

DIOCESAN PRIESTS IN IRELAND 2006

This fact sheet outlines the data reported to the Council for Research & Development (CRD) for the number of Diocesan priests in the 26 Dioceses of Ireland in the year October 2005 to September 2006. These data are sourced from the Annual Vocations and Personnel Survey conducted by the CRD.

The numbers of Diocesan priests in Ireland in 2006 was 3,078. This figure represents a small drop of 51 since 2005 or a fall of 1.7% year on year. Since 2000, the numbers of Diocesan priests in Ireland has declined by 10.6% and this represents a slow down in the rate of decline when compared with the 1990 to 2000 period.

76% of all the priests in Ireland are active in their Diocese. Just over 9% are retired and another 8% are designated *Pastor Emeritus*. Among Diocesan priests, there have been 62 deaths in the year to September 2006. This makes up the majority of the total net loss to the numbers

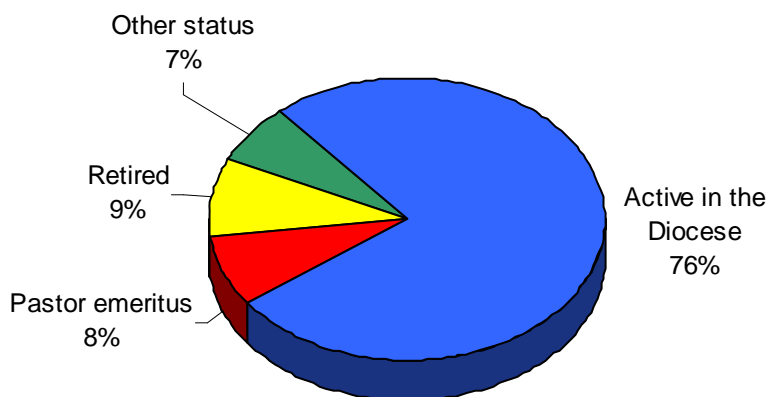
of priests as a whole with 13 departing, 5 more than the previous year. (*Total net loss* is a figure derived by adding the number of deaths and departures and subtracting it from the number of ordinations in any particular year.)

The age profile of Diocesan priests in Ireland is becoming older when compared with the population as a whole. In 2001, 3% of priests were

	<i>Percentage of total</i>
Active in the Diocese	76.1
<i>Pastor emeritus</i> *	8.1
Retired	8.9
Full time study	1.2
Another Diocese	1.4
Mission abroad	1.9
Sick leave	0.8
Temporary absence	1.6

* the designations *Pastor Emeritus* and 'Retired' do not necessarily imply that a priest no longer carries out pastoral duties.

aged between 25 and 29. In 2006 merely 0.9% of priests was in this age group. Across the same time period, the proportion between the ages of 40 and 49 decreased by over 1% to 18.3% and down again



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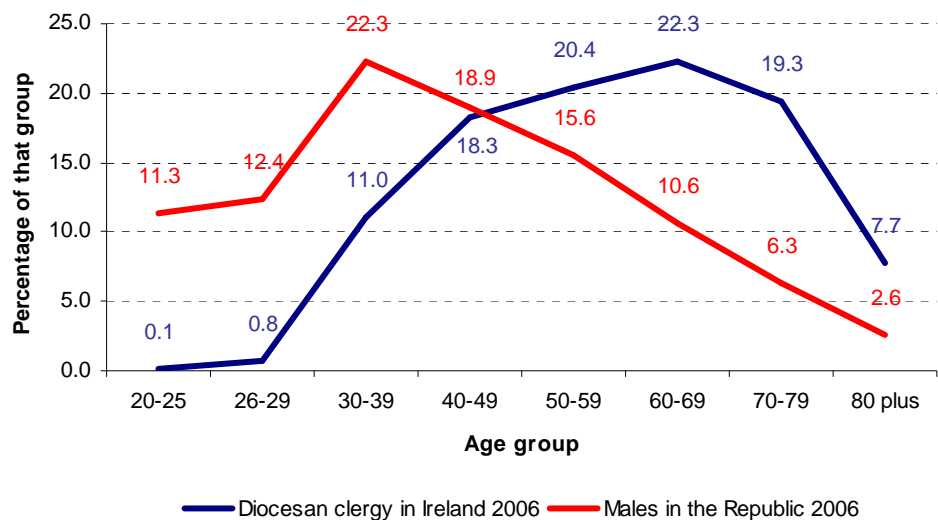


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on 2004 when 20% were in this age group. The percentage aged 80 and above has also increased steadily over this 5 year period. Irish society as a whole is getting older when compared with the relatively younger profile of the 1970s and 1980s. The current older age profile of Diocesan priests may be a cause for concern in the years ahead. The graph below shows a

comparative age profile between the population of single males in the Republic and the population of Diocesan priests in Ireland for the year 2006. As can be seen the largest proportion of single males in the Republic is aged 30 to 39 years old. For Diocesan priests in Ireland, it is 60 to 69 years old. Of the 3,078 Diocesan priests in Ireland, 480 of them or 15.6% hold appointments from the Dublin



Diocese. This is the Diocese with the largest number of Diocesan priests in Ireland, with Down & Connor as second in the list with 6% of all priests or 185 men in total. Between these two Dioceses, just over 1 in 5 of priests in Ireland are based in Dublin or Down & Connor. 9 more Dioceses have between 4 (n=123) and 5% (n=149) of the total number of priests in Ireland. The Dioceses with the lowest proportion of the country's Diocesan priests are Killala (1.8% of the total), Achonry (1.7%) and Clonfert (1.4%). As yet there are no accurate data for the number of Catholics per Diocesan priest available. Based on the 2006 Census for the Republic and the 2004 population projections for Northern Ireland, we can construct the following picture for the year to September 2006:

- Number of Catholics in Ireland: **4,359,908**
- Number of Diocesan priests in Ireland: **3,078**
- Ratio of Diocesan priests to Catholics in Ireland: **1:1,416**
- Percentage of Diocesan priests categorized as 'Active': **76.1%** (n=2,342)
- Ratio of 'Active' Diocesan priests to Catholics in Ireland: **1:1,862**

Ratios of Diocesan priests per Catholic vary considerably from Diocese to Diocese. These data are indicative only as they rely on 2006 data for the Republic of Ireland and 2004 data for Northern Ireland.