

**March 2020**

***The Class of 2020:  
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood***

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

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Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*

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



**March 2020**

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**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a national survey of seminarians scheduled for ordination to the priesthood in 2020. The report is a part of collaboration between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). The purpose of this report is to compile information regarding men who are ordained to priesthood within a particular year.

The data collection for this report involved identifying ordinands to the priesthood in 2020 by contacting all theologates, houses of formation, dioceses, archdioceses, eparchies, and institutes of men religious in the United States. The resulting contact list 448 ordinands were used to administer the survey.

The survey was administered between February 6 and March 22. The survey invitation was sent by email to 448 identified ordinands. Follow-up emails were regularly sent to the ordinands who delayed their response. A total of 347 ordinands completed the survey (77% response rate). The responding ordinands included 285 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (82% of all respondents) and 62 ordinands to the religious priesthood (18%).

## Major Findings

- Four in five (83%) responding ordinands are preparing for ordination to a diocese or eparchy. Responding ordinands from religious institutes comprise the remaining 17%. The biggest group of responding ordinands (about one-third) is completing studies at one of the seminaries in the Midwest. More than one in ten is completing studies at a seminary abroad.
- On average, responding diocesan ordinands lived in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for 17 years before they entered the seminary. Responding ordinands from religious institutes knew the members of their religious institute for five years, on average, before they entered the seminary.

### *Age*

- On average, responding ordinands first considered priesthood when they were 16 years old. Responding ordinands were scheduled for ordination on average 18 years later (at the age of 34).
- Since 1999, the average age of responding ordinands has been in the mid-thirties, trending slightly younger, from an average of 36 in 1999 to the current average age of 34.

### *Race/Ethnicity and Culture*

- Two-thirds of responding ordinands (67%) are Caucasian. One in six (16%) is Hispanic/Latino. One in ten (10%) is Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. And one in twenty (6%) is African/African American/black.
- A quarter (25%) is foreign-born. By comparison, since 1999, on average, 29% of responding ordinands were foreign-born.
- The four most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Philippines, Nigeria, and Colombia. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 11 years ago at the age of 25.

### *Education*

- One in ten (10%) responding ordinands report being home schooled. Those who were home schooled report eight years of home schooling, on average.
- Between 35% and 44% of all responding ordinands attended a Catholic school for at least some part of their schooling. Six in ten responding ordinands (60%) participated in a religious education program in their parish for seven years, on average.
- More than half of responding ordinands (54%) report that they completed graduate or undergraduate degrees before entering the seminary.

- Among those who attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary, the most common fields of study was theology or philosophy, social science, science or math, or business.
- One-half of responding ordinands (46%) entered their seminary program at the pre-theology level. Three in ten (28%) carried educational debt, which averaged \$28,828 at the time they entered the seminary. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 4 percentage points more likely than those from dioceses to carry educational debt (31% compared to 27%).

### *Work*

- Three in five responding ordinands (55%) reported full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in six (18%) worked in education. Responding ordinands from religious institutes who have prior full-time work experience are 19 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education (33% compared to 14%).
- One in ten responding ordinands (13%) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. One in twenty (6%) responding ordinands served in the U.S. Armed Forces themselves. The percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military varies considerably from year to year.

### *Vocational Discernment*

- Nine in ten responding ordinands (90%) report being baptized Catholic as an infant. Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 19. Just over four in five responding ordinands (85%) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children. One in three (35%) has or had a relative who is a priest or religious.
- Seven in ten responding ordinands (72%) participated in Eucharistic Adoration on a regular basis before entering the seminary, a similar proportion (70%) prayed the rosary, more than two in five (44%) attended prayer group/Bible study, and two in five (38%) participated in high school retreats. One in three attended Lectio Divina (33%) and/or participated in college retreats (31%).
- In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands (51%) participated in a parish youth group. About three in ten (29%) participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center.
- In regard to participation in parish ministries, just over seven in ten responding ordinands (73%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Half (50%) served as lectors. Four in ten (40%) served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. About three in ten served as catechists (33%), in campus ministry or youth ministry (32%) or as a confirmation sponsor/godfather (30%).

- Nine in ten responding ordinands (89%) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life (most frequently, the parish priest, a friend, or another parishioner).
- Half of responding ordinands (52%) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Most often, this person was a friend/classmate or a family member (other than parents).
- In regard to participation in vocation programs before entering the seminary, half of responding ordinands (46%) report participating in “Come and See” weekends at the seminary or the religious institute/society. During their seminary years, at least seven in ten ordinands who participated in available programs reported that a Pastoral Year internship, a Spiritual Year, a Thirty Day Retreat, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), or Priestly fraternity group (e.g. Jesus Caritas) contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation.

## 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 responding 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 improve 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 from the Class of 2020 survey.

To obtain the names and contact information for the ordinands, in fall 2019 and winter 2020, CARA contacted all theologates, houses of formation, dioceses, eparchies, and institutes for men religious in the United States to ask them for the names and contact information of all men scheduled for ordination to priesthood in 2020. The resulting contact list of 448 ordinands were used to administer the survey.

CARA then contacted these men by email to explain the project and to ask them to complete an online survey (with a pdf version of the survey available for those who preferred that option). The survey was administered between February 6 and March 22. The survey invitation was sent by email to 448 identified ordinands. Follow-up emails were regularly sent to the ordinands who delayed their response. A total of 347 ordinands completed the survey (77% response rate). The respondents included 285 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (82% of all responding ordinands) and 62 ordinands to the religious priesthood (18%).

