

Ordained Vocations

2021-2025





Executive Summary

This research presents the numbers and characteristics of ordinands, candidates being recommended by Panel for training for ordained ministry within the Church of England in the seasons 2021/22 to 2024/25. A national benchmark of 665 new ordinands has been used to provide a comparator for the actual number of candidates entering training.

Clearly 2021-2025 has been significantly impacted by the pandemic, clergy wellbeing and other factors but in this period:

- Half of all dioceses have at least 30% of their clergy aged over 60
- 63% of the benchmark number of candidates have been recommended for training
- Scaled by attendance of those aged 18-69, five dioceses have met their proportional share of the benchmark
- The percentage of recommended candidates aged under 32 has fallen from 28% to 17%
- The percentage of recommended candidates of Global Majority Heritage has risen to 14%, and those declaring a disability to 13%
- To reach the benchmark of 665 candidates per year, 1.92 in every 1,000 (1 in 521) adult weekly attenders aged 18-69 needs to be recommended for training ¹
- The smallest quarter of churches are sending 80% of the benchmark; the largest half of churches (with congregations with more than 24 Adult AWA) are sending 55%
- The most deprived 20% of parishes are sending 68% of the benchmark, while the least deprived 20% are sending 54%
- Rural parishes are sending 57% of the benchmark, urban parishes are sending 66%

¹ 2024 Adult AWA was 607,700, of which 57%, 346,700, were aged between 18 and 69. This divided by the benchmark of 665 is 521.3.

Data Considerations

Data on ordinands within the Church of England has not been published for some years. It is held within the Discernment Portal from which certain reports can be generated, but these reports do not meet the needs of the wider Church.

To produce this report, we have had access to:

- A table of numbers of candidates recommended for training at each season, split by diocese, type of vocation - Distinctive Deacon or Priest, and whether incumbent, assistant or locally-deployed in each case. This is used in the section “Numbers of Ordinands”.
- A file of anonymised data on characteristics (ethnicity, gender, age at April 2026, declared disability) of each candidate and their Panel date, from March 2022 to March 2026. This is used in the section “Characteristics of Ordinands”.
- A list of names of sending churches for candidates at or beyond Stage 2 within the Discernment Portal. This is used in the section “Sending Churches”.

In addition, we have combined this data with other Church of England data sources, including:

- Statistics for Mission
- Ministry Statistics
- Census and Deprivation data for parishes

These are available from Data Services (<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/data-services>)

Previous reports and graphs were found in *Ordained Vocations Statistics 1949-2014* and other documents. We do not have the data behind these graphs, so any reference can only be estimates.

A great deal of data processing, sense-checking and linkage was required and carried out with R Statistical Software (v4.5.2; R Core Team 2025). Full details of the processing are available. We have linked manually the names of 1,881 sending churches to internal church codes, and these have been checked by most dioceses. We have done our best to avoid any errors or omissions but some may remain. We welcome queries about the processing of this data; questions about the data itself would be best directed to the Discernment Portal team.

Rev Dr Fiona J Tweedie
Brendan Research
6 July 2026

Numbers of Ordinands

Total numbers

Figure 1 and *Table 1* show the number of ordinands by season, and the percentage of the benchmark that this represents. Across the most recent four years, 1,669 candidates have been recommended for training to become distinctive deacon or priest, only 63% of the benchmark figure.²

63%
of benchmark
figure reached

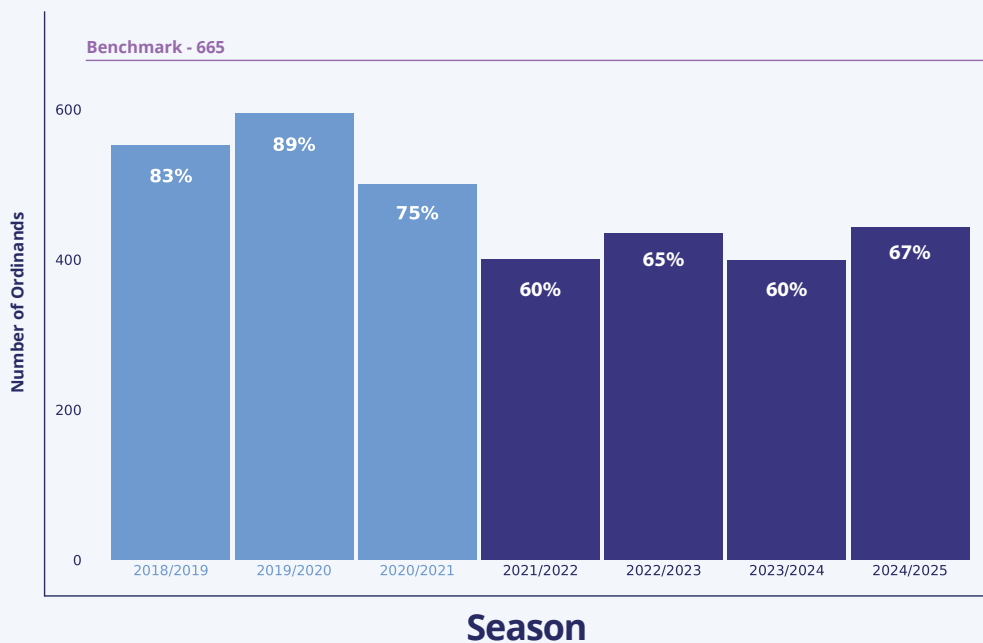


Figure 1: Ordinands by Season

Season	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 ³	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Ordinands	551	591	501	398	430	396	445
% of 665 Benchmark	82.9%	88.9%	75.3%	59.8%	64.7%	59.5%	66.9%
No. required to meet benchmark	114	74	164	267	235	269	220

Table 1: Ordinands by Season

^{2,3} There is a small discrepancy between these figures from the most recent diocesan report from the Portal and previously published data. The discrepancy is not large enough to be material but we are investigating why there is a difference.



