



Elder Abuse Prevention (ON)

Stop Abuse - Restore Respect

WEBINAR

# Preventing Domestic Homicides with Older Couples: Lesson Learned from Tragedies

**NOVEMBER 24, 2021**  
**1 PM - 2 PM**



#VictimsWeek



**Margaret MacPherson**

Research Associate  
Centre for Research and  
Education on Violence  
Against Women and  
Children



**Dr. Peter Jaffe**

Psychologist, Professor  
Emeritus, a founding  
Director of the Centre for  
Research and Education  
on Violence Against  
Women & Children in the  
Faculty of Education at  
Western University

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A top-down view of a smudge stick burning in a brass bowl. The bowl is ornate with embossed patterns. White smoke rises from the burning bundle. The scene is set on a green wooden surface, surrounded by various natural elements: a large white crystal in the top left, a green chrysanthemum in the top left, green cedar branches in the top right, a yellow pom-pom flower in the middle left, another yellow pom-pom flower in the middle right, a green chrysanthemum in the bottom center, a green chrysanthemum in the bottom right, and a large clear crystal in the bottom right. A semi-transparent grey banner with the text "LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT" is positioned across the bottom of the image.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



# WEBINAR HOUSEKEEPING



## Communication

All attendees will be muted during the webinar.



## Speakers

Will be visible while presenting and for the Question/Answer session.



## ASL Interpreters

Image and name of Interpreters will be visible during the webinar.  
You can view all speakers by clicking gallery view.



## Adjusting Speaker Images

Drag the line between the image frame and slides to the left (adjust at beginning of the webinar).

# WEBINAR HOUSEKEEPING



## Chat Box

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Post comments during the session.



## Question Box

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Type your questions in **Question/Answer box**. A response will be posted during the webinar *or* asked to speaker after the presentation.



## Recording

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A recorded version of this webinar will be available on EAPO's website.



## Evaluation

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After the session, a pop-up screen will appear to complete survey. Your feedback and suggestions for future webinars is appreciated.

# WEBINAR HOUSEKEEPING

## Respecting Privacy and Confidentiality

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EAPO appreciates there may be personal circumstances or issues which participants may wish to address. However, in keeping with our commitment to maintaining your privacy and confidentiality, today we will be answering general questions posed through the Q&A.

If someone wishes to discuss specific circumstances, we invite you to contact EAPO following this webinar to arrange for a confidential conversation so that we may further assist you.



[www.eapon.ca](http://www.eapon.ca)

# Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO)

## Mission and Goals

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EAPO envisions an Ontario where ALL seniors are free from abuse, have a strong voice, feel safe and respected.

Achieving our mission requires raising awareness, delivering education and training, working collaboratively with like-minded organizations and assisting with service coordination and advocacy.

@EAPreventionON  
#RestoringRespect

Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario | 2021

# Ontario's Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse

1

## **Public Education and Awareness**

A Province-wide, multi-media public education campaign to promote awareness about elder abuse and provide information on how to access services.

2

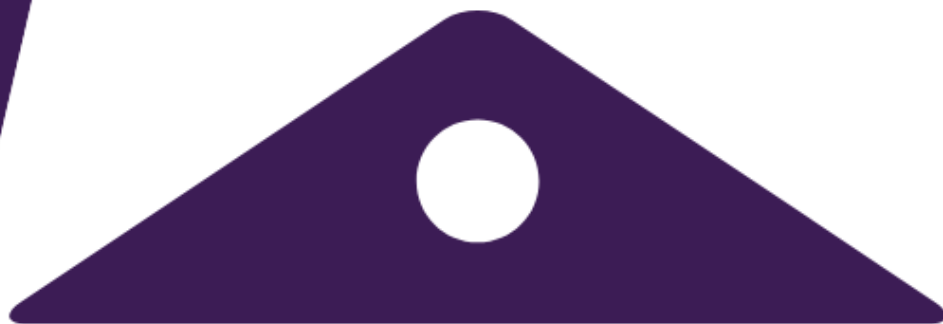
## **Training for Front-Line Staff**

Specialized training to staff from various sectors, who work directly with seniors, to enhance their knowledge and skills to recognize and respond to elder abuse.

3

## **Co-ordination of Community Services**

To strengthen communities across the province by building partnerships, promoting information sharing and supporting their efforts to combat elder abuse.



Co-ordination of  
Community Services

Training for  
Front-Line Staff

Public Education  
and Awareness

**3 Pillars of the Strategy**



# Supporting older adult victims and survivors of abuse

## ***THE POWER OF COLLABORATION***



**Join EAPO's Webinar Series in recognition of  
VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF CRIME WEEK**



Project funding provided by  
Department of Justice Canada

**NOVEMBER 14 -20, 2021**







## Dr. Peter Jaffe

**Psychologist, Professor Emeritus, and one of the founding Directors of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children in the Faculty of Education at Western University**

Dr. Jaffe is a psychologist, Professor Emeritus, and one of the founding Directors of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children in the Faculty of Education at Western University (London Ontario, Canada).

He has co-authored eleven books, 40 chapters and over 80 articles related to domestic violence, the impact of domestic violence on children, homicide prevention and the role of the criminal and family justice systems.

For the past 30 years, he has presented workshops across the United States and Canada, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Costa Rica and Europe to various groups including judges, lawyers, health, mental health professionals and educators.

WEBINAR

GUEST  
SPEAKER



# **Margaret MacPherson**

**Research Associate, Centre for  
Research and Education on Violence  
Against Women and Children**

Margaret is a Research Associate with the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children (CREVAWC) at Western University in London Ontario. Margaret designs and develops curriculum and related materials on a number of initiatives including the Make It Our Business, workplace domestic violence program and It's Not Right! Neighbours, Friends and Families for Older Adults.

Margaret is passionate in her belief that everyone has an important contribution to make in creating safe and supportive environments at work and in our communities.

**WEBINAR**

**GUEST  
SPEAKER**



# Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children

*Learning to End Abuse*



Western  
Education



Intimate Partner Homicides Involving Older Adults: Lessons  
Learned from Tragedies

Peter Jaffe, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Education  
Margaret MacPherson, Research Associate

November 24, 2021

[learningtoendabuse.ca](http://learningtoendabuse.ca)



Traumatic CONTENT  
Vicarious Trauma



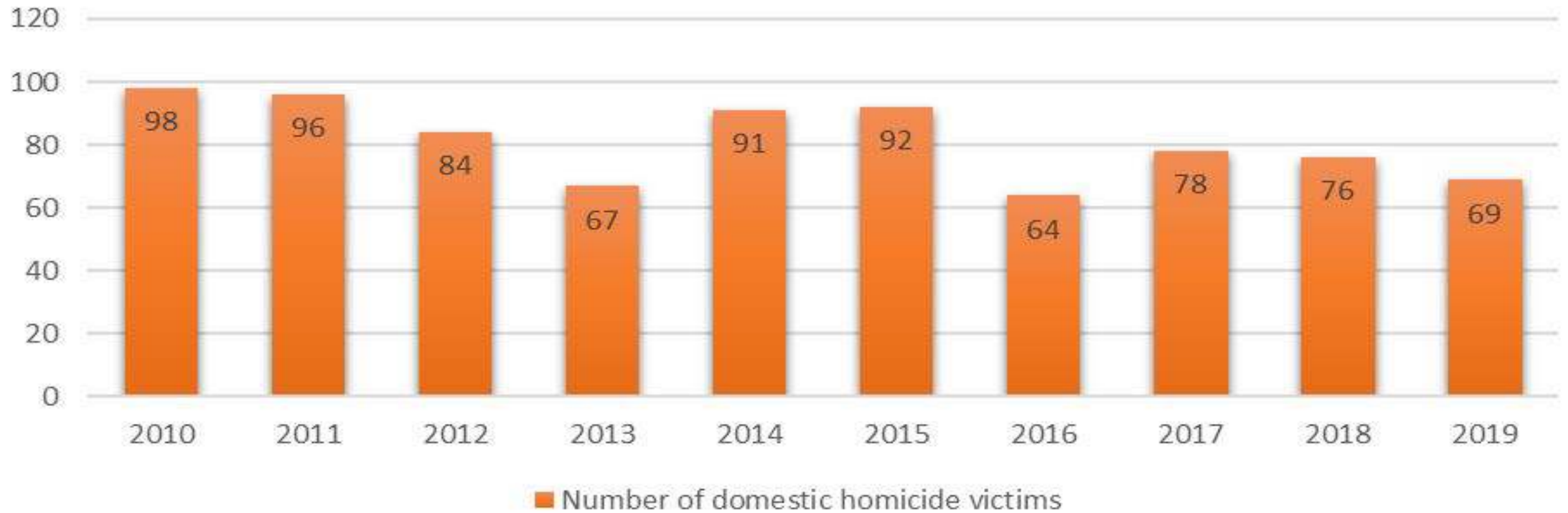
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# Canadian Domestic Homicides ([www.cdhpi.ca](http://www.cdhpi.ca))

