

John Jay Researchers Summarize Clergy Sexual Abuse Since 1950

Researchers at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York have presented an update on their seminal 2004 survey of allegations of sexual abuse by clerics in the United States between 1950 and 2002. The new report includes findings on the current situation in the United States, as well as comparative information from government and church research in Australia and Europe.

The present report is significantly informed and extended by the annual surveys of new allegations of sexual abuse that CARA has done for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops since 2004. The John Jay survey had a response rate of 97 percent of dioceses and 63 percent of religious institutes of men. CARA's most recent study for 2018 was based on responses from 99 percent of dioceses and 85 percent of men's religious institutes.

The comprehensive new report asks, "What more do we know in 2019?"

- Incidence and reporting curves are stable. The peak of abuse in the United States was in 1974–1982, with abuse committed by 4.6 percent of diocesan priests and 2.7 percent of religious priests.
- The majority of victims—over 80 percent—were male adolescents.
- Approximately half of the priests reported to have abused had a single known victim.
- A small fraction were persistent offenders, with success in avoiding detection, who were often valued by their community.

- Most incidents of abuse were substantiated by the dioceses pre-2002, but now many cannot be substantiated, with a very small fraction (2 percent, according to CARA's most recent "Annual Survey of Allegations and Costs") found to be false.
- The results of studies that gathered data directly from victims as well as criminal justice sources are consistent with the results of studies based on diocesan data alone.

The Causes and Context section of the report addresses a number of key questions:

- What explained the peak of abuse behavior in the 1970s?
- Why was the harm of sexual abuse not understood?
- Are there risk factors that might identify potential offenders?
- How has seminary education changed over this time period?
- What role did Church leadership play in addressing the abuse crisis, and when?
- What role did opportunity and situation play in the abusive behavior?

For additional information on the latest John Jay report, see the presentation *Sexual Abuse of Youth in the Catholic Church and Society: Prevalence, Context, and Future Directions*, by Karen Terry and Margaret Smith, a symposium on March 26, 2019, at the Center on Religion and Culture, Fordham University, at library.fordham.edu/crctranscripts/Reckoningpp.pdf.

Most Religious Superiors in United States Support Ordaining Women as Deacons

The Catholic website *Cruix* quotes a survey by CARA finding that the majority of U.S. Catholic religious orders believe women should be allowed to serve as ordained deacons. "Seventy-seven percent of both male and female superiors in the U.S. believe such ordination is theoretically possible, and 72 percent think the Church should go ahead and authorize it." But the study found that only 45 percent believe the Church will actually allow women deacons.

"Advocates for expanding the ministry to include women say doing so would provide women with a greater role in the ministry and governance of the Church, while also helping address the effects of the Catholic priest shortage in parts of the world by allowing women

to perform some priestly functions." On the other hand, "Opponents say ordaining women to the diaconate would signal the start of a slippery slope toward ordaining women to the priesthood."

The CARA survey of religious orders in the United States was conducted from January–May 2018. About half of the 777 religious superiors replied to written questions and follow-up from researchers. CARA said the 385 responses did "strongly resemble" the overall pool of potential respondents.

"Study: US Religious Orders Overwhelmingly Back Women Deacons," by Nicole Winfield, August 2, 2018, appears on the website of *Cruix: Taking the Catholic Pulse* (cruixnow.com).