Candidates by Diocese

Total figures mask the varying numbers of candidates from each diocese. Dioceses vary in size and demographics, so a graph of the raw numbers would not be helpful. Instead we have standardised the data by adult attenders aged 18-69, the people whom we might expect to respond to a calling to ordination.

For the purposes of this report, if we assume that callings to ordained vocations are evenly distributed across adults who attend the Church of England, we can calculate the number of candidates we would “expect” from each diocese. [Table 2](#) and [Figure 2](#) (pages 7 and 8) show the percentage of their share of the benchmark each diocese has achieved, standardised by adult attenders aged 18-69 in 2024.⁴

Five dioceses have exceeded the expected number across this period: Europe, Peterborough, Truro, Winchester and Worcester. They are highlighted in purple. Three further dioceses have achieved more than 85% of their share: Guildford, Leicester and Manchester.

[Figure 3](#) (page 9) shows the same data now scaled by the full adult attendance, that is all those aged over 18. Dioceses where there are a lot of younger people such as London appear higher, while those with more older people, such as Truro, have a reduced percentage. This is provided for comparison purposes. Similar patterns are found when scaled by other attendance measures such as all-age Weekly Attendance and adult Sunday Attendance.

⁴ We have used the Adult AWA 2024 and scaled it using the Worshipping Community 2024 age distribution, both from *Statistics for Mission*: https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/statisticsformission2024_tables.xlsx We found the percentage of those aged 18-69 within those aged 18-69 and 70+ (Table A14) and used this figure to scale Adult AWA (Table A3). We feel that this gives the best indication of the number of people in each diocese available to be called to an ordained vocation.

Diocese Ref.	Diocese	Adult AWA 24	18-69 AWA	Benchmark per annum	Candidates pa across 2021-2025	% achieved	% clergy aged 60 and over
1	Bath and Wells	14,300	6,160	11.8	8.5	71.9%	31.3%
2	Birmingham	11,600	7,600	14.6	7.5	51.4%	25.6%
3	Blackburn	13,700	7,660	14.7	5.8	39.1%	28.4%
5	Bristol	10,000	6,130	11.8	5.8	48.9%	28.7%
6	Canterbury	10,400	5,350	10.3	7.8	75.4%	31.0%
7	Carlisle	8,200	3,610	6.9	4.3	61.3%	29.6%
8	Chelmsford	23,200	13,980	26.8	18.5	69.0%	25.4%
9	Chester	18,900	8,640	16.6	9.0	54.3%	37.9%
10	Chichester	25,200	13,560	26.0	5.8	22.1%	32.6%
11	Coventry	10,300	6,400	12.3	8.8	71.2%	20.2%
12	Derby	8,900	4,370	8.4	3.5	41.7%	26.6%
13	Durham	11,000	5,940	11.4	7.0	61.4%	27.0%
14	Ely	12,000	7,560	14.5	10.0	68.9%	31.1%
15	Exeter	16,100	7,380	14.2	10.8	75.9%	30.6%
16	Gloucester	11,000	5,840	11.2	7.5	67.0%	30.4%
17	Guildford	14,500	8,690	16.7	16.0	95.9%	29.8%
18	Hereford	6,500	2,660	5.1	3.8	73.4%	34.7%
19	Leicester	8,300	4,280	8.2	7.3	88.3%	30.2%
20	Lichfield	18,600	9,360	18.0	9.3	51.5%	31.0%
21	Lincoln	10,500	4,540	8.7	5.0	57.4%	38.3%
22	Liverpool	13,900	7,940	15.2	8.3	54.1%	23.2%
23	London	53,700	42,190	81.0	62.5	77.2%	19.7%
24	Manchester	14,500	9,150	17.6	15.8	89.7%	29.4%
25	Newcastle	9,600	4,920	9.4	3.5	37.1%	34.0%
26	Norwich	11,900	5,480	10.5	5.8	54.7%	36.4%
27	Oxford	33,600	20,840	40.0	20.8	51.9%	28.0%
28	Peterborough	9,400	4,810	9.2	10.0	108.2%	31.3%
29	Portsmouth	8,000	4,020	7.7	5.3	68.1%	27.0%
31	Rochester	15,000	9,270	17.8	7.5	42.2%	34.9%
32	St Albans	19,200	11,740	22.5	12.3	54.4%	27.3%
33	St Eds. and Ipswich	10,600	4,890	9.4	7.3	77.3%	44.3%
34	Salisbury	17,500	7,820	15.0	6.3	41.6%	28.2%
35	Sheffield	10,700	6,650	12.8	8.3	64.7%	20.0%
36	Sodor and Man	1,300	480	0.9	0.5	54.0%	
37	Southwark	27,300	20,020	38.4	13.0	33.8%	23.4%
38	Southwell and Notts	9,900	5,930	11.4	8.8	76.9%	18.6%
39	Truro	6,800	2,750	5.3	7.3	137.6%	22.4%
41	Winchester	15,300	8,080	15.5	17.3	111.3%	21.8%
42	Worcester	7,600	3,270	6.3	8.5	135.4%	25.6%
43	York	17,600	8,860	17.0	6.0	35.3%	33.3%
44	Europe	8,200	5,570	10.7	10.8	100.5%	
46	Leeds	22,700	12,150	23.3	10.5	45.0%	27.1%

Table 2: Dioceses' Candidates 2021-2025. Benchmark scaled by 18-69 AWA 2024

Diocese

Percentage of benchmark achieved 2021-2025
scaled by 18-69 WC and adult AWA by Diocese

