

**April 2022**

***The Class of 2022:  
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood***



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C.

*The Class of 2022:  
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*

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

**April 2022**



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***The Class of 2022:  
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood***

**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a national survey of seminarians scheduled for ordination to the priesthood in 2022. 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 2022 by contacting all theologates, houses of formation, dioceses, archdioceses, eparchies, and institutes of men religious in the United States. The resulting contact list of was used to administer the survey.

The survey was administered between January 10 and March 18. The survey invitation was sent by email to 419 identified ordinands. Follow-up emails were regularly sent to the ordinands who delayed their response. A total of 317 ordinands completed the survey (76% response rate). The respondents included 238 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (75% of all respondents) and 79 ordinands to the religious priesthood (25%).

The main findings from the study are the following:

- Three quarters of responding ordinands (75%) are preparing for ordination to a diocese or eparchy. Responding ordinands in religious institutes comprise 25%. The biggest group of responding ordinands (30%) is completing studies at one of the seminaries in the Midwest. One in ten (8%) 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 in religious institutes knew the members of their religious institute for 6 years, on average, before entering.

***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 33).

- 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 33.

### ***Race/Ethnicity and Culture***

- Three in five responding ordinands (60%) are Caucasian. One in five (22%) is Hispanic/Latino. One in ten (11%) is Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. Relatively few (4%) are African/African American/black.
- A quarter (26%) is foreign-born. By comparison, since 1999, on average, 28% of responding ordinands were foreign-born.
- The four most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Vietnam, Brazil, Colombia, and India. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 13 years ago at the age of 20.

### ***Education***

- One in ten responding ordinands (9%) report being home schooled. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of home schooling was 8 years.
- Between 39% and 42% of all responding ordinands attended a Catholic school on the K-12 and/or college level. Two in three responding ordinands (65%) participated in a religious education program in their parish, for seven years on average.
- Three in five responding ordinands (58%) completed an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree before entering the seminary.
- Among those who attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary, the most common fields of study were philosophy, liberal arts, theology, business, science/math, and education.
- Three in ten responding ordinands (28%) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or religious institute), which was \$29,550 on average. Between entering seminary and ordination, the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands in religious institutes decreased by 53% and the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands decreased by 4% since entering the seminary (unadjusted for inflation).

### ***Work***

- Seven in ten responding ordinands (68%) reported full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in six worked in education (16%). Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 14 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education.
- One in eleven responding ordinands (9%) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. Relatively few (3%) 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 (92%) report being baptized Catholic as an infant. Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 19. Nine in ten responding ordinands (86%) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children. Two in five (36%) has or had a relative who is a priest or religious. The vast majority of responding ordinands (97%) were raised during the most formative part of their childhood by their biological parents.
- Seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (74%) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, a similar proportion (72%) prayed the rosary. Half attended prayer group/Bible study (46%). Two in five participated in high school retreats (41%) or prayed Lectio Divina (38%). Three in ten participated in college retreats (32%).
- In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands (50%) participated in a parish youth group. Three in ten participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (28%) or in Boy Scouts (25%).
- In regard to participation in parish ministries, seven in ten responding ordinands (74%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Half (51%) served as lectors. Two in five served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (37%) or as catechists (37%). Three in ten served as in campus ministry/youth ministry (33%) or as a Confirmation sponsors/godfathers (27%). A quarter served as a cantor or in music ministry (26%).
- Nine in ten responding ordinands (90%) 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 (48%) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Most often, this person was a family member (other than parents) or a friend/classmate.
- In regard to participation in vocation programs before entering the seminary, half of responding ordinands (49%) report participating in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society. During their seminary years, nine in ten ordinands (83%) reported that a Pastoral Year internship 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 2022 survey.

To obtain the names and contact information for the ordinands, in fall 2021 and winter 2022, 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 2022. The resulting contact list of 427 ordinands was used to administer the survey.

CARA contacted these men by email to explain the project and to ask them to complete an online survey. The survey was administered between January 10 and March 18. The survey invitation was sent by email to 419 identified ordinands. Follow-up emails were regularly sent to the ordinands who delayed their response. A total of 317 ordinands completed the survey (76% response rate). The respondents included 238 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (75% of all respondents) and 79 ordinands to the religious priesthood (25%).

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 in religious institutes. The report also contains selected trend data since 1999, the first year for which comparable data on both diocesan and responding ordinands in religious institutes are available.

## Part I: Type of Priesthood

Responding ordinands who participated in the survey represent 113 U.S. dioceses and eparchies and 31 distinct religious institutes.

