

IDENTIFYING TRENDS AND POLICE RESPONSES TO ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Executive Summary

Adults aged 65 years and older represent an increasing proportion of the Canadian population. Similarly, rates of violent crimes involving elder victims have reportedly been increasing in Canada (Conroy, 2021). The report explored the trends in police files involving elder victims of violent crimes through analyses of police data and survey data collected from frontline general duty members deployed in 'E' Division RCMP detachments.

The abuse of elderly people by those known to them is a growing public health and criminal justice concern. It is estimated that one in six adults aged 60 years old and older are subjected to some form of abuse annually (Yon et al., 2017). Elder abuse can be categorized by the type of abuse, the abuser, the nature of the act, criminality, or the setting in which the abuse occurs (Yon et al., 2019). Perpetrators of elder abuse can include friends, family, acquaintances, or a person for whom the older adult relies on for some form of support (Walsh & Yon 2012; Yon et al., 2019). The types of abuse that are recognized within the general framework of elder abuse include: (1) psychological or emotional abuse; (2) physical abuse; (3) sexual abuse; (4) financial abuse; and (5) neglect (Yon et al., 2019). According to police data reported to Statistics Canada, in 2019, there were over 14,000 elder victims of police-reported violence, one-third (32 per cent) of whom were victimized by family members, primarily the elder's children or spouse (Conroy, 2021). This was the fourth consecutive year of increasing rates of violence committed against elders in Canada, which represented an increase of 20% since 2015 (Conroy, 2021).

According to the police-reported data, the most common form of family violence that elder victims experienced was physical assault (72 per cent). However, this differs substantially from the profile of elder abuse provided by self-report victimization data. Canadian self-report victimization data on elder abuse and neglect collected in the 2015 *National Survey on the Mistreatment of Older Canadians* prevalence study by McDonald (2018) found that elders in Canada experienced high rates of psychological and emotional abuse, among other forms of victimization. Specifically, 8.2% of elders living within the community experienced some form of mistreatment in the past year (McDonald, 2018). Most commonly, this was emotional/psychological abuse (33.3 per cent) or financial abuse (32.2 per cent). However, one-quarter reported physical abuse (26 per cent), one-fifth experienced sexual abuse (19.5 per cent), while 14.9% reported neglect. It is likely that these estimates are lower than the actual rates of mistreatment as McDonald (2018) observed that when compared to standardized scales used to screen for abuse and neglect, many elders did not subjectively identify as being abused or neglect. This gap was most notable for psychological/emotional abuse, where the Conflict Tactics Scale identified that 30% were abused in this way, but only 6.7% of elders self-reported being psychologically/emotionally abused. Like with the police data, perpetrators of elder abuse or neglect were most likely to be children of the victim or a spouse. Common factors identified among the perpetrators included mental health challenge and substance abuse issues.

There is a paucity of research examining elder abuse or neglect trends in institutional settings. The police-reported statistics summarized by Conroy (2021) concluded that one-in-ten elders who experienced violence in 2019 were victimized while residing in institutional care. Beyond this, there is no Canadian data available. However, there are some worldwide estimates of elder abuse in

institutional settings. According to a systematic review by Yon et al. (2018), elder abuse in institutional settings was high with 33.4% of older residents reporting psychological abuse, 14.1% reporting physical abuse, 13.8% indicating financial abuse, 11.6% reporting neglect, and 1.9% were sexually abused (Yon et al., 2019).

Accurate data on the prevalence of elder abuse is hindered by the fact that it remains underreported. There are many potential reasons for this. Often, older adults are dependent emotionally, physically, or financially on those who abuse them (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Groh & Linden, 2011; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016; Mayda et al., 2012). This dependency relationship with the abuser may lead an older adult to feel ashamed that a person they relied upon had abused them, which may lead them to choose not to disclose the abuse (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Groh & Linden, 2011; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016; Mayda et al., 2012). Other older adults may fear retaliation from the abuser for reporting their abuse, losing contact with a caregiver or a family member, or being put into a long-term care facility against their will (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Grant & Benedet, 2016; Groh & Linden, 2012; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). Those who have mental impairments or physical limitations may simply not be able to ask for help due to their conditions (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Burgess et al., 2008; Grant & Benedet, 2016; Groh & Linden, 2012; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). It is estimated that the actual percentage of older adults who are abused each year within Canada is between 10% and 15%, which suggests that official prevalence data is likely an underestimation (Beaulieu et al., 2016). As the aging population rapidly grows and the number of older adults abused each year increases in Canada, so too will the need for prevention practices, police intervention, and appropriate resources for elders facing abuse.

The role of law enforcement in investigating elder abuse and neglect reports is extremely important. Police may be responsible for prevention, such as carrying out awareness activities with older adults and the public about what elder abuse is and the role of the police in addressing and responding to incidents of abuse, as well as detecting abuse, providing frontline intervention, conducting investigations, and assisting victims with information updates and connecting them to with appropriate services (Beaulieu et al., 2016). However, police may fail to detect or adequately respond to elder abuse or neglect due to a lack of knowledge or training (Kurkurina et al., 2018; Tapp et al., 2015). Because elder abuse is so complicated, proper training for law enforcement is necessary to detect and investigate the phenomenon.

There are few examples of policing training or police programs concerning elder abuse and neglect in Canada. The province of Alberta released a 2016 police guide for elder abuse investigation meant for the RCMP, municipal police agencies, and First Nations police services in Alberta (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). The guide outlines best practices regarding elder abuse investigations to assist police services in developing policy, procedures, and training (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). In addition, although not official police guidelines, both Vancouver Coastal Health and Seniors First BC have released their own reference guides for all frontline workers that covers both general and specific signs of elder abuse and best practices when interacting with suspected elder abuse victims (Seniors First BC, 2020, VCH, n.d.). However, there is no apparent research on the efficacy of this training and education or on how officers receive and evaluate the utility of this information and the extent to which it affects their related investigations

There does not appear to be a single widely used instrument for law enforcement to detect elder abuse. However, law enforcement may be able to use a version of the Elder Abuse Suspicion Index (EASI) adapted for law enforcement, the Elder Abuse Suspicion Index and Needs Assessment for Law Enforcement Officers (EASI-Leo; Kurkurina et al., 2018). The seven-item tool is comprehensive, quick, and easy to administer, though more research is required to determine its utility in correctly screening elder abuse and neglect files. Another version of this tool – the Australian Elder Abuse Screening Instrument (AuSI) has been studied, although not in a law enforcement setting. Still, the tool may be useful in supporting otherwise untrained police officers to screen for elder abuse and neglect more effectively during their interactions with elder victims.

While there are agencies designated across British Columbia to receive and investigate reports about elder abuse and neglect, these reports may still necessitate a police response and may, in fact, be reported directly to the police at the outset as opposed to a designated agency. It is important to understand the nature and extent of elder abuse and neglect files that are coming to the attention of the police in British Columbia, and to assess their knowledge and current practices when conducting related investigations.

VIOLENT OFFENCE DATA

'E' Division OSB provided a dataset on founded violent offences with at least one victim aged 65 years or older that were reported to the RCMP in British Columbia between 2014 and 2018. The dataset included a total of 5,011 unique occurrences of violence reported to the BC RCMP involving at least one elder victim between 2014 and 2018. On average, approximately 1,002 violent offence files with an elder victim were reported each year. The number of founded violent offence files involving an elder victim increased year to year over this five-year period with an overall increase of 29% over the five-year period. These trends were similar within all four policing districts; the largest proportion of files were reported in the Lower Mainland District.

Elder victims were, on average, 71.5 years old; they ranged in age between 65 and 114 years old. Most elder victims were male (57.9 per cent). Where ethnicity was recorded, most elder victims were Caucasian (77.0 per cent). This dataset included offences flagged as family violence, as well as non-family violence forms of victimization. Most commonly, elder victims of violence were victimized by a stranger (28.4 per cent). One-fifth (19.9 per cent) were victimized by a friend (n = 135), neighbour (n = 314), or casual acquaintance (n = 465). Slightly more than one-in-ten (12.2 per cent) were victimized by a spouse. When considering all violence files involving an elder victim, the most common location was some form of residential property (64 per cent). A significantly larger proportion of elder, spousal, and other family violence involved a female victim, whereas a significantly larger proportion of non-family violence involved a male victim.

Of the approximately 5,000 occurrences of violence where there was an elder victim, only 2.4% (n = 120) received the elder abuse flag. If the abuse was perpetrated by a spouse, then a spousal abuse code would be more appropriate to designate given the associated intimate partner violence policies followed in police investigations. Spousal abuse was noted in 15% (n = 749) of the violent occurrences involving an elder victim. However, most files involving an elder victim were scored as not family violence (65.0 per cent, n = 3,254). The remaining 17.7% were scored as some other

form of family violence. It is probably that some of these latter files could more appropriately be scored as elder abuse, as they likely involved abuse or neglect perpetrated by a family member against an elder victim.

Slightly more than half of the occurrences involved a common assault; this was nearly four times as common as the next category, assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm. Utter threats against a person was the third most common offence. Comparatively speaking, occurrences involving an attempted or completed homicide, a sexual assault, or criminal negligence causing bodily harm or death were relatively rare. The most common weapon documented was physical force. CCJS Status indicates the Statistics Canada clearance codes. The most common file outcome where information was available (39 cases were not located) was a charge (43.2 per cent).

FAMILY VIOLENCE DATA

'E' Division OSB provided a second database containing all founded family violence occurrences reported to 'E' Division RCMP detachments between 2014 and 2018. This included intimate partner violence files and other family violence files, such as elder abuse. In total, there were 60,645 founded family violence files over this five-year period involving 114,921 individuals. Over the entire five-year period the rate of family violence files per year remained relatively stable, with an average of 12,129 founded family violence files per year. Overall, between 2014 and 2018, the number of founded family violence files reported to the BC RCMP increased by 2.8%. Again, these included family violence files with elder victims and/or perpetrators, as well as family violence files with non-elder victims and/or perpetrators.

The 60,645 files were divided into three main forms of family violence: elder abuse (n = 181; 0.3 per cent), spousal abuse (n = 43,576; 71.9 per cent), and other family violence (n = 16,888; 27.8 per cent) which included child abuse, a sibling dispute, or dispute with a parent/guardian. When considering only the file types of spousal and 'other' family violence (i.e., excluding elder abuse files), a significantly larger proportion of the files involving an elder entity were considered 'other' family violence (51.7 per cent) as compared to the files without an elder entity (26.5 per cent). Conversely, a statistically significantly larger percentage of the non-elder files were considered spousal violence (73.5 per cent) than were the elder-involved files (48.3 per cent).

There were nearly 2,500 files involving at least one elder entity. Elders could be involved in the file only as a victim (55.9 per cent), only as a suspect with charges recommended or laid (28.6 per cent), or as both a victim and a suspect, for example, if the file involved intimate partner violence with two individuals aged 65 years and older (15.5 per cent). There were 1,430 elders involved in 1,378 family violence files only as a victim. In total, there were between one and 13 entities attached to files where the only role for the elder was as a victim (average = 2.2 entities per file). The elder victims ranged in age from 65 to 114 years old, with an average age of 71.3 years old. Slightly over half (51.3 per cent) were female and three-quarters (73.1 per cent) were Caucasian. The age of the non-elder perpetrators against an elder victim ranged from eight years of age to 64 years of age, with an average of 41.4 years old. Overall, two-thirds (62.4 per cent) of elder victims were involved in 'other family' violence, followed by spousal violence (29.2 per cent), and then elder abuse (8.3 per cent).

The most common perpetrator overall was a child or stepchild (24.5 per cent) followed by a parent or stepparent (20.9 per cent), then a spouse (16.8 per cent), or an 'other' immediate family member (14.2 per cent). The most common UCR code was for a common assault (64.3 per cent) followed by assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (15.5 per cent), and utter threats against a person (11.6 per cent). Physical force was the most common weapon used against them (70.1 per cent). Half (49.8 per cent) of the files where the elder was involved only as a victim ended with a minor injury, while nearly half (46.8 per cent) had no injury documented. Overall, 89.3% of the files involving an elder victim were closed. Over half (55.6 per cent) of the files involved the perpetrator being charged, while 19.5% were closed with the victim/complainant requesting no further action.

There were 714 elders involved in a file only as a suspect/chargeable/charged entity. The elder perpetrators in these files ranged in age from 65 to 91 with an average age of 70 years old. As with the victim-only files, the most common ethnicity of the perpetrator was Caucasian (68.8 per cent). When looking only at the victims in these files, the ages ranged from 1 to 64 years old; the average age of the non-elder victims was 42.1 years old. when the elder role in the file was as a perpetrator, the most common type of family violence was spousal (53.5 per cent) followed by 'other' family (46.4 per cent). The most common UCR code for files where the elder was only involved as a perpetrator was common assault (55.7 per cent). However, a relatively large percentage of these files were scored as some form of sexual assault (15.3 per cent). physical force was the most common weapon used by elder perpetrators against a non-elder victim (72.2 per cent). Files involving an elder perpetrator against a non-elder victim were equally likely to result in a minor injury (49.2 per cent) as a non-injury (48.1 per cent). Overall, 87.4% of the files where elders were involved only as a perpetrator were closed. Two-thirds (65.5 per cent) involved a charge, while 14.5% were closed through departmental discretion and 14.3% were concluded due to no further action being requested by the victim/complainant.

The third set of analyses focused on the files in which an elder was involved both as a victim and as a perpetrator (n = 761). In total, 50.1% of the elders in these files were identified as a victim, while 49.9% were identified as a perpetrator (suspect/chargeable/charged). The elders involved in files with both an elder victim and an elder perpetrator were slightly more likely to be male (50.7 per cent), and predominantly Caucasian (78.8 per cent). Nearly all files involving both an elder victim and perpetrator were considered spousal violence cases (91.4 per cent), followed by 'other' family (7.3 per cent). Common assault was the most common UCR code making up three-quarters (73.4 per cent) of these files. The most common weapon again was physical force (75.9 per cent). A larger percentage of the files involving both an elder victim and elder perpetrator resulted in a minor injury (57.2 per cent) while a smaller percentage resulted in no injury (39.9 per cent). Overall, 92.4% of these files were considered closed. When looking at the file outcomes, two-thirds (68.2 per cent) resulted in the perpetrator being charged, while one-fifth (20.7 per cent) were concluded via departmental discretion. Less than one-in-ten (7.9 per cent) were concluded because no further action was requested by the victim/complainant.

Overall, the results of the quantitative data analysis indicated that the number of violent offences involving elder victims increased year-by-year between 2014 and 2018, while the rate of family violence files (both involving elders and non-elders) fluctuated, with small overall increase over the five-year period. Both data sets revealed that the elder abuse code was infrequently used in these

files. There appeared to be a lack of clarity about when to use this file designation, resulting in the reliance on the 'other family violence' code to classify these types of files.

POLICE SURVEY DATA

The final set of analyses focused on surveys conducted with frontline police officers and senior leaders across British Columbia. The surveys explored common challenges with and perceived needs for elder abuse and neglect investigations. Survey data was collected from 111 frontline general duty members and seven senior leaders. Only 17.1% of frontline members reported having received any prior training relating to elder abuse and neglect. Relatedly, detachment level resources for elder abuse and neglect were extremely limited as no frontline members identified existing program or partnerships in this area, while a very small proportion identified having an elder designate or another related position. Likewise, senior leaders reported that none of their members were trained on elder abuse or neglect, and that few programs existed at the detachment level or in partnership with the community. While senior leaders suggested elder abuse and neglect training would be more of a priority for supervisors, there was a clear demand from the frontline members for more training in all 12 areas provided on the survey, most notably with respect to the relevance of the *Adult Guardianship Act*, as most identified not being familiar with this act. They also desired more training and guidance on how and when to work with other agencies on elder abuse and neglect files. Senior leaders felt that more training on financial abuse would be useful, given increasing rates of this in their communities.

Frontline members were presented with three scenarios of elder abuse and neglect. They were most comfortable with the physical abuse scenario, with a majority identifying that a criminal offence had likely occurred and consistency in identifying the offence as an assault. Police felt this type of call was primarily a police matter. However, there was less consensus with the other two scenarios. In the neglect scenario, police recognized that there was a potential criminal offence but when asked to specify what offence may have occurred, provided a wide range of possible answers. While still feeling as though police have a role to play in this scenario, there was greater emphasis on the need for health and social workers to be involved, as well as mental health. Similarly, with the financial abuse scenario, police again recognized that a criminal offence had likely occurred but although more consistent than in the neglect scenario, still provided a range of possible offences that might have occurred in this situation. They generally felt that while police should be involved, this type of file should also involve social workers, mental health, or the health authority.

When it came to conducting investigations, many challenges were reported by frontline general duty members. In total, 90% or more identified that mental health issues, cognitive issues, communication barriers due to physical issues (e.g., loss of hearing, non-verbal), a loss of control over their own finances, and a failure to recognize that they were a victim of crime were common challenges when conducting elder abuse and neglect investigations. Charge approval was also an issue, with frontline members reporting that charge approval was generally very or somewhat easy to obtain for physical abuse and sexual assault files, but somewhat or very difficult to obtain for emotional/psychological abuse, financial abuse, or neglect. Relatedly, they felt their detachments were generally very effective when it came to investigating physical abuse and sexual assault files

but were only somewhat effective when it came to emotional/spiritual abuse, financial abuse, or neglect files.

Frontline members were generally unfamiliar with the types of elder-specific resources they can connect to for support in their investigations. Only a minority knew about or had ever used the Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia or other designated agencies, or elder-specific resources like Seniors First BC or the Senior Abuse Information Line. When asked what resources they felt were definitely or possibly needed in the future, frontline members identified developing elder abuse and neglect police-community partnerships, internal policy on elder abuse and neglect investigations, and elder abuse and neglect supplementary tool to guide their investigation, and dedicated officers or units for elder abuse and neglect. In contrast, senior leaders felt that better training for supervisors and for victim services, more training for members on financial abuse, more partnerships with the community, and more public outreach and education, particularly around financial abuse prevention, was where they needed to see more resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The file data analysis together with the survey results indicated a few areas where enhanced practices or training would be beneficial. These included training for officers around the appropriate use of, and rationale for, the elder abuse flag in family violence files, curriculum for police on conducting elder abuse and neglect investigations, specially trained elder designates to provide detachment-level support for frontline members conducting these investigations, implementation of an elder abuse and neglect supplementary tool, such as the EASI or AuSI, and the development of police-community agency partnerships to enhance elder abuse and neglect prevention and response.

The results of the current project revealed important gaps in awareness and understanding of the challenges inherent in elder abuse and neglect investigations and the resources available to support both the investigations and the victims of abuse and neglect. Although 'E' Division RCMP detachments generally perceive that elder abuse and neglect is relatively uncommon, the file data demonstrated increasing numbers of violent offences involving elder victims year after year between 2014 and 2018. This trend was likely only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, given the increasing rates of family violence that have been documented (Brijnath et al., 2022). Furthermore, elders are a fast-growing population in Canada. The number of files with elder victims that are reported to the police can only be expected to increase going forward. This is an opportune time for the 'E' Division RCMP to move forward in implementing training and education for frontline officers, establishing collaborative networks and partnerships to respond to these types of files, and introduce screening tools or 'job aids' to assist police in conducting efficient and effective investigations with elder victims of abuse or neglect.

Introduction

Elder individuals, or adults who are 65 years of age or older, are a growing demographic in Canada. In Canada, in 2015, the proportion of elders exceeded for the first time the proportion of youth under the age of 15 years old (Burczycka & Conroy, 2017). Up to one out of every ten elders may be victims of elder abuse (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012), although these estimates increase substantially when measures of psychological abuse are considered (McDonald, 2018). However, only one in five victims of elder abuse report their victimization (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012). One key issue associated with elder abuse is that victims may face unique challenges in accessing the criminal justice system due to age-related physical limitations and mental conditions, transportation limitations, physical, psychological, or economic dependency on caregivers who may also be their abusers, lack of familiarity or comfort with using certain technologies, and language and cultural barriers (Burczycka & Conroy, 2017). Given this, the current project sought to explore police-level trends in the quantity and nature of elder abuse and neglect investigations, challenges with conducting these investigations, and strategies to prevent and respond to elder abuse and neglect.

Project Objectives

The main objectives of this project were to provide a provincial overview of the extent and nature of elder abuse and neglect files, provide a descriptive analysis of the nature and extent of elder abuse and neglect files reported to RCMP, and assess general duty member awareness, practices, and experiences with investigating elder abuse and neglect files. A further purpose of the project was to develop a better understanding of elder abuse and neglect policing trends and to identify potential opportunities for training and the development of alternative strategies to respond to these types of files.

Project Methodology

Three main approaches were used to complete this study. First, a literature review was conducted to summarize the nature and quantity of elder abuse and neglect cases in Canada, as well as to identify best or promising practices in police and community responses to and the prevention of elder abuse and neglect. The second main approach consisted of quantitative analyses of two datasets provided by 'E' Division RCMP Operations Strategy Branch (OSB). One dataset contained all founded occurrences reported to 'E' Division RCMP between 2014 and 2018 involving a violent *Criminal Code* offence where there was at least one victim aged 65 years of age or older. The second dataset more specifically included all founded family violence occurrences (elder abuse as well as other forms of family violence) received by 'E' Division RCMP between 2014 and 2018. These datasets were used to provide a context of the nature and quantity of elder abuse and neglect files reported to the police in British Columbia over a five-year period.

The third component involved survey research with 'E' Division RCMP detachments across the four policing districts. Initially, the survey research was conducted online; however, due to low

participation rates, the surveys were converted to hard copies disseminated during shift briefings at RCMP detachments. Thirteen small, medium, and large RCMP detachments were intentionally selected for participation through consultation with 'E' Division Community Policing Services (CPS) based on census data indicating a higher rate of elder citizens living within their policing jurisdiction. This included three detachments from the Lower Mainland District, three detachments from the Island District, four detachments from the Southeast District, and three detachments in the North District.

It was anticipated that between these 13 RCMP detachments, there would be approximately 1,000 frontline police officers who either responded to calls for service or investigated cases of elder abuse and neglect. Through 'E' Division CPS, points of contact were identified at each of the 13 detachments. These contacts were sent an email by the primary researchers requesting that they forward the email invitation and link to the anonymous survey to their frontline members. The frontline member surveys sought to explore member familiarity with elder abuse and neglect files, training experiences and perceived needs, common reasons for and sources of these files, common challenges with investigating these types of files, detachment strengths and needs in managing these types of files, and the existence and use of partnerships with other relevant agencies. A draft of the survey was circulated with members of the Council to Reduce Elder Abuse in BC (CREA) and their feedback was integrated into the final version. A second email and survey link were sent directly to the same points of contact with the request that one survey be completed per detachment by a senior leader (e.g., an Officer in Charge or Operations Non-Commissioned Officer) to capture detachment level trends more broadly in relation to elder abuse and neglect files.

In total, six¹ of the 13 detachments participated in the senior leader online survey. However, only 17 online survey responses were received from frontline members, despite extending the study date.² Through consultation with 'E' Division CPS, the decision was made to shift to an in-person briefing survey. As this survey dissemination occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, 'E' Division CPS identified points of contact at each of the 13 detachments who indicated a willingness to assist in the distribution and collection of hardcopy surveys during shift briefings. Hardcopies of the survey were packed into envelopes for each of the four Watches per detachment and then mailed to the points of contact at each detachment along with a cover letter that provided a summary of the study purpose and pre-addressed return envelopes for the completed surveys. The points of contact were requested to read a brief statement during the briefings, to then hand the surveys to members, and to collect them back from the members approximately 15 to 20 minutes later in a plain envelope. The envelopes were pre-addressed with a point of contact at 'E' Division

¹ There were seven unique anonymized surveys submitted by senior leaders; however, it appears as though two senior leaders at the same detachment may have both completed the survey as the number of participating detachments for that policing district exceeded the number of invited detachments. Due to the anonymity of the survey data, and the closest 'identifying' characteristic being police district, the researchers were unable to determine which two surveys likely came from the same detachment. Therefore, all seven submitted surveys were analyzed for this report.

² At the time the online survey was disseminated, the RCMP was migrating to a new email system. It is possible that the survey email, which was sent shortly prior to this migration, resulted in the invitation not being migrated into the new email account and not being seen by members.

Headquarters who agreed to receive the completed surveys for pick up by a member of the research team. Detachment point of contacts were instructed to seal the collected surveys in the envelope and then return them through internal RCMP mail to the 'E' Division Headquarters' point of contact. Through this process, the research team sought to maintain the anonymity of the participating detachments. A total of 111 completed and usable surveys were returned, some to the 'E' Division Headquarters point of contact, while others were returned directly by mail to the researchers at the University of the Fraser Valley. While it is unclear, given the anonymity of the returned surveys, how many of the 13 detachments participated in the study, the response rate overall was estimated at 11% given the anticipated size of the potential population.

Literature Review

The abuse of elderly people by those known to them is a growing public health and criminal justice concern. It is estimated that one in six adults aged 60 years old and older are subjected to some form of abuse annually (Yon et al., 2017). Currently, there is no agreed upon definition that encompasses the multitude of behaviours that constitute elder abuse (Dion et al., 2020). Still, an often-cited definition by the World Health Organization defines elder abuse as “a single or repeated act of commission or omission that occurs within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person” (WHO, 2020). The terms “older person/adult” or “senior” most commonly refers to adults aged 65 years old and older. However, the terms may be used to refer to people as young as 55 years old (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013).

