

Ordinations and Vocations

Catholics were asked several questions about ordinations and vocations: whether they have ever attended an ordination ceremony for a priest, whether they have ever considered a vocation to the clergy or religious life, whether they have ever encouraged others to pursue a religious vocation and (if not) their willingness to do so.

Attendance of an Ordination Ceremony

About one in eight Catholics (13 percent) have attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest.

<i>Have you ever attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest?</i>	
Yes	13%
No	87

Differences by Mass Attendance

The more frequently respondents attend Mass, the more likely they are to say they have attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest.

<i>Have you ever attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest?</i>			
<i>By Mass Attendance</i>			
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Yes	20%	17%	8%
No	80	83	92

Differences by Education

Among those who attended at least some college, those enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who were not to say they have attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest (31 percent compared to 13 percent).

Consideration of Becoming a Priest or Religious Brother

About one in six Catholic men (17 percent) have ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother.

<i>Have you ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a priest or religious brother...</i>		
Male respondents		
	2003	2008
Very seriously	5%	3%
Somewhat seriously	6	6
Only a little seriously	6	7
Not seriously at all	2	1
Has never considered	80	83
I am a priest or religious brother	--	<1

Nine percent have of men have “somewhat” or “very” seriously considered becoming a priest or religious brother. A similar proportion, 8 percent, have considered it “only a little seriously” or “not seriously at all.”

In 2003, one-fifth of men reported that they had considered becoming a priest or religious brother.²¹ This proportion is just slightly higher than the 17 percent in the current survey.

²¹ Results are from the 2003 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Male Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month are most likely to say they have at least “somewhat” seriously considered becoming a priest or brother. Seventeen percent of these men responded as such, compared to 11 percent of weekly attenders and 6 percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.

<i>Have you ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a priest or religious brother...</i>			
Male respondents			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Very seriously	4%	8%	2%
Somewhat seriously	7	9	4
Only a little seriously	7	10	6
Not seriously at all	2	0	1
Has never considered	79	73	87
I am a priest or religious brother	<1	0	0

Differences by Generation

Men of the Vatican II Generation are most likely to have considered a vocation to the priesthood or religious life (25 percent), followed by 17 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 12 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 9 percent of the Millennial Generation.

Differences by Education

Men with post-graduate degrees are most likely to have considered the priesthood or religious life (24 percent, compared to 20 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 18 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 12 percent of those with a high school diploma or less).

Among men who attended at least some college, those enrolled at a Catholic college or university are much more likely than those enrolled elsewhere to say they have considered becoming a priest or religious brother (40 percent compared to 17 percent). About one in four men who have attended a Catholic college or university (26 percent) say they have at least “somewhat” seriously considered the priesthood or religious life. Men who attended a Catholic high school are also more likely to have considered this vocation (32 percent overall and 20 percent at least “somewhat” seriously).

Consideration of Becoming a Permanent Deacon

Very few Catholic men, 5 percent, have ever given any consideration to becoming a permanent deacon.

A permanent deacon is an ordained man, either married or single, who may proclaim the Gospel, preach, and teach in the name of the Church, baptize, lead the faithful in prayer, witness marriages, and conduct wake and funeral services. Deacons are also leaders in identifying the needs of others, then marshalling the Church's resources to meet those needs. Have you ever considered becoming a permanent deacon? [If "Yes"] Would you say you have considered becoming a permanent deacon...

Male respondents

Very seriously	1%
Somewhat seriously	2
Only a little seriously	1
Not seriously at all	1
Has never considered	95
I am currently serving as a permanent deacon	0

Catholic men who are age 35 or older are *not* more likely than those who are younger to have considered becoming a permanent deacon.²² Married Catholic men age 35 or older are also no more likely to have considered this.

²² The minimum age for ordination as a permanent deacon is 35.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Regardless of frequency of Mass attendance, Catholic men are less likely to say they have seriously considered becoming a deacon than a priest or brother. Seven percent of men who attend Mass weekly have “somewhat” or “very” seriously considered becoming a permanent deacon. Very few men who attend Mass a few times a year or less have considered this, as have only 2 percent of men who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month.

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Male respondents

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Very seriously	3%	0%	<1%
Somewhat seriously	4	2	<1
Only a little seriously	3	2	<1
Not seriously at all	0	6	0
Has never considered	90	90	99

Differences by Generation

Ten percent of men of the Pre-Vatican II Generation have considered becoming a permanent deacon. This compares to 7 percent of men of the Vatican II Generation and 3 percent each of the Post-Vatican II and Millennial generations.

Differences by Education

Men with post-graduate degrees are most likely to have considered becoming a permanent deacon (16 percent, compared to 4 percent of all other men).

Among men who have attended at least some college, those enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who were not to say they have considered this (17 percent compared to 5 percent).

