

**Actions of the Church in Poland
Concerning the Protection of Minors
and Assistance to Victims of Sexual Abuse**

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Actions of the Church in Poland Concerning the Protection of Minors and Assistance to Victims of Sexual Abuse



Polish Bishops' Conference 2021

Editorial board:

Office of the PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth
the Polish Bishops' Conference Saint Joseph Foundation

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Introduction



Violence against children and harm to them should never happen. Together – the Church community, society, state institutions as well as the media – let us do everything possible to be more sensitive to the suffering of children and to appropriately react to even the smallest sign that they may be in harm's way.

– “Let's be sensitive to the safety of children and youth” Position of the Polish Bishops' Conference on the protection of children and youth (363. PBC Plenary Meeting, 9/10/2013)

We apologize to God, to the victims of abuse, to their families and to the community of the Church for all the harm inflicted on children, youth and their loved ones by the clergy, consecrated persons and lay Church workers. We ask the Lord to give us light, strength and courage to firmly combat the moral and spiritual corruption that is the primary source of sexual abuse of minors.

– Position of the Polish Bishops' Conference on the sexual abuse of minors by certain clergy members (381. PBC Plenary Meeting, 19/11/2018)

There is no place among the clergy for people who sexually abuse minors. There can be no agreement to conceal their crimes. We prosecute the perpetrators in order to support the work of good priests and, together with them, help all the faithful to discover God's love.

– Statement by Archbishop Wojciech Polak, the PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth (16/05/2020)

The actions of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland with regard to the prevention of sexual abuse of minors and assistance to victims are based on existing basic structures in dioceses and religious orders, reporting directly to the bishop or religious superior. The Polish Bishops' Conference PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth acting in agreement with the PBC Coordinator for the Protection of Children and Youth are responsible for actions in this area at a national level across Poland. The Child Protection Centre, operating since 2014 at the Ignatianum Academy in Krakow, supports dioceses and religious congregations in developing sexual abuse prevention and response systems. Moreover, in 2019 the Polish Bishops' Conference established the PBC Saint Joseph Foundation whose task is to assist persons abused by the clergy members while supporting existing and initiating new actions for the protection of minors within local structures.

For many years, the Polish Bishops' Conference (PBC) has been taking actions to eliminate sexual abuse crimes among the clergy. Guidelines regarding responding to notifications of potential criminal acts were developed in close cooperation with Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis.

In addition, statistical studies have been carried out concerning sexual abuse of minors in the Church. At the request of the Polish Bishops' Conference, the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics SAC has conducted two research initiatives jointly comprising notifications from 1990 to 2020.

Timeline

2007

beginning of the work of the Polish Bishops' Conference on the first guidelines for the protection of children and youth

06.2009

the Polish Bishops' Conference adopts detailed guidelines on the ecclesiastical treatment of accusations against the clergy of sexual harassment of persons under the age of 18

03.2012

new version of **"Guidelines"** (developed in accordance with the circular of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) adopted by the Polish Bishops' Conference

06.2013

the Polish Bishops' Conference appoints the PBC Coordinator for the Protection of Children and Youth – Fr. Adam Żak SJ

10.2013

the Polish Bishops' Conference approves annexes to **"Guidelines"**:

Annex no 1. Assistance to victims
Annex no 2. Procedures to follow
Annex no 3. Principles of formation and prevention

Publication of the Position of the Polish Bishops' Conference concerning the protection of children and youth "Let's be vigilant regarding the safety of children and youth"

03.2014

founding of the Child Protection Centre (CPC) at the Ignatianum Academy on the initiative of the PBC Coordinator

international conference: “How to understand and respond adequately to the sexual abuse of minors in the Church” (Krakow, Ignatianum Academy)

06.2014

Poland’s first nationwide penitential liturgy for the sins and crimes of sexual abuse in the Church (Krakow, Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus)

06.2014

10.2014

documents published by the Polish Bishops’ Conference:

