

December 2011

***The Profession Class of 2011:
Survey of Women and Men Religious
Professing Perpetual Vows***

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

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Professing Perpetual Vows*

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



December 2011

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2011 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 have brothers and who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 175 contemplative communities in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (146 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 2011. 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 to the major superiors and to the women and men religious who had been identified by them, a total of 84 sisters and nuns and eight brothers responded to the survey by December 15, 2011. (These eight brothers do not intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination; the study excluded any brothers who are preparing for priesthood.) This represents a response rate of 75 percent of the 122 potential members of the Profession Class of 2011 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

The response rate from the 464 responding major superiors was 57 percent (69 percent of LCWR superiors, 61 percent of CMSM superiors, 55 percent of CMSWR superiors, and 31 percent of superiors of contemplative communities).

Major Findings

- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2011 is 40. The average age among women professing perpetual vows in 2011 is 39, while that for men is 42. Half of the responding women religious are age 39 or younger; among responding brothers, half are age 44 or younger.
- In general, religious of the Profession Class of 2011 are more diverse than other perpetually professed religious in terms of their racial and ethnic identity. While nearly two-thirds (65 percent) identify as white, nearly one in five (19 percent) identifies as Asian, and almost one in ten (nine percent) identifies as Hispanic.
- Most responding religious (70 percent) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most common countries of origin are Vietnam, the Philippines, or India. On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 21 years old when they first came to the United States and they have lived here for 11 years before perpetual profession.

Family Background

- More than nine in ten (94 percent) responding religious have been Catholic since birth. About eight in ten (79 percent) come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Responding brothers are slightly more likely than sisters or nuns to have two Catholic parents (88 percent compared to 78 percent). Among the 6 percent of respondents who became Catholic later in life, the average age at which they converted was 24 (22 for women and 33 for men).
- All the responding religious have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is one. Women are most likely to have one sibling, while men most often have three. More than two in five (42 percent) of these responding religious have four or more siblings. More than one-third (35 percent) are the oldest child in the family and about a quarter (26 percent) are the youngest. Women are more likely to be the youngest (27 percent for women compared to 12 percent for men), while men are more frequently a middle child (50 percent for men and 38 percent for women). Men and women are equally likely to be an eldest child (38 percent for men compared to 35 percent for women).

Education, Work, and Ministry Experience

- Nearly half of responding religious (48 percent, about equal for women and men) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is a rate slightly higher than that for all Catholic adults in the United States (42 percent). These respondents are also more likely than other U.S. Catholics 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 (25 percent of women religious, compared to just 7 percent of U.S. adult Catholics). Responding women religious are three times as likely as men to have attended a Catholic high school (39 percent among women compared to 12 percent for men). Women are also twice as likely to have attended a Catholic college (25 percent for women compared to 12 percent for men).

- The responding religious are highly educated. Sixteen percent of responding religious earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute (including 26 percent among brothers). Nearly six in ten (57 percent) entered their religious institute with at least a bachelor's degree or more (56 percent for women and 76 percent for men).
- Nearly nine in ten responding religious (87 percent) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Of those who were employed, almost one in four (23 percent) were employed part-time and just under two-thirds (64 percent) were employed full-time before entering the institute. Men were more likely to be employed in business or education, while women tended toward health care or church ministry professions.
- Many responding religious were active in parish life before entering their religious institute. One-third participated in a young adult group and one in five participated in a youth ministry or a youth group. About one in four (24 percent) was active in campus ministry or a Newman Club on campus.
- Eight in ten had ministry experience before entering their religious institute, most commonly in faith formation, some form of liturgical ministry, or social service ministry. 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. Two-thirds joined in retreats (more common among women than men) or regularly prayed the Rosary and three in five participated in Eucharistic Adoration before entering. About half regularly participated in a faith sharing or Bible study group and/or in regular spiritual direction.

