

Trends in Faith-Based Service Report

Catholic Volunteer Network



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Table of Contents

- I. Introduction**
- II. Who is Catholic Volunteer Network?**
 - a) Composition of membership
 - i) Program's religious affiliation
 - ii) Offices by region
 - iii) Domestic vs. International
 - iv) Length of Service
 - a) Domestic
 - b) International
 - v) Size of Member Programs
- III. How are volunteers serving?**
 - a) Numbers of volunteers
 - b) Comparing number of volunteers with member programs
- IV. Who are the volunteers?**
 - a) Type of service
 - b) Demographics
 - i) Age
 - ii) Gender
 - iii) Sexual identity
 - iv) Race/Ethnicity
 - v) Religious affiliation
 - vi) Disability
 - vii) Education level
- V. What is the impact of service?**
 - a) Volunteer motivations
 - b) Impacts of Service
 - c) Recommending service
 - d) Post service plans
 - i) Areas of work and study
- VI. What are the trends in volunteer recruitment?**
 - a) How did volunteers learn about service?
 - b) Resources utilized
 - c) Top schools for recruitment
 - d) Application goals
- VII. Conclusion**



I. Introduction

Each year, typically between the months of January – March, Catholic Volunteer Network (CVN) invites its member programs to renew membership and complete the Annual Member Survey. In addition to sharing feedback regarding member benefits, resources, and service we ask that programs report on the number of volunteers serving in their programs during the given service year. In the following Trends in Faith-Based Service Report you will see data analyzed from three different service years (2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020).

In addition to the Membership Survey, CVN runs our Annual Volunteer Survey between the months of May – August, when many volunteer programs complete their service year. We invite member programs to share the survey with their volunteers, who had completed their service in that respective service year. CVN also shares the survey through our volunteer listservs, which volunteers can sign up for on our website. Collectively, 776 total volunteers participated in the Annual Volunteer Survey over these three years (2018-2020), representing nearly 80 member programs. Some of the following data presents an analysis of highlights and trends from volunteer perspectives over the course of these three years. We hope to gather full participation from member programs for even more accurate and relevant data in the future.

We at Catholic Volunteer Network highly value both our Annual Member Survey and Volunteer Survey. The data collected is used to study trends in faith-based service and strengthens our cause when representing our member programs at conferences and events. We reference the statistics when being interviewed for national publications and media opportunities, or when we are applying for grant funding for projects that would benefit our membership. Each program can help ensure that our data correctly reflects the state of faith-based service by providing complete and accurate data wherever possible.

II. Who is Catholic Volunteer Network?

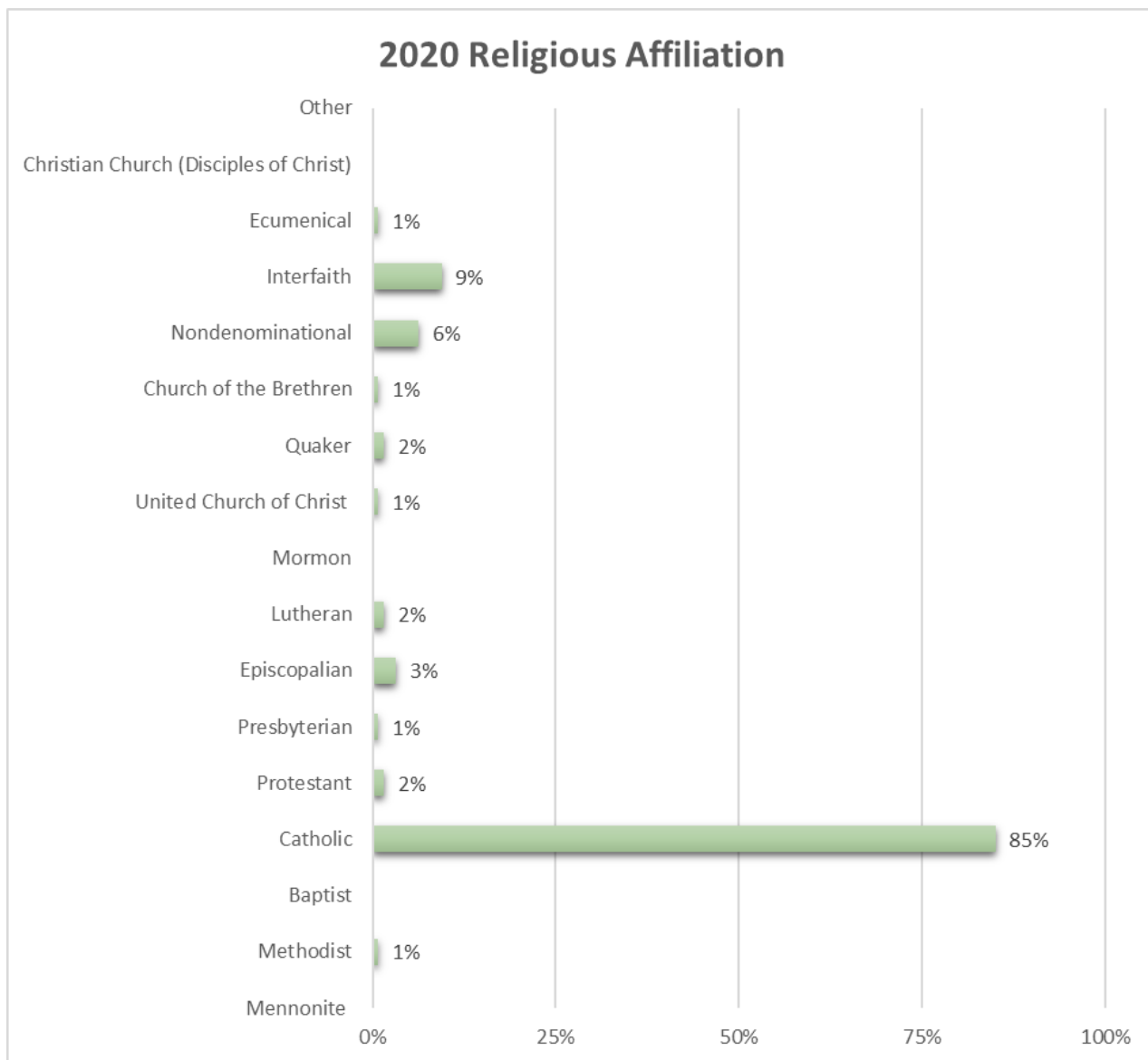
a) Composition of Membership

Catholic Volunteer Network (CVN) is a national membership organization of Christian volunteer and mission programs. Over the past three years CVN has grown in diversity in membership while at the same time shrinking in actual members. During the membership year 2018 CVN had 185 member programs, then in 2019 it was 154, and in 2020 there were just 135. This decrease in membership is tied to many factors, but here are a few examples: volunteer programs choose not to renew membership because of budget constraints; volunteer programs close their doors due to difficulty recruiting volunteers; volunteer programs have staff turn over which leads to them missing the membership renewal and/or not understanding the value of CVN membership.



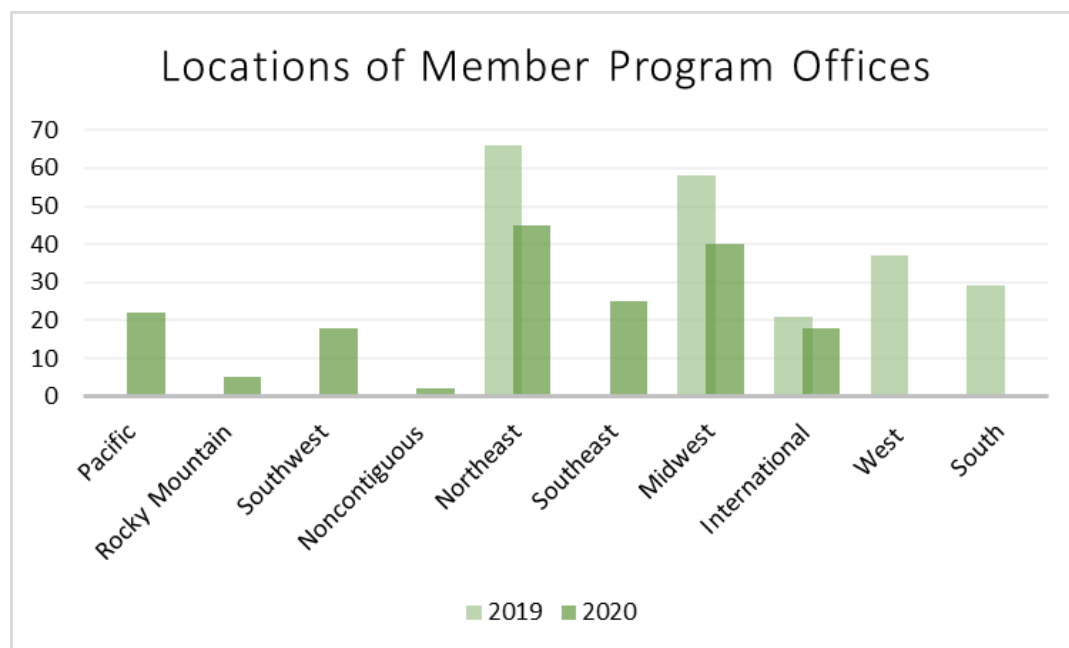
i) Program's Religious Affiliation

The past three years CVN has asked member programs to tell us their program's religious/denominational affiliation and check all that apply. Consistently "Catholic" is the largest reported (80.67% in 2018, 89.19% in 2019, and 85% in 2020). Each year we have expanded our options for this question with 14-religious denominations and "Other" listed as options in 2020 compared to the 9-religious denominations and "Other" in 2018.



ii) Offices by region

In 2019 we started asking the question, “Please select which U.S. region/s your program’s office is located in. Check all that apply.” Over the past two years, most programs have consistently been headquartered in the Northeast and Midwest (over half). Some programs selected multiple regions since there are programs with more than one office of operation.



iii) Domestic vs. International

When looking at the data from the past three years the following has remained true, the majority of CVN member programs have domestic service opportunities (68% in 2018, 63% in 2019, and 65% in 2020).

