

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
Georgetown University  
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**Women and Men Entering Religious Life:  
The Entrance Class of 2025**



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**Women and Men Entering Religious Life:  
The Entrance Class of 2025**

**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from an annual national survey of women and men religious who formally entered a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States during 2025. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of men and women religious institutes in the United States. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered their institute (for the first time, as a postulant or novice in institutes that do not have postulancy) in the United States since January 1, 2025.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 548 of 723 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 76% among religious institutes. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 320 members (137 women and 183 men) who entered religious life in 2025.

In November 2025, CARA distributed a survey to 320 identified entrants, asking them to complete it online or return a paper copy by mail. A total of 198 people responded by February 1, 2026. Nine individuals could not be reached due to missing contact information. Altogether, CARA achieved a 64% response rate among the reachable, eligible entrants.

## Major Findings

### Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

- Of the 720 religious institutes invited to participate in this project, 548 responded, yielding a 76% response rate. Among the respondents, 141 report that they no longer accept new vocations, while 463 report they still do. Of the institutes still accepting vocations, 274 major superiors (70%) report having no new entrants in 2025. Another 53 (13%) report one new entrant, and 66 (17%) report two or more.
- Among the 198 respondents who completed the survey, half (46%) are men and another half (54%) are women. Among men, nine in ten (87%) expect to become priests and more than one in ten (13%) plans to become a perpetually professed brother.
- The average age of respondents is 29. Half of the respondents are age 26 or younger.
- Respondents were born in 15 countries. Eight in ten (82%) were born in the United States. Those who were born outside the United States were 21 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for ten years before entering religious life.
- Two in three of those who entered a religious institute report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (67%). One in seven respondents identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a) (14%) and one in eight as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (13%). Four percent identify as mixed or some other race or ethnicity. Three percent identify as African/African American/black.
- Respondents report speaking 15 different languages, with English (78%) most frequently reported, followed by Spanish (11%) and other languages (9%).
- Nine in ten (89%) have been Catholic since birth, with four in five (80%) coming from families in which both parents are Catholic. Just over nine in ten (93%) have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is one or two (48%).
- Almost all respondents were raised by their biological parents (97%) during the most formative part of their childhood, with one in seven raised by their grandparents (14%). Three percent were raised by stepparents.
- Half (46%) report that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation.
- While growing up, six in ten (58%) report that outside of family members, they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun. Three in ten have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun (29%).

- Eight in ten (78%) report having earned at least a bachelor's degree. One in five received a master's degree (19%), including 4% having a doctoral degree.
- At least four in five (83%) report attending one of the Catholic schools before entering religious life.
- More than seven in ten participated in retreats (73%), various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting (68%), and campus ministry during college (51%) before entering their religious institute.
- Seven in ten respondents were employed full time (69%) and one in five was employed part time (18%) before entering religious life.

### **Vocational Discernment and Choice of a Religious Institute**

- Nearly nine in ten say they were "very much" attracted to religious life by a sense of call to religious life (88%) and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (85%).
- Nearly all report that they were "somewhat" attracted by the charism, mission, and spirituality of the institute (98%). Nine in ten respondents report they are at least "somewhat" attracted to their religious institute by the community life, prayer life, welcome and encouragement by the institute's members, and institute's fidelity to the Church.
- Around eight in ten report those deemed "very" helpful were the live-in experience (86%), contact with the vocation director (83%), visits to the Motherhouse or local community/ies (80%), vocation or discernment retreat (79%), and the "Come and See" experience (77%).
- On average, respondents were 20 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life. More than nine in ten received encouragement from members of the institute (92%), a vocation director/team (92%), a spiritual director (92%).
- A third report becoming acquainted the recommendation of a family member, friend, or advisor (35%). A quarter got acquainted through their own search (27%), an institution where members served (25%), or through the reputation or history of the institute (23%).
- New entrants were also invited to respond in their own words to an open-ended question: "*What most attracted you to your religious institute?*" Respondents shared many aspects of what most attracted them to their religious institute. The aspects include spirituality and charism of the institute, prayer life and communal prayer,

community life, sense of mission and ministry, God's call and their relationship with him, the witness and joy of the members, and fidelity to the Church and its teachings.

### **Experience of Religious Life and Religious Institute**

- More than nine in ten say that private personal prayer (94%) and daily Eucharist (92%) are “very” important to them.
- Eight in ten say these are “very” important to them: living with other members (87%), praying with other members (83%), and socializing/sharing leisure time together (76%).
- Eight in ten (81%) respondents indicate that members of their institute wear a habit.
- In written comments at the end of the survey, respondents shared a variety of challenges that face them in religious life, including community life; adapting to the vows—particularly obedience—and the accompanying loss of personal autonomy; separation from family and friends; the transition into and ongoing adjustment to religious life; inner struggles and personal growth; cultural and generational differences; and experiences of burnout.

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The Entrance Class of 2025**

**Introduction**

In 2014, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an annual survey of women and men who enter religious life in the United States each year, gathering information about their characteristics and experiences. CARA designed a questionnaire based on previous CARA research on religious life and reviewed it with a representative from the Hilton Foundation. This report presents results of this survey of women and men of the Entrance Class of 2025.

To obtain the names and contact information for women and men entering religious life in 2025, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of men and women religious institutes in the United States. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a postulant or novice in institutes that do not have postulancy) in the United States since January 1, 2025.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 548 of 723 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 76% among religious institutes. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 320 members (137 women and 183 men) who entered religious life in 2025.

In November 2025, CARA distributed a survey to 320 identified entrants, asking them to complete it online or return a paper copy by mail. A total of 198 people responded by February 1, 2026. Nine individuals could not be reached due to missing contact information. Altogether, CARA achieved a 64% response rate among the reachable, eligible entrants.

The questionnaire asked these women and men about their demographic and religious background, education and family background, previous ministry or service and other formative experiences, encouragement and discouragement to consider religious life, initial acquaintance with their institutes, and vocation/discernment programs and experiences. This report presents analyses of each question from all responding men and women.

This report is arranged in three parts: Part I describes characteristics of the institutes that responded to the request for names as well as characteristics of the Entrance Class of 2025. Part II describes aspects of the vocational discernment of the Entrance Class of 2025. Part III describes their experience of religious life so far and reports, in their own words, what attracts them to religious life and what they find most challenging about religious life.

## Interpreting this Report

Many of the questions on the survey use four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “poor,” “fair,” “good,” and “excellent”). These scales allow half of the responses to be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“poor” and “fair,” for example) and half as relatively more “positive” (“good” and “excellent,” for example). In parts of the analysis in this report, these responses are combined to allow for clearer comparisons. Tables summarizing responses to questions that use these scales usually report the percentage of those who responded to the two most positive categories combined (e.g., “somewhat” and “very much”), followed by a column of the percentage of those who responded in the most positive category (e.g., “very much”), since the most positive response sometimes distinguishes important contrasts in the level of support. This is especially useful here since many respondents tended to give “positive” responses but not always the most positive responses.

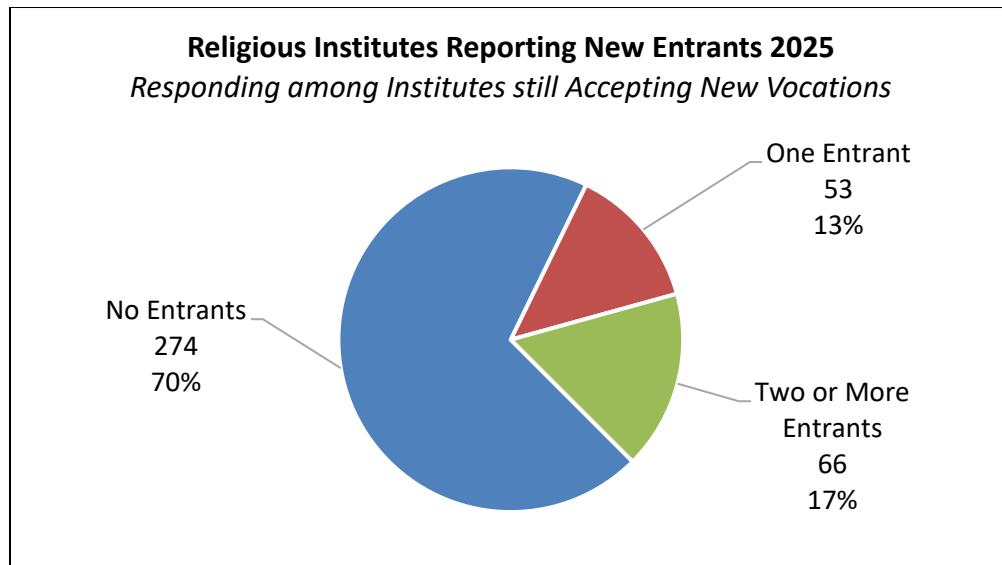
Readers may also wish to compare the difference between the two extreme responses, say “poor” and “excellent,” to compare the level of intensity with which opposing opinions are held. These comparisons and others may be drawn by referring to the actual percentage responses given in Appendix I. That appendix shows the percentage responses for each item, calculated out of 100%, as well as the percentage of all respondents that did not respond to each question, separately calculated out of 100% for clarity of comparison.

In general, in making comparisons between men and women, tables will show the overall percentage who provided a strong response, followed by the percentage of each subgroup (i.e., men and women) who provided a strong response. Whenever the difference in percentages between these groups approaches or exceeds 10%, this difference is considered notable or important.

## Part I Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

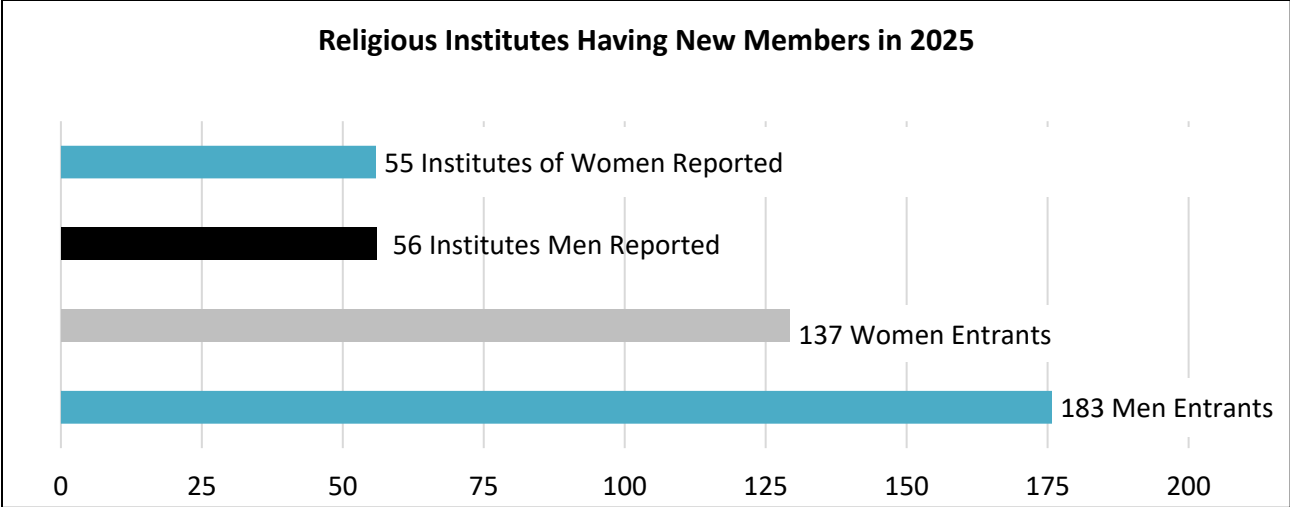
### Institutes Reporting New Entrants in 2025

A total of 720 religious institutes were asked to participate in the project, with 548 responding, resulting in an overall response rate of 76%. Of these responding institutes, 141 indicate no longer accepting new vocations, whereas 463 report continuing to accept them. Among the institutes still accepting new vocations, 274 major superiors (70%) report zero new entrants in 2025, 53 (13%) report one entrant, and 66 (17%) report two or more.



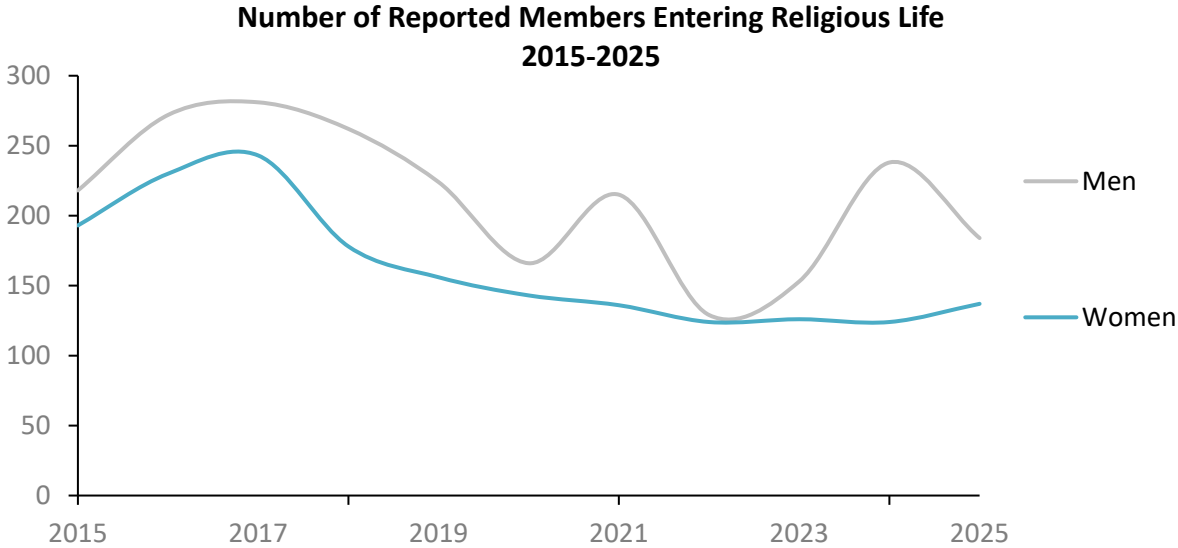
Among responding religious institutes that report at least one member entering in 2025, three-fourths (76%) are active while a fourth (28%) is contemplative. Among these institutes, half (48%) are smaller sized (less than 50 professed members), a third (32%) is medium sized (51-150 professed members), and two in ten (20%) are larger sized (more than 151 professed members).

Two-thirds of responding institutes (65%) having new members entering in 2025 have a combination of primary apostolates that include healthcare, education, and pastoral ministry. A third reports their primary apostolate is pastoral ministry (19%) or education (14%).

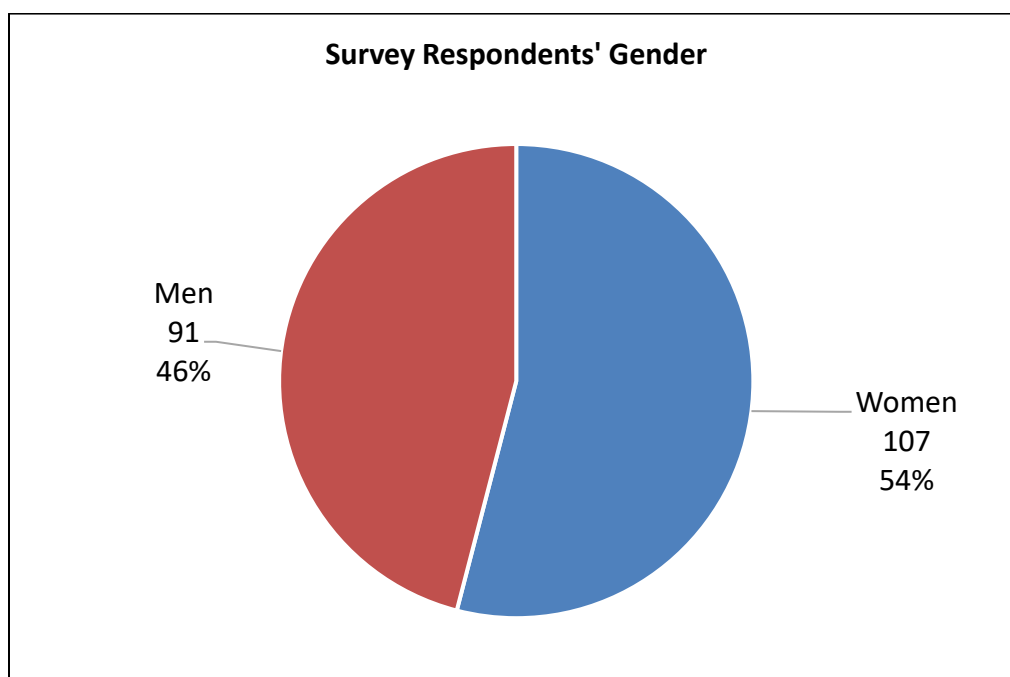


Among the institutes having members entering in 2025, 50% (55 institutes) are women’s institutes while 50% (56 institutes) are men’s institutes. Al together total of 111 religious institutes reports at least one member entering their religious institute in 2025 for a toral of 320 members - 137 women and 183 men.

On average, 163 women and 213 men entered religious life annually over the last 10 years.

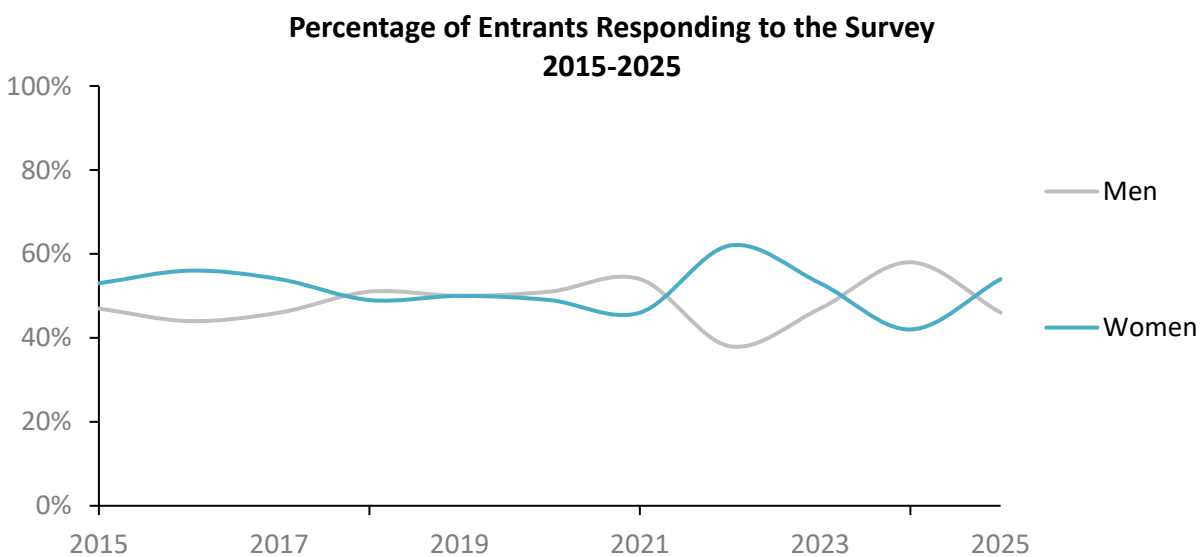


## Gender



Among the 198 respondents who completed the survey, half (46%) are men and another half (54%) are women. Among men, nine in ten (87%) expect to become priests and more than one in ten (13%) plans to become a perpetually professed brother.

On average, 52% of women and 48% of men responded to the survey over the last 10 years.



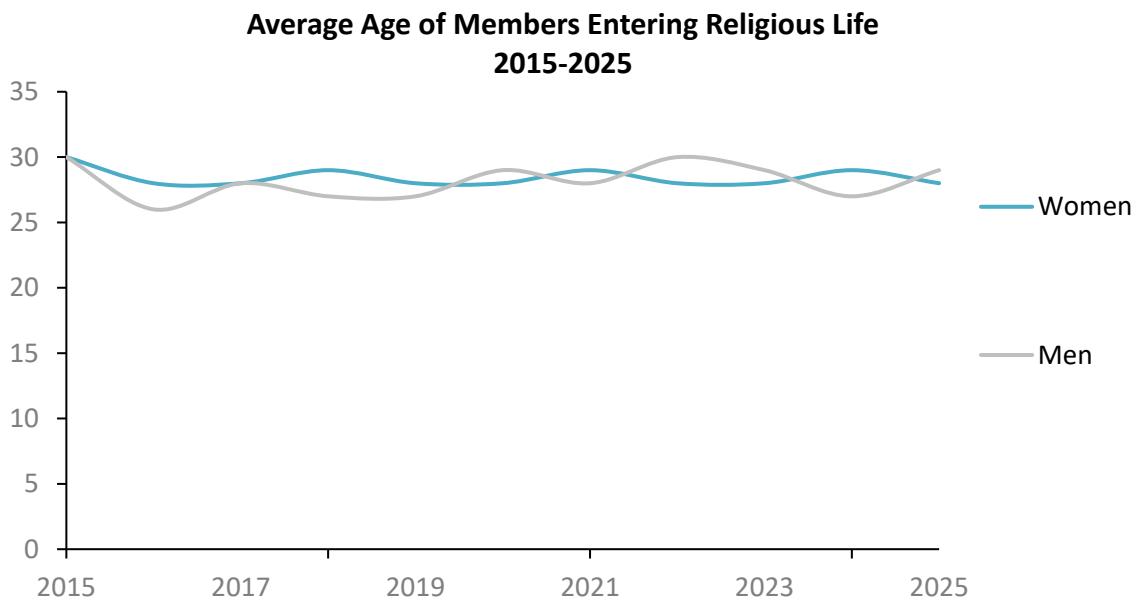
## Age of Entrance Class of 2025

<b>Age Entering Religious Life Entrance Class of 2025</b>			
	<b>Men [years]</b>	<b>Women [years]</b>	<b>All [years]</b>
Average	29	28	29
Median	28	25	26
Range	18-58	18-65	18-65

The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2025 is 29. Half of the respondents are age 26 or younger.

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Entrance Class of 2025 is 18 and the oldest is 65. Among men, the youngest is 18 and the oldest is 65. Regardless of gender, almost nine in ten respondents (85%) are 35 or younger.

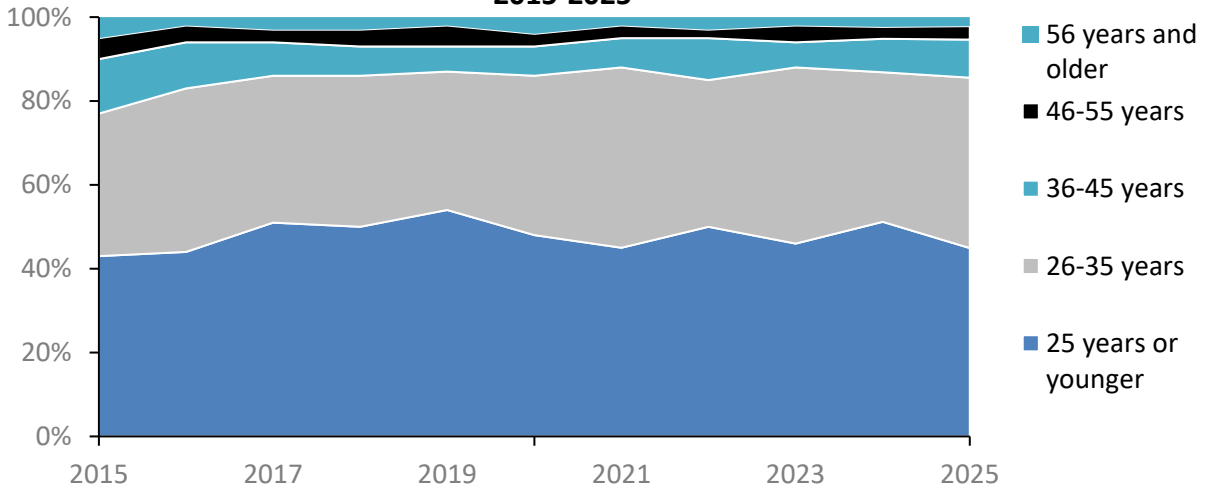
On average, the average age was 28 and ranged between 27 and 30 during the years the survey has been conducted.



