

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



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

Thu T. Do, LHC, Ph.D.
Thomas P. Gaunt, SJ, Ph.D.

January 2026

***Women and Men Professing Perpetual Vows
in Religious Life:
The Profession Class of 2025***

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Major Findings	2
Introduction.....	5
Part I: Demographics of Responding Religious	6
Institutes Reporting Perpetual Profession	6
Gender and Previous Religious/Diocesan Formation	8
Age of Perpetual Profession	9
Country of Birth	11
Foreign-born Religious' Age at Entry to the United States.....	12
Racial and Ethnic Background.....	13
Part II: Family Background	15
Religious Background.....	15
Family Religious Background	16
Parenting	18
Siblings	19
Birth Order	20
Part III: Educational Background	21
Catholic Education	21
Catholic Religious Education	23
Home Schooling	25
Highest Education	26
Educational Debt.....	27
Part IV: Work and Ministry Experience Before Entering	29
Work Experience.....	29
Ministry Experience	31
Program Participation	32
Part V: Vocational Discernment	33
Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups	33
Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life.....	35
Encouragement to Consider a Vocation	36
Discouragement from Considering a Vocation.....	37
Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute.....	38
Participating in Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences.....	40

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

***Women and Men Professing Perpetual Vows
in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2025***

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2025 in a religious institute, province, or monastery based in the United States. To obtain the names and contact information for these men and women, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of men and women religious institutes 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 2025. CARA then contacted these men and women religious by e-mail or mail to explain the project and ask them to complete a brief survey.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 520 of 723 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 72% among religious institutes. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 179 members (74 women and 105 men) who professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2025.

Of these 179 identified women and men religious, a total of 130 religious members, including 59 sisters and nuns and 71 brothers and priests, responded to the survey by January 7, 2026. This represents a response rate of 73% of the 179 members of the Profession Class of 2025 that were reported to CARA by major superiors of men and women religious.

Major Findings

Demographic Background

- A total of 421 major superiors (82% of respondents) report that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2025. One in ten responding institutes (10%) had one perpetual profession. Forty-three major superiors (8%) report from two to nine members professing perpetual vows in 2025. In total, the responding religious institutes report 179 members (74 women and 105 men) who professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2025.
- Among 130 perpetually professed members participating in this study, 55% are men; 45% are women.
- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2025 is 38. Half of the responding religious are age 35 or younger. The youngest is 22 and the oldest is 74.
- Seven in ten responding religious (69%) were born in the United States. Twelve percent were born in Asia. Nine percent were born in Latin America. Seven percent were born in Africa.
- Three in five responding religious (57%) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white. One in six identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (16%), as Hispanic/Latino(a) (16%), as African/African American/black (9%), and as mixed race or other (3%).
- Nine in ten responding religious (92%) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age at the time of their conversion was 20.

Family Background

- Almost all respondents (95%) report that when they were children, they had at least one parent who was Catholic. Nearly nine in ten (85%) report that both parents were Catholic.
- A third (35%) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious.
- Almost all (95%) respondents were raised by their biological parents during the most formative part of their childhood. Besides, one in ten (9%) reported being raised by their grandparents during the most formative part of their childhood.
- During the most formative part of their childhood, nearly nine in ten (85%) respondents were raised by a married couple, living together.
- Almost all responding religious (98%) of the Profession Class of 2025 have at least one sibling. One-fifth (21%) has one brother or sister. Two-fifths (38%) have two or three. Another two-fifths (39%) have four or more siblings.

- A third of respondents (35%) are the eldest in their family. Two in five (41%) were born somewhere in the middle. A quarter (23%) are the youngest. Two percent are the only child in his or her family.

Educational Background

- Half of respondents (47%) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. A third (35%) attended a Catholic high school. Two in five (39%) attended a Catholic college or university.
- More than three in five respondents (60%) participated in a religious education program/CCD/RCIA in their parish. A quarter (25%) report participating in a Catholic ministry formation program before they entered their religious institute.
- Approximately one in eight (13%) reports 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.
- Seven in ten (73%) earned an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute.
- Nearly one in ten responding religious (8%) report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to the religious institute for two years on average while they paid down an average of \$55,500 in educational debt. Friends and family members are the most common source of assistance for paying down educational debt.

Work and Ministry Experiences

- Four in five (84%) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Three in five (61%) were employed full-time and about a quarter (23%) were employed part-time before entering their religious institute. Among those who report work experience, the main work fields are business and education.
- Almost all responding religious (95%) 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 experiences reported by respondents were as altar server (60%), lector (57%), youth ministry/campus ministry (56%), and faith formation/RCIA (56%).
- Four in five (81%) participated in one or more religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute, with the most common ministry being the youth ministry or youth group (63%) and Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (57%).

Vocational Discernment

- Almost all responding religious of the Profession Class of 2025 (97%) participated in one or more prayer practices or groups on a regular basis prior to entering their religious institute.
- On average, respondents report that they were 18 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, with half being 18 or younger when they first did so.
- Nearly nine in ten (86%) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life. More than two in five report being encouraged by a religious sister or brother (52%), friend (48%), and parish priest (46%).
- More than half (53%) report that they were discouraged from considering a vocation to religious life by one or more persons. Women are more likely than men to report being discouraged from discerning a religious vocation.
- On average, responding religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute six years before they entered.
- Most (92%) had participated in at least one vocational discernment program prior to entering their religious institute. Among the vocation programs and experiences about which they were asked, respondents are most likely to have participated in a “Come and See” experience (78%).

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. For this year's survey, 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 2025.

To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men CARA contacted all major superiors of men and women religious institutes 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 2025. CARA then contacted these men and women religious by e-mail or mail to explain the project and ask them to complete a brief survey.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 520 of 723 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 72% among religious institutes. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 179 members (74 women and 105 men) who professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2025.

Of these 179 identified women and men religious, a total of 130 religious members, including 59 sisters and nuns and 71 brothers and priests, responded to the survey by January 7, 2026. This represents a response rate of 73% of the 179 members of the Profession Class of 2025 that were reported to CARA by major superiors of men and women religious.

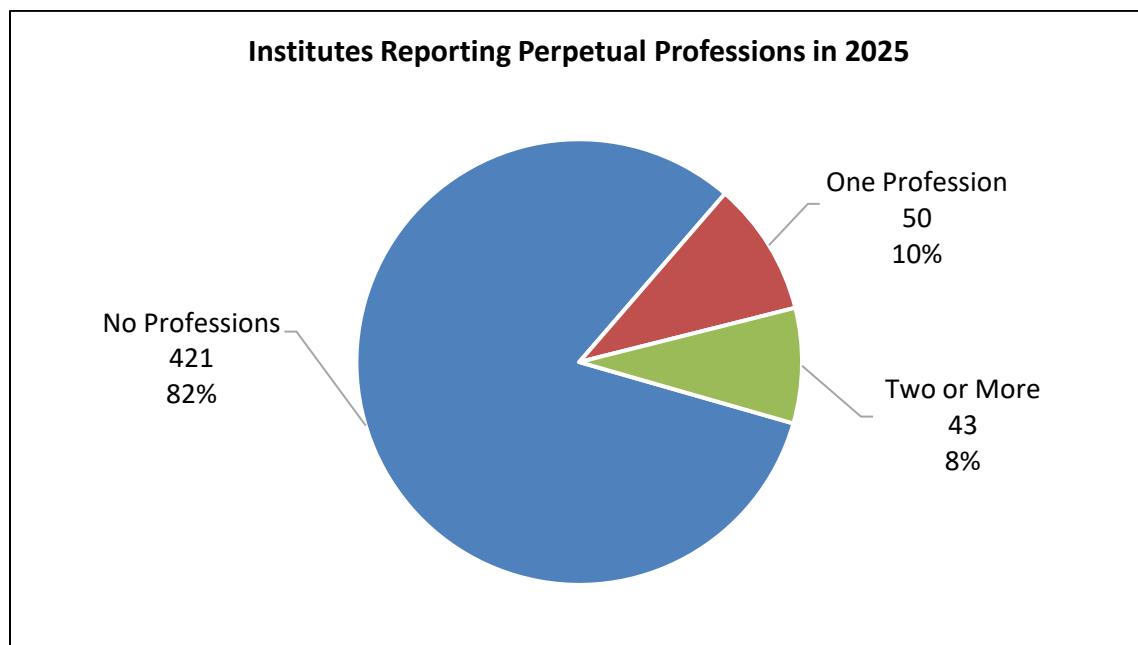
The questionnaire asked these religious about their demographic and religious background, education and work experience, previous ministry or service and other formative experiences, encouragement and discouragement to consider religious life, initial acquaintance with their institutes, and vocation/discernment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

Part I: Demographics of Responding Religious

Part I describes the demographic characteristics of the responding religious institutes as well as the responding women and men religious.

Institutes Reporting Perpetual Profession

CARA asked the 723 religious institutes, provinces, or monasteries in the United States to provide the names of members who professed or were planning to profess perpetual vows in 2025. A total of 520 major superiors responded (a 72% response rate) with 179 names of perpetually professed sisters, priests, and brothers.



Among the institutes responding to the question on if they had any members making perpetual profession in 2025, a total of 421 major superiors (82% of respondents) report that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2025. One in ten institutes (10%) had one perpetual profession. Another one in ten major superiors (8%) report from two to nine members professing perpetual vows in 2025.

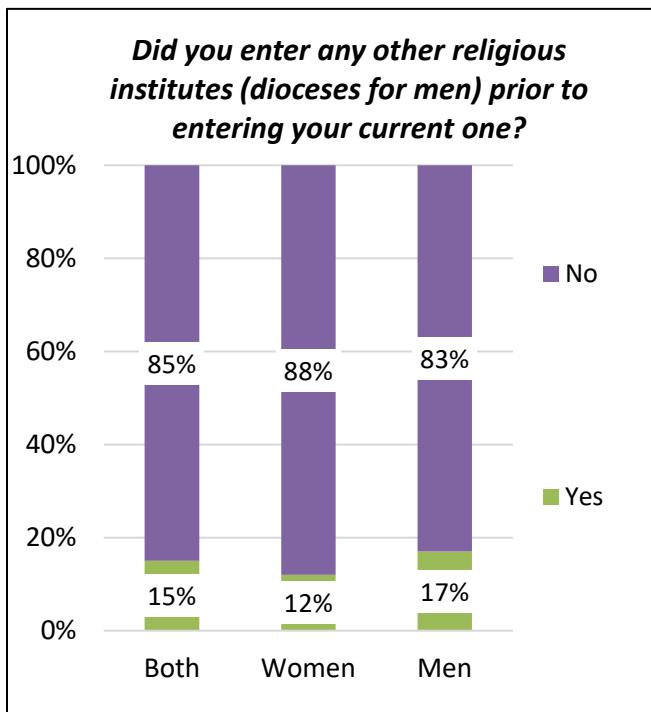
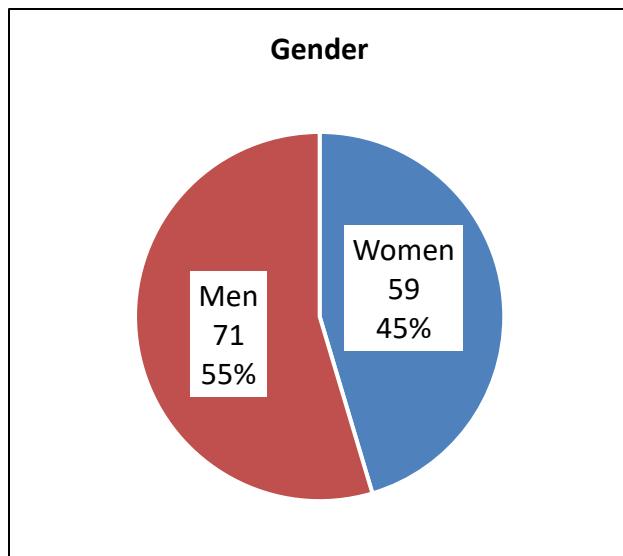
Among the institutes having members make perpetual profession in 2025, 54% are women's institutes while 46% are men's institutes. Nine in ten (86%) of these institutes are active, while one in ten (14%) is contemplative. Among these institutes, one third (32%) are smaller sized (less than 50 professed members), another third (34%) are medium sized (51-150 professed members), and a quarter (24%) are larger sized (more than 151 professed members).

Three-fifths of the responding institutes (58%) having perpetual profession in 2025 have a combination of primary apostolates that include healthcare, education, and pastoral ministry. One-fifth reports their primary apostolate is pastoral ministry (19%). One-tenth reports education (11%). Another one-tenth is contemplative.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 39 different religious institutes, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the brothers and priests who responded come from 36 different religious institutes, provinces, or monasteries.

