

March 2021

*The Class of 2021:
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*

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

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Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*

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

March 2021



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***The Class of 2021:
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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of seminarians scheduled for ordination to the priesthood in 2021. 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 2021 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 15 and March 13. The survey invitation was sent by email to 472 identified ordinands. Follow-up emails were regularly sent to the ordinands who delayed their response. A total of 346 ordinands completed the survey (73% response rate). The respondents included 261 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (75% of all respondents) and 83 ordinands to the religious priesthood (24%).

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 24%. The biggest group of responding ordinands (about one-third) is completing studies at one of the seminaries in the Midwest. One in ten is completing studies at a seminary abroad.
- On average, responding diocesan ordinands lived in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for 17 years before they entered the seminary. Responding ordinands in religious institutes knew the members of their religious institute for seven years, on average, before they entered the seminary.

Age

- On average, responding ordinands first considered priesthood when they were 17 years old. Responding ordinands were scheduled for ordination on average 17 years later (at the age of 34).

- Since 1999, the average age of responding ordinands has been in the mid-thirties, trending slightly younger, from an average of 36 in 1999 to the current average age of 34.

Race/Ethnicity and Culture

- Two-thirds of responding ordinands (65%) are Caucasian. One in six (16%) is Hispanic/Latino. One in ten (10%) is Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. And one in twenty (6%) is African/African American/black.
- A quarter (27%) is foreign-born. By comparison, since 1999, on average, 29% of responding ordinands were foreign-born.
- The four most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Vietnam, Philippines, and Poland. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 13 years ago at the age of 23.

Education

- One in seventeen responding ordinands (6%) report being home schooled. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of home schooling was nine years.
- Between 38% and 44% of all responding ordinands attended a Catholic school on the K-12 and/or college level. Three in five responding ordinands (62%) participated in a religious education program in their parish, for seven years on average.
- Three in five responding ordinands (60%) 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 social science, liberal arts, philosophy or theology, business.
- Three in ten responding ordinands (29%) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or religious institute), which was \$26,030 on average. Between entering seminary and ordination, the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands in religious institutes decreased by 61% and the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands decreased by 6% since entering the seminary (unadjusted for inflation).

Work

- Three in five responding ordinands (58%) reported full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in eleven (9%) worked in education. Responding ordinands in religious institutes who have prior full-time work experience are 7 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education.
- One in nine responding ordinands (11%) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. One in twenty (5%) 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 20. Four in five responding ordinands (82%) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children. Three in ten (30%) has or had a relative who is a priest or religious.
- Seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (74%) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, a similar proportion (74%) prayed the rosary. Two in five attended prayer group/Bible study (41%), Lectio Divina (40%), and participated in high school retreats (39%). Three in ten participated in college retreats (29%).
- In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands (46%) participated in a parish youth group. A quarter (25%) participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center.
- In regard to participation in parish ministries, seven in ten responding ordinands (73%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Half (48%) served as lectors. Two in five served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (40%) or as catechists (36%). Three in ten served as a Confirmation sponsors/godfathers (33%), or in campus ministry/youth ministry (33%). A quarter served as a cantor or in music ministry (24%).
- Nine in ten responding ordinands (93%) 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 (47%) 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 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 2021 survey.

To obtain the names and contact information for the ordinands, in fall 2020 and winter 2021, 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 2021. The resulting contact list of 472 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 (with a pdf version of the survey available for those who preferred that option). The survey was administered between January 15 and March 13. The survey invitation was sent by email to 472 identified ordinands. Follow-up emails were regularly sent to the ordinands who delayed their response. A total of 346 ordinands completed the survey (73% response rate). The respondents included 261 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (75% of all responding ordinands) and 83 ordinands to the religious priesthood (24%).

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 119 U.S. dioceses and eparchies and 37 distinct religious institutes.

The greatest number of responses from diocesan ordinands came from the Archdiocese of Chicago (nine respondents), Archdiocese of Los Angeles (seven), Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Archdiocese of Miami (six each), as well as Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Archdiocese of New Orleans, Diocese of Little Rock, Archdiocese of St. Louis, and Archdiocese of Newark (five each).

The greatest number of responses from ordinands to the religious priesthood came from the Society of Jesus (13 respondents) and the Order of Preachers (eight respondents).¹

<i>How long did you live in this diocese or eparchy before entering the seminary?</i>		<i>How long did you know the members of this institute or society before entering the seminary?</i>	
Time in years		Time in years	
Diocesan		Religious	
Mean	17	Mean	7
Median	18	Median	4
Range	0-65	Range	0-44

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 seven years, on average, before they entered the seminary (a median of four years).

