

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

*Recent Vocations to Religious Life:
A Report for the
National Religious Vocation Conference*

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a study of recent vocations to religious life in the United States that was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). The study is based on surveys of religious institutes as well as surveys and focus groups with recent vocations to religious life. The study was designed to replicate and extend similar research conducted by NRVC and CARA in 2009, so as to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the men and women who have entered religious life in recent years.

The study is based on three major research components:

- A single-informant survey of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life
- A survey of those who entered religious life within the last 15 years and remain members
- Focus groups with those who entered religious life within the last 15 years and remain

For the first phase of the study, CARA surveyed religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. Using mailing lists provided by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), CARA sent a questionnaire to each major superior with a cover letter from Sister Deborah Marie Borneman, SS.C.M., NRVC Director of Mission Integration, and a return envelope addressed to CARA. The cover letter and survey included instructions to respond only for the governance unit (e.g., congregation or province) for which the superior was responsible and, for international institutes or societies, to respond only for members who entered and are based in the United States.

CARA also sent questionnaires and cover letters to superiors of monasteries of contemplative nuns (who do not belong to either LCWR or CMSWR) as well as to superiors of new or emerging communities of consecrated life using mailing lists that CARA compiled for previous research. The list of emerging communities included some that are public associations of the faithful that are in the process of seeking canonical status as a religious institute or society of apostolic life.

Throughout the report, the term “religious institute” is used for religious institutes, societies of apostolic life, and public associations of the faithful that are seeking canonical status as a religious institute or society of apostolic life.

CARA mailed surveys to a total of 755 governance units in spring 2019 and then conducted extensive follow-up by e-mail, telephone, and fax throughout spring and summer 2019 to achieve a high response rate. Three religious superiors reported that the study did not apply to them because they are not part of a U.S. institute and all of their formation takes place outside the United States. Another 19 religious superiors declined to participate but did not give a reason. Altogether, CARA received completed responses from 503 religious institutes for a response rate of 67 percent. A close examination of the lists and the non-respondents revealed that some of the congregations and provinces on the original lists had merged or were in the process of merging with others during the course of the research. A few other entities on the lists are neither provinces nor congregations, but regions or houses that do not have formation/incorporation in the United States and should not have been included in the survey. Still others, particularly among the contemplative monasteries and the emerging communities, had apparently ceased to exist.¹

CARA estimates that the total number of governance units (i.e., congregations, provinces, monasteries) in the United States is approximately 750. The 503 units that responded account for 42,586 men and women religious, or well over 70 percent of all women and men religious in the United States. Many of the governance units that did not respond appear to be either small, mostly contemplative, communities that may not have had anyone in initial formation for some time, or those who are still in the process of becoming institutes of consecrated life.

This initial survey was designed to gather statistics about the membership in the institute, including the numbers in initial formation or incorporation; basic information about vocation promotion and formation in the institute; and basic data about the institute's ministry, community life, and community prayer.

The second phase of the research consisted of a survey of "new members," that is, current candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows or commitment as well as those who had professed final vows or commitment within the last 15 years. In spring and summer 2019, the questionnaire was sent to 3,318 identified new members and those in formation (emailed to 2,804 and mailed to 514 who had no email address, with a return envelope addressed to CARA). Both mailings included a cover letter from Sister Deborah Marie Borneman, SS.C.M. A total of 55 email addresses were returned as undeliverable. Another 35 invitees responded via email that they were not willing to participate and another 50 responded via email that the study did not apply to them since they had entered religious life before 2003 (mostly transfers from another religious institute within the last 15 years). Approximately 100 completed surveys were unusable because the participants reported entering religious life before 2003. When all these are removed from the sample, CARA received a total of 1,933 usable responses from new members and those in formation for a response rate of at least 63 percent.

The survey of new members was designed to identify what attracted these candidates and new members to religious life and to their particular religious institute or society; what they found helpful in their discernment process; what their attitudes and preferences are regarding community

¹ "Reconfiguration" among religious institutes proved to be one of the most challenging issues for calculating a response rate as well as for obtaining historical information about new membership. Responses to questions about reconfiguration in the survey revealed that 13 percent of the respondents were in the process of reconfiguring at the time the survey was conducted in 2019 and another 17 percent had reconfigured since 2003. Thus, the number of "institutes" changed while the survey was being conducted.

life, prayer, and ministry; and what sustains and challenges them in religious life. The survey also asked about their background characteristics as well as their experiences before entering religious life. In addition, the survey included a question asking the respondent if he or she would be willing to participate in a focus group.

The final phase of the research, which included focus groups with new members, was conducted during fall 2019. CARA conducted 13 focus groups with new members in Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, San Antonio, and St. Louis. These sites were selected because of the relatively large concentration of new members in each of these areas. Participants were selected from among the survey respondents who indicated that they would be willing to participate in a focus group and included women and men, ordained and non-ordained, contemplative and active, and professed members as well as those in formation.

The focus groups explored issues similar to those examined in the survey. Specifically, they were designed to gather insights from newer members about what attracts, sustains, and challenges them in religious life. The discussions were also directed toward understanding the attitudes and experiences of new members and especially toward identifying “best practices” for vocation and formation ministry that would assist men and women in discerning and responding to a call to religious life.

Major Findings

Part I: Findings from the Survey of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life

Religious Life Today

- The study identified at least 2,471 men and women in initial formation and about 1,000 more who had professed perpetual vows within the previous 15 years. The actual number of new members is likely even higher, given that at least a third of U.S. religious institutes did not respond to the survey and/or did not provide information about members who had professed final vows since 2003. The findings from the surveys, and especially those from the focus groups with new members, confirm that there are still significant numbers of men and women who are responding to a call to religious life and are hopeful about its future.
- Since 2003, over 80 percent of responding religious institutes has had at least one serious discernment and nearly 90 percent continue to accept new members and promote religious vocations.
- The expected demographic shift in *total numbers* of religious continues, due to the unusually large number of entrants in the first half of the last century. The study reports 11,780 men (a 15 percent decrease from 2009) and 30,806 women (a 36 percent decrease from a decade ago).

- The total number of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life (i.e., congregations, provinces, monasteries) in the United States is approximately 750. Fifty percent have less than 50 members.
- Indicating that new membership has remained fairly steady, the number of men and women in *initial formation* is not significantly different from that reported in the 2009 study. Superiors report a total of 1,085 women in initial formation (a decline of 10 percent from 2009) and 1,386 men in initial formation (a decline of less than 1 percent from 2009).
- Sixty percent of responding institutes have at least one person in initial formation. Having someone in formation and having more than one or two in formation is more common in institutes of men than in institutes of women. For those who entered and then departed from religious life since 2003, the most common time to do so was during candidacy/postulancy, which is part of the discernment and formation process and consistent with 2009 departure rates.
- Eighty-seven percent of men and women in *perpetual vows* are over age 60, a statistic that is unchanged since 2009, which suggests that the influx of newer members has helped to offset the drastic decline that was anticipated as the unusually high number of members who entered during the first half of the last century age out.
- Almost half of those in *initial formation* are under age 30, an increase from the 43 percent who were under age 30 in 2009. Nearly three-fourths of those in initial formation are part of the Millennial Generation (born in the 1980s or 1990s) and another 6 percent, born in 2000 or later, could be considered part of the emerging next generation of young adults.
- Those in initial formation are more diverse, ethnically and racially, than those in perpetual vows, as was the case in 2009. However, those in perpetual vows have increased in diversity by 7 percentage points since 2009.
- Sixty-seven percent of U.S. religious institutes claim that the majority of their perpetually professed members are located in the Northeast and Midwest.

Vocation Promotion and Discernment Programs

- Seventy-seven percent of responding religious institutes report that they have one or more vocation directors or a vocation team, down from 88 percent in 2009. Ninety-four percent of vocation directors/teams meet with leadership at least annually.
- The average annual budget for the vocation director/team (excluding salaries) is \$34,039. However, half of responding institutes report an annual budget of \$14,600 or less for their vocation director/team and some 4 percent of institutes declare that there is no budget for the vocation director/team.

- Institutes of men are more likely than institutes of women to indicate that vocations is a topic on all or most of the institute’s leadership meetings (41 percent compared to 23 percent).
- Religious institutes are sponsoring fewer discernment programs than they did a decade ago, but “Come and See” experiences continue to be the most common program, offered by 60 percent of responding institutes.
- The most common vocation promotion approach among responding institutes (78 percent) is vocation information on the institute’s website or a distinct website for vocations. Vocation promotion and discernment programs are most typically targeted toward young adults and college-age students.

Interaction with Others in Formation

- Two in three responding institutes report that their candidates/postulants interact with candidates/postulants from other units of their institute, society, or federation and just over three-fifths have them interacting with candidates/postulants from other institutes or societies. This increase in cross and intercongregational initial formation represents a change in formation practices in the past century.
- Almost three in five indicate that their novices interact in an Intercommunity Novitiate with novices from other units of their institute, society, or federation and more than half send their novices to an Intercommunity Novitiate with novices from other institutes or societies.
- Nearly 40 percent of respondents indicate that their institute offers a formation experience for U.S. members in initial formation that takes place outside the United States. Men’s institutes are more likely than women’s institutes to offer such a program.

Community Life and Prayer

- Among the various factors related to healthy and holy community life, institute leaders in 2019, similar to those in 2009, rated communal prayer and shared experiences with other community members most highly. More than eight in ten rate praying with other members and celebrating holidays/feast days together as “very” important.
- Personal private prayer characterizes the regular prayer life of a majority of active members in almost all responding institutes (95 percent), followed closely by daily Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours, reported by nearly nine in ten responding institutes.

Concerns of Superiors for New Members

- Major superiors are most concerned about strengthening peer support among new members. They also express concern about the gap in age among institute members and the healthcare and cultural challenges older members pose for younger members.

- Major superiors raise many concerns about the effectiveness of their formation process and the catechesis of their new members. Some express concern that new members may not have the level of commitment necessary to persevere in religious life or the necessary support to sustain them in their vocation.
- Community life is another serious concern for major superiors. They hope that the new members will see the value of living in a community even if they must do so across communities and cultures.

Support from Major Superiors for New Members

- Superiors recognize that the best way to nurture a vocation is to ensure that it is strengthened by a solid formation experience. Many hold regular meetings with the formation director and individually with those in formation. Many also provide a mentor for those in formation.
- Another way that religious institutes support their newer members is through deliberate engagement of the wider religious community in the accompaniment and formation process. This helps newer members, especially those who may be the sole new member in their unit, to establish the support of peers in formation. This inclusion in the wider community also helps newer members to feel that they have a voice and a place in the community.
- Prayer and spiritual direction are a vital part of formation in religious life. These tools are also essential to the support of newer members in their vocation.
- Perhaps one of the most important ways that religious institutes support newer members in their vocation is through listening and dialogue along the journey. Many superiors mentioned this as a way they support their newer members.

Part II: Findings from the Survey and Focus Groups of New Members in Religious Institutes

Characteristics of New Members

- Respondents to the survey of new members are nearly equally divided by gender; 51 percent are women and 49 percent are men. Close to half are in their 30s, compared to just over a quarter who were in this age range in 2009. About 30 percent are ages 19-29, compared to just 16 percent who were in this range in 2009. Seven in ten had considered religious life by the time they were 21. The average age of entrance is 28 for men and 29 for women. This is a little younger than the average age of entrance in 2009, which was 30 for men and 32 for women.
- Compared to finally professed members, those in initial formation are more likely to come from diverse cultural backgrounds: 11 percent are Hispanic/Latino(a), 13 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, 3 percent are African American/African/black, and 3 percent are of mixed race or ethnicity. About 70 percent are Caucasian/European American/Anglo/white, compared to about 87 percent of perpetually professed members.
- One-quarter of those in initial formation were born outside the United States and a third have at least one parent who was born outside the United States. Among those who were born in the United States, six in ten grew up in the Northeast or the Midwest regions. Three in four speak English as their first language and four in ten speak at least two languages fluently.
- About nine in ten were raised Catholic and most (73 percent) attended a Catholic school for at least part of their education. About half attended parish-based religious education and 10 percent were homeschooled for at least part of their education. Almost half (49 percent) earned a bachelor's degree, 17 percent a Master's, and 4 percent a doctoral degree before they entered their religious institute.
- At least eight in ten were employed before they entered, usually in a full-time position. Slightly more than half were engaged in ministry, about a quarter on a full-time basis, one-sixth on a part-time basis, and about three-fifths on a volunteer basis. Many were also involved in various parish ministries and/or other volunteer work.
- Among the male respondents, 80 percent are or expect to become priests and 20 percent are or expect to become brothers.

Attraction to Religious Life and to a Particular Religious Institute

- New members are drawn to *religious life* primarily by a sense of call and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth. Most respondents report that they were attracted “very much” by a desire for a deeper relationship with God (86 percent), a sense of call to religious life (79 percent), and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (77 percent). To only a slightly lesser degree, most new members also say they were attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service and a desire to be part of a community. Women are more likely than men to say they were

attracted by a sense of call, a desire for prayer and spiritual growth, and by a desire for a deeper relationship with God. Men are more likely than women to say they were attracted by a desire to be of service and by a desire to be part of a community.

- Newer members were attracted to *their particular religious institute* by its spirituality, charism, prayer life, mission, and community life of the institute. Although the ministries of the institute are also important to most new members, they are less important than spirituality, prayer, community, and lifestyle. Millennial respondents are more likely than older generations to be “very much” attracted by the example of the members and the community life of the institute. They are least likely to be “very much” attracted by the life and works of the founder/ess.
- Newer members in religious life first became acquainted with their religious institutes in many different ways. The most common experience was in an institution, such as a school, where the members served (37 percent). Men are more likely than women to report that they first encountered their religious institute in a school or other institution where the members served. Women are more likely than men to indicate that they learned about their institute through a presentation at a school/parish/youth ministry event.
- Some younger members did not know anyone in religious life before they sensed a call to religious life. Many found out or learned more about their institute online. Men and women are equally likely to have had religious life formally presented, either in class or in campus ministry, as an option for them to consider while they were in college (nearly four in ten). Millennials are also much more likely than older generations to have an experience such as this while they were in college. Direct experience with the institute and its members, through “Come and See” experiences, discernment retreats, and other opportunities to spend time with members are especially important for this age group.
- When asked how much various factors influenced their decision to enter their religious institute, respondents were most likely to name the charism and community life of their institute as the factors that influenced them “very much.” Women are more likely than men to be “very much” influenced by prayer life or prayer styles, community life, the way the vows are lived in the institute, and the living of the Gospel values. Men are more influenced by the future of the institute, its geographic location, and its ministries.

Encouragement and Support in Discernment and in Religious Life

- During their initial discernment, most new members report that they received a great deal of encouragement from institute members, their vocation director or team, and their spiritual director. Most also report high levels of encouragement from those to whom and with whom they minister. Although many new members did not experience a great deal of encouragement from parents, siblings, and other family members when they were first considering a vocation to religious life, 70 percent report that support from their family increased after they entered religious life.
- Compared to older new members, younger new members are more likely to report that they were encouraged by institute members, their vocation director or team, parents, family

members, and diocesan priests when they were first considering religious life. They are also more likely to report receiving encouragement from diocesan priests in their life and ministry now.

- Seven in ten report that friends outside the institute and people in the parish were also a significant source of support. Men were more likely than women to report receiving “very much” encouragement from their parents and grandparents.

Prayer and Spirituality

- Many new members identify personal private prayer as one of the aspects of religious life that is most important to them and that most sustains them now. When asked about the importance of various types of communal prayer, respondents are most likely to name daily Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours as the prayer types that are most important to them. New members in 2019 are more likely than those in 2009 to report that Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament/Eucharistic Adoration is “very” important to them (66 percent compared to 50 percent in 2009).
- Millennial Generation respondents are much more likely than other respondents—especially those from the Vatican II Generation—to say that daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, and other devotional prayers are “very” important to them. Compared to younger respondents, older respondents place greater importance on faith-sharing and, to a lesser degree, on prayer using an app/online resources and ecumenical interfaith prayer, such as Taizé.

Community Life and Ministry Setting Preferences

- As in 2009, praying together, living together, and sharing meals with other members are particularly important aspects of community life to most newer members of religious institutes. Women are more likely than men to rate doing things together with other members as “very” important to them, which includes praying with other members, socializing/sharing leisure time together, and celebrating holidays/feast days together. Women are also more likely than men to report that ongoing formation and lifelong education are “very” important to them.
- Repeating a pattern of enthusiasm indicated throughout the study, Millennial Generation respondents, in particular, are more likely than older respondents to report that living, ministering, sharing meals, and socializing with other members are “very” important to them.
- When asked about various living arrangements, most new members prefer to live in a large (eight or more) or medium-sized (four to seven) community, living with members of different ages at or near their ministry site. Younger respondents express even stronger preferences for living with members of their institute in large community settings and for living with other members close to them in age.

Evaluation of Religious Institutes

- New members give their religious institutes the highest ratings on their care and support of the elderly members and are positive overall about the quality of life in their religious institute. The younger a respondent is, the more likely that he or she rates the following aspects as “excellent”: the efforts to promote vocations, the initial formation/incorporation programs, and lifelong educational opportunities.
- Overall, women tend to be more positive than men in their evaluation of various aspects of life in their religious institutes. The largest gap (more than 30 percent) in an “excellent” rating between women and men is in their assessment of communal prayer and fidelity to the church within their institutes.

Concerns for Their Future in Religious Life

- When asked to share their thoughts about what most concerns them about their future in religious life, newer members expressed concerns similar to those shared by institute leaders in the first part of this report, such as the gap in age between the senior members and the new members and worries about the future of the institute as the communities age and decrease in size. More than one in ten comments from newer members, however, expressed a lack of concern about their future in religious life and more than a quarter expressed a concern related to *personal* fidelity to their commitment to religious life.
- The most commonly expressed concern that newer members express about their future in religious life is a very personal concern—that they will have the faithfulness to persevere in this life they have chosen. At least a quarter of respondents shared this concern, although a substantial number worded this sentiment more as a desire than a concern.
- Newer members are also concerned about the changing demographics of aging members and fewer vocations to replace them. They also worry about the necessity to restructure the institute and the effect of restructuring on younger members.
- Closely related to concerns about smaller congregations, many newer members also express concerns about finding balance in their lives. They worry about overwork and burnout. Some also express concerns about stresses related to being called into positions of leadership for which they do not feel adequately prepared.
- Many newer members express concerns related to being able to live an authentic community life. As newer members, they sometimes struggle with challenges related to living in community. Others are concerned with the challenges of intergenerational living. While some institutes struggle with concerns of aging membership and institutes decreasing in size, others are concerned about growth in their institute and the ability to maintain a strong sense of community. Loneliness is another concern expressed by newer members, which is related to their concern for authentic community life.

- A number of newer members express concerns related to adapting to rapid changes in society. Some are concerned about their own ability to adapt, while others are more concerned about the ability of their institute and its members to adapt to social and cultural changes.

Hopes for the Future

- Although cognizant of the challenges and concerns expressed by major superiors in the first part of this report, newer members are more optimistic than the superiors in their hopes for the future, perhaps because they recognize their own agency in creating a future for their institute. Focus group participants share the same awareness of the challenges and optimism about the future of religious life.
- Newer members realize that they have entered religious institutes that are, for the most part, characterized by smaller congregations and an aging membership. They are realistic about this reality while at the same time optimistic about the future and their role as members of these institutes. They express hope for renewal of religious life in general and of their religious institute in particular. Newer members realize that more deliberate efforts at networking and collaboration can help them and their institutes to extend their ministry.
- Newer members recognize that the recent past has been turbulent and difficult for religious institutes. They sense that many institutes have been struggling just to survive in light of smaller numbers and increased workload shared among an increasingly aged membership. Their hope for the next ten years is for an increase in clarity of mission and identity as renewed institutes reemerge from consolidation and restructuring.
- Newer members eagerly anticipate the evolution of religious life in the next ten years. They look forward to increased collaboration across generations. They also recognize the increased cultural diversity of the Catholic Church in the United States and they look forward to ensuring that religious life reflects that diversity.
- Newer members recognize the need for additional formation in leadership so that they are prepared to assume leadership in their institutes and in the Church. They are eager to move beyond diminishment and to expand the mission of their institute into new avenues for ministry. At the same time, some newer members feel drawn to return to the roots of their institute and to restore a sense of its original charism.
- Newer members desire members of all ages to be committed to living the charism more vibrantly with a greater effort to live in solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Unlike previous generations to religious life, they recognize stewardship involves divesting of empty buildings, underutilized property, and sponsored institutions to live more simply utilizing human and material resources to benefit the neediest.

Introduction

This report presents findings from a study of recent vocations to religious life in the United States that was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). The study is based on surveys of religious institutes, and surveys and focus groups with recent vocations to religious life. The study was designed to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the men and women who are coming to religious life today.

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congregations, but regions or houses that do not have formation/incorporation in the United States and should not have been included in the survey. Still others, particularly among the contemplative monasteries and the emerging communities, had apparently not yet come into existence, ceased to exist, or changed forms due to reconfiguration.²

CARA estimates that the total number of governance units (i.e., congregations, provinces, monasteries) in the United States is approximately 750. However, the responding units account for 42,586 men and women religious, or well over 70 percent of all women and men religious in the United States. Many of the governance units that did not respond appear to be either small, mostly contemplative, communities that may not have had anyone in initial formation for some time, or those who are still in the process of becoming institutes of consecrated life.

This initial survey was designed to gather statistics about the membership in the institute, including the numbers in initial formation or incorporation; basic information about vocation promotion and formation in the institute; and basic data about the institute's ministry, community life, and community prayer.

The second phase of the research consisted of a survey of “new members,” that is, current candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows or commitment as well as those who had professed final vows or commitment within the last 15 years. In spring and summer 2019, the questionnaire was sent to 3,318 identified new members and those in formation (emailed to 2,804 and mailed to 514 who had no email address, with a return envelope addressed to CARA). Both mailings included a cover letter from Sister Deborah Marie Borneman, SS.C.M. A total of 55 email addresses were returned as undeliverable. Another 35 invitees responded via email that they were not willing to participate and another 50 responded via email that the study did not apply to them since they had entered religious life before 2003 (mostly transfers from another religious institute within the last 15 years). Approximately 100 completed surveys were unusable because the participants reported entering religious life before 2003. When all these are removed from the sample, CARA received a total of 1,933 usable responses from new members and those in formation for a response rate of at least 63 percent.

The survey of new members was designed to identify what attracted these candidates and new members to religious life and to their particular religious institute or society; what they found helpful in their discernment process; what their attitudes and preferences are regarding community life, prayer, and ministry; and what sustains and challenges them in religious life. The survey also asked about their background characteristics as well as their experiences before entering religious life. In addition, the survey included a question asking the respondent if he or she would be willing to participate in a focus group.

The final phase of the research, which included focus groups with new members, was conducted during fall 2019. CARA conducted 13 focus groups with new members in Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and San Antonio. These

² “Reconfiguration” among religious institutes proved to be one of the most challenging issues for calculating a response rate as well as for obtaining historical information about new membership. Responses to questions about reconfiguration in the survey revealed that 13 percent of the respondents were in the process of reconfiguring at the time the survey was conducted in 2019 and another 17 percent had reconfigured since 2003. Thus, the number of “institutes” changed while the survey was being conducted.

sites were selected because of the relatively large concentration of new members in each of these areas. Participants were selected from among the survey respondents who indicated that they would be willing to participate in a focus group and included women and men, ordained and non-ordained, contemplative and active, and professed members as well as those in formation.

The focus groups explored issues similar to those examined in the survey. Specifically, they were designed to gather insights from newer members about what attracts, sustains, and challenges them in religious life. The discussions were also directed toward understanding the attitudes and experiences of new members and especially toward identifying “best practices” for vocation and formation ministry that would assist men and women in discerning and responding to a call to religious life.

Organization of this Report

The report is divided into two main parts:

- Part I provides an overview of religious life in the United States based primarily on the survey of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life.
- Part II presents the results of the survey of new members. It also draws on findings from the focus groups and personal conversations with new members.

Copies of the two survey questionnaires, with the percentage responses for each close-ended item, calculated out of 100 percent, can be found in Appendix I. The percentage of non-respondents to each item, calculated separately out of 100 percent, is also shown on the questionnaires in Appendix I. A complete transcription of the responses to the open-ended questions that were included in the survey of religious institutes and the survey of new members can be found in Appendix II. Copies of the protocol that guided the focus group discussions can be found in Appendix III, which also includes a complete transcription of the proceedings from each of the focus groups. Due to size, Appendix II and Appendix III are bound separately from this report.

Interpreting this Report

Most of the questions on the survey used four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “only a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “poor,” “fair,” “good,” and “excellent”). Two of the responses in these scales may be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“not at all” and “only a little,” for example) and the other two as relatively more “positive” (“somewhat” and “very much,” for example). Tables summarizing responses to questions that use these scales usually include two columns. The first column presents the percentage for the combined positive side of the scale, that is, the percentage of respondents saying *either* “somewhat” or “very much,” for example. The second column lists the percentage for the most positive category only, that is, the percentage of respondents saying “very much,” for example, since the most positive response sometimes distinguishes important contrasts in level of support. This is especially useful for this survey since many respondents tended to give “positive” responses but not always the *most* positive

responses. Readers may also wish to compare the difference between the two extreme responses. These comparisons and others may be drawn by referring to the complete percentage responses for each question, listed on the copies of the questionnaires in the Appendix I.

In addition to summarizing the responses to each question for respondents as a whole, the report also compares the responses of religious institutes and new members from several subgroups. Part I examines differences in responses of institutes of men and institutes of women. Part II examines differences in responses of men and women as well as those from different generations. Throughout the report, the tables and charts that compare differences between and among these various subgroups typically present only the percentages of those who give the most positive response.

Because this project deliberately replicates and extends the original research on new members to religious life that was conducted by NRVC and CARA in 2009, care is taken throughout the report to compare current findings to those from the 2009 study. Where appropriate, the report points out important similarities and differences in the findings from the two studies.

PART I: Findings from Major Superiors of Religious Institutes

This part of the report presents findings from the survey of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. As noted in the introduction, the survey was also sent to public associations of the faithful that are in the process of seeking canonical status as religious institutes. Throughout the remainder of this report, the term “religious institute” includes these public associations of the faithful as well as the societies of apostolic life that were included in the survey.

Types of Institutes and Societies

The survey included a series of questions to identify the type of religious institutes being surveyed. These questions asked about the gender of members, current status of reconfiguration, and acceptance of new members.

Three-tenths of the survey responses are from institutes, societies, or associations of men (30 percent) and seven-tenths are from institutes, societies, or associations of women (70 percent).

One in six responding religious institutes has reconfigured since 2003, while just over one in ten is in the process of reconfiguring.

Since 2003, more than eight in ten responding religious institutes has had at least one serious discerner and nearly nine in ten continue to accept new members and promote religious vocations.

Reconfiguration and New Members		
Percentage in each category		
	Yes	No
	%	%
Has your institute reconfigured since 2003	17	83
Is your institute in the process of reconfiguring	13	87
Since 2003, this unit has had <u>no</u> serious discerner	16	84
This unit has stopped accepting new members	12	88
This unit has stopped promoting vocations to religious life	11	89

Number of Members

A total of 490 of the 503 responding institutes report their current number of finally professed members as well as the number in each stage of initial formation (candidates or postulants, novices, and temporary professed).

Note that the survey used both “vows” and “commitment” as well as both “formation” and “incorporation” to account for differences in terminology among respondents as well as for differences between religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. In the rest of this report, the terms “final” or “perpetual” “profession” or “vows” includes definitive incorporation into a society. “Initial formation” includes candidates or postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows or commitment. It does not include pre-candidates or aspirants who have not yet entered.

The survey included questions about the number of candidates/postulants, novices, and temporary as well as the numbers of perpetually professed members according to their decade of birth. The following table aggregates the current numbers in each stage of formation.

Number in Initial Formation and Perpetual Vows			
	All	Men	Women
Candidates/postulants	524	240	284
Novices	532	268	264
Temporary vows/commitment	1,415	878	537
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	<u>40,115</u>	<u>10,394</u>	<u>29,721</u>
Total members	42,586	11,780	30,806

The institute survey identified at least 2,471 candidates/postulants, novices and temporary professed members of religious institutes, a similar number to the 2,630 reported in the 2009 survey and suggesting a 6 percent decrease among those in formation since 2009. Note that some 30 percent of religious institutes did not respond to the survey, thus the actual number of men and women in initial formation is likely even higher.

Due to the unusually large number of entrants in the first half of the last century, the expected demographic shift in total numbers of religious continues. The study reports 11,780 men (a 15 percent decrease from the 13,868 reported by men’s institutes in 2009) and 30,806 women (a 36 percent decrease from the 48,320 reported in 2009).

By contrast, the number of men and women religious *in initial formation* that are reported in this study are *not* significantly different from those reported in the 2009 study. Superiors report a total of 1,386 men in initial formation (compared to 1,396 men reported in 2009, a decline of less than 1 percent) and 1,085 women in initial formation (compared to 1,206 women reported in 2009, a decline of 10 percent).

Initial Formation

The table below shows the numbers in initial formation per institute when the categories are collapsed, that is, when candidates or postulants, novices, and temporary professed are combined into a single category of those in initial formation.

The majority of religious institutes have at least one person in initial formation. Six in ten responding institutes have at least one person in initial formation, compared to seven in ten in 2009. Having someone in formation and having more than one or two in formation is more common in institutes of men than in institutes of women.

Initial Formation in Religious Institutes in 2019			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
None	40	23	47
One or Two	26	25	27
Three to Five	16	19	15
Six to Ten	8	15	5
More than 10	10	18	6

Initial Formation in Religious Institutes in 2009			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
None	30	22	34
One or Two	33	21	37
Three to Five	18	20	27
Six to Ten	11	18	8
More than 10	8	19	4

Retention and Departure

The survey asked major superiors to report the total number who had entered their institute since 2003 and then those who remained, in order to calculate an overall retention rate. It should be noted that these numbers are typically not readily at hand for superiors and less than half provided sufficient information for calculation, so this retention rate should be interpreted with great caution. Of the total 12,145 entrants to religious life since 2003, some 31 percent remain through final vows.

Of the total 8,403 of those who entered and then departed from religious life since 2003, the most common time to do so was during candidacy/postulancy, which is the first part of the discernment and formation process. This finding is consistent with the 2009 finding about departures among religious. Departures decrease through novitiate and temporary vows, and only 7 percent leave after final vows.

Departures since 2003			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
During candidacy/postulancy	41	38	46
During novitiate	30	30	30
During temporary vows/commitment	22	23	20
After final/perpetual vows/commitment	7	8	4

Similar to 2009, there is no significant difference between men and women in the proportion who leave during novitiate or during temporary vows/commitment. Men are twice as likely as women to leave after final/perpetual vows/commitment.³

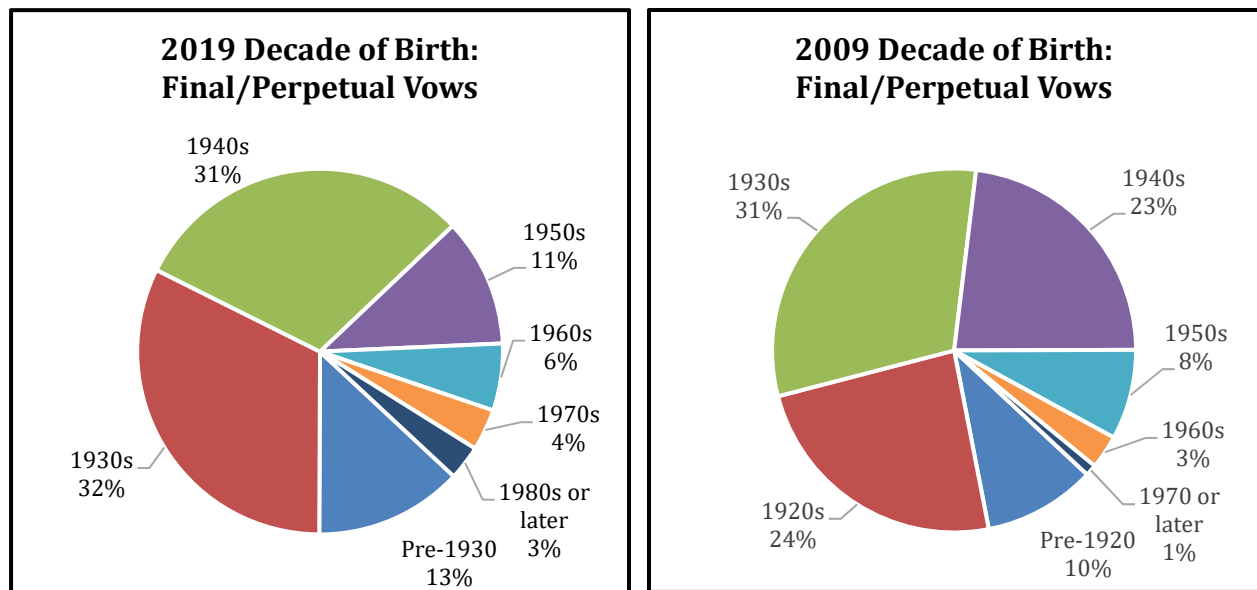
³ The differences between men and women may be related to the timing of priestly formation and ordination in the formation process. The survey did not ask the number who left during priestly formation or after ordination.

Age Distribution

The charts and tables below show the decade of birth and age distribution of all members, and then compare men and women for both perpetually professed and those in initial formation.

Perpetually Professed

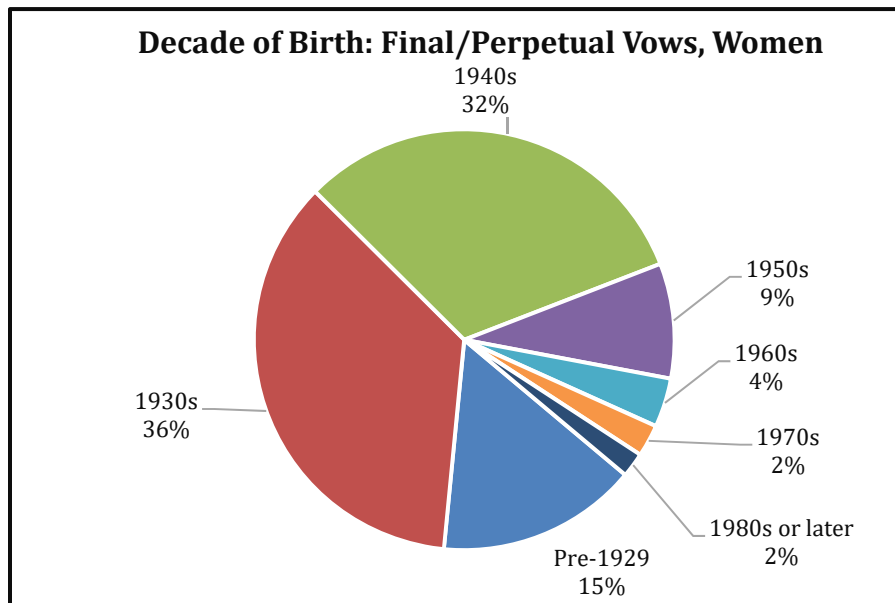
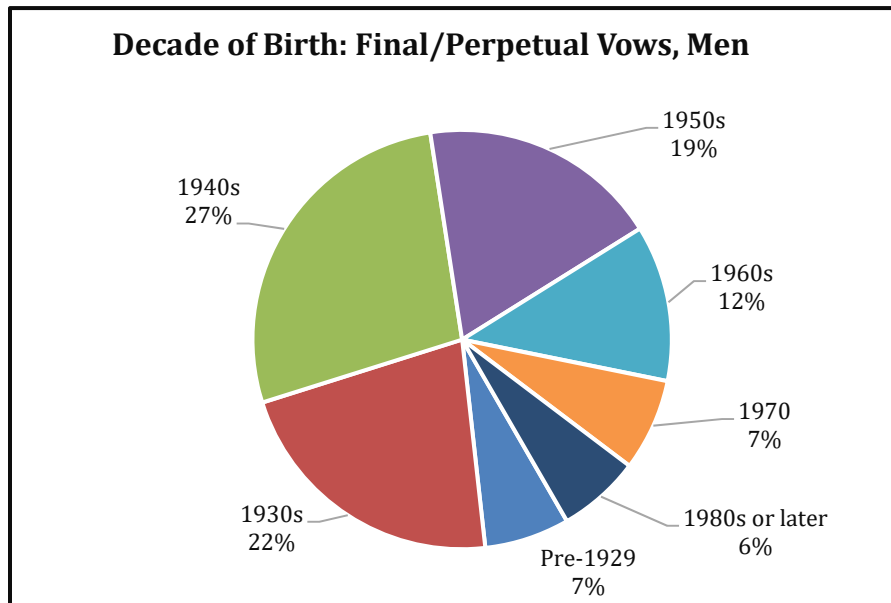
Almost nine in ten men and women religious in final/perpetual vows (87 percent) were born before 1960 and thus are in their 60s or older in 2019. This proportion is virtually unchanged from that reported in 2009 (88 percent in their 60s or older). This unchanged proportion over the decade suggests that the influx of newer members has helped to offset the drastic decline that was anticipated as the unusually high number of members who entered in the first half of the last century age out.



In 2019, some 13 percent of perpetually professed are younger than age 60 and the identical proportion are age 90 or older. A nearly identical 12 percent of perpetually professed in 2009 were younger than age 60 and 10 percent were older than 90.

The charts below illustrate the age distribution of perpetually professed men and perpetually professed women.

Very similar to the findings in 2009, compared to women, men have a higher percentage of younger members and a much lower percentage of very old members. A quarter of finally professed men (25 percent), compared to one in ten finally professed women (8 percent), were born in 1960 or later.⁴



⁴ Note that the graphs show the proportion of new members in each category. In absolute numbers, women religious outnumber men religious by more than three to one.

The table below shows the same information, converted into age ranges in the year 2019. In addition, the table shows the average, median, and modal median age of perpetually professed members reported by the responding religious institutes.⁵

Age Distribution and Median Age: Final/Perpetual Vows			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Under 40	3	6	2
40-49	4	7	2
50-59	6	12	4
60-69	11	19	9
70-79	31	27	32
80-89	32	22	36
90 and over	13	7	15
Average Median Age	72	68	74
Median Median Age	75	69	78
Modal Median Age	80	70	80

The most common median age in religious institutes of men is 70 and 80 in religious institutes of women. The average and median ages are slightly lower among institutes of men.

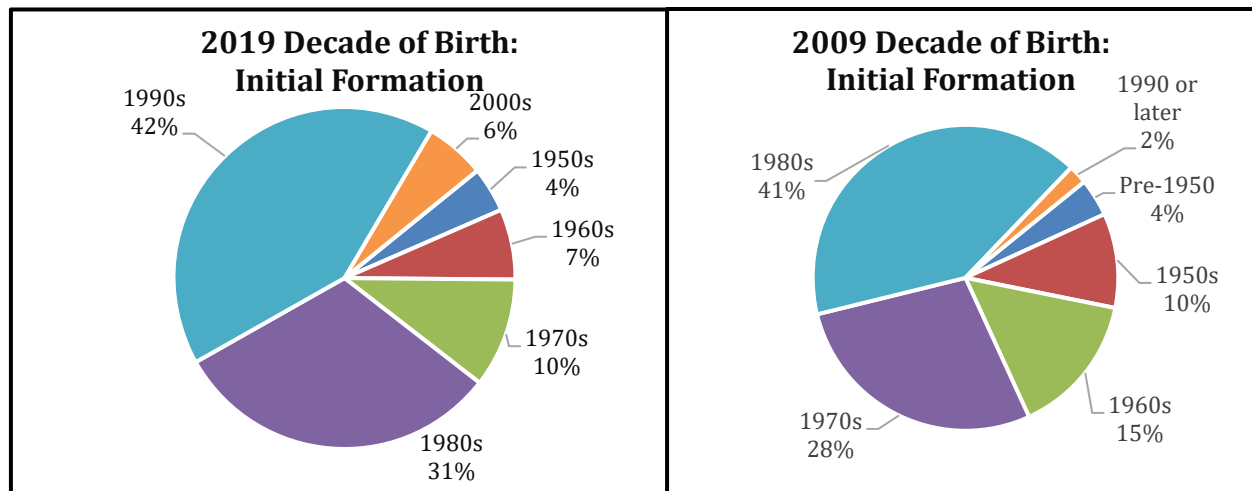
As expected, compared to the 2009 study, a higher proportion of perpetually professed members are in the older age categories. A third of perpetually professed are in their 80s now, compared to a quarter who were in their 80s in the 2009 study. Likewise, 13 percent now are in their 90s or older, compared to 10 percent who were in that category in 2009. However, 13 percent in 2019 are younger than age 60, compared to an almost identical 12 percent who were under age 60 in 2009.

⁵ The survey asked respondents to report the median age in their institutes. From this information, CARA calculated the mean, median, and modal median ages.

Initial Formation

The following chart shows the decade of birth of those in initial formation, that is, of those who are candidates or postulants, novices, or in temporary vows or commitment.

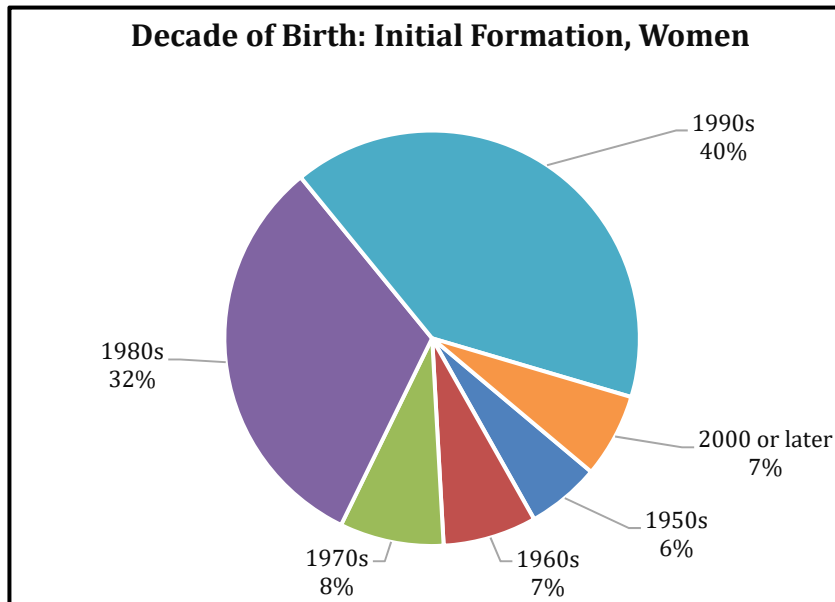
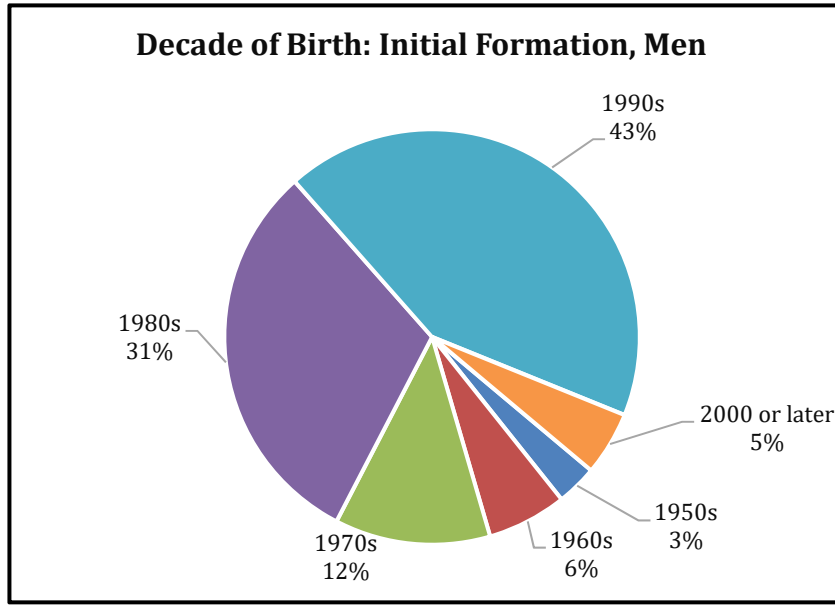
Almost half of those in initial formation (48 percent) were born in 1990 or later and are thus under 30 in 2019 (an increase from the 43 percent who were under age 30 in 2009). Nearly three-fourths of those in initial formation would be considered to be part of the Millennial generation, usually defined as those born from 1982 to 1996 or later. At least 6 percent may even belong to the next generation after the Millennials, depending on the year used to determine the end of the Millennial generation.



Those in initial formation in 2019 are a bit younger than those who were in initial formation in 2009. Nearly eight in ten of those in initial formation in 2019 (79 percent) are under age 40, compared to 71 percent of those in initial formation in 2009 who were under age 40.

The charts below illustrate the differences in the decade of birth of men and women in initial formation.

