

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 2016*

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



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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2016 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 member of the institute who was scheduled to profess perpetual vows in 2016. 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 610 of 759 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 80 percent among religious institutes. In all, 93 percent of LCWR superiors, 84 percent of CMSWR superiors, 76 percent of CMSM superiors, and 60 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 216 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2016.

Of these 216 identified women and men religious, a total of 81 sisters and nuns and 96 brothers and priests responded to the survey by January 13, 2017. These 96 men include brothers, priests, and those pursuing studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 82 percent of the 216 potential members of the Profession Class of 2016 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Major Findings

- Eight in ten responding religious institutes had no one professing perpetual vows in religious life in 2016. More than one in ten institutes had one perpetual profession and nearly in one in ten reported two or more.
- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2016 is 39. Half of the responding religious are age 36 or younger. The youngest is 26 and the oldest is 86.
- Two in three responding religious (66 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 (67 percent) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most common country of origin is Vietnam.
- Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) six in ten (58 percent) are U.S. born. Those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian are predominantly (96 percent) foreign born. Nearly all identifying as Caucasian/white (91 percent) are U.S. born.
- On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 24 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 15 years before perpetual profession.

Family Background

- Nearly nine in ten responding religious (89 percent) have been Catholic since birth. More than three-quarters (81 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 23.
- Three-quarters of responding religious (75 percent) of the Profession Class of 2016 have more than one sibling. More than one in five (21 percent) have one brother or sister and one-third (33 percent) report having two or three. More than a quarter (27 percent) have four or more siblings.

Education, Work, and Ministry Experience

- Almost half of the responding religious (46 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 (38 percent of responding religious, compared to 19 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (37 percent of responding religious, compared to 10 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).

Responding women religious are less likely than responding men religious to have attended a Catholic college (31 percent for women compared to 42 percent for men).

- The Profession Class of 2016 is highly educated. Twenty-five 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 (59 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 4 percent who did report educational debt, however, they averaged about four years of delay while they paid down an average of \$29,100 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, a fifth (20 percent) were employed part-time and almost two-thirds (65 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 (46 percent) or as an altar server (41 percent). About two in five served in music ministry (39 percent), as an Extraordinary Minister of Communion (37 percent), or in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (36 percent). One in four ministered in a social services setting. One in six taught in a Catholic school. Less than 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 before entering their religious institute. Nearly four in ten (36 percent) participated in youth ministry or youth group (36 percent), or in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center (33 percent). A quarter (26 percent) participated in a young adult ministry or group. 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.

- More than half say that a parish priest (53 percent) encouraged their vocation.
- Over four in ten report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by their friends. Four in ten report being encouraged to consider a vocation by a religious sister or brother. Women religious were more likely than men religious to do 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 of respondents (49 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. Responding religious were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. About a quarter (26 percent) report that they first became acquainted with their institute 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 2016 (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. About half of responding religious (49 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 2016.

To obtain the names and contact information for the religious professing perpetual vows in 2016, 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 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 2016. 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.

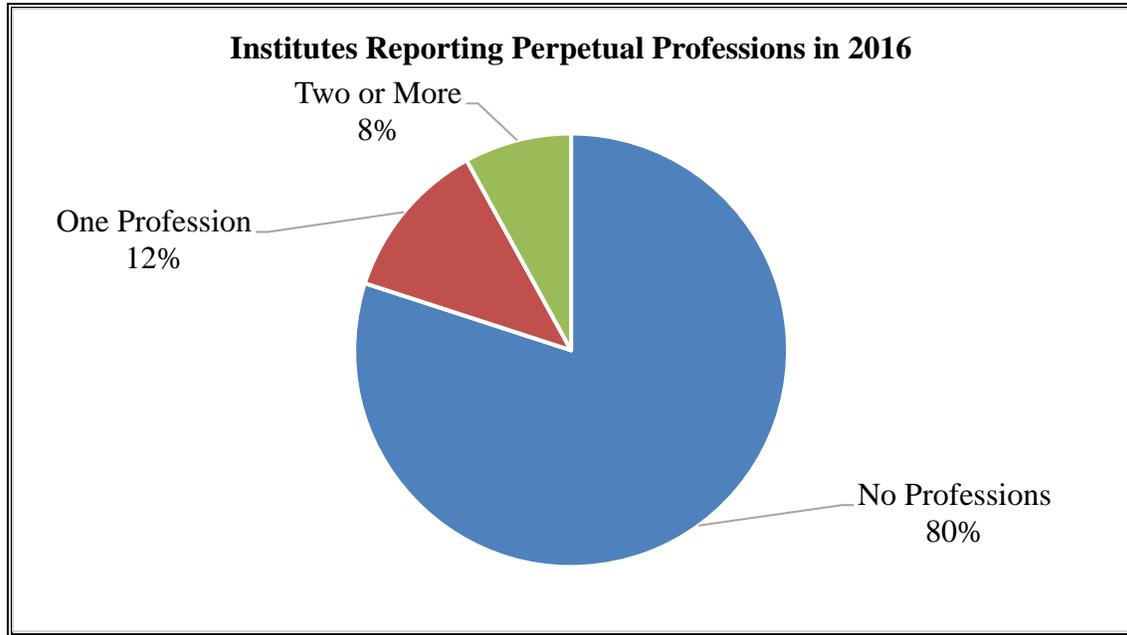
After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 610 of 759 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 80 percent among religious institutes. In all, 93 percent of LCWR superiors, 84 percent of CMSWR superiors, 76 percent of CMSM superiors, and 60 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 216 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2016.