The greatest number of responses from diocesan ordinands came from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (eight), Diocese of Paterson (eight), Diocese of Arlington (seven), Archdiocese of Denver (seven), Archdiocese of Philadelphia (six), Archdiocese of Newark (six), Archdiocese of Cincinnati (six), and Diocese of Worcester (six).

The greatest number of responses from ordinands to the religious priesthood came from the Society of Jesus (16 respondents), the Order of Preachers (12 respondents), and the Order of Saint Benedict (eight).<sup>1</sup>

<b><i>How long did you live in this diocese or eparchy before entering the seminary?<sup>2</sup></i></b>		<b><i>How long did you know the members of this institute or society before entering the seminary?</i></b>	
Time in years		Time in years	
<b>Diocesan</b>		<b>Religious</b>	
Mean	17	Mean	6
Median	18	Median	4
Range	0-58	Range	1-31

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 in religious institutes report that they knew the members of their religious institute for six years, on average, 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 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Estimated.

<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	30	22	32
South	26	31	25
Northeast	21	26	20
West	15	18	14
<b>USA - subtotal</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>90</b>
Abroad	8	4	10

Out of all responding ordinands, three in ten are studying at one of the seminaries located in the Midwest (30%) or in the South (26%). Fewer are studying in the Northeast (21%) or in the West (15%).

One in thirteen ordinands (8%) report studying at a seminary outside of the United States (e.g., Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy).

## 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 scheduled for ordination 18 years later, on average (at the age of 33). Responding ordinands in religious institutes are three years older than diocesan ordinands, on average, at the time of ordination.

### Age When First Considered Priesthood and Ordination

<i>How old were you when you first considered a vocation to the priesthood?</i>			
Time in years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	16	16	16
Median	16	16	15
Range	3-62	3-30	3-62

On average, responding ordinands were 16 years old when they first considered vocation to priesthood (half was between 3 and 16 years old and the other half between 16 and 62 years old).

Responding ordinands in religious institutes were about the same age, on average, as responding diocesan ordinands when they first considered a vocation to priesthood:

- On average, responding diocesan ordinands were 16, on average, when they first considered a vocation to priesthood (a median of 15).
- Responding ordinands in religious institutes were 16, on average, when they first considered a vocation to priesthood (a median of 16).

***How old were you when you first considered a vocation to the priesthood?***

Percentage of all respondents

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Adulthood (22 or older)	17	18	16
College (18 through 21)	21	27	19
High school (14 through 17)	24	18	27
Elementary (6 through 13)	30	32	29
Preschool (5 or younger)	8	5	8

The table above provides an alternative description for the same question which is considered in the table on the previous page.

One in five responding ordinands considered vocation to the priesthood for the first time in adulthood (22 or older) (17%) or in college (18 through 21) (21%).

One in four responding ordinands considered vocation to the priesthood for the first time in high school (14 through 17) (24%) and three in ten considered it in elementary school (6 through 13) (30%).

Relatively few responding ordinands (8%) considered vocation to the priesthood for the first time in preschool (5 or younger).

In terms of differences between diocesan ordinands and ordinands in religious institutes:

- Responding ordinands in religious institutes were 8 percentage points more likely to consider a vocation to the priesthood for the first time while in college.
- Responding diocesan ordinands were 9 percentage points more likely to consider a vocation to the priesthood for the first time while in high school.