- “Guidelines for Initial Canonical Investigations in Cases Involving Clergy are Accused of Acts Against the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue with a Minor Under the Age of Eighteen”
- “Prevention of Sexual Abuse Against Children and Youth and the Disabled in the Pastoral and Educational Work of the Church in Poland”

2015

the Holy See approves the “PBC Guidelines” and the document on prevention

2015

the appointment and training of delegates for the protection of children and youth in dioceses and religious orders; appointment and training of pastoral workers of abused persons and their families

10.2016 **06.2017**

in response to Pope Francis' appeal, the Polish Bishops' Conference establishes the first Friday of Lent as a day of prayer and penance for the sin of sexual abuse of minors

revision of "Guidelines" (related to a change in state law requiring the reporting of abuse of minors under the age of 15 under criminal sanction)

08.2018

the decision by diocesan bishops to develop a prevention programme for each Polish diocese

11.2018

"Position of the Polish Bishops' Conference on the Sexual Abuse of Minors by Certain Clergy Members" is published

the Polish Bishops' Conference appoints a PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth – Archbishop Wojciech Polak

03.2019

03.2019

the first presentation based on the commission of the Polish Bishops' Conference showing research findings concerning the years 1990-2018 on cases of sexual abuse reported to dioceses and male religious orders

06.2019

the Office of the PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth commences its work in the building of the Secretariat of the Polish Bishops' Conference

during the plenary meeting, bishops meet Archbishop Charles Scicluna, the second secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who has been dealing with the issue of sexual abuse in the Church for many years

09.2019

10.2019

the Polish Bishops' Conference establishes the PBC Saint Joseph Foundation

10.2019

another revision of "Guidelines" (taking into account the recommendations of VELM)

12.2019

meeting of pastoral workers of victims with the PBC Delegate

appointment of supervisors for the protection of children and youth in dioceses and religious orders

09.2020

10.2020

publication of legal documents of the Holy See and the Polish Bishops' Conference ("The Church's Response to the Tragedy of Sexual Abuse. The Legal Aspect", pl. „Odpowiedź Kościoła na dramat wykorzystania seksualnego. Aspekt prawny” Apostolicum 2020)

12.2020

launch of the website zgloskrzywde.pl, a guide for people who have been abused or have knowledge of the abuse of others; Saint Joseph Foundation launches a call-in service

01.2021

session of the Catholic News Agency "Building a System in the Church in Poland Against the Sexual Abuse of Minors"; presentation of in-depth results of research findings concerning the years 1990-2018

- publication of a guide for confessors („Confessor in the Face of the Tragedy of Sexual Abuse. A Guide” pl. „Spowiednik wobec dramatu wykorzystania seksualnego. Poradnik”, WAM 2021)
- international conference: “Our Common Mission of Safeguarding God’s Children” (Warsaw), organised on the initiative of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in collaboration with the PBC

02.2021

on the occasion of the Day of Prayer and Repentance for sin of the sexual abuse of minors, the website wspolnotazezranionymi.pl is launched with information on the spiritual and pastoral assistance available to victims

03.2021

the first report on the functioning of the system of protection of minors in the Church in Poland is published (for 2020)

- the Polish Bishops’ Conference appoints a working team for contact with the State Commission on Paedophilia
- male religious orders enter into cooperation with the PBC Saint Joseph Foundation

03.2021

launch of a joint project of the National Centre for Pastoral Assistance to Families and the Saint Joseph Foundation (training for specialists and diocesan family life counsellors, specialised studies)

05.2021

06.2021

the Polish Bishops’ Conference endorses Marta Titaniec as the President of the PBC Saint Joseph Foundation

06.2021

presentation of the findings of the second research study on cases of sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church reported from 1 July 2018 to the end of 2020

09.2021

System of Protection of Minors and Assistance for Victims of Sexual Abuse in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland



PBC DELEGATE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

PBC COORDINATOR

BASIC STRUCTURES

EXECUTIVE AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

EXPERT STRUCTURES



Office of the PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth



Saint Joseph Foundation of the Polish Bishops' Conference

• SJF Coordinators



Delegates



Pastoral workers



Supervisors



Responsible for prevention



Centre for Child Protection



Permanent and ad hoc expert groups

- Institute for Catholic Church Statistics SAC
- Legal group of the PBC Delegate
- PBC Team to contact the State Commission for Paedophilia

