

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

*The Class of 2018:  
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*

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



**April 2018**

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***The Class of 2018:  
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**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a national survey of seminarians scheduled for ordination to the priesthood in 2018. 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 the responding ordinands to the priesthood in 2018 by contacting all theologates, houses of formation, dioceses, archdioceses, eparchies, and institutes of men religious in the United States for the names and contact information of all men scheduled for ordination to priesthood in 2018 . The resulting contact list was used to administer the survey.

The survey was administered between January 29 and March 11. The survey invitation was sent by email to 430 identified ordinands. Follow-up emails were regularly sent to the ordinands who delayed their response and one follow-up email was sent to major superiors and vocation directors asking for assistance with encouraging the ordinands to participate in the survey. A total of 334 ordinands completed the survey (78 percent response rate). The responding ordinands included 252 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (75 percent of all responding ordinands) and 78 ordinands to the religious priesthood (23 percent). Four responding ordinands did not report whether they belong to a religious institute or a diocese.

## **Major Findings**

- Three-quarters (75 percent) of all responding ordinands are preparing for ordination to a diocese or eparchy. Responding ordinands from religious institutes comprise the remaining 23 percent. The biggest group of responding ordinands (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 from religious institutes knew the members of their religious institute on average for seven years 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 18 years later (at the age of 35).
- Since 1999, the average age of responding ordinands has fluctuated only slightly each year, from an average of 36 in 1999 to the current average age of 35.

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

- The majority of responding ordinands is Caucasian (seven in ten) and was born in the United States (three in four). One in four is foreign-born. By comparison, since 1999, on average each year, 30 percent of responding ordinands were foreign-born.
- The four most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Colombia. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 12 years ago at the age of 23.

### ***Education***

- About one in twenty (6 percent) responding ordinands report being home schooled. Those who were home schooled report nine years of home schooling, on average.
- Between 39 and 47 percent of all responding ordinands attended a Catholic school for at least some part of their schooling. Half of responding ordinands (51 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish for seven years, on average.
- Nearly half of responding ordinands (45 percent) report that they completed college or university undergraduate degree before entering the seminary.
- The most common fields of study responding ordinands who attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary are social science, theology or philosophy, business, or liberal arts.

- One-half of responding ordinands (50 percent) entered their seminary program at the pre-theology level. A quarter (24 percent) carried educational debt, which averaged \$27,241 at the time they entered the seminary. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were as likely as those from dioceses to carry educational debt, but they were also more highly educated and on average their debt was smaller in comparison to responding diocesan ordinands.

### ***Work***

- Two in three responding ordinands (64 percent) reported full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in five of those responding ordinands worked in education. Responding ordinands for religious institutes are more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have work experience (71 percent as compared to 62 percent).
- About one in eight responding ordinands (13 percent) reported that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. One in twenty 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***

- Almost all responding ordinands reported being baptized Catholic as an infant (90 percent). Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 26. Four in five responding ordinands (83 percent) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children. One in three (35 percent) has or had a relative who is a priest or religious.
- More than seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic Adoration (73 percent) on a regular basis before entering the seminary. The same proportion of responding ordinands (72 percent) prayed the rosary, half (48 percent) attended prayer group/Bible study, two in five (40 percent) went to high school retreats, one in three responding ordinands attended Lectio Divina (33 percent), and a quarter attended college retreats (27 percent).
- Responding diocesan ordinands were 14 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to participate in Eucharistic Adoration. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 12 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to attend college retreats.
- In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands participated in a parish youth group (45 percent) before entering the seminary. About three in ten responding ordinands participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (28 percent).
- In regard to participation in parish ministries before entering the seminary, nearly three-fourths of responding ordinands (74 percent) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Nearly three in five (57 percent) served as lectors. Around a half served as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (46 percent). One in three served as

catechists (38 percent), in campus ministry or youth ministry (35 percent), or as confirmation sponsors/godfathers (31 percent).

- In regard to participation in vocation programs before entering the seminary, half of responding ordinands (46 percent) reported participating in “Come and See” weekends at the seminary or the religious institute/society.
- Nearly nine in ten responding ordinands (86 percent) reported being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life (most frequently, the parish priest, friend, or another parishioner). Responding ordinands indicate that, on average, four individuals encouraged their vocation.
- One-half of responding ordinands (51 percent) indicated that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Most often, this person was a friend/classmate or a family member (other than parents).

## 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 2018 survey.

To obtain the names and contact information for the ordinands, in winter 2018 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 2018. The resulting contact list was used to administer the survey.

CARA then contacted these men by email to explain the project and to ask them to complete an online survey, (with a paper version of the survey available who preferred that option). CARA also emailed a request to the diocesan vocation directors and to the major superiors of clerical and mixed religious institutes, asking them to encourage their ordinands to participate in the online survey.

