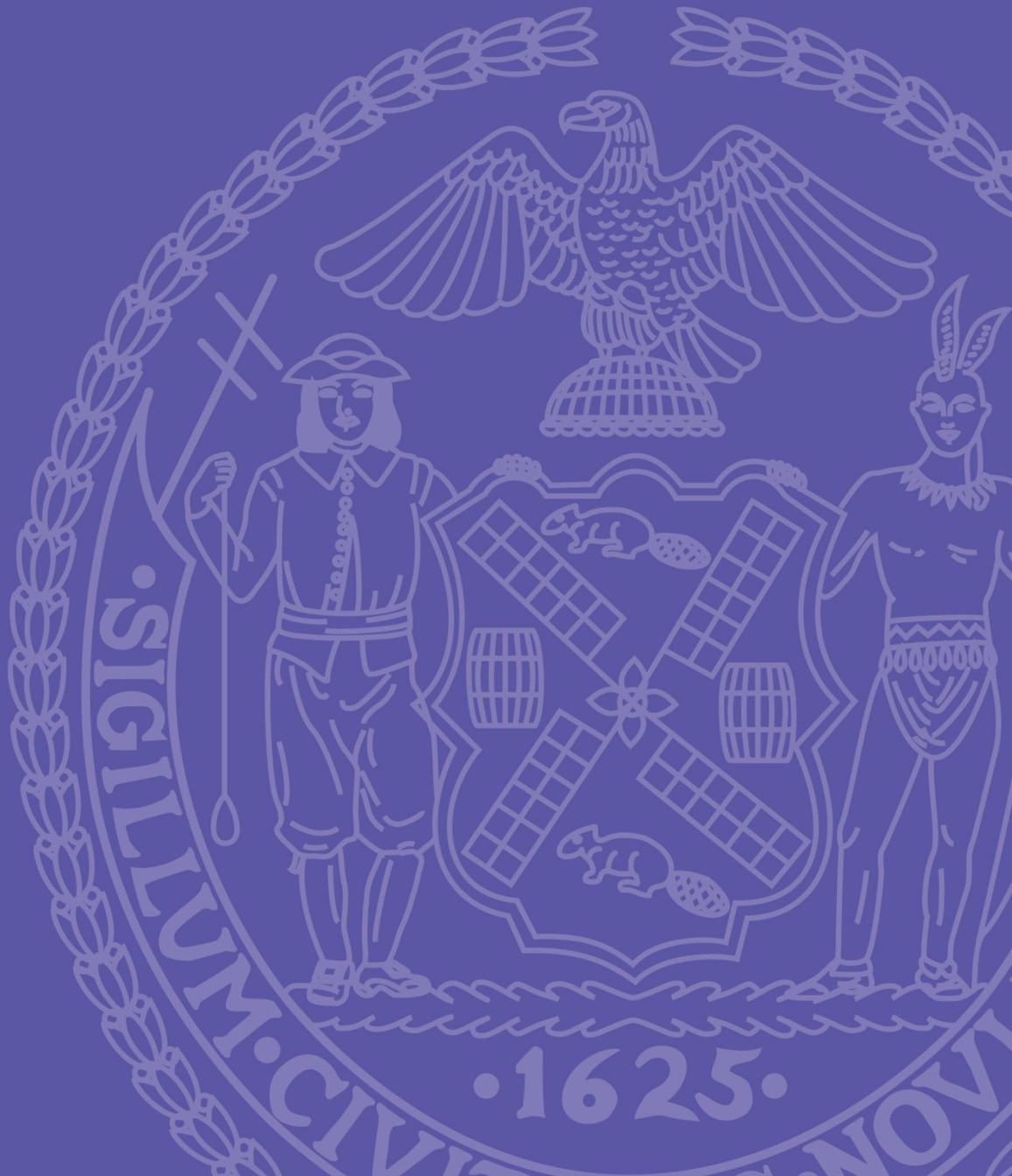


# INTIMATE PARTNER ELDER ABUSE IN NEW YORK CITY



**NYC**<sup>™</sup>  
Department for  
the Aging

**NYC**<sup>®</sup>  
Mayor's Office  
to Combat  
Domestic Violence



# INTIMATE PARTNER ELDER ABUSE IN NEW YORK CITY

## Key Takeaway:

Intimate partner elder abuse affects the health and safety of many New Yorkers and their families. Public awareness of the issue and a coordinated multidisciplinary response are required as the New York City elder population continues to increase.

## Highlights:

### *Intimate partner elder abuse crime in New York City:*

- In 2016, the NYPD filed 2,857 domestic incident reports (DIRs) for intimate partner elder abuse.
- In 2016, there were 146 reported felony assaults between intimate partners in which the victim was 60 years or older.
- Between 2010 and 2016, there were 23 intimate partner homicides in which the victim was 60 years or older.

### *Intimate partner elder abuse at the Family Justice Centers:*

- Between 2010 and 2016, the Family Justice Centers served at least 1,063 clients who were experiencing intimate partner elder abuse.

### *Services:*

- The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence and the Department for the Aging offer a wide range of services for New Yorkers who are experiencing intimate partner elder abuse.

Suggested citation: New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence and the New York City Department for the Aging. Intimate Partner Elder Abuse in New York City. New York City Office of the Mayor, 2017.

