



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

**Pastoral Research Office**

# Understanding Religious Vocation in Australia Today

Report of a  
Study of Vocations to Religious Life 2000-2015  
**For Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia**

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Ruth Webber  
Stephen Reid  
Richard Rymarz  
Julie Martin  
Noel Connolly SSC

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Ministry Australia**



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First printed February 2018

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## Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA)

Catholic Vocations Ministry of Australia (CVMA) is pleased to present the results of a Survey on Religious Vocations within the Australian Church. Under the guidance and discretion of the Pastoral Research Office in Melbourne we have been able to gain some interesting insights with regard to Vocations for the now and the future.

The team at the Pastoral Research Office under the direction of Dr Bob Dixon has indeed done a stellar job. The staff of the office have always been of great assistance, as have been those who have given up their time to assist us in the personal interviews which have enabled us to produce such results.

For over 20 years CVMA has served the Australian Church well. Many Conferences and Workshops with Keynote Speakers from within Australia and overseas have availed of our invitations and spoken on various matters with regard to Vocations and Vocation Ministry. On top of these Conferences, Workshops have been held on a regular basis in various States within Australia assisting both Diocesan Clergy and also male and female Religious Groups. VocNET (the CVMA's Vocations Publication) has been our flagship and the varying articles have appealed right across the board.

Though our Church has seen and continues to experience many and differing challenges, we, as an Executive, are continually amazed by the interest shown and the willingness on the part of many to participate in discernment processes so that they may honestly respond to their Baptismal Call. A vocation to Religious Life and Priesthood is still very much a viable option for the young and young in heart!

CVMA offers this Survey to the Australian Church and as we gradually adapt to the lessening demands on us and the increasing initiatives within all the Religious and Diocesan Bodies, we hope it will inspire and encourage many in the Ministry of Vocation.

We acknowledge the contributions and participation of past members of the Executive, both Religious and Diocesan.

For financial assistance with regard to this Survey, we sincerely thank Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (NSW), Kerry Oil Candles (QLD) and the State Vocation Networks associated within CVMA.

With every Grace and Blessing,

Yours Sincerely,

The Executive of CVMA

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Peter Hendriks msc  
Lindsay Rust sac  
Anne Taylor rsc  
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## About the authors

### Robert Dixon

Robert (Bob) Dixon is the former Director and a current Honorary Senior Fellow of the Pastoral Research Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Honorary Professor of Australian Catholic University (ACU), and an Honorary Research Fellow of the University of Divinity. Bob headed the project team and was the principal author of this report.

### Ruth Webber

Ruth Webber is Honorary Professor of Australian Catholic University and an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Divinity. For many years, she has conducted research and evaluation projects for not-for-profit organisations. Her involvement in this project included conducting interviews and focus groups, analysing the qualitative and quantitative data, and contributing to the writing of the report, especially by selecting the extracts from interviews and focus groups that it contains.

### Stephen Reid

Stephen Reid is Acting Director and Senior Research Officer at the Pastoral Research Office, where he commenced working in 2007. Stephen contributed to survey design, built the survey website, and prepared the survey data for analysis. He also contributed to the writing of the report.

### Richard Rymarz

Richard Rymarz is the Head of Religious Education and Director of Research at BBI—The Australian Institute of Theological Education. Prior to this he was Professor of Catholic Religious Education at St Joseph's College, University of Alberta. He has also worked at ACU where he remains an adjunct professor. In 2014, Richard spent several months working at the PRO during which time he wrote the review of recent literature on religious vocations which forms Chapter 2 of this report.

### Julie Martin

Julie Martin worked at the PRO as a research officer during 2013-2014 and 2016-2017. She assisted with the work of analysing the quantitative data and coding and analysing the qualitative data collected in the open-ended questions, interviews and focus groups.

### Noel Connolly SSC

Father Noel Connolly SSC is a Columban missionary priest and lecturer in Mission and Culture at BBI—The Australian Institute of Theological Education and the Catholic Institute of Sydney, and a member of the Adult Formation team of Catholic Mission. He is also a member of the Facilitation Team for the Plenary Council 2020. Noel conducted the interviews with most of the Sydney-based religious congregations that were interviewed for the project.

## About the Pastoral Research Office

The Pastoral Research Office (PRO) is an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference whose mission is to assist the Catholic Church in Australia at all levels in understanding the cultural, social and personal dimensions of religion in the changing contemporary context. The work of the PRO is overseen by the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research which in turn reports to the Bishops Commission for Administration and Information. The PRO was established in 1996 and has been located on the Melbourne Campus of Australian Catholic University since 2004. Previous research conducted by the Pastoral Research Office includes the 2009 study of Catholic Religious Institutes in Australia [See, I am doing a new thing](#), carried out in association with Catholic Religious Australia (CRA). Noel Connolly SSC was a member of the research team that carried out the study.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the members of the CVMA Executive, especially Tony Cox SSC, Peter Hendriks MSC and Donna Millsom, Assistant Administrator of the CVMA, for their initiative in proposing this project and for their support, encouragement and patience throughout its more than three-year duration. They also provided helpful commentary on our research instruments and our research method. Lindsay Rust SAC employed his eagle eye and grammatical prowess to ensure that typographical errors and inexact phrases were identified and removed from early drafts of several chapters.

The Executive and the authors are all very appreciative of the encouragement we received from many people to pursue this study. Among them was Holy Cross Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, the Executive Director of the National Religious Vocation Conference in the United States and the driving force behind the similar study conducted there.

We owe many people our deep gratitude for making this study possible. Perhaps our greatest debt is to the congregational leaders and new members who responded to the surveys and especially those who agreed to be interviewed or to take part in focus groups. It was your willingness to participate that enabled us to bring the project to reality. We thank you all for your time, and trust that we have done justice to the information and insights that you shared with us.

It is a special pleasure to thank Annemarie Atapattu, Administrative Assistant at the PRO, for the work she did in producing this report. She checked, corrected, edited and assembled the extensive appendices, read various drafts of the report and offered critical comments, and then proofread the entire final version. As well, she took responsibility for communicating with congregational leaders and focus group participants.

Finally, from my own point of view, I cannot adequately thank my fellow authors and the other staff of the Pastoral Research Office. This project was a huge undertaking and this report is a product of their teamwork and effort. It is a report about religious vocations and religious life written by a group made up, except for Noel Connolly SSC, entirely by lay people, not all of whom are Catholic. We hope we have captured the experience of religious vocations and presented it in language that will be recognized as authentic. If there are shortcomings in the report in this or any other respect then, in the last analysis, they are my responsibility.

Bob Dixon

February 2018.



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

**Pastoral Research Office**



**Catholic Vocations  
Ministry Australia**

## Executive Summary

This report is the result of an invitation from Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA) to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Pastoral Research Office (PRO) to carry out a research study of recent vocations to religious life in Australia.

The purpose of the study was to help identify successful practices for promoting vocations to religious life and to understand what factors assist in the retention of new members. It was also to study the characteristics of people who had entered religious life since 2000 and to examine what had attracted them to this way of life, and what they found challenging and rewarding.

The project aimed to answer the following key questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of the men and women who have entered religious life (and stayed) since 2000? Why did they enter, and why have they stayed?
- 2) What are the characteristics, policies and practices of the religious institutes and societies that are attracting and successfully retaining new members?

The study used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods to address the key questions. Data collection was carried out by means of surveys of congregational leaders (Leaders' Survey) and of people who had entered religious life since 2000 (New Members' Survey), interviews with leaders of congregations that have successfully recruited and retained new members since 2000, and focus groups with new members of congregations.

Valid responses to the Leaders' Survey were received from 93 of the more than 150 religious congregations in Australia at the time of the survey. The responses came from 34 male institutes and 59 female institutes, with a total membership at the time of the survey of 4,427, meaning that the institutes responding to the survey represented 64 per cent of religious in Australia. Leaders of the nine congregations that had recruited and retained the most new members since 2000 were invited to take part in an interview; eight accepted the invitation.

The leaders were asked to pass on an invitation to members of their congregation who had joined between 2000 and 2015 to respond to an anonymous survey about their understanding of religious life and religious vocations in Australia today. The New Members' Survey was completed by 55 religious (45 women and 10 men) out of a total pool, according to Leaders' Survey data, of 254 new members. Twelve of the respondents to the New Members' Survey took part in one of four focus groups in order to discuss their experience of religious vocation with other new members and a member of the research team.

Congregational leaders identified three main factors that contributed to success in attracting new members: having an integrated and well-resourced approach, offering a live-in experience, and having a full-time vocation director or team. In their experience, the most effective way of promoting the congregation and attracting new members was by inviting inquirers to take part in events such as Come and See experiences, live-in experiences, and ministry or mission experiences.

Congregational leaders observed that the challenges associated with living in a religious community can be particularly acute for new members still finding their way in religious life. They maintained that retaining new members relied on having a formation program that provided new members with a lot of support and encouragement from the community members as well as from professional counsellors

and spiritual advisors. They also spoke of the need to avoid pressurising people to join or to stay, and of how important it is to find ways of accompanying someone who either decides to leave or who is asked to leave.

The report corrects two common misconceptions, first, that only conservative or traditional religious institutes attract new vocations, and second, that only people born overseas are entering religious life in Australia. The data shows that by no means could all the congregations that have been successful in attracting new members in the last 15 years be said to be at the conservative or traditional end of the spectrum. Nor could this be said of many of the new members that took part in the project, although some did say that they were drawn to their chosen congregation by the fact that it was a traditional religious community. Furthermore, sixty per cent of the respondents to the New Members' Survey were born in Australia, and 27 of those 33 people had at least one parent who had been born in Australia.

New members identified the main challenges they face in religious life as living in community, the vow of obedience, and factors such as being separated from family and friends, adapting to different expectations with regard to the use of social media, and coping with the sexual abuse issue. On the other hand, there were rich rewards in religious life in terms of personal development, prayer life and spirituality, community life and companionship, and opportunities to be of service to others and to be involved in evangelisation.

Attitudes to wearing religious habit varied considerably among new members. For some, the fact that their congregation wore a habit was a factor in their choice; others chose their congregation because members were not required to wear habits.

This report will help determine best practices for the promotion of religious vocations and assist those involved in vocation ministry to revise existing strategies and develop new approaches for attracting vocations, and to understand what assists in the retention of new members.

The report leaves us in no doubt that religious life has a future in Australia, although the future will not look like the past or even the present. While numbers of young people continue to see value in religious life, and some congregations will continue to successfully attract new members, the numbers are not sufficient to prevent large-scale shrinkage of religious congregations in the years ahead.

In the wake of the revelations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, it can be a difficult and demoralising time to be a Catholic in Australia today. Those entering religious life are acutely conscious of the critical, sometimes hostile, attitude to religious personnel, and are affected in their selection and training by the demands for change in policy and practice made by the Royal Commission, Australian society and the Catholic community itself.

In spite of this changed environment (or perhaps even because of it), people are continuing to enter religious life and, having entered, deciding to make a lifelong commitment. They recognise that religious life, in the words of Vatican II's *Perfectae Caritatis*, aims to help them 'follow Christ and be united to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels' (that is, chastity, poverty and obedience). Their generosity of spirit, their prayer life and their ministry will continue to be, as always, a beautiful gift to the life of the Church.



## Chapter 1. Introduction

This report is the result of a May 2014 invitation from Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA) to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Pastoral Research Office (PRO) to develop a proposal for a research study of recent vocations to religious life in Australia. CVMA had been established in 1995 as a National Association of Vocations Ministers. According to its statutes, the purpose of CVMA is to foster a 'vocations culture' that:

- Educates people about the nature of vocation;
- Promotes, at a national level, the development of vocations ministry;
- Actively promotes vocations to the ordained ministry, consecrated life and societies of apostolic life;
- Fosters a sense of unity and collaboration amongst state, diocesan and congregational vocations ministers;
- Supports vocations ministry networks through the sharing of resources, materials, skills and achievements;
- Fosters and presents a coordinated approach to vocations ministry throughout Australia;
- Helps ensure that personnel and resources are most effectively utilised on behalf of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Recognising that the low numbers of people entering religious life is a major contemporary challenge facing the Church in Australia, and conscious of the changing nature of Australian society and of religious practice among Australian Catholics, CVMA invited the PRO to carry out a study similar to one carried out in the United States in 2009 for the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC).<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of the Australian study was to help identify successful practices for promoting vocations to religious life and to understand what factors assist in the retention of new members. It was also to study the characteristics of people who had entered religious life since 2000 and to examine what had attracted them to this way of life, and what they found challenging and rewarding.

The study did not include those who entered religious life since 2000 and who have since left. Nor did it include those who are in Australia for formation or study but who will return to their country of origin to minister. However, it was not always possible, even for congregational leaders themselves, to determine whether certain of their new members would be remaining in Australia.

The initial plan was to include vocations to the diocesan priesthood since 2000, including both those who were still seminarians and those who had been ordained. However, discussions with diocesan seminary staff members made the research team realise that the question of vocations to the diocesan priesthood really constituted a different research project, and so it was decided to confine this study to religious life only.

The project aimed to answer the following key questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of the men and women who have entered religious life (and stayed) since 2000? Why did they enter, and why have they stayed?
- 2) What are the characteristics, policies and practices of the religious institutes and societies that are attracting and successfully retaining new members?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.catholicovocations.org.au/Home>

<sup>2</sup> The full report of the NRVC study can be downloaded at <https://nrvc.net/247/publication/913/article/1022-executive-summary-english>.

The answers to these questions will help directors of vocations and formation make decisions based on real data rather than relying solely on anecdotal evidence, hunches, past experience and personal preferences. This report will therefore help determine best practices for the promotion of religious vocations and assist those involved in vocation ministry to revise existing strategies and develop new approaches for attracting vocations, and to understand what assists in the retention of new members. In the long run, this research will contribute to a strengthening of religious life and therefore to the overall wellbeing of the Catholic community in Australia.

The project was initially scheduled to be completed by June 2015, a most appropriate date considering that 2015 had been declared as the Year of Consecrated Life. Unfortunately, staff shortages and related issues at the PRO, beginning in May 2015 and continuing throughout the duration of the project, meant that the original timeline was not able to be met.

### **How the data was collected**

The study used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods to address the key questions. Data collection was carried out by means of:

- A survey designed to be completed online or in hardcopy by congregational leaders. The survey consisted mainly of closed questions but included opportunities to write in comments. This 'Survey of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life' is referred to simply as the 'Leaders' Survey' in this report.
- Interviews with leaders of congregations
- A 'Survey of New Members of Catholic Religious Institutes' designed to be completed online or in hardcopy by people who have joined religious congregations since 2000, including those who have now professed final vows/commitment or who have been ordained. Like the Leaders' Survey, it consisted mainly of closed questions but included invitations to add written comments. In this report it is referred to as the 'New Members' Survey'.
- Focus groups with new members of congregations.

The two questionnaires were modified versions of the questionnaires used in the NRVC study. They returned a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, while the interviews and focus groups proved to be rich sources of qualitative data.

This report makes use of each of these four sources of data to show how congregations go about attracting new members and to describe the formation process. It also uses the data to describe the experiences of new members, including what attracted them to their congregation, the challenges they face and the rewards they gain from religious life. Tables detailing the full results of each of the questions in the two surveys are contained in the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

### ***The Leaders' Survey***

Leaders of congregations operating in Australia were sent a letter inviting them to respond anonymously to an on-line or hard copy of a survey about religious life and religious vocations in Australia today (see Appendix 5). Ninety-three valid responses were received from the leaders of 34 male institutes and 59 institutes for women. Because of the wide variation in structure between religious institutes, we adopted the solution used in the NRVC survey of asking leaders to respond on behalf of the 'unit' for which they were responsible. For different leaders, the term unit might refer to the congregation, province, monastery or order for which they had responsibility. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 3.

Reporting the results of the Leaders' Survey presented the research team with some problems. The fact that there were 93 valid responses meant that many congregations did not respond at all. The *Official Directory* for 2014-15 lists a 43 clerical religious institutes, five institutes of religious brothers, 92 institutes of religious women, seven institutes of consecrated life and seven societies of apostolic life that were eligible to take part in the survey, a total of 154 religious institutes. We cannot be confident, then, that the 93 congregations are representative of all congregations in Australia. The results accurately describe the congregations that responded, but cannot be assumed to apply equally to all congregations. As well, the congregations that did respond did not all answer every question, so that the number of responses to individual questions varies quite considerably. As percentages are based on the number of responses to each question (the denominator), it meant that the percentages would be based on different denominators for almost every question, making the results quite confusing for the reader. For that reason, in Appendix 1 we have generally reported the number of congregations (male and female) responding to each question, rather than the percentage of congregations. There are also some items where we report the aggregate number of male and female religious in particular categories. In some of the tables in Chapter 3, we report percentages to make it easier to compare female and male congregations as well as 'Selected' and non-selected congregations.

### *Interviews: Leaders*

From the responses to the Leaders' Survey, nine congregations that had attracted and retained at least ten new members since 2000 were identified and the leaders of those congregations were invited to participate in an interview. The leaders of eight of these congregations accepted the invitation and were interviewed by a member of the research team.<sup>3</sup> For easy identification these nine congregations are labelled the 'Selected' group. The names of these 'Selected' congregations and the number of their members who joined since 2000 are listed in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 'Selected' congregations by new members entering and remaining between 2000 & 2015**

<b>'Selected' congregations</b>	<b>New members since 2000</b>	<b>New members remaining 2015</b>
Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian Fathers & Brothers), Oceania Province	28	21
Sisters of St Joseph	28	18
Order of Saint Augustine	22	13
Faithful Companions of Jesus (Asia- Australia) <sup>4</sup>	17	13
Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia	13	11
Secular Institute of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary (not interviewed)	14	11
Capuchin Friars Minor, Province of Australia	31	10
Missionaries of God's Love, Canberra	21	10
Sisters of the Good Samaritan	10	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>117</b>

<sup>3</sup> Interviews were conducted by Professor Ruth Webber, Rev Dr Noel Connolly and Dr Bob Dixon. The ninth congregation that had more than ten new recruits since 2001, the Secular Institute of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, declined the invitation to be interviewed.

<sup>4</sup> Although the Faithful Companions of Jesus was one of the congregations with the most new members, it was discovered during the interview with the congregational leader that none of them came from Australia and it was not expected that they would work in Australia after taking final vows.

Retention rates varied considerably: while the Good Samaritan Sisters had retained all ten new members and the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia had retained 11 of 13 new members during that period, only about a third of the 31 men who had joined the Capuchin Friars since 2000 were still members at the time of the study. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix 7.

### *The New Members' Survey*

The leaders were asked to pass on an invitation to members of their congregation who had joined between 2000 and 2015 to respond to an anonymous online or hard copy survey about their understanding of religious life and religious vocations in Australia today (see Appendix 4). Fifty-five new members of Australian religious institutions (45 women and 10 men) filled out the survey.

As with the Leaders' Survey, there was a problem that arose with reporting the results of the New Members' Survey. According to the Leaders' Survey, there are 254 current members of the responding congregations who have entered since 2000, yet only 55 responses to the New Members' Survey were received, meaning that we cannot be confident that the respondents are a representative sample of all new members who have entered religious life in Australia since 2000. This is particularly true in the case of the men. We therefore emphasise that the results apply to the respondents only, and cannot be generalised with confidence to all new members. Nevertheless, the responses to the survey, and the written comments to the open-ended questions in particular, tell us valuable information about the views and experiences of those who did respond.

In contrast to the Leaders' Survey, the response rate to individual questions among those who completed the survey was very high, often 100 per cent. For this reason, it seemed more helpful to our readers to present the results in terms of percentages of male and female respondents. This certainly makes it easier to compare the responses of the men and women; it must be kept in mind, however, that since there were only ten men, each of their responses counts for 10 per cent of the male responses.

### *Focus groups: new members*

The final question on the New Members' Survey invited respondents to contact the research team if they were interested in participating in a focus group to discuss their vocation with other new members and a member of the research team. As a result, focus groups involving 12 new members from seven different religious congregations were held in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra (by Skype) and Perth (also by Skype). The focus groups provided the nine male and three female participants with the opportunity to give voice to their opinions on various issues such as the reason for entering religious life, their experiences of living such a life, and their reasons for staying. The questions used as the basis for the discussion in the focus groups can be found in Appendix 9.

### **Research ethics**

On 18 September 2014, the Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee confirmed that the project was low risk and that it met the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Before being interviewed, leaders of the 'Selected' congregations signed a consent form (see Appendix 6) indicating that research data collected in the course of the interview could be published in a form that might enable them to be identified, but that the researchers would use their discretion to remove any sensitive data and that they would be given an opportunity, prior to publication of the report, to review all remarks that could identify them. This meant that we could

associate the name of the congregation with non-sensitive statements made by congregational leaders, thereby making it possible for people interested in the experience of one of the 'Selected' congregations to make contact with a view to learning more. Two leaders made minor changes to their statements in order to clarify points that they had made.

All comments in the report, both written and spoken, by new members are anonymous and care has been taken to ensure that individuals cannot be identified. Non-sensitive comments made by focus group participants were included only after each person had had a chance to review and adjust his or her statement and had given approval for the statement to be published. See Appendix 8 for the consent form for focus group participants.

### **Outline of the report**

The next chapter, Chapter 2, contains a comprehensive review of recent English-language research into vocations to religious life and related subjects. Chapter 3 describes some of the main features of the congregations which responded to the Leader's Survey. In Chapter 4, we present a detailed account of the policies and practices of the participating congregations in relation to vocations' promotion and the formation of new members. Chapter 5 looks at the vocation experience from the point of view of new members, and Chapter 6 is a summary and conclusion to the report. This is followed by a number of appendices, including copies of the research instruments, and detailed results for the two questionnaires.

## Chapter 2. A review of recent literature on religious vocations<sup>5</sup>

### An Overview

The most striking feature of any study on vocations in the Catholic Church is the steep decline in many aspects of religious life in recent decades. No group in the world has done more high quality empirical research on the question of religious life and vocations than the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) and all who work in this area are in their debt. Based at Georgetown University in Washington DC, CARA provides the following figures for the USA (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Priests and religious in the United States, 1965-2017<sup>6</sup>**

Clergy and Religious	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2017
Diocesan priests	35,925	37,272	36,005	35,627	35,052	34,114	32,349	30,607	28,094	27,182	25,760
Religious priests	22,707	21,920	22,904	22,771	22,265	18,010	16,705	15,092	13,305	12,811	11,432
Total priests	58,632	59,192	58,909	58,398	57,317	52,124	49,054	45,699	41,399	39,993	37,192
Priestly ordinations	994	805	771	593	533	595	511	442	454	459	548
Permanent deacons	na	na	898	4,093	7,204	9,356	10,932	12,378	14,574	16,649	18,173
Graduate-level seminarians	8,325	6,602	5,279	4,197	4,063	3,658	3,172	3,474	3,308	3,483	3,520
Religious sisters	179,954	160,931	135,225	126,517	115,386	102,504	90,809	79,814	68,634	57,544	47,170
Religious brothers	12,271	11,623	8,625	7,941	7,544	6,721	6,535	5,662	5,451	4,690	4,119

The most notable decline in these figures is the change in the number of religious priests, sisters and brothers and the corresponding large growth in the number of permanent deacons. This downward trend is also evident for diocesan priests, priestly ordinations and graduate-level seminarians as well. In other countries such as Canada, France and Germany sharp decreases have also been recorded.<sup>7</sup> This decline is most acute when we examine data for new members of these communities. In response to a 2011 CARA survey of religious congregations in the United States about the number of religious professing perpetual vows, only 18 per cent of responding congregations reported that

<sup>5</sup> An earlier version of this literature review appeared in Richard Rymarz, 'Religious Vocations Today', *Australasian Catholic Record* 93, no. 3 (July 2016): 277-291.

<sup>6</sup> Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2017. <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>. Accessed 11 May 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Stark and Finke, for instance, recorded a 77 per cent decline in Canadian Catholic male religious between 1965 and 1995. In Germany for the same period the decline was 54 per cent. For female religious in France the decline was 44 per cent. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 170. For a more historical view see: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 'US Religious Life and the Decline of Vocations' *Origins*, 16, no. 25 (December 1986): 467-470, Helen Ebaugh, *Women in the Vanishing Cloister: Organizational Decline in Catholic Religious Orders in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

they had someone professing perpetual vows in 2011, but in only a little more than one-fifth of those congregations was there more than one person professing perpetual vows that year.<sup>8</sup> This figure reflects those at the final stage of formation, not a total figure for all those in formation. For all religious institutes in the United States in 2009 there were 2,630 men and women in all stages of formation. For women religious there were 179 candidates/postulants, 319 novices and 708 in temporary vows or commitments, while for men the corresponding figures were 291, 276 and 829.<sup>9</sup> The decrease in numbers of those in formation does have a number of implications. The most pertinent of these is the ageing profile of members of religious institutes. In 2009, for instance, only one per cent of female religious in the United States were under 40 years of age.<sup>10</sup>

In Australia, similar figures for religious institutes were gathered in 2009 by the Pastoral Research Office in collaboration with Catholic Religious Australia. The figures from that report, supplemented with figures for 2017, are shown in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2 Australian religious personnel, 1901-2017<sup>11</sup>**

	1901	1926	1951	1966	1976	2009	2017
Sisters	3,622	8,141	11,245	14,622	12,619	5,927	4,166
Brothers	388	837	1,532	2,163	2,089	884	689
Clerical religious	195	432	1,087	2,628	2,321	1,611	1,063
Total	4,205	9,410	13,864	19,413	17029	8,422	5,918

The decline in religious personnel between 1976 and 2009 is very evident. This reinforces data from other places and is indicative of a major trend in Western countries. The 2009 survey also provided information about new vocations to religious institutes and retention of those vocations. In the period 1997-2008, there were 206 new vocations to women's religious institutes, of whom 164 were still members at the time of the survey. In the same period, 182 men had joined clerical religious institutes (126 remaining at the time of the survey) and ten men had joined orders of religious brothers, with five still members at the time of the survey.<sup>12</sup> The survey also confirmed the ageing profile of religious in Australia with just four per cent of all religious being aged under 40 years.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Mary Gautier and Thomas Gaunt. *New Sisters and Brothers in Perpetual Vows: The Profession Class of 2014. A Report to the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Mary Bendyna and Mary Gautier. *Recent Vocations to Religious Life: A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2009). For a historical perspective see Mary Ewens, 'The Vocation Decline of Women Religious: Some Historical Perspectives', in *The Crisis in Religious Vocations*, ed. Laurie Felknor (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 165–180.

<sup>10</sup> Erick Berrelleza, Mary Gautier and Mark Gray, *Population Trends Among Religious Institutes of Women* (Washington DC: CARA, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Dixon, Stephen Reid and Noel Connolly, 'See I am Doing a New Thing: The 2009 Survey of Catholic Religious Institutes in Australia', *Australasian Catholic Record* 88, no. 3 (July 2011): 271-283. Figures for 2017 are taken from *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia 2017-2018*, Published with the authority of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference by the National Council of Priests of Australia, Belmont, Victoria, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Reid, Robert Dixon and Noel Connolly, *See, I am Doing a New Thing: A report on the 2009 survey of Catholic Religious Institutes in Australia* (Mulgrave, Vic: John Garratt Publishing, 2010), 9.

<sup>13</sup> Reid et al., *See, I am doing a New Thing*, 10. By way of comparison a greater proportion, 5.2 per cent, of members were over 90 years of age.

## Some characteristics of new vocations

It is clear that the number of vocations to religious life has been in strong and steady decline for some decades. Along with this, there are generational changes as new aspirants, albeit in reduced numbers, embrace religious life. This generational change brings with it a consideration of some of the characteristics of those who seek to join religious congregations today.<sup>14</sup> Hoge and Wenger compared survey results from priests, both religious and diocesan, over a thirty year period from 1970 to 2001.<sup>15</sup> They found, for example, that priests overall were happier in 2001 than in 1971. In 1971, 28 per cent of priests said they were very happy, whereas in 2001 this figure had risen to 45 per cent, with the rise being most obvious among younger priests.<sup>16</sup> There were a range of measures that identified some other significant generational issues. Younger priests, those aged between 25 and 35 in 2001, expressed much higher levels of agreement, when compared to older priests, with statements such as 'ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity'.<sup>17</sup> Other results confirmed the authors' analysis that younger priests were likely to adopt what they called a cultic view of priesthood, one that sees priests as men apart. This is perhaps a consequence of young priests having no experience of the Church before the Second Vatican Council or of the tumult in the years immediately following it. Hoge and Wenger encapsulate this view in the following terms:

The research is clear: a new type of priest has arrived. A process of change began in the early 1980s and picked up steam through the 1990s. Not only does our survey indicate this, but everyone we interviewed said the same: they are different from priests ordained in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>18</sup>

More recent research bears out these differences. US data from 2009 shows men being ordained at an older age and more likely to be engaged in parish ministry, almost to the exclusion of anything else.<sup>19</sup> In addition, a far higher proportion of priests were born outside the US than in earlier surveys.<sup>20</sup> This data also showed a number of generational differences between priests. When asked in 2009 about the likelihood of their leaving the priesthood, 88 per cent of priests in their 30s responded, 'Definitely not'. When asked the same question in 1985, only 37 per cent of priests in their 30s had responded in that way. In the 2009 survey, the percentage of priests who could be described as traditionalists was also age-related. Among priests in their 30's, 37 per cent were identified as traditionalist, whereas the comparable figure for priests in their 50s was 22 per cent

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<sup>14</sup> Donald Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood* (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 2002). James Davidson and Dean Hoge, 'Mind the Gap: The Return of the Lay-Clerical Divide', *Commonweal* 134, no. 18 (2007). Dean Hoge, *The First Five Years of Priesthood* (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 2002). Franz Klein, 'John Paul II Priests', *Commonweal* 132, no. 14 (2005): 23-25.

<sup>15</sup> Dean Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood: Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> As Hoge and Wenger put it, 'The rise in the total samples was largely due to a rise in happiness among younger priests – the 25-35 year olds and the 35-45 year olds. Older priests also rose in their reported level of happiness but only slightly'. Hoge and Wenger, *Evolving*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Hoge and Wenger, *Evolving*, 54

<sup>18</sup> Hoge and Wenger, *Evolving*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Gautier, Paul Perl and Stephen Fichter, *Same Call, Different Men: The Evolution of the Priesthood since Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012). Compared to men and women religious in the last century those entering religious life today are far more diverse with a wide variety of ethnic, educational and cultural backgrounds, not to mention life experiences. Bendyna and Gautier, *Recent Vocations*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Reporting on the US ordination class of 2015, Gautier and Gaunt report that 69 per cent of ordinands were 'Caucasian/European/American/White'. Mary Gautier and Thomas Gaunt, *The Class of 2015: Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood. A Report to the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2015).

and for those in their 60s, 14 per cent. These figures are mirrored in the percentages of priests identified as progressive. For priests in their 30s, this figure was nine per cent, while for those in their 50s the figure was 22 per cent and for those in their 60s it was 33 per cent who were identified as progressives.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the survey revealed a link, for priests of all age groups, between more traditional views of the priesthood and satisfaction, with priests who were identified as traditional having higher rates of satisfaction. More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of these priests described themselves as very happy while only 44 per cent of progressive priests described themselves in similar terms.<sup>22</sup> The American priest and sociologist, Andrew Greeley, draws out this point about the satisfaction of priestly life as being a key factor in attracting new vocations. There is no substitute for the enthusiasm for priestly life provided by other priests.<sup>23</sup>

Research on women in religious life also reveals generational differences.<sup>24</sup> For Millennials<sup>25</sup> (those born after 1982), in contrast to older generations, one of the most important attractions of religious life was the prayer life that was offered. Across all ages, however, a sense of call to religious life remains a key attraction.<sup>26</sup> Compared to older generations of sisters, Millennial sisters reported higher satisfaction scores for measures such as welcome and support of new members, quality of life, and relationships with one another.<sup>27</sup> They also rated as excellent their own institute's commitment to ministry.

In response to questions about what influenced their decision to enter their chosen congregation and how they would evaluate certain aspects of their congregation, Johnson and her colleagues found very evident differences between sisters belonging to different generations. Some of these differences are shown in Table 2.3 below. For example, around 90 per cent of Millennial sisters said

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<sup>21</sup> The definition of progressive and traditionalist followed the cultic model index first used by Hoge and Wenger. A key determinant here was how priests understand their ontological status. Progressives were seen as strongly identifying with the servant leader model and traditionalists strongly identified with the cultic model of priesthood. Gautier et al., *Same Call*, 30-32.

<sup>22</sup> Gautier and her colleagues summarized this link in the following terms: 'while we would not describe the differences between younger and older priests as an extreme polarization, the data are consistent with the conjecture that a relationship exists between traditional views of the priesthood and a general satisfaction among today's younger priests.' Gautier et al., *Same Call*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Greeley comments: 'The real cause of the vocations shortage is the reticence of those who are happy in the priesthood and not excessively burdened by celibacy. They may complain about the shortage of priests, but they are not ready yet to do battle with the anticelibacy ideologues to recruit young men to what is a happy and satisfying life. Nor are they ready to speak, individually or collectively, about the joys of being a priest.' Andrew Greeley, *Priests: A Calling in Crises* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 122.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Johnson, 'Religious Life in the USA: Community as a Key Bridge to Young Adults', *Social Compass* 48, no. 2 (2001): 229-236. Mary Johnson, 'Collective Identity and Distinctiveness: The Case of U.S. Conferences of Apostolic Women and Men Religious.' in *Inculturation and the Church in North America*, ed. T. Frank Kennedy, SJ (New York: Herder & Herder, Crossroad Publishing, 2006), 179-197. Mary Johnson and Patricia Wittberg, 'Reality Check: A Fact-Based Assessment of Vocations to Religious Life', *America* 207, no. 10 (October 2012).

<sup>25</sup> In Australia, we tend to use the term 'Generation Y', referring to those born between 1976 and 1990, in preference to the term 'Millennials'.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Johnson, Patricia Wittberg and Mary Gautier, *New Generations of Catholic Sisters: The Challenge of Diversity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 72-73. For a general account of generational issues and religion see Wade Clark Roof, 'Generations and Religion', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* ed. Peter B. Clarke (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). For a more focused examination of diversity in Catholic religious communities see Mary Gautier, Jonathon Wiggins and Jonathon Holland, *Incorporating Cultural Diversity in Religious Life: A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference*. (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Johnson et al., *New Generations*, 75.

they were attracted to their institute because of its fidelity to the Church and its practice regarding the wearing of a religious habit, and an even higher percentage (96 per cent) rated their Institute's fidelity to Church teaching as excellent. In other words, the reality matched their expectations. The Millennials' responses are in sharp contrast to the responses of those born between 1943 and 1960, whom the authors call the Vatican II Generation.