Benchmark: 665

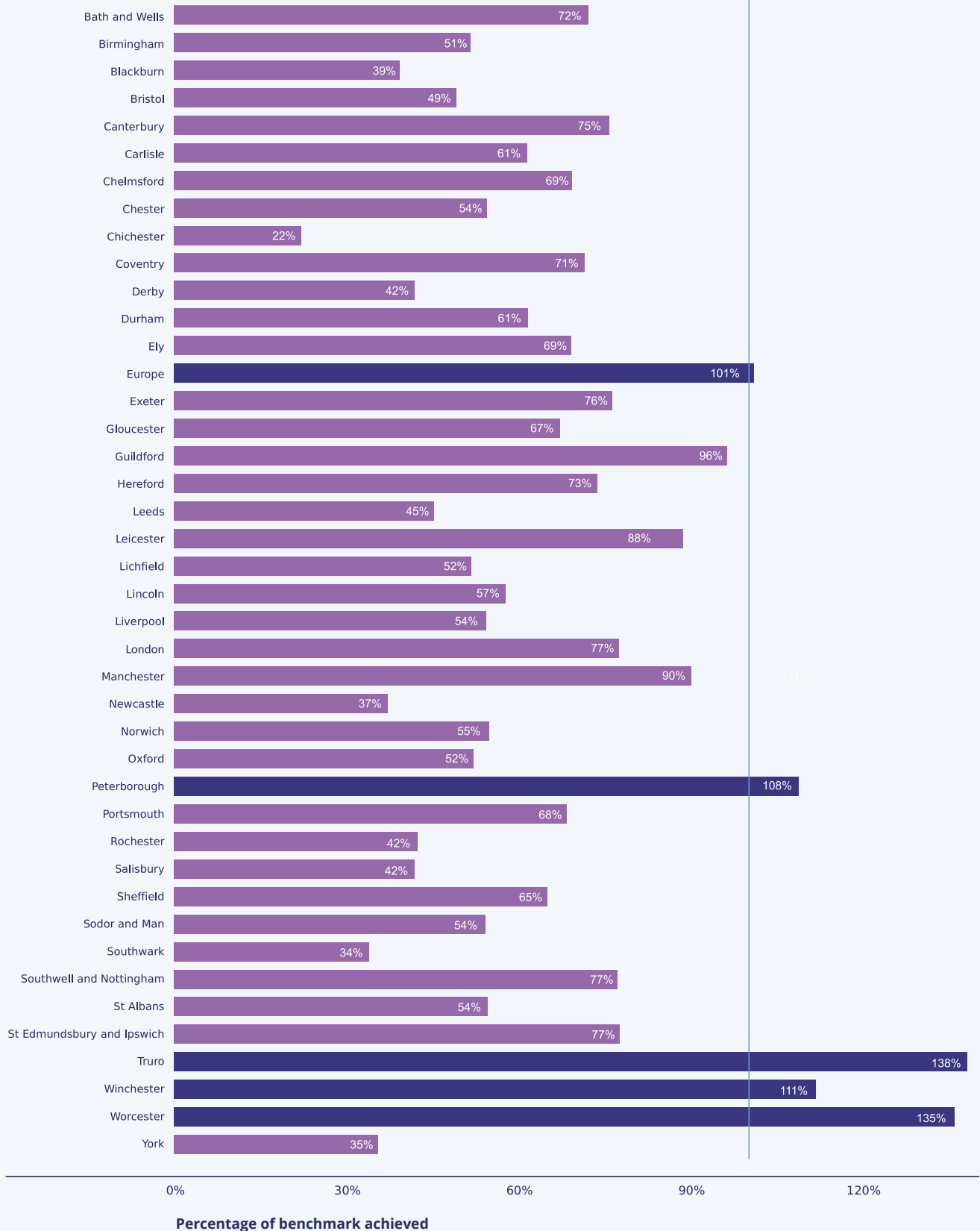


Figure 2: Percentage of benchmark achieved 2021-2025 scaled by adult AWA and WC 18-69 by Diocese

