

Immigrant Services Calgary

WELCOME!

Elder Abuse – How Big is the Problem(1)?

The *General Social Survey on Victimization (2004)*, indicates that approximately 10% of seniors in Canada are victims of crime each year.

Abuse can be physical, emotional, or financial and can be a crime under the *Criminal Code* if it takes the form of fraud, assault, sexual assault, uttering threats, criminal harassment.

🍁 Source: [Crime and Abuse Against Seniors: A Review of the Research Literature With Special Reference to the Canadian Situation \(justice.gc.ca\)](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/1525/1525.html)

Elder Abuse – How Big is the Problem (2)?

- About 45 percent of seniors report experiencing some form of abuse from the age of 65 on.
- Financial abuse/exploitation and emotional abuse appear to be the most prevalent forms of abuse.
- Seniors are less likely to report being victims than are non-seniors.
- Senior victims of violence usually know their attackers(the perpetrators) , who are equally as likely to be family members as friends or acquaintances.

Elder Abuse – Areas of concern?

The three principal areas of concern for seniors, identified in this review, are:

- 1. Financial crimes by strangers.** A variety of fraudulent schemes fall in this category, including Ponzi schemes (investment), false promises of prizes, aggressive telemarketing, schemes involving health products, and fraudulent home repairs.
- 2. Crime and abuse by relatives and caregivers.** This includes the full range of crime and abuse, including *physical, emotional*, and sexual abuse, as well as *financial exploitation and neglect*. There is also the undue exercise of control, such as isolating the senior from others or interfering with his or her participation in religious services.
- 3. Crime and abuse in institutional settings.** Here again, there is the full range of abuse and, in particular, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as systemic abuse.

Immigrant Seniors at more risk

A research paper by Elections Canada states that sponsored immigrant seniors are more susceptible to elder abuse.

28% of seniors in Canada are immigrants.

Language barrier, and cultural differences prevent access to help.

Immigration policies obligate families sponsoring relatives to support them for up to 10 years, making immigrant seniors more vulnerable to mistreatment by their families than Canadian-born seniors.

Sources:

[Elder abuse among immigrants a growing concern | The Star](#)

[Research Note – Canadian Seniors: A Demographic Profile – Elections Canada](#)

Immigrant Seniors – Elder Abuse

“The issue is just beginning to come out of the closet”

- Elder abuse is seen more frequently by workers in immigrant services.
- The marked increase has been noted since Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in 2005, began investing more resources in seniors’ English classes, drop-ins and recreational programs.
- The majority of the abuse is verbal and violation of personal rights.

Source: [Elder abuse among immigrants a growing concern | The Star](#)

Immigrant Seniors – Culture matters

- Older immigrants may not recognize themselves as victims of abuse.
- They often do not know their legal or human rights or the community resources that are available to them.
- Language barriers, social isolation, financial and emotional dependency, sociocultural factors, dysfunctional family dynamics, caregiver stress and personal characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator may lead to elder abuse or prolong it in some ethnocultural communities.
- Under-reporting of elder abuse has been related to discomfort in discussing the issue, a strong sense of family honour, a strong reliance on family members for support and perceptions about treatment within the criminal justice system.
- In some cultures, silence, shame and secrecy about abuse is common.

Source: [Elder abuse among immigrant adults Metropolis-Walsh.pptx \(ualberta.ca\)](#)

Immigrant Seniors – Situations

“Many of our immigrant seniors don’t have an idea what elder abuse is.”

“Adult children expect the seniors to cook ,look after the house when they go to work, take the grandchildren out for classes, because they paid for their sponsorship”.

“Seniors don’t know they can access financial help”.

When they do: “my son in law says that I am a widow and why should I have anything on my own name, and why can’t I give everything to them and just be a slave to them”.

“Here I was put down and that made me very unhappy. But my daughter is the only daughter, and I can’t leave her and go, because it will be bad for her children so I thought I should sacrifice my life for those two children ”

“I didn’t want to leave the house because I was very attached to my grandchildren”

“People say we shouldn’t tell about the abuse to anyone, because it’s disgrace. I never told to anyone, won’t even cry louder when he beats me”.

“They said they would send me to a nursing home”.

Source: [Older womens perceptions final report.pdf \(wellesleyinstitute.com\)](#)

Gaps – Elder Abuse in immigrant communities

- Not enough research done to understand this phenomenon within immigrant communities.
- Elder Abuse Awareness/Prevention : Not “ a one size fits all”
- York University -Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies

“Developing a comprehensive understanding of elder abuse prevention in immigrant communities”.

Funder: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Purpose: first, to develop a comprehensive classification of risk factors for elder abuse in immigrant communities, it is critical to clarify these complex variables and how they combine to increase older immigrants' risk of elder abuse;

and second, to identify the most appropriate and culturally relevant strategies to address the risk factors in immigrant communities in Canada. The study builds on the literature and our own work in this area, and addresses a knowledge, policy, and practice gap identified by various stakeholders across Canada.

[Developing a comprehensive understanding of elder abuse prevention in immigrant communities | Project | Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies \(yorku.ca\)](http://www.yorku.ca)

Social and Civic Participation

“A study has shown that it is important for seniors to remain active in social networks, as this fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness, and is associated with better health and quality of life outcomes.

Seniors who are socially involved are less isolated and tend to have more close friends and are less likely to be victim of abuse/ more likely to access support when subjected to abuse”.

Access to places of worship decreases isolation for seniors.

Source : [Research Note – Canadian Seniors: A Demographic Profile – Elections Canada](#)

Our approach

- Holistic approach to the whole family for all newcomers. Through Gateway the Personalized Plans cater to all in the household including elders.
- Create opportunities to volunteer . ~ 5 % of our active volunteers are seniors.
- Seniors' programs : 3000+ seniors attend the programs every year

CISP - Community Initiatives for Immigrant Seniors

Program Enhances social inclusion of immigrant/refugee seniors.

Supports immigrant seniors with building :Self sufficiency, Community ties ,Social support networks.

Individual support, Group activities, Informational workshops.

Topics : Health care education, Elder Abuse, Seniors' benefits, Financial Literacy...

The challenges and workarounds

- “Elder abuse - You can’t call a program an elder abuse program/family violence program, no one would show up”.

It is rather ,

- Building Healthy Relationships
- De-escalating techniques
- Types of Scams and how to identify them...