

January 2019

***Women and Men
Professing Perpetual Vows
in Religious Life:
The Profession Class of 2018***

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

*Women and Men Professing Perpetual Vows
in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2018*

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



January 2019

Thu T. Do, LHC, Ph.D.
Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Major Findings.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Institutes Reporting Perpetual Professions	6
Age of Professed.....	7
Race and Ethnic Background.....	8
Country of Birth and Age at Entry to the United States	9
Family Background.....	10
Education	12
Educational Debt.....	14
Work Experience	15
Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries	16
Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups	18
Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life	19
Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute.....	21
Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences.....	24

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

***Women and Men Professing Perpetual Vows
in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2018***

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2018 in a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superior of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 135 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every member of the institute who was scheduled to profess perpetual vows in 2018. 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 530 of 753 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 71 percent among religious institutes. Six religious institutes were not interested in participating in the studies. In all, 82 percent of LCWR superiors, 72 percent of CMSWR superiors, 71 percent of CMSM superiors, and 44 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 240 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2018.

Of these 240 identified women and men religious, a total of 92 sisters and nuns and 70 brothers and priests responded to the survey by January 13, 2019. These 70 men include brothers, priests, and those pursuing studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 68 percent of the 240 potential members of the Profession Class of 2018 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Major Findings

- Eight in ten responding religious institutes (80 percent) had no one professing perpetual vows in religious life in 2018. One in eight institutes (13 percent) had one perpetual profession and just over one in twenty (7 percent) reported two or more.
- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2018 is 38. Half of the responding religious are age 35 or younger. The youngest is 22 and the oldest is 75.
- Two-thirds of the responding religious (69 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as white. Nearly one in five (16 percent) identify as Asian, and one in ten (10 percent) identifies as Hispanic.
- More than two-thirds of responding religious (68 percent) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most common country of origin is Vietnam.
- On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 25 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 11 years before perpetual profession.

Family Background

- Nine in ten responding religious (90 percent) have been Catholic since birth. More than three-quarters (78 percent) come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Among the 10 percent of respondents who became Catholic later in life, the average age at which they converted was 19.
- Nearly eight in ten responding religious (79 percent) of the Profession Class of 2018 have more than one sibling. One in five (18 percent) has one brother or sister. A third (34 percent) report having two or three. Nearly half (45 percent) have four or more siblings.

Education, Work, and Ministry Experience

- Half of the responding religious (50 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is higher than that for all Catholic adults in the United States (39 percent). These respondents are also more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (38 percent of responding religious, compared to 19 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (36 percent of responding religious, compared to 10 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).
- The Profession Class of 2018 is highly educated. Twenty-three percent of responding religious earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. More than two-thirds (71 percent) entered their religious institute with at least a bachelor's degree (65 percent for women and 79 percent for men).

- Most religious did not report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to their institute. Among the 9 percent who did report educational debt, however, they averaged about 1.4 years of delay while they paid down an average of \$35,167 in educational debt. Family members and friends/co-workers are the most common source of assistance for paying down educational debt.
- Nearly three quarters (72 percent) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Of those who were employed, one in five (20 percent) were employed part-time and more than half (52 percent) were employed full-time before entering the institute. Women religious are more likely than men to have been employed in education or health care, while men religious are more likely than women to have been employed in business.
- Around nine in ten responding religious (85 percent) served in one or more church ministries before entering their religious institute, most commonly as a lector (50 percent), altar server (47 percent), or Extraordinary Minister of Communion (45 percent). About two in five served in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (40 percent), or youth ministry/campus ministry, or music ministry, cantor, or choir. Around a quarter served in social service ministry. One in six taught in a Catholic school.
- Three-quarters (75 percent) participated in one or more religious programs or activities before entering before entering their religious institute. Nearly half (48 percent) participated in youth ministry or youth group. A third (33 percent) participated in young adult ministry. Three in ten (29 percent) participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center. One in five participated in World Youth Day. One in seven participated in the Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference.
- Nine in ten responding religious (91 percent) regularly participated in some type of private prayer activity before they entered their religious institute. Two-thirds participated in Eucharistic Adoration, prayed the rosary, or attended retreats before entering. Nearly six in ten participated in spiritual direction before entering.