Gender and Previous Religious/Diocesan Formation

Among 130 perpetually professed members participating in this study, 55% are men; 45% are women.



Among responding women religious, one in eight (12%) ever entered another religious institute prior to entering their current one, and stayed in that institute for six years, on average. Four in five entered an active institute, while one in five entered a contemplative one.

Among responding men religious, one in six (17%) ever entered another religious institute or diocese prior to entering their current one, and stayed in that institute for five years, on average. Half of them entered a diocese, and another half entered a religious institute. Among those entering a religious institute, two-thirds entered an active one, while a third entered a contemplative one. Four in five were in formation to be a priest at the time of entering another institute prior their current one.

Age of Perpetual Profession

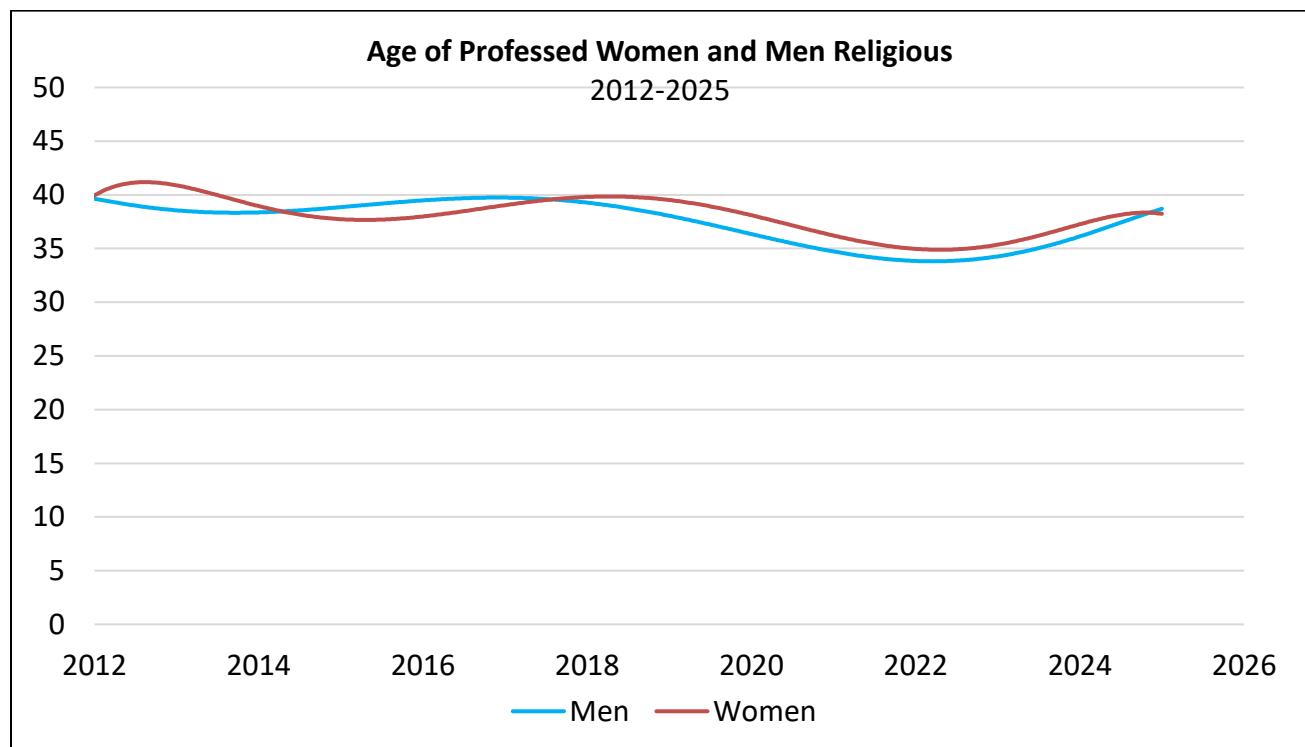
Responding religious making perpetual profession in 2025 were, on average, 38 years old. Half were 35 years or younger.

Age of Professed Women and Men

Percentage in each age category

	Both	Women	Men
Average age	38	39	38
Median age	35	35	34
Range in ages	21-74	26-74	21-61

Between 2012 and 2025, the age of the newly perpetually professed averaged 38 and has ranged between 33 and 41.



One in six respondents (17%) make their final profession at the age of 29 or younger. The youngest are 21 years of age. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 21% and ranged between 13% and 27%.

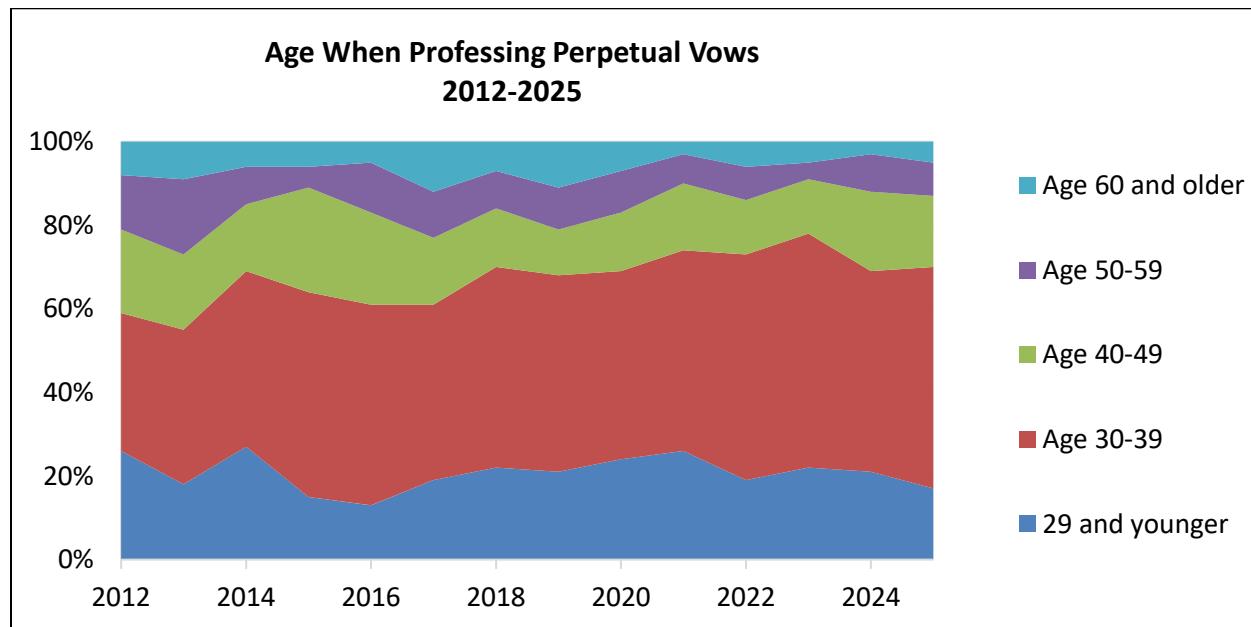
	Age of Professed Men and Women Religious		
	Percentage in each category		
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
29 and younger	17	12	21
Age 30-39	53	57	49
Age 40-49	17	17	17
Age 50-59	8	7	9
Age 60 and older	5	7	4

Half (53%) profess perpetual vows at age 30 to 39. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 47% and ranged between 33% and 56%.

One in five (17%) make perpetual profession between the ages 40 and 49. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 17% and ranged between 11% and 25%.

One in ten (8%) does so between the ages 50 and 59. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 10% and ranged between 9% and 18%.

One in twenty (5%) does so at age 60 or older. The oldest sister made her final profession at the age of 74, and the oldest brother made his final profession at the age of 61. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 7% and ranged between 1% and 12%.



Country of Birth

For the Profession Class of 2025, seven in ten responding religious (69%) were born in the United States. Three in ten (31%) were born outside the United States. These respondents identified a total of 22 different countries of origin.

Between 2012 and 2025, their share among men and women religious born in the United States averaged 73% and ranged between 62% and 77%.

	Continents of Birth		
	Percentage in each category		
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
USA	69	68	69
Asia	12	15	10
Latin America	9	5	13
Africa	7	7	7
Canada	2	3	0
Europe	2	2	1

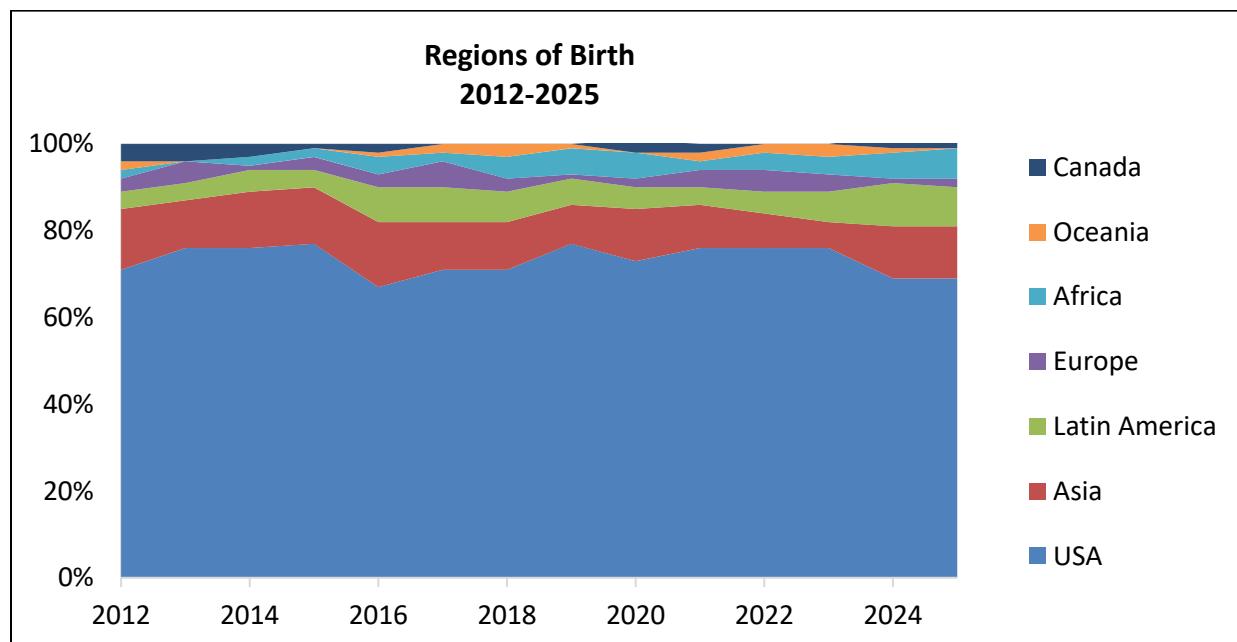
Twelve percent were born in Asia. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 11% and ranged between 6% and 15%.

Nine percent were born in Latin America. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 6% and ranged between 4% and 10%.

Seven percent were born in Africa. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 4% and ranged between 0% and 6%.

Two percent were born in Canada. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 2% and ranged between 0% and 6%.

Two percent were born in Europe. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 3% and ranged between 1% and 6%.

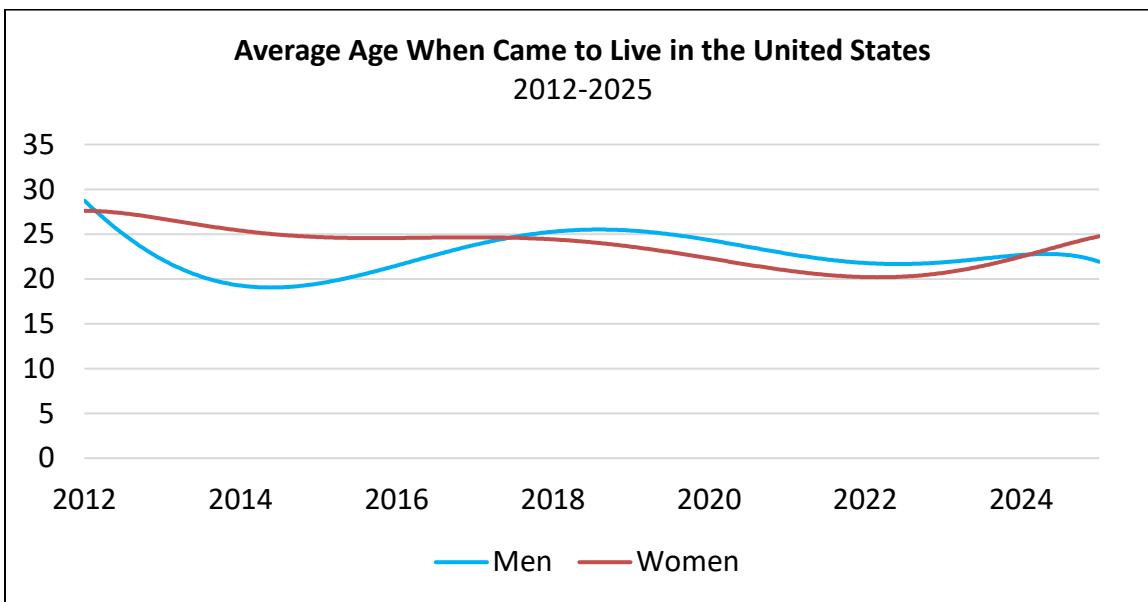


Foreign-born Religious' Age at Entry to the United States

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 23. Half were age 24 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The youngest came to the United States at the age of one; the oldest entered the United States at the age of 54.

