



**IRISH RELIGIOUS STEWARDSHIP
GATHERING
5 December 2025**



Irish Religious Stewardship Gathering

AGENDA

10am: Welcome & Prayer

- Fr Joe McGee & Sr Uainín Clarke

10 – 11am: Irish Religious Stewardship

- Fr Aidan McGrath, Ms Nicola Keogh,

- Sr Avril O'Regan and Sr Carmel Murtagh

11 – 11.30am: Coffee & Buzz

11.30 – 12.15pm: IRS Strategy and Costings

- David Rose

12.15 – 1pm: Open Forum & Questions

1pm: Light Lunch

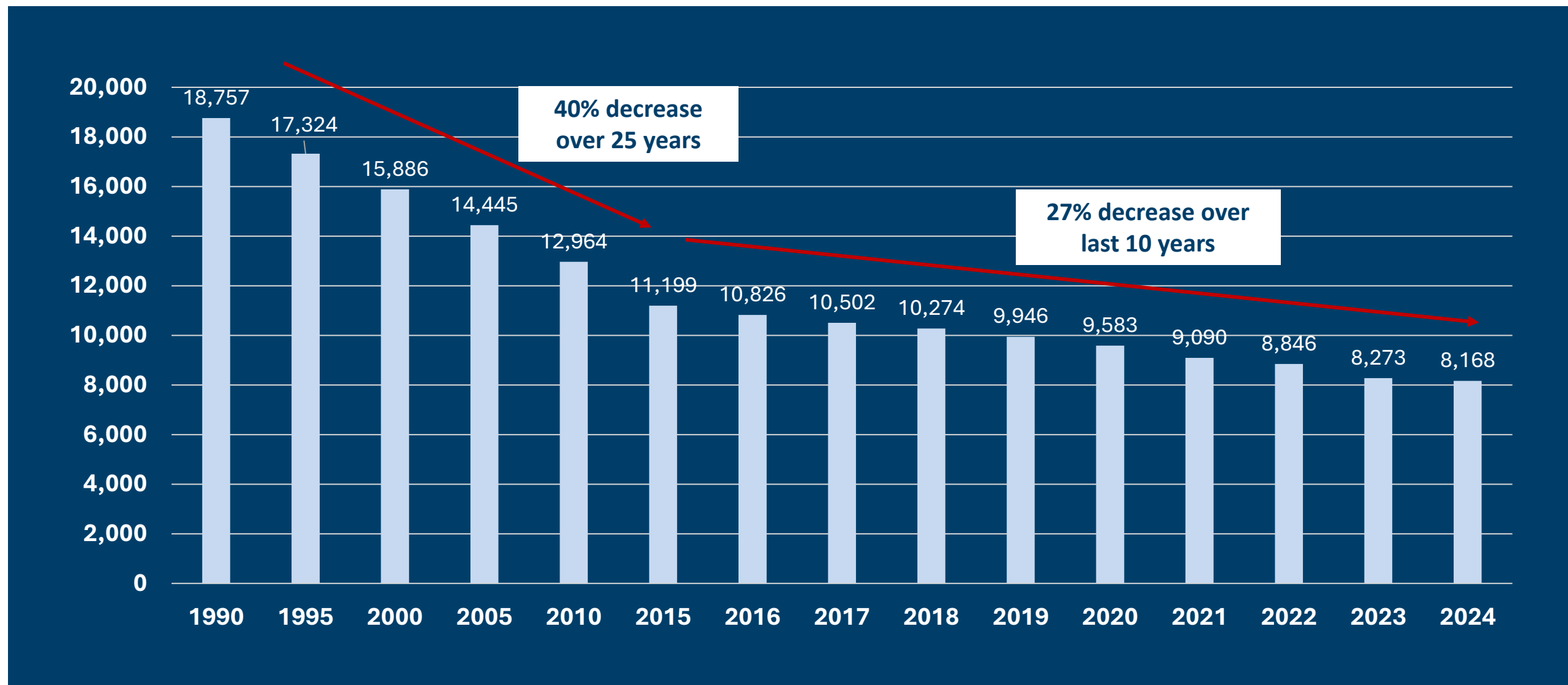
Setting the Context

Changing Profile of Religious Life in Ireland

- **Dramatic Decline in Vocations and Impact on Membership:** The number of men and women entering religious life in Ireland has significantly decreased over the last forty years, leading to aging congregations and fewer active members.
- **Aging Religious Communities:** Many congregations within Ireland now consist predominantly of elderly members, with increasing care needs and with a reduced capacity for active ministry.
- **Shift from Institutional to Charism-Based Identity:** Religious life has evolved from large institutional roles (e.g., schools, hospitals) to smaller, mission-focused communities rooted in spiritual charism and individual ministries.
