



# Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study

NEW YORK *Takes Action* AGAINST  
ELDER MISTREATMENT AND NEGLECT

**Target:  
Elder  
Abuse**

## 2004 “Target Elder Abuse” NYS Summit

### Priority 2 Recommendation:

“ Conduct a statewide research study to define the nature and scope of elder abuse, establish the baseline of prevalence and incidence, and develop a methodology for ongoing data collection and analysis for purposes of policy, planning, program development and evaluation”.

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# Project Partners

- Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc (Lifespan)
- Weill Medical College of Cornell University (Cornell)
- The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA)

## Principal investigators:

Jackie Berman, PhD (DFTA)

Mark Lachs, MD (Cornell)

The project is being partially funded by the New York State Children and Family Trust Fund, a program administered under the NYS Office of Children and Family Services

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# Other Members of Research Team

- **Fordham University**  
Research consultant  
Graduate students
- **Cornell University (Cornell)**  
Statistician  
Elder abuse researcher
- **Cornell Survey Research Institute**
- **Advisory Committee**

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# Project Collaborators

- **State and local Agencies**
- **Regional Elder Abuse Coalitions**
- **Local District OFAs**
- **County DA's Offices**
- **Community-based Agencies**

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# What is elder abuse?



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# What is elder abuse?



# Significance of the Study

- First statewide study to examine the prevalence of elder mistreatment of community-dwelling older adults
- First statewide study that compares self-reported data to documented case data over the same secular period
- Largest and most comprehensive samples to date
- State of the art instruments

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# Previous Prevalence Studies in US

- Pillemer and Finkelhor, 1998 –Boston
- National Center on Elder Abuse, 1998 -National Elder Abuse Incidence Study
- Teaster & Otto, 2006 – national survey of Adult Protective Services cases
- Laumann, Leitsch and Waite, 2008 – national study
- Acierno, Hernandez, et al., 2009 –national study

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# New York State

- Total population: 19,378,102 (US Census 2010)
- Older adult population (over 60): 3,507,000
- Third largest elder population in US

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# Aims of Study

- To estimate the prevalence of various forms of elder abuse in a large, representative, statewide sample of older New Yorkers over 60 years of age through direct interviews (***the Self-Reported Prevalence Study***)
- To estimate the number of elder abuse cases coming to the attention of all agencies and programs responsible for serving elder abuse victims in New York State in a one-year period (***the Documented Case Study***)
- To compare rates of elder abuse in the two component studies, permitting a comparison of “known” to “hidden” cases, and thereby determining an estimate of the rate of elder abuse under-reporting in New York State.

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# Challenges conducting the self reported study in New York State

- Diverse geographic regions – 62 counties
- Large population
- Diverse populations
- Language groups

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# Methodology

## Self Reported Study

- Creation of survey instrument
- Assembling representative sample
- Data collection
- Subject safety

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# The Methodology of Self-Reported Study

## N= 4,156

- Telephone Sample- weighted to reflect the population distribution of elder adults in New York State by geographic region
- Instrument Construction
  - For Financial Exploitation: New items added
  - For Neglect: ADL/IADL impairment scales
  - For Physical & Psychological Abuse: Modification of the Conflict Tactics Scale
  - Novel validation of the instruments
- Subject Safety – extensive safeguards- training of interviewers, Lifespan/MD backup
- Assessment of Capacity
- Over-sampling of diverse communities; English and Spanish

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# Use and Modification of Instruments

- Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) has been preferred instrument in violence research
- Problematic for many forms of elder abuse
- Modified to reflect other actors
- Used gerontological instruments (e.g. ADLs, IADLS)
- Extensive safety protocols

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# Creation of New Items: Financial Exploitation

- Every instrument purported to measure financial exploitation in older people reviewed
- No instrument was fully appropriate:
  - Did not capture range of activities
  - Not culturally/socially appropriate
  - Not “modern”
- Consensus technique used to test and generate items
- Unachievable without partnership

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# Response rate of self-reported study & sample demographics

**N = 4,156** (4,000 subjects interviewed directly, 156 proxy interviews)

## Demographics of the sample

- Age ranged from 60-101, median age 74
- Close to one half of the sample were married/partnered (47%)
- Mean household income was between \$30,000 and \$40,000 category
- Nearly two thirds of subjects self-rated their health as “good”, “very good” or “excellent.”

