

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

*The Class of 2015:
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*

**A Report to the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life & Vocations
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**



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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of ordinands to the priesthood in 2015. To obtain the names and contact information for these ordinands, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all theologates and houses of formation in fall 2014 to request names and contact information for every seminarian who was scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood in 2015. CARA also requested names from the vocation director at all dioceses and archdioceses in the United States as well as the major superior of all U.S. based institutes of men religious and asked for their support in encouraging their potential ordinands to complete the survey.

CARA then contacted the ordinands by e-mail to explain the project and ask them to complete a brief online survey. At the same time, CARA also e-mailed or faxed a similar request to the seminary rector or president at all theologates in its Catholic ministry formation database as well as all major superiors of clerical and mixed religious institutes, asking them to contact their ordinands for CARA and invite them to participate in the online survey.

After repeated follow-up, a total of 411 ordinands responded to the survey by March 6, 2015. This represents a response rate of approximately 69 percent of the 595 potential ordinands reported to CARA by theologates, houses of formation, arch/dioceses, and religious institutes. These 411 ordinands include 317 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood, from 120 different dioceses and archdioceses, and 94 ordinands to the religious priesthood.

Major Findings

- The average age of ordinands for the Class of 2015 is 34. The median age (midpoint of the distribution) is 31. Eight in ten responding ordinands are between 25 and 39. This distribution is slightly younger than in 2014, but follows the pattern in recent years of average age at ordination in the mid-thirties.
- On average, diocesan ordinands lived in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for 15 years before entering the seminary. Religious ordinands knew the members of their religious institute an average of six years before they entered the seminary.

Background and Country of Origin

- Two-thirds of responding ordinands (69 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white. Compared to the adult Catholic population of the United States, ordinands are more likely to be of Asian or Pacific Islander background (10 percent of responding ordinands), but less likely to be Hispanic/Latino (14 percent of responding ordinands). Compared to diocesan ordinands, religious ordinands are *less* likely to report their race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white.
- One-quarter of the ordinands (25 percent) were born outside the United States, with the largest numbers coming from Colombia, Mexico, the Philippines, Nigeria, Poland, and Vietnam. On average, responding ordinands who were born in another country have lived in the United States for 12 years. Between 20 and 30 percent of ordinands to diocesan priesthood for each of the last ten years were born outside of the United States, as were 25 percent of this year's diocesan ordinands.
- Most ordinands have been Catholic since birth, although 7 percent became Catholic later in life. Eighty-four percent report that both of their parents are Catholic and more than a third (37 percent) have a relative who is a priest or a religious.
- Almost all ordinands in the Class of 2015 (96 percent) have at least one sibling. Seven in ten (74 percent) have more than two siblings, while one in five (22 percent) have five or more siblings. Ordinands are most likely to be the oldest in their family (36 percent).

Education, Ministry, and Work Experience

- More than half of ordinands completed college (60 percent) before entering the seminary. One in seven (15 percent) entered the seminary with a graduate degree. Among those who completed college before entering the seminary, three-quarters (76 percent) entered the seminary at the pre-theology level and 19 percent entered at the theology level. One in three (34 percent) report entering the seminary while in college.
- The most common fields of study for ordinands before entering the seminary are theology or philosophy (20 percent), liberal arts (19 percent), and science (13 percent).

- Half of responding ordinands (51 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is a rate higher than that of all Catholic adults in the United States. In addition, ordinands are somewhat more likely than other U.S. Catholic adults to have attended a Catholic high school and they are much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (45 percent, compared to 7 percent among U.S. Catholic adults).
- Just over a quarter (26 percent) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, averaging a little over \$22,500 in educational debt at entrance to the seminary.
- Six in ten ordinands (61 percent) report some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary, most often in education. Six percent of responding ordinands report prior service in the U.S. Armed Forces. About one in six ordinands (16 percent) report that either parent had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces.
- Ordinands of the Class of 2015 have been active in parish ministries, with eight in ten (78 percent) indicating they served as an altar server and about half (51 percent) reporting service as a lector. One in seven (14 percent) participated in a World Youth Day before entering the seminary.
- About seven in ten ordinands report regularly praying the rosary (70 percent) and participating in Eucharistic adoration (70 percent) before entering the seminary.

Vocational Discernment

- On average, responding ordinands report that they were about 17 when they first considered a vocation to the priesthood. They were encouraged to consider a vocation by an average of four people. Seven in ten (71 percent) say they were encouraged by a parish priest. Other frequent encouragers include friends (46 percent), parishioners (45 percent), and mothers (40 percent).
- Almost half of responding ordinands (48 percent) indicated that they were *discouraged* from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Among those who reported discouragement, on average, two individuals are said to have discouraged them. Twenty-one percent indicate that one person discouraged them from considering the priesthood and 14 percent indicate that two people discouraged them.

