

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

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Facts About Violence Against Mid-Life and Older Women

(Excerpted from the Older Women's League 1994 Mother's Day Report)

- Between 1974 and 1990, the murder rate for women age 65 and older increased by 30 percent while the murder rate for men the same age dropped by six percent. (Senate Judiciary Committee, 1990)
- According to a national survey of the health of women conducted for the Commonwealth Fund in 1992, an estimated 1.4 million women between the ages of 45 to 64 were physically abused by their spouses. (Plichta)
- Of 1500 shelters for battered women nationwide, few offer programs specifically designed to meet the needs of older battered women. For instance, a study of 25 shelters in Florida, where there is a disproportionate number of older people, found that just two offered specific services for older women. (Vinton, 1992)
- More than a million American women age 65 and older are victims of abuse each year. (Policy Research Inc., 1994)
- Nearly 400,000 older women living in institutions are victims of physical or sexual abuse. In one study, more than 36 percent of care providers in institutional facilities had witnessed at least one incident of physical abuse by another staff person, and four in five had witnessed an incident of psychological abuse. (House Select Committee on Aging, 1991)
- Between 1986 and 1991, there was a 94 percent increase in elder abuse reported to state agencies. (NARCEA, 1991)
- Women are much more likely than men to be elder abuse victims. In Illinois in fiscal year 1993, nearly three-fourths of all abuse victims over the age of 60 were women; because women represent 59 percent of the population of this age group in Illinois, they were significantly over-represented in reported elder abuse cases. In Colorado in fiscal year 1993, more than two in three of newly reported protection cases among adults age 60 or over were women. (Illinois Department on Aging, Colorado Department on Justice)
- In elder sexual abuse cases, the victim is typically a woman in her seventies, dependent upon the individual who sexually abused her for care. (Ramsey-Klawnsnik, 1991)

Additional Facts About Older Women:

- Fifteen percent of women aged 65 and older, 2.5 million individuals, live in poverty compared to approximately 9 percent of men 65 or older, or 1 million individuals. Elderly African American and Hispanic women are especially vulnerable to living in poverty. (Jean Vellen, the Older Women's League)
- After age 65 women have a median annual income of \$8,499; men get \$14,983. The Social Security portion of income is \$6,456 women; \$10,296 men. (Older Women's League 1995 Mother's Day Report: The Path to Poverty)