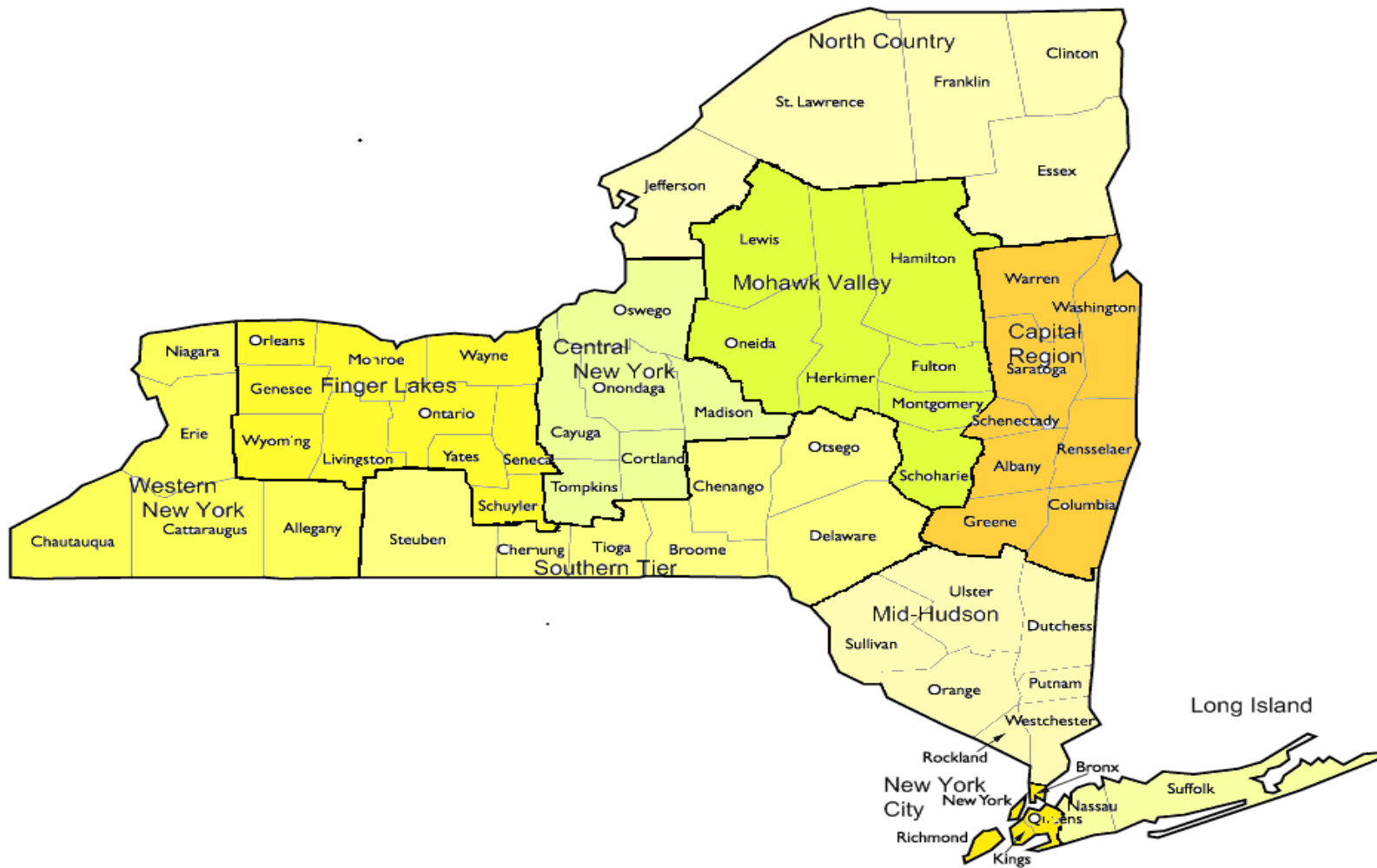
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## Respondent & Elder Population by Demographics

Demographic information	% of Respondents (Self Report Study)	% of 60+ population in NYS
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	36.0	42.7
Female	65.0	57.3
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		
White/Caucasian	75.0	72.7
African American	19.0	11.6
Hispanic/Latino	6.0	9.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.2	5.1
American Indian /Aleut Eskimo	0.8	0.2
Other	2.3	0.2
(Missing)	1.2	N/A

# Map of New York State Regions



## Respondent & Elder Population Distribution by Region

Region (number of counties)	Respondents (Self Report Study)	% of all respondents	60+ population in region (2008 Census)	% of 60+ population in NYS
NYC (5)	1,378	33.2	1,394,486	39.2
Long Island(2)	579	13.9	545,512	15.3
Mid- Hudson (7)	428	10.3	421,949	11.9
Capital, Mohawk Valley, North country (20)	543	13.0	382,339	10.7
Central NY, Southern Tier (13)	374	9.0	288,053	8.1
Finger lakes (10)	362	8.7	232,989	6.5
Western NY (5)	492	11.8	293,132	8.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,156</b>		<b>3,558,460</b>	

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# Methodology

## Documented case study

(N= 292 organizations reported on documented cases)

- Sample
- Instrument Construction
- Data Collection

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# Challenges conducting a documented case study

