Perceptions of Trauma and Available Services for Seniors: A Sample Study of Individuals with Varying Degrees of Exposure to Physical and Sexual Abuse

Physical and sexual abuse are under-reported forms of abuse of older people who live in the community, as well as those in assisted-living facilities or long-term care institutions.[1] Of those incidents of elder abuse that are reported, it is estimated that as much as 16 percent of the incidents involve sexual violence,[2] which can have serious mental and physical health consequences.[3]

In their review of the literature, Oan Cook and associates[4] examined the relationship between exposure to trauma and health consequences. It is widely accepted that there are short-term and long-term negative physical and mental health effects of sexual and physical abuse. Although the link between interpersonal violence and later personal health concerns is well documented in younger and middle-aged adults, it is less well established in older adults. Nonetheless, there is evidence that older women who are sexual assault survivors are at greater risk of developing arthritis and breast cancer,[5] and older women who have experienced interpersonal violence report poorer health and greater use of medications.[6]

Sexual abuse among older adults is devastating not only because of the potential psychological consequences of abuse and increased risk of mortality and morbidity, but also because the survivors of the abuse may be in situations where the abuse is likely to continue. Unfortunately, when an offender and survivor have a known relationship, Adult Protective Services evaluations result in fewer criminal investigations, fewer physical exams for the older adult, and fewer referrals to the prosecutor's office, perpetuating the danger of continued abuse.[7] Investigators do not receive 50 percent of elder sexual abuse cases committed in nursing homes

until two or more days after the incident, making it more difficult to acquire sufficient forensic evidence to establish a claim.[8]

It is important that researchers assess the nature, risk factors, and effects of elder abuse in general, and physical and sexual abuse in particular. With a better understanding of the critical factors, researchers and practitioners will be in a better position to recommend programs for abuse prevention and develop approaches for improving access to care and justice for older victims.

Sexual abuse later in life is defined as sexual victimization of an older adult that includes both hands-off and hands-on actions. Exhibitionism, voyeurism, forced pornography, being left nude, and uncomfortable gestures, conversation, or statements are on one end of that scale, while touching, physical molestation, forced oral and/or genital contact, penetration, and unnecessary genital or rectal care practices are on the other.[9] Physical elder abuse, on the other hand, is any sort of violence or harm that causes a substantial injury to an elderly person. Kicking, pushing/shoving, scratching, hitting, punching, slapping, and/or restraining are typical forms of physical abuse that could take months to heal or even result in an elder's death.[10]

Understanding individuals' perceptions, particularly when it comes to seeking assistance and resources, could help health care workers better support older people who have been sexually and/or physically abused. There are myriad reasons why victims might not report abuse or seek help, including fear for their safety, not knowing how to report an incident, concern that nothing will be done, and lack of information about available services.[11] Directly asking non-reporters and those not-seeking assistance is challenging, because those individuals are difficult to identify. As a result, there is a paucity of research on individuals' perceptions of the support available for victims of elder abuse.

Characteristics and Prevalence of Abuse

The nature of sexual violence experienced by older adults is similar to that experienced by younger adults.[12] The majority of victims are women, and the majority of perpetrators are men known personally by the victims.[13] There has been a lack of attention paid to the experiences of older women who have been sexually abused later in life. Indeed, there is silence about sexual violence against older women, and ageist views of older people as asexual make older women seem unlikely candidates for such abuse. Most research focuses on the experiences of women in young adulthood and in middle age, however there is increasing evidence that women experience sexual violence in later life,[14] and these incidents are equally worthy of our attention.

Although there are risk factors that can increase an older woman's vulnerability to sexual abuse, the number of incidents reported each year is relatively low.[15] The World Health Organization[16] estimates that more than 30 percent of women worldwide will experience at least one instance of sexual violence during their lifetime. One out of every five American women will be raped at some point in their lives, and at least two out of every five will have experienced other types of sexual assault.[17] In comparison, only one out of every seventy-one men will be raped, and one out of five heterosexual men and two out of five gay men experience other types of sexual assault.[18] The percentage of rapes and sexual assaults reported to law enforcement among those 65 and older is 0.2 percent per 1,000 people, or 7,260 rape/sexual assault victims each year.[19] Because rape is the least commonly reported violation,[20] the number of actual victims could be much higher. Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of research on the effects of sexual violence on older people, their support needs and coping mechanisms, and their experiences of reaching out for help.

Availability and Utilization of Services for Victims

There are few studies of services for elder abuse victims.[21] However, a report from the Elder Abuse Prevention Program of New York State provides some insights into services utilized. For the most commonly reported forms of abuse, 71 percent of those who were abused received counseling; services were coordinated with professionals for 64 percent; and 63 percent had short-term support and advocacy.[22]

In addition to services available at the local and state levels, there are a number of resources provided by the federal government. For example, the Elder Justice Initiative assists individuals find help or report abuse; the Eldercare Locator provides referrals to local agencies; and the National Center for Elder Abuse provides information and resources on abuse prevention and response. In order to access the specialized assistance services that are available, victims need to recognize that what they have experienced is abuse, and they need to be willing to report the abuse.

Reporting of Abuse

Several factors influence older victims' decisions or ability to report incidents of sexual and physical victimization, which has a detrimental effect on an older person's access to justice after victimization. Recent statistics show that just 15 percent of women who have experienced the most serious sexual offenses go on to report their victimizations.[23] Regarding older victims, they may lack an understanding and knowledge of what characterizes sexual or physical abuse.[24] Additionally, they may be unaware of their rights as residents, patients, spouses, and caretakers. There may also be a lack of knowledge when it comes to obtaining assistance. When an older adult has a lack of awareness regarding services, it may prompt them to believe that their

experiences are different from those of younger sexual assault victims, and that support systems and services are not available or relevant to them.

In a thorough review of the literature, Amy Peirone and Myrna Dawson[25] describe several barriers to self-disclosure of sexual assault in later life. Cognitive impairments, mental illnesses, and age-related dementias can be significant obstacles to reporting abuse, because such conditions can make it difficult for a survivor to remember and communicate their experience verbally. The older victim's beliefs are shaped by generational attitudes and beliefs. During their time, topics like sexual health, sexual violence, and sex in general were considered private affairs, not to be discussed publicly or even within families. Similarly, cultural norms, stereotypes, and even language barriers may influence perceptions of consent and who represents "normal" victims or perpetrators, particularly in situations of spousal and familial sexual or physical assault. As is widely known, older adults are at risk for social isolation. For victims of abuse, social isolation may also discourage or prevent the older adult from accessing support and making a report. Lastly, some older adults may be reluctant to report abuse because they had negative experiences with police and the criminal justice system in the past.

Present Study

The aim of this study was to determine: 1) if individuals personally know victims of abuse, 2) whether the abuse experiences reported by individuals would be similar to what the literature describes 3) individuals' perceptions of the number of assistance services for older victims, 4) individuals' confidence in their ability to identify and use specialized victim assistance services, 5) individuals' perceptions of the likelihood of victims reporting the abuse, and 6) individuals' perceptions of the reasons why victims would not want to report the abuse. Due to the low reporting rate of sexual and physical abuse, there is a scarcity of information on

victims. The present study design used a methodology that had the potential to reach individuals who might not have been in contact with service providers or the justice system. Specifically, questionnaires were made available to individuals participating in relevant social media sites dealing with abuse. The study was approved by the Niagara University Institutional Review Board (IRB Case #2021-040).

Based on the literature, it was hypothesized that most individuals would not know an older person who had been physically or sexually abused, and that the abuse experiences reported by individuals would be similar to what the literature describes. It was further expected that individuals would report believing there are fewer services available for older people and that individuals would not be confident in their ability to identify and use assistance specialized for older victims of sexual or physical abuse. It was also predicted that most individuals would express the belief that older people are less likely to report abuse. Finally, it was hypothesized that individuals would report a variety of reasons why older people might not report abuse. Some of the anticipated reasons were fear, embarrassment, and concern that nothing would be done.

Methodology

Participant Characteristics

The total number of participants was forty, with ages ranging from 18 to 83. The sample included 18 young adults (18-29), 12 middle-aged adults (30-59), 9 older adults (60-83), and one individual who failed to provide an age. A majority of the respondents identified as women (92.5 percent), while a small percentage identified as men (7.5 percent), and no respondents identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. The racial identities of the participants included Caucasian or white (85 percent), African American or black (15 percent), and Asian or Pacific

Islander (2.5 percent). A minority of the participants were of Hispanic origin or descent (5.1 percent).

Education varied greatly among the participants. The largest group was individuals who had some college education (45 percent), while the next largest group consisted of individuals with a college degree (20 percent). Individuals with postgraduate degrees (15 percent) outnumbered those with a high school diploma or GED (12.5 percent). Post-high school education other than college, some high school, and associate degree received the fewest responses, showing that the majority of the respondents were well-educated. With regard to marital status, more than a third of the participants were married or partnered (35 percent), others were single or never married (42.5 percent), single and divorced (12.5 percent), or widowed (10 percent) The demographic section's final question inquired about the individual's general health. Most people said their health was fair (42.5 percent) or very good (40 percent). Very few respondents said that their health was excellent (7.5 percent) or very poor (10 percent).

Instrument

A 16-item survey was designed by the researchers. The survey is provided in the appendix. The first section of the survey consists of demographic questions about the participant's age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, level of education, marital status, and health perception. The second section includes questions regarding trauma and comparing older victims and younger victims. The purpose of assessing the participant's opinions and knowledge was to determine potential ageist attitudes, societal viewpoints, and general trauma knowledge. The third section of the survey asks individuals to report whether they or someone they know has been subjected to any sort of sexual or physical abuse since turning sixty. Participants were directed to another set of questions depending on their responses. If applicable, the individuals

were prompted with questions regarding the age when the abuse occurred, what the abuse entailed, the relationship to the abuser, the gender identity of the abuser, the number of times the abuse occurred, their perspective on the seriousness of the nature of the abuse, whether or not they reported these incidents and how long after the incident they reported, where they sought assistance, why they may have felt reluctant to report, possible previous trauma history and how it impacted their willingness to report, coping abilities, physical health, and mental health. If not applicable, they were asked questions to gauge their confidence in their knowledge, their capacity to locate and use specialized assistance for older victims of abuse, and why they thought an older adult would be reluctant to disclose their abuse.

Procedure

The survey was posted on twenty-six Facebook groups, potentially reaching 70,000 individuals around the world. Specific groups included Abuse & Trauma Survivors Support Group for Women, Help STOP Elder Abuse, Elder Abuse Awareness, Domestic Abuse Support Group for Women, and Women's Rape Survivors Support Group. Before participants could begin the survey, they read an informed consent statement and were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially. The survey included a trigger warning as well as the National Hotline for Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence.

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 28. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the sample characteristics for key variables. The standard error of a proportion was used to test the following three hypotheses: that most individuals do not know an older person who had been sexually or physically abused, that most individuals believe there are fewer services available for older victims, and that most individuals believe older adults are less likely to report abuse. A one-sample *t*-test was used to test the hypothesis that individuals would

not be confident in their ability to find and utilize assistance. Effect size was reported using Cohen's d, and significance was determined at a $p < .05$ level.

Results

Participant Experiences

Although the majority of participants (65 percent) had neither experienced or knew someone who had faced physical or sexual abuse since turning 60, ten (25 percent) individuals knew someone, and four (10 percent) individuals had experienced abuse themselves. It had been hypothesized that most individuals would not know an older victim, and while the percentage was 65, the standard error of a proportion revealed that the difference between 65 percent and 50 percent was not statistically significant, $z = .05$, $p > .05$.

In the cases of the four individuals who recounted their own experiences with abuse, all the victims were women, and all the perpetrators were men. When the first episode of abuse happened, the victims were between the ages of 60 and 70. Only one of the women had been primarily subjected to physical violence, but she, like the other three women, had also been subjected to some forms of sexual abuse. All the women were forced to have sexual intercourse against their will, and they were subjected to various forms of physical and sexual violence in addition to the rape. In each case, the perpetrator was someone they knew, with 75 percent of victims stating that the abuser was their spouse or partner. These were not isolated events, as all the women stated that they had been abused twenty to thirty times, if not more, by their abuser since turning 60. Regardless of the intensity of their abuse, all the women gave ratings of 5 or below when asked to rate the seriousness of their abuse (1=not at all serious, 10=extremely serious). Only one of the four women reported their abuse, and a month or more had passed before she sought support from law enforcement. When asked why they were reluctant or did not

follow through with a report, they all agreed with the responses “I didn't know who to call or where to go for help" and "I didn't think anything would be done." Lastly, the survey prompted the participants with questions regarding previous trauma relating to sexual and/or physical abuse. Half of the women stated that they had experienced previous trauma relating to this topic and their previous trauma contributed to their unwillingness to report. The women rated the impact of their previous abuse on their coping abilities, physical health, and mental health as neutral.

Of the individuals who were responding to the survey because they knew someone who has experienced sexual and/or physical abuse since turning 60, all stated that the victims were women with ages ranging between 60 and 85. Most of the women in these situations were subjected to both physical and sexual abuse. According to the respondents, 69.2 percent of the perpetrators were men and 30.8 percent were women. The relationships between the perpetrator and victim varied. A majority stated that the individual was a spouse/ partner (30.8 percent) or a paid home care aid (30.8 percent). Some other individuals who were perpetrators in these specific cases were nurses, an OB-GYN, a friend, a grandchild or another relative. Most of these cases were not isolated events as respondents stated that the abuse occurred between two to ten times (53.8 percent), ten-twenty times (15.4 percent), and twenty to thirty times (15.4 percent) since turning 60. Despite the seriousness of the abuse, more than 50 percent of the victims rated the abuse severity at 5 or below on a ten-point scale. Though many victims did not disclose their assault, 53.8 percent did after a significant period of time. More than half of the victims waited a month or longer to come forward. When asked about the victim’s hesitancy or reluctance to report, 70 percent of the respondents stated that the victim felt embarrassed or ashamed, or that it would be too emotionally difficult to disclose their abuse. Since these individuals were

responding based on the experiences of others, some were unaware if the person in question had previously experienced a traumatic event involving physical or sexual abuse. Those who knew believed that the individual's previous abuse compelled them to report later-in-life assault.

Participant Perceptions

When it comes to comparing the prevalence of abuse among seniors and young people, 45 percent of respondents believed that younger and older people are equally likely to be abused, 32.5 percent believed that older adults are less likely to be abused, and 22.5 percent believed that older adults are more likely to be abused. Individuals under age 30 tended to believe younger adults are more often abused, while individuals aged 50 and older tended to believe older adults are more often abused. In addition, 72 percent of the respondents believed that there are fewer support services for older victims than younger victims and 82.5 percent believed that older victims are less likely to report than younger victims.

The standard error of a proportion was used to test the hypothesis that most individuals believe there are fewer services available for older victims. The result was not statistically significant, $z = .01$, $p > .05$. The standard error of a proportion was also used to test the hypothesis that most individuals believe older adults are less likely to report abuse. The result was not statistically significant, $z = .10$, $p > .05$.

Services and Reporting

In the closing section of the survey, individuals were asked how confident they were in their ability to find and utilize assistance specifically for older victims of sexual and/or physical abuse. The respondents were given a rating scale in which 1 meant they were not confident at all and 10 meant they were extremely confident. Though the responses ranged from 1 to 10, 60 percent of the participants evaluated their confidence as a 5 or lower, the mean response was

5.05 (SD = 2.32), and the most frequent response was 3. It was hypothesized that individuals would not be confident in their ability to find and utilize assistance. A one-sample *t*-test was used to compare the mean response with the neutral response of 5.5. The mean response was not significantly lower than the neutral response, $t(39) = -1.22$, $p > .05$, d = .19.

When individuals were asked to explain their level of confidence, they emphasized the importance of visibility and education specifically relating to older survivors of abuse. One commenter stated, "The assault of older victims is not talked about, and I am completely unfamiliar with where to find resources," while another commenter wrote, "I'm not sure where to go, it's not as advertised as it is for young people," further showing the importance of facilitating conversations regarding elder abuse. This question also generated responses relating to barriers to seeking assistance, like hearing and vision impairments. One individual wrote, "older people are less technologically savvy," while another shared, "hearing and vision loss make it difficult to use computers and make phone calls."

The final question in the survey prompted individuals to assess their own perceptions and beliefs as to why an older victim might not report abuse. There were a variety of responses and embarrassment was one of the most common reasons given. Almost 70 percent of the people believed that older adults are reluctant to report due to feelings of embarrassment, shame, and that by reporting, it would be too emotionally difficult. In addition, 45 percent of the respondents believed that older adults feel as though nothing will be done if they report their abuse. Lastly, 43 percent of the respondents say that when it comes to accessing resources, older adults do not know where to go or who to contact.

Discussion

As the population ages, there is an increase in the importance of understanding elder abuse, its consequences, and the needs of its victims. The present study was exploratory in nature, with six hypotheses proposed:

1) most individuals do not know an older person who had been physically or sexually abused;
2) abuse experiences reported by individuals are similar to what the literature describes;
3) most individuals believe that there are fewer services available for older people;
4) individuals are not confident in their ability to identify and use assistance specialized for older victims of sexual or physical abuse;
5) most individuals believe that older people are less likely to report abuse;
6) individuals believe there are a variety of reasons why older victims might not report abuse, including fear, embarrassment, and concern that nothing would be done.

Hypotheses 1, 3, 4, and 5 were based on previous research and, though the analyses of those hypotheses were not statistically significant, the results were in the predicted directions. A larger sample would have provided more power for the analyses, which would have increased the probability of detecting a true effect.

As predicted in the second hypothesis, the responses to questions regarding experiences were consistent with the published literature.[26] Individuals who were recounting their own experiences or responding to the survey because they knew someone who experienced sexual and/or physical abuse since turning 60, all stated that the victims were women, and most of the perpetrators were men who were known by the victims. Many victims did not report their abuse, and those who did report the abuse often waited a month or so before reporting. One surprising finding is that the survivors of abuse did not consider the abuse to be serious, and they rated the mental and physical health impact of the abuse to be neutral. For these individuals, downplaying

the effects of abuse may be a way of coping with their circumstances, especially if they felt they could not leave the relationship or report the abuse.

Although the sixth hypothesis was less specific and did not lend itself to statistical analysis, it is true that a variety of reasons were reported, and embarrassment and concern that nothing would be done were among the top three responses. The third top response was that older adults do not know where to go or who to contact. When asked about barriers to reporting, individuals were offered a number of options, including the opportunity to select "other." The list was fairly comprehensive and included most of the barriers to reporting identified in the literature review of Peirone and Dawson.[27] One notable exception is the barrier created by cognitive impairment, mental illness, or age-related dementias. Impairments in mental ability were not listed as response options and were not added by participants in the "other" category.

A strength of the present study is that it differed from previous research in terms of its methodology. Individuals were recruited from social media sites that focus on abuse. Another way the present study differed from previous research is that the survey design included questions about individuals' perceptions of issues related to the physical and sexual abuse of older adults.

It should be noted that the present study used a questionnaire and relies on self-report data, therefore there are inherent limitations to the study. As with any questionnaire study, there is the potential for differing interpretations of questions and the possibility that individuals will be motivated to provide socially desirable responses. Another limitation that may affect the generalizability of the results is the study's sample, which is relatively small and lacking in diversity. Consequently, the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of these individuals may not be representative or reflective of other adults. For example, the participants who recounted their

own experiences with abuse were all women and their perpetrators were all men. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all victims of abuse.

The results of the present study suggest that efforts to reduce the stigma for victims, and efforts to provide more information, education, and support, could lead to an increase in the reporting of victimizations. Future research on the topic of trauma and older survivors will provide the greatest benefit to practitioners and policy makers if it includes a variety of methodologies and diverse samples from a variety of settings. In particular, it is recommended that future researchers consider recruiting individuals through social media sites focused on abuse, and that researchers' assessments address individuals' perceptions as well as their experiences, as was done in the present study. A larger sample size, which would increase statistical power, would provide a better test of the study's hypotheses. It is through these different approaches that we will gain a more complete understanding of the issues critical to preventing abuse, supporting victims, and seeking justice.

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Appendix

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each question and respond honestly from the multiple-choice responses provided. The survey is composed of a series of questions and will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

DEFINITIONS:

PHYSICAL ABUSE: Non-accidental use of force that results in bodily injury, pain, or impairment, including but not limited to, being slapped, burned, cut, bruised or improperly physically restrained.

SEXUAL ABUSE: Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind, including but not limited to, forcing sexual contact or forcing sex with a third party.

DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your age? - Short answer

Which best describes your gender identity?
- Woman
- Man
- Transgender woman
- Transgender man
- Genderqueer or gender non-conforming
- Questioning
- Other: _____

Select one or more of the following races that best describes you: (Mark all that apply)
- African American or black
- Caucasian or white
- American Indian, Aleut, Eskimo
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Other: _____

Are you of Hispanic origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background?
- Yes
- No
- Do not know

What is your highest level of education?
- 8th grade or less
- Some high school (but did not graduate)
- High school diploma or GED
- Post-high school other than college
- Some college
- College degree
- Post graduate

Are you currently …
- Married or partnered
- Widowed
- Separated
- Single, never married
- Single, divorced
- Other: ____

How would you rate your overall health at the present time? Would you say overall your health is:
- Excellent
- Very good

- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very poor

OPINION QUESTIONS What role do you believe past trauma has in a person's decision to report a recent traumatic event they experienced?
- They are more likely to report
- They are less likely to report
- No association
- Unsure

(Fill in the blank) Please select the option that best matches the statement in your opinion: There are _____ support services for older victims than younger victims.
- More
- Less
- Equal (Fill in the blank)

Please select the option that best matches the statement in your opinion: An older (60+) victim of physical and/or sexual abuse is _____ likely to report than a younger victim.
- More
- Less
- Equally

(Fill in the blank) Please select the option that best matches the statement in your opinion: Physical and/or sexual abuse is ____ common among older (60+) people than younger people.
- More
- Less
- Equally

EXPERIENCES
Have you or someone you know experienced any form of sexual abuse or physical abuse since turning 60?
- Yes, myself (participant is directed to “personal recent experience”)
- Yes, someone I know (participant is directed to “vicarious recent experiences”)
- No (participant is directed to “closing questions”)

PERSONAL RECENT EXPERIENCE
Please respond to the following questions to the best of your ability. How old were you when this recent violent incident occurred?
- Short answer

If you have experienced physical abuse, what did the abuse include?
- Kicked, bit or hit you with a fist
- Hit or tried to hit you with something

- Beat you up
- Threatened you with a knife or gun
- Used a knife or gun
- Thrown something at you
- Tried to slap or hit you
- Pushed, grabbed or shoved you
- Slapped you
- Not applicable
- Other: ____

If you have experienced sexual abuse, what did the abuse include?
- Forced kissing
- Unwanted groping
- Forced touching
- Pressured sexual activity
- An attempt to touch you in a sexual way against your will
- Forced you to have sexual intercourse against your will
- Not applicable
- Other: _____

What is the abusers' relationship to you? (Select those that apply)
- Spouse/Partner
- Your adult child
- Son/Daughter in-law
- Grandchild
- Other relative
- Neighbor
- Friend
- Other non-relative
- Paid home care aid (attendant)
- Stranger
- I don’t know the person
- Other: _____

What is the gender identity of your abuser?
- Woman
- Man
- Transgender woman –
Transgender man
- Genderqueer or gender non-conforming
- Questioning
- Unsure
- Other: ____

How many times has this happened since turning 60?
- Once - 2 to 10 times

- 10 to 20 times
- 20 to 30 times
- Other: ____

How serious a problem is it that the person did this?
- Scale from 1-10
- 1 = Not serious at all
- 10 = Very serious
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (participant will click the circle that best describes their opinion)

Did you report these incidents?
- Yes
- No

(If applicable) How long after the incident did you report?
- Within a few hours
- Within a few days
- More than a few days but less than a month
- More than a month

(If applicable) Where did you report and/or seek help?
- Law enforcement or police
- Crisis hotline
- Health care personnel
- Adult Protective Services
- Other: _____

Were any of the following reasons why you did not report or were hesitant to report? (Pick your top 3)
- Did not know where to go for help or who to tell
- Felt embarrassed, ashamed or that it would be too emotionally difficult
- I did not think anyone would believe me
- I did not think it was serious enough to report
- I did not want the person to get into trouble
- I feared negative social consequences
- I did not think anything would be done
- I feared it would not be kept confidential
- Past traumatic experience affected my willingness to report
- Other: _____

Have you experienced any previous trauma relating to physical or sexual abuse in your life prior to this?
- Yes (Proceed participant to “Exit Questions”)
- No (Proceed participant to “Exit Questions”)

If at all, how do you think your prior trauma affected your recent experience with abuse?

- Willingness to report scale from 1-3 1 2 3 (better, neutral, worse)
- Mental health scale from 1-3 1 2 3 (better, neutral, worse)
- Physical health scale from 1-3 1 2 3 (better, neutral, worse)
- Coping abilities scale from 1-3 1 2 3 (better, neutral, worse)

RECENT EXPERIENCE OF OLDER ADULT (60+) YOU KNOW
Please respond to the following questions to the best of your ability.
How old was the victim when the violent incident occurred?
- Short answer

What is the gender identity of the victim?
- Woman
- Man
- Transgender woman
- Transgender man
- Genderqueer or gender non-conforming
- Questioning
- Unsure
- Other: ____