Consideration of Religious Life and Choice of Community

- On average, responding religious report that they were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, but half were 17 or younger when they first did so. This average age is slightly younger than that reported in last year's survey.
- Eight in ten responding religious say they were encouraged to consider religious life by someone in their life. Just under half (46 percent) say they were encouraged by a religious sister or brother. Sisters and nuns were more likely than brothers to say they were encouraged to consider religious life by a religious (48 percent among women compared to 25 percent among men).

- More than two-thirds of responding religious (68 percent) 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 (36 percent) or by friends or classmates (33 percent). Women were more likely than men to say they were discouraged by other family members (37 percent compared to 25 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. About a quarter (27 percent) were introduced to their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor. Women are equally likely as men to say they were introduced to their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor.
- A great majority of the religious of the Profession Class of 2011 (86 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 (61 percent) or a vocation retreat (39 percent). Men were slightly more likely than women to have participated in a “Come and See” experience (75 percent and 60 percent, respectively) while women were more likely to have participated in a vocation retreat (40 percent for women compared to 25 percent for men).

Introduction

In April 2011, the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2011 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 design two questionnaires – one for women religious and another for brothers – that was patterned after the questionnaire used for the “Profession Class of 2010” study of women religious professing perpetual vows in 2010. 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 2011.

To obtain the names and contact information for the religious professing perpetual vows in 2011, 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 175 contemplative communities in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (146 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 2011. 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.

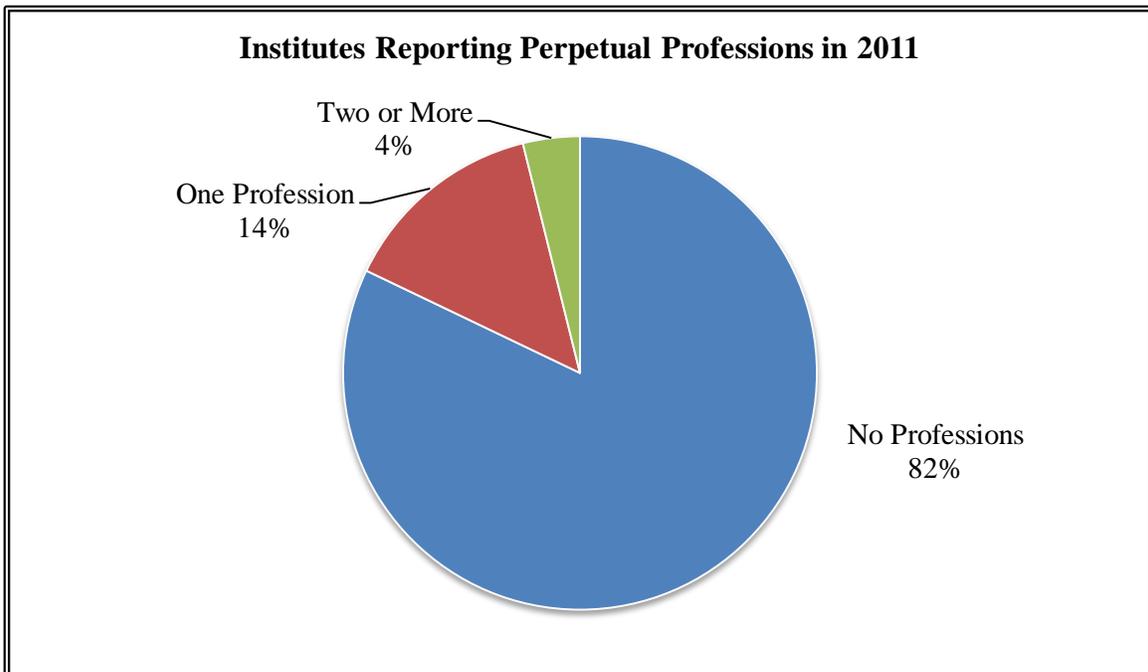
After repeated follow-ups to the major superiors and to the women and men religious who had been identified by them, a total of 84 sisters and nuns and eight brothers responded to the survey by December 15, 2011. (These eight brothers do not intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination; the study excluded any brothers who are preparing for priesthood.) This represents a response rate of 75 percent of the 122 potential members of the Profession Class of 2011 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

The response rate from the 464 responding major superiors was 57 percent (69 percent of LCWR superiors, 61 percent of CMSM superiors, 55 percent of CMSWR superiors, and 31 percent of superiors of contemplative communities).