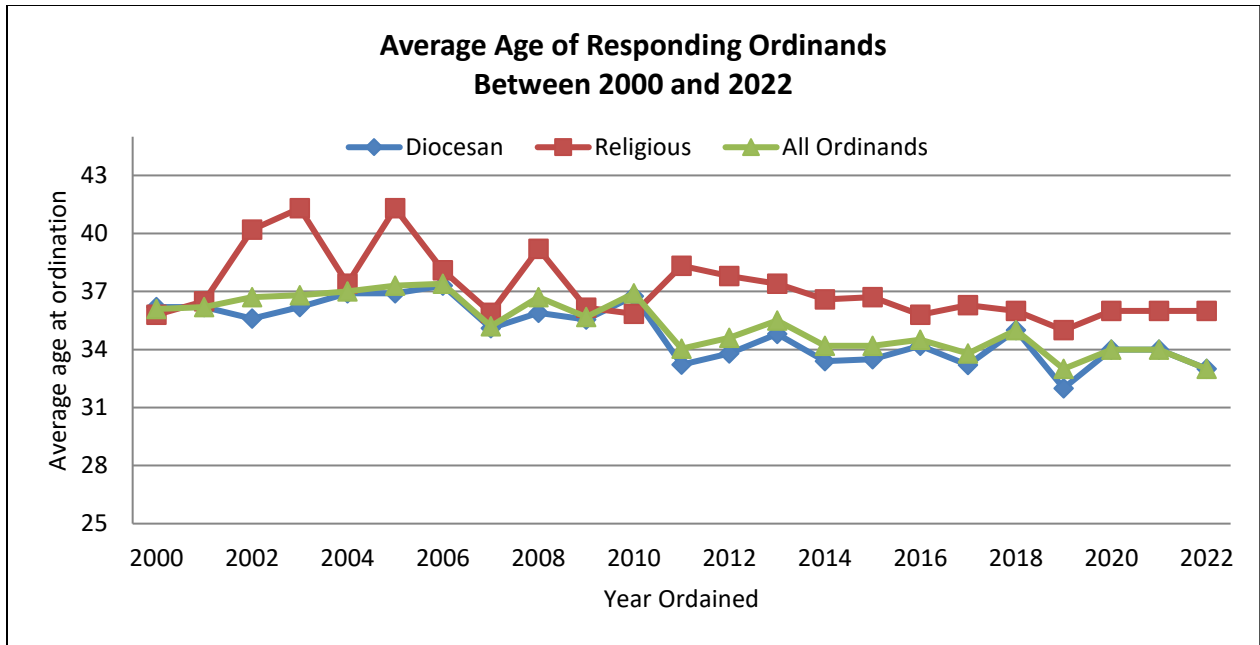
## Age When Scheduled for Ordination

<b>Age at Ordination</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
30 years or younger	44	17	53
31-40 years	42	67	34
41-50 years	10	14	9
51 years or older	4	3	4
Mean	33	36	33
Median	31	35	30
Range	25-70	27-55	25-70

The average age at the time of ordination among all responding ordinands is 33 years old, with half being ordained at the age 31 or younger. The youngest respondent will be 25 at ordination and the oldest will be 70.

Responding ordinands in religious institutes are on average 3 years older than responding diocesan ordinands.

- Responding diocesan ordinands are on average 33 years old (a median of 30 years old). Their age varies from 25 to 70 years old.
- Responding ordinands in religious institutes are on average 36 years old (a median of 35 years old). Their age varies from 27 to 55 years old.



The Class of 2022 follows the pattern in recent years of average age at ordination in the mid-thirties. The average age among all responding ordinands is 33 years old this year (Ordination Class of 2022). By comparison, responding ordinands were 34 years old on average in previous year (Ordination Class of 2021) and 34 years old on average two years ago (Ordination Class of 2020).

Due to relatively small number of responding ordinands in religious institutes, their average age is relatively volatile from one year to another.

### **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 (60%) is Caucasian and three in four (74%) were born in the United States.

One in four responding ordinands (26%) reported being foreign-born. The share of responding ordinands who were foreign-born increased from 22% in 1999 to 38% in 2003, then decreased to 23% in 2015. Since 2016, the ratio fluctuated between 25% and 30%.

This year, the four most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Vietnam, Brazil, Colombia, and India. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 13 years ago and were, on average, age 22 at the time they came.



## Race and Ethnicity

<b>Primary race or ethnicity (Please select only one)</b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	60	49	63
Hispanic/Latino	22	15	24
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	11	22	8
African/African American/black	4	5	4
Other (mixed)	3	9	1

Three in five responding ordinands are Caucasian (60%). By comparison, Caucasians constituted 65% of all responding ordinands last year and 67% two years ago.

Less than a quarter of all responding ordinands is:

- Hispanic/Latino (22%).
- Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (11%).
- African/African American/black (4%).
- Other or of mixed race (3%).

Comparing diocesan ordinands to responding ordinands in religious institutes:

- Ordinands in religious institutes are 14 percentage points more likely than diocesan institutes to identify as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian.
- Diocesan ordinands are 14 percentage points more likely than ordinands in religious institutes to identify as Caucasian/European American/white.