Among men, nearly half (48 percent) were born since 1990 and thus are under age 30 in 2019. Among women, about the same proportion (47 percent) are in this category. In 2009, 50 percent of men and 35 percent of women in initial formation were under age 30.



Just about half of men and women religious in initial formation are under age 30.

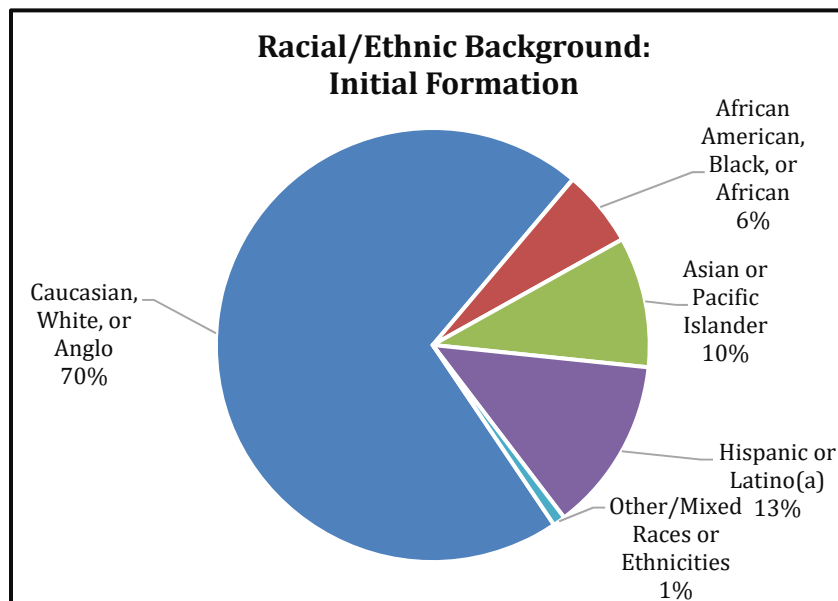
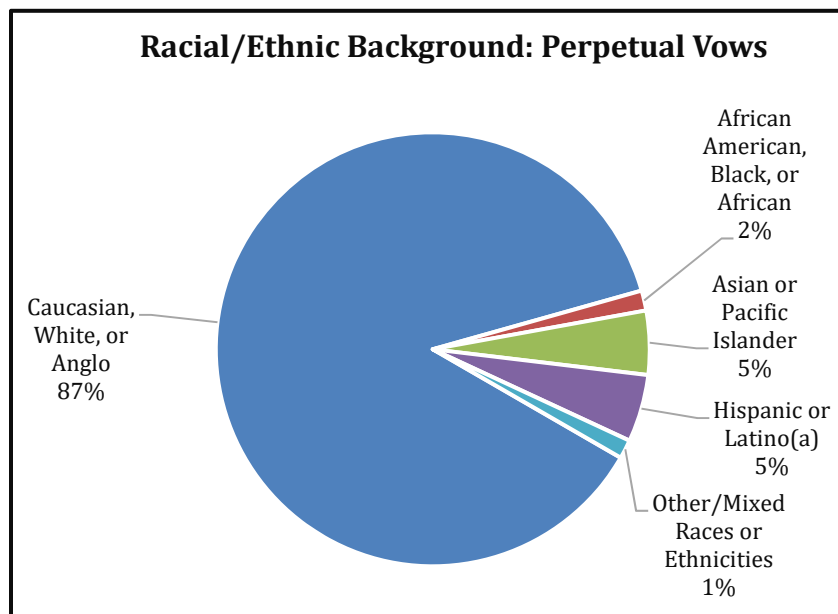
2019 Age Distribution: Initial Formation			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Under 20	6	5	7
20-29	42	43	40
30-39	31	31	32
40-49	10	12	8
50-59	7	6	7
60 and over	4	4	5

2009 Age Distribution: Initial Formation			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Under 20	2	1	2
20-29	41	49	33
30-39	28	27	29
40-49	15	13	17
50-59	10	8	13
60 and over	4	2	6

Racial/Ethnic Background

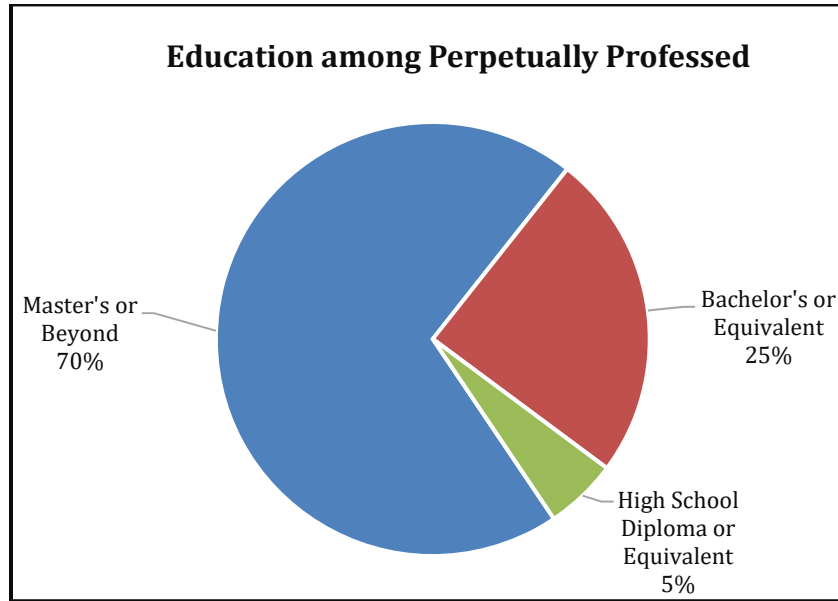
The charts show the racial/ethnic background of men and women religious using categories comparable to those used by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among perpetually professed members, diversity has increased by 7 percentage points since 2009, with an increase in African American/black/African (1 percentage point), Asian/Pacific Islander (3 percentage points), Hispanic/Latino(a) by 2 percentage points, and other/mixed races or ethnicities by 1 percentage point. Among those in initial formation, there has been a 12 percentage point increase in those reported to be Caucasian/white/Anglo (70 percent compared to 58 percent in 2009). As was the case in 2009, those in initial formation are more diverse, ethnically and racially, than those in perpetual vows.



Education Level of Perpetually Professed Members

Major superiors were asked to estimate the highest level of education among the majority of perpetually professed members in their unit. When these estimates are aggregated across all responding units, nearly all have at least a college degree and seven in ten have a Master's degree or more.

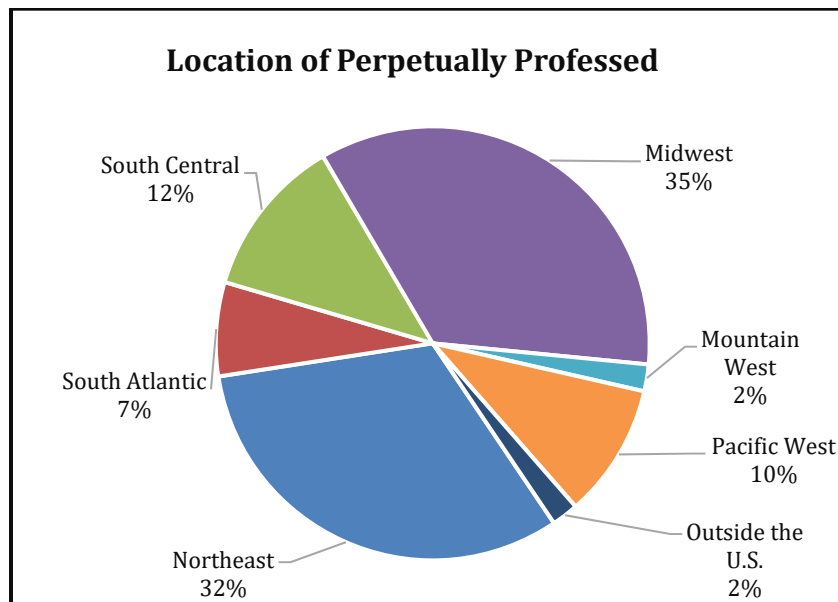


Perpetually professed members of both institutes of men and institutes of women are equally likely to hold a college degree, but institutes of men have a higher proportion of perpetually professed members with advanced degrees. More than eight in ten members of men's institutes have a Master's degree or beyond (a requirement for ordination), compared to two in three members of women's institutes who have attained this level of education.

Education among Perpetually Professed			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Master's degree or beyond	70	82	65
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	25	16	28
High School diploma or equivalent	5	2	7

Location of Perpetually Professed Members

A majority of perpetually professed members of religious institutes are located in the areas of traditional concentration of religious institutes in the United States.⁶ About two in three institutes (67 percent) claim that the majority of their perpetually professed members are located in the Northeast or the Midwest. Another tenth are located in the South Central states (12 percent) or in the Pacific West (10 percent). Less than a tenth are located in the South Atlantic (7 percent) or in the Mountain West (2 percent). Just 2 percent of U.S.-based institutes indicate that the majority of their perpetually professed members are located outside the United States.



There is no significant difference between institutes of men and institutes of women in the location of the majority of their members. Each group, overall, is proportionally represented in the areas as described above, which conform to the historical concentrations of immigrant Catholics in the United States. This does not imply that men and women religious serve only in areas where their unit was originally founded—indeed, many religious institutes have individual members or small groups spread out in ministries throughout the United States and beyond. It does suggest, however, that there is still a disproportionate concentration of religious institutes in the Midwest and the Northeast.

⁶ The regions described in this analysis conform to U.S. Census regions and include the following states: Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT), South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV), South Central (AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX), Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI), Mountain West (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY), Pacific West (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA), Outside the United States (Puerto Rico, Guam, and other U.S. territories). This information was not asked on the 2009 study, so no comparison to those data is possible.

Vocation Ministry

Respondents were asked to indicate the structure of their vocation efforts, meaning whether their unit has a vocation director and/or vocation team. They were asked about the characteristics of the vocation director and his or her length of service in the role. Those with a vocation team were asked about its composition. Additional questions asked about institutional support for vocation efforts, the budget for vocation efforts, and any connection between vocation efforts and institute leadership.

More than three in four responding religious institutes (77 percent) report that they have one or more vocation directors or a vocation team, down from 88 percent in 2009. Among those with a vocation director(s), 33 percent have a full-time vocation director, 30 percent have a part-time vocation director, and 29 percent have a vocation team. Just over one in ten report that they have co-vocation directors. Sixty institutes (13 percent) report that their vocation efforts are *ad hoc* or they do something other than a vocation director or vocation team.

<i>What is the structure of your vocation efforts?</i>			
Check all that apply*			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Full-time vocation director	33	45	28
Part-time vocation director	30	31	30
Vocation team	29	30	29
Co-vocation directors	12	13	11
<i>Ad hoc</i> or none of the above	13	14	13

* The percentages do not sum to 100 percent as respondents were allowed to select more than one answer.

Institutes of men are more likely than those of women to have a full-time vocation director (45 percent compared to 28 percent).

Vocation Director

As in 2009, among the institutes that have a vocation director, almost all (97 percent) report the vocation director is a perpetually professed member of their institute. Nearly 3 percent of institutes report their vocation director is an associate or a lay person who is not a member or associate. On average, this vocational director has served in vocation ministry for seven years. Half of vocation directors among the responding institutes have served in vocational ministry for five years or less.

Vocation Team

Three in ten responding institutes (29 percent) have a vocation team, which means that more than one person is directly responsible for vocation ministry. In institutes with a vocation team, the team is composed of:

- One or more perpetually professed members (96 percent of institutes with a vocation team)
- Member(s) of the leadership team/council liaison (37 percent)
- One or more temporary professed members (25 percent)
- One or more associates (13 percent)
- One or more other lay person(s) who is/are not member(s) or associates, such as young adults or parents (7 percent)

Women's institutes are more likely than men's institutes to include a member of the leadership team or a council liaison on the vocation team (44 percent compared to 22 percent). Men's institutes are more likely than women's institutes, however, to include some other lay person who is not a member or an associate, such as a young adult or a parent, on the team (36 percent compared to 11 percent).

Vocation Support

Seven in ten institutes report that the vocation director or vocation team has a job description. The same proportion say that the vocation director or team works with the communications director of the institute.

Structural Support for Vocation Ministry			
Percentage responding			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Vocation director/team has job description(s)	72	69	73
Vocation director/team works with the communications director of your institute	72	66	74
Vocation director/team has clerical support	47	61	39
* The percentages do not sum to 100 percent as respondents were allowed to select more than one answer.			

Just under half of responding institutes (47 percent) report that their vocation director/team has clerical support. Institutes of men are more likely than those of women to provide clerical support for vocation directors/teams (61 percent compared to 39 percent).

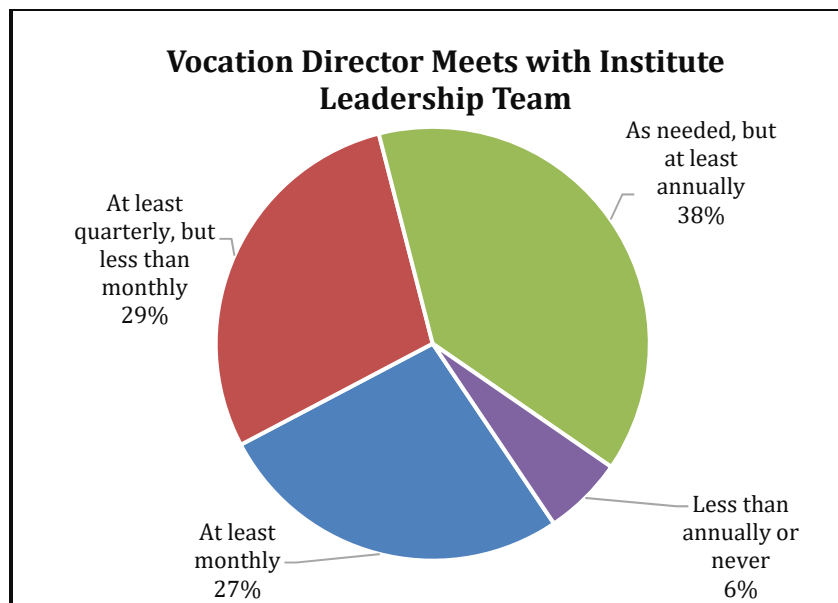
The average annual budget of the responding institutes for their vocation director/team (excluding salaries) is \$34,039. However, half of responding institutes have an annual budget for the

vocation director/team of \$14,600 or less. Some 4 percent of institutes declare that there is no budget for the vocation director/team.

Annual Budget for the Vocation Director/Team (excluding salaries)			
	All	Men	Women
Average	\$34,039	\$55,401	\$21,925
Median	\$14,600	\$36,000	\$10,000
Range	\$0 -- \$375,000	\$0 -- \$375,000	\$0 -- \$361,000

Religious institutes of men tend to allocate more money to vocations ministry than do women’s institutes. The average annual budget for the vocation director/team in men’s institutes is \$55,401, compared to \$21,925 in women’s institutes.

A quarter of religious institutes (27 percent) report that their vocation director/team meets with the leadership team at least monthly. Three in ten report that their vocation director/team meets with the leadership team at least quarterly, but less than monthly. Four in ten report that they meet with the leadership team as needed, but at least annually.



Women’s institutes are more likely than men’s institutes to report that their vocation director/team meets with the leadership team as needed, but at least annually (44 percent compared to 29 percent among men’s institutes).

When asked how often the topic of vocations is on the agenda of the institute leadership team meetings:

- Three in ten report that vocations is on the agenda of leadership team meetings at nearly every meeting (at least 75% of all meetings). Institutes of men are more likely than institutes of women to indicate this frequency (41 percent compared to 23 percent).
- One in five report that at least half of all leadership team meetings annually (50-74%) include the topic of vocations on the agenda.
- One third indicate that the topic of vocations is occasionally on the agenda of the institute leadership team meetings (at least 25-49% of all meetings). Institutes of women are more likely than institutes of men to indicate this frequency (37 percent compared to 28 percent).
- One in six report that the topic of vocations is seldom or never on the agenda of the institute leadership team meetings.

Vocation Promotion and Discernment Activities

Major superiors were next asked about various vocation promotion and discernment activities of the institute, including whether the institute sponsors or co-sponsors various discernment programs, has used various media for vocation promotion in the last five years, and/or has targeted certain age groups in its vocation promotion and discernment programs.

Discernment Programs

Of the various types of discernment programs about which responding institutes were asked, “Come and See” experiences are the most common. Three in five responding institutes report that they sponsor or co-sponsor “Come and See” experiences.

<i>Please indicate if your <u>unit</u> sponsors or co-sponsors the following discernment programs</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
“Come and See” experience	60	69	57
Live-in experience	39	49	35
Discernment retreat	37	40	35
Busy Persons Retreat, Nun Run, Open House, Theology on Tap, <i>Cursillo</i> , etc.	33	19	38
Volunteer service immersion experience with members of the institute	24	25	23
Diocesan vocation program such as Quo Vadis, Fiat Days, dinner with the Bishop, etc.	22	8	28
Regular meetings with a discernment group	21	27	18
Online discernment group	10	13	9
Discernment house	9	14	7
<i>From Service to Sisterhood</i> volunteer program	2	0	2

- Four-tenths offer live-in experiences and/or discernment retreats, while a third offer a program such as a Busy Persons Retreat, Nun Run, Open House, Theology on Tap, *Cursillo*, etc.
- A quarter offer a volunteer service immersion experience with members of the institute, while at least one in five offer diocesan vocation program such as Quo Vadis, Fiat Days, dinner with the Bishop, etc. and regular meetings with a discernment group
- One in ten offers an online discernment group or a discernment house. Just 2 percent offer a From Service to Sisterhood volunteer program.

Some of these discernment programs are more common among men's institutes:

- “Come and See” experience (69 percent for men's institutes compared to 57 percent)
- Live-in experience (49 percent compared to 35 percent)
- Regular meetings with a discernment group (27 percent compared to 18 percent)

Other programs are more common among women's institutes:

- Busy Persons Retreat, Nun Run, Open House, Theology on Tap, *Cursillo*, etc. (38 percent for women's institutes compared to 19 percent)
- Diocesan vocation program such as Quo Vadis, Fiat Days, dinner with the Bishop, etc. (28 percent compared to 8 percent)

Religious institutes are less likely now than they were in 2009 to report that they sponsor any of the discernment programs that were asked on both surveys:

- “Come and See” experiences (60 percent now compared to 73 percent in 2009)
- Live-in experiences (39 percent now compared to 56 percent)
- Discernment retreats (37 percent now compared to 54 percent)
- Discernment houses (9 percent now compared to 12 percent)

However, data from the survey of new members, which is reported in detail in Part II of this report, find that nearly 75 percent of those entering religious life in the last 15 years participated in “Come and See” experiences and 59 percent participated in discernment retreats. Similar to 2009, newer members report that they found these programs to be helpful in their discernment.

Use of Media for Vocation Promotion

Vocation information on the institute’s website or a distinct website for vocations is the most common vocation promotion tactic among responding institutes, with almost four in five using this method.

Print materials are also a relatively common method of vocation promotion. Three in four religious institutes use print materials (e.g., prayer cards, brochures, posters) to promote vocations.

Just over three in five institutes advertise in discernment magazines, diocesan papers, parish bulletins, etc. A similar proportion use social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Chat) to promote vocations.

Half of religious institutes use VISION Vocation Guide, online VISION Vocation Network, and Vocation Match.

Online experiences (e.g., A Nun’s Life, podcasts, blogs) and Broadcast media (e.g., EWTN, Salt and Light, diocesan) are used for vocation promotion by a quarter or fewer.

Please indicate if your unit has used any of the following advertising strategies for vocation promotion in the last five years:

Percentage checking each response

	All %	Men %	Women %
Vocation information on your website or a distinct website for vocations	78	84	75
Print materials (e.g., prayer cards, brochures, posters)	74	77	72
Advertising in discernment magazines, diocesan papers, parish bulletins, etc.	63	70	61
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Chat)	62	68	59
VISION Vocation Guide, online VISION Vocation Network, Vocation Match	50	56	47
Online experiences (e.g., A Nun’s Life, podcasts, blogs)	23	23	24
Broadcast media (e.g., EWTN, Salt and Light, diocesan)	10	7	11

There is little difference between institutes of men and institutes of women in the use of these advertising strategies, but men’s institutes tend to report using more of these strategies.

Compared to 2009, responding institutes are less likely to use each of these promotion methods. In particular, use of print materials, such as prayer cards and brochures, is down by 17 percentage points from 2009.

Vocation Promotion and Discernment Programs Targeted toward Age Groups

Responding institutes are most likely to report that they target their vocation promotion and discernment programs toward young adults (defined on the questionnaire as people in their 20s and 30s) and, to a slightly lesser degree, toward college-age students. Half of responding institutes focus their vocation efforts on college students and close to six in ten focus on young adults. Men's institutes are more likely than women's institutes to focus on these two age groups.

Two-fifths focus their vocation promotion or discernment programs toward high school students. A quarter sponsor or co-sponsor programs for elementary schools. Women's institutes are more likely than men's institutes to focus on this age group. Just over one-tenth sponsor vocation promotion or discernment programs for mature adults (defined on the questionnaire as those age 40 and over). Women's institutes are a little more likely than men's to target this group.

Please indicate if your unit sponsors or co-sponsors vocation promotion or discernment programs specifically targeted toward these age groups:

Percentage checking each response

	All	Men	Women	All 2009
	%	%	%	%
Young adults (20s and 30s)	57	64	54	71
College	50	55	48	65
High school	41	41	42	56
Elementary school	26	13	31	34
Mature adults (age 40 and over)	14	9	16	27

As shown in the right-most column of the table above, compared with the 2009 study, religious institutes are less likely to sponsor or co-sponsor vocation promotion or discernment programs targeted toward any of these age groups.

Annual Vocation Promotion Events

Many religious institutes are involved in various annual events to promote vocations to religious life. Two-fifths are actively involved annually in the World Day for Consecrated Life, National Vocation Awareness Week, and the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

At least one in five institutes are involved annually in congregational festivals/fairs/public events and their congregational Founder's Day/Patron Saint Day. Men's institutes are more likely than women's institutes to be involved in these annual events.

Among women's institutes, just over a third are involved in National Catholic Sisters Week. Among men's institutes, a fifth are involved in Religious Brothers Day.

Please indicate the annual events in which your unit actively involves members to promote vocations to religious life:

Percentage checking each response

	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
World Day for Consecrated Life	41	35	44
National Vocation Awareness Week	40	39	40
World Day of Prayer for Vocations	40	43	31
National Catholic Sisters Week	--	--	35
Congregational festivals/fairs/public events	23	30	20
Congregational Founder's Day/Patron Saint Day	22	31	18
Religious Brothers Day	--	20	--

Admission Requirements and Initial Formation Practices

This section examines requirements for admission to candidacy/postulancy as well as several practices in initial formation.

Age Requirements

Most religious institutes have minimum (90 percent) and maximum (84 percent) age requirements. Ten percent of responding institutes report that they have no minimum age for admission and 16 percent do not have a maximum age for admission.

The average minimum age for admission for religious institutes is 20 among institutes who report that they have a minimum age. Half of religious institutes have a minimum age for entrance of 20 or younger. The average maximum age for admission is 43. Among religious institutes who have a maximum age for admission, half report a maximum age of 40 or older.

The most common minimum age requirement is 18 (reported by 39 percent of respondents). Just over 1 percent of institutes would accept a candidate who is younger than 18. Another 48 percent require the potential candidate to be between 19 and 22.

The most typical maximum age, among institutes who have a maximum age requirement, is 35 (reported by 22 percent of institutes). Another fifth (20 percent) report a maximum age of 40 and almost a fifth (18 percent) report a maximum age of 45. Seven percent set the maximum age at 30 or younger. More than half of institutes with a maximum age (52 percent) set it between 30 and 44. Another three in ten (28 percent) report a maximum age higher than 45 (as high as 65).

*Please indicate the age requirements for admission to
candidacy/postulancy for your unit*
Among institutes reporting a required
minimum/maximum age

Average minimum age	20
Modal minimum age	18
Average maximum age	43
Modal maximum age	35

Men's institutes do not differ significantly from women's institutes on either minimum or maximum age requirements.

These statistics closely correspond to the age requirements reported by religious institutes in the 2009 study.

Interaction with Others in Formation

Two in three responding institutes report that their candidates/postulants interact with other candidates/postulants from other units of their institute, society, or federation. Just over three-fifths report that their candidates/postulants interact with those from other institutes or societies.

<i>Do candidates/postulants in your <u>unit</u> interact with other candidates/postulants from:</i>	
Percentage responding "Yes"	
	%
Other units of your institute, society, or federation	67
Other institutes or societies	62

Almost three-fifths indicate that novices in their institutes interact in an Intercommunity Novitiate program with novices from other units of their institute, society, or federation. Just over half report that their novices interact in an Intercommunity Novitiate program with novices from other institutes or societies.

<i>Do novices in your <u>unit</u> interact with other novices in an Intercommunity Novitiate program from:</i>	
Percentage responding "Yes"	
	%
Other units of your institute, society, or federation	58
Other institutes or societies	54

For institutes reporting that their novices interact with other novices in an Intercommunity Novitiate program, the most frequently mentioned states in which the program takes place are:

Intercommunity Novitiate Program Location	
	%
New York	15
Missouri	14
Pennsylvania	13
California	13
Illinois	12
Wisconsin	5
Ohio	5

Three-quarters of responding superiors indicate that those in temporary profession in their institutes interact with those who are temporary professed from other units of their institute, society, or federation. Three-fifths report that those in temporary profession in their institute interact with those from other institutes or societies.

<i>Do those in temporary profession in your <u>unit</u> interact with others who are temporary professed from:</i>	
Percentage responding “Yes”	
	%
Other units of your institute, society, or federation	76
Other institutes or societies	63

International Formation Experience

Almost two-fifths of respondents indicate that their institute offers a formation experience for U.S. members in initial formation that takes place outside the United States. Men’s institutes are more likely than women’s institutes to offer such a program.

<i>Does your <u>unit</u> offer a formation experience for U.S. members in initial formation that takes place outside the United States?</i>		
Percentage responding “Yes”		
All	Men	Women
%	%	%
37	48	31

Some of the most commonly mentioned countries in which these formation experiences take place include Italy, Mexico, the Philippines, France, Kenya, Canada, Vietnam, and Peru.

Post-final Vow Structure or Program

Three in ten responding religious institutes report that they have a post-final vow structure or program to aid retention. No other questions were asked about the details of such a program or structure. Men’s institutes are slightly more likely than women’s institutes to report having such a structure, though the difference is not statistically significant (34 percent compared to 27 percent).

Community Life and Prayer

This section of the report explores the importance of various factors related to healthy and holy community life, such as the size and composition of communities. A final set of questions explores the regular prayer life of active members.

Size and Composition of the Community

Major superiors were asked to report the number of active members living in variously sized communities as well as the number of active members living with members of another religious institute and members living with non-vowed, such as volunteers, associates, or refugees. Many superiors found this set of questions difficult and elected not to respond to them. Between a quarter and a third did not respond to the questions about community size. Half did not respond to the question about living with members of another institute and six in ten did not respond to the question about living with non-vowed.

Community Size and Composition of Active Members			
Average number of active members reported by each unit			
	All	Men	Women
Singly (or with family members)	11	5	13
In community with 2-3 members of your unit	13	12	14
In community with 4-7 members of your unit	15	16	15
In community with 8 or more of your unit	27	35	24
In community with members of another religious institute	2	1	2
In community with non-vowed	1	<1	1

On average, responding institutes say that they have 11 active members living singly, 13 active members living in communities of 2-3 members, 15 active members living in communities of 4-7 members, and 27 active members living in communities with 8 or more members. These are overall averages, though, and institutes vary widely in their responses, depending on the size of the institute. In fact, one in five institutes (22 percent) report that they have no members living singly, one in six (16 percent) have no members living in communities of 2-3 members, one in seven (15 percent) have no members living in communities of 4-7 members, and one in seven (14 percent) have no members living in communities of 8 or more members.

It is quite uncommon for institutes to report having members living with members of another religious institute. On average, respondents report that they have two members who live with members of another institute, but half of institutes (50 percent) have no active members in that living situation.

Even less common is a situation of active religious living with non-vowed, such as volunteers, associates, or refugees. Responding institutes report an average of one active member living in such a community, but seven in ten (71 percent) have no active members in such a community.

Aspects of Community Life

Similar to 2009, communal prayer and shared experiences with community members is rated most highly among responding superiors. Several factors are reported by nearly all responding institutes as “somewhat” or “very” important for healthy and holy community life in the institute. These include praying with other members, celebrating holidays/feast days together, living with other members, sharing meals with other members, socializing/sharing leisure with members, and ongoing formation and lifelong education. More than nine in ten responding superiors recognized each of these as at least “somewhat” important.

<i>How important are these aspects for healthy and holy community life in your <u>unit</u>?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very” Important	“Very” Important Only
	%	%
Praying with other members	99	87
Celebrating holidays/feast days together	99	85
Living with other members	95	75
Sharing meals with other members	95	72
Socializing/sharing leisure with members	95	67
Ongoing formation and lifelong education	95	71
Valuing cultural diversity beyond tolerance	88	60
Ministering wherever the need is greatest	84	59
Ministering/working with other members	81	49
Discussing local/global news and events	81	37
Corporate stances on social justice issues	69	36
Learning and implementing cultural competencies with members	68	31
Praying with lay partners in ministry	62	19
Participating in neighborhood outreach	56	20
Sharing meals with lay partners in ministry	44	11

- Almost nine in ten report that valuing cultural diversity beyond tolerance is at least “somewhat” important, with three-fifths reporting it is “very” important.

- More than four in five report that ministering wherever the need is greatest, ministering/working with other members and discussing local/global news and events are at least “somewhat” important to them. Between 37 percent and 59 percent find these aspects “very” important to them.
- Nearly seven in ten indicate that corporate stances on social justice issues and learning and implementing cultural competencies with members are at least “somewhat” important to them. More than three in ten find these aspects “very” important.
- Just about three-fifths report that praying with lay partners in ministry and participating in neighborhood outreach are at least somewhat important to them. About a fifth find these aspects “very” important.
- About two-fifths report that sharing meals with lay partners in ministry is at least “somewhat” important for healthy and holy community life in their unit.

Prayer Practices

Personal prayer and communal forms of prayer characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of active members in almost all responding institutes.

Please indicate which of the following characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of members of your unit who are in active ministry?

Percentage checking each response

	All	Men	Women	All 2009
	%	%	%	%
Personal private prayer	95	95	95	--
Daily Eucharist	87	95	83	90
Liturgy of the Hours	86	96	82	85
<i>Lectio Divina</i> /spiritual reading and reflection	67	53	72	--
Faith sharing	55	25	67	53
Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament	50	47	51	--
Non-liturgical common prayer (i.e. rosary, devotions)	47	38	51	42
Common meditation/centering prayer	34	30	36	28
Journal writing, poetry, prayer blogs	25	11	31	--
Ecumenical and interfaith prayer (e.g. Taizé)	10	3	13	--
Prayer with an online community	4	1	6	--

- Nearly all institutes (95 percent) report that personal private prayer characterizes the regular prayer life of a majority of the active members of their unit.
- Daily Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours are almost as common, reported by nearly nine in ten responding institutes. Institutes of men are more likely than institutes of women to report that these two aspects characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of their active members.
- Two-thirds of respondents report that *Lectio Divina*/spiritual reading and reflection are characteristic of the regular prayer life of members. Women's institutes are more likely than men's institutes to report this prayer practice.
- About half report that faith sharing, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and non-liturgical common prayer (i.e. rosary, devotions) characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of their active members. Women's institutes are more likely than men's institutes to report that faith sharing and non-liturgical common prayer are characteristic of the regular prayer life of a majority of their active members.
- A third cite common meditation/centering prayer and a quarter mention journal writing, poetry, prayer blogs as characteristic of the regular prayer life of a majority of their members. Journal writing, poetry or prayer blogs are more common among women's institutes than among men's institutes.
- Ten percent mention ecumenical and interfaith prayer (e.g. Taizé) and just 4 percent indicate that prayer with an online community characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of their active members. Women's institutes are more likely than men's institutes to mention ecumenical and interfaith prayer.

As shown in the right-most column of the table above, religious institutes in 2009 reported nearly the same percentages of active members participating in several of these prayer practices. *Note that not all of the prayer practices were asked on the 2009 study.*

Greatest Concern/Worry for the Newest Members

New in the 2019 study, major superiors of men's and women's religious institutes were allowed to describe, in their own words, their greatest concern/worry for the newest members of their unit. A total of 470 major superiors provided at least one comment in response to this question. They mentioned various concerns for their new members, such as the gap in age between the senior members and the new members and worries about the future of the institute as the communities age and decrease in size. CARA analyzed the responses to this question and grouped their responses into general categories below. Each category is illustrated by a few representative comments. The full set of responses to this question can be located in Appendix II.

Lack of Peer Support

In religious life today, major superiors are most concerned about strengthening peer support among new members.

- *As an international congregation, our newest members, small in number, are scattered across the world. How will they support one another in mission, balance addressing the needs of elderly members with the ongoing calls of ministry, respond to the challenge of living mission interculturally? Can we, older members, truly listen beyond our own desires and experiences of community, mission, etc.? How do we help them use their experiences and gifts in community? How do we pass on our values and traditions but recognize they will be expressed differently? I am concerned about how to incorporate them into the mission of the congregation. It is difficult to help them be part of the community when they sometimes feel so lonely because of lack of companionship. They sometimes fear, because they are so few, that their voices won't be heard.*
- *Being alone can be challenging. While there may be a level of friendship with other members in the community, there is a lack of many shared experiences that newer members previously developed with other young women in their group during their years of formation. Our greatest concern is that the young vocations will become discouraged because they are so few in number.*
- *It is hard to do formation when only one person is in formation and there is not a group to interact with. It is our goal to give our new members a solid foundation in theology and the mission and charism of our congregation; however, we do not have enough Sisters to form small communities to serve as mentors.*
- *It's a concern that our lone Sister in temporary vows [may] feel so alone. She's the only one in initial formation from a country and culture that is unique in our Province. It can get very lonely.*
- *Lack of cohort/companions. Maintaining desire to be in active ministry when entering a more retired community. Limited number of prepared members to serve as directors.*
- *Newest member is finally professed, and in another country. Concern is connecting with other members.*
- *One of my concerns is that the newest members find viable local communities with which to share daily life, prayer, community.*
- *Our greatest concern is that there are few younger members in our Congregation, so young women don't see anyone who "looks like them" which can lead them to believe that the vowed life is only for women with grey hair.*
- *Our newest members are part of an aging province. I am concerned about their lack of peer support within the province and the sometimes overburden of caring for many elders. We have few "younger" and "newer" members. They are often mixed with many older members. Meetings and gatherings are adapted to meet the needs of the older members and the newest members can get lost in the dominant group.*

- *Peer support, quality of community life that they could feel concerned for the future of the Institute, having sisters to mentor them into leadership that they may feel pressured to work in Institutional works versus non-Institutional works. I worry sometimes that we are not providing good networks among ourselves so we (and our younger sisters) can continue to have a collective impact e.g. among migrants, in healthcare, in education of youth, and when there are fewer numbers we will need to work intercommunity—we can't wait to do this.*
- *Their small number and diverse backgrounds and needs can lead to a feeling of isolation. Paradoxically, the great efforts made by the sisters to support and encourage them, may mean that they are not challenged in their vocation and never go deeper.*

Recognizing that the new members need support and encouragement from peers, some major superiors hope to create ongoing support systems for these new members spiritually and holistically and provide opportunities for intercongregational support among members.

- *Continue to provide opportunities for these members to develop relationships among their peer group both within our congregation and with members of other congregations: also, continue to provide opportunities for these sisters to participate as leaderful members.*
- *Ensuring an active, engaged, ongoing support system for them spiritually and holistically.*
- *Finding the support, encouragement and life they need to be sustained in an aging, retired community. Helping them to experience the fire of mission, not smoldering embers.*
- *Offering them opportunities to interact with other young men and women who are in formation as religious.*
- *Ongoing formation and support in a peer-group setting that encourages mutual support while guarding our monastic values of solitude and silence.*
- *That the newest members will really find appropriate companionship and/or with other religious their age. That their gifts and talents will be recognized, revered, respected and employed in our ministries. That they will really develop a deep spiritual life.*
- *That they have time to mature in their vocation and ministry before too many responsibilities are thrust upon them—or they take them on themselves. Accompaniment during temporary profession has become a much greater concern.*

Intergenerational and Intercultural Challenges

Many superiors are concerned about the gap in age among institute members. As the senior members are aging, they find that very few new members join the institute. This growing gap in age among members is an ongoing concern, which has serious implications for the future of the institute. At the same time, the newer members are often from a different cultural background than the dominant culture of the institute and that poses challenges as well.

- *Disparity of age between current membership and potential members.*
- *Generation gap. Lack of interest of new candidates. Lack of parental support. Lack of future leadership when new members are not interested.*
- *Given the reality of our situation, with the increased age and decreased availability of our members, we rely on our newer members to hold leadership positions.*
- *Harmony and understanding between members of widely varying generations is a concern to me.*

- *My greatest concern for the newest members in our unit is they do not have peers, both in formation and in their age group. Another concern that I have is the understanding of cultural differences that exist within our community. While we have made strides at addressing the issue of accepting those that may be different, we still have a way to go.*
- *Not having a cohort—living with older people tends to make younger people act older.*
- *Our newest members are quite a lot younger than our professed members and there are “cultural” challenges for them as well as for all the members as we strive to be true to our charism and open to what new God is doing in and through us.*
- *The age differences between our youngest members and our older members is significant. There is an existing concern of each member to identify with those younger women becoming a part of our community.*
- *There is an age gap in our community even though the younger ones are in their fifties. My concern is their future if there is no one entering even though our vocation director has a number of contacts. Another is leadership. We have leaders in this group but elders do not want to let go and let them lead.*
- *We are in a mission diocese and have very little contact with the youth. Because of the age gap I question how open we are to receiving new vocations. Our youngest member, 34 years old, is from India. Often, she feels misunderstood, understandably so. Her presence with us has revealed the huge cultural and age gap and the need for enculturation (our need). We cannot just say they don’t have a vocation if they are different than we are. “We” have a lot of work to do in this area and I am not sure how that will happen—hopefully she will speak up!*

The age gap also concerns the major superiors because they worry that new members should not feel overburdened by caring for the senior members.

- *The newest members in my province are all finally professed. My greatest concern is that they become overburdened with caring for our elderly members and/or serving in leadership positions, and thus are less involved in the apostolate.*
- *We have only one relatively new member who made her final vows two years ago. Age wise, she is 13 years younger than the next Sister. My concern for her is that she will feel the burden of taking care of and being responsible for the congregation in ways we can’t even imagine, as the community ages. I worry about her being supported, but she has connected with her peers in other congregations who went through formation at the time she did. She, however, is not concerned!*
- *New members are entering at a time when it seems we are constantly seeking clarity about the life—it is not a time of clear and direct understanding. Attending to their “future” in the midst of aging and diminishing members!*

Formation

The major superiors raise many concerns about the formation process for their new members. They hope that their formation programs will enable their new members to have a solid foundation about religious life and help them incorporate that into their daily religious life. They worry that young people in modern, secularized society do not have the faith background that was common in previous generations.

- *A general lack of solid formation in the faith and its practice.*
- *Adequate formation for young women immersed in our present culture.*
- *As Provincial, a major concern is the entitlement that newest members exhibit. ... This is an attitude that appears to be part of the men when they come to the congregation and continues to flourish as they go through the process. Another concern is the secularization of the newest members. Some of the men believe they are free to act in any manner they choose when outside the community—how they dress and act; how they interact with their community members; their interaction on social media; etc. They seem unaware how they reflect the community, the congregation, and their fellow brothers.*
- *Faithfulness to vows and order. Fight temptation of possessions & money.*
- *Finding ways to nurture growth and support the gifts of newer members. Being sure that those admitted have adequate maturity and mental health for good community life. Integrating a spiritually encompassing work, prayer, and community life. Finding appropriate ministries.*
- *It isn't a worry necessarily, but we maintain a constant concern to provide and maintain appropriate formation. We realize that through good formation a young woman will have a balanced and whole picture to help her discern.*
- *Loyalty to the Church and ability to overcome the need for immediate results especially in spiritual formation. Also, a perseverance in commitment.*
- *My greatest worry is that the newest member(s) receive proper and regular formation. The best teachers in the community are usually involved in full-time ministry.*
- *That they have the proper formation experience regarding human development.*
- *That they receive the formation that they need, given that they are coming out to a culture which does not foster or uphold true human flourishing or our God-given capacity to love.*
- *They are very idealistic and fervent, so the clergy sexual abuse scandal is difficult for them. In addition, they have more traditional sensibilities than some older members of the community and that can cause tension among the younger brothers and anxiety in the older ones.*
- *Viable, quality small living communities in which to live. Impact of clericalism in the Church, impacting their Catholic identity. Their own lack of theological background, basic catechesis. Lack of understanding of the Scriptures.*

The major superiors also express hope that their formation will enable their new members to comprehend the institutes' charism, tradition, and ministry.

- *An area of concern is how we are as solemn/perpetually professed members faithfully handing on the charism and traditions of our order to newcomers. Likewise, how are our newest members grappling with long-standing traditions/customs of our order in a world that seems to be constantly shifting and changing?*

- *Development of formation program centered on our charism and mission. Interaction with others (intercongregationally) to broaden experience. Theological education; deepening prayer life. Ongoing formation throughout life.*
- *It is our goal to give our new members a solid foundation in theology and the mission and charism of our congregation; however, we do not have enough Sisters to form small communities to serve as mentors.*
- *Lack of stability in our Congregation's structure and knowledge of our Constitutions.*
- *Over the last two decades, the Church has encouraged a greater emphasis, in initial formation, on personal accompaniment in both the spiritual and the human formation dimension. Because of this, those in formation have experienced, and needed, a program very different from what was experienced by those who were perpetually professed before 2000 (most of our members). My greatest concern is how to create a bridge, so that our newest members can transition into a sense of belonging with that older group and vice versa, after final profession.*
- *That they discern well, truly understanding the charism and experiencing it in practice so as to be able to live it well.*
- *Their ability to adapt and "fit" into our Provincial life beyond formation - and our ability to adapt to their hopes for our life and ministry.*

The major superiors realize that the Internet and social media make things more difficult for their formation program.

- *Concern is helping people in today's society adjust to the life in the cloister in a healthy, wholesome way. Not easy for those who were very involved with a lot the electronic media of cellphones, internet, etc. to develop true contemplative prayer. Too much self-absorption hinders them from really being focused on God and others as is needed in our monastic, cloistered, contemplative life.*
- *How the use of modern technology has formed the women in the world before coming to us and the challenges of transition from "the world" of such technology, to almost no use of technology in the first years of formation to finally a more balanced use of technology in the vowed life.*
- *Use of technology and social media. Temptations and distractions from prayer + community life.*

Given the many challenges in religious life, the major superiors express concern that new members need to be mature in their vocation to religious life.

- *Human development and maturity.*
- *I am concerned that they may lack sufficient psychological and moral maturity for serious religious life.*
- *Ideology of relativism—doctrine that there are no absolute truths—different people can have different views about what's moral and immoral—the dictatorship of relativism.*
- *That they have time to mature in their vocation and ministry before too many responsibilities are thrust upon them—or they take them on themselves. Accompaniment during temporary profession has become a much greater concern.*

Commitment and Perseverance

Some major superiors express concern that new members may not have the level of commitment necessary to persevere in religious life or the necessary support to sustain them in their vocation.

- *Although we have not had any new members for a long time, our ongoing challenge is to promote faithfulness to our vocation as a woman religious especially in this time of major changes as a religious congregation. How do we provide support for personal and congregationally transformation?*
- *Getting candidates to be willing to make a life-long commitment to see and accept the value of living a community life.*
- *I hope they stay long enough to realize that what our life is about is usually understood and experienced only after years of living it and make their decision to stay on, go based on that realization.*
- *My greatest concern is the newest members are not trusting enough in the way the Lord is guiding them, not willing to give their total life over to God and the preaching of the Good News.*
- *My greatest concern is to reach in our youngest sisters the fidelity in their religious vocation.*
- *See the value of commitment that can be for life.*
- *That they see a future in this house.*
- *That they will be dissolution and lose heart in persevering the life, especially when people they care about are close to leave, whether in the community or other religious orders.*
- *That they will remember why they entered and vowed themselves amidst the secularized atmosphere where they live and minister.*
- *The need for support following perpetual vows in order to sustain and persevere in the commitment for life that has been made.*
- *This is a time of tremendous change especially as most of us in apostolic religious life are about “right-sizing” our living and ministerial commitments. What brought members to the Congregation essentially needs to be tended and supported for growth while external shape and form may change. My hope is to continue to seek ways to support and encourage mature fidelity.*
- *To assure that with their gifts they can truly live the charism today, responding to the present moment needs and not only be bound to continuing existing commitments.*

Community Life

Another serious concern that is expressed by a number of major superiors has to do with community life. They hope that the new members will see the value of living in a community even if they must do so across different communities and cultures.

