

FACTSHEET

MARCH 2023

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Elder Abuse of Individuals with Alzheimer's

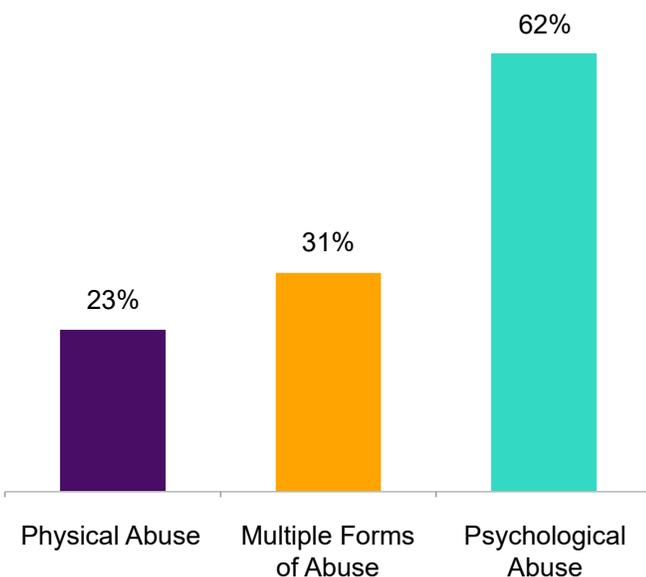
How significant is the problem of elder abuse among people with dementia?

- Elder abuse is the intentional or negligent act by any person that causes serious harm to an older adult. This harm may be physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and/or financial.
- Older adults with dementia are especially susceptible to abuse. According to one study, as many as 62% experience psychological abuse and nearly 1 in 4 have been physically abused.
- Additionally, a study found that 60% of elderly victims of sexual abuse have cognitive impairment.

What barriers exist in helping people with dementia who are victims of abuse?

- Police, firefighters, emergency personnel, and social workers increasingly encounter individuals with dementia — and working with them can be fundamentally different from working with other victims of abuse or exploitation.
- Individuals living with dementia often have difficulty understanding or explaining situations, and their behaviors may be viewed as uncooperative, disruptive, or combative. Those with dementia may have difficulty assisting investigators or prosecutors due to their cognitive impairment.
- Despite this reality, professionals and staff throughout the health care, social services, and criminal justice systems receive little or no training in the unique needs of individuals with dementia.

Older Adults with Dementia Experiencing Abuse



How does the Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act (P.L. 116-252) address the problem?

- Since becoming law in 2020, the Act has required the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop training materials on how to work with victims of abuse who have Alzheimer's and other dementias. These materials are intended for law enforcement, legal counsel, medical personnel, and the many others who support those living with Alzheimer's.
- In addition, the DOJ is required to annually report to Congress on the dissemination and use of the educational materials.