- **Increased Lay Collaboration:** Laypeople are increasingly involved in the ministries and governance of religious congregations, often taking on roles once held by vowed members.
- **Changing Role in Irish Society:** The influence of religious congregations in public life has diminished, prompting a re-evaluation of their mission, visibility, and legacy in a more secular Ireland.
- **Strategic Stewardship of Property:** With fewer members and changing needs, congregations are reassessing their property portfolios—balancing heritage, mission, and sustainability in decisions about use, repurposing, or divestment.



Total Number of Religious in Ireland (Republic and Northern Ireland) 1990 - 2024

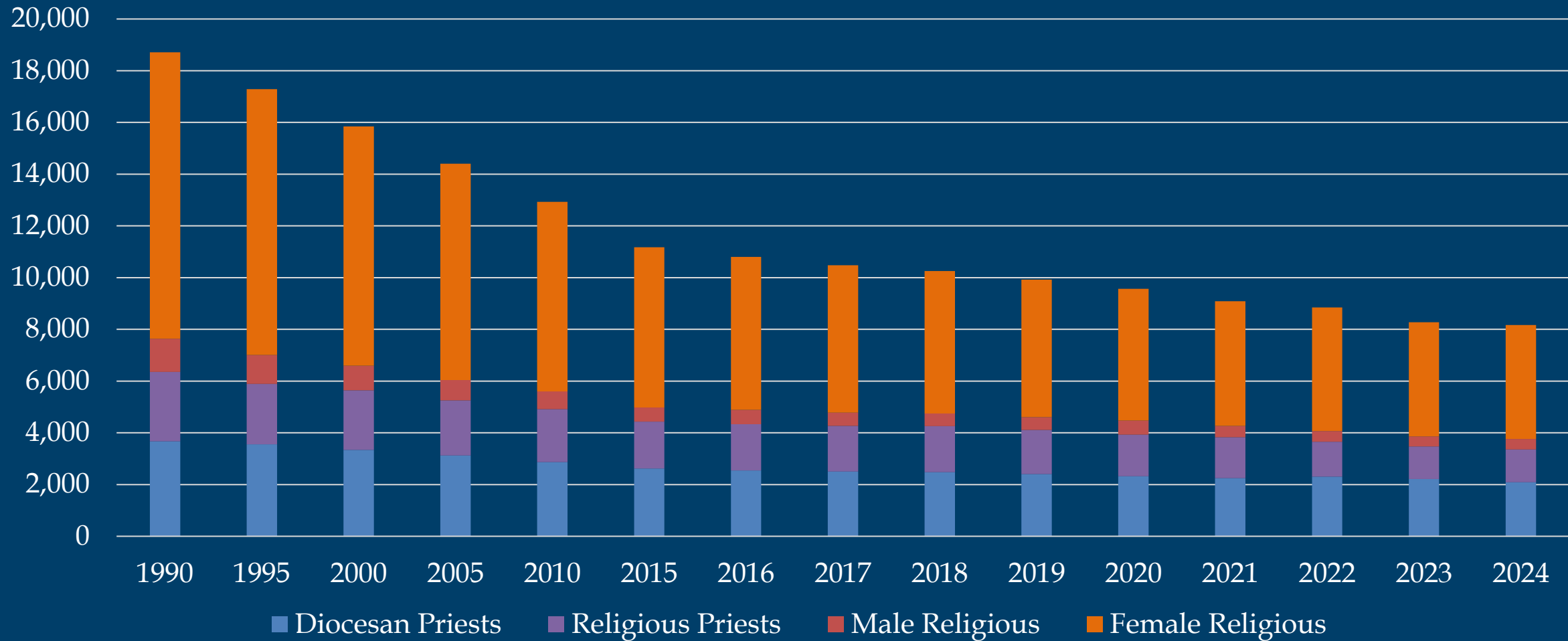


Religious Statistics for Ireland (Republic and Northern Ireland) 1990 - 2024

Year	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Male Religious	Female Religious	Total Religious*
1990	3,673	2,680	1,285	11,077	18,757
1995	3,554	2,334	1,120	10,280	17,324
2000	3,336	2,306	950	9,254	15,886
2005	3,121	2,128	790	8,370	14,445
2010	2,867	2,044	685	7,337	12,964
2015	2,621	1,810	545	6,197	11,199
2020	2,320	1,608	545	5,091	9,583
2021	2,246	1,581	439	4,824	9,090
2022	2,300	1,350	419	4,777	8,846
2023	2,213	1,255	396	4,409	8,273
2024	2,090	1,261	409	4,408	8,168
% Change 1990 - 2024	-43.1%	-52.9%	-68.2%	-60.2%	-56.5%

