



VOCATION FACT SHEET By VISION editors and Sr. Debbie Borneman, SS.C.M.

Myths and misconceptions abound when it comes to consecrated life and religious vocations. We are happy to bust those myths by putting facts at your fingertips. VISION Vocation Network tracks vocation trends annually. Don't forget to sign up to receive our award-winning [E-Vocation newsletter](#) to stay up-to-date on vocation news.

WHO'S CONSIDERING RELIGIOUS LIFE?

Just who is considering religious life is tracked by a number of different organizations, including the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the National Religious Vocation Conference, and VISION Vocation Network.

Men

- Among male never-married Catholics, 3 percent (or approximately 350,000) have very seriously considered becoming a priest or religious brother.
- Men who have attended a Catholic secondary school are six times more likely to consider being a priest or brother.
- Among college students involved in Catholic campus ministry: 66 percent have seriously considered becoming a priest or religious brother.
- Among men involved in diocesan young adult ministry: 84 percent have seriously considered becoming a priest or religious brother.
- Among the 2,083 men who completed online VISION Vocation Match profiles in 2013, the majority are under 30, desire to wear a habit or distinctive religious garb, prefer to enter an apostolic community, and attended Catholic school.

KEY VOCATION INFLUENCERS

Parental encouragement

Catholic education

Participation in parish ministry

Volunteer service

Invitation by pastor, mentor, family, or friends

Women

- Among female never-married Catholics 2 percent (or approximately 250,000) have very seriously considered becoming a religious sister.
- Women who have attended a Catholic primary school are three times more likely than those who did not to consider being a religious sister.
- Among college students involved in Catholic campus ministry: 39 percent have seriously considered becoming a religious sister.
- Among women involved in diocesan young-adult ministry: 30 percent have seriously considered becoming a religious sister.
- Among the 2,642 women who completed online VISION Vocation Match profiles in 2013, the majority are under 30, desire to wear a habit or distinctive religious garb, prefer to enter an apostolic community, and attended Catholic school.

Women & Men

- Among former full-time volunteers of Catholic Volunteer Network 37 percent have considered religious life or the priesthood and 6 percent have chosen a religious vocation.
- Among men and women discerning a vocation, the average educational debt is \$28,000. (A majority of religious congregations have turned an inquirer away within the last 10 years because of educational debt.)

WHO'S ENTERING RELIGIOUS LIFE?

Newer entrants identify their primary reasons for coming to religious life as a sense of call, a desire to deepen their prayer and spiritual life, and a desire to live and work with others who share their faith and values.

Worldwide

In 2014 there were nearly 1.2 million religious brothers, sisters, and order and diocesan priests in the world:

705,529 religious sisters and nuns

279,561 diocesan priests worldwide

134,752 religious order priests

55,314 religious brothers

In the United States

- Newer entrants are attracted to communities that have a strong Catholic identity, are hopeful about their future, have members who live together in community, and have a structured prayer life.
- There are more than 66,000 religious sisters, brothers, and priests in the United States in more than 800 religious institutes (approximately 600 institutes of women and 200 of men).
- Nearly 1,000 U.S. women are in formation preparing to become sisters.
- More than 100 women and men in the U.S. profess perpetual vows annually.
- Fifty percent of new religious report that they were 17 or younger when they first considered a vocation to religious life.

- In 2014 approximately 477 entered priesthood—266 to diocesan priesthood (from 114 dioceses) and 96 to religious priesthood. Among religious orders, the largest number of respondents came from the Jesuits, Dominicans, and Benedictines.
- The average age of entrance to religious life is 30 for men and 32 for women.
- Newer entrants are 58 percent Caucasian; 21 percent Hispanic/Latino/a; 14 percent Asian/Pacific Islander; 6 percent African American; 1 percent other.
- 70 percent of newer entrants have a bachelor's degree when they enter.

Information gathered from the follow sources:

<http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html>

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/ordination-class/upload/Class-of-2014-report-FINAL-2.pdf>

http://www.vocationnetwork.org/statistics/response_statistics?year=2013

[2013 CARA/National Survey of Former Full-time Volunteers of the Catholic Volunteer Network by Caroline Saunders, Thomas Gaunt, S.J., and Eva Coll](#)

[2012 CARA/USCCB Study on the Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life among Never-Married U.S. Catholics by Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier](#)

[2009 NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations](#)



"Religious life ought to promote growth in the Church by way of attraction. The Church must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world."

-- Pope Francis