Ordained Vocations Statistics

1949-2014
Introduction

For over half a century, selection and training pathways for candidates for ordination have been managed centrally by the Ministry Council and staff of Ministry Division, maintaining the consistency necessary for national deployability of ordinands. Over this time, we have gathered a quantity of statistics for monitoring purposes that describe demographic patterns over the last 6 decades. In this report we share this data to help inform the decisions of dioceses on their vocations strategy.

These statistics, however, are only part of the picture. They are only useful when interpreted in local context, understood through case studies, local knowledge and above all prayerful discernment. Behind these numbers, graphs and tables lie real people. Real children of God who have offered themselves for the service of the Gospel. Real servants of Christ still working in parishes, chaplaincies, dioceses and in secular employment. If you look at the graph of recommended candidates since 1949, in 1988 the line is one person higher: that’s Archbishop Justin Welby. If you look at 1997, those numbers include the vicar in my own parish. These points on the graph are both priests, faithfully serving God as they have been called.

Without a national selection system for non-ordained vocations, statistics are missing for the vast numbers of faithful Christians living out their calling in the work place, at home, as Readers, evangelists, missioners, children’s and youth workers, and in a hundred other ways. They are no less important to the kingdom of God, but they are not recorded here. We do not nationally train people to be Christians, following Jesus and living out the faith of their Baptism. It is in our common Baptism that we are united with Jesus and become the body of Christ where all our gifts and callings find their essential purpose.

Bearing all this in mind, we hope this report will provide an extra layer to diocesan decisions on vocations strategy, supporting the whole people of God in living out their callings. The report will begin with a reflection on the data by Benny Hazlehurst, the Vocations Co-ordinator for Salisbury diocese and former mathematician. Then presentation of the data begins with overall demographic trends from 1949 to 2013, followed by some more detailed graphs showing the demographic data from 2010-2014. To provide context for these statistics, we have included short case studies of current work on vocations in three dioceses, St Albans, Guildford and Liverpool. At the end of the report there are specific details for your diocese showing your demographic data for the years 2010-2014 in comparison with the national average.

This report should be studied alongside the report on clergy projections “Ministry Statistics in focus: Stipendiary clergy projections, 2015-2035”. A second report with further case studies and research on good practice will be released later in 2016. In future years we will be looking to better integrate the Vocations Statistics report with Statistics for Ministry.

Catherine Nancekievill,
Head of Discipleship and Vocation, Ministry Division
Contents
Abbreviations ...................................................................................................................... 4
The call to increase the number of candidates for ordained ministry ................................................. 5
A note on the use of the data ........................................................................................................ 6
Acknowledgement .................................................................................................................... 6
A Diocesan Vocations Co-ordinator’s reflection ........................................................................... 7
Section 1a: National historical data .............................................................................................. 9
  Total number of recommended candidates, 1949-2014 ............................................................. 9
  Recommended candidates by ministry type ................................................................................. 10
  Gender ....................................................................................................................................... 11
  Age and gender ............................................................................................................................ 11
  Ethnicity profile trends ............................................................................................................... 12
Section 1b: Recent national trends .................................................................................................. 13
  Total candidates by diocese 2010-2014 ....................................................................................... 13
  Candidates 2010 to 2014 as a proportion of attendance by diocese ................................................. 14
    Impact of the age profile of a diocese ......................................................................................... 15
  Young Candidates ....................................................................................................................... 15
  Age profile .................................................................................................................................. 16
  Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic candidates ............................................................................... 18
  Disabled candidates ................................................................................................................... 18
Case studies ..................................................................................................................................... 19
  St Albans ...................................................................................................................................... 19
  Liverpool ..................................................................................................................................... 20
  Guildford ...................................................................................................................................... 21
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSM</td>
<td>Non-stipendiary Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLM</td>
<td>Ordained Local Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSM</td>
<td>Self-supporting Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAME</td>
<td>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RME</td>
<td>Resourcing Ministerial Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The call to increase the number of candidates for ordained ministry