**Table 2.3 Influences on decision to enter and evaluation of religious institute (percentage responding 'very much' or 'excellent').<sup>28</sup>**

	Pre-Vatican II (born before 1943) (%)	Vatican II (born between 1943- 1960) (%)	Post-Vatican II (born between 1961-1981) (%)	Millennial (born after 1982) (%)
Attraction of Institute's fidelity to the Church	54	32	58	90
Attraction of Institute's practice regarding religious habit	39	40	62	91
Evaluation of Institute's fidelity to Church and teachings	55	50	71	96

### Vocations: Some theoretical perspectives

In any analysis of vocations to religious life the challenge comes in moving beyond the figures to providing an analysis. In this report, three perspectives are offered as ways of better understanding the decline and also the ongoing attraction of vocations in contemporary culture. This is not an exhaustive account but the perspectives offered here provide a way of opening the dialogue.

The first perspective is that offered by Robin Gill, who has described the demise of the cultural paradigm of religion as one way of better understanding the place of religion in Western societies.<sup>29</sup> This model has applicability to a number of situations experiencing institutional decline, such as the decrease in religious vocations. In cultural models, religion persists in two ways. The first is through the general support that religious communities get from the wider culture, often in the form of endorsement for moral and social precepts.<sup>30</sup> A least in recent centuries, in many countries a religious vocation was seen as a calling that brought with it a range of perceived advantages. These reflected not only the esteem with which religious life was held,<sup>31</sup> but also a broad acceptance by the wider community of religious ideals and aspirations. Religious communities were, by and large, supported by the wider community, a support that was often further enshrined in law. The same cannot be said about general cultural support for religion today. In fact, it could be argued that there is a growing disparity between long-held religious principles and widely held community mores. This

<sup>28</sup> Johnson et al., *New Generations*, 125.

<sup>29</sup> Robin Gill, *Theology in a Social Context: Sociological Theology, Vol 1* (London: Ashgate, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Callum Brown, *Religion and the Demographic Revolution*. Studies in Modern British History (Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> William D'Antonio, Michele Dillon and Mary Gautier, *American Catholics in Transition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013).

disparity, after emerging for many decades, has now taken hold and in all likelihood will become more rather than less pronounced in the foreseeable future. One of the implications of this change in community mores is that religious congregations must work much harder to justify their position, in the first instance, to their own communities. The process involved in a person considering religious life is no longer natural and spontaneous and requires a good deal of effort from the religious community if it is to be advanced. A recent study in the United States, for example, shows that there are a sizeable number of younger Catholics who have at some stage considered a religious vocation.<sup>32</sup> For the clear majority of these individuals, however, there has been no development of this interest. One of the main reasons for this is that after initially entertaining the thought of religious life, there has been no other process to help make this counter-cultural option realisable. In contrast, in earlier decades, when many people entered religious life at a very young age without a clear sense of the distinctiveness of their calling, they were following a well-defined path within the internal culture of the Church.

The second way in which religious transmission is mediated is through the internal culture of religious groups. This internal culture can range from weak to intense. Internal culture does not directly depend on wider societal support and is controlled by the group. Internal culture is best illustrated by how well religious groups are able to build and sustain meaning by the myriad of activities, events and human connections that they foster.<sup>33</sup> This may be in contrast to the overall religious sensibility of a society. In these cases the internal religious culture of a group may provide for an even greater attraction to that particular tradition. Vocations to the religious life within the Catholic Church in places like Australia give a good indication of this phenomenon. Until recent decades, Australian Catholics suffered from a range of sectarian practices which imposed restrictions on the opportunities available to them. This took place in a culture where the place of religion as described by Gill was still assured. In this context, the internal culture of the Church was able to flourish and religious vocations were seen as an attractive option, as they were, amongst other things, a way for young people to live out a life that was strongly supported by a powerful subculture that strengthened and reinforced those who were a part of it. In the immediate post-conciliar period, however, this subculture rapidly and unexpectedly all but disappeared.<sup>34</sup> One very significant consequence of the weakening of the religious subculture was that the decline in salience of religious belief and practice in society as a whole began to have a much stronger impact on religious communities. In the post-conciliar Church, this has resulted in all strong forms of identification with a religious tradition becoming problematic, with clear implications for the attractiveness of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Gray and Mary Gautier, *Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life among Never-Married U.S. Catholics* (Washington DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2012). Brian Conway, 'The Lure of an Irish Diocesan Seminary', *Review of Religious Research* 56 (2014): 487-488.

<sup>33</sup> John Thomas, *The American Catholic Family* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1956). Timothy Kelly, *The Transformation of American Catholicism: The Pittsburgh Laity and the Second Vatican Council, 1950-1972* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins and the Second Vatican Council* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004). Finke and Stark have described processes such as these as a transition from a high tension model, where a group has many beliefs and practices that set them apart from their environment, to a low tension model where such differences are relatively slight. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

### *Rational Choice Theory and vocations*

A second perspective on the decline of vocations to religious life is offered by Rodney Stark and Roger Finke in their influential 2000 book *Acts of Faith*. They devote a chapter to Catholic religious vocations in which they spell out the applicability of their Rational Choice Theory (RCT) to vocations.<sup>35</sup> They begin their analysis with an overview of the severe decline in vocations in a number of Western countries. These figures are well known and provide a sense of the scope of the phenomenon. At the heart of RCT is an assumption that religious affiliation and commitment, far from being a neurotic or haphazard decision, reflect a considered analysis of a number of competing options.<sup>36</sup> For many young adults today, having a number of options available to them is a characteristic of their worldview.<sup>37</sup> In terms of religion, what governs what choices are made is a calculus which weighs religious benefits against religious costs, the assumption being that most decisions are indicative of a general tendency to maximize benefit whilst minimizing cost.<sup>38</sup> In the case of vocations, key questions are how has this calculus changed in recent decades and can this be used to give an accurate account for the massive decline during that period. Stark and Finke argue that, after the Second Vatican Council, in particular, many of the compelling motivations for religious life were heavily discounted. At the same time, the costly aspects were retained or even heightened. In this scenario, it follows that the number of vocations would decrease accordingly.

Stark and Finke place great store on the idea that religious life can be seen as a life apart, one that is not available to everyone. It comes at considerable cost, but that only adds to the allure. In earlier comments, they note that one of the reasons for the growth of Methodism in the USA in the nineteenth century was the vigour of missionaries. Like St Paul, those missionaries had conventional employment as well as the taxing task of spreading the faith to those on the frontier, often involving riding vast distances to preach and give witness to the Christian message. Most people could not undertake such an onerous mission and as such the so-called boundary riders were part of an elite group to whom special deference was given. When Methodist clergy became more professional, that is, they forsook other employment and worked full time for the Church, the attraction of this calling diminished. They were no longer a group set apart but one option amongst many for those within the religious community.<sup>39</sup>

When religious life loses this sense of otherness, or what Stark and Finke call special holiness, it becomes far less attractive. This can be seen in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. The general empowerment of the laity under the Council's call to universal holiness had the unintended consequence of making religious life far less distinctive. 'In one stroke *Lumen Gentium* nullified the basic ideological foundation for eighteen centuries of Roman Catholic religious life', observed Patricia Wittberg in her analysis of the impact of the universal call to holiness on religious

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<sup>35</sup> Stark and Finke, *Acts*.

<sup>36</sup> Proposition 1, 'Within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options, guided by their preferences and tastes, humans attempt to make rational choices.' Stark and Finke, *Acts*, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Dean Hoge, William Dinges, Mary Johnson and Juan Gonzales, Jr, *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001). Lisa Pearce and Melinda Denton, *A Faith of Their Own: Stability and Change in the Religiosity of America's Adolescents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Proposition 17, 'People will seek to minimize their religious costs.' Stark and Finke, *Acts*, 100.

<sup>39</sup> Finke and Stark use the example of the Methodist Church in the USA (in contrast to the Baptists) to illustrate the point that religious groups can emerge, flourish and decline in relatively rapid succession. Finke and Stark, *Churching*, 156-197.

life. This foundation, according to Wittberg, was that only vowed religious could achieve spiritual perfection.<sup>40</sup>

In the post-conciliar Church, some of the roles typically reserved for priests and religious became open to lay people.<sup>41</sup> Equally important was the movement of many religious into roles that had not been their traditional province.<sup>42</sup> In a similar vein, many of the markers of religious life, such as clerical dress or religious habits, and being referred to by honorific titles such as 'Father' or 'Sister' also became much less common. Becker, in his analysis of the Jesuits in the immediate post-conciliar period, makes the point that the importance of the loss of these markers of identity was underestimated in evaluating the decline of the attractiveness of religious life.<sup>43</sup> While any one of these features, if taken in isolation, was not significant, when taken in totality the uniqueness of religious life was greatly compromised. Commenting on changes in religious life for women after the Council, Stark and Finke note that 'entire orders abandoned their convents for a new life as scattered apartment dwellers, often without roommates, and dressed like everyone else'.<sup>44</sup>

The costs of religious life, however, remained much more stable. Those in religious life were still prohibited from marrying and had to live under vows of obedience which diminished their freedom of choice about where to live or study.<sup>45</sup> These significant costs can only be mitigated by perceived benefit. The costs or sacrifices seem even more unreasonable if the life the professed religious is living is in so many other aspects more conventional and difficult to distinguish from that of a well-disposed lay person who has specialist training. Two of the best examples of areas where this blurring of roles can be seen are education and healthcare.<sup>46</sup> Both of these fields were traditionally the domain of religious but in more recent times they have become overwhelmingly staffed by dedicated lay people.<sup>47</sup>

This analysis of costs and benefits can also be used to explain the cases of religious institutes which are defying the general trend and growing in number. Stark and Finke argue that the success of these institutes is due to their insistence on maintaining the distinctiveness of religious life as a corollary to maintaining the traditional disciplines of religious life, a theme taken up by Bendyna and

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<sup>40</sup> Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 214.

<sup>41</sup> William D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge and Mary L. Gautier, *American Catholics Today: New Realities of their Faith and their Church* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

<sup>42</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio* (Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council), 1971, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19710629\\_evangelica-testificatio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19710629_evangelica-testificatio.html)

<sup>43</sup> Joseph Becker, *Re-Formed Jesuits: A History of Changes in Jesuit Formation during the Decade 1965-1975* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> Stark and Finke, *Acts*, 178.

<sup>45</sup> John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation), 25 March 1996, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031996\\_vita-consecrata.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata.html)

<sup>46</sup> Mary Bendyna, *Partners in Mission: A Profile of Associates and Religious in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: North American Conference of Associates and Religious, 2000). Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, *The Foundations of Religious Life: Revisiting the Vision* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> To illustrate this ministerial change consider that in 2009 there were only 144 religious working in Australia's 1,537 Catholic schools. Dixon et al., *See I am Doing a New Thing*, 270. See also Robert Dixon, Jane McMahon, Stephen Reid, George Keryk and Annemarie Atapattu, *Our Work Matters: Catholic Church employers and employees in Australia*, Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations, 2017, which describes the Church's 220,000 strong Australian lay workforce. Available from <http://www.accer.asn.au/>

her colleagues.<sup>48</sup> They found that it is those consecrated communities in the USA which embrace a radical poverty as well as a strong contemplative aspect that are the most likely to attract vocations.<sup>49</sup>

The communal dimension of religious life, something that cannot easily be replicated in the wider community,<sup>50</sup> is a critical dimension for those who have had a successful experience of religious life. In terms of RCT, the communal dimension of religious life re-emphasises its special or distinctive nature and is something that is especially appropriate to those who do not have family ties or the need to develop professional lives. The key link that needs to be visibly established is that living this special or distinctive way of life can lead to joy and fulfilment. If it is evident from the lives of those already involved, then religious life becomes far more attractive to those on the periphery who are thinking about embracing this vocation. According to RCT, the advocacy and witness of those already in religious life is a strong determinant its attractiveness. Put simply, we can ask, 'Who would be interested in joining a group if its own members do not seem to be promoting it?' This is a point that Gautier and her colleagues make in their recent study of the priesthood in support of the comments quoted earlier by Greeley. They note that 'there are signs of renewal in vocational recruiting by priests, especially among the post Vatican II generation who are actively and happily promoting the priesthood. Perhaps their happiness will attract more men to consider the priesthood'.<sup>51</sup>

### *Vocations and transformations in religious virtuosity*

For the third perspective on the decline of religious vocations, let us turn to Patricia Wittberg, who uses the Weberian prism of virtuosity to analyse contemporary religious life.<sup>52</sup> Virtuosity refers to individuals who, by living out the full demands of their religion, seek to attain perfection as defined by their tradition.<sup>53</sup> In Weberian terms, the religious virtuoso is not outside institutional forces but lives within a religious tradition,<sup>54</sup> while at the same time consciously living a life that is counter-cultural in three senses: the individual sees their life as being different, as does their religious community and the wider culture. In many ways the virtuoso is the exemplar of the tradition and how he or she lives is not an accurate reflection of the way most other members of the congregation live. As such, professed religious are good examples of virtuosity.

For many centuries, Catholic female religious typically had combined an interior spiritual life with one of active service. The gradual shift from the contemplative as the major activity of religious congregations has occurred over several centuries. In 1800, contemplative women's orders were still in the majority, but by the early twentieth century only 11 per cent of women's orders were contemplative. Between 1800 and 1900, 600 new orders were founded and almost all of them were devoted to outreach in some form. Many of these new orders attracted a considerable number of

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<sup>48</sup> Mary Bendyna, Editor, *Emerging Communities of Consecrated Life in the United States* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2006). See also *Emerging Religious Communities in the United States* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> For a discussion of contemporary contemplative life amongst religious sisters see, Ann Denham and Gert Wilkinson, *Cloister of the Heart: Association of Contemplative Sisters* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Sandra Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000). Sandra Schneiders, *Selling All: Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Gautier et al., *Same Call*, 203.

<sup>52</sup> Patricia Wittberg, *From Piety to Professionalism—And Back? Transformations of Organized Religious Virtuosity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> William Swatos, Virtuoso, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Society* (Hartford: Hartford Institute for Religious Research), <http://www.hirr.hartsem.edu/ency/Virtuoso.htm>

<sup>54</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

vocations and many of them soon became quite large. In these congregations the discipline of religious observance was matched by a vigorous apostolate. This was often conducted in what we would now call the service sector. Along with this there was a close alignment between religious congregations and what Wittberg calls sponsoring organisations or, in this context, the hierarchical structures of the Church. A critical example of the interplay of these three factors is in congregations that were founded with a clear educational charism. In these groups, sisters lived a communal life as evidenced by regular prayer and time for contemplation. They also established school systems that in many parts of the world received no or meagre government support.<sup>55</sup> In addition, this work was closely aligned with the aspirations and plans of Church leadership. Bishops were very much dependent on religious sisters to carry out their educational goals and as a consequence strongly supported this traditional form of religious life. When all three factors are in harmony, there is great capacity for those in religious community to develop virtuosity. This Weberian idea overlaps with other notions discussed earlier. The religious sister is doing something of great value, is highly esteemed in her community and is fulfilling a role that others simply could not accomplish. The history of Catholic schools in countries like Australia, for example, tells the story of a system that was only possible because of the involvement of large numbers of teaching religious and most of these were sisters belonging to a variety of congregations dedicated to education.<sup>56</sup> Such achievement can bring with it a heightened sense of attraction to religious life for those considering entering a congregation.

In many ways, the apostolates of these religious women were very successful. In particular, the schools and hospitals they created provided a range of services that were sought out by increasingly diverse sections of the community.<sup>57</sup> As these institutions grew, however, a subtle shift occurred which, for Wittberg, is a telling argument about the attraction of religious life today. This shift is captured in the title of her book – *From piety to professionalism*. The work of women religious began to be identified with what in earlier times had been called the active apostolate rather than with the communal or reflective aspects of religious life. Over time, this change made those in religious life appear to be less like virtuosi and more like highly trained and dedicated lay professionals. This was especially acute as many orders do not have an articulated theology of an activity-centred sense of virtuosity. In this shift, the attraction of religious life diminished because those elements which were peculiar to it did not have a prominent role in the identity of either congregations or individual sisters. Consider the example of a religious who is in charge of a large health care system. This is a demanding and challenging job, one that many lay people undertake. Just as most lay people in such a situation would find it impossible to take part in regular ritual and communal prayer, so does the religious sister who is fulfilling a similar role. This analogy can be extended to markers of religious virtuosity. The symbols that reminded others of the special charism of the virtuoso are an important driver of this from a Weberian perspective. Does the 'professional' religious go to work in a distinctive habit that marks her as being part of a religious community or in the simple attire of one who has chosen a life of poverty or austerity? It is far more likely that a religious in such a position will dress in a style that is commensurate with her position. The loss of these traditional religious markers is important in as much as it signals the demise of the religious virtuoso and the ascent of the professional. In this process, which is often not conscious or deliberate, the attraction of

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<sup>55</sup> Wittberg, *Piety*, 9. For example, Wittberg notes that by 1900 Catholic sisters in the USA ran 3,811 parochial schools and 633 girls' academies.

<sup>56</sup> Frank Rogan, *A Short History of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne 1839-1980* (Melbourne: Catholic Education Office, 2000). Berenice Kerr, *The Congregational School: Its History and Significance in Catholic Education in NSW and Australia* (Sydney: Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Antoinette Baldwinfor, *The Congregational Hospital: Its History and Significance in Catholic Health Care in New South Wales* (Sydney: Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutions in NSW, 2011).

religious life is lessened and the radical counter-cultural aspect, which had always been present, is increasingly diminished and devalued. The balance here is important. Dedicated and exclusive contemplative life is difficult and for most people there is more attraction in a vocation that combines, to use Carmelite terms, active and interior components. It is telling that in the surveys of religious congregations of women discussed earlier, one of the major attractions for women who have joined was the communal and reflective aspects of their communities, aspects that are important for those who strive to be religious virtuosi. In Weber's view, there will always be those who seek out this type of life within religious communities but it is important that this life reflects a balance of outreach, community life and a distinctive life style.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

The following is a concluding comment from the 2009 survey of religious life in Australia:

It is easy to be hopeful when bolstered by the success of our works and the optimism of everyone around us but it requires faith and courage to trust that all will be well when we are not so successful, when our future is uncertain and when God seems absent.<sup>59</sup>

These remarks could be used to describe not just the conditions for religious life but also for the wider Church. In concentrating on vocations to religious life it is easy to lose sight of the fact that this discussion takes place in a much wider context. There is no question that vocations to religious life have become scarcer in recent times. At the same time, however, the Christian life in general has also become much more challenging. In keeping with Gill's analysis, the cultural model of religious affiliation has made it much more difficult for Christians in general to live as active members of faith-based communities. There is now no special kudos associated with identifying with a Church and there is a transition in what Rahner called the movement from a national to an intentional Church.<sup>60</sup> Part of this movement is to see the Christian life being genuinely counter-cultural.

If we see religious life in this context, a way of seeing the future of vocations, at least in the medium term, becomes clearer. What does a counter-cultural life look like at its extremes? If Christianity is seen increasingly as an alternative way of living, then how is religious life within this way of life seen? A number of sentinel points suggest themselves. Religious life will be seen as something that is attractive to a relatively small number of people. This is in keeping with Wittberg's analysis of religious life as a manifestation of the Weberian template for religious virtuosity. At the same time, however, those who choose this way of life will do so because it offers a different path from that of the layperson. This is a reflection of RCT. In this paradigm, the question that is always asked is, 'Why should someone choose to be a religious?'. In the case of religious life, why would someone choose to live in this fashion when there are other less demanding modes available? The answer to the latter question must be found in the distinctiveness of religious life. The communal aspect, along with a call to prayer and reflection, seems to be especially important. To distil the research on new vocations, those congregations which offer a clear alternative but which do so in an integrated and joyful way are those most likely to flourish in what is a difficult cultural context.

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<sup>58</sup> Pope Paul VI gives a sense of this balance when he writes 'Let us admit, sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, that at the present moment it is difficult to find a life style in harmony with this exigency. Too many contrary attractions lead one to seek first of all for a humanly effective activity. But is it not for you to give an example of joyful, well-balanced austerity, by accepting the difficulties inherent in work and in social relationships and by bearing patiently the trials of life.' *Evangelica Testificatio*, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Reid et al., *See, I am Doing a New Thing*, 39.

<sup>60</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (London: SPCK, 1974), 50.

## Chapter 3. Some features of religious congregations in Australia

Ninety-eight leaders of religious institutes in Australia responded to online or by hard copy to the Leaders' Survey, but one clerical religious institute and four female religious institutes returned blank survey forms, so that we received 93 valid responses. The valid responses came from 34 male institutes and 59 female institutes, with a total membership at the time of the survey of 4,427. According to the 2014-15 edition of the *Official Catholic Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*, there were 6,926 religious in Australia in 2015, meaning that the institutes responding to the survey represented 64 per cent of religious in Australia at that time.

This chapter describes some of the features of the 93 religious congregations whose leader completed the survey. Complete results for the Leaders' Survey, including a list of all the responding congregations, can be found in Appendix 1.

### Type of institute

Valid responses were received from 57 religious institutes of women, 26 clerical religious institutes, two institutes of religious brothers, five societies of apostolic life (all of which were male) and two institutes of consecrated life (two female and one male).

The term 'religious institute' serves as a generic term that includes all these forms of religious life. In this report, however, we have chosen to use the more commonly used word 'congregation' in most places.

Of the 34 male institutes, six were from congregations of priests only, 26 were from congregations that include brothers and priests, and two were from congregations of brothers only.

Eighty-three per cent of the responding congregations described themselves as 'Apostolic', with 20 per cent describing themselves as 'Contemplative', 12 per cent as 'Monastic', ten per cent as 'Conventual' and nine per cent as 'Evangelical'. Among the responding congregations, male congregations were more likely than female congregations to adopt the labels 'Monastic', 'Conventual' and 'Evangelical' (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1 Character or lifestyle of the institute or society**

Character or lifestyle	Female (%)	Male (%)	All (%)
Apostolic	83	82	83
Contemplative	22	18	20
Monastic	10	15	12
Conventual	5	18	10
Evangelical	5	15	9

*Note: Totals add to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than one response*

One of the 93 valid responses came from the Missionaries of God's Love, a relatively new Australian congregation of religious women that has not yet been canonically recognised as a religious institute.

### The size of congregations

There were several questions in the Leaders' Survey about the numerical strength of the congregation. The total strength of the congregation could theoretically be calculated in a number of different ways, from questions about the number of members at each stage of religious life, the number born in each decade, and the number in active ministry added to those who are retired from

active ministry. However, not all leaders answered all three of these questions, and for those that did, the totals did not always agree. Where totals did not agree, we normally accepted the highest value, unless there was good reason not to.

By far the largest of the participating congregations was the Sisters of St Joseph, with 904 sisters. The next largest female congregation, with 244 sisters, was the Good Samaritans. The largest of the male congregations was the Marist Brothers, with 235 members, followed by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the Jesuits, with 148 and 137 members respectively. In contrast, 26 congregations have ten or fewer members in Australia, and 12 have five or fewer (Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2 Congregational size**

<b>Number of members</b>	<b>Female congregations</b>	<b>Male congregations</b>	<b>All congregations</b>
1-5	7	3	10
6-10	11	6	17
11-20	9	7	16
21-50	14	8	22
51-100	12	7	19
Over 100	4	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>91</b>

*Based on data from 91 congregations that provided some information about numerical strength*

Of the 439 people who had joined a congregation since January 2000, 254 (58 per cent) were still members. The period of candidacy or postulancy was the time when people were most likely to have left (41 per cent), although ten per cent had departed after taking final vows.

### Age of members

Well over half the finally professed members were born before 1950: 77 per cent of the women and 61 per cent of the men (Table 3.3). Only four per cent of female religious and eleven per cent of male religious were aged under 45 at the time of the survey in 2015. This confirms the pattern of decline that has occurred in Australia and in the United States over the past three decades as outlined in Chapter 2.

**Table 3.3 Finally professed members' year of birth**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Women (n=2,682) (%)</b>	<b>Men (n=1,179) (%)</b>	<b>All (n=3,861) (%)</b>
Before 1940	47	37	44
1940-1949	29	24	28
1950-1959	13	18	15
1960-1969	5	10	7
1970-1979	3	8	5
1980 or later	1	2	2

### Entrance requirements

The majority of the congregations had a minimum age of 18 for new entrants, while a handful had a minimum age of 25 and one had 26 years as the minimum age. The maximum age for entry to female congregations ranged from 27 to 60 with almost half having a maximum entry age of 35,

while the maximum age for male congregations ranged from 32 to 55 with the majority having a maximum age of 35 or 40 years at time of entry.

Two-thirds of the responding congregations require a minimum standard of education or work experience prior to entry, although many indicated there was flexibility in this requirement. For example, respondents to the Leaders' Survey wrote comments like 'For those seeking to be priests, the normal minimum education would be successful completion of Year 12. For those seeking to be brothers, this would most usually be the case, but exceptions could be made'. Other comments included 'Discernment of capacity to live in international community' or 'Each case would be assessed individually'. The full list of comments can be found in Appendix 1.

### Stages of religious life

Eighty-four leaders responded to the survey question about the number of their members at each stage of religious life. In these congregations there were 3,853 people who had taken final or perpetual vows. There were also 170 people who were temporarily professed, 59 novices and 94 people in candidacy or postulancy. Most members were fully professed (92 per cent) with only small numbers at other stages of religious life (Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4 Membership of religious institutes responding to survey**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
In final or perpetual vows	2,674	1,179	3,853	92.3
Not in final or perpetual vows				
- <i>Candidates / Postulants</i>	71	23	94	2.3
- <i>Novices</i>	44	15	59	1.4
- <i>Temporary vows</i>	103	67	170	4.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,892</b>	<b>1,284</b>	<b>4,176</b>	<b>100</b>

However, 47 congregations had no candidates or postulants, 44 had no novices, and 32 had no-one in temporary vows or commitment. In fact, nine congregations (five female and four male) had nobody at all in any of those three stages of formation, and another 36 congregations did not answer this question, suggesting that they probably had nothing to report. Among those congregations that had at least one person in those three stages of formation, 12 (11 female and one male) had only one person, and 16 others (seven female and nine male) had two to four people. Only 12 congregations (12 female, four male) had more than 10 people in these three stages of formation.

The amount of time required for each period of initial formation or incorporation in a congregation differs from congregation to congregation, although the most common periods were one year for pre-candidacy and candidacy / postulancy, and two years for novitiate. Similarly, the length of time that religious spent in temporary vows varied from two years to more than six, with some congregational leaders reporting that the period was variable. For the majority of congregations, the usual period was three or five years.

### Living arrangements

Most religious belonging to the responding congregations (58 per cent) who are involved in active ministry live alone or in small communities of two or three (Table 3.5). The question was restricted to those in active ministry to remove the possibility of distorting the results through the effect of some fully retired religious living in aged care facilities. There are some differences in the types of accommodation between male and female congregations, with women more likely than men to live

alone or in groups of two or three. Conversely, 60 per cent of male religious live in communities of 4 or more, compared to just 31 per cent of women. The difference between the ‘Selected’ and non-selected congregations is even more stark: 88 per cent of active religious belonging to the ‘Selected’ congregations live alone or in communities of 2 or 3, compared to just 44 per cent of active religious in the non-selected congregations.

**Table 3.5 Active members’ living arrangements**

Accommodation type	Active women (%)	Active men (%)	Active religious in ‘Selected’ (%)	Active religious in non-selected (%)	All active religious (n=79) (%)
Alone	34	14	44	19	27
In communities of 2 or 3	35	25	44	25	31
In communities of 4 to 7	17	34	8	31	23
In communities of 8 or more	14	27	4	26	18

### Prayer life

Leaders were asked about the features of the regular prayer life of a majority of members of their congregation (Table 3.6). In most congregations, the majority of members prayed the Liturgy of the Hours and celebrated the Eucharist daily. The Eucharist was more likely to be part of the daily prayer of male religious than of female religious, but this could well be a matter of access to the Eucharist rather than any underlying preferences. Meditation in community was more likely to be part of the prayer life of men than of women, whereas women were more likely than men to include elements of non-liturgical common prayer and faith-sharing in their regular prayer life. Not surprisingly, in most respects the prayer life of the ‘Selected’ and non-selected congregations were similar, although it is not clear why there would be such a big difference between the two groups in relation to the Liturgy of the Hours.

**Table 3.6 Prayer life**

Prayer life	Female institutes (n=53) (%)	Male institutes (n=31) (%)	‘Selected’ (n=9) (%)	Non-selected (n=75) (%)	Total institutes (n=84) (%)
Liturgy of the Hours	91	94	67	95	92
Daily Eucharist	85	97	78	91	89
Faith sharing	85	26	67	63	63
Non-liturgical common prayer	66	32	44	55	54
Common meditation	40	55	44	45	45

### Religious habits

Leaders were asked in the survey: *Do members of your institute or society wear a habit?* The dress codes varied considerably between congregations and in some cases they varied within the same congregation (Table 3.7). It was pointed out by some respondents that the four response options were inadequate to describe all situations and that there should have been a fifth: ‘Yes, some members do sometimes’. Two-fifths of female congregations do not wear a habit, compared to one-fifth of male congregations, but within those congregations that do wear a habit there seems to be

more option for the men to wear it at some times but not at others. Among those congregations that wear a habit at least some of the time, 71 per cent of the female but only 25 per cent of the male congregations required it to be worn in all or most circumstances. In one third of the male congregations where a habit is worn, it was required to be worn only at certain times, such as for prayer, and in another third the wearing of the habit was optional.

There was little difference between the 'Selected' and non-selected congregations in relation to wearing the habit.

**Table 3.7 Wearing of religious habits**

Do members of your institute wear a habit?	Female congregations (n=53) (%)	Male congregations (n=31) (%)	'Selected' congregations (n=9) (%)	Non-selected congregations (n=75) (%)	All congregations (n=84) (%)
No	42	22	44	33	35
Yes	45	32	33	41	40
Yes, some members do	13	10	11	12	12
Yes, sometimes	0	35	11	13	13

In congregations where the wearing of the habit is optional, a sizeable majority (81 per cent) wear it at least some of the time.

There was space at the end of the survey question to describe the type of habit.

*We do not have a distinctive habit but, if anything, wear clerical dress. Our Constitutions speak of dressing like worthy diocesan priests in whatever region we are in. The options for who wears the habit did not allow for both 'some do' and 'sometimes'. This would be most accurate for us. - Society of Jesus, Australian Province.*

For a description of the habits worn by responding congregations, see Appendix 1.

### Areas of ministry

One of the questions in the Leaders' Survey asked leaders to provide the numbers of people in their congregation who were active in a full-time ministry, active in a part-time ministry, and retired from active ministry. The total number of religious recorded in this question was 3,901, of whom almost a third were recorded as being retired from active ministry and another quarter as being involved in a part-time ministry. These figures provide another confirmation of the ageing demographic of Australia's religious.

What about those who were still active in ministry? The congregations responding to the survey were involved in a wide variety of ministry areas. Of the 77 that answered the question about ministries (49 female and 28 male congregations), several were involved in all or nearly all of the nine listed ministry areas and, in some cases, also specified other areas that were not listed in the question (Table 3.8). On the other hand, 13 congregations were involved in only one ministry area, while 31 were involved in two, three or four areas. Among the men's congregations, 93 per cent of the responding congregations had men involved in pastoral ministry, 71 per cent had men in education, and in 68 per cent there were men involved in the internal ministry of the congregation, a figure that was similar to that for the women's congregations (63 per cent). Almost three-quarters of the female congregations were involved in pastoral ministry, 63 were involved in education, and 53 per cent were involved in health care.

**Table 3.8 Major types of ministry engaged in by active members**

<b>Congregation has active members serving in ...</b>	<b>Female (n=49) (%)</b>	<b>Male (n=28) (%)</b>	<b>'Selected' (n=9) (%)</b>	<b>Non- selected (n=68) (%)</b>	<b>All (n=77) (%)</b>
Pastoral ministry	71	93	100	76	79
Education	63	71	78	65	66
Internal ministry	63	68	89	62	65
Spiritual direction / retreat work	57	64	100	54	60
Health care	53	43	44	50	49
Social work / social service	45	39	56	41	43
Social justice / advocacy	39	36	33	38	38
Ministry sponsored/co-sponsored by congregation	33	43	78	31	36
Full-time student	31	46	44	35	36
Other ...	22	14	44	16	19

All nine of the 'Selected' congregations, those that had recruited and retained the most new members since 2000, were involved in pastoral ministry and in spiritual direction and/or retreat work, areas where prospective new members are most likely to be encountered. It is also noteworthy that 'Selected' congregations are more likely than other congregations to have members studying full-time. This is probably indicative of the number of new members they have who are still in formation. The other noteworthy difference between 'Selected' and non-selected congregations is that the former are more likely to be involved in ministries that are sponsored or co-sponsored by the congregation. Again, this might suggest a greater opportunity to engage with prospective new members.

### Reconfiguration

The Leaders' Survey asked leaders if their congregation had been reconfigured since 2000, without specifying what was meant by that term. Twelve female leaders and five male leaders said their congregations had been reconfigured, and another seven female congregations and two male congregations were in the process of reconfiguring. A full list of the written responses to this question can be found in Appendix 1.

This completes the description of the characteristics of the congregations whose leaders responded to the survey. We now turn to a consideration of their policies and practices in relation to vocations.

## Chapter 4. Vocations from the perspective of congregational leaders

### Approaches to vocations by religious congregations

This chapter examines the responses of congregational leaders to questions in their survey and in interviews with leaders of the 'Selected' congregations about their congregation's approach to vocations. In particular, we look at their vocations personnel, the type of promotional material they use, the range of programs and activities they offer to inquirers, and their screening and support strategies. We also look at the question of why some new members decide to leave, and what happens when they do. The chapter concludes with a summary of best practice in relation to attracting and keeping new members.

### Vocations director or team

Just over half (56 per cent) of the congregations that responded to the leaders' survey had a vocation ministry, with 100 per cent of 'Selected' congregations doing so. Survey results reveal that a vocations director was usually a member of the community and was almost always responsible for vocations to their particular community only. There was little difference between the 'Selected' and non-selected congregations in this. However, a greater proportion of the 'Selected' congregations (33 per cent) had a full-time director compared to the rest of the congregations (18 per cent), with male congregations more likely to do so than female congregations. Almost two-fifths of congregations had more than one person directly responsible for vocations ministry. In contrast, each of the 'Selected' congregations had a vocations director, a vocations team or a group for whom vocations work was part of their role.

