This report on incorporating cultural diversity in religious life presents findings from a study of U.S.-based religious institutes about the ways they recruit and integrate multicultural candidates into their communities. The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to learn from religious institutes about their policies, procedures, and experiences with the formation and integration of candidates from cultures different from the dominant one of the institute. The goal of the research is to provide information that will help promote religious life and strengthen its quality so that it will better attract and retain new members.

Racial and ethnic composition of religious institutes

- Nine in 10 religious institutes report that the dominant racial/ethnic culture of the institute is white. On average, nine in 10 full members of religious institutes are Caucasian/White/Anglo, 6 percent are Hispanic/Latino(a), 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent are African American/Black/African. Institutes of men are slightly more racially/ethnically diverse than are institutes of women.
- Those who have entered religious institutes in the past 10 years are more diverse, reflecting the increasing diversity in the U.S. Catholic population as a whole. Among those entering in the past 10 years, 57 percent are Caucasian/White/Anglo, 17 percent are Hispanic/Latino(a), 16 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, 8 percent are African American/Black/African, and 2 percent are Native American or other race/ethnicity.
- More than six in 10 institutes report having at least one entrant in the past 10 years born outside the United States. Institutes of men are particularly likely to have had someone from outside the U.S. enter in the past 10 years.
- Eight in 10 institutes of men and about two-thirds of institutes of women have at least one person in initial formation. Among those in initial formation, three in five are Caucasian/White/Anglo, about one in six is Asian/Pacific Islander, just over one in 10 is Hispanic/Latino(a), one in 20 is African American/Black/African, and about 4 percent are Native American or other race/ethnicity.
- Almost six in 10 institutes have at least one person currently in initial formation born outside the United States. Institutes of men are somewhat more likely than institutes of women to report having someone from outside the United States in initial formation.

Recruitment of culturally diverse candidates

- About two-thirds of responding superiors indicate that their vocation directors/vocation committees, institute leaders, and formation personnel are “very” open to recruiting candidates from cultures different from the dominant ethnic/racial cohort of their institutes. Fewer than half report that their members, in general, are “very” open to such recruitment.
- Seven in 10 report that their institute’s website displays a diversity of cultures. About six in 10 indicate that the majority of their printed promotional materials display a diversity of cultures. International institutes and missionary institutes are more likely to display a variety of cultures in their online and printed materials.
- Candidates born outside the United States are accepted by more than nine in 10 institutes. Just over half, however, have policies and procedures in place for accepting such candidates. Institutes of men are more likely than institutes of women to have such policies and procedures. International institutes are more likely than those
The Executive Summary of the study is available in Spanish at www.nrvc.net