The questionnaire asked responding ordinands about their demographic and religious background, education, previous ministry and work experience, as well as various aspects of vocation discernment (e.g., people encouraging and discouraging them from considering priesthood, experience with vocation programs). This report describes responses to the questions from all responding ordinands combined as well as separately for diocesan ordinands and ordinands from religious institutes. The report also contains selected trend data since 1999, the first year for which comparable data on both diocesan and responding ordinands from religious institutes are available.



## Part I: Ordinands to Secular (Diocesan) and Religious Priesthood

Responding ordinands represent 130 U.S. dioceses and eparchies and 34 distinct religious congregations.

The greatest number of responses from diocesan ordinands came from the Archdiocese of Newark (ten respondents) followed by Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Dioceses of Joliet and Springfield in Illinois (seven respondents each), as well as the Archdioceses of Philadelphia and Diocese of Saint Augustine (six respondents each).

The greatest number of responses from ordinands to the religious priesthood came from the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and Order of Preachers (Dominicans) with ten respondents each.<sup>1</sup>

<b>How long did you live in this diocese or eparchy before entering the seminary?</b>		<b>How long did you know the members of this institute or society before entering the seminary?</b>	
Time in years		Time in years	
	<b>Diocesan</b>		<b>Religious</b>
Mean	17	Mean	5
Median	18	Median	4
Range	0-36	Range	0-13

Responding diocesan ordinands report that they lived in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for 17 years on average before they entered the seminary. Half of them reported living in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for 18 years or more.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes report that they knew the members of their religious institute for five years before they entered the seminary (a median of four years).

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers refer only to responding ordinands and do not necessarily mean that these dioceses and religious institutes will ordain the largest number of priests in 2020.

*One in seven responding ordinands (14%) report studying at a seminary outside of the United States (e.g., Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy).*

<b>Distribution of Responding Ordinands by the Location of Their Seminary</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Midwest	35	32	35
Northeast	21	12	23
South	20	31	18
West	10	12	9
<b>USA - subtotal</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>85</b>
Abroad	14	14	14

In the United States, one in three responding ordinands (35%) are studying at one of the seminaries located in the Midwest. One in five (21%) are studying at seminaries in the Northeast. Another one in five (20%) are studying at seminaries in the South. One in ten (10%) are studying at seminaries in the West.

## Part II: Age

The second part of the report focuses on the age of ordinands when they first considered priesthood and their current age (in the year when they are scheduled for ordination).

On average, responding ordinands first considered priesthood when they were 16 years old. They are now scheduled for ordination 18 years later on average (at the age of 34). Responding ordinands from religious institutes are two years older than responding diocesan ordinands, on average, at the time of ordination.

### Age When First Considered Priesthood and Ordination

*On average, responding ordinands were 16 years old, with half age 15 or younger when they first considered vocation to priesthood. Notably, the age when they first considered a vocation varies substantially, from three to 58.*

<b>How old were you when you first considered a vocation to the priesthood?</b>			
Time in years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	16	18	16
Median	15	18	15
Range	3-58	4-41	3-58

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were two years older on average than responding diocesan ordinands when they first considered a vocation to priesthood:

- On average, responding diocesan ordinands were age 16 (half of them were 15 or older) when they first considered a vocation to priesthood.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were on average age 18 (a median of 18) when they first considered a vocation to priesthood.

The table below provides an alternative description for the same question that is shown in the table on the previous page.

<b>How old were you when you first considered a vocation to the priesthood?</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Preschool (5 or younger)	6	2	8
Elementary (6 through 13)	36	24	38
High school (14 through 17)	18	21	17
College (18 through 21)	23	29	21
Adulthood (22 or older)	17	24	15