Of these 216 identified women and men religious, a total of 81 sisters and nuns and 96 brothers and priests responded to the survey by January 13, 2017. These 96 men include brothers, priests, and those pursuing studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 82 percent of the 216 potential members of the Profession Class of 2016 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 759 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 2016. A total of 610 major superiors responded (80 percent) with 216 names of women religious and brothers.



A total of 484 major superiors (80 percent of those responding) report that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2016, another 72 major superiors (12 percent) report one member professing perpetual vows, and 54 major superiors (8 percent) report from two to twelve members professing perpetual vows in 2016.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 40 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 2016 is 39. 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	13%	10%	16%
Age 30-39	48	58	39
Age 40-49	22	20	23
Age 50-59	12	6	18
Age 60 and older	5	5	4
Average age	39	38	40
Median age	36	35	38
Range in years	26-86	26-86	26-69

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Profession Class of 2016 is 26 and the oldest is 86 years of age. Eight 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 69. A little more than half of the responding men religious are 39 or younger.

Race and Ethnic Background

Two in three responding religious (66 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white.

	Both	Women	Men
Caucasian/European American/white	66%	68%	64%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	16	17	15
Hispanic/Latino(a)	11	10	12
African/African American/black	4	4	4
Other	3	1	4
Native American	0	0	0

One in six (16 percent) of the Profession Class of 2016 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 2016 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 (91 percent) U.S. born. Just 9 percent were born outside the United States. Those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian are predominantly (96 percent) foreign born. Only 4 percent are U.S. born. Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) about six in ten (58 percent) are U.S. born and about four in ten (40 percent) are foreign born.

Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States

About two in three (67 percent) responding religious were born in the United States.

Country of Birth			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
United States	67%	71%	64%
Asia	15	15	15
Latin America	8	5	11
Europe	3	1	4
Africa	4	3	4
Oceania	1	3	0
Canada	2	3	1

Vietnam is the most frequently mentioned country of birth among responding religious who were born outside the United States. These respondents identified a total of 26 different countries of origin.

Responding religious who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 15 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2004 or earlier.

Entrance to the United States				
	Year	Age at Entry		
	Both	Both	Women	Men
Mean	2001	24	25	24
Median	2004	23	23	23
Range	1952-2016	2-46	7-45	2-46

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 24. Half were age 23 or younger when they came to live in the United States. Three men and two women were age ten or younger when they entered the United States; the oldest man was 46 at the time he entered the United States.

Family Background

Nearly nine in ten responding religious (89 percent) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age at the time of their conversion was 23.

