

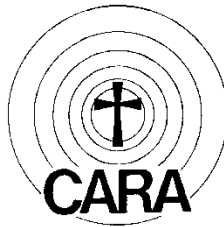
January 2013

***New Sisters and Brothers
Professing Perpetual Vows
in Religious Life***

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

*New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows
in Religious Life*

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



January 2013

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Major Findings..... | 2 |
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| Institutes Reporting Perpetual Professions | 6 |
| Age of Professed..... | 7 |
| Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States | 9 |
| Family Background..... | 10 |
| Education | 13 |
| Educational Debt..... | 15 |
| Work Experience | 16 |
| Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries | 17 |
| Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups | 19 |
| Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life | 21 |
| Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute..... | 24 |
| Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences..... | 26 |

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2012 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 174 contemplative communities in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (145 communities of nuns and 29 contemplative communities of men). 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 2012. 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 508 of 813 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 62 percent among religious institutes. In all, 78 percent of LCWR superiors, 68 percent of CMSM superiors, 57 percent of CMSWR superiors, and 33 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 156 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2012.

Of these 156 identified women and men religious, a total of 108 sisters and nuns and 24 brothers responded to the survey by December 15, 2012. These 24 brothers may include some brothers who intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 85 percent of the 156 potential members of the Profession Class of 2012 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Major Findings

- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2012 is 39. The average age among women professing perpetual vows in 2012 is 40, while that for men is 39. Half of the responding religious are age 37 or younger.
- Over two-thirds (69 percent) of responding religious identify as white, nearly one in six (15 percent) identifies as Asian, and almost one in ten (8 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 Vietnam (8 percent). On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 28 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 12 years before perpetual profession.

Family Background

- More than eight in ten (85 percent) responding religious have been Catholic since birth. Almost eight in ten (78 percent) come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Among the 15 percent of respondents who became Catholic later in life, the average age at which they converted was 24.
- Almost all (96 percent) responding religious have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is two. Almost half (45 percent) of these responding religious have four or more siblings. The same proportions (29 percent) are either the oldest or the youngest sibling, with similar proportions for men and women.

Education, Work, and Ministry Experience

- About four in ten responding religious (43 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is almost 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 (36 percent of responding religious, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (33 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 high school (32 percent among women compared to 50 percent for men). Women are also less likely than brothers to have attended a Catholic college (32 percent for women compared to 42 percent for men).
- The responding religious are highly educated. Twenty-two percent of responding religious earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute (including 37 percent of brothers, compared to 19 percent of sisters/nuns). Six in ten (60 percent)

entered their religious institute with at least a bachelor's degree or more (58 percent for women and 70 percent for men).

- Most religious did not report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to their institute. Among those who did report educational debt, however, they averaged two years of delay while they paid down an average of \$19,500 in educational debt. Several of the women, but none of the men, reported receiving assistance in paying down their debt.
- Over eight in ten responding religious (82 percent) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Of those who were employed, almost one in five (19 percent) were employed part-time and just under two-thirds (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 or church ministry.
- Many responding religious were active in parish life before entering their religious institute. Almost half (45 percent) participated in youth ministry or youth group. One quarter (25 percent) participated in young adult ministry or group, Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center, and/or World Youth Day.
- Almost nine in ten (88 percent) had ministry experience before entering their religious institute, most commonly in faith formation (46 percent). Women were more likely to participate in faith formation or liturgical ministries (except altar servers), while men more commonly reported hospital or prison ministries, altar server, or teaching in a Catholic school.
- Nearly all (95 percent) responding religious regularly participated in some type of private prayer activity before they entered their religious institute. Three quarters (73 percent) joined in retreats (more common among women than men) and seven in ten (69 percent) participated in Eucharistic Adoration before entering. Three in ten (31 percent) participated in *Lectio Divina* prior to entering their religious institute.