The Sisters of St Joseph, one of the 'Selected' congregations, does not have either a vocations director or a vocations team as such, but instead has formed a group called Congregational Immersion and Discernment of Call. This group is responsible for a number of different roles including formation. A former congregational leader heads this group and is supported by a committee that organises immersion programs and helps candidates decide among the various pathways.

Some leaders said that responsibility for recruitment should not be restricted to one person but that it ought to be the responsibility of the whole community. A leader of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, a congregation with 17 new members since 2000, indicated that the aim was that all the sisters would recognise that they had a role in vocations promotion.

*We do this by releasing some sisters to be part-time vocation promoters and by establishing a Mission and Identity Team in Australia and by encouraging all sisters to be vocation promoters.*

The preference of many 'Selected' congregations to have a team approach rather than one person fulfilling the role of vocations director was based on a perception that there was a greater chance of success when it is not the responsibility of just one person. It was claimed that a lone person in this role can become disillusioned because recruitment can be a frustrating task, particularly in an environment where there are so few people joining from Australia. It was claimed by leaders of the 'Selected' congregations that a team approach meant that recruitment could be extended to outside Australia, particularly in Asian countries where there is a greater likelihood of attracting new members. One or more of the recruitment team could spend time in other countries involving themselves in formation and adopting a joint or shared approach.

In response to a question in the leaders' survey about the role of a vocations director, a leader wrote about how the team approach operated:

*The Vincentians have Vocation Directors in Fiji and Australia. They work with the Formation Team. There are twice yearly meetings of the Vocation Directors and the Formation men from Australia, Fiji and the Solomon Islands.*

Most 'Selected' congregations routinely send their vocation director and other team members on vocation training courses.

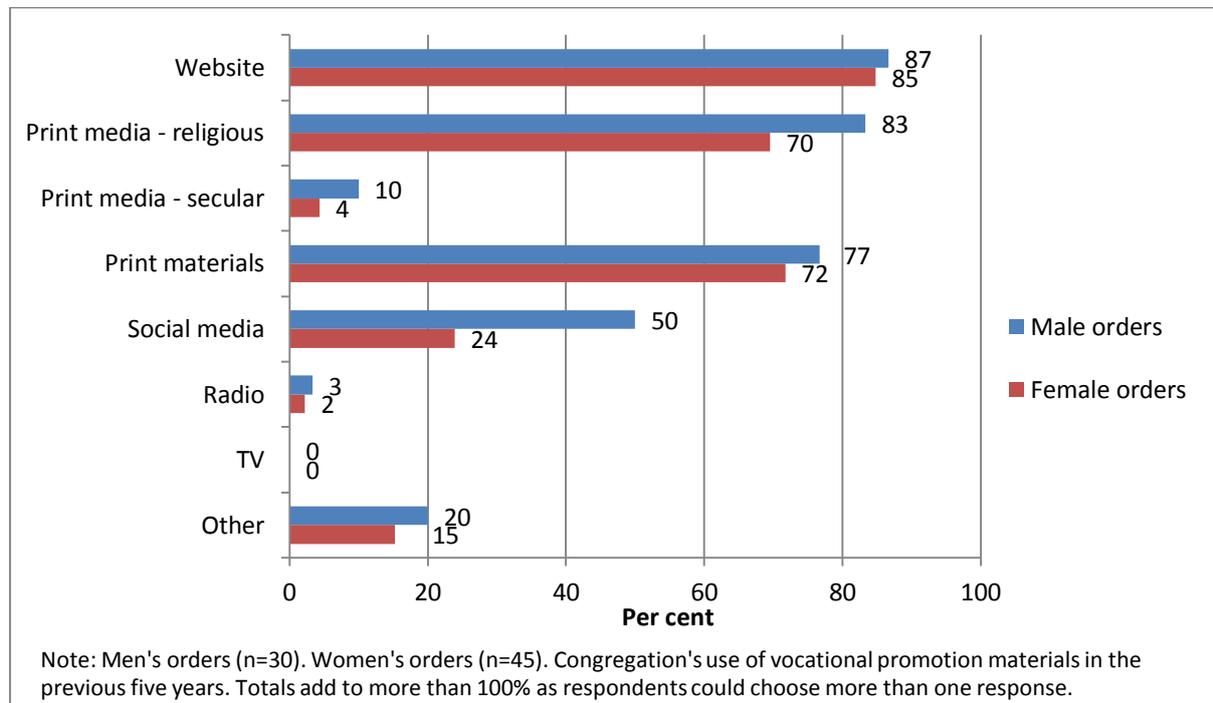
*We sent one sister to the 'Journeying with New Members' Course for Religious Formators at Marymount Mercy Centre, Castle Hill NSW, in 2012. This was very helpful for her education as a Formator. – Missionaries of God's Love*

Although one approach does not stand out as more successful than another within the 'Selected' congregations, all of those congregations are highly focused on ensuring that the vocations director or team have the support of the community and are resourced accordingly.

### Promotional materials

Leaders were asked in the survey about the type of material that the congregation had used for vocation promotion during the previous five years (Figure 4.1). Results revealed that congregations utilise a range of advertising and promotional material. There were eight options in the list, with the last option providing leaders with the opportunity to describe other promotions that were not included in the list.

**Figure 4.1 Use of promotional materials by congregations**



Websites, print media and print materials (i.e. posters, prayer cards, brochures, etc.) were all used by at least 70 per cent of responding congregations. The written comments made in response to open-ended questions in the survey provided further useful information about the type of promotional activities they utilised:

- Expos at youth gatherings
- Participation in vocation promotions in the diocese
- Personal meetings
- Word of mouth – personal contact
- Wrist bands
- Youth ministry conferences, festival, booths and expos
- Presence at youth conferences and youth festivals
- Visits to schools, parishes and youth groups
- Vocations stalls
- Video clips.

For the most part, differences between the ‘Selected’ congregations and the other congregations in relation to their use of promotional materials were small, except that ‘Selected’ congregations (78 per cent) were much more likely than the rest of the congregations (28 per cent) to use social media as a promotional tool.

An analysis of the interviews with ‘Selected’ congregational leaders reveals that many congregations devote a great deal of resources to improving the quality and presentation of their promotional material. They endeavour to make it relevant and visually attractive to young people while at the same time appealing to their special interests. Many make use of the Internet and social media, and attend youth events to promote their work. Some websites include stories about the people who join and about the work they undertake in helping those in need of assistance or support.

The ‘Selected’ congregations tended to have a range of programs and activities to promote their work, many of which involve young people. For example, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, who had recruited ten new members since 2000, all of whom were still present in the congregation, have an integrated approach which includes Come and See gatherings, discernment weekends, booklets, prayer cards, linking of school students to ministry endeavours and participation in vocation days in schools.

Likewise, another ‘Selected’ congregation, the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian Fathers and Brothers), a congregation with 28 new members since 2000, 21 of whom were still in the congregation, had a similar integrated approach to promoting their order and their mission. The leader wrote that their approach included the following activities:

*(i) Speaking at our parishes about Come and See Weekends. (ii) Personal invitation to a Come and See Weekend or observation of our works. (iii) Commitment to running two Come and See Programs a year. (iv) Regular accompaniment sessions with those seriously interested in a vocation in the near future. (v) Meals from time to time with our members in our community houses. (vi) Spending some time in more than one of our community houses to allow more members of our congregation to form an opinion as to the prospective candidate's suitability.*

Most ‘Selected’ congregations ensure that they are present at youth events and are highly visible in a range of events and activities. The Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia (13 new members, 11 still in the congregation) represent this multi-pronged approach by being highly visible, and by actively

engaging with prospective new members and providing them with an experience of community and religious life.

*Our community tries to be present at various events for young people in the archdiocese. We also attend and speak at retreats/conferences sponsored by the archdiocese in addition to hosting two vocation retreats each year [with a maximum number of eight participants in each]. In the past we have established a discernment group to assist young women who are discerning. This was successful as young women entered not just our congregation, but others, as well as discernment toward marriage. We now post events on Facebook as well as having a mailing list in which we advertise events or significant church feasts etc.*

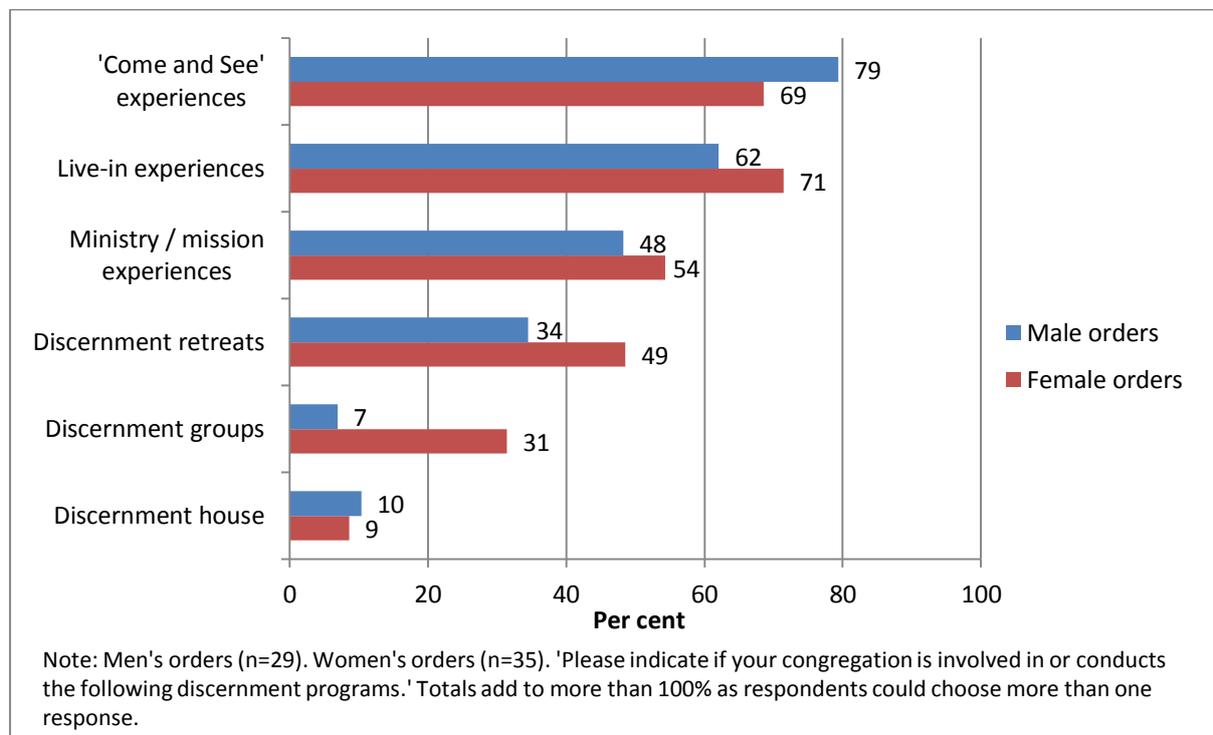
Writing about personal experiences of vocation is seen to be a way of providing an insider’s account and in so doing demystify and personalise it. For example, in the publication *Veritas*<sup>61</sup> there is an article by an Australian-born sister about her experiences of joining the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia and the ways in which she was supported and encouraged in her spiritual journey.

Some congregations focused their attention on specific ethnic communities within Australia. For example, the Augustinians’ vocations director spends a lot of time interacting with the Vietnamese community.

### Come and See programs and live-in experiences

The results from the leaders’ survey reveal that most common discernment programs involved Come and See experiences, live-in experiences, and ministry/mission experiences (Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2 Involvement in discernment programs by survey congregations**



<sup>61</sup> Unnamed author, 'To Love Christ with an Undivided Heart', *Veritas*, Newsletter of the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia, (2011), 12-13.

All 'Selected' congregations offer Come and See experiences while only 69 per cent of the rest of the congregations do so. The 'Selected' congregations tended to offer a greater range of experiences than the rest. For example, 67 per cent of the 'Selected' group offered discernment retreats while only 38 per cent of the rest did so. This pattern was repeated for discernment groups (56 per cent compared to 15 per cent) and ministry/mission experiences (78 per cent compared to 47 per cent).

A common strategy of 'Selected' congregations is to provide opportunities for inquirers to spend time in one of their communities. The Augustinians (22 new members since 2000, 13 still in the congregation) are one example of a congregation that does this. While Come and See programs were used by 79 per cent of male congregations and 69 per cent of female congregations, all 'Selected' congregations have incorporated a Come and See program into their recruitment process, with some having developed a much more individual focus than others. For instance, as part of its recruitment plan, the Sisters of St Joseph, with 28 new members commencing since 2000 (and 18 still in the congregation), put a lot of emphasis on the 'Come and See' program, which they claim is focused on the needs of each person rather than a one-size-fits-all approach:

*We have come to realise that we should offer formation that is REAL to the way Josephites are living now in community and ministry. Each person in 'Come and See' (Postulancy) has a discernment guide and a community while staying in their own job and house. Many of the women are mature women and we concentrate on the individual woman's nature and needs. Each formation program is very different. The Josephites have offered other pathways of formal commitment which enables the person to be in communion with the Josephites and to share in the spirituality and mission of the Congregation. We have 14 people who have made a covenant with the SOSJs in the last 6 years.*

In the Leaders' Survey it was noted that while only two-thirds of all congregations offered a live-in experience, every one of the 'Selected' congregations did so. These types of experiences get visitors involved in the mission and work of the congregation.

The interviews with congregational leaders indicated that, while the live-in experience was highly organised, each congregation approached it slightly differently. Some congregations offered it for a weekend or several weekends, others offered it for a whole week or month, and some offered an even longer live-in experience. Some congregations provide other options that suited a particular potential new member. A consistent feature of the live-in approach in the 'Selected' group were the messages to inquirers that 'You are most welcome', 'There is no pressure to make a decision', and 'There are many ways to serve God, this is but one of them'.

In the female 'Selected' congregations, it was a common practice for women who showed an interest in the community to be invited to join the ministry team in its social welfare activities, particularly among the poor, sick, disadvantaged or those in need. In the male 'Selected' congregations, men who expressed an interest in entering were more likely to be invited to join in more overtly religious or liturgical aspects of the congregation's work.

Leaders were asked in their survey to describe any special vocation promotion or recruitment efforts undertaken by their institute. Those from the 'Selected' group noted several wide-ranging strategies. All 'Selected' congregations appear to have a multi-pronged approach that involves a combination of 'Come and See' experiences, print and Internet promotional material, social media, visits to schools and parishes, attending and organising youth events, and using community or youth volunteers. They also offered discernment days, weekend retreats, and people staying for weekends or meals or assisting in the congregation's welfare or other mission work. The following quote illustrates the multi-faceted approach taken by some congregations:

*Vocation Promotion is an area that all members and communities take very much to heart. We are conscious that the first form of vocation promotion is the witnessing of our lived consecrated apostolic life. These are some of the initiatives: days of prayer, taking part in parish/diocesan youth gatherings and vocation expos, inviting young people into our communities for moments of prayer and a shared meal, sharing the story of our vocations in schools and parishes, personal accompaniment and spiritual direction to those discerning, etc. All the initiatives are supported by constant prayer and times of adoration in our communities as well as with groups of lay people. – Canossian Daughters of Charity*

Developing relationships with people was seen by leaders from the ‘Selected’ congregations as an effective way of letting people know about the mission and the work they were undertaking. This involved such strategies as meeting with young people, getting to know them, and offering personal invitations to events. A leader of the FCJ Sisters described a typical process which involved developing friendships with people, inviting them to accompany sisters to an event, and sharing a meal. They tried to treat inquirers as friends, rather than as prospective new members. The community was encouraged to provide an open and welcoming environment in response to people who showed an interest in the congregation. According to this leader, a typical pathway for prospective new members would include being invited to:

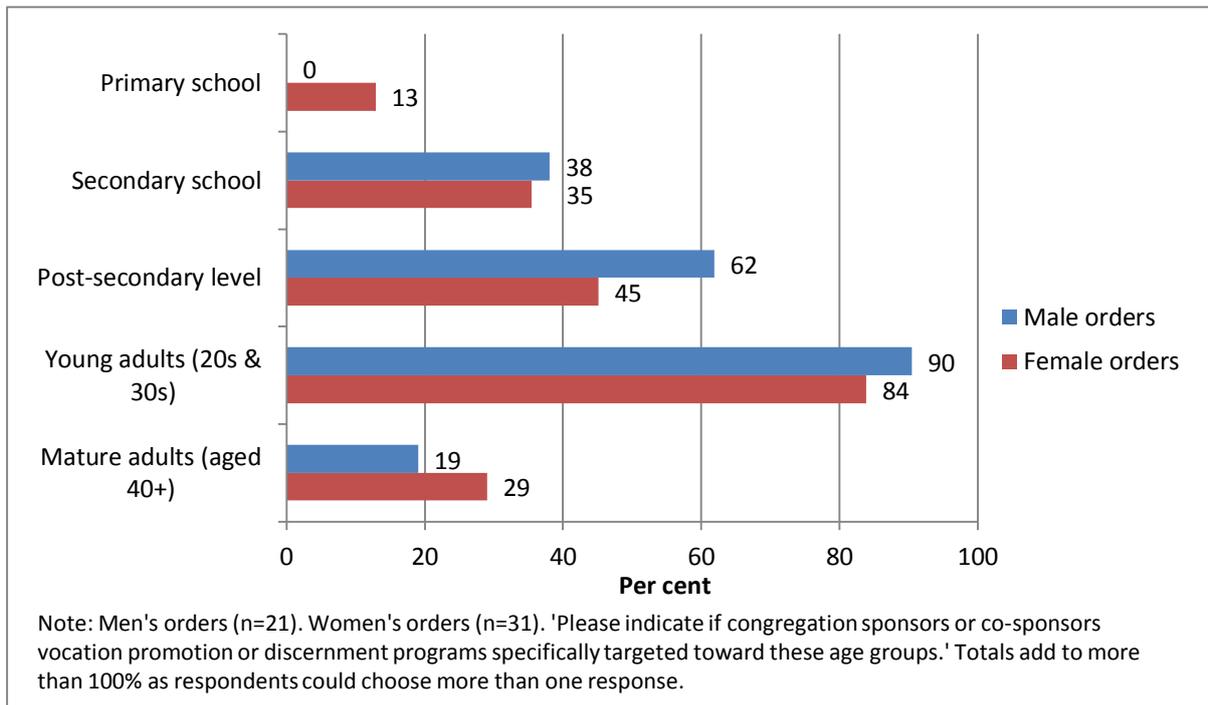
- Join a community for a meal and prayer
- Take part in special occasions
- Spend a week or fortnight with the congregation
- Join a program for 12 months that involves regular prayer with the religious community. At this stage, they can choose to live in or out of the congregation without the need to make a commitment.

The process that leads to a person making a commitment to a congregation might take months or even years. For this reason, the ‘Selected’ congregations developed strategies and processes that would enable them to keep in touch with such people and in many cases to befriend them.

This gentle approach is intended to ensure that people do not feel pressured into making a firm commitment during this period. A leader of the Missionaries of God’s Love said that the sisters accompany those who are interested in joining the congregation to events and keep in regular contact with them; during this time they would actively promote vocations when opportunities arose. A female leader said that her congregation wanted to show inquirers that there is no shame in choosing not to join the congregation or in leaving after having spent some time with them.

As Figure 4.3 shows, a little over a third of congregations included secondary schools in their vocation promotion or discernment programs. However, most programs focused on post-secondary students and young adults (those aged in their 20s and 30s). This focus on young adults is reflected in the minimum age and minimum education or experience requirements for entry into the community discussed in the previous chapter.

**Figure 4.3 Vocation promotion or discernment programs of congregations**



Many 'Selected' congregations were very active in promoting themselves in schools, parishes and other groups. They were proactive and looked for and created opportunities to attract young people to their work and their community and provided all sorts of programs to which young people were invited. During these programs, the focus was not so much on getting new members but on the work of the congregation, and the link between their service to others and the Church's mission. One of their aims was to focus on helping young people develop their appreciation of the relevance that God can have to their lives. The following extract from an interview with a congregational leader provides some details about the youth ministry program of one congregation:

*We do a lot of youth ministry, through parishes, schools, advertising, etc. We belong to a lay covenant community and work with them to organise national events for young people: e.g. Summer School in January that is held across Australia. We try to help young people connect with their faith. Evangelisation is a big part of our ministry. Evangelisation is encouraging people to understand what faith is, to have God in their lives and to share this with others, to help young people to do this naturally, genuinely and talk openly to others about their faith.*  
 – Missionaries of God's Love

### Overseas formation experiences

Some 'Selected' congregations cooperated with members of their congregations in Asia and other parts of the world in providing formation programs. This strategy helped provide novices with the opportunity to get to know and understand different cultures and to be part of a world-wide organisation.

The Capuchin Friars, the congregation with the largest number of new members (31) entering since 2000, reported that it has a multi-target approach to formation which involves personal and online interactions. The friars send new members to their overseas missions for immersion experiences.

*Our formation program includes a short immersion experience in one of our missions. Our novices do novitiate in the United States. Some students get sent to study in Rome ... We have*

*vocation assistants—who are members responsible for the vocations activities in our various presences—and these work in conjunction with, and under the direction of, the vocation director. We are involved in youth ministry, we incorporate young people into our own ministries and we seek to have an engaging online presence.*

The Augustinians use joint Asia-Pacific formation experiences in which novices spend two weeks in the Philippines as part of their formation program. In other congregations, novices stayed away from Australia for much longer periods of time. Women who join the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia spend five or more years in formation at the mother house in Nashville (USA), with home visits from time to time. There they learn about the charism, the liturgy, and other theological and philosophical resources of the congregation. It is because Nashville has a long history of conducting formation for the congregation that formation programs are not run in Australia.

### Screening and support strategies

The leaders' survey showed that medical assessments, referee checks and psychological testing were generally required prior to admission to a congregation (Table 15). Interestingly, police checks were required by only 79 per cent of male congregations and 47 per cent of female congregations. The survey did not ask about Working with Children Checks, a mechanism for pre-screening people's criminal records and professional conduct and preventing those who pose an unjustifiable risk to children from working with or caring for them.

As far as admission checks are concerned, there is little difference between male and female congregations in respect to medical assessment and referee checks, but a greater proportion of male than female congregations utilise police checks, psychological testing and behavioural assessment as a matter of course.

**Table 4.1 Admission checks by male/female and 'Selected'/non-selected congregations**

Admission checks	Female congregations (%)	Male congregations (%)	'Selected' congregations (%)	Non-selected congregations (%)	All congregations (%)
Medical assessment	91	96	100	92	93
Referee check	83	86	100	82	84
Psychological testing	68	89	89	74	76
Police check	47	79	67	58	59
Behavioral assessment	47	64	78	50	53

The majority of congregations ensure that new recruits undertake psychological testing, behavioural assessments and reference checks prior to entry not only as a screening tool but also as a way of pre-empting conflict or stress by providing early assistance and support. All 'Selected' congregations ensure that new recruits satisfy medical assessments and referee checks, and are much more likely to utilise the other types of admission checks than are the non-selected congregations. Leaders of 'Selected' congregations said that the use of such measures helped them select suitable candidates – and to keep them.

*I take a long time to make sure that I think this young woman can do it. ... Sometimes I ask our sisters their opinion so I know this person will be comfortable with us. We do a psych evaluation as well which I think is important. We have a great Catholic doctor who does it and I trust his judgement. – Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia*

The leaders discussed the practical ways in which they provided emotional support to new members. For example, the Good Samaritan Sisters recognise that some will have experienced

family disruption, personal issues and traumas. To help new members to address these issues they utilise psychological assessment, counselling and spiritual direction in addition to other measures. The Missionaries of God's Love adopt a similar approach:

*We encourage discernment from the beginning and all the way through. We try to be very open, listen carefully throughout the process and give them honest support and feedback. The new members have an external spiritual director who will help them look at what their true vocation is – whether that is with the MGLs or not.*

Most 'Selected' congregations have a spiritual director or a person who fulfils an emotional or spiritual supportive role:

*The spiritual director will talk with them and work through their struggles [with them]. We also ask them to share and discuss anything that may have happened during the day, in their houses, so we can explain or clarify Church teachings. It's very open and honest. We encourage them to pray for understanding and revelation. – Missionaries of God's Love*

One leader said that where there are only a few members living in the same household, it is easier to identify challenges facing new members because leaders are able to observe their emergence at an early stage and before they escalate.

As part of the formation program, several 'Selected' congregations provide opportunities for members to get to know about each other's backgrounds and cultures. During these times, members learn how to resolve conflicts and relate to each other. Some congregations have regular meetings in which members share their ups and downs, personal accomplishments, anxieties and concerns.

*We pray for each other specifically and invite them to share where they are struggling and feel the need for grace. We support each other by prayer. – Missionaries of God's Love*

Leaders noted that appointing people with the appropriate temperament and background to the formation team was a key to helping new members feel comfortable, welcome, integrated and involved in the community. They said that they endeavour to avoid potentially volatile situations from arising between members by taking pre-emptive measures such as helping members to develop interpersonal skills and an understanding of cultural and ethnic differences. It also involves encouraging their members to discuss issues of concern openly.

## Social media

Leaders were asked about whether they had policies regarding the use of social media by their members. Some communities have strict rules about the use of social media, whereas others are more relaxed. For example, the Canossian Sisters do not ban social media, arguing that it would be hard to enforce. Instead they have sessions for new members on how to use it responsibly. A Canossian sister who took part in a focus group explained that:

*Social media is not banned in our community ... We are taught how to use it responsibly and to make choices about how we spend our free time.*

Some leaders encourage members to use social media as part of their work. They indicated that Facebook can be used for communicating with other members around the world and that it is a way of sharing with people who are interested in religious life. YouTube is also used to broadcast good news stories about people in the congregation around the world. It can be a tool for use in evangelising young people.

Other congregations put greater restrictions on the use of social media, and leaders gave several reasons for this. One reported that new members sometimes get involved in gossiping, on Facebook for example, thus creating tensions and jealousy between members. While gossiping can be an issue in any organisation, new technologies appear to have a greater negative impact because Facebook and other social media sites can 'go viral' quickly, with long-lasting impact.

Leaders also noted that some members find it difficult to adjust to restrictions around the use of email, Facebook and other types of chatrooms:

*We still have a lot of regulations about communication. We still write letters but we have some exceptions regarding email. But not being able to be in touch with their parents every day or several times a day is an adjustment that they need to get accustomed to. We use Facebook only for events and organisational details. Only a few are given mobile phones for work or travel. But we don't use all the features of the phones. Those whom we ask to give up things like Facebook say they are ready to do that. And then they need to actually do it which is an adjustment they have to make. – Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia*

### Challenges of religious life

In the interviews, congregational leaders noted that the challenges of religious life included those associated with living in a religious community, such as sharing, loss of personal freedom, cultural and social status differences, generational conflicts, and handling difficult personalities. These challenges are faced by all religious, but leaders noted that learning to live in a community could be particularly challenging for new members.

Several congregational leaders reported during their interviews that age differences between those who had been in the congregation for a long time and the new members could be a source of conflict and tension. They said that it was a challenge to integrate new members into a community where the existing members had long-standing relationships, especially when there were very few new members.

These issues are outlined in the following notes taken during the interviews with three congregational leaders:

*Challenges: Loss of independence. Limited social media. Communal living and learning to share. Leaving family. Learning to be honest and how to vocalise issues. – Missionaries of God's Love*

*Challenges: Members of the community with dysfunctional behaviours and handling different personalities. The problem is often not between the young and the elderly sisters but with the generations in between. – Good Samaritans*

*Challenges: Letting go personal freedom and learning to share in community. Sometimes a generational clash about the meaning of religious life. The congregation was not always good at understanding cross-cultural communication and support. Living a communal life-style often requires managing different viewpoints and understandings of theology and spirituality and a willingness to engage in communal discernment. These days it also entails the challenge of the digital world. – Josephites*

Leaders of female religious congregations claimed that new members often found it difficult to adapt to the culture of communal life in a religious institution. As we shall see in the next chapter, this was confirmed by new members in the focus groups and by the statements written at the end of the new members' survey.

## Why new members leave

Leaders of the 'Selected' congregations and new members were asked in their interviews and focus groups about why people leave their congregation and the process that congregations adopt to assist them. The leaders said that many leave of their own accord out of a desire to marry, or because they realise they are not suited to religious life, or because they feel called to a different ministry. Some leave for health reasons.

*Through fraternal life, shared ministry, personal accompaniment and discernment they and the young friars come to the decision to leave. Their major question is, 'Do you feel at home with us?' In recent years they haven't had to ask a student to leave. They will challenge him and he normally comes to the decision himself. – Capuchin leader*

Occasionally members are asked to leave, often because they have a mental illness or have not recovered from past trauma:

*The hardest thing is accompanying a young woman when we have discerned that this vocation is not for her. She may need extra support or counselling so that she can be in a position to discern what God is calling her to do. Some may feel called, but their true vocation may be to marriage. – Leader, Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia*

The congregational leaders and those involved in vocation teams indicated that they try to support people who are leaving and provide them with resources to assist them to re-settle elsewhere. Many stay in contact with the congregation after they leave. Some focus groups participants indicated that they felt excluded from the process when someone left and often didn't know the person was leaving until after the event.

## Summary: attracting and keeping new members

In the final section of the chapter, we attempt to summarise what we have learnt from congregational leaders in relation to attracting and keeping new members.

The 'Selected' congregations were selected because they were the most successful congregations in Australia at attracting and keeping new members. However, even in the 'Selected' congregations, some were less successful at keeping new members than others. The reasons for this are unclear, partly because there are many unknown factors that could influence this result, including the year in which new members joined the community, their age at time of entry and their ethnic origins. There are probably also different reasons for men and women. The eight congregational leaders from the 'Selected' group who were interviewed were asked 'Why do you think you have been successful in attracting and keeping new members when many other congregations have not?'. An analysis of comments made by these 'Selected' leaders provides some useful insight into the ways in which their congregations attracted and supported new members.

### Attracting new members

In response to the interview question about the ways in which congregations had been successful in attracting new members, congregational leaders focused on three main areas: having an integrated and well-resourced approach, offering a live-in experience, and having a full-time vocation director or team.

All 'Selected' congregations had either a vocations director or a vocations team devoted to the task of promoting the work and mission of the congregation. They all had an integrated and targeted approach to promotion of their ministry and activities. This approach tended to be professional and

personal. The written and web-based material was visually attractive and contained important and relevant information about their ministry.

All 'Selected' congregations offered a live-in experience which provided inquirers with the opportunity to see for themselves what members did on a day-to-day basis and how they expressed their faith. It also allowed these visitors an opportunity to explore whether God was calling them to this ministry. This process also screened out some young people who otherwise might have joined and then left, perhaps with a sense of failure.

The eight leaders of the 'Selected' congregations who were interviewed were optimistic that, even if the number of new members was small, there would always be some young people who would be interested in a religious vocation. This optimism meant that resources were directed to achieving that outcome. Members responsible for promoting vocations were able to seek out and plan events where they would meet active young Catholics. They would make sure they were regularly among young and religiously committed young people by organising and promoting youth events and befriending those interested in the congregation and its work. They visited schools and attended other youth events as a matter of course. Providing opportunities for training for this ministry was an essential part of the process of providing support and encouragement to those who took on vocation roles.

### *Keeping new members*

In response to the question about why their congregations had been successful in keeping new members, leaders firstly pointed out that not all of them had stayed. However, they claimed that their relative success in keeping new members was in part due to their formation program in which new members are provided with a lot of support and encouragement from the community members as well as from professional counsellors. Leaders claimed that new members were encouraged to talk openly about their concerns and that this was possible because an environment was created in which new members felt emotionally safe. One congregational leader said that she encouraged new members to share their challenges and issues with other members of the community and also to seek support from their families when under stress.

The leaders of the 'Selected' congregations recognised that young people must often work through a number of issues before they can discern their vocation, and confirmed that some new members find this process difficult. For this reason they are provided with support from professionals such as psychologists, spiritual advisors and, if necessary, psychiatrists. Leaders observed that working through personal crises, such as a family breakup, takes time and requires the support of the congregation and family members:

*We try to offer a lot of support, care and encouragement and encourage them to share even though it's difficult to be vulnerable. We're part of a lay community and the families involved offer a lot of support as well. They are encouraged to stay in close contact with their own families and the families are invited to meet the sisters in the congregation too. – Leader, Missionaries of God's Love*

The 'Selected' congregations also made a concerted effort to build an integrated community. They did this in part by helping members to develop strategies for resolving interpersonal disputes and arguments. Leaders and other members of the congregation tried to teach new members about cultural differences among members and how to be sensitive to people from different backgrounds. Leaders also indicated that they attempted to give the young people a voice in the community and to really listen to their views. They also felt that giving them an experience of living in another part

of the congregation, including overseas stays, was helpful. They reported that recruits who are older when they join have less difficulty adapting.

Learning to live with other people in a community and apart from their family was seen as a challenge by new members and the leaders of the 'Selected' congregations. Several 'Selected' congregations recognised that they needed to address challenges associated with communal living. Female congregations, in particular, had developed programs and strategies specifically designed to help new recruits to adapt to communal life. Providing a live-in experience either through a Come and See program or through longer term residencies was a popular approach. Another strategy was to remove pressure from young people who undertook a live-in experience from feeling like they had to make a commitment by making it clear that it was not assumed that they would eventually join the congregation.

Leaders indicated that it was important to include new members in the life of the community, and that this requires planning rather than an ad hoc approach. One strategy was to find a role for new members that enabled them to have a voice in the community and to feel part of the wider ministry, particularly in serving others and carrying out the mission of the congregation.

In the next chapter, we look at the experience of joining a religious congregation from the perspective of new members.

## Chapter 5. Religious vocations from the perspective of new members

Information about the views and experiences of new members were collected by means of a survey of new members and through the use of focus groups in which twelve respondents to the survey participated. New members were defined as those who had joined their religious congregation since 2000.

This lengthy chapter begins with a description of the new members whose responses to the survey and contributions to focus groups provided the data for the chapter. We then follow them through the various stages of the journey which has led them to their current situation, beginning with what attracted them to religious life and to their particular congregation, what influenced their decision to enter, where they found encouragement for their chosen vocation and the challenges and rewards they have experienced. They were also asked how they would rate their own congregation on a number of aspects of religious life, what they think when people decide to leave, and what advice they would have for congregational leaders and for others considering a religious vocation.

