

Elder abuse in Australia: Prevalence

Findings from the National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study

Research snapshot | August 2022



This snapshot discusses elder abuse and presents material that some people may find distressing. If you or someone you know needs assistance, please call 1800 ELDERHelp (1800 353 374). A list of elder abuse support services is available [at the end of this snapshot](#). If you are in immediate danger call Police on 000.

About the National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study (NEAPS)

As part of the [National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians](#) (Council of Attorneys-General, 2019), the Attorney-General's Department commissioned the National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study (NEAPS) to investigate elder abuse. This snapshot provides the key findings of the Survey of Older People (2020), a nationally representative survey of 7,000 people aged 65 and over living in the community (i.e. they did not live in residential aged care settings). The full report on the NEAPS is available on the [AIFS website](#).

How common is elder abuse?

According to the Survey of Older People, **15%** of people aged 65 and older living in community dwellings in Australia reported an experience of at least one of five subtypes of elder abuse in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Figure 1: Prevalence of elder abuse



Of the survey participants who reported an experience of abuse, 24% reported multiple types of abuse.

Who experiences elder abuse?

There was limited gender difference in the prevalence rate of elder abuse:



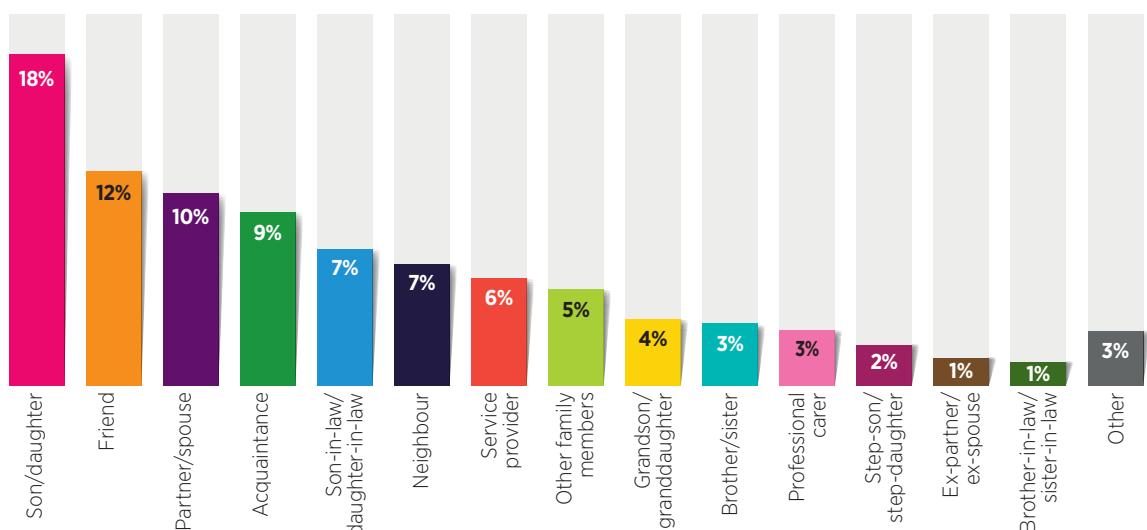
Anyone can experience elder abuse, but some older people were more likely to experience it than others.

Socio-demographic characteristics that were associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing elder abuse include being separated or divorced or never married, having stepchildren, owning a home with a mortgage or renting (including living in public housing), and living in a disadvantaged area.

An experience of elder abuse was associated with poorer physical health, poorer psychological health and a lower sense of social connection.

Who commits elder abuse?