¹ 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 2021.

Distribution of Responding Ordinands by the Location of Their Seminary			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Midwest	36	38	36
South	27	25	28
Northeast	17	13	18
West	11	16	10
USA - subtotal	91	92	91
Abroad	9	8	9

Out of all responding ordinands, two in five (36%) are studying at one of the seminaries located in the Midwest. Three in ten (27%) are studying at seminaries in the South followed by 17% studying in the Northeast and 11% studying in the West.

One in thirteen ordinands (9%) 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 17 years old. They are now scheduled for ordination 17 years later, on average (at the age of 34). Responding ordinands in religious institutes are two 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			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
Mean	17	17	16
Median	16	17	16
Range	4-55	6-42	4-55

On average, responding ordinands were 17 years old when they first considered vocation to priesthood (half was between four and 16 years old and the other half between 16 and 55 years old).

Responding ordinands in religious institutes were one year older, on average, than 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 (half of them was 16 or older).
- Responding ordinands in religious institutes were 17, on average, when they first considered a vocation to priesthood (a median of 17).

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

Percentage of all respondents

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Adulthood (22 or older)	17	18	16
College (18 through 21)	20	25	18
High school (14 through 17)	33	34	32
Elementary (6 through 13)	28	23	29
Preschool (5 or younger)	3	0	4

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

Two 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) (20 percent).

Three in ten responding ordinands considered vocation to the priesthood for the first time in high school (14 through 17) (33%) or in elementary school (6 through 13) (28%).

Relatively few responding ordinands (3%) 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 7 percentage points more likely to consider a vocation to the priesthood for the first time while in college.
- Responding diocesan ordinands were 7 percentage points more likely to consider a vocation to the priesthood for the first time while in elementary school.

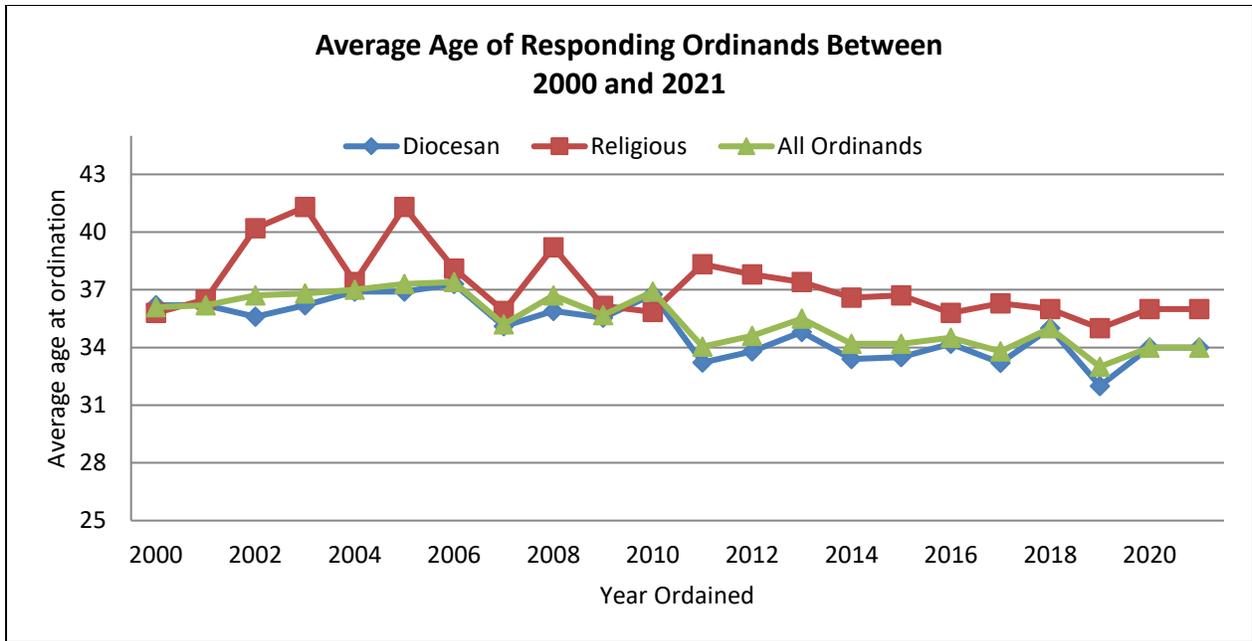
Age When Scheduled for Ordination

Age at Ordination			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
30 years or younger	40	19	47
31-40 years	42	57	38
41-50 years	12	22	9
51 years or older	5	2	6
Mean	34	36	34
Median	32	35	31
Range	23-72	25-53	23-72

The average age at the time of ordination among all responding ordinands is 34 years old, with half being ordained at age 32 or younger at the time of the survey. The youngest will be 23 at ordination and the oldest will be 72.