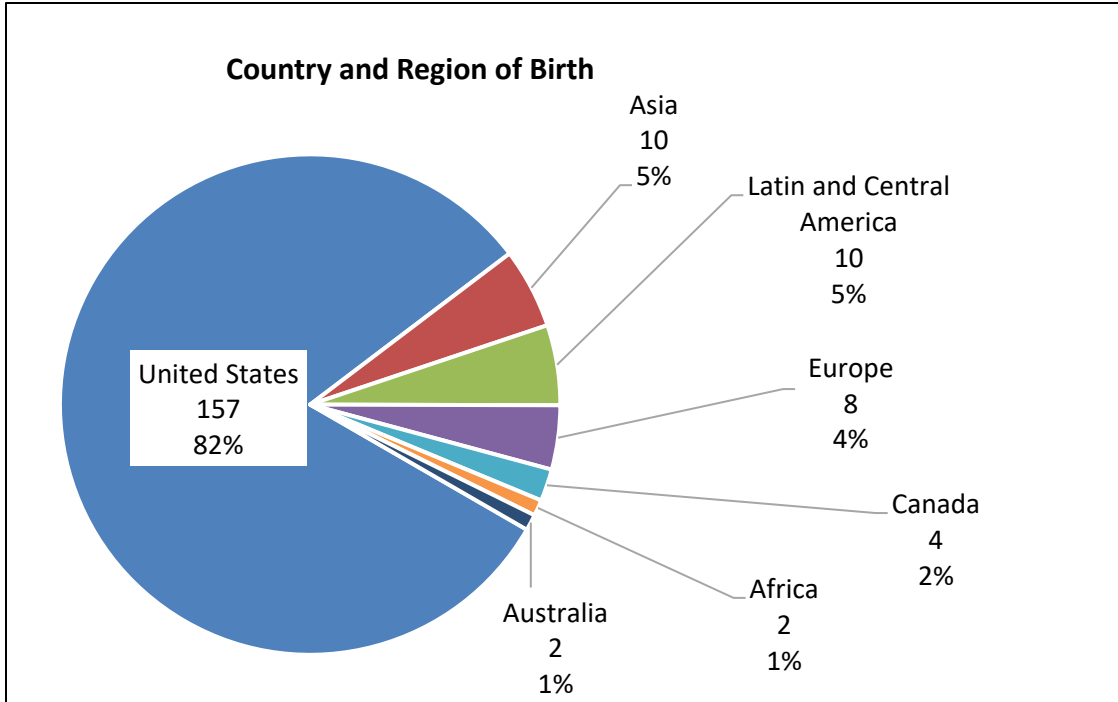
<b>Age of Women and Men Entering Religious Life</b>			
Percentage in each age category			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
25 and younger	45	34	54
Age 26-35	41	49	34
Age 36-45	9	12	7
Age 46-55	3	4	3
Age 56 and older	2	1	3

- About half of responding entrants (45%) are 25 years and younger when entering religious life. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 48% and ranged between 43% and 54%.
- Responding entrants 26-35 years old constituted 41% of entrants who responded to this question in 2025. They represented 49% of male entrants and 34% of female entrants (significantly different). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 37% and ranged between 33% and 43%.
- Responding entrants 36-45 years old constituted 9% of entrants who responded to this question, in 2025. They represented 12% of male entrants and 7% of female entrants. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 8% and ranged between 6% and 13%.
- Responding entrants 46-55 years old constituted 3% of entrants who responded to this question, in 2025. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 4% and ranged between 2% and 5%.
- Responding entrants 56 years and older constituted 6% of entrants who responded to this question, in 2025. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 3% and ranged between 2% and 5%.

**Distribution of All Respondents by Age When Entering Religious Life,  
2015-2025**



## Region or Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States



Responding postulants were born in 15 countries. Eight in ten (82%) respondents were born in the United States. Two in ten (18%) was born outside the United States.

Responding entrants who were born in the United States constituted 82% of entrants who responded to this survey. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 80% and ranged between 72% and 86%.

Responding entrants who were born outside the United States constituted 5% of entrants who were born in one of Asian countries. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 8% and ranged between 4% and 12%.

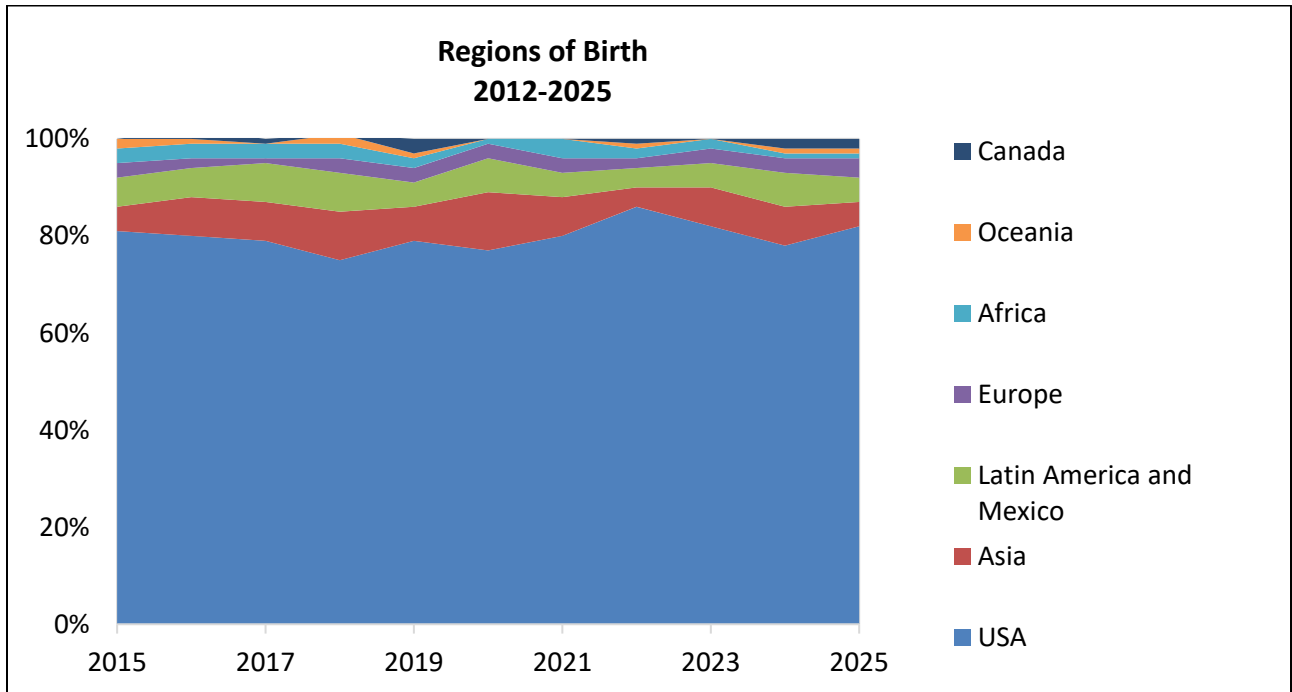
Responding entrants who were born outside the United States constituted 5% of entrants who were born in one of Latin and Central American countries. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 6% and ranged between 4% and 8%.

Responding entrants who were born outside the United States constituted 3% of entrants who were born in one of European countries. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 3% and ranged between 1% and 4%.

Responding entrants who were born outside the United States constituted 2% of entrants who were born in one of African countries. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 2% and ranged between 1% and 3%.

Responding entrants who were born outside the United States constituted 2% of entrants who were born in Canada. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 1% and ranged between 0% and 3%.

Responding entrants who were born outside the United States constituted 1% of entrants who were born in Oceania. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 1% and ranged between 0% and 2%.



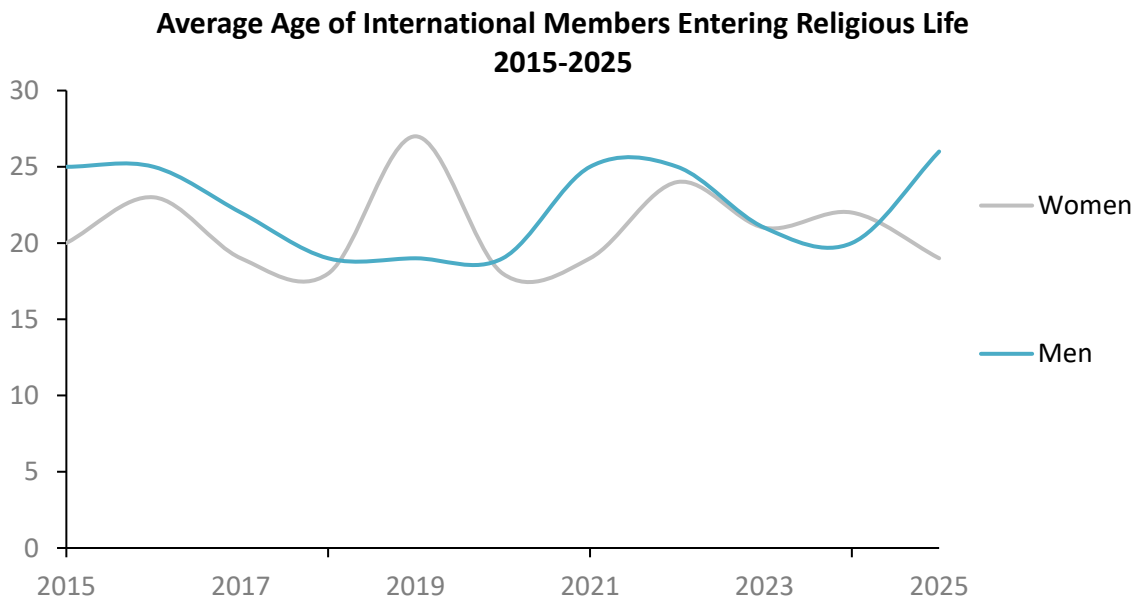
## Foreign-born Religious' Age at Entry to the United States

	Entrance to the United States			
	<i>Years in USA</i>	<i>Age at Entry</i>		
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Mean	10	21	26	19
Median	4	24	25	23
Range	1-49	1-49	1-49	1-46

Respondents who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 10 years. Half of them have been in the United States for 4 years or less.

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at the age of 21. Half were age 24 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The oldest woman was 46 while the oldest man was 49 at the time they entered the United States.

Since 2015, the average age of entrants who were born abroad entered the United States at the age of 21 and ranged between 19 and 25.



## Race and Ethnic Background

<b><i>What best describes your racial or ethnic background?</i></b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	67	70	65
Hispanic/Latino(a)	14	14	13
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	13	10	15
African/African American/black	3	1	5
Mixed race or other	3	5	2

Two in three responding entrants report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (67%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 68% and ranged between 63% and 80%.

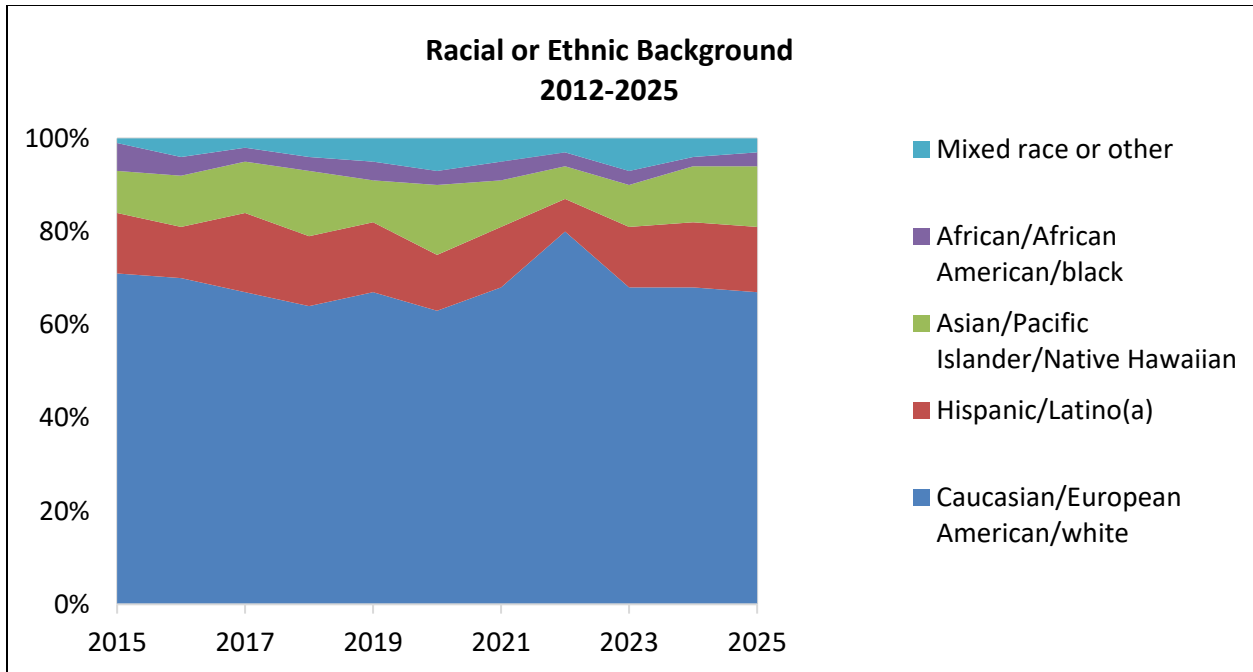
One in seven responding entrants reports their primary race or ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino (a) (14%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 13% and ranged between 7% and 13%.

One in eight responding entrants reports their primary race or ethnicity as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (13%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 13% and ranged between 7% and 15%.

One in eight responding entrants reports their primary race or ethnicity as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (13%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 13% and ranged between 7% and 15%.

Three percent of responding entrants reports their primary race or ethnicity as African American/black. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 3% and ranged between 2% and 6%.

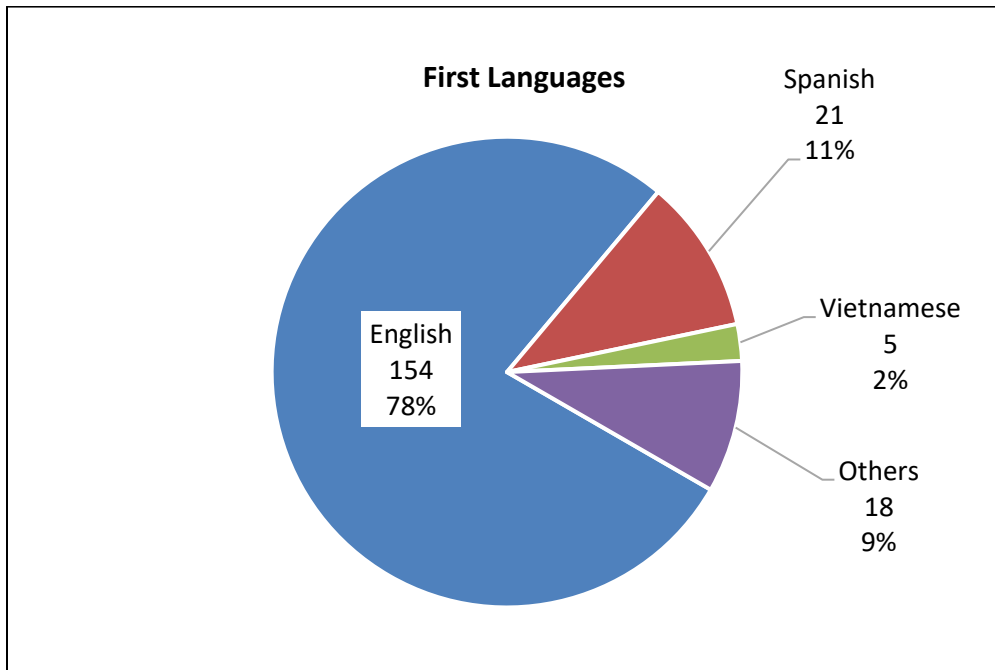
Three percent of responding entrants reports their primary race or ethnicity as Mixed race or other. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 4% and ranged between 1% and 7%.



### Differences by Country of Birth

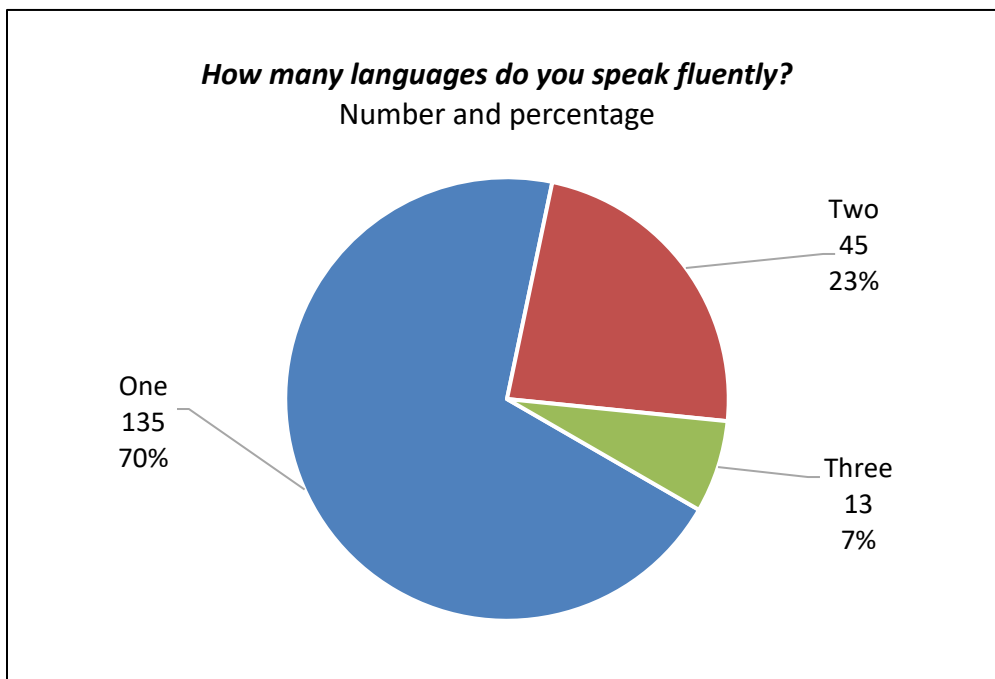
- Among those who were born in the United States, three-fourths (74%) report being Caucasian/European American/white.
- Among those who were born outside the United States, a third identifies as Caucasian or European American or White (37%). Three in ten were Asian/Pacific/Native Hawaiian (29%). And a quarter was Hispanic or Latino(a) (24%).

## First Languages and Fluency



Responding entrants report speaking 15 different languages, with English (78%) most frequently reported followed by Spanish (11%).

Three in ten respondents speak fluently one language (70%), with over one in five (23%) speaking two. Seven percent speak three languages.



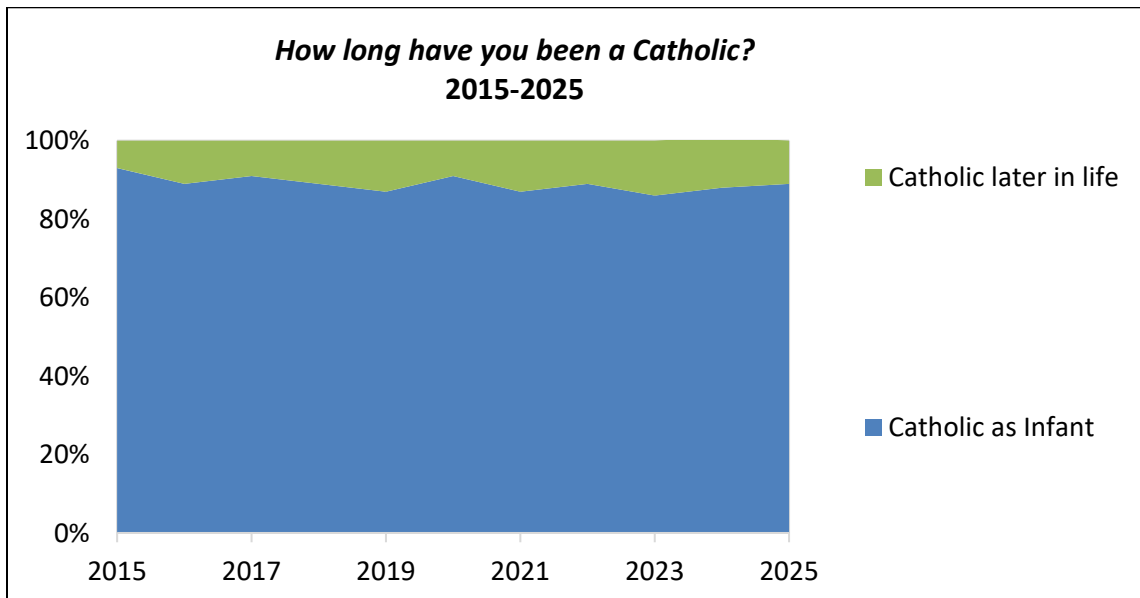
## Religious Background

<b>Catholic Background</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Catholic since birth	89	83	94
Became Catholic later in life	11	17	6

Nine in ten respondents (89%) have been Catholic since birth. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 89% and ranged between 87% and 93%.

One in ten became Catholic later in life. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 11% and ranged between 7% and 14%.

Among those who became Catholic later in life, 71% participated in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. These entrants came from a variety of faiths: Atheist, Baptist, Buddhism, Church of Scotland, Evangelical Christian, Evangelical presbyterian, Lutheran—ELCA, Methodist Protestant, Non-Denominational/Messianic, Protestant, Protestant – Baptist, Anglican, Protestant (Evangelical Presbyterian Church), United Methodist.



## Family Religious Background

<b>Religious Background of Respondents' Parents</b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	80	78	83
Mother Catholic, father not	9	8	9
Neither parent was Catholic	7	10	4
Father Catholic, mother not	4	3	4

Four in five (80%) report that both of their parents were Catholic when they were growing up. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 79% and ranged between 74% and 83%.

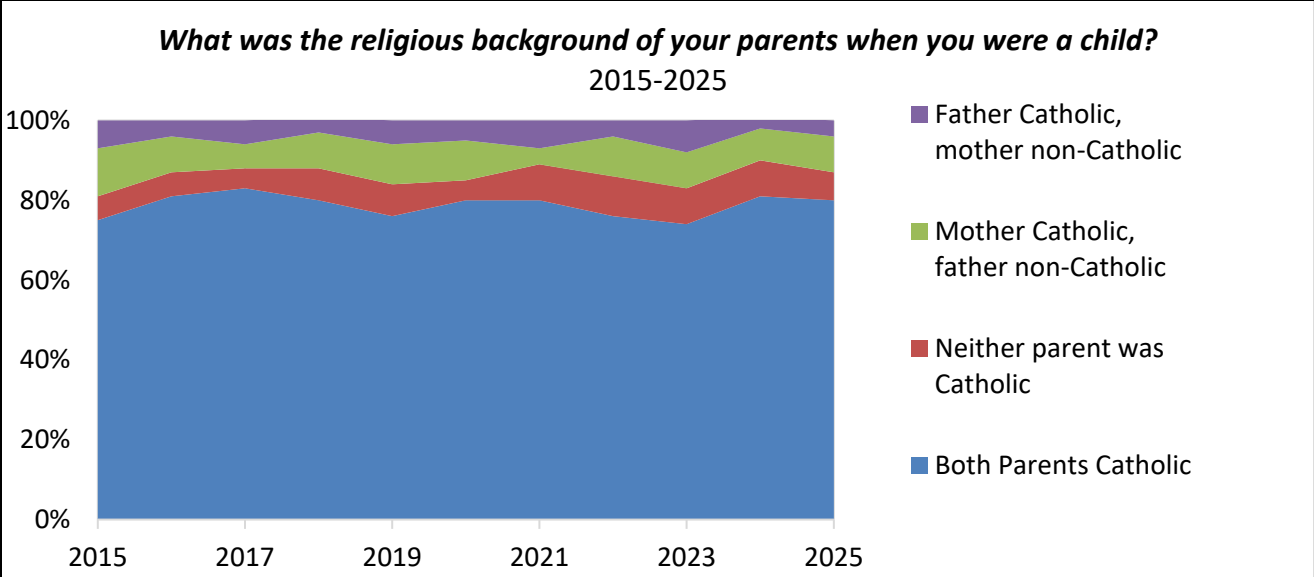
One in ten reports their mother was Catholic but their father was not while they were growing up. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 9% and ranged between 4% and 12%.

