

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C.

*Recent Vocations to Religious Life in Canada:*

*A Report for the  
National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors*

April 2018



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***Recent Vocations to Religious Life in Canada:  
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**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a study of recent vocations to religious life in Canada that was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD). The study is based on surveys of religious institutes, surveys and focus groups with recent vocations to religious life, and an examination of selected religious institutes that have been relatively successful in attracting and retaining new members to their institutes since 2000. The study was designed to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the women and men who are coming to religious life in Canada today as well as the characteristics and practices of the religious institutes that are successfully attracting new candidates and retaining new members.

The study is based on four major research components:

- A single informant survey of the major superior of each religious institute in Canada
- A survey of those in initial formation or in final/perpetual vows since 2000
- Focus groups with those in initial formation or in final/perpetual vows since 2000
- Site visits at selected religious institutes to interview leaders and those in vocation ministry

For the first phase of the research, CARA surveyed the major superiors of all religious institutes in Canada. To do this, CARA relied on a contact list provided by NAVFD, which included 343 units of religious institutes (i.e., congregations, provinces, or monasteries, each with its own major superior in Canada): 187 were French-speaking units and 176 were English-speaking units.

The survey of major superiors was administered between May 2017 and September 2017 and received a usable response from 172 units, for a response rate of 50 percent. However, careful examination of the units that did not respond to the survey suggests that non-responding units appear to be either small, mostly contemplative and monastic units that may not have had anyone in initial formation for some time, or diminishing congregations with mostly aged members that are no longer accepting new members.

This survey of major superiors was designed to gather statistics about the membership in the institute, including the numbers in initial formation, basic information about vocation animation and formation in the institute, and basic data about the institute's ministry, community life, community prayer, and practice regarding the religious habit. In addition, major superiors were asked to provide the names and contact information for those in initial formation as well as those who had professed

final or perpetual vows since 2000. This list served as the contact list for the survey of new members that is described below.

The second phase of the research consisted of a survey of “new members,” that is, current candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows as well as those who had professed final or perpetual vows since 2000. The final contact list for the new members included 186 persons (141 English-speaking and 45 French-speaking). Additionally, one major superior indicated that there are new members in the unit, but did not specify their number. The survey of new members was administered between July 2017 and October 2017. Overall, 117 new members responded to the survey by the cut-off date at the end of October 2017. After removing the responses from men and women religious who did not meet the definition of new members as well as responses that were unusable due to incompleteness, the final dataset included 102 new members, for a response rate of 54 percent.

The survey of new members was designed to identify what attracted these men and women to religious life and to their particular institute; what they found helpful in their discernment process; who supported or discouraged them in their discernment; their attitudes and preferences regarding community life, community prayer, ministry, and the wearing of a religious habit; and what sustains and challenges them in religious life. The survey also asked about their background characteristics as well as their experience before entering religious life.

The third phase of the study involved three focus groups of new members. All focus groups were arranged by NAVFD and led by a CARA researcher. Conducted in summer 2017 at selected sites throughout Canada, all focus groups used the same protocol. 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.

The fourth and final phase of the study involved site visits to three selected religious institutes, which were conducted in February 2018. CARA selected the institutes to visit, based on the responses to the survey of major superiors, and NAVFD made all arrangements for the site visits. Each site visit included an interview with the major superior and other members of the leadership team, members of the vocation team, and, when possible, one or more formation directors. In addition to the interviews, researchers reviewed vocation promotion materials and practices as well as institute websites and social media.

## **Major Findings**

### ***Part I. Findings from Major Superiors of Religious Institutes***

In regard to **general characteristics**, the majority of congregations, provinces, and monasteries who participated in the survey (collectively referred to as “units”) are women’s units (69 percent), have at least one new member (56 percent), hold religious institute status (as opposed to society of apostolic life or public association of the faithful) (88 percent), are institutes or societies of pontifical right (as opposed to diocesan right) (86 percent), and describe their character or lifestyle as apostolic (82 percent).

In regard to **consecration status**, on average, each unit has one person who is a pre-candidate, aspirant, candidate, or postulant, one novice, and two members in temporary vows or commitment. On average, there are 51 members who made final vows or commitment per unit (a median of 21 members who made final vows or commitment).

In regard to **clerical status**, 74 percent of men's units include both brothers and priests, 15 percent include only priests, and 11 percent include only brothers.

In regard to **reconfiguration**, three in ten responding units (28 percent) have reconfigured since 2000 while one in five units (20 percent) are currently in the process of reconfiguring. Furthermore, a few units report exploring greater collaboration with the laity (e.g., through lay associate programs or mixed communities of consecrated religious and lay associates).

In regard to **retention rate**, on average, 66 percent of all members who entered since 2000 remain with the units (i.e., among a little less than four members who entered an average unit since 2000 more than two members still remain in 2017).

In regard to **age**, 12 percent of all religious (including those in formation) are 57 years old or younger (born after 1959), while 61 percent are 78 years old or older. Among full members, 8 percent are 57 years old or younger while 64 percent are 78 years or older. Notably, more women than men are in the oldest age categories.

In regard to members' **place of birth**, in an average unit, two-thirds of all men and women religious (68 percent) were born in Canada. The remaining third (32 percent) were born abroad or their place of birth is unknown.

In regard to **ministry**, 50 percent of members in an average active/apostolic institute or society are retired from active ministry, 27 percent are active in part-time ministry, and 23 percent are active in full-time ministry. On average, members of those active/apostolic institutes or societies engage in the following types of ministry (starting with the most common): internal ministry, pastoral ministry, ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by the unit, congregational leadership, education, spiritual direction/retreat work, health care, social work/social service, social justice/advocacy, and ecological justice advocacy.

In regard to **community size**, 15 percent of members in an average unit live singly, 13 percent live in communities of two or three, 17 percent live in communities of four to seven, and 55 percent live in communities of eight or more.

In regard to **prayer life**, the most common prayer practices include daily Eucharist (practiced by a majority of members in 81 percent of all responding units) and Liturgy of the Hours (79 percent). Less frequent practices include faith sharing (52 percent), non-liturgical common prayer (34 percent), and common meditation (27 percent). Notably, more than a third of members in an average contemplative institute (37 percent) are not able to fully participate in the prayer life of the institute, most commonly due to infirmity or age.

When it comes to **practices regarding the habit**, 54 percent of units report that at least some members wear a habit. Half of those units (55 percent) require wearing it in all or most

circumstances. The habit most often consists of a cross or medallion, devotional scapular or ring, or secular dress (40 percent of all responding units where members wear a habit include those elements) followed by a cowl with a veil or a hood (22 percent), monastic scapular (17 percent), tunic (14 percent), or other elements (12 percent).

In regard to **vocation animation and discernment**, a little under half of responding units (47 percent) have a vocation director. In almost all cases (96 percent), the vocation director comes from within the unit and in three-quarters of those cases (76 percent), the vocation director is engaged part-time in vocation ministry. In nine out of ten units with a vocation director (96 percent) the vocation director is assigned to their unit only. Additionally, 31 percent of the units have a vocation team (i.e., more than one person directly responsible for vocation ministry). On average, vocation teams have four members, but half of all units have three or less on their vocation team.

The most common types of vocation ministry activities include sponsoring “Come and See” experiences (undertaken by 26 percent of the units), followed by discernment retreats (24 percent), live-in experiences (20 percent), ministry/mission experiences (16 percent), discernment groups (13 percent), and a discernment house (9 percent).

Vocation animation in the last five years was most likely to include a website (used by 52 percent of the units), followed by print materials (42 percent), social media (28 percent), advertising (22 percent), and other (such as parish announcements and preaching) (8 percent).

In regard to **admission requirements**, three in five units (58 percent) require references for admission and medical assessment (58 percent). The other requirements include psychological testing (required by 48 percent of all respondents), background check (40 percent), and behavioral assessments (32 percent). The majority of all responding units (75 percent) has a minimum age requirement for admission to candidacy/postulancy (on average, 19 years old). Additionally, 63 percent have a maximum age limit (on average, 41 years old). Two-thirds of all responding units (66 percent) have a minimum education requirement and 38 percent require prior work experience.

In regard to the **initial formation practices**, in an average unit, pre-candidacy/aspirancy lasts a year, candidacy/postulancy last another year, novitiate averages less than two years, and temporary commitment averages less than five years. A substantial fraction of members in initial formation spends all or part of their formation with others from other units of their institute, society, or federation: candidates/postulants in 50 percent of the units; novices in 27 percent of the units; those in temporary vows/commitment in 70 percent of the units. A substantial but generally smaller fraction of members in initial formation also spends all or part of their formation with others from other institutes or societies: candidates/postulants in 27 percent of the units; novices in 34 percent of the units; those in temporary vows/commitment in 32 percent of the units.

In regard to **characteristics that distinguish units with new members from units without new members** (i.e., a person who entered the unit between 2000-2017) three items stand out as statistically significant predictors of having new members (starting with the most significant): monastic lifestyle or character of the institute, involvement in vocation programs specifically targeting the age group under 19-year-old, and living in communities of four to seven active members. This means that, for example, a congregation that focuses their vocation programs on those under 19 years old is significantly more likely to have new members than a congregation that does not focus their vocation programs this way.

## ***Part II. Findings from the Study of New Members***

In regard to **gender and age**, 68 percent of responding new members are female and 31 percent are male. They are 44 years old, on average (the youngest is 22 and the oldest 78).

In regard to **country of birth**, 62 percent of new members were born in Canada. Among those foreign-born, 74 percent entered religious life after moving to Canada and 26 percent entered before moving to Canada.

When it comes to **education**, seven in ten new members (67 percent) had a university undergraduate or graduate degree before they entered religious life. Among those who continued education after entering, 70 percent have earned a university undergraduate or graduate degree.

In regard to **employment**, 90 percent of new members were employed before they entered religious life. Among those who were employed, 74 percent worked full-time.

Regarding **marital history and children**, 90 percent of new members were never married and 95 percent do not have any children.

In regard to **religious background**, 94 percent of new members were raised Catholic. Those who entered the Catholic Church as adults did so at an average age of 27 years (the youngest convert was 22 years old and the oldest, 37 years old). Half of new members (55 percent) attended Catholic elementary and high school and 26 percent attended Catholic college or university. Three-quarters (74 percent) of new members were engaged in some form of ministry before they entered religious life and 56 percent were involved in volunteer work in a parish or other setting.

In regard to their **current status in religious life**, half of responding new members (47 percent) have already taken final/perpetual vows/commitment. Three in ten made temporary vows (26 percent). One in five is a novice (23 percent). The smallest group, 3 percent, are at the candidacy or postulancy stage of their formation.

When **discerning the call to religious life**, almost all new members were at least “somewhat” attracted by a sense of call to religious life (96 percent), followed by a desire to be of service (94 percent), a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (94 percent), a desire to be part of a community (88 percent), and a desire to be more committed to the Church (85 percent).

In the process of discerning the call, more than half of new members found the following personal experiences at least “somewhat” helpful: meeting with a member(s) of the institute (88 percent), spiritual direction (86 percent), “Come and See” (77 percent), discernment retreat (76 percent), visits to communities (74 percent), live in experiences (68 percent), meeting with a vocation director (68 percent), ministry or mission experience (51 percent), and websites of religious institutes (51 percent).

When **discerning the call to a particular religious institute**, almost all new members were at least “somewhat” attracted by the spirituality of the institute (95 percent) and the mission of the institute (95 percent). About nine in ten new members were attracted by the ministries of the institute (86 percent), its prayer life (86 percent), and its community life (86 percent).



The three most common ways that **new members first became acquainted with their institute** include through the recommendation of a friend or advisor, meeting institutes members in a place where they served (e.g., at school), and working with a member of the institute.

When **making the decision to enter a religious institute**, almost all new members were at least “somewhat” influenced by the institute’s charism (95 percent). Four in five new members were influenced by the prayer life or prayer styles of the institute (81 percent), community life of the institute (79 percent), the lifestyle of members (78 percent), or the types of ministry of its members (75 percent). About half of new members were influenced by the institute’s practice regarding a religious habit (51 percent) and its geographic location(s) (47 percent).

When asked **what most attracted them to their religious institute**, new members were most likely to focus on some aspect of the institute itself (such as the founder or foundress, charism, institute’s martyrs, spirituality, etc.), the personal example of institute members, day-to-day aspects of the institute’s life, or the calling itself (rather than specific qualities of the institute).

In regard to **networks of support**, the people most likely to support new members when they first considered entering a religious institute are members of the institute (reported by 88 percent of new members), spiritual director (86 percent), vocation director/team (73 percent), friends outside the institute (67 percent), and other religious (64 percent). The people most likely to be currently supportive of the new members largely overlap with the former and consist of members of the institute (97 percent), spiritual director (95 percent), the leadership of the institute (95 percent), friends within the institute (90 percent), and other religious (89 percent).

When it comes to **preferences regarding prayer**, virtually all new members consider it “somewhat” or very” important to engage in personal prayer/meditation (100 percent) and daily Eucharist (96 percent). Nine in ten find faith sharing (89 percent) to be an important type of prayer. Four in five find it important to pray Liturgy of the Hours (84 percent), non-liturgical common prayer (74 percent), and Eucharistic adoration (74 percent). Seven in ten new members believe that it is important to do common meditation (72 percent) and other devotional prayers (71 percent).

When it comes to **preferences regarding community life**, the vast majority of new members consider the following to be “somewhat” or very” important: praying with other members (98 percent), living with other members (96 percent), sharing meals together (94 percent), socializing/sharing leisure time together (93 percent), and working with other members (89 percent).

New members prefer to live in medium-sized communities (of four to seven) over large communities (of eight or more), small communities (of two or three), or living singly. Virtually all new members at least “somewhat” prefer living with members of different ages and cultures. They are relatively unlikely to prefer living with associates or with members of other institutes.

When it comes to **preferences regarding ministry**, the vast majority of new members “somewhat” or very much” prefer ministry with other members of their institute (91 percent), serving in a ministry sponsored by their institute (82 percent), and/or with members of other units of their institute (79 percent). Seven in ten new members “somewhat” or very much” prefer ministry with an organization that is Catholic but is not sponsored by their institute (73 percent) and/or with members of other institutes (71 percent). Three in five new members “somewhat” or very much” prefer ministry in a parish or diocesan ministry (60 percent).

When it comes to **practices regarding the religious habit**, 61 percent of new members reported that the members of their institute wear a habit. When describing the role a religious habit plays in their identity as men and women religious, new members who wear a habit tend to focus on two functions: the habit as an outward symbol that communicates religious status to others and the habit as a means of reinforcing their inward identity as a consecrated person.

When making an **assessment of their chosen religious institute**, at least three quarters of new members rate the institute as at least “good” across 20 different categories. Notably, efforts to promote vocations is one of two categories least likely to be rated as “good” or “excellent.”

When asked what they find **most rewarding about religious life**, new members are likely to focus their answers on how religious life allows them to pursue their own calling, how their religious institute provides valuable direction in their lives, how they benefit from communal living, how they enjoy accessibility and frequency of liturgical and prayer activities, and how they enjoy their ministry.

On the other hand, when asked what they find **most challenging about religious life**, new members are likely to focus on various aspects of community life, on challenges related to addressing current and future challenges on the institute level, on challenges pertaining to their individual spiritual life (e.g., remaining faithful to the vows), and on challenges related to their personal identity (which is related to feeling understood by others).

### ***Part III. Findings in Support of Best Practices in Vocation Promotion***

The findings from the surveys, focus groups, and site visits suggest a number of “best practices” for vocation animation. Three suggestions stand out in particular.

**Make vocation animation a priority – from the top – and work to instill a “culture of vocation” in institute members.** The aspects that most attract discerners to a particular institute include its spirituality and mission, its ministries, its prayer life, and its community life. Attractive websites and social media, informative and engaging print materials, and active engagement with young people in public settings such as vocation fairs and vocation talks in parishes and schools are all important ways to build awareness of the institute in the public. These activities and materials require a commitment of resources – both material and personnel – to vocation animation and institutes that are attracting new members have dedicated or increased institute resources in these areas in recent years. The study found that units with new members are more likely than units without new members to focus vocation animation on youth under 19 years old. Units with new members are significantly more likely than units without new members to sponsor each of the vocation programs identified in the survey except for the discernment house.

This is only part of the picture of successful vocation animation, however, necessary but not sufficient in and of itself. When it comes to introducing most-likely-to-succeed candidates to the institute, current members are the institute’s greatest asset. It is institute members who most often play a role in making the first acquaintance with a discerner, rather than formal vocation programs. Half of new members say they first became acquainted with their institute through a member of the institute (e.g., at school or at their place of work), and more than a third say they first learned of the institute through some other person or institution not related to the institute (e.g., through a friend,

an advisor, or a vocation placement service). By comparison, just a quarter of new members say they first became acquainted with their institute through the direct outreach efforts of the institute (e.g., through promotional materials, a story in the media, a vocation fair, or through an event sponsored by the institute).

New members consistently report that it is the personal contact with institute members that helps them most in discerning their call to religious life: meeting with members of the institute, spiritual direction, “Come and See” experiences, discernment retreats, and visits to communities are more likely than websites, videos, promotional materials, and vocation programs to make the difference in discerning a call to a particular institute. New members repeatedly describe the joy of institute members, their example and inspiration, as the characteristics that influenced them most in deciding on a particular religious institute. They are attracted by the love that institute members, of all ages, show for one another, by authentic community life, by communal prayer experiences, and by meaningful ministries. They learn about all of these aspects of an institute through personal interactions with institute members. This cannot be done in isolation or apart from active, engaged discernment and formation communities. When all members of the institute, from most senior to newest, see themselves as engaged in vocations ministry, then all become vocation ministers and the institute achieves a culture of vocations.

**Be true to the charism of the institute, to community life, and to communal prayer.**

The charism of the institute is the aspect that is most influential in an individual’s decision to enter a particular institute. This was more influential than ministry, community life, prayer life, religious habit, institute size, ages of members, or any other institute characteristic. In focus groups, new members repeatedly mentioned the charism of the institute and the story of the founder/foundress as key aspects that first drew them to their particular institute.

After the institute’s charism, new members are most influenced by the prayer life, the community life, and the ministries of the institute when deciding on a particular institute. These aspects are all related to an institute’s charism, as they are the particular way that institute members embody the charism through their lives. New members express a preference for living in moderate sized communities of four to seven members – not so large as to feel like an institution and not so small that community experiences and communal prayer become impossible.

**Be open to change.** Society is changing, Catholic culture is changing, and religious institutes are also changing – whether they want to or not. Young people still seek deeper meaning, and a higher purpose for their lives, as they always have. Religious institutes that are successful in vocation animation meet young people where they are in their lives and connect with that desire for deeper meaning and higher purpose. This means that those in vocations ministry, in particular, need to be flexible and adaptable in communicating the timeless message of their charism to new generations, different cultures, and those who may not be as conversant with their Catholic heritage.

Some expressions of religious life, such as wearing a religious habit, which is looked upon as an important aspect of religious life among some discerners, does not have the same meaning for them as it does for religious who lived through the transition away from such garb half a century ago. Likewise, more traditional forms of prayer, such as Eucharistic adoration and Lectio Divina, can be very meaningful for younger members, and are not necessarily expressions of a more traditional ecclesiology. And discerners from different countries or different ethnic and cultural groups can bring an added richness to community life, for those who are open to this.

## Introduction

This report presents findings from a study of recent vocations to religious life in Canada that was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD). The study is based on surveys of religious institutes, surveys and focus groups with recent vocations to religious life, and an examination of selected religious institutes that have been relatively successful in attracting and retaining new members to their institutes since 2000. The study was designed to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the women and men who are coming to religious life in Canada today as well as the characteristics and practices of the religious institutes that are successfully attracting new candidates and retaining new members.

For the first phase of the study, CARA surveyed the major superiors of all religious institutes in Canada. To do this, CARA relied on a contact list compiled by NAVFD in collaboration with the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC). CARA worked with NAVFD to ensure that the contact list was as current and complete as possible. The final contact list of major superiors included 343 units of religious institutes (i.e., congregations, provinces, or monasteries, each with its own major superior in Canada). Of these, 187 were French-speaking units and 176 were English-speaking units.

CARA and NAVFD developed the survey questions for major superiors in English and NAVFD translated the questionnaire into French. CARA then programmed the survey into an online format (in English and French) and hosted it on the CARA website, so that those who prefer to respond to the survey online could do so.

The survey of major superiors was administered between May 2017 and September 2017. NAVFD sent a letter to all major superiors, informing them of the study and requesting their cooperation. CARA sent the survey invitation to major superiors by email and, in cases where an email address was not available, by letter. CARA and NAVFD conducted extensive follow-up by mail and email, in both languages, to achieve the highest possible response rate. By the cut-off date at the end of September 2017 a total of 172 units provided a usable response to the survey, for a response rate of 50 percent. However, careful examination of the units that did not respond to the survey suggests that non-responding units appear to be either small, mostly contemplative and monastic units that may not have had anyone in initial formation for some time, or diminishing congregations with mostly aged members that are no longer accepting new members.

This survey of major superiors was designed to gather statistics about the membership in the institute, including the numbers in initial formation, basic information about vocation animation and formation in the institute, and basic data about the institute's ministry, community life, community prayer, and practice regarding the religious habit. In addition, major superiors were asked to provide the names and contact information for those in initial formation as well as those who had professed final or perpetual vows since 2000. This list served as the contact list for the survey of new members that is described below.

The second phase of the study consisted of a survey of "new members," that is, current candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows as well as those who had professed final or perpetual vows since 2000. Overall, 174 major superiors who responded to the survey of major superiors provided information about the presence of new members in their units (two major

superiors provided this information but did not fill out the survey). Out of this number, 51 major superiors (29 percent) indicated that there are new members in their units and 123 major superiors (71 percent) reported that there are no new members in their units.

The process for developing the questionnaire for new members was similar to that described above for the survey of major superiors: CARA and NAVFD developed the survey questions in English and NAVFD translated the questionnaire into French. CARA then programmed the survey into an online format (in English and French) and hosted it on the CARA website, so that those who prefer to respond to the survey online could do so.

The final contact list for the new members included 186 persons (141 English-speaking and 45 French-speaking). Additionally, one major superior indicated that there are new members in the unit, but did not specify their number. The survey of new members was administered between July 2017 and October 2017. CARA sent the survey invitation by email and, in cases where email address was not available, by letter to all identified new members. CARA sent two follow-up reminders in both formats, in both languages. Overall, 117 new members responded to the survey by the cut-off date at the end of October 2017. After removing the responses from men and women religious who did not meet the definition of new members as well as responses that were unusable due to incompleteness, the final dataset included 102 new members, for a response rate of 54 percent.

The survey of new members was designed to identify what attracted these men and women to religious life and to their particular institute; what they found helpful in their discernment process; who supported or discouraged them in their discernment; their attitudes and preferences regarding community life, community prayer, ministry, and the wearing of a religious habit; and what sustains and challenges them in religious life. The survey also asked about their background characteristics as well as their experience before entering religious life.

The third phase of the study involved three focus groups of new members. All focus groups were arranged by NAVFD and led by a CARA researcher. One focus group consisted of twenty religious from a variety of religious institutes around Canada who had gathered for a retreat in Saskatoon in July. The focus group was conducted at the end of the retreat. A second focus group consisted of four Jesuits and was conducted at the motherhouse of a religious congregation in Montréal in August. The third focus group was conducted at Regis College, University of Toronto, in September and consisted of approximately 15 new members from a variety of religious institutes in and near Toronto. All focus groups used the same protocol and lasted approximately one and a half hours. The focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed, and selected comments from the focus groups are included where appropriate in Part II of this report.

The fourth and final phase of the study involved site visits to three selected religious institutes, which were conducted in February 2018. CARA selected the institutes to visit, based on the responses to the survey of major superiors, and NAVFD made all arrangements for the site visits. The three sites included the Society of Jesus in English Canada, the Congregation of the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood, and the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada. Each site visit included an interview with the major superior and other members of the leadership team, members of the vocation team, and, when possible, one or more formation directors. In addition to the interviews, researchers reviewed vocation promotion materials and practices as well as institute websites and social media.

## Organization of this Report

The report is divided into three main parts:

- Part I provides an overview of religious institutes in Canada, based on the survey of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. It includes information about the age of members, places of birth, types of ministries carried out, practices related to prayer life, religious habit, etc. The description also covers practices related to vocation animation and discernment, admission requirements, retention rate and departures as well as the practices related to the initial formation.
- Part II presents the results of the survey of new members as well as findings from the three focus groups of new members. It includes background information about the new members (such as gender, country of birth, education, and religious background). The description also covers the attitudes and experiences during the discernment process and current attitudes about religious life.
- Part III highlights “best practices” for vocation animation. This part draws from the findings from the two surveys as well as from the focus groups and site visits that were conducted in the last two phases of the research.

A copy of the original questionnaires with the percentage frequencies of responses for each applicable closed-ended item can be found in Appendix I. The percentage frequencies for each response category are calculated out of 100 percent among those who responded to each question. The percentage of non-respondents to each item is calculated separately out of 100 percent. A complete transcription of the responses to the open-ended questions that were included in both surveys can be found in Appendix II. Copies of the protocols that guided the focus group discussions and the site visits can be found in Appendix III, which also includes a complete transcription of the proceedings from each of the focus groups.

### Interpreting the Report

This report uses two main units of analysis:

- **Religious institutes in Canada**, which are defined as individual congregations, provinces, or monasteries located in Canada, each with its own major superior.
- **New members**, who are defined as current candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows as well as those who professed final or perpetual vows in a Canadian religious institute since 2000 and are still members.

The report explores a number of concepts that may be interpreted in various ways (e.g., habit, vocation animation, communal prayer). The terms can mean different things to different groups of religious, as illustrated by their responses. For example, the religious habit is considered by religious to be an outward symbol that communicates to others their status as a member of a religious institute. This symbol can be a style or manner of dress (e.g. a full, floor-length tunic with veil or cowl, or modest clothing in simple colors such as blue or black) but the habit is also defined by some as a particular style of cross, medallion, devotional scapular, or ring that is worn with secular dress. Some religious define their habit as their inward identity as a consecrated person.

The term vocation animation is also subject to various interpretations. Some religious institutes understand vocation animation as the efforts of the institute and its members that are aimed toward increasing the number of religious (in particular, in their own institute). Others view vocation animation as the work of the institute and its members in supporting the discernment process of those with whom they come in contact. The purpose of this report is not to arbitrarily define those terms but rather to let the study participants define these terms through their responses.

The report uses several statistical terms to describe various attributes of the responses:

- The **mean** is the sum of all reported values for a single variable, divided by the total number of valid responses to that variable.
- The **median** is the midpoint in an array of responses to a single variable, ordered from lowest to highest. If the array consists of an even number of responses, then the median is the mean of the two middle responses.
- The **range** is reported as the spread between the lowest and the highest reported value.
- The word **significant** is used to indicate that with high certainty (95 percent confidence) one can reject a claim that there is no difference between the values being compared.

The fact that a relationship is marked as significant in the text points out an important finding, but on its own should not be considered sufficient to make practical decisions. In this report, tests of significance focus on each individual question separately. Those findings could be different if multiple questions are considered at the same time.

To address this shortcoming, a statistical tool known as logistic regression was applied to the entire survey of religious institutes in a single equation to find the characteristics that distinguish units with new members from units without new members. According to those findings, the monastic lifestyle or character of a unit, involvement in vocation programs specifically targeting the age group under 19-years-old, and living in communities of four to seven active members are significantly and positively related to the likelihood of new members being present in the unit, when controlling for responses from other questions. Notably, this should not be interpreted to mean that those three characteristics cause new members to join the unit. Rather, this statistical tool indicates that units sharing those characteristics are more likely than those who do not share those characteristics to have new members.

The report indicates when the number of responses to a particular question is low, because a low number of observations underlying different comparisons may affect the validity of the results.

## **Subgroup Comparisons**

Findings from the study of congregations, provinces, and monasteries (referred to as “units” in the report) in Part I are compared between men’s and women’s units and by the presence (or lack) of new members in the unit. Arguably, these categorizations are particularly useful when trying to draw practical implications for vocation ministry.

Findings from the study of new members in Part II are presented first in aggregate and then separately for men and women under age 42 who entered religious life in Canada since 2000. Those subgroups were identified based on the following observations:

- As described in the section on Admission Requirements in Part I, 63 percent of the responding units have a maximum age limit for admission to candidacy/postulancy which is, on average, 41 years old. Since new members at this age and below are, arguably, most representative of the age group of current and prospective applicants their characteristics and attitudes are likely to be of particular interest to vocation directors and vocation teams.
- As noted in the section on Country of Birth in Part II, not all new members were born in Canada. In fact, 26 percent of foreign-born religious entered religious life before moving to Canada. Arguably, Canadian vocation teams would likely be most interested in the experiences and attitudes of new members who enter religious life in Canada, since those individuals are most representative of the prospective applicants targeted by the domestic vocation ministry.
- Finally, it is expected that the backgrounds, experiences, and attitudes of men and women in religious life may differ significantly from each other.



## **PART I: Findings from the Study of Religious Institutes**

This part of the report presents findings from the survey of the major superiors of all 343 units of religious institutes in Canada. For this phase of the study, CARA surveyed the major superiors of all religious units in Canada (i.e., congregations, provinces, or monasteries, each with its own major superior in Canada). Of these, 187 were French-speaking units and 176 were English-speaking units.

CARA and NAVFD developed the survey questions for major superiors in English and NAVFD translated the questionnaire into French. CARA then programmed the survey into an online format (in English and French) and hosted it on the CARA website, so that those who prefer to respond to the survey online could do so.

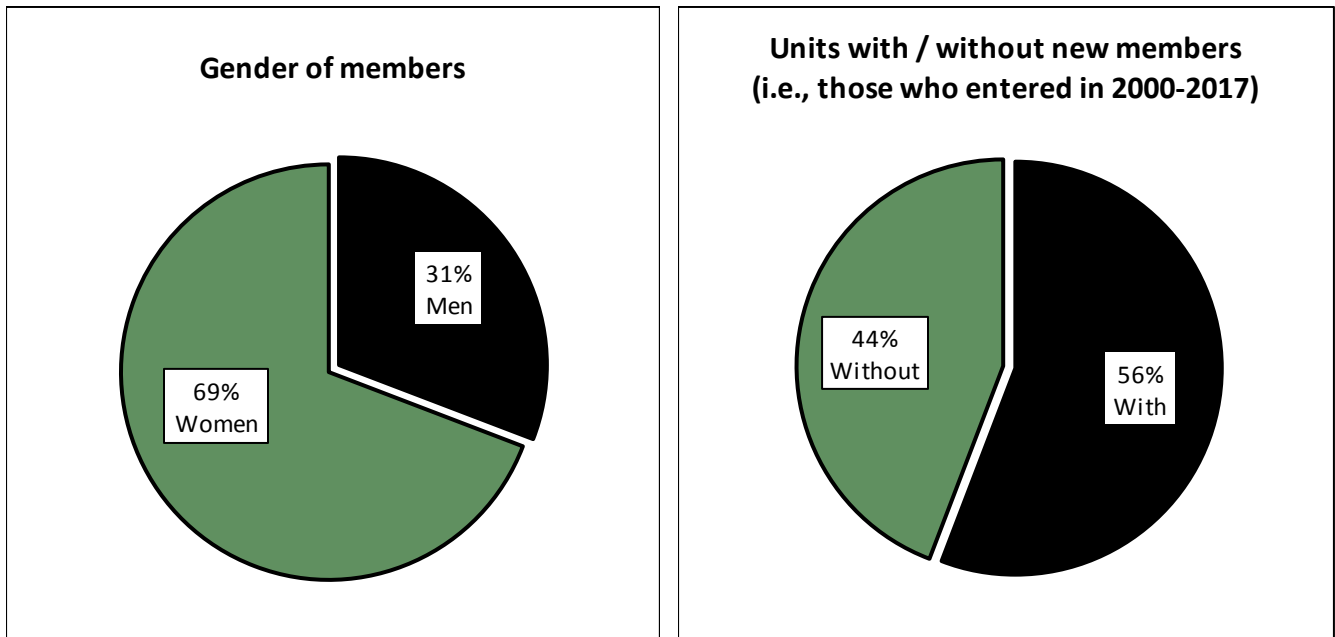
The survey of major superiors was administered between May 2017 and September 2017. NAVFD sent a letter to all major superiors, informing them of the study and requesting their cooperation. CARA sent the survey invitation to major superiors by email and, in cases where an email address was not available, by letter. CARA and NAVFD conducted extensive follow-up by mail and email, in both languages, to achieve the highest possible response rate. By the cut-off date at the end of September 2017 a total of 172 units provided a usable response to the survey, for a response rate of 50 percent. However, the responding units report a total of 8,478 men and women religious, or about 80 percent of all women and men religious in Canada. Many of the units that did not respond to the survey appear to be either small, mostly contemplative, congregations that may not have had anyone in initial formation for some time, or diminishing congregations with mostly aged members that are no longer accepting new members.

This part of the report presents statistics about general characteristics of the responding units, including the numbers, age categories, and country of birth of full members and those in initial formation; information about reconfigurations since 2000 and retention rate among those who have entered since 2000; and basic data about the institute's ministry, community life, community prayer, and practice regarding the religious habit. In addition, this section reports basic information about vocation animation and formation in the institute, admission requirements, and initial formation practices.

Throughout this part of the report, all findings in each section are presented in aggregate form for all responding units overall. The findings are then presented according to the gender of the institute (comparing the responses from all units of men religious to the responses from all units of women religious). Finally, the findings are also compared according to whether the unit reported any new members (i.e., those who entered the unit between 2000 and 2017) or reported no new members since 2000.

## General Character of Religious Institutes

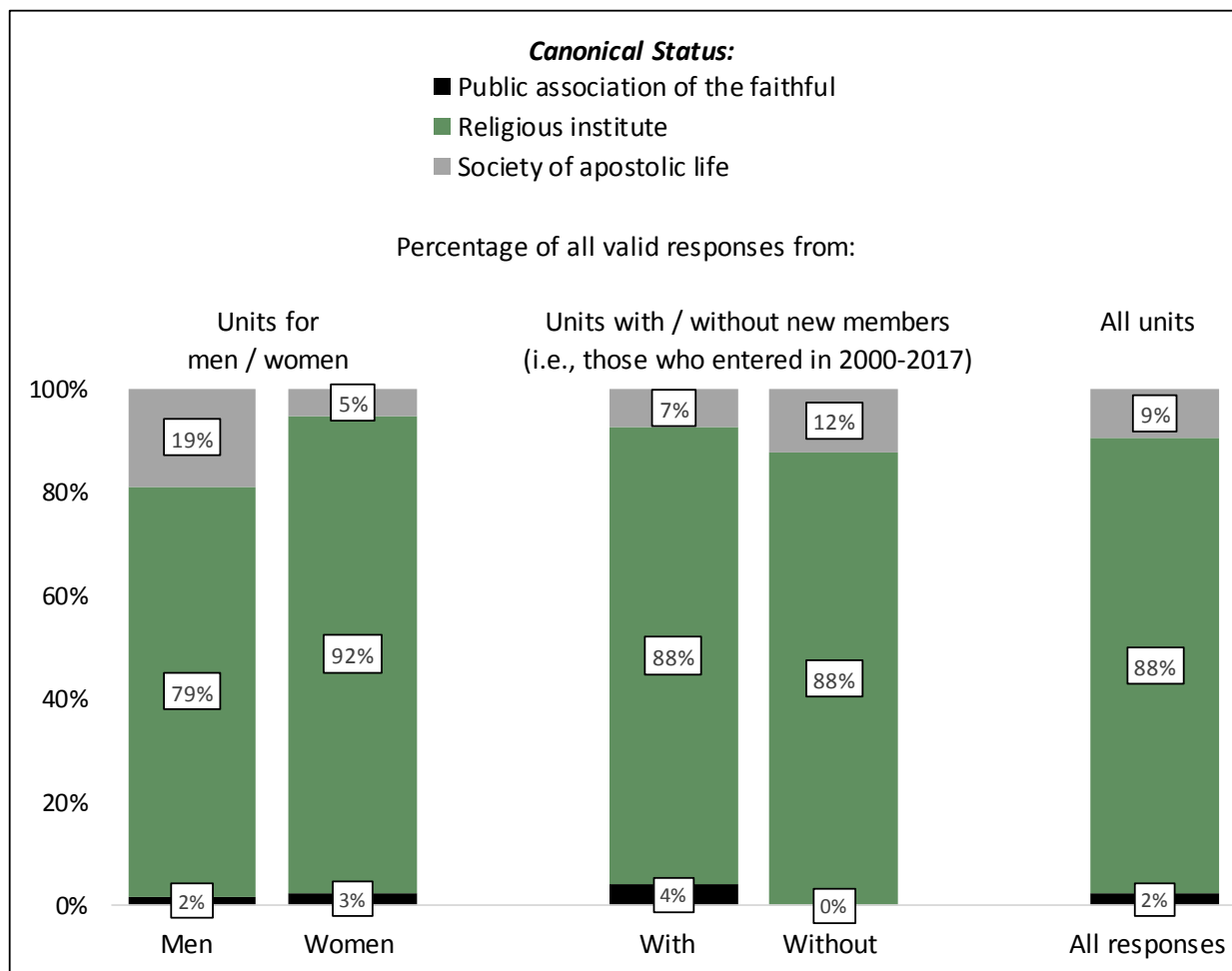
The congregations, provinces, and monasteries (referred to as “units” in the report) can be grouped into different categories based on members’ gender, presence (or lack) of new members, canonical status, ecclesial status (i.e., diocesan right or pontifical right), as well as character or lifestyle (e.g., apostolic or contemplative). The first two categorizations are particularly useful when trying to draw practical implications for vocation ministry. For this reason, all the findings in this part of the report are compared using these two categorizations.



Overall, seven in ten responding units (69 percent) are women’s units. The other 31 percent are men’s units.

Overall, three in five units participating in the study (56 percent) have at least one new member (i.e., a member who has entered the unit between 2000-2017).

The differences between units with and without new members and between men’s and women’s units are not significant (not shown on the charts).

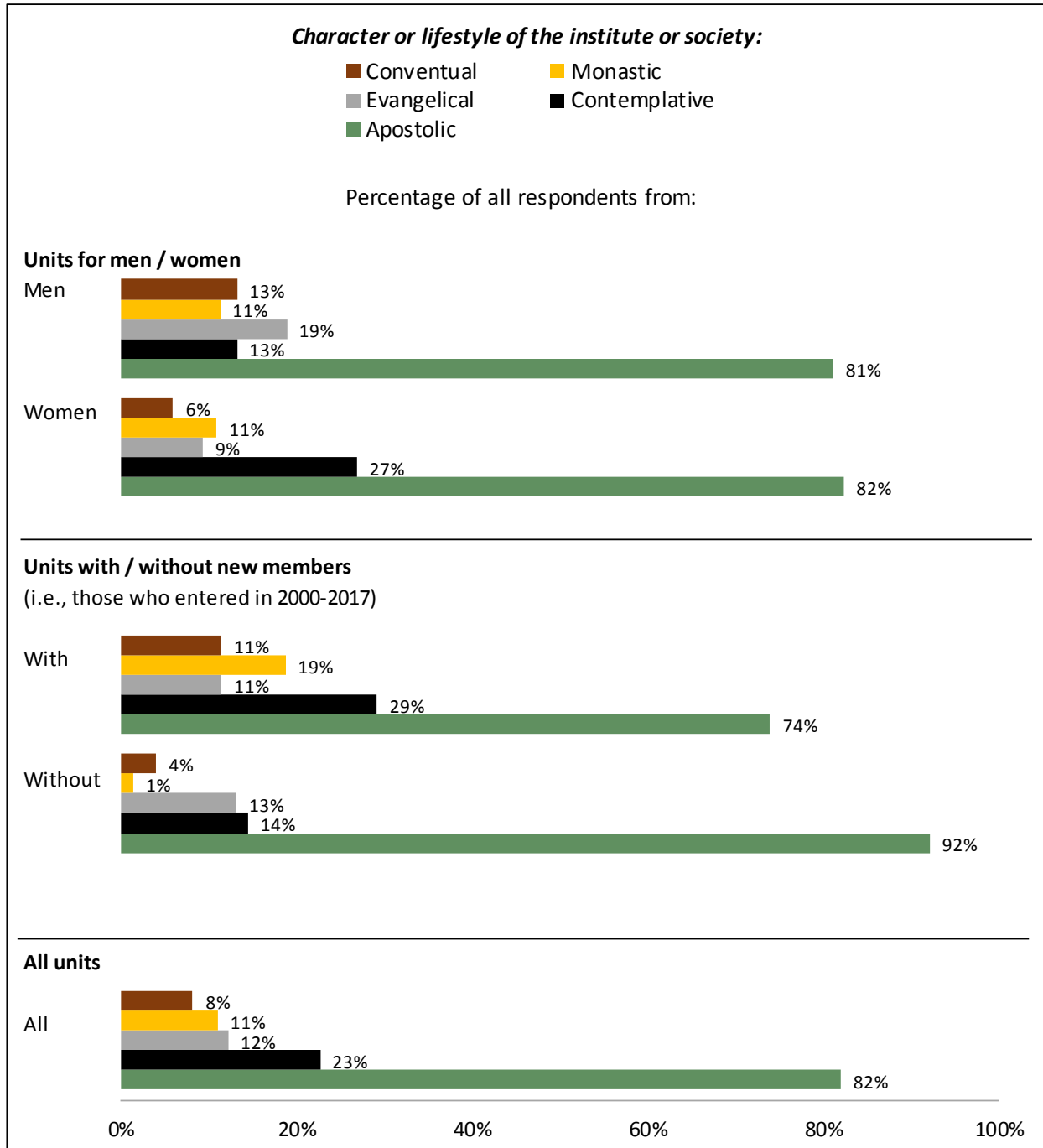


Overall, religious institutes constitute the biggest group of all units (88 percent). One in ten responding units are societies of apostolic life and the remaining 2 percent are public associations of the faithful.

The chart above shows some significant differences between the subgroups:

- Women’s units are 14 percentage points less likely than men’s units to be societies of apostolic life.
- Women’s units are 13 percentage points more likely than men’s units to have religious institute canonical status.

It is also noteworthy that all units who reported their canonical status as public associations of the faithful have new members.



