

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
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***Research Review:
Lay Ecclesial Ministers in the United States***

Abstract

There are currently more than 39,600 lay ecclesial ministers (LEMs) in the United States. They are most commonly involved in religious education, sacramental preparation, and/or formation; liturgy and/or music ministry; or general parish administration. Eighty percent of LEMs are women and the median age is 55. Older LEMs are less likely than younger LEMs to have college degrees in ministry, religion, or theology and more likely to have begun their ministry as a volunteer within their home parish. Younger LEMs are more likely to come out of college looking for opportunities in parishes other than their own and are seeking paid positions from the outset. Younger LEMs are also more racially and ethnically diverse than older LEMs. Forty-seven percent of those currently enrolled in lay ecclesial ministry formation programs are Hispanic or Latino(a). Parishioners report high levels of satisfaction with the ministry of LEMs and about eight in ten priests agree that parish life would be aided by an increase in full-time professional lay ecclesial ministers and that the Catholic Church needs to move faster empowering laypersons in ministry. LEMs are most likely to say they began their career in ministry to be of service to the Church, in response to God's call, and because this fit their areas of competence, interests, and or gifts. LEMs report that they heard "the call" to ministry at about age 25. Nine in ten (89 percent) consider their ministry "a vocation, not just a job."

Introduction

In this white paper, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) utilizes and summarizes its existing data and resources to provide the most current profile possible of lay ecclesial ministers (LEMs) in the United States.¹ The definition of lay ecclesial ministers outlined in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (2005) states that these individuals are adequately formed and prepared lay persons, authorized by the hierarchy to serve publicly in leadership for a particular area of ministry, in close mutual collaboration with clergy. In terms of research, most often this population has been defined as those professional and trained lay persons involved in paid parish ministry for at least 20 hours a week. Although there may not always be perfect overlap between the *Co-Workers* definition and the social science research on LEMs, we expect and assume that most often there is.

The Ministerial Landscape

In 2010, the total number of people on Catholic parish staffs in the United States was estimated by CARA to be 168,448. This total included both ordained and lay ministry staff and volunteers as well as non-ministry staff and volunteers (including parish bookkeepers, groundskeepers, cooks, etc.). The average parish had a total staff size of 9.5 members with 5.4 individuals in ministry positions. The estimated number of lay ecclesial ministers (paid in ministry for at least 20 hours per week) in the United States at that time was approximately 38,000. This represents 23 percent of all parish staff and 40 percent of all staff members involved in ministry. CARA estimates that the Catholic Church in the United States in recent years has gained a net of about 430 additional LEMs on parish ministry staffs each year.² Thus, projecting forward to the end of last year, CARA estimates there were 39,651 LEMs in the United States in December 2014.³

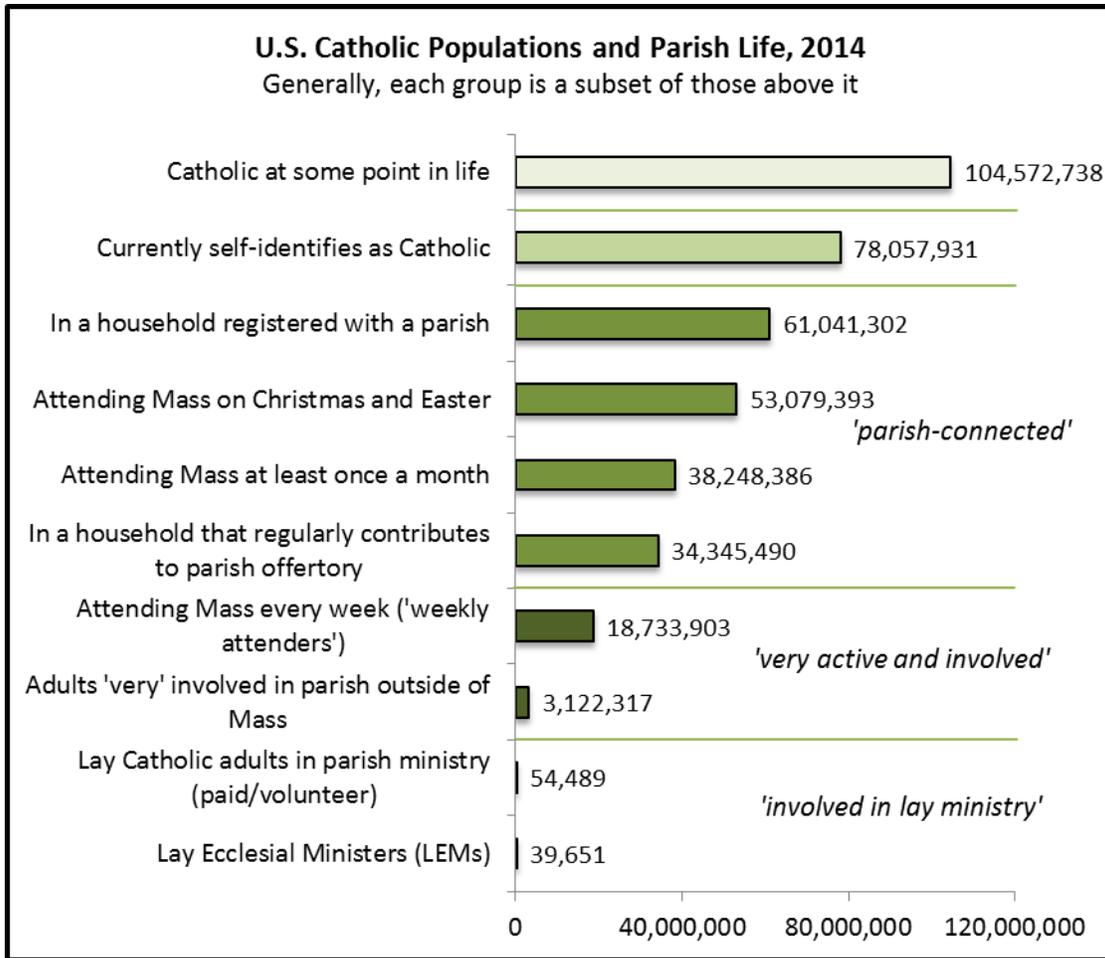
Sixteen percent of LEMs work 20 hours a week, on average, and no more. One in four (26 percent) work more than 20 hours but less than 40 hours per week. Forty-nine percent work 40 hours on average per week. One in ten (9 percent) work more than 40 hours per week.

As shown in the figure on the next page, CARA estimates that there are currently more than 100 million people in the United States who have been baptized Catholic and more than 78 million who currently self-identify their religious affiliation as Catholic. Far fewer are very active in the life and community of a parish or serve in a parish leadership role. Based on CARA's regular national surveys of adult Catholics, about 18.7 million Catholics attend Mass on a weekly basis (i.e., at least once a week, *every week*). Significantly fewer, about 3.1 million report that they are "very" involved in their parish beyond attending Mass. More than 54,000 are involved in pastoral ministry in their parish.

¹ These data are often collected in collaboration with CARA clients interested in lay ecclesial ministry and parish life. CARA also reports on some non-CARA research, when in-house data are unavailable and for trend analysis. However, CARA only reports here on surveys using scientific sampling. There are a handful of other non-CARA surveys of Catholic populations that do not rely on probability-based sampling. It is difficult to know how representative these are of the populations studied.

² This estimate represents *net* additions—accounting for LEMs who retire, pass away, or leave ministry for some other reason.

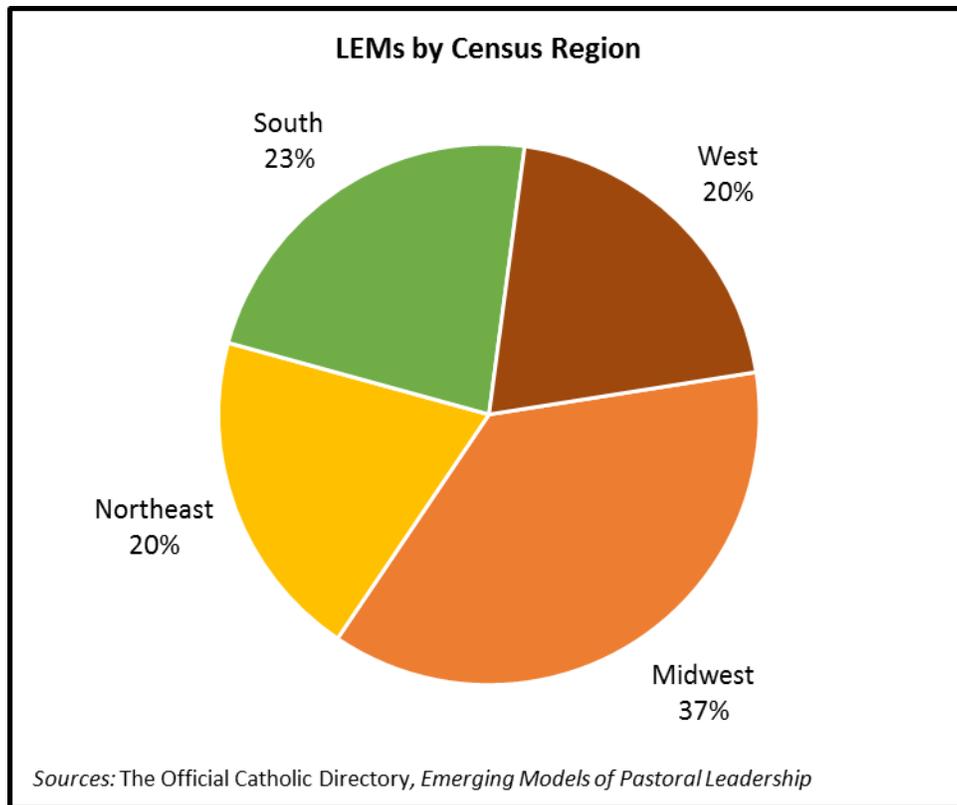
³ Dioceses in the United States reported 3.7 percent growth in "professional lay ministers" from 2010 to 2014 in *The Official Catholic Directory*. If we use this as an alternative measure of growth, we would estimate the total number of LEMs in the U.S. at the end of 2014 to be 39,300.



Putting the total population figures shown above into a “per parish context” (i.e., 17,483 parishes in 2014) there are 4,465 self-identified Catholics per parish and of these, 3,491 are registered with their parish, 1,072 attend Mass every week, and 2.3 serve as lay ecclesial ministers.

