

Elder Mistreatment: recent research and current controversies

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What is Elder Mistreatment?

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Types of Definition

- General definitions
- Typologies

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A General Definition



- “A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person”

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US National Research Council 2003

- Intentional actions that cause harm or create a serious risk of harm (whether or not harm is intended) to a vulnerable elder by a caregiver or other person who stands in a trust relationship to the elder
- failure by a caregiver to satisfy the elder's basic needs or to protect the elder from harm.

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US National Research Council 2003

- ‘Mistreatment’ : that some injury, deprivation, or dangerous condition has occurred to the elder person and that someone else bears responsibility for causing the condition or failing to prevent it’.

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Excludes

- Self-neglect
- Self-harm
- Crimes by strangers
- Social Ageism

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Includes

- Interpersonal Relationships
- Care settings
- Formal: professional helpers
- Informal : families, friends

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Contexts of Mistreatment

- In Community settings- where older people are living at home.
- In Institutional settings- where older people are living in hospital, in residential or nursing homes.

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Operational Definitions

- *A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person”*

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Mistreatment Includes

- Physical Abuse
- Psychological/Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Financial Abuse
- Neglect

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Definition: physical abuse

- 1 or more times in last 12 months
 - slapped you
 - grabbed, pushed or shoved you
 - kicked, bit or hit you with a fist
 - burned or scalded you
 - threatened you with a knife, gun or other weapon
 - used a knife, gun or other weapon
 - any other violence
 - tied you down
 - locked you in your room
 - given you drugs or too much medicine to control you
 - restrained you in any other way

Definition: psychological abuse

- 10 or more times in last 12 months by the same person
 - insulted you, called you names or sworn at you
 - threatened you
 - undermined or belittled you
 - excluded you or repeatedly ignored you
 - threatened to harm others that you care about
 - prevented you from seeing others that you care about

Definition: sexual abuse/harassment

- 1 or more times in last 12 months
 - talked to you in a sexual way that made you feel uncomfortable
 - touched you in a sexual way against your will
 - tried to touch you in a sexual way against your will
 - made you watch pornography against your will
 - tried to make you watch pornography against your will
 - had sexual intercourse with you against your will
 - tried to have sexual intercourse with you against your will

Definition: financial abuse

- 1 or more times in last 12 months:
 - stolen money, possessions or property (or attempted to)
 - made you give money, possessions or property (or tried to)
 - used fraud to take money, possessions or property (or tried to)
 - taken or kept power of attorney (or tried to)

Definition: neglect

- 10 or more times in last 12 months
less than 10 but judged by respondent to be "very serious" OR
- Needs and does not receive help with:
 - day to day activities (eg. shopping, preparing meals, housework)
 - personal care (eg. washing, dressing eating)
 - correct dose and timing of medication

Social Ageism

- "Ageism can be seen as a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin colour and gender ..."
- (Butler 1975)

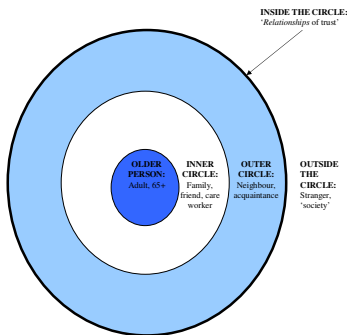
Social Ageism

- Ageism allows the younger generations to see older people as different from themselves, thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings"
- (Butler 1975)

Examples of Ageism from the UK

- 29% adults report age discrimination
- 1:10 employers use age as a criterion
- 20% of volunteering orgs have upper age limits
- No Magistrates & jurors above 70
- No motor insurance over 75
- Women over 70 not invited to breast screening
- Disabled people over 65 ineligible for support

Figure 2: Inner and outer circles of trust as applied to perpetrators of mistreatment.



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In the Context of Ageism

But distinguished by caring and trust relationships

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The UK Prevalence Study 2007

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Research Findings

KINGS LONDON
University of London

NatCen
National Centre for Social Research

UK Study of Abuse and Neglect of Older People



Elder abuse and neglect (mismanagement) are increasingly recognised as a social problem in the UK and internationally, but there has been an absence of any sound data on the extent of this in the UK. This task of evidence generated Centre for Social and the Department of Health to fund a dedicated survey to provide nationally representative prevalence estimates of elder abuse and neglect in the community. The results of which are presented here.