**Annual distribution of domestic homicide victims, Canada, 2010-2019 (N=815)**



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# Demographic characteristics

Most adult victims were female (79%)

- Average age of 41 years

Most accused were male (86%)

- Average age of 41 years



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# Vulnerable Populations

Of the 815 domestic homicide victims, 439 (54%) were identified as belonging to one or more of these vulnerable populations:

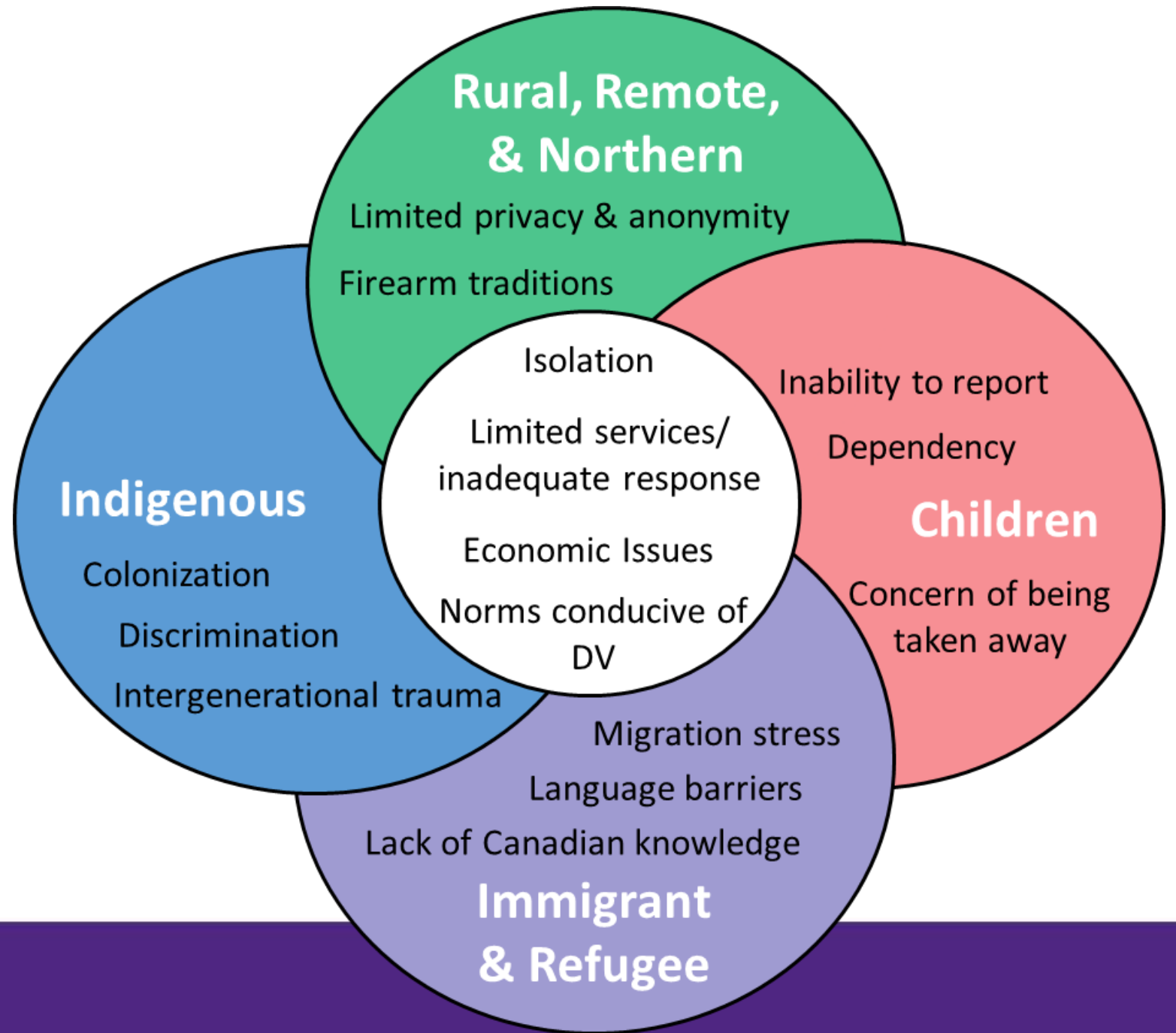
Indigenous (N=103)	Immigrant/refugee (N=128)	Rural, remote, northern (N=252)	Children (N=74)
66% were killed in an RRN area	5% lived in an RRN area	27% were Indigenous 3% were immigrants/ refugees	46% lived in an RRN area
10% were children	5% were children	13% were children	14% were Indigenous 8% were immigrant/ refugees



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# Risk Factors



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# Learning from Tragedies



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# We Speak for the Dead to Protect the Living



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## **Not a Blaming & Shaming Exercise**

What can we do to prevent a tragedy in similar circumstances in the future?



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# The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC)

**Multi-disciplinary** advisory committee of experts established in 2003 in response to two major inquests into the deaths of Arlene May and Gillian Hadley, by their intimate partners.

Committee consists of representatives with expertise in domestic violence from law enforcement, criminal justice, healthcare, academia, social services, victim services and other public safety agencies and organizations (as needed).



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# 2003-2017

## Reviewed 311 cases, involving 445 deaths

- 65% were homicides & 35% were homicide-suicides
- 72% had a history of domestic violence
- 67% had an actual or pending separation
- 71% had seven or more risk factors



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# Common Risk Markers

- 74%** - Prior history of domestic violence
- 72%** - Actual or pending separation
- 56%** - Obsessive behavior (including stalking)
- 56%** - Depression (or other MH problems)
- 51%** - Prior threats to commit suicide or attempt
- 47%** - Escalation of violence



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# Who knows what?