Responding ordinands in religious institutes are on average 2 years older than responding diocesan ordinands.

- Responding diocesan ordinands are on average 34 years old (a median of 31 years old). Their age varies from 23 to 72 years old.
- Responding ordinands in religious institutes are on average 36 years old (a median of 35 years old). Their age varies from 25 to 53 years old.



The Class of 2021 follows the pattern in recent years of average age at ordination in the mid-thirties. The average age among all responding ordinands is 34 years old this year (Ordination Class of 2021). By comparison, responding ordinands were 34 years old on average in previous year (Ordination Class of 2020), and 33 years old on average two years ago (Ordination Class of 2019).

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 (65%) is Caucasian and three in four (73%) were born in the United States.

One in four responding ordinands (27%) reported being foreign-born. The share of responding ordinands who were foreign-born increased from 22% in 1999 to 38% in 2003. Since 2003, the ratio declined to 23 percent in 2015.

This year, the four most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Vietnam, Philippines, and Poland. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 13 years ago and were, on average, age 23 at the time they came.

Race and Ethnicity

Primary race or ethnicity (Please select only one)			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	65	69	65
Hispanic/Latino	16	12	16
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	10	10	10
African/African American/black	6	7	6
Other (mixed)	2	1	2

Two in three responding ordinands are Caucasian (65%). By comparison, Caucasians constituted 67% of all responding ordinands last year and 58% of all adult Catholics nationally (according to a recent CARA telephone poll of self-identified U.S. adult Catholics).

Less than a quarter of all responding ordinands is:

- Hispanic/Latino (16%)
- Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (10%)
- African/African American/black (6%)
- Other or of mixed race (2%)

Comparing diocesan ordinands to responding ordinands in religious institutes:

- Ordinands in religious institutes are 4 percentage points more likely than diocesan institutes to identify as Caucasian/European American/white.
- Diocesan ordinands are 4 percentage points more likely than ordinands in religious institutes to identify as Hispanics/Latinos.

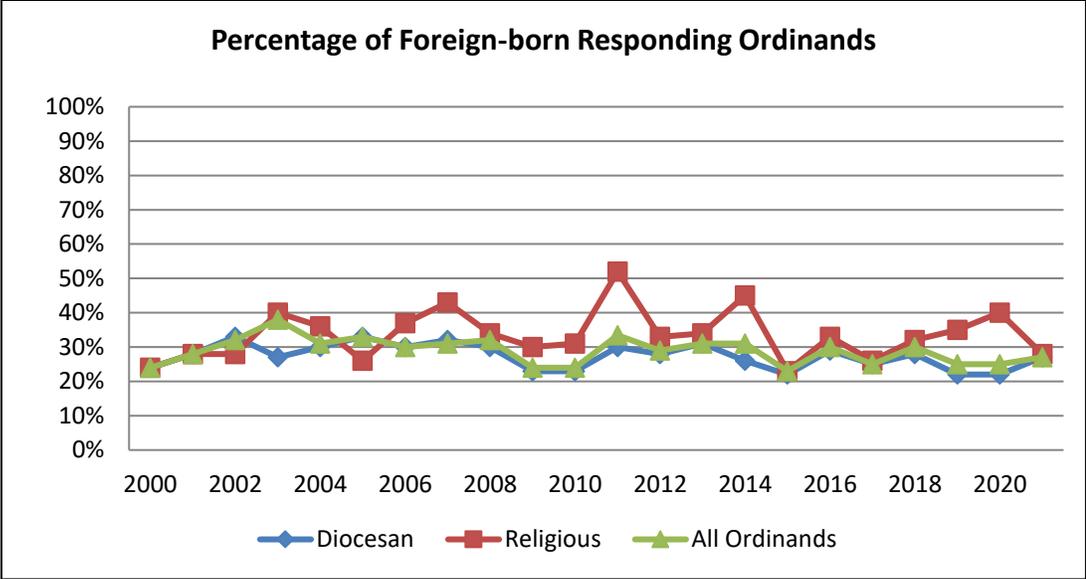
Country of Birth

Top Five Countries of Birth			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
United States	73	72	73
Mexico	5	4	5
Vietnam	4	7	3
Philippines	2	0	2
Poland	2	0	2
Other	15	17	15

The majority of responding ordinands was born in the United States (72% of responding ordinands in religious institutes, 73% of responding diocesan ordinands, and 73% overall).