- *Along with concern for their integral human formation we want to instill in men from the beginning the importance of community life. If men don't learn to value it, and to be accountable and supportive to one another from the start they won't pick up that aptitude later.*
- *Forming a community as a support. How the only one or two, get the spirit of the community without community to live with. Inter-communication with other religious communities. In working cross-culturally because newer members are coming from other countries.*
- *Getting candidates to be willing to make a life-long commitment to see and accept the value of living a community life.*

- *Learn to live a community life with the aspect of “Give and take” it requires. To look at others and grow in their community.*
- *Life giving community and acceptance by professed members beyond a “surface” conversation.*
- *Melding into the community and developing a spiritual life together, which we as a monastic community do well.*
- *One of my concerns is that the newest members find viable local communities with which to share daily life, prayer, community.*
- *Vibrancy of community life. Cultivating leadership in newer members. Future of the Congregation. How to find integration in ministry and other areas.*

The major superiors mentioned various factors that hinder community life these days. Some of these factors include the allure of individualism in modern society, experiences of living alone before entering religious life, or the Internet and social media.

- *Her work schedule limits her community prayer/ life.*
- *Individualism and lack of skill/intention for community life.*
- *Individualism in modern American Society/ religious life. 2. Communities/ Superiors who do not allow the newer (younger) members a space for creativity, dreams, and trial and error. Most especially, Confreres when presented with ideas/ suggestions from ... newest members respond negatively. (“We’ve already tried that” or “that won’t work”)*
- *Learning to integrate with the community. Can be very difficult for newer members.*
- *Our younger members have lived independently before they entered community. The concept of community is difficult for some to understand. Living a life of poverty is a challenge because they have so much in most cases. Obedience is more difficult because they are older and independent and do not understand that they are now a part of a community.*
- *That they will become isolated and separated. Sense of individualism and self-centered rather than focused on the WE—the community.*
- *The number of newly professed who leave the community. After years of formation, often the newly-professed find it difficult to adjust to the different ways in which we live fraternity life in a ministry situation.*
- *This is the age of individualism. Solid spirituality life/ community life.*

The small size of communities, now and into the future, is repeatedly mentioned as a challenge to the institutes that affects both their ministries and the leadership of the institutes. The major superiors are concerned about how to prepare new members for leadership roles in challenging times.

- *My greatest concern is that the unit will de-institutionalize sufficiently to make leadership easier for the younger members in the future. This correlates with ensuring the younger members are well educated and also well prepared to assume leadership.*
- *Greatest concern: Companionship within community; Balancing prayer life and ministry involvement; How not to become burned out within community and ministry and preparing them for leadership roles in challenging times.*

- *Intentional communities for them to live in intercongregational living. Leadership roles in an aging congregation. Leadership roles in a bilingual congregation when new members are not bilingual.*
- *If new members are ready for the institute's change. They are concerned over how to prepare them for leadership of the institutes given the small membership size and during the complex socio-cultural context, and that they do not feel overburdened by the responsibilities.*
- *Cultivating leadership in newer members. Future of the Congregation. How to find integration in ministry and other areas.*
- *How to prepare them for leadership in our complex canonical and civil organization.*
- *The newest members in my province are all finally professed. My greatest concern is that they become overburdened with caring for our elderly members and/or serving in leadership positions, and thus are less involved in the apostolate.*
- *Given the reality of our situation, with the increased age and decreased availability of our members, we rely on our newer members to hold leadership positions.*

Accordingly, these major superiors are concerned about the future of the institute. They worry about whether these new members will be able to adapt to all the changes they see on the horizon.

- *I believe the future is going to be in the hands of younger members collaborating with each other. If these younger members do not have the opportunity, or take advantage of such opportunities, that would be a serious concern.*
- *One of my concerns is having enough vibrant communities and ministries to invite and sustain inquiries and new members ... I know as a Vocation Director that young women exploring religious life in an apostolic community like ours, are looking for more an "edgy" lifestyle; one which is focused on intentional, simple living, rooted in personal and communal prayer, in sync with the care of creation and with direct interaction with people who live on the margins of our society-our "dear neighbor." Fortunately, we still have these kind of housing options today, and I believe we need to plan to continue this lifestyle in the future as well.*
- *Our concerns include: whether the Church and society will accept and support cloistered religious life in the future; the length of time for formation stipulated in our canons; the impact of having to federate on maintaining our own formation program; the ability to attract new vocations.*
- *The new members of the next generation need to be free to envision and create the next incarnation of the charism. Part of this process is letting go of the big convents and large institutional ministries so that the newest members are empowered to respond to the new needs of their time.*
- *The newest members of our province have been with us for twenty years. They are concerned that they have adequate support as our province comes to completion. The newest members of our congregation are West Africans, citizens of a country in great turmoil. As parts of our congregation come to completion, will our newest members be able to continue without the support of their elders?*
- *Their need for contemporary relationships. The future top-heavy pyramid of elderly to care for. The need for future leadership which may hurt their ministry outside the Congregation and what is to do now to address this.*

A few major superiors are concerned about their new members' previous experiences before they entered religious life. They worry that these new members may need some mentoring or counseling.

- *Being able to heal from wounded childhood experience.*
- *Dealing with formatees that came to us with past family wounds which causes a great gap in their maturity and human formation. This makes religious formation difficult since they are still struggling to find their identity and self-worth.*
- *Dealing with wounds from past and lack of family formation.*
- *That there are so few; also, that some of the “younger” members have serious health issues.*
- *The new comers, young, they come from broken families—the idea of father authority is broken, the sense of respect for elders is absent. How to work with that in a religious house?*
- *The psychological baggage from non/dysfunctional families. Being able to strike a balance between the monastic life and cultural practices they bring (phones, social media, etc.).*
- *The woundedness they have upon entrance—it often doesn’t manifest itself for a couple of years.*

Support for the Newest Members in Their Vocation

Also new in the 2019 study, major superiors of men's and women's religious institutes were asked to describe, in their own words, how they and/or their unit support their newest members in their vocation. A total of 418 major superiors provided at least one comment in response to this question. They mentioned various ways that they support their newest members, such as through their formation program, accompaniment, mentoring, engagement in the wider community, and introduction to ministry and leadership opportunities. CARA analyzed the responses to this question and grouped their responses into general categories below. Each category is illustrated by a few representative comments. The full set of responses to this question can be located in Appendix II.

Formation Support

Superiors recognize that the best way to nurture a vocation is to ensure that it is strengthened by a solid formation experience. Many superiors described some of the ways they support vocations through their formation.

- *1. Having a balance in experience of study, work, prayer, & ministry conducive to their formation. Giving the young sisters appropriate levels of responsibility for their formation. 2. Giving the women freedom in their discernment. 3. Being "real" with the human aspects of living the vows - taking the abstract/ideal and making it concrete.*
- *Appointing balanced formators to assist them. After First Profession each member is assigned a mentor who meets with the young member weekly at first and less often as final profession approaches. Prayer.*
- *Assign a well formed formator who is a good listener, who is gentle and kind but able and willing to call people forth. Provide a mentor within Community to meet regularly for support.*
- *Better screening methods of candidates. Forming good formators and supporting our formation team.*
- *By inviting the members to reflection on our spiritual, communal, and apostolic life through a structured process. By showing personal interest in the new members without undermining formators.*
- *Careful selection, "formative community," and housing for newer members and for ongoing formation. Providing well trained Formators. Leadership training through CLDP—Collaborative Leadership Development Program for newer members 60 and below. Encouraging opportunities for ongoing companionship and education, and spiritual growth.*
- *Creating a Formation model built on adult learning theory with individualized programmatic content that prepares them to be women who serve the Church and the World.*
- *Follow an initial formation plan. Membership has a director of temporary professed. Annual budget with generous resources. Monthly spiritual direction. Access to a counselor if needed.*
- *Formation of team which comprises of various ministries and educational/ spiritual and life experiences (years in congregation).*
- *Listen to them, their needs. Offer opportunities for collaboration with other new members. Involve them in leadership. Provide quality educational formation.*
- *Having skilled and prepared formators.*
- *Try to form and give priority to creating a formative community to receive them, welcome them, support them and nurture their vocation. We put our best men in vocation and formation ministry. We also put our financial resources there, too!*

Many superiors describe regular meetings they hold with the formation director and individually with those in formation. They suggest that this helps formatees to trust the process and trust those in authority.

- *1. Regular meetings(formal and informal); 2. Retreats and Reconnections; 3. Hospitable confreres and parishes to support their integration and formation.*
- *By meeting frequently with the formation team for sharing, updates, and dialogue.*
- *In addition to the regular formation program, the Formation Director meets with the novices individually every other week, and I meet with them once a month. These meetings continue throughout the period of initial formation.*
- *In all ways that is possible: spiritual, human, theological formation, we integrate them and interact with all the sisters. They feel part of the community.*
- *Keep in touch personally. Formative meeting twice a year specifically for temporary professed. Formative meetings twice a year for all the newer members.*
- *Meet with them periodically, listening to their concerns. Give them classes on our way of life, our charism.*
- *My own formation as a formator is continuous, and ongoing, with special attention focused on the official documents issued by the Holy See, regarding formation. The smaller numbers of those in initial formation over the last two decades has allowed for greater individual attention, and accompaniment that is suited to the particular needs of each. The one-on-one relationship with the formator has been an effective context both for vocation discernment and for adjustment to the demands of our traditional religious life and practices.*
- *Novice Master meets regularly with novices as does the spiritual director. Novice is formed by living community life of prayer and suitable work. Classes acquaint him with the heritage of the community.*
- *Ongoing days of formation for those in first vows; monthly meetings with their local superior; providing for monthly spiritual direction; mentoring and formation in mission.*
- *Regular visits and communication with newest members and their formation directors.*
- *The biggest support for newer members is the excellent accompaniment by the vocation and formation team and the International Novitiate which brings the novices from around the world together. As leader, I make time to teach and interact with these women as often as possible. We are grateful for resources from NRVC to help our vocation formation personnel.*
- *We have dedicated formation directors at every level. We have regular formal meetings monthly. We have a mentoring program for perpetually professed members. We have regular interaction with Provincial leadership. We have Summer/Year long ministry experiences for the temp. professed.*
- *We hope that we lead by example and support in ministry areas which draw her; also through companionship and encouraging her in her formation and personal growth. We would also introduce her to history, charism, and experiences which are integral to deepen her knowledge and understanding of her, and our, call.*

Others describe the importance of providing and modeling a balance in religious life, especially during formation.

- *By providing a balance of prayer, ministry, and leisure in the schedule for newer members.*
- *Fully join in community life. Encourage openness and transparency. Give a lot of time to allow them to express and work through initial years of taking on the responsibilities of the apostolate. Help them work through balancing prayer time and the works in the apostolate.*
- *We support their spiritual, biological (good health), psychological, educational formation. We care for them in a warm family atmosphere.*

- *We are engaged in a Transformative Visioning Process with a view to simplifying our current structures and ways of doing things so that our younger, active members can thrive, freed from the burdens of heavy responsibilities.*
- *We are keenly aware of our responsibility to support the vocation of our newest members. We try as best we can not to call on those currently in full-time active ministry to assume internal positions. We try when possible to hire lay people to assume needed responsibilities in lieu of our sisters or to lighten the load that they bear.*

Accompaniment and Mentoring

Superiors also recognize the importance of close personal contact with the individuals who are entering religious life. They support these vocations through accompaniment, companionship, and guidance along the way. Many also provide a mentor for those in formation.

- *Accompaniment.*
- *Education, mentoring, modeling community life.*
- *Gatherings for members in certain age groups. Intercultural opportunities. Spiritual and religious formation programs. Team of mentors working with and guiding individuals along the way.*
- *It is important that we assign our newly-professed friars in friaries that are well established, with a solid prayer life, good fraternity, and with friars who have experience in formation who can guide the newly professed in the difficult times.*
- *Make myself available for spiritual accompaniment and mentoring in a way that respects the boundaries imposed by abbatial ministry—friend/ brother/ superior.*
- *Mentoring: they have wonderful Sisters who serve as directors and mentors.*
- *Mentors journeying with them through final profession.*
- *Much is done by accompanying them in living the life with us.*
- *Newest members are assigned mentors in various locations, enabling a variety of experiences and ministries.*
- *Our provincial is easily accessible and always willing to provide counsel when needed. Different sisters are assigned to follow each new member during the period of discernment. The flow of constant communication and prayer is remarkable.*
- *Personal accompaniment.*
- *Several contact people staying in touch with them: mentors, renewed local communities, leadership team, etc.*
- *She arrived in January. She has been with us only two months. The community is very supportive of her. They take time to engage her in conversation and in allowing her to take the lead in some activities. She seems a really good match for our community. She is very aware and cares for the elderly.*
- *The support I see as important is to be able to understand the background/ environment/ culture that these new people are coming from. To be able to include in their formation program the transition they need from where they are coming from.*
- *They are accompanied by a brother who visits them in their respective locales twice a semester. I try to ensure they are placed in a healthy, vibrant community with a meaningful ministry.*
- *We invest our best people in initial formation, and provide mentors for those in formation, and for these in the first five years of ministry.*
- *We support our youngest members by walking with them. We listen to their needs. We seek for their input on community decisions.*

- *We try to assign the younger members with someone close to their age. The local superior has specific duties to accompany the younger member. The newer members have annual formation meetings together.*

Engagement with the Wider Community

Another way that religious institutes support their newer members is through deliberate engagement of the wider religious community in the accompaniment and formation process. This helps newer members, especially those who may be the sole new vocation in their unit, to establish the support of peers in formation.

- *Again, because we are small, intentionally our formation program includes classes with the [Name] men in formation. Intercongregational formation program in Villa Maria, Giving Voice, etc.*
- *As a province of older religious, predominantly brothers, we support our younger members through our regular prayers for them. In addition, we always welcome them into our communities for short visits, month-long placements during their novitiate year, etc. During these times the young religious learn our history through the lived experience of the older members, forge emotional bonds, and have their own identities as religious deepened as their felt connection to the larger group is strengthened.*
- *I/we as a team encourage all members, including the newest who is finally professed to engage in all the programs the Province offers, to keep in touch with her peers from the Novitiate program and to associate with others in her profession so that she is stimulated.*
- *Including programs of the RFC in the initial formation.*
- *Invitations to join local communities for a meal + prayer. Participation in intercommunity candidate + novitiate programs individual meetings with new members.*
- *New members are given an opportunity to participate in Giving Voice, CLDP + interprovince experiences with other younger members + thus experience a collaborative peer cohort.*
- *Offer opportunities for cohort gatherings, study, ways to meet other religious in their age groups.*
- *Prioritizing their living / formation experiences in our congregational work. Encouraging / supporting their experience of inculturating in our congregation. Ensuring a vibrant living community and opportunities to create intercongregational relationships.*
- *Provide for opportunities of engagement within and outside the unit. Importance of intercongregational connections all through formation and beyond. "Inter-novitiates," Giving Voice, our own Vocation Formation Conference for our men and women.*
- *Try to "check-in" and provide as many opportunities for interaction with other new/younger religious around the country. Support their educational and spiritual needs and formation.*
- *We do try to be supportive of the newest members and try to provide opportunities for them, e.g. study, connecting with peers from other provinces, participating in intercongregational programs, gathering younger members. I believe we can improve in the area.*
- *We encourage them to participate in intercommunity programs, to participate in new methods of formation as well as participate in national offerings such as RFC, etc. As an Institute we offer some Institute wide formation which allows for peer support. There is a newly formed "newer sisters" group which helps newer or younger sisters connect with each other across the Institute. We provide mentorship where it is needed. We encourage formation, spiritual direction, annual retreat, professional development.*

This inclusion in the wider community also helps newer members to feel that they have a voice and a place in the community.

- *A primary pathway for our newest members' support is through their relationships with Sisters in the broader community. Their involvement in community meetings, activities and ministries is also a natural vehicle for mutual support. They are also encouraged to participate in spiritual direction, retreats and ongoing formation activities, many of which are in Mexico, where they reside.*
- *Involve them in planning community's future. Continued development of their leadership skills within community + participation in available workshops. Involvement in intra federation meetings of "under 55".*
- *Our newest members are supported by the prayers and encouragement of the Sisters. They are also given the opportunity to interact with others in formation through the programs offered by the Religious Formation Conference. They are also given opportunities to use their unique gifts and talents. We encourage newer members by acknowledging their good qualities, the way they fit into Community, the value of their service in ministry and the positive witness they radiate to others. We really try to listen, when they share their own experiences and as appropriate, relate our own similar situations to give them hope.*
- *Our newest member has had opportunities (and has taken advantage of them) to participate in Giving Voice, and she completed the "For Mission" program. She is involved with a group of younger sisters from 4 or 5 other communities in our area. She is currently serving on our leadership team.*
- *We encourage them to participate with their age cohort through Giving Voice. All under 60 were inclined to participation in the Collaborative Leadership Development Program. We involve them in chapter planning, community activities. Ongoing formation opportunities are offered.*
- *We encourage members to engage in personal, ongoing formation and spiritual development. We invite our younger members to membership in congregational committees and service opportunities to help develop a broader perspective of the challenges facing the congregation.*
- *We let them live the life in every way except in the decisions that belong to the Chapter members. This complete immersion makes them feel at home and we believe the Holy Spirit is better able to work interiorly. The Mistress of Novices (person in charge of new members) presents the Charism, but by having the proper ambience, the Holy Spirit can breathe more freely.*
- *We provide opportunities for them to meet (by zoom and in person) with other members of their age cohort within the Congregation. We make sure they are members of committees and boards and their voice is heard.*

Some institutes that have an international presence also encourage travel abroad to share in the life of their international members. A few institutes that have been attracting international vocations also work with institute members to assist in enculturation and language acquisition.

- *International programs before perpetual vows. These programs comprise young sisters from Africa, Philippines, and South America.*
- *I would encourage them to be open to diversity; and us being a missionary society, I would gradually expose them to going and living abroad, mixing in with local people.*
- *Our newly professed members are sent to the international juniorate of our Institute to strengthen their spiritual life and to let them experience living with interracial/ intercultural community proper to our missionary life. Before they are assigned to a foreign country, they are sent first to a language school to learn the language of the country. When young members don't have academic degrees, they are sent to universities to equip themselves with knowledge proper to their missionary life and to gain more self-confidence to do their apostolate.*
- *Regular dialogue. Providing her with experiences in other Provinces (international) where she can find other sisters of her age and stage of formation.*

- *Since 2004, we have an agreement with one of (the) provinces in India. They support us with up to 10 members (8 here at present: 4 have joined our province; 4 can join also; one went back after 15 years). As the U.S.-born members pass away, the Indian confreres will gradually lead the community.*
- *The community has and is participating in educational skills building meeting around culture competence. We have formation in the language and when possible culture of our newest members.*
- *The unit supports the new members from our African units by sponsoring the heritage pilgrimage, bringing them here to see our reality, and some of us visiting them. Electronic communication between areas/ units is also growing.*
- *To foster engagement, identity, participation in the life and mission of our US area and our international Congregation: We will hold an international gathering of all active in ministry our apostolic religious life in the 21st century; this is a gathering to strengthen and deepen international relationships, share cultural riches, and reflect together on God's call for us and our future.*
- *We have a "bridge" grouping of Sisters in the US and Canada.*
- *We provide supportive local communities; opportunities to travel to be with other young religious in our congregation and others; periodic young members' gathering in Rome with our international congregation; professional and theological education; spiritual direction; counseling as needed.*

Sometimes, engagement with the wider community is enabled and facilitated through the use of technology.

- *I am the youngest member, age 45, but not the newest, and I am serving on the leadership council. The thing that I am doing is putting energy toward networking with other units who share the same foundress and charism so that there are relationships in place for the next generation to enjoy a vibrant religious life connected with sisters around the world. I am working on a collaborative project to use technology to create opportunities for sisters and associates to connect across several units with the same charism. Geographically, merger does not make sense right now, but collaboration makes a lot of sense.*
- *Visit them. Communicate with them via technology. Encourage work group presence on community committee.*
- *We engage in as much international exchange as possible and use our INTRAnet & Whatsapp frequently.*

Prayer, Retreats, Spiritual Direction

Prayer and spiritual direction are a vital part of formation in religious life. These tools are also essential to the support of newer members in their vocation.

- *1. Through a united community and fraternal life. 2. Through a genuine personal and communal prayer life. 3. Through spiritual, emotional support given by the members.*
- *1. Prayer. 2. Support by interacting on a daily basis: concerns and communication. 3. Spending leisure time with them.*
- *Annual retreat for all in Initial Formation and Temporary Profession; The community has support personnel in the various ministries who can accompany young members; Providing opportunities for Spiritual Direction and Community members, in particular, Congressional Leadership Liaison, who offer encouragement.*
- *Because we are a small community, new members participate fully in the common life of our community: Pray together 7 times each day, meals with reading and silence, work, recreation. We also provide a spiritual director, meeting with the formation director for classes with the superior. If there are other helps that are*

needed, such as counseling, we provide it as well. Working together provides a natural ambience for people to bring up questions and concerns.

- *Common retreats, formation gatherings, one-on-one support, individual attention in formation.*
- *Communal prayer 3x daily. Lectio-communally. Retreat.*
- *Guide them in their life of prayer and community life. Familiarize with them the History of the Congregation, Charism, and Mission.*
- *Insistence on spiritual direction; counseling as necessary.*
- *Offer spiritual help/guidance, gather these new members for days of prayer, sharing and instructions. Junior professed have 1 month every year of seminars and retreat.*
- *Personal spiritual direction. Warm personal encounters that offer support. Patience in giving them time to grow. Appreciation of their presence and really welcoming them as part of the monastic family. Small novitiate gives plenty of time for meeting individual needs.*
- *Pray for one another. Be inclusive with each other as a community + share in the work of community. Respect one another + their gifts.*
- *Prayer. Witnessing the charism in daily life. Verbal encouragement and understanding.*
- *Regular community prayers. Community gatherings, reading, celebrations, sharing. Spiritual directions/ day of prayer/ retreat. Open communication. Support in ministry.*
- *Understand the experiences of a candidate/novice in the lifestyle changes. Understanding the formation process as different from past formation. Patience, welcome, love, prayer.*
- *We support our newer members through prayer, collaboration and mentoring. They also have the opportunity to meet and support their peers throughout the congregation.*

Listening and Dialogue

Perhaps one of the most important ways that religious superiors and religious institutes can support newer members in their vocation is through listening and dialogue along the journey. Many superiors mentioned this as a way they support their newer members.

- *As members, being sensitive to their struggles, needs or joys. Keeping lines of communication open always.*
- *Availability. Listening. As a monastic community that generally does not leave the property we do spend a lot of time together. Nevertheless, I find it critical to make individual appointments to respond to the needs and questions of the individual.*
- *By regularly checking with her as to how things are going and by facilitating conversation for her with other sisters when problems arise.*
- *Giving different kinds of help, especially to listen to them and their needs. To just be there. To support. And pray for them. Use professional help with their feelings.*
- *I keep encouraging them to open to the spirit and listen with open hearts and minds. I try to support their talents that they have in leadership. I encourage them to be realistic in working and leading our elders.*
- *Listening, trying to understand the present culture and making sure Directory is clear—clear in goals and expectations.*
- *Mentoring. Post perpetual profession gatherings. Listening and supporting new ideas. Empowering through leadership positions.*
- *Model authentic religious life. By frequently being present to them and supporting them in their journey. By deep listening to the hopes, desires, and challenges of the newer members.*

- *Personal relationships; visits by Councilors (leaders); listening, asking questions of the members; companioning them as religious life changes.*
- *Provide them with the best tools we have now - conversations about interculturality, contemplative dialogue, communal discernment; Provide opportunities to develop skills. Provide encouragement, yet being realists about the future.*
- *Spend time listening and sharing with them one-on-one. Making them aware of opportunities to meet other religious.*
- *Spend time listening, continually looking at what is important, essential rather than surface differences between younger & older members: What are the deep values not to be lost and what are behaviors that are different, but not essential to life as a consecrated religious woman.*
- *Time and attention. Listening to them and letting them begin to tell our story, rather than the “old and wise” telling the young how it should be.*
- *We show interest in them! We meet with them individually from time to time and communicate with them via email, text, and telephone. We hold meetings with them as a group for prayer, contemplative dialogue and sharing of common concern. We encourage them to gather with each other and newer members of other congregations.*
- *We support them through a team approach that utilizes the strength of different team members. We work with each new member as an individual, discerning her strengths and weaknesses, her experience and inclinations, her background and her abilities.*

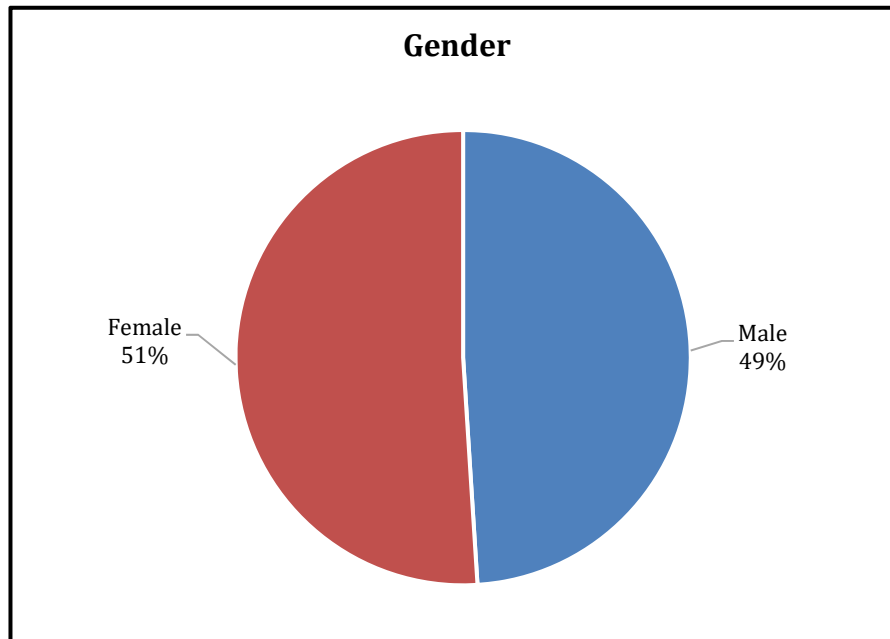
PART II: Findings from New Members

This part of the report presents findings from the survey of new members, defined for the purpose of this study as members and those in formation who have entered religious life in the last 15 years and stayed. It is based primarily on responses to the survey of 1,933 new members. These findings are supplemented and illustrated by comments from the focus groups and personal conversations with new members.

Background and Characteristics of the Respondents

This section describes the demographic characteristics and background experiences of the responding new members. These characteristics include their gender, age and generation, racial and ethnic background and country of origin, Catholic upbringing and education, previous marriage and children, employment and ministry experience, age at time of entrance and current status in their religious institute, and the age at which they first considered religious life. Throughout Part II, comparisons are drawn between male and female respondents and among respondents from different generations. Whenever significant, comparisons are also made between the current data and that of the 2009 NRVC/CARA study.

Participants in this study are evenly distributed in terms of gender. Half are female (51 percent) and half are male (49 percent).



Data from the *Official Catholic Directory 2019* indicate that women religious outnumber men religious in the United States by nearly three to one (45,100 women religious compared to 15,549

men religious).⁷ However, data reported in Part I of this study suggest that there are currently more men than women in initial formation (approximately 1,386 men compared to approximately 1,085 women among the institutes that reported these data). This may account for the somewhat higher proportion of men in this sample of new members than in the population of all religious in the United States. It may also help explain why the proportion of women in the sample has decreased relative to that reported in the 2009 NRVC/CARA study, which was 64 percent female and 36 percent male.

Age and Generation

Respondents were born between 1940 and 2000 and thus range in age from 19 to 79 in 2019. The average age of the respondents overall is 36 (35 for men and 37 for women). The median age for the entire sample is 33 (33 for men and 34 for women). The modal age is 31 for the entire sample (32 for men and 31 for women). The average age of the respondents for this study is a little younger than those of the 2009 study, who averaged 43 years of age.

Compared to the 2009 study, a higher proportion of the new members in this study are in their 20s and 30s. Close to half are in the 30-39 age range, compared to just over a quarter who were in this age range in 2009. About three in ten are in the 19-29 age range, compared to just one-sixth who were in this age range in 2009. This pattern holds for both women and men.

Age Distribution			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
19-29	29	31	27
30-39	45	45	45
40-49	15	15	15
50-59	7	7	7
60 and over	5	3	6

For purposes of analysis of differences among Catholics, CARA typically categorizes respondents into four generations based on their year of birth: Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, Post-Vatican II, and Millennial Generations. This sample includes too few Pre-Vatican II Catholics (those born between 1925 and 1942) to include in analysis. The sample also includes so many Millennial Catholics (those born after 1982 are 68 percent of the sample) that this group is divided here into two approximately equal-sized groups—Early Millennials (born between 1982 and 1991) and Late Millennials (born in 1992 or later). This distinction is somewhat arbitrary because sociologists have not yet come to agreement on an end date for the Millennial Generation. CARA explored several

⁷ These numbers include only those in dioceses and eparchies whose bishops belong to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

different options for dealing with this very large group of Millennials, and this categorization proved to be the most useful way to divide the group. Below is a brief description of the four groups.

- Members of the *Vatican II Generation* were born between 1943 and 1960 and are between the ages of 59 and 76 in 2019. Members of this generation came of age during the time of the Second Vatican Council and their formative years spanned a period of profound changes in the Church (as well as in society and culture). To a large extent, this generation overlaps with the “Baby Boomers.” In general, members of this generation are more likely to emphasize concerns of individual self-actualization over institutional commitment. Only 5 percent of the survey respondents are of the Vatican II Generation, compared to 27 percent in 2009.
- The *Post-Vatican II Generation*, born between 1961 and 1981, consists of those who are ages 38 to 58 in 2019. Members of this generation, sometimes called “Generation X” have no lived experience of the pre-Vatican II Church. Their religious training occurred primarily during the 1970s and 1980s, a time when religious education patterns and methods were very different from those used up to the late 1960s. Members of this generation are relatively less likely to make long-term commitments, are more pragmatic and less ideological, and are relatively more interested in issues of identity and community than those before them. Almost three in ten of the survey respondents (28 percent) are of the Post-Vatican II Generation, compared to 58 percent in 2009.
- The *Millennial Generation*, born between 1982 and 2000, consists of those who are ages 19 to 37 in 2019. Members of this generation tend to be community- and service-oriented as well as interested in spirituality and questions of faith. They also tend to be optimistic in their outlook, tolerant of differences among people, and positive in their attitudes toward authority. Because this is such a large cohort of respondents (68 percent, compared to 11 percent in 2009), CARA divides this group into early and late millennials to explore differences in behaviors and attitudes between the two groups.
 - The *Early Millennial Generation*, born between 1982 and 1991, consists of those who are ages 28 to 37 in 2019. This Millennial group has come of age under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. On the whole, they are less steeped in the Catholic culture of earlier generations of Catholics and less knowledgeable about their faith. Those who are active in their faith tend to be more traditional in their religious beliefs and practices. Almost half of the survey respondents (48 percent) are of the Early Millennial Generation.
 - The *Late Millennial Generation*, born between 1992 and 2000, is the youngest generation of Catholic adults. The leading edge of this generation is just beginning to reach their late-20s. This Millennial group has no lived experience without iPhones, tablets, and social media/networks as well as no lived experience of 9/11 and the immediate aftermath. Yet, their whole life has existed in the new realities of global terrorism and reactions to this. They came of age under Pope Francis, and had no experience of “and also with you” at Mass. One in five survey respondents (20 percent) are of the Late Millennial Generation.

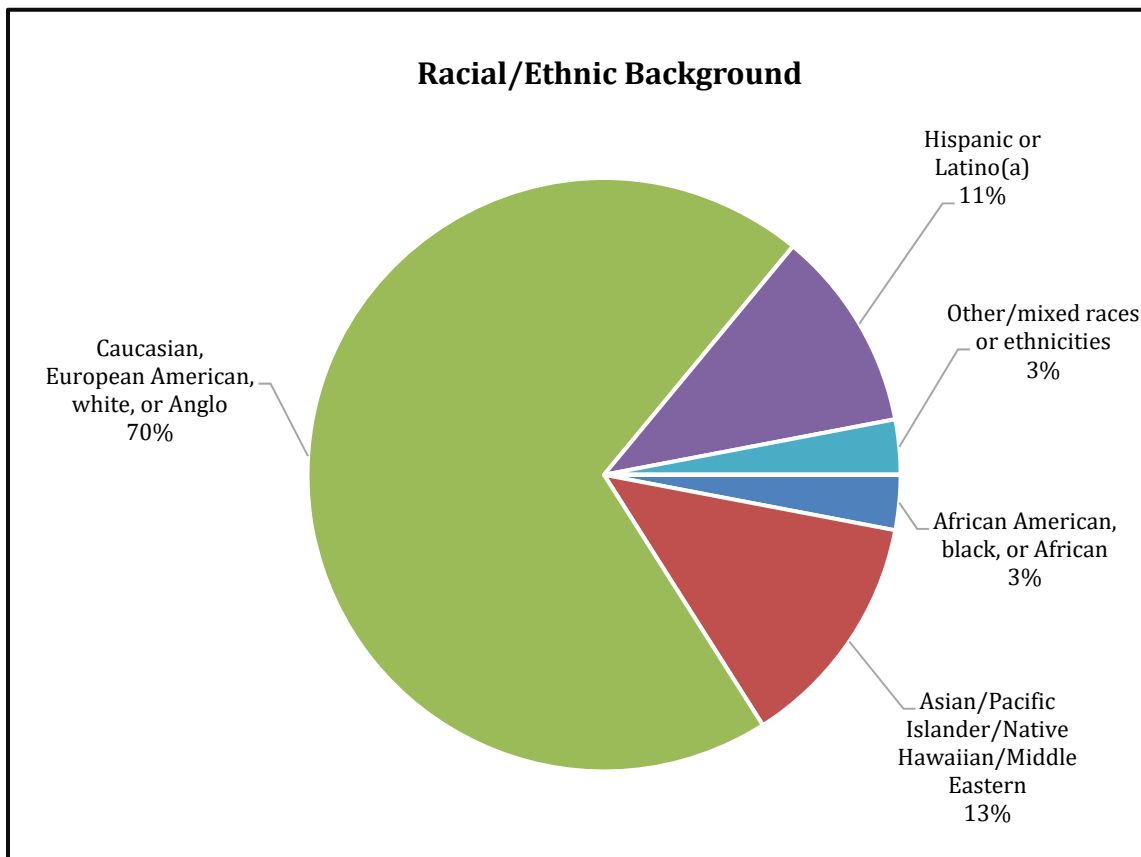
The range of ages among new members as well as the age differences between newer members and older members that are common in many religious institutes present a number of

challenges for these newer members as well as for the religious institutes they have entered. These are described in greater detail in the section on challenges below.

Racial/Ethnic Background, Country of Origin, and Languages

Consistent with the findings reported in Part I, there is greater diversity in the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the new members than in the overall population of perpetually professed men and women religious.⁸

Seven in ten responding new members describe themselves as Caucasian, European American, Anglo, or white.



Just over one in ten new members is Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian/Middle Eastern and another one in ten is Hispanic or Latino(a). About 3 percent describe their background as African American, African, or black. Note that the racial and ethnic composition of new members presented here is slightly different from the racial and ethnic composition of those in

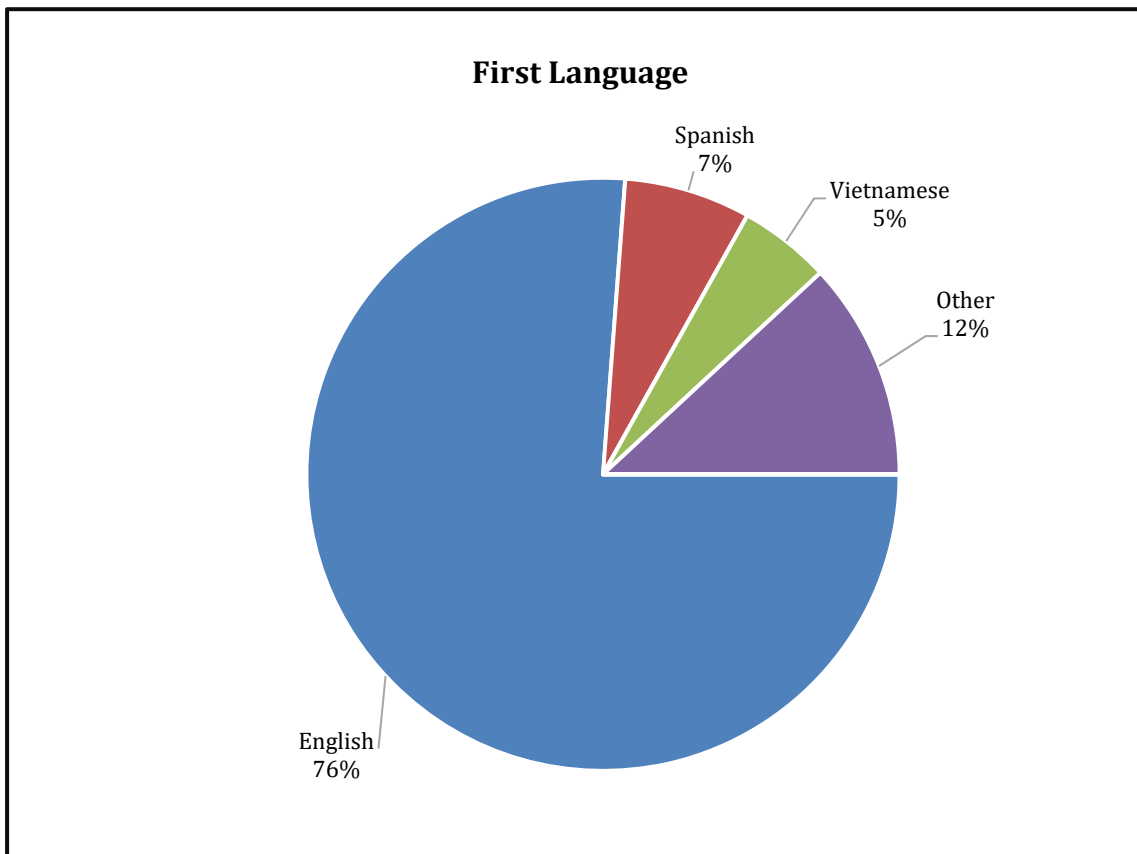
⁸ The figure presented above does not correspond exactly to the racial/ethnic background reported by the religious superiors in Part I for two reasons: 1) Superiors were reporting their estimates of the racial/ethnic composition of the men and women in formation in their religious institute, which does not include all those who entered in the last 15 years, as in the figure above. 2) Superiors were estimating the racial/ethnic composition of their institute, while the figure above presents individual self-identification of those who have entered in the last 15 years.

initial formation described in Part I of this report. The new members described here include not only those in initial formation but also those who have professed perpetual vows within the last 15 years. Compared to the 2009 study, these respondents are even more diverse than the new members at that time.

A quarter of new members (24 percent) were born in a country other than the United States. Respondents who were born outside the United State represent 68 countries. The most common countries that were mentioned are Vietnam (4 percent of respondents), Mexico (3 percent), the Philippines (2 percent), and Canada (2 percent). Men are just slightly more likely than women to have been born outside the United States (26 percent compared to 22 percent).

On average, those who were born in a country other than the United States first came to live in the United States at age 21; half were 22 or older when they first came here. The youngest was less than one and the oldest was age 60. A third (34 percent) arrived as children, ages 17 or younger. Another third arrived as a young adult, between the age of 18 and 25. The other third arrived as adults, age 26 or older. Most of those arrived in their twenties or early thirties, however, as less than one in ten arrived after age 34. The most common age of arrival for men is age 25; for women it is age 27.

When respondents were asked to state their first language, they reported a total of 59 different languages.⁹ More than three in four (76 percent) report English as their first language.



⁹ Respondents were allowed to write in more than one language, but the first language they listed defines their first language.

Another 7 percent report Spanish as their first language, and 5 percent report Vietnamese. No other language is mentioned as a first language by more than 1 percent.

Men are a little more likely than women to report that their first language is something other than English. Just over seven in ten men list English as their first language (72 percent), followed by Spanish (9 percent) and Vietnamese (6 percent). Among women, 81 percent list English as their first language, followed by Spanish (5 percent) and Vietnamese (4 percent).

Six in ten respondents (58 percent) speak one language fluently. Another three in ten (30 percent) speak two languages fluently, and just over one in ten (12 percent) speak three or more languages fluently. Among those who speak English as their first language, almost three in four (73 percent) speak only that language fluently. One in five English speakers (21 percent) speak two languages fluently and 6 percent speak three or more fluently. Among those who speak Spanish or Vietnamese as their first language, 5 percent speak only that language fluently, 82 percent speak two languages, and 13 percent speak three or more fluently.

Men are a little more likely than women to be multilingual. Just under half of men (46 percent) speak one language fluently, 36 percent speak two, and 18 percent speak three or more. Among women, 69 percent speak one language fluently, 25 percent speak two, and 6 percent speak three or more.

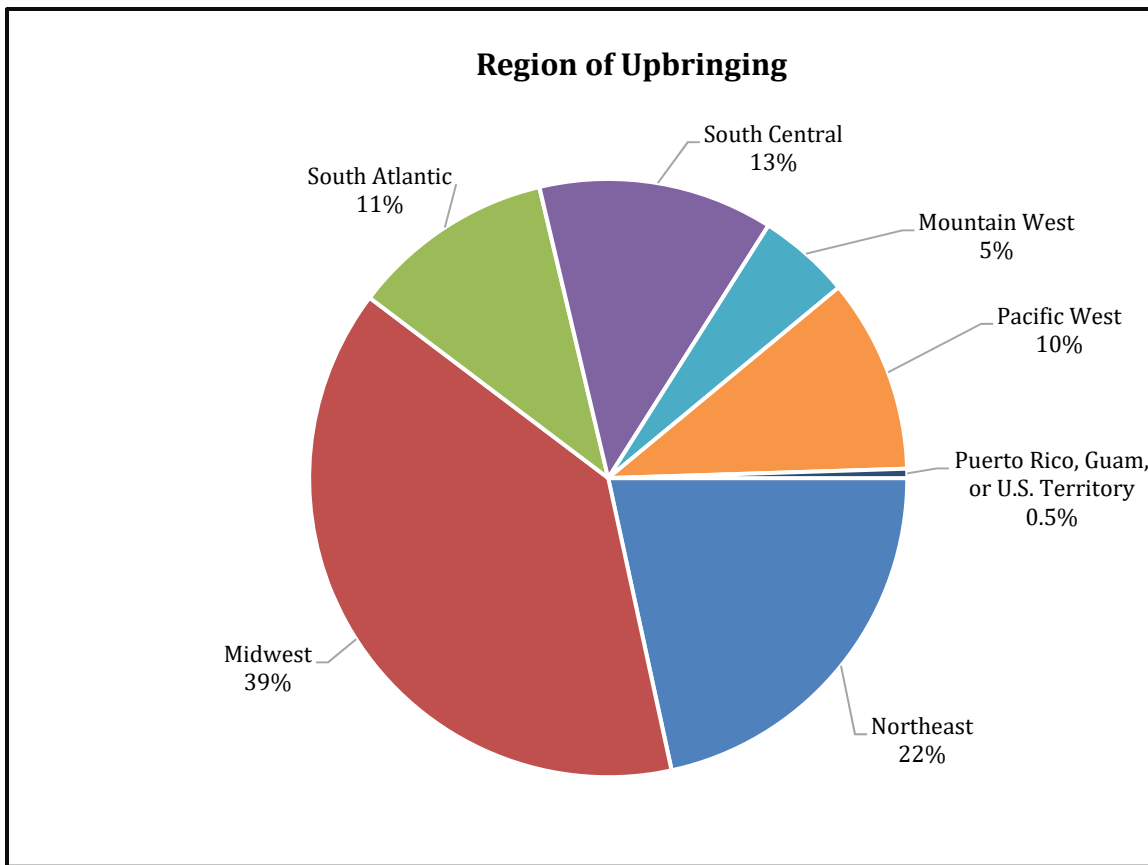
Family Background, Socioeconomic Status, and Region of Upbringing

A third of new members (33 percent) indicate that at least one of their parents were born outside the United States. The most common countries mentioned are Mexico (5 percent of respondents), Vietnam (5 percent), the Philippines (3 percent), Canada (2 percent), and Germany (1 percent). Men are a little more likely than women to indicate that they have at least one parent who was born outside the United States (38 percent compared to 28 percent).

When asked to describe their family's socioeconomic status when they were in elementary school, most respondents (73 percent) say that they grew up in a middle class family. Another fifth (20 percent) grew up in a working class family. Some 6 percent say that their family was wealthy when they were in elementary school and another 2 percent lived in poverty at that time.