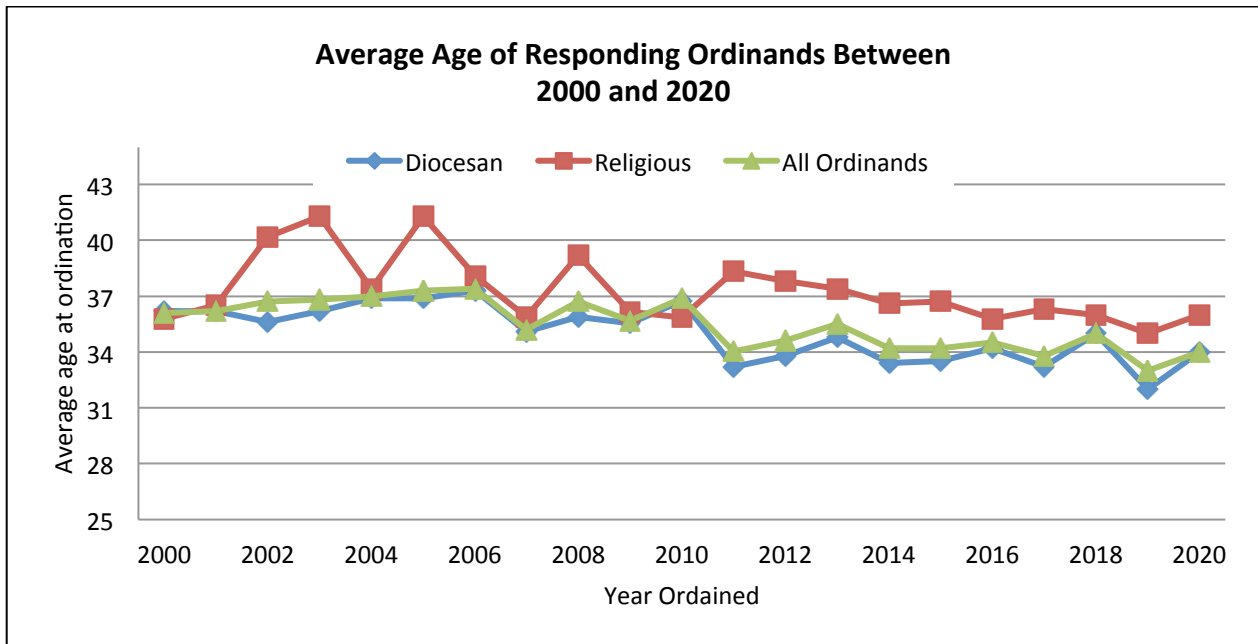
- More than a third of responding ordinands (36%) first considered a vocation to the priesthood while they were in elementary school (ages 6 through 13).
- One in six responding ordinands (18%) first considered a vocation to the priesthood in high school (ages 14 through 17).
- Almost one in four (23%) first considered a vocation in college (ages 18 through 21).
- One in six (17%) first considered a vocation in adulthood (ages 22 or older).

Religious ordinands are 9 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to have first considered a vocation to the priesthood during their adulthood, while diocesan ordinands are 14 percentage points more likely than religious ordinands to have first considered this during their elementary years.

## Age When Scheduled for Ordination

<b>Age at Ordination</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
30 years or younger	43	15	50
31-40 years	41	71	34
41-50 years	9	13	9
51 years or older	6	2	7
Mean	34	36	34
Median	32	34	31
Range	25-69	27-53	25-69

The average age at the time of ordination among all responding ordinands is 34 years old, with half being ordained at age 32 or younger at the time of the survey. The youngest will be 25 at ordination and the oldest will be 69.



The Class of 2020 follows the pattern in recent years of average age at ordination in the mid-thirties.

### Part III: Race/Ethnicity and Cultural Background

The third part of the report focuses on selected demographics about the responding ordinands, including information about race and ethnicity, information pertaining to immigration to the United States (for ordinands born abroad), and information regarding siblings.

The majority of responding ordinands (67%) is Caucasian (two in three) and three in four (75%) were born in the United States.

One in four responding ordinands (25%) report being foreign-born. The share of responding ordinands who were foreign-born has fluctuated between 20% and 30% since 1998, the year these annual reports began.

This year, the four most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Philippines, Nigeria, and Colombia. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 11 years ago and were, on average, age 25 at the time they came.

#### Race and Ethnicity

*Two in three responding ordinands are Caucasian (67%).*

<b>Primary race or ethnicity (Please select only one)</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	67	58	69
Hispanic/Latino	16	13	16
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	10	18	9
African/African American/black	6	8	6
Other (mixed)	1	3	1

By comparison, Caucasians constituted 70% of all responding ordinands last year and 58% of all adult Catholics nationally (according to a recent CARA telephone poll of self-identified U.S. adult Catholics).

Among the other responding ordinands, their race or ethnicity is:

- Hispanic/Latino (16%)
- Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (10%)
- African/African American/black (6%)
- Other or of mixed race (1%)

Comparing diocesan ordinands to religious ordinands:

- The proportion of Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian among religious ordinands is twice that among diocesan ordinands (18% compared to 9%).
- Diocesan ordinands are 11 percentage points more likely than ordinands in religious institutes to identify as Caucasian/European American/white (69% compared to 58%).

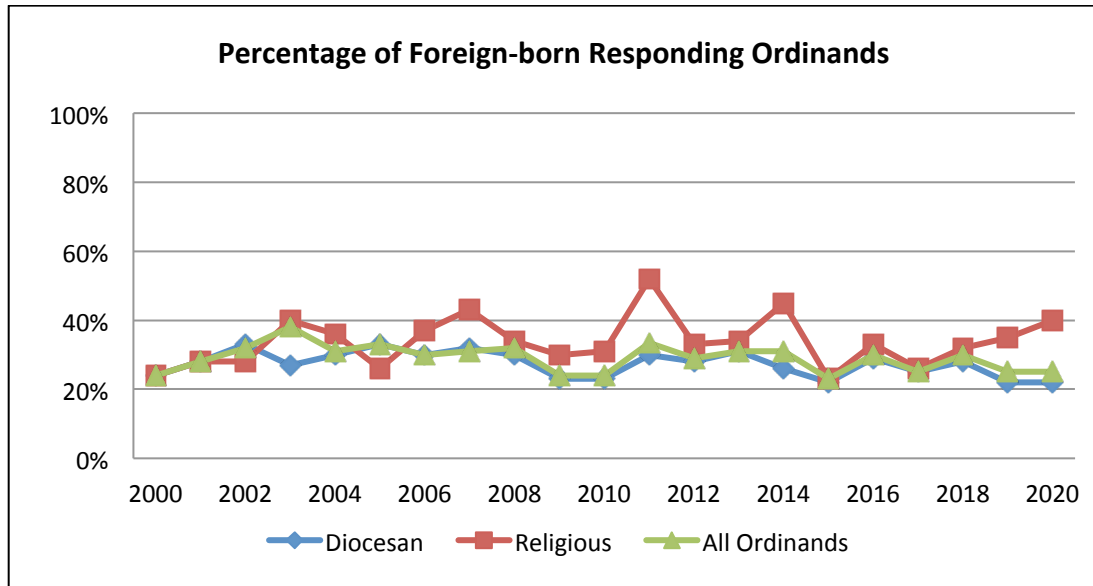
### Country of Birth and Year of Entrance into the United States