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 811 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 2011. A total of 464 major superiors responded (57 percent) with 122 names of women religious and brothers.



A total of 381 major superiors (82 percent of those responding) reported that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2011, 65 major superiors (14 percent) reported one member professing perpetual vows, and 18 major superiors (4 percent) reported from two to seven.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 52 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the brothers who responded come from eight different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious.

Age of Professed

The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2011 is 40. Among responding women, half are age 39 or younger. For responding brothers, half are age 44 or younger.

Age of Professed Women and Men			
Percentage in each age category			
	Both	Women	Men
Age 25-29	20%	22%	0%
Age 30-39	38	38	37
Age 40-49	23	19	63
Age 50-59	13	14	0
Age 60 and older	6	7	0
Average age	40	40	42
Median age	39	39	44
Range in years	26-71	26-71	32-48

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Profession Class of 2011 is 26 (there were five of this age) and the oldest is 71 years of age. Six women respondents are professing perpetual vows at age 60 or older. Among brothers, the youngest is 32 and the oldest is 48.

Race and Ethnic Background

Two-thirds of responding religious (65 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	65%	66%	50%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	19	17	38
Hispanic/Latino/a	9	10	0
African/African American/black	4	4	12
Native American	0	0	0
Other	3	3	0

Nearly one in five (19 percent) of the Profession Class of 2011 identify as Asian, and almost one in ten (9 percent) identifies as Hispanic or Latina (no responding brothers identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino). In general, religious of the Profession Class of 2011 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

Seven in ten responding religious were born in the United States.

Country of Birth			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
United States	70%	70%	64%
Vietnam	8	8	0
Other Asia	6	5	12
Latin America	4	5	0
Philippines	4	4	12
Africa	3	2	12
India	3	4	0
Other countries	2	2	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 16 different countries of origin. Among Latinas responding to the survey, half were born in the United States.

Responding religious who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 18 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 1992 or earlier.

Entrance to the United States				
	<u>Year</u>	<u>Age at Entry</u>		
	Both	Both	Women	Men
Mean	1993	21	21	23
Median	1992	19	19	30
Range	1972-2008	7-44	7-44	8-30

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 21. Half were age 19 or younger when they came to live in the United States; the youngest was seven and the oldest was 44 at the time she entered the United States.

Family Background

More than nine in ten responding religious (94 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	94%	95%	88%
Became Catholic later in life	6	5	12
Average age at conversion	24	22	33