Three in four responding ordinands were born in the United States (73%). The second most common country of origin was Mexico (5%).

Other countries of birth include: Vietnam (4%), Philippines (2%), and Poland (2%). The remaining 15 percent of responding ordinands reported a total of 11 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 2021, one in four responding ordinands (27%) report being foreign-born, compared to 25% in 2020 and 2019.

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 percent. In 2021, one in three ordinands in religious institutes (28%) report being foreign-born.

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

Year of entry

	All	Religious	Diocesan
Mean	2008	2009	2008
Median	2013	2013	2012
Range	1965-2020	1982-2019	1965-2020

On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 13 years ago (a median of eight years ago). The first foreign-born ordinand for Class of 2021 entered the country 56 years ago.

- Responding diocesan ordinands came to live in the United States 13 years ago on average (a median of nine years ago). The first diocesan ordinand for the Class of 2021 entered the country 56 years ago.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes came to live in the United States 12 years ago (a median of eight years ago). The first religious ordinand for the Class of 2021 entered the country 39 years ago.

Year of Entrance into the United States

Age at Entry to the United States of Foreign-born Responding Ordinands			
Age in years			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
Mean	23	25	22
Median	25	27	24
Range	0-49	2-40	0-49

On average, responding foreign-born ordinands came to live in the United States at the age of 23 (a median of 25). Responding ordinands in religious institutes were, on average, three years older than responding diocesan ordinands when they first came to live in the United States.

Part IV: Education

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

One in seventeen responding ordinands (6%) report being home schooled. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of home schooling was nine years.

Between 38% and 44% of all responding ordinands attended a Catholic school on the K-12 and/or college level. Three in five responding ordinands (62%) participated in a religious education program in their parish, for seven years on average.

Three in five responding ordinands (60%) completed an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree before entering the seminary. Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 25 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to complete an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree prior to entering the seminary.

Half of responding ordinands (52%) entered seminary at the pre-theology or theology level.

Three in ten responding ordinands (29%) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or religious institute), which was \$26,030 on average. Between entering seminary and ordination, the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands in religious institutes decreased by 61% and the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands decreased by 6% since entering the seminary (unadjusted for inflation).

Home Schooling

<i>Were you ever home schooled?</i>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
No	94	99	93
Yes	6	1	7

One in seventeen responding ordinands (6%) report being home schooled. Responding diocesan ordinands are 6 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to have been home schooled.

<i>If you were home schooled, total number of years of home schooling:</i>			
Years			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
Mean	9	12	9
Median	12	12	11
Range	1-12	12-12	1-12

Among those responding ordinands who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home-schooled was nine years (a median of 12 years).²

² One response indicating 17 years of home schooling was excluded from the analysis.

Highest Level of Education before Seminary

<i>What is the highest level of education you completed before entering the seminary?</i>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Graduate degree	16	21	14
College or university undergraduate degree	44	58	40
Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree	17	6	20
Trade or technical school	1	0	1
High school	20	15	22
Elementary school (K-8)	1	0	2

Three in five responding ordinands (60%) 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 five responding ordinands (21%) ended their education at the high school or elementary school (K-8) level before entering the seminary.

Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 25 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

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Social Science	28	27	30
Liberal Arts	25	28	23
Philosophy or Theology	21	23	19
Business	20	14	23
Science or Math	15	16	15
Engineering	13	6	15
Education	11	8	12
Computer Science	7	5	8
Medicine	5	2	7
Fine Arts	4	6	3
Law	2	2	2

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

- Three in ten responding ordinands studied social science (e.g., history, social work, political science, psychology) (28%) and liberal arts (25%).
- One in five responding ordinands studied philosophy/theology (21%), business (20%), and science or math (15%).
- One in ten responding ordinands studied engineering (13%), education (11%), computer science (7%), and medicine (5%).
- Relatively few responding ordinands studied fine arts (4%) and law (2%).