*The majority of responding ordinands was born in the United States (60% of responding ordinands from religious institutes, 78% of responding diocesan ordinands, and 75% overall).*

<b>Top Five Countries of Birth</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
USA	75	60	78
Mexico	6	8	5
Philippines	3	8	2
Nigeria	3	0	3
Colombia	2	0	3
Other	11	24	9

Three in four responding ordinands were born in the United States (75%). The second most common country of origin was Mexico, with 6% of ordinands born in that country.

Other countries of birth reported include: Philippines (3%), Nigeria (3%), and Colombia (2%). The remaining 11 percent of responding ordinands identified a total of 24 other countries of birth.



The percentage of responding ordinands who are foreign-born increased from 22% in 1999 to 38% in 2003, then declined to 23% in 2015. In 2020, one in four responding ordinands (25%) report being foreign-born, compared to 25% in 2019 and 30% in 2018.

The percentage of responding foreign-born ordinands from religious institutes has fluctuated somewhat due to the relatively small number. Since 2000 the percentage of responding diocesan ordinands has remained relatively steady at approximately 20% to 30%.

***If born outside the United States,  
in what year did you come to live in the United States?***

Year of entry

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	2009	2009	2009
Median	2012	2013	2012
Range	1975-2019	1975-2019	1987-2017

On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 11 years ago (a median of eight years ago). The first foreign-born for the Ordination Class of 2020 entered the country 45 years ago.

- Responding diocesan ordinands came to live in the United States 11 years ago, on average (half first came to the United States eight or more years ago). The first foreign-born diocesan ordinand for the Ordination Class of 2020 entered the country 33 years ago.



- Responding ordinands from religious institutes came to live in the United States on average 11 years ago (half first came to the United States seven or more years ago). The first foreign-born religious ordinand for the Ordination Class of 2020 entered the country 45 years ago.

<b>Age at Entry to the United States of Foreign-born Responding Ordinands</b>			
Age in years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	25	27	24
Median	27	29	25
Range	2-43	3-40	2-43

On average, responding foreign-born ordinands came to live in the United States at the age of 25 (a median of 27). Responding ordinands from religious institutes were, on average, four years older than responding diocesan ordinands when they first came to live in the United States.

## **Part IV: Education**

The fourth part of the report focuses on the education experience of responding ordinands. This includes information about the highest level of education completed before entering the seminary, attained Catholic education, and information pertaining to educational debt.

One in ten responding ordinands (10%) report being home schooled. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of home schooling was eight years.

Between 35% and 43% of all responding ordinands attended a Catholic school on the K-12 and/or college level. Three in five responding ordinands (60%) participated in a religious education program in their parish, for six years on average.

More than half of responding ordinands (54%) report that they completed college or university before entering the seminary. Religious ordinands were slightly more likely than diocesan ordinands to complete a college/university degree prior to entering the seminary (73% compared to 51%).

Half of responding ordinands (46%) entered a seminary program at the pre-theology level.

Almost three in ten responding ordinands (28%) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or religious institute), which was \$28,828 on average. While the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands from religious institutes decreased by 38%, the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands increased by 7% since entering the seminary.

## Home Schooling

<b><i>Were you ever home schooled?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	10	8	11
No	90	92	89

One in ten responding ordinands (10%) report being home schooled. Responding diocesan ordinands are generally as likely as responding ordinands from religious institutes to have been home schooled.

<b><i>If you were home schooled, total number of years of home schooling:</i></b>			
Years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	8	7	8
Median	9	6	10
Range	1-13	1-12	1-13

Among those responding ordinands who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home-schooled was eight years (a median of nine years).

## Highest Level of Education before Seminary

*More than half of responding ordinands (54%) report that they completed an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree before entering the seminary.*

<b>What is the highest level of education you completed before entering the seminary?</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Elementary school (K-8)	2	5	1
High school	23	18	25
Trade or technical school	1	3	1
Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree	19	2	23
College or university undergraduate degree	40	47	39
Graduate degree	14	26	12

Overall, two in five responding ordinands (40%) report that they completed a college or university undergraduate degree (but not more) before entering the seminary.

Overall, less than a quarter of responding ordinands reported that they completed:

- Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree (19%)
- High school only (23%)
- Graduate degree (14%)
- Elementary school only (K-8) (2%)
- Trade or technical school (1%)

Responding ordinands from religious institutes are more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to complete an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree prior to entering the seminary (73% compared to 51%).

The responding ordinands who attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary were asked about their field of study. Studies focusing specifically on theology or philosophy were most popular, with one in five (20%) responding ordinands committing to this field of study in undergraduate or graduate school.

