

# Elder Abuse and Neglect

According to new data released by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in September 1997, persons age 50 or older made up:

30 percent of the population

12 percent of murder victims

7 percent of serious violent crime victims.

(Perkins, C. (1997, September). *Age Patterns of Victims of Serious Violent Crime: Special Report*, NCJ-162031, p. 1. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.)

Specifically, the Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report stated that persons age 64 or older represent 15 percent of the population and experience: 2 percent of all violent crime, 1 percent of all rapes and sexual assaults, and 4 percent of all robberies. (*Ibid.*, p. 1.)

In 1996, it was estimated that there were between 820,000 and 1,860,000 abused elders in the country; however, the true national prevalence or incidence of elder abuse is not known today. (Tatara, T. (1996, May). "Elder Abuse in Domestic Settings." *Elder Abuse Information Series*, #1. Washington, DC: National Center on Elder Abuse.)

Nationally, nearly 70 percent of Adult Protective Service agencies' annual caseloads involve elder abuse. (*Ibid.*, p. 19)

Based on reports from 39 states, the National Center on Elder Abuse states that out of confirmed domestic elder abuse cases reported in 1994 (excluding self-neglect or self-abuse cases), the perpetrators of elder abuse in the domestic setting are as follows: adult children (35 percent); grandchildren (5.9 percent); spouse (13.4 percent); sibling (2.9 percent); other relatives (13.6 percent); service provider (6.2 percent); friend/neighbor (5.2 percent); all others

(10.3 percent); and unknown (7.4 percent.) (*Ibid.*, p. 9)

The National Center on Elder Abuse estimates the incidence of specific types of elder maltreatment in 1994 (based on reports from 39 states) as follows: physical abuse (15.7 percent); sexual abuse (.04 percent); emotional abuse (7.3 percent); neglect (58.5 percent); financial exploitation (12.3 percent); all other types (5.1 percent); and unknown (.06 percent). (*Ibid.*, p. 8)

Among murders of victims over age 60, their offspring were the killers in 42 percent of the cases. Spouses were the perpetrators in 24 percent of family murders of persons over age 60. (Dawson & Langan. (1994). *Murder in Families*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.)

In most states, specific professionals are designated as "mandatory reporters of elder abuse" and are required by law to report suspected cases of elder maltreatment. In 1994, 21.6 percent of all domestic elder abuse reports came from physicians and other health care professionals, while another 9.4 percent came from service providers. Family members and relatives of victims reported 14.9 percent of reported cases of domestic elder abuse. (*Findings from a national study of domestic elder abuse reports conducted by the National Center on Elder Abuse, 1994.*)

The median age of elder abuse victims was 76.4 years, according to 1994 data that excluded self-neglecting elders. (*Ibid.*)

*Note: OVC makes no representation concerning the accuracy of data from non-Department of Justice sources.*