- No one centralized dataset
- No single point of entry – complex service delivery
- No unified definition of elder abuse and neglect

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# Major Service Areas Serving Elder Abuse Victims (in red centralized databases)

- **Adult Protective Services**
- Aging Services
- District Attorneys
- Elder Abuse Coalition members
- **New York State Office of Victim Services funded programs**
- New York State Domestic Violence Programs
- **Law Enforcement (Domestic Incident Report data)**

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# Minimum Dataset: Identified Data Fields (for 60+ by county)

- Total number of unduplicated elder abuse(60+)
- Demographic data of victims:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Household composition
  - Poverty
  - Race/ethnicity
- Demographic data of abusers:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Relationship of abuser
- Types of mistreatment
- Referral source
- Disposition – referral to others

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## Response rate of documented cases by service system

(292 of the 325 organizations were able to report information on elder abuse cases)

<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Total number of surveys</b>	<b>Number of surveys completed</b>	<b>% completed</b>
<b>Total number of unduplicated</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>78</b>
Community Based Organizations	254	191	75
Adult Protective Services	62	62	100
Law Enforcement	62	62	100
District Attorneys	62	36	58

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## Response rate of documented cases by region

Organizations	Total Number of Agencies	Number Completed Survey	% Completed
<b>TOTAL NUMBER (UNDUPLICATED)</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>78</b>
<i>New York City</i>	111	105	95
<i>Long Island</i>	16	15	94
<i>Mid-Hudson</i>	60	39	65
<i>Capital region, North Country, Mohawk Valley</i>	95	90	95
<i>Central New York and Southern Tier</i>	68	53	78
<i>Finger Lakes</i>	56	55	98
<i>Western New York</i>	32	25	78

# Major Findings



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# Major findings of the Self-Reported Study

- The cumulative prevalence of any form of **non-financial elder mistreatment was 46.2 per thousand.**
- The most common form of mistreatment was **major financial exploitation** (theft of money or property, using items without permission, impersonation to get access, forcing or misleading to get items such as money, bank cards, accounts, power of attorney) with a **rate of 41 per 1,000.** (The rate for moderate financial exploitation, was far lower).
- **A total incidence rate of 76 per 1,000 older residents** of New York State, in the past year, for any form of elder abuse was found (non financial and/or financial).
- The study also found that **141 out of 1,000 older New Yorkers have experienced an elder abuse event since turning age 60.**

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# Major Findings of the Documented Case Study

- Adjusting for possible duplication of victims served by more than one program, **11,432 victims were** included within documented data systems **throughout New York State, yielding a rate of 3.2 elder abuse victims served per 1,000 older adults.**
- **Rates of documented elder abuse varied by region.** The highest rate was in New York City (3.8 reported cases per 1,000) compared to the region with the lowest rate of documented cases, Central New York /Southern Tier (2.3 cases per 1,000).
- **Urban areas tend to have higher documented case rates than rural counties.**

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## Major Findings of the Documented Case Study (cont.)

- **Variability in data collection across service systems and victim non-reporting** contributed to the gap between the number of cases reported through the Documented Case Study and the prevalence rates found in the Self-Reported Study.
- **Emotional/psychological abuse is the most common abuse category documented, followed by physical abuse.**

## Rates of Elder Abuse in New York State: Comparison of self-reported and documented case data

	<b>Documented Rate per 1,000</b>	<b>Self-reported Rate per 1,000</b>	<b>Ratio of Self-Reported to Documented</b>
<b>All forms of abuse</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>76.0</b>	<b>23.5</b>
Financial	1.0	42.1	43.9
Physical and Sexual	1.1	22.4	19.8
Neglect	0.3	18.3	57.2
Emotional/psychological	1.4	16.4	12.0

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## Regional Comparison of self-reported and documented case data

<b>Region</b>	<b>Documented rate per 1,000</b>	<b>Self-reported rate per 1,000</b>	<b>Ratio of self-reported to documented</b>
<b>New York State</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>76.0</b>	<b>23.5</b>
<b>County Types</b>			
Urban	3.6	84.8	23.9
Suburban	3.1	68.9	22.4
Rural	2.2	56.7	26.3
<b>Regional Breakdown</b>			
<i>New York City</i>	3.8	92.2	24.3
<i>Long Island</i>	3.6	74.3	20.6
<i>Mid-Hudson</i>	2.5	70.1	27.8
<i>Capital region, North Country, Mohawk Valley</i>	2.7	55.2	20.2
<i>Central New York and Southern Tier</i>	2.3	80.2	34.9
<i>Finger Lakes</i>	3.4	58.0	17.2
<i>Western New York</i>	2.3	71.1	30.4



