

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 2017*

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



January 2018

Thu T. Do, LHC, Ph.D.
Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Major Findings.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Institutes Reporting Perpetual Professions	6
Age of Professed.....	7
Race and Ethnic Background.....	8
Country of Birth and Age at Entry to the United States	9
Family Background.....	10
Education	12
Educational Debt.....	14
Work Experience	15
Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries	16
Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups	18
Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life	20
Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute.....	22
Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences.....	24

**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 2017***

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2017 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 136 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 member of the institute who was scheduled to profess perpetual vows in 2017. CARA then contacted these men and women religious 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 600 of 768 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 78 percent among religious institutes. Five religious institutes were not interested in participating in the studies. In all, 93 percent of LCWR superiors, 76 percent of CMSWR superiors, 77 percent of CMSM superiors, and 53 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 208 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2017.

Of these 208 identified women and men religious, a total of 100 sisters and nuns and 51 brothers and priests responded to the survey by January 13, 2017. These 51 men include brothers, priests, and those pursuing studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 73 percent of the 208 potential members of the Profession Class of 2017 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Major Findings

- Eight in ten responding religious institutes (80 percent) had no one professing perpetual vows in religious life in 2017. One in eight institutes (13 percent) had one perpetual profession and just under one in ten (8 percent) reported two or more.
- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2017 is 41. Half of the responding religious are age 36 or younger. The youngest is 24 and the oldest is 86.
- More than two in three responding religious (64 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as white. Nearly two in ten (18 percent) identify as Asian, and more than one in ten (11 percent) identifies as Hispanic.
- Most responding religious (71 percent) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most common country of origin is Mexico.
- 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 responding religious (88 percent) have been Catholic since birth. More than three-quarters (77 percent) come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Among the 12 percent of respondents who became Catholic later in life, the average age at which they converted was 22.
- Nearly nine in ten responding religious (85 percent) of the Profession Class of 2017 have more than one sibling. One in ten (11 percent) have one brother or sister. Nearly four in ten (37 percent) report having two or three. Nearly a half (46 percent) have four or more siblings.

Education, Work, and Ministry Experience

- Half of the responding religious (50 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is a little higher than that for all Catholic adults in the United States (39 percent). These respondents are also more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (44 percent of responding religious, compared to 19 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (43 percent of responding religious, compared to 10 percent of U.S. adult Catholics). Responding women religious are more likely than responding men religious to have attended a Catholic college (47 percent for women compared to 36 percent for men).
- The Profession Class of 2017 is highly educated. Twenty-five percent of responding religious earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. More than

two-thirds (69 percent) entered their religious institute with at least a bachelor's degree (61 percent for women and 83 percent for men).

- Most religious did not report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to their institute. Among the 6 percent who did report educational debt, however, they averaged about 1.5 years of delay while they paid down an average of \$33,700 in educational debt. Family members and friends/co-workers are the most common source of assistance for paying down educational debt.
- Nearly all responding religious (85 percent) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Of those who were employed, almost a quarter (23 percent) were employed part-time and more than three in five (62 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.
- Eight in ten (82 percent) had ministry experience before entering their religious institute, most commonly as a lector (47 percent) or in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (45 percent). About two in five served in as an altar server (39 percent) or as an Extraordinary Minister of Communion (39 percent) and a third (32 percent) served in music ministry. One in four ministered in a social services setting. One in six taught in a Catholic school. A tenth served in hospital or prison ministry.
- Just under three-quarters (70 percent) participated in one or more religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. More than four in ten (42 percent) participated in youth ministry or youth group. A quarter (24 percent) participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center. Nearly one in five participated in World Youth Day. One in ten participated in the Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference or served in a volunteer program through a religious institute.
- Nearly nine in ten responding religious (86 percent) regularly participated in some type of private prayer activity before they entered their religious institute. About two-thirds participated in Eucharistic Adoration, prayed the rosary, or attended retreats before entering. Nearly six in ten participated in 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 nine in ten (87 percent) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life. Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from other religious, friends, or a parish priest. They were more likely to receive encouragement from their mother than from their father.