As shown in the figure on the next page, 37 percent of LEMs are in a parish in the Midwest, 23 percent in the South, 20 percent in the West, and 20 percent in the Northeast.⁴ The regional distribution of LEMs is strongly correlated to the distribution of parishes nationwide. For example, 37 percent of parishes are in the Midwest and CARA estimates 37 percent of LEMs are as well. The South has 27 percent of the parishes and 27 percent of LEMs. However, in the West and Northeast there is some variation between these proportions. The Northeast has 25 percent of the country’s parishes but only 20 percent of its LEMs. The West has only 15 percent of U.S. parishes but 20 percent of LEMs.

⁴ Results from three data sources were averaged to produce this estimate. The first was the distribution of “professional lay ministers” reported by dioceses in *The Official Catholic Directory*. The second was the distribution of LEMs reported to CARA by pastors and parish life coordinators in the national survey of parishes conducted for the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership study. The third was the distribution of responding LEMs in CARA’s survey of parish leaders for the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership study. All three sources are very similar.



In 1990, Msgr. Philip J. Murnion conducted a survey of 1,163 parishes in 43 randomly selected dioceses. The pastor (or a person designated by the pastor to respond) listed parish staff, their positions, salaries, hours per week, and other demographic information. From these data Murnion estimated that there were 21,569 LEMs in the United States. These were defined as paid, non-ordained parish ministry staff working at least 20 hours per week. These LEMs were 42 percent vowed religious and 58 percent other lay persons. Overall, 85 percent were female and 15 percent male.

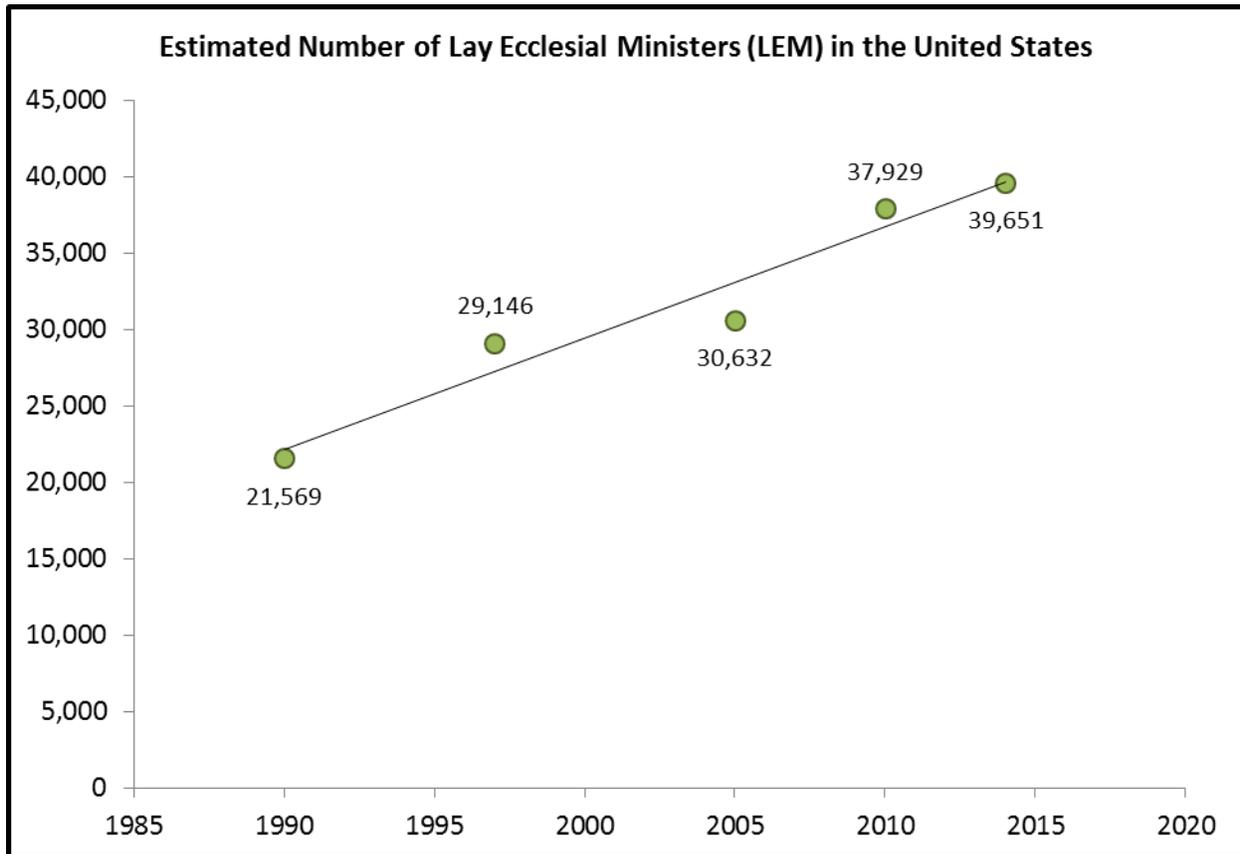
In 1997, Murnion and David DeLambo replicated the 1992 study with a survey of 949 parishes in the same 43 dioceses. This study estimated that the number of LEMs had grown to 29,146. These LEMs were 29 percent vowed religious and 71 percent other lay persons. Overall, 82 percent were female and 18 percent male.

In 2005, David DeLambo replicated the 1992 and 1997 studies with a survey of 929 parishes in the same 43 dioceses. This study estimated that there were 30,632 LEMs in ministry in the United States. These LEMs were 16 percent vowed religious and 84 percent other lay persons. Overall, 80 percent were female and 20 percent male.

CARA's estimates are based on a 2010 national, random-sample survey of 846 pastors and parish life coordinators (PLCs).⁵ The sample for this study included parishes in all U.S. territorial

⁵ This research was conducted for the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership research project.

dioceses and utilized a grid design that was very similar to that used by DeLambo to request information from respondents about the parish staff.⁶



In a follow-up survey in 2012, CARA obtained information directly from parish leaders, where 14 percent of LEM respondents indicated that they were vowed religious and 86 percent other lay persons. Overall, 80 percent were female and 20 percent male. Just under half of LEMs have a graduate or professional degree (46 percent). Sixty percent of LEMs attended Catholic primary schools, 47 percent were enrolled in a Catholic secondary school and 58 percent attended a Catholic college or university.

As shown in the figure on the next page, pastors and PLCs in 2010 reported that 5 percent of the LEMs in their parish were under the age of 30. Ten percent were in their 30s and 23 percent in their 40s. Thus, about four in ten LEMs in 2010 were estimated to be under the age of 50. A majority are 50 or older.

⁶ In addition to using the data provided by respondents, CARA researchers verified staff lists using secondary sources—primarily parish websites and online parish bulletins. It became evident that many parishes did not always include their full staff as instructed. In some cases pastors left off lay staff members. There are many possible reasons for this omission. Some may have not had the information about their lay staff members, others simply may have not taken the time to completely fill out this section, and others expressed concerns about confidentiality and providing this information for their staff. Regardless, relying on survey data alone would have provided an undercount of LEMs.

Ages of Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Under 30	5%
30 to 39	10
40 to 49	23
50 to 59	33
60 to 69	23
70 or older	6

Source: CARA/Emerging Models (2010)

According to pastors and PLCs, 88 percent of LEMs (unchanged from DeLambo’s 2005 estimates) self-identified as non-Hispanic white, 9 percent as Hispanic or Latino(a), and less than 2 percent as black, African American or African (1.6 percent).⁷ A similar percentage self-identified as Asian or Pacific Islander (1.7 percent) and less than 1 percent as Native American or Native Alaskan (0.2 percent).

<i>The Changing Profile of Lay Ecclesial Ministers in the U.S. Catholic Church</i>				
	2012	2005	1997	1990
Number of LEMs	37,929	30,632	29,146	21,569
Gender				
Male	20%	20%	15%	18%
Female	80%	80%	85%	82%
Race/Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic white	88%	89%	94%	--
Hispanic/Latino(a)	9%	8%	4%	--
African American	1.6%	1.4%	1.2%	--
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.7%	1.7%	0.6%	--
Native American	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	--
Median age	55	64	61	58
Ecclesial Status				
Vowed religious	14%	16%	28%	41%
Other lay person	86%	84%	72%	59%
Graduate or professional degree	46%	48%	42%	53%
Sources: CARA/Emerging Models (2010, 2012), DeLambo (2005), Murnion and DeLambo (1997), Murnion (1992)				

The table on the following page puts the race and ethnicity of LEMs into the broader context of the workforce of the Catholic Church and the Catholic population.⁸ Much of the racial and ethnic

⁷ Ninety-seven percent of LEMs indicate use of English in their ministry. Eleven percent report use of Spanish. Three percent indicate using a language other than English or Spanish in their ministry.

⁸ This figure is from CARA’s *Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics* (2012).

diversity of the U.S. Catholic population is concentrated among those born after 1960. As more of these younger Catholics enter ministry roles overall the diversity of LEMs will very likely shift. This is best represented in the diversity among those enrolled in LEM formation programs today.

Race and Ethnicity of Groups within the Catholic Church in the United States					
	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Other
Clergy					
Catholic priests	92%	3%	2%	3%	<1%
Catholic priests born after 1960	75	15	2	8	<1
Permanent deacons (active)	76	16	4	3	1
Ordinands (2012)	71	15	3	9	1
Men & Women Religious					
Men and women in perpetual vows	94%	3%	1%	2%	<1%
Women professing perpetual vows (2011)	66	10	4	17	3
Men professing perpetual vows (2011)*	50	0	12	38	0
Lay Persons					
Lay ecclesial ministers	88%	9%	2%	1%	<1%
Adult Mass-attending Catholics (in-pew)	62	26	2	5	5
All adult Catholics	58	35	3	3	1
*Estimates for new religious brothers are based on a small sample. Sources: The CARA Catholic Poll (CCP), CARA Pastoral Assistance Surveys and Services (PASS) In-Pew Cumulative Statistics, <i>The Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes</i> (2011), <i>New Sisters and Brothers in Perpetual Vows</i> (2011), <i>Recent Vocations to Religious Life</i> (2009), <i>The Class of 2012: Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood</i> (2012), <i>Same Call, Different Men: The Evolution of the Priesthood since Vatican II</i> (2012), <i>A Portrait of the Permanent Diaconate</i> (2012).					

Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation Programs

CARA has been conducting studies of LEM formation programs nearly every year since 1994. These studies include all programs of at least two years' duration that provide training for professional lay ecclesial ministry. Reported enrollment in these formation programs has fluctuated over the more than 20 years that the data have been collected. The largest number reported in formation was in 2002-2003, when a record 36,048 total participants were identified. In 2013-2014, CARA identified a total of 210 active LEM formation programs and received program information from 195 of these. The total number of LEM candidates enrolled in degree and certificate programs in 2013-2014 was 22,791, of which 17,114 (75 percent) were working toward a certificate in ministry and 5,677 (25 percent) were working toward a graduate degree in ministry. The total number of enrollees is nearly identical to the 22,564 candidates reported in 2012-2013.

Many LEM formation programs can be classified as either exclusively diocesan-based or academic-based, but several are the result of collaboration between a diocese and an academic institution. In these cases, often the diocese assumes responsibility for the human, spiritual, and

pastoral formation, while the academic institution is responsible for the intellectual formation. Currently, 138 active programs are sponsored or co-sponsored by a diocese, 70 are sponsored or co-sponsored by a Catholic college or university, and 30 are sponsored or co-sponsored by a seminary or school of theology. In addition to academic and diocesan-based programs, independent Catholic organizations sponsor several other programs.

U.S. Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation Programs, 1994-2014				
Year	States/DC	Dioceses	Programs	Enrollment
1994-1995	51	135	265	21,800
1996-1997	46	134	281	20,281
1997-1998	46	135	287	23,333
1998-1999	49	145	295	29,137
1999-2000	46	134	331	31,168
2000-2001	48	142	314	35,582
2001-2002	49	144	314	34,414
2002-2003	49	147	320	36,048
2003-2004	45	142	290	25,964*
2004-2005	46	143	289	18,847
2005-2006	45	122	226	16,037
2006-2007	44	126	253	20,240
2007-2008	44	130	240	18,622
2008-2009	44	119	234	17,538
2009-2010	47	123	233	17,935
2010-2011	45	116	233	18,493
2011-2012	45	111	200	17,452
2012-2013	45	119	227	22,564
2013-2014	43	109	195	22,791

*Includes 7,630 estimated participants likely enrolled in the 23 programs that did not report enrollment.

Some programs are designed to meet particular needs in lay ecclesial ministry formation, including several programs designed specifically for ministry with and to the Hispanic community (such as the Escuela de Ministerios Pastorales of the Diocese of Oakland), one program designed for ministry formation in the African American community (the Institute for Black Catholic Studies in New Orleans, LA), and one program, offered by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, which prepares pastoral musicians for certification as a Director of Music Ministries. Another program, the Master of Science in Church Management at Villanova University, is designed to prepare those who are in church leadership and administrative roles who are seeking to become better stewards of church resources by improving their business and management skills.

Most of the degree-granting programs offer graduate degrees, although a few also grant associate or baccalaureate degrees. The most commonly offered graduate degrees in degree-granting lay ministry programs are the M.A. in Pastoral Studies or Pastoral Ministry (55 programs), the M.A. in Theology, Theological Studies, or Pastoral Theology (45 programs), the M.A. in Religious Education (26 programs), the Masters in Divinity (20 programs), the M.A. in Religious Studies

(13 programs), and the M.A. in Spirituality (9 programs).

Most lay ecclesial ministry programs also grant certificates of completion. The most common certificate programs are in Pastoral Ministry (92 programs), Religious Education (60 programs), Catechetics (54 programs), and Youth Ministry (50 programs).

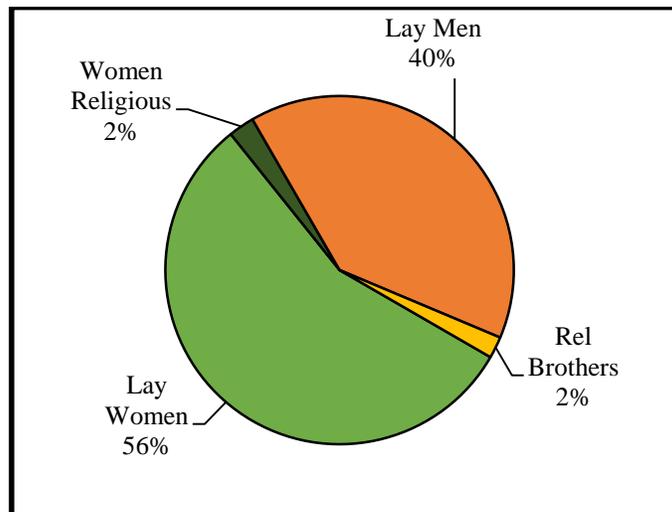
Certificates Available in Lay Ecclesial Ministry, 2013-2014	
Type of Certificate	Number of Programs
Certificate in Pastoral Ministry	92
Certificate in Religious Education	60
Certificate in Catechetics	54
Certificate in Youth Ministry	50
Certificate in Liturgy	34
Certificate in Theology	29
Certificate in Clinical Pastoral Education	17
Certificate in Pastoral Administration or Business Management	12
Certificate in Spiritual Direction	10
Certificate in Pastoral Counseling	8
Certificate in Hispanic Ministry	7
Certificate in Liturgical Music	7
Certificate in Biblical Studies	5

A number of programs are being developed to take advantage of the internet as a tool for expanding their reach to a wider audience. Several programs offer some coursework online and a few offer their entire program online. Thirty-two programs report that their certificate program can be completed online and 27 programs report that they have a degree program that can be completed online.

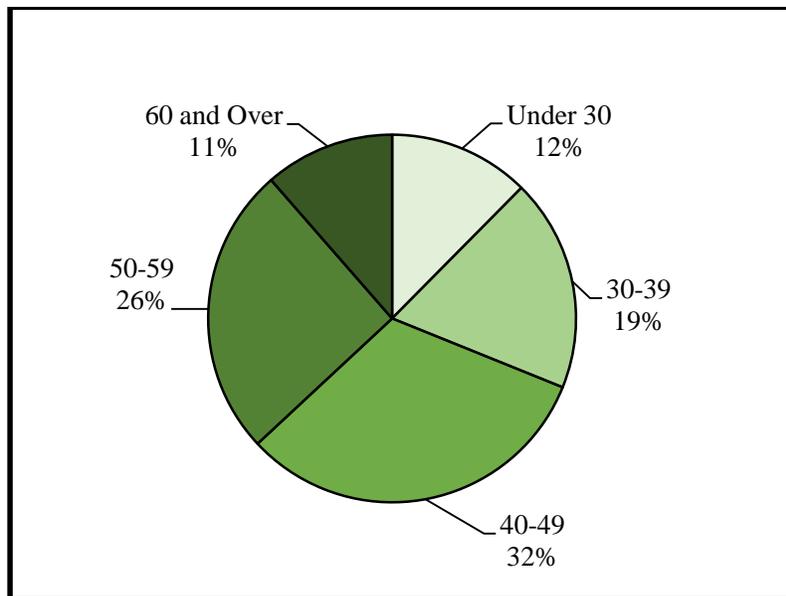
Lay ecclesial ministry formation programs are conducted in a variety of languages. Nearly all use English as the primary language of instruction, but 11 programs are taught only in Spanish, 40 use both English and Spanish, and two more make some accommodation for use of Spanish. In addition, one program uses English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole; and one uses English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean.

Although intellectual formation is indispensable to lay ecclesial ministry formation, human, spiritual, and pastoral formation are also essential components of formation for ministry. Overall, among the 195 responding active programs half (51 percent) say that formal spiritual formation is required of program participants. Just as many (51 percent) report that the program includes a field education/internship requirement. Fewer programs (34 percent) require both.

To reflect more accurately the lay composition of these programs, CARA asked program directors to report statistics about lay program participants only. As shown in the figure on the next page, about three in five lay program participants (58 percent) are women (including women religious).



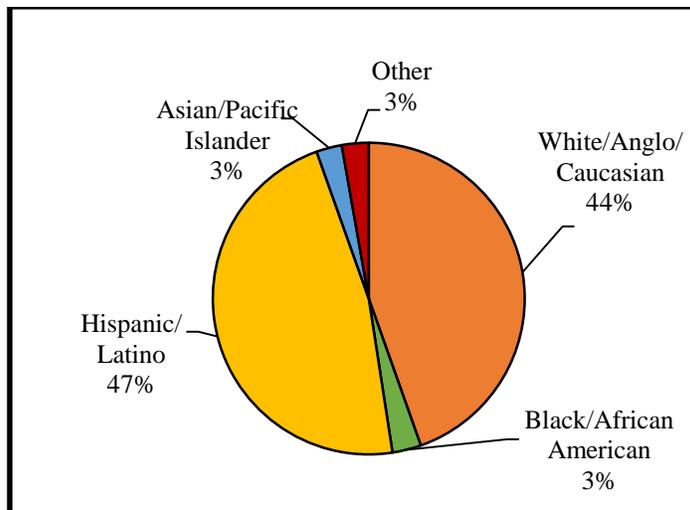
Women and men religious are slightly more likely to be enrolled in degree programs than to be enrolled in certificate programs. Lay women who are not members of a religious institute are more than twice as likely to be enrolled in a certificate program as in a degree program. Lay women who are enrolled in a degree program make up 16 percent and lay women enrolled in a certificate program make up 40 percent of all lay ecclesial ministry program participants. Lay men are also more than twice as likely to be enrolled in a certificate program (28 percent of all lay ecclesial ministry program participants) than in a degree program (12 percent).



More than half of students in lay ecclesial ministry formation programs (58 percent) are in their 40s and 50s. A third (31 percent) are under the age of 40 and about one in ten (11 percent) are age 60 and older.

Hispanics/Latino(a)s make up almost half (47 percent) of participants in lay ecclesial ministry

formation programs. White/Anglo/ Caucasian participants make up a little more than four in ten (44 percent). Blacks/African Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders make up another 3 percent each. Others (including Native Americans) also make up 3 percent of enrollees in these programs.