Introduction

In December 2005, the Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation (now the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an annual survey of ordinands to the priesthood. The survey was initially developed by the Secretariat in 1998 and has been administered online since 2005. CARA assumed responsibility for the project in 2006, using the online survey developed by the Secretariat. CARA worked with the Secretariat to upgrade the online survey and to incorporate it into the data collection process for CARA's annual survey of priestly formation programs. This report presents results of the survey of ordinands of the Class of 2015.

To obtain the names and contact information for these ordinands, CARA contacted all theologates and houses of formation in fall 2014 and requested each site to provide names and contact information for every seminarian who was scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood in 2015. CARA also requested names from the vocation director at all dioceses and archdioceses in the United States as well as the major superior of all U.S. based institutes of men religious and asked for their support in encouraging their potential ordinands to complete the survey.

CARA then contacted the ordinands by e-mail to explain the project and ask them to complete a brief online survey. At the same time, CARA also e-mailed or faxed a similar request to the seminary rector or president at all theologates in its Catholic ministry formation database as well as all major superiors of clerical and mixed religious institutes, asking them to contact their ordinands for CARA and invite them to participate in the online survey.

After repeated follow-ups, a total of 411 ordinands responded to the survey by March 1, 2015. This represents a response rate of approximately 69 percent of the 595 potential ordinands reported to CARA by theologates, houses of formation, arch/dioceses, and religious institutes. These 411 ordinands include 317 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood, from 120 different dioceses and archdioceses, and 94 ordinands to the religious priesthood.

The questionnaire asked ordinands about their demographic and religious background, education, previous ministry and work experience, encouragement and discouragement to consider the priesthood, and experience with vocation programs. This report presents analyses of each question from all ordinands combined as well as separately for diocesan and religious ordinands. The report also contains trend data on selected items since 1999, the first year for which comparable data on both diocesan and religious ordinands are available.

Ordination to Diocesan or Religious Priesthood

Responding ordinands represent 120 dioceses and eparchies and 28 distinct religious congregations.

The largest number of responses from diocesan ordinands were from the Archdiocese of Newark with 12 respondents. Nine of the responding ordinands are from the Archdiocese of Washington and eight each from Archdiocese of Chicago and the Diocese of Brooklyn.

The largest number of responses from ordinands to the religious priesthood were from the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) with 24 respondents. Twelve of the responding ordinands are from the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans) and eleven are from the Order of Saint Benedict (the Benedictines).¹

On average, responding diocesan ordinands report they lived in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for more than 15 years before they entered the seminary.

| <i>How long did you live in this diocese or eparchy before entering the seminary?</i> | |
|---|--------------|
| | Years |
| Mean | 15 |
| Median | 18 |
| Range | 0-54 |

About one in ten diocesan ordinands (9 percent) report that they lived in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained less than a year before they entered the seminary.

¹ These numbers refer only to ordinands who responded to the survey and do not necessarily mean that these dioceses or religious institutes will ordain the largest number of priests in 2015.

On average, ordinands from religious institutes report that they knew the members of their religious institute for six years before they entered the seminary.

| <i>How long did you know the members of this religious institute before entering the seminary?</i> | |
|---|--------------|
| | Years |
| Mean | 6 |
| Median | 5 |
| Range | 0-35 |

One in eight ordinands from religious institutes (12 percent) report that they knew the members of their religious institute a year or less before they entered the seminary.

Age of Ordinands

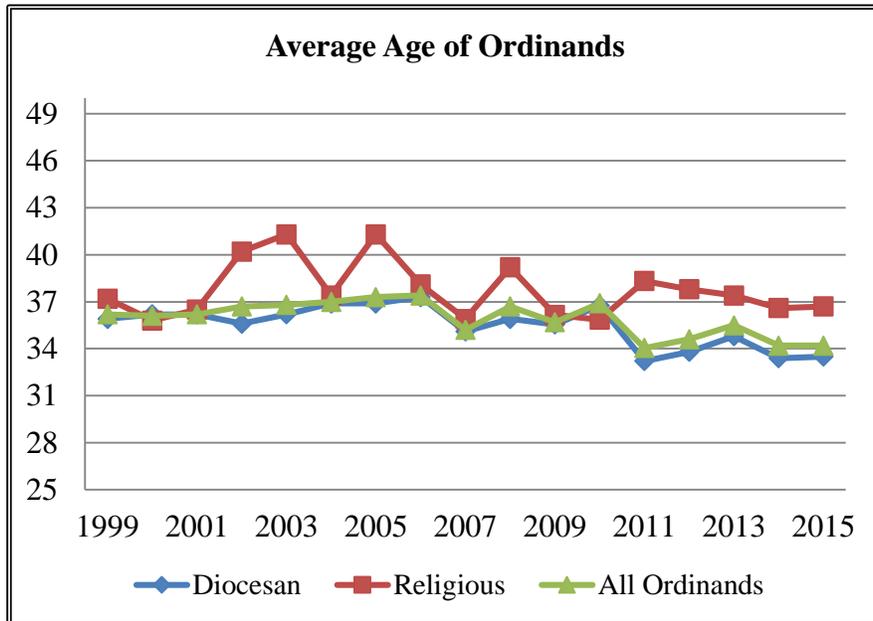
The average age of responding ordinands of the Class of 2015 is 34. Eight in ten (82 percent) are between 25 and 39.