Diocese

Percentage of benchmark achieved 2021-2025 scaled by adult AWA by Diocese

Benchmark: 665

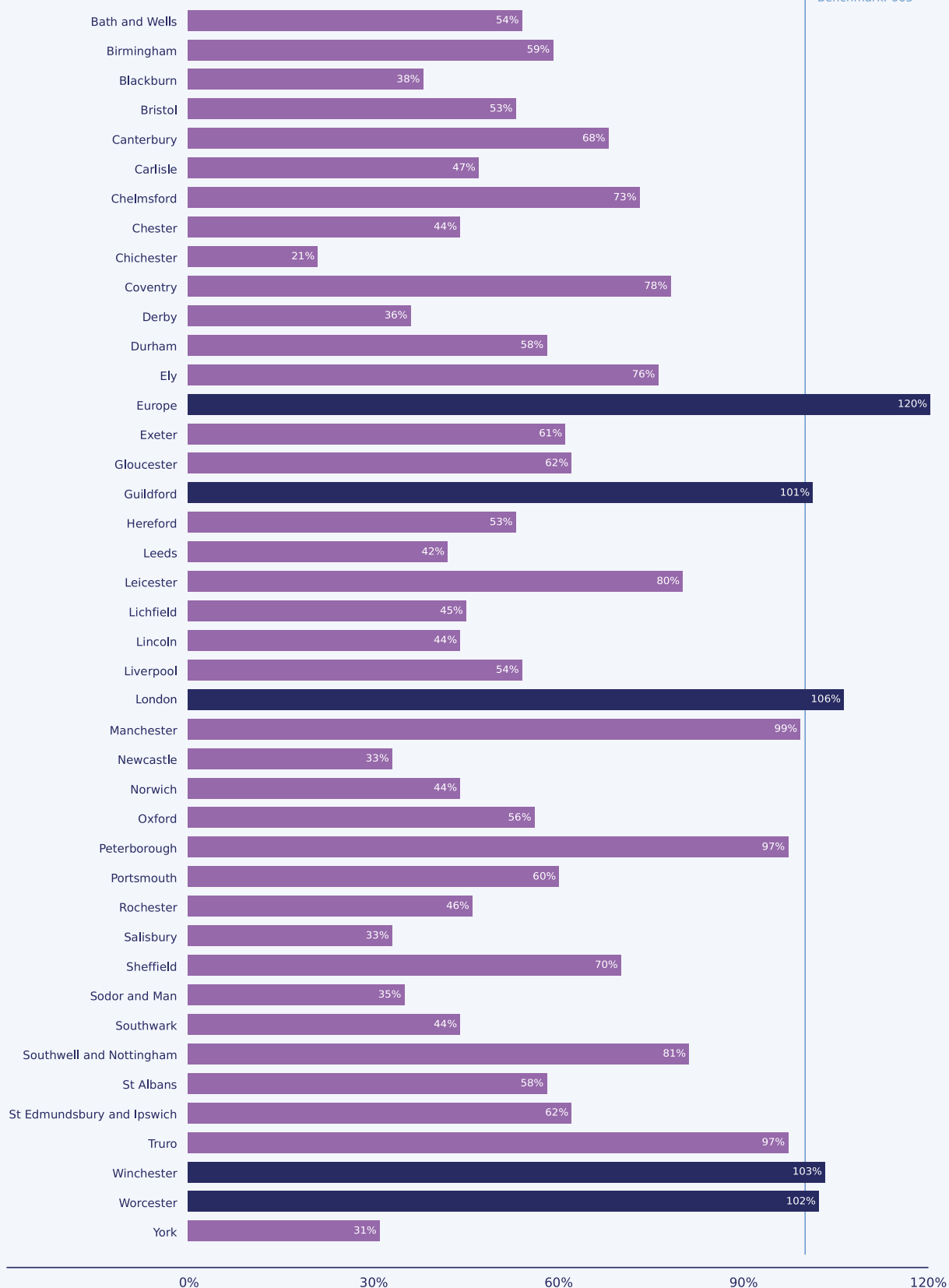


Figure 3: Percentage of benchmark candidates required, scaled by Adult AWA 24



Changes between 2021/22 and 2024/25

The numbers presented in pages 5 to 9 mask any changes through time.
Figure 4 (page 11) shows changes in numbers of candidates in each season by diocese.

Some dioceses, such as Portsmouth and Winchester have seen increases in numbers each year. Others, such as Bath & Wells, Hereford, Liverpool, and Newcastle have seen decreases. Where a diocese has met its proportional contribution scaled by attendance it is shown in dark blue.