One in fourteen reports that neither of their parents were Catholic while they were growing up. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 7% and ranged between 5% and 10%.

Seven percent report that their father was Catholic but their mother was not while they were growing up. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 5% and ranged between 4% and 8%.

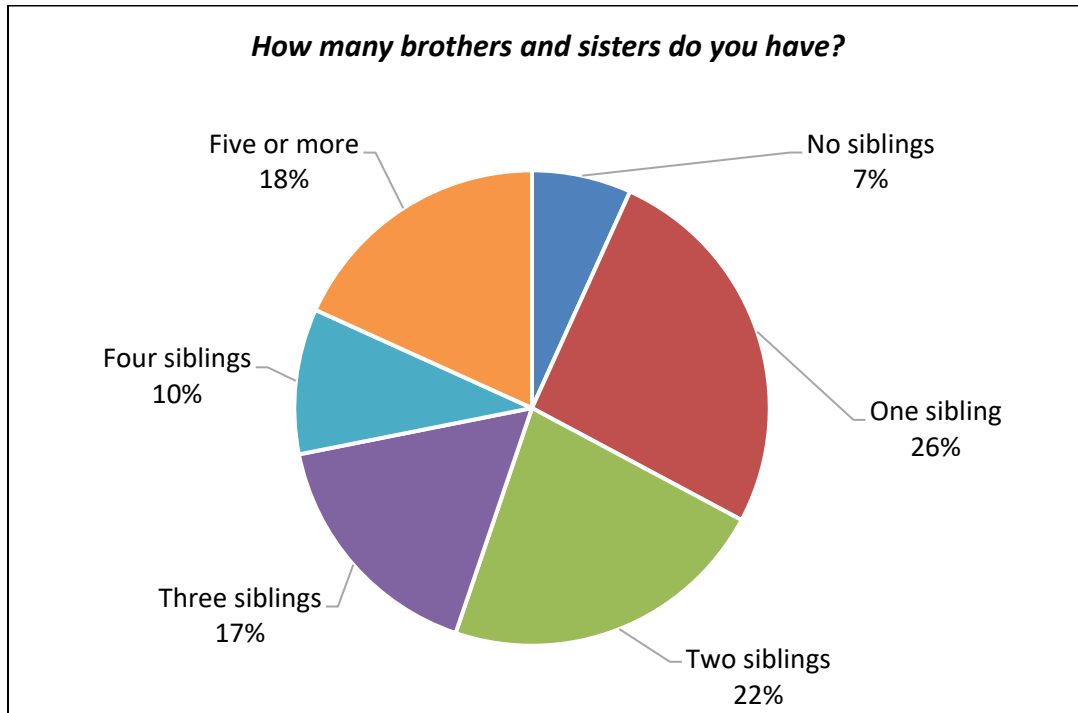
Respondents who had non-Catholic parents report that their parents were either Baptist, Buddhism, Church of Scotland, Episcopalian Protestant, Evangelical, Hindu, Lutheran, Protestant, Nondenominational, Evangelical Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, or United Methodist.

Regardless of the religious tradition of their parents, two-thirds (64%) respondents report that religion was “very important” to their mothers and 46% report that religion was “very important” to their fathers.



## Siblings

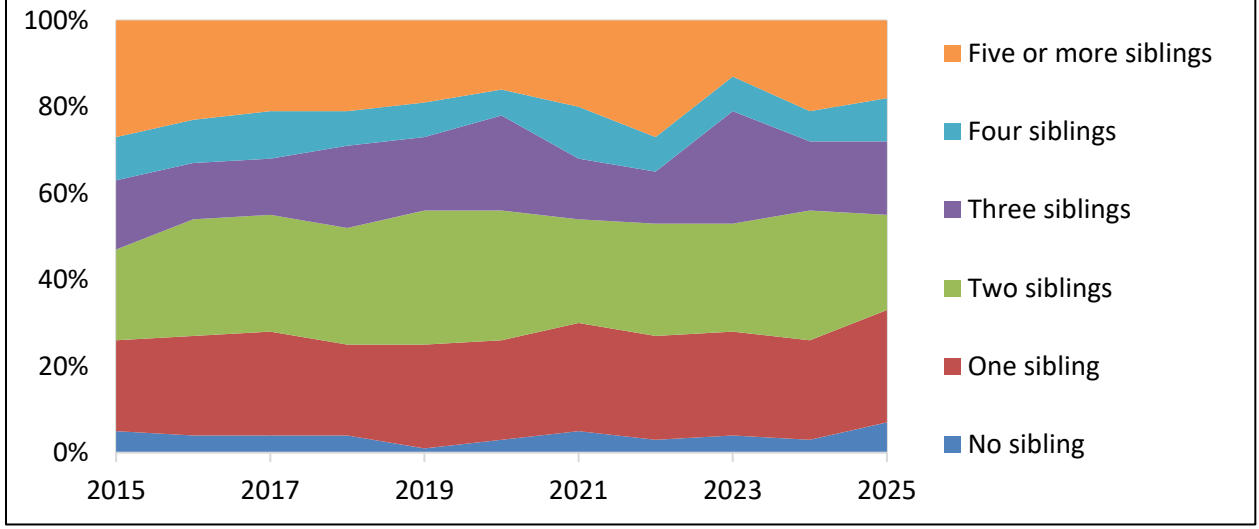
On average, members of the Entrance Class of 2025 have three siblings. The most common response to this question, among women and men, is one or two siblings (48%).



- One in fourteen reports being the only child (7%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 4% and ranged between 1% and 7%.
- A quarter reports having one sibling (26%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 23% and ranged between 21% and 26%.
- One in five reports having two siblings (22%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 26% and ranged between 21% and 31%.
- One in six reports having three siblings (17%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 17% and ranged between 13% and 22%.
- One in ten reports having four siblings (10%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 9% and ranged between 6% and 12%.
- One in five reports having five siblings or more (18%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 21% and ranged between 16% and 27%.

**How many brothers and sisters do you have?**

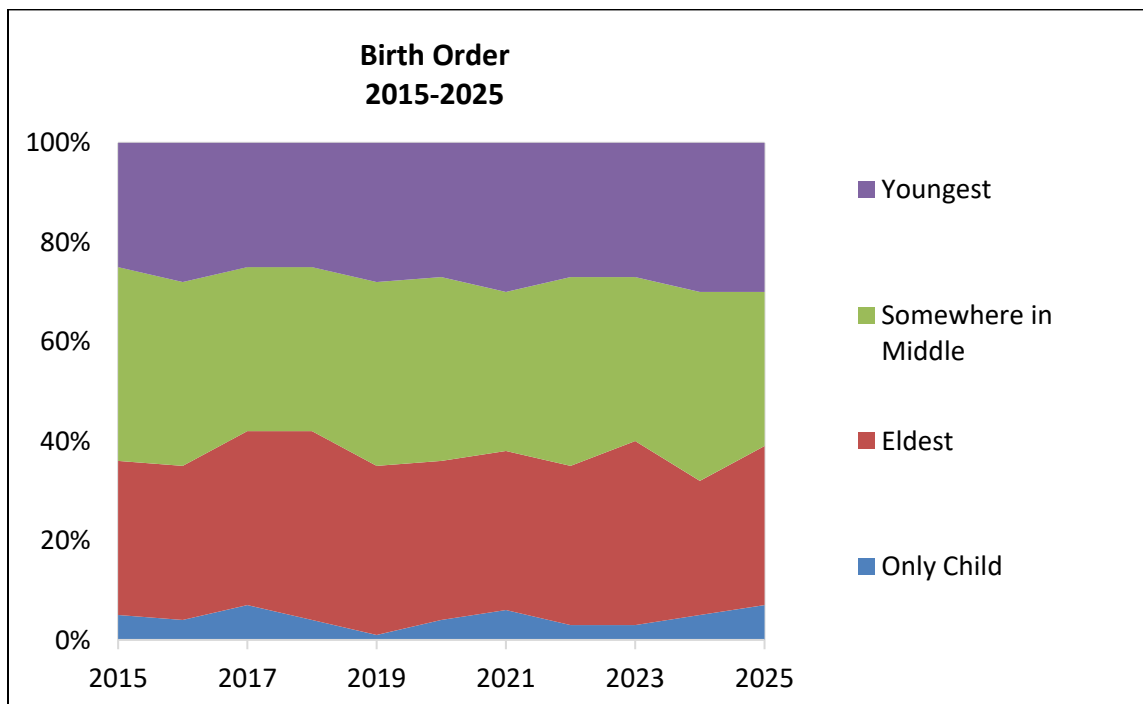
Percentage of responses, 2015-2025



## Birth Order

<b>What is your birth order?</b>			
Percentage in each category			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Eldest	32	34	30
Middle	31	26	36
Youngest	30	32	29
Only child	7	8	6

- Three in ten report being the eldest (32%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 33% and ranged between 27% and 38%.
- Three in ten report being in the middle (31%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 35% and ranged between 31% and 39%.
- Three in ten report being the youngest (30%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 27% and ranged between 25% and 30%.
- One in fourteen reports being the only child (7%). Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 4% and ranged between 1% and 7%.



## Parentings

<b><i>Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood?</i></b>			
Respondents were invited to select all that apply			
	<b>Both</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Biological parents	97	99	96
Grandparents	14	21	8
Other relative(s)	8	9	7
Stepparents	3	2	4
Adoptive parents	2	1	2
Someone else	1	0	2

Entrants were asked to identify who raised them during the most formative part of their childhood. They could select one or more of the options presented in the table above. Almost all respondents were raised by their biological parents (97%) during that time, with one in seven raised by their grandparents (14%). One in ten were raised by other relative(s). Three percent were raised by stepparents. Three percent were raised by their adoptive parents or someone else.

## Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up

<b>Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up</b>			
Percentage responding "Yes" to each question*			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?	46	47	45
Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	28	28	27
Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	26	31	22
Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	19	24	14
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

- Half (46%) report that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation.
- Nearly three in ten indicate that their mother spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life (28%) whereas two in ten say that their father spoke to them about vocations.
- About a quarter indicates that another family member (26%) spoke to them about vocations to priesthood or religious life.

Six in ten of the respondents (58%) report that outside of family members, while they were growing up, they ever got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun. Three in ten have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun (29%).

**Familiarity with Priests and/or Religious Brothers and Sisters/Nuns  
while Growing Up**

*Percentage responding "Yes" to each question*

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	58	53	62
Do you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	29	27	31

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

## Catholic Education Before Entering a Religious Institute

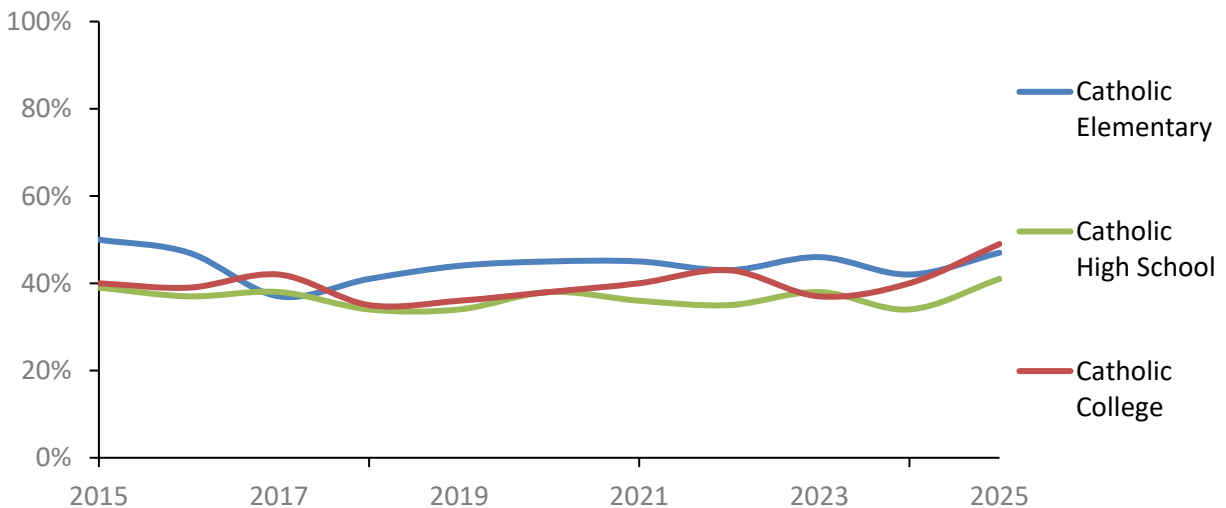
At least four in five (83%) report attending one of the Catholic schools before entering religious life.

***Did you attend any of the following before you entered? \****  
Percentage responding “Yes” to each question

	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Catholic elementary or middle school	47	55	42
Catholic high school	41	49	35
Catholic college/university	49	46	50

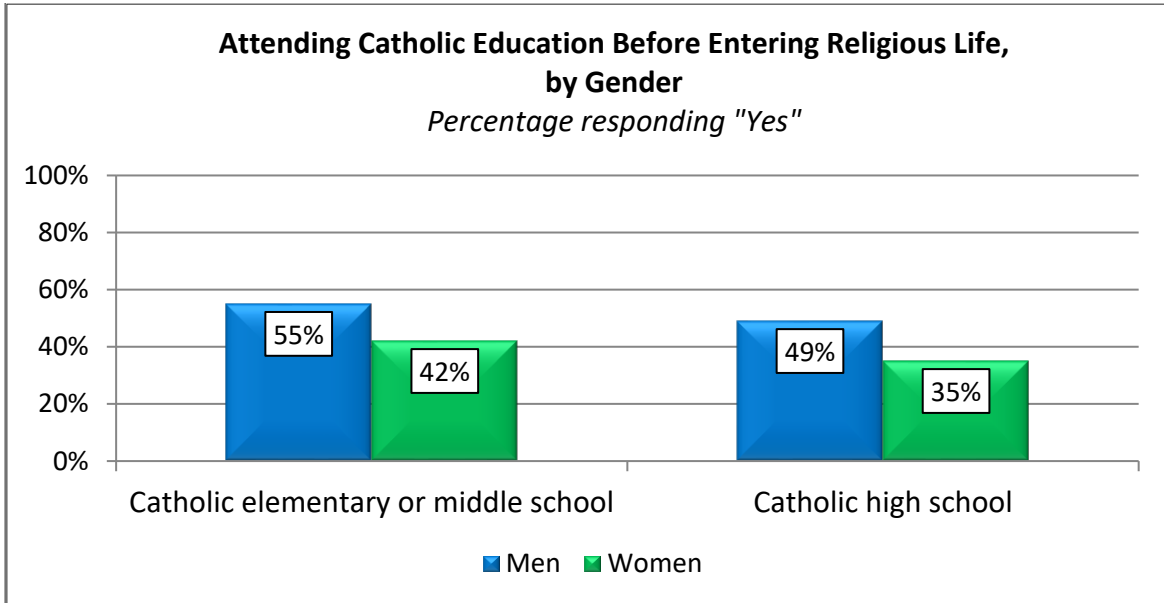
- Half (47%) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 44% and ranged between 37% and 50%.
- Four in ten (41%) attended a Catholic high school. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 37% and ranged between 34% and 41%.
- Half (49%) attended a Catholic college/university. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 40% and ranged between 36% and 49%.

### Catholic Education Before Entering Religious Life 2015-2025



*Attending Catholic Education by Gender*

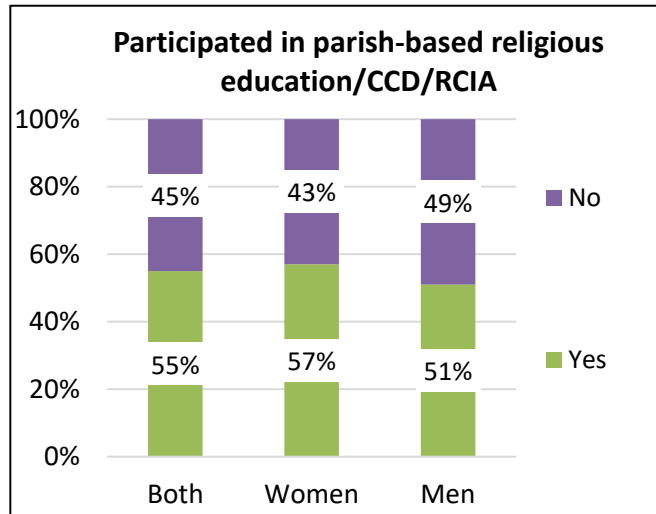
Responding men entrants are more likely than responding women entrants to attend a Catholic elementary, middle, or Catholic high school.



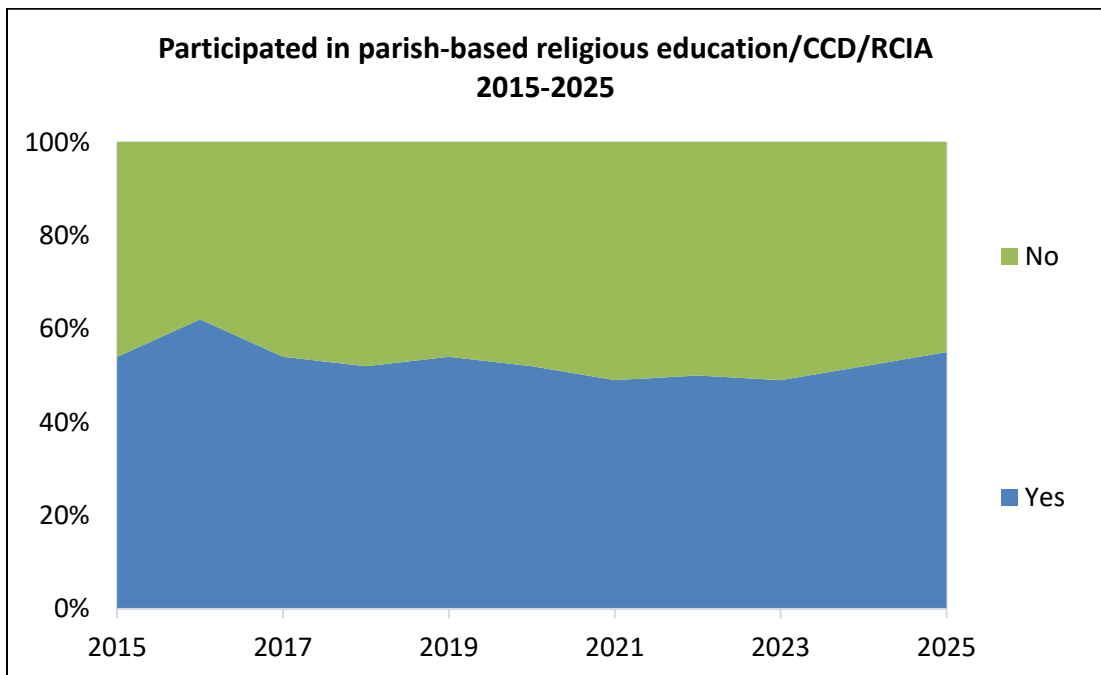
## Catholic Religious Education

More than half of respondents attended a parish-based religious education program (55%).

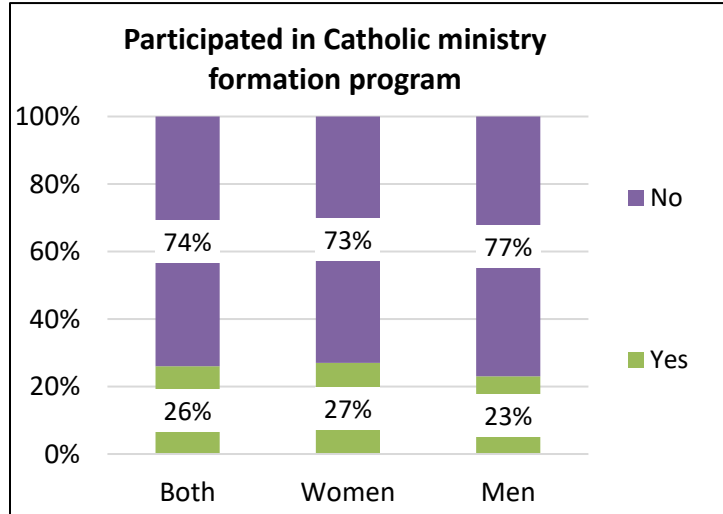
Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 64% did not report attending a Catholic elementary school and 61% did not attend a Catholic high school.



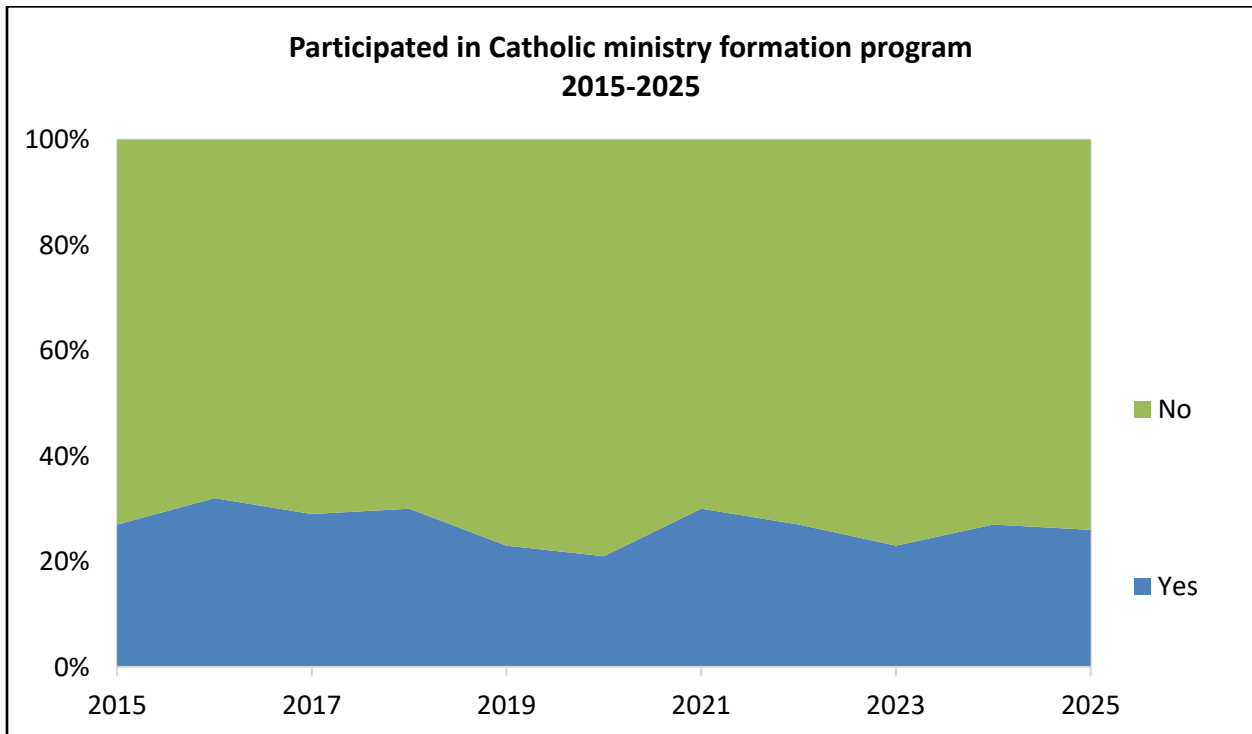
Between 2015 and 2025, their share averaged 53% and ranged between 49% and 62%.



A quarter (26%) responding women and men religious report that they participated in a Catholic ministry formation program before they entered their religious institute.



