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Interpreting and Living out the Vow of Obedience among Women Religious in Cameroon

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Purpose of Project and Methodology

Purpose

To enable religious women to better understand and interpret the Vow of Obedience they take – especially among the different cohorts or generations of Sisters in Cameroon

Methods

The online survey was distributed to religious sisters in Cameroon in early 2020. An invitation to respond and a link to the survey was distributed mainly via WhatsApp. Some 175 sisters responded.

Today's Presentation

I will focus on just one part of the survey – I want to show you how important examining subgroups of respondents and comparing them are.



Agreement with Statements about their Congregation's Process for Decision Making

*How much do you agree with these statements about the
process of decision making in your congregation?*

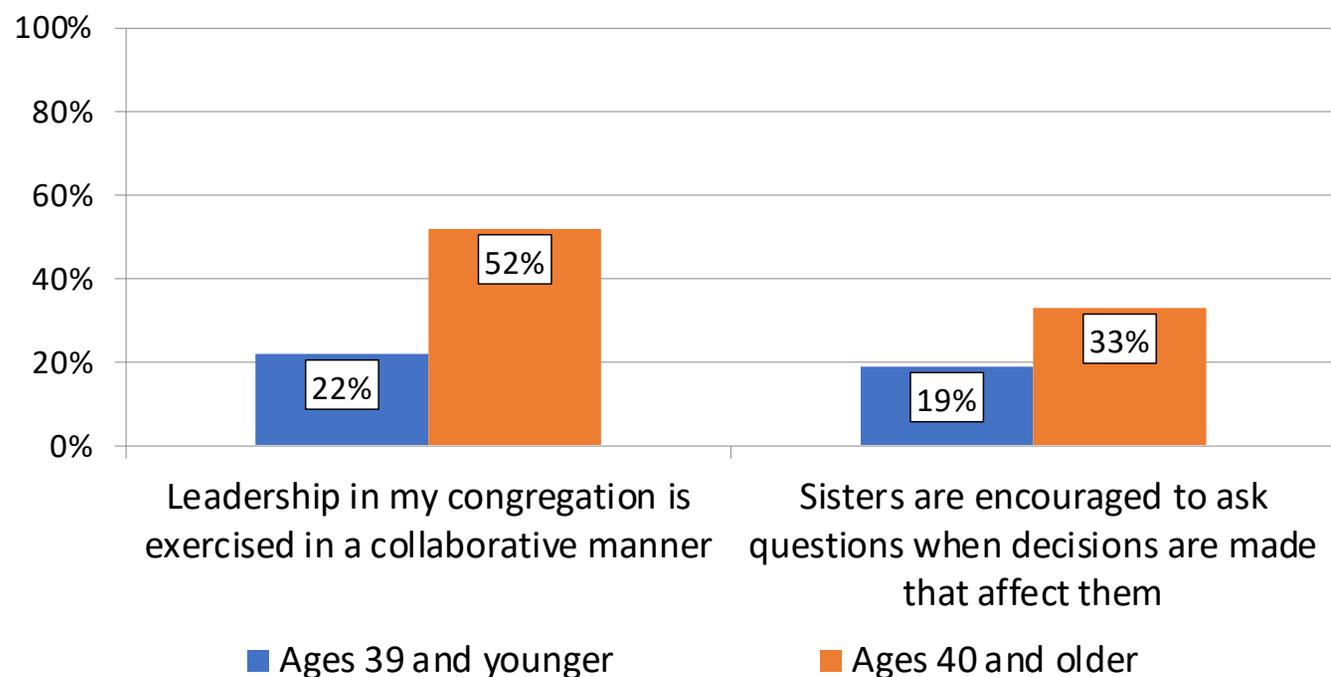
Percentage responding

| | "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" Combined % | "Strongly Agree" Only % |
|--|--|--|
| Leadership in my congregation is exercised in a collaborative manner | 85 | 39 |
| Some decisions that my superiors have made have been hard for me to live with | 73 | 33 |
| My superiors do not just inform sisters of their decisions, but try to help the sisters understand the reasons behind the decision | 68 | 31 |
| Our leadership seeks input from a sister before taking any decision that directly affects her | 57 | 22 |
| Sisters are encouraged to ask questions when decisions are made that affect them | 55 | 27 |



