

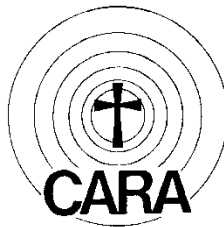
January 2016

***New Sisters and Brothers
Professing Perpetual Vows
in Religious Life:
The Profession Class of 2015***

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 2015*

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



January 2016

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2015 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 138 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 2015. 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 447 of 790 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 57 percent among religious institutes. In all, 75 percent of LCWR superiors, 55 percent of CMSWR superiors, 52 percent of CMSM superiors, and 22 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 136 members who professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2015.

Of these 136 identified women and men religious, a total of 54 sisters and nuns and 35 brothers responded to the survey by December 31, 2015. These 35 brothers may include some brothers who intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 65 percent of the 136 potential members of the Profession Class of 2015 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Major Findings

- More than eight in ten responding religious institutes had no one professing perpetual vows in religious life in 2015. One in ten institutes had one perpetual profession and one in twenty reported two or more.
- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2015 is 39. Half of the responding religious are age 35 or younger. The youngest is 26 and the oldest is 76.
- Two in three responding religious (68 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as white, more than one in six (16 percent) identifies as Asian, and more than one in ten (11 percent) identifies as Hispanic.
- Most responding religious (77 percent) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most common country of origin is The Philippines.
- Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) six in ten (60 percent) are U.S. born. Those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian are predominantly (86 percent) foreign born. Nearly all identifying as Caucasian/white (97 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 14 years before perpetual profession.

Family Background

- More than nine in ten responding religious (91 percent) have been Catholic since birth. More than three-quarters (78 percent) come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Among the 9 percent of respondents who became Catholic later in life, the average age at which they converted was 21.
- About seven in ten responding religious (71 percent) of the Profession Class of 2015 have more than one sibling. One-quarter (26 percent) have one brother or sister and two in five (40 percent) report having two or three. One in three (31 percent) have four or more siblings.

Education, Work, and Ministry Experience

- Almost one-half of the responding religious (47 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is nearly 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 (39 percent of responding religious, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (43 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 (37 percent for women compared to 51 percent for men).

- The Profession Class of 2015 is highly educated. Eighteen percent of responding religious earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Three-quarters (74 percent) entered their religious institute with at least a bachelor's degree (66 percent for women and 86 percent for men).
- Most religious did not report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to their institute. Among the two who did report educational debt, however, they averaged less than a one year of delay while they paid down an average of \$35,000 in educational debt.
- Nearly all responding religious (87 percent) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Of those who were employed, a quarter (24 percent) were employed part-time and just over three in five (63 percent) were employed full-time before entering the institute. Women religious are more likely than men to have been employed in education or health care, while men religious are more likely than women to have been employed in business.
- Many responding religious were active in parish life before entering their religious institute. Nearly four in ten (37 percent) participated in young adult ministry or in a young adult group. Around three in ten participated in a youth ministry or youth group (31 percent) or Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center (28 percent). One in eight participated in World Youth Day and/or in Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference.
- Eight in ten (82 percent) had ministry experience before entering their religious institute, most commonly as a lector (55 percent) or as an Extraordinary Minister of Communion (52 percent). About one-half served in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (47 percent). Around one-third served as an altar server, social service ministry, or in music ministry. One in ten taught in a Catholic school or served in hospital or prison ministry.
- Nearly all responding religious (90 percent) regularly participated in some type of private prayer activity before they entered their religious institute. About two-thirds participated in Eucharistic Adoration or prayed the rosary before entering. Nearly 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.
- One-half say that a religious sister or brother encouraged their vocation (52 percent).

