

A Review of Clergy Abuse from Church Archives

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THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCUMENTS
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WE KEEP ARCHIVES TO REMIND US
HOW BAD WE WERE.

To its credit, the Roman Catholic Church has traditionally been a staunch guardian of documents and archives. In recent times—since 1985—this reverence for documents has eroded to the point where some archival documents have been deliberately destroyed or variously hidden and diverted to avoid investigation and prosecution. The crisis of sexual abuse of minors by clergy in the United States is one element that has given rise to this unfortunate trend. Certainly the protection of children will be one victim of these maneuvers because the more accurate knowledge an institution has of the process of its past workings the more astute it can be in eliminating shortcomings and instituting healthy changes.

For its own good the church needs to face the treasure trove of knowledge—however disconcerting—secreted in its archives. The sooner the better in regard to the real protection of children thereby empowering bishops to implement initiatives that go beyond statements of intention and self-protective policy.

LORD ACTON

Lord John Acton (1834-1902) was a Roman Catholic who pursued history as a critical and scientific discipline; he perceived the history of Christianity and the church as a process of change and development rather than as a fixed system of doctrine and dogma. He held that the best way to understand any human phenomenon is to study its existence as a process of development.

He is widely remembered for his saying: “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” He contributed to his field by his mastery and critical analysis of sources, especially by his investigation of documents and archives. These establish a necessary foundation of historical knowledge.

He thought that the truth about the past could only become adequately known and the historical facts established by means of exploring documents and archives.

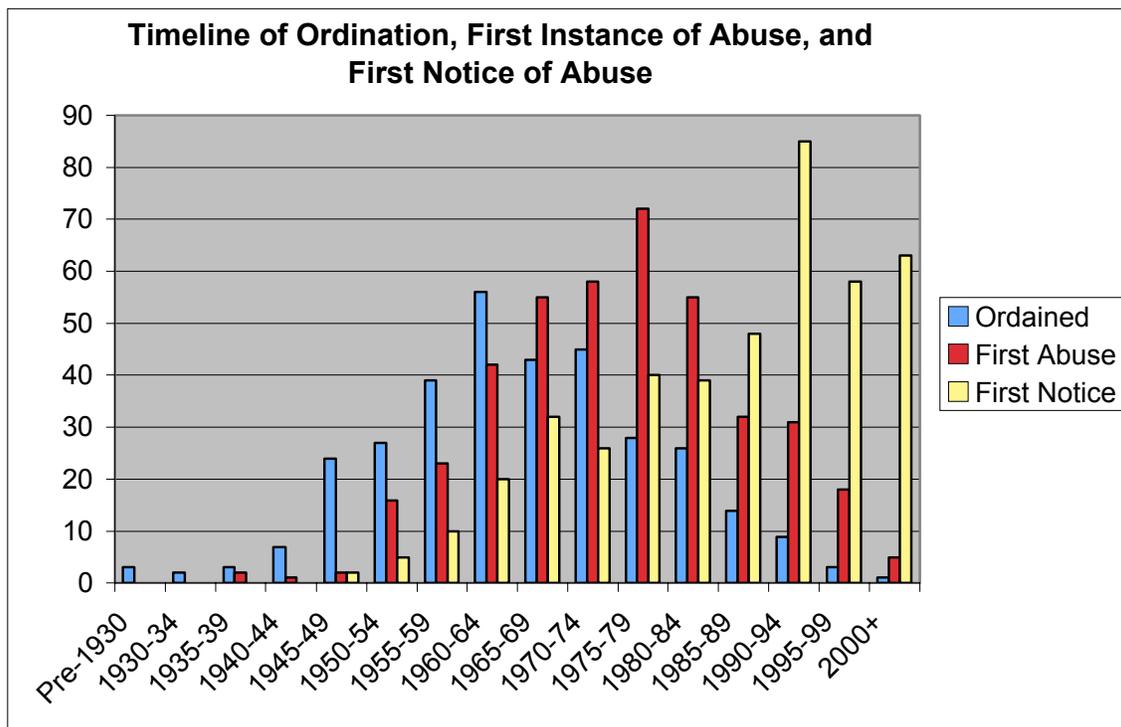
Partiality, error, and falsehood constantly distort the reality of the present and the past. He felt that the evidence of archives was the only way "to compel assent, or to crush interest or prejudice" because the power and the "enmity between the truth of history and the reason [motives] of state and official secrecy."

He told students at Cambridge University that by turning from books to manuscripts and from the library to the archive, "we exchange doubt for certainty, and become our own masters. We explore a new heaven and a new earth, and at each step forward, the world moves with us."

