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## **Croatia: census, row over Catholic numbers. Ancic (Bishops' Conference spokesman), "figures should be clarified"**

The number of Catholics in Croatia recorded during the 2021 census and published yesterday has sparked the reaction of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the country, as reported by its spokesman Zvonimir Ancic. According to the census, Catholics account for 78.97% of the population, which is a decrease by 7% compared to the 2011 census. "As for the decline in the number of Catholics - Ancic said - we do not yet know what the percentage is because some of the data published is questionable, I mean, these figures must be taken seriously and treated responsibly". The spokesman recalled that "while 78.97% of Croats declared themselves Catholics, another 4.83% said they were Christians, but 87% of these last two also said they belonged to the Catholic Church". "In this way – he added – the total number of Catholics exceeds 83%". "What matters, however", is to interpret the data in light of the "significant changes that have occurred over the last decade". "First - he said - the number of inhabitants has decreased by almost 10%". Then, in his view, "it is a matter of great concern that the share of the population aged between 0 and 14 is just over 14%, and that the share of the population aged 65 or more is about 22.5%".

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