Consideration of Religious Life and Choice of Community

- On average, responding religious report that they were 20 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, but half were 18 or younger when they first did so.
- Eight in ten (82 percent) responding religious say they were encouraged to consider religious life by someone in their life. Just under half (47 percent) say they were encouraged by a parish priest. Sisters and nuns were less likely than brothers to say they were encouraged to consider religious life by a parish priest (44 percent among women compared to 58 percent among men). Brothers are also more likely to say they were encouraged by a parishioner, a friend, or a family member.

- Almost three quarters (74 percent) of responding religious report that they were *discouraged* from considering a vocation by one or more persons. These respondents are most likely to report that they were discouraged by a family member other than a parent (29 percent) or by friends or classmates (25 percent). Women were more likely than men to say they were discouraged by a relative other than a parent (32 percent compared to 17 percent).
- On average, these religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute for four years before they entered, but half knew them for two years or less. One in five (20 percent) were introduced to their institute through a sponsored institution or work of the institute. Women are less likely than men to say they were introduced to their institute through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (15 percent compared to 42 percent).
- A great majority of the religious of the Profession Class of 2012 (88 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 (60 percent) or a vocation retreat (49 percent). Men were slightly less likely than women to have participated in a “Come and See” experience (54 percent and 61 percent, respectively) while women were slightly less likely to have participated in a vocation retreat (48 percent for women compared to 54 percent for men).

Introduction

Since 2010, the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of women and men religious who profess perpetual vows each year in a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States. For this project, CARA was asked to gather information about the characteristics and experiences of these religious and report the findings to the Secretariat for use with the World Day of Consecrated Life in February. CARA worked with the Secretariat to revise two questionnaires – one for women religious and another for brothers – that were used for the “Profession Class of 2011” study of women and men religious professing perpetual vows in 2011. 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 2012.

To obtain the names and contact information for the religious professing perpetual vows in 2012, 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 174 contemplative communities in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (145 communities of nuns and 29 contemplative communities of men). 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 2012. CARA then contacted these sisters, nuns, or brothers by e-mail or mail to explain the project and ask them to complete a brief online survey.

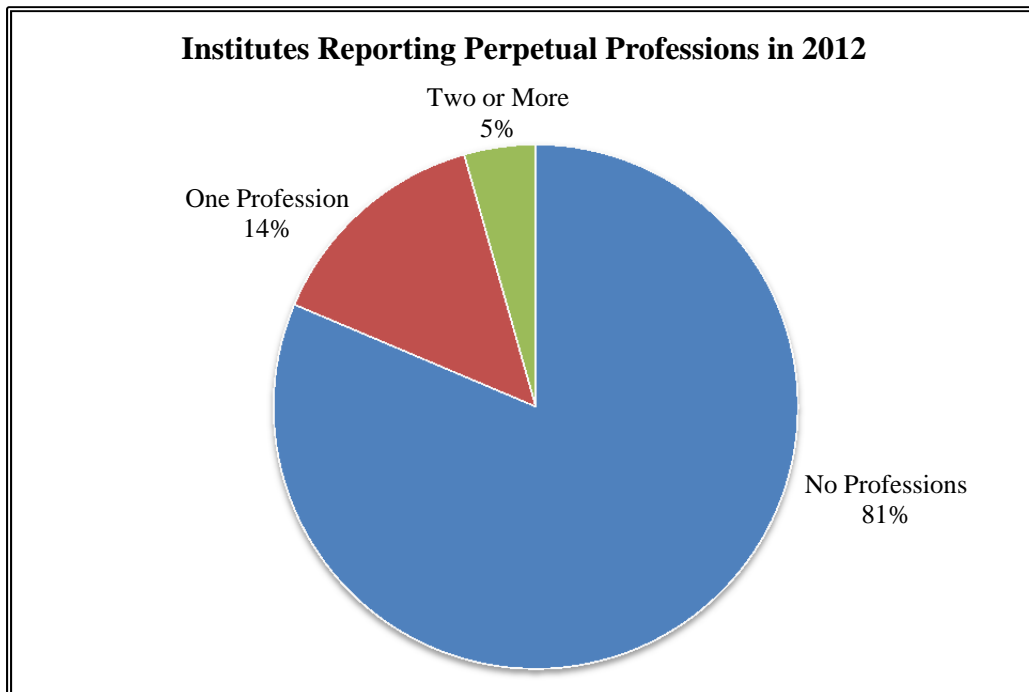
CARA received a response from 508 of 813 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 62 percent among religious institutes. In all, 78 percent of LCWR superiors, 68 percent of CMSM superiors, 57 percent of CMSWR superiors, and 33 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 156 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2012.