New members who had at least one parent that was born outside the United States are *more* likely than those whose parents were U.S. born to have been raised in a family characterized as working poor (33 percent compared to 13 percent) and *less* likely to have been raised in a middle class family (60 percent compared to 79 percent). For those who say they were raised in poverty and those who say they were raised in a wealthy family there is no difference according to the place of birth of their parents.

Among respondents who were born in the United States, a majority (60 percent) grew up in the Midwest or the Northeast, which are traditional areas of Catholic concentration from the last century.¹⁰



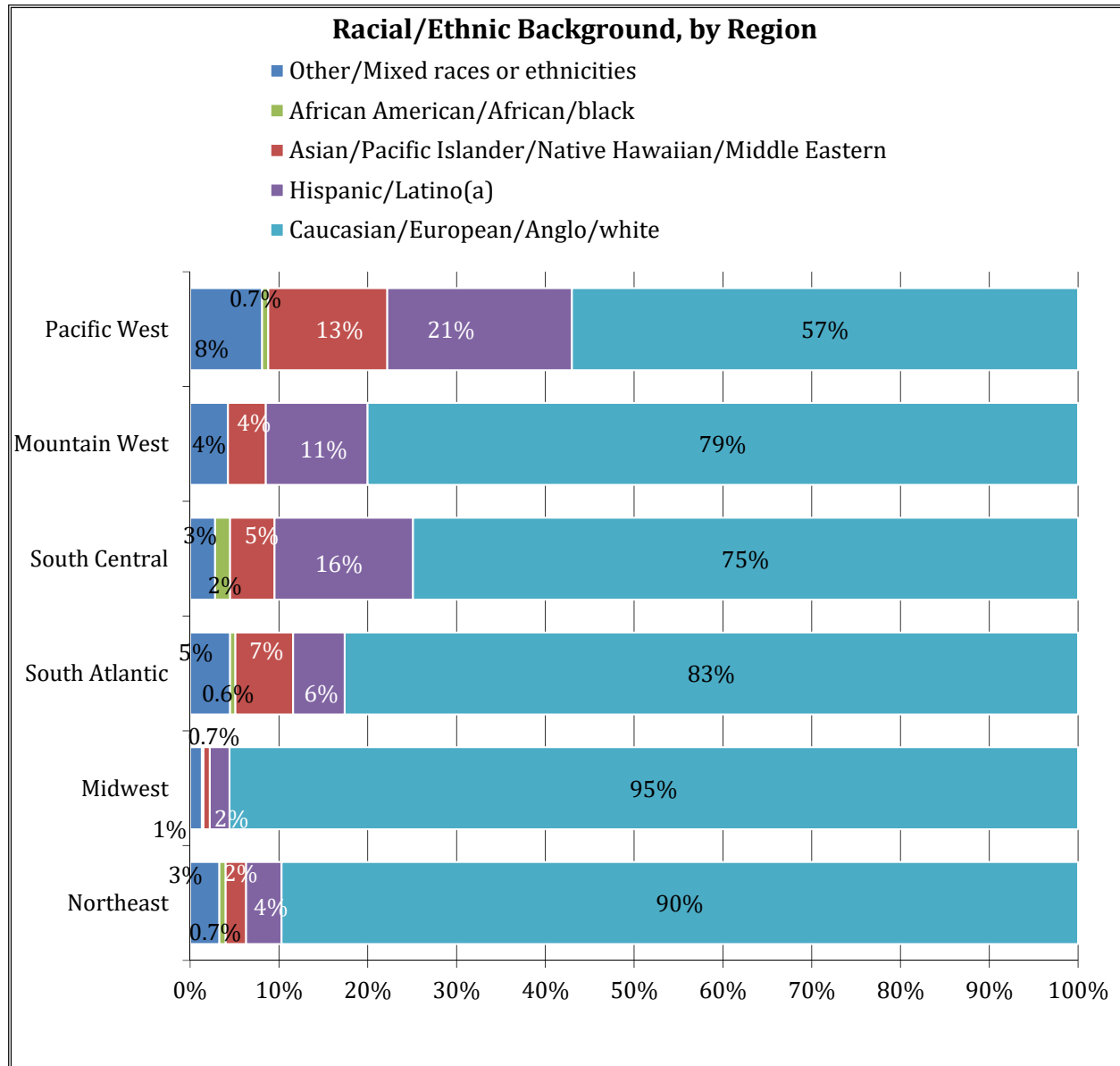
Catholics in general are now nearly equally distributed across the four U.S. Census regions: Northeast, Midwest, South (comprising South Atlantic and South Central), and West (comprising Mountain West and Pacific West). Respondents, therefore, are slightly overrepresented from the Midwest and slightly underrepresented from the West.

Respondents who have at least one parent who is foreign born are significantly *less* likely to have grown up in the Midwest (17 percent compared to 42 percent) and significantly *more* likely to have grown up in the Pacific West (32 percent compared to 7 percent). For those who grew up in other regions there is no difference according to the place of birth of their parents.

Women are a little more likely than men to have grown up in the Midwest (42 percent compared to 35 percent) and a little less likely to have grown up in the Pacific West (8 percent compared to 14 percent), although these differences are not statistically significant.

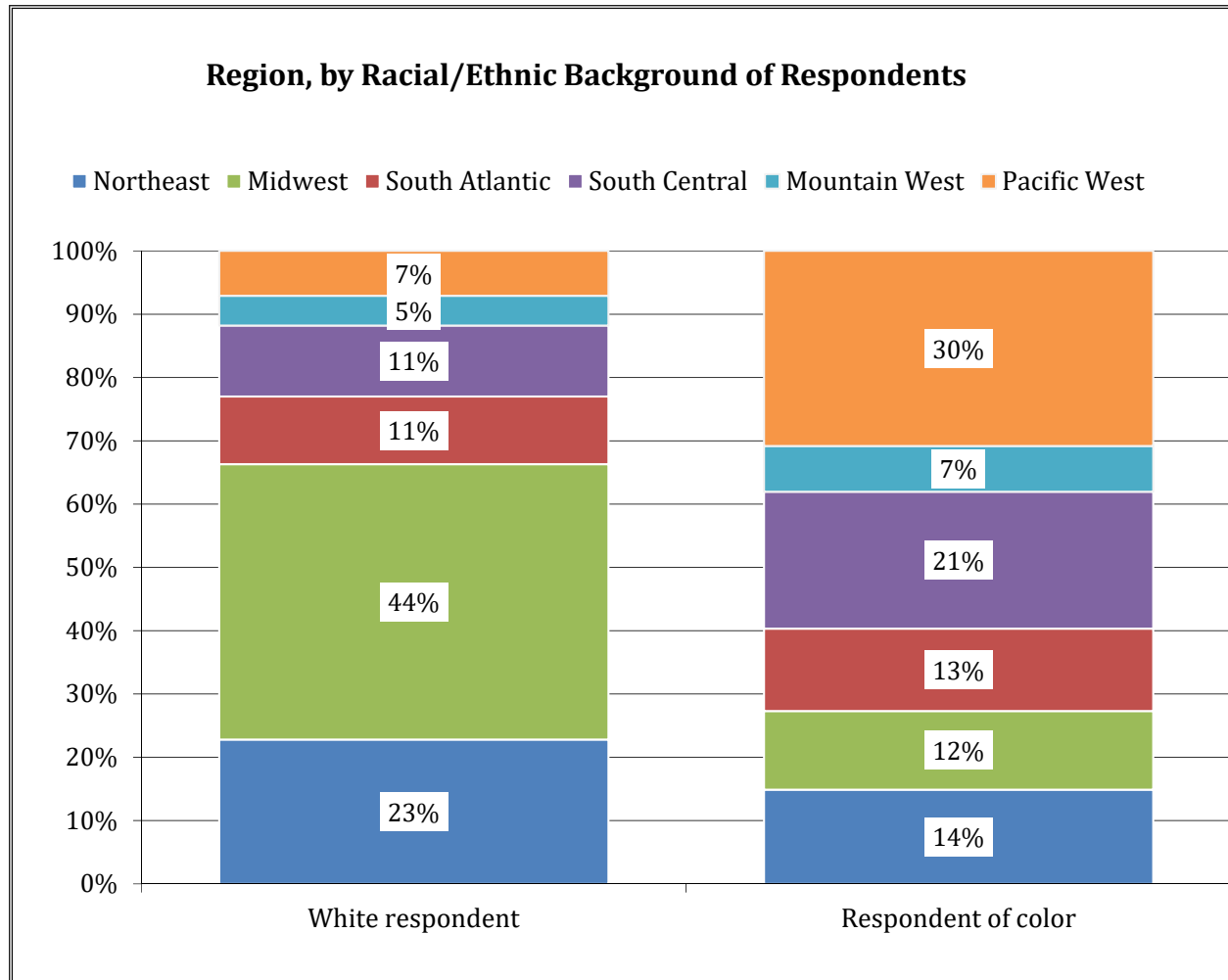
¹⁰ The following states comprise these six regions, according to U.S. Census Bureau categories: Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT), South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV), South Central (AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX), Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI), Mountain West (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY), Pacific West (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA).

Although there are too few cases to ensure statistical significance across all categories, a comparison of regions according to the racial/ethnic composition of new members shows some interesting differences.



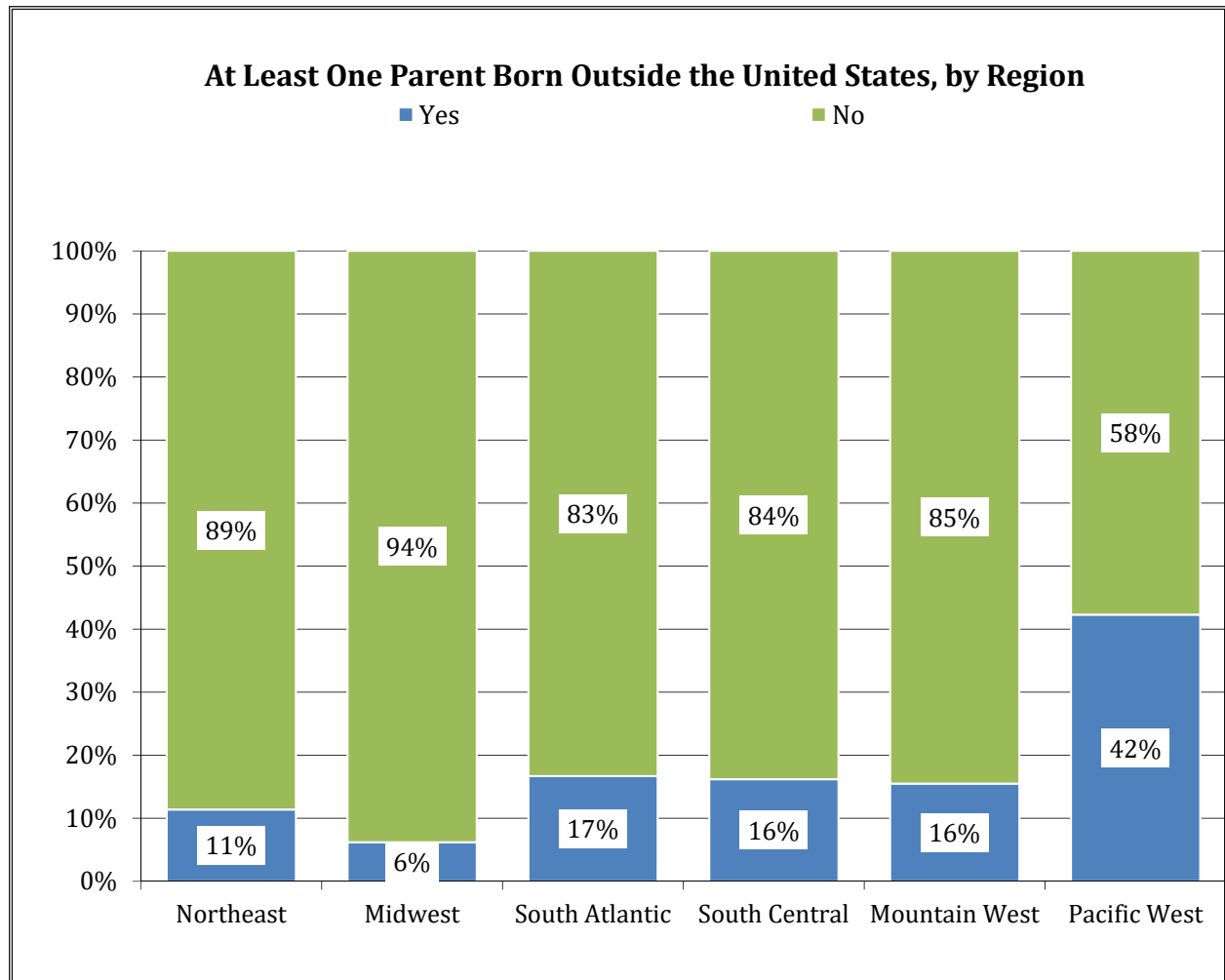
As shown above, the Midwest and the Northeast have the greatest proportion of new members who self-identify as Caucasian/European/Anglo/white. Very few in those two regions are of other races/ethnicities. The South Atlantic region is similar in composition, with 83 percent white, 7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 6 percent Hispanic/Latino(a), and 5 percent other/ mixed races or ethnicities. The South Central region has the greatest concentration of African American/African/black respondents (2 percent) and the Mountain West has none (among these respondents). The Pacific West is the most diverse, with 57 percent white, 21 percent Hispanic, 13 percent Asian, almost 1 percent black, and 8 percent other/mixed races or ethnicities.

Another way to look at these data, which may be more illustrative even though there are still too few cases for statistical significance, is to categorize respondents as white or persons of color and compare the distribution of both groups across regions.



The figure above shows that the greatest proportion of white respondents grew up in the Midwest or the Northeast, while the greatest proportion of respondents of color grew up in the Pacific West or in the South Central region.

Comparison of regions according to the nativity of parents is also interesting, although again there are too few cases to ensure statistical significance across all categories.



As shown above, the Midwest has the lowest percentage of respondents declaring that at least one of their parents was born outside the United States. By contrast more than four in ten respondents who grew up in the Pacific West had at least one parent that was born outside the United States. The other regions are all about the same in the proportion of respondents who had a parent that was born outside the United States.

Catholic Upbringing, Faith Formation, and Education

- Just as was reported in 2009, nine in ten respondents were raised Catholic. Among those who became Catholic as adults, a majority did so when they were in their late teens or early 20s.
- One in ten respondents (10 percent) were ever home-schooled, compared to 3 percent in 2009. On average, the respondents were home-schooled for about eight years. Women are more likely than men to have been home-schooled (14 percent compared to 7 percent).
- Almost half of the respondents (46 percent) attended a Catholic school for at least some of their elementary or middle school education, compared to more than half (56 percent) from the 2009 study who reported attending a Catholic school. Four in ten (39 percent) attended a Catholic high school and another four in ten (39 percent) attended a Catholic college or university. Almost three-fourths (73 percent) attended a Catholic school for at least part of their education. Half (50 percent) attended parish-based religious education, CCD, or RCIA.
- Compared to other respondents, those from the Vatican II Generation are *less* likely to have attended parish-based religious education, CCD, or RCIA (34 percent compared to at least 50 percent of other generations). However, Vatican II Generation respondents are *more* likely than others to have attended a Catholic elementary school.
- Seventy one percent of respondents had at least a bachelor's degree before they entered their religious institute (49 percent bachelor's, 17 percent Master's, 4 percent doctoral degree).
- One-third of respondents (34 percent) have a relative who is a priest, deacon, or religious sister or brother.
- Outside of family members, almost nine in ten knew at least one priest, brother, or sister before discerning their vocation. One in ten respondents were an associate of their current institute before entering.

Marriage and Children

About 3 percent of respondents were once married and nearly 2 percent have children. This is a decrease from the 2009 study, which reported 7 percent of respondents had once been married and about 5 percent had children.

- Previous marriage and children is more common among female than male respondents. Among female respondents, 4 percent were married and 2 percent have children. Among male respondents, 2 percent were married and 1 percent have children. Of all new members with children, three in four (76 percent) are female.
- Marriage and children is also more common among older respondents. Among the Vatican II Generation, 35 percent have been married and 25 percent have children. Four percent of

the Post Vatican II Generation was married and only 1 percent have children. None of the Millennials have children and less than 1 percent have been married.

Age First Considered Religious Life

When asked the age at which they first considered religious life, respondents report being as young as three and as old as 69. The average age was 19 and both the median and modal age was 18.

Almost nine in ten newer members (among those who responded to the survey) were age 25 or younger when they first considered religious life.

Age First Considered Religious Life			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
13 or younger	23	16	30
14-17	20	21	20
18-21	27	30	23
22-25	15	18	12
26-30	7	8	7
31-40	5	5	5
41-50	2	1	2
51-65	1	1	1

Seven in ten (70 percent) considered religious life by the time they were 21, with half (51 percent) doing so by the time they were 17.

- Just as in the 2009 study, female respondents are more likely than male respondents to have thought about a religious vocation at a young age, that is, before the age of 14.
- Men were a little more likely than women to first consider religious life when they were college-age.

Age at Time of Entrance

The average age of new members who entered religious life for the first time in the last 15 years was 28 at the time they entered (down from 2009, where the average age at entrance was 30 for men and 32 for women). Half entered religious life at the age of 25. One man entered religious life at the age of 12 and one woman entered religious life at the age of 69.

Age at Time of Entrance into Religious Life			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Under 20	9	11	7
20-29	61	60	61
30-39	18	19	17
40-49	7	7	7
50-59	4	2	6
60 and over	1	1	1
Average	28	28	29
Median	25	25	26
Mode	23	23	25

Six in ten respondents entered since 2010 (60 percent), that is, they have been in their religious institutes for fewer than ten years at the time they completed the survey. Almost a third entered in 2015 or later. One in ten report that they entered another religious institute before the one to which they currently belong.

Current Status in the Religious Institute

Current Status in Religious Institute			
Percentage in each category			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Candidate/Postulant	5	4	6
Novice	15	15	14
Temporary vows/ commitment	34	29	38
Final/perpetual vows/ commitment	47	52	43

- Almost half of the respondents are finally professed (47 percent) and a third are in temporary vows (34 percent). Just over one in ten is a novice (15 percent), and one in 20 is a candidate/postulant (5 percent). Compared to the 2009 study, a higher proportion of these respondents are in formation. In 2009, two-thirds of respondents (63 percent) were finally professed while a quarter were temporary professed (26 percent), 8 percent were novices, and 3 percent were candidates/postulants.
- Among the male respondents, four-fifths are or expect to become priests and one-fifth are or expect to become brothers (down from one-quarter in 2009). Among religious men who are or expect to become priests, two-thirds (68 percent) expect to be ordained into priesthood between 2019 and 2040.

Employment and Ministry Experience

More than eight in ten respondents (81 percent) were employed before they entered religious life. Among those who were employed, three in four were employed full-time and one in four were employed part-time. Women are more likely than men to have been employed before they entered (86 percent compared to 75 percent). Men and women are about equally likely to have been employed full-time (77 percent among men compared to 73 percent among women).

Whether or not they were employed, just over half of respondents (52 percent) were engaged in ministry before they entered religious life. Among those who were engaged in ministry, most (57 percent) served in a volunteer capacity, while a little over a quarter (27 percent) were engaged full-time and 16 percent were engaged part-time in ministry. Women are also more likely than men to have been engaged in ministry before they entered religious life (58 percent compared to 45 percent), though there is no significant difference in their level of engagement.

Six in ten respondents report that they were involved in liturgical ministry. Just over half report being involved in youth ministry and/or in other volunteer work in a parish or other setting before they entered.

Were you involved in any of the following before you entered?

Percentage checking each response in respective years of the survey

	2019	2009
	%	%
Liturgical ministry, e.g., lector, extraordinary minister	59	54
Youth ministry, parish youth group, or LifeTeen	54	39
Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting	52	51
Campus ministry or group	43	29
Young adult ministry or group	41	31
Bible study group	39	--
Music ministry, cantor, choir	37	34
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	31	40
Right to Life March in Washington, D.C.	27	--
World Youth Day	17	13
Steubenville High School Youth Conference	15	--
Religious institute volunteer program, e.g., Mercy or Jesuit Volunteer Corps	12	9
FOCUS	7	--
National Catholic Youth Conference	7	--
Military service/Armed Forces, active or reserve	2	--
From Service to Sisterhood volunteer program	<1	--

- Four in ten were involved in campus ministry or other campus group, young adult ministry or other young adult group, Bible study group, or music ministry/cantor/choir.
- Nearly three in ten participated in faith formation/catechetical ministry/RCIA and/or the Right to Life March in Washington, D.C.
- Women were more likely than men to have participated in a Bible study group, Steubenville High School Youth conference, Right to Life march in Washington, D.C., and World Youth Day.

Attraction to Religious Life

Newer members are most likely to say they were attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth and by a desire for a deeper relationship with God, which compares almost exactly to the 2009 study results.

<i>How much did the following attract you to <u>religious life</u>?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %	“Very Much” Only %
Desire for prayer and spiritual growth	97	77
Desire for a deeper relationship with God	96	86
A sense of call to religious life	95	79
Desire to be of service	93	69
Desire to be part of a community	91	65
Desire to be more committed to the Church	83	52
Desire to profess and live vows	79	41

- When asked how much various factors attracted them *to religious life*, most respondents report that they were attracted “very much” by desire for a deeper relationship with God (86 percent), a sense of call to religious life (79 percent), and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (77 percent).
- To only a slightly lesser degree, most also say they were attracted by desire to be of service and a desire to be part of a community.
- At least nine in ten respondents say they were attracted at least “somewhat” by each of these. About four-fifths say they were attracted by a desire to be more committed to the Church and/or by a desire to profess and live vows.

Gender Differences

Compared to male respondents, female respondents are more likely to say they were attracted to religious life by a sense of call to religious life, a desire for prayer and spiritual growth, and by a desire for a deeper relationship with God. Men are likely than women to say they were attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service and by a desire to be part of a community.

Generational Differences

Vatican II generation respondents are more likely than other generations to report that they were attracted to religious life by a desire to profess and live vows.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

Compared to white respondents, men and women of color are more likely to report that they were “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service, to profess and live vows, and to be more committed to the Church.

Comments from Focus Groups

In telling their vocation stories, many of the focus group participants described their sense of call to religious life and particularly their desire to deepen their relationship with God and with Christ. They spoke of the radicalness of giving one’s life in totality to Christ, but they also talked about particular elements of religious life such as community life, communal prayer, and service. Several of the men also talked about their call to priesthood. For some, the desire for priesthood preceded a sense of call to religious life. For others, discernment of a vocation to priesthood or brotherhood came later. Some of the men talked about their attraction to community life and the possibility of different ministries that would not be possible in diocesan priesthood.

For me it was a desire for community after having been in parish ministry for 20 years as a single person. Everywhere I looked didn’t have the fulfillment of community that I was looking for. It’s not that there wasn’t community...but I wanted to work and pray and live with people of the same mindset and heartset, if you will. While I had a great Catholic education, it wasn’t that—I am an older vocation, as it were—those relationships as a young child and as a high schooler were certainly important, but they weren’t the only thing. So, there was an inward nag and it would not go away. And so, it was that nag for community life for a stable place and to just be with people of like mind and heart.

I think for me what first attracted me to religious life was first understanding that we have a vocation, that every person has a vocation, and that that vocation whether its marriage or religious life or priesthood is where you are going to be the happiest. So, at first, I had to get to that step of understanding that no matter where I am called to, that’s where I am going to be the happiest. Then, having that spiritual indifference to discern, to say OK, if I am called to marriage, if I am called to religious life, both are beautiful, both benefit the Church, both will make me happy, but it’s ultimately where is God leading me to, what’s his will for me?

It was really the call to community life and the balance of work in prayer, and just how, especially at the high school, how active the friars were in things other than like church stuff. We used to be surprised, one of the friars is cutting grass. It seems like normal, approachable. That attracted me to the community. I was discerning with diocese and priesthood, too and pretty similarly like I’d be living by myself or one other person. I knew there’s going to be somebody else or ten other guys in the chapel to pray with, I’m more likely going to go to the chapel to pray. That attraction to the community I found even right from the beginning of postulancy until this day, is followed through it. There is a community to pray with.

Little by little, I came to feel that for other people it was enough to, in other words, for me it wouldn’t be enough to get married or to live a single life. I needed to give everything. If I was going to give something, I needed to give everything. That was part of the initial attraction. Then I met my community when I was 16. Actually, I was not attracted to my mission at the beginning, but I was attracted to the relationship with Jesus that I saw that the members had, their joy. Then also I met a lot of members who entered or began their religious life at a younger age when we used to have a high school. I think that kind of tapped into that desire to give everything, like even youth and the years of my life that I didn’t realize I could give to God.

I was a history major in college. As I studied more about injustices, and I studied abroad in South Africa and experienced a lot of injustices, it really awoke this place in me that I guess I became very conflicted about how I wanted to live, and I how I want others to live. Basically, it was centred around community, simplicity, social justice, prayer, serve the poor, live close to the poor, and I would just kind of see, “Oh I’m describing what religious life is.” ... I came back from South Africa more intentional about discerning what I would want to do with my life. I entered pretty young because I felt pretty clear about how I wanted to live my life.

When I think of my initial call I was in college. I hadn’t gone to Catholic school for high school or grade school, but we went to church regularly as a family. I was in college when I decided I wanted to play my instrument at Mass. I had an opportunity to practice with another sister who helped me along the way with getting my instrumental playing together for church, which was really cool. It also opened that door and let me see a glimpse of what religious life was like for her in living community. That for me was my initial call to religious life.

I visited the sisters and then I just sat across from a sister. I saw joy in her eyes. I said, that’s nothing that you can fake. I was like, what is that? I started asking the deeper questions.

Attraction to their Religious Institute

When asked how much various factors attracted them to their religious institute, new members report that it was the spirituality and the charism of the institute that most attracted them to their religious institutes, with at least seven in ten reporting these aspects attracted them “very much.”

How much did the following attract you to your religious institute?

Percentage responding

	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %	“Very Much” Only %
The spirituality of the institute	95	71
The charism of the institute	94	75
The mission of the institute	93	66
The prayer life of the institute	93	63
The community life of the institute	92	67
The example of members of the institute	90	65
Welcome and encouragement by members	88	60
The ministries of the institute	84	49
The life and works of your founder/ess	72	41
The cultural diversity of institute members	36	16

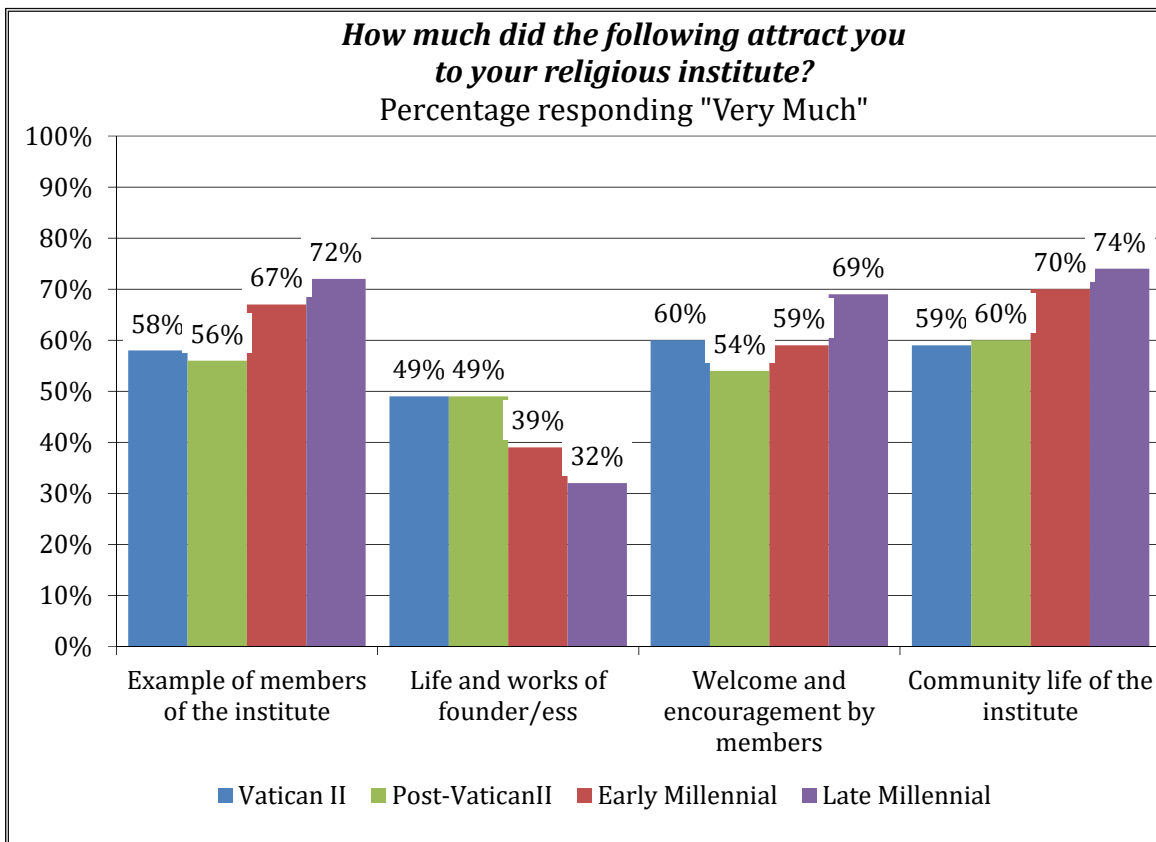
- At least nine in ten respondents report that the following factors at least “somewhat” attracted them to their religious institute: the spirituality, charisma, prayer life, mission, community life, and the example of members of the institute.
- Almost nine in ten respondents were at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the welcome and encouragement of the institute’s members, with six in ten reporting this aspect attracted them “very much.”
- Just over eight in ten report being at least “somewhat” attracted to their institute by its ministries, with half reporting this aspect attracted them “very much.”
- Just over seven in ten report being at least “somewhat” attracted to their institute by the life and works of the institute’s founder/ess, with four in ten reporting this aspect attracted them “very much.”
- About one-third report being at least “somewhat” attracted to the cultural diversity of institute members, but just one-sixth report that this aspect attracted them “very much.”

Gender Differences

- Female respondents are more likely than male respondents to report that the prayer life, community life, and spirituality of the institute attracted them “very much.”
- Compared to female respondents, male respondents are more likely to say that they were attracted “very much” by the mission and ministries of the institute as well as by the life and works of its founder.

Generational Differences

Late Millennial respondents were most likely to be “very much” attracted to their religious institute by the example of the members, welcome and encouragement by members, and the community life of the institute, while they were least likely to be “very much” attracted by the life and works of the institute’s founder/ess.



- Post-Vatican II respondents are less likely than other generations to be “very much” attracted to their institutes by the example of the members and by the welcome and encouragement by members of the institute.
- Vatican II and Post-Vatican II are more likely than other generations to be “very much” attracted to their institutes by the life and works of the founder/ess. They are less likely than other generations to be “very much” attracted by the community life of the institute.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

Respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to be “very much” attracted to their institute by the life and works of the founder/ess, the ministries of the institute, the cultural diversity of institute members, and the welcome and encouragement by members.

Comments from Focus Groups

In the focus groups, participants tended to talk primarily about the example of members of the institute. Some also mentioned the spiritual, communal, and/or ministerial dimensions of religious life as among the things that attracted them. Several mentioned feeling welcomed by the members and being attracted to the community life they experienced there.

What attracted me to my community was the witness of joy that our sisters had. I had a teacher who was from our community when I was a freshman in high school, and there was something about her presence that she had, a joy that I had never seen anyone else have before. And I wanted what she had. I wanted that joy.

I see the passion of our sisters who fight for social justice whether it be the unborn, or those at the border. And that passion for social justice is filled with compassion. Passion with a lot compassion. That's what fires me; that is what keeps me here.

I didn't know that male religious existed until I went to college. I went to college that's ... sponsored by my community. I guess it was my first introduction into a male religious order. But I would say my first really strong attraction to the religious way of life came as a college student, very much experiencing a deepening of my faith and a desire to follow Christ and to serve him. It was kind of that pivotal moment when I first got introduced to the rule of Saint Benedict. That was really my, the first kind of tug at my heart, was discovering that a man who kind of had the Christian life figured out, and knew what it was about, and knew how to follow Christ, whose whole mission was to seek God. That was my first interaction, then growing in relationship with the community, and also discerning with other religious orders. It became very clear to me that God was calling me...

I just attended the final profession Mass for four women. Every sister from around the country came. It was four-hour incredible Mass. I'm smack in the middle of it. After they took their final vows, they stood at the front of church. Every sister in the church got up and walked to them. It took over an hour just to do that. They took their time doing it. It was embedded in the liturgy. All I could think of is, "This is why I'm here." I couldn't put words to it, but it did speak for something bigger than me and something that's eternal, something that's totally about service. I didn't know ten people in the whole church. I just knew I wanted to be a part of that.

When I met our sisters, I was not discerning, but I was very struck by how authentic they were, that they were each totally themselves, and they were really happy, and joyful, and normal, and so that was what drew me to our community.

I have met our sisters and it was random and whenever I reached out to them and the way it all worked out, but when I met them I remember just experiencing joy. I was surprised at the variety that exists within religious life because I literally knew nothing about it. And then when I started coming to visit it felt like home. It was a place that I wanted to come back to and visit. So, for me it developed slowly in a way that I was like, wow I want to know this place more, I want to know these sisters more and then I decided to move in.

I grew up with my congregation, but I felt it was fair to like check out other ones too before I committed to mine. So, I did a little bit of visiting, you know, but for me it was an easy decision, as you know. It felt right to me. I made a lay commitment first when I was in college and we were all going around the circle saying why we wanted to be in this lay community and all the things that people were saying were what I grew up with. That was my view of the Church and not just of this congregation. So, I said, "Well shoot, I don't want that to end once I graduate from college or whatever and I feel a really strong pull to help that continue in our world." I think that there is a need for our specific charism to exist in the world and I can play a role in helping that continue. Not to say that the lay couldn't, but as a religious, it's just a little more fit to me. Not better not worse, but to me that is kind of where I came in.

What attracted me the first community was their joy. That was like the thing, I'm like that could be me. The first order that I was looking into it's just like their charism, their mission wasn't something I thought that I could do. The order that I joined, this is exactly what I want to do. This is exactly my fix. Honestly since entering and since being received and everything I feel whole for the first time in my life.

After college I moved out, taught on the Navaho reservation. I met one of the sisters from our community out there. It was not the spiritual stuff, it was more of the faith through action. She was always doing things like out cutting bushes, mowing grass, doing that kind of stuff, waxing, stripping floors. She'd ask for help. I could help with those things. Those were safe things. I kind of helped with that, saving the church, doing those different things. She's like, so, faith and action, you're kind of doing and finding God in those things. Kind of meeting her through doing those non-spiritual things, but those kind of faith through action, is kind of what drew me to community, and kind of where it blossomed from there.

I read all the CARA stuff too so forgive me if I sound too jargony, but definitely it was the common apostolate that drew me in. To see these men, priests and brothers, working together on a project that seemed worth doing. They were very, very much individuals, unique, bring very different things to the work, bringing different gifts to a work that seemed desperately in need of being done well.

When I started visiting, I really fell in love with the way the sisters loved each other. The way, when I was at the monastery I didn't have to put on anything of who I was. They liked me and loved me for who I was. I think the community aspect of knowing that I would never be sent off by myself somewhere, I would always have community. The prayer life, the praying of the liturgy, the hours three times a day, centered us. That was the mainstay of where we went with our ministry. I always wanted to be a teacher and I knew I could be a teacher if I entered this community. It was basically the love that I saw between the sisters when I visited the monastery, the way they just embraced me, who I was, and then the community prayer being important.

What attracted me to the Sisters of [Name] was the founder [Name], her life and her commitment to the poor. I could find myself in her story, but she had the sense of wisdom, here's something for you to learn and grow into. I continue to find that in her, so that attracted me specifically to the Sisters of [Name].

Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

The most common way the new members first became acquainted with their religious institute was in an institution, such as a school, where the members served. Two-fifths of respondents reported so.

<i>How did you <u>first</u> become acquainted with your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage checking each item in respective years of the survey		
	2019	2009
	%	%
In an institution where members served, e.g., school	37	36
Through your own internet search of websites	29	--
Through a relative or friend in the institute	24	-- ¹¹
Through working with a member of the institute	19	19
Through printed materials (e.g., prayer cards, bookmarks, brochures, books, booklets)	18	-- ¹²
Through online content (e.g., podcasts, videos, blogs, vlogs, webinars)	12	--
Through a presentation at a school/parish/youth ministry event	11	--
Through a vocation fair or exhibit at an event or conference	9	5
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	6	--
Through a vocation match or placement service	6	3

Newer members in religious life first became acquainted with their religious institutes in many different ways. Besides institutional settings, other relatively common ways of becoming acquainted with the institute were through their own internet search of websites, through a relative or friend in the institute, through working with a member of the institute, or through printed materials. About one in ten first became acquainted with their institute through its online content (such as podcasts, videos, or blogs), or through a presentation at school/parish/youth ministry event or at a conference. Few (6 percent or fewer) indicate that they met the institute through a social media site, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, or through a vocation match or placement service.

Gender Differences

- Men are more likely than women to report that they first encountered their religious institute in a school or other institution where the members served (51 percent compared to 23 percent).

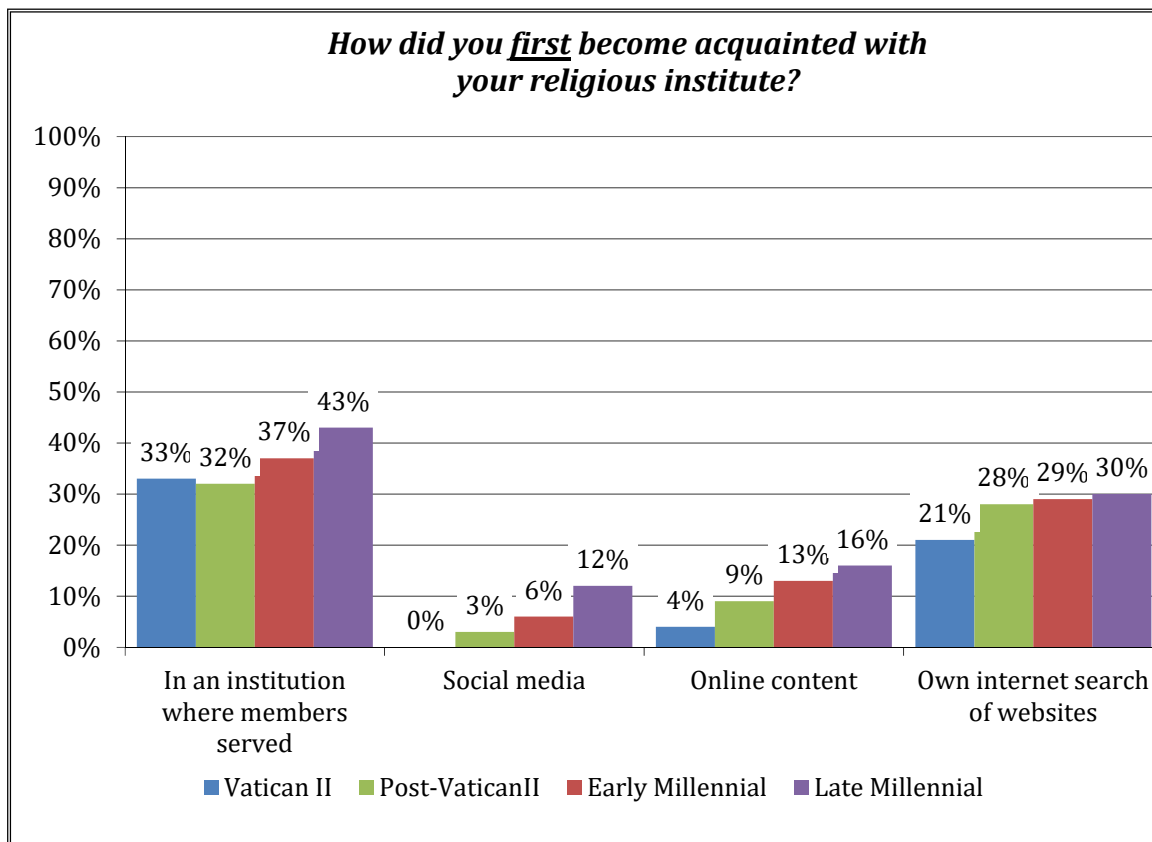
¹¹ 2009 questions and response percentages: Through a relative in the institute (5 percent), Through a friend in the institute (16 percent).

¹² 2009 question and response percentage: Through print or online promotional materials (17 percent).

- Women are more likely than men to indicate that they learned about their institute through a presentation at a school/parish/youth ministry event (14 percent compared to 7 percent).

Generational Differences

Younger respondents, especially those in the late Millennial Generation, are more likely to have first heard about the institute in an institution where members served (43 percent). This generation are also more likely than other generations to be first attracted to their religious institutes through the internet, such as social media such as Facebook, online content such as podcasts or videos, or their own internet search of websites.



Race/Ethnicity Differences

White respondents are more likely than respondents of color to say they first became acquainted with their religious institute through a relative or friend in the institute.

Comments from Focus Groups

The focus group participants provided many examples of finding and being attracted to the religious institute they eventually entered through these various means. In keeping with the findings noted above, the men tended to be more likely to relay experiences of first coming to know priests or brothers while in college or high school, often in a residence hall setting. The women, on the

other hand, tended to mention working with members and gradually getting to know their communities through them. Many of the younger participants indicated that they did not know a man or woman religious before they sensed a call to religious life. A number of these young religious found out or learned more about their institute online. The comments below provide examples of each of these.

For me I began thinking about religious life most seriously when I was a sophomore in high school. I knew of one sister who was at my high school. I didn't feel comfortable yet talking to her about it, or talking to anyone about it. I just went online to try to find out as much as I could. When I was a senior in high school, the sisters from my community came to visit and have lunch with a few of us... In meeting them, they're real people. I could see myself doing that, and doing that happily. From there I just kept in communication with them, visited them. In visiting with them I saw their spirituality and I saw aspects of their spirituality that made sense for me.

I didn't have any of our sisters in school, but when I was in the process of discerning, I had a copy of the vocation magazine, VISION. First, I went through and skipped any organizations that said you had to be between 18 and 30. I found one that seemed like they would accept you if you were older. I wrote to ten. Out of those ten about seven answered back and said, perhaps you want to consider our associates. A couple of others just send like the same copy of VISION magazine back to me with papers. But one—the community I joined—the sister actually answered my letter and invited me to come and visit.

I had already discerned a calling to work with elderly people and had it been doing it for an entire career. It seemed like that would be the best way to express my religious vocation, would be to continue in that thing and use those gifts from God, the education, the credentials, the background experience in working with elderly people. I found the [Name] sisters through VocationMatch.com [vocationnetwork.org/en/match] on the computer.

In my case I'm not sure exactly when I got acquainted with the [Name]. I think it could have been online. It was also the spiritual director, a Jesuit father in my high school, sort of mentioned that some of the things I was talking about were the [Name] that I was already thinking I was attracted to. The first thing I do know, the first way I encountered religious life is reading Teresa of Avila, The Way of Perfection. I sort of was very attracted to it. I didn't know any real orders. As I was looking at them, the priest sort of pointed me toward the [Name] eventually, although I'd already found them on the internet before that.

I didn't know any religious or sisters growing up until I went to university. As soon as I met the sisters there, it was just something different about them and something that called me to see myself with them. They had a lot of joy, and they really were always present on campus.

I did not know religious life where I was growing up because there was no religious around the area. It's just diocesan priests and it wasn't until later in life that I found out that there was religious, and there were also religious brothers. ... That's really what attracted me to the community was more of the sense of family, the sense of prayer and a sense of equality to a certain degree.

I was surprised at the variety that exists within religious life because I literally knew nothing about it. And then when I started coming to visit, it felt like home. It was a place that I wanted to come back to and visit. So, for me it developed slowly in a way that I was like, "Wow I want to know this place more, I want to know these sisters more," and then I decided to move in.

I did all my research online. I Googled the congregations. I found what was important, their mission and charism statements. I reached out to several, visited several, and noticed one in particular where the relationships were easy. They kept inviting and I kept saying yes. You start to feel comfortable and at home. They're still inviting; I'm still saying yes.

Participation in Vocation Promotion and Discernment Activities

Most newer members (74 percent) participated in “Come and See” experience(s) before they entered their religious institute, compared to 57 percent in 2009. Participation doubled since 2009 in discernment groups (28 percent compared to 14 percent).