- Half say that a religious sister or brother (50 percent) encouraged their vocation and more than four in ten report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by parish priests or by their friends.
- Close to half of respondents (45 percent) report that they were discouraged from considering a vocation by one or more persons. Women and men are equally likely to report that someone discouraged them from considering a vocation.
- On average, responding religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute for four years before they entered. About a quarter (26 percent) report that they first became acquainted with their institute in/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital) and through the recommendation of a priest or advisor. Women were more likely than men to report being recommended to their religious institute by a priest or advisor.
- Nearly all of the religious of the Profession Class of 2017 (88 percent) participated in some type of vocation program or experience prior to entering their religious institute. “Come and See” experiences are a popular vocation program, experienced by about two-thirds of the respondents (65 percent) before they entered their religious institute. A half of responding religious (50 percent) participated 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 2017.

To obtain the names and contact information for the religious professing perpetual vows in 2017, 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 belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 136 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 2017. 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.

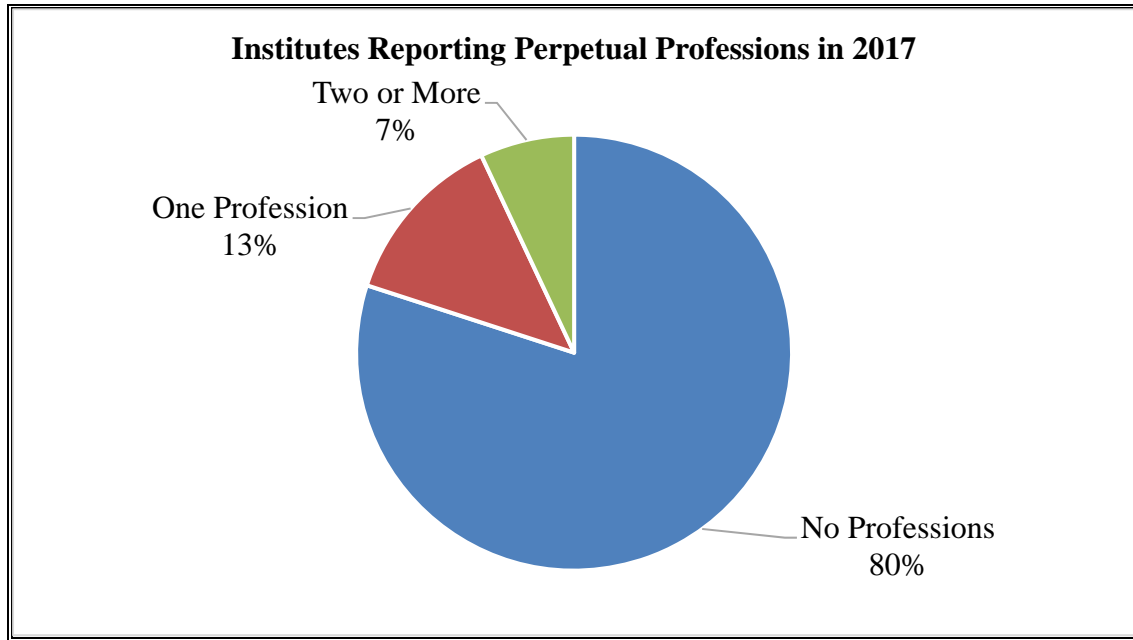
After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 600 of 768 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 78 percent among religious institutes. Five religious institutes were not interested in participating in the studies. In all, 93 percent of LCWR superiors, 77 percent of CMSWR superiors, 77 percent of CMSM superiors, and 53 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 208 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2017.

Of these 208 identified women and men religious, a total of 100 sisters and nuns and 51 brothers and priests responded to the survey by January 16, 2017. These 51 men include brothers, priests, and those pursuing studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 73 percent of the 208 potential members of the Profession Class of 2017 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 768 religious institutes, 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 2017. A total of 600 major superiors responded (78 percent) with 208 names of women religious and brothers.