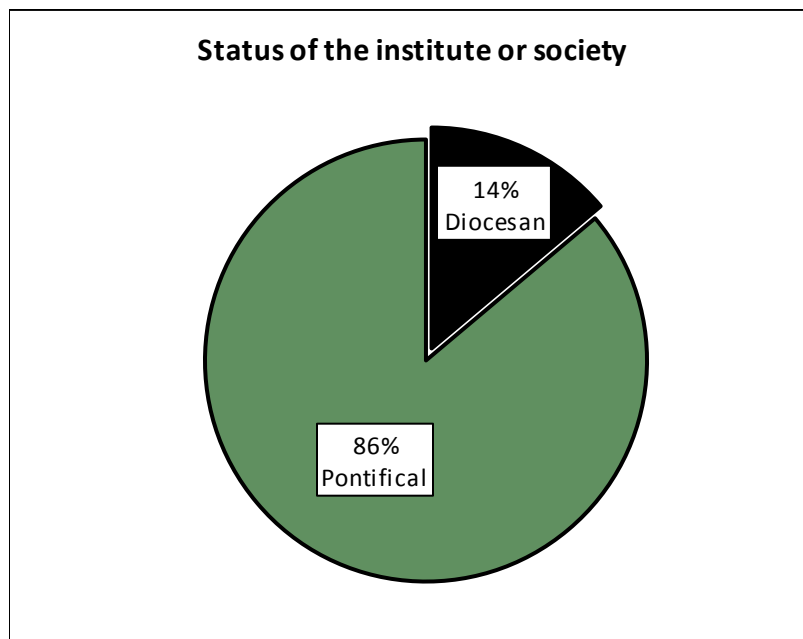
Eight in ten responding units (82 percent) described their character or lifestyle as apostolic.

The chart above shows some significant differences between the subgroups:

- Women’s units are 14 percentage points more likely than men’s units to have contemplative character.

- Units with new members are 18 percentage points less likely than units without new members to have apostolic character.
- Units with new members are 17 percentage points more likely than units without new members to have monastic character.
- Units with new members are 15 percentage points more likely than units without new members to have contemplative character.

It is noteworthy that none of the responding units described themselves as eremitic (hence, this option was excluded from the chart above).



Overall, the majority of responding units (86 percent) are institutes or societies of pontifical right. The differences between men's and women's units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.

## Candidates, Novices, Temporary Professed, and Full Members

<b>Please indicate the number in each category in your unit</b>				
Responses for all units				
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>
Pre-candidates/aspirants (before entrance)	0.5	0	0 - 8	44
Candidates/postulants (before novitiate)	0.6	0	0 - 29	46
Novices	0.8	0	0 - 21	67
Temporary vows/commitment	1.5	0	0 - 31	144
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	51.4	21	0 - 557	8,177
All members	51.4	21	0 - 560	8,478

As of 2017, there are 8,478 religious members in the 161 units who responded to this survey question. The actual number of men and women religious present in Canada is higher, but difficult to specify exactly.<sup>1</sup> Overall, there are 343 units believed to be currently present in Canada, so the 161 units who responded to this question are 47 percent of all known units. However, the units that did not respond to the survey are more likely than those who did respond to be either smaller contemplative and monastic units with fewer full members and no one in formation, or diminishing units of mostly aged members that are no longer accepting new members, so the actual number of members – and in particular the actual number of those in formation – is not proportionately higher.

The number of members in each unit varies by their status:

- On average, there is one pre-candidate/aspirant (before entrance) per unit (a median of zero). The number of pre-candidates/aspirants (before entrance) ranges from zero to eight per unit.
- On average, there is one candidate/postulant (before novitiate) per unit (a median of zero). The number of candidates/postulants (before novitiate) ranges from zero to 29 per unit.
- On average, there is one novice per unit (a median of zero). The number of novices ranges from zero to 21 per unit.

<sup>1</sup> According to the website of the Canadian Religious Conference, the 240 congregations that are members of the CRC comprise 12,220 religious in Canada in 2017 (<https://www.crc-canada.org/en/who-are-we/statistics/>). By contrast, the 2015 Statistical Yearbook of the Church, published by the Vatican, reports a total of 16,861 religious in Canada in 2015.

- On average, there are two members who took temporary vows/commitment per unit (a median of zero). The number of temporary vows/commitment ranges from zero to 31 per unit.
- On average, there are 51 members who took final/perpetual vows/commitment per unit (a median of 21). The number of final/perpetual vows/commitment ranges from zero to 557 per unit.
- Overall, units average 51 members (a median of 21). The number of all members ranges from zero to 560 per unit.

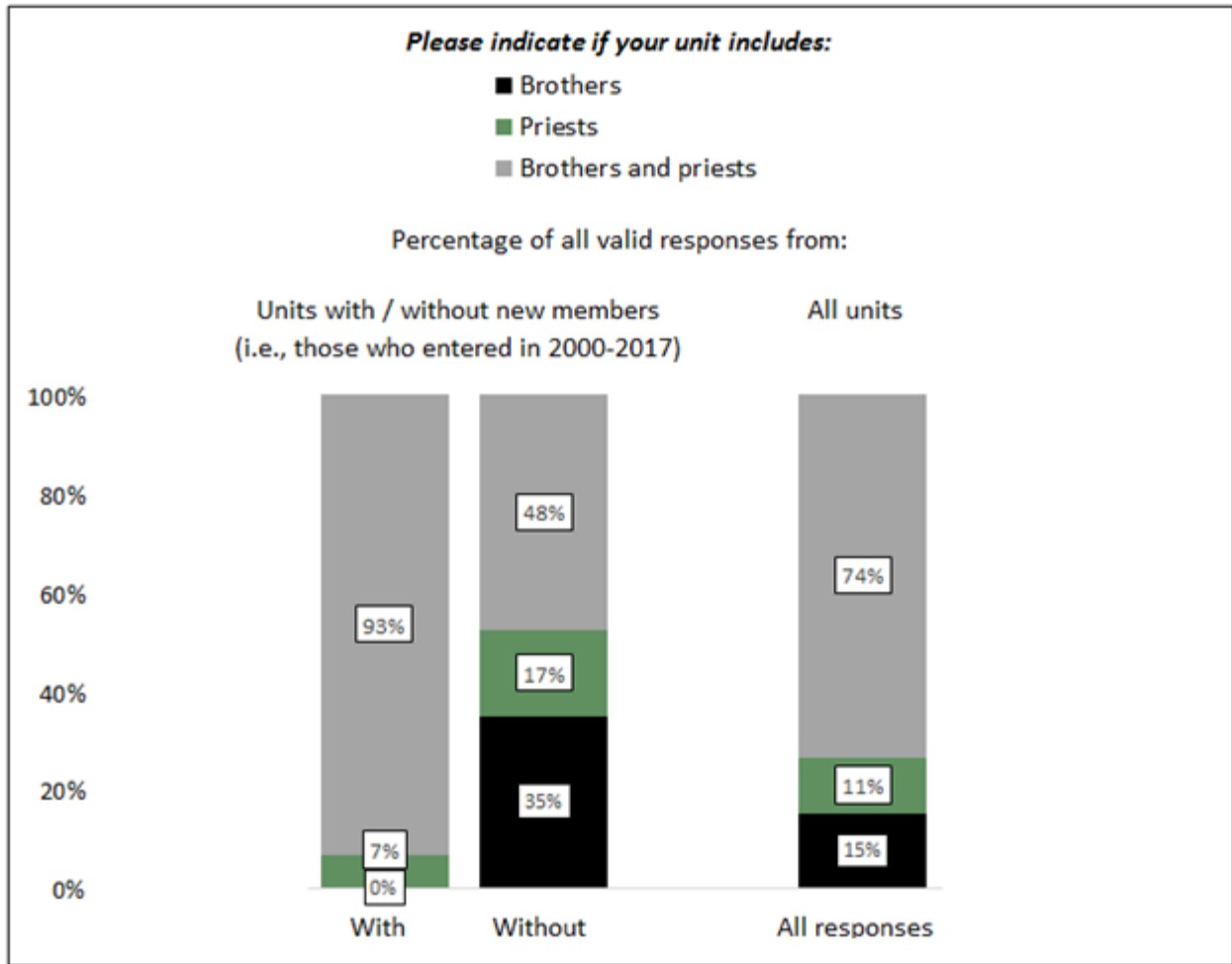
**Please indicate the number in each category in your unit**  
Responses from units for:

	Men				Women			
	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Total #	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Total #
Pre-candidates	0.5	0	0 - 8	18	0.5	0	0 - 5	26
Candidates	1.1	0	0 - 29	38	0.2	0	0 - 2	8
Novices	1.2	0	0 - 21	41	0.5	0	0 - 4	26
Temporary vows	2.5	0	0 - 31	96	0.8	0	0 - 5	48
Final vows	33.8	21	0 - 180	1,557	58.6	21	0 - 557	6,620
All members	35.0	21	0 - 182	1,750	58.5	21	0 - 560	6,728

The median number of members is the same for men’s and women’s units. A caveat should be added that:

- Overall, women’s units have more members, on average, than men’s units. This is due to the fact that the biggest women’s units are much larger than the biggest men’s units. The median size of both women’s and men’s units is the same (i.e., a median of 21 for both).
- Men’s units have, on average, the same number or more members in formation (i.e., pre-candidates, novices, and temporary professed) than women’s units. However, the median for both women’s and men’s units is the same (i.e., a median of zero for both).

The differences between units with and without new members follow a similar pattern (not shown on the table) — the average size of units is bigger for units with new members (i.e., those members who entered from 2000 to 2017). There are 60 members per unit in units with new members and 41 members per unit in units without new members. However, the median number is the same (i.e., a median of 21 for both).



Three quarters of all responding men’s units (74 percent) include both brothers and priests.

The chart above shows one significant difference: units with new members are 46 percentage points more likely than units without new members to include both brothers and priests.

It is also noteworthy that all units that are brothers-only do not report any new members.



***If a mixed clerical institute or society,  
please indicate the number in each category in your unit.***

Responses for all units

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>
Brothers (temporary commitment)	0.7	0	0 - 2
Priests (temporary commitment)	1.8	0	0 - 30
Brothers (final commitment)	15.4	4	0 - 180
Priests (final commitment)	31.7	16	0 - 210

Mixed clerical institutes and societies average one brother in temporary vows/commitment and 15 brothers in final/perpetual vows/commitment. Those units also average two priests/seminarians in temporary vows/commitment and 32 priests in final/perpetual vows/commitment. Notably, the median numbers are considerably lower due to the much larger sizes of the biggest responding units.

***If a mixed clerical institute or society,  
please indicate the number in each category in your unit.***

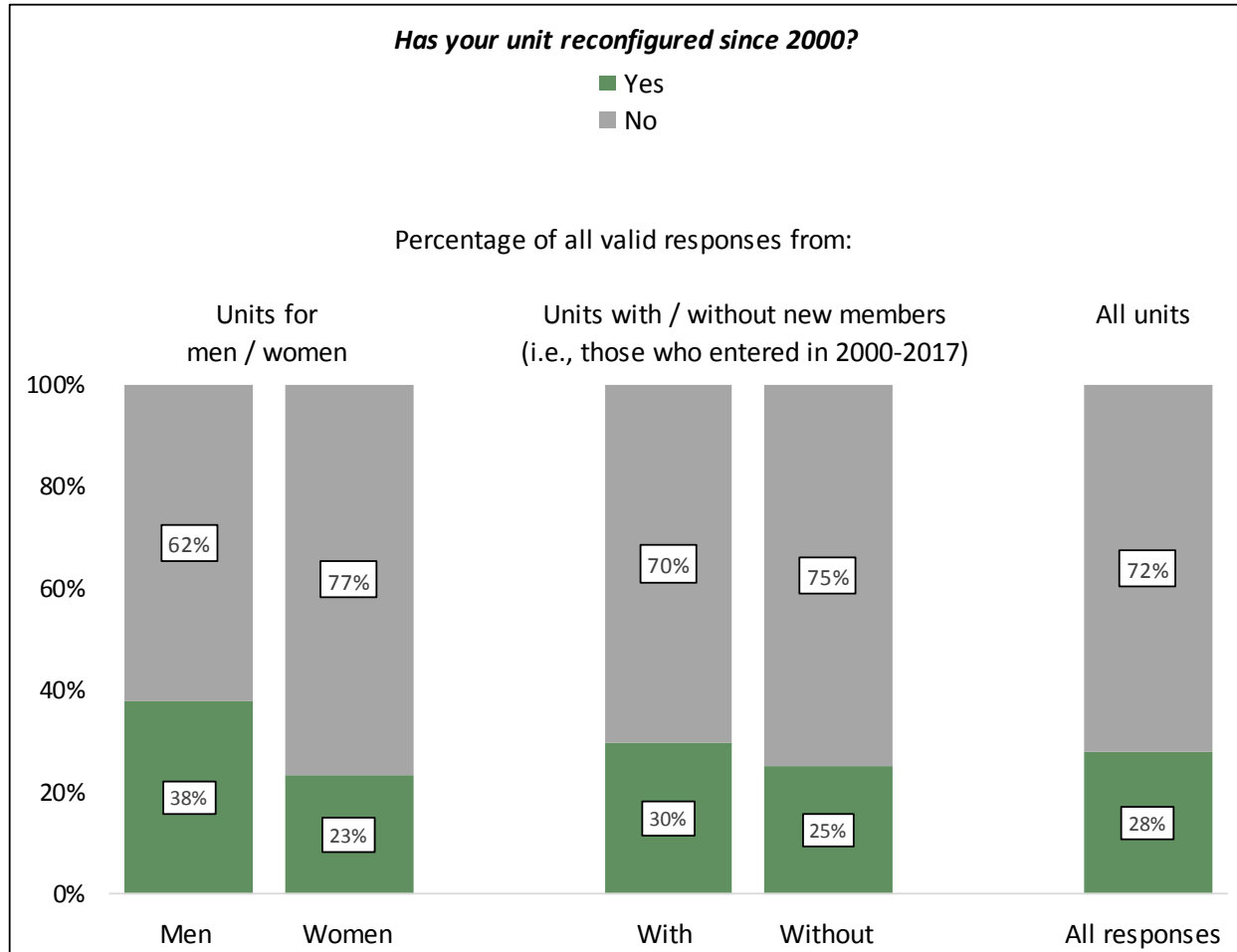
Responses from units with / without new members:  
(i.e., those who entered in 2000-2017)

	<b>With</b>			<b>Without</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>
Brothers (temporary commitment)	1.1	1	0 - 2	0	0	0 - 0
Priests (temporary commitment)	2.9	1	0 - 30	0	0	0 - 0
Brothers (final commitment)	18.9	5	1 - 180	10.7	2	0 - 102
Priests (final commitment)	43.8	21	2 - 210	11.5	8	0 - 24

There are a few noteworthy differences between units with / without new members (i.e., those members who entered from 2000 to 2017):

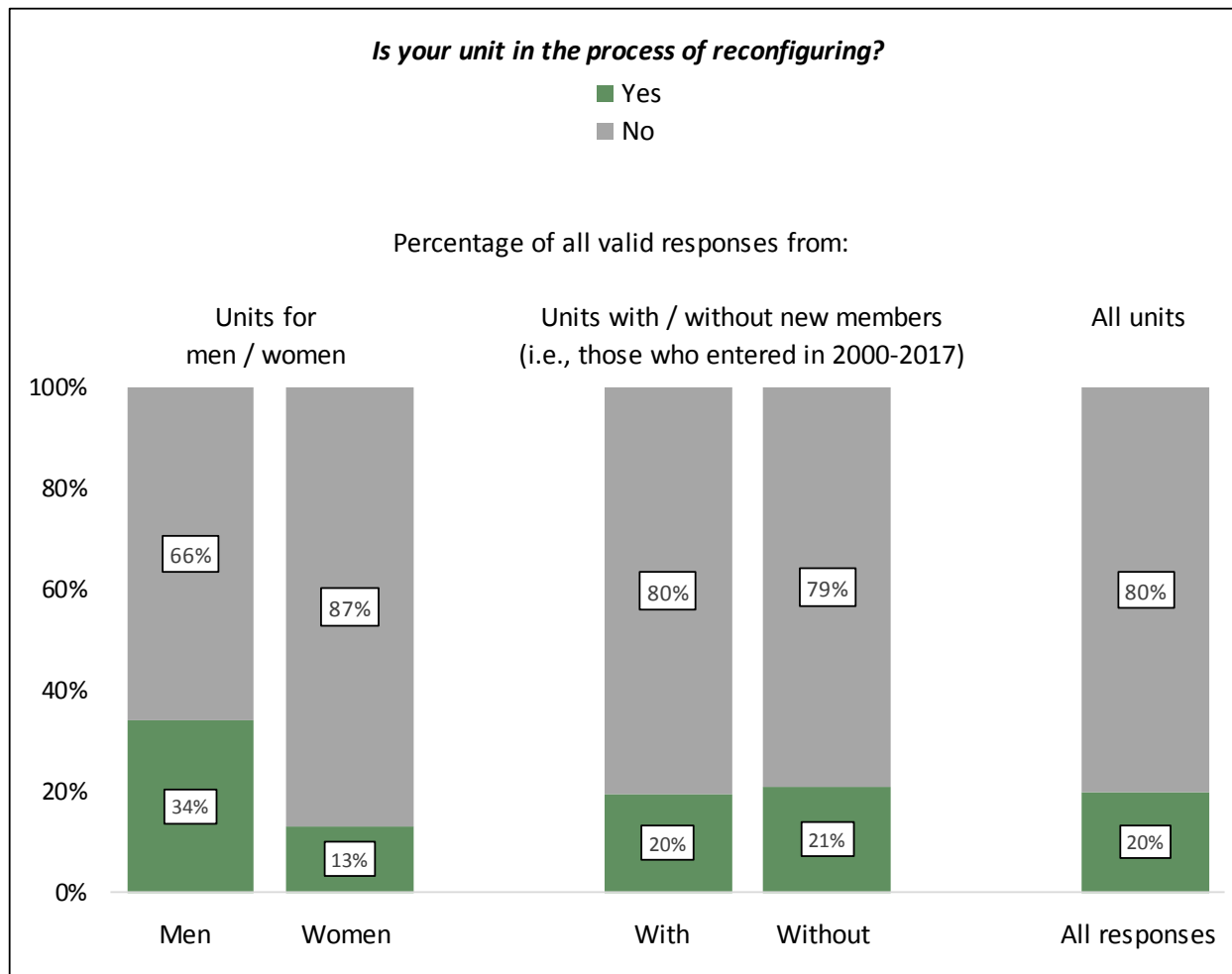
- On average, there are twice as many (1.8 times) brothers in final/perpetual vows/commitment in units with new members than in units without new members.
- On average there are four times as many (3.8 times) priests/seminarians in final/perpetual vows/commitment in units with new members than in units without new members.

## Reconfigurations and Other Changes Underway or Anticipated



Overall, seven in ten responding units (72 percent) have not reconfigured since 2000.

The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.



Four in five responding units (20 percent), however, are in the process of reconfiguring.

The chart above shows one significant difference between the subgroups: men's units are 21 percentage points more likely than women's units to be in the process of reconfiguring.

In response to an open-ended question asking superiors to describe the process of reconfiguration, 27 respondents reported that they were (or still are) in the process of unification of smaller units into a bigger one. Five respondents are in the process of downgrading their status (e.g., from province to delegation, vice-province or region, from region to territory). Five respondents are in the process of shutting down portions of their operations (e.g., by not accepting vocations or by selling off real estate). By comparison, only one respondent reported moving in the opposite direction: splitting a larger unit into smaller ones. Two other respondents reported that their units are newly created.

Relatively few units (31) responded to a second open-ended question asking if they are exploring any new and viable models/expressions of religious life. The biggest group of answers focused on **collaborating with the laity**. A few units reported working on lay associate programs:

*New Forms of Consecrated Life - private vows, inspired by our spirituality and charism.  
Associates - sharing of our spirituality and charism.*

*Though our very active lay associate program we encourage any interested candidates to get involved and that can help them discern. These associates may be a means to new and viable models and expressions of religious life. We support our associates in this Spirit-inspired means of helping others, men and women, to respond to God's call.*

Some units are considering the possibility of **mixed communities of consecrated religious and lay associates**, while other units are not open to such a possibility at this time.

*Our Province is actively developing Oblate Associates. One possibility explored is mixed communities of Oblates and Oblate Associates.*

*Our congregation is open to have lay associates living with us, like in Thailand. They join us in our community life. They are our loyal employees of our schools.*

Allowing associates who do not live in community may present an opportunity to include married people. For example, one unit reported having associates who makes private vows (of chastity, poverty and obedience) and make a commitment they renew every year. They do not live in community, because of family or professional commitments, but they participate in some liturgies wearing a habit. They live the institute's spirituality and they share certain moments of community life according to the arrangement made with the prioress.

Additionally, some units are experimenting with **more transitory programs**. For instance, one unit developed a long-term missionary program (a three-year commitment). Another unit has lay vocation volunteers.

## Retention Rate and Departures

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

Responses for all units

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>
Number who entered in 2000 or later	3.8	2	0 - 48
Number of the above who remain	2.5	1	0 - 27

On average, 66 percent of all members who entered since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000 remain with the units.

- An average unit had four new members who entered in 2000 or later (a median of two). The number who entered since 2000 or later ranges from zero to 48 per unit.
- On average, three of those new members still remain per unit (a median of one). The number of entrants who still remains ranges from zero to 27 per unit.

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

Responses from units for:

	<b>Men</b>			<b>Women</b>		
	<b>Mean</b> #	<b>Median</b> #	<b>Range</b> #	<b>Mean</b> #	<b>Median</b> #	<b>Range</b> #
Number who entered in 2000 or later	5.8	3	0 - 48	2.8	2	0 - 26
Number of the above who remain	3.4	2	0 - 27	2.1	1	0 - 16

On average, 59 percent of men religious and 75 percent of women religious who entered since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000 remain with the units.

There are a few noteworthy differences between men's and women's units:

- The average number of new members who entered in 2000 or later in men's units is 2.1 times higher than in women's units (a difference of three new members).
- The average number of new members who entered in 2000 or later and who still remain in men's units is 1.6 times higher than in women's units (a difference of one new, remaining member).

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

Responses for all units

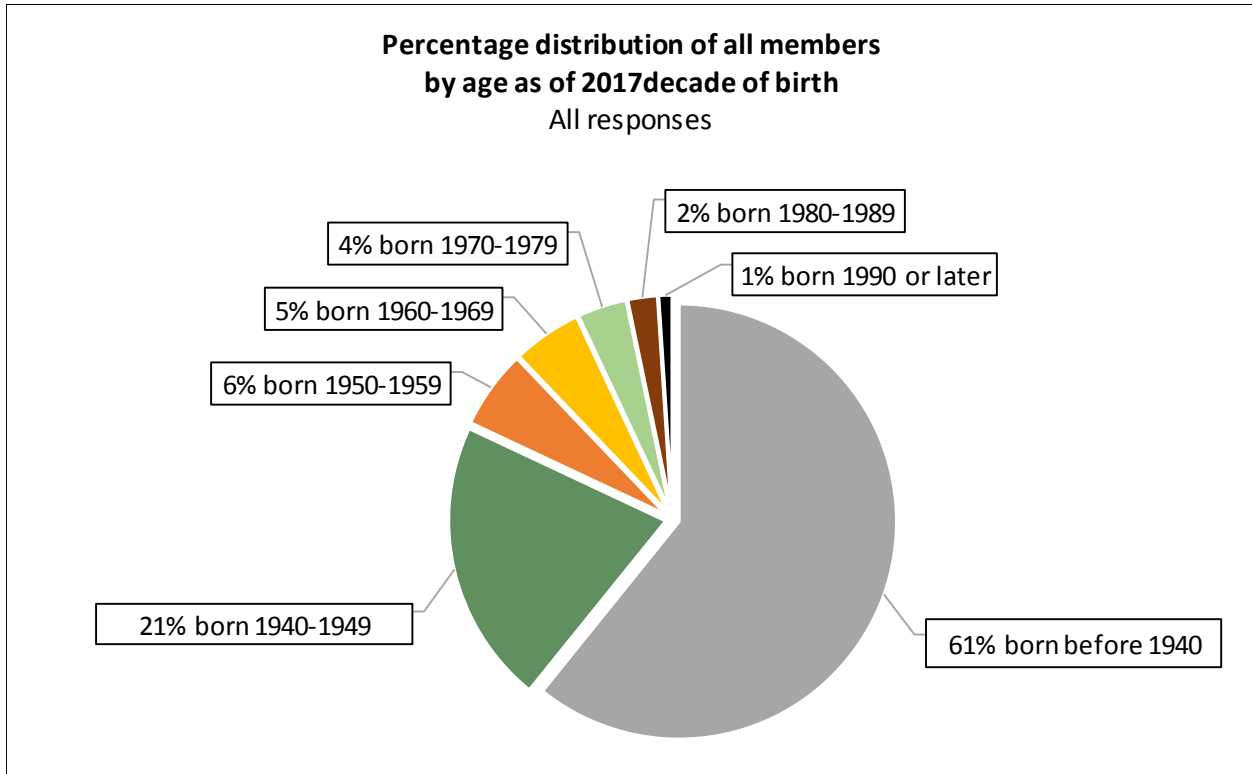
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>
During candidacy/postulancy	1.7	1	0 - 10
During novitiate	1.6	1	0 - 13
During temporary vows/commitment	2.0	1	0 - 14
After final/perpetual vows/commitment	1.7	1	0 - 27

Of those who entered since 2000 and have since departed:

- On average, two new members departed during candidacy/postulancy per unit (a median of one). The number of departures at this stage ranges from zero to ten per unit.
- On average, two new members departed during novitiate per unit (a median of one). The number of departures at this stage ranges from zero to 13 per unit.
- On average, two new members departed during temporary vows/commitment per unit (a median of one). The number of departures at this stage ranges from zero to 14 per unit.
- On average, two new members departed after final/perpetual vows/commitment per unit (a median of one). The number of departures at this stage ranges from zero to 27 per unit.

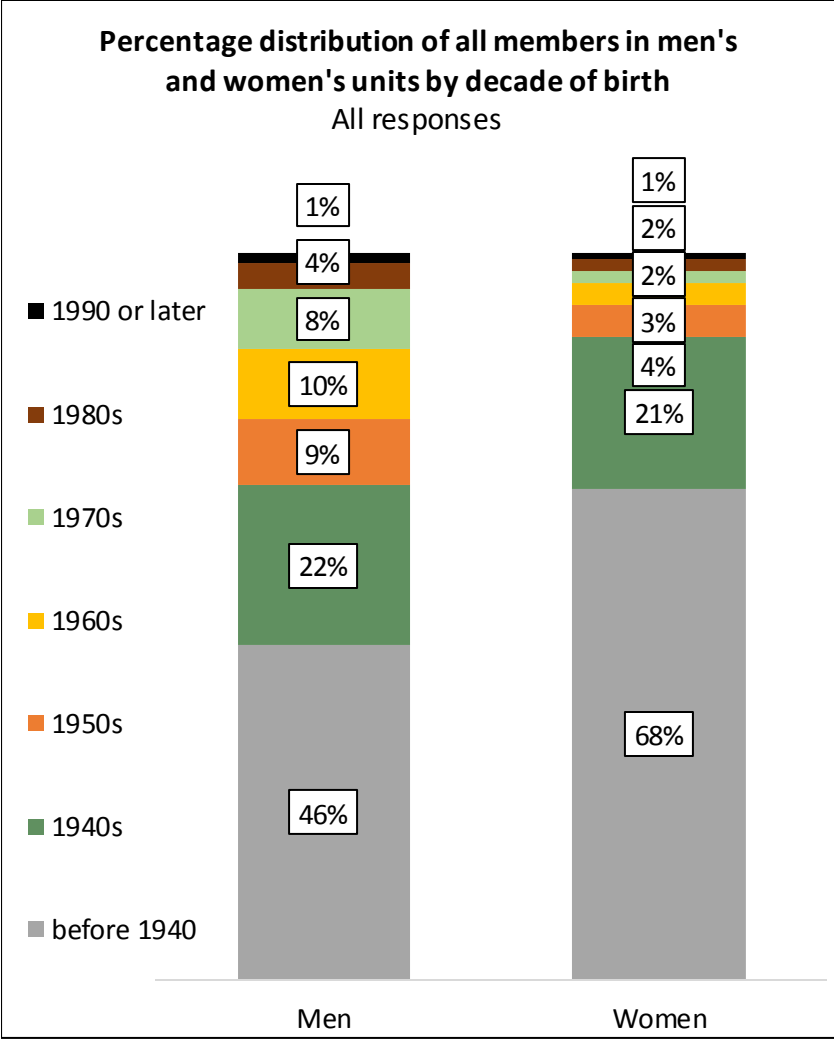
## Ages of All Religious

Only 12 percent of all religious (including those in formation) are 57 years old or younger (born in 1960 or later), while 61 percent are 78 years old or older (born before 1940). Focusing on those in perpetual profession, only 8 percent of all full members are 57 years old or younger, while 64 percent are 78 years or older (not shown on the chart).



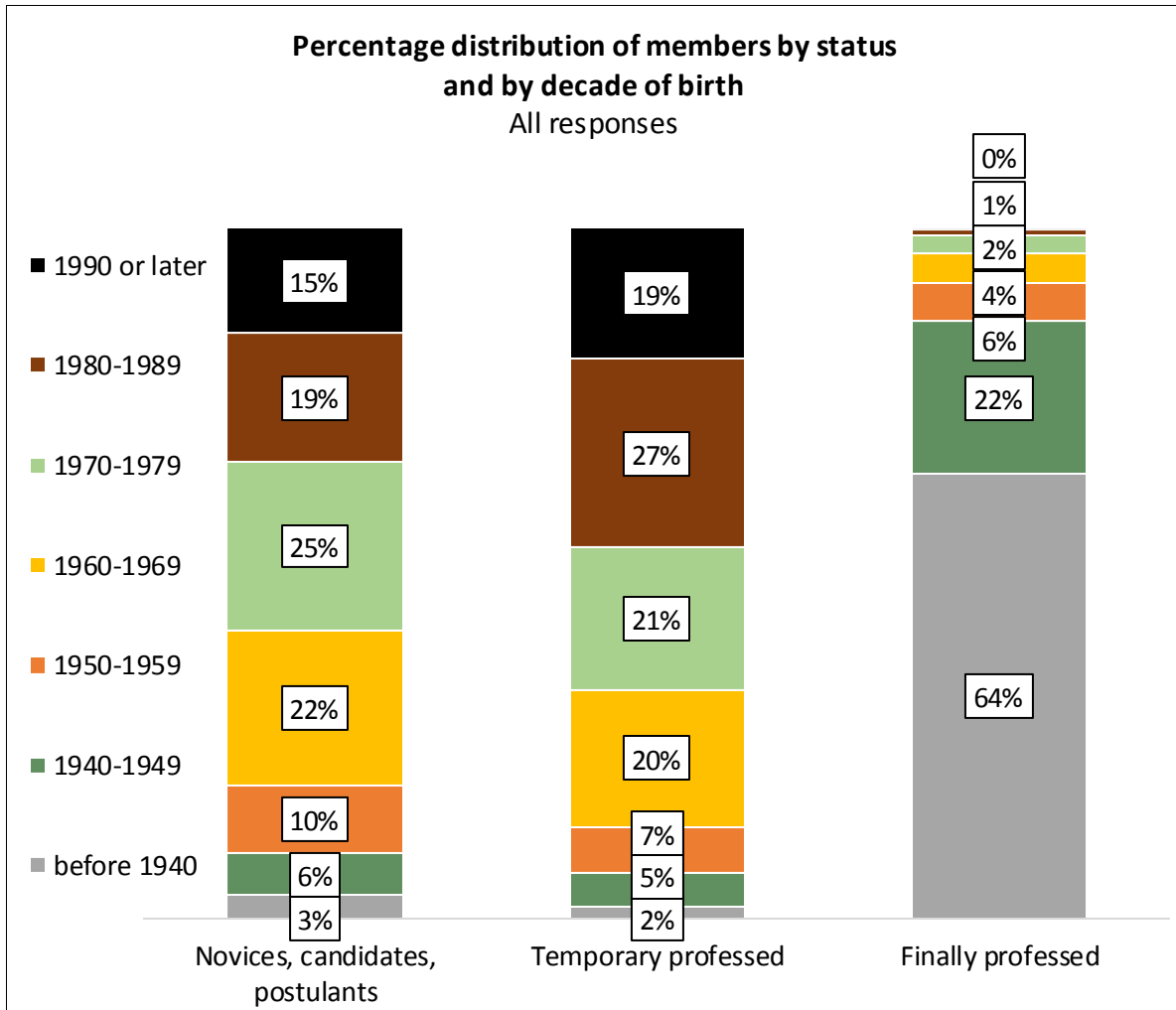
Altogether, the majority of men and women religious (including candidates, postulants, novices, temporary professed, and finally professed members) was born before 1940 (61 percent). The percentage of religious born in each consecutive decade decreases from 21 percent for those born in the 1940s to 1 percent for those born in 1990 or later.





Women’s units have a larger proportion of elderly members than men’s units:

- The percentage of men religious in each decade of birth decreases from 46 percent for those born before 1940 to 10 percent for those born in the 1960s and 1 percent for those born in 1990 or later. By comparison, 68 percent of women religious were born before 1940, 3 percent were born in the 1960s and 1 percent was born in 1990 or later.
- Overall, there are twice as many women religious as there are men religious (not included on the chart). However, among those born in 1950 or later, there are 30 percent more men religious than women religious. This finding demonstrates that the diminishment in women’s units is proceeding at a faster pace than in men’s units.



As could be expected, men and women in final profession are likely to be older than those who are still in formation.

More noteworthy is the finding that members in temporary profession are younger, on average, than novices, candidates and postulants. This appears counterintuitive and may be explained by the fact that 10 percent of new members entered religious life before they moved to Canada. Those new members who entered religious life abroad are on average three years younger than new members who entered in Canada.

**The number of members per unit  
by decade of birth**

Responses for all units

	Candidates, postulants and novices			Temporary professed members			Finally professed members		
	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Mean #	Median #	Range #
before 1940	0.4	0	0 - 4	0.1	0	0 - 2	36.6	15	0 - 440
1940-1949	0.6	0	0 - 4	0.3	0	0 - 2	12.3	6	0 - 101
1950-1959	1.0	0	0 - 6	0.4	0	0 - 3	3.3	3	0 - 21
1960-1969	2.1	0	0 - 14	0.9	0	0 - 6	2.9	2	0 - 19
1970-1979	2.1	0	0 - 25	0.8	0	0 - 12	2.4	1	0 - 14
1980-1989	1.5	0	0 - 9	1.0	1	0 - 7	1.5	1	0 - 7
1990 or later	1.3	0	0 - 15	0.9	0	0 - 14	0.3	0	0 - 4

On average, there are 73 members per unit among units who responded to this question. This number is inflated by the presence of eight “retirement” units (each one reporting over 100 members who are over 77 years old). When those respondents-outliers are removed, the average number of members falls to 58 per unit (not shown on the table above). Since it is likely that smaller units were less likely to participate in this study than larger ones, the actual average number of members in all units of men and women religious in Canada may be lower than the number reported here.

Comparing units according to their members’ status in religious life, there are nine candidates/postulants/novices per unit among those who responded to this question. On average, four of those were born before 1970 and five were born that year or later. There are also four temporary professed members per unit and 59 finally professed members per unit, on average.

The ages of finally professed members vary considerably among units (not shown on the table). The average age of finally professed members is 73 years of age per unit (a median of 77). The average age ranges from 25 to 90 per unit.

There a couple of noteworthy differences among units:

- The average age of finally professed members in men’s units are on average four years lower than in women’s units.
- The average age of finally professed members in units with new members is 0.9 of that in units without new members.

## Place of Birth

Overall, in an average unit, two-thirds of all men and women religious (68 percent) were born in Canada (not shown on the table). The remaining 32 percent were born abroad or their place of birth is unknown. Units with new members (i.e., those members who entered from 2000 to 2017) average 16 percentage points more members born abroad (or their place of birth is unknown) than units without new members. Women's units average 6 percentage points more members born abroad (or their place of birth is unknown) than men's units.

***Please indicate the number of candidates /postulants, novices, and temporary professed members in your unit by their place of birth. Please count each member only once.***

Responses for all units

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>
Canada	5.1	2	0 - 37
USA or Mexico	1.6	1	0 - 18
Africa	4.8	1	0 - 34
Central/South America	2.8	0	0 - 23
Asia or Oceania	3.7	1	0 - 30
Europe	2.5	1	0 - 27
unknown place of birth	2.4	0	0 - 29

Candidates/postulants novices, temporary professed members living in Canada come from all over the world:

- In an average unit, five of their members in formation (22 percent) were born in Canada (a median of two). The number of those born in Canada ranges from zero to 37 per unit.
- In an average unit, 15 of those members (67 percent) were born abroad.
- On average, responding superiors do not know the place of birth for two members (a median of zero).

**Please indicate the number of candidates/postulants, novices, temporary professed members in your unit by their place of birth. Please count each member only once.**

Responses from units for:

	Men			Women		
	Mean	Median	Range	Mean	Median	Range
	#	#	#	#	#	#
Canada	5.6	2	0 - 37	4.7	2	0 - 23
USA or Mexico	2.6	0	0 - 18	0.9	1	0 - 3
Africa	4.8	0	0 - 30	4.9	1	0 - 34
Central/South America	3.0	0	0 - 23	2.7	1	0 - 22
Asia or Oceania	2.4	1	0 - 25	4.7	2	0 - 30
Europe	3.5	0	0 - 27	1.5	1	0 - 9
unknown place of birth	3.6	0	0 - 29	0.7	0	0 - 4

There are a few noteworthy differences between men's and women's units regarding the place of birth of candidates/postulants, novices, temporary professed members:

- The average number of those members born in Canada in men's units is 1.2 times higher than in women's units.
- The average number of those members born in USA or Mexico in men's units is 2.9 times higher than in women's units.
- The average number of those members born in Central/South America in men's units is 1.1 times higher than in women's units.
- The average number of those members born in Asia or Oceania in men's units is 0.5 of that in women's units.
- The average number of those members born in Europe in men's units is 2.3 times higher than in women's units.
- The average number of those members whose place of birth is unknown in men's units is 5.1 times higher than in women's units.

***Please indicate the number of finally professed members in your unit by their place of birth. Please count each member only once.***

Responses for all units

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>
Canada	51.8	22	1 - 545
USA or Mexico	2.3	1	0 - 18
Africa	3.9	1	0 - 43
Central/South America	3.8	1	0 - 64
Asia or Oceania	5.1	2	0 - 97
Europe	4.5	2	0 - 51
unknown place of birth	2.3	0	0 - 30

Finally professed members living in Canada come from all over the world:

- In an average unit, 52 finally professed members (70 percent of all members in an average unit) were born in Canada (a median of 22).
- In an average unit, 2.3 finally professed members (3 percent) were born in USA or Mexico (a median of one).
- In an average unit, four finally professed members (5 percent) were born in Africa (a median of one).
- In an average unit, four finally professed members (5 percent) were born in Central/South America (a median of one).
- In an average unit, five finally professed members (7 percent) were born in Asia or Oceania (a median of two).
- In an average unit, five finally professed members (6 percent) were born in Europe (a median of two). The number of Europe ranges from zero to 51 per unit.
- In an average unit, the place of birth of two finally professed members (3 percent) is unknown by the religious superior (a median of zero).

**Please indicate the number of finally professed members in your unit by their place of birth. Please count each member only once.**

Responses from units for:

	Men			Women		
	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Mean #	Median #	Range #
Canada	32.9	18	1 - 178	64.3	37	1 - 545
USA or Mexico	1.6	1	0 - 5	2.8	2	0 - 18
Africa	2.8	1	0 - 22	5.1	1	0 - 43
Central/South America	2.3	1	0 - 24	4.8	1	0 - 64
Asia or Oceania	3.3	1	0 - 26	6.4	2	0 - 97
Europe	6.3	2	0 - 51	3.4	2	0 - 26
unknown place of birth	3.8	0	0 - 30	0.0	0	0 - 0

There are a few noteworthy differences between men's and women's units:

- The average number of finally professed members born in Canada in men's units is 0.5 of that in women's units.
- The average number of finally professed members born in USA or Mexico in men's units is 0.6 times of that in women's units.
- The average number of finally professed members born in Africa in men's units is 0.5 of that in women's units.
- The average number of finally professed members born in Central/South America in men's units is 0.5 of that in women's units.
- The average number of finally professed members born in Asia or Oceania in men's units is 0.5 of that in women's units.
- The average number of finally professed members born in Europe in men's units is 1.9 times higher than in women's units.

**Please indicate the number of finally professed members in your unit by their place of birth. Please count each member only once.**

Responses from units with / without new members:  
(i.e., those who entered in 2000-2017)

	With			Without		
	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Mean #	Median #	Range #
Canada	59.9	27	1 - 545	41.4	22	1 - 209
USA or Mexico	2.8	2	0 - 18	1.4	1	0 - 7
Africa	4.5	1	0 - 43	2.8	1	0 - 22
Central/South America	4.9	1	0 - 64	0.6	1	0 - 2
Asia or Oceania	6.1	2	0 - 97	2.0	2	0 - 8
Europe	5.9	3	0 - 51	2.4	1	0 - 16
unknown place of birth	3.8	0	0 - 30	0.0	0	0 - 0

The average number of foreign-born members (or of unknown place of birth) is the same for both types of units (an average of six members). However, units with new members are more likely than those without new members to have at least one member born outside Canada.

There are a few noteworthy differences between units with / without new members (i.e., those members who entered from 2000 to 2017) regarding the place of birth of finally professed members:

- The average number of finally professed members born in Canada in units with new members is 1.4 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of finally professed members born in USA or Mexico in units with new members is 1.2 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of finally professed members born in Africa in units with new members is 1.6 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of finally professed members born in Central/South America in units with new members is 8.2 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of finally professed members born in Asia or Oceania in units with new members is 3.1 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of finally professed members born in Europe in units with new members is 2.5 times higher than in units without new members.



## Ministry Status of Members in Active/Apostolic Institutes

Half of members in an average active/apostolic institute or society (50 percent) are retired from active ministry, 27 percent are active in part-time ministry, and 23 percent are active in full-time ministry.

<b>Active/apostolic institutes or societies only:</b>			
<b>Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:</b>			
Responses for all units			
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	#	#	#
Active in a full-time ministry	13.8	8	0 - 116
Active in a part-time ministry	16.6	7	0 - 180
Retired from active ministry	30.2	14	0 - 227

Among the active/apostolic institutes or societies:

- On average, there are 14 members active in a full-time ministry per unit (a median of eight). The number of members active in a full-time ministry ranges from zero to 116 per unit.
- On average, there are 17 members active in a part-time ministry per unit (a median of seven). The number of members active in a part-time ministry ranges from zero to 180 per unit.
- On average, there are 30 members retired from active ministry per unit (a median of 14). The number of members retired from active ministry ranges from zero to 227 per unit.