After repeated follow-ups to the major superiors and to the women and men religious who had been identified by them, a total of 108 sisters and nuns and 24 brothers responded to the survey by December 15, 2012. (These 24 brothers may include some brothers who intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination). This represents a response rate of 85 percent of the 156 potential members of the Profession Class of 2012 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 813 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 2012. A total of 508 major superiors responded (62 percent) with 156 names of women religious and brothers.



A total of 406 major superiors (80 percent of those responding) reported that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2012, 71 major superiors (14 percent) reported one member professing perpetual vows, and 22 major superiors (4 percent) reported from two to seven.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 64 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the brothers who responded come from 19 different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious.

Age of Professed

The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2012 is 39. Half of the responding religious are age 37 or younger, among women as well as men.

| Age of Professed Women and Men | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Percentage in each age category | | | |
| | Both | Women | Men |
| 29 and younger | 26% | 28% | 17% |
| Age 30-39 | 33 | 29 | 48 |
| Age 40-49 | 20 | 22 | 13 |
| Age 50-59 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Age 60 and older | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| | | | |
| Average age | 39 | 40 | 39 |
| Median age | 37 | 37 | 37 |
| Range in years | 23-66 | 23-66 | 25-62 |

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Profession Class of 2012 is 23 and the oldest is 66 years of age. Eight women respondents are professing perpetual vows at age 60 or older. Among brothers, the youngest is 25 and the oldest is 62; two are professing perpetual vows at age 60 or older.

Race and Ethnic Background

Seven out of ten responding religious (70 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 | 69% | 70% | 67% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian | 15 | 16 | 13 |
| Hispanic/Latino(a) | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| African/African American/black | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Native American | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Other | 4 | 3 | 8 |

Nearly one in six (15 percent) of the Profession Class of 2012 identifies as Asian, and almost one in ten (8 percent) identifies as Hispanic or Latino/a. In general, religious of the Profession Class of 2012 are more likely than other adult Catholics nationally to be Asian and less likely to be Hispanic.

Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States

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

| Country of Birth | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Percentage in each category | | | |
| | Both | Women | Men |
| United States | 71% | 69% | 76% |
| Vietnam | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Latin America | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| Philippines | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Africa | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| Other Asia | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| India | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other countries | 8 | 11 | 0 |

Vietnam is the most frequently mentioned country of birth among responding religious women who were born outside the United States. These respondents identified a total of 18 different countries of origin.

Responding religious who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 12 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 | 1999 | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| Median | 2002 | 29 | 29 | 28 |
| Range | 1978-2011 | 4-59 | 4-59 | 25-34 |

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 28. Half were age 29 or younger when they came to live in the United States; the youngest was four and the oldest was 59 at the time she entered the United States.

Family Background

More than eight in ten responding religious (85 percent) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age at the time of their conversion was 24.

| Catholic Background | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| | Both | Women | Men |
| Catholic since birth | 85% | 84% | 88% |
| Became Catholic later in life | 15 | 16 | 12 |
| Average age at conversion | 24 | 24 | 24 |