- Over four in ten report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by a parish priest or a friend. Women are more likely than men to have been encouraged by both (46 percent compared to 34 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 three (34 percent) report that their mother encouraged them to consider religious life. Just under a quarter received encouragement from their father (22 percent) or other relatives (19 percent).
- Six in ten (58 percent) report that they were *discouraged* from considering a vocation by one or more persons. These respondents are more likely to report that they were discouraged by a friend (40 percent) or other relative (36 percent), than by their mother (29 percent) or father (29 percent).
- On average, these religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute for five years before they entered, but half knew them for two years or less. Three in ten (30 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 2015 (84 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 (72 percent) or a vocation retreat (46 percent). Women were more likely than men (57 percent compared to 29 percent) to report participating in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute.

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 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 2015.

To obtain the names and contact information for the religious professing perpetual vows in 2015, 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 138 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 2015. 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.

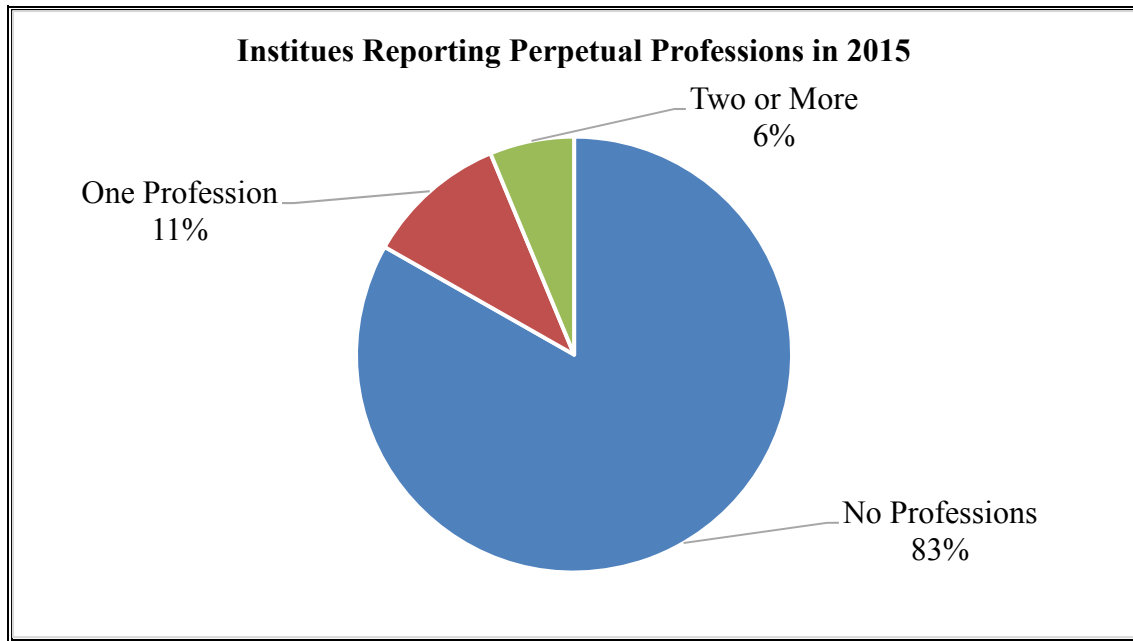
After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 447 of 790 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 57 percent among religious institutes. In all, 75 percent of LCWR superiors, 55 percent of CMSWR superiors, 52 percent of CMSM superiors, and 22 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 136 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2015.

Of these 136 identified women and men religious, a total of 54 sisters and nuns and 35 brothers responded to the survey by December 31, 2015. These 35 brothers may include some brothers who intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 65 percent of the 136 potential members of the Profession Class of 2015 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 790 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 2015. A total of 447 major superiors responded (57 percent) with 136 names of women religious and brothers.



A total of 372 major superiors (83 percent of those responding) reported that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2015, another 47 major superiors (11 percent) reported one member professing perpetual vows, and 28 major superiors (6 percent) reported from two to eight.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 43 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the brothers who responded come from 32 different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious.

Age of Professed

The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2015 is 39. Half of the responding religious are age 35 or younger.

