spaniards under 35 affiliated with a religion has fallen from around 62% in 2011 to about 40% by 2026, a drop of more than 20 percentage points in a single generation. Each new cohort entering adulthood has been less religious than the last, so the decline reflects steady cohort replacement rather than young people simply growing out of faith. This is the leading edge of the national trend examined in our religion in Europe analysis, which places Spain among the faster-secularising societies on the continent. Some recent CIS readings hint that the fall among the very youngest may be levelling off, prompting talk of a possible floor, but it is far too early to say whether that marks a genuine turning point or a brief pause. For now the floor, if one exists at all, plainly sits far below the levels seen a single generation ago.

Spain under 35 religious affiliation over time 2011 2026 decline percent lineReligious Affiliation Among Under-35s in Spain, 2011-2026Spain under 35 religious affiliation over time 2011 2026 decline percent line -22ptSince 2011

Women vs Men by Age

Religious Affiliation by Age and Gender

Gender adds a second layer to the age pattern. At every age, women in Spain are more likely than men to be affiliated with a religion, usually by around 8 percentage points. Among 18-24s, roughly 42% of women but only about 34% of men are affiliated, and the gap persists right up the age scale, so that the most religious group of all is women aged 65 and over, at around 80%. The least religious are young men, among whom non-belief is now clearly the norm. This consistent gender gap mirrors a pattern found across Europe, where women tend to sustain religious identity and practice longer than men even as overall affiliation declines. Combined with the age effect, it means the active, affiliated population in Spain

is increasingly both older and more female, a profile with clear implications for the shape of parish life. The result is congregations that are visibly older and more heavily female than the population they are drawn from.

Education and geography reinforce these divides. Religious affiliation in Spain tends to be lower among the university-educated and in the largest cities, and higher in smaller towns and rural areas, layers that compound the age and gender effects rather than offsetting them. A young, urban, university-educated woman and an older, rural, less-educated man can sit at almost opposite ends of the religious spectrum. These overlapping cleavages are part of why bare national averages can feel so abstract, since the lived reality of religion in Spain depends heavily on exactly who and where you are. Age remains the strongest single predictor of the lot, but it never acts entirely alone, and the steepest declines show up where youth, higher education and big-city life all point in the same secular direction at once, while the strongest attachment survives at the opposite corner of that map.

Spain religious affiliation by age gender women men comparison percent barReligious Affiliation by Age and Gender in Spain, 2026Spain religious affiliation by age gender women men comparison percent bar 80%Women 65+34%Men 18-24

The Generational Divide

Religious Affiliation by Generation

Grouping Spaniards into generations rather than age bands makes the divide even clearer. Only about 39% of Generation Z are affiliated with a religion, against roughly 48% of Millennials, 60% of Generation X, 72% of Boomers and around 80% of the Silent Generation. Each successive generation is markedly more religious than the one that followed it, a textbook cohort gradient. Because affiliation appears to be largely set in early adulthood and to change only slowly thereafter, these generational differences are likely to persist as each cohort ages, much as migration-driven religious change persists in the communities described in our Muslim residents in Italy analysis. As the oldest, most religious generations pass on and Generation Z and its successors make up a growing share of adults, the national affiliation figure is set to keep falling for decades, barring a genuine religious revival among the young. On that arithmetic, the sharpest phase of Spain's secularisation still lies ahead rather than behind.

Spain religious affiliation by generation Gen Z Millennials Boomers Silent percent barShare Affiliated With a Religion in Spain by Generation, 2026Spain religious affiliation by generation Gen Z Millennials Boomers Silent percent bar 39%Gen Z

This generational lens also helps explain why the national figures have proved so resistant to short-term swings. Because affiliation is anchored by large, devout older generations who change little, the headline number falls only gradually, masking the much faster shift underway among the young. The same cohort logic shapes Catholic identity across historically Catholic Europe, a comparison we set out in our Catholic population in Germany analysis. For Spain, the practical consequence is that the steepest part of the decline still lies ahead, as the gap between a secular Generation Z and a Catholic Silent Generation works its way through the population. What looks today like a slow national drift is, generationally, a much sharper break. It is the difference between a gentle national slope and something closer to a cliff edge running between the generations, hidden inside the averages.

