

**January 2015**

***New Sisters and Brothers  
Professing Perpetual Vows  
in Religious Life:  
The Profession Class of 2014***



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

*New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows  
in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2014*

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



**January 2015**

Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D.  
Thomas P. Gaunt, S.J., Ph.D.

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**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2014 in a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superior of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 142 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every sister, nun or brother in her/his institute who was scheduled to profess perpetual vows in 2014. CARA then contacted these sisters, nuns or brothers by e-mail or mail to explain the project and ask them to complete a brief online survey.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 454 of 799 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 57 percent among religious institutes. In all, 75 percent of LCWR superiors, 49 percent of CMSM superiors, 66 percent of CMSWR superiors, and 27 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 190 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2014.

Of these 190 identified women and men religious, a total of 77 sisters and nuns and 41 brothers responded to the survey by December 21, 2014. These 41 brothers may include some brothers who intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 62 percent of the 190 potential members of the Profession Class of 2014 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

## **Major Findings**

- Almost nine in ten responding religious institutes had no one professing perpetual vows in religious life in 2014. One in fifteen institutes had one perpetual profession and a similar proportion reported two or more.
- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2014 is 37. Half of the responding religious are age 34 or younger. The youngest is 24 and the oldest is 64.
- Two-thirds of responding religious (67 percent) identify as white, more than one in seven (15 percent) identifies as Hispanic, and one in seven (14 percent) identifies as Asian.
- Most responding religious (76 percent) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most common countries of origin are the Philippines and Vietnam.
- Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) two-thirds (67 percent) are U.S. born and one-third (33 percent) are foreign born. Those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian are predominantly (94 percent) foreign born. Nearly all identifying as Caucasian/white (95 percent) are U.S. born.
- On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 23 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 16 years before perpetual profession.

### ***Family Background***

- Nearly nine in ten (86 percent) responding religious have been Catholic since birth. More than eight in ten (83 percent) come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Among the 14 percent of respondents who became Catholic later in life, the average age at which they converted was 24.
- Almost eight in ten responding religious (79 percent) have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is two. More than one in three (36 percent) of these responding religious have four or more siblings. Overall, respondents with one or more siblings are typically one of the middle children in their family. Sisters are more likely to be a middle child (44 percent) than either the youngest or the oldest child (29 and 26 percent).

### ***Education, Work, and Ministry Experience***

- About four in ten responding religious (42 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is the same as that for all Catholic adults in the United States (42 percent). These respondents are more likely than other U.S. Catholics, however, to have attended a Catholic high school (31 percent of responding religious, compared to 22 percent of U.S.

adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (34 percent of responding religious, compared to just 7 percent of U.S. adult Catholics). Responding women religious are less likely than brothers to have attended a Catholic college (27 percent for women compared to 46 percent for men).

- The responding religious are highly educated. Eighteen percent of responding religious earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Two in three (68 percent) entered their religious institute with at least a bachelor's degree (61 percent for women and 80 percent for men).
- Most religious did not report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to their institute. Among those who did report educational debt, however, they averaged one year of delay while they paid down an average of \$15,750 in educational debt. Several of the women, but none of the men, reported receiving assistance in paying down their debt.
- Nearly all responding religious (88 percent) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Of those who were employed, a quarter (27 percent) were employed part-time and just over three in five (61 percent) were employed full-time before entering the institute. Women religious are more likely than men to have been employed in health care, while men religious are more likely than women to have been employed in business and education.
- Many responding religious were active in parish life before entering their religious institute. Four in ten (42 percent) participated in youth ministry or youth group. Almost a third participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center. One in five participated in World Youth Day and/or in a young adult ministry or group.
- Almost nine in ten (88 percent) had ministry experience before entering their religious institute, most commonly as a lector (50 percent) followed by ministry in faith formation (47 percent). Four in ten served in music ministry and over one-third as Extraordinary Ministers of Communion or as an altar server. Over one-quarter served in a social service ministry, and one in ten taught in a Catholic school or served in hospital or prison ministry.
- Nearly all responding religious (91 percent) regularly participated in some type of private prayer activity before they entered their religious institute. Seven in ten participated in Eucharistic Adoration or prayed the rosary before entering. More than six in ten participated in retreats or spiritual direction before entering.

### ***Consideration of Religious Life and Choice of Community***

- On average, responding religious report that they were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, but half were 18 or younger when they first did so.