Family..... 73%

Friends.....65%

Police.....57%

Lawyer.....42%

Co-workers.....33%

Medical..... 22%

DV agency..... 15%

Child Protection 10%

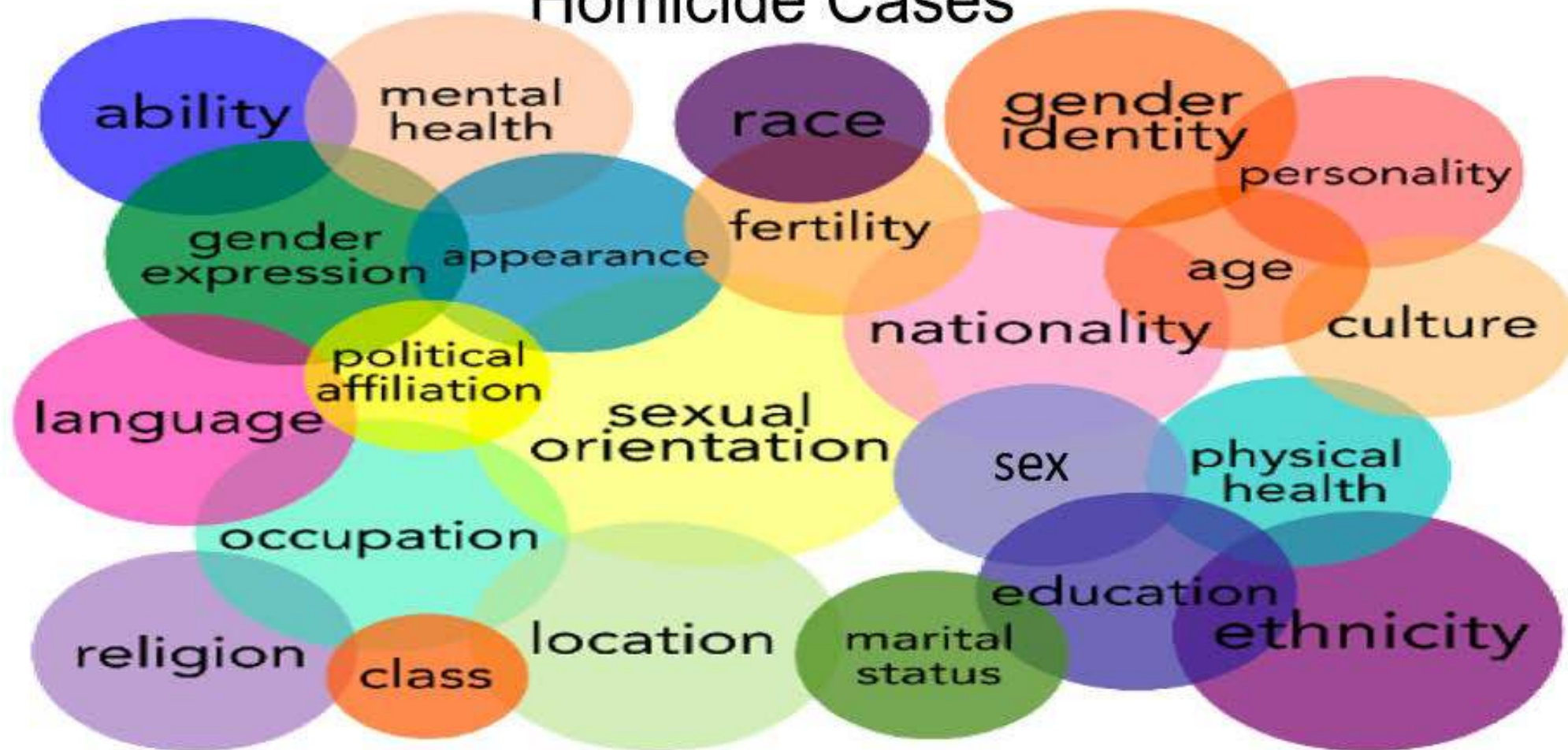
Clergy..... 4%



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# Patterns & Risk Factors are Diverse in Domestic Homicide Cases



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# How do Domestic Homicides Differ with **Older** Adults?



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# Research from Quebec Coroner's Office

- 27 cases of older couples
- 25 male (93%) 65-81
- 19 homicide-suicide 70%
- **75% major depression**

Several victims had pre-existing medical illnesses – often perpetrators who were caregivers to chronically ill spouses.

Few perpetrators had received psychiatric help



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# International Research

## **Based on an analysis of 49 studies:**

Perpetrators of homicide-suicides were older and male

Adversity during childhood, legal issues in the past, as well as the exposure to stressful and/or traumatic events shortly before the homicide

Significant contribution of psychopathological factors (e.g., depressive disorder, psychotic delusional convictions)



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# Warning Signs & Risk Factors

Crime

**Terrance Finn found guilty of first-degree murder in Peterborough parking lot shooting death of wife**



**Terry Finn** was known for his care and safety when it came to the guns he kept locked up at home, the court later heard. But on the weekend before his wife was killed, Terry grabbed his favourite, a Colt revolver of the style seen in old westerns and went for a drive. He later called home, telling his wife and sons he was "too stressed out" to carry on.

"I was going to shoot myself," Terry would later tell police. "I had them all upset and worried." When Terry returned home unhurt later that day, his son scolded him, and Terry apologized. **Court documents note the family talked about taking his guns away "for his own safety and the safety of others." But the guns remained in his possession.**

Brenda McGrath, a neighbour and close friend of Sandra's for 37 years, saw the guns as a serious threat. **"When I heard there were guns in the house, I begged [Sandra] to get out before something happened to her,"** McGrath later wrote in her victim impact statement.



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# Domestic Violence with Older Adults

- Older population has the lowest rates of domestic violence (DV)
  - But still important – close to 3,000 individuals over the age of 55 reported spousal violence in Canada, 2011
  - Expect that reporting rates are conservative
- Older women have different experiences with domestic violence
  - Physical, emotional, and financial barriers
  - Dependency
  - Beliefs – less likely to report to the police or disclose to others



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# Domestic Homicide in the Older Population

Of the limited research that has been done:

- Couples are most often in intact marriages
- Husbands are the large majority of perpetrators
- Physical health problems common
- Depression within the perpetrator; dementia within the victim
- Care taker

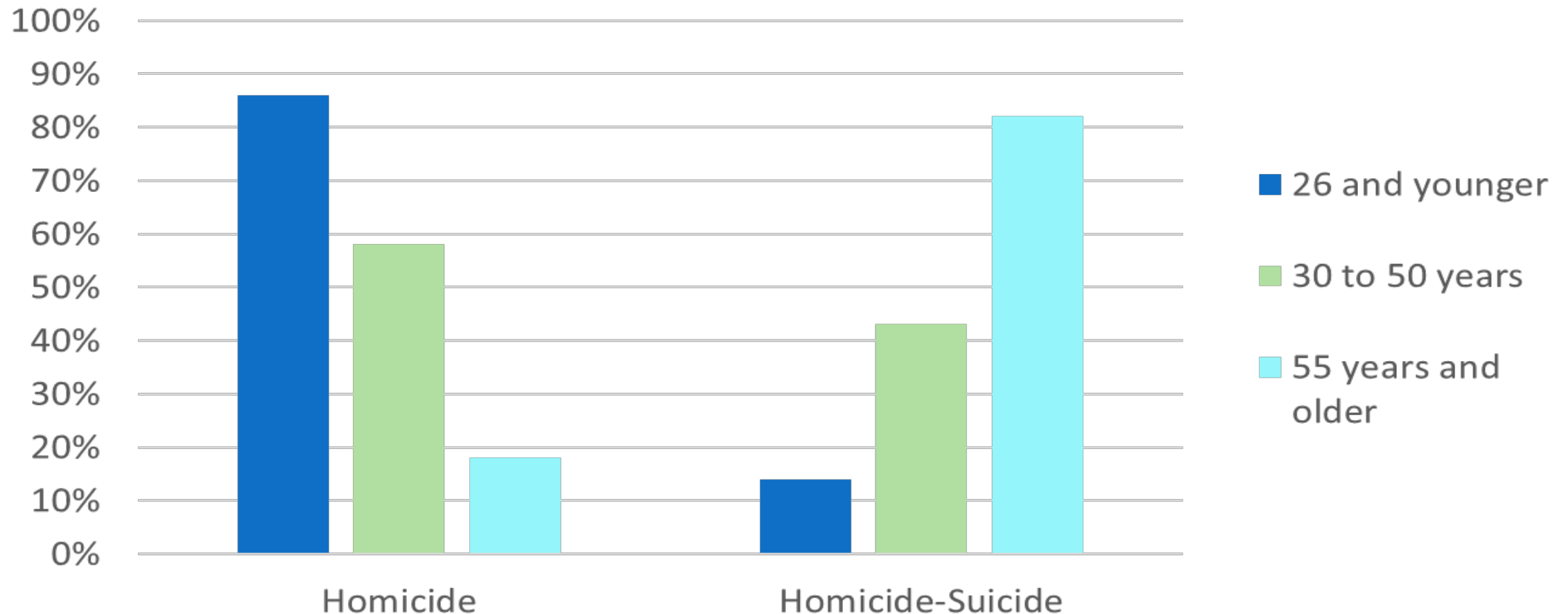
Homicide is different within the older age group