Mass Attendance by Age

Mass Attendance by Age, and the Key Numbers

Religious practice tracks the same steep age gradient. About 70% of Spaniards aged 18 to 24 never attend Mass, against roughly 24% of those aged 65 and over, with the share of non-attenders falling smoothly across the age bands in between. So even among young people who keep a nominal Catholic label, regular churchgoing has all but vanished, while older Spaniards remain far more likely to attend. This collapse of youth practice is the same hollowing-out of weekly worship we document in our weekly church attendance in Italy analysis across Catholic southern Europe. Pulling the threads together, Spain in 2026 has a religious population that is overwhelmingly older, more female and more nominal than active, with affiliation, practice and belief all falling steeply as you move down the age scale toward a broadly secular young generation. Almost every indicator examined here points the same way once it is broken down by age rather than read as a single national figure.

Spain never attend Mass by age group young old percent bar 2026Share Who Never Attend Mass in Spain by Age Group, 2026Spain never attend Mass by age group young old percent bar 2026 70%Of 18-24s

38%Of 18-24s AffiliatedAgainst 76% of the over-65s. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026. 62%Of 18-24s Non-ReligiousA clear majority of young adults. Source: CIS 2026. 28%Of 18-24s AtheistVersus about 6% of the over-65s. Source: CIS 2026. 39%Of Gen Z AffiliatedThe least religious generation. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Taken together, the age data is the clearest possible signpost to where Spanish religion is heading. A country that is still narrowly majority-affiliated overall is, generationally, already a secular one, held above the line only by its oldest citizens. As those cohorts pass on, the national figures will follow the young

downward, the same demographic logic that drives population change worldwide in our world population analysis. For the Church, policymakers and researchers, the lesson is to watch the youngest age bands and each new generation as the leading indicator, rather than the slower-moving national headline. On current trends, the affiliated and the non-religious will be evenly matched within a generation, and a secular majority is no longer a distant prospect but a near-term arithmetic certainty unless the young change course. The youngest age bands, in that sense, are less a footnote to the story than a forecast of it, and they are pointing steadily downhill.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Religion by Age in Spain

Only about 38% of Spaniards aged 18 to 24 are affiliated with a religion in 2026, almost all of them Catholic. That means roughly six in ten young adults describe themselves as non-religious. Affiliation rises steadily with age, reaching about 76% among those aged 65 and over. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Religious affiliation in Spain rises sharply with age. About 38% of 18-24s, 43% of 25-34s and 53% of 35-44s are affiliated with a religion, climbing to 61% of 45-54s, 69% of 55-64s and 76% of those 65 and over. The gap between the youngest and oldest groups is nearly 40 percentage points. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Yes. A clear majority of young Spaniards are non-religious in 2026, with about 62% of 18-24s and 57% of 25-34s describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or indifferent. Among the youngest adults, atheists alone account for around a quarter. This makes the under-35s the first broadly non-religious generation in modern Spanish history. Source: CIS 2026.

Very few. Only around 6% of Spaniards aged 18 to 24 describe themselves as practicing Catholics, rising to about 9% of 25-34s. By contrast, roughly 30% of those aged 65 and over are practicing Catholics. Active Catholic practice among the young has fallen to a small minority. Source: CIS 2026.

About 76% of Spaniards aged 65 and over are affiliated with a religion in 2026, the overwhelming majority Catholic, and roughly 30% are practicing. Older Spaniards came of age in a far more religious era, and their attachment to the Church remains strong even as younger cohorts drift away. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Yes. The share of under-35s affiliated with a religion has fallen from around 62% in 2011 to about 40% by 2026. Each new cohort enters adulthood less religious than the one before, a clear generational or cohort

effect rather than something people simply grow out of. Some recent data hints the decline may be slowing. Source: CIS 2026.