	2020	2019	2018
Domestic	65%	63%	68%
International	9%	12%	15.3%
Both	17%	13.5%	10.6%
None	9%	11.3%	6%

From 2018 to 2019 the percentage of programs reporting “None” (no volunteers) doubled from 6% to 12% but then it dropped back down in 2020 to just 9%. Know that the 12% does not mean they did not offer domestic or international service or both but that they just did not have volunteers serve in their program.



iv) **Length of Service**a) **Domestic**

	2020	2019	2018
Short-Term	15%	15%	17%
Long-Term	64%	70%	60%
Both	21%	15%	23%

Of those domestic volunteer programs most have long-term placements while a few programs offer short-term. Comparing all three years it is interesting to see the percentages change when it comes to programs having both short and long-term volunteer opportunities during the same program year.

b) **International**

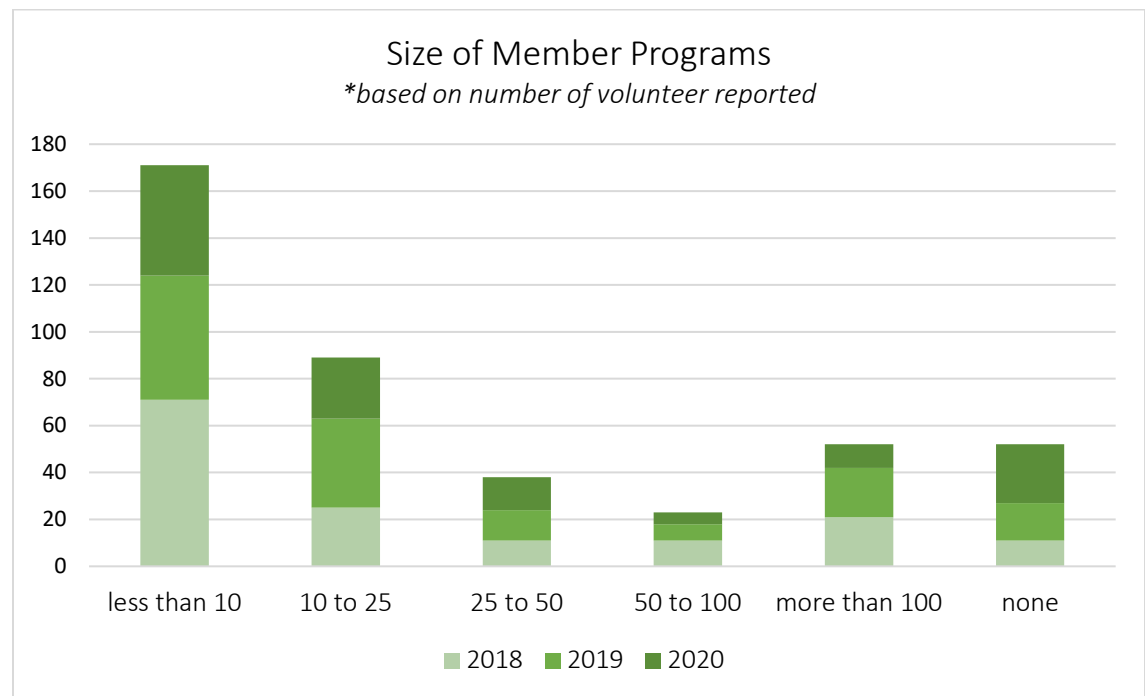
	2020	2019	2018
Short-Term	21%	18%	18%
Long-Term	52%	55%	42%
Both	7%	26%	39%

In 2020 there was an increase (3%) in short-term international while the other areas decreased, most notable being 'Both' dropping 19% from 26% in 2019 to just 7% in 2020. Why the shift? Is it related to program capacity to have both short and long-term volunteer opportunities running during the program year or is it just shift in volunteer demographics?

c) **Size of Member Programs**

Over the years the majority (over half) of CVN member programs have consistently had less than 25 volunteers (64% in 2018, 61% in 2019, and 57% in 2020). The second largest group (less than one fifth) of member programs, over the past three years, have had more than 100 volunteers.





III. How are volunteers serving?

a) Numbers of volunteers

As per usual the largest number of volunteers that impact our total numbers are domestic short term 0-3 weeks/alt breaks. The grand total number of volunteers has declined over the past three years, but this is consistent with the decrease in member programs reporting and being part of Catholic Volunteer Network. The connection between the two is detailed in Section III part b. of this report.

The large decrease from 23,136 in 2018 to 3,137 in 2019 was because one program in 2018 reported over 16,000 0-3 weeks/alt break volunteers. This program has not renewed membership therefore they no longer contribute to the data reported here.

Length of Service	2018		2019		2020	
	Domestic	International	Domestic	International	Domestic	International
0-3 Weeks/ Alternative Break	23,136	1,118	3,137	2,081	2,778	386
1-3 Months	658	957	260	83	185	75
4-8 Months	116	31	43	29	81	36
9-12 Months	1,853	127	1879	116	1,298	61
13-24 Months	59	119	611	71	817	103



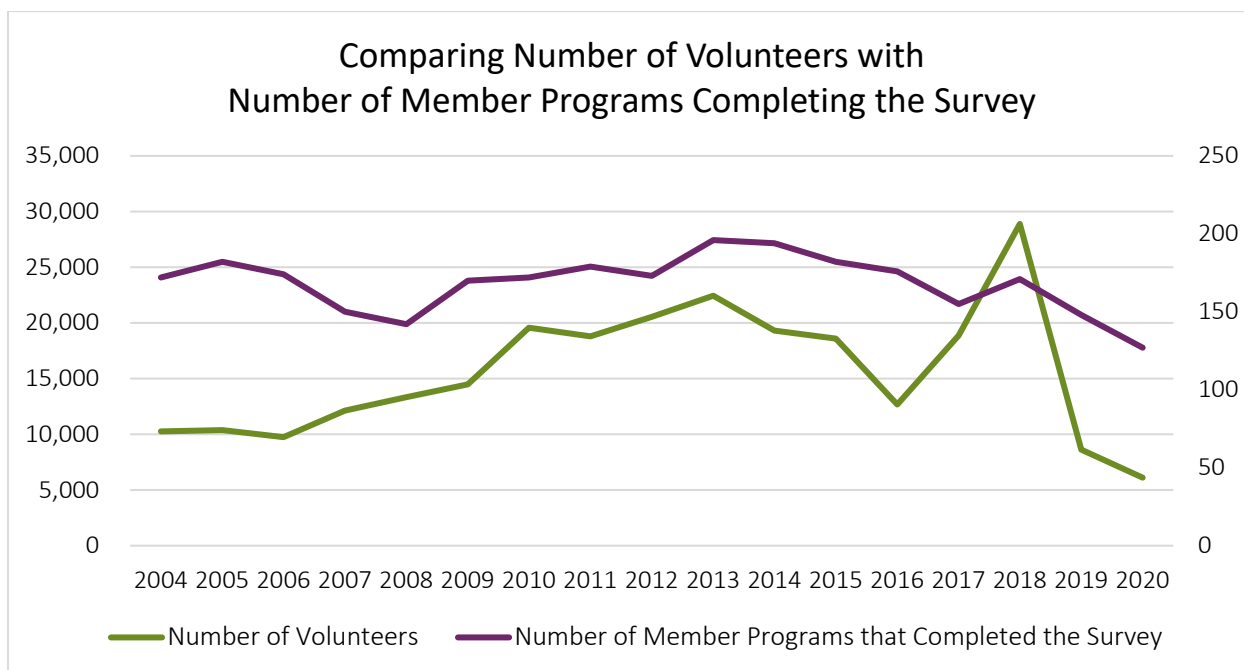
24+ Months	615	102	195	122	203	86
TOTAL:	26,437	2,454	6,125	2,502	5,362	747

b) Comparing number of volunteers with member programs

Here is another way to look at the data. This shows the history of CVN membership participating in the survey correlated with number of volunteers reported.

Over the past 15 years the number of member programs participating in this data has averaged around 171. The past five years we have noticed a decline in programs renewing but not engagement/participation with the data. One program can really impact the data as illustrated by the sharp decline of the green line in the chart.

Some programs have closed while others opt to try new strategies eliminating the need for CVN membership. Some chose to just miss the renewal due to staff turnover and then later opt back in.



IV. Who are the Volunteers?

a) Type of Service

In each Annual Volunteer Survey from 2018 to 2020, we ask volunteers to categorize the type of service they are engaged with: "Which category best describes the type of service you were involved in?" Each year, Social Services, Health Care, and Education are consistently the top three service categories, selected most by volunteer respondents. In 2020, 34% of volunteers



identified their service as Education, 25% of volunteers identified their service as Social Services, and 13% identified their service as Healthcare/Medicine. Though only a subset of volunteers complete the Annual Volunteer Survey each year, the responses to this question does appear to accurately reflect our membership's service offerings.

