



Annual Report 2022-2023

seniors first BC

#502-1281 W Georgia St,
Vancouver, BC V6E 4H1

T: 604-688-1927
F: 604-437-1929

www.seniorsfirstbc.ca
info@seniorsFirstBC.ca

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BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1

It is my pleasure to report that Seniors First BC has had yet another extremely successful year. This is due in no small measure to the exemplary work of our Executive Director, Marie-Noël Campbell, our organization's dedicated and committed staff, and our enthusiastic Board members.

The organization continues to grow, improve and show determination and a common cause in helping seniors overcome many life challenges and issues.

I am very proud of the work that all our enthusiastic staff does in the service of our vision that older adults in BC have the right to live with dignity, free from abuse of any kind. We work towards this in four ways:

1. **Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL)** – Our Province-wide confidential Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) is a safe place for older adults, and those who care about them, to talk to a trained intake worker about abuse or mistreatment and to receive information and support about issues that impact the health and well-being of an older adult. Tina Chang is the unfaltering manager of the SAIL program. She is very ably assisted by SAIL Team Lead, Hannah Jung, as well as a team of talented SAIL intake workers, comprising Angela Carmichael, Cara Nikolai, Maggie Verheyden, Mara Gurr, Julie Cameron, and Sarah Blewett, all of whom ensure that our callers' interactions with Seniors First BC are a positive and informative experience.

2. **Victims Services Program** – Our Victims Services Program helps victims of crime or abuse who are 50+ and provides emotional support to anyone who has witnessed the abuse of an older adult. Assistance is provided over the phone and callers may remain anonymous. In addition to her role managing the SAIL program, Tina Chang is also the manager of the Victim Services program. Queen Adonri remains the pillar of this program and deals with this stressful work with both sensitivity and grace.
3. **Legal Programs** – Seniors First BC provides services to older adults who are not able to access legal help elsewhere due to low income or other barriers. Legal Services may be provided by one of our legal advocates, or one of the lawyers in our Elder Law Clinic. Our excellent and experienced legal services team includes lawyers Gordon Marshall and Zack Uganec, staff lawyers Marie-Noël Campbell and Sara Pon, paralegal Natalija Maksimovic, legal advocates Preetkamal Brar and Nighat Afsar, legal advocates Hailey Chapman and Eve Hansen, Advance Planning Clinic Program Manager Catharine Schlenker, as well as Nelson Cares Clinic Assistant Axel McGown.
4. **Public Education and Outreach** – Since its beginning, Seniors First BC has worked hard to raise awareness about elder abuse and to educate the public about the rights of seniors. We currently fulfill this role through public education and workshops delivered by staff and volunteers through several publications and resources available online. Justin Lee is our Public Education and Outreach Program Manager, Linda Yauk is our Workshop and Outreach Coordinator. Justin and Linda are doing a stellar job informing the public about what we do and increasing our reach across the Province.

Rounding out the organization’s staff are Operations Manager Alan Woodland, Office Manager and Administrative Assistant Suad Seddiq, Legal Administrative Assistant Nataliya Ivannikova, casual bookkeeping assistant Malavika Tewari, and Executive Director Marie-Noël Campbell (who is also the Legal Advocacy Supervisor), all of whom keep the operational side of Seniors First BC running harmoniously.

Last year, Seniors First BC developed and rolled out an Advance Planning Outreach Program, which aims to provide Wills Clinics across British Columbia to reach a multitude of seniors who want to arrange their affairs in an effective and dignified manner, but often live in areas not

served by or inaccessible to estate planning lawyers. The program launched in the fall of 2022 and has been a splendid success. Several clinics all across the Province have been held, and the program continues to grow and attract more interest as word of mouth and marketing efforts increase awareness and interest in its services.

Seniors First BC's continued success and its ability to employ and retain its devoted staff is and remains the result of the ongoing backing of our incredible funders and stakeholders, who not only provide much-needed funding to support the great work of our organization but provide other supports and encouragement above and beyond that of traditional funders. For this we are as always extremely grateful, and we feel honoured that our funders continue to show confidence in this organization and its vision. Our primary funders are the Province of British Columbia and the Law Foundation of British Columbia. We work hard to nurture and strengthen our relationships with all funders so that we can continue to provide the services we do, while we simultaneously explore additional funding options so that Seniors First BC can further expand and cement its rightful place as the preeminent organization to support seniors in this Province.

Lastly, our success would also not be possible without our dedicated Board members, each of whom contributes their time and expertise to improving the organization. Margaret Ostrowski, KC (Vice President), Chelsea Belyk (Treasurer), Christine Jones (Secretary), Gloria Gutman, Andrea Rolls, Edward Macaulay, Kevin Smith, Thomas Yoo, Vivek Joseph and Rabjeet (RJ) Wallia, I am extremely grateful for the hard and invaluable work that each of you have put into and continue to put into the organization. My gratitude also extends to past Board members who stood down during this past term for personal reasons.

In June, we regrettably said goodbye to our very good friend and former Board President, Kenneth Kramer, KC, who passed away at 57 years young after a battle with cancer. Ken was a true titan of the non-profit sector, respected by all who had the pleasure of working alongside him, and a fearless fighter to the end. While he was on the Board of Seniors First BC, he was an integral part the organization and steered it through occasionally choppy waters with distinction and always with an affable smile and kind words for his colleagues. Even after stepped down from the Board, having served a maximum of 6 years, Ken remained committed to Seniors First BC and advocated on its behalf whenever he was requested to do so.

Ken's loss as both a colleague and friend cannot be overstated, and we miss him and mourn his tragic passing!

Ending on a positive note, however, the new term promises to be even better than the last, with an incredible staff, and an established and settled Board that will be bolstered by some wonderful new members from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, bringing fresh ideas to our organization that I expect will improve its governance. Seniors First BC intends to build on its past successes while we continue to expand and serve some of our community's most vulnerable members.

Eric B. Clavier, Board President

September 13, 2023

Vancouver, BC

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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Seniors First BC has considerably expanded in scope, reach and staffing in 2022-2023.

Our Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) received over 6,500 calls and emails requesting information or assistance. Abuse-related calls have increased by ten percent, with most affected older adults living in independent housing. Navigating highly sensitive situations of abuse is delicate work that SAIL intake workers perform with great care, call after call, under the steady leadership of Tina Chang, SAIL and Victim Services Manager.

The Victim Services program provided emotional support, safety planning and individual case-management services to nearly 160 older adults in situations of severe emotional and/or physical abuse, including food deprivation and gaslighting.

The Public Education and Outreach (“PEO”) program made a strong return to offering in-person presentations throughout the province, while continuing to offer webinars, attending outreach events, and launching our new website.

All legal programs benefited from increased support from the Law Foundation of BC, which enabled the hiring of new legal staff and allowed us to provide full representation services to more seniors. This increase in funding also recognized the work of two pillars of our legal programs, who have each served thousands of clients since joining Seniors First BC:

J. Gordon Marshall, senior legal counsel since 2017, who has put over fifty years’ experience in civil and criminal law to the service of vulnerable older adults, and Nighat Afsar, legal advocate, who has helped seniors with housing and income security issues since 2010.

Following receipt of a cy-près award through the Law Foundation, our one-year pilot Travelling Wills Clinic Project evolved into an established Advance Planning Clinic Program with dedicated outreach efforts to serve Elders on reserve.

Current legal advice and advance planning services are provided through the Elder Law Clinic at our office and in New Westminister, Surrey and Burnaby in collaboration with valued partners:

- the Newton Seniors Centre of the City of Surrey,
- Seniors Services Society,
- Burnaby Community Services and Burnaby South Neighbourhood house,
- the Vancouver Coastal Health Deaf Well-Being Program.

Current Advance Planning Clinic Program partners include:

- Prince George Council of Seniors,
- Nanaimo Family Life Association,
- Haida Gwaii Legal Project Society, in both Skidegate and Masset,
- Chilliwack & District Resource Seniors Centre,
- Nelson CARES Society – Nelson Advocacy Centre,
- Sunshine Coast Resource Centre, in Sechelt.

In addition, ad hoc clinics have been held for First Nations near Merritt and at three locations on the Mid-Coast.

With funding from the Council to Reduce Elder Abuse, our legal team started an update of our advocate's guide on residential care issues, which turned into a larger publication, which will be available next month on Clicklaw Wikibooks: Senior Housing Guide – Understanding home care services and navigating issues in assisted living and long-term care facilities.

As a charity, our work would not be possible without the help of volunteers who generously donate their time and expertise. We want to extend our gratitude to:

- Our directors, who have contributed their expertise and time to shape our charity and implement its vision.
- Prince George lawyers who showed their commitment to pro bono services: Trevor Slaney of Slaney Randall, Carolynne Burkholder-James of Marcotte Law, as well as HSJ lawyers Robert J. Stewart, Robin Craig and Chelsea Dunk.
- Halldor Bjarnason, recently semi-retired trust and disability lawyer, who quickly became our first point of contact for questions on trust and estate matters for clients with disabilities, mental health issues and special needs.
- Daniela Talarico, Grace Hu, and Kiki Yu helped the PEO program by presenting educational sessions and conducting research for our newsletter.
- Terry Wright, dedicated volunteer since 2017 and well into his eighties, who presented numerous workshops until his health abruptly deteriorated a few months ago. His sudden passing represented a great loss to the team and the elder community.