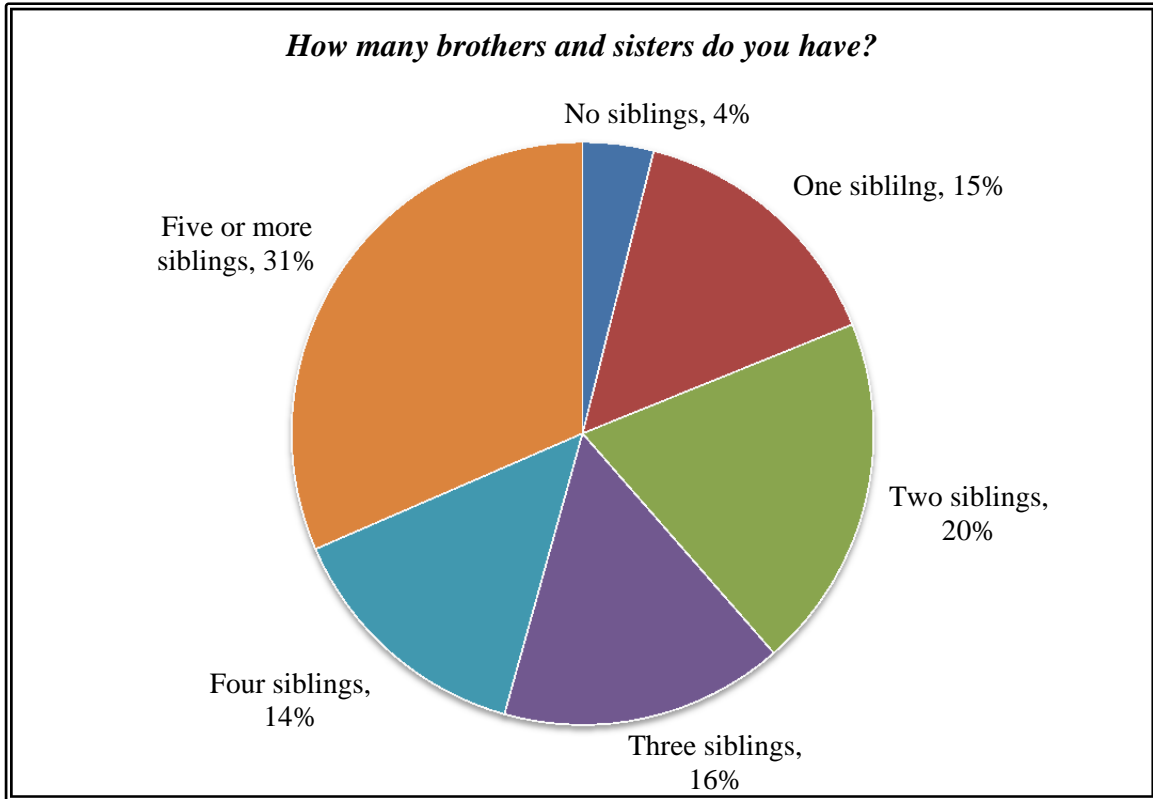
Those who came into full communion with the Catholic Church from another denomination or those who converted from another faith tradition came from a variety of faiths: Anglican, Buddhism, East African religion (meditation), Episcopalian, Evangelical, Jewish, Methodist, Presbyterian, Protestant, Southern Baptist and Unitarian, as well as some saying they were previously of no religion.

Just under nine out of ten (88 percent) respondents report that when they were children they had at least one parent who was Catholic; almost eight in ten (78 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 | 78% | 77% | 83% |
| Neither parent was Catholic | 12 | 13 | 4 |
| Mother Catholic, father not | 6 | 7 | 4 |
| Father Catholic, mother not | 4 | 3 | 9 |

In addition, over four in ten (43 percent) of responding religious report having a relative who is a priest or a religious. However, only three in ten (29 percent) of men report having a relative who is a priest or a religious compared to almost half (46 percent) religious.

More than eight in ten (81 percent) of the religious in the Profession Class of 2012 have more than one sibling. Nearly one in six (15 percent) has one brother or sister and one in five (20 percent) report having two or three. More than four in ten (52 percent) have four or more siblings.



