

## Demographic and Background Characteristics

This subsection summarizes background characteristics of respondents. Knowledge Networks has previously compiled a great deal of information on the demographic characteristics of its panel members. Demographic characteristics include gender, generation, race and ethnicity, education, geographic region, and marital status. For these previously compiled factors, the tables show unweighted frequencies (the raw percentage of respondents to the survey) as well as weighted frequencies (percentages that have been statistically adjusted to compensate for higher or lower rates of participation in the survey among various demographic groups in the panel).<sup>9</sup> This section also summarizes respondents' Catholic schooling and the frequency with which they attend Mass.

Several of these demographic and background characteristics are used later in the report to draw comparisons among respondents—for example to compare the responses of Catholics of different generations or different ethnicities. Comparisons on the basis of Mass attendance are presented consistently throughout the report. For all other background characteristics, comparisons are presented only when differences are statistically significant.

### *Gender*

After weighting, 52 percent of the survey respondents are women and 48 percent are men. This greater proportion of women largely reflects higher mortality rates among men.

<b>Gender</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Female	51%	52%
Male	49	48

---

<sup>9</sup> After this subsection, the remainder of the report presents only weighted frequencies.

## Generation

The age of respondents ranges from 18 to 97, with a median of 47. Important differences among respondents are often found along generational lines. CARA divides Catholics into the following four generations, reflecting categories used by other researchers.

- *The “Pre-Vatican II Generation,” ages 66 and over in 2008.* The Pre-Vatican II Generation was born in 1942 or earlier. Its members came of age before the Second Vatican Council. After weighting, members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation make up 17 percent of respondents to the survey.
- *The “Vatican II Generation,” ages 48-65 in 2008.* These are the “baby boomers” who were born between 1943 and 1960, a time of great demographic and economic growth. They came of age during the time of the Second Vatican Council and their formative years likely spanned that time of profound changes in the Church. Vatican II Generation parishioners make up 33 percent of respondents.
- *The “Post-Vatican II Generation,” ages 27-47 in 2008.* Born between 1961 and 1981, this generation, sometimes called “Generation X” or “baby busters” by demographers, has no lived experience of the pre-Vatican II Church. Thirty-six percent of respondents are members of the Post-Vatican II Generation.
- *The “Millennial Generation,” ages 18-26 in 2008.* This generation, born in 1982 or later (up to 1990 among adults), have come of age primarily under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Because some still live with their parents, their religious practice is often closely related to that of their families of origin. Fifteen percent of respondents belong to the Millennial Generation.

Generation		
	Unweighted	Weighted <sup>10</sup>
Pre-Vatican II	20%	17%
Vatican II	39	33
Post-Vatican II	30	36
Millennial	11	15

<sup>10</sup> Whenever percentages in a table sum to 99 or 100 (as is the case in the second column), the reason is rounding error.

### ***Adult Race and Ethnicity***

Because people of Hispanic/Latino(a) origin can be of any race, respondents are divided into those who self-identify as being of Hispanic origin and those who say they are members of each of three racial groups (white, African American, and other) but answer “no” to the Hispanic origin question.

<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Non-Hispanic white	69%	64%
Hispanic or Latino(a)	24	28
African American	2	3
Other <sup>11</sup>	5	5

After weighting, 64 percent of respondents are non-Hispanic whites. Twenty-eight percent are Hispanic or Latino(a).<sup>12</sup> Three percent are African American, and five percent are members of other racial and ethnic groups.

Note that subgroup comparisons later in this report focus on two racial and ethnic groups: non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics. There are too few respondents of other racial and ethnic identities for separate comparison.

---

<sup>11</sup> These categories represent Knowledge Networks’ summary classification for race and ethnicity. “Other” primarily consists of includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans as well as other racial and ethnic groups.