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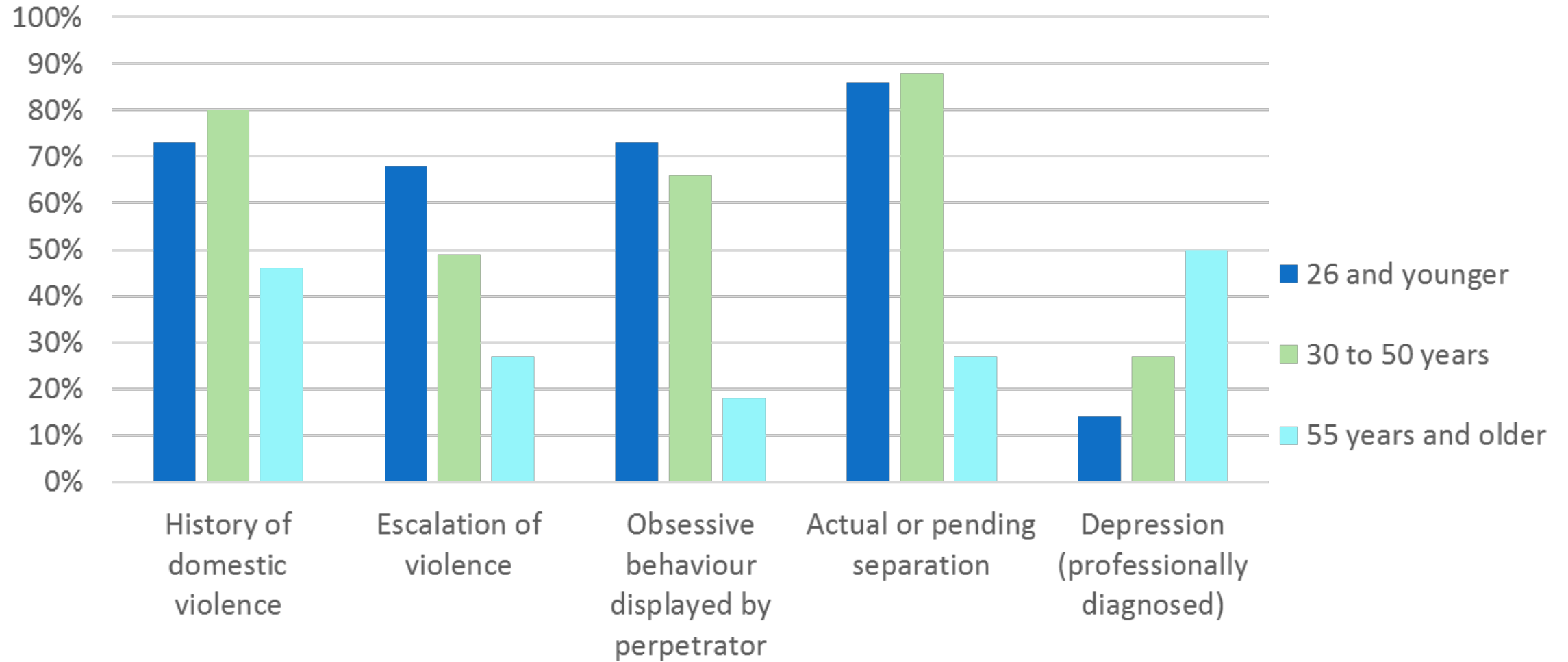
# DVDRC - Type of Case by Age



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# DVDRC Top Five Risk Factors by Age

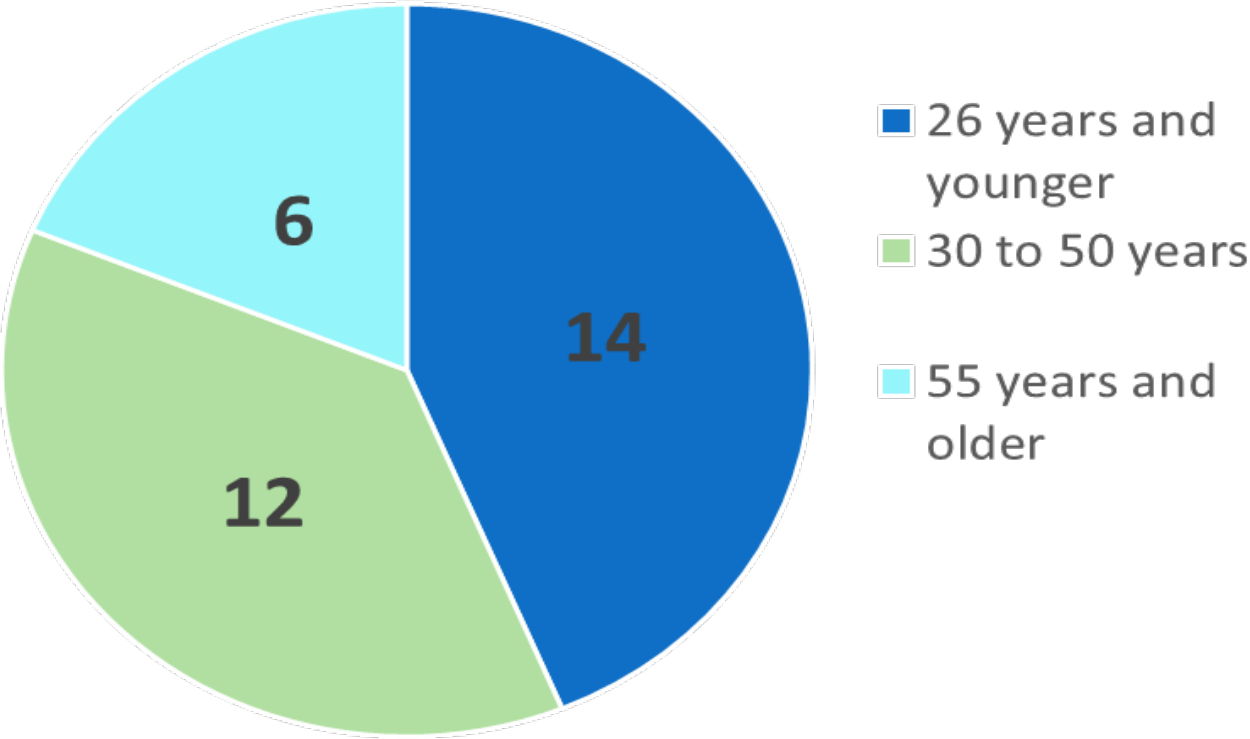


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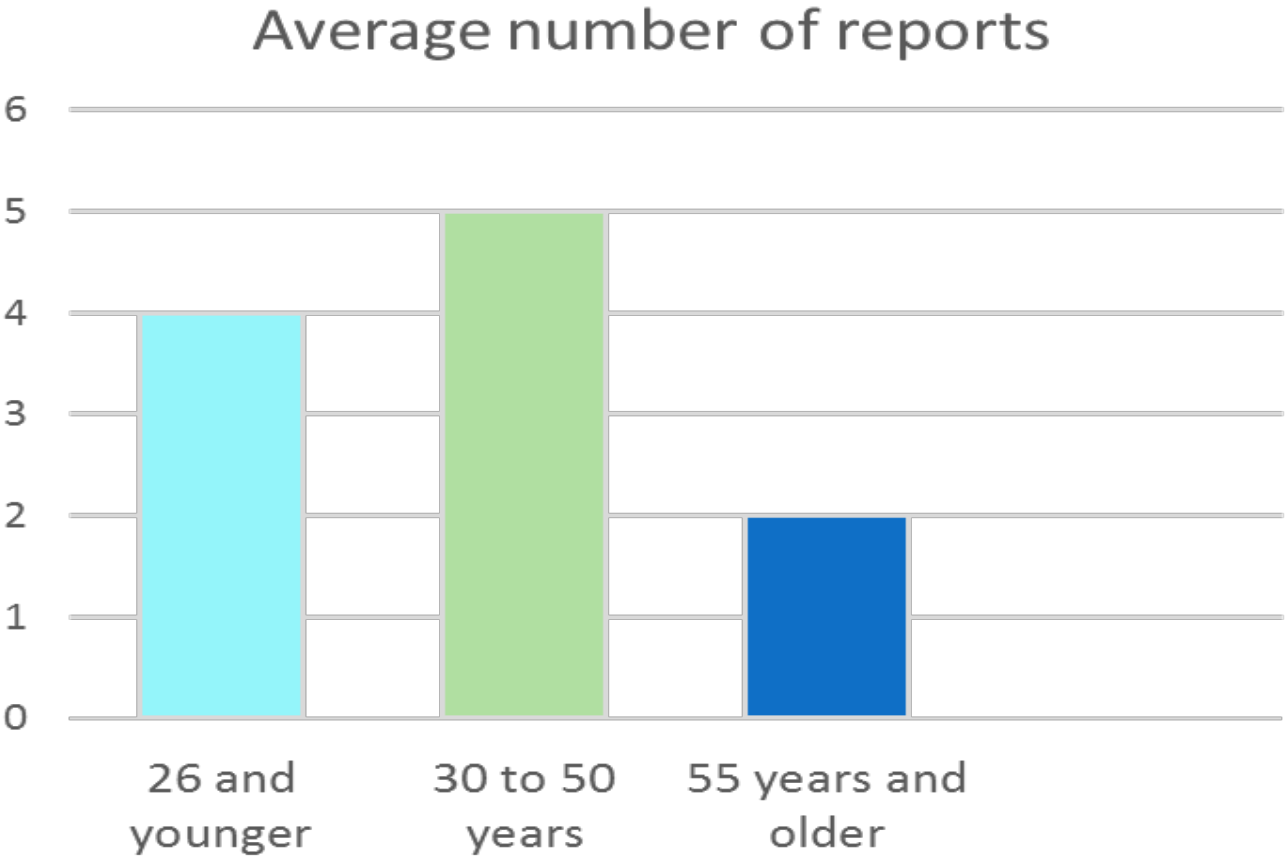
# DVDRC Total Risk Factors by Age



## Total Number of Risk Factors

	26 years and younger	30 to 50 years	55 years and older
3 or less	5%	4%	46%
7 or more	91%	88%	41%

# DVDRC - Who Knows by Age?



Reports of DV (significantly different)			
	26 and younger	30 to 50 years	55 years and older
Police	32%	56%	23%
Family	86%	75%	50%
Friends	86%	69%	36%
Co-Workers	23%	40%	18%
Neighbours	27%	30%	14%

# Sample Past DVDRC Recommendations

Individuals and organizations providing health care services and support to aging couples with declining or poor health should receive enhanced education and training about their increased risk of intimate partner homicide-suicide, particularly if the male is in the caretaker role for his female partner or there has been some other major life event. (2012)

Health care providers, police services, victim services, community care access centres, Ontario Women's Directorate, and families should receive enhanced education and training about aging couples' increased risk of intimate partner homicide-suicide, particularly if they are experiencing declining or poor health, and/or some other major life change. (2015)



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# Recent Study with Link to COVID-19

**Major Risk Factors:** Male, Caregiving Role,  
Health Issues in one or both Individuals,  
Legal Issues, Depression, Suicide Ideation

**Access to Firearms**

**Major Recs:** Screen for depressive symptoms, suicidality and alcohol and substance abuse

Screen for domestic violence and access to weapons & Referral to specialized mental health professional.



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# Implications

- Take Domestic Violence in Older Couples Seriously
- Older victims more reluctant and more dependent
- Screen for mental health and physical health problems and access to guns
- Minor charges may reflect major issues
- Address basic issues in safety planning and risk management – e.g., housing issues, caregiving issues
- Need for public education and professionals – especially those working with older adults



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# Public Awareness & Prevention

*It's Not Right! Neighbours, Friends and Family for Older Adults*

<http://itsnotright.ca/>



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# Older women and domestic homicide

We have experienced an ongoing sense of frustration, traumatic disbelief, and sorrow that more could not have been done to save lives in the face of so many warning signs in the vast majority of domestic homicides.

