

PWGSC Contract 19040-100111/001/CY
POR Registration #POR 037-10
Contract Award Date: 08/09/2010



Follow-Up and Final Awareness and Perceptions of Elder Abuse Survey 2010

FINAL REPORT

Ce rapport est également disponible en français

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January 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Methodology

In May 2007 the Government of Canada created a National Seniors Council to give advice to the Government on matters of national importance to seniors. One of the first areas identified by the Council was combating elder abuse. Subsequently, in the Speech from the Throne on October 16, 2007, it was announced that new measures would be implemented to address elder abuse. In Budget 2008, the Government committed \$13 million over three years to help seniors and others recognize the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and to provide information on what support is available.

The three-year Federal Elder Abuse Initiative (FEAI) started on April 1, 2008 and will conclude on March 31, 2011. One of the anticipated outcomes of the initiative is an increased societal awareness of elder abuse. As a result, the initiative required a follow-up public opinion survey to assess changes in awareness and understanding of elder abuse, following the materials and resources (as well as media campaigns) developed and launched in the last two and a half years. Two earlier studies examining views on elder abuse were conducted in May 2008 and February 2009 – where available, results are tracked from these previous studies to gauge any shifts in awareness and perceptions of elder abuse.

The 2010 study involved a 17-minute telephone survey with 3,012 respondents drawn from the general Canadian population. Respondents were 18 years of age and older, and were randomly selected (through random digit dialling). All provinces were sampled, and the survey was administered in both English and French. Surveying was undertaken between November 15 and December 10, 2010.

Outlined below are the key findings from the survey. The remainder of this report describes survey results in more detail.

Awareness and Perceptions of Elder Abuse

As a way of establishing the context for the remainder of the survey, respondents were first asked whether or not they had heard the term “elder abuse”. Fully, nine in ten Canadians (93 per cent) say they are aware of the term, while fewer than one in ten (seven per cent) indicate they had not heard of this term. Claimed awareness of the term “elder abuse” is up a full 11 points since February 2009, suggesting that Canadians are becoming more familiar with this issue.

The survey went on to examine perceptions of elder abuse in Canada. Canadians were asked without prompting, to name, the kinds of abuse they believe seniors might experience. Physical abuse (e.g., hitting, spitting on) tops the list (mentioned by 55 per cent of respondents), followed closely by emotional/psychological/verbal abuse (52 per cent). Financial abuse (43 per cent) and neglect (36 per cent) are also

mentioned by a sizable proportion of the Canadian public. These results have changed somewhat since we asked this question in 2009: Canadians are now more likely to mention emotional/ psychological/verbal abuse and financial abuse, and are somewhat less likely to mention neglect.

In addition to naming the various kinds of abuse seniors may experience, respondents were asked to identify from a list the type of abuse they think is most commonly experienced by seniors (i.e., physical abuse, financial abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect). Neglect is chosen as the most common type of abuse (43 per cent), followed by psychological/emotional abuse (25 per cent), and financial abuse (22 per cent). Interestingly, despite being mentioned most often as a top-of-mind form of elder abuse, only about one in ten Canadians (eight per cent) thinks physical abuse is the most *common* type of abuse perpetrated against seniors. Virtually no one feels sexual abuse is the most common form of elder abuse. These results have remained largely stable since we last asked this question in February 2009, although neglect is now identified somewhat more frequently than in 2009.

Respondents were also asked, unprompted, to identify the types of financial abuse that could be experienced by seniors. Results reveal that, as in 2009, Canadians are able to generate a sizeable list of potential financial abuses. At the top of the list was pressuring a senior to give money (mentioned by 32 per cent of respondents), followed by assuming/abusing control of a senior's finances (20 per cent), and misusing a power of attorney for personal gain (17 per cent). Telemarketing and letter scams (15 per cent) and using a credit card or bank card without their knowledge (12 per cent) were also seen as fairly common forms of financial abuse. Tracking reveals that Canadians are now more likely to mention pressuring a senior to give money, and abusing control of a senior's finances than they were in February 2009.

Perceived Perpetrators of Elder Abuse

According to police-reported data, seniors are most likely to be victimized by someone they know.¹ Results from this survey seem to reflect this finding. Indeed, when asked, without prompting, who they pictured as being responsible for elder abuse, very few think of someone who is not at least acquainted with the senior (only 11 per cent say "stranger"). Overall, two main categories of perpetrators come to mind: a family member other than a spouse (75 per cent – up 17 points since 2009) and paid caregivers in institutions (48 per cent).

Canadians were also asked to select from a list who they thought would be the most likely to *financially* abuse a senior. In this context, a family member (not including a spouse) is once again named as the most probable perpetrator (62 per cent). Unlike elder abuse in general, no other category of individual is identified by a significant portion of the population. Indeed, all of the other categories on the list were selected by less than one in seven Canadians. These results have remained largely stable since we last

¹ This information is drawn from the 2004 Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey. See the Statistics Canada publication, Seniors as Victims of Crime 2004 and 2005, for more information.

asked this question in February 2009, although the proportion of Canadians who identify a paid caregiver as being most likely to financially abuse a senior is up six percentage points since 2009 (to 14 per cent).

Beliefs About Elder Abuse

The survey also examined Canadians' beliefs about elder abuse in Canada. Respondents were read a series of statements and asked if they thought each of the statements was true or false. Results reveal that nearly all Canadians believe that most of the abuse experienced by older adults goes undetected (97 per cent indicate this is true, including 45 per cent who say it is definitely true). A similar proportion (93 per cent) agree that abuse experienced by an older person often gets worse over time (including 40 per cent who say this is definitely true). However, three-quarters of respondents (78 per cent) also feel that seniors today have more opportunities to get help than in the past. Canadians are also increasingly likely to believe that many types of elder abuse are crimes under the *Criminal Code* (77 per cent, up from 67 per cent in May 2008). More than seven in 10 Canadians also believe that older women are more likely to be abused than older men (73 per cent, although this is down six points since May 2008). Results further reveal a significant decrease in agreement with the idea that most instances of elder abuse occur in elder care facilities: 64 per cent of Canadians believe this statement to be true, down six percentage points since 2008.

Priorities for Governments

The survey examined Canadians' preferred priorities for governments in preventing or stopping elder abuse. Results reveal strong support for all of the potential strategies examined, although support is strongest for policies designed to raise awareness. Eight in ten say that raising awareness among seniors about their right to live safely and securely (83 per cent) and raising awareness among the public about elder abuse (78 per cent) should be high priorities. Three quarters (74 per cent) believe that better enforcement of existing laws should be a high priority for governments, and a similar proportion (73 per cent) believe that providing more resources and information to organizations that deal with seniors is important. Making new laws to prevent elder abuse is seen as comparatively less important in addressing elder abuse, although a majority of respondents (59 per cent) still feel this should be a high priority for governments. Tracking reveals a decline in the proportion of Canadians who assign high priority to each of these strategies, particularly in terms of providing more resources to organizations that deal with seniors (down seven percentage points since May 2008).

Respondents were also asked if they felt that criminal laws should be strengthened to impose tougher sanctions on offences committed against seniors. Results reveal strong support for this idea: fully nine in ten Canadians (91 per cent) agree with bolstering Canada's criminal laws, including 67 per cent who "strongly" agree with this idea. Only six per cent disagree with this statement.

Views on Family Violence

The survey also included a number of questions examining views on family violence. Respondents were presented with a list of four types of family violence (e.g., spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, and sibling abuse) and asked to identify which one they consider to be the most prevalent. Interestingly, despite the focus on elder abuse in this survey, the plurality of Canadians (42 per cent) identify spousal abuse as the most prevalent form of abuse, followed by child abuse (30 per cent). Elder abuse is perceived as the most prevalent type of family abuse by about one in six Canadians (15 per cent), and only five per cent of Canadians feel that sibling abuse is the most common form of abuse.

Respondents were also asked, unprompted, to identify what they consider to be the primary causes of family violence. Results reveal that poverty/financial stress is seen as the primary cause of family violence (mentioned by 50 per cent of respondents), followed fairly distantly by drug or alcohol addiction (21 per cent).