Hispanics/Latino(a)s are much less likely to be enrolled in degree programs than in certificate programs. By contrast, whites/Anglos/Caucasians are much more likely to be enrolled in degree programs than in certificate programs. Hispanics/Latino(a)s comprise 17 percent of students enrolled in degree programs and 60 percent of students enrolled in certificate programs. Whites/Anglos/Caucasians make up 67 percent of degree candidates and 35 percent of certificate candidates. Blacks/African Americans, Asians/Pacific Islanders, and others are about equally likely to be enrolled in a degree program as in a certificate program.

Authorization and Hiring

In 2012, CARA surveyed representatives from selected diocesan lay ministry offices and lay formation programs around the country. The survey inquired about the practice and policies for authorizing LEMs for ministry. As shown in the figure on the next page, among the respondents, assurance that LEMs have proper training and formation is the most important aspect of the authorization process, with two thirds (67 percent) of respondents saying this particular aspect is “very important” in their diocese.

Approximately three-quarters (73 to 74 percent) of respondents say that the authorization process is “somewhat” or “very” important because it gives public validation and support for LEMs, grants the LEM the right to serve in a public ministry in the Church and strengthens the relationship between the LEM and the diocese. Over half (52 percent) say that the authorization process is “very” important because it ensure adequate ecclesiastical oversight of ministry. More than eight in ten (85 percent) say this oversight is at least a “somewhat” important aspect of the authorization process.

How important are each of these aspects in the authorization process for lay ecclesial ministry in your arch/diocese?

Percentage responding:

	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Ensures adequate ecclesiastical oversight of ministry	85%	52%
Assurance that the lay ecclesial ministry has proper training and formation	84	67
Public validation and support for the lay ecclesial minister	74	55
Grants the lay ecclesial minister the right to serve in a public ministry in the Church	74	48
Strengthens the relationship between the lay ecclesial minister and the arch/diocese	73	52

Although the authorization process is seen to be important for the variety of the reasons noted above, nearly four in ten dioceses (38 percent) have not yet established a formal process for authorization. Forty-two percent of dioceses have an Office of Lay Ecclesial Ministry and just 27 percent have a written diocesan policy on authorization. Only one in five respondents (20 percent) says their diocese requires certification for all LEMs. Two in five respondents (40 percent) say that there is no commissioning ceremony or public installation for LEMs.

Two thirds of respondents (67 percent) say that the diocese recommends potential LEMs to pastors who inquire, but just under half (44 percent) say that there is no involvement of the diocese in placement of LEMs. Further, nine in ten respondents (89 percent) say their diocese does not provide a process for transferring LEMs from one parish to another. Less than one in ten (8 percent) respondents say that “most or all” or “many” of their LEMs serving in the diocese have an official appointment to their position by the bishop. About half (51 percent) of respondents say that “most or all” or “many” have a written job description, but fewer than one in five (17 percent) say that that “most or all” or “many” have a contract for their position.⁹ Two in ten (21 percent) say “most or all” or “many” have a periodic, written evaluation of their ministry and fewer than one in 20 (4 percent) say “most or all” or “many” have a set term of appointment with provision for renewal.

Half of respondents (51 percent) say “most or all” or “many” of their LEMs were hired by the pastor of the parish in which they serve. Three in ten respondents (29 percent) say “most or all” or “many” of their LEMs are serving in a volunteer capacity. One in six (17 percent) say “most or all” or “many” of their parish lay ecclesial ministers were hired by another diocesan official. Fewer than one in ten (8 percent) say “most or all” or “many” were hired by the bishop.

⁹ In some cases, diocesan staff may be unaware of parish-level written job descriptions. In CARA’s 2012 survey of parish leaders, 86 percent of LEM respondents indicated their ministry position had a written job description.

What proportion of parish lay ecclesial ministers serving in the arch/diocese have:
Percentage responding:

	“Many (51 – 74%)” or “Most or all (more than 75%)”	“Most or all (more than 75%)” Only
A written job description	51%	19%
A periodic, written evaluation of their ministry	21	2
A contract for their position	17	12
An official appointment to their position by the arch/bishop	8	5
A set term of appointment with provision for renewal	4	2

What proportion of parish lay ecclesial ministers serving in the arch/diocese are:
Percentage responding:

	“Many (51 – 74%)” or “Most or all (more than 75%)”	“Most or all (more than 75%)” Only
Hired by the pastor of the parish in which they serve	51%	19%
Hired by another arch/diocesan official	17	12
Hired by the arch/bishop	8	5
Serving as a lay ecclesial minister in a volunteer capacity	29%	12%
Serving in a part-time paid ministry position	21	2
Serving in a full-time paid ministry position	4	2

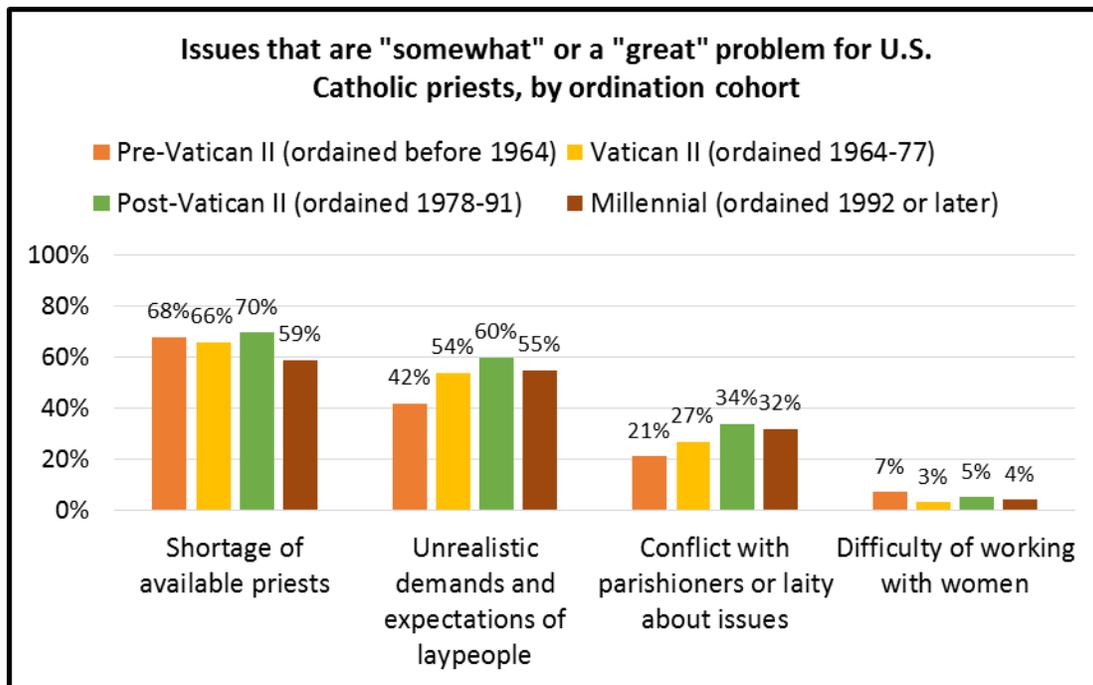
The most common authorized forms of lay ecclesial ministry in dioceses are pastoral associates (51 percent), religious education for children or youth (51 percent), youth ministry (47 percent), adult faith formation and/or RCIA (40 percent), liturgical or music ministry (36 percent), and young adult ministry (33 percent).

Co-responsibility

Collaboration between clergy and laity in ministry has become a regular part of parish life in the United States. In 1965 there were 35,925 diocesan priests in the United States and 94 percent of them were active in ministry in the country’s 17,637 parishes. In 2014, the number of these

priests available had declined to 26,265, of which only 68 percent are active in ministry in the country's 17,483 parishes.¹⁰ In 1965 there were two active diocesan priests per parish and today there is only one. Because the number of diocesan priests available varies according to dioceses, there are nearly 3,500 parishes now without a resident priest pastor (20 percent of all U.S. parishes). Although the percentage of Catholics attending Mass on a given weekend has declined from an average of about 55 percent 1965 to about 31 percent now, the self-identified Catholic population has grown from 48.5 million in 1965 to approximately 78 million now.¹¹ To meet the needs of Catholics, priests collaborate with the laity as well as permanent deacons (which did not exist in 1965 and now number more than 17,000). Since 1965, lay participation in ministry, on councils, and in emerging roles such as parish business managers has become not only the norm but also a necessary dimension of the life and ministry of many parishes.¹²

For *Same Call, Different Men* (2012), CARA researchers surveyed 960 randomly selected U.S. Catholic priests. The figure below shows some of the issues that priests might consider problematic concerning the laity and parish life. As shown in the figure below, majorities of younger priests (those ordained 1965 or later) say that a shortage of priests and unrealistic demands and expectations of lay people are "somewhat" or a "great" problem for them on a day-to-day basis. Fewer cited conflicts with the laity or difficulties working with women as a problem.

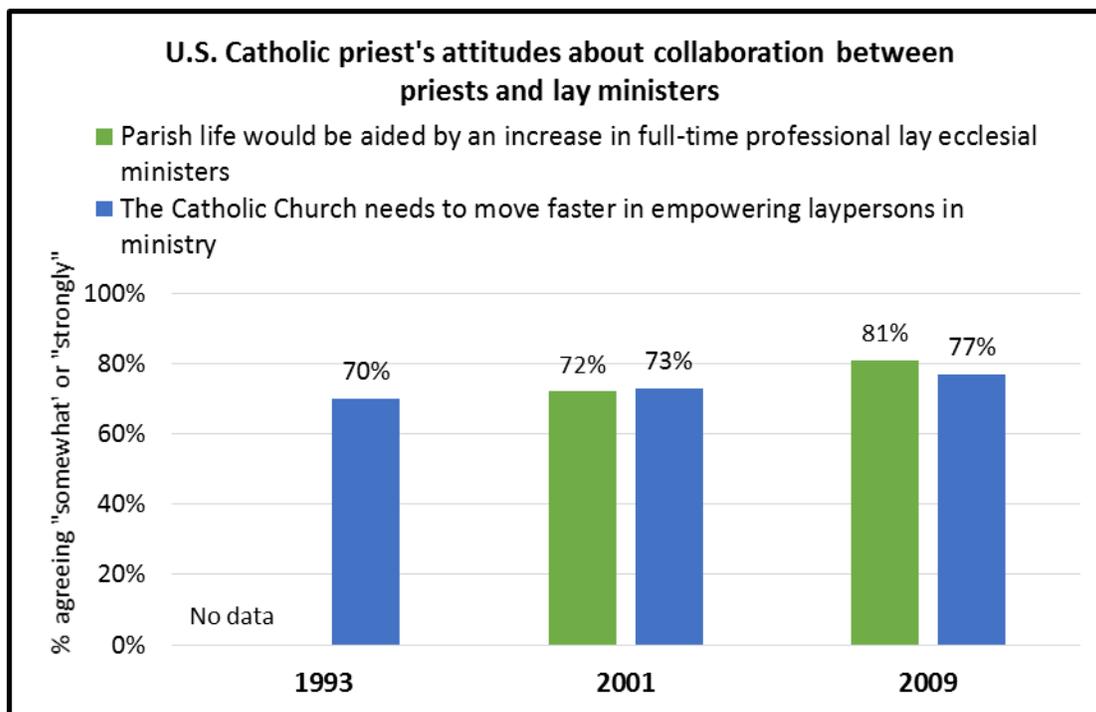


¹⁰ The average age of priests in 1970 was 35 (Gautier, et al., 2012, pg. 3). In 2009, the average age had increased to 63. A larger share of priests are retired and no longer active in parish ministry now than in the past.