The survey was administered between January 29 and March 11. The survey invitation was sent by email to 430 identified ordinands. Follow-up emails were regularly sent to the ordinands who delayed their response and one follow-up email was sent to major superiors and vocation directors asking for assistance with encouraging the ordinands to participate in the survey. A total of 334 ordinands completed the survey (78 percent response rate). The responding ordinands included 252 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (75 percent of all responding ordinands) and 78 ordinands to the religious priesthood (23 percent). Four responding ordinands did not report whether they belong to a religious institute or a diocese.

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

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

Responding ordinands represent 99 dioceses and eparchies and 41 distinct religious congregations.

The greatest numbers of men scheduled for ordination to diocesan priesthood in 2018 were reported by the Diocese of Wichita (ten ordinands) and the Archdiocese of Newark (nine ordinands), followed by the Diocese of Little Rock, the Archdiocese of Chicago, and the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter (eight ordinands each). The greatest number of responses from diocesan ordinands was from the Archdiocese of Chicago (nine respondents) followed by the Archdioceses of Boston, Denver, and Newark, as well as the Dioceses of Little Rock and Wichita (eight respondents each).

The greatest number of men scheduled for ordination to religious priesthood in 2018 was reported by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) with 21 ordinands, followed by the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) with nine ordinands. The greatest number of responses from ordinands to the religious priesthood was from the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) with 16 respondents, followed by the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) with 11 respondents, and the Society of Divine Word six respondents.<sup>1</sup>

<b><i>How long did you live in this diocese or eparchy before entering the seminary?</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	7
Median	18	Median	5
Range	0-70	Range	0-35

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers refer only to reported and responding ordinands and do not necessarily mean that these dioceses and religious institutes will ordain the largest number of priests in 2017.

<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>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Midwest	38	33	38
South	25	28	24
Northeast	18	21	19
West	9	10	9
<b>USA - subtotal</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>90</b>
Abroad	10	7	9

One in ten responding ordinands (10 percent) report studying at a seminary outside of the United States (e.g., Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy). Two in five responding ordinands (38 percent) study at one of the seminaries located in the Midwest. A quarter of responding ordinands (25 percent) are studying at seminaries in the South. One in five responding ordinands (18 percent) are studying at seminaries in the Northeast and one in ten (9 percent) are studying at seminaries in the West.

## Part II: Age

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

On average, responding ordinands first considered priesthood when they were 17 years old. They are now scheduled for ordination 18 years later on average (at the age of 35). Responding ordinands from religious institutes are three years older than responding diocesan ordinands, on average, at the time of ordination.

### Age When First Considered Priesthood

<i>How old were you when you first considered a vocation to the priesthood?</i>			
Years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	17	18	17
Median	16	17	16
Range	3-60	5-60	3-59

On average, responding ordinands were 17 years old (a median of 16) when they first considered vocation to priesthood. Notably, the age when they first considered a vocation varies substantially, from age three to age 60.

Responding ordinands from 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 age 17 (half of them were 16 or older) when they first considered a vocation to priesthood.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were on average age 18 (a median of 17) when they first considered a vocation to priesthood.

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Preschool (5 or younger)	7	1	8
Elementary (6 through 13)	32	30	32
High school (14 through 17)	22	22	22
College (18 through 21)	15	18	15
Adulthood (22 or older)	25	30	23

The table above provides an alternative description for the same question that is shown in the table on the previous page. A third of responding ordinands (32 percent) first considered a vocation to the priesthood while they were in elementary school (ages 6 through 13).

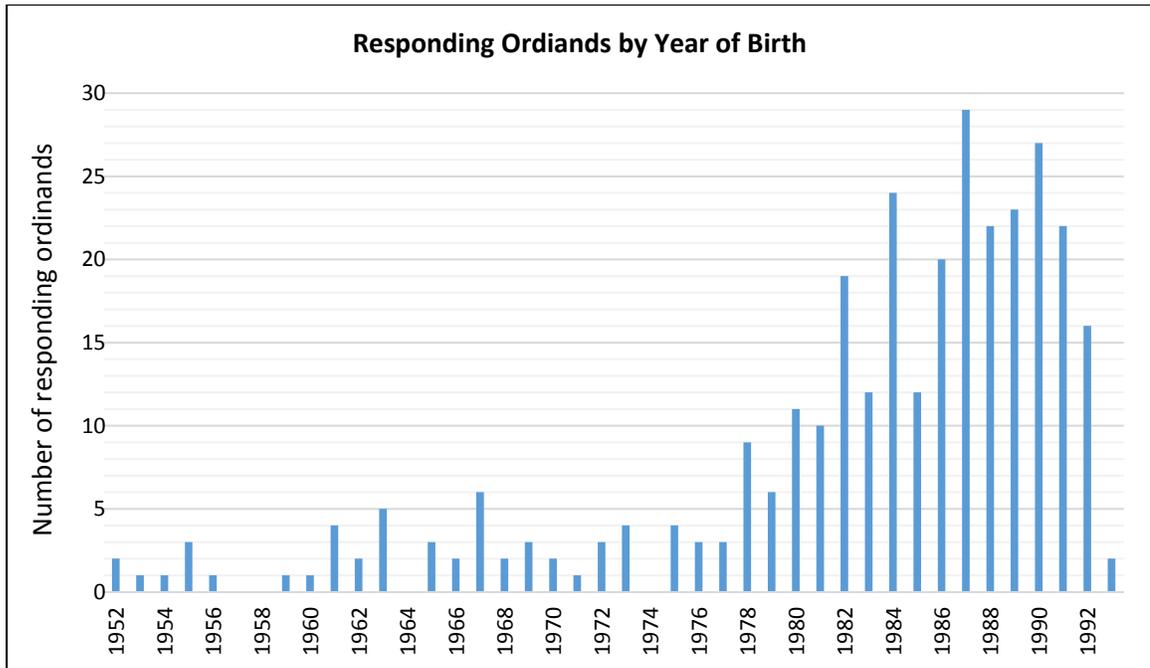
A quarter of responding ordinands first considered a vocation in adulthood. About a fifth of ordinands first considered a vocation to the priesthood in high school (ages 14 through 17). One in seven first considered a vocation while they were in college (ages 18 through 21).

