

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**

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***Women and Men Professing Perpetual Vows  
in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2022***



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Major Findings.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Institutes Reporting Perpetual Profession.....	6
Age of Professed.....	7
Country of Birth and Age at Entry to the United States .....	8
Race and Ethnic Background.....	9
Religious Background.....	10
Family Background.....	11
Education .....	13
Educational Debt.....	15
Work Experience .....	16
Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries .....	17
Private Prayer Practices and Prayer Groups .....	20
Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life .....	21
Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute.....	24
Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences.....	27
Appendix: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies .....	29

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***Women and Men Professing Perpetual Vows  
in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2022***

**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2022 in a religious institute, 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 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 2022. 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 484 of 737 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 66% among religious institutes. Three religious institutes were not interested in participating in the studies. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 168 members (88 women and 80 men) who professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2022.

Of these 168 identified women and men religious, a total of 114 religious members, including 62 sisters and nuns and 52 brothers and priests, responded to the survey by January 14, 2022. This represents a response rate of 67% of the 168 potential members of the Profession Class of 2022 that were reported to CARA by major superiors of men and women religious.

## Major Findings

### *Demographic Background*

- Eight in ten responding religious institutes (82%) had no one professing perpetual vows in religious life in 2022. One in ten institutes (10%) had one perpetual profession and about one in sixteen (8%) reported two or more. In total, the religious institutes report 168 newly perpetually professed members (88 women and 80 men) in 2022.
- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2022 is 33. Half of the responding religious are age 34 or younger. The youngest is 25 and the oldest is 75.
- Four in five responding religious (76%) were born in the United States. On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 21 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 22 years before perpetual profession.
- Two in three responding religious (66%) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white. One in six (16%) members of the Profession Class of 2022 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. One in ten identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a). Four percent identifies as African/African American/black. And just three respondents identify as mixed race or other.
- More than 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 11.

### *Family Background*

- Almost all respondents (95%) report that when they were children, they had at least one parent who was Catholic. More than four in five (84%) report that both parents were Catholic.
- Almost all (95%) respondents were raised by their biological parents during the most formative part of their childhood. Besides, one in ten (11%) report being raised by their grandparents during the most formative part of their childhood.
- During the most formative part of their childhood, nine in ten (91%) respondents were raised by a married couple, living together. One in twenty respondents were raised by one parent who was widowed. Three percent was raised by one parent who was either separated or divorced. Three percent was raised by an unmarried couple who lived together, or married couple living separately, or one parent either single or unmarried.
- Almost all responding religious (96%) of the Profession Class of 2022 have at least one sibling. One in five (22%) have one brother or sister. Two in five (39%) report having two or three. A third (35%) have four or more siblings.
- Two in five (40%) respondents are the eldest in their family. Two in five (37%) of respondents are somewhere in the middle of their family. Women are more likely than men religious to be

someone in the middle of their family; meanwhile, men are more likely than women to be the eldest. One in five (18%) are the youngest. Just 4% is the only child in his or her family.

- Three in ten (30%) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious.

### ***Education, Work, and Ministry Experience***

- Just over one in ten (12%) 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 11 years.
- Nearly half of the responding religious (48%) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is higher than that for all Catholic adults in the United States (16%). These respondents are also more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (36% of responding religious, compared to 8% of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (36% of responding religious, compared to 5% of U.S. adult Catholics).
- The Profession Class of 2022 is highly educated. Two in ten responding religious earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Three-fourths (75%) entered their religious institute with at least a bachelor's degree.
- Most responding religious did not report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to their institute. Among 6% of respondents who did report educational debt, however, they averaged about less than a year of delay while they paid down an average of \$34,000 in educational debt. Friends, family members, and parish are the most common source of assistance for paying down educational debt.
- More than four in five (83%) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. More than a half (52%) were employed full-time and three in ten (31%) were employed part-time before entering their religious institute. Among those who report work experience, the main work fields are business, education, and healthcare.
- More than eight in ten responding religious (84%) 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 an altar server (51%), followed by youth ministry/campus ministry (50%), faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA (48%), and lector (46%).
- Nearly nine in ten (87%) 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 (50%), with half participating in this ministry. Two-fifths of respondents (42%) participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center. A third (35%) participated in young adult ministry or group before entering religious life.
- Over nine in ten responding religious of the Profession Class of 2022 (94%) participated in one or more of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis prior to entering their religious

institute. Nearly eight in ten (77%) participated in Eucharistic Adoration. Seven in ten respondents (70%) did rosary or had retreat (68%). Six in ten (58%) had spiritual direction before entering their religious institute.

