NRVC National Religious Vocation Conference

RELIGIOUS LIFE TODAY
SELECT FINDINGS FROM THE NRVC/CARA 2020 STUDY ON RECENT VOCATIONS TO RELIGIOUS LIFE. FIND THE COMPLETE STUDY AT NRVC.NET.

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT NEW MEMBERS (ENTERING FROM 2003-2018)

1. ENDLESS CALL: Men and women continue to respond to the call to religious life
2. APPEAL: Drawn by prayer, spirituality, charisma, community life, and mission
3. ATTRIBUTES: Culturally diverse; embrace intercultural, intergenerational living
4. LIFESTYLE: Committed to living simply and in solidarity with the poor
5. OUTLOOK: Filled with abundant hope for religious life amid changing demographics

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW MEMBERS

3,500+ NEW MEMBERS
PAST 15 YEARS; 200+ PROFESSED MEMBERS PER YEAR

28 AVERAGE AGE AT ENTRANCE

81% WERE EMPLOYED BEFORE ENTRANCE

73% ATTENDED A CATHOLIC SCHOOL FOR AT LEAST PART OF THEIR EDUCATION

73% GREW UP IN “MIDDLE-CLASS” HOUSEHOLDS

71% OBTAINED A BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR MORE BEFORE ENTERING RELIGIOUS LIFE

35% DISCERNED FOR MORE THAN 2 YEARS

34% HAVE A RELATIVE IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

33% HAVE A PARENT BORN OUTSIDE THE U.S.

AGE OF THOSE IN INITIAL FORMATION

4% 60 and over
6% Under 20
10% 40-49
31% 30-39
42% 20-29

RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUND*

African American/Black/African-American 6%
Hispanic 10%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian/Middle Eastern 13%
Caucasian/White/Anglo 70%

FIRST LANGUAGE
76% English
7% Spanish
5% Vietnamese
12% Other (59 different languages)

VOCATION AWARENESS

70% of new entrants considered religious life before age 21. Most:
• Accessed a wide array of print and online resources as they discerned;
• Talked to their pastors; attended vocation-related events; and
• Received encouragement from religious institutes, family, friends, parish members, and campus ministers.

95% Found meeting with a member of the institute most helpful
74% Participated in a “Come and See” experience
66% Were invited to consider a religious vocation

*New members as reported by Major Superiors of Religious Institutes.
COMMUNITY LIFE

Newer members see community life as what is distinctive and attractive about religious life. The majority of newer members desire to live in a community of four or more and find the following aspects of community “Very Important.” (Their ratings correspond fairly closely to the ratings of Major Superiors of religious institutes.)

- Ministering wherever the need is greatest
- Ministering/working with other members
- Socializing/sharing leisure time together
- Celebrating holidays/festive days together
- Ongoing formation and lifelong education
- Sharing meals with other members
- Living with other members
- Praying with other members

CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES

- **752** U.S. INSTITUTES

ADMISSION AGE REQUIREMENT

- **20** YEARS MIN - **43** YEARS MAX

AVERAGE VOCATION DIRECTOR TERM

- **7** YEARS

- **$34,039** AVERAGE BUDGET
- **$14,600** MEDIAN BUDGET
- **47%** HAVE OFFICE/ADMIN SUPPORT

- **94%** HAVE LEADERSHIP & VOCATION DIRECTORS/TEAMS MEET AT LEAST ONCE ANNUALLY
- **88%** ACCEPT NEW MEMBERS
- **84%** HAVE AT LEAST ONE SERIOUS DISCERNER SINCE 2003
- **78%** PROMOTE VOCATIONS ONLINE
- **75%** HAVE A VOCATION DIRECTOR/VOCATION TEAM
- **60%** HAVE AT LEAST ONE PERSON IN INITIAL FORMATION
- **60%** SPONSOR “COME AND SEE” EXPERIENCES
- **50%+** PROMOTE TO COLLEGE AGE & YOUNG ADULTS (46% TO HIGH SCHOOLS; 26% TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS)

ATTRACTION TO CHOSEN COMMUNITY

Note: Respondents of culturally diverse ethnicities are more likely than Anglos to be “very much” attracted to their institute by the life and works of the founder/ess, the ministries of the institute, the cultural diversity of members, and the welcome and encouragement by members.

Go to NRVC.net for the complete NRVC/CARA 2020 Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life. This study was made possible in part through a grant from the GHR Foundation.

NRVC offers many opportunities for supporting our mission including membership, sponsorship, subscriptions, and participation in our events. Learn more at NRVC.net.