<i>Did you participate in any of the following before you entered your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage checking each response in respective years of the survey		
	2019	2009
	%	%
“Come and See” experience(s)	74	57
Discernment retreat	59	56
Busy Persons retreat, Nun Run, Open House, Theology on Tap, <i>Cursillo</i> , etc.	31	--
In-person meetings with a discernment group	28	14 ¹³
Live-in experience with the institute	27	33
Diocesan vocation programs (e.g., Quo Vadis, Fiat Days, dinner with the Bishop)	25	24
Volunteer service immersion experience(s) with members of the institute	16	22 ¹⁴
Living at a Discernment House	7	--
Online discernment forums, chats, etc.	7	--

- Three-fifths of respondents report participating in a discernment retreat, similar to 2009. At least three in ten participated in a Busy Persons retreat, a Nun Run, an Open House, Theology on Tap, a *Cursillo*, or something similar. Nearly as many participated in in-person meetings with a discernment group or a live-in experience with the institute.
- A quarter report participating in a diocesan vocation program, such as Quo Vadis, Fiat Days, or dinner with the Bishop.
- One-sixth participated in volunteer service immersion experience(s) with members of the institute.
- Less than one in ten lived at a Discernment House or participated in online discernment forums, chats, etc.

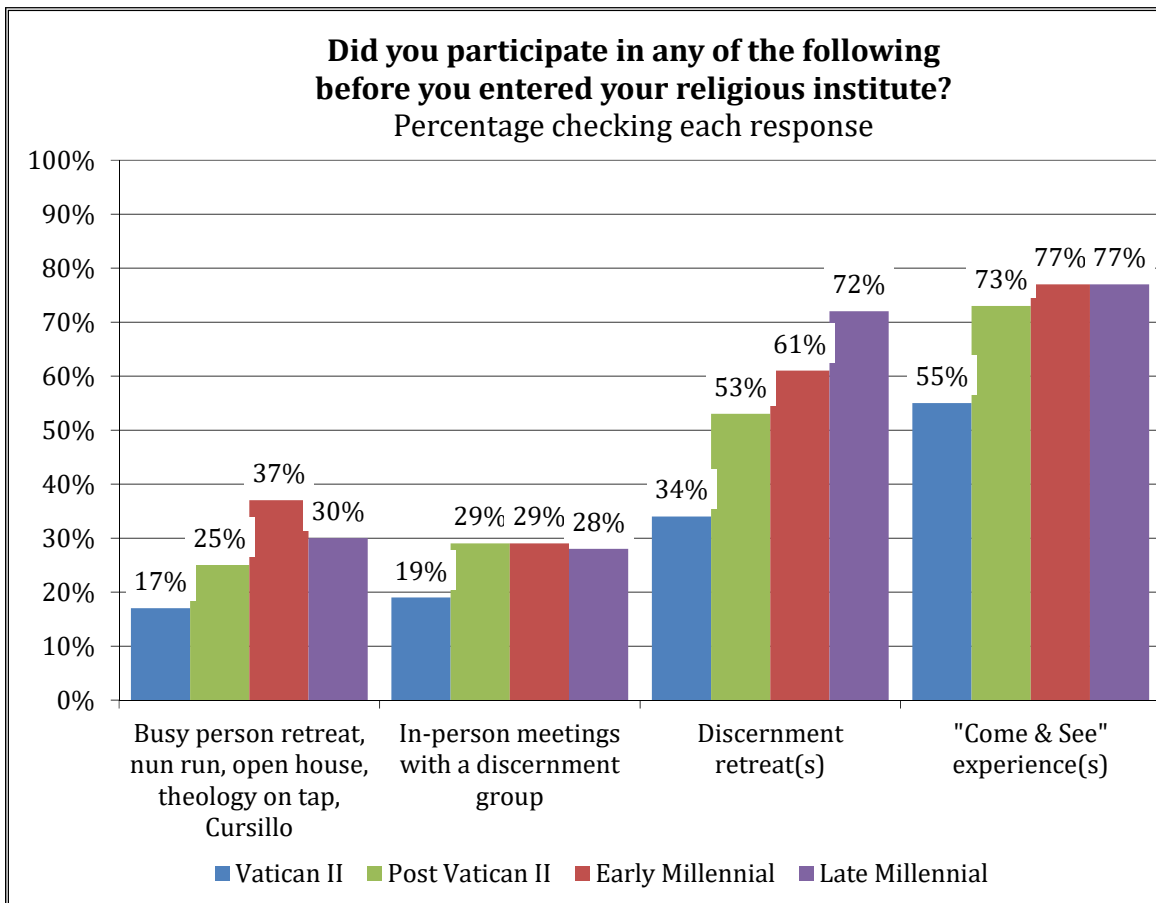
¹³ 2009 question and response percentage: Regular meeting with a discernment group (14 percent).

¹⁴ 2009 question and response percentage: Ministry or mission experience with the institute (22 percent).

Gender Differences

Men religious are more likely than women religious to indicate that they participated in diocesan vocation programs (32 percent compared to 18 percent) and in meetings with a discernment group (33 percent compared to 24 percent). Women religious are more likely than men religious to have participated in a Busy Persons retreat, a Nun Run, an Open House, Theology on Tap, *Cursillo*, or similar programs (38 percent compared to 23 percent).

Generational Differences



Younger new members were more likely than older new members to have participated in “Come and See” experiences, discernment retreats, and, to a lesser extent, discernment groups.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

Respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to say they participated in in-person meetings with a discernment group before they entered their institute. In contrast, white newer members are more likely than respondents of color to have participated in an activity such as a Busy Persons retreat, Nun Run, Open House, Theology on Tap, or *Cursillo* before they entered their institute.

Presentation of Religious Life as an Option

Newer members were most likely to have religious life formally presented as an option for them to consider seriously when they were in college. Close to four in ten experienced a formal presentation of religious life as an option at that time in their life.

Presentation of Religious Life as an Option			
Percentage in each category:			
	All	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Elementary school	14	12	16
Middle school	14	15	14
High School	30	32	28
College	37	38	37

Few newer members report that religious life was formally presented as an option for them to consider seriously while they were in elementary or middle school. Women are a little more likely than men to have had such a presentation while in elementary school (16 percent compared to 12 percent).

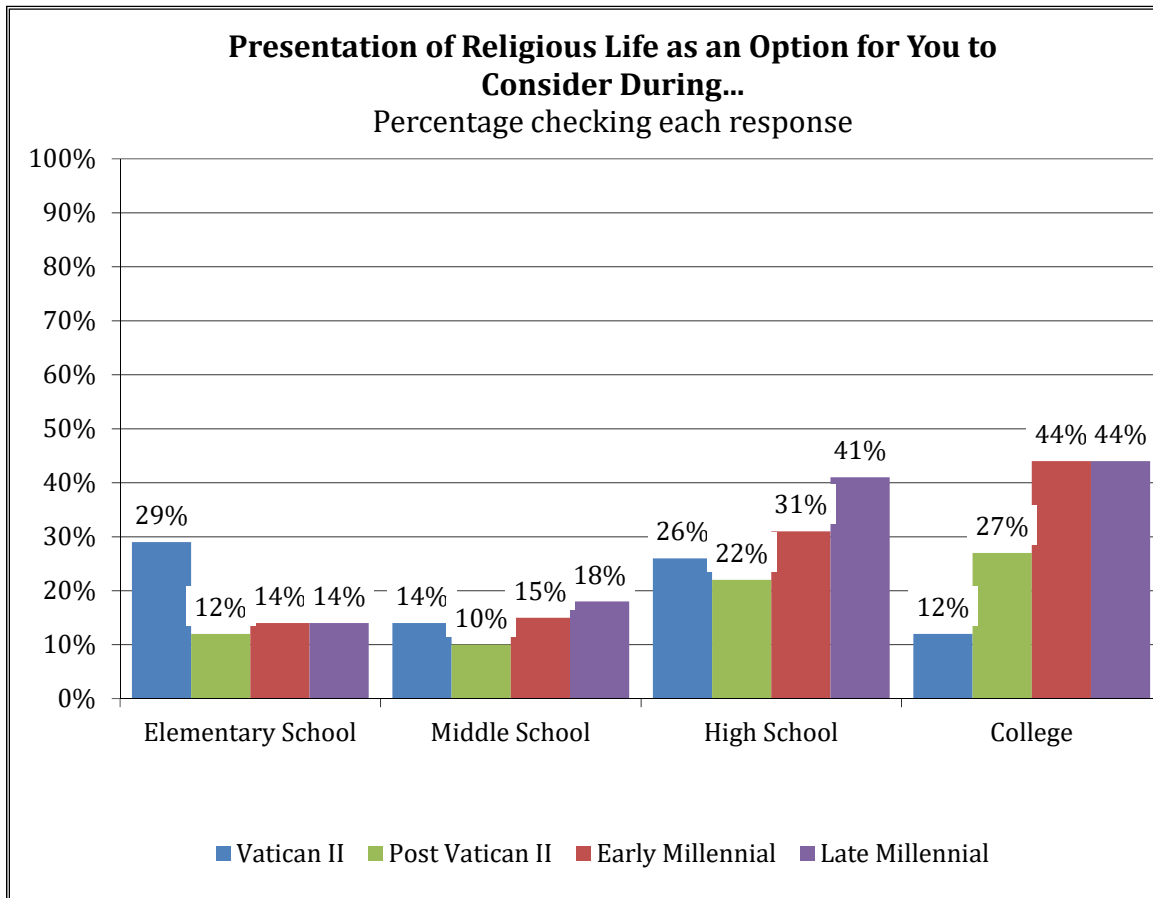
By high school, however, three in ten respondents say that religious life was formally presented as an option for them to consider seriously. Men are slightly more likely than women to have had such a formal presentation while in high school (32 percent compared to 28 percent) but the difference is not significant.

Men and women are equally likely to have religious life formally presented, in class or in campus ministry, as an option for them to consider while they were in college.

White respondents are more likely than respondents of color to have experienced a formal presentation of religious life as an option when they were in college.

Generational Differences

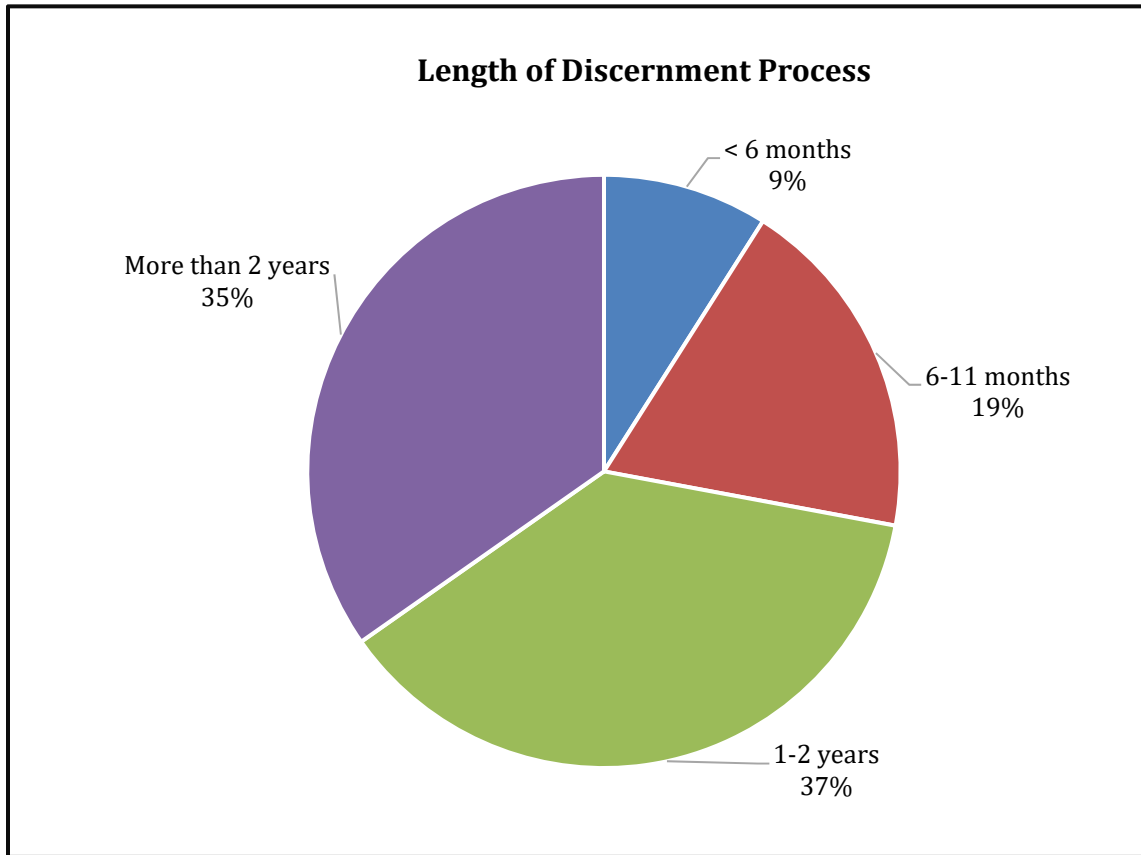
Newer members from the Vatican II Generation are much more likely than those from later generations to have experienced a formal presentation of religious life as an option for them to consider seriously while in elementary school. As was reported in an earlier section, this generation is also much more likely than later generations to have attended a Catholic elementary school, which is probably where they experienced such a presentation.



- High school is the time when the greatest proportion across each generation were exposed to a formal presentation on religious life as an option for them to consider. Millennials were more likely than older generations to have experienced such a presentation in high school.
- Millennials are also much more likely than older generations to have experienced a formal presentation of religious life as an option for them to consider while in college. It should be noted that the generations do not differ significantly in the proportion who attended a Catholic college: 40 percent of Vatican II respondents, 38 percent of Post-Vatican II respondents, 43 percent of Early Millennial respondents, and 37 percent of Late Millennial respondents.

Invitation to Discernment

Two in three respondents indicate that someone invited them to consider vocation discernment. Men are just a little more likely than women to say that someone invited them to consider discernment (70 percent compared to 64 percent).



Most respondents indicate that they were in a formal discernment process for more than a year.

Helpfulness of Vocation Promotion and Discernment Activities

The table below shows the degree to which respondents found various activities and programs helpful when they were discerning their call to religious life.

<i>How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
	%	%
Meeting with a member(s) of the institute	95	79
Communal prayer and meals with a member(s) of the institute	86	67
Discernment with a vocation director	84	21
Websites of religious institutes	63	33
Print materials (e.g. prayer cards, books, bookmarks, brochures, booklets, posters)	54	21
Talking with my pastor	48	26
Invitations to receptions, final professions, and Jubilees	48	25
Online content (e.g., podcasts, videos, blogs, vlogs, webinars)	35	14
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat)	23	8
VISION Vocation Guide, online VISION Vocation Network, VocationMatch	18	7
Other media (e.g., OYE, A Guide to Religious Ministries, EWTN, Salt and Light Media)	18	6

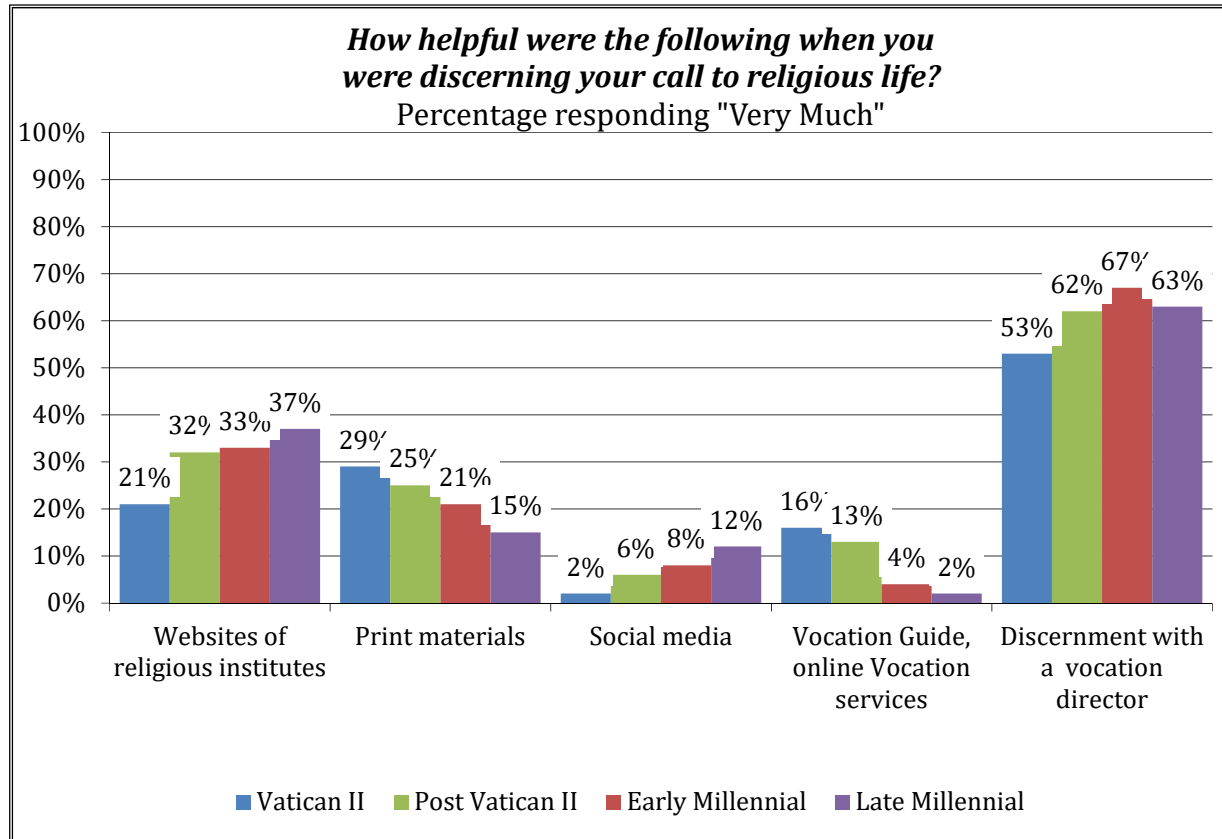
Similar to 2009, respondents report that personal contact with institute members was most helpful when they were discerning. Meeting with members of the institute was the most helpful activity, with eight in ten reporting that this aspect was “very much” helpful. More than four-fifths of the respondents indicate they found communal prayer and meals with a member(s) of the institute and discernment with a vocation director at least “somewhat” helpful when they were discerning their call. Two-thirds of the respondents report communal prayer and meals with a member(s) of the institute “very” helpful to them during their vocation discernment.

Also similar to 2009, more than half of respondents found websites of religious institutes at least “somewhat” helpful, and half found the following factors at least “somewhat” helpful: print materials (e.g. prayer cards, books, bookmarks, brochures, booklets, posters), talking with the pastor, and invitations to receptions, final professions, and Jubilees. Other elements that were at least

“somewhat helpful to initial discernment included online content (e.g., podcasts, videos, blogs, vlogs, webinars), social media, VISION Vocation Guide, and other media.

Generational Differences

Compared to Vatican II respondents, Millennial and Post-Vatican II respondents were more likely to report that websites and social media were “very” helpful to them. Older generations of new members are more likely to find print materials and the printed VISION Vocation Guide “very” helpful in their discernment.



Race/Ethnicity Differences

Respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to indicate that print materials; social media; and invitations to receptions, final professions, and jubilees were “very” helpful to them when they were discerning.

Comments from Focus Groups

The focus group participants identified many different things that helped them in their discernment process, including each of the programs and resources listed in the table above. The most helpful were those that involved spending time with their institute and its members. A few specifically mentioned spending time with older members, while others mentioned having a mentor with whom he or she met during the discernment and/or formation process. Some found websites very helpful in learning more about the institute and about religious life.

I did all my research online. I Googled the congregations. I found what was important was their mission and charism statements. I reached out to several, visited several, and noticed one in particular the relationships were easy. They kept inviting and I kept saying yes. You start to feel comfortable and at home. They're still inviting, I'm still saying yes.

That helped me too, to think like there is purpose to this, there's an energy but being supported by others who have similar formation experiences but have come through the other side and are doing things with that.

But all of my experiences with brothers had been with these 60, 50+ year old brothers, and our conversations were just so filled with life. The laughter, the prayer, Masses, age was never an issue for me. And as I went formally into formation the one thing that was consistent was the relationships that I had with them, and the mentorships that went along with all of that. And that real sense of just being brother. Just because you are the director of my community and you are 70 years old, you are just brother. And so, for me that has been a great gift, that ability to create all of those relationships. Friendships really, and again centered in Christ first and foremost, and then with that community life, being able to take it to the apostolate and to give witness, as a community, was probably the best thing.

That's what keeps me going is prayer but also the friendships I've made doing the time of formation, the community aspect of that. That's really what keeps me going knowing that there are people out there that have made it for a longer period of time and then having a conversation, and talking to them about the struggles. If I didn't have that, don't think I would have made it.

There is the external part about being open to talking about vocation and answering questions with people on the plane. I've had young women come up to me in random places and just being open to talking about it. People would like to talk about it. The witness of being joyful, but also committed to Christ and things like that. But then on a deeper level, to just like the deep living of the vows and knowing that sometimes it is our retired sisters who are doing the most for religious life in the United States—their apostolate of prayers and for their patience.

There were a couple of things that really pushed me. One was Bishop Barron. I love to read and I love to gain knowledge, so I did a lot of my own study of my faith, just in general. He was very influential in having the freedom to live and do whatever God calls you to do. That pulled me. Another thing was, I was talking to one of my sisters and she gave me her story. Her story was that she didn't want to be a sister. She entered in order to prove that she was not supposed to be there. I said, "Well, the only way that I will know is if I give it everything."

Giving Voice, that's been a really wonderful piece for me, just to have those relationships. I'm kind of new at Giving Voice. The national gathering is only every other year. It's at the end of June. ... I think that when I went to Giving Voice for the first time, it was like I'm choosing to be here. ... Those relationships, it was just different for me.

Influences on the Decision to Enter Their Religious Institute

When asked how much various factors influenced their decision to enter their religious institute, respondents were most likely to name the charism and community life of their institute as the factors that influenced them “very much.”

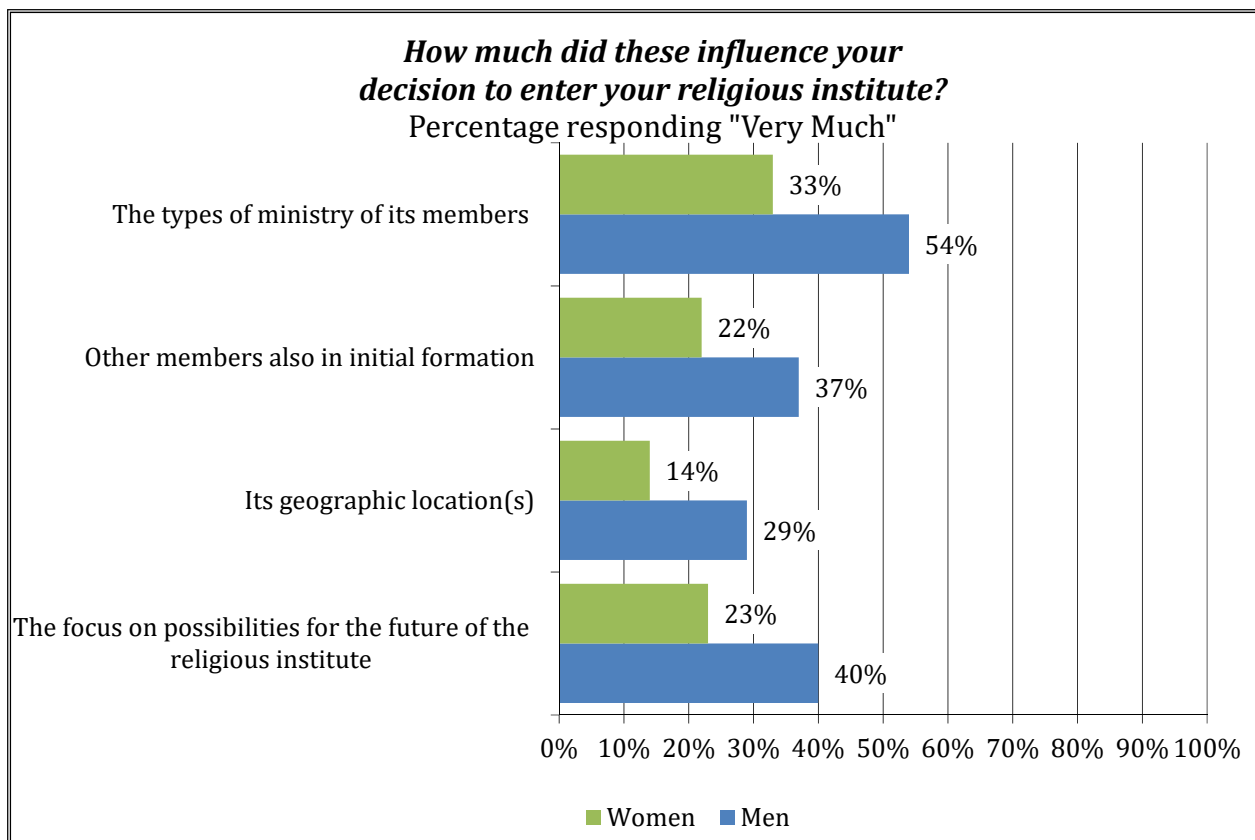
<i>How much did these influence your decision to enter <u>your</u> religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %	“Very Much” Only %
The charism of the institute	95	77
Community life in the institute	93	69
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	93	65
The living of the Gospel values	92	64
The way the vows are lived in the institute	85	51
The vitality of members	82	50
The types of ministry of its members	76	43
The focus on possibilities for the future of the religious institute	62	32
Other members also in initial formation	59	30
The size of the institute	55	11
The preferential option and commitment for the poor among its members	50	27
Its geographic location(s)	50	21
The age of the members	46	16
The cultural diversity of the members	32	15
The diversity of languages among members	21	8

- More than nine in ten new members say their decision to enter their religious institute was at least “somewhat” influenced by the charism of the institute, community life in the institute, the prayer life or prayer styles in the institute, and the living of the Gospel values. Between 64 percent and 77 percent report these aspects influenced their decision to enter their institute “very much.”
- Four-fifths say the way the vows are lived in the institute, the vitality of members, and the types of ministry of its members at least “somewhat” influenced their decision to enter their institute.

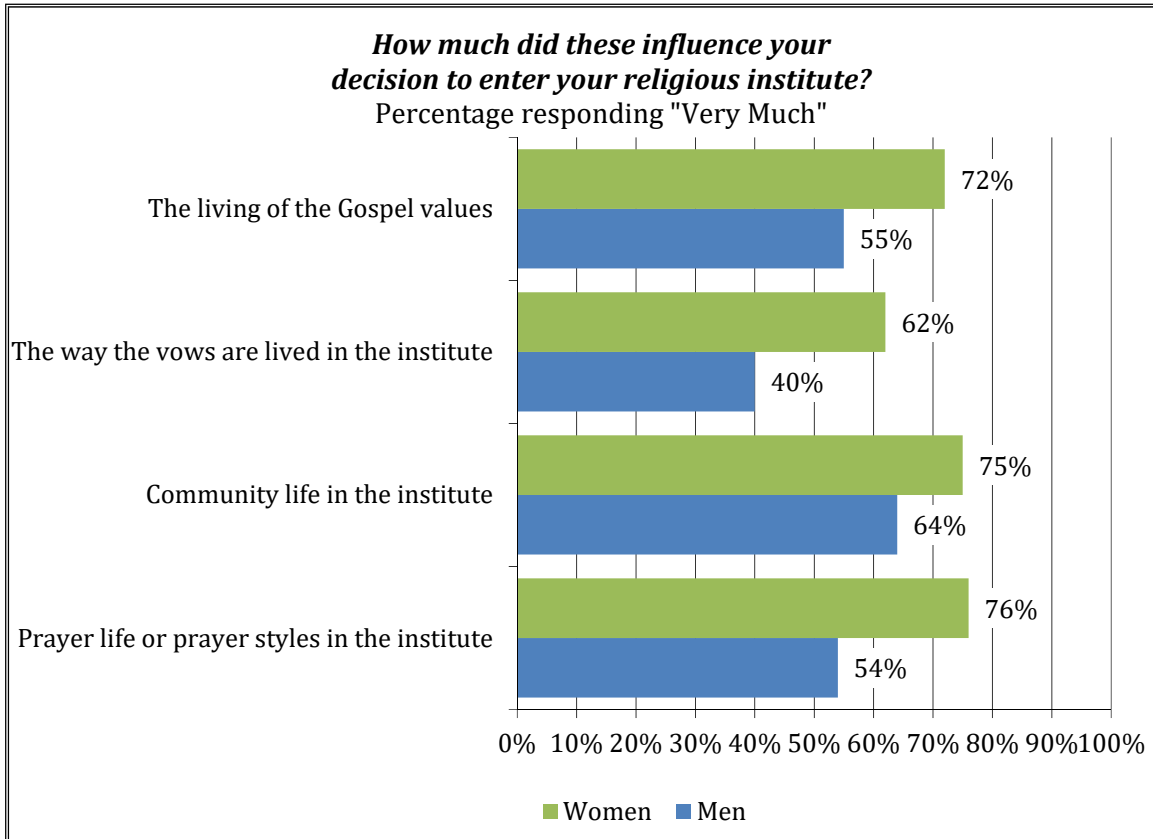
- Three-fifths indicate that the focus on possibilities for the future of the religious institute, other members also in initial formation, and the size of the institute at least “somewhat” influenced their decision.
- Half report that the preferential option and commitment for the poor among its members, and its geographic location(s), and the age of the members at least “somewhat” influenced their decision to enter their institute.
- The cultural diversity of the members and the diversity of languages among members were not important influences for most respondents. However, these were significant for culturally/racially diverse respondents.

Gender Differences

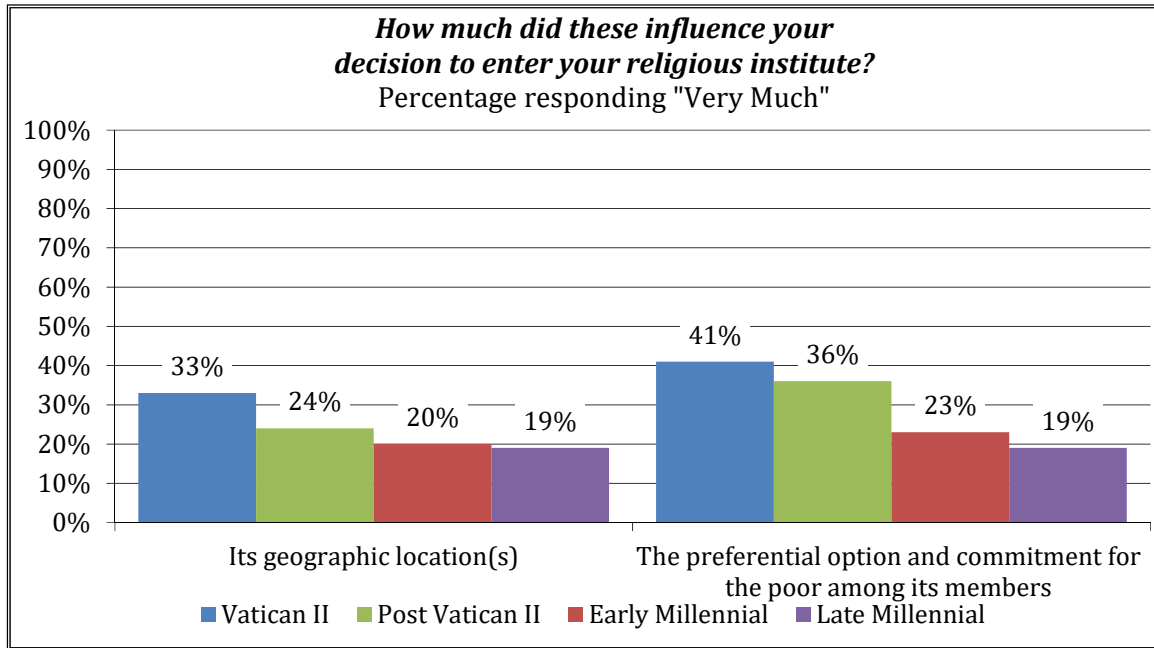
Men religious are more likely than women to be “very much” influenced in their decision to enter their institute by the followings: The focus on possibilities for the future of the religious institute, its geographic location(s), other members also in initial formation, and the types of ministry of its members.



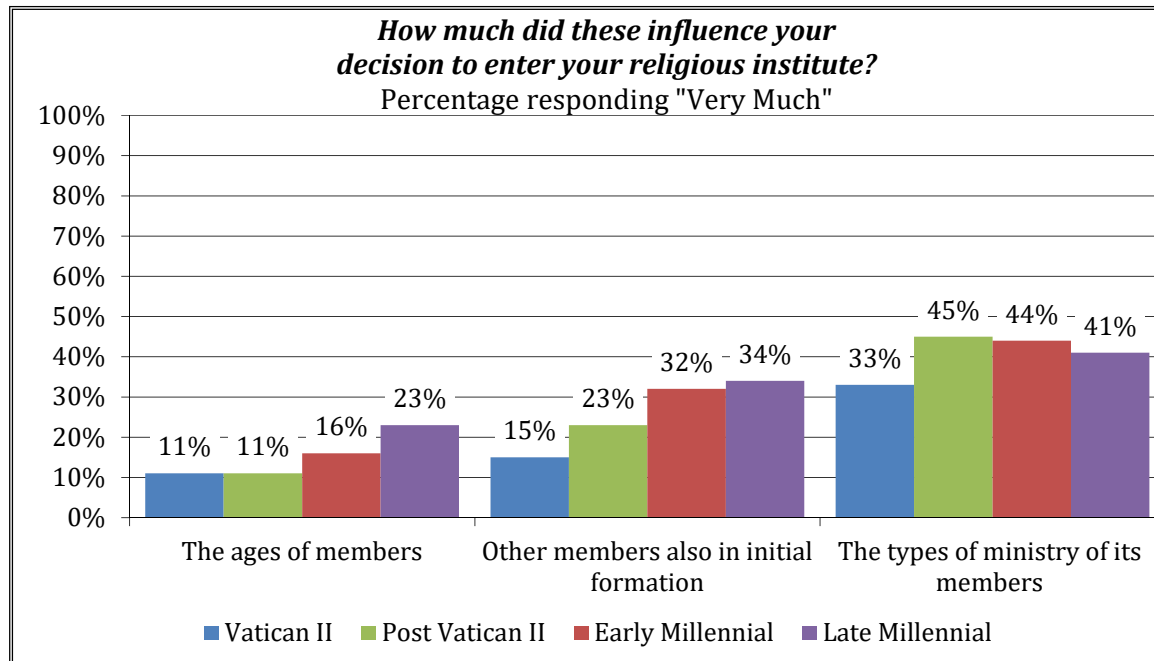
Women religious are more likely than men to be “very much” influenced in the decision to enter their institute by the following: Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute, community life in the institute, the way the vows are lived in the institute, and the living of the Gospel values.



Generational Differences



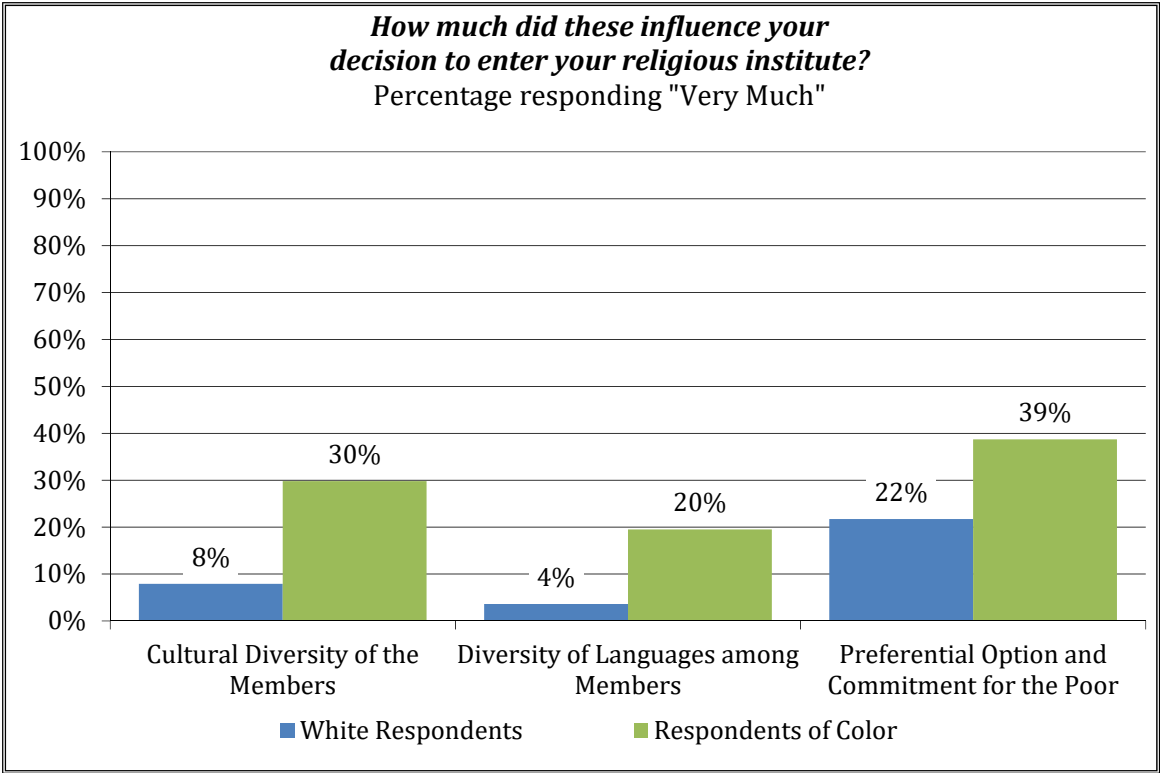
Compared to older new members, younger new members are more likely to indicate that their decision to enter their institute was “very much” influenced by the ages of members, other members also in initial formation, and the types of ministry of its members.



Older new members are more likely than Millennial new members be “very much” influenced the institute’s geographic location(s) and the preferential option and commitment for the poor among its members.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

Respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to say that their decision to enter their religious institute was “very much” influenced by the cultural diversity of the members, the diversity of languages among members, and by the preferential option and commitment for the poor among its members.



Encouragement for Religious Life

Respondents were asked about the level of encouragement they received from various individuals and groups when they first considered entering their religious institute and they indicated receiving strong support on a number of fronts.

During their initial discernment, new members received the most encouragement from members of their institute, their vocation director or team, and their spiritual director.

<i>How much encouragement did you receive from the following when you <u>first considered</u> entering your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %	“Very Much” Only %
Members of your institute	94	69
Vocation director/team	90	68
Spiritual director, if applicable	87	63
Religious sisters, brothers, and/or priests	80	49
Friends outside the institute	74	40
People in your parish	69	37
Teachers, mentors, or others in your school or workplace	62	29
Your parents, if applicable	61	34
Your siblings, if applicable	60	24
Diocesan priests, deacons, and/or bishop	58	30
Your grandparents, if applicable	56	23
Youth minister or college campus minister	50	30
Other family members	43	15

- Eight in ten report that religious sisters, brothers, and/or priests at least “somewhat” encouraged them when they first considered entering. Seven in ten report that friends outside the institute and people in the parish were also a significant source of support.
- Six in ten report that teachers, mentors, or others in your school or workplace, parents, siblings, diocesan priests, deacons, and/or bishops, and grandparents at last “somewhat” encouraged them when they first considered entering their religious institute.
- Half report that they received at least “somewhat” encouragement from a youth minister or college campus minister when they first considered entering their religious institute. Less than half were encouraged at least “somewhat” by other family members.

Gender Differences

- Women were more likely than men to experience “very much” encouragement from diocesan priests, deacons, and/or bishops (37 percent compared to 24 percent).
- Although neither group received strong encouragement from various family members, men were more likely than women to report receiving “very much” encouragement from their parents (39 percent among women compared to 29 percent among men) and grandparents (28 percent compared to 18 percent).

Generational Differences

Compared to older new members, younger new members are more likely to report that they were encouraged “very much” by all people mentioned in the questions.

Responses to Open-ended Questions

In the responses to the open-ended question about what are the greatest obstacles in vocation discernment, some new members commented on the lack of understanding, encouragement, and support for religious life both within and outside the Church. More than a few also mentioned lack of understanding and support from family and friends. Some of the focus group participants also addressed these issues.

An un-supportive culture, especially familial or local church community. A widespread lack of understanding of the religious vocation among diocesan clergy (and bishops).

For women religious, the lack of support/ education at the parish level. I had no idea how to even begin discerning after I realized that was what I was being called to do! It made it a rather bumpy ride, but ended up well. :)

I believe that the biggest obstacles would be not enough support for vocation discerners and Sisters are not as present in the Midwest as they should be. Young women discerning a religious vocation need to be around Sisters who are faithfully and joyfully living their vows.

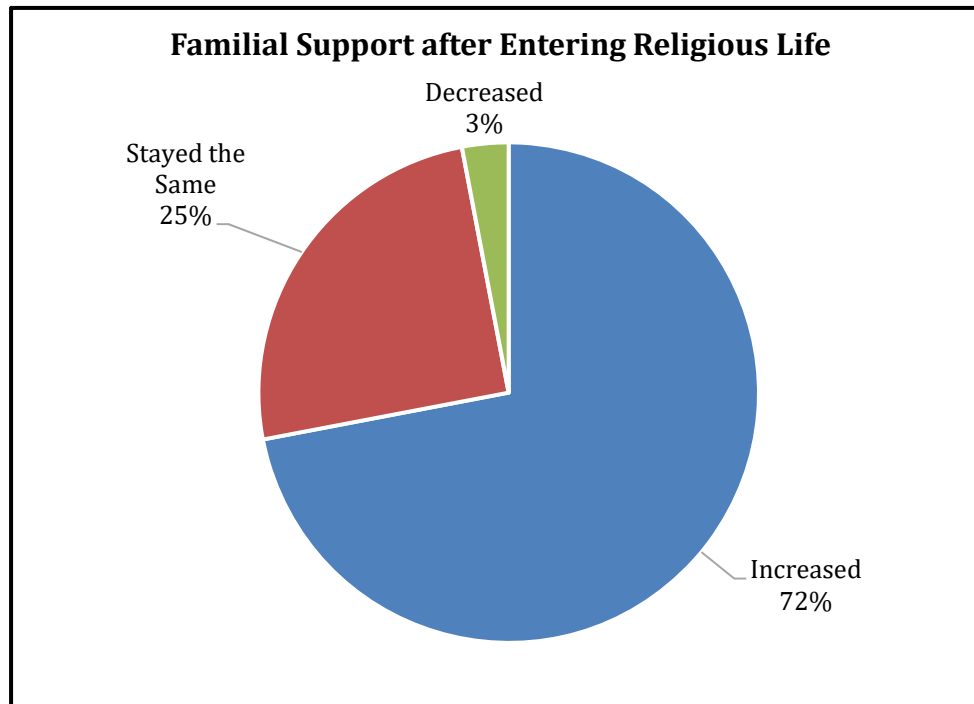
I perceive that in the United States, entering religious life has many obstacles. Aside from being counter-cultural, my biggest obstacle was lack of parental support and my student loans. ... What shocked me was encountering priests who did not believe in me or God's ability to provide for the seemingly impossible, which was discouraging.

I think one of the greatest obstacles today are a lack of support from family members and friends. Vocations and vows are a real mystery to people and therefore many are scared to either accept their vocation or those of others dear to them, as if they're "throwing their life away" in answering a call.

I think the greatest obstacles are a lack of knowledge of religious life itself, as well as lack of familial support for those discerning. Another obstacle is the wide variety of ways to live a committed life of service to the Church outside of religious life. Compounding that is the sometimes less than vibrant ways that community life is lived by community members.

Familial Support after Entering Religious Life

Respondents were also asked about the level of encouragement and support they currently receive from their family after entering religious life. Just over seven in ten report that support from their family increased. A quarter report this support stayed the same. Only 3 percent report that their familial support decreased.



Comments from Focus Groups

While some new members initially encountered opposition when they were discerning a vocation to religious life, some also described family members or others eventually “coming around” and being very supportive, even if they did not really understand religious life.

I don't think my dad was very convinced actually until my first profession—we had recreation with all the sisters that night and one of the things available was ping pong, so he and my now brother-in-law and my sister and I were all playing ping pong and I think my dad was caught off guard by how competitive some of the sisters are but in a good way. For him to be able to see like “Oh my goodness they are normal,” because he was always supportive of me but didn't really get the whole thing.

I think with my family, for four years they were waiting for me to come back. “You're not going to persevere.” I didn't do it for them. I did it because I believe there is something in religious life that is giving me meaning. I have peace.

And I remember once when my parents came to visit when I was in the novitiate and the novice directress told my mom—they were talking—my family is not Catholic so my vocation has been hard for them, but she told

my mom “she’s free to leave anytime”, and that was really helpful for my parents and I think I just realized like wow I am, I have always been free.

Importance of Types of Prayer

Most new members (91 percent) say that personal private prayer is “very” important to them, followed by daily Eucharist (85 percent).