### ***Consideration of Religious Life and Choice of 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.
- More than nine in ten (93%) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life. Men are more likely than women to be encouraged by a parish priest, friend, mother, and parishioner; meanwhile, women are more likely than men to be encouraged by a religious sister or brother.
- 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 (64% compared with 37% of men religious).
- On average, respondents report having known the members of their religious institute for three years before they entered. Three-tenths (28%) report being first acquainted with their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor. A quarter report being first acquainted with their institute in or through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital) (26%) or through print or online promotional material published by the institute (24%).
- Most (93%) had participated in at least one of these programs or experiences 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. Three-fourths (75%) report participating in this program before they entered their religious institute. Men are more likely than women to participate in this experience.

## 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 2022.

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 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 2022. 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 484 of 737 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 66% among religious institutes. Three religious institutes were not interested in participating in the studies. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 168 members (88 women and 80 men) who professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2022.

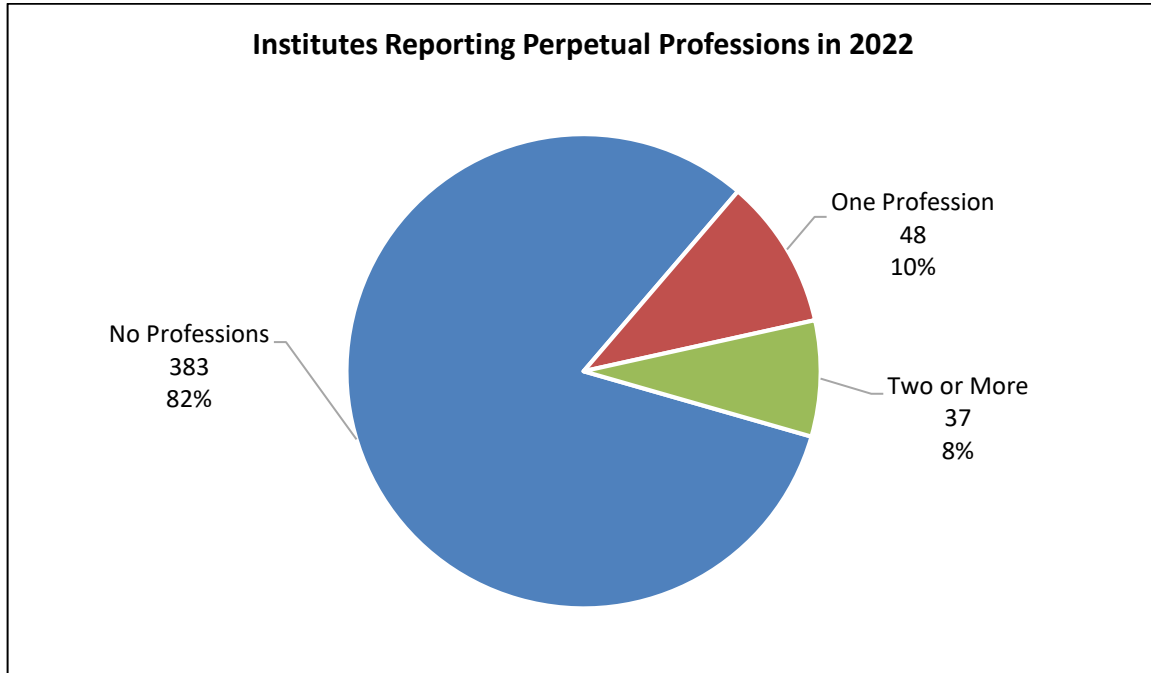
Of these 168 identified women and men religious, a total of 114 religious members, including 62 sisters and nuns and 52 brothers and priests, responded to the survey by January 14, 2022. This represents a response rate of 67% of the 168 potential members of the Profession Class of 2022 that were reported 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.



## Institutes Reporting Perpetual Profession

CARA asked the 737 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 2022. A total of 484 major superiors responded (a 66% response rate) with 168 names of perpetually professed sisters, priests, and brothers. A major superior responded that they would not participate this year.



A total of 383 major superiors (82% of respondents) report that they had no one professing perpetual vows in 2022. One in ten institutes (10%) had one perpetual profession. Another 37 major superiors (8%) report from two to nine members professing perpetual vows in 2022.

The sisters and nuns who responded to the survey represent 39 different religious institutes, provinces, or monasteries of women religious. Similarly, the brothers and priests who responded come from 28 different religious institutes, provinces, or monasteries of men religious.

## Age of Professed

The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2022 is 33. Half of the responding religious are age 34 or younger.