**Age When Scheduled for Ordination**

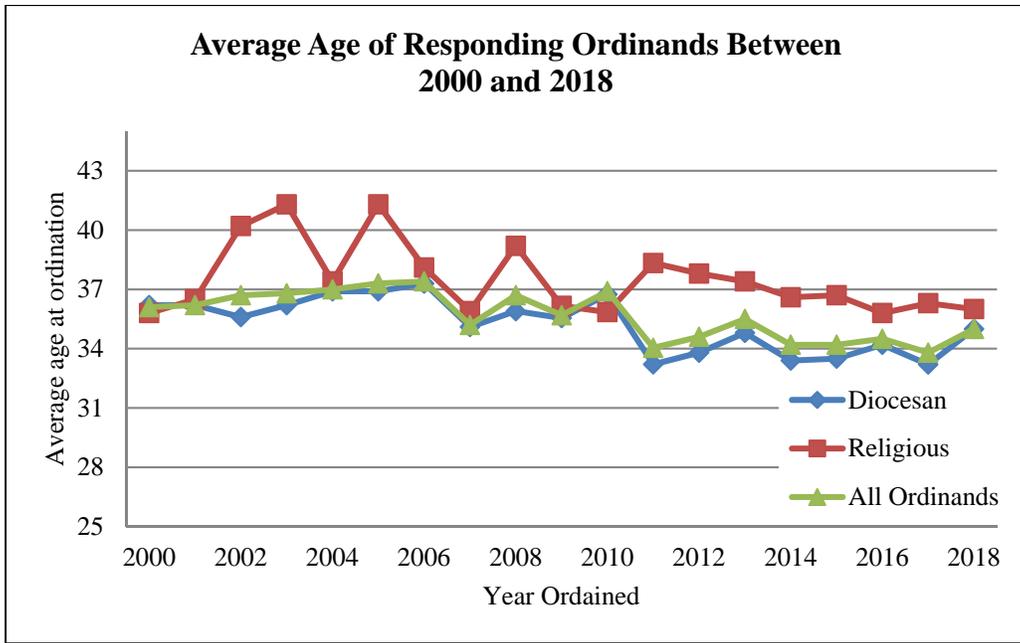
	<b>Age at Ordination</b>		
	Age in years		
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	35	36	35
Median	33	34	32
Range	25-70	26-64	25-70

The average age at the time of ordination among all responding ordinands is 35 years old (a median of 33 years old). The youngest will be 25 at ordination and the oldest will be 70.

## Ordinands by Year of Birth



Half of responding ordinands (51 percent) are 33 years old or younger at the time of the survey. One in ten responding ordinands (10 percent) is over 50 years old. Nine responding ordinands are over 60 years old.



The Class of 2018 follows the pattern in recent years of average age at ordination in the mid-thirties. The average age among all responding ordinands is 35 years old this year (Ordination Class of 2018). By comparison, responding ordinands were 34 years old on average in the previous year (Ordination Class of 2017), and 35 years old on average two years ago (Ordination Class of 2016).

Due to the small number of responding ordinands from religious institutes, their average age is relatively volatile from one year to another but has been decreasing slightly over the past few years to the mid-thirties, approximately the same average age as diocesan ordinands.

### 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 is Caucasian (seven in ten) and seven in ten were born in the United States.

Three in ten responding ordinands (30 percent) reported being foreign-born. The share of responding ordinands who were foreign-born increased from 22 percent in 1999 to 38 percent in 2003, then declined to 23 percent in 2015, but has increased again to 30 percent in 2018.

This year, the four most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Colombia. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 12 years ago and were, on average, age 23 at the time they came.