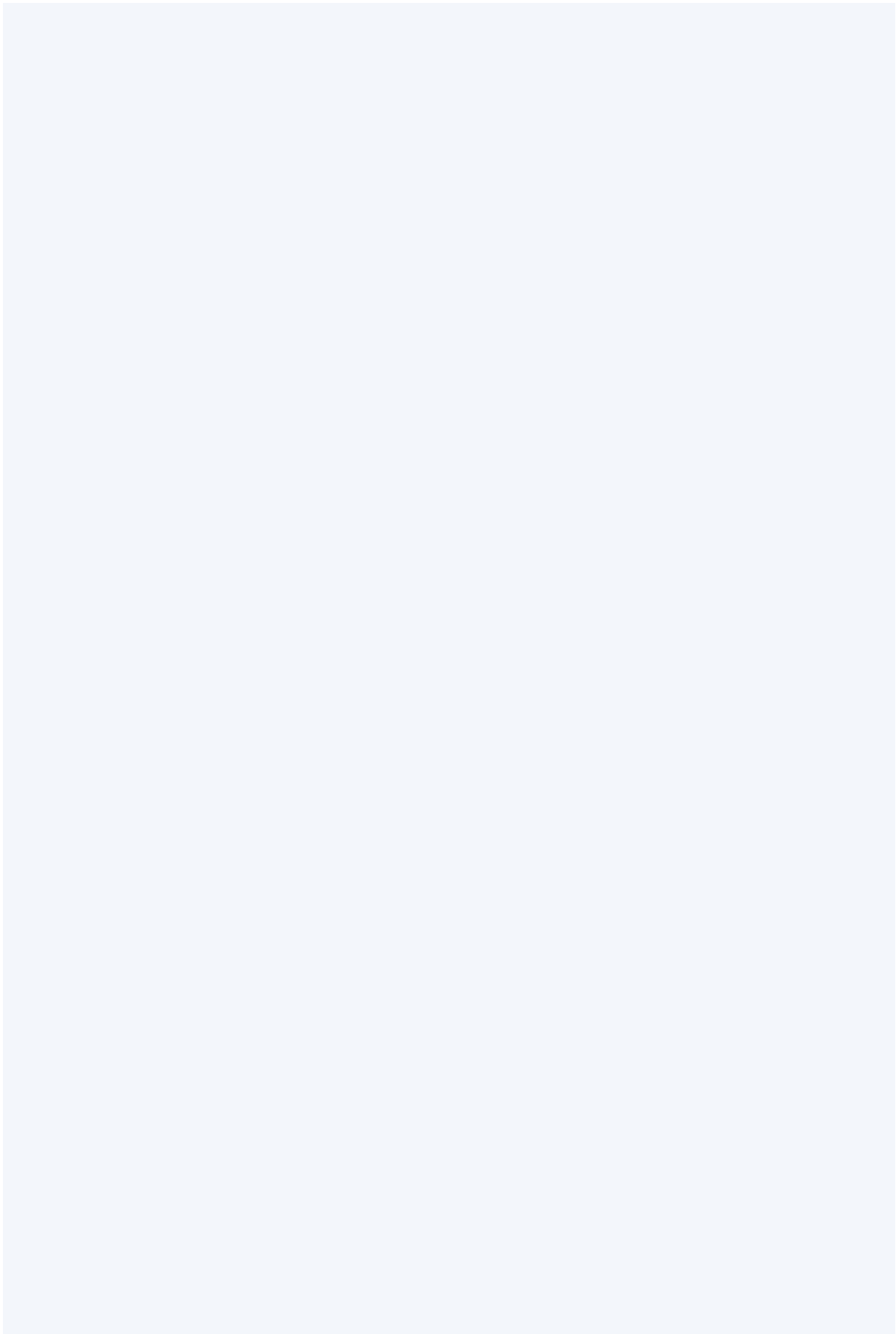


Figure 4: Change by diocese

Characteristics of Ordinands

Data on the characteristics of people being recommended for training is available at a national church level from the Discernment Portal. To ensure that individuals cannot be identified, this was not available by diocese.

Age and Gender

As noted previously the trend of men being younger than women is not recent; there are more men than women at each age up to 36, thereafter there are more women than men.

There are particular peaks in the graph – we can see that a lot of men are coming to Panel aged 28 and 36. Women are coming to Panel aged 55 and 60, perhaps due to retirement ages or age limits in training. There are more older people coming to Panel in these seasons than in the past.

Women generally present for training at an older age than men

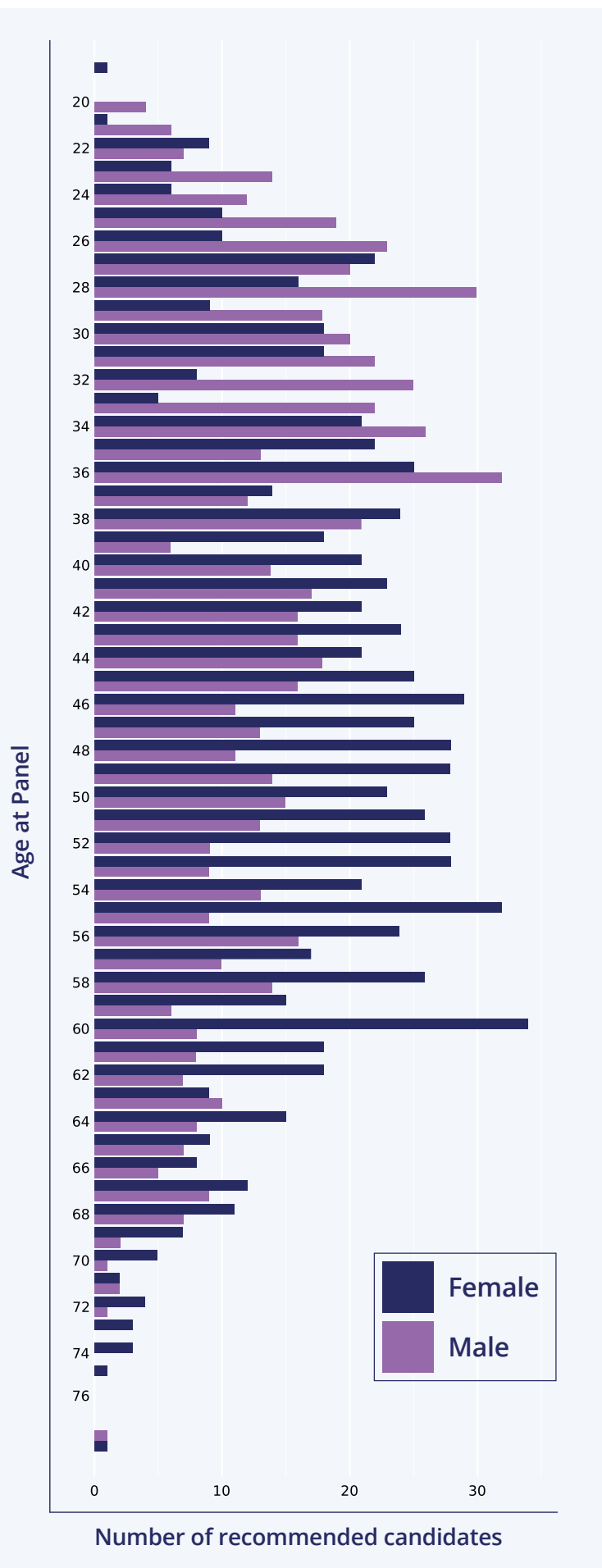


Figure 5: Age and Gender of recommended candidates

Figure 6 shows the number and gender of ordinands by season. From 2022/23 to 2024/25 there have been considerably more female than male candidates. Nevertheless, the numbers shown do not reach the benchmark of 665 in any season.