Catholic Background			
	Both	Women	Men
Catholic since birth	89%	89%	90%
Became Catholic later in life	10	11	10
Average age at conversion	23	19	26

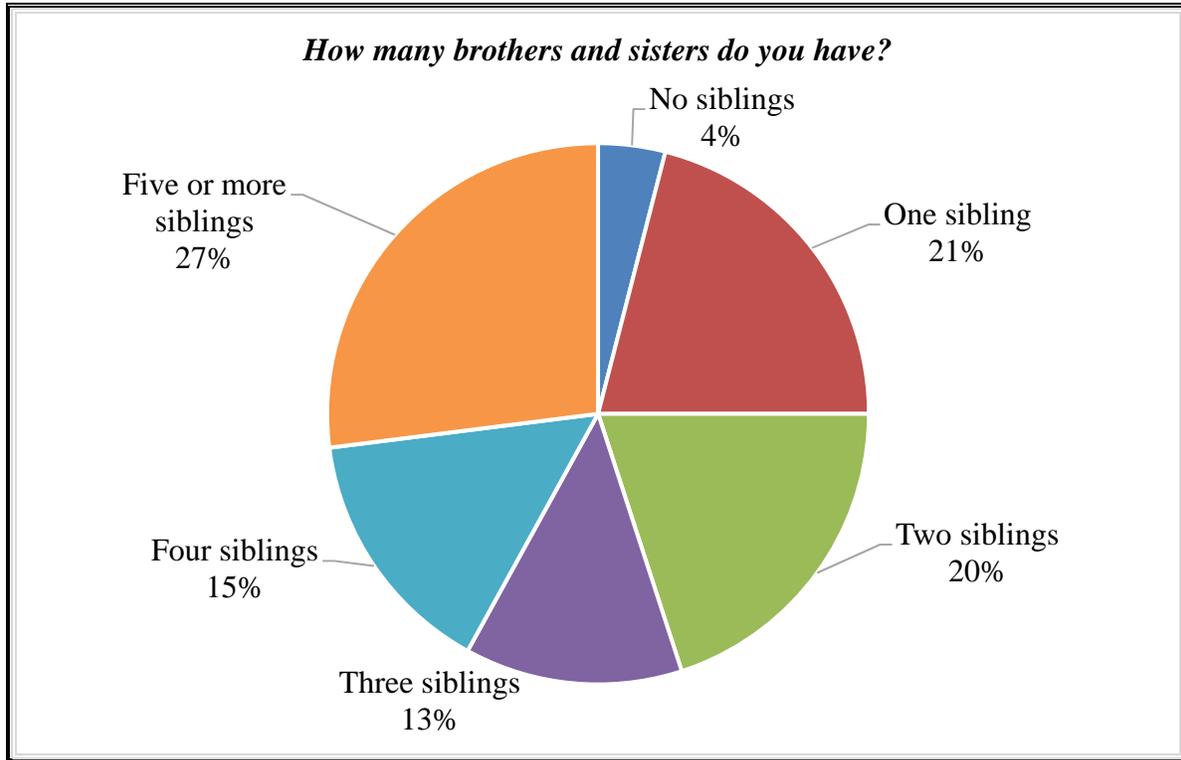
Those who came into full communion with the Catholic Church from another denomination or those who converted from another faith tradition came from a variety of faiths: Buddhist, Lutheran, Southern Baptist, Non-Denominational, Protestants as well as some saying they were previously of no religion.

More than nine in ten respondents (93 percent) report that when they were children they had at least one parent who was Catholic. More than four in five (81 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	81%	85%	77%
Neither parent was Catholic	7	5	8
Mother Catholic, father not	8	8	9
Father Catholic, mother not	5	2	7

In addition, four in ten responding religious (41 percent) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious. Women are more likely than men (46 percent compared to 37 percent) to report having a relative who is a priest or a religious.

Three-quarters of responding religious (75 percent) of the Profession Class of 2016 have more than one sibling. More than one in five (21 percent) have one brother or sister and a third (33 percent) report having two or three. More than a quarter (27 percent) have four or more siblings.



On average, respondents have three siblings. Four percent from the Profession Class of 2016 report being an only child. The most common response to this question among women is two siblings and among men is one sibling.

<i>What is your birth order?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
(Among respondents with one or more siblings)			
	Both	Women	Men
Middle	46%	56%	37%
Youngest	20	16	24
Oldest	31	25	36

Overall, respondents with one or more siblings are most likely to be a middle child of their family. A quarter of responding women and more than a third of responding men are the oldest child in their family.

Education

Nearly one-half (46 percent) of those responding attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Four in ten (38 percent) attended a Catholic high school and a near equal proportion (37 percent) attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute.