God is calling a great diversity of people to ordained ministry. This call is developed through a prayerful relationship with God, through the opportunities they have to experience ministry, through others who discern and encourage and through our formal structures of selection. The Holy Spirit guides the Church, the body of Christ, in discerning what is needed to effectively participate in the mission of God in the world. The dioceses have told us that the ministry needs of the future look different from the needs of the late 20th century. They are looking for a cohort of candidates that embodies the diversity in the Church of England and in the nation. This means a cohort that is younger, more socially and ethnically diverse and displays the qualities of being adaptable, collaborative and missional. In order to understand how to prioritise our efforts and allocate resources we aspire to this outcome, keeping in mind that it is God who calls and we cannot recruit candidates who are not called, but only remove barriers for those who are.

For this reason, the Church of England is seeking an increase in the numbers coming into ordained ministry and is setting as a target:

The Church of England is seeking an increase of 50% in the number of candidates for ordained ministry. This means an increase in numbers per annum from around 500 to 750 in the overall annual cohort. The Church is seeking both numerical growth and an increase in diversity within the cohort of ordinands so that it reflects the communities in wider society where the Church is engaged in mission, in terms of age, gender and ethnic and social background.
A note on the use of the data

All numbers and charts are for RECOMMENDED AND CONDITIONALLY RECOMMENDED CANDIDATES, even where this is not stated due to space constraints.

Statistics and analysis are only as reliable as the data they are based on. As with any data that covers a long period of time, this data is not infallible. We have tried to highlight gaps and problems, and urge you to avoid reading too much into any single data point. In particular, where numbers are low (for example numbers of BAME candidates), percentages and trends should be treated very cautiously.

Throughout the report we have provided comment where necessary for clarification on the data, however, we have refrained from statistical analysis of the trends or speculation on their meaning, as this is a tool intended to help your decision making rather than present a particular argument.

Acknowledgement

This report started with a group of DDOs and Vocations Officers working with Ministry Division during an all day meeting and through email correspondence. We worked together to understand the data held centrally, and how it could be made useful for dioceses. The intention was to jointly shape a report that communicated the data and helped dioceses to benchmark their progress without creating an unhelpful 'league table'. We hope that we have struck the right note and invite the two-way conversation that has begun over the past year to continue to develop. We are grateful for the time and support of all those across the Church who have helped shape the report.
A Diocesan Vocations Co-ordinator’s reflection

As a vocations co-ordinator working to a target of 60 additional vocations to ordination (above our average) over 10 years, I found the statistics in this report both striking and enlightening. As often the case with facts and figures, they don’t give you the answers, but they do identify the issues!

In the national tables, there were a number of things which I noted.

- how the declining numbers of candidates at BAP before 1994 has reversed following the first ordinations of women to the priesthood in that year.
- the decline in NSM vocations since many dioceses began to close their OLM schemes.
- that female recommended candidates have almost (but not quite) reached parity with male candidates since 2000.
- that the trend in BAME candidates has increased significantly in the last 30 years, although it still remains significantly below the number of BAME people in the general population or in church.

Most striking however, is the continuing disparity of vocations between women and men in age and type of ministry.

- that the average age of women candidates is much higher than for men - and remains stubbornly so!
- that there is an clear inverse relationship between age and gender of candidates
- and between gender and stipendiary versus non-stipendiary ministry.

Put simply:

- If you are under 40 years old and going to a BAP, you are more likely to be male
- If you are over 40, you are more likely to be female

This particularly striking in young vocations up to the age of 27 at the time of attending a BAP (the most common age for recommendation). Chart 10 shows that candidates are 3.5 times more likely to be male than female up to the age of 27 – or put another way, there are only 2 women for every 7 men.

While I have heard anecdotal evidence that more traditional patterns of child care may prevent many women from offering for ordination, this cannot be the only factor as this those under 27 are well below the average age for women having their first child – now 30 years old. Something else is in play here.

