

Summary of report on abuse of older persons

- This document summarizes the findings of a report, [Report on Abuse of Older Persons, 2022/06/15, Korea Elder Protection Agency], that set out to investigate and analyze 19,391 cases of alleged elder abuse brought to 37 local Korea Elder Protection Agency between January 1 and December 31, 2021.
- The purpose of the report was to provide objective evidence to guide the future direction of Korea Elder Protection Agency, and assist in the formulation of policies for the protection of older persons.
- Of the 19,391 cases of abuse reported to Korea Elder Protection Agency, 6,774 cases of actual abuse were confirmed through on-site investigation and consultation.
- This document summarizes the principal findings of the study under the following headings: degree of receptivity to reports of abuse of older persons; the most common types of abuse; field investigations conducted; the most common characteristics of victims, abusers, and causes of abuse; and service provision, including counseling.
- In accordance with the revision of the Welfare of Senior Citizens Act (June 3, 2017), the abuse of persons aged 65 and older has been defined as elder abuse since January 2018. However, in some cases, statistics include those aged 60 and older.
- In the case of regional status, the processing status of each Korea Elder Protection Agency is simply aggregated, and since the total number is not large. Therefore, attention to simple comparison is required because it does not have statistical significance.

▶ Status of reporting of abuse of older persons

▶ Reporting of abuse of older persons

Reports of abuse of older persons are regarded as all those cases for counseling and reporting purposes received by Korea Elder Protection Agency. Each center classifies such reports as either potential cases of abuse or general welfare cases, assessed via case meetings and case judgment committees, using the basic information collected at the time of reporting.

- In 2021, the total number of reports received by local Korea Elder Protection Agency was 19,391, an increase of 14.2 percent on the previous year (16,973 cases → 19,391).
- General welfare cases numbered 12,617 (65.1 percent of the whole), an increase of 17.8 percent on the previous year (10,714 cases → 12,617 cases).
- The number of abuse cases was 6,774 (34.9 percent of the whole), an increase of 8.2 percent on the previous year (6,259 cases → 6,774).
- Of the 6,774 cases of abuse, the highest number of reported cases was in Gyeonggi-do (1431 cases, 21.1 percent of the whole). Then there were 736 cases in Seoul (10.9 percent of the whole), and 599 in Gyeongsangbuk-do (8.8 percent).

▶ Type of abuse reporters

Abuse reporters are divided into mandated reporters and non-mandated reporters. A mandated reporter is a person who is obligated to report abuse of older persons, pursuant to Article 39-6 of the Welfare of Senior Citizens Act: the heads of medical institutions and medical personnel; service workers such as visiting carers; the heads of senior welfare facilities and their workers; senior welfare counselors; persons who conduct counseling, treatment, training, or nursing services for older persons with disabilities; the heads of, and workers in, counseling centers related to domestic violence and facilities for protecting victims of domestic violence; public officials dedicated to social welfare; social welfare centers; the heads of facilities for the protection of the homeless and their workers; the heads of long-term care institutions and their workers; paramedics of the 119 emergency service; the head of the Korea Institute for the Healthy Family and its workers; the head of the Multicultural Family Support Center and its workers; the head of sexual violence victim protection facilities and their workers; nursing staff belonging to the National Health Insurance

Service; the heads and workers of local health and medical institutions; public officials in charge of installing and managing welfare facilities for older persons; and social service personnel (limited to those who serve in face-to-face work for older persons). Non-mandated reporters are all persons except those obligated to report, in other words relatives of older persons, the abusers themselves, victim of abuse, and relevant agencies like the police.

- Of the 6,774 cases that were found to be of actual elder abuse, 860 cases (12.7 percent) were reported by mandated reporters, and 5,914 cases (87.3 percent) were reported by non-mandated reporters.
- The number of cases reported by persons whose job it is to monitor and end elder abuse decreased by 8.4 percent by comparison with the previous year (939 cases → 860 cases).
- The number of reports by non-mandated reporters increased by 11.2 percent by comparison with the previous year (5,320 cases → 5,914 cases).

► Abuse Reporting Channels, Detailed Classification of Abuse Reporting Channels, Ways to Get to Know Abuse Reporting Channels

The abuse reporting channels currently in existence aims to collect basic information in order to evaluate the urgency of cases reported to Korea Elder Protection Agency and determine the response of the Korea Elder Protection Agency. This route includes the Government Civil Service Information Call Center 110, available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; the elderly abuse emergency call-line 1577-1389; the reporting app "Nabisegim (Protector of older persons)"; and emergency services number 112 (police station).