Diocesan ordinands were 9 percentage points more likely than ordinands in religious institutes to have studied business and engineering.

At what level did you first enter a seminary program?

Percentage of all respondents

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Theology	13	26	9
Pre-theology	42	41	43
College	41	31	43
High school	4	3	5

Half of responding ordinands (52%) entered seminary at the pre-theology or theology level. Two in five (41%) entered at the college level.

Responding diocesan ordinands are 12 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to enter the seminary at the college level and 17 percentage points less likely to enter the seminary at the theology level.

Attained Catholic Education

<i>Did you attend Catholic school at any of the following levels? (Please check all that apply)</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Elementary school (K-8)	44	48	43
High school	40	47	38
College	38	48	34

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

- Responding ordinands are 5 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school (44% compared to 39%).
- Responding ordinands are 21 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (40% compared to 19%).
- Responding ordinands are 28 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic college (38% compared to 10%).

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

- One in two U.S. born ordinands attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to two in five ordinands born outside the United States (47% compared to 37%).
- U.S. born ordinands are 7 percentage points more likely than non-U.S. born ordinands to have attended a Catholic high school (42% compared to 35%).
- U.S. born ordinands are 7 percentage points more likely than non-U.S. born ordinands to have attended a Catholic college or university (40% compared to 33%).

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

- 14 percentage points more likely to have attended Catholic college.
- 9 percentage points more likely to have attended Catholic high school.
- 6 percentage points more likely to have attended Catholic elementary school (K-8).

The Catholic colleges attended by more than one respondent included Franciscan University and Catholic University of America.

Participation in Catholic Religious Education

<i>Did you participate in the religious education program in your parish?</i>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Yes	62	57	63
No	38	43	37

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, three in five responding ordinands (62%) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Diocesan ordinands are 6 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to have participated in the religious education program in their parish.

<i>If you participated in the religious education program in your parish, total number of years in parish religious education:</i>			
Years			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
Mean	7	6	7
Median	7	5	8
Range	1-12	1-12	1-12

Those who participated in the religious education program in their parish spent, on average, seven years in those programs (a median of seven years). Diocesan ordinands reported spending one year more in religious education programs than responding ordinands in religious institutes, on average.³

³ Responses over 12 years were recoded to 12.

Educational Debt

<i>Did you have educational debt at the time you entered the seminary (If religious: at the time you entered your institute/society)?</i>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Yes	29	38	27
No	71	62	73

Three in ten responding ordinands (29%) 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 are 11 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to carry educational debt.

<i>What was the amount of your educational debt at the time you entered?</i>			
Dollars			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	\$	\$	\$
Mean	26,030	28,943	24,781
Median	20,000	20,000	20,000
Range	750-120,000	750-120,000	1,500-100,000

Among those who had educational debt, at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt was \$26,030 (a median of \$20,000). The total amount of educational debt varied from \$750 to \$120,000. Responding ordinands in religious institutes are on average \$4,162 more in debt than responding diocesan ordinands.

<i>What is the amount of your educational debt now:</i>			
Dollars			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	\$	\$	\$
Mean	19,797	11,332	23,266
Median	10,000	3,000	17,000
Range	0-170,000	0-80,000	\$0-170,000

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt they currently owe is \$19,797, which is \$6,233 less debt, on average, than when they entered. The average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands in religious institutes decreased by 61% and the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands decreased by 6% 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: seven years, two years, “not long,” and delayed an unspecified amount of time.

***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

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Family members	29	32	27
Religious community	17	55	0
Knights of Columbus Fund for Vocations	10	0	14
Parish	9	6	10
Friends/co-workers	7	10	6
Serra Fund for Vocations	2	0	3
Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations	0	0	0
The Labouré Society	0	0	0

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, three in ten (29%) received assistance from family members in paying down the debt.

Responding diocesan ordinands are 14 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to receive assistance from family members or the Knights of Columbus.

Three-fifths (55%) of responding ordinands in religious institutes who had debt 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.

Three in five responding ordinands (58%) report some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in eleven (9%) worked in education. Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 7 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education.

Around one in twenty responding ordinands (5%) served in the U.S. Armed Forces, who were all diocesan ordinands. The percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military changes considerably from year to year. About one in nine responding ordinands (11%) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Employment Background

<i>What was your main full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary, if any?</i>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Management/administration	10	12	10
Education	9	14	7
Sales, customer service	7	5	8
Church ministry, parish life	7	10	5
Construction, labor, farming	6	7	6
Restaurant/food services	6	5	6
Medical/health care	3	2	4
Engineering, architecture	3	2	3
Computers, IT	3	1	3
Business	2	4	2
Legal professions	2	2	2
Law enforcement/military	1	1	2
Research/science	1	4	1
Journalism	1	0	1
Other	1	1	2

Three in five responding ordinands (58%) 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 management/administration-related professions (10%) and in education (9%).

Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 7 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education.

Military Background

<i>Have you ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States?</i>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
No	95	99	94
Yes	5	1	6

Five percent of responding ordinands report having served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Diocesan ordinands are 5 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to have this experience.

<i>If have served in the Armed Forces of the United States which branch(es)?</i>			
<i>(Please check all that apply):</i>			
Percentage of all respondents who ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Air Force	35	0	38
Army	35	100	31
National Guard	12	0	13
Navy	12	0	13
Marines	6	0	6
Coast Guard	0	0	0
Reserves	0	0	0

Among those with military experience, a third served in the Air Force (35%) or Army (35%). One in eight served in the National Guard (12%) or Navy (12%). Relatively few served in the Marines (6%).

Since the number of responding ordinands with military experience is relatively small (5% of all responding ordinands), the percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military varies considerably from year to year.

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
No	89	89	90
Yes	11	11	10

About one in ten responding ordinands (11%) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. Responding diocesan ordinands were about as likely as responding ordinands in religious institutes to report having a parent with a military career (10% compared to 11%).

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 20. Four in five responding ordinands (82%) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children.

Seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (74%) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, a similar proportion (74%) prayed the rosary. Two in five attended prayer group/Bible study (41%), *Lectio Divina* (40%), and participated in high school retreats (39%). Three in ten participated in college retreats (29%).

In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands (46%) participated in a parish youth group. A quarter (25%) participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center.

In regard to participation in parish ministries, seven in ten responding ordinands (73%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Half (48%) served as lectors. Two in five served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (40%) or as catechists (36%). Three in ten served as Confirmation sponsors/godfathers (33%), or in campus ministry/youth ministry (33%). A quarter served as a cantor or in music ministry (24%).

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 reported that a Pastoral Year internship contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation.

Nine in ten responding ordinands (93%) 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 (47%) 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

<i>How long have you been a Catholic?</i>			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Baptized Catholic as an infant	92	91	92
Became a Catholic later in life	8	9	8

Nine in ten responding ordinands (92%) report being baptized Catholic as an infant. There is virtually no difference between responding diocesan ordinands and responding ordinands in religious institutes in their likelihood to be baptized Catholic as an infant.

Among the 8% of all responding ordinands who became Catholic later in life (17 respondents), the majority belonged formerly to a Protestant tradition (e.g., Anglican, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian). Eight responding ordinands were raised without a faith tradition.

<i>How old were you when you became a Catholic?</i>			
Age in years			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
Mean	20	16	22
Median	20	17	21
Range	7-47	8-22	7-47

Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 20 years old (a median of 20) and varied from 7 to 47 years old. Responding diocesan ordinands were on average six 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

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	82	78	84
Mother Catholic, father non-Catholic	10	15	8
Neither parent was Catholic	6	6	5
Father Catholic, mother non-Catholic	3	1	3

Four in five responding ordinands (82%) 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

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
No	70	63	72
Yes	30	37	28

Three in ten responding ordinands (30%) have (had) a relative who is a priest or religious. Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 9 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to have (had) a relative who is a priest or a religious.

Siblings and Birth Order

How many brothers and sisters do you have?			
Reported number of siblings			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
No siblings	2	1	2
One sibling	20	20	20
Two siblings	30	36	28
Three siblings	18	15	19
Four siblings	8	6	9
Five siblings or more	22	21	21
Mean	3	3	3
Median	2	2	2
Range	0-12	0-12	0-11

Almost all responding ordinands (98%-99%) have at least one sibling. On average, responding ordinands have three siblings (a median of two).

What is your birth order?			
Percentage of all respondents			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Eldest	34	41	33
Somewhere in the middle	34	26	36
Youngest	30	33	29
Only child	1	0	2

Ordinands tend to be the “eldest” (provided by 34% of all responding ordinands) or somewhere in the middle (34%). Three in ten report being the “youngest.” One percent (1%) is the “only child.”

Responding diocesan ordinands are 8 percentage points less likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to be “eldest” (41% compared to 33%).