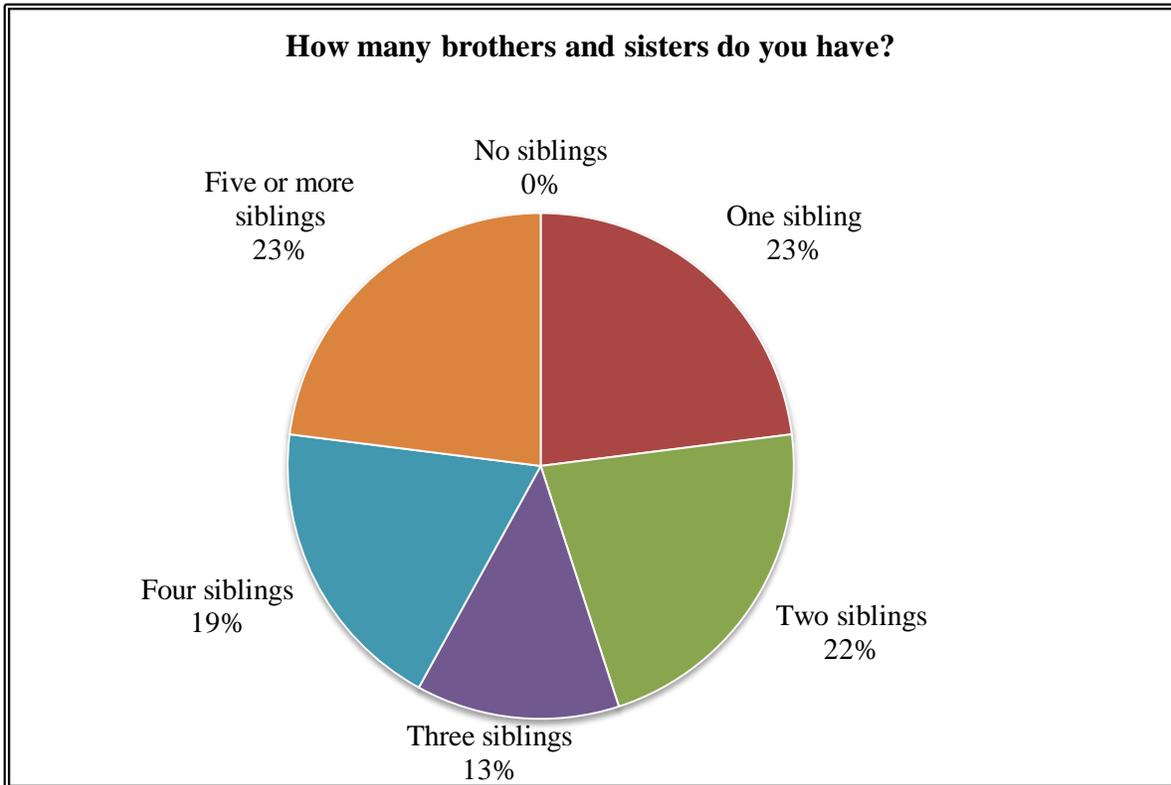
Those who came into full communion with the Catholic Church from another denomination or those who converted from another faith tradition came from a variety of faiths: Anglican, Buddhist, Methodist, Presbyterian, one “nominally Christian,” and one “no religious affiliation.”

Nearly all respondents report that when they were children they had at least one parent who was Catholic; almost eight in ten (79 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	79%	78%	88%
Mother Catholic, father not	11	12	0
Neither parent was Catholic	8	7	12
Father Catholic, mother not	2	3	0

In addition to the predominantly Catholic background of their parents, many of these responding religious also report that they have a relative who is a priest or a religious. In the Profession Class of 2011, 42 percent of respondents report that they have or had a relative who is a priest or a religious (not shown in the table above). All of these were religious women; none of the brothers had a relative who was a priest or religious.

More than three-quarters (77 percent) of the religious in the Profession Class of 2011 have more than one sibling. Nearly a quarter (23 percent) has one brother or sister and more than a third (35 percent) report having two or three. More than four in ten (42 percent) have four or more siblings.



On average, respondents have three siblings. No one from the Profession Class of 2011 reports being an only child and only one reports that he or she has ten or more brothers and sisters (14). The most common response to this question, among the women, is one sibling. For brothers, the most common response is three siblings.

What is your birth order?
Percentage in each category

	Both	Women	Men
Youngest	26%	27%	12%
Middle	39	38	50
Oldest	35	35	38

Overall, these respondents are slightly most likely to be one of the middle children in their family (nearly four in ten women and half of the brothers was a middle child), but they are almost as likely to be the eldest child (more than one in three were the oldest). They are least likely to be the youngest child.

Education

Nearly half (48 percent) of those responding attended a Catholic elementary school. More than a third (36 percent) attended a Catholic high school and a quarter attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute.