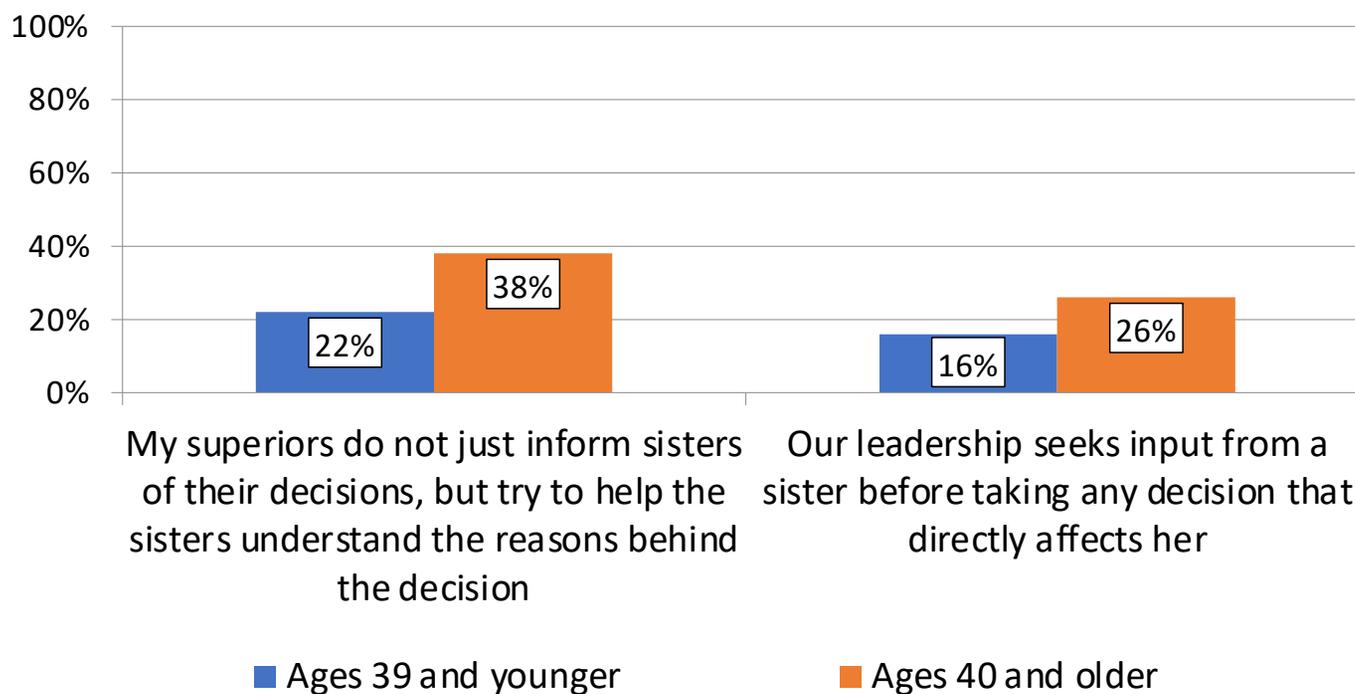
Differences in Agreement by Age Groups

"Strongly" Agree with the Statements, by Age Group