- 3,838 of the 6,774 cases finally judged to be abuse cases were received through 112 transfers, accounting for about half; 2,365 cases (34.9 percent) of self-reception, 173 cases (2.6 per cent) via administrative welfare centers; and 152 cases (2.2 percent) from City Hall.

The detailed classification of abuse reporting channels are classified as face-to-face, depending on a visit to the agency or a counselor, a phone report through 1577-1389, or as

correspondence, including online reporting via the website or e-mail of the Korea Elder Protection Agency, or the reporting app.

- Regarding how cases were received, 4,147 (61.2 percent) came through correspondence, accounting for more than half; 2,326 (34.3 percent) by phone call, 256 (3.8 percent) face-to-face, and 45 (0.7 percent) online.

Ways to get to know abuse reporting channels refer to the route of knowing the elderly abuse report counseling phone number (1577-1389) and Korea Elder Protection Agency.

- About the type of recognition of the reporting route, 5,868 cases (86.6%) accounted for more than half of the total number of cases, with 278 cases (4.1%) of "other agency guidance" and 186 cases (2.7%) of "already had intervention experience and direct promotion"
- Recognition of the reporting path of the person obligated to report (person who is already aware of it): a 3.5% decrease from the previous year (823 cases and → 794 cases)
- Recognition of the reporting path of non-reporting obligations (people who are already aware of it): an increase of 18.3% compared to the previous year (4,289 cases, → 5,074 cases)

► Field investigation and case judgment

► On-site investigation and visit-counseling

An on-site investigation refers to a visit to investigate the alleged victim and abuser. In cases of abuse, it is mandatory to conduct on-site investigations; however, sometimes on-site investigations cannot be conducted, for reasons that include the parties' rejection of investigation, an older person's hospital and facility admission due to deteriorating health, or their move to another place.

- Of the 6,774 cases of abuse in 2021, 6,696 cases (98.8%) were conducted on-site
- ※ Number of field surveys: 2017 (4,443) - 2018 (4,965) - 2019 (5,084) - 2020 (6,152) - 2021 (6,696 cases)

On-site investigation and visit-counseling are conducted by visiting the abused older person at home, where it is possible to check on their safety and living conditions.

- The number of counseling sessions for 6,774 cases of abuse was 37,889; in other words, the average number of counseling sessions conducted per case was 5.6.

▶ Case judgment

Case judgment refers to the process of determining the existence and extent of abuse after a field investigation triggered by information provided at the time of report.

- Of the 6,774 abuse cases in 2021, 142 emergency cases (2.1%), 4,445 non-emergency cases (65.6%), and 2,187 potential abuse cases (32.3%)
- Emergency cases have decreased by 13.9 percent year-on-year (165 cases → 142 cases).
- In the case of non-emergency cases, there was an increase of 13.3 percent compared to the previous year (3,923 cases → 4,445 cases).
- Potential abuse cases increased by 0.7 percent year-on-year (2,171 cases → 2,187 cases).
- In the case of emergency and non-emergency cases, physical abuse was the most common, followed by emotional abuse, and the last was neglect. As for the type of abuse in the potential case, emotional abuse was the highest, followed by physical abuse and neglect.

▶ Re-abuse

Re-abuse refers to cases where abuse occurs again among cases that had been reported closed by Korea Elder Protection Agency. Out of 6,774 cases of abuse in 2021, 739 cases (10.9 per

cent) of re-abuse were reported, with 597 of the victims female (80.8 percent) and 142 (19.2 percent) male.

※ Number of re-abuse: 2017 (359 cases) - 2018 (488 cases) - 2019 (500 cases) – 2020 (614 cases) - 2021 (739 cases).

► Types of elder abuse

Article 1-2, Subparagraph 4, of the Welfare of Senior Citizens Act, classifies these categories of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse, neglect, and self-neglect. In 2021, the number of abuse types was 10,624.

- There were 4,627 cases of emotional abuse (43.6 percent), 4,390 cases of physical abuse (41.3 percent), 691 cases of neglect (6.5 percent), 406 cases of economic abuse (3.8 percent), 260 cases of sexual abuse (2.4 percent), 204 cases of self-neglect (1.9 percent), and 46 cases of abandonment (0.4 percent).