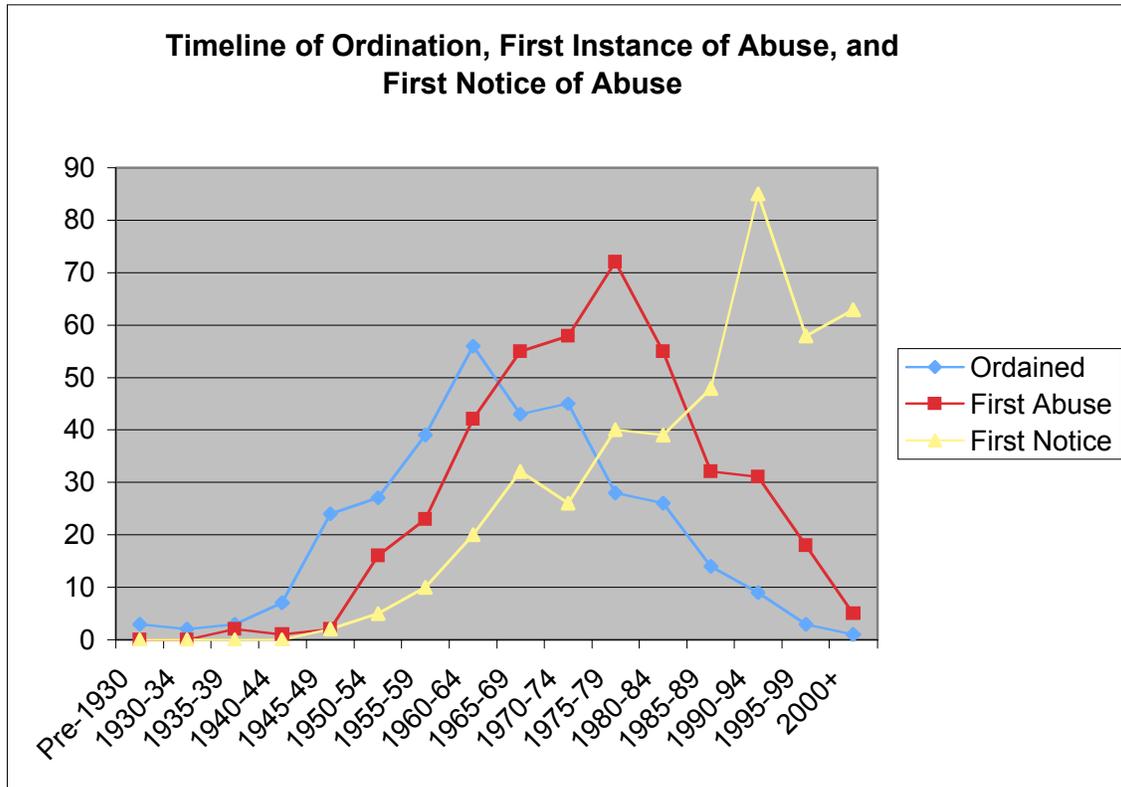
Overview of Our Data

- The following data was gathered from personnel files of ten United States dioceses.
- A total of 441 priests are represented in the following profiles.
- Largest diocese represents 102 files of priests accused of abuse; smallest diocese represents 13 files

Timeline 1



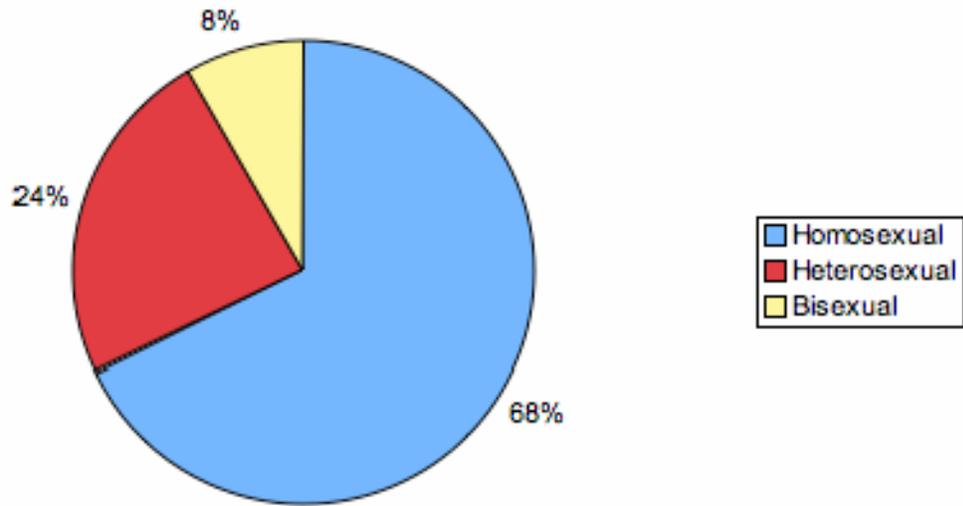
Timeline 2



Timeline Data

	Ordained	First Abuse	First Notice
Pre-1930	3	0	0
1930-34	2	0	0
1935-39	3	2	0
1940-44	7	1	0
1945-49	24	2	2
1950-54	27	16	5
1955-59	39	23	10
1960-64	56	42	20
1965-69	43	55	32
1970-74	45	58	26
1975-79	28	72	40
1980-84	26	55	39
1985-89	14	32	48
1990-94	9	31	85
1995-99	3	18	58
2000+	1	5	63