**If you attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary, what was your field of study?**  
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Social Science	20	16	22
Philosophy or Theology	20	22	19
Science or Math	12	6	13
Business	12	14	12
Engineering	8	8	8
Liberal Arts	7	12	6
Education	7	8	7
Fine Arts	5	4	4
Computer Science	4	2	4
Medicine	3	6	2
Law	3	2	3
Other	0	0	1

- Another popular field is social science (20%), with one in five studying this field (e.g., history, social work, political science, psychology, sociology).
- Just over one in ten studied science or math (12%) or business (12%).
- Nearly one in ten studied engineering (8%), liberal arts (7%), or education (7%).
- About one in twenty studied fine arts (5%) or computer science (4%).
- Less than one in twenty studied medicine (3%) or law (3%).

**At what level did you first enter a seminary program?**  
 Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
High school	7	11	6
College	38	18	43
Pre-theology	46	53	45
Theology	8	18	6

Half of responding ordinands (46%) entered seminary at the pre-theology level. In comparison to responding ordinands from religious institutes, responding diocesan ordinands are 25 percentage points *more* likely to enter the seminary at the college level and 12 percentage points *less* likely to enter the seminary at the theology level.

## Attained Catholic Education

<b><i>Did you attend Catholic school at any of the following levels? (Please check all that apply)</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Elementary school (K-8)	44	47	43
High school	35	44	33
College	43	57	41

Responding ordinands are more likely than U.S. Catholics in general to have attended a Catholic school at some level (based on a 2017 national poll of U.S. adult Catholics conducted by CARA).

- Responding ordinands are 5 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school (44% compared to 39%).
- Responding ordinands are 16 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (35% compared to 19%).
- Responding ordinands are 33 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic college (43% compared to 10%).

Compared to U.S. born ordinands, those born outside the United States are less likely to have attended a Catholic school at any level.

- Half of U.S. born ordinands attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to just over a quarter of ordinands born outside the United States (50% compared to 26%).
- U.S. born ordinands are slightly more likely than non-U.S. born ordinands to have attended a Catholic high school (37% compared to 31%).
- U.S. born ordinands are slightly more likely than non-U.S. born ordinands to have attended a Catholic college or university (45% compared to 40%).

Compared to the education level of entering a seminary program, those who entered a seminary program at the theology level are more likely than those who entered seminary at the college or pre-theology level to have attended a Catholic college before entering their seminary program. In other words, 69% of those who entered the seminary at the college level had attended a Catholic college before entering, compared to 45% of those who entered the seminary at the college or 35% of those who entered the seminary at the pre-theology level.

Among ordinands who attended a Catholic college, the most frequently mentioned college they attended was Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio (nine respondents).

- Seven ordinands reported attending the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana and The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.
- Six ordinands reported attending the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.
- Four ordinands each reported attending Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey and Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas.
- Three ordinands each reported attending the Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island and St. Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri.



### Participation in Catholic Religious Education

<b><i>Did you participate in the religious education program in your parish?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	60	58	60
No	40	42	40

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, three in five responding ordinands (60%) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Diocesan and religious ordinands are equally likely to have participated in the religious education program in their parish.

<b><i>If you participated in the religious education program in your parish, total number of years in parish religious education:</i></b>			
Years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	7	5	7
Median	7	5	8
Range	1-20	1-15	1-20

Those who participated in the religious education program in their parish spent on average seven years (a median of seven years) in those programs. Diocesan ordinands reported spending two more years in religious education than religious ordinands, on average.

## Educational Debt

<b><i>Did you have educational debt at the time you entered the seminary (If religious: at the time you entered your institute/society)?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	28	31	27
No	72	69	73

Three in ten responding ordinands (28%) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or at the time they entered the religious institute, for those in religious orders). Responding ordinands from religious institutes are four percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to carry educational debt.

<b><i>What was the amount of your educational debt at the time you entered?</i></b>			
Dollars			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	\$28,828	\$29,044	\$28,770
Median	\$19,850	\$18,350	\$20,750
Range	\$2,000-200,000	\$6,000-90,000	\$2,000-200,000

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt at the time they entered the seminary was \$28,828 (a median of \$19,850). The total amount of educational debt varied from \$2,000 to \$200,000.

<b><i>What is the amount of your educational debt now:</i></b>			
Dollars			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	\$28,530	\$17,957	\$30,843
Median	\$18,000	\$0	\$20,000
Range	\$0-250,000	\$0-120,000	\$0-250,000

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt they currently owe is \$28,530, which is \$298 less debt, on average, than when they entered. While the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands from religious institutes decreased by 38%, the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands increased by 7% since entering the seminary.

<b><i>How long were you delayed entrance by your educational debt:</i></b>			
Years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	0	0	0
Median	0	0	0
Range	0-2	0-1	0-2

On average, those who had educational debt were not delayed entrance by that debt. However, in some instances, respondents report that their entrance was delayed for up to two years.

***Did you receive assistance from any of these groups  
in paying down your debt? (Please check all that apply):***

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Family members	32	21	34
Religious community	13	63	0
Knights of Columbus Fund for Vocations	9	0	12
Parish	8	11	8
Friends/co-workers	4	5	4
Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations	2	11	0
Serra Fund for Vocations	1	0	1
The Labouré Society	0	0	0

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, about a third (32%) received assistance from family members in paying down the debt.