| Age of Ordinands | | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of all responding ordinands in each age category | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Less than 25 | 1% | 1% | 0% |
| Age 25-29 | 40 | 47 | 15 |
| Age 30-34 | 30 | 26 | 45 |
| Age 35-39 | 12 | 10 | 19 |
| Age 40-44 | 6 | 5 | 8 |
| Age 45-49 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Age 50-54 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Age 55-59 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Age 60 and older | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Average age | 34 | 34 | 37 |
| Median age | 31 | 30 | 34 |
| Range in years | 24-64 | 24-64 | 25-64 |

The youngest responding ordinand of the Class of 2015 is 24 and the oldest is 64 years of age. Thirteen respondents are being ordained to the priesthood after age 60.

Diocesan ordinands are younger than religious ordinands in the Class of 2015. The median age of diocesan ordinands is 30, which means that half of the diocesan ordinands responding to the survey this year are 30 years old or younger. By contrast, the median age of religious ordinands is 34.

Ordinands of last year's Class of 2014 averaged 34 years of age, the same as the ordinands of the Class of 2015. On average, ordinands from religious institutes are somewhat older than diocesan ordinands.²



The Class of 2015 follows the pattern in recent years of average age at ordination in the mid-thirties.

² Because the total number of religious ordinands is relatively small each year, the line representing the average age of religious ordinands varies widely across years.

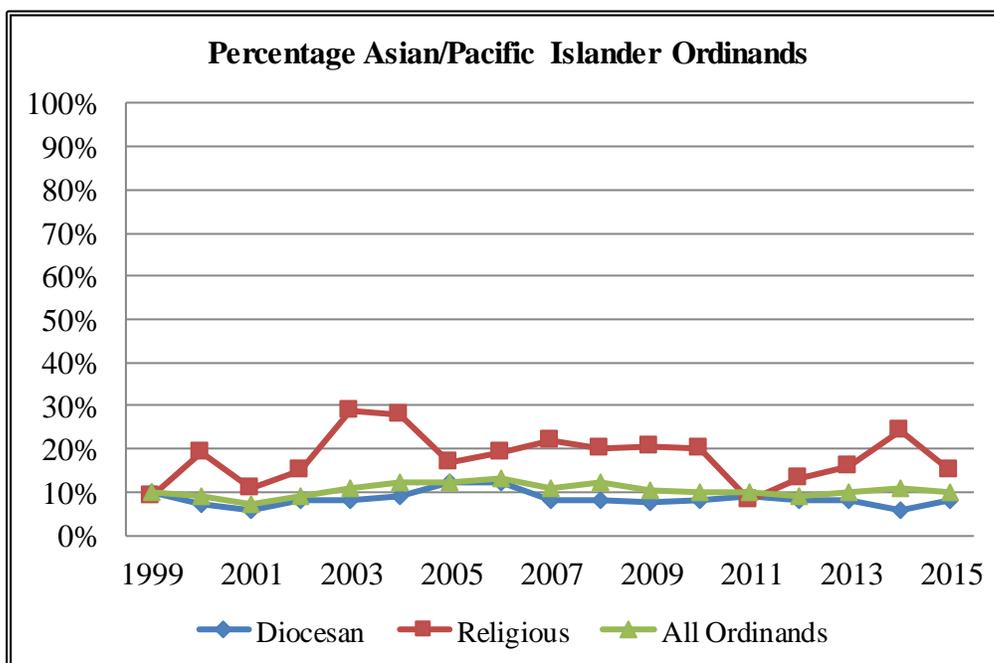
Race and Ethnic Background

More than two-thirds of responding ordinands (69 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white.

| Race and Ethnic Background of Ordinands and Adult Catholics | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category | | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious | Adult Catholics Nationally |
| Caucasian/European American/white | 69% | 72% | 61% | 58% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 14 | 14 | 14 | 34 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian | 10 | 8 | 15 | 4 |
| African/African American/black | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Native American | <1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 2 | 2 | 2 | ----* |

* Data unavailable.

Compared to data from a recent CARA telephone poll of self-identified adult Catholics in the United States, Caucasian/European American/white ordinands are over-represented among responding ordinands, relative to their proportion of the U.S. adult Catholic population, while Hispanics/Latinos are under-represented. Caucasian/European American/white constitutes 58 percent of U.S. Catholics overall but are 69 percent of responding ordinands. By contrast, Hispanics/Latinos constitute approximately 34 percent of U.S. adult Catholics but make up 14 percent of responding ordinands.



Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States

Three in four responding ordinands (75 percent) were born in the United States.

| Country of Birth of Ordinands | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| United States | 75% | 75% | 75% |
| Colombia | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Mexico | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Philippines | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Nigeria | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Poland | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Vietnam | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Kenya | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| South Korea | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Argentina | <1 | 0 | 2 |
| China | <1 | 0 | 2 |
| Dominican Republic | <1 | 1 | 0 |
| Italy | <1 | 1 | 0 |
| Japan | <1 | 1 | 0 |
| Other countries | 5 | 5 | 11 |

Ordinands from religious institutes and dioceses are equally likely to have been born outside the United States. Three-quarters of both the diocesan and religious institute ordinands were born in the United States (75 percent).

Colombia, Mexico, and the Philippines are the most frequently mentioned countries of birth among responding ordinands who were born outside the United States. The responding ordinands identified a total of 30 different countries of origin.

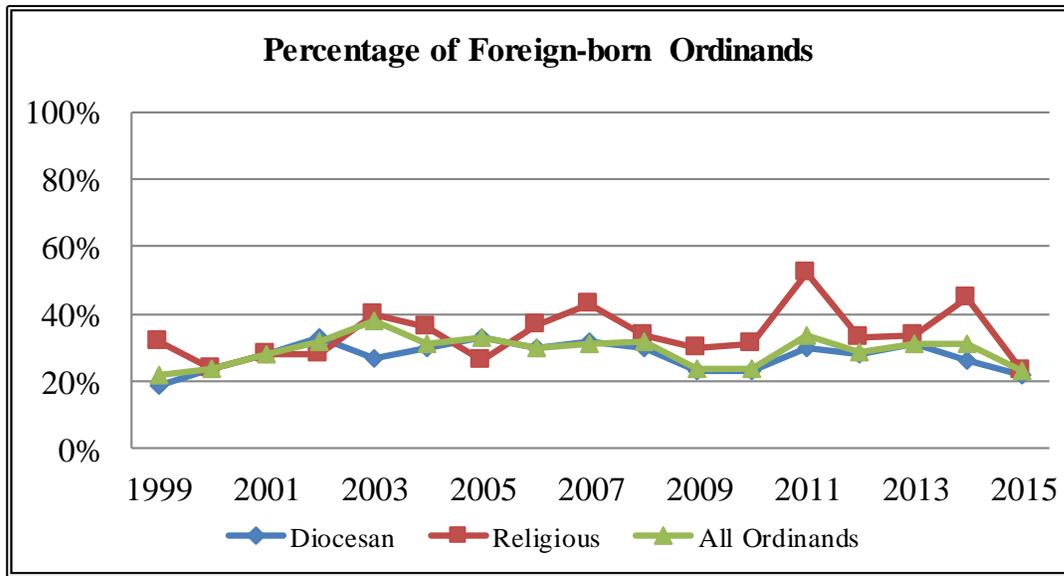
On average, responding ordinands who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for 12 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2007 or earlier.

| Year of Entry to the U.S. of Foreign-born Ordinands | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Mean | 2003 | 2005 | 1998 |
| Median | 2007 | 2008 | 2002 |
| Range | 1960-2014 | 1975-2014 | 1960-2011 |

On average, responding foreign-born ordinands came to live in the United States at age 23. Religious ordinands were, on average, slightly younger than diocesan ordinands when they came to live in the United States.

| Age at Entry to the United States of Foreign-born Ordinands | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Mean | 23 | 24 | 21 |
| Median | 25 | 25 | 22 |
| Range | 0-42 | 0-42 | 0-40 |

The percentage of ordinands who are foreign-born increased from 22 percent in 1999 to 38 percent in 2003, but has declined since that point and is now at 23 percent in 2015.



While the percentage of foreign-born ordinands from religious institutes has fluctuated somewhat since 1999 due to the relatively smaller number of religious ordinands, the diocesan percentage has remained relatively steady at approximately 20 to 30 percent of all diocesan ordinands.

Catholic Background

Nine in ten responding ordinands (93 percent) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age of conversion was about 21.

| Catholic Background | | | |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Catholic since birth | 93% | 92% | 94% |
| Became Catholic later | 7 | 8 | 6 |
| Average age at conversion | 21 | 20 | 25 |

Most ordinands who converted from another denomination or faith tradition are from a Protestant tradition (e.g., Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, or Anglican). One ordinand was formerly Ethiopian Orthodox. Six responding ordinands were raised without a faith tradition.