## **A Joint Research Report from the New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence and the New York City Department for the Aging**

**Commissioners: Cecile Noel and Donna M. Corrado**

The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) formulates policies and programs, coordinates the citywide delivery of domestic violence services, and works with diverse communities and community leaders to increase awareness of domestic violence. OCDV collaborates closely with government and nonprofit agencies that assist domestic violence survivors and operates the New York City Family Justice Centers. These co-located multidisciplinary domestic violence service centers provide vital social service, civil legal and criminal justice assistance for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children under one roof.

For more information on intimate partner violence programs and services in New York City, please visit the OCDV website at [nyc.gov/domesticviolence](http://nyc.gov/domesticviolence).

The Department for the Aging (DFTA) provides essential services for seniors in New York City. It channels federal, state, and city funds to community-based organizations that contract with DFTA to provide needed programs locally throughout the five boroughs. DFTA is proud to include among these services our Senior Centers. With close to 250 Senior Centers across NYC, including 16 Innovative Senior Centers (ISCs), and 28 Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORCs), DFTA continues to support these Centers' activities and programs. Moreover, as of this year mental health services have been embedded in 25 of DFTA's senior centers. In addition, DFTA provides seniors with home-delivered meals; in-home services such as case management, friendly visiting and home care; transportation; free legal assistance; an Elderly Crime Victims Resource Center; community Elder Abuse programs; an Alzheimer's and Caregiver Resource Center; a Grandparent Resource Center; job training and placement for older adults; volunteering opportunities; services for LGBT seniors and those with vision and hearing loss; as well as crucial services to immigrants and refugees, who are among NYC's fastest growing senior population.

For more information on elder abuse programs and services in New York City, please visit the DFTA website at [nyc.gov/aging](http://nyc.gov/aging).

## WHAT IS INTIMATE PARTNER ELDER ABUSE?

Intimate partner violence is a pattern of abusive behavior that occurs between intimate partners to gain or maintain power and control. Intimate partners include current or former spouses, dating partners, and domestic partners as well as people with children in common. Intimate partner violence can include, but is not limited to, physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. The focus of this report, *intimate partner elder abuse*, is intimate partner violence that occurs among those age 60 and older.

The 2011 “Under the Radar” report prepared by Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc., Weill Cornell Medical Center of Cornell University, and the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) is the most recent and comprehensive prevalence study of elder abuse in New York State.<sup>i</sup> The study showed that 76 of every 1,000 New York State residents age 60 and older reported being a victim of elder abuse. Twenty percent of self-reported victims reported that the abuser was their spouse or partner.

Despite clear evidence that the elder community experiences intimate partner violence, limited research has been conducted on the prevalence and dynamics of intimate partner violence among this community.<sup>ii,iii</sup> Additionally, because elder victims of intimate partner violence face additional barriers to help-seeking, intimate partner elder abuse may be severely underreported. Researchers have identified a number of internal and external barriers to help-seeking among older women experiencing intimate partner violence such as self-blame, powerlessness, a perceived lack of social support, and a belief that no help is available for elder victims.<sup>ii,iv</sup> Victims with anxiety or depression often face additional challenges. In addition to protecting themselves, they may have mental health symptoms that undermine their motivation and initiative.<sup>v</sup> Improved public awareness about intimate partner elder abuse and the services available could improve reporting and help connect elder victims of intimate partner violence with appropriate services. What follows is the first ever in-depth look at intimate partner elder abuse in New York City.

## NEW YORK CITY INTIMATE PARTNER ELDER ABUSE CRIME STATISTICS

In this section, we present recent data on New York City intimate partner crime affecting residents age 60 and older obtained from the New York Police Department (NYPD)<sup>1</sup> and the New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME).<sup>2</sup>

### Domestic Incident Reports

In 2016, the NYPD filed 2,857 domestic incident reports (DIRs) for incidents between intimate partners in which the victim was 60 years or older. These represent about 3% of the total 2016 intimate partner DIRs for which age was reported (n=83,996). Figure 1 displays a breakdown of the intimate partner elder abuse DIRs by victim age, victim gender, borough of incident, and perpetrator-victim relationship. Please note that there may be multiple DIRs between the same victim and/or perpetrator, so the statistics displayed in Figure 1 may include duplicate counts of certain individuals.

