

**FACT  
SHEET**

**ELDER ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Although sexual assault makes up about 3% of known cases of elder abuse in care facilities, research suggests that women are overwhelmingly the victims in situations of elder sexual abuse. One of the first studies on sexual assault against older women conducted in Massachusetts found that, of the 28 cases examined, all victim/survivors were women, all but one of the offenders was a man, and the majority of offenders were caregivers to the victim/survivors. (Ramsey-Klawnsnik, 1991). Sexual assault within aged care facilities resembles the pattern of sexual assault generally: an overwhelming proportion of victims are women who experience violence at the hands of family members or those in positions of trust.

*Quadara, A. "Elder Abuse and the Sexual Assault of Older Women," Aware: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault Newsletter. (13) December, 2006.*

What we know about elder sexual abuse:

- Perpetrators are likely to be male caregivers.
- Older victims are most often females over 70, who are totally dependent or functioning at a poor level.
- Older victims suffer more genital trauma than younger victims.
- Older victims are less likely to report sexual abuse than younger victims.

*Vierthaler, Karla. "Elder Sex Abuse: The Dynamics of Problem and Community-Based Solutions," National Center on Elder Abuse Newsletter. April, 2004.*

Women 70-89 years old who experienced sexual abuse while living in nursing homes reported sexualized kissing and fondling and unwelcome sexual interest in the woman's body by resident male perpetrators, typically 70 years or older. In only three cases was the offender prosecuted and in only one of these cases was the offender convicted.

*Teaster, P.B., and Roberto, K.A. "Sexual Abuse of Older Women Living in Nursing Homes," Journal of Gerontological Social Work. 40(4), 2003.*

When researchers analyzed sub-sample data from National Violence Against Women survey respondents over the age of 55, they found that older adults experienced intimate partner violence (1.3% vs. 1.6%) and stalking (2.3% vs. 2.7%) at relatively similar rates as the total sample of all respondents (age 18 years and older).

*Jasinski, J.L. and Dietz, T.L. "Domestic Violence & Stalking Among Older Adults: An Assessment of Risk Markers," Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect. 15(1), 2003.*

Data from the Supplementary Homicide Reports (FBI Uniform Crime Reports 1976-1999) on the homicide of elderly female victims showed that 92% of the cases also involved the rape of the victim, with 8% involving some other sexual offense. 56% of the offenders lived within six blocks of the victim, with nearly 30% living on the same block.

*Safarik, Mark E., Jarvis, John P., and Nussbaum, Kathleen E. "Sexual Homicide of Elderly Females: Linking Offender Characteristics to Victim and Crime Scene Attributes," Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 17(5), 2002.*

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There are three types of sex offenders who assault elders: gerophiles who often seek jobs in nursing homes, sexually aggressive elderly men who themselves reside in nursing homes, or strangers or known persons who rape non-resident elderly women.

*Capezuti, E.A. and Swedlow, D.S. "Sexual Abuse in Nursing Homes," Elder Advisor: The Journal of Elder Law and Post-Retirement Planning. 2(2), 2000.*

Analysis of data from 21 nursing home residents (19 women, 2 men) who were raped indicated the following:

- Someone other than the victim reported the rape to an official.
- Unless the rape was witnessed, the report was delayed.
- Clues, such as a sexually transmitted disease, assisted in the disclosure of a rape.
- Victim typically had an impairment which affected their ability to communicate.
- Offenders were either nursing home employees or other residents.
- Physical or forensic evidence was missing if the examinations were delayed.
- 55% of victims died within one year of the assault.

*Burgess, A.W., Dowdell, E.B., Prentky, R.A. "Sexual Abuse of Nursing Home Residents," Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services. 38(8), 2000.*

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