



Ordinations & perpetual professions to religious life have increased in the past five years

■ 2015

595 potential ordinands representing:
120 dioceses
28 religious institutes

■ 2014

190 women and men professed final vows from:
62 religious institutes

477 potential ordinands representing:
31 religious institutes
114 dioceses (and archdioceses)

■ 2013

107 women and men professed final vows from:
55 religious institutes

497 potential ordinands representing:
30 religious institutes
119 dioceses (and archdioceses)

■ 2012

156 women and men professed final vows from:
83 religious institutes

487 potential ordinands representing:
49 religious institutes
123 dioceses (and archdioceses)

■ 2011

122 women and men professed final vows from:
60 religious institutes

480 potential ordinands representing:
54 religious institutes
128 dioceses (and archdioceses)

Sources:

USCCB/CARA Studies on Ordinands to the Priesthood: The Ordination Class of . . .

USCCB/CARA Studies on New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life: The Profession Class of . . .

STATISTICS ON RECENT VOCATIONS TO RELIGIOUS LIFE AND ORDAINED MINISTRY

Number of women and men in initial formation to religious life remains steady since 2009

- In 2014, 80 percent of religious institutes for men and approximately 66 percent of religious institutes for women had at least one person in initial formation (*2014 NRVC/CARA Study on Incorporating Cultural Diversity in Religious Life*).
- In 2009, 78 percent of religious institutes for men and 66 percent of religious institutes for women had at least one person in initial formation (*2009 NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life*).

Characteristics of ordinands and those newly professed to religious life

AGE

Average age is three years younger than it was five years ago

- The average age of potential ordinands in 2015 is 34 compared to 37 years of age in 2010. The youngest was 24 years of age while the oldest was 64 years old. Potential ordinands in religious institutes tend to be ordained older than diocesan ordinands (48 percent of diocesan ordinands are under the age of 30 compared to 15 percent of religious ordinands).
- The average age of women and men at final profession in 2014 is 37 compared to 40 in 2011. For women, the youngest was 24 years old while the oldest was 64. For men, the youngest was 26 years old while the oldest is 62.
- Of those professing final vows and religious ordinands, the average age respondents first considered a religious vocation was 18 years of age; however, half were 18 or older when they first did so. Religious ordinands are likely to have first considered a vocation to priesthood during college years. This echoes the *2009 NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life*, which reported 53 percent of those in initial formation first considered a vocation to religious life by the time they were 18 years old. That same NRVC study reported men were more likely to consider vocations during college while women were more likely to consider a vocation before the age of 14.

ETHNICITY

More diverse, reflecting the increasing diversity in the U.S. Catholic population as a whole

- Among those entering in the past ten years, 57 percent are Caucasian/White/Anglo, 17 percent are Hispanic/Latino(a), 16 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, 8 percent are African American/Black/African, and 2 percent are Native American or other race/ethnicity.
- On average, 90 percent of perpetually professed members of religious institutes are Caucasian/White/Anglo, 6 percent are Hispanic/Latino(a), 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent are African American/Black/African. Religious institutes of men are slightly more racially/ethnically diverse than are institutes of women.
- 76 percent of those professing final vows and 75 percent of potential ordinands were born in the United States (*2014 NRVC/CARA Study on Incorporating Cultural Diversity in Religious Life*).

IMPACT OF FAMILY

Of those professing final vows in 2014:

- 31 percent report having a relative who is a priest or a religious.

Of the potential ordinands in 2015:

- 37 percent have a relative who is a priest or religious.
- Religious ordinands are more likely to report a relative who is a priest or religious than diocesan ordinands (44 percent compared to 36 percent).

Of those professing final vows in 2014:

- 25 percent report their mothers encouraged them to consider religious life.
- 15 percent received encouragement from their fathers.

Of the potential ordinands in 2015:

- 40 percent report their mothers encouraged them to consider a vocation to priesthood
- 30 percent received encouragement from their fathers.

MISSION OF NRVC

The National Religious Vocation Conference is a professional organization of vocation ministers that presents religious life as a viable option in the Catholic Church. NRVC promotes vocation awareness, invitation, and discernment to life as a religious sister, brother, or priest. NRVC reflects all forms of religious life and provides educational opportunities, resources, and other supportive services for spiritual, professional, and personal growth.

Sources:

USCCB/CARA Study on the Class of 2015: Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood

USCCB/CARA Study on New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2014

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Majority attend public schools, yet more likely to be educated in Catholic schools compared to the U.S. Catholic population

- Among the population of Catholics in the United States 42 percent attended Catholic elementary school, 22 percent attended Catholic high school, and 7 percent attended Catholic college. Of those professing final vows in 2014, 42 percent attended Catholic elementary school, 31 percent attended Catholic high school, and 34 percent attended Catholic college. Six percent report being home schooled.
- Compared to the national average of U.S. Catholics, potential ordinands were more likely to be educated in Catholic schools. More than half (51 percent) attended Catholic elementary school, 43 percent attended Catholic high school, and 45 percent attended Catholic college. Seven percent of ordinands report being home schooled.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Highly educated with educational debt

- Of those vowing perpetual profession in 2014, 18 percent had earned a graduate degree before entering religious life and 68 percent entered with at least a bachelor's degree (61 percent for women and 80 percent for men). Of the potential ordinands of 2015, 15 percent had earned a graduate degree before entering the seminary and 60 percent completed college before entering the seminary. Religious ordinands were more likely than diocesan ordinands to have a graduate degree before entering the seminary (20 percent compared to 13 percent).
- On average, those vowing perpetual profession in 2014 had \$15,750 in educational debt at the time they first applied for entrance to their religious institute. Men and women religious were about the same in the amount of educational debt they reported. Religious ordinands are more likely than diocesan ordinands to have educational debt (34 percent compared to 24 percent) at the time they enter seminary. Diocesan ordinands who have educational debt averaged \$20,770 at the time they entered the seminary, compared to nearly \$27,000 among religious ordinands at the time they entered their religious institute.
- The majority of religious institutes (55 percent) are experiencing an increase in the number of inquirers with educational debt. During discernment, 32 percent of serious inquirers have significant educational debt. It is estimated that since 2002, more than 1,000 inquirers were turned away by a religious institute or personally opted out of discernment because of educational debt (2012 NRVC/CARA Study on Educational Debt and Vocations to Religious Life).
- The average amount of debt at the time of inquiry is \$28,000. The National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations (www.nfcrv.org) was established in 2014 to offer financial assistance to religious institutes so that they may accept candidates who have student loan obligations.

PARISH LIFE

Participated in parish ministry prior to entering formation programs

- Of the women and men vowing perpetual profession in 2014, 88 percent had parish ministry experience before entering religious life, most commonly as lector (50 percent), music minister (40 percent), eucharistic minister (35 percent), or altar server (35 percent). Additionally, before entering religious life, 42 percent participated in high-school youth ministry, 31 percent participated in college campus ministry, 21 percent participated in World Youth Day, and 5 percent in NCYC.
- Of the potential ordinands in 2015, prior to entering the seminary 78 percent were altar servers, 51 percent served as lectors, and 46 percent served as eucharistic ministers. Additionally, 46 percent participated in high-school youth ministry, 31 percent in Boy Scouts, 26 percent in college campus ministry, 14 percent participated in World Youth Day, and 9 percent in NCYC before entering the seminary.