#### Race and Ethnicity

<b>Primary race or ethnicity (Please select only one)</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Caucasian/European American/white	65	68	65
Hispanic/Latino	20	10	23
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	11	18	8
African/African American/black	2	3	2
Other (mixed)	2	1	2

Two in three responding ordinands are Caucasian (65 percent). By comparison, Caucasians constituted 70 percent of all responding ordinands last year and 58 percent 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 (20 percent)
- Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (11 percent)
- African/African American/black (2 percent)
- Other or of mixed race (2 percent)

Comparing diocesan ordinands to religious ordinands:

- The proportion of Hispanic/Latino among dioceses ordinands is twice that among religious ordinands (23 percent compared to 10 percent).
- Asians constitute a higher proportion of ordinands in religious institutes than among diocesan ordinands (18 percent compared to 8 percent).

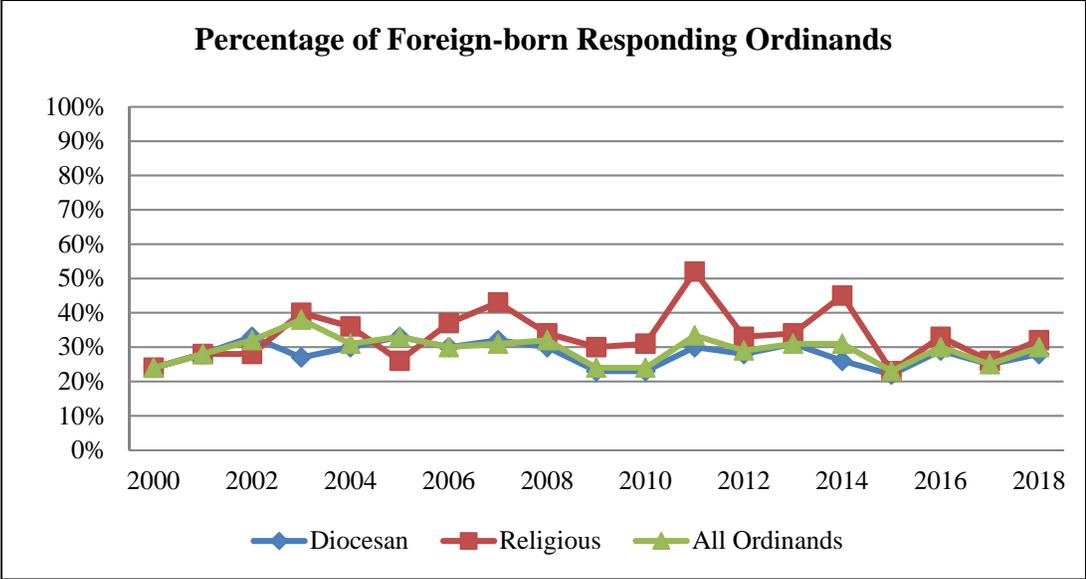
**Country of Birth and Year of Entrance into the United States**

<b>Top Five Countries of Birth</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
USA	70	68	72
Mexico	6	3	8
Vietnam	5	9	3
Colombia	3	1	4
Other	16	19	13

The majority of responding ordinands was born in the United States (68 percent of responding ordinands from religious institutes, 72 percent of responding diocesan ordinands, and 70 percent overall).

Seven in ten responding ordinands were born in the United States (70 percent). The second most common country of origin was Mexico, with 6 percent of ordinands born in that country.

Other countries of birth reported include: Vietnam (5 percent), Colombia (3 percent), the Philippines (2 percent), Dominican Republic (2 percent), Nigeria (1 percent), Honduras (1 percent), Lebanon (1 percent), Poland (1 percent), Canada (1 percent), Nigeria (1 percent), and Italy (1 percent). Less than 1 percent of responding ordinands were born in Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Germany, Ecuador, England, Ghana, Haiti, India, Kenya, Paraguay, South Korea, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela.



The percentage of responding ordinands who are foreign-born increased from 22 percent in 1999 to 38 percent in 2003, then declined to 23 percent in 2015. In 2018, three in ten responding ordinands (30 percent) reported being foreign-born, compared to 25 percent in 2017.

While the percentage of responding foreign-born ordinands from religious institutes has fluctuated somewhat due to the relatively smaller number, since 2000 the percentage of responding diocesan ordinands has remained relatively steady at approximately 20 to 30 percent.

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

Year of entry

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	2006	2004	2007
Median	2008	2007	2008
Range	1967-2016	1970-2016	1967-2016

On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 12 years ago (a median of 10 years ago). The first foreign-born for the Ordination Class of 2018 entered the country 51 years ago.

- Responding diocesan ordinands came to live in the United States 11 years ago, on average (half first came to the United States 10 or more years ago). The first foreign-born diocesan ordinand for the Ordination Class of 2018 entered the country 51 years ago.

- Responding ordinands from religious institutes came to live in the United States on average 14 years ago (half first came to the United States 11 or more years ago). The first foreign-born religious ordinand for the Ordination Class of 2018 entered the country 34 years ago.

<b>Age at Entry to the United States of Foreign-born Responding Ordinands</b>			
Age in years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	23	21	24
Median	24	23	25
Range	1-50	1-50	2-43

On average, responding foreign-born ordinands came to live in the United States at the age of 23 (a median of 24). Responding ordinands from religious institutes were, on average, slightly 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, their attained Catholic education, and information pertaining to educational debt.