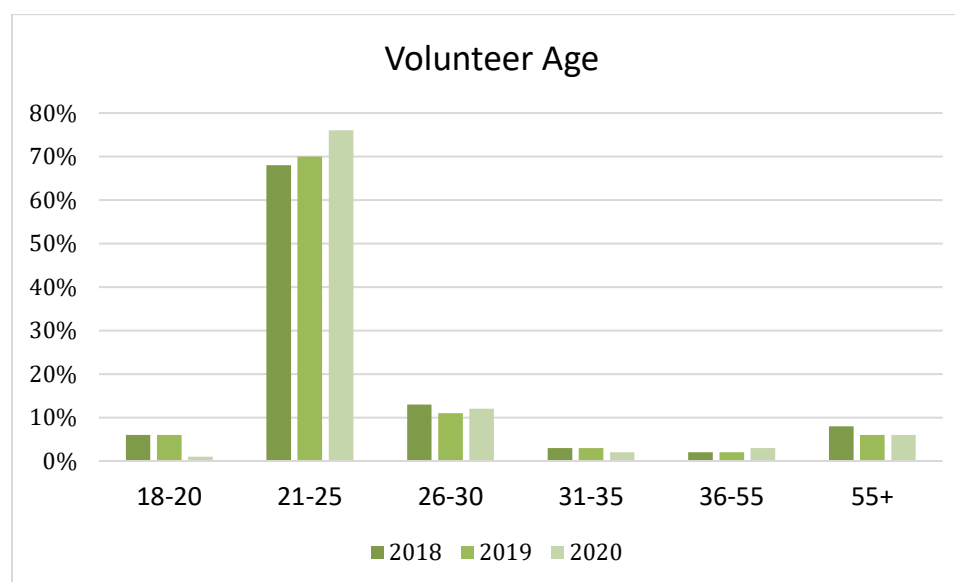
b) Demographics

Over the past three years, CVN's Demographics section has evolved with an intention of being more inclusive of the various identities which volunteers hold. Question and responses have been updated thanks to recommendations from former volunteers, member program staff, our RJD Committee, as well as industry trends. At the beginning of the Demographic Section, we included the following explanation for the rationale behind these questions along with a reminder that all survey responses were optional and anonymous:

Catholic Volunteer Network invites you to respond to the following Demographic questions. Your responses will help us understand the identities of current/former volunteers and help inform our efforts to foster diversity and champion racial justice in the field of faith-based service. (Read our Commitment to Diversity and Racial Justice in full on CVN's website).

Your responses to these questions, as with all responses to this survey, are anonymous. We will never share your personal information or individual responses. You also have the option not to respond to any of the following questions by selecting, "Prefer not to answer".

i) Age

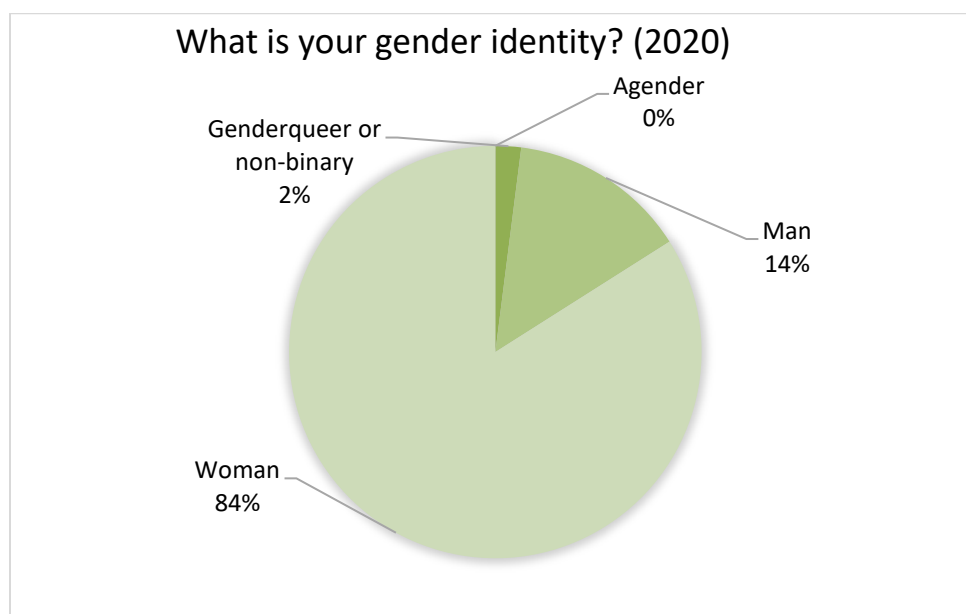


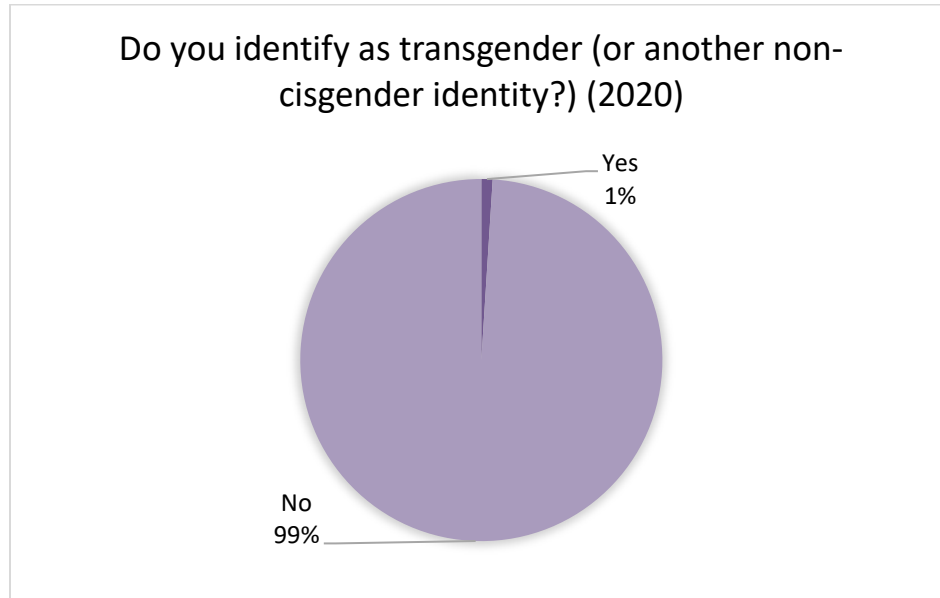
ii) Gender



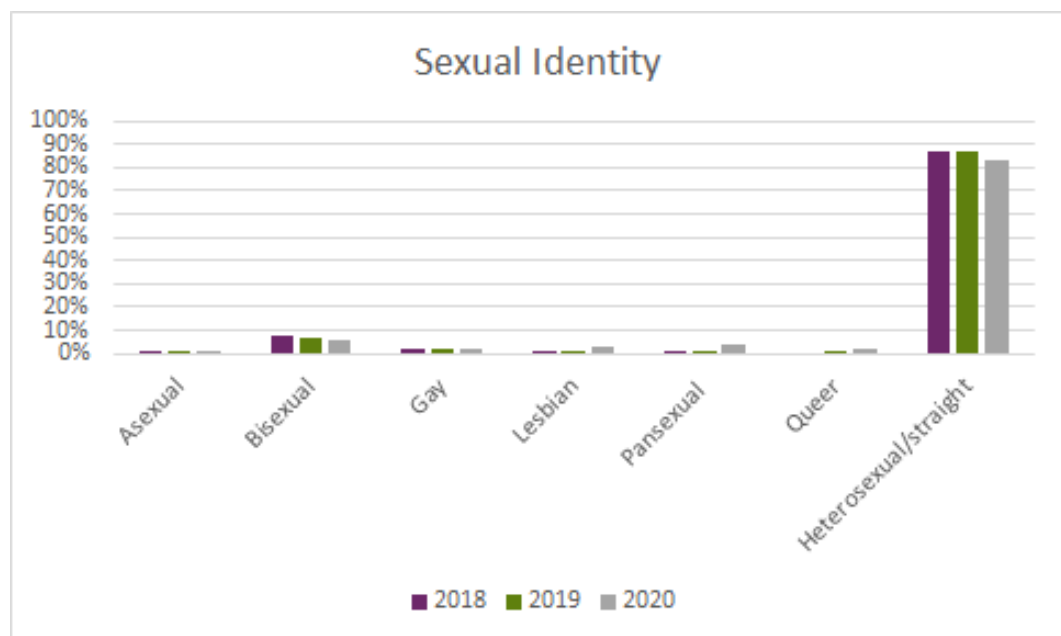
From 2018, 2019, to 2020, we modified this question and responses to provide more options for volunteers who may not identify with the traditional gender binary of male and female. In 2018, volunteers could select between “Male” and “Female”; in 2019, volunteers could select between “Cis man,” “Cis woman,” “Gender-queer,” “Non-binary,” “Transgender woman,” and “Transgender man,”; in 2020, volunteers could select between “Agender,” “Genderqueer or non-binary,” “Man,” or “Woman”, followed by a second question asking if volunteers identified as Transgender (or another non-cisgender identity).