- Of the 10,624 instances of abuse, the gender breakdown was as follows

- Emotional abuse: 3,656 cases (79 percent) for women and 971 cases (21 percent) for men
- Physical abuse: 3,453 cases (78.7 percent) for women and 937 cases (21.3 percent) for men
- Negligence: 470 cases for women (68 percent), 221 cases for men (32 percent)
- Economic abuse: 296 women (72.9 percent) and 110 men (27.1 percent)
- Sexual abuse: 206 cases (79.2 percent) for women and 54 cases (20.8 percent) for men
- Self-neglect: 85 women (41.7 percent), 119 men (58.3 percent)
- Abandonment: 28 women (60.9 percent), 18 men (39.1 percent)

- The age groups of victims of abuse by type of abuse are as follows

- Physical, emotional and economic abuse and self-neglect were found mainly to occur among people in their 70s, while sexual abuse, neglect, and abandonment were high for people in their 80s. In the case of abandonment, however, people in both their 70s and 80s were affected.

- The most common abuser was, in descending order of frequency, ‘spouse - son – daughter’.
In the case of neglect, the order runs ‘institution - son – daughter’. It is evident that neglect includes neglect by children and neglect of older persons who are in welfare institutions
- Ranking of abusers by abuse types
 - Economic abuse (son - daughter - institution)
 - Sexual abuse (institution - spouse - others)
 - Neglect (son - daughter - spouse)

► Place of abuse

The spaces where abuse occurs are mainly the home, residential facilities, service facilities, hospitals, and public places.

- Of the 6,774 cases proved to involve abuse, 5,962 cases (88 percent) occurred in the home, followed by 536 cases (7.9 percent) in residential facilities, 87 cases (1.3%) in utility facilities, 73 other cases (1.1%), 62 in hospitals (0.9 percent), and 54 cases (0.8 percent) in public places.
- Domestic abuse increased by 8.3 percent year-on-year (5505 cases → 5,962).
- Elder abuse in hospitals increased by 67.6 percent year-on-year (37 cases → 62 cases).

► Elder abuse counseling

Elder abuse counseling is divided into general counseling and abuse counseling. General counseling is counseling in general matters, such as simple information provision. Abuse counseling is classified according to methods and process.

- The total number of consultations for 19,391 reported cases of potential abuse was 200,513.
- 159,446 calls were made; the average number of consultations per case was 23.5.
- The number of general counseling sessions was 41,067; in other words, the average number of counseling sessions per case was 3.3.

- Compared to the previous year, the number of consultations increased by 9.7 percent (182,849 → 200,513).
- The number of abuse cases increased by 5.7 percent compared to the previous year (150,846 → 159,446).
- The number of general consultations increased by 28.3% compared to the previous year (32,003 times → 41,067 times)

► Classification according to counseling method

The abuse counseling method is classified according to the specific counseling method: telephone counseling, face-to-face counseling through a visit, correspondence, online counseling, and so on.

- For telephone counseling, 108,919 sessions were conducted, 68.3 percent of the total, an increase of 5.9 percent on the previous year (102,844 → 108,919).
- In the case of visits, they increased by 4 percent year-on-year to 37,889 (36,443 → 37,889).

► Classification according to the consultation process

This process is classified as following a specific path: reception counseling, progress counseling, termination counseling, and follow-up management. The total number of abuse-related calls was 159,446.

- According to the consultation process, 120,362 consultations (75.5%) followed by follow-up management 25,170 (15.8%), 7,000 closed consultations (4.4%), and 6,914 reception consultations (4.3%) followed.

► Services provided by institutions specializing in the protection of older persons

Services provided to abused older persons and their abusers are largely classified as counseling services, welfare service links, legal service links, medical service links, protection services, and information provision services.

► Services provided to older persons affected by abuse

For 6,774 victims, the Korea Elder Protection Agency provided services a total of 245,952 times, an average of 36.3 times per case.

- These included 132,044 counseling services (53.7 percent), 89,719 provision of information services (36.5 percent), 20,349 welfare services (8.3 percent), 1,897 instances of protection services (0.8 percent), 1,449 medical services (0.6 percent) and 494 legal services (0.2 percent).

► Services provided to abusers

Services provided to abusers by senior protection agencies happened 56,388 times for 8,423 abusers, an average of 6.7 times per case.

- In detail, this involved the provision of counseling services 28,565 times (50.7 percent), 25,742 instances of information provision (45.7 percent), 1,845 welfare services (3.3 percent), and 208 medical services (0.4 percent).

► Current status of victims of abuse

► Gender and age

The total number of identified victims of elder abuse was 6,774, with 5,143 (75.9 percent) women and 1,631 (24.1 percent) men – about 3.2 times more women than men.