Finally, a big thank you to our members, directors, Seniors First BC staff members, donors and funders, which include the Province of British Columbia, the Law Foundation of British Columbia, and, as of the time of writing, Vancouver City Community Savings, and the City of Vancouver.

Marie-Noël Campbell, Executive Director and Lawyer

September 13, 2023

Vancouver, BC



Board of Directors

Eric B. Clavier	<i>President</i>
Margaret Ostrowski K.C.	<i>Vice President</i>
Christine Jones	<i>Secretary</i>
Chelsea Belyk	<i>Treasurer</i>
Edward Macaulay	<i>Member at Large</i>
Gloria Gutman	<i>Member at Large</i>
Andrea Rolls	<i>Member at Large</i>
Kevin Smith	<i>Member at Large</i>
Tom Yoo	<i>Member at Large</i>
Vivek Joseph	<i>Member at Large</i>
Rabjeet Wallia	<i>Member at Large</i>
Pearl Mckenzie	<i>Honourary Lifetime Director</i>
Penny Bain	<i>Honourary Lifetime Director</i>

Staff

SAIL and Victim Services

Tina Chang	<i>Manager of SAIL and Victim Services</i>
Hannah	<i>SAIL Team Lead</i>
Angela	<i>SAIL Intake Worker</i>
Cara	<i>SAIL Intake Worker</i>
Julie	<i>SAIL Intake Worker</i>
Maggie	<i>SAIL Intake Worker</i>
Mara	<i>SAIL Intake Worker</i>
Sarah	<i>SAIL Intake Worker</i>
Queen	<i>Victim Services Worker</i>

Legal Programs

Gordon Marshall	<i>Senior Counsel - Elder Law Clinic</i>
Catharine Schlenker	<i>Advance Planning Clinic Program Manager & Staff Lawyer</i>
Zack Uganec	<i>Staff Lawyer</i>
Sara Pon	<i>Staff Lawyer</i>
Nighat Afsar	<i>Legal Advocate</i>
Preetkamal Brar	<i>Legal Advocate</i>
Natalija Maksimovic	<i>Paralegal</i>
Nataliya Ivannikova	<i>Legal Administrative Assistant</i>
Hailey Chapman	<i>Legal Advocate/Skidegate Advance Planning Clinic Assistant</i>
Eve Hansen	<i>Legal Advocate/Masset Advance Planning Clinic Assistant</i>
Axel McGown	<i>Nelson Cares Advance Planning Clinic Assistant</i>

Public Education & Outreach Program

Justin Lee	<i>Public Education & Outreach Program Manager</i>
Linda Yauk	<i>Workshop & Outreach Program Coordinator</i>

Management and Administration

Marie-Noël Campbell	<i>Executive Director & Lawyer</i>
Alan Woodland	<i>Operations Manager</i>
Suad Seddiq	<i>Office Manager & Administrative Assistant</i>
Malavika Tewari	<i>Bookkeeping Assistant</i>



SAIL REPORT

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Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL)

The Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) continues to be the front door to Seniors First BC's programs and services, providing a safe space for older folx and those who care about them to speak with a trained worker about the wellbeing of older adults throughout the province. SAIL responded to 6,501 inquiries in 2022-2023 and have often been the first point of contact in guiding the public on elder abuse situations in a variety of settings.

Our team of diverse professional intake workers team provide emotional support in the moment of the call, help connect callers to appropriate supports that meet their needs, and collaborate with internal programs. Our SAIL team also directly engaged with the community at events and workshops and through projects such as BC Association of Community Response Networks' (BCCRN) Regional Mapping and Community Engagement Project.

With increased outreach, dialogue, and collaborative efforts with community stakeholders in the healthcare, criminal justice, and social service sector, we expect the call volume on SAIL to further grow. Almost 40 percent of calls on SAIL in 2022-2023 were about abuse and neglect, significantly more than previous years. SAIL also experienced a rise of emotional abuse (10 percent increase), particularly in behaviours that further isolate the older adult and undermine the older adult's sense of dignity and worth.

A number of older adults were struggling to evict family members who moved in during the pandemic and/or abusive tenants and roommates. Generally, calls about housing and homelessness, especially residential tenancy matters, were prevalent and represented 57 percent of SAIL's referrals to the Legal Advocacy program.

One such caller shared on SAIL that “[they could] not imagine being able to find housing elsewhere and does not see moving [as] a solution.” We recognize the increasing and diversity of social needs of the community and have expanded our resource database and increased training for intake workers on SAIL to ensure our capacity to meet the dynamic needs of older folxs in BC.

I deeply appreciate our SAIL team members unwavering commitment to be there for older folks who may often contact us in distress and to help improve the program as they had an integral role in the expansion of SAIL services this year.

We also remodeled the infrastructure for SAIL’s digital workspace by implementing a new telephony system and expanded the accessibility of our services through the following ways:

- integrating video communication tool to support American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation;
- increasing the availability of simultaneous language interpretation across all of SAIL’s operational hours; and
- developing a protocol for follow-up contact with participants of our workshops and presentations who experience barriers in reaching out to SAIL on their own due to safety concerns.

SAIL’s growth would also not have been possible without Marie-Noël Campbell’s guidance and support of our funder, the Province of BC.

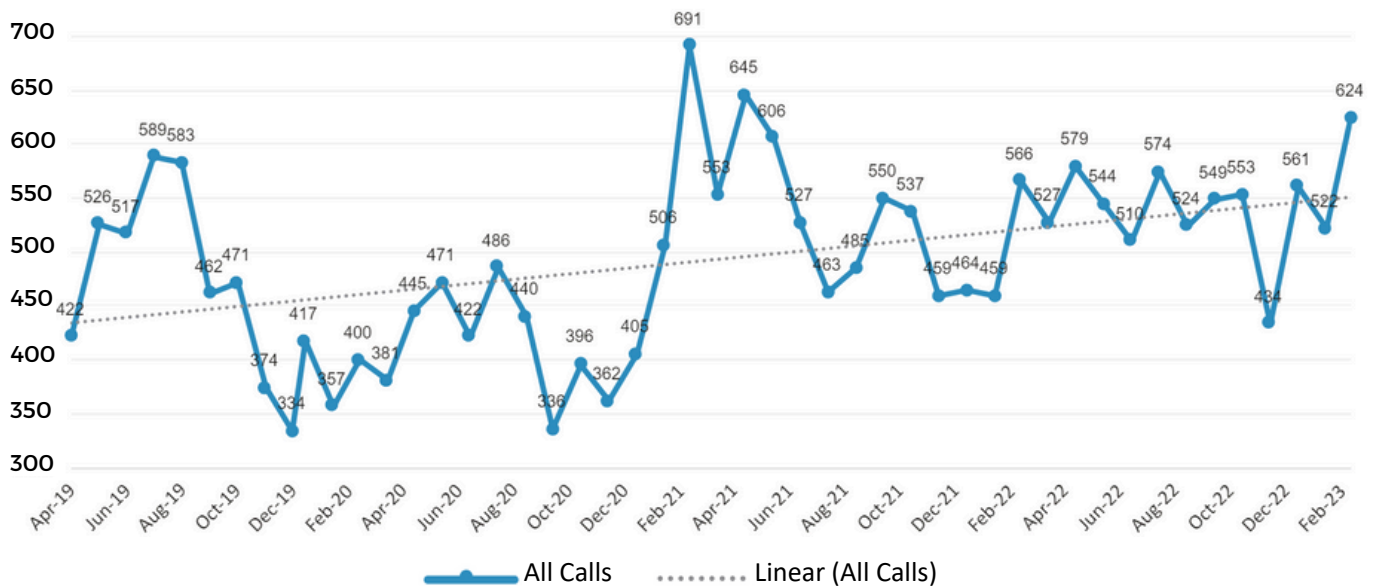
Tina Chang, Manager, SAIL and Victim Services Programs

September 13, 2023

Total Number of Calls: 6,501 (April 2022 - March 2023)