Attendance at Catholic School*			
Percentage responding			
	Both	Women	Men
Elementary	48%	48%	50%
High School	36	39	12
College	25	25	12

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

Members of the Profession Class of 2011 are more likely than 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 48 percent among these religious. Responding religious of 2011 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 (25 percent of responding religious, compared to just 7 percent of U.S. adult Catholics). Men were less likely than women to have attended a Catholic high school (12 percent for men compared to 39 percent for women) or a Catholic college (12 percent for men compared to 25 percent for women).

In addition, 18 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 of the respondents participated in a religious education program in their parish. This percentage is the

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

same for both women and men. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, six in ten did not report attending a Catholic school at either the elementary or high school level.

Three percent of responding religious report being home schooled at some time in their educational background (although none of the brothers report this). Among those religious women who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was nine years.

The responding religious are highly educated. Nearly six in ten (57 percent) earned an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute.

Highest Education Completed Before Entering			
Percentage responding			
	Both	Women	Men
High school	17%	17%	12%
Trade or technical school	2	2	0
Some college, no degree	24	25	12
Undergraduate degree	41	40	50
Graduate degree	16	16	26

One in six (17 percent) religious of the Profession Class of 2011 completed only high school before entering the religious institute and a great majority (81 percent) completed at least some college before entering their religious institute. Responding brothers are a little more likely than sisters or nuns to have a college degree before entering their religious institute: three-quarters of brothers have a college degree compared to 56 percent of women religious.

Work Experience

Nearly nine in ten responding religious (87 percent) report some type of work experience prior to entering the religious institute. Almost one in four (23 percent) were employed part-time and just under two-thirds (64 percent) had been employed full-time before entering their institute.

Prior Work Experience			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
Business/Occupational	36%	34%	50%
Education/Academic	33	32	38
Health care	21	23	0
Church ministry	4	5	0
Recreation	3	3	0
Government/Military	2	1	12
Student	1	1	0

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 (23 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. Three-quarters participated in one or more of these programs or activities before entering.

Participation in Religious Programs or Activities*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Young adult ministry or group	33%	33%	25%
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	24	26	0
Youth ministry or youth group	20	21	0
World Youth Day	14	14	12
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	12	13	0
Religious institute volunteer	6	6	12
Sodality	5	5	***
National Catholic Youth Conference	3	4	0
Fellowship of Catholic University Students	2	2	0
National Evangelization Team	2	2	0
Catholic Scouting	1	**	12
Other	1	1	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.

- One in three respondents participated in young adult ministry or a young adult group before entering. Women were slightly more likely than men to have participated in a young adult ministry or group (33 percent compared to 25 percent).
- One in four (24 percent, but only women) were involved in Catholic campus ministry or in a Newman Center while in college. One in five (again, only women respondents) participated in youth ministry or a youth group.
- More than one in ten (14 percent) participated in World Youth Day, with men and women in nearly equal proportions. About the same proportion (12 percent, all women) participated in the Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference.

A great majority of responding religious (81 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	48%	49%	38%
Lector	43	43	38
Extraordinary Minister of Communion	41	42	25
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	40	42	12
Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service)	26	29	0
Hospital or prison ministry	14	13	25
Altar server	13	10	50
Teacher in a Catholic school	8	7	12