Between 2015 and 2025, their share averaged 27% and ranged between 21% and 32%.



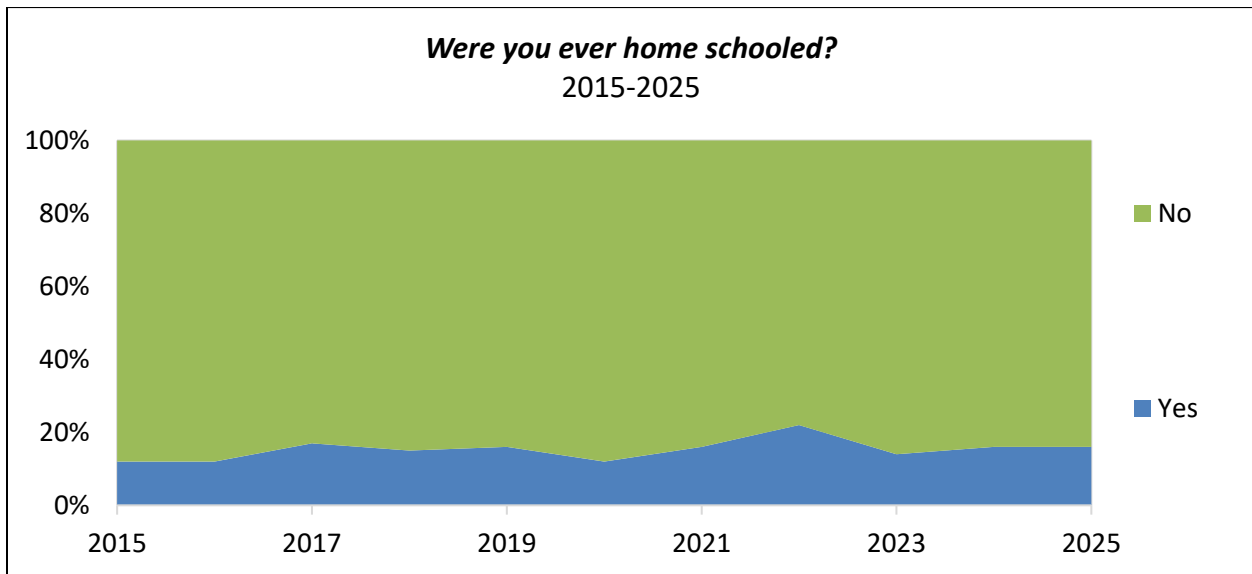
## Home Schooling

Less than one in six responding entrants (16%) report being home schooled at some time in their educational background.

<b><i>Were you ever home-schooled?</i></b>			
Percentage responding "Yes" or "No"			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	16	14	17
No	85	86	83
Average number of years home-schooled	9	6	10

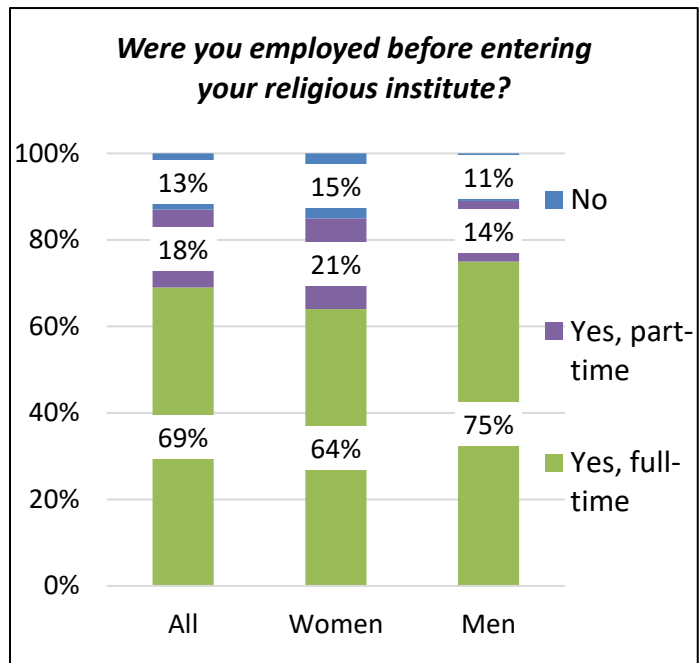
Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was nine years.

Between 2015 and 2025, their share averaged 15% and ranged between 12% and 22%.

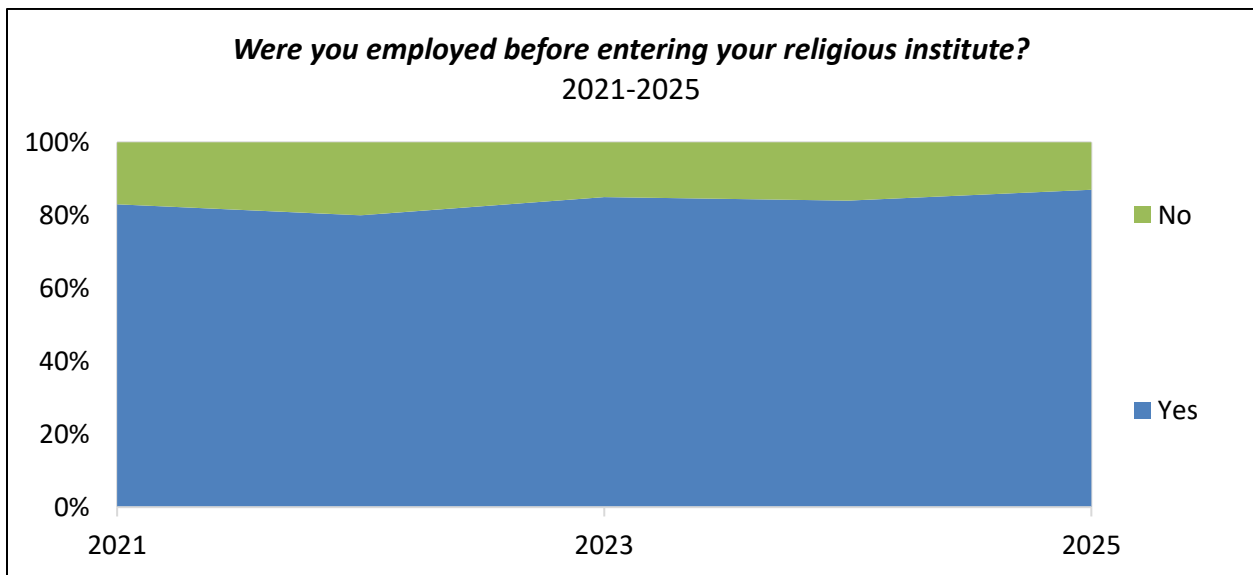


## Work Experience

Less than nine in ten (87%) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Seven in ten (69%) were employed full-time and one in five (18%) were employed part-time before entering their religious institute.

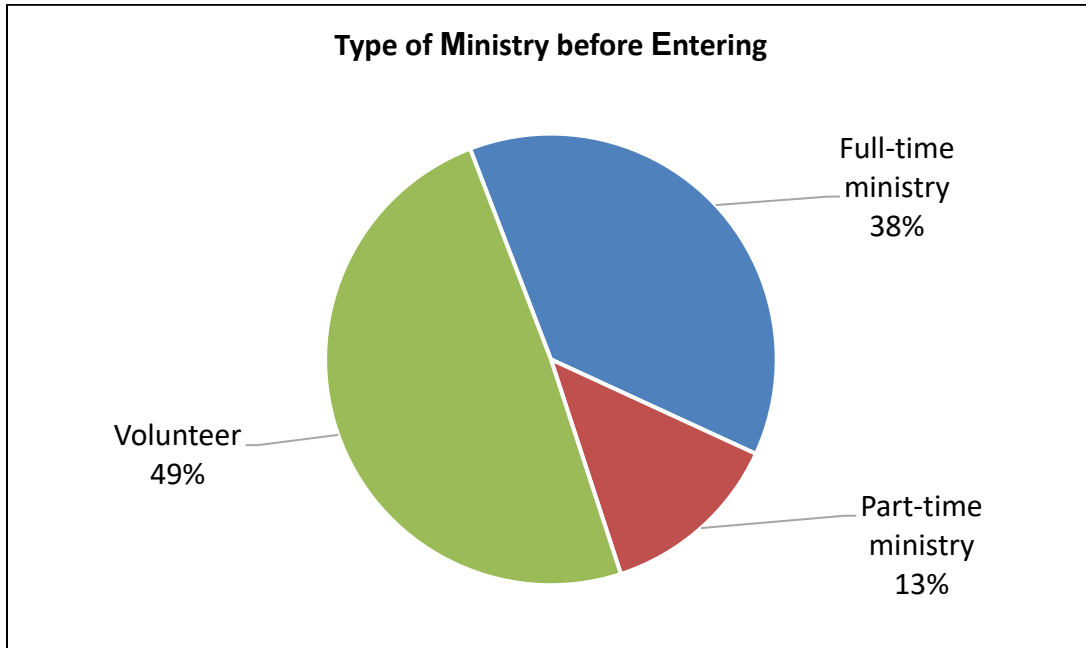


Between 2015 and 2025, their share averaged 15% and ranged between 12% and 22%.

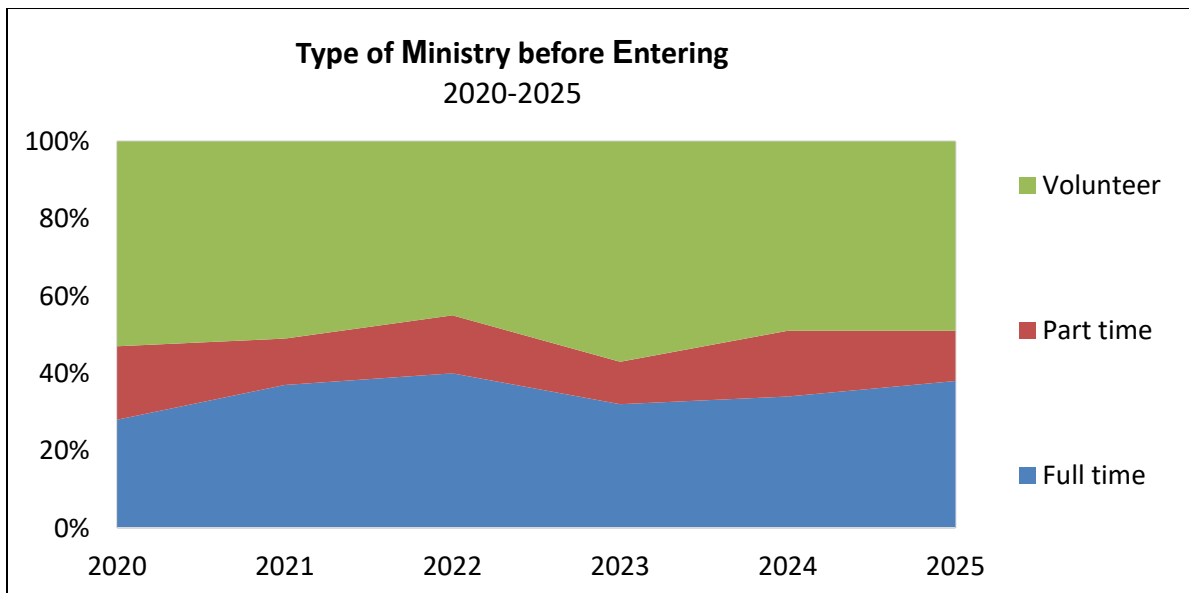


## Ministry Experience

Before entering religious life, three in five were engaged in ministry (63%). Among them, two in five were engaged in full-time ministry (38%), one in eight (13%) in part-time ministry, and half (49%) in voluntary ministry.



Between 2012 and 2025, their share averaged 49% and ranged between 43% and 51%.



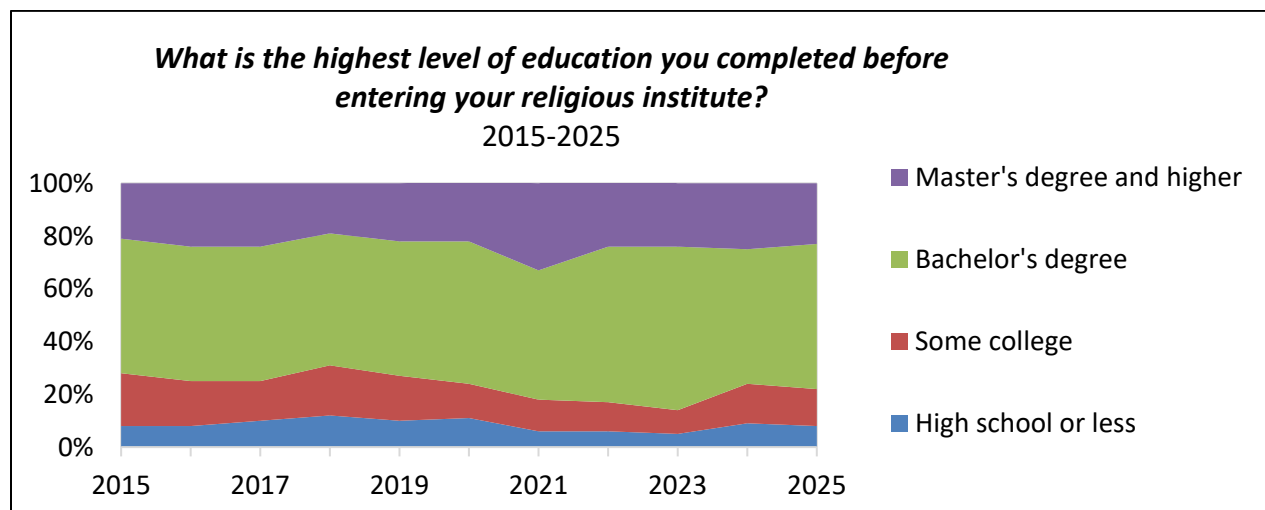
## Education Level Before Entering a Religious Institute

The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2025 were highly educated before entering. Nearly four in five (78%) report at least having earned a bachelor’s degree before entering their religious institute.

***What was your highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?***  
Percentage responding

	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
High school or less	8	5	10
Some college	14	10	17
Bachelor’s degree	55	56	55
Master’s degree	19	22	17
Doctoral degree	4	8	1

- More than half (55%) received a Bachelor’s degree before entering their religious institute. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 53% and ranged between 49% and 62%.
- Nearly a quarter (23%) received a Master’s degree or higher before entering their religious institute. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 24% and ranged between 19% and 33%.
- One in seven (14%) received some college before entering their religious institute. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 15% and ranged between 9% and 20%.
- One in thirteen (8%) finished high school or less before entering their religious institute. Between 2015 and 2025, their share has averaged 8% and ranged between 5% and 12%.



## Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Almost all respondents (94%) participated in at least one of the programs or activities listed in the table below before entering.

<b><i>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of the these before you entered?</i></b>			
Percentage checking each response*			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Retreats	73	73	73
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	68	68	68
Campus ministry during college	51	46	54
Right to Life March in Washington	39	32	44
Campus ministry during high school years	26	29	25
World Youth Day	15	10	19
National Catholic Youth Conference	10	6	13
Religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)	9	7	10

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Three-fourths participated in retreats (73%).
- Six in ten participated in other volunteer work in a parish/other setting (68%).
- Half of respondents were engaged in campus ministry during college (51%).
- Four in ten joined the Right to Life March in Washington (39%).
- One quarter participated in campus ministry during high school years (26%).
- One in seven participated in World Youth Day (15%).
- One in ten participated in a National Catholic Youth Conference (10%) and a religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps) (9%).

It is instructive to examine how many participated in parish programs as adults before they entered religious life. Nearly nine in ten (94%) served in one or more specified parish ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer.

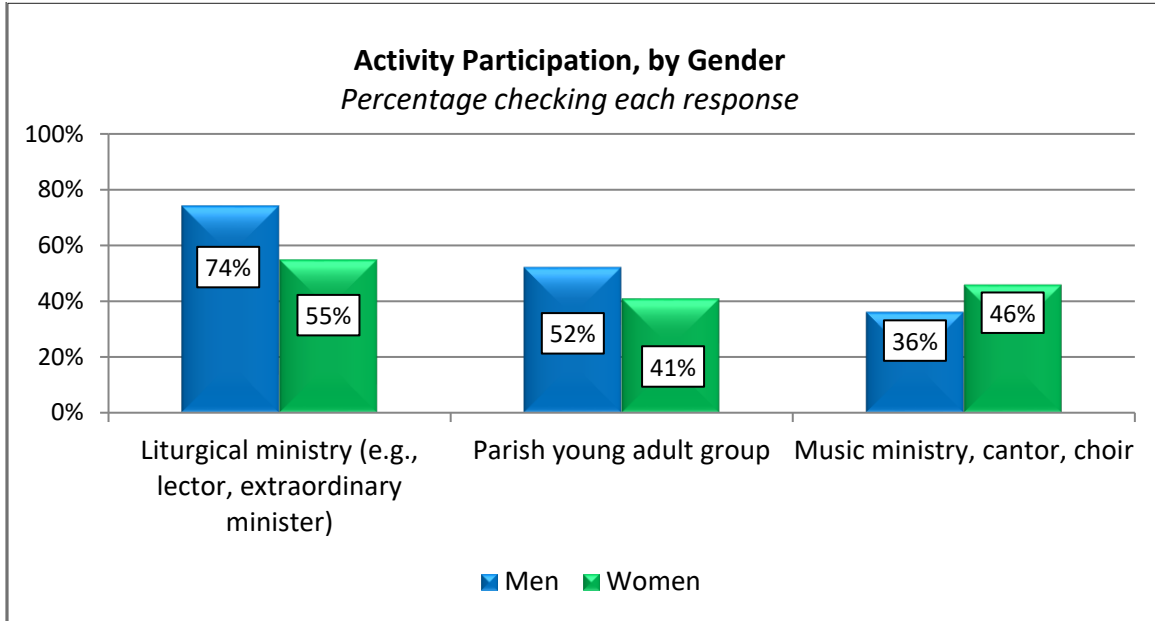
<b>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of these before you entered?</b>			
Percentage checking each response			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	68	68	68
Liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister)	63	74	55
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA team	47	45	48
Parish young adult group	46	52	41
Parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years	45	41	49
Music ministry, cantor, choir	41	36	46

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Seven in ten entrants report that they served in another volunteer work in a parish/other setting (68%).
- Six in ten served in liturgical ministry roles, such as being a lector or extraordinary minister of Communion (63%).
- Half of respondents participated in a faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA team (47%); parish young adult group (46%); and parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years (45%).

## Differences by Gender

Responding entrants of men are more likely than women to have participated in liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister) and parish young adult group; meanwhile, women entrants are more likely than men to participate in the music ministry, cantor or choir before entering their religious institute.



## Part II Vocational Discernment to Religious Life and Institute

### Attraction to Religious Life

Entrants in 2025 were asked how much various elements attracted them to religious life. Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a sense of call to religious life (100%) and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (96%). Nine in ten were “very much” attracted by these aspects.

<b><i>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</i></b>		
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very Much”		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much” Attracted</b>	<b>“Very Much” Attracted Only</b>
	%	%
A sense of call to religious life	100	88
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	96	85
A desire to be of service	94	67
A desire to be part of a community	92	64
A desire to be more committed to the Church	88	58

- Nine in ten respondents were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service (94%) and a desire to be part of a community (92%). About two-thirds each of these attracted them “very much.”
- Nearly nine in ten had a desire to be more committed to the Church (88%), with six in ten saying this aspect attracts them “very much.”

## Attraction to a Religious Institute

Entrants were asked how much each of ten aspects of religious life mentioned in the table below attracted them to their particular religious institute. Almost all of them report that they were “somewhat” attracted by the charism, mission and spirituality of the institute (98%), with 85% saying this aspect attracted them “very much.”

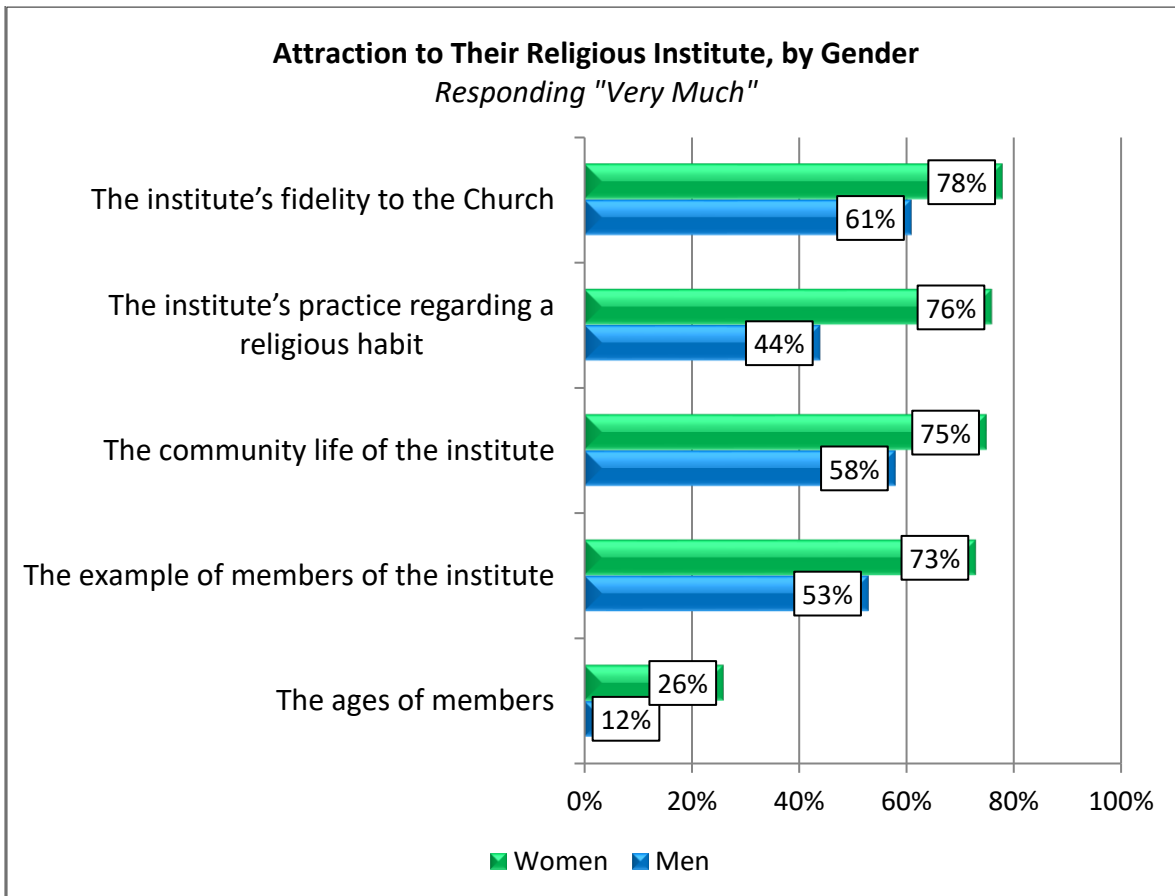
<b>How much did these attract you to your religious institute?</b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” and “Very Much” Combined</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
The charism, mission, and spirituality of the institute	98	85
The prayer life of the institute	93	67
The community life of the institute	93	66
Welcome and encouragement by the institute’s members	93	70
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	91	70
The example of members of the institute	89	63
The ministries of the institute	88	51
The institute’s practice regarding a religious habit	79	62
The life and works of your founder/ress	68	42
The focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute	62	38
The ages of members	57	20
The size of the institute	53	22
The geographic location(s) of the institute	52	23
The institute’s internationality, if applicable	48	24
The cultural diversity of the members	32	16

- Nine in ten respondents report they are at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the followings, with about seven in ten saying these aspects attracted them “very much”:
  - The prayer life of the institute (93%)
  - The community life of the institute (93%)
  - Welcome and encouragement by the institute’s members (93%)
  - The institute’s fidelity to the Church (91%)
  - The example of members of the institute (89%)
  - The ministries of the institute (88%)

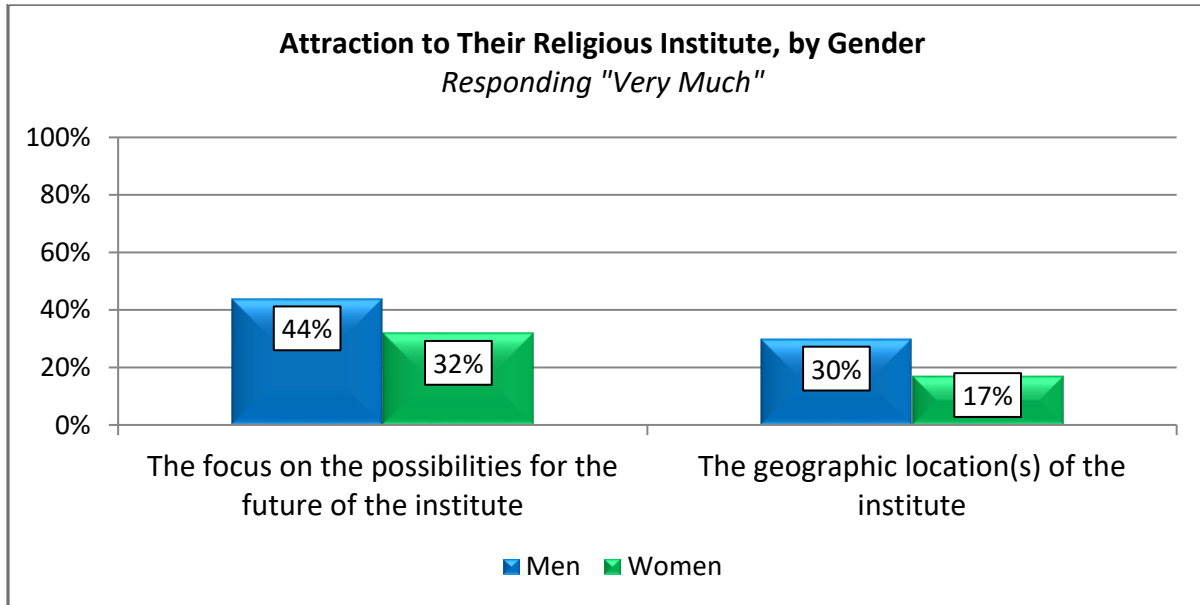
- Eight in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted by their institute’s practice regarding a religious habit (79%), with six in ten say this practice attracted them “very much.”
- Seven in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted by the life and works of their institute’s founder/ress (68%), with four in ten saying this aspect attracted them “very much.”
- Six in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted by the focus on the possibilities for the future of their institute (62%) and the ages of members (57%).
- Half were at least “somewhat” attracted by the size of the institute (53%), the geographic location(s) of the institute (52%), and the institute’s internationality (48%).
- Three in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted by the cultural diversity of the members in their institute (32%).

### Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to get attracted to their religious institute by their institute’s fidelity to the Church, their institute’s practice regarding a religious habit, the community life of the institute, the example of members of the institute, and the ages of members.



In contrast, men are more likely than women to be attracted to their religious institute by the focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute and the geographic location(s) of the institute



## Helpfulness of Discernment Programs and Experiences

Entrants were asked how helpful selected vocation experiences were to them in discerning their call to their institute before they entered. This section only reports those who participated in these activities.

Almost all entrants report that visit(s) to the Motherhouse or local community(ies), contact with the vocation director, “Come and See” experience, and live-in experience are at least “somewhat” helpful to them, with eight in ten saying these experiences are “very” helpful.

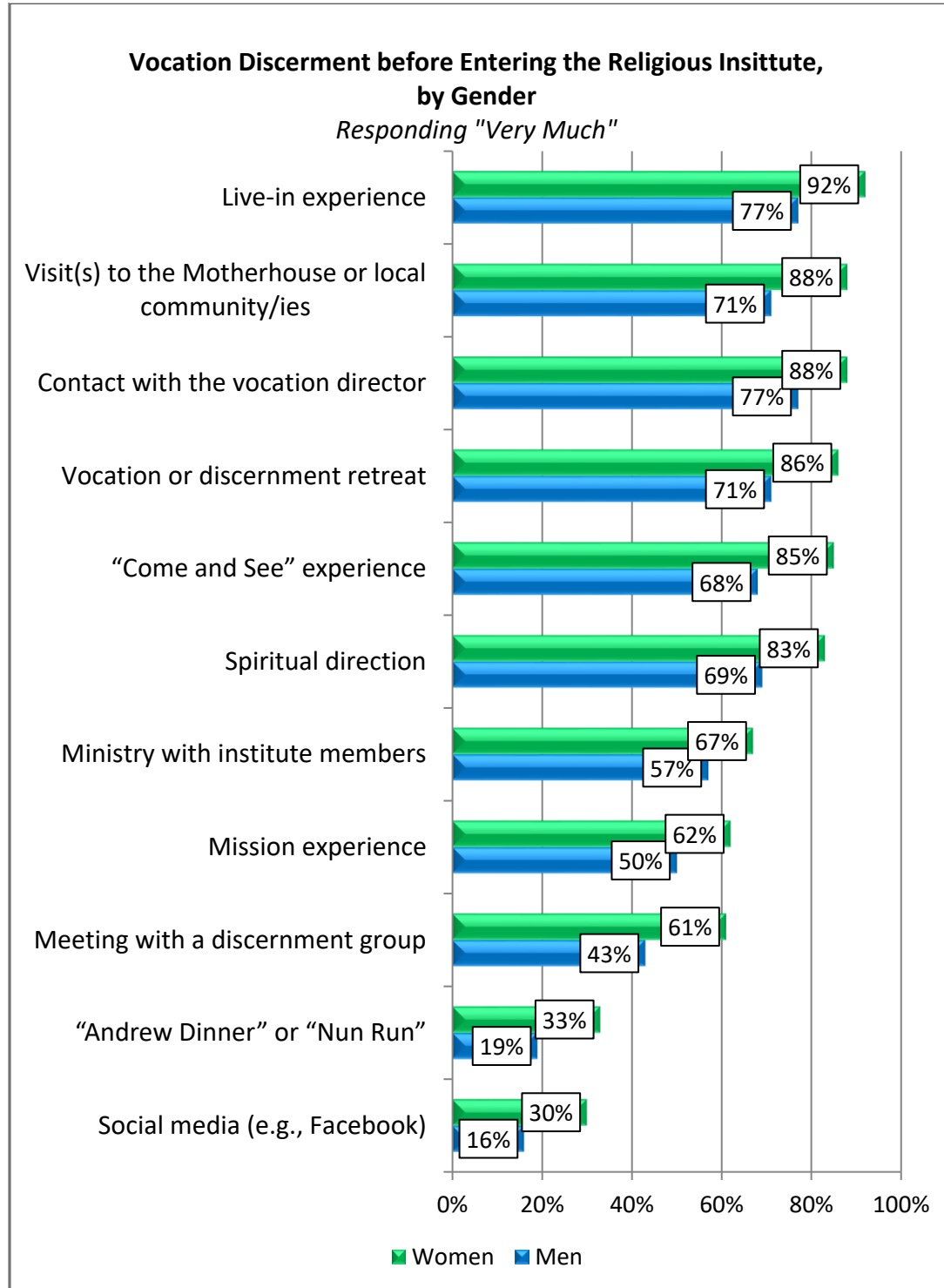
<i><b>If you participated in any of the following with your religious institute before you entered, how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?</b></i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” and “Very” Helpful Combined</b>	<b>“Very” Helpful Only</b>
	%	%
Visit(s) to the Motherhouse or local community/ies	96	80
Contact with the vocation director	94	83
“Come and See” experience	93	77
Live-in experience	93	86
Contact with institute members	92	75
Vocation or discernment retreat	92	79
Spiritual direction	92	76
Ministry with institute members	85	62
Mission experience	73	56
Meeting with a discernment group	73	51
Social media (e.g., Facebook)	51	23
“Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run”	36	24

- Nine in ten report participating in following activities were at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their institute. Seven in ten say these are “very” helpful:
  - Contact with institute members (92%)
  - Vocation or discernment retreat (92%)
  - Spiritual direction (92%)
  - Ministry with institute members (85%)
- Seven in ten report participating in mission experience (73%) and meeting with a discernment group (73%) at least “somewhat” helpful to them, with half saying these are “very” helpful.

- Half saying social media (51%) and a third saying “Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run” (36%) are at least “somewhat” helpful to them.

## Comparisons by Gender

Women entrants are more likely than men entrants to report that the experiences in the chart below are “very” helpful to them in discerning their call to their religious institute.

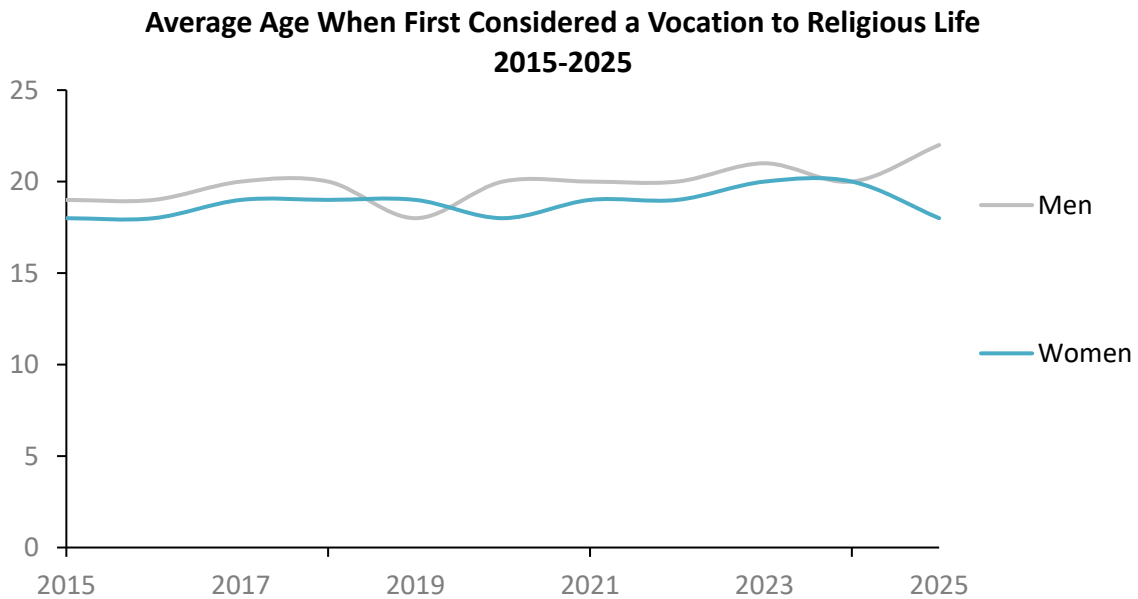


## Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, respondents were 20 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life. Half of them were 20 or younger when they first considered a vocation.

<b>Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life</b>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Mean age	20	22	18
Median age	20	22	18
Range of ages	5-47	6-47	5-37

Between 2015 and 2025, responding entrants first considered a vocation to religious life at the age of 20 on average and ranged between 18 and 20.



## Encouragement to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life

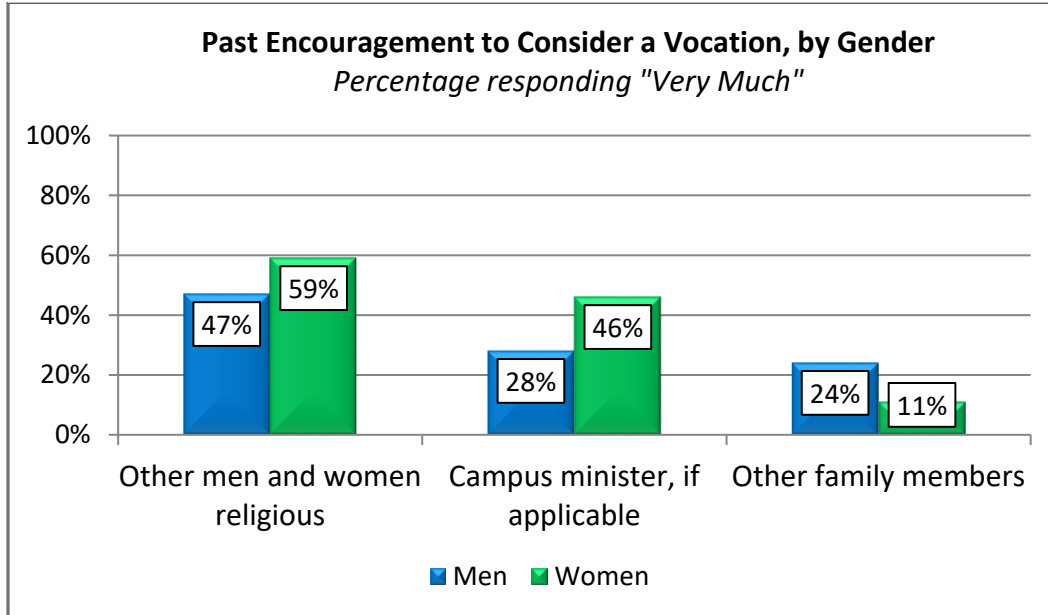
Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. Nine in ten received at least “somewhat” encouragement from members of their institute (92%), vocation director/team (92%), and spiritual director (92%) when they first considered entering a religious institute. About eight in ten said these people encouraged them “very much.”

<b><i>How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” and “Very Much” Encouragement Combined</b>	<b>“Very Much” Encouragement Only</b>
	%	%
Members of your institute	92	77
Vocation director/team	92	77
Spiritual director, if applicable	92	76
Friends outside the Institute	84	55
Other men and women religious	81	54
People in your parish	80	55
Diocesan priests	78	51
People in your school or workplace	68	40
Your parents, if applicable	66	39
Campus minister, if applicable	64	36
Your siblings, if applicable	60	28
Other family members	52	17

- Eight in ten received at least “somewhat” encouragement from friends outside the Institute (84%), other men and women religious (81%), people in their parish (80%), and diocesan priests (78%). Half received encouragement from these people “very much.”
- Seven in ten received at least “somewhat” encouragement from people in their school or workplace (68%) and their parents (66%). Four in ten received encouragement from these people “very much.”
- Six in ten received at least “somewhat” encouragement from a campus minister (64%) and their siblings (60%).
- Half received at least “somewhat” encouragement from other family members (52%).

## Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to receive “very much” encouragement to consider a vocation from religious besides members of their institute and from their campus minister; meanwhile, men are more likely than women to receive “very much” encouragement from their family members beside their parents and siblings.



## Initial Acquaintance with Religious Institute

Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute.

<i>How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?</i>			
Percentage checking each response*			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Through the recommendation of a family member, friend, or advisor	35	24	44
Through your own search	27	34	21
In an institution where members served, e.g., school	25	28	22
Through the reputation or history of the institute	23	27	20
Through a personal invitation by a member	20	23	18
Through web or social media promotional materials	17	16	18
Through working with a member of the institute	13	13	13
Through an event sponsored by the institute	10	11	9
Through a media story about the institute or member	9	8	10
Through a vocation fair, vocation match or placement service	8	9	8
Through print promotional materials	6	6	6
Other	12	9	14

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- A third reports first being acquainted with their religious institute through the recommendation of a family member, friend or advisor (35%). Women are more likely than men to report this.
- A quarter reports first being acquainted with their religious institute through their own search (27%) and in an institution where members served, e.g., school (25%). Men are more likely than women to report this.
- One in five reports first being acquainted with their religious institute through the reputation or history of the institute (23%), through a personal invitation by a member (20%), and through web or social media promotional materials (17%).

- One in ten reports first being acquainted with their religious institute through working with a member of the institute (13%), through an event sponsored by the institute (10%), through a media story about the institute or member (9%), and through a vocation fair, vocation match or placement service (8%).
- One in thirteen reports first being acquainted with their religious institute through print promotional materials (6%).
- One in ten (12%) first became acquainted with their religious institute through some “other” means (often during their college years). The “other” responses are listed below, lightly edited:
  - *A monk celebrated Mass at my parish and talked with me after.*
  - *Books*
  - *Family friend entered the order*
  - *FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) training for new staff*
  - *Friendship with sister*
  - *I saw them at an appointment I had in Los Angeles*
  - *I think they helped lead part of my Torts Tuus training for the Rockford Diner*
  - *I was at school at the mother house of the institution*
  - *In my hometown*
  - *Presence at a young adult conference in my Archdiocese*
  - *Retreats*
  - *SEEK conference*
  - *Seek Conference - Our sisters spoke there*
  - *Served on the same committee.*
  - *Sister(s) at Parish*
  - *Spiritual Founder's legacy*
  - *Spiritual Reading/books*
  - *Talking with a close personal friend during my vocation search, who was very familiar with the order.*
  - *The sisters came to my parents' house for dinner.*
  - *The writings of St. Therese (I'm a postulant with the Discalced Carmelite Friars)*
  - *They are the granddaughter house, and in the same Association as the monastery I was previously a member of.*
  - *They came to FOCUS missionary training*
  - *Through a Catholic conference*
  - *through a retreat to which the sisters came to give talks*
  - *Through prayer, Jesuit saints, and my own research mixed in*
  - *Through the works of our foundress*
  - *Volunteer program*
  - *Watching a friend join.*
  - *Youth group*

## What Most Attracted Entrants to Their Religious Institute

New Entrants were invited to respond in their own words to this open-ended question: “What most attracted you to your religious institute?”

A total of 184 respondents shared many aspects of this attraction, including spirituality and charism of the institute, prayer life and communal prayer, community life, sense of mission and ministry, God’s call and their relationship with him, the witness and joy of the members, and fidelity to the Church and its teachings. A few of their comments related to each of these aspects are listed below. A full transcript of all open-ended responses is included in an appendix at the end of this report.

### Founder/Foundress, Spirituality, and Charism of the institute

The founder or foundress, along with the charism and spirituality of the institute, emerged as a key factor attracting respondents to their religious community. This was cited by 79 respondents (43%). Selected responses are provided below.

*I want to be fully united to Christ in a way that would bear the greatest possible fruit. I know that healing and formation is a huge part of that, and from experience in the world and as a diocesan seminarian, I saw that this order was very healthy, and their aim was truly to help me discern the Will of God in my life and experience true healing and holiness regardless of where or whether I professed with them. I'm deeply attracted to their charisms, especially their teaching charism (I taught high school theology). I saw and still see in them a receptivity to the Holy Spirit, which allows me to entrust my vocation to them more deeply, and encourages me to be like them.*

*I was most attracted to the spirituality and the community life of my institute. In college, I was introduced to the spirituality of my institute. I deepened my relationship with God through reading members' spiritual texts, in conversations with members of the institute, and I saw an alignment with my views of the Church and the institute.*

*The charism and spirituality of the founder, and the witness of members with whom I had become acquainted.*

*The charism was a huge draw for me. I wouldn't have considered a cloistered order but the charism spoke to me so much I had to check it out and was then also attracted to their life of prayer and authentic search for God and their striving for holiness.*

*The charisms of the Society of Jesus and Ignatian Spirituality aligning most closely with my own spirituality and way of life.*

*The contemplative life and spirituality, the Marian character, the tradition of saints in the order, the history of the order, practice of poverty, and obedience to the Pope and Magisterium.*

*The founders and the example of the members.*

*The spirituality and missions of the Jesuits is what attracted me the most.*

*Their Charism. The way they are involved in different ministries especially in education, health and social development.*

## **Prayer Life and Spiritual Life**

At least 53 respondents (29%) recognized prayer as an important factor that drew them to their religious institute. Following are some of their responses.

*Educational approach or pedagogy, variety of ministries with young people, family spirit - meals together, recreation regularly, Eucharistic devotion and emphasis on the sacramental life.*

*The life of prayer, work, and living in community. My monastery is near the ocean. The silence in the monastery. Adoration on Tuesdays and Fridays and saying the Angelus after Lauds, before lunch and dinner. My monastery is pretty devoted to the Blessed Mother.*

*Getting to know the other members through visits; chanting the divine office in choir; the chance for extended periods of personal prayer and meditation.*

*I was most attracted by a life of contemplation and prayer, balanced with fraternity and ministry.*

*Reading the works of St. Teresa of Avila, especially the Way of Perfection. My prayer was almost non-existent for a year and a half and when I began to research prayer, she helped me to realize the beauty and necessity of prayer and why mental prayer was so necessary for the spiritual life. Then the more I researched the Discalced Carmelites, the more and more drawn I was to them: their devotion to the Blessed Virgin, obedience to the Church, 2 hours of mental prayer throughout the day, an overall very balanced lifestyle that has its roots in scripture.*

*Spirituality, prayer seemed to align.*

*The charism and their deep prayer life. They share that we are first bride!*

*What most attracted me to my religious institute was the charism and spirituality of continual prayer for the salvation of all souls and especially for priests. I felt, and feel, called to offer myself to God with my religious institute as a sacrifice of constant prayer so that all may be saved.*

*Their prayer life, their habit, their family feel, an attraction to their apostolate.*

*Their joy, love for the Eucharist, and the way they pray.*

## **Community Life**

Living in community was another key factor attracting respondents to their religious institute, identified by 48 respondents (26%). Below are some of the many replies.

*Community life and sense of joy among the seminarians and priests, life of common prayer, diverse and active apostolate, charism centered on education.*

*I was most attracted to the Order's dedication to prayer, intimacy with and attentiveness to God, as well as the healthy and comfortable community life (i.e. good rapport and love shared between the brothers, which was easy to feel included in).*

*Jesuit spirituality, the communal nature of the order, and the apostolic nature of the order.*

*My community is very relational and international serving together as a family.*

*Sense of community. They encourage individual growth and expression. Ministry works for peace and justice. Plans for future of newer/younger members. They are a learning community and seek knowledge and input from various aspects of life, cultures, and society as well as from the academic and theological institutes.*

*The community life.*

*The joy of the community, our mission, our family spirit and contact with family, our charism, the founder's lives.*

*The spirit and deep sense of my community, the visible expression of the charism in every moment of life, the great joy and love of each sister all attracted me to my religious institute. I should note, however, that because I felt called to religious life at such a young age, there is the added component of an enduring sense of God's call to my religious institute that played a major role.*

*What most attracted me to my religious institute was the sense of being a part of a family from the very beginning. As well of the closeness I felt to God by being in our convent.*

*The prayer life and community life.*

*The community and life of common prayer. The commitment to preaching the truths of the Catholic faith with nuance and clarity.*

### **Sense of Mission and Ministry of the Institute**

A sense of mission and the ministry of the institute was another commonly cited factor attracting respondents, identified by 44 postulants (24%).

*What most attracted me to the Society of the Divine Word is its missionary and international character.*

*What most attracted me to the Capuchin Franciscans was their emphasis on the contemplative life, and how this was integrated with active ministry that involved helping the poor and the marginalized.*

*The Sisters and their commitment to service and the joy they brought to their relationships to one another and those they serve.*

*Stability in prayer, the habit, complete devotion to ministry.*

*Internationality and interculturality, missionary work especially serving the poor, a non-negligible number of members are Vietnamese, diversity in initial formation setting.*

*I was drawn most to the ministry of preaching, the common life and the support it can provide, and the beauty of the choral Office in my institute.*

*Being in community and the service the Jesuits did on the margins.*

*Don Bosco's (the founder) reputation for working with the youth, especially those at risk.*

*Its spirituality; diversity of apostolates; internationality; work with the marginalized, especially migrants; and its balance of prayer, intellectual life, sacramental/liturgical life, and apostolate.*

## **Sense of God's Call**

38 respondents (21%) felt it was God himself calling them to their religious institute and to the life as a religious sister or priest. Below are a few of their responses.

