

May 28, 2025

Hidden in Plain Sight Understanding Abuse of Older People

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The logo features the word "VLOCO" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A light grey silhouette of a hand is positioned behind the letters, with the index finger pointing upwards and slightly to the right, as if highlighting or pointing to the text.

VLOCO

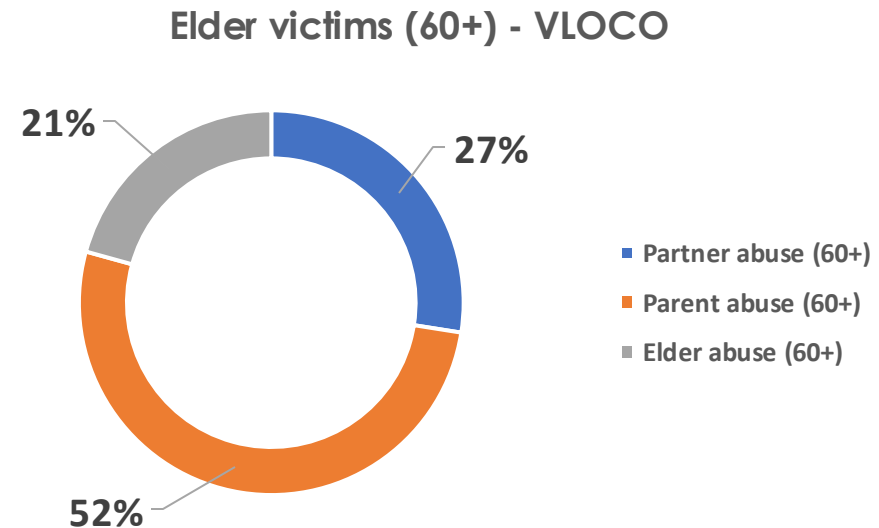
Vlaams Ondersteuningscentrum Ouderenmis(be)handeling

Flemish centre for
support on elder abuse
for professionals

What is VLOCO?

VLOCO is a Flemish support line and centre of expertise for professionals who need information and advice about a specific situation of elder abuse.

265 situations
in 2024





Helpline 1712

What is 1712?

“1712 is a professional helpline for all citizens with a question about violence, sexual abuse or child abuse. Professionals listen to the story, explore and identify the (underlying) questions and needs, provide information, support, and advice, and aim to look for the best possible solution together with the help-seeker. The helpline is free and anonymous.”



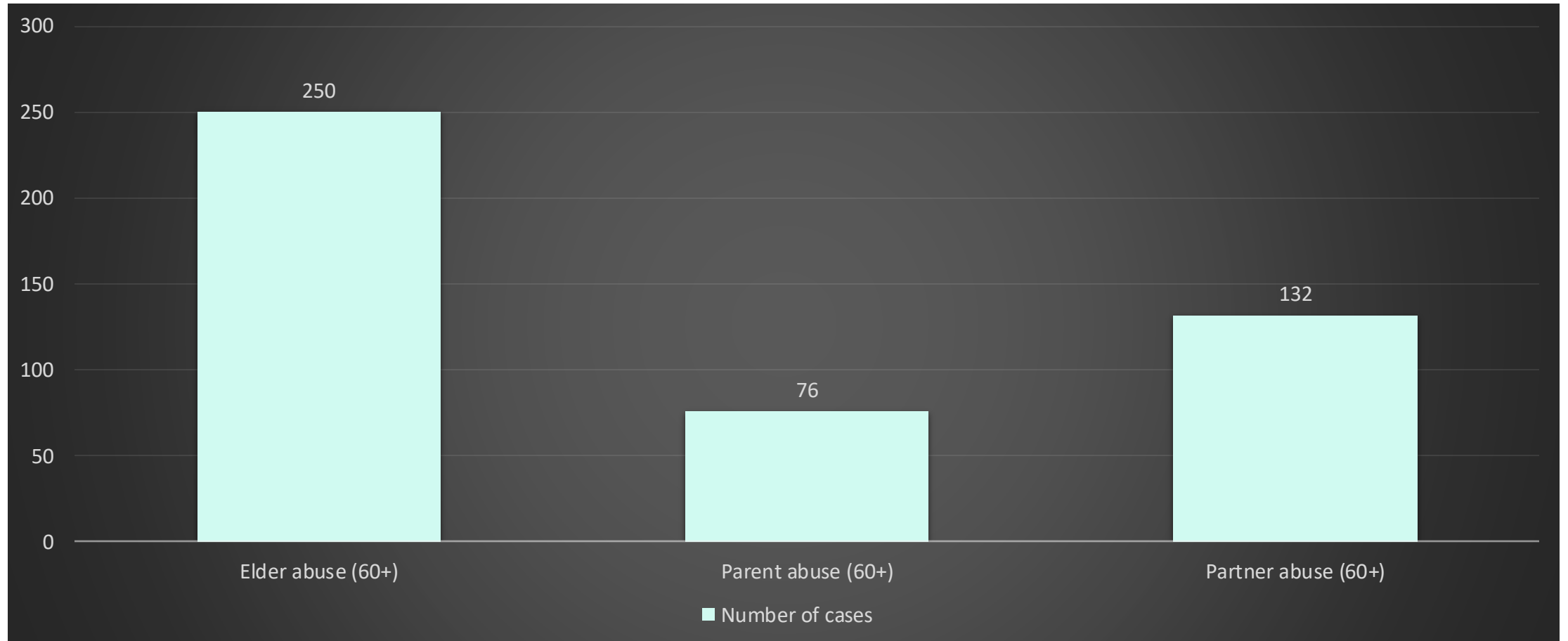
9.594 calls in
2024



13.281
(potential)
victims

Elder Victims (+60y)

+/- 3%



A teal wooden door with a brass handle and a metal latch, set against a blurred background of a field.

What to expect?