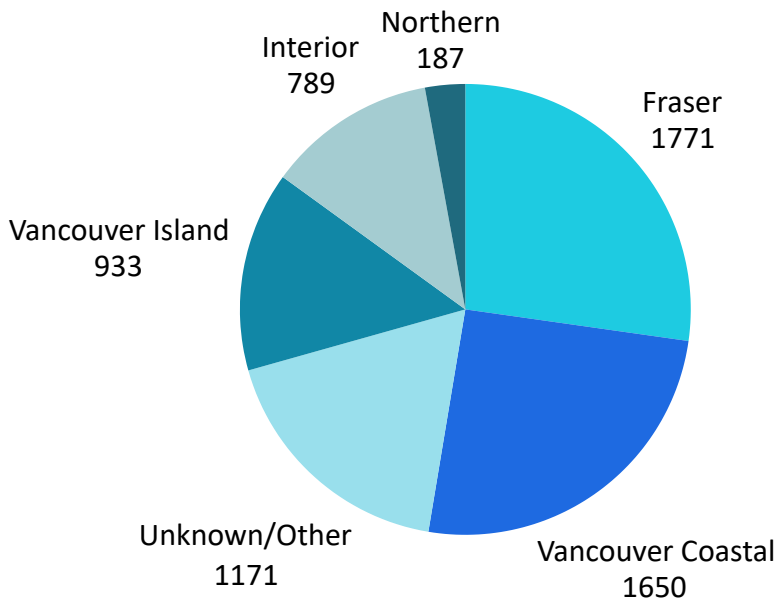
Year	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
2019-20	422	526	517	589	583	462	471	374	334	417	357	400	5452
2020-21	381	445	471	422	486	440	336	396	362	405	506	691	5341
2021-22	553	645	606	527	463	485	550	537	459	464	459	566	6314
2022-23	527	579	544	510	574	524	549	553	434	561	522	624	6501

Number of Calls by Month (with Linear Trendline)



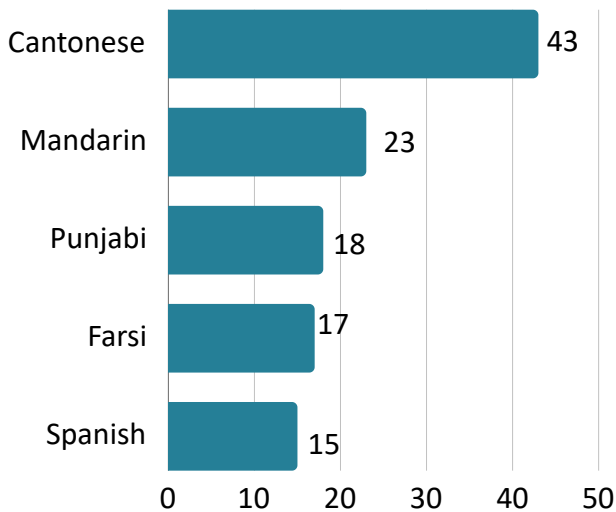
There was a significant increase of 19% in the number of calls during the fiscal year 2022-23 compared to 2019-20 (prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic).

Caller Regions



Language Barrier (self-identified)

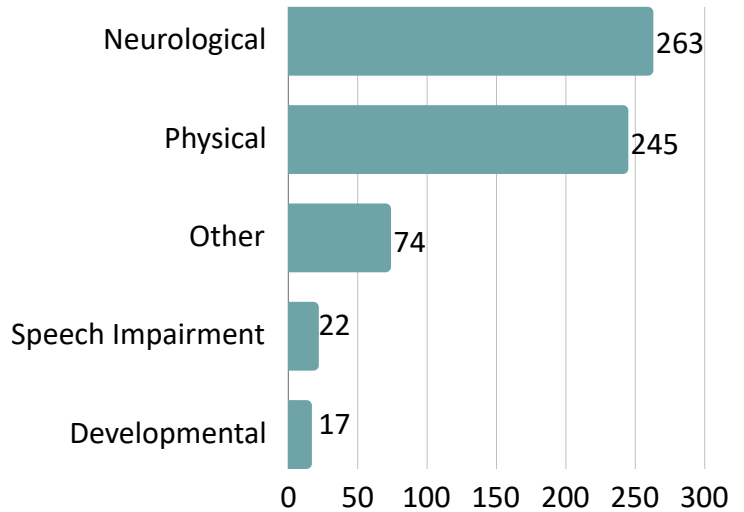
159 callers required interpretation.
 (+25%, 127 callers required interpretation in 2021-22)



**Top 5 languages requested for interpretation.*

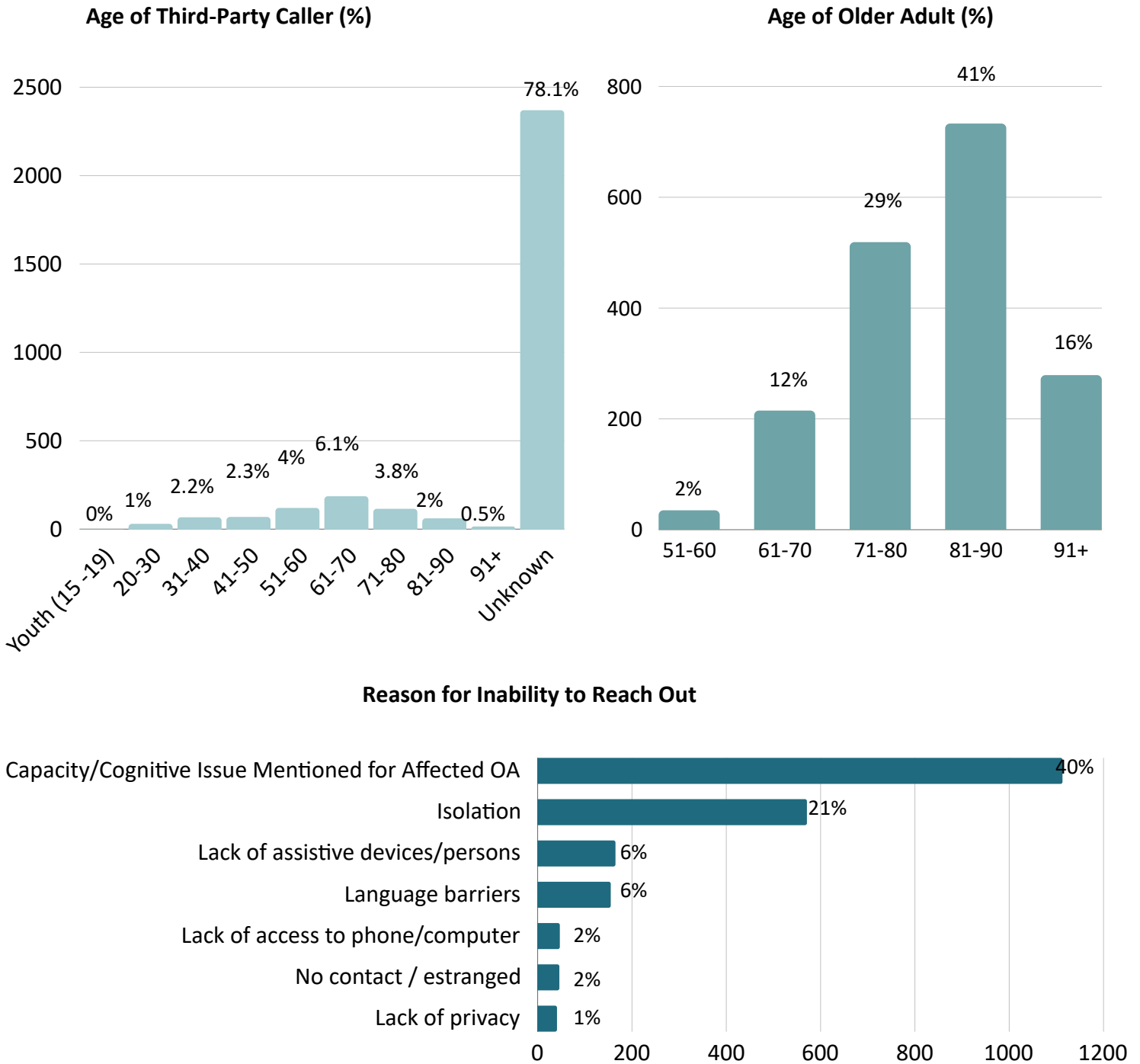
Disability

549 callers self-identified having a disability.
 (+0.2%, 548 callers have disability in 2021-22)



**Top 5 form of disability mentioned by callers. A caller can have more than one type of disability*

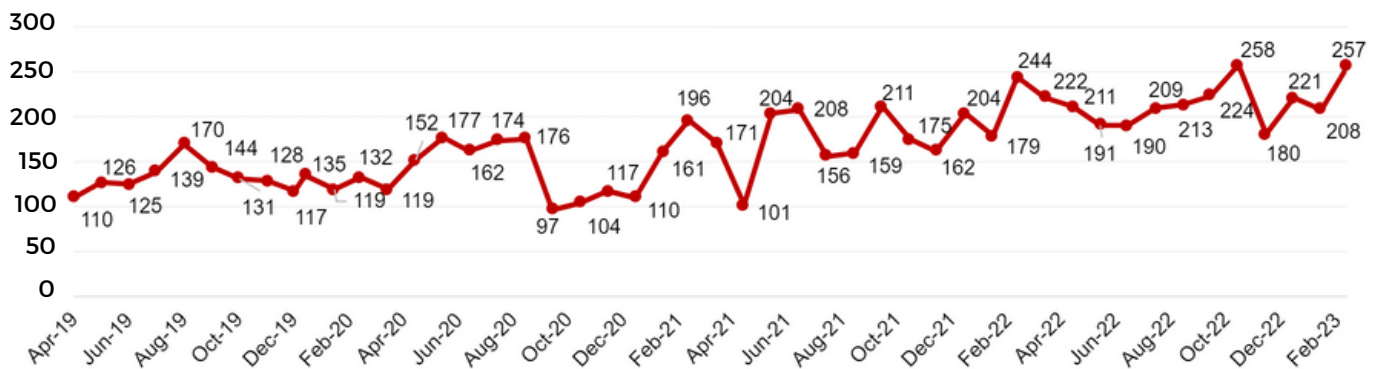
Older Adult Information When Unable to Reach Out Themselves - All SAIL Calls