* Includes a very small number of secular religious from 1990 - 2020

Total Number of Religious (by group) 1990 - 2024

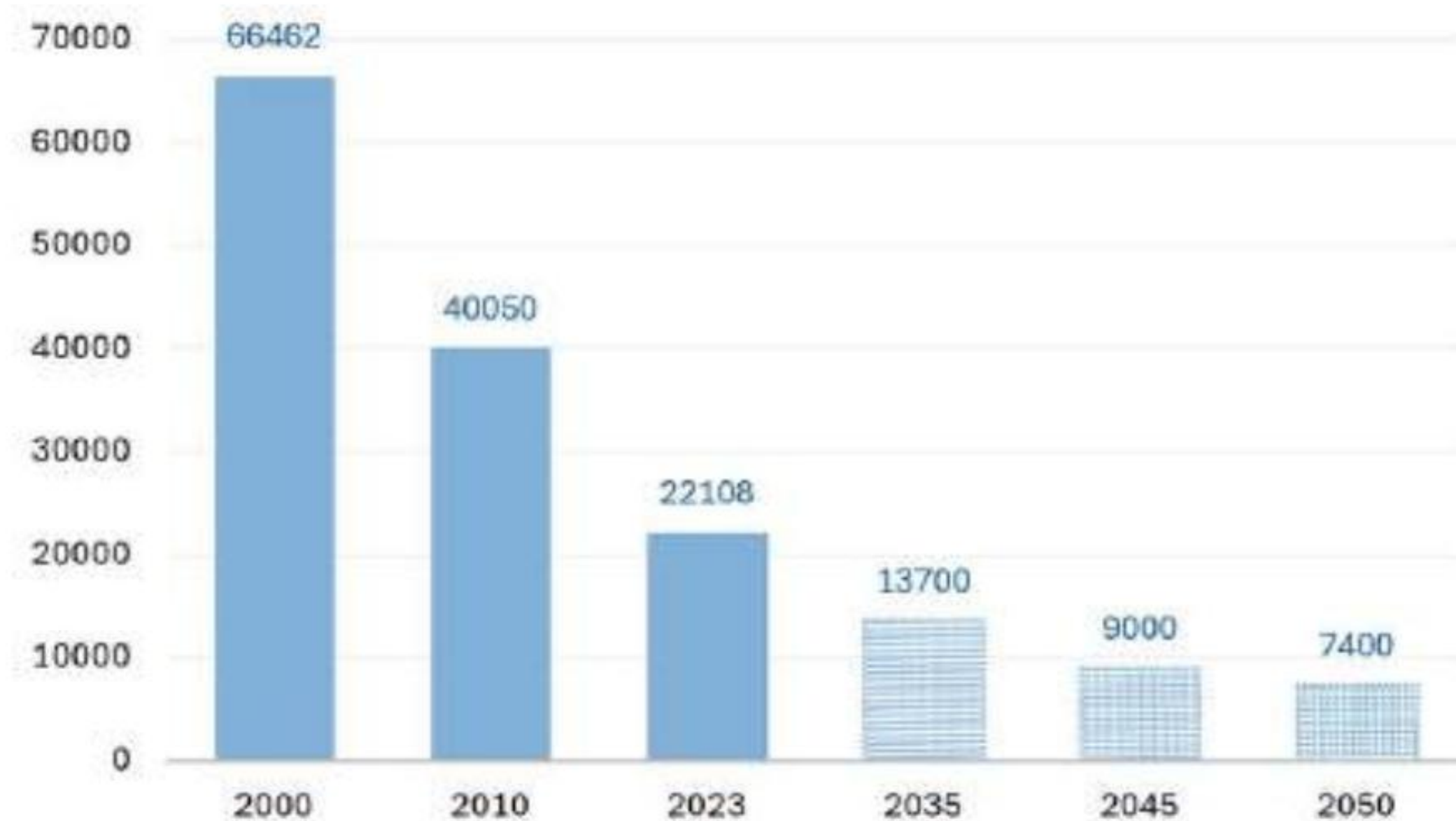


Summary

Overall reduction of almost **57%** in the number of Religious (Consecrated & Non-Consecrated) within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland from 1990 to 2024.