Consideration of Becoming a Nun or Religious Sister

Fifteen percent of Catholic women have ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister.

<i>Have you ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a nun or religious sister...</i>		
Female respondents		
	2003	2008
Very seriously	4%	<1%
Somewhat seriously	5	4
Only a little seriously	6	9
Not seriously at all	2	2
Has never considered	84	85
 I am a nun or religious sister	 --	 0

In 2003, about one in six women (16 percent) reported that they had ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister, a nearly identical proportion as in the present survey (15 percent).²³ However, the percentage reporting that they considered this “very” seriously has declined from 4 percent to less than 1 percent.

²³ Results are from the 2003 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

Differences by Mass Attendance

More than one in 20 Catholic women who attend Mass at least once a month have “somewhat” or “very” seriously considered becoming a nun or a religious sister (6 percent of weekly attenders and 7 percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month). Slightly fewer (4 percent) of those attending Mass less frequently have considered this.

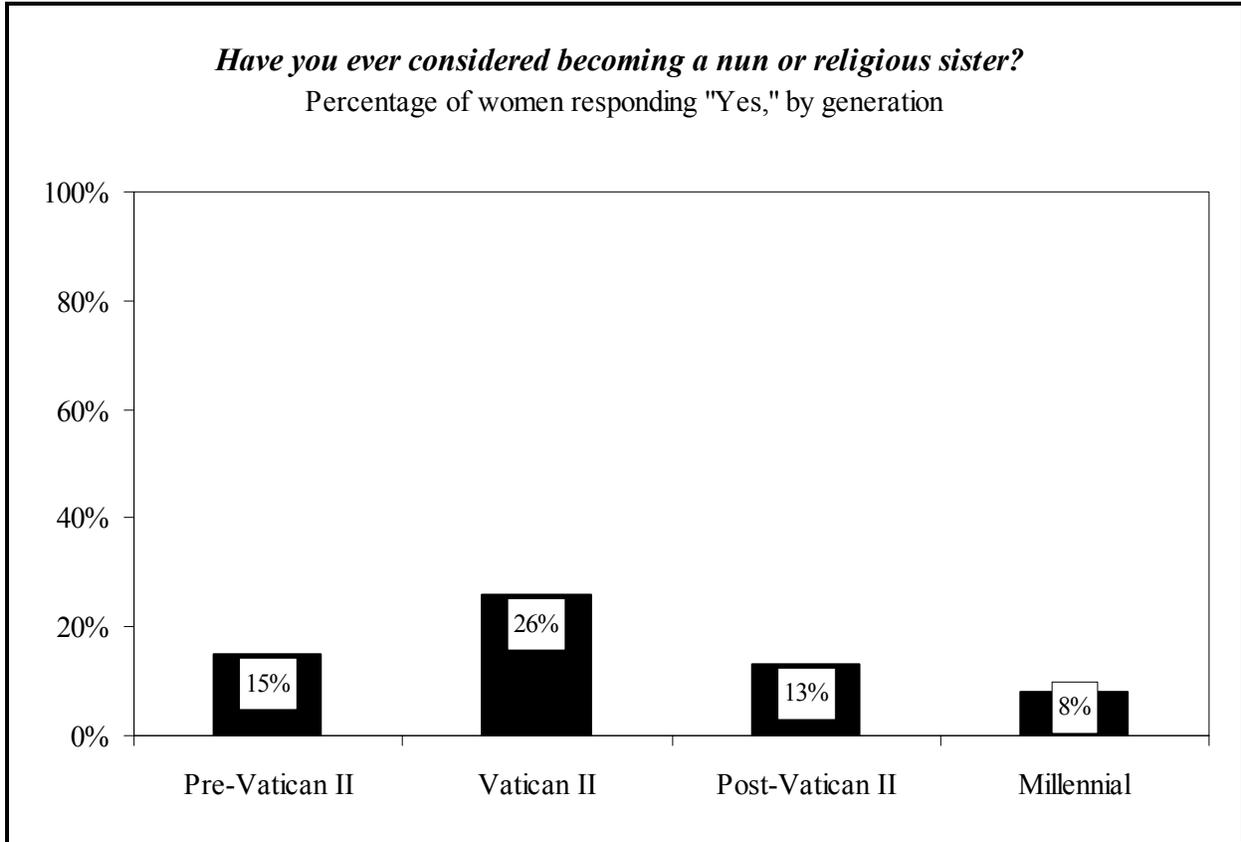
<i>Have you ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a nun or religious sister...</i>			
Female respondents			
<i>By Mass Attendance</i>			
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Very seriously	1%	0%	1%
Somewhat seriously	5	7	3
Only a little seriously	11	11	6
Not seriously at all	3	0	3
Has never considered	80	82	87

Differences by Education

- Women with no more than a high school diploma are *less* likely than all others to have considered religious life (10 percent compared to 22 percent).
- Women who attended a Catholic high school are among the most likely to have considered this vocation (25 percent overall and 8 percent at least “somewhat” seriously).
- Women who have attended a Catholic college or university are among the most likely to have considered becoming a nun or religious sister (41 percent). Most say they considered this “only a little” seriously (24 percent) rather than at least “somewhat” seriously (6 percent) or “not seriously at all” (11 percent).

