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SIX PERCENT OF U.S. SEMINARIANS REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT, ABUSE, OR MISCONDUCT

A widely reported CARA survey has found that 6 percent of seminarians in the United States say they have experienced some form of sexual harassment, abuse, or misconduct at their present seminary or house of formation. The research was commissioned by the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, which with CARA designed the questionnaire to determine the prevalence and implications of such conduct nationally. The form was emailed to 2,375 theologate or college-level seminarians, which resulted in 1,544 (65 percent) valid responses from March to May 2019. Some of the major findings are summarized below.

Characteristics of Respondents

Sixty-eight percent are studying to serve as diocesan priests, 28 percent as religious priests or brothers, and 3 percent identified only as “seminarians” or “deacons.” Fifty-three percent are enrolled at the theology level, 26 percent in college seminary/philosophy studies, and 18 percent in pre-theology. Seventy percent live in a residence hall at their seminary, 23 percent live with religious community members, and 5 percent have other living arrangements.

Extent of the Issue Nationally

Three in four (76 percent) report that sexual harassment, abuse, or misconduct is “not at all a problem.” Eleven percent indicate it is

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National Study of Catholic and Other Denominational Finances

The *National Study of Congregations’ Economic Practices* (NSCEP) is the largest and most comprehensive study in the United States of religious congregations’ finances in more than a generation. It reveals how the nation’s more than 300,000 congregations receive, manage, and spend money. Funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, the NSCEP is based on a nationally representative sample with a response rate of 40 percent and data collected from leaders of 1,231 congregations. The paragraphs below, excerpted from the report, may be of particular interest to Catholic readers.

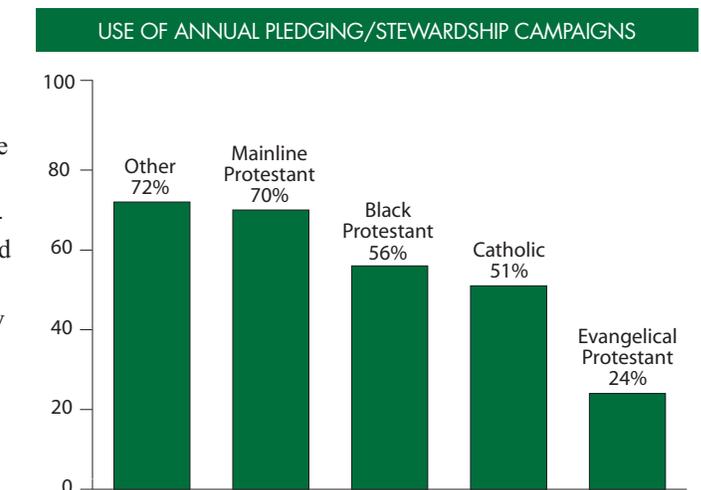
While the Pew Research Center has estimated that 21 percent of Americans identify as Catholic, the NSCEP indicates that only 10 percent of congregations in the United States are Catholic, a difference explained by the fact that Catholic parishes tend to be much larger than congregations of other religious traditions.

Other congregations are grouped into evangelical Protestant (43 percent), mainline Protestant (28 percent), black Protestant (14 percent), and other groups (5 percent).

More than half of all congregations report growth in size and revenue, but 42 percent are declining or remaining flat in both. A greater proportion of Catholic parishes report a decrease in participation (53 percent, compared to 24 percent growth) while 49 percent of mainline Protestant churches also reported a decrease. Also, Catholic congregations were the only group with a higher proportion reporting revenue decreasing (56 percent) than increasing (31 percent). The vast majority of congregations receive the bulk of their contributions through the offering plate, and checks account for more than four times the average weekly amount received either digitally or in cash.

Annual pledging/stewardship campaigns are used by 51 percent of Catholic parishes in contrast to 70 percent of mainline Protestant, 56 percent of black Protestant, 24 percent of evangelical Protestant, and 72 percent of other religious groups.

Money management classes, including religious giving, occur in 30 percent of Catholic parishes and 54 percent of black Protestant, 31 percent of evangelical Protestant, 25 percent of mainline Protestant congregations, and 26 percent of other religious groups.