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

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Eucharistic Adoration	74	61	77
Rosary	74	61	77
Prayer group/Bible study	41	34	44
Lectio Divina	40	39	40
High School Retreats	39	39	39
College Retreats	29	30	29

Three quarters of responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (74%) and prayed rosary (74%) on a regular basis before entering the seminary.

Two in five attended prayer group/Bible study (41%), prayed Lectio Divina (40%), or participated in high school retreats (39%).

Three in ten attended college retreats (29%).

Responding diocesan ordinands are 16 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to have participated Eucharistic adoration and rosary before entering the seminary (77% compared to 61%).

Participation in Faith-Related Activities

<i>Did you participate in any of these programs or activities before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Parish youth group	46	39	49
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	25	31	24
Boy Scouts	21	25	20
Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver	20	13	23
Parish young adult group	20	20	20
Right to Life	13	17	11
Charismatic Renewal/Pastoral Juvenil	11	11	11
St. Vincent de Paul Society	5	5	5
Volunteer program associated with the Catholic Volunteer Network	5	12	3
Cursillo	4	2	5
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 (79%) participated in at least one of the programs or activities listed in the table above before entering.

- Half of responding ordinands (46%) participated in a parish youth group before entering the seminary.
- A quarter of responding ordinands participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (25%).
- One in five responding ordinands participated in Boy Scouts (21%), Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver (20%), or a parish young adult group (20%).
- One in ten participated in Right to Life events (13%), Charismatic Renewal/Pastoral Juvenil (11%), St. Vincent de Paul Society (5%), or in volunteer program associated with the Catholic Volunteer Network (e.g., Mercy Volunteer Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps) (5%).
- Relatively few were involved with Cursillo (4%) or Serra Club (1%).

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
World Youth Day	14	14	14
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	12	8	13
Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) SEEK Conference	9	6	10
Marian Days	9	7	9
National Catholic Youth Conference	8	7	9

- One in seven responding ordinands (14%) participated in a World Youth Day before entering the seminary.
- One in nine responding ordinands (12%) participated in a Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference.
- One in eleven responding ordinands participated in FOCUS Conference (9%), Marian Days (9%), or in a National Catholic Youth Conference (8%).

Participation in Parish Ministries

<i>Did you serve in any of these parish ministries before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Altar server	73	69	74
Lector	48	52	47
Minister of Holy Communion	40	37	41
Catechist	36	33	37
Confirmation sponsor/godfather	33	34	33
Campus ministry/Youth ministry	33	36	32
Cantor or music ministry	24	29	22
RCIA team member/sponsor	15	13	16
Usher/minister of hospitality	14	8	16
Parish pastoral council member	13	11	14
Liturgy committee member	9	7	9
Full-time parish/diocesan employee	7	10	6

Almost all respondents were active in parish ministries before entering their religious institute. Nine in ten (92%) served in at least one of the parish ministries listed in the table above before entering.

- Seven in ten responding ordinands (73%) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Diocesan ordinands were 5 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to serve as altar servers before entering the seminary.
- Half (48%) served as lectors.
- Two in five served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (40%) or catechists (36%).
- One in three served as a Confirmation sponsor/godfather (33%), or in campus ministry/youth ministry (33%).
- A quarter served as a cantor or in music ministry (24%). Responding ordinands in religious institutes were 7 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to serve as a cantor or in music ministry (29% compared to 22%).
- Relatively few responding ordinands served as RCIA team member/sponsor (15%), usher/minister of hospitality (14%), parish pastoral council member (13%), liturgy committee member (9%), or full-time parish/diocesan employee (7%).

Influence of Others

Were you encouraged to consider the priesthood by any of these people? (Please check all that apply):			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Parish Priest	66	58	69
Friend	50	52	49
Parishioner	45	35	48
Mother	40	37	41
Father	29	28	29
Teacher/Catechist	28	33	27
Grandparent(s)	25	25	25
Religious Brother/Priest	23	43	16
Other relative	22	24	22
Campus Minister/School Chaplain	18	24	16
Youth Minister	17	11	20
Religious Sister	17	18	17
Bishop	13	12	13
Deacon	8	6	9
Military Chaplain	2	2	2

Nine in ten responding ordinands (93%) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life.