The National Level in Poland

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The PBC Delegate and his Office



PBC DELEGATE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Archbishop Wojciech Polak
Metropolitan Bishop of Gniezno and the Primate of Poland

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Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, PBC President



„The Decision of the Polish Bishops’ Conference concerning the appointment of this function stems from the concern of Polish bishops for the protection of minors and is the result of the profound desire of the entire Polish Bishops’ Conference to implement even more far-reaching initiatives in this regard.”

03.2019

Appointment of the PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth

– Archbishop Wojciech Polak

He carries out his tasks with the assistance of the Office of the PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth and the support of the Legal Working Group of the PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth.

The PBC Delegate is responsible for legal and canonical aspects as well as the organisational and communication aspects of the system of protection of children and youth against sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland.

Statement by the PBC Delegate, 16/05/2020



I would like to thank the victims who chose to speak out about the abuse they suffered. I urge anyone who has knowledge of any sexual abuse of a minor to remember that they are obliged by conscience – and the law – to report it.

Tasks of the PBC Delegate and his Office:

1. working out and implementing systemic solutions for the Church in Poland that serve the protection of minors and help the victims

- work on the establishment of the PBC Saint Joseph Foundation and establishing cooperation with male religious orders; chairing the Foundation Council
- directing the work of the Team for contact with the State Commission on Paedophilia, appointed by the Polish Bishops' Conference
- preparation of pastoral materials for the Day of Prayer and Repentance for the sin of sexual abuse, coordination of events at the national level

2. monitoring the assistance system at the national level

- investigation of cases of sexual abuse of minors in the Church, carried out by the ISKK (Institute for Catholic Church Statistics): 2 research studies, 1 in-depth analysis
- regular meetings with diocesan and religious delegates, pastoral workers, supervisors and coordinators of the Saint Joseph Foundation

3. individual assistance to victims

- individual interviews
- legal assistance in submitting notifications to the Holy See in accordance with the *motu proprio* „Vos estis lux mundi” of Pope Francis

4. intra-church communication

- presentation of issues related to the protection of minors, primarily during the plenary meetings of the Polish Bishops' Conference
- reactions to inappropriate statements by the clergy on the issue of sexual abuse in the Church

5. external communications, contact with the media

- communications and statements, inter alia
 - after the release of the film „Hide-and-seeK” (Pl. “Zabawa w chowanego”) and in response to allegations concerning the notification of the PBC Delegate to the Holy See
 - concerning doubts about making Church files available to the State Commission on Paedophilia and inaccuracies in its report
- press conferences

6. publications

- introductions to books on sexual abuse in the Church
- publication of the collection of legal documents of the Holy See and the Polish Bishops' Conference

The PBC Coordinator



PBC COORDINATOR FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Fr. Adam Żak SJ

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e-mail: adam.zak@ignatianum.edu.pl

06.2013

Appointment of the PBC Coordinator for the Protection of Children and Youth

– Fr. Adam Żak SJ

The PBC Coordinator is responsible for the substantive aspect of the system of protection of children and youth against sexual abuse in the Polish Church.

He shall ensure that all actions taken are professional, relevant and appropriate to the needs, and that the persons undertaking them are competent. In particular, his tasks include:

1. indicating the directions the system should follow

- developing a strategy of protection of children and youth
- suggesting new areas and ways of taking action, e.g. appointing probation officers, prevention of abuse in Catholic schools, in work with disabled people, preparation of training programmes in the e-learning system for religious group leaders
- 2014 – collecting the first data concerning cases of sexual abuse of minors by certain clergymen and consecrated persons over the period of 1990–2013

2. overseeing the content quality of actions, training sessions, workshops, publications, etc. carried out within the system (in close cooperation with the Child Protection Centre)