Edited by  
Peter Jaffe  
Katreena Scott  
Anna-Lee Straatman

# PREVENTING DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

Lessons Learned from Tragedies





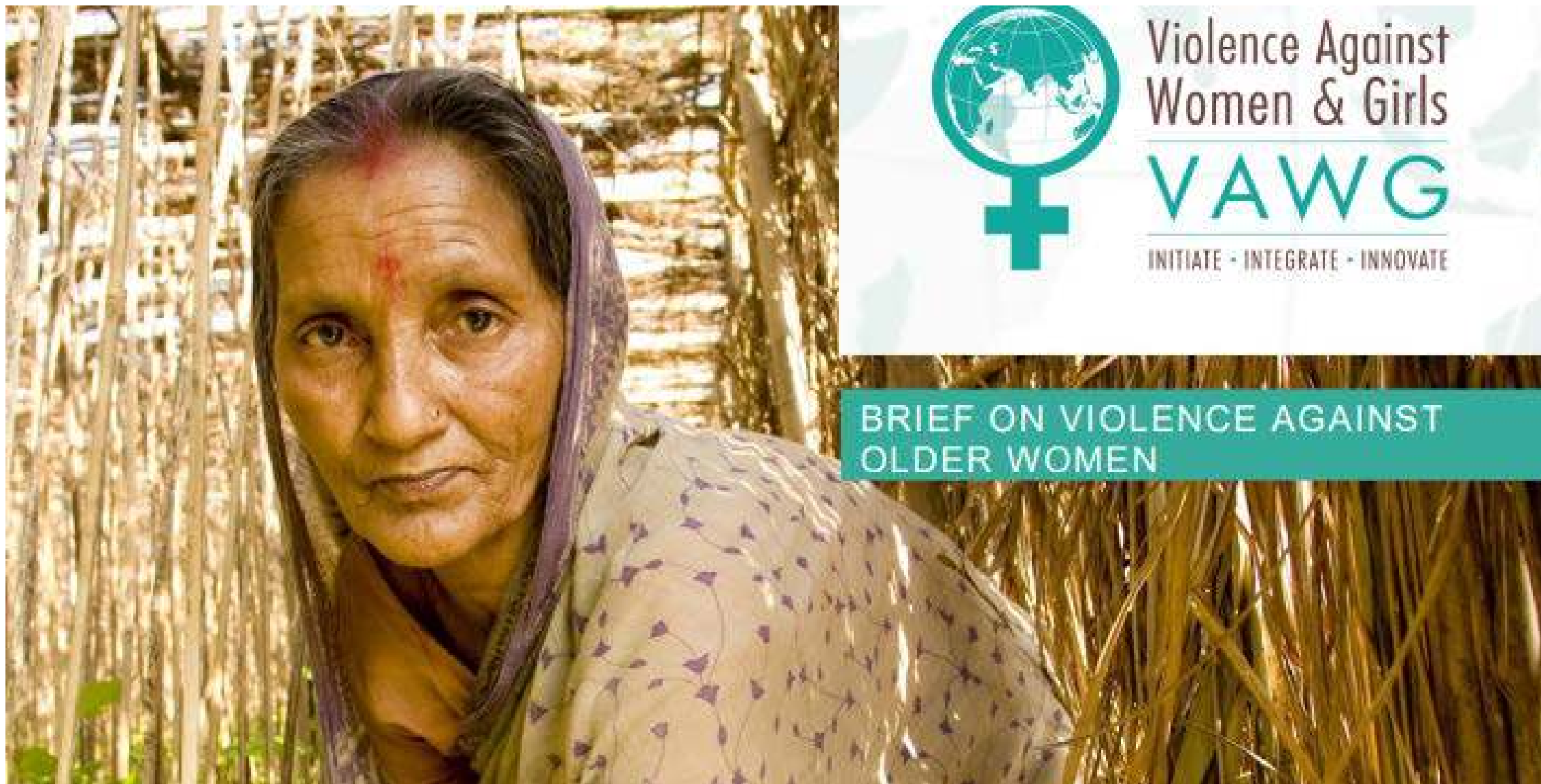


Violence Against  
Women & Girls

**VAWG**

INITIATE • INTEGRATE • INNOVATE

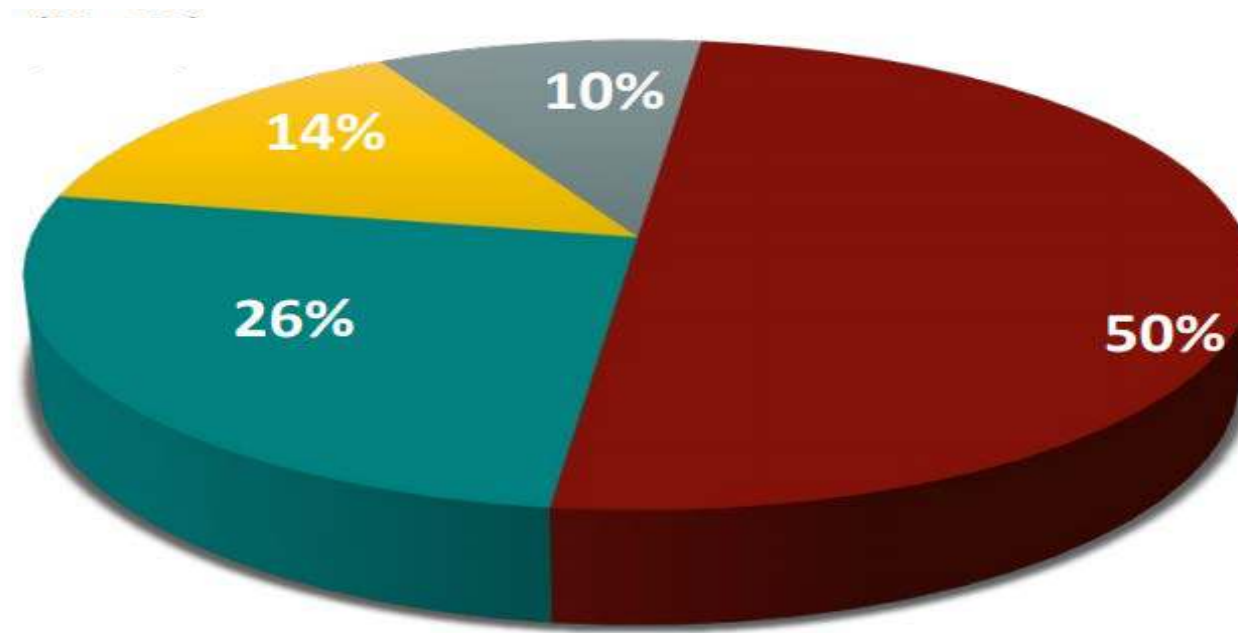
**BRIEF ON VIOLENCE AGAINST  
OLDER WOMEN**





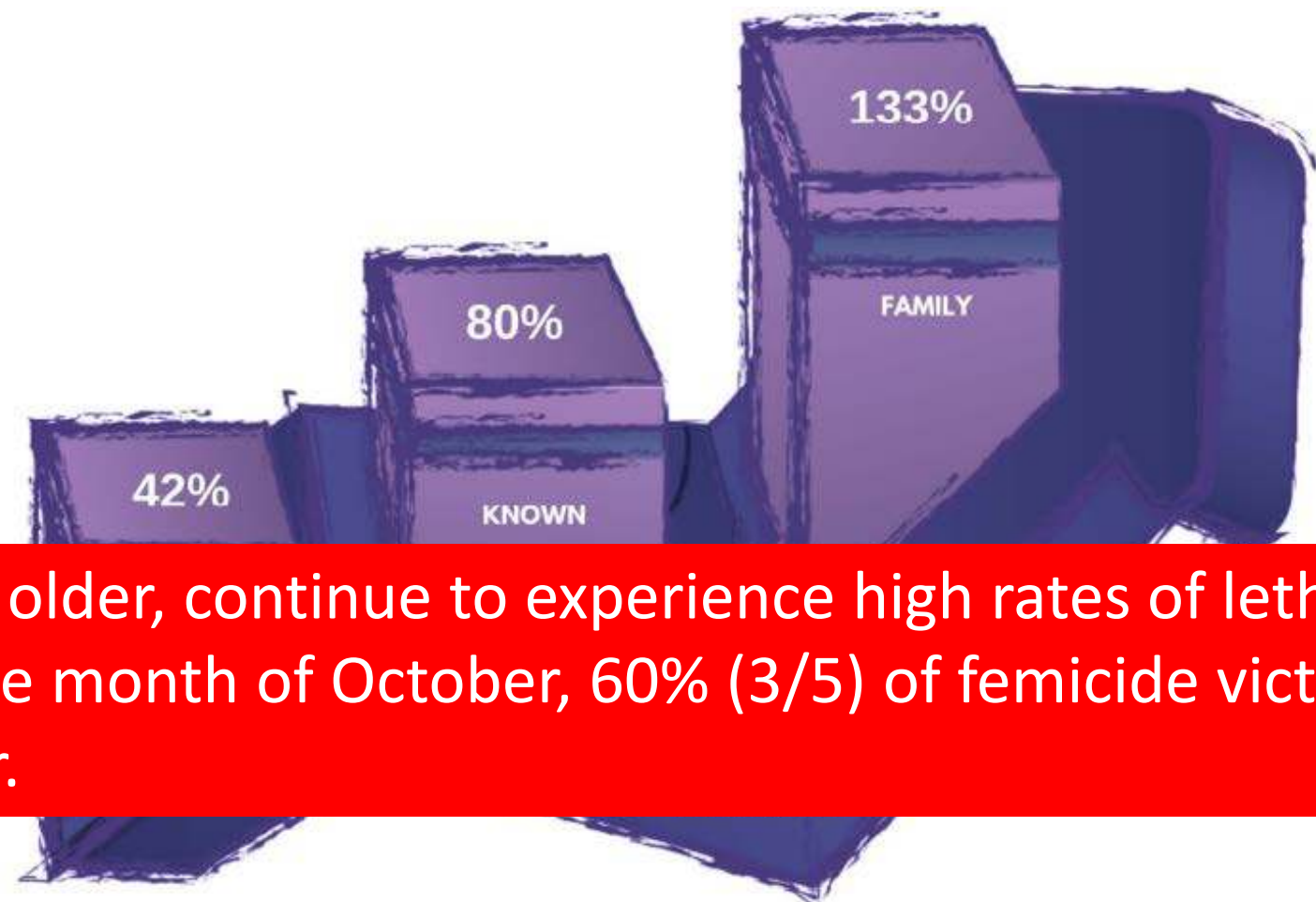
Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability

Observatoire canadien du féminicide pour la justice et la responsabilisation




■ Current/former partners ■ Other family  
■ Friends/acquaintances ■ Strangers

10 women or girls were killed by men for every month in 2020  
Half were killed by an intimate partner



...older women, ages 55 and older, continue to experience high rates of lethal gender-based violence. In the month of October, 60% (3/5) of femicide victims in Ontario were 55 and older.

#### Victim-Perpetrator Relationship

<div> OAITH Femicide Data - Victim-Perpetrator Relationships December 2020 - October 2021</div>			
Intimate Partner	Family	Known	Unknown
20	14	9	10