Forty-five women and ten men completed the New Members' Survey. These low numbers make it problematic to report results in percentages. After all, the difference between ten per cent and twenty per cent of the men is only one man! The problem is even starker in questions that were answered by only a small number of respondents, such as in the question that asks those that became Catholics as adults the age at which they did so. Six women answered this question, and two said they became Catholics in their 30s. It seems misleading to report this result as 33 per cent. On the other hand, the use of percentages does make it easier to compare the results for men and women. Another reason to report percentages is to be able to compare results from this project with those from other studies and, at some time in the future, to see whether results reported here have changed for later generations of people entering religious life. However, the small numbers in this sample mean that the results are heavily dependent on the characteristics of each individual who chose to participate, so that different figures reported in future research might not necessarily reflect broad changes in the views or practices of new religious. We therefore decided that, throughout this chapter, numerical results will often be given in terms of raw numbers, but that we will use percentages when we want to highlight the comparison between the female and male respondents – particularly in the tables – and in a few other instances where reporting percentages makes sense. In Appendix 2, which provides results for female and male respondents for all the questions in the survey, we have reported percentages for most questions in order to assist readers to make comparisons between the women and the men, except in those questions where there were very few respondents or where comparison seems less important.

### Respondents to the New Members' Survey

The 55 respondents to the New Members' Survey were at various stages of religious life: five women were candidates or postulants, six women and two men were novices, 15 women and three men were in the temporary vows stage of commitment, and 18 women and five men had made final vows. Among the men, eight were or expected to become priests, while two were brothers.

Most of the respondents (25 women and eight men) had been born in Australia. No-one was of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. Six women had been born in Vietnam, three in the Philippines and three in New Zealand. (For other birthplaces, see Appendix 2.) All the overseas-born respondents who answered the question about when they arrived in Australia to live said they had arrived since 1980, although eight of the overseas-born women did not say when they had arrived in Australia.

The majority of the respondents had a father (55 per cent) or mother (57 per cent) born overseas, most in non-English speaking countries. Of the 33 born in Australia, four were the children of two parents born in non-English speaking countries, and two were the children of two parents born overseas in English speaking countries. All of the other Australian-born respondents had at least one parent born in Australia. English was the first language of 64 per cent of the responding new members (women 60 per cent, men 80 per cent). The other most common first language was Mandarin, followed by Vietnamese. This diversity was reinforced by congregational leaders from the 'Selected' congregations in their interviews. They reported that new members were typically recruited in Australia but came from a range of different ethnic and cultural groups. The birthplaces of new members who have joined the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia in recent years are a good example of this trend: Australia (4), Italy (2), Lebanon (2), Vietnam (1), Ireland (1), Tonga (1) and Croatia (1). They all resided in Australia at some point before entering and that is where they had encountered the congregation. The Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) differ from the other congregations in the 'Selected' group in that all their new recruits came from Asia and work in Asia as part of the congregation there. The order had no new recruits from Australia and leaders are not optimistic about this changing in the future.

All of the respondents to the New Members' Survey were born between 1948 and 1996, with 70 per cent being born after 1970 (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1 Decade of birth of new members**

Decade	Women (Number)	Men (Number)	All	
			Number	Per cent
1940s	2	0	2	4
1950s	5	0	5	9
1960s	8	1	9	16
1970s	9	1	10	18
1980s	18	7	25	45
1990s	3	1	4	7

Eighty-four per cent of the respondents to the survey had been raised Catholic, but a number had become Catholic as teenagers or adults, including one woman who had become a Catholic in her 40s. Although all had entered their religious congregation between 2000 and 2015, most had joined quite recently, with 52 per cent of the women and 40 per cent of the men joining between 2011 and 2015. For most, it was their first attempt to enter religious life, although several women had previously joined a different congregation, and four women and two men had considered joining other congregations without actually doing so. Most respondents had first thought of entering religious life when they were aged between 15 and 24, although some of the women had first considered it when they were younger, including four women who said they first thought about being a religious when they were under ten years old. For others, the idea of religious life came much later: four women first considered it when they were in their 40s, while another did not consider it until she was in her 50s. Very few of the survey respondents had entered straight from school; most had entered when they were in their twenties and early thirties, with some entering in their 40s, 50s and, in the case of three women, their 60s.

At the time of the survey, all new members had completed studies at or above high school level. More than 80 per cent of the respondents had a university degree *before* they entered, with several holding a master's degree and one woman having a doctorate, and many had gained additional educational qualifications after they entered, with one more woman earning a doctoral degree. All

of the men and almost all the women had been employed prior to entering religious life, many in professional roles, and around two-thirds had been in full-time employment. For example, a Capuchin friar taking part in a focus group observed that those who had recently joined the Capuchins were mainly in their mid-20s and that most were professionals: ‘a couple of architects, a couple of civil engineers and a couple of teachers’. Although many of these new members are Vietnamese they were all recruited in Australia. Similarly, most new members of the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia had post-school qualifications.

Five of the women but none of the men had been married at some time in their lives, and four of these had had children.

All but two of the survey respondents reported that they had been active in a number of Church-related activities before they entered, including 11 who had been full-time or part-time teachers in Catholic schools (see Question 16a in Appendix 2 for a complete list of the activities). Most had been involved in at least two activities, and five of the women had been involved in as many as nine of the 12 listed activities.

All of the male respondents and 19 of the women belong to congregations that wear a habit or, in the case of some male congregations, clerical dress. Seven of the men and 14 of those 19 women choose to wear their habit in all or most circumstances, while one of them said she never wears it.

### Focus group participants

33 respondents to the New Members’ Survey answered ‘Yes’ to the question ‘Would you be willing to participate in a focus group to discuss your experience of joining and being a member of a religious congregation?’. Four focus groups were eventually arranged, in which 12 of these respondents participated. While it was originally envisaged that each focus group would involve a mixture of male and female new members from different congregations, this proved difficult to arrange in practice. Two focus groups, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne, satisfied this criterion, but the other two, both conducted by Skype, involved only Missionaries of God’s Love in one case and Canossian Daughters of Charity in the other. The congregations of the nine women and three men who took part in the focus groups are listed in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2 Sex and congregation of focus group participants**

Female/Male	Congregation
F	Sisters of the Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ (Passionist Sisters)
F	Salesian Sisters
F	Sisters of St Joseph (Josephite Sisters)
F	Canossian Daughters of Charity
F	Canossian Daughters of Charity
F	Missionaries of God’s Love (MGLs)
F	Missionaries of God’s Love (MGLs)
F	Missionaries of God’s Love (MGLs)
F	Missionaries of God’s Love (MGLs)
M	Order of Preachers (Dominicans)
M	Order of Preachers (Dominicans)
M	Capuchin Franciscans

## Quotations

The quotations in this chapter come from two sources: the written responses to the open-ended questions in the New Members' Survey, and written or spoken comments made by new members who participated in a focus group. The origin of the former is indicated with the sex and stage of formation of the respondent (for example 'Female, temporary vows'). Where a survey respondent did not indicate their stage of formation, they are labelled as a male or female survey respondent. The contributions of male and female focus group participants are, in most cases, labelled as such, although in a few instances the congregation to which they belong is also noted.

## Attraction to religious life and to a particular religious institute

The new members were asked in the survey what attracted them to religious life. The responses were on a four-point scale from 'not at all' to 'very much'. Table 5.3 lists the percentage of women, men and all respondents who responded 'very much' to one or more of the items in the list. Men and women tended to be attracted by the same factors: for example, 80 per cent of men and 80 per cent of women were 'very much' attracted to religious life by a sense of call. Women were more inclined than men to state that they were 'very much' attracted to religious life because of a desire to be of service and to be part of a community.

**Table 5.3 Attraction to *religious life***

Very much attracted by ...	Women (n=42-44) (%)	Men (n=10) (%)	All (n=54) (%)
A sense of call to religious life	80	80	80
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	77	70	76
A desire to be of service	79	30	70
A desire to be part of a community	61	40	57
A desire to be more committed to the Church	45	50	46

A follow-up question asked what attracted them to their chosen institute (Table 5.4). The mission, spirituality and prayer life of the institute were the strongest factors for about two-thirds of the respondents. The biggest differences between the men and the women were in relation to the community life and the ministries of the institute, with both of these factors being more important for women in choosing a congregation to join.

**Table 5.4 Attraction to a *particular religious institute***

Very much attracted by ...	Women (n=42-45) (%)	Men (n=10) (%)	All (n=54) (%)
The mission of the institute	76	40	69
The spirituality of the institute	68	70	69
The prayer life of the institute	64	70	65
The life and works of the founder	57	30	52
The ministries of the institute	60	10	51
The community life of the institute	57	20	50
The institute's fidelity to the Church	47	50	47
The example of members of the institute	49	40	47
Welcome and encouragement by members	44	20	40
A personal invitation by a member	23	30	26

Focus group participants were asked a similar question to that posed in the survey: *Could you tell me about what attracted you to join your particular congregation rather than another congregation?* There were many different responses to this question, but they revolved around the following five main themes.

### *The charism of the order*

Based on both the written comments in the survey and the focus group responses, charism appears to be an important influence on a new member's decision to join a specific congregation. Twelve new members (ten women and two men) wrote in the comments section of the survey that they were attracted to their order because of its charism. In response to the question 'What most attracted you to your religious institute?', they wrote comments such as:

*The charism and life of the founder and other saints of the institute, as well as the way it was being lived out by the current members. [I was attracted to] the great balance between prayer and ministry in the institute; the members' love for the Church, for prayer and their wearing of the habit. The fact that they had Australian vocations. – Male, final/perpetual vows*

*Mostly I would say it was the joy of the sisters, there was something very relational and humble about them that I didn't find when talking with religious of other congregations. It seems that it is the charism alive in them. – Female, temporary vows*

Similarly, focus group participants talked about their desire to closely align what they were seeking in religious life with the charism of the order. A Capuchin described the charism of the community and the way in which it met his vocation:

*There was a variety of different outreach ministries available and this appealed to me: to pray and to serve; preaching; chaplaincy; in parishes and with the poor – I was open to this. One of the other orders that I had considered mainly only directed retreats and I felt called to do more than that.*

Almost all focus group members had thought about their vocation for a long time before they actually joined their congregation. Some considered different congregations before making a choice, while others had contact with members of a congregation and were attracted by their example and charism. Some had known from when they were quite young that they had a religious vocation, while for most it was during or after their tertiary studies they felt called:

*I was pretty aware of a vocation from when I was little. I visited quite a lot of orders, some who did a lot of charity work. I wanted this but also more prayer life and communal prayer. – Female focus group participant*

*I stayed with them for a week in Canberra. Contemplation and adoration were important – I wanted them to be central. I like the ministry they do. When I visited I took part a bit – we visited the needy, marginalised people and people living in government housing. I knew this was the kind of ministry I wanted to do. I joined last year when I was 18, straight after my gap year. – Female focus group participant*

Focus group participants were asked to what extent the particular apostolate of their congregation had been an attraction for them. For many, it was not a defining factor, either because the congregation had a variety of ministries or because the ministry had changed over time. However, two participants specifically noted that the apostolate was a factor. One sister said that it provided her with an opportunity to work in parishes overseas and in outreach to women and children, such

as in teaching and empowering women and in sacramental programs with children. A Dominican said that he was attracted to the sacramental side of ministry.

### *Living out their faith*

Many focus group participants were attracted to community life and to have the chance to live and practise their faith:

*[I was attracted to] the sense of community life, authentic living of the charism, awareness and concern for all people and the world's current situation, and deep love and loyalty to the Church and the Pope. – Female, temporary vows*

Researchers<sup>62</sup> have noted the importance to members of finding joint meaning in religious life and living in a community that has developed and maintained a religious and spiritual culture. While new members did not speak about 'culture' as such in this context, there was an element of it in their comments when they wrote about the relevance to their religious life of loyalty to the Church and the founders, and the strong sense of mission and direction of the community.

### *The spiritual life of the community*

In the New Members' Survey, 76 per cent of respondents said that they were 'very much' attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth. This tendency was confirmed in the responses to the open-ended question about what most attracted new members to their religious institute:

*[I was attracted to] the sense that God was calling me here. The sisters appeared to live according to the Church's idea of Religious Life i.e. habit, common life of prayer, penance (and recreation, work for the Church etc.). Also their witness - Being religious, being God's, putting Him FIRST. – Female, temporary vows*

*In Carmel you find God everywhere, not only in prayer. Life for a Carmelite is communion with God from morning till night and from night till morning. – Female, postulant*

In the 2009 CARA report<sup>63</sup> of recent vocations to religious life in the USA, many new members made comments about the attraction of a monastic life. In contrast, only a few participants in the Australian study specifically indicated that monastic life was the main attraction of religious life for them. However, those that did write about monastic life were relatively emphatic about its importance to them:

*[I was attracted to] the spirituality of the Cistercians; the values, the practices, community life, and monastic solitude. – Male, final/perpetual vows*

*[I was attracted to] the spirituality and monastic life of a total commitment to God; the lives of the Carmelite saints and some of their writings. The setting of living in a monastery with the Blessed Sacrament, the cloister and prayerful building and grounds. Living in community, praying and supporting each other. Timetable and life focused on prayer and deepening our relationship with God. Our mission praying for priests, the Church and the world. – Female, final/perpetual vows*

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<sup>62</sup> John Thomas, *The American Catholic Family*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1956. Timothy Kelly, *The Transformation of American Catholicism: The Pittsburgh Laity and the Second Vatican Council, 1950-1972*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Mary Bendyna and Mary Gautier. *Recent Vocations to Religious Life: A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2009.

Four out of five new members indicated that ‘the call to religious life’ was a strong motivator for joining the congregation. While this was equally so for males and females, in response to the open-ended question, six women but no men wrote about being ‘called by God’ to join a congregation, as illustrated in the following two responses (emphasis added):

*The attraction is being part of something bigger than my own immediate circle, and being part of something intentionally based on Gospel values, focused on mission and ministry, has been very satisfying and rewarding for me. Also to be part of a traditional movement that is looking very closely at its reason for being in light of the needs of our time and the ever evolving story of the universe. It is also very satisfying being with other women of all ages and stages in religious life who share the same sense of call to something bigger than themselves. – Female, temporary vows/commitment*

*I really enjoy the community life and prayer together, like the first community in the Bible. They all had one heart and everything they shared. The community life is very meaningful for me. Also that God is growing with me in all aspects and I can answer my call in this congregation. – Female, Novice*

### **Service to the poor, marginalised and disadvantaged**

The results of the New Members’ Survey revealed that 79 per cent of the female respondents but only 30 per cent of the men indicated that a major attraction to religious life was ‘a desire to be of service’. In the comment section of the survey, seven women but no men wrote that the main attraction for them was their congregation’s focus on ministry of service to the poor and marginalised. A respondent who was taking her final vows wrote that what attracted her was helping others:

*[The attraction for me is] ministering with other women and living with those who have the same passion and love for God. Walking beside those who need a helping hand in the community.*

A congregation’s international connection was often mentioned by new members as an attraction because of the global sense of mission. One female new member in temporary vows wrote:

*I am attracted to its internationality and global sense of mission and solidarity with the marginalised.*

The importance of being able to serve others in society was reinforced in the responses of female respondents to the open-ended questions.

*The joy and peace I could see in its members, their ministry of evangelisation to the young and the poor, radical poverty, community life, communal prayer.*

The leaders of some female congregations confirmed that many members were attracted to the ministry of service to the poor and marginalised.

### **Traditional religious community**

Three respondents to the New Members’ Survey indicated in response to the open-ended question that they were attracted to their community because it was ‘traditional’ and retained traditional community life and religious dress such as the habit.

*I was attracted that it was a traditional religious institute and a good expression of consecrated religious life, i.e., the vows, the habit, community life, being 'set apart' to fully give your life to God, that is, its spirituality of being religious. – Male, temporary vows*

*The sisters wore a habit, lived in a convent with each other. They take their religious life seriously. They are not out to get vocations but help girls know and do God's will, with regards to their vocation. – Female, perpetual vows*

*[I was attracted to] its adherence to Dominican prayer, apostolate and customs. They retained the habit, followed the Horarium, and addressed the need of today's uneducated world; as well as remaining in Australia. They recognised religious life as something radical and totally focused on Christ. – Female, postulant*

### Getting acquainted with the chosen congregation

New members reported becoming acquainted with their religious institute through face-to-face opportunities such as through an event sponsored by the institute, a vocation expo, a friend in the institute, and in a variety of other ways.

A small number of respondents reported becoming acquainted with their religious institute through literature (for example, through print or online promotional materials or a story in the media about the institute or one of its members). However, the majority of respondents did not find vocation literature of any type (including DVDs) overly helpful when discerning their call to religious life. Often they drew on several experiences, for example, one congregation's 'very comprehensive spiritual/social justice library and retreat programme'. Although the numbers are small, it does appear that men are more likely than women to become acquainted with their congregation through events sponsored by the congregation or through an institution where the congregation had a presence (Table 5.5).

**Table 5.5 How new members became acquainted with the religious institute**

How did you <u>first</u> become acquainted with your religious institute?	Women (n=44) (%)	Men (n=9) (%)	All (n=53) (%)
In an institution where members served, e.g. school	23	44	26
Through a friend in the institute	25	22	25
Through an event sponsored by the institute	18	44	23
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	18	22	19
Through print or online promotional materials	14	22	15
Through working with a member of the institute	16	0	13
Through a vocation expo	11	22	13
Through a relative in the institute	2	0	2
Through a media story about the institute or member	2	0	2
Other	32	22	30

New members were asked in the survey if they had participated in vocational experiences before they entered their religious institute (Table 5.6). The majority of them reported participating in a variety of experiences aimed at familiarising them with their chosen institute. The most common types of experiences, in each of which more than 50 per cent of the respondents to the New Members' Survey had participated, were:

- Spiritual direction
- Come and See experiences
- Discernment retreats
- Live-in experiences with the institute
- Regular meetings with a member or members of the congregation.

**Table 5.6 Participation in vocational experiences before entering religious institute**

Vocational experiences	Women (n=45) (%)	Men (n=10) (%)	All (n=54) (%)
Spiritual direction	67	80	69
Come and See experience	60	80	64
Live-in experience with the institute	56	70	58
Discernment retreat	51	80	56
Regular meeting with a member(s) of the institute	53	50	53
Regular visits to religious communities	38	50	40
Ministry or mission experience with the institute	42	20	38
A World Youth Day experience	33	40	35
Regular meeting with a vocation director	29	40	31
Regular meeting with a discernment group	16	20	16
Diocesan vocation programs	7	30	11

Respondents were also asked to rate, on a four-point scale from 'not at all' to 'very much', how helpful these and other vocational experiences had been in discerning their call to religious life. Six of the eight men and 22 of the 25 women who had had a Come and See experience reported that it had been helpful to them in discerning their call to religious life either 'to some extent' or 'very much', while all of the men and women who had had live-in experiences rated them as helpful 'to some extent' or 'very much'. These results highlight the importance for discernment of having a live-in or a Come and See or related experience, with all but ten of the 55 respondents to the survey reporting they had had at least one of these experiences.

Other vocational experiences to be rated highly included spiritual direction (with 57 per cent of respondents saying it had helped 'very much'), meeting with members of the institute (48 per cent), discernment retreats (41 per cent), ministry or mission experiences (37 per cent), and meeting with a vocation director (32 per cent). In contrast, impersonal approaches such as websites, print or online promotional materials, newspaper or magazine articles, diocesan vocation programs and general Catholic or diocesan websites all rated poorly in terms of being helpful in discerning a vocation. There were few differences between men and women with the exception of spiritual direction, which women (63 per cent) were more inclined than men (30 per cent) to rate at the highest level of helpfulness.

Focus group members were asked how they came into contact with their congregation. Some said they had been involved in retreats, camps or other events hosted by the congregation. The new Dominican men said they had seen the strong Dominican presence at university.

Almost all focus group members had attended World Youth Day (WYD) in Sydney in 2008, with some having gone to earlier WYDs as well. Some had come into contact with their congregation there and had visited the vocation booths. For every focus group participant, the WYD experience had been instrumental in their faith development and for some it was a catalyst to seeking religious life.

*In the year 2000 I attend WYD in Rome...it was here, in mixing with millions of other young people, I was inspired by the late Saint Pope John Paul II to cast my net into the deep—and to not be afraid...After WYD in Rome, I went straight to Africa for that mission experience that I spoke of, and the rest is history...or HIS story!! – Female focus group participant*

There was some criticism from focus group participants that there was little follow-up after WYD in Sydney which meant that young people like themselves had difficulty finding an expression for their revitalised faith. Two participants who had spent time working on vocations stalls indicated that the

lack of provision of religious programs or events where young Catholics could meet after WYD impacted on the recruitment to religious congregations:

*I went to Sydney and Madrid and I was already a sister. In Sydney I was on our vocations stall, and I came away wondering if it had really helped anyone. There were a lot of school kids who came through who didn't seem to be thinking vocationally at all, just enjoying the activities on the different stalls.. – Female focus group participant*

### Decision to enter religious life

New members were also asked in the survey: *How much did the following factors influence your decision to enter your religious institute?* Table 5.7 details their responses.

While men and women had a number of similarities in their responses to the question about motivating factors in choosing a religious institute, a greater proportion of males than females were influenced by the congregation's practice with respect to the wearing of a religious habit, historically one of the markers of religious identity. In those congregations where a habit is customarily worn, new members were aware of this requirement and so most accepted it without too much difficulty.

*Only one girl really struggled – she wanted to look like everyone else. The others accept it quite readily and they all knew about wearing brown and white before they joined. There seem to be a few girls now that want to be more distinctive and even want the veil and a more conservative look. – Female focus group participant*

**Table 5.7 Factors influencing the decision to enter chosen religious institute**

<b>Factors influencing decision to enter <u>your</u> religious institute 'very much'</b>	<b>Women (n=39-45) (%)</b>	<b>Men (n=10) (%)</b>	<b>All (n=55) (%)</b>
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	64	70	65
The lifestyle of members	47	60	49
Community life in the institute	56	40	53
The types of ministry of its members	48	10	41
Its practice regarding a religious habit	32	80	41
The racial/ethnic background of members	10	0	8
Its internationality	5	20	8
Geographic location(s)	5	10	6
The ages of members	5	0	4
The size of the institute	0	0	0

Other new members, particularly those from Asian cultures, were gratified that their community wore a habit. Focus group participants from the Capuchin Friars and the Salesian Sisters stated that they were attracted to traditional dress and worship. They indicated that the habit helped their visibility with the public and was part of their identity:

*The balance between the time the friars spend both in prayer and in ministry appealed to me and suited the way God had been leading me: a life involving both contemplation and time out serving in the wider community. The spirit among the friars and the wearing of the habit ... manifested to me that they knew their identity and that was attractive... Their charism, their orthodoxy and their reverence for the Eucharist was attractive. The communal prayer three times a day was attractive. – Capuchin friar*

The leader of one female congregation indicated that some new members from Indonesia and the Philippines were disappointed that the habit was no longer worn. Their preference for wearing a

habit was based on the assumption that they could have been more identifiable when they were doing welfare work. They also felt that having a ‘uniform’ gave them status. For the most part, Australia-born new members were not concerned about formal dress codes and not wearing a habit did not concern them. A few focus group participants were adamant that they would not join any order that insisted on wearing a habit:

*Habits – I don’t feel drawn to wearing a habit. But I respect those who do. For some people it can create a barrier. For example, if I talk to a person that is homeless who may be in a vulnerable state a habit might present as foreign or scary to them. We are apostolic – being with, on the same level, the same dress, just as the apostles were. – Female survey respondent*

### Sources of encouragement

The Survey of New Members asked respondents about who had encouraged them in their religious vocation, both at the time they were first considering it and currently. Table 5.8 shows the percentages of different groups of people providing ‘very much’ encouragement. The strongest encouragement came from members of their chosen institute, especially the vocation director or team, and their spiritual director. Only about one-quarter of the respondents reported that family members, including parents, offered very much encouragement, and few people (and none of the men) had received strong encouragement from diocesan priests. This may have been because diocesan priests were more likely to encourage men to join the diocesan priesthood.

**Table 5.8 Sources of encouragement when first considering religious life and currently**

People offering ‘very much’ encouragement when first considering religious life and now	When first considering religious life			Now		
	Women (n=38-45) (%)	Men (n=9-10) (%)	All (n=47-55) (%)	Women (n=37-45) (%)	Men (n=9-10) (%)	All (n=46-55) (%)
Members of your institute	58	50	56	64	60	62
The leadership of your institute	-	-	-	68	30	61
Spiritual director, if applicable	58	30	52	61	60	60
Vocation director/team	47	60	50	-	-	-
Novice/formation director/team	-	-	-	66	30	59
Friends within the institute	40	20	36	67	50	64
Friends outside the institute	31	20	28	49	40	47
Your parents, if applicable	33	10	28	45	60	49
Your siblings, if applicable	27	20	25	48	30	44
Other men & women religious	24	20	23	38	20	35
People in your parish	20	22	20	35	22	33
Diocesan priests	22	0	18	29	10	25
People in your school or workplace	11	0	8	36	10	31
Other family members	8	0	6	31	0	25
People with whom you minister	-	-	-	46	20	41
People to whom you minister	-	-	-	51	30	47

For every type of person mentioned in Table 5.8, more survey respondents, even if only marginally, reported that they received very much encouragement now than they did when they were first considering a religious vocation. This increase is especially noticeable in relation to family members and friends outside the institute, who may well have had reservations about the new member’s vocational choice but became much more supportive once he or she had actually entered. There was

also a dramatic increase in the number of respondents experiencing strong support from people in their school or workplace, but that probably has more to do with a change of workplace than a change in individuals' level of encouragement.

Focus group participants discussed the support and encouragement they received during their formation. The women talked about how much they appreciated being given time to settle in and come to know that they were warmly welcomed and accepted.

*It was the personalised approach with sisters who really listened to us ... They let us have space and time to travel along at our own pace in adapting to the community life. This grounding helped us settle in and feel wanted, valued and accepted. – Female focus group participant*

Male focus group participants frequently mentioned that they received spiritual direction and practical exhortation as well as support and that these actions helped them to settle in. One man said that he would have left the congregation if he had not experienced this kind of support.

### **Challenges of religious life**

In the New Members' Survey, respondents were asked 'What do you find most challenging about religious life?'. This question was also asked in the interviews with the congregational leaders and in the focus groups. The challenges identified by both new members and leaders were similar and revolved around three main areas: living in a religious community, the vow of obedience, and personal issues.

#### ***Living in a religious community***

There was a question in the New Members' Survey about levels of satisfaction with their congregation. Two items in this question set were about relationships and community life: *Quality of community life* and *Relationships with one another* (see Question 13 in Appendix 2). The female respondents (56 per cent) were more likely than the male respondents (20 per cent) to rate the quality of community life as excellent. Further, 51 per cent of the women but only ten per cent of the men reported that relationships with one another were excellent. One explanation for the women giving these items a higher rating was that there were comprehensive programs in some female congregations specifically designed to help new members to live together and resolve conflicts. While no leader of any male congregation mentioned that the community had a specific program for this purpose, the leaders of congregations for women discussed at length the strategies they used to help members adapt to communal living and address conflict and cultural differences.

In the written comments made by new members in their survey, many women but few men said that they found adapting to community life challenging, and several female new members but no male members wrote that they found the lack of privacy challenging. Living in close proximity with each other and missing their family could also be major challenges in adapting to religious life:

*Challenges: Sometimes being misunderstood by other people, especially if you express different ideas. – Female, postulant*

*Challenges: How to bridge the generational gap, cultural differences, and different practices of the vows among members of the institute. – Female, temporary vows*

A few new members wrote that they found the behaviour of some members of their community inadequate. This was particularly challenging when there was a lack of consistency between their behaviour and the expectations of the congregation:

*The lack of commitment that is evident in some sisters. The contradiction in life between those who taught me as a younger sister and the way I see them live now. The desire I perceive in the sisters to not want to stand out as being different and being set apart for Christ, but rather desiring to conform to what is the easier way. – Female survey respondent*

A new member indicated that he found the attitudes of some members a challenge.

*A lack of encouragement and good example from other members in the community. A lack of enthusiasm for Christ in the religious way of life – such as turning up to community prayer and meditation – and attitude towards the sacraments and religious life. – Male, temporary vows*

Almost all of the focus group participants spoke about the challenges of living in a community where there were wide age and/or cultural differences. Some said that, as younger members, there would come a time when they would be expected to look after older members:

*The fact that the existing members were older meant you knew that in the future the order would shrink and you would be required to look after them. That is daunting. – Male focus group participant*

*There were challenges and opportunities in being with other people who were a multicultural mix or five people from four different cultures. We all needed to get along and appreciate each other. – Female focus group participant*

### **Obedience**

Several new members wrote in response to survey questions that the main difficulty they faced was in relation to obedience to authority.

*Obedience and community life [is a challenge]. Authority is not hard and fast and it is not hard to twist things to my own purposes. But to see the spiritual benefit of obedience firstly to the superior and moreover, mutual obedience: obedience to my brothers. The fragility of community life is a continuing challenge, without prayer, humility and obedience of members it would fall apart. – Male, final/perpetual vows*

A few men and women wrote about the challenges they faced in surrendering themselves to God and being faithful to God's will. The following statement is typical of these sentiments:

*Challenges: Religious life!!! The struggle against sin, the day-to-day fidelity to Him through obedience and docility. Seeking and being open to truth even when it is inconvenient or shows up my many flaws, selfishness and lack of generosity. – Female, temporary vows/commitment*

A few men wrote that they found celibacy particularly challenging. Both male and female focus group participants discussed the difficulties of giving up their independence and the freedom of being able to choose how to conduct their lives. There was tension for some new members around having to obey rules that had been established decades earlier and which did not seem, in their view, to be relevant to today's society.

### **Personal issues**

The main personal challenges mentioned by new members in the open-ended section of the survey were being separated from family and friends, the struggle to live up to expectations, and the way the Church had dealt with sexual abuse issues. A greater proportion of women than men among the new members made comments about personal issues:

*Separated by distance from my own family members, missing out important family events because of the distance and ministry commitments. – Female, temporary vows*

*Challenges: Giving over my control on my living arrangement and the possibility of being 'judged' negatively by other members. Trying to explain to lay (or other religious) that this following of Christ to the Cross is what we are ALL called to. I constantly have to remind myself not to be mediocre, to give more, to seek Him, and to stop quantifying how or when. – Female postulant*

Some new members talked about not being able to meet the expectations of the community and having unrealistic expectations put on them while they were still learning how things operated:

*Challenges: The high expectations of other people and being put on a pedestal. I am a normal person like everyone else — not better or holier or saintly. It does not help that we are put on some kind of different level to other lay people. It is also a challenge with the way Church authorities have initially dealt with the sexual abuse issues. – Female, final/perpetual vows*

Another challenge for some new members related to adapting to the way they used social media. Focus group participants were asked: *Do you use social media? What media, and how do you use it? Did it have any role to play when you were considering entering your congregation?* Some participants indicated that they had been regular users of social media prior to coming into the community. Some indicated that restrictions put on its use by the community meant that it could be difficult to keep in contact with family and friends. For some, this was a painful experience:

*Yes I used to be on Facebook and pretty much everything. It was hard to let go, but now I realise how unnecessary they are. I've had to find new ways to keep in contact with all my friends. Some of them I had no other contact for. – Female focus group participant*

Some focus group participants indicated that if anyone used social media irresponsibly, unwisely or caused harm to another person there would be 'consequences'.

## **Rewards of religious life**

One of the open-ended questions at the conclusion of the New Members' Survey was: *What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?* Most respondents took the opportunity to fill in this section. While there was some similarity, there were also some clear differences in the responses made by male and female new members. New members described five main types of rewards of religious life.

### **Personal development**

Several female members (but no male members) wrote about the joy of being on a journey of self-discovery and fulfilment both in their relationship with God and their own personal development. The following quotes from two female new members are typical of this type of response:

*Rewards: My sense of being on a journey. That journey which is one of deepening my relationship with God. It is nourished by my prayer life, my ministries, and the relationships I have with people I encounter in my work, my Sisters in community and my own family. I love being able to be present to people and know that we are all essentially on the pathway and we need each other along the way. – Final/perpetual vows*

*Rewards: I learn so much from those with whom I minister. So, even though I am constantly challenged by what I experience, there is a growth and a humbling of spirit that allows me to be the person that I am growing into being. The community aspect I find to be a gift: to be*

*connected with a group of like-minded people who are working towards breaking open God's creation. – Temporary vows*

The notion of being on a journey in which one's spiritual life is enhanced and developed was a common theme with female new members.

### **Prayer life and spiritual companionship**

In the survey, 73 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men rated their institution's faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth as 'excellent'. No women, but ten per cent of men (that is, one respondent), rated it as 'poor'.

Both male and female new members wrote about the joy associated with their prayer and spiritual life. Developing a closer relationship with God was a common thread running through the many comments made in this section:

*Rewards: The opportunity and every day encouragement to live in communion with God. To allow myself to be loved and to become a bearer of God's peace and love to those I minister with. – Female, temporary vows*

*Rewards: There are many rewarding aspects of this life; the joy of being completely for God, the beauty of meeting God in those we minister to, the many opportunities to grow and be shaped more and more into the one that God wants me to be, as well as the process of coming to know myself more through formation and thus being free to live for God and others. – Female, temporary vows*

*Rewards: Environment which facilitates spiritual growth combined with life in a community. A place for growth spiritually, but also as a human being, and intellectually and in responsibility in serving the community with particular duties and responsibilities. – Male, final/perpetual vows*

Focus group participants discussed how grateful they were to have the opportunity and environment where they could express their faith as a community. They enjoyed having the time to attend retreats and to pray:

*Rewards: I love charismatic prayer; I really connect with God through this kind of praying and through singing. I also really appreciate silent prayer and solitude. We have a weekly 'prayer day' and a three-day 'solitude' every six weeks or so, kind of like a mini silent retreat. I love it! – Female focus group participant*

### **Community life and companionship**

New members were asked on a four-point scale from 'not at all' to 'very much' to respond to the question: *How important to you are these aspects of community life?* There were five areas of community life listed in the question (Table 5.9). The results suggest that women place more importance than men on socialising and sharing leisure time together.