- Nearly half say that a parish priest or a religious sister or brother encouraged their vocation (49 and 47 percent). Men were more likely than women to have been encouraged by a parish priest or religious sister or a brother.
- Over four in ten report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by a friend. Women are more likely than men to have been encouraged by a friend (48 percent compared to 37 percent).
- Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from other religious, friends, or a parish priest. One in four (25 percent) report that their mother encouraged them to consider religious life. Just under a quarter received encouragement from other relatives (23 percent) or their father (15 percent).
- Six in ten (58 percent) report that they were *discouraged* from considering a vocation by one or more persons. These respondents are most likely to report that they were discouraged by a family member other than a parent (36 percent) or by friends or classmates (24 percent).
- On average, these religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute for four years before they entered, but half knew them for two years or less. One in three (36 percent) first became acquainted with their institute through promotional material published by the institute. One in five first learned of their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor.
- Nearly all of the religious of the Profession Class of 2014 (89 percent) participated in some type of vocation program or experience prior to entering their religious institute. Most commonly, this was a “Come and See” experience (59 percent) or a vocation retreat (50 percent). Men were more likely than women to have participated in a “Come and See” experience (66 percent and 56 percent, respectively) or in a vocation retreat (59 percent for men compared to 45 percent for women).



## **Introduction**

Since 2010, the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of women and men religious who profess perpetual vows each year in a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States. For this project, CARA was asked to gather information about the characteristics and experiences of these religious and report the findings to the Secretariat for use with the World Day of Consecrated Life in February. CARA worked with the Secretariat to revise two questionnaires – one for women religious and another for brothers – that had been used for the “Profession Class of 2013” study of women and men religious professing perpetual vows in 2013. CARA then programmed the questionnaires into an online survey to give respondents the option of completing the survey either online or on paper. This report presents results of this survey of women and men religious of the Profession Class of 2014.

To obtain the names and contact information for the religious professing perpetual vows in 2014, CARA contacted all major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superior of all religious institutes who have brothers and who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 142 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every sister, nun, or brother in the institute who was scheduled to profess perpetual vows in 2014. CARA then contacted these sisters, nuns, or brothers by e-mail or mail to explain the project and ask them to complete a brief online survey.

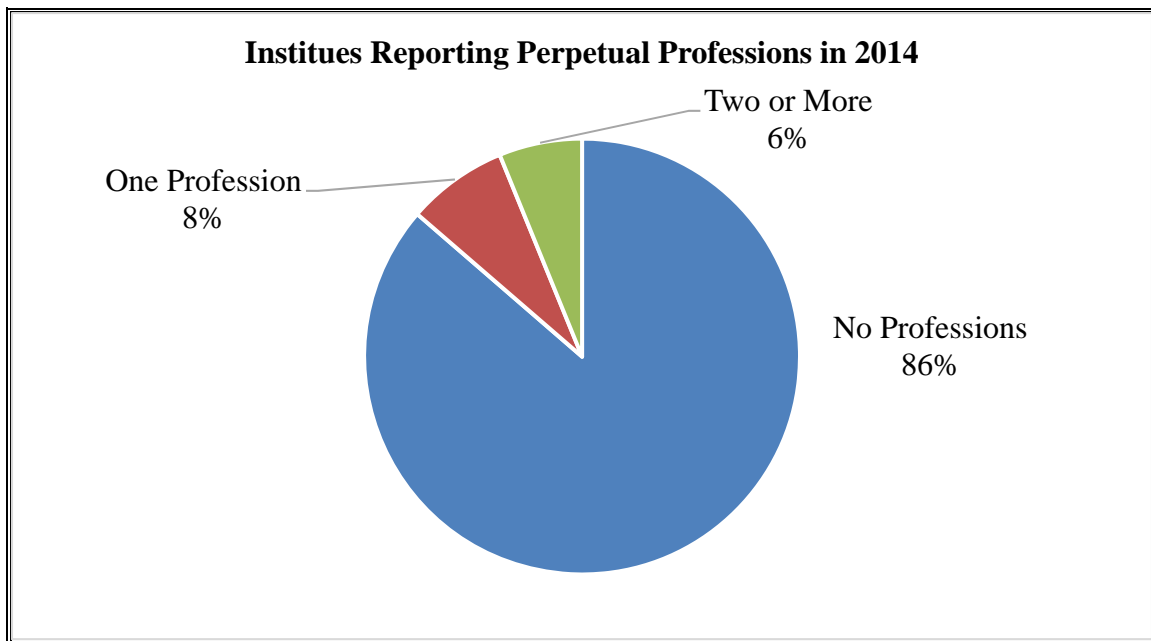
CARA received a response from 460 of 799 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 58 percent among religious institutes. In all, 75 percent of LCWR superiors, 49 percent of CMSM superiors, 66 percent of CMSWR superiors, and 27 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 190 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2014.