Total Number of Abuse-Related Calls: 2,584 (April 2022 - March 2023)

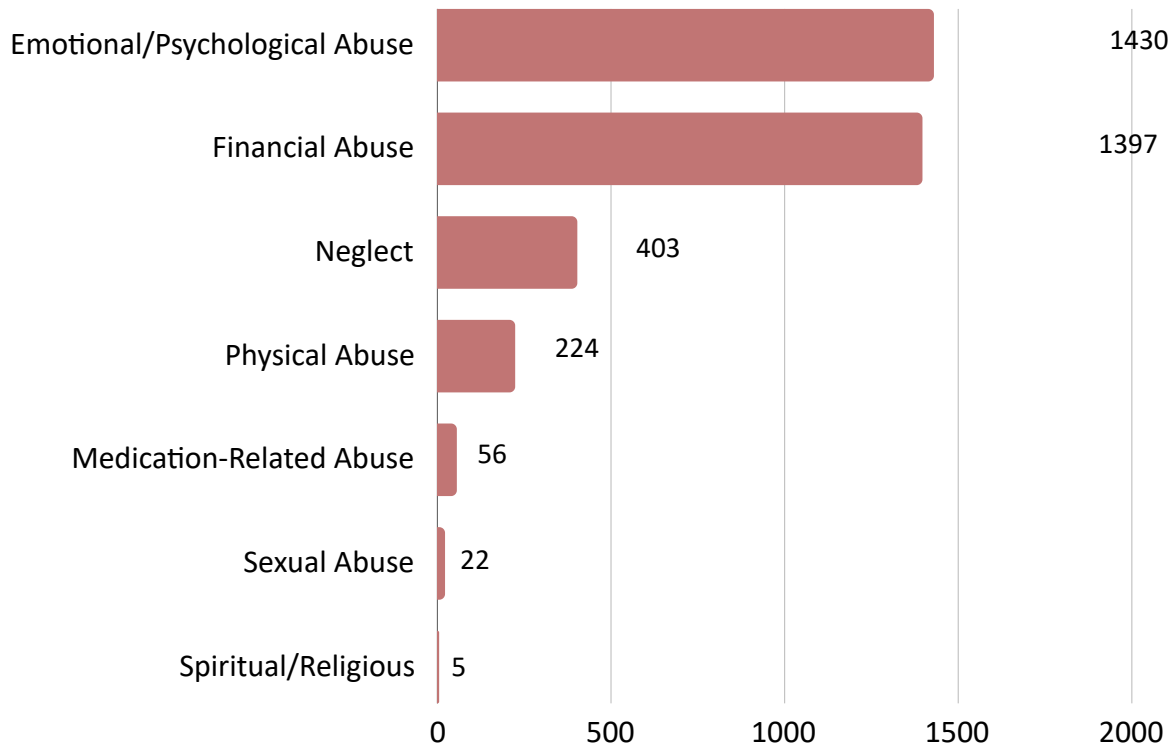
Year	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
2019-20	110	126	125	139	170	144	131	128	117	135	119	132	1576
2020-21	119	152	177	162	174	176	97	104	117	110	161	196	1745
2021-22	171	101	204	208	156	159	211	175	162	204	179	244	2174
2022-23	222	211	191	190	209	213	224	258	180	221	208	257	2584

Abuse-Related Calls (with Linear Trendline)



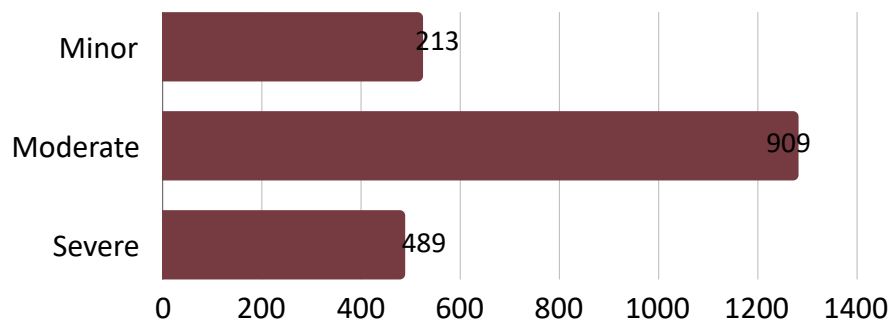
There was a significant increase of 64% in the number of calls related to abuse during the fiscal year 2022-23 compared to 2019-20.