New members, particularly women, wrote about the companionship they enjoyed in religious life. The quality of the relationships they had with other members of the community and the welcome and support they received provided the new members with a high degree of satisfaction that added to their sense of wellbeing:

*I was also interested in my Institute's work in social justice and living in community. I was also surprised at the level of welcome and support I received from Institute members who really did not know me at that stage. – Female, final/perpetual vows*

*The most rewarding or satisfying aspect about religious life was that I was encouraged and fostered in spirituality, Ministry and Community; the sense of belonging to a group of enthusiastic, committed women, in a Religious Community. – Female, temporary vows/commitment*

**Table 5.9 Importance of community life to new members**

Importance of aspects of community (Very much)	Women (n=45) (%)	Men (n=10) (%)	All (n=55) (%)
Praying with other members	80	80	80
Living with other members	67	80	69
Sharing meals together	69	60	67
Socialising/sharing leisure time together	58	30	53
Working with other members	47	50	47

Female focus group participants also spoke about the joy of community life. They talked about how much pleasure and satisfaction they receive from sharing others’ stories and their joy when things go well. They appreciated the support they received from each other and the opportunity to celebrate milestones together and to honour and affirm each other. They enjoyed sharing in activities, whether it was working, praying, playing music, doing art, or just cooking together. They said things like:

*We start the day together with an hour of silent Eucharistic adoration and chanted morning prayer. That is a joy for me.*

*There is a joy and creativity in going out and helping people.*

*Three pillars: prayer, sisterhood and mission are central to everything we do. We are all in it together and it is balanced and joyful and there’s so much variety in what we do.*

### **Service to others**

The desire of female new members to serve others is reflected in their comments written in response to the open-ended question ‘*What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?*’. Seven females but no males made a comment about how much they valued being able to care for others and provide support for the vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. Here are some of those comments. The first is from a postulant, the next two are from women in temporary vows and the last two from finally professed women:

*The social justice ministries with the most vulnerable people who are marginalised, and the faith sharing with members who are like-minded is the most rewarding.*

*Being able to serve others and enable them to see as well as feel the Goodness of God in their life.*

*The fact that I am totally connected to God; that my whole life is an act of religion, and that I have dedicated my life to service.*

*[Working in hospital chaplaincy], it is rewarding being with those who are sick and need comforting; just being available when the need arises.*

*God loves me so much that God called me to religious life to live an intimate relationship with God and to serve God in others, especially in the little children and the youth who are most vulnerable and needed.*

### **Evangelisation**

A small number of both male and female new members wrote at the end of the survey that the most rewarding aspect of religious life was to bring others to Christ and to be part of evangelisation ministry. The following two comments illustrate how rewarding this ministry can be to new members:

*Bringing others to Christ and helping them realise their own vocations but above all, being with Christ. – Male, temporary vows*

*What I find most rewarding as I minister among God's people, the feeling of God's compassion, love and grace from me to them. That through me, I am showing to them (people) that God's love, compassion and care are real. – Female, final/perpetual vows*

Part of their reward was in being able to share God's love with others and to demonstrate God's compassion to others in the way they lived their lives. This was also a central theme of the discussions in the focus groups with members recounting the importance of witnessing the Gospel to others.

*We need to radically witness the Gospel to all the people we come into contact with, including new members. We need them to feel loved and valued. – Female focus group participant*

### **Rating their congregations**

New members were asked in the survey: *How would you rate the following in your religious institute?* The rating was on a four-point scale from 'poor' to 'excellent'. There were 19 items about various aspects of vocation and formation, some of which have already been referred to earlier in this chapter. The full list is shown in Question 13 in Appendix 2.

Women generally gave their congregations a higher rating than the men did, but none of the 19 qualities received a rating of 'excellent' from 100 per cent of the respondents. The qualities rated 'excellent' by the highest percentages of respondents were 'Opportunities for spiritual growth' (71 per cent), 'Fidelity to the Church and its teachings' (67 per cent), 'Focus on mission' (66 per cent), 'Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth' and 'Commitment to ministry' (both 65 per cent).

Interestingly, it was in relation to items that could well have had the greatest impact on the new members that the percentages rating them as 'poor' or 'fair' reached 20 per cent or above. 'Efforts to promote vocations' received the lowest rating of all the items on the list; 40 per cent rated their congregation's efforts to promote vocations as 'poor' or 'fair', and only 25 per cent rated them as 'excellent'. Other items related to initial training that rated poorly were 'Preparation for ministry' (rated as 'poor' or 'fair' by 15 per cent of the women and 60 per cent of the men) and 'Formation/incorporation programs' (15 per cent of the women and 40 per cent of the men).

Female respondents (65 per cent) were much more likely than their male counterparts (11 per cent) to rate their congregations as excellent in their 'Efforts to promote social justice'. This reflects the finding that female new members indicated that they were attracted to congregations that focus on concern for and service to the less fortunate.

## Why new members leave

A view expressed in the focus groups was that some people leave for reasons that could have been prevented. This happens when new members do not have enough support during formation and the congregation is not involved enough in the process of helping them settle in. If there had been a process in place to encourage people to talk about how they were feeling, some people who left may not have done so. One focus group participant said that the congregation assumes new members know how the community's processes and practices operate and are not given sufficient assistance or the information required to learn them:

*My journey in faith is not centred on what other people do but in listening with and surrender to God. Sure, there is a shock and sadness when someone leaves. But, what is important is that they make a choice which will be the best life-giving decision for them. Some of the structures in place now were not in place in the past and we are living in different times. – Female survey respondent*

## New members' advice for the future

Focus group participants were asked 'What advice, if any, would you give to leaders of communities about attracting new members and helping them adjust to their new life?'. This question prompted a lively discussion in focus groups with some members adding written comments after the session. A common thread was that participants believed that congregations ought to provide opportunities for members of the community to engage with young people, actively interact with them, and invite them to assist in the community's ministry or join in a community activity. This involved making sure that someone from the community attends youth functions or even organises them. This can be through providing outreach programs such as summer schools, Come and See programs, retreats, and short-term sessions with youth groups in the diocese. There was a lot of discussion about the importance of providing an environment and culture where young people felt welcome to drop in for a visit, stay for a while, or just come for a meal. They clearly stated that just providing opportunities for engagement is insufficient to attract new members. It is also about the manner in which the engagement takes place. It is about building relationships and showing warmth and acceptance. One focus group participant said that it is important to talk to as many people as possible about the ministry and to be seen to be enjoying the ministry and interactions with the wider community. She emphasised the need to be down-to-earth and to share stories about yourself and your vocation experience. A Dominican friar emphasised the importance of initiatives like Come and See weekends:

*The Come and See weekends and the Retreat gave young people the opportunity to see, meet and talk to people without feeling pressured to join. Young people are highly idealistic and the Come and See weekends provide them with an opportunity to talk and discuss. It is an outward presentation that meets our ideas and connected our ideals with those of the congregation.*

There was a lot of discussion about being authentic and showing a genuine interest in young people as people, not just as possible recruits. While there was recognition that use of social media was an excellent way to communicate about events in the community, there was a disdain for commercialism or consumerism:

*Don't use a consumer method. You need to be real, authentic. You should not promise wonderful things that are not part of religious life. You need to allow people to respond to God's calling, not push them into something. .... It should be the Holy Spirit that you see in*

*others that attracts you, not in-your-face advertising or pressure. – Female focus group participant*

Focus group members insisted that, in order to present a positive view of religious life, congregations must have a clear vision of what they represent and how they function and then firmly and clearly communicate it:

*The order needs to have a clear vision as a congregation and to communicate this widely. This prevents future conflicts. You need to allow people time to adjust to religious life. – Male focus group participant*

Another common theme was to encourage new members to stay connected to the outside world, their friends, family and interests. They also emphasized that it was important to give them a role to fulfil so that they felt valued from the start:

*New recruits need to be given things to do. This establishes some kind of normality. They need to let you go to different groups outside the community and to be part of the world. They need to assist you to connect with the wider community. – Female focus group participant*

It was generally acknowledged that having new young members involved in vocation activities created a flow-on effect and that it was hard to recruit when all the existing members were old:

*Having a few new young members already in the order helps, they need to be visible. A little bit of success brings about more success. New members are attracted to the reverence that they observe in the Come and See experiences and retreats. – Male focus group participant*

*There are lots of Australian and young sisters. I felt I'd fit in, rather than if everyone else was from another culture or much older. – Female focus group participant*

Focus group participants emphasised the importance of demonstrating that discipleship is a positive experience and one that is relevant to today's society. The following statement made by a Canossian sister offers a succinct summary of what religious life can offer young people:

*There is so much good young people can do as lay people. Yet there has to be a difference, a sign of something more, that attracts youth to join religious life. We need to question ourselves, what is the difference that we bear witness to? Oftentimes the greatest criticism of our desire to bear witness to our consecration, or to be radical, can in fact come from within our own congregations! As a young religious in leadership in my congregation, I seek to try to continue to live my original desire to be radical and authentic in following Christ, and to empower others to do the same...As religious we are called to be iconic...to call other people to Christ not just by our words, but also by our presence. And I feel the more we seek to be 'one with the crowd' we lose this witness factor, which the world, and especially the young, so desperately need. .... Young people are there, we just need to provide channels for them to discover where and how God calls them to the fullness of joy, in whatever state of life that is.*

## Chapter 6. Summary and conclusion

As far as the authors are aware, this large-scale study is the first in-depth, cross-congregational study of vocations to religious life in Australia for many years. It aimed to answer the following key questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of the men and women who have entered religious life (and stayed) since 200? Why did they enter, and why have they stayed?
- 2) What are the characteristics, policies and practices of the religious institutes and societies that are attracting and successfully retaining new members?

In addressing these questions, the study has given us an insight into three main topics: the current situation of religious congregations in Australia (Chapter 3), congregations' approaches to recruiting new vocations and the formation of new members (Chapter 4), and the views about and experiences of new members in relation to vocations to religious life (Chapter 5). These are placed in the context of previous research reviewed in Chapter 2, a chapter which also offers three theoretical lenses with which to view religious life. We will summarise our findings for each of these areas in turn.

### Religious congregations in Australia today

Ninety-three congregations operating in Australia responded to the invitation, sent to all congregational leaders, to complete a survey about their congregation and, in particular, their approach to attracting new vocations. These congregations together represented about two-thirds of Australia's religious. It was noticeable that several of the larger congregations did not respond, possibly because for congregations with large numbers of members some of the questions in the survey involved a considerable amount of work. Nevertheless, the healthy response rate is sufficient to ensure that we have a good representation of religious congregations in Australia.

The size of the participating congregations varied enormously; at the time of the survey, ten had five or fewer members in Australia, while the Sisters of St Joseph numbered more than 900. The vast majority of congregations had very few people in the three stages of initial formation (candidacy or postulancy, novitiate and temporary vows); some had none at all. That this dearth of new vocations has been going on for quite some time can be seen in the age profile of religious: 77 per cent of female religious and 61 per cent of male religious were born before 1950, and only four per cent of the women and 11 per cent of the men were aged under 45 at the time of the survey in 2015. Almost a third of all the religious in the participating congregations had retired from active ministry.

The congregations responding to the survey were involved in a wide variety of ministry areas. Of the 77 that answered the question about ministries, several had a presence in a large number of ministry areas. Among the men's congregations, the most common areas were pastoral ministry, education and the internal ministry of the congregation, while for female congregations they were pastoral ministry, education, health care and internal ministry.

Most religious involved in active ministry live alone or in small communities of two or three, with women more likely than men to live alone or in groups of two or three. Dress codes varied considerably between congregations and in some cases they varied within the same institution. Two-fifths of female congregations do not wear a habit, compared to one-fifth of male congregations, but within those congregations that do wear a habit there seems to be more option for the men to wear it at some times but not at others.

## Approaches to vocations and formation

Congregational leaders identified three main things that contributed to success in attracting new members: having an integrated and well-resourced approach, offering a live-in experience, and having a full-time vocation director or team. All the 'Selected' congregations had either a vocations director or a vocations team devoted to the task of promoting the work and mission of the congregation and whose written and web-based material was visually attractive and contained important and relevant information about their ministry. Websites, print media and other print materials were the most common advertising and promotional media, with over 70 per cent of congregations using each of these. They also employ social media, especially as, for most congregations, the major focus in their vocations efforts is on post-secondary students and young adults.

The most effective way of promoting the congregation and attracting new members was by inviting inquirers to take part in events such as Come and See experiences, live-in experiences, and ministry or mission experiences. Experiences of this type are offered by all of the 'Selected' congregations.

Congregational leaders observed that the challenges associated with living in a religious community that all religious have to deal with, challenges such as sharing, loss of personal freedom, cultural and social status differences, generational conflicts, and handling difficult personalities, can be particularly acute for new members still finding their way in religious life. The 'Selected' congregations made a concerted effort to build an integrated community, in part by helping members to develop strategies to resolve interpersonal disputes and arguments and teaching them how to be sensitive to people from different cultural backgrounds. People who are older when they enter are reported to have less difficulty adapting to communal living.

Of the 439 new entrants to the participating congregations between 2000 and 2015, 254 were still in religious life. Leaders maintained that retaining new members relied on having a formation program that provided new members with a lot of support and encouragement from the community members as well as from professional counsellors and spiritual advisors. On the other hand, 185 of those who had entered since 2000 had left. Congregational leaders spoke of the need to avoid pressurising people to join or to stay, and of how important it is to find ways of accompanying someone who either decides to leave or who is asked to leave.

## The views and experiences of new members

The views and experiences of new members in this report are based on survey responses from 55 new members and from the discussions in four focus groups formed by 12 of those respondents. The majority of the respondents were born in Australia, although the majority also had at least one parent who was born overseas. They were born between 1948 and 1996, with 70 per cent being born after 1970. Most had been Catholic all their lives, although a few had become Catholic as teenagers or adults. They were a well-educated group and most had had experience in the workforce before entering religious life.

Respondents to the survey identified a sense of being called as something that drew them to religious life. Factors that drew new members to their particular congregation included the charisma of the order, the way members of the congregation lived out their faith and the spirituality of the congregation, the opportunity the congregation gave them to fulfil a desire to be of service and, for some, the fact that the chosen congregation was a traditional religious community.

The new members reported that early encouragement for their inquiries into religious life came mainly from members of the institute and the vocation director or team, and from their spiritual

director; in contrast, their parents and other family members were often not initially encouraging, although this usually changed once they had joined their congregation. They reported that the most helpful vocational experiences they had had were Come and See or live-in experiences, followed by spiritual direction, meetings with members of the congregation they were considering joining, discernment retreats, ministry or mission experiences, and meeting with a vocation director.

New members identified the main challenges they face in religious life as living in community, obedience, and factors such as being separated from family and friends, adapting to different expectations with regard to the use of social media, and coping with the sexual abuse issue. On the other hand, there were rich rewards in religious life in terms of personal development, prayer life and spirituality, community life and companionship, and opportunities to be of service to others and to be involved in evangelisation.

Somewhat surprisingly, when new members were asked to rate their own congregations on a wide range of characteristics, they tended to be quite critical. Women generally gave their congregations a higher rating than the men did, but none of the 19 qualities received a rating of 'excellent' from 100 per cent of the respondents. The highest rating qualities were 'Opportunities for spiritual growth', 'Fidelity to the Church and its teachings', 'Focus on mission', 'Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth' and 'Commitment to ministry'. In contrast, 'Efforts to promote vocations' received the lowest rating of all the items on the list and 'Preparation for ministry' and 'Formation/incorporation programs' were also rated poorly.

Attitudes to wearing religious habit varied considerably among new members. For some, the fact that their congregation wore a habit was a factor in their choice; others chose their congregation because members were not required to wear habits. Those who wear habits felt that the habit strengthened their sense of identity as members of their congregation and made them identifiable as religious in public. Some of those who do not wear habits thought it could be a barrier to effective communication in pastoral situations.

### **Differences between female and male congregations and new members**

The report found some differences between the practices and policies of female and male congregations, and between the views and experiences of female and male new members. Since these differences emerged from written or spoken comments by leaders and new members, and given the small numbers of cases, we have to regard them as impressions rather than as established facts.

Overall, there were many commonalities between female and male congregations but, with regard to vocations, there were some noticeable differences. For example, male congregations were more likely than female congregations to appoint a full-time vocations director, and tended to have more stringent screening procedures prior to accepting new entrants. When women showed an interest in joining a congregation, they were commonly invited to participate in the congregation's social welfare activities, whereas men were more likely to be invited to join in more overtly religious or liturgical aspects of the congregation's work.

Female congregations and female new members seem to place a greater emphasis than their male counterparts on the challenges and rewards of living in community. Some female congregations had comprehensive programs specifically designed to help new members to live together and resolve conflicts. While no leader of any male congregation mentioned that the community had a specific program for this purpose, the leaders of congregations for women discussed at length the strategies they used to help members adapt to communal living and address conflict and cultural differences.

Female participants frequently commented on the joy of living in community, and of the value of socialising and sharing leisure time together.

The women were also much more likely than the men to mention social justice, and to speak about their desire to be part of a congregation whose ministry involved caring for others and providing support for the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

## Conclusion

In the wake of the revelations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,<sup>64</sup> it can be a difficult and demoralising time to be a Catholic in Australia today. Why would anyone want to join a religious congregation? Those entering religious life are acutely conscious of the critical, sometimes hostile, attitude to religious personnel, and are affected in their selection and training by the demands for change in policy and practice made by the Royal Commission, Australian society and the Catholic community itself.

In spite of this changed environment (or perhaps even because of it), people are continuing to enter religious life and, having entered, deciding to make a lifelong commitment. The situation in Australia can be described using a passage from the NCRV report: 'although most religious institutes ... are experiencing aging membership, diminishing numbers, and few, if any, new vocations, some continue to attract new members'.<sup>65</sup>

In fact, our findings are similar in very many ways to the findings of the American study. It would be a tedious exercise to spell them all out, but here are just a few:

- A desire for spiritual growth was noted by most new members in both Australia and the United States as a motivation for joining religious life.<sup>66</sup>
- Both studies found that difficulties arising from age differences between new members and older religious were evident.<sup>67</sup>
- In both studies, new members noted the importance of strong community life and of receiving support from other members of their congregation.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, there were also some differences apart from the obvious ones associated with living in two different countries. For example, while the American study noted that one of the challenges in religious life was theological and ecclesiological differences between members,<sup>69</sup> this was never mentioned by any of the new members, either in the open-ended comments made in response to the New Members' Survey or in the focus groups. This may indicate that there is less polarisation among religious in Australia than in the United States.

It is often said that only conservative or traditional religious institutes attract new vocations these days. This project has shown that that is not the case. By no means could all the congregations that have been successful in attracting new members in the last 15 years be said to be at the conservative or traditional end of the spectrum; nor could this be said of many of the new members who took part in the project.

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<sup>64</sup> See <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>.

<sup>65</sup> Mary Bendyna and Mary Gautier. *Recent Vocations to Religious Life: A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2009), 7.

<sup>66</sup> Bendyna and Gautier, *Recent Vocations*, 46.

<sup>67</sup> Bendyna and Gautier, *Recent Vocations*, 105-107.

<sup>68</sup> Bendyna and Gautier, *Recent Vocations*, 9.

<sup>69</sup> Bendyna and Gautier, *Recent Vocations*, 109.

It is also commonly said that only people born overseas are entering religious life in this country. This project has shown that this, too, is not the case. Sixty per cent of the respondents to the New Members' Survey were born in Australia, and 27 of those 33 people had at least one parent who had been born in Australia.

The report leaves us in no doubt that religious life has a future in Australia, although the future will not look like the past or even the present. While numbers of young people continue to see value in religious life, and some congregations will continue to successfully attract new members, the numbers are not sufficient to prevent large-scale shrinkage of religious congregations in the years ahead. In one sense, it can be said that religious are no longer able to contribute to 'the strength of the Church'<sup>70</sup> in the way they once did. According to the recently published report *Our Work Matters*,<sup>71</sup> the Catholic Church in Australia now employs about 220,000 people, a figure that does not include priests and religious. Whereas Catholic schools and Catholic hospitals once relied on the generosity of religious sisters, brothers and priests in order to even exist, nowadays most of their workforce – in fact, often *all* of their workforce – is made up of lay people, many of whom see their work as a way of living out their baptismal call and collaborating in the mission of the Church.

The real purpose of religious life, however, is not about providing a workforce for the Church. Rather, as the Second Vatican Council noted, it is 'to help the members follow Christ and be united to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels' (that is, chastity, poverty and obedience).<sup>72</sup> 'The more fervently, then, they are joined to Christ by this total life-long gift of themselves, the richer the life of the Church becomes'<sup>73</sup> and the more 'their witness may be seen by all'.<sup>74</sup>

Australian society has changed dramatically in the last 50 years, and religious life has had to contend with those changes, as can be seen, for example, in the considerable amount of reconfiguration that has been and is going on in the participating congregations, and in efforts to adapt to changes in patterns of social interaction exemplified by the use of social media.

There will always be people who experience the call and who will enter religious life. Their generosity of spirit, their prayer life and their ministry will continue to be, as always, a beautiful gift to the life of the Church.

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<sup>70</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 24.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Dixon, Jane McMahon, Stephen Reid, George Keryk and Annemarie Atapattu, *Our Work Matters: Catholic Church employers and employees in Australia*, Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations, 2017.

<sup>72</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2e.

<sup>73</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 1.

<sup>74</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 25.



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# Appendices

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## Survey of Leaders of Catholic Religious Institutes

In all, responses were received from 98 religious institutes, but one clerical religious institute and four female religious institutes returned blank questionnaires. The tables therefore report the data from the 93 institutes that provided responses to the survey questions.

Not all respondents answered every question. The number of institutes selecting each response to a question is shown in the tables. Where it was possible to select more than one response to a question, the total number of responding institutes is shown below the table for that question.

The tables report either:

(1) the number of men's and women's institutes that selected each response to the question. In these tables, columns are headed 'Men's institutes' and 'Women's institutes'.

(2) the aggregate number of men and women in the responding institutes to which the selected characteristic applies. In these tables, there are columns are headed 'Men' and 'Women'.

Figures in all tables are actual numbers of institutes or of men and women *unless they are clearly marked as percentages*.

### TYPE OF INSTITUTE OR SOCIETY

	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes
<b>1. Canonical Status of Institute or Society</b>			
Religious institutes -- Sisters <sup>1</sup>	57	--	57
Religious institutes -- Clerical	--	26	26
Religious institutes -- Brothers	--	2	2
Societies of apostolic life	--	5	5
Institutes of consecrated life	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>93</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes the Missionaries of Gods Love, which is not yet a recognised religious institute.

	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes	
			Number	Per cent
<b>2. Character or lifestyle of the institute or society</b>				
Apostolic	49	28	77	82.8
Contemplative	13	6	19	20.4
Conventual	3	6	9	9.7
Evangelical	3	5	8	8.6
Monastic	6	5	11	11.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>133.3</b>

Note: Total adds to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than one response. Total number of institutes responding = 93.

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

3. <i>Gender of members</i>	Women's	Men's	Total Institutes	
	institutes	institutes	Number	Per cent
Men	--	34	34	36.6
Women	59	--	59	63.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100</b>

4. <i>Men's Institutes and Societies</i>	Institutes responding	
	Number	Per cent
Brothers only	2	5.9
Priests only	6	17.6
Brothers and priests	26	76.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>

5. <i>Numbers in unit (Men's Institutes and Societies only)</i>	Institutes responding	Institutes with nil	Total members
<b>Brothers:</b>			
Brothers in temporary vows/commitment	19	12	9
Brothers in final/perpetual vows/commitment	25	1	131
<b>Priests/seminarians:</b>			
Priests/seminarians in temporary vows/commitment	18	7	64
Priests/seminarians in final/perpetual vows/commitment	26	--	797

6. <i>Numbers in unit</i>	Institutes responding	Institutes with nil	Women	Men	Total
Pre-candidates/aspirants (before entrance)	66	39	52	22	74
Candidates/postulants (before novitiate)	64	47	22	16	38
Novices	66	44	27	23	50
Temporary vows/commitment	70	32	76	71	147
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	83	9	2,375	969	3,344

7. <i>Numbers of candidates/postulants, novices &amp; temporary professed in unit born in each</i>	Candidates/postulants	Novices	Temporary professed
Before 1960	8	3	11
1960 - 1969	13	4	21
1970 - 1979	14	9	46
1980 - 1989	28	31	80
1990 or later	31	12	20

8. <i>Numbers of finally professed members born in each decade</i>	Women	Men	Total	Per cent
Before 1920	45	7	52	1.3
1920 - 1929	397	126	523	13.5
1930 - 1939	828	302	1,130	29.3
1940 - 1949	790	280	1,070	27.7
1950 - 1959	362	215	577	14.9
1960 - 1969	138	122	260	6.7
1970 - 1979	83	98	181	4.7
1980 or later	39	29	68	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,682</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>3,861</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures in all tables are actual numbers of institutes or of men and women unless they are clearly marked as percentages.

## VOCATION MINISTRY

9. <i>Does your unit have a vocation director?</i>	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes	
			Number	Per cent
Yes	23	27	50	55.6
No	35	5	40	44.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

10. <i>Which best describes the vocation director?</i>	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes	Per cent
A member of your unit	21	26	47	94.0
A member of another unit of your institute, society, or federation	1	1	2	4.0
A member of another institute or society	0	0	0	0.0
A lay person who is not a member or associate	1	0	1	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

11. <i>The vocation director is engaged in vocation ministry . . .</i>	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes	Per cent
Full-time	3	7	10	20.8
Part-time	18	20	38	79.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>

12. <i>Does your unit have a vocation team?</i>	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes	Per cent
Yes	22	12	34	38.2
No	35	20	55	61.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100</b>

13. <i>Please indicate if the vocation team includes the following . . .</i>	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes	Per cent
Member(s)	22	12	34	100.0
Lay person(s)	2	1	3	8.8

*Note: Total adds to more than 100% as more than one response could be chosen. Number of institutes responding = 34.*

14. <i>Scope of the vocation director's and/or team's responsibilities</i>	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes	Per cent
Your unit only	26	26	52	91.2
More than one unit of your institute, society, or federation (e.g., two or more provinces)	3	1	4	7.0
More than one institute or society	1	0	1	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>

15. <i>Unit's involvement in discernment programs</i>	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Total institutes	Per cent
Discernment groups	11	2	13	20.3
Discernment retreats	17	10	27	42.2
"Come and See" experiences	24	23	47	73.4
Discernment house	3	3	6	9.4
Live-in experiences	25	18	43	67.2
Ministry/mission experiences	19	14	33	51.6

*Note: Total adds to more than 100% as more than one response could be chosen. Number of institutes responding = 64.*

<b>16. Has your unit used any of the following for vocation promotion in the last five years?</b>	<b>Institutes responding</b>			
	<b>Women's institutes</b>	<b>Men's institutes</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Print media - religious publications	46	30	76	100.0
Print media - Secular publications	2	3	5	6.6
Website / Internet	39	25	64	84.2
Radio	1	1	2	2.6
TV	-	-	-	0.0
Print materials (i.e. posters, prayer cards, brochures, etc.)	33	23	56	73.7
Social media	11	15	26	34.2
Other promotions (see below):	7	6	13	17.1

*Note: Total adds to more than 100% as more than one response could be chosen. Number of institutes responding = 76.*

#### **Other promotions . . .**

Expo at youth gatherings

MSS has a website and a newsletter 3 times a year in collaboration with the John Wallis Foundation which it has set up. The Foundation has its own website. The web and print media is not specifically directed at vocation promotion.

Participate in vocation promotions in diocese

Personal meetings

Presence at youth conference

Presence at youth festivals etc.

Very little traditional promotions. Women come to us through advertisements in the Web or when knowing other sisters.

Video clips

Visit schools and parishes and youth groups

Stalls at vocations promotion events

Word of mouth

Wrist bands

Youth ministry conferences, booths and expos

<b>17. Unit's sponsoring or co-sponsoring of vocation promotion or</b>	<b>Women's institutes</b>	<b>Men's institutes</b>	<b>Total institutes</b>	
			<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Primary school	4	-	4	5.3
Secondary school	11	8	19	25.0
Post-secondary level	14	13	27	35.5
Young adults (20s and 30s)	26	19	45	59.2
Mature adults (over age 40)	9	4	13	17.1

*Note: Total adds to more than 100% as more than one response could be chosen. Number of institutes responding = 76.*

<b>18. Unit requires the following for admission . . .</b>	<b>Women's institutes</b>	<b>Men's institutes</b>	<b>Total institutes</b>	
			<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Medical assessment	43	27	70	93.3
Behavioral assessment	22	18	40	53.3
Psychological testing	32	25	57	76.0
Police check	22	22	44	58.7
Referee check	39	24	63	84.0

*Note: Total adds to more than 100% as more than one response could be chosen. Number of institutes responding = 75.*

## FORMATION AND INCORPORATION INTO MINISTRY

<b>19. Entry and retention of new members since 2000</b>	<b>Institutes</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>responding</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	
Total number of individuals entered unit since 1 Jan. 2000	73	221	218	439
Total number of individuals entered unit since 1 Jan. 2000 and still remain	63	140	114	254
<i>Number of new entrants who departed since 1 Jan. 2000</i>		81	104	185
<i>Percentage of new entrants who departed since 1 Jan. 2000</i>		36.7	47.7	42.1
<i>Percentage of new entrants who still remain</i>		63.3	52.3	57.9

<b>20. Number who entered and departed at each stage</b>	<b>Institutes</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>responding</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	
During candidacy / postulancy . . .	38	34	50	84
During novitiate . . .	37	19	32	51
During temporary vows/commitment . . .	34	20	28	48
After final/perpetual vows/commitment . . .	30	13	8	21
				204

<b>21. Typical number of years required for each period of initial formation or incorporation</b>	<b>Institutes responding</b>		
	<b>For pre-candidacy/postulancy</b>	<b>For candidacy/postulancy</b>	<b>For novitiate</b>
Up to six months	19	13	1
A year	33	47	22
Two years	9	10	50
More than two years	-	1	-

<b>21. Typical number of years required for period of temporary vows</b>	<b>Institutes responding</b>
Two years	2
Three years	17
Four years	8
Five years	26
Six years	7
More than 6 years	3
Variable length of time	8

Note: Figures in all tables are actual numbers of institutes or of men and women unless they are clearly marked as percentages.

	Institutes responding	Institutes responding 'Yes'		
		Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Per cent of responding institutes
<b>22. Admission requirements</b>				
Unit has a set minimum age	69	32	20	75.4
Unit has a set maximum age	71	23	16	54.9
Unit requires a minimum standard of education	73	29	21	68.5
Unit requires a minimum level of work experience	67	13	7	29.9

	Women's institutes	Men's institutes
<b>22. Minimum and maximum ages at entry</b>		
Youngest minimum age	17 years	17 years
Oldest minimum age	26 years	25 years
Average minimum age	19.7 years	18.8 years
Youngest maximum age	27 years	32 years
Oldest maximum age	60 years	55 years
Average maximum age	38.8 years	38.9 years

*For a description of educational or work experience required prior to admission, see page 68.*

	Institutes responding	Institutes responding 'Yes'		
		Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Responding institutes (%)
<b>23. Do candidates / postulants / other candidates in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from ...</b>				
Other units of your institute, society, federation	71	20	17	52.1
Other institutes or societies	60	8	7	25.0
<b>24. Do novices in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from ... ?</b>				
Other units of your institute, society, federation	69	22	16	55.1
Other institutes or societies	58	14	5	32.8
<b>25. Do those in temporary vows/commitment in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from ... ?</b>				
Other units of your institute, society, federation	68	24	18	61.8
Other institutes or societies	58	12	11	39.7

## RECONFIGURATION

	Institutes responding	Institutes responding 'Yes'		
		Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Per cent of responding institutes
<b>26. Reconfiguration of unit</b>				
Has your unit reconfigured since 2000?	78	12	5	21.8
Is your unit in the process of reconfiguring?	69	7	2	13.0

*For respondents comments on what reconfiguration entailed for their congregation, see page 70.*

## MINISTRY

<b>27. Number of members in unit who are . . .</b>	Institutes responding	Women	Men	Total
Active in a full-time ministry	70	1,016	729	1,745
Active in a part-time ministry	64	769	171	940
Retired from active ministry	62	949	267	1,216

<b>28. Number of active members engaged in various ministries</b>	Institutes responding	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Per cent of responding institutes
Education	51	31	20	66
Health care	38	26	12	49
Pastoral ministry (e.g., parish, campus)	61	35	26	79
Spiritual direction/retreat work	46	28	18	60
Social work/social service	33	22	11	43
Social justice/advocacy	29	19	10	38
Internal ministry	50	31	19	65
Serving in ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by your unit	28	16	12	36
Full-time student	28	15	13	36
Other . . .	15	11	4	19

*Aboriginal*

*Contemplative life*

*Engineer, artist, horticulture*

*Ministry of prayer only*

*Overseas ministry*

*Overseas Mission 15; Integrity of Ministry Office 1; Vicar General 1*

*Pastoral care in nursing home*

*Pastoral Visitation*

*Postulant Director*

*Prayer*

*Publications*

*Students*

*Support & Education of Women in our Wholistic Centre*

*Teach Scripture in Public Schools - but no schools*

*We MSS believe that life is mission so the whole 31 still see themselves, whatever their capacity, as being on mission. Even those who are "retired" are so involved in many good initiatives that the categories given above do not actually cover the breadth of involvement of our sisters. Only 3 are unable to be mobile The social justice category includes many of our women even though they are not physically working with an agency or organisation They often advocate through letter writing and keep up with many social justice issues of the day.*

## COMMUNITY LIFE AND PRAYER

<b>29. Number of active members in unit who . . .</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
Live alone	569	131	700
Live in communities of 2 or 3	573	238	811
Live in communities of 4 to 7	284	315	599
Live in communities of 8 or more	225	253	478

*Total number of institutes responding = 79.*

<b>30. Characteristics of regular prayer life of members in unit</b>	<b>Women's institutes</b>	<b>Men's institutes</b>	<b>Per cent of responding institutes</b>
Daily Eucharist	45	30	89.3
Liturgy of the Hours	48	29	91.7
Non-liturgical common prayer	35	10	53.6
Common meditation	21	17	45.2
Faith sharing	45	8	63.1

*Note: Total adds to more than 100% as more than one response could be chosen. Number of institutes responding = 84.*

## CONTEMPLATIVE INSTITUTES

<b>31. Number of members in unit who are . . .</b>	<b>Institutes responding</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Able to participate fully in prayer life	17	129	99	228
Able to participate somewhat in prayer life	8	31	12	43
Unable to participate in prayer life	8	7	16	23

## RELIGIOUS HABIT

	Institutes responding	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Per cent of responding institutes
<b>32. Do members of your unit wear a habit?</b>				
No	29	22	7	34.5
Yes	34	24	10	40.5
Yes, some members do	10	7	3	11.9
Yes, sometimes	11	0	11	13.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

See page 72 for a description of the habits worn by members responding congregations.