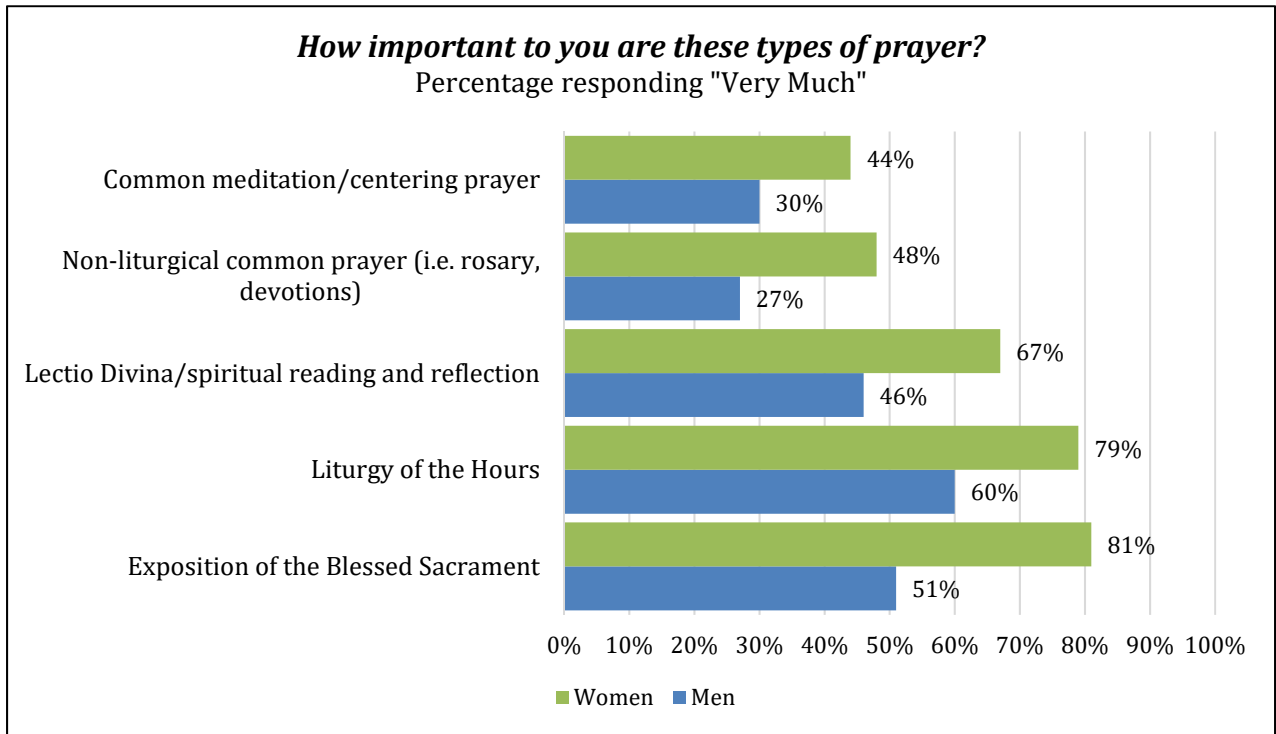
<i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %	“Very Much” Only %
Personal private prayer	99	91
Daily Eucharist	95	85
<i>Lectio Divina</i> /spiritual reading and reflection	89	57
Liturgy of the Hours	88	70
Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament	85	66
Non-liturgical common prayer (i.e. rosary, devotions)	72	38
Faith sharing	70	35
Common meditation/centering prayer	62	37
Journal writing, poetry, prayer blogs	56	26
Ecumenical interfaith prayer (e.g. Taizé)	27	8
Prayer using an app/online resources	16	24

- When asked about the importance of various types of prayer, respondents are most likely to name personal private prayer, daily Eucharist, *Lectio Divina*/spiritual reading and reflection, Liturgy of the Hours, and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament as the prayer types that are most important to them.
- Non-liturgical common prayer, faith sharing, and common meditation are at least “somewhat” important to a majority, and about a third or more consider each of these prayer types “very” important.
- A little more than half consider journal writing, poetry, and prayer blogs to be at least “somewhat” important and more than a quarter consider ecumenical interfaith prayer to be as important. About a sixth say that praying with an app or other online resource is at least “somewhat” important.

Compared to the 2009 study, while new members in both studies consider daily Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours “very” important to them, new members in 2019 are *more* likely than those in 2009 to report that Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament/Eucharist Adoration is “very” important to them (66 percent compared with 50 percent in 2009). They are *less* likely than those in 2009 to report that faith sharing is “very” important to them (35 percent compared with 49 percent in 2009).

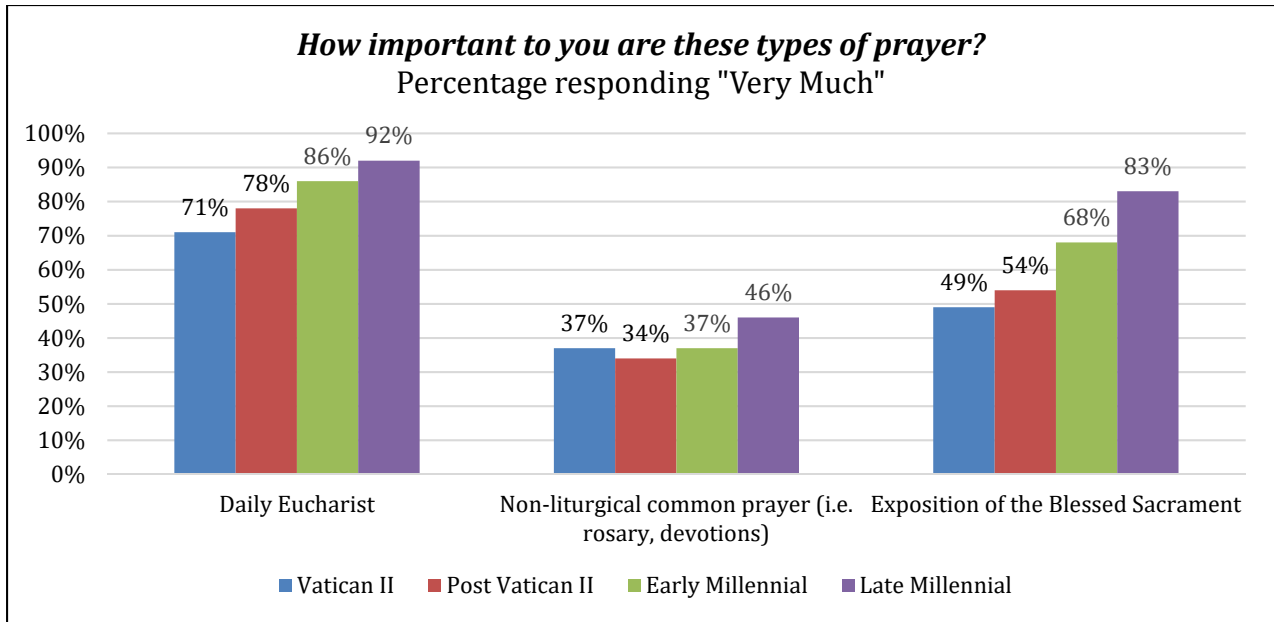
Gender Differences

Women are more likely than men to report that each of the types of prayers shown in the figure below are “very” important to them.

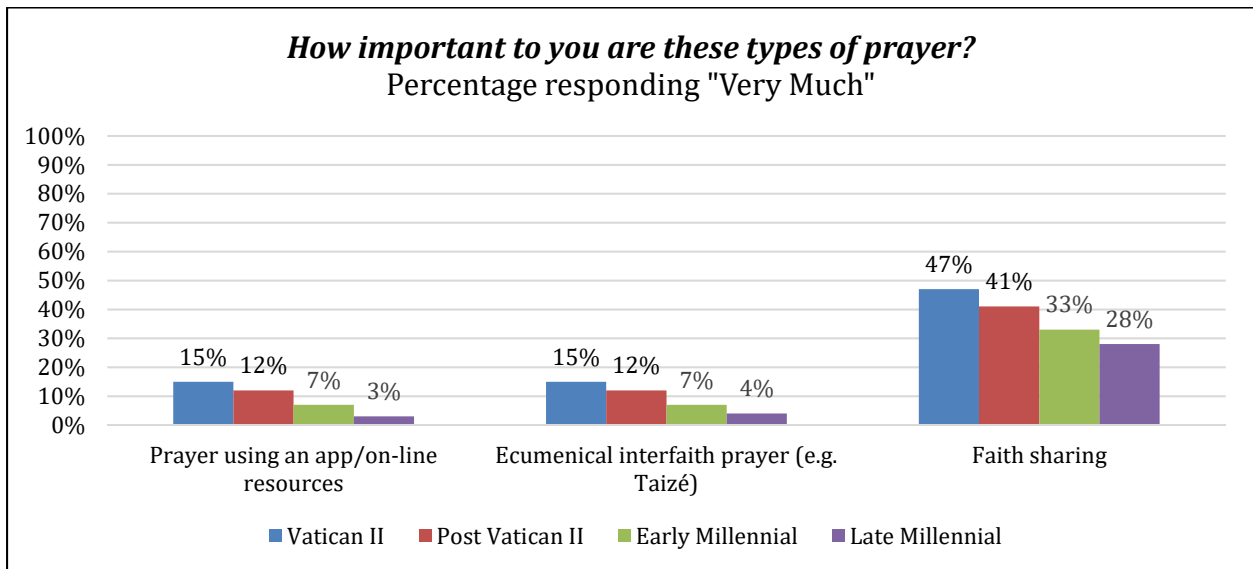


Generational Differences

Early Millennial Generation respondents are more likely than other respondents—especially those in the Vatican II Generation—to say that daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, Non-liturgical common prayer (i.e. rosary, devotions), and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament are “very” important to them.



Compared to younger respondents, older respondents place greater importance on faith-sharing and, to a lesser degree, on prayer using an app/online resources and ecumenical interfaith prayer (e.g. Taizé).



Race/Ethnicity Differences

Respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to report that common meditation/centering prayer, faith sharing, ecumenical interfaith prayer, and prayer using an app/online resources are “very” important to them.

Comments from Focus Groups

As already noted, many new members report that they were attracted to their religious institute by its spirituality and prayer life and, especially, by its common prayer and devotional practices. Some also mention other devotional practices that are particular to their institute or the spiritual heritage or traditions of their founder. The focus group comments below are typical; see Appendix III for the full transcription of all comments.

What started my more intense discernment was this desire—as I was growing in a life of prayer—I was being taught how to pray and really formed in a life of prayer and communion with God—and as I was growing in that prayer life I realized that I really wanted my whole life to be that intimate communion with God, to be that life of prayer. And the more that desire grew the more I saw the way it's lived out in religious life.

That's really what attracted me to the community was more of the sense of family, the sense of prayer and a sense of equality to a certain degree.

I think it was the 80-year-old brothers, the wisdom figures of the community that were always the first in the chapel and the last at the dining room table. They were always there, you could count hour before we had morning prayer Mass or whatever in the morning, I always tried to get there before them and never could. They were always there, and you could count on them.

What sustains me the most is prayer, for sure both my quiet contemplative time that I take each morning. Praying in creation which is not something that I have normally done but I have had the blessing of this year to be able to do that to be outside as much as I want to be and really taking the time to stop and appreciate the creation that God has given us and our role in maintain that. And then our community prayer.

Some people may be against having community prayer or doing the rosary or doing adoration but for me it brings me closer to Christ and brings me closer to my community.

What attracted me was the prayer-centered life and also the community. Even when I was in college, I found that I benefited so much from this way of life.

What attracted me to the [Name] was contemplative prayer as a community. I felt like they were brothers to each other. I felt like they were brothers to me also. It was that brother, fraternal aspect and the contemplative prayer aspect. I think that's what I have to say for right now.

When I started working I realized I'm really bad about setting aside time for prayer. It was like, it's more difficult to practice a spiritual life when you're working with totally secular people. Entering religious life where you have a structured prayer environment and you're working with other people who take the faith seriously, just makes total sense as a way of life. That was how I started looking.

I spent a lot of time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. In our parish we were asked to give an hour a week. Before all was said and done, I had three scheduled hours each week. As time came closer and closer as that came to our health care hospital in our community, I started spending nine and ten hours a week in prayer. I just really enjoyed that solitude in the middle of a very busy healthcare job working as a nurse.

Importance of Aspects of Community Life

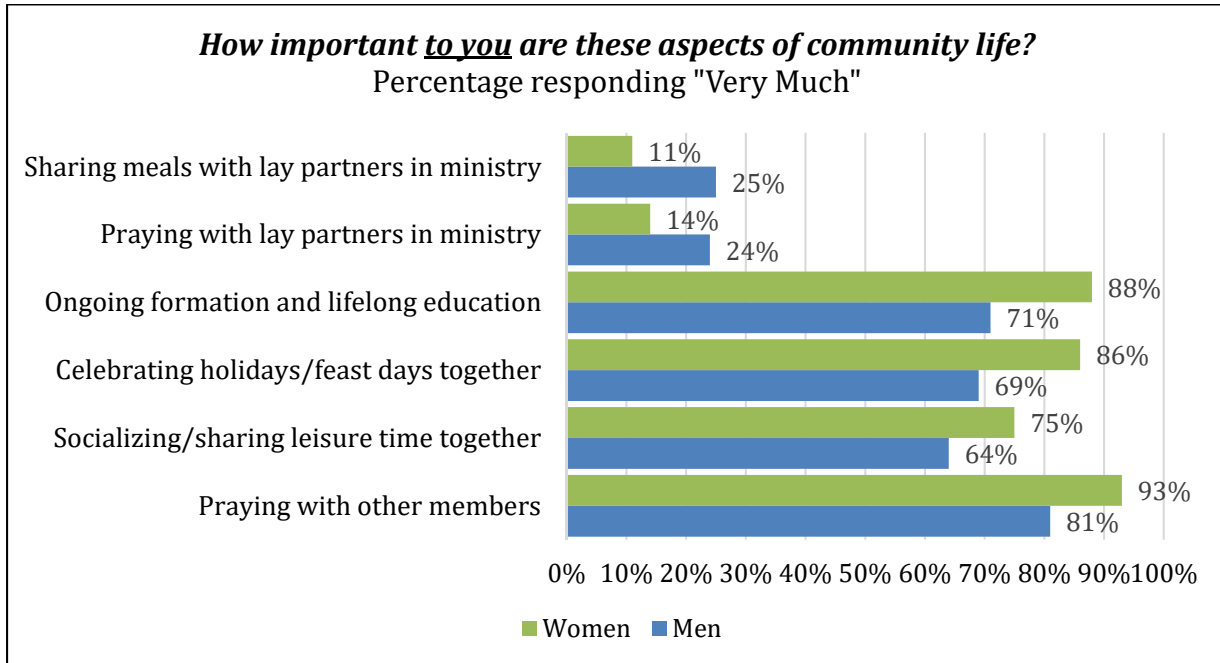
As in 2009, praying together, living together, and sharing meals with other members are particularly important aspects of community life to most newer members of religious institutes, with more than eight in ten reporting each of these aspects as “very” important.

<i>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
	%	%
Praying with other members	98	87
Living with other members	97	87
Sharing meals with other members	97	82
Ongoing formation and lifelong education	96	79
Celebrating holidays/feast days together	96	78
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	94	70
Ministering/working with other members	91	63
Ministering wherever the need is greatest	88	57
Valuing cultural diversity beyond tolerance	69	41
Learning and implementing cultural competencies with other members	58	27
Discussing local/global news and events	58	22
Participating in neighborhood outreach	56	20
Corporate stances on social justice issues	54	25
Praying with lay partners in ministry	53	19
Sharing meals with lay partners in ministry	47	18

- Ongoing formation and lifelong education and celebrating holidays/feast days together are two other aspects that nearly all newer members report to be at least “somewhat” important to them, with four in five reporting them “very” important.
- Nine in ten report that the following aspects are at least “somewhat” important to them: Socializing/sharing leisure time together, ministering/working with other members, and ministering wherever the need is greatest, with at least three-fifths reporting them “very” important.
- Half or more consider the following aspects to be at least “somewhat” important to them: Learning and implementing cultural competencies with other members, discussing local/global news and events, participating in neighborhood outreach, corporate stances on social justice issues, and praying with lay partners in ministry. Close to half consider sharing meals with lay partners in ministry to be at least “somewhat” important to them.

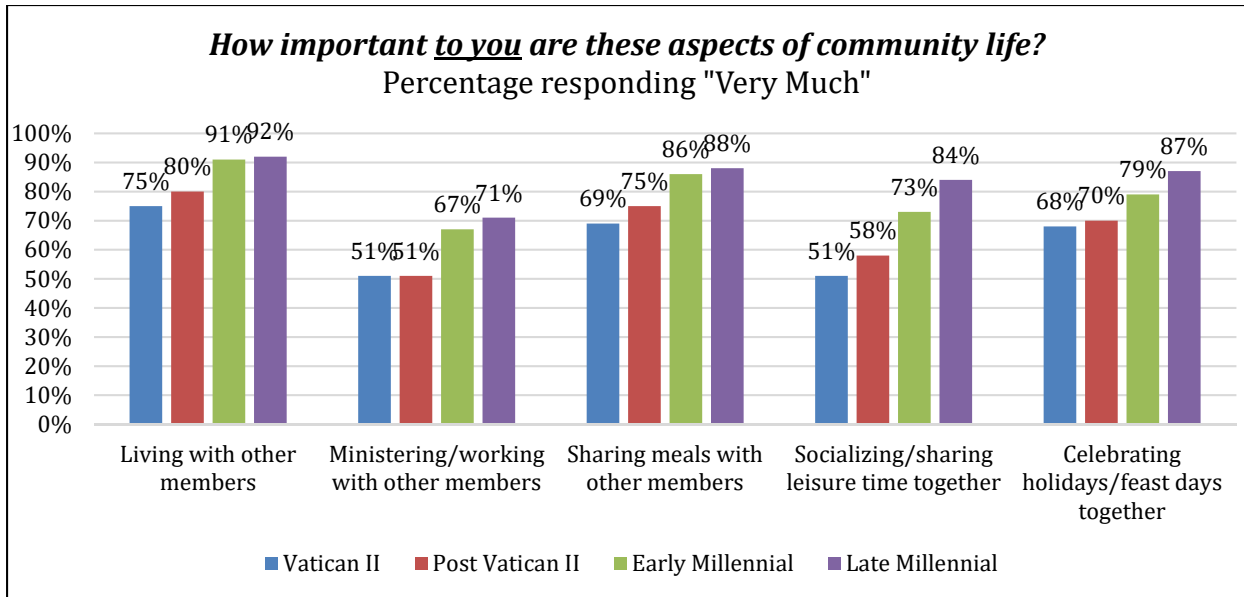
Gender Differences

Women are more likely than men to say that doing things together with other members is “very” important to them, which includes praying with other members, socializing/sharing leisure time together, and celebrating holidays/feast days together. Women are also more likely than men to report that ongoing formation and lifelong education are “very” important to them. They are less likely than men to report that praying with lay partners in ministry and sharing meals with lay partners in ministry are “very” important to them.

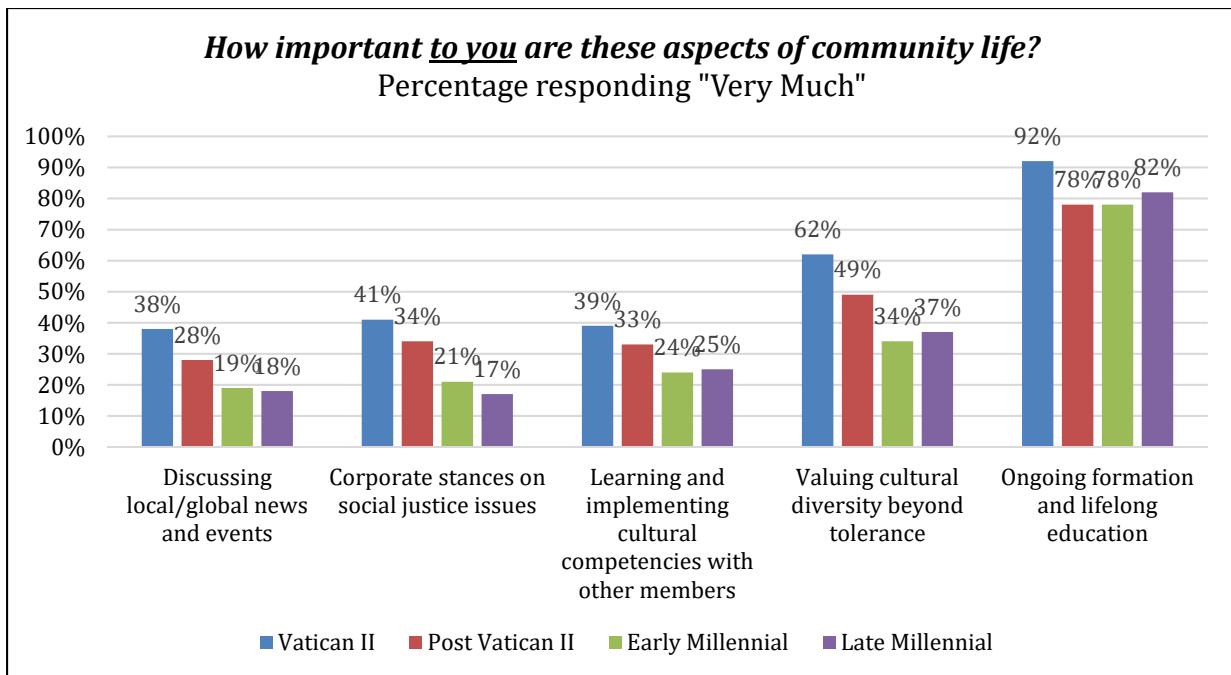


Generational Differences

Although most new members indicate that each of these aspects of community life are “very” important to them, younger respondents are particularly likely to agree strongly. Repeating a pattern of enthusiasm indicated throughout the study, Millennial Generation respondents, in particular, are more likely than older generation respondents to report that living, ministering, and sharing meals, and socializing with other members are “very” important to them.



Vatican II and Post Vatican II Generation respondents are more likely than Millennial respondents to report that the aspects below are “very much” important to them.



Race/Ethnicity Differences

Respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to indicate that each of these aspects of community life are “very” important to them: valuing cultural diversity beyond tolerance, learning to implement cultural competencies with other members, corporate stances on social justice issues, discussing local/global news and events, participating in neighborhood outreach, sharing meals with lay partners in ministry, praying with lay partners in ministry, and ministering wherever the need is greatest.

Comments from Focus Groups

Community life was also a major topic in the focus groups with new members. As the examples below illustrate, many newer members see community life as what is distinctive and most attractive about religious life.

The idea of being supported and having a joyful community and seeing priests and brothers in my order having fun together, joking around together made it seem much more realistic. But also a group that was going to push me, encourage me to be my best self spiritually, communally and ministerial and with that support to be able to then go from the community to work hard and to respond to needs that sort of freedom to be able to do lots of different things professionally and not feel like I am stuck in one place or on a sort of...climbing a ladder towards a specific thing. It would be more freeing to respond to the movement of the spirit in my life I think. Religious community provides that kind structure and that kind of freedom.

Just falling in love with my community and realizing as a sister that people do these things nowadays. There are people that are entering. When I entered the discernment program with my community, there were other young women. Not everyone discerned to enter but there was a group of people who were interested. That's what attracted me.

What I appreciated about my community was there wasn't like a cookie cutter mold. I need to have this expression. Like if you met one of our sisters, you've met one. There are other kinds. What I sensed from that was I didn't have to change who I was or deny a part of myself or suppress some part of my personality to join them.

Then I started thinking about religious life because living on my own, it just felt like something was missing. I was attracted to living in community with other people with the same charisma, with the same spirit, with the same hopes for the world with our differences. I wanted to be in community. That was really important to me.

I think for me it's a blessing but yet it's hard at the same time. My best friend was 83 years old when I entered my community. You have to go through the grieving process when she dies. That's hard. It's also hard sometimes when at the dinner table all that is talked about is what kind of doctor appointment you had that day.

I think having that supportive community is what is really important to us; this is what we value, this is the way we live our life. And we do it together, so that if I wake up in the morning and I am tired, I am still going to get up and go to the chapel because I know I have sisters who are going to be there. So, I think that support of "we are doing this together" is really important.

I think for me one of the biggest challenges is to learn to be part of the community. All of the unwritten rules that are part of being in a religious community and the experiences.

I think the greatest joy and the greatest challenge is community life, always.

Preferences for Living Arrangements

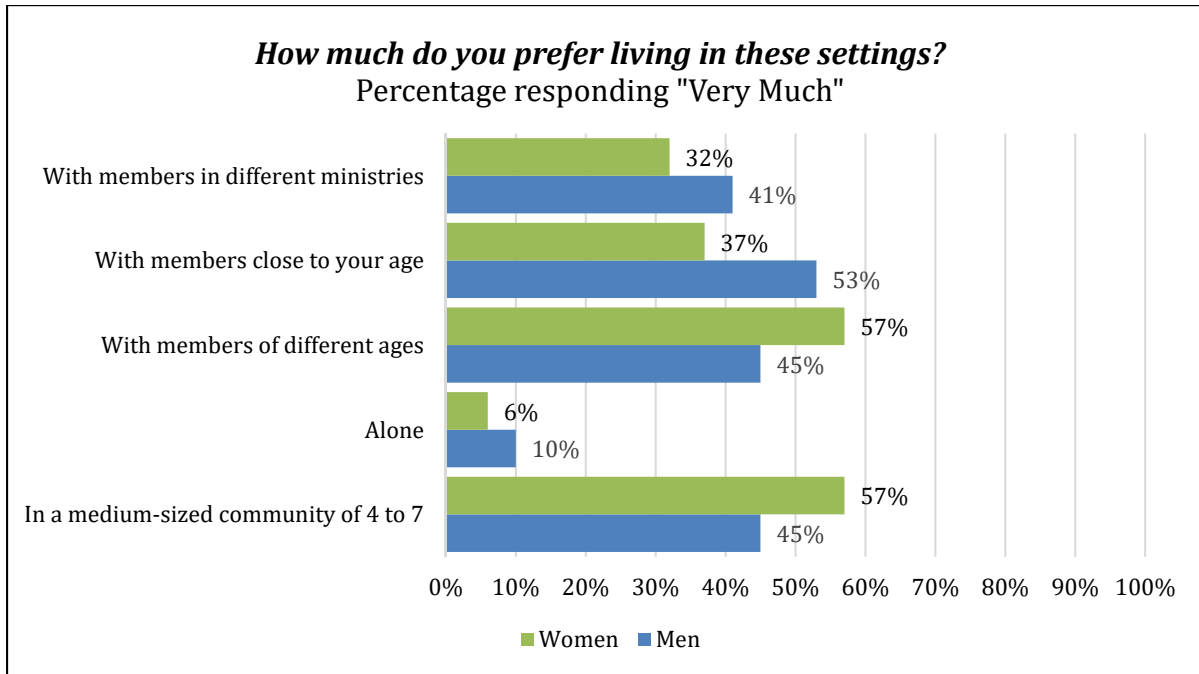
Most new members prefer to live in large (eight or more members) or medium (four to seven members) communities rather than alone or in communities of two or three. This trend, identified in 2009, has shown slight increases in 2019.

<i>How much do you prefer living in these settings?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
	%	%
In a large community of 8 or more	87	60
In a medium-sized community of 4 to 7	85	51
In a small community of 2 to 3	48	16
Alone	23	8
With members of different ages	93	51
With members close to your age	85	45
With members of different cultures	81	38
With members in different ministries	74	36
Living at or near your ministry site	85	51
Living simply, in solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and neglected	82	47
In community with non-vowed (e.g., volunteers, associates, refugees)	19	5

- In terms of the composition of the community, most would prefer to live in communities with members of different ages or in communities that are close in age.
- Four in five at least “somewhat” prefer living with members of different cultures. Three in four at least “somewhat” prefer living with members in different ministries.
- Another four in five at least “somewhat” prefer living at or near their ministry site and living simply, in solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and neglected. About half “very much” prefer this lifestyle.
- One in five at least “somewhat” prefer living in community with non-vowed, but few prefer this arrangement “very much.”

Gender Differences

Although not the preference for most, men express greater willingness than women to live alone. Men are *less* willing than women, however, to live in medium-sized communities of four to seven.

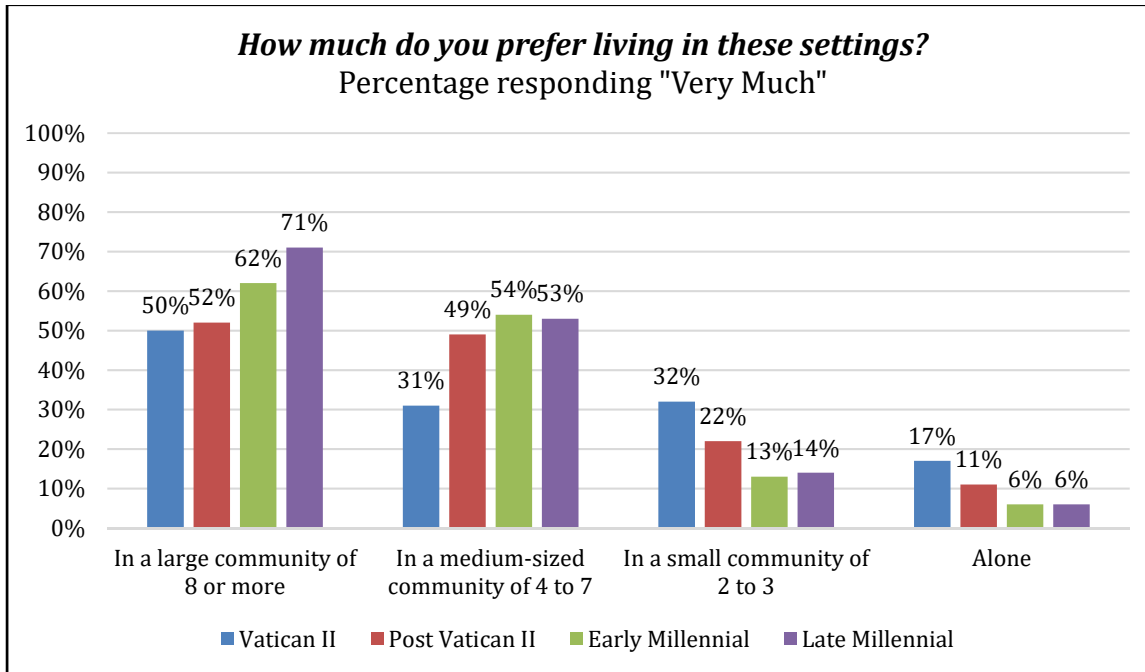


- Women are more likely than men to indicate that they prefer to live with members of different ages. Men, on the other hand, are a little more likely to have some preference for living with members in different ministries and with members who are close to their ages.

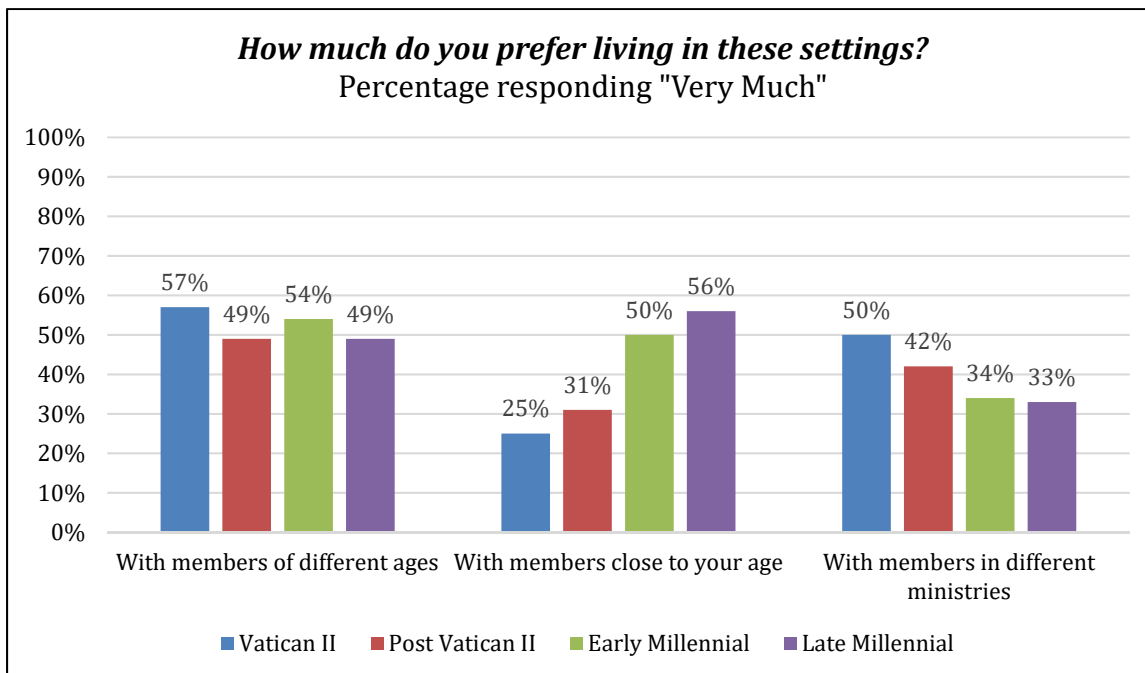
Generational Differences

The younger a respondent is, the more likely he or she is to prefer to live in a larger community, especially one with at least eight members. Two-thirds of both early and late Millennials (62 percent and 71 percent respectively) prefer this “very much.”

This finding is similar to the 2009 study, where two-thirds of younger respondents also expressed a preference for a larger community.



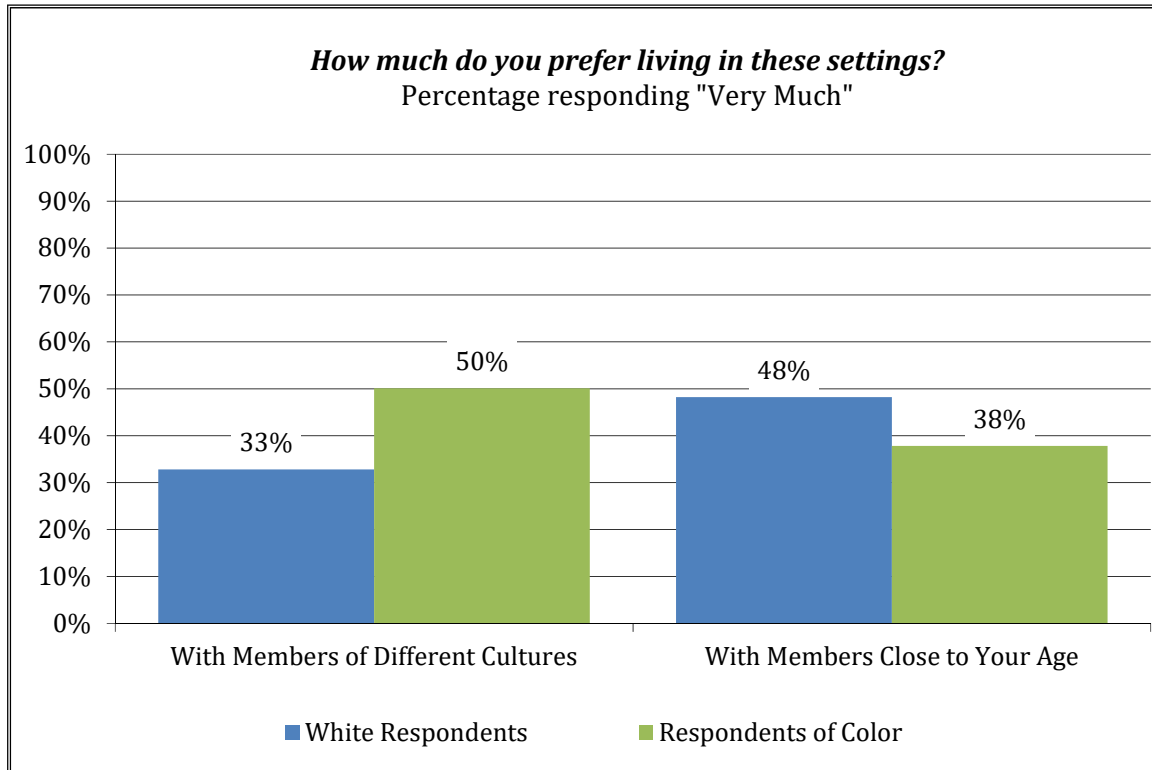
The older a respondent is, the more likely he or she is to have at least some preference for living alone and, to a lesser extent, with one or two others. Both the Vatican II and the Post Vatican II Generations are more likely than Early and Late Millennials to prefer this option “very much.”



There are no significant differences based on age in preference for living with members of different cultures. However, compared to younger respondents, older respondents express a greater willingness to live with members in different ministries. Younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to prefer living with members close to their age.

Race/Ethnicity Differences

Respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to say they “very much” prefer living with members of different cultures or with members in different ministries. White respondents are more likely than respondents of color to say they “very much” prefer living with members that are close to them in age.



Comments from Focus Groups

Intergenerational and intercultural living was also a topic in the focus groups with new members. Examples below illustrate how newer members navigate these challenges in community life.

Our median age is 70 something. How do we promote vocations when all of us younger members live not at the monastery? Yet that's where you're going to live your first three years of your monastic life is at the monastery with everybody that's older than you. I like the intergenerational living. It's hard but I think that's the part that keeps me in community.

One day, I cooked with fish and I know it smelled so bad. One of the sisters said, "That smell is disgusting!" I said, okay that's my food they are calling disgusting. It is difficult to face it but at the same time you have to live with the reality that we are all formed differently in culture, and continue to talk about it. Another challenge is the loneliness of having to leave your country or what is familiar to you. Sometimes it is very difficult. ... Sometimes we are afraid to leave our comfort zones to move away from where we are.

There's also that layer of culture that is happening. I voiced it out where we can have all these readings about intercultural living but until you've ever experienced it yourself, it's not going to be the same. You're not going to see eye to eye. For me, my challenge when I was a postulant was that I wish it came from my formator to be able to just ask me, "How do you say this in your language? What kind of food do you like in your culture?" I've said like my focus is not just the fact that, it's not the way you pronounce it because it's no matter what, you're not going to say it right [laughter]. The fact of the matter is that you asked me. It tells me you're interested.

Being a millennial, and ... then entering religious life did sometimes feel like travelling back in time—and that is not a bad thing. But you do have to reorient over and over, and kind of step outside of what I think should be. ... But I think one of the really beautiful things that I am experiencing is this openness. There is a huge generational gap going on, so can we be committed to talking about what does that mean? And each of us, I think, coming to a place of—especially younger sisters—of putting aside our generational differences.

Can we be grateful for the different generations? I mean it is beautiful to have all different generations and ethnicities in one community, in one house, if we allow ourselves to see that beauty. ... There are gaps—age gaps, ethnicity differences—experiences, backgrounds—but how are we going to respond proactively to that with healthy communication? The world doesn't do a very good job of teaching us how to communicate in a healthy manner.

How do my cultural values influence how I practice my faith? That's valid and valued. This community really, for me, gave me a place and a voice to say, it's okay that you sing in Spanish. It's okay that you're abuelito did this. You had a little altarcito. It's okay. At that point in my life that was really valuable to me. My search for where I'm going, what is God calling me to? That cultural experience is valid, is valued. That's what attracted me to my community, where I could explore that and celebrate that.

One of the things that, ... being Italian, being so different, has driven many conversations about our multicultural Church. The United States has always been a place where for the immigrant. ... You know, to get down to the heart of the fact that it's our charism.

In our novitiate—everyone ate potatoes and I thought "I grew up with rice every day." I didn't know if it was against humility or against propriety to ask if we could we have rice every once in a while. Not every day but just one in a while. And it was kind of unheard of, not because the sisters were being mean but it just was not part of their experience.

I think, too, the gifts that we ... bring to the world are so needed: the ability to live in community, the ability to live interculturally. Not only the ability but the enthusiasm, the excitement to live with people who are different than us.

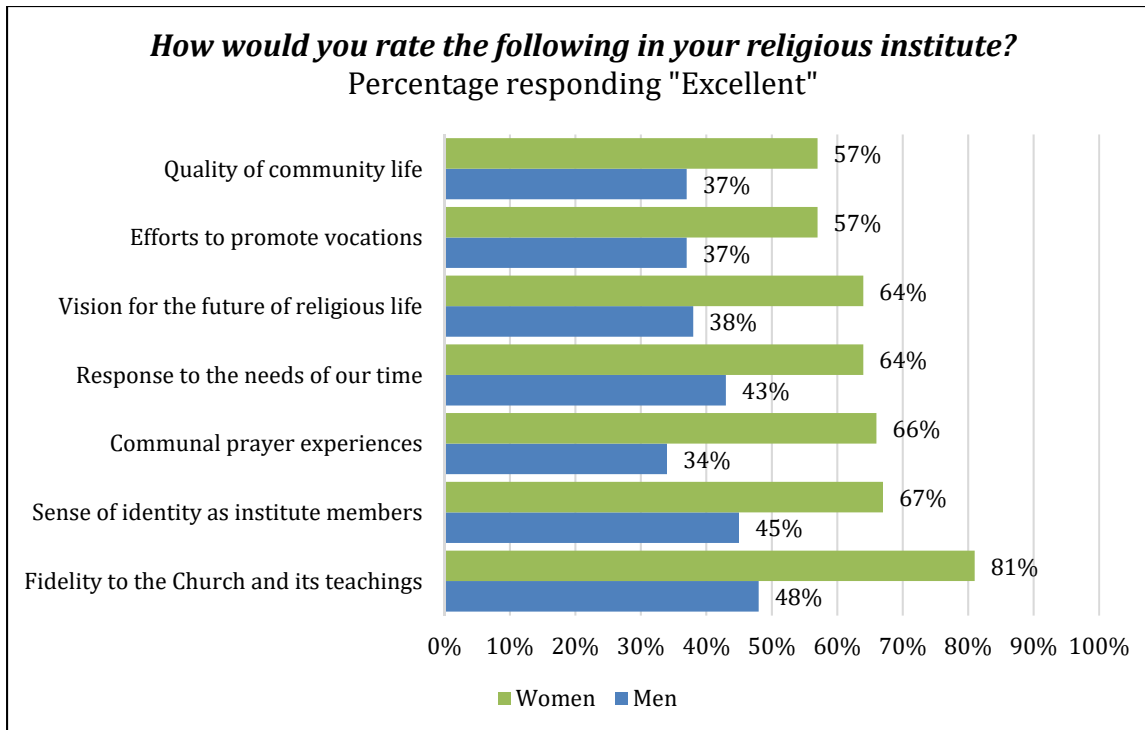
Evaluation of Their Religious Institute

New members give their religious institutes the highest ratings on their care and support of the elderly members and are positive overall about the quality of life in their religious institute.

<i>How would you rate the following in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Good” or “Excellent”	“Excellent”
	%	%
Care and support of the elderly members	96	74
Fidelity to the Church and its teachings	91	65
Welcome and support of newer members	89	60
Relationships with one another	89	44
Focus on mission and its relevance today	88	56
Sense of identity as institute members	87	56
Response to the needs of our time	87	54
Initial formation/incorporation programs	86	57
Quality of community life	86	47
Communal prayer experiences	84	51
Vision for the future of religious life	83	51
Lifelong educational opportunities	83	49
Efforts to promote vocations	83	47
Preparation for ministry	83	42
Ongoing formation and spiritual growth	82	45
Opportunities to voice opinions/be heard	80	42
Efforts to promote social justice	77	35
Opportunities to lead/learn leadership skills	75	37
Diversity of cultures within the institute	59	28
Communal work around racism	53	18

- Respondents give their religious institutes “excellent” ratings for their care and support of the elderly members, fidelity to the Church and its teachings, and welcome and support of newer members. At least six in ten evaluate their institute this highly on each of these aspects.
- At least half rate their institutes as “excellent” in initial formation/incorporation programs, sense of identity as members, focus on mission and its relevance today, its response to the needs of our time, vision for the future, and communal prayer experiences.
- Respondents tended to be relatively positive in their assessment of each of the aspects of life in their institutes about which they were asked, with about eight in ten or more rating all but four aspects as at least “good.”