- Seven in ten responding ordinands (66%) were encouraged to consider priesthood by a parish priest.
- Half of responding ordinands (50%) were encouraged to consider priesthood by a friend or a parishioner (45%).
- Another two in five were encouraged to consider priesthood by their mother (40%).
- Three in ten were encouraged to consider priesthood by their father (29%), a teacher/catechist (28%), or grandparent(s) (25%).
- One in five was encouraged to consider priesthood by a religious brother/priest (23%), other relative (22%), a campus minister/school chaplain (18%), a youth minister (17%), or a religious sister (17%).

- One in ten responding ordinands was encouraged to consider priesthood by a bishop (13%) or a deacon (8%).
- Relatively few were encouraged to consider priesthood by a military chaplain (2%).
- Diocesan ordinands are 13 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to having been encouraged by a parishioner.
- Responding ordinands in religious institutes are 28 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to be encouraged by a religious brother/priest.

Did anyone discourage you from considering priesthood as a vocation?			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
No	53	44	56
Yes	47	56	44

Who discouraged you			
(Please check all that apply):			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Other family member	25	28	25
Friend or school classmate	22	25	20
Father	14	16	13
Mother	11	17	9
Colleague or coworker	8	6	8
Someone else	5	8	4
Priest or other clergy	4	4	5
Teacher	4	4	4
Religious sister or brother	2	5	1
Youth/campus minister	<1	0	<1

Half of responding ordinands (47%) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons.

- A quarter of the responding ordinands (25%) report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by a family member (other than their mother or father).
- One fifth (22%) report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by a friend or schoolmate.
- One in ten report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by their father (14%), their mother (11%), their colleague or coworker (8%), or by someone else not listed in the table (5%).
- Responding ordinands were least likely to report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by a priest or other clergy (4%), a teacher (4%), by religious sister or brother (2%), or by a youth/campus minister (less than 1%).

Participation in Vocation Activities

<i>Did you participate in any of these vocation programs before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Come and See weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society	49	64	45
Quo Vadis retreat/Discernment retreat	14	8	16
College vocation program	10	16	9
High school vocation program	10	11	9
Other parish vocation program	8	1	11
Elementary school or CCD vocation program	5	0	7
Operation Andrew	5	2	5
Traveling Chalice/Cross/Statue for vocations	3	1	3

Three in five responding ordinands (66%) report participating in at least one of the vocation programs listed in the table. On average, they participated in one type of vocation program before they entered the seminary.

- Half of responding ordinands (49%) report participating in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or at the religious institute/society.
- One in seven responding ordinands report participating in a Quo Vadis retreat/discernment retreat (14%).
- One in ten or fewer responding ordinands report participating in:
 - A college vocation program (10%).
 - High school vocation program (10%).
 - Other parish vocation program (8%).
 - Elementary school or CCD vocation program (5%).
 - Operation Andrew (5%).
 - Traveling Chalice/Cross/Statue for vocations (3%).

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

Percentage of all respondents

	All	Religious	Diocesan
	%	%	%
Yes	47	35	51
No	53	65	49

In addition to the vocation programs listed above, half of the responding ordinands (47%) have seen the vocational promotion DVD "Fishers of Men," published by the USCCB. Responding diocesan ordinands are 16 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands in religious institutes to have seen the DVD (51 % compared to 35%).

Formation Activities during Seminary

Contribution of Formation Activities During Seminary		
Percentage of all responding ordinands		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
	%	%
Pastoral Year internship	86	69
Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)	78	49
Spirituality Year	74	63
Thirty Day Retreat	71	59
Priestly fraternity group (e.g. Jesus Caritas)	71	42
Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF)	69	48
Pastoral Language Immersion (e.g. Central America)	64	36
English as a Second Language (ESL)	56	47

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 27% and 60% 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.

- Nine in ten ordinands (86%) found that the Pastoral Year internship contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation, with seven in ten (69%) saying this contributed “very much” to their vocation.
- Four in five ordinands (78%) found the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation, includes 49% who found it "very" useful.
- Seven in ten found that the following activities contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation:
 - Spirituality Year (74%), which includes 63% who found it "very" useful.
 - Thirty Day Retreat (71%), which includes 59% who found it "very" useful.
 - Priestly fraternity group (e.g., Jesus Caritas) (71%), which includes 42% who found it "very" useful.
 - Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) (69%), which includes 48% who found it "very" useful.

- Three in five found that the following activities contributed at least “somewhat” to their vocation:
 - Pastoral Language Immersion (e.g., Central America) (64%), which includes 36% who found it "very" useful.
 - English as a Second Language (ESL) (56%), which includes 47% who found it "very" useful.