Risks of Elder Abuse ...

1 in 6 people aged 60 years and older experience elder abuse (1). And it's likely that only 1 in 24 cases become known to authorities (2).

Elder abuse can occur to any elder but, there are circumstances, or factors, that increase an elder's risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. These factors often interact, and range from the level of the individual, their relationships, to the wider community, and broader societal factors.

Ageism for instance, affects all levels of society. **Ageist culture influences policies and practices**, which affect capacity of **community services**, and impacts **social connections**. People with ageist views are more inclined **dehumanize older adults**. This **can lead to elder abuse**, or to **overlooking elder abuse**. When elders internalize these views, they **might not seek the support they need** (3).



Personal Factors

- Old age.
- Female.
- Member of LGBTQ+ community.
- Low socio-economic status/poverty.
- Physical health issues or conditions.
- Mental health issues or conditions.
- Substance abuse.
- Difficulty coping with stress.
- Dependency (financial, functional etc).
- Internalized ageism.



Relational Factors

- Lack of support.
- Problems with minimizing behavior of the perpetrator, and the risks they pose.
- Exposure to abuse throughout life course.
- Dysfunctional family relationships, e.g. codependency.
- Insufficiently trained and under-resourced caregivers.



Community Factors

- Social isolation.
- Limited access to aging services.
- Limited access to healthcare.
- Fragmented health and community services.
- Ageist attitudes and practices.
- Poor conditions for paid/ unpaid caregivers.



Societal Factors

- Ageism.
- Policies and legislation (e.g. funding cuts).
- Culture of individualism.

Elders with 3-4 risk factors can be 4 times more likely to experience abuse.

Those with **5 or more** risk factors were **26 times more** likely (4).

Factors
Societal

Community

Relationa/

Personal

E.g. Ageism

Note: Characteristics of abusers can be more predictive of elder abuse than elders' risks. See our 'Who are the Perpetrators of Elder Abuse' infographic.

References: 1. Yon et al., 2017; 2. Storey, 2020; 3. Chang, 2021; 4. Dong et al., 2014; Bolkan et. al., 2023; CDC, 2020.