Gender Differences

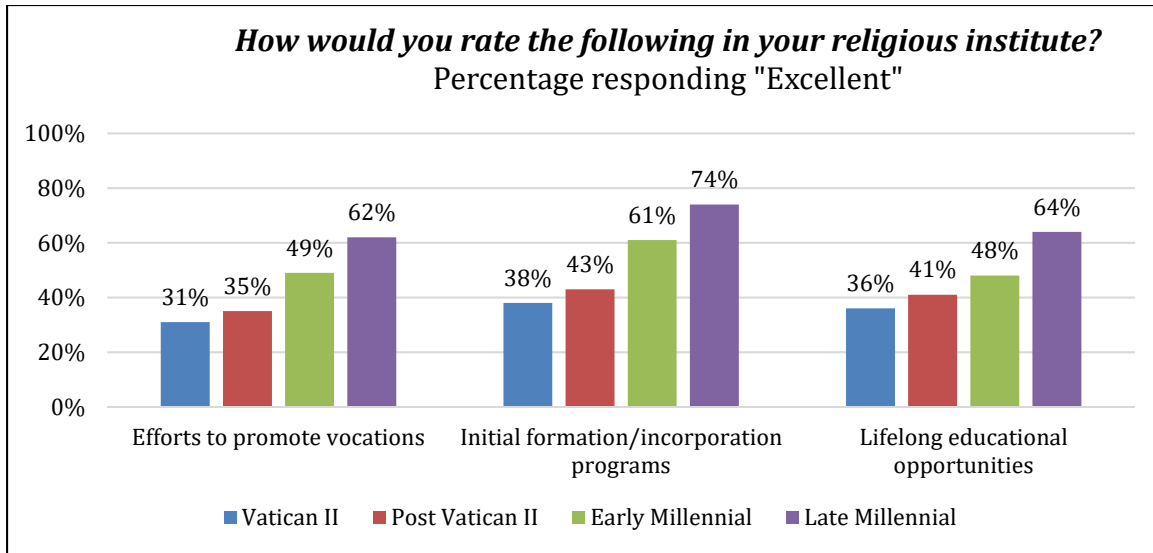


Women tend to be more positive than men in their evaluation of various aspects of life in their religious institutes. The largest gap (more than 30 percent) in an “excellent” rating between men and women is in their assessment of communal prayer and fidelity to the Church within their institute.

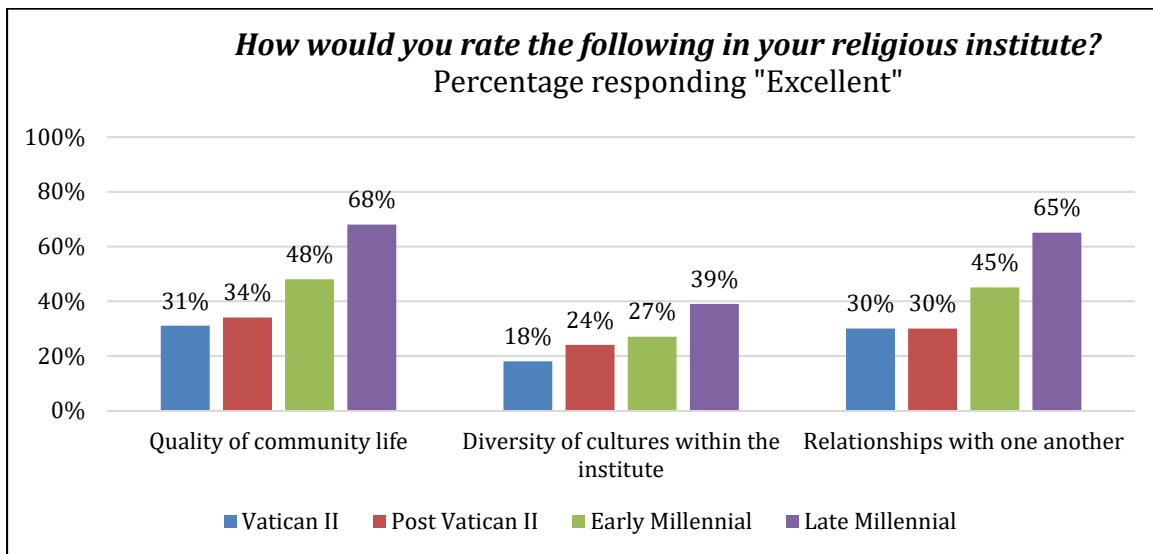
Generational Differences

There are significant differences across generations in evaluations of various aspects of life in their religious institutes, with few exceptions. In general, the Late Millennial Generation respondents are positive about every aspect of their institute.

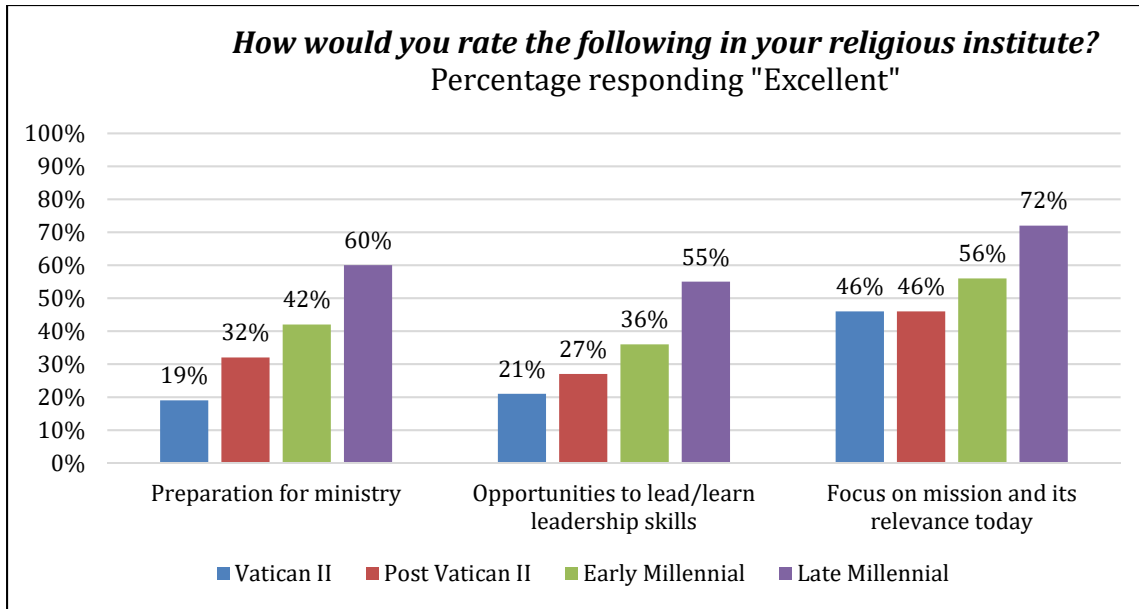
The younger, a respondent is, the more likely he or she rates the following aspects as “excellent”: the efforts to promote vocations, the initial formation/incorporation programs, and lifelong educational opportunities. Late Millennial and Early Millennial Generation respondents are the most positive about these aspects of their institutes.



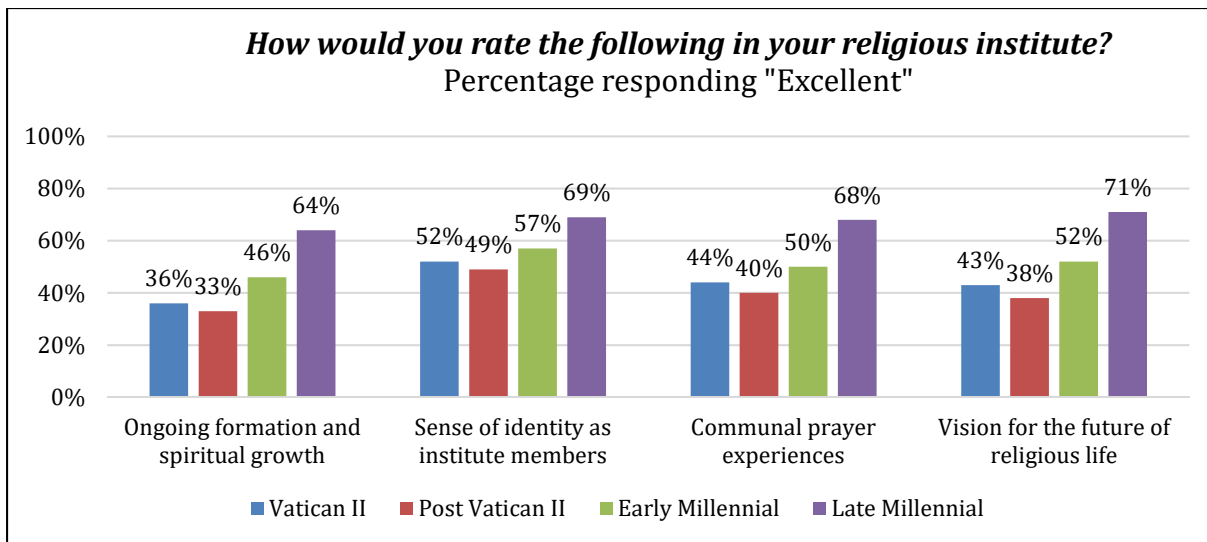
Late Millennial Generation respondents, followed by Early Millennial Generation respondents, are also the most positive about the quality of community life, the diversity of cultures within the institute, and their relationships with one another.



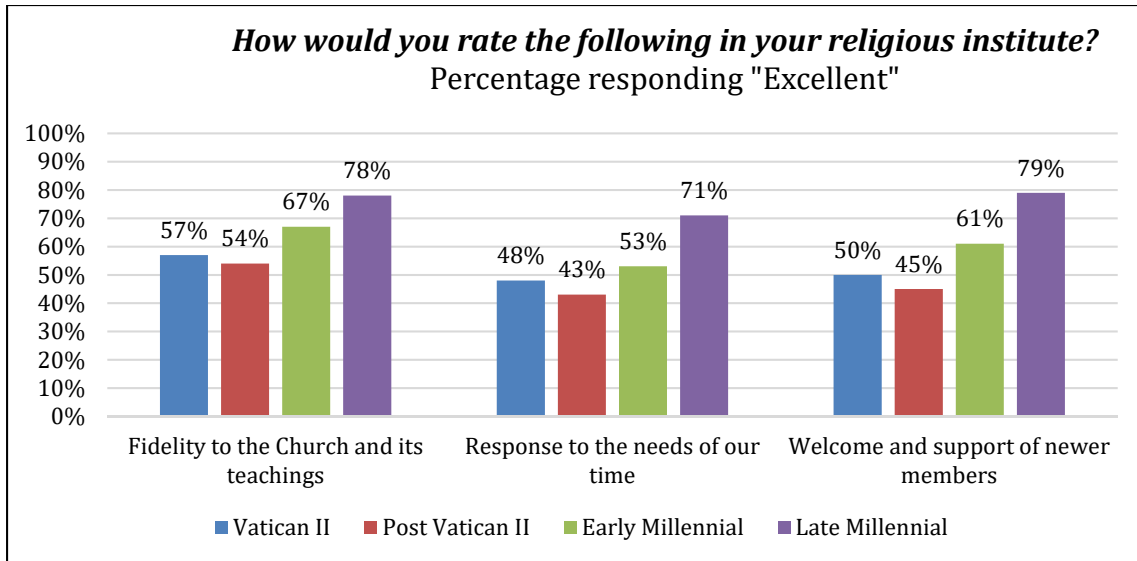
Late Millennial Generation are also the most positive about their focus on mission and its relevance today, preparation for ministry, and the opportunities to lead/learn leadership skills. In contrast, Vatican II Generation respondents are the least positive about these aspects.



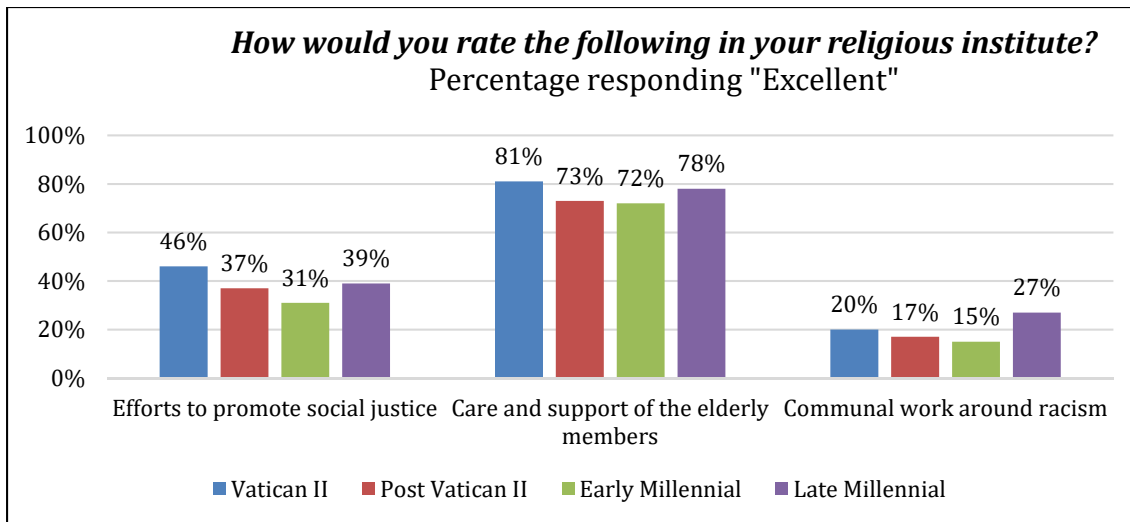
In keeping with patterns noted earlier, Late Millennials are the most positive in their assessment of their institute’s ongoing formation and spiritual growth, their sense of identity as institute members, the communal prayer experiences, and their vision for the future of religious life. The Post Vatican II Generation respondents are the least positive about these aspects.



Post Vatican II Generation respondents also tend to be less positive about their institute’s fidelity to the Church and its teachings, its response to the needs of our time, and its welcome and support of newer members. Late Millennial Generation respondents are most positive about these aspects.



The oldest and youngest newer members (those from the Vatican II and Late Millennial Generations) are more likely than those from the two middle generations (Post Vatican II and Early Millennial Generations) to rate efforts to efforts to promote social justice and care and support of the elderly members as “excellent.” While these differences for the most part are not statistically significant, they are nevertheless consistent with the patterns illustrated above.



Race/Ethnicity Differences

Respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to rate as “excellent” the diversity of cultures within their institute (39 percent compared to 24 percent), its efforts to promote social justice (42 percent compared to 31 percent), and its communal work around racism (26 percent compared to 15 percent).

Concerns about the Future

One question at the end of the survey asked respondents to share any thoughts they had about what most concerns them about their future in religious life. A total of 1,502 new members provided at least one comment in response to this question. Similar to the comments from the major superiors that were analyzed in the first part of this report, these newer members also expressed some realistic concerns about the future, such as the gap in age between the senior members and the new members and worries about the future of the institute as the communities age and decrease in size. More than one in ten comments, however, expressed a *lack of concern* about their future in religious life and more than a quarter expressed a concern related to personal fidelity to their commitment to religious life. CARA analyzed the responses to this question and grouped their responses into general categories below. Each category is illustrated by a few representative comments. The full set of responses to this question can be located in Appendix II.

Faithfulness to Vocation, Fidelity, and Perseverance in Religious Life

The most commonly expressed concern that men and women have about their future in religious life is a very personal concern—that they will have the faithfulness to persevere in this life they have chosen. At least a quarter of respondents shared this concern, although a substantial number worded this sentiment more as a desire than a concern.

- *Ability to keep enthusiasm alive in the face of pessimism, setbacks, and slow process*
- *Am I adequate for the life? Can I pray, study, and minister as I am feeling called to?*
- *Being able to stay faithful to prayer and community life in the midst of increasing responsibilities/ duties*
- *Being faithful to my vows and maintaining/ deepening the zeal for Christ and His Church. I don't want to become lukewarm or lax, but give my whole life, not just my young life.*
- *Faithfulness to grace and to all that has been imparted onto me during formation. My greatest fear is to be an unhappy and mediocre religious.*
- *Human weakness plays a role in any tragedy. I trust that Christ will keep me faithful if I cling to him, but often the biggest fear is oneself. I fear to become lukewarm or disheartened. Once again, Christ is the answer. He keeps us young and new.*
- *I desire to continually deepen in my fidelity*
- *I hope that I will be able to develop lasting virtues and a deep reverence for the presence of God in my daily work, as well as a genuine love and kindness for those whom I serve. It is also very important to me that I use my gifts and talents in every way possible to further the kingdom of God and fulfill my obedience well.*
- *I pray for perseverance and fidelity.*
- *It is a daily concern for me that I remain faithful to what I have professed. I know it is only by God's grace that I am serving Him, and my weakness is always before me. I must never be presumptuous with my calling—I must not “cut corners” and become complacent, rather I am called to daily strive to live in the truth of God's love for me and His call, trusting in His mercy when I do fail, and trusting that that He will provide the necessary grace to remain faithful. I pray each day for final perseverance. I am blessed to be a part of a community where I feel spiritually and emotionally supported as we journey together to serve others with toward our common goal, Heaven.*
- *My greatest concern is a persevering fidelity to my vocation in a world growing more and more hostile to God and anything to do with Him.*

- *My greatest concern is that I will reach a stage of competence and start to rely on my experience instead of on God.*
- *My own weaknesses with regards to the needs of the mission at hand. I want to be an instrument of God's grace and not a stumbling block. I am concerned that the initial fervor that I had as a young religious will decline and that I will begin to have doubts about the calling that God has for me.*
- *Persevering in joy most concerns me about my future in religious life.*
- *Sometimes I am afraid I will settle into mediocrity and just get by instead of growing in charity. Sometimes I am afraid I will not make final vows. But these fears are more temptations than reasonable concerns.*
- *That I fail to be the man Christ wants me to be.*
- *That I may not respond fully to God's graces and become the good and holy religious He desires is my only real concern.*
- *This is a good question to ponder. My biggest concern about my future in religious life I would say is not seeing myself in it and not fulfilling God's Will.*
- *To be faithful to my Eternal Spouse always, living the Holy Rule and Monastic life, and not to impede Jesus in any gift He calls me to give to the Church; just as I gratefully and humbly receive love from all, so to share Christ's joy in living and in dying, with all the Church.*
- *What most concerns me about my future in religious life is continuing to seek the Lord's grace in humility to respond to His great gift of this beautiful vocation, knowing my own weakness and relying on His strength.*

Changing Demographics: Aging Membership and Smaller Institutes

Newer members are also concerned about the changing demographics in religious life that they experience in many of the religious institutes. They express concern about aging members and fewer vocations to replace them.

- *62.5% of my community is in their 80s and 90s. 25% are in their 70s. That is very common in other communities as well. The very young members entering now are not looking at religious life the same way older members do. I'm concerned that the majority of the sisters I live with now will be gone in the next 5-7 years. Then what will we do as a community???*
- *Dwindling numbers. Vitality for the mission.*
- *Fewer members for more tasks*
- *How to manage our sponsored ministries and maintain a physical presence of members with the decline in numbers.*
- *I am concerned that there will be many sisters in need of extra care as they begin to age, and there not being enough younger sisters to care for them well.*
- *I am most concerned if the energy, vision, and mission of the religious institute can support and sustain me and future members in our energy, vision, and mission. I am concerned that as a community we cater to the older generations and the elderly sisters and what is life-giving for them with a seemingly unawareness of what is life-giving for young adults.*
- *I worry about our varied ministerial commitments which will have to be downsized at some point as our Order gets smaller.*
- *Many of the older members of my institute are in their 70s and 80s. Their wisdom and collective contribution to the Church and my order cannot be replaced. I worry about the number of institutions we have and how this might lead to a cycle of fewer and fewer men.*

They also worry about the necessity to restructure the institute and the effect of restructuring on younger members.

- *Currently we are going through a restructuring process and I feel that older members are dwelling on the past too much and are failing to see the necessity that this has for the younger members of the community.*
- *Deciding what ministries to maintain and get involved in.*
- *Gap between older and newer members means many of us are being put in leadership positions sooner.*
- *I am concerned about future membership, that is, will I be one of the last sisters to bring the congregation to “completion” or will there be a significant number of sisters who will carry on well into the future.*
- *I am concerned the most of the diminishment, of being the only young person in my community. I am concerned that there will be less viable communities to live in or that I will be living on my own. Community is one of the main reasons why I wanted to enter religious life.*
- *My biggest concern is a mild anxiety regarding how my congregation will navigate the impending contraction of our presence in ministries due to diminishing numbers. I am anxious to know how large our local communities will be and what form they will take. I am also anxious to know what ministries we will be serving, and about the possibility of new missions in new geographic areas. I call it a mild anxiety because of my community’s long track-record of wise, prudent decisions that have born tremendous fruit. That record of inspired leadership lessens my worries considerably.*

Stress, Burnout, and Finding Balance in Life

Closely related to concerns about changing demographics, many newer members express concerns about finding balance in their life. They worry about overwork and burnout.

- *Becoming overwhelmed and overworked due to declining numbers.*
- *Being overworked to the point the spirit of prayer is extinguished.*
- *Burn-out because of wearing too many hats or never moving out of formation work.*
- *Burn-out- working too hard because we don’t have enough friars who are willing to work hard and/ or to become pastors*
- *Getting burned out. I have a lot of apostolic responsibility already and I worry that I won’t get my life balanced.*
- *I am concerned that I will become too focused on the apostolate of my relationship with our Lord might take the back seat. I am aware of my tendency to overwork and that concerns me.*
- *One concern is that we can stretch ourselves too thin in serving others and that everyone feels so busy.*
- *Overwork that neglects spiritual growth.*
- *Workaholicism: That we are trying to do too much with too little, burning out our young priests with overwork in a way that hampers our joyful witness.*

Some also express concerns about stresses related to being called into positions of leadership for which they do not feel adequately prepared.

- *As far as my own future in religious life, I am most concerned about being given too much responsibility and authority too quickly. The dynamic of demographics in my Province have already placed me in positions which in the past would only be given after several more years of experience.*

- *Being able to live a contemplative life, having time/ space to cultivate for interior prayer (a challenge yet necessity for me) because I am the first young Sister and have to be novice mistress and infirmarian, vocation directress, while cooking, cleaning, etc. I need to be a truly contemplative nun so that the younger Sisters can look up to me and emulate me.*
- *I'm concerned about the amount of responsibility I'll be asked to assume within the community and whether I'll have the skills, experiences, and time needed to do it while also being able to stay in active ministry/ direct service. Will our community adapt our norms and practices so the needs/ dreams/ voices of younger, smaller cohorts hold the same weight and influence as older, larger cohorts?*
- *That one day I will be in a leadership position even if I don't want to! I hope and pray that I would be given plenty of opportunity to develop leadership skills along the way.*

Some religious have health concerns.

- *Health concerns that might prevent me from freely giving my gift of self.*
- *I am concerned that I will not have the energy, stamina and time to be a fully involved and functional member of the community.*
- *I have had health issues for the past couple of years which impacted my ability to minister and my relationships in community. In the past two months, my health has returned. I hope that my sisters can forgive my lapses in communication and allow me to join in community - recognized as a whole and healthy member and not as "broken" as I have heard them refer to other sisters. We are not always or even commonly kind to each other.*
- *My health and age.*
- *My health due to the environment and setting of the monastery. Misunderstanding of different cultures.*
- *Physical and mental health*
- *That I remain in good health!*

Many express a desire to find or maintain balance in their lives.

- *Ability to balance work, prayer, free time*
- *Balancing the call to be prophetic with maintaining institutions.*
- *Even as one cannot have a healthy marriage without giving sufficient time to a spouse, so too in religious life. The Church knows this truth, and it is reflected in our constitutions, with the balance they envision between prayer and work, common life and solitude. Yet in a diminished community, the balance becomes increasingly difficult to find and maintain, and externals and practicalities can absorb one's attention, making silence and prayer seem secondary importance and therefore dispensable. In the long run, the spirit of the community suffers.*
- *Finding more of a balance between ministry, prayer, and community life.*
- *I am most concerned to maintain balance; to give everything, and not be spent; to live by convictions, and persevere; to lose myself, my personality, only to find what God meant it to be.*
- *Maintaining a balance between all the elements of our life. Not mistaking workaholicism for generosity.*
- *The threat of ministry crowding out prayer and the subsequent burnout that results from that. In other words, being able to find the prayer, ministry, and everything else balance.*

Community Life

Many newer members express concerns related to being able to live an authentic community life. As newer members, they sometimes struggle with challenges related to living in community.

- *Ambiguity about how I fit into the community.*
- *Being able to fully adapt to community life after living on my own for most of my adult life.*
- *Feeling at home in the community*
- *Forming meaningful bonds in community life as we are spread thin apostolically.*
- *How to establish healthy patterns of relationship with the other sisters and with superiors.*
- *I suppose the possibility of being assigned to a dysfunctional local community or ministry where I am not welcomed or where I am not able to use my gifts to the fullest extent is a concern.*
- *Individualism and seeing work as more important than living communally. Efficiency oftentimes trumps forming authentic relationships.*
- *It can be a concern to not know what exactly community life will look like in the future and what my part will be in it - again, because we are so new there are still a lot of unknowns!*
- *Supportive community life. Some members don't seem as concerned about fidelity to our charism.*
- *That my brothers support me*
- *Where I fit in the picture of community—how to have my voice heard while living truly in obedience, etc.*
- *Whether community life is something I'm called to. I feel strongly called to the priesthood, but whether that's as a religious priest or secular priest is something I've yet to work out. I thought I'd really enjoy community life, but after my postulant year, I'm not as confident that God is calling me to it.*

Others are concerned with the challenges of intergenerational living.

- *How I would build meaningful relationships with some younger members in the community who seem to be driven by worldly expectations.*
- *I am very concerned that our communities do not support our young members, that our communities have little prayer or intellectual life, and that the older members do not want any younger members to voice their opinions about how to improve the community. It is also concerning that we cannot live a united life if our older members have radically opposed visions of faith and religious life to younger members—these might be truly insurmountable.*
- *Intergenerational differences and understanding.*
- *I've become so close with the older members and haven't spent much time with the younger members to form good friendships/relationships with them. I'm concerned about our community life later when we are fewer and only have each other to rely on. I've relied on the support and wisdom of our older members so much, so who will be there once they're gone? At times I question whether or not some of us can have the depth of spirit that will be needed in this drastically changing world.*
- *Living with the elderly and dying while still ministering full time and having my social needs met.*

Other concerns are related to community life as institutes struggle with smaller numbers.

- *As a religious institute, we are required to live in a community of (at least) two members of the institute. However, as many of the members in my institute are getting older, I might end up living by myself. Thus, I*

hope the collaboration with other provinces/ countries will work so that we have more members in our institution.

- *Availability of community living experiences with other vowed members (can be intercongregational)*
- *Being able to live in good-sized (8-12 men) communities. Unless we are more strategic about our ministries, we will have a plethora of communities with only 3-5 people in them, all overworked.*
- *I am concerned about what our community life will look like in the future given aging members and changing ministries.*
- *My greatest concern is that I will have no one with which to share this life. I could do ministry as a single woman, and I could have a deep personal prayer life as well. I can enter into communal prayer at my parish through mass and other parish groups. But what I desire is to live in community. I am interested in seeing what it would be like to expand the definition of community (i.e., intercommunity living, non-religious community living), but I don't want that to happen because there is a lack of members of my own community to live with.*
- *The quality of community life, especially with other religious who are aging and have different ideas of what community should be like.*

Others are concerned about growth in their institute and the ability to maintain a strong sense of community.

- *As our community grows and expands, I hope we are able to maintain our deep commitment to community life, so vital to our way of life and apostolates.*
- *As our congregation grows, my ONLY concern is to see that we are running out of space for all of us to come home to the Motherhouse. We have already built and we've outgrown it. It is hard for me to envision us not all coming home, nor to envision needing to split the Congregation. We are family. God's will be done.*
- *As the community grows, I have concerns about keeping the sense of community which we possess now. We have branched out to serve in countries outside the United States and I am concerned that we might lose our sense of identity as an institute if members remain in other countries for years.*

Loneliness is another concern expressed by newer members, which is related to their concern for authentic community life.

- *Being spread too far from other members.*
- *I am most concerned that I will be lonely and that the individualism of today's culture will take root in my community and make it difficult to live my vocation.*
- *I'm concerned about loneliness, something I've struggled with since I've entered.*

Ability to Adapt to Changes in Society and in Religious Life

A number of newer members express a variety of concerns related to adapting to rapid changes in society. Some are concerned about their own ability to adapt, while others are more concerned about the ability of their institute and its members to adapt to social and cultural changes.

- *Adapting to the lifestyle and vows as I grow and change*
- *Adapting to a smaller community and the challenges / changes that come along with that.*
- *Continuing to grow and develop (rather than settling into a half-hearted mediocrity)*

- *I am concerned about the kind of order we will become considering the way the members are being influenced by the society and technology.*
- *I am concerned about our unspoken or unaddressed prejudice against those of a different ethnic background or age. I am worried that we will remain silent about the tough issues regarding these biases, which are present individually and communally. (Everyone—not just in our congregation but in worldwide—struggles with some level of prejudice or preconceived notion about another group of people in my opinion). I am concerned that we will continue to cling to stereotypes and fears which could suffocate our consecrated life as a whole, our community life, our ministry, and vocations to our institute.*
- *I am concerned about the dependence of American culture on technology and I wonder how that will impact my contemplative life. I wonder about the continued safety of religious in the world. Right now, it is safe to wear a habit in public but I wonder if 20 years from now I will still be safe to travel in public while wearing my habit?*
- *I am concerned that I do not know what the future holds for my vocation and if I will be able to meet the challenges that will arise.*
- *I am most concerned about the ability to practice my healthcare profession according to my Catholic faith in an increasingly secular culture.*
- *I am most concerned about the effects of the secular, social media culture on my future students, my personal mentality, and the mentality of the faithful.*
- *I feel that we are riding the waves of change. Similar to our members who lived in the important changes of Vatican II, we are facing something similar. My concern is that there might be a resistance to welcome the changes that The Spirit might be inviting us to be part of. On a personal note, the uncertainty of the unknown has me a bit anxious. This is a real practice of trusting God.*
- *I just think religious life is in a great amount of change right now and that's a good thing. It can be scary but it's a good thing. I think what we're called to, as men and women religious, is also what the world is called to. That's to give space and time for relationships to engage and do it very mindfully. So much in the United States speaks of individualism, but our vows are asking us to be ever more communal. We need to see what the world around us is longing for and what our community's spirit is asking for. With this, my most concern is that we know how to educate the young to stay focused as they journey each day.*
- *If I have any concerns, it's that we members may need to take more caution in not being "swept up" in relativism and secularism in the culture around us today and be tempted to lose our faithfulness to our vows, especially in the practice of the "little things" as mentioned in our Rule and Constitutions.*
- *I'm not sure that we are adapting quickly enough to the diversity of the Church in the U.S. I'm worried that we are not providing education or pastoral ministry to Latinos and others who make of such a large portion of the Church. I'm afraid that we may never actually side with the poor and instead will remain complacent with our privilege and power; consequently, we will continue to lack credibility.*
- *That we will make ourselves irrelevant in a world that needs good spirituality.*

Hopes for the Future

Respondents were also asked to imagine, looking ahead ten years, their hopes for the future in their religious institute. A total of 1,593 new members provided at least one comment in response to this question. Although cognizant of the challenges and concerns that were expressed by the major superiors in the first part of this report, these newer members were more optimistic than the superiors in their hopes for the future, perhaps because they recognize their own agency in creating a future for their institute. CARA analyzed the responses to this question and grouped their responses into general categories below. Each category is illustrated by a few representative comments. The full set of responses to this question are found in Appendix II.

Increase in Vocations and Better Response to Discerners

The most commonly expressed hope for the future is the desire for an increase in vocations to religious life. At least a quarter of respondents expressed some sort of hope for vocations to religious life, often while recognizing at the same time the reality of large numbers of older religious that will also be a significant part of the next ten years.

- *A growth in more American vocations and a look at some of the treasures of our tradition.*
- *A lower median age/higher vitality of members, in order to in order to revisit and solidify our community customs, and be more able to move ahead into the future, more fervently and intently live our vocation, and be more attractive to young aspirants.*
- *Although vocations have picked up in the last several years, our numbers are rapidly decreasing. My hope is that, after the baby-boom generation of vocations have passed, our numbers will level out if not increase. I also hope that our vow of poverty will be lived out more authentically. We have many institutionalized ministry settings that tend to be very materially comfortable. I hope we become more intentional about living simply, especially in the latter communities.*
- *Continued blessings in vocations so that we may continue to grow/support new foundations*
- *Growth in holiness, greater capacity to discern and respond to the needs of the world, more vocations, new thrust to apostolic activity*
- *I hope for growth and a higher commitment to the ministry and work we do. To dream bigger and open to new ways of doing things.*
- *I hope for growth in many ways! Fidelity to the charism, more vocations, development of our apostolates, sending members for further studies, capacity/more wisdom in caring for our members as they age.*
- *I hope that my religious institute will continue increasing slowly and steadily each year and will continue to be a sign of hope for the Church by its vibrancy of faith and the powerful witness of the members.*
- *I hope that we continue to increase the number of young men entering each year so as to be able to maintain important apostolates and enliven their work for the kingdom of God in creative ways.*
- *I hope that we continue to receive more members into the province who have a strong calling to our way of life and are zealous for the ministry. I hope that we continue to be stable so that we do not have to dissolve the province (due to finances or lack of members).*
- *I hope that we will continue to be blessed with holy vocations and open new foundations across the country and internationally, but most of all I hope that we will remain faithful to our charism and constitutions and grow in holiness and love of God, each other, and all souls.*
- *I hope we could strengthen our community and apostolic life by consolidating all of our smaller communities of sisters. Increase of vocations at the same time keeping our communities intergenerational.*

- *I would like to see an increase in non-ordained vocations, as well as a greater focus of ministries so that we are not overextended.*
- *Increased membership and scaling down of facilities to better accommodate a smaller community.*
- *More members. The average age of our community is well over 60. We need an infusion of new blood if the institute is to continue.*
- *My hope is that we will continue to receive newer, younger members. Our survival as a religious institute depends on it.*
- *Our future looks promising. I just hope that we have enough vocations to maintain our current works while still being free to start new works.*
- *That there will be many more vocations and missions. That we will be living with just as much and even more fidelity than we do today.*
- *That we will have younger members who have the opportunity to dream of new ways to minister to the poor and marginalized and young people.*
- *Whatever God wills for us. Since we are a small, relatively new, diocesan institute, I pray that God will continue to bless us with vocations so that we may spread throughout our diocese, bringing the fullness of truth, goodness, and beauty to people, especially through the liturgy.*

In addition to an increase in new vocations, respondents recognize and voice a hope for better formation that is sensitive to the changing demographics of Catholics in the United States. They also express a desire for ongoing formation that helps all in the institute to adapt to the changes in religious life.

- *Currently my religious institute is undergoing changes to its basic formation program. I hope that in ten years there is a stronger sense of unity in our members as well as improvements in the area of cultural diversity.*
- *Focused on formation of young adults*
- *I hope for a greater attentiveness to the needs of members in formation - there can be a disconnect between the superiors (abbot, novice master, junior master) and the junior at times. At times, corrections are overly frequent and unclear. Hence, my hope is that the community has clearer goals as to what they want to see accomplished prior to solemn profession, so that these goals guide the superiors in what behaviors to correct and how to go about correcting said behaviors.*
- *I hope that we continue to have women enter our community as they have in the past, that we can continue to take new missions wherever we are needed, that our ongoing formation renews us in a deeper living of our vows, and that our sense of family and community grows as our size grows.*
- *In ten years, my hopes for my religious institute certainly include continuing to have several younger women to join us in mission. Our congregation has been a resource for other congregations in the area of vocation and formation ministry. It is my hope that it will continue. I also hope that our congregation will be successfully connecting with the younger generations.*
- *More vocations, better leadership training for new members, recommitment to apostolate, and better ongoing formation/ life plans for older members*
- *Openness to change and growth. More members. Continued commitment to working alongside those who live in poverty. Formation for ADULT women understood a little better.*

Respondents also recognize the need for institutes to develop their use of technology if they are to attract and communicate successfully with younger discerners.

- *Greater planning and discussion for the future, in terms of looking at the signs of the times with ministry choices, embracing technology for ministry and vocation direction.*
- *I hope that we will be more present in social media, such as Facebook and YouTube. I pray that there will be a new springtime of new vocations, and that we remain faithful to our mission to the poorest.*
- *I hope we continue to serve directly among the young and not get caught in administration, that we find ourselves more present to the young online, recognizing the needs of the young and organizing ministry focused on them.*
- *That we work on merging our two shrinking U.S. provinces. That we begin to develop our evangelization efforts, particularly in our institute's tradition/ charism/ spirituality. That we create a better online presence to promote our spirituality and vocations to our way of life.*
- *We change some fundamental ways of vocation work in order to respond to how youth seek information. We start getting more involved in ministry through the internet and social media.*

Use of Gifts

A substantial number of respondents recognize their own agency as they hope that in the next ten years they will be using their gifts in service to their institute.

- *Be fully professed, doing our Lord's will*
- *Being a priest, participating in the parish where we are located and teaching in the seminary.*
- *Centered on Jesus and willing to go wherever the Spirit leads.*
- *Having already professed solemn vows, ordained, and working in the ministry my Province considers best for me or where it needs me most.*
- *I hope to be in a closer relationship with God than I am now. And I hope to trust Him more.*
- *I hope to be involved in higher education in a city where I can also minister to marginalized communities such as immigrants or LGBT+ adults.*
- *I hope to be ordained a Jesuit priest and serve in a Jesuit high school, perhaps as a mathematics teacher, a theology teacher, a soccer coach and/or as an administrator.*
- *I hope to find my ministry that God has called me to and be educated and prepared to do it. I expect to be involved in congregational work.*
- *I hope to respond with fidelity to God's will each day.*
- *I hope to serve parishioners faithfully and well as a weekend priest and also to serve my community in one of our apostolates, such as teaching or chaplaincy work. I have no ambition for a leadership post within my community, but if elected to such I would hope to serve willingly and with great dedication and focus.*
- *I hope, with the grace of God, to be a professed monk still at the monastery where I entered. To continue to seek God with the zeal I have today. To be as St. Paul says: not I but Christ lives in me. If it is the Lord's wish, to serve Him as a Cleric.*
- *I see myself as a religious, giving all my best in the service that I will do on my apostolate offering everything for the Glory of God.*
- *I would like to do spiritual writing and spiritual direction, more college level Theology teaching, as well as theological formation of lay Catholics. I would also like to continue to minister through visual art, as well as continue to serve the Order internationally as a translator/interpreter, and am open to some forms of internal ministry.*
- *My greatest hope is to be able to further embrace my vocation in living out my vows and charism in my community. I simply want to be a better Sister, for my community, the apostolate, the Church and most of all*

for Christ. I do not know where that will lead me in my service of the community, but I pray that I will increase in gratitude for the great gift that I have been given in a religious vocation.

- *Priestly ordination, Getting back in the classroom and teaching. Developing my ministry as a Youth Minister. Developing some type of outdoor ministry.*
- *Spreading the gospel and leading others to Christ through the gifts God has given me, particularly through teaching.*
- *To be a brother within the Order, doing some pastoral work, living in community.*
- *To be a faithful daughter of the Church and a faithful religious in my community. I desire to be a lifelong learner.*
- *To become more prayerful and grow in holiness.*
- *To finish formation and be prepared for mission. To participate in a renewal of the Catholic Church.*
- *To serve God faithfully as I live the common life.*

Recognition of Changing Demographics and the Need for Renewal and Consolidation

Newer members realize that they have entered religious institutes that are, for the most part, characterized by smaller numbers and an aging membership. They are realistic about this reality while at the same time optimistic about the future and their role as members of these institutes. Their pragmatism is reflected in their comments about their hopes for the future.

- *1. To make peace with the diminishment of the post-WWII baby boomer generation and to thank them for their many contributions to renewal of religious life. AND 2. To assess honestly the signs of the times for today, where religiosity has become liquid and institutional mistrust is high, even within religious congregations. AND 3. To discern honestly which external handles/markers of identity are helpful for younger men in formation, bracketing my own discomfort with so-called 'externals' or 'devotional pieties' that are attractive to younger Catholics.*
- *A solid, small, but mighty group of newer members discerning and living into the new reality of the congregation. Older members well-cared-for and companioning us in prayer.*
- *As we go through a process of restructuring, I hope that we will be bold in the ways that we focus on our mission and charism such that we do not over-extend ourselves in the number of our apostolates or do not respond to facts/statistics due to fear of change/lack of creative vision grounded in our founder's vision and the Holy Spirit.*
- *At the moment the six provinces of the United States are in a process of unification, I expect great changes.*
- *I hope that we can make a smooth transition as our foundresses become older and are less able to lead. I hope that we can all be as holy and Christ-centered as they are! I would want us to continue to follow the Holy Spirit wherever He leads, and who is wise enough to know where that is?*
- *In the light of the decreasing number of our members, I hope that we will be able to gracefully let go of certain of our works only to better dedicate ourselves to those that—in a spirit of discernment—we wish to keep.*
- *That our community will take bolder risks to address our changing demographics... and in that process, we will apply our charism to upcoming needs of the Church.*
- *That we are able to build ourselves up through additional multicultural and multi-economical members. That our order is able to grow in its thinking to focus less on diminishment and more on what it can do today.*
- *That we choose and implement in a timely manner the significant changes necessary for the changing needs and realities of our community.*

- *That we will be smaller and stronger. That there will be continued “inter-charism” and intercongregational relationship. That we will balance care for our elderly members who are/will likely soon be in need of care (the majority of members) with vibrancy for mission. That we will find a way to respond to the interlocking challenges of care for members, mission, buildings, sponsored institutions etc. in a way that helps us to grow together and not apart. That we all continue to grow in holiness and wholeness whether we are in our first or sixtieth year of religious life.*
- *We are in fragile condition at present, with few young nuns, an aging and diminishing community, and a very large, old monastery. My hope is that we will be able to attract and nurture new vocations, while perhaps joining with other dwindling monasteries of our order, so that our religious life, in its essence, may flourish for the future. That takes courage - and faith!*
- *We will come through the difficult years of the death of most of our elder members and the closing of our large institutions. We will be smaller but the critical yeast in our communities. We will be joined in mission and charism with many lay people and together we will continue to be voices for peace, love, compassion, justice, and Earth.*

They express hope for renewal of religious life in general and of their religious institute in particular. They hope that such a renewal will be one of the outcomes of the consolidation and reconfiguration that institutes have been experiencing in recent years.

- *We are in the process of restructuring in order to better serve the people of God, without neglecting our charism.*
- *Continued renewal of each member; faithful living of the vows*
- *I hope that our community will continue its renewal and commitment to living the vows more deeply. For myself, I hope to be able to give as much love in community as I have received.*
- *I hope that the ministry expectations will not be overwhelming because of the decline in the number of priests, that we restructure ourselves as a North American church to both meet the needs of the faithful but also not burden priests with unrealistic expectations as to what each person can do.*
- *I hope that we can attract more religious and priestly vocations, especially from our high schools; that we can continue the re-shaping / consolidation process in our province in order to strengthen fraternal life in our communities; that older members can be more open to the opinions and life experiences of younger members instead of reminiscing so much about the past.*
- *My hope is that we will be able to consolidate our ministries and live in communities where members work in multiple ministries. I also hope that our province has developed a better culture of vocation acquisition, and a model of life that can grow and contract according to our numbers. Finally, I hope we better develop a culture where we recognize the gifts of our constituents and encourage the growth of these gifts.*
- *My hope is that we work at increasing our numbers by living a joyful witness to the gospel. I know that we must consolidate our ministries, but in doing so, that we could also work at rebuilding them as well. I hope that we become men very deeply rooted in prayer, both personally and communally.*
- *New energy and creativity around evangelization and renewal of religious life; expansion into new ministerial opportunities*
- *That we find ways to consolidate our apostolates so that an increasing number of our religious live in vibrant communities and work together in ministries envisioned by our founder.*
- *That we have continued renewal, that an even greater common vision is shared, that evangelization is more concretely exercised, and we have taken the time to form our younger members in leadership.*
- *To expand into more countries, especially in Asia and Africa. I also hope that we are able to engage more fully in apostolate after this period of renewal my congregation had due to the scandal of our founder.*

- *My hope is that we'll be able to make this transition into a new entity and organization in such a way that truly helps us to live our lives as members and to develop an identity beyond our traditional province/regional identities. I also hope that we will make conscious choices that will lead us in the direction of developing new, more viable approaches to service and ministries, especially to the needs of the marginalized and the newer populations of Catholics and non-Catholics in North America.*

One of the outcomes of changing demographics and reconfigurations is often a recognition of the need for collaboration with other religious institutes and with other lay partners in order to fulfill the mission. Responding new members realize that these efforts at networking and collaboration can help them and their institutes to extend their ministry despite smaller numbers of vowed members.

