



Impact of Crime on Older Adults

Researchers agree that fraud against older adults is underreported. This is problematic because:

- Failure to report means assistance by police, service providers and family members and others is not mobilized to stop the abuse
- Offenders are able to continue to take advantage of multiple unsuspecting older adults
- Underreporting of the different types of scams, methods used by the perpetrator to con older adults and also the frequency of frauds means there is no pressure to change the existing system that is allowing these crimes to take place.

Impact

1) Inability to recover financially

2) Loss of independence

3) Physical and emotional impact

4) Diminished Quality of Life

5) Vicarious victimization

Consequences

Income lost as a result of a burglary, financial mis-advice or real estate scam(s) can compromise an older adult's standard of living, especially if they live on a fixed income. Older adults may not be able to afford basic necessities such as regular meals, comfortable heating in the home or warm clothing.

Studies have shown that crime can be the catalyst which can bring an end to the emotional and financial independence of older adults and also curtail their lives and lifespans. It can make them fearful of going out, decrease their desire to interact with other people and increase their social isolation.

Older adults may recuperate more slowly from a life-threatening illness, suffer from depression and may isolate themselves from family, friends and their community because of feelings of shame.

Older adults may become overly worried and distressed about being scammed again or feel so embarrassed that it drives them into reclusion from other people, including their own community. or cause them deep doubt in their ability or self-confidence.

The National Centre for Elder Abuse defines "vicarious victimization" as the phenomena where an older adult has not been a victim, but is deeply fearful of becoming one because a friend, relative or neighbour has been a victim of elder abuse. They may alter their lifestyle by withdrawing from society, abandon friends, church and even shopping. They may begin to see the world from a different perspective which makes them more isolated. This can happen to older adults who are homebound and get all their interaction from television.