Entrance to the United States				
Year	Age at Entry			Men
	Both	Both	Women	
Mean	2010	23	24	22
Median	2014	24	25	23
Range	1984-2024	1-54	2-54	1-34

Since 2012, the average age was 23 and ranged between 15 and 28.



Racial and Ethnic Background

	Race and Ethnic Background		
	Percentage in each category		
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/White	57	58	57
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	16	9	10
Hispanic/Latino(a)	16	9	21
African/African American/Black	9	22	10
Mixed race or other	3	4	1

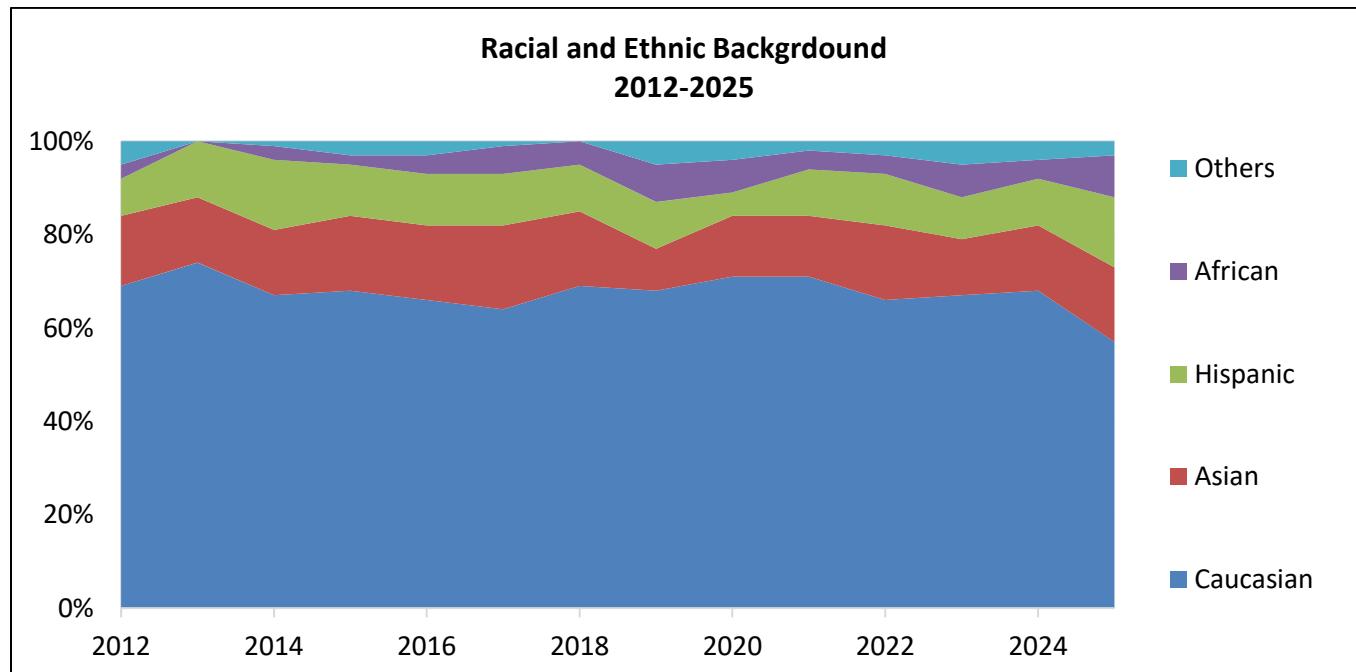
Three in five responding religious (57%) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 68% and ranged between 64% and 74%.

One in six (16%) responding members identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 14% and ranged between 9% and 18%.

One in six identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a) (16%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 11% and ranged between 5% and 15%.

One in ten identifies as African/African American/black (9%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 5% and ranged between 0% and 8%.

Three percent of respondents identify as mixed race or other. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 3% and ranged between 0% and 5%.



Differences by Country of Birth

Among those who were born in the United States, four in five responding religious (80%) identify themselves as Caucasian/European American/White. Among those who were born outside the United States, four in ten (39%) identify as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, 24% as African/African American/black, 22% as Hispanic/Latino(a), 10% as Caucasian/European American/white.

Part II: Family Background

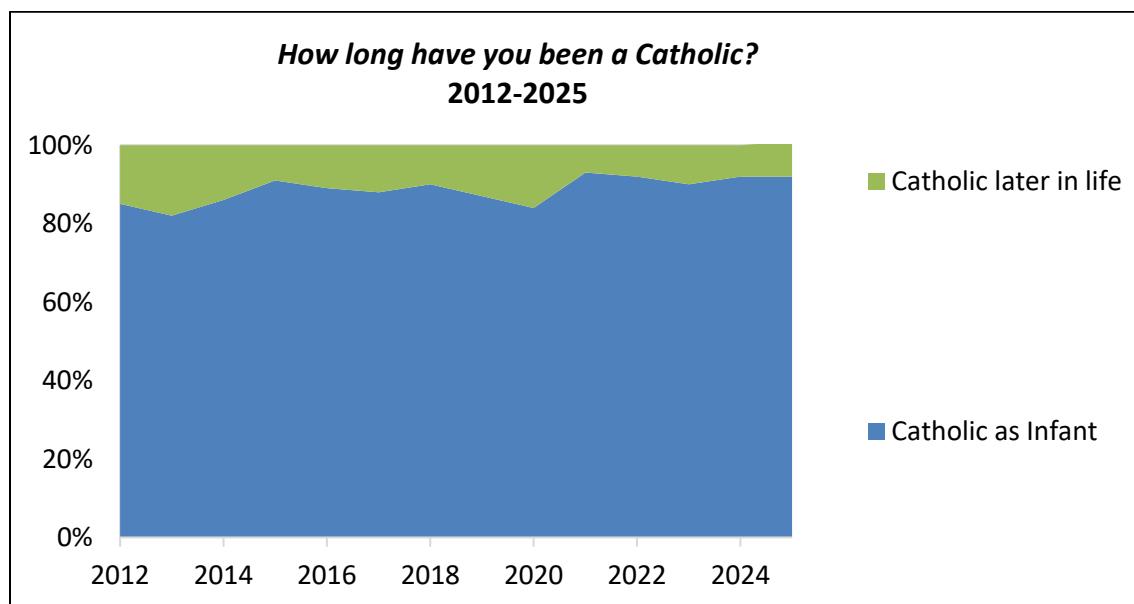
Part II describes the family backgrounds of the responding women and men religious.

Religious Background

Nine in ten responding religious (92%) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age at the time of their conversion was 20.

Catholic Background <i>Percentage responding</i>			
	Both %	Women %	Men %
Catholic since birth	92	93	90
Became Catholic later in life	9	7	10
Average age at entering the Church	20	22	20

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: Southern Baptist, Protestant, Non-denominational, Methodist, Evangelical, Evangelical, and Episcopalian.



Family Religious Background

Almost all respondents (95%) report that when they were children, they had at least one parent who was Catholic.

Nearly nine in ten (85%) report that both parents were Catholic. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 80% and ranged from 75% and 87%.

What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?

Percentage responding

	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	85	86	85
Mother Catholic, father not	5	5	6
Father Catholic, mother not	5	5	4
Neither parent was Catholic	5	3	6

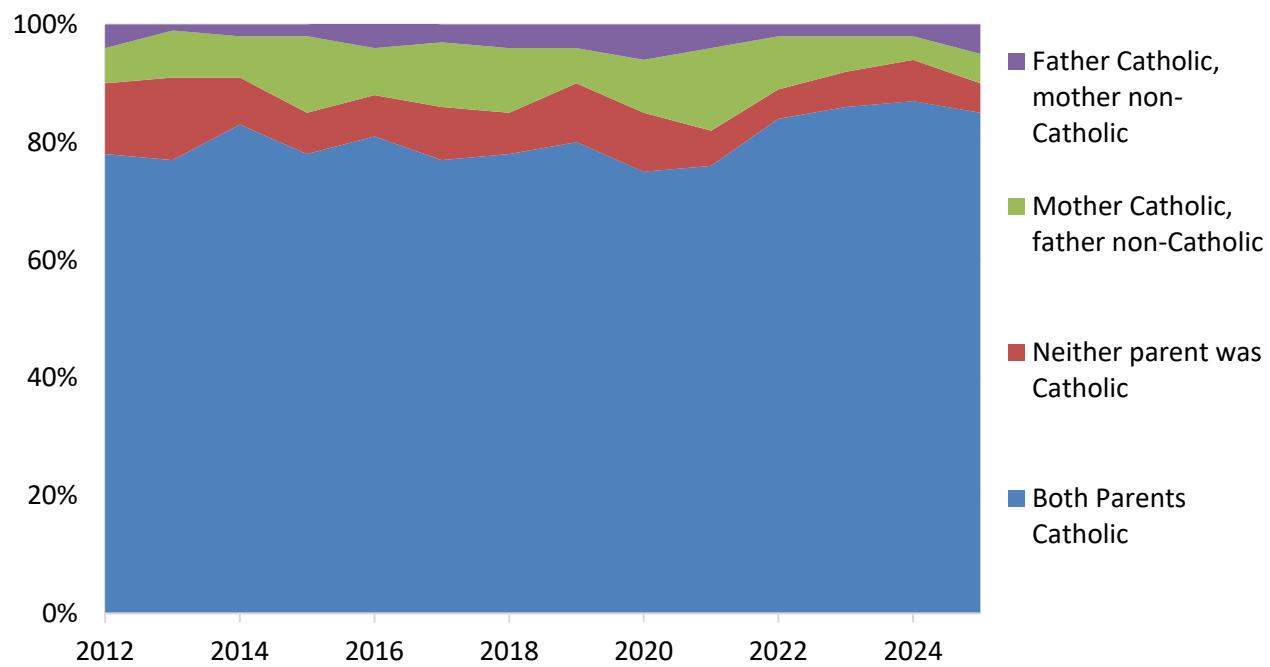
Five percent reports their mother was Catholic but not their father when they were a child. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 8% and ranged from 4% and 14%.

Five percent reports their father was Catholic but not their mother when they were a child. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 8% and ranged from 2% and 18%.

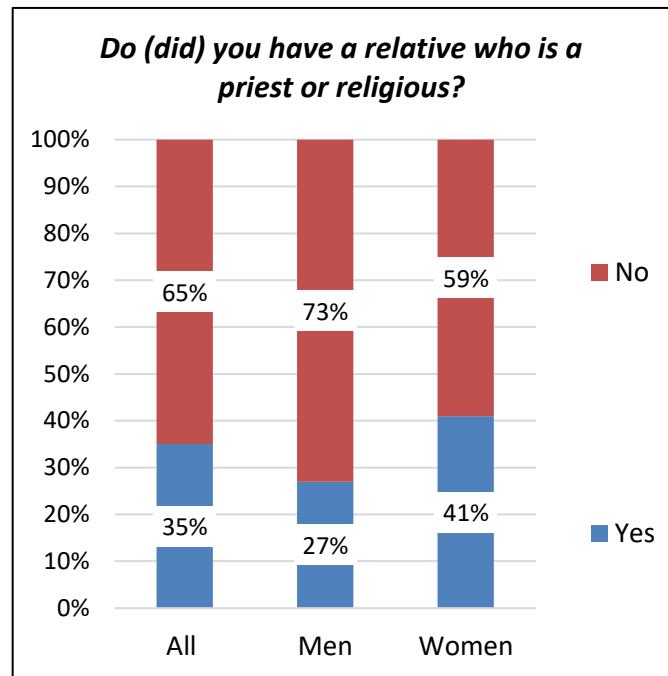
Five percent reports neither their mother nor their father was Catholic when they were a child. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 3% and ranged from 5% and 14%.

What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?