**Active/apostolic institutes or societies only:**  
**Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:**

Responses from units for:

	<b>Men</b>			<b>Women</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	#	#	#	#	#	#
Active in a full-time ministry	15.7	8	0 - 116	12.6	8	0 - 83
Active in a part-time ministry	13.6	6	0 - 130	18.3	7	0 - 180
Retired from active ministry	24.6	10	0 - 227	33.2	17	0 - 189

Among active/apostolic institutes or societies, there are a few noteworthy differences between men's and women's units:

- The average number of members active in a full-time ministry in men's units is 1.2 times higher than in women's units.
- The average number of members active in a part-time ministry in men's units is 0.7 of that in women's units.
- The average number of members retired from active ministry in men's units is 0.7 of that in women's units.

**Active/apostolic institutes or societies only:  
Of members who are active (not retired from active ministry),  
number engaged in the following types of ministry:**

Responses for all units

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	#	#	#
Internal ministry	15.0	5	0 - 180
Pastoral ministry	9.2	5	0 - 117
Ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by the unit	7.1	2	0 - 63
Congregational Leadership	5.4	4	0 - 52
Education	4.7	2	0 - 39
Spiritual direction/retreat work	3.6	2	0 - 16
Health care	3.2	2	0 - 18
Social work/social service	3.2	2	0 - 21
Social justice/advocacy	3.0	1	0 - 21
Ecological Justice Advocacy	2.8	1	0 - 16

Among the active/apostolic institutes or societies, the five most common ministries are the following:

- On average, there are 15 members active in internal ministry per unit (a median of five). The number of members active in internal ministry ranges from zero to 180 per unit.
- On average, there are nine members active in pastoral ministry per unit (a median of five).
- On average, there are seven members active in ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by the unit per unit (a median of two).
- On average, there are five members active in congregational leadership per unit (a median of four).
- On average, there are five members active in education per unit (a median of two).
- On average, there are just over three members active in spiritual direction/retreat work, in health care, and in social work/social service, with a median of two in each.
- On average, there are just under three members active in social justice/advocacy and in ecological justice advocacy, with a median of one member in each.

**Active/apostolic institutes or societies only:  
Of members who are active (not retired from active ministry),  
number engaged in the following types of ministry:**

Responses from units for:

	Men			Women		
	Mean	Median	Range	Mean	Median	Range
	#	#	#	#	#	#
Internal ministry	7.2	4	0 - 40	18.8	6	0 - 180
Pastoral ministry	14.0	7	0 - 117	6.5	4	1 - 44
Ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by the unit	3.0	1	0 - 14	8.6	3	0 - 63
Congregational Leadership	4.7	4	0 - 29	5.7	4	1 - 52
Education	5.5	2	0 - 39	4.3	2	0 - 35
Spiritual direction/retreat work	3.0	2	0 - 16	3.9	3	0 - 15
Health care	2.0	1	0 - 9	3.8	3	0 - 18
Social work/social service	2.1	1	0 - 8	3.8	2	0 - 21
Social justice/advocacy	1.1	1	0 - 3	4.2	2	0 - 21
Ecological Justice Advocacy	1.7	1	0 - 16	3.6	3	0 - 12

Among the active/apostolic institutes or societies, there are a few noteworthy differences between men's and women's units:

- The average number of members active in pastoral ministry in men's units is 2.2 times higher than in women's units.
- The average number of members active in social work/social service in men's units is 0.6 of that in women's units.
- The average number of members active in internal ministry in men's units is 0.4 of that in women's units.
- The average number of members active in ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by the unit in men's units is 0.3 of that in women's units.
- The average number of members active in social justice/advocacy in men's units is 0.3 of that in women's units.

**Active/apostolic institutes or societies only:  
Of members who are active (not retired from active ministry),  
number engaged in the following types of ministry:**

Responses from units with / without new members:  
(i.e., those who entered in 2000-2017)

	With			Without		
	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Mean #	Median #	Range #
Internal ministry	19.9	8	0 - 180	6.9	3	0 - 70
Pastoral ministry	12.7	7	0 - 117	4.0	3	1 - 16
Ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by the unit	9.4	3	0 - 63	2.6	2	0 - 10
Congregational Leadership	6.5	5	1 - 52	4.1	4	0 - 17
Education	5.5	3	0 - 39	3.3	2	0 - 17
Spiritual direction/retreat work	4.3	3	0 - 16	1.8	1	0 - 4
Health care	4.0	3	0 - 18	1.8	1	0 - 7
Social work/social service	3.9	2	0 - 21	2.1	1	0 - 13
Social justice/advocacy	3.7	2	0 - 21	1.7	1	0 - 7
Ecological Justice Advocacy	3.1	2	0 - 16	2.2	1	0 - 12

Among the active/apostolic institutes or societies, there are a few noteworthy differences between units with / without new members (i.e., those members who entered from 2000 to 2017):

- The average number of members active in ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by the unit in units with new members is 3.6 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of members active in pastoral ministry in units with new members is 3.2 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of members active in internal ministry in units with new members is 2.9 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of members active in spiritual direction/retreat work in units with new members is 2.4 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of members active in health care in units with new members is 2.2 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of members active in social justice/advocacy in units with new members is 2.2 times higher than in units without new members.

## Community Size

More than half of members in an average unit (55 percent) live in communities of eight or more, 15 percent live singly, 13 percent live in communities of two or three, and 17 percent live in communities of four to seven.

<b><i>Please indicate the number of active members (not retired from active ministry) of your unit who:</i></b>			
Responses for all units			
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	#	#	#
Live singly	7.8	3	0 - 84
Live in communities of 2 or 3	7.2	4	0 - 56
Live in communities of 4 to 7	8.9	5	0 - 54
Live in communities of 8 or more	29.8	14	0 - 369

The living arrangements of active members vary between units:

- On average, there are eight active members who live singly per unit (a median of three). The number of active members who live singly ranges from zero to 84 per unit.
- On average, there are seven active members who live in communities of two or three per unit (a median of four). The number of active members who live in communities of two or three ranges from zero to 56 per unit.
- On average, there are nine active members who live in communities of four to seven per unit (a median of five). The number of active members who live in communities of four to seven ranges from zero to 54 per unit.
- On average, there are 30 active members who live in communities of eight or more per unit (a median of 14). The number of active members who live in communities of eight or more ranges from zero to 369 per unit.

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

Responses from units for:

	Men			Women		
	Mean	Median	Range	Mean	Median	Range
	#	#	#	#	#	#
Live singly	4.8	3	0 - 57	9.8	5	0 - 84
Live in communities of 2 or 3	5.9	4	0 - 38	8.1	4	0 - 56
Live in communities of 4 to 7	9.0	6	0 - 47	8.9	5	0 - 54
Live in communities of 8 or more	20.7	10	0 - 91	35.6	15	0 - 369

There are a few noteworthy differences between men's and women's units:

- The average number of active members who live singly in men's units is 0.5 of that in women's units.
- The average number of active members who live in communities of two or three in men's units is 0.7 of that in women's units.
- The average number of active members who live in communities of four to seven in men's units is comparable to that in women's units.
- The average number of active members who live in communities of eight or more in men's units is 0.6 of that in women's units.

**Please indicate the number of active members  
(not retired from active ministry) of your unit who:  
Responses from units with / without new members:  
(i.e., those who entered in 2000-2017)**

	With			Without		
	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Mean #	Median #	Range #
Live singly	8.8	5	0 - 68	6.6	3	0 - 84
Live in communities of 2 or 3	9.3	5	0 - 56	4.5	3	0 - 27
Live in communities of 4 to 7	11.8	7	0 - 54	4.2	4	0 - 21
Live in communities of 8 or more	36.2	15	0 - 369	20.6	10	0 - 117

There are a few noteworthy differences between units with/without new members (i.e., those members who entered from 2000 to 2017):

- The average number of active members who live singly in units with new members is 1.3 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of active members who live in communities of two or three in units with new members is 2.1 times higher than in units without new members.
- The average number of active members who live in communities of four to seven in units with new members is 2.8 times higher than in units without new members. This finding is particularly noteworthy because this size of community is preferred by new members (see Part II of this report).
- The average number of active members who live in communities of eight or more in units with new members is 1.8 times higher than in units without new members.



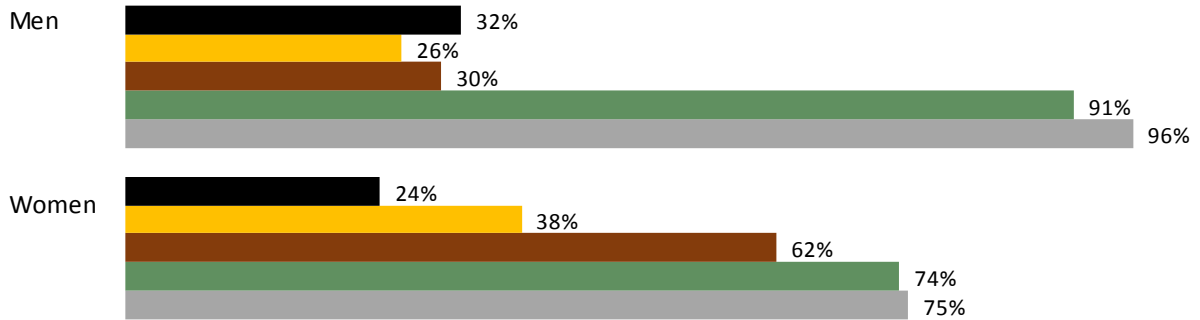
## Prayer Life

*Please indicate which of the following characterize the regular communal prayer life of a majority of members of your unit*

- Common meditation
- Non-liturgical common prayer
- Faith sharing
- Liturgy of the Hours
- Daily Eucharist

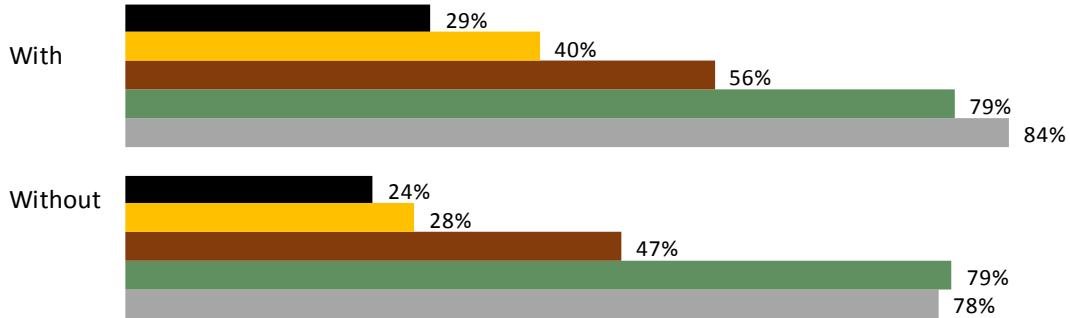
Percentage of all respondents from:

### Units for men / women

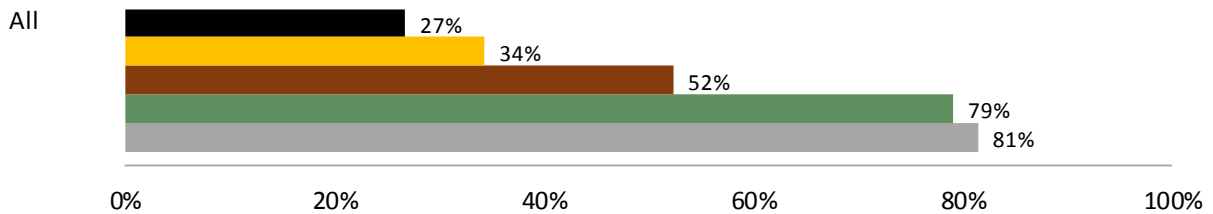


### Units with / without new members

(i.e., those who entered in 2000-2017)



### All units



Overall, the most common prayer practices include daily Eucharist (practiced by a majority of members in 81 percent of all responding units) and Liturgy of the Hours (79 percent). Less frequent practices include faith sharing (52 percent), non-liturgical common prayer (34 percent), and common meditation (27 percent).

The chart above shows some significant differences between the subgroups:

- Women’s units are 32 percentage points more likely than men’s units to practice faith sharing.
- Women’s units are 21 percentage points less likely than men’s units to practice daily Eucharist.
- Women’s units are 17 percentage points less likely than men’s units to practice Liturgy of the Hours.

<b>Contemplative institutes only:</b>			
<b>Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:</b>			
Responses for all units			
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	#	#	#
Able to participate fully in prayer life	25.1	13	2 - 161
Able to participate somewhat in prayer life	8.9	4	0 - 65
Unable to participate in prayer life	5.9	3	0 - 49

Among the contemplative institutes:

- On average, there are 25 members per unit who are able to participate fully in prayer life per unit (a median of 13). The number of members who are able to participate fully in prayer life ranges from two to 161 per unit.
- On average, there are nine members per unit who are able to participate somewhat in prayer life per unit (a median of four). The number of members who are able to participate somewhat in prayer life ranges from zero to 65 per unit.
- On average, there are six members per unit who are unable to participate in prayer life per unit (a median of three). The number of members who are unable to participate in prayer life ranges from zero to 49 per unit.

**Contemplative institutes only:**  
**Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:**

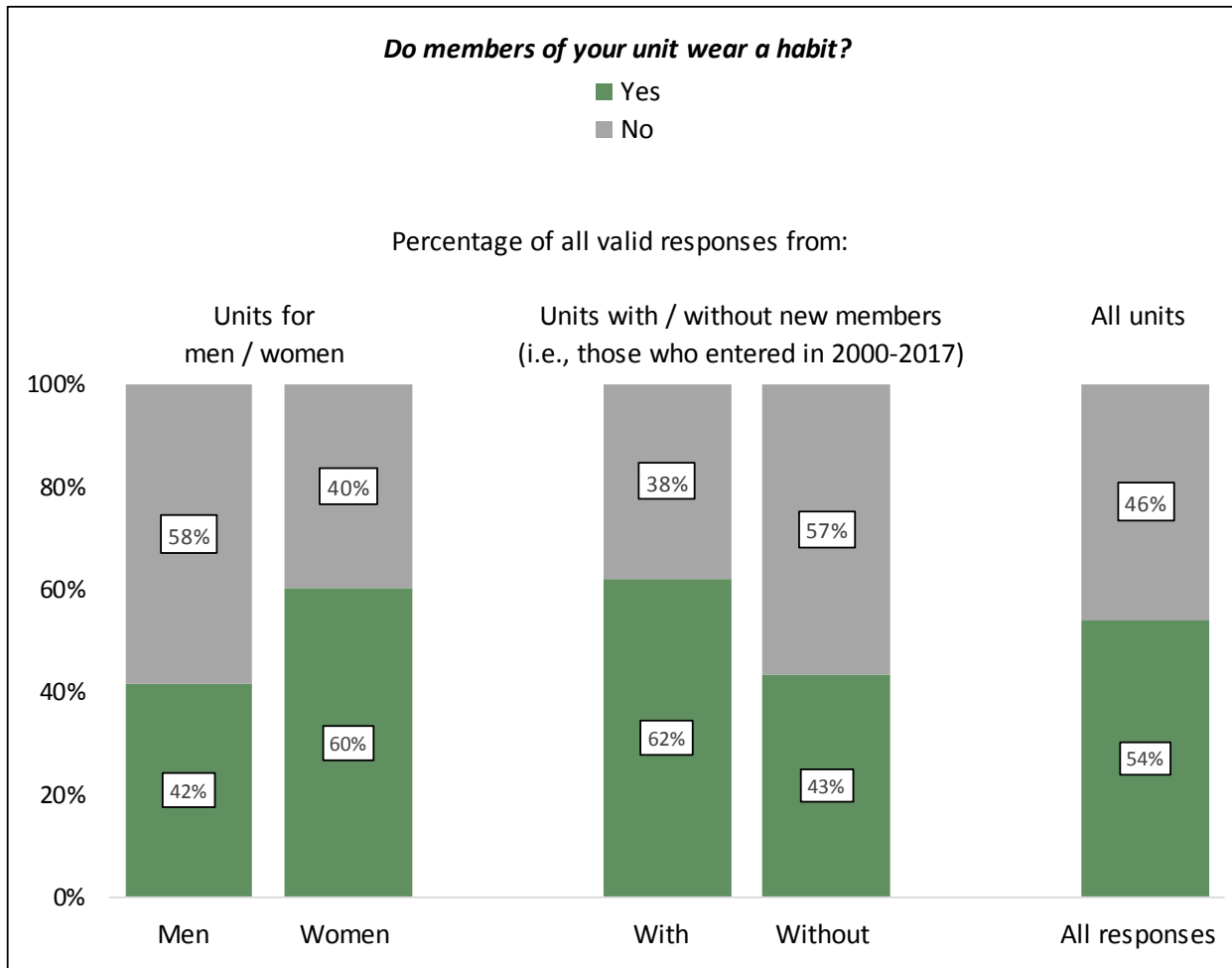
Responses from units for:

	Men			Women		
	Mean	Median	Range	Mean	Median	Range
	#	#	#	#	#	#
Able to participate fully in prayer life	31.8	15	2 - 161	22.5	11	2 - 150
Able to participate somewhat in prayer life	14.0	8	0 - 65	4.8	3	0 - 22
Unable to participate in prayer life	5.4	3	0 - 20	6.1	2	0 - 49

There are a few noteworthy differences between men's and women's units:

- The average number of members who are able to participate fully in prayer life in men's units is 1.4 times higher than in women's units.
- The average number of members who are able to participate somewhat in prayer life in men's units is 2.9 times higher than in women's units.
- The average number of members who are unable to participate in prayer life in men's units is 0.9 of that in women's units.

## Practices Regarding the Habit



Overall, more than half of all responding units (54 percent) reported that their members wear a habit. The definition of what the habit consists of differs widely among units, as is described on the next chart.

The chart above shows some significant differences between the subgroups:

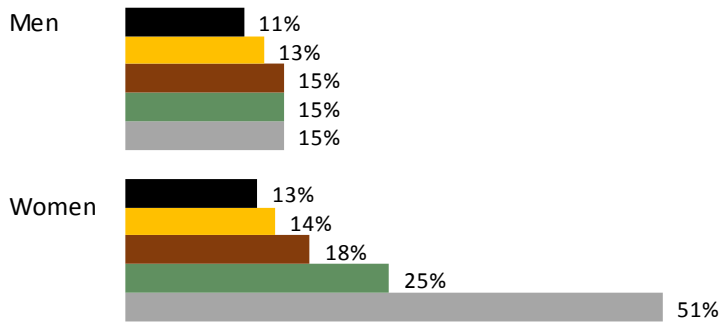
- Members of women's units are 18 percentage points more likely than members of men's units to wear a habit.
- Units with new members are 19 percentage points more likely than units without new members to report that their members wear a habit.

***If members of your unit wear a habit, what are the elements of the habit typically worn by the members?***

- Other
- Tunic
- Monastic Scapular
- Cowl with a veil / a hood
- Secular Dress

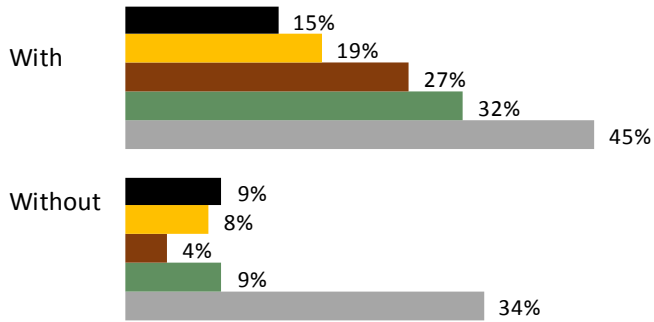
Percentage of all respondents from:

**Units for men / women**

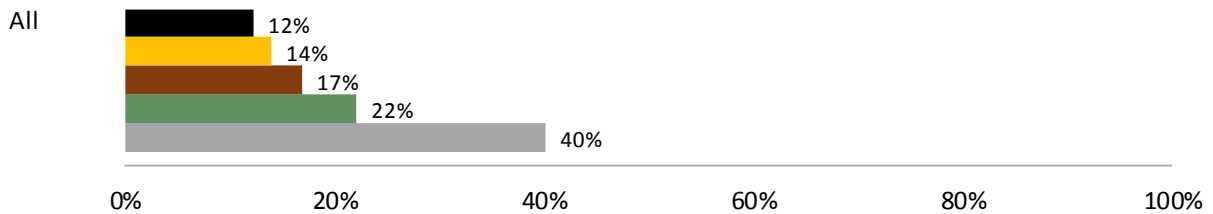


**Units with / without new members**

(i.e., those who entered in 2000-2017)



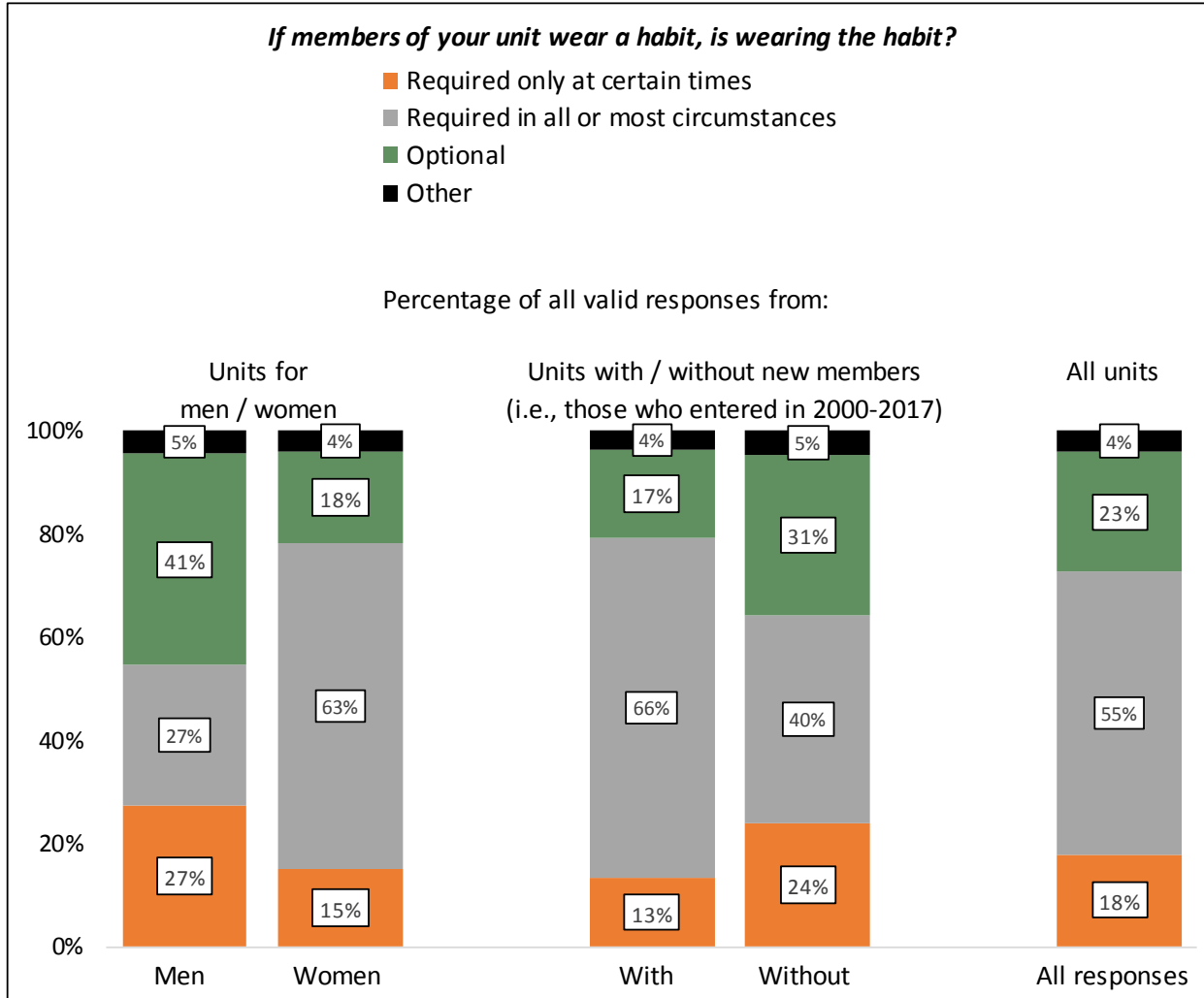
**All units**



Overall, the habit most often consists of a cross or medallion, a devotional scapular or ring, or secular dress (40 percent of all responding units where members wear a habit include those elements). The habit is less likely to include a cowl with a veil/a hood (worn by members of 22 percent of the units where members wear a habit), monastic scapular (17 percent), tunic (14 percent), or other elements (12 percent).

The chart above shows some significant differences between the subgroups:

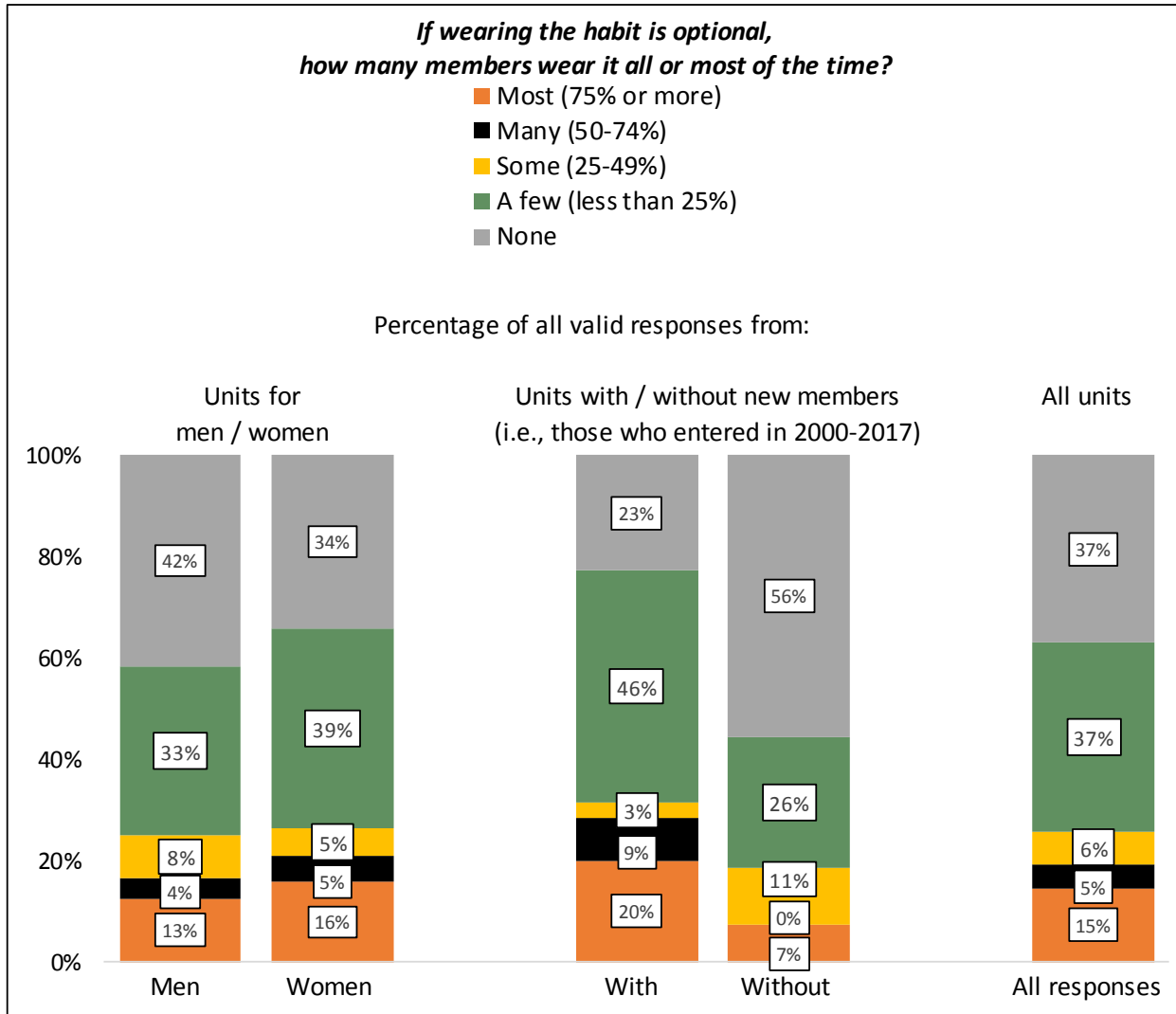
- Women's units are 36 percentage points more likely than men's units to wear a cross or medallion, a devotional scapular or ring, or secular dress.
- Units with new members are 23 percentage points more likely than units without new members to wear a monastic scapular.
- Units with new members are 23 percentage points more likely than units without new members to wear a cowl with a veil/a hood.
- Units with new members are 11 percentage points more likely than units without new members to wear a tunic.



Overall, more than half of responding units where members wear a habit require wearing it in all or most circumstances (55 percent). The respondents in the “other” category include those who wear a habit except for particular occasions (e.g., when working) and those who do not wear a formal habit, but have certain guidelines for clothing (e.g., only badge, dark, or brown clothes).

The chart above shows some significant differences between the subgroups, among those units where members wear a habit:

- Women’s units are 36 percentage points more likely than men’s units to require wearing the habit in all or most circumstances.
- Women’s units are 23 percentage points less likely than men’s units to make wearing the habit optional.
- Units with new members are 21 percentage points more likely than units without new members to require wearing the habit in all or most circumstances.

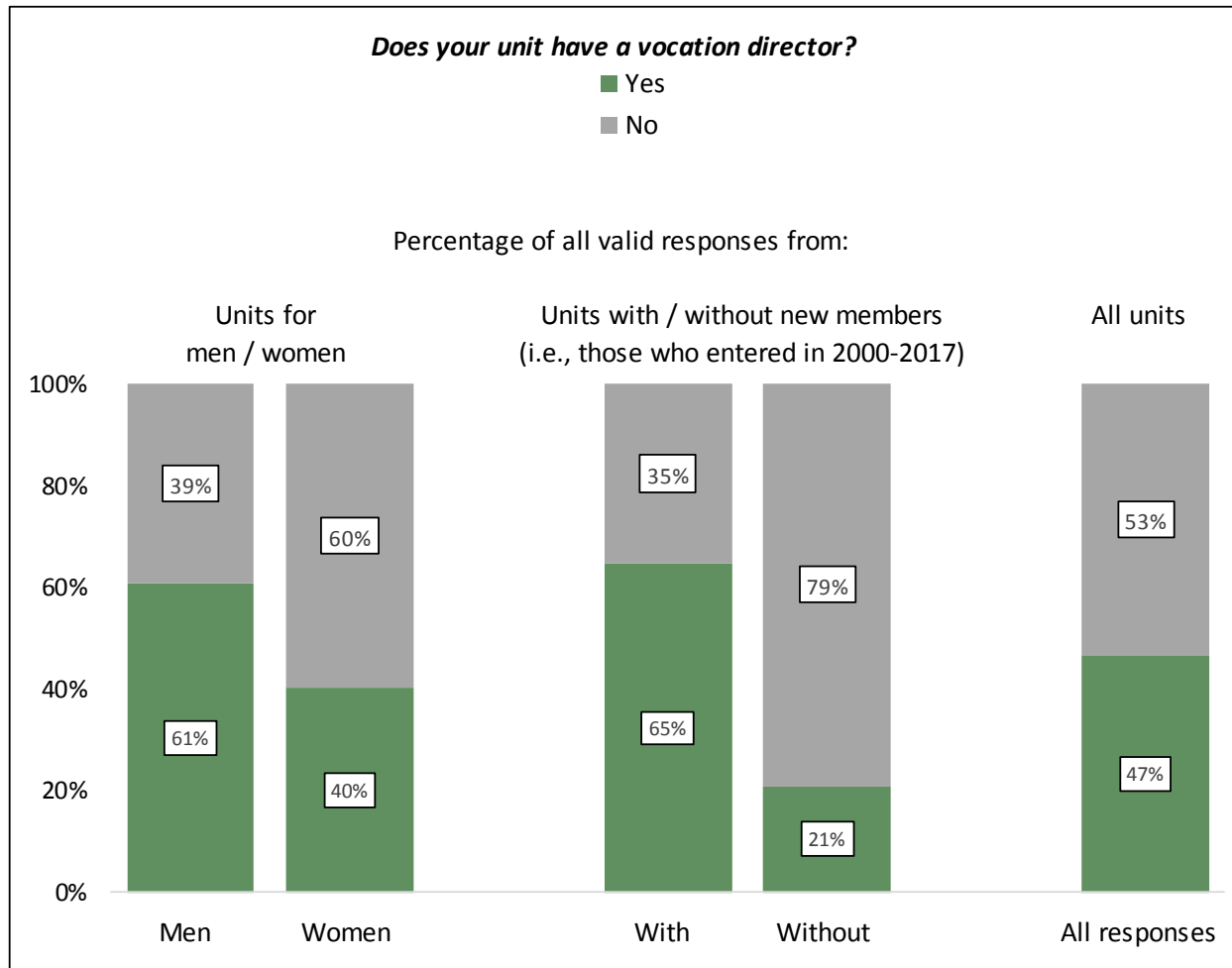


Overall, the two biggest groups of those responding units which make wearing a habit optional (37 percent each) reported that none of their members opt to wear it all or most of the time or that a few members wear it (less than 25 percent of unit's members).

The chart above shows only one significant difference between the subgroups, among those units where members wear a habit: units without new members are 33 percentage points more likely than units with new members to report that none of their members opt to wear a habit.



## Vocation Ministry and Formation



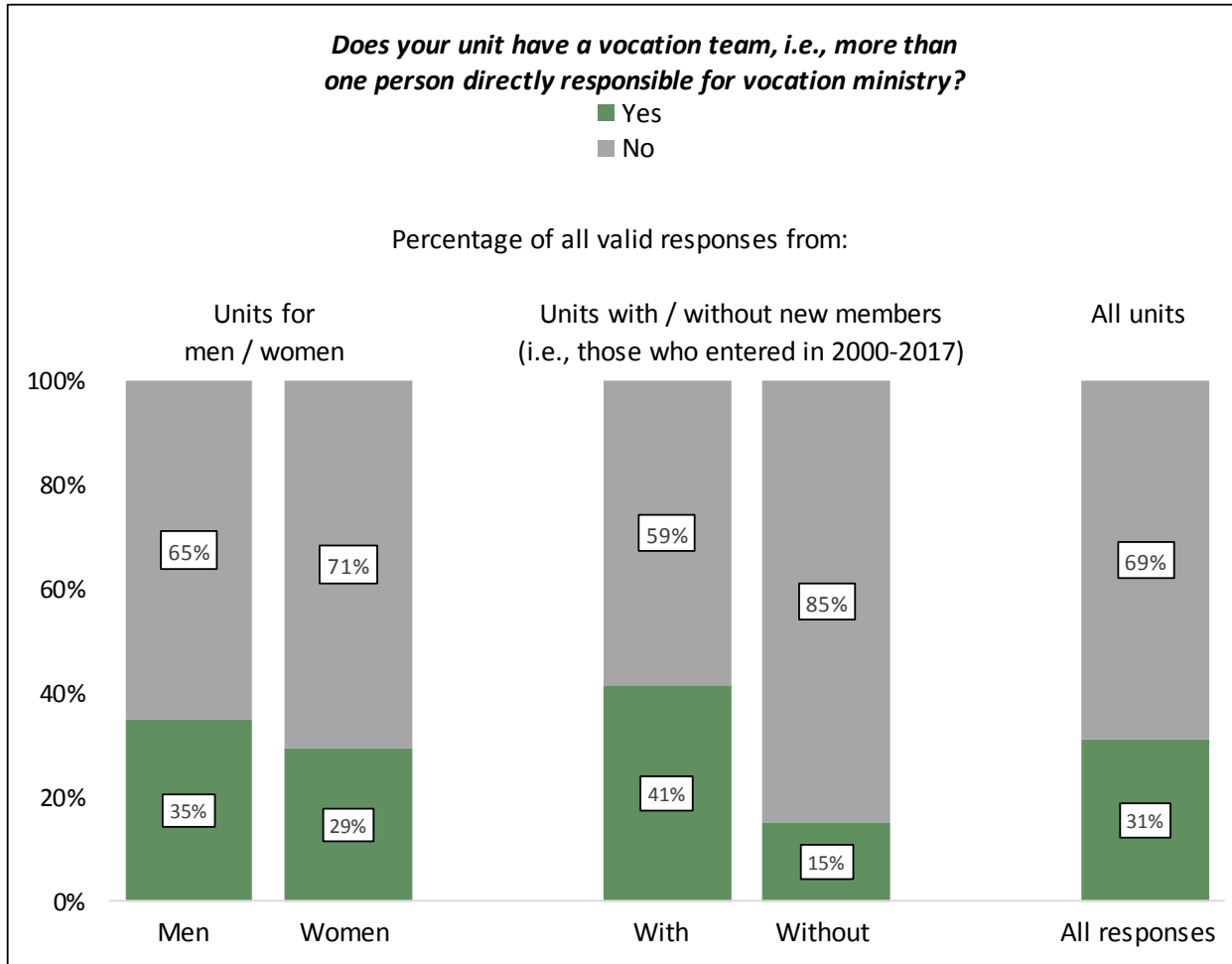
More than half of all responding units (53 percent) have no vocation director. Women’s units are less likely than men’s units to have a vocation director. Furthermore, units with new members are 44 percentage points more likely than units without new members to have a vocation director. Eight in ten units without new members do not have a vocation director.

In almost all cases (96 percent), the vocation director comes from within the unit (not shown on the chart). Furthermore, units with new members are 11 percentage points more likely than units without new members to have a vocation director who is a member of the unit.

Overall, in three-quarters of all responding units with a vocation director (76 percent), the vocation director was engaged part-time in vocation ministry (not shown on the chart).

Nearly all responding units with a vocation director (96 percent) reported that their vocation director is assigned to their unit only (not shown on the chart). It is noteworthy that only women’s units without new members share a vocation director with another institute or society. There are only three of those units.

## Vocation Team



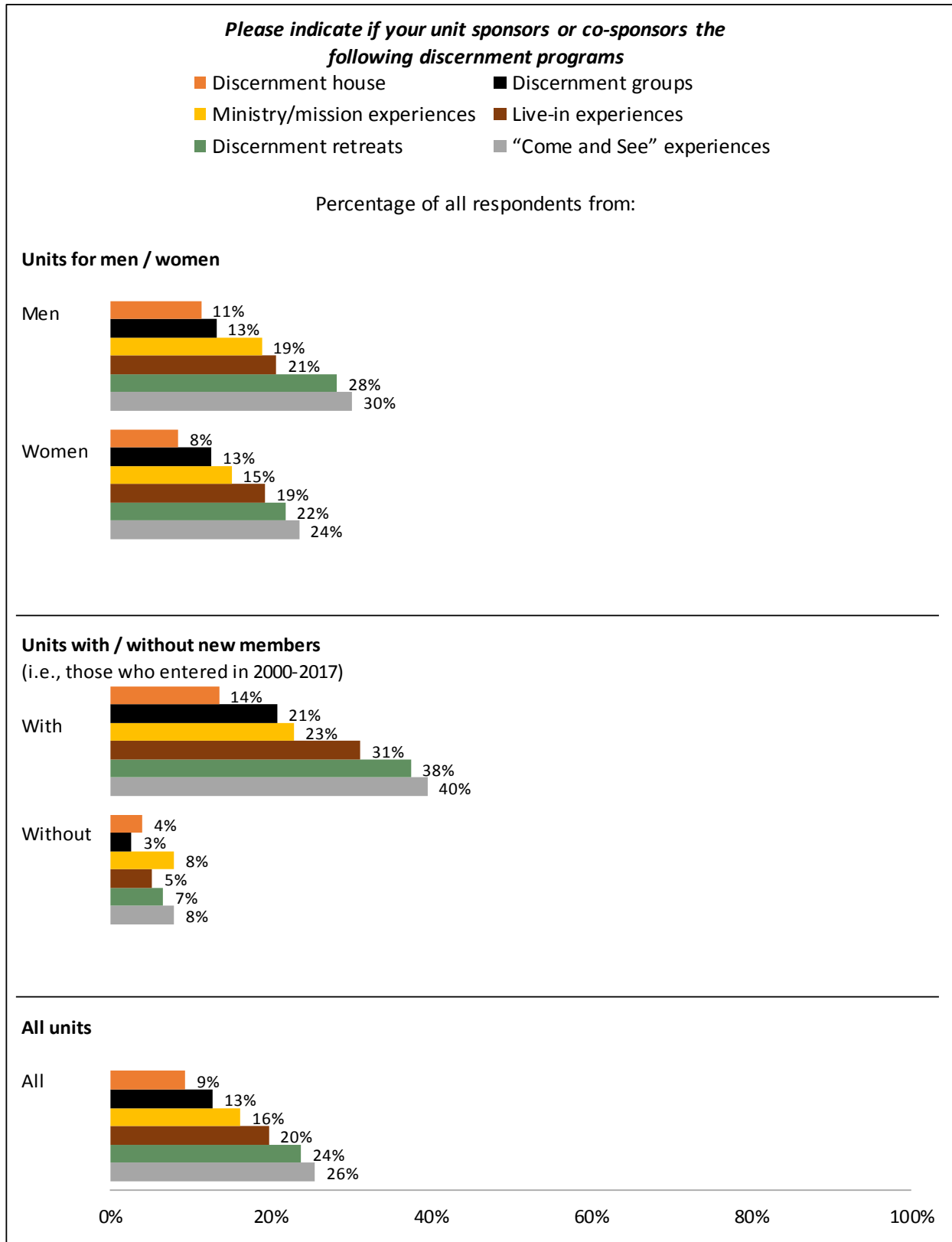
Three in ten responding units (31 percent) have a vocation team, i.e., more than one person directly responsible for vocation ministry.

The chart above shows one significant subgroup difference: units with new members are 26 percentage points more likely than units without new members to have a vocation team.

On average, there are four members (3.6) of the vocation team per unit (a median of three) among the units that responded to this question (not shown on the chart). The number of members of the vocation team ranges from zero to 12 per unit.

Overall, one in four units with a vocation team (27 percent) has member(s) of the unit on their vocation team (not shown on the chart). Units with new members are 24 percentage points more likely than units without new members to have their own member(s) on the vocation team.

