

CARP Elder Abuse Poll Report February 10, 2015

Key Findings

One third of members know someone who has suffered elder abuse, and this is most likely to be financial elder abuse. These data have not changed significantly since we began measuring in 2011, with the exception that financial abuse may be slightly less common now, while verbal and psychological abuse may have increased.

Members agree enshrining a 'Duty to Report' elder abuse by professionals dealing with dependent older adults in law is the best way to combat the problem, and, while they think little progress (other than some public awareness) has been achieved, virtually every member agrees the Duty to Report is necessary to combat the power imbalance implicit in the caregiver-patient relationship, and two thirds agree strongly.

Despite the fact that intervention may risk negative outcomes to the professionals involved, members agree it is better to risk intervening to stop potential abuse. The best courses to counter the previously mentioned power imbalance are seen to be more house calls by medical and public health professionals and more support and education for caregivers. More than one half of members would withhold their vote from a politician who did not explicitly endorse comprehensive anti-elder abuse legislation, even if it meant voting against their usual party, or they would not vote.

After briefly tying the Liberals in member voting preference, the Conservatives have retreated to second place, with the NDP in third place. However, the Conservatives have higher member expectations of victory than the Liberals.

Detailed Findings

One third of members know someone (34%) either themselves (3%) or someone they know (31%) who has suffered elder abuse, and this rate has remained relatively stable over time (since December 2011).

Elder abuse can be physical abuse, verbal and psychological abuse, financial abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. Have you, or has anyone you know ever been a victim of elder abuse?

	December 2011	October 2012	June 2013	January 2015
YES	34%	37%	38%	34%
Me	2%	4%	3%	3%
Someone I know	32%	33%	35%	31%
NO	66%	62%	60%	65%
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	n/a	1%	1%	1%

Abuse is most likely to be financial (39%), followed by verbal or psychological abuse (30%), but incidence of financial abuse has declined since 2011 (50%) and incidence of psychological abuse has increased (from 23%). Incidence of physical abuse is up over time (from 5% to 11%).

What form did this abuse take?

	December 2011	October 2012	June 2013	January 2015
Financial abuse	50%	46%	45%	39%
Verbal abuse	23%	31%	25%	30%
Neglect	18%	13%	14%	13%
Physical abuse	5%	6%	11%	11%
OTHER	4%	4%	6%	3%

Enshrining a duty to report in law is seen to be the most effective way to combat elder abuse (30%), followed by about half this proportion who opt for more caregiver training and support (18%), a new criminal offense (16%) and a 1-800/911 type emergency reporting line (13%).

CARP is calling for comprehensive action to end elder abuse. Which one of the solutions below do you think would be most effective in fighting elder abuse?

Enshrine 'Duty To Report' in law/clear guidelines	30%
Caregiver training/support/education	18%
New criminal offense of elder abuse	16%
1-800/911 -type hotline/single point of contact	13%
Support services for victims	9%
Specialized investigation teams	3%
More study needed	3%
NO ACTION REQUIRED	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	8%

Most members think little progress has been made (28%) other than some awareness raising (20%).

CARP has worked to eradicate elder abuse, and, as a result, the federal government changed the criminal code in 2011 to allow for stiffer sentences for elder abuse as a result. What progress has been made since 2011?

Little progress has been made	28%
More public awareness now	20%
Elder abuse more socially unacceptable	9%
More media/official awareness	8%
Minor actions taken by government	5%
A few more cases have gone to court	3%
Major actions taken by government	1%
Enough progress has been made/awareness is high	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	27%

More than half our members do not think the provinces, under whose jurisdiction most elder abuse protection initiatives fall, have made much or any progress in combatting elder abuse (51%). A minority say some provinces have begun to act (14%).

Many of CARP's recommendations for further action against elder abuse fall under provincial jurisdiction, including a duty to report, an elder abuse reporting hotline, victim services and investigation/prosecution support. How much progress is being made by the provinces on combating elder abuse?