<b>Age of Professed Women and Men</b>			
<i>Percentage in each age category</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
29 and younger	19	10	31
Age 30-39	54	70	33
Age 40-49	13	8	20
Age 50-59	8	4	14
Age 60 and older	6	10	2
Average age	33	34	32
Median age	34	34	29
Range in ages	25-75	26-75	25-61

- One in five respondents (19%) make final profession at the age of 29 or younger. The youngest are 25 years of age.
- More than half (54%) profess perpetual vows at age 30 to 39. One in nine (13%) make perpetual profession at age 40 to 49.
- Less than one in ten (8%) do so at age 50 to 59. About the same number of respondents profess perpetual vows at age 60 or older. The oldest sister makes final profession at the age of 75.

## Country of Birth and Age at Entry to the United States

Four in five responding religious (76%) were born in the United States.

<b>Continent of Birth</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
USA	76	81	75
Asia	8	6	10
Latin America	5	2	10
Europe	5	8	2
Africa	4	3	4
Oceania	2	3	0

One in five (22%) were born outside the United States. These respondents identified a total of 18 different countries of origin.

Responding religious who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 22 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2000 or earlier.

<b>Entrance to the United States</b>				
	<u><b>Year</b></u>	<u><b>Age at Entry</b></u>		
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Mean	2000	21	23	19
Median	2017	21	23	21
Range	1972-2019	4-44	9-44	4-39

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at age 21. Half were age 21 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The youngest came to the United States at the age of four; the oldest entered the United States at the age of 44.

## Race and Ethnic Background

Two in three responding religious (66%) report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white.

<b>Race and Ethnic Background</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	66	69	63
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	16	16	16
Hispanic/Latino(a)	11	8	16
African/African American/black	4	5	4
Mixed race or other	3	3	2

One in six (16%) members of the Profession Class of 2022 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. One in ten identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a). Four percent identifies as African/African American/black. And just three respondents identify as mixed race or other.

### ***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, followed by Hispanic or Latino(a) (11%), and Asian (8%). Among those who were born outside the United States, four in ten (41%) identify as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, 18% as African/African American/black, another 18% as Hispanic/Latino(a), and 14% as Caucasian/European American/white.

## Religious Background

More than 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 11.

<b>Catholic Background</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Catholic since birth	92	92	92
Became Catholic later in life	8	8	8
Average age at entering the Church	11	23	11

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: Protestant, Pentecostal, Non-denominational, Jewish, Evangelical American Baptist, and Anglican.

## Family Background

Almost all respondents (95%) report that when they were children, they had at least one parent who was Catholic. More than four in five (84%) report that both parents were Catholic.

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

	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	84	83	86
Mother Catholic, father not	9	9	8
Neither parent was Catholic	5	6	4
Father Catholic, mother not	2	2	2

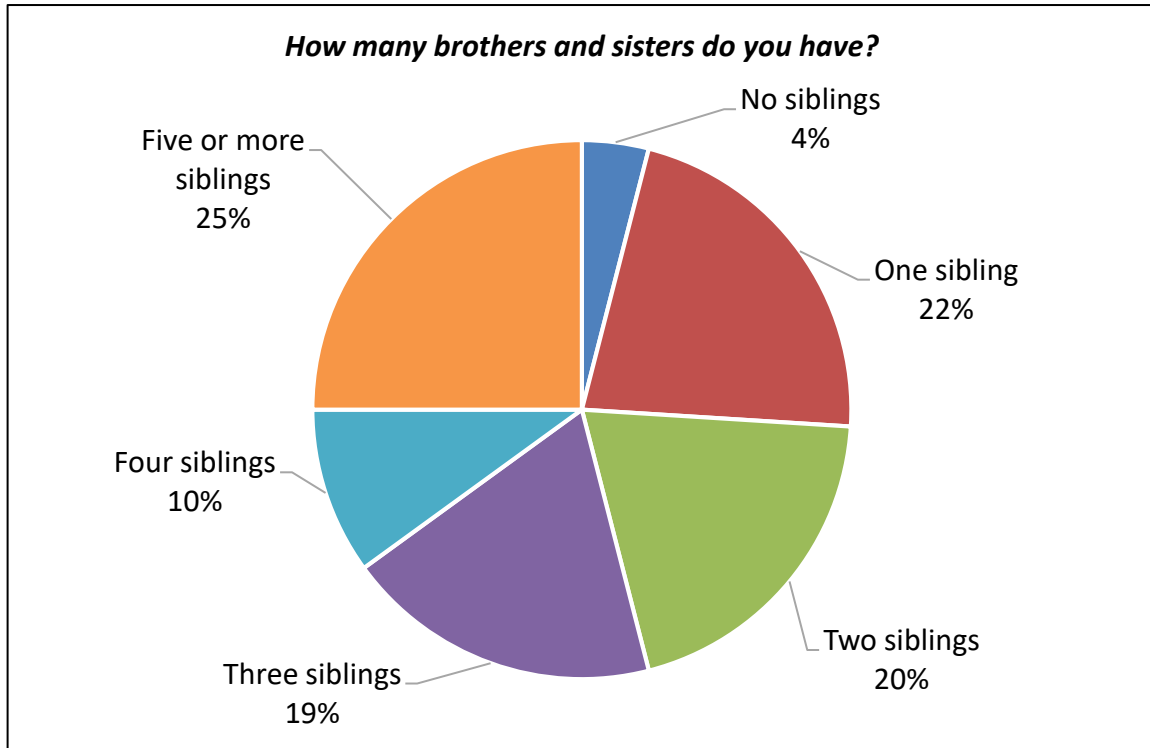
Almost all (95%) respondents were raised by their biological parents during the most formative part of their childhood. Besides, one in ten (11%) report being raised by their grandparents during the most formative part of their childhood.