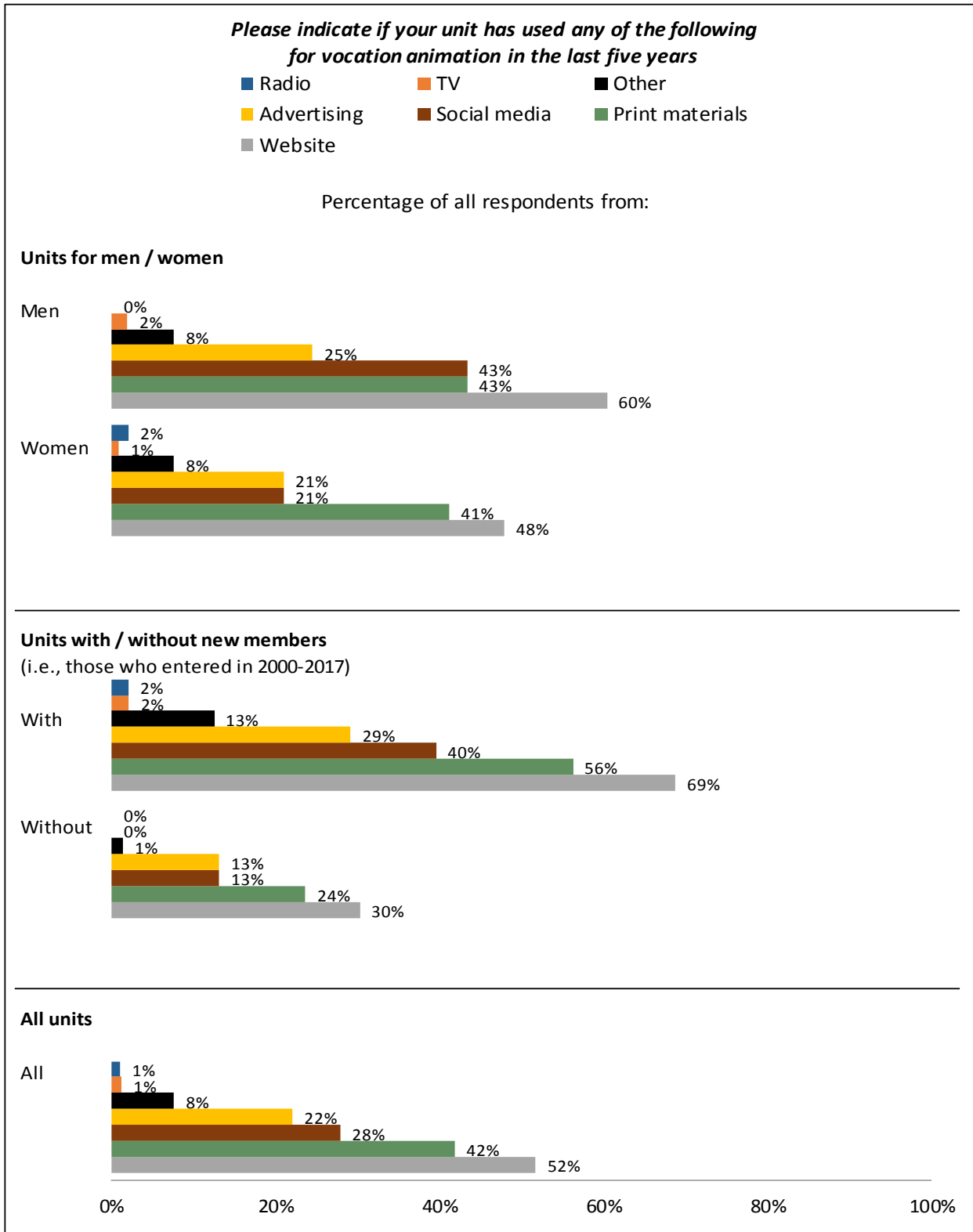
## Discernment Programs



Overall, the biggest group of responding units (26 percent) indicate that they sponsor or co-sponsor “Come and See” experiences, followed by discernment retreats (24 percent), live-in experiences (20 percent), ministry/mission experiences (16 percent), discernment groups (13 percent), and a discernment house (9 percent).

Units with new members are significantly more likely than units without new members to sponsor each of these programs except the discernment house.

## Vocation Animation Materials

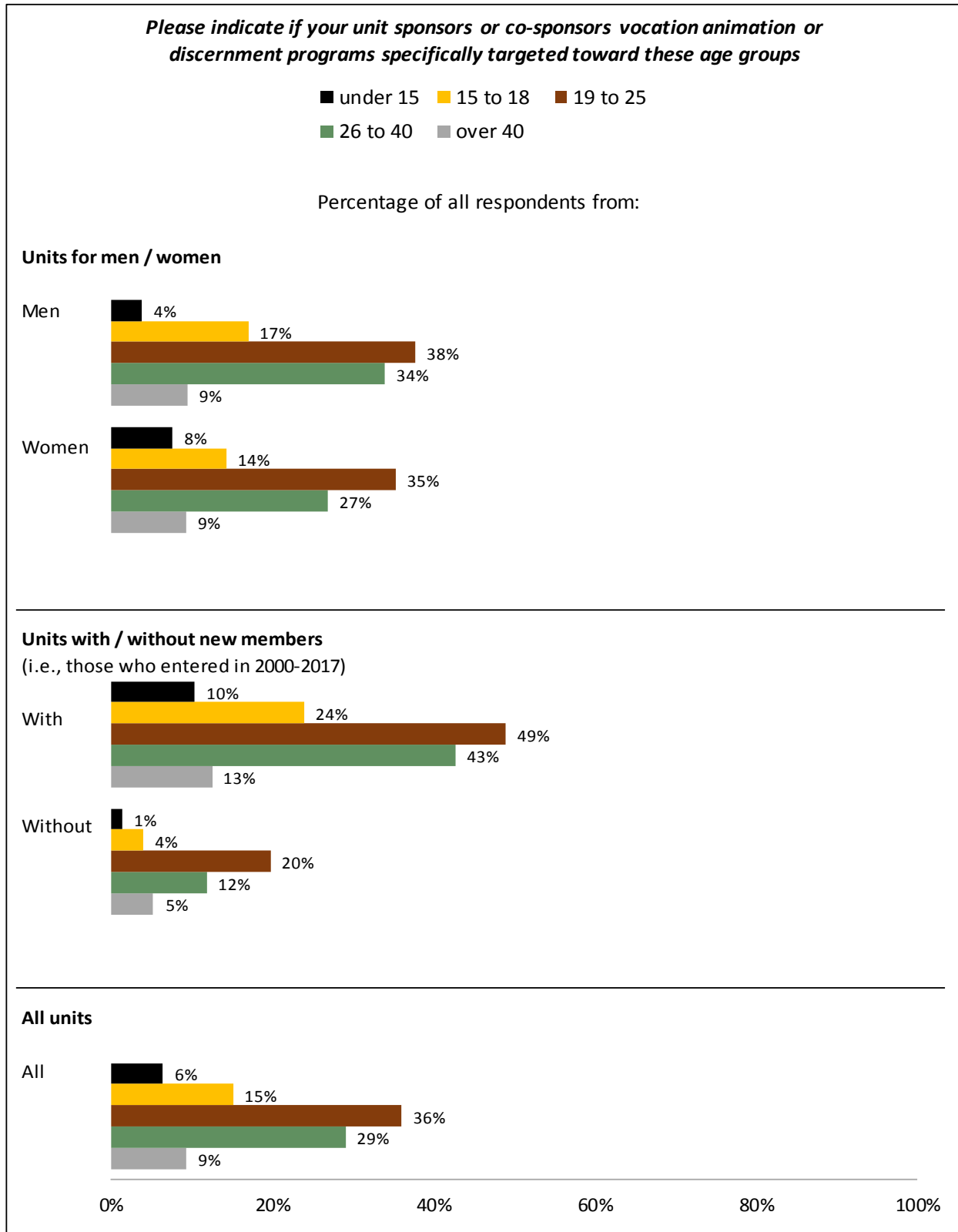


Overall, a unit's website was the most popular tool (52 percent) for vocation animation in the last five years among all responding units. Additional tools included print materials (used by 42 percent of all responding units), social media (28 percent), advertising (22 percent), TV (1 percent), and radio (1 percent). Other tools (reported by 8 percent of all respondents) include parish announcements and preaching in parishes, e-mail communications, DVDs, workshops, Eucharistic adoration, and vocation days as well as temporary tattoos, stickers, and magnets.

The chart above shows some significant differences between the subgroups:

- Women's units are 22 percentage points less likely than men's units to use social media for vocation animation in the last five years.
- Units with new members are significantly more likely than units without new members to use each of the listed tools except for radio and TV.

## Age Groups Targeted in Vocation Animation



Overall, the biggest group of all responding units (36 percent) sponsors or co-sponsors vocation animation or discernment programs specifically targeted toward 19 to 25 year olds. Units with new members are significantly more likely than units without new members to target all age groups except for those over 40 years old.

An open ended question asked about any special vocation animation or recruitment efforts the unit has undertaken in recent years. Overall, 79 respondents reported those kinds of activities. In this group, five reported recruitment efforts in collaboration **with another religious unit**, 11 collaborate **with arch/dioceses** (typically by participating in vocation fairs), 17 collaborate **with parishes** (e.g., by distributing brochures, preaching and participating in parish celebrations), 12 collaborate **with schools** (e.g., by organizing various youth programs and giving talks), and 16 collaborate **with other programs or institutions**. As one of the respondents wrote:

*We have found that young people are busy, so we need to join them where they already are instead of creating new events for them to attend. We are making efforts to be present at large gatherings of young adults hosted by various organizations such as CCO and Couples for Christ.*

In regard to the various kinds of vocation animation and recruitment efforts, 23 respondents mentioned **Internet-based projects** (such as creating or upgrading a vocation website, and using social media), and ten respondents reported using **printed materials** (such as brochures and flyers). Some units advertise in newspapers. One unit reported advertising on buses.

Other units take a more **organic approach**, relying on word of mouth and the personal witness of their members. For example, one of the respondents described their approach in this way:

*From their occupations, the brothers have contact with young people or groups of young people. Among these groups of young people, there are young people who show a certain interest in our life as religious brothers. The person responsible for vocations [head of vocations] is then informed and, with the colleagues who are in contact with the young people interested in our way of life, follows up.*

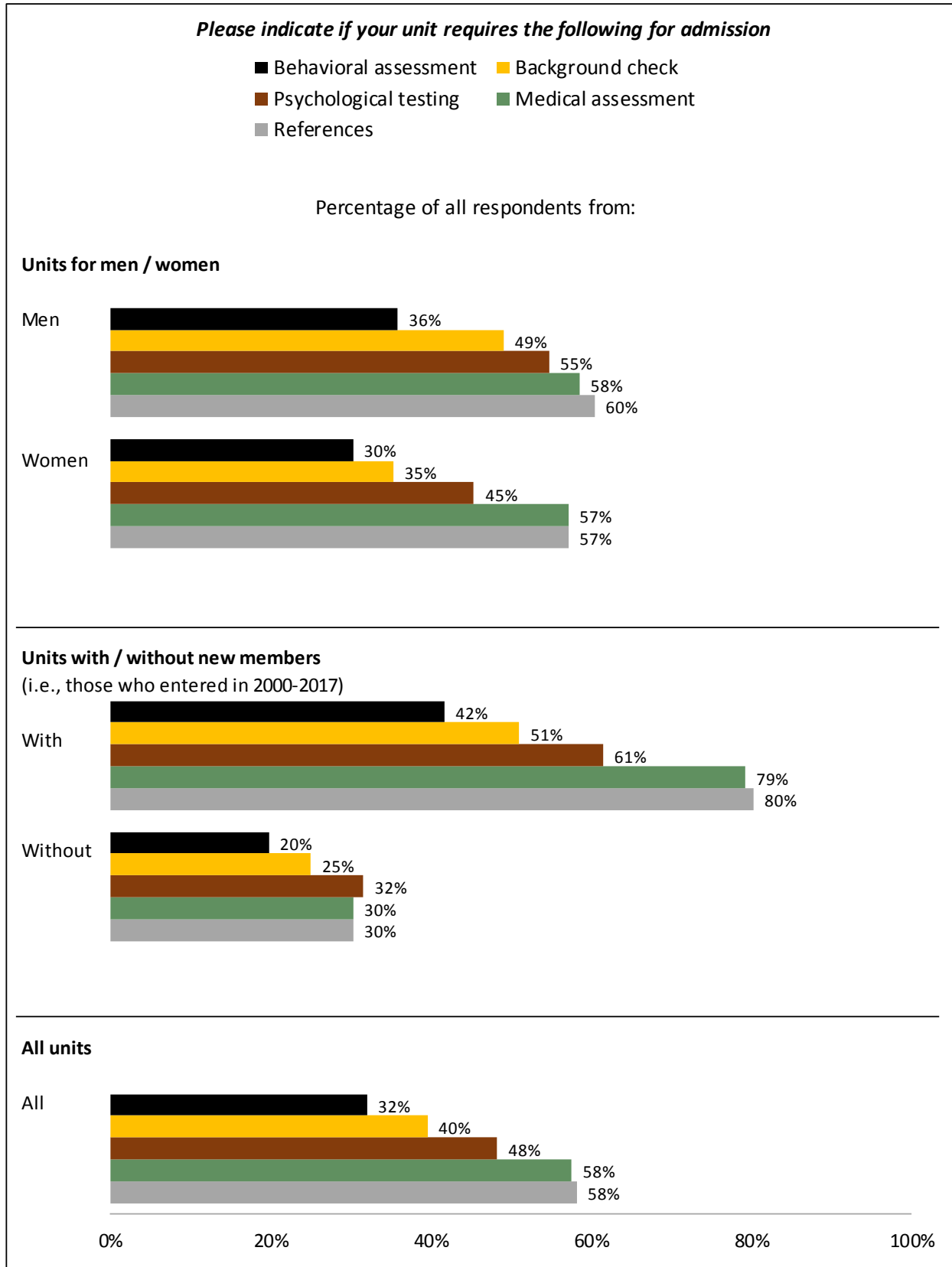
Many of the respondents carried out **periodic events** in their community, to inform groups of people about religious life (such as a “Come and See” event) and carried out more **individualized extended retreats** for those more advanced in their discernment. As one respondent pointed out, those efforts are not simply focusing on increasing the number of vocations to the institute:

*We have never done ‘recruitment.’ Since 1986, we have a discernment house for women. We journey with them so as to help them discover their baptismal call. Are they called to marriage, single life or religious life?? We have married many, a few have gone on to religious life. We have journeyed with over 500 young women who have lived with us. Many have a good marriage because of the experience, some have gone to other communities and some have come to us. The experience has been very positive. We have created many good relationships, we have many good friends.*

Finally, it is worth noting that one does not need to seek new vocations to carry out vocation ministry. Six respondents indicated that they do not seek vocations for their own units and send the applicants elsewhere. Others participate in supporting the discernment process individually.

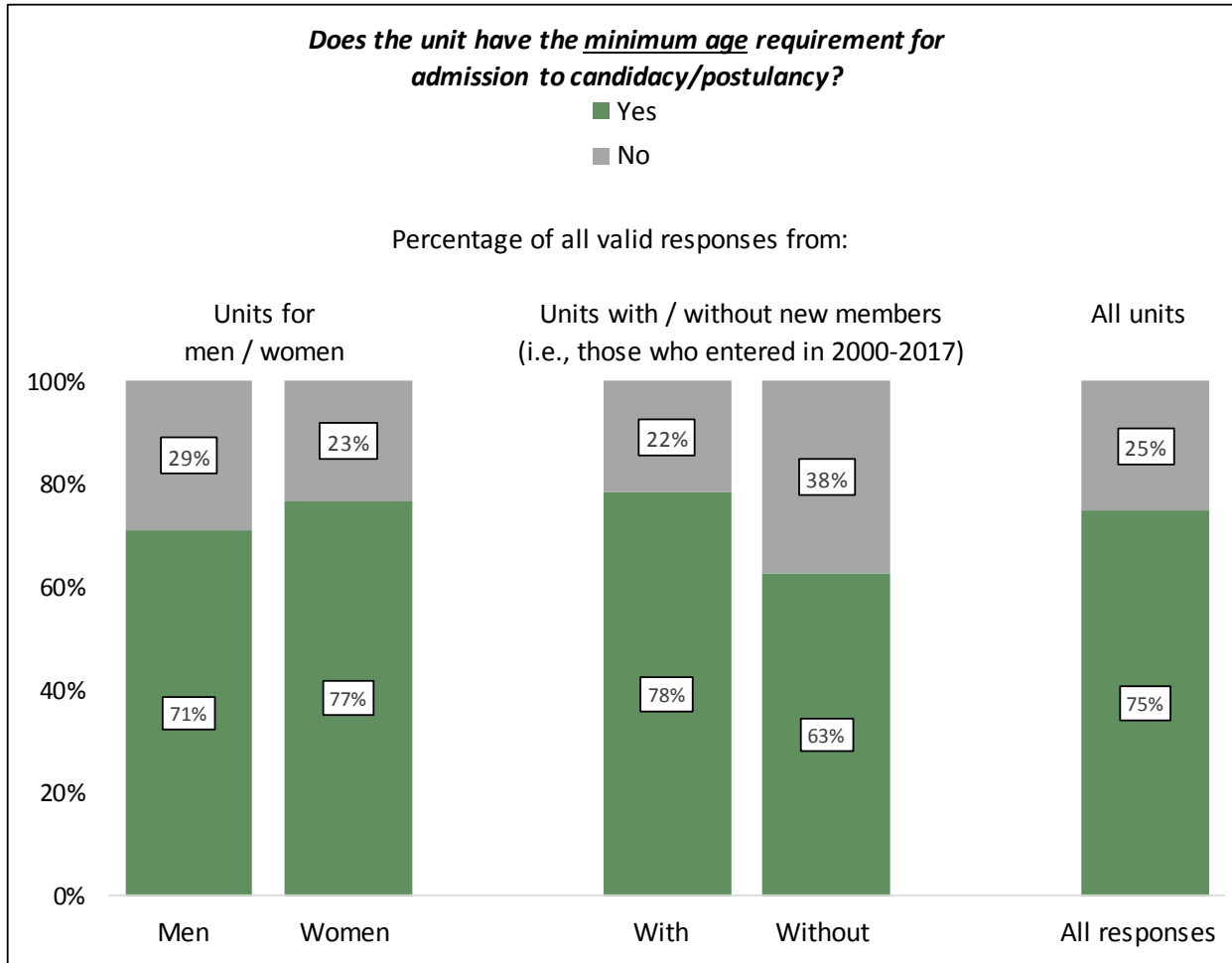


## Admission Requirements



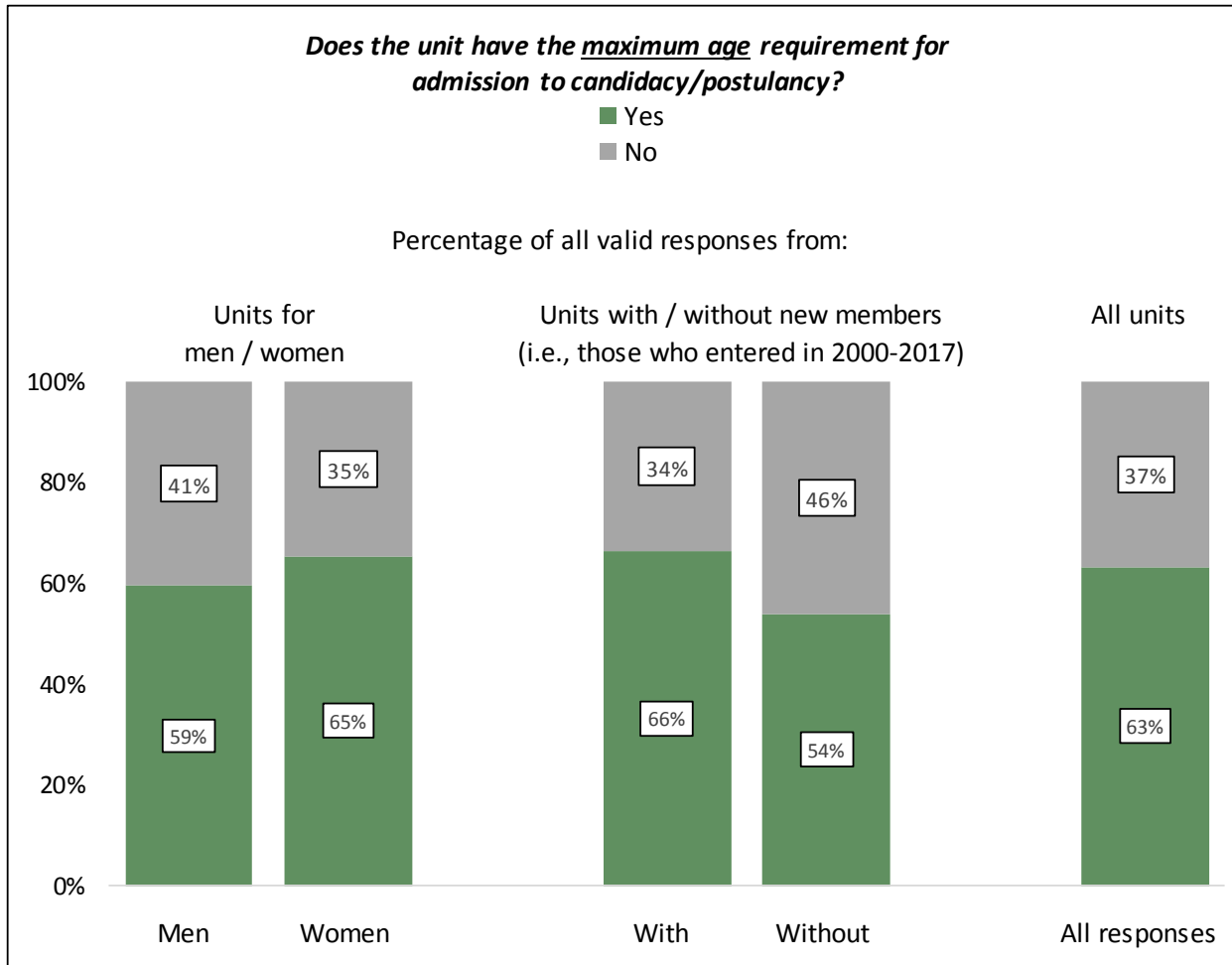
Overall, three in five units (58 percent) require references and medical assessment (58 percent) for admission. Other requirements include psychological testing (required by 48 percent of all respondents), background check (40 percent), and behavioral assessment (32 percent).

Units with new members are more likely than units without new members to have requirements pertaining to each of those categories.



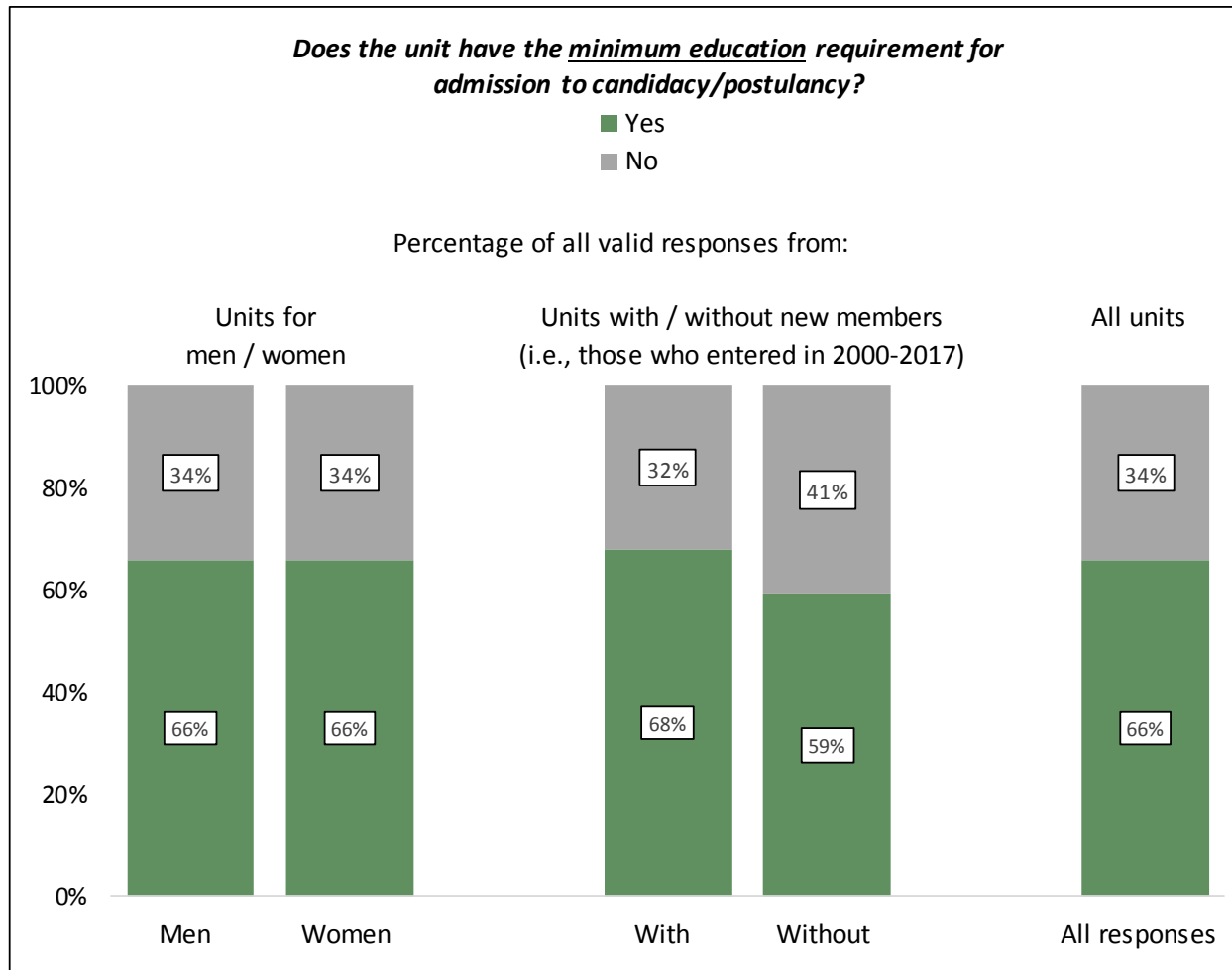
Overall, three quarters of all responding units (75 percent) have a minimum age requirement for admission to candidacy/postulancy. On average, the minimum age is 19 years old (a median of 18). The required minimum age ranges from 16 to 25 years.

The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant. The average minimum age required in men’s units is comparable to that in women’s units. The average minimum age required in units with and without new members is also comparable.



Overall, three in five responding units (63 percent) have a maximum age limit for admission to candidacy/postulancy. On average, the maximum age is 41 years old (a median of 40) among the units that responded to this question. The maximum age reported by units ranges from 30 to 60 years.

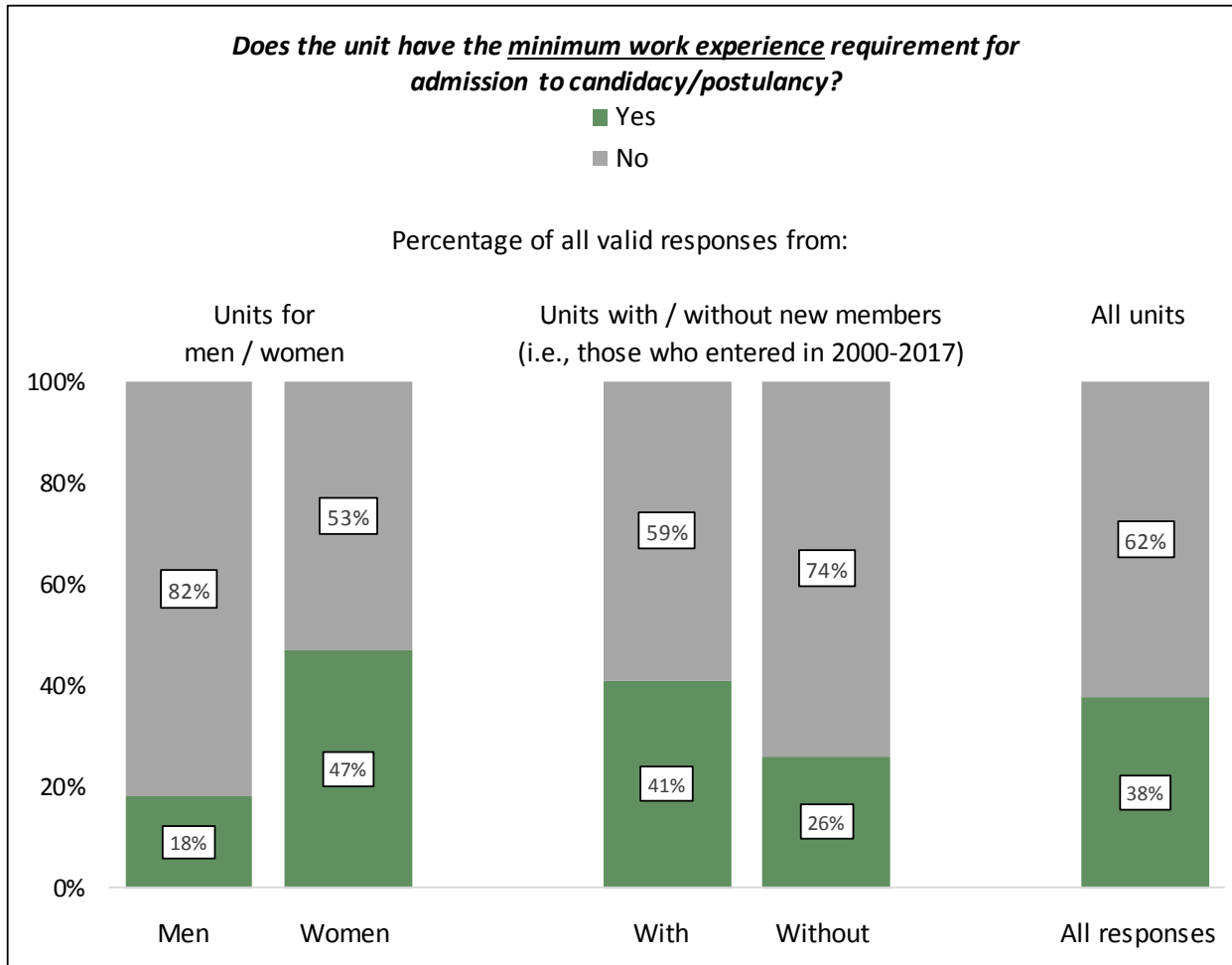
The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant. The average maximum age limit in men's units is comparable to that in women's units. The average maximum age limit in units with new members is also comparable to that in units without new members.



Overall, two thirds of all responding units (66 percent) have a minimum education requirement for admission to candidacy/postulancy.

The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.

In response to an open ended question asking for the description of minimum requirements, 38 units stated that they require either some or completed high school education, 22 require college or university-level education, 20 units require work experience (four require at least one year of such experience, while others do not specify the amount of time required). Responses from many of the units tend to omit objective criteria (such as specific number of years of employment, or education level) and instead focus more on generally assessing applicant's maturity, independence, and ability to work.



Overall, three in five responding units (62 percent) do not have a minimum work experience requirement for admission to candidacy/postulancy.

The chart above shows one significant difference between the subgroups: women's units are 29 percentage points more likely than men's units to have a minimum work experience requirement for admission to candidacy/postulancy.

## Initial Formation Practices

As described in more detail below, in an average unit, pre-candidacy/aspirancy lasts a year, candidacy/postulancy last another year, novitiate takes less than two years, and temporary commitment takes almost five years. A substantial fraction of members in initial formation spends all or part of their formation with others from other units of their institute, society, federation in: candidates/postulants in 50 percent of the units; novices in 27 percent of the units; those in temporary vows/commitment in 70 percent of the units. A substantial fraction of members in initial formation also spends all or part of their formation with others from other institutes or societies: candidates/postulants in 27 percent of the units; novices in 34 percent of the units; those in temporary vows/commitment in 32 percent of the units.

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

Responses for all units

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>#</b>
Pre-candidacy/aspirancy	1.1	1	0 - 2
Candidacy/postulancy	1.1	1	1 - 2
Novitiate	1.7	2	1 - 3
Temporary commitment	4.6	5	1 - 8

The number of years spent at each stage of the formation process is as follows:

- On average, the pre-candidacy/aspirancy (before entrance) lasts one year (a median of one). Responses above two years were excluded from the analysis.
- On average, the candidacy/postulancy (before novitiate) lasts one year (a median of one). Responses above two years were excluded from the analysis.
- On average, the novitiate lasts two years (a median of two). The number of years of novitiate ranges from one to three per unit. Responses above three years were excluded from the analysis.
- On average, the temporary vows/commitment take 5 years (a median of five). Responses above nine years were excluded from the analysis.

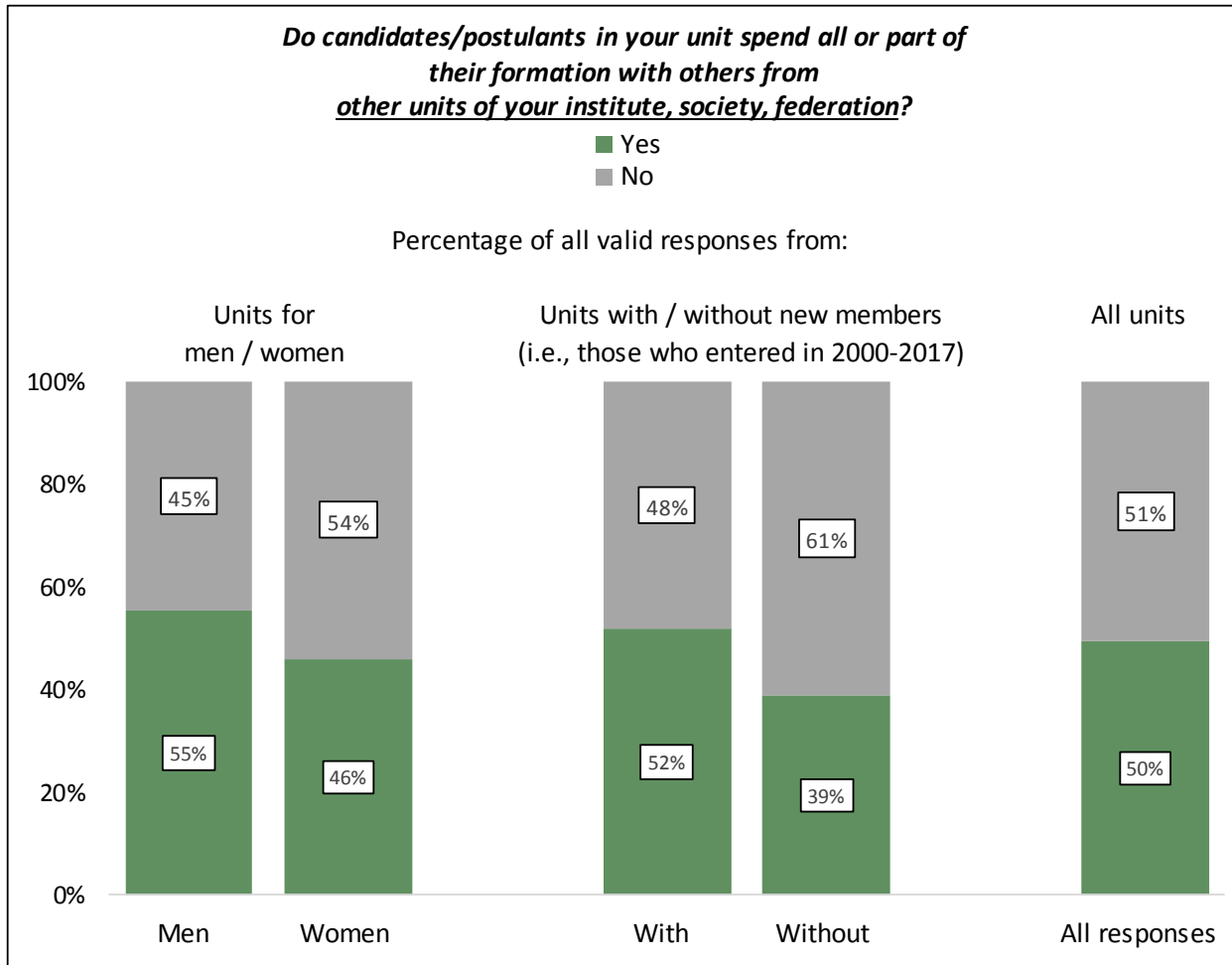
**Please indicate the typical number of years that are required for each period of initial formation or incorporation in your unit  
(if less than a year, please specify fraction of a year):**

Responses from units for:

	Men			Women		
	Mean #	Median #	Range #	Mean #	Median #	Range #
Pre-candidacy/aspirancy	1.0	1	0 - 2	1.1	1	0 - 2
Candidacy/postulancy	1.1	1	1 - 2	1.2	1	1 - 2
Novitiate	1.3	1	1 - 2	2.0	2	1 - 3
Temporary vows/commitment	4.2	4	1 - 8	4.8	5	2 - 7

There are a few noteworthy differences between men's and women's units:

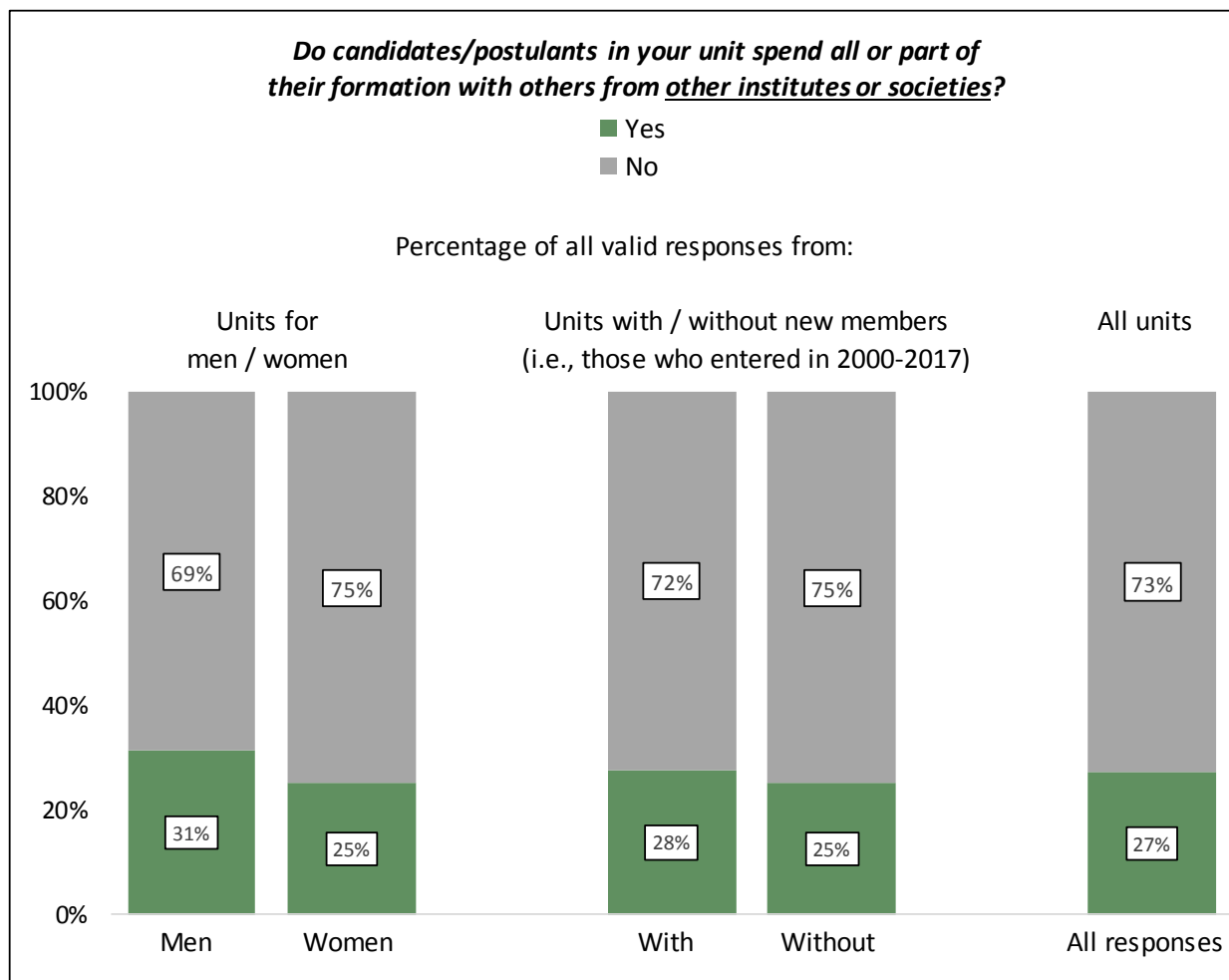
- The average number of years spent in novitiate in men's units is 0.7 of that in women's units.
- The average number of years spent in temporary vows/commitment in men's units is 0.9 of that in women's units.



Overall, candidates/postulants in half of all responding units (50 percent) spend all or part of their formation with others from other units of their institute, society, or federation.

