

Sexual Violence Against Older Adults

Sexual violence against people later in life is defined as sexual offenses that are perpetrated against those at the age of 60 or older.¹ While sexual abuse is the least common type of elder abuse, it is important to acknowledge that this type of violence is chronically underreported and under-identified.

- Most survivors have a personal relationship with the perpetrator.²
- Sexual assault can be perpetrated against those with a mental illness (or dementia) that could cause an older person to be unable to communicate their consent for sexual contact.³
- Women are **6 times** more likely to be the victims of sexual assault later in life, but underreporting within the male population is common.⁴
- Sexual abuse also occurs in institutional settings like hospitals, nursing homes, and other long-term care facilities.⁵
- Caregivers are the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against elders, including staff in facilities or family members in community settings.⁶
- Survivors can experience adverse effects including health problems, cognitive impairments, and negative emotional symptoms.⁷
- Similar to child abusers, offenders who target elderly victims often prey on the vulnerability of the population.⁸
- Older survivors' needs can differ from those of younger victims considering intersectional effects of factors like ageism, institutionalization, and pre-existing health conditions.⁹
- Many victims later in life are unaware of the support services that exist for them.¹⁰
- Only about **30%** of elderly victims of sexual abuse over the age of 65 years report the abuse to the authorities.¹¹
- About **83%** of victims of elder sexual abuse reside in an institutional care center, such as a nursing home.¹²
- About **27%** of victims of elder sexual abuse occurred in either the elder's own home or in the perpetrators home.¹³
- About **80%** of the time, the perpetrator of elder sexual abuse was the caregiver to the elder.¹⁴
- About **76%** of elder sexual abuse victims have had their incident witnessed by another.¹⁵
- About **67%** of elder sexual abusers were members of the family, according to the National Elder Abuse Incidence Study.¹⁶

¹ Lancet Glob Health, "Elder abuse prevalence in community settings: a systematic and Meta-analysis," Y. Yon, ET la., 2017

² Ibid.

³ Nursing Home Abuse Center, "Sexual abuse of the Elderly," 2019

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Nursing Research and Practice, "Sexual abuse of older nursing home residents: A literature review," Malmedal, et al., 2015

⁶ Lancet Glob Health, "Elder abuse prevalence in community settings: a systematic and Meta-analysis," Y. Yon, ET la., 2017

⁷ Violence against Women, "Practitioner Views on the Impacts, Challenges, and Barriers in Supporting Older Survivors of Sexual Violence," Bows, 2017

⁸ Journal of Interpersonal Violence, "Elderly sexual abuse: An examination of the criminal event," Beauregard & Chopin, 2019

⁹ Trauma, Violence, and Abuse, "Sexual Assault and Justice for Older Women: A Critical Review of the Literature," B. Fileborn, 2016

¹⁰ Violence against Women, "Practitioner Views on the Impacts, Challenges, and Barriers in Supporting Older Survivors of Sexual Violence," Bows, 2017

¹¹ <https://www.nursinghomeabusecenter.com/elder-abuse/types/sexual-abuse>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.