

3.2 SUMMARY RESULTS: PRIESTS WHO HAVE ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Priests who have allegations of sexual abuse of minors are a heterogeneous group of individuals. This is also the case with the general population of child sexual abusers, who have no consistent pattern of age, socioeconomic status, race or psychological problems. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the characteristics of these priests, including their demographic characteristics (e.g., age at time of ordination and offense), their status in the Church, any behavioral and psychological problems they have experienced and any criminal penalties resulting from the allegations of abuse.

The study produced a number of interesting findings:

- The majority of priests with allegations of abuse from 1950-2002 were ordained between the 1950s and 1970s.
- The majority of priests with allegations of abuse are diocesan. Religious priests have slightly more than half as many allegations as diocesan priests. Additionally, religious priests have fewer multiple allegations and fewer allegations of "severe" offenses (e.g., those with penetration).
- Surveys indicated that some priests with allegations of sexual abuse also showed a variety of behavioral problems, the most common of which were personality problems.
- Few incidents were reported to the police. It is possible to speculate that one reason for this is because of the delay in reporting of abuse; consequently, the abuse was alleged beyond the statutes of limitation in many instances.
- When allegations were made to the police, they were almost always investigated, and about one in three priests were charged with a crime. Overall, few priests with allegations served criminal sentences; only 3% of all priests with allegations served prison sentences. The priests with many allegations of abuse were not more likely than other priests to be charged and serve prison sentences.