	Institutes responding	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Per cent of responding institutes
<b>33. If yes, is wearing the habit . . .</b>				
Required in all or most circumstances	28	22	6	50.9
Required only at certain times, (e.g., ministry, prayer)	9	1	8	16.4
Optional	12	4	8	21.8
Other (see below)	6	4	2	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

### Other

*But the sisters in Australia wear it all the time.*

*Formal occasions.*

*In the Eucharist Celebrations, ministry and other times depending on the situation.*

*Not strictly "required" at certain times, but most wear it most (or a lot) of the time.*

*Only 2 sisters of a total of 143 choose to wear a habit.*

*PLEASE NOTE: we do not wear the medieval garb that is referred to but the simple dress of today plus ring and cross.*

	Institutes responding	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Per cent of responding institutes
<b>34. If wearing habit is optional, how many members wear it all or most of the time?</b>				
None	5	1	4	19.2
A few (less than 25%)	8	2	6	30.8
Some (25-49%)	3	1	2	11.5
Many (50-74%)	2	1	1	7.7
Most (75% or more)	8	7	1	30.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

	Institutes responding	Women's institutes	Men's institutes	Per cent of responding institutes
<b>35. Has your unit made a decision that its members won't wear a religious habit?</b>				
Yes	21	18	3	27.3
No	56	30	26	72.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>

### 36. Please describe any special vocation promotion or recruitment efforts your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years.

See page 74 for the written responses.

### 37. Please describe any 'special' formation/incorporation programs your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years.

See page 77 for the written responses.

### 38. Do you have any further observations that you would like to add?

See page 79 for the written responses.

Note: Figures in all tables are actual numbers of institutes or of men and women unless they are clearly marked as percentages.

**22. Level of education or previous work experience required prior to admission  
Female institutes  
Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

18	* Candidates are required to demonstrate stability in employment or study before admission
11	* Requires reasonable academic results - preferable tertiary education - but not essential
11	* The young woman must have completed high school education/diploma/ or its equivalent. Our maximum age is 30, however, our Superior General and Council can make an exception, and have (this is evident in the data presented here [in response to the survey]).
10	* We require Yr 12 level education or equivalent and good English skills.
10	* Secondary education and some work experience
9	At least secondary school education. Needs to show have been able to hold a job
6	We are flexible
5	At least year 12 or equivalent
5	Completed secondary school with some kind of tertiary qualification. To have had reasonable life and work experience
3	Each candidate is assessed in a personal way. At least to have completed secondary school education
3	Education: post-secondary. Work experience: parish involvement, secular job
3	High school diploma
3	Must have good knowledge of English. Pastoral experience and work experience important but not essential.
3	We require studies completed to year 12 level and the intellectual ability to study at tertiary level
2	Completion of secondary school, preferably some tertiary qualification.
2	Education - at least completed high school and with capacity for tertiary degree in future
1	At least complete secondary education; some tertiary education preferred. Work experience.
1	Completed Year 10
1	Each case would be assessed individually
0	Completed degree course plus 2 years work experience
0	Completion of tertiary education
0	Discernment of capacity to live in international community
0	Qualification for ministry
0	Senior High School ie Matriculation, HSC, encouraged to have further studies or work experience of perhaps two years
0	VCE
0	We would expect candidates to have completed High School and have post education work experience and a capacity for learning and study to tertiary level.
	High School to at least Year 11, preferably to graduation from Year 12. Work experience for at least 2 years
	Those wishing to be admitted to our Congregation need to have completed secondary education and either some tertiary education or work
	Vocational qualifications in some area e.g. education

**22. Level of education or previous work experience required prior to admission  
Male institutes  
Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

21	* Passed Higher School Certificate or equivalent. At least 2 years work experience or tertiary study
13	* Matriculation
9	Entrant needs to have completed tertiary education or to have several years' work experience.
8	Some kind of work in the world
7	Completed secondary school and some tertiary education and/or work.
7	Education: That the person has completed year 12 or the equivalent.
5	Senior School Certificate (Year 12 or equivalent)
4	Completion of secondary school
4	Year 12 or equivalent
2	At least a secondary education, preferably some higher education, and some job experience
1	Education which allows them to study at university level
1	Equivalent to Year 12 graduation
1	Year 12 - VCE or equivalent
0	Completed formal education and had some experience working
0	Completed Secondary studies.
0	Education - HSC
0	Higher School Certificate, two years work experience
	After high school
	Education or work experience that is sufficient for the person to enter a formation program rather than a human developmental program.

For those seeking to be priests, the normal minimum education would be successful completion of Year 12. For those seeking to be brothers, this would most usually be the case, but exceptions could be made.

*\*Interviewed*

**26. Reconfiguration  
Female institutes**

**Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

18	*	There has been a fusion of 5 Josephite congregations across Australia
13	*	We became the Province of Asia-Australia: Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar
5		Our Province is now established in Vietnam, Timor Leste and the Philippines
2		New local superior --- each member of this community will leave Australia for a one year period to another community around the world to renew missionary experience - we will rotate
1		Reclaiming in a more visible way our contemplative monastic way of life. Transitioned our 133 year old original Australian Foundation to Catholic Education Office.
0		2011 - shift from 2 Canonical Provinces in Australia to 2 non-Canonical leadership teams of the Communities.
0		Administration has transferred to New Caledonia and the novitiate has been moved to New Zealand and now to Senegal in West Africa
0		New Province Australia, New Zealand, Tonga
0		Our congregation in its present form will cease to exist in the coming 30 to 40 years. We have set up the John Wallis Foundation (named after our Founder Fr. John Wallis) which is governed by a Board and is continuing on the vision and mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service. In terms of the internal governance of the MSS, we have invited two lay people (and more to come) on to our MSS Governing Body. Our present MSS members on this body are three sisters. For the next year or three, one or two MSS sisters will be members of the MSS Governing Body but eventually it will be completely lay run. It is many years since we have had any enquiries from women interested in joining our congregation. What is emerging from the Missionary Sisters of Service in the last five years is like a new birth and is drawing wonderful people in via the John Wallis Foundation and other governance needs.
		From being a Delegation to Unification with Philippines to form one Province
		Linked to regions of Asia in 2007
		On July 2010, a Deed of Assignment between the Congregation of Sisters of OLHC and the Archdiocese of Sydney was signed and sealed.
		Our whole Congregation reconfigured into three Regions with each country within the Region becoming a Sector. Australia is a Sector of the Region of Asia/Pacific

**26. Reconfiguration**

**Male institutes**

**Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

21	* Change of name from Australian Province to Oceania Province to reflect the reality that our area covers, Australia, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea
9	The Redemptorist Province of Oceania came into existence at the beginning of 2015. It comprises the former province of Canberra, and the former region of New Zealand (both of these identities are extinguished); it includes, as before, the vice-provinces of Ipoh and Manila, and has acquired the region of Colombo (Sri Lanka). Also included are Missions in Samoa and China.
5	In 2012 the two Marist Brothers Provinces of Melbourne and Sydney reconfigured to become the Province of Australia
3	New partnership with another Province; plus assistance from three other Provinces
1	We were a Vicariate of the Western Province of the USA. Now we are a Delegation of the USA Province
	Sorry too difficult to describe...

**\*Interviewed**

**32. Religious habit  
Female institutes  
Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

11	* All of the Sisters wear the full Dominican habit which consists of a white tunic, scapular and cape, with a black veil for those who are professed and a white veil for the novices. Postulants, in their first year of formation, wear a simple black skirt and white blouse, in common with the others.
11	It is not a habit rather a uniform dress - we are a secular institute and thus have both forms. The ministry dictates what we wear
10	* Simple brown skirt and a white blouse
9	Black dress and grey veil in winter, white dress and white veil in summer
6	We wear the traditional Carmelite habit. It is a brown ankle-length habit with brown scapular, cincture, white toque and black veil. (White veil for novitiate.) For footwear, we wear sandals. A white mantle is worn for Mass and special occasions.
6	One person does
5	The habit in the same color with veil for the professed Sisters. The habit with a white veil for the novices.
3	Feminine lines. Dark colour in winter, lighter shade in summer, veil. Described as an attractive habit.
3	Full length white robe with scapular and guimp, rosary, black veil and black liturgical cappa.
3	Grey skirt and white blouse with the medal of our Lady of Sorrows
3	Full habit or skirt and blouse. Veil
2	Blue or white habit and veil.
2	The Sisters wear a simple religious dress as a sign of their consecration and as a witness to poverty. They further wear the distinctive emblems of the profession ring and Mercy Cross.
1	Grey habit with veil
1	Brown Franciscan habit, white collar, cord, black veil. The veil is worn only for the celebration of the Eucharist.
1	Full Habit and veil with modified head wear
1	Beige in colour with Franciscan cord and Poor Clare emblem worn over simple secular dress also beige in colour and worn for ministry & prayer.
1	3 options are permitted: 1. Habit and veil in black or grey colour; 2. White blouse and black/grey shirt with veil; 3. White blouse and black/grey shirt and no veil.
0	Black veil. White headless with gamp - ankle length. Brown habit, white cord and chaplet.
0	Traditional dress with veil
	Constitution stipulates "simple dress"
	Veil, habit and profession cross
	Formal occasions - navy/black skirt; white/blue blouse (suit)
	Traditional black habits and modern uniform - navy blue veil and skirts with white or blue blouse
	Blue suits (skirts/vests/blazers) with white/grey/blue shirts and Congregational emblem.
	Grey/blue habit, scapular and veil

**32. Religious habit  
Male institutes**

**Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

13	* Black tunic, capuche, cincture
10	* Tunic with hood, plus cord
9	Yes, sometimes: Most members would wear the habit to Mass or any other religious service, and to any formal community ceremony. Most would not wear it at other times.
8	Roman cassock, cincture, collar
7	Medieval style white habit with a black cloak worn in winter.
7	5 pieces all in white: tunic, belt, rosaries (can be any colour or made of any material), scapular, capuce (hood)
6	Full Franciscan habit
5	Benedictine tunic, belt, scapular and cowl
5	Some members occasionally wear a clerical collar
5	White soutane crucifix cord with three vows
4	White robe, black scapular, black belt and cowl
3	White habit with Congregational emblem
2	Tunic, capuce, cord
1	White cassock
1	White - older order tradition
1	Black habit: tunic, belt, scapula and cowl
0	Soutane and sash
	Gown + scapular
	Depending on the need to be recognised as a priest.
	According to our constitution we wear just black soutane
	Just a plain black or white soutane with a belt and cincture dropping at the left with tassels.
	Clericals

**\*Interviewed**

**36. Vocations  
Female institutes  
Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

18	* We no longer adopt the traditional approach to vocational promotion.
13	* Releasing some sisters to be part time vocation promoters. Establishing a Mission and Identity Team in Australia. Encouraging all sisters to be vocation promoters.
11	* Our community hosts two weekend vocation retreats a year, held at the convent. We attend diocesan events and youth events in other dioceses as well. We assist at the Archdiocesan vocation retreat each year: giving a talk and being available for direction. We send out an E-newsletter advertising these retreats or days of recollection. We often invite young women to join us for prayers and the vocation director meets regularly one-on-one with young women who are discerning (to our community or others).
10	* Come and see gatherings. Discernment weekends. Booklets, prayer cards. Linking of school students to ministry endeavours. Participation in vocation days in schools
10	* We work with young people in evangelisation and encourage them to surrender their lives to God as the best thing they can do in their lives, if they do this, they are open to discerning a vocation. We participate in anything that is happening such as vocation breakfasts, panels, weekends and seminars.
11	Discernment days and retreats
9	Our Sisters tend to join the youth in different events. They went to "Hearts Aflame" in New Zealand. Youth gathering in Melbourne. Conduct discernment retreats in house.
6	We participate in the vocation meetings organised statewide or nationally.
6	While some young people contact us after having heard of us from priests or from other young people, we find that a significant percentage of enquiries come through our website: <a href="http://www.flowerofcarmel.com">www.flowerofcarmel.com</a>
5	Prayer groups for vocations, sometimes in conjunction with youth camps or youth group activities which our Sisters involved in. Distribute the vocation cards. A special prayer for vocation in community prayer times.
5	Not a great deal. We do advertise during vocations week, but more than anything we believe in the power of personal contact
3	Participation in general projects such as "Hearts on Fire" in Melbourne, World Youth Day in Sydney ACSA and other youth gatherings. We have given vocation talks on the request of priests and laity at gatherings of Catholic families and youth, Home-school camps etc.
3	Been part of Scene in Martin Place, advertising in Catholic papers of local dioceses, web presence
3	Daily prayer for vocations. Holy Hours several times a week for vocations. Promotion material distributed in local churches etc. Talks at youth conferences etc. Discernment weekends. Live in experience. Visits to schools when asked. Presence at youth gatherings, events e.g. Theology in the Pub, Holy Hours. Advertising in Catholic magazines
3	In Melbourne there is a program called "Dare to Pause", and in Sydney "What is your Mission?". Both are geared towards vocation promotion.
3	Vocation Promotion is an area that all members and communities take very much at heart. We are conscious that the first form of vocation promotion is the witnessing of our lived consecrated apostolic life. These are some of the initiatives: days of prayer, taking part in parish/diocesan youth gatherings and vocation expos, inviting young people into our communities for moments of prayer and a shared meal, sharing the story of our vocations in schools and parishes, personal accompaniment and spiritual direction to those discerning, etc. All the initiatives are supported by constant prayer and times of adoration in our communities as well as with groups of lay people.

**36. Vocations  
Female institutes  
Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

2	Holding discernment retreats, having come and see experiences where women are invited for a short period to live with us, calling specific younger missionaries to this ministry
1	Our major focus for vocations is the witness of our life and talking about our life in whatever venue we are invited to do so.
1	Come and see retreats, discernment weekends for individuals, vocational prayer e.g. Stations of the cross in Lent. Vocation evening with the members from other congregations living within the area (organised in the nearby parish)
1	Displayed and distributed vocation leaflets at special Franciscan events.
1	From 2000 we printed our own publication for young people, including stories of vocation, our spirituality, news of our group for young adults, help for prayer etc. Since 2001 we have a group of young adults, 18-35, who attend bi-monthly sessions with new sisters, Lectio Divina, sharing our spirituality and praying Evening Prayer with the community. We have been present at the Vocations and Ministries Expo at WYD08 in Sydney and at the Ignite Conference for the last two years. We have produced several brochures and prayer cards about our life and spirituality.
1	Participated with displays and attendance whenever the opportunity presents itself. E.g., huge Franciscan displays at World Youth Day, the Wollongong vocation expo, Martin Place expo and school groups.
1	Vocation discernment days last year and this year
0	A concerted effort was made at WYD in 2008 but since then very little here in Australia. The majority of our vocations are from the Pacific and Africa.
0	Vocation promotion is very informal and is usually in response to questions from people about our life, charism, spirituality and values
0	Webpage has been the main vehicle for promotion. Our webpage gets many 'hits'. Advertising in local Church events where a booklet is available
	Attend Darwin Diocese vocation events and youth gatherings.
	Promote founderess charism by divulging the Jubilee booklet in 2014.
	Sending out of vocational literature to religious organisations who promote religious life.
	Two members of the administration team take every opportunity to join vocation promotion groups for prayer in the Cathedral or any other activities that are brought to their attention.
	Vocations Forum in conjunction with Diocesan Vocations Team. Monthly lectio divina for young adults. Distribution of bookmark and brochures on the charism of the Congregation. Ads in Catholic newspapers
	We have not taken on any "recruitment" efforts, believing that God will send the people He is calling and He has. People manage to find us on the internet, hear of us through those who come to our guests cottages. The ABC screened the very successful "The Abbey" series in 2007 and have repeated it but no vocations came from that media exposure, rather a heightened awareness of our existence.
	We have not undertaken any vocation promotion in recent years as we consider that it would be unfair to encourage women to join us when there would be a huge age gap between them and us.

**36. Vocations  
Male institutes  
Number entered since  
2000 & retained**

21	* (i) Speaking at our parishes about Come and See Weekends. (ii) Personal invitation to a Come and See Weekend or observation of our works. (iii) Commitment to running 2 Come and See Programs a year. (iv) Regular accompaniment sessions with those seriously interested in a vocation in the near future. (v) Meals from time to time with our members in our community houses. (vi) Spending some time in more than one of our community houses to allow more members of our congregation to form an opinion as to the prospective candidate's suitability.
13	* Preparation of new printed material. Visits of enquirers to our formation community
10	* We have vocation assistants - who are members responsible for the vocations activities in our various presences - and these work in conjunction with, and under the direction of, the vocation director. We are involved in youth ministry, we incorporate young people into our own ministries and we seek to have an engaging online presence.
9	We set up and staffed a Redemptorist booth at the vocations exhibition at World Youth Day in Sydney, and at a diocesan exhibition in about 2010.
8	As our community is a small community, it is a personal approach and we try to get to know their families and also their parents.
7	+ Vocations Retreats at the Provincial Mother House, Penrose Park. + Visitations of parishes run by the Order to promote vocations. + Involvement in local conventions, functions organised for vocations. + Word of mouth and example through Shrine related activities in both Monasteries and Shrines (Penrose Park and Marian Valley)
7	We have run a number of live-in experiences for younger men in various places, and attended meetings of young men who may be considering a vocation.
5	Discernment Weekends; Visiting Schools, Parishes & Youth Groups; advertising in Catholic Print Media; advertising in Catholic on-line media; Facebook; webpage; Promoting Mission Experience; encouraging professed members to ask men who they think would make a good MSC Priest or Brother.
5	School visits with Years 7, 11, and 12. Vocation Weekend for Year 12 students. Justice Forum for Year 11 students. Work with Marist Youth Ministry groups. Work with Marist Young Adults. Vocations Discernment weekend. Presence at ACYF. Presence at Ignite. Vocations Dinners. Social Media / Website / Facebook Page / Twitter. Mentors Program. Set up House of Discernment in 2014 - no takers yet!
4	Vocations Newsletter - for members only promoting their own vocation, and tips for vocation discernment in others. Vocations pamphlet - distributed to parishes etc. Advertisements in our own publications (paper and electronic). Active Youth Ministry. Overseas volunteer programs. Overseas immersion programs
1	Vocation promotions through publications, brochures, posters, etc. Vocation recruitment from other circumscriptions/countries of the same Society of St Paul
0	Invitations to live in community
0	Vocation stall at Archdiocesan vocations promotion
	Entertain potential candidates outside of the province i.e. Fiji, Vanuatu, etc.
	Starting a house in inner-city Sydney for young graduates of our Sydney high schools who are at uni and who are involved in immersion experiences over the summer - a house which it is hoped will be a focus for young-adult ministry.
	We have general vocation promotor for all provinces who resides in Poland.
	Word of mouth and presence in ministry

*\*Interviewed*

**37. Please describe any 'special' formation/incorporation programs your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years.**  
**Female institutes**

**Number entered since 2000 & retained**

13 *	Before Final Vows there is a special programme for those sisters. All will be given the opportunity to do a pilgrimage in the footsteps of our Foundress. Meetings of the Province in Australia.
11 *	Come and See weekend
11 *	Our community has an on-going formation program which entails private study and community discussion, as well as monthly one-on-one sessions between the junior professed with her superior. We have held discernment groups for young women which entails prayer together, discussion etc. When a young woman becomes more serious about her discernment she makes a longer retreat (of 2-3 weeks) at our Motherhouse in the US.
10 *	Participation in ministry of sisters e.g. mental hospital, prisons, feeding programmes in squatter areas.
10 *	We sent one sister to the "Journeying with New Members" Course for Religious Formators - Marymount Mercy Centre, Castle Hill NSW, in 2012. This was very helpful for her education as a Formator.
6	In recent years we have found that it is important to listen carefully to each young person who comes, explaining the teachings of our saints in a way that resonates with them.
5	Made a video clip and play it when communities gathering for celebration when it is possible. Approach priests and asked them say some words to promote vocations in their weekend Masses, at the first Sunday of the month.
3	Candidacy programs. Come and See weekends or visits. Live in experiences
3	Pre-postulancy is important
3	We have a comprehensive formation program entitled "Ongoing, Ever-engaging Plan of Formation A Vision in Action". It is too extensive to incorporate here. It covers each stage of formation from pre-candidacy to on-going formation.
2	Before final vows those in formations round the world before final profession do a retreat together --- in our centre in Europe.
1	Nothing special - just whatever is offered in the church in Australia.
1	Our formator attended the six month course for Formators at Marycrest in 2008.
1	Participated in the Kiaros Program for two years.
0	Formation efforts have focused on lay leadership of our ministries.
0	We begin from where the candidate is and the formative experience is shaped around the needs of the individual but there are core elements on charism, congregation history, religious life, vows, prayer, spirituality, mission and community living and pastoral involvement which will be part of the program.
	We have on going formation during the year. Once a year we meet together with our Regional Delegates who come from Philippines. Our Delegation: Australia- Philippines Indonesia. The Formation House is in Manila.
	Because our way of life is centered around an "enclosed monastic life" we do not have a need for any "special formation/incorporation programs", other than those which already exist which cater fully to our own formation need.
	Some of our Sisters from overseas have taken part in the programme at Marymount. We had a month renewal for our younger Sisters from around the world in Sydney in 2013/14

**37. Please describe any 'special' formation/incorporation programs your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years.**

**Male institutes**

**Number entered since**

**2000 & retained**

- 
- 13 \* Participation of novices in Asia-Pacific Joint formation experience in the Philippines (2 weeks). Participation of novices in Kairos programme.  
Participation of temporary professed in temporary professed weekend at Millgrove 2013
- 10 \* Our formation program includes a short immersion experience in one of our missions. Our novices do novitiate in the United States. Some students get sent to study in Rome.
- 9 All novices from Australia now do their Novitiate in Lipa, Philippines, with others from the region; and at least one year of theology at our regional seminary in Davao, Philippines.
- 8 Human formation with a specific focus on current difficulties that may be encountered by our priests in ministry and also the problems that our faithful may be undergoing or face.
- 7 + Sending Novices to Poland for their Novitiate in order to better immerse themselves into the History and character of the Order. + Sending Seminarians to Rome to Study.
- 5 Combined formation program for Postulancy and Novitiate with the Marist Province of USA. Updated formation documents and brochures. Offered a 'crossroads' discernment weekend for young men on our Contact Program
- 5 Having our Pre-Novitiate based in a parish. Attending a course with Novices from other Units, the course is called Kairos and is held in Sydney. Novices doing a 30 Silent Retreat undergoing the Spiritual Exercises. Having our post novitiate full time students based in a parish. Two students in temporary vows attended a retreat in Vietnam with our Vietnamese brothers in temporary vows in preparation for their final vows.
- 5 New Norcia Institute for Benedictine Studies. Spirituality Programme
- 4 As a large International Congregation we have students from other Provinces coming to undertake some of their Formation in Australia. Our Province Novitiate is located in Suva (Our Province includes Fiji, Samoa and New Zealand)
- 3 Pilgrimage to Founder's Places (overseas)
- 1 Philosophy Courses. Theology Courses. Communications Media Courses. Pauline Spirituality Courses  
All Religious and Theological formation is done in Poland for all Provinces

**\*Interviewed**

**38. Do you have any further observations that you would like to add?**

***Female institutes***

**Number entered since 2000 & retained**

18	* We have come to realize that we should offer formation that is REAL to the way Josephites are living now in community and ministry. Each person in "Come and See" (Postulancy) has a discernment guide and community while staying in their own job and house. Many of the women are mature women and we concentrate on the individual woman's nature and needs. Each formation programme is very different. The Josephites have offered other pathways of formal commitment whereby they come into communion with the Josephite sisters. We have 14 people who have made a covenant with the SOSJs in the last 6 years.
13	* Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the survey and let me know if I can be of any help
11	* In presenting this information I strove to capture the mission here in Sydney. Our community is originally from the US, so two of the finally professed sisters who have been recorded here are from the US and on mission here in Australia. The other figure captures data on Postulants/Novices and temporary professed Sisters who may be in the US for their initial formation but are originally from Australia and will eventually return to Australia to engage in ministry. Two of the temporarily professed Sisters from Australia are here in Australia.
10	* Being involved in ministry with young adults is the reason we get vocations. We naturally get to know young women who are open to God, and they get to know us. They know we are normal human beings and begin to ask themselves where they may be called.
6	We find that the young people appreciate being treated as mature human persons. They tend NOT to appreciate psychological techniques and over-detailed formation programmes, finding these too artificial. They particularly do not like being categorised as belonging to a certain generation that has characteristic traits. They respond well to sincere dialogue about their life of prayer and their desire to find Jesus as their Beloved. After they have realised the possibility of really finding Him at a deeper level through following the advice of our saints and our Rule and Constitutions, they are ready to accept the various aspects of a formation programme.
5	To promote religious or priesthood vocations I think it is important that parents, now and then, talk to their children about it. It is equally important that teachers in schools at both levels, primary and secondary sometimes mention about it in classes and pray for it to raise up the awareness of it among their children and students.
3	Our Sisters continually report following contact with youth that they are very keen on the following: Religious life - prayer life; Community life; Identification of who they are e.g. a habit or very visible symbol of their vocation; They are enthusiastic and committed to living and giving witness to their faith; We can too easily underestimate them and their generosity; They have great love for our recent Popes e.g. John Paul II, Benedict and Francis; They like to be challenged and respond positively to it
3	We are new to Australia, so our numbers are smaller. Our formation takes place overseas so I hope I've responded properly to your questions.
2	We intend to make this an important element of our recent Chapter decision to re-found our congregation.
1	I feel that not too many congregations are interested in the vocation promotion - which is understandable due to their diminishing numbers etc. Being part of many meetings of religious as well as CRA National Council was an inspiring experience showing me the dedication of many religious in this country, but I sometimes feel that we waste our time talking about veils, etc, instead of looking at the ways how we can do something TOGETHER.

**38. Do you have any further observations that you would like to add?**

***Female institutes***

**Number entered since 2000 & retained**

1	Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the survey - however, I felt the questions did not enable me to give a proper/full response to our Poor Clare living and prayer. Where do we put our Sisters who are in nursing care - active in their prayer and ministry amongst the other residents?
1	Young people hardly ever 'see' religious women today. We need to be visible. Otherwise, how can they discern a religious vocation?
0	* Although a large number of our sisters appear to be retired many are involved in a variety of ministries but you would describe their ministry as part time. * A number of our sisters live in units that share a common street address. They live singly but come together for prayer and meals on a regular but not daily basis. I have included them in the size of the cluster. * Very few sisters have the opportunity to attend daily Eucharist. However most would attend Eucharist when it is possible to do so. The same would apply to "Faith Sharing" by whatever form it takes. * Because this survey refers to Australia no mention has been made of our members in the Solomon Islands where we had, in April 2014, 18 sisters in final vows, 9 in temporary vows and 3 novices. The formation process is conducted by our Solomonese sisters but much support comes from our Australian members.
0	I based our numbers as at April 2014. Since then two members have died, two are in the process of being missioned to Africa and the Philippines. This has left us with only two sisters who could put up their hand for vocation work. Both are in full time work caring for the elderly sisters in nursing homes as well as being the 'go-for' for other tasks that arise.
0	The Missionary Sisters of Service is probably fairly typical of many religious womens' communities in Australia today. It is not receiving new members for many reasons. Apart from four MSS sisters who live in aged care facilities, and two other sisters who share a house, every other member lives alone, or as in one case, four sisters live in units which are side by side. We have a very strong sense of communion (communion of mind and heart is at our core). We were only founded in Australia 70 years ago and have always had a spirit of independence and self reliance, often going to work alone in situations where other religious did not go until the last twenty or thirty years. While our congregation in its present form of 31 vowed members is dying away, there is much new birth happening through the John Wallis Foundation and other people who have become involved in the emerging governance structure for the congregation and its day to day functioning. Various sections of the survey were not relevant to our current situation. Thank you for the opportunity to participate.
0	The one sister whose profession of final vows was post 2000 died in January 2015.
0	We are just three members of a small international congregation of pontifical rite and have only been in the Archdiocese of Melbourne since 2007. We are affiliated with the Passionists and work alongside them in ministry.
	Only to say that formation within an enclosed monastic community differs in many ways from that required of an active group. We are not training people "to go out" we are training them to be women of prayer, living an enclosed life. The ordinary psychological needs being fully attended to.
	We have not had anyone join and stay since 1974.
	We wonder if it would be an idea to 'sow the seed' with vocation promotion / awareness in middle to late primary classes and again in years 9 or 10 when schools are looking at career paths for students.

**38. Do you have any further observations that you would like to add?**

***Male institutes***

**Number entered since 2000 & retained**

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- 8 There is a special emphasis on ascetical theology and the practical help for mental prayer and meditation. Guided meditations for the first 3 months and then the novice will lead some of the morning meditations for another 3 months. There are also guided visits to various pastoral activities (education, nursing home, hospitals, home bound) with a pre-briefing and then a post-briefing.
- 
- 7 It is very difficult to find time to answer these surveys in a small Religious Order.
- 
- 3 Prayer sessions with people during Advent and Lent
- 
- 1 1. we are an order of priests and brothers but our unit at present only has priests. 2. included in our statistics are 7 overseas priests here on 457 visas, for 3 or 4 year terms.

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The questions about temporary/permanent commitment do not work for the Society of Jesus. We do not take temporary vows at any stage, but simple perpetual vows after novitiate. I have offered our figures on the basis of what is common in most clerical religious congregations - ie. counting those in post-novitiate formation as though they are in temporary vows, and those ordained as though they are all in final vows. Education requirements are different for those seeking to be priests and those seeking to be brothers. The questions did not allow for this distinction. We do not have a distinctive habit but, if anything, wear clerical dress. Our Constitutions speak of dressing like worthy diocesan priests in whatever region we are in. The options for who wears the habit did not allow for both 'some do' and 'sometimes'. This would be most accurate for us.

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*\*Interviewed*

## Congregations responding to CVMA Vocations Survey 2015 (up to 21 September 2015)

Sisters	Clerical (priests and priests/brothers)
Augustinian Sisters, Servants of Jesus and Mary	Benedictine Monks
Benedictine Abbey	Blessed Sacrament Congregation
Canossian Daughters Of Charity - Australian Province	Canons Regular of Premontre
Carmelite Nuns Ormiston Qld	Capuchin Friars Minor, Province of Australia
Congregation of Presentation Sisters WA	Cistercian monks
Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians	Congregation of the Passion
Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth	Conventual Franciscans
Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth	Dominican Friars Province
Conventual Sisters of St Dominic	Franciscans of the Immaculate
Daughters of St Anne	Marist Fathers -- Australian Province
Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart	Ministers of the Infirm (Carmillians)
Disalced Carmelite Nuns, Goonellabah	Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and Solomon Islands	Missionary Society of St Paul
Dominican Sisters of North Adelaide	New Norcia Benedictine Community
Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia	Oblates of Mary Immaculate
Faithful Companions of Jesus. Asia - Australia	Order of Saint Augustine
Family Care Sisters	Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary	Redemptorists (Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer) -- Oceania Province
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters	Salesians of Don Bosco -- Australia-Pacific Province
Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Province of Australia & South East Asia	Society of Christ
Little Company of Mary	Society of Jesus -- Australian Province
Little Sisters of Jesus	Society of St Paul
Little Sisters of the Poor -- Province of Oceania	Society of the Divine Word -- Australia Province
Marist Sisters	The Order of the Friar Servants of Mary (Servite Friars)
Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family	The Society of the Divine Savior
Missionaries of Charity	Anonymous - 2
Missionaries of God's Love, Canberra	
Missionary Sisters Of Mary, Queen Of The World	
Missionary Sisters of Service	
Missionary Sisters of St Anthony Mary Claret	
Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver	
	<b>Brothers</b>
	Marist Brothers (FMS)
	Patrician Brothers --- AUS-PNG

<b>Sisters</b>	<b>Societies of Apostolic Life</b>
Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart	Community of the Sons and Daughters of God
Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary	Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian Fathers and Brothers) -- Oceania Province
Poor Clare Colettines Bendigo	Missionary Society of St Columban
Poor Clares, Bethlehem Monastery, Campbelltown, NSW	Priestly Fraternity of St Peter
Poor Clares, Waverley, NSW	Society of the Catholic Apostolate
Presentation Congregation Queensland	
Presentation Sisters Tasmania	<b>Institutes of Consecrated Life</b>
Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma	Schoenstatt Fathers
Salesian Sisters	Secular Institute of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary
Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, Australian Community	Verbum Dei
Sisters Adorers of the Blood of Christ - Croatian Sisters	
Sisters of Charity of Australia	
Sisters of Charity of St Anne	
Sisters of Jesus Good Shepherd "Pastorelle"	
Sisters of Mercy -- North Sydney	
Sisters of Mercy -- Parramatta	
Sisters of Our Lady of Sion -- Region of Australia	
Sisters of St Brigid (Brigidine Sisters)	
Sisters of St Joseph	
Sisters of the Cross & Passion	
Sisters of the Good Samaritan	
Sisters of the Good Shepherd	
Sisters of the Nativity	
Sisters of the Resurrection	
Ursulines of the Roman Union	
Anonymous - 5	

## Survey of New Members of Catholic Religious Institutes

The survey of new members was answered by 55 members of religious institutes (45 women and 10 men) who had entered religious life since 2000.

Unless otherwise indicated, the figures that appear in the following tables are the percentages of women, men and all respondents selecting each option of a particular question. The use of percentages rather than raw numbers makes it easier to compare the responses of the men and the women.

The number of men and women responding is shown below the question. A range (for example, 'Women: 42-44') is provided if the number of responses differed for each part of a question with multiple parts.