- providing opinions, evaluations, indicating the heads and reviewers, etc.
- training supervisors of indicted and convicted clergy members
- numerous training sessions in dioceses (priests, seminarians, catechist), religious congregations and communities

3. counselling and mentoring for entities making up the protection system

- support in creating the Regional Consultation Point for the Victims in the Church in Poznan
- counselling for the team of pastoral workers of victims

4. proposing candidates for advisory bodies appointed by the PBC Delegate

5. coordinating the efforts of the working teams of delegates, pastoral workers, supervisors and those responsible for prevention in dioceses and religious congregations (Pre-Council at the PBC Delegate)

SJF (Saint Joseph Foundation) and its Coordinators



THE POLISH BISHOPS' CONFERENCE SAINT JOSEPH FOUNDATION

President of the Board: [Marta Titaniec](#)

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The Saint Joseph Foundation supports people who have been sexually abused in childhood or adolescence in the community of the Church. It supports the building of diocesan and religious structures responsible for the prevention of abuse and providing assistance to the victims.

10.2019

|
The Polish Bishops' Conference establishes the Foundation

01.2020

|
Formal launch of activities – registration in the Polish National Court Register (KRS)

The Foundation Council is a body responsible for supervision and providing opinions. It is composed of both clergy and lay people.

Activities of the PBC Saint Joseph Foundation:

- financed from funds transferred by particular dioceses proportionally to the number of bishops and priests belonging to them (contributions set by the PBC: PLN 2 000 per bishop and PLN 150 per presbyter)
- moreover, male orders contribute to the fund proportionally with regard to the number of ordained members

Saint Joseph Foundation coordinators have been appointed in dioceses and religious orders to help people and institutions in local churches obtain funds from the Foundation.

The database of diocesan and religious order coordinators, as well as the rules under which SJF provides assistance, are described in the grant regulations which are available on fsj.org.pl.

EXTERNAL PROJECTS

professionalisation of structures and institutional support

- professionalisation of people working in the Church in the area of protection of children and youth (delegates, pastoral workers, supervisors, therapists, psychologists, etc.)
- the Child Protection Centre activities
- Regional Consultation Points for the Victims in the Church (Poznan, Lublin, Gdansk)
- support groups for victims of sexual abuse in the Church (Warsaw, Krakow)
- support for therapists working in Church family counselling centres in cooperation with the National Centre for Family Pastoral Care of the Polish Bishops' Conference
- supporting the projects of the initiative "Wounded in the Church" (pl. "Zranieni w Kościele")
- initiatives of lay Catholics for victims of sexual abuse

individual support for the victims

- covering the financial cost of therapy for victims
- covering the financial cost of educational assistance (gaining vocational education, possibility to complete studies)
- legal assistance in court trials against clerical perpetrators

OWN PROJECTS

12.2020

|

launching www.zgloskrzywde.pl

The **website** provides basic information about support for the victims, their rights, reporting procedures and how to respond to possible negligence by Church authorities.

Comments on the Church's reporting system and the victims' support system can be submitted by phone or by email:

phone.: +48 571 805 535 – Tue 9.00 am – 1.00 pm / Wed 5.00 pm – 9.00 pm /
Thu 5.00 pm – 9.00 pm

e-mail: zgloskrzywde@fsj.org.pl

04.2021

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launching www.wspolnotazeranionymi.pl

The website, which is run in cooperation with pastoral workers of the victims, contains pastoral materials to help organise prayers for the victims.

PUBLICATIONS

“The Church’s Response to the Tragedy of Sexual Abuse. The Legal Aspect”

pl. “Odpowiedź Kościoła na dramat wykorzystania seksualnego. Aspekt prawny”
red. Rev. Piotr Studnicki, Marta Dalgiewicz
Apostolicum 2020

„Confessor in the Face of the Tragedy of Sexual Abuse. A Guide”

pl. „Spowiednik wobec dramatu wykorzystania seksualnego. Poradnik”
Rev. Tomasz Liszewski, Rev. Krzysztof Matuszewski
WAM 2021