Respondents were also asked to prioritize a number of potential government policies to help address family violence (half of respondents were asked these questions in terms of *preventing* family violence and half were asked about these policies in terms of *stopping* family violence). Looking at preventing family violence, three-quarters of Canadians believe that better enforcing existing laws (77 per cent) and raising awareness among the public (76 per cent) should be given highest priority, followed closely by providing more resources to organizations that deal with family violence (72 per cent). As with elder abuse, introducing new laws to deal with family violence is seen as comparatively less important, although a slight majority (53 per cent) feel this should be the top priority.

Results are virtually identical when the terminology is changed from preventing family violence to stopping family violence. Three-quarters agree that better enforcement of existing laws (77 per cent) and raising awareness among the public (77 per cent) should be top priorities. Seven in 10 (70 per cent) feel that the government should provide more resources and information to organizations that deal with family violence. And again, at the bottom of the list, just over half (51 per cent) feel that making new laws to deal with family violence should be given highest priority.

Supplier Name: EKOS Research Associates

PWGSC Contract Number: #19040-100111/001/CY

Contract Award Date: 08/09/2010

To obtain more information on this study, please e-mail por-rop@justice.gc.ca

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Canada's population is aging rapidly and according to the most recent projections, seniors (defined as individuals 65 years of age and older) will outnumber children 15 years of age and younger in the coming decade.² These projections – along with the already unprecedented increase in the number of seniors in Canada – has led to growing concerns about the physical, social, and economic well-being of this segment of the population. By corollary, concern over the victimization of older Canadians has also heightened in recent years.

In May 2007 the Government of Canada created a National Seniors Council to give advice to the Government on matters of national importance to seniors. One of the first areas identified by the Council was combating elder abuse. Subsequently, in the Speech from the Throne on October 16, 2007, it was announced that new measures would be implemented to address elder abuse. In Budget 2008, the Government committed \$13 million over three years to help seniors and others recognize the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and to provide information on what support is available.

The three-year Federal Elder Abuse Initiative (FEAI) started on April 1, 2008 and will conclude on March 31, 2011. The initiative is under the lead of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and involves the Department of Justice Canada (DOJ), the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

The FEAI was launched in June 2009 with a national awareness campaign - *Elder Abuse – It's Time to Face the Reality*. The advertising campaign ran for a second time during the month of October 2010. The campaign helps Canadians recognize the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and provides important information on help and support that are available. The second phase of the national awareness campaign coincided with the United Nations International Day of Older Persons on October 1, 2009. The campaign consisted of information dissemination through the Internet, brochures, and fact sheets, as well as television and magazine advertisements. For example, the fact sheets on various types of elder abuse include: Facts on the Abuse of Seniors, Physical and Sexual Abuse, Psychological/Emotional Abuse, Financial Abuse, and Neglect. Four brochures were also developed to provide information to help older adults identify potential fraud; tips on how to protect themselves and information on supports available: Door-to-Door Sales Fraud, Credit Card Fraud, Investment Fraud, and Lottery Fraud. A subsequent awareness campaign was conducted from October to December 2010.

² Source: 2006 Census: Portrait of the Canadian Population in 2006, by Age and Sex: National Portrait, (Statistics Canada).

One of the anticipated outcomes of the initiative is an increased societal awareness of elder abuse. As a result, the initiative required a follow-up public opinion survey to assess changes in awareness and understanding of elder abuse, following the materials and resources (as well as media campaigns) developed and launched in the last two and a half years. This study is critical to assessing whether the FEAI has fulfilled the outcome of increased societal awareness of elder abuse, and consequently forms an integral part of the evaluation of the FEAI. Findings from this survey will also be useful to understanding how Canadians view elder abuse at this time.

In addition to examining whether the FEAI has met one of the desired outcomes as noted above (i.e., increased societal awareness of elder abuse), data from this study may be used to:

- Contribute to the refinement of existing (and development of new) awareness materials for seniors on elder abuse in general and the risk of financial abuse (including fraud) in particular and determining the efficacy of existing materials;
- Help inform the debate on conceptual issues in this field, by identifying general perceptions of what the concept of elder abuse entails; and
- Provide directions for further research, policy and programs and help to identify emerging issues in this area.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

a) Overview

The study involved a 17-minute telephone survey with 3,012 respondents drawn from the general Canadian population. Respondents were 18 years of age and older, and were randomly selected (through random digit dialling). All provinces were sampled, and the survey was administered in both English and French. Surveying on the study was undertaken between November 15 and December 10, 2010.

b) Design and Pretest

Justice Canada undertook the design of the questionnaire for this study. EKOS reviewed the questionnaire and made a few small recommendations regarding overall design and question wording. The final version of this survey is provided in Appendix A.

Once the questionnaire was finalized, it was translated and pre-tested with 22 respondents (10 English and 12 French). No significant issues were encountered in the pretest.

c) Sampling Strategy

The study involved a stratified random sample of respondents that was designed to provide a national representation of the Canadian general public, 18 years of age and older.

EKOS used Survey Sample software to produce the sample for this project. This software samples by Random Digit Dial (RDD) methodology and checks its samples against published phone lists to divide the RDD into "Directory Listed" (DL) and "Directory Not Listed" (DNL) RDD components.

Once the sample was determined, the telephone numbers were imported into our Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. Additional criteria were then added to the introduction of the questionnaire to select the individual respondent in the household. For this survey, the respondent had to be at least 18 years of age.

d) Survey Administration

Fieldwork for this project was conducted by highly trained interviewers at EKOS' call centre in Ottawa. Throughout the data collection, survey supervisors continuously monitored interviewing to ensure consistency of questionnaire administration and interviewing techniques.

As is standard EKOS practice, a minimum of eight call-backs (nine total calls) were made to each selected household in the original sample before retiring a case and substituting another household. Follow-up calls were made on subsequent days, at varying time periods to maximize the potential for reaching a given respondent and appointments were taken at the convenience of the respondent. All individuals were given the choice of conducting the interview in either official language.

At the start of every survey, EKOS informed respondents of their rights under the Privacy and Access to Information Acts. Respondents were also informed of the purpose of the research; the name of the sponsoring department and research supplier; and that their participation in the study was voluntary.

The response rate for this survey was 17 per cent, which is in line with the response rates of other large scale telephone surveys we have conducted. Full details regarding the call disposition/response rate for this survey are included in Appendix B.

e) Weighting

Once data collection was complete, the results were statistically weighted by age, sex, and region to ensure that the findings were representative of the Canadian population 18 years of age and over.

Weighting was done using the statistical software package, StatXP. This program carries out this task on the basis of the distribution of the population for each variable considered in the weighting scheme (i.e., age, sex, region). Weights were developed so that the differences between the survey sample and the actual population were reduced.

With a sample size of 3,012, the results from this survey may be considered statistically accurate to within +/- 1.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The sample sizes broken down by region, gender, and age as well as the associated margins of error are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Composition & Associated Margins of Error

	Sample Size	Margin of Error
Region		
British Columbia	399	∓4.9
Alberta	301	∓5.8
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	205	∓6.8
Ontario	1,141	∓2.9
Quebec	724	∓3.6
Atlantic Canada	239	∓6.4
Gender		
Male	1,238	∓2.8
Female	1,774	∓2.3
Age		
<25	83	∓10.8
25-44	795	∓3.5
45-64	1,360	∓2.7
65+	273	∓5.9
TOTAL	3,012	∓1.8

The remainder of this report summarizes findings from the survey. Please note that several questions in this survey were first asked in February 2009, or June 2008. Where available, results are tracked from these previous studies to gauge any shifts in awareness and perceptions of elder abuse which may have occurred over the past two and a half years.

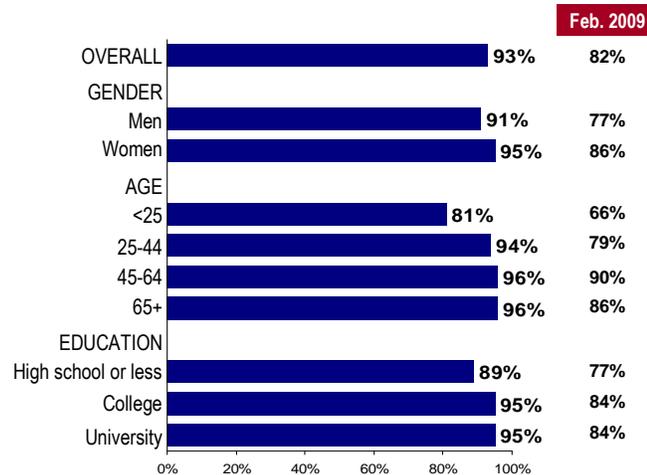
2. AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF ELDER ABUSE

2.1 AWARENESS OF TERM “ELDER ABUSE”

As a way of establishing the context for the remainder of the survey, respondents were first asked whether or not they had heard the term “elder abuse”. Fully, nine in ten Canadians (93 per cent) say they are aware of the term, while fewer than one in ten (seven per cent) indicate they had not heard of this term. Claimed awareness of the term “elder abuse” is up a full 11 points since February 2009, suggesting that Canadians are becoming more familiar with this issue. Survey results also reveal that while awareness of the term “elder abuse” is consistently high across sub-groups of the Canadian population, it does vary somewhat across regional and socio-demographic characteristics.

Awareness of Term “Elder Abuse”

“Have you ever heard the term “elder abuse” before today?”



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Those saying “yes”
n=3012

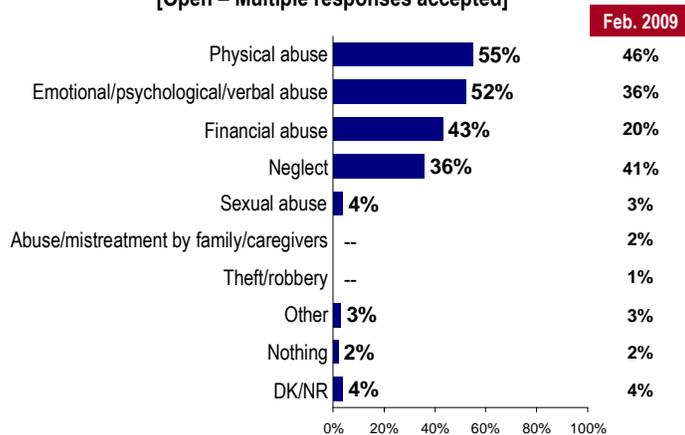
- Regionally, residents of Manitoba/Saskatchewan (96 per cent) are most likely to be aware of the term “elder abuse”, whereas those living in Quebec (91 per cent) are least familiar with the term (please note that the French term used in the Federal Elder Abuse Initiative (mauvais traitements envers des aînés) is not the same as the term used by the Government of Québec (maltraitance des aînés) and this could have had an impact on results in Québec).
- Women (95 per cent) are more familiar with the term than men (91 per cent).
- Older segments of the population are also more aware (96 per cent of those 45 years of age and older say they have heard of elder abuse, compared to 81 per cent of those under 25).
- Awareness of the term is greater among Canadians with higher levels of education (95 per cent of the college and university-educated vs. 89 per cent of those with a high school education or less).
- There is less awareness of elder abuse among members of visible minority groups (88 per cent vs. 94 per cent of those who are not members of a visible minority), and among those who were born outside of Canada (86 per cent vs. 94 per cent of those who list Canada as their country of origin).
- Interestingly, whether or not there is a “senior” (i.e., an individual 65 years of age or older) living in the home makes no difference in terms of awareness of the term “elder abuse”.

2.2 PERCEIVED ABUSE EXPERIENCED BY SENIORS

The survey went on to examine perceptions of elder abuse in Canada. Canadians were asked without prompting, to name, the kinds of abuse they believe seniors might experience.³ Physical abuse (e.g., hitting, spitting on) tops the list (mentioned by 55 per cent of respondents), followed closely by emotional/psychological/verbal abuse (52 per cent). Financial abuse (43 per cent) and neglect (36 per cent) are also mentioned by a sizable proportion of the Canadian public. All other responses were mentioned by fewer than five per cent of respondents. These results have changed somewhat since we asked this question in 2009: Canadians are now more likely to mention emotional/psychological/verbal abuse and financial abuse, and are somewhat less likely to mention neglect.

Perceived Abuse Experienced by Seniors

“Some seniors live in institutions such as nursing homes or senior residences, however, others live in the community, by themselves, or with family or friends. If I asked you about what kinds of abuse seniors might experience, what comes to mind?”
[Open – Multiple responses accepted]



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n=3012

³ Before answering this question, respondents were first reminded that some elderly people live in institutions (e.g., nursing homes, senior’s residences), while others live in the community either on their own or with family or friends.

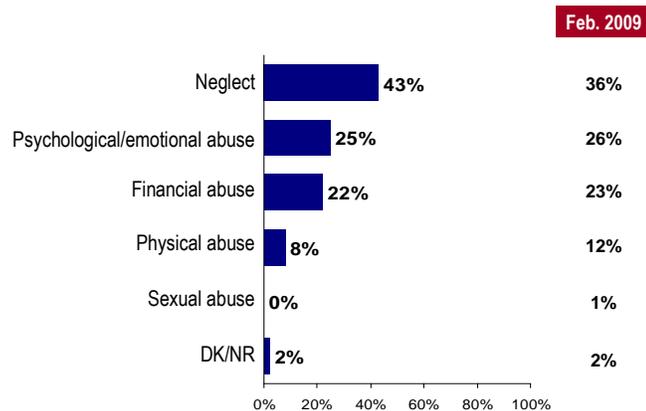
- Regionally, residents of Alberta are more likely to mention both physical abuse (60 per cent) and emotional/psychological/verbal abuse (57 per cent) than those living elsewhere in Canada. Neglect, on the other hand, is mentioned more frequently in Ontario (39 per cent).
- Not only are women more likely to be aware of the term “elder abuse” than men, they are also significantly more likely to perceive seniors as experiencing many types of abuse: i.e., physical (58 per cent vs. 52 per cent of men), emotional (54 per cent vs. 49 per cent of men), and financial (49 per cent vs. 37 per cent of men).
- The perception that seniors experience physical, emotional, and financial abuse is more common among Canadians with higher levels of educational attainment.
- Those born in Canada and those who are not members of a visible minority are also more likely to feel that seniors experience physical, emotional, and financial abuse.

2.3 MOST COMMON TYPES OF ABUSE

In addition to naming the various kinds of abuse seniors may experience, respondents were asked to select from a list the type of abuse that they think is most commonly experienced by seniors. The list included the following types of abuse: physical abuse, financial abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. When presented with these options, neglect is chosen as the most common type of abuse (43 per cent), followed by psychological/emotional abuse (25 per cent), and financial abuse (22 per cent). Interestingly, despite being mentioned most often as a top-of-mind form of elder abuse (see Section 2.2), only about one in ten Canadians (eight per cent) thinks physical abuse is the most *common* type of abuse perpetrated against seniors. Virtually no one feels sexual abuse is the most common form of elder abuse. These results have remained largely stable since we last asked this question in February 2009, although neglect is now identified somewhat more frequently than in 2009.

Most Common Types of Abuse

“I am going to read you a list of types of abuse that could be experienced by seniors. Please tell me which one you think is MOST COMMON”



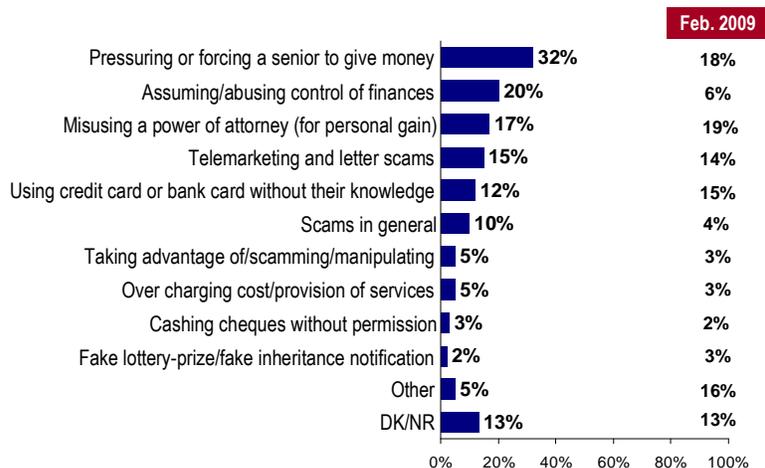
- Compared to those living elsewhere in Canada, residents of Quebec are much less likely to consider neglect the most common form of elder abuse (35 per cent vs. 43 per cent at the national level). Quebecers are instead more likely to consider psychological/emotional abuse the most prevalent form of abuse (32 per cent vs. 25 per cent at the national level).
- The belief that neglect is the most common form of abuse is particularly prevalent among those between the ages of 25-44 (49 per cent, compared to only 32 per cent of those 65 years and older). Older Canadians, on the other hand, are more likely to name psychological/emotional abuse as the most prevalent form of elder abuse (36 per cent of respondents over the age of 65 vs. 22 per cent of the 25-44 age cohort, and 16 per cent of those less than 25 years of age).
- Those with higher levels of education and income are particularly likely to select neglect as the most common form of elder abuse.
- Respondents with seniors in the home are more inclined to believe that emotional abuse is the most frequent form of abuse (30 per cent vs. 24 per cent of respondents who do not live with someone over the age of 65).

2.4 PERCEIVED EXAMPLES OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

Respondents were also asked, unprompted, to identify the types of financial abuse that could be experienced by seniors. Results reveal that, as in 2009, Canadians are able to generate a sizeable list of potential financial abuses. At the top of the list was pressuring a senior to give money (mentioned by 32 per cent of respondents), followed by assuming/abusing control of a senior's finances (20 per cent), and misusing a power of attorney for personal gain (17 per cent). Telemarketing and letter scams (15 per cent) and using a credit card or bank card without their knowledge (12 per cent) were also seen as fairly common forms of financial abuse. Scams in general were also mentioned by a fairly large proportion of Canadians (10 per cent). All other responses were mentioned by five per cent or fewer Canadians. About one in eight Canadians (13 per cent) were unable to provide any examples of financial abuse that could be perpetrated against seniors. Tracking reveals that Canadians are now more likely to mention pressuring a senior to give money, and abusing control of a senior's finances than they were in February 2009.

Perceived Examples of Financial Abuse

"One kind of abuse that seniors could face is financial abuse. Can you think of any examples?" [Open – Multiple responses accepted]



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n=3012

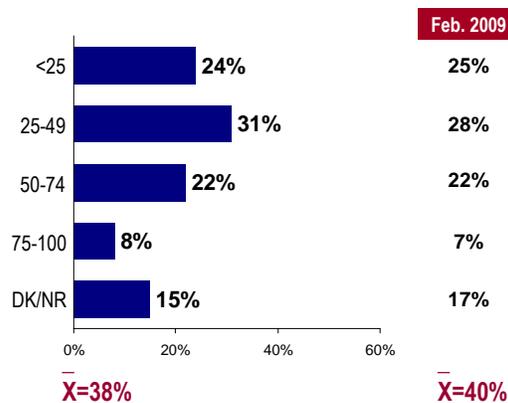
- Pressuring a senior to give money is mentioned more often by Quebec residents (39 per cent), those 25-34 years of age (35 per cent), the university-educated (35 per cent), and those earning \$80,000 or more in annual household income (37 per cent).
- Assuming/abusing control of seniors' finances was mentioned most often by Atlantic Province residents (25 per cent), women (24 per cent), and those with a senior living in their household (24 per cent).
- Misusing a power of attorney is mentioned more often by women (19 per cent), university-educated respondents (21 per cent), and those who are not members of a visible minority (19 per cent).
- The incidence of those unable to name any examples of financial abuse that could be perpetrated against seniors is higher among youth (19 per cent of those under 25 years of age vs. 13 per cent overall), those with high school education or less (24 per cent), those earning less than \$20,000 in household income (22 per cent), and visible minorities (20 per cent).

2.5 PERCEIVED PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS OVER 65 WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ELDER ABUSE

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of seniors who have experienced any form of elder abuse. Overall, Canadians estimate the rate of elder abuse (in general) to be 38 per cent on average (roughly the same as the 40 per cent estimated in the 2009 survey). This estimate is considerably higher than the ten per cent rate of victimization captured in the most recent General Social Survey (GSS).⁴ Although this survey's conceptualization of elder abuse is broader than what is reflected in the GSS⁵, it is interesting to compare the perceived versus the reported levels of victimization.

Perceived Percentage of Persons Over 65 Who Have Experienced Elder Abuse

“What percentage of persons over 65 years of age do you think would have experienced any form of elder abuse?”



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n=3012

⁴ This figure is based on information provided by respondents to the 2004 General Social Survey. See the Statistics Canada publication, *Seniors as Victims of Crime 2004 and 2005*, for more information.

⁵ The GSS asks respondents about their personal victimization experiences.

The groups that estimate the rate of elder abuse as significantly higher or lower than the average are outlined below.

- The prevalence of elder abuse is rated **lower** on average by:
 - ◇ residents of Quebec (36 per cent);
 - ◇ men (35 per cent);
 - ◇ older Canadians (32 per cent of those 65 years of age and older); and
 - ◇ those earning \$100,000 or more in household income (35 per cent).

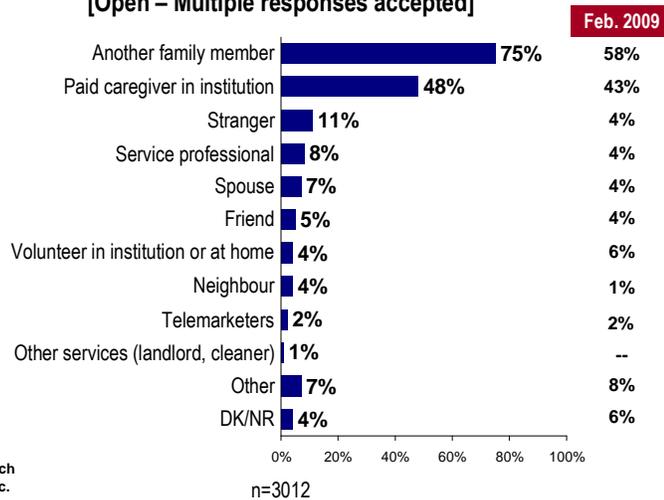
- By comparison, the prevalence of elder abuse is rated **higher** on average by:
 - ◇ residents of Ontario (40 per cent);
 - ◇ women (41 per cent);
 - ◇ younger Canadians (44 per cent of those under 25 years of age);
 - ◇ those earning less than \$20,000 in household income (42 per cent);
 - ◇ those who identify themselves as belonging to a visible minority (45 per cent); and
 - ◇ those caring for a senior (41 per cent).

2.6 POSSIBLE PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR ABUSE

According to police-reported data, seniors are most likely to be victimized by someone they know.⁶ Results from this survey seem to reflect this finding. Indeed, when asked, without prompting, who they pictured as being responsible for elder abuse, very few think of someone who is not at least acquainted with the senior (only 11 per cent say “stranger”). Overall, two main categories of perpetrators come to mind: a family member other than a spouse (75 per cent – up 17 points since 2009) and paid caregivers in institutions (48 per cent).

Possible Person(s) Responsible for Abuse

“When you think about elder abuse in general, who do you picture as the person or persons who are responsible for the abuse?”
[Open – Multiple responses accepted]



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- British Columbia residents (79 per cent), women (79 per cent), those 65 years of age and older (80 per cent), those with university education (81 per cent), higher income earners, and those caring for a senior (79 per cent) are particularly likely to mention another family member as responsible for elder abuse.
- Paid caregivers are most likely to be mentioned by women (53 per cent), those with university education (52 per cent), and those living with a senior (52 per cent).

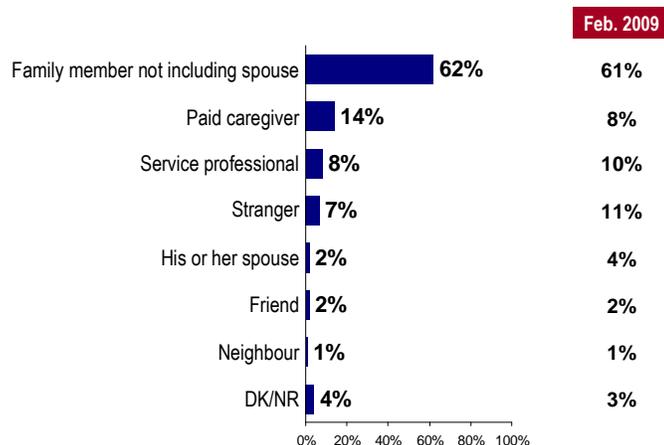
⁶ This information is drawn from the 2004 Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey. See the Statistics Canada publication, Seniors as Victims of Crime 2004 and 2005, for more information.

2.7 PEOPLE MOST LIKELY TO FINANCIALLY ABUSE A SENIOR

Canadians were also asked to select from a list who they thought would be the most likely to *financially* abuse a senior. In this context, a family member (not including a spouse) is once again named as the most probable perpetrator (62 per cent). Unlike elder abuse in general, no other category of individual is identified by a significant portion of the population. Indeed, all of the other categories on the list were selected by less than one in seven Canadians (14 per cent for paid caregivers, eight per cent for service professionals, etc.). These results have remained largely stable since we last asked this question in February 2009, although the proportion of Canadians who identify a paid caregiver as being most likely to financially abuse a senior is up six points since 2009.

People Most Likely to Financially Abuse A Senior

“Please tell me which of these people, in your view, is the MOST LIKELY to FINANCIALLY abuse a senior?”



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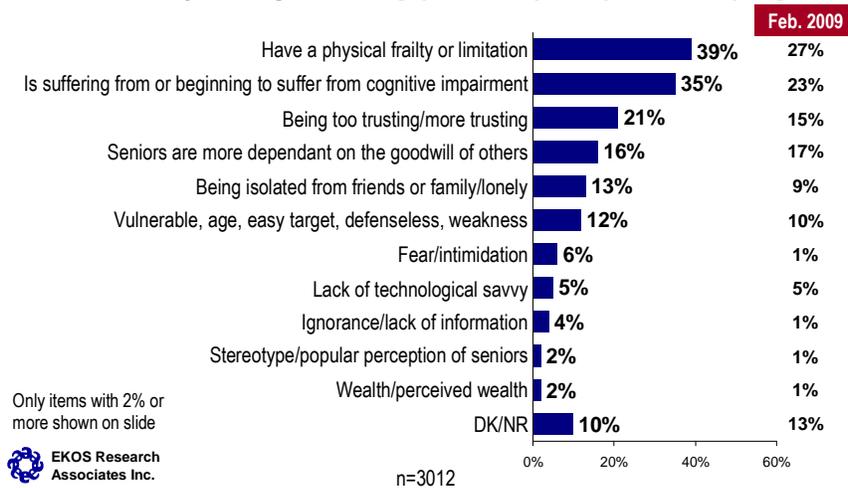
- Alberta residents (68 per cent), women (66 per cent), those 65 years of age and older (68 per cent), those with university education (68 per cent), and those with annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more (68 per cent) are most likely to see a family member as primarily engaging in this behaviour.

2.8 PERCEIVED REASONS FOR SENIOR ABUSE

Canadians were asked, unprompted, to provide reasons as to why some seniors might be more likely to experience abuse than adults under the age of 65. By grouping responses together, several broad themes are evident. The most common is a perception that seniors are more vulnerable due to physical or mental limitations (e.g., physically frail – 39 per cent), cognitive impairment (35 per cent), or general vulnerability/weakness (12 per cent). A significant proportion of Canadians also feel that seniors might be more prone to abuse because they are too trusting (21 per cent), or more dependent on the goodwill of others (16 per cent). There is also a sense among some Canadians that the isolation of seniors might lead to abuse (13 per cent). All other reasons are mentioned by six per cent or fewer respondents, and one in ten (10 per cent) were unable to provide a response to this question. Tracking reveals that the proportion of Canadians who identify physical frailty, cognitive impairment, and seniors' trusting nature as reasons for abuse is up since 2009.

Perceived Reasons for Senior Abuse

“Some people think that seniors are more likely to experience any form of abuse than other adults under 65 years of age. Can you give me some reasons why this might be so?” [Open – Multiple responses accepted]



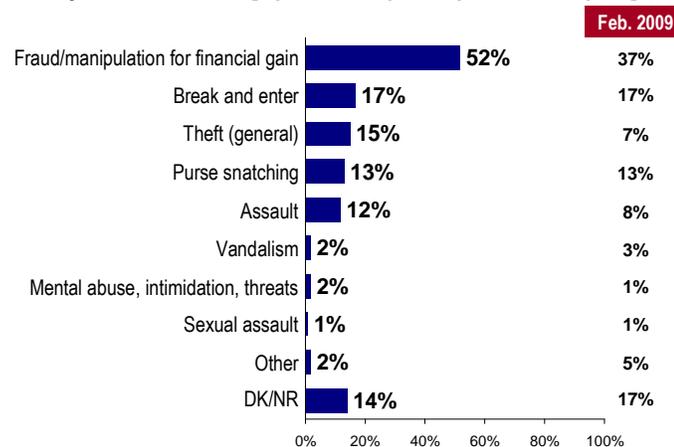
- Residents of Quebec are more likely than other Canadians to mention physical frailty (50 per cent) as a reason for elder abuse.
- Women are particularly likely to think that elder abuse is a result of seniors' physical frailty (41 per cent), cognitive impairment (37 per cent), and dependence on others (18 per cent).
- Those with university education are more likely to identify physical frailty (43 per cent), cognitive impairment (42 per cent), and dependence on others (20 per cent) as reasons for the abuse of seniors.
- Being too trusting is mentioned more often by Saskatchewan/Manitoba residents (30 per cent), those earning \$100,000 or more in household income (25 per cent), and those caring for a senior (27 per cent).

2.9 SENIORS VULNERABILITY TO CRIMES COMMITTED BY STRANGERS

As mentioned earlier, research suggests that seniors are most likely to be victimized by someone they know.⁷ That said, every year many seniors still fall victim to crimes perpetrated by strangers. Consequently, Canadians were asked, unprompted, whether they felt there are crimes committed by strangers to which seniors are particularly vulnerable. Fraud/manipulation for financial gain is seen as the most common type of crime committed by strangers on seniors (mentioned by more than half of respondents, 52 per cent – up 15 points since 2009). Break and enter (17 per cent), theft in general (15 per cent), and purse snatching (13 per cent) are seen as fairly distant second tier crimes aimed at seniors. About one in seven respondents (14 per cent) were unable to think of any stranger-initiated crimes to which seniors may be particularly vulnerable.

Seniors Vulnerability to Crimes Committed by Strangers

“Are there any crimes committed by strangers that you think seniors are particularly vulnerable to?” [Open – Multiple responses accepted]



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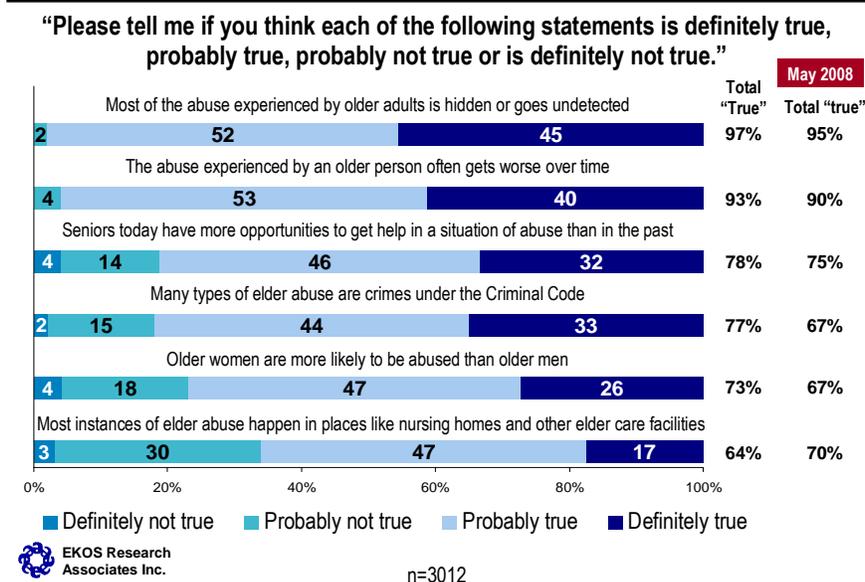
⁷ See the Statistics Canada publication, Seniors as Victims of Crime 2004 and 2005, for more information.

- Interestingly, Quebecers are significantly less likely than those living elsewhere in Canada to think that fraud is a serious threat to seniors (31 per cent vs. 52 per cent nationally). They are, on the other hand, more likely than other Canadians to think seniors are vulnerable to assault (23 per cent vs. 12 per cent nationally).
- Fraud is also much less likely to be mentioned by those under 25 years of age (21 per cent) and more likely to be mentioned by those 45-64 years of age (58 per cent).
- The belief that seniors are particularly vulnerable to fraud increases with level of educational attainment (41 per cent among those with a high school education or less, compared to 58 per cent of the university-educated) and annual household income (38 per cent of those earning less than \$20,000 in annual household income, compared to 60 per cent of those earning \$100,000 or more in household income).
- Those caring for a senior (57 per cent) are also more likely to mention fraud as a crime to which seniors are vulnerable.

2.10 BELIEFS ABOUT ELDER ABUSE

The survey also examined Canadians' beliefs about elder abuse in Canada. Respondents were read a series of statements and asked if they thought each of the statements was true or false. Results reveal that nearly all Canadians believe that most of the abuse experienced by older adults goes undetected (97 per cent indicate this is true, including 45 per cent who say it is definitely true). A similar proportion (93 per cent) agree that abuse experienced by an older person often gets worse over time (including 40 per cent who say this is definitely true). However, three-quarters of respondents also feel that seniors today have more opportunities to get help than in the past (78 per cent indicate this is true, including 32 per cent who say definitely true). Canadians are also increasingly likely to believe that many types of elder abuse are crimes under the Criminal Code (77 per cent indicate this is true, up from 67 per cent in May 2008). More than seven in 10 Canadians believe that older women are more likely to be abused than older men (73 per cent, although this is down six points since May 2008). Results further reveal a significant decrease in agreement with the idea that most instances of elder abuse occur in elder care facilities: 64 per cent of Canadians believe this statement to be true, down six percentage points since 2008.

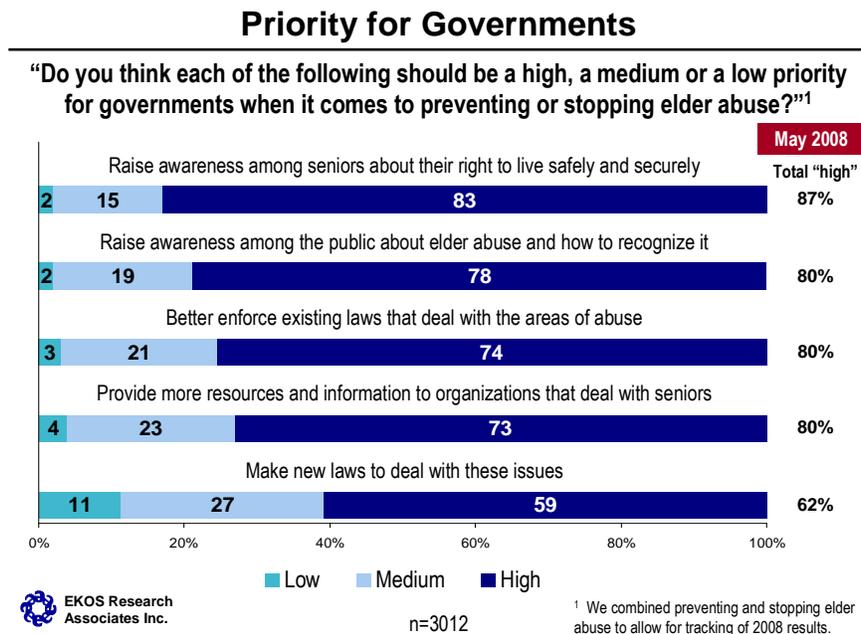
Beliefs About Elder Abuse



- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba are particularly likely to feel that seniors now have more opportunity to get help than in the past (89 per cent say this is true).
- Residents of Quebec are most likely to believe that most instances of elder abuse occur in elder care facilities (74 per cent indicate this is true), while residents of Alberta, British Columbia, and the Prairies (i.e. Saskatchewan and Manitoba) are the most skeptical of this statement (55 per cent, 54 per cent, and 53 per cent, respectively, indicate this is true).

2.11 PRIORITY FOR GOVERNMENTS IN PREVENTING OR STOPPING ELDER ABUSE

The survey also examined Canadians' preferred priorities for governments in preventing or stopping elder abuse. Results reveal strong support for all of the potential strategies examined, although support is strongest for policies designed to raise awareness. Eight in ten respondents say that raising awareness among seniors about their right to live safely and securely (83 per cent) and raising awareness among the public about elder abuse (78 per cent) should be high priorities. Three quarters (74 per cent) believe that better enforcement of existing laws should be a high priority for governments, and a similar proportion (73 per cent) believe that providing more resources and information to organizations that deal with seniors is important. Making new laws to prevent elder abuse is seen as comparatively less important in addressing elder abuse, although a majority of respondents (59 per cent) still feel this should be a high priority for governments. Tracking reveals a decline in the proportion of Canadians who assign high priority to each of these strategies, particularly in terms of providing more resources to organizations that deal with seniors (down seven percentage points since May 2008).



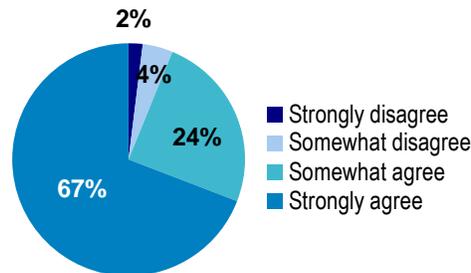
- Women are more likely to say that each of these strategies should be a high government priority.
- Those who identify themselves as belonging to a visible minority are also generally more supportive of these approaches.
- Perhaps not surprisingly, older age groups are more likely to express support for all of the strategies examined.
- Those living with seniors, and those caring for seniors are more likely to prioritise raising awareness among seniors about their rights, and raising awareness among the public about elder abuse.
- Those with a household income of less than \$20,000 (74 per cent) and those with high school education or less (69 per cent) are more likely to suggest that creating new laws should be a high priority for governments.
- Those with seniors in the home are also more likely to say that introducing new laws to prevent elder abuse should be a high priority (63 per cent).

2.12 AGREEMENT THAT CRIMINAL LAWS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED

Respondents were also asked if they felt that criminal laws should be strengthened to impose tougher sanctions on offences committed against seniors. Results reveal strong support for this idea: fully nine in ten Canadians (91 per cent) agree with bolstering Canada's criminal laws, including 67 per cent who "strongly" agree with this idea. Only six per cent disagree with this statement.

Agreement that Criminal Laws Should be Strengthened

"Generally speaking, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the criminal laws should be strengthened to impose tougher sanctions on offences committed against seniors?"



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- Agreement with this idea is highest among those with a high school education or less (76 per cent strongly agree), college graduates (71 per cent), and women (71 per cent).
- Agreement decreases with income levels (78 per cent of those with an annual household income of less than \$20,000 say they strongly agree with strengthening criminal laws, compared to just 58 per cent among those earning over \$100,000).

3. VIEWS ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

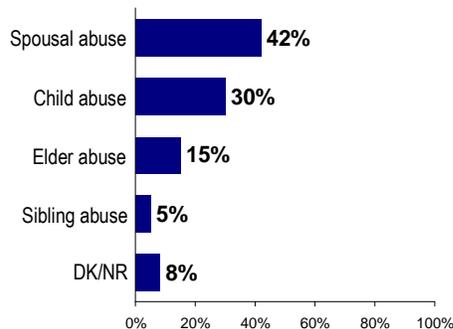
In this chapter, we move away from the issue of elder abuse to the broader topic of family violence.

3.1 PERCEIVED MOST COMMON FORM OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were presented with a list of four types of family violence (e.g., spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, and sibling abuse) and asked to identify which one they consider to be the most prevalent. Interestingly, despite the focus on elder abuse in this survey, the plurality of Canadians (42 per cent) identify spousal abuse as the most prevalent form of abuse, followed by child abuse (30 per cent). Elder abuse is perceived as the most prevalent type of family abuse by about one in six Canadians (15 per cent), and only five per cent of Canadians feel that sibling abuse is the most common form of abuse.

Perceived Most Common Form of Family Violence

“When committed by a family member, elder abuse can be a form of family violence. Family violence also includes spousal abuse, child abuse and sibling abuse. Which of these forms of family violence do you think is the MOST prevalent?”



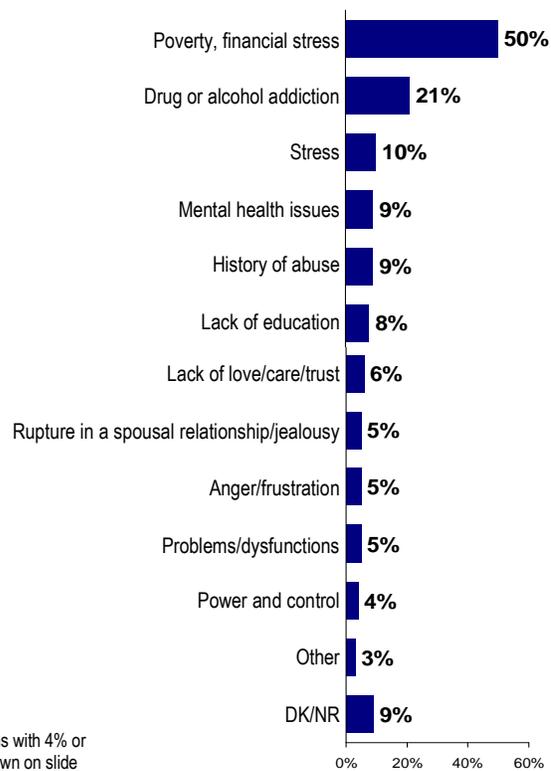
- Residents of Quebec (49 per cent), university graduates (47 per cent), and those with children in the household (45 per cent) are most likely to perceive spousal abuse as the most common form of family violence.
- Atlantic Canadians (36 per cent), those with a household income of less than \$20,000 (36 per cent), and women (34 per cent) are relatively more likely to say that child abuse is the most common type of family violence.
- Those who identify themselves as belonging to a visible minority are somewhat more likely to see elder abuse as the leading form of abuse (19 per cent, compared to 15 per cent overall).
- Perhaps not surprisingly, one in five respondents under the age of 25 (19 per cent) see sibling abuse as the most common form of family violence.

3.2 PERCEIVED PRIMARY CAUSES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were also asked, unprompted, to identify what they consider to be the primary causes of family violence. Results reveal that poverty/financial stress is seen as the primary cause of family violence (mentioned by 50 per cent of respondents), followed fairly distantly by drug or alcohol addiction (21 per cent). About one in ten respondents feel that stress (10 per cent), mental health issues (9 per cent), history of abuse (9 per cent), and a lack of education (8 per cent) are primary causes of family violence. About one in ten respondents (9 per cent) did not provide a response to this question.

Perceived Primary Causes of Family Violence

“What do you think are the primary causes of family violence?”
[Open – multiple responses accepted]



Only items with 4% or more shown on slide

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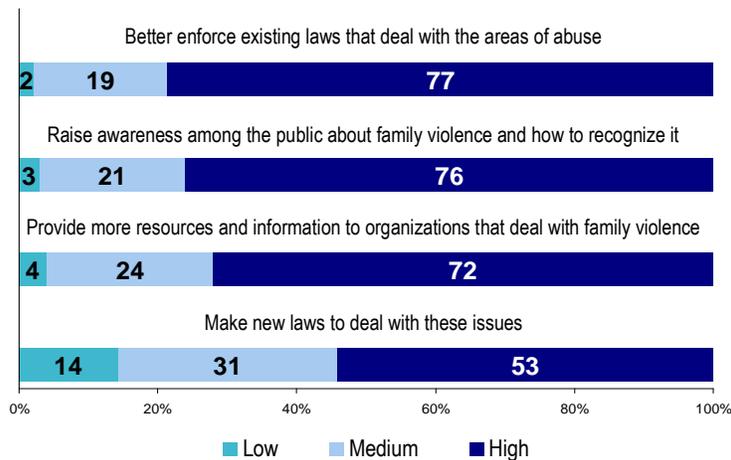
- Residents of Atlantic Canada are the most likely to identify poverty/financial stress as a primary cause of family violence (58 per cent, a figure that drops to 46 per cent in Alberta and Quebec).
- Interestingly, the groups that would be most prone to financial problems (i.e. youth and those in the lowest income brackets) are the least likely to name poverty/financial stress as a leading cause of family abuse (36 per cent of youth and 46 per cent of those with a household income of less than \$20,000 mentioned poverty/financial stress).
- Residents of Alberta are relatively more likely to identify drug or alcohol addiction (30 per cent) and stress in general (15 per cent) as primary causes of family violence.

3.3 PRIORITIES FOR GOVERNMENTS IN PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were also asked to prioritize a number of potential government policies to help address family violence (half of respondents were asked these questions in terms of *preventing* family violence and half were asked about these policies in terms of *stopping* family violence). Looking at preventing family violence, three-quarters of Canadians believe that better enforcing existing laws (77 per cent) and raising awareness among the public (76 per cent) should be given highest priority, followed closely by providing more resources to organizations that deal with family violence (72 per cent). As with elder abuse, introducing new laws to deal with family violence is seen as comparatively less important, although a slight majority (53 per cent) feel this should be the top priority.

Priorities for Governments in Preventing Family Violence

“Do you think each of the following should be a high, a medium or a low priority for governments when it comes to preventing family violence?”



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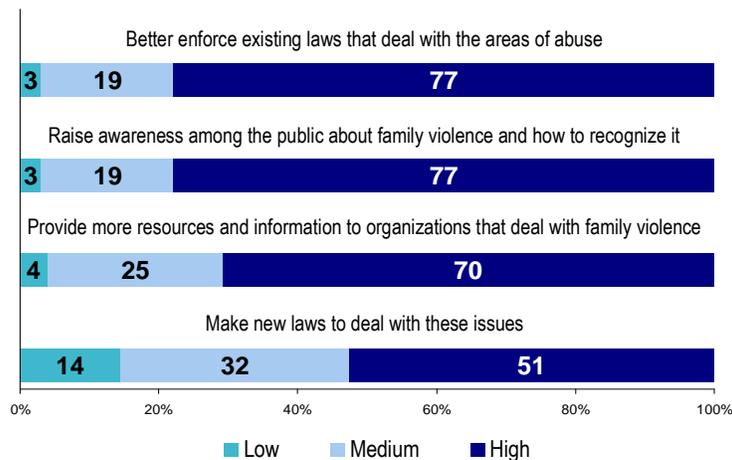
- Similar to the issue of elder abuse, women and visible minority respondents are consistently more likely to say that each of the approaches should be a high priority.
- Raising public awareness appears to be the preferred approach among seniors (84 per cent of those ages 65 and over say it should be a top priority, compared to 67 per cent of those under 25), and among Atlantic Canadians (84 per cent).
- Those with a household income of less than \$20,000 and those with a high school education or less are much more likely to say that creating new laws should be a high priority (74 and 68 per cent, respectively).