During the most formative part of their childhood, nine in ten (91%) respondents were raised by a married couple, living together. One in twenty respondents were raised by one parent who was widowed. Three percent was raised by one parent who was either separated or divorced. Three percent was raised by an unmarried couple who lived together, or married couple living separately, or one parent either single or unmarried.

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

	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Married couple, living together	91	95	86
One parent, widowed	4	0	8
One parent, separated/divorced	3	3	2
Unmarried couple, living together	1	2	0
Married couple, living separately	1	0	2
One parent, single/unmarried	1	0	2
I prefer not to answer	0	0	0

Almost all responding religious (96%) of the Profession Class of 2022 have at least one sibling. One in five (22%) have one brother or sister. Two in five (39%) report having two or three. A third (35%) have four or more siblings.



Three in ten (30%) report having a relative who is a priest or a religious.

Two in five (40%) respondents are the eldest in their family. Two in five (37%) of respondents are somewhere in the middle of their family. Women are more likely than men religious to be someone in the middle of their family; meanwhile, men are more likely than women to be the eldest. One in five (18%) are the youngest. Just 4% are the only child in his or her family.

<b>What is your birth order?</b>			
Percentage in each category			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Eldest	39	34	45
Somewhere in the middle	37	42	31
Youngest	20	22	18
Only child	4	2	6

## Education

Nearly half (48%) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. More than a third (36%) attended a Catholic high school. Another a third (36%) attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute.

<b>Attendance at Catholic School*</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Parish-based religious education/ CCD/RCIA	57	63	49
Catholic elementary or middle school	48	48	47
Catholic high school	36	32	41
Catholic college or university	36	34	37
Catholic ministry formation program	24	34	12
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

Members of the Profession Class of 2022 are more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,<sup>1</sup> 16% of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school compared to 48% of the members of the Profession Class of 2022. Responding perpetually professed religious of 2022 are also more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (36% among responding religious, compared to 8% of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (36% of responding religious, compared to 5% of U.S. adult Catholics).

In addition, a quarter (24%) 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, nearly three in five respondents (57%) participated in a religious education program/CCD/RCIA in their parish. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 68% did *not* report attending a Catholic elementary school and 80% did *not* attend a Catholic high school.

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<sup>1</sup>CARA Catholic Poll, 2016. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.



Just over one in ten (12%) 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 11 years.

<b>Were you ever home schooled?</b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	12	13	12
Average length of time being home schooled	11	11	12

The responding religious are highly educated. Three in four (75%) earned an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering their religious institute.

<b>Highest Education Completed Before Entering</b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Elementary school (K-8)	1	0	2
High school	5	6	4
Trade or technical school	1	2	0
Some college, no degree	18	17	20
Undergraduate degree	56	56	55
Graduate degree	19	19	20

Just one in twenty (6%) religious of the Profession Class of 2022 completed only high school or less before entering the religious institute. Nearly six in ten (56%) had an undergraduate degree and one in five (19%) had a graduate degree before entering their religious institute.

## Educational Debt

One in twenty responding religious (6%) report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to the religious institute. While five sisters report having educational debt, only one religious brother or priest reports so.

<b>Impact of Educational Debt on Entrance to Religious Life</b>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Application delayed by debt	6%	9%	2%
Average length of delay	<1 years	<1 years	<1 years
Average amount of debt	\$34,000	\$23,000	\$45,000
Median amount of debt	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$45,000

Among 12 responding religious who were delayed by educational debt, the average length of time required to pay off their educational debt was around less than a year. The average amount of educational debt they carried was \$34,000.

Four responding religious who reported that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to a religious institute report receiving assistance from friends/co-workers (5 members), from family members (4 members), from parish (3 members), and from other organizations (Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations, Serra Fund for Vocations, and the Laboure Society, 1 member) in paying down their debt.