- Both male and female showed high rates of emotional abuse, and the overall abuse rate was generally high, from emotional and physical abuse to neglect.

· Types of abuse sustained by men: emotional, 971 cases (40 percent) – physical, 937 cases (38.6 percent) - 221 cases of neglect (9.1 percent).

· Types of abuse sustained by women: emotional, 3,656 cases (44.6 percent) - physical 3,453 cases (42.1 percent) - neglect 470 cases (5.7 percent).

- Abuse victims by age group: 2,899 people in their 70s (42.8 percent), 2,038 people in their 80s (30.1 percent), 1,428 people in their 60s (21.1 percent).

► Marriage and cohabitation status

Abused older persons are classified as living alone, living in a couple, living with children and/or grandchildren, living in facilities of one kind or another, or with no permanent abode. However, even if the elderly and the abuser do not live together, it is difficult to assert that the risk factor of living together is higher because abuser do not fulfill their responsibilities and obligations as a dependent or visit on a regular basis.

- About 4,000 abuse victims (59.0 percent) had a spouse and 2,774 victims (41 percent) had no spouse.

- 4,820 abuse victims (71.2 percent) lived with the abuser, out of 6,774 victims, and 1,954 (28.8 percent) did not.

- There are a total of 7,053 overlapping family types for the 4,820 people living with their abusers: 3,190 living with spouses (45.2 percent), followed by 1,979 living with sons (28.1 percent), 585 with daughters (8.3 percent), and 502 with grandchildren (7.1 percent).

- Of the types of household affected by abuse, 2,332 (34.4 percent) were married households, 2,111 (31.2 percent) living with children, and 1,195 (17.6 percent) living alone.

► Status of national basic livelihood security level, and education, of older persons affected by abuse

The National Basic Livelihood Security Act provides livelihood benefits to enable a minimum standard of living.

- Of the 6,774 victims of abuse, 1,165 (17.2 percent) were recipients of National Basic

Livelihood Security benefits.

- The education level of older persons affected by abuse was 2,476 elementary school graduates (36.6 percent), followed by 1,682 (24.8 percent) illiterate and 1,231 (18.2 percent) middle school graduates.

▶ Health status

The health status of abused older persons was checked against a list that included disease type, number of disabilities, disability type, degree of dementia, and addiction type.

- Types of disease found included high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes, disc problems, osteoporosis, and neuralgia.
 - Of the 6,774 victims of abuse, 5,872 (86.7 percent) suffered from more than one disease. 1,372 (23.4 percent) had high blood pressure, 882 (15.0%) had arthritis, and 781 (13.3 percent) had diabetes.
- Disability types were largely divided into physical disabilities and mental disorders.

Physical disabilities (지체장애) were classified as problems with hearing, vision, and brain lesions. Mental disabilities were classified as intellectual difficulties, depression, and schizophrenia.

 - Of the 6,774 victims of abuse, 628 (9.3 percent) had disabilities, 379 (60.4 percent) with physical disabilities and 249 (39.6 percent) with mental disabilities.
 - In detail: 178 people had depression (28.3 percent), 141 people had physical disabilities (22.5 percent), and 100 people had hearing disabilities (15.9 percent).
- The degree of dementia was evaluated according to whether or not a case had been diagnosed at a hospital or there was simply a suspicion of dementia.
 - Among victims of abuse, 1,699 (25.1 percent) were both suspected of or had been diagnosed with dementia. 607 (9 percent) were suspected of dementia, and 1,092 (16.1 percent) were diagnosed with dementia.

- Addictions include alcohol use, drug use disorder, and gambling.
- Of the 6,774 victims of abuse, 98 (1.4 percent) were found to have at least one addiction, of which 94 (95.9 percent), the majority, had alcohol use disorder.
- In order to evaluate the functional status of abused older persons, their ability to perform daily life (ADL) and their ability to perform instrumental daily life (IADL) were investigated.
- Daily life performance (ADL) is determined by: taking off clothes, washing your face, brushing your teeth, bathing, eating, changing your body position, sitting up, moving, coming out of the room, using the bathroom, controlling your feces, and controlling your urine.
- Instrumental Daily Life Performance (IADL) is identified by grooming, doing housework, preparing meals, doing laundry, going out for short distances, using transportation, shopping, managing money, making phone calls, and taking medication.
- Of the abuse victims studied, 72.3–74.7 percent appeared to be ‘completely independent’ in relation to ADL, and 67.2-73.1 percent in relation to IADL.

► Occupational status

The occupational status of the abused older persons measured the presence or absence of a job as the main source of income. Occupational status can be seen as closely related to living standards.