Types of Harm*

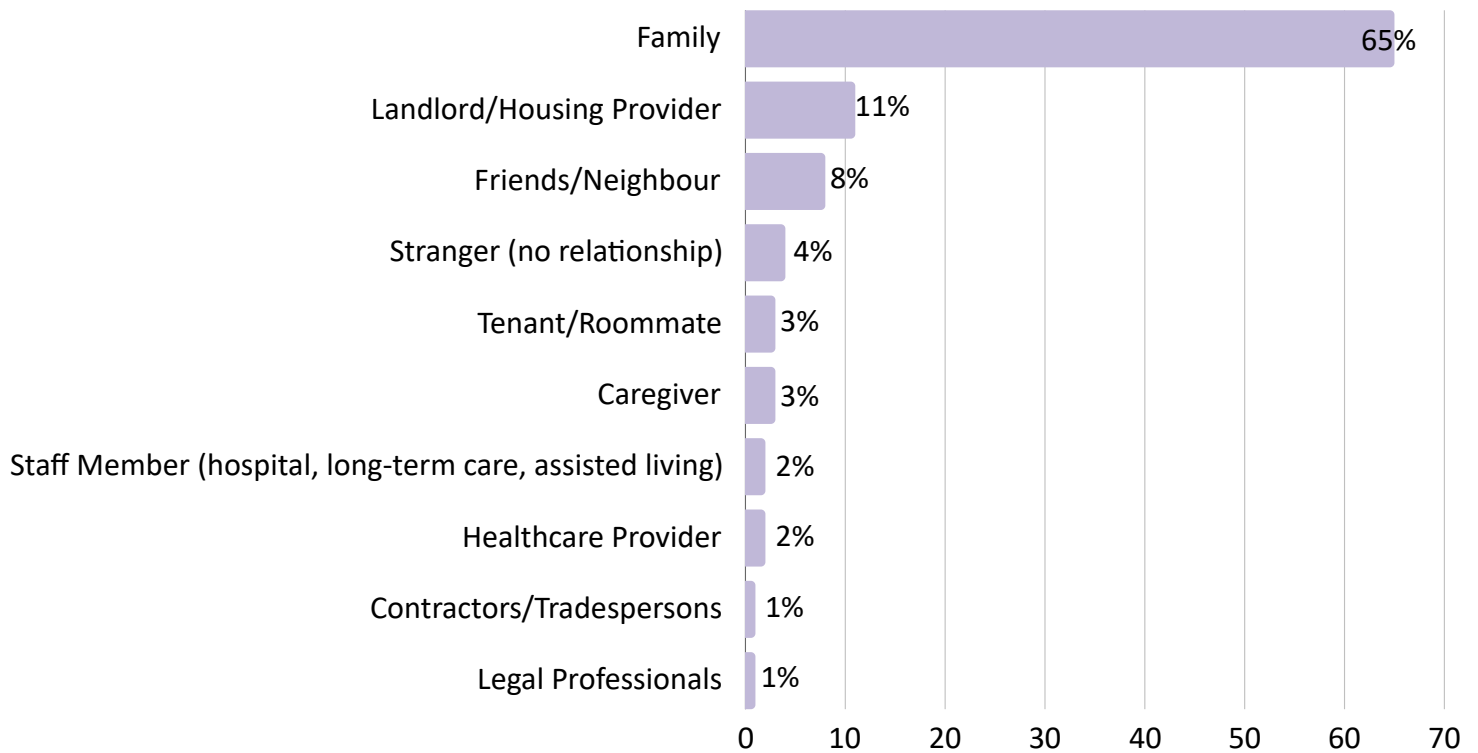


**Some individuals may experience more than one form of harm.*

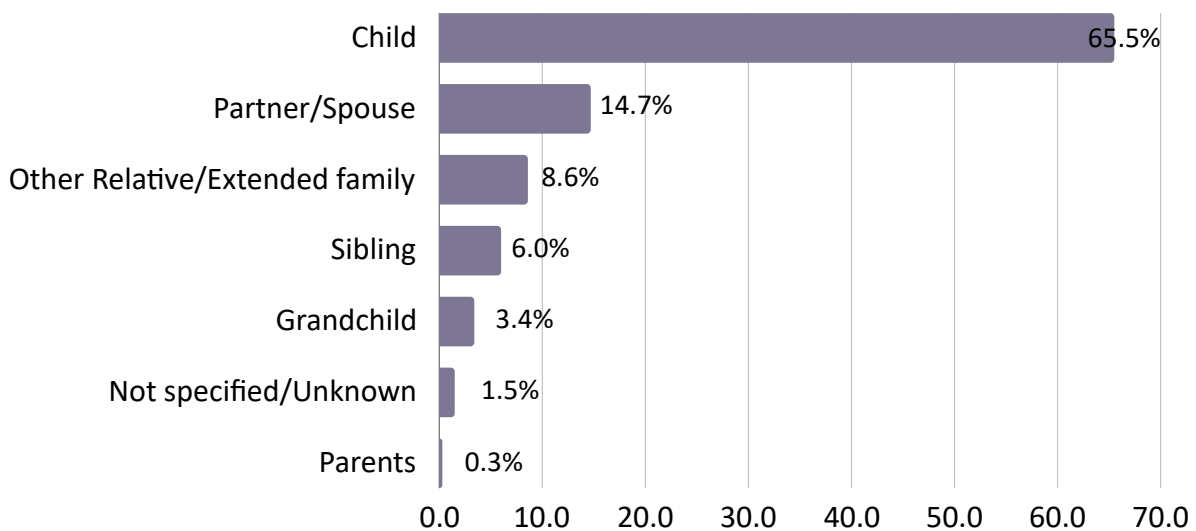
Level of Harm



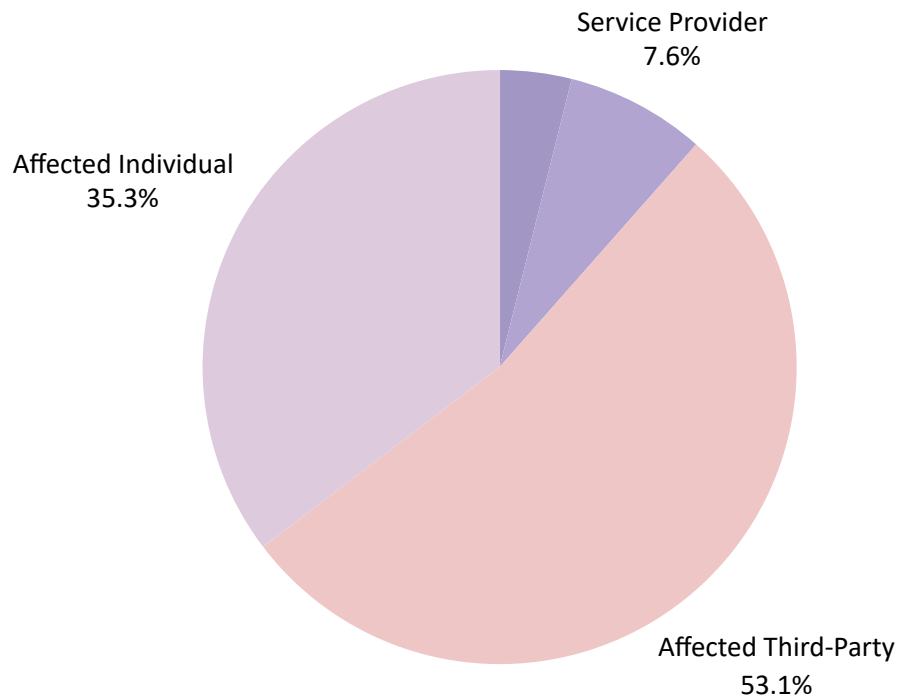
Type of Relationship with Alleged Abuser



Alleged Abuser - Family Details

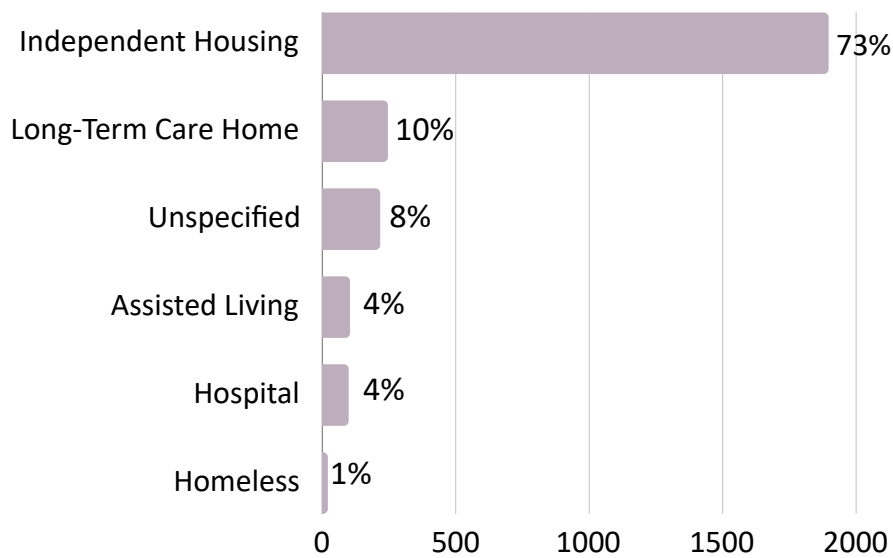


Type of Caller - Abuse Calls



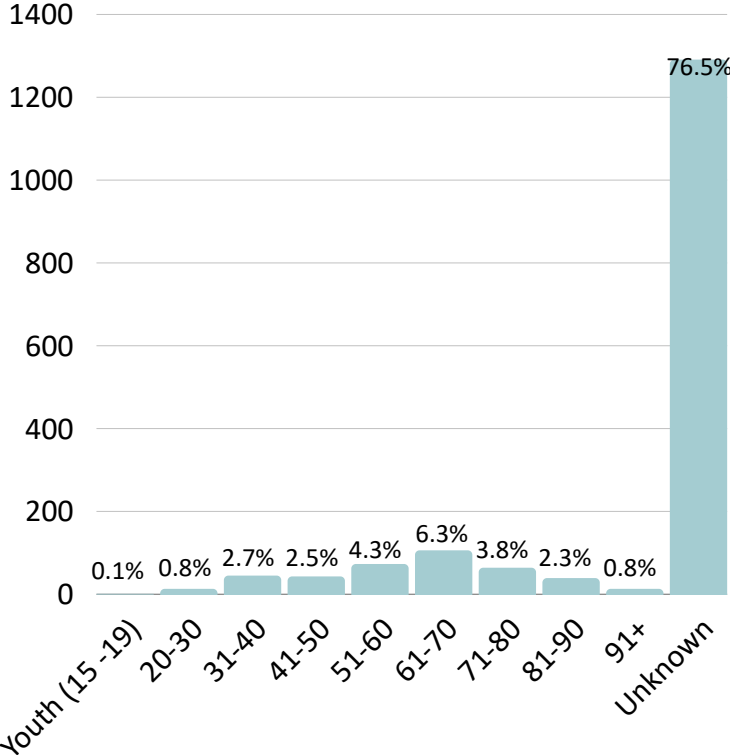
**General public refers to individuals who are not involved in the subject of the issue and/or have no relationship with the subject of the call.*

Caller's Type of Housing - Abuse Calls

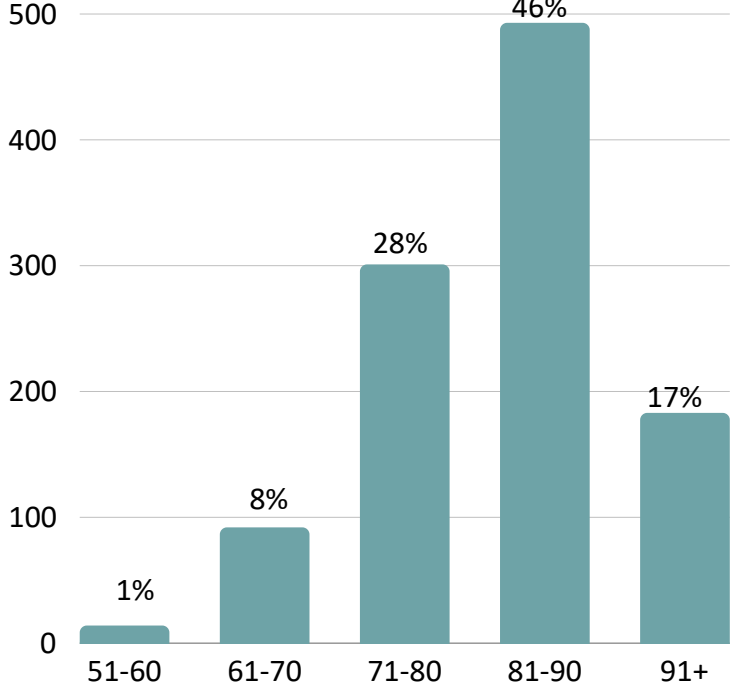


Older Adult Information When Unable to Reach Out Themselves - Abuse-Related Calls