Differences by Generation

Twenty-six percent of women of the Vatican II Generation have considered becoming a nun or religious sister. This compares to 15 percent of women of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 13 percent of those of the Millennial Generation, and 8 percent of those of the Post-Vatican II Generation.



Previous Encouragement of Religious Vocations

One in ten Catholics have encouraged someone they know to pursue a religious vocation.

<i>Have you ever encouraged someone you know to become a...</i>	
Percentage responding "Yes"	
Priest	6%
Permanent deacon	4
Nun or religious sister	4
Religious brother	3
Any of the above	10

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

Six percent of Catholics have ever encouraged someone they know to become a priest. Four percent have every encouraged someone to become a permanent deacon, and an identical proportion have ever encouraged someone to become a nun or religious sister. Three percent have ever encouraged someone to become a religious brother.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Encouragement of vocations is especially likely to come from weekly Mass attenders. One in five weekly Mass attenders (19 percent) has encouraged someone they know to become a priest and nearly three in ten (28 percent) have encouraged someone to consider any of the vocations listed. Those attending Mass less frequently are not as likely to encourage vocations. Respondents are most likely (across all Mass attendance categories) to say they have encouraged priestly vocations.

<i>Have you ever encouraged someone you know to become a...</i>			
Percentage responding "Yes"			
<i>By Mass Attendance</i>			
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Priest	19%	5%	2%
Permanent deacon	12	2	1
Nun or religious sister	10	3	1
Religious brother	9	2	<1
Any of the above	28	9	3

Willingness to Encourage Religious Vocations

Among Catholics who have not previously done so, one-quarter say they would encourage someone else they know to become a priest.

[If respondent has not previously encouraged each type of vocation] Would you encourage someone else you know to become a...²⁴

Percentage of those who have *not* encouraged responding “Yes”

Permanent deacon	28%
Religious brother	27
Nun or religious sister	27
Priest	25
Any of the above	31
All of the above	19

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

Slightly larger percentages (27 to 28 percent) say they would encourage someone else they know to become a permanent deacon, a religious brother, or a nun or religious sister. About three in ten say they would encourage at least one of the four types of vocations. About one in five of these respondents would encourage all four types.

²⁴ Respondents were only asked about the specific vocations that they said had not encouraged in the past. Someone who said yes that they had encouraged just one vocation could say that they would not encourage any of the other vocations.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Among those who have *not* previously encouraged vocations, a majority of weekly Mass attenders (53 percent) say they would encourage someone they know to seek at least one of the vocations listed. Forty-seven percent of weekly attenders in this group say they would encourage a man they know to become a permanent deacon, followed by 46 percent who would encourage a women they know to become a nun or religious sister.

[If respondent has not previously encouraged each type of vocation] <u>Would you encourage someone else you know to become a...</u>			
Percentage of those who have <i>not</i> encouraged responding “Yes”			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Permanent deacon	47%	31%	20%
Nun or religious sister	46	28	19
Religious brother	45	29	20
Priest	42	27	19
Any of the above	53	34	22
All of the above	23	21	17

Among those who have not encouraged vocations, those attending Mass less than weekly are *less* likely than weekly attenders to say they would encourage someone to seek any of the vocations listed.

Differences by Education

Among the respondents who have not encouraged vocations, 25 percent of Catholics with a high school diploma or less would encourage any (at least one) of the four types of vocations. This compares to 70 percent of those with some college, 59 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree and 56 percent of those with a post-graduate degree.

Willingness to Encourage One’s Child to Pursue a Vocation

About one-third of Catholics would encourage their own child to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun or sister.

<i>Would you encourage your own child to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun, or sister?</i>	
Yes	32%
No	68

There is no statistically significant difference between the responses of those who have children and those who do not (34 percent compared to 32 percent).

Differences by Mass Attendance

A majority of adult Catholics attending Mass weekly (55 percent) say they would encourage their own child to pursue a vocation compared to a third of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month (33 percent) and more than one in five of those attending Mass a few times a year or less often (22 percent).

<i>Would you encourage your own child to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun, or sister?</i>			
Percentage responding “Yes”			
<i>By Mass Attendance</i>			
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Yes	55%	33%	22%
No	45	67	78

Differences by Education

Forty-six percent of Catholics with a post-graduate degree would encourage their own child to pursue a religious vocation. This compares to 38 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 33 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 27 percent of those with a high school diploma or less.