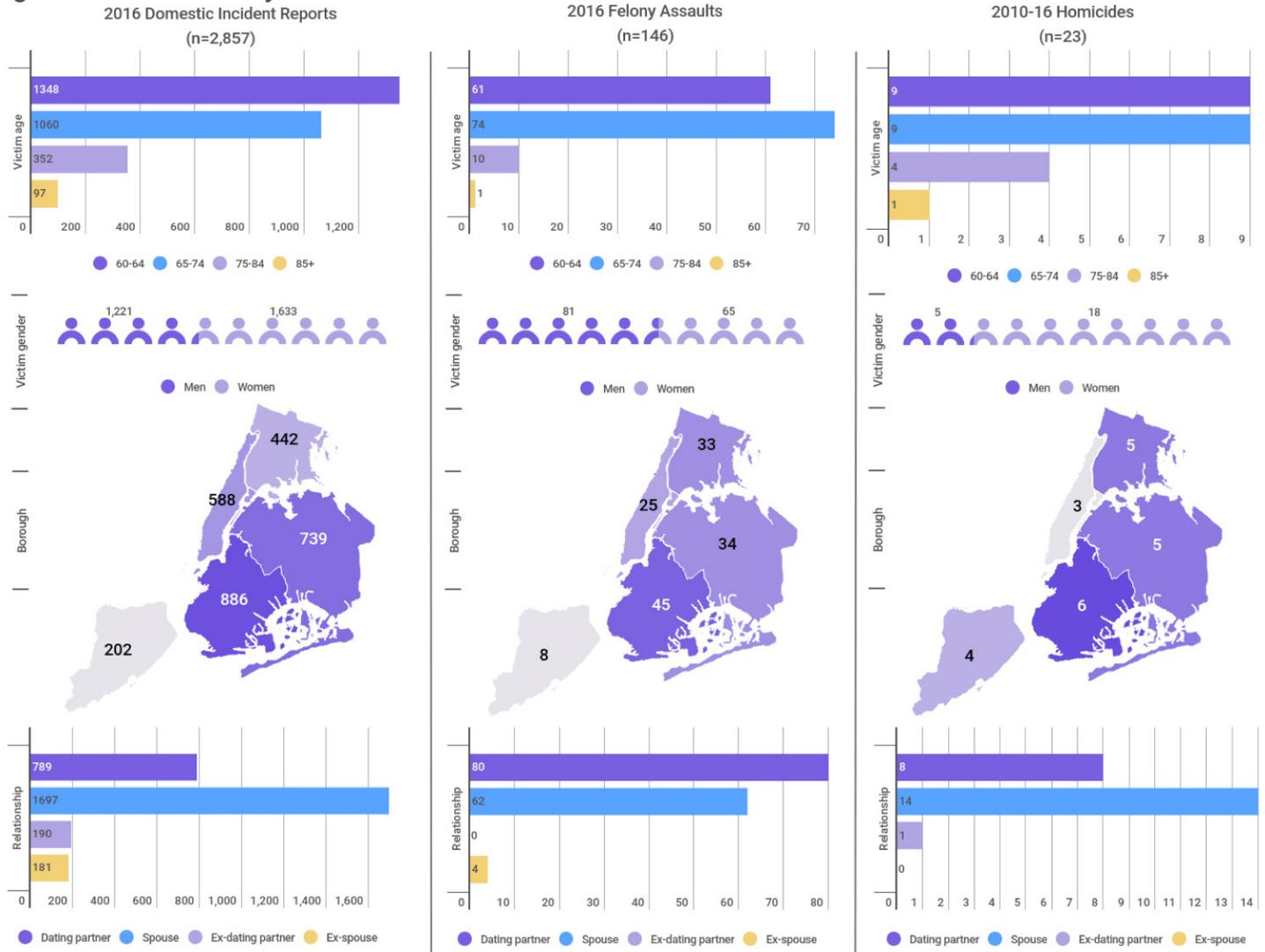
As shown in Figure 1, intimate partner elder abuse DIRs were most common among victims 60-64 years old (47.2%). The majority of intimate partner elder abuse DIR victims were women (57.2%), however 1,221 men were also victims of intimate partner elder abuse DIRs (42.7%). These incidents took place in all five boroughs, with the most in Brooklyn (31.0%) and Queens (25.9%). The geographic distribution of DIRs is similar to the American Community Survey 2011-2015 estimated population distribution of elder New Yorkers by borough.<sup>vi</sup> Most of the incidents occurred between spouses (59.4%), but many also occurred between dating partners (27.6%).

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<sup>1</sup>Data on domestic incident reports and felony assaults are preliminary and subject to further revision by the NYPD.

<sup>2</sup>Data on victim race and victim country of origin for intimate partner elder abuse homicides were obtained through a review of OCME records conducted by staff at the Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence.

**Figure 1. New York City Intimate Partner Elder Abuse Crime**



### Felony Assaults

In 2016, there were 146 reported felony assaults between intimate partners in which the victim was 60 years or older. Again, these represent about 3% of the total 2016 intimate partner felony assaults for which age was reported (n=4,992). Figure 1 displays a breakdown of the intimate partner elder abuse felony assaults by victim age, victim gender, borough of incident, and perpetrator-victim relationship.

Intimate partner elder abuse felony assaults were most common among victims 65-74 years old (50.7%). In contrast to the gender breakdown of intimate partner elder abuse DIRs, most victims of these felony assaults were men (55.5%). The felony assaults took place in all five boroughs with a higher proportion in the Bronx compared with intimate partner elder abuse DIRs (22.6% vs. 15.5%). Most of the felony assaults occurred between dating partners (54.8%). The remainder was between current or former spouses (45.2%).

### Homicide

Between 2010 and 2016, there were 23 intimate partner homicides of victims age 60 or older. These represent 9% of the total intimate partner homicides over this time period (n=253). Figure 1 displays a breakdown of the homicides by victim age, victim gender, borough of incident, and perpetrator-victim relationship.