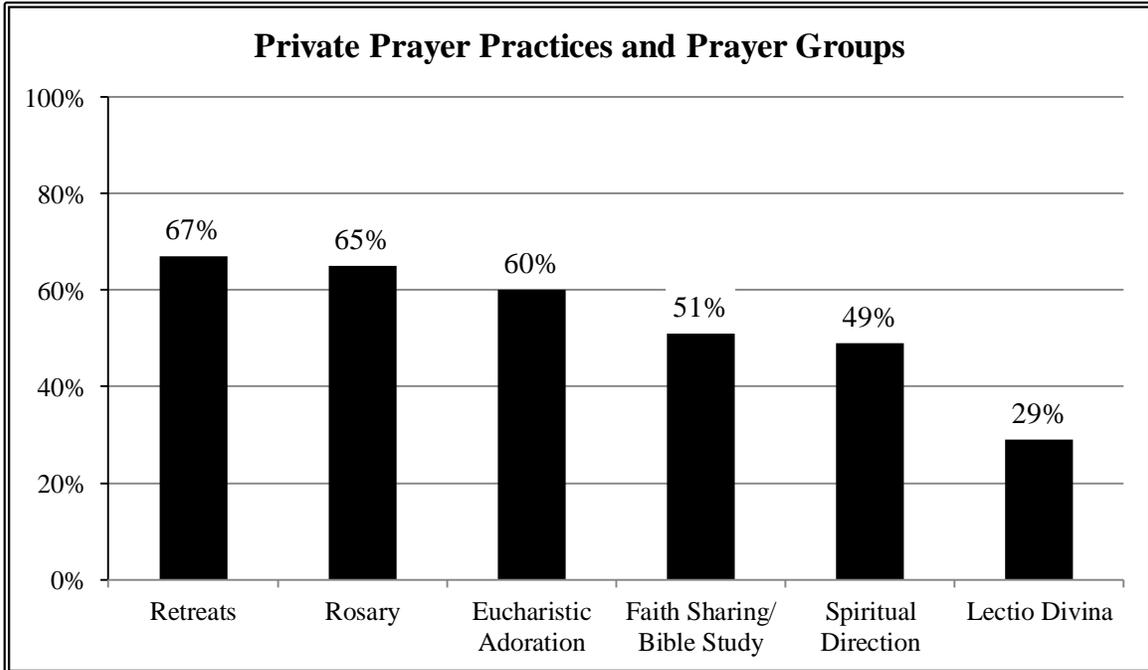
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- 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 (49 percent for women compared to 38 percent for men). Four in ten 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 25 percent for men).
- About four in ten respondents served in liturgical ministries, such as lector (43 percent), Extraordinary Minister of Communion (41 percent), or music ministry (40 percent) before entering their religious institute. Women were more likely than men to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Communion or music ministers.
- A quarter (26 percent) of respondents reported that they served in a social service ministry, such as a Catholic Charities program, or some other community service. This type of service was reported exclusively by women.
- 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.

- Eighty-one 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 (83 percent) are more likely to have so served in ministry than men (62 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 2011 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 two out of three religious of the Profession Class of 2011.
- Just under two-thirds of respondents regularly prayed the Rosary (65 percent) or participated in Eucharistic Adoration (60 percent) prior to entering their religious institute.
- About half report participating on a regular basis in a faith sharing or Bible study group (51 percent) or receiving spiritual direction (49 percent) before entering their religious institute.

- Just under one-third (29 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.

New women religious are about twice as likely as men to report making retreats prior to their entry into religious life (70 percent for women compared to 38 percent for men).

Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups*		
Percentage checking each response		
	Women	Men
Retreats	70%	38%
Rosary	64	75
Eucharistic Adoration	63	25
Faith-sharing group/Bible study	54	25
Spiritual direction	49	50
Lectio Divina	29	38

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

- Women are more likely than men to participate in Eucharistic Adoration before they entered (63 percent for women compared to 25 percent for men).
- Women are also more likely than men to be involved in a faith-sharing group or Bible study (54 percent for women compared to 25 percent for men).

Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, responding religious report that they were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, but half were under the age of 17 when they first considered a vocation.

Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life			
	Age		
	Both	Women	Men
Mean	19	19	20
Median	17	17	19
Range	3-64	3-64	5-37

Encouragement to Consider a Vocation

Eight in ten responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life. Nearly half (46 percent) say they were encouraged by a religious sister or brother.

Encouragement to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
Religious sister or brother	46%	48%	25%
Friend	38	38	38
Parish priest	34	32	50
Mother	18	18	25
Other relative	15	16	12
Parishioner	14	14	12
Campus minister/School chaplain	12	13	0
Teacher/Catechist	12	13	0
Father	8	7	12
Youth minister	5	6	0
Deacon	3	4	0
Bishop	2	2	0

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

Many respondents were encouraged by a friend or parish priest.