## Work Experience

More than four in five (83%) of responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering the religious institute. More than a half (52%) were employed full-time and three in ten (31%) were employed part-time before entering their religious institute.

<b>Prior Work Experience</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Business/Occupational	43	32	56
Education/Academic	32	36	27
Health care	14	19	7
Church/pastoral ministry	4	4	5
Others	7	9	5

More than two in five responding religious (43%) report that they were in some form of business, or an occupation or trade, or technology prior to entering their religious institute. Three-tenths had been employed in education (32%). More than one in ten (14%) had been employed in the health care.

Women are more likely than men religious to work in health care (19% compared with 7% of men religious); meanwhile, men are more likely than women to work in some form of business (56% compared with 32% of women religious).

## Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

Many responding religious were active in ministry before entering their religious institute. More than eight in ten responding religious (84%) 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 an altar server (51%) and youth ministry/campus ministry (50%), with half serving in each ministry.

<b>Ministry Experience*</b>			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Altar server	51	36	71
Youth ministry/campus ministry	50	53	47
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	48	63	29
Lector	46	47	45
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	43	50	33
Extraordinary Minister of Communion	42	44	39
Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service)	24	27	22
Teacher in a Catholic school	14	17	10
Hospital or prison ministry	5	6	4
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

- Half served in each of the following ministries. Men are more likely than women to serve as altar server, meanwhile women are more likely than men to serve in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA:
  - Altar server (51%)
  - Youth ministry/campus ministry (50%)
  - Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA (48%)
  - Lector (46%).
- Two in five served in music ministry, cantor, or choir (43%) and as extraordinary minister of Communion (42%). Women are more likely than men to serve in music ministry, cantor, or choir.
- A quarter (24%) served social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service).
- More than one in ten (14%) served as a teacher in a Catholic school.
- Just one in twenty (5%) served in hospital or prison ministry before they entered their religious institute.

Nearly nine in ten (87%) 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 (50%), with half participating in this ministry.

<b>Participation in Religious Programs or Activities*</b>			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Youth ministry or youth group	50	52	47
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	42	53	28
Young adult ministry or group	35	38	31
Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference	15	17	12
Fellowship of Catholic University Students	15	17	12
World Youth Day	13	13	14
National Catholic Youth Conference	9	9	8
Religious institute volunteer	7	11	2
St. Vincent de Paul Society	6	8	4
National Evangelization Team	4	3	4
Catholic Scouting	—	**	6
Catholic Daughters	—	2	***
Knights of Columbus	—	**	12
Sodality	—	4	***

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

- Two-fifths of respondents (42%) participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center. Women are more likely than men to participate in this ministry.
- A third (35%) participated in young adult ministry or group before entering religious life.
- At least one in ten participated in the following ministries prior to entering their religious institute:
  - Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference (15%)
  - Fellowship of Catholic University Students (15%)
  - World Youth Day (13%)
- Nearly one in ten participated in a National Catholic Youth Conference (9%).

- Around one in eighteen participated in a religious institute voluntary program (7%) and St. Vincent de Paul Society (6%). Just 4% participated in National Evangelization Team.

## 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. More than nine in ten responding religious of the Profession Class of 2022 (94%) participated in one or more of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis prior to entering their religious institute.

<b><i>Did you participate in any of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis before entering your religious institute?</i></b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Eucharistic Adoration	77	84	67
Rosary	70	73	67
Retreats	68	69	67
Spiritual Direction	58	67	47
Faith-sharing group/Bible study	48	58	35
Lectio Divina	40	44	35

- Eucharistic Adoration is the most common type of formative prayer experience, reported by three quarters of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2022 (77%). Women are more likely than men to report doing Eucharistic adoration before entering religious life (84% compared to 67% of men).
- Seven in ten respondents did rosary (70%) or had retreat (68%).
- Six in ten (58%) had spiritual direction before entering their religious institute. Women are more likely than men to have spiritual direction (67% compared with 47% of men).
- About a half (48%) regularly participated in a faith-sharing group or a Bible study group. Women are more likely than men to participate in this practice (58% compared with 35% of men).
- Two in five (40%) 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 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.

	Age		
	Both	Women	Men
Mean	18	18	18
Median	18	18	18
Range	5-47	6-46	5-47

### *Encouragement to Consider a Vocation*

More than nine in ten (93%) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life.

