

## Take Away from this Study

If you hope to attract new vocations to your institute consider the following:

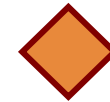
- **Make vocation animation a priority – from the top – and work to instill a “culture of vocation” in institute members**
- **Be true to the charism of the institute, to community life, and to communal prayer**
- **Be open to change**

**The National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors**

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## **Recent Vocations to Religious Life in Canada: Findings from a Nationwide Study**



Study Highlights

Conducted by  
**The National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors**  
and  
**The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate**

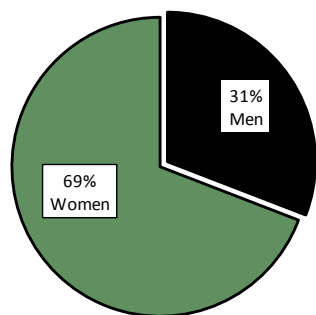
Funded by  
**The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**

## About this Study

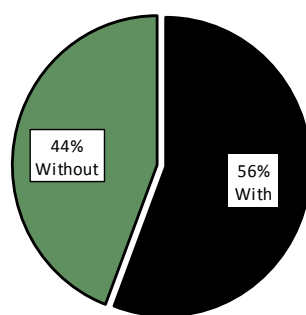
- First nationwide study of its kind, on vocations, in Canada
- Commissioned by the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD)
- Conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)
- Made possible through a research grant from Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

## Part I: Findings from the Survey of Religious Institutes

- **A list of major superiors was compiled based on initial information gratefully received from the Canadian Religious Conference and then expanded by NAVFD to include all religious institutes in Canada.**
- **The final contact list of major superiors included 343 units of religious institutes:**
  - 187 French-speaking units
  - 176 English-speaking units
- **The survey was administered between May 2017 and September 2017 both electronically and on paper**
- **The response rate was 50% (172 out of 343 units)**
- **Each response comes from a unit of religious institute in Canada, i.e., a congregation, province, or monastery, located in Canada, that has its own major superior**
- **Questions focused on the numbers in initial formation, information about vocation animation, vocation formation, and information about the institute's ministry, community life, community prayer, and practice regarding the religious habit**



Gender of Members



Units with/without new members  
(those who entered in 2000-2017)

## Site Visits

- **Altogether, 3 religious institutes were selected based on the responses to the survey of major superiors:**
  - Society of Jesus in English Canada
  - The Congregation of the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood
  - The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
- **Arranged by NAVFD**
- **Led by a CARA researcher in February 2018**
- **Each site visit included:**
  - interviews with the major superior and other members of the leadership team, members of the vocation team, and formation director(s)
  - review of vocation promotion materials and practices as well as institute websites and social media

## Institute Characteristics Attractive to New Members (from site visits)

**In the experience of institutes successful in attracting new members the following are particularly important:**

- Deliberate attention to vocation animation (i.e., vocation director/team, attractive and informative website, clear vocation materials)
- Meaningful interaction with youth
- Cultural openness and flexibility
- Authentic community life and communal prayer
- Openness to change and willingness to adapt

## Predictors of New Members' Presence (from the survey of institute leaders)

**A survey of institute leaders confirmed that a unit which is significantly more likely to currently have new members has the following 3 characteristics:**

- **Monastic lifestyle/character**
- **Vocation programs specifically targeting the under-19 age group**
- **A typical community size of 4 to 7 active members.**

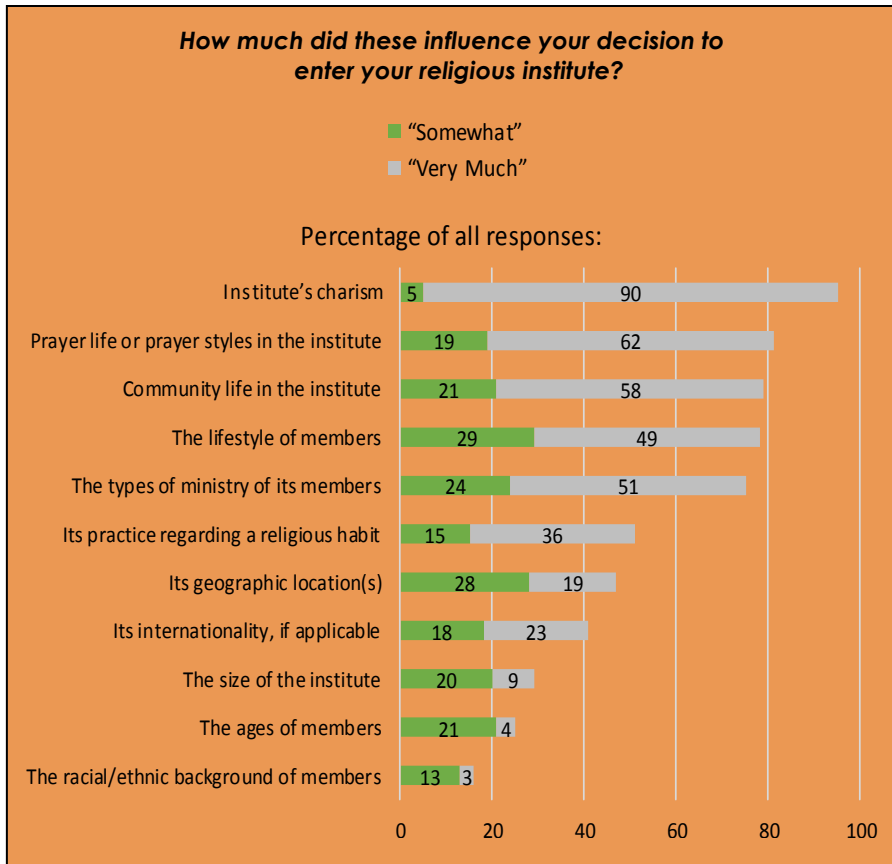
## Part II: Findings from the Survey and Focus Groups of New Members