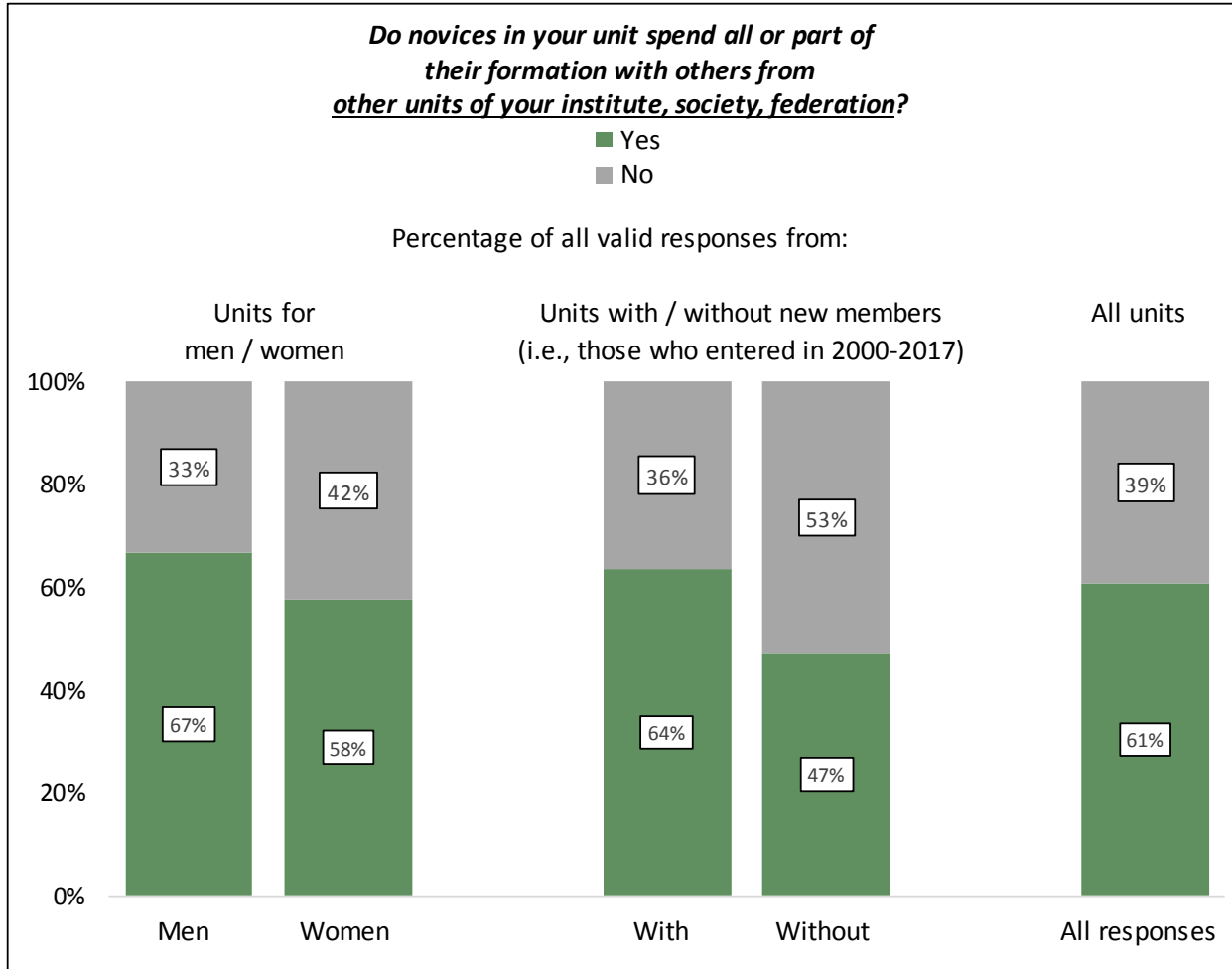
The differences between men's and women's units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.





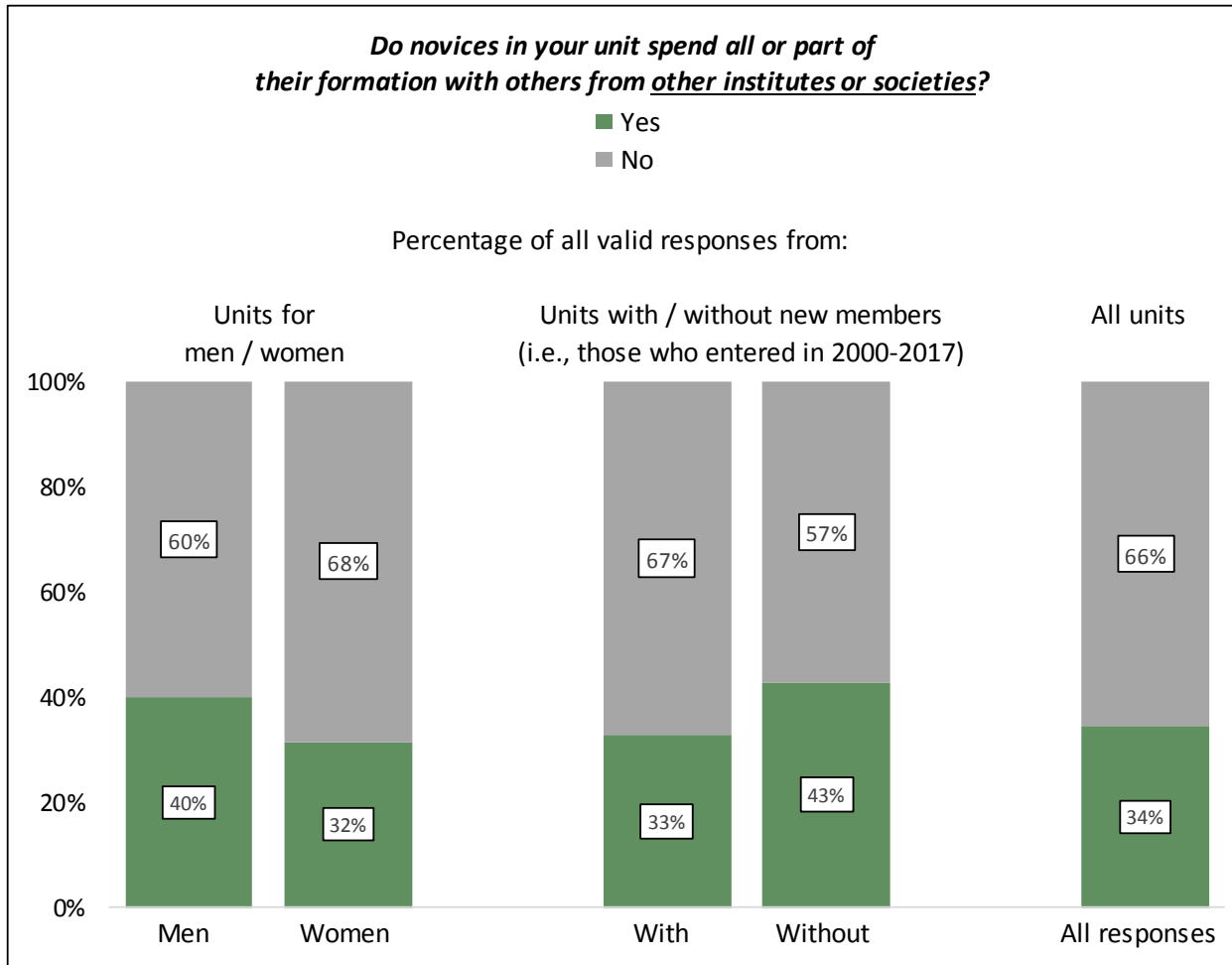
Overall, three quarters of all responding units (73 percent) do not have candidates/postulants spending all or part of their formation with others from other institutes or societies.

The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.



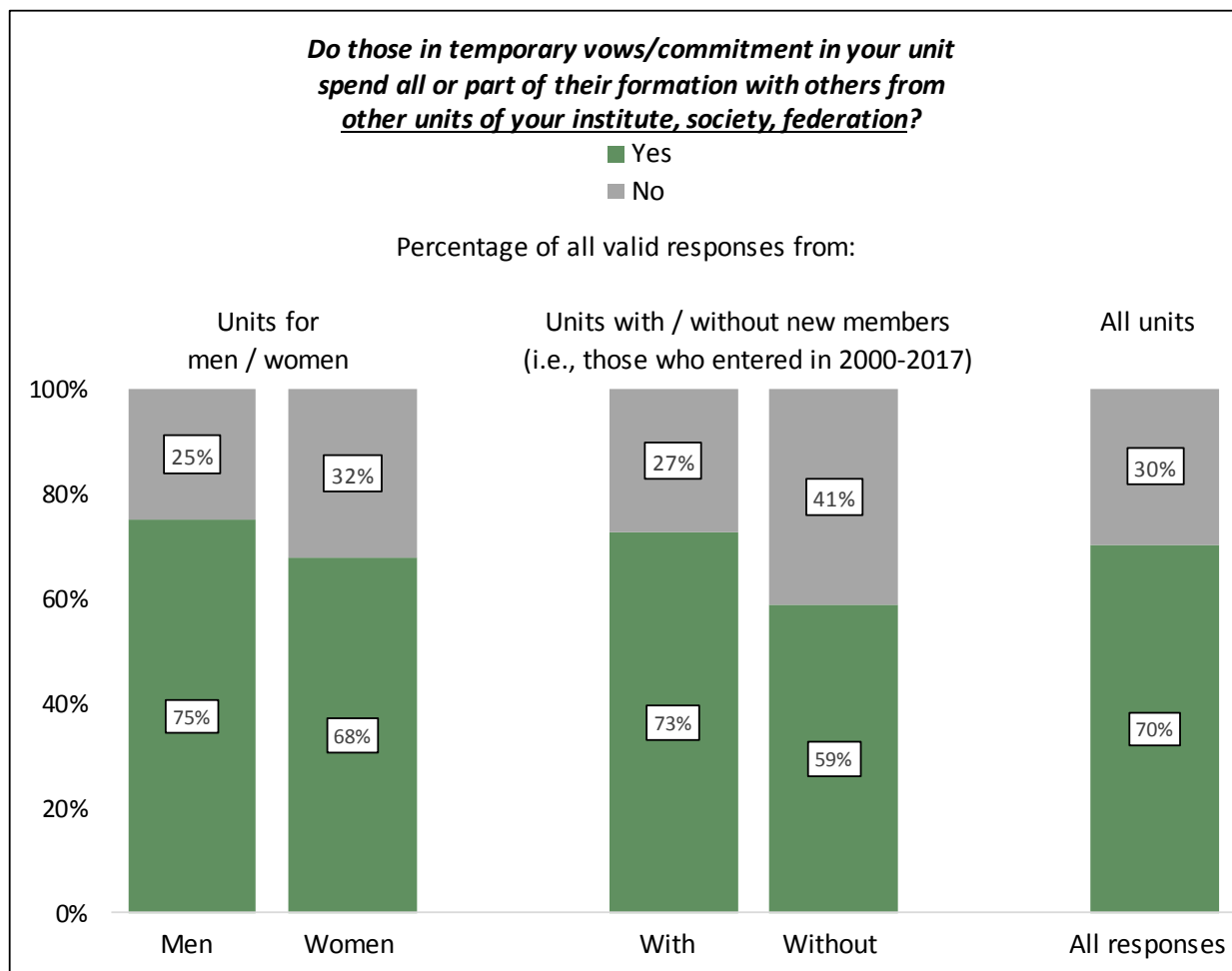
Overall, novices three in five of all responding units (61 percent) spend all or part of their formation with others from other units of your institute, society, federation.

The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.



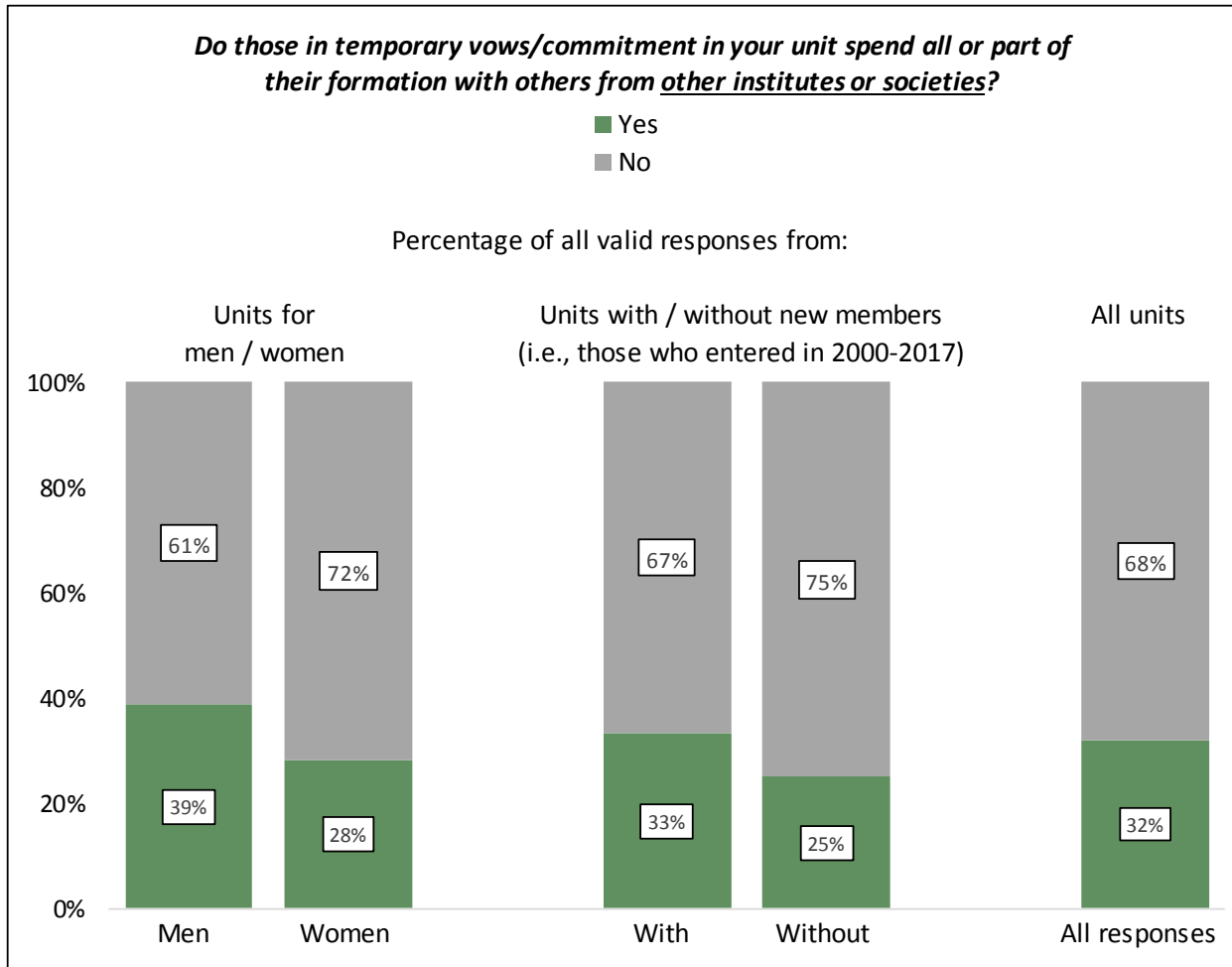
Overall, two thirds of all responding units (66 percent) do not have novices spending all or part of their formation with others from other institutes or societies.

The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.



Overall, seven in ten responding units (70 percent) have those in temporary vows/commitment spending all or part of their formation with others from units of the same institute, society, or federation.

The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.



Overall, seven in ten responding units (68 percent) do not have those in temporary vows/commitment spending all or part of their formation with others from other institutes or societies.

The differences between men and women units as well as between units with and without new members are not significant.

## **PART II: Findings from the Survey and Focus Groups of New Members**

This part of the report presents findings from the survey of new members and includes selected representative comments from three focus groups of new members. For this study, “new members” are current candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows as well as those who professed final or perpetual vows since 2000. Overall, 174 major superiors who responded to the survey of major superiors provided information about the presence of new members in their units. Out of this number, 51 major superiors (29 percent) indicated that there are new members in their units and 123 major superiors (71 percent) reported that there are no new members in their units.

The final contact list for the survey of new members included 186 persons (141 English-speaking and 45 French-speaking). The process for developing the questionnaire for new members was similar to that for the survey of major superiors: CARA and NAVFD developed the survey questions in English and NAVFD translated the questionnaire into French. CARA then programmed the survey into an online format (in English and French) and hosted it on the CARA website, so that those who prefer to respond to the survey online could do so. The survey of new members was administered between July 2017 and October 2017. CARA sent the survey invitation by email and, in cases where email address was not available, by letter to all identified new members. CARA sent two follow-up reminders in both formats, in both languages. Overall, 117 new members responded to the survey by the cut-off date at the end of October 2017. After removing the responses from men and women religious who did not meet the definition of new members as well as responses that were unusable due to incompleteness, the final dataset included 102 new members, for a response rate of 54 percent.

The survey of new members was designed to identify what attracted these men and women to religious life and to their particular institute; what they found helpful in their discernment process; who supported or discouraged them in their discernment; their attitudes and preferences regarding community life, community prayer, ministry, and the wearing of a religious habit; and what sustains and challenges them in religious life. The survey also asked about their background characteristics as well as their experience before entering religious life.

The third phase of the study involved three focus groups of new members. All focus groups were arranged by NAVFD and led by a CARA researcher. One focus group consisted of twenty religious from a variety of religious institutes around Canada who had gathered for a retreat in Saskatoon in July. The focus group was conducted at the end of the retreat. A second focus group consisted of four Jesuits and was conducted at the motherhouse of a religious congregation in Montréal in August. The third focus group was conducted at Regis College, University of Toronto, in September and consisted of approximately 15 new members from a variety of religious institutes in and near Toronto. All focus groups used the same protocol and lasted approximately one and a half hours. The focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed, and selected comments from the focus groups are included where appropriate in this part of the report.

## New Member Demographics and Background

### Gender and Age

For the purpose of this study, new members are defined as those who entered religious life between 2000 and 2017. Among new members who responded to this question, 68 percent are female and 31 percent are male.

<b>Age of New Members</b>			
Responses for all units			
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
	#	#	#
Age when first considered religious life	22	20	6 - 55
Age when entered religious institute	35	33	19 - 65
Age at first profession	38	37	21 - 70
Age at final vows/perpetual commitment	44	42	24 - 73
Age at ordination to the priesthood	40	38	32 - 58
Current age	44	41	22 - 78

In general, each of the new members completed a series of steps to join religious life:

- On average, new members were 22 years old when they first considered religious life (a median of 20 years of age).
- On average, new members were 35 years old when they entered a religious institute (a median of 33 years of age).
- On average, new members were 38 years old when they made their first profession (a median of 37 years of age).
- On average, new members were/will be 44 years old when they professed/expect to profess final vows/perpetual commitment (a median of 42 years of age).
- On average, applicable new members were/will be 40 years old when they were ordained/expect to be ordained to the priesthood (a median of 38 years of age).
- On average, new members are currently 44 years old (a median of 41 years of age).

## **Subgroup Comparisons among New Members by Gender and Age**

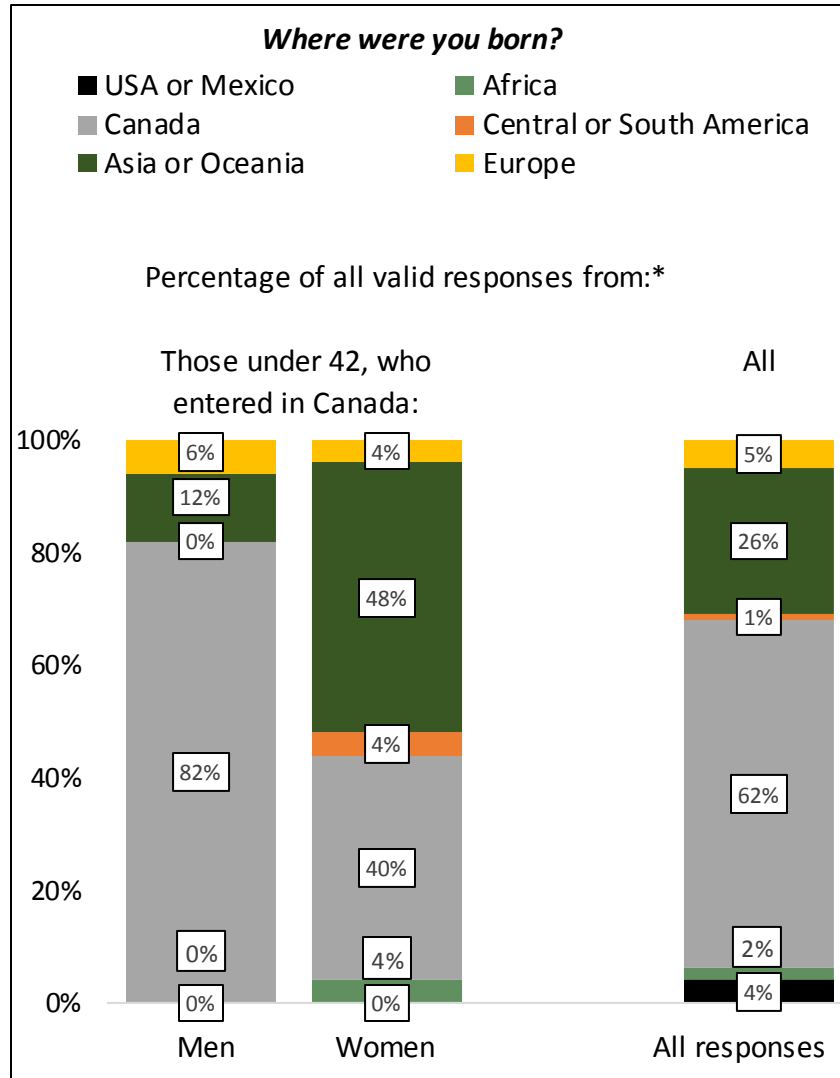
As described in the section on Admission Requirements in Part I, 63 percent of the responding units have a maximum age limit for admission to candidacy/postulancy which is, on average, 41 years old. Since new members at this age and below are, arguably, most representative of the age group of current, prospective applicants, this group is most likely to be of particular interest to vocation ministers.

Not all new members were born in Canada, as shown in the section on Country of Birth and Native Language. Among the foreign-born, 26 percent entered religious life before moving to Canada. Arguably, Canadian vocation teams will be most interested in the experiences and attitudes of new members who entered religious institutes in Canada, since those individuals are most representative of the prospective applicants targeted by the domestic vocation ministry.

Finally, the backgrounds, experiences, and attitudes of men and women in religious life may differ significantly from each other. For those reasons, all the findings in this part of the report are presented separately for two groups of respondents: (1) men and (2) women who are under 42 years old and who entered religious life in Canada since 2000. A caveat should be added that those targeted subsamples are very small (27 women and 17 men), so differences between them must be interpreted with caution.



## Country of Birth and Native Language



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, three in five new members who replied to this question (62 percent) were born in Canada. An additional 4 percent was born somewhere else in North America (i.e., Mexico and United States). The second most common world region was Asia and Oceania (26 percent of new members were born there), followed by Europe (5 percent), Africa (2 percent), and Central and South America (1 percent).

There are two significant differences between new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada in regard to place of birth:

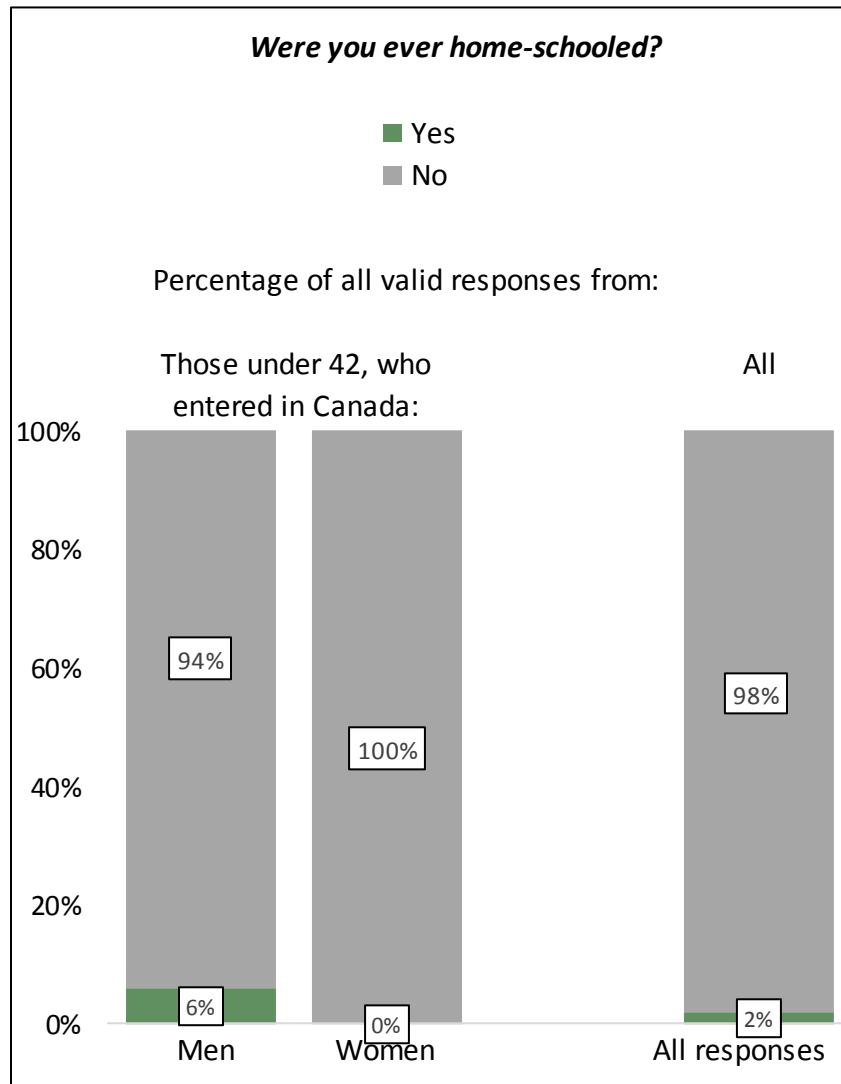
- Women are 42 percentage points less likely than men to come from Canada.
- Women are 36 percentage points more likely than men to come from Asia or Oceania.

Out of 39 new members not born in Canada, 74 percent entered a religious institute after moving to Canada and 26 percent entered before moving to Canada.

The respondents who were not born in Canada were most likely to be born in the Philippines (8 respondents), Vietnam (7 respondents), and the United States (3 respondents). Two respondents were born in each of the following: Hong Kong, Netherlands, and Trinidad and Tobago. One respondent was born in each of the following: the Azores, Bahrain, China, Haiti, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

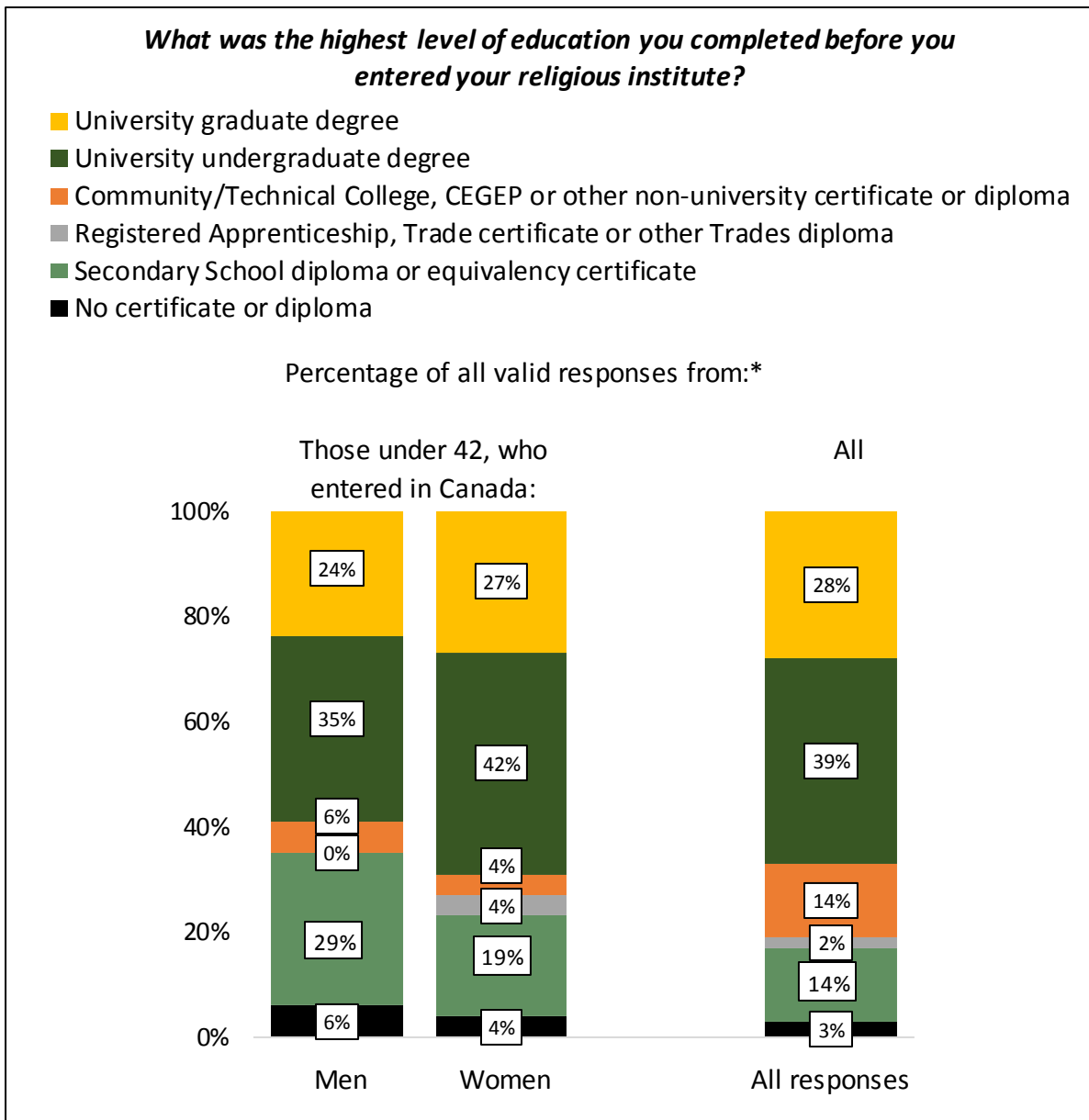
Unsurprisingly, the two most common native languages are English (reported by 20 respondents) and French (10 respondents). Other languages include: Tagalog / Filipino (9 respondents), Vietnamese (8 respondents), and Chinese (either Mandarin or Cantonese spoken by 4 respondents). One respondent was a native speaker of each of the following: Arabic, Creole, Dutch, Igbo, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish.

### Education



Overall, 98 percent of new members who replied to this question were never home-schooled. One respondent was home-schooled for 2 years and the other for 12 years.

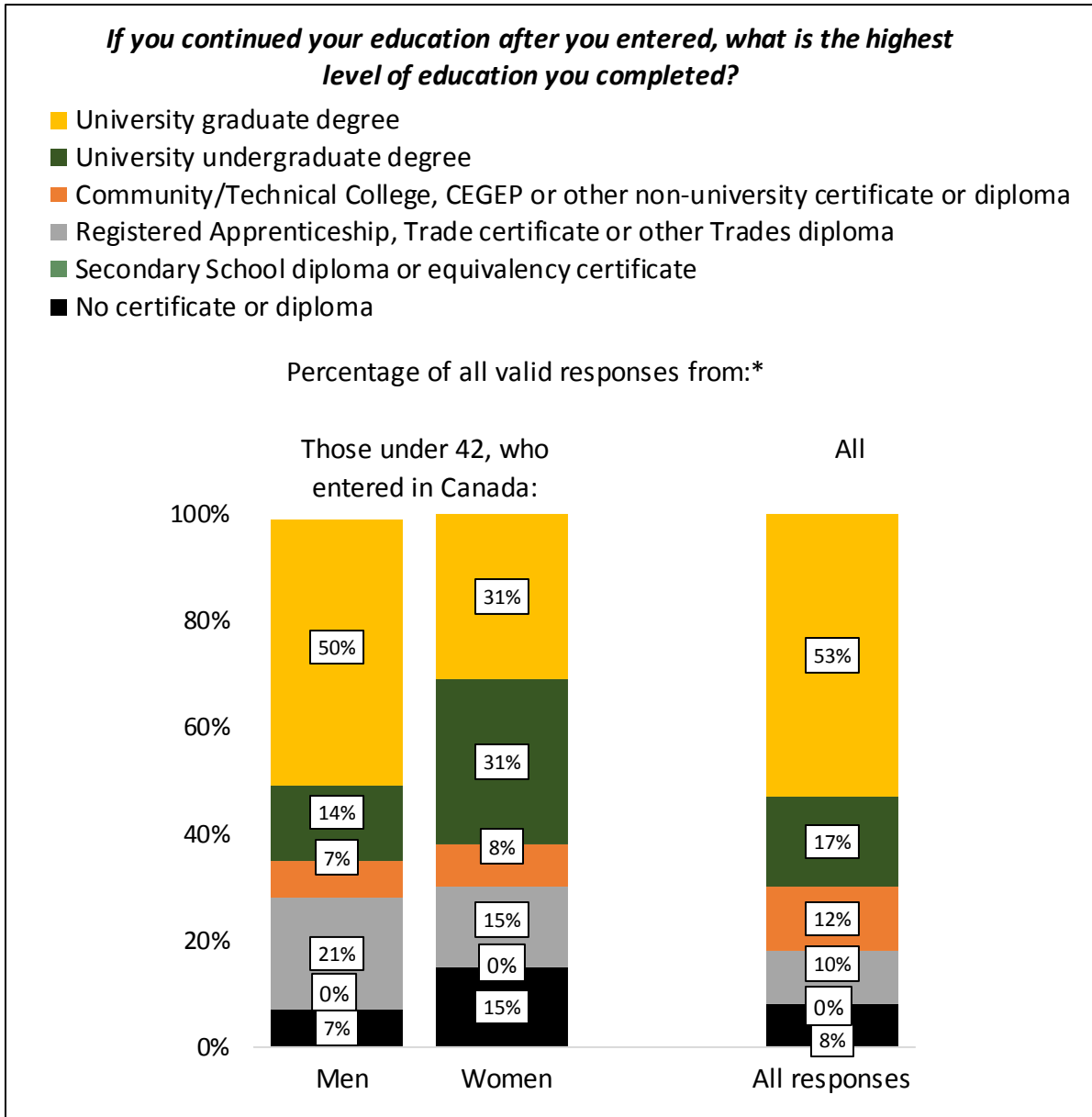
Among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada who responded to this question, there are no significant differences between women and men. Notably, only men were ever home-schooled.



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, new members who responded to this question were most likely to have earned a university undergraduate degree before they entered their religious institute. Seven in ten (67 percent) had at least a university undergraduate or graduate degree.

Among new members who are under 42 and who entered religious life in Canada, there are no significant differences between men and women.

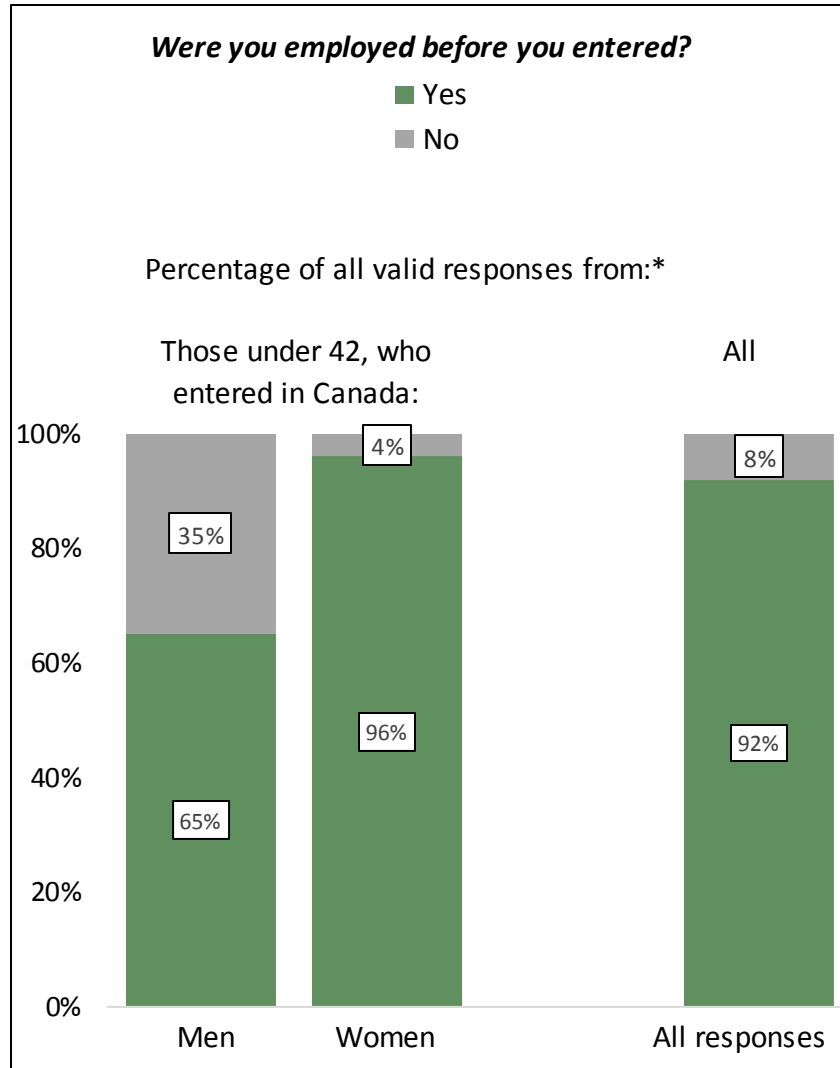


\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, half of new members who responded to this question (53 percent) earned a university graduate degree after they entered their religious institute.

Among new members who are under 42 and who entered religious life in Canada, there are no significant differences between men and women.

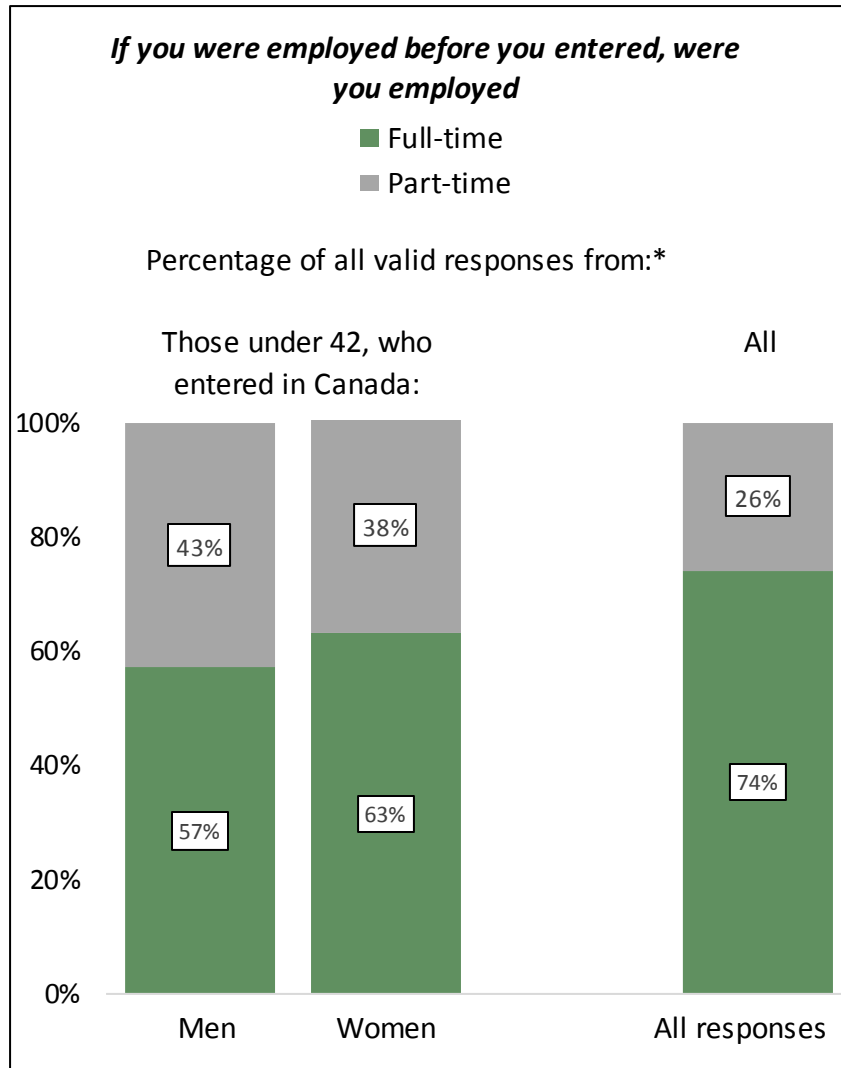
## Employment



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, 90 percent of new members who replied to this question were employed before they entered religious life.

Among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, women are 31 percentage points more likely than men to state that were employed before they entered religious life.



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, 74 percent of new members who were employed before they entered responded that they were employed full-time.

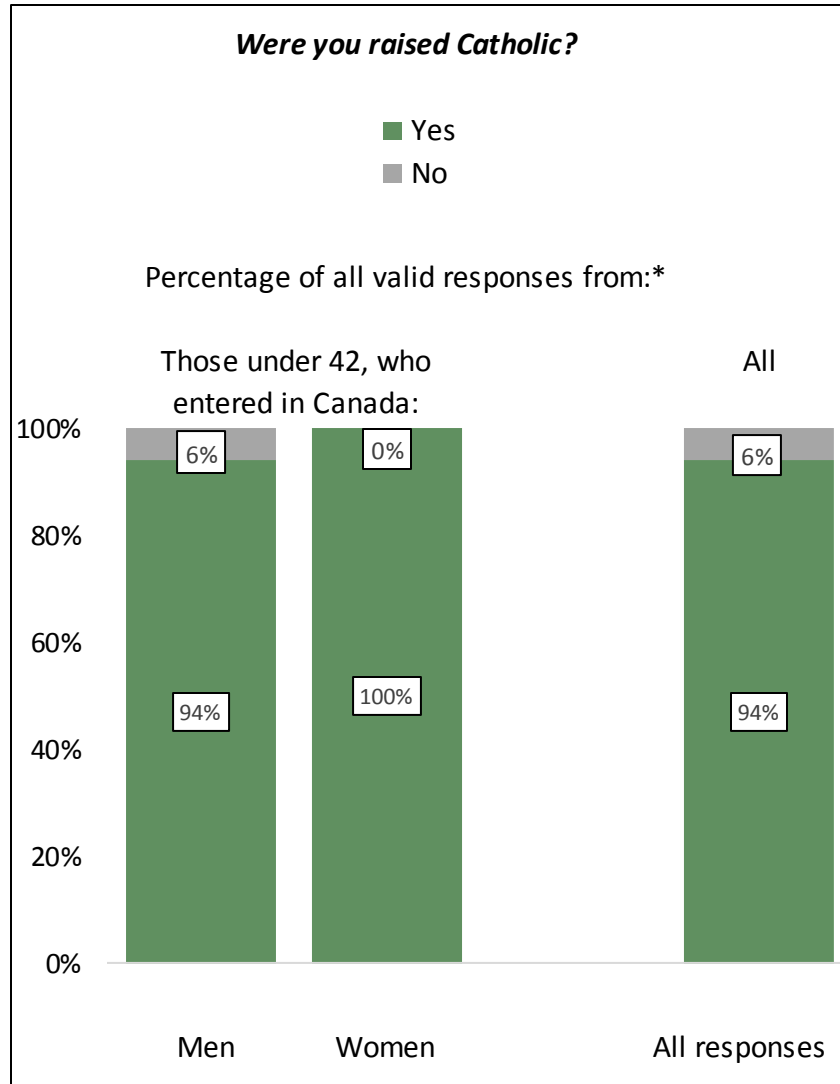
Among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, the responses from women and men are not significantly different.

### **Marital History and Children**

Overall, 90 percent of new members who replied to this question were never married. All new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada and who responded to this question were never married.