While the structure of the question changed year to year, there is a notable trend. Across all three years, a majority of respondents identified as female, cis women, or women (81% in 2018, 76% in 2016, and 84% in 2020), while less than one fourth of volunteers identified as either male, cis men, or men, or gender-queer, non-binary, transgender, or agender.





iii) Sexual Identity

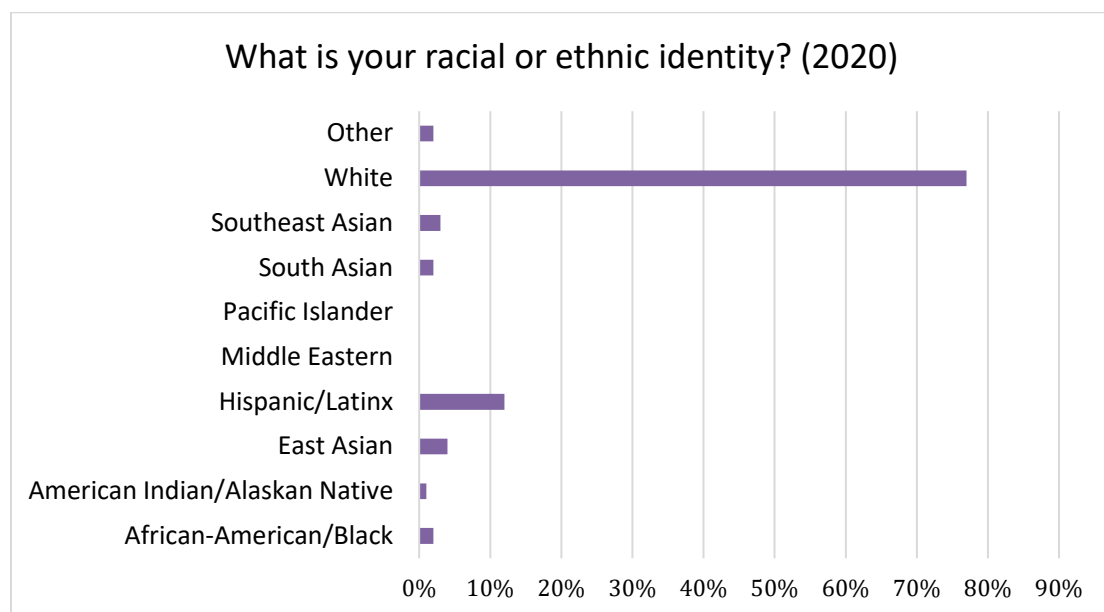
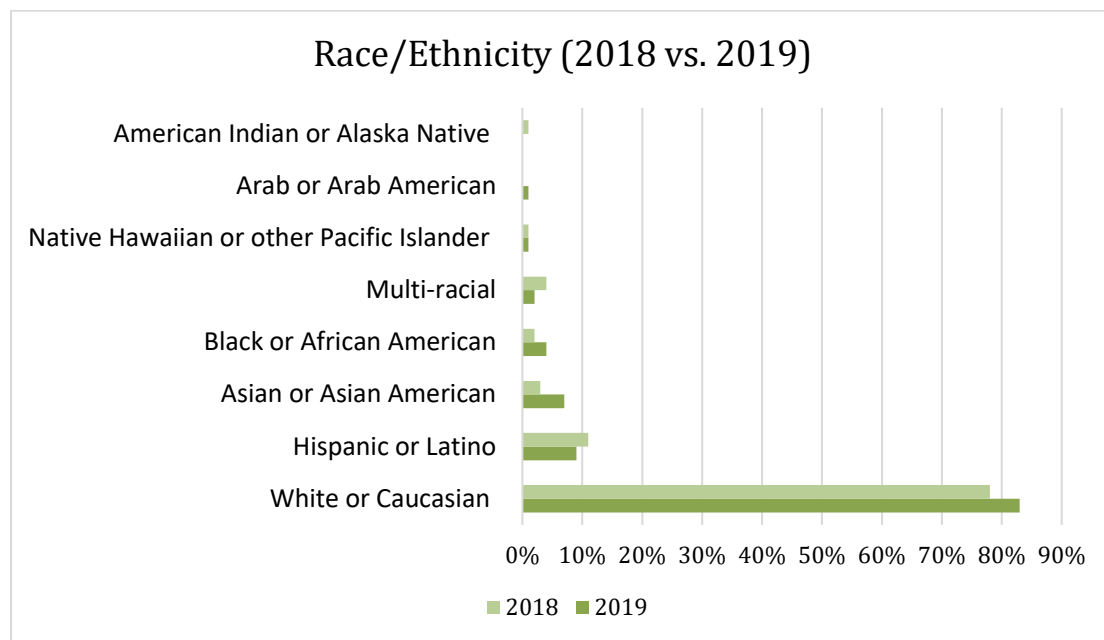


iv) Racial Identity

While we used the same question/response for racial identity from 2018 to 2019, from 2019 to 2020, we modified this question and responses for volunteers to self-report their respective racial identities. For this reason, we cannot do a detailed side by side comparison for these three years. From 2018 through 2020, there are two notable



consistencies: fewer than 25% of volunteer respondents self-identified as BIPOC, while a majority of volunteers self-identified as White or Caucasian (73% in 2018, 83% in 2019, and 77% in 2020).

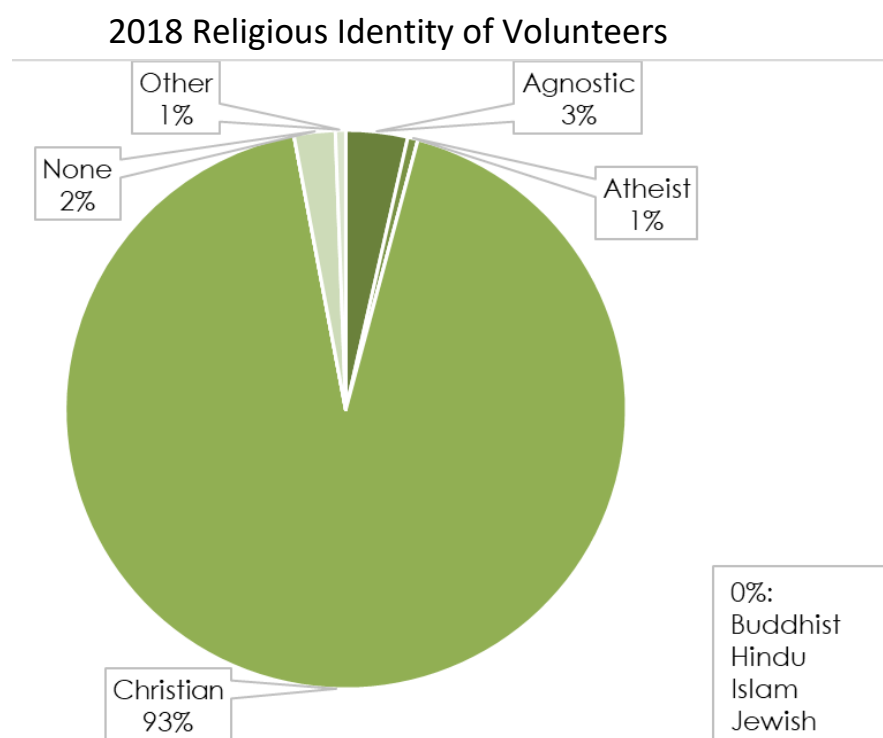


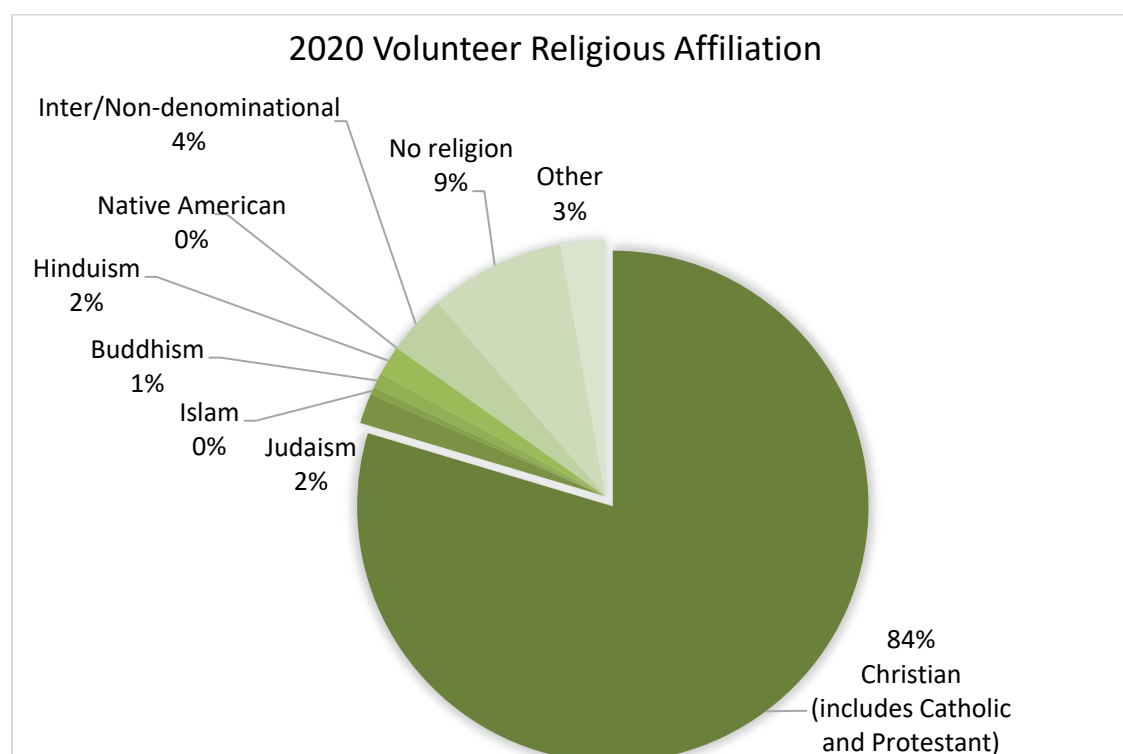
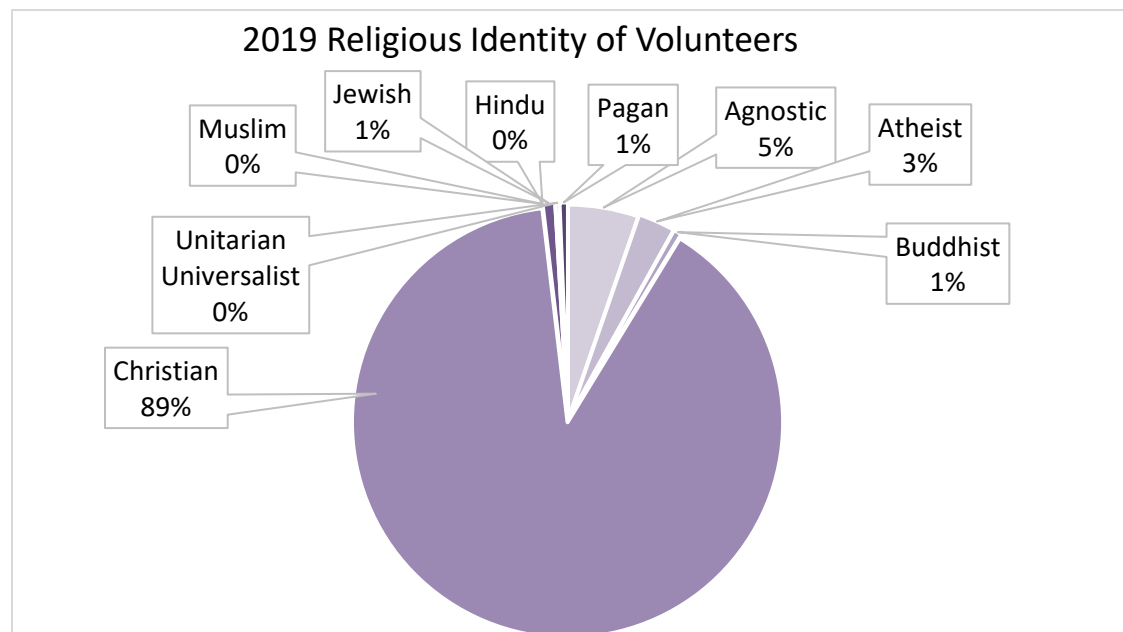
v) Religious Affiliation