On average, respondents have four siblings. Four percent from the Profession Class of 2012 report being an only child and only three respondents report that he or she has ten or more brothers and sisters. The most common response to this question, among the women, is one sibling. For brothers, the most common response is two siblings.

| <i>What is your birth order?</i> | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Percentage in each category | | | |
| | Both | Women | Men |
| Oldest | 29% | 29% | 30% |
| Middle | 42 | 42 | 44 |
| Youngest | 29 | 29 | 26 |

Overall, these respondents are more likely to be one of the middle children in their family than the eldest or youngest child. Over four in ten women (42 percent) and brothers (44 percent) were a middle child. Respondents are equally as likely to be the oldest or the youngest child (29 percent) of their family.

Education

Over four in ten (43 percent) of those responding attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. More than a third (36 percent) attended a Catholic high school and a third (33 percent) attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute.

| Attendance at Catholic School* | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Percentage responding | | | |
| | Both | Women | Men |
| Elementary or middle school | 43% | 41% | 54% |
| High School | 36 | 32 | 50 |
| College | 33 | 32 | 42 |

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

Members of the Profession Class of 2012 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, compared to 43 percent among these religious. Responding religious of 2012 are also more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (36 percent among responding religious, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (33 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 high school (50 percent for men compared to 32 percent for women) or a Catholic college (42 percent for men compared to 32 percent for women).

In addition, 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, half (49 percent) of the respondents participated in a religious education program in their parish. However, only 38 percent of men compared to 52 percent of women respondents have participated. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, over six in ten (63 percent) did not report attending a Catholic school at either the elementary or high school level.

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

Seven 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 five years (five years for women and three years for men).

The responding religious are highly educated. Six in ten (60 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) | 2% | 1% | 4% |
| High school | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Some college, no degree | 25 | 28 | 13 |
| Undergraduate degree | 38 | 39 | 33 |
| Graduate degree | 22 | 19 | 37 |

Less than one in six (13 percent) religious of the Profession Class of 2012 completed only high school before entering the religious institute and a great majority (85 percent) completed at least some college before entering their religious institute. Responding brothers are a more likely than sisters or nuns to have a graduate degree before entering their religious institute: over one third of brothers have a college degree compared to two in ten (19 percent) of women religious.

Educational Debt

Fewer than one in ten responding religious (7 percent) 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 | 7% | 7% | 8% |
| Average length of delay | 2 years | 1.5 years | 2 years |
| Average amount of debt | \$19,500 | \$18,167 | \$23,500 |
| Median amount of debt | \$16,000 | \$16,000 | \$23,500 |

Most responding religious of the Profession Class of 2012 report that educational debt did not delay their application for entrance. Among those that were delayed by educational debt, however, the average delay was two years.

On average, responding religious had \$19,500 in educational debt at the time they first applied for entrance to their religious institute. Men averaged slightly more educational debt than women. Half of the women with educational debt owed \$16,000 or less, while half the men with educational debt owed \$23,500 or less.

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

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

Work Experience

Over eight in ten (82 percent) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering the religious institute. Almost one in five (19 percent) were employed part-time and just under two-thirds (63 percent) had been employed full-time before entering their institute.

| Prior Work Experience | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Percentage in each category | | | |
| | Both | Women | Men |
| Business/Occupational | 45% | 43% | 55% |
| Education/Academic | 25 | 27 | 17 |
| Health care | 19 | 23 | 5 |
| Church ministry | 9 | 7 | 17 |
| Government/Military | 2 | 0 | 6 |

These religious, especially the brothers, were most likely to report that they were in some form of business, education, or academic career prior to entering their religious institute. A significant proportion of women (19 percent) were also engaged in health care. Women who had been in business were about as likely to report that they had done skilled labor (such as bank manager) as unskilled (such as waitress) before entering.

Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

Many responding religious were active in parish life before entering their religious institute. Just under three-quarters (72 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 |
| Youth ministry or youth group | 45% | 48% | 33% |
| Young adult ministry or group | 25 | 26 | 17 |
| Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center | 25 | 26 | 21 |
| World Youth Day | 25 | 28 | 13 |
| Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference | 9 | 11 | 0 |
| Fellowship of Catholic University Students | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| Sodality | 6 | 8 | *** |
| Catholic Scouting | 3 | ** | 17 |
| St. Vincent de Paul Society | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Knights of Conference | 2 | 0 | 13 |
| Catholic Daughters | 2 | 3 | *** |
| Religious institute volunteer | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| National Catholic Youth Conference | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| National Evangelization Team | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.
 **Not asked of women. Percentages for “Both” calculated based on 92 respondents.
 ***Not asked of men. Percentages for “Both” calculated based on 92 respondents.

- Almost half (45 percent) of responding religious participated in youth ministry or youth group. Women are more likely than men to have participated in youth ministry or youth group (48 percent compared to 33 percent).
- One in four (25 percent) respondents participated in young adult ministry or a young adult group before entering. Women are more likely than men to have participated in a young adult ministry or group (26 percent compared to 17 percent).
- No respondents participated in the National Catholic Youth Conference or the National Evangelization Team before entering their religious institute.

A great majority of responding religious (88 percent) served in one or more specified ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer. The most common ministry service reported was some form of liturgical ministry.

| Ministry Experience* | | | |
|---|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Percentage checking each response | | | |
| | Both | Women | Men |
| Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA | 46% | 48% | 38% |
| Lector | 43 | 44 | 42 |
| Music ministry, cantor, or choir | 39 | 42 | 29 |
| Extraordinary Minister of Communion | 36 | 38 | 29 |
| Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service) | 31 | 32 | 25 |
| Altar server | 23 | 15 | 50 |
| Teacher in a Catholic school | 12 | 11 | 17 |
| Hospital or prison ministry | 10 | 7 | 21 |

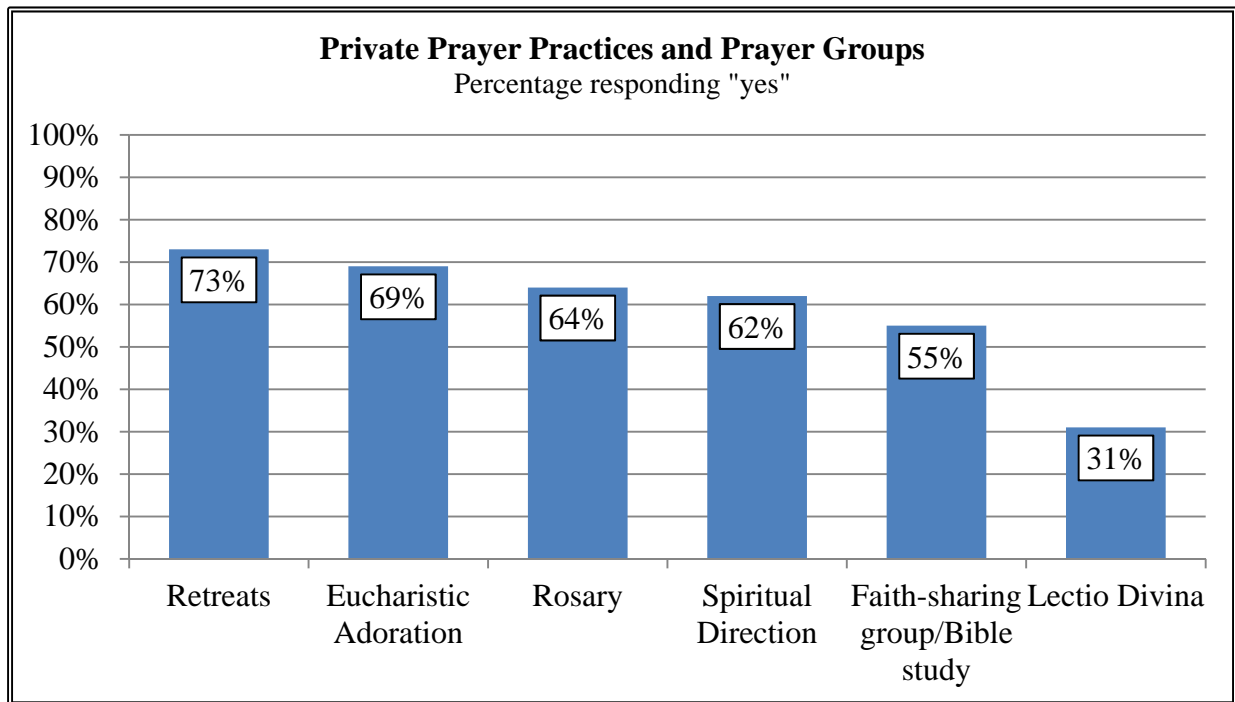
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Among the ministries listed on the survey, respondents were *most* likely to report that they served in catechetical ministry or faith formation, including RCIA. Women were slightly more likely to have participated in faith formation than men (48 percent for women compared to 38 percent for men). Four in ten (39 percent) responding religious were involved in music ministry, sang in a choir, or served as a cantor, but women were more likely to do so than men (42 percent for women compared to 29 percent for men).
- About four in ten respondents served in liturgical ministries, such as lector (43 percent), Extraordinary Minister of Communion (36 percent), or music ministry (39 percent) before entering their religious institute. Women were more likely than men to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Communion or music ministers.
- Almost one third (31 percent) of respondents 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, as an altar server, or as a teacher in a Catholic school before they entered their religious institute.

