

# Elder Mistreatment Among Latin@s

## Key Research Findings in the Puerto Rican Community

### Latin@s in the United States

Latin@s or Hispanics - people of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American culture or origin regardless of race - are the nation's largest ethnic minority and account for 17% of the total US population.

Of those, Puerto Ricans are the second largest group, accounting for 9.2% of the Latin@ or Hispanic population.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2011)



#### ELDER ABUSE:

Intentional actions that cause harm or create a serious risk of harm (whether or not harm is intended) to a vulnerable elder by a caregiver or other person who stands in a relationship of trust to that elder (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003).

psychological abuse

sexual abuse

caregiver neglect

financial exploitation

physical abuse



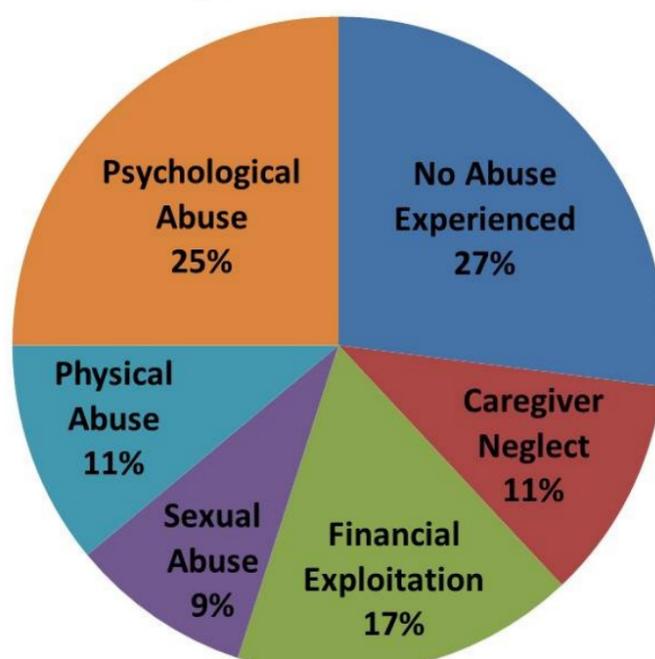
#### Among Latin@s

Latinos elders are less likely than their white counterparts to report physical or verbal abuse. The most common types of abuse experienced are listed in the chart to the right (DeLiema et al, 2012).

40% experienced elder abuse

1.5% reported elder abused to adult protective services

#### Types of Abuse



Due to the limited number of studies of elder mistreatment in the Latin@ population as well as study design variations, it is difficult to estimate an exact prevalence rate of elder mistreatment (Laumann et al, 2008).

# Puerto Rican Culture, Attitudes, and Beliefs

Puerto Rican elders are knowledgeable concerning what constitutes situations of abuse, mistreatment, and neglect (Irizarry-Irizarry, 2005).

Puerto Ricans chose psychological neglect as the worst thing a family member can do to an elderly person (Anetzberger et al, 1996).



Puerto Ricans tend to have strong family associations (Sanchez-Ayendez, 1988).

Most Puerto Ricans said they would contact authorities if an elderly person was mistreated by a family member (Anetzberger et al, 1996).



## TIPS FOR WORKING WITH LATIN@ INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

The utilization of *promotores* - advocates that act on behalf of an older adult - is a culturally informed method of intervention to provide services and resources (often in a community based-setting).

Make no assumptions - the elder is the expert on their own culture and beliefs. Explore the cultural context of elder mistreatment (e.g. how much of their resources do they share and how they feel about it).

Culture, along with factors such as English proficiency, fear of authorities, and living arrangements impact how elders perceive mistreatment, their knowledge of support services, and if they report or seek help for mistreatment.



(Moon, 2000)

## Latin@s may under-report abuse due to:

- feelings of *vergüenza* (shame) and stigma
- fear of retaliation
- fear of being ignored
- fear of being placed in an institution
- cultural beliefs about finances



(DeLiema et al., 2012; Irizarry-Irizarry, 2005)

### Sources

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National Center on Elder Abuse

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