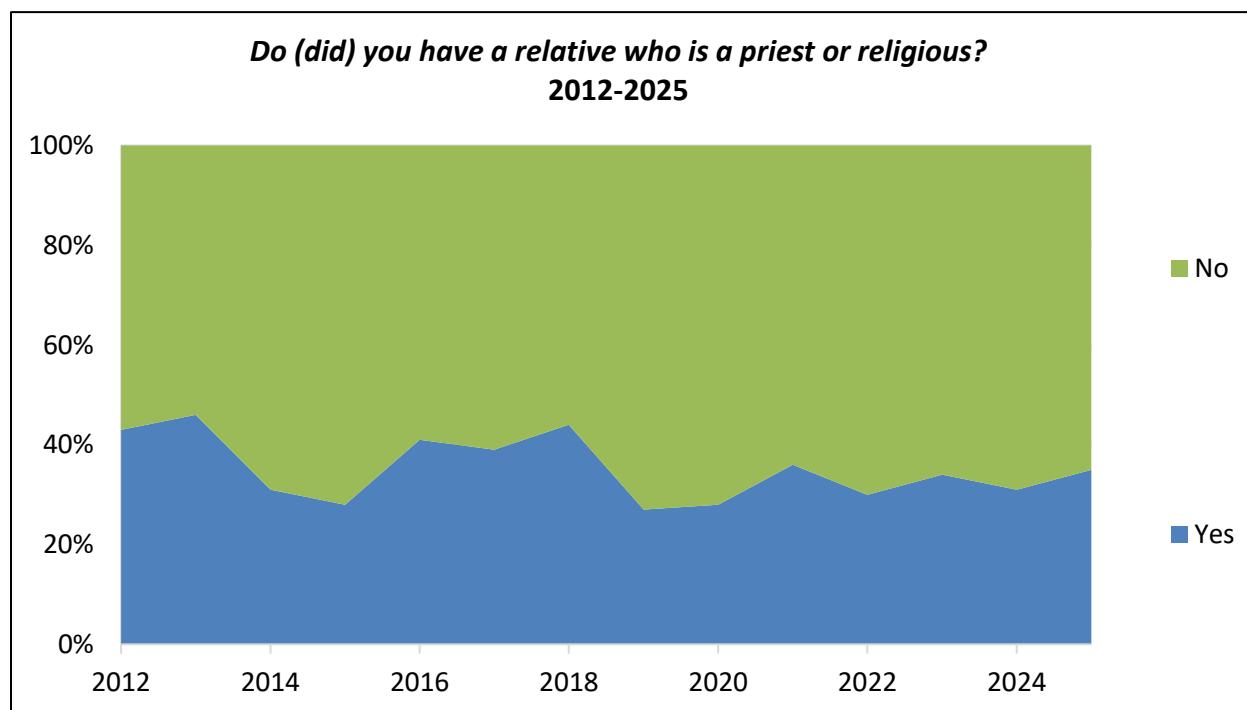
2012-2025



A third (35%) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious.



Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 41% and ranged between 27% and 46%.



Parenting

Almost all (95%) respondents were raised by their biological parents during the most formative part of their childhood. Between 2021 and 2025, their share averaged 97% and ranged between 95% and 99%.

One in ten (9%) was raised by their grandparents during the most formative part of their childhood. Between 2021 and 2025, their share averaged 10% and ranged between 7% and 13%.

Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood? Please check all that apply?

Percentage responding

	Both %	Women %	Men %
Biological parent(s)	95	98	93
Grandparent(s)	9	2	16
Other relative(s)	5	0	9
Adoptive parent(s)	3	2	4
Step parent	2	2	1
Someone else	2	0	3
I prefer not to answer	1	0	2

During the most formative part of their childhood, nearly nine in ten (85%) respondents were raised by a married couple, living together. Five percent were raised by one parent who was either separated or divorced. Three percent were raised by one parent who is widowed. Two percent was raised by an unmarried couple, living together.

During the most formative part of your childhood, were you raised by:

Percentage responding

	Both %	Women %	Men %
Married couple, living together	85	86	85
One parent, separated/divorced	5	5	5
One parent, widowed	3	2	5
Unmarried couple, living together	2	2	2
Something else	2	2	2
I prefer not to answer	1	2	0

Siblings

Almost all responding religious (98%) of the Profession Class of 2025 have at least one sibling.

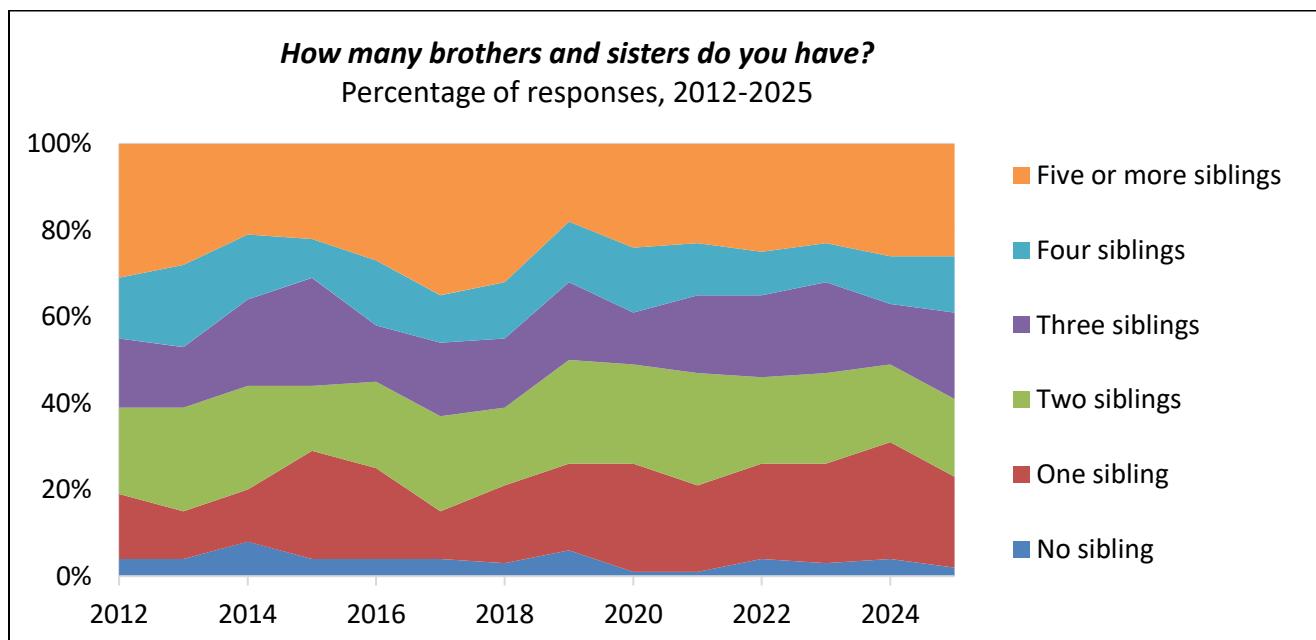
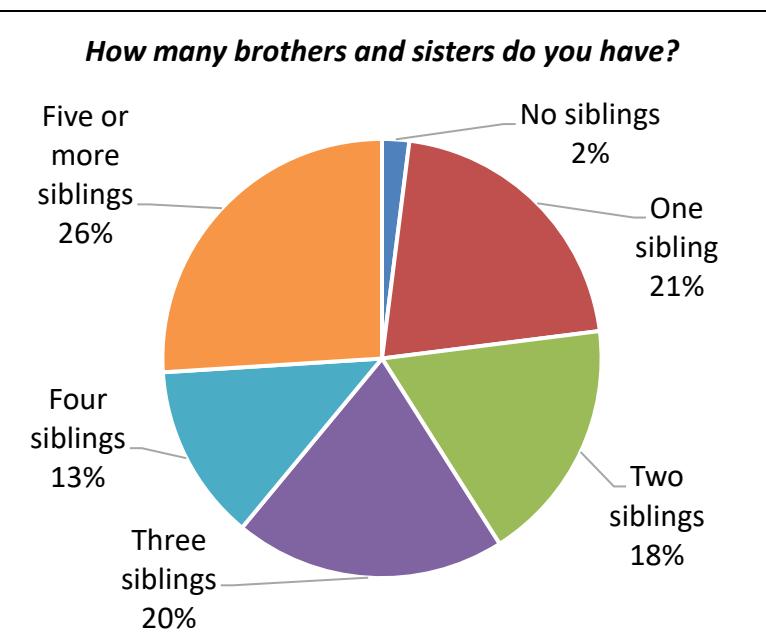
One in five respondents (21%) have one brother or sister. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 19% and ranged between 11% and 27%.

One in five (18%) reports having two siblings. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 21% and ranged between 15% and 26%.

One in five (20%) reports having three siblings. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 17% and ranged between 12% and 25%.

One in ten (13%) reports having four siblings. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 13% and ranged between 9% and 19%.

A quarter (26%) have five or more siblings. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 26% and ranged between 18% and 35%.



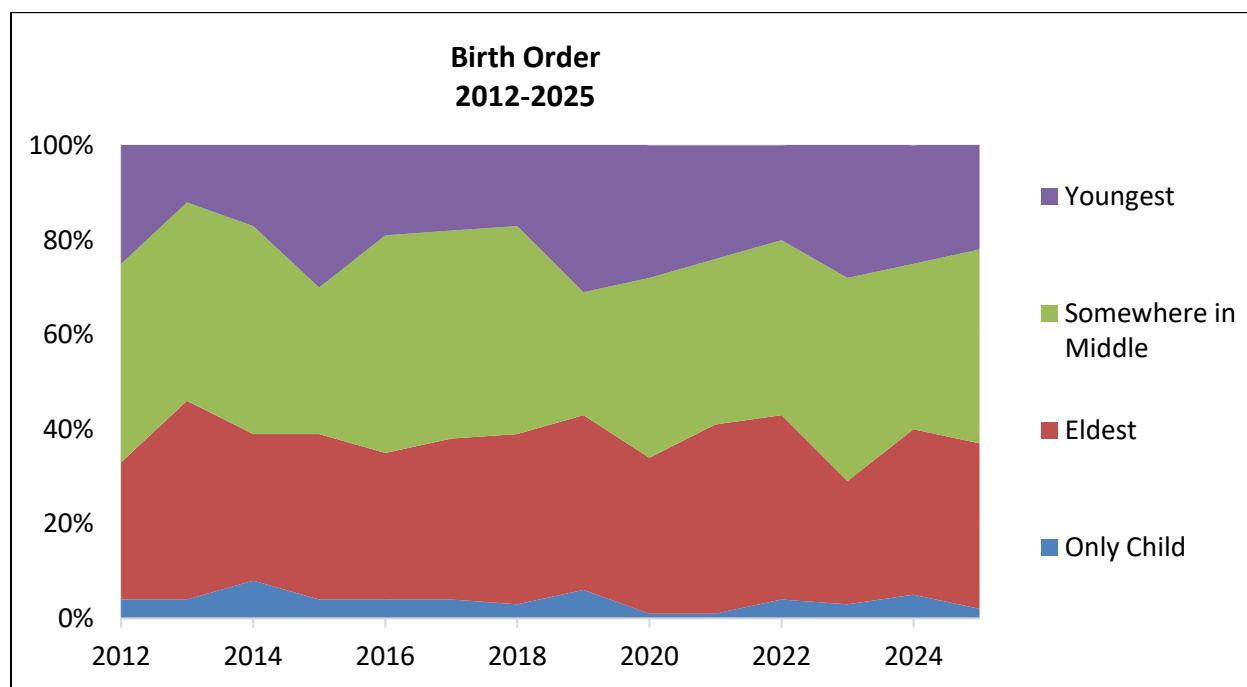
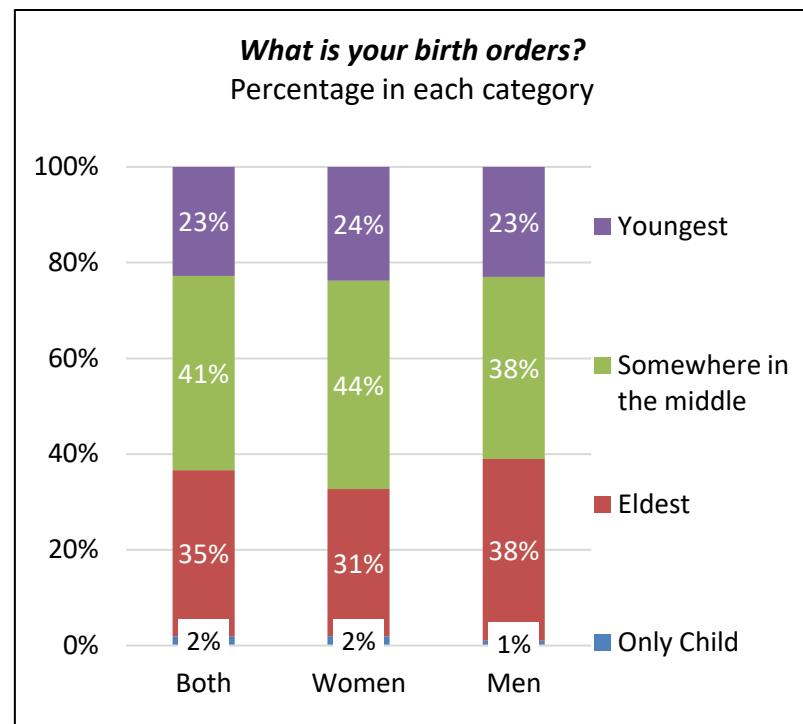
Birth Order

A third of respondents are the eldest. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 35% and ranged between 26% and 42%.