*When I came for the first time, I received that experience as God's response to my openness, at long last, to be His bride, and in particular, a Carmelite. What attracted me most, then, to this religious institute, is that He was calling me here, to this particular place.*

*The belief that this is where God is calling me to be. Plus, the spirituality, charism, focus on prayer, blend of active and contemplative life, orthodoxy, community life, and trajectory of the province.*

*My belief that the Lord has plans for me here.*

*Life of devotion to the Lord and devoting oneself to the service and care of others.*

*I didn't think God wanted me on the path I was on so I asked Him to guide me and he led me to a religious institute.*

*I believe this is where the Lord is calling me. There are many things I find attractive about the community such as fidelity to the church, beautiful liturgy, fidelity to the ancient ways of monasticism, but I'm here because I believe God wants me here and that is what I find most attractive about this place.*

*I am attracted to this way of life because there is such freedom and joy in giving myself, first to God in prayer, and then, for the majority of the day, in a consoling ministry of presence to God's own who might otherwise not be loved. Often, I have such affection for these people (such as the children of the school I worked at) and my prayer is always for our Father to open my eyes even more to see and love these children as He sees and loves them. I do of course have some painful memories of doing ministry, when things didn't "go right"--even these are moments of growth and humility.*

*A particular grace from Jesus to be moved by the entirety of the charism of the sisters.*

*God's personal call to be His bride and discovering the particular charism He made me for, which He revealed through my discernment of His will.*

### **Witness and Joy of Members**

36 respondents (20%) were attracted to their institute by the witness and joy of the members they encounter daily in community. Some of their responses are below.

*What attracts me most to my religious institute is the deep sense of community and shared mission. I am inspired by the way my sisters live the Gospel through simple acts of love, service, and unity. Every day, I see how we support one another in prayer and in our ministries, and that spirit of sisterhood gives me great joy and strength.*

*Their charism, Apostolate, members of the community that I met during visits, and their overall joy.*

*The life and the spirituality the joy and realness of the sisters.*

*The Horarium was how the Lord drew me. Also, I had an extraordinary sense of joy when surrounded by the sisters.*

*The history of the order and the sense of brotherhood and genuine friendship I felt when I visited the friars.*

*That in all they do, the sisters are clearly Brides of Christ; and that joy that is brought forth from that identity.*

*I was most attracted to the joy of my now sisters. It was clear to me that their joy resulted from their way of life and deep relationship with the Lord and showed me that the religious life is truly a deeply happy life.*

*I love the balance of life presented by the Dominicans and also how each sister was wholly given over to Christ, in an authentic, simple, and integral way. Through the pillars of prayer, study, community, and the apostolate, the sisters have a deep inner joy and freedom because they seek and find Christ in everything.*

*How every sister so deeply embodied the charism in the boundless charity, love, and joy they gave to everyone they met!*

## **Fidelity to the Church and Her Teachings**

A notable portion of respondents were drawn to their religious institute because of its clear fidelity to the Church and her teachings. Fourteen respondents (8%) identified this as a primary factor in their discernment, often highlighting a deep commitment to the Magisterium, reverent liturgical life, and a strong emphasis on prayer, community, and apostolic mission. Below are a few of their comments.

*Their zeal for Souls, commitment to prayer and the sacraments, fidelity to and love of the Church and her teachings, the fact that that this community is clearly flourishing, the traditional Dominican habit, the teaching apostolate, and the joy and holiness of the sisters.*

*The joy and the prayer life. Community life and fidelity to the teachings of the Church.*

*Fidelity to the Church, Reverent Liturgies, Common Liturgical Prayer, Common Life.*

*Fervent life of common prayer, study, and preaching. Fidelity to Church teaching. Commitment to frequent ministering of the Sacraments. Powerful preaching and teaching. Religious observances.*

*Fidelity to the Magisterium, Authenticity of the sisters, Radical Detachment, Carmelite spirituality (seeking union with God).*

*Their joy, fidelity to the church, and their zeal.*

*Their fidelity to the teachings of the Church.*

## **Habit**

At least 10 respondents (8%) said that the use of a habit was another key factor in why they chose their religious institute.

*The habit. The living of the Gospel radically and the fraternal life.*

*Monastic living, praying the Hours and the traditional habit. The community's main focus is monastic life but they do have an active mission as well. The ability to do both was appealing.*

*Faithfulness to prayer and the habit.*

*Common prayer, community and a clear identity, e.g., the wearing of the habit.*

*A fourth vow, the charism, the habit.*

*The life of the founder, the habit, community life.*

## **Other**

14 respondents (8%) stated what most attracted them to their religious institute, however their responses did not fit easily into the previous categories. Below are a few of their responses.

*While this may seem odd, I really wasn't generally attracted to the Benedictines at all. Though I believe the Lord willed me to go, and as a result I obeyed, and have seen some merit to my time in the monastery, I cannot genuinely say I was attracted to the OSB's at all.*

*To be a brother to all and to be a OFM cap.*

*They live everything I lived in my past.*

*They are monks.*

*The vocation in education.*

*Possibility for anything.*

## Part III Experience of Religious Life and Institute

### Prayer Practices

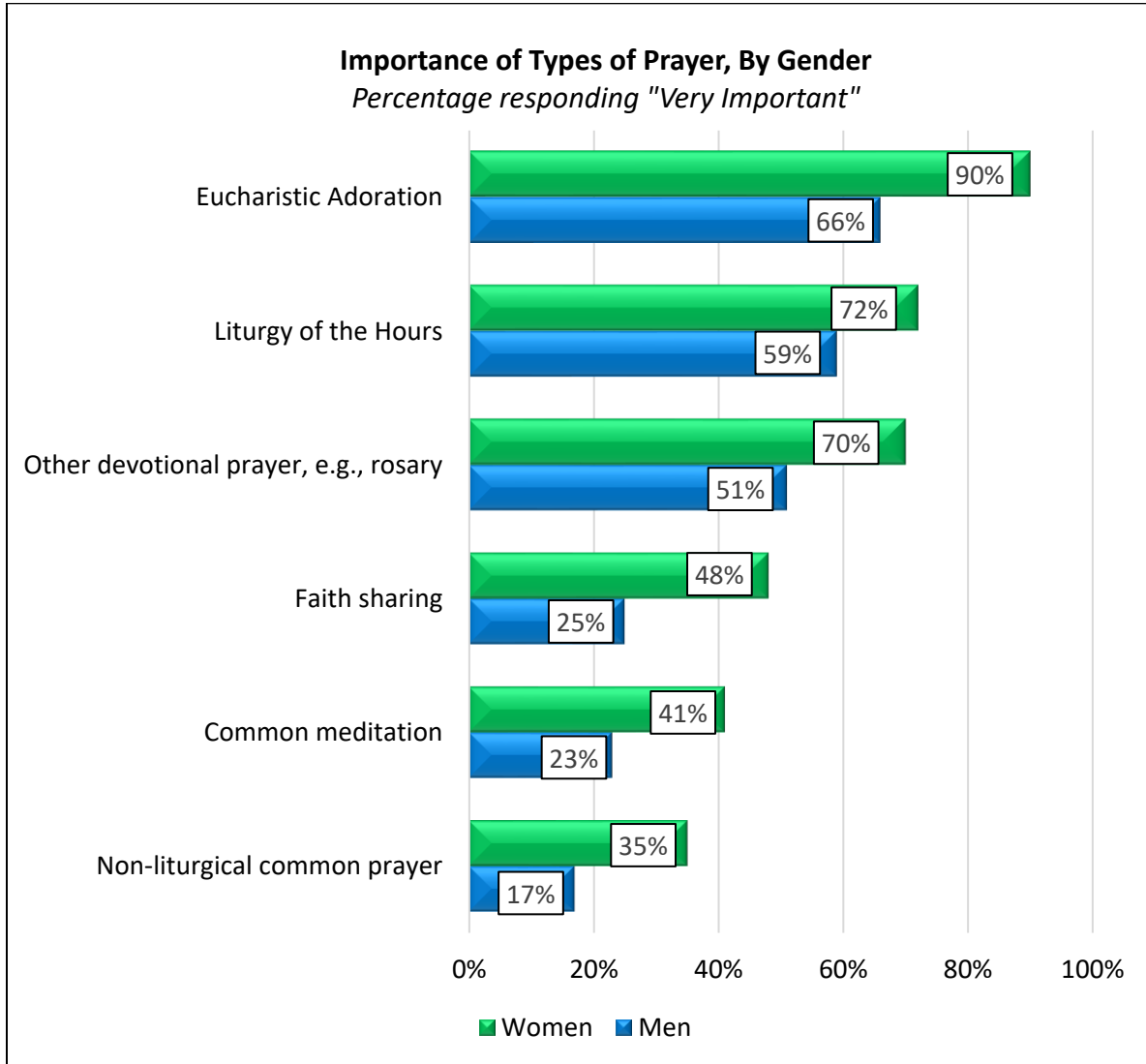
Respondents were asked to evaluate how important each of nine different types of prayer are to them. All respondents say private personal prayer (100%); daily Eucharist (99%); Scripture reading, spiritual reading, daily examination (98%); and Eucharistic Adoration (96%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. At least eight in ten report that these types of prayers are “very” important to them.

<i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very” Important</b>	<b>“Very” Important Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Private personal prayer	100	94
Daily Eucharist	99	92
Scripture reading, spiritual reading, daily examination	98	81
Eucharistic Adoration	96	79
Liturgy of the Hours	89	66
Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary	89	62
Faith sharing	73	38
Non-liturgical common prayer	70	27
Common meditation	67	33

- Nine in ten respondents report that Liturgy of the Hours (89%) and other devotional prayer (89%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Six in ten or more report that these kinds of prayers are “very” important to them.
- Seven in ten report that faith sharing (73%) and non-liturgical common prayer (70%) are at least “somewhat” important to them.
- Two-thirds say common meditation (67%) is at least “somewhat” important to them.

## Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say that the aspects of prayer life mentioned in the chart below are “very” important to them.



## Importance of Aspects of Community Life

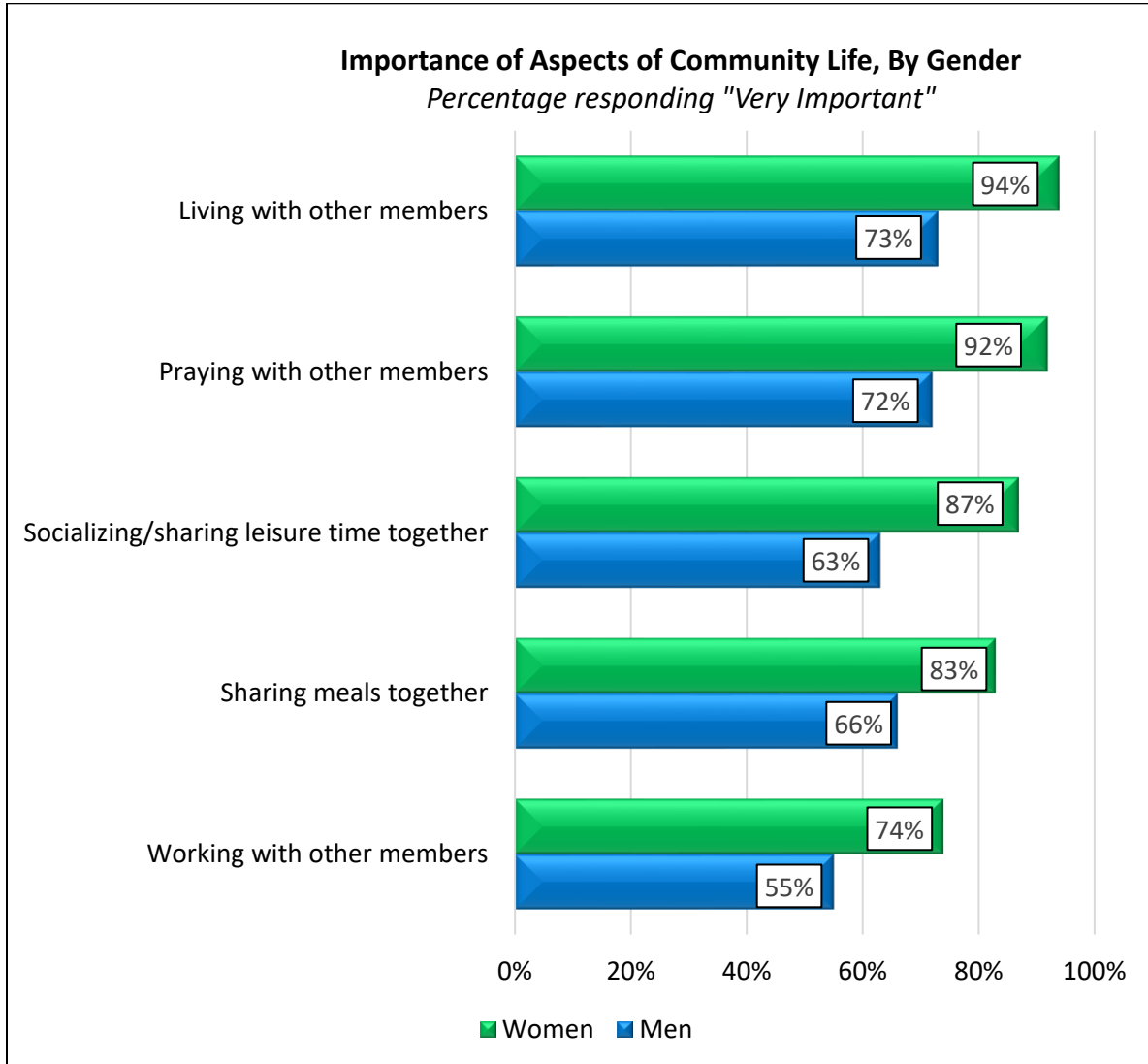
Entrants to religious life were asked to indicate the importance to them of various aspects of community life. Almost all report that living with other members (97%) and praying with other members (96%) are at least “somewhat” important to them, with eight or more in ten saying these aspects are very important to them.

<b><i>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very” Combined</b>	<b>“Very” Only</b>
	%	%
Living with other members	97	87
Praying with other members	96	83
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	95	76
Sharing meals together	93	75
Working with other members	90	65

More than nine in ten indicate that socializing/sharing leisure time together (95%) and sharing meals together (93%) are at least “somewhat” important to them.

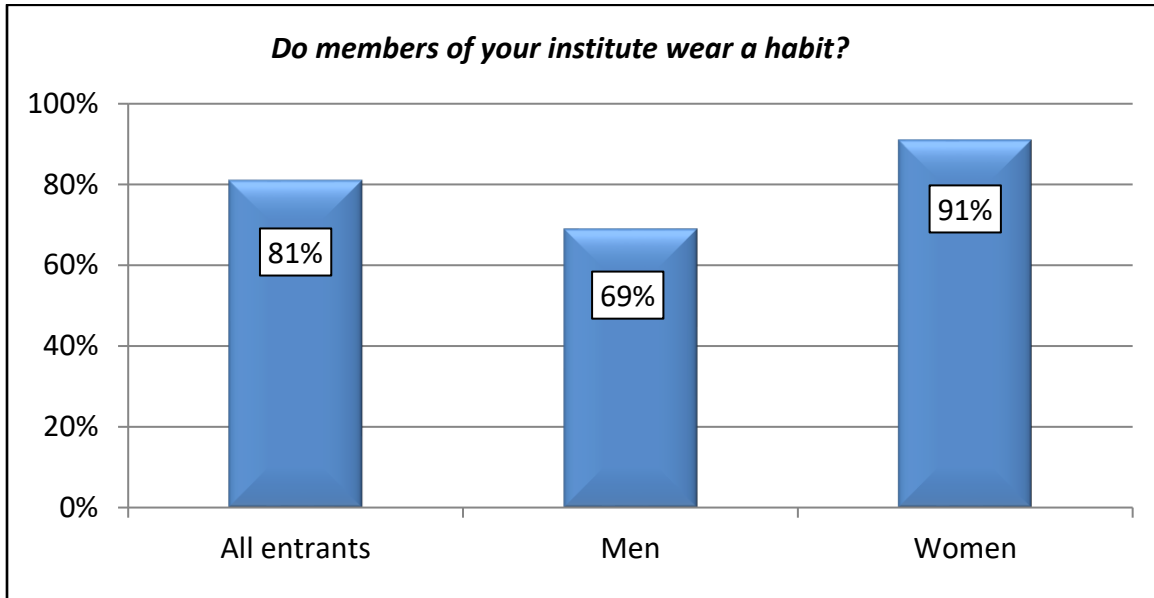
## Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say that the aspect of community life mentioned in the chart below are “very” important to them.



## Wearing Religious Habit

New entrants were asked if the members of their institute wear a habit. Eight in ten (81%) indicate that members of their institute wear a habit. Women are more likely than men to say that members of their institute wear a habit.



## What Entrants Find Most Challenging about Religious Life

A second open-ended question invited new entrants to respond, in their own words, to this question: “*What do you find most challenging about religious life?*”

A total of 181 respondents identified a wide range of challenges. These responses can be grouped into several key areas, including community life; adapting to the vows—particularly obedience—and the accompanying loss of personal autonomy; separation from family and friends; the transition into and ongoing adjustment to religious life; inner struggles and personal growth; cultural and generational differences; and experiences of burnout. A full transcript of all open-ended responses is included in an appendix at the end of this report.

### Community

50 respondents (28%) most commonly report that they find community life the most challenging aspect of their religious life experience. Working and living with personalities you clash with can be very challenging to entrants. Following are some of their remarks.

*Peoples' differing temperaments and the struggles of working with or being around people you don't like in community. The cut off from family and friends with limited contact with them. Struggling with past life and wounds interfering with community or religious life.*

*I find that community life is the most challenging but also the most rewarding. It's hard when there are tensions, differences in thinking, personality, temperaments, etc. that make it hard to have unity. But, if worked through together with willingness and openness of heart, unity is greater solidified and authentic.*

*I find living in community with others to be the most challenging aspect of religious life thus far.*

*Community life is the most challenging aspect of my journey. Living with three other postulants, including myself as the fourth, has its ups and downs. Our personalities sometimes clash, but we all share a common goal: to focus on Jesus Christ. It's similar to living with siblings — we love each other, but we may not always agree on everything. While it can be challenging, it's also a gift. I'm grateful for the love and support of my fellow postulants. I joined as group of two (me and another girl from my school) and we are also joined by two second-year postulants above us who will be novices in August 2026, if God wills...*

*Community ~ specific members. Community is both the greatest blessing + biggest cross.*

*Community life is a huge blessing, and it can also be difficult. You get to know many people on a level that you might otherwise only experience with a spouse or a family member. You see people's faults, and that usually brings your own faults into high relief, and you can't distract yourself as easily from them as you could in the workaday world.*

*Community life, mostly with the other Postulants. Learning to live with completely other personalities, with young people raised entirely different from you, is a massive challenge but simultaneously an enormous blessing.*

*It's been challenging for me spending as much time I've spent in leisure time with the community.*

*When found out the members and especially abbess of my religious institute act and practice completely different or opposite from the charism, mission, and spirituality of the institute even as a regular Christian. Feel like being cheated.*

### **Living their Vows**

48 respondents report that they find religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to be challenging aspects of their religious life experience. Some of their responses are found below.

*Considering the opportunities, I may be giving up by taking vows.*

*Having to follow rules is difficult for me, but I want to do it out of love.*

*I am most challenged by the vow of celibacy as well as questions around whether I should have entered religious life after having more 'world experience'. It can be challenging when my expectations regarding community life are not being met. I sometimes feel embarrassed when I consider the negative perception of my institute by people within the Church.*

*I think for me the biggest challenge about religious life is the giving up of marriage and having your own family and not being around your current family and friends.*

*Ironing, cooking, sewing, learning piano, guitar, organ. Getting permission to fast. Getting all done homework on time. Getting permission to exercise after sitting for most of the day. How to manage time when everything takes longer when you need more than 30 minutes to do something. Communicating needs. Communicating with people who need you, but you have limited phone time to meet their needs after a serious situation with their family.*

*Most challenging is the embrace of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.*

*Needing to ask permission to do things I could do freely before I entered.*

*No longer answering just to myself, but to formators and superiors.*

*Obedience / less independence compared to my life before.*

*Right now, the most challenging aspect of religious life is obedience. Learning when I have to ask for permission to do something and having my will conform to the superiors.*

*The purification and integration of my desires for marriage, children, and spousal intimacy. Learning to live in the sacrifice of that ache and not deny it or distract myself from it, but really offer it to the Lord.*

*The sacrifices (distance from family, surrendering the thought of being married and having children one day), learning to live with community members who you may struggle to agree*

*with about small topics, being directed/corrected and asking for permission about things that you used to do on your own as an adult (obedience).*

### **Detachment from Family and Friends**

37 respondents (20 %) from the entrance class of 2025 find separation from family, friends and previous relationships to be the biggest challenge they face. They worry that their relationships will diminish over time.

*What I find most challenging about religious life is all that I am called to give up. As I am part of a cloistered community, I am called to give up the kind of contact and amount of time with my family that I had before entering, and right now this is the hardest aspect.*

*Visiting days when other sisters have family here but I do not have visitors as it is too far for my family to travel.*

*The most challenging part has been the distance from family and friends, and the fear of losing those relationships as time goes on.*

*Shared finances, less autonomy, the idea/reality of being away from family and friends and not integrated into their daily lives.*

*Separation and limits on communication with friends and family.*

*Limited communication with family.*

*At the moment I find difficult to be separated so far from my family in Germany and especially from my little brother. But still, I feel very much in the right place here and am happy. (With so limited communication opportunity).*

*Being in less contact with my family, being far from home.*

### **Transition and Adjustment to Religious Life**

For 30 respondents (17%), the adjustment to religious life has proven to be challenging, particularly in adapting to new schedules and daily rhythms, balancing workload, and integrating into community life. Following are some of their comments.

*Facing and deconstructing all the defenses and material attachments I have created over a lifetime living and working in the 'outside' world. I wish to give myself entirely to Christ, to fall into his loving care, but the wounds from my previous life run deep, and learning to trust in Jesus's healing power through the Rule and obedience to my superiors, many of whom are younger than me, is made more complicated by my worldly experiences and coping mechanisms which, while perhaps suitable for that former environment, are seemingly incompatible with this way of life.*

*Juggling multiple responsibilities and shifting out of my previous mode of thinking as an engineer and educator.*

*Learning a completely new way of life which is so different from my life before.*

*Right now, the most challenging part of religious life is the detachment from truly good and beautiful relationships I've had in the world and transitioning into a community with all new people and new kinds of relationships.*

*So far, I have found having to learn an entirely new pattern of life and breaking old, bad habits the most challenging.*

*The uncertainty and lack of control; compared to living as a single person beforehand.*

*Waking up at 5AM.*

*Way more structure than I'm used to.*

*What I find most challenging is detachment from the world, entering into prayer and the healing Jesus wants to bring me, calling family less.*

### **Personal Growth Amid Inner Struggles and Doubts**

A total of 28 respondents (15%) reported that internal struggles present a notable challenge in their early experience of religious life. These challenges often involve doubt, uncertainty, and ongoing discernment about their decision.

*What I have found to be the most challenging part about religious life has been to work on myself interiorly. Whether it is by working on my behavior, time-management, or other aspects.*

*What I find most challenging about religious life are the mental hurdles. Constantly having to face my weaknesses and dealing with strong emotions.*

*The most challenging part about religious life is having to face everything in myself that I naturally want to avoid or run away from, and learning how flawed I am. However, once I face those parts in myself, I find healing and greater peace, and so even the most challenging times are very fruitful later on.*

*The biggest challenge is myself. God supplies every necessary grace; I just need to learn to say yes!*

*Questions and doubts if this vocation will truly satisfy me, learning to live in community, facing my own weakness and area in need of growth.*

*Overcoming my own weaknesses, faults, and sins.*

*Learning to accept my own imperfections, understanding that I will not be perfect but I am here to love and be loved, and that God will provide me with all that I need beyond that.*

*I find the interior life difficult because sometimes I doubt if I am praying correctly. I can also have tendencies toward jealousy and sometimes I can notice it when community members are speaking about their spiritual experiences.*

*Discerning God's Will versus my will + feelings.*

*Community life and internal struggles.*

## **Cultural and Generational Differences**

Twenty-seven respondents (8%) reported difficulty relating to others in community life due to cultural and generational differences. Variations in age, temperament, political perspectives, and traditions were commonly cited as contributing factors. Below are a few of their remarks.