\* indicates a statistically significant difference between the men and the women

<b>1</b>	<b>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
	<i>A sense of call to religious life</i>			
	Not at all	-	-	-
	A little	-	-	-
	To some extent	20	20	20
	Very much	80	80	80
	<i>A desire for prayer and spiritual growth</i>			
	Not at all	-	-	-
	A little*	7	-	6
	To some extent	16	30	19
	Very much*	77	70	76
	<i>A desire to be part of a community</i>			
	Not at all	5	-	4
	A little	5	30	9
	To some extent	30	30	30
	Very much	61	40	57
	<i>A desire to be of service</i>			
	Not at all	-	-	-
	A little*	5	40	11
	To some extent	16	30	19
	Very much*	79	30	70
	<i>A desire to be more committed to the Church</i>			
	Not at all	7	-	6
	A little	24	20	23
	To some extent	24	30	25
	Very much	45	50	46

*Respondents - Women: 42-44; Men: 10*

<b>2</b>	<b>How much did the following attract you to your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
	<i>The life and works of your founder</i>			
	Not at all	11	20	13
	A little	5	30	9
	To some extent	27	20	26
	Very much	57	30	52

<b>2 How much did the following attract you to your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>The mission of the institute</i>			
Not at all	2	-	2
A little*	-	30	5
To some extent	22	30	24
Very much	76	40	69
<i>The spirituality of the institute</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	2	-	2
To some extent	30	30	30
Very much	68	70	69
<i>The prayer life of the institute</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	7	-	5
To some extent	29	30	29
Very much	64	70	65
<i>The community life of the institute</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little*	7	40	13
To some extent	36	40	37
Very much	57	20	50
<i>The ministries of the institute</i>			
Not at all	7	-	5
A little*	7	50	15
To some extent	27	40	29
Very much*	60	10	51
<i>The institute's fidelity to the Church</i>			
Not at all	12	-	9
A little	12	10	11
To some extent	30	40	32
Very much	47	50	47
<i>The example of members of the institute</i>			
Not at all	2	-	2
A little	18	40	22
To some extent	31	20	29
Very much	49	40	47
<i>A personal invitation by a member</i>			
Not at all	36	20	33
A little	20	10	19
To some extent	18	40	22
Very much	23	30	26
<i>Welcome and encouragement by members</i>			
Not at all	4	10	5
A little	11	30	15
To some extent	40	40	40
Very much	44	20	40

Respondents - Women: 42-45; Men: 10

<b>3 How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
In an institution where members served. e.g. school	23	44	26
Through working with a member of the institute	16	-	13
Through a relative in the institute	2	-	2
Through a friend in the institute	25	22	25
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	18	22	19
Through a vocation expo	11	22	13
Through an event sponsored by the institute	18	44	23
Through a media story about the institute or member	2	-	2
Through print or online promotional materials	14	22	15
Other ^	32	22	30

*Respondents - Women: 44; Men: 9. Note: Total adds to more than 100% as respondents could select all that apply. ^Text responses discussed in the body of the report.*

<b>4 Did you participate in any of the following before you entered your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Spiritual direction	67	80	69
Come and See experience	60	80	64
Live-in experience with the institute	56	70	58
Discernment retreat	51	80	56
Regular meeting with a member(s) of the institute	53	50	53
Regular visits to religious communities	38	50	40
Ministry or mission experience with the institute	42	20	38
A World Youth Day experience	33	40	35
Regular meeting with a vocation director	29	40	31
Regular meeting with a discernment group	16	20	16
Diocesan vocation programs	7	30	11

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10. Note: Total adds to more than 100% as members could select all that apply*

<b>5 How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>General Catholic or diocesan websites</i>			
Not at all	62	40	57
A little	23	20	22
To some extent	13	40	18
Very much	3	-	2
<i>Vocation discernment websites</i>			
Not at all	46	50	47
A little	36	10	31
To some extent	13	30	16
Very much	5	10	6
<i>Websites of religious institutes</i>			
Not at all	33	30	32
A little	23	-	18
To some extent	35	60	40
Very much	10	10	10

<b>5 How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>Newspaper or magazine articles</i>			
Not at all	53	30	48
A little	32	60	38
To some extent	11	10	10
Very much	5	-	4
<i>Print or online promotional materials, e.g. brochures, posters, ads</i>			
Not at all	28	10	24
A little	44	40	43
To some extent	21	40	24
Very much	8	10	8
<i>CDs, DVDs, or videos</i>			
Not at all	48	50	48
A little	23	30	24
To some extent	18	20	19
Very much	11	-	9
<i>Diocesan vocation programs</i>			
Not at all	71	60	69
A little	24	30	25
To some extent	5	10	6
Very much	-	-	-
<i>Spiritual direction</i>			
Not at all	12	20	13
A little	19	30	21
To some extent	7	20	9
Very much	63	30	57
<i>Discernment retreat</i>			
Not at all	28	20	27
A little	8	20	10
To some extent	23	20	22
Very much	41	40	41
<i>Come and see experience</i>			
Not at all	24	10	21
A little	8	30	13
To some extent	19	20	19
Very much	49	40	47
<i>Live in experiences</i>			
Not at all	15	10	14
A little	5	-	4
To some extent	20	60	28
Very much	60	30	54
<i>Ministry or mission experience</i>			
Not at all	28	50	33
A little	8	40	15
To some extent	19	-	15
Very much	44	10	37

<b>5</b>	<b>How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
	<i>Meeting with a discernment group</i>			
	Not at all	60	60	60
	A little	6	20	9
	To some extent	17	10	16
	Very much	17	10	16
	<i>Meeting with a vocation director</i>			
	Not at all	35	10	30
	A little	14	20	15
	To some extent	24	20	23
	Very much	27	50	32
	<i>Meeting with a member(s) of the institute</i>			
	Not at all	17	20	17
	A little	10	20	12
	To some extent	21	30	23
	Very much	52	30	48
	<i>Visits to religious communities</i>			
	Not at all	10	20	12
	A little	25	20	24
	To some extent	18	30	20
	Very much	48	30	44

Respondents - Women: 35-44; Men: 10

<b>6</b>	<b>How much did the following factors influence your decision to enter <u>your</u> religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
	<i>The size of the institute</i>			
	Not at all	72	40	66
	A little	7	20	9
	To some extent	21	40	25
	Very much	-	-	-
	<i>Its geographic location(s)</i>			
	Not at all	49	20	43
	A little	23	20	23
	To some extent	23	50	28
	Very much	5	10	6
	<i>Its internationality, if applicable</i>			
	Not at all	51	10	43
	A little	15	40	20
	To some extent	28	30	29
	Very much	5	20	8
	<i>Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute</i>			
	Not at all	2	-	2
	A little	16	20	17
	To some extent	18	10	17
	Very much	64	70	65
	<i>Community life in the institute</i>			
	Not at all	2	-	2
	A little	16	30	18
	To some extent	27	30	27
	Very much	56	40	53

<b>6</b>	<b>How much did the following factors influence your decision to enter your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
	<i>The lifestyle of members</i>			
	Not at all	2	-	2
	A little	18	30	20
	To some extent	33	10	29
	Very much	47	60	49
	<i>The racial/ethnic background of members</i>			
	Not at all	62	80	65
	A little	5	10	6
	To some extent	24	10	21
	Very much	10	-	8
	<i>The ages of members</i>			
	Not at all	56	50	55
	A little	21	20	21
	To some extent	19	30	21
	Very much	5	-	4
	<i>The types of ministry its members</i>			
	Not at all	7	30	11
	A little	7	10	7
	To some extent	39	50	41
	Very much	48	10	41
	<i>Its practice regarding wearing a religious habit</i>			
	Not at all	41	-	33
	A little	11	10	11
	To some extent	16	10	15
	Very much	32	80	41

Respondents - Women: 39-45; Men: 10

<b>7</b>	<b>How much encouragement did you receive from the following when you first considered entering your religious institute?"</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
	<i>Members of your institute</i>			
	Not at all	4	0	4
	A little	2	0	2
	To some extent	36	50	38
	Very much	58	50	56
	<i>Vocation director/team</i>			
	Not at all	29	20	27
	A little	3	-	2
	To some extent	21	20	21
	Very much	47	60	50
	<i>Spiritual director, if applicable</i>			
	Not at all	13	20	14
	A little	8	30	12
	To some extent	23	20	22
	Very much	58	30	52

<b>7 How much encouragement did you receive from the following when you first considered entering your religious institute”</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>Other men and women religious</i>			
Not at all	19	10	17
A little	10	50	17
To some extent	48	20	42
Very much	24	20	23
<i>Diocesan priests</i>			
Not at all	37	30	35
A little	27	50	31
To some extent	15	20	16
Very much	22	-	18
<i>Your parents, if applicable</i>			
Not at all	45	50	46
A little	10	20	12
To some extent	13	20	14
Very much	33	10	28
<i>Your siblings, if applicable</i>			
Not at all	37	40	37
A little	20	30	22
To some extent	17	10	16
Very much	27	20	25
<i>Other family members</i>			
Not at all	40	50	42
A little	20	40	24
To some extent	33	10	28
Very much	8	0	6
<i>People in your parish</i>			
Not at all	20	44	24
A little	15	22	16
To some extent	45	11	39
Very much	20	22	20
<i>People in your school or workplace</i>			
Not at all	45	60	48
A little	24	40	27
To some extent	21	-	17
Very much	11	-	8
<i>Friends within the institute</i>			
Not at all	20	40	24
A little	8	-	6
To some extent	33	40	34
Very much	40	20	36
<i>Friends outside the institute</i>			
Not at all	13	20	14
A little	18	20	18
To some extent	38	40	40
Very much	31	20	28

Respondents - Women: 38-45; Men: 9-10

<b>8 How much encouragement do you <u>currently</u> receive from the following in your life and ministry as a member of your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>Members of your institute</i>			
Not at all	2	-	2
A little	7	-	5
To some extent	27	50	31
Very much	64	50	62
<i>The leadership of your institute</i>			
Not at all	2	-	2
A little	5	10	6
To some extent	25	60	31
Very much	68	30	61
<i>Novice/formation director/team</i>			
Not at all	12	10	12
A little	2	20	6
To some extent	20	40	24
Very much	66	30	59
<i>Other men and women religious</i>			
Not at all	7	-	6
A little	19	60	27
To some extent	36	20	33
Very much	38	20	35
<i>Diocesan priests</i>			
Not at all	27	10	24
A little	24	60	31
To some extent	20	20	20
Very much	29	10	25
<i>Your parents, if applicable</i>			
Not at all	27	10	24
A little	12	30	16
To some extent	15	0	12
Very much	46	60	49
<i>Your siblings, if applicable</i>			
Not at all	21	30	23
A little	12	10	12
To some extent	19	30	21
Very much	48	30	44
<i>Other family members</i>			
Not at all	29	30	29
A little	14	30	17
To some extent	26	40	29
Very much	31	0	25
<i>People in your parish</i>			
Not at all	10	44	16
A little	18	0	14
To some extent	38	33	37
Very much	35	22	33

<b>8 How much encouragement do you <u>currently</u> receive from the following in your life and ministry as a member of your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>People in your school or workplace</i>			
Not at all	18	50	24
A little	26	10	22
To some extent	21	30	22
Very much	36	10	31
<i>Friends within the institute</i>			
Not at all	5	10	6
A little	14	0	11
To some extent	14	40	19
Very much	67	50	64
<i>Friends outside the institute</i>			
Not at all	2	0	2
A little	12	10	11
To some extent	37	50	40
Very much	49	40	47
<i>Spiritual director, if applicable</i>			
Not at all	5	0	4
A little	5	10	6
To some extent	29	30	29
Very much	61	60	60
<i>People with whom you minister</i>			
Not at all	5	30	10
A little	13	0	10
To some extent	36	50	39
Very much	46	20	41
<i>People to whom you minister</i>			
Not at all	3	30	9
A little	16	10	15
To some extent	30	30	30
Very much	51	30	47

*Respondents - Women: 37-45; Men: 9-10*

<b>9 How important to you are these types of prayer?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>Daily Eucharist</i>			
Not at all	2	0	2
A little	9	0	7
To some extent	16	0	13
Very much	73	100	78
<i>Liturgy of the Hours</i>			
Not at all	9	0	7
A little	11	0	9
To some extent	31	0	25
Very much	49	100	58
<i>Non-liturgical common prayer</i>			
Not at all	5	11	6
A little	5	22	8
To some extent	44	44	44
Very much	47	22	42
<i>Eucharistic Adoration</i>			
Not at all	11	0	9
A little	20	10	18
To some extent	11	20	13
Very much	58	70	60
<i>Other devotional prayer, e.g. Rosary</i>			
Not at all	11	0	9
A little	33	20	31
To some extent	22	10	20
Very much	33	70	40
<i>Faith sharing</i>			
Not at all	5	20	7
A little	9	30	13
To some extent	23	20	22
Very much	64	30	57
<i>Private prayer/charismatic/personal</i>			
Not at all	2	10	4
A little	5	10	6
To some extent	16	20	17
Very much	77	60	74
<i>Common meditation</i>			
Not at all	9	10	9
A little	16	-	13
To some extent	30	30	30
Very much	44	60	47
<i>Personal meditation</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	-	-	-
To some extent	16	30	19
Very much	84	70	81

Respondents - Women: 43-45; Men: 9-10

<b>10 How important to you are these aspects of community life?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>Living with other members</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	9	10	9
To some extent	24	10	22
Very much	67	80	69
<i>Praying with other members</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	2	10	4
To some extent	18	10	16
Very much	80	80	80
<i>Working with other members</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	14	20	15
To some extent	40	30	38
Very much	47	50	47
<i>Sharing meals together</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	2	-	2
To some extent	29	40	31
Very much	69	60	67
<i>Socialising/sharing leisure time together</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	2	10	4
To some extent	40	60	44
Very much	58	30	53

Respondents - Women: 43-45; Men: 10

<b>11 How much do you like living in these settings?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>Alone</i>			
Not at all	44	44	44
A little	16	-	13
To some extent	28	44	31
Very much	12	11	12
<i>In a small community of two or three</i>			
Not at all	14	20	15
A little	24	50	29
To some extent	36	30	35
Very much	26	-	21
<i>In a medium-sized community of 4 to 7</i>			
Not at all	8	-	6
A little	18	10	16
To some extent	30	50	34
Very much	45	40	44
<i>In a large community of 8 or more</i>			
Not at all	17	-	13
A little	17	-	13
To some extent	33	40	35
Very much	33	60	38

<b>11 How much do you like living in these settings?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>With members of different ages</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	12	-	10
To some extent	31	20	29
Very much	57	80	62
<i>With members of different cultures</i>			
Not at all	-	-	-
A little	9	20	11
To some extent	37	50	40
Very much	53	30	49
<i>With members in different ministries</i>			
Not at all	2	-	2
A little	15	20	16
To some extent	24	40	27
Very much	59	40	55
<i>With only members of your institute</i>			
Not at all	9	-	8
A little	18	11	17
To some extent	20	11	19
Very much	52	78	57
<i>With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces</i>			
Not at all	11	10	11
A little	11	30	15
To some extent	32	30	32
Very much	46	30	43
<i>With members of other institutes</i>			
Not at all	26	40	29
A little	24	40	27
To some extent	37	20	33
Very much	13	-	10
<i>With lay co-workers</i>			
Not at all	26	78	36
A little	34	22	32
To some extent	29	-	23
Very much	11	-	9

*Respondents - Women: 37-44; Men: 9-10*

<b>12 How much do you prefer ministry in these settings?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>In a ministry sponsored by your institute</i>			
Not at all	-	10	2
A little	8	-	6
To some extent	39	20	35
Very much	53	70	56
<i>In a parish or diocesan ministry</i>			
Not at all	3	22	7
A little	24	11	22
To some extent	59	67	61
Very much	14	-	11
<i>With other members of your institute</i>			
Not at all	3	10	4
A little	5	-	4
To some extent	45	30	42
Very much	45	60	50
<i>With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces</i>			
Not at all	3	20	6
A little	11	-	9
To some extent	38	40	38
Very much	49	40	47
<i>With members of other institutes</i>			
Not at all	3	10	4
A little	18	20	19
To some extent	50	50	49
Very much	29	20	28
<i>With an organisation that is Catholic but is not sponsored by your institute</i>			
Not at all	3	20	6
A little	21	20	21
To some extent	55	50	54
Very much	21	10	19
<i>With an organisation that is religious but is not Catholic</i>			
Not at all	8	30	13
A little	25	40	28
To some extent	44	30	41
Very much	22	-	17
<i>With an organisation that is not religious</i>			
Not at all	17	30	20
A little	31	50	35
To some extent	31	10	26
Very much	22	10	20
<i>In an educational ministry (Catholic)</i>			
Not at all	11	20	13
A little	16	20	17
To some extent	38	30	36
Very much	35	30	34

Respondents - Women: 36-40; Men: 9-10

<b>13 How would you rate the following in your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>Efforts to promote vocations</i>			
Poor	13	-	11
Fair	29	30	29
Good	31	50	35
Excellent	27	20	25
<i>Welcome and support of newer members</i>			
Poor	7	-	5
Fair	7	20	9
Good	36	40	36
Excellent	51	40	49
<i>Formation/incorporation programs</i>			
Poor	2	-	2
Fair	13	40	18
Good	36	40	36
Excellent	49	20	44
<i>Opportunities for ongoing formation</i>			
Poor	2	-	2
Fair	11	40	17
Good	32	40	33
Excellent	55	20	48
<i>Educational opportunities</i>			
Poor	5	-	4
Fair	7	10	8
Good*	28	70	36
Excellent	60	20	53
<i>Preparation for ministry</i>			
Poor	10	-	8
Fair*	5	60	16
Good	39	40	39
Excellent*	46	-	37
<i>Opportunities for spiritual growth</i>			
Poor	-	10	2
Fair	4	20	7
Good	16	40	20
Excellent*	80	30	71
<i>Opportunities for personal growth</i>			
Poor	-	-	-
Fair	7	20	9
Good	20	60	27
Excellent	73	20	64
<i>Sense of identity as religious</i>			
Poor	2	-	2
Fair	9	20	11
Good	20	50	25
Excellent	69	30	62
<i>Sense of identity as institute members</i>			
Poor	-	-	-
Fair	11	20	13
Good	18	50	24
Excellent	71	30	64

<b>13 How would you rate the following in your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<i>Fidelity to the Church and its teachings</i>			
Poor	-	-	-
Fair	7	-	6
Good*	18	70	28
Excellent*	75	30	67
<i>Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth</i>			
Poor	-	10	2
Fair	7	-	5
Good*	20	60	27
Excellent*	73	30	65
<i>Focus on mission</i>			
Poor*	-	20	4
Fair	7	10	8
Good	16	50	23
Excellent*	77	20	66
<i>Commitment to ministry</i>			
Poor*	-	20	4
Fair	7	-	6
Good*	18	60	26
Excellent*	75	20	65
<i>Response to the needs of our time</i>			
Poor	2	10	4
Fair	5	10	6
Good*	18	70	28
Excellent*	75	10	63
<i>Efforts to promote social justice</i>			
Poor	2	11	4
Fair	9	22	12
Good	23	56	29
Excellent*	65	11	56
<i>Quality of community life</i>			
Poor	2	10	4
Fair	16	10	15
Good	27	60	33
Excellent	56	20	49
<i>Communal prayer experiences</i>			
Poor	-	10	2
Fair	9	-	7
Good	38	80	45
Excellent*	53	10	45
<i>Relationships with one another</i>			
Poor	-	-	-
Fair	9	30	13
Good	41	60	44
Excellent	51	10	43

Respondents - Women: 41-45; Men: 10

<b>14a Do members of your institute wear a habit or clerical collar?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes*	42	100	53
No*	58	-	47

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10*

<b>14b If wearing the habit or collar is optional, how frequently do you wear it?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Never	7	-	4
Once in a while	-	-	-
Only at certain time, e.g., ministry, prayer	-	30	12
In all or most circumstances	93	70	84

*Respondents - Women: 15; Men: 10*

<b>15a Were you employed before you entered religious life?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	91	100	93
No	9	-	7

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10*

<b>15b Were you employed ...</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Full-time?	71	60	69
Part-time?	29	40	31

*Respondents - Women: 41; Men: 10*

<b>16a Were you involved in any of the following before you entered?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Teacher in a Catholic school	20	22	21
Youth ministry or group	59	44	57
Young adult ministry or group	55	44	53
Campus ministry or group	16	33	19
Liturgical ministry, e.g., lector, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist	55	56	55
Music ministry, cantor, choir	34	44	36
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	50	11	43
Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting	68	44	64
Retreats	59	44	57
World Youth Day or associated festival	30	33	30
Faith-sharing group	55	44	53
Religious institute volunteer program	23	22	23

*Respondents - Women: 44; Men: 9. Note: Total adds to more than 100% as respondents could select all that apply*

<b>16b Were you a paid employee in any of the activities you marked above?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes, full-time employee	30	-	25
Yes, part-time employee	-	11	2
No	70	89	74

*Respondents - Women: 44; Men: 9*

<b>17 What is your current status in your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Candidate/postulant	11	-	9
Novice	14	20	15
Temporary vows/commitment	34	30	33
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	41	50	43

*Respondents - Women: 44; Men: 10*

<b>19 Are you (or do you expect to be) a:</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>
Brother	20
Priest	80

*Respondents - Men = 10. Note: Males only.*

<b>20 Country of birth <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Women (Number)</b>	<b>Men (Number)</b>	<b>Total (Number)</b>
Australia	25	8	33
Cambodia	1	-	1
Costa Rica	1	-	1
India	1	-	1
Indonesia	1	-	1
Korea, South	1	-	1
Lebanon*	-	1	1
Malaysia	1	-	1
New Zealand	3	-	3
Philippines	3	-	3
Singapore*	-	1	1
Vanuatu	1	-	1
Vietnam	6	-	6
Other	1	-	1

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10. Note. There were no respondents of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.*

<b>20c In what year did you first arrive in Australia to live?</b>	<b>Women (Number)</b>	<b>Men (Number)</b>	<b>Total (Number)</b>
Prior to 1980	0	0	0
1980-1989	4	1	5
1990-1999	8	1	9
2000 or later	0	0	0

*Respondents - Women: 12; Men: 2. Note: eight overseas-born women did not answer the question about when they first arrived in Australia to live.*

<b>22a Where were your parents born? - Mother</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Australia	48	20	43
Overseas English speaking country	9	20	11
Overseas non-English speaking country	43	60	46

*Respondents - Women: 44; Men: 10*

<b>22b Where were your parents born? - Father</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Australia	45	44	45
Overseas English speaking country	11	22	13
Overseas non-English speaking country	43	33	42

*Respondents - Women: 44; Men: 9*

<b>23 Is English your first language (mother tongue)?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	60	80	64
No <sup>^</sup>	40	20	36

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10. ^ Mother tongue: Women (n=18) Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, French, Indonesian, Khmer And Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Tokelanan, Vietnamese (n=6). Men (n=2) Arabic; Mandarin.*

<b>24 When were you born?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
1940s	4	-	4
1950s	11	-	9
1960s	18	10	16
1970s	20	10	18
1980s	40	70	45
1990s	7	10	7

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10*

<b>25 What year did you enter your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
2000 - 2005	30	30	30
2006 - 2010	18	30	22
2011 - 2015	52	40	48

*Respondents - Women: 43; Men: 10*

<b>26 What year did you profess or do you expect to profess your final vows/perpetual commitment?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
2000 - 2005	6	-	6
2006 - 2010	9	20	12
2011 - 2015	26	30	28
2016 - 2020	56	50	56

*Respondents - Women: 41; Men: 10*

<b>27 At what age did you first consider religious life?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Under 10 years	9	-	7
10 to 14 years	11	-	9
15 to 19 years	42	30	40
20 to 24 years	16	50	22
25 to 29 years	7	20	9
30 to 34 years	4	-	4
35 to 39 years	-	-	-
40 to 44 years	9	-	7
45 to 49 years	-	-	-
50 to 54 years	2	-	2

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10*

<b>28 Did you attempt to enter another religious institute before this one?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes, but I did not enter	9	20	11
Yes <sup>^</sup>	20	-	16
No	71	80	73

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10. <sup>^</sup> Length of stay (n=8) average of 12 years, median of 11.5 years, 1-26 years.*

<b>29a Were you raised Catholic?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	82	90	84
No	18	10	16

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10*

<b>29b If you became Catholic as an adult, at what age did you become a Catholic?<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
15 - 19	34		28
20 - 29	17	100	28
30 - 39	34		28
40 - 49	17		14

*Respondents - Women: 6; Men: 1. <sup>^</sup> Previous religion - Women (n=7): Anglican, Antiochian Orthodox, Follow tradition of family and country, Non-practising Catholic, No religion (n=3); Men (n=1): Taoist. One woman who stated her previous religion did not provide the age at which she became Catholic.*

<b>30 Were you ever married?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	11	-	9
No	89	100	91

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10*

<b>31 Do you have any children?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	9	-	7
No	91	100	93

*Respondents - Women: 44; Men: 10*

<b>32a Were you ever home-schooled?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	11	10	11
No	89	90	89

*Respondents - Women: 45; Men: 10*

<b>32b Number of years you were home-schooled</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
1	20	-	17
7-9	40	100	50
10 or more	40	-	33

*Respondents - Women: 5; Men: 1*

<b>33 What was the <u>highest</u> level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
High school or less	20	10	18
Bachelor's degree	40	70	45
Master's degree	11	10	11
Doctoral degree	2	-	2
Other^	27	10	24

*Respondents - Women: 44; Men: 10. ^ The highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute - Women (n=12): Bachelor's degree Honours year, Diploma, Diploma of Teaching [JP], B. Arts & B. Social Work, Diploma in Community Welfare, Post Graduate Diploma, Diploma in Education following my Bachelor's degree, Cert In Accounting;Diploma in Catechetical Studies;Diploma in Pastoral Leadership, Cert in Celebrant Studies; Cert in Te Reo Maori (Maori Language), General and Midwifery Nursing Certificate, Certificate/Trade, Diploma & Early Childhood Educator (Canada), Homeschooling Year 12 standard. Men (n=1): Honours.*

<b>34 If you continued your education after you entered, what is the <u>highest</u> level of education you have so far completed?</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
High school or less	-	-	-
Bachelor's degree	46	22	41
Master's degree*	18	78	32
Doctoral degree	7	-	5
Other^	29	-	22

*Respondents - Women: 28; Men: 9. \*Statistically significant ^ If you continued your education after you entered, what is the highest level of education you have so far completed?: Women (n=8) Diploma of Children's services and doing bachelor of early childhood and primary education, Bachelor's degree Honours year, Not sure yet, N/A other than CPE, Grad Dip Theology & Grad Dip Migration Law, Cert in Clinical Pastoral Education; Cert in Competency in Budget Advising; SGM Spiritual Directors Formation Training, Diploma in Nursing, Certificate IV in youth ministry*

## Responses to open-ended questions in New Members survey

Square brackets indicate either (1) words added to assist meaning or (2) replacement words that ensure the anonymity of the respondent

Stage	Are you ...	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	Ministry of Service of the poor and marginalise	Common living and prayer	
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	The combination of commitment to ministry to those most in need and the commitment to prayer, contemplation and community life. [In our congregation], community is highly valued but there is also a commitment to service as educated, thoughtful and mature women of the Church. For me, I found the challenge of entering religious life in the context of a Church culture which does not always value women as equal very difficult, and my congregation gives me a place where I feel at home and able to take my place in the Church community as a woman with insight and gifts which are valued and respected. The commitment to community life is important to me personally because I believe that God is active in those we live and minister with and so I am grateful for the support and presence of my sisters in all that I am and do. They challenge me to be faithful in my vocation and they support me every day in living that out. I also appreciate that my congregation is one which values the gifts and talents of individuals and each sister is encouraged to use her own gifts in the service of their neighbour, in whatever way they are called. There is no single ministry or determined way to be a sister in our congregation and I feel this reflects the openness and love of God.	The opportunity and every day encouragement to live in communion with God. To allow myself to be loved and to become a bearer of God's peace and love to those I minister with.	I find it challenging to be a younger/newer member at this time in our history. I have faith that God's grace will guide us into the future but the demographic challenges are significant and are sometimes just plain painful. I don't mean to complain about my sisters because my congregation handles this better than many, I think, but personally, it can be very difficult. I sometimes find it difficult to balance the need to live as a continuation of the rich and wonderful tradition, and to live into the new and emerging with courage and trust.

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	A desire to give my whole life to God in the service of the Church.	Being able to be with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament more often than what is possible in the world.	Community life and trying to adapt to the culture of Religious life, as it is so different from the culture of the world that I have been brought up in.
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	Ministry: Biblical apostolate, inter-religious dialogue particularly in Jewish-Christian relationship, advocacy to justice and peace.	Being able to served others and enable them to see as well as feel the Goodness of God in their life.	Community Life
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	Committed, gritty women who are prepared to work in many and varied Ministries.	Encouraged and fostered spirituality, Ministry and Community. Sense of belonging to a group of enthusiastic, committed women, in a Religious Community.	AT TIMES the reality of the human condition.
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	Mostly I would say it was the joy of the sisters, there was something very relational and humble about them that I didn't find when talking with religious of other congregations. It seems that it is the charism alive in them.	There are many rewarding aspects of this life; the joy of being completely for God, the beauty of meeting God in those we minister to, the many opportunities to grow and be shaped more and more into the one that God wants me to be, as well as the process of coming to know myself more through formation and thus being free to live for God and others.	Well... the process of transition to religious life was quite difficult if I am honest... there were many personal challenges, like the process of self-acceptance and coming to know what community life is like with its ups and downs. Though at the present time I am glad for what I have learnt thus far, even through challenges – they have shaped me as much as the times of consolation.
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	The ministries and lifestyle of the Sisters that remain open to the needs of each situation and to cultivate the talents that each Sister has had. Its internationality and global sense of mission and solidarity with the marginalized.	Discovering the depth of God's faithfulness, compassion and mercy through my ministry among people who are marginalized in our society.	Separated by distance from my own family members, missing out important family events because of the distance and ministry commitments. How to bridge the generational gap, cultural differences, and different practices of the vows among members of the institute.
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	They are absolutely faithful to the Church's teaching and they live religious life as the Church exhorts us to. I was also attracted to the charism of the Order, to which they are also faithful.	The fact that I am totally connected to God; that my whole life is an act of religion, and that I have dedicated my life to service.	Surrendering completely to God, which, paradoxically, is also very satisfying and rewarding.

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	The sense of community life, authentic living of the Charism, awareness and concern for all people and the World's current situation, and deep love and loyalty to the Church and the Pope.	The peace and joy from doing what Jesus asks of me, even though I don't fully understand and struggle, there is constant support from my Sisters; and I feel my Faith deepen daily, and my love for service to others reflects more my love for Jesus.	Going out into the unknown in the spiritual life; not knowing what the future might bring – but this also gives a sense of adventure and trust – accepting present religious members and trying to love new ones; it's a changing family all the time and keeping focused on what unites us.
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	The sense that God was calling me here. The sisters appeared to live according to the Church's idea of Religious Life i.e., habit, common life of prayer, penance (and recreation, work for the Church etc.). Also their witness - Being religious, being God's, putting Him FIRST.	Doing God's will (and in the process finding out who He created me to be. Religious life enables you to find many hidden talents, and to develop many other aspects of one's person that otherwise may never have been used for the glory of God.	-Religious life!!! The struggle against sin, the day to day fidelity to Him through obedience and docility. -Seeking and being open to truth even when it is inconvenient or show up my many flaws, selfishness and lack of generosity.
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	All I had to 'look for' when I started visiting religious institutes was to ascertain if the members 1) had a deep, sincere love and respect for traditions and teachings of the Church, and 2) weren't afraid to be radical and wear a habit and live in a convent, 3) love the Holy Eucharist, and 4) were savvy about the effects of materialism and hedonism in Australia.	The guarantee that if I cooperate wholeheartedly with my supervisor and in the living my religious life I will grow in holiness. The Church has high expectation of her religion and it is an honour and privilege (if sometimes a challenge) to live up to them.	Trying to dispel the misconceptions most Catholics seem to have about religious sisters as strict, stuffy and sad and that they are just an 'optional extra' in the Church. Within religious life, every challenge is a stepping stone towards God, so I am grateful for them, especially small daily changes.
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	For me, this institute was founded to be with those on the margins of society in many aspects of life. This certainly appealed to me and even though it challenges every fibre of my being, it where my heart is quite happy and content, walking with those who just live from day to day in very challenging circumstances.	I learn so much from those with whom I minister. So, even though I am constantly challenged by what I experience, there is a growth and a humbling of spirit that allows me to be the person that I am growing into being. The community aspect I find to be a gift. To be connected with a group of like-minded people who are working towards breaking open God's creation.	[For some time], I lived by myself as a professional woman. My greatest challenge is living in community. Even though I do find this a gift, I also find it most difficult. Making time for contemplation and finding that balance between contemplation and action for mission is quite challenging for me. Another challenge is the meeting of those who have only known religious life and those just moving into this life style. We are both coming from very different aspects of

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	Prayer life living together ministry	Prayer has been a bottom line	life. Having formation along an organic style, is very different from the military style formation that happened many years ago. 'Generation gap' has returned!
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	The life and charism of our founder and the life style and service of our sisters	The mission and ministry	Often culture creates misunderstanding
Temporary vows/ commitment	Female	I had known the Sisters for a number of years and was part of an affiliated group. Their openness to responding to the needs of the time and their willingness to stretch boundaries in both the areas of social justice and spiritual practice resonated with my own desire to do the same. I eventually became a fulltime paid [employee of the order]. An unsolicited invitation came to consider vowed membership, my heart skipped a beat and being convinced it was indeed a possibility, the rest is history as they say!	Being part of something bigger than my own immediate circle, and being part of something intentionally based on Gospel values, focused on mission and ministry, has been very satisfying and rewarding for me. Also to be part of a traditional movement that is looking very closely at its reason for being in light of the needs of our time and the ever evolving story of the universe. It is also very satisfying being with other women of all ages and stages in religious life who share the same sense of call to something bigger than themselves.	Community life and the vow of obedience
Novice	Female	Community life and prayer. Different projects in the congregation. International congregation. Some ministries like education, Jewish and Christian relations...	I really enjoy the community life and prayer together like [the] first community in the Bible. All had one heart and everything they shared. The community life is very meaningful for me. Also that God is growing with me in all aspects and I can answer my call in this congregation.	During the early stages I was given the very comprehensive writings of Sandra Schneiders ihm on religious life. I was particularly captivated by the idea of religious life modelling a discipleship of equals, especially at my age and stage of life. My lived experience in the early stages of temporary vows has meant taking my rose-tinted glasses off! I have learnt that traditional structures are difficult to dismantle and will provide ongoing challenges for me as an older woman new in religious life.
				I used to do things that I had to change, because some sisters do not do like that. So sometimes you need to change and it is painful, because my family had taught like that. But I think it is a process where you need to be perseverant.