¹¹ For more see: "Sunday Morning: Deconstructing Catholic Mass attendance in the 1950s and now" at: <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2011/03/sunday-morning-deconstructing-catholic.html>

¹² On average, parishes have a 12-member Parish Pastoral Council and typically 10 or 11 of these members are lay people (Zech, et al., 2010, pg.55).

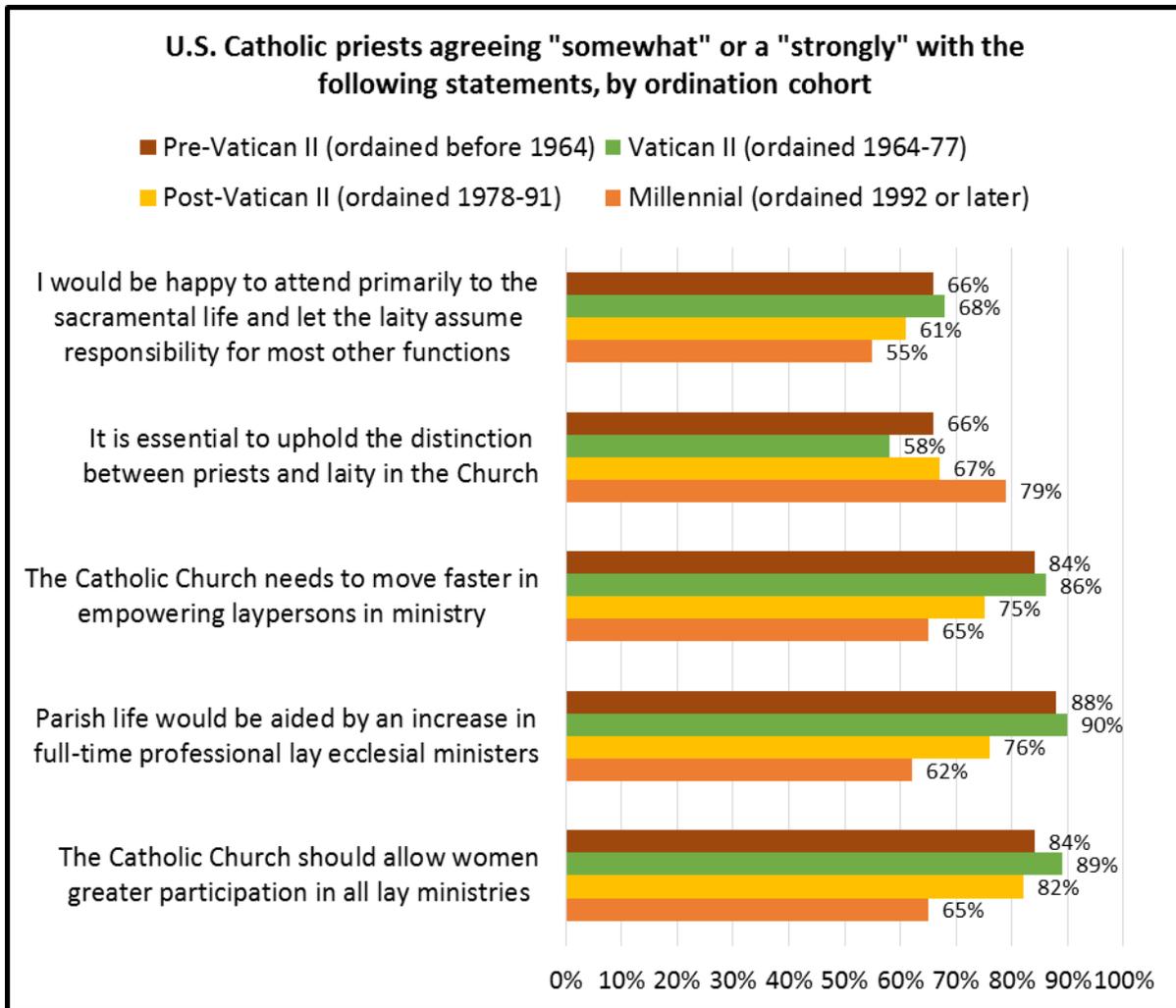
The survey conducted for *Same Call, Different Men* in 2009 is a replication of similar surveys conducted by researchers in 1993 and 2001. As shown below, seven in ten or more priests in these surveys agreed “somewhat” or “strongly” that the Catholic Church needs to move faster in empowering laypersons in ministry and that parish life would be aided by an increase in full-time LEMs.



Some examples of what priests indicated in their own words in the 2009 study include: “*More people are getting more and more involved in more things and that’s exciting to me. I just try to get out of their way*” (Gautier, Perl, and Fichter, p. 80) and “*I think we need to find leadership from within the people. ... We need to collaborate with the laity rather than taking the whole burden on us that we have to minister to them*” (p.82).

The numbers of priests in the Pre-Vatican II and Vatican II ordination cohorts are diminishing due to retirement and mortality. As shown in the figure on the next page, these older cohorts are the most supportive of moving faster to empower lay people in ministry and include more who believe that parish life would be aided by an increase in use of full-time LEMs. Nevertheless, majorities of priests in each cohort agree at least “somewhat” with each statement.

The *Same Call* authors note that more than one in five Post-Vatican II and Millennial cohort priests are international priests that were raised and formed for priesthood elsewhere in the world—often in developing countries. By comparison, fewer than one in 20 priests of older ordination cohorts are international priests. Thus, some of the attitudinal differences by cohort represents cross-cultural variations rather than period or generational effects.



Pathways to Ministry

In 2012 CARA conducted a national survey of never-married Catholics ages 14 and older. Five percent of male respondents indicated that they had considered becoming a lay ecclesial minister at some point in their life. By comparison 13 percent said they had considered becoming a priest or religious brother. Among female respondents, 7 percent indicated that they had considered becoming a lay ecclesial minister at some point. By comparison, 10 percent said they had considered becoming a religious sister. Thus, it does not appear that many Catholics envision themselves serving as a LEM in their youth.¹³

This finding is supported by data collected in CARA’s 2012 survey of parish leaders, which included a number of questions about the call and path to pastoral ministry for LEMs. On average, LEMs report that at age 25 they “first felt the call to ministry or parish service in any setting (parish, school, hospital; paid or volunteer).”¹⁴ Given the formation and placement involved, one can expect that the average person interested in pastoral ministry likely does not

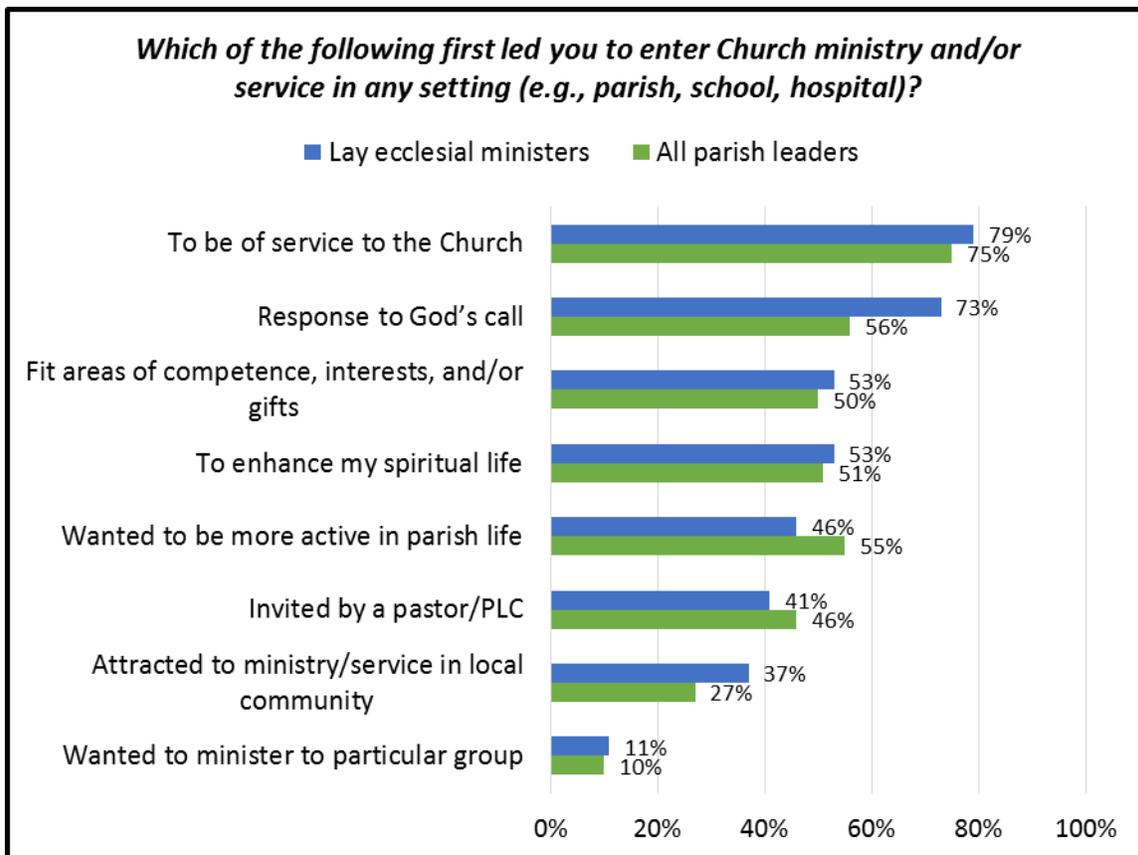
¹³ Ninety-two percent of LEMs say they were raised Catholic (similar to the adult Catholic population).