Overview

Defining elder abuse

Prevalence of elder abuse

Risk factors

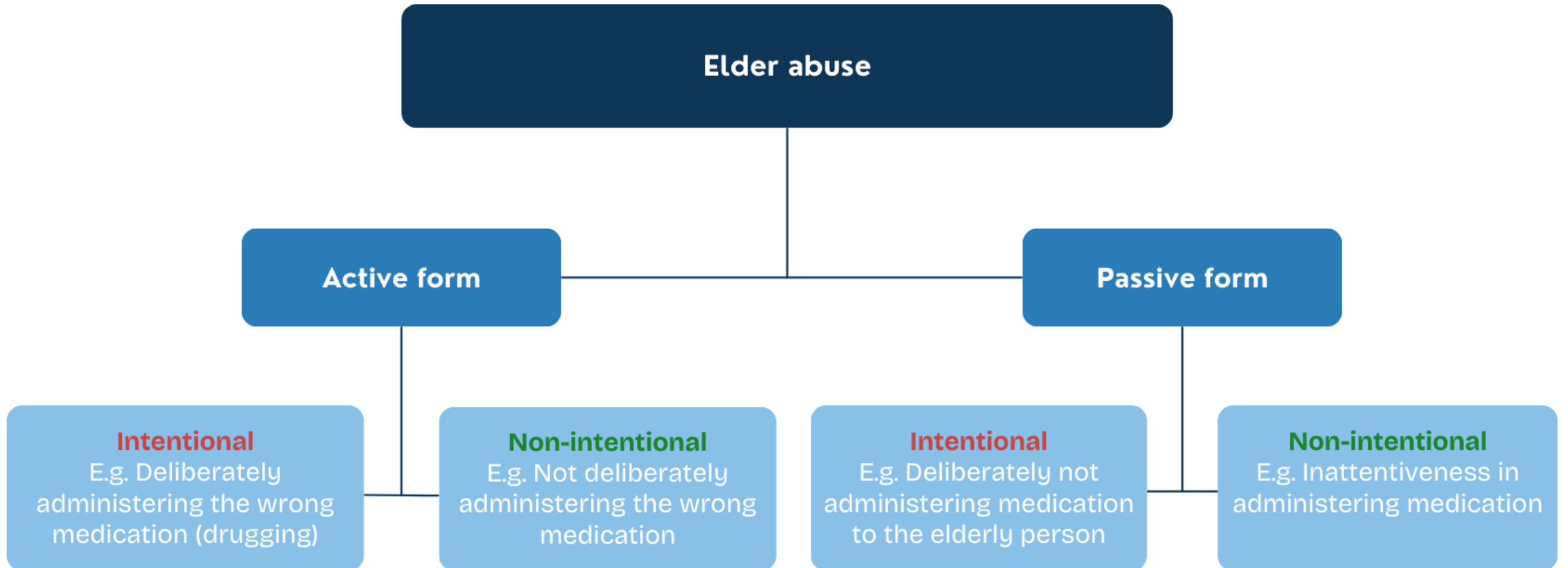
Help-seeking behavior



Definition of Elder Abuse

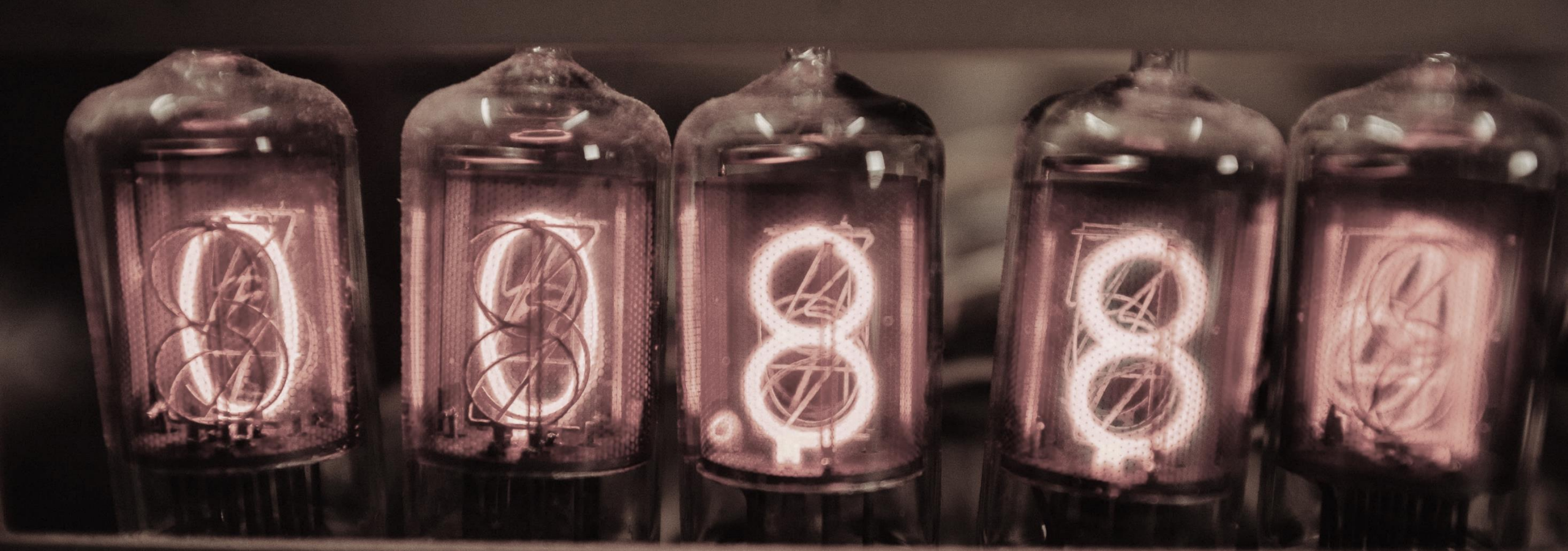
Definition abuse of older adults

The abuse of older people, also known as elder abuse, is 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. This type of violence constitutes a violation of human rights and includes **physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse; financial and material abuse; abandonment; neglect; and serious loss of dignity and respect.**



<https://youtu.be/khniYQZUOv0>

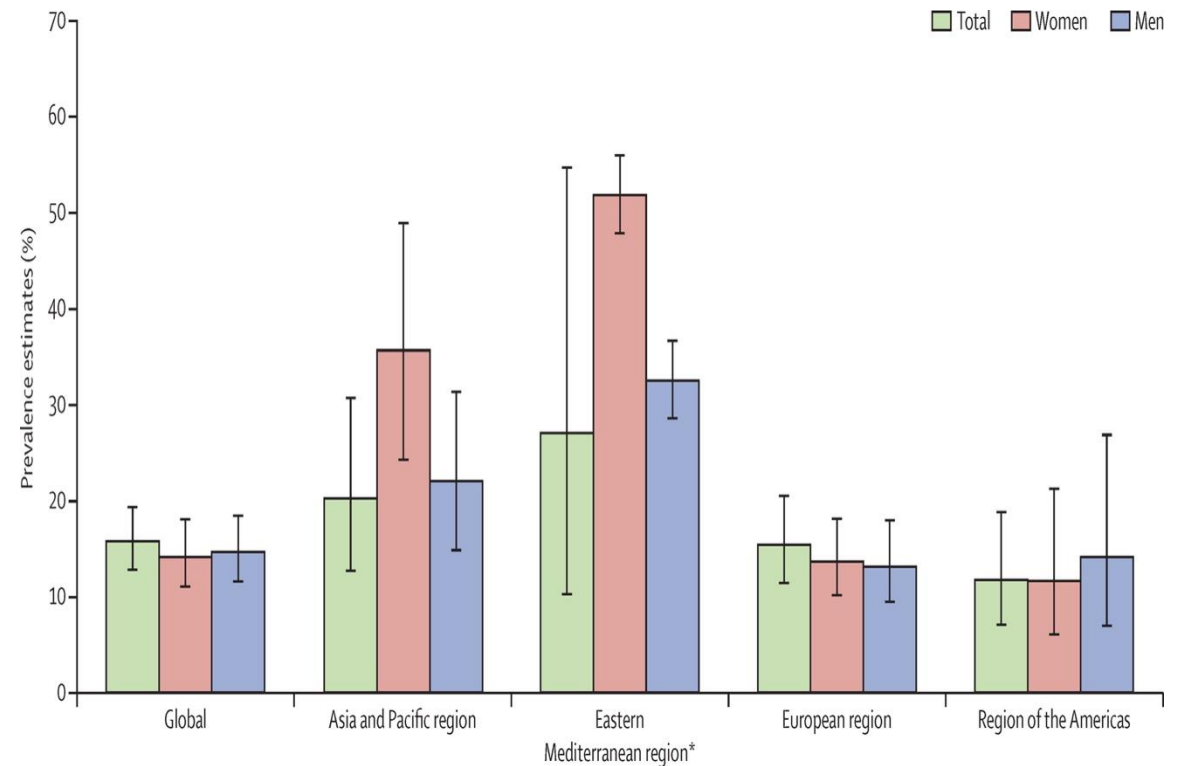




Prevalence

Prevalence Elder Abuse

- Past-year abuse prevalence in adults aged 60 years or older
- Community samples
- 28 countries
- Overall: 16%
 - Psychological abuse: 7%
 - Financial abuse: 7%
 - Neglect: 4%
 - Physical abuse: 3%
 - Sexual abuse: 0,9%



(Yon et al., 2017)

Sexual violence in older adults

- Representative sample of the Belgian population aged 70y or older ($N=513$) (Nobels et al., 2021)
- Lifetime prevalence: 44%
 - 55% of females
 - 29% of males
- In the past 12 months: 8% at least 1 form of SV
 - 9% of females
 - 8% of males

Intimate partner violence among the elder

= physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former partner or spouse.

