

FAQs about Elder Abuse

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust, such as family or friends. It includes financial, emotional, physical, social or sexual abuse and neglect.

It may involve taking someone's money or possessions, not providing necessary care, making threats or stopping an older person's social contacts, as well as physical or sexual abuse.

Who is at risk of elder abuse?

Elder abuse can happen to any older person, regardless of their background or lifestyle.

How many people experience elder abuse?

Between 4-6 per cent of older people experience elder abuse. As our population ages, more and more of us will be affected.

Older people in Victoria

By 2030, it is projected that one quarter of Victoria's population will be aged over 60, increasing to 29 per cent (2.4 million people) by 2050. The proportion of older people in regional and rural Victoria is greater than in Melbourne. By 2020, it is projected that 28 per cent of the regional and rural population of Victoria will be over 60, rising to 35 per cent in 2050.

How does an older person's cultural background affect elder abuse?

Elder abuse occurs in all cultures and backgrounds. There is no evidence that elder abuse is greater in different cultural groups. Today, around 40 per cent of Victorians over 65 years are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. By 2026, it is projected that one in every four people over 80 years will come from CALD backgrounds.

Experiences of elder abuse vary for people from different cultures. An understanding of cultural aspects is important when someone has been abused.

If you, your client or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse contact our free confidential Helpline on 1300 368 821

Why does elder abuse occur?

Ageism in our society can negatively impact on the way we respect older people. Offspring may have a sense of entitlement or, as with many families; there can be mental health problems, alcohol and other drug or gambling problems.

What is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day?

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is on June 15th each year. It is the internationally recognised day to focus public attention on the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue. See our FAQ Sheet about World Elder Abuse Awareness Day for more info.