# Mercy killing likely in couple's murder-suicide

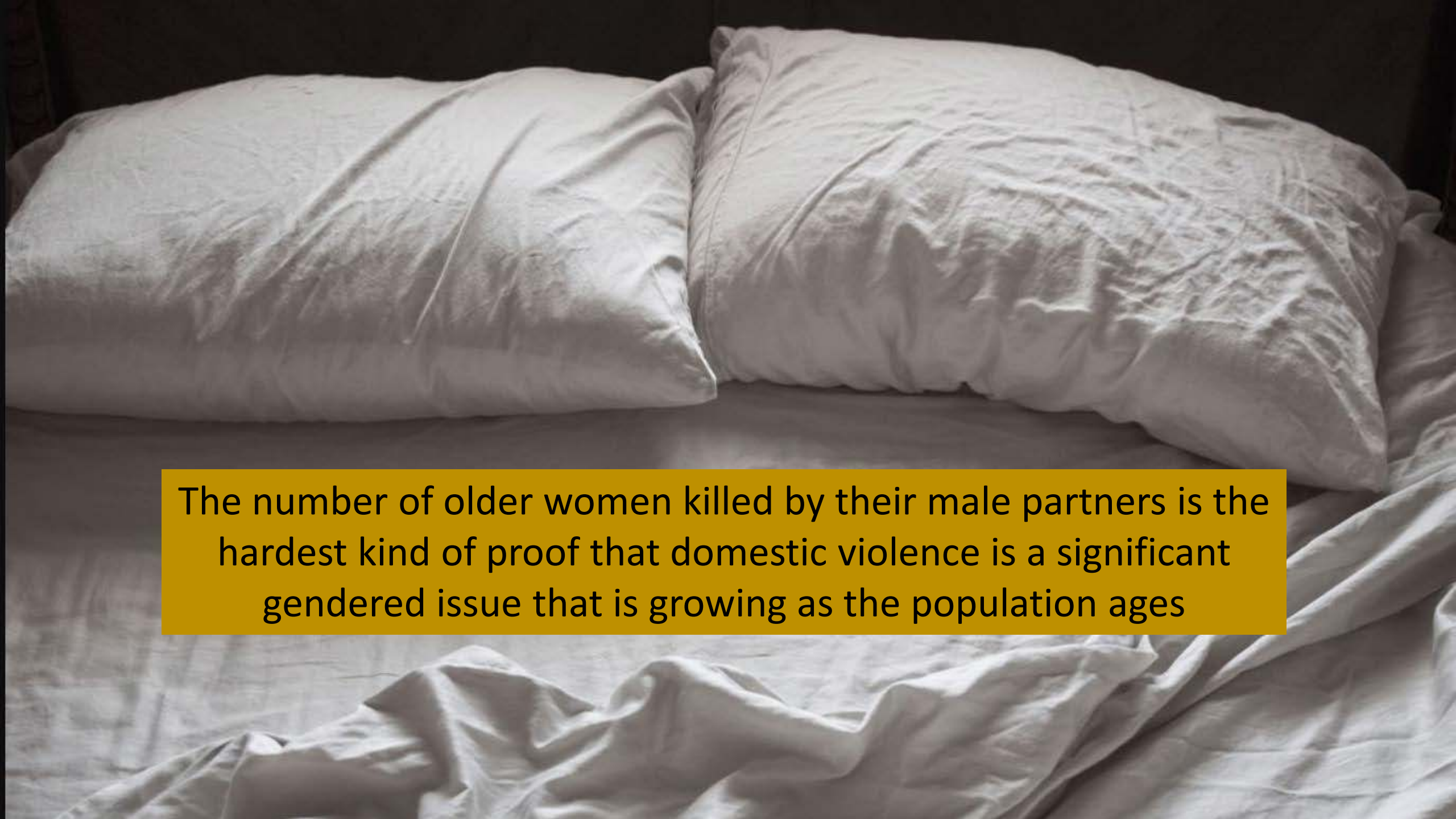
Associated Press

Thursday, Sept. 1, 2016 | 3:07 p.m.

BOXVILLE, Ky. — Autopsies have confirmed that an elderly couple in Kentucky was a murder-suicide, and the coroner believes it was probably a "mercy killing."





A photograph of a bed with two white pillows and a white sheet. The pillows are at the top of the frame, and the sheet is draped over the bottom. The lighting is soft and even.

The number of older women killed by their male partners is the hardest kind of proof that domestic violence is a significant gendered issue that is growing as the population ages



# Ageism

The triple threat

- Being a woman
- Being an older woman
- Being an older woman experiencing violence

PLUS

- Intersections of oppression

# Structural Violence

The idea that domestic violence only affects younger women is due in part to systemic ageism that operates as structural violence in excluding old-age cohorts from study samples.

Global and national surveys of intimate partner violence have included women only up to the age of 49.