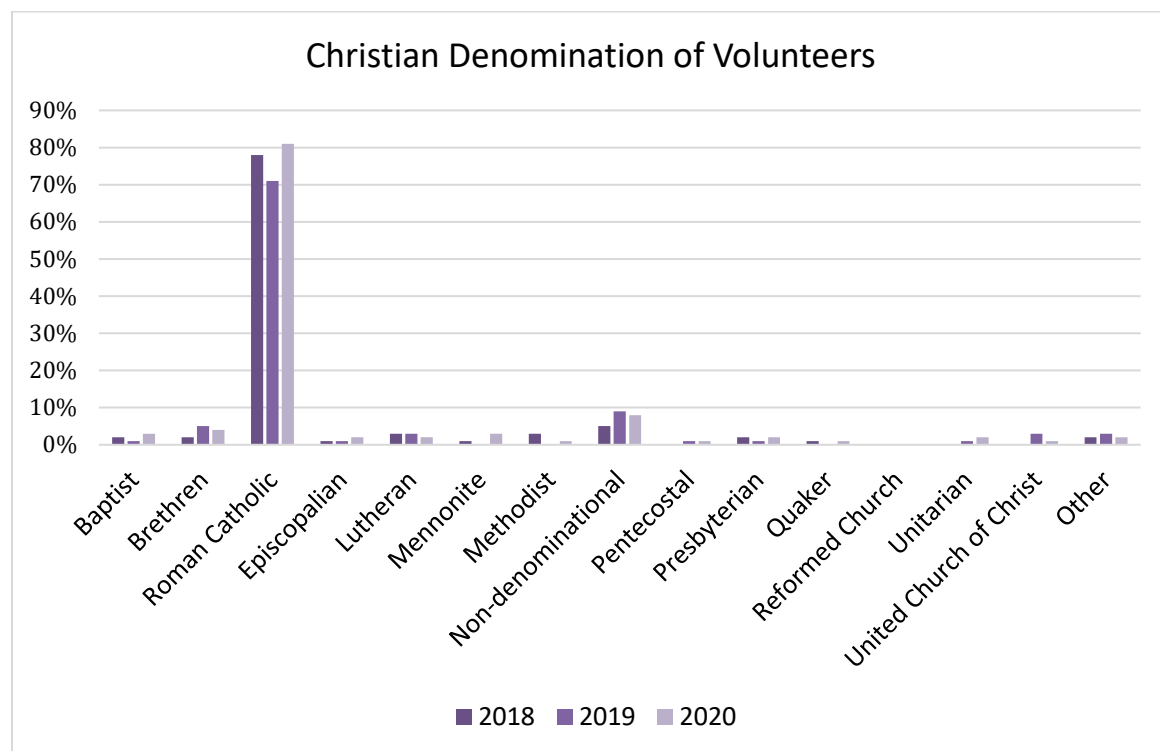
In 2018 and 2019, we asked volunteers to self-identify religious affiliation based on multiple choice format. In 2020, we shifted this question to checkboxes, with an instruction for respondents to “Select all that apply” to allow respondents to select more than one religious affiliation. For this reason, we cannot do a detailed side by side comparison for these three years.

Still, there are two notable trends. The percentage of volunteers self-identifying as Christian has steadily decreased from 93% in 2018, to 89% in 2019, and 84% in 2020, while the number of volunteers self-identifying as Agnostic, Atheist, Buddhist, Jewish, Other, or No Religion has steadily increased from 7% in 2018, to 10% in 2019, to 17% in 2020.

Over the past three years, of all respondents who self-selected “Christian,” 72% identify as Catholic, 16% identify as Protestant, 27% identify as Non Denominational, and less than 1% identify as Other.

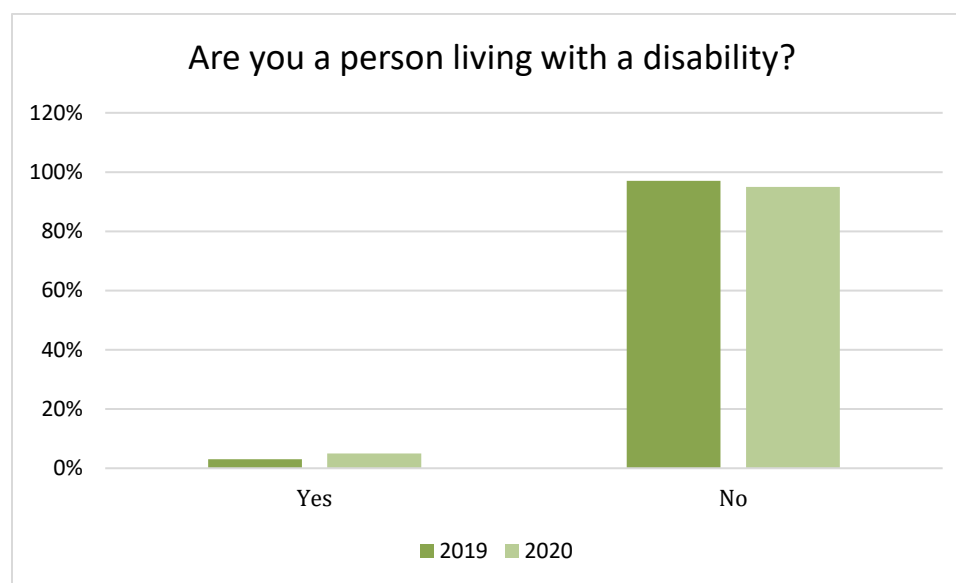






vi) Disability

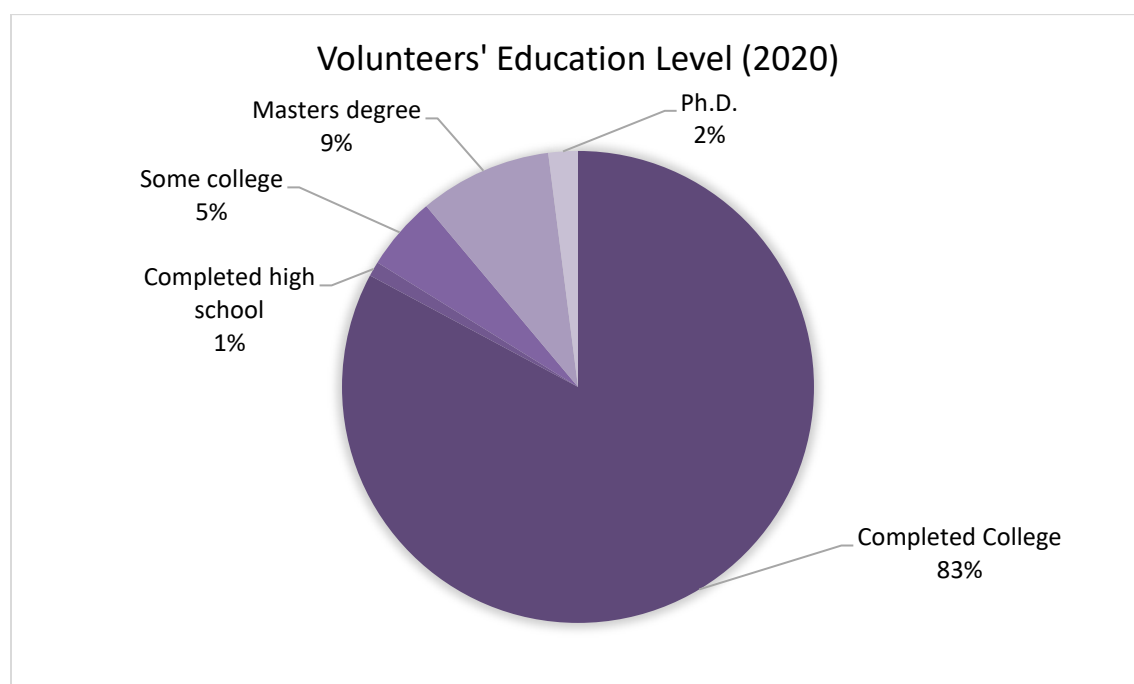
2019 was the first year that we asked respondents to self-report whether or not they are a person living with a disability. From 2019 to 2020, 5% or fewer respondents reported living with a disability, while a majority of respondents (over 95%) reported they are not living with a disability.