ODPOWIEDŹ KOŚCIOŁA

aspekt prawny

na dramat
wykorzystania
seksualnego
małoletnich

dokumenty | komentarze

Spowiednik
wobec dramatu
wykorzystania
seksualnego

PORADNIK



ks. Tomasz Liszewski
ks. Krzysztof Matuszewski

Wydawnictwo NAM

The CPC



THE CHILD PROTECTION CENTRE

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03.2014

|

Establishing the Child Protection Centre
at the Ignatianum Academy in Krakow
on the initiative of the PBC Coordinator

The CPC supports the child and youth protection system through educational and conceptual activities:

- developing new prevention programmes, support materials, etc.
- developing training programmes for different target groups, running them or supporting others in running them, either in terms of content or staff
- evaluation of training programmes and training courses
- providing superintendent and expert assistance to system entities
- conducting postgraduate studies on the protection of children and Youth against sexual abuse
- research and scientific activities
- international cooperation, inter alia through participation in the Global Safeguarding Alliance

05.2020

launching the e-mail address pomocod@ignatianum.edu.pl for people who are struggling with the consequences of sexual abuse in their youth in the Church

11.2020

The CPC co-created the Global Safeguarding Alliance (GSA) – an alliance of 8 Catholic academic institutions working across all continents in the field of child protection (a voluntary association of academic, teaching and research institutions, as well as practice-oriented professional schools and individual experts)

The Local Level

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Delegates

Appointed in dioceses and religious order provinces, the **DELEGATES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH** are authorized by the bishop or religious superior to:

- receive reports of sexual abuse of minors
- initiate the appropriate measures and help for victims of sexual abuse to receive adequate psychological, legal and pastoral support

50 delegates in dioceses (46 priests, 1 nun, 3 laypersons)

66 delegates in religious orders (64 priests and monks, 1 nun, 1 layperson)

The Office of the Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth is „a stable system, easily accessible to anyone for the purpose of filing a report”.

(recommended by the Holy See – VELM, Art. 2)

- The full database can be found on ochrona.episkopat.pl and cod.ignatianum.edu.pl
- The data of the delegates for the protection of children and Youth and the pastoral workers of the victims are also available on wspolnotazezranionymi.pl and zgloskrzywde.pl

The CPC organises regular training sessions for delegates to keep their knowledge up-to-date.

Pastoral Workers

In dioceses and religious congregations, **PASTORAL WORKERS OF THE VICTIMS** provide pastoral care and spiritual support to:

- victims of sexual abuse
- relatives of the victims
- communities affected by sexual depravity

43 pastoral workers across dioceses

27 pastoral workers across religious congregations

Prayer initiatives undertaken:

- **Day of prayer and penance for the sin of sexual abuse** – celebrated at the initiative of Pope Francis and designated as the first Friday of Lent in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland
- **Prayer for the Victims in the Church** – organised recurrently from June 2019 on the initiative of lay Catholics in Krakow. The event includes prayer for the victims (adoration, Mass) and a meeting in the form of a testimony or lecture
- **ANASTASIS – a space of prayer for the victims, their relatives and supporters** – an initiative of the pastoral workers of the victims of the Archdiocese of Krakow and lay people, gathering monthly in the Sanctuary of Saint John Paul II in Krakow.

Contact details for pastoral workers of the victims as well as prayers, testimonies of the victims and other pastoral materials can be found, among others, on wspolnotazezranionymi.pl.

Supervisors

SUPERVISORS of clergy members suspected, accused, convicted or acquitted of the crime of sexual abuse of minors:

- establish a „safety plan”
- accompany a clergy members who has been accused of sexual abuse from the time of the accusation until the conclusion of the trial
- following any conviction, a new safety plan is agreed upon, taking into account the findings of the trial.

The goal of the supervisors is to help the defendant understand and adhere to the restrictions imposed on him and, after trial and sentencing is carried out, to help him change his life and behaviour so that he will never hurt anyone again.

52 supervisors across dioceses

34 supervisors across religious orders

The first training session for supervisors was conducted in December 2020 by the Child Protection Centre together with the PBC Coordinator Fr. Adam Žak SJ (in collaboration with the PBC Delegate's Office and with financial support from the PBC Saint Joseph Foundation).