Age of Professed Women and Men			
Percentage in each age category			
	Both	Women	Men
29 and younger	15%	11%	20%
Age 30-39	49	57	37
Age 40-49	25	19	34
Age 50-59	5	4	6
Age 60 and older	7	9	3
Average age	39	39	38
Median age	35	35	37
Range in years	26-76	26-76	26-63

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Profession Class of 2015 is 26 and the oldest is 76 years of age. Five 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 63. Almost six in ten of the responding brothers are 39 or younger.

Race and Ethnic Background

Two in three responding religious (68 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white.

Race and Ethnic Background			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
Caucasian/European American/white	68%	75%	57%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	16	9	26
Hispanic/Latino(a)	11	11	11
African/African American/black	2	2	3
Native American	0	0	0

One in six (16 percent) of the Profession Class of 2015 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. One in nine (11 percent) identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a). In general, religious of the Profession Class of 2015 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 (97 percent) U.S. born. Just 3 percent were born outside the United States. Those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian are predominantly (86 percent) foreign born. One in seven (14 percent) are U.S. born. Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) six in ten (60 percent) are U.S. born and four in ten (40 percent) are foreign born.

Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States

About three in four (77 percent) responding religious were born in the United States.

Country of Birth			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
United States	77%	85%	66%
Asia	13	9	20
Latin America	4	2	9
Europe	3	3	3
Africa	1	0	3

The Philippines is the most frequently mentioned country of birth among responding religious who were born outside the United States. These respondents identified a total of 12 different countries of origin.

Responding religious who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 14 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2002 or earlier.

Entrance to the United States				
	Year	Age at Entry		
	Both	Both	Women	Men
Mean	2001	23	23	24
Median	2002	27	27	27
Range	1981-2013	6-36	8-33	6-36

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 23. Half were age 27 or younger when they came to live in the United States. Two men and one woman were age ten or younger when they entered the United States; the oldest man was 36 at the time he entered the United States.

Family Background

More than nine in ten responding religious (91 percent) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age at the time of their conversion was 21.

Catholic Background			
	Both	Women	Men
Catholic since birth	91%	87%	97%
Became Catholic later in life	9	13	3
Average age at conversion	21	20	26

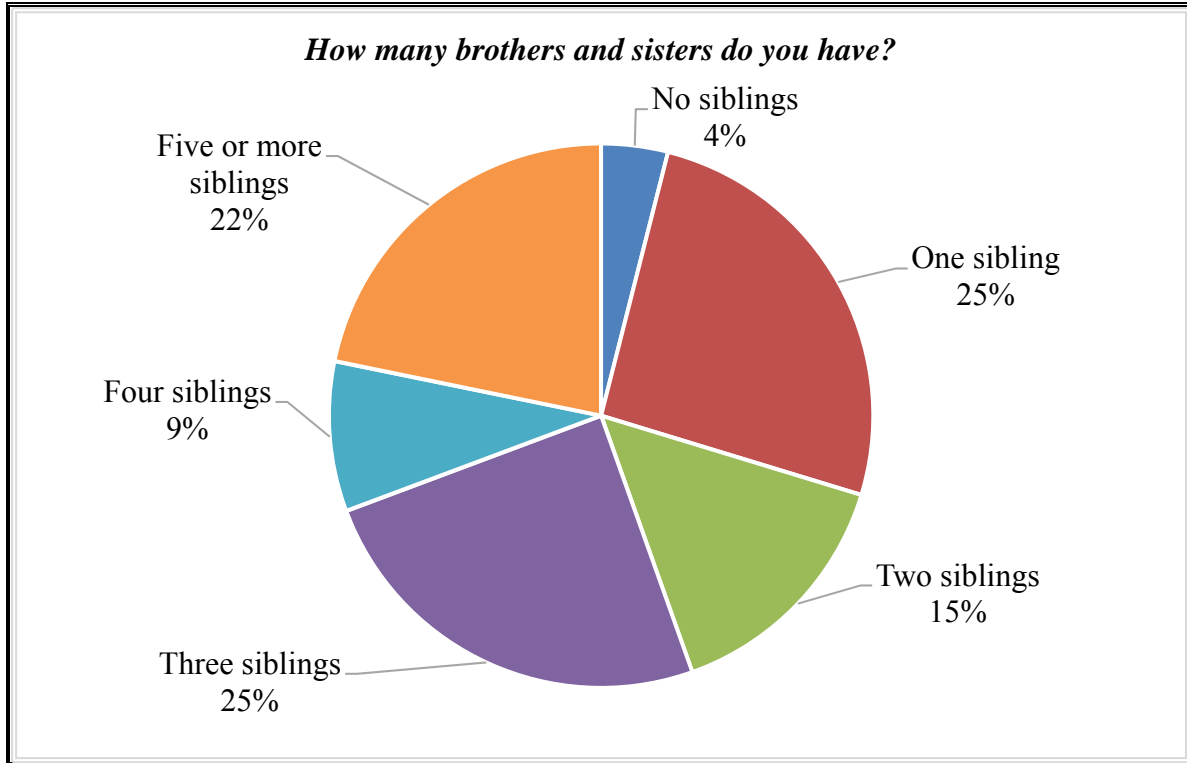
Those who came into full communion with the Catholic Church from another denomination or those who converted from another faith tradition came from a variety of faiths: Episcopalian, Methodist, Non-Denominational, New Age, as well as some saying they were previously of no religion.