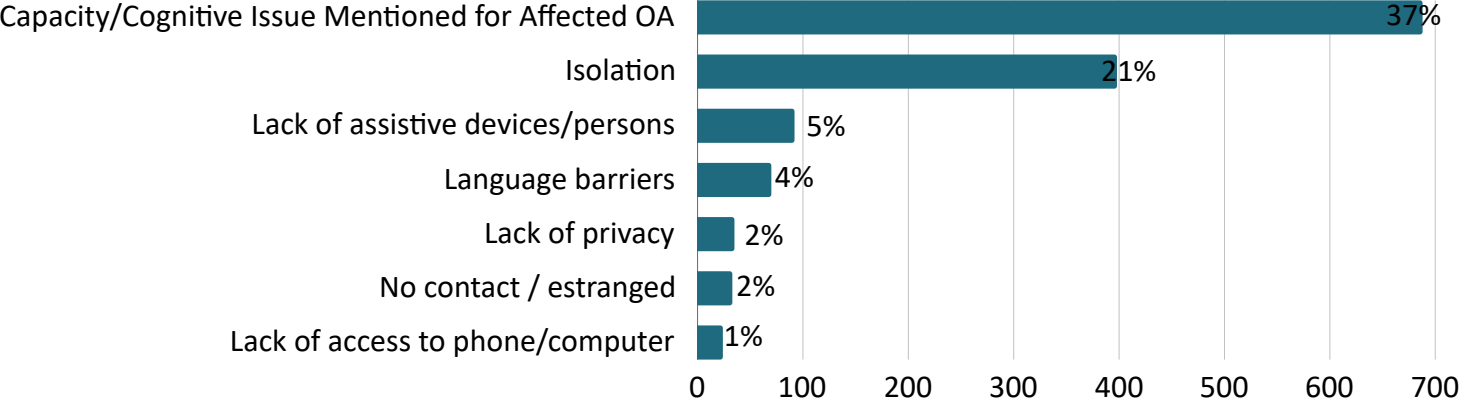
Age of Third-Party Caller (%)



Age of Older Adult (%)



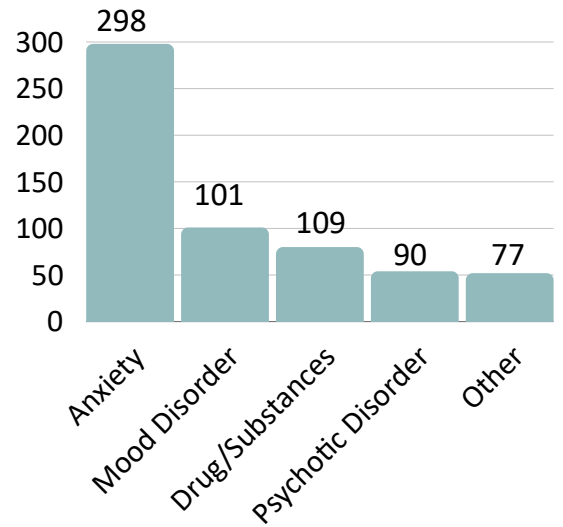
Reason for Inability to Reach Out



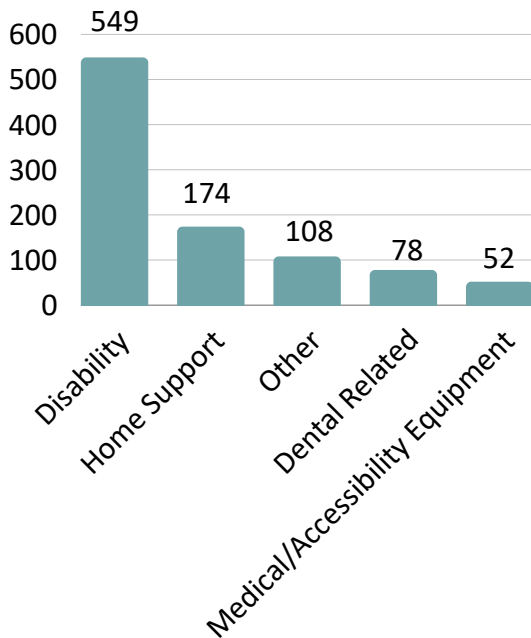
Calls Related to Health, Mental Health, Substance Use, and Self-Neglect



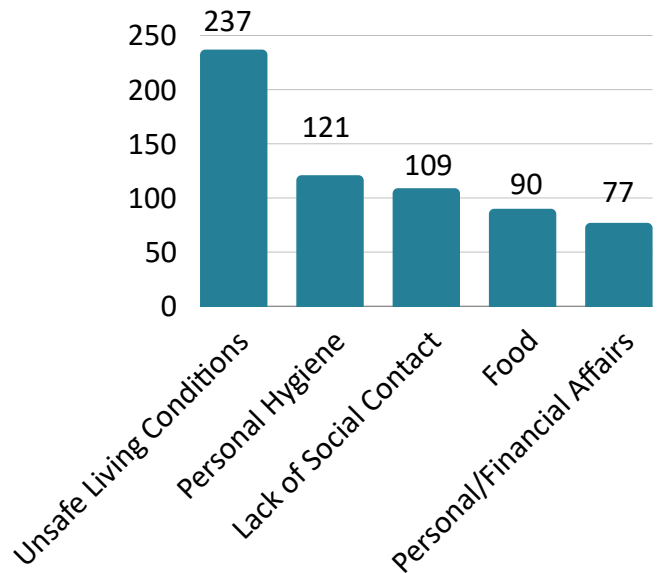
Top Mental Health and Substance Use Issues