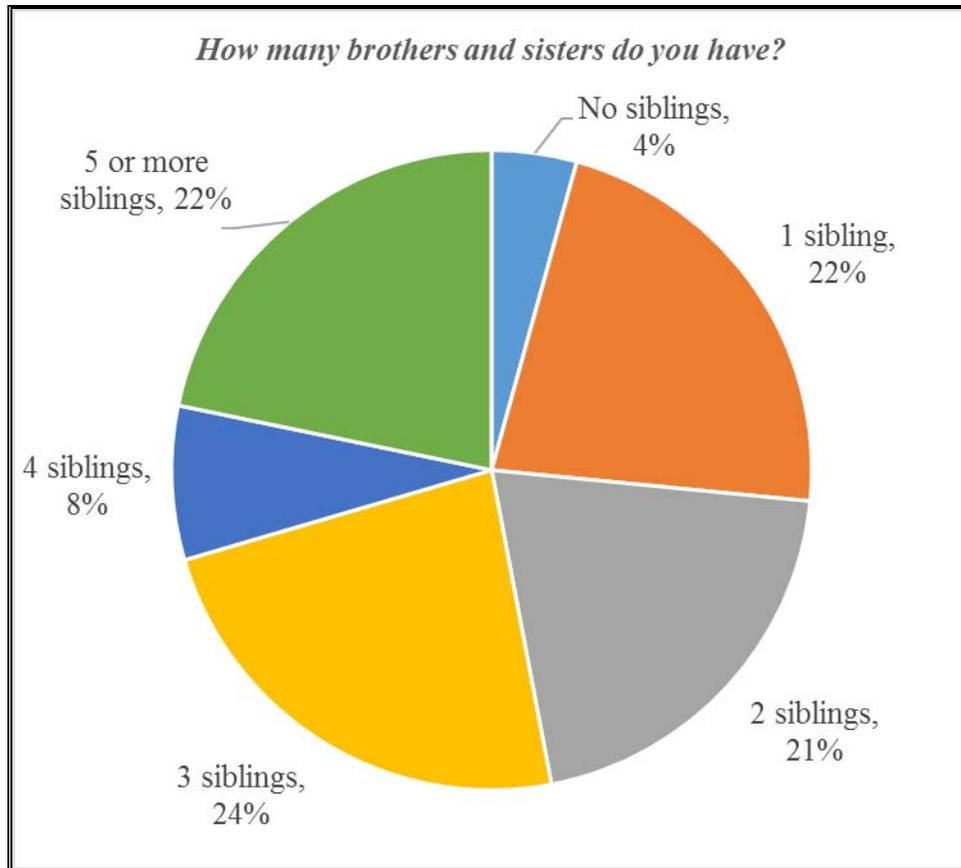
Nearly all ordinands report that when they were children they had at least one parent who was Catholic; more than eight in ten (84 percent) report that both parents were Catholic.

| <i>What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?</i> | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Both parents Catholic | 84% | 82% | 88% |
| Mother Catholic, father not | 9 | 10 | 6 |
| Father Catholic, mother not | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Neither parent was Catholic | 4 | 4 | 3 |

In addition to the predominantly Catholic background of their parents, many ordinands also report that they have a relative who is a priest or a religious. In the Class of 2015, 37 percent of responding ordinands report that they have a relative who is a priest or a religious (not shown in the table above). Religious ordinands are more likely than diocesan ordinands to report this (44 percent compared to 36 percent).

Siblings

Almost all ordinands in the Class of 2015 (96 percent) have at least one sibling. About half (53 percent) have two to four siblings, while one in five (22 percent) have five or more siblings.



On average, ordinands have three to four siblings (overall average is three siblings). Ordinands from both religious orders and dioceses have on average the same number of siblings (mean=3.2).

| <i>What is your birth order?</i> | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Oldest | 36% | 38% | 33% |
| Middle | 33 | 31 | 40 |
| Youngest | 25 | 26 | 23 |
| Only child | 5 | 5 | 4 |

Overall, ordinands are slightly more likely to be the oldest child in their family.

Education

The responding ordinands are highly educated. Three in five (60 percent) completed college before entering the seminary.³

| Highest Education Completed Before the Seminary | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Elementary | 2% | 3% | 0% |
| High school | 21 | 23 | 16 |
| Trade or technical school | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Some college, no degree | 16 | 17 | 11 |
| Undergraduate degree | 45 | 43 | 53 |
| Graduate degree | 15 | 13 | 20 |

A small number of ordinands (2 percent) report that they completed elementary school only before entering the seminary. All of these men then entered the seminary in high school. Twenty-one percent of ordinands of the Class of 2015 completed only high school before entering the seminary. One in six (17 percent) attended some college or a technical school before entering the seminary. Most responding ordinands (60 percent) completed college before entering the seminary. Religious ordinands are more likely than diocesan ordinands to have a graduate degree before entering the seminary (20 percent compared to 13 percent).

| <i>At what level did you first enter the seminary?</i> | | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| High school | 6% | 6% | 6% |
| College | 34 | 36 | 28 |
| Pre-theology | 48 | 50 | 38 |
| Theology | 13 | 9 | 28 |

³ Some respondents entered the seminary at the high school or college level and thus would not complete these levels of education before entering the seminary.

Almost eight in ten ordinands (79 percent) who report their highest level of education before seminary is high school entered the seminary while in college. Among those who completed their undergraduate education before entering the seminary (including those who went on to graduate school), about three-quarters (76 percent) entered the seminary at the pre-theology level and 19 percent entered at the theology level.