- Women $\geq 45y$ (Pathak et al., 2019):
 - 16.5 - 54.5% (lifetime)
 - 2 - 28.5% (current IPV)
 - Psychological IPV > physical or sexual IPV
 - A decline over age groups, except for non-physical forms of IPV

Abuse of Older People 2023 in Flandres

VLOCO – 1712 – CAW's – Tele-Onthaal – Health Insurance Funds



> 30 situations/week

1.584 older people 60+ experience violence

Risk factors



Risk factors for elder abuse

(Lachs & Pillemer, 2015)

- Being female
- Shared living environment, i.e., other than spouse
- Low income
- Isolation & lack of social support





Risk factors for abuse in residential care settings

(Connolly & Browne, 2023)

- Being single, widowed or divorced
- Advanced age
- Cognitive impairment or dementia
- Having a physical disability
- Communication difficulties

But also,

- Hostile residents
- Residents with unrealistic expectations, dissatisfied with care
- Residents who labelled themselves as aggressive

Risk factors for perpetration (CDC, 2024)

- Individual risk factors
 - Current diagnosis of mental illness
 - Current or past abuse of drugs or alcohol
 - Current physical health problems
 - Past experience of disruptive behavior
 - Past experience of traumatic events
 - Exposure to or witnessing abuse as a child
 - High level of stress
 - Inadequate coping skills
 - Social isolation
 - Poor or inadequate preparation or training for caregiving responsibilities



Risk factors for perpetration (CDC, 2024)

- Relationship risk factors
 - High financial and emotional dependence upon a vulnerable elder
 - Past family conflict
 - Inability to establish or maintain positive prosocial relationships
 - Lack of social support
- Societal risk factors
 - Staffing problems and lack of qualified staff
 - Staff burnout and stressful working conditions



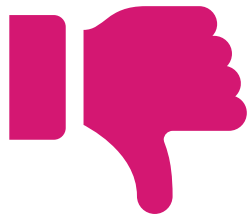


REAMI – Risk on Elder Abuse and Mistreatment Instrument

REAMI - Risk on Elder Abuse and Mistreatment Instrument



- Short questionnaire (2 – 3 min)
- Testing your own suspicions – how you feel about the situation



- Questionnaire in presence of older adult
- No interrogation of the elder, the caregiver

REAMI – PART 1: older person

PART 1										
To which extent do you feel that:										
							A	B	C	D
... the older person is dependent on one key figure ¹ ? (e.g. for care, finances, administration, housing, ...)										
... the older person is isolated?										
... there are signals that the older person cannot handle the situation anymore? (e.g. signals of overburdening, fatigue, emotionality, irritation, short temper, indifference, feelings of powerlessness, frustration, anxiety, ...)										
... the older person faces physical constraints, dementia, depressive symptoms, addiction, psychiatric or psychosocial problems?										
... radical and stressful changes in the life of the older person have recently occurred? (e.g. moving, death of partner, ...)										
... there is a history of violence in the family?										
Total (Count how many times A and B, C and D are answered)										

REAMI – PART 2: key figure

PART 2										
To which extent do you feel that:										
							A	B	C	D
... the relationship between the key figure and the older person is problematic? (e.g. stress, tensions, conflicts, ...)										
... the relationship between the key figure and their close environment is problematic? (e.g. stress, tensions, conflicts)										
... the key figure is dependent on the older person?										
... the care, provided by the key figure for the older person, is too much?										
... the care knowledge of the key figure is insufficient?										
... the key figure is isolated?										
... there are signals that the key figure cannot handle the situation anymore? (e.g. signals of overburdening, fatigue, emotionality, irritation, short temper, indifference, feelings of powerlessness, frustration, anxiety, ...)										
... the key figure faces physical constraints, dementia, depressive symptoms, addiction, psychiatric or psychosocial problems?										
... the key figure has financial problems?										
... radical and stressful changes in the life of the key figure have recently occurred?										
Total (Count how many times A and B, C and D are answered)										

REAMI – PART 3: types of elder abuse

PART 3													
To which extent do you feel that:													
										A	B	C	D
... there are signals of violation of rights? (e.g. hindered to read their mail, to meet friends or acquaintances, ...)													
... there are signals of emotional abuse and mistreatment? (e.g. feeling anxious, ashamed, threatened by accusations, being belittled, ...)													
... there are signals of neglect? (e.g. lack of getting dressed, groceries, meals, household)													
... there are signals of financial abuse and mistreatment? (e.g. forced to sign papers or to give money or goods, forced changes to a will, sudden unexplainable changes in the financial situation, ...)													
... there are signs of physical abuse and mistreatment? (e.g. physically injured, assaulted, ...)													
... there are signs of sexual abuse and mistreatment? (e.g. unwanted touching, obliged to undress, ...)													
Total (Count how many times A and B, C and D are answered)										27			

TOTAL SCORE OF THE REAMI

Note down the totals from the grey boxes in part 1, part 2 and part 3. Multiply these totals by the corresponding number (1,10 or 1000). Add these three numbers together.

Part 1:		X 1	=							
Part 2:		X 10	=							
Part 3:		X 1000	=							
Total			=							

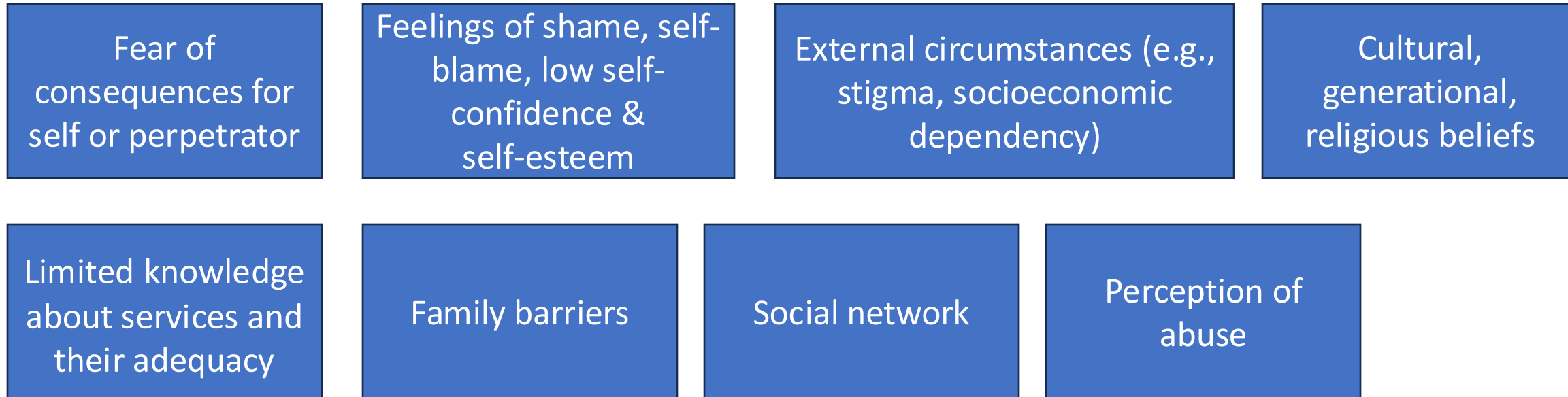
Total	Explanation
0	The situation is good. There is no risk.
1/ 2/ 3/ 10 / 11	The older person has a low risk of elder abuse and mistreatment.
4/ 5/ 6/ 12 tot 106	The older person has a moderate risk of elder abuse and mistreatment. At this moment, there may be no visible signs of elder abuse and mistreatment; however, there is a moderate risk. Further attention is required.
1000 tot 6106	There are indications that the older person is being abused. There is a high risk of elder abuse and mistreatment.