<b>Encouragement to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life*</b>			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Parish priest	45	38	55
Religious sister or brother	44	48	39
Friend	44	44	43
Mother	25	19	33
Teacher/Catechist	23	25	20
Campus minister/School chaplain	22	20	24
Parishioner	19	13	28
Father	16	9	24
Other relative	15	13	18
Youth minister	7	6	8
Bishop	5	5	6
Deacon	2	2	2

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

- Nearly half report being encouraged by a parish priest (45%). More two in five report being encouraged by a religious sister or brother (44%) or a friend (44%) to consider a vocation to



religious life. Men are more likely than men to be encouraged by a parish priest; meanwhile, women are more likely than men to be encouraged by a religious sister or brother.

- A quarter was encouraged to consider a vocation to religious life by their mother (25%) and a teacher/catechist (23%). Men are more likely than women to be encouraged by their mother.
- More than one in five was encouraged to consider a vocation to religious life by a campus minister/School chaplain (22%) and a parishioner (19%).
- One in sixteen report being encouraged to consider a vocation to religious life by their father (16%) or other relative (15%).
- 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***

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 (64% compared with 37% of men religious).

<b>Discouragement from Considering a Vocation to Religious Life*</b>			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Other relative	26	36	14
Father	23	30	14
Friend or school classmate	22	25	18
Mother	18	23	12
Colleague or coworker	9	9	8
Someone else	5	8	2
Teacher	4	5	2
Priest or other clergy	3	2	4
Religious sister or brother	2	0	4
Youth minister	0	0	0

\*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 other relative (26%), father (23%), friend or school classmate (22%), or their mother (18%). Women are more likely than men to be discouraged from considering a vocation to religious life by their relative and father.
- Very few respondents say they were discouraged from considering a vocation by teachers, 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 three years before they entered.

<b><i>How many years did you know the members of your religious institute before entering?</i></b>			
	<b>Years</b>		
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Mean	3	2	3
Median	1	2	1
Range	0-36	0-36	0-22

Responding religious were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute.

<b><i>How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?*</i></b>			
Percentage checking each response			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor	28	28	28
In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital)	26	17	37
Through print or online promotional material published by the institute	24	28	20
Through a friend or relative in the institute	9	5	14
At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)	7	8	6
Through a vocation matching or placement service	7	11	2
Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute	5	2	10
Other	35	38	29

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

- Nearly three in ten (28%) report being first acquainted with their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor.
- A quarter report being first acquainted with their institute in or through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital) (26%) or through print or online promotional material published by the institute (24%).

- About one in ten indicate that they first became acquainted with their institute a friend or relative in the institute (9%).
- About one in twenty first became acquainted with their institute through the followings:
  - At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair) (7%)
  - Through a vocation matching or placement service (7%)
  - Through working with a Sister/Brother from the institute (5%)
- More than one in ten (35%) said they first became acquainted with their religious institute through some other means. Some of those “other” responses included:
  - A college "nun run" where young women visited different religious communities over Spring break
  - A friend invited me to a retreat hosted by the Sisters
  - A friend who attended a sponsored school of the institute
  - A friend who was discerning religious life
  - A random comment from someone doing an online course
  - A retreat connection with my college
  - Alternative spring break trip, campus minister
  - At a Diocesan Priesthood Ordination where I met the Vocation Director of my religious community
  - At my parish.
  - At school
  - At the FOCUS Conference in 2012 Orlando FL
  - Brother from Institute was Military Chaplain while deployed
  - Celebration of Religious Profession / Ordinations
  - College Retreat
  - Direct contact with assistant for vocations
  - Event where the sisters attended
  - Google
  - Google Search
  - I grew up going to my abbey
  - I met the priests and brothers on campus at Notre Dame and had conversations with their vocation director
  - Incarnate Word Lay Missionary
  - Internet
  - Nun run
  - One of the local Missionaries of Christ told me there was a Carmel in MN (where I live) - so that's how I found our convent because we don't have a webpage
  - Professor
  - Read the book on the life of St. Ignatius after hearing the Take, Lord Receive song by John Foley, S.J.
  - Reading St. Therese's story of the soul
  - Recommendation of a superior from another institute
  - Recommended by my aunt who is a Sister in another Benedictine monastery

- Religious sister participated with the Youth group at our Church
- Sisters speaking at my college
- They were present at a retreat I helped with and they stayed where I was living
- Through a friend who knew the community
- VEYM event
- Vocation Brochure

## Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences

Most (93%) had participated in at least one of these programs or experiences 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. Three-fourths (75%) report participating in this program before they entered their religious institute.