*Age gaps and the sometimes-hostile dynamics between religious orders and dioceses (especially when the religious orders are exclusively lay brothers).*

*Dealing with a mentally ill sister, boredom, age gap, lack of other younger sisters or postulants. I'm the only one and it can be lonely.*

*Diversity of membership could be more; however, they are aware of this disparity and encourage study and discussion with members/persons of diverse cultural backgrounds.*

*Ecclesial and political viewpoints, often from generational differences.*

*I am Asian and I live with mostly western-minded people. I often find bridging the gap between the different ways of thoughts to be more of a burden on me than others.*

*Loving brothers who have very different personalities and interests than me.*

*Sometimes being away from family or having very limited contact with them. At times community life with very different personalities and the need for greater charity in those interactions. Lastly, on occasion the pressure to perform well in class or studies.*

*This early on, community. Living with guys who are not emotionally mature generally, and seem to have poor coping skills when it comes to handling conflict specifically, has been a real bummer.*

## **Burnout Both Physical and Mental**

Fifteen respondents (8%) are feeling both physical and mental burnout. Below highlight a few of their comments.

*Can be very busy at times. Maybe trying to train us now to fill a gap in the priest shortage. However, ministry burnout is a real reality to be aware of.*

*Currently, the most difficult part is keeping up physically to the daily schedule—persevering through tiredness.*

*Everything about religious life has been a blessing so far. The most challenging component is the reality that there are only 24 hours in a day, and due to my university studies, I am still trying to figure out how best to organize my time so that I can pray, complete my work, participate in community life, all while taking care of myself.*

*Having a very rigid schedule with very few days off.*

*I would say the business of apostolic work. It is always in constantly moving but it's okay. This would be a physical tiredness.*

*Probably physical exhaustion.*

*The sometimes-intense pace of life during transitions and prioritizing self-care during free time amongst busy schedule to prevent burn out.*

## **Other**

There were ten respondents whose responses did not fit easily into any of the topics above. Here are a few of their replies:

*Waiting to enter the next stage in formation.*

*Unity in diversity.*

*To conclusively make decisions that suit all without having some feeling left out, pinched... in other words to satisfy everyone on matters decisions.*

*The actual corrupted state of the Church as an institution. The political ideology as a for of frenetic social activism. The hypocrisy and bad example of the religious members. The constant pressure of being evaluated, judged, and "molded" by resentful and bitter elders.*

*Sometimes common recreation.*

*Religious Life is very counter cultural. I was worried about what my friends and family would think when I told them this is what I wanted to dedicate my life to. I find it challenging to talk about my vocation with general people because it's so uncommon.*

## **Appendix I: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies**



**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
Entrance Class of 2025**



*This survey is designed to help us understand the characteristics and experiences of those entering religious life in the United States today and the religious institutes they are entering. "Religious institute" refers to the congregation, province, or abbey/monastery to which you belong. Please respond by marking an "X" in the appropriate box for each question below. If any question does not apply to you, please leave it blank. If you prefer completing this survey online, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/mt537x8e> using a login code*

*Please use the responses below for questions 1-21.*

<b>1=Not at All</b>	<b>2=Only a Little</b>	<b>3=Somewhat</b>	<b>4=Very Much</b>
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1	2	3	4	NR	
<b>How much did the following attract you to <u>religious life</u>?</b>					
0	0	12	88	0	1. A sense of call to religious life
1	3	12	85	1	2. A desire for prayer and spiritual growth
2	6	28	64	1	3. A desire to be part of a community
2	4	27	67	1	4. A desire to be of service
4	8	30	58	1	5. A desire to be more committed to the Church
1	2	3	4	NR	
<b>How much did these attract you to <u>your religious institute</u>?</b>					
13	19	26	42	2	6. The life and works of your founder/ress
1	1	13	85	1	7. The charism, mission, and spirituality of the institute
1	6	26	67	2	8. The prayer life of the institute
1	6	27	66	2	9. The community life of the institute
3	9	37	51	3	10. The ministries of the institute
2	7	21	70	2	11. The institute's fidelity to the Church
14	8	17	62	2	12. The institute's practice regarding a religious habit
16	22	25	38	4	13. The focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute
20	27	30	22	2	14. The size of the institute
28	20	29	23	2	15. The geographic location(s) of the institute
36	16	23	24	11	16. The institute's internationality, if applicable
3	8	26	63	2	17. The example of members of the institute
1	6	23	70	2	18. Welcome and encouragement by the institute's members
61	16	11	12	3	19. The racial/ethnic background of members
21	22	37	20	2	20. The ages of members
49	20	16	16	3	21. The cultural diversity of the members

**How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?** *Check all that apply.*

19	22.	Through a personal invitation by a member
24	23.	In an institution where members served, e.g., school
12	24.	Through working with a member of the institute
32	25.	Through the recommendation of a family member, friend, or advisor
21	26.	Through the reputation or history of the institute
10	27.	Through an event sponsored by the institute
9	28.	Through a media story about the institute or member
7	29.	Through a vocation fair, vocation match or placement service
6	30.	Through print promotional materials
17	31.	Through web or social media promotional materials
26	32.	Through your own search
19	33.	Other: _____

Please use the responses below for questions 34-45.

1=Not at All Helpful

2=Only a Little Helpful

3=Somewhat Helpful

4=Very Helpful

5=Not Applicable/Did not participate

Please choose "5" if you did not participate. If you participated in any of the following **with your religious institute** before entering how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?

1	2	3	4	5	
1	5	11	78	6	34. Contact with the vocation director
2	5	15	64	15	35. Contact with institute members
6	3	2	3	87	36. "Andrew Dinner" or "Nun Run"
2	4	13	63	19	37. "Come and See" experience
2	4	9	54	32	38. Vocation or discernment retreat
3	1	4	45	48	39. Live-in experience
3	4	11	28	55	40. Ministry with institute members
3	6	5	19	67	41. Mission experience
3	7	9	19	62	42. Meeting with a discernment group
1	2	13	66	18	43. Visit(s) to the Motherhouse or local community/ies
11	17	16	14	44	44. Social media (e.g., Facebook)
2	4	12	55	28	45. Spiritual direction

Please use the responses below for questions 46-59.

1=Not at All

2=Only a Little

3=Somewhat Important

4=Very Important

1	2	3	4	NR		<b>How important to you are these types of prayer?</b>
0	0	6	94	2	46.	Private personal prayer
2	0	6	92	2	47.	Daily Eucharist
3	9	23	66	2	48.	Liturgy of the Hours
7	23	43	27	2	49.	Non-liturgical common prayer
12	21	34	33	2	50.	Common meditation
2	3	17	79	2	51.	Eucharistic Adoration
4	8	27	62	2	52.	Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary
8	19	35	38	2	53.	Faith sharing
0	2	17	81	2	54.	Scripture reading, spiritual reading, daily examination

**How important to you are these aspects of community life?**

1	2	3	4	NR	
1	3	10	87	2	55. Living with other members
1	3	13	83	2	56. Praying with other members
2	8	25	65	2	57. Working with other members
2	5	18	75	2	58. Sharing meals together
2	4	19	76	2	59. Socializing/sharing leisure time together

60. Do members of your institute wear a habit? 81 Yes 19 No **NR=3**

**About You**

61. \_\_\_\_\_ Year you were born

62. \_\_\_\_\_ Age you first considered religious life

63. \_\_\_\_\_ How many brothers and sisters do you have?

64. What is your birth order? 7 Only child 32 Eldest 30 Youngest  Somewhere in the middle **NR=2**

65. Are you: 46 Male 54 Female

- 65.1. *If male*, do you expect become a 13 Perpetually professed brother? 87 Priest **NR=6**
66. What is your first language? \_\_\_\_\_
67. How many languages do you speak fluently? 70 One 23 Two 7 Three 0 Four or more **NR=3**
68. Were you employed before you entered? 87 Yes 13 No **NR=2**
- 68.1. *If Yes to #68*, were you employed? 69 Full-time 18 Part-time 3 No **NR=2**
69. Were you in ministry before you entered? 63 Yes 37 No **NR=2**
- 69.1. *If Yes to #69*, were you engaged in ministry? 38 Full-time 13 Part-time 49 Volunteer **NR=38**
70. What best describes your racial or ethnic background? **NR=3**
- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 3 African/African American/Black          | 14 Hispanic/Latino(a)             |
| 13 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian | 0 Native American/American Indian |
| 67 Caucasian/European American/White      | 3 Mixed race                      |
|   | 1 Other: _____                    |
71. Were you born in the United States? 80 Yes 20 No **NR=3**
- 71.1. *If No to #71*, country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
- 71.2. *If No to #71*, year you first moved to United States: \_\_\_\_\_
72. Were you raised Catholic? 89 Yes 11 No **NR=3**
- 72.1. *If No to #72*, did you become Catholic through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)? 71 Yes 29 No **NR=89**
- 72.2. *If No to #72*, what was your prior religious affiliation? \_\_\_\_\_
73. Were you ever home-schooled? 16 Yes 84 No **NR=2**
- 73.1. *If Yes to #73*, number of years home-schooled: \_\_\_\_\_
74. What was the highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute? **NR=2**
- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 8 High school or less | 19 Master's degree |
| 14 Some college       | 4 Doctoral degree  |
| 55 Bachelor's degree  | 0 Other _____      |

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

- 46 75. Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR
- 39 76. Catholic elementary or middle school
- 34 77. Catholic high school
- 40 78. Catholic college or university
- 21 79. Catholic ministry formation program

**Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of these before you entered? Check all that apply.**

- 42 80. Parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years
- 25 81. Campus ministry during high school years
- 43 82. Parish young adult group
- 48 83. Campus ministry during college
- 8 84. Religious institute volunteer program (e.g., Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)
- 60 85. Liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister)
- 39 86. Music ministry, cantor, choir
- 44 87. Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA team
- 64 88. Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting
- 68 89. Retreats
- 14 90. World Youth Day
- 9 91. National Catholic Youth Conference
- 36 92. Right to Life March in Washington, DC
- 7 93. Marian gatherings (e.g., Marian Days in Carthage, MO)
- 15 94. Other youth ministries (e.g., Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement, National Spanish Youth Ministry)

**Family Background While You Were Growing Up**

95. Was your mother Catholic? 90 Yes 15 No **NR=2**

95.1. *If No to #95, what was her religious preference?*

97. Was your father Catholic? 85 Yes 15 No **NR=3**

97.1. *If No to #97, what was his religious preference?*

96. How important was religion to your mother while you were growing up? **NR=2**

3 Not at all 24 Somewhat important

9 Only a little 64 Very important

**Yes No NR**

29 71 3

58 42 2

28 72 2

19 81 3

26 74 3

46 54 4

98. How important was religion to your father while you were growing up? **NR=4**

9 Not at all 30 Somewhat important

15 Only a little 46 Very important

99. Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?

100. Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?

101. Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

102. Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

103. Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

104. Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?

**105. Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood? Please select all that apply.**

97 Biological parent(s) 8 Other relative(s)

3 Stepparent 1 Someone else

2 Adoptive parent(s) 1 I prefer not to answer

14 Grandparent(s)

**How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?**

Not at All	Only a Little	Somewhat	Very Much	NR	
5	4	14	77	5	106. Members of your institute
4	4	15	77	5	107. Vocation director/team
6	2	17	76	14	108. Spiritual director, if applicable
13	6	27	54	12	109. Other men and women religious
10	12	26	51	10	110. Diocesan priests
14	20	27	39	6	111. Your parents, if applicable
21	19	32	28	10	112. Your siblings, if applicable
27	22	35	17	11	113. Other family members
11	9	25	55	9	114. People in your parish
14	18	28	40	10	115. People in your school or workplace
33	3	27	36	50	116. Campus minister, if applicable
5	10	29	55	7	117. Friends outside the Institute

118. What most attracted you to your religious institute? \_\_\_\_\_

119. What do you find most challenging about religious life? \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!**  
**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University (CARA)**  
 2300 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Suite 400A, Washington, DC 20007

## **Appendix II: Responses to Open-ended Comments**

## **Q117. What most attracted you to your religious institute?**

Presented here are the responses of the new entrants, lightly edited for punctuation.

*A balanced life of contemplation and serving the sick poor.*

*A fourth vow, the charism, the habit.*

*A particular grace from Jesus to be moved by the entirety of the charism of the sisters.*

*A personal holy hour of Adoration each day, kneeling while receiving the Eucharist, the postulants wear chapel veils, we are able to sit on the floor when we adore Jesus, the charismatic spirit the institution carries, and the authenticity of each sister here.*

*An amazing balance in between monastic practices and apostolic work.*

*Being in community and the service the Jesuits did on the margins.*

*Belong to something bigger to myself, and devoting myself to working for the salvation of the youth.*

*Charism, joy of members.*

*Charism.*

*Charism & community life.*

*Charism and history.*

*Charism and ministry focus.*

*Charism, Professional network, history, and apostolate options (education primarily).*

*Common Prayer, community and a clear identity, e.g., the wearing of the habit.*

*Communal charity as the core of the charism.*

*Community and Ministry (specifically teaching).*

*Community life and sense of joy among the seminarians and priests, life of common prayer, diverse and active apostolate, charism centered on education.*

*Community life, common prayer, study, and preaching.*

*Community life, prayer and serving God in a social outreach type of way with people of similar ethnicities.*

*Community lifestyle and support system.*

*Deep fidelity to the Eucharist, the kerygma, and to the heart and mission of the Church, alongside true human formation that treats us like men. It is a very moderate, pragmatic, prudent congregation: no ideological idealism, no cultural or liturgical axes to grind. Deep fraternity of men who feel healthy, normal, and joyful.*

*Diocesan Charism.*

*Divine providence and peace of heart were the main things, but I enjoy the 1-week cycle in Divine Office, and the "tight knit family" feel of the community.*

*Dominican spirituality, a love for truth/orthodoxy, and a love for the Eucharist.*

*Don Bosco's (the founder) reputation for working with the youth, especially those at risk.*

*Educational approach or pedagogy, variety of ministries with young people, family spirit - meals together, recreation regularly, Eucharistic devotion and emphasis on the sacramental life.*

*Emphasis on community life.*

*Faithfulness to prayer and the habit.*

*Fervent life of common prayer, study, and preaching. Fidelity to Church teaching. Commitment to frequent ministering of the Sacraments. Powerful preaching and teaching. Religious observances.*

*Fidelity to the Church, Reverent Liturgies, Common Liturgical Prayer, Common Life.*

*Fidelity to the Magisterium, Authenticity of the sisters, Radical Detachment, Carmelite spirituality (seeking union with God).*

*Gave me the freedom and resources to pursue a life of prayer, study, ministry with like-minded people.*

*Getting to know the other members through visits; chanting the divine office in choir; the chance for extended periods of personal prayer and meditation.*

*God's calling.*

*God's personal call to be His bride and discovering the particular chrism He made me for, which He revealed through my discernment of His will.*

*How every sister so deeply embodied the charism in the boundless charity, love, and joy they gave to everyone they met!*

*How human and real they seemed. I didn't know any sisters growing up in family and went to public school so my first impressions of sisters were from social media with images of more traditional sisters wearing habits and talking about Jesus is my husband imagery which is off putting to me. The Sisters of the Holy Cross weren't like that. Their vocation stories felt more like how I felt. Wanting to do good, to serve others, to help people. Mysteriously feeling called to something deeper.*

*I am attracted to this way of life because there is such freedom and joy in giving myself, first to God in prayer, and then, for the majority of the day, in a consoling ministry of presence to God's own who might otherwise not be loved. Often, I have such affection for these people (such as the children of the school I worked at) and my prayer is always for our Father to open my eyes even more to see and love these children as He sees and loves them. I do of course have some painful memories of doing ministry, when things didn't "go right"--even these are moments of growth and humility.*

*I attended a high school run by our sisters, and as their student, I was struck by their deep love for us and even greater love for God. It was delightful to be the recipient of their spiritual Motherhood, and their teaching, guidance, and example really formed me and my relationship with God. After thinking for a long time that I wanted to be like these women, I then realized that I wanted not only to be like them, but to be one of them.*

*I believe that the Jesuit charism of radical availability is the very gateway into ultimate freedom, a freedom that I had always searched out in the world but can be only found in union with Our Lord's Sacred Heart through the virtue of obedience.*

*I believe this is where the Lord is calling me. There are many things I find attractive about the community such as fidelity to the church, beautiful liturgy, fidelity to the ancient ways of monasticism, but I'm here because I believe God wants me here and that is what I find most attractive about this place.*

*I didn't think God wanted me on the path I was on so I asked Him to guide me and he led me to a religious institute.*

*I had a sister of Christian Charity at my high school, Allentown Central Catholic High School in Pennsylvania, who was incredibly involved on campus. One of my classmates (my class of 2025) joined the same order from my school. I felt a strong calling to the charism and the way these sisters lived. When I went on a "live-in" experience, that call was confirmed. As a result. I never visited another order besides mine in Mendham, NJ.*

*I love the balance of life presented by the Dominicans and also how each sister was wholly given over to Christ, in an authentic, simple, and integral way. Through the pillars of prayer, study, community, and the apostolate, the sisters have a deep inner joy and freedom because they seek and find Christ in everything.*

*I love their vision and goal of Christian unity for all of humanity.*

*I most wanted help to become a saint.*

*I want to be fully united to Christ in a way that would bear the greatest possible fruit. I know that healing and formation is a huge part of that, and from experience in the world and as a diocesan seminarian, I saw that this order was very healthy, and their aim was truly to help me discern the Will of God in my life and experience true healing and holiness regardless of where I whether I professed with them. I'm deeply attracted to their charisms, especially their teaching charism (I taught High School theology). I saw and still see in them a receptivity to the Holy Spirit, which allows me to entrust my vocation to them more deeply, and encourages me to be like them.*

*I wanted to dedicate my whole self to God.*

*I was drawn most to the ministry of preaching, the common life and the support it can provide, and the beauty of the choral Office in my institute.*

*I was educated by English Benedictines, and have been associated with the monastery there since I was very young—my father had tried his vocation there. The community where I am now*

*has the DNA, as it were, of the place I love, but none of the familial connections allowing me to be entirely me while retaining a connection to a way of life I grew up with and always admired.*

*I was hesitant to join the Lovers of the Holy Cross, because I originally had other communities in mind. It was in prayer that Jesus revealed to me that he wanted me to join this community, and I felt that Jesus Christ Crucified was calling me to follow him in this way.*

*I was most attracted by a life of contemplation and prayer, balanced with fraternity and ministry.*

*I was most attracted to the joy of my now sisters. It was clear to me that their joy resulted from their way of life and deep relationship with the Lord and showed me that the religious life is truly a deeply happy life.*

*I was most attracted to the Order's dedication to prayer, intimacy with and attentiveness to God, as well as the healthy and comfortable community life (i.e. good rapport and love shared between the brothers, which was easy to feel included in).*

*I was most attracted to the spirituality and the community life of my institute. In college, I was introduced to the spirituality of my institute. I deepened my relationship with God through reading members' spiritual texts, in conversations with members of the institute, and I saw an alignment with my views of the Church and the institute.*

*I was really attracted to the joy and liveliness in spirit. I also saw many young vocations around my age who all desired to follow Jesus more intimately.*

*I was very attracted by the holy history of the Order, its orthodoxy in matters of doctrine, reverence in the liturgy, commitment to common prayer and community life, opportunities for lay brothers, and focus on the contemplative life.*

*In my country, I met the sisters of the Cross, and when I arrived in the USA, I ran into the missionaries of the Holy Spirit who directly share the spirituality of the Cross. At first, I thought it was just chance, but I know that this is where I should be.*

*Initially, I saw a lot of young women I could relate to. The order was so vibrant and joyful and I could easily picture myself there. I was able to see a future for myself in the apostolate work and as a part of their community and prayer life.*

*Internationality and interculturality, missionary work especially serving the poor, a non-negligible number of members are Vietnamese, diversity in initial formation setting.*

*Its spirituality; diversity of apostolates; internationality; work with the marginalized, especially migrants; and its balance of prayer, intellectual life, sacramental/liturgical life, and apostolate.*

*Jesuit spirituality, the communal nature of the order, and the apostolic nature of the order.*

*Jesus asked me to join religious life, so I did.*

*Jesus had me feel His thirst for saving souls the most in my religious institute.*

*Joy - out of living faithful life of love for the Lord as His brides.*

*Life of devotion to the Lord and devoting oneself to the service and care of others.*

*Liturgical, communal prayer Many young vocations.*

*Mission and founder charism.*

*Monastic living, praying the Hours and the traditional habit. The community's main focus is monastic life but they do have an active mission as well. The ability to do both was appealing.*

*My belief that the Lord has plans for me here.*

*My community is very relational and international serving together as a family.*

*My institute's name which is Adorers of the Holy Cross and especially its meaning.*

*Our Lady of Mount Carmel.*

*Perpetual adoration it has aspects of both an active and contemplative institute.*

*Possibility for anything.*

*Priestly perfection through monastic observance.*

*Reading the works of St. Teresa of Avila, especially the Way of Perfection. My prayer was almost non-existent for a year and a half and when I began to research prayer, she helped me to realize the beauty and necessity of prayer and why mental prayer was so necessary for the spiritual life. Then the more I researched the Discalced Carmelites, the more and more drawn I was to them: their devotion to the Blessed Virgin, obedience to the Church, 2 hours of mental prayer throughout the day, an overall very balanced lifestyle that has its roots in scripture.*

*Sense of community. They encourage individual growth and expression. Ministry works for peace and justice. Plans for future of newer/younger members. They are a learning community and seek knowledge and input from various aspects of life, cultures, and society as well as from the academic and theological institutes.*

*Simplicity, joy, & love of the sisters 2. Mission to quench the thirst of Christ by serving Him in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor (apostolate).*

*Spirituality of Ignatius, Spiritual writings on healing, ministries of teaching.*

*Spirituality, prayer seemed to align.*

*Stability in prayer, the habit, complete devotion to ministry.*

*Su forma de vida (Their way of life).*

*That in all they do, the sisters are clearly Brides of Christ; and that joy that is brought forth from that identity.*

*That we live in a house that has a tabernacle in it attracted me most. But I also like the ordered day structure that is so balanced and summits in the liturgy and the great gift of community live and seeking truth through study.*

*The "door" to monastic life opened to me after a long period of discernment (sometimes painful!), including an experience of several years discerning with a very active contemplative community in the "heart of the world." I was attracted from the beginning by the invitation to learn to listen to the Voice of Love - in lectio Divina, in liturgy, in community relationships, in the*

*life of the Church and in my brothers and sisters around the world. In cloistered contemplative life I have discovered a new way to live in solidarity with all those who long (and those who don't even know they are longing) for the Lord's mercy. Most of all, I was attracted by the sense that this was the path of greatest love for me - the path to purity of heart - as well as the path of loving service to the Lord and his people.*

*The ancient tradition of the consecrated life. The solitude. The silence. The mysticism.*

*The apostolic life and the friars that lived it well, the fruit of their lives in abandonment to Christ.*

*The assurance of being able once again to give my life completely to God's service, to live the rule of the Order more perfectly, and not be alone in trying to do so.*

*The belief that this is where God is calling me to be. Plus, the spirituality, charism, focus on prayer, blend of active and contemplative life, orthodoxy, community life, and trajectory of the province.*

*The call of Jesus and the charism of life.*

*The call to serve people from the strength of my heart. To always be near Christ. To deepen in peace, hope, and love. To utilize all of my talents in all ways God sees fit.*

*The Charism.*

*The charism and apostolates (specifically, its spirituality, evangelization, the history of the institute, and its higher education apostolates).*

*The charism and spirituality of the founder, and the witness of members with whom I had become acquainted.*