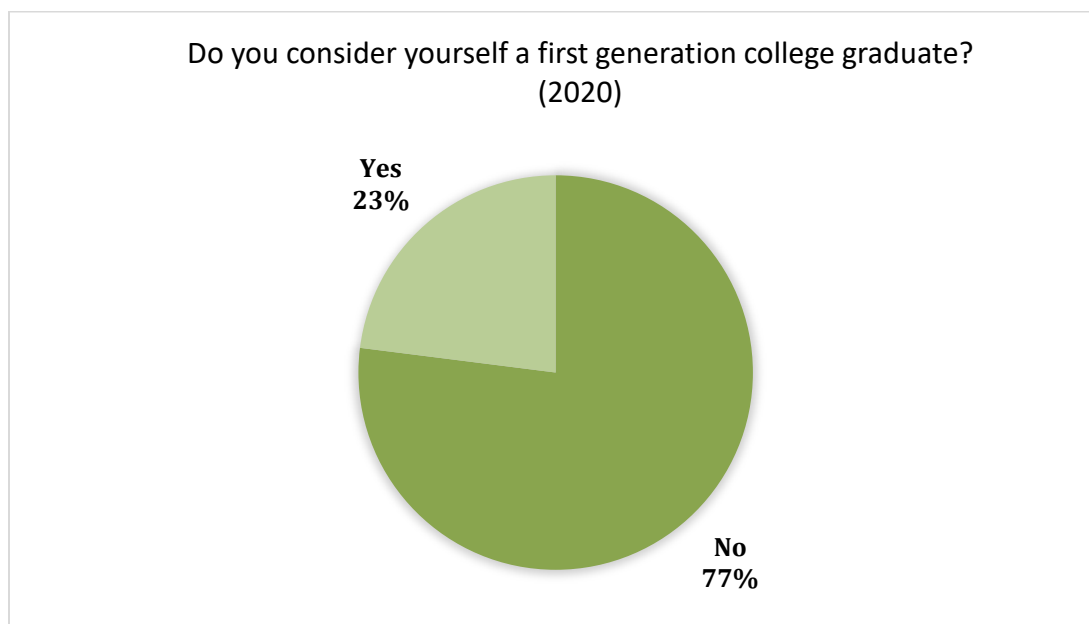


vii) Education Level

While we used the same question/response for education level from 2018 to 2019, we modified this question and responses from 2019 to 2020 for volunteers to self-report their respective education levels. For this reason, we cannot do a detailed side by side comparison for these three years. Still, one notable trend includes a steady increase in volunteers who have reported as “Completed College” or a 4-year degree, from 67% in 2018 to 77% in 2019 and 83% in 2020.

In 2020 we also asked a new question to better understand volunteers’ educational background: “Do you consider yourself a first-generation college graduate?” Just under one fourth of respondents self-identified as a first-generation college graduate, while about three-fourths did not.





VIII. What is the impact of service?

a) Volunteer motivations

In 2019 and 2020, we asked volunteers to rank which factors played the biggest role in their decision whether or not to serve. Respondents had seven factors to rank in order of importance from 1-7 (1 = most important and 7 = least important). These seven factors include: Personal/Spiritual Growth, A chance to give back, Professional experience, Intentional community, Living in a new place, Vocational discernment, and Financial security/support.

Across both years, volunteer respondents consistently selected “Personal/Spiritual Growth” and “A chance to give back” as their top two factors when considering service, while “Vocational discernment” and “Financial security/support” were selected as the two least important factors.

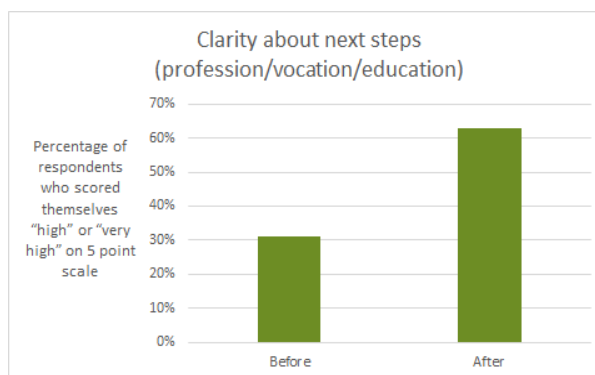
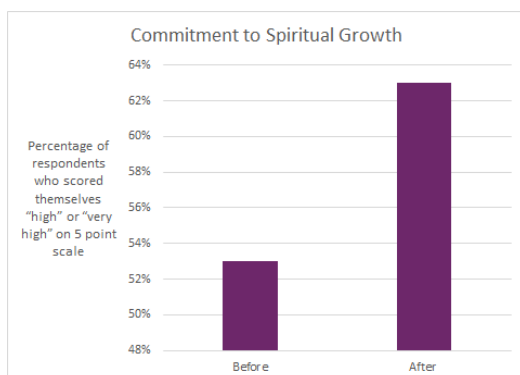
b) Impact of Service

In 2018 and 2019, we asked volunteers to state to what degree they agreed with a number of statements regarding their service experience’s impact on their sense of: faith and purpose, personal skills development, and justice and advocacy. In 2020, we shifted the structure of these questions to match that in our Former Volunteer Study, an intensive evaluation and analysis of the volunteer experience conducted in partnership with Ministry Leadership Center.

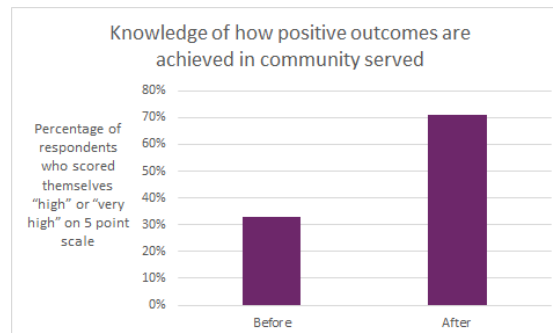
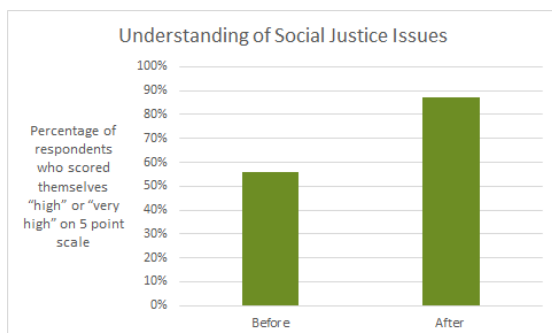
The bar charts below compare the percentage of respondents who scored themselves “high” or “very high” on various dimensions of personal growth before and after the service



experience. The data demonstrates consistent, considerable personal growth results from the service experience.



The bar charts below compare the percentage of respondents who scored themselves "high" or "very high" on various dimensions of their capacity to contribute to positive outcomes in the communities they served. The data demonstrates consistent, considerable growth results in this area from the service experience.

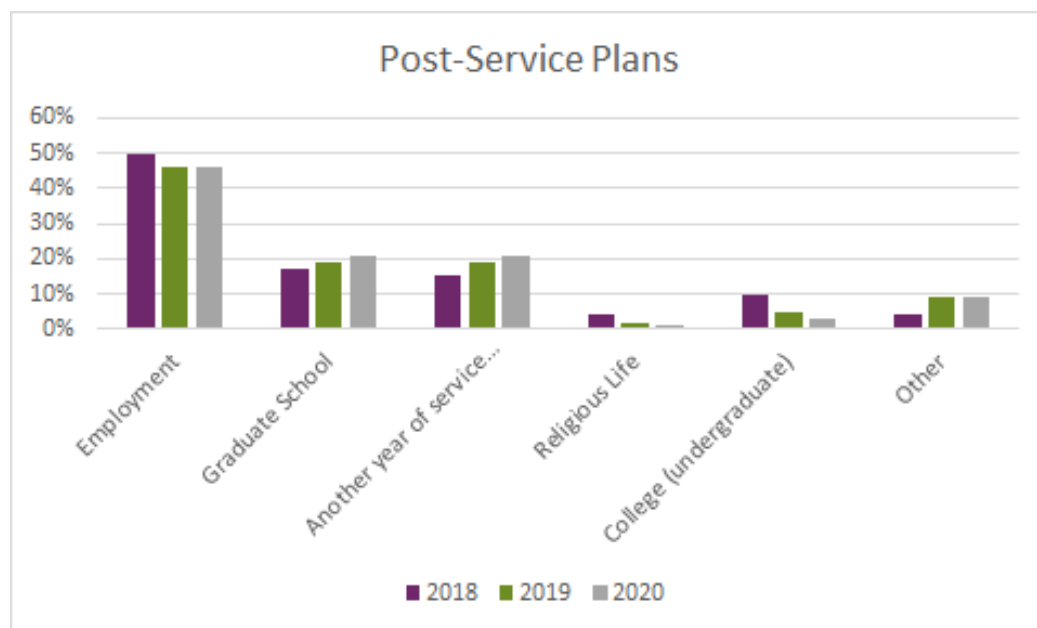


c) Recommending service

Over the past three years, we have consistently asked respondents how likely they are to recommend full-time volunteering to friends and family. Consistently, over 95% of respondents have agreed that they would recommend full-time volunteering to friends and family (97% in 2018, 99% in 2019, and 98% in 2020). Of these respondents, nearly three fourths reported they would be "very likely" to recommend full-time volunteering to friends and family (73% in 2018, 74% in 2019, and 72% in 2020). This data is encouraging, particularly for programs who invite former volunteers to support their recruitment efforts.

