

# Psychological Abuse

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Australian research indicates that psychological abuse is the most common form of elder abuse. 11.7% of older people reported experiencing this form of abuse in the last 12 months.<sup>1</sup> Women are more likely to report psychological abuse than men.<sup>2</sup>

It may be:

- Name calling, or treating the older person like a child
- Confining or isolating an older person
- Withholding affection, such as refusing access to grandchildren, often referred to as [grandparent alienation](#).
- Preventing social contact with family and friends
- Denying or limiting social activities, such as religious, cultural or community events
- Not obtaining or incorporating an older person's wishes or preferences in exercising powers of attorney
- Misleading an individual's capacity for decision-making
- Taking away decision-making powers
- Withholding or controlling mail
- Taking over the older person's home so that their normal social contacts don't continue
- Verbal threats, like "Do what I say, or I'll put you in a home"

In the recent [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study](#) half (49%) of the respondents who experienced psychological abuse reported being insulted, called names or sworn at in a way they found offensive or aggressive.<sup>3</sup>

Just under half of respondents (46.4%) reported being excluded or repeatedly ignored, or experienced behaviour that was undermining or belittling.<sup>4</sup>

Respondents also reported actions that involved preventing them from seeing or contacting family members or medical professionals (14.5%), as well as threats of physical harm (10.2%).<sup>5</sup>

The Australian research indicates that children are the main perpetrators of psychological abuse. Other common perpetrators of this type of elder abuse include sons- and daughters-in-law, spouses, friends, acquaintances and neighbours.<sup>6</sup>

60% of older people who experience psychological abuse do not report it.<sup>7</sup>

## References

1. [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study, 2021](#)
2. [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study, 2021](#)
3. [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study, 2021](#)
4. [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study, 2021](#)
5. [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study, 2021](#)
6. [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study, 2021](#)
7. [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study, 2021](#)