Overall, 95 percent of new members who replied to this question do not have any children. All new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada and who responded to this question do not have any children.

## Religious and Ministry Background



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, 94 percent of new members who replied to this question were raised Catholic. Those who entered the Catholic Church as adults did so at an average age of 27 years (a median of 24 years). The youngest convert was 22 years old and the oldest was 37 years old.

Among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, the difference between women and men is not significant.

**Did you attend any of the following before you entered?**

Percentage of new members:

	Those under 42, who entered in Canada:		All
	Men	Women	
	%	%	
Catholic elementary	53	67	55
Catholic high school	53	63	55
Parish-based religious education/CCD/RCIA	41	33	34
Catholic college or university	12	19	26
Ministry formation program	18	26	17
Other	18	7	11

More than half of new members (55 percent) attended a Catholic school for their elementary and high school education. A third report attending parish-based religious education/CCD/RCIA and a quarter attended a Catholic college or university.

One in six attended a ministry formation program before entering religious life and one in ten report some “other” category of education, including:

*Benedictine Minor Seminary*

*Secular university studying philosophy and psychology*

*[P]ublic elementary*

*Catholic Formation Program for Young Adults - 9 month program*

*Retreats*

*Youth for Christ - youth group*

*Private instruction prior to confirmation in Catholic Church*

*Grand Seminaire (5 years)*

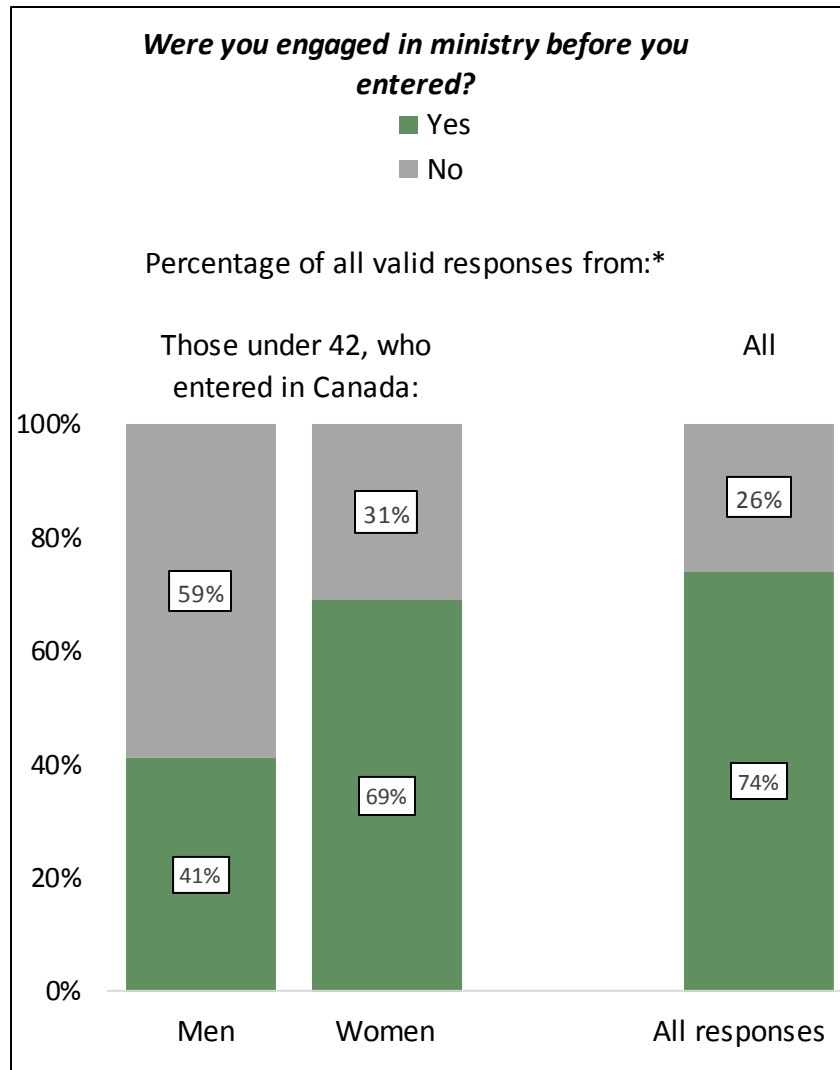
*[M]issionary experiences*

*During my adolescence, public schools no longer claimed the qualifier of Catholic. I attended a private Catholic school and a public non-confessional school before doing CEGEP (public college).*

*Formation in pastoral school and family.*



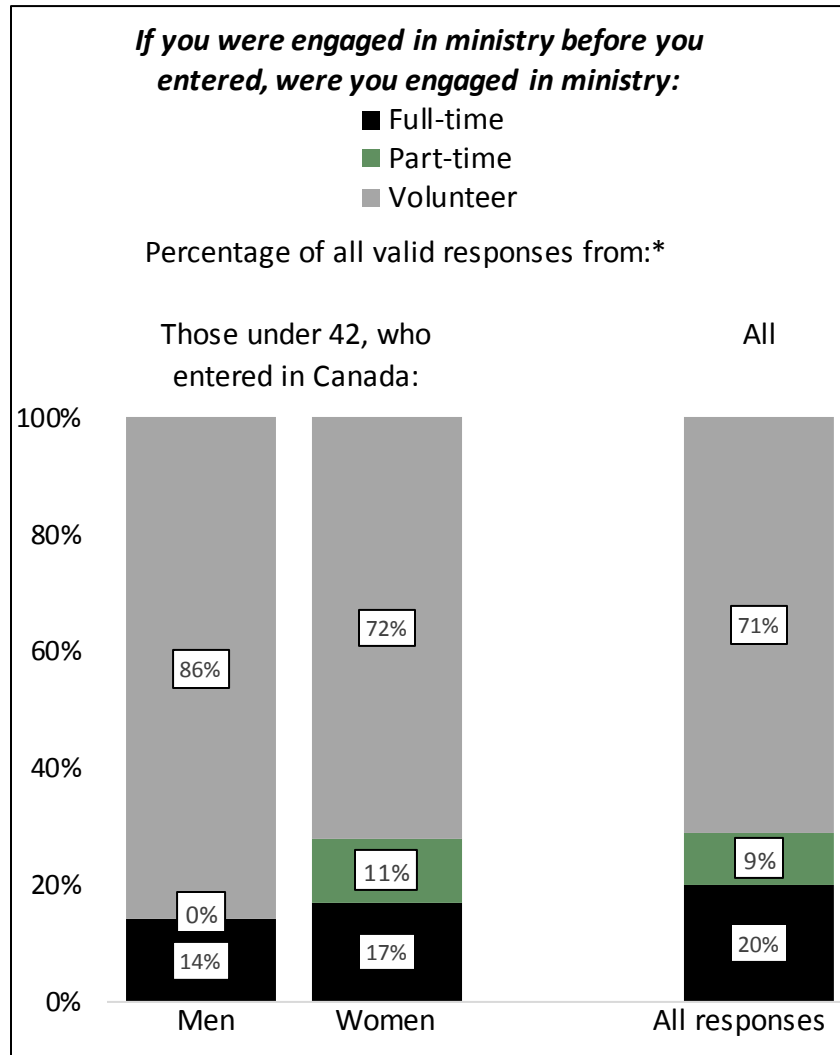
Among new members who are under 42 and who entered religious life in Canada, there are no significant differences between men and women.



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, 74 percent of new members who replied to this question were engaged in ministry before they entered religious life.

Among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, there are no significant differences in the proportion of women and men engaged in ministry before they entered.



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, 71 percent of new members who were engaged in ministry before they entered religious life, were volunteers. By comparison, 20 percent were engaged in full-time and 9 percent in part-time ministry.

Among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, there are no significant differences between women and men.

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

Percentage of new members:\*

	<b>Those under 42, who entered in Canada:</b>		<b>All</b>
	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting	53	44	56
Liturgical ministry	47	48	47
Young adult ministry or group	47	74	43
Retreats	47	30	37
Youth ministry or group	59	41	36
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	47	30	36
World Youth Day	71	33	34
Music ministry, cantor, choir	29	44	31
Faith-sharing group	35	37	28
Social and ecological justice	29	22	27
Campus ministry or group	29	33	22
Religious institute volunteer program	0	7	8

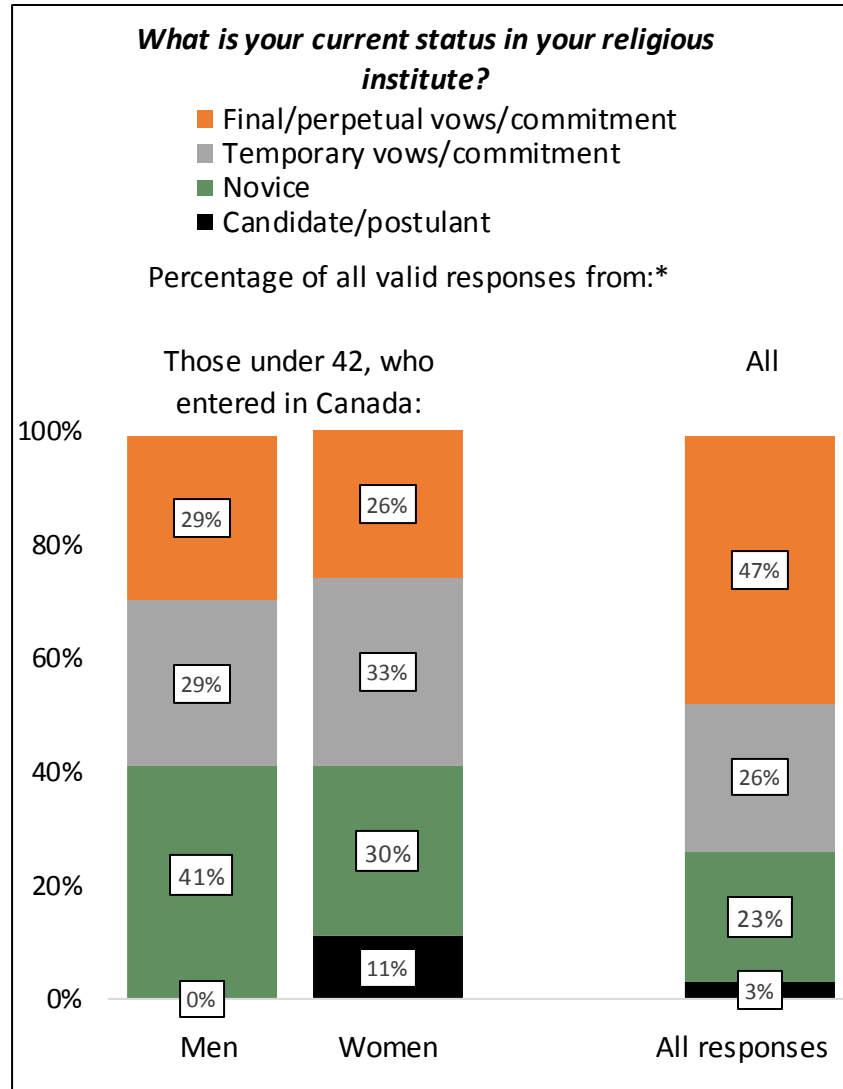
\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Almost half of new members were involved in liturgical ministry in a parish before entering their religious institute. More than half (56 percent) were involved in other volunteer work in a parish or other setting.

- About four in ten were involved in a young adult ministry or group (43 percent), or in retreats (37 percent).
- About a third were involve in youth ministry or a youth group (36 percent), in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or RCIA (36 percent), or in World Youth Day (34 percent).
- Three in ten were involved in music ministry, cantor, choir (31 percent), in a faith-sharing group (28 percent), or in a social and ecological justice group (27 percent).
- One in five was involved in campus ministry (22 percent) and one in ten was in a religious institute volunteer program (8 percent).

Among new members who are under 42 and who entered religious life in Canada, there is one significant difference between men and women: women were 38 percentage points less likely than men to participate in World Youth Day.

## Current and Previous Status in Religious Life

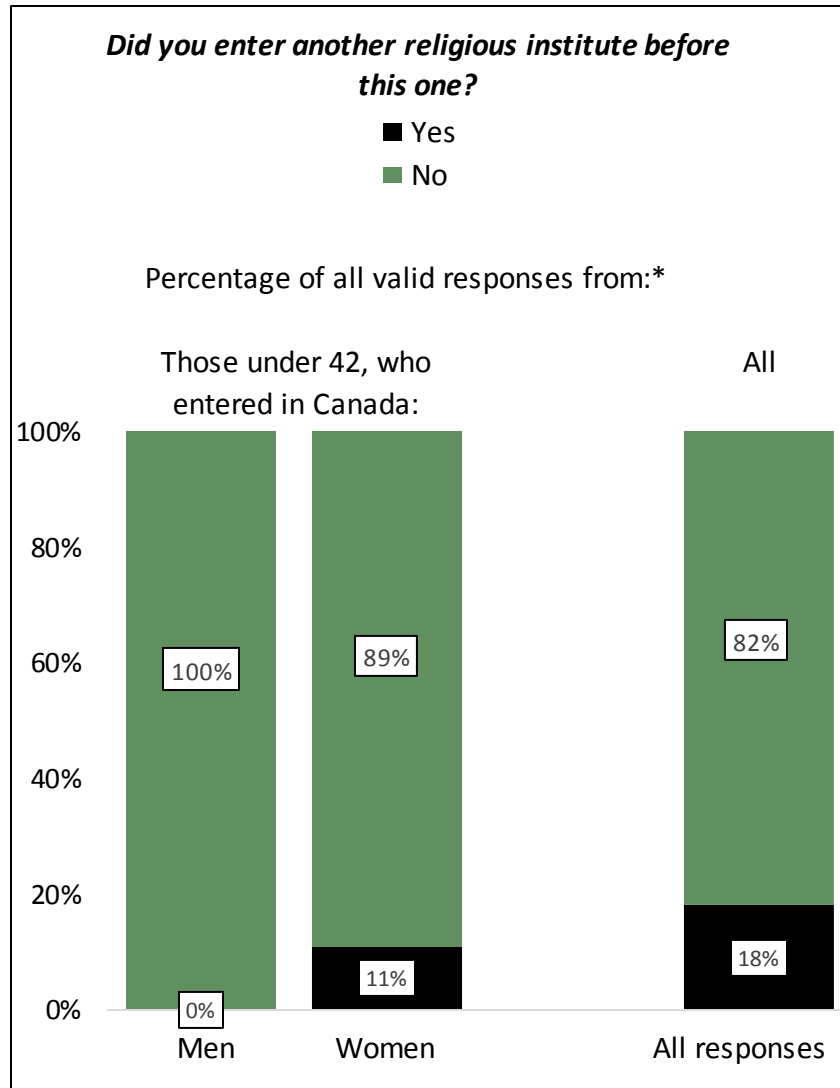


\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, half of new members who replied to this question (47 percent) have already taken final/perpetual vows/commitment. Three in ten are in temporary vows (26 percent). One in five is a novice (23 percent). The smallest group, 3 percent, are at the candidacy or postulancy stage of their formation.

Among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, there are no significant differences between women and men. Notably, there are no men at the candidacy or postulancy stage of formation.

Overall, 29 men indicated their current or expected status in the religious community. In this group, 72 percent are or expect to become priests and 28 percent are brothers.



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, 82 percent of new members who replied to this question responded that they did not enter another religious institute before the one they are in currently. Those who did enter another religious institute, spent there 11 years on average (a median of 7 years).

Among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, the difference between women and men is not significant.

## Discernment of the Call to Religious Life

### Attraction to Religious Life

<b>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
A sense of call to religious life	96	89
A desire to be of service	94	79
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	94	75
A desire to be part of a community	88	56
A desire to be more committed to the Church	85	54

Almost all new members were attracted to religious life by a sense of call to religious life (96 percent) and by a desire to be of service (94 percent).

At least three in four new members were “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service (79 percent) and by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (75 percent). More than half were “very much” attracted by a desire to be part of a community (56 percent) and/or by a desire to be more committed to the Church (54 percent). Differences between men and women (below) are not significant.

<b>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</b>				
Percentage of responses from those who are under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:*				
	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>	
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very”</b>	<b>“Very” Only</b>	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very”</b>	<b>“Very” Only</b>
	%	%	%	%
A desire to be part of a community	100	59	85	62
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	94	59	96	81
A desire to be of service	94	82	92	85
A sense of call to religious life	88	71	96	88
A desire to be more committed to the Church	88	47	85	70

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

## Focus Group Comments on Attraction to Religious Life

In the focus groups, new members provided further insights on what attracted them to religious life. Several mentioned being attracted to religious life **out of a desire to grow in relationship with Christ**.

*I would say there was two steps. The first was really a conversion to Christ and it was a consolation to me and that was really huge. But I was a bit deaf, I wanted to get married. Then I had a second call when I was near 40 so it was very clear [to me] that the call was just what I heard before, and I was sorry and very astonished that I heard the call again that I had ignored before.*

*So I would just say that what attracted me to religious life was I had a really profound experience of a personal Jesus, and I really felt attracted to that and wanted to explore that more and deepen that relationship.*

*I think for me, at least at first, it was just the idea of being a way of completely following Christ. It was a means that I saw of giving myself completely and of serving. That was a big part of the call – service.*

*I did participate in World Youth Day and that was my big decision, I had a big moment there and it didn't get more concrete than that as far as myself. I asked for a sign and I got one.*

Others mentioned being attracted to religious life **out of desire for living a more meaningful life**, which led them to enter religious life.

*For me at a young age wanting to be a religious, even wanting to be a priest from a very early age. But it was during my undergrad when I was studying that I just began to have a sense that I wanted to do more with my life. What I was doing was not enough, so it was about at the age of eighteen I think that I really started to discern religious life in a more directive way and I decided to enter.*

*For me, it was a good example of sisters who were feeding homeless people. So that's the time that I started thinking about religious life.*

*For me, I wanted to serve God alone, and so I went to my parish priest, and he was the one that put me with the congregation.*

Still others mentioned being attracted to religious life **by reading the story of an institute founder or learning of the charism of an institute**.

*To me, it's the possibility of an honest life, so even before joining the congregation, when I finished my high school life, I had the opportunity to read in my room a lot of time so it was the life story [of the founder] that attracted me.*

*I would say the charism discovered in the writings of [the founder of the institute].*

Some new members said that they were attracted to religious life **by the idea of living in community** and by the prayer life available in community.

*When I was first considering religious life, I was attracted more to the community aspect of it and then the opportunity to learn the spiritual life in a deeper way.*

*I grew up with the sisters; they taught me First Communion and they were part of my parish, and so I saw them on a regular basis. And I was attracted to them. And their prayer life. And I wanted that.*

*I've always been attracted to community. It's a very important part of my life. And so I was attracted to that, the element community. And what also attracted me was a deeper life of prayer, so whatever that might be.*

*And the communal aspect of the mission and the welcome in the sense of myself, that I found in the [Institute].*

### Helpful Discernment Experiences and Materials

<b>How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?</b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Meeting with a member(s) of the institute	88	59
Spiritual direction	86	68
“Come and See” experience	77	67
Discernment retreat	76	54
Visits to communities	74	55
Live in experiences	68	52
Meeting with a vocation director	68	49
Ministry or mission experience	51	35
Websites of religious institutes	51	29
Print or online promotional materials	36	17
Vocation discernment websites	34	16
Meeting with a discernment group	29	14
CDs, DVDs, or videos	26	10
General Catholic or diocesan websites	23	7
Newspaper or magazine articles	20	4
Diocesan vocation programs	14	5



About nine in ten new members found it “somewhat” or “very” helpful when discerning their call to religious life to meet with a member(s) of the institute (88 percent). The same proportion found that spiritual direction (86 percent) was as helpful when discerning.

Around four in five new members found the following “somewhat” or “very” helpful when discerning their call to religious life:

- “Come and See” experience (77 percent);
- discernment retreat (76 percent);

Seven in ten new members found the following “somewhat” or “very” helpful when discerning their call to religious life:

- visits to communities (74 percent);
- live in experiences (68 percent).
- meeting with a vocation director (68 percent);

About half of new members found the following “somewhat” or “very” helpful when discerning their call to religious life:

- ministry or mission experience (51 percent);
- websites of religious institutes (51 percent).

Two in five new members found it “somewhat” or “very” helpful when discerning their call to religious life to read print or online promotional materials (36 percent).

A third of new members or less found the following “somewhat” or “very” helpful when discerning their call to religious life:

- vocation discernment websites (34 percent);
- meeting with a discernment group (29 percent);
- CDs, DVDs, or videos (26 percent);
- general Catholic or diocesan websites (23 percent);
- newspaper or magazine articles (20 percent);
- diocesan vocation programs (14 percent).

## *Differences between Men and Women*

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

Percentage of responses from those who are under 42,  
who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:\*

	Men		Women	
	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %
Spiritual direction	88	65	86	73
Meeting with a member(s) of the institute	82	59	86	64
"Come and See" experience	76	71	92	88
Discernment retreat	65	41	78	70
Visits to communities	65	29	89	78
Meeting with a vocation director	53	35	74	52
Websites of religious institutes	41	18	67	38
Live in experiences	38	19	81	67
Print or online promotional materials	24	6	43	17
Ministry or mission experience	20	13	72	56
Vocation discernment websites	19	6	63	29
General Catholic or diocesan websites	18	6	42	13
CDs, DVDs, or videos	13	6	53	21
Newspaper or magazine articles	12	0	30	0
Meeting with a discernment group	7	0	47	26
Diocesan vocation programs	6	0	32	11

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are 26 percentage points less likely than women to report finding the listed items at least "somewhat" helpful when they were discerning their call to religious life. Furthermore, men are 20 percentage points less likely than women to report those items being "very" helpful.

There are a few significant differences in regard to specific items. Women are more likely than men to find the following at least "somewhat" helpful when they were discerning their call to religious life:

- ministry or mission experience (52 percentage points more likely);
- vocation discernment websites (44 percentage points more likely);
- live in experiences (43 percentage points more likely);
- CDs, DVDs, or videos (40 percentage points more likely);
- meeting with a discernment group (40 percentage points more likely).

Women are also more likely than men to find the following “very” helpful when they were discerning their call to religious life:

- visits to communities (49 percentage points more likely);
- live in experiences (48 percentage points more likely);
- ministry or mission experience (43 percentage points more likely).

### Focus Group Comments on Helpful Resources in Discernment

In the focus groups, several new members mentioned **spiritual direction** as helpful to them in their discernment.

*I was just seeing a spiritual director because I wanted something more from my life. I just wasn't satisfied. And kept wanting more and I still wasn't satisfied.*

*For me, it was the spiritual company that I had at the time. Because I was living in a different city than the sisters were in, so I only met them occasionally for a year. But I was led through the 19th annotation of the Spiritual Exercises by my spiritual director, and that was a really incredible experience, opening myself up to religious life.*

*I would say that the support that I got was from the community, not that my family was not supporting that decision, but it took a while before I spoke about my desire to enter a religious community. So I was on my own, so to speak with my spiritual director and the choice...*

*[H]aving a spiritual director who I could work through things with but who could also, when he felt it was right, pushing a little bit to take the next step and to move forward as I was being called.*

Several mentioned experiences of meeting and spending **time with the community** as being particularly helpful in their discernment.

*And one of the big things that helped me was a live-in experience. I actually had two: one with the [Name] group in [Place] and that really drew me, and then also my week with our sisters in [Place]. And that really helped me solidify the “yes” that I saw and what this charism was and what we could do, what it's all about. So the live-in experience helped me a lot to see that.*

*For me, it was actually meeting with the sisters. They were close enough to where I lived that I could go there and join them in evening prayer, and did many retreats with them. That really helped.*

Others spoke of **working with members of their institute in apostolates** and getting to know them in that way.

*I was, of course, as all of us, scared to take the first steps and not tell anyone. There was a safe environment in an on-site ministry that Sister [Name] invites me to work with her. And I was able to get on their network and be able to talk and share, and there was no push, no nothing. It's just a safe place to be religious, not religious. And that helps fuel the flame and then helps with the search.*

### Discernment of the Call to a Particular Religious Institute

## Attraction to a Particular Religious Institute

<b><i>How much did the following attract you to your religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
The spirituality of the institute	95	79
The mission of the institute	95	76
The ministries of the institute	86	54
The prayer life of the institute	86	60
The community life of the institute	86	60
The life and works of your founder/ess	84	50
The example of members of the institute	82	56
Welcome and encouragement by members	77	53
The institute’s relationship to the Church	72	42
A personal invitation by a member	41	29

Almost all new members were attracted to religious institute “somewhat” or “very much” by the spirituality of the institute (95 percent) and the mission of the institute (95 percent).

About nine in ten new members were attracted to religious institute “somewhat” or “very much” by the ministries of the institute (86 percent), the prayer life of the institute (86 percent), and the community life of the institute (86 percent).

Around four in five new members were attracted to religious institute “somewhat” or “very much” by the life and works of their founder/ess (84 percent), the example of members of the institute (82 percent), and welcome and encouragement by members (77 percent).

Seven in ten were attracted by the institute’s relationship to the Church (72 percent). Two in five were attracted at least “somewhat” by a personal invitation from a member (41 percent).

## *Differences between Men and Women*

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

Percentage of responses from those who are under 42,  
who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:\*

	Men		Women	
	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %
The mission of the institute	100	59	92	85
The spirituality of the institute	94	65	100	88
The life and works of your founder/ess	88	53	85	58
The community life of the institute	76	47	85	70
The ministries of the institute	76	41	92	75
The prayer life of the institute	71	47	93	78
Welcome and encouragement by members	71	41	72	68
The example of members of the institute	59	24	84	64
The institute's relationship to the Church	41	12	85	62
A personal invitation by a member	35	24	30	17

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are 11 percentage points less likely than women to report being at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by each of the listed items. Furthermore, men are 25 percentage points less likely than women to report being “very much” attracted to religious life by these items.

There are a few significant differences among new members who are under 42 and who entered religious life in Canada:

- women are 43 percentage points more likely than men to be at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the institute’s relationship to the Church, and 50 percentage points more likely than men to be “very much” attracted;
- women are 40 percentage points more likely than men to be “very much” attracted to their religious institute by the example of members of the institute;
- women are 34 percentage points more likely than men to be “very much” attracted to their religious institute by the ministries of the institute;
- women are 31 percentage points more likely than men to be “very much” attracted to their religious institute by the prayer life of the institute.

## Focus Group Comments about Attraction to a Particular Religious Institute

When asked about what attracted them to their particular religious institute, new members in the focus groups most frequently mentioned their **personal interactions and experiences with members of the institute**.

*I was taught by a sister when I was in school, and seeing those sisters involved in the parish, helping all the people and everything. And also, especially one of the sisters, she was, she seemed to be so happy. And I was wondering, what's happy? How can she be that? And something attracted me, so I went and checked and answered the call.*

*I will say that the example that I saw in one of the priests, you know, that attracted me very strong and then later I learned about the community... It was the example. Yeah, the first thing. . . That joy that I can see in that person, in that priest.*

*And what attracted me to my particular congregation were the women themselves, their spirit, their obvious love for Jesus and for each other.*

*For me, it was a combination of the initial meetings I had with the sisters when I got that sense of their deep joy; so that first drew me to them.*

*[W]hat initially attracted me was the joy that I saw in that group of religious. Young religious who were just joyful and so that is kind of what started it, just seeing religious...*

*It was an accumulation of life experiences and getting to know the [Institute] on a really personal basis because I think at that time when I was around eighteen I could have gone with many different religious communities but I was getting to know the [Institute] as peers, actually as friends.*

Others mentioned being particularly influenced by the **charism of the institute or by the story of its founder**.

*[I]t was when one of the members gave me a copy of what we call our preface to our constitutions and rules, which basically has the essential charism in it. When I read that I just said, "Wow, I want that; that's what I want."*

*What clicked with the [Institute] was that it was really the foundress and having that active apostolate; there is no way I could be in a cloister. I wanted to be a missionary and all this kind of stuff and she has that. And I wanted to be a contemplative at the same time and all this kind of stuff and there's this contemplative in action that our foundress has. It was something that, the more that I spent with the sisters the more I entered my relationship with Christ. That was the attraction, was that these women have that communal call and that desire to work together in this central purpose.*

*But I love their spirit and I love our charism – that we do whatever one is capable of doing.*

Still others spoke of being attracted by the **sense of community** they experienced in the institute.

*I think first off the sense of community... The religious I was meeting there were committed and joyful and interesting, engaging and were having meaningful lives. And it was in the context of a community.*

*[My life] needed to have a purpose and it needed to be with people – that, I knew. I was always more happy in hockey team, baseball team, or a school setting than being alone or by myself. So realizing that, in the realm of a religious community, it made sense for me. I belong to a group, I was part of it and that's very important for me. A sense of community, which is much bigger than myself and with the [Institute], I hit the jackpot, so to speak.*

A few mentioned being attracted in particular by some aspect of the ministry of the institute.

*I was in school, so two of the sisters [of my community] came to give a retreat and seminar. And they spoke about how to become a religious and then they shared the spirituality, the charism, and the apostolate. So I was very much attracted to do work with the [Institute].*

*And what I liked in the [Institute] Sisters was their freedom, the freedom there. And also their love of the world. I am a person who was a bit afraid of the world and had the temptation just to withdraw [from the world] because it is too hard. I could see these women really embracing the Church and also very active in the city. So it really affected me and it was really a way of saying “I don't know what is ahead” but I trust in God.*

### **Open-ended Comments about Attraction to Their Religious Institute**

When asked in an open-ended question to describe what most attracted them to their religious institute new members are most likely to focus their answers on **some institutional aspect of the institute** (such as its founder or foundress, charism, institute's martyrs, spirituality, etc.). Overall, 59 responses can be categorized this way. For example, when asked what most attracted them to their religious institute new members responded:

*The spirituality and charism of the institute and the life of our founder*

*[T]he spirituality and vision of the foundress*

*The charism. Our charism for life and the dignity of the human person resonated so deeply within my heart when I began to spend time with our community during discernment. It was an experience of coming home, of finding the Lord as I had always known Him.*

Additionally, 29 responses focused on **the personal example of the institute's members**. Some of their written comments include:

*The first [s]ister that I met and continued to see for spiritual direction at the time.*

*A member of the institute, as she worked with the poor and broken with such great love and compassion. She lived the example of Jesus.*

*[T]he example and inspiration of members of the Institute whom I met*

Many of the responses focused on the practical, **day-to-day aspects of the institute's life** among the most attractive things about this institute. This includes lifestyle (mentioned in 26 responses), ministry (mentioned in 21 responses), and community life (20 responses), such as:

*The contemplative aspect of our life.*

*[T]he ministry of the order, the holy and orthodox practice of the community, the graces I received while first staying with the community, and my experiences living with the community members.*

*I was also attracted to their way of prayer and the amount of time spent in community.*

*Their Eucharistic and Marian [s]pirituality and the way in which they live religious life*

*I liked that they had a strong community life and lived and prayed and worked together*

*The joy of living with the brothers and being in relation to simple people. I was drawn by the simplicity of the brothers and by the quality of the relations they create with people. I was also drawn by a simple and poor way of life, and by assiduous prayer and devotion.*

The fourth category of responses focused on **the calling itself**, rather than specific qualities of the institute. For example, new members responded:

*Entering into religious life as a nun, brother or priest is ultimately a 'DECISION OF LOVE'. Like any love on one level, it's a bit mysterious, and hard to express to someone who doesn't share it. If you ask a married couple what made them to decide to get married? they might be able to list one another's qualities, shared interests, and so on, but all that would not be enough to explain in the simple fact that stands at the heart of their relationship; that they love one another. On another level, though it's quite straightforward. If you spend all your time with someone and rearrange your life around them, if you start to share friends and interests, then you might eventually think about marrying them. Entering religious life for me is also an acknowledgement that I had met this kind of life-shaping love, to grow deeper in freedom in the service of others.*

*To be honest, the main factor was that I felt deeply that this was the institute Our Lord wanted me to enter. Everything else, whether the habit, charism, etc. was secondary to that. For me, a vocation means going where the Lord calls, not where it suits my preferences, although Our Lord can certainly use those preferences to attract a person where He wants them to go.*

A sizable number of responses pertained to **various more specific characteristics of the institute**. Those characteristics include: wearing of the habit (mentioned in 12 responses), fidelity to Church and Her teachings (eight responses), or its formation program (mentioned once), such as these:

*Their fidelity to the teachings and mission of the Church (specifically the Pope and the Bishops in union with him); the wearing of a distinct religious habit*

*I loved that they were faithful to all the Church's teachings and lived traditional religious life.*

*The fidelity to the Church and the Pope, a devotion to the Eucharist and Mary, the wearing of the habit*

Finally, 14 responses did not fit into any of the categories above and included an assortment of things such as motivations from childhood, the international presence of the institute, or the institute's geographic location.



## First Acquaintance with a Particular Religious Institute

	Those under 42, who entered in Canada:		All
	Men	Women	
	%	%	%
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	24	44	33
In an institution where members served, e.g., school	29	7	21
Through working with a member of the institute	12	4	15
Through print or online promotional materials	12	11	13
Through a friend in the institute	18	7	12
Through a media story about the institute or member	0	4	5
Through a vocation fair	6	0	4
Through an event sponsored by the institute	0	11	4
Through a relative in the institute	0	0	3
Through a vocation match or placement service	6	0	3
Other	29	37	38

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Most new members (38 percent) indicated that they first became first acquainted with their religious order in some way not identified in the survey categories. Those ways frequently included an acquaintance (18 out of 45 responses) such as a friend, family member, coworker, parish priest, spiritual director, etc. An additional 14 out of 45 responses indicated that the new member first became acquainted with the institute through various outreach activities carried out by this institute (e.g., brochure, website, information provided at a school fair, retreat operated by the institute, presentation by institute members). Finally, 13 out of 45 responses contained an assortment of things such as general Internet searches, reading books about martyrs, etc.

A third of new members indicated they first become acquainted with their religious institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (33 percent) and a fifth first became acquainted in an institution where members served, e.g., school (21 percent).

About one in ten first became acquainted through working with a member of the institute (15 percent), through print or online promotional materials (13 percent), or through a friend in the institute (12 percent). Fewer, about one in twenty, first became acquainted through a media story about the institute or member (5 percent), through a vocation fair (4 percent), through an event sponsored by the institute (4 percent), through a relative in the institute (3 percent), or through a vocation match or placement service (3 percent). Differences between men and women are not significant.

## Focus Group Comments on First Acquaintance with Their Religious Institute

Several focus group members mention that they first became acquainted with their religious institute through the institute **where their members served**.

*I went to have an experience with the [Institute] in [Place] in my last year of university. Working there with them was nice. And because of L'Arche and my experience with the Sisters there I realized that I did indeed want to join religious life.*

*For me, I grew up with the sisters in our church. So I was around them all the time, and I think as I got older into my teenage years, reflecting back, I had the opportunity to be with them. They lived not far from us, so I was often at the house. I would spend the weekend. And as I got older, I had the opportunity to do a mission with them. A summer mission, I would spend three weeks teaching catechism, teaching catechism in the city, and so I just feel very blessed that from a very young age, I was kind of helped by them, as I discerned, and I'm where I am now.*

*Okay, well personally I met the [Institute] through the [Institute] Volunteer Corps. So I spent a year doing volunteer work at a time when I was not actively discerning a religious vocation.*

*I got to know the order by working for them... I was a student at that time, so I was a receptionist during the evenings and during the summer I would mow the lawn and do all kinds of chores, wash the dishes. I began slowly going back to Mass, speaking with the fathers there.*

Other members described listening to the **recommendations of priests and other religious** when they were discerning religious life and exploring particular institutes. Several described a process of spiritual accompaniment, whereby they explored and discerned with others from different religious institutes.

*But I wasn't exposed to sisters in my life, so she put me in touch with Sister [Name] who was in a different congregation. So conflict of interests, there. And as the spirituality grew, my yearning grew, I was asked if I wanted to be an associate of the Sisters, and I said yes. And I was that for many years. And I just, I'm not satisfied, just want something more. And then I began my search to see what was out there and that was a whole journey in itself.*

*When I approached the priest and told him that I want to enter, I have a vocation, the first thing he said was, "Okay where would you like to enter?" It was a priest from our order and he said, "Where do you want to enter?" I said, "You have sisters, I want to go there." And he said, "But there are other orders." He didn't say, "Join this community." It was like, "Take a look around." But I just knew that's where I wanted to go. It was a nice thing; I didn't expect to hear that. But he just said, "Okay where would you like to go?"*

*A friend of mine is a [Institute] and was trying to encourage me to join them, and I didn't really feel the chemistry there. So I did look at other things but really the [Institute] were the ones that...probably because I had that personal connection in my early twenties. I think that it really left an impression.*

*I think that I would agree that accompaniment, spiritual accompaniment, has been integral for me. Particularly with the religious, and religious not with the community that I was discerning with.*

A few mentioned becoming acquainted with the institute through **events that were sponsored by members of their institute.**

*What I think did support my vocation was the few events that our order did, but not directed to youth and vocations but just in general, youth events or family events. So I could see the religious I could approach and ask them questions.*

*For me it was really helpful, because it was a presentation of religious life and Ignatian life so it helped for me to discern, even if I was very sure about it because Ignatians are very prudent. So I went to see the video because I have known them for eight years now and they said, "Ok, no problem." They said, "Go during the weekends, just to see that they have. Go and meet all of the congregation."*

Several mentioned doing an **Internet search** to learn about their institute, or **reading print materials** about religious life and about their institute.

*For me I think one of the biggest helps was reading the Lives of the Saints. They inspired me to go for it and to live out the life of Christ in an extreme way and really follow God. But in a practical sense also when I was discerning I looked on the Internet at lots of different congregations, different spiritualities, I started reading more religious books, as well as paying attention in religious classes in schools and churches and stuff like that. Not as much talking to people because I was a shy teenager, so, it was a little bit of that, but not as much.*

*I was more inclined to look up everything I could find about that community on the Internet before I would physically approach.*

*[S]piritual reading came into play, but I did look on the Internet as far as vocations things and how you pursue discernment. And a lot of the stuff that was in the States did not seem largely Canadian discernment. There is a Canada discernment thing here and there that I did find but I started looking that way, because some communities weren't open to receiving.*

## Participation in Experiences before Entering

<b>Did you participate in any of the following before you entered your religious institute?</b>			
Percentage of new members:*			
	<b>Those under 42, who entered in Canada:</b>		<b>All</b>
	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Spiritual direction	82	56	72
“Come and See” experience	71	85	65
Discernment retreat	71	48	52
Live in experience with the institute	35	44	50
Regular meeting with a member(s) of the institute	71	15	40
Regular visits to communities	35	30	38
Regular meeting with a vocation director	24	41	31
Ministry or mission experience with the institute	18	19	24
Diocesan vocation programs	12	19	17
Regular meeting with a discernment group	0	19	12

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

New members were most likely to receive spiritual direction (72 percent), attend a “Come and See” experience (65 percent), and participate in discernment retreats (52 percent) before they entered their religious institute.

Among new members who are under 42 and who entered religious life in Canada, there is one significant difference between men and women: men were 56 percentage points more likely than women to participate in regular meetings with a member(s) of the institute before they entered.

### Focus Group Comments on Experiences before Entering Their Religious Institute

In the focus groups, several new members mentioned receiving spiritual direction before entering their religious institute. Others spoke of spending time with the members of the institute before entering.

*Spiritual direction was certainly key to me. My spiritual director was in no way pushing towards a particular vocation. It was to support me just in my discernment and wherever that may lead.*

*Spiritual direction was helpful. The local [Institute] communities where I would go for dinner, they were very supportive. The other thing is that because it is such a big step, I really took advantage of all the opportunities like to visit the novitiate, there's a six weeks of [Institute] program in [Place], that I did, during my*

*novitiate. All of these things so that I could really get a sense of what I was about to do. And all the people that I met on all those things were very supportive.*

*I have had spiritual directors over the years that have been phenomenal and you need somebody that is going to challenge you as well. You don't want someone that is going to hold your hand and say "There, there, yeah you are right." I'm in no way, shape, or form definitely right in a lot of things what I say to my director. So it's important to have that, to be like, "wow think about what you are saying here." Unfortunately, I didn't have a director during my discernment but I had sisters from a different community that said, "Well I don't see why you're not joining our community, like you were raised with us so why don't you join ours?" And I am like, "because that is why" [laughter] They tried to kidnap me.*

*Two things that I can put my finger on for helping me in my discernment. One was my proximity to the [Institute] as a student in [Place] and having access to the [Institute]. And seeing religious life in all of its ups and downs within the community. That was something that really helped open the door for me in some ways. Just seeing how normal life was as a religious and how it very quickly pulled back "veil of perfection" that I expected from looking [at religious life] from a distance and seeing how an actual community functions. And their welcome and just the being at their home and always hearing "Come by, the door's open, stop by for Mass, and stop by for supper." So that ultimately was very important in that ability just to get to see what a community was like.*

*But it was just being in that dynamic with people and being supported by clergy and parishioners and stuff like that, in that environment, that kind of helped keep the coals burning.*

*So for me it was personal prayer and really spending time with other sisters and just talking about it openly.*

## Influences of Institute Characteristics on the Decision to Enter

<b><i>How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Institute’s charism	95	90
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	81	62
Community life in the institute	79	58
The lifestyle of members	78	49
The types of ministry of its members	75	51
Its practice regarding a religious habit	51	36
Its geographic location(s)	47	19
Its internationality, if applicable	41	23
The size of the institute	29	9
The ages of members	25	4
The racial/ethnic background of members	16	3

Almost all new members were “somewhat” or “very” influenced by the institute’s charism (95 percent) when making the decision to enter their religious institute.

Around four in five new members were “somewhat” or “very” influenced by the prayer life or prayer styles in the institute (81 percent), the community life in the institute (79 percent), the lifestyle of members (78 percent), and the types of ministry of its members (75 percent) when making the decision to enter their religious institute.

About half of new members were “somewhat” or “very” influenced by its practice regarding a religious habit (51 percent) or by its geographic location (47 percent) when making the decision to enter their religious institute.

Two in five new members were “somewhat” or “very” influenced by the institute’s internationality (41 percent) when making the decision to enter their religious institute.

A third or less were “somewhat” or “very” influenced by the size of the institute (29 percent), the ages of members (25 percent), or the racial/ethnic background of members (16 percent) when making the decision to enter their religious institute:

*Differences between Men and Women*

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

Percentage of responses from those who are under 42,  
who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:\*

	Men		Women	
	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %
Institute's charism	94	88	100	96
The types of ministry of its members	76	53	78	57
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	71	53	89	78
Community life in the institute	65	47	84	76
The lifestyle of members	65	47	84	60
Its geographic location(s)	53	24	50	25
Its internationality, if applicable	47	12	53	37
The ages of members	41	6	26	4
The size of the institute	29	6	48	13
Its practice regarding a religious habit	24	12	77	58
The racial/ethnic background of members	12	0	22	4

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are 12 percentage points less likely than women to report being at least "somewhat" influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by these listed items. Furthermore, men are 15 percentage points less likely than women to report being "very much" influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the listed items.