In Canada, abuse is considered criminal when the act violates any section of the *Canadian Criminal Code*. These acts may include assault, threats, confinement, intimidation, fraud, harassment, and sexual abuse, among others (Podnieks, 2008). The *Canadian Criminal Code* also provides protection from offences, such as theft, extortion, breach of trust, the misuse of a power of attorney, manslaughter or murder, forcible confinement, criminal negligence, and failure to provide the necessities of life (Podnieks, 2008). However, some instances of abuse may not be considered crimes, such as verbal insults or ignoring or discrediting an older adult's point of view (Podnieks, 2008). Still, these types of behaviours or actions may cause harm and distress to older adults and may lead to or precipitate criminal acts (Podnieks, 2008).

TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE

Elder abuse can be categorized by the type of abuse, the abuser, the nature of the act, criminality, or the setting in which the abuse occurs (Yon et al., 2019). Perpetrators of elder abuse can include friends, family, acquaintances, or a person for whom the older adult relies on for some form of support (Walsh & Yon 2012; Yon et al., 2019). Elder abuse may be committed in one's home, in the community, or within an institution, such as long-term care facilities or nursing homes (Walsh & Yon 2012; Yon et al., 2019). The types of abuse that are recognized within the general framework of elder abuse include: (1) psychological or emotional abuse; (2) physical abuse; (3) sexual abuse; (4) financial abuse; and (5) neglect (Yon et al., 2019).

One of the more common forms of elder abuse in Canada is psychological or emotional abuse (McDonald, 2018; Walsh & Yon, 2012). This form of abuse refers to intentional acts that inflict mental harm, fear, or distress in an older person (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Yon et al., 2019). Any type of coercive or threatening behaviour that creates a power imbalance between an older person being abused and their family member or caregiver is considered abusive (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Adults who experience psychologically abusive acts may have their sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth diminished (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). There are a range of behaviours, such as yelling, swearing, and making insulting or disrespectful comments towards an elderly person, that may result in emotional distress. Other acts, such as confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, and infantilization, may cause significant psychological harm (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Psychological and emotional abuse is often used in combination with other types of abuse to control the life of an older person. The consequences of serious emotional and psychological stress include anxiety, depression, and irritability (Podnieks & Thomas, 2017). Many forms of this abuse may constitute a criminal offence, such as criminal harassment, threats, or intimidation (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013).

A second common form of elder abuse, and the kind of abuse that is most likely to be reported to the police, is physical abuse (McDonald, 2018; Walsh & Yon, 2012; Yon et al., 2019). This form of abuse is defined as the intentional use of force against an older person that leads to physical harm ranging from physical pain to death (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Physical abuse includes any kind of physical assault, such as pinching, slapping, kicking, and punching (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Yon et al., 2019). Physical abuse may also include injuries sustained by being attacked with an object or weapon. Other examples of physical abuse can be acts that deliberately expose the older adult to severe weather, inappropriately dispensing medication, any unnecessary physical restraint, and strangulation (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). These acts may result in injuries ranging from minor scratches and bruises to broken bones, head injuries, and death (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). For older adults, the consequences of physical abuse can be especially serious because, due to their age and health, even relative minor injuries can cause serious and permanent damage or death (Podnieks & Thomas, 2017).

Elders may also be the victim of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse refers to any sexual behaviour that is directed at someone without the person's full knowledge or consent. Sexually abusive behaviours may include acts, such as unwanted kissing, fondling, sexual harassment, and sexual assault (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Yon et al., 2019). Older adults are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse since it is not always clear if the elder has the necessary capacity to consent or if their consent was given voluntarily (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Some older adults may have cognitive impairments that accompany age-related medical conditions, difficulties communicating, and/or medications that may temporarily compromise their ability to make free and informed decisions. These conditions may affect an older adult's capacity to consent to sexual acts (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Furthermore, consent is only deemed voluntary in the absence of pressure or duress, and is violated when an older adult is pressured, coerced, or threatened (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013).

Sexual abuse is often difficult for older adults to report. Older people may not report their victimization or abuse because they feel overwhelming shame or guilt or may not trust their own

feelings or recollections of having been assaulted (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Grant & Benedet, 2016; Groh & Linden, 2011; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016; Leisey et al., 2009). Furthermore, older adults with developmental or cognitive disabilities may have difficulties distinguishing between normal physical caregiving and sexual assault (Burgess et al., 2008; BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Groh & Linden, 2012; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). Like other segments of the population, some elderly people may fear receiving a negative reaction from the person they report the abuse to or from the police. They may also fear that they will not be believed when they report their abuse or victimization (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Many older adults may also fear retaliation by their abuser, as older adults often rely on their abuser for their primary care (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Groh & Linden, 2012; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). In addition, ageist stereotypes suggesting that older adults are not sexual or sexually attractive can create barriers to detection and a willingness to report sexual abuse (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Grant & Benedet, 2016).

Financial abuse is another common form of elder abuse (McDonald, 2018; Walsh & Yon, 2012). Also known as material abuse, financial abuse involves the misappropriation or exploitation of an older adult's funds or assets without the person's knowledge or consent (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Yon et al., 2019). For those adults who are not mentally capable, this form of abuse includes the misuse of an enduring power of attorney or making choices that are not in the older person's best interest (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Examples of financial abuse include making large purchases with the older person's money without consent, cashing pension or cheques without permission, or denying the older person access to their own funds or home (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Financial abuse may also include improper use of powers of attorney, representation agreements, trusts, or guardianships (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013).

Older adults may also be subjected to neglect, which can be defined as the failure of a caregiver to meet the physical, social, or emotional needs of an older person (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Yon et al., 2019). Neglect is different from other forms of abuse because, in these cases, the perpetrator fails to act rather than engaging in explicitly abusive acts (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). In British Columbia, three forms of neglect are currently recognized: active; passive; and self-neglect. Active and passive neglect focuses on the caregiver and their intent, while self-neglect focuses on the acts of the older adult themselves (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). With active neglect, the caregiver intentionally fails to meet their obligations towards the older adult (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Examples of active neglect include denying an older person food, water, or visits from others (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). In contrast, with passive neglect, this failure to adequately carry out responsibilities is unintentional and often the result of a caregiver being overloaded with work or lacking information on appropriate caregiving strategies (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Examples of passive neglect include a caregiver being unaware of the full needs of the older person and being unable to adjust to the demands that come with taking care of an elderly person due to their own advanced ageing, stress, or exhaustion (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Lastly, self-neglect refers to when an elderly person harms themselves. In these circumstances, the older adults may not be eating, going to the doctor when needed, abusing substances, or compulsively hoarding (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Although self-neglect is included in some definitions of elder abuse, this aspect of elder abuse focuses on the older adult's own problematic behaviour.

These five general categories of elder abuse allow for the classification of a variety of abuses, all of which occur in diverse relationships, across multiple settings, and result in a wide range of outcomes. It is also important to note that, although acts that are considered elder abuse generally fall into one or more of these five categories, these categories do not encompass all the forms of abuse that can be experienced by older adults. Specialists in the field also recognize other forms of abuse, such as spiritual, systemic, medical, civic, and human rights abuses (Dumont-Smith, 2002; Erlingsson, 2007). Specialists have argued that these lesser known, recognized, or reported forms of abuse should be incorporated into the broader definitions of elder abuse to more accurately capture the full range of victim experiences, victim perpetrator relationships, and avenues of intervention (Erlingsson, 2007).

TRENDS IN ELDER ABUSE RATES

Trends in police-reported elder abuse are most recently available from Statistics Canada for 2019 (Conroy, 2021). Here, elders are defined as individuals between the ages of 65 and 89 years old. There were over 14,000 elder victims of police-reported violence in 2019; one-third (32 per cent) of whom were victimized by family members, including the elder's children, their spouse, or other direct (e.g., siblings) or extended (e.g., cousins) family members (Conroy, 2021). Notably, Conroy (2021) concluded that 2019 represented the fourth consecutive year of increasing rates of violence committed against elders in Canada. Specifically, between 2018 and 2019, the rate of non-family violence against an elder increased by 13% and the rate of family violence against an elder increased by 8%. When compared to 2015, family violence against elders increased by 20%. Most commonly, elder victims of family violence were abused by their child (34 per cent) or spouse (26 per cent), or a sibling (12 per cent). However, while the majority (55 per cent) of elders who were the victim of any form of police-reported violence were men, when it came specifically to victims of family violence reported to the police, a majority (58 per cent) of the victims were elder women. Moreover, approximately one-in-ten (11 per cent) elder victims of violence reported to the police were abused while residing in a nursing or retirement home. According to the police-reported data, the most common form of family violence that elder victims experienced was physical assault (72 per cent). However, this finding differed substantially from the profile of elder abuse provided by self-report victimization data.

To date, few victimization studies have investigated the national prevalence of elder abuse and neglect in Canada (McDonald, 2018; Podnieks, 1993). Canadian self-report victimization data on elder abuse and neglect was collected in the 2015 *National Survey on the Mistreatment of Older Canadians* prevalence study by McDonald (2018). An important caveat to this research is that, while the police-reported Statistics Canada data on elder victims of violence defined elders as between 65 and 89 years of age, McDonald's (2018) prevalence data was drawn from individuals 55 years of age and older. Further, while the Statistics Canada analysis of police-reported elder abuse included those residing in institutional settings, McDonald's study focused on community level trends. Therefore, the statistics from these two key sources are not directly comparable. Still, the self-report data provided by McDonald suggested that when not limiting the analyses to only

victimization reported to the police, elders in Canada were experiencing high rates of psychological and emotional abuse, among other forms of victimization.

McDonald (2018) conducted their national telephone survey in 2015 with 8,163 older adults aged 55 years old and older. The study found that 8.2% of elders living within the community experienced some form of mistreatment in the past year (McDonald, 2018). In the entire sample, 2.2% reported experiencing physical abuse, 1.6% reported being sexually abused, 2.7% were psychologically abused, 2.6% were financially abused and 1.2% reported that they were neglected (McDonald, 2018). When considering the different forms of abuse and neglect only within the 666 participants of the study who reported any form of abuse, one-third of those experiencing abuse experienced emotional/psychological abuse (33.3 per cent, n = 222) or financial abuse (32.2 per cent, n = 215). In total, approximately one-quarter experienced physical abuse (26 per cent, n = 173), nearly one-fifth experienced sexual abuse (19.5 per cent, n = 130), and 14.9% (n = 99) reported neglect. Importantly, McDonald (2018) noted that some elders whose standardized scales (the Conflict Tactics Scale) identified them as being abused or neglect did not themselves identify as being abused or neglected. This poses a barrier to reporting victimization and may present challenges for successful prevention or intervention efforts. This gap was most notable for psychological/emotional abuse, where the Conflict Tactics Scale identified that 30% were abused in this way, but only 6.7% of the sample self-reported being psychologically/emotionally abused.

Regardless of the form of abuse, perpetrators were most likely to be current or former spouses, or a child/grandchild (McDonald, 2018). Current or former spouses were the perpetrator in 34% of physical abuse, 19% of sexual abuse, 41% of psychological/emotional abuse, 22% of financial abuse, and 31% of neglect cases. A child/grandchild was the perpetrator in 27% of physical abuse, 1% of sexual abuse, 25% of psychological abuse, 37% of financial abuse, and 27% of neglect cases. In other words, the perpetrator was most commonly a spouse, except when the abuse took the form of financial abuse where the most common perpetrator was a child/grandchild. The only other exception to these trends concerned sexual abuse, where 50% of the abusive acts were committed by a friend. When examining other characteristics of the abusers, mental health issues were commonly featured. In other words, mental health issues were identified in 26.5% of those committing physical abuse, 15.4% of those committing sexual abuse, 13.5% of those committing psychological abuse, 28.8% of those committing financial abuse, and 15.8% of those engaging in neglect. Alcohol/drug abuse was also identified, though not as frequently. This was considered an issue for 15.2% of those who committed physical abuse, 17.9% of those who committed sexual abuse, 9.3% of those who committed psychological abuse, 25.9% of those who committed financial abuse, and 11.8% of those engaging in neglect.

Overall, McDonald's study (2018) found that women were more likely to be abused than men. Further, members of visible minorities were more at risk of being abused, as were those who were socially isolated or who had challenges with mobility. Another variable relevant to predicting the likelihood of being abuse as an elder was childhood experiences with abuse, i.e., during the first 17 years of life (McDonald, 2018).

McDonald's (2018) study did not specifically analyze experiences of abuse among Indigenous participants. Research on elder abuse in Canada is particularly scarce in relation to the Indigenous population and their communities. The research to date appears to indicate that Aboriginal people

are subjected generally to higher rates of violence in comparison to the non-Aboriginal population in Canada (Podnieks, 2008). Whether this also holds true for the prevalence rates of elder abuse, both on- and off-reserve, remains largely unknown (Dumont-Smith, 2002). While dated, a report from 1993 suggested that elder abuse was a serious problem in some Aboriginal communities (Ontario Advisory Council of Seniors, 1993 as cited in Podnieks, 2008). However, much more research is needed to understand the current prevalence rates of elder abuse within Aboriginal communities.

TRENDS IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

As the population of older adults increases, so too will the need for institutional care. With the rise in the number of elderly people living in care situations comes the possibility of elder abuse within these facilities. Statistics Canada (2012) reported that the portion of people aged 65 years old and older living in Canadian healthcare institutions remained stable at approximately 7% since 2001. However, the prevalence of seniors living in care facilities increases with an elder's age (Statistics Canada, 2012). It has been projected that if the same level of institutionalization is maintained in Canada, over 500,000 Canadians will require long-term care by 2031 (Trottier et al., 2000).

To date, data on elder abuse within institutional settings in Canada is minimal and the data that is available is rather dated. In one attempt to determine the prevalence of abuse and neglect within Canada's elderly care institutions, a random telephone survey of 804 nurses and aides in Ontario was conducted (College of Nurses of Ontario, 1993 as cited in McDonald, 2011). In this study, 20% of nurses and aids reported witnessing abuse of patients, 31% witnessed rough handling of patients, and 28% witnessed yelling and swearing at patients (College of Nurses of Ontario, 1993 as cited in McDonald, 2011). However, caution must be taken with these results as the study did not state where the abuse was witnessed, over what time frame, and who the victim was (McDonald, 2011). More recently, Conroy's (2021) analysis of police-reported violence against elders indicated that one-in-ten elders who experienced violence in 2019 were victimized while residing in institutional care.

Although Canadian data on the subject is minimal, there are some worldwide estimates of elder abuse in institutional settings. Yon et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of nine studies to develop prevalence estimates for institutional elder abuse worldwide. According to this study, elder abuse in the institutional settings was high with 33.4% of older residents reporting psychological abuse, 14.1% reporting physical abuse, 13.8% indicating that they were victims of financial abuse, 11.6% were neglected, and 1.9% were sexually abused (Yon et al., 2019). In addition, from data based on staff self-reports, this study found that 64.2% of staff admitted to some form of elder abuse (Yon et al., 2019). Yon et al. (2019) noted that caution was needed when interpreting staff self-reported data, as this data only showed a partial picture of elder abuse and did not indicate the overall prevalence of abuse in the institution. Grant and Benedet (2016) suggested that up to one-third of sexual abuse cases involving elder women took place in institutional settings but that much of this may not be reported to the police. This might be due to lack of detection or due to perceived issues with holding the perpetrator accountable because of underlying cognitive impairments that

might affect either the perpetrator's legal responsibility or the victim's capacity to give evidence (Grant & Benedet, 2016).

Accurate data on the prevalence of elder abuse is hindered because it remains underreported. As mentioned above, older adults may not report abuse for a variety of reasons. Often, older adults are dependent emotionally, physically, or financially on those who abuse them (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Groh & Linden, 2011; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016; Mayda et al., 2012). This dependency relationship with the abuser may lead an older adult to feel ashamed that a person they relied upon was abusing them, which may lead them to choose not to disclose the abuse (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Groh & Linden, 2011; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016; Mayda et al., 2012). Other older adults may fear retaliation from the abuser for reporting their abuse, losing contact with a caregiver or a family member, or being put into a long-term care facility against their will (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Grant & Benedet, 2016; Groh & Linden, 2012; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). Lastly, those with mental impairments or physical limitations may simply not be able to ask for help due to their conditions (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013; Burgess et al., 2008; Grant & Benedet, 2016; Groh & Linden, 2012; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). It is estimated that the actual percentage of older adults abused each year within Canada is between 10% and 15%, which suggests that official prevalence data is likely an underestimation (Beaulieu et al., 2016). As the aging population rapidly grows and the number of older adults abused each year increases in Canada, so too will the need for prevention practices, police interventions, and appropriate resources for elders facing abuse (WHO, 2020).

INTERVENTIONS RELATED TO ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Screening tools for elder abuse and neglect in a variety of professional settings are increasingly available and undergoing evaluation research. Equally important is the development of partnerships or programs to support effective interventions when elder abuse or neglect is identified. The following section reviews examples of these tools and the initiatives that have been put into practice to prevent and effectively respond to elder abuse and neglect.

Police Practices

Law enforcement officers are involved in countering the mistreatment of older adults in a variety of ways. In terms of elder abuse, police are responsible for prevention, such as carrying out awareness activities with older adults and the public about what elder abuse is and the role of the police in addressing and responding to incidents of abuse, detecting abuse, providing frontline interventions, conducting investigations, and assisting victims with information updates and connecting them to appropriate services (Beaulieu et al., 2016). Ideally, police officers work collaboratively with each other and with community organizations to prevent and respond to instances of elder abuse. For example, **patrol officers and investigators should work together once a case of abuse is detected to ensure that the victim is safe and that the abuser no longer has access or contact with the victim** (Beaulieu et al., 2016). Additionally, police officers work with community organizations to prevent elder abuse and to follow-up on abuse cases (Beaulieu et al., 2016).

The role of law enforcement is extremely important because they are uniquely positioned to detect and respond to elder abuse. However, they may fail to act due to a lack of knowledge about the abuse or an older adult's unwillingness to report their abuse. There is some limited research indicating that officers reported substantial gaps in their knowledge and training related to the investigation and reporting of elder abuse (Tapp et al., 2015). Having a gap in knowledge decreases an officer's ability to discover, assess, and respond to elder abuse. Furthermore, an officer's lack of knowledge may leave an older adult with limited options and may result in their hesitation to report their abuse (Kurkurina et al., 2018). As mentioned above, in addition to possibly not being able to report abuse due to physical and mental limitations, victims may not want to see the abuser punished because their abuser may be a family member or a designated caregiver (Kurkurina et al., 2018). As mentioned above, older adults may be more hesitant to report abuse to the police when it is perpetrated by a family member out of fear of being placed in a long-term care facility against their wishes or losing caregiver support entirely (Kurkurina et al., 2018). Furthermore, reporting to the police may be more difficult in rural or remote communities due to a lack of services, feelings of police distrust, shame, concern about protecting the family's reputation, and the increased likelihood of having ongoing contact with abusers in the community (Warren & Blundell, 2019).

Open-source material does not provide sufficient details on how the police are trained to investigate elder abuse in Canada. The province of Alberta released a 2016 police guide for elder abuse investigation meant for the RCMP, municipal police agencies, and First Nations police services in Alberta (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). The guide outlined best practices regarding elder abuse investigations to assist police services in developing policy, procedures, and training (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). In addition, although not official police guidelines, both Vancouver Coastal Health and Seniors First BC released their own reference guides for all frontline workers that covered both general and specific signs of elder abuse and best practices when interacting with suspected elder abuse victims (Seniors First BC, 2020, VCH, n.d.). However, there is no apparent research on the efficacy of this training and education, or on how police officers received and evaluated the utility of this information and the extent to which it affected how they conducted their investigations.

Because elder abuse is so complicated, **proper training for law enforcement is necessary to detect and investigate the phenomenon.** The Vancouver Coastal Health highlighted that a potential victim may have injuries that do not match the explanation given by the patient or that the potential victim may present with repeated "accidental injuries" (VCH, n.d.). Some older adults may appear isolated, scared, depressed, and stressed (VCH, n.d.). Additionally, older adults may miss appointments, be unable to follow through on a treatment plan or medical care or fail to seek medical care in a timely manner (VCH, n.d.). In addition to these general indicators, the general guidelines provided specific indicators pertaining to each of the five forms of abuse (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016; VCH, n.d.).³

³ A list of indicators is provided in Appendix A of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General (2016) document, available here - <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/6c35ec93-824e-4770-8fd1-91f44d2c229e/resource/55675cdc-4e8b-4367-9a24-a5d2e9f6da6f/download/2016-ea-police-guidelines-final-april-2016.pdf>.

As of the time of this report, there does not appear to be a single widely used instrument for law enforcement to detect elder abuse. However, law enforcement may be able to use an adapted version of the Elder Abuse Suspicion Index (EASI) with some success (Kurkurina et al., 2018). The EASI was initially developed and validated for family physicians based in Connecticut and consists of six questions. The tool is comprehensive, quick, and easy to administer. The tool received positive feedback from physicians who used it in their practice, and the instrument was recommended for use among law enforcement (Kurkurina et al., 2018; Yaffe et al., 2008). Kurkurina et al. (2008) redeveloped the tool into the Elder Abuse Suspicion Index and Needs Assessment for Law Enforcement Officers (EASI-Leo). In the United States, in one study with the target population, this revised instrument was deemed to have the potential to provide an appropriate and easy detection tool for law enforcement officers to use in cases of suspected elder abuse (Kurkurina et al., 2018). The EASI-Leo consists of seven questions that also allows for officer feedback through the separation of multipart questions, inclusion of checkboxes, and the addition of clear instructions for how to administer the instrument and assess the information. The first question gauges potential vulnerability by screening whether the elderly person is dependent upon anyone to provide for their basic needs. An answer of “yes” to one or more of the subsequent five questions indicates suspicion of elder abuse (Kurkurina et al., 2018). These questions touch on the general framework of elder abuse and neglect. The first of these five questions asks about being denied access to basic needs (*neglect*), the second and third ask about isolation and being made to feel ashamed or threatened by the way someone has spoken to them (*psychological/emotional abuse*), the fourth asks about being forced to sign papers or use their money in ways they did not want to (*financial abuse*), and the fifth asks about being touched in a way they did not want (*sexual abuse*) or in a way that hurt them physically (*physical abuse*). There is also a final question that allows officers to use their own judgement to determine if an elder may be at risk, such as through observations that the elder has bruises, looks malnourished, or is withdrawn or avoiding eye contact (Kurkurina et al., 2018). An additional section of questions prompts the officer to assess for victim needs and vulnerabilities, such as by asking if they have someone other than their caregiver who they can talk to, if they feel safe in their home, what other services they might need, and their ability to contact these services (Kurkurina et al., 2018).

Kurkurina et al. (2018) concluded that this tool could easily be adapted to other jurisdictions. However, their study only discussed the process of designing the adapted tool for law enforcement and research on its use in the field does not yet appear to be available. Another version of this tool – the Australian Elder Abuse Screening Instrument⁴ (AuSI) has been studied, although not in a law enforcement context. The AuSI was developed through a collaborative approach because of research identifying that currently existing tools were not suitable for use in their current settings (with primary care, hospital staff, or residential care workers) (Brijnath et al., 2020). Through a collaborative process (see Gahan et al., 2019), the AuSI was co-designed with the input of police, health, care providers, community, and family mediation and legal services representatives and

⁴ A copy of the AuSI is available here <https://www.nari.net.au/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=b793ff77-d3ff-4440-91df-bd883a1ba86d>

piloted with a sample of frontline health care workers in an Australian hospital setting (Brijnath et al., 2022).

The initial pilot test of the AuSI with 32 ‘health, aged care, and legal services’ showed that, while the AuSI was perceived as easy to use, helpful, and improved the confidence of those with little experience in elder abuse in identifying potential victims of elder abuse, it did not appear to affect the rate at which elder abuse was detected (Brijnath et al., 2022). However, this may be due to already high levels of awareness of elder abuse/neglect in the pilot population. Participants did feel that the tool enhanced their ability to screen for less overt forms of abuse, such as financial and psychological abuse. The use of the AuSI also appeared to result in a greater variety of referrals being made in elder abuse/neglect cases, suggesting that its use may increase multidisciplinary responses. The participants felt that the tool streamlined and standardized their assessment process that before being conducted with the AuSI was reportedly lengthy, unstructured, and involved multiple meetings with the elder. However, for some of those who had already received more training in this area or who routinely screened for elder abuse/neglect as part of their practice (e.g., social workers), the tool was perceived as less helpful and more restrictive than their typical approach of engaging in conversations around potential abuse or neglect (Brijnath et al., 2022). Still, in a policing setting, where there is very little training likely available on this subject, **tools like the AuSI may be of great value in supporting or guiding the initial screening of a potential elder victim.**

One challenge with the use of screening tools like the EASI and its various adaptations is that the use of this tool assumes that the elder in question has the cognitive capacity to understand the nature and risk association with their current situation, something that police officers may not be trained to assess. Capacity refers to an individual’s ability to make decisions that may have legal or other consequences; however, legal definitions vary across provinces and territories (Canadian Centre for Elder Law, 2011). In general, a capable adult must be able to understand information and appreciate the consequences of their decisions (Canadian Centre for Elder Law, 2011). It has been recommended that **if a victim of elder abuse appears to be confused, repetitive, or unable to answer general questions, the responding officer should administer a cognitive impairment test** (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). However, there should not be an automatic assumption that confusion is cognitive impairment (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). Older adults may be confused for several reasons, including physical illness, such as Urinary Tract Infections (UTI’s) or dehydration, the side-effects from medications, over or under medicating, stress, and depression (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). Thus, assessments of cognitive impairment must be comprehensive. For example, an officer may use the ABC tool that assesses multiple facets of an older adult’s interaction with police. In effect, **it is important for police officers to assess the older adult’s affect, behaviour, and cognition during police interviews to determine if further cognitive assessments are needed** (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016).