### Survey of New Members

- The final contact list of major superiors included ~186 new members:
  - 45 French-speaking units
  - 141 English-speaking units
- The response rate was 54% (102 out of 186 new members)
- Questions focused on what attracted new members 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

### Focus Groups

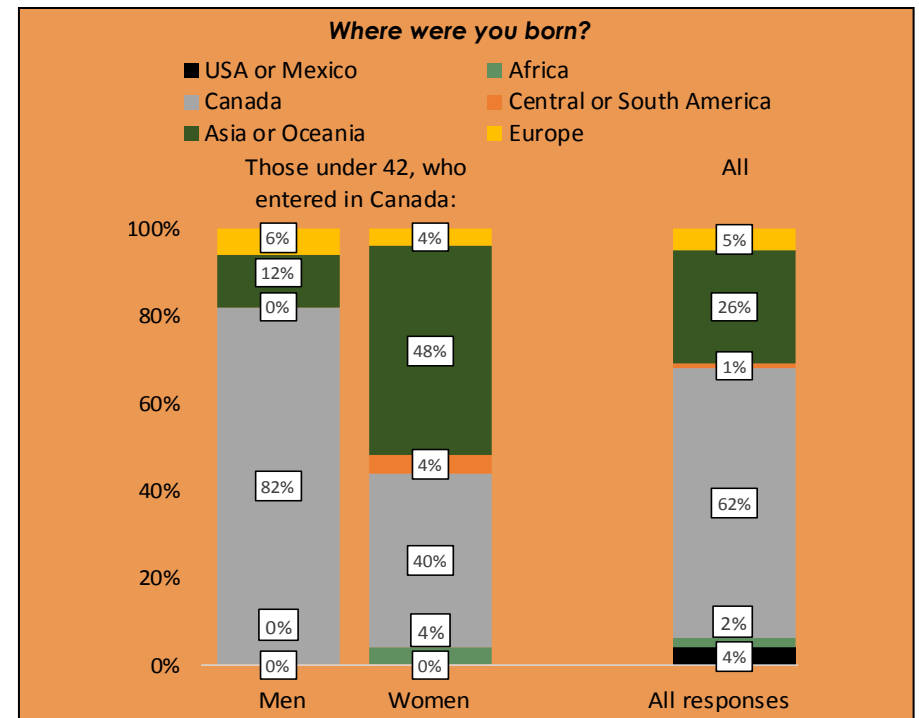
1. Twenty religious from various institutes around Canada who had gathered for a retreat in Saskatoon (July '17)
2. Four Jesuits at a congregational motherhouse in Montréal (August '17)
3. Fifteen new members from a variety of religious institutes in and near Toronto (September '17)



### Most Rewarding Aspects of Religious Life

#### Main themes in responses from new members:

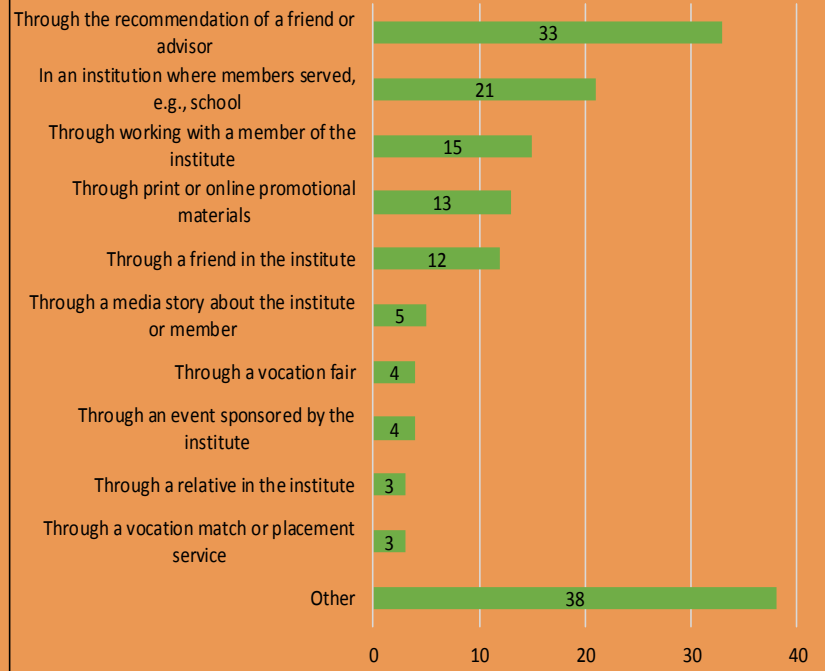
- Pursuit of personal calling, growth in the relationship with God, and spiritual development
- Direction provided by the religious institute (e.g., in the form of the overall charism, formation program, or individual guidance)
- Community life
- Liturgical and prayer practices and the communal aspect of those practices
- Ministry



\*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.

**How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?**

Percentage of all new members



**Did you participate in any of the following before you entered your religious institute?**

Percentage of all new members