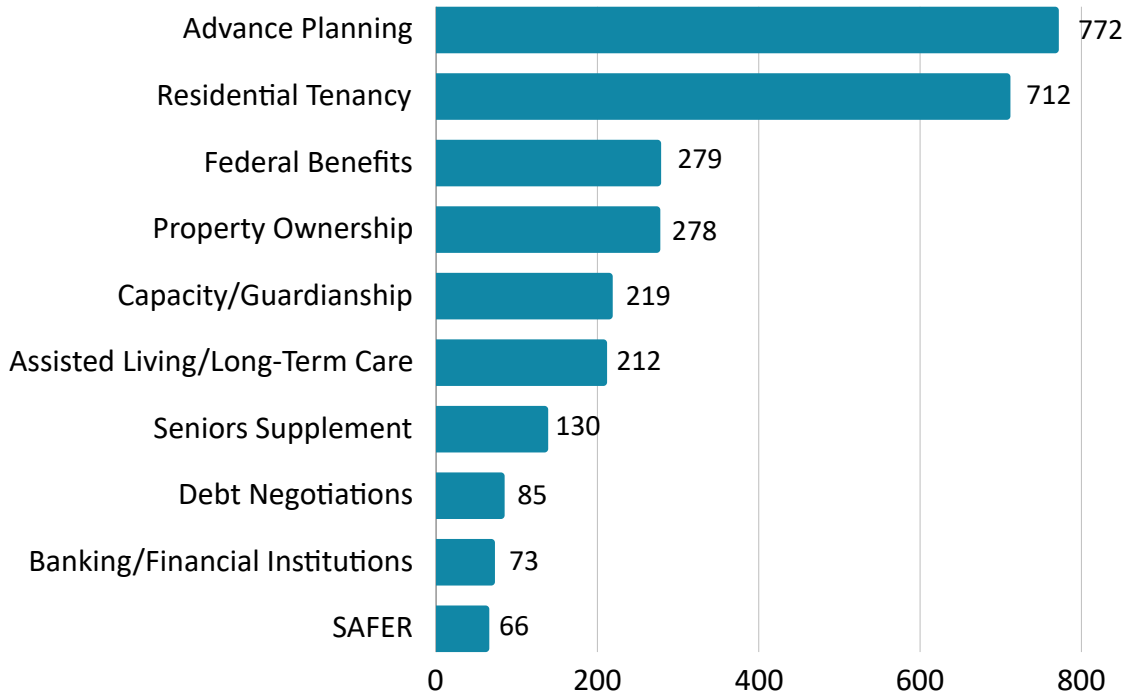
Most Common Health-Related Needs



Most Common Self-Neglect Issues

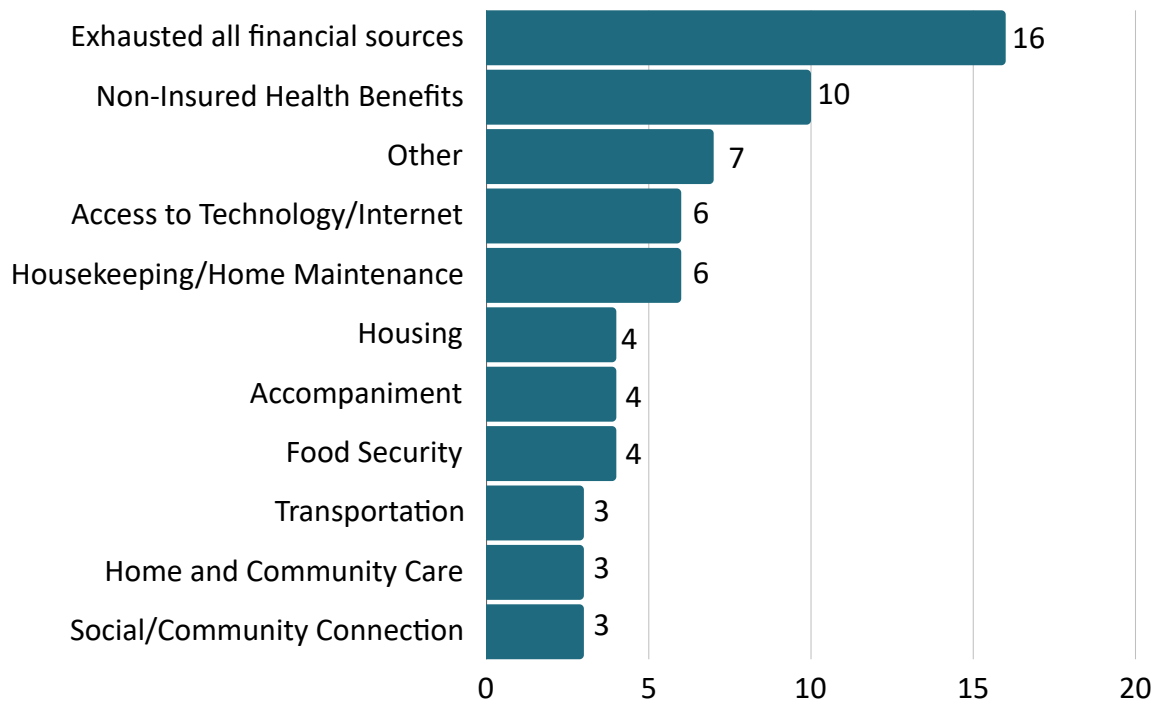


Most Common Legal Issues: 2,757*



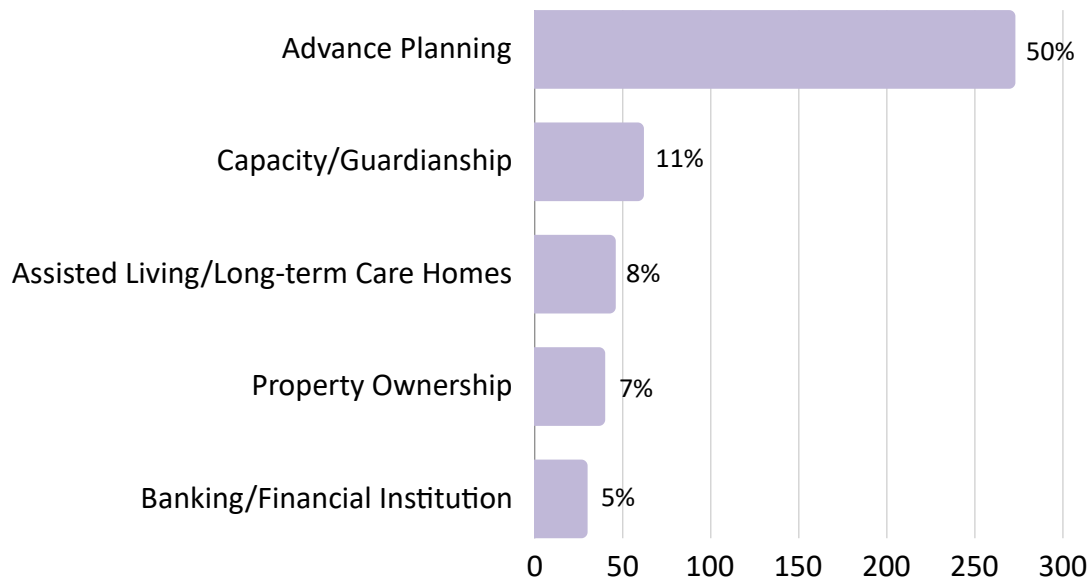
*42 percent of all calls on SAIL.

Unmet/Partially Met Needs

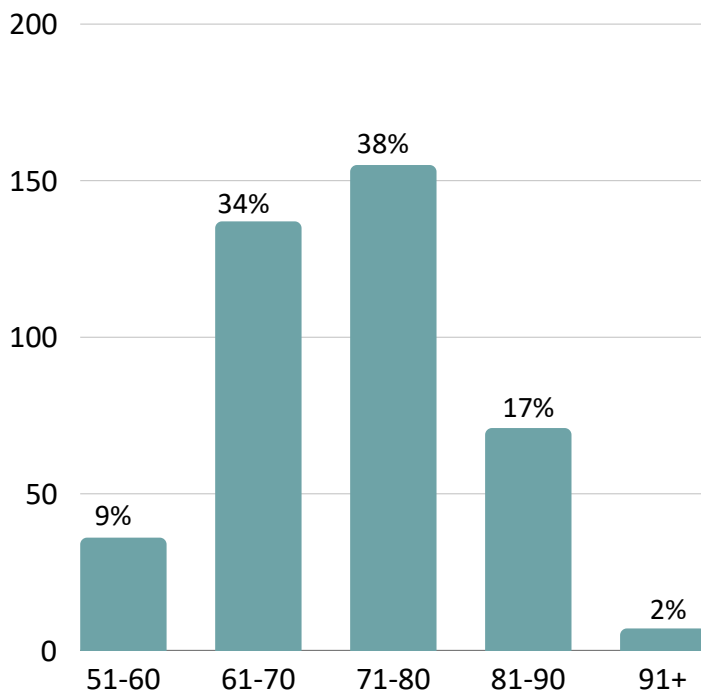


Referrals to Elder Law Clinic: 548*

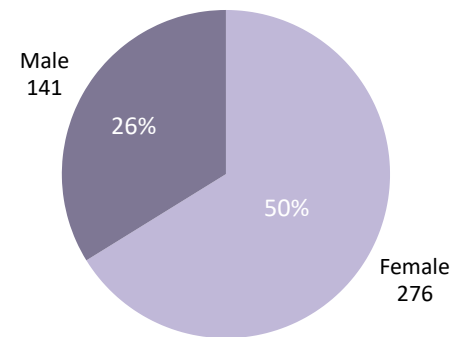
*20 percent of all calls on SAIL related to a legal issue.



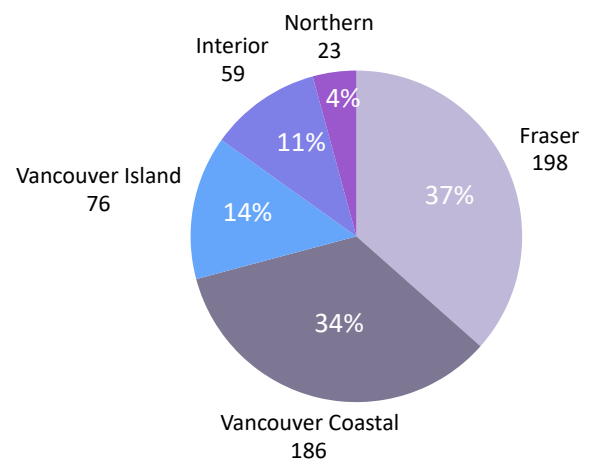
Age



Gender (self-identified)

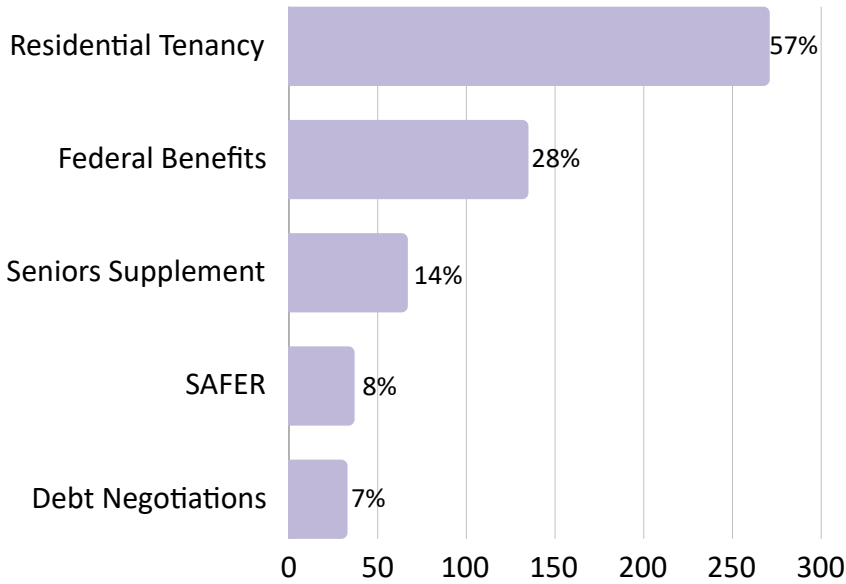


Region

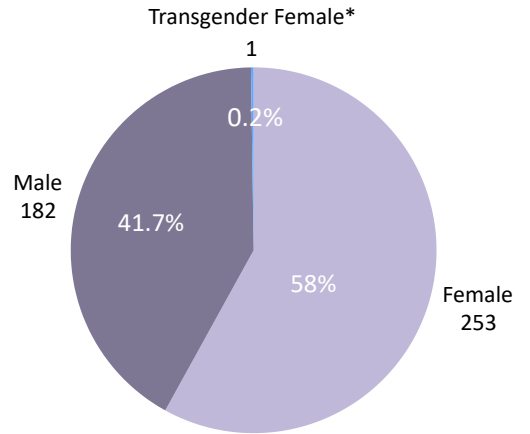


Referrals to Legal Advocacy Program: 476*

*17 percent of all calls on SAIL related to a legal issue.