Help-seeking behavior

Help-seeking behaviors in victims of elder abuse (Dominguez et al., 2021)

Barriers?



Help-seeking behaviors in victims of elder abuse (Dominguez et al., 2021)

Facilitators?

Financial abuse

Severe consequences

Help-seeking behaviors in victims of elder abuse

(Dominguez et al., 2021)

- Help after 6 – 7 months of violence
- Sources?
 - Informal > formal sources
 - Often different sources
 - Police = last resort
- No help?
 - Dealing themselves



A wooden post with three directional signs pointing to the right. The top sign is light-colored wood and says 'Help'. The middle sign is dark-colored wood and says 'Support'. The bottom sign is light-colored wood and says 'Advice'. The background is a blue sky with white clouds.

Help

Support

Advice

Helpline 1712 & VLOCO:
additional information



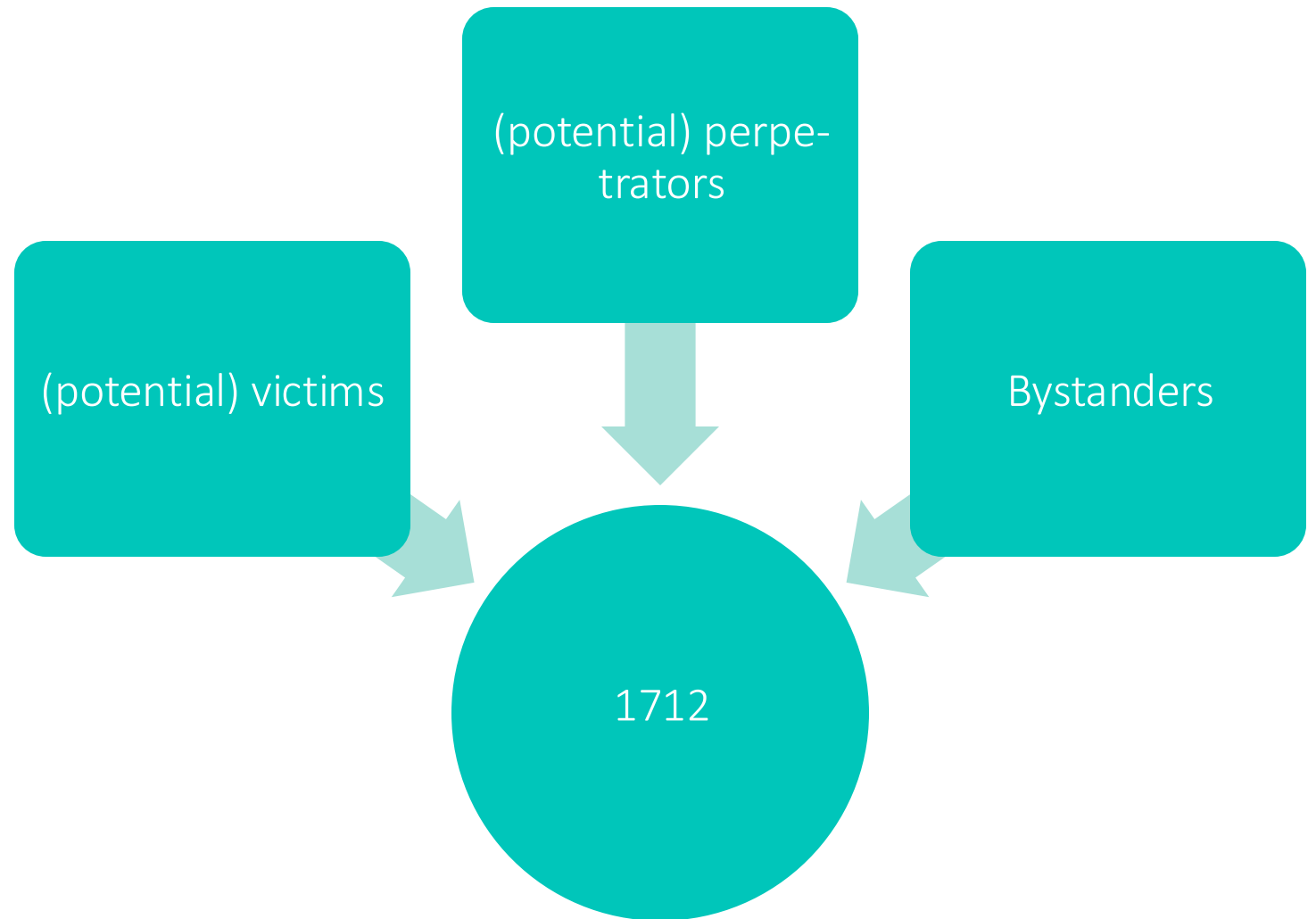
**BEL OF CHAT
BIJ VRAGEN OVER GEWELD**

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For whom?



For what?

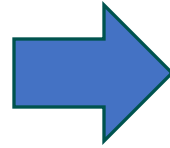




How?