- Seventy-nine 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 (77 percent) are less likely to have so served in ministry than men (87 percent), although both groups were equally likely to have served as a volunteer (64 percent and 62 percent, respectively).

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 (95 percent) responding religious of the Profession Class of 2012 participated in one or more of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis prior to entering her or his religious institute.



- Retreats are the most common type of formative prayer experience, reported by almost three quarters of religious of the Profession Class of 2012.
- Around two-thirds of respondents regularly prayed the Rosary (64 percent) or participated in Eucharistic Adoration (69 percent) prior to entering their religious institute.
- About six out of ten (62 percent) respondents report participating in spiritual direction.

- Just under one-third (31 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 slightly less likely than men religious to report making retreats prior to their entry into religious life (72 percent for women compared to 79 percent for men), although the differences between women and men reported here are not statistically significant.

| Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups* | | |
|--|--------------|------------|
| Percentage checking each response | | |
| | Women | Men |
| Retreats | 72% | 79% |
| Eucharistic Adoration | 70 | 67 |
| Rosary | 63 | 67 |
| Spiritual direction | 60 | 67 |
| Faith-sharing group/Bible study | 56 | 50 |
| Lectio Divina | 30 | 33 |

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

- Women are also a little less likely than men to have participated spiritual direction before they entered (60 percent for women compared to 67 percent for men).
- Women are slightly more likely than men to have been involved in a faith-sharing group or Bible study (56 percent for women compared to 50 percent for men).

Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, responding religious report that they were 20 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 | 20 | 20 | 21 |
| Median | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| Range | 4-50 | 4-50 | 10-46 |

Encouragement to Consider a Vocation

Eight in ten (82 percent) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life. Nearly half (47 percent) say they were encouraged by a parish priest.

| Encouragement to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life* | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Percentage checking each response | | | |
| | Both | Women | Men |
| Parish priest | 47% | 44% | 58% |
| Religious sister or brother | 42 | 43 | 38 |
| Friend | 42 | 38 | 63 |
| Mother | 26 | 24 | 38 |
| Parishioner | 25 | 22 | 42 |
| Father | 19 | 17 | 29 |
| Other relative | 17 | 14 | 29 |
| Youth minister | 15 | 16 | 8 |
| Campus minister/School chaplain | 14 | 14 | 13 |
| Teacher/Catechist | 12 | 12 | 13 |
| Deacon | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Bishop | 4 | 3 | 8 |