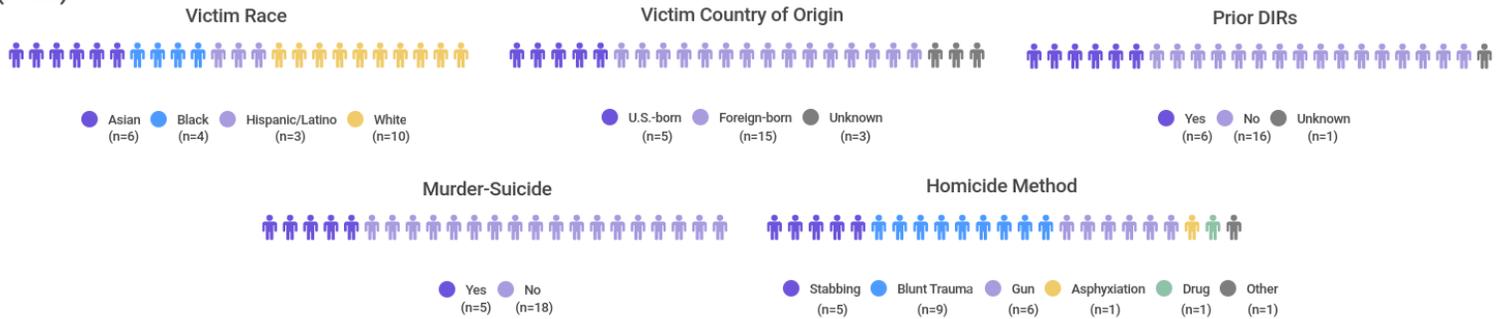
Most victims of intimate partner elder abuse homicide were between the ages of 60-74 years old (78.3%). Additionally, 78.3% of victims were women. This is in stark contrast to the gender breakdown

of victims of intimate partner elder abuse domestic incidents (43% men, 57% women) and felony assaults (56% men, 44% women). These 23 homicides took place in all five boroughs, with the highest number in Brooklyn (6, 26.1%). The majority of homicides were between spouses (60.9%), with many also occurring between dating partners (34.8%).

We were able to obtain additional data on the intimate partner elder abuse homicides from the NYPD and through reviewing records obtained from the OCME. Please see Figure 2 below for these additional data.

**Figure 2. 2010-16 Intimate Partner Elder Abuse Homicides - Additional Data**

(N=23)



Ten of the 23 homicide victims were White (43.5%). The data also show that the majority of homicide victims were foreign-born (65.2%). The victim and perpetrator had prior DIRs in their police record in only six of the 23 homicides (26.1%). Five of the 23 homicides (21.7%) were murder-suicides (homicides after which the perpetrator committed suicide). This is a relatively high rate of murder-suicide as only 14.2% of all intimate partner homicides over this time period (2010-16) were murder-suicides. Finally, the most common homicide method was blunt trauma (39.1%).

It is important to note that for intimate partner DIRs and felony assaults, elder abuse cases comprised just 3% of all cases. However, with regards to intimate partner homicide, that percentage increases to 9%. This further suggests that intimate partner elder abuse may be underreported and under acknowledged in New York City until it becomes lethal.

Please see the Appendix for data comparing intimate partner elder abuse crime to intimate partner crime among victims age 59 and younger.

## SERVICES

### Family Justice Center Client Profile

The New York City Family Justice Centers (FJCs) provide comprehensive civil legal, counseling, and supportive services for survivors of intimate partner violence, including those in the elder community who are experiencing intimate partner violence or other forms of elder abuse. Between 2010 and 2016, the FJCs served at least 1,063 unique clients who were experiencing intimate partner elder abuse. Over this time period, 87,611 unique clients visited a FJC and completed the screening process. Of these, 36,207 clients (41.3%) were missing information on age or their relationship with the abuser, so we could not determine if any of these clients were intimate partner elder abuse clients. Thus, it is likely that more than 1,063 intimate partner elder abuse clients visited a FJC. Figure 2 displays descriptive statistics about the 1,063 clients who definitively visited a FJC for intimate partner elder abuse services. Please see the Appendix for details on missing data.

As shown in Figure 2, a majority of intimate partner elder abuse clients (57.9%) were 60-64 years old and a large majority (80.1%) were women. About one-third of clients (32.7%) identified as Hispanic or Latino and another third (31.4%) identified as Black. The Brooklyn FJC saw the largest number of clients while Staten Island saw the fewest.<sup>3</sup>

