



Aging is natural... Abuse is not

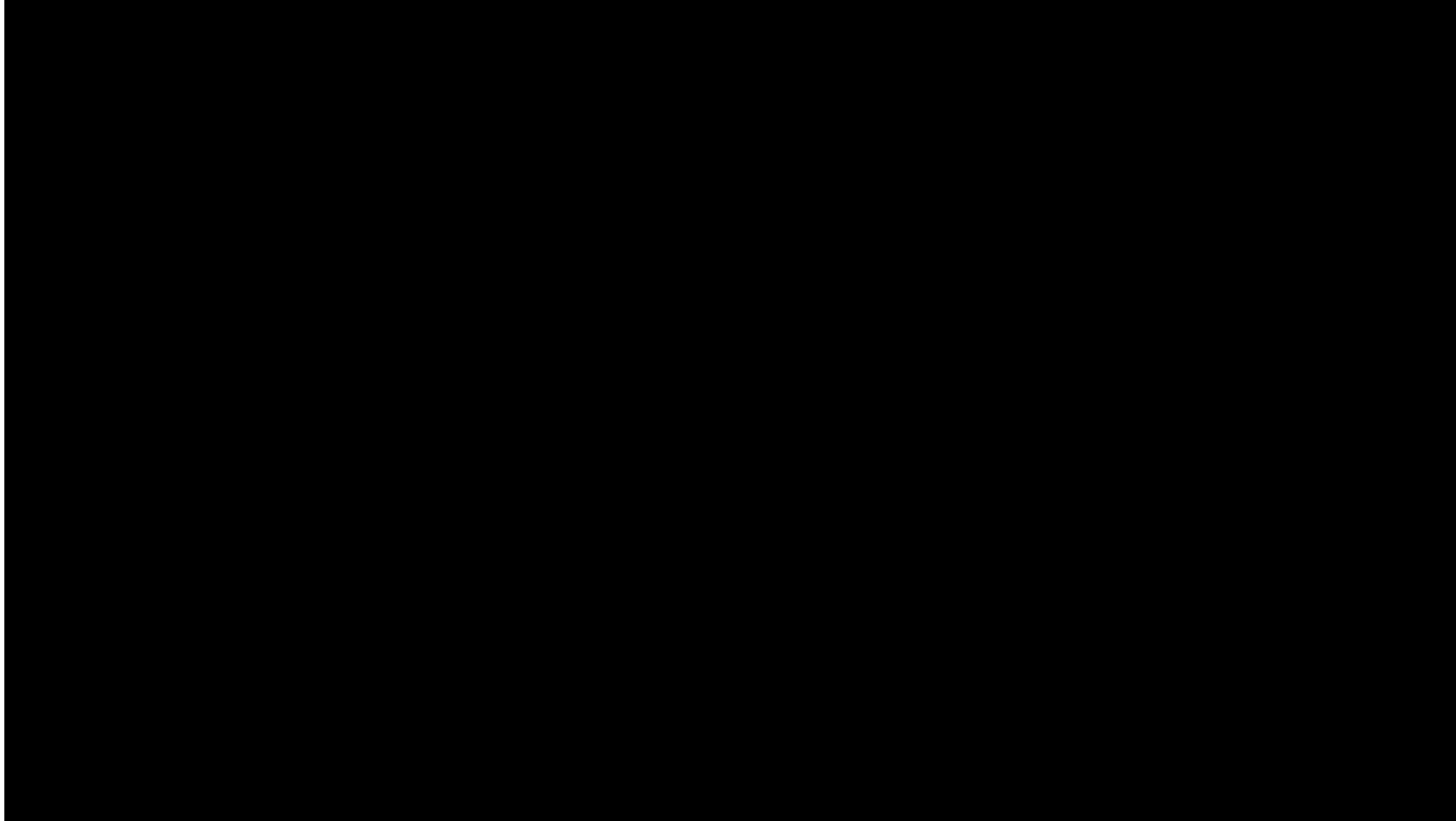
Abuse in Later Life: A Community Problem with Systemic Solutions

A Matter of Justice

“Creating a just society includes treating older people as equal members and making sure we are all connected to our communities as we age, so that we can prevent and address elder abuse.”

Frameworks Institute: Talking Elder Abuse

○ Abuse in Later Life as a Social Problem



National Center on Elder Abuse, "Reframing Elder Abuse"



Dynamics & Impact

Abuse in Later Life

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional/verbal abuse
- Neglect
- Financial Exploitation

These forms of abuse
often **co-occur**

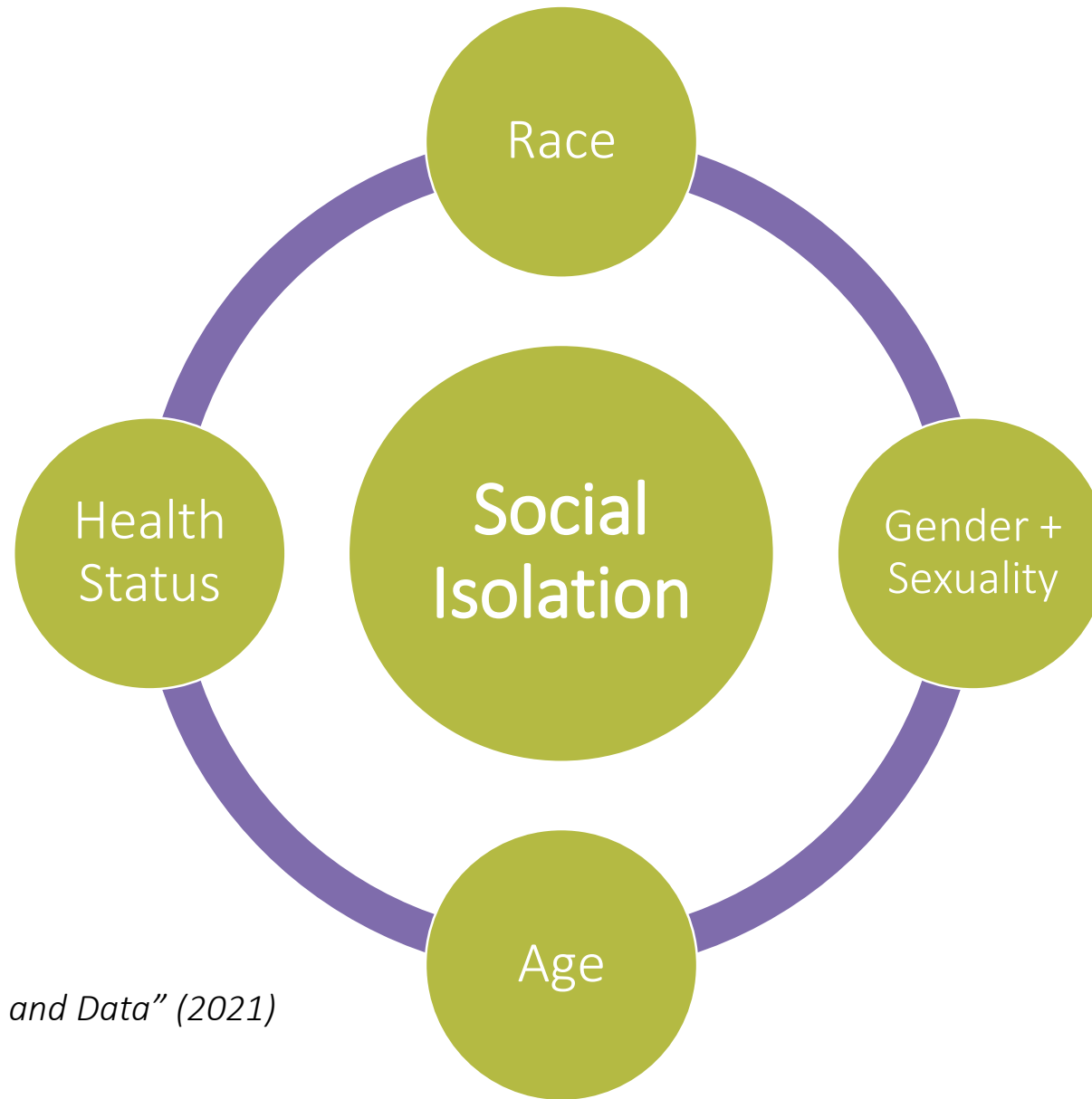
*NCEA, "Research, Statistics, and Data" (2021)
NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence Study (2011)*

Scope of the Problem

- **14.1%** of people over 60 report having experienced at least one form of abuse
- Underreporting
 - For every **1** case reported, estimated **23** remain undisclosed

NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence Study (2011)

Risk Factors



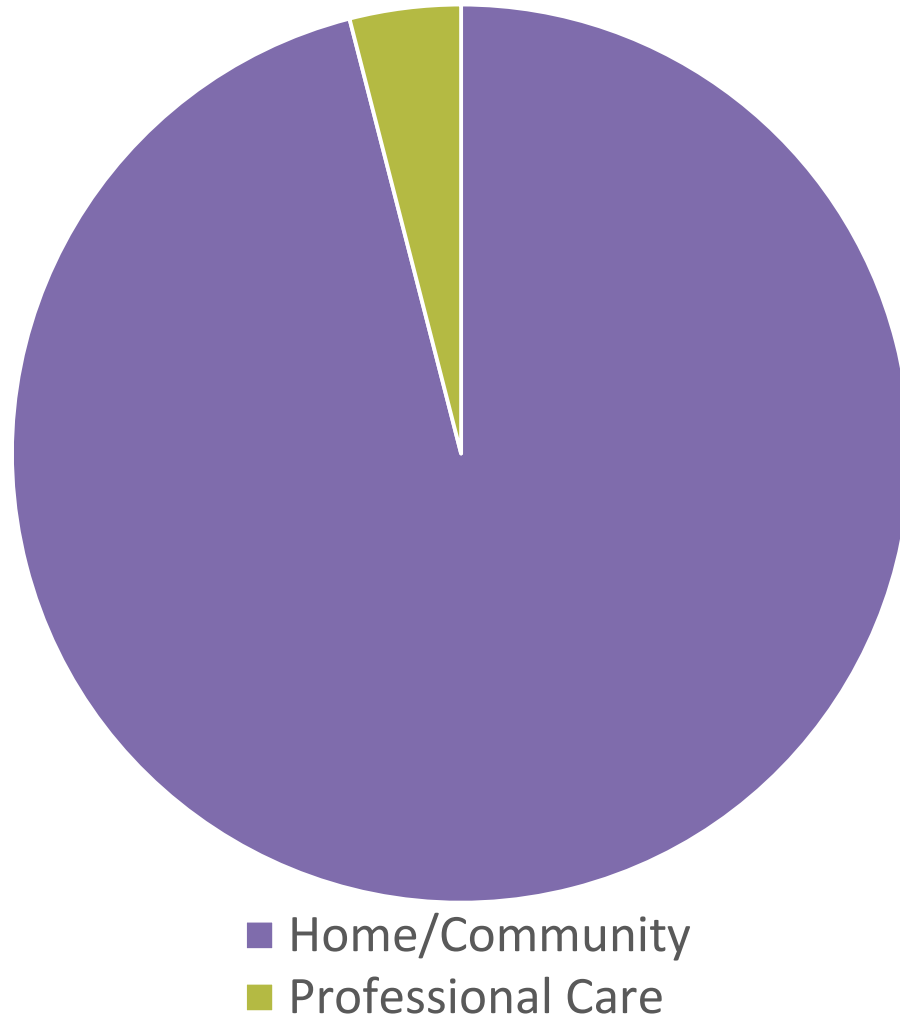
NCEA, "Research, Statistics, and Data" (2021)
Burnes et al. (2021)

Ageism and Risk

- Ageism: prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination based on age
 - Can underly abusive behavior
 - Keeps people from fully participating in our communities

NCEA, "Research Brief: Ageism" (2021)

Where does abuse occur?



