

# ELDER ABUSE

*Many older people experience some form of abuse in the home.*

Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person. Elder abuse includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial and material abuse; abandonment; neglect and serious loss of dignity and respect.

### Key facts:

- National surveys conducted in predominantly high-income countries find wide variation in rates of abuse in the preceding 12 months among adults aged over 60 years, ranging from 0.8% in Spain and 2.6% in the United Kingdom to upwards of 18% in Israel, 23.8% in Austria and 32% in Belgium.
- Elder abuse can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences, including depression and anxiety.
- Elder abuse is predicted to increase as many countries are experiencing rapidly ageing populations.

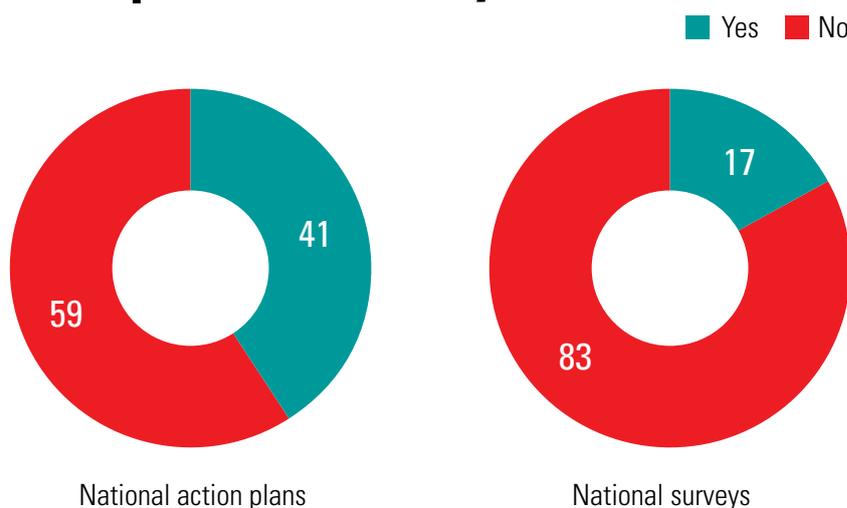
### Findings from the survey

Although public and professional information campaigns to raise awareness about elder abuse are reported in many countries, elder abuse is one of the least-investigated types of violence in national surveys, and one of the least addressed in national action plans.

### Prevention approaches

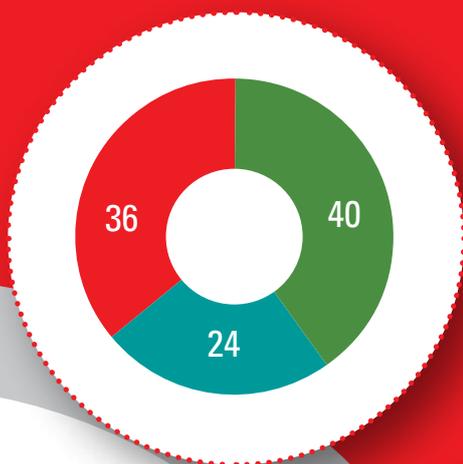
Strategies to prevent elder abuse include efforts to raise professional awareness and train practitioners; inform the public about how to identify the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and where help can be obtained, and improving policies and practices in residential care facilities for elderly people. There is, however, very little research on the effectiveness of any such programmes in preventing elder abuse, and this is a critical gap to fill.

## Proportion of countries with national action plans and surveys



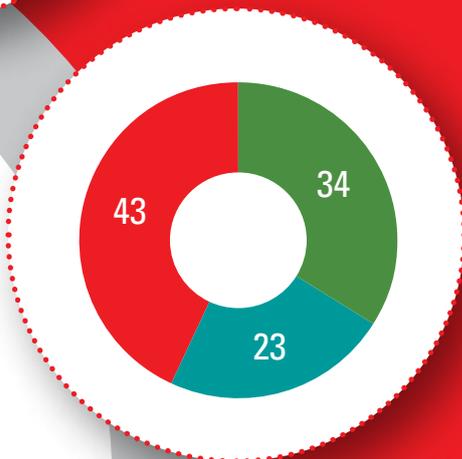
# Proportion of countries that reported implementing a particular strategy

- **None**  
(not implemented at all)
- **Limited**  
(implemented once or a few times)
- **Larger scale**  
(e.g. across many schools or communities or has reached 30% or more of the target population)



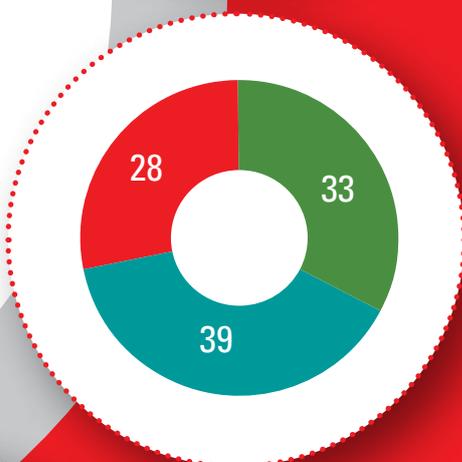
## Professional awareness campaigns

Professional awareness campaigns aim to improve professionals' ability to identify and deal effectively with suspected elder abuse cases. While they can increase such knowledge, their effectiveness depends on the strategies in place to deal with a suspected case once identified.



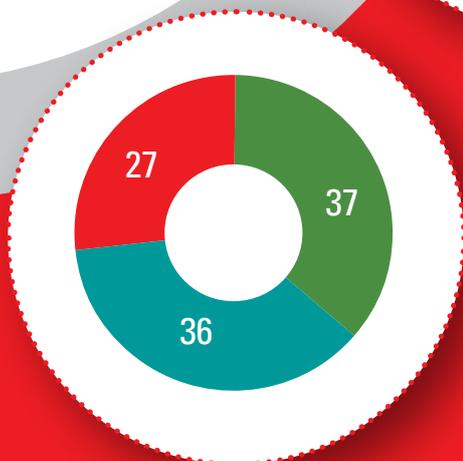
## Public information campaigns

Public information campaigns aim to increase public awareness about elder abuse, promote positive attitudes towards older people, and encourage the respectful, dignified treatment of older people. They may help to raise the visibility of elder abuse and change social norms that are supportive of elder abuse.



## Caregiver support

Caregiver support programmes provide services to relieve the burden of caregiving, by, for instance, providing help with housekeeping and meal preparation, respite care, support groups and day care. They can reduce the caregiver burden, stress and depression, all of which are risk factors for elder abuse.



## Residential care policies

Residential care policies aim to improve standards of care in nursing and other residential care homes for elderly people by implementing procedures within the homes that reduce the likelihood of elder abuse. They can help to establish uniform licencing requirements and professional operating standards that lower the risk of elder abuse.