Similarly, charts 11 and 12 show that

- male candidates predominate in stipendiary ministry - especially up to the age of 42
- whereas female candidates predominate among NSM candidates generally and in every single age band over the age of 42.

Again, put simply,
• at 27 years old candidates for stipendiary ministry are 6 times more likely to be male
• whereas at 56, candidates for NSM are 3 times more likely to be female.

Surely we need to ask ourselves why? What is putting young women off exploring God’s call to ordination? Could it be that ministry in the Church of England is seen as inflexible with rigid expectations of working patterns and opportunities? Could part of the reason be because career breaks, available in many professions are not easily available to women in the church, especially when your housing is tied up with your post?

At a diocesan level, there was also much food for thought.

I was encouraged that
• the average age of our recommended candidates has dropped from a high of 50 years old to around 35 in recent years
• that our average age by gender is approaching equality.

On the other hand I am challenged by
• our low number of candidates as a proportion of Sunday attendance compared to the national average over the last 5 years
• our alarmingly high ratio of male to female young vocations under 32 over the last 5 years.

There is much for us to ponder here and to work at addressing, both nationally and locally. I think that this sentence in the Introduction deserves repetition here:

“...it is God who calls and we cannot recruit candidates who are not called, but only remove barriers for those who are.”

Our task is to identify those barriers and find creative ways in which we can encourage all who hear God’s call to see how that calling can be fulfilled in the Church of England. We need to find ways to be more creative and flexible to unlock the potential of all potential ordinands – women and men, young and not so young – to follow where God calls.

These statistics can’t show us what we need to do – but they can show us where to start looking.

Rev Benny Hazlehurst
Diocesan Vocations Co-ordinator
Diocese of Salisbury.
Section 1a: National historical data

The historical data is taken from two sources: an ABM paper (no. 13), which lists candidate numbers from 1949 to 1988, and an electronic database of demographic information that covers 1988 to 2014. Data in the ABM paper was divided into four groups:

1. candidates for stipendiary priesthood
2. candidates for non-stipendiary priesthood
3. candidates for stipendiary accredited lay ministry, permanent diaconate and deaconess
4. candidates for non-stipendiary accredited lay ministry, permanent diaconate and deaconess.

The database categorises the ministry of candidates in four ways:

1. candidates for stipendiary priesthood
2. candidates for non-stipendiary priesthood (including ordained local ministers (OLMs))
3. candidates for stipendiary permanent diaconate
4. candidates for non-stipendiary permanent diaconate.

As the categories in the ABM paper and the database don’t match, it makes drawing a continuous line from 1949 to the present difficult. We have opted to begin with a graph of all candidates in Chart 1 (which will include accredited lay ministry between 1972 and 1987).

Total number of recommended candidates, 1949-2014

![Chart 1](image-url)
Recommended candidates by ministry type

The more complex picture is shown in Chart 2. Here we have separated out priestly and diaconal ministry as well as stipendiary and non-stipendiary. Be aware that from 1988, accredited lay ministry and deaconesses are no longer included in the database. The exact dates covered by each category are described in the legend.

Chart 2
**Gender**

Chart 3 shows the number recommended male candidates and the number of recommended female candidates for each year between 1988 and 2014.

![Gender Chart](image)

**Age and gender**

Chart 4 shows the average age of all recommended candidates in each year between 1988 and 2014, as well as the average age each year of male and female candidates.

![Average Age Chart](image)
Ethnicity profile trends

Chart 5 shows the percentage of all recommended candidates self-identifying as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic in each year between 1988 and 2014.

The way information was collected and stored about ethnicity of candidates changed in 2002, leaving a 3-year gap in the data where the information we have is not reliable. The number of ethnic minority candidates is also quite variable from year to year. These two factors makes adding a line joining the points in each year unhelpful. Instead we have added a trend line, that although shouldn’t be used to forecast the future, does show an upwards trend between the years 1988 to 2014.