Just over nine in ten respondent (93 percent) report that when they were children they had at least one parent who was Catholic; almost four in five (78 percent) report that both parents were Catholic.

<i>What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?</i>			
Percentage responding			
	Both	Women	Men
Both parents Catholic	78%	72%	86%
Neither parent was Catholic	7	9	3
Mother Catholic, father not	13	17	9
Father Catholic, mother not	2	2	3

In addition, nearly three in ten responding religious (28 percent) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious. Men are more likely than women (42 percent compared to 19 percent) to report having a relative who is a priest or relative.

About seven in ten responding religious (71 percent) of the Profession Class of 2015 have more than one sibling. One-quarter (26 percent) have one brother or sister and two in five (40 percent) report having two or three. One in three (31 percent) have four or more siblings.



On average, respondents have three siblings. Four percent from the Profession Class of 2015 report being an only child. The most common response to this question, among women as well as men, is three siblings.

<i>What is your birth order?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
(Among respondents with one or more siblings)			
	Both	Women	Men
Oldest	35%	33%	38%
Middle	31	30	32
Youngest	32	33	29

Overall, respondents with one or more siblings are most likely to be oldest child in their family.

Education

Nearly one-half (47 percent) of those responding attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Four in ten (39 percent) attended a Catholic high school and a near equal proportion (43 percent) attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute.

Attendance at Catholic School*			
Percentage responding			
	Both	Women	Men
Elementary or middle school	47%	43%	54%
High School	39	37	43
College	43	37	51

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

Members of the Profession Class of 2015 are about as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2008 national poll conducted by CARA,¹ 42 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school. Responding religious of 2015 are also more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (39 percent among responding religious, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (43 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 (54 percent for men compared to 43 percent for women), a Catholic high school (43 percent for men compared to 37 percent for women), or a Catholic college (51 percent for men compared to 37 percent for women).

In addition, one in five (20 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, more than one-half (54 percent) of the respondents participated in a religious education program in their parish. Men and women participated at about the same level (49 percent of men compared to 57 percent of women respondents) in parish-based religious education. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 69 percent did *not* report attending a Catholic elementary school and 81 percent did *not* attend a Catholic high school.

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

Twelve 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 seven years. Only two of the men religious report being home schooled.

The responding religious are highly educated. Three-quarters (74 percent) earned an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute.