A total of 483 major superiors (80 percent of those responding) report that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2017. More than one in ten (13 percent) report one member professing perpetual vows. Other 42 major superiors (7 percent) report from two to 19 members professing perpetual vows in 2017.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 59 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the brothers who responded come from 42 different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious.

Age of Professed

The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2017 is 41. Half of the responding religious are age 36 or younger.

Age of Professed Women and Men			
Percentage in each age category			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
29 and younger	19	24	11
Age 30-39	42	44	40
Age 40-49	16	12	23
Age 50-59	11	8	17
Age 60 and older	12	13	9
Average age	41	39	43
Median age	36	34	39
Range in years	24-86	24-86	27-69

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Profession Class of 2017 is 24 and the oldest is 86 years of age. Twelve women respondents are professing perpetual vows at age 60 or older. Two-thirds of the responding sisters are 39 or younger. Among brothers, the youngest is 27 and the oldest is 69. Half of the responding men religious are 39 or younger.

Race and Ethnic Background

Two in three responding religious (64 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	64	67	59
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	18	17	19
Hispanic/Latino(a)	11	11	11
African/African American/black	6	3	11
Other	1	1	0
Native American	0	0	0

Nearly one in five (18 percent) of the Profession Class of 2017 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. One in ten (11 percent) identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a). In general, religious of the Profession Class of 2017 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 almost all (94 percent) U.S. born. Just 6 percent were born outside the United States. Among those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, seven in ten are foreign born, while three in ten are U.S. born. Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) about six in ten (62 percent) are foreign born while four in ten (38 percent) are U.S. born.

Country of Birth and Age at Entry to the United States

Seven in ten responding religious (71 percent) were born in the United States.

Country of Birth			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
United States	71	75	65
Asia	11	11	12
Latin America	8	7	10
Africa	6	3	10
Europe	2	2	2
Oceania	2	2	2

Mexico is the most frequently mentioned country of birth among responding religious who were born outside the United States, followed by Vietnam and the Philippines. These respondents identified a total of 15 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 2005 or earlier.

Entrance to the United States				
	Year	Age at Entry		
	Both	Both	Women	Men
Mean	2001	23	25	20
Median	2005	26	25	28
Range	1959-2016	1-45	3-45	1-37

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 23. Half were age 26 or younger when they came to live in the United States. Four men and two women were age ten or younger when they entered the United States; the oldest woman was 45 at the time she entered the United States.

Family Background

Nearly nine in ten responding religious (88 percent) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age at the time of their conversion was 22.