After repeated follow-ups to the major superiors and to the women and men religious who had been identified by them, a total of 77 sisters and nuns and 41 brothers responded to the survey by December 21, 2014. (These 41 brothers may include some brothers who intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination). This represents a response rate of 62 percent of the 190 potential members of the Profession Class of 2014 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

The questionnaire asked these religious about their demographic and religious background, education and work experience, previous ministry or service and other formative experiences, encouragement and discouragement to consider religious life, initial acquaintance with their institutes, and vocation/discernment programs and experiences. This report presents analyses of each question from all responding religious.

## Institutes Reporting Perpetual Professions

CARA asked the 799 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries in the United States that were identified by the two leadership conferences of women religious, the CMSM, or the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations to provide the names of women religious or brothers who professed or were planning to profess perpetual vows in 2014. A total of 454 major superiors responded (57 percent) with 190 names of women religious and brothers.



A total of 392 major superiors (86 percent of those responding) reported that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2014, another 34 major superiors (7 percent) reported one member professing perpetual vows, and 28 major superiors (6 percent) reported from two to ten.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 41 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the brothers who responded come from 21 different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious.

## Age of Professed

*The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2014 is 37. Half of the responding religious are age 34 or younger.*

<b>Age of Professed Women and Men</b>			
Percentage in each age category			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
29 and younger	27%	25%	32%
Age 30-39	42	43	42
Age 40-49	16	17	15
Age 50-59	9	10	5
Age 60 and older	5	4	7
Average age	37	38	36
Median age	34	35	32
Range in years	24-64	24-64	26-62

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Profession Class of 2014 is 24 and the oldest is 64 years of age. Three women respondents are professing perpetual vows at age 60 or older. More than two-thirds of the responding sisters are 39 or younger. Among brothers, the youngest is 26 and the oldest is 62. Almost three-quarters of the responding brothers are 39 or younger.

## Race and Ethnic Background

*Two in three responding religious (67 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white.*

<b>Race and Ethnic Background</b>			
Percentage in each category			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Caucasian/European American/white	67%	69%	65%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	15	13	20
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	14	16	10
African/African American/black	3	3	2
Native American	1	0	2

One in seven (15 percent) of the Profession Class of 2014 identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a), and just as many (14 percent) identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. In general, religious of the Profession Class of 2014 are more likely than other adult Catholics nationally to be Asian and less likely to be Hispanic.

### *Differences by country of birth*

Responding religious who identify themselves as Caucasian/European American/white are nearly all (95 percent) U.S. born. Just one in twenty (5 percent) were born outside the United States. Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) two-thirds (67 percent) are U.S. born and one-third (33 percent) are foreign born. Those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian are predominantly (94 percent) foreign born. One in twenty (6 percent) are U.S. born.

## Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States

*About three in four (76 percent) responding religious were born in the United States.*

<b>Country of Birth</b>			
Percentage in each category			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
United States	76%	74%	81%
Asia	13	14	10
Latin America	5	4	7
Canada	3	3	2
Africa	2	3	0
Europe	1	1	0

Vietnam and the Philippines are the most frequently mentioned country of birth among responding religious women who were born outside the United States. These respondents identified a total of 13 different countries of origin.

*Responding religious who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 16 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2002 or earlier.*

<b>Entrance to the United States</b>				
	<b>Year</b>	<b>Age at Entry</b>		
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Mean	1998	23	28	12
Median	2002	25	30	8
Range	1969-2010	0-39	7-39	0-27

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 23. Half were age 25 or younger when they came to live in the United States. Four men and one woman were under age ten when they entered the United States; the oldest woman was 39 at the time she entered the United States.