Consideration of Religious Life and Choice of Community

- On average, responding religious report that they were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, but half were 18 or younger when they first did so.
- Nearly eight in ten (78 percent) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life. Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from friends, other religious, parish priests, or from a religious sister or brother.
- Half of respondents (51 percent) report that they were discouraged from considering a vocation by one or more persons. Women are more likely than men to report being discouraged from discerning a religious vocation (58 percent compared with 43 percent of men).

- On average, responding religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute for four years before they entered. About a quarter (26 percent) report that they first became acquainted with their institute through print or online promotional material published and through a friend or relative in the institute. One in five reported knowing their religious institute in/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital) and through the recommendation of a priest or advisor. One in ten respondents knew their religious institutes from a vocation event.
- Nearly all of the religious of the Profession Class of 2018 (88 percent) participated in some type of vocation program or experience prior to entering their religious institute. “Come and See” experiences are a popular vocation program, experienced by about three in five (57 percent) before entering their religious institute. About half of responding religious (48 percent) participated in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute.

Introduction

Since 2010, the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of women and men religious who profess perpetual vows each year in a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States. For this project, CARA was asked to gather information about the characteristics and experiences of these religious and report the findings to the Secretariat for use with the World Day of Consecrated Life in February. CARA then programmed the questionnaires into an online survey to give respondents the option of completing the survey either online or on paper. This report presents results of this survey of women and men religious of the Profession Class of 2018.

To obtain the names and contact information for the religious professing perpetual vows in 2018, CARA contacted all major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superior of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 135 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every member of the institute who was scheduled to profess perpetual vows in 2018. CARA then contacted these members by e-mail or mail to explain the project and ask them to complete a brief online survey.

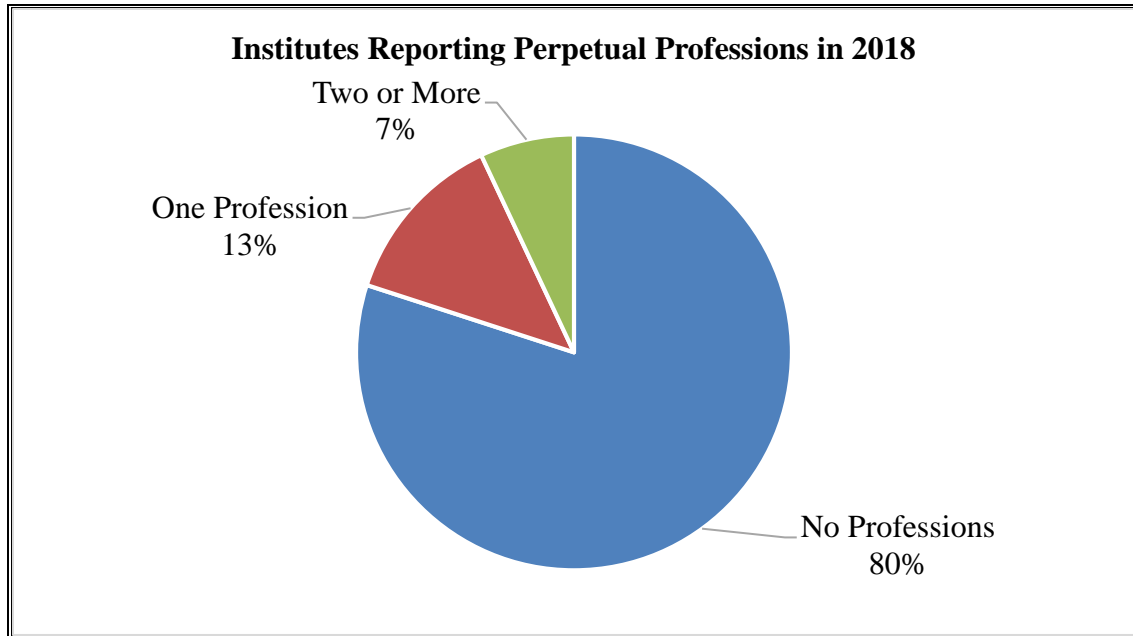
After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 530 of 753 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 71 percent among religious institutes. Six religious institutes were not interested in participating in the studies. In all, 82 percent of LCWR superiors, 72 percent of CMSWR superiors, 71 percent of CMSM superiors, and 44 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 240 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2018.