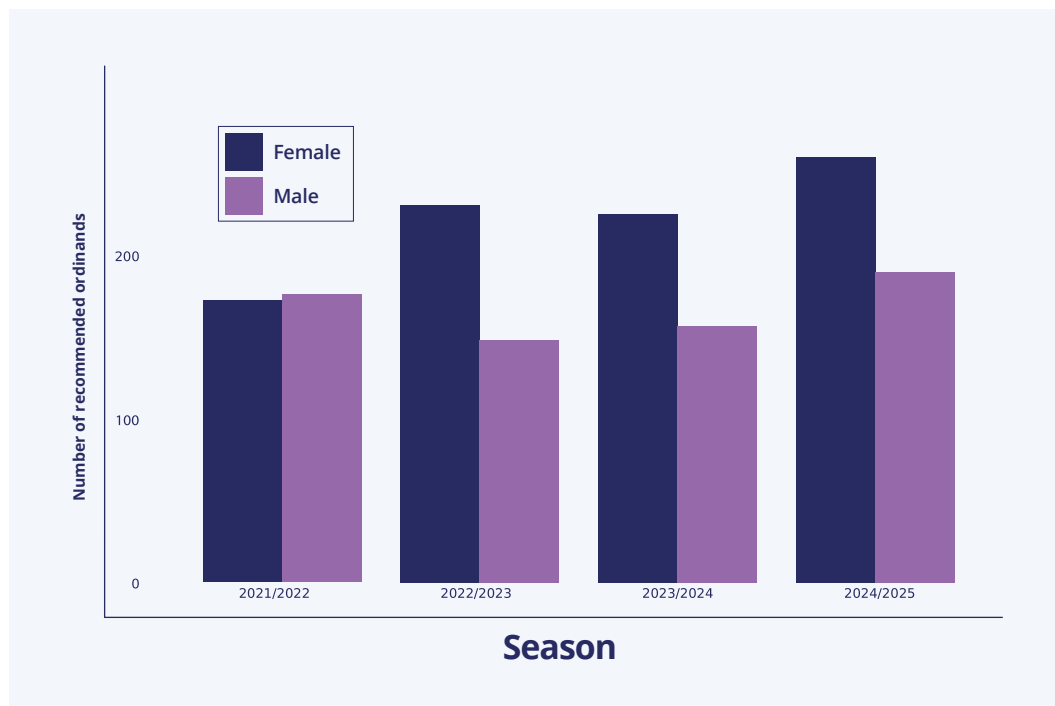


Figure 6: Ordinands by gender and season

Figure 7 below shows the numbers of candidates with the benchmark of 665.

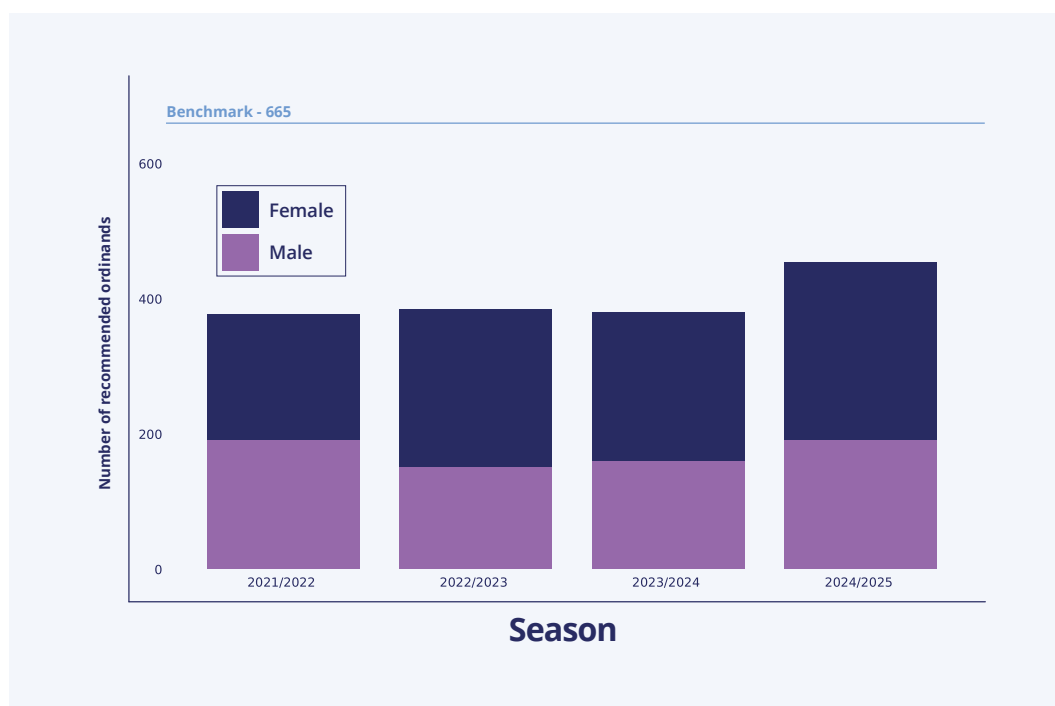


Figure 7: Ordinands by gender and season and benchmark

Diversity Outcomes

The national renewing ministerial vocations strategy has the following diversity targets:

- **25% of ordinands aged under 32 when starting training**
- 20% has been achieved in 2021-2025
- **15% of ordinands of Global Majority Heritage**
- 13% has been achieved
- **15% of ordinands declaring a disability**
- 12% has been achieved

Ordinands are more diverse but not younger

The percentages of ordinands with each characteristic in each season are given in [Table 3](#) and graphs are given in [Figures 8 to 10](#).

The percentage of those aged under 32 has fallen from 28% to 17% while those of Global Majority Heritage have risen slightly from 13% to 14%, with a drop in 2023/4 to 10%. Those with a declared disability have risen from 10% to 13%.