## Family Background

*More than eight in ten responding religious (86 percent) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age at the time of their conversion was 24.*

<b>Catholic Background</b>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Catholic since birth	86%	83%	93%
Became Catholic later in life	14	17	7
Average age at conversion	24	25	23

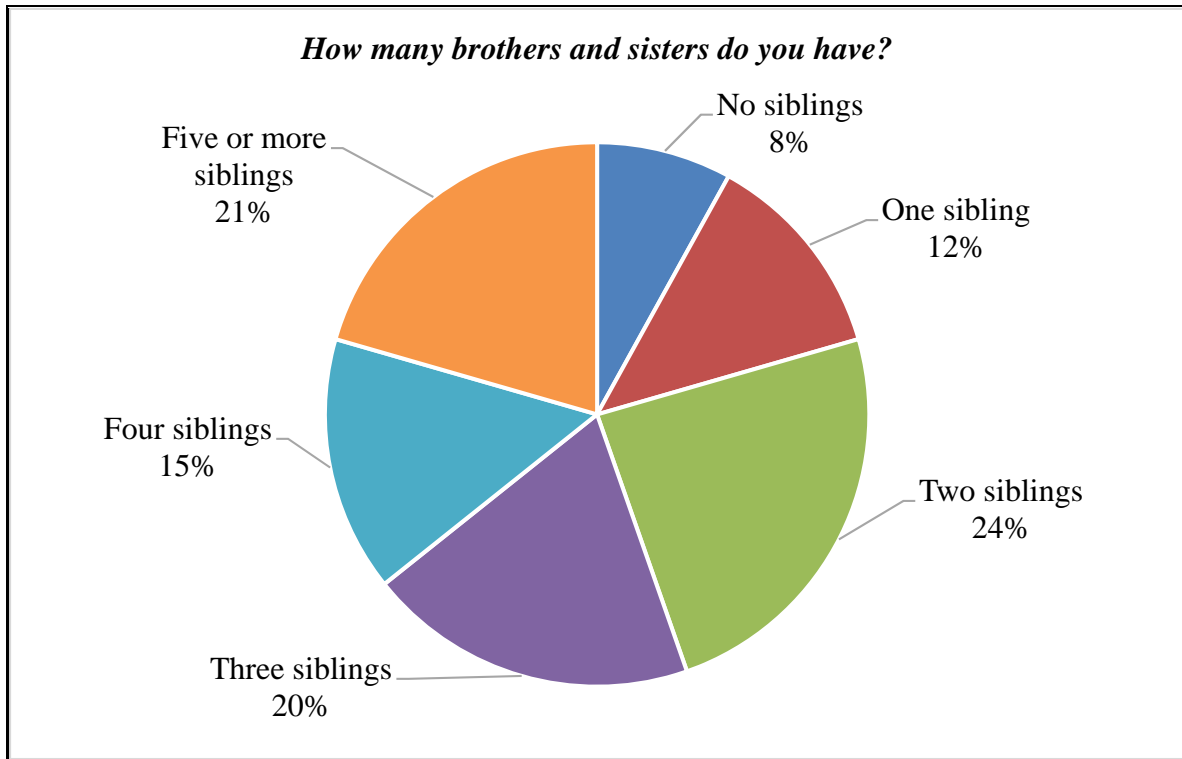
Those who came into full communion with the Catholic Church from another denomination or those who converted from another faith tradition came from a variety of faiths: Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Protestant, Southern Baptist, Unitarian, United Church of Christ, as well as some saying they were previously of no religion.

*Just over nine in ten respondent (92 percent) report that when they were children they had at least one parent who was Catholic; more than four in five (83 percent) report that both parents were Catholic.*

<b><i>What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?</i></b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Both parents Catholic	83%	81%	88%
Neither parent was Catholic	8	8	7
Mother Catholic, father not	7	8	5
Father Catholic, mother not	3	4	0

In addition, nearly one-third of responding religious (31 percent) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious. This proportion is about equal among both men and women religious of the Profession Class of 2014.

About eight in ten responding religious (79 percent) of the Profession Class of 2014 have more than one sibling. One in eight (13 percent) has one brother or sister and two in five (44 percent) report having two or three. More than one in three (36 percent) have four or more siblings.



On average, respondents have three siblings. Eight percent from the Profession Class of 2014 report being an only child and only five respondents report ten or more brothers and sisters. The most common response to this question, among women as well as men, is two siblings.