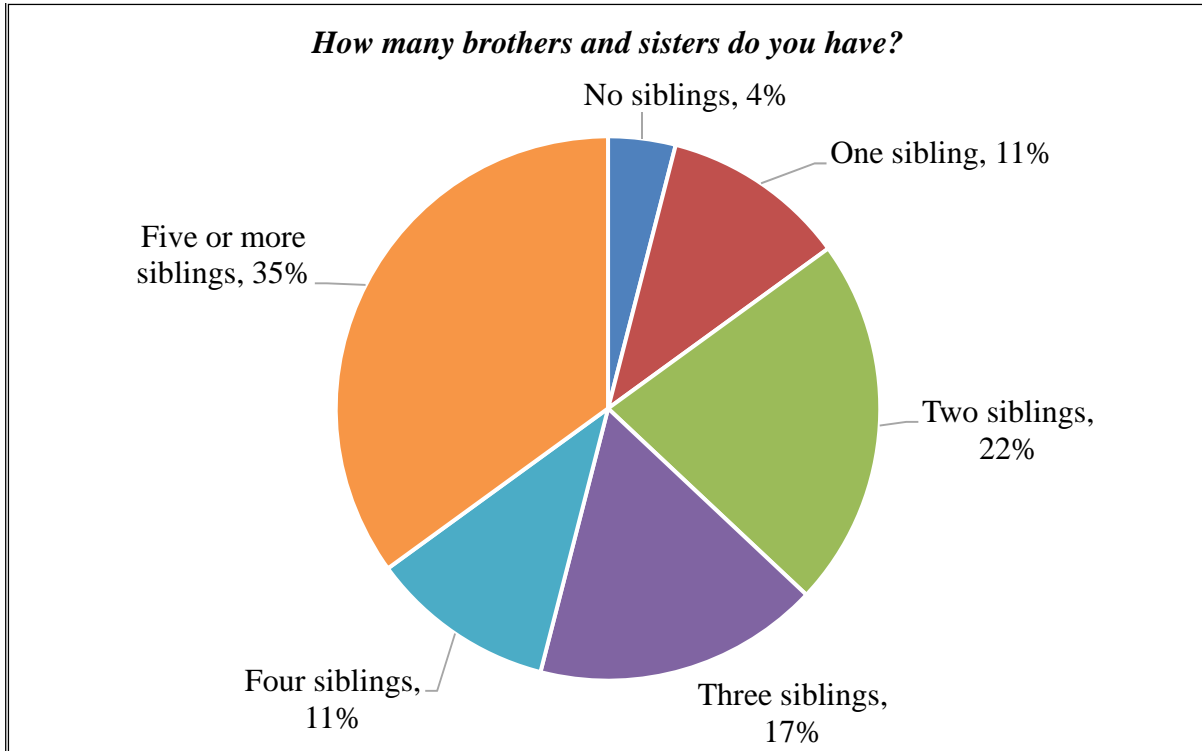
Catholic Background			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Catholic since birth	88	88	87
Became Catholic later in life	12	12	12
Average age at conversion	22	21	23

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: Buddhist, Church of the Brethren, Hindu, Lutheran, Methodist, Southern Baptist, Presbyterian, Protestant, Quaker, Unitarian, as well as some saying they were previously of no religion.

More than nine in ten respondents (91 percent) report that when they were children they had at least one parent who was Catholic. Nearly four in five (77 percent) report that both parents were Catholic.

What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?			
Percentage responding			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	77	78	76
Neither parent was Catholic	9	8	11
Mother Catholic, father not	11	13	9
Father Catholic, mother not	2	1	4

Almost all responding religious (96 percent) of the Profession Class of 2017 at least have a sibling. One in ten (11 percent) has one brother or sister. Two in five (39 percent) report having two or three. Nearly half (46 percent) have four or more siblings.



A third of respondents with one or more siblings are the eldest child in their family. A fifth are the youngest. And more than two in five are somewhere in the middle of their family.

What is your birth order?
 Percentage in each category
 (Among respondents with one or more siblings)

	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Eldest	34	31	37
Youngest	22	20	26
Somewhere in the middle	44	49	37

In addition, four in ten responding religious (39 percent) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious. Women are more likely than men (46 percent compared to 28 percent) to report having a relative who is a priest or a religious.

Education

One-half (50 percent) of responding religious attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. More than four in ten (44 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*			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Parish-based religious education/CCD/RCIA	45	47	42
Catholic elementary or middle school	50	48	53
Catholic high school	44	47	40
Catholic college or university	43	47	36
Catholic ministry formation program	15	14	16
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

Members of the Profession Class of 2017 are a little more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,¹ 39 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school. Responding religious of 2017 are also more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (44 percent among responding religious, compared to 19 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (43 percent of responding religious, compared to 10 percent of U.S. adult Catholics). Women are more likely than men to have attended a Catholic college or university (47 compared to 36 percent for men).

In addition, more than one in seven (15 percent) responding women and men religious report that they participated in a Catholic ministry formation program before they entered their religious institute.

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, about half of the respondents (45 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish. 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 79 percent did *not* attend a Catholic high school.

¹CARA *Catholic Poll*. Poll conducted May 16-26, 2016. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

Only 4 percent of responding religious report being home schooled at some time in their educational background. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was five years. All respondents who report being home schooled were sisters.