One in five ordinands (20 percent) studied in the area of theology or philosophy before entering the seminary. Liberal arts and science are the second and third most common areas of study.

| Field of Study before the Seminary | | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Theology or Philosophy | 20% | 20% | 22% |
| Liberal Arts | 19 | 21 | 12 |
| Science | 13 | 11 | 18 |
| Business | 10 | 11 | 8 |
| Engineering | 9 | 10 | 4 |
| Social Sciences | 8 | 6 | 27 |
| Computers or Information Technology | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| Education | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| Fine Arts | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Law | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 8 | 7 | 11 |

Catholic Education

Half of responding ordinands (51 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school. About four in ten attended a Catholic high school (43 percent) and a similar proportion (45 percent) attended a Catholic college.

| Attendance at Catholic School* | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Elementary | 51% | 49% | 58% |
| High School | 43 | 40 | 54 |
| College | 45 | 41 | 56 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

Ordinands in 2015 are slightly more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2008 national poll conducted by CARA⁴, 42 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 51 percent of ordinands who have done so. Ordinands are also more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (43 percent of ordinands, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics), and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (45 percent of ordinands, compared to just 7 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, 58 percent of responding ordinands (59 percent of diocesan ordinands and 57 percent of religious ordinands) participated in a religious education program in their parish. On average, they completed seven years of parish religious education.

Only 7 percent of ordinands report being home schooled at some time in their educational background, with diocesan ordinands a little more likely to have been home schooled (7 percent) than religious ordinands (5 percent). Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home-schooled was seven years.

⁴*Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics.* April 2008. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

Educational Debt

A little over quarter of responding ordinands (26 percent) of the Class of 2015 carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or at the time they entered the religious institute, for those in religious orders).

| Educational Debt | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Percentage with debt | 26% | 24% | 34% |
| Amount of debt at entrance | | | |
| Mean | \$22,612 | \$20,770 | \$26,997 |
| Median | \$15,000 | \$16,000 | \$16,000 |
| Range | \$1,800- \$150,000 | \$2,000- \$110,000 | \$1,800- \$150,000 |
| Current educational debt | | | |
| Mean | \$17,907 | \$21,067 | \$9,833 |
| Median | \$18,250 | \$19,250 | \$11,000 |
| Range | 0-\$105,000 | 0-\$105,000 | 0-\$85,000 |

Religious ordinands are more likely than men being ordained for dioceses to have educational debt and the amount of debt they carried at entrance is higher, on average, among these respondents.

- Diocesan ordinands who have educational debt averaged \$20,770 in educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, compared to nearly \$27,000 among religious ordinands at the time they entered their institute. Several report that their educational debt is currently paid off, with the average current educational debt of just under \$18,000 among those who entered with educational debt.
- Religious ordinands are a little more likely than diocesan ordinands to have paid off or substantially paid down their educational debt prior to ordination. Among those who still have educational debt at the time of this survey, the average amount of that debt is \$17,907. The average remaining educational debt for diocesan ordinands is just over \$21,000 and for religious ordinands is just under \$10,000.

Work Experience

Six in ten ordinands (61 percent) report some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. Diocesan and religious ordinands are equally likely to have work experience (61 percent of diocesan ordinands compared to 64 percent of religious ordinands).

| Prior Full-time Work Experience | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Education | 16% | 14% | 23% |
| Sales, customer service | 14 | 15 | 10 |
| Church ministry, parish life | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Construction, labor, farming | 8 | 9 | 2 |
| Business | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| Accounting, finance, insurance | 6 | 5 | 10 |
| Engineer, architect | 6 | 7 | 2 |
| Student | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Restaurant/food services | 5 | 6 | 2 |
| Medical, scientist | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Military | 4 | 5 | 2 |
| Management | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Government, law enforcement | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Computers, IT | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| Legal professions | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Other work | 5 | 5 | 7 |

Ordinands who mentioned prior work experience were most likely to report that they were educators. Only 8 percent of ordinands worked in church ministry or parish life prior to entering the seminary.

Military Experience

Six percent of responding ordinands reports having served in the U.S. Armed Forces (6 percent of diocesan ordinands and 6 percent of religious ordinands). Among those with military experience, almost four in ten (36 percent) served in the Army.

| Service in the U.S. Armed Forces* | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (among respondents who indicated prior military service) | | | |
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Army | 36% | 40% | 25% |
| Air Force | 28 | 30 | 25 |
| Marines | 16 | 10 | 50 |
| Navy | 8 | 5 | 25 |
| National Guard | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Coast Guard | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Reserve | 4 | 5 | 0 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

The table above shows the branch of service among those who reported military service. Only four religious ordinands reported service, compared to twenty diocesan ordinands. Diocesan ordinands are most likely to indicate service in the Army or the Air Force (70 percent).

Ordinands were also asked whether either of their parents was a career military person. About one in six ordinands (16 percent) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. Diocesan ordinands were equally as likely as religious ordinands to report having a parent with a military career (15 percent compared to 16 percent).