About one in twenty responding ordinands (6 percent) report being home schooled. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of their home schooling was nine years.

Between 39 and 47 percent of all responding ordinands attended Catholic education on the K-12 and/or college level. Half of responding ordinands (51 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish for seven years on average.

Nearly half of responding ordinands (45 percent) report that they completed college or university undergraduate degree before entering the seminary. Religious ordinands were more likely than diocesan ordinands to complete a college/university undergraduate degree prior to entering the seminary (58 percent of religious ordinands compared to 41 percent of diocesan ordinands)

Half of responding ordinands (50 percent) entered a seminary program at the pre-theology level and a quarter (24 percent) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or religious institute), which was \$27,241 on average.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were as likely as responding diocesan ordinands to carry educational debt but they were also more highly educated and, on average, their debt was smaller in comparison to responding diocesan ordinands.

Those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary were able to reduce it to an average amount of \$19,143, which is 26 percent less than when they entered (unadjusted for inflation). While the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands from religious institutes decreased by two-thirds (67 percent), the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands decreased by 12 percent since entering the seminary (unadjusted for inflation).

## Highest Level of Education before Seminary

More than six in ten responding ordinands report that they completed an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree before entering the seminary. Diocesan ordinands are more likely than religious to report that they entered seminary either before or during college.

<b><i>What is the highest level of education you completed before entering the seminary?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
College or university undergraduate degree	45	58	41
High school	19	9	22
Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree	18	9	21
Graduate degree	16	22	14
Elementary school (K-8)	2	3	2

Overall, two in five responding ordinands report that they completed a college or university undergraduate degree before entering the seminary (45 percent).

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

- Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree (18 percent)
- High school only (19 percent)
- Graduate degree (16 percent)
- Elementary school only (K-8) (2 percent)

Responding ordinands from religious institutes tended to have higher levels of education than responding diocesan ordinands 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 responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Theology or Philosophy	18	24	16
Business	14	8	16
Liberal Arts	14	18	12
Engineering	13	6	15
Social Science	12	9	12
Science or Math	9	12	8
Computers or Information Technology	7	6	7
Fine Arts	5	6	5
Medicine	4	5	4
Education	3	3	2
Law	3	3	3

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

- Studies focusing specifically on theology or philosophy were most popular, with 18 percent of all responding ordinands committing to this field of study in undergraduate or graduate school.
- Another 14 percent studied liberal arts (e.g., English, Spanish, romance languages, journalism, music) and the same percentage (14 percent) studied business.
- One in ten responding ordinands (13 percent) studied engineering, a social science (e.g., history, social work, political science, psychology, sociology), or science or math.
- One in twenty or less studied fine arts, medicine, education, or law.

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

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Pre-theology	50	55	48
College	34	20	39
Theology	12	22	9
High school	3	3	4

Half of responding ordinands (50 percent) entered seminary at the pre-theology level. In comparison to responding ordinands from religious institutes, responding diocesan ordinands are 19 percentage points *more* likely to enter the seminary at the college level and 13 percentage points *less* likely to enter the seminary at the theology level.

**Attained Catholic Education**

**Did you attend Catholic school at any of the following levels?**  
**(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>
Elementary school (K-8)	47	46	48
High school	42	54	39
College	39	41	39

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

- Responding ordinands are 9 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school (47 percent compared to 39 percent).
- Responding ordinands are 23 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (42 percent compared to 19 percent).
- Responding ordinands are 29 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic college (39 percent compared to 10 percent).

## Participation in Catholic Religious Education

<b><i>Did you participate in the religious education program in your parish?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	51	54	50
No	49	46	50

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, half of responding ordinands (51 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Diocesan and religious ordinands are equally likely to have participated in the religious education program in their parish.

<b><i>If you participated in the religious education program in your parish, total number of years in parish religious education:</i></b>			
Years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	7	7	6
Median	6	7	6
Range	1-18	1-16	1-18

Those who participated in the religious education program in their parish spent on average seven years (a median of six years) in those programs.

## Home Schooling

<b><i>Were you ever home schooled?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	6	4	7
No	94	96	93

One in 20 responding ordinands (6 percent) report being home schooled. Responding diocesan ordinands are as likely as responding ordinands from religious institutes to have been home schooled.

<b><i>If you were home schooled, total number of years of home schooling:</i></b>			
Years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	9	6	10
Median	9	8	12
Range	2-16	3-8	2-16

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

## Educational Debt

<b><i>Did you have educational debt at the time you entered the seminary (If religious: at the time you entered your institute/society)?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	24	33	21
No	76	67	79

A quarter of responding ordinands (24 percent) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or at the time they entered the religious institute, for those in religious orders). Responding ordinands from religious institutes were slightly more likely to carry educational debt, but they were also more highly educated (see the section on the highest completed education).