Candidates do not have to declare their ethnicity. On average, 5% between 2005 and 2014 have not declared ethnicity, so the actual percentage may vary by approximately this amount.
Section 1b: Recent national trends

The information in this section is more recent (years 2010-2014). Using the most this data we can present a picture of what is happening in each diocese. Each diocese is unique and has its own strategy for vocations and ministry. It is not necessarily helpful to compare one diocese with another on a purely numerical basis. However, understanding the number and demographics of candidates in a diocese, benchmarked against other dioceses, can be a helpful aid to decision making, when analysed in context. The data is better at helping you ask the right questions than giving you the answers.

Total candidates by diocese 2010-2014

Chart 6 shows the total number of recommended candidates for a period of five years (2010-2014), for each diocese. Although this graph is interesting to ponder, it has limited usefulness because the dioceses have very variable numbers of people attending church. For example, although London sends many more candidates than other dioceses, it has approximately 30% more people in church than the next largest diocese.
Candidates 2010 to 2014 as a proportion of attendance by diocese

To remove the factor of diocesan size from data, Chart 7 shows the number of candidates as a proportion of attendance in each diocese. This adjusts for the relative population sizes of dioceses which necessarily impacts on the number of candidates coming forward for ordination.

The attendance statistics are taken from the Statistics for Mission returns completed by parishes, reporting their count of attendance in the first four weeks of October. Midweek child attendance has been excluded from the calculation, as the method of counting attendance school assemblies has recently changed, which can produce unreliable results at diocesan level for the years affected by the change.

![Candidates as a proportion of attendance](image-url)

*Chart 7*
Impact of the age profile of a diocese

It is fair to say that the age profile of a diocese will also affect the potential number of candidates for ordained ministry. Dioceses with a very significant proportion of worshippers aged over 55 are likely to send less candidates. We have an estimate of the age profile of dioceses from “Everyone Counts” in 2014. However, dioceses vary as to how extensively the data was collected. The data set is therefore not robust enough to provide a diocese-by-diocese comparison of candidates as a proportion of worshippers in the age bracket 18-55. In section 2 we have included this information for each individual diocese, but not as a comparison with other dioceses.

Young Candidates

Chart 8 shows the percentage of recommended candidates under 32 between 2010 and 2014, by diocese.
Age profile

Chart 9 shows the age profile of male and female candidates. Each bar represents the total number of male or female candidates of that age between the years 2010 and 2014. Chart 10 and 11 show the same data but for stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry respectively.
Chart 10

Stipendiary age profile by gender

Chart 11

NSM age profile by gender
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic candidates

Although it is possible to create a bar chart of the percentage of candidates who self-declare as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), it does not produce useful information. Dioceses have hugely different numbers of BAME people in their populations so it is not helpful to compare candidate numbers between dioceses. Instead, we have put the BAME percentage for each individual diocese in Section 2, alongside the percentage identifying as BAME in the general population (census data) and in the congregation (from Everyone Counts).

Disabled candidates

Information about disability is only requested from candidates when relevant to any adjustments or support needed to attend a Bishops’ Advisory Panel. As those declaring a disability are only doing so if it is relevant to BAP, the numbers are low and do not reflect the likely number of ordinands with a disability. This makes the data unreliable and indicates a need to take steps to improve the monitoring process.
Case studies

St Albans

Over the last five years and in common with many other Dioceses we have run a variety of vocations events, produced a range of literature, set up a programme for young vocations, established a Pastoral Assistant scheme under the banner of CEMES (the Church of England Ministerial Experience Scheme) and more. Some of these initiatives have borne much visible fruit, others less so. But what underpins our vocations work is a steady and unspectacular rhythm of encouragement: of our Vocations Advisers team, which meets quarterly and now has an annual training day; of the clergy and other church leaders around the Diocese, through discussions at chapter meetings, presentations at Deanery Synods, guest preaching and dialogue; and of the potential ordinands and Readers who come to talk to us about God’s call on their lives. Clergy in particular are our best recruiters and – sometimes – the biggest obstacles, if they themselves are disenchanted or have simply lost touch with the original excitement of their own vocations. Our most important task is to equip and enthuse them to encourage those in their own congregations to listen and respond to God’s call.

