

## **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2021**

### **Humans Rights of elderly are at stake- Agewell**

To coincide with the **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** on **15<sup>th</sup> June, 2021**, Agewell Foundation has conducted a national online survey on current status of older persons with special focus on impact of second wave of Covid-19 crisis on elderly. The online survey was conducted with support from our volunteers' spread across the country during the Months of June 2021. Agewell volunteers interacted with 5000 elderly respondents in different parts of the country. The initiative was conducted under Agewell Research & Advocacy Centre for Needs & Rights of Older Persons.

Survey indicates that second wave of Covid-19 and lockdown related rules / restrictions have forced most older persons to live in critical conditions. It has been observed that older persons are not only prone to the severity and fatality of Covid due to age, they are going through a very tough phase in their life and living under the shadow of constant fear of death / loss of family members / loss of jobs to earning family members due to Covid-19. Today they are facing severe psychosocial challenges such as;

- Anxiety / restlessness / depression
- Isolation / Loneliness
- Neglect / Marginalization
- Lack of autonomy / psychological dependence
- Sleeplessness / fatigue, and chronic stress
- Addiction disorders – alcohol/smoking
- Fear of death / prolonged illness / loss of money due to Covid-19 treatment
- Nervousness / frustration / desperation
- Self-neglect / lack of self-esteem
- And even risks of abuse / elder abuse

#### **Most common ways of Elder Abuse**

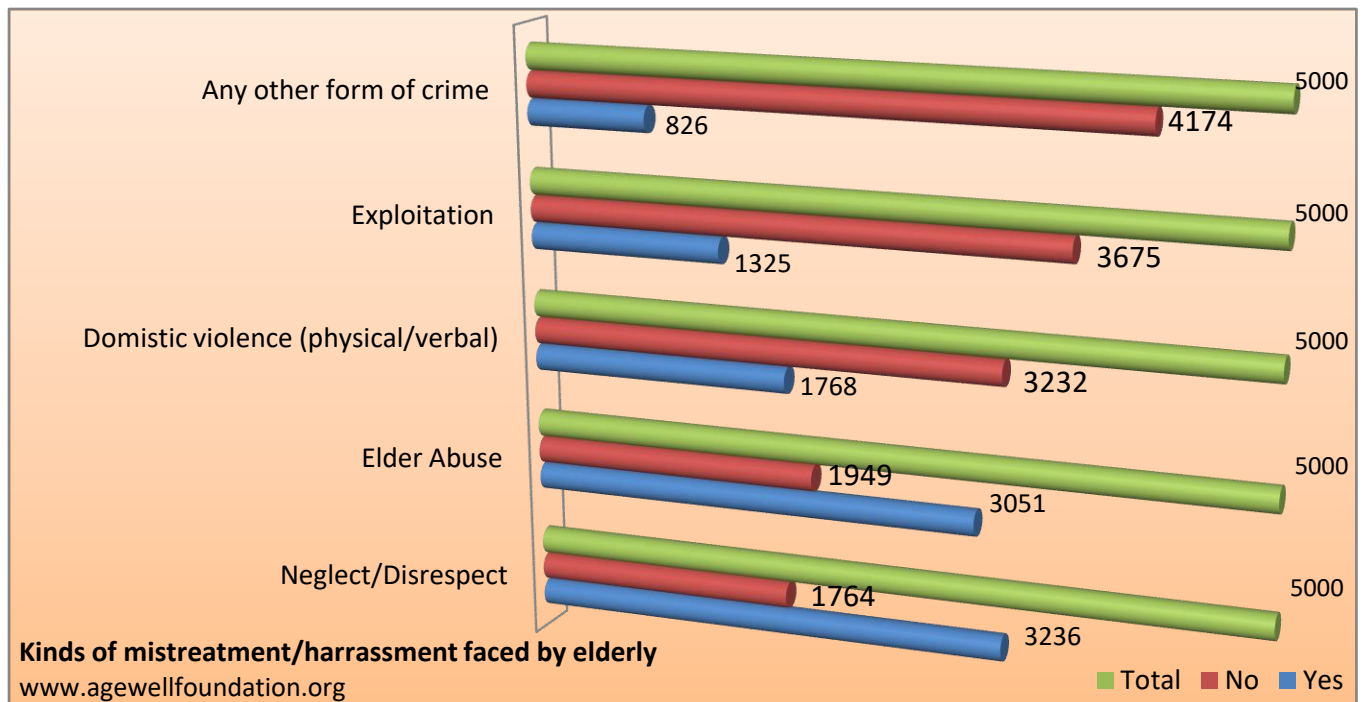
*(If you notice any elder being abused, please help them)*

- Disrespect and verbal abuse
- Silent treatment (not talking to them)
- Ignoring their daily needs
- Denying proper food
- Denying medical support
- Financial cheating
- Physical and emotional violence

In absence of proper support mechanism in Old Age, today, older persons are forced to live in most disadvantaged circumstances. Social isolation, loneliness and marginalization due to current lockdown / restrictions have further deteriorated the situation of elderly. All this has made life of older persons more critical and it is also affecting their health adversely. Current Covid-19 situation has further intensified their problems and make them more vulnerable to different forms of elder abuse.

#### **Salient finding of the survey are as under -**

- 82% of elderly respondents claimed that their life has been affected adversely during current Covid-19 situation.
- 73% elderly respondents reportedly said that cases of elder abuse have increased during lockdown period and after
- Among them 61% claimed that interpersonal relationships is the main factor responsible for fast increasing incidence of elder abuse in families
- During the study it was found that 65% elderly respondents were facing neglect in their life.
- Approx. 58% elderly respondents said that they are suffering elder abuse in their families / society



- Approx. every third elderly (35.1%) claimed that elderly face domestic violence (physical / verbal) in old age.

*Speaking about the initiative, **Himanshu Rath, Chairman, Agewell Foundation** said, Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as a major cause of concern for every section of the society. People are struggling to protect themselves from Coronavirus and its consequences on human life all over the world. Though Covid-19 situation and related lockdown rules / restrictions have affected almost every human being, older persons are the most vulnerable so far as the Coronavirus threat and its impact is concerned. There is an urgent need to sensitize the entire community about the growing incidences of elder abuse. Older persons also *need to be educated about support systems, legal provisions and non-formal support network, accessible and available to them.*"*

Survey concludes that most elderly have to depend on family care, which makes them vulnerable. Incidences of elder abuse, mistreatment, and harassment of elderly occur primarily within their respective families are on rise due to vulnerability of older people. Elderly women are worst affected due to their poor financial status, increased level of dependency, and even due to longer lifespan comparatively elderly men. Elderly hardly report incidences of elder abuse to concerned stakeholders due to various factors like lack of awareness about their rights, poor physical health and lack of social support system. Elderly, particularly those living alone need emotional support.

Agewell Foundation appeals to concerned stakeholders to join hands and carry out sensitization programs to sensitize general public towards needs & rights of older persons. It is important to create awareness about Rights of Older persons among elderly and protect human rights of older persons.

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