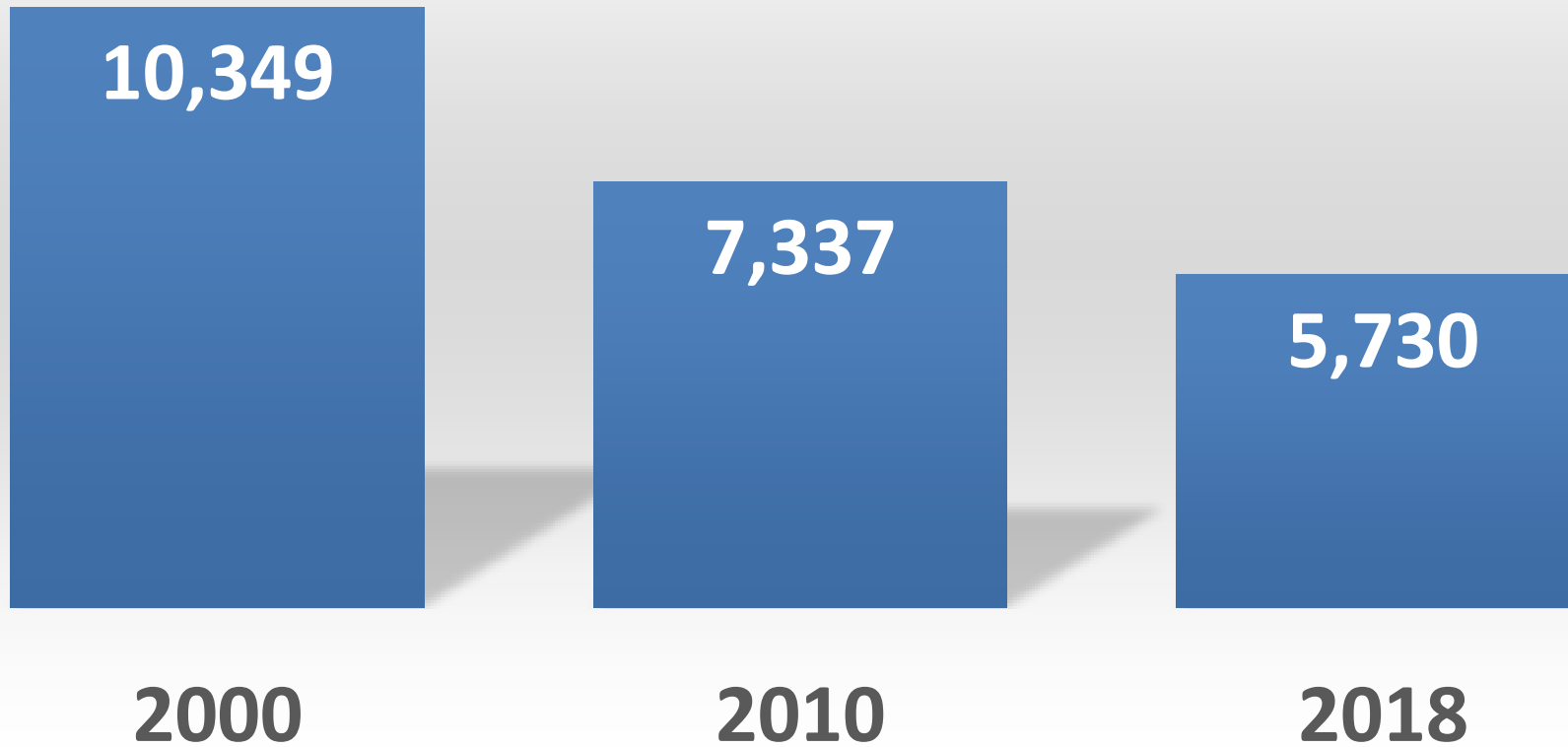
Group	% Change: 1990 - 2024
Male Religious (Consecrated and Non-Consecrated)	-49%
<i>Priests (Diocesan and Religious)</i>	-47%
<i>Male Religious</i>	-68%
Female Religious	-60%

Total number of religious in France



In Ireland?