<sup>12</sup> In CARA’s most recent telephone poll in January 2007, the percentage of Catholics self-identifying as Hispanic or Latino was 35 percent (weighted). On average, Knowledge Networks polls tend to underestimate the percentage of Catholics who are Hispanic/Latino by about 6 percentage points. CARA still prefers using Knowledge Networks rather than telephone polls for the significant reduction in social desirability bias that comes with using the self-administered format (see Appendix II). Across a variety of indicators, CARA has found that telephone polls dramatically over-estimate frequency of Mass attendance, frequency of giving, frequency of going to confession, evaluations of Church leaders, etc. The multiple benefits across many key questions of using the Knowledge Networks format far outweigh this single cost of slightly underestimating the Hispanic/Latino population. Knowledge Networks likely underestimates the percentage of the Catholic population that is Hispanic/Latino due to panel members being recruited through landline telephones followed by eligibility requirements to join the panel that include the household having either a computer or television to complete the survey. CARA created a weight to bring up the percentage of Hispanics/Latinos in the poll to 35 percent from 28 percent. Differences in responses vary by about 1 percentage point or less for each question using this weight. This weighting represents the correct size of the Hispanic/Latino population among respondents, however it does not correct for the attributes of Hispanics/Latinos who are missed that may be related to a lack of telephone or television (or computer) as well as the ability to answer questions in English or Spanish in a text-based self-administered survey. CARA has compared, and does compare in this report, the results of its telephone polls and Knowledge Networks polls. The distortions caused by telephone polling for questions regarding religious attitudes and behaviors (that are strongly affected by social desirability pressures) are significantly larger than those resulting from the underestimation of the Hispanic/Latino population in the Knowledge Networks’ panel. Frequencies for results using the weight that brings the Hispanic/Latino percentage among respondents to 35 percent are available upon request.

**Education**

About one in six adult Catholics have not completed high school. About one-third have a high school diploma. About one-quarter have some college education or an associate’s degree. Slightly less than one-fifth have a bachelor’s degree, and 8 percent have a post-graduate degree.

<b>Education</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Less than a high school diploma	13%	16%
High school diploma	32	32
Some college or Associate’s degree	28	26
Bachelor’s degree	18	18
Post-graduate degree	9	8

Educational subgroup comparisons presented later in this report are generally based on four categories: a high school diploma or less, some college or an associate’s degree, a bachelor’s degree, and a post-graduate degree.

**Catholic Education**

About four in ten adult Catholics attended a Catholic elementary, middle, or junior high school.<sup>13</sup> About two in ten attended a Catholic high school.

<b><i>Did you attend a Catholic...</i></b>	
Percentage saying “Yes”	
Elementary, middle, or junior high school	42%
High school	22
College or university	7
<i>All of the above</i>	3
<i>Earned a degree from a Catholic college or university</i>	4

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

Among all respondents, 7 percent have attended a Catholic college or university, and 4 percent have a degree from such an institution. When limited to respondents who attended

<sup>13</sup> Note that this question does not measure length of attendance.

college, 14 percent have attended a Catholic college or university, with 8 percent having received a degree from a Catholic college or university.

Three percent of adult Catholics attended Catholic educational institutions from elementary school through college.

**Marital Status**<sup>14</sup>

Slightly more than one-quarter of adult Catholics have never been married. About one-third are married to a fellow Catholic and about one-sixth are married to a person who is not Catholic. About one-tenth of adult Catholics are divorced or separated. Six percent each are widowed or living with a partner.

<b>Marital Status</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Never married	23%	27%
Married to a Catholic	37	34
Married to a non-Catholic	16	16
Divorced or separated	13	11
Widowed	7	6
Living with a partner	5	6

**Prior Marriage to a Catholic among Divorced and Widowed Respondents**

Among respondents who are divorced or widowed, about two-thirds have previously been married to a Catholic.

<b>Were you ever married to a Catholic?</b>	
Respondents who are currently divorced or widowed	
Yes	68%
No	32

The proportion who have ever been married to a Catholic is slightly higher among widow(er)s (72 percent) than among those who are divorced (62 percent).

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the marital status of Catholics and their celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage see *Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics* a report based on a 2007 CARA survey commissioned the Committee on Marriage and Family Life of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). This can be accessed at: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/MarriageReport.pdf>

### ***Geographic Region***

The table below summarizes geographic region using categories designated by the U.S. Census.<sup>15</sup> About three-tenths of Catholics reside in the Northeast. Slightly more than one-fifth reside in the Midwest. About one-quarter each reside in the South and the West.

<b>Geographic Region</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Northeast	26%	29%
Midwest	29	22
South	24	25
West	21	24

### ***Frequency of Mass Attendance***

Twenty-three percent of adult Catholics say they attend Mass *every* week (once or more often). Given that those who attend less often have some probability of attending Mass in *any* given week (for the methodology of this calculation see Appendix II), CARA estimates that approximately 31.4 percent of Catholic adults attend Mass in *any* given week (or approximately 16.1 million weekly adult Mass attendees as of April 2008).