Attendance at Catholic School*			
Percentage responding			
	Both	Women	Men
Elementary or middle school	46%	48%	44%
High School	38	27	47
College	37	31	42

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

Members of the Profession Class of 2016 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 2016 are also more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (38 percent among responding religious, compared to 19 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (37 percent of responding religious, compared to 10 percent of U.S. adult Catholics). Women were more likely than men to have attended a Catholic elementary or middle school (48 percent for women compared to 44 percent for men), but less likely than men to have attended a Catholic high school (27 percent for women compared to 47 percent for men), or a Catholic college (31 percent for women compared to 42 percent for men).

In addition, more than one in ten (13 percent) responding women and men religious 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, about half of the respondents (48 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Women were a little more likely than men to participate in parish-based religious education (42 percent of men compared to 54 percent of women respondents). 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 6 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 nine years. Only three 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)	1%	1%	0%
High school	10	13	8
Trade or technical school	1	1	1
Some college, no degree	14	25	4
Undergraduate degree	49	44	52
Graduate degree	25	15	34

About one in ten (11 percent) religious of the Profession Class of 2016 completed only elementary or high school before entering the religious institute. Nearly one in six (15 percent) completed trade school or some college before entering. Nearly one-half (49 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.

Educational Debt

Four 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	4%	4%	5%
Average length of delay	4 years	2 years	>5 years
Average amount of debt	\$29,100	\$32,000	\$24,750
Median amount of debt	\$25,000	\$22,500	\$25,000

Most responding religious of the Profession Class of 2016 report that educational debt did not delay their application for entrance. Among the 4 percent who were delayed by educational debt, the average length of time required to pay off their educational debt was four years. The average amount of educational debt they carried was \$29,100.

Among the 4 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 and co-workers.

Assistance for Paying Down Educational Debt			
<i>Among those delayed by educational debt</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
Family members	57%	100%	25%
Friends/co-workers	43	67	25
Parish	29	67	0
Religious community	29	0	50
Serra Fund for Vocations	29	33	25
Labouré Society	29	67	0
Mater Ecclesiae Fund	14	33	0
Knights of Columbus Fund	14	0	25

Work Experience

Almost nine in ten (85 percent) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering the religious institute. One in five (20 percent) were employed part-time and about two in three (65 percent) had been employed full-time before entering their institute.

	Both	Women	Men
Business/Occupational	50%	44%	56%
Education/Academic	29	31	27
Health care	11	17	4
Church ministry	8	7	8
Government/Military	2	0	4

Men are a little more likely than women to report that they were in some form of business, or an occupation or trade, prior to entering their religious institute. Women are a little more likely than men to have been employed in education or health care. 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 (82 percent) served in one or more specified ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer. Women and men are equally likely to have so served in ministry. The most common ministry experience reported by respondents was service as a lector, followed by altar server.

Ministry Experience*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Lector	46%	37%	52%
Altar server	41	21	57
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	39	43	36
Extraordinary Minister of Communion	37	30	42
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	36	43	31
Youth ministry/campus ministry	29	34	26
Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service)	26	22	30
Teacher in a Catholic school	15	17	13
Hospital or prison ministry	7	5	8

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

- Nearly two in five reported serving in music ministry (39 percent), extraordinary ministry of communion (37 percent), and faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (36 percent).
- Nearly three in ten respondents reported that they served in youth ministry/campus ministry (29 percent) or in a social service ministry (26 percent) 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.