- *A new foundation of monasticism with collaboration between nuns and monks*
- *As community continues to have a drop in numbers that we can come together, as an international community, and find a reality that supports us spiritually, emotionally, and communally. My other hope would be that we are open to other forms of living. We might have to consider intercongregational living.*
- *As my religious order is an international religious order I hope for greater collaboration internationally.*
- *Focus on abundance instead of scarcity. More collaboration with other religious congregations.*
- *I hope for a greater sense of intra-institutional collaboration among the men in my Order with respect to the various apostolates in a particular region.*
- *I hope my institute will be more connected with other Dominican Institutes. I hope that younger members will have more relationships with members of other institutes.*
- *I hope that there will be more extensive collaboration with other institutes both close by and far away. I hope that we are able to start living and ministering in creative ways.*
- *I would like to see my religious institution to become more flexible and willing to go wherever the needs are. I would like to see my institution to become more radically welcoming to others and aligning ourselves more radically with the poor and marginalized. I would like to see us partnering with others over beginning ministries on our own.*
- *Less tied to institutions, more communities and ministries inserted into neighborhoods with fewer resources, more collaboration with other congregations and more incorporation of the laity in our ministries, diversity of cultures among incoming vocations.*
- *Monasticism will live on in some form. See being faithful to monastic prayer and practices, ministry in some way depending on local needs, downsize or new buildings, smaller community. More interaction between oblate community and monastic community. I could see ministering with oblates, even some of them living with us.*
- *My hope is that it is still thriving. I see us being more in touch with our international reality. I see us working together with all of our members around the world, not divided by where we are from, but united that we are all members.*
- *That as we get smaller in number, we can reconfigure and respond more to the periphery. To collaborate more with different groups in mission where there is a greater need*
- *That lay people know and live our charism and spirituality.*
- *That we, in collaboration with other religious institutes, create ways for newer/younger members to come together in religious life.*
- *Vitality, passion living authentic religious life by all members; healthy ministries with lay collaborators who live in ways that reflect the charism*

- *We can renew the fidelity of our call, to become who we claim to be! I also hope for greater communication and collaboration of newer members across provinces, internationally.*

Clear Sense of Mission/Identity

Responding new members recognize that the recent past has been turbulent and difficult for religious institutes. They sense that many institutes have been struggling just to survive in light of fewer members and increased workload shared among an increasingly aged membership. Their hope for the next ten years is for an increase in clarity of mission and identity as renewed institutes reemerge from consolidation and restructuring.

- *A clearer sense of our mission; an integration of all our apostolates within a common vision; to be an institute that is noticed and admired by young faithful Catholics.*
- *A greater sense of common purpose around particular goals for our common life and for our apostolate; better cohesion among the different age groups in the monastery.*
- *A move away from maintenance back to mission. The sexual abuse scandals consume too much time of our provincial leadership. We are too consumed with the state of our finances. A move toward immersion fraternities built not around ministry obligations but opportunities for witness to the Gospel.*
- *After having formally finished a beautiful, difficult, but necessary renewal process, I hope to see a new outbreak of missionary drive. I would particularly like to see greater involvement in the cultural and intellectual apostolate of the Church, working with and forming Catholic cultural and intellectual leaders.*
- *Become a real centralized source of Catholic culture for the local area.*
- *Clearer understanding of and focus on what constitutes the essential elements of our life and tradition.*
- *Currently, we have just under 200 members and we talk a lot about transformation, with about half those members being in their 80s. We talk a lot about looking nothing like we do right now. My hope is to be clearer about our charism and being who we say we are. I hope we will be more contemplative and less apostolic than we were in “recent” years.*
- *I hope that my religious order maintains the spirit of our mother foundress, even if it means closing some of our homes. Yes, I desire that the future brings more vocations, but more importantly will be to guard our spirit.*
- *I hope we will be able to navigate the death of the majority of our members and emerge with a passionate commitment to our Mission. In particular, I hope we will be free to discern and to follow the invitation of the spirit to develop the ministries currently dreamed by newer members.*
- *Intentional community diversification and a clear identity in line with the charism but being relevant to the world of today*
- *Looking at the numbers, my institute has a future, but it will be very different, at least in this country, from what it looked like in the 20th century. My hope is that we will discern a way forward to serve the Church effectively with the number of men we have, rather than try to continue to staff a large number of institutions with a small number of men.*
- *More focus on mission, greater collaboration with other communities and ministry partners, less material to hold onto.*
- *My hope is that we have freed ourselves with the management of our properties, (motherhouse, campus, etc.). We have a lot of unknowns at this time in our community. We are still vibrant and on fire in living the Gospel, accompanying anyone along the way, serving those who are in need, visiting the infirmed.*
- *My religious institute can rediscover its roots*

- *That our focus be on quality of ministry and not quantity of members.*
- *To be faithful to our charism, to prayer & to community life. We have a missionary heart, so I look forward to seeing us grow & follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.*
- *To recover from the current crisis and to rejuvenate our apostolic work, so that many young people can have the same experience of Christ that I had. To remain faithful to the Church and our charism.*

Members also hope for an increased sense of community among members as they rebuild for the future.

- *Better community life, less technology minded. Less like workaholics, more like sisters living together in community.*
- *Greater depth and commitment to community life, as well as greater vulnerability and conversation around issues of race, sexism, and personal experiences (which includes struggles) with our shared prayer, vows, and life in the institute.*
- *I am a part of an international, multicultural community. From my experience in this country, we celebrate this diversity and strive to integrate our different prayer groups who speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds with one another. Having also experienced my community charism outside my native culture in other countries, my hope is that we continue to learn how to grow in the area of multicultural community life. I pray we continue learning how we can enter other cultures and how we can receive missionaries from other cultures. These discussions already exist, but I believe we can go deeper.*
- *I hope that even as members age and the numbers decline in our province, we will be more intentional in the way we live our community life.*
- *Life-giving intentional experiences of community life*
- *My hopes are for a renewed sense of mission coupled with authentic community life.*
- *Stronger community life, not focusing on the apostolate every single minute*
- *That the smaller numbers will not diminish community life.*
- *That we will be faithful to our Rule, live a vibrant community life, and have young men answer the call to be a Brother in our Institute.*
- *We can focus as much energy on the mission and members in full-time ministry as we do as on the aging and grieving the death of members. There can be conversations around how to live community life as less of us are in full-time ministry and we are all spread out around the country. We do the internal work on racism as a community. We embrace cultural diversity and not only talk about it.*

Respondents anticipate that their renewed institutes will be in a better position to read the signs of the times and respond to the needs of the Church.

- *I hope that my order will continue to read the signs of the times and to work to spread the Gospel and work for justice in society and in the world.*
- *I hope that our religious institute stays faithful to its charism as we continue to grow in numbers of members and as we spread across the USA. I hope that we continue to adapt and adjust to the changes of the times so as to be more effective witnesses in the apostolate.*
- *I hope we will have sustained the vocations of our newer members and welcomed a few more. I hope we will continue to care for our elders with compassion and quality care. I hope we will continue to be focused on mission, giving new life to our charism and responding to the signs of the times.*

- *My greatest hope is that we continue to respond to the needs of God's people with creative hope by thinking outside the box of "what has been" to "what could be." These are exciting times to be a religious and I am grateful to and hopeful because of the leadership of my congregation. I want to continue to live Gospel values, pray deeply for God's guidance in these difficult times, and grow in love and service of God's people. I am confident I can do that in the religious institute I am in because of the guidance, leadership, and spirit of our administration and our members.*
- *That we can be free to let go of our longstanding institutional commitments and be creative in starting new ministries that respond to the needs of our time*
- *That we continue to adapt with the times of today while remaining true to who we are as a religious community. Our ministries are becoming more diverse and I pray that we stay true to who we are.*
- *That we will continue to be guided in our lives and ministries by the call of our times, the Holy Spirit and our charism... God is calling... people are responding!!*
- *To continue responding to the signs of the times (becoming more racially diverse as well as being inclusive and having deeper conversations about that), seeing more people of color in leadership, greater lay formation*
- *Younger members taking more ownership. Newer members being a vital part of reading the signs of the times.*

Increasing Diversity, Leadership, and Collaboration across Generations

Newer members eagerly anticipate the evolution of religious life in the next ten years. They look forward to increased collaboration across generations.

- *As we start to have a wider spread of ages, I hope that all the age groups will be able to listen to each other and learn from one another. I also hope we continue to grow steadily and figure out how to stay close despite numbers increase.*
- *Continuing to receive vocations and steadfast fidelity to our charism and religious life. Also, healthy community life as we will begin to have a larger gap between the older and younger members.*
- *I hope and pray that we are able to grow in deeper understanding of the intergenerational divide and reality within our community, which is also a microcosm of the greater world today. That we may grow in vulnerability with one another and capacity to share the fruit of our relationship with the Lord with each other and the people of God more freely—in an authentically relevant and honest way. That we would be able to effectively communicate Christ at the heart of our call to live our special mission.*
- *I hope to see our community deeply embrace and reverence our members who are older and aging (we are a young community with few older members)—learning to treasure their wisdom & perseverance.*
- *I would also like to see more understanding between generations within our community so that the young members feel more welcomed and supported.*
- *That there be a collaborative community. Where both younger and older members are respected and their voices are heard.*

Newer members also recognize the increased cultural diversity of the Catholic Church in the United States and they look forward to ensuring that religious life reflects that diversity.

- *A more diverse community that focuses on poor.*
- *Embracing our diversity more effectively, consolidating our Regions in fewer places of great need in the world, educating formally more members, affirming community life, training younger members of color to take leadership roles, remaining in dialogue with the Church, embracing ministries that meet urgent/ongoing needs of the marginalized.*

- *Get more Hispanic members*
- *I hope that we can continue to attract young, dynamic men to our order, especially from diverse ethnic backgrounds that are more representative of the Church in the U.S.*
- *I also hope to see the institute grow & expand in numbers of members and in foundations both in the U.S. and internationally. I hope to welcome more members who come from other countries, and especially for more members who speak Spanish—so as to bring our charism to the growing Latino/Spanish-speaking community in the U.S.*
- *More cultural diversity and formation houses in other countries*
- *More members from diverse cultures and foundations in other countries. A more organic structure that allows us to be more about mission. For our community's intercultural work to serve as a blueprint for other congregations.*
- *More women entering (especially from diverse cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, and ministerial backgrounds).*
- *Originally, my Community was formed for the U.S.-born vocations. After ten years, I would like to see how we embrace other nationalities.*
- *Thriving, with increased vocations, even greater cultural and ethnic diversity, continued diversity of ministries, and increased communication and collaboration with other religious institutions, hopefully being known for preaching the truth, and upholding the truth and human rights*
- *We will be more racially diverse. We will live a little lower socioeconomic-economically, and we will be more ecologically and sustainability focused*

Newer members recognize the need for additional formation in leadership so that they are prepared to assume leadership in their institutes and in the Church.

- *A desire for the older generation to actually train and pass on leadership to the younger generation. They cling to power, authority, and leadership as a dying person clings to life. Real and authentic relationships based on mutual respect and fraternal care.*
- *Continued growth, see how younger members take on leadership roles as older members retire.*
- *Greater collaboration and trust, especially across generations, in provincial leadership and ministry.*
- *I hope that we can start to think in new ways. I would like to see us put more trust in younger member to assume leadership roles. I would like us to be unafraid to let things die so that new things can emerge. I would like to see us reimagine the missionary spirit, and to move to new territory.*
- *I also hope that the next generation of leadership have risen up and are providing a strong vision for how to live consecrated life in the 21st century.*
- *More opportunities for younger members to lead*
- *Structures of mentorship to prepare future leaders*
- *That we allow young, forward-thinking leaders to emerge who are decisive about making hard choices (in light of institutional decline in manpower and resources) with a clear vision*
- *To have sisters receiving more professional training and terminal degrees to be able to meet the needs for leadership roles in our various institutes of healthcare and education. There seems to be a lack of women religious studying for Ph.D.s or even other professional degrees. It seems way less than it used to be- that in the past, women religious received an education way beyond what their lay counterparts did, whereas now it appears to be the opposite in our and some other congregations, even though it seems the need is greater now- to be able to be on par with lay peers.*

New Ministries, Mission with the Poor, and Fidelity to the Charism of the Founder(ess)

Newer members are eager to move beyond diminishment and to expand the mission of their institute into new avenues for ministry. At the same time, some newer members feel drawn to return to the roots of their institute and to restore a sense of its original charism.

- *1. To be engaged in the work that our young members find satisfaction, meaning, and opportunity for discipleship in. 2. That we find new, creative ways to live the Gospel.*
- *A greater diversity in ministries and freedom regarding how members are missioned. I hope that we continue to grow and develop our communal and spiritual gifts as an institute.*
- *A recommitment to our charism in new forms of ministry—breaking us out of the “we’ve always done it this way” mode of thinking.*
- *Better discernment of existing institutional commitments to stay open to new possibilities*
- *Fidelity to the grace of our founder, and to Holy Mother Church.*
- *I hope for continued fidelity to our charism and zeal in living deeply our religious life. I hope that we find new expressions of our charism to meet the needs of our culture.*
- *I hope my religious institute can become freer to move from many of its institutions to found new apostolates where the need is greatest. I hope that my religious institute can become more ethnically and racially diverse as well.*
- *I hope my religious institute has the courage to leave our works that are self-sufficient, and to begin new works in areas that need our ministry.*
- *I hope that my community will continue in fidelity to Christ in the heart of the Church and in fidelity to our charism. This includes, of course, deepening our fidelity to the vows, as well as living community life and apostolic service with charity and joy.*
- *I hope that my institute will be revitalized by new members and new apostolates. We are currently leaving some of our long-standing locations of ministry. My hope is that in ten years we can continue to educate the next generation for the new evangelization.*
- *I hope that my institute would be more daring in its ministry, that we would choose to be bold in expanding. If this is not possible, then we I hope that we would be brave to pick up more dynamic ministries according to our founder’s charism and plans.*
- *I hope that we continue to do follow God’s will and plan for us. My hopes would be that we continue to attract new vocations, that we persevere in our vocation, and that we live an authentic traditional religious life. I hope that my community considers a more wholesome local community life and that we can live in larger communities.*
- *I look forward to our religious institute in continuing and expanding our mission of preaching and being faithful witnesses of the gospel. I would like to see more mission on the West Coast.*
- *Increased attention to Adult Faith Formation, providing avenues to pray and think with people regarding the relevance of faith in today’s world, the new evangelization, engaging in conversation/dialogue about the relevant issues of society with others outside the Catholic Church*
- *Living more simply, with and among the poor; more collaboration with lay associates (perhaps living in community with them in some situations); a continued tone of tolerance and welcoming; creatively seeking new ways to work for justice*
- *More active ministry distinct from simply maintaining the status quo.*
- *My biggest hope is that throughout the processes that we are undergoing and the renewal that entails, we will be able to remain steadfast in our traditional way of life (keep our way of living our vow at Enclosure among*

other things). My second hope is that we will grow (we are a small community now, due to death of older members) and that those who join our community will be steadfast in our way of life.

- *My hope is that our institute continues to bring in men who are discerning both brotherhood and priesthood, that we strengthen bonds between priests, brothers, and sisters as the family our founder intended for us to be, and that we also continue to hold on to the work we do in the social justice sector, with our homeless center in [Place]. Also, that we strive to articulate what about us is distinctive in the world, and present a united front as regards our witness and mission in a ever-changing world.*
- *My hope is that we look at different ways to serve instead of just education/ administration. There is a greater need among the elderly/ poor/ spreading the gospel message to so many that don't have a relationship or even an awareness of God. All types of religious formation/ education is needed, from those in the pew to those who have fallen away from the church.*
- *One of my hopes for our community is opening a convent in a developing country in Latin America. I would love to serve the poor in one of those countries.*
- *Perhaps an increase in efforts to respond to issues of social justice as a community, and a growth and development of our Hispanic ministry.*
- *That we continue to live in deep faith, with courageous action / spirit for justice. To be less concerned about numbers and more invested in God's loving desires for us.*
- *That we will invest in ministries that respond to the signs of the times and become freer in using our prophetic voice.*
- *To found other houses where the divine liturgy can be sung in community, to draw new members to religious life, and the faithful can be instructed and inspired to lead holy lives and enjoy more fruitfully the communion that belongs to all the members of the Christ's Church.*
- *To increase our outreach for new evangelization and to be a witness of a live and vibrant religious life lived in community and in total union with the teachings of the Church.*
- *With my ambition and love for Religious life, I wish to take my community to a greater height. As I look at all the members, the first thing that strikes me is how varied we are. If I had the opportunity in the future, I would take my congregation to Africa and help my community grow more as it used to be years ago.*

Newer members desire members of all ages to be committed to living the charism more vibrantly, with a greater effort to live in solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Unlike previous generations to religious life, they recognize stewardship involves divesting of empty buildings, underutilized property, and sponsored institutions to live more simply, utilizing human and material resources to benefit the neediest.

- *As we decrease in numbers, I really hope that we can remain open to the Spirit's call to be in service of the poor. I hope that we can continue to choose to place ourselves in the pathway of the marginalized and not be afraid to speak truth to power. I hope that we can grow in our ability to move away from clericalism and oppressive realities. I hope that we can grow in awareness of the institutional racism of our order and the Church and work concretely on dismantling racism and homophobia.*
- *I hope that our communities are diverse culturally and generationally and I hope that we have a strong prayer life commitment and recreational commitment to one another. I also hope that we have a strong commitment to the poor and marginalized.*
- *I hope we will be present among the migrants who most need to be helped and committed to social justice and fair relationships.*
- *I hope that we can address climate change and its effect on the poorest among us and find practical ways forward.*

- *I hope we look at our levels of involvement in our various apostolates and discern how we can better serve the poor in our educational ministries. I also hope we continue to grow in our reception of candidates for the brother's vocation.*
- *I hope that we as a congregation can continue to serve the needs of the poor, especially women and children. I hope that we can divest ourselves of some of our major properties and that these properties will benefit the needy such as through affordable housing. I also hope that other women join our religious congregation and contribute their talents and good works for the good of the whole.*
- *I hope that we as members continue to grow in unity. I hope we can remain faithful to our primary apostolate of perpetual adoration.*
- *I hope that we are less parish based and freer to go where the need is most felt. I also hope that we are more socially minded with our ministries, i.e., soup kitchens, warming centers, employment for recently released, working with homeless.*
- *I hope that we are meeting the needs of low-income families, especially those impacted by immigration and socioeconomic disparity. I hope that we are working to more equitable church that is focused on inclusion rather than disassociation or elitism.*
- *I hope that we effectively discern the signs of the times and respond to the needs of the Church, especially by immersing ourselves along the margins of the poorest and most vulnerable.*
- *I hope that we can grow in living simplicity, engage newer members, and deepen in our prayer and spiritual lives, especially a sense of common life.*
- *I hope that we can grow in solidarity with the poor and our sense of community with one another. I hope that we are able to live more simply, a more authentic poverty that gives credibility to what we preach. I hope that we can continue to attract young, dynamic men to our order, especially from diverse ethnic backgrounds that are more representative of the Church in the U.S.*
- *I hope to see an increase in ministries oriented to directly working with the poor and marginalized, with the sick, with immigrants, etc. I hope that my institute learn, once and for all, that the gospel is lived and witnessed to, in the streets not inside a building.*
- *That we would be increasingly better stewards of the gifts given to us and that we would be more faithful to our charism of reaching out to the poorest.*
- *More diversity, more ministries with the marginalized, more ecologically sustainable and more bold statements for justice.*
- *I hope we are still witnessing to God's providential care to the world's people. That we will be a sign of hope and voice raised against injustice. I hope we will help raise people out of poverty. I hope that there will still be new members joining our congregation.*
- *Living more simply, with and among the poor; more collaboration with lay associates (perhaps living in community with them in some situations); a continued tone of tolerance and welcoming; creatively seeking new ways to work for justice.*
- *I hope we continue to make a strong commitment to the poor and marginalized. I hope we recognize that our presence and our community life is as important as ministry.*

Appendix I: Questionnaires with Response Frequencies



**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
and the National Religious Vocation Conference
Survey of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life**



*This survey is part of a study to assist NRV/C and CARA in understanding religious life and religious vocations in the United States today. Please respond for the **unit** (congregation, province, monastery) for which you are responsible. **If your unit is international, respond for the United States only.***

Type of Institute or Society

1. Gender of members: 30₁ Men 70₂ Women.
Yes No NR
 17 83 4 2. Has your institute reconfigured since 2003?
 13 87 6 3. Is your institute in the process of reconfiguring?
 16 84 7 4. Since 2003, this unit has had no serious
 discerner.
 12 88 4 5. This unit has stopped accepting new members.
 11 89 5 6. This unit has stopped promoting vocations to
 religious life.

If Yes to #5 and #6 and you do not have a vocation director, please answer only questions 36-45, 52-59, and 83-108.

Demographic Data

Please indicate the number in each category in your unit who entered since January 1, 2003. If your religious institute has been reconfigured since 2003, please include the numbers for the religious institutes that are now part of your unit.

- _____ 7. Candidates/postulants (before novitiate)
 _____ 8. Novices
 _____ 9. Temporary/first vows/commitment
 _____ 10. Perpetual/final vows/commitment

Of those who entered your unit since 2003 and then departed, please indicate the number who departed at each stage.

- _____ 11. During candidacy/postulancy
 _____ 12. During novitiate
 _____ 13. During temporary vows/commitment
 _____ 14. After perpetual vows/commitment

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

	Candidates/ Postulants	Novices	Temporary Professed
Before 1950	15. _____	22. _____	29. _____
1950-1959	16. _____	23. _____	30. _____
1960-1969	17. _____	24. _____	31. _____
1970-1979	18. _____	25. _____	32. _____
1980-1989	19. _____	26. _____	33. _____
1990-1999	20. _____	27. _____	34. _____
2000 or later	21. _____	28. _____	35. _____

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

- _____ 36. Before 1929 _____ 40. 1960-1969
 _____ 37. 1930-1939 _____ 41. 1970-1979
 _____ 38. 1940-1949 _____ 42. 1980-1989
 _____ 39. 1950-1959 _____ 43. 1990 or later
 _____ 44. Average age of **perpetually professed members**
 _____ 45. Median age of **perpetually professed members**

*Please indicate the number of **candidates/postulants, novices, and temporary professed** currently in your unit in each racial or ethnic category.*

- _____ 46. African American/African/black
 _____ 47. Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian/
 Middle Eastern
 _____ 48. Caucasian/European American/Anglo/white
 _____ 49. Hispanic/Latino(a)
 _____ 50. Native American/Alaskan Native
 _____ 51. Other/Don't know/Mixed races or ethnicities

*Please indicate the number of **perpetually professed members** currently in your unit in each racial or ethnic category.*

- _____ 52. African American/African/black
 _____ 53. Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian/
 Middle Eastern
 _____ 54. Caucasian/European American/Anglo/white
 _____ 55. Hispanic/Latino(a)
 _____ 56. Native American/Alaskan Native
 _____ 57. Other/Don't know/Mixed races or ethnicities

58. What is the highest level of education among the majority of perpetually professed members in your unit? *(Check one)*

- 70 Master's degree or beyond
 25 Bachelor's degree or equivalent
 5 High school diploma or equivalent
 NR=4

59. Where are the majority of perpetually professed members in your unit located? *(Check only one)*

- 32 Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
 7 South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)
 12 South Central (AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX)
 35 Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH,
 SD, WI)
 2 Mountain West (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY)
 10 Pacific West (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)
 2 Outside the United States (include PR and GU here)

Vocation Ministry

60. What is the structure of your vocation efforts? (*Check all that apply*)
- 33 Full-time vocation director
 - 30 Part-time vocation director
 - 12 Co-vocation directors
 - 29 Vocation team
 - 13 Ad hoc or none of the above (skip to item #69)
61. Which best describes the **vocation director**? (*If more than one vocation director, please answer for the longest serving*)
- 97 A perpetually professed member of your institute
 - 1 A temporary professed member of your institute
 - 0 A member of another institute or society
 - 1 An associate
 - 2 A lay person who is not a member or associate
- NR=25

_____ 62. Number of years this **vocation director** has served in vocation ministry.

63. If your unit has a **vocation team**, please indicate if it includes the following (*check all that apply*):
- 46 Perpetually professed member(s)
 - 11 Temporary professed member(s)
 - 5 Associate(s)
 - 16 Leadership team/Council liaison
 - 7 Other lay person(s) who is/are not member(s) or associates (e.g., young adults, parents)

Yes No NR

- 47 53 34 64. Vocation director/team has clerical support.
72 28 33 65. Vocation director/team has job description(s).
72 28 37 66. Vocation director/team works with the communications director of your institute.

\$_____ 67. Annual budget for the vocation director/team (excluding salaries).

68. How often does the vocation director meet with the institute leadership team?
- 27 At least monthly
 - 29 At least quarterly, but less than monthly
 - 39 As needed, but at least annually
 - 6 Less than annually or never
- NR=26
69. How often is the topic of vocations on the agenda of the institute leadership team meetings?
- 29 Nearly every meeting (at least 75% of all meetings)
 - 21 At least half of all meetings annually (50-74%)
 - 34 Occasionally (at least 25-49% of all meetings)
 - 16 Seldom or never
- NR=16

Vocation Promotion and Discernment Activities

70. Please indicate if your **unit** sponsors or co-sponsors the following discernment programs (*check all that apply*):
- 33 Busy Persons Retreat, Nun Run, Open House, Theology on Tap, Cursillo, etc.
 - 22 Diocesan vocation program such as Quo Vadis, Fiat Days, dinner with the Bishop, etc.
 - 21 Regular meetings with a discernment group
 - 10 Online discernment group
 - 37 Discernment retreat
 - 60 "Come and See" experience
 - 9 Discernment house
 - 39 Live-in experience
 - 24 Volunteer service immersion experience with members of the institute
 - 2 *From Service to Sisterhood* volunteer program
71. Please indicate if your **unit** has used any of the following advertising strategies for vocation promotion in the last five years (*check all that apply*):
- 63 Advertising in discernment magazines, diocesan papers, parish bulletins, etc.
 - 78 Vocation information on your website or a distinct website for vocations
 - 62 Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Chat)
 - 23 Online experiences (e.g., A Nun's Life, podcasts, blogs)
 - 74 Print materials (e.g., prayer cards, brochures, posters)
 - 50 VISION Vocation guide, online VISION Vocation Network, VocationMatch
 - 10 Broadcast media (e.g., EWTN, Salt and Light, diocesan)
72. Please indicate if your **unit** sponsors or co-sponsors vocation promotion or discernment programs specifically targeted toward these age groups (*check all that apply*):
- 26 Elementary/middle school
 - 41 High school
 - 50 College campuses
 - 57 Young adults (20s and 30s)
 - 14 Mature adults (over age 40)
73. Please indicate the annual events in which your **unit** actively involves members to promote vocations to religious life (*check all that apply*):
- 22 Congregational Founder's Day/Patron Saint Day
 - 23 Congregational festivals/fairs/public events
 - 25 National Catholic Sisters Week
 - 40 National Vocation Awareness Week
 - 6 Religious Brothers Day
 - 41 World Day for Consecrated Life
 - 40 World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Formation/Incorporation Ministry

Please indicate the age requirements for admission to candidacy/postulancy for your unit.

_____ 74. Minimum age (please write 0 if none)

_____ 75. Maximum age (please write 0 if none)

Do **candidates/postulants** in your unit interact with other candidates/postulants from:

Yes No NR

67 33 28 76. Other units of your institute, society, or federation

62 38 31 77. Other institutes or societies

Do **novices** in your unit interact with other novices in an Intercommunity Novitiate program from:

Yes No NR

58 42 33 78. Other units of your institute, society, or federation

54 46 33 79. Other institutes or societies

80. **If yes to #78 and/or #79**, please indicate the city and state of this program: _____

Do those in **temporary profession** in your unit interact with others who are temporary professed from:

Yes No NR

76 24 33 79. Other units of your institute, society, or federation

63 37 38 80. Other institutes or societies

81. Does your unit offer a formation experience for U.S. members in initial formation that takes place outside the United States? 37 Yes 63 No NR=23

82. **If yes**, please indicate the city and country of this program: _____

Community Life and Prayer

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

_____ 83. Singly (or with family members)

_____ 84. In community with 2-3 members of your unit

_____ 85. In community with 4-7 members of your unit

_____ 86. In community with 8 or more of your unit

_____ 87. In community with members of another religious institute

_____ 88. In community with non-vowed (e.g., volunteers, associates, refugees)

Please use these responses for items 89-103.

1=Not at all

3=Somewhat

2=Only a little

4=Very

How important are these aspects for healthy and holy community life in your unit?

1 2 3 4 NR

2 3 20 75 2 89. Living with other members

1 1 12 87 2 90. Praying with other members

10 28 43 19 5 91. Praying with lay partners in ministry

5 14 32 49 4 92. Ministering/working with other members

7 9 24 59 4 93. Ministering wherever the need is greatest

1 4 23 72 1 94. Sharing meals with other members

21 36 33 11 6 95. Sharing meals with lay partners in ministry

1 4 29 67 2 96. Socializing/sharing leisure with members

0 1 14 85 1 97. Celebrating holidays/feast days together

16 28 36 20 5 98. Participating in neighborhood outreach

4 15 44 37 3 99. Discussing local/global news and events

8 23 33 36 4 100. Corporate stances on social justice issues

8 24 37 31 6 101. Learning and implementing cultural competencies with members

2 11 28 60 3 102. Valuing cultural diversity beyond tolerance

<1 5 24 71 3 103. Ongoing formation and lifelong education

104. Please indicate which of the following characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of members of your unit who are in active ministry (*check all that apply*):

95 Personal private prayer

25 Journal writing, poetry, prayer blogs

87 Daily Eucharist

86 Liturgy of the Hours

47 Non-liturgical common prayer (i.e. rosary, devotions)

34 Common meditation/centering prayer

55 Faith sharing

67 *Lectio Divina*/spiritual reading and reflection

10 Ecumenical and interfaith prayer (e.g. Taizé)

50 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

4 Prayer with an online community

Yes No NR

30 70 4 105. Does your religious institute have a post-final vow structure or program to aid retention?

106. Please describe your greatest concern/worry for the newest members of your unit.

107. Please describe the ways in which you (as a leader) and/or your unit support your newest members in their vocation.

108. Please describe any ways that NRVC can be of more value to your religious institute.

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: _____ E-mail: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

CARA/Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University

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**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
and the National Religious Vocation Conference**
Survey of New Members



*This survey is part of a study to assist NRVC and CARA in understanding religious life and religious vocations in the United States today. "Religious institute" refers to the congregation, province, or abbey/monastery to which you belong. **Your responses are very important.** Please respond by marking an "X" in the appropriate boxes. If you do not know how to respond to a question, or if it does not apply, please leave it blank.*

Please use the responses below for questions 1-17.
1=Not at All **3=Somewhat**
2= Only a Little **4=Very Much**

How much did the following attract you to religious life?

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
| 1 | 4 | 16 | 79 | 1 | 1. A sense of call to religious life |
| <1 | 3 | 20 | 77 | 1 | 2. Desire for prayer and spiritual growth |
| <1 | 1 | 12 | 86 | 1 | 3. Desire for a deeper relationship with God |
| 1 | 6 | 24 | 69 | 1 | 4. Desire to be of service |
| 5 | 16 | 38 | 41 | 1 | 5. Desire to profess and live vows |
| 2 | 8 | 26 | 65 | 1 | 6. Desire to be part of a community |
| 5 | 12 | 32 | 52 | 1 | 7. Desire to be more committed to the Church |

How much did the following attract you to your religious institute?

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
| 10 | 18 | 32 | 41 | 2 | 8. The life and works of your founder/ress |
| 1 | 4 | 20 | 75 | 2 | 9. The charism of the institute |
| 1 | 6 | 27 | 65 | 2 | 10. The mission of the institute |
| 1 | 4 | 24 | 71 | 1 | 11. The spirituality of the institute |
| 1 | 6 | 30 | 63 | 1 | 12. The prayer life of the institute |
| 1 | 6 | 25 | 67 | 1 | 13. The community life of the institute |
| 4 | 13 | 35 | 49 | 1 | 14. The ministries of the institute |
| 2 | 8 | 26 | 65 | 1 | 15. The example of members of the institute |
| 39 | 26 | 20 | 16 | 2 | 16. The cultural diversity of institute members |
| 2 | 10 | 28 | 60 | 1 | 17. Welcome and encouragement by members |

How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?

- Check all that apply.
- | | | |
|----|-----|---|
| 37 | 18. | In an institution where members served, e.g., school |
| 19 | 19. | Through working with a member of the institute |
| 24 | 20. | Through a relative or friend in the institute |
| 11 | 21. | Through a presentation at a school/parish/youth ministry event |
| 9 | 22. | Through a vocation fair or exhibit at an event or conference |
| 6 | 23. | Through a vocation match or placement service (e.g., VISION Vocation Match) |
| 29 | 24. | Through your own internet search of websites |
| 12 | 25. | Through online content (e.g., podcasts, videos, blogs, vlogs, webinars) |
| 18 | 26. | Through printed materials (e.g., prayer cards, bookmarks, brochures, books, booklets) |
| 6 | 27. | Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) |

- Did you participate in any of the following before you entered your religious institute? Check all that apply.*
- | | | |
|----|-----|---|
| 25 | 28. | Diocesan vocation programs (e.g., Quo Vadis, Fiat Days, dinner with the Bishop) |
| 31 | 29. | Busy Persons Retreat, Nun Run, Open House, Theology on Tap, Cursillo, etc. |
| 7 | 30. | Online discernment forums, chats, etc. |
| 28 | 31. | In-person meetings with a discernment group |
| 59 | 32. | Discernment retreat(s) |
| 74 | 33. | "Come and See" experience(s) |
| 7 | 34. | Living at a Discernment House |
| 27 | 35. | Live in experience with the institute |
| 16 | 36. | Volunteer service immersion experience(s) with members of the institute |

Was religious life formally presented, in class or in campus ministry, as an option for you to consider seriously while you were in these settings? Check all that apply.

- | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-------------------|----|-----|-------------|
| 14 | 37. | Elementary school | 30 | 39. | High school |
| 14 | 38. | Middle school | 37 | 40. | College |

Please use the responses below for questions 41-51.
1=Not at All **3=Somewhat**
2=Only a Little **4=Very Much**

How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
| 19 | 18 | 31 | 33 | 4 | 41. Websites of religious institutes |
| 31 | 21 | 22 | 26 | 6 | 42. Talking with my pastor |
| 17 | 28 | 34 | 21 | 5 | 43. Printed materials (e.g., prayer cards, books, bookmarks, brochures, booklets, posters) |
| 59 | 18 | 15 | 8 | 8 | 44. Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat) |
| 43 | 22 | 20 | 14 | 8 | 45. Online content (e.g., podcasts, videos, blogs, vlogs, webinars) |
| 68 | 14 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 46. VISION Vocation Guide, online VISION Vocation Network, VocationMatch |
| 64 | 18 | 12 | 6 | 9 | 47. Other media (e.g., OYE, A Guide to Religious Ministries, EWTN, Salt and Light Media) |
| 39 | 13 | 23 | 24 | 9 | 48. Invitations to Receptions, Final professions, and Jubilees |
| 8 | 7 | 21 | 64 | 5 | 49. Discernment with a vocation director |
| 2 | 3 | 16 | 79 | 3 | 50. Meeting with a member(s) of the institute |
| 7 | 8 | 19 | 67 | 4 | 51. Communal prayer and meals with a member(s) of the institute |

Please use the responses below for questions 52-79.

1=Not at All

3=Somewhat

2=Only a Little

4=Very Much

How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 32 24 34 11 3 52. The size of the institute
30 20 29 21 3 53. Its geographic location(s)
1 4 18 77 2 54. The charism of the institute
1 6 28 65 2 55. Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute
1 6 24 69 2 56. Community life in the institute
3 11 34 51 2 57. The way the vows are lived in the institute
2 6 28 64 3 58. The living of the Gospel values
46 22 17 15 3 59. The cultural diversity of the members
29 26 30 16 3 60. The ages of members
22 19 30 30 3 61. Other members also in initial formation
9 16 33 43 4 62. The types of ministry of its members
62 17 12 9 4 63. The diversity of languages among members
27 22 24 27 5 64. The preferential option and commitment for the poor among its members
7 11 32 50 3 65. The vitality of members
18 20 31 32 4 66. The focus on possibilities for the future of the religious institute

How much encouragement did you receive from the following when you first considered entering your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 1 7 25 69 3 67. Members of your institute
4 6 23 68 4 68. Vocation director/team
8 6 24 63 16 69. Spiritual director, if applicable
9 11 32 49 9 70. Religious sisters, brothers, and/or priests
22 20 28 30 9 71. Diocesan priests, deacons, and/or bishop
19 20 28 34 6 72. Your parents, if applicable
37 17 23 23 27 73. Your grandparents, if applicable
24 23 29 24 9 74. Your siblings, if applicable
30 27 28 15 12 75. Other family members
15 16 32 37 9 76. People in your parish
20 19 33 29 12 77. Teachers, mentors, or others in your school or workplace
39 11 20 30 28 78. Youth minister or college campus minister
10 16 34 40 6 79. Friends outside the institute

80. After entering religious life, did familial support and encouragement for your vocation: *Check only one.*

72 1. Increase 25 2. Stay the same 3 3. Decrease

Yes No NR

- 34 66 2 81. Do you have a relative who is a priest, deacon, or religious sister or brother?
87 14 2 82. Outside of family members, were there any priests, brothers, or sisters you knew before discerning your vocation?
11 89 2 83. Were you an associate of your institute before entering?
3 97 2 84. Were you ever married?
2 98 2 85. Do you have any children?

Please use the responses below for questions 86-122.

1=Not at All

3=Somewhat

2=Only a Little

4=Very Much

How important to you are these types of prayer?

1 2 3 4 NR

- <1 1 8 91 2 86. Personal private prayer
18 26 30 26 3 87. Journal writing, poetry, prayer blogs
1 3 11 85 2 88. Daily Eucharist
3 9 18 70 2 89. Liturgy of the Hours
8 20 34 38 2 90. Non-liturgical common prayer (i.e. rosary, devotions)
20 18 25 37 4 91. Common meditation/centering prayer
9 21 35 35 3 92. Faith sharing
2 10 32 57 2 93. *Lectio Divina*/spiritual reading and reflection
43 30 19 8 5 94. Ecumenical interfaith prayer (e.g. Taizé)
4 11 19 66 2 95. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
54 22 16 8 3 96. Prayer using an app/online resources

How important to you are these aspects of community life?

1 2 3 4 NR

- <1 2 10 87 2 97. Living with other members
<1 1 11 8 2 98. Praying with other members
17 30 34 20 5 99. Praying with lay partners in ministry
2 7 28 63 3 100. Ministering/working with other members
3 8 32 57 5 101. Ministering wherever the need is greatest
1 3 15 82 2 102. Sharing meals with other members
24 29 29 18 6 103. Sharing meals with lay partners in ministry
1 5 24 70 2 104. Socializing/sharing leisure time together
1 4 18 78 2 105. Celebrating holidays/feast days together
17 28 36 20 7 106. Participating in neighborhood outreach
12 30 36 22 4 107. Discussing local/global news and events
19 27 29 25 6 108. Corporate stances on social justice issues
18 24 31 27 7 109. Learning and implementing cultural competencies with other members
13 18 29 41 6 110. Valuing cultural diversity beyond tolerance
1 3 17 79 2 111. Ongoing formation and lifelong education

How much do you prefer living in these settings?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 56 21 15 8 6 112. Singly (or with family members)
18 34 32 16 7 113. In a community of 2-3 unit members
6 9 34 51 7 114. In a community of 4-7 unit members
4 9 27 60 5 115. In a community of 8 or more unit members
3 11 41 45 5 116. With members close to you in age
1 6 42 51 5 117. With members of different ages
4 15 43 38 6 118. With members of different cultures
9 17 38 36 8 119. With members in different ministries
4 11 34 51 7 120. Living at or near your ministry site
5 14 35 47 6 121. Living simply, in solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and neglected
58 23 14 5 7 122. In community with non-vowed (e.g., volunteers, associates, refugees)

Please use the responses below for questions 123-142.

1=Poor

3=Good

2=Fair

4=Excellent

How would you rate the following in your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 4 13 36 47 3 123. Efforts to promote vocations
2 9 30 60 3 124. Welcome and support of newer members
3 11 29 57 3 125. Initial formation/incorporation programs
3 14 37 45 4 126. Ongoing formation and spiritual growth
3 14 34 49 5 127. Lifelong educational opportunities
3 15 41 42 6 128. Preparation for ministry
6 20 38 37 5 129. Opportunities to lead/learn leadership skills
5 15 39 42 4 130. Opportunities to voice opinions/be heard
14 27 31 28 5 131. Diversity of cultures within the institute
3 10 31 56 4 132. Sense of identity as institute members
2 7 26 65 3 133. Fidelity to the Church and its teachings
3 13 32 51 4 134. Vision for the future of religious life
2 9 32 56 5 135. Focus on mission and its relevance today
<1 3 23 74 5 136. Care and support of the elderly members
2 11 33 54 4 137. Response to the needs of our time
4 20 42 35 7 138. Efforts to promote social justice
2 12 39 47 3 139. Quality of community life
2 13 34 51 4 140. Communal prayer experiences
1 10 45 44 4 141. Relationships with one another
15 32 35 18 14 142. Communal work around racism

Were you involved in any of the following before you entered? Check all that apply.

- 54 143. Youth ministry, parish youth group, or LifeTeen
42 144. Young adult ministry or group
43 145. College campus ministry/Newman Center
59 146. Liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister)
37 147. Music ministry (e.g., cantor, choir, musician)
31 148. Adult faith formation, catechist, RCIA team
51 149. Other volunteer work in a parish or ministry setting
39 150. Bible study group
2 151. Military service/Armed Forces, active or reserve
7 152. FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students)
7 153. National Catholic Youth Conference
15 154. Steubenville High School Youth Conference
28 155. Right to Life March in Washington, D.C.
18 156. World Youth Day
<1 157. From Service to Sisterhood volunteer program
12 158. Volunteer service immersion experiences (e.g., Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)

Yes No NR

- 67 33 4 159. Did someone invite you to consider vocation discernment?

160. How long were you in a formal discernment process?

NR=4

- 9 1. Less than 6 months 37 3. One to two years
19 2. 6-11 months 35 4. More than two years

About You

161. What is your current status in your religious institute?

NR=4

- 5 1. Candidate/postulant
15 2. Novice
34 3. Temporary vows/commitment
47 4. Final/perpetual vows/commitment

Yes No

33 67 162. Were either of your parents born outside the United States? NR=4

163. *If yes to #162*, country(ies) of birth:

23 77 164. Were you born outside the United States?

NR=4

165. *If yes to #164*, country of birth:

_____ 166. *If yes to #164*, age you first came to live in the United States

167. *If no to #164*, in what U.S. region did you grow up?

NR=27

- 22₁ Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
11₂ South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)
13₃ South Central (AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX)
39₄ Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI)
5₅ Mountain West (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY)
11₆ Pacific West (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)
1₇ Puerto Rico, Guam, or other U.S. Territory

168. What is your first language? _____

169. How many languages do you speak fluently? NR=4

58 1. One 30 2. Two 8 1. Three 4 2. Four or more

170. Which socioeconomic category best describes your family when you were in elementary school? NR=4

2 1. Poverty 73 3. Middle class

20 2. Working poor 6 4. Wealthy

Yes No

81 19 171. Were you employed before you entered?

NR=4

172. *If yes to #171*, were you employed NR=22

75 1. Full-time 25 2. Part-time

52 48 173. Were you in ministry before you entered?

NR=5

174. *If yes to #173*, were you engaged in ministry

NR=51

27 1. Full-time 16 2. Part-time 57 3. Volunteer

175. Are you: 49 1. Male 51 2. Female
 176. If male, are you (or do you expect to be) a
 20 1. Brother 80 2. Priest

177. What best describes your racial or ethnic background?
NR=4

- 3 1. African American/African/black
 13 2. Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian/Middle Eastern
 70 3. Caucasian/European American/Anglo/white
 11 4. Hispanic/Latino(a)
 <1 5. Native American/Alaskan Native
 3 6. Other/Mixed races or ethnicities

- _____ 178. Year you were born
 _____ 179. Year you entered your religious institute
 _____ 180. Year you professed/expect to profess final vows/perpetual commitment
 _____ 181. Year you were ordained/expect to be ordained to the priesthood (if applicable)
 _____ 182. Age you first considered religious life

Yes No NR

- 8 92 4 183. Did you enter another religious institute before this one?
 _____ 184. *If yes*, number of years in that institute
 91 9 4 185. Were you raised Catholic?
 _____ 186. If you became Catholic as an adult, age you entered the Catholic Church

Yes No NR

- 10 90 4 187. Were you ever home-schooled?
 _____ 188. *If yes*, number of years home-schooled

Did you attend any of the following before you entered?
Check all that apply.

- 51 189. Parish-based religious education/CCD/RCIA
 46 190. Catholic elementary or middle school
 39 191. Catholic high school
 39 192. Catholic college or university

193. What was the highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute? **NR=4**

- 12 1. High school diploma 50 4. Bachelor's degree
 13 2. Some college credits 17 5. Master's degree
 5 3. Technical college or Associate degree 4 6. Doctoral degree

194. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group?
NR=7 44 1. Yes 56 2. No

Please provide your contact information:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

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195. Looking ahead ten years, what are your hopes for the future in your religious institute?

196. What most concerns you about your future in religious life?

197. What are the greatest obstacles in vocation discernment for discerners and vocation directors?