<b><i>What is your birth order?</i></b>			
Percentage in each category			
(Among respondents with one or more siblings)			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Oldest	31%	26%	40%
Middle	44	44	43
Youngest	25	29	17

Overall, respondents with one or more siblings are most likely to be one of the middle children in their family. Sisters are much more likely to be a middle child (44 percent) than either the youngest or the oldest child (29 and 26 percent).



## Education

*Over four in ten (42 percent) of those responding attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Three in ten (31 percent) attended a Catholic high school and a near equal proportion (34 percent) attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute.*

<b>Attendance at Catholic School*</b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Elementary or middle school	42%	39%	49%
High School	31	25	42
College	34	27	46

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

Members of the Profession Class of 2014 are about as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2008 national poll conducted by CARA,<sup>1</sup> 42 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, exactly the same as among these religious. Responding religious of 2014 are also more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (31 percent among responding religious, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (34 percent of responding religious, compared to just 7 percent of U.S. adult Catholics). Men were more likely than women to have attended a Catholic elementary or middle school (49 percent for men compared to 39 percent for women), a Catholic high school (42 percent for men compared to 25 percent for women), or a Catholic college (46 percent for men compared to 27 percent for women).

In addition, 14 percent of responding women religious and brothers report that they participated in a Catholic ministry formation program before they entered their religious institute (not shown in the table).

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, almost three in five (59 percent) of the respondents participated in a religious education program in their parish. Men and women participated at the same level (61 percent of men compared to 58 percent of women respondents) in parish-based religious education. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 70 percent did *not* report attending a Catholic elementary school and 81 percent did *not* attend a Catholic high school.

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<sup>1</sup>*Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics.* April 2008. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

Six percent of responding religious report being home schooled at some time in their educational background. Among those religious who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was eight years. Only one of the men religious report being home schooled.

*The responding religious are highly educated. Two in three (68 percent) earned an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute.*

<b>Highest Education Completed Before Entering</b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Elementary school (K-8)	2%	3%	0%
High school	14	12	12
Trade or technical school	2	1	2
Some college, no degree	15	21	5
Undergraduate degree	50	49	51
Graduate degree	18	12	29

Less than one in seven (16 percent) religious of the Profession Class of 2014 completed only elementary or high school before entering the religious institute. A similar proportion (17 percent) completed trade school or some college before entering. One-half (50 percent) had an undergraduate degree and nearly one in five (18 percent) had a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Responding sisters or nuns are a little less likely than responding brothers to have an undergraduate degree before entering their religious institute but brothers are more likely than sisters or nuns to have a graduate degree.

## Educational Debt

*Fewer than one in ten responding religious (7 percent) report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to the religious institute.*

<b>Impact of Educational Debt on Entrance to Religious Life</b>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Application delayed by debt	7%	9%	2%
Average length of delay	1 year	1 year	1 year
Average amount of debt	\$15,750	\$15,427	\$18,000
Median amount of debt	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$18,000

Most responding religious of the Profession Class of 2014 report that educational debt did not delay their application for entrance. Among those that were delayed by educational debt, however, the average delay was one year.

On average, responding religious had \$15,750 in educational debt at the time they first applied for entrance to their religious institute. Men and women were about the same in the amount of educational debt they reported.

None of the brothers reported receiving assistance in paying down their educational debt prior to entering their religious institute. Among women religious, several reported assistance from these groups in paying down their debt:

- Five reported assistance from friends/co-workers
- Four reported assistance from family members
- Four reported assistance from their religious institute
- Four received assistance from the Labouré Society
- Three reported assistance from their parish
- Two received assistance from the Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations
- Two received assistance from the Knights of Columbus Fund for Vocations

## Work Experience

*Almost nine in ten (88 percent) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering the religious institute. A quarter (27 percent) were employed part-time and three in five (61 percent) had been employed full-time before entering their institute.*

<b>Prior Work Experience</b>			
Percentage in each category			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Business/Occupational	50%	46%	57%
Education/Academic	29	26	36
Health care	12	17	0
Church ministry	9	10	6
Government/Military	0	0	0

These religious, especially the brothers, were most likely to report that they were in some form of business, or an occupation or trade, prior to entering their religious institute. Both women and men were most likely to report that they were employed in business or education prior to entering their institute.

## Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

*Many responding religious were active in parish life before entering their religious institute. Just under three-quarters (73 percent) participated in one or more of these programs or activities before entering.*

<b>Participation in Religious Programs or Activities*</b>			
Percentage checking each response			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Youth ministry or youth group	42%	48%	29%
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	31	27	39
World Youth Day	21	25	15
Young adult ministry or group	20	21	20
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	16	21	7
National Catholic Youth Conference	5	5	5
Religious institute volunteer	4	5	2
St. Vincent de Paul Society	3	4	2
National Evangelization Team	3	3	2
Fellowship of Catholic University Students	2	3	0
Sodality	—	5	***
Catholic Scouting	—	**	5
Knights of Columbus	—	**	27
Catholic Daughters	—	3	***

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.  
 \*\*Not asked of women.  
 \*\*\*Not asked of men.

- More than two in five (42 percent) of responding religious participated in youth ministry or a youth group. About a third (31 percent) participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center. Men are more likely than women to have had this experience.
- About one in six (16 percent) participated in the Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference. Women were three times as likely to participate as men.
- One in five (20 percent) respondents participated in young adult ministry or a young adult group before entering. About the same proportion participated in a World Youth Day prior to entering their religious institute.
- One in twenty (5 percent) participated in the National Catholic Youth Conference.

Nearly all responding religious (88 percent) served in one or more specified ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer. The most common ministry service reported was lector, followed by some form of faith formation.

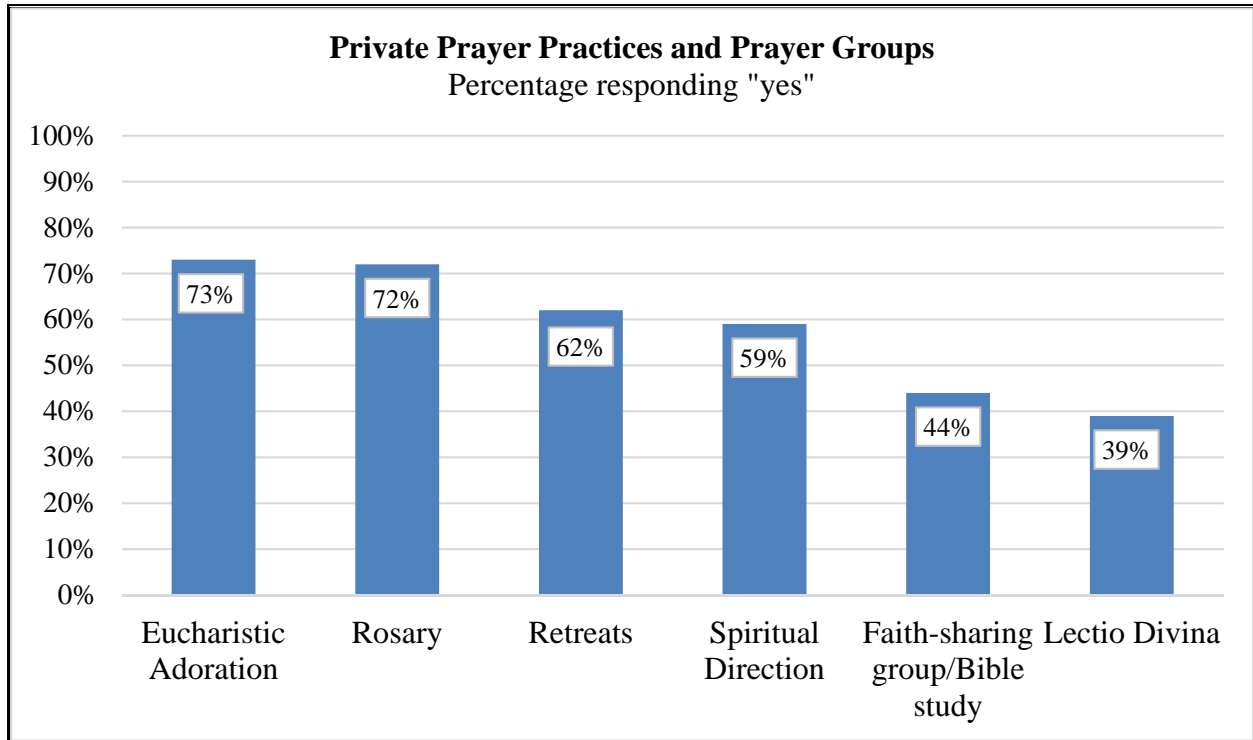
<b>Ministry Experience*</b>			
Percentage checking each response			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Lector	50%	39%	71%
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	47	51	39
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	42	48	44
Extraordinary Minister of Communion	36	29	49
Altar server	35	14	73
Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service)	28	29	27
Teacher in a Catholic school	9	10	7
Hospital or prison ministry	9	9	7

