



behavior research center's

Latino Poll

NEWS RELEASE
HTLP 2002-II-10

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SIX OF TEN HISPANICS UPSET WITH CHURCH'S HANDLING OF SEXUAL ABUSE CASES

Phoenix, Arizona, May 3, 2002. Six of ten Arizona Hispanics believe the Catholic church is doing a poor job in how it has handled the recent alleged incidents of priests sexually abusing children. The "poor" ratings rest at 57 percent among those who are Catholic and 71 percent among Hispanics whose affiliation is with a different religion.

At the same time, it appears that over the past decade, the ranks of Hispanics in Arizona who think of themselves as Catholic may be eroding – from 74 percent in 1994 to 71 percent today – and those who identify with other religions grew from 16 to 19 percent during the same period. Erosion is particularly evident within the ranks of Hispanic adults under the age of 25 where only 63 percent call themselves Catholic. Given the strong family orientation within the Hispanic community, it may be reasonable to assume that dissatisfaction with how the church has responded will work to further erode loyalty to the church, particularly so among younger Hispanics whose loyalty is less intense.

The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 500 Hispanic heads of household across Maricopa and Pima Counties, conducted between April 6 and April 26, 2002, by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona as part of the Center's independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll series. The public is welcome to visit www.brcpolls.com to read this and other recent polls.

The negative public assessment of the manner in which the church has handled this scandal may trace in part to beliefs that the cases thus far reported are part of a pattern of abuse, and not just aberrant behavior of individual priests. Stories from the Boston area suggesting that priests with histories of abuse were shuttled from one parish to another have undoubtedly shaken the confidence of the faithful that the church has and is being diligent in protecting children from such abuse. Just over half characterize the problem as chronic and

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another fifth are unsure. Only three in ten believe the offending priests represent isolated cases.

Curiously, Hispanic families with children are somewhat more inclined to give the church the benefit of the doubt on the question of whether the child abuse cases reveal a pattern of abuse. Thus, 54 percent with no children believe the scandal reveals a pattern of abuse compared to only 47 percent among families with children.

Concern that the church may have tolerated a pattern of abuse rises sharply among Hispanics with the strongest English language skills, longest residency in Arizona and who have gone the furthest in school. As well, older and perhaps more seasoned Hispanics are among the most likely to opine that these acts of sexual misconduct are part of an emerging pattern among the Catholic ministry.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll Arizona (2002-II-10) is based on 500 telephone interviews with Hispanic heads of household across Maricopa and Pima Counties, conducted from April 8 through April 26, 2002 throughout Arizona. In the overall sample, one may say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 4.47 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

BELOW: Statistical data

For this and other polls. See www.brcpolls.com/results

STATISTICAL DATA

Behavior Research Center
Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona
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"When it comes to religion, do you think of yourself as Catholic, some other religion or denomination, or are you not religious?"

	2002	1994
Catholic	71%	74%
Other religion	19	16
Not religious	9	9
Unsure	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	100%	100%

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| <u>Detail: 2002</u> | CATHOLIC | Other | Not Reli-<br>gious/<br>Unsure |
|---------------------|----------|-------|-------------------------------|
| TOTAL               | 71%      | 19%   | 10%                           |
| <u>AGE:</u>         |          |       |                               |
| Under 25            | 61       | 10    | 29                            |
| 25 to 34            | 74       | 17    | 9                             |
| 35 to 44            | 70       | 20    | 10                            |
| 45+                 | 72       | 21    | 7                             |

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STATISTICAL DATA

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"In your opinion, are the recent cases in which priests have been accused of sexually abusing children isolated cases or a part of a pattern of abuse?"

	PATTERN		
	OF ABUSE	UNSURE	ISOLATED CASES
TOTAL	51%	21%	28%
Catholic	46	22	32
Other religion	67	16	17
Not religious	50	25	25
<u>AGE:</u>			
Under 25	45	16	39
25 to 34	44	24	32
35 to 44	52	19	29
45+	54	23	23

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*"From what you have seen or heard, would you say the leaders of the Catholic Church have handled the alleged incidents of priests sexually abusing children very well, fairly well or poorly?"*

|                | Very Well | FAIRLY WELL | POORLY | UNSURE |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|--------|--------|
|                | TOTAL     | 8%          | 19%    | 59%    |
| Catholic       | 10        | 22          | 57     | 11     |
| Other religion | 3         | 11          | 71     | 15     |
| Not religious  | 4         | 14          | 58     | 24     |

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