



Membership Trends and Demographics

- **SVdP conferences nationwide report an aging membership base;** most active members are over 60, with many in their 70s and 80s. The youngest Vincentian in some conferences is often 60 or above; many worry about sustaining the work in the next decade.
- **A consistent theme is the difficulty of attracting young adults, families with children, or even empty nesters.** The main barriers cited are busyness (work, family, extracurriculars), lack of interest in traditional meetings, or the intimidating time commitment.
- **Recruitment efforts often rely on pulpit talks, bulletin ads, and ministry fairs,** but these tend to attract retirees more than young members. Many new members join because of a personal invitation or relationship with an existing Vincentian.
- Members frequently express concern that **younger generations are not as engaged in parish life or volunteering as older generations were,** often citing changing cultural values, increased work demands, and a general decline in church attendance.

Recruitment and Inclusion Challenges

- Many responses note that **young people are not joining volunteer organizations of any type at the same rate as in past generations.** Parish membership and church attendance are also aging phenomena.
- There are ongoing struggles with **ethnic and cultural diversity,** particularly where the parish community is homogenous. Some suggest focused recruitment of underrepresented groups, forming Spanish-speaking or culturally specific conferences, and building bridges with non-Catholic communities.
- **Non-Catholics and younger people are welcomed as volunteers,** but rules often preclude them from full membership or leadership roles, which is debated as a barrier to inclusion.
- **Language barriers, especially Spanish, are a common issue;** members stress the need for bilingual resources and outreach to Hispanic/Latino Catholics.

Barriers to Participation and Retention

- The most cited **barrier for young or new members is the time commitment required,** especially the expectation to attend meetings, do home visits, or fill officer roles.
- **Home visits can intimidate potential members,** who may prefer support roles, pantry service, fundraising, or other behind-the-scenes jobs.
- Rigid requirements for attendance, training (especially Ozanam Orientation), and paperwork/record-keeping may deter busy or tech-shy candidates.



- **Burnout among current volunteers is prevalent**, with many feeling overburdened by administration and a lack of available successors.

Suggested Solutions and Best Practices

- **Diversify volunteer roles:** Offer project-based, “one and done,” or limited-duration opportunities, allowing people to opt into short-term or non-home-visit assignments.
- **Mentorship and orientation are repeatedly recommended:** Pair each new member with a mentor for at least 6–12 months, provide onboarding binders or checklists, and allow new recruits to “shadow” experienced Vincentians.
- **Streamline and modernize training:** Calls for shorter, more frequent, and online-accessible Ozanam and other essential training to remove participation barriers for busy or geographically distant volunteers.
- **Outreach to youth and families:** Create opportunities for students (service hours), partner with parish schools and religious education, and start “Mini Vinnie” or Junior SVdP groups. Engage entire families in projects and make recruitment part of parish onboarding for new families.
- **Make volunteering family- and schedule-friendly:** Offer meetings or events during evenings or weekends, provide childcare during meetings, and embrace hybrid or remote participation options.
- **Personal invitation remains key:** The most effective recruitment consistently cited is one-on-one invitations, especially from respected fellow parishioners or leaders.

Technology and Communication

- **Utilize technology for outreach and internal processes:** Younger volunteers are comfortable with social media, digital marketing, and modern tools. Suggestions include using apps, regular email updates, and producing updated recruitment videos.
- **Address technophobia among older members:** Offer simple, patient tech training sessions and create opportunities for tech-savvy volunteers to help with digital tasks.

Diversity and Inclusion

- **Conferences that mirror the diversity of their parish/community fare better in engagement and impact.** Strategies include active outreach to underrepresented ethnic groups, aligning volunteer recruitment with the demographics of those served, and reducing “Catholic-centric” messaging when trying to attract non-Catholic volunteers.
- **Adapt recruiting language and structure to present SVdP as a ministry and not just a club or another activity.** Emphasize the mission and tangible community impact, which many young people and new immigrants find compelling.



Leadership and Sustainability

- **Succession planning is critically needed at all levels;** many conferences experience a leadership vacuum due to the lack of willing or prepared candidates.
- **Develop pathways for technology adoption, new member development, and leadership tracks,** with support from National and councils, to standardize and share successful models.