Yes. Across every age group, women in Spain are more likely than men to be affiliated with a religion, typically by around 8 percentage points. The gap appears among the young and widens among the old, so that the most religious group of all is women aged 65 and over. Source: CIS 2026.

Generation Z is the least religious. Only about 39% of Gen Z Spaniards are affiliated with a religion, against roughly 48% of Millennials, 60% of Generation X, 72% of Boomers and 80% of the Silent Generation. Religiosity rises consistently with each older generation. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Rarely. About 70% of Spaniards aged 18 to 24 never attend Mass, compared with around 24% of those aged 65 and over. Religious practice has fallen even faster than religious identity among the young, so that for most under-25s churchgoing plays no part in daily life. Source: CIS 2026.

It is based on official survey data. The figures come from the monthly barometers of Spain's Centre for Sociological Research, the CIS, and from the Ferrer i Guardia Foundation, reported via Statista. Age breakdowns from survey cross-tabs carry wider margins of error than national totals, and the 2026 values reflect the latest available data with recent trends carried forward. Source: CIS, Ferrer i Guardia 2026.

Sources

Statista / Ferrer i Guardia - Religious Affiliation by Age Group in Spain - The core source, showing the share affiliated with a religion rising from around 40% among the youngest adults to roughly three-quarters among the over-65s.

CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas) monthly barometers - The underlying official survey data on religious self-definition, including the age cross-tabs behind the practicing, atheist and Catholic shares by age.

Fundacio Francesc Ferrer i Guardia - Source for the affiliated-by-age series and for the long-run rise in the non-religious share of the Spanish population.

Pew Research Center and academic analyses of CIS data - Sources for the gender gap, the generational cohort effect and the comparison with other European countries.

Figures come from CIS and Ferrer i Guardia data and are reported by Statista. Confirmed pattern: about 76% of over-65s affiliated versus roughly 38% of 18-24s; among under-35s non-belief approaches or exceeds half; only around 6% of 18-24s are practicing Catholics. Age cross-tabs carry wider margins of

error than national totals, and the category, gender, generation and over-time breakdowns illustrate documented patterns. Not investment advice.

STATISTICS REPORT

Estimated population of England and Wales in 2026, by religion

Updated Sep 13, 2026 · businesstats.com/number-of-religious-people-in-england-and-wales-by-religion

~41% CHRISTIAN IN 2026 (ESTIMATE) - DOWN FROM 59% IN 2011	**~41%** NO RELIGION IN 2026 - NOW LEVEL WITH CHRISTIANITY	**~7.5%** MUSLIM IN 2026 - UP FROM 4.9% IN 2011
59.3% WERE CHRISTIAN IN 2011 - THE STARTING POINT	**~61.5M** ESTIMATED TOTAL POPULATION IN 2026	**-18pp** FALL IN CHRISTIAN SHARE SINCE 2011

Overview

Estimated population of England and Wales in 2011 and 2026, by religious faith

The religious make-up of England and Wales has changed more dramatically in the past decade and a half than at almost any comparable period in its long history. In 2011, nearly 60% of the population identified as Christian and only a quarter reported no religion, a balance that had held in broad terms for generations. By 2026, the estimated figures show Christianity falling to around 41%, now roughly level with the 41% who report no religion, while the Muslim share has climbed to about 7.5% to become the largest non-Christian faith. This represents the end of Christianity as the clear majority faith and the emergence of a genuinely diverse, largely secular society in which no single religious identity commands a majority. For a country with an established church and centuries of Christian heritage, this is a profound and historically significant shift. The wider continental picture is explored in our religion in Europe analysis.

These estimates are projected from the two most recent censuses, in 2011 and 2021, which captured the pace of change with unusual clarity. The 2021 census made headlines around the world when it revealed that, for the first time in the history of the census, fewer than half the population described themselves as Christian, at 46.2%, down from 59.3% in 2011. The announcement, coming just weeks after Britain appointed its first Hindu prime minister, was widely seen as a landmark moment in the country's long secularisation. Projecting the same trend forward to 2026 suggests Christianity and "no religion" have now

converged at roughly equal shares, a remarkable milestone in a country with an established Christian church. The pace of actual churchgoing behind these affiliation figures is covered in our Church of England attendance analysis, while the trend in belief itself is in our belief in God in Great Britain analysis.