3.4 PRIORITIES FOR GOVERNMENTS IN STOPPING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Results are virtually identical when the terminology is changed from preventing family violence to stopping family violence. Three-quarters agree that better enforcement of existing laws (77 per cent) and raising awareness among the public (77 per cent) should be top priorities. Seven in 10 (70 per cent) feel that the government should provide more resources and information to organizations that deal with family violence. And again, at the bottom of the list, just over half (51 per cent) feel that making new laws to deal with family violence should be given highest priority.

Priorities for Governments in Stopping Family Violence

“Do you think each of the following should be a high, a medium or a low priority for governments when it comes to stopping family violence?”



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n=1510

- Once again, women and visible minorities are more likely to say that each of these options should be a top priority.
- Creating new laws is more likely to be perceived as highly important among residents of Atlantic Canada (64 per cent), low income groups (70 per cent of those with a household income of less than \$20,000, compared to just 35 per cent of those earning more than \$100,000), and those with less educational attainment (62 per cent of those with high school education or less, compared to 43 per cent of university graduates).
- Those with seniors in the household place relatively more importance on raising public awareness (88 per cent), better enforcing existing laws (84 per cent), and providing more resources to organizations that deal with family violence (78 per cent).

4. PROFILE OF CAREGIVERS

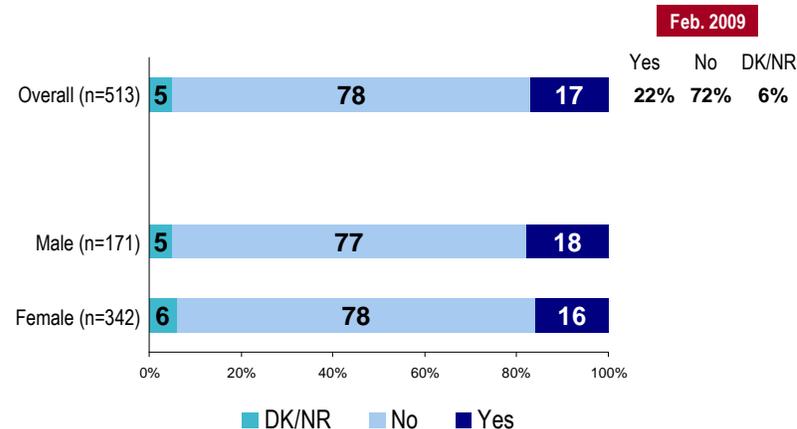
In addition to gathering views on elder abuse, this survey also sought to develop a profile of individuals responsible for caring for elderly persons (age 65 or older).

4.1 CARE PROVIDED TO AN ELDERLY HOUSEHOLD MEMBER

Caregivers perform various tasks in caring for seniors including personal care, assistance with medical treatments or procedures, transportation, and housekeeping. Respondents who indicated they lived with someone 65 years of age or older were asked if they currently provide care to an elderly household member who is 65 years of age or older. About one in six of these respondents (17 per cent) indicated they are currently caring for an elderly household member, while the majority of these respondents (78 per cent) said they did not.

Care Provided to an Elderly Household Member

“Do you currently provide care to an elderly household member who is age 65 or older?”



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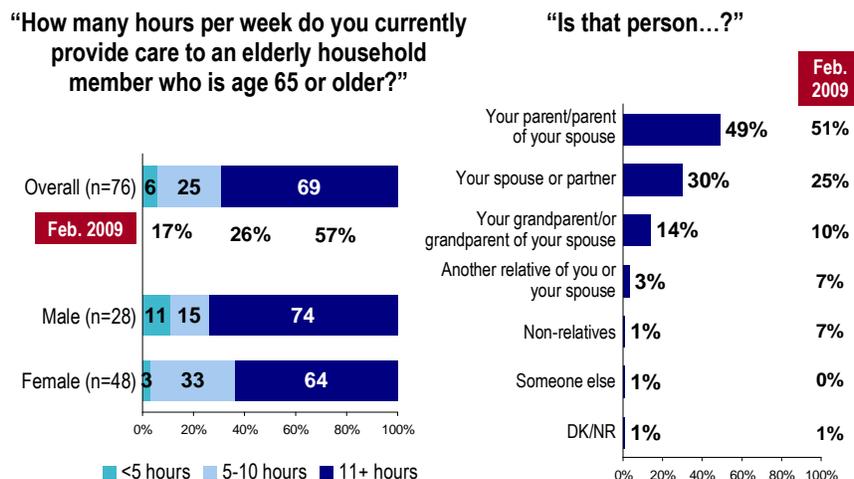
- Atlantic Province residents (24 per cent), those between 25 and 64 years of age (26 per cent), those earning less than \$20,000 in annual household income (26 per cent), those with children (27 per cent), those born outside of Canada (29 per cent), and visible minority members (26 per cent) are most likely to say they provide care to an elderly household member.

4.2 NUMBERS OF HOURS PER WEEK TO PROVIDE CARE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ELDERLY HOUSEHOLD MEMBER

Respondents who said they currently provide care for an elderly household member were asked how many hours per week they provide this care. Findings reveal that the majority of these respondents (69 per cent) say they spend 11 hours or more per week providing care for an elder in their home; only six per cent say they spend less than five hours per week caring for an elderly household member.

Respondents were also asked to specify the nature of the relationship they have with the elder to whom they are providing care. Just under half of these respondents (49 per cent) indicate they are caring for a parent (their own or their spouse's), and three in 10 (30 per cent) are caring for a their spouse or partner. One in seven (14 per cent) say they are caring for a grandparent (their own or their spouse's).

Numbers of Hours Per Week to Provide Care

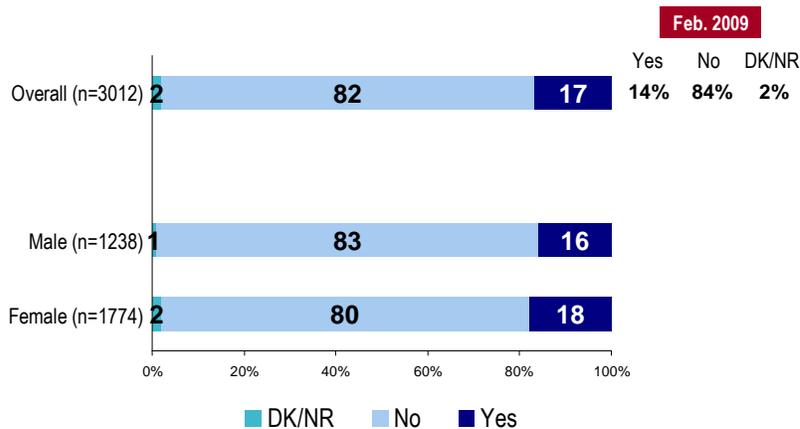


4.3 CARE PROVIDED TO AN ELDERLY FAMILY MEMBER NOT LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD

All respondents were asked if they currently provide care to an elderly family member or friend (aged 65 years or older) who is not living in their household. Results reveal that one in six Canadians (17 per cent) say they provide care to an elderly person outside of their home, while the majority of Canadians (82 per cent) say they are not providing care for an elderly family member or friend outside their home.

Care Provided to an Elderly Family Member Not Living in Household

“Do you currently provide care to an elderly family member or friend who does not live in your household and is age 65 or older?”



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- Ontario residents (20 per cent), those between 45 and 64 years of age (24 per cent), and those with children (19 per cent) are most likely to say they provide care to an elderly family member or friend who does not live in their household.

4.4 NUMBER OF HOURS PER WEEK TO PROVIDE CARE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ELDERLY PERSON

Respondents who said they currently provide care for an elderly family member outside their household were asked how many hours of care per week they provide. Results suggest that the plurality of these respondents (47 per cent) spend less than five hours per week providing care to an elderly family member outside their home. Others, however, spend a fairly significant portion of their time caring for an elderly family member living outside their home: 33 per cent say they provide between five and ten hours per week, and 19 per cent devote 11 hours or more per week caring for an elder who does not reside with them.

These respondents were also asked to specify the nature of the relationship they have with the elder to whom they are providing care. The majority (52 per cent) indicate they are caring for a parent (their own or their spouse's), while one in four (23 per cent) say they are caring for non-relatives. About one in ten are caring for a grandparent (13 per cent) or another family relative (eight per cent), while only two per cent are looking after their spouse or partner.