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Novice	Female	Charism. Story of founders. Current members. Formation program. Openness.	Sense of 'home'. Ministry. Focus on God. Authenticity to self & others.	False stereotypes & judgements. Community house living with large age & personality differences.
Novice	Female	The Charism of the Institute and the Constitutions	I can live my life wholeheartedly	The inequality with regards to the roles of women in the Church
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	Ministry, charism, mission	Fulfilment, meaningful, Godliness	Not really.
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	The life and faith of the foundress of my religious institute: her attitude towards life, her desire and passion for the poor/need, her love and faithfulness to God.	To have like-minded people journey with me in bringing hope, peace and love for our world. And on the journey to learn and find my true self more and more through my relationship to all the creation.	It is important for me remain humble and nurture my prayer life so that in my relationship with others I can be more sensitive to others' needs and my own needs.
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	The spirituality and monastic life of a total commitment to God. The lives of the Carmelite saints and some of their writings. The setting of living in a monastery with the Blessed Sacrament, the cloister and prayerful building [and] grounds. Living in community, praying and supporting each other. Timetable and life focused on prayer and deepening our relationship with God. Our mission praying for priests, the Church and the world.	My deepening awareness of God and His love for me and all people. The support and love of living in a community of sisters. The prayer life and times of silence & spiritual reading. Being part of the Church, praying for the needs of people and the world. Being united to Jesus, in the Blessed Trinity praying for all people & God's Kingdom of love and peace to come in its fullness.	The lack of younger women to give energy, new life and hope to our community. The aging sisters are full of wisdom and love, but having a large number of them means a lot of time and energy is spent caring for them and also they are not able to fully participate in different community acts and discussions. Being the youngest in the community.
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	Ministering with other women and living with those who have the same passion and love for God. Walking beside those who need a helping hand in the community.	Being with those who are sick and need comforting. Just being available when the need arises. Hospital Chaplaincy.	Nil.

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	For me, what most attracted me to the Josephites is [that] the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart live a simple life, down to earth and friendly	What I find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life is to be a member, to belong, to support each other and care for each other.	What I find most challenging about religious life is to be balance[d] between community life and ministry
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	What most attracted me to the religious institute is their down to earth [approach], with the people and among the people, living out or witnessing the Christ like or living out the Gospel.	What I find most rewarding as I minister among God's people, the feeling of God's compassion, love and grace from me to them. That through me I am showing to them (people) that God's love, compassion and care is real.	What I find most challenging in religious life is when people expect so much from you (me).
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	A constant search for God in our daily life in all circumstances. To serve the church through the charism of our Order.	To recognise the grace of God through the sorrows and joys of religious life on a daily basis.	Lack of discernment in God's will in small and great decisions in life.
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	The way of life of the founders of the congregation. The work and ministry is for young people and it looks at the poor and marginalised people. The way of life	Taking the time in our busy life to sit in prayer in silence and stillness either at the start or at the end of the day.	Living with other people in a small house where there is no space just to chill and relax besides my room. It's a challenge that [the members of our small community all live and work together]. That the work that I do everyone will take credit for [even if they haven't done any of the work].
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	The sisters wore a habit, lived in a convent with each other. They take their religious life seriously. They are not out to get vocation but help girls know and do God's will, with regards to their vocation.	A vocation to the religious life is a calling - God chooses, and because of Him, I am a public witness of the Church. I am an instrument in God's hand and in the hands of the Church. Also having a close relationship with God is rewarding.	Doing God's will at all times. Being a "celebrity" because young religious in habits are rare.
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	Identifying closely with the works of Mary MacKillop: education for the poor, being with those on the fringes of society, doing the Will of God etc.	Our common unity: beliefs, values, ministry and mission, prayer life, being united as a Congregation	Living community life in small communities with sisters 'set in their ways'; controlling; unaware of the other

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spirituality</li> <li>- Life style</li> <li>- Prayer style</li> <li>- Governance</li> </ul> <p>The life stories of St John Bosco and St Maria Mazzarello and the charism of the institute.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A sense of Community</li> <li>- Balanced living</li> </ul> <p>God loves me so much that God called me to religious life to live an intimate relationship with God and to serve God in others, especially in the little children and the youth who are most vulnerable and needed.</p>	How to recognise the real need in the modern society and how to respond to it?  To uphold the gospel value and live it each day.
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	The way of life attracted me. I grew up in a Catholic family and members of my extended family belonged to other religious congregations and also to the Diocesan Priests. This way of life was always an option. I enjoyed the Religious I met with and in my own life I was guided and mentored by them through the friendship we shared. I enjoyed their ministries and their love of the Spiritual. Their way of life touched into my own sense of searching. I felt a sense of belonging in this particular way of life and felt drawn/called to follow knowing that this way also resonated [with] my own Truth....a truth that is God.	My sense of being on a journey. That journey which is one of deepening my relationship with God. It is nourished by my prayer life, my ministries, the relationships I have with people I encounter in my work, my Sisters in community and my own family. I love being able to be present to people and know that we are all essentially on the pathway and we need each other along the way.	The various ages in Community life. Being a younger but not young member I have always felt that I have lived the life of an older person. This is a challenge and it calls me to stay well connected to my friends of a similar age outside my community. I value deeply my relationship with older members and I learn so much from them, however, sometimes it would be nice to be able to journey with people of a similar age and stage in life. This is something that I miss and I have had to manage.
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Female	The life story, spirituality and character of our foundress. I was also interested in my Institute's work in social justice and living in community. I was also surprised at the level of welcome and support I received from Institute members who really did not know me at that stage.	The ministry, companionship and prayer life. It helps a lot especially when difficulties arise in life and ministry. It has been a privilege to have met and worked with different groups of people (social and economic background, races, professions, etc). In a lot of ways, the people that I have met and lived with have helped me remain as a Catholic and be faithful to our beliefs. Gaining a deep knowledge about	The high expectations of other people and being put in a pedestal. I am a normal person like everyone else – not better or holier or saintly. It does not help that we are put in some kind of different level to other lay people. It is also a challenge with the way Church authorities have initially dealt with the sexual abuse issues.

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Candidate/postulant	Female	The charism, community, spiritual, creative and personal development, balanced lifestyle.	our faith and the many people of deep faith has given me an anchor in times of challenges especially with the current issues faced by the Catholic Church. Community support, regular community prayer, opportunities for spiritual nourishment.	Extra commitments, sacrificing time, not seeing family and friends as regularly.
Candidate/postulant	Female	In Carmel you find God in everywhere not only in pray. Life for a Carmelite is communion with God from morning till night and from night till morning.	Everything because God is truly present in ours.	
Candidate/postulant	Female	The concern they have for those living on the margins	Working with a group of fellow believers who have common goals	Sometimes being misunderstood by other people, especially if you express different ideas
Candidate/postulant	Female	The many possibilities for ministry, the spirituality of the members and my "connection" with the Father founder who has visited my birth place even before I was born.	The social justice ministries with the most vulnerable people who are marginalised, and the faith sharing with members who are like-minded.	Giving over my control on my living arrangement and the possibility of being "judged" negatively by other members.
Candidate/postulant	Female	Its adherence to Dominican prayer, apostolate and customs. They retained the habit, followed the Horarium, and addressed the need of today's uneducated world; as well as remaining in Australia. They recognised religious life as something radical and totally focused on Christ. (Also their cooking).	The opportunities for conquering myself and offering up my life for others. There is only so much I can do – but there is no limit to how much I can give to God.	Trying to explain to lay [people] (or [people of] other religion) that this following of Christ to the Cross is what we are ALL called to. I constantly have to remind myself not to be mediocre, to give more, to seek Him, and to stop quantifying how or when.
	Female	- Carmelite spirituality and contemplative living - Strongly felt called to the Carmelite vocation	To know God intimately and to be in love with Christ.	To be constantly faithful to the doing of God's will and to live up to the demands/obligations of the vow's life.
Novice	Female	The congregations are not living in the past; they embrace their history while living in the present. They are meeting the needs of our time and identity -the shift within the church and religious vocation to adapt and move forward.	Sharing that deep foundation base on Christ, nourishing and enriching ourselves and our community and individually to let the Lord's love flow into all aspects and relationship/encounters we have.	Being seen as radical. Not seeing other young religious, having no connection or communication with them, having no base to share about how my journey is going.

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Temporary vows	Male	Initially zeal for holiness, visible through: habit, active ministry, reverence in prayer and Eucharist, fidelity to traditional faith.	The knowledge that I am growing closer to God – faster than I would be outside religious life	Fidelity to vows of poverty, chastity and celibacy.
Final perpetual vows	Male	Community life, faithfulness to the church's teaching, wearing the habit, opportunity to become a priest and serve the faithful.	Finally doing what God has been asking me to do all along.	Living in community (which is also one of the most rewarding aspects) and feeling a bit like a hypocrite sometimes because I'm not that good a person (but it's all good).
Temporary vows/ commitment	Male	That it was a traditional religious institute and a good expression of consecrated religious life. I.e.: the vows, the habit, community life, being 'set apart' to fully give your life to God, that is, its spirituality of being religious.	Bringing others to Christ and helping them realise their own vocations but above all, being with Christ.	Myself. Also, lack of encouragement and good example of other members in the community. A lack of enthusiasm for Christ in the religious way of life - such as turning to up community prayer and meditation, celebration and attitude towards the sacraments and religious life.
Temporary vows/ commitment	Male	The strongly Catholic identity of the members whom I met, allied with broader cultural attainments.	That the centre of one's life is Jesus Christ as present in the world in his mystical body, the Church.	Community life, while something I desired and still desire, is frequently challenging; which, however, as a pre-condition for growth, is not necessarily a negative, even though it remains a challenge.
Novice	Male	The sense of community, commitment to Christ and witness, and the example of our founder.	The opportunity to dedicate myself to Jesus Christ every day, in a way that allows me to be who I was born to be.	Discerning whether it is actually God's will for me.
Novice	Male	- Focus on contemplative prayer and devotion to prayer - Simplicity of lifestyle - Example of the members	Prayer life. Encountering people. Seeing God at work in others	- Community life - Living chastely
Final/ perpetual vows/ commitment	Male	The charism and life of the founder and other saints of the institute, as well as the way it was being lived out by the current members. The great balance between prayer and ministry in the institute. The members' love for the Church, for prayer and their	The life of prayer and of ministry.	Some of the challenges of community life

Stage	Are you . . .	What most attracted you to your religious institute?	What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?	What do you find most challenging about religious life?
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Male	wearing of the habit. The fact that they had Australian vocations. Charism: Truth, Teaching, Learning	Balance of Contemplation and Action	Obedience.
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	Male	The spirituality of the Cistercians. The values, the practises, community life, and monastic solitude.	Environment which facilitates the spiritual growth combined with life in a community which is challenging us [to?] incarnate our convictions. A place for growth spiritually, but also as a human being, and intellectually and in responsibility in serving the community with particular duties and responsibilities.	Obedience and community life. Authority is not hard and fast and it is not hard to twist things to my own purposes. But to see the spiritual benefit of obedience firstly to the superior and moreover, mutual obedience: obedience to my brothers. The fragility of community life is a continuing challenge; without prayer, humility and obedience of members it would fall apart.



### Survey of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life

This survey is part of a study to assist Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA) and the ACBC Pastoral Research Office (PRO) in understanding religious life and religious vocations in Australia today. **Please respond for the unit for which you are responsible. NOTE: ‘Unit’ throughout this survey refers to the congregation, province, monastery or order. If the unit is international, respond for Australia. If you have postulants, novices and/or students from other Provinces undertaking formation in Australia, please only include those who intend to remain in Australia after formation. Please respond by marking an “X” in the appropriate boxes.**

#### Type of Institute or Society

- Q1 Canonical Status:
- Religious institute
  - Society of apostolic life
- Q2 Character or lifestyle of the institute or society (check all that apply):
- Apostolic
  - Contemplative
  - Conventual
  - Evangelical
  - Monastic

#### Demographic data

Q3 Gender of members: Men  Women

***This shaded section to be completed by MEN’S INSTITUTES & SOCIETIES ONLY:***

Q4 Please indicate if your unit includes:

Brothers  Priests  Brothers and priests

Q5 If a mixed clerical institute or society, please indicate the number in each category in your unit, **as of 1 April 2014:**

Brothers in temporary vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

Priests/seminarians in temporary vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

Brothers in final/perpetual vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

Priests/seminarians in final/perpetual vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

Q6 Please indicate the number in each category in your unit, **as of 1 April 2014:**

Pre-candidates/aspirants (before entrance) \_\_\_\_\_

Candidates/postulants (before novitiate) \_\_\_\_\_

Novices \_\_\_\_\_

Temporary vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

Final/perpetual vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

Q7 Please indicate the number of candidates/postulants, novices, and temporary professed in your unit who were born in each decade:

	Candidates/ Postulants	Novices	Temporary Professed
Before 1960	_____	_____	_____
1960-1969	_____	_____	_____
1970-1979	_____	_____	_____
1980-1989	_____	_____	_____
1990 or later	_____	_____	_____

Q8 Please indicate the number of **finally professed members** in your unit who were born in each decade:

Before 1920	_____	1950-1959	_____
1920-1929	_____	1960-1969	_____
1930-1939	_____	1970-1979	_____
1940-1949	_____	1980 or later	_____

## Vocation Ministry

Q9 Does your unit (congregation, province, monastery or order) have a **vocation director**?

Yes  No

Q10 If yes, which best describes the vocation director?

- A member of your unit
- A member of another unit of your institute, society, or federation
- A member of another institute or society
- A lay person who is not a member or associate

Q11 Is the vocation director engaged in vocation ministry:

Full-time  Part-time

Q12 Does your unit have a **vocation team**, i.e., more than one person directly responsible for vocation ministry?

Yes  No

Q13 If your unit has a **vocation team**, please indicate if it includes the following (*check all that apply*):

- Member(s)
- Lay person(s)

Q14 If your unit has a **vocation director and/or team**, what is the scope of his/her/their responsibilities?

- Your unit only
- More than one unit of your institute, society, or federation (e.g., two or more provinces)
- More than one institute or society

Q15 Please indicate if your unit is involved in or conducts the following discernment programs (*check all that apply*):

- Discernment groups
- Discernment retreats
- “Come and See” experiences
- Discernment house
- Live-in experiences
- Ministry/mission experiences

Q16 Please indicate if your unit has used any of the following for vocation promotion in the last five years (*check all that apply*):

- Print media: - Religious publications
- Secular publications

- Website/Internet
- Radio
- TV
- Print materials (i.e. posters, prayer cards, brochures, etc.)
- Social media
- Other promotions: \_\_\_\_\_

Q17 Please indicate if your unit sponsors or co-sponsors vocation promotion or discernment programs specifically targeted toward these age groups (*check all that apply*):

- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Post-secondary level
- Young adults (20s and 30s)
- Mature adults (over age 40)

Q18 Please indicate if your unit requires the following for admission (*check all that apply*):

- Medical assessment
- Behavioral assessment
- Psychological testing
- Police check
- Referee check

## Formation/Incorporation in Ministry

Q19 Please indicate the number of individuals in each category in your unit. If your unit has been reconfigured since 2000, please include the numbers for the units that are now part of your unit.

Total number who entered since 1 Jan. 2000 \_\_\_\_\_

Of the total in the above figure,  
number remaining \_\_\_\_\_

Q20 Of those who entered and then **departed** since 2000, please indicate the number who departed at each stage:

During candidacy/postulancy \_\_\_\_\_

During novitiate \_\_\_\_\_

During temporary vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

After final/perpetual vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

*Q21 Please indicate the typical number of years that are required for each period of initial formation or incorporation in your unit (if less than a year, please specify the number of months):*

Pre-candidacy/aspirancy (before entrance) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Candidacy/postulancy (before novitiate) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Novitiate \_\_\_\_\_  
 Temporary vows/commitment \_\_\_\_\_

*Q22 Does the unit have the following requirements for admission to candidacy/postulancy?*

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Minimum</b> age (please specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Maximum</b> age (please specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minimum education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minimum work experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*If yes to 'education' or 'work experience' above, please describe:*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Q23 Do candidates/postulants/other candidates in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from:*

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Other units of your institute, society, federation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other institutes or societies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Q24 Do novices in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from:*

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Other units of your institute, society, federation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other institutes or societies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Q25 Do those in temporary vows/commitment in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from:*

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Other units of your institute, society, federation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other institutes or societies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Reconfiguration

**Q26**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Has your unit reconfigured since 2000?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your unit in the process of reconfiguring?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*If yes to reconfiguration of unit above, please describe:*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Ministry

*Q27 Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:*

Active in a full-time ministry	_____
Active in a part-time ministry	_____
Retired from active ministry	_____

*Q28 Of members who are active (not retired from active ministry), number engaged in the following types of ministry:*

Education	_____
Health care	_____
Pastoral ministry (e.g., parish, campus)	_____
Spiritual direction/retreat work	_____
Social work/social service	_____
Social justice/advocacy	_____
Internal ministry	_____
Serving in a ministry sponsored/co-sponsored by your unit	_____
Full-time student	_____
Other _____	_____

## Community Life and Prayer

*Q29 Please indicate the number of active members (not retired from active ministry) of your unit who:*

Live alone	_____
Live in communities of 2 or 3	_____
Live in communities of 4 to 7	_____
Live in communities of 8 or more	_____

*Q30 Please indicate which of the following characterise the regular prayer life of a majority of members of your unit (check all that apply):*

Daily Eucharist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Liturgy of the Hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-liturgical common prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Common meditation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faith sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>

***This shaded section to be completed by  
CONTEMPLATIVE INSTITUTES ONLY:***

Q31 Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:

Able to participate fully in prayer life \_\_\_\_\_

Able to participate somewhat in prayer life \_\_\_\_\_

Unable to participate in prayer life \_\_\_\_\_

**Religious Habit**

Q32 Do members of your unit wear a habit?

No

Yes

Yes, some members do

Yes, sometimes

*If yes, please describe:*

Q33 *If yes to above question*, is wearing the habit

Required in all or most circumstances

Required only at certain times,  
(e.g., ministry, prayer)

Optional

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q34 *If wearing the habit is optional*, how many members wear it all or most of the time?

None

A few (less than 25%)

Some (25-49%)

Many (50-74%)

Most (75% or more)

Q35 Has your unit made a decision that its members won't wear a religious habit?

**Yes** **No**

Q36 Please describe any special vocation promotion or recruitment efforts your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years. *Attach additional sheets if necessary.*

Q37 Please describe any 'special' formation/incorporation programs your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in **recent** years. *Attach additional sheets if necessary.*

Q38 Do you have any further observations that you would like to add? *Attach additional sheets if necessary.*

Please provide the information below for the person completing this survey so we may contact you for clarifications about your responses:

Name and Title:

Institute/Society and Province:

Phone and e-mail address:

***Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.***

## Survey of New Members of Catholic Religious Institutes

**To complete this questionnaire on-line instead, please use this link: [tinyurl.com/CVMAsurvey](http://tinyurl.com/CVMAsurvey)**

*This survey is part of a study to assist Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA) and the ACBC Pastoral Research Office (PRO) in understanding religious life and religious vocations in Australia today.*

*The survey should take you around 20-30 minutes to complete. Respond by ticking or marking the appropriate box. If you do not know how to respond to a question, or if it does not apply, please leave it blank. You will not be identifiable in any of the responses and your responses will be completely anonymous.*

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE BY FRIDAY 17 JUNE 2016**

*If you require assistance with the survey, please contact:*

- *Stephen Reid: [s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au](mailto:s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au) or (03) 9953 3457*
- *Bob Dixon: [r.dixon@pro.catholic.org.au](mailto:r.dixon@pro.catholic.org.au) or (03) 9953 3456*

*NOTE: We have used the word 'Institute' to be inclusive of all Institutes of Clerical Religious, Institutes of Religious Women, Institutes of Religious Brothers, Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. 'Unit' throughout this survey refers to the congregation, province, monastery or order. If the unit is international, respond for Australia only.*

**Q1** How much did the following attract you to **religious life**?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
A sense of call to religious life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A desire to be part of a community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A desire to be of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A desire to be more committed to the Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q2** How much did the following attract you to **your religious institute**?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
The life and works of your founder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The mission of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The spirituality of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The prayer life of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The community life of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The ministries of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The institute's fidelity to the Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The example of members of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A personal invitation by a member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welcome and encouragement by members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q3** How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?

	Please tick all that apply
In an institution where members served. e.g. school	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through working with a member of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through a relative in the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through a friend in the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through a vocation expo	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through an event sponsored by the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through a media story about the institute or member	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through print or online promotional materials	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe):	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q4** Did you participate in any of the following before you entered your religious institute?

	Please tick all that apply
Diocesan vocation programs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spiritual direction	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discernment retreat	<input type="checkbox"/>
“Come and See” experience	<input type="checkbox"/>
Live-in experience with the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ministry or mission experience with the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular meeting with a discernment group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular meeting with a vocation director	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular meeting with a member(s) of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular visits to religious communities	<input type="checkbox"/>
A World Youth Day experience	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q5** How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
General Catholic or diocesan websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocation discernment websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Websites of religious institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspaper or magazine articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Print or online promotional materials, e.g. brochures, posters, ads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CDs, DVDs or videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diocesan vocation programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spiritual direction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discernment retreat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“Come and See” experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Live in experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ministry or mission experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting with a discernment group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting with a vocation director	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting with a member(s) of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visits to religious communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q6** How much did the following factors influence your decision to enter your religious institute?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
The size of the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Its geographic location(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Its internationality, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community life in the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The lifestyle of members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The racial/ethnic background of members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The ages of members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The types of ministry of its members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Its practice regarding a religious habit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q7** How much encouragement did you receive from the following when you first considered entering your religious institute?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
Members of your institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocation director/team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spiritual director, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other men and women religious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diocesan priests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your parents, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your siblings, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other family members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in your parish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in your school or workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends within the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends outside the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q8** How much encouragement do you currently receive from the following in your life and ministry as a member of your religious institute?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
Members of your institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The leadership of your institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Novice/formation director/team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spiritual director, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other men and women religious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diocesan priests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your parents, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your siblings, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other family members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in your parish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in your school or workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People with whom you minister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People to whom you minister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends within the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends outside the institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q9** How important to you are these types of prayer?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
Daily Eucharist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Liturgy of the Hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-liturgical common prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Common meditation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eucharistic Adoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other devotional prayer, e.g. Rosary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faith sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private/charismatic/personal prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal meditation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q10** How important to you are these aspects of community life?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
Living with other members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Praying with other members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working with other members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sharing meals together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socialising/sharing leisure time together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q11** How much do you like living in these settings?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
Alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a small community of two or three	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a medium-sized community of 4 to 7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a large community of 8 or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With members of different ages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With members of different cultures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With members in different ministries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With only members of your institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With members of other institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With lay co-workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q12** How much do you prefer ministry in these settings?

	Not at all	A little	To some extent	Very much
With other members of your institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With members of other institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a ministry sponsored by your institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a parish or diocesan ministry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With an organisation that is Catholic but is not sponsored by your institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With an organisation that is religious but is not Catholic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With an organisation that is not religious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In an educational ministry (Catholic)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q13** How would you rate the following in your religious institute?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Efforts to promote vocations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welcome and support of newer members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formation/incorporation programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for ongoing formation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparation for ministry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for spiritual growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for personal growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sense of identity as religious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sense of identity as institute members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fidelity to the Church and its teachings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus on mission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commitment to ministry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Response to the needs of our time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Efforts to promote social justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of community life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communal prayer experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships with one another	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q14a** Do members of your institute wear a habit or clerical collar?

- Yes (*. . . if **Yes**, please answer the next question*)  
 No (*. . . if **No**, please skip to Question 15*)

**Q14b** If wearing the habit or collar is optional, how frequently do you wear it?

- Never  
 Once in a while  
 Only at certain time, e.g., ministry, prayer  
 In all or most circumstances

**Q15a** Were you employed before you entered religious life?

- Yes (*... if **Yes**, please answer the next question*)  
 No (*... if **No**, please skip to Question 16a*)

**Q15b** Were you employed . . . ?

- Full-time  
 Part-time

**Q16a** Were you involved in any of the following before you entered?

	Please tick all that apply
Teacher in a Catholic school	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth ministry or group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young adult ministry or group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Campus ministry or group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Liturgical ministry, e.g., lector, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music ministry, cantor, choir	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retreats	<input type="checkbox"/>
World Youth Day or associated festival	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faith-sharing group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religious institute volunteer program	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q16b** Were you a paid employee in any of the activities you marked above?

- Yes, full-time employee  
 Yes, part-time employee  
 No

**Q17** What is your current status in your religious institute?

	Please click all that apply
Candidate/postulant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Novice	<input type="checkbox"/>
Temporary vows/commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q18** Are you . . .

- Male (*... if **Male**, please answer the next question*)  
 Female (*... if **Female**, please skip to Question 20a*)

**Q19a** Are you (or do you expect to be) a . . .

- Brother  
 Priest

**Q19b** What year were you ordained or do you expect to be ordained to the priesthood? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q20a** Were you born in Australia?

- Yes (*... if **Yes**, please skip to Question 21*)  
 No (*... if **No**, please answer the next question*)

**Q20b** What was your country of birth? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q20c** In what year did you first arrive in Australia to live?

**Q21** Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- Yes
- No

**Q22** Where were your parents born?

	Australia	Overseas English speaking country	Overseas non-English speaking country
Mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Father	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q23a** Is English your first language (mother tongue)?

- Yes (*... if Yes, please skip to Question 24*)
- No (*... if No, please answer the next question*)

**Q23b** What was your first language? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q24** What year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q25** What year did you enter your religious institute? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q26** What year did you profess or do you expect to profess your final vows/perpetual commitment? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q27** What age did you first consider religious life? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q28** Did you attempt to enter another religious institute before this one?

- Yes, but I did not enter
- Yes, and I stayed for (*insert number of years*): \_\_\_\_\_
- No

**Q29a** Were you raised Catholic?

- Yes (*... if Yes, please skip to Question 30*)
- No (*... if No, please answer the next question*)

**Q29b** If you became Catholic as an adult, at what age did you become a Catholic? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q29c** What was your previous religion? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q30** Were you ever married?

- Yes
- No

**Q31** Do you have any children?

- Yes
- No

**Q32a** Were you ever home-schooled?

- Yes (*... if Yes, please answer the next question*)
- No (*... if No, please skip to Question 33*)

**Q32b** Number of years you were home-schooled? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q33** What was the highest level of education you completed **before** you entered your religious institute?

- High school or less
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Other (*please describe*): \_\_\_\_\_

**Q34** If you continued your education after you entered, what is the highest level of education you have so far completed?

- High school or less
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Other (*please describe*): \_\_\_\_\_

**Q35a** Would you be willing to participate in a focus group to discuss your experience of joining and being a member of a religious congregation?

- Yes (*. . . if Yes, please send an email indicating your willingness to: s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au*)
- No

***Now for the final three questions where we invite you to write down some thoughts about religious life.***

**Q36** What most attracted you to your religious institute?

**Q37** What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?

**Q38** What do you find most challenging about religious life?

***Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.***

*Please post this form to:*

*Mr Stephen Reid  
ACBC Pastoral Research Office  
Australian Catholic University  
Locked Bag 4115  
Fitzroy Victoria 3065*

*Or scan and email to:*

[s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au](mailto:s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au)



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## Pastoral Research Office

### Understanding Religious Vocation in Australia Today

#### A research study of recent vocation to the priesthood and religious life

#### LETTER TO LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

21 October, 2014

Dear Congregational Leader,

*Who is joining religious life and the priesthood?*

Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA) believes this is a timely and important question, given the changing nature of Australian society, current challenges facing the future of religious and priestly vocations, and the fact that 2015 has been declared as the Year of Consecrated Life. CVMA has therefore invited the Pastoral Research Office (PRO) to carry out research to answer this question. The purpose of the study is to help identify successful practices for promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life and to understand what factors assist in the retention of new members.

The research project includes a detailed study using quantitative and qualitative research methods, including online surveys, interviews and focus group. The project aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of the men and women who have entered religious life and diocesan seminaries (and stayed) since 2000? Why did they enter, and why have they stayed?
- 2) What are the characteristics, policies and practices of the religious institutes, societies and diocesan seminaries (and dioceses) that are attracting and successfully retaining new members?

On behalf of CVMA, I would like to invite you to participate in this research project, and I would also like to invite those current members of your congregation who entered in 2000 or later, including those who are already fully professed, to take part.

If you accept this invitation, this is what is involved:

- You are asked to complete an online questionnaire by **7 November 2014**. The questionnaire can be found at [https://acu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_a2xqsfguhJWkWfb](https://acu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_a2xqsfguhJWkWfb) (This link has also been provided to you electronically in the email accompanying this letter). A hard copy of the questionnaire is also available should you prefer to respond in that way. It is estimated that completing it will take about 20-30 minutes.

- We would like to survey members of your congregation who entered the congregation in 2000 or later, including those who are already fully professed. We will send you another link at a later date that these members can use to fill in an online survey. The data received from these surveys is confidential. It will not be possible to identify any participant in data or reports made available to CVMA or others.
- It is possible that one of these members of your congregation will be invited to take part in a focus group to be conducted at a later stage of the research.
- You may also be invited to participate in an interview and, if so, you will be invited to sign a consent form before being interviewed, should you choose to participate. It may be that we will want to include certain things you say in the interview in our report in a way which makes you identifiable. If that happens, we will seek your explicit permission to include that material.
- Interviews will be conducted by a member of the research team at a convenient location for you.

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the project.

I trust that you will welcome the opportunity to take part in this research project.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Dr Bob Dixon  
Director



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## Pastoral Research Office

### Understanding Religious Vocation in Australia Today

A research study of recent vocations to religious life

#### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Title of project: Understanding Religious Vocation in Australia Today

Names of investigators: Dr. Robert Dixon (Principal Investigator)  
Professor Ruth Webber (Co-investigator)  
Rev Dr Noel Connolly SSC (Co-investigator)

- I, ..... have read and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to Leaders of Religious Congregations. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time. I give my consent for the interview to be digitally audio recorded.
- I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that might enable me to be identified.
- I agree that the researchers will use their discretion to remove any sensitive data and that I will have the option to review all remarks made by me that may identify me before they are used in the study.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....  
(Block letters)

SIGNATURE: ..... DATE: .....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: .....

DATE: .....

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS CONCERNING CURRENT MEMBERS WHO HAVE JOINED SINCE 2000

Motivation for joining

1. Could you tell me a bit about the people who have joined your congregation since 2000? Are there any common aspects of those who have joined?
2. What do you think were the main factors that attracted them to your congregation rather than another congregation?
3. To what extent do you think the particular apostolate of your congregation was a factor in their being attracted?
4. What differences, if any, have you noticed between the types of people joining the congregation today compared to those who were joining in the last decades of the 20th century?

Vocation Program

5. What was the motivation for the new recruits to come to your congregation?
6. What processes have you put in place to attract people to your congregation?
7. Does your congregation have a Vocation Director? Or a Vocation Team? Please tell me what his/her/their role involves.
8. It is not always easy to keep new members. Why do you think you have been successful in attracting and keeping new members when many other congregations have not?

Formation

9. Can you describe the entry pathway into your congregation? What stages does a person go through on the way to becoming a professed member? How long does it typically take?
10. What programs have you put in place to help new members feel comfortable, welcome and to feel integrated and involved in the community?
11. How does the formation program assist new members to find a role within the congregation that matches their skills and the needs of the congregation?
12. People are not always attracted to the same things. What are the differences in your group as to the reasons they were attracted to join? Were different people among your new

members attracted by different aspects of religious life? Is there an age or ethnicity dimension to this?

13. Can you give me some examples of how the things you have put in place have helped a new member to address their concern and their disconnection from much of their past life?

#### Communal living

14. What are the most difficult aspects of community life for new member? Examples?

15. How do you assist members to adapt to communal living?

#### Special features of your congregation

16. Do you have a habit / dress code or other ways of living that are specific to your congregation? If so, how do new members adapt to it? How do you help them see that these things are an integral part of being in the congregation? To what extent do you think your habit / dress code is part of the attraction to new members?

#### Vocation discernment

17. How do you think new members understand or think about 'vocation'?
18. How do you help new members who are struggling with their faith or with some of the teachings or practices of the church?

#### The link to the wider Church

19. How do you assist new members to connect with the wider church and to see that they are part of a whole church with a vast history?
20. How do you provide opportunities for new members to work with people outside the congregation and to contribute to the needs of society inside and outside the church?

#### Leaving the congregation

21. Some people inevitably leave the congregation. In your experience why do people make this decision and what role do you have in this process?

#### Written Material

22. Could you please provide copies of all promotion materials used by the religious institute to attract new members? (Print, Internet, published advertisements etc.)



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## Pastoral Research Office

### Understanding Religious Vocation in Australia Today

A research study of recent vocations to religious life

#### CONSENT FORM FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Title of project: Understanding Religious Vocation in Australia Today

Names of investigators: Dr. Robert Dixon (Principal Investigator)  
Professor Ruth Webber (Co-investigator)  
Rev Dr Noel Connolly SSC (Co-investigator)

- I, ..... have read and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to Members of Religious Congregations Who Have Entered Since 2000. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time. I give my consent for the focus group discussion to be digitally audio recorded.
- I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.
- I agree that the researchers will use their discretion to remove any sensitive data and that I will have the option to review all remarks made by me that could conceivably identify me before they are used in the study.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....  
(Block letters)

SIGNATURE: ..... DATE: .....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: .....

DATE: .....

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP OF NEW MEMBERS

1. Could you tell me a bit about what attracted you to join your particular congregation rather than another congregation? What was it that drew you to this community? Did you spend some time in the community before you entered?
2. How did your congregation go about helping you to find your vocation?
3. It is not easy to attract and keep new member why do you think your community has been successful in attracting new members? Some communities are better at keeping new members than others, in your experience why is this so?
4. What were the main challenges you faced when you first joined the community and how did the community help you to overcome them? Can you give me some examples of how support is provided to help new members adjust?
5. It is not always living in a community in close contact with other people? What are the difficulties that you have noticed or experienced in this area? How did the community help people resolve interpersonal conflicts or niggles? Any idea on other things that could be done?
6. Now you have been in the community for some time, could you tell me a bit about what gives you the greatest level of satisfaction in your community? What makes you feel good about being a member of your community?
7. Some people inevitably leave the congregation. In your experience why do people make this decision? Can this be a supportive process? Can you give me an example?
8. What advice if any would you give to leaders of communities about attracting new members and of helping them adjust to their new life?

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