Consideration of Priesthood

On average, ordinands report that they were about 17 years old when they first considered a vocation to the priesthood, with little variation between diocesan and religious ordinands.

| Age When Ordinands First Considered Priesthood | | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Preschool (5 or younger) | 5% | 5% | 6% |
| Elementary (6 through 13) | 34 | 38 | 21 |
| High school (14 through 17) | 22 | 23 | 22 |
| College (18 through 21) | 19 | 16 | 30 |
| Adulthood (22 or older) | 19 | 18 | 22 |
| | | | |
| Mean | 17 | 16 | 18 |
| Median | 16 | 15 | 18 |
| Range | 4-58 | 4-58 | 4-54 |

- A third of ordinands first considered a vocation to priesthood when they were in elementary school (ages six through 13). Diocesan ordinands are a little more likely than religious ordinands to consider a vocation in elementary school.
- More than one in five first considered a vocation in high school (ages 14 through 17). One in five first considered this in college. Religious ordinands are more likely than diocesan ordinands to have first considered a vocation to priesthood during their college years.
- One in five first considered a vocation to priesthood as adults, ages 22 or older.

Encouragement to Consider Priesthood

Nine in ten ordinands (93 percent) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life. Ordinands indicate that, on average, four individuals encouraged their vocation. Seven in ten (71 percent) say they were encouraged by a parish priest. Other frequent encouragers include friends (46 percent), parishioners (45 percent), and mothers (40 percent).

| Encouragement to Consider Priesthood* | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (Percentage checking each response) | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Parish priest | 71% | 75% | 58% |
| Friend | 46 | 45 | 51 |
| Parishioner | 45 | 47 | 38 |
| Mother | 40 | 40 | 38 |
| Father | 30 | 30 | 29 |
| Teacher/Catechist | 26 | 25 | 29 |
| Grandparent | 23 | 24 | 18 |
| Other relative | 22 | 20 | 28 |
| Campus minister/School chaplain | 21 | 18 | 32 |
| Religious Sister | 17 | 15 | 24 |
| Youth minister | 16 | 16 | 14 |
| Bishop | 15 | 17 | 10 |
| Religious Brother | 11 | 7 | 27 |
| Deacon | 10 | 11 | 8 |
| Military chaplain | 3 | 4 | 3 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Diocesan ordinands are more likely than religious ordinands to have been encouraged by a parish priest (75 percent compared to 58 percent), a parishioner (47 percent compared to 38 percent), a grandparent (24 percent compared to 18 percent), or a bishop (17 percent compared to 10 percent).
- Religious ordinands are more likely than diocesan ordinands to report encouragement from friends (51 percent compared to 45 percent), other relatives (28 percent compared to 20 percent), a campus minister/school chaplain (32 percent compared to 18 percent), religious Sister (24 percent compared to 15 percent), or a religious Brother (27 percent compared to 7 percent).

Discouragement from Considering Priesthood

Almost half of responding ordinands (48 percent) indicated that they were *discouraged* from considering the priesthood by one or more persons (not shown in the table below). Among those who reported discouragement, on average, two individuals are said to have discouraged them. Twenty-one percent indicate that one person discouraged them from considering the priesthood and 14 percent indicate that two people discouraged them.

| Discouragement from Considering Priesthood* | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Among ordinands reporting someone discouraged them | | | |
| (Percentage checking each response) | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Friend or classmate | 28% | 29% | 27% |
| Other family member | 21 | 19 | 26 |
| Father | 12 | 10 | 20 |
| Colleague or co-worker | 10 | 9 | 13 |
| Mother | 9 | 9 | 12 |
| Priest or other clergy | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Teacher | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Religious sister or brother | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Youth minister | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Someone else | 3 | 3 | 1 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

Among those who report being *discouraged* from considering a vocation to the priesthood, three in ten ordinands report that they were discouraged by friends or classmates.

- One in five responding ordinands (21 percent) were discouraged from considering a priestly vocation by some other family member (but not a parent). About one in ten were discouraged from considering a vocation by their mother (9 percent) or father (12 percent).
- Another one in ten (10 percent) were discouraged from considering a vocation by a colleague or co-worker.
- Fewer than one in ten responding ordinands report being discouraged from considering a priestly vocation by clergy (9 percent), a teacher (5 percent), or a religious sister or brother (1 percent).
- Three percent of responding ordinands report being discouraged by someone else.