A successful training program would teach police officers how to detect and investigate elder abuse and would make police officers aware of the tools and resources available to them. Training should provide an overall understanding of the important role that frontline emergency responders play in preventing abuse and the benefits of properly investigating and assessing the presence of elder abuse (Gironde et al., 2010). Based on the research, it is recommended that **all elder abuse**

programs be created as modules that can be integrated into pre-existing training and courses currently undertaken by police officers (Gironda et al., 2010). By integrating modules on elder abuse, the content of the modules can be easily updated when new research is published or when jurisdictional-specific issues or trends emerge with minimal effects on the overall curriculum (Gironda et al., 2010). According to Ejaz et al. (2017), training course content should cover both elder abuse and abuse of adults with disabilities, the types of abuse, risk factors, screening tools, and reporting protocols. In addition, special attention should be taken to ensure training is standardized, culturally sensitive, and trauma informed (Gironda et al., 2010). Lastly, opportunities to test participant knowledge and provide feedback should be included to allow administrators to further refine and tailor the program to departmental or detachment needs (Ejaz et al., 2017).

In addition to institutionalizing training and education on elder abuse for all police officers, multidisciplinary teams are recommended, as they provide the combined expertise of social workers, lawyers, physicians, police officers, and protective services that can raise awareness and offer jurisdictional-specific education on elder abuse (Alon & Berg-Warman, 2014; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). Police organizations may choose to partner with other fields and disciplines through community organizations to collaborate during investigations, provide support to older adults, and to create training programs (Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). By having a multidisciplinary approach, teams can meet the multiple needs of older adults experiencing abuse (Alon & Berg-Warman, 2014). For example, the Vancouver Police Department's domestic violence, criminal harassment, and elder abuse unit has developed the Safety and Awareness for Elders (S.A.F.E.) project.

The S.A.F.E. project is an intervention program that involves collaboration between local law enforcement and community-based elderly service providers. S.A.F.E. is designed to increase awareness and education for seniors about elder abuse, while creating positive, collaborative, and trusting relationships between the community and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) (BC CREA, 2017). The VPD partnered with several organizations, such as Family Services of Greater Vancouver, Seniors First BC, Vancouver Aboriginal Community Police Centers Society, MOSAIC (Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities), QMUNITY, and Vancouver Coastal Health-ReACT to address elder abuse (BC CREA, 2017). Through these partnerships, diverse communities that demonstrate a higher-than-average risk of abuse are provided targeted support (BC CREA, 2017). Furthermore, the resources, training, and programming are provided in multiple languages and through different modes of dissemination (BC CREA, 2017). In addition to a webpage dedicated to elder abuse prevention, community events include presentations to share information about elder abuse resources to local organizations and older adults (BC CREA, 2017). S.A.F.E. wallet cards that provide contact numbers for assistance are also available in several languages (BC CREA, 2017). The project also created a poster campaign emphasizing the message "Be Safe - Be Strong" that has been displayed at highly visible SkyTrain stations and bus shelters around Vancouver (BC CREA, 2017). There does not appear to be a formal evaluation of the project, but the [BC CREA website](#) identified the following outcomes:

- “Increased:
 - Participation by seniors and organizations in programs and initiatives hosted by VPD about elder abuse prevention.
 - Understanding by victims and potential victims of the dynamics surrounding elder abuse.
 - Knowledge and awareness by the general public of elder abuse, what it constitutes, and how to respond.
 - Reporting to VPD about actions of abuse that constitute crimes (financial, fraud, theft etc.; assault, sexual assault; neglect, not providing the necessities of life; assistance requested; disturbance; domestic assault; verbal assault; fear for life).
 - Understanding about the level and types of abuse occurring.
 - Requests for resources and strategies to deal with abuse.
 - Number of case files on elder abuse.”

However, information on how this data was collected or over what period of time was not provided. The BC CREA site concluded that the S.A.F.E. program has now been integrated permanently into the VPD’s Domestic Violence, Criminal Harassment, and Elder Abuse Unit, and the Unit will provide education and resources related to the program.

Other Agencies Focused on Elder Abuse and Neglect

In addition to the police, there are community and government agencies involved in preventing, investigating, and responding to allegations of elder abuse and neglect in Canada. The Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder abuse (CNPEA) is one of Canada’s most prominent resources on elder abuse. Their mission is to work at the local, regional, provincial/territorial, and national levels to connect people and organizations, foster the exchange of reliable information, and advance program and policy developments on issues related to the prevention of elder abuse (CNPEA, 2017). The organization has created a national knowledge sharing hub through a user-friendly website allowing for interactive ways to connect and collaborate with researchers, older adults, community members, and other stakeholders (CNPEA, 2017).

In British Columbia, designated agencies and victim services provide services to elders and their communities for those experiencing abuse or neglect. Designated agencies, such as regional health authorities, are legally mandated to investigate reports of abuse and neglect of adults (Canadian Centre for Elder Law, 2011; Seniors First BC, 2020). They work in partnership with the police as they report and share any information they collect about suspected criminal offences against older adults (Seniors First BC, 2020). Furthermore, these agencies and services liaise with community health workers, human services workers, and community response networks to effectively address the complex nature of elder abuse (Seniors First BC, 2020). In addition to the standard supports available to police, such as victim service workers and VictimLink BC, the available programs in British Columbia that police may be able to partner with to provide support to elder victims of abuse or neglect include the BC Association of Community Response Networks, Seniors First BC (formerly the BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support), the Public Guardian and Trustee, and other designated agencies (Cudmore, 2014).

[Community Response Networks](#) (CRNs) are composed of a wide variety of agency representatives who collaborate to provide a coordinated system of prevention and response to support elder victims. CRNs exist in numerous municipalities across British Columbia⁵; however, while police may hold a seat at these networks, it is unclear how common this is or what role they typically play on a CRN. Ongoing evaluations of the CRN model indicated that, as of 2020, there were 81 active CRNs in British Columbia delivering services to 233 different communities. A yearly survey is conducted with CRN members across BC. In the 2020 evaluation, survey responses were collected from 345 participants (28 per cent response rate) who, on average, had been involved in their CRN for approximately 3.5 years. Participants of the CRNs perceived these networks as informal cooperative partnerships that operated transparently. On average, they appeared to work with approximately three individuals or community groups when problem solving. Of note, in approximately 10% of the groups formed to address a client's needs involved the police. Nearly three-quarters (70 per cent) of CRN members surveyed reported that they had "seen or heard about a positive impact on the community as a result of the CRN", though they had faced some challenges with networking and outreach over the course of the pandemic (Emotus Operandi, Inc, 2021, p. 3). It was also unclear what these positive impacts were. While nearly half (44.6 per cent) of CRN participants felt that their CRN had started to act to either prevent or address adult abuse, one-fifth (19.7 per cent) identified that their CRN was still in the early planning stages, while another one-fifth (20.7 per cent) reported that their CRN had not engaged in any coordinated response to date. The final 15% of respondents felt that their CRN had developed an effective model to prevent or respond to abuse of vulnerable adults. Further, the CRN participants did not appear to meet on a regular basis, with more than half reporting that they had attended one or no meetings in 2020 (Emotus Operandi, 2021).

Another resource that police may be able to use to support elders who experience abuse or neglect is [Seniors First BC](#), whose mandate is to protect the legal rights of elders, increase access to justice for elders, inform the public about elder abuse, and provide supporting program to elders who have been abused. This non-profit organization operates an Elder Law clinic, provides educational resources and information to the public and service providers, and they also operate the Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) where elders or those concerned for their safety can speak to someone about their concerns and can be connected to appropriate resources. Seniors First BC provides education and workshops for professionals who may directly or indirectly work with elders. For example, some of the workshop topics that may be relevant to policing concern Powers of Attorney, frauds and scams, and elder abuse more broadly. Other areas of education offered through Seniors First BC include the ethical challenges with supporting elders who may be being abused or neglected, assessing their legal and cognitive capacity, and laws, policies, and practices related to working with victimized elders, including the *Adult Guardianship Act*.⁶ Seniors First BC also operates a [Victim Services Program](#) for adults 50 years of age and older who have experienced

⁵ A directory of CRNs actively operating in British Columbia is available here <https://bccrns.ca/resources/crn-directory>

⁶ A list of resource areas for professionals is available here <https://seniorsfirstbc.ca/education-outreach/> and here <https://seniorsfirstbc.ca/for-professionals/>.

or witnessed elder abuse. This program, which primarily offers emotional support, operates autonomously from the police and, therefore, does not require that a police file to have been opened to receive services.

Among other vulnerable groups, the Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT) provides support to elders who may have impaired decision making due to cognitive issues or other related challenges. The [PGT website](#) has a referral form where anyone who has concerns about a vulnerable adult that may be experiencing abuse, neglect, or self-neglect can make a confidential report. The PGT may provide advice or initiate an investigation and may act on the vulnerable adult's behalf if they are unable to do so themselves. More specifically, regional consultants for the PGT may:

- “Consult on complex abuse/neglect situations where there are concerns about a substitute decision maker's actions or where a substitute decision maker may be needed.
- Investigate actions of trustees, representatives, or attorneys when the adult may be incapable and there are concerns about financial mismanagement.
- Use protective measures like temporarily restricting access to bank accounts or preventing property transfers during an investigation.
- Get an accounting of how the adult's funds are being spent.
- Collaborate with designated agencies to address other forms of abuse that may be co-occurring with the alleged financial mismanagement.” (Cudmore, 2014, pp. 18-19).

In addition to the PGT, confidential reports about suspected abuse or neglect can also be made to other designated agencies, including Community Living BC (when the elder has a developmental disability), to Providence Health Care, or to any of the five regional health authorities in British Columbia. If the designated agency determines it is necessary, a police file may be opened; however, this is not always the case, for example, if the designated agency is able to provide protection to the elder through other means and supports (Public Guardian and Trustee, n.d.).

An example of a local health authority working as a designated agency is Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) that created the ReACT program. Adapted for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, this program aims to provide education, resources, and a response program open to professionals and older adults (VCH, n.d.). Like the PGT, some of the main functions of the program are to receive reports of abuse, provide consultations, and coordinate responses for abused and neglected adults who are unable to seek support on their own (VCH, n.d.). In terms of training frontline care workers, VCH aims to educate and assist workers in their abilities to recognize abuse, know how to report suspected cases, and how to investigate and respond to reported cases (VCH, n.d.). When it comes to elder abuse, VCH believes in four guiding principles. First, they believe in self-determination and choice, meaning that all adults are entitled to live in a way they wish, as long as they do not harm others and are capable of making their own decisions (VCH, n.d.). Second, VCH believes that when an adult is unable to care for themselves, they should receive the most effective, but least restrictive and intrusive, form of support (VCH, n.d.). Third, VCH believe that all adults are presumed capable of making their own decisions until the contrary is proven through an assessment (VCH, n.d.). Finally, VCH believe that a court or any option that removes an adult's right to make decisions should be considered as a last resort (VCH, n.d.).

While keeping these guiding principles in mind, VCH has several responsibilities to older adults through the ReACT program. Due to being a designated service, they must investigate all instances of suspected or reported abuse, neglect, and self-neglect of vulnerable adults that VCH becomes aware of (VCH, n.d.). After examining a report of elder abuse or neglect, VCH must determine if the older adult needs support and assistance. Coordinators are encouraged to consult with the older adult as much as possible to select the most appropriate forms assistance and support (VCH, n.d.). If there are crimes to report, and the older adult in question is unable to seek support from the police, the agency must report the crimes committed against vulnerable adults to the authorities (VCH, n.d.). Finally, they must keep the identity of the person who made the report confidential (VCH, n.d.).

Given that elder abuse is a complex issue, there are many circumstances where ReACT program staff will work closely and collaboratively with the police (VCH, n.d.). Program staff are mandated to report to the police any known or suspected abuse against vulnerable older adults and are expected to continually provide information pertaining to the case (VCH, n.d.). This allows police, who are responsible for criminal investigations, to determine if a crime has been committed. In addition, the police may provide support to staff (VCH, n.d.). Moreover, the presence of the police may be requested to attend situations where there is a risk of safety of staff or others (VCH, n.d.). Examples of police involvement include attending emergencies where immediate protection from serious harm or loss is needed, attending with staff when executing an *Access Order* or *Justice of the Peace Warrant*, consulting about high-risk situations, and collecting evidence to support prosecution (VCH, n.d.). The authors of this report were unable to locate any independent evaluations of the ReACT program have been conducted.

Another avenue of support for older adults experiencing elder abuse is through victim services. Composed of both police and community-based workers, victim services provide information, practical assistance, and emotional support to victims of crime both before and after a police report is made (Seniors First BC, 2020). Victim services can be police-based or community-based. Police-based victim services are usually provided following a victim's first contact with the police and provide information, support, assistance, referral, and court orientation to victims of crime (Officer of the Federal Ombudsman for Victim of Crime, n.d.). Community-based victim services provide direct services to victims and receive funding either in whole or in part from the provincial and/or federal government responsible for criminal justice matters (Officer of the Federal Ombudsman for Victim of Crime, n.d.). These services offer emotional support, practical assistance, information, court orientation, and referrals (Officer of the Federal Ombudsman for Victim of Crime, n.d.). A few examples of victim services are those found in police stations and Seniors First BC victim services. The support a victim receives is tailored to their needs and often requires the collaboration of multiple organizations. Victim services routinely work with advocates, transition houses, peer counsellors, community centers, faith groups, and non-profit services that may be contacted to provide support to older adults who are being or have been abused or neglected (Seniors First BC, 2020).

As older women are considered more likely than men to experience elder abuse, gendered trauma responses are necessary to meet the unique needs of older women (Straka & Montminy, 2006; Walsh et al., 2007). Atira Women's Resource Society is an example of a victim service accessible to

older women in British Columbia. Atira is dedicated to supporting women and children affected by violence by offering safe and supportive housing, education, and advocacy aimed to end all forms of gendered violence (Atira Women's Resource Society, 2019). For older women, they provide a specialized outreach program and transition homes to connect and support those fleeing any form of abuse (Abbott et al., 2015). One way that Atira supports older women is by doing outreach and sharing resources with the community. This destigmatizes being a victim of abuse while providing women with the knowledge of what is considered abuse, the range of resources available to them, and what steps to take if they or someone they know are in harm. The outreach program is tailored to reach older women by forming partnerships with places older women may regularly visit and allowing women to receive information easily and without putting them in potential harm if they are in contact with their abuser (Abbott et al., 2015). Information and resources about elder abuse are shared in a variety of places, such as doctor's offices, public libraries, banks, lawyers' offices, faith institutions, immigrant organizations, senior homes, senior centres, police offices, and other government agencies (Abbott et al., 2015). For women who are not yet ready or unable to leave their homes due to disabilities or an abuser being present, the outreach program provides in-home visits at requested times to provide information on elder abuse and other support and resources (Abbott et al., 2015).

In addition to their outreach program, Atira has created several transition homes to help elder women escape abuse. In 2004, Atira opened Canada's first specialized transition house specifically for women aged 55 years old and older (Atira Women's Resource Society, 2019). Ama house is a four-bedroom house in a residential neighbourhood staffed 24 hours per day (James et al., 2015). Older women are allowed to stay anywhere from 30 to 180 days, but the typical length of stay is six months (Atira Women's Resource Society, 2019; James et al., 2015). However, if needed, older women may stay longer to provide sufficient time to find safe, appropriate, and affordable housing (James et al., 2015). During their stay, residents are offered a range of programming, such as advocacy, one to one support, and referrals to other services and programs (Atira Women's Resource Society, 2019). These resources have been carefully created and adapted to address the complex health needs of older women (Abbott et al., 2015; Atira Women's Resource Society, 2019). Much like in the ReACT program, Atira staff and clients may work collaboratively with police to ensure the safety of their staff and female seniors in their care (Abbott et al., 2015). Evaluations of Ama house suggested that, due to its ability to accommodate older women and offer them physical, medical, and mental support, they have made a positive difference for older women fleeing violence (Abbott et al., 2015).

PROMISING PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING AND RESPONDING TO ELDER ABUSE

Despite the increasing attention to elder abuse, the empirical data on prevention and intervention models and programs to guide professionals remains limited. This may be because elder abuse is underreported and under researched resulting in a lack of qualitative and quantitative evaluations (Beaulieu et al., 2016). More research is required on all facets of elder abuse, including the effectiveness of community and governmental interventions. Additionally, there is a need for increased collaboration and sharing of knowledge between stakeholders, as this is necessary for professionals to prevent, detect, and respond to elder abuse. Based on the available literature,

practices in addressing elder abuse should be senior centered. Older adults have needs that may differ from those of other age groups, such as different physical and mental abilities, fears, values, assets, and literacy levels (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). All resources should be accessible in the primary language of the older adult and appropriate based on the older adult's cognitive ability (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Programs should also consider cultural diversity by being culturally sensitive to an older adult's values and beliefs (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013). Further, all programs should be trauma informed to provide for the safety, empowerment, and healing to older adult's facing abuse (BC Ministry of Public Safety, 2013).

The practice of educating older adults and professionals is necessary to address elder abuse. Educating older adults provides the opportunity for seniors to take the lead in protecting themselves and allows those who have been abused to access necessary and available resources and support. Although there is a lack of evaluations demonstrating their success, common approaches in educating seniors about abuse is through the creation of awareness campaigns and community outreach programs. In addition to educating older adults, professionals must also be continually educated on elder abuse and the most effective ways to intervene. Frontline emergency responders should have an overall understanding of the important role that they play in preventing and reporting elder abuse (Gironda et al., 2010). Training and educational programs should focus on understanding elder abuse in general, while highlighting specific issues, such as domestic violence and poly-victimization (Ejaz et al., 2017). Additional knowledge on the current prevalence of abuse, reasons why abuse is under-reported, and common characteristics of victims and perpetrators is also necessary (Ejaz et al., 2017). Supplementary components of training should focus on screening for elder abuse and issues related to an older adult's competence and capacity (Alon & Berg-Warman, 2014; Ejaz et al., 2017; Gironda et al., 2010). Lastly, programs should highlight specific reporting protocols found in the region of the program since this can be province or territory specific (Ejaz et al., 2017).

According to the research literature, the creation and usage of multidisciplinary teams is recommended to address elder abuse more effectively and efficiently. Multidisciplinary teams are commonly used as a part of the prevention and response to elder abuse. Teams include social workers, lawyers, physicians, police, and protective services workers (Alon & Berg-Warman, 2014; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). By working together, the strength of each agency can complement each other while using their expertise to raise awareness, provide the necessary education, and contribute to addressing individual cases of elder abuse (Alon & Berg-Warman, 2014; Justice and Solicitor General, 2016). Together, agencies can ensure that victims do not fall through the cracks while addressing a wide range of needs, and to ensure that victims have awareness of and access to coordinated services. Furthermore, agencies can provide benefits to other team members and the community through the exposure to different agencies, information, and the strengthening of bonds between families, communities, and organizations.

Current Study

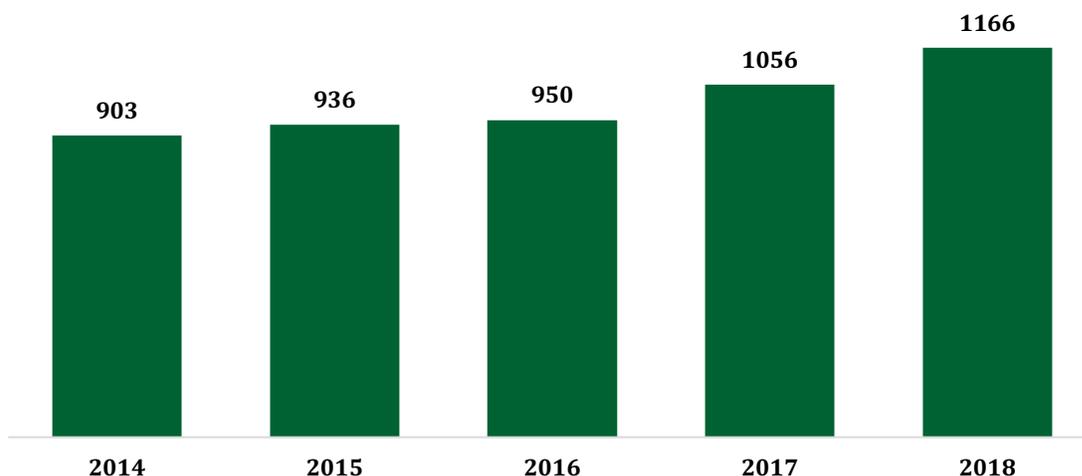
While there are agencies designated across British Columbia to receive and investigate reports about elder abuse and neglect, physical, sexual, psychological/emotional, financial abuse, and

neglect may still necessitate a police response and may be reported to the police directly at the outset, as opposed to being reported through a designated agency. It is important to understand the nature and extent of elder abuse and neglect files that come to the attention of the police in British Columbia and to assess their knowledge and current practices when conducting investigations of elder abuse and neglect. Given this, the remainder of this report provides the results of the quantitative data analysis conducted using: (i) police-reported violent offences with an elder victim; (ii) police-reported family violence files; and (iii) survey data collected from frontline members and senior members working in 'E' Division RCMP detachments.

Violent Offence Data Analysis

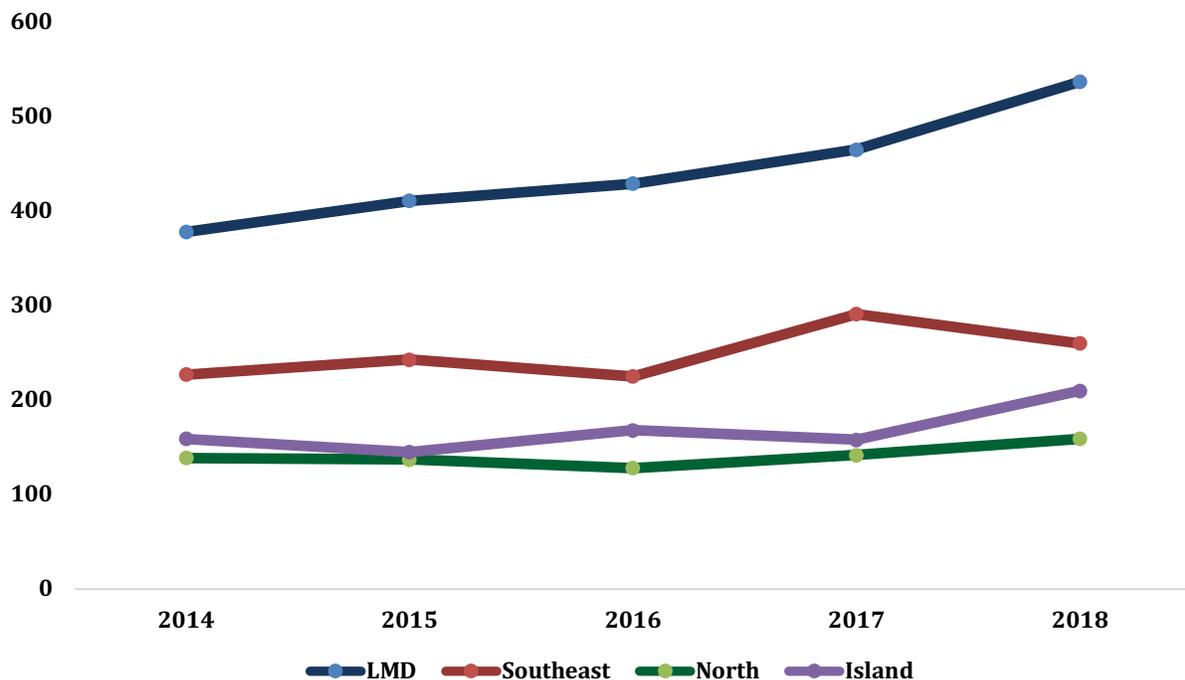
As previously described, one set of analyses was conducted on a database provided by 'E' Division OSB on founded violent offences with at least one victim aged 65 years or older that was reported to the RCMP in British Columbia between 2014 and 2018. This dataset included offences flagged as family violence, as well as non-family violence forms of victimization. The dataset contained a total of 9,986 violent occurrences; however, this included multiple victims per incident. When examining the data for unique occurrences, there were a total of 5,011 unique occurrences of violence reported to the BC RCMP involving at least one elder victim between 2014 and 2018. On average then, approximately 1,002 violent offence files with an elder victim were reported each year. However, when examining the yearly trends, as shown in Figure 1, the number of founded violent offence files involving an elder victim increased year to year over this five-year period. Files increased by 3.7% between 2014 and 2015, 1.5% between 2015 and 2016, 11.2% between 2016 and 2017, and 10.4% between 2017 and 2018. Overall, the number of founded violent offence files involving an elder victim increased by 29% over the five-year period from 2014 to 2018.