<b>Vocation/Discernment Programs and Experiences*</b>			
<i>Percentage checking each response</i>			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
“Come and See” experience	75	72	78
Vocation retreat	55	59	49
Live-in experience	25	27	24
“Andrew Dinner”	—	**	8
“Nun Run”	—	20	***
Other	13	19	6

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

- Nearly three in five responding religious (55%) participated in a vocation retreat before entering their religious institute.
- A quarter (25%) participated in some sort of live-in experience with their religious institute before entering.
- One in five (20%) report participating in a “Nun Run” (asked only of women), and 8% 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:

- Camino pilgrimage with personal intention of vocational discernment
- Dinner with Archbishop
- Diocese life awareness program
- Hearing different Sisters from different communities speak at events hosted by college Campus Ministry
- I volunteered for 120 hours at a homeless shelter where a Capuchin Brother worked
- Live with them for a week
- Lived for years in CCVI community
- Personal Retreats at Monastery, attending Liturgies and events at monastery
- Samuel Group for young adults run by the Apostles of the Interior Life
- Seminary
- Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola

## **Appendix: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies**





**Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**



**Profession Class of 2022 National Survey**

This survey will help us to understand the characteristics of the women professing perpetual vows in religious life in 2022. In addition, some of the information will be used by the Secretariat in conjunction with the World Day of Consecrated Life to assist the media in offering positive and accurate information about the women who profess perpetual vows each year. The information you provide here will be combined with that of other religious women who have made or are making their profession of perpetual vows this year for use in press releases and highlighted on the USCCB website. **Your participation in this project is very important. No individual level information will be released without your express permission. Please respond by December 15.**

1. Name of your religious institute: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name of your monastery or province (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you:    44 Male    56 Female
5. Your country of birth: 76 USA    24 Others  
    \_\_\_\_\_5a. If born outside the United States, in what year did you come to live in the United States?
6. Your primary race or ethnicity (Please select only one):
  - 66 Caucasian/European American/white
  - 4 African/African American/black
  - 11 Hispanic/Latina
  - 16 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian/Middle Eastern
  - 0 Native American/Alaska Native
  - 1 Mixed race
  - 2 Other: \_\_\_\_\_
7. How long have you been a Catholic?
  - 92 Baptized Catholic as an infant (“cradle Catholic”)
  - 8 Became a Catholic later in life

7a. If you answered “Became a Catholic later in life” in the previous question, how old were you when you became a Catholic? \_\_\_\_\_

7b. What was your previous religious affiliation? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood? **Please select all that apply.**

95 Biological parent(s)	4 Other relative(s)
1 Step parent	0 Someone else
0 Adoptive parent(s)	0 I prefer not to answer
11 Grandparent(s)	

8a. [If selected biological/step/adoptive parent(s)] During the most formative part of your childhood, were you raised by: (Please select one)

- |                                       |                                  |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 91 Married couple, living together    | 3 One parent, separated/divorced |
| 1 Married couple, living separately   | 1 One parent, single/unmarried   |
| 0 Unmarried couple, living separately | 0 Something else                 |
| 1 Unmarried couple, living together   | 0 I prefer not to answer         |
| 4 One parent, widowed                 |                                  |

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

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 84 Both parents Catholic               | 2 Father Catholic, mother non-Catholic |
| 9 Mother Catholic, father non-Catholic | 5 Neither parent was Catholic          |

10. How many brothers and sisters do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What is your birth order?

- |              |           |             |                            |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------------|
| 4 Only child | 39 Eldest | 20 Youngest | 37 Somewhere in the middle |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------------|

12. Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or a religious? 30 Yes 70 No

13. Did you attend any of the following before you entered your religious institute? **Please check all that apply**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 57 Parish-based religious education/<br>CCD/RCIA | 36 Catholic high school                 |
| 48 Catholic elementary or middle school          | 36 Catholic college or university       |
|  | 24 Catholic ministry formation programs |

14. Were you ever home schooled? 12 Yes 88 No

14a. If "Yes," total number of years of home schooling: \_\_\_\_\_

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

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 Elementary school (K-8)   | 18 Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree  |
| 5 High school               | 56 College or university undergraduate degree |
| 1 Trade or technical school | 19 Graduate degree                            |

16. Did educational debt delay your application for entrance to your institute? 6 Yes 94 No

16a. If "Yes," approximately how long were you delayed? \_\_\_\_\_

16b. If "Yes," what was the amount of your educational debt: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

16c. If "Yes," did you receive assistance from any of these groups in paying down your debt? **Please check all that apply**

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 4 Family members      | 1 Serra Fund for Vocations                         |
| 4 Parish              | 1 Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations               |
| 1 Religious community | 3 Knights of Columbus Fund for Vocations           |
| 5 Friends/co-workers  | 0 Vocational Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations |
| 1 The Labouré Society | 1 Other: _____                                     |

17. Were you employed before entering your religious institute?

- |       |                   |                   |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 17 No | 31 Yes, part-time | 52 Yes, full-time |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------|

17a. *If yes*, what was your main work experience prior to entering your religious institute?  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. Were you involved in ministry before entering your religious institute?