Table 3: Percentages of each characteristic by season

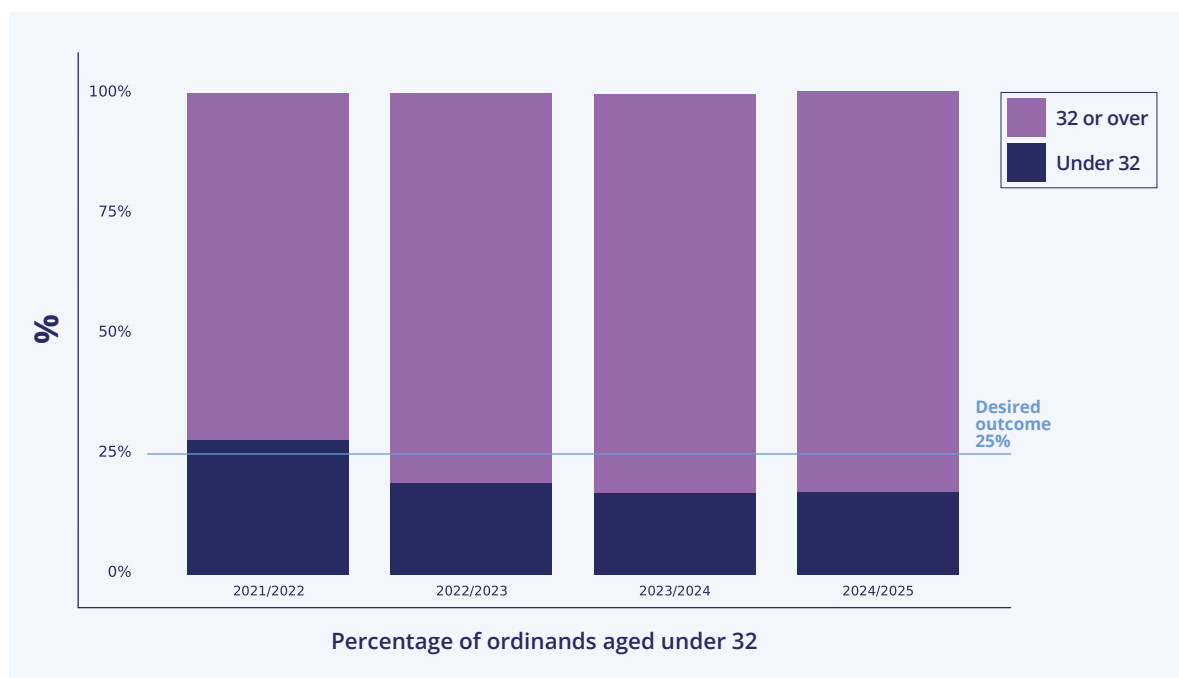


Figure 8: Percentage of ordinands aged under 32

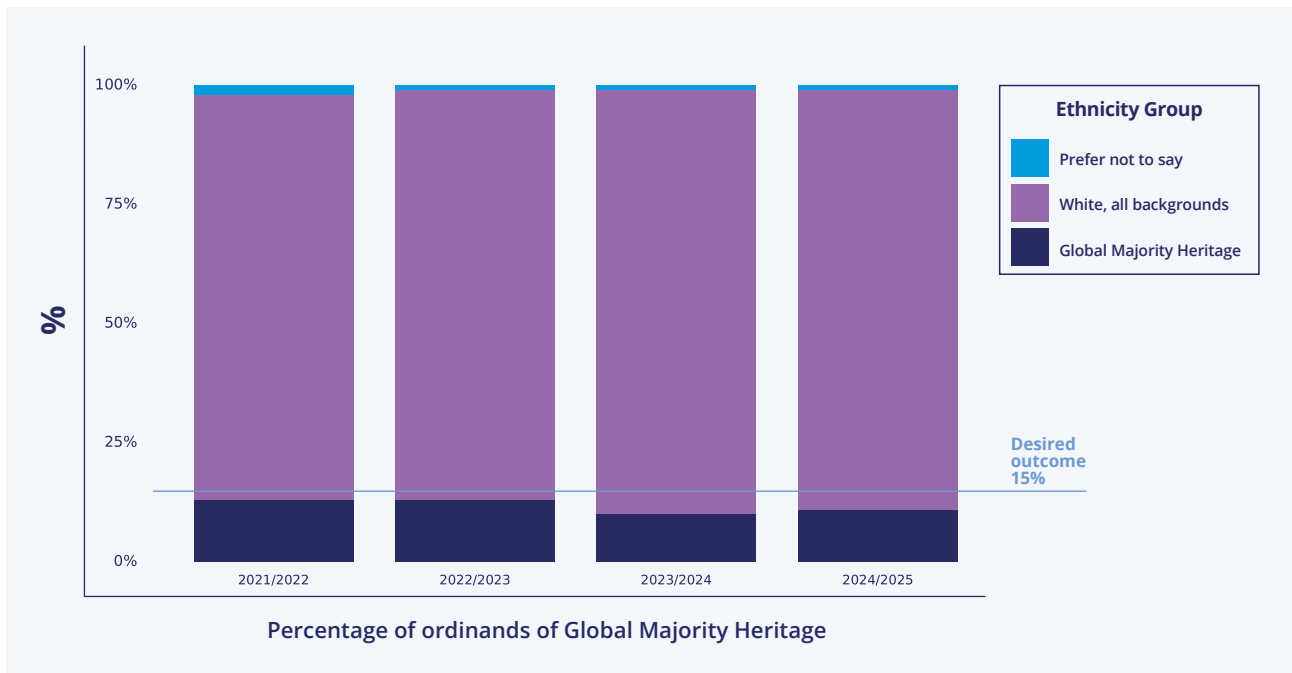


Figure 9: Percentage of ordinands of Global Majority Heritage

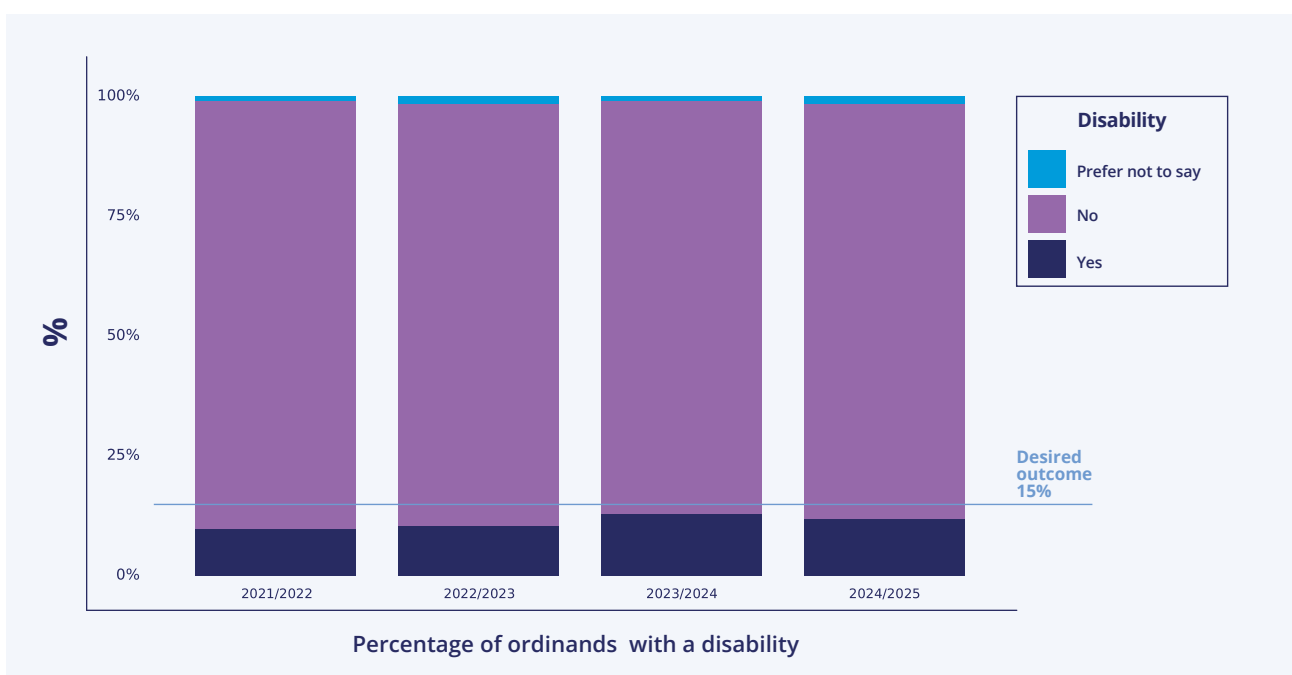


Figure 10: Percentage of ordinands declaring a disability

Sending Churches

When a candidate comes to Stage 2 of the discernment process the name of their sending church is entered into their Portal record. We have been able to match those names to church codes within the Church of England data for 1,915 candidates from 1,406 churches.⁵ Nationally, 10.9% of parishes, 19.9% of benefices, have sent candidates to Stage 2 Panels in 2021-2026.

Over these seasons 93% of candidates who entered Stage 2 have subsequently been recommended for training. The benchmark figure for people at this stage is therefore increased to 2.06 (1.92 divided by 93%) candidates per 1,000 18-69 Adult Weekly Attenders.

Multi-parish benefices

Multi-parish benefices make up 34% of benefices in the Church of England.

When scaled by 18-69 AWA 2024, this represents 59% of the benchmark for single-parish benefices and 66% for multi-parish benefices.

11%
of parishes,
20%
of benefices,
have sent
candidates
to Stage 2

Benefice Type	Candidates per year	Adult AWA 2024	18-69 AWA 2024	Candidates per 1,000 18-69 AWA	% achieved of Benchmark
Single-parish	247.6	349,580	203,790	1.21	58.9%
Multi-parish	122.0	195,900	89,800	1.36	65.9%

Table 4: Candidates by Benefice Type



⁵ Others include sending churches in Wales, Scotland or ecumenical partners.
Some sending churches could not be disambiguated from the free text format information given.

Congregation size

For candidates where we have been able to identify a sending church, we can examine the church size.