- Overall, 2.0% of people aged 65 and over living in private households (including residential care) reported that they had experienced mistreatment during the past year.
- This equates to about 227,000 people aged 65 and over experiencing mistreatment, or around one in fifty of the older population.
- When the one year prevalence of mistreatment is broadened to include exclude involving neighbours and neighbours, the overall prevalence increases from 2.0% to 4.0%. This would give a figure of approximately 242,000 older people subject to some form of mistreatment.
- Continuing mistreatment in the past year involving family and friends and care workers.
- The predominant type of mistreatment reported was neglect (17%), followed by financial abuse (15%). The prevalence of psychological and physical abuse was similar (both 8.5%), and sexual abuse reported across most of mistreatment, with the least reported type (0.2%).
- Women were more likely to say that they had experienced mistreatment than men: 3.0% of women and 1.1% of men.
- Mistreatment in the past year was significantly more likely to be reported by those with poor mental health, and increased with declining health status, depression and isolation.
- 61% of mistreatment in the past year involved a non-responder, 40% within family members, 17% a care worker and 2% a close friend. Relationships could neither be determined from any source.

What is Prevalence?

- Incidence: the number of new referrals/people using a service.
- Prevalence: the estimated number of people affected, in a given population.

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Findings 2

Mistreatment by socio-demographic factors

- Likelihood of having been mistreated in the past year varied by:
 - **marital status**, ranging from 9.4% of those who were separated or divorced to 1.4% of those who were widowed
 - **tenure**, those who lived in rented accommodation (social or private) tended to have higher prevalence rates than owner-occupiers
 - **general health**, the likelihood of having been mistreated increased with declining health status
 - **loneliness, depression and quality of life**, those feeling lonely, depressed or with a lower QoL more likely to have experienced mistreatment

Findings 3

Perpetrators

- Half of those who experienced mistreatment had been neglected or abused by their *partner* (51%); a similar proportion by *other family* (49%) (respondents could mention more than one person)
 - *Spouse or partner* most common perpetrator for neglect (70%) and interpersonal abuse (57%)
 - *Other family* most common for financial abuse (54%)
 - Overall, abuse was more commonly carried out by men (74%) than women (26%); the split was more equal for financial abuse (56% men)

Findings 4

Impact

- 76% said the effect on them was serious or very serious
- Most commonly reported effects were emotional and social
- 70% of those asked told someone about the mistreatment or sought help. Most commonly from:
 - Friends or family (31%)
 - Health professional or social worker (30%)

One year prevalence – outer circle *(family, friends, care workers plus neighbours & acquaintances)*

	Broader definition (%)	95% confidence intervals	Estimated no. in UK population*
Any mistreatment	4.0	3.0 to 5.3	342,400
Neglect	1.2	0.7 to 2.0	105,000
Financial	1.0	0.6 to 1.8	86,500
Psychological	0.7	0.4 to 1.3	58,600
Physical	0.7	0.4 to 1.4	62,400
Sexual	0.5	0.2 to 1.2	42,500

Unweighted base: 2106 (bases vary slightly, base shown here for neglect)
Based on UK household population of 8,536,800 aged 16 and over (ONS, NISDA)

The Public and the Scientific

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The spread of mistreatment

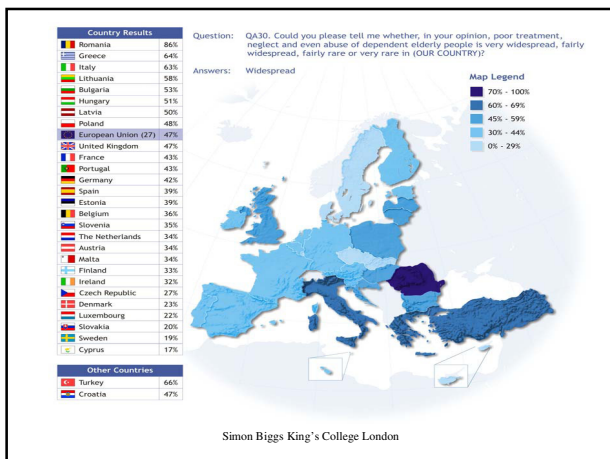
Public expectation
Trajectories of prevalence
Ubiquitous definitions