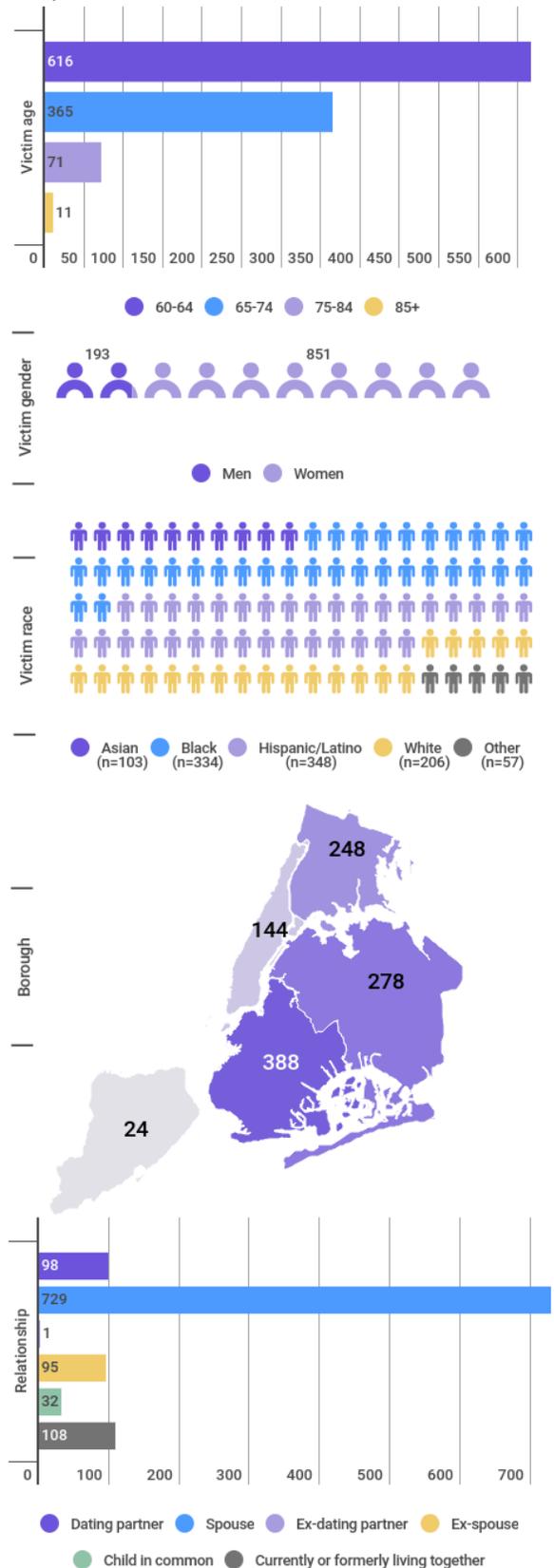
In addition to these demographic data, we found that on average, intimate partner elder abuse clients each had 4.6 visits to a FJC. Their top needs as identified through the client screening process were 1) safety planning, 2) civil legal services, 3) counseling services, and 4) permanent housing. These were the same top needs identified by other intimate partner violence clients age 59 and younger.

### Comparative Analyses

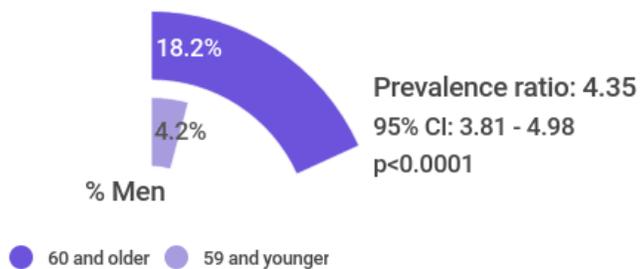
In the following section, we take a closer look at the profile of these 1,063 unique intimate partner elder abuse clients and compare them with the intimate partner violence clients who are age 59 and younger (n=47,384). For each characteristic, we present a breakdown among intimate partner elder abuse clients (60 and older) and among the other intimate partner violence clients (59 and younger). We also calculate a prevalence ratio (the probability of a given characteristic among clients 60 and older divided by the probability of said characteristic among clients 59 and younger), a 95% confidence interval (CI), and the corresponding p-value.

**Figure 3. 2010-16 Intimate Partner Elder Abuse Family Justice Center Clients**

(N=1,063)

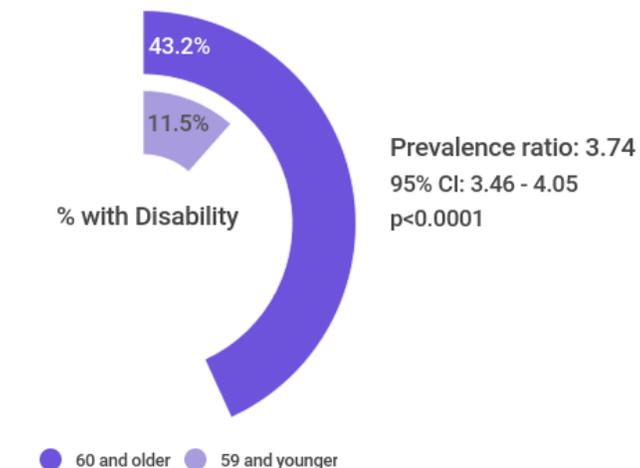


<sup>3</sup> The Manhattan Family Justice Center opened in March 2014 and the Staten Island Family Justice Center opened in June 2016



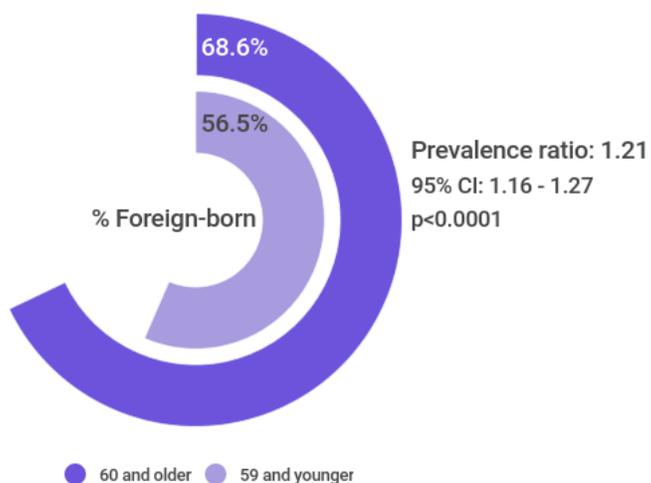
## Gender

As shown, 18.2% of clients 60 and older were men compared to 4.2% of clients 59 and younger. Thus, intimate partner elder abuse clients were over four times more likely to be men compared to younger intimate partner violence clients.