If the victim experienced physical abuse, what did the abuse include?
- Kicked, bit or hit them with a fist
- Hit or tried to hit them with something
- Beating them up
- Threatened them with a knife or gun
- Used a knife or gun
- Threw something at them
- Tried to slap or hit them
- Pushed, grabbed or shoved them
- Slapped them
- Not applicable
- I don’t know
- Other: ___

If the victim experienced sexual abuse, what did the abuse include?
- Forced kissing
- Unwanted groping
- Forced touching
- Pressured sexual activity
- An attempt to touch them in a sexual way against their will
- Forced them to have sexual intercourse against their will
- Not applicable
- I don’t know
- Other: ____

What is the abusers' relationship to this individual? (Select those that apply)

- Spouse/Partner
- Adult child
- Son/Daughter in-law
- Grandchild
- Other relative
- Neighbor
- Friend
- Other non-relative
- Paid home care aid (attendant)
- Stranger
- I don't know the person
- Other: _____

What is the gender identity of the abuser?
- Woman
- Man
- Transgender woman
- Transgender man
- Genderqueer or gender non-conforming
- Questioning
- Unsure
- Other: ____

How many times has this happened since the victim turned 60?
- Once
- 2 to 10 times
- 10 to 20 times
- 20 to 30 times
- I don't know –
Other: ____

How serious did the victim consider the incidents to be?
- Scale from 1-10
- 1 = Not serious at all
- 10 = Very serious
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (participant will click the circle which best represents their opinion)

Did they report these incidents?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

(If applicable) How long after the incident did they report?
- Within a few hours
- Within a few days
- More than a few days but less than a month

- More than a month

(If applicable) Where did they report and/or seek help?
- Law enforcement or police
- Crisis hotline
- Health care personnel
- Adult Protective Services
- I don't know
- Other: _____

Were any of the following reasons why they did not report or were hesitant to report? (Pick your top 3)
- Did not know where to go for help or who to tell
- Felt embarrassed, ashamed or that it would be too emotionally difficult
- Did not think anyone would believe them
- Did not think it was serious enough to report
- Did not want the person to get into trouble
- Feared negative social consequences
- Did not think anything would be done
- Feared it would not be kept confidential
- Past traumatic experience affected their willingness to report
- I don't know
- Other: _____

Have they experienced any previous trauma relating to physical or sexual abuse in their life prior to this?
- Yes (Proceed participant to "Exit Questions")
- No (Proceed participant to "Exit Questions")
- I don't know (Proceed participant to "Exit Questions")

If at all, how do you think their prior trauma affected their recent experience with abuse? (e.g. willingness to report, mental health, physical health, coping abilities)
- Willingness to report scale from 1-3 1 2 3 (better, neutral, worse)
- Mental health scale from 1-3 1 2 3 (better, neutral, worse)
- Physical health scale from 1-3 1 2 3 (better, neutral, worse)
- Coping abilities scale from 1-3 1 2 3 (better, neutral, worse)

** participants will be directed to skip this question if they do not know.

CLOSING QUESTIONS

How confident are you in your ability to find and utilize assistance specialized for older victims of sexual and/or physical abuse?
- Scale from 1 to 10
- 1 = Not confident at all
- 10 = Completely confident
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (participant will click the circle that best represents their opinion)

Please explain your answer to the previous question:
- Short answer

What do you think are the major reasons why older victims do not disclose their abuse? (Pick your top 3)
- Did not know where to go for help or who to tell
- Felt embarrassed, ashamed or that it would be too emotionally difficult
- Did not think anyone would believe them
- Did not think it was serious enough to report
- Did not want the person to get into trouble
- Feared negative social consequences
- Did not think anything would be done
- Feared it would not be kept confidential
- Past traumatic experience affected their willingness to report
- Other: _____

How confident do you feel that you were able to correctly answer the questions in this survey? Would you say…
- Scale from 1 to 10 (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10) - participants will click the circle that describes their opinion.
- 1 = Not confident at all
- 10 = completely confident

EXIT QUESTIONS

How confident are you in your ability to find and utilize assistance specialized for older victims of sexual and/or physical abuse?
- Scale from 1 to 10 (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10) - participants will click the circle that describes their opinion.
- 1 = Not confident at all
- 10 = Completely confident

Please explain your answer to the previous question:
- Short answer

How confident do you feel that you were able to correctly answer the questions in this survey? Would you say…
- Scale from 1 to 10 (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10) - participants will click the circle that describes their opinion.
- 1 = Not confident at all
- 10 = completely confident