Two in five of the 2025 respondents (41%) were born somewhere in the middle. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 39% and ranged between 26% and 46%.

A quarter of respondents (23%) are the youngest. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 25% and ranged between 17% and 33%.

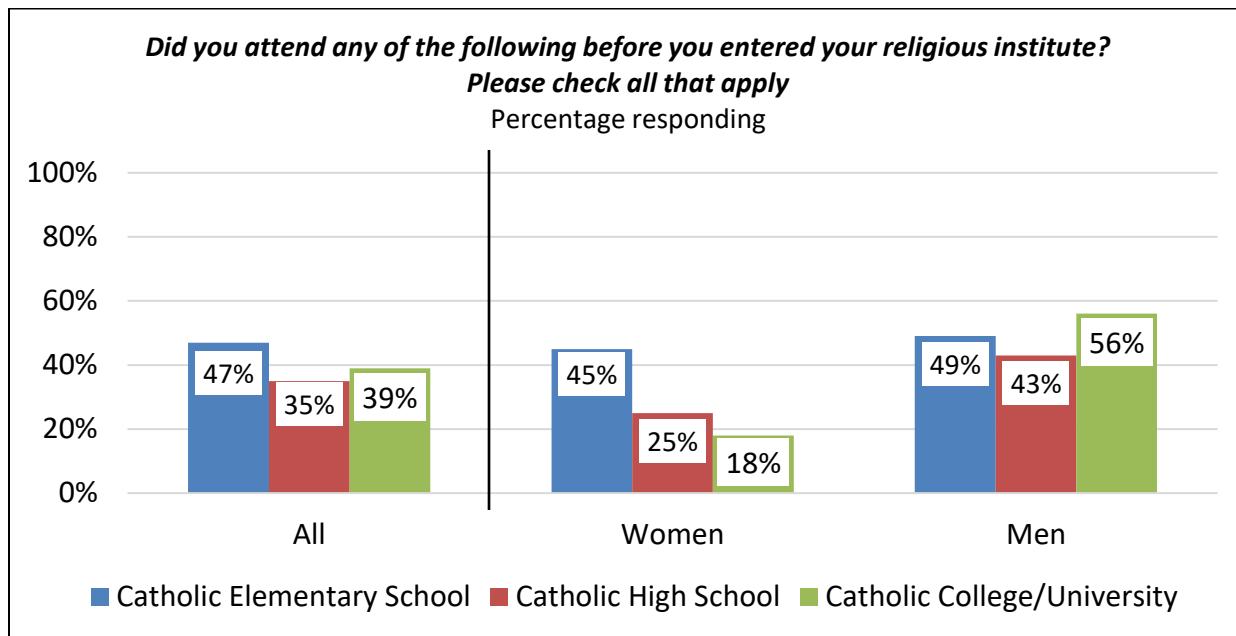
Two percent are the only child in his or her family. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 4% and ranged between 1% and 8%.



Part III: Educational Background

Part III discusses the educational background of the men and women religious.

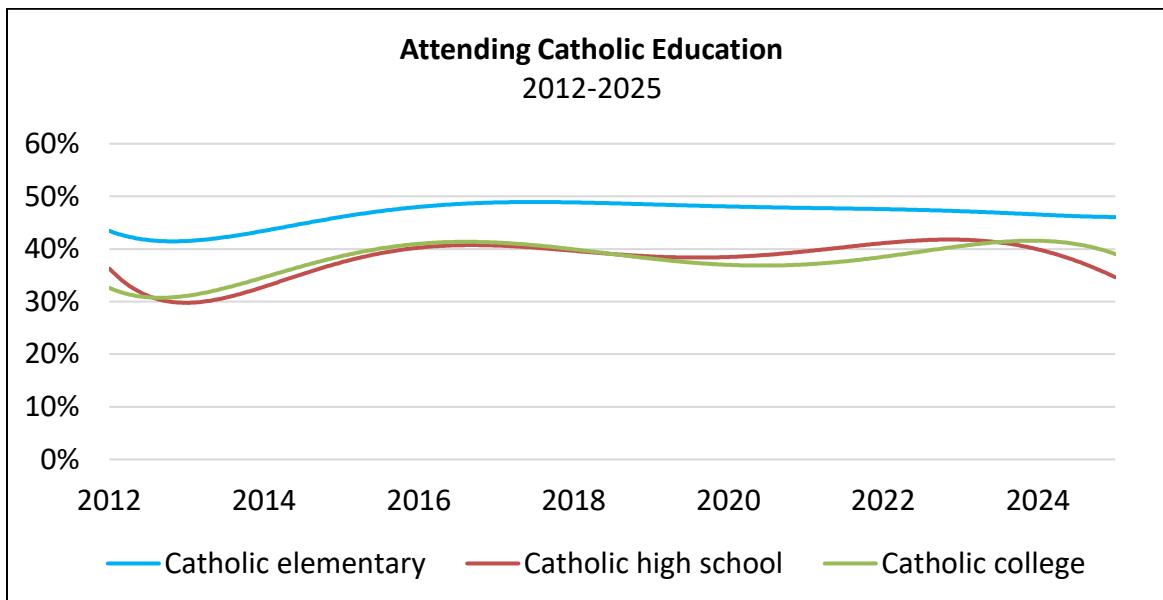
Catholic Education



Half responding religious professing final vows in 2025 (47%) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 47% and ranged between 42% and 51%.

A third (35%) attended a Catholic high school. Men are more likely than men to attend a Catholic high school. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 38% and ranged between 31% and 46%.

Two in five (39%) attended a Catholic college or university. Men are more likely than men to attend a Catholic college or university. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 38% and ranged between 30% and 43%.



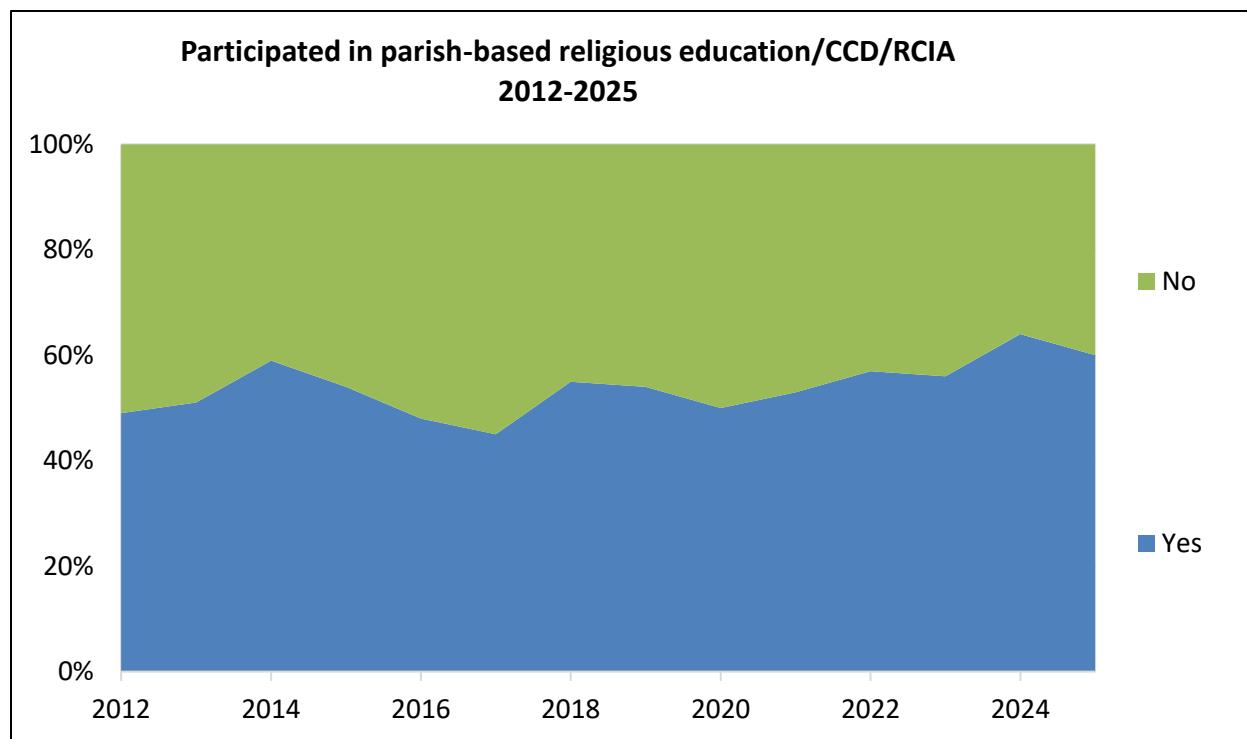
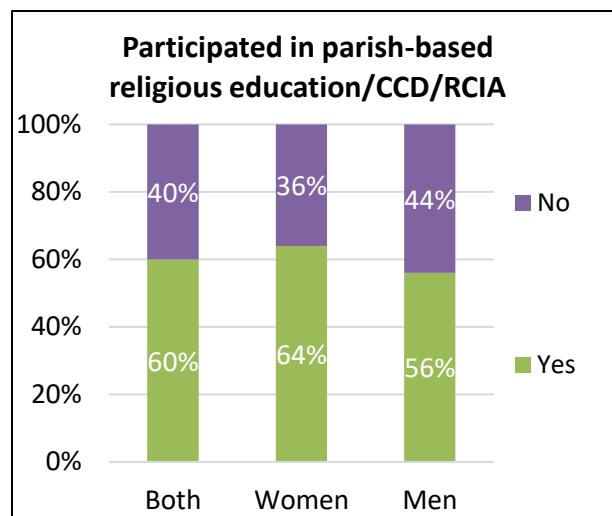
Members of the Profession Class of 2025 are more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2022 national poll conducted by CARA¹, 40% of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school compared to 47% of the members of the Profession Class of 2025. Responding perpetually professed religious of 2025 are also more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (35% among responding religious, compared to 24% of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (39% of responding religious, compared to 7% of U.S. adult Catholics).

¹ CARA Catholic Poll, 2022. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

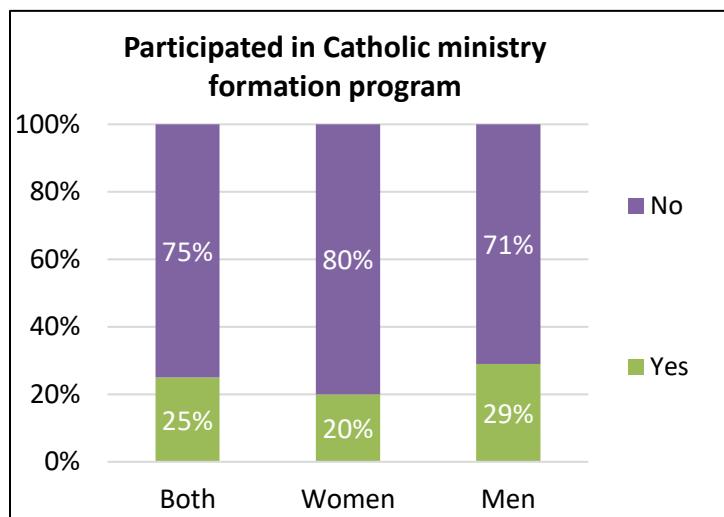
Catholic Religious Education

Three in five respondents (60%) participated in a religious education program/CCD/RCIA in their parish. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 54% and ranged between 45% and 64%.