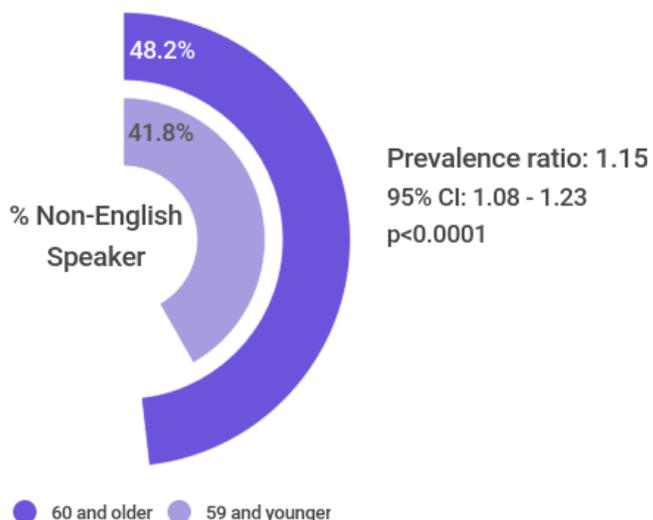
## Disability Status

As shown, 43.2% of clients 60 and older reported a disability compared to 11.5% of clients 59 and younger. Thus, intimate partner elder abuse clients were over three times more likely to report living with a disability compared to younger intimate partner violence clients.



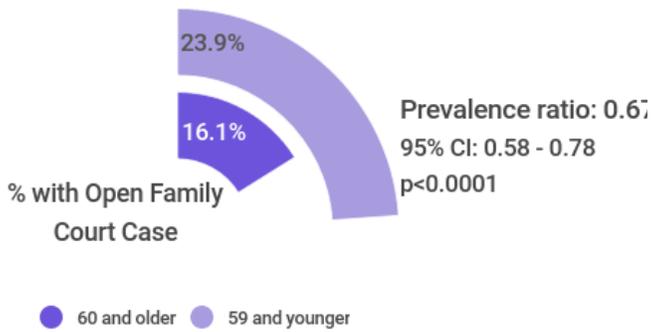
## Country of Origin

As shown, 68.6% of clients 60 and older were born outside the U.S. compared to 56.5% of clients 59 and younger. Thus, intimate partner elder abuse clients were 20% more likely to be foreign-born compared to younger intimate partner violence clients.



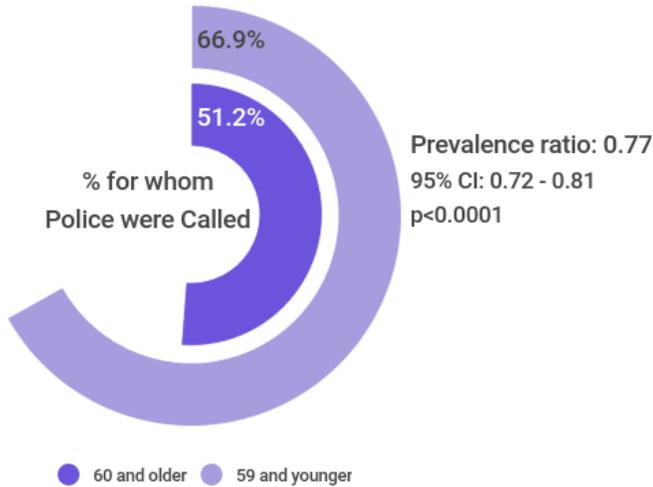
## Primary Language

As shown, 48.2% of clients 60 and older had a non-English primary language compared to 41.8% of clients 59 and younger. Similar to country of origin, intimate partner elder abuse clients were 15% more likely to have a non-English primary language compared to younger intimate partner violence clients.



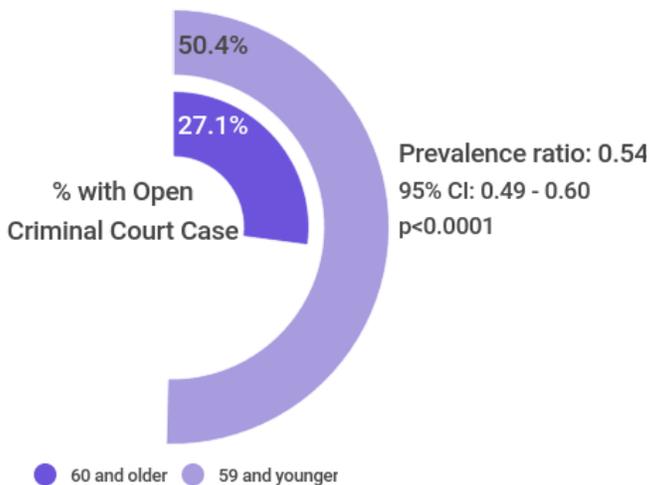
### Open Family Court Case

As shown, 16.1% of clients 60 and older had an open case in family court compared to 23.9% of clients 59 and younger. Thus, intimate partner elder abuse clients were 30% less likely to have an open family court case compared to younger intimate partner violence clients.



### Police Called

As shown, the police had been called for 51.2% of clients 60 and older compared to 66.9% of clients 59 and younger. Thus, intimate partner elder abuse clients were 20% less likely to have had the police called in relation to their case compared to younger intimate partner violence clients.



### Open Criminal Court Case

As shown, 27.1% of clients 60 and older had an open case in criminal court compared to 50.4% of clients 59 and younger. Thus, intimate partner elder abuse clients were about half as likely to have an open criminal court case compared to younger intimate partner violence clients.