FIGURE 1: FOUNDED VIOLENT OFFENCE FILES WITH AN ELDER VICTIM BY YEAR REPORTED TO 'E' DIVISION RCMP



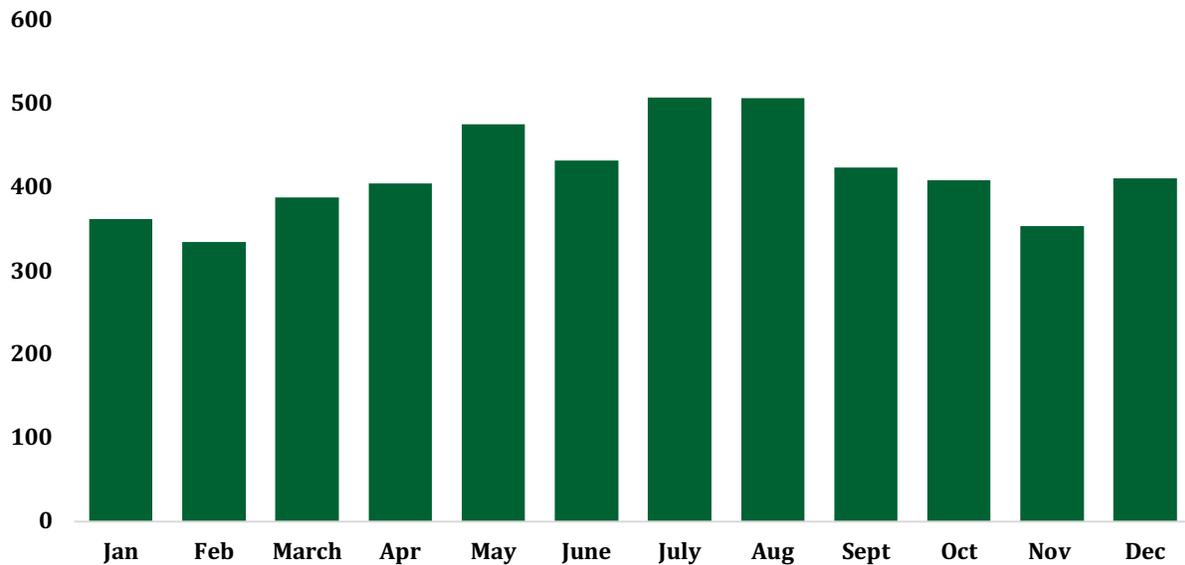
Not surprisingly, given that it contained the largest population base, the policing district with the most violent offence files involving an elder victim was the Lower Mainland District (n = 2,220; 44.3 per cent of files). This was followed by the Southeast District (n = 1,246, 24.9 per cent). Comparatively fewer files were reported for the Island District (n = 840, 16.8 per cent) and North District (n = 705 14.1 per cent). There were slight variations by policing district in the pattern of violent offences involving elder victims. While all four districts experienced an increase in files from 2014 to 2018, these files steadily increased over the five-year period for the Lower Mainland District, whereas the other Districts experienced more fluctuation year to year (see Figure 2). The number of violent offence files involving an elder victim increased slightly (7.1 per cent) between 2014 and 2015 in the Southeast District before dropping again by the same amount in 2016 (-7.4 per cent). The number of files increased by 29.3% between 2016 and 2017 before declining again by 10.7% in 2018. Files from the Island District showed a mirror image pattern to the Southeast District where they initially declined slightly (-8.8 per cent) between 2014 and 2015 before increasing by 15.9% to 2016. Between 2016 and 2017 the number of files dropped slightly (-6.0 per cent) before increasing again by 32.9% in 2018. Files in the North District decreased between 2014 and 2016 (1.4 per cent change between 2014 and 2015, 6.6 per cent change between 2015 and 2016) before rising upwards again, with a 10.9% increase between 2016 and 2017. Like the Island District, the North District also experienced a comparatively large increase of 32.9% between 2017 and 2018. Overall, the Southeast District was the only District to experience a reduction in files between 2017 and 2018. Regardless of the year-to-year change, all four Districts experienced an overall increase in files between 2014 and 2018 (Lower Mainland +42.1 per cent; Southeast +14.5 per cent; North +14.4 per cent; Island +32.1 per cent).

FIGURE 2: CHANGES OVER TIME BY DISTRICT IN VIOLENT OFFENCES WITH AN ELDER VICTIM (2014 - 2018)



Violent offence files involving an elder victim were generally distributed fairly equally over the 12 months of the year (see Figure 3). A slightly larger proportion of violent offence files with an elder victim were reported in July and August (10.1 per cent each) as compared to February (6.7 per cent). The average number of files reported per month for the 'E' Division RCMP was 417.6.

FIGURE 3: VIOLENT OFFENCES INVOLVING AN ELDER VICTIM BY MONTH OF THE YEAR



DEMOGRAPHICS OF ELDER VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Elder victims were, on average, 71.5 years old. They ranged in age from between 65 years old and 114 years old. Most elder victims were male (57.9 per cent); one was unknown while the remainder (42.1 per cent) were female. Ethnicity was missing for 705 cases. Where ethnicity was recorded, most elder victims were Caucasian (77.0 per cent). This was followed by Indigenous (9.1 per cent) followed by South Asian (6.5 per cent) and Asian (4.3 per cent). Another 3% were classified as 'other' (e.g., Black, Hispanic). A significantly smaller proportion of elder female victims were Caucasian (75.4 per cent) as compared to elder male victims (78.2 per cent); however, there were no other statistically significant differences when comparing gender by ethnicity of the elder victim.⁷ On average, elder female victims were statistically significantly older ($x = 72.2$ years) than elder male victims ($x = 70.90$).⁸

⁷ The overall test was not statistically significant, $\chi^2 (4) = 8.59$, $p > .05$ but this one difference was statistically significant at the .05 level.

⁸ $t (4072.24) = -7.34$, $p < .001$ (Equality of Levene's not assumed, $p < .001$; standard deviation for females = 6.81, while for males = 5.77).

Interestingly, there was a statistically significant difference when comparing the gender of the elder victim and the district of the file.⁹ While nearly half of all files derived from the Lower Mainland District, a significantly larger proportion of the files involving a female victim (48.1 per cent) as compared to a male victim (41.5 per cent) were found in the Lower Mainland District. Conversely, a significantly larger proportion of files involving a male victim (17.8 per cent) as opposed to a female victim (15.4 per cent) were found in the Island District.

Most commonly, elder victims of violence were victimized by a stranger (28.4 per cent). One-fifth (19.9 per cent) were victimized by a friend (n = 135), neighbour (n = 314), or casual acquaintance (n = 465). Slightly more than one-in-ten (12.2 per cent) were victimized by a spouse (see Table 1). It was much less common for the abuser to be the child or stepchild (9.2 per cent), parent or stepparent (8.5 per cent), or another member of the victim's immediate family (5.7 per cent). It was interesting to note that the abuser was very rarely an authority of reverse authority figure (1.1 per cent), a roommate (2.2 per cent), or a current or former intimate partner of the victim (3.2 per cent).

TABLE 1: RELATIONSHIP OF ACCUSED TO ELDER VICTIM (N = 4,602)

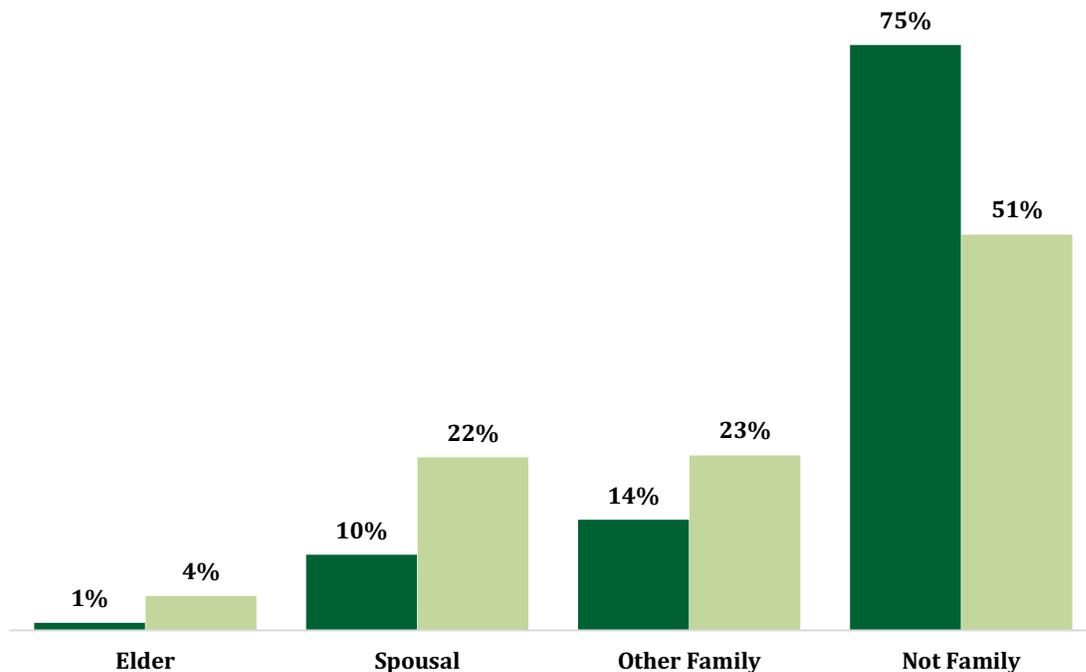
Nature of the Relationship of the Accused to the Elder Victim	Per cent
Stranger	28.4%
Friend, Neighbour, or Casual Acquaintance	19.9%
Spouse	12.2%
Child or Stepchild	9.2%
Parent or Stepparent	8.5%
Other Immediate Family	5.7%
Extended Family Member	4.7%
Business Relationship	4.5%
Current / Former Boyfriend/Girlfriend, of Separated/Divorced	3.2%
Roommate	2.2%
Authority or Reverse Authority Figure	1.1%
Other	0.5%

When comparing gender of the elder victim to the nature of the relationship between the victim and the abuser, all comparisons were statistically significant.¹⁰ As shown in Figure 4, a significantly larger proportion of elder, spousal, and other family violence involved a female victim, whereas a significantly larger proportion of non-family violence involved a male victim.

⁹ $\chi^2 (3) = 22.07, p < .001$

¹⁰ $\chi^2 (3) = 345.92, p < .001$

FIGURE 4: GENDER BY FAMILY VIOLENCE TYPE



Data was available on the location of the offence. An important limitation of this study is that the ‘elder abuse’ flag is only used in the family violence context. Therefore, incidents of elder abuse and neglect that may occur in a care home will not be reflected in the elder abuse data. When considering all violence files involving an elder victim, the most common location was some form of residential property (64 per cent). Just over one-in-ten violent offence files with an elder victim occurred on a street, road, or highway (11.9 per cent). The third most common location was ‘other commercial/corporate places’, which accounted for 6.2% of the data, while 2.5% occurred in ‘other non commercial/corporate places’, which may encompass, but is not limited to, the care home setting. Given this, it was unclear from the violent offence data how much of the elder victimization reported to the police between 2014 and 2018 was being perpetrated in a care home or other similar institutional setting.

FAMILY VIOLENCE CATEGORY

Police can identify family violence files using a family violence flag. Within this flag are a range of possible definitions, including elder abuse, as well as child abuse, a sibling assault, or spousal/partner abuse or assault. The 21 unique family violence flags appearing in this dataset were collapsed into the four broad categories of elder abuse, spousal abuse, other family violence offence, or not family violence. According to ‘E’ Division OSB, the Family Violence-Elder Abuse flag is only used for “situations occurring within the context of familial or domestic type environments” with an “individual 65 years of age or older”. Moreover, abuse is broadly defined to include neglect. More specifically, police are instructed to use this code in situations of “mistreatment or neglect of an individual by a parent, child, spouse, guardian, or other family member which results in physical,

sexual, emotional and/or psychological harm”. Abuse includes but is not restricted to physical (unreasonable use of physical force), sexual (exploitative sexual contact or behaviour), emotional (treatment resulting in emotional and/or mental harm), and neglect (failure to provide physical and/or emotional care). Therefore, under RCMP policy, the elder abuse designation may be used in files where an elder has been the victim of abuse or neglect that has been perpetrated in a family context.

Of the approximately 5,000 occurrences of violence where there was an elder victim, only 2.4% (n = 120) received the elder abuse flag. Some forms of victimization involving elders in this dataset may not be scored with the ‘elder abuse’ flag as it occurred through a non-familial context (e.g., an elder being victimized by a caregiver in a care home). Alternatively, if the abuse was perpetrated by a spouse, then a spousal abuse code would be more appropriate to designate. Spousal abuse was noted in 15% (n = 749) of the violent occurrences involving an elder victim. Instead, most files involving an elder victim were scored as not family violence (65.0 per cent, n = 3,254). The remaining 17.7% were scored as some other form of family violence. In these files, there may have been an elder victim of violence; however, if there was more than one victim or if no abuse was determined to have occurred, then an alternative code (e.g., abuse other family dispute) may have been more relevant.

Overall, the breakdown of family violence offences did not differ significantly by policing district (Table 2). However, one statistically significant finding was that the North District reported a comparatively higher percentage of elder abuse cases when compared to the Southeast District.¹¹

TABLE 2: BREAKDOWN OF FAMILY VIOLENCE DESIGNATIONS IN FILES INVOLVING AN ELDER VICTIM

	LMD% (n = 2,220)	Southeast (n = 1,245)	North (n = 704)	Island (n = 839)
Elder Abuse	2.5%	1.9%	3.4%	2.0%
Spousal Abuse	14.3%	15.0%	14.6%	16.9%
Other Family Violence	18.0%	16.9%	17.5%	18.0%
Not Family Violence	65.2%	66.1%	64.5%	63.1%

OFFENCE TYPE

Up to four UCR codes can be designated for each file. The most serious UCR codes were collapsed into 12 different categories and analyzed. As shown in Table 3, slightly more than half of the occurrences involved a common assault. This offence code was nearly four times as common as the next category, assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm. Utter threats against a person was the third most common offence. Comparatively speaking, occurrences involving an attempted or

¹¹ The overall test result was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(9) = 8.96, p > .05$; however, when comparing column proportions, the Southeast and North Districts differed from each other at the $p = .05$ level of significance.

completed homicide, a sexual assault, or criminal negligence causing bodily harm or death were relatively rare.

TABLE 3: OFFENCE TYPES INVOLVING ELDER VICTIMS IN BC RCMP JURISDICTIONS 2014-2018

	n	%
Assault – Common	2,740	54.7%
Assault – W/Weapon or CBH	707	14.1%
Utter Threats	646	12.9%
Robbery	330	6.6%
Other	284	5.7%
Criminal Harassment, Harassing Communications	228	4.5%
Sexual Assault, Aggravated Sexual Assault, Sexual Assault w/Weapon or CBH	112	2.2%
Other	88	1.8%
Murder, Attempted Murder, Manslaughter	47	0.9%
Assault – Aggravated	37	0.7%
Extortion	34	0.7%
Forcible Confinement	25	0.5%
Criminal Negligence causing Death or CBH	17	0.3%

There were some statistically significant differences between the policing districts and the proportion of different offences reported over the five-year period.¹² The Island District reported a significantly larger percentage of common assaults as compared to the Lower Mainland and the North Districts. The Southeast District also had a significantly larger percentage of common assault cases than the Lower Mainland District. Although the overall number of cases was small, there was also a statistically significant pattern with aggravated assault files, as this offence was significantly more likely to be reported in the Island District than in the Lower Mainland District. In contrast, the Lower Mainland District reported a larger percentage of criminal harassment or harassing communications files than did the Southeast or Island Districts, and the Lower Mainland District reported a significantly higher percentage of extortion cases compared to the Island District. The Lower Mainland District also reported a statistically significantly larger proportion of homicide files compared to the Southeast District. The Lower Mainland District also differed significantly from the other policing districts in the percentage of robbery files. The North District also experienced a significantly larger proportion of robbery files when compared to the Island District. Compared to all other Districts, the Island District experienced a significantly smaller proportion of utter threats files. To summarize, whereas the Lower Mainland District reported proportionately fewer common assault files than the Island and Southeast Districts, they tended to report a larger proportion of harassment, extortion, homicide, and robbery files.

¹² $\chi^2(33) = 112.22, p < .001$

There were no statistically significant differences in the proportion of offences by policing district when considering assault with a weapon or assault causing bodily harm, forcible confinement, sexual assault, or criminal negligence causing death or bodily harm.

TABLE 4: OFFENCE TYPES INVOLVING ELDER VICTIMS BY POLICE DISTRICT 2014 – 2018 (N = 5,008)

	LMD	Southeast	North	Island
Assault – Common	50.9%	57.2%	54.3%	61.2%
Assault – Aggravated	0.5%	0.8%	0.6%	1.3%
Assault – With a Weapon or Causing Bodily Harm	13.5%	13.1%	16.0%	15.6%
Criminal Harassment, Harassing Communications	5.7%	3.5%	3.8%	3.7%
Extortion	1.0%	0.6%	0.4%	0.1%
Forcible Confinement	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%
Murder, Attempted Murder, Manslaughter	1.3%	0.6%	0.9%	0.7%
Robbery	9.3%	4.7%	5.5%	3.2%
Sexual Assault, Aggravated Sexual Assault, Sexual Assault with a Weapon or Causing Bodily Harm	2.1%	2.4%	2.3%	2.3%
Criminal Negligence causing Death or Bodily Harm	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%
Other	1.9%	1.6%	2.0%	1.3%
Utter Threats	12.7%	14.9%	13.6%	9.6%

Some statistically significant differences were found when examining the distribution of cases involving male versus female victims by offence type.¹³ A significantly larger proportion of files involving male victims were coded as assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (16.7 per cent) compared to the files involving female victims (10.6 per cent). In contrast, a significantly larger proportion of files involving female victims (6.0 per cent) compared to male victim (3.5 per cent) were coded as harassment-related files. A significantly larger proportion of female victims were associated with sexual assault files (4.9 per cent) as compared to male victims (0.3 per cent). While the base rates were low, a significantly lower proportion of female victims were associated with forcible confinement offences (0.8 per cent) as compared to male victims (0.3 per cent). There were no differences in the proportions of male versus female victims in common assault, aggravated assault, extortion, homicide, robbery, criminal negligence, utter threats, or other offences.

There were also some statistically significant differences when comparing the forms of family violence against the offence types.¹⁴ Prior to analyzing this relationship, several offence types (extortion, forcible confinement, criminal negligence) were combined into the other category due to the relative infrequency with which they occurred. A significantly higher proportion of elder abuse files involved common assault when compared to offences not involving family members (see Table 5). Similarly, a significantly higher proportion of spousal abuse files where there was an elder victim involved common assault when compared to other family violence and non-family violence

¹³ $\chi^2(11) = 170.19, p < .001$

¹⁴ $\chi^2(24) = 311.65, p < .001$. Column proportions that differed significantly did so at the $p = .05$ level of significance.

cases with elder victims. A significantly higher proportion of assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm occurred in spousal abuse files as compared to non-family violence; however, this proportion did not differ from the proportion of elder abuse or other family violence files.

A significantly larger proportion of criminal harassment/harassing communications offences occurred in non-family violence files compared to spousal or other family violence files, though not when compared to elder abuse files (see Table 5). However, there was a larger proportion of harassment offences when comparing elder abuse files to spousal abuse files. A significantly higher proportion of robbery offences occurred in the non-family violence files when compared to all other forms of family violence. The proportion of robbery files in elder abuse versus other family abuse did not differ, though both had significantly larger proportions of these files than when compared to spousal abuse. A significantly larger proportion of sexual assault files occurred in the non-family violence files as compared to the spousal or other family violence files. There was no difference when comparing the proportion of non-family violence sexual assault files to the elder abuse sexual assault files, though the proportion of sexual assault files in elder abuse did not differ significantly from the proportion of sexual assault files in spousal or other family violence files. A significantly smaller proportion of utter threats against person files occurred in elder abuse files as compared to non-family violence files. A significantly larger proportion of utter threats against person offences occurred in other family and non-family violence files as compared to spousal abuse files. Finally, the proportion of ‘other’ offences was significantly smaller in spousal abuse files compared to elder abuse or non-family violence files. There were no statistically significant differences in the proportion of aggravated assault or murder/attempted murder/manslaughter offences based on family violence type.

TABLE 5: OFFENCE TYPE BY FAMILY VIOLENCE CATEGORY (N = 5,008)

	Elder Abuse	Spousal Abuse	Other Family Violence	Not Family Violence
Assault – Common	65.0%	68.9%	64.3%	48.4%
Assault – Aggravated	0	0.7%	1.1%	0.7%
Assault – with a Weapon of Causing Bodily Harm	15.8%	16.4%	14.1%	13.5%
Criminal Harassment, Harassing Communications	4.2%	1.3%	3.3%	5.7%
Murder, Attempted Murder, Manslaughter	0	1.1%	0.6%	1.0%
Robbery	1.7%	0	1.1%	9.8%
Sexual Assault, Aggravated Sexual Assault, Sexual Assault with a Weapon or Causing Bodily Harm	1.7%	0.7%	0.3%	3.1%
Utter Threats	7.5%	9.5%	12.8%	13.9%
Other	4.2%	1.5%	2.4%	3.9%

WEAPONS AND INJURIES

The most serious weapon used in the offence was collapsed from 17 initial categories into eight main categories, as shown in Table 6. Regardless of the category of violence, the most common weapon documented was physical force, though the breakdown of weapon type by the category of

violence was statistically significant overall.¹⁵ A significantly larger proportion of elder abuse files involved this most serious weapon type when compared to other family or non-family violence. Compared to all other categories of violence, non-family violence files reported a significantly larger proportion of firearms-related or other weapons. Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences by category of violence when examining the distribution of knife or other cutting weapons. Elder abuse files were significantly less likely than all other violence categories to involve a blunt instrument, whereas spousal assault files were significantly more likely than the other three forms of violence to involve a blunt weapon. Significantly smaller proportions of elder abuse and spousal assault files involved threats when compared to other family or non-family violence. Elder abuse and non-family violence files were significantly more likely than spousal assault files to involve no weapon. Finally, non-family violence was significantly more likely than spousal or other family violence to involve an unknown weapon.

TABLE 6: MOST SERIOUS WEAPON PRESENT (N = 4,985)

	Elder Abuse	Spousal Abuse	Other Family Violence	Not Family Violence
Gun/Firearm	0	1.1%	0.6%	2.6%
Knife/Cutting Instrument	5.0%	4.6%	4.2%	4.6%
Blunt Force/Instrument	1.7%	6.2%	4.1%	4.0%
Physical Force	76.7%	71.9%	70.0%	58.1%
Threat	7.5%	8.2%	12.8%	13.3%
Other	5.0%	6.4%	5.7%	9.7%
No Weapon	4.2%	1.2%	2.3%	6.4%
Unknown	0	0.4%	0.5%	1.3%

Injury data was missing for 896 participants. Of the remaining 4,115 people in the database, just over half (51.3 per cent) sustained an injury. Of those who were injured, nearly all the injuries were classified as minor (94 per cent). In addition, 32 people (0.08 per cent) were killed.

After removing files where the weapon type was unknown, a threat, or where there was no weapon, weapon type was compared to injury outcome (see Table 7).¹⁶ Unexpectedly, the form of weapon least likely to result in an injury was a firearm. One potential explanation is that this may have been used to threaten the victim, but the firearm was not discharged. When examining the weapon most likely to be implicated in a major injury or death, in both cases, this was a firearm. In contrast, the largest proportion of minor injuries were caused by a blunt instrument followed by physical force.

¹⁵ $\chi^2(21) = 343.31, p < .001$

¹⁶ Due to some categories having small raw numbers making the statistical test unreliable, this test was not interpreted with reference to statistical significance.

TABLE 7: WEAPON TYPE BY INJURY

	Firearm (n = 77)	Knife/Cutting (n = 203)	Blunt Instrument (n = 207)	Physical Force (n = 2,914)	Other (n = 390)
No injury (n = 1,711)	62.3%	56.7%	30.4%	45.1%	43.8%
Minor injury (n = 1,929)	19.5%	35.0%	59.9%	52.3%	50.0%
Major injury (n = 125)	10.4%	6.4%	8.2%	2.4%	4.4%
Death (n = 26)	7.8%	2.0%	1.4%	0.2%	1.8%

When comparing injury level by gender, there was a statistically significant pattern.¹⁷ A significantly larger proportion of females (51.9 per cent) when compared to males (46.5 per cent) experienced no injury, whereas a significantly larger proportion of males (49.7 per cent) compared to females (44.2 per cent) experienced a minor injury.

CLEARANCE STATUS

CCJS Status indicates the Statistics Canada clearance codes. There were 17 different code types assigned across the 5,011 unique occurrences. These were collapsed into six more commonly used codes as well as an 'other' category. The most common file outcome where information was available (39 cases were not located) was a charge (43.2 per cent). The next most common status was the file being uncleared (founded not cleared; 27.1 per cent). Less than one-in-five files were left uncleared due to no further action being requested by the victim or complainant (14.7 per cent), or due to departmental discretion (12.5 per cent). Only 1.5% of cases were left uncleared due to insufficient evidence, while 0.2% had charges recommended that were declined by Crown. In total, 0.7% of files were assigned to the 'other' category. These included files cleared via alternative measures (n = 14) files where the accused was less than 12 years old (n = 5), files where the accused or complainant had died (n = 5) or was already in jail (n = 1), or files that were simply unsolved (n = 9).

The file outcomes with less than 100 occurrences were removed, and the main file outcomes were then compared by policing district. There were some statistically significant variations by policing district (See Table 8).¹⁸ A significantly larger proportion of files in the Lower Mainland District were founded not cleared compared to the other three districts. Compared to the North and Island Districts, a larger proportion of Southeast District files were also scored founded not cleared. In contrast, a statistically significantly larger proportion of files in the Southeast, North, and Island Districts were cleared by charge compared to files in the Lower Mainland District. Similarly, a statistically significantly larger proportion of files in the North and Island Districts compared to the Southeast District were cleared by charge. The same patterns were observed with respect to files that were concluded without charge due to no further action being requested by the victim/complainant, with significantly fewer of these occurring in the Lower Mainland District than

¹⁷ $\chi^2(3) = 13.38, p = .004$

¹⁸ $\chi^2(9) = 231.33, p < .001$

the other three policing districts, and a significantly larger proportion occurring in the North and Island Districts compared to the Southeast District. In contrast, a higher proportion of files in the Southeast District were statistically significantly more likely to be cleared by departmental discretion than any of the other three policing districts. The North and Island Districts did not differ from each other on any of these file outcomes.