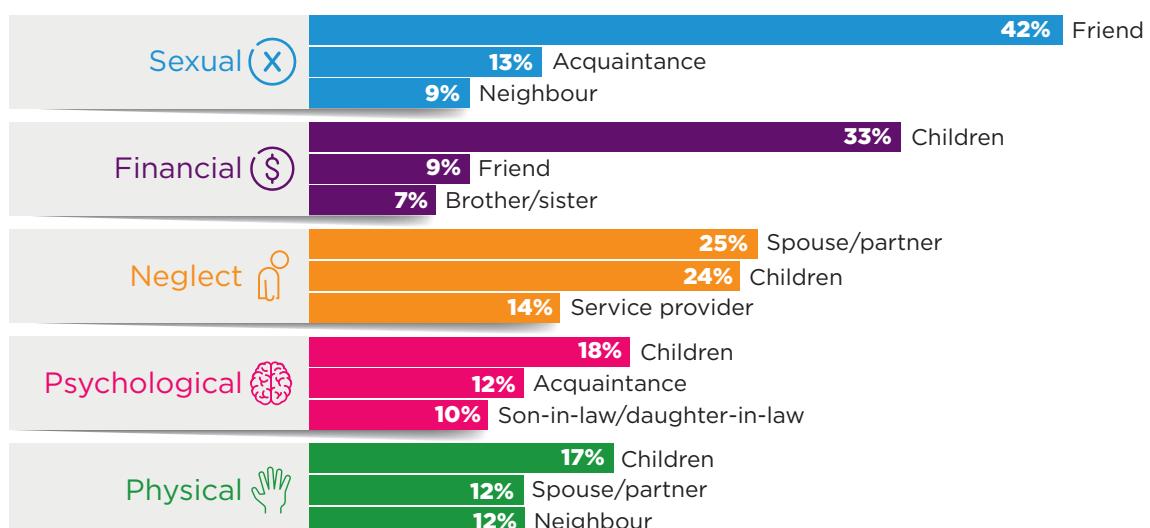
Figure 2: Relationship of perpetrators to the participants who experienced abuse (as % of all perpetrators)



Note: An older person may report more than one perpetrator in relation to an abuse subtype.

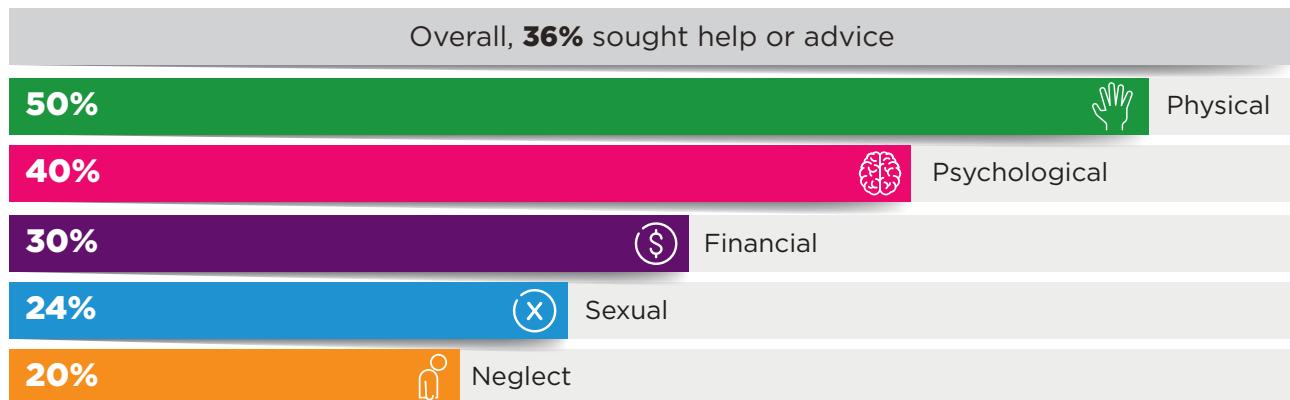
While children were the largest perpetrator group for all subtypes of elder abuse except sexual abuse, perpetrator groups differ for each abuse subtype (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Main perpetrator groups by elder abuse subtype



Do people who experience elder abuse seek help?

Figure 4: Proportion of older persons who experienced elder abuse who sought help or advice, by abuse subtype



Older people who sought help or advice typically turned to family members or friends.