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Among the ministries listed on the survey, respondents were *most* likely to report that they served as a lector. Men were almost twice as likely as women to have served in this capacity.
- Almost one-half reported serving in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (47 percent). Women were more likely than men to have served in these ministries.
- About one-third of respondents served in liturgical ministries, such as Extraordinary Minister of Communion (36 percent), altar server (35 percent), or music ministry (42 percent) before entering their religious institute.
- One in three respondents (28 percent) reported that they served in a social service ministry, such as a Catholic Charities program, or some other community service.
- Responding religious were *least* likely to have served in a hospital or prison ministry or as a teacher in a Catholic school before they entered their religious institute.
- Eighty-eight percent of respondents report being involved in ministry either in a full-time, part-time or volunteer capacity prior to entering their religious institute. Women and men are equally likely to have so served in ministry (not shown in the table).

## Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups

*Private prayer and prayer groups are another type of formative experience that can help shape one's religious faith and openness to consider a vocation. Almost all (91 percent) responding religious of the Profession Class of 2014 participated in one or more of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis prior to entering her or his religious institute.*



- Eucharistic Adoration and the rosary are the most common types of formative prayer experience, reported by close to three-fourths of religious of the Profession Class of 2014.
- Six in ten respondents had made a retreat or had spiritual direction (62 and 59 percent) prior to entering their religious institute.
- Less than half (44 percent) regularly participated in a faith-sharing group or a Bible study group.
- Almost four in ten (39 percent) regularly participated in *Lectio Divina* prayer prior to entering their religious institute. This is an ancient prayer practice from the Order of St. Benedict.

*Women religious are a little more likely than men religious to report participating in Eucharistic Adoration or making retreats prior to their entry into religious life.*

<b>Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups*</b>		
Percentage checking each response		
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Eucharistic Adoration	74%	71%
Rosary	69	78
Retreats	65	56
Spiritual direction	57	61
Faith-sharing group/Bible study	42	49
Lectio Divina	36	44

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Men are more likely than women to say they pray the rosary (78 percent for men compared to 69 percent for women).
- Men are more likely than women to have participated spiritual direction before they entered (61 percent for men compared to 57 percent for women).
- Women are less likely than men to have been involved in a faith-sharing group or Bible study (42 percent for women compared to 49 percent for men).



## Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

*On average, responding religious report that they were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, but half were 18 or younger when they first considered a vocation.*

<b>Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life</b>			
	<b>Age</b>		
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Mean	19	18	19
Median	18	17	19
Range	5-49	5-49	5-37

### *Encouragement to Consider a Vocation*

*More than eight in ten (85 percent) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life. Nine in ten men (90 percent) compared to 82 percent of women report that they were encouraged by someone to consider a vocation.*

<b>Encouragement to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life*</b>			
Percentage checking each response			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Parish priest	49%	45%	56%
Religious sister or brother	47	44	51
Friend	44	48	37
Mother	25	26	24
Other relative	23	22	24
Parishioner	22	21	24
Teacher/Catechist	18	16	22
Father	15	14	17
Campus minister/School chaplain	14	13	17
Youth minister	8	10	5
Deacon	6	6	5
Bishop	5	3	10

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one response.

- Close to half of responding religious say that a parish priest or a religious sister or brother encouraged their vocation (49 and 47 percent). Men were more likely than women to have been encouraged by a parish priest or religious sister or a brother.
- Over four in ten report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by a friend. Women are more likely than men to have been encouraged by a friend (48 percent compared to 37 percent).
- Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from other religious, friends, or a parish priest. One in four (25 percent) report that their mother encouraged them to consider religious life. Just under a quarter received encouragement from other relatives (23 percent) or their father (15 percent).
- More than one in five responding religious received encouragement from a parishioner (22 percent) and almost one in five (18 percent) received encouragement from a teacher.
- Respondents were least likely to report being encouraged to consider a vocation by a campus minister, a youth minister, a deacon, or a bishop.

