

VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN

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

(BC Health Files, 2005)

Prevalence

- ❖ Violence against older persons has remained a largely hidden issue, with untold social and economic costs.
- ❖ It is difficult to estimate the prevalence of violence against older persons due to factors such as under-reporting, confusion about what constitutes violence, limitations in victimization surveys and police reported data, and a general lack of awareness about the issue.
- ❖ In 2006, overall rates of police-reported violent crimes against older persons were higher for older men (150/100,000) than older women (103/100,000). During this same time period however, rates of family violence were higher for older women (47/100,000) than older men (37/100,000).
- ❖ 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 abuse than older men.

Who are the Perpetrators?

- ❖ Approximately 80% of those accused of violently harming an older family member are men.

Victim/Victim-Perpetrator Relationship	Total % of Perpetrators Known to Victim	% of Known Perpetrators who are Family Members	% of Known Perpetrators who are Friends or Acquaintances	% of Known Family Perpetrators who are a Spouse or Ex-spouse	% of Known Family Perpetrators who are an Adult Child
Older Women	72	63	39	35	31
Older Men	64	39	62	21	34

*Percentages are approximate values.

Physical Violence

- ❖ Older female victims of violence (60%) are more likely than older men (53%) to experience physical force as a form of victimization.
- ❖ 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 abuse from staff, family or volunteers.
- ❖ Older men are more likely than older women to have a weapon present in the committing of a violent crime (19% versus 13% respectively). The most common weapon used to victimize older men and women is a knife or other piercing instrument.
- ❖ In 2005, murders committed against older persons represented 7% of all murders committed in Canada. This translates to a rate of 1.16/100,000. Over the past 30 years, murder rates for older persons in Canada have been gradually declining.

Sexual Violence

- ❖ According to 2005 police-reported data, sexual assault is the **only** violent crime for which older women had higher rates than older men (6/100,000 versus 1/100,000 respectively).

Financial Violence

- ❖ Financial victimization is the most common form of abuse that older persons are likely to face. Due to the fact that older women typically live longer than older men, financial victimization for older women may have profound and long-term impacts on their quality of life.
- ❖ National statistics on the extent of telephone fraud experienced by Canadians has been non-existent. However, unlike other classifications of crime, it has been recognized that older persons are particularly vulnerable to telemarketing fraud. According to *PhoneBusters*, Canada's anti-fraud call centre, between 1996 and 2003, 84% of the total dollar loss through telemarketing prize and lottery occurrences was accounted for by victims over the age of 60.

Sources Consulted:

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- National Seniors Council. (2007). *Report of the National Seniors Council on Elder Abuse*. Ottawa, ON: National Seniors Council.