

Elder Abuse and Neglect

In 1999, the rate of violent crime victimization of persons ages sixty-five or older was 4 per 1,000. (Rennison, C. August 2000. *Criminal Victimization 1999, Changes 1998-99 with Trends 1993-99*, NCJ 182734. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.)

The first National Elder Abuse Incidence Study estimates that a total of 551,011 elderly persons, ages sixty and over, experienced abuse, neglect, and/or self neglect in domestic settings in 1996. Of this total, 115,110 (21%) were reported to and substantiated by adult protective service agencies, with the remaining 435,901 (79%) not reported to APS agencies. These figures indicate that almost four times as many new incidents of elder abuse, neglect, and/or self-neglect were unreported than those reported in 1996. (National Center on Elder Abuse. September 1998. *National Elder Abuse Incidence Study: Final Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families and Administration on Aging.)

Neglect of the elderly was the most frequent type of elder maltreatment (48.7%); emotional/psychological abuse was the second (35.5%); physical abuse was the third (25.6%); financial/material exploitation was the fourth (30.2%); and abandonment was the least common (3.6%). (Ibid.)

Adult children comprised the largest category of perpetrators (47.3%) of substantiated incidents of elder abuse; spouses followed second by 19.3%; other relatives were third at 8.8%; and grandchildren followed last with 8.6%. (Ibid.)

Three out of four elder abuse and neglect victims suffer from physical frailty. About one-half (47.9%) of substantiated incidents

of abuse and neglect involved elderly persons who were not physically able to care for themselves, while 28.7% of victims could care for themselves marginally. (Ibid.)

Some experts estimate that only one out of fourteen domestic elder abuse incidents (excluding self-neglect) comes to the attention of authorities. Based on these estimates, somewhere between 820,000 and 1,860,000 elders were victims of abuse in 1996, indicating that the majority of cases went unreported to state protective agencies. (Tatara, R. November 1997. "Reporting Requirements and Characteristics of Victims." *Domestic Elder Abuse Information Series #3*. Washington, DC: National Center on Elder Abuse, 1.)

From 1986 to 1996, there was a steady increase in the reporting of domestic elder abuse nationwide, from 117,000 reported cases in 1986 to 293,000 reported cases in 1996—a 150.4% increase. (Ibid., 2)

According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, 66.4% of victims of domestic elder abuse were white, 18.7% were black, 10.4% were Hispanic, and 1% each were Native Americans and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders for the reporting year 1996. (Ibid.)

In 1996, 22.5% of all domestic elder abuse reports came from physicians and other health care professionals; 15.1% from other care service providers; 16.3% from family members and relatives; and the remainder from other reporting sources: police, friends, neighbors, clergy, banks/business institutions, etc. (Ibid, 1)

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