Highest Education Completed Before Entering			
Percentage responding			
	Both	Women	Men
Elementary school (K-8)	0%	0%	0%
High school	7	11	0
Trade or technical school	3	6	0
Some college, no degree	16	17	14
Undergraduate degree	56	49	66
Graduate degree	18	17	20

Less than one in fifteen (7 percent) religious of the Profession Class of 2015 completed only elementary or high school before entering the religious institute. One in five (19 percent) completed trade school or some college before entering. More than one-half (56 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 less likely than responding brothers to have an undergraduate degree before entering their religious institute but they are equally likely to have a graduate degree.

Educational Debt

Only two *responding religious* (1 percent) report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to the religious institute; both were sisters.

Impact of Educational Debt on Entrance to Religious Life			
	Both	Women	Men
Application delayed by debt	1%	2%	0%
Average length of delay	< 1 year	< 1 year	none
Average amount of debt	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$ 0
Median amount of debt	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$ 0

Most responding religious of the Profession Class of 2015 report that educational debt did not delay their application for entrance. The one sister whose entrance was delayed by educational debt reported that her entrance was delayed by one year.

Two women religious reported assistance from family members and their parish.

Work Experience

Almost nine in ten (87 percent) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering the religious institute. A quarter (24 percent) were employed part-time and three in five (63 percent) had been employed full-time before entering their institute.

Prior Work Experience			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
Business/Occupational	51%	42%	66%
Education/Academic	26	31	17
Health care	9	13	3
Church ministry	9	8	10
Government/Military	5	6	3

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 (74 percent) participated in one or more of these programs or activities before entering.

Participation in Religious Programs or Activities*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Young adult ministry or group	37%	41%	31%
Youth ministry or youth group	31	37	23
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	28	28	29
World Youth Day	13	19	6
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	12	20	0
National Evangelization Team	7	11	0
Religious institute volunteer	6	4	9
St. Vincent de Paul Society	2	2	3
National Catholic Youth Conference	2	4	0
Fellowship of Catholic University Students	1	2	0
Sodality	—	9	***
Catholic Scouting	—	**	9
Knights of Columbus	—	**	9
Catholic Daughters	—	0	***

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

- Over one-third (37 percent) of respondents participated in young adult ministry or a young adult group before entering.
- Three in ten (31 percent) of responding religious participated in youth ministry or a youth group. About the same proportion (28 percent) participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center.
- One in five (20 percent) of responding women participated in the Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference. None of the men did so.
- About one in eight (13 percent) participated in a World Youth Day prior to entering their religious institute. Women were three times more likely than men to have participated.
- One in twenty (6 percent) participated as a religious institute volunteer prior to entering.

Four in five responding religious (82 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 Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist.