Structure 1712

CAW Oost-Brabant vzw



**BEL OF CHAT
BIJ VRAGEN OVER GEWELD**

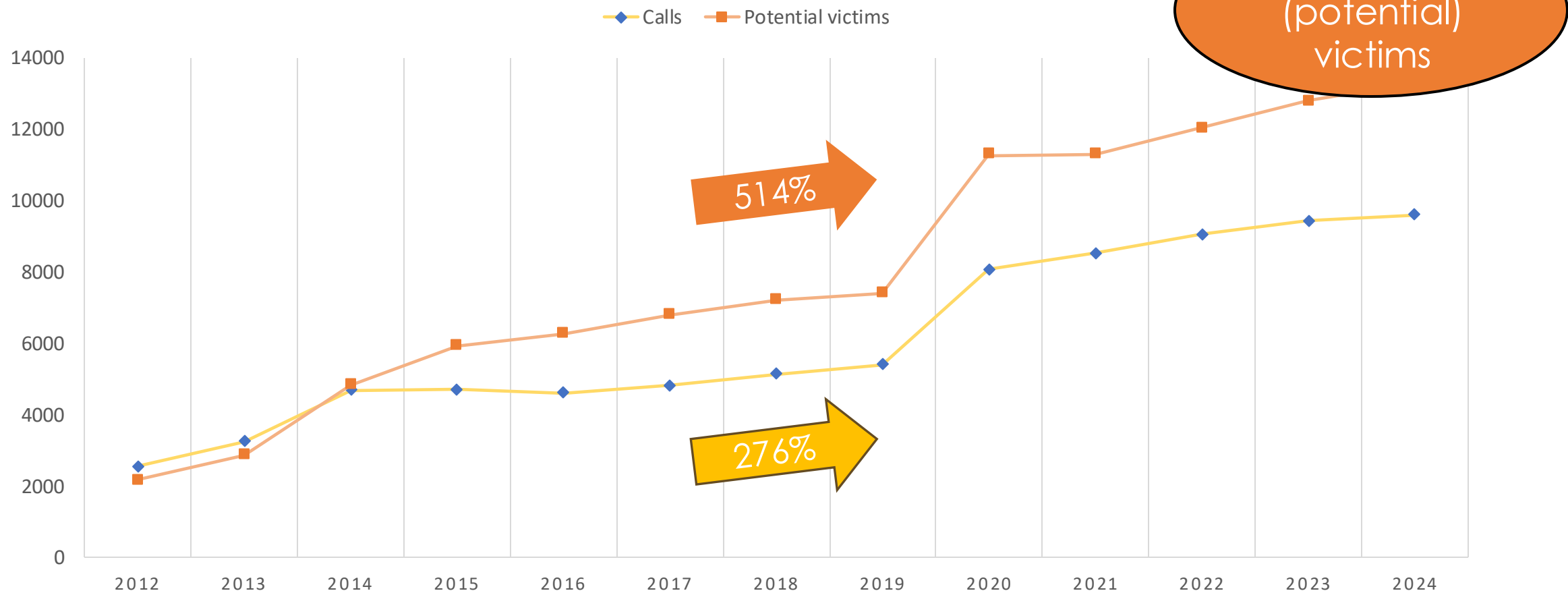


**VERTROUWENSCESTRUM
KINDERMISHANDELING**



4 teams/regions: phone & mail
1 team/region: phone, mail & chat

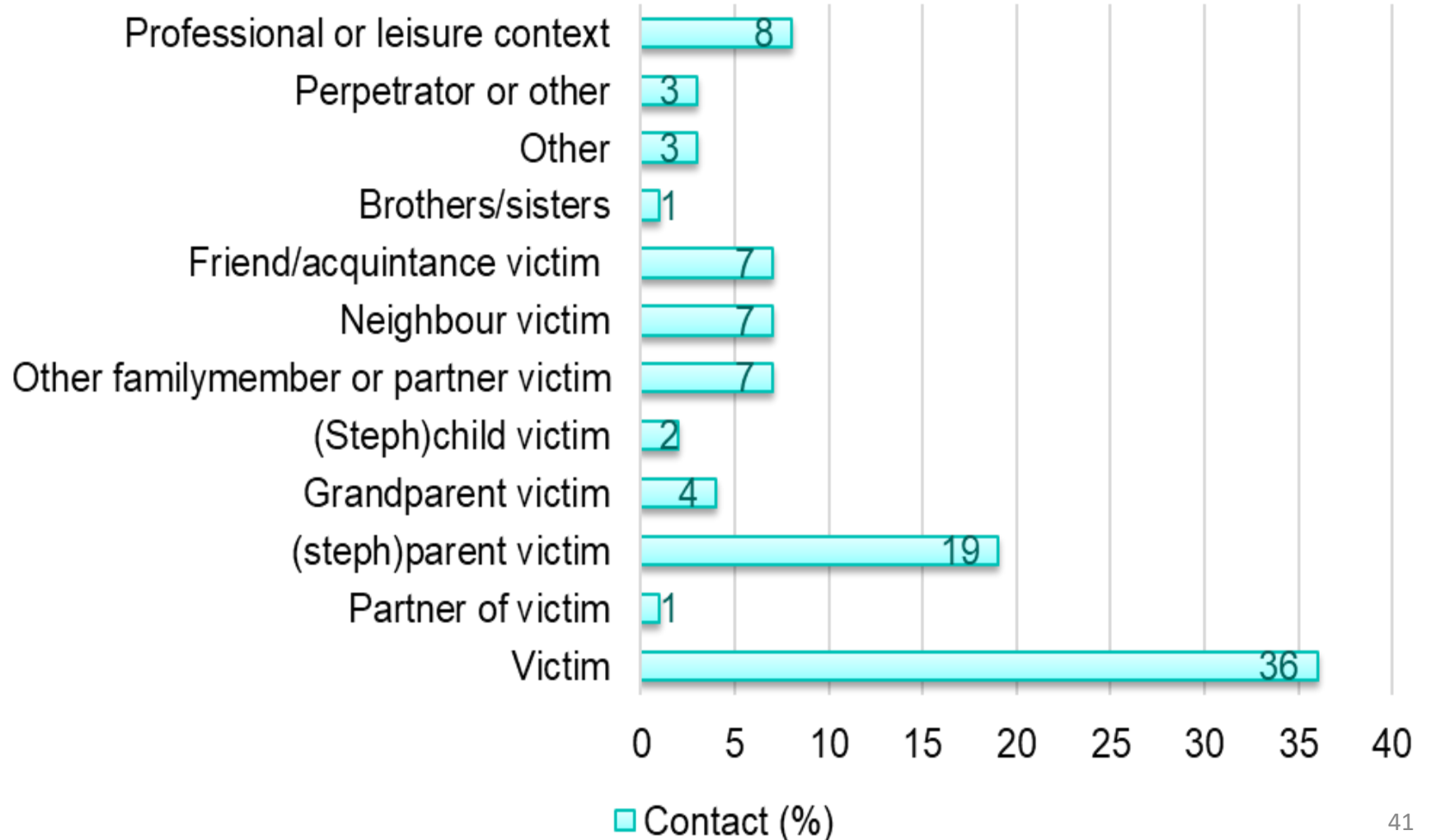
1712 across the years (2012-2024)



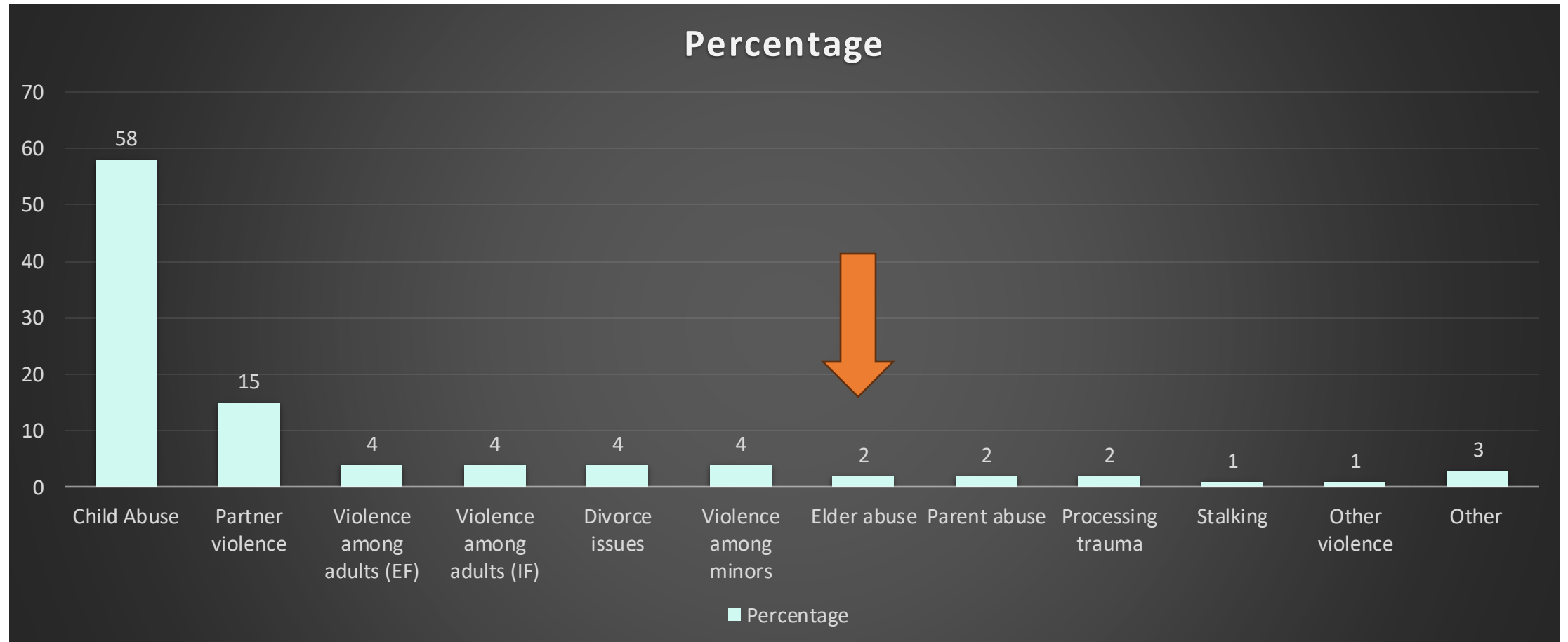
Who contacted the helpline in 2024?