## ***Discouragement from Considering a Vocation***

*Almost six in ten responding religious (58 percent) reported that they were discouraged from considering a vocation by one or more persons. Women were more likely than men (62 percent compared to 51 percent) to report that someone discouraged them from considering a vocation.*

<b>Discouragement from Considering a Vocation to Religious Life*</b>			
Percentage checking each response			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Other relative	36%	38%	34%
Mother	25	27	20
Friend or school classmate	24	26	20
Father	15	14	17
Colleague or coworker	10	12	7
Teacher	7	7	6
Priest or other clergy	7	10	5
Religious sister or brother	7	9	2
Youth minister	1	2	0
Someone else	4	5	2

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one response.

Those who reported being *discouraged* from considering a vocation are most likely to report that they were discouraged by a family member (36 percent) other than their mother (25 percent) or father (15 percent) or by friends or classmates (24 percent).

- Men are less likely than women to have been discouraged by their mother (20 percent compared to 27 percent) but are equally likely to have been discouraged by their father or other relative.
- Very few respondents say they were discouraged from considering a vocation by teachers, clergy, religious sisters or brothers, or youth ministers.
- One in ten (10 percent) were discouraged from considering a vocation to religious life by a colleague or coworker. Women were a little more likely than men to report being discouraged from their vocation by a colleague or coworker.

## Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

*On average, responding religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute four years before they entered.*

	<b>Years</b>		
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Mean	4	3	5
Median	2	2	3
Range	0-26	0-20	0-26

On average, sisters report that they knew members of their institutes for about three years and brothers for about five years. Half of all responding religious (men and women) report that they knew the members of their religious institute for two years or less before they entered. About one in four (23 percent) knew the members of their religious institute for one year before they entered and one in ten (11 percent) knew the members for less than a year.

*Responding religious were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. Over one-third (36 percent) report that they first became acquainted with their institute through print or online promotional material published by the institute.*

***How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?\****

Percentage checking each response

	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Through print or online promotional material published by the institute	36%	40%	27%
Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor	21	21	22
In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital)	16	12	24
Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute	12	12	12
Through a friend or relative in the institute	10	10	10
Through a vocation matching or placement service	6	5	7
At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)	5	6	2
Other	27	29	24

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one response.

Respondents also indicate that they first became acquainted with their institute through a priest or advisor (21 percent), through a sponsored institute or work of the institute (16 percent), or through working with someone from the institute (12 percent). Just over one-quarter (27 percent) said they first became acquainted with their religious institute through some other means. Some of those “other” responses included:

- At a parish mission given by one of our friars
- Internet
- The Franciscan tradition itself
- Through a retreat
- A friend told me of this institute, then I looked online for more information
- I saw an advertisement regarding a Come and See weekend with the Sisters of Providence 13 years ago
- Met a Sister from the Monastery at our parish
- Sisters taught catechism at my parish
- Through friends who were interested in the community; through family and friends associated with my community
- Through volunteering with one of their ministries
- Vision magazine
- Volunteer work in a home for the disabled

## Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences

*Among the vocation programs and experiences about which they were asked, respondents are most likely to have participated in a “Come and See” experience. Nearly all (89 percent) had participated in at least one of these programs or experiences prior to entering their religious institute.*

<b><i>Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences*</i></b>			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
“Come and See” experience	59%	56%	66%
Vocation retreat	50	45	59
Live-in experience	26	30	20
“Nun Run”/“Andrew Dinner”	4	4	5
Other	12	16	5
<p>*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one response.</p>			

- “Come and See” experiences are a popular vocation program, experienced by almost three in five respondents (59 percent) before they entered their religious institute.
- Half of responding religious (50 percent) participated in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute. Men were more likely than women (59 percent compared to 45 percent) to report participating in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute.
- A quarter (26 percent) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering.
- Only one in twenty responding sisters or nuns (4 percent) report that they participated in a “Nun Run” (asked only of women) experience, and the same proportion of brothers had participated in an “Andrew Dinner” (asked only of men).

Respondents were also allowed to add any “other” vocational discernment experiences which they might have had. Their responses included the following:

- Joint vocation awareness day organized by several religious groups
- A leadership retreat led by Religious Sisters
- Informal visit to Motherhouse
- Lived in Discernment Community
- Non-vocation Retreat (“Jesu Caritas” retreat)
- Serving for two years as a volunteer with the community
- Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius