Each year, Age Concern’s Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention (EANP) services receive over 1000 referrals about people who may be facing elder abuse or neglect. That’s about 4 referrals every working day.

We investigate each situation, and work with the older person/kaumātua (and their family/whānau when this is appropriate) to help them to live safely, free from abuse. About two-thirds of these situations are confirmed to involve elder abuse.

_Elder Abuse is 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._  

Abuse is also identified by other agencies including health providers, the Police, lawyers, other community support organisations, and other non-Age Concern Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention services.

That’s not the whole size of the problem though. We know that only a small proportion of elder abuse incidents come to the attention of an agency that can be of assistance.

A large community based study in the UK reported that 2.6% of older people experience abuse each year. This is equivalent to 2 older people in New Zealand being abused every hour of every day.

### Types of abuse

Most older people/kaumātua experience more than one type of abuse or neglect. The types of abuse identified in cases referred to Age Concern are:

- **Psychological** 62%

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7 National Center on Elder Abuse USA, *Iceberg Theory of Elder Abuse: The National Elder Abuse Incidence Study*, 1998


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- Material/financial - 50%
- Physical – 20%
- Neglect – 20%

**Who is involved?**

- **2/3 of abused older people are women.** Even taking account of the fact that there are 6 women over the age of 65 for every 5 men, women are over-represented as victims of elder abuse.

- **40% of abused live alone**

- **Almost 80% of abuse is committed by family/whānau members;** and we know that family/whānau members continue to abuse their older relatives even when that person is in residential care.

- **Over 40% of abusers are adult children**

- **Almost 80% of abuse is committed by family/whānau members;** and we know that family/whānau members continue to abuse their older relatives even when that person is in residential care.

- **Up to 35 % of abusers are primary caregivers.** This could be a family/whānau member or support worker if the person is living in the community, or a staff member if the person is living in residential care.

**How does abuse affect older people/kaumātua?**

Older people/kaumātua who are dependent on others are particularly vulnerable to abuse. There are a number of reasons for this - abuse often happens because of an imbalance of power. It continues to happen because the older person/kaumātua may fear that if they complain, they abuse will worsen.

For **about half** of the older people/kaumātua supported by Age Concern over the last ten years, their **health was significantly affected** by the abuse they experienced.

Two out of every 5 abused people experienced a **significant reduction in their independence, loss of confidence and self esteem,** and reported feeling very frightened or anxious and **emotionally distressed.**

About a quarter experienced **long-term consequences.** The UK study found similar results.

For more information about World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and contact details for services visit: [www.ageconcern.org.nz](http://www.ageconcern.org.nz)