

Summary of Selected Findings

Making Safe Places: Understanding Female Survivors of Clergy Sexual Abuse

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National Survey

Conducted March-May 2015

280 Respondents

(Inclusion criteria, women who were abused age 16 or older at time of abuse,
and at least 18 at time of survey)

The Survivors

- Survivors from 42 States participated
- Average age of respondent at time of survey = 47
- Average length of abuse **4 years**
- Average age abuse started = 30
- Average times abused = 93
- Race
 - 83% Caucasian
 - 9% African American
 - 3% Hispanic
 - 2% Asian
 - 3% Other
- Marital Status
 - Married 65%
 - Single Never Married 15%
 - Single Divorced 17%
 - Separated 3%

The Perpetrator

- Average age of abuser = 45
- Only 4% of perpetrators prosecuted
- Marital Status of Abuser
 - Married 88%
 - Single 8%
 - Divorced 3%
 - Separated 1%

Most Common Behaviors of Abuse

50% reported flirting, staring, and seductive behavior

50% reported invitation to private meetings

46% reported sexual talk and conversation

43% reported sexual touch

Experiences in the Congregation

75% Agree or Strongly Agree that the congregation felt safe before the abuse started
62% Agree or Strongly Agree that they were being counseled by the church leader (when abuse started)
52% Agree or Strongly Agree that they were blamed by members of their congregation
50% Agree or Strongly Agree that they felt supported by someone in the congregation after they made the abuse known
48% Agree or Strongly Agree that the way they were treated by the congregation after the abuse was made known was worse than the abuse
45% Agree or Strongly Agree that people in the congregation could have intervened or stopped the abuse
57% Agree or Strongly Agree that at least one person in the congregation tried to understand their experience of being victimized
Only 8% Agree or Strongly Agree that their church supported them after the abuse occurred

About the Survivor

65% Agree or Strongly Agree that they are currently a part of a congregation
65% Agree or Strongly Agree that they had unprocessed/unresolved trauma prior to the abuse
65% Agree or Strongly Agree that they were blamed for the abuse
78% Agree or Strongly Agree that they are healing or getting better
55% Agree or Strongly Agree that they are stronger after the abuse
35% Agree or Strongly Agree that they have recovered from the abuse
8% Agree or Strongly Agree that the perpetrator apologized to them

God and Spiritual Life

50% Agree or Strongly Agree that their experience with the church after the abuse negatively affected their relationship with God
80% Agree or Strongly Agree that their experience with the church after the abuse negatively affected their spiritual life
65% Agree or Strongly Agree that their faith in God helped them get through the abuse

Church Policy and Reporting

7% Agree or Strongly Agree that their church had a policy in place to help support them
33% Agree or Strongly Agree when they reported the abuse they were believed
9% Agree or Strongly Agree the church was helpful when they reported the abuse
15% Agree or Strongly Agree that their church/denomination thoroughly investigated the report

11% Agree or Strongly Agree that their church openly communicated with them during the investigation