Responding diocesan ordinands are more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to receive assistance from family members or the Knights of Columbus.

Just over three-fifths (63%) of responding ordinands from religious institutes who had debt received assistance from their religious communities. These religious are also more likely than diocesan ordinands to report receiving assistance from the Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations.

## **Part V: Work**

The fifth part of the report focuses on the prior work experience of ordinands, including full-time employment and military experience, of responding ordinands prior to entering the seminary.

Three in five responding ordinands (55%) report some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in six (18%) worked in education. Responding ordinands from religious institutes who have prior full-time work experience are 19 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education (33% compared to 14%).

Around one in twenty responding ordinands (6%) served in the U.S. Armed Forces, who were all diocesan ordinands. The percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military changes considerably from year to year. About one in ten responding ordinands (13%) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces.

## Employment Background

<b><i>What was your main full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary, if any?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Education	18	33	14
Church ministry, parish life	11	8	12
Business	10	14	9
Construction, labor, farming	9	6	10
Sales, customer service	9	3	11
Restaurant/food services	6	8	6
Management/administration	6	6	7
Computers, IT	5	6	5
Medical/health care	5	8	4
Law enforcement/military	4	0	5
Engineering, architecture	3	6	3
Research/science	3	0	3
Legal professions	2	0	3
Journalism	2	0	3
Other	5	3	6

Three in five responding ordinands (55%) report some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. The most common category of full-time work experience among all responding ordinands (18%) is education.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes who have prior full-time work experience are 19 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education (33% compared to 14%).

## Military Background

<b>Have you ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States?</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	6	0	7
No	94	100	93

Six percent of responding ordinands report having served in the U.S. Armed Forces. All 21 of them are diocesan ordinands.

<b>If you have served in the Armed Forces of the United States, which branch(es)?</b>	
<b>(Please check all that apply):</b>	
Percentage of all responding ordinands	
	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%
Army	33
Air Force	24
Marines	19
Navy	14
Reserves	10
National Guard	5
Coast Guard	5

Among those with military experience, a third (33%) served in the Army. A quarter served in the Air Force (24%). One-fifth served in the Marines (19%).

Since the number of responding ordinands with military experience is relatively small (6% of all responding ordinands), the percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military varies considerably from year to year.

***Did either of your parents have a military career  
in the U. S. Armed Forces?***

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	13	8	14
No	87	92	86

Responding ordinands were asked whether either of their parents had a career in the military. About one in ten responding ordinands (13%) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. Responding diocesan ordinands were six percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to report having a parent with a military career (14% compared to 8%).



## Part VI: Vocational Discernment

The sixth part of the report focuses on various factors that might have influenced the process of vocational discernment.

Almost all responding ordinands (90%) report being baptized Catholic as an infant. Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 19. Almost nine in ten responding ordinands (85%) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children. One in three (35%) has/had a relative who is a priest or religious.

Seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (72%) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, a similar proportion (70%) prayed the rosary. Two in five attended prayer group/Bible study (44%), and participated in high school retreats (38%). About three in ten attended Lectio Divina (33%) and/or participated in college retreats (31%). Responding religious ordinands were 13 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have participated in college retreats before entering the seminary.

In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands (51%) participated in a parish youth group. Three in ten responding ordinands (29%) participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center.

In regard to participation in parish ministries, seven in ten responding ordinands (73%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Half (50%) served as lectors. Two in five (40%) served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. At least one in three served as catechists (33%), in campus ministry/youth ministry (32%), as a Confirmation sponsor/godfather (30%), or as a cantor or in music ministry (28%).

In regard to participation in vocation programs before entering the seminary, half of responding ordinands (46%) report participating in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society. During their seminary years, at least seven in ten ordinands who participated in available programs reported that a Pastoral Year internship, a Spiritual Year, or a Thirty Day Retreat contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation.

Nine in ten responding ordinands (89%) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life (most frequently, the parish priest, a friend, or another parishioner).

More than half of responding ordinands (52%) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Most often, this person was a friend/classmate or a family member (other than parents).

## Family Religious Background

<b><i>How long have you been a Catholic?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Baptized Catholic as an infant	90	92	90
Became a Catholic later in life	10	8	10

Almost all responding ordinands (90%) report being baptized Catholic as an infant. There is no difference between responding diocesan ordinands and responding ordinands from religious institutes in their likelihood to be baptized Catholic as an infant.

Among the 10% of all responding ordinands who became Catholic later in life (35 responding ordinands), the majority belonged formerly to a Protestant tradition (e.g., Anglican, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian). Five responding ordinands were raised without a faith tradition.

<b><i>How old were you when you became a Catholic?</i></b>			
Age in years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	19	16	20
Median	19	16	19
Range	4-46	7-22	7-46

Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 19 years old (a median of 19) and varied from 4 to 46 years old. Responding diocesan ordinands were on average four years older than responding religious ordinands when they became Catholic.

***What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?***

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Both parents Catholic	85	87	84
Mother Catholic, father non-Catholic	5	5	5
Neither parent was Catholic	7	7	7
Father Catholic, mother non-Catholic	3	2	3

Nine in ten responding ordinands (85%) report that both of their parents were Catholic when they were children.

***Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or a religious?***

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	35	42	33
No	65	58	67

One in three responding ordinands (35%) has (had) a relative who is a priest or religious. Responding ordinands from religious institutes are 9 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to have (had) a relative who is a priest or a religious.

## Siblings and Birth Order

*Almost all responding ordinands (95%) have at least one sibling. On average, responding ordinands have three siblings (a median of two).*

<b>How many brothers and sisters do you have?</b>			
Reported number of siblings			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
No siblings	5	7	5
One sibling	19	15	20
Two siblings	30	27	31
Three siblings	16	21	15
Four siblings	8	10	8
Five siblings or more	22	21	22
Mean	3	3	3
Median	2	3	2
Range	0-14	0-11	0-14

*Overall, “eldest” is the most frequent response (provided by 35% of all responding ordinands). Responding diocesan ordinands are 8 percentage points more likely than religious ordinands to be “eldest” (37% compared to 29%).*

<b>What is your birth order?</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Eldest	35	29	37
Somewhere in the middle	33	42	32
Youngest	26	23	27
Only child	5	7	5

- About a third of responding ordinands (33%) is “somewhere in the middle”. Religious ordinands are 10 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to be somewhere in the middle (42% compared to 32%).
- A quarter report being the “youngest”. One in twenty responding ordinands (5%) is the “only child.”

## Prayer Practices

*Seven in ten (72%) responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration on a regular basis before entering the seminary.*

<b>Did you participate in any of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Eucharistic adoration	72	74	72
Rosary	70	71	69
Prayer group/Bible study	44	39	45
High school retreats	38	32	39
Lectio Divina	33	29	33
College retreats	31	42	29

- Seven in ten responding ordinands (70%) prayed the rosary.
- Two in five attended prayer group/Bible study (44%), or participated in high school retreats (38%).
- About a third prayed Lectio Divina (33%) or attended college retreats (31%).

Responding religious ordinands are 13 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have participated in college retreats before entering the seminary (42% compared to 29%).

## Participation in Faith-Related Activities

*Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering the seminary. Four in five respondents (83%) participated in at least one of the programs or activities listed in the table below before entering.*

<b>Did you participate in any of these programs or activities before entering the seminary?</b>			
<b>(Please check all that apply):</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Parish youth group	51	44	53
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	29	37	27
Boy Scouts	27	27	27
Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver	22	15	24
Parish young adult group	18	24	17
Right to Life	13	5	14
Charismatic Renewal	11	11	11
St. Vincent de Paul Society	5	3	6
Cursillo	4	2	4
Volunteer program associated with CVN	2	7	1
Serra Club	1	0	1

- Half of responding ordinands (51%) participated in a parish youth group before entering the seminary.
- A quarter to a third of responding ordinands participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (29%) or Boy Scouts (27%). Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 10 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to participate in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (37% compared to 27%).
- One in five (18%) participated in parish young adult group, while about one in ten attended Right to Life (13%) or Charismatic Renewal (11%).
- One in twenty or less participated in St. Vincent de Paul Society (5%), Cursillo (4%), volunteer program associated with the Catholic Volunteer Network (2%), or in Serra Club (1%).

***Did you participate in any of these events before entering the seminary?  
(Please check all that apply):***

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
World Youth Day	16	19	16
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	16	16	17
FOCUS	8	7	9
National Catholic Youth Conference	7	8	7
Marian Days	5	7	5

- One in six responding ordinands participated in a World Youth Day (16%) or Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference (16%) before entering the seminary.
- One in ten responding ordinands participated in FOCUS (8%) or National Catholic Youth Conference (7%).
- One in twenty responding ordinands (5%) participated in Marian Days.

## Participation in Parish Ministries

*Almost all respondents were active in parish ministries before entering their religious institute. Nine in ten (91%) served in at least one of the parish ministries listed in the table below before entering.*

<b>Did you serve in any of these parish ministries before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Altar server	73	63	75
Lector	50	45	51
Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion	40	24	43
Catechist	33	29	33
Campus ministry/Youth ministry	32	34	32
Confirmation sponsor/godfather	30	32	29
Cantor or music ministry	28	37	27
Usher/minister of hospitality	16	15	17
RCIA team member/sponsor	10	11	10
Liturgy committee member	9	5	10
Parish pastoral council member	8	5	9
Full-time parish/diocesan employee	6	3	6

- More than seven in ten responding ordinands (73%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Diocesan ordinands were 12 percentage points more likely than religious ordinands to serve as altar servers before entering the seminary (75% compared to 63%).
- Half (50%) served as lectors. Two in five (40%) served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
- One in three served as catechists (33%), in campus ministry/youth ministry (32%), as a Confirmation sponsor/godfather (30%), or as a cantor or in music ministry (28%). Religious ordinands were 10 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to serve as a cantor or in music ministry (37% compared to 27%).
- Less than a quarter of responding ordinands served as ushers/ministers of hospitality (16%), RCIA team members or sponsors (10%), liturgy committee members (9%), parish pastoral council member (8%) or as full-time parish/diocesan employees (6%).