Of these 240 identified women and men religious, a total of 92 sisters and nuns and 70 brothers and priests responded to the survey by January 13, 2019. These 70 men include brothers, priests, and those pursuing studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 68 percent of the 240 potential members of the Profession Class of 2018 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

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

Institutes Reporting Perpetual Professions

CARA asked the 753 religious institutes, 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 members who professed or were planning to profess perpetual vows in 2018. A total of 524 major superiors responded (71 percent) with 240 names of women religious, priests, and brothers. Six major superiors responded that they would not participate this year.



A total of 411 major superiors (80 percent of those responding) report that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2018. One in eight (13 percent) report one member professing perpetual vows. Another 39 major superiors (7 percent) report from two to 22 members professing perpetual vows in 2018.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 53 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the brothers and priests who responded come from 34 different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious.

Age of Professed

The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2018 is 38. Half of the responding religious are age 35 or younger.

Age of Professed Women and Men			
Percentage in each age category			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
29 and younger	22	21	24
Age 30-39	48	54	40
Age 40-49	14	9	20
Age 50-59	9	9	10
Age 60 and older	7	9	6
Average age	38	38	38
Median age	35	35	33
Range in years	22-75	25-75	22-69

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Profession Class of 2018 is 25 and the oldest is 75 years of age. Eight women respondents are professing perpetual vows at age 60 or older. Three-fourths of the responding sisters are 39 or younger. Among brothers, the youngest is 22 and the oldest is 69. More than three in five responding men religious are 39 or younger.

Race and Ethnic Background

More than two-thirds of the responding religious (69 percent) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white.

Race and Ethnic Background			
Percentage in each category			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	69	76	61
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	16	14	17
Hispanic/Latino(a)	10	9	12
African/African American/black	5	1	10

Nearly one in six members of the Profession Class of 2018 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. One in ten (10 percent) identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a). In general, religious of the Profession Class of 2018 are more likely than other adult Catholics nationally to be Asian and less likely to be Hispanic.

Differences by Country of Birth

Responding religious who identify themselves as Caucasian/European American/white are almost all (93 percent) U.S. born. Just 7 percent were born outside the United States. Among those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, nine in ten (92 percent) are foreign born, while about one in ten (8 percent) is U.S. born. Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) more than two-thirds (69 percent) are foreign born while a third (31 percent) are U.S. born.

Country of Birth and Age at Entry to the United States

Seven in ten responding religious (68 percent) were born in the United States.

Continent of Birth			
<i>Percentage in each category</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
North America (USA & Canada)	71	76	63
Asia	11	7	15
Latin America	7	5	10
Africa	5	2	8
Europe	2	2	1
Oceania	3	5	2

Vietnam (8 religious) is the most frequently mentioned country of birth among responding religious who were born outside the United States. These respondents identified a total of 19 different countries of origin.

Responding religious who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 11 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2011 or earlier.

Entrance to the United States				
	<u>Year</u>	<u>Age at Entry</u>		
	Both	Both	Women	Men
Mean	2007	25	23	26
Median	2011	26	26	25
Range	1983-2017	0-47	0-36	3-47

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 25. Half were age 26 or younger when they came to live in the United States. Eight women and one man were age ten or younger when they entered the United States; the oldest man was 47 at the time he entered the United States.