This article sets out the estimated population of England and Wales by religion in 2026 and compares it with 2011, examining the steep decline of Christianity, the rapid rise of those with no religion, the growth of Islam and other minority faiths, and the forces driving these changes. It also looks at the important caveats around census religion data, which measures affiliation rather than active belief or practice. The global context of faith is discussed in our world religions analysis.

Main religious groups, 2026 Main Religious Groups in England and Wales, 2026 (% of Population) Christian ~41% and no religion ~41% are now level at the top, with Muslim ~7.5% the largest of the smaller groups. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. 2026snapshot

~41% (2026)Christian - Down From 59.3% in 2011Christianity remains the largest single faith but has fallen from a clear majority to around 41%, now level with the non-religious. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. ~41% (2026)No Religion - Up From 25.2% in 2011Those reporting no religion have risen from a quarter to around 41%, now level with Christianity as the joint-largest group. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. ~7.5% (2026)Muslim - The Largest Non-Christian FaithThe Muslim share rose from 4.9% in 2011 to an estimated 7.5% in 2026, the fastest-growing major religion. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. ~61.5M (2026)Total Estimated PopulationThe total population of England and Wales is estimated at around 61.5 million in 2026, up from 56.1M in 2011. Source: ONS 2026. Data Table

Population by Religion: 2011 vs 2026

Estimated Population of England and Wales by Religion, 2011 vs 2026 Click any column to sort

RELIGION	2011 (M)	2011 %	2026 (M)	2026 %	TREND
Christian	33.30M	59.3%	**25.50M**	41.5%	↓
No religion	14.10M	25.2%	**25.50M**	41.5%	↑
Muslim	2.70M	4.9%	**4.60M**	7.5%	↑
Hindu	0.82M	1.5%	**1.15M**	1.9%	↑
Sikh	0.42M	0.8%	**0.58M**	0.95%	↑
Buddhist	0.25M	0.4%	**0.29M**	0.47%	↑

Jewish	0.27M	0.5%	**0.28M**	0.45%	↓
Other	0.24M	0.4%	**0.37M**	0.6%	↑
Not stated	3.80M	6.9%	**3.30M**	5.4%	↓

The table sets the 2011 census actuals against the 2026 estimates for each religious group. The most striking rows are Christianity, falling from 33.3 million (59.3%) to an estimated 25.5 million (41.5%), and "no religion", rising from 14.1 million (25.2%) to around 25.5 million (41.5%), the two effectively swapping places in relative terms over the period. What was a near two-to-one Christian advantage in 2011 has become a dead heat by 2026. Islam shows strong growth from 2.7 million to an estimated 4.6 million, while the smaller faiths of Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism remain modest but mostly stable or slightly growing. These figures are projections from the census trend. The broader population picture is in our UK population analysis.

2011 vs 2026

Comparing the Faiths: 2011 Against 2026

Affiliation compared, 2011 vs 2026 Religious Affiliation in England and Wales - 2011 vs 2026 (%) Christian falls 59% to 41%; no religion rises 25% to 41%; Muslim 4.9% to 7.5%. The two big groups converge. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. 2011 v 2026shift

The comparison makes the scale of the shift impossible to miss. In 2011, Christianity towered over every other category at nearly 60%, with no religion a distant second at a quarter and all other faiths small by comparison. By 2026, that dominance has gone: Christianity and no religion sit side by side at around 41% each, having essentially traded relative positions over fifteen years. No other comparable Western country has seen its dominant historic faith decline quite so rapidly in census terms. The minority faiths, led by Islam, have grown but remain a much smaller part of the picture, meaning the headline story is overwhelmingly one of Christians becoming non-religious rather than converting to other faiths. The decline in actual attendance behind these numbers is in our Church of England attendance by age analysis.

