

Elder Abuse and Neglect

The first-ever National Elder Abuse Incidence Study, conducted by the National Center on Elder Abuse for the Administration for Children and Families and the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, estimates that at least one-half million older persons in domestic settings were abused and/or neglected, or experienced self neglect during 1996, and that for every reported incident of elder abuse, neglect or self neglect, approximately five go unreported. (*The National Center on Elder Abuse, American Public Human Services Association. (September 1998). The National Elder Abuse Incidence Study: Final Report. Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families & Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*)

Female elders are abused at a higher rate than males, after accounting for their larger proportion in the aging population. (*Ibid.*)

The nation's oldest elders (80 years and older) are abused and neglected at two to three times their proportion of the elderly population. (*Ibid.*)

In almost 90 percent of the elder abuse and neglect incidents with a known perpetrator, the perpetrator is a family member, and two-thirds of the perpetrators are adult children or spouses. (*Ibid.*)

According to data released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in September 1997, persons age 50 or older made up:

30 percent of the population

12 percent of murder victims

7 percent of serious violent crime victims.

(*Perkins, C. (1997, September). Age Patterns of Victims of Serious Violent Crime: Special Report, NCJ-162031, p. 1. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.*)

Nationally, nearly 70 percent of Adult Protective Service agencies' annual caseloads involve elder abuse. (*Tatara, T. (1996, May). "Elder Abuse in Domestic Settings." Elder Abuse Information Series, #1, p. 19. Washington, DC: National Center on Elder Abuse.*)

The National Center on Elder Abuse estimates the incidence of specific types of elder maltreatment in 1994 (based on reports from 39 states) as follows: physical abuse (15.7 percent); sexual abuse (.04 percent); emotional abuse (7.3 percent); neglect (58.5 percent); financial exploitation (12.3 percent); all other types (5.1 percent); and unknown (.06 percent). (*Ibid., p. 8*)

Among murders of victims over age 60, their offspring were the killers in 42 percent of the cases. Spouses were the perpetrators in 24 percent of family murders of persons over age 60. (*Dawson & Langan. (1994). Murder in Families. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.*)

In most states, specific professionals are designated as "mandatory reporters of elder abuse" and are required by law to report suspected cases of elder maltreatment. In 1994, 21.6 percent of all domestic elder abuse reports came from physicians and other health care professionals, while another 9.4 percent came from service providers. Family members and relatives of victims reported 14.9 percent of reported cases of domestic elder abuse. (*Findings from a national study of domestic elder abuse reports conducted by the National Center on Elder Abuse, 1994.*)

Note: OVC makes no representation concerning the accuracy of data from non-Department of Justice sources.