There is one significant difference between men and women: women are 53 percentage points more likely than men to be at least "somewhat" influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by its practice regarding a religious habit.

## Support and Discouragement While Discerning

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

Percentage of all responses:

	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only %</b>
Members of your institute	88	56
Spiritual director, if applicable	86	65
Vocation director/team	73	52
Friends outside the institute	67	26
Other men and women religious	64	28
Your siblings, if applicable	63	26
People in your parish	62	27
Your parents, if applicable	60	29
Diocesan priests	58	35
Friends within the institute	51	22
Other family members	49	14
People in your school or workplace	46	14

About nine in ten new members received “some” or “very much” encouragement from members of their institute (88 percent) when they first considered entering religious institute. Similarly, more than four in five received as much encouragement from their spiritual director (86 percent) when they first considered entering.

Seven in ten new members received at least “some” encouragement when they first considered entering their religious institute from their vocation director/team (73 percent) and from friends outside the institute (67 percent).

Three in five new members received at least “some” encouragement from other men and women religious (64 percent), their siblings (63 percent), the people in their parish (62 percent), their parents (60 percent), and from diocesan priests (58 percent).

About half of new members received at least “some” encouragement from friends within the institute (51 percent) and from other family members (49 percent).

Two in five new members received at least “some” encouragement from people in their school or workplace (46 percent) when they first considered entering their religious institute.



## *Differences between Men and Women*

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

Percentage of responses from those who are under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:\*

	Men		Women	
	"Somewhat" or "Very"	"Very" Only	"Somewhat" or "Very"	"Very" Only
	%	%	%	%
Members of your institute	82	65	88	62
Spiritual director, if applicable	82	47	87	70
Your parents, if applicable	71	41	65	27
Vocation director/team	69	44	87	65
Other men and women religious	69	25	71	33
People in your parish	63	19	76	44
Friends outside the institute	53	24	83	50
Friends within the institute	53	27	60	27
Your siblings, if applicable	44	19	77	27
People in your school or workplace	41	18	55	27
Diocesan priests	38	25	79	50
Other family members	35	12	57	17

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are 16 percentage points less likely than women to report being at least “somewhat” encouraged by the listed groups of people (and 11 percentage points less likely to be “very much” encouraged).

There are a few significant differences in regard to specific items. Women are more likely than men to report that, when they first discerned entering their religious institute, they felt at least “somewhat” encouraged by:

- diocesan priests (42 percentage points more likely);
- siblings (33 percentage points more likely);
- friends outside the institute (30 percentage points more likely).

## Focus Group Comments on Support and Discouragement for Their Vocation

In the focus groups, the new members described the encouragement and discouragement they received from various individuals and groups when they were discerning their vocation. Some spoke of interactions with **current and former religious**. Some of these were encouraging while others described being *discouraged* by other religious when they were discerning.

*[T]he more time I spent with the Sisters and just not in a sense of having to get to know them or wanting to be... There was a desire, just wanting to know them. Just to spend time and just to be friends with them and that's kind of what I did in the beginning. But I also did that with other congregations, just to get a general sense and a general feel.*

*If you knew of an order that you were going to join, then they were really gung ho with, "Come and See," and all this kind of stuff. But if you were kind of like waning, they were not really open to help support a vocation. It's almost as if you want to keep that person for yourself, almost.*

*[T]he people who were actively dissuading me from this – telling me that I was making a big mistake with my life – were former religious. So these are people who had a bad experience of religious life. They actually went out of their way to say, "You don't know, and you are making a big mistake." So obviously that was something that they were projecting on me, based on their own experience.*

*I have friends, I still do, who are former religious at the time and they seriously asked me if I knew what I was getting into. And they told me their own experience about why they left, and sometimes it put chills on my back about if I wanted to do this or not. But they were helpful, actually. It was a good way to test my desire, in fact.*

Others spoke of being encouraged, and discouraged, by **friends**.

*Also my ... my confrere at L'Arche were very supportive, and they were a good kind of sounding board for me. I would say that's how I sort of discerned, with other people. I think it was basically a personal decision or a personal discernment, but I had different people I could try it on or talk to and everyone was very supportive.*

*But I think a great support for me was the personal support of friends. I was very fortunate that one of the Sisters that I grew up with went into the infirmary, and I don't know if it was good for her, but it was good for me, in Canada. So she was like my spiritual grandmother, giving me advice on religious life.*

*Like the other candidates who were discerning like me, I kept in touch with them. So I think that was....we didn't really have a discernment group, I don't think, but that kind of how that operated. There were other people my age who were also doing this, and we kept in touch.*

*Yeah, so one of the discouraging experiences for me was when I was in the seminary. When I would go home for vacation, my friends used to say "Why would you want to be a priest, you're not really going to do that? Because you can do a lot of stuff here, you know, in engineering, some other studies, medicine, you know, stuff like that." So some of the guys, you know, in my peer group, said "it's not real."*

*And I had friends that said, "Well, it's a waste of your time" and they had a misconception of what religious life was, of what you can and cannot do. Like you are going to be poor and begging on the street and asking*

*for money type of a thing. Or it's going to be like Sister Act. [Laughter] or things like that, that's not the thing.*

General **acquaintances** tended to be discouraging or just curious.

*I would say more [discouragement] in the realm of people that I was living or interacting with. There was lots of ignorance or "How does it work?" "You cannot do this," "You need to go to bed at seven in the evening" and "It's like entering the military, in a way." So the ignorance went as far as asking, "Is it a sect? Is it part of the Catholic Church?" There was a lot of misinformation. But they could relate to following a desire for a sense of belonging, that you could follow your heart. And they were in agreement with that.*

*I think, you know, families are smaller now, the parents want grandchildren. I think the abuse crisis too, that is why people think, "Well why would you want to be a priest given all the bad publicity, you'll have to deal with this the rest of your life, do you really want to deal with this?" I have known of cases of people like that. I didn't feel this from my family, from my parents, anyway, they were not saying that. And I was older too. By that point they were like, "Well whatever you decide we are going to support you."*

*[P]eople who may not be religious, didn't really understand why I would be doing this, didn't come from the faith context. So for them I would just say, "Well I am following my heart" and that was something they could kind of understand. But I didn't really encounter any active opposition otherwise, from people saying, "No, this is a bad thing." Plus I was older, you know, I entered at thirty-three. So people were like, "Okay that sounds interesting. We don't know too much about what that really means, but..." But they weren't actively opposing it.*

*I have to be careful who I told. I learned not tell people. It's just once you start talk about it there is discouragement so and I didn't really want to talk to my mom about it. So I learned to just not talk about it.*

Still others spoke of their **family members**, who were most often encouraging of their vocation but, in some cases, were discouraging – at least in the beginning.

*So when I decided to enter I went to my family. I first worked on my father and he was the easiest to work on. I think because one of his closest friends was a religious. And once I had him on board, the support of the religious who was his friend, then we went to my mother. I think my mother wanted grandchildren. It wasn't in opposition to the Church, but they wanted family, they wanted this and that for me, they had these ideas. Because I was so young, I had ideas about what I wanted to do with my life, but it wasn't a decision against them. And so I think that took a while. I think it took even after vows, but once they were able to appreciate it, I think they were able to see it as it's nothing against them.*

*My family, my dad supported, my mom didn't, it was hard for her but when she saw me happy, she accepted it.*

*I knew that my father was going to object. He's got a brother who is a Trappist monk. And he just has one tunnel vision of what it looks like. But his first reaction, when I told him, and I didn't tell him until I knew that I was going to be accepted, was "I don't want my money going to the convent."*

*My parents, for instance, at first they were very reluctant. And Mom had read a book from a former religious who talked about negative experiences in the community. She also had a friend who was a priest wife because we were Eastern Catholic and that is part of our tradition. So when I told her I wanted to be a sister she*

*said, "Why don't you become a priest's wife? You marry this boy and I think he may be interested in becoming a priest." And I am like "No." And so she was worried about me maybe being abused, or the family having to support me because of the vow of poverty.*

*I didn't have much of the family support, so to say, even though my family was really Catholic. They are very traditional and so when I surprised them with this, they were like "What??"*

*I really didn't tell my family until just before I entered and knew that they would be opposed as it were. But they came along very well, actually and they were supportive.*

Some spoke of being encouraged or discouraged in their discernment by their **parish priest and other parishioners.**

*And so, my mother encouraged me and the parish priest and one fellow [Institute] student and a catechist in my parish. So these are the four main people who encouraged me before entering the seminary. But once I entered the seminary, it was the formator and the spiritual director who helped me to discern this call.*

*I did speak with like my parish priest about stuff.*

*We had a youth group and my parents let the priest him know that I discerning. He supported it but he didn't do anything.*

*The other thing that was kind of a check for me was the local parish priest that was attached to the university community, he was the vocation director for the diocese. And before he had taken over as the parish priest, I was already quite involved in my discernment to be a religious. And that was evident and I was kind of open with him about that. There were points that, and one particular point I remember during the Mass, I was serving Mass for him and just before that he had had a vocational discernment with a group of young people discerning with the diocese. And in the Mass he makes a big deal saying, "Oh look at these young men, discerning how important they are." And I'm standing right behind him and there is no mention, no other acknowledgement of something other than the diocese. And throughout that whole interaction with him he never acknowledged the fact that I was discerning religious life. And so it became very discouraging in some ways to see a vocation director telling me, "It's great that you are involved in the parish, great that you are engaged, but I really don't have any interest in you." And in some ways I felt like he saw it [religious life] kind of like a secondary vocation or lesser vocation.*

## Current Networks of Support

***How much encouragement do you currently receive from the following in your life and ministry as a member of your religious institute?***

Percentage of all responses:

	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only %</b>
Members of your institute	97	87
Spiritual director, if applicable	95	78
The leadership of your institute	95	75
Friends within the institute	90	62
Other men and women religious	89	45
Novice/formation director/team	85	70
People with whom you minister	84	63
People to whom you minister	82	60
Your siblings, if applicable	80	53
Friends outside the institute	80	49
Your parents, if applicable	78	57
Members of other institutes	75	39
Other family members	72	39
Diocesan priests	67	41
People in your parish	64	51
People in your school or workplace	63	37
Members of your federation	54	38

Almost all new members currently receive “some” or “very much” encouragement in their lives and ministries as members of religious institutes from the members of their institute (97 percent), their spiritual director (95 percent), and from the leadership of their institute (95 percent).

About nine in ten new members currently receive at least “some” encouragement from friends within the institute (90 percent), from other men and women religious (89 percent) and from their novice/formation director/team (85 percent).

Around four in five new members currently receive at least “some” encouragement from the people with whom they minister (84 percent), the people to whom they minister (82 percent), from friends outside the institute (82 percent), from their siblings (80 percent), or their parents (78 percent), as well as from the members of other religious institutes (75 percent).

Seven in ten new members currently receive at least “some” encouragement from other family members (72 percent) or from diocesan priests (67 percent).

Three in five new members currently receive at least “some” encouragement from the people in their parish (64 percent) and from the people in their school or workplace (63 percent).

About half of new members currently receive at least “some” encouragement from the other members of their federation (54 percent).

***Differences between Men and Women***

***How much encouragement do you currently receive from the following in your life and ministry as a member of your religious institute?***  
 Percentage of responses from those who are under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:\*

	Men		Women	
	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %
Members of your institute	100	71	100	96
The leadership of your institute	94	59	100	100
Spiritual director, if applicable	94	76	95	95
Friends within the institute	94	65	90	62
Other men and women religious	82	41	95	62
Novice/formation director/team	82	76	100	90
Your parents, if applicable	82	65	87	61
People to whom you minister	76	35	86	68
Members of other institutes	75	38	90	57
People with whom you minister	71	41	91	65
Friends outside the institute	71	29	86	67
Diocesan priests	56	25	91	73
Other family members	53	24	92	58
Your siblings, if applicable	50	31	92	64
People in your parish	47	29	76	71
People in your school or workplace	41	18	73	47
Members of your federation	29	14	57	43

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are 18 percentage points less likely than women to report currently being at least “somewhat” encouraged by the listed groups of people. There are a few significant differences

in regard to specific items. Women are more likely than men to currently find these people at least “somewhat” encouraging in their life and ministry: siblings (42 percentage points more likely), other family members (39 percentage points more likely), and diocesan priests (35 percentage points more likely).

Women are also significantly more likely than men to currently find these people “very” encouraging in their life and ministry as a member of your religious institute: diocesan priests (48 percentage points more likely), people in their parish (42 percentage points more likely), other family members (34 percentage points more likely), siblings (33 percentage points more likely), people to whom they minister (33 percentage points more likely), and the members of their institute (25 percentage points more likely).

### **Focus Group Comments on Current Support for Religious Life and Ministry**

Many focus group participants spoke of the support they receive from the other members of their institute. They note that is **the diversity of gifts within the unit** that brings out the best in community living, pointing out the importance of recognizing, and celebrating, differences.

*What I like about my mine, it's the openness of the community for accepting me. Being an older member, an older person, it's the openness of the community, which mean they are open to new things, new future.*

*“We are most a priest when we are ourselves.” And I would say it's a chance to be who you truly are or called to be. So [Name] touched earlier on diversity and I really feel that in the [Institute] that it's not just diversity of profession, you can be a teacher, or a lawyer, or whatever. That's great too, but also there is no one way of being a member. When people come and see that they are kind of intrigued because I think people have this image of a cookie cutter that all the [Institute] are the same. And then, you start to realize that, “Oh my gosh! These two or three or four, they are so different!” So I guess that's identity and uniqueness that is acknowledged and valued, enhanced and encouraged, actually... There is an openness to explore that. So there are many ways in promoting Catholic identity and the [Institute] way, I find very freeing.*

*For me, it's the other sisters, the other members of my community, and the love that I see they have for God and for each other and for the people they work with. And also, they're progressive and open to new things, new ways and changes.*

*What has been very important for me, life-giving for me, was as sense of unity and diversity and an experience of fraternity within that. I always kind of marvel at our community when I look around the room and there are people from many different countries, with many different interests. They have backgrounds in engineering, science, liberal arts. Different perspectives on the world, different political views: the ability to have that kind of fraternal love and support in that and not have everyone thinking the same way you are thinking. I couldn't be in a community where everyone had the same perspective on everything. So to find that support and that community but also know that there's a difference of opinions that can challenge and open and broaden you own horizons. Having that openness to say I'm thinking about this or have different people from different perspectives offer their wisdom, but at the same time feeling cared for in that environment.*

*For me the big thing is that the sense of community is that sisterly bond that we have even though I am one of the youngest in Canada, and then it just kind of shoots up from there. But to have such a diversity as far as demographics and age and yet have such a commonality in the basis of a faith-based charism that just draws*

*us together. We see things, some of us see things very differently, but I have learned very quickly to not to grow up, but to be child-like in different ways, to help them to remember, "Hey, differences." It's that sense of community that's existing, that support that's important.*

*And I see that we have so much to learn, especially from those for whom we are very different from in the order. Or guys who I meet, my personality might struggle with them a wee bit – those are the people to pay attention to because they are the men who can teach me so much more about myself than about others. In their difference or in my resistance, and so for me the [Institute] is sort of like a school of life. I think about Paul the Sixth and the School of Nazareth, well it's the same thing. It's the school of life of the [Institute]. How we get to know each other, but get to know ourselves through each other. It helps us in our ministry, in our public life and so I have to thank all those people.*

*And when we are all comfortable in that, because it is our spirituality and the member that gets on my nerves may be the one touching my growing spot, where I need to live. It seems to be easier said than done, but when you realize it and you are open to it, things work out.*

*[T]he image that comes to mind is a [Institute] once told me, "you know putting [Institute] into community together because we are all so different it's like taking all these rocks with sharp edges and putting them in a blender. [laughter] You rub off each other and in a while they become well rounded." I thought, "Well if I had been living alone I would have missed this." I mean not that it's always easy. I mean it can be pretty painful to live with people that you didn't choose to live with, these people. Well you chose to join the order but you didn't choose to live with so and so who is driving you up the wall. I think that it does round out those sharp edges somehow.*

They also describe how supported they feel in their religious life when they recognize the **importance of listening to one another**. Even the newest members contribute to the good of the whole, when they are listened to.

*He said, "I'm the new provincial and everyone is asking me what my plan is." And he said, "Now I finally realized what my plan is." He says, "My plan is you." I thought, "Wow that's discerning!" He's not like "Oh well, let's just fit this guy in this slot and this person in this slot." It's "Who has God sent us? Who is the Holy Spirit sending us?" And let's discern among this group and what the needs are and what they might be doing and what's going on within that person too. So we are not there to plug holes in an institution. There are those needs out there but there is also what is going on within the person. So be able to discern that and not fit people into things, I think that is where the problems start.*

*The first thing that comes to mind for me is that even in this era of declining vocations, and when our provincial has to make very difficult decisions about closing some apostolates, even in that climate, certainly from the provincial now and from the previous one, they are very open to new ventures. And that has been extremely supportive. To me, I would find it very distressing as a religious if I felt like my whole role was going to be to shore up these institutions that were founded a long time ago. But by contrast we have had a number of new things since I entered including [New Initiative], which is a huge undertaking. The [Institute] volunteer program, which has recently come back to Canada, which is again an awful lot of time, and working on issues going into that, but that's been pretty life-giving for me. We just started this retreat program in [Place], actually a retreat center. We offer retreats for men who experience homelessness and recovering from addiction, that's been a big initiative. So there's an attentiveness to where is the Spirit moving? And now where's the energy at now? And so the possibility of being part of that has been one of the most life-giving things.*



Another way that these new members feel the support of their community is through the support they received from **other religious during their formation**, particularly now that the numbers entering religious life in Canada are so small.

*Support in formation when the numbers are very small.*

*I remember when I did my novitiate I was one of one. And I tried to reach out to other novitiates in our community. So I reached out to Brazil, I reached out to like all the novitiates internationally, just to have some sense of community to understand me, “hey there is another novice here” in North America by myself like I need somebody to interact with. Because when I entered, it was like the first one in like ten years or 15 years so it was kind of like, I didn’t have anyone else to kind of understand and at that point I was the youngest one in the community. So it was important to have that network and that bond with the sisters, which was really important.*

*It was interesting for me because when I entered, I entered alone. So I was the only novice in my area but there was another novice a year ahead of me. And so I had a year of there being only two novices in our novitiate. But really, one of the structures that helped in that, right from day one of our novitiate there wasn’t just a novice master and two novices. There was a community that was built around that. So our superior was working in the curia office and there are associates. So we had a fuller community that spanned the age range, which would fairly quickly gave me a sense of dynamism. But also the reality of being a religious in our context is that all of our communities for the most part are always going to have large gaps and spread out age group. And being alone but also having an opportunity to kind of to engage novices from other novitiates in North America, so there’s five, four novitiates in North America, something like that, yeah. And so on a regular basis we had trips to [Place], once or twice a year with the novices there. And having a group so that when I was in my second year in novitiate there was a group of first-year novices who were seven. So all of a sudden there were a bigger group of novices. So seeing both worlds of being one or two, or being eight or nine, and the big difference between that and having a stronger fraternal group dynamic seeing that we are in this together. But that was also very important, too. So I kind of got lucky and had the best of both worlds.*

*I had already another sister who was one year professed when I had entered as a postulant, so when I entered there were two of us. One who was a later vocation, so she was in her fifties and I was in my twenties, thirty years apart. And she was European and she didn’t know English coming into Canada. And so there were just two of us and also the cultural dynamics, in addition to the smallness, that was a big factor for me.*

*I think that’s the same thing, too, not having other younger religious around. My novitiate was in [Place]. I had friends; actually a friend of mine was in the [Institute] and so sometimes we would get together and stuff like that. And I had a [Institute] friend in [Place] so we started trying to converse with people that I knew that had entered, on my own, to kind of have some connections. But nothing that was set as far as a national program or any kind of a gathering.*

Some new members describe how their **communal prayer experiences** reinforce the support they feel from the other members of their community.

*For me, it was the prayer life and the understanding of the community members. Also, the sharing of our elderly sisters, listening to their stories, their experience.*

*I feel sustained in my life and in the community that I'm living with and working with, in their willing to share our struggles and our hopes, and we have good conversations, the difficult conversations. We try things and fail, and that's okay. And we build each other up. And that's so important, and I appreciate our prayer times together. And I appreciate the love and support. I recently lost a very dear sister friend of mine, and it was difficult, and I didn't know how to cope. So [Name] said, "Do you want to pray together?" This was in the morning. And I said "yes." So now, whenever we can, we pray together in the morning because usually you are by yourself, praying. And that strengthens me, and I look forward to when we do pray together in the morning to start our day. That's community-building, and the support and the love that we have for each other.*

A few, who are members of international institutes, mention how supported they feel by the other members of their institute around the world. They feel enriched by the **international connection**.

*I've always found the [Institute members] to be there for me, wherever I go. And they have a good sense of humor, you know, maybe that's something that's everywhere, but I certainly do find it with the [Institute]. And then the connection to that international, corporate mission.*

*One of the major things for me, the most important is in our communities, the international living. You're from Africa, right, and we have others from seven different countries. Seven foreign countries, it's something really engaging and interesting. It has its own challenges, but it's really a richness.*

*For me too, the internationality. Like, when I did my novitiate, there were others from twenty countries. And it's like each culture was enriching me, and I like that.*

## Importance of Aspects of Religious Life

### Preferences Regarding Prayer

<b><i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i></b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
Personal prayer/meditation	100	90
Daily Eucharist	96	81
Faith sharing	89	57
Liturgy of the Hours	84	70
Non-liturgical common prayer	74	44
Eucharistic Adoration	74	55
Common meditation	72	54
Other devotional prayer	71	47

All new members find personal prayer/meditation at least “somewhat” important and nearly as many (96 percent) find daily Eucharist as important to them. About nine in ten find faith sharing (89 percent) to be “somewhat” or “very” important to them.

At least three in four new members find Liturgy of the Hours (84 percent), non-liturgical common prayer (74 percent), and Eucharistic Adoration (74 percent) at least “somewhat” important to them.

Seven in ten find common meditation (72 percent) or other devotional prayer (71 percent) “somewhat” or “very” important.

## *Differences between Men and Women*

### **How important to you are these types of prayer?**

Percentage of responses from those who are under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:\*

	Men		Women	
	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %
Personal prayer/meditation	100	88	100	92
Daily Eucharist	100	94	100	89
Faith sharing	94	59	88	62
Liturgy of the Hours	76	59	100	81
Eucharistic Adoration	59	29	96	89
Other devotional prayer	53	12	96	77
Non-liturgical common prayer	41	24	96	60
Common meditation	35	18	96	85

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are 27 percentage points less likely than women to report the listed items at least “somewhat” important to them (and 31 percentage points less likely to find these items “very important”).

Women are significantly more likely than men to consider the following at least “somewhat” important: common meditation (61 percentage points more likely), non-liturgical common prayer (55 percentage points more likely), other devotional prayer (43 percentage points more likely), and Eucharistic Adoration (37 percentage points more likely).

Women are significantly more likely than men to consider the following “very” important: Eucharistic Adoration (60 percentage points more likely), other devotional prayer (65 percentage points more likely), non-liturgical common prayer (36 percentage points more likely), and common meditation (67 percentage points more likely).

## Preferences Regarding Community Lifestyle

<b>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>"Somewhat" or "Very Much"</b>	<b>"Very Much" Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Praying with other members	98	84
Living with other members	96	80
Sharing meals together	94	80
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	93	68
Working with other members	89	66

Almost all new members consider praying with other members (98 percent) and living with other members (96 percent) "somewhat" or "very" important aspects of community life to them.

About nine in ten new members consider sharing meals together (94 percent), socializing/sharing leisure time together (93 percent), and working with other members (89 percent) to be "somewhat" or "very" important aspects of community life.

### *Differences between Men and Women*

<b>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</b>				
Percentage of responses from those who are under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:*				
	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>	
	<b>"Somewhat" or "Very"</b>	<b>"Very" Only</b>	<b>"Somewhat" or "Very"</b>	<b>"Very" Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Praying with other members	100	82	100	93
Living with other members	100	88	100	100
Sharing meals together	100	82	96	88
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	94	71	96	85
Working with other members	71	41	96	81

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are about as likely as women to report listed community-related items at least “somewhat” important, but they are 16 percentage points less likely to report listed items “very” important.

There is one significant difference between women and men: women are 26 percentage points more likely than men to consider working with other members to be at least “somewhat” important and 40 percentage points more likely to consider it “very” important aspect of community life.

### Preferences Regarding Community Size and Setting

When asked about their preference as to the size of the community, eight in ten new members prefer living in a medium-sized community of four to seven. More than half (56 percent) prefer this size “very much.”

<b>How much do you prefer living in these settings?</b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Singly	21	10
In a small community of 2 or 3	41	17
In a medium-sized community of 4 to 7	80	56
In a large community of 8 or more	74	45
With members of different ages	96	66
With members of different cultures	92	59
With members in different ministries	76	46
With only members of your institute	74	49
With members of other units of your institute	77	45
With members of other institutes	40	14
With associates	36	13

As for who they prefer to live with, new members prefer to live with other members of different ages, different cultures, and different ministries. At the same time, they indicate a definite preference for living with other members of their institute over living with members of other institutes or with associates.

About nine in ten new members at least “somewhat” prefer to live with members of different ages (96 percent) and with members of different cultures (92 percent).

Around three in four at least “somewhat” prefer to live with members of other units of their institute, e.g., other provinces (77 percent), with members in different ministries (76 percent), and with only members of their institute (74 percent).

Less than half prefer “somewhat” or very much” to live with members of other institutes (40 percent) or with associates (36 percent).

### *Differences between Men and Women*

<b>How much do you prefer living in these settings?</b>				
Percentage of responses from those who are under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:*				
	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>	
	<b>"Somewhat" or "Very"</b>	<b>"Very" Only</b>	<b>"Somewhat" or "Very"</b>	<b>"Very" Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Singly	12	0	9	5
In a small community of two or three	35	18	48	24
In a medium-sized community of 4 to 7	75	38	82	77
In a large community of 8 or more	82	47	79	58
With members of different ages	88	71	96	58
With members of different cultures	88	53	92	67
With members of other units of your institute	76	29	94	65
With only members of your institute	73	40	87	65
With members in different ministries	65	24	81	57
With members of other institutes	27	7	48	14
With associates	7	0	47	21

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are 12 percentage points less likely than women to report that they at least “somewhat” prefer living in these settings. Women are significantly more likely than men to “very much” prefer living in a medium-sized community of four to seven members (39 percentage points more likely). Men are 17 percentage points less likely than women to report that they “very much” prefer living in the listed settings. Women are also 41 percentage points more likely than men to at least “somewhat” prefer living with associates, but associates are an arrangement that is much more common in women’s institutes than in men’s.

At the same time, women are significantly more likely than men to “very much” prefer living with members of other units of their institute, e.g., other provinces (36 percentage points more likely) and with members in different ministries (33 percentage points more likely).

## Preferences Regarding Ministry Setting

<b><i>How much do you prefer ministry in these settings?</i></b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only %</b>
With other members of your institute	91	68
In a ministry sponsored by your institute	82	48
With members of other units of your institute	79	44
With an organization that is Catholic but is not sponsored by your institute	73	27
With members of other institutes	71	29
In a parish or diocesan ministry	60	31
With an organization that is religious but is not Catholic	51	17
Individual ministry	51	20
With an organization that is not religious	38	14

In general, new members prefer ministry with other members of their institute or in an institute-sponsored ministry over other types of ministry.

About nine in ten new members at least “somewhat” prefer ministry with other members of their institute (91 percent).

Four in five new members at least “somewhat” prefer serving in a ministry sponsored by their institute (82 percent) and/or with members of other units of their institute (79 percent).

Seven in ten new members at least “somewhat” prefer ministry with an organization that is Catholic but is not sponsored by their institute (73 percent) and/or with members of other institutes (71 percent).

Three in five new members at least “somewhat” prefer ministry in a parish or diocesan ministry (60 percent).

Half or fewer “somewhat” prefer to minister with an organization that is religious but is not Catholic (51 percent), in an individual ministry (51 percent), or in a ministry with an organization that is not religious (38 percent).



## *Differences between Men and Women*

### **How much do you prefer ministry in these settings?**

Percentage of responses from those who are under 42,  
who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:\*

	Men		Women	
	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %	"Somewhat" or "Very" %	"Very" Only %
With other members of your institute	88	53	100	77
With an organization that is Catholic but is not sponsored by your institute	76	24	78	22
In a ministry sponsored by your institute	71	35	95	59
With members of other units of your institute	71	29	94	59
With members of other institutes	65	24	71	33
Individual ministry	59	12	29	14
In a parish or diocesan ministry	53	24	84	58
With an organization that is religious but is not Catholic	47	12	48	24
With an organization that is not religious	38	6	50	25

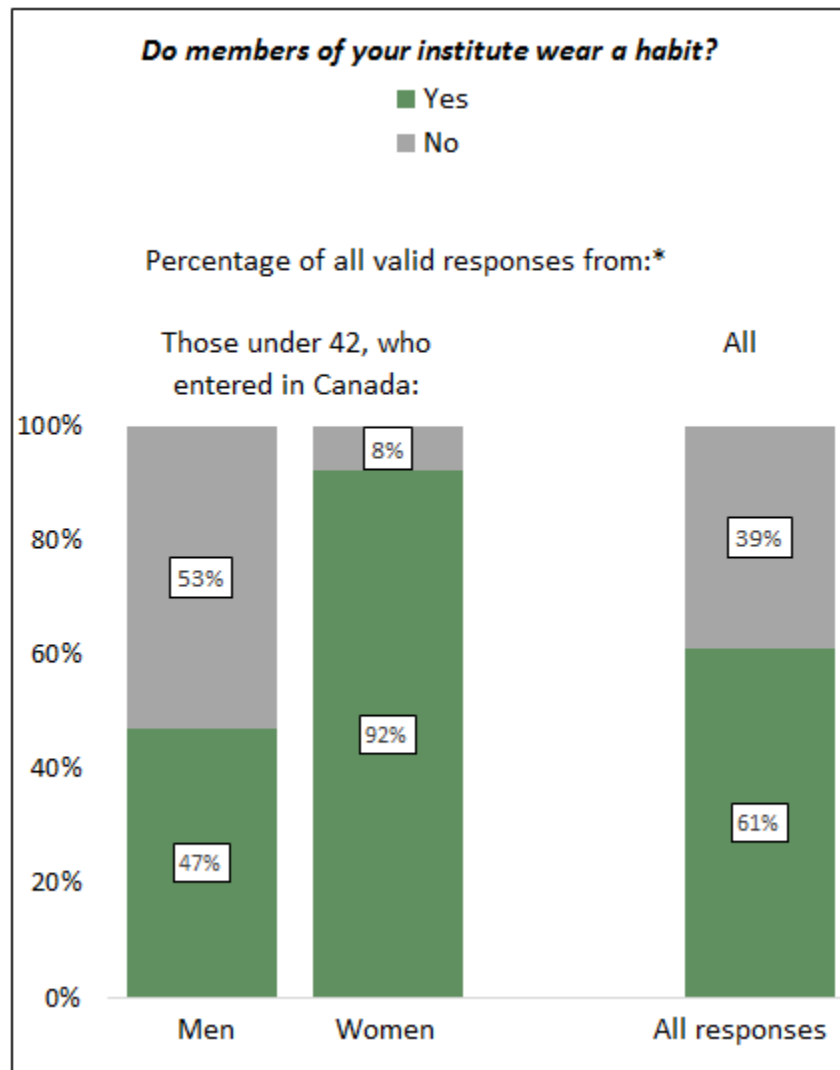
\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Comparing men and women, on average, men are 9 percentage points less likely than women to report that they at least “somewhat” prefer ministry in these listed settings (and 17 percentage points less likely to prefer them “very much”).

There are a few significant differences between men and women under 42, who entered religious life in Canada:

- Women are 34 percentage points more likely than men to “very much” prefer ministry in a parish or diocesan ministry.
- Women are 31 percentage points more likely than men to at least “somewhat” prefer ministry in a parish or diocesan ministry or in a ministry sponsored by their institute (25 percentage points more likely than men).

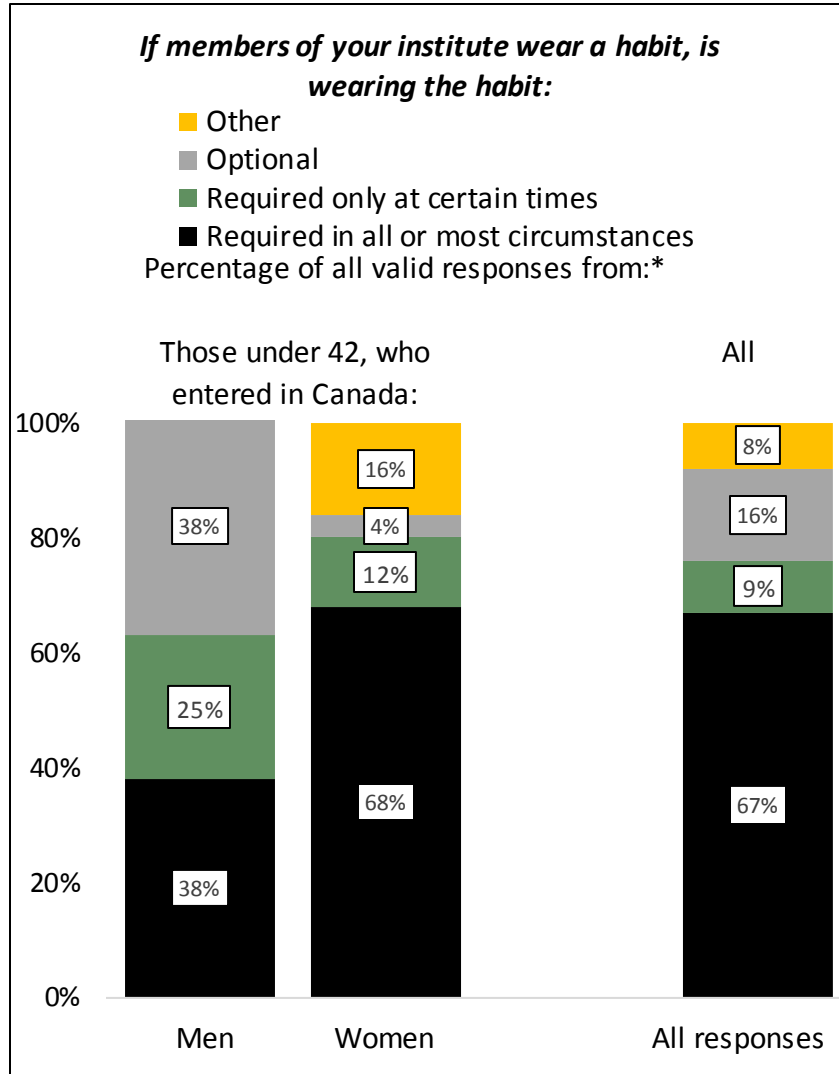
## Practices Regarding the Habit



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, 61 percent of new members who replied to this question responded that the members of their institute wear a habit.

The difference between two groups is significant: among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, women are 45 percentage points more likely than men to report that the members of their institute wear a habit.



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Two in three new members who replied to this question responded that wearing a habit is required in all or most circumstances, as compared to optional (16 percent of responding members), required only at certain times (9 percent), and other (8 percent). The responses in the “other” category contained the following explanations:

*In Canada, it is optional, but when you wear it, you wear it all the time in public.*

*In different countries the habit may be different so as to respect the local culture and also for practicality.*

*It is optional but if a member wants to wear the habit it must be worn at all times*

*It is optional in Canada but mandatory in USA.*

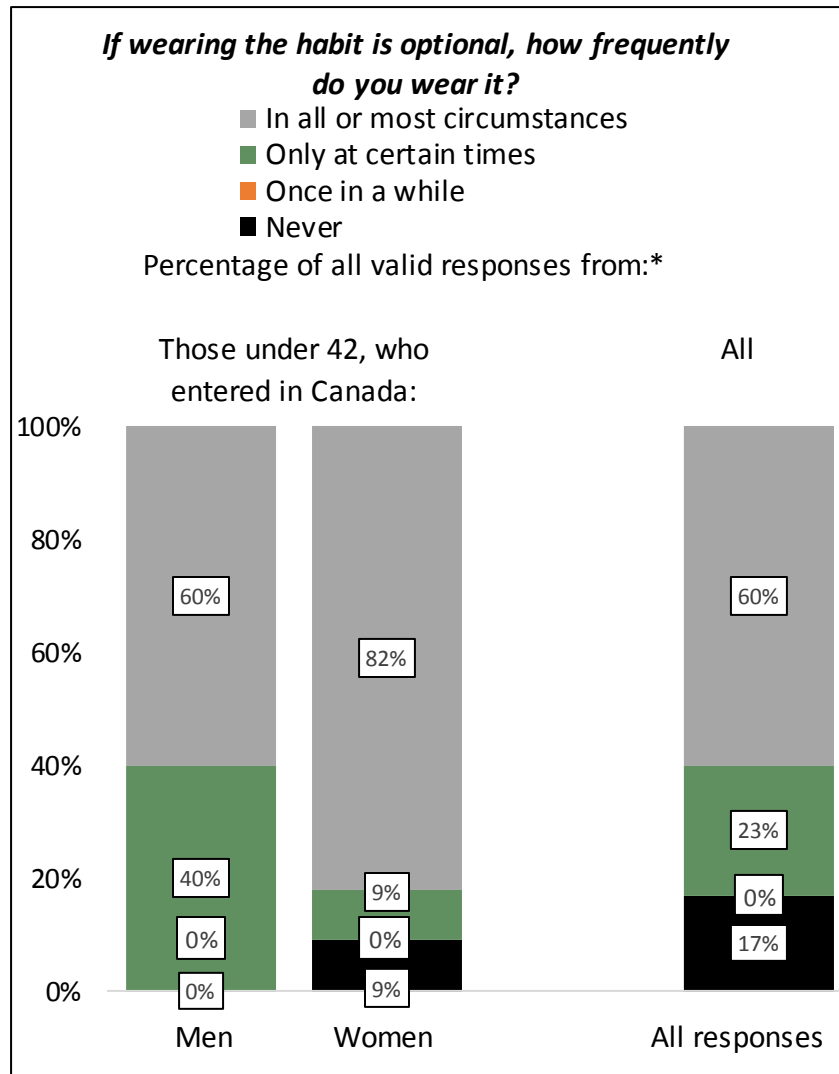
*It is required in the US but optional in Canada*

*[O]nly 2 wear a habit*

*Voluntary veil, skirt and the colours blue and white are mandatory. Wear our cross.*

*We stopped wearing a habit*

One difference between women and men is significant: among new members under 42, who entered religious life in Canada, women are 34 percentage points less likely than men to report that wearing a habit is optional in their institute.



\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, new members in institutes where wearing a habit is optional are most likely to wear it in all or most circumstances. The differences between men and women are not significant.

***If you wear the habit, what does it consist of?***  
Percentage of new members:\*

	<b>Those under 42, who entered in Canada:</b>		<b>All</b>
	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	
Monastic Scapular	29	59	40
Cross / Medallion / Devotional Scapular	6	85	39
Tunic	41	59	39
Cowl with a veil / a hood	24	41	32
Other	18	26	17

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

Overall, new members are most likely to wear a habit that consists of (in order of descending likelihood):

- monastic scapular (40 percent);
- cross, medallion, or devotional scapular (39 percent);
- tunic (39 percent);
- cowl with a veil/a hood (32 percent);
- other (17 percent).

Among new members who are under 42 and who entered religious life in Canada, there is one significant difference between men and women: women are 79 percentage points more likely than men to wear a habit that consists of a cross, medallion, or devotional scapular.

## The Role of the Habit in the Identity of Those Who Wear One

Respondents who described the role the habit plays in their identity as men and women religious tended to focus on two functions: **habit as an outward symbol that communicates religious status to others and habit as a mean of reinforcing inward identity as a consecrated person.** Out of 57 responses, 15 focused on the former, 12 focused on the latter, and an additional 22 referenced both together.

The two expressed functions of wearing a habit are exemplified in the following responses:

*[By wearing the habit,] I am recognized as someone close to God and people recognize that and come to me and share their problems with me and ask for prayers. If I were not in a habit, nobody would consider approaching me for these things.*

*[The habit] holds a deep part of my identity in that it reminds me of who I am and whose I am. It reminds me every day that I am a bride of Jesus Christ. It places who I am in the forefront of my mind and the minds of those to whom I serve or even just encounter.*

*It reminds me daily of the spousal nature of my consecration. It also continually draws me forth in public witness. So many people that we encounter come up to us for prayer, assistance, etc. because they 'see' and know that we are for them.*

Notably, the **habit is not always uniformly helpful.** For example, one of the respondents had this to say:

*For me personally, if I do wear the habit, it will only give me identity and I will easily be recognized by other sectors. Where I minister now, if I wear the habit, it will scare the people I minister to and with.*

Finally, a couple of respondents noted that the **habit aids them in a practical way** by aiding their overall effort to live a simple life.

## Current Assessment of the Chosen Religious Institute

<b><i>How would you rate the following in your religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage of all responses:		
	<b>“Good” or “Excellent” %</b>	<b>“Excellent” Only %</b>
Focus on mission	97	68
Commitment to ministry	97	68
Response to the needs of our time	92	77
Opportunities for ongoing formation	92	56
Opportunities for spiritual growth	91	66
Opportunities for personal growth	90	68
Educational opportunities	90	64
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	90	59
Relationship to the Church and its teachings	89	57
Welcome and support of newer members	88	49
Formation/incorporation programs	88	44
Sense of identity as religious	85	64
Sense of identity as institute members	83	63
Efforts to promote social justice	82	45
Quality of community life	82	43
Relationships with one another	82	33
Communal prayer experiences	81	45
Preparation for ministry	79	36
Efforts to promote vocations	76	36
Efforts to promote ecological justice	76	35

Almost all new members rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” in its focus on mission (97 percent) and its commitment to ministry (97 percent).

In addition, about nine in ten rate their institute as “good” or “excellent” in its opportunities for ongoing formation (92 percent), its response to the needs of our time (92 percent), its opportunities for spiritual growth (91 percent), its educational opportunities (90 percent), its opportunities for personal growth (90 percent), its faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth (90 percent), and its relationship to the Church and its teachings (89 percent).