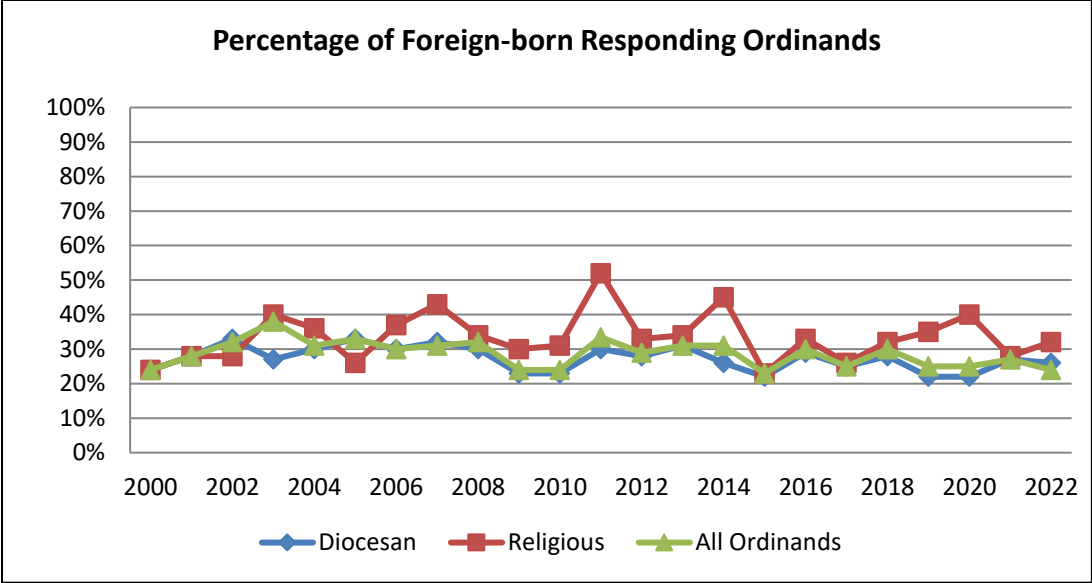
## Country of Birth

<b>Top Countries of Birth</b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
United States	74	68	76
Mexico	6	5	6
Vietnam	4	8	3
Brazil	2	1	2
Colombia	2	0	2
India	2	3	1
Other	12	16	11

The majority of responding ordinands was born in the United States (68% of responding ordinands in religious institutes, 76% of responding diocesan ordinands, and 74% overall).

The second most common country of birth was Mexico (with 6% of ordinands born there).

Other countries of birth include: Vietnam (4%), Brazil (2%), Colombia (2%), and India (2%). The remaining 12% of responding ordinands reported a total of 21 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 2022, three in ten responding ordinands (26%) report being foreign-born, compared to 27% in 2021 and 25% in 2020.

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

## Year of Entrance into the United States

<i><b>If born outside the United States, in what year did you come to live in the United States?</b></i>			
Year of entry			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	2009	2006	2010
Median	2014	2010	2015
Range	1978-2019	1978-2019	1984-2019

On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 13 years ago (a median of 8 years ago). The first foreign-born ordinand for Class of 2022 entered the country 44 years ago.

- Responding diocesan ordinands came to live in the United States 12 years ago on average (a median of 7 years ago). The first diocesan ordinand for the Class of 2022 entered the country 38 years ago.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes came to live in the United States 16 years ago (a median of 12 years ago). The first religious ordinand for the Class of 2022 entered the country 44 years ago.

**Age at Entry to the United States  
of Foreign-born Responding Ordinands**

Age in years

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	22	21	22
Median	24	24	25
Range	0-40	0-37	3-40

On average, responding foreign-born ordinands came to live in the United States at the age of 22 (a median of 24). Responding ordinands in religious institutes were, on average, 1 year younger 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 nine responding ordinands (11%) report being home schooled. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of home schooling was 8 years.

Between 39% and 42% of all responding ordinands attended a Catholic school on the K-12 and/or college level. Two in three responding ordinands (65%) participated in a religious education program in their parish, for seven years on average.

Three in five responding ordinands (58%) completed an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree before entering the seminary. Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 35 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to complete an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree prior to entering the seminary.

More than half of responding ordinands (57%) entered seminary at the pre-theology or theology level.

Three in ten responding ordinands (28%) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or religious institute), which was \$29,550 on average. Between entering seminary and ordination, the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands in religious institutes decreased by 53% and the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands decreased by 4% since entering the seminary (unadjusted for inflation).

## Home Schooling

<b><i>Were you ever home schooled?</i></b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
No	89	87	90
Yes	11	13	10

One in ten responding ordinands (11%) reported being home schooled. Responding diocesan ordinands are 3 percentage points less likely than responding ordinands in 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	10	8
Median	10	11	9
Range	1-12	5-12	1-12

Among those responding ordinands who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home-schooled was 8 years (a median of 10 years).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Responses over 12 years were recoded to 12.

## Highest Level of Education before Seminary

<b><i>What is the highest level of education you completed before entering the seminary?</i></b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Graduate degree	18	30	13
College or university undergraduate degree	40	53	35
Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree	18	8	21
Trade or technical school	<1	0	<1
High school	24	9	29
Elementary school (K-8)	1	0	1

Three in five responding ordinands (58%) completed an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree before entering the seminary.

One in five responding ordinands (18%) completed some college (but did not earn Bachelor's degree) or attended trade or technical school.

One in four responding ordinands (25%) ended their education at the high school or elementary school (K-8) level before entering the seminary.

Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 35 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to complete an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree prior to entering the seminary.



***If you attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary, what was your field of study?***

Percentage of all respondents who attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Philosophy	17	24	14
Liberal Arts	15	19	14
Theology	15	22	12
Business	13	8	14
Science or Math	12	14	11
Education	11	13	10
Engineering	10	6	11
Social Science	9	8	10
Computer Science	5	6	5
Fine Arts	5	4	5
Law	3	4	2
Medicine	3	3	4
Other	20	17	21

The responding ordinands who attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary were asked about their field of study. In this subgroup:

- 17% studied philosophy.
- 15% studied liberal arts.
- 15% studied theology.
- 13% studied business.
- 12% studied science/math.
- 11% studied education.

Diocesan ordinands were 20 percentage points less likely than ordinands in religious institutes to have studied philosophy or theology.

***At what level did you first enter a seminary program?***

Percentage of all respondents

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Theology	11	24	8
Pre-theology	46	53	43
College	39	21	45
High school	4	3	5

Three in five responding ordinands (57%) entered seminary at the pre-theology or theology level. Two in five (39%) entered at the college level.

Responding diocesan ordinands are 24 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to enter the seminary at the college level and 16 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)	42	44	41
High school	35	37	35
College	39	43	38

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

- One in two U.S. born ordinands attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to three in ten ordinands born outside the United States (48% compared to 26%).
- U.S. born ordinands are 12 percentage points more likely than non-U.S. born ordinands to have attended a Catholic high school (39% compared to 27%).
- U.S. born ordinands are 17 percentage points more likely than non-U.S. born ordinands to have attended a Catholic college or university (44% compared to 27%).

As compared to responding diocesan ordinands, ordinands in religious institutes are:

- 5 percentage points more likely to have attended Catholic college.
- 2 percentage points more likely to have attended Catholic high school.
- 3 percentage points more likely to have attended Catholic elementary school (K-8).

## Participation in Catholic Religious Education

<b><i>Did you participate in the religious education program in your parish?</i></b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	65	73	62
No	35	27	38

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, three in five responding ordinands (65%) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Diocesan ordinands are 11 percentage points less likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes 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	6	7
Median	7	6	8
Range	1-12	2-12	1-12

Those who participated in the religious education program(s) in their parish spent, on average, 7 years in those programs (a median of 7 years). Diocesan ordinands reported spending one year more in religious education programs than responding ordinands in religious institutes, on average.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Responses over 12 years were recoded to 12.

## 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 respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
No	72	76	71
Yes	28	24	29

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 in religious institutes were 5 percentage points less 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>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Mean	29,550	28,822	29,755
Median	20,000	20,000	20,000
Range	2,000-130,000	2,000-130,000	3,000-115,000

Among those who had educational debt, at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt was \$29,550 (a median of \$20,000). The total amount of educational debt varied from \$2,000 to \$130,000.<sup>5</sup> Responding ordinands in religious institutes were on average \$933 less in debt than responding diocesan ordinands.

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<sup>5</sup> One respondent indicated having “over \$200,000” in debt but did not specify the exact amount so his answer was not included in the analysis.

<b><i>What is the amount of your educational debt now:</i></b>			
Dollars			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Mean	25,315	13,529	28,599
Median	17,000	0	20,000
Range	0-120,000	0-100,000	\$0-120,000

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt they currently owe is \$25,315, which is \$4,235 less debt, on average, than when they entered. The average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands in religious institutes decreased by 53% and the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands decreased by 4% since entering the seminary (unadjusted for inflation).

Those who had educational debt were not delayed entrance by that debt with the exception of four respondents who were delayed between 1 and 2 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 who had education debt

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Family members	27	17	30
Religious community	18	78	2
Knights of Columbus Fund for Vocations	9	6	9
Parish	6	0	8
Friends/co-workers	6	6	6
The Labouré Society	1	0	2
Serra Fund for Vocations	1	0	2
Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations	0	0	0

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, three in ten (27%) received assistance from family members in paying down the debt.

Responding diocesan ordinands are 13 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to receive assistance from family members.

Three in four responding ordinands in religious institutes who had debt (78%) received assistance from their religious communities.

## **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.

Seven in ten responding ordinands (68%) report some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in six worked in education (16%). Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 14 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education.

Overall, 3% of responding ordinands served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military changes considerably from year to year. About one in ten responding ordinands (9%) 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 respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Education	16	27	13
Church ministry, parish life	9	11	8
Construction, labor, farming	9	9	8
Restaurant/food services	7	6	7
Business	6	9	5
Sales, customer service	6	5	6
Computers, IT	4	10	2
Engineering, architecture	3	3	3
Medical/health care	3	3	4
Journalism	2	1	2
Management/administration	2	3	1
Research/science	2	4	2
Law enforcement/military	1	4	<1
Legal professions	<1	0	<1
Other	19	14	20

Seven in ten responding ordinands (68%) report some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. The most common categories of full-time work experience among all responding ordinands are in education-related professions (16%), in church ministry/parish life (9%), and in construction/labor/farming (9%).

Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 14 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education.

## Military Background

<b><i>Have you ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States?</i></b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
No	97	99	97
Yes	3	1	3

Overall, 3% of responding ordinands report having served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Diocesan ordinands are 2 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to have this experience.

Among responding ordinands in religious institutes 1 served in the Armed Forces of the United States, in the Army.

Among diocesan ordinands, 8 served in the Armed Forces of the United States:

- 2 in the Army,
- 1 in the National Guard,
- 4 in the Navy, and
- 1 in Reserves.

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
No	91	95	90
Yes	9	5	10

About one in ten responding ordinands (9%) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. Responding diocesan ordinands were 5 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to report having a parent with a military career (10% compared to 5%).

## Part VI: Vocational Discernment

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

Nine in ten responding ordinands (92%) report being baptized Catholic as an infant. Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 19. Nine in ten responding ordinands (86%) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children. The vast majority was raised by their biological parents (97%). Among those responding ordinands who were raised by their biological, step, or adoptive parent(s), nine in ten were raised by a married couple living together (88%).

Seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (74%) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, a similar proportion (72%) prayed the rosary. Half attended prayer group/Bible study (46%). Two in five participated in high school retreats (41%) or prayed Lectio Divina (38%). Three in ten participated in college retreats (32%).

In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands (50%) participated in a parish youth group. Three in ten participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (28%) or in Boy Scouts (25%).

In regard to participation in parish ministries, seven in ten responding ordinands (74%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Half (51%) served as lectors. Two in five served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (37%) or as catechists (37%). Three in ten served as in campus ministry/youth ministry (33%) or as a Confirmation sponsors/godfathers (27%). A quarter served as a cantor or in music ministry (26%).

In regard to participation in vocation programs before entering the seminary, half of responding ordinands (49%) report participating in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society. During their seminary years, nine in ten ordinands (83%) reported that a Pastoral Year internship contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation.

Nine in ten responding ordinands (90%) 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 (48%) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Most often, this person was a family member (other than parents) or a friend/classmate.

## Family Religious Background

<b><i>How long have you been a Catholic?</i></b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Baptized Catholic as an infant	92	94	92
Became a Catholic later in life	8	6	8

Nine in ten responding ordinands (92%) report being baptized Catholic as an infant.

Among the 8% of all responding ordinands who became Catholic later in life (24 respondents), the majority belonged formerly to a Protestant tradition (e.g., Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, and 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	15	20
Median	18	13	19
Range	7-42	9-22	7-42

Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 19 years old (a median of 18) and varied from 7 to 42 years old. Responding diocesan ordinands were on average 6 years older than responding ordinands in religious institutes when they became Catholic.

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

Percentage of all respondents

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Both parents Catholic	86	80	88
Mother Catholic, father non-Catholic	8	13	6
Neither parent was Catholic	4	4	4
Father Catholic, mother non-Catholic	3	4	2

Nine in ten responding ordinands (86%) 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 respondents

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
No	64	64	63
Yes	36	36	37

Two in five responding ordinands (36%) have (had) a relative who is a priest or religious. Responding ordinands in religious institutes are about as likely as diocesan ordinands to have (had) a relative who is a priest or a religious.

## Parents

<b>Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood? (Please select all that apply)</b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Biological parent(s)	97	95	97
Grandparent (s)	9	16	7
Other relative(s)	3	9	2
Step parent	2	1	2
Adoptive parent(s)	1	3	1
Someone else	<1	1	0
I prefer not to answer	0	0	0

The vast majority of responding ordinands (97%) were raised during the most formative part of their childhood by their biological parents. One in ten was raised by their grandparents (9%). Relatively few were raised by other relative(s) (3%), step parent (2%), adoptive parent(s) (1%), or by someone else (less than 1%).

<b>During the most formative part of your childhood, were you raised by: (Please select one)</b>			
Percentage of respondents raised by biological, step, or adoptive parent(s)			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Married couple, living together	88	90	88
One parent, separated/divorced	5	4	5
Unmarried couple, living together	2	3	2
One parent, widowed	2	1	2
I prefer not to answer	1	0	1
Married couple, living separately	1	1	1
One parent, single/unmarried	1	0	1

Among those responding ordinands who were raised by their biological, step, or adoptive parent(s), nine in ten were raised by a married couple living together (88%). Relatively few were raised by one parent, separated/divorced (5%), an unmarried couple, living together (2%), one parent, widowed (2%), married couple, living separately (1%), or one parent, single/unmarried (1%).