<b><i>What was the amount of your educational debt at the time you entered?</i></b>			
Dollars			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	\$27,241	\$26,400	\$27,716
Median	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$21,000
Range	\$2,000-75,000	\$2,000-75,000	\$3,000-75,000

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt at the time they entered the seminary was \$27,241 (a median of \$20,000). The total amount of educational debt varied from \$2,000 to \$75,000.

<b><i>What is the amount of your educational debt now:</i></b>			
Dollars			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	\$19,143	\$9,070	\$24,837
Median	\$15,000	\$408	\$19,500
Range	\$0-85,000	\$0-59,000	\$0-85,000

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt they currently owe is \$19,143, which is 26 percent less than when they entered (unadjusted for inflation). While the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands from religious institutes decreased by two-thirds (67 percent), the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands decreased by 12 percent (unadjusted for inflation) since entering the seminary.

<b><i>How long were you delayed entrance by your educational debt:</i></b>			
Years			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
Mean	0	0	0
Median	0	0	0
Range	0-7	0-0	0-7

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

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Family members	24	23	24
Religious community	16	46	0
Knights of Columbus Fund for Vocations	15	12	16
Parish	5	0	8
Friends/co-workers	5	8	4
Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations	3	4	2
Serra Fund for Vocations	1	0	2
The Labouré Society	0	0	0

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, about a quarter (24 percent) received assistance from family members in paying down the debt.

Responding diocesan ordinands were more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to receive assistance from the Knights of Columbus, their parish, or Serra Funds for Vocations.

Almost a half (46 percent) of responding ordinands from religious institutes who had debt received assistance from their religious communities. These religious were more likely than diocesan ordinands to report receiving assistance from friends/co-workers or from the Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations.

## **Part V: Work**

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

Two in three responding ordinands (64 percent) report some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in five worked in business. Responding ordinands for religious institutes are more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have prior work experience (71 percent as compared to 62 percent).

Around one in twenty 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 eight responding ordinands (13 percent) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces.

## Employment Background

<b><i>What was your main full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary, if any?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Business	18	9	19
Education	17	30	17
Computers, IT	10	6	10
Engineering, architecture	10	9	10
Sales, customer service	6	9	6
Management/administration	6	2	6
Construction, labor, farming	5	0	5
Restaurant/food services	5	2	5
Legal professions	5	2	5
Other	5	7	5
Church ministry, parish life	4	2	4
Clerical	4	4	4
Health care	3	7	3
Social work/counseling	2	0	3
Law enforcement	2	4	1
Military	1	0	1
Research/science	1	6	1
Journalism	1	2	1

Two in three responding ordinands (64 percent) reported some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. Responding ordinands from religious institutes are more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have prior work experience (71 percent as compared to 62 percent).

The most common category of full-time work experience among all responding ordinands (18 percent) is business.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes who have prior full-time work experience are 13 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education.

Responding diocesan ordinands with prior full-time work experience are 10 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to have worked in business.

## Military Background

<b><i>Have you ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
No	96	100	94
Yes	4	0	6

Four percent of responding ordinands report having served in the U.S. Armed Forces. All of these are diocesan ordinands.

<b><i>If you have served in the Armed Forces of the United States, which branch(es)?</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>
	%	%	%
Air Force	36	0	36
Reserves	21	0	21
Navy	21	0	21
National Guard	21	0	21
Army	14	0	14
Marines	7	0	7
Coast Guard	7	0	7

Among those with military experience, more than a third (36 percent) served in the Air Force. Since the number of responding ordinands with military experience is relatively small (4 percent of all responding ordinands), the percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military varies considerably from year to year.

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	13	16	12
No	87	84	88

Responding ordinands were asked whether either of their parents had a career in the military. About one in eight responding ordinands (13 percent) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. Responding diocesan ordinands were less likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to report having a parent with a military career (12 percent compared to 16 percent).

## Part VI: Vocational Discernment

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

Almost all responding ordinands report being baptized Catholic as an infant (90 percent). Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 26. Four in five responding ordinands (83 percent) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children. One in three (35 percent) has/had a relative who is a priest or religious.

More than seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (73 percent) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, the same number of responding ordinands (72 percent) prayed the rosary, half (48 percent) attended prayer group/Bible study, two in five (40 percent) went to high school retreats, about three in ten responding ordinands attended Lectio Divina (33 percent) and/or attended college retreats (27 percent).

Responding diocesan ordinands were 14 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to participate in Eucharistic adoration. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 12 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to attend college retreats.

In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands participated in a parish youth group (45 percent) before entering the seminary. About three in ten responding ordinands participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (28 percent).

In regard to participation in parish ministries before entering the seminary, nearly three-fourths of responding ordinands (74 percent) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Nearly three in five (57 percent) responding ordinands served as lectors. Around a half served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (46 percent). One in three served as catechists (38 percent), in campus ministry or youth ministry (35 percent), or as a confirmation sponsor/godfather (31 percent).

