

RESEARCH BRIEF

How at Risk for Abuse Are People with Dementia?

Elder Abuse is one of the most overlooked public health hazards in the United States. The National Center on Elder Abuse estimates that between one and two million elderly adults have suffered from some form of elder abuse. The main types of elder abuse are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, neglect and self-neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation.

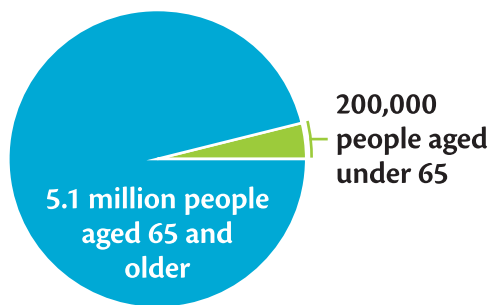
Elders with dementia are thought to be at greater risk of abuse and neglect than those of the general elderly population. The following studies looked directly at several questions related to how often people with dementia are abused by their caregivers and what, if any, variables are associated with mistreatment. Citations to the research studies in this fact sheet are shown in parentheses.

FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

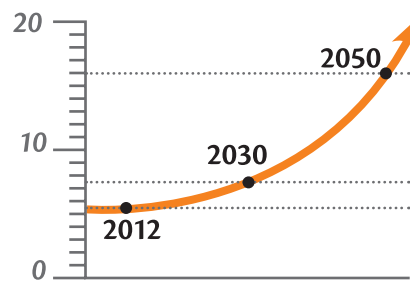
February 2012

Background

The number of Americans with Alzheimer's disease is expected to grow exponentially in the coming decades. (1)



Currently, approximately **5.3 million Americans of all ages have Alzheimer's disease.**



Approximately **7.7 million people will have Alzheimer's disease in 2030**, and the number will increase to **16 million in 2050.**

Do caregivers fear becoming abusive with person with dementia?

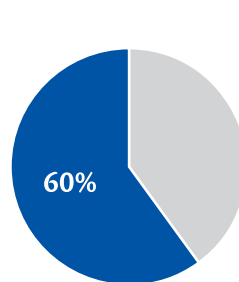
In one U.S. study, **20% of caregivers expressed fears that they would become violent** with the people for whom they cared for. (2)



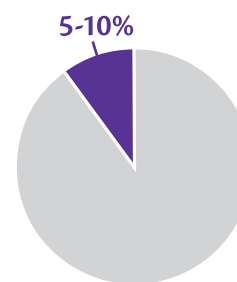
How often are caregivers abusive to people with dementia?

- Three international studies found **overall rates of abuse of people with dementia by their caregivers ranging from 34 to 62%.** (3,4 & 5)
- In a U.S. study, caregiver **abuse and neglect of people with dementia was detected in 47.3% of the surveyed caregivers.** (6)

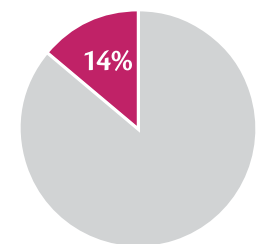
What type of abuse is most reported by U.S. caregivers of people with dementia?



VERBAL ABUSE
One study shows **60% of caregivers had been verbally abusive** with the person for whom they were providing care. (7)



PHYSICAL ABUSE
Between 5 and 10% of caregivers reported that they were physically abusive toward the care recipients. (6 & 8)



NEGLECT
Fourteen percent of caregivers reported that they were neglectful. (6)

What, if any, characteristics are associated with different kinds and combinations of mistreatment of people with dementia?

Characteristics associated with mistreatment of people with dementia included:

- The caregiver's **anxiety, depressive symptoms, social contacts, perceived burden, emotional status, and role limitations due to emotional problems.** (6)
- The care recipients's **psychological aggression and physical assault behaviors.** These behaviors were the best indicators for elder mistreatment as defined by the expert panel convened for this research study. (6)



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This document was completed for the National Center on Elder Abuse and is supported in part by a grant (No. 90AB0002/01) from the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Grantees carrying out projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Therefore, points of view or opinions do not necessarily represent official Administration on Aging or DHHS policy."

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