## Demographic comparison of documented to self-reported cases

	Documented Case Study	Self-Reported Study
Information about victims	% of victims	% of victims
<b>Age groups</b>		
60-64	17.0	20.3
65-74	41.9	38.0
75-84	28.1	29.1
85+	13.0	12.7
(Missing)	14.9	0.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	32.8	35.8
Female	67.2	64.2
(Missing)	13.8	0.0
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
African American	27.9	26.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.0	1.6
Caucasian	69.3	65.5
Hispanic/Latino	16.4	7.6
Native American/Aleut Eskimo	0.8	1.9
Race, other	10.5	2.9
(Missing)	50.8	1.9

## Demographic comparison of documented to self-reported cases

	<b>Documented Case Study</b>	<b>Self-Reported Study</b>
<b>Information about abusers</b>	<b>% of abusers</b>	<b>% of abusers</b>
<b>Relationship of abuser</b>		
Spouse/partner	26.0	20.3
Adult child	41.7	22.9
Grandchild	9.5	6.8
Other Relative	13.1	11.7
Friend/Neighbor	3.5	14.0
Paid home care aide	.7	12.4
Other Non-relative	5.6	9.6
(Missing)	(21.6)	(2.4)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	66.3	n/a
Female	33.7	
(Missing)	18.3	
<b>Number of Abusers</b>		
1		74.0
2	N/A	17.0
3+		9.0

## Abuser information by type of mistreatment

Abuser	Neglect	Financial Exploitation	Psychological Abuse	Physical Abuse	TOTAL
Spouse/Partner	17.0	15.0	28.0	40.0	100.0
Adult Child	29.0	40.0	15.0	15.0	100.0
Grandchild	7.0	76.0	3.0	14.0	100.0
Other Relative	6.0	50.0	20.0	24.0	100.0
Neighbor	7.0	47.0	33.0	13.0	100.0
Friend	9.0	56.0	11.0	24.0	100.0
Other Non-Relative	12.0	29.0	17.0	41.0	100.0
Paid Home Care Aide	43.0	55.0	0.0	2.0	100.0

## Percent of organizations providing demographic information by service system

<b>Minimum data set for elder abuse</b>	<b>Adult Protective Services</b>	<b>Law Enforcement</b>	<b>District Attorney</b>	<b>Community Based Organization</b>
<b>Type of mistreatment</b>	94.7 %	100.0%	61.1 %	74.0%
<b>Information on victims</b>				
Age	94.7	100.0	44.4	78.1
Gender	94.7	100.0	50.0	81.2
Race/ethnicity	94.7	100.0	38.9	68.7
Living arrangements	94.7	0.0	16.7	64.6
Lives with Abuser	0.0	100.0	22.2	60.4
Poverty Status	0.0	0.0	5.6	39.6
<b>Information on abusers</b>				
Age	9.3	100.0	80.0	75.0
Gender	100.0	100.0	0.0	96.9
Relationship of abuser	100.0	100.0	60.0	93.7

# Overall Major Findings

The findings of the study point to a **dramatic gap** between the rate of elder abuse events reported by older New Yorkers and the number of documented cases within the formal elder abuse service system.

Overall the study found an elder abuse prevalence rate in New York State that was nearly **24 times greater** than the number of cases included within documented data systems throughout New York State.

**Verbal/psychological abuse** was the most common form of mistreatment reported by agencies providing data on elder abuse victims in the **Documented Case Study**. This finding stands in contrast to the results of **the Self-Reported Study** in which **financial exploitation** was the most prevalent form of mistreatment.

Applying the prevalence rates derived from the self-reported study, over **250,000 older adults in the state have been victims of at least one form of elder abuse since turning 60**

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# Study Limitations

- Respondents:
  - English or Spanish
  - Capacity to use phone
  - Cognitively intact
- Could not collect data on 100% of cases

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# Study Implications

- **The findings suggest that attention should be paid to the following issues in elder abuse services:**
  - Consistency and adequacy in **the collection of data** regarding elder abuse cases across service systems.
  - Emphasis on **cross-system collaboration** to ensure that limited resources are used wisely to identify and serve elder abuse victims.
  - Greater focus on **prevention and intervention** in those forms of elder abuse reported by elders to be most prevalent, in particular, financial exploitation.
  - **Promotion of public and professional awareness** through education campaigns and training concerning the signs of elder abuse and the resources available to assist older adults who are being mistreated by trusted individuals.

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# 2010 New York State Elder Abuse Summit Results

## An updated Action Agenda for NYS

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# New York State Elder Abuse Summit

- November 2010
- 100 experts in elder abuse and aging services
- Release of Prevalence Study results

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## New York State Action Agenda

- Reform and update specific NYS laws,
- Develop a system of uniform data collection
- Design and implement a statewide public awareness campaign
- Promote Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) and cross system coordination
- Discipline-specific training on elder abuse
- Statewide network/resource center
- Practice Enhancement: Identify and promote evidence-based practice

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