9.594 calls

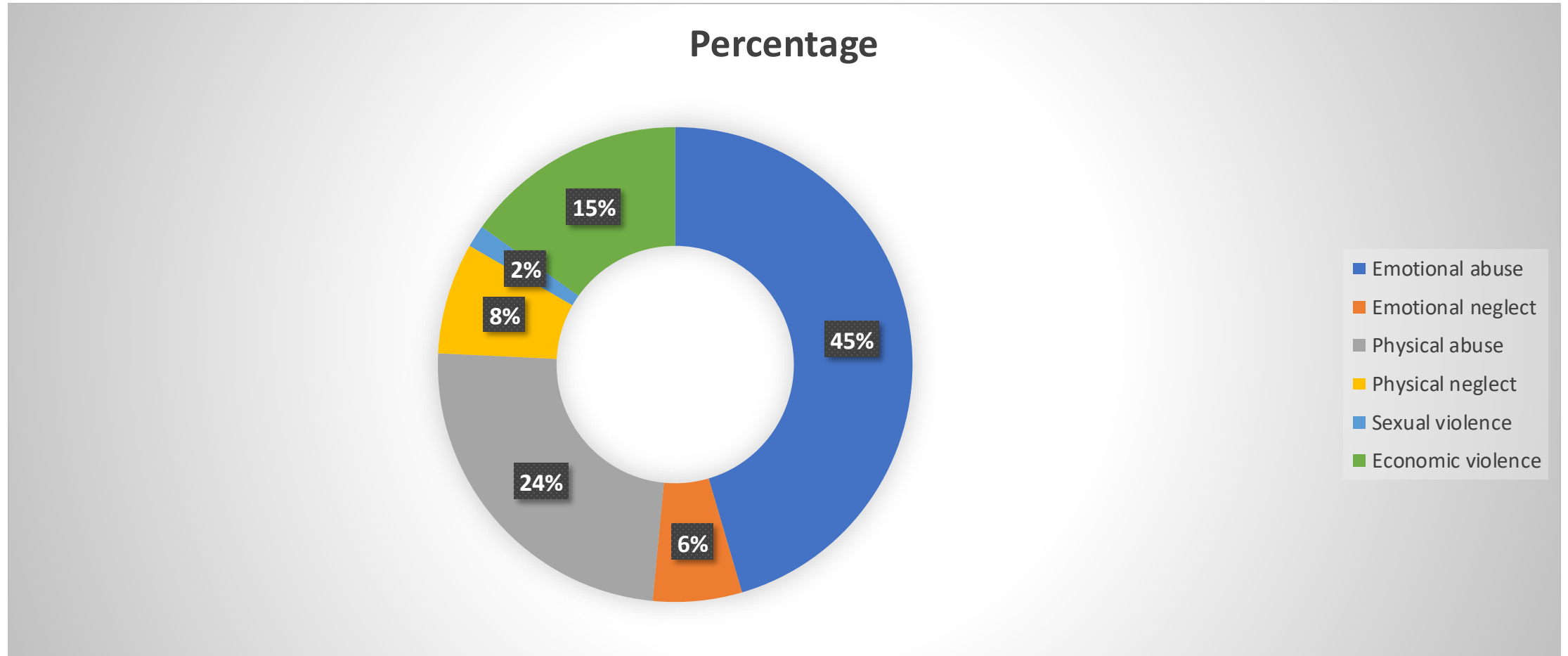
13.281
(potential)
victims



Kind of abuse (2024)



Kind of elder abuse





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Tasks?



Developing tools



Training professionals



Increasing awareness



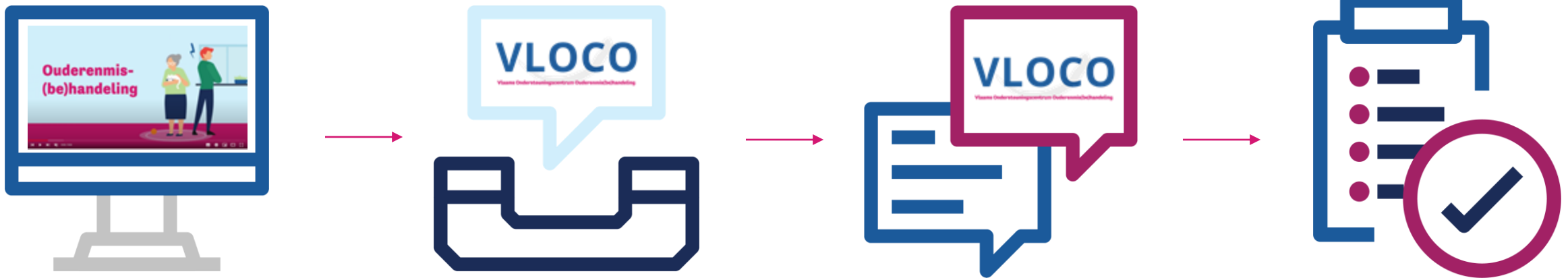
Support line

Support line?

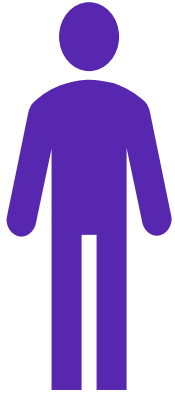
- Only professionals
- Situation or suspicion of elder abuse
- Only professionals
- Only abuse of older adults
- Source of information - support - referral
- For free - anonymous