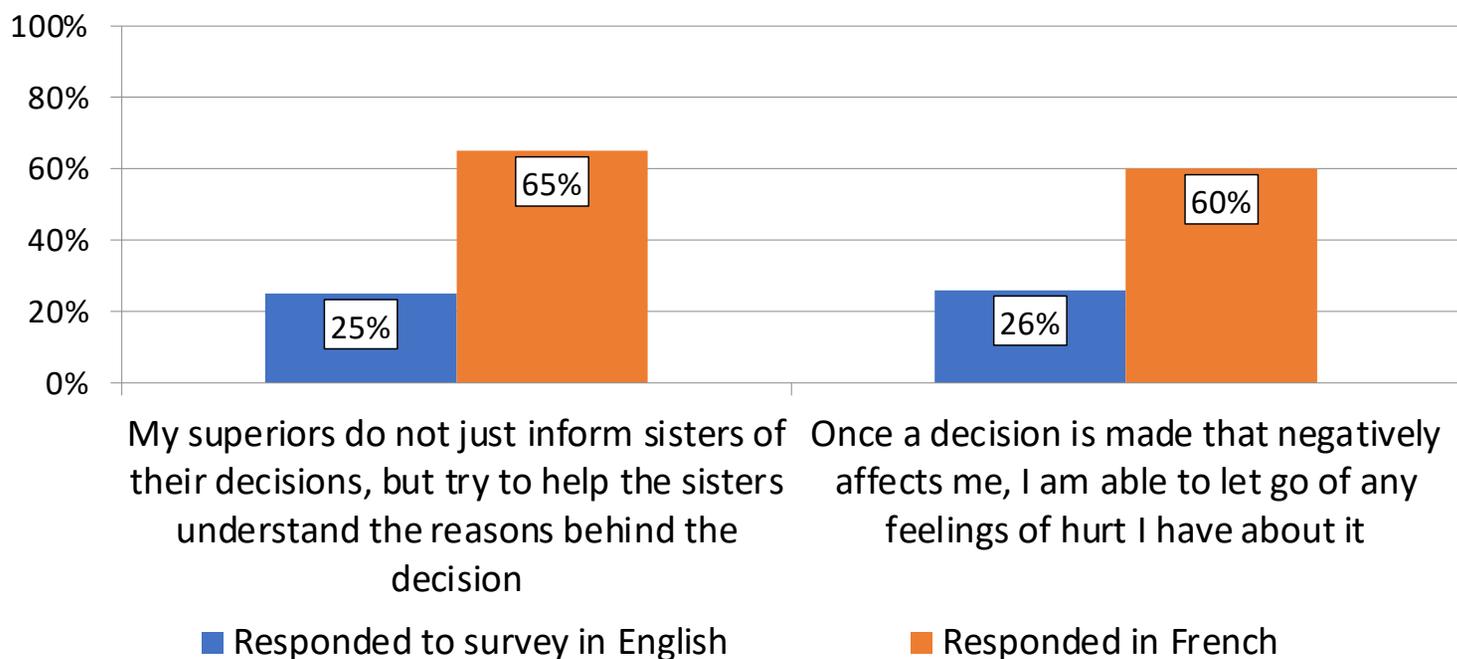
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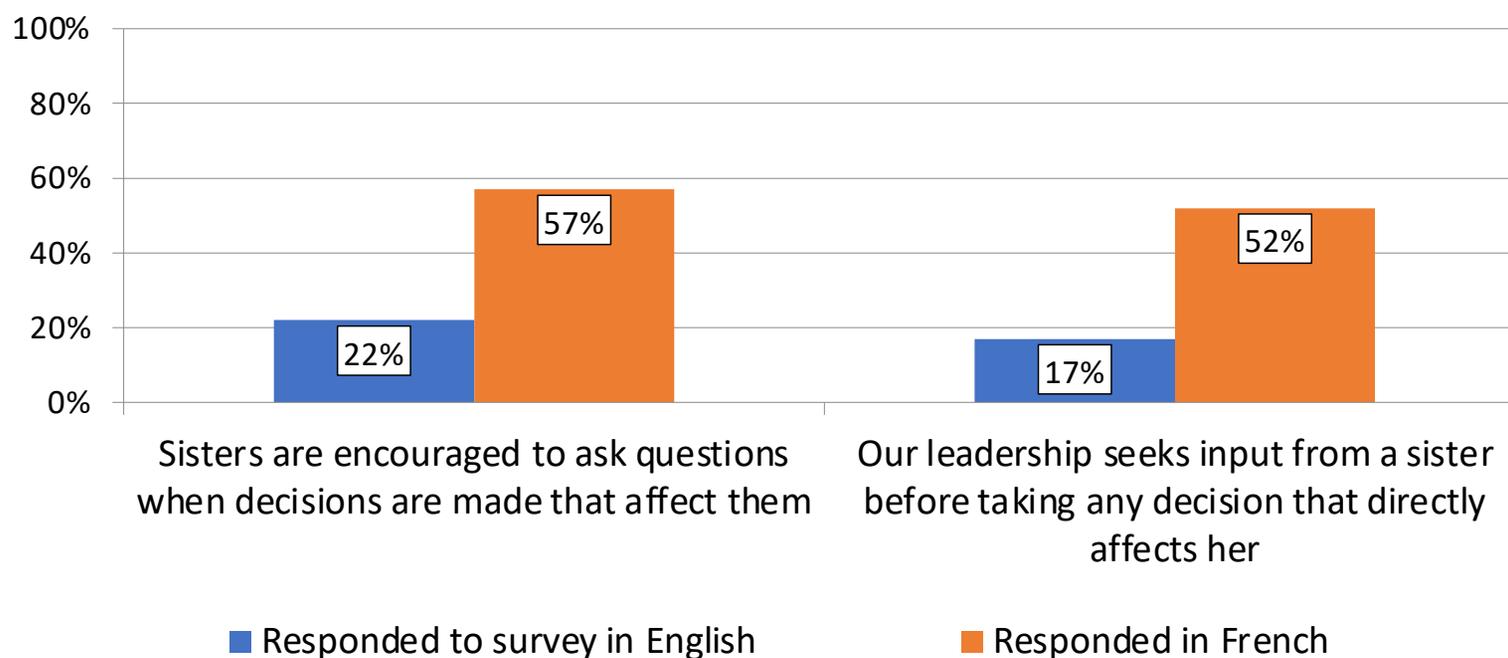
Differences by Language of Response

"Strongly" Agree with Statements, by Language of Response



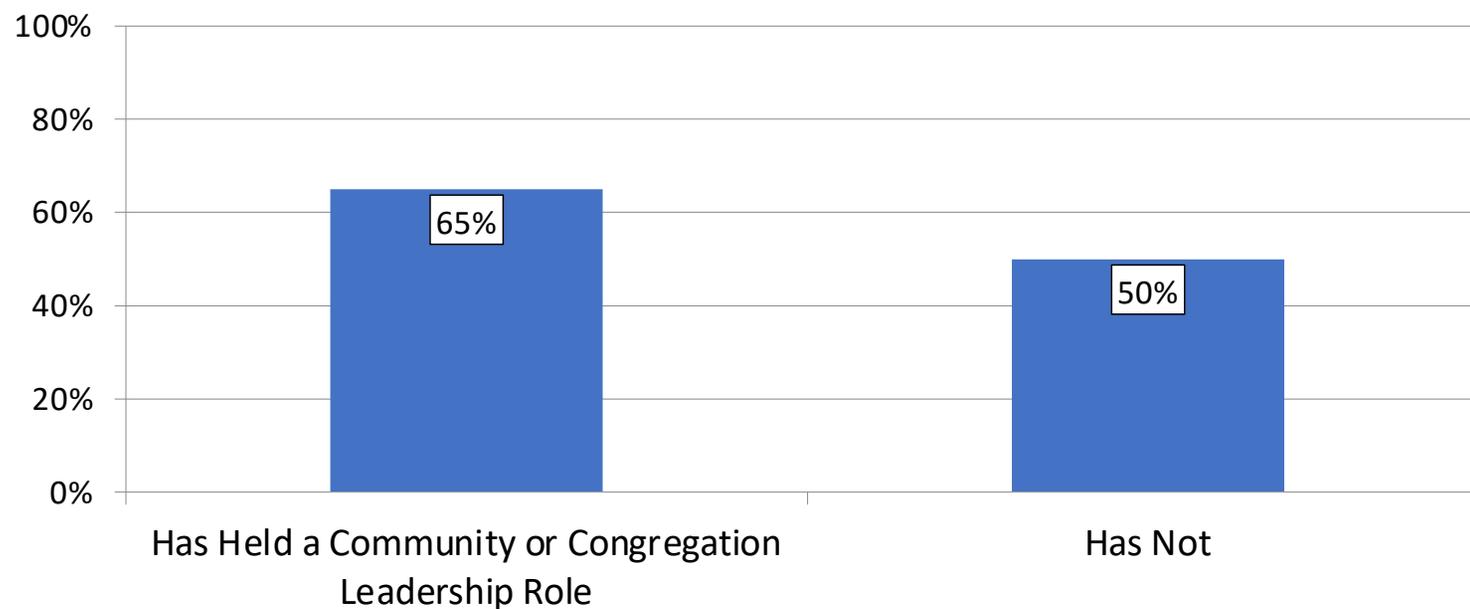
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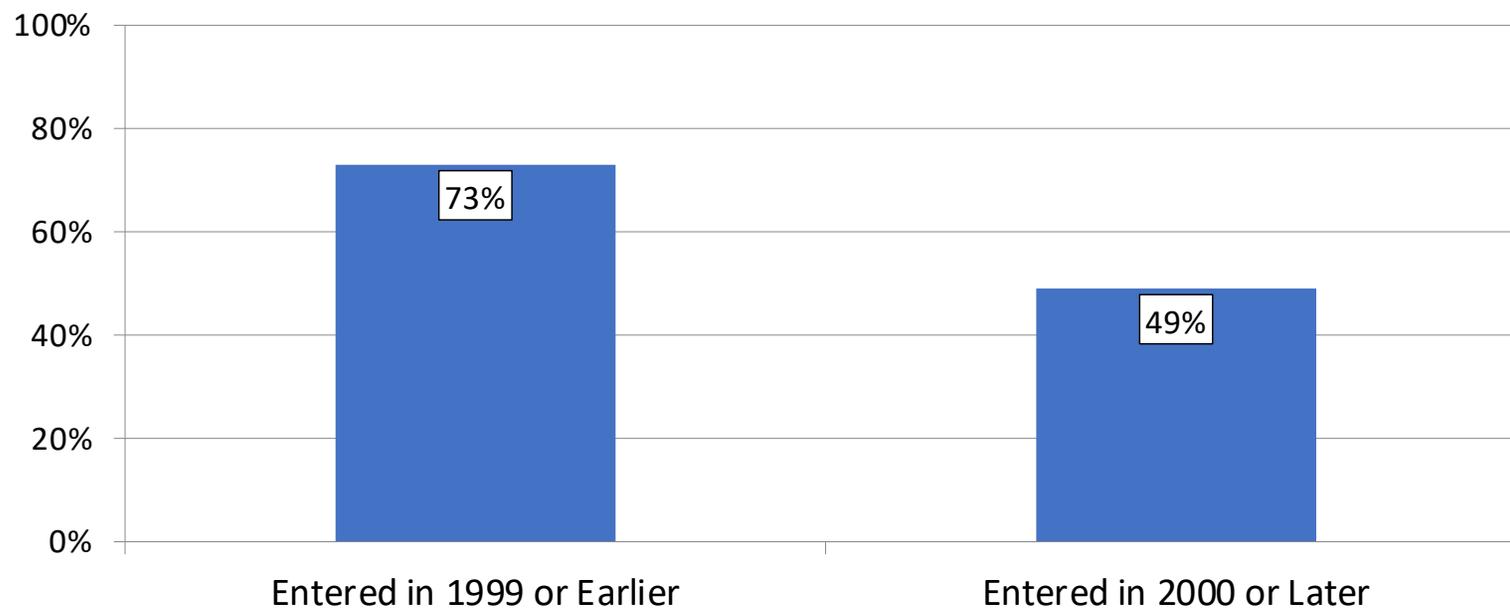
Differences by Leadership Roles Held

"Somewhat" or "Strongly" Agree that their Leadership Seeks Input from a Sister Before Taking Any Decision That Directly Affects Her, by Leadership Roles Held



Differences by Year of Entry

"Somewhat" or "Strongly" Agree that their Leadership Seeks Input from a Sister Before Taking Any Decision That Directly Affects Her, by Year of Entry



Summary

What can we conclude from what is above?

- Individual sisters do indeed have their own personal convictions about the vow of obedience
- Culture has an influence in how they interpret the vow, be it the culture of an age cohort, the culture of a language group, or the culture of those who have ever held leadership positions



My Conclusions

- Even though individual sisters may have their personal convictions about this vow, they are, however, encouraged to consult with leadership in a discernment process, to make decisions.
- Individual convictions must tie in with the common good, as this adds power and strength to any commitment.
- Individual convictions and interpretation of the vow must resonate with today's world; this is because the vow of obedience seeks and promotes the mission of Christ.