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How to Increase U.S. Parish Financial Support among Latino Catholics

Professor Maureen K. Day of the Franciscan School of Theology notes that it has been established that Latino Catholics in the United States give less money to their parishes than other parishioners. Since it is unclear why this gap exists, parish leaders are left unsure how to respond. There are several pastoral concerns that emerge because of this gap, both now and especially in the future as the Catholic Church in the United States becomes increasingly Latino.

Day has undertaken a study including interviews with pastors and both high-giving and low-giving Latinos. The study explores the cultural understandings of stewardship among Latino Catholics and examines the strategies that pastors of predominantly Latino parishes use to encourage giving.

The author outlines two concepts or frames that leaders of congregations use to inspire giving in their faith communities, based on previous research: “Paying the Bills” and “Living the Vision.” In the first, clergy requests are very limited, just enough to meet immediate budgetary needs, an approach common in Catholic churches. The second situates giving into the greater context of Christian worship and generosity, connecting the spiritual meaning of giving to the church’s religious mission and demonstrating that God must be present in all realms of a person’s life, including one’s finances.

“... pastors place more emphasis on financial obstacles to giving, while lay Catholics indicate that historical factors as well as not perceiving their parish’s financial needs are the biggest obstacles.”

From these frames, the author has chosen three of nine established hypotheses of why Christians do not give more to explain the relatively low levels of giving among Latino Catholics. The first, “resource constraints,” is a real possibility, since financial needs may be greater among Latino families, whose average household income is \$39,000 compared to the overall United States average of \$51,000. The second is that parish leadership may be unwittingly undermining fundraising efforts through “low leadership expectations.” Finally, low giving may be due to “unperceived needs,” meaning that Latino Catholics are not aware that their parish’s budget is stretched quite thin and that more resources are needed.

To these three hypotheses, the author adds three more of her own, beginning with the church as a place of “perceived abundance” with more than enough funding to function well. Also, it may be that financial giving “lacks cultural salience” for Latino Catholics, since

HYPOTHESES TO EXPLAIN LOW RATES OF GIVING AMONG LATINO CATHOLICS

Resource constraints among Latino families

Low leadership expectations on the part of clergy

Unperceived needs—lack of awareness that parish budget is tight

Church’s “perceived abundance”

Financial giving lacks cultural salience among Latinos

Lack of sense of ownership

the cultural context of parish sponsorship in Mexico has a different history of support than do congregations in this country. Her final hypothesis is that Latino Catholics “lack a sense of ownership” in their parish.

The results indicate that pastors and parishioners have significant overlap in their stewardship views. However, pastors place more emphasis on financial obstacles to giving, while lay Catholics indicate that historical factors as well as not perceiving their parish’s financial needs are the biggest obstacles. The paper concludes with an extensive discussion of the implications of the findings, including recommended best practices to increase Latino giving.

For further information on “Latino Catholic Financial Giving and Clergy Responses: Understanding Stewardship Frames,” by Maureen K. Day, a paper presented at the conference of the RRA/SSSR in St. Louis in October 2019, contact the author at maureenday@fst.edu.

A LOOK AT CATHOLIC PARENTS

According to information posted on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the following statistics provide a snapshot of the religious practices of Catholic parents in the United States:

- Seventy-six percent of married Catholic parents have a Catholic spouse.
- Twenty-two percent of Catholic parents attend Mass weekly.
- Fifty-three percent of Catholic parents attend Mass at least once a month.
- Sixty-six percent of Catholic parents with three or more children attend Mass at least once a month.
- Sixty-eight percent of parents do not have any of their children enrolled in formal Catholic religious education.
- Seventy-one percent of parents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that prayer is essential to their faith.
- Thirty-six percent of parents pray at least once a day.

“A Look at Catholic Families,” whose source was listed as the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (usccb.org), appeared as a sidebar to “Symposium Addresses Liturgy of Family Life,” by Greg Popcak in *Our Sunday Visitor* for September 8–14, 2019.