

3.3 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIESTS AND DEACONS ACCUSED OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINOR CHILDREN

This chapter is based on survey data that describes 4,392 individual men ordained as Catholic priests or deacons. The following steps were taken to achieve that number:

- 4,627 surveys were submitted based on files of individual priests and deacons.
- 68 surveys were removed as ineligible for the study.
- 143 priests were accused of sexual abuse of minors in more than one diocese or religious community. These individuals were identified as having identically encrypted initials and birth dates. All were also confirmed by ordination year and seminary. The information about these men from multiple surveys has been collected into a single entry, and the duplicate entries deleted.
- There were 41 permanent deacons, 20 transitional deacons and 22 seminarians (who were later ordained) among the group of men accused of sexual abuse of minor children. Since there were few deacons, it should be understood that they are included when priests are mentioned.
- Not all questions were answered on each survey; *as a result, each table shows the available responses, and the total will change from table to table.*

Birth dates of the clerics accused of sexual abuse of minors during the study period span more than a century—from 1867 to 1973 (Table 3.3.1). The ordination dates show a similar range, from 1890 to 2000 (Table 3.3.2). However, the majority of men in this study were born between 1920 and 1950, and were ordained in their mid- to late-twenties. Almost 50% of these men were ordained at ages 26 or 27, and 75% were ordained between the ages of 26 and 30. The majority were ordained after 1950.

Table 3.3.1 DECADE OF BIRTH

Decade	Count	Percent	Cumulative
1860 - 1899	88	2.2%	2.2%
1900 - 1909	189	4.7%	6.9%
1910 - 1919	430	10.7%	17.6%
1920 - 1929	839	20.9%	38.5%
1930 - 1939	1049	26.1%	64.6%
1940 - 1949	1003	25.0%	89.5%
1950 - 1959	336	8.4%	97.9%
1960 - 1969	80	2.0%	99.9%
1970 - 1979	5	.1%	100.0%
Total	4019	100.0%	

The year of a priest or deacon's birth was provided for 4,019 individuals, or 91.5% of those reported in the surveys.

Table 3.3.2 DECADE OF ORDINATION

Decade	Count	Percent	Cumulative
1890 - 1919	33	.8%	.8%
1920 - 1929	79	2.0%	2.8%
1930 - 1939	245	6.1%	8.8%
1940 - 1949	501	12.4%	21.3%
1950 - 1959	931	23.1%	44.3%
1960 - 1969	1021	25.3%	69.7%
1970 - 1979	791	19.6%	89.3%
1980 - 1989	339	8.4%	97.7%
1990 - 2002	94	2.3%	100.0%
Total	4034	100.0%	

The year of ordination was provided for 4,034 priests and deacons, or 91.6% of those reported in the surveys.

Canon law establishes the age for ordination.

In 1983, Canon Law established the minimum age for ordination as 24. In earlier years, it would have been possible to be ordained to minor orders at a younger age. With respect to those ordained before the mid-1950s, we cannot be sure how those who completed the surveys understood ordination date and whether the date reported is ordination to a minor order or ordination to the priesthood.

The average age at the time of ordination of those included in this study did not change between 1880 and 1979, but has risen significantly in the last 20 years to 35 in the period between 1990 and 2002. This change in age at time of ordination, observed in this subset of all men ordained to the Catholic priesthood, is consistent with an overall trend in the Catholic Church. If all are considered, the average age at the time of ordination for a diocesan priest in this study is 28 and for a religious priest, 29.

Table 3.3.3 AGE AT TIME OF ORDINATION

Age	Count	% of Total
18 - 24	169	4.5%
25 - 29	2726	71.9%
30 - 34	616	16.3%
35 - 39	168	4.4%
40 - 49	76	2.0%
50 - 59	27	.7%
60 +	7	.2%
Total	3789	100.0%

The age at ordination was calculated by subtracting the year of birth from the year of ordination. Information on both ages was available for 4,089 priests and deacons.

Only 1% of the men in this study were married at the time an allegation of sexual abuse was made against them.

Table 3.3.4 CLERIC'S MARITAL STATUS

Status	Count	% of Total
Married	51	1.2%
Not Married	4218	98.8%
Total	4269	100.0%

The diaconate is the first stage of ordained ministry. Both married and unmarried men may be ordained as permanent deacons.

Their clerical status at the time the allegation was made is shown below in Table 3.3.5. For 42 individuals, the clerical status changed during the period covered by the accusation.

Overall, 68 % of the accused priests were diocesan priests and 23.2% were religious priests. Twelve men held the status of bishop while accused of an incident of abuse.

Table 3.3.5 CLERICAL STATUS AT TIME OF ALLEGATION

Clerical status	Count	% of Total
Diocesan Priest	2921	69.4%
Religious Priest	929	22.1%
Extern Priest	208	4.9%
Eparchian Priest	14	.3%
Transitional Deacon	19	.5%
Permanent Deacon	42	1.0%
Bishop	4	.1%
Seminarian	21	.5%
Other	51	1.2%
Totals	4210	100.0%

A small number of priests held more than one clerical position during the period of alleged abuse.

Seminarians or brothers who had been the subject of allegations before they were ordained were included in the study as long as they proceeded to ordination.

The total of 4210 shown in Table 3.3.5 is less than the overall total of 4,392 because not all survey forms provided clerical status.

As a whole, the known population of sexual offenders is older than the population of other types of offenders. However, those who have a higher number of victims and are more serious offenders tend to have an earlier age of onset. Paraphilias often develop prior to adulthood, and adult sex offenders who had sexual convictions as adolescents generally commit more offenses as adults as well as offenses that are more serious than those who were not juvenile-onset offenders

Table 3.3.6 AGE OF PRIEST AT FIRST INSTANCE OF ALLEGED ABUSE

Age in Years	Count	% of Total
18 – 24	105	3.3%
25 – 29	541	17.0%
30 – 34	718	22.6%
35 – 39	570	17.9%
40 – 44	406	12.8%
45 – 49	316	9.9%
50 – 59	345	10.9%
60 – 69	125	3.9%
70 – 90	50	1.6%
Totals	3176	100.0%

Table 3.3.7 AGE OF PRIEST AT FIRST INSTANCE OF ALLEGED ABUSE, DIOCESAN & RELIGIOUS

Age in Years	Diocesan Count	Diocesan Percent	Religious Count	Religious Percent
18 - 24	86	3.4%	18	3.1%
25 – 29	488	19.3%	45	7.7%
30 – 34	587	23.3%	112	19.2%
35 – 39	438	17.4%	123	21.1%
40 – 44	308	12.2%	89	15.3%
45 – 49	229	9.1%	77	13.2%
50 – 59	259	10.3%	75	12.9%
60 – 69	95	3.8%	28	4.8%
70 - 90	32	1.3%	15	2.6%
Total	2522	100.0%	582	100.0%

The average age of a priest at the first incident or allegation of child sexual abuse is 39 if all surveys are considered, and the median is 35. The average and median both rise gradually from late 30s to late 40s between 1950 and 2002.

Table 3.3.8 CHANGE IN AGE AT FIRST INSTANCE OF ALLEGED ABUSE, 1950 – 2002 BY DECADE

Time Period	Average Age	Median Age
1950 - 1959s	38	36
1960 - 1960s	37	35
1970 - 1970s	37	35
1980 - 1980s	42.5	39
1990 - 1990s	47	45
2000 - 2002	48	48
Overall	39	35