In regard to participation in vocation programs before entering the seminary, half of responding ordinands (46 percent) report participating in “Come and See” weekends at the seminary or the religious institute/society.

Nearly nine in ten responding ordinands (86 percent) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life (most frequently, the parish priest, friend, or another parishioner). Responding ordinands indicate that, on average, four individuals encouraged their vocation.

One-half of responding ordinands (51 percent) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Most often, this person was a friend/classmate or a family member (other than parents).

## Family Religious Background

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

Almost all responding ordinands report being baptized Catholic as an infant (90 percent). Responding religious ordinands are 2 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from diocesan institutes to be baptized Catholic as an infant.

Among the 10 percent of all responding ordinands who became Catholic later in life (32 responding ordinands), the majority belonged formerly to a Protestant tradition (e.g., Anglican, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian). One responding ordinand was 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	26	24	26
Median	24	22	24
Range	5-56	7-44	5-56

Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 26 years old (a median of 24) and varied from 5 to 56 years old. Responding religious ordinands were on average two years younger than responding diocesan ordinands when they became Catholic.

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Both parents Catholic	83	83	82
Mother Catholic, father non-Catholic	7	5	7
Neither parent was Catholic	7	9	7
Father Catholic, mother non-Catholic	3	3	4

More than four in five responding ordinands (83 percent) report that both of their parents were Catholic when they were children.

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	35	31	36
No	65	69	64

One in three responding ordinands (35 percent) has (had) a relative who is a priest or religious. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 4 percentage points more likely to have (had) a relative who is a priest or a religious.

## 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>
Mean	3	3	3
Median	3	3	3
Range	0-13	0-10	0-13

Almost all responding ordinands (97 percent) have at least one sibling. More than half (54 percent) have three siblings or more. On average, responding ordinands have three siblings (a median of two).

<b>What is your birth order?</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Eldest	36	39	35
Somewhere in the middle	34	29	36
Youngest	26	29	26
Only child	4	3	4

The responding ordinands who have siblings were asked to identify their birth order.

- Overall, “eldest” were the most frequent response (provided by 36 percent of all responding ordinands).
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were most likely to be “eldest” (39 percent) while responding diocesan ordinands were most likely to be “somewhere in the middle” (36 percent).
- About a quarter of responding ordinands (26 percent) is the “youngest” child.

One in twenty-five responding ordinands (4 percent) is the “only child.”

## Prayer Practices

<b><i>Did you participate in any of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis 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>
	%	%	%
Eucharistic adoration	73	62	76
Rosary	72	66	74
Prayer group/Bible study	48	44	49
High school retreats	40	48	37
Lectio Divina	33	25	36
College retreats	27	36	24

More than seven in ten responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic adoration (73 percent) on a regular basis before entering the seminary. The same proportion of responding ordinands (72 percent) prayed the rosary, half (48 percent) attended prayer group/Bible study, two in five (40 percent) went to high school retreats, a third attended Lectio Divina (33 percent), and a quarter attended college retreats (27 percent).

Responding diocesan ordinands were 14 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to participate in Eucharistic adoration.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 12 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to attend college retreats.

## 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	45	47	44
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	28	33	26
Boy Scouts	24	32	22
Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver	23	18	25
Parish young adult group	23	27	21
Right to Life	18	24	16
Charismatic Renewal	12	10	13
Cursillo	7	6	7
St. Vincent de Paul Society	4	3	4
Volunteer program associated with CVN	2	4	2
Serra Club	1	0	2

Nearly half of responding ordinands participated in a parish youth group (45 percent) before entering the seminary.

- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were most likely than diocesan ordinands to participate in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center before entering the seminary (33 percent compared to 26 percent).
- A about a quarter of responding ordinands participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (28 percent), Boy Scouts (24 percent), Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver (23 percent), or a parish young adult group (23 percent).
- One in five or less participated in Right to Life (18 percent), Charismatic Renewal (12 percent), Cursillo (7 percent), St. Vincent de Paul Society (4 percent), Volunteer program associated with the Catholic Volunteer Network (2 percent), or in Serra Club (1 percent).

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
World Youth Day	18	26	15
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	11	13	10
National Catholic Youth Conference	7	4	8
FOCUS	6	3	7
Marian Days	6	5	6

One in six responding ordinands (18 percent) participated in a World Youth Day before entering the seminary. Responding religious ordinands were 11 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to participate in a World Youth Day and three percentage points more likely to participate in Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference before entering the seminary.

Responding diocesan ordinands were more likely than ordinands from religious institutes to participate in a National Catholic Youth Conference, in FOCUS, or in Marian Days.

## Participation in Parish Ministries

Nearly three-fourths of responding ordinands (74 percent) served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Nearly three in five (57 percent) of responding ordinands served as lectors. Around half of responding ordinands served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (46 percent).