## Influence of Others

*Nine in ten responding ordinands (89%) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life.*

<b>Were you encouraged to consider the priesthood by any of these people? (Please check all that apply):</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Parish Priest	68	48	72
Friend	46	57	44
Parishioner	42	34	43
Mother	33	27	34
Teacher/Catechist	28	23	30
Grandparent(s)	26	18	28
Father	25	24	25
Other relative	20	19	20
Campus Minister/School Chaplain	18	26	16
Youth Minister	14	8	15
Bishop	13	2	15
Religious Sister	11	15	11
Religious Brother	10	26	7
Deacon	7	2	8
Military Chaplain	2	0	3

- Around seven in ten responding ordinands (68%) were encouraged to consider priesthood by a parish priest.
- About half of responding ordinands (46%) were encouraged to consider priesthood by a friend.
- Another two in five (42%) were encouraged to consider priesthood by a parishioner. Three in ten reported being encouraged by their mother (33%) or a teacher/catechist (28%).
- A quarter were encouraged to consider priesthood by grandparents (26%) or father (25%), and about a fifth by another relative (20%) or Campus Minister/school chaplain (18%).

- Less than a fifth of responding ordinands report being encouraged to consider priesthood by a youth minister (14%), a bishop (13%), a religious sister (11 %), a religious brother (10%), deacon (7%), or a military chaplain (2%).
- Diocesan ordinands are 24 percentage points more likely than religious ordinands to be encouraged by a parish priest (72% compared to 48%).
- Religious ordinands are 13 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to be encouraged by a friend (57% compared to 44%).

<b>Did anyone discourage you from considering priesthood as a vocation?</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
No	52	63	49
Yes	48	37	51

*Half of responding ordinands (52%) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons.*

<b>Who discouraged you</b>			
<b>(Please check all that apply):</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Friend or school classmate	29	37	27
Other family member	23	23	23
Mother	12	19	11
Father	12	16	11
Colleague or coworker	8	10	8
Teacher	6	10	5
Someone else	6	10	5
Priest or other clergy	2	2	3
Youth/campus minister	<1	0	<1
Religious sister or brother	0	0	0

- Three in ten responding ordinands (29%) report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by a friend or school classmate.

- One fifth or more (23%) report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by another family member.
- One in ten report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by their mother (12%), their father (12%), or their colleague or coworker (8%).
- Responding ordinands were least likely to report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by a teacher (6%), by someone else not listed here (6%), by a priest or other clergy (2%), or by a Youth/campus minister (less than 1%).

## Participation in Vocation Activities

*Three in five responding ordinands (63%) report participating in at least one of the vocation programs listed below. On average, they participated in one vocation program before they entered the seminary.*

<b>Did you participate in any of these vocation programs before entering the seminary?</b>			
<b>(Please check all that apply):</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
“Come and See” weekend	46	74	60
Quo Vadis retreat/Discernment retreat	14	7	16
High school vocation program	12	8	13
College vocation program	10	16	9
Other parish vocation program	10	11	9
Elementary school or CCD vocation program	7	5	8
Operation Andrew	7	3	8
Traveling Chalice/Cross/Statue for vocations	4	5	4

- Half of responding ordinands (46%) report participating in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or at the religious institute/society.
- One in seven responding ordinands report participating in a Quo Vadis retreat/discernment retreat (14%) or high school vocation program (12%).
- One in ten or fewer responding ordinands report participating in a college vocation program (10%), another parish vocation program (10%), elementary school or CCD vocation program (7%), an Operation Andrew program (7%), or traveling Chalice/Cross/Statue for vocations (4%).
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes are 14 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to participate in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society (74% as compared to 60%) but 9 percentage points less likely to participate in a Quo Vadis retreat/Discernment retreat (16% as compared to 7%).

***Did you see the DVD “Fishers of Men,” published by the USCCB,  
before entering the seminary or religious life?***

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	53	33	58
No	47	67	42

In addition to the vocation programs listed above, seven in ten responding ordinands (66%) have seen the vocational promotion DVD “Fishers of Men,” published by the USCCB. Responding diocesan ordinands are 25 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to have seen the DVD (58 % compared to 33%).

## Formation Activities during Seminary

In addition to the many programs and activities that can promote or encourage a priestly vocation before one enters the seminary, several activities that take place during the seminary years can also contribute to a vocation. While not every seminary offers these activities (between 38% and 73% of respondents reported that a particular program was not available to them), at least half of those who did participate report that these programs contributed to their vocation.

<b>Contribution of Formation Activities During Seminary</b>		
Percentage of all responding ordinands		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
Pastoral Year internship	89	78
Spirituality Year	76	64
Thirty Day Retreat	70	56
Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)	70	39
Priestly fraternity group (e.g. Jesus Caritas)	65	34
Pastoral Language Immersion (e.g. Central America)	64	31
Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF)	62	44
English as a Second Language (ESL)	54	39

- Among ordinands who had access to the programs, nine in ten (89%) found that the Pastoral Year internship contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation, with eight in ten (78%) saying this contributed “very much” to their vocation.
- Four in five (76%) found that the Spirituality Year at least “somewhat” contributed to their vocation, with about three in five saying that it contributed “very much” to their vocation.
- At least two-thirds report the followings contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation: Thirty Day Retreat (70%), Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) (70%), and Priestly fraternity group (e.g. Jesus Caritas) (65%).
- Three in five report that Pastoral Language Immersion (e.g. Central America) (64%) and Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) (62%) contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation.
- Half of those who had access to the program (54%) report that English as a Second Language (ESL) program contributed to their vocation at least “somewhat.”