TABLE 8: TOP 4 CCJS STATUS CODES BY DISTRICT (N = 4,848)

	LMD	Southeast	North	Island
Founded not cleared	37.4%	24.3%	17.6%	16.6%
Charged	40.1%	43.7%	49.9%	51.6%
No further action requested by victim/complainant	11.2%	15.2%	21.1%	19.9%
Cleared by departmental discretion	11.3%	16.7%	11.4%	11.9%

There were significant differences when comparing gender and file outcomes.¹⁹ A larger proportion of files involving elder male victims (29.0 per cent) were scored as founded not cleared compared to files involving elder female victims (24.5 per cent). Conversely, a larger proportion of the files involving an elder female victim (46.3 per cent) resulted in the accused being charged compared to the files involving elder male victims (41.0 per cent).

The next set of analyses examined family violence type against the CCJS status of the file and again, some statistically significant differences were observed.²⁰ . When it came to the proportion of files that were considered as founded not cleared, all four categories of violence differed statistically significantly from each other. The largest proportion of files meeting this designation came from the non-family violence files, whereas spousal assault was the least likely to receive this designation (see Table 9). Similarly, the overall proportion of files receiving a ‘charged’ designation all statistically significantly differed from each other based on the category of violence, with the pattern showing the reverse of the founded not cleared files. There were also statistically significant differences in the proportion of files where no further action was requested by the victim/complainant. Most commonly, this occurred in the ‘other family violence’ files where a significantly larger proportion of files received this designation when compared to all three of the other categories of violence. The proportion of elder files receiving this designation did not differ significantly from the proportion of non-family violence files, but both differed significantly from the proportion of spousal assault files. Compared with all other categories of family violence, a statistically significantly smaller proportion of elder abuse files were cleared using departmental discretion. A significantly smaller proportion of other family violence files than spousal or not family violence files were documented as having insufficient evidence, though this proportion did not differ from the proportion of elder abuse files with this designation. There were no statistically

¹⁹ $\chi^2 (4) = 21.01, p < .001$

²⁰ $\chi^2 (18) = 649.62, p < .001$

significant differences when comparing the proportion of files where charges were recommended but declined by Crown or when files were cleared in some other way.

TABLE 9: VIOLENCE CATEGORY BY CLEARANCE STATUS (N = 4,848)

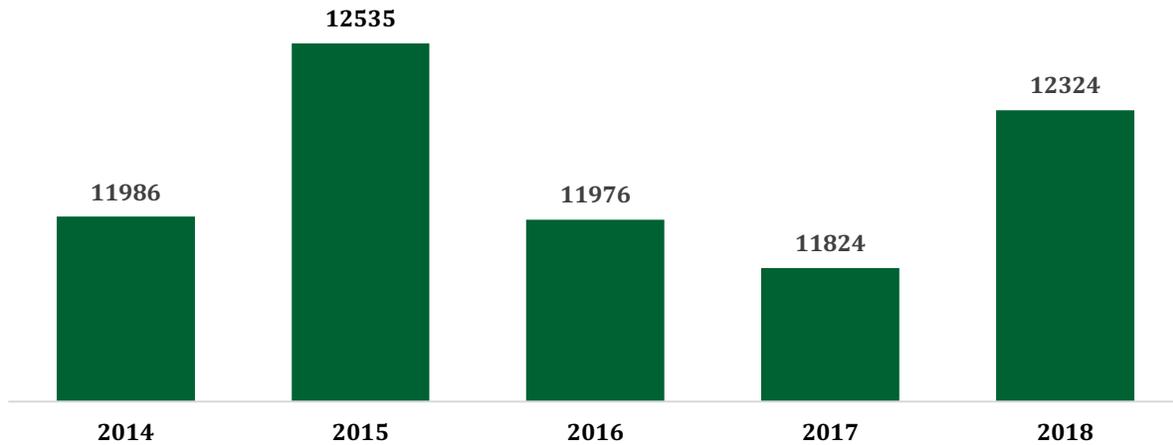
	Elder Abuse	Spousal Abuse	Other Family Violence	Not Family Violence
Founded not cleared	21.7%	6.6%	12.0%	36.2%
Charged	57.5%	72.4%	46.7%	35.1%
No further action requested by victim/complainant	14.2%	5.7%	26.9%	13.5%
Departmental discretion	5.0%	13.2%	13.1%	12.4%
Insufficient evidence	0.8%	1.3%	0.2%	1.9%
Charges not approved by Crown	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Other	0	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%

Family Violence File Analysis

'E' Division OSB provided the authors of this report with a second database containing all founded family violence occurrences reported to 'E' Division RCMP detachments between 2014 and 2018. This included intimate partner violence files, as well as other family violence files, such as elder abuse. In total, there were 60,645 founded family violence files over this five-year period involving 114,921 individuals.²¹ Over the entire five-year period, the rate of family violence files per year remained relatively stable, with an average of 12,129 founded family violence files per year (see Figure 5). The number of files between 2014 and 2015 increased by 4.5%; however, the number of files between 2015 and 2016 dropped by the equivalent amount. There was a further reduction between 2016 and 2017 of -1.3%, before the number of files climbed slightly by 4.2% between 2017 and 2018. Overall, between 2014 and 2018, the number of founded family violence files reported to the RCMP in British Columbia increased by 2.8%. Again, these included family violence files with elder victims and/or perpetrators, as well as family violence files with non-elder victims and/or perpetrators.

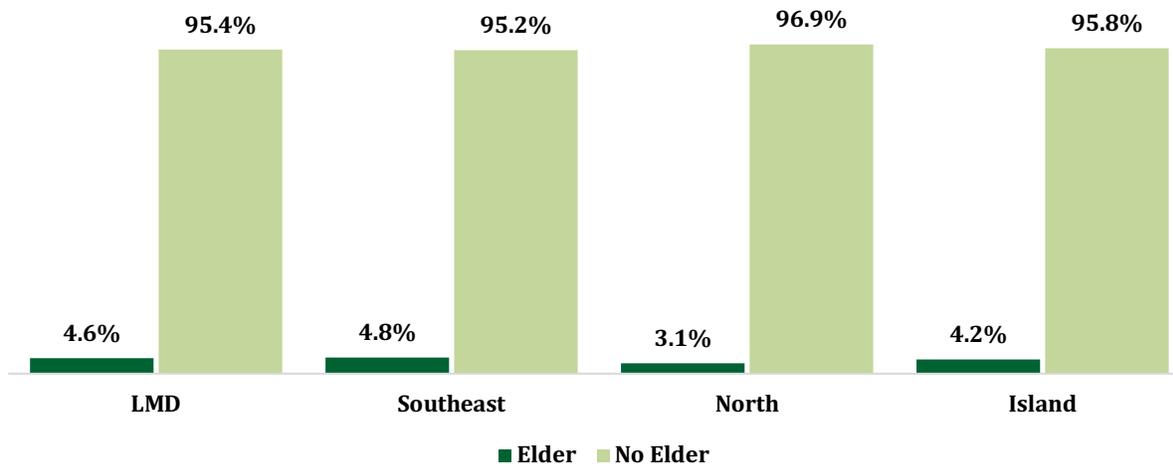
²¹ The dataset contained information on both victims and suspects attached to the same occurrence file.

FIGURE 5: FOUNDED FAMILY VIOLENCE FILES REPORTED TO 'E' DIVISION RCMP BETWEEN 2014 AND 2018



Nearly half of all the family violence files were reported in the Lower Mainland District (40.1 per cent) followed by around one-fifth in each of the Southeast (20.5 per cent), North (20.8 per cent), and Island (18.6 per cent) Districts. Between 3% to 5% of all founded family violence files involved an elder as a victim and/or perpetrator (see Figure 6). The North District recorded statistically significantly fewer family violence files involving an elder compared to all other districts. The Island District recorded significantly fewer family violence files involving an elder compared to the Southeast District, but not when compared to the Lower Mainland District.²²

FIGURE 6: PERCENT OF FOUNDED FAMILY VIOLENCE FILES INVOLVING AT LEAST ONE ELDER (N = 57,537)



²² $\chi^2(3) = 54.251, p < .001$; data on family violence type or district was missing for $n = 3,108$.

The distribution of family violence types between the four main districts is shown in Table 10. Regardless of the district, elder abuse files composed less than half of one percent of all family violence cases recorded in that district. However, there were some statistically significant differences when comparing the family violence files scored as spousal or other family violence by district.²³ Specifically, a larger percentage of spousal violence cases were recorded in the Southeast District when compared to all other districts, whereas the Southeast District recorded a significantly smaller percentage of other family violence cases compared to the other districts. The Island District also recorded a significantly larger percentage of spousal violence cases and smaller percentage of other family violence cases when compared to the Lower Mainland and North Districts. The Lower Mainland and North Districts did not differ from each other in their distribution of family violence types.

TABLE 10: DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE TYPES BY POLICING DISTRICT (N = 60,645)

	LMD	Southeast	North	Island
Elder Abuse	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Spousal	70.4%	74.6%	71.1%	72.8%
Other Family	29.3%	25.1%	28.6%	27.0%

When looking specifically at the files where there was at least one elder involved as a victim, a perpetrator, or both, the distribution of family violence types did not differ significantly between the four main districts. As shown in Table 11, an average of 4.9% of family violence files were coded as elder abuse, while, on average, 46.2% were coded as spousal violence, and 48.9%, on average, were scored as other family violence.

TABLE 11: DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE TYPES INVOLVING AN ELDER BY POLICING DISTRICT (N = 2,467)

	LMD	Southeast	North	Island
Elder Abuse	5.2%	4.2%	6.5%	3.7%
Spousal	44.5%	47.4%	44.2%	48.5%
Other Family	50.3%	48.3%	49.2%	47.8%

The 60,645 files were divided into three main forms of family violence; elder abuse (n = 181; 0.3 per cent), spousal abuse (n = 43,576; 71.9 per cent), and other family violence (n = 16,888; 27.8 per cent). This last category included child abuse, a sibling dispute, or dispute with a parent/guardian. When considering only the file types of spousal and 'other' family violence (i.e., excluding elder abuse files), a significantly larger proportion of the files involving an elder person were considered 'other' family violence (51.7 per cent) compared to the files without an elder person (26.5 per

²³ $\chi^2(6) = 82.02, p < .001$

cent).²⁴ Conversely, a statistically significantly larger percentage of the non-elder files were considered spousal violence (73.5 per cent) than were the elder-involved files (48.3 per cent).

Returning to the full sample, there were nearly 2,500 files involving at least one elder person. On average, these 2,465 files involved just over two individuals (mean = 2.12), ranging from one individual named in the file (n = 235) to 13 individuals (n = 1). Most commonly, there were two individuals named per file (n = 1,860). Elders could be involved in the file only as a victim, only as a suspect with charges recommended or laid, or as both a victim and a suspect. This could occur, for example, if the file involved intimate partner violence with two individuals aged 65 years and older. Most commonly, elders were identified as a victim in a file (55.9 per cent). In just over one-quarter of the files (28.6 per cent), the elder was involved only as some form of suspect/charged entity. In the remaining 15.5% of files, elders were involved as both a victim and a suspect/charged entity. The elder-involved files were separated into a new dataset and analyzed for trends, the results of which are presented in the three subsequent sections.

FAMILY VIOLENCE FILES INVOLVING AN ELDER ONLY AS A VICTIM

There were 1,430 elders involved in 1,378 family violence files only as a victim.²⁵ Files involving elders as the perpetrator or both an elder victim and an elder perpetrator were analyzed separately below. This section provides a description of the files where the only role for the elder was as a victim. In some cases (n = 181 or 13.1 per cent), the elder was the only person attached to the file; more often, perpetrators under the age of 65 were attached to the file. In total, there were between one and 13 entities attached to files where the only role for the elder was as a victim (average = 2.2 entities per file).

The elder victims ranged in age from 65 to 114, with an average age of 71.3 years old. Slightly over half (51.3 per cent) were female, and three-quarters (73.1 per cent) were Caucasian, while just over one-in-ten (12.4 per cent) were Indigenous. The age of the non-elder perpetrators against an elder victim ranged from eight years of age to 64 years of age, with the average being 41.4 years old. Five of the perpetrators (0.4 per cent) were under the age of 12 years old, while another 47 (4 per cent) were youth between 12 and 17 years of age.

Overall, two-thirds (62.4 per cent) of elder victims were involved in 'other family' violence, followed by spousal violence (29.2 per cent), and then elder abuse (8.3 per cent). More specifically, most commonly, these files were labelled as a parent/child assault (23.8 per cent) followed by a spousal/partner assault (23.1 per cent), and then 'other' family assault (17.4 per cent). The most common perpetrator overall was a child or stepchild (24.5 per cent) followed by a parent or stepparent (20.9 per cent), then a spouse (16.8 per cent), or an 'other' immediate family member (14.2 per cent).

²⁴ $\chi^2 (1) = 717.84, p < .001$

²⁵ This is not the equivalent of 1,430 separate files as some files involved more than one elder victim. For example, some of the files involved two elder entities, both of whom were identified as victims.

The most common UCR code was for a common assault (64.3 per cent) followed by assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (15.5 per cent), and utter threats against a person (11.6 per cent). Physical force was the most common weapon used against an elder victim (70.1 per cent) followed distantly by a threat (11.4 per cent). Half (49.8 per cent) of the files where the elder was involved only as a victim ended with a minor injury, while nearly half (46.8 per cent) had no injury documented. In 3.0% of the files, a major injury occurred, and in five files (0.5 per cent) a death was recorded. Overall, 89.3% of the files involving an elder victim were closed. Over half (55.6 per cent) of the files involved the perpetrator being charged, while 19.5% were closed with the victim/complainant requesting no further action. Another 12.7% were scored as founded not cleared, while 10.3% were cleared by departmental discretion.

FAMILY VIOLENCE FILES INVOLVING AN ELDER PERPETRATOR WITH A NON-ELDER VICTIM

There were 714 elders involved in a file only as a suspect/chargeable/charged entity. In other words, in these files, the only role played by an elder was as the perpetrator. In some cases, they were the only entity attached to the file; in other cases, victims under the age of 65 were attached to the file. This section examines the characteristics of these files.

The elder perpetrators in these files ranged in age from 65 to 91 years old with an average age of 70 years old. As with the victim-only files, the most common ethnicity of the perpetrator was Caucasian (68.8 per cent) followed by Indigenous (13.4 per cent). When the elder was only involved in the file as a perpetrator, there were a range of between one and seven different entities involved in the file with an average of 2.1 entities. When looking only at the victims in these files, the ages ranged from 1 to 64 years old; the average age of the non-elder victims was 42.1 years old.

Unlike with the elder-victim only analysis where the most common type of family violence was 'other family', when the elder role in the file was as a perpetrator, the most common type of family violence was spousal (53.5 per cent), followed by other family (46.4 per cent). Only one file was identified as an elder abuse file. In this case, the victim's age was not recorded. When looking more specifically at the family violence codes where an elder was the perpetrator only, 40.8% were described as a spousal/partner assault. The perpetrator was identified as the spouse of the victim in 35.5% of files, and either a former or current dating partner or former marital partner in 14.2% of the files. In 15.3% of the files, the elder perpetrator were identified as the parent or stepparent of the victim, while in another 11.5% the elder perpetrator was identified as an 'other' immediate family member.

Like with the files where the elder was only involved as a victim, the most common UCR code for files where the elder was only involved as a perpetrator was common assault (55.7 per cent). However, a relatively large percentage of these files were scored as some form of sexual assault (15.3 per cent). The third most common file type was utter threats (10.8 per cent).

Like with the elder victim only files, physical force was the most common weapon used by elder perpetrators against a non-elder victim (72.2 per cent). This was distantly followed by a threat (8.9 per cent). Files involving an elder perpetrator against a non-elder victim were equally likely to result in a minor injury (49.2 per cent) as a non-injury (48.1 per cent). In total, 2% (n = 11) of these files involved a major injury, and four files indicated that the victim had died. Overall, 87.4% of the

files where elders were involved only as a perpetrator were closed. Two-thirds (65.5 per cent) involved a charge, while 14.5% were closed through departmental discretion and 14.3% were concluded due to no further action being requested by the victim/complainant.

FAMILY VIOLENCE FILES INVOLVING ELDER VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS

The third set of analyses focused on the files where an elder was involved both as a victim and as a perpetrator (n = 761). Half of the elders in these files were identified as a victim, while the other half were identified as a perpetrator (suspect/chargeable/charged). There were between two and four entities involved in these types of files, with an average of two entities.

Regardless of their specific role in these files, the elders involved in files with both an elder victim and an elder perpetrator were slightly more likely to be male (50.7 per cent), and predominantly Caucasian (78.8 per cent). In these files, only 4.1% were identified as Indigenous. Instead, the second most common ethnicity for files involving both elder victims and perpetrators was South Asian (7.2 per cent) followed by Asian (6.4 per cent).

Nearly all files involving both an elder victim and perpetrator were considered spousal violence cases (91.4 per cent), followed by 'other' family (7.3 per cent). Only five files (1.3 per cent) involved elder abuse. More specifically, 79.1% of the files involving both an elder victim and perpetrator were assigned the Spousal/Partner Assault family violence code. The next most common family violence code was Spousal/Partner Other Offence (7.3 per cent). The relationship of the accused to the victim was overwhelmingly 'spouse' (82.9 per cent). This was followed by a current or former intimate partner relationship (8.9 per cent).

Common assault was the most common UCR code (73.4 per cent) in these files. As with the files involving only an elder victim with a non-elder perpetrator, the next most common UCR was an assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (13.8 per cent) followed by utter threats (8.9 per cent). Again, the most common weapon was physical force (75.9 per cent) followed by a threat (6.8 per cent) or a blunt object/instrument (6.0 per cent). Compared to the elder victim-only and elder perpetrator-only files, a larger percentage of the files involving both an elder victim and elder perpetrator resulted in a minor injury (57.2 per cent) and a smaller percentage resulted in no injury (39.9 per cent). In total, 2% of these files (n = 7) resulted in a major injury, while three files recorded a death. Overall, 92.4% of these files were considered closed. When looking at the file outcomes, two-thirds (68.2 per cent) resulted in the perpetrator being charged, while one-fifth (20.7 per cent) were concluded via departmental discretion. Less than one-in-ten (7.9 per cent) files were concluded as a result of no further action being requested by the victim/complainant.

Overall, the results of the quantitative data analysis indicated that the number of violent offences involving elder victims increased year-by-year between 2014 and 2018, while the rate of family violence files (both involving elders and non-elders) fluctuated with small overall increases over the five-year period. Both data sets revealed that the elder abuse code was infrequently used in these files. Whereas it is likely preferable to assign the spousal offence-related codes when the parties involved in the violence/abuse were current or former spouses, given that this indicated the need for intimate partner violence related policies to be applied, it is plausible that **the elder abuse designation could be used much more frequently, particularly in cases of family violence**

where the elder was a victim of some form of abuse or neglect as perpetrated by a child, grandchild, or other family member. There appeared to be a lack of clarity about when to use this file designation resulting in the reliance on the 'other family violence' code to classify these types of files. To better understand some of the challenges with responding to and investigating elder abuse and neglect files, the quantitative data analysis was supplemented with surveys conducted with frontline police officers in RCMP detachments from across British Columbia. The results from these surveys are discussed in the next section of this report.

Surveys with Frontline Members

Completed online surveys were submitted by 15 frontline members, primarily from the Island District. These surveys were merged with 96 hardcopy surveys that were collected during shift briefings among the participating detachments. There was a total of 111 completed surveys that were submitted and included for analysis, which is a response rate of approximately 11%.

As the survey data was collected anonymously, the participating detachments were not identified. However, the largest number of surveys were submitted from the North District (n = 46; 41.8 per cent), followed by the Southeast (n = 38; 34.6 per cent), and Island (n = 19; 17.3 per cent) Districts. Unfortunately, only seven surveys (6.4 per cent) were submitted from the Lower Mainland District. While not all the 13 detachments that were invited to participate in the study administered the surveys as requested, the researchers were unable to tell how many of the 13 detachments did administer the surveys with their members due to the anonymous way in which the data was collected. Given the substantial underrepresentation of the Lower Mainland District, particularly when considering that they received the largest proportion of files involving elder victims, the analyses were not run at the police district level but rather for the entire sample.

Most of the respondents were male (81 per cent) while just over one-tenth were female (15.2 per cent), and a small portion reported being non-binary, transgender, or two-spirit (3.8 per cent). The average age of the sample was 39.5 (standard deviation = 9), with ages ranging from 22 to 60 years old. The average time spent working as a general duty member of the RCMP was 11.3 years (standard deviation = 7.5), and the number of years worked ranged from one to 35 years.

Participants were given a list of different specialized units, positions, resources, and programs, and asked to identify which, if any, their detachment has. None of the participants reported that their detachment had an elder abuse program. Similarly, hardly any participants reported that their detachment had a dedicated elder abuse and neglect investigator (1.8 per cent), an *Adult Guardianship Act* designate (1.8 per cent), training on elder abuse and neglect (4.6 per cent), or some other type of unit, position, program, or resource for domestic violence or elder abuse and neglect (7.3 per cent). However, the participants did commonly observe having resources related to intimate partner violence investigations. Specifically, three-quarters of participants identified that their detachment had a designated domestic violence unit (78.0 per cent), a Domestic Violence Incidence Report (DVIR) coordinator (74.1 per cent), while half reported having an Interagency Case Assessment Team (ICAT) or Highest Risk Domestic Violence Team (HRDVT) (45.8 per cent), and one-fifth reported having domestic violence watch specialists (18.3 per cent).

SCENARIO ASSESSMENTS

Participants were provided with three brief scenarios, each describing a different form of elder abuse or neglect. After reading the scenario, they were asked to identify how concerned they were that a criminal offence had occurred, what the nature of the criminal offence might be, and then to rate the extent they believed that the current issue required a police response as opposed to a response from another agency. The intention of the scenario questions was twofold. First, to assess the extent to which police detected potential abuse or neglect concerns that may warrant further investigation, and second, to assess whether police believed they were the best resource to use in that scenario.

Scenario 1

In the first scenario, which presented a situation of elder neglect, participants were informed that someone had reported that their 82-year-old father, who was currently living with another family member, frequently appeared to be wearing dirty clothing, often seemed hungry, and did not appear to be taking his medication. As previously noted, neglect is a criminal offence that occurs when one fails to provide the necessities of life, which include food, clothing, and necessary medication. There are two potential criminal offences in the *Criminal Code of Canada* that may apply in this situation. The most relevant category is section 215 that applies when one has a legal duty to provide necessities, such as when a person who, by reason of factors including age, is unable to provide themselves with the necessities of life. Therefore, if the family member who the elder victim is living with has a duty to provide necessities, section 215 would apply. The second potential criminal offence is section 219, criminal negligence. Under section 219, criminal negligence occurs when a person omits to do something that is in their (legal) duty to do that shows wanton or reckless disregard for the lives or safety of others. Given these statutes, officers should be at least slightly, if not very, concerned that a criminal offence has occurred. That said, while police may need to conduct a criminal investigation, there may be other agencies better positioned to provide support and assistance to the victim. Therefore, participants were also asked to what degree this situation required a police response and what other agencies might be better positioned, with the options including a social worker, mental health worker, a health authority, or another agency, to aid the subject.

Overall, slightly more than half (54.1 per cent) of the participants were slightly concerned that a criminal offence had occurred while just under one-third (29.7 per cent) were very concerned. Only 18 participants (16.2 per cent) were not very concerned that a criminal offence had occurred. Therefore, it appeared that, for the most part, participants recognized that this situation presented a potential criminal issue. However, when asked to identify the specific type of offence that may have occurred, a wide range of answers were provided. Participants were intentionally not provided with a list of possible offences to choose from, and the results suggested a lack of familiarity with neglect investigations. Over one-third of participants (38.7 per cent, $n = 43$) did not identify a criminal offence, while another six participants (5.4 per cent) indicated that no criminal offence has occurred, and seven participants (6.3 per cent) either stated that they were not sure or listed off a myriad of possible offences that might apply, including assault, fraud, and mischief. Three additional participants (3.6 per cent) rationalized the scenario further with two participants

concluding that they needed more information, while another participant reported that whether a criminal offence had occurred was dependant on the specific circumstances, such as the living agreement that was in place and the mental or physical capabilities of the subject of complaint.

After removing these 59 responses, the remaining 52 responses in which the participant had identified a criminal offence were analyzed. Within this, the most common answer provided was that the scenario was an example of a violation of section 215, failing to provide the necessities of life. This response was given by just one-third (30.8 per cent, n = 16) of participants. The next most common answer, which was provided by 15 participants (28.8 per cent), was negligence or criminal negligence. Taken more broadly, when considering the 111 officers who responded to this scenario, only slightly more than one-quarter (27.9 per cent, n = 31) correctly identified that this was a situation involving the potential criminal offence of failing to provide the necessities of life or criminal negligence. Another 10 participants identified that this was a situation of neglect referring to it alternatively as neglect, elder neglect, or criminal neglect, but did not identify the specific criminal offence that would apply. Another four participants (7.7 per cent) identified the scenario as the criminal offence as 'abuse'. The remaining participants identified the offence as assault (3.8 per cent), abuse and neglect (3.8 per cent), exploitation (1.9 per cent), fraud (1.9 per cent) or as a mental health related issue (1.9 per cent).

Most participants (72.3 per cent) either strongly or somewhat agreed that this scenario required a police response. Just under one-in-ten neither disagreed or agreed that this required a police response, while just under one-fifth (19.2 per cent) strongly or somewhat disagreed that this scenario required a police response. However, the participants generally felt that other agencies also needed to be involved in the response to this scenario. In total, slightly more than three-quarters (77.9 per cent) of participants felt that the health authority should be involved, 71.6% of participants felt that social workers should be called in, while just over half (55.2 per cent) felt that mental health workers should be involved. One participant specifically stated that the police should be used as a support for these agencies and should not be the primary responding agency.

Scenario 2

The second scenario presented a situation of potential abuse of an elder. In this scenario, the complainant was a neighbour who reported that they could often hear the 75-year-old victim being yelled at by the victim's daughter and son-in-law who she had moved in with eight months prior when the victim's husband had passed away. The neighbour reported that the victim seemed confused lately and talked about no longer having access to the money from the sale of her home. Given this, financial abuse is of primary concern, with psychological abuse as a secondary offence. There are several potential sections of the *Criminal Code* that might apply in this type of scenario. For example, section 380(1) of the *Criminal Code of Canada* pertains to offences of fraud, which include when a person "who, by deceit, falsehood, or other fraudulent means...defrauds the public or any person...of any property, money, or valuable security...". Alternatively, the offence of theft, under section 322(1) may also apply, given that theft is defined as when one "fraudulently and without colour of right takes, or fraudulently and without colour of right converts to his use or to the use of another person..." some form of property. More relevant to elder abuse cases; however, is

section 331 of the *Criminal Code of Canada*, which explains the offence of theft by person holding power of attorney as:

“Every one commits theft who, being entrusted, whether solely or jointly with another person, with a power of attorney for the sale, mortgage, pledge or other disposition of real or personal property, fraudulently sells, mortgages, pledges or otherwise disposes of the property or any part of it, or fraudulently converts the proceeds of a sale, mortgage, pledge or other disposition of the property, or any part of the proceeds, to a purpose other than that for which he was entrusted by the power of attorney.”

Relatedly, section 332(1) identifies misappropriation of money held under direction as another form of theft, where a person who has received money or a power of attorney for the sale of a property does not appropriately apply or pay the money as directed. Given the law and the scenario, responses by participants that alluded to theft or fraud in these contexts were considered ‘correct’. However, as will be discussed below, some participants identified exploitation, which is found under section 279.04(1) of the *Criminal code of Canada*. This does not fit the scenario provided, given that exploitation is defined as causing a person to provide or offer to provide a labour or service that if they did in fact provide, could reasonably be expected to cause the person offering the service a threat to their safety, or a threat to their safety if they refuse to provide the service. Exploitation is more commonly used in sexual offences, such as human trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors.

Overall, two-thirds of participants (61.8 per cent) were slightly concerned that a criminal offence had occurred, while just under one-third (31.8 per cent) were very concerned. Only seven participants (6.4 per cent) were not very concerned. When asked to identify what criminal offence may have occurred, one-third (33.3 per cent, n = 37) did not provide a response, while six participants (5.4 per cent) said that no criminal offence had occurred, five participants (4.5 per cent) were unsure what criminal offence would apply, and one participants (0.9 per cent) said that there was not enough information to determine whether an offence had or was taking place. After removing these 49 participants, the remaining 62 answers were analyzed. Of those participants who identified a criminal offence, 87.1% (n = 54) correctly named some form of theft or fraud offence. Further investigation would be required to determine which specific section of the *Criminal Code of Canada* might apply, as many participants stated ‘Fraud, Theft’ as their response. Only one participant specifically identified section 331, while another participant identified ‘theft by conversion fraud’. Interestingly, one participant identified the correct broad area, in terms of fraud, but specifically named the offence as identity fraud, under section 403 of the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Those participants who did not identify theft or fraud appeared to focus on the verbal assault as the primary offence, as their answers included assault/threats (6.5 per cent) or harassment (1.6 per cent), while three (4.8 per cent) more broadly identified ‘abuse’ or ‘abuse and neglect under the *Adult Guardianship Act* as the criminal offence that had occurred.

Overall, participants generally identified the correct type of abuse that had occurred, though all participants may benefit from further training and awareness around the specific sub-sections of the *Criminal Code of Canada* that may apply in this type of scenario, depending, for instance, on whether a Power of Attorney agreement was in place between the victim and their adult child. Still, when examining the answers provided by the full sample of 111 participants, there appeared to be a need for more training broadly speaking as, overall, only 47.7% (n = 53) correctly identified that

an offence had occurred and that it was a theft or fraud related offence. In effect, most participants either did not identify any criminal offence or identified an incorrect offence for this scenario.

Over four-fifths (83.5 per cent) of participants strongly or somewhat agreed that this scenario required a police response. Another 8.4% strongly or somewhat disagreed that this type of scenario required a police response, while the remaining 8.4% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Once again, participants felt that even with the police responding, there was still a need for other agencies or sectors to be involved. For this scenario, it was most common suggested (80.0 per cent) that this scenario required the participation of social workers. Moreover, half of the participants felt that mental health (50.5 per cent) or health authority (49.5 per cent) agencies should be involved. Just over one-tenth of participants (11.6 per cent) also identified other agencies, including the Public Guardian and Trustee (n = 1), a financial accountant (n = 1), or lawyers (n = 3). A few participants also mentioned an elder specialist social worker or elder abuse team should become involved, while two participants suggested that all agencies should be involved, though police should play more of a support role.

Scenario 3

The final scenario presented a possible case of assault or sexual assault. In this scenario, a home care worker had reported concerns about an elder they provide care for once per week. The victim in this scenario had a physical disability. On their last visit, the home care worker found bruises and scratches on the victim's forearms and thighs. Pending further investigation, the possible criminal offence that may be present is section 265(1) assault, where force is applied directly or indirectly, or attempted or threatened to be applied, by one person to another without their consent. This may include a physical assault or a sexual assault.

Compared to the previous two scenarios, a larger proportion of participants were 'very concerned' (35.8 per cent) that a criminal offence may have occurred in this scenario. Conversely, compared to the prior scenarios, a larger proportion of participants were also 'not very concerned' (12.8 per cent) that a criminal offence had occurred. Around half (51.4 per cent) were 'slightly' concerned that a criminal offence had occurred. Not considering those who were 'not very concerned' that an offence had occurred, more than four-fifths (85.3 per cent) of participants identified that some sort of assault may have occurred, though several included the caveat that further investigation was needed as the victim may have fallen and hurt themselves resulting in the observed injuries. In total, 13 participants (13.7 per cent) who were slightly or very concerned that an offence had occurred did not identify a criminal offence that might apply in this case, while one additional participant said that more information was needed to determine what offence might apply. Overall, although some participants did not perceive this scenario to present any concerning information regarding the commission of a criminal offence, for the most part, participants did not appear to have difficulty assessing that the circumstances in the current scenario may present a concern about potential elder abuse.

Four-fifths of participants (85.3 per cent) strongly or somewhat agreed that this scenario required a police response. Seven participants strongly or slightly disagreed, and another seven neither agreed nor disagreed. Despite the tendency to identify this as a policing issue, participants felt that

other agencies should also become involved, namely health care (62.8 per cent) or social workers (56.4 per cent), though another 40.9% felt that mental health workers should become involved.

Overall, the scenario assessments indicated that police were most comfortable recognizing and responding to elder abuse in the form of an assault. This falls more firmly in their mandate as a police responsibility, though other agencies were viewed as important to include in the response. In contrast, the participants appeared to be less comfortable with identifying cases of elder neglect or elder financial abuse. They were more likely to see this as a role better taken on by others, though, for the most part, they felt that they should still be at least part of the response. Notably, only one participant suggested involving the BC Public Guardian and Trustee in the situation of financial abuse; yet, investigating concerns about financial abuse is a primary role that this organization plays in the province. While many participants felt that a criminal offence may have occurred in the first two scenarios, their identification of the relevant criminal offences that applied to these suggested that there were opportunities to enhance frontline police officer understanding of non-physical forms of elder abuse and neglect, for example, through training on elder abuse and neglect which, as discussed in the next section, few participants reporting having any experience or training on.

TRAINING EXPERIENCES AND PERCEIVED NEEDS

In total, half (51.0 per cent) of the participants reported that they had received training on trauma-informed practice, while two-thirds (65.7 per cent) had received training on cultural humility. However, only 18 participants (17.1 per cent) reported that they had received training that was specific to investigating crimes involving elder victims. Of these 18 participants, most reported that this included content on assessing for signs of abuse (94.0 per cent) or neglect (90.0 per cent), as well as assessing for cognitive issues (81.0 per cent). While still including more than two-thirds of the sample, a smaller percentage of participants (69.0 per cent) identified that their training included content on managing privacy or confidentiality concerns during an investigation.

Most frontline participants felt their jurisdiction either 'possibly' or 'definitely' needed training to enhance investigations of elder abuse and neglect. As shown in Table 12, participants were presented with 12 potential areas relating to victims of elder abuse/neglect and asked whether they 'definitely needed', 'possibly needed', 'did not need' training in these areas, or 'already had training' available in these areas. At least one-quarter to one-third of participants identified a definite need for training in all areas presented.

TABLE 12: DESIRED AREAS FOR FURTHER TRAINING

	Already Have	Definitely Need	Possibly Need	Do Not Need
Relevance of Adult Guardianship Act	0.9%	45.8%	48.6%	4.7%
Role or mandate of other agencies	2.2%	39.1%	55.4%	3.3%
When to refer to other agencies	2.1%	37.2%	53.2%	7.4%
Mental capacity and decision-making rights of elders	2.8%	37.0%	49.1%	11.1%
Common investigation challenges	1.9%	34.9%	53.8%	9.4%
Conducting investigations when cognitive impairment is present	4.7%	34.0%	52.8%	8.5%
Conducting investigations with communication barriers	5.6%	33.6%	48.6%	12.1%
Fraud/Financial abuse of elders	3.7%	32.1%	57.8%	6.4%
Signs of elder abuse or neglect	5.5%	30.3%	57.8%	6.4%
Assessing for cognitive impairment	3.3%	29.3%	55.4%	12.0%
Privacy and confidentiality training	12.0%	28.7%	45.4%	13.9%
Collecting evidence from elder victims	6.4%	28.4%	51.4%	13.8%

When combining those who felt training was ‘definitely’ or ‘possibly’ needed, at least three-quarters or more of participants identified the following areas as places for training to occur: the role or mandate of other agencies where members can refer elders (94.6 per cent); training on the *Adult Guardianship Act* and its relevance to elder abuse and neglect investigations (94.4 per cent), when to refer elders to other agencies (90.4 per cent), fraud or financial abuse of elders (89.9 per cent), common challenges in conducting elder abuse and neglect investigations (88.7 per cent), signs of elder abuse and neglect (88.1 per cent), conducting investigations when there were concerns about or signs of cognitive impairment (86.8 per cent), the mental capacity and decision-making rights of vulnerable adults (86.1 per cent), how to assess for cognitive impairment in elder victims/complainants (84.8 per cent), conducting investigations when there are concerns about communication issues (82.2 per cent), collecting evidence from elder victims of abuse and neglect (79.8 per cent), and confidentiality and privacy issues (74.1 per cent) (see Table 12).

There was a consistently high demand for training in all the 12 areas. The data suggested that three areas where **training may be needed most is on the role or mandate of other agencies where members can refer elders, when to refer elders to other agencies, as well as the training of the *Adult Guardianship Act* and its relevance to elder abuse and neglect investigations.** Conversely, the area where the largest proportion of participants felt they did not need training was in maintaining privacy and confidentiality, possibly as they felt this applied more generally to all investigations that they conducted, rather than this skill being particular to elder abuse or neglect cases. Still, nearly half of all participants identified a possible need for training in this area, which suggested that they may need more specific examples of the unique privacy and confidentiality issues that may arise in these types of investigations, e.g., due to the caregiving role an abuser may have with the victim and their potential control over the relevant information for an investigation due to holding Power of Attorney status.

Participants were given the opportunity to expand on what else their jurisdiction may need to enhance investigations of elder abuse and neglect in their jurisdiction. The most mentioned themes were the need for more training in elder abuse and neglect in general, training about what

resources or partner agencies are available in these cases, and that supervisors and victim services might also need training in these areas. Altogether, these results suggested that **jurisdictions may need to implement more training that involves elder abuse and neglect in a variety of important areas.**

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY CONCERNS

Participants were asked specifically whether and what confidentiality or privacy issues needed to be considered in an elder abuse/neglect investigation. While many felt that there was no difference between this and any other investigation, and nearly one-quarter (23.4 per cent) indicated that they were not aware of any confidentiality or privacy issues within these types of investigations, one of the difficulties reported by several participants was that if the elder victim had a caregiver, that person needed to be informed about the concerns. However, that caregiver may also be the one responsible for the abuse or neglect. Therefore, there may be a need to maintain confidentiality of the file from the caregiver or other family members, particularly if knowledge of the abuse or neglect disclosure has the potential to trigger retaliation from the abuser(s).

Another common challenge had to do with the *Privacy Act* and accessing information from other agencies that may be providing services to the elder, such as health or mental health care providers or other government agencies who may have relevant information, such as about financial standings. Similarly, if the abuser has control over access to these records through holding Power of Attorney, it can be difficult to obtain the needed information because of other challenges, such as memory loss, unwillingness to participate, or language or cultural barriers. Given this, officers may not have the evidence needed to support the generation of a production order for medical or financial records. Some of the ways that participants suggested for managing these types of situations were to ask for consent from the elder presuming there were no cognitive issues for their information to be shared or seeking Power of Attorney. While the BC Public Guardian and Trustee could play an important role in guiding these conversations and decisions, they were not identified by the participants as a resource that they would use in this context.

FAMILIARITY WITH THE ADULT GUARDIANSHIP ACT

When asked how familiar participants were with Part 3 of the *Adult Guardianship Act*, which covers Support and Assistance for Abused and Neglected Adults, the majority of participants (81.7 per cent) reported being not at all familiar with the Act. Nearly one-fifth of participants (17.4 per cent) stated they were somewhat familiar with the Act, and just one participant (0.9 per cent) reported that they were very familiar with it. This finding was concerning, given the fact that the purpose of Part 3 of the Act is to provide support and assistance for abused or neglected adults who are unable to seek support or assistance because of physical restraints, a physical handicap limiting their ability to seek assistance, or a disease, injury, or condition affecting their ability to make decisions about said abuse or neglect (*Adult Guardianship Act*, 1996). In prior sections of the results, there was a reported need for training on the Act and its relevance for elder abuse and neglect investigations, and the findings from the survey indicated that hardly any RCMP detachments had an *Adult Guardianship Act* designate. Notably, while an understanding of the Act is especially

relevant for elder abuse and neglect investigations, it is also equally important for other demographics of adults who are not elderly but may be experiencing some form of disability. Altogether, **there is a clear need for updated training and awareness of the *Adult Guardianship Act*** to support frontline officers in being adequately prepared to assist and investigate instances of abuse and neglect for a variety of demographics, including elders and adults with disabilities.

ASSESSING COGNITIVE CAPACITY

Participants were provided with several ways in which they may assess the cognitive capacity of an elder victim. In total, 11 participants (11.5 per cent) indicated that they had never needed to assess the cognitive capacity of an elder victim before. Of the 96 participants who answered the remaining questions, the most common method reported by nearly all participants (92.7 per cent) was to ask a family member or caregiver if there were any related diagnoses (e.g., dementia). In addition, more than four-fifths of participants (83.3 per cent) would ask specific baseline questions that the elder should know the answer to, such as the day's date, what time it was, and their current location. The third most common strategy used by participants was to ask for assistance from a mental health worker (70.5 per cent). Less commonly, 62.5% would ask for assistance from a social worker. Of note, half of the participants (50.5 per cent) would ask for assistance from a victim service worker, presumably as victim service workers do not tend to be specialized in the types of populations they work with, except for the Seniors First BC victim service program. Finally, slightly more than one-fifth of the participants (21.9 per cent) also indicated that they do not necessarily take any steps but did look for issues related to cognitive capacity during their interviews or interactions with an elder victim. For the most part, it appeared that, while participants had not received training specific to working with elder victims of crime, they were taking simple steps to check for potential issues with cognitive capacity.

ISSUES DRIVING REPORTING

There are a wide range of reasons why victimization of elders may be brought to the attention of the police. Participants were provided with a list of potential reasons why someone might report a concern about victimization of an elder and were asked to identify whether these were very common, somewhat common, somewhat uncommon, or very uncommon. When looking specifically at the sources that were very common, the most endorsed statements were receiving a report that the elder person has gone missing or has been found wandering, that the elder was living in unhealthy living conditions (e.g., their residence being filthy), or it was due to an elder making a false report as a result of their cognitive issues (e.g., reporting what turned out to be a delusion) (see Table 13). These three reasons were also frequently identified as 'somewhat common'. Additional 'somewhat common' reasons for files being initiated were that the elder was living in unsafe housing conditions (e.g., hoarding or the house in disrepair) or that someone had seen visible bruising on the elder. In contrast, the less common reasons for police files included that an elder had suddenly or unexpectedly stopped attending programming leading to concerns about their wellbeing, for someone to become concerned that professionals, such as a family doctor, were

being prevented from meeting individually with the elder, or that someone noticed and became concerned that an elder was dehydrated or appeared fragile (see Table 13). It is possible that these types of concerns were brought by members of the public or the victims themselves to community designates like the BC Public Guardian and Trustee rather than resulting in a call to service to the police. Similarly, it was also unlikely for the Public Guardian and Trustee to request police support, for example, in the context of a financial victimization, perhaps because Public Guardian and trustee representatives were well trained in how to conduct their own investigations and provided their own supports directly to the elder in cases of financial abuse. Of note, nine participants specifically noted that elder abuse/neglect files were not a common report in and of themselves.

TABLE 13: ISSUES DRIVING POLICE FILES

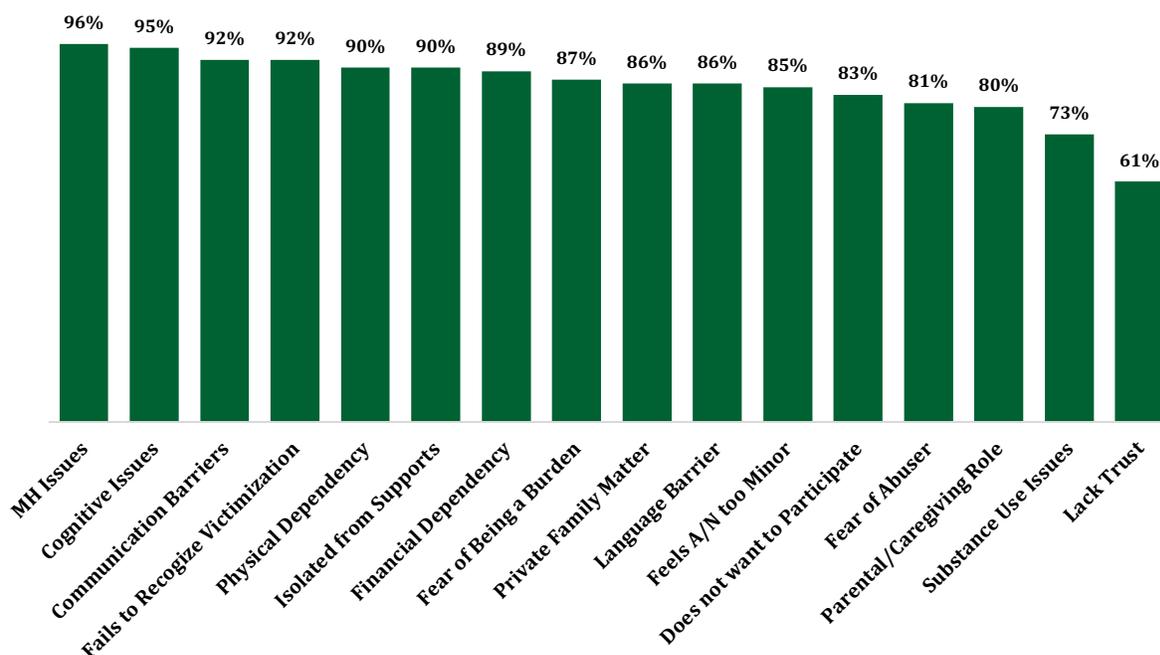
	Very Common	Somewhat Common	Somewhat Uncommon	Very Uncommon
Found missing or wandering	21.2%	46.2%	25.0%	7.7%
Unhealthy living conditions	18.1%	55.2%	18.1%	8.6%
Elder reports unfounded crimes as result of cognitive issues	16.9%	43.8%	29.2%	10.1%
Unsafe housing conditions	15.5%	51.5%	21.4%	11.7%
Signs of abuse/neglect uncovered during an investigation	13.6%	31.8%	36.4%	18.2%
Denied access to funds or money missing	13.5%	39.4%	31.7%	15.4%
Uncared for medical needs	11.7%	43.7%	33.0%	11.7%
Dishevelled appearance	11.7%	37.9%	36.9%	13.6%
Witnessed being assaulted	8.7%	33.7%	32.7%	25.0%
Public Guardian and Trustee requests police support	6.8%	31.1%	32.0%	30.1%
Dehydration or Fragility	6.7%	30.8%	31.7%	30.8%
Designated agency requests police support	6.7%	40.0%	28.6%	24.8%
Visible bruising	5.7%	49.5%	25.7%	19.0%
Fear of another person(s) in residence	5.7%	40.0%	32.4%	21.9%
Unwillingness to leave elder alone with professionals	4.9%	29.1%	33.0%	33.0%
Access to elder is being prevented	4.9%	38.8%	30.1%	26.2%
Unexpected disappearance from programming	3.9%	27.2%	35.9%	33.0%
Withdrawal or depression	2.9%	36.3%	37.3%	23.5%

INVESTIGATION CHALLENGES

Participants were presented with a range of possible challenges that might be experienced during an elder abuse/neglect investigation. As shown in Figure 7, nearly all participants indicated that most of the items they were provided with in the survey posed a challenge to them when investigating instances of elder abuse/neglect. While nearly two-thirds of participants (60.1 per cent) indicated that the elder person having a lack of trust in the police was a common issue, this was the challenge with the lowest rate. The next lowest reported challenge by participants was the elder victim having substance use issues, which was reported by nearly three-quarters of participants (73 per cent). Conversely, nearly all participants reported that common challenges in elder abuse or neglect investigations included the elder victim experiencing mental health issues (96 per cent), cognitive issues (95 per cent), communication barriers due to physical issues, such as loss of hearing or being non-verbal (92 per cent), a failure to recognize that they were a victim of

crime (92 per cent), physical dependency (90 per cent), and being isolated from supports (90 per cent).

FIGURE 7: PRESENCE OF COMMON ELDER ABUSE/NEGLECT INVESTIGATION CHALLENGES



To consider these findings more specifically, participants were asked about how common these challenges were in their investigations (see Table 14). The challenge that was most likely to be identified as occurring ‘all of the time’ was that the elder victim of abuse or neglect failed to recognize that they were a victim of abuse or neglect (6.6 per cent). As discussed in the literature review above, this may be the result of denial where the elder refuses to admit that a family member could hurt or take advantage of them in some way. The elder may also not have a good understanding of the behaviours that constitute abuse or neglect, or their cognitive functioning may prevent them from understanding that they are being victimized. Following this, the challenges that were most likely to occur ‘all of the time’ included the elder feeling that their victimization was a private family matter that did not concern the police (5.7 per cent), the elder being isolated from other social support systems and, therefore, not having anyone to reach out to (5.7 per cent), the elder fearing their abuser (4.8 per cent), and the elder fearing being a burden on others (4.8 per cent). The investigational challenges that were primarily identified as occurring ‘most of the time’ included the elder having a mental health issue or cognitive issue (37.1 per cent and 33.6 per cent, respectively), or being physically (34 per cent) or financially (31.7 per cent) dependent on their abuser. Challenges that occurred less frequently, or only ‘some of the time’ during an investigation included the elder having difficulty communicating due to physical issues, such as a loss of hearing

or stroke (75.2 per cent), or having some other form of language barrier, such as not speaking the language of the officer (75 per cent).

TABLE 14: FREQUENCY OF COMMONLY OCCURRING INVESTIGATIONAL CHALLENGES

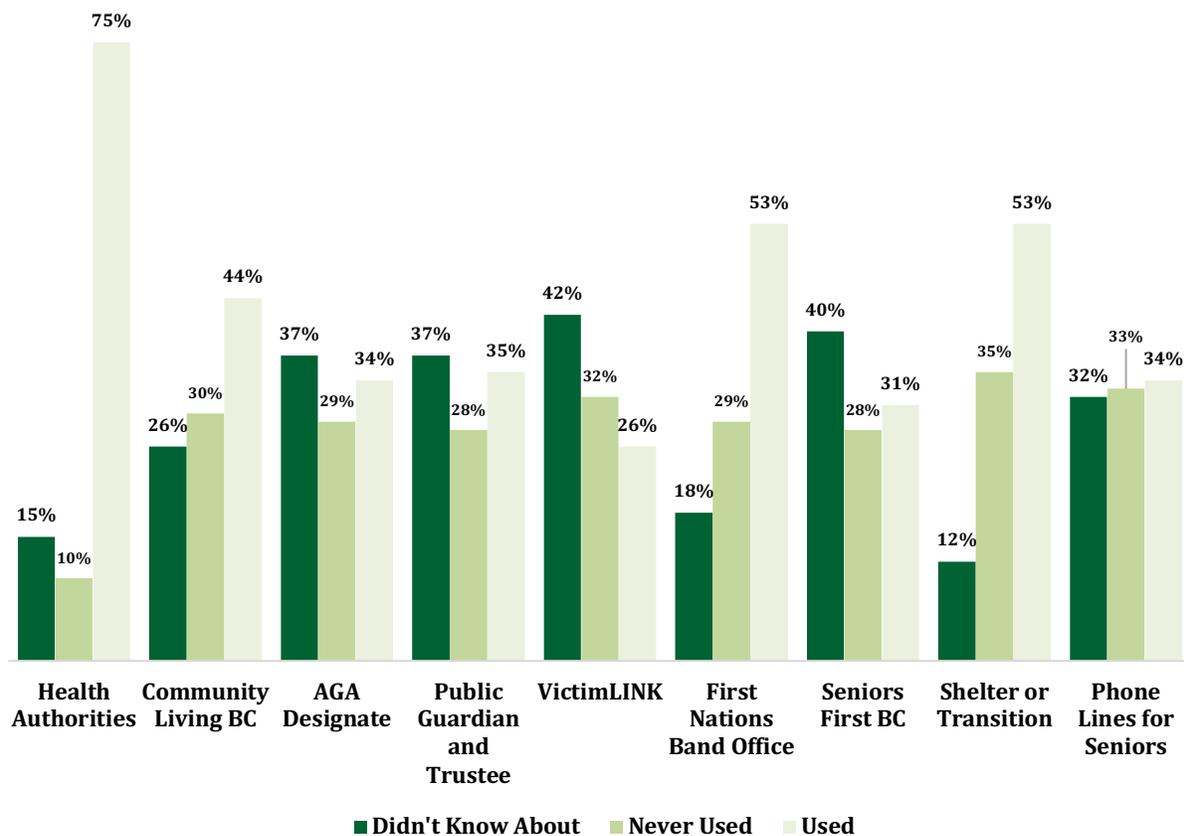
	All the Time	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	None of the Time
Cognitive Issues (e.g., Dementia)	3.7%	33.6%	57.9%	4.7%
Difficult Communicating (e.g., Hearing Loss, Stroke)	1.9%	15.2%	75.2%	7.6%
Mental Health Issues	3.8%	37.1%	55.2%	3.8%
Substance Use Issues	1.9%	10.4%	60.4%	27.4%
Physical Dependency on Abuser	2.8%	34.0%	52.8%	10.4%
Financial Dependency on Abuser	2.9%	31.7%	54.8%	10.6%
Fear of Abuser	4.8%	22.9%	53.3%	19.0%
Parental/Caregiving Role over Abuser	1.9%	18.9%	59.4%	19.8%
Elder Fails to Recognize Victimization	6.6%	34.9%	50.0%	8.5%
Elder Feels Victimization too Minor for Police	2.9%	20.0%	61.9%	15.2%
Elder Fears Being a Burden	4.8%	24.8%	57.1%	13.3%
Elder Feels it is a Private Family Matter	5.7%	26.7%	53.3%	14.3%
Elder has been Isolated from other Supports	5.7%	23.6%	60.4%	10.4%
Language Barrier with Police	1.0%	9.6%	75.0%	14.4%
Lack of Trust in Police	1.9%	5.8%	52.9%	39.4%
Does not Want to Participate in Investigation	2.0%	18.8%	62.4%	16.8%

Some participants provided additional qualitative comments about common challenges with elder abuse/neglect investigations. Here, participants reported that challenges included that many cases of elder abuse/neglect were not get reported to the police. Some participants commented on cultural barriers, such as historical mistrust among Indigenous communities towards the police, or cultural/language barriers. Several identified issues with partnering with other agencies outside of police for assistance. For example, one participant suggested that to be more effective with their elder population, a social worker with specialized training was needed. Moreover, several participants made comments about making referrals to outside agencies and either having those referrals not acted on or not being sure if or when they were acted on. Participants also stated that there were information sharing barriers between police and outside agencies that made it challenging to address the needs of elder victims of abuse or neglect. Several participants also commented on the lack of resources available to support removing an elder victim of abuse or neglect from the situation they were in. It is also important to note that six participants stated that they had never actually conducted an elder abuse or neglect investigation.

Participants were asked specifically about which resources they used during an investigation of elder abuse or neglect. Figure 8 presents the data on whether police were familiar with or had ever used some specific resources, such as health agencies or elder-specific resources. Given that the police are the holders of the Protective Order Registry in British Columbia, where police need to call to determine if a protection order is currently in place and what conditions might exist, it was not expected that 42% of participants reported that they ‘did not know about’ VictimLink. This suggests

the need for greater training among frontline officers about the available resources and what they can offer in domestic violence investigations. Along this same line, 40% of participants were not aware of the Seniors First BC line, while one-third of participants (32.0 per cent) were not aware that phone lines, such as Seniors Health Care Support Line or Seniors Abuse and Information Line existed. More than one-third (37 per cent) were not aware that there were designated agencies under the *Adult Guardianship Act* that the police could make referrals to, and the same percentage were unaware of the BC Public Guardian and Trustee. Overall, it appears as though participants primarily relied on the general resources available to them in investigations more broadly, which included health authorities (75 per cent), First Nations Band Offices (53 per cent), or shelters or transition homes (53 per cent). Just under half of participants (44 per cent) reported using Community Living BC as a partner. Overall, it appeared that police would benefit from training that informs them about the various provincially available resources and more specifically, what those resources can offer them in supporting vulnerable elders at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect. Moreover, it would likely also benefit both the police and service providers to have more communication between agencies so that meaningful partnerships could develop, or existing partnerships could be strengthened.

FIGURE 8: RESOURCE USE IN ELDER ABUSE/NEGLECT INVESTIGATIONS



In addition to being asked generally about the challenges with conducting elder abuse/neglect investigations, participants were also asked specifically about how easy or difficult it was to obtain charge approval for physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or spiritual abuse, financial abuse, or neglect files (see Table 15). Sexual abuse charges were reported as somewhat difficult (40.7 per cent) to obtain charge approval for. One-third of participants similarly reported that physical assault charges were somewhat difficult to get charge approval for. Most commonly though, the majority of participants (70.8 per cent) felt that charges were very difficult to obtain for emotional or spiritual abuse files, while just under half of the participants (48.9 per cent) felt that financial abuse charges were also very difficult to obtain. Exactly half of the sample felt that neglect charges were very difficult to obtain. Among these types of offences, the easiest charge approval to obtain was for physical assault, as just under one-quarter (22 per cent) of participants reported it to be very easy.

TABLE 15: DIFFICULTY OBTAINING CHARGE APPROVAL BY ABUSE TYPE

	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Physical Assault (n = 91)	22.0%	29.7%	34.1%	11.7%
Sexual Abuse (n = 91)	8.8%	25.3%	40.7%	25.3%
Emotional/Psychological Abuse (n = 89)	1.1%	2.2%	25.8%	70.8%
Financial Abuse (n = 92)	2.2%	5.4%	43.5%	48.9%
Neglect (n = 92)	2.2%	6.5%	41.3%	50.0%

When asked what the most common obstacles or barriers were to obtaining charge approval, a total of 62 participants (55.9 per cent) provided an answer. Common answers were grouped into three main themes: (1) victims; (2) Crown counsel; and (3) evidence. First, participants reported that challenges with victim participation and cooperation made it more difficult to obtain charge approval. They expressed that with elder victims specifically, cognitive ability and mental health issues created an additional barrier, as cognitive deficits could create difficulties for victims, especially in explaining and articulating what happened. This caused issues with obtaining detailed statements that subsequently decreased the likelihood of Crown Counsel proceeding with charge approval. Second, participants expressed that because Crown Counsel was responsible for charge approval in British Columbia, their willingness to proceed with charges considering their perception of public interest and the lack of cooperation by the victim served to create additional barriers for obtaining charge approval. Likely related to Crown Counsel's willingness to approve charges, the third main challenge concerned evidence. Participants explained that obtaining evidence in these investigations was a challenge because physical evidence may not always be available. In addition, a lack of credible or cooperative witnesses posed an additional barrier. It is evident that there are a variety of unique obstacles and barriers to obtaining charge approval for offences involving elder individuals. As participants suggested, the variable of being an elderly victim may potentially add to the challenge of obtaining charge approval.

PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF DETACHMENT IN ELDER ABUSE/NEGLECT FILES

Participants were asked to report on their opinions of their detachment’s effectiveness in responding to different types of offences involving an elder victim. Participants mostly reported that detachment responses were either ‘very effective’ or ‘somewhat effective’. To elaborate, a majority of participants reported feeling that their detachment was ‘very effective’ at responding to physical assault (64.8 per cent), as well as sexual abuse (61.1 per cent) involving an elder victim. Meanwhile, a smaller proportion, though still a majority, of participants reported feeling their detachment was only ‘somewhat effective’ at responding to emotional or spiritual abuse (52.3 per cent), financial abuse (55.6 per cent), and neglect (54.2 per cent) involving elder victims. Just over one-third of participants (34.6 per cent) felt that their detachments response to emotional or spiritual abuse was ‘not at all effective’ and nearly one-quarter of participants (24.1 per cent) felt the same about their detachments response to financial abuse. Considering the range of responses, it was evident that there were mixed feelings among participants about how effective their detachment was at responding to different types of offences involving elder victims (see Table 16).

TABLE 16: FRONTLINE MEMBER PERCEPTIONS OF DETACHMENT EFFECTIVENESS WITH ELDER ABUSE/NEGLECT FILES

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not At All Effective
Physical Abuse	64.8%	33.3%	1.9%
Sexual Abuse	61.1%	35.2%	3.7%
Emotional/Spiritual Abuse	13.1%	52.3%	34.6%
Financial Abuse	20.4%	55.6%	24.1%
Neglect	28.0%	54.2%	17.8%

Of the total sample, 50 participants (45 per cent) elaborated on why they felt this way about their detachments’ response to these kinds of files. Participants explained that their detachment lacked the resources to effectively address these types of cases, with multiple participants suggesting that they needed specialized training or specialized units to help investigate these kind of files. Staffing was commonly reported to be a factor as well. Still, some participants expressed the feeling that their detachment was a very effective force in general, especially with respect to partnering with relevant agencies or passing on elder abuse or neglect files to specialized units where necessary. A few participants stated that their detachment hardly received any files involving elderly victims, and explained that certain types of offences, such as fraud, emotional/spiritual abuse, and financial abuse, were difficult to obtain charge approval for when they did investigate these types of files. Participants expressed concern that working and communicating with elderly victims could be difficult, which resulted in the files being harder to work on and conclude successfully with a charge. Participants also explained that detachments may struggle with these files because of a lack of trust between elder victims and the police, specifically those who self-identify as Indigenous because of historic events and their culture. In effect, a common theme among participants was that elder abuse and neglect files are likely underreported and this underreporting is because of these aforementioned factors.

FRONTLINE MEMBERS' PERCEIVED NEEDS FOR SPECIALIZED POLICIES, UNITS, OR RESOURCES

According to participants, not many relevant and specific elder abuse and neglect resources were available within 'E' Division of the RCMP. When asked if different types of resources were needed, participants reported that only two were already present in their detachment. A very small number of participants reported that their detachment already had internal RCMP policy specifically related to elder abuse and neglect investigations (4.7 per cent), and an elder-specific abuse and neglect tool similar to the BC Summary of Domestic Violence Risk Factor (1.1 per cent). However, as only one participant reported that they had the latter, when it is provincial policy to utilize the BC Summary of Domestic Violence Risk Factor tool in all founded intimate partner violence files, it is a possibility that participants misinterpreted the question and believed they were being asked if they had the Domestic Violence Risk Factor tool rather than a similar tool.

As for the level of need, most participants felt that specific elder abuse and neglect resources were either 'possibly' or 'definitely' needed (see Table 17). Participants felt there was 'possibly' or 'definitely' a need for an elder abuse and neglect police-community agency partnership program (85.9 per cent), internal RCMP policy specific for elder abuse and neglect investigations (69.1 per cent), an elder-specific abuse and neglect supplementary tool (59.8 per cent), a dedicated elder abuse and neglect police officer (59.2 per cent), and a dedicated elder abuse and neglect unit (54.3 per cent). Equally important to note; however, is that a considerable proportion of participants felt these resources were not at all needed. For example, nearly half of the sample felt that a dedicated elder abuse and neglect unit (45.7 per cent) or officer (40.7 per cent) was not at all needed. Slightly more than one-third (39.1 per cent) of the sample felt that an elder-specific abuse and neglect supplementary tool was not at all needed, while just over one-quarter of participants (26.2 per cent) felt the same about the need for an internal policy specifically designed to address the investigation of elder abuse or neglect files. Just over one-tenth (14 per cent) of the sample felt an elder abuse and neglect police-community agency partnership was also not needed. When given space to add any comments pertaining to their answers, a very small proportion of participants (3.6 per cent) responded. Among these responses, participants expressed feeling that the issue of elder abuse and neglect should be investigated or addressed by partner agencies other than the police, such as social workers.

TABLE 17: PERCEIVED NEED FOR ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT RESOURCES

	Definitely Needed	Possibly Needed	Not Needed	Already Have
Internal Policy for EAN Investigations	14.0%	55.1%	26.2%	4.7%
Dedicated EAN Officer	25.9%	33.3%	40.7%	0
Dedicated EAN Unit	20.0%	34.3%	45.7%	0
EAN Police-Community Agency Partnership	33.6%	52.3%	14.0%	0
Supplementary tool like the BC-SDVR	16.3%	43.5%	39.1%	1.1%

WHAT DETACHMENTS SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT BE DOING

Participants were asked an open-ended question about what else they thought their detachment should be doing with elder abuse or neglect files that they were not already doing. In total, 48 participants provided at least one suggestion. Of these participants, 11 reported that they felt their detachment needed to do nothing else than what was currently being done to address and respond to elder abuse and neglect. Of note, some of these participants specified that nothing else was needed because their detachment did not receive many calls for service related to elder abuse or neglect. However, one participant suggested that their detachment should do a better job of informing the public that victims of elder abuse or neglect should contact the police because this participant felt they did not receive many calls with this concern and that elder abuse and neglect was likely underreported in their community. Beyond this, eight participants suggested that a dedicated team or unit was needed who could be specially trained and tasked to work on these types of files. Another participant suggested that a regional or provincial unit should be developed. Seven participants suggested that more education and training was needed for all general duty members and investigators, not just for those working on specialized units. Four participants identified the need for more resources, while another participant specifically mentioned that there needed to be better community-level resources. Four participants felt that more non-policing responses needed to be developed, such as specialized mental health and social worker teams. Four others felt that more partnerships or better information sharing and access to information would be useful. While it was very uncommon for participants to indicate that their detachment was not at all aware of the issues related to identifying and investigating elder abuse and neglect files, **it might be helpful for detachments to better educate all members about the correct procedures to follow when concerned about or investigating elder abuse or neglect files.**

Conversely, participants were also asked what their detachments were already doing that would be better accomplished by others. In total, 44 participants provided their thoughts. Of these participants, 14 indicated that they would not change anything while three were unsure what needed to change. However, 16 participants specifically stated that they felt many of the issues that contributed to elder abuse and neglect were not policing matters. Rather, they felt that, at the outset, these files should be handled by other partners, such as social workers or mental health workers, who could have on-call workers or direct points of contact that could engage in activities like wellness checks. Participants observed that unless the elder was in danger or there was clear evidence that a criminal offence had occurred, concerns about vulnerable adults should be primarily handled through community level partners that could involve the police if there was a concern about a criminal offence. Similarly, five participants explained that partnerships should be used more to respond to these concerns.

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM FRONTLINE PARTICIPANTS

A total of 20 participants (18 per cent) elected to share additional comments about the investigation of elder abuse and neglect. There were two main themes that came from an analysis of this information. First was a general feeling that files involving elder abuse and neglect were uncommon or were underreported. Of note, these are two very different possibilities, and it remains entirely possible that these files were more common than they appeared to be from the

participant's recollection, especially given the absence of training in recognizing and responding to elder abuse or neglect files. The second theme was that there were limited resources for police in general, in addition to dealing specifically with cases of elder abuse or neglect. It was clear that participants shared the concern of the effects of being short on both resources and staff. Consequently, participants felt that their detachments were not adequately prepared to conduct investigations of elder abuse and neglect, and likely did not prioritize these types of files because of the lack of resources. As the elderly demographic is growing in British Columbia, it is important that internal staffing and resource issues within law enforcement do not present as a barrier to addressing calls of elder abuse and neglect. Clearly the issue of elder abuse and neglect will be difficult to be address with education and training until the pre-existing challenges of limited staffing and resources are remedied.

Surveys with Senior Leaders

Of the 13 detachments, survey responses were received from seven senior leaders. Five of these participants were from the Island District and two were from the North District. Given this, it appeared that more than one senior leader per Island detachment completed the survey, as there were three Island District detachments invited to participate. No senior leader surveys were received from the Lower Mainland or Southeast Districts. Given this, the following analyses must be taken with caution as they do not adequately represent the experiences of all four policing districts in British Columbia. Further, given as some of the detachments may be represented more than once in the data, the analyses were conducted from the perspective of senior leaders rather than as detachment level trends.

A majority of the seven senior leaders reported that their detachment had a designated domestic violence unit or domestic violence designates (57.1 per cent each). None of the participants reported having an elder abuse or neglect unit, an *Adult Guardianship Act* designate, or any type of specially trained investigator or program dedicated to elder abuse or neglect. However, two of the senior leaders reported that their detachment had formal partnerships with government or community agencies regarding elder abuse or neglect files. A senior leader from the Island District identified that Vancouver Island Health operated a Senior Outreach Team (SORT) that police could make referrals to in files involving possible self-neglect or elder abuse. The other senior leader reported that the partnerships essentially meant information sharing practices when responding to files involving elders.

The senior leaders were asked to identify how common different types of elder abuse and neglect files were at their detachment. Examples were given for each form of abuse and neglect as follows: emotional abuse was the infliction of psychological distress or mental harm; psychological abuse was being controlled, threatened, or humiliated by others; verbal abuse was yelling, name calling, or other forms of being verbally demeaned; physical abuse was being slapped, pinched, physically restrained, or overmedicated; sexual abuse was being subjected to unwanted touching or sexual assault; financial abuse was experiencing the misappropriation of funds, financial exploitation, or loss of control over assets; emotional neglect was the victim's psychological needs or emotional wellbeing being ignored; physical neglect was the victim's physical needs being ignored, failing to

be provided with the necessities of life, or failing to have their physical ailments cared for; and self-neglect was the victim failing to care for their own personal health and safety. After removing those who did not reply or who selected 'don't know' as their response, the elder abuse/neglect files that appeared to be the most common, according to participants, was financial abuse and self-neglect followed by verbal abuse (see Table 18). Conversely, the file types that were perceived by senior leaders as relatively uncommon were sexual abuse followed by emotional neglect, emotional abuse, and physical abuse.

TABLE 18: PERCEIVED FREQUENCY OF ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT FILE TYPES

	Somewhat or Very Common	Somewhat or Very Uncommon
Emotional abuse (n = 6)	16.7%	83.3%
Psychological abuse (n = 5)	20.0%	80.0%
Verbal abuse (n = 5)	40.0%	60.0%
Physical abuse (n = 6)	16.7%	83.3%
Sexual abuse (n = 6)	0	100.0%
Financial abuse (n = 6)	50.0%	50.0%
Emotional neglect (n = 6)	16.7%	83.3%
Physical neglect (n = 6)	33.3%	66.7%
Self-neglect (n = 6)	50.0%	50.0%

The main role for police officers in these files, from the perspective of senior leaders, was believed to be as an investigator. More specifically, senior leaders were asked what proportion of the time police officers were involved in elder abuse/neglect files as an investigator, as a support to designated agencies conducting an elder abuse/neglect investigation, or as a support to the Public Guardian and Trustee. As demonstrated in Table 19, again, senior leaders commonly perceived that officers were acting as the investigator, but they also indicated that 'some of the time' their officers provided supports to other designated agencies. Senior leaders were least sure of their officers' involvement as a support or resource to the Public Guardian and Trustee.

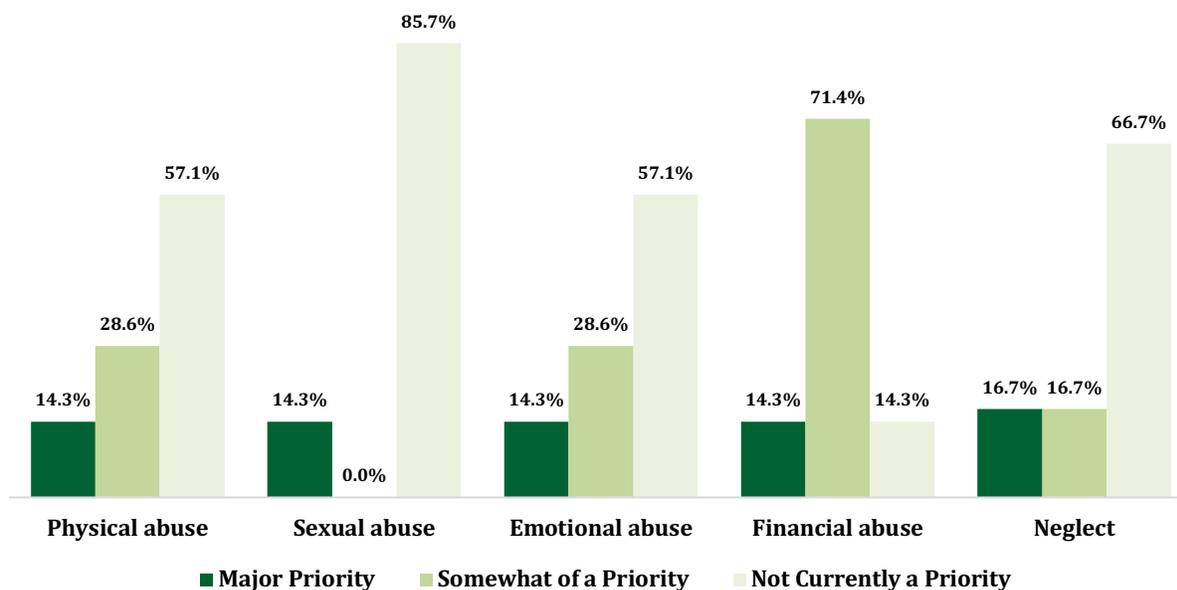
TABLE 19: PERCEIVED ROLE OFFICERS TEND TO PLAY IN ELDER ABUSE/NEGLECT INVESTIGATIONS

	All of the Time	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	None of the Time	Unsure
Investigator	57.1%	14.3%	28.6%	-	-
Support to Designated Agency	14.3%	14.3%	42.9%	28.6%	-
Support to Public Guardian and Trustee	-	-	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%

Senior leaders were asked to rank to what extent physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse, or neglect of elders was considered a priority at their detachment. For most of these types of files, a majority of the senior leaders identified that it was not considered a current priority (see Figure 9). Only one senior leader identified any of these forms of abuse or neglect as a major priority for their

detachment. The one form of elder abuse/neglect that did not follow this overall trend was financial abuse, where 71.4% of the seven senior leaders said it was 'somewhat' of a priority.

FIGURE 9: RELATIVE PRIORITY OF ELDER ABUSE/NEGLECT FILES AT DETACHMENT



When asked to explain their responses, the senior leader who identified these files as priorities at their detachment explained that “all abuse is a priority” and that their detachment investigated all reports of domestic violence or intimate partner violence. A senior leader who identified most of the aforementioned issues as ‘somewhat of a priority’ explained that, for physical abuse, it could be difficult to obtain the necessary information, depending on the nature of the situation. The same senior leader explained that emotional abuse was somewhat of a priority because it was important to monitor for this, even though they did not tend to see any files involving emotional abuse. Several of the senior leaders who identified financial abuse as somewhat of a priority added some context for this. Primarily, these police leaders were somewhat concerned because of the frequency with which elders in their jurisdiction were experiencing this form of victimization. Four senior leaders specifically mentioned that their detachments were actively trying to increase awareness among elders about financial abuse by doing presentations, media releases, through Block Watch meetings, or by forming partnerships with banks raise awareness and to reduce the risk of this form of victimization.

Senior leaders were asked whether anything was missing in their detachment’s current response to elder abuse/neglect files and what else they could or should be doing to address these types of files. Several senior leaders said that there was no need to do anything more than what was currently being done because they did not have any of these types of files. One senior leader suggested that it was important to ensure that there were proper partnerships in place, while another suggested that victim services needed to be better prepared to support elders who had experienced significant financial loss. A third senior police leader suggested that their detachment needed more time and resources to do more public outreach in the community. Moreover, senior police leaders in this

study did not identify anything that their detachment was currently doing that they should stop doing because it was either not effective or not needed. The one exception was from one police leader who believed that their detachment should not be following up on economic scams/losses when the crimes were committed by international offenders. However, this point of view was not specific to when the victim was an elder.

Notably, none of the senior leaders reported that any of their officers had received training specifically on the topic of elder abuse or neglect. In response to questions about what training, programs, or other resources were needed to enhance the detachment's response to elder abuse/neglect files, nearly half of the responding senior leaders (42.9 per cent) felt that training specifically on financial abuse and fraud investigations was 'definitely' needed, while most senior leaders (57.1 per cent) felt it was 'possibly' needed (see Table 19). None of the senior leaders identified this as something they were already doing. One participant commented that "the number one call for service by far regarding elders is in regard to online frauds" and that they foresaw this problem becoming even worse in the future.