## Siblings and Birth Order

<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	4	4	4
One sibling	21	22	20
Two siblings	29	34	27
Three siblings	14	5	17
Four siblings	9	10	9
Five siblings or more	23	25	22
Mean	3	3	3
Median	2	2	2
Range	0-28	0-28	0-13

Almost all responding ordinands (96%) have at least one sibling. On average, responding ordinands have 3 siblings (a median of 2).

<b>What is your birth order?</b>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Somewhere in the middle	38	27	42
Eldest	33	41	30
Youngest	28	32	27
Only child	1	0	1

In terms of birth order, responding ordinands are most likely to be born “somewhere in the middle” (38%). One third reports being the eldest (33%). Three in ten reports being the “youngest” (28%). The remaining 1% is the “only child.”

Responding diocesan ordinands are 11 percentage points less likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to be “eldest” (30% compared to 41%) and 15 percentage points more likely to be “somewhere in the middle” (42% compared to 27%).



## Prayer Practices

***Did you participate in any of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):***

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Eucharistic Adoration	74	71	75
Rosary	72	68	74
Prayer group/Bible study	46	35	50
High School Retreats	41	34	43
Lectio Divina	38	43	37
College Retreats	32	34	31

Seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (74%) or prayed rosary (72%) on a regular basis before entering the seminary.

Half attended prayer groups/Bible studies (46%).

Two in five participated in high school retreats (41%) and prayed Lectio Divina (38%).

Three in ten attended college retreats (32%).

Responding diocesan ordinands are 15 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to have participated prayer groups/Bible studies before entering the seminary (50% compared to 35%).

## Participation in Faith-Related Activities

<b><i>Did you participate in any of these programs or activities before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Parish youth group	50	48	51
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	28	28	29
Boy Scouts	25	24	25
Parish young adult group	24	33	21
Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver	22	16	24
Right to Life	15	16	15
Charismatic Renewal/Pastoral Juvenil	13	10	13
St. Vincent de Paul Society	3	3	3
Cursillo	3	1	4
Volunteer program associated with the Catholic Volunteer Network	2	5	1
Serra Club	<1	1	0

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 above before entering the seminary.

- Half of responding ordinands (50%) participated in a parish youth group before entering the seminary.
- Three in ten responding ordinands participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (28%) or in Boy Scouts (25%).
- One in five responding ordinands participated in a parish young adult group (24%), Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver (22%), or in Right to Life (15%).
- One in eight responding ordinands participated in Charismatic Renewal/Pastoral Juvenil (13%).
- Relatively few responding ordinands participated in St. Vincent de Paul Society (3%), Cursillo (3%), volunteer programs associated with the Catholic Volunteer Network (2%), or Serra Club (less than 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>
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	15	13	16
World Youth Day	15	19	13
Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) SEEK Conference	10	5	12
National Catholic Youth Conference	9	5	10
Marian Days	4	6	3

- One in seven responding ordinands (15%) participated in a Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference or a World Youth Day before entering the seminary.
- One in ten responding ordinands participated in FOCUS Conference (10%) or in a National Catholic Youth Conference (9%).
- Relatively few responding ordinands participated in Marian Days (4%).

## Participation in Parish Ministries

<b><i>Did you serve in any of these parish ministries before entering the seminary?</i></b>			
<b><i>(Please check all that apply):</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Altar server	74	73	74
Lector	51	56	50
Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion	37	37	37
Catechist	37	48	33
Campus ministry/Youth ministry	33	33	33
Confirmation sponsor/godfather	27	32	25
Cantor or music ministry	26	28	25
Usher/minister of hospitality	12	16	11
RCIA team member/sponsor	10	8	11
Liturgy committee member	8	13	6
Parish pastoral council member	7	9	6
Full-time parish/diocesan employee	4	5	4

Almost all respondents were active in parish ministries before entering their religious institute. Nine in ten (93%) served in at least one of the parish ministries listed in the table above before entering.

- Seven in ten responding ordinands (74%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary.
- Half (51%) served as lectors.
- Two in five served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (37%) or catechists (37%). Responding ordinands in religious institutes were 15 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to serve as Catechists.
- Three in ten served in campus ministry/youth ministry (33%), as a Confirmation sponsor/godfather (27%), or as a cantor or in music ministry (26%).
- One in ten served as an usher/minister of hospitality (12%), an RCIA team member/sponsor (10%), as a liturgy committee member (8%), or on as a parish pastoral council member (7%).
- Relatively few worked as a full-time parish/diocesan employee (4%).

