

CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
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CATHOLICS: CELIBACY AND HOMOSEXUALITY NOT MAJOR FACTORS IN CHILD SEX ABUSE BY PRIESTS

April 28-May 2, 2010

As reports have recently come to light regarding sexual abuse of children by some priests, Catholics think celibacy and homosexuality play some part in the abuse, but fewer than a third think either is a major factor. American Catholics are even less likely to say that only permitting men to be priests plays a major role in child sexual abuse by priests.

Just 31% of Catholics say celibacy among priests is a major factor that contributes to child sex abuse, and 30% say homosexuality is a major contributing factor.

Only men are allowed to be priests in the Catholic Church, and just 17% of Catholics think this is a major factor that contributes to child sex abuse by priests. In fact, more than half do not think this is a contributing factor at all.

FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO CHILD SEX ABUSE BY PRIESTS

(Among all Catholics)

	Major	Minor	Not a factor
Celibacy	31%	28	35
Homosexuality	30%	23	37
Only allowing men to be priests	17%	27	53

More observant Catholics (those who attend Mass at least once a week) are even less likely than Catholics overall to think these factors contribute to child sex abuse by priests.

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1079 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone April 28-May 2, 2010. Phone numbers were dialed from RDD samples of both standard land-lines and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

An oversample of Catholics was interviewed, for a total of 412 interviews. The results were then weighted in proportion to the adult population. The margin of error for the sample of Catholics is five points. This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.