- Almost four in ten (38 percent), equally women and men, say that a friend encouraged their vocation. More than a third (34 percent) were encouraged to consider a vocation to religious life by their parish priest. Brothers more commonly reported that they were encouraged in their vocation by their parish priest (50 percent) compared to about a third of women who said the same.
- Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from other religious, friends, or a parish priest. About one in five report that their mother encouraged them to consider religious life. Almost as many received encouragement from another relative (15 percent) and about one in ten (8 percent) said that their father encouraged them in their vocation.
- About one in ten responding religious received encouragement from a parishioner (14 percent), a campus minister (12 percent), or a teacher (12 percent). Very few (5 percent or less) received encouragement from a youth minister, a deacon, or a bishop.
- More than one in ten responding religious of the Profession Class of 2011 (13 percent) report that no one encouraged them in their vocation (not shown in table).

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation

More than two-thirds (68 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	36%	37%	25%
Friend or school classmate	33	32	38
Mother	25	25	25
Father	14	14	12
Colleague or coworker	11	10	25
Teacher	8	8	0
Priest or other clergy	4	4	12
Religious sister or brother	4	5	0
Youth minister	0	0	0
Someone else	11	10	12

*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 other than a parent (36 percent) or by friends or classmates (33 percent).

- A quarter of responding religious report being discouraged from considering a vocation by their mothers. About half as many, 14 percent, report being discouraged by their fathers. Men and women are equally likely to have been discouraged from considering a vocation by one of their parents.
- 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.
- About one in ten mentioned someone else who had discouraged them from pursuing their vocation, including boyfriends, siblings, family friends, or in-laws.

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	4	2
Median	2	2	1
Range	0-39	0-39	0-10

On average, brothers report that they knew members of their institutes only about half as long (two years) as all respondents. 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 nearly two in ten (18 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 quarter (27 percent) were introduced to their institute by a priest or advisor.

How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?*

Percentage checking each response

	Both	Women	Men
Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor	27%	27%	25%
Through print or online promotional material published by the institute	23	20	50
Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute	16	18	0
Through a friend or relative in the institute	14	14	12
At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)	11	12	0
In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital)	11	11	12
Through a vocation matching or placement service	3	4	0
Other	34	36	12

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

About a third of responding sisters and nuns (36 percent) mentioned some other way they first became acquainted with the institute. These responses include:

- Through contact with friends who knew the institute (6).
- A retreat that my institute gave (4).
- The sisters visited my college campus (2).
- Through a program offered at the retreat house of the community.
- A member of my institute spoke at our parish.
- Diocesan Vocation Director.
- My brother was taught by our Sisters in the seminary.
- They taught at the school which my niece and nephew attend.
- Through my grandmother.
- Knew a member of my institute from birth.
- Faith-sharing/Bible study group sponsored by my Sisters.
- A Sister I knew from another community suggested visiting them.
- On a pilgrimage.
- A priest of the institute.
- Through a prayer group.
- An ad in our Catholic newspaper for a caregiver at our retirement home for sisters.

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

Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
“Come and See” experience	61%	60%	75%
Vocation retreat	39	40	25
Live-in experience	32	32	25
“Nun Run”/“Andrew Dinner”	6	6	0
Other	8	7	12
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one response.			

- Three out of five responding religious women and three-quarters of responding brothers participated in a “Come and See” experience before entering their religious institute.
- Vocation retreats are another popular vocation program, experienced by nearly four in ten (39 percent) respondents before they entered their religious institute.
- A third (32 percent) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering.
- Very few 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:

- The first time I met our Sisters was when they came to visit my high school.
- I was regularly invited to the community house for holidays, celebrations, prayer, etc.
- Sodality visits on Saturday morning after Mass.
- I visited the congregation for one week.
- Candidacy.
- Gathering of women event.
- I made a personal five-day visit.
- Private retreat.