Religious women



"Half a century ago there were more than 14,000 women religious in Ireland. Today that number is closer to 4000 with an average age over 80"

Last nuns in Ireland

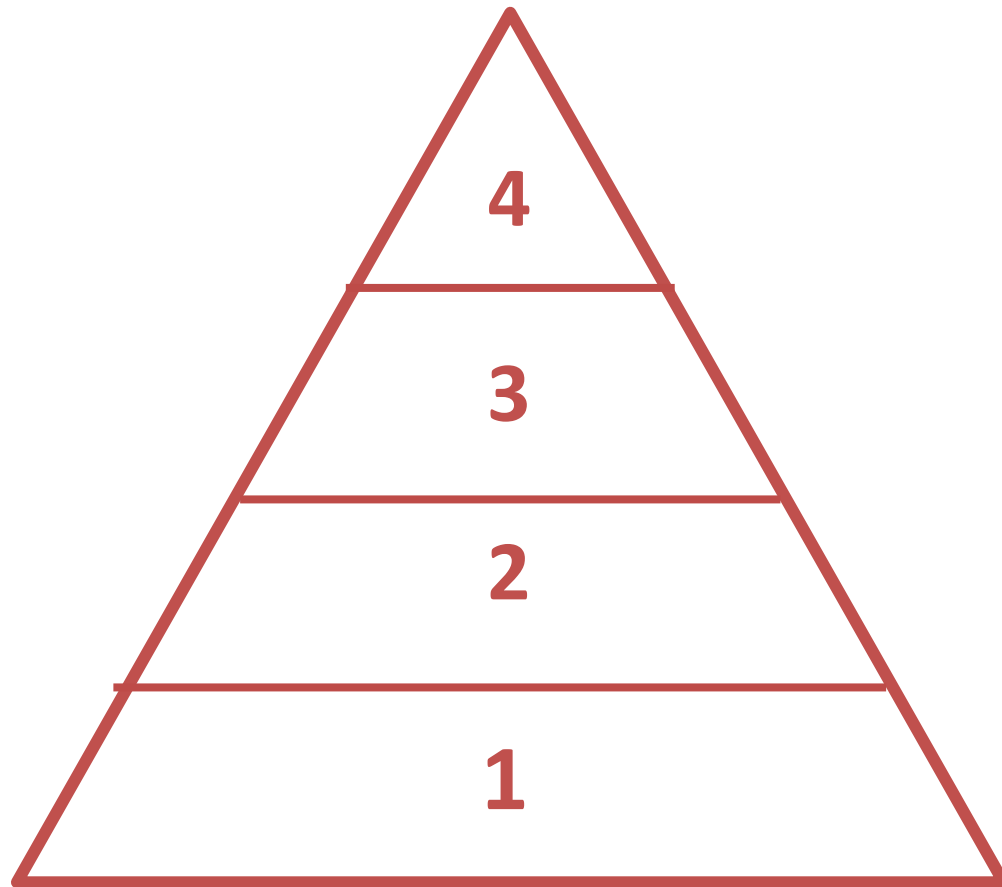
Challenges

- ❖ Increasing fragility
- ❖ Difficulty in finding leaders, bursars etc.
- ❖ Increasing need for financial & leadership assistance
- ❖ Downsizing & adaptation of buildings
- ❖ Supporting aging or dependent members
- ❖ Organisation of the transfer of works & ministries

Emerging structures

- ❖ Canadian Religious Stewardship
- ❖ L'intendance Religieuse Canadienne
- ❖ Emerging Futures Collaborative (Australia)
- ❖ CISCA (Brussels)
- ❖ Corref & Companie
- ❖ Irish Religious Stewardship

Emerging structures – what do they do?



Complete & Comprehensive support

Provide Services / Management

Pool human & technical resources

Raise awareness

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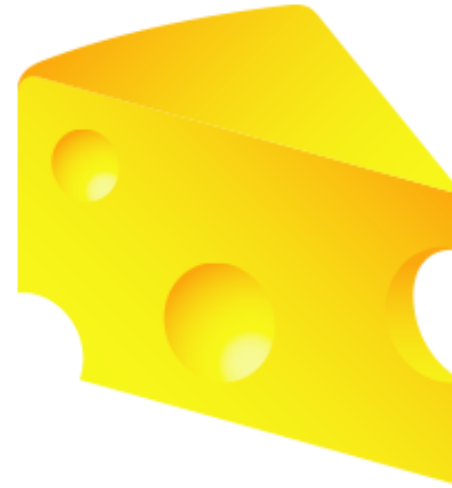
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SPENCER JOHNSON

-WHO MOVED MY CHEESE-

**What you are afraid
of is never as bad as
what you imagine.
The fear you let build
up in your mind is
worse than the situation
that actually exists.**



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Reflections, Questions & Answers