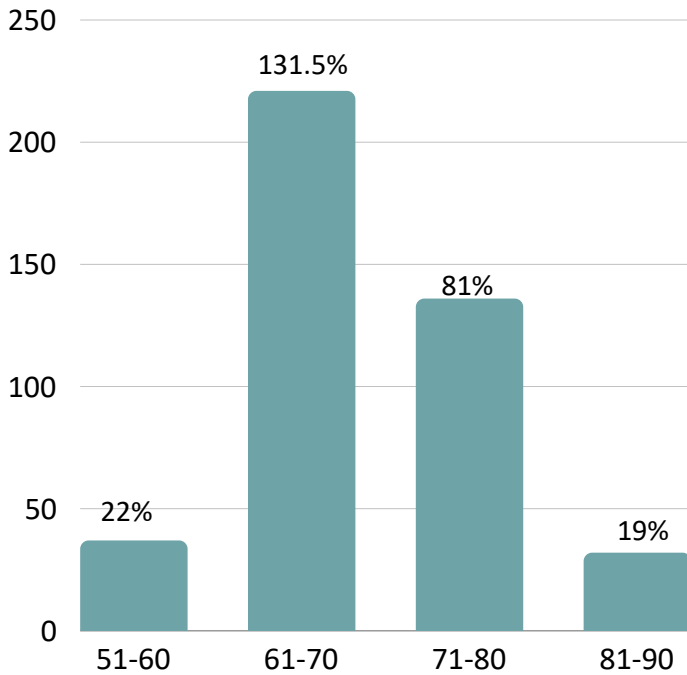


Gender (self-identified)

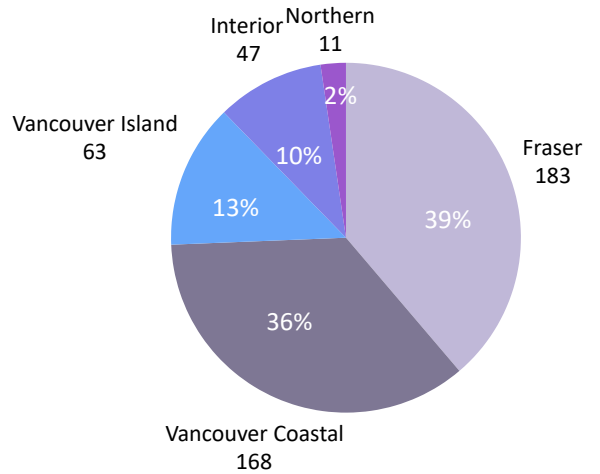


*insufficient data on non-binary genders.

Age

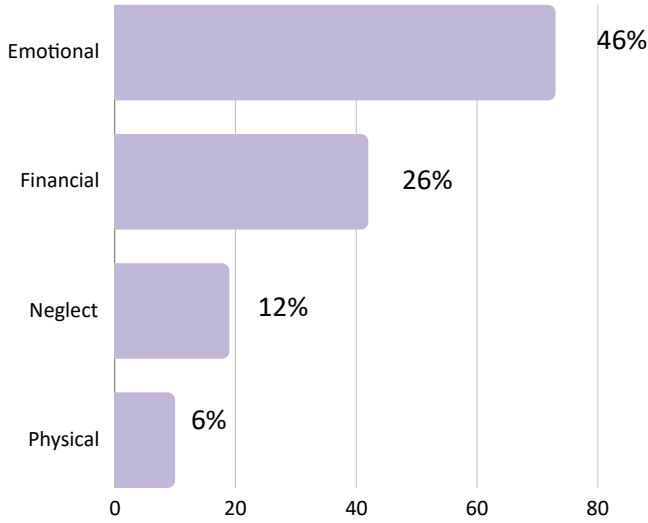


Region

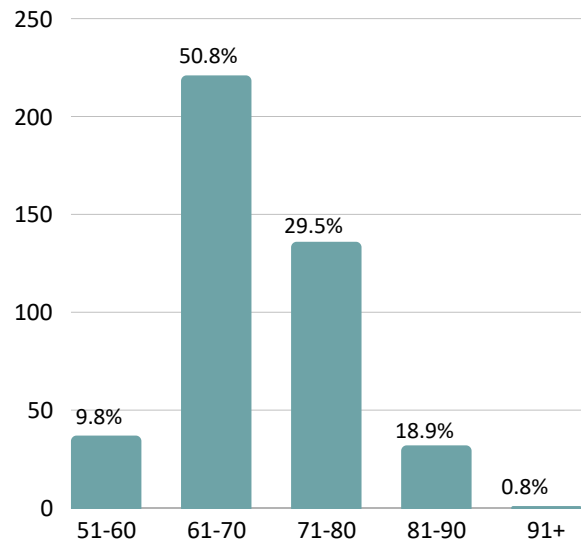


Referrals to Victim Services Program: 159

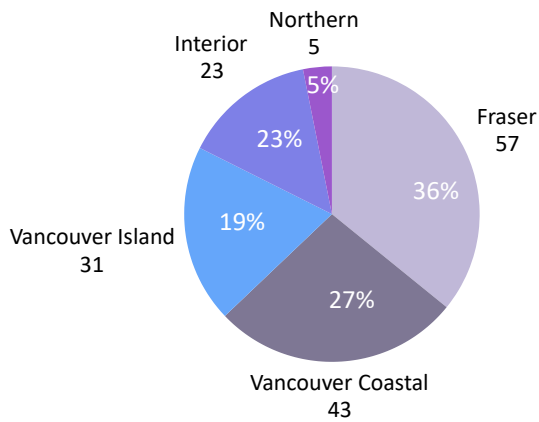
Top Types of Abuse



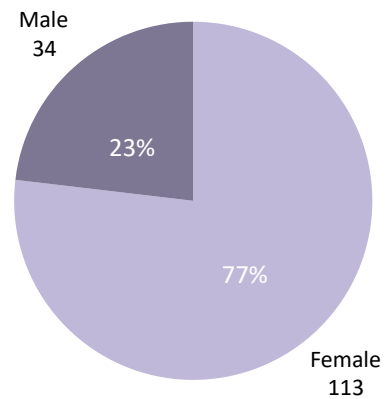
Age



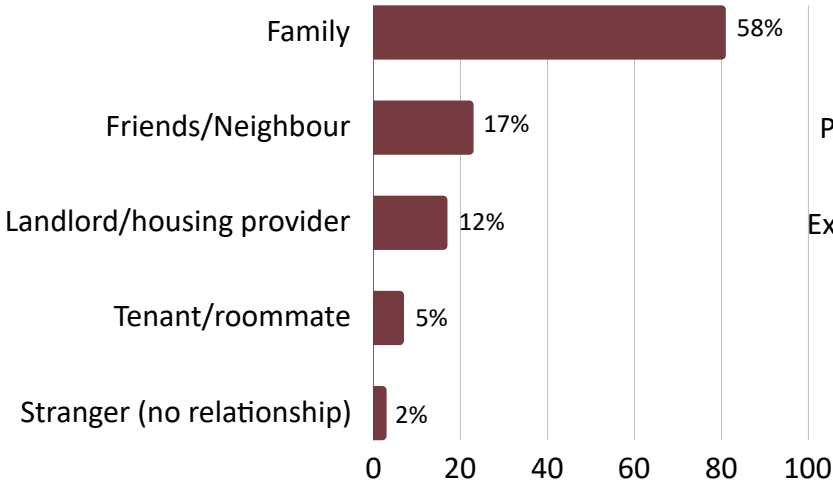
Region



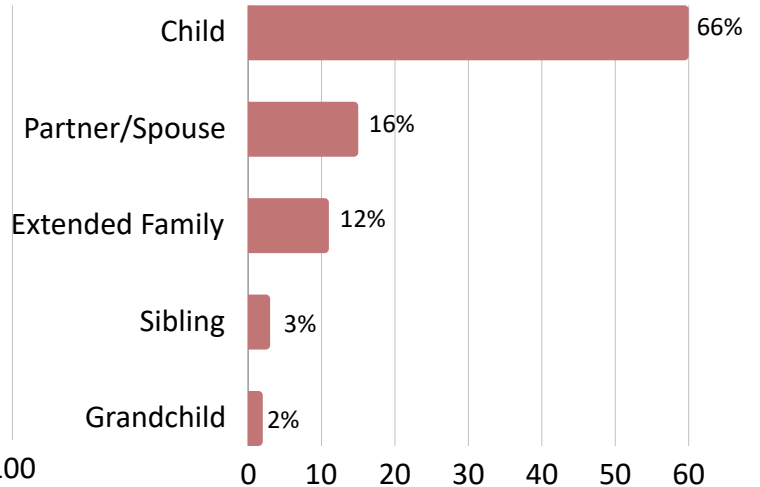
Gender (self-identified)



Type of Relationship with Alleged Abuser



Alleged Abuser - Family Details





