

**One in six older Australians (15%) reported experiencing abuse in 12 months prior to survey Feb - May 2020.**

Elder abuse can take the form of **psychological (12%), neglect (3%), financial (2%), physical (2%) and sexual (1%).**

**Perpetrators of elder abuse are often family members, mostly adult children, but can be friends, neighbours and acquaintances.**

People with **poor physical or psychological health and higher levels of social isolation are more likely to experience elder abuse.**

**Two thirds of people don't seek help when abused (61%).**

**Elder abuse often remains hidden, with the most frequent action to stop the abuse involving the victim speaking directly to the perpetrator.**

**Family and friends are the most common source of support for older people who experience abuse.**

## INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS OF ELDER ABUSE DAY

15 June marks World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, officially recognised by the United Nations in 2011. On this day individuals and organisations worldwide highlight the importance of the rights of older people, as prevention against the mistreatment and harm occurring in their communities.

‘The COVID-19 pandemic is causing untold fear and suffering for older people across the world. Beyond its immediate health impact, the pandemic is putting older people at greater risk of poverty, discrimination and isolation. It is likely to have a particularly devastating impact on older people in developing countries.’  
UN Secretary-General António Guterres

Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust such as a family member or friend. The abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect. Rates of elder abuse are under reported, but the Australian Institute of Family Studies estimates up to 14 per cent of older people in Australia are affected.

The warning signs of elder abuse may include an older person seeming fearful, anxious or isolated. There may be injuries, or an absence of personal care. Unexplained changes to legal documents or finances are also of concern. Most elder abuse occurs behind closed doors, so it is important for loved ones to watch out for signs, listen and offer help.

Older people can reduce the risk of elder abuse by making sure their financial, medical, legal and other affairs are in order. They must also be empowered to recognise the signs of elder abuse and encouraged to seek help.

If you are concerned about elder abuse you may want information, or the opportunity to talk to someone about your concerns, and options for getting help. **1800 ELDERHelp (1800 353 374)** is the National Elder Abuse phone line. 1800ELDERHelp automatically redirects callers seeking information or advice on elder abuse to their state or territory phone line service. If you require assistance in an emergency or life-threatening situation, contact 000.

Susan Skowronski  
Social issues and Action coordinator

*May we always see the world through the eyes of Christ, speak to those we meet with the words of Christ, and take with us on our journey the peace of Christ*