*The charism and the different apostolates.*

*The charism and their deep prayer life. They share that we are first bride!*

*The charism and their joy.*

*The charism of having all vocations-lay, religious sisters, and priests and brothers, as well as the sense that they seem free to be themselves.*

*The charism of Life! The beauty + joy in the sisters lovingly laying down their lives so that others may live.*

*The charism of Mercy.*

*The Charism of the Congregation.*

*The charism of the order, it's saints and their writings, as well as its orthodoxy.*

*The charism since I was a teacher before entering.*

*The charism was a huge draw for me. I wouldn't have considered a cloistered order but the charism spoke to me so much I had to check it out and was then also attracted to their life of prayer and authentic search for God and their striving for holiness.*

*The charism.*

*The charisms of the Society of Jesus and Ignatian Spirituality aligning most closely with my own spirituality and way of life.*

*The communal life of prayer + work.*

*The community and life of common prayer. The commitment to preaching the truths of the Catholic faith with nuance and clarity.*

*The community life and charisms of the Franciscans.*

*The community life.*

*The contemplative life.*

*The contemplative life and spirituality, the Marian character, the tradition of saints in the order, the history of the order, practice of poverty, and obedience to the Pope and Magisterium.*

*The contemplative life. St. Benedict.*

*The Eucharistic prayer life and service to the poor. The sisters' joy!*

*The founders and the example of the members.*

*The fraternal dimension of the order, as well as the witness of friars to their charism and way of life.*

*The friars.*

*The habit. The living of the Gospel radically and the fraternal life.*

*The history of the order and the sense of brotherhood and genuine friendship I felt when I visited the friars.*

*The history of the Society of Jesus, the founder's history, the charisms, the outreach, the education.*

*The horarium was how the Lord drew me. Also, I had an extraordinary sense of joy when surrounded by the sisters.*

*The joy and the prayer life. Community life & fidelity to the teachings of the Church.*

*The joy of the community, our mission, our family spirit and contact with family, our charism, the Founder's lives.*

*The joy of the sisters and the apostolate of teaching and their focus on the Eucharist and the Blessed Mother.*

*The joy of the sisters and the solid, balanced life. I trusted the community to form me, because of their witness as very normal well-rounded spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically mature women who love the Lord with their whole lives.*

*The joy of the sisters in the community and their passion for Christ and sharing Him with the young.*

*The joy that is in their faces for the service of others.*

*The life & the Spirituality the joy & realness of the sisters.*

*The life of prayer that they lived.*

*The life of prayer, work, and living in community. My Monastery is near the ocean. The silence in the Monastery. Adoration on Tuesdays and Fridays and saying the Angelus after Lauds, before lunch and dinner. My Monastery is pretty devoted to the Blessed Mother.*

*The life of the founder, the habit, community life.*

*The mission and spiritually.*

*The Missionaries of Charity mission of serving the poorest of the poor. Being a bride of Jesus Christ.*

*The obvious joy of the life and the peace and joy of every religious I know.*

*The opportunity for a shared life.*

*The opportunity to live a communal life of faith, service, and justice. Even though my life before entering was beautiful and healthy, I felt a deeper calling than what my lay life was giving me. I wanted to be more connected to Jesus and the Gospels.*

*The prayer life and community life.*

*The Saints and history and the mission.*

*The Salesian charism, especially the family aspect.*

*The Sisters and their commitment to service and the joy they brought to their relationships to one another and those they serve.*

*The sisters joy, average age, prayer life, and the habit.*

*The sisters living first and foremost as Brides of Christ as well as the Missionary Zeal of the Dominican order; To preach and teach and win souls for Christ.*

*The sisters' joy and love for the Lord! Also, the way they live out their total self-gift—their love for Christ is so real and it made me want to love the Lord like that!*

*The spirit and deep sense of my community, the visible expression of the charism in every moment of life, the great joy and love of each sister all attracted me to my religious institute. I should note, however, that because I felt called to religious life at such a young age, there is the added component of an enduring sense of God's call to my religious institute that played a major role.*

*The spirituality and missions of the Jesuits is what attracted me the most.*

*The strong conviction I had that God was calling me the Benedictine life.*

*The strong sense I could find union with Our Lord living the life and in community.*

*The thing that attracted me the most to my religious institute is the team. Having sisters, priests, brothers, and laity all working together to bring Christ to all. Having the sisters be down to earth and real, and having such a wide variety of personality in the institute. The sisters putting prayer above all, and being very reverent in all things that has to do with God. So much attracts me to my religious institute, but the biggest part is Jesus being the center of it all.*

*The variety of apostolates and the Franciscan spirituality.*

*The versatility of the apostolate; follows magisterial teachings.*

*The Vietnamese culture and community life.*

*The vocation in education.*

*The work that Jesuits do, it's where I think Jesus would be laboring if He was here today.*

*Their approach and dedication to contemplative prayer.*

*Their beauty, orthodoxy, liturgy, and community members.*

*Their charism and how they bear witness to it through everything they do.*

*Their charism of contemplative and active lifestyle.*

*Their charism of reconciliation and renewal, communal bond of members and their temperament, and their presence in Ohio not too far from where my family lives.*

*Their charism, Apostolate, members of the community that I met during visits, and their overall joy.*

*Their Charism. The way they are involved in different ministries especially in education, health and social development.*

*Their commitment to the Traditional Form of the Liturgy.*

*Their dedication to following the will of God.*

*Their fidelity to the teachings of the Church.*

*Their joy, fidelity to the church, and their zeal.*

*Their joy, love for the Eucharist, and the way they pray.*

*Their long history of being faithful to the Church and their charism through many trials.*

*Their love for God, each other, and ministry their joy, love, attractive holiness.*

*Their prayer life, their habit, their family feel, an attraction to their apostolate.*

*Their range of ministries and flexibility/creativity.*

*Their witness, joy, and freedom. The habit, the horarium (all the times for prayer). Living with our Eucharistic Lord.*

*Their zeal for Souls, commitment to prayer and the sacraments, fidelity to and love of the Church and her teachings, the fact that that this community is clearly flourishing, the traditional Dominican habit, the teaching apostolate, and the joy and holiness of the sisters.*

*They are monks.*

*They live everything I lived in my past.*

*They're so free and full of life.*

*To be a brother to all and to be a OFM cap.*

*What attracted me the most to my religious institute was the radical living out of the vow of Holy Poverty.*

*What attracts me most to my religious institute is the deep sense of community and shared mission. I am inspired by the way my sisters live the Gospel through simple acts of love, service, and unity. Every day, I see how we support one another in prayer and in our ministries, and that spirit of sisterhood gives me great joy and strength.*

*What most attracted me to my religious institute was the charism and spirituality of continual prayer for the salvation of all souls and especially for priests. I felt, and feel, called to offer myself to God with my religious institute as a sacrifice of constant prayer so that all may be saved.*

*What most attracted me to my religious institute was the sense of being a part of a family from the very beginning. As well of the closeness I felt to God by being in our convent.*

*What most attracted me to the Capuchin Franciscans was their emphasis on the contemplative life, and how this was integrated with active ministry that involved helping the poor and the marginalized.*

*What most attracted me to the Society of the Divine Word is its missionary and international character.*

*When I came for the first time, I received that experience as God's response to my openness, at long last, to be His bride, and in particular, a Carmelite. What attracted me most, then, to this religious institute, is that He was calling me here, to this particular place.*

*While this may seem odd, I really wasn't generally attracted to the Benedictines at all. Though I believe the Lord willed me to go, and as a result I obeyed, and have seen some merit to my time in the monastery, I cannot genuinely say I was attracted to the OSB's at all.*

## **Q118. What do you find most challenging about religious life?**

Presented here are the responses of the new entrants, lightly edited for punctuation.

*A generational divide in perspectives concerning recent/current developments in the Church.*

*A lack of clarity in the communication from superiors about expectations.*

*Able to live the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience.*

*Accepting how some of my brothers are, especially the ones that don't care about me. Growing in humility which will take time to grow in and overcoming certain temptations.*

*Adapting to a lifestyle that is very different to mine before entering.*

*Adjusting to different personalities.*

*Age differences.*

*Age gaps and the sometimes-hostile dynamics between religious orders and dioceses (especially when the religious orders are exclusively lay brothers).*

*Answering questions. Manual labor.*

*At the moment I find difficult to be separated so far from my family in Germany and especially from my little brother. But still, I feel very much in the right place here and am happy. (With so limited communication opportunity).*

*Balancing the active ministry with creating time for contemplative prayer.*

*Because I am still in the beginning stages of my religious life, I've found it challenging to unlearn various habits and ways of thinking I developed in the world. What a worthy challenge though!*

*Being away from family.*

*Being away from family and country of origin.*

*Being away from family and the inability to engage in some of the pastimes I once enjoyed.*

*Being evaluated/ 'scrutinized' in formation process.*

*Being in less contact with my family, being far from home.*

*Being open to change.*

*Being part of a whole.*

*Being separated from a life partner (former girlfriend) of 21 years.*

*Being very far away from where I grew up & where my family lives.*

*Can be very busy at times. Maybe trying to train us now to fill a gap in the priest shortage. However, ministry burnout is a real reality to be aware of.*

*Community.*

*Community ~ specific members. Community is both the greatest blessing + biggest cross.*

*Community life.*

*Community life.*

*Community life.*

*Community life.*

*Community life.*

*Community life.*

*Community life.*

*Community life.*

*Community life.*

*Community life and interactions with members; becoming acquainted with all of the customs and culture of the house.*

*Community life and internal struggles.*

*Community life is a crucible of love, and it takes the gifts of persevering humility and courage to allow the Holy Spirit to open me up to the hard work of transformation! But I believe the struggle is worth it and full of hope. The witness of the Lord's joy in the lives of my community members, especially the "beautiful elders," gives me courage.*

*Community life is a huge blessing, and it can also be difficult. You get to know many people on a level that you might otherwise only experience with a spouse or a family member. You see people's faults, and that usually brings your own faults into high relief, and you can't distract yourself as easily from them as you could in the workaday world.*

*Community life is the most challenging aspect of my journey. Living with three other postulants, including myself as the fourth, has its ups and downs. Our personalities sometimes clash, but we all share a common goal: to focus on Jesus Christ. It's similar to living with siblings — we love each other, but we may not always agree on everything. While it can be challenging, it's also a gift. I'm grateful for the love and support of my fellow postulants. I joined as group of two (me and another girl from my school) and we are also joined by two second-year postulants above us who will be novices in August 2026, if God wills...*

*Community life, especially living with guys that are trying to adjust to religious life but are struggling to be a life-giving member.*

*Community life, mostly with the other Postulants. Learning to live with completely other personalities, with young people raised entirely different from you, is a massive challenge but simultaneously an enormous blessing.*

*Community life, time management and priorities.*

*Community life. Restrictions of obedience.*

*Community, though it is also a major blessing.*

*Community.*

*Considering the opportunities, I may be giving up by taking vows.*

*Cooking for 8+ people.*

*Currently my biggest challenge is separation from my family, whom I am very close to.*

*Currently, the most difficult part is keeping up physically to the daily schedule—persevering through tiredness.*

*Dealing with a mentally ill sister Boredom Age gap, lack of other younger sisters or postulants. I'm the only one and it can be lonely.*

*Dichotomy between my life's purpose & purpose of the world (both exist & are good, both different).*

*Discerning God's Will versus my will + feelings.*

*Distance from family and friends.*

*Diversity of membership could be more; however, they are aware of this disparity and encourage study and discussion with members/persons of diverse cultural backgrounds.*

*Dying to oneself.*

*Ecclesial and political viewpoints, often from generational differences.*

*Erm, having only been here two months, that seems rather a premature question; i.e., I don't know yet.*

*Everything about religious life has been a blessing so far. The most challenging component is the reality that there are only 24 hours in a day, and due to my university studies, I am still trying to figure out how best to organize my time so that I can pray, complete my work, participate in community life, all while taking care of myself.*

*Facing and deconstructing all the defenses and material attachments I have created over a lifetime living and working in the 'outside' world. I wish to give myself entirely to Christ, to fall into his loving care, but the wounds from my previous life run deep, and learning to trust in Jesus's healing power through the Rule and obedience to my superiors, many of whom are younger than me, is made more complicated by my worldly experiences and coping mechanisms which, while perhaps suitable for that former environment, are seemingly incompatible with this way of life.*

*Facing my own shortcomings and weaknesses.*

*Facing my own woundedness in living in community.*

*Fewer interactions with others/harder to get to know people.*

*Fraternal life, to speak in public.*

*Giving up easy access to family + friends as well as Conforming my will at all times to God's will, even if I know and believe that He will fully take care of me no matter what.*

*Growing in Prayer/holiness Sometimes feel isolating from my family and friends.*

*Habitual /custom way of living that make my body part sick.*

*Having a very rigid schedule with very few days off.*

*Having limited communication with my family.*

*Having to follow rules is difficult for me, but I want to do it out of love.*

*Homesickness and culture differences.*

*Humility and not being in a role of authority anymore.*

*I am Asian and I live with mostly Western minded people. I often find bridging the gap between the different ways of thoughts to be more of a burden on me than others.*

*I am most challenged by the vow of celibacy as well as questions around whether I should have entered religious life after having more 'world experience'. It can be challenging when my expectations regarding community life are not being met. I sometimes feel embarrassed when I consider the negative perception of my institute by people within the Church.*

*I am what is most challenging about religious life. I can pray, 'not my will, but yours be done' one minute and as soon as I'm given an opportunity to have not my will be done, it grates against me.*

*I can get caught up in what I think authority figures/decision makers think of me. My fears of authority can be genuinely frightening and can lead to catastrophizing scenarios. I think that in one of these, I caused a sexual scandal after being dismissed from my institute, and in another, I ended up deeply hurt and homeless.*

*I find living in community with others to be the most challenging aspect of religious life thus far.*

*I find that community life is the most challenging but also the most rewarding. It's hard when there are tensions, differences in thinking, personality, temperaments, etc. that make it hard to have unity. But, if worked through together with willingness and openness of heart, unity is greater solidified and authentic.*

*I find the interior life difficult because sometimes I doubt if I am praying correctly. I can also have tendencies toward jealousy and sometimes I can notice it when community members are speaking about their spiritual experiences.*

*I find the relative separation from family and friends back home, as well as the lack of control over my schedule to be the most challenging aspects thus far.*

*I find the separation from family and friends challenging, but not insurmountable.*

*I think for me the biggest challenge about religious life is the giving up of marriage and having your own family and not being around your current family and friends.*

*I think the thing that is most challenging about religious life is not unique to it. It is the daily journey to be more properly mortified.*

*I would say that sometimes celibacy is daunting.*

*I would say the business of apostolic work. It is always in constantly moving but it's okay. This would be a physical tiredness.*

*I've only been in for a short while, but it is difficult being challenged to grow past the normal coping mechanisms and sore spots that we develop as we become adults. It's a lot of growth pains learning to deal with disagreement, correction, and stepping on each other's toes. I find it very hard, but I know it's good work that's being done.*

*Ideological differences as a point of tension.*

*In the particular environment I was in, solitude was likely the most difficult feature of the contemplative vocation in its austerity. This, because I am more relationally composed than this monastery embraced. I suppose if I were in a more charismatic/itinerant vocation, the difficulty would be to oppose sloth and commit to daily prayer and the rigor of a religious vocation.*

*Ironing, cooking, sewing, learning piano, guitar, organ. Getting permission to fast. Getting all done homework on time. Getting permission to exercise after sitting for most of the day. How to manage time when everything takes longer when you need more than 30 minutes to do something. Communicating needs. Communicating with people who need you, but you have limited phone time to meet their needs after a serious situation with their family.*

*It has been most challenging to leave behind my network of support—my family and my close friends from college. It is especially difficult because building a new network is different in the convent because there is so much silence, you can't make closer friends to the exclusion of others, you can't choose your companions, and you are learning to love all through Christ.*

*It's been challenging for me spending as much time I've spent in leisure time with the community.*

*Juggling multiple responsibilities and shifting out of my previous mode of thinking as an engineer and educator.*

*La comunidad (The community).*

*Lack of vocations.*

*Lack of tradition, the laxity of members, lack of communal encouragement to more prayer/penance/works of mercy.*

*Learning a completely new way of life which is so different from my life before.*

*Learning a new way of life.*

*Learning to accept my own imperfections, understanding that I will not be perfect but I am here to love and be loved, and that God will provide me with all that I need beyond that.*

*Learning what friendship looks like in the convent, and learning the way of life and not being afraid of "doing the wrong thing" / "messing up".*

*Leaving behind my parents and seeing that it is hard for them and how much they miss me.*

*Leaving everything behind, including leaving my family, especially my mom, because we are always together and never separate.*

*Less independence on areas of my personal life (e.g., adjusting my fitness and dietary habits), and being around more older people than those my age.*

*Letting go.*

*Life in close community with a wide range of people.*

*Limited communication with family.*

*Living in a large community with people of diverse personalities.*

*Living with different personalities that you do not get to choose.*

*Loving and praying for my brother when I am annoyed with him. Persevering in prayer when I am in darkness, doubts, and desolation. Being on time to everything. Remaining recollected. Being humble.*

*Loving brothers who have very different personalities and interests than me.*

*Mainly, letting go of my own will.*

*Many sacrifices. 2. community life.*

*Me. The life-long struggle of learning to live with me, my personal weaknesses, faults, imperfections, challenges, etc.*

*Ministry. I have never taught young students nor preached to homeless people before. It is still something I'm getting used to.*

*Most challenging is the embrace of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.*

*Needing to ask permission to do things I could do freely before I entered.*

*No longer answering just to myself, but to formators and superiors.*

*Obedience.*

*Obedience / less independence compared to my life before.*

*Obedience is a struggle. I was always moving every 2-3 years as a kid so stability has been and will be challenging as well. It has all been very fruitful.*

*Overcoming my own Weaknesses, faults, and sins.*

*Peoples' differing temperaments and the struggles of working with or being around people you don't like in community. The cut off from family and friends with limited contact with them. Struggling with past life and wounds interfering with community or religious life.*

*Practicing obedience when my superiors seem illogical.*

*Probably being away from my family.*

*Probably physical exhaustion.*

*Questions and doubts if this vocation will truly satisfy me, learning to live in community, facing my own weakness and area in need of growth.*

*Religious Life is very counter cultural. I was worried about what my friends and family would think when I told them this is what I wanted to dedicate my life to. I find it challenging to talk about my vocation with general people because it's so uncommon.*

*Religious life, and in particular, cloistered, contemplative life, puts one face-to-face with all one's imperfections, and brings to light all the areas not yet fully surrendered to God; and sets before us the daily task of fidelity to the Rule in union with Christ as the means of surmounting these difficulties, that we might see God "face to face". This is extremely challenging.*

*Response of family and distance from them.*

*Right now, the most challenging part of religious life is the detachment from truly good and beautiful relationships I've had in the world and transitioning into a community with all new people and new kinds of relationships.*

*Right now, the most challenging aspect of religious life is obedience. Learning when I have to ask for permission to do something and having my will conform to the superiors.*

*Separation and limits on communication with friends and family.*

*Separation from family. The transition from living in the world. For example: Not being able to make my own decisions, obedience in small things or having to ask permission for things that would seem trivial in the world, etc.*

*Separation from family and friends.*

*Separation from friends. All other sacrifices and challenges are as nothing to that. Trusting that friendships here will grow over time. Trying to live up to my ideal of what a religious is (aka my fallen-ness). Not knowing if this is what God wants for me.*

*Shared finances, less autonomy, the idea/reality of being away from family and friends and not integrated into their daily lives.*

*So far, I have found having to learn an entirely new pattern of life and breaking old, bad habits the most challenging.*

*So far, surrendering control of my daily schedule.*

*Sometimes being away from family or having very limited contact with them. At times community life with very different personalities and the need for greater charity in those interactions. Lastly, on occasion the pressure to perform well in class or studies.*

*Sometimes common recreation.*

*Strict budgets through poverty and long-term obedience.*

*Taking up my cross daily.*

*Temptation that comes from the life that I lived before I had my "reversion" to the faith.*

*The actual corrupted state of the Church as an institution. The political ideology as a for of frenetic social activism. The hypocrisy and bad example of the religious members. The constant pressure of being evaluated, judged, and "molded" by resentful and bitter elders.*

*The beautiful, life-giving, painful, piercing offering of my will.*

*The biggest challenge is myself. God supplies every necessary grace; I just need to learn to say yes!*

*The challenge is living community life with honesty and patience. Community brings together different personalities, cultures, and ways of seeing the world.*

*The community life.*

*The constant and daily death to self is the most challenging but SO beautiful! All for Jesus!*

*The constant apostolic work.*

*The differences in community, and also the internal and emotional work that needs to be done as a part of formation.*

*The distance it can create between me and my family at times.*

*The growing integration of attentiveness to God's will + needs of others + my desires and rejecting secular gospels I have taken on from the world as I grow in this.*

*The most challenging part about religious life is having to face everything in myself that I naturally want to avoid or run away from, and learning how flawed I am. However, once I face those parts in myself, I find healing and greater peace, and so even the most challenging times are very fruitful later on.*

*The most challenging part has been the distance from family and friends, and the fear of losing those relationships as time goes on.*

*The most challenging part of religious life for me is learning to surrender my own will and live in true obedience and trust. It is not always easy to let go of personal preferences or to accept differences within community life. However, through prayer and reflection, I am gradually learning that these moments of difficulty are also moments of grace that help me grow in humility and love.*

*The most challenging part of religious life is being obedient. Hopefully through the practice of discerning I will become more attentive when it comes to listening to God's voice and doing His will through the orders from the superior.*

*The purification and integration of my desires for marriage, children, and spousal intimacy. Learning to live in the sacrifice of that ache and not deny it or distract myself from it, but really offer it to the Lord.*

*The renunciation of Marriage.*

*The sacrifice it entails. Most particularly, giving up the gift of marriage.*

*The sacrifices (distance from family, surrendering the thought of being married and having children one day), learning to live with community members who you may struggle to agree with about small topics, being directed/corrected and asking for permission about things that you used to do on your own as an adult (obedience).*

*The schedule, to have to ask permission, to study.*

*The separation from family and the world. It was harder to adjust.*

*The separation/detachment from family and friends.*

*The sometimes-intense pace of life during transitions and prioritizing self-care during free time amongst busy schedule to prevent burn out.*

*The structure of the schedule.*

*The uncertainty and lack of control; compared to living as a single person beforehand.*

*This early on, community. Living with guys who are not emotionally mature generally, and seem to have poor coping skills when it comes to handling conflict specifically, has been a real bummer.*

*Thus far, the most challenging thing is coming to terms with my own weaknesses and imperfections, sometimes becoming discouraged in it. (But my HOPE is in Jesus and His grace!).*

*To conclusively make decisions that suit all without having some feeling left out, pinched... in other words to satisfy everyone on matters decisions.*

*To make others, especially those who are not Catholics understand the call to religious life. Especially dedicating on self to a life of poverty and celibacy.*

*To study / to take so many classes.*

*Unity in diversity.*

*Visiting days when other sisters have family here but I do not have visitors as it is too far for my family to travel.*

*Waiting to enter the next stage in formation.*

*Waking up at 5AM.*

*Way more structure than I'm used to.*

*What I find most challenging about religious life are the mental hurdles. Constantly having to face my weaknesses and dealing with strong emotions.*

*What I find most challenging about religious life is all that I am called to give up. As I am part of a cloistered community, I am called to give up the kind of contact and amount of time with my family that I had before entering, and right now this is the hardest aspect.*

*What I find most challenging is detachment from the world, entering into prayer and the healing Jesus wants to bring me, calling family less.*

*What I have found to be the most challenging part about religious life has been to work on myself interiorly. Whether it is by working on my behavior, time-management, or other aspects.*

*What is most challenging to me is being very attracted to the life of the Order on paper and in our Constitutions, but often perceiving a laxity in those around me, especially regarding prayer and poverty.*

*When found out the members and especially abbess of my religious institute act and practice completely different or opposite from the charism, mission, and spirituality of the institute even as a regular Christian. Feel like being cheated.*