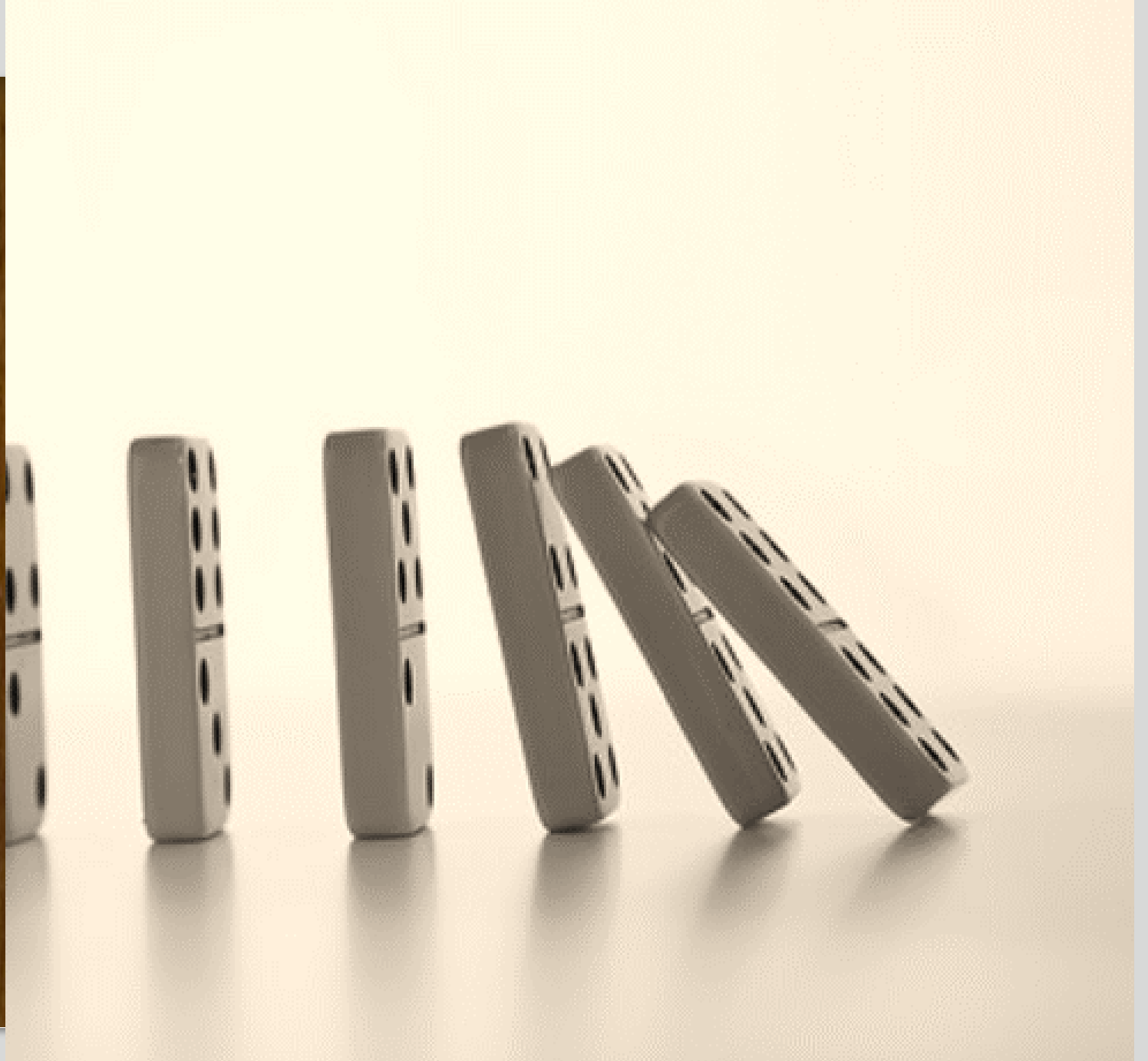


## Gaps in Research

40 year age range

3 competing paradigms

- Social gerontology
- Geriatrics
- Violence against women

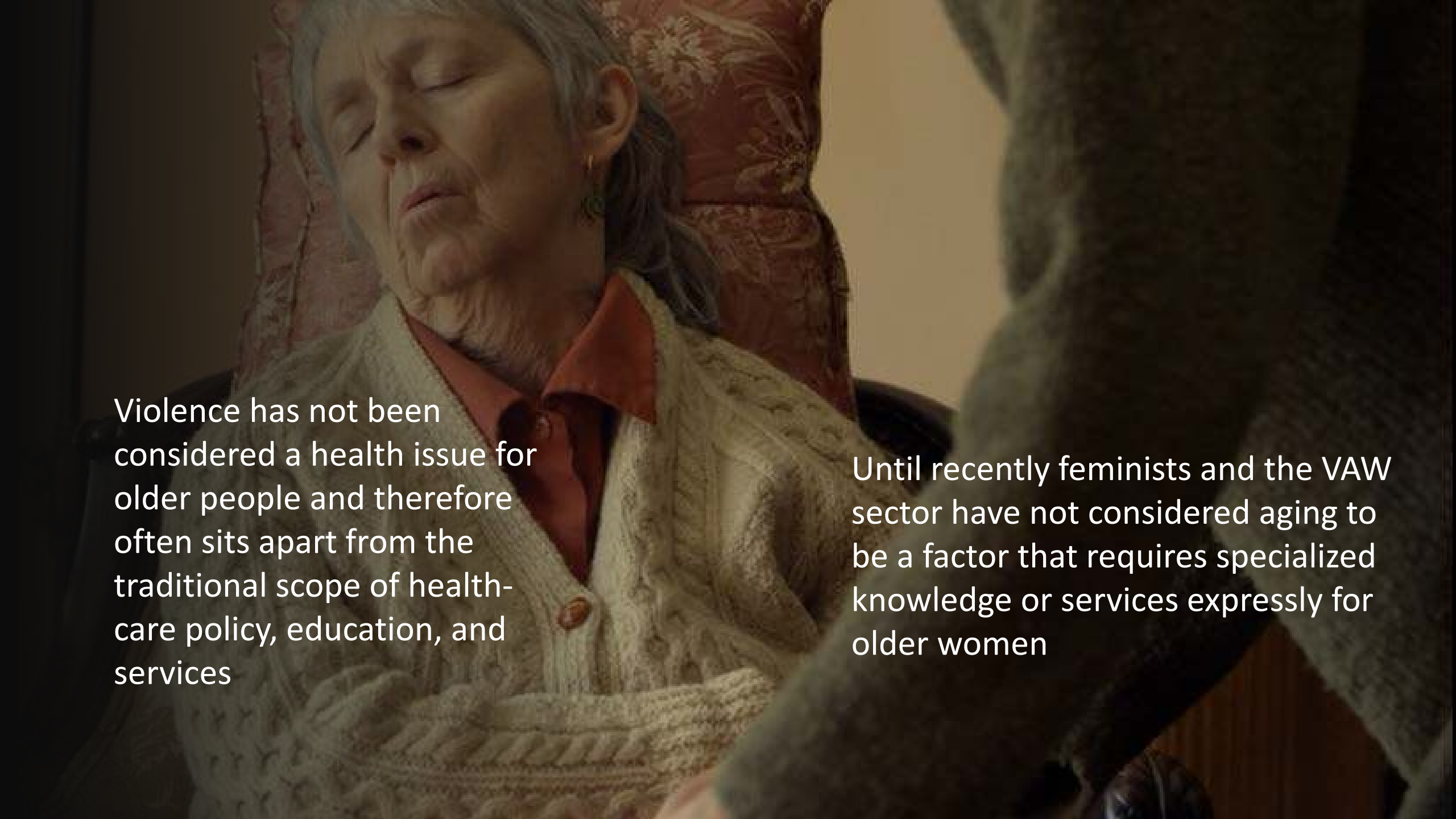






# Sector Differences

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Violence has not been considered a health issue for older people and therefore often sits apart from the traditional scope of health-care policy, education, and services

Until recently feminists and the VAW sector have not considered aging to be a factor that requires specialized knowledge or services expressly for older women



Health professionals working most closely with seniors are not usually trained to recognize warning signs and risk factors of domestic violence



As women age,  
“their horizons for action  
diminish and they see  
themselves as having  
fewer life choices within  
the scope of decreasing  
power”



....many older abused women  
were surprised to learn that their  
experiences were abnormal or  
worthy of any special services.

T. Zink







Change is  
possible



**CANADIAN NETWORK *for***  
***the* PREVENTION *of* ELDER ABUSE**



# Forward thinking

An equity orientation provides the foundation for the development of shared principles and practices using a common language that is well versed in the relationship between social location, trauma, and violence at all levels of society



GENDER, TRAUMA & VIOLENCE  
**KNOWLEDGE INCUBATOR**  
@WESTERN



**EQUIP** Health Care  
Research to Equip Health Care for Equity

# We can become Trauma - -and Violence- Informed

Universal precautions:

- Everyone has had trauma of some kind
- You don't have to know their story to be caring
- People don't do things without reason





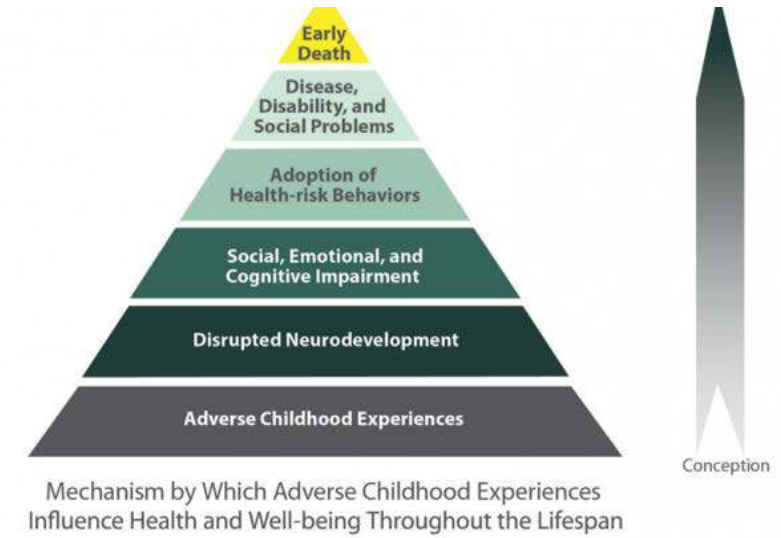
Teach  
everyone!



**It's Not Right!**

Neighbours, Friends & Families for Older Adults





# Risk factors

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Learning to  
manage risk as  
a community

Everyone  
has a role to  
play





Thank you  
Merci  
Miigwech



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**Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children** [www.learningtoendabuse.ca](http://www.learningtoendabuse.ca)

**Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative** [www.cdhpi.ca](http://www.cdhpi.ca)

**It's Not Right! Neighbours, Friends & Families for Older Adults**  
<http://itsnotright.ca/>



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# QUESTIONS





# Support for Seniors

- ✓ **Support**
- ✓ **Information**
- ✓ **Referral**



# 1-866-299-1011

-  24/7, 365 days of the year
-  live counsellors, over 200 languages
-  [awhl.org/seniors](http://awhl.org/seniors)

# The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

**16 Days  
of Activism  
Against  
Gender-Based  
Violence  
Campaign**

November 25 - December 10



An annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day. It was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

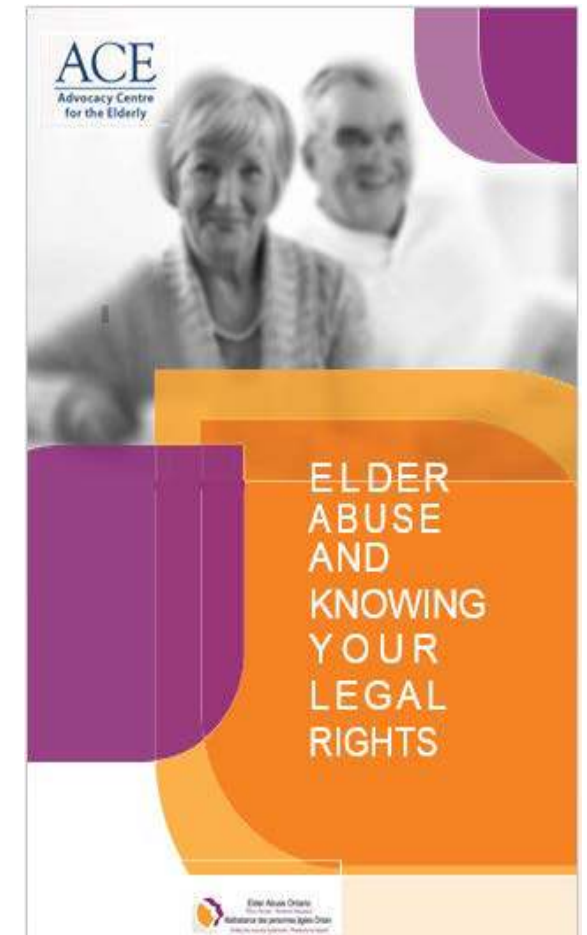
The global theme for this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, is  
**"Orange the world: End violence against women now!"**



In support of this civil society initiative, the [United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign](#) (UNiTE campaign) calls for global actions to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts, and share knowledge and innovations.

# EAPO Tools and Resources

[www.eapon.ca](http://www.eapon.ca)



# EVALUATION

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Please take  
a minute  
to complete  
our survey!







# Keep Connected

## Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario

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