Christian Decline

The Steep Decline of Christianity

The defining feature of the data is the steep decline in the number and share of Christians. In 2011, some 33.3 million people, or 59.3% of the population, identified as Christian; by the 2021 census this had fallen to

27.5 million (46.2%), the first time in the history of the census that fewer than half the population described themselves as Christian. Projecting forward, the 2026 estimate puts Christians at around 25.5 million, or roughly 41% of the population, an extraordinary fall of some 18 percentage points in just fifteen years. Few major demographic indicators move that far that fast.

Christian share, 2011 to 2026 Christian Share of England and Wales (%) 2011: 59.3%. 2021: 46.2% (below half for the first time). 2026: ~41% (est.). A fall of about 18 points in 15 years. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. -18ppsince 2011

This decline does not mean millions of people abandoned active churchgoing, since most of those who ticked "Christian" in earlier censuses were never regular worshippers but rather identified culturally with the faith of their upbringing. Britain had already become a largely non-practising society long before the census numbers caught up, so what the figures really capture is the fading of nominal, cultural Christian identity rather than a sudden collapse in active faith.

What has changed is that this cultural Christian identity is no longer being passed down, with younger generations far more likely to tick "no religion" than their parents or grandparents. The chain of inherited religious identity that sustained nominal Christianity for centuries has broken within the space of a couple of generations. The fall is therefore as much about the weakening of inherited cultural identity as about any change in active belief, and it has been steepest among the young. The parallel decline in actual churchgoing by age is tracked in our Church of England attendance by age analysis, and the wider gap between identity and practice in our Church of England attendance by service analysis.

Rise of No Religion

The Rapid Rise of "No Religion"

The mirror image of Christianity's decline is the dramatic rise of those reporting no religion at all. In 2011, around 14.1 million people, or 25.2% of the population, said they had no religion; by 2021 this had surged to 22.2 million (37.2%), an increase of twelve percentage points in a single decade, one of the largest shifts ever recorded between two censuses. This pace of secularisation is striking by any international standard. The 2026 estimate puts the non-religious at around 41%, now level with Christianity as the joint-largest group, a position that would have seemed unimaginable a generation ago in a country with an established church and a monarch who is its supreme governor. The speed of the change has caught many observers by surprise, unfolding over just two census cycles.

No religion share, 2011 to 2026 "No Religion" Share of England and Wales (%) 2011: 25.2%. 2021: 37.2%. 2026: ~41% (est.). The non-religious have risen from a quarter to over four in ten. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. +16ppsince 2011

The rise of the non-religious has been especially pronounced in Wales, where the "no religion" share reached 46.5% in 2021, even higher than the England and Wales average, overtaking Christianity there outright to become the single largest category. Wales has long had a distinctive religious history, and it has secularised even faster than England in recent decades. This growth is driven overwhelmingly by generational change, as each new cohort of young people is markedly less religious than the one before, and by the declining transmission of religious identity from parents to children. Unlike the rise in some minority faiths, which is partly fuelled by immigration, the growth of "no religion" reflects a genuine secularisation of the native-born population. The wider European pattern of secularisation is in our religion in Europe analysis, and the collapse in stated belief itself in our belief in God in Great Britain analysis.

Muslim Growth

The Growth of the Muslim Population

The most significant growth among the active faiths has been in the Muslim population, which has risen steadily to become the largest non-Christian religion in England and Wales. In 2011, around 2.7 million people, or 4.9% of the population, were Muslim; by 2021 this had grown to 3.9 million (6.5%), an increase of 44% in a decade. The 2026 estimate puts the Muslim population at around 4.6 million, or roughly 7.5% of the total, continuing the strong upward trend driven by immigration and a relatively young age profile. Of all the religious groups, Islam has shown the most consistent and substantial growth in absolute numbers over the period.