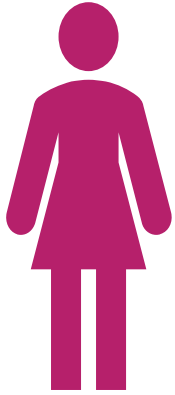
Client's journey



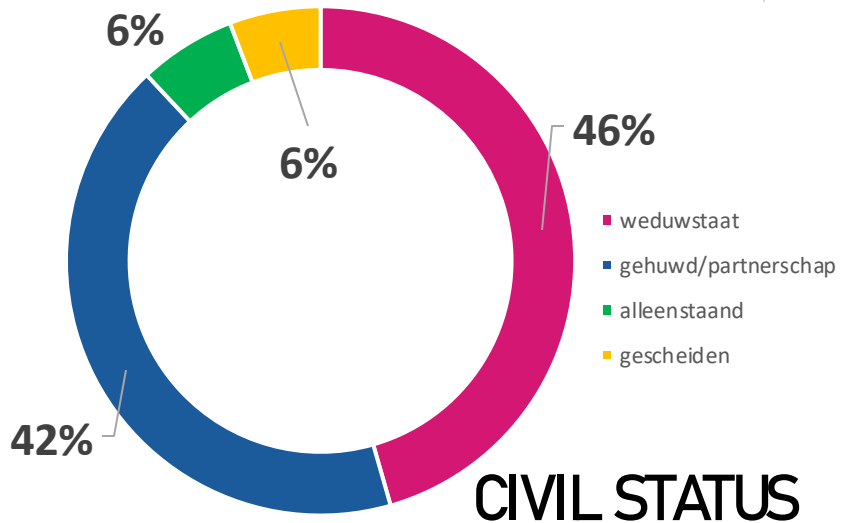
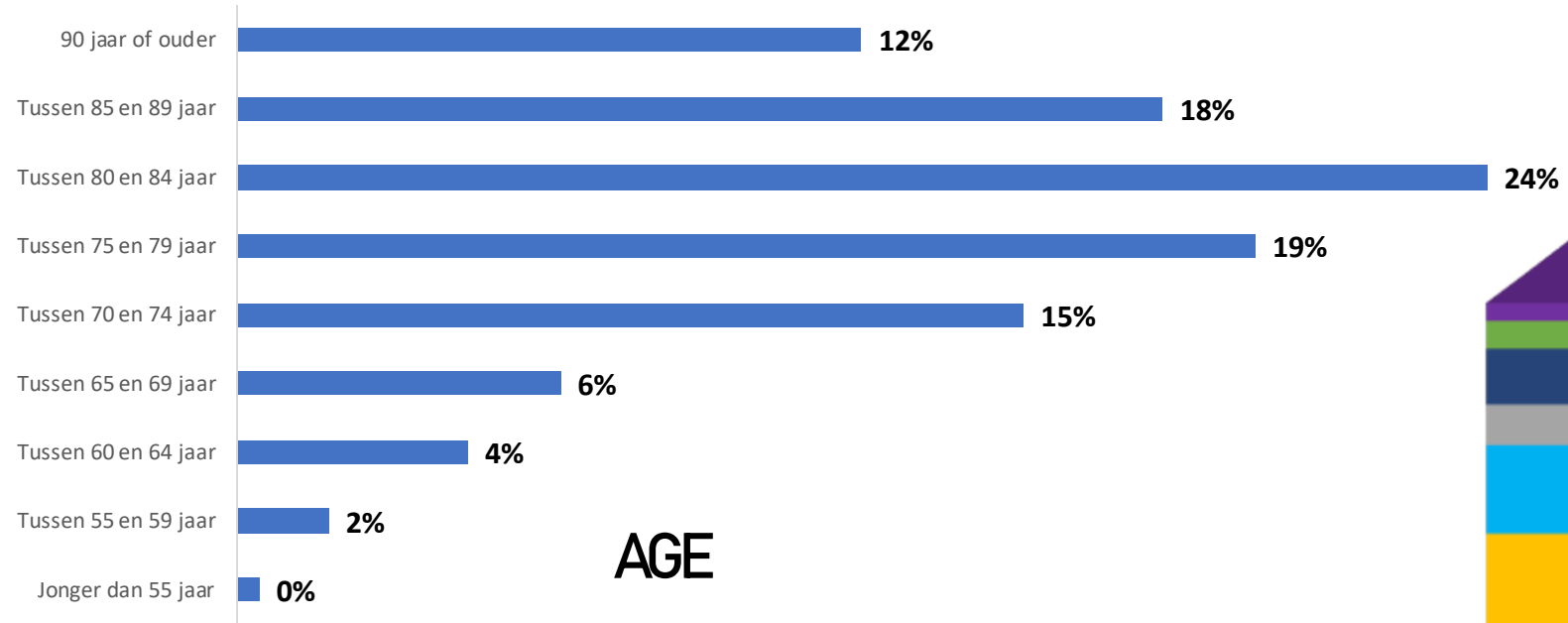
PROFILE OLDER ADULTS 2024 - VLOCO



33 %

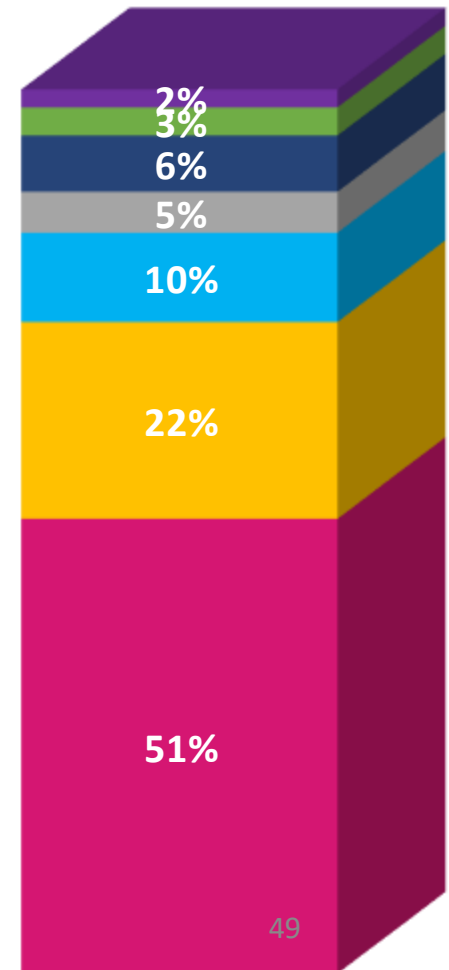


67 %



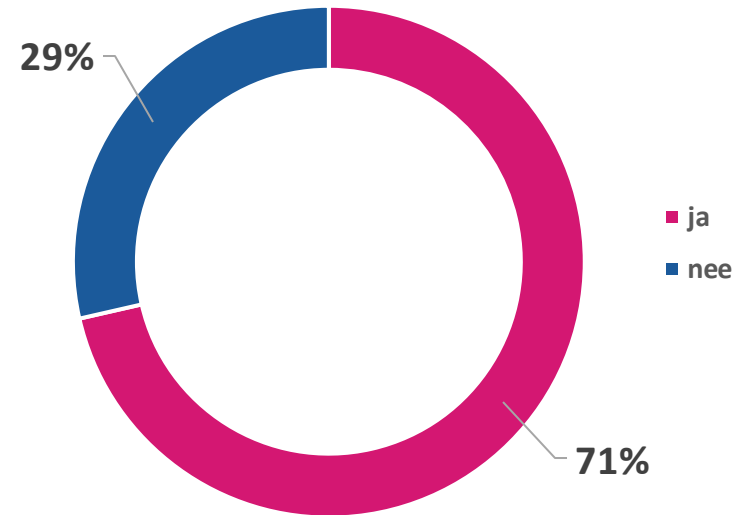
RISK FACTORS

- verslaving
- laagbegaafdheid
- financiële/materiële problemen
- psychiatrisch ziektebeeld
- psychosociaal probleem
- dementie
- lichamelijke beperking

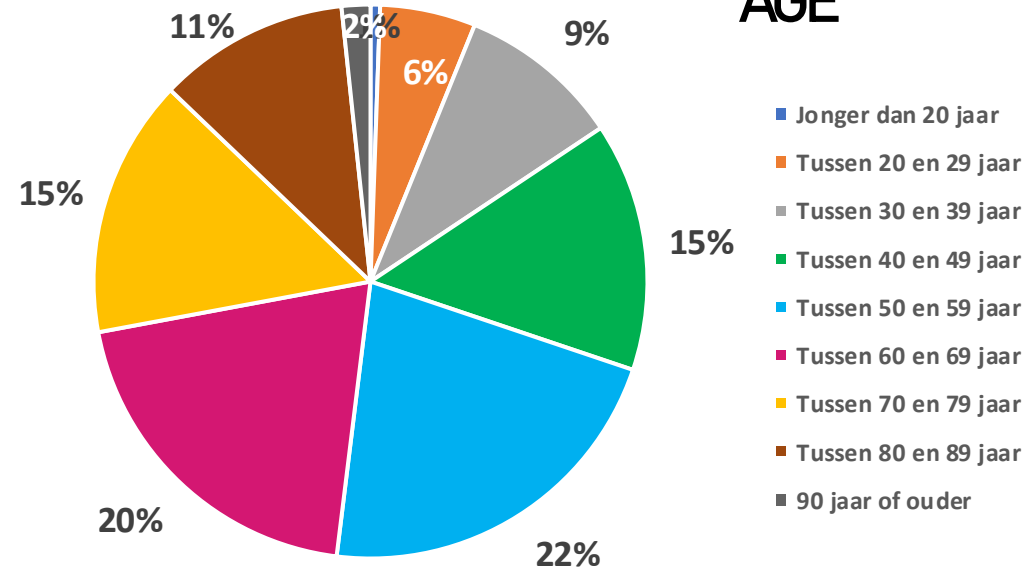


PROFILE KEY FIGURE 2024 - VLOCO

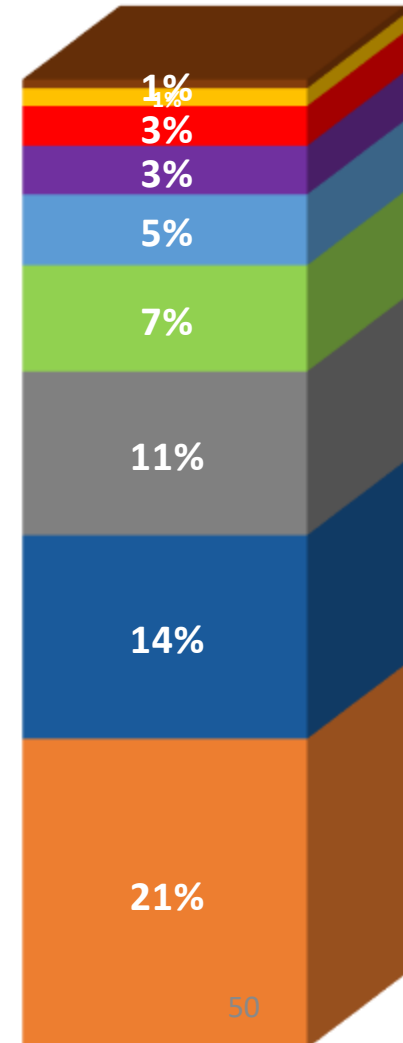
CARER?



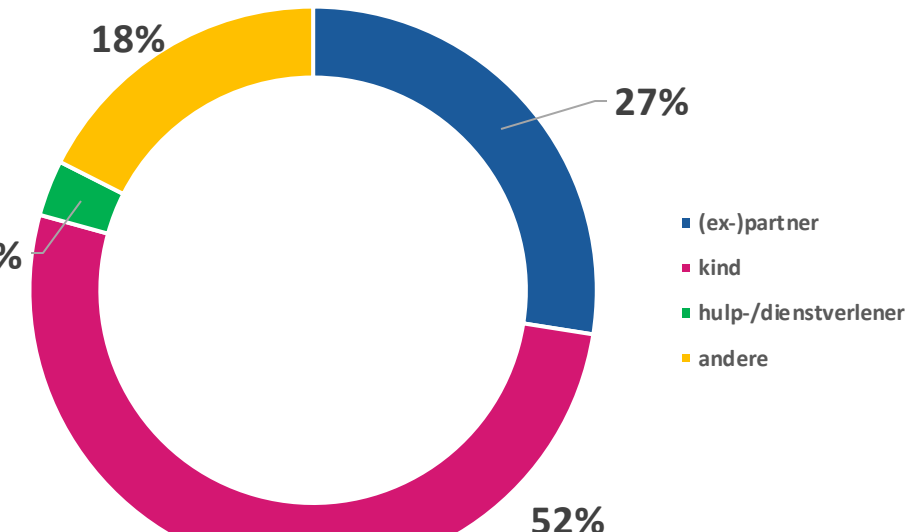
AGE



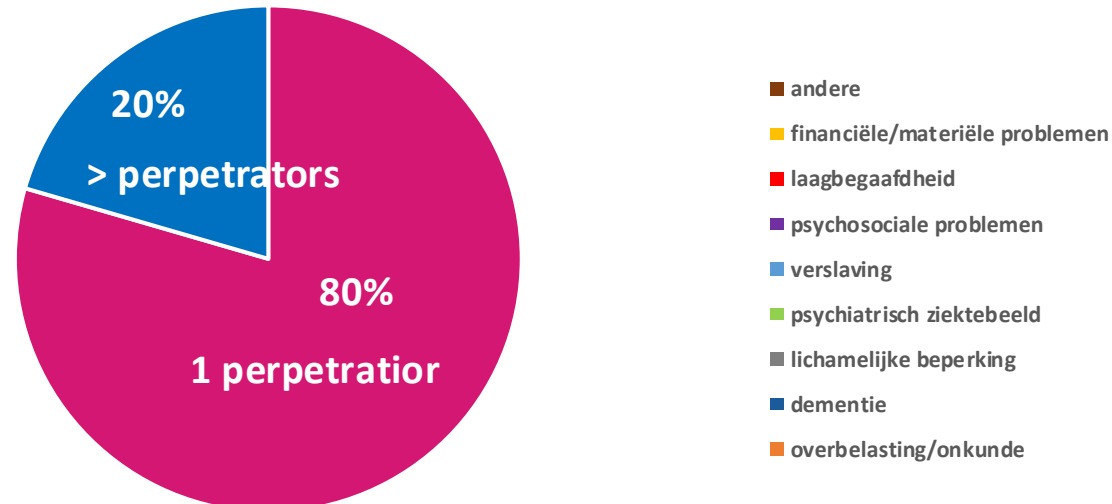
RISK FACTORS



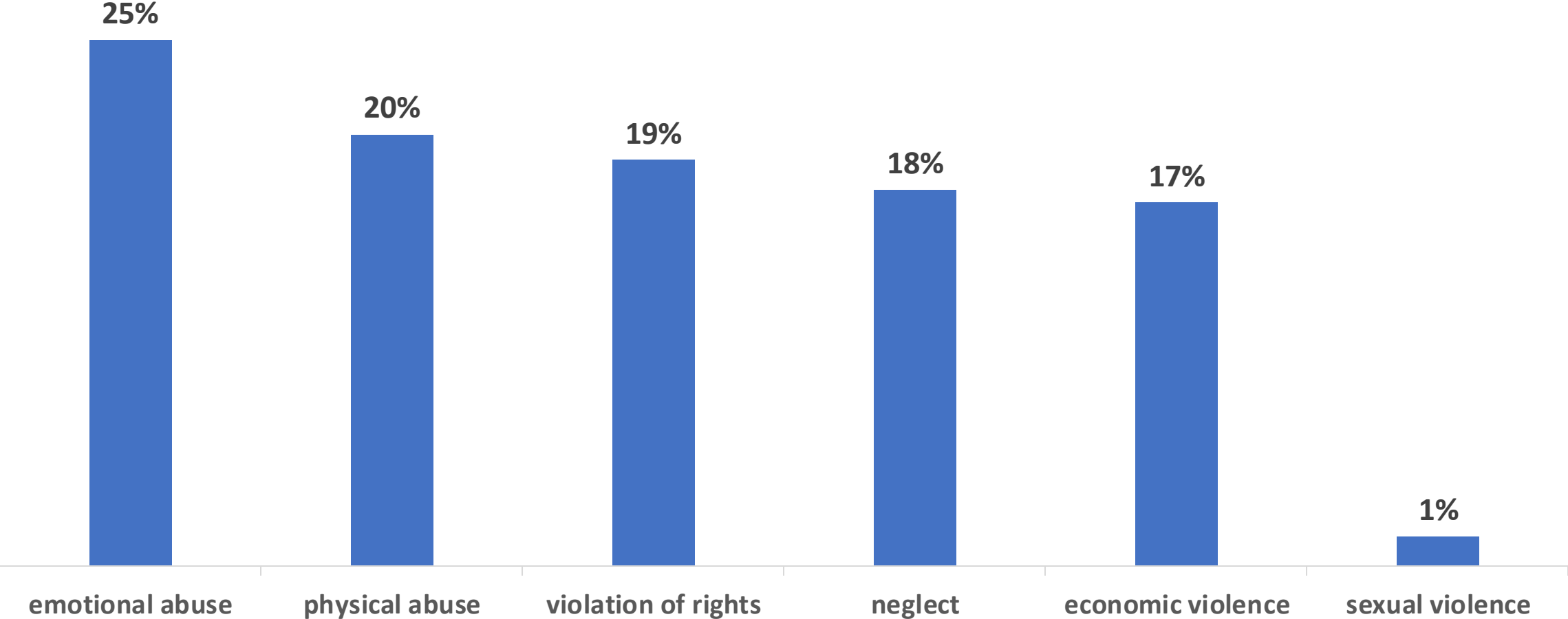
RELATIONSHIP WITH ELDER



MULTIPLE PERPETRATORS?



TYPE OF ABUSE 2024 - VLOCO





Questions?

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