Family Background

Nine in ten responding religious (90 percent) have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, their average age at the time of their conversion was 19.

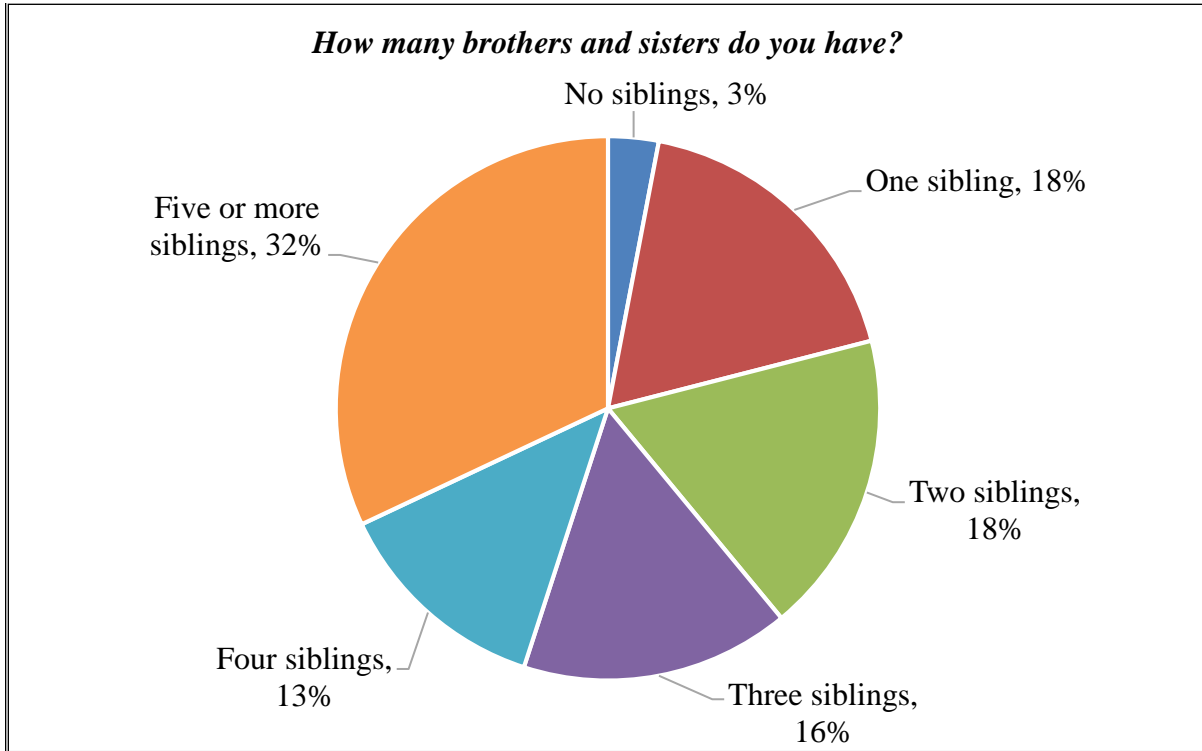
Catholic Background			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Catholic since birth	90	90	90
Became Catholic later in life	10	10	10
Average age at conversion	19	22	16

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: Baptist, Church of South India, Episcopalian, Evangelical United Brethren, Lutheran, Reformed Calvinist, as well as some saying they were previously of no religion.

More than nine in ten respondents (93 percent) report that when they were children they had at least one parent who was Catholic. More than three-quarters (78 percent) report that both parents were Catholic.

What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?			
Percentage responding			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	78	74	82
Mother Catholic, father not	11	12	9
Neither parent was Catholic	7	8	6
Father Catholic, mother not	5	6	3

Almost all responding religious (97 percent) of the Profession Class of 2018 have at least one sibling. Nearly two in five (18 percent) have one brother or sister. A third (34 percent) report having two or three. Nearly half (45 percent) have four or more siblings.