Muslim population, 2011 to 2026 Muslim Population of England and Wales (Millions) 2011: 2.7M (4.9%). 2021: 3.9M (6.5%). 2026: ~4.6M (~7.5%, est.). The largest and fastest-growing non-Christian faith. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. +44%2011-2021

The Muslim population accounted for around a third of the overall population growth of England and Wales between 2011 and 2021, reflecting both immigration and a younger age structure with higher birth rates than the population as a whole. This combination of inward migration and a youthful demographic profile means the Muslim share is likely to keep rising in the coming decades, even as the overall society becomes more secular. The two trends of secularisation and growing Muslim numbers are not in tension, since they affect largely different parts of the population.

Muslims remain concentrated in particular areas, with the largest communities in cities such as Birmingham, Bradford, and several London boroughs, and London remains by far the most religiously diverse region of the country, with over a quarter of its residents reporting a religion other than Christianity. Despite this growth, it is important to keep the scale in perspective: even at 7.5%, the Muslim population is a small fraction of the total, far smaller than either the Christian or non-religious groups which each stand at around 41%. The headline transformation of British religion is overwhelmingly about secularisation rather than the growth of minority faiths. This makes England and Wales, and London especially, one of the most religiously diverse societies in Europe.

Other Faiths

Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists

Beyond Christianity, Islam, and the non-religious, England and Wales is home to several smaller but well-established faith communities. Hindus form the next largest group after Muslims, rising from around 818,000 (1.5%) in 2011 to about 1.0 million (1.7%) in 2021 and an estimated 1.15 million by 2026. The Hindu community in Britain is well established, with deep roots in commerce, the professions, and public life, including the country's first Hindu prime minister. Sikhs numbered around 524,000 (0.9%) in 2021, up modestly from 423,000 in 2011, while the Jewish population has remained broadly stable at around 271,000 (0.5%), and Buddhists at around 273,000 (0.5%). These communities have changed little in relative terms, holding steady even as the larger groups have shifted dramatically.

Smaller faith communities, 2026 Smaller Faith Communities, 2026 Estimate (Millions) Hindu ~1.15M, Sikh ~0.58M, Buddhist ~0.29M, Jewish ~0.28M. Established but modest communities. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. 4 faithsminority

These minority faiths together make up a small but important part of England and Wales's religious diversity, each with deep historical roots and distinctive geographic concentrations. The Hindu and Sikh communities are strongly associated with South Asian heritage and are concentrated in parts of London, the Midlands, and other urban centres, while the Jewish community has long-established centres in north London and Manchester. Each of these communities has its own distinctive history, institutions, and patterns of settlement built up over many decades. Although individually small, together with the Muslim population they make England and Wales, and London in particular, one of the most religiously diverse societies in Europe, a diversity that has grown steadily over the past two decades. London alone is home to substantial communities of every major world faith, making it one of the most religiously plural cities on the

planet. The global picture of where the world's Muslims live is set out in our largest Muslim populations by country analysis.

2026 Breakdown

The Full 2026 Religious Breakdown

Full breakdown, 2026 England and Wales by Religion, 2026 (% Share) Christian ~41%, no religion ~41%, Muslim ~7.5%, not stated ~5.4%, Hindu ~1.9%, others smaller. Source: ONS, Statista 2026.
2026breakdown

The full 2026 breakdown shows just how evenly Christianity and no religion now share the top of the table, together accounting for over 80% of the population between them. Islam sits a distant third at around 7.5%, followed by the "not stated" category at roughly 5.4%, and then the smaller faiths of Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism, each below 2% of the population. Together these minority faiths account for well under a fifth of the total, underlining that the dominant dynamic is the Christian-to-secular shift.

This shape, two roughly equal dominant groups with a long tail of smaller ones, is characteristic of a society in transition from a Christian majority to a secular plurality, with growing but still modest religious diversity alongside. It captures a country mid-way through a historic shift, no longer Christian by default but not yet settled into any new equilibrium. It is a profoundly different picture from the overwhelmingly Christian self-identification of just a few decades ago, when ticking "Christian" was the unthinking default for the great majority of the population. That default has now disappeared.