## Overview of services available in NYC

As mentioned above, the New York City Family Justice Centers (FJCs) provide comprehensive civil legal, counseling and supportive services for survivors of domestic violence, elder abuse and sex trafficking. Located in all five boroughs, the FJCs are safe, caring environments that provide one-stop services and support. Key City agencies, community, social and civil legal services providers, and District Attorney's Offices are located on-site at the FJCs to make it easier for survivors to get help. Services are free and confidential. All are welcome regardless of language, income, or immigration status.

In addition, the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) together with its community based elder abuse partners provide direct services to victims of elder abuse, as well as develop prevention activities that include trainings and outreach. There are elder abuse funded programs in each of the boroughs. These contracted agencies provide long-term case management services to clients, many of whom present highly complex cases. Providers may assist victims of elder abuse by helping them secure orders of protection; providing long-term counseling; accompanying victims to court; examining powers of attorney and other legal documents; working with police to place victims on high-propensity lists; and working closely with District Attorneys to aid in the prosecution of cases. Programs have attorneys on staff to provide legal services on behalf of clients. These programs can be reached by calling 311.

As an initiative of Mayor Bill de Blasio's Domestic Violence Task Force, DFTA will expand its Providing Options to Elderly Clients Together (PROTECT) program. DFTA and the Weil Cornell Medical Center have partnered to develop PROTECT, an evidence-based program that provides combined social work and mental health intervention to elder abuse victims. The City will expand PROTECT by offering the program to clients of DFTA's existing borough-based elder abuse programs. PROTECT will be offered in English and Spanish.

Additionally, DFTA has entered into contract with the Weill Cornell New York City Elder Abuse Center, to implement a citywide Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) initiative to enhance services to victims of elder abuse. Each MDT will bring together all of the key entities in their borough(s) that work with agencies serving victims of elder abuse in an effort to coordinate services in cases of elder abuse that have a high degree of difficulty and that require a multi-agency response. These teams comprise groups of professionals from diverse disciplines who come together to provide comprehensive assessment and consultation on abuse cases. The teams function as a problem solving group for individual cases and create a wider, community-based approach to handling elder abuse.

## CONCLUSION

Intimate partner elder abuse is an issue that impacts many New Yorkers and their families. Intimate partner violence is associated with a number of short- and long-term physical and mental health consequences. These consequences can have more severe impacts on elder victims whose health or autonomy may already be compromised.<sup>vii</sup> The data presented in this report represent the first ever in-depth look at intimate partner elder abuse. As such, further research is needed to better understand the causes and consequences of this social problem. For example, additional research could help illuminate the mechanisms behind the observed trends in intimate partner elder abuse by gender.

The elder community New York City represents one of the fastest growing communities in the City. The New York City Department of City Planning projects that the population of residents 65 and older will increase from 1,002,208 in 2010 to 1,177,215 in 2020, representing a 17% increase.<sup>vii</sup> The projected population size of this demographic in 2040 is 1,409,708, representing a 41% projected increase over 30 years. As the size of the elder community continues to increase in New York City, it is critical that we increase public awareness of intimate partner elder abuse and improve linkages to service providers. As described above, intimate partner elder abuse is a complex issue involving many disciplines including healthcare, law, social services, and public safety. It therefore requires a coordinated multidisciplinary, multi-agency, and multi-system response. OCDV and DFTA are dedicated to working collaboratively to have a positive impact on victim service provision.

If you or anyone you know is experiencing domestic violence, call 311 and ask for the City's 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline or to be referred to a community based elder abuse provider in your borough.

## APPENDIX

Table 1. New York City Intimate Partner Crime by Age Categories

Domestic Incident Reports (2016)					
		Victim age 60 and older		Victim age 59 and younger	
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Victim Gender</b>					
	Man	1,221	42.7%	20,466	25.2%
	Woman	1,633	57.2%	60,628	74.7%
	Unknown	3	0.1%	45	0.1%
<b>Borough</b>					
	Bronx	442	15.5%	20,248	25.0%
	Brooklyn	886	31.0%	24,202	29.8%
	Manhattan	588	20.6%	12,109	14.9%
	Queens	739	25.9%	19,407	23.9%
	Staten Island	202	7.1%	5,173	6.4%
<b>Relationship</b>					
	Dating partner	789	27.6%	38,975	48.0%
	Spouse	1,697	59.4%	22,368	27.6%
	Ex-dating partner	190	6.7%	15,928	19.6%
	Ex-spouse	181	6.3%	3,868	4.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,857</b>		<b>81,139</b>	
Felony Assaults (2016)					
		Victim age 60 and older		Victim age 59 and younger	
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Victim Gender</b>					
	Man	81	55.5%	1,257	25.9%
	Woman	65	44.5%	3,586	74.0%
	Unknown	0	0.0%	1	0.0%
<b>Borough</b>					
	Bronx	33	22.6%	1,401	28.9%
	Brooklyn	45	30.8%	1,517	31.3%
	Manhattan	25	17.1%	664	13.7%
	Queens	34	23.3%	1,085	22.4%
	Staten Island	8	5.5%	177	3.7%
<b>Relationship</b>					
	Dating partner	80	54.8%	3,758	77.5%
	Spouse	62	42.5%	1,066	22.0%
	Ex-dating partner	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Ex-spouse	4	2.7%	20	0.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>146</b>		<b>4,844</b>	
Homicides (2010-16)					
		Victim age 60 and older		Victim age 59 and younger	
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Victim Gender</b>					
	Man	5	21.7%	54	23.5%
	Woman	18	78.3%	176	76.5%
	Unknown	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>Borough</b>					
	Bronx	5	21.7%	72	31.3%
	Brooklyn	6	26.1%	67	29.1%
	Manhattan	3	13.0%	26	11.3%
	Queens	5	21.7%	54	23.5%

	Staten Island	4	17.4%	11	4.8%
<b>Relationship</b>					
	Dating partner	8	34.8%	141	61.3%
	Spouse	14	60.9%	52	22.6%
	Ex-dating partner	1	4.3%	9	3.9%
	Ex-spouse	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Child in common	0	0.0%	27	11.7%
	Other	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
<b>Victim Race</b>					
	Asian	6	26.1%		<i>Data not available</i>
	Black	4	17.4%		<i>Data not available</i>
	Hispanic or Latino	3	13.0%		<i>Data not available</i>
	White	10	43.5%		<i>Data not available</i>
<b>Victim Country of Origin</b>					
	U.S.-born	5	21.7%		<i>Data not available</i>
	Foreign-born	15	65.2%		<i>Data not available</i>
	Unknown	3	13.0%		<i>Data not available</i>
<b>Prior DIRs</b>					
	Yes	6	26.1%	93	40.4%
	No	16	69.6%	137	59.6%
	Unknown	1	4.3%	0	0.0%
<b>Murder-suicide</b>					
	Yes	5	21.7%	31	13.5%
	No	18	78.3%	199	86.5%
<b>Homicide Method</b>					
	Stabbing	5	21.7%	121	52.6%
	Blunt Trauma	9	39.1%	28	12.2%
	Gun	6	26.1%	52	22.6%
	Asphyxiation	1	4.3%	23	10.0%
	Drug	1	4.3%	0	0.0%
	Other	1	4.3%	6	2.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>23</b>		<b>230</b>	

**Table 2. 2010-16 New York City Intimate Partner Family Justice Center Clients by Age Categories**

<b>Family Justice Center Clients (2010-16)</b>					
		<b>Client age 60 and older</b>		<b>Client age 59 and younger</b>	
		<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Victim Gender</b>					
	Man	193	18.2%	1,976	4.2%
	Woman	851	80.1%	43,774	92.4%
	Missing or Other <sup>4</sup>	19	1.8%	634	1.3%
<b>Race</b>					
	Asian	103	9.7%	2,790	5.9%
	Black	334	31.4%	17,651	37.3%
	Hispanic or Latino	348	32.7%	19,913	42.0%
	White	206	19.4%	4,892	10.3%
	Other	57	5.4%	2,133	4.5%
	Missing	36	3.4%	1,156	2.4%
<b>Borough</b>					
	Bronx	248	23.3%	12,288	25.9%
	Brooklyn	388	36.5%	22,612	47.7%
	Manhattan	144	13.5%	3,760	7.9%
	Queens	278	26.2%	10,824	22.8%
	Staten Island	24	2.3%	682	1.4%
	Missing	8	0.8%	600	1.3%
<b>Relationship</b>					
	Dating partner	98	9.2%	7,382	15.6%
	Spouse	729	68.6%	19,092	40.3%
	Ex-dating partner	1	0.1%	61	0.1%
	Ex-spouse	95	8.9%	2,161	4.6%
	Child in common	32	3.0%	14,616	30.8%
	Currently or formerly living together	108	10.2%	4,335	9.1%
<b>Living with Disability</b>					
	Yes	393	43.2%	4,318	11.5%
	No	517	56.8%	33,112	88.5%
	Missing	153	<i>excluded</i>	9,954	<i>excluded</i>
<b>Country of Origin</b>					
	U.S.-born	686	68.6%	24,878	56.5%
	Foreign-born	314	31.4%	19,163	43.5%
	Missing	63	<i>excluded</i>	3,343	<i>excluded</i>
<b>Primary Language</b>					
	English	512	48.2%	19,805	41.8%
	Not English	551	51.8%	27,577	58.2%
	Missing	0	-	2	<i>excluded</i>
<b>Open Family Court Case</b>					
	Yes	151	16.1%	9,095	23.9%
	No	785	83.9%	28,898	76.1%
	Missing	127	<i>excluded</i>	9,391	<i>excluded</i>
<b>Police Called</b>					
	Yes	489	51.2%	26,808	66.9%
	No	466	48.8%	13,248	33.1%
	Missing	108	<i>excluded</i>	7,328	<i>excluded</i>
<b>Open Criminal Court Case</b>					
	Yes	273	27.1%	22,650	50.4%

<sup>4</sup> Gender options other than man and woman were added in 2016

	No	734	72.9%	22,270	49.6%
	Missing	56	<i>excluded</i>	2,464	<i>excluded</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,063</b>		<b>47,384</b>	

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<sup>i</sup> Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc., Weill Cornell Medical Center of Cornell University, and New York City Department of Aging. (May 2011). Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study.

<sup>ii</sup> Beaulaurier RL, Seff LR, Newman FL. (2008). Barriers to Help-Seeking for Older Women Who Experience Intimate Partner Violence: A Descriptive Model. *Journal of Women & Aging*, 20(3/4):231-48.

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