The next most endorsed areas for training or programming were training for supervisors on elder abuse/neglect investigations, having a supplementary guide like the former BC Summary of Domestic Violence Risk Factors²⁶ specifically for elder abuse or neglect, and training on the role of the police regarding elder citizens and the *Adult Guardianship Act*. For these three items, just over one-quarter of the senior leaders endorsed this as 'definitely needed'. Interestingly, most senior leaders felt that training for frontline members on elder abuse and neglect investigations was only 'possibly' needed. In other words, there was much less support for frontline member training on elder abuse/neglect investigations from the senior leadership when compared to how frontline members responded. This was likely because the senior leaders generally perceived elder abuse/neglect files as relatively uncommon in their jurisdictions, with the noted exception of financial abuse files. Instead, they appeared to feel that training would be of more use at the supervisor level. Consequently, there was very little support among senior leaders for a specialized elder abuse/neglect unit (85.7 per cent). A larger percentage of senior leaders (42.9 per cent) agreed that there may be a need for specially trained elder abuse/neglect designates at their detachment, though none felt that this was 'definitely' needed, and the majority (57.1 per cent) felt this was not needed. Similarly, none of the senior leaders felt that training was 'definitely' needed on confidentiality and privacy issues, or on conducting investigations when there were issues with communication. Of note, one additional senior leader indicated that their detachment was already doing many of the things listed in Table 20. The remaining senior leaders they felt that these things were either 'possibly' needed or, in the case of confidentiality/privacy issues, not needed at all. Senior leaders were somewhat divided on the issue of having an *Adult Guardianship Act* designate

²⁶ In 2022, the 'E' Division RCMP implemented an updated version of this tool, now titled the BC Summary of Intimate Partner Violence Risk Factors. In addition, this new tool came with new curriculum. The title change was because that the tool was designed for use specifically with intimate partner violence files, as it reflects the risk factors associated in the research literature as increasing the risk for IPV frequency and severity rather than the risk factors associated with broader forms of domestic violence, such as elder abuse/neglect.

at their detachment, with one saying that this was ‘definitely’ needed, and the others equally divided between this not being needed and being ‘possibly’ needed.

TABLE 20: PERCEIVED TRAINING AND RESOURCE NEEDS AMONG SENIOR LEADERS

	Definitely Needed	Possibly Needed	Not Needed
Training for frontline members to conduct financial abuse/fraud investigations	42.9%	57.1%	-
Training for supervisors on elder abuse/neglect investigations	28.6%	71.4%	-
Having a supplementary guide to support elder abuse/neglect investigations	28.6%	71.4%	-
Training on the role of police regarding elder citizens and the Adult Guardian Act	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%
Formal partnerships with agencies providing support for elders in the community	16.7%	83.3%	-
Training for frontline members on the mental capacity and decision making of vulnerable adults	16.7%	83.3%	-
Training for frontline members to recognize signs of elder abuse/neglect	14.3%	85.7%	-
Training for frontline members to conduct elder abuse/neglect investigations	14.3%	85.7%	-
Training for frontline members on conducting investigations when there are concerns about cognitive impairment	14.3%	85.7%	-
Having an Adult Guardianship Act designate	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%
Training for frontline members on confidentiality and privacy issues	-	83.3%	16.7%
Training for frontline members on conducting investigations when there are concerns about communication	-	100%	-
Having an elder abuse/neglect designate	-	42.9%	57.1%
Having a dedicated elder abuse/neglect unit	-	14.3%	85.7%

The final sets of questions provided opportunities for senior leaders to identify what their detachment could do to enhance their response or management of elder abuse/neglect investigations. While several did not provide any suggestions, one senior leader suggested more cooperation was needed with the community, while another suggested that there needed to be training and also some available information that would assist police officers in knowing **what community supports were available for these files, how to proceed if and when the elder was not willing or able to cooperate, and how and when to conduct different kinds of assessments to determine whether an elder person was the victim of abuse or neglect.**

Recommendations

While the frontline RCMP members who participated in this study expressed a clear desire for more training in many areas related to elder abuse/neglect investigations, there was less support for frontline member training among the senior leaders. Senior leaders and the frontline members commented that they felt elder abuse/neglect files were relatively uncommon in their jurisdictions. While instances of elder abuse or neglect may not be reported to the police or occur as frequently as other types of files, the elderly demographic is one of the fastest growing demographics and it is important that detachments are adequately prepared to handle these types of investigations. As reflected in the file data analyzed above, while family violence files between 2014 and 2018 have fluctuated somewhat, there was a clear trend for a steady yearly increase in the number of violent

offence files involving an elder victim. In other words, these kinds of files appeared to be increasing in their frequency over time. When considering family violence files more specifically, while elder abuse files were comparatively less common than other forms of family violence files, elders are still commonly involved, primarily as victims but also, at times, as perpetrators. Elders are also appearing in 'other' family violence, such as when they are victimized by an adult child, as well as in spousal assault files. Given these trends, frontline members would benefit from training to enhance their investigation skills not only of elder abuse/neglect files specifically, but also in cases where the elder may be a victim of spousal violence or other family violence. In addition to the recommendations highlighted throughout this report, the following section provides several key recommendations to enhance the police response to elder abuse and neglect files.

CLARITY AROUND THE PURPOSE AND USE OF THE 'ELDER ABUSE' FLAG

Although the RCMP family violence codes contain a flag for elder abuse that applies to situations of both abuse and neglect perpetrated in a family context, this flag was rarely used in the files, even in situations where it appeared to be the most applicable code. For example, 'other family violence' was the designation used in many family violence offences where an elder victim was abused or neglected by a family member, such as a child or grandchild. This suggests that officers may not be familiar with the flag or why it would be beneficial to use the flag as opposed to the 'other family violence' flag. It would be beneficial to refresh officer awareness of when and why to use this code, as it would enable better reviews by supervisors and others involved in quality control who review files to ensure that the proper policies have been followed. With files involving elder abuse and neglect, these policies might involve ensuring that the officer screened for potential cognitive issues, that they considered the possible role that dependency on an abuser might have in affecting any statements given to the police by the elder victim, and that the frontline member or the investigator sought out the proper networks of supports, such as involving the Public Guardian and Trustee or other designated agencies that can provide more complex supports to elders who are abused or neglected. Ensuring that this flag is used more routinely would also improve the statistics and consequently knowledge base about the trends in elder abuse and neglect. A more consistent and appropriate use of the elder abuse flag would also encourage detachments to be more aware of the extent to which elder abuse and neglect is an issue in their jurisdictions. While there are approximately 1,000 files involving elder victims of violence coming to the attention of the RCMP in British Columbia each year, elder abuse/neglect itself was not viewed as a very common issue, even at detachments intentionally selected for participation in this project due to the comparatively high proportions of elders residing in their jurisdictions.

Another consideration regarding the elder abuse flag is whether its use would be appropriate for instances that occurred outside of the family context. Given the definitions of elder abuse and neglect, it is not only family members who may perpetrate these forms of victimization on an elder. As demonstrated in the violent data trends, elders are also victimized by professional caregivers in their own home and in institutional settings, by other professionals, such as those working in finance or accounting, neighbours, friends, and strangers. The use of the elder abuse code beyond the family context would bring the same benefits as suggested in this recommendation, namely, more accurate reviews by supervisors and quality control, improved data on elder abuse trends and

patterns, and better appreciation of detachment-level trends in elder abuse and neglect. Finally, the definition provided by 'E' Division OSB for the family violence-elder abuse flag did not include financial abuse as one of the forms of abuse that this specific flag should be used with. It is recommended that if the definition does not include financial abuse that this form of abuse be included.

LOCATION DATA

While the location of the offence was available in the violent offence data, institutional settings like care homes were not uniquely identified as a place where abuse and neglect were occurring making it a challenge to identify or interpret the volume of abuse or neglect at the institutional level. Given the increasing trends towards use of care homes among the elderly, it would be beneficial to add a specific location code to enable capturing of this kind of data so that these trends can be more clearly monitored going forwards. This information could also be provided to the community so that elders are more aware of abuse and neglect in institutional setting, have a better understanding of their rights, and know how to report any abuse or neglect that might occur in these settings.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Only 18 of the 111 police officers surveyed in the current project had ever received any training specific to elder abuse and neglect, while the senior leader participants indicated that none of their officers had any specialized training in these areas. As noted in the literature review above, elder abuse and neglect are complex files that are difficult to investigate given the added challenges of possible cognitive issues, isolation and dependence on the abuser, the potential for injuries to be considered the consequences of falling, and lack of trust in the police. Police officers would benefit from having some basic education regarding elders and the known challenges associated with conducting investigations of elder abuse or neglect. In particular, police should receive training on screening for cognitive issues. Most participants in the current survey already engaged in this practice, for example, by checking the elder's awareness of date, time, and location, or by asking a family member about cognitive diagnoses, such as those related to dementia. While the literature review included recommendations from other research studies to provide police officers with more complex cognitive training, it is important to remember that many frontline officers respond to multiple files of a widely varying nature in a typical 12-hour shift, and their role is primarily to secure the safety of the victim, secure the scene of any crime, and detain or otherwise prevent the suspect from committing further criminal acts. Frontline police should not also be expected to perform more complex cognitive assessments of perpetrators and victims. This is a skill that could be more effectively used by a partner agency. However, at the very least, all police officers should be comfortable providing a cognitive screen to determine whether cognitive issues might be present, at which point they should have a resource network to turn to for further assistance in conducting a more in-depth assessment of the extent of the cognitive disability. For example, depending on the time of day or day of the week, the officer could use the SAIL line to have a more in-depth assessment of cognitive capacity completed.

On this note, police need to be made aware of the various resources available in their communities, starting with the BC Public Guardian and Trustee and the role of other designated agencies. The results of the current study suggested that police had very limited awareness of the types of resources they might turn to in calls for service or investigations related to elder abuse or neglect. This appeared to extend to when officers needed to reach out to these types of resources or the role that potential partners could play in either leading or supporting an investigation into elder abuse or neglect. To that end, police officers need to be informed about the mandates of these agencies when it comes to elder abuse and neglect, and when these files should be primarily handled by these potential partners as opposed to being primarily or exclusively handled by the police. Particularly in cases of financial abuse or when there are complications surrounding Power of Attorney, the police should be aware of how agencies, like the Public Guardian and Trustee, can support both their investigation and the elder victim. Within this, training should also cover the *Adult Guardianship Act* and particularly Part III, which addresses the abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults, including elder citizens.

Police would also benefit from reviewing some of the common types of offences against elders, including the *Criminal Code of Canada* section for failing to provide the necessities of life. The scenario assessments revealed that, while police were generally concerned that there might be criminal offences occurring within the basic information they were presented with, they seemed much more comfortable in recognizing when a potential assault had occurred than when interpreting or identifying potential situations of neglect or financial abuse. Given this, another aspect that should be covered by training is the purpose of the elder abuse code and situations when it should be applied to files, including some of the reasons why proper use of this code would be important.

There are various options for how training on elder abuse and neglect can be offered to police. Seniors First BC routinely offers workshops on elder abuse and neglect, as well as on some specific related issues, such as Power of Attorney, ethics, privacy and confidentiality, and financial abuse. However, what may be of more use to police is for the RCMP to form an expert working group with representatives from elder-serving agencies across the province (e.g., Seniors First BC, the Council to Reduce Elder Abuse, the Centre for Education and Research on Aging, Office of the Seniors Advocate British Columbia) who can work together with RCMP curriculum developers to plan a series of modules on conducting elder abuse and neglect investigations for release on the Canadian Police Knowledge Network (CPKN) site. Both frontline police officers and their supervisors would then be able to complete this training online. It is recommended that this training include scenario assessments and examples of role playing to help convey to officers some of the common challenges that present in these investigations and the resources available to support them and the elder victim. Moreover, it would also be important to provide access to this training to victim service workers who play important support and advocacy roles to elder victims of abuse or neglect, connecting them to needed resources and supports in the community.

SPECIALIZED UNITS VERSUS ELDER DESIGNATES

In most cases, there does not currently appear to be a need to develop or implement specialized units dedicated towards investigating elder abuse and neglect files. While this could be subsumed under current intimate partner violence units, these units will potentially already deal with some of these files when the elder perpetrator and/or victim are in a current or former spousal relationship. Other types of elder abuse/neglect files will fall outside the specialized training of these units as they concern other family relationships that are of a non-intimate nature or even non-family relationships. Currently, there is no support from senior leaders to develop these specialized units, nor do the trends in elder abuse and neglect appear to warrant their need at this point.

However, some detachments may benefit from implementing an elder designate who has received more specialized training and who could play more of a leadership role as a detachment-level expert. The training suggested above could be divided into two courses; one to provide frontline members with knowledge about the trends, challenges, and resources available to police officers when conducting elder abuse/neglect investigations, while a second more specialized course could provide more detailed knowledge regarding the complicating effects of dementia and related cognitive issues, power of attorney concerns, more specialized knowledge regarding financial abuse, and privacy and confidentiality concerns in elder abuse/neglect files. Having a specially trained designate at the detachment would provide added support to the frontline members who could call on the designate for support when managing a file involving an elder victim of abuse or neglect. Having a designate at a detachment would also be beneficial in terms of promoting collaborative efforts and partnerships with community agencies, as it would enable the development of working relationships between the specially trained officers and agencies like the Public Guardian and Trustee. The designate could assume the role of an *Adult Guardianship Act* designate providing advice to frontline members about the role and purpose of this Act and its relevance for their investigations. The designates could also be assigned to sit on local CRNs and/or sit at local Situation Tables to contribute to the problem-solving solutions used to support elders in need in their community. This might also subsequently increase the number of elder abuse and neglect files coming to the attention of the police and contribute towards improved information sharing between the police and partner agencies, such as social workers, mental health workers, and elder-serving agencies.

Other models that were suggested by participants included a regional advisor or unit that could provide support for these investigations or establishing a direct contact with an elder resource, such as Seniors First BC, that the police could reach out to when conducting these types of investigations. However, it would be more efficient and effective to have a detachment-level designate build and sustain these relationships and act as the go-between on behalf of detachment officers, while providing guidance when possible and seeking out additional information and resources from their other agency partners when needed. Given the complex nature of elder abuse and neglect, and the importance of providing community level support for the victims and perpetrators of elder abuse and neglect, having up-to-date and detailed awareness of and collaborative relationships with relevant community partners is essential.

ESTABLISHING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Given the complexities of elder abuse and neglect, the common forms that it takes, as well as the underlying reasons for why it occurs, police should not be the only responding agency to these files, nor should they always play the lead role in these investigations. If it is determined that a criminal offence has occurred, the police are critical in conducting the investigation and articulating the evidence that may support recommended criminal charges. However, their role is not to provide ongoing support to the elder victim. In general, this role would be better played by specially trained victim service workers, social workers, mental health care workers, or other specialists, particularly those already trained to work with elders. Similarly, it is possible that the perpetrator of elder abuse/neglect may themselves be suffering from cognitive challenges, other mental health issues, or substance abuse. Therefore, by working more effectively with multidisciplinary partners, police may be able to recommend alternative solutions that better address these underlying challenges than a criminal charge may be able to accomplish.

With this in mind, there are several recommendations when it comes to establishing meaningful and effective partnerships. First, it is recommended that the 'E' Division RCMP undertake an environmental scan to develop a comprehensive and contemporary understanding of the various agencies that provide supporting or leading roles in investigating or assisting those who have or may be victims of elder abuse or neglect. While the BC CRN has established over 80 networks across British Columbia and a listing of these resources are available on their website, it is not clear to what extent the RCMP currently engages in these partnerships, if at all. It is also not clear the extent to which information sharing between CRN partners occurs, how files are typically resolved, and whether or when they refer to the police for a criminal investigation. Files on elder abuse and neglect more often came from the victim or a complainant related to the victim, so it does not appear that CRNs are a major source of files for police. It is also possible that some potential concerns of elder abuse or neglect were raised at Situation Tables rather than at CRNs, so exploring to what extent this occurs and how these files are resolved would also be beneficial.

Few of the 13 detachments invited to participate in the current project reported having existing partnerships for elder abuse or neglect. Given this, a detachment level environmental scan might reveal unique or innovative formal or informal partnerships that detachments not invited to participate in the current project have implemented to support elder abuse or neglect files. The environmental scan would also reveal the various resources available in each detachment's jurisdiction that could serve as a guide for the development of closer working relationships, and ideally, formal partnerships and multidisciplinary networks or approaches to addressing elder abuse and neglect moving forward. If current avenues for collaborative responses to these files, such as through CRNs or Situation Tables, do not already exist in the jurisdiction, efforts should be made by the detachment, ideally by an elder designate, to develop a network of resources that work together to effectively manage elder abuse and neglect files in a more partnered and shared responsibility approach.

Establishing more formalized partnerships could encourage greater use of non-criminal resolutions to these files. That said, it is unclear how many files involving elder abuse or neglect that are referred to designated agencies are currently resolved in this way versus being turned over to the police for a criminal investigation. It is possible that given the presence of underlying mental health

and substance use or abuse issues among those perpetrating elder abuse or neglect, or when the perpetrator is an elder, that other solutions are already being implemented rather than referring files to the police for further investigation. By engaging more often with collaborative networks managing elder abuse and neglect concerns in the community, police would be able to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the true extent to which these issues are occurring within their jurisdiction, as they are currently likely only seeing a small proportion of the actual volume of elder abuse and neglect that is occurring in the community.

In the future, should it become apparent that a detachment had sufficient rates of elder abuse/neglect coming to their attention that the establishment of a specialized elder abuse/neglect unit is either required or desired, it is recommended that this unit have a co-located social worker who can provide added supports and connections to the elder victim, enabling better information sharing and coordination of resources, and allowing the police officer to focus their attention primarily on conducting the criminal investigation.

USE OF SCREENING TOOLS TO ASSESS FOR ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Currently, frontline officers do not have any guiding questions or indicators that they can use to assess if elder abuse or neglect may be occurring when they are responding to calls for service. According to the survey data, most participants felt that a tool to guide their investigations would be beneficial. The police currently use the Summary of Domestic Violence Risk Factors to conduct evidence-based investigations of intimate partner violence files. This tool guides them on the major risk factors to explore and how the presence of these factors increases the risk for either the frequency or severity of future violence. A screening tool that is specific to elder abuse or neglect investigations could similarly support the police in ensuring that they are asking the right kinds of questions to enhance their detection of elder abuse or neglect. The EASI appears to be the most available tool at this time, and with several adaptations of this tool already being used by police in other countries, such as Australia, it could likewise be adapted for use in the Canadian context.

The adapted AuSI tool developed by Brijnath et al. (Gahan et al., 2019) for the Australian Ageing Research Institute is provided in Appendix A of this report. While not specific to law enforcement, a version of this tool could easily be implemented in the BC RCMP setting to guide frontline officers when investigating files with elder victims of abuse or neglect. The benefit of using this type of screening form is that it provides a brief summary of how to use the form, includes screening questions designed to identify if abuse or neglect may be present, is structured to guide the police officer away from asking questions of a more sensitive nature about abuse/neglect unless otherwise indicated by the first two screening questions, provides a summary of some common indicators of abuse or neglect, and provides a list of resources that the elder or person conducting the assessment can connect with for further supports. It is recommended that the 'E' Division RCMP adapt a version of the AuSI for use in the police context and include a list of British Columbian resources that police should be using when managing elder abuse or neglect files. It is further recommended that the 'E' Division RCMP first pilot the use of an adapted British Columbian version of this tool in several detachments across the various police districts and measure its effects on

enhancing the detachment's understanding and detection of elder abuse and neglect files, and their confidence in responding to these types of files.

Conclusion

The results of the current project revealed important gaps in awareness and understanding of the challenges inherent in elder abuse and neglect investigations, and the resources available to support both the investigations and the elder victims of abuse and neglect. However, there were some limitations to the current project. The low response rate of approximately 11% was less than ideal but may reflect the overall lack of importance seemingly given to this subject matter by RCMP detachments. As reflected by the senior leader surveys, the overall approach to elder abuse and neglect was to view it as less of a priority than other types of crimes investigated by the police. In particular, the lack of data from the Lower Mainland District was concerning given that this district has the largest population base and correspondingly receives proportionately more elder abuse and neglect files than the other three policing districts. If the RCMP are to engage in the recommended environmental scans, initiating this process in the Lower Mainland District to better understand the available resources and current practices would be beneficial.

Regardless of these limitations, the project results pointed to several areas where enhancements to the police investigation of elder abuse and neglect could be introduced. Although 'E' Division RCMP detachments generally perceived that elder abuse and neglect was relatively uncommon, the file data demonstrated increasing numbers of violent offences involving elder victims year after year between 2014 and 2018. This trend was likely only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, given the increasing rates of family violence that have been documented over this period of time (Brijnath et al., 2022). Furthermore, elders are a fast-growing population in Canada. The number of files with elder victims that are reported to the police can only be expected to increase moving forward. This is an opportune time for the 'E' Division RCMP to move towards implementing training and education for frontline officers, establishing collaborative networks and partnerships to respond to these types of files, and to introduce screening tools or 'job aids' to assist police in conducting efficient and effective investigations with elder victims of abuse or neglect.

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DRAFT

Australian Elder Abuse Screening Instrument (AuSI)



HOW TO USE THE AU SI

- Use the AuSI when elder abuse is suspected.
- Use the AuSI as part of a consultation AND to identify whether further assessment is required.
- Take time before asking questions. The older person will be more likely to disclose information when trust and rapport has been built.
- Use the AuSI in a private room. The older person should answer questions independently of any person who may be providing them with care.
- Seek an independent interpreter service if needed. Do not have a family member/friend translate.
- Explain that the conversation will be confidential, except where their safety is identified to be at risk (e.g. if they disclose that someone is hurting or abusing them) you would need to notify your supervisor.
- Consider the client's ability to answer. Where possible, use the AuSI at a time and place when client capacity is maximised. If this is not possible, use the AuSI another time.

ASSESSOR TO NOTE:

Date:	Client Name:	DOB:	Gender:
Assessor Name:		Assessor Role:	
Place of screening: <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital <input type="checkbox"/> GP Clinic <input type="checkbox"/> Private residence <input type="checkbox"/> Aged Care <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			
Client's place of residence: (note who else might live with the older person)			

SCREENING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you need help from another person with any of the following tasks?

<input type="checkbox"/> Social activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Dressing	<input type="checkbox"/> Bathing / showering
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Medication
<input type="checkbox"/> Finances / bills / banking	<input type="checkbox"/> Shopping	<input type="checkbox"/> Toileting / personal care
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		

2. Do all of the people helping you treat you with respect? Yes No Unsure

If YES, no further questions may be needed. However, the assessor should use professional judgment. If NO or UNSURE answered, go to question 3.

3. Do any of these people refuse to help you when you need help? Never Sometimes Often

4. Do any of these people stop you from seeking help from others? Never Sometimes Often

5. Do any of these people make you sign documents that you are not comfortable signing or do not understand? Never Sometimes Often

6. Do any of these people take anything of yours without asking, such as your money (including accessing bank accounts) or valuables? Never Sometimes Often

7. Do any of these people make you feel afraid? Never Sometimes Often

8. Do any of these people speak to you in ways that make you feel upset? Never Sometimes Often

9. Would you like help with any of this now? **Yes** (provide relevant referrals from overleaf then continue to question 10) **No** (respect client's wishes and provide them with information about help that is available if they decide to seek it in the future)

IF THE OLDER PERSON IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OR RISK OF HARM CALL POLICE ON 000 (TRIPLE ZERO).
Regardless of the answer given to question 9, if SOMETIMES or OFTEN is given to questions 3 - 8 continue to question 10.

10. Do any of these people threaten you? (E.g. threats with respect to money, property or access to grandchildren?) Never Sometimes Often

11. Do any of these people touch you in ways that make you feel uncomfortable? Never Sometimes Often

12. Do any of these people hurt you physically? Never Sometimes Often

If SOMETIMES or OFTEN is given to questions 10 - 12, notify your supervisor to decide on next steps regarding client safety.

²⁷ A copy of this tool is viewable at <https://www.nari.net.au/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=b793ff77-d3ff-4440-91df-bd883a1ba86d>

ASSESSOR TO NOTE FACTORS THAT MAY REQUIRE SPECIFIC SUPPORTS OR REFERRALS:
(speak with supervisor if any concerns are identified for appropriate referrals)

Client identities: <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Intersex <input type="checkbox"/> Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Client health factors: <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health status <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive status <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Assessor comments:	

ABUSE INDICATORS	
Physical	Unexplained injuries (burns, cuts, bruises); Sprained or broken bones; Pain; Restricted movement; Client unwilling to seek medical attention for injuries; Unexplained injuries (burns, cuts, bruises)
Financial	Unable to pay bills, stockpiling unpaid bills; Unable to pay for basic living expenses (food, transport, clothing); Unexplained changes to usual banking; Unusually large withdrawals from bank accounts
Neglect	Poor personal hygiene; Inadequate medical or dental care; Worsening health conditions; Wearing inappropriate clothing; Significant changes in weight
Psychological	Fear; Anxiety; Depression; Social isolation; Loneliness
Sexual	Unexplained STI; Incontinence (bladder or bowel); Trauma or physical injury around genitals, chest, rectum or mouth
Social	Loss of self-esteem; Expression of sadness about loss of contact with others; Withdrawal

REFERRAL CONTACTS (VICTORIA)	
FAMILY VIOLENCE REFERRAL CONTACTS	
<i>Elder Abuse is recognised as a form of Family Violence by the Victorian Government</i>	
1800RESPECT	National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence 24/7 Counselling Service. 1800 737 732
Victoria Police	Contact local station and speak to the Family Violence Liaison Officer, Supervisor or Family Violence Advisor for further advice.

OTHER REFERRAL CONTACTS	
Seniors Rights Victoria	Information, support, advice (including legal and financial) and education for older people. Helpline: 1300 368 821
Better Place Australia	Victoria specific Respecting Elders Support and Conflict Resolution Service. 1800 214 117
Office of the Public Advocate	Advice and advocacy on matters including guardianship, administration, and powers of attorney. Advice service: 1300 309 337 (9am - 4.45pm Monday to Friday)
Aged Care Assessment Service	Referral required through My Aged Care. 1800 200 422





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