



Always respected Never abused

Elder Abuse Awareness Week

15 – 22 June



Starts on
World Elder
Abuse Awareness
Day June 15

Elder abuse key trends

Data from Age Concern New Zealand's Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services

Elder Abuse Awareness Week June 15 -22 starts on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day June 15

Each year, Age Concern's Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention (EANP) services receive more than 2,000 referrals of older people who may be facing elder abuse or neglect. That's **eight referrals every working day**. About three quarters of these situations are confirmed to involve elder abuse or neglect.

Abuse is also identified by other agencies including health providers, the police, lawyers, banks, other community support organisations, and other non-Age Concern Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention services.

We know that only a small proportion of elder abuse incidents come to the attention of an agency that can be of assistance.¹

Incidence of elder abuse

An analysis of data from the New Zealand Longitudinal Study of Ageing concluded that 10% of the population aged over 65 years who are living in the community have experienced abuse.²

A large community based study in the UK found that 2.6 - 4% of older people experience abuse each year.³ When this prevalence figure is applied to the population of New Zealanders aged over 65 years, it equates to **two - three older people being abused every hour**.

¹ National Center on Elder Abuse USA, *Iceberg Theory of Elder Abuse: The National Elder Abuse Incidence Study*, 1998

² Charles Waldegrave, *Measuring Elder Abuse in New Zealand: Findings from the New Zealand Longitudinal Study of Ageing*, <http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/our-structure/osc/elder-abuse-technical-report.pdf>

³ National Centre for Social Research, King's College London, *UK Study of Abuse and Neglect of Older People: Prevalence Survey Report*, 2007

Elder abuse can be classified into different types. Often the abuse experienced by an older person/kaumātua involves more than one type of abuse. In the cases seen by Age Concern's Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services over the last three years:⁴

- Three quarters involved psychological abuse
- Over half involved financial abuse
- 15-20% involved physical abuse
- 15-20% involved neglect
- 15-20% involved self-neglect

Age Concerns report that they are dealing with an increasing number of older people who have become the victims of scams. Scammers are targeting lonely older people who have assets, forming friendships with them (particularly through romance scams) and then requesting money for various hypothetical emergencies. In many cases, it is the family who contact Age Concern for assistance. The older person is often content to accept their financial loss in exchange for the proffered friendship.

Who is involved?⁵

- Almost half of abused older people are over the age of 80
- Forty per cent of abused older people live alone
- More than three quarters of alleged abusers are family/whānau; and we know that family/whānau members continue to abuse their older relatives even when that person is in residential care.
- Almost half of alleged abusers are adult children
- Abusers are as likely to be female as male.

How does abuse affect older people/kaumātua?⁶

For about half of the older people/kaumātua seen by Age Concern's Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services, **their health was significantly affected** by the abuse.

Two out of every five abused people experienced a **significant reduction in their independence, loss of confidence and self esteem, and reported feeling very frightened or anxious and emotionally distressed.**

About a quarter of abused older people experienced **long-term inability to cope by themselves and poor health**, sometimes leading to the need for residential care.

For more information and contact details for services visit:

www.ageconcern.org.nz

⁴ Data obtained from the Age Concern National Data Base for 2015 - 2016

⁵ Data obtained from the Age Concern National Database for 2015-2016

⁶ Data obtained from Age Concern National Database for 2011-2015