## Influence of Others

<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	66	51	71
Friend	48	46	48
Parishioner	44	37	47
Mother	36	35	37
Teacher/Catechist	29	20	32
Father	28	27	29
Grandparent(s)	23	25	22
Other relative	19	25	17
Youth Minister	19	11	21
Religious Brother/Priest	19	38	13
Campus Minister/School Chaplain	18	20	17
Religious Sister	14	25	10
Bishop	13	4	16
Deacon	11	5	13
Military Chaplain	1	1	<1

Nine in ten responding ordinands (90%) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life.

- Seven in ten responding ordinands were encouraged to consider priesthood by a parish priest (66%).
- Half was encouraged by a friend (48%).
- Two in five were encouraged by a parishioner (44%), or his mother (36%).
- Three in ten were encouraged by a teacher/catechist (29%), or his father (28%).
- One in five was encouraged by a grandparent (23%), another relative not listed in the table (19%), a youth minister (19%), a religious brother/priest (19%), or a campus minister/school chaplain (18%).
- One in ten was encouraged by a religious sister (14%), bishop (13%), or a deacon (11%).

- Relatively few were encouraged by a military chaplain (1%).

<b><i>Did anyone discourage you from considering priesthood as a vocation?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
No	52	61	49
Yes	48	39	51

<b><i>Who discouraged you</i></b>			
<b><i>(Please check all that apply):</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Friend or school classmate	26	20	27
Other family member	21	22	21
Mother	16	15	16
Father	15	18	13
Colleague or coworker	8	8	8
Priest or other clergy	5	5	5
Teacher	5	4	6
Someone else:	3	1	3
Youth/campus minister	2	1	2
Religious sister or brother	0	0	0

Half of responding ordinands (48%) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons.

- One in four responding ordinands were discouraged from considering priesthood by a friend or school classmate (26%).
- One in five were discouraged by some other family member (21%), his mother (16%), or his father (15%).
- One in ten were discouraged by a colleague or coworker (8%), a priest or other clergy (5%), or a teacher (5%).
- Relatively few were discouraged by someone else not listed in the table (3%) or a youth/campus minister (2%).

## Participation in Vocation Activities

<b><i>Did you participate in any of these vocation programs before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Come and See weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society	49	67	43
Quo Vadis retreat/Discernment retreat	16	5	20
College vocation program	13	14	13
High school vocation program	12	11	12
Other parish vocation program	10	6	11
Elementary school or CCD vocation program	7	4	8
Operation Andrew	6	0	8
Traveling Chalice/Cross/Statue for vocations	4	1	5

Seven in ten responding ordinands (70%) report participating in at least one of the vocation programs listed in the table.

- Half of responding ordinands (49%) report participating in a Come and See weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society (49%).
- One in five participated in Quo Vadis retreat/discernment retreat (16%).
- One in ten participated in a college vocation program (13%), a high school vocation program (12%), another parish vocation program not listed in the table (10%), elementary school or CCD vocation program (7%), or Operation Andrew (6%).
- Relatively few attended traveling chalice/cross/statue for vocations (4%).

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

Percentage of all respondents

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>No</b>	51	61	48
<b>Yes</b>	49	39	52

In addition to the vocation programs listed above, half of the responding ordinands (49%) have seen the vocational promotion video “Fishers of Men” published by the USCCB. Responding diocesan ordinands are 13 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to have seen the video (52% compared to 39%).



## Formation Activities during Seminary

<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	83	69
Spirituality Year	77	66
Thirty Day Retreat	77	61
Priestly fraternity group (e.g. Jesus Caritas)	73	40
Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF)	69	48
Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)	67	40
Pastoral Language Immersion (e.g. Central America)	62	29
English as a Second Language (ESL)	59	50

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 26% and 43% 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.

- Four in five ordinands found that the following activities contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation:
  - Pastoral Year internship (83%), which includes 69% who found it “very” useful.
  - Spirituality Year (77%), which includes 66% who found it “very” useful.
  - Thirty Day Retreat (77%), which includes 61% who found it “very” useful.
- Seven in ten ordinands found that the following activities contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation:
  - Priestly fraternity group (e.g., Jesus Caritas) (73%), which includes 40% who found it “very” useful.
  - Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) (69%), which includes 48% who found it “very” useful.
  - Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) (67%), which includes 40% who found it “very” useful.

- Three in five ordinands found that the following activities contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation:
  - Pastoral Language Immersion (e.g., Central America) (62%), which includes 29% who found it “very” useful.
  - English as a Second Language (ESL) (59%), which includes 50% who found it “very” useful.