Regardless of whether they reported seeking help or advice from a third party, eight in 10 older persons who experienced elder abuse indicated that they took action, or had action taken on their behalf, to stop the abuse from happening again (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Action taken by older persons who experienced elder abuse

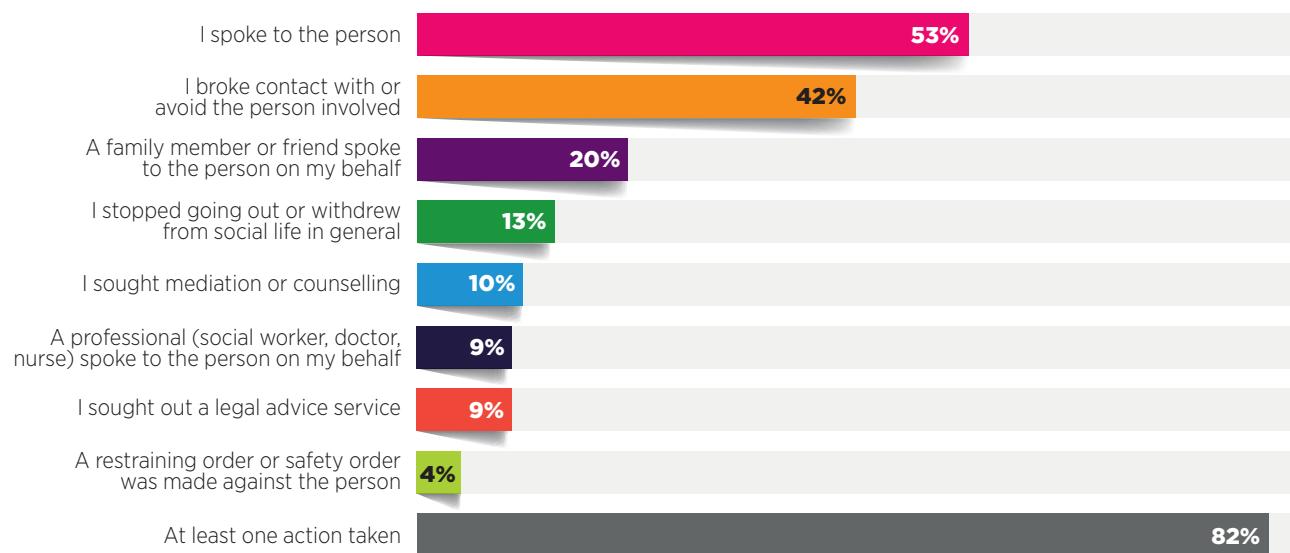
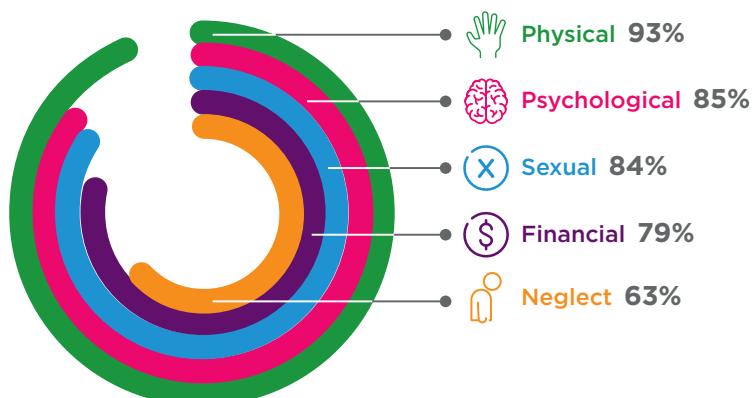


Figure 6: Proportion of people who took any action to stop the abuse, by subtype



Support services/Helplines

- If you have any concerns about potential or actual elder abuse, please contact **1800 ELDERHelp** (1800 353 374) to be redirected to the existing phone line service in your state or territory (free call).
- If you or someone you know have experienced violence or sexual assault and require immediate or ongoing assistance, contact **1800 RESPECT** (1800 737 732) to talk to a counsellor from the National Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence hotline.
- For confidential support and information, contact Safe Steps' 24/7 family violence response line on **1800 015 188** or the Men's Referral Service on **1300 766 491**.
- For a confidential discussion with an experienced counsellor, call Lifeline on **13 11 14**.

Citation

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