PROGRESS MADE	15%
Great deal, provinces lead effort	1%
Some, provinces have begun to act	14%
PROGRESS NOT MADE	51%
Not very much, minor efforts only	22%
Very little, provinces not doing enough	26%
None	3%
DON'T KNOW	35%

Virtually all members agree a duty to report is necessary for professionals dealing with dependent adults (95%), and two thirds agree strongly (62%).

CARP recommends a 'Duty to Report' for professionals who interact with elderly and dependent adults, with clear guidelines for action, intervention and protection, along with adding professional capacity to investigate such reports. Do you agree or disagree a 'Duty to Report' is necessary for professionals who deal with elderly and dependent adults?

AGREE	95%
Agree strongly	62%
Agree	33%
DISAGREE	3%
Disagree	2%
Disagree strongly	1%
DON'T KNOW	3%

Members are especially likely to agree countering the power imbalance implied in caregiving was more important (79%) than the risk of diminishing the elderly (3%).

Some say a “Duty to Report” risks infantilizing seniors and limits professionals’ freedom of action, while others say it may be necessary to counter the power imbalance that often exists between a dependent adult and a caregiver. Which of these two positions do you support?

Infantilizes/limits freedom of action	3%
Necessary to counter power imbalance	79%
NEITHER	7%
OTHER/DON’T KNOW	10%

Close to half of members think a duty to report should be enshrined in law (45%), while a third think it should be mandated by professional bodies (35%). Few think it should only be encouraged behavior (14%).

What is the best way to implement a ‘Duty to Report’ for professionals who deal with dependent adults?

Enshrine ‘Duty To Report’ in law	45%
Mandated by professional associations/agencies	35%
Encourage as social goal/not mandated	14%
NO ‘DUTY TO REPORT’ NECESSARY	1%
OTHER/DON’T KNOW	5%

More than half our members agree a duty to report risks personal repercussions for professionals in some cases (56%).

Do you agree or disagree that a ‘Duty to Report’, by requiring professionals to get involved in complex family dynamics, risks negative repercussions for the professional involved?

AGREE	56%
Agree strongly	9%
Agree	47%
DISAGREE	29%
Disagree	26%
Disagree strongly	3%
DON’T KNOW	15%

Equal proportions say whistleblower protection or more training in family dynamics are the solution to this problem (31% each).

Which one safeguard would be most effective in protecting professionals who are subject to a 'Duty to Report'?

Train professionals in family dynamics	31%
Whistleblower-type protection	31%
Anonymity in investigation/prosecution	9%
Prosecution immunity in case of reporting error	9%
Must speak to person accused	7%
Legal indemnity if accused countersues	3%
NO SAFEGUARDS REQUIRED	2%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	8%

Despite the risk of negative personal outcomes for professionals involved, most agree it is more important to risk interfering (64%), or that more awareness will make intervention easier in the future (26%).

Given the potential repercussions for the professionals who report elder abuse and the possibility of mistakenly interfering in family dynamics that the suspected abused person deems acceptable, how would you respond?

Better to risk interfering to prevent abuse	64%
More awareness makes intervention easier	27%
Best to leave things as they are	2%
DON'T KNOW/OTHER	7%

A third of members see more house calls as a solution to the power imbalance which can be caused by isolation and dependence (36%), while somewhat fewer think the answer is more social supports (28%) or greater public awareness (23%).

A major element in elder abuse situations is the power imbalance - dependence on a caregiver, social isolation and lack of awareness of rights or options. What is the best measure to address this imbalance?

More house calls by public health/MDs	36%
More social services to support/educate caregivers	28%
Greater public awareness	23%
Awareness programs in schools	1%
Shelters	1%
DON'T KNOW/OTHER	10%

Members are equally likely to suggest a financial ombud with authority to recoup funds (32%) or requirement that banks and financial advisors have to deal directly with the client when abuse is suspected (30%). About a tenth want an independent observer for all financial transactions (14%) or more public awareness (10%).