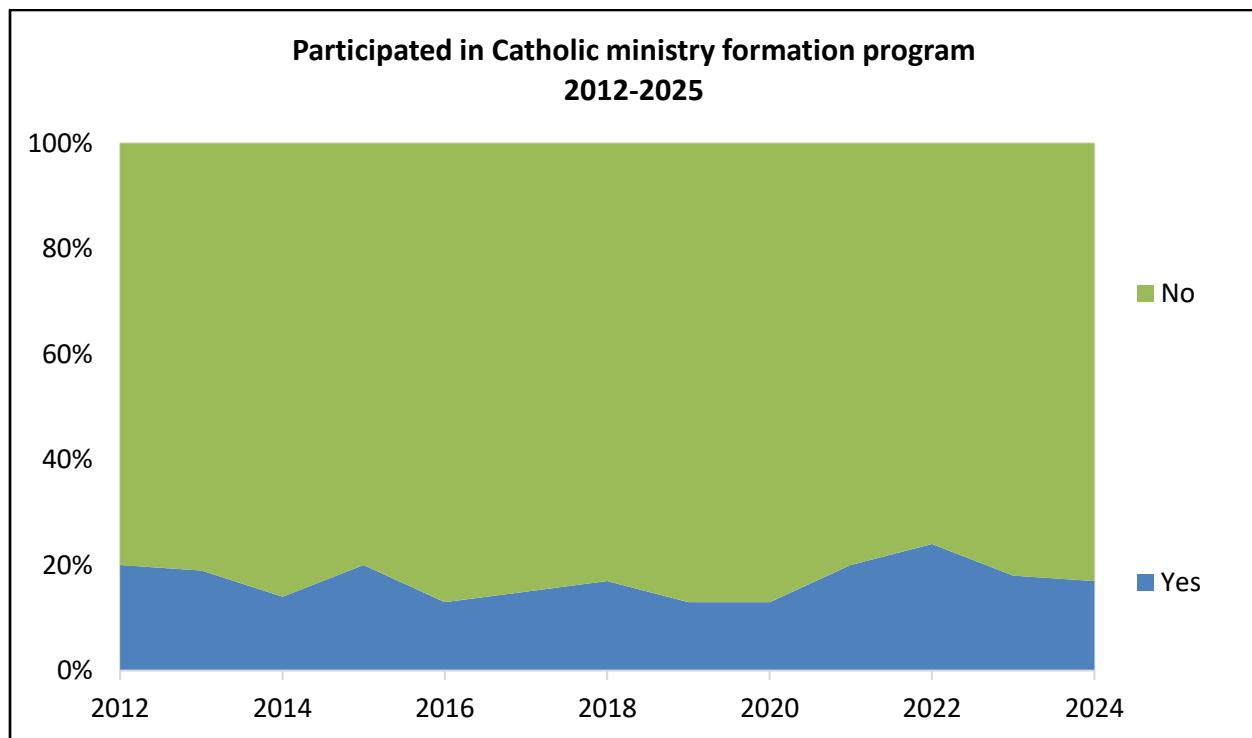
Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 72% did not report attending a Catholic elementary school and 60% did not attend a Catholic high school.



A quarter of responding women and men religious (25%) report that they participated in a Catholic ministry formation program before they entered their religious institute.

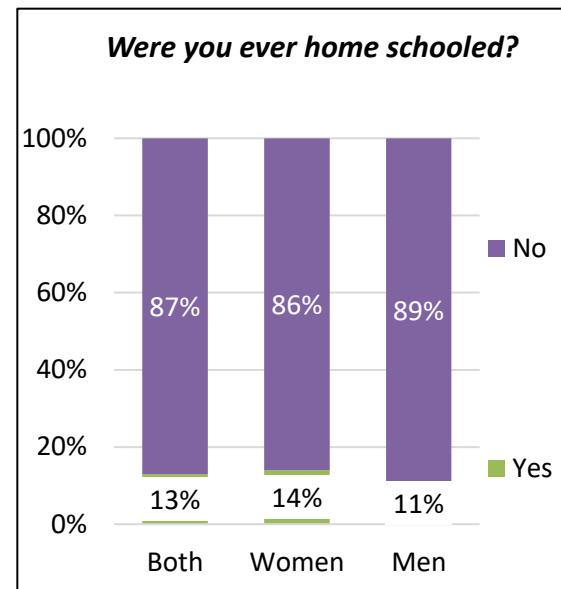


Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 17% and ranged between 13% and 24%.

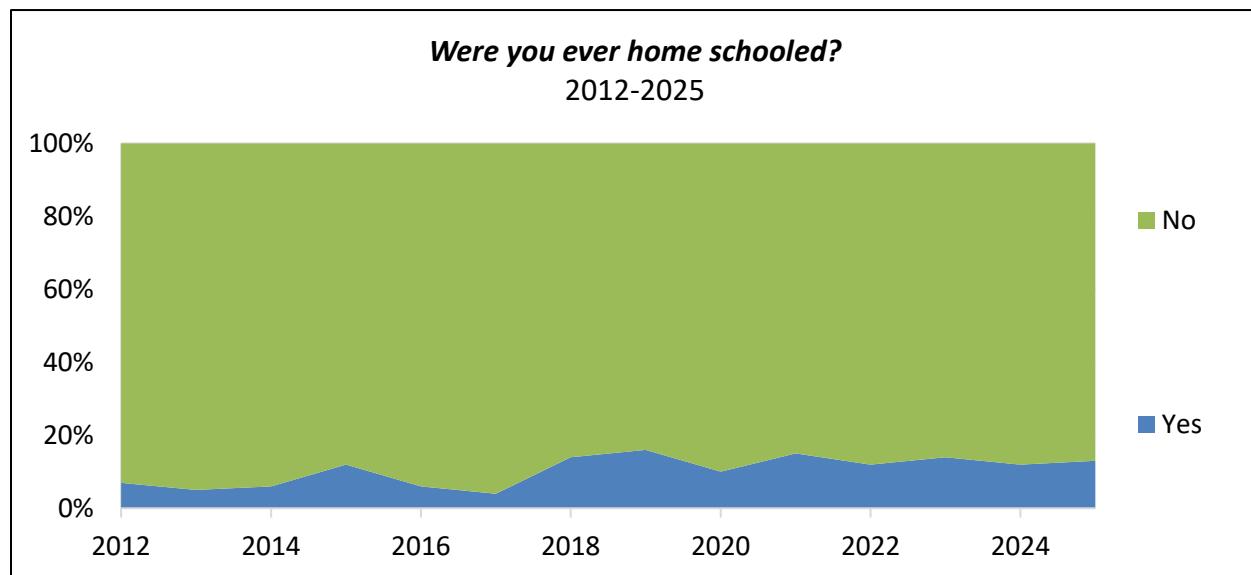


Home Schooling

One in ten (13%) responding religious reports being home schooled at some time in their educational background.



Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 10% and ranged between 4% and 16%.



Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was eight years.

If you were home schooled, total number of years of home schooling?

Profession Class of 2025

	Both [year] %	Women [years] %	Men [years] %
Mean	9	9	10
Median	10	9	10
Range	1-13	1-13	6-13

Highest Education

The responding religious are highly educated. Seven in ten (73%) earned an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute.

Half of respondents of the Profession Class of 2025 completed an undergraduate degree before entering. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 49% and ranged between 38% and 62%.

Highest Education Completed Before Entering Percentage responding

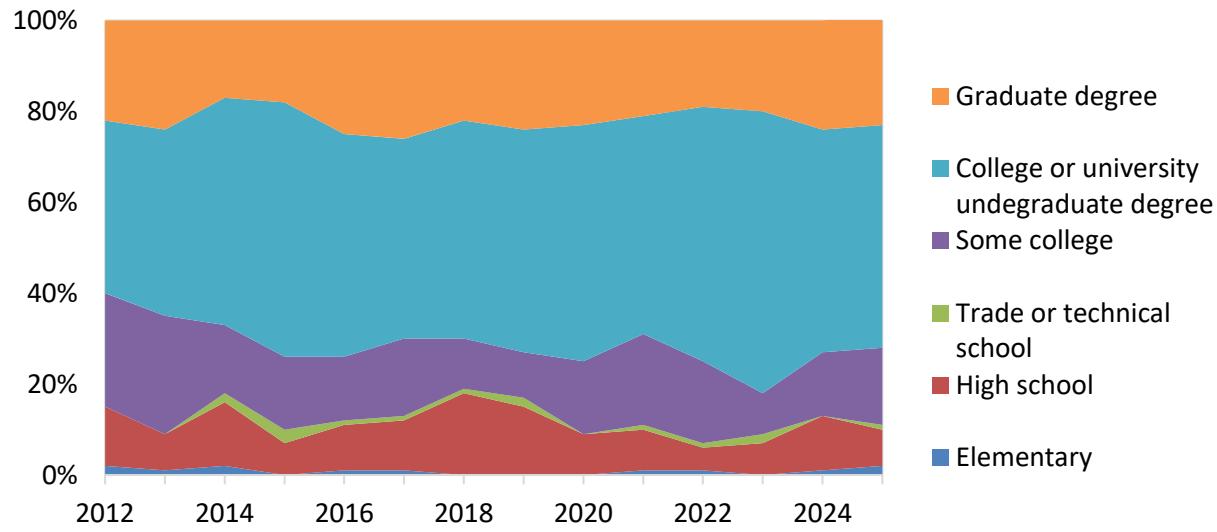
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Elementary	2	3	0
High school	8	2	13
Trade or technical school	1	0	1
Some college, no degree	17	19	16
Undergraduate degree	49	48	49
Graduate degree	24	28	21

A quarter (24%) had a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 22% and ranged between 17% and 26%.

One in ten (10%) religious of the Profession Class of 2025 completed only high school or less before entering the religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 11% and ranged between 5% and 18%.

What is the highest level of education you completed before entering your religious institute?

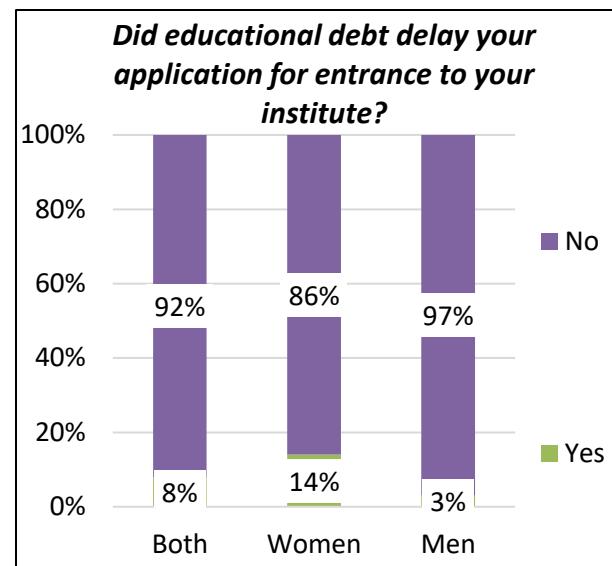
2012-2025



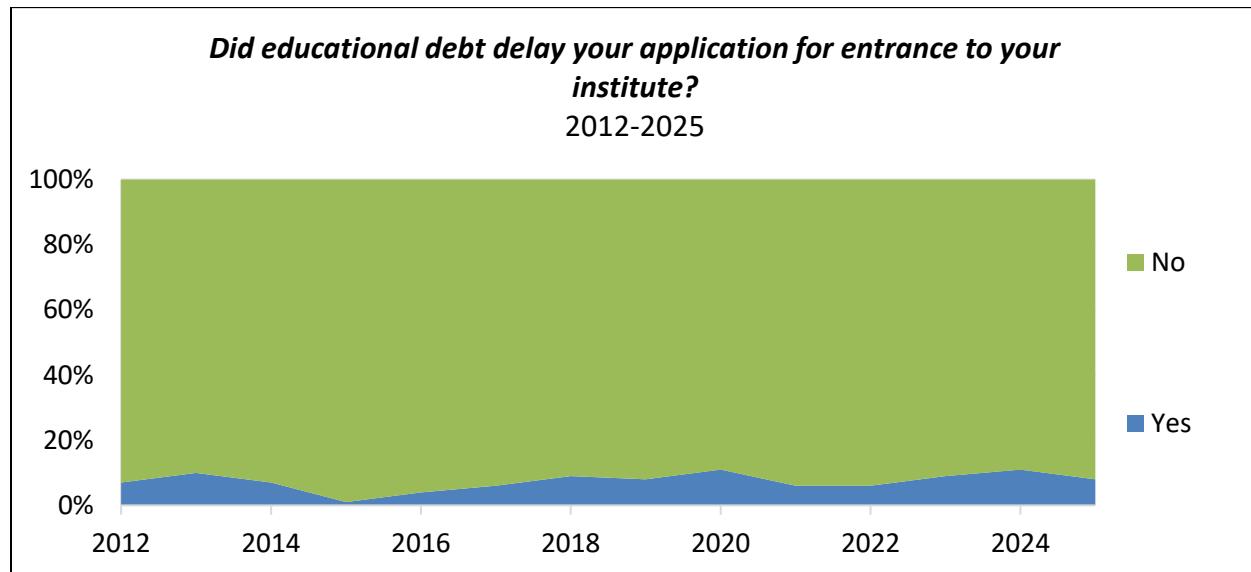
Educational Debt

One in ten responding religious (8%) reports that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to the religious institute. While eight sisters report having educational debt, two religious brothers or priests report the same.