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

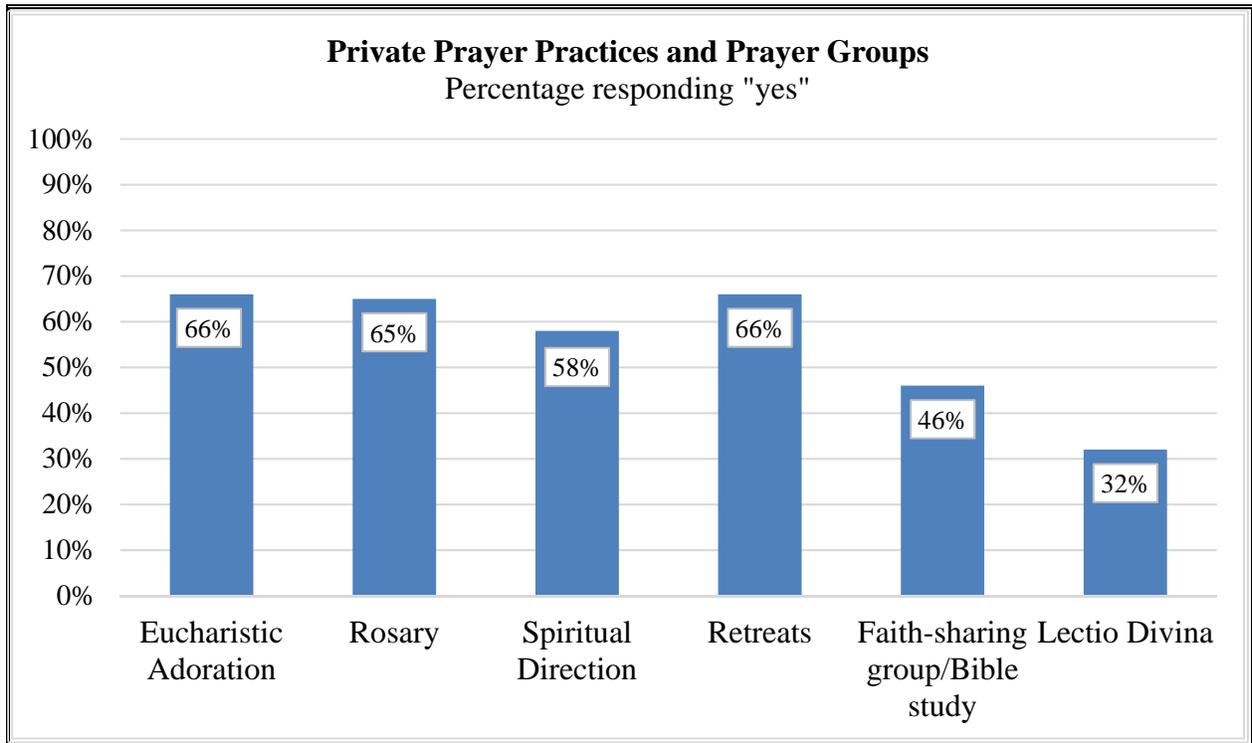
Participation in Religious Programs or Activities*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Youth ministry or youth group	36%	49%	25%
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	33	38	30
Young adult ministry or group	26	32	22
World Youth Day	18	30	7
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	14	23	6
Religious institute volunteer	9	9	10
St. Vincent de Paul Society	7	6	7
Fellowship of Catholic University Students	5	6	3
National Catholic Youth Conference	3	5	1
National Evangelization Team	2	5	0
Sodality	—	4	***
Catholic Scouting	—	**	6
Knights of Columbus	—	**	12
Catholic Daughters	—	1	***

*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 (36 percent) of respondents participated in young adult ministry or a young adult group before entering.
- Three in ten (33 percent) of responding religious participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center. A quarter (26 percent) participated in youth ministry or a youth group.
- Nearly one in four responding women (23 percent) participated in the Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference, compared to 6 percent of men who did so.
- About one in five (18 percent) participated in a World Youth Day prior to entering their religious institute. Women were three times more likely than men to have participated.
- About one in ten (9 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 2016 (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 2016.
- Almost six in ten respondents had spiritual direction prior to entering their religious institute.
- Less than half (46 percent) regularly participated in a faith-sharing group or a Bible study group.
- A third of respondents (32 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	89%	46%
Rosary	81	52
Retreats	78	56
Spiritual direction	67	51
Faith-sharing group/Bible study	54	39
Lectio Divina	35	28

*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 (35 percent for women compared to 28 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	17	20
Median	18	17	19
Range	4-55	5-40	4-55

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
Parish priest	53%	58%	50%
Friend	45	46	44
Religious sister or brother	40	48	34
Mother	27	23	31
Parishioner	24	24	24
Campus minister/School chaplain	21	19	23
Other relative	19	15	23
Teacher/Catechist	19	18	21
Father	18	15	20
Youth minister	9	11	6
Bishop	4	3	5
Deacon	3	1	5

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

- More than half of responding religious say that a parish priest encouraged their vocation (53 percent).