More than a third of respondents with one or more siblings are the eldest child in their family (36 percent). A fifth are the youngest. More than two in five are somewhere in the middle of their family.

What is your birth order?
 Percentage in each category
 (Among respondents with one or more siblings)

	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Eldest	36	36	35
Somewhere in the middle	44	42	46
Youngest	21	22	19

In addition, more than four in ten responding religious (44 percent) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious.

Education

More than half (55 percent) of responding religious attended parish-based religious education/CCD/RCIA. One-half (50 percent) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Around two in five (38 percent) attended a Catholic high school and a near equal proportion (36 percent) attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute.

Attendance at Catholic School*			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Parish-based religious education/CCD/RCIA	55	53	57
Catholic elementary or middle school	50	48	53
Catholic high school	38	30	47
Catholic college or university	36	37	34
Catholic ministry formation program	17	15	21

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

Members of the Profession Class of 2018 are a little more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,¹ 39 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school compared to half of the members of the Profession Class of 2018. Responding religious of 2018 are also more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (38 percent among responding religious, compared to 19 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (36 percent of responding religious, compared to 10 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).

In addition, more than one in six (17 percent) responding women and men religious report that they participated in a Catholic ministry formation program before they entered their religious institute.

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, more than a half of the respondents (55 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 66 percent did *not* report attending a Catholic elementary school and 80 percent did *not* attend a Catholic high school.

¹CARA *Catholic Poll*. Poll conducted May 16-26, 2016. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

More than one in ten (14 percent) responding religious report being home schooled at some time in their educational background. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was nine years. Sisters are more likely than men religious to be home schooled (17 sisters compared with 4 men religious).

The responding religious are highly educated. Seven in ten (71 percent) earned an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute.

Highest Education Completed Before Entering			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
High school	18	21	14
Trade or technical school	1	1	0
Some college, no degree	11	14	6
Undergraduate degree	48	44	54
Graduate degree	23	21	26

About two in five (18 percent) religious of the Profession Class of 2018 completed only high school before entering the religious institute. Nearly half (48 percent) had an undergraduate degree and one-quarter (23 percent) had a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Responding sisters or nuns are less likely than responding brothers or priests to have an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute (65 percent compared with 80 percent of brothers or priests).

Educational Debt

Nine percent of responding religious report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to the religious institute. While 12 sisters reported having educational debt, only two men religious reported so.

Impact of Educational Debt on Entrance to Religious Life			
	Both	Women	Men
Application delayed by debt	9%	14%	3%
Average length of delay	1.4 years	1.2 years	2 years
Average amount of debt	\$35,167	\$29,273	\$100,000
Median amount of debt	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$100,000

Most responding religious of the Profession Class of 2018 report that educational debt did not delay their application for entrance. Among the 9 percent who were delayed by educational debt, the average length of time required to pay off their educational debt was around a year and a half. The average amount of educational debt they carried was \$35,167.

Among the 9 percent of respondents who reported that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to a religious institute, they were most likely to receive assistance for paying down their educational debt from family members and from friends or co-workers.

Assistance for Paying Down Educational Debt			
<i>Among those delayed by educational debt</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Family members	50	50	50
Friends/co-workers	29	25	50
Parish	21	17	50
Religious community	21	8	100
Mater Ecclesiae Fund	21	17	50
Labouré Society	14	17	0
Knights of Columbus Fund	13	20	0
Serra Fund for Vocations	0	0	0

Work Experience

More than seven in ten (72 percent) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering the religious institute. More than half (52 percent) had been employed full-time and one in five (20 percent) were employed part-time before entering their institute.

Prior Work Experience			
<i>Percentage in each category</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Business/Occupational	49	47	52
Education/Academic	32	35	29
Health care	9	10	7
Church/pastoral ministry	7	7	7
Government/Military	2	0	5

Half of responding religious (49 percent) reported that were in some form of business, or an occupation or trade, prior to entering their religious institute. A third had been employed in education (32 percent). Women and men were equally likely to report that they had been employed in church ministry prior to entering their institute.

Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

Many responding religious were active in ministry before entering their religious institute. Around nine in ten responding religious (85 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 experience reported by respondents was service as a lector, followed by faith formation, altar server, Extraordinary Minister of Communion, and youth ministry.

Ministry Experience*			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Lector	50	47	53
Altar server	47	27	74
Extraordinary Minister of Communion	45	52	37
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	40	40	40
Youth ministry/campus ministry	40	37	43
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	36	39	32
Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service)	22	23	22
Teacher in a Catholic school	13	11	15
Hospital or prison ministry	5	3	6
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

- Half reported serving as a lector (50 percent), and nearly half served as an altar server (47 percent) or Extraordinary Minister of Communion (45 percent).
- Two in five reported serving in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (40 percent), youth ministry/campus ministry (40 percent), or music ministry, cantor, or choir (36 percent).
- One in five reported serving in some aspect of social service ministry. More than one in five reported serving as a teacher in a Catholic school.
- Responding religious were *least* likely to have served in a hospital or prison ministry before they entered their religious institute.

Three-quarters (75 percent) participated in one or more religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute.

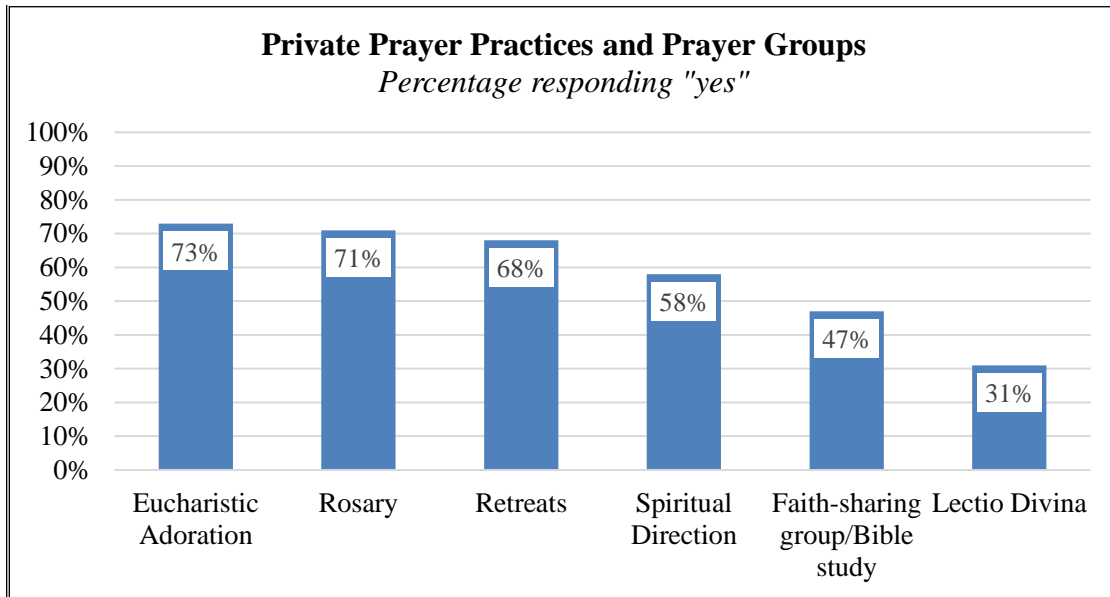
Participation in Religious Programs or Activities*			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Youth ministry or youth group	48	55	39
Young adult ministry or group	33	33	32
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	29	32	25
World Youth Day	20	25	14
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	15	16	14
National Catholic Youth Conference	7	9	3
Fellowship of Catholic University Students	5	7	3
Religious institute volunteer	4	6	2
National Evangelization Team	3	3	2
St. Vincent de Paul Society	3	5	2
Catholic Scouting	—	**	9
Knights of Columbus	—	**	14
Catholic Daughters	—	6	***
Sodality	—	5	***

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.
 **Not asked of women.
 ***Not asked of men.