On average, their application for entrance to their institute was delayed because of educational debt for about two years.



Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 7% and ranged between 1% and 11%.



Those responding professed members who had educational debt had, on average, \$55,500 of educational debt at the time of making perpetual profession (half had between \$27,000 and \$40,000 and the other half between \$40,000 and \$110,000).

Impact of Educational Debt on Entrance to Religious Life

	Both	Women	Men
Average amount of debt	55,500	56,250	52,500
Median amount of debt	40,000	40,000	52,500
Range	\$27,000-\$110,000	\$27,000-\$110,000	\$40,000-65,000

Since 2012, the average amount of debt was \$35,141 and ranged between \$15,750 and \$50,000.

Those responding professed members who had educational debt report receiving assistance from:

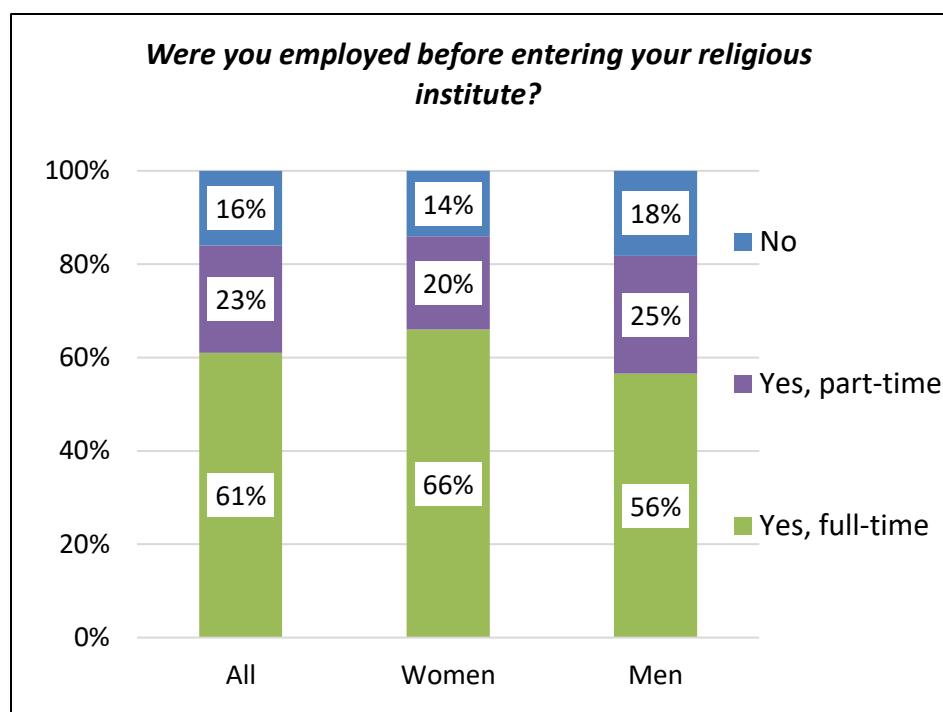
- family members (6 members)
- friends/co-workers (3 members)
- parish (3 members)
- Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations (2 member)
- National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations (2)
- Knights of Columbus Fund for Vocations (1 member)
- Laboure Society (1 members)
- religious community (1 member)

Part IV: Work and Ministry Experience Before Entering

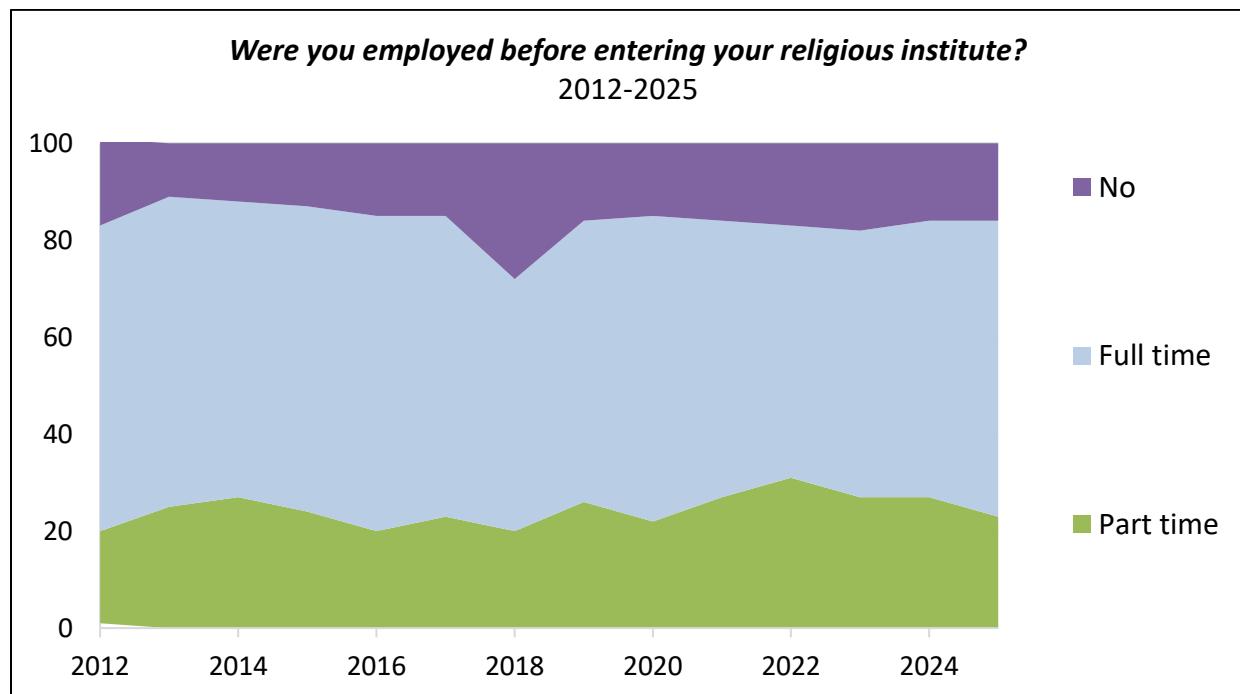
Part IV describes the work and ministry experiences of the women and men religious.

Work Experience

More than four in five (84%) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Three in five (61%) were employed full-time and one in five (23%) were employed part-time before entering their religious institute.



Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 84% and ranged between 72% and 89%.



Prior Work Experience
Percentage in each category

	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Business/Occupational	50	33	66
Education/Academic	29	38	21
Health care	5	10	0
Church/pastoral ministry	2	5	0
Others	14	15	14

- A half of responding religious (50%) report that they were in some form of business, or an occupation or trade, or technology prior to entering their religious institute.
- Three in ten had been employed in education (29%).
- One in ten twenty was employed in a health care sector.
- Two percent was in pastoral ministry (20%).
- More than one in ten (14%) was in other sectors.

Ministry Experience

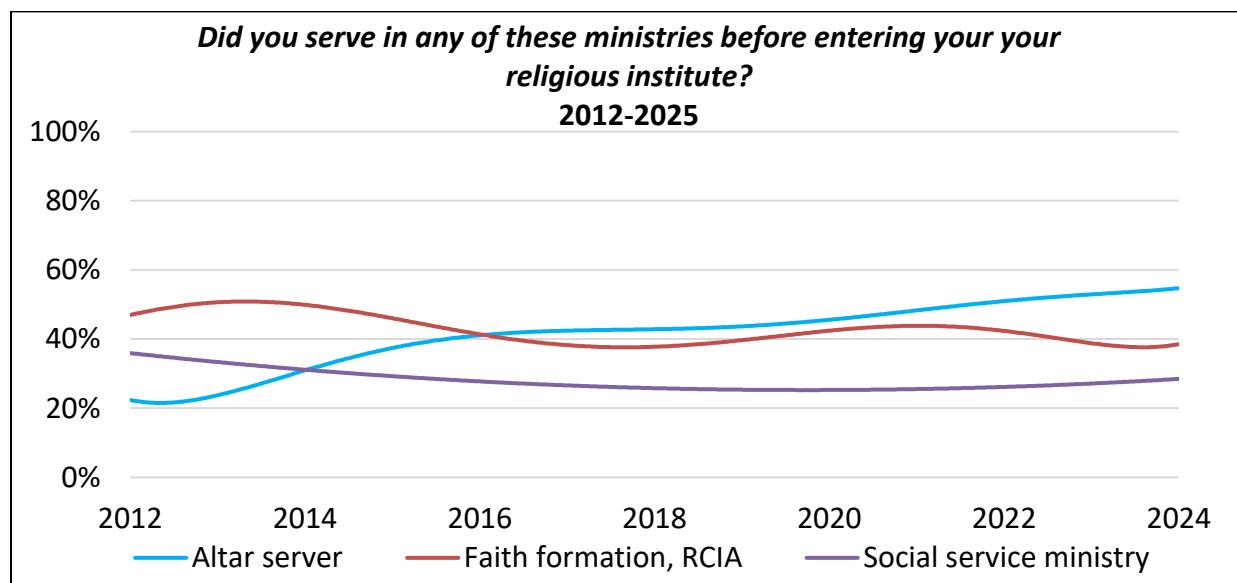
Almost all responding religious (95%) served in one or more specified ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer.

<i>Did you serve in any of these ministries before entering your religious institute? Please check all that apply</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Altar server	60	40	76
Lector	57	52	61
Youth ministry/campus ministry	56	57	54
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	55	54	56
Extraordinary Minister of Communion	44	39	49
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	41	43	40
Social service ministry	32	30	34
Teacher in a Catholic school	18	22	14
Hospital or prison ministry	10	7	11

Six in ten served as altar servers (60%), lectors (57%), in youth ministry/campus ministry (56%), or faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA (55%). Men are more likely than women to serve as altar servers.

Four in ten served as Extraordinary Ministers of Communion (44%) or in music ministry, cantor, or choir (41%). Men are more likely than women to serve as Extraordinary Minister of Communion

Three in ten served in the social service ministry (32%). Two in ten served as teachers in a Catholic school (18%). One in ten served in the hospital or prison ministry (10%).



Program Participation

Eight in ten responding religious (81%) participated in one or more specified ministries before entering their religious institute.

<i>Did you participate in any of these programs or activities before entering your religious institute? Please check all that apply</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Youth ministry or youth group	63	64	63
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	57	68	48
Young adult ministry or group	55	57	53
World Youth Day	21	19	22
Franciscan U. of Steubenville HS Youth Conference	18	21	15
Fellowship of Catholic University Students	13	23	5
National Catholic Youth Conference	11	19	5
St. Vincent de Paul Society	9	15	3
Religious institute volunteer	8	4	10
National Evangelization Team	3	6	0
Catholic Scouting	---	---	0
Catholic Daughters	---	0	---
Knights of Columbus	---	---	0
Solidarity	---	0	---

Six in ten participated in youth ministry or youth group (63%), Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (57%), or young adult ministry or group (55%). Women are more likely than men to participate in a Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center.

Two in ten participated in a World Youth Day (21%) or Franciscan U. of Steubenville HS Youth Conference (18%).

One in ten participated in one of the following:

- Fellowship of Catholic University Students (13%)
- National Catholic Youth Conference (11%)
- St. Vincent de Paul Society (9%)
- Religious institute volunteer (8%)

Three percent of respondents participated National Evangelization Team.

Part V: Vocational Discernment

Part V summarizes the experiences of women and men religious during their vocational discernment period.

Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups

Almost all responding religious of the Profession Class of 2025 (97%) participated in one or more of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis prior to entering their religious institute.

Did you participate in any of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis before entering your religious institute?

Please check all that apply

	Both %	Women %	Men %
Retreats	79	73	83
Rosary	77	84	71
Eucharistic Adoration	71	75	69
Spiritual Direction	67	63	70
Faith-sharing group/Bible study	54	57	51
Liturgy of the Hours	52	43	59
Lectio Divina	47	41	51

Retreat is the most common type of formative prayer experience, with eight in ten (79%) doing so on a regular basis before entering their religious institute. Men are more likely than women to report doing retreats before entering their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 68% and ranged between 56% and 77%.

Nearly eight in ten (77%) regularly did rosary before joining their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 69% and ranged between 59% and 76%.