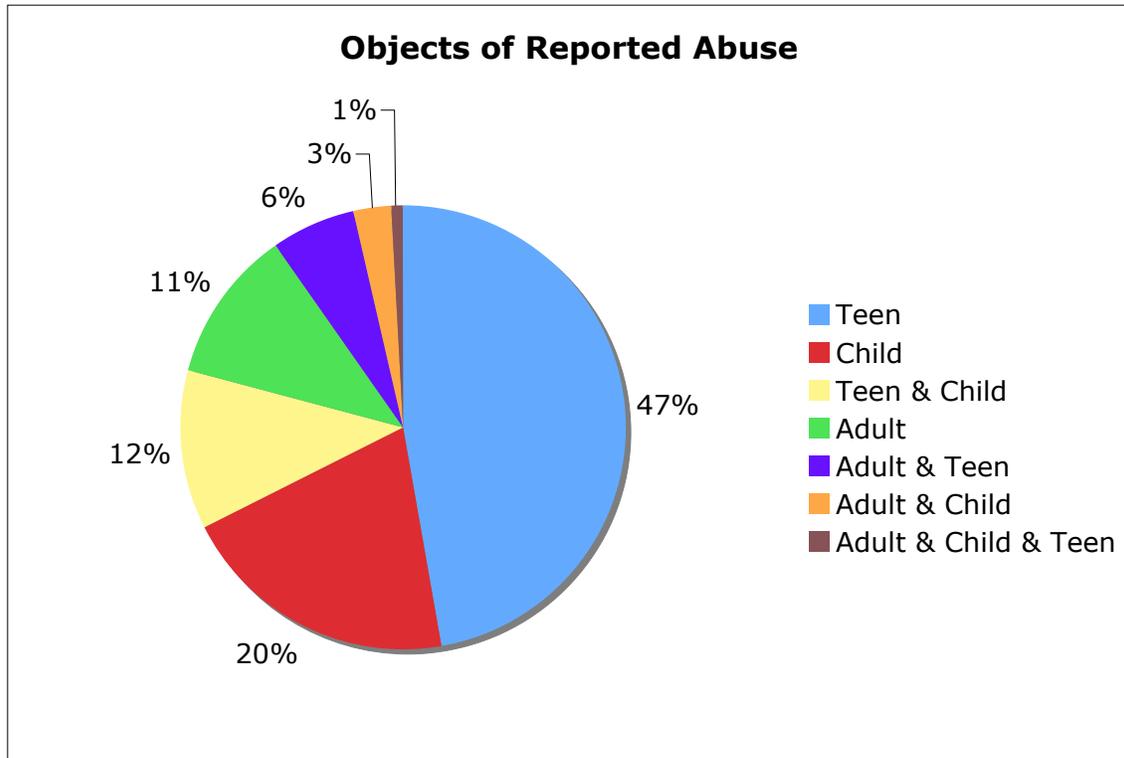
Sexual Orientation Determined by Reports of Abuse