The breakpoints have been chosen by the quartiles given in Statistics for Mission for Adult AWA. “Small” churches make up the smallest 25% of Adult AWA 2024, that is, those with fewer than 9 Adult Average Weekly attenders. “Very large” churches are those in the largest 5% of churches.⁶

While around 140 candidates per year come from “Large” churches, when compared with the Adult 18-69 AWA figures, they only represent 58% of the benchmark required. In contrast, the 9 candidates from “Small” churches are coming forward at 80% of the benchmark.

Table 5: Candidates by AWA by church size

Rurality

Where a sending church is part of a parish, as opposed to a Cathedral or a benefice without a geographical parish area, we can link to the Census data supplied by Data Services.⁷

One aspect we can consider is how rural or urban the parish area is. If a parish is deemed to have more than half of its area as “rural”, it is classified as “rural”, otherwise it is “urban”. Churches in rural parishes are sending 57% of the benchmark number of candidates, while those in urban parishes are sending 66%.

Table 7: Candidates by AWA by rural/urban classification

⁶ 12.1 candidates per year said that came from churches with a recorded Adult AWA in 2024 of 0. We have removed them from this analysis as we are unclear what the 0 might represent.

⁷ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/parish_censusimdsimmary_nov2025.xlsx

Deprivation levels

Data is also available on the deprivation of parishes, based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Parishes in the most deprived 20% (Deciles 1 and 2) are sending each year around 1.41 candidates to Panel for every 1,000 adults aged 18-69 attending church. This equates to 68% of the benchmark. Many resource churches are in such areas. Conversely, the parishes in the least deprived 20% areas (Deciles 9 and 10) are sending 1.12 candidates per year per 1,000 18-69 AWA, 54% of the benchmark.



Table 6: Table 6: Candidates by 18-69 AWA by IMD decile.

⁸ Holy Trinity, Brompton sends over 8 candidates a year and is in this decile.