Prevention

June 2014

Adoption of the document „Prevention of Sexual Abuse Against Children and Youth and the Disabled in the Pastoral and Educational Work of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland”

August 2018

The Council of Diocesan Bishops decided that each diocese should develop its own (or a common one within a metropolis) programme for the prevention of crimes of sexual abuse against children and youth

Diocesan documents on prevention – 36 (covering 39 dioceses)

available on the dioceses’ websites

Documents on prevention principles are also developed by religious congregations, both male and female.

Fr. Adam Źak SJ, the PBC Coordinator for the Protection of Children and Youth, is responsible for prevention activities on a national scale.

The Child Protection Centre under his direction:

- launched a postgraduate programme „The prevention of sexual violence against children and youth”
- conducts training sessions on the prevention of sexual abuse, the mature experience of sexuality and the protection of children and youth (for priests, catechists, community leaders, religious congregations)
- develops prevention programmes and projects:
 - for people with disabilities
 - in Catholic schools
 - for young leaders of youth groups (e-learning)

Research Studies and Statistics

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Research Studies and Statistics

2018

the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics SAC in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Polish Bishops' Conference and the Conference of Major Superiors of Male Congregations conducts a research study covering a period of almost 28 years (from 1 January 1990 to 30 June 2018)

14 March 2019

the results of the first ever Roman Catholic Church research in Poland on cases of sexual abuse of minors reported from 1 January 1990 to 30 June 2018 are published

„The published data, on the one hand, once again emphasise, above all, the need to surround the victims with care and assistance and, on the other hand, demand the continuation of the fight against the abuse of minors by Church people.”

– Communication from the 382. Plenary Meeting of the Polish Bishops' Conference, 14/03/2019

2021

a second research study is conducted according to a new methodology developed by the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics in collaboration with the PBC Coordinator and the Office of the PBC Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth (1 July 2018 - 31 December 2020)

28 June 2021

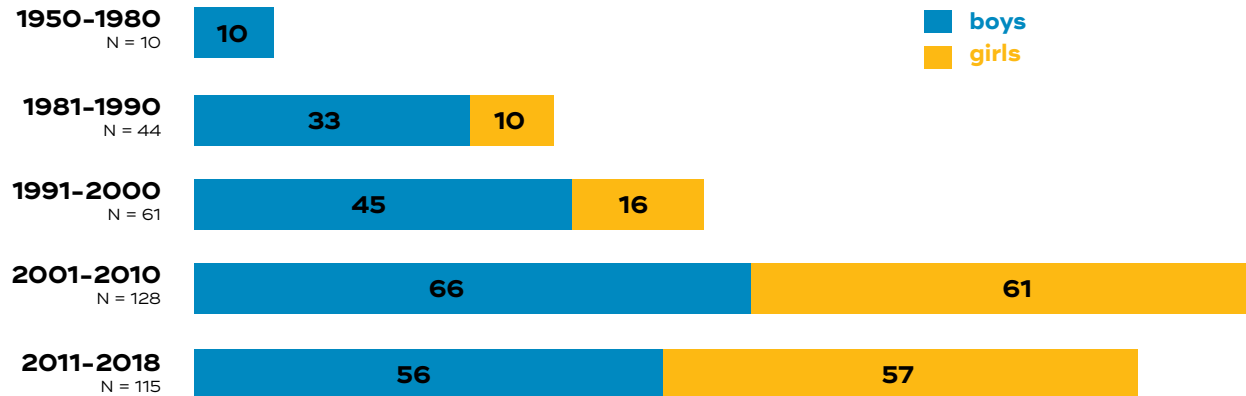
presentation of the results of the second research study covering notifications from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2020

