

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – 15th June 2022

“My son persuaded me to sell my house to repay his debt...I agreed and now I’m left homeless” (older woman). “I live with my son’s family, since my wife died. My daughter-in-law insults me, does not give me sufficient food, does not want to launder my things” (older man). Such experiences shed light on [elder abuse](#), which may be defined as “a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.”

[Elder abuse](#) is a problem that exists in both developing and developed countries yet is typically underreported globally. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, 1 in 6 people over 60 years of age suffers from abuse. That means nearly 141 million people globally suffer from abuse. Neglect, psychological, financial, physical, and sexual abuse are all types of elder abuse that violate older persons' dignity. Elder abuse can be carried out by those who are close to older people, such as family and caregivers, or by institutions and social structures. This makes it more difficult for older persons to report abuse.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, observed annually on 15th June, provides an opportunity to raise awareness of such problem and to curb it. This year, this day coincides with the start of the [United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing \(2021-2030\)](#), which *“marks the beginning of ten years of concerted, catalytic and sustained collaboration with diverse stakeholders on improving the lives of older people, their families and their communities.”*

Undoubtedly, more work must be done to [raise awareness on elder abuse](#). Education is the cornerstone of preventing elder abuse; educating the public may lead to more awareness of protecting older people. We should keep in touch with older people in our communities to ensure they know they have all the support they need. If an older person reaches out for help, we must listen to their problem and direct them to support services. All in all, we should help older persons recognise the signs of abuse and inform them about their right to live without fear.

According to [data](#) published by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in July 2021, around 19% of the Maltese population were aged 65 years and over. Moreover, [321 violent crimes against the elderly](#) were reported in 2021, with the vast majority (225) being cases of domestic violence. The police received 75 reports of injuries against people aged 60 and up. A further 19 reports involved violent thefts, of which 5 were classified as armed robbery, 6 as mugging and 8 as snatch and grab. The police also received two reports of rape involving older people.

To this end, assistance is provided by the Victim Support Agency to elderly crime victims when they are asked to testify in Court. This will be made possible by means of an agreement signed between the Agency for Crime Victims and Activity Ageing and Community Care. In the first four months of 2022, the [Agency](#) for crime victims helped 70 people over the age of 65. Other services are available by the Appogg Agency within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services.

The [National Commission for the Promotion of Equality \(NCPE\)](#) also works to safeguard equality on the ground of age and to combat ageism and related discrimination. In fact, the NCPE investigates complaints of persons who deem they are victims of discrimination on the ground of age in employment, banks and financial institutions, as well as education as per the NCPE's remit. Moreover, training and awareness-raising campaigns are carried out to promote the vital role of both older women and older men in society.

Older persons should be given the opportunity to contribute to society by sharing their skills and knowledge with younger generations and participate actively in formulating and implementing policies that directly or indirectly affect their well-being. Above all, they should be able to live in dignity and be free of exploitation and abuse.

The [National Commission for the Promotion of Equality \(NCPE\)](#) can be contacted on: 2276 8200 or equality@gov.mt or our Facebook page

14th June 2022