- Just under half of respondents (48 percent) participated in youth ministry or youth group and a third (33 percent) participated in a young adult ministry or group before entering religious life. Women were more likely than men to participate in youth ministry or youth group (55 percent compared with 39 percent).
- More than a quarter (29 percent) of responding religious participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center.
- One in five (20 percent) participated in a World Youth Day prior to entering their religious institute. Women were more likely than men to have participated in World Youth Day (25 percent compared with 14 percent).
- One in seven (15 percent) participated in a Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference.

Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups

Private prayer and prayer groups are another type of formative experience that can help shape one's religious faith and openness to consider a vocation. Nearly nine in ten responding religious the Profession Class of 2018 (91 percent) participated in one or more of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis prior to entering their religious institute.



- Eucharistic Adoration, retreats, and the rosary are the most common types of formative prayer experience, reported by two-thirds of religious of the Profession Class of 2018.
- Almost six in ten respondents had spiritual direction prior to entering their religious institute.
- Around a half (47 percent) regularly participated in a faith-sharing group or a Bible study group.
- A third of respondents (31 percent) regularly participated in *Lectio Divina* prayer prior to entering their religious institute. This is an ancient prayer practice from the Order of St. Benedict.

Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, responding religious report that they were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, but half were 18 or younger when they first considered a vocation.

	Age		
	Both	Women	Men
Mean	19	19	18
Median	18	18	18
Range	3-68	3-68	7-40

Encouragement to Consider a Vocation

Nearly four in five (78 percent) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life.

Encouragement to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life*			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Friend	44	42	46
Parish priest	41	33	51
Religious sister or brother	40	40	39
Mother	31	27	37
Father	28	21	38
Other relative	22	23	22
Parishioner	21	23	20
Teacher/Catechist	19	12	28
Campus minister/School chaplain	11	11	11
Youth minister	8	9	8
Bishop	7	3	11
Deacon	6	3	9

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

- Four in five responding religious say that a friend (44 percent), a parish priest (41 percent), or a religious sister or brother (40 percent) encouraged their vocation.

- Three in ten respondents reported that they were encouraged by their mother or father. Men are more likely than women to be encouraged by their mother or father.
- One in five reported being encouraged by another relative, a parishioner, or a teacher/catechist. One in ten was encouraged by a campus minister/school chaplain.
- Respondents are more likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from a bishop, deacon, or youth minister.

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation

Half of respondents (51 percent) report that they were discouraged from considering a vocation by one or more persons. Women are more likely than men to report being discouraged from discerning a religious vocation (58 percent compared with 43 percent of men).

Discouragement from Considering a Vocation to Religious Life*			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Friend or school classmate	31	36	25
Other relative	27	37	14
Mother	21	25	15
Father	18	21	12
Teacher	7	7	6
Priest or other clergy	6	6	6
Colleague or coworker	5	7	3
Someone else	5	5	5
Religious sister or brother	2	2	2
Youth minister	1	0	2

*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 friend or a school classmate (31 percent) or another relative (27 percent), or their mother (21 percent), or father (18 percent).
- Women are more likely than men to have been discouraged by their mother (25 percent compared to 15 percent).
- Very few respondents say they were discouraged from considering a vocation by teachers, clergy, a colleague or coworker, religious sisters or brothers, or youth ministers.

Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

On average, responding religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute four years before they entered.

How many years did you know the members of your religious institute before entering?			
	Years		
	Both	Women	Men
Mean	4	3	5
Median	2	2	4
Range	0-40	0-24	0-40

Half of all responding religious (men and women) report that they knew the members of their religious institute for two years before they entered. A quarter (26 percent) knew the members of their religious institute for one year before they entered.

