

# RESEARCH ON ABUSE IN LATER LIFE

## THE UNITED STATES GROWS OLDER

- The population of persons 65+ in 2030 is projected to be twice as large as in 2000. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005)
- Persons reaching age 65 have an average life expectancy of an additional 18.5 years; 19.8 years for females and 16.8 years for males. (2005 Profile of Older Americans, US DHHS, AOA)
- The three fastest-growing 5-year age groups in the United States since the last census were 50-54 year-olds at 55%, 45-49 years olds at 45%, and 90-94 year-olds at 45%. (US. Census Bureau, 2001)
- 52% of elderly live in nine states - CA, NY, FL, PA, TX, IL, MI, OH, and NJ. (2005 Profile of Older Americans, US DHHS, AOA)
- Projections indicate that by 2030, the composition of the older population will be more diverse: 72% non-Hispanic White, 11% Hispanic, 10% Black and 5% Asian. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005)

## GROWING OLDER IN THE UNITED STATES

- About 415,000 grandparents aged 65 or more had the primary responsibility of their grandchildren. (2005 Profile of Older Americans, US DHHS, AOA)
- The median income of older persons in 2004 was \$21,102 for males and \$12,080 for females. (2005 Profile of Older Americans, US DHHS, AOA)
- For one-third of Americans over 65, Social Security benefits constitute 90% of their income. (2005 Profile of Older Americans, US DHHS, AOA)
- 3.6 million elderly persons or 9.8% lived below the poverty level in 2004; another 2.2 million or 6.4% were classified as "near poor." (2005 Profile of Older Americans, US DHHS, AOA)

## REPORTED CASES OF ELDER ABUSE ARE INCREASING

- In 2003, 565,747 cases of abuse and neglect were reported to adult protective services throughout the United States. This represents a 19.7% increase from the 2000 survey. (NCEA, 2004)
- For every case reported to authorities, five more go unreported. (NCEA, 1998)
- Only an estimated 30% of sexual assaults against the elderly ever get reported to the authorities. (Burgess, Clements 2006)

## ELDER ABUSE IS OFTEN FAMILY VIOLENCE

- According to the Adult Protective Services Survey done in 2004, 89.3% of elder abuse reports occurred in domestic settings. (NCEA, 2004)
- A 1999 study also found that many victims had difficulty taking care of themselves and that family members were the primary perpetrators of sexual abuse. (Teaster, 2000)

## **A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF ELDER ABUSE IS SPOUSE/PARTNER VIOLENCE**

- A study of 257 older women ages 50–79 found that 32% had experienced physical abuse or threat from their partners at some point in their lives. (Mouton, 1999)
- In a 5-year study done of 1057 victims 65 and over receiving domestic violence program services, 71.2 % reported physical abuse. (Lundy, Grossman, 2004)

## **ABUSE IN LATER LIFE TURNS DEADLY**

- 8% of all women in single female victim/single male offender homicides reported in 2003 were 65 years of age or older. (Violence Policy Center, 2005)
- Each year more than 500 homicide-suicides or 1,000 deaths occur in persons 55 years and older, which means that nearly 20 older Americans die each week in a homicide-suicide. (Cohen, 2001)
- A Florida study found that persons age 55 and over had homicide-suicide rates almost twice that of persons under age 55, 75% involve a husband who kills his wife before killing himself. (Malphurs, Eisdorfer, Cohen, 2001)
- Abused elders are more likely to end up dead at the end of a 13-year follow-up period than self-neglecting or elders who are not abused. (Lachs, Williams, O'Brien, Pillemer, and Charlson, 1998)
- 25% of homicide-suicide perpetrators age 55 years and older have a history of domestic violence. (Mulphurs, Cohen, 2005)

## **SEXUAL ABUSE OCCURS IN LATER LIFE**

- A study of 284 cases of sexual assault against victims age 60 and older revealed that 70% of the victims were assaulted in their homes; 23.2% were assaulted while living in an institution, and 4.8% were assaulted in other locations. (Burgess, 2006)
- Of the 284 victims in this study, 261 (93.5%) were female elders and 19 (6.5%) were male elders (4 of the 284 victims did not identify a gender). There were 210 male offenders and 20 female offenders in cases with data. (Burgess, 2006)
- More than 60,000 rapes of women older than 50 years of age are reported annually. (NCEA, 2005)

## **ABUSERS ARE OFTEN DEPENDENT ON THEIR VICTIMS**

- Many abusers are dependent on their victims for housing, transportation and sometimes care. (Brownell, 1999; Reis, 1998 and 1997; Otiniano, 1998; Wolf and Pillemer, 1997; Seaver, 1996; Pillemer and Finklehor, 1988)