

# Violence Against Older Persons

Violence against older persons refers to actions that harm an older person or jeopardize the person's health or welfare. Violence against older persons has remained a largely hidden issue, with untold social and economic costs.

*(Report of the National Seniors Council on Elder Abuse, 2007)*

Violence against older persons can occur at home, in the community, or in institutional settings. Violence can take many forms, including physical, emotional, financial, sexual, spiritual or cultural.

*(Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults: Understanding Gender Differences, 2005)*

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It is difficult to estimate the prevalence and incidence of violence against older persons in Canada due to factors such as under-reporting, confusion about what constitutes violence and abuse, limitations in victimization surveys and police statistics, and a general lack of awareness about the issue.

## Who are the Perpetrators?

Violence against older persons most often occurs within the family and is most commonly perpetrated by a spouse, adult child(ren), and/or grandchild(ren). However, abusers can also include friends, neighbours, paid care providers, landlords and staff, companies, or any individual or organization for the purpose of power and control.

## Neglect

Neglect is a significant form of violence against older persons. Failing to provide food, shelter, medication, or care to an older person is a form of neglect.

In Canada, it is estimated that 80% of neglect experienced by older persons is hidden or goes undetected.

Abuse or neglect can happen to any older adult. In fact, contrary to commonly held beliefs, most older adults who experience abuse or neglect are mentally competent, are not dependent on other people, and do not require constant care.

## Older Women

Women are more likely than men to consistently experience violence throughout the duration of their life. Older women are more likely to have experienced many years of emotional, physical or sexual violence than older men.

Older women are the victims in about two-thirds of the cases of violence or neglect that come to the attention of community agencies.

On average, older women live longer than older men. Older women are more likely than older men to live in a residential care facility, and are therefore at greater risk of institutional violence and abuse from staff, family or volunteers.

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