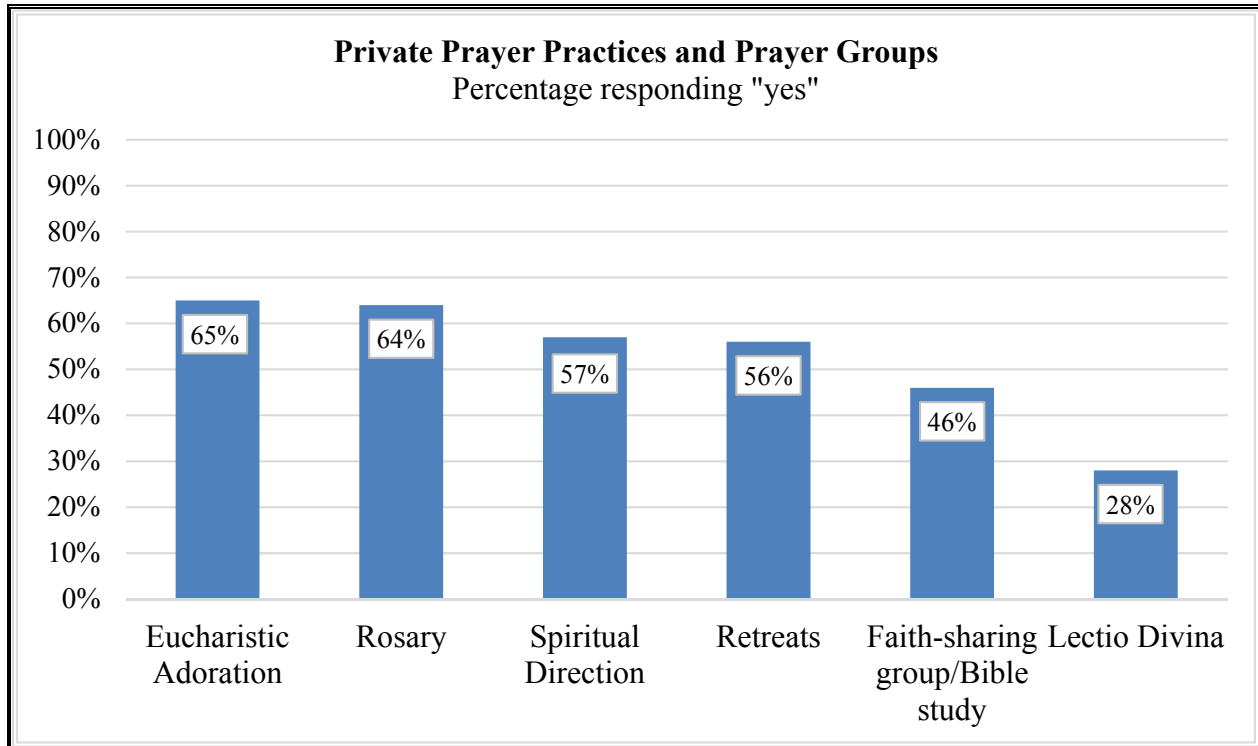
Ministry Experience*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Lector	55%	63%	43%
Extraordinary Minister of Communion	52	56	46
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	47	48	46
Altar server	36	20	60
Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service)	35	37	31
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	29	33	23
Teacher in a Catholic school	11	9	14
Hospital or prison ministry	8	6	11

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

- Almost one-half reported serving in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (47 percent).
- About one-third of respondents served in liturgical ministries, such as altar server (36 percent), or music ministry (29 percent) before entering their religious institute.
- One in three respondents (35 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-two 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 (90 percent) responding religious of the Profession Class of 2015 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 two-thirds of religious of the Profession Class of 2015.
- Almost six in ten respondents had spiritual direction or made a retreat (57 and 56 percent) prior to entering their religious institute.
- Less than half (46 percent) regularly participated in a faith-sharing group or a Bible study group.
- More than one-quarter (28 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 more likely than men religious to report participating in Eucharistic Adoration, making retreats, or participating in a faith-sharing group/Bible study prior to their entry into religious life. Women are also more likely than men to have practiced Lectio Divina (33 percent for women compared to 20 percent for men).

Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups*		
Percentage checking each response		
	Women	Men
Eucharistic Adoration	78%	46%
Rosary	67	60
Retreats	67	40
Spiritual direction	57	57
Faith-sharing group/Bible study	52	37
Lectio Divina	33	20

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

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.

Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life			
	Age		
	Both	Women	Men
Mean	19	18	19
Median	18	17	19
Range	4-50	4-50	6-45

Encouragement to Consider a Vocation

Nearly nine in ten (87 percent) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life.

Encouragement to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Religious sister or brother	52%	52%	51%
Parish priest	42	46	34
Friend	42	46	34
Mother	34	26	46
Parishioner	22	22	23
Father	22	15	34
Other relative	19	17	23
Campus minister/School chaplain	19	15	26
Teacher/Catechist	18	19	17
Youth minister	7	7	6
Deacon	4	7	0
Bishop	1	0	3

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

- One-half of responding religious say that a religious sister or brother encouraged their vocation (52 percent).

- Over four in ten report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by a parish priest or a friend. Women are more likely than men to have been encouraged by a friend (46 percent compared to 34 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 three (34 percent) report that their mother encouraged them to consider religious life. Just under a quarter received encouragement from their father (22 percent) or other relatives (19 percent).
- More than one in five responding religious received encouragement from a parishioner (22 percent) and almost one in five received encouragement from a campus minister/school chaplain (19 percent) or a teacher (18 percent).
- Respondents were least likely to report being encouraged to consider a vocation by a youth minister, a deacon, or a bishop.

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation

Almost six in ten responding religious (58 percent) report that they were discouraged from considering a vocation by one or more persons. Women were more likely than men (70 percent compared to 40 percent) to report that someone discouraged them from considering a vocation.

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation to Religious Life*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Friend or school classmate	40%	58%	20%
Other relative	36	53	17
Mother	29	42	14
Father	29	42	14
Colleague or coworker	21	32	9
Teacher	10	18	0
Religious sister or brother	5	11	0
Youth minister	5	8	3
Priest or other clergy	4	5	3
Someone else	5	8	3

*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 friend (40 percent) or other relative (36 percent), than by their mother (29 percent) or father (29 percent).

- Men are less likely than women to have been discouraged by their mother (14 percent compared to 42 percent), their father (14 percent compared to 42 percent), other relative (17 percent compared to 53 percent), or friend (20 percent compared to 58 percent).
- Very few respondents say they were discouraged from considering a vocation by teachers, clergy, religious sisters or brothers, or youth ministers.
- One in five (21 percent) were discouraged from considering a vocation to religious life by a colleague or coworker. Women were much 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 five years before they entered.

	Years		
	Both	Women	Men
Mean	5	4	6
Median	2	2	3
Range	0-46	0-46	1-35

On average, sisters report that they knew members of their institutes for about four years and brothers for about six 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-third (31 percent) knew the members of their religious institute for one year before they entered.

Responding religious were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. Three in ten (30 percent) report that they first became acquainted with their institute through print or online promotional material published by the institute.

<i>How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?*</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Through print or online promotional material published by the institute	30%	41%	14%
Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor	21	24	17
In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital)	21	13	34
Through a friend or relative in the institute	13	9	20
Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute	11	11	11
At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)	7	9	3
Through a vocation matching or placement service	4	4	6
Other	28	35	17

*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 (21 percent), through a friend or relative in the institute (13 percent), or through working with someone from the institute (11 percent).

Just over one-quarter (28 percent) said they first became acquainted with their religious institute through some other means. Some of those “other” responses included:

- A yearlong volunteer program sponsored by my order
- FOCUS conference
- Friends recommendation, vocational discernment group at church
- I had a friend who eventually introduced me to a member of the institute
- My close friend's aunt is a member of my Order
- Sisters’ presence on Franciscan University campus
- Teacher in High School
- Word of mouth – non-members speaking of the institute
- Preachers at my local parish/weekend call

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. Most (84 percent) had participated in at least one of these programs or experiences prior to entering their religious institute.

Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences*			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
“Come and See” experience	72%	80%	60%
Vocation retreat	46	57	29
Live-in experience	24	22	26
“Nun Run”/“Andrew Dinner”	6	7	3
Other	10	11	9
<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-quarters of the respondents (72 percent) before they entered their religious institute. Women are more likely than men to have participated in this experience (80 percent compared to 60 percent).
- About half of responding religious (46 percent) participated in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute. Women were more likely than men (57 percent compared to 29 percent) to report participating in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute.
- A quarter (24 percent) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering.
- Only one in fifteen responding sisters or nuns (7 percent) report that they participated in a “Nun Run” (asked only of women) experience, and a smaller proportion of brothers (3 percent) 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:

- 8 day retreat
- I lived with my great grand uncle (who was priest) for three years
- Discerned with my Spiritual Director – a religious from a different congregation
- Lay missionary
- Pre-postulant week at the convent
- Discernment group