¹⁴ LEM respondents reported feeling the call to ministry as early as the age of 10 and as late as the age of 70. LEMs report hearing the call, on average, a few years before other parish leaders (age 25 compared to 29).

begin their professional ministry before reaching their late 20s or early 30s. This means that only a small segment of the Millennial Generation (born 1982 or later) would be expected to be serving as a LEM currently.¹⁵

On average, LEMs report that about a year and a half passed between hearing the call to ministry and their beginning involvement in parish ministry or service. A majority of LEMs begin their parish ministry or service in their home parish (52 percent) and just under half start this as a volunteer (45 percent). However, there may be some changes occurring in the hiring of LEMs. In CARA’s survey of parish leaders for the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership project, Millennial LEMs were much less likely than older LEMs to say they were a parishioner in the parish where they serve before entering ministry (31 percent compared to 71 percent) or that they began as a volunteer (31 percent compared to 68 percent).

CARA asked LEMs what first led them to enter Church ministry. The figure below shows the reasons most often cited and compares LEMs to all those serving in parish ministry (including clergy). Nearly three in four LEMs (73 percent) say they did so in “response to God’s call.” Among all those in ministry, only 56 percent indicated this. The most common reason for entering ministry for all respondents was “to be of service to the Church” (79 percent of LEMs and 75 percent of all parish leaders).



¹⁵ Only 5.4 percent of LEMs were of the Millennial Generation when this survey was conducted. At that time, the oldest members of the Millennial Generation were 30 (i.e., those born in 1982).

Forty-six percent say that one of the reasons they began their ministry was because they were invited to do so by the pastor or parish life coordinator (i.e., Canon 517.2 parishes). Three in ten LEMs note that they were inspired to enter their ministry through involvement with a movement within the Church such as Cursillo or RENEW. Millennial Generation LEMs are the most likely to say they began in ministry because it “fit areas of competence, interests, and/or gifts” (71 percent).

Forty-four percent of LEMs note that they were encouraged to begin their ministry or service by a priest. The next most common types of individuals to encourage are: friends (37 percent), a religious sister or religious brother (32 percent), a parishioner (31 percent), family members (26 percent), a teacher or professor (21 percent), another LEM (19 percent), a spouse (18 percent), and permanent deacons (3 percent).

Nine in ten LEMs (89 percent) say they consider their ministry “a vocation, not just a job.” As shown in the table below, more than four in ten are primarily involved in religious education, sacramental preparation, and/or formation (44 percent). One in five are primarily involved in liturgy and/or music ministry (21 percent). Fifteen percent are primarily involved in general parish administration.

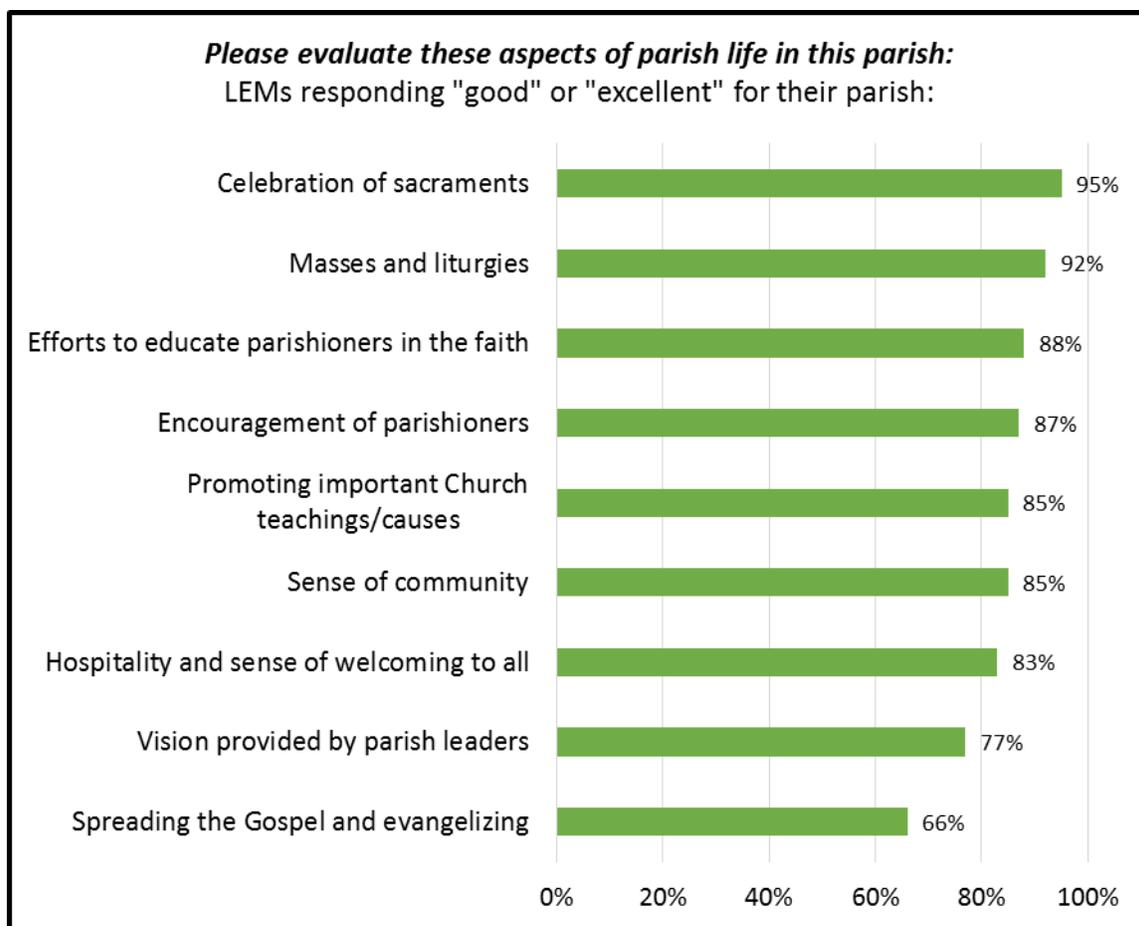
<i>Indicate your primary ministry area:</i>	
Percentage of LEMs responding:	
Religious education for youth	30%
Liturgy and/or music ministry	21
General parish administration	15
Adult faith formation	8
Sacramental preparation/RCIA	6
Youth ministry	4
Public affairs/advocacy	4
Budget and finances	3
Ministry to the sick, disabled, homebound	3
Young adult ministry	2
Evangelization	1
Stewardship and development	1
Parish council	1
Services to those in financial need	1
Ministry to the bereaved	1
Ministry to elderly/seniors	1

Eighteen percent of LEMs indicate their job title includes “pastoral associate” or “pastoral assistant.” Twelve percent report their title includes “director” or “coordinator” of “religious education.”

Their Parish and Workplace

In CARA’s 2012 survey of parish leaders, 91 percent of LEMs say their overall satisfaction with their parish is “good” or “excellent.” Nine percent say their satisfaction is only “fair” and less than one percent say this is “poor.”

The respondents were also asked to evaluate more specific aspects of parish life as “good or “excellent.” The figure below shows these results. In percentage terms, LEMs give the highest “A” marks to the celebration of sacraments (95 percent “good” or “excellent”) and the Masses and liturgies (92 percent). The following receive “B” ratings: efforts to educate parishioners in the faith (88 percent), encouragement of parishioners (87 percent), promoting important Church teachings or causes (85 percent), the sense of community (85 percent), and the hospitality and sense of welcoming to all (83 percent). The vision provided by parish leaders (77 percent) and spreading the Gospel and evangelizing (66 percent) receive only fair “C” level evaluations.

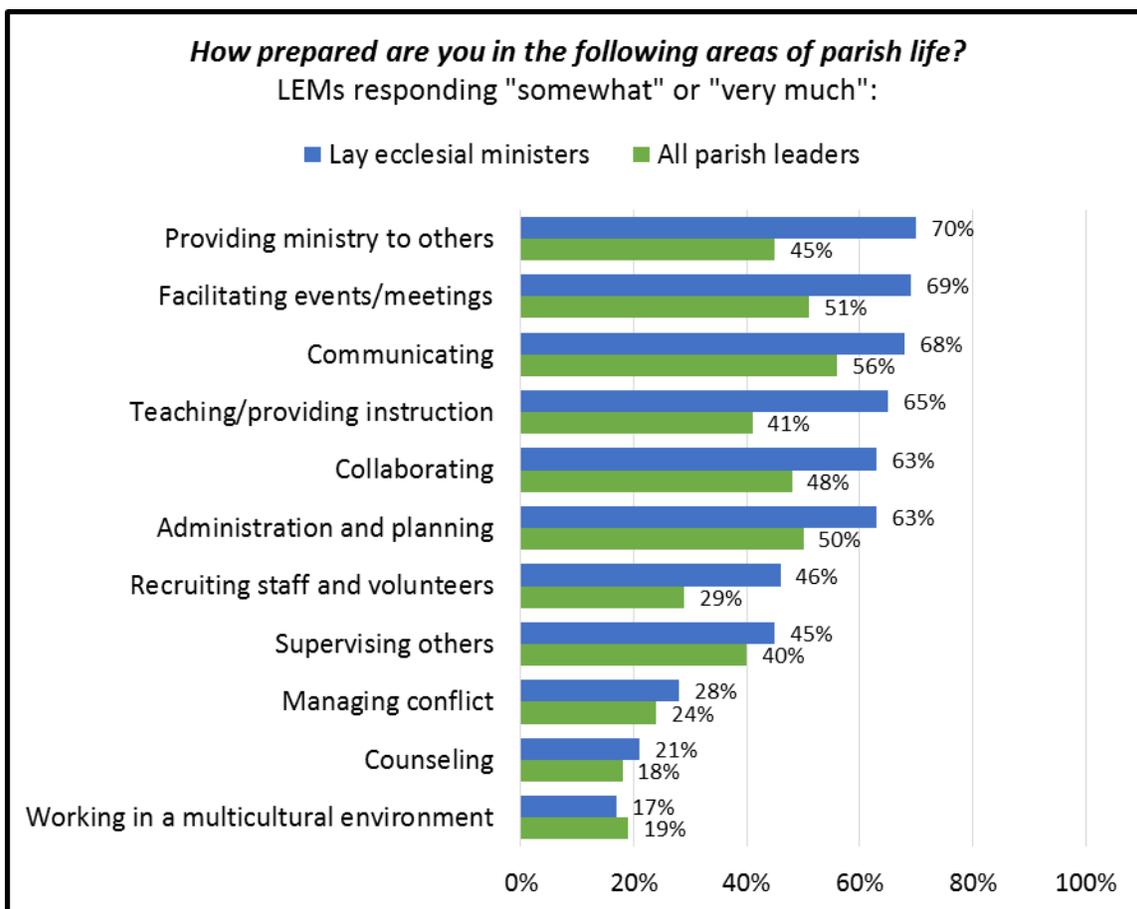


More than eight in ten LEMs say that their parish is “somewhat” or “very” successful at recruiting and retaining ministers and staff (87 percent) and promoting ministry opportunities (85 percent).

All of the LEMs CARA surveyed agreed “somewhat” or “very much” that they “feel adequately prepared for ministry” (88 percent “very much” only). Seventy-two percent agreed this much

that they “felt adequately prepared” for their ministry at the time they began it (28 percent “very much” only). On average, LEMs report that they have served in ministry for 29 years (9 years in their current position).

The figure below shows how prepared LEMs feel they are for different aspects of parish ministry. For comparison, the level of preparation for all parish leaders is shown as well. LEMs feel most prepared (“somewhat” or “very much”) for providing ministry to others (70 percent), facilitating events/meetings (69 percent), communicating (68 percent), teaching/providing instruction (65 percent), and collaborating (63 percent). Fewer than half feel this prepared for recruiting staff and volunteers (46 percent) and supervising others (45 percent). Fewer than three in ten feel this prepared for managing conflict (28 percent), counseling (21 percent), or working in a multicultural environment (17 percent).



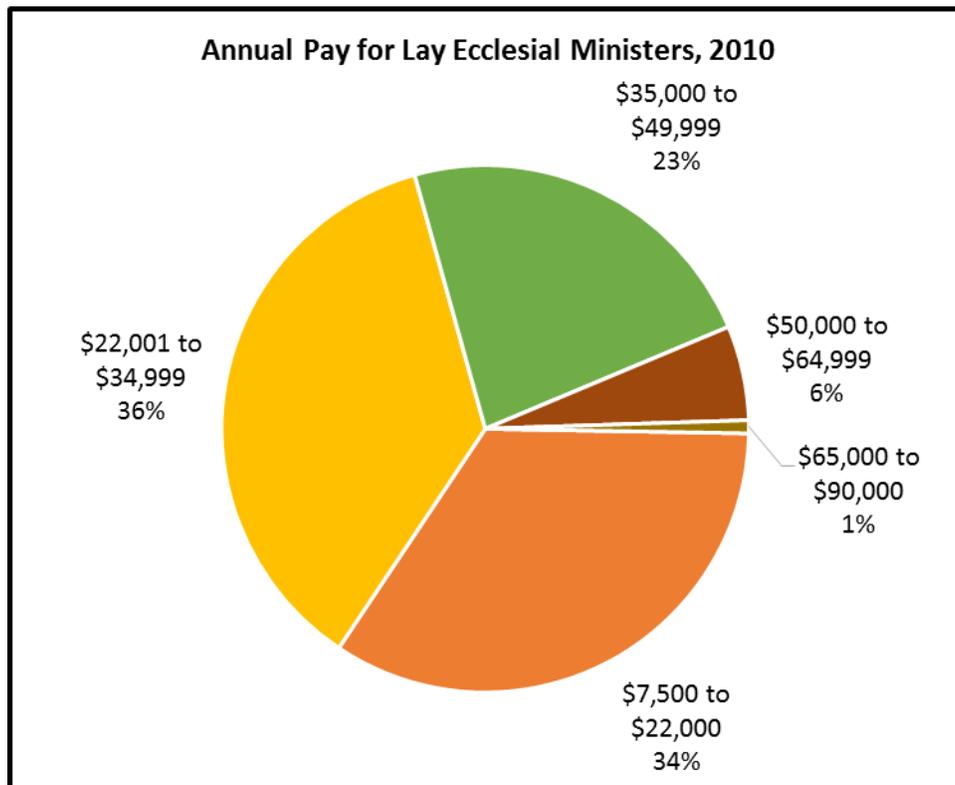
Nearly all LEMs agree “somewhat” or “very much” that they “feel sufficient job security in the parish” (95 percent and 56 percent agree “very much” only) and that their parish provides them “with the resources I need for my ministry/service” (95 percent and 68 percent agree “very much” only).

The median number of hours worked per week by LEMs (i.e., those paid and working at least 20 hours per week), as reported to CARA by pastors and parish life coordinators in 2010 was 40 hours per week, with an average of 34.5 hours worked per week.¹⁶

Nearly a quarter of LEMs (22 percent) agree “very much” that they “often feel overworked” in their parish ministry or service. Millennial Generation LEMs are most likely to agree “very much” that they often feel overworked (29 percent).

Majorities of LEMs agree at least “somewhat” that they have sufficient time for their ministry (96 percent), for personal prayer and spirituality (78 percent), for family responsibilities (73 percent), and for time with friends and guests (58 percent). However, fewer than half similarly agree that they have sufficient time for hobbies or special interests (48 percent).

The median annual pay for LEMs, as reported to CARA by pastors and parish life coordinators in 2010 was \$27,590.¹⁷ The minimum annual salary/wages reported was \$7,572 and the maximum \$89,184.



¹⁶ Forty-seven percent of LEMs report that they are involved in ministry in more than one parish and may have additional hours worked elsewhere (on average this is about 7.6 hours per week). Sometimes this is in the context of being a shared staff member in a multi-parish ministry setting. Twenty-percent of LEMs additionally have paid jobs outside of ministry.

¹⁷ This includes only those lay ministers in pastoral ministries working 20 hours or more per week in paid ministry. The median annual salary/wages reported by LEMs in CARA’s 2012 survey was \$34,200. However, this may have included income from multiple parishes and was based on a smaller sample of individuals than CARA’s 2010 data.

The median annual salary/wages, if it were the only income for a family of four would be \$5,477 above the federal poverty line for 2010 (i.e., \$22,113). Thirty-four percent of LEMs earn \$22,000 or less per year for their ministry.¹⁸ The table below shows the median hourly wage for selected ministry titles often held by Lay Ecclesial Ministers.

Median Hourly Pay for Selected LEM Position Titles	
Director of Liturgy and Music	\$33.50
Music Director	\$25.06
Catechetical Ministry Director	\$19.50
Pastoral Ministry Director	\$19.16
Parish Life Coordinator (Canon 517.2 parishes)	\$18.60
Pastoral Associate/Assistant	\$17.97
Youth Ministry Director	\$17.47
RCIA Director	\$16.83
Youth Minister	\$15.26
Pastoral Minister	\$15.11
Catechetical Ministry Assistant	\$13.48
Sacristan	\$11.89

Source: Pay & Benefits Survey of Catholic Parishes (2011)

Seventy-one percent of LEMs who are not vowed religious are married.¹⁹ Of those who are married, 89 percent have a Catholic spouse. Eighty-one percent of married LEMs have a spouse who is working. Thus, for many, the income they earn is supplemented by a spouse's income.²⁰

CARA research has highlighted the challenges of educational debt in the encouragement and recruitment of a variety of vocations. Given the incomes available to most LEMs, financing education and formation is an emerging issue.

In CARA's 2012 survey of representatives from diocesan lay ministry offices and lay formation programs around the country more than three in four respondents (78 percent) said their diocese subsidizes the formation of lay ecclesial ministers. The subsidy policy varies by dioceses, but no respondents indicated that the diocese pays the full cost for formation.

A fifth of respondents (20 percent) say that the diocese pays a third and the parish pays a third to subsidize the formation of lay ecclesial ministry. One in ten respondents (9 percent) indicates that the diocese pays half the cost for formation for lay ecclesial ministry.

¹⁸ Twenty-seven percent of LEMs surveyed in 2012 reported ministry and income wages at or below the poverty level for a family of four in that year.

¹⁹ Nineteen percent are have never married, 6 percent are separated or divorced, and 4 percent are widowed.

²⁰ The median household income in LEM households is nearly the same as the median for all U.S. households.

If your arch/diocese subsidizes the formation of lay ecclesial ministers, what best describes the subsidy policy for lay ecclesial ministry formation?

Percentage responding:

Arch/diocese pays the full cost for formation for lay ecclesial ministry	0%
Arch/diocese pays half, parish or lay minister pays half	9
Arch/diocese pays a third, parish pays a third, lay minister pays a third	20
Other	71

Seven in ten (71 percent) respondents listed other subsidy policies. Examples of some of these other policies are listed below:

- Diocese pays a third, lay minister pays two-thirds.
- For the Spanish speaking LEM Formation Program the Diocese pays the full cost. The English speakers are subsidized at about half of the total cost of running the program.
- In some cases, full scholarships are available; in other cases, a combination of grants and loans are offered.
- Parishes are encouraged to provide tuition assistance, diocesan scholarships are available.
- Tuition is waived by the diocese if the student is a good candidate, but lacks money.

In CARA’s 2012 survey of parish leaders, some LEM respondents indicated that they had received financial assistance for their ministry formation from the following sources: their parish (46 percent), a college or university (16 percent), a religious community (13 percent), a diocese (12 percent), and a seminary (2 percent).

LEMs are most likely to report participation in a formation program sponsored by a diocese or a diocesan office or agency (66 percent). Fewer have participated in programs sponsored by a college or university (47 percent), an extension program (29 percent), or a seminary or school of theology (27 percent). Forty-four percent indicate participation in formation sponsored by some other certification program.