Responding religious were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. A quarter (26 percent) report that they first became acquainted with their institute through print or online promotional material published by the institute. Women are twice as likely as men to report being recommended to their religious institute through print or online promotional material published by the institute. Men are more likely than women to report becoming acquainted with their religious institute through one of the sponsored institution or work of the institute

How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?*			
Percentage checking each response			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Through print or online promotional material published by the institute	26	34	15
Through a friend or relative in the institute	22	18	28
In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital)	19	9	32
Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor	17	17	17
At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)	11	13	8
Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute	10	9	11
Through a vocation matching or placement service	3	5	2
Other	32	34	24

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

Respondents also indicate that they first became acquainted with their institute through a friend or relative in the institute (22 percent), a sponsored institute or work of the institute (19 percent), through a recommendation of a priest or advisor (17 percent), at a vocation event (11 percent), or through working with a sister/brother from the institute.

A third (32 percent) said they first became acquainted with their religious institute through some other means. Some of those “other” responses included:

- 24-hour event called
- A CMSWR directory
- A high school retreat
- A talk at my university
- At a Diocesan retreat
- At a national FOCUS conference and through my FOCUS missionaries (when I was a college student)
- At a talk the Sisters gave while they were on an apostolic trip
- At a youth event
- At my parish
- Book by Rumer Godden -- In This House of Brede
- By visiting (I am a transfer from my original community)
- Campus visit by my institute to my college
- “Come and See” weekend at monastery
- Diocesan Discernment Dinner for women
- Diocesan youth camps
- EWTN
- Google
- High School Retreat- Sisters gave a vocation talk
- I met them at Religious Education Congress
- I read about them on a vocation forum of sorts where parents of daughters in our Carmel had posted in reply to young women interested.
- I saw their sign while driving down the street
- I was a student in the school
- I went to the chapel for Eucharistic Adoration
- Mission trip
- My parish and working together in mission
- Sister at my college campus ministry
- They taught me in high school
- Through a FOCUS missionary friend at my college campus ministry
- Through a Sister visiting for family
- Through ENJES a national youth conference in Mexico
- Through volunteer work
- Two Sisters of Life came to my work and home (I lived in a discernment house in St. Paul, MN
- UNL Newman Center presence

- Visiting male relative at Seminary
- I went to Mass where the sisters were serving and also met them when we both went to a catechetical congress
- World Youth Day
- Youth retreat

Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences

Among the vocation programs and experiences about which they were asked, respondents are most likely to have participated in a “Come and See” experience. Most (88 percent) had participated in at least one of these programs or experiences prior to entering their religious institute.

Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences*			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	Both	Women	Men
	%	%	%
“Come and See” experience	57	52	63
Vocation retreat	48	59	34
Live-in experience	26	35	12
“Nun Run”	—	13	***
“Andrew Dinner”	—	**	3
Other	11	14	6
<p>*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one response. **Not asked of women. ***Not asked of men.</p>			

- “Come and See” experiences are a popular vocation program, experienced by more than half of the respondents (57 percent) before they entered their religious institute.
- Half of responding religious (48 percent) participated in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute. Men and women are equally likely to have participated in a vocation retreat.
- A quarter (26 percent) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering.
- More than one in ten women religious report that they participated in a “Nun Run” (asked only of women), and 3 percent of men had participated in an “Andrew Dinner” (asked only of men).

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

- A personal visit to the Carmel, meeting the Mother and community, joining them for prayer from the public chapel
- Diocesan College Seminary Discernment Program
- Discernment House
- It is done differently in my country
- Many visits to the motherhouse. I attended a week-long Lands of Dominic armchair retreat
- Minor Seminary boarding school for junior-high and highschoolers interested in the vocation
- Visited some communities and observed the sisters in one of their apostolates
- Vocation Camp
- Vocation talk at the parish
- Weekend informal visit to convent
- When the Sister visited the parish where I was serving