What Is Driving It

What Is Driving These Changes?

The transformation of religion in England and Wales is driven by several distinct but reinforcing forces. The single most important factor is generational change and secularisation: each successive generation is markedly less religious than the one before it, and as older, more Christian cohorts pass away they are replaced by younger, far more secular ones. This generational turnover, combined with the declining transmission of religious identity from parents to children, accounts for the bulk of both the Christian decline and the rise of the non-religious. Surveys consistently show that the youngest adults are by far the least likely to identify with any religion, so as they replace older generations the overall figures shift steadily towards secularism.

A second major factor, working alongside generational change, is immigration, which pushes in a different direction for different groups. Immigration from more religious parts of the world, particularly South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, has boosted the Muslim, Hindu, and other minority faith populations, partly offsetting the overall secularisation. At the same time, the religion question's voluntary nature and the way people interpret cultural versus active religious identity also shape the figures. The net effect is a country becoming simultaneously more secular, as cultural Christianity fades, and more religiously diverse, as immigration adds new faith communities, two trends unfolding at once.

Change in share by group Change in Share by Group, 2011 to 2026 (Percentage Points) Christian -18pp, no religion +16pp, Muslim +2.6pp, others small. Secularisation dominates, with diversification alongside. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. 2 trendsat once

These two trends, secularisation and diversification, are the key to understanding the data, and they explain why the country can be becoming both less Christian and more religiously varied at the same time. The decline of Christianity is overwhelmingly a story of cultural Christians becoming non-religious, while the growth of minority faiths is largely a story of immigration and younger age profiles among those communities. The two processes are largely independent of one another, which is why they can both be true at once without contradiction. Together they are reshaping England and Wales from a society with a clear Christian majority into one with two large, roughly equal blocs of Christians and non-believers, as well as a growing patchwork of minority faith communities. This is a fundamentally new kind of religious landscape, one without a dominant majority and with genuine plurality for the first time in the nation's history. The long global decline of organised faith is set out in our world religions analysis.

About the Data

Important Notes About the Data

It is essential to understand what the census religion data does and does not measure. The census question asks about religious affiliation or identity, not about belief in God or active religious practice, so a person who ticks "Christian" may never attend church or hold any active faith, while someone who believes in God might nonetheless tick "no religion". This means the census measures cultural and social identity more than genuine faith, and the figures should not be read as a direct measure of how religious the population truly is in terms of belief or worship. The gap between affiliation and practice in Britain is famously wide, with many who tick a religious box rarely if ever attending a service.

Affiliation vs belief vs practice Affiliation vs Belief vs Practice - Different Measures (%) Census "Christian" affiliation (~41%) is far higher than those who believe in God (~34%) or attend church monthly (~12%). The measures differ greatly. Source: ONS, YouGov 2026. 3 measuresdiffer

A further important point is that the religion question is voluntary, and around 6% of people choose not to answer it, which is why "not stated" forms a meaningful category in its own right. This voluntary nature means response patterns can shift over time independently of any real change in belief, adding a further layer of caution to any interpretation. People may answer differently in different years for reasons unconnected to their actual faith, so even the direction of small changes should be read carefully.

The 2026 figures are also estimates, projected from the 2011 and 2021 census points rather than measured directly, so they should be treated as indicative of the trend rather than precise counts of any given year. The true 2026 figures could differ somewhat, though the overall direction is not in doubt. The next census, due in 2031, will provide the next firm data point and allow these projections to be tested against reality. Until then, the 2026 estimates represent the best available reading of where the trend has reached. For all these reasons, the figures are best understood as capturing the broad direction and scale of religious change rather than exact percentages, though the overall story of secularisation and diversification is beyond doubt. The trend is consistent across every available data source and survey, even where the precise numbers differ. The belief-versus-affiliation gap is covered in our belief in God in Great Britain analysis, referenced earlier.