Research Study I – for the Reporting Period from 1 January 1990 to 30 June 2018

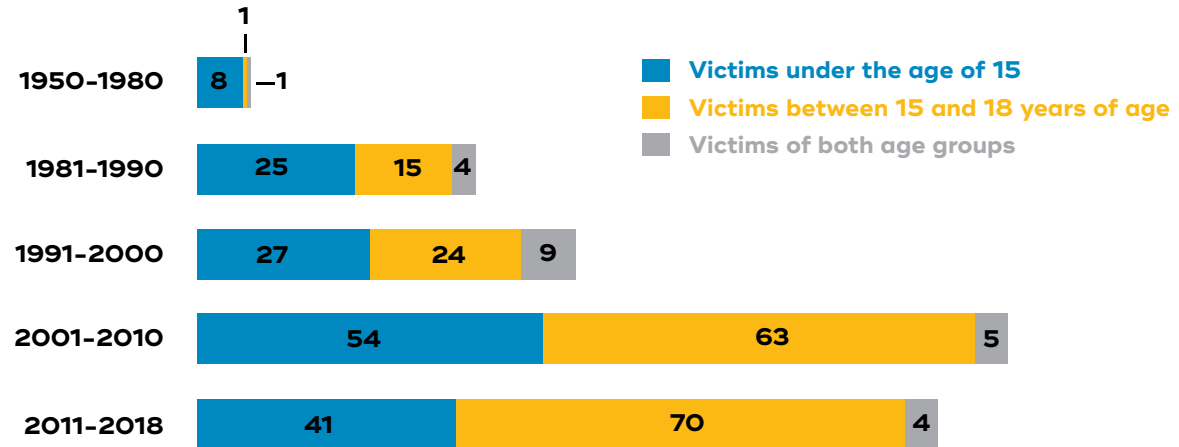
The research uncovered 382 reported cases of abuse over the years 1950–2018

284 reported cases across dioceses
98 reported cases across male religious orders

NOTIFICATIONS BY GENDER OF THE ABUSED PERSONS



NOTIFICATIONS IN TERMS OF THE AGE OF THE ABUSED PERSONS



The in-depth analysis showed that:

- acts committed in the distant past have only been reported in recent years
- offenders are clearly differentiated in terms of age
- the average age of perpetrators increases with time
- there is a dynamic increase in the number of cases of abuse of female minors
- there is an increase in the number of victims above the age of 15

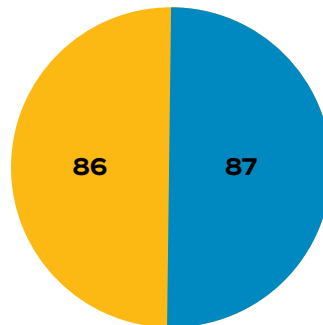
Research Study II – for the Period from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2020

Dioceses and male religious orders received 368 reports of sexual abuse of minors

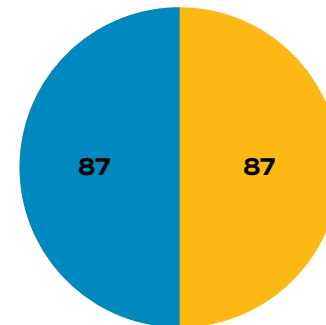
300 reported cases across dioceses
68 reported cases across male religious orders

Almost half of the abused persons reported were under 15 years of age (47%) and also almost half were over 15 years of age (47.3%). In both age groups, the proportion of boys and girls was the same (50% each).

Under 15 years of age



Age 15 and over



■ boys
■ girls

The reported cases cover acts from 1958 to 2020 and involve 292 priests and religious order members. 81% of the acts committed between 1958 and 2017 and 18% of the reports concerned acts from the last three years (2018-2020). The time of the alleged acts was not specified in 4 reports.

In the period under research, there was no single month without a report notification submitted to the Church jurisdiction in Poland.

Among all the report notifications – 38 (that is 10%) were found to be non-credible and rejected, 186 are still under investigation, and 144 were confirmed or substantiated at the preliminary stage or by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Cases concerning minors under 15 years of age are notified to the state law enforcement authorities unless such authorities were notified by a different entity, the perpetrator is deceased, or the allegations were found to be unfounded in the preliminary examination.