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Eurobarometer 2008

- 47% of European Citizens: 'believe that poor treatment neglect and even abuse of dependent older people is widespread'
- Varies from 86% in Romania, to 17% in Cyprus
- Sexual Assault 31%, Physical 52%, Psychological 64%, Property 67% as the:
'Level of risk you think dependent older people are exposed to'

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Ireland (26 Counties)

- Senior caseworker referrals 2007-8
- Incidence study
- 0.36% (1670/468,000)
- If 2.6% UK figure used, indicates a likelihood of 12,170 older people being mistreated.

HSE Survey

Perceived prevalence of elder abuse:

- Very widespread 15%
- Quite Widespread 40%
- Not very 34%
- Not at all 5%
- Don't Know 5%

BBC study (Hussein et al, 2007)

- 55% 'a great deal' of mistreatment
- respondents estimated that 11.4% older adults suffered from physical abuse, 4.9% from stealing (financial), 0.8% from sexual abuse and 20.7% from humiliation (psychological).

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Trajectories for prevalence

- 1986 Boston 2.6/3.2%
- 1990 Canada 4.0%
- 1992 UK 5.0%
- 1994 Holland 5.6%
- 1999 Canada 7.0%
- 2002 H.K. 20%
- 2005 Israel 18.4%
- 2005 Germany 6.5%
- 2006 UK 2.6/4.0%
- 2006 Spain 0.8/ 4.5%

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‘Worldview Environmental Scan’ (Podnieks, 2007)

“any harm done to an older person that undermines that person’s physical, emotional, spiritual or social well being.”
The forms of abuse can include, but are not limited to, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, intimidation, coercion, discrimination, and self-neglect’ (p1).

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Under reporting

- USA: National Elder Abuse Incidence Study 1 in 4 cases go unreported
- UK: NATCEN/King’s Prevalence Figures, compared to APS caseloads- appx 3% being picked up.

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Issues

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What Prevalence can tell us

- Extent of the problem
- Can compare to incidence
- What types
- Compare different contexts
- Change over time

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The value to policy makers

- How big a problem is it?
- How much are services picking up?
- Can identify effective 'tailored' forms of response
- Can target resources more accurately
- Can see what works.

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Policy and Practice Implications

- there is much more out there than APSs are picking up
- we need to distinguish between different forms of mistreatment much more clearly
- its not just physical
- what about neglect
- there are interpersonal and there are neighbourhood forms

Sources of Ambiguity

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Bauman

'Responsibility for the other is shot through with ambivalence: I has no obvious limits, nor does it easily translate into practical steps to be taken or refrained from- each such step being instead pregnant with consequences that are notoriously uneasy to predict and even less easy to evaluate in advance'

Life in Fragments, 1995

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Living with Complexity

- Different types – different dynamics
- Investigating risk- sustainable solutions
- Under reporting – inspiring trust
- Changes with age and context
- Different forms-different solutions

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Remaining Questions 1

- What is the relationship between:
- Ageist Attitudes
- Neglected services
- Extreme behaviours like abuse and neglect

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Remaining Questions 2

- What is going on in neighbourhoods?
- What about Institutional forms?
- What are the most appropriate responses to different forms?
- Translating the evidence base into services and training

De Beauvoir

'By the way in which society behaves toward its old people it uncovers the naked, and often carefully hidden truth about its real principles and aims'

'Coming of Age'/Old Age/La Vieillesse.
1970.

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Abuse of Elderly in Europe project
<http://www.abuel.org/>
National Centre For the Protection of Older People
<http://www.ncpop.ie/>

Institute of Gerontology KCL
UK prevalence study of abuse and neglect of older people:
full report
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/sspp/geront/res/researchreports.html>

Summary of findings UK prevalence study
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/comment/1/c6/02/96/45/Natcenresearchfindings.pdf>

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