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

- Over four in ten (42 percent), say that a friend or a religious sister or brother encouraged their vocation. Men are more likely than women to have been encouraged by a friend (63 percent compared to 38 percent).
- Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from other religious, friends, or a parish priest. Over one quarter (26 percent) report that their mother encouraged them to consider religious life. Just under one in five received encouragement from their father (19 percent) or another relative (17 percent).
- One quarter responding religious received encouragement from a parishioner (25 percent).
- Almost two in ten responding religious of the Profession Class of 2012 (18 percent) report that no one encouraged them in their vocation (not shown in table).

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation

Almost three quarters (74 percent) of responding religious reported 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 | 29% | 32% | 17% |
| Friend or school classmate | 25 | 25 | 29 |
| Mother | 23 | 26 | 13 |
| Father | 22 | 25 | 8 |
| Colleague or coworker | 9 | 9 | 4 |
| Teacher | 9 | 8 | 0 |
| Priest or other clergy | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| Religious sister or brother | 5 | 6 | 0 |
| Youth minister | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Someone else | 6 | 6 | 8 |

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

Those who reported being *discouraged* from considering a vocation are most likely to report that they were discouraged by a family member (25 percent) other than their mother (23 percent) or father (23 percent) or by friends or classmates (25 percent).

- Men are less likely than women to have been discouraged by both their mothers (26 percent compared to 13 percent) and their fathers (25 percent compared to 8 percent).
- Very few respondents say they were discouraged from considering a vocation by clergy, teachers, or religious sisters or brothers. No one reported being discouraged by a youth minister.
- Just over one in twenty (6 percent) were discouraged from considering a vocation to religious life by someone else such as boyfriends, congregation members of friends of parents.

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.

| | Years | | |
|--------|-------|-------|------|
| | Both | Women | Men |
| Mean | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Median | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Range | 0-29 | 0-28 | 0-29 |

On average, sisters report that they knew members of their institutes only about half as long (three years) as brothers (seven years). Half of all responding religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute for two years or less before they entered. Thirty percent knew the members of their religious institute for one year before they entered and just over one in ten (12 percent) knew the members for less than a year.

Responding religious were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. Just over one out of five (20 percent) were in/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute.

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) | 20% | 15% | 42% |
| Through print or online promotional material published by the institute | 19 | 20 | 17 |
| Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor | 17 | 18 | 13 |
| Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute | 13 | 14 | 8 |
| Through a friend or relative in the institute | 13 | 11 | 21 |
| At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair) | 12 | 13 | 4 |
| Through a vocation matching or placement service | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Other | 29 | 29 | 25 |

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

Just under a third of religious (29 percent) said they first became acquainted with their religious institute through some other means. Responses included:

- Archdiocesan Vocation Office
- Had a Sister of St. Joseph in my Archdiocesan High School
- My dad had seen them working at a school
- Spiritual Direction
- Youth 2000 Retreats (1999, 2000, 2001)

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. A great majority (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 | 60% | 61% | 54% |
| Vocation retreat | 49 | 48 | 54 |
| Live-in experience | 31 | 27 | 46 |
| “Nun Run”/“Andrew Dinner” | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Other | 11 | 11 | 8 |
| <p>*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one response.</p> | | | |

- Over three out of five (61 percent) responding religious women and over half (54 percent) of responding brothers participated in a “Come and See” experience before entering their religious institute.
- Vocation retreats are another popular vocation program, experienced by almost half (49 percent) of respondents before they entered their religious institute.
- A third (31 percent) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering.
- Very few (6 percent) responding sisters or nuns report that they participated in a “Nun Run” (asked only of women) experience, and none of the brothers had participated in an “Andrew Dinner” (asked only of men).

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

- Capuchin college program
- Life Awareness Program
- Service Trip
- Weekend visit, then later a 30 day visit
- Women Exploring