- Over four in ten report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by their friends. Four in ten report being encouraged to consider a vocation by a religious sister or brother. Women are more likely than men to say that a religious sister or brother encouraged them to consider a vocation.
- 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.
- About a quarter of responding religious received encouragement from a parishioner (24 percent) and one in five received encouragement from a campus minister/school chaplain (21 percent) or a teacher (19 percent).
- 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

Half of respondents (49 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.

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation to Religious Life*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Other relative	29%	39%	21%
Friend or school classmate	27	25	28
Mother	27	35	20
Father	20	25	16
Colleague or coworker	11	9	13
Teacher	5	5	4
Priest or other clergy	3	5	1
Religious sister or brother	2	1	2
Someone else	2	1	2
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 other than their parents (29 percent), by their mother (27 percent), or by a friend or classmate (27 percent).
- Women are more likely than men to have been discouraged by their mother (35 percent compared to 20 percent), by their father (25 percent compared to 16 percent), or by some other relative (39 percent compared to 21 percent).
- One in ten (11 percent) were discouraged from considering a vocation to religious life by a colleague or coworker. 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	3	4
Median	2	2	3
Range	0-28	0-28	0-24

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 four in ten (39 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
Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor	26%	32%	22%
Through print or online promotional material published by the institute	22	25	19
In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital)	18	13	23
Through a friend or relative in the institute	16	20	13
Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute	10	11	10
At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)	8	14	3
Through a vocation matching or placement service	7	4	10
Other	22	19	25

*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 print or online promotional material published by the institute (22 percent), through a sponsored institute or work of the institute (18 percent), through a friend or relative in the institute (16 percent), or through working with someone from the institute (10 percent).

Just over one-quarter (22 percent) said they first became acquainted with their religious institute through some other means. Some of those “other” responses included:

- A book written about our foundress and a documentary on her life
- Archdiocesan Vocations Office
- Associates Program
- Attended a retreat at the monastery
- Became a member of the Secular order of Discalced Carmelites
- Benefactor of the religious community
- Book by Mother Francis, PCC “A Right to be Merry”
- Campus Ministry
- Carmelite priest assisting at home parish
- Catholic Radio
- Chaplain of a study abroad program
- I met a brother at a prayer group at a DC parish
- I met our sisters at the March for Life
- Joining the community for prayer weekly
- Meeting a priest at a friend's birthday party
- Met sisters at Theology on Tap
- Met while on a missionary walk
- My parish belongs to the religious institute (Society of the Divine Word)
- My religious neighbor
- Occasional Mass attendance at St. Francis of Assisi Church in midtown NYC
- Reading about spirituality
- Sisters at Franciscan University of Steubenville when I was attending college there
- Student at a school run by institute
- The reputation of Jesuits, especially with regard to social justice work
- Theological Study (of Aquinas)
- They were transfers from my previous congregation
- Through a spiritual convention
- Through rumors, opinions
- Through visiting a Carmelite shrine
- Vacation in Assisi
- Washed dishes in the Jesuit House
- Youth 2000 Retreat Suggested by my Parish Priest. He is the one who really suggested our community.

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.

<i>Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences*</i>			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
“Come and See” experience	65%	68%	62%
Vocation retreat	49	49	48
Live-in experience	32	44	23
“Nun Run”/“Andrew Dinner”	3	5	1
Other	10	13	8
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one response.			

- “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.
- About half of responding religious (49 percent) participated in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute. Men and women are equally likely to have participated in a vocation retreat.
- A third (32 percent) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering. Women are more likely than men (44 percent compared to 23 percent) to report participating in in a live-in experience with their religious institute.
- Only 5 percent of women religious report that they participated in a “Nun Run” (asked only of women) experience, and an even smaller proportion of men (1 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:

- A friend and myself spent three days in the extern part of the monastery meeting the abbess and some of the sisters for personal interviews
- A Nun's Life convention
- A visit to the novitiate
- Communities brought in by our diocese while I lived in a discernment house
- Discernment retreat
- I met with my director for a year once a month
- I spent a year as a volunteer/worker in one of our mission homes
- Periodic Group meetings with Vocation Director and other vocation contacts
- Profession (attended)
- Religious pre-formation program
- Sharing with the President of my Congregation in person. Traveled for a week and engaged in conversation with other members of the congregation.
- Sister's Nights and Discernment Weekends
- Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius
- Teaching at a Jesuit Summer Camp
- The Franciscan covenant program
- Visits to local house
- Vocations in Process Club (in my parish)