Sexual Orientation Data

Homosexual	325
Heterosexual	115
Bisexual	40

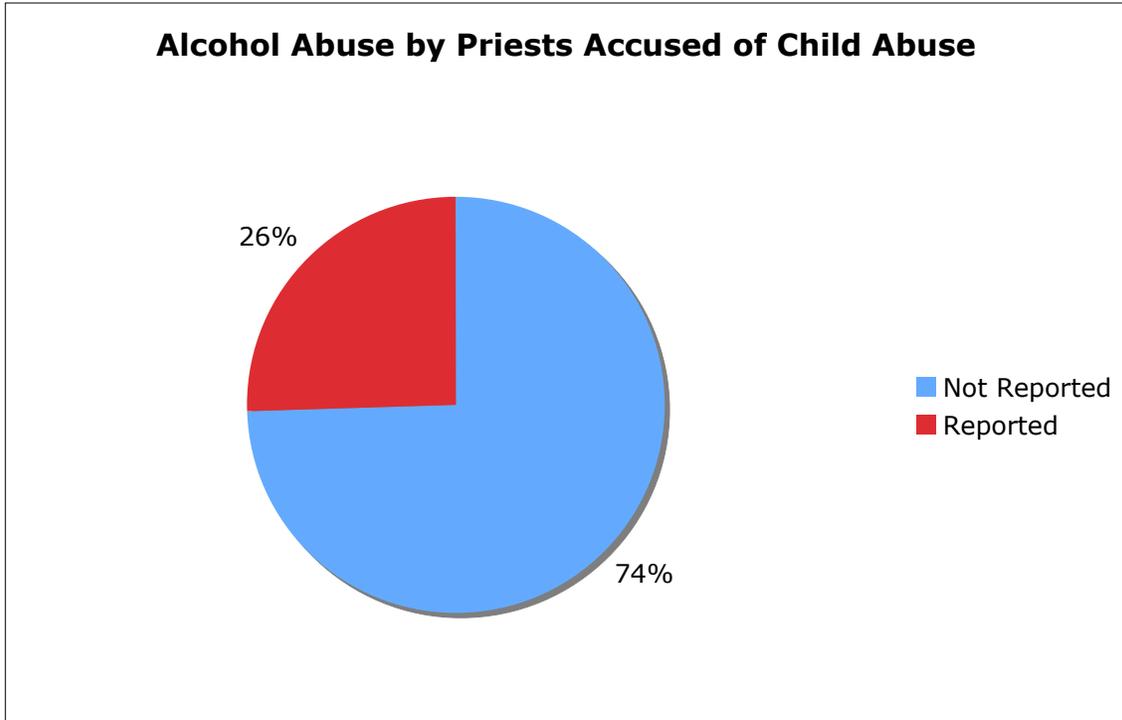
Victims of Reported Abuse



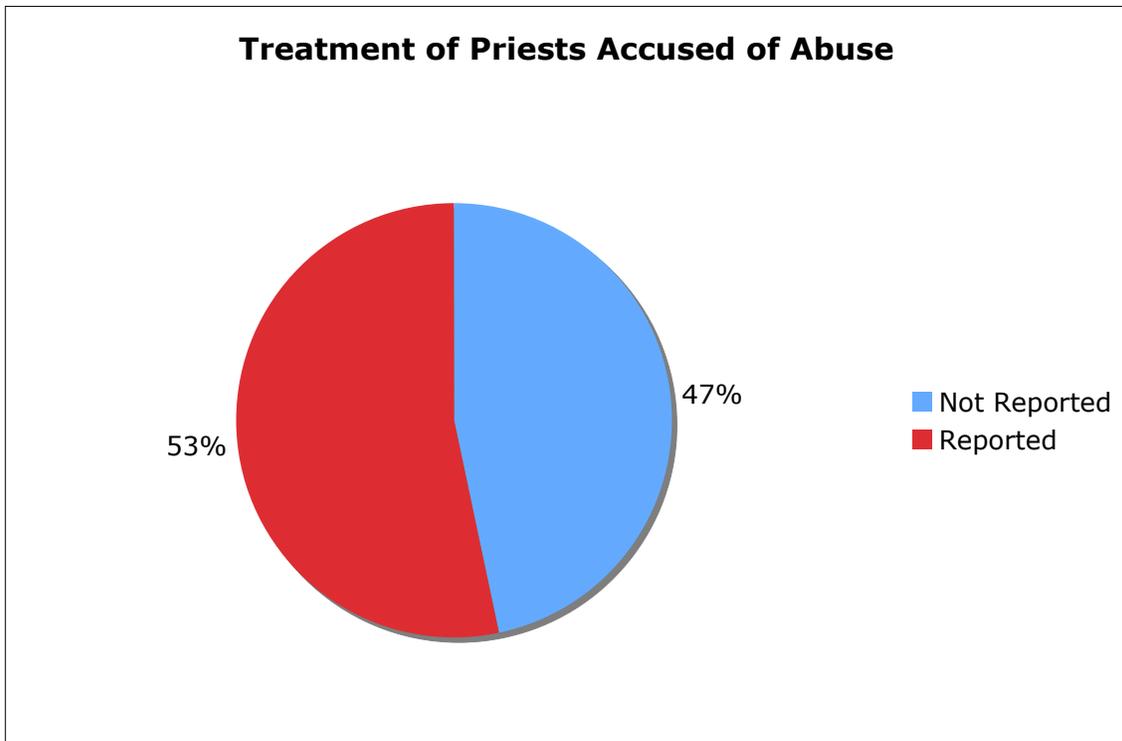
Victims of Reported Abuse Data

Teen	205
Child	87
Teen & Child	51
Adult	48
Adult & Teen	26
Adult & Child	12
Adult & Child & Teen	4

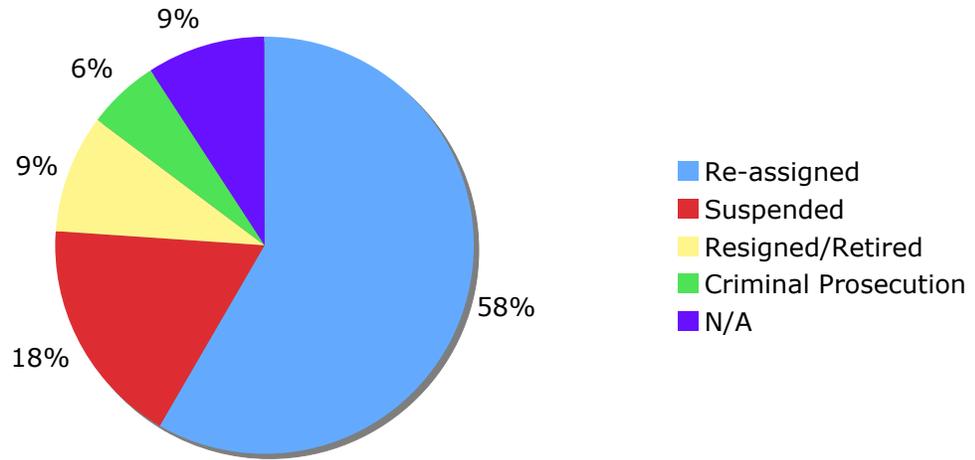
Reported Treatment



Reported Treatment



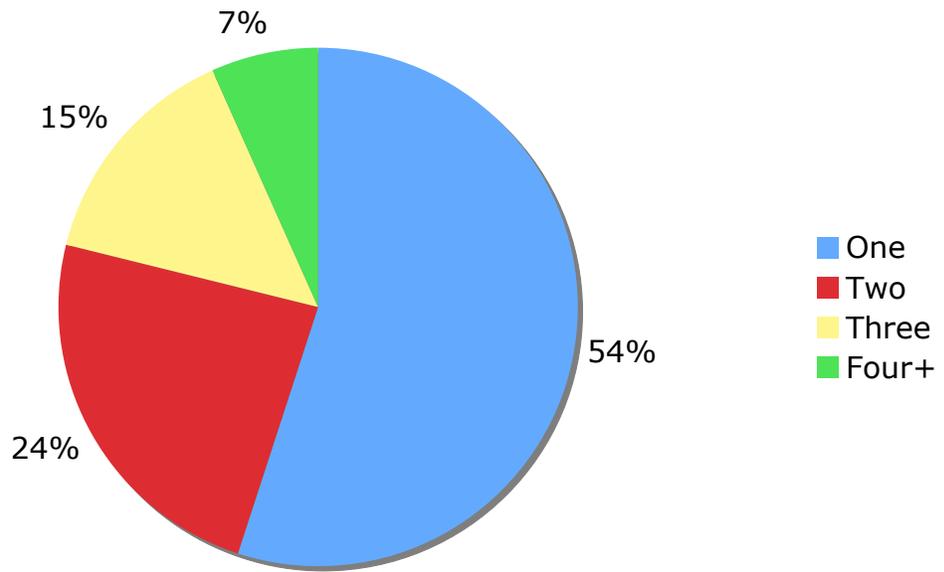
Response to First Notice of Abuse



First Notice Data

Re-assigned	264
Suspended	80
Resigned/Retired	41
Criminal Prosecution	25
N/A	42

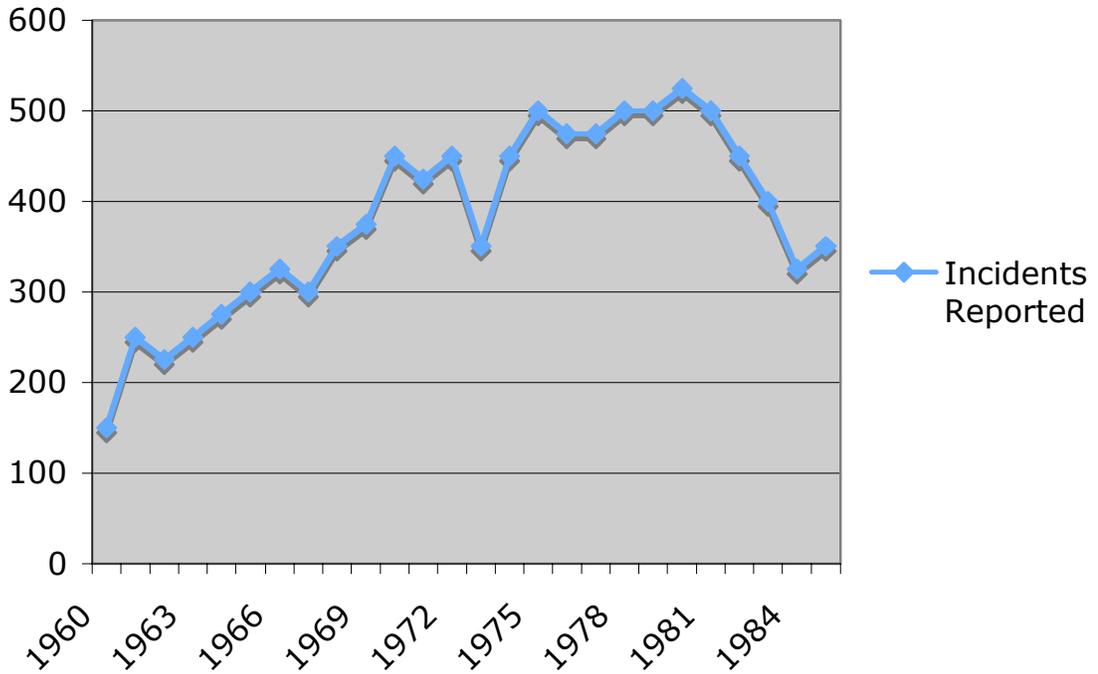
Number of Reports per Accused Priest



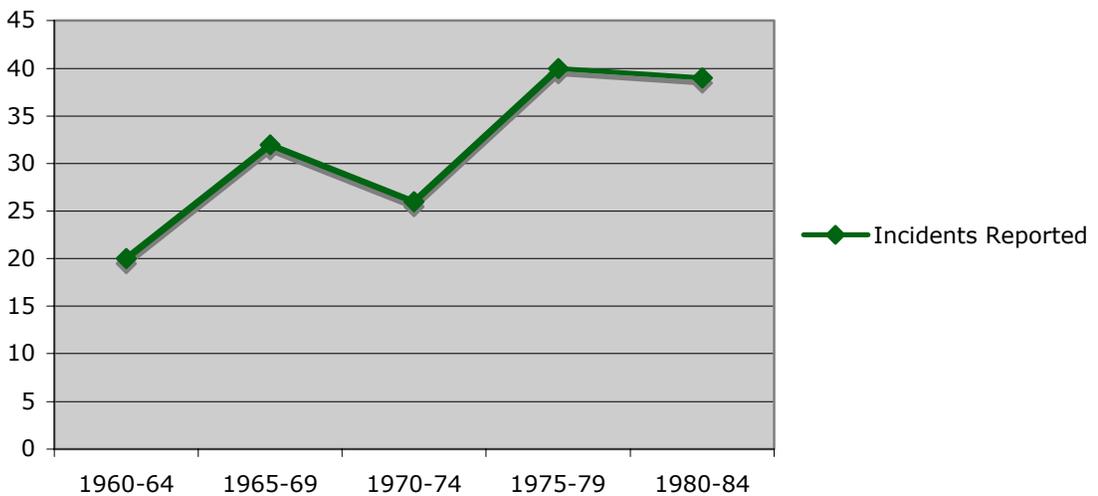
Notes

- Some of the dioceses that released information have withheld data, for instance Orange, Los Angeles, and Baltimore, which declared the names of 58 abusive priests (withholding the names of 26 deceased priests) but did not include the gender, ages of the victims, or the type of behavior. This makes analysis difficult.
- The data so far assembled from all sources indicates that the 25-year- period between 1960 and 1985 represents a 9 percent abuse rate by priests in the United States. This the most probable base line to calculate the percentage of abusing bishops and priests. (Cf. the John Jay report 2/ 27/04 and note how adding deacons increased the denominator.)
- The sexual orientations listed are projected solely on the reported behavior. This is necessarily incomplete and in some cases incorrect. The inadequacy of this data exists as well in the John Jay Study because some heterosexually oriented priests do abuse boys and some homosexual priests do abuse minor girls. Also the sexual behavior of priests who molest minors is neither always limited to that age group nor to the gender of their minor victims.
- Sexual deprivation can skew a person's sexual attractions, behavior and identity over brief or longer periods of time. Prison populations, men in isolated working circumstances, and men segregated for religious reasons give testimony to this phenomenon.
- The homosocial culture of the Catholic priesthood makes the determination of sexual orientation at times more problematic than in other social systems. This is an area of investigation sorely in need of attention.
- We have extrapolated the following information from the John Jay data as it relates to the crisis between 1960 and 1985. Of note are their figures of the number of abusing clergy in that time period that more closely responds to the more refined percentage of molesters being identified with the current (2006) data.
- The discrepancy between John Jay's projection of the ratio of gender of minor victims and the implications about the sexual orientation (homosexual to heterosexual) of the molesters is of note.

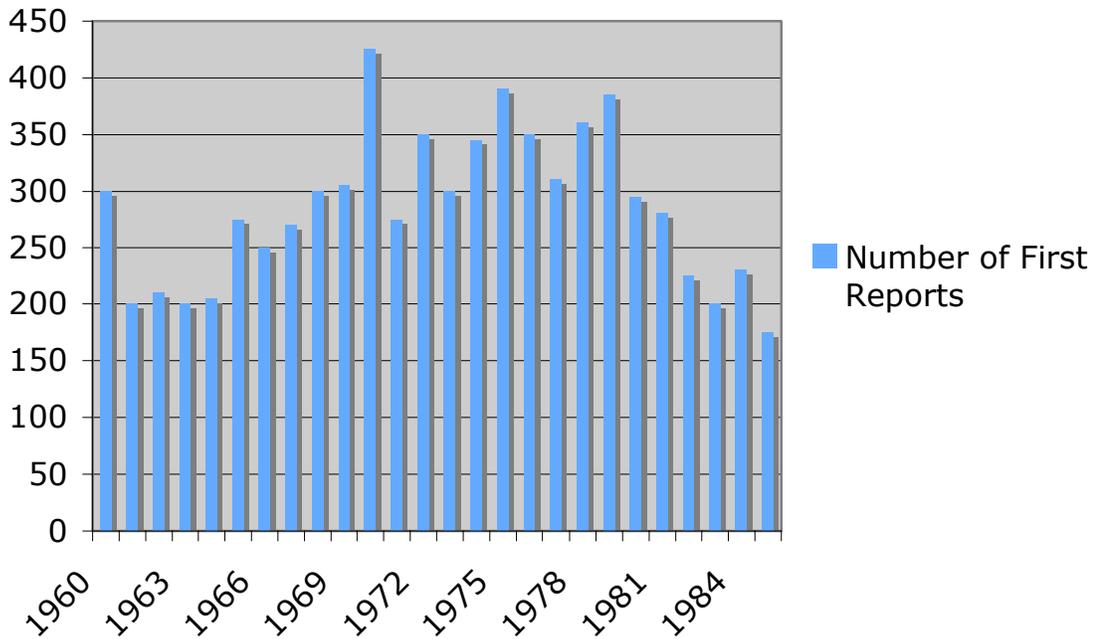
Annual Count of Incidents Reported of Priest Abuse by Year from John Jay Report, 1960-1985 (p.30)



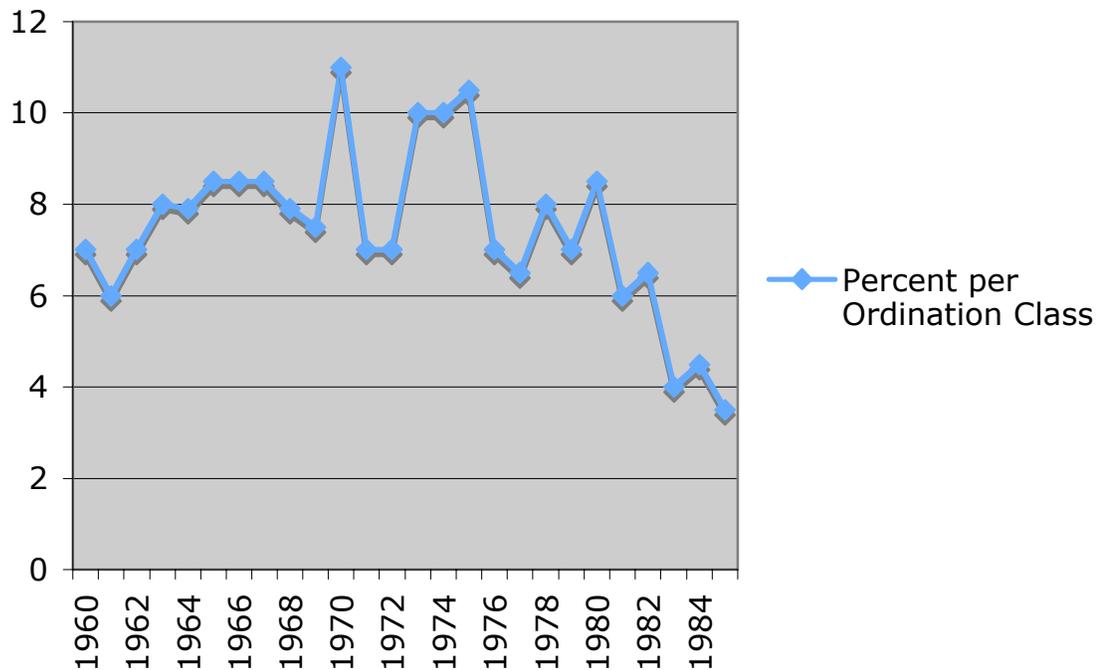
Annual Count of Incidents Reported of Priest Abuse by Year from Our Diocesan Files, 1960-1985