Participation in Programs, Activities, or Ministries

Many ordinands were active in Church-sponsored programs and activities before entering the seminary. Parish youth groups, Boy Scouts, and Knights of Columbus are among the most common programs or activities reported by ordinands.

| Participation in Programs or Activities* | | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (Percentage checking each response) | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Parish youth group | 46% | 49% | 34% |
| Boy Scouts | 31 | 34 | 23 |
| Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center | 26 | 25 | 29 |
| Knights of Columbus | 22 | 24 | 13 |
| Parish young adult group | 20 | 19 | 21 |
| Charismatic Renewal | 15 | 16 | 12 |
| Right to Life | 14 | 13 | 16 |
| St. Vincent de Paul Society | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Cursillo | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Religious institute volunteer | 5 | 4 | 11 |
| Serra Club | 1 | 1 | 1 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Almost half of responding ordinands participated in parish youth groups (46 percent).
- One in three participated in the Boy Scouts (31 percent).
- About a quarter participated in Catholic campus ministry (26 percent), or in the Knights of Columbus (22 percent).
- One in five participated in parish young adult groups (20 percent).
- About one in seven have been active in Charismatic Renewal (15 percent), and slightly fewer participated in Right to Life groups (14 percent).
- Among the activities or programs about which they were asked, ordinands were *least* likely to have been involved in St. Vincent de Paul Society, Cursillo, as a volunteer in a religious institute, or in the Serra Club.

Participation in Other Youth Ministry Programs

Percentage responding

| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
|---|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| World Youth Day | 14% | 15% | 12% |
| Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference | 10 | 11 | 10 |
| National Catholic Youth Conference | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Marian Days | 4 | 3 | 6 |

- One in seven ordinands (14 percent) reports having attended World Youth Day before entering the seminary. Diocesan ordinands are slightly more likely than religious ordinands to have attended World Youth Day (15 percent compared to 12 percent) and the Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference (11 percent compared to 10 percent).
- Nine percent of ordinands overall have attended the National Catholic Youth Conference.
- Religious ordinands are more likely than diocesan ordinands to have attended Marian Days (6 percent compared to 3 percent).

Most ordinands participated in one or more liturgical ministries in the parish before entering the seminary. Eight in ten were altar servers.

| Participation in Parish Ministries* | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (Percentage checking each response) | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Altar server | 78% | 78% | 76% |
| Lector | 51 | 52 | 48 |
| Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion | 46 | 46 | 45 |
| Catechist | 37 | 37 | 35 |
| Campus ministry/Youth ministry | 32 | 32 | 33 |
| Confirmation sponsor/godfather | 32 | 32 | 31 |
| Cantor or music minister | 22 | 23 | 19 |
| RCIA team member/sponsor | 14 | 15 | 13 |
| Usher/minister of hospitality | 13 | 12 | 15 |
| Liturgy committee member | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Parish pastoral council member | 8 | 8 | 5 |
| Full-time parish/diocesan employee | 6 | 5 | 6 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

Among the parish ministries listed on the survey, responding ordinands were most likely to report that they served in liturgical ministries such as altar server, lector, or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion before entering the seminary. Some served in educational roles within the Church, with about four in ten serving as a catechist and a third serving either as a confirmation sponsor/godfather or in campus ministry or youth ministry.

Prayer Practices

Seven in ten responding ordinands (70 percent) regularly prayed the rosary and participated in Eucharistic Adoration before entering the seminary.

| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Rosary | 70% | 72% | 64% |
| Eucharistic Adoration | 70 | 70 | 70 |
| Prayer group/Bible study | 47 | 45 | 54 |
| High School Retreats | 39 | 38 | 41 |
| Lectio Divina | 33 | 32 | 36 |
| College Retreats | 30 | 28 | 37 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

Religious ordinands are similar to diocesan ordinands in their prayer practices prior to entering the seminary.

- Religious ordinands are a little less likely than diocesan ordinands to pray the rosary (64 percent compared to 72 percent) before entering the seminary.
- Almost half of the responding ordinands (47 percent) regularly participated in a prayer group or Bible study before entering the seminary and about four in ten (39 percent) participated in high school retreats.

Vocation Programs and Vocational Advertising

Among the vocation programs identified, responding ordinands are most likely to have experienced a “Come and See” weekend. Almost two thirds (65 percent) participated in at least one of the listed vocation programs before entering the seminary.

| Vocation Programs* | | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (Percentage checking each response) | | | |
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or at the religious institute/society | 45% | 41% | 57% |
| High school vocation programs | 14 | 12 | 20 |
| College vocation program | 14 | 12 | 18 |
| Quo Vadis retreat/Discernment retreat | 13 | 15 | 7 |
| Elementary school/CCD vocation programs | 11 | 11 | 9 |
| Other parish vocation programs | 10 | 11 | 9 |
| Operation Andrew | 6 | 8 | 1 |
| Traveling Chalice/Cup/Cross/Statue programs | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| * Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category. | | | |

- About one in seven responding ordinands participated in high school (14 percent) or college (14 percent) vocation programs, or a Quo Vadis or discernment retreat (13 percent) before entering the seminary.
- Religious ordinands were more likely than diocesan ordinands to report having attended a “Come and See” weekend. More than half religious ordinands (57 percent) attended such a program, compared to four in ten diocesan ordinands (41 percent).

In addition to the vocation programs listed above, seven in ten responding ordinands (72 percent) have seen the vocational promotion DVD “Fishers of Men,” published by the USCCB. Diocesan ordinands are more likely than religious ordinands to have seen the DVD (80 percent compared to 43 percent).