New members are more likely to rate their institute as “good” or “excellent” in its welcome and support of newer members (88 percent) and its formation/incorporation programs (88 percent),

than in its efforts to promote vocations (76 percent). Fewer than half rate their institute as “excellent” in these three aspects of welcome and incorporation of new vocations.

Likewise, around four in five new members rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” regarding its sense of identity as religious (85 percent) and its sense of identity as institute members (83 percent). Three in five rate their institute as “excellent” in these two aspects of identity.

About the same proportion (four in five) rate their institute as at least “good” in its relationships with one another (82 percent), its quality of community life (82 percent), its efforts to promote social justice (82 percent), its communal prayer experiences (81 percent), and its preparation for ministry (79 percent). Between a third and two-fifths rate their institute as “excellent” in these aspects having to do with the quality of communal life.

Finally, about three in four rate their institute as either “excellent” (35 percent) or “good” (21 percent) in its efforts to promote ecological justice.



## *Differences between Men and Women*

### ***How would you rate the following in your religious institute?***

Percentage of responses from those who are under 42,  
who entered religious life in Canada, and who are:\*

	Men		Women	
	“Good” or “Excellent” %	“Excellent” Only %	“Good” or “Excellent” %	“Excellent” Only %
Opportunities for personal growth	94	65	92	85
Commitment to ministry	94	63	100	83
Opportunities for ongoing formation	88	53	100	73
Educational opportunities	88	71	100	71
Efforts to promote ecological justice	88	47	57	35
Opportunities for spiritual growth	88	47	96	92
Relationships with one another	88	24	83	38
Focus on mission	82	59	100	88
Response to the needs of our time	82	59	100	92
Formation/incorporation programs	82	53	96	65
Welcome and support of newer members	76	35	100	76
Relationship to the Church and its teachings	76	24	96	88
Sense of identity as religious	71	47	96	81
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	71	29	100	81
Sense of identity as institute members	65	47	96	76
Efforts to promote vocations	65	29	92	54
Efforts to promote social justice	65	29	83	58
Preparation for ministry	65	24	83	46
Quality of community life	59	29	96	63
Communal prayer experiences	59	24	96	63

\* Note low sample sizes (fewer than 18 men and 28 women)

On average, men are 16 percentage points less likely than women to rate their religious institute at least as “good” on these aspects of religious life. Furthermore, men are 28 percentage points less likely than women to rate their religious institute as “excellent,” overall, on these aspects.

Men are 32 percentage points more likely than women to rate at least “good” their religious institute’s efforts to promote ecological justice.

On the other hand, women are more likely than men to rate their religious institute as at least “good” in regard to its:

- quality of community life (37 percentage points more likely);
- communal prayer experiences (37 percentage points more likely);
- sense of identity as institute members (31 percentage points more likely);
- efforts to promote vocations (28 percentage points more likely);
- sense of identity as religious (26 percentage points more likely);
- relationship to the Church and its teachings (20 percentage points more likely).

Women are also more likely than men to rate their religious institute as “excellent” in regard to its:

- relationship to the Church and its teachings (64 percentage points more likely);
- faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth (52 percentage points more likely);
- opportunities for spiritual growth (45 percentage points more likely);
- welcome and support of newer members (41 percentage points more likely);
- communal prayer experiences (39 percentage points more likely);
- sense of identity as religious (34 percentage points more likely);
- quality of community life (34 percentage points more likely);
- response to the needs of our time (33 percentage points more likely);
- focus on mission (29 percentage points more likely).

## Most Rewarding Aspects of Religious Life

When asked in an open-ended question to describe what they find most rewarding about religious life, new members are most likely to focus their answers on how it allows them to **pursue their own calling, grow in the relationship with God, and develop spiritually** (65 responses fall into this category). A selection of these comments include the following:

*The sense that I am where God has called me to be.*

*Intimate and ultimate relationship with God*

*Opportunity to live my ideal of religious life in the service of the church all while remaining faithful to myself.*

Additionally, a few respondents (13 responses) indicated that the **direction** they receive from their religious institute (e.g., in the form of the overall charism, formation program, or individual guidance) is particularly valuable to them. For example, some new members responded:

*Rule and constitutions*

*good formation and on-going formation*

*The living out the Charism of my Institute in a life of loving service.*

*following our charism and [f]oundress ways in life*

A considerable number of responses (42 responses) described various aspects of **community life** as most satisfying about religious life. For example, some new members responded:

*I guess I would have to say learning to live with others who are all striving to become saints. We help each other and encourage each other, and most importantly, we love each other in the ups and downs.*

*The ability to help people especially children whom I would not otherwise have been able to reach out to. My daily prayer life is much more fulfilling now and the support of most community members helps to draw me closer to what God is calling me to.*

Additionally, 24 responses focus explicitly on the opportunity for more frequent **liturgical and prayer practices** and the communal aspect of those practices. A selection of these comments include the following:

*The discipline of prayer that our institute bequeaths us*

*Pray with other*

*My daily prayer life is much more fulfilling now and the support of most community members helps to draw me closer to what God is calling me to.*

*It's this space that religious life gives us inside the cloister, despite a hectic life of searching for the face by daily Eucharist.*

Many respondents consider their **ministry** among the most satisfying things about religious life. For example, some new members responded:

*Being able to help people in a radical way.*

*To walk with persons who are trying to overcome personal trauma (sexual, physical, mental, spiritual abused)*

*The ability to help people especially children whom I would not otherwise have been able to reach out to*

## Most Challenging Aspects of Religious Life

When asked in a second open-ended question to describe what they find most challenging about religious life, new members are most likely to focus their answers on **various aspects of community life** (58 responses), such as problems stemming from differences between young and old members and between new and established members, as well as cultural differences, ecclesiological differences, and different backgrounds in general. Some problems were also related to the size of the community. For example, some new members responded:

*Community life is a joy but it is also a struggle, especially being the youngest member of the Institute and having an average age gap of 40-50 years between myself and the other members. It can be difficult being the only person to experience the initial zeal of religious life while the rest of the Institute is in a period of contraction.*

*I also find it difficult to accept sisters who spend their time gossiping about others, and using the superior's weakness to manipulating to manipulate her to believe all their lies.*

*Getting along with other members who are of a different nationality and don't understand our culture of living....this can be extremely frustrating for them and for myself.*

*We are 4 different communities that joined into one and each one of the communities have a different culture. Even now when I go to one of the four main residences (former motherhouses) I can feel the difference in the cultures, ways of being with each other, prayer, community.*

*Living alone in [r]eligious [l]ife is a challenge.*

*Loss. As I develop relationships, the women in my community die.*

A related category of challenges has to do with **various aspects of institute life** (13 responses) that tend to focus on adapting to the future. Some of these responses include:

*Being forward thinking as a community.*

*The future! Our community is aging and there are few vocation inquiries from women under the age of 60. As the youngest member the uncertainty we face is a challenge I struggle with [it] in prayer but also in the day to day responsibilities that need to be met.*

*[N]avigating these ambiguous days of transition i.e. letting go of old patterns and models of religious life while discerning new models*

*The future! The context of secularized Western society.*

*To find again our prophetic dimension, [i.e.] being capable of denouncing the lies and illusions of consumerist society, of a competitive and elitist culture, of a cult of the superficial etc. by our lives. We shouldn't do it by discourse but by an art of living differently. I find that religious life [here] is bourgeois and, in the ecclesiastical context, clericalized. We need to retrieve the radical [way] of life!*

Another major category of challenges pertains to **individual spiritual life**. Overall, 45 responses can be put into this category. Among the responses focusing explicitly on the religious vows, obedience is considered challenging most frequently (mentioned in 11 responses), as compared to the vow of chastity (6 responses), and the vow of poverty (3 responses). Examples of other challenges in this category, in the words of the respondents, include the following:

*The most challenging part about [r]eligious [l]ife is myself. Learning to love myself even with my imperfections and faults has been the most challenging part for me.*

*We cannot do all the good there is to do. People want us to do so much, not realizing that if we do everything they want us to do we cannot be whom they want and need us to be. There is a constant tension between contemplation and service, and a temptation to allow prayer to suffer.*

*The effort to keep up (make time for) the prayer life.*

*The most challenging thing about religious life is accepting my weaknesses and learning to trust God completely and letting go of my own will and doing His Will.*

*My biggest challenge in religious life is dealing with myself and getting myself to become less selfish and giving more of my love to God and others.*

*The constant call to grow in holiness each day in fidelity to the vows I have professed and to leave no area of my life (human, spiritual, emotional, intellectual) untouched by the Lord's grace.*

A related category of challenges has to do with the **problems of identity** or feeling understood by others. Six responses fit into this category. Examples of challenges in this category, in the words of the respondents, include the following:

*[L]ack of public understanding – counter-cultural reality of religious life*

*The sense that people expect me to fit into a particular "nun box". I am my own person, as anyone is, but people are surprised that [s]isters drink wine or eat out or dress like normal people or watch the news, etc.*

*Adapting to this counter-cultural way of life. Letting go of my old life and dreams and things.*

Finally, 24 responses did not fit into any of the categories above and included an assortment of things such as challenges related to ministry, problems deriving from new members' responsibilities for their family members, etc.

## Focus Group Comments regarding what is Most Challenging about Religious Life Today

In the focus groups, too, the new members were asked about what they find to be the most challenging aspects of religious life today. One of the most common challenges that many of the new members described was the challenge of living in community with members who are much older than they are. These large **age differences** are a serious challenge to community life.

*I am in a house where there are sixteen of us and eleven are over the age of 85. And so, although I know that their intentions are good, and I know that they love us, they love me, but it's difficult. It's difficult to build that community, too.*

*Because I was the youngest person in the house by thirty years and there was a fourth sister in the community other than the two of us entering, and the novice mistress, and an elder sister who was herself going through a transition and a few years later she was officially diagnosed with Alzheimer's while I was still a novice. So her going through the initial stages of that when I first entered and she had just come to that house from another community and another province that same time I did. So that was a big transition for all four of us. And it was very difficult.*

*Where I am at, it's more like a retirement residence. So after supper, everyone goes to their room. It's like, "It's too early. It's only six o'clock!" So it is a struggle that way, even though I'm in community, sometimes I don't feel like I'm in community. There's no bond.*

*So, when I first moved in, they pushed back dinner to have a late dinner at six o'clock, because normally they eat at five. But because I'm working and I was still at work at five, so that's why they pushed back the dinner hour for me. And it was a struggle to leave work at five, to be home for six, for supper at six. And very often, I used to come in after they were all sitting. And also, I used to eat at eight, eight-thirty, so to eat at six o'clock was a big challenge for me.*

*And the age factor is also a challenge in the sense that when I was living on my own, I was used to having music playing. But here, nobody plays music. Or if they do, it's more religious hymns that are playing, and I feel like I'm intruding on silence or intruding on their time if I play anything else. And I'm not used to going around the house with my earbuds on. I just like music playing in my room, but the walls are so thin, so I know I disturb other people.*

*[A]lso different personality types and learning to work with different personality types. And some are more sensitive than others. You have to be careful what you say and what you do. Where I work, there are three sisters at the retreat house, and one staff. I want to learn everything, but it feels like when I'm doing the learning, I'm stepping on the other sister's toes because that's what she does. And we've had some interesting conversations about this: "Well, I'm just learning because when you're gone, I need to know how it's done. I'm not trying to take over." We've come to some understandings, especially at meal times and clean ups that I say, "Is there anything else?" and if she says "no," then I respect that and I step back, even though I know that there's more I could do to help her out so that she could relax a little sooner. But you've got to respect the boundaries and find those boundaries, and that can be difficult as well.*

*Actually, in that context, how do we experience the youthfulness of the religious life when we're in a context of caring for the elders of our community? When the majority of our sisters are preparing for death and preparing to meet God. They're giving up their ministries. Even the simple things, like chores around the house, they're starting to give up things like that, those who can't. We need to fit ourselves into that and take*

*up those things that they did but how do we take up new things when there's all these things. Sometimes it feels like there's pressure to take on the things given up by others, when maybe God is calling us to do something new.*

*One of my challenges is, I become the go-to person for everything: errands, yard work, and fixing stuff. And because they're older and that's the natural thing, they're like, "Oh, those young fellows, they can do that." And then, I find myself getting frustrated, because I work out of the house, and therefore I'm always there. They think, "Oh, you're at home, so you're not doing anything, can you fix this, look at this?" So I find, personally, that's one of my challenges.*

Others describe the challenge of being a religious in a time when religious institutes are experiencing severe **diminishment in their numbers**. Several described the challenge in terms of trying to maintain a sense of living in community when houses are closing and when members are living alone.

*One of the biggest challenges that I see right now is managing our diminishments and maintaining a sense of community in that. I think the [Institute] is an example of that: we're spread from coast to coast. Our average community size is shrinking and we have communities that were once ten people are now five people or four or three. How do we manage that diminishment while maintaining a sense of community? ... One of the biggest challenges for me is having to live in a smaller community. Right now that community has twelve people and it's great, but living in a community with four or three, that's pretty hard to find a lot of support. So, how do I manage that, how do I find support in those situations?*

*Our homes are closing, that's the reality now. We have homes of two, homes of one. We have one sister who has been in [Place] for thirty-three years by herself. On and off there has been someone wanting to close that home and people revolted! We're celebrating our 15 years this year in Canada and 125 since our founding. What do you do? It's crunch time. Prayer is the only thing.*

*I think the challenge of living community is constantly trying to be, choosing to live it when you're not under one roof. So, when I'm living alone, always being aware and mindful of how to keep nurturing that. What's my part in that, what am I doing? So it's just that it's, the challenge is to be constantly aware of it because I think that if it slips, other things have the potential to fill.*

*It's, how do you make a community when you're living on your own? Sometimes you have to because of the ministry you're involved in, but how do you make community? How do you be a community in a group of sixty where everybody goes to their bedrooms after supper? That's not community, you know. You need to be able to do things together, have some time together. It's tough, and there are some who just want it but can't live community, and they're on their own. And it's a conversation we have at home all the time, about what it is.*

*So for me, for example, I'm a little bit scared, but I'm hearing that sisters entering community life, and then they decide to live on their own. So they're doing their own schedules of how they pray, when they're going to Mass, something like that. So, for me that is forbidden, where is the community? If you're living on your own, as a young person, for example, I'm not seeing the point. Why did they enter religious life, some kind of community, I can live by myself and not be a nun. And I can volunteer, I can do good things. So I'm seeing that probably in that area, we need to change some things to show that we are a little different than just a nun living on her own, supporting ourselves, and so on. That's my kind of challenge, I just can't understand it. And it does not attract me at all.*



Several focus group members described a **resistance to change** that they see operating in their communities as a real challenge for them and for the community as a whole. Some of this they see as being related to aging and diminishment, but for others it is a more generalized sense of resistance to try new things.

*I think for me, it's having a community life that's life-giving. Like we have a lot of sisters who have lived in the same place for a long time, and there's a lot of groups that are kind of closed off [among themselves]. So we wouldn't send a younger member, or anyone really, because they would have a hard time living in some of the houses because they're so used to living together that it's hard to bring somebody new in. And, so actually communal living is one of the great things, and one of the hardest things. When it's going well, that's the best part. And when it's not going well, it's very difficult. And so, I've had an experience of both.*

*Speaking in a general sense, I think one of the dangers that religious communities can get into is not being open to new apostolates and new missions. And that being said, being stuck in nostalgia for what was, and what we used to do, or what we've always done, or where we used to be, can be a limiting factor for people who are desiring to enter any particular community.*

*Having more of a closed-off mindset with regards to the apostolate and ministries is very dangerous for communities. I think it is important to keep in mind for the charism as far as being open to, like the [Institute], to explore and take risks. It's a fine line to be very attentive to the Holy Spirit and see where the needs can be. Because with human nature we can always kind of tweak that and say, "It's either this or it's that." And there's always risk involved when opening any kind of a mission but it seems to me that we need to be more open as to our approach.*

*And the sense of being involved in making those decisions, "What are we going to close? Where are we going to be?" Because we can't be everywhere we are now, we can't be there ten years from now, in those same cities. We can't be in all those same apostolates.*

*Again, it's a spirituality. I think religious communities have to be discerning communities. So in other words, if there is no flexibility, if we only do this ministry, all we do is teach, all we do is hospitals, and we are trained this way, then there is a problem. Because the world has changed and you know, we don't need sisters setting up hospitals anymore. We don't need religious running schools, setting up schools, the way it was.*

A few spoke of the challenge of **creating a good community experience** for those in formation when the numbers are small. Some describe this challenge in terms of a difference of ecclesiology in newer members, who are seen by some to be more traditional in their orientation toward the Church.

*I mean, in [Place] where we have our novitiate, we've got sisters who live on their own in these two-bedroom apartments. And yet, there's only one sister and two novices living together as a community in the novitiate. And it seems, my interpretation is that nobody wants to leave their comfort zone, to be able to make a really good, fuller experience with more sisters to see what this community life is like. So they are comfortable in their one's and two's. That's, that's hard. You know, that here we are, we're entering religious life, and nobody wants to give up their apartment to come live the change.*

*The primary challenge is the dropping number of young people in religious life, particularly in apostolic religious life, particularly in the women's orders. At the same time we see people going into more traditional,*

*contemplative orders. That's a vicious cycle too, right. I've talked to a number of young women who say, "If the [Institute] accepted women, I would be a [Institute]." I say, "There's lots of great Ignatian women's orders. The [Institute] and others." They say, "Well yeah, but there's only two sisters under 50." That kind of thing is a very real hurdle towards entering.*

*And tied to that is a reaction against the younger generation of religious. Many who are considering religious life today would seem [conservative], to our men, who are either moderate or somewhat progressive ecclesiologically. They have some apprehension about a more conservative younger active Catholic, and I suppose that would be one of my real struggles.*

Another spoke of the difficulty of balancing a challenging apostolate with a desire for a strong community life.

*And another challenge is that, since we are active members and we work in different ministries, sometimes we make excuses for ourselves by saying "I have to work in the parish" and another says "I have to work in my ministry." That's a big challenge, how to reconcile both and be present and involved with others in community.*

Others see a different challenge in the diminishment that describes religious life today. They speak of the **lack of opportunity to meet other religious** from other congregations.

*But the one thing I did feel was missing, I felt for a long time, the lack of connections with young women religious, primarily because there was so few. And in particular in the orders that were traditionally very close to the [Institute], the [Institute], [Institute], and so on. So that was always something I felt was missing. We had some connections through the novitiate program in [Place], which were great, but those were mostly sisters that were semi-cloistered, so outside of actually seeing them in class there was no opportunities to interact. Something that I would have appreciated more of. There is a limited chance here at [Place]; there are a few women religious here I know of, but not many, that's for sure.*

*In my community, we were the last ones not to do the inter-novitiate. The year after that, the new mistress, the person in charge of the novitiate, decided to enter the Ignatian inter-novitiate, so that was with the Jesuits and all the Ignatian female congregations. We didn't do it but I think it's a great thing, the communalization and the Ignatian and that bond we can share: brothers and sisters, already.*

Another challenge of religious life today, not necessarily related to diminishment, is the challenge of **living in community with those from other cultures**.

*Well, I knew a little bit of [Language] and that was the language she spoke, primarily, and we are an Eastern Catholic community, and that is the mother tongue, I guess, of our community. Although in North America, we primarily speak English at home because we all know English. And so I had to learn a lot more, I could read and write, but I didn't know what I was reading and writing. So, I had to learn to speak, and I had to make up words, guessing what I think that I heard this person saying, this word, in this context. So I really had to give up that fear [of learning a new language] and it was crazy.*

*And also the food, I like my food spicier, the food is very bland. They all know, I carried my hot sauce here. So the food is bland. I think, they do try to add a little bit more spice in their food, but to them, pepper is a spice. And, it's just different. But nothing big, I do get a chance to cook my own meals. So I do that, I do that on weekends.*

*And also a lack of preparation of those who live here to receive others. Because sometimes, those who come from outside, we undergo a number of preparations, and those who live here, okay, nothing. So we have preparation for entering congregations, and it's a problem for those who receive us without being prepared for other cultures and other people. So it's always two sides. And it's a really big challenge.*

Finally, a number of religious described the most challenging aspect of religious life as **staying relevant in modern society**. They sense that as religion and religious life becomes less visible in society, people may be losing touch with the importance of religion for society. They sense that religious life is becoming more marginalized and that they may be losing touch with young people.

*For me there seems to be all these stereotypes about religious and a lot of them are around religious being unhappy. We are living in a secular, sexualized world so it is difficult for people on the outside to reconcile how you can be celibate and still be happy. And that is a question I get thrown at from all my friends even those who have accepted that I am joining and are supportive. They keep coming back to celibacy and it's like, "Why? Why do you want to be? And how do you do that?" and "Why do you join a community to do the work?" It's like the spiritual aspect gets overlooked. Because it's more than the mission, it's more than that.*

*I feel that in [Place] there is a lot of indifference towards religious people. So how do I keep at it, being who I am, being happy, trying to bring different types of projects, getting to have people working together? And how do I continue that with the indifference of the world around? I don't know, that is a lot of questions. It won't stop me from persisting and being happy with what I am doing, the different types of projects. That's for me one of the different challenges.*

*So how do we remain relevant? I think we are relevant, but to do that we have to be connecting with people and with questions that are relevant to them. The questions that are relevant to them are things like, "Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? Where am I going? What is the meaning of life?" And the challenges to that are, you know busyness, technology we are constantly...we are too busy to stop and think and reflect on some of these basic questions. I think quite frankly a lot of people live their lives trying to avoid these questions. It is not until they are sick, or facing the end of their lives, or lost a loved one, or some tragedy where they start to wonder what is the point of life. I think you know at those moments and all the way through that, we should be there with people on that journey. And that is how we remain relevant.*

*The next Synod in 2018 will be addressing youth ministry, discernment, and vocation. So are we relevant to younger people? And the fundamental questions that are being asked by youth from sixteen to twenty-nine years old have to do with meaning. The Pope is interested in the opinions of everybody in that age group because youth is not a disease but it's a step in life. So everybody was young at one time and it changes from generation to generation. So how can we be more meaningful to younger people? I hope that we will have lots of insight from that document.*

They describe the challenge of relevance as a perceived **threat to the apostolic ministries** that men and women religious traditionally have been engaged in.

*Sometimes, relevance because a lot of the areas in which sisters, brothers, and priests have been working in, if they have apostolic ministries, they've been taken over by other organizations like the government or sometimes just other kinds of ways of working. So there can be a problem of what to do? If I become a religious, like you don't want to be a contemplative necessarily, but what kind of ministry will I have?*

*Yeah, the traditional ministries of nursing and pastoral care, all of those traditional roles are gone. We built the hospitals, we built the parishes, we built the schools, and now they're taken over by the government. So okay, what do sisters do now? Or brothers, or priests?*

*I know one sister who was doing all of that, she made final vows, and then she left, to get married. Because she said, "I can do all this, and I don't have to be a religious." So what's the attraction? Why are we here? It's a question I continually ask myself. I haven't made final vows yet. I could easily walk away and be well taken care of, it's not a problem. Not that I want to be taken care of. But it's, we need people to understand that you doing something that's bigger than yourself. Bigger than your own home communities, it's really the whole world. Living a prophetic life.*

And even though being relevant to society is understood as a challenge for religious life, at the same time a number of religious describe this as something of an opportunity for religious life, as well. They see the challenge as one of **being true to the charism** of the community.

*But I tend to think that we are at the beginning of something, historically. I think the world has changed quite a bit, especially in the geopolitical way. Something is going on and it's not just to look at things politically, but to look at things spiritually. Where are we in terms of consumerism? Where are we in terms of our response to others less fortunate? Where do we stand? What do we think about? How do we live well together? Or are we going to be people who are selfish? I think that the Church will have a lot to say in that conversation, but I think it's a conversation that we are not yet having.*

*I think it's a great time, actually, to be in religious life. Because of that, because it's an opportunity for us to be relevant. I think we struggle too much with what it means to be relevant because we think in terms of institutional relevancy. I don't think the Church needs a bunch of men running around who are identifiable as priests in all this to be relevant. I don't think that's the matter. I don't think we should count it by the amount of people who are in the Church or not, I don't think that matters. I think it's listening and accompanying, I think that is the most important thing. That is what we are being called to do. That actually excites me.*

*I think, like what we just talked about with relevance, it's not about numbers. It's not about saving an institution or saving a community. It's about being true to the charism of that community. And being present to people in their struggles and their journeys. My hope is that, you know we were asked to do that at Vatican II, to go back to our original charism. And I think, in other communities as well, but in [Institute] we have done it a lot on that. And so I think we have been very intentional about who we are. And the communities that are intentional about who they are and know who they are, are the ones that are attracting vocations. If you don't know who you are then you don't know what you have to offer.*

*The big challenge I see, is being spiritual, mystic, and prophetic. What people seek, as I have observed here, is not that you are doing some volunteer work. Now anyone can do that and younger guys are much better at that. And they go to different countries and they can do one week, two weeks, or one month of missionary work as long as you are happy. So how to be more grounded in Christ and how to be motivated by the spiritual lessons. How to be a good spiritual mystic. That, I think, is a big challenge.*

One sees another challenge to religious life in the **increased flow of information** in modern society, which Pope Francis described as the "rapidification" of society.

*I think another thing that's a challenge to our religious life is what Francis called the rapidification of society in general, particularly in the Western world. There's so much information continuously coming at you, so many things to be on top of. And there's fewer, maybe church people, or maybe fewer religious, so we're covering more ground, we're covering more areas. So you have to know everything that's going on in the diocese, but you also have to know all that's going on in the province. You also have to know everything that's going on in your particular expertise area whether it's vocation work, or chaplaincy, or you're a professor. There's just so many things, and it's all flowing, it's all coming at you.*

Another sees a challenge to religious life in the **declining reputation of the Catholic Church** in Canada, stemming from the sexual abuse scandals and the legacy of the residential schools in Canada.

*I also wonder if sort of the decline in reputation of the Church in Canada, I think, really affects religious life. I mean, we have problems with fallout from the child sexual abuse scandals, there's the legacy of the residential schools in Canada. There are a lot of people who have been wounded by the Church, and they've kind of passed that down I think, to the next generation. And so there's a hesitancy to even have a relationship with your local parish. So how can you even go beyond that to considering religious life and kind of being an emblem for the Church? You know, there's a lot of tension, I think, in society, in between the Church and regular families.*

## **Hopes and Fears for the Future of Religious Life in Canada**

A final question asked focus group members to describe their hopes and fears for the future of religious life in Canada. **Staying joyful in one's vocation** was one hope for the future that was repeated by a number of religious.

*I am hoping that each of us we can live our vocation with joy. Because if we do that then others are going to see that we made a good decision; that the Lord is with us; that the Lord is working in us. Because sometimes we forget so much, we are so distracted, and we don't live our vocation with joy.*

*It is my dream that we could show the world how fun it is to be religious. We usually say it in my community that, "Religious life is the best kept secret, why keep it secret?" I realize that right now it is a tough moment and we do not have ideal numbers, but religious life is so rich. My dream is that people could hear that we are happy. It's a life worth living.*

Another hope that shared in the focus groups was the desire to keep a **healthy, broad understanding of vocation** so that religious life is seen as one option among several that can bring joy and peace to one's life.

*My hope is that if we can keep a healthy, broad understanding of vocation and within vocation understand religious vocations, marriage, and the ordained and single life. If we can have a healthy perspective of that and not be so concerned about self-preservation, we will continue. I am finding often in my own language and those that I either work with or are in ministry with, I really challenge us, or me, when I use just the word vocation in the context of religious vocation. When I mean religious vocation, but I just call it vocation. I think it's because the more we can help the people of God to see that we all have a vocation. How is God calling you to be most in love with God? And then move from there. That is where I find hope. Because I think if we keep*

*that language alive and the actions that accompany it, there for me is the hope that people will be invited to respond to whatever that vocation is and if it is a religious vocation, we will be there ready to welcome them.*

Others expressed their hope that religious life in Canada will be **open to vocations from other countries and from other congregations.**

*But there needs to be an openness. You look at other countries, [Place], they're very spiritual. It's a different mindset. Vocations are on the rise there. You go to third world countries and they're booming for different reasons. There's obviously something that is drawing people to the [Institute], to your community in numbers, that men and women are looking at, that other communities aren't having. It's not necessarily that people aren't being drawn to that charism or that founder. It's that there's something that we're missing — that each community is closed off, or something. I think it has to do with a cultural thing, a norm, we have to be able to accept it.*

*One of my [Institute] professors said that as numbers shrink in religious life that it is a tremendous opportunity for there to be bridge building between different congregations. Ironically, the [Institute] are probably the worst at that, but that is a whole other story. But like things like this, like bringing different congregations together, in different contexts, working together. We have found this to be such an enriching opportunity. And I mean there is already so much going on around the world. I know in the South Sudan there is a lot of inter-congregational community building and work going on. I think that can only be for the good. So I think there is a lot of hope in that.*

*My supervisor, ... she's a Muslim women, a very devout Muslim in conservative dress. Her break is spent in prayer in the mid-afternoon and it was very multicultural. It was just one other Catholic out of the six of us in our location. So, just experiencing that multicultural, multi-religious atmosphere, she was the one who understood the most. The Muslim, who was not afraid or ashamed of her faith, understood my expressiveness of my faith. When I dressed conservatively, she was the one who understood. People might say something or ask questions. We would ask questions about our respective religions in a respectful way and there was such mutual respect. I found that very heartening.*

Still others expressed a hope that vocations will continue to be **promoted within families and among youth.** They hope that interactions between young people and religious will be life-giving, welcoming, and inviting so that youth and young adults will recognize religious life as an option that might be right for them.

*It starts at home too. Families aren't promoting this. I've had people tell me all the time, "How come the sisters don't do this, why aren't there sisters in the parish, how come the sisters don't do that?" I simply say, "Are you promoting? Are you asking your sons and daughters to enter?" The reality is, do you promote this also at home? That's what used to happen. You foster that—it starts at home.*

*Yes, some communities don't have the means to do that kind of fellowship and stuff. I think that presence is really important, to even having more youth and young religious gatherings. It's an inter-congregational thing. Having an open to the public thing, opening the doors. We have our Founder's Day. It's a day of prayer, we have posters that we send out to our parishes, and we say, "Come pray with us! Come join us in prayer! We have a whole day, the chapel's open, come join the sisters in prayer." Just having things like that to promote is important. We need to start taking more risks in 2017.*

*I think there needs to be a revamping as far as how vocations are approached and marketed because there isn't a lot out there. I know that I've looked at several communities' websites and I say "Really? It doesn't look like this has been updated since I don't know when." It's just having more of a presence. I've found that even at the retreat center where I work, having young school groups come in and I've heard them say, "There's a nun coming!" And I turn around and say, "Where?" So, coming up to them and approaching them to break that stigma, because it's already like, "What is a sister?" They have no idea but somehow getting out there more in the public.*

*Working with young adults in a college setting and having that privilege to view, with pastoral conversations and other means, you see young adults who are maybe taking steps to actualize their faith. How much they even struggle with commitment, self-esteem, just staying on task, perseverance. The capacity to do something hard for a long time. That really concerns me. When we dream in these meetings and stuff, about new forms of religious life and I still think, I don't think the young adults today have enough parts per million of perseverance, resilience, joy, faith, to really live a vowed life. I don't care what form it is, whatever new form it is, there is going to be vows and there is going to be community.*

*It's not so much the things that we do that draws people, but how we are and who we are in the relationships that we have with one another and with Christ in how we interact. That draws people. You're talking about your experiences within the society and with [Name] and the spirituality. That's what's drawing people. And we need to give witness to that joy and seeing the religious and that interaction. I don't think people are getting enough of now, in this day and age, unless they have interaction with the sisters, whether it's youth groups or things like that. That needs to be in revival. Maybe we need to plug onto rather than EWTN – plug in onto some kind of religious commercial of like, "Look at us!" We need to be outside the religious channels because people aren't necessarily looking on those. Throw up a billboard someplace. A subway advert. Think outside of the box.*

Some religious expressed the hope that their religious institutes will make **wise choices among their institutional commitments**. They fear that the reality of diminishment will pressure institutes to hold onto apostolates in which they no longer have the capacity for effective ministry and perhaps cause them to miss opportunities for welcoming new members and for moving into new ministries that might be open to them.

*The hope for the future is the sense of not being stuck in the nostalgia of which apostolates and which cities. What were our locations and having some of the flexibility to say, "Right now we're in seventeen cities doing these things." Having the freedom to say, "In ten years, we'll only be in three cities or four cities in order to meet our personal capacity to do ministry." Personally, I don't think I could ever live in a community of two or three people and be effective in ministry in the long term. Short term, here or there, as the transition happens, sure, but in the long term, no. My hope is that as we live this diminishment, we find a way to maintain our ability to live in community.*

*My hope is that religious will make choices today around institutional commitments and that sort of thing that will allow those few remaining members to perhaps get back to the essentials. To focus beyond, if they wish, to focus beyond the needs of the long-standing commitments, pursuing the needs of today in ways that best respond to those needs.*

*Even though we have our Constitution and we have our charism, by welcoming a man in the community, everything shifts. Not dramatically, but we need to be open and realize that it will change and we cannot be stuck.*

*And what I do worry about and [Name] talked a little bit about the more conservative candidates coming in to some of the congregations. I guess what I worry about is, I really believe that that the Church has evolved a lot in the last 2,000 years and it will continue to evolve. And as numbers fall, I worry that people will read that as we need to go backwards, rather than maybe doing a bit more of a deeper discernment of what needs to change. You do see some bishops, in certain areas, spouting that – that we need to go back to how things were. That really bothers me when I hear that.*

*Personally, my hope would be for a huge amount of outside-the-box thinking on these things. For instance, why do we have so many different vocation directors to go through? Why not get a number of communities with like-minded charisms to have a single really strong vocation team that would support young people discerning vocation, wherever that vocation may be. Even at the point of formation: why do we all have to be in separate novitiates? Why can't there be a common novitiate? It's great when you can come together across national boundaries. Why not across congregational boundaries? There are a lot of historical differences in the roots of the different congregations, but some may even come together in some type of way into the future. Why not come together in active apostolic communities. If there are only two [Institute] members in [Place], why can't they live with some of the other religious orders, including in some cases some men's and women's communities combined and working together and having closer connections, or having different houses on the same street, or having meals together a few times a week? I feel like there are a thousand things that could be done to work more closely together to support one another in our religious vocations but the [Institute] are bad at this. We're among the worst and it's partly because we do have that sort of critical mass that we can do things on our own. In Chicago, there are 21 different congregations that make up the Catholic Theological Union there, and they send people there for studies. Why not work together far, far more than we are now? I would personally find that extremely enriching and it would give me more hope for the future.*



## **PART III: Best Practices in Vocation Animation**

The final phase of the research took place in February 2018 and involved site visits to three religious institutes who have had success in recruiting and retaining new members in recent years. These institutes do not necessarily have the highest numbers of new members, but were selected to represent different types of institutes and to help identify “best practices” in vocation animation and retention. The three sites included the Society of Jesus in English Canada, the Congregation of the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood, and the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada. Each site visit included an interview with the major superior and/or other members of the leadership team, members of the vocation team, and, when possible, one or more formation directors. In addition to the interviews, researchers reviewed vocation animation materials and practices as well as institute websites and social media.

To help to identify some “best practices” for vocation animation, the three phases of the study were considered jointly: the findings from the surveys of institute leaders and of new members, focus groups, and site visits suggest a number of “best practices” for vocation animation.

From the survey of institute leaders, these characteristics distinguish institutes with new members from institutes without new members:

- Monastic lifestyle or character
- Vocation animation targeting youth under age 19
- Living in communities of four to seven

None of these characteristics alone, or even all three in combination, are a guarantee of success in vocation animation. They do suggest, however, some avenues that institutes and vocation teams may wish to explore internally as they discern how to adapt to changes in society and stay relevant to those who may be discerning a vocation to religious life. For example, apostolic institutes certainly should not change their lifestyle to monastic in order to attract candidates, but does your community ever engage in more monastic styles of communal prayer experiences, such as *Lectio Divina*, especially in gatherings with young adults? Likewise, as fewer religious teach in Catholic schools and minister in parishes, does your institute seek out other ways to interact with youth and young adults in other natural settings, such as open houses, youth retreats, or service projects? And as for community life, even if the majority of the institute lives in communities of three or less, have you explored ways to ensure an authentic experience of community life during discernment and formation, such as discernment houses or an inter-novitiate?

From the survey and focus groups of new members, members of religious institutes who have entered religious life between 2000 and 2017 report that they are attracted to religious life by:

- Charism of the founder/foundress
- Sense of purpose deriving from what they do in religious life
- Strong communal prayer life
- Community living – particularly in groups of four to seven

Again, none of these characteristics alone are a guarantee of success. They do suggest, however, some avenues that religious institutes and vocation teams may wish to explore internally as they work on vocation animation. After all, in assessing their current religious institute, just over a third of new members rated it “excellent” in its efforts to promote vocations. Some questions that religious institutes and vocation teams might want to explore include: Is the charism of the institute and the story of its founder/foundress prominently employed on the institute website, social media, and vocation materials? Are all members comfortable in talking about the charism of the institute and drawing connections between the charism and their own particular life and ministry? Are there plenty of opportunities for discerners to interact and pray with members, such as “Come and See” programs, vocation retreats, live-in experiences? Are those in formation assigned meaningful tasks that not only form them in religious life but also connect them to the charism? Do members at all stages have a say in the apostolate to which they are assigned? How is community life and community prayer structured for those in formation? Do your houses of discernment and formation communities model and promote vital community living, even if this is accomplished through an inter-novitiate?

From the site visits, characteristics of institutes that have attracted steady numbers of new members since 2000 include:

- Deliberate attention to vocation animation, including a vocation director and/or a vocation team, attractive and informative website, and vocation materials that clearly identify the charism and ministry of the institute
- Opportunities for members of all ages to interact with young people in meaningful activities
- Openness and flexibility in working with candidates and new members from other cultures
- Authentic community life and communal prayer, particularly for discerners and those in formation
- Openness to change and willingness to adapt to new realities

As before, none of these characteristics guarantee success in attracting vocations but each suggest ways that religious institutes can explore with their members how they are working together to build up a culture of vocations within the institute. In sum, the research suggests that it is the example of members and the characteristics of the institute that have the most influence on the decision to enter a particular institute. These findings from the research suggest the following “best practices” for religious institutes to consider for vocation animation.

**Make vocation animation a priority – from the top – and work to instill a “culture of vocation” in institute members.**

The aspects that most attract discerners to a particular institute include its spirituality and mission, its ministries, its prayer life, and its community life. Attractive websites and social media, informative and engaging print materials, and active engagement with young people in public settings such as vocation fairs and vocation talks in parishes and schools are all important ways to build public awareness of the institute among discerners. These activities and materials require a commitment of resources – both material and personnel – to vocation animation and institutes that are attracting new members have dedicated or increased institute resources in these areas in recent years.

When it comes to thinking about vocation programs, arguably, it might be best to begin with identifying the target audience prior to considering the means of reaching this audience. Notably, the study found that the units with new members are more likely than units without new members to focus vocation animation on youth under 19 years old. Units with new members are significantly more likely than units without new members to sponsor each of the vocation programs identified in the survey except for the discernment house. Vocation programs, however, are only part of the picture of successful vocation animation, necessary but not sufficient in and of themselves.

When it comes to introducing most-likely-to-succeed candidates to the institute, current members are the institute's greatest asset. It is institute members who most often play a role in making the first acquaintance with a discerner, rather than formal vocation programs. Half of new members say they first became acquainted with their institute through a member of the institute (e.g., at school or at their place of work), and more than a third say they first learned of the institute through some other person or institution not related to the institute (e.g., through a friend, an advisor, or a vocation placement service). By comparison, just a quarter of new members say they first became acquainted with their institute through the direct outreach efforts of the institute (e.g., through promotional materials, a story in the media, a vocation fair, or through an event sponsored by the institute).

New members consistently report that it is the personal contact with institute members that helps them most in discerning their call to religious life: meeting with members of the institute, spiritual direction, "Come and See" experiences, discernment retreats, and visits to communities are more likely than websites, videos, promotional materials, and vocation programs to make the difference in discerning a call to a particular institute. New members repeatedly described the joy of institute members, their example and inspiration, as the characteristics that influenced them most in deciding on a particular religious institute. They are attracted by the love that institute members, of all ages, show for one another, by authentic community life, by communal prayer experiences, and by meaningful ministries. They learn about all of these aspects of an institute through personal interactions with institute members. This cannot be done in isolation or apart from active, engaged discernment and formation communities. When all members of the institute, from most senior to newest, see themselves as engaged in vocations ministry, then all become vocations ministers and the institute achieves a culture of vocations.

### **Be true to the charism of the institute, to community life, and to communal prayer.**

The charism of the institute is the aspect that is most influential in an individual's decision to enter a particular institute – nine in ten new members say that the institute's charism influenced them "very much" when they were deciding on a particular institute. In focus groups, new members repeatedly mentioned the charism of the institute and the story of the founder/foundress as key aspects that first drew them to their particular institute.

After the institute's charism, new members are most influenced by the prayer life, the community life, and the ministries of the institute when deciding on a particular institute. These aspects are all related to an institute's charism, as they are the particular way that institute members embody the charism through their lives. New members express a preference for living in moderate sized communities of four to seven members – not so large as to feel like an institution and not so small that community experiences and communal prayer become impossible. They find daily communal prayer, especially daily Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours, to be particularly important.

In focus groups, new members repeatedly mention the sense of community, and the prayer life within the community, as attracting and sustaining them in religious life. Overall, new members are a little less likely to mention the institute's practices regarding the habit when they are describing what influenced them to enter their institute. Religious habit is central to some new members (e.g., one respondent stated that they would never enter religious life if they could not wear the habit) and secondary to others.

### **Be open to change.**

Society is changing, Catholic culture is changing, and religious institutes are also changing – whether they want to or not. Young people still seek deeper meaning, and a higher purpose for their lives, as they always have. Religious institutes that are successful in vocation animation meet young people where they are in their lives and connect with that desire for deeper meaning and higher purpose. This means that those in vocations ministry, in particular, need to be flexible and adaptable in communicating the timeless message of their charism to new generations, different cultures, and those who may not be as conversant with their Catholic heritage. Some expressions of religious life, such as wearing a religious habit, which is looked upon as an important aspect of religious life among some discerners, does not have the same meaning for them as it does for religious who lived through the transition away from such garb half a century ago. Likewise, more traditional forms of prayer, such as Eucharistic adoration and Lectio Divina, can be very meaningful for younger members, and are not necessarily expressions of a more traditional ecclesiology. And discerners from different countries or different ethnic and cultural groups can bring an added richness to community life, for those who are open to this.