d) Post service plans





From 2018 to 2020, we asked volunteers to identify their post-service plans. Volunteer respondents consistently selected Employment, Graduate School, and Another Year of Service as the top three next steps following their service experience. It is a positive sign that the percentage of volunteers choosing to continue their service experience has increased steadily each year, from 15% in 2019 to 19% in 2020 to 21% in 2020. This includes both renewing a service year with their current program or beginning service with a different program. CVN reports a retention rate of one-fifth of volunteers for the field of faith-based service represented in these survey responses.

i. Areas of work and study

From 2018 to 2019, CVN also asked volunteers who selected Employment or Graduate School as their post-service plan to identify their intended field of work or study. Over these three years, respondents ranked the following as the top fields of work and study volunteers pursue following their service experience: Medicine/Health Care (14%); Education (13%); Nonprofit (12%); and Social Work (9%).

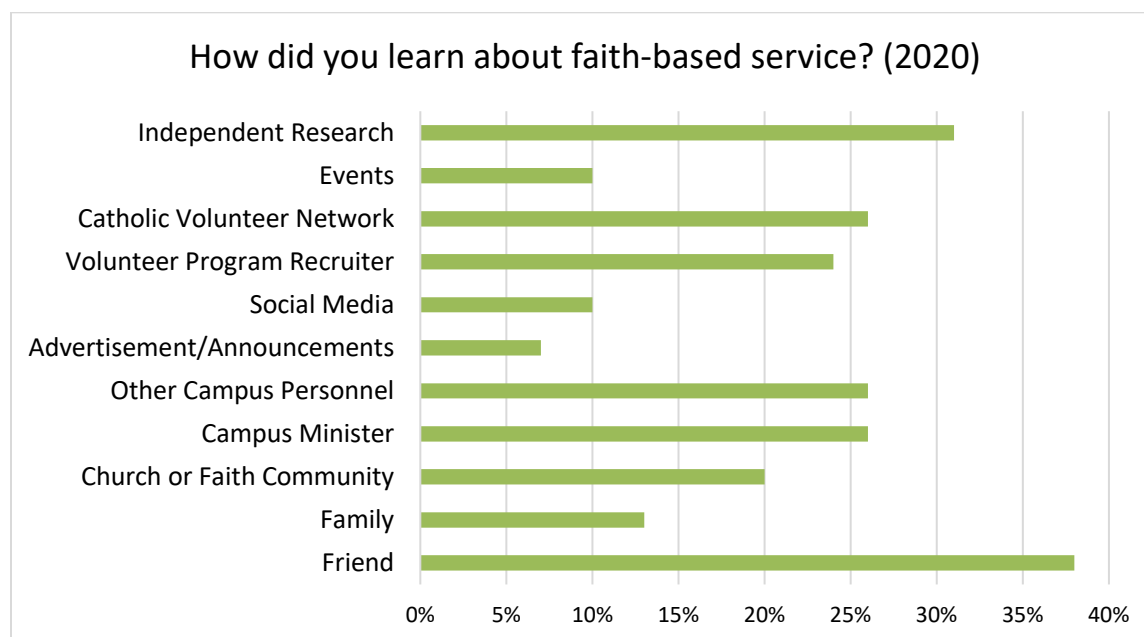
V. What are the trends in volunteer recruitment?

a) How did volunteers learn about service?

In 2018 and 2019, we asked respondents: “How did you first learn about faith-based service?” in a multiple-choice format, from which respondents were required to select one choice. In 2020, we adapted this question to ask more broadly, “How did you learn about service?” in a checkbox format, instructing respondents to “select all that apply.”



While responses vary broadly each year, respondents consistently selected “Friend” as the highest resource that helped them learn about service (34% in 2018, 34% in 2019, and 38% in 2020). Campus ministry is consistently named as one of the top five sources of learning about faith-based service (31% in 2018, 25% in 2019, and 26% in 2020), closely followed by Volunteer Program Recruiters (27% in 2018, 26% in 2019, 24% in 2020). CVN is selected as a top five resource in 2019 (27%) and 2020 (26%).

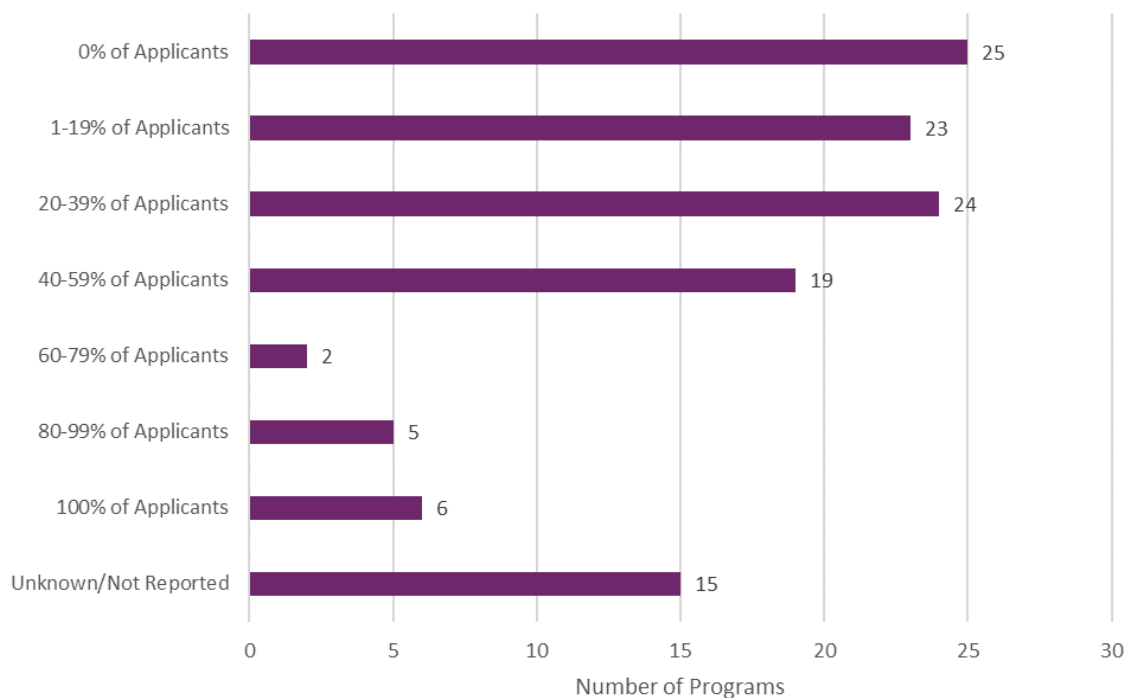


CVN aims to assist programs with volunteer recruitment through in-person efforts at campus events, printed RESPONSE directories, the online search tool, online volunteer profiles, and other resources. Out of 123 responding programs, 25 (20%) received no applications as a result of CVN’s recruitment initiatives. 23 (19%) of programs received 1-19% of their applicants through referrals from CVN. 24 (20%) of programs received 20-39% of their applications through CVN referrals. 19 (15%) of programs received 40-59% of applications through CVN referrals. 13 (11%) of programs received 60-100% of their application as a result of CVN referrals.

It is important to note that CVN recruiting efforts (and those of individual programs) did change in the 2020-2021 recruiting season as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from this time period will be shared later in 2021.