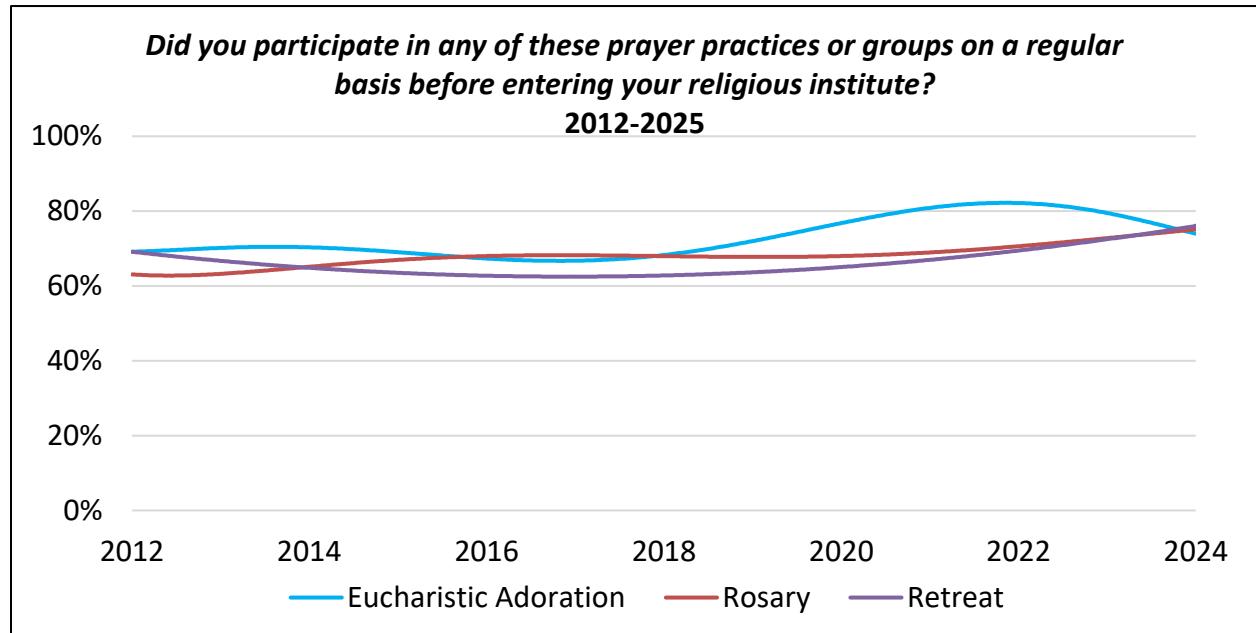
Seven in ten (71%) regularly participated in Eucharistic adoration before joining their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 73% and ranged between 61% and 86%.

Nearly seven in ten (67%) regularly participated in spiritual direction before joining their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 60% and ranged between 54% and 66%.

More than half (54%) regularly participated in faith sharing group/Bible study before joining their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 49% and ranged between 54% and 66%.

Half (52%) regularly prayed the Liturgy of the Hours before joining their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 44% and ranged between 39% and 52%.

About a half (47%) regularly participated in the *Lectio Divina* prayer practice prior to entering their religious institute. This is an ancient prayer practice from the Order of St. Benedict. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 35% and ranged between 28% and 47%.



Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, responding religious report being 18 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, with half being 18 or younger when they first considered a vocation. Some religious considered a vocation to religious life as early as the age four and as old as the age 48.

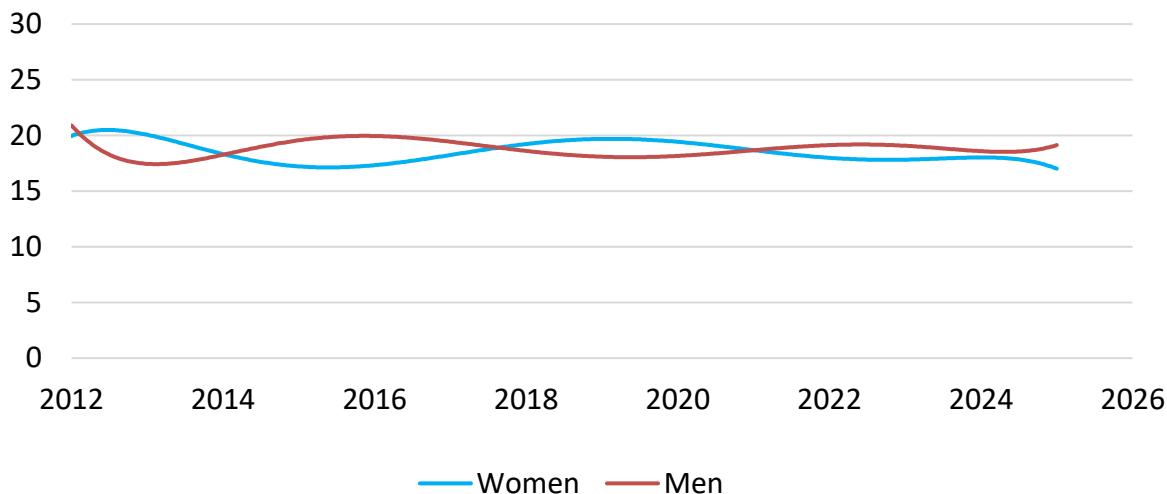
Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life

	Age		
	Both [years]	Women [years]	Men [years]
Mean	18	17	19
Median	18	17	18
Range	4-48	4-34	4-48

Between 2012 and 2025, the average age was 19 and ranged between 17 and 20.

How old were you when you first considered a vocation to religious life?

2012-2025



Encouragement to Consider a Vocation

More than eight in ten (86%) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life.

<i>Were you encouraged to consider religious life by any of these people?</i>			
<i>Please check all that apply</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Religious sister or brother	52	49	54
Friend	48	43	52
Parish priest	46	43	49
Mother	33	28	37
Teacher/Catechist	26	34	20
Other relative	25	17	31
Parishioner	22	17	26
Campus minister/School chaplain	20	13	25
Father	19	19	19
Youth minister	15	17	14
Deacon	9	4	12
Bishop	6	6	6

Half report being encouraged by a religious sister or brother (52%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 46% and ranged between 39% and 59%.

Half report being encouraged by a friend (48%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 44% and ranged between 39% and 59%.

Nearly half report being encouraged by a parish priest (46%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 44% and ranged between 38% and 53%.

A third was encouraged to consider a vocation to religious life by their mother (33%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 27% and ranged between 16% and 34%.

A quarter was encouraged to consider a vocation to religious life by their teacher/Catechist (26%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 19% and ranged between 16% and 34%.

Another quarter reports being encouraged to consider a vocation to religious life by other relatives (25%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 20% and ranged between 17% and 28%.

One in five reports being encouraged to consider a vocation to religious life by a parishioner, Campus minister/school chaplain, father, or youth minister.

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation

Half (53%) report that they were discouraged from considering a vocation to religious life by one or more persons. Women are more likely than men to be discouraged from considering religious life as a vocation.

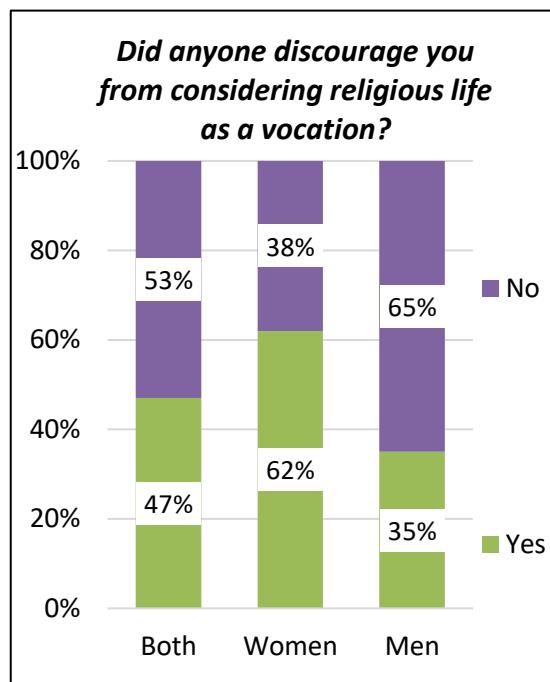
Among those who report being discouraged from considering religious life as a vocation, half were discouraged by a relative. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 36% and ranged between 26% and 53%.

Two in five report being discouraged from considering religious life as a vocation by their mother (40%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 28% and ranged between 17% and 44%.

Two in five report being discouraged from considering religious life as a vocation by a friend or school classmate (38%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 33% and ranged between 21% and 52%.

A third reports being discouraged from considering religious life as a vocation by their father (33%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 24% and ranged between 15% and 43%.

One in five reports being discouraged from considering religious life as a vocation by a colleague or coworker (17%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 13% and ranged between 5% and 21%.



Who discouraged you [from considering religious life as a vocation]? Please check all that apply

	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Other relative	47	43	52
Mother	40	46	32
Friend or school classmate	38	29	52
Father	33	43	20
Colleague or coworker	17	20	12
Someone else	13	11	16
Priest or other clergy	10	9	12
Teacher	3	6	0
Religious sister or brother	0	0	0
Youth minister	0	0	0

Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

On average, responding religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute six years before they entered. Since 2012, the average length was five years.

How many years did you know the members of your religious institute before entering?

	Both [years]	Women [years]	Men [years]
Mean	6	6	6
Median	3	3	3
Range	1-45	1-45	1-40

A quarter (25%) report being first acquainted with their institute in/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital). Men are more likely than women to have become acquainted through this way. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 22% and ranged between 15% and 31%.

How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?

Please check all that apply

	Both %	Women %	Men %
In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital)	25	12	37
Through print or online promotional material published by the institute	19	17	21
Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor	16	14	18
Through a friend or relative in the institute	11	12	10
Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute	9	7	10
Through a vocation matching or placement service	5	7	4
At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)	12	19	7
Others	28	41	17

One in five became first acquainted with their institute through print or online promotional material published by the institute (19%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 25% and ranged between 19% and 36%.

One in five indicates that they first became acquainted with their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor (16%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 20% and ranged between 16% and 28%.

One in ten indicates that they first became acquainted with their institute through a friend or relative in the institute (11%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 14% and ranged between 9% and 22%.

About one in ten first became acquainted with their institute through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute (9%). Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 9% and ranged between 5% and 13%.

Three in ten (28%) said they first became acquainted with their religious institute through some other means. Some of those “other” responses included:

- A lady at my parish offered to take a group of girls to visit the community.
- A pilgrimage in Rome.
- Acquaintance.
- At a conference on evangelization held by a campus ministry group (SPO).
- Attended seminary at Mount Angel.
- By being into the third order Carmelite.
- Employee of the congregation.
- Facebook.
- From my home parish and during vocational meetings.
- High School.
- I grew up 30 mins from our Carmelite Basilica in Wisconsin, where I served Mass throughout my high school years. As a result, I was acquainted with the Discalced Carmelite Friars for as long as I could remember.
- I was invited to attend a Young Women's Retreat by a friend at the sisters' retreat center. I was not even thinking about a Vocation.
- I was looking for spiritual director.
- Lived in the same city as one of their convents.
- living together as a guest.
- My former Parish.
- My parish was an SVD parish.
- My spiritual director was a member of the institute.
- One of the CSJ Orange sisters helped me with work.
- Personal online research.
- Professors at my university were affiliated with the Order.
- Reading lives of the saints who were Discalced Carmelites, especially St. Therese of Lisieux.
- Recommendation of a religious brother.
- Social Media.
- Spiritual direction.
- Studying history.
- The bishop was visiting my community with the sisters.
- The Sisters visiting our Newman Center regularly.
- Through a friend who mentioned the community to me.
- Through an online search (Google) that led to the website.
- Vocation director from one group referred me to my congregation's vocation director.
- While participating in a 'Mass Run.'
- Word of mouth.
- Working nearby the mother church and attending Mass there.

Participating in Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences

More than nine in ten (92%) had participated in at least one of these programs or experiences shown in the table below prior to entering their religious institute.

<i>Did you participate in any of these vocation/discernment programs before entering your religious institute?</i>			
Please check all that apply			
	All	Women	Men
	%	%	%
“Come and See” experience	78	82	73
Vocation retreat	58	45	69
Live-in experience	28	38	20
“Nun Run”	13	13	----
“Andrew Dinner”	5	----	5
Other	5	4	6

Among the vocation programs and experiences about which they were asked, four in five (78%) report having participated in a “Come and See” experience before entering their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 68% and ranged between 56% and 84%.

Six in ten responding religious (58%) participated in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 51% and ranged between 45% and 59%.

Three in ten (28%) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering. Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 27% and ranged between 17% and 34%.

More than one in ten women had participated in a “Nun Run” (13%) (asked only of women), while one in twenty men had participated in an “Andrew Dinner” (5%) (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:

- I studied at Minor Seminary - High School.
- Joint ministry and spending time visiting communities.
- Live in volunteer experience w a community that I ultimately didn't enter
- Mater Redemptoris House of Formation.
- Service Trip sponsored by a Religious Institute.
- Vocational discernment group.

***Did you participate in any of these vocation/discernment programs
before entering your religious institute?
2012-2025***