- |       |                        |                  |                   |
|-------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 16 No | 67 Yes, as a volunteer | 7 Yes, part-time | 10 Yes, full-time |
|-------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|

19. Did you serve in any of these **ministries** before entering your religious institute? **Please check all that apply**
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 51 Altar server                                 | 14 Teacher in a Catholic school  |
| 42 Extraordinary Minister of Communion          | 5 Hospital or prison ministry  |
| 46 Lector                                       | 24 Social service ministry (e.g., Catholic Charities program, other community service) |
| 43 Music ministry, cantor, choir                | 50 Youth minister or Campus minister   |
| 48 Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA |  |
20. Did you participate in any of these **programs or activities** before entering your religious institute? **Please check all that apply**
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 42 Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center                             | 7 Religious institute volunteer (e.g., Mercy Volunteer Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps) |
| 1 Catholic Daughters (if female)                                      | 3 Sodality (if female)  |
| 4 Catholic Scouting (if male)   | 6 St. Vincent de Paul Society   |
| 15 Fellowship of Catholic University Students                         | 13 World Youth Day  |
| 15 Franciscan University of Steubenville High School Youth Conference | 35 Young adult ministry or group  |
| 6 Knights of Columbus (if male)                                       | 50 Youth ministry or youth group  |
| 9 National Catholic Youth Conference                                  |   |
| 4 National Evangelization Team (NET)                                  |   |
21. 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**
- |                                    |                        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 77 Eucharistic Adoration           | 68 Retreats            |
| 48 Faith-sharing group/Bible study | 40 Lectio Divina       |
| 70 Rosary                          | 58 Spiritual direction |
22. How old were you when you first considered a vocation to religious life? \_\_\_\_\_
23. Were you encouraged to consider religious life by any of these people? **Please check all that apply**
- |                      |                                |                                       |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 25 Mother            | 45 Parish Priest               | 44 Friend                             |
| 19 Parishioner       | 15 Other relative              | 22 Campus Minister or School Chaplain |
| 5 Bishop             | 7 Youth Minister               | 2 Deacon                              |
| 16 Father            | 44 Religious sister or brother |                                       |
| 23 Teacher/Catechist |                                |                                       |
24. Did anyone discourage you from considering religious life as a vocation? 53 Yes 47 No
- 24a. If "Yes" who discouraged you. **Please check all that apply**
- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 18 Mother                     | 9 Colleague or coworker       |
| 23 Father                     | 2 Religious sister or brother |
| 26 Other relative             | 0 Youth minister              |
| 22 Friend or school classmate | 4 Teacher                     |
| 3 Priest or other clergy      | 5 Someone else: _____         |
25. How many years did you know the members of your religious institute before you entered?  
\_\_\_\_\_
26. How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute? **Please check all that apply**
- |   |
|---|
| 26 In/through a sponsored institution or work of the institute (e.g., school, hospital) |
| 5 Through working with a Sister from the institute                                      |
| 9 Through a friend or relative in the institute   |

- 28 Through the recommendation of a priest or advisor
- 24 Through print or online promotional material published by the institute
- 7 Through a vocation matching or placement service
- 7 At a vocation event (e.g., Vocation Fair)
- 35 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Did you participate in any of these vocation/discernment programs before entering you religious institute? **Please check all that apply**

- 4 "Andrew Dinner" (if male)
- 11 "Nun Run" (if female)
- 75 "Come and See" experience
- 25 Live-in experience
- 55 Vocation retreat
- 13 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

28. Every religious has his/her own interesting story. Please briefly complete the following statement about yourself. This is to be **up to three sentences** that can be shared on the USCCB Profession Class of 2022 webpage. Please do not include overly personal information.  
 People might be surprised to know that I \_\_\_\_\_

29. Please provide the following information so that we may contact you for clarification about your survey responses, if needed. This contact information will not be shared without your express permission:

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

30. I permit the USCCB to use my name, statement, and photograph on the Profession Class of 2022 webpage.

- Yes  No I permit the USCCB to use my name, statement, and photograph on the Profession Class of 2022 webpage.

**You are invited to submit an individual, self-taken photo (a clear headshot) in digital format to be featured on the USCCB website, "Meet the Profession Class."** You are also encouraged to respond to the prompt (i.e., "People might be surprised to know that I ..."), so that both your picture and quote can be published on the website. For an example on how this information is displayed, please visit <https://www.usccb.org/committees/clergy-consecrated-life-vocations/profession-classes>.

Thank you for participating in this survey. This project presents religious life in a positive light and is meant to be an encouragement for the faithful.

– Father Luke Ballman, Director  
 USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations

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