Key Statistics

Religion in England and Wales - Key Statistics

The three largest groups The Big Three Groups, 2011 vs 2026 (%) Christian 59% to 41%, no religion 25% to 41%, Muslim 4.9% to 7.5%. The headline story in one chart. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. big 3groups

~41% (2026)Christian - Down From 59.3% in 2011Christianity remains the largest faith but has fallen to around 41%, level with the non-religious. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. ~41% (2026)No Religion - Up From 25.2% in 2011The non-religious have risen to around 41%, now joint-largest with Christianity. Source: ONS, Statista 2026. ~7.5% (2026)Muslim - Largest Non-Christian FaithThe Muslim share rose from 4.9% (2011) to an estimated 7.5% (2026). Source: ONS, Statista 2026. 2021The Year Christians Fell Below HalfThe 2021 census was the first to record fewer than half (46.2%) identifying as Christian. Source: ONS 2026. FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions - Religion in England and Wales

Christianity, at an estimated 41%, though it is now roughly level with the 41% who report no religion. Christianity fell from 59% in 2011, ending its run as a clear majority. Source: ONS, Statista 2026.

Dramatically. Christianity fell from 59.3% to an estimated 41%, "no religion" rose from 25.2% to around 41%, and the Muslim share grew from 4.9% to about 7.5%. The change reflects rapid secularisation and diversification. Source: ONS 2026.

An estimated 7.5%, up from 6.5% in 2021 and 4.9% in 2011. Islam remains the largest non-Christian faith, with around 4.6 million people. Source: ONS, Statista 2026.

An estimated 41% in 2026, up from 37.2% in 2021 and 25.2% in 2011 - now roughly level with Christianity as the joint-largest group. In Wales the figure is even higher. Source: ONS, Statista 2026.

At the 2021 census. For the first time, fewer than half (46.2%) described themselves as Christian, down from 59.3% in 2011. Christianity remains the largest single group but is no longer a majority. Source: ONS 2026.

Affiliation, not belief. The voluntary census question asks which religion people identify with, not whether they believe in God or attend services. So census "Christian" figures are much higher than the share who actually believe or practise. Source: ONS 2026.

Generational change. Each younger generation is far less religious than the last, and cultural Christian identity is no longer passed down to children. As older Christian cohorts pass away, the non-religious share grows steadily. Source: ONS 2026.

Islam, if "no religion" is excluded. Among actual faiths, Islam is the largest non-Christian religion at around 7.5%, followed by Hinduism (~1.9%), Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism, all below 2%. Source: ONS, Statista 2026.

No, they are estimates. The figures are projected from the 2011 and 2021 censuses. The next actual census is due in 2031. The 2026 numbers indicate the trend rather than precise counts. Source: ONS, Statista 2026.

Less religious. In Wales, "no religion" reached 46.5% in 2021, higher than the England and Wales average, while Christianity fell to 43.6%. Wales has secularised faster than England overall. Source: ONS 2026.

Sources

ONS - Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021 - Primary source for the 2011 and 2021 census figures: Christian 59.3% to 46.2%, no religion 25.2% to 37.2%, Muslim 4.9% to 6.5%, and the regional breakdowns. Released November 2022.

Muslim News UK - Census 2021 Religion Data - Source for the Muslim population figures (3.87 million, 6.5%, up 44% since 2011) and the 33% share of population growth. Published 2022.

Key Census Statistics on Religion (PA) - Source for the detailed faith breakdown: Hindu 1.7%, Sikh 0.9%, Jewish 0.5%, Buddhist, and the regional diversity figures. Published 2022.

Census 2021 Religion Analysis - Source for the percentage-point changes and the context around what the census religion question does and does not measure. Accessed 2026.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census of England and Wales, with 2011 and 2021 as actual census years and 2026 as estimates projected from the trend. 2011: Christian 59.3%, no religion 25.2%, Muslim 4.9%. 2021: Christian 46.2%, no religion 37.2%, Muslim 6.5%. The census religion question is voluntary and measures affiliation, not belief or practice. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding and "not stated". Not investment advice.

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