The responding religious are highly educated. Two-third (69 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)	1	2	0
High school	11	9	15
Trade or technical school	1	2	0
Some college, no degree	17	26	2
Undergraduate degree	44	42	48
Graduate degree	25	19	35

About one in ten (12 percent) religious of the Profession Class of 2017 completed only elementary or high school before entering the religious institute. Nearly one in five (18 percent) completed trade school or some college before entering. More than two in five (44 percent) had an undergraduate degree and one-quarter (25 percent) had a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Responding sisters or nuns are less likely than responding brothers or priests to have an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute (19 percent compared with 35 percent of brothers or priests).

Educational Debt

Six percent of responding religious report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to the religious institute.

Impact of Educational Debt on Entrance to Religious Life			
	Both	Women	Men
Application delayed by debt	6%	6%	6%
Average length of delay	1.5 years	1.5 years	1.5 years
Average amount of debt	\$33,700	\$41,000	\$26,400
Median amount of debt	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$4,000

Most responding religious of the Profession Class of 2017 report that educational debt did not delay their application for entrance. Among the 6 percent who were delayed by educational debt, the average length of time required to pay off their educational debt was a year and a half. The average amount of educational debt they carried was \$33,700.

Among the 6 percent of respondents who reported that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to a religious institute, they were most likely to receive assistance for paying down their educational debt from family member and from friends or co-workers.

Assistance for Paying Down Educational Debt			
<i>Among those delayed by educational debt</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Family members	38	20	67
Friends/co-workers	38	40	33
Parish	38	40	33
Religious community	25	20	33
Mater Ecclesiae Fund	25	20	33
Knights of Columbus Fund	13	20	0
Serra Fund for Vocations	0	0	0
Labouré Society	0	0	0

Work Experience

Almost nine in ten (85 percent) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering the religious institute. More than one in five (23 percent) were employed part-time and three in five (62 percent) had been employed full-time before entering their institute.

Prior Work Experience			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Business/Occupational	47	53	37
Education/Academic	34	30	41
Health care	11	10	13
Church ministry	6	6	7
Government/Military	2	1	2

Women are a little more likely than men to report that they were in some form of business, or an occupation or trade, prior to entering their religious institute (53 percent compared with 37 percent of men). However, men are a little more likely than women to have been employed in education (41 percent compared with 30 percent of women). Women and men were equally likely to report that they had been employed in church ministry prior to entering their institute.

Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

Many responding religious were active in ministry before entering their religious institute. Four in five responding religious (78 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 experience reported by respondents was service as a lector, followed by faith formation, altar server, extraordinary minister of Communion, and youth ministry.

Ministry Experience*			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Lector	47	44	53
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	45	48	38
Altar server	39	22	69
Extraordinary Minister of Communion	39	37	42
Youth ministry/campus ministry	36	38	33
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	32	39	20
Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service)	20	22	18
Teacher in a Catholic school	17	15	20
Hospital or prison ministry	11	11	11
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

- Nearly half reported serving as a lector (47 percent) or in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (45 percent).
- Nearly two in five reported serving as an altar server (39 percent), Extraordinary Minister of Communion (39 percent), or in youth ministry/campus ministry (36 percent).
- A third reported serving in music ministry. Two in ten reported serving in some aspect of social service ministry.
- 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.

Just under three-quarters (70 percent) participated in one or more religious programs or activities before entering.