Barriers to Seeking Help

Individual

Fear
Denial
Overwhelmed
Ambivalence
Dependency
Grief
Anger
Depression



Embarrassment
Guilt/Shame
Loyalty

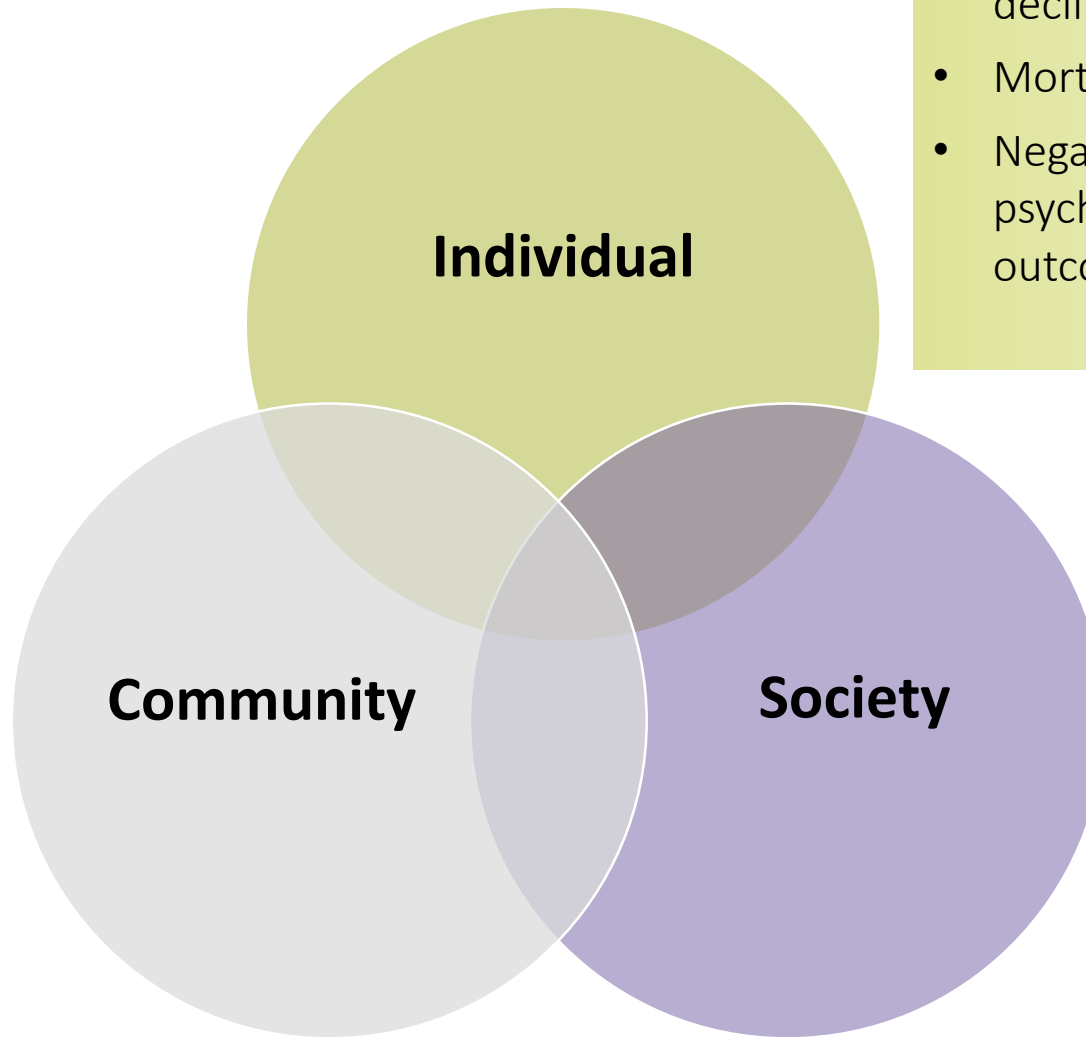


Social

Generational values
Rigid gender roles
Cultural values
Inequitable experiences with systems

The Cost

Decreases participation of older adults in community life: community loses valuable contributions



- Physical decline
- Mortality
- Negative psychological outcomes
- \$2.9 billion lost annually to financial exploitation
- Loss of independence

- Financial exploitation: \$15 million in public costs annually in NYS
- National healthcare cost: \$5.3 billion



Strengthening the Beams

Know the Signs: Physical Red Flags

- Unexplained injuries (bruises, cuts, burns, broken bones, etc.)
 - Differing explanations from older adult v. caregiver
- Untreated bed sores
- Changes in physical appearance: hygiene, weight, dress
- Difficulty walking/standing
- Appearing under or over medicated

National Center on Elder Abuse, "Research, Statistics, and Data" (2021)

Know the Signs: Emotional/Behavioral Red Flags

- Unusual changes in behavior or sleep
- Withdrawn, hopeless, or resigned affect
- Depression, anxiety, fear
- Differing behavior in the presence of the caregiver/caregiver speaking for the older adult
- Trauma symptoms v. dementia

National Center on Elder Abuse, "Research, Statistics, and Data" (2021)

Know the Signs: Financial Red Flags

- Unusual changes in bank account/money management behaviors
- Missing checks, money, or belongings
- New debt
- Unpaid bills
- Unexplained or sudden change in Power of Attorney, wills, legal documents

National Center on Elder Abuse, "Research, Statistics, and Data" (2021)

Person-Centered Support: Safety + Self-Determination

- Safety
 - Survivor as the expert of their own situation
 - No “one size fits all” solution
- Self-Determination
 - Restoring control to survivor

Supportive Services: Office for Aging & APS

- Onondaga County Office for Aging: 315-435-2362
 - Information & Assistance
 - Caregiver Resources
 - Community Services
 - Senior Nutrition
 - Case Management
- Adult Protective Services: 315-435-2815
 - Investigates cases of suspected abuse/exploitation

Supportive Services: Vera House

- Dedicated elder advocate
 - Emotional support, safety planning, systems navigation
- Evergreen Support Group
- E-MDT
- 24-hour Crisis and Support Line: **(315) 468-3260**
- WebChat: www.verahouse.org

Supportive Services: Concerned Persons Helpline

- Helpline dedicated to family members, friends, neighbors, or caregivers who are concerned about an older adult
- 844-746-6905
 - M-F, 9AM-5PM
 - Emotional support, resources, guidance on next steps

Prevention: Challenge Ageism

- Be aware of how ageism shows up in our attitudes, interactions, and the policies and systems around us
- Disrupt ageism when we see and hear it
 - “senior moment” v. “I forgot____”
 - Challenging assumptions
 - Advocating for change

Gendron, “Recognizing and Combatting Ageism During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond” (2021)

Prevention: Increase Social Connection

- Reaching out & maintaining connections
 - Individualism v. Community
- Systems-level solutions:
 - More resources for community centers
 - Intergenerational programs
 - Improving public transportation
 - Digital access

Frameworks Institute, "Talking Elder Abuse"

Conclusion



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