- Of the abuse victims studied, the majority, 5,851 (86.4 percent) were unemployed, followed by 315 (4.7 percent) manual laborers, and 188 (2.8 percent) workers in agricultural, fishing, and livestock industries.

► Status of abusers

► Gender and age

- The total number of abusers was 8,423, with 5,413 males (64.3 percent) and 3,010 females (35.7 percent) – in other words, about 1.8 times more males than females.
- Of the 8,423 abusers, 2,287 were sons, accounting for 27.2 percent (which is about 42.3 percent of the 5,413 male abusers).
- The highest number of abusers, 2,486 (29.5 percent), were in their 50s.
- Of male abusers, 2,050 (37.9 percent) were aged 70 or older; 1,195 (22.1 percent) were in their 50s; 973 (18 percent) in their 40s.
- Of the female abusers, 1,291 (42.9 percent) were in their 50s; 773 (25.7 percent) in their 60s; and 420 (14 percent) in their 40s.
- There were a total of 3,133 cases of elder abuse by abusers aged 65 or older, accounting for 37.2 percent of the total number of abusers.

► Relationship between the abuser and the victim of abuse

The relationship between the abuser and the victim is classified as with victim's own relatives, others, institutions, etc. Relatives are defined as spouses, sons, daughters-in-law, and neighbors; institutional relations include abusers who are medical personnel and welfare facility workers.

- Of the 8,423 cases of abuser, 2,455 (29.1 percent) involved spouses, 2,287 (27.2 percent) involved sons, and 2,170 (25.8 percent) involved institutions. Until 2020, the biggest abuser of elders was a son, but for the first time, this study found the order was reversed, with spouses outdoing sons.
- 5,792 (68.8 percent) of relatives, such as sons, spouses, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren and other relatives accounted for the majority of abusive actors.
- The number of abusers was 204, down 7.7 percent from the previous year (221 cases → 204 cases).

► Type of marriage

- Among abusers, 5,480 (65.1 percent) have a spouse, and 2,943 (34.9 percent) have no spouse.
- In the case of having a spouse, first marriage was the most common with 5,001 (59.4%),

and in the case of not having a spouse, unmarried was the most common with 1,881 (22.3%).

► Abusers' education level and access to national basic livelihood security

- Out of 8,423 abusers, 799 (9.5 percent) were recipients of National Basic Livelihood Security benefits.
- 4,075 abusers were high school graduates (48.4 percent), and 1,732 college graduates (20.6 percent).

► Physical state of health

The checklist for the health status of abusers included disability, both physical and mental, and addiction. Physical disability was classified as retardation, hearing and vision problems, and brain lesions. Mental disability included intellectual difficulties, depression, and schizophrenia.

- Of the 8,423 abusers, a total of 1,049 (12.5 percent) had disabilities, 754 (71.9 percent) with mental disorders and 295 (28.1 percent) with physical disabilities.
- In detail: 342 abusers had schizophrenia (32.6 percent) and 227 abusers had depression (21.6 percent).
- The type of addiction of abusers refers to whether or not they had alcohol use disorders, drug use disorders, or a gambling addiction.
- Of the abusers, 1,224 (14.5 percent) were found to have one or more addictions.
- Among them, 1,158 (94.6 percent) had alcohol use disorder, 36 (2.9 percent) had drug use disorder, and 30 (2.5 percent) had a gambling addiction.

► Occupational type

The occupational type of the abuser refers to the presence or absence of a job as the main source of income, which is closely related to the economic support burden of the victim.

- Amongst abusers, 4,582 (54.4 percent) were unemployed, followed by 1,499 (17.8 percent) service and sales workers, 698 (8.3 percent) simple laborers, and 600 (7.1 percent) professionals.

► Counselor workload

- The number of reports received, consultations, field surveys, home visits, and services provided to older persons affected by abuse and to abusers, were all calculated as indicators of the workload on counselors.
- Counselors who perform tasks related to elder abuse are burdened with a work structure in which one counselor performs all areas, from reporting to field investigation and service provision.

► Workload per counselor

- The average workload per counselor was analyzed by dividing the total workload of senior protection institutions nationwide amongst 296 counselors (excluding the head of the agency).
- In 2021, the number of reports per counselor was 65.5, the number of consultations was 677.4, the number of field surveys was 22.6, and the number of home consultation visits was 128.
- The average service provided to a victim of abuse involved 830.9 sessions, and the services provided per abuser were 190.5 sessions.