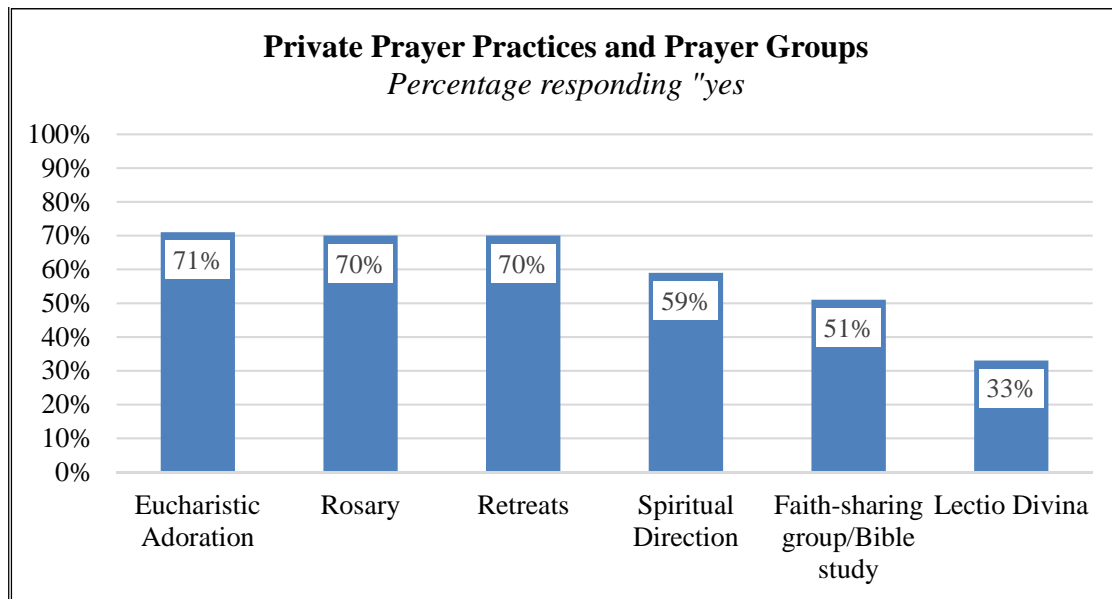
Participation in Religious Programs or Activities*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Young adult ministry or group	42	43	40
Youth ministry or youth group	27	26	29
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	24	26	21
World Youth Day	19	26	8
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	10	14	4
Religious institute volunteer	10	13	6
Fellowship of Catholic University Students	5	8	0
National Catholic Youth Conference	4	7	0
National Evangelization Team	4	5	2
St. Vincent de Paul Society	4	6	2
Catholic Scouting	—	**	6
Knights of Columbus	—	**	19
Catholic Daughters	—	4	***
Sodality	—	4	***

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

- Two in five respondents (42 percent) participated in young adult ministry and more than a quarter participated in a youth group or in youth ministry before entering.
- A quarter (24 percent) of responding religious participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center.
- About one in five (19 percent) participated in a World Youth Day prior to entering their religious institute. Women were three times more likely than men to have participated in World Youth Day.
- More than one in ten women (14 percent) participated in the Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference, compared to 6 percent of men who did so.
- One in ten (10 percent) participated as a religious institute volunteer prior to entering.

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. Nearly nine in ten responding religious the Profession Class of 2017 (86 percent) 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, retreats, and the rosary are the most common types of formative prayer experience, reported by two-thirds of religious of the Profession Class of 2017.
- Almost six in ten respondents had spiritual direction prior to entering their religious institute.
- Half (51 percent) regularly participated in a faith-sharing group or a Bible study group.
- A third of respondents (33 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.

Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups*

Percentage checking each response

	Women	Men
	%	%
Eucharistic Adoration	77	62
Rosary	77	64
Retreats	73	60
Spiritual direction	64	50
Faith-sharing group/Bible study	56	42
Lectio Divina	33	35

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

- Women religious are more likely than men religious to report participating in Eucharistic Adoration, praying the rosary, making retreats, receiving spiritual direction, or participating in a faith-sharing group/Bible study prior to their entry into religious life.
- Women and men are equally likely to have practiced Lectio Divina (33 percent for women compared to 35 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.

Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life			
	Age		
	Both	Women	Men
Mean	19	18	20
Median	18	16	19
Range	5-71	5-71	7-65

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	50	52	46
Parish priest	43	36	54
Friend	41	40	42
Mother	24	22	27
Parishioner	22	19	27
Teacher/Catechist	20	21	19
Other relative	18	17	19
Father	17	20	14
Campus minister/School chaplain	12	12	12
Youth minister	9	11	6
Bishop	4	4	4
Deacon	1	1	2

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

- Half of responding religious say that a religious sister or brother encouraged their vocation (50 percent).