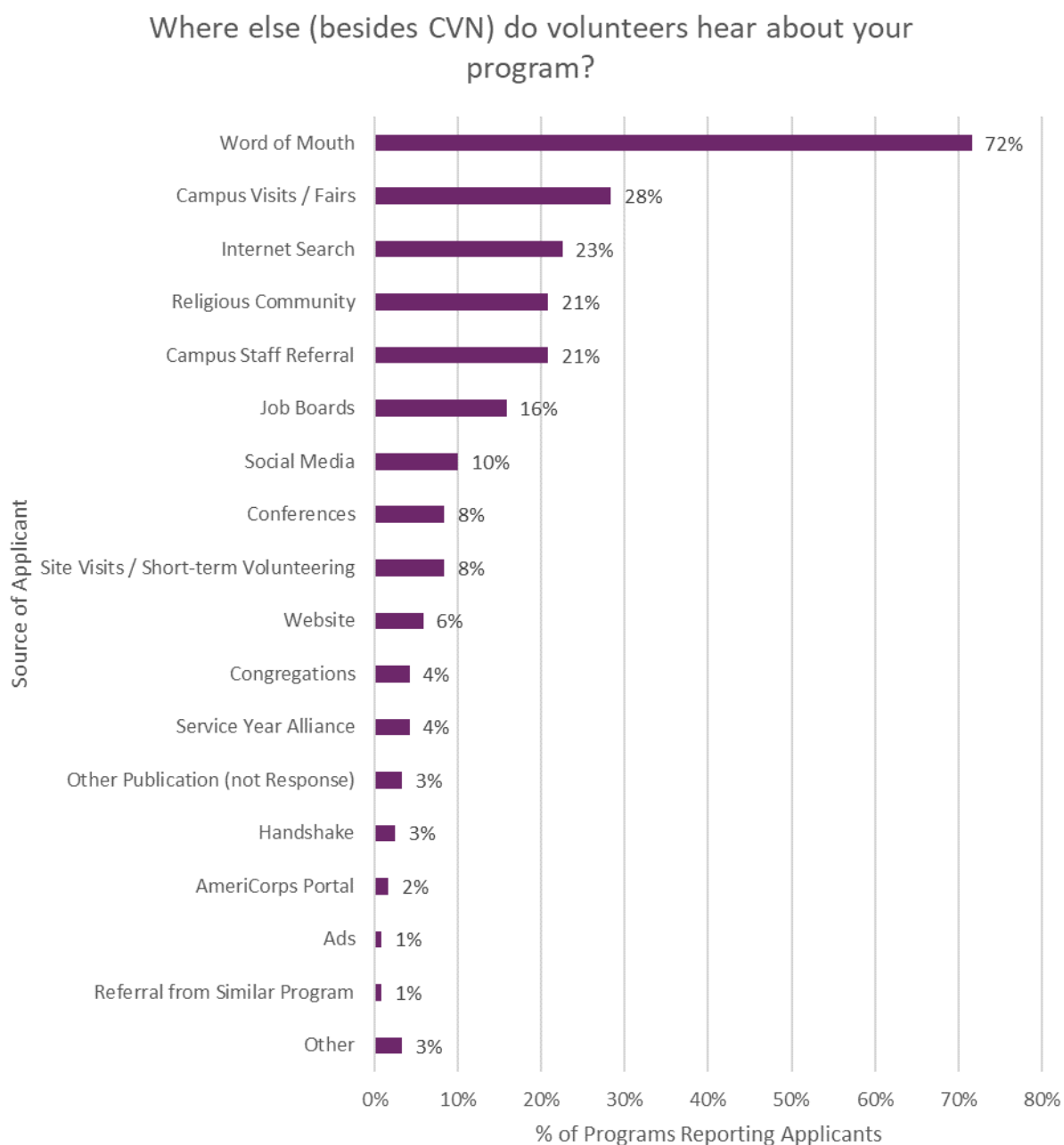


How many of your applicants heard about your program as a result (full or in part) of CVN (recruiters, profiles, RESPONSE directory, website, events, etc.)?



CVN programs receive applications from a variety of sources beyond CVN recruiting efforts. (Note that in many cases, an applicant will have had contact with multiple sources of information about service before submitting an application.) 72% of responding programs received at least one application from a volunteer who found out about the program from a friend, parent, family member, or other loved one (word of mouth). In many cases, these loved ones had firsthand experience with the program (usually they were alumni). Other sources of referrals included campus staff members (usually identified as campus ministers and rarely name as professors, career center staff, or others), internet searches, and affiliated religious communities (sisters and brothers) or congregations.





b) Resources utilized

From 2018 through 2020, over one third of respondents reported utilizing CVN resources to find their program (49% in 2018, 43% in 2019, and 39% in 2020). Respondents consistently select CVN's website, RESPONSE directory, and Events/Speaking engagements as the top three CVN resources they used to help them find their program.



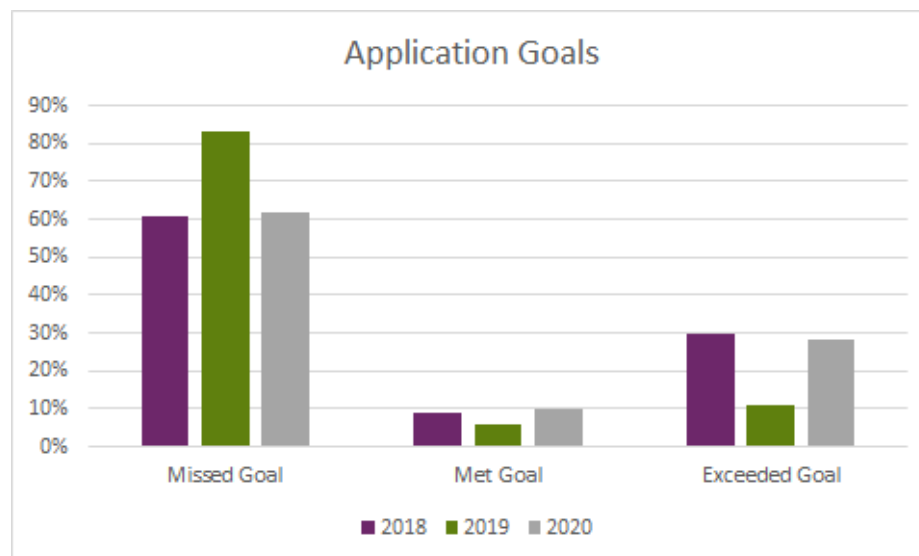
c) Top schools for recruitment

From 2018 to 2019, CVN member programs were asked to identify the top three colleges and universities for volunteer recruitment. In some cases, these schools provided the largest number of applicants. In other cases, they held successful recruitment fairs on campus or otherwise formed strong partnerships with the programs. The following five schools were consistently identified most often (3 or more times) as top schools by responding programs, across all three years:

- Boston College
- Catholic University of America
- University of Notre Dame
- University of Dayton
- Villanova University

In 2019 and 2020, respondents identified Georgetown University as a top school for service. Respondents in 2020 also identified three new top schools for service: St. Joseph's University, St. Louis College, and St. Mary's College.

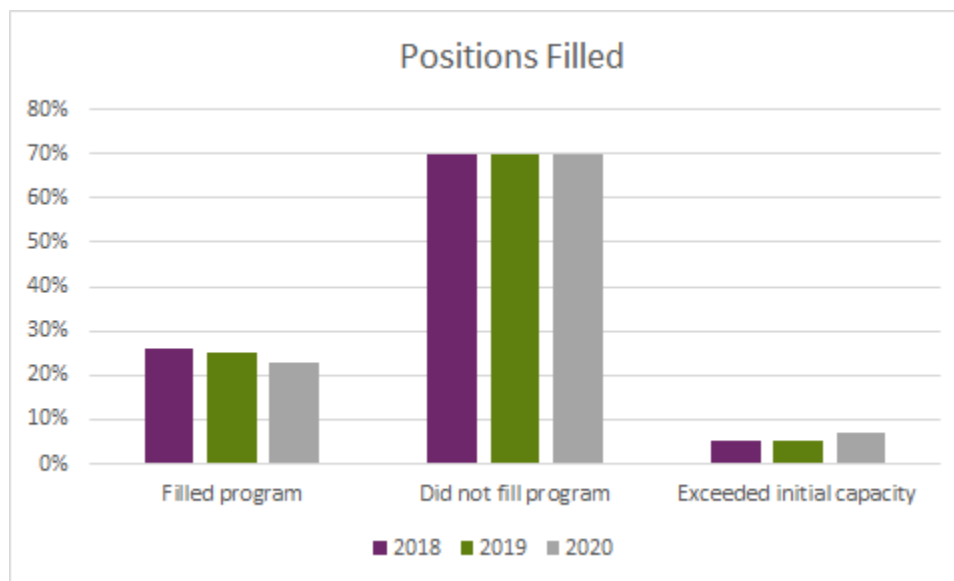
d) Application goals



Each year programs set goals for the number of applications they hope to receive for the following program cycle. In 2018 and 2020, the percentage of responding programs who missed, met, and exceeded their application goals was fairly consistent. 2019 seemed to be a more challenging year for programs to meet their application goals, as 83% of responding programs reported missing their goal. Survey data during this year does not provide a clear explanation for this shift. Through anecdotal conversations with



programs, CVN posits that this could be due to factors such as growing application goals or a more challenging recruitment cycle. In 2020, these percentages leveled back out: 62% of responding programs did not reach their goal, 10% met their goal exactly, and 28% exceeded their goal for number of applications submitted.



Similarly, programs also have goals for the number of volunteer slots they are recruiting to fill. Despite not receiving as many applications in 2019, the numbers of volunteers who ended up serving did not change significantly from 2018 to 2019. As the chart above demonstrates from 2018 to 2020, about 25% of CVN member programs met or exceeded volunteer capacity, while nearly 70% of programs did not fill all of their open volunteer placements.

VI. Conclusion

This report is CVN's first compilation of membership survey data and volunteer survey data spanning three years (2018-2020). As we grow our evaluative capacity and experiment with new survey styles and content, our hope is to find ways to continue to report on trends in the field of faith-based service. We welcome your feedback as to which data points are most helpful to you and your program.

If you would like permission to cite data or need more information about any of the survey findings shared in this report, please reach out to Sarah Hammel, CVN's Director of Membership and Operations: shammel@catholicvolunteernetwork.org (for membership survey data) and/or Katie Delaney, CVN's Manager of Strategic Learning and Evaluation: kdelaney@catholicvolunteernetwork.org (for volunteer survey data). Thank you for your partnership!