One-third of respondents report that they rarely or never attend Mass and one-quarter report that they do so a few times a year. One-tenth each report that they attend once or twice a month and almost every week. One-fifth say they attend every week and 3 percent attend more than once a week.

<b><i>Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?</i></b>		
	<b>2002</b>	<b>2008</b>
Rarely or never	25%	32%
A few times a year	25	24
Once or twice a month	12	10
Almost every week	12	11
Every week	22	20
More than once a week	4	3

<sup>15</sup> The *Northeast* region includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The *Midwest* region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The *South* region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The *West* region includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

The first column in the table on the previous page shows results for frequency of Mass attendance from a poll conducted by CARA using Knowledge Networks in September 2002. The results in 2002 and 2008 are roughly similar. Except that in 2008, more Catholics report that they rarely or never attend Mass.

Differences between the results of Mass attendance questions from Knowledge Networks survey methods and those commonly found in telephone polls, including CARA's previous telephone polls for the USCCB, are related to the effects of an interviewer.<sup>16</sup> Telephone polls involve a personal interaction between respondent and interviewer. Survey researchers have long understood that the social pressures involved in this interaction can create over-reports of certain activities (such as voting or giving to charity) that are considered socially desirable. Responses to questions regarding attendance at religious services are known to be biased toward estimates higher than actual attendance as measured by head counts or time diary studies.

Knowledge Networks surveys use methods that do not require a human interviewer—respondents are answering questions as they appear on-screen (either through a computer or television). Self-administered surveys, such as this, are known to reduce over-reports for questions that have socially desirable response sets, producing results that more closely reflect actual behavior than estimates derived from telephone polls. For more information about these issues see Appendix II.

Throughout this report, responses to the main survey questions are analyzed according to four categories: all respondents, those who attend Mass weekly or more, those attending less than weekly but at least once a month, and those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often. It is important to keep in mind that Mass attendance is correlated with several of the demographic characteristics that are used for subgroup comparisons in this report—in particular, generation, gender, marital status, education, and region.

- Previous research has consistently shown strong generational differences for Mass attendance and related measures of Catholic commitment. Forty-five percent of members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation report attending Mass at least once a week (64 percent at least once a month). This compares to 24 percent of the Vatican II Generation (42 percent at least once a month), 15 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation (39 percent at least once a month), and 18 percent of the Millennial Generation (36 percent at least once a month).
- Women are more likely than men to attend Mass at least once a month (49 compared to 38 percent).
- Thirty-three percent of respondents who are married to a Catholic attend Mass every week. This compares to 11 percent of those whose spouse is not Catholic. Eighteen percent of Catholics who have never been married attend Mass weekly, as do 16 percent of those who are divorced or separated and 16 percent of those who live with a partner.

---

<sup>16</sup> Differences are not limited to Mass attendance and generally are observable for any socially desirable activity from financial giving to frequency of prayer.

Widows are most likely to attend Mass every week (40 percent), although this largely reflects that they are disproportionately members of the Pre-Vatican Generation.

- One in four Catholics (25 percent) with a high school diploma or less attend Mass weekly, compared to 19 percent who attended some college, 22 percent who have a bachelor’s degree, and 33 percent of those with a graduate or professional degree.
- Attendance at Catholic educational institutions also has an effect. Twenty-six percent of Catholics who attended a Catholic elementary or middle school at some point attend Mass weekly compared to 22 percent of those who did not. Those who attended a Catholic high school or a Catholic college or university are especially likely to be weekly Mass attenders (29 percent and 38 percent, respectively).
- Thirty-two percent of adult Catholics in the South say they attend Mass once a week or more (52 percent at least once a month). By comparison, 23 percent of Catholics in the Midwest report this frequency of attendance (49 percent at least once a month), followed by 20 percent in the West (38 percent at least once a moth) and 19 percent in the Northeast (37 percent at least once a month).

***Parish Registration***

Six in ten Catholics are registered at a Catholic parish.

<i>Are you registered at a Catholic parish?</i>		
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>
Yes	60%	61%
No	40	39

Ninety-six percent of those who attend Mass once a week or more often are registered with a parish compared to 85 percent of those who attend Mass at least once a month but less than weekly. Thirty-seven percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often are registered at a parish.

Seventy-four percent of Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics are registered with a parish, whereas 58 percent of younger Catholics are registered. There are no statistically significant differences for registration among Catholics of the Vatican II, Post-Vatican II, and Millennial generations.

Results of a 2005 poll conducted by CARA with Knowledge Networks show similar patterns of parish registration.