- Over four in ten report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by their parish priest or by their friends.
- Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from other religious, friends, or a parish priest. They were more likely to receive encouragement from their mother than from their father.
- Respondents were least likely to report being encouraged to consider a vocation by a youth minister, a bishop, or a deacon.

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation

Nearly half of respondents (45 percent) report that they were discouraged from considering a vocation by one or more persons.

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation to Religious Life*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Other relative	28	30	23
Friend or school classmate	28	28	27
Mother	23	28	14
Father	16	19	12
Colleague or coworker	10	12	8
Teacher	4	5	2
Priest or other clergy	7	6	10
Religious sister or brother	1	1	0
Someone else	4	5	4
Youth minister	1	1	0

*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 relative (28 percent) and friend or school classmate (28 percent) other than their mother (23 percent), or father (16 percent).
- Women are more likely than men to have been discouraged by their mother (28 percent compared to 14 percent).
- Very few respondents say they were discouraged from considering a vocation by teachers, clergy, religious sisters or brothers, or youth ministers.

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.

How many years did you know the members of your religious institute before entering?			
	Years		
	Both	Women	Men
Mean	4	4	6
Median	3	2	3
Range	0-66	0-31	0-66

Half of all responding religious (men and women) report that they knew the members of their religious institute for three years before they entered. About two in ten (19 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. A quarter (26 percent) report that they first became acquainted with their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor. Women are more likely than men to report being recommended to their religious institute by a priest or advisor.

How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital)	26	23	29
Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor	24	26	22
Through a friend or relative in the institute	19	14	28
Through print or online promotional material published by the institute	19	19	20
Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute	17	17	15
Other	12	13	10
At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)	11	12	10
Through a vocation matching or placement service	4	2	8

*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 sponsored institute or work of the institute (26 percent, through a recommendation of a priest or advisor (24 percent), through a friend or relative in the institute (19 percent), through print or online promotional material published by the institute (19 percent), or through working with someone from the institute (17 percent).

More than one in ten (12 percent) said they first became acquainted with their religious institute through some other means. Some of those “other” responses included:

- As an associate (a live-in volunteer a few years after retirement)
- Busted Halo radio show
- Conversation among co-workers at Totus Tuus.
- Diocesan Website
- Father John Corapi on EWTN
- FOCUS conference
- Reading Religious History
- Since I was a child
- Through a sister of one of the Crosiers
- Through an Archdiocesan program
- Through contact with the Norbertine Fathers who were influential in bringing our sisters to the United States
- Visited with a friend for a pro-life conference
- Vocations director for diocese
- While on vacation at one our missions
- Word of mouth/acquaintances
- World Youth Day and Catholic Radio

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 (88 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	65	64	67
Vocation retreat	50	51	47
Live-in experience	17	16	17
“Nun Run”	—	7	***
“Andrew Dinner”	—	**	8
Other	8	9	6

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

- “Come and See” experiences are a popular vocation program, experienced by almost two-thirds of the respondents (65 percent) before they entered their religious institute.
- Half of responding religious (50 percent) participated in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute. Men and women are equally likely to have participated in a vocation retreat.
- About one in five (17 percent) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering.
- Only 7 percent of women religious report that they participated in a “Nun Run” (asked only of women) experience, and 8 percent of men 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:

- Candidacy program through my institute that included a discernment retreat
- Chicago INSEARCH discernment program; Jesuit discernment/candidate program
- College support group for potential candidates
- I worked for the community in the summer
- Informal day visit to another religious community
- Made time to go and see communities
- Mission trip with the order
- Overnight visit at a single community (not my own)
- Private visits
- Spiritual directress
- Visited the community for a week of discernment
- Vocation group in high school
- Volunteer program with the sisters