<b>Did you serve in any of these parish ministries before entering the seminary?</b>			
<b>(Please check all that apply):</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Altar server	74	72	75
Lector	57	47	60
Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion	46	49	46
Catechist	38	41	37
Campus ministry/Youth ministry	35	45	33
Confirmation sponsor/godfather	31	36	30
Cantor or music ministry	29	33	28
RCIA team member/sponsor	17	18	17
Usher/minister of hospitality	14	10	15
Liturgy committee member	9	10	8
Parish pastoral council member	7	5	7
Full-time parish/diocesan employee	4	3	4

- One in three responding ordinands served as catechists (38 percent), or in campus ministry/youth ministry (35 percent).
- Three in ten served as Confirmation sponsors/godfathers (31 percent) or as cantor or music ministry (29 percent).
- Less than a quarter of responding ordinands served as RCIA team members/sponsors (17 percent), Ushers/ministers of hospitality (14 percent), liturgy committee members (9 percent), parish pastoral council members (7 percent), or as full-time parish/diocesan employees (4 percent)
- Responding diocesan ordinands were 13 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to serve as lectors.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 12 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to serve in Campus ministry/Youth ministry.

## Influence of Others

Nearly nine in ten responding ordinands (86 percent) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life. Responding ordinands indicate that, on average, four individuals encouraged their vocation.

<b>Were you encouraged to consider the priesthood by any of these people?</b>			
<b>(Please check all that apply):</b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Parish Priest	70	59	74
Friend	48	49	49
Parishioner	47	39	50
Mother	37	40	37
Teacher/Catechist	31	33	31
Father	26	22	27
Grandparent(s)	21	17	23
Other relative	20	14	22
Campus Minister/School Chaplain	18	24	17
Religious Sister	17	22	16
Youth Minister	16	15	17
Bishop	13	8	15
Religious Brother	13	30	8
Deacon	10	6	12
Military Chaplain	2	0	2

Around seven in ten responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by a parish priest (70 percent).

Half of responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by a friend (48 percent) or by a parishioner (47 percent).

Two in five responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by their mother (37 percent).

About three in ten responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by a teacher/catechist (31 percent), and/or their father (26 percent).

Less than a quarter of responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by grandparent(s) (21 percent), other relative than parents (20 percent), campus minister/school chaplain (18 percent), religious sister (17 percent), youth minister (16 percent), bishop (13 percent), religious brother (13 percent), deacon (10 percent), or a military chaplain (2 percent).

Responding diocesan ordinands were 15 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to be encouraged to consider priesthood by a parish priest.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 22 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to be encouraged to consider priesthood by religious brother, and 7 percentage points more likely to be encouraged to consider priesthood by campus minister/school chaplain.

<b><i>Did anyone discourage you from considering priesthood as a vocation?</i></b>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
No	51	57	50
Yes	49	43	50

One-half of responding ordinands (51 percent) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons.

**Who discouraged you**  
**(Please check all that apply):**  
Percentage of all responding ordinands

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	%	%	%
Friend or school classmate	30	35	29
Other family member	21	21	22
Father	15	17	14
Mother	14	21	12
Colleague or coworker	13	14	13
Priest or other clergy	6	6	6
Teacher	5	3	6
Someone else	3	4	3
Religious sister or brother	2	3	1
Youth/campus minister	1	1	<1

One fifth or more of the responding ordinands report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by a friend or school classmate (30 percent) or “other” family member (21 percent).

About one in ten responding ordinands reported being discouraged to consider the priesthood by their father (15 percent) or their mother (14 percent), or by a colleague or coworker (13 percent).

Responding ordinands were least likely to report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by a priest or other clergy (6 percent), or by a teacher (5 percent), by “someone else” (3 percent), by a religious sister or brother (2 percent), or by a youth minister or campus minister (1 percent).

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were nine percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to report being discouraged by their mothers from considering a vocation.

## 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>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
“Come and See” weekend	46	71	37
Quo Vadis retreat/Discernment retreat	17	13	18
High school vocation program	10	13	9
College vocation program	9	14	7
Operation Andrew	8	5	8
Other parish vocation program	7	8	7
Elementary school or CCD vocation program	7	7	7
Traveling Chalice/Cross/Statue for vocations	5	4	5

Close to half of responding ordinands (46 percent) reported participating in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society.

Nearly two in ten responding ordinands reported participating in a Quo Vadis retreat/discernment retreat (17 percent).

Around one in ten or fewer responding ordinands reported participating in a high school vocation program (10 percent), in a college vocation program (9 percent), in Operation Andrew (8 percent), in some “other parish vocation program” (7 percent), in an elementary school or CCD vocation program (7 percent), or in a traveling chalice/cross/statue for vocations (5 percent).

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 36 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to participate in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society and seven percentage points more likely to participate in a college vocation program.

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

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	<b>All</b>	<b>Religious</b>	<b>Diocesan</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	66	49	72
No	34	51	28

In addition to the vocation programs listed above, two-thirds of responding ordinands (66 percent) have seen the vocational promotion DVD “Fishers of Men,” published by the USCCB. Responding diocesan ordinands are more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to have seen the DVD (72 percent compared to 49 percent).