The most common degree held by LEMs is a master’s in ministry, religion, or theology. Twenty-seven percent have this in hand and an additional 8 percent are in progress in a program that will lead to this degree. Twenty-eight percent have a ministry formation program certificate and 9 percent are in the process of earning this. Twelve percent have a bachelor’s degree in ministry, religion, or theology and an additional 5 percent are in progress in a program that will lead to this degree. Five percent have an associate’s degree in ministry, religion, or theology and 2 percent are working on earning this degree. Only 1 percent has a doctorate in ministry, religion, or theology with an additional 2 percent working on earning this degree. Millennial Generation

LEMs are the most likely to have a bachelor’s or master’s degree in ministry, religion, or theology (43 percent and 57 percent, respectively).

Sixty-three percent of LEMs CARA surveyed said they currently had access to educational tuition assistance as part of their ministry. Of those with access to this benefit, 61 percent said they were “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with it. Seventy-nine percent of LEMs are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with their ministry wages or salary.

For each type of compensation or benefit for your ministry listed below, how satisfied are you?

	Very much	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't have benefit
Retirement or pension	33%	27%	15%	12%	13%
Life insurance	29	23	7	7	34
Health insurance	40	23	3	5	29
Dental insurance	28	23	9	6	33
Paid sick days	63	17	3	1	16
Paid vacation days	61	16	5	2	16
Tuition assistance	25	14	9	15	37

As shown in the table above, many LEMs also receive the following for their ministry: retirement savings (87 percent), paid sick days (84 percent), paid vacation days (84 percent), health insurance (71 percent), dental insurance (67 percent), and life insurance (66 percent). Among those who receive the benefits, the highest levels of satisfaction (“somewhat” or “very much”) are given to paid sick days (95 percent), paid vacation days (92 percent), and health insurance (88 percent).

LEMs report use of a variety of new media and social networks in their parish ministry. This is most common among those of the Millennial and Post-Vatican II generations (i.e., those who grew up with computers and/or the internet). Forty percent of LEMs use Facebook in their ministry and 36 percent use YouTube. Sixteen percent blog as part of their ministry and 5 percent utilize Twitter. Ninety-five percent of LEMs are in parishes with websites and 87 percent of those in these parishes provide content for this site. Eighty-three percent of LEMs are provided with a parish email address.

LEMs note that they receive assistance from the parishioners of their parish. Three in four LEMs agree “somewhat” or “very much” that parishioners in their parish “readily volunteer” (75 percent) and nearly all agree this much that “parishioners are invited and encouraged to participate in parish ministry” (93 percent).

View from the Pews

In 2012, CARA conducted in-pew surveys of parishioners in 23 randomly selected parishes in the United States as part of the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership research project. In all,

CARA heard from 14,437 parishioners while they were attending Mass (an average of 628 respondents per parish; ages 16 and older). Many of the questions related to their evaluations of the ministry of LEMs. It is important to note that eight in ten respondents were registered with their parish and 35 percent were attending Mass at a parish of their own choosing rather than their territorial parish. This self-selection of parishes and connection to them are reflected in parishioner evaluations which tended to be very positive. Increasingly parishioners are seeking out parishes that best meet their needs and preferences. This is common among young Catholics and those who self-identify their race and ethnicity as something other than non-Hispanic white.

Overall, 58 percent of parishioners surveyed in-pew rate their overall satisfaction with their parish as “excellent” (94 percent rate this as “good” or “excellent”). Eighty-five percent agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that their parish has “sufficient qualified parish staff to meet the parish’s needs.”

In many cases, parishioners evaluate their parish more positively than the LEMs working in them. Parishioners are also very likely to provide positive evaluations (i.e., “good” or “excellent”) for the ministries that LEMs are most likely to be involved with. Nine in ten or more parishioners say the following in their parish is “good” or “excellent”: sacramental preparation for first reconciliation, first communion, and confirmation (95 percent), RCIA (94 percent), marriage preparation (94 percent), sacramental preparation for baptism (94 percent), children’s religious education (92 percent), youth ministry (90 percent), and faith formation for adults (90 percent).

Overall, 92 percent of parishioners say the ministry of the “professional ministry staff” is “good” or “excellent” (53 percent “excellent” only). Similarly, parishioners evaluate, as “good” or “excellent,” their parish’s Director of Religious Education (91 percent and 53 percent “excellent” only) and Youth Minister (90 percent and 52 percent as “excellent” only).²¹

More than six in ten parishioners say the following “very much” attracted them to their parish: its open, welcoming spirit (67 percent), the quality of the liturgy (63 percent), the quality of the preaching (63 percent), and the sense of belonging they feel there (62 percent). However, only 18 percent of parishioners “strongly agree” that they feel they have a role in the decision making of the parish. Half of parishioners (49 percent) “strongly agree” that they feel invited and encouraged to participate in parish ministry. One in four (25 percent) “strongly agree” that they are interested in being more involved in the ministry of the parish and 20 percent agree similarly that they have “felt a calling to a greater role in parish ministry.” Thirty-five percent “strongly agree” that it is clear to them how to become more involved in the ministry of the parish and 30 percent agree similarly that parish leaders encourage them to explore their vocation within the parish.

Seventy-seven percent of parishioners agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that the diversity of the parish is reflected in the diversity of the parish staff (33 percent agree “strongly” only). Eighty-eight percent of parishioners agree at least “somewhat” that they are comfortable with the idea of sharing staff with other parishes to meet the parish’s needs (37 percent agree “strongly” only).

²¹ The survey did not inquire about evaluations for other specific LEMs by job title or role.

In CARA’s 2008 national survey of adult self-identified Catholics, we asked respondents about what they would prefer to be done in their parish if a priest becomes less available.

Listed below are some of the things the Catholic Church is doing to help meet Catholics’ need in a time of fewer priests. Would you support or oppose each of the following if the parish you attend did not have a resident priest?

Percentage of parishioners who “support” or “strongly support” each:

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Sharing a priest with one or more other parishes	76%	78%	56%
Bringing in a priest from outside of the United States	73	67	45
Asking a retired priest to come in and do more	71	59	46
Increasing the use of deacons	68	70	46
Increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers	60	56	38
Merging the parish with another nearby parish	50	51	40

Overall, 55 percent said they would “support” or “strongly support” “increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers. As shown in the table above, self-identified Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more often (i.e., those most likely to be in the pews) have even stronger majority support for the increased use of LEMs (60 percent). However, it is also important to note that there are several other alternatives that have broader support among the most frequent attenders, including: sharing a priest with another parish (76 percent), bringing in a priest from outside the United States (73 percent), asking a retired priest to come in and do more (71 percent), and increasing the use of deacons (68 percent).²²

In CARA’s 2010 national survey of parishes, 53 percent of pastors or PLCs indicated that their parish had at least one LEM on staff. Parishes with LEMs are larger than parishes without them. The average annual operating revenue in parishes with at least one LEM in 2010 was about \$731,500 compared to \$630,000 in parishes without a LEM on staff. A parish that has at least one LEM has an average of 1,241 registered households compared to 1,069 in parishes without at any LEMs. Noticeably, as shown in the table on the following page, parishes with LEMs are better able to provide ministries to parishioners than parishes without at least one LEM on staff.

Nine in ten or more parishes with at least one LEM on staff provide sacramental preparation; religious education, faith formation, or catechesis for children and adolescents; RCIA; and

²² The least favored option is merging the parish with another nearby parish (50 percent).

marriage preparation. Parishes without a LEM on staff are less able to provide these ministries as well as many others listed in the table on the next page.

<i>Does the parish provide or offer the following ministries, programs, or services?</i>		
Percentage of pastors or PLCs responding “Yes”:		
	Has at least one LEM on staff	No LEMs on staff
Sacramental preparation	99%	87%
Religious education, faith formation, or catechesis for children	98	88
RCIA	93	76
Marriage preparation	91	77
Religious education, faith formation, or catechesis for adolescents	90	75
Ministries to the infirm or homebound	89	75
Adult faith formation	87	71
Ministry to elderly or seniors	66	55
Social services to meet individual needs	66	47
Ministry to the bereaved	58	45
Evangelization	42	32
Social action to educate or effect change	39	25
Youth ministry	33	27
Ministry to persons with disabilities	28	22
Ministry to the divorced or separated	18	13

Remaining Questions

The research reviewed here is neither conclusive nor complete. There are other important questions that remain understudied. The parish environment in the United States continues to undergo change as the Catholic population shifts geographically and demographically and parishes and dioceses plan for the future. Twelve percent of those currently in lay ecclesial ministry formation programs are under age 30. When they enter their parishes they will join the leading edge of Millennial Generation LEMs already at work. They will be more prepared than their elders, more racially and ethnically diverse, and more active in digital social networks. How will these new parish leaders affect parish life and evangelization?

Parishioners are currently broadly positive about the parishes they choose to attend. However, a greater depth of understanding is needed to fully comprehend the relationships between LEMs and parishioners in the pews, in religious education classes, at sacramental celebrations, and other parish activities. The roles of LEMs in reaching out to those Catholics who are not in the pews needs further examination as well.

Although we understand much about how priests view their working relationships with LEMs we have few, if any studies, that can provide significant insight into how LEMs view this

relationship. We also do not know enough about how LEMs work with deacons within the parish. Differing attitudes among priests about LEMs also need further exploration. Essentially, more research is needed on the co-responsibility for parish life and evangelization between these parish leaders.

Finally, the roles of LEMs outside the parish also needs more research. Lay people are also serving in ministry on college campuses, hospitals, relief and service organizations, as well as prisons. There are few, if any studies to date, that can shed light on LEMs active in these ministries.

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All of the studies referenced in this paper use probability-based, scientific, random sampling. The use of these quantitative methods ensure that the respondents and information collected from them is as representative as possible of the populations studied. Note the article text refers to survey years rather than publication years. Often a survey is conducted in one year and the report is not released or a book not published until the next year.

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About CARA

CARA is a national non-profit research center that conducts social scientific studies about the Catholic Church. Founded in 1964, CARA has three major dimensions to its mission:

- to increase the Church's self-understanding
- to serve the applied research needs of Church decision-makers

- to advance scholarly research on religion, particularly Catholicism

CARA has more than 50 years of experience in quality social science research on the Catholic Church offering a range of research and consulting services for dioceses, parishes, religious communities and institutes, and other Catholic organizations. CARA's longstanding policy is to let research findings stand on their own and never take an advocacy position or go into areas outside its social science competence. All CARA researchers have advanced degrees in relevant academic disciplines as well as pastoral experience. Many CARA researchers were involved in conducting the research summarized here. The CARA co-authors of this white paper are Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier.