



Church saw sharp rise in clergy sex abuse victims who came forward last year

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By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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The number of victims who brought new claims of sexual abuse by clergy rose sharply last year, fueled in large part by a surge of allegations from Minnesota, according to a report released Thursday by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

That state temporarily lifted its statute of limitations in 2013 to allow alleged victims older than 24 to sue for past abuse, and the deadline to file such claims was in late May 2016, according to the report. The deadline is believed to have prompted a rush of last-minute filings.

The [annual report](#) from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, which covers July 2015 to June 2016, said 911 victims came forward with allegations the church deemed credible, the vast majority of which were from adults who said they were abused when they were children.

That was up from 384 in the [previous 12-month span](#), and it marked the highest total since 1,083 victims came forward in 2004, the first year the bishops conference published an annual report on the topic amid the fallout of the abuse crisis that was exposed in the early 2000s.

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“I am grateful that allegations are being reported,” Deacon Bernie Nojadera, executive director of the conference’s Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, wrote in the report. “I am grateful that alleged victims are being treated with sensitivity and care. I am grateful that alleged offenders are offered treatment and supervision. But much work is still needed.

“May God bless our victims/survivors and our endeavors toward healing, justice, and peace,” he added.

The report did not break down the number of complaints in the most recent year that came from Minnesota but said they were a “substantial portion.”

The report also noted that the November 2015 release of the movie “Spotlight,” which recounted The Boston Globe’s investigation of the clergy-abuse crisis, “helped bring the issue back into the mind of the general public.”

“As the movie illustrates, it was because of a few brave individuals who had the courage to come forward that the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church was brought to light,” the report says.

Victims who came forward during the most recent reporting year included 26 minors, the report said.

The report’s definition of “minors” included people under age 18 or anyone who “habitually lacks the use of reason.”

As of June 30, 2016, two of the 26 cases had been substantiated, while 11 had been deemed



unsubstantiated by church officials. The rest remained under investigation, the report said.

The offenders in the substantiated cases were removed from ministry, as were 26 other priests or deacons accused of past abuse, officials said.

The report did not break down the location of the allegations but said its data was based on information from all 196 diocese and eparchies of the bishops conference, which includes the Archdiocese of Boston, and from 180 of the 232 religious institutes of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.

The latest figures mean that between 1950 and June 2016, more than 18,500 people nationwide made clergy abuse allegations deemed credible by US Catholic officials, and more than 6,700 clerics have been accused of abuse, church records show.

Activists have questioned whether the church's count of clergy sex abuse victims is lower than the actual total.

The abuse crisis has cost the church billions of dollars.

Between 1950 and June 2016, about \$3.7 billion was spent on settlement-related costs, including \$141 million during the most recent year, according to the church.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele).

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