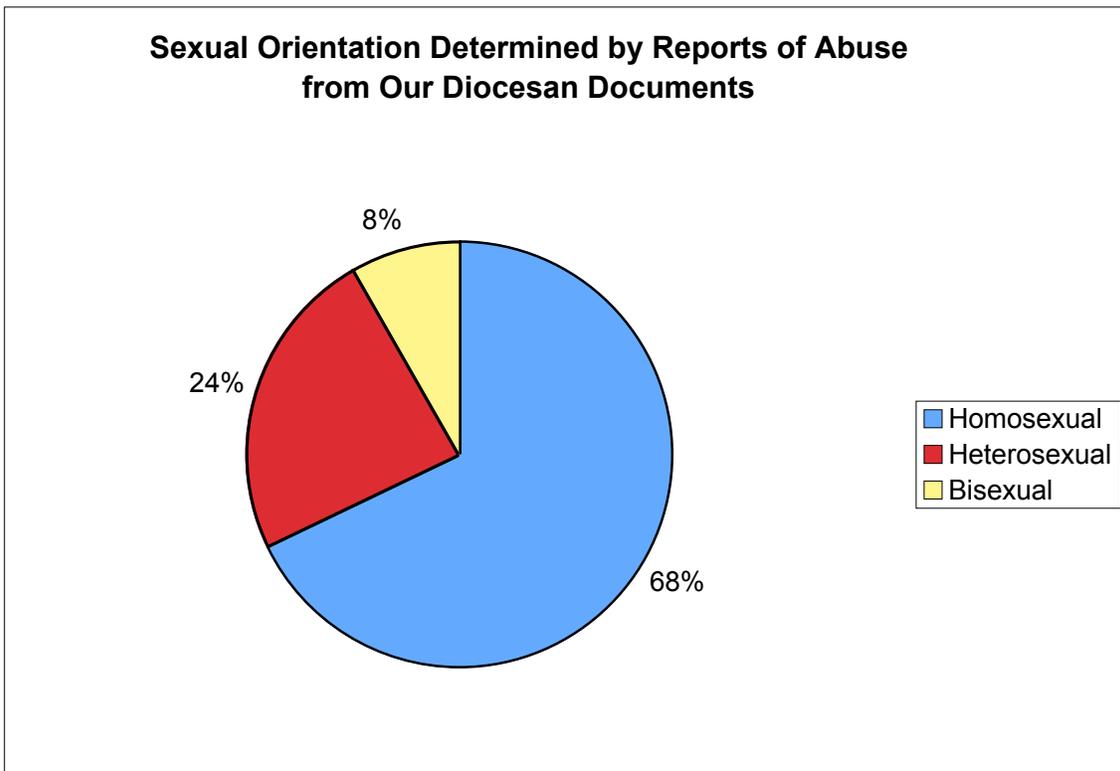
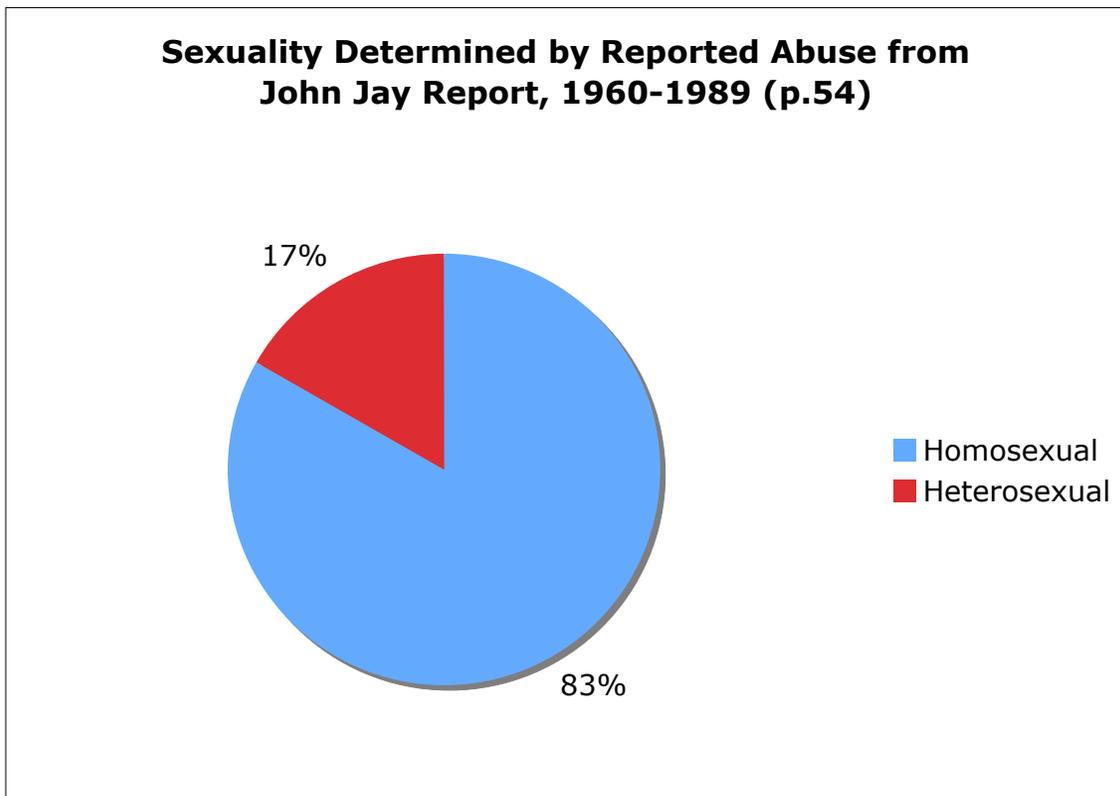
Distribution of Alleged Incidents of Abuse by Date of First Instance from the John Jay Report, 1960-1985 (p.31)



Priests Accused as a Percent of All Ordinations by Year from the John Jay Report, 1960-1985



*The Sipe Report 1980-1985 estimated that 6% of priests were involved in sexual relationships with minors during that period of time.



Looking Forward

- Clergy files from other diocese are providing more data that require analysis. Data from religious orders remain to be studied.
- Further analysis of abuser priests, including the seminary where they were educated, the bishops who supervised them, and how the clerical system develops, fosters, and hides abuse remains to be deciphered.