We are now gearing up to respond to the challenge at the heart of Resourcing Ministerial Education to increase the number of ordinands by 50%. We have to think radically, to challenge assumptions, to rethink some long-held beliefs. We only have a very general idea of where this may take us and a good deal of apprehension at the size of the task. Like the ordinands who stand in front of their Bishop, agreeing to take on a role for which they feel only vaguely worthy, we recognise that our own efforts will accomplish little but that nothing is impossible with God. And so we say, with them, ‘With the help of God, we will.’

Charles Burch, Diocesan Vocations Officer
Liverpool

As part of Diocesan Growth Agenda we have developed a vocations strategy which was branded LifeCall. We have recently created and appointed a full time post for a Director of Vocations, which incorporates the previous part time DDO role. This role with the support of the Vocations Officer and the DDO team is to oversee and develop the discernment process for ordained ministry and to take a broad base approach to actively promote, encourage and nurture not just recognised licensed or ordained ministry but a ministry to a wide range of lay vocations as the natural outworking of faithful discipleship in the church, workplace, home and community.

We have tried to encourage people in a number of ways:

- A Re-constructed DDO Team – including DDO, 7 Assistant DDO’s who work with at least 4 candidates at a time preparing draft sponsoring papers, 6 examining chaplain and a full time Vocations Officer who completes all the initial interviews and has an overview of the whole process.
- LifeCall events – We have run information evenings on ordination, Reader Ministry, Children’s ministry, Whole Life Discipleship, adoption and fostering, supporting people with mental health and dementia, men’s ministry and how to tell our story. These evenings offer support for people at whatever stage of the journey they are at with information.
- Directions Course – The Directions is a lay course to help people discern what God is calling them to and to equip them in their future ministry. It includes a mix of upfront teaching and group work looking at a variety of areas to do with mission and ministry. People have gone on from Directions to a varied range of ministries including ordained and licensed. We will also be introducing an option for assessed work.
- Study Skills Course – a short course specifically for people who will be going forward for ordination and Reader selection who haven’t completed any formal academic study for a long time. The course includes input on how to study, engaging with the bible, beginning theology and working with others. Each session includes some written follow up work of increasing length and complexity with marking and feedback from experienced TEI tutors.

The diocese is also actively developing forms of Local Missional Leadership and Pioneer ministries.

Debbie Ellison, Vocations Officer
**Guildford**

Guildford has a dedicated team of Vocations Advisers around the Diocese — they both meet with individual enquirers and proactively encourage parishes to remember the priority of vocational work. The Ministry Team are regularly involved in preaching around the Diocese — not necessarily on the theme of Vocation, but aiming to be visible in as many parishes as possible. We have occasional events focused on Vocation, e.g. Saturday mornings beginning with bacon rolls and offering inspiration and information on different authorised and licensed ministries.

The Bishop is keen to develop a culture of vocation across the Diocese, and is dedicating a Study Morning in November 2016 to this theme; he also preaches regularly on Vocation at Evening Services that draw in good numbers of young people.

In order to cope with an anticipated growth in numbers, we have increased our Assistant DDO team from two to four, and are also budgeting to increase the number of Stipendiary Title Posts in the Diocese from six to nine by 2019.

More detailed research into good practice in dioceses and parishes will be published later in 2016.

*Photo by Jack Boskett*
This version of the report contains only Section 1, the information about all dioceses. Diocesan specific information is contain in Section 2. For Section 2, please see the file named with the diocese.