Financial elder abuse is among the most prevalent forms of elder abuse. What is the best measure to counter financial elder abuse?

Financial ombud with authority to recoup funds	32%
Banks/advisers to deal directly when abuse suspected	30%
Require independent legal advice for all transactions	14%
More public awareness	10%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	15%

Almost two thirds of members disagree police forces in Canada are adequately trained or equipped to deal with elder abuse (61%).

Investigating reported cases of elder abuse is an important aspect of 'Duty to Report'. Do you agree or disagree police forces in Canada are currently equipped and able to investigate and prosecute acts of elder abuse that might be uncovered by a 'Duty to Report'?

AGREE	18%
Agree strongly	3%
Agree	15%
DISAGREE	61%
Disagree	47%
Disagree strongly	14%
DON'T KNOW	20%

In what constitutes the ballot question, one half of members would withhold their vote from a politician who did not explicitly support comprehensive anti-elder abuse legislation, even if it were the member's usual party (49%).

Would you withhold your vote from a politician in your riding who did not explicitly support comprehensive anti-elder abuse legislation in the next election, regardless of the party you usually vote for?

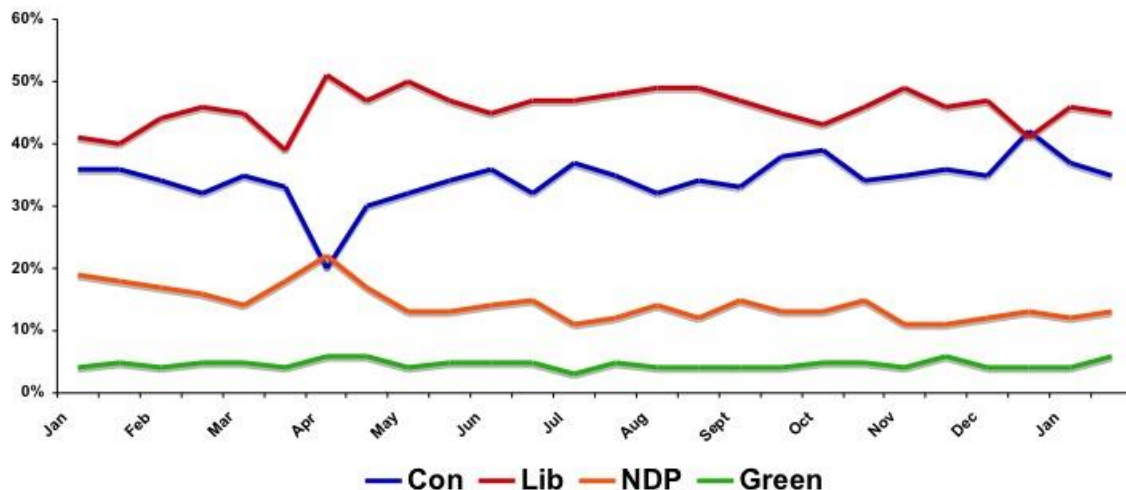
Would withhold vote, even if my usual party	49%
Would not vote	8%
Would not change my vote if usual party	27%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	15%

Electoral Preference

After briefly tying the Liberals in member voting preference, the Conservatives have retreated to second place (35%) behind the Liberals (45%). The NDP is third (13%). However, members are more likely to think the Conservatives will win the next election (53%) than they do the Liberals (44%) and this trend has been growing since last year. Expectation of victory has been shown to be an effective predictive electoral measure.

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you support/and which party do you EXPECT to win the next election?

	December 15	December 31	January 15	January 31
Liberals	51%	46%	47%	44%
Conservatives	44%	51%	50%	53%
NDP	3%	3%	2%	2%
Green	*	*	*	*



More than 1300 CARP Poll™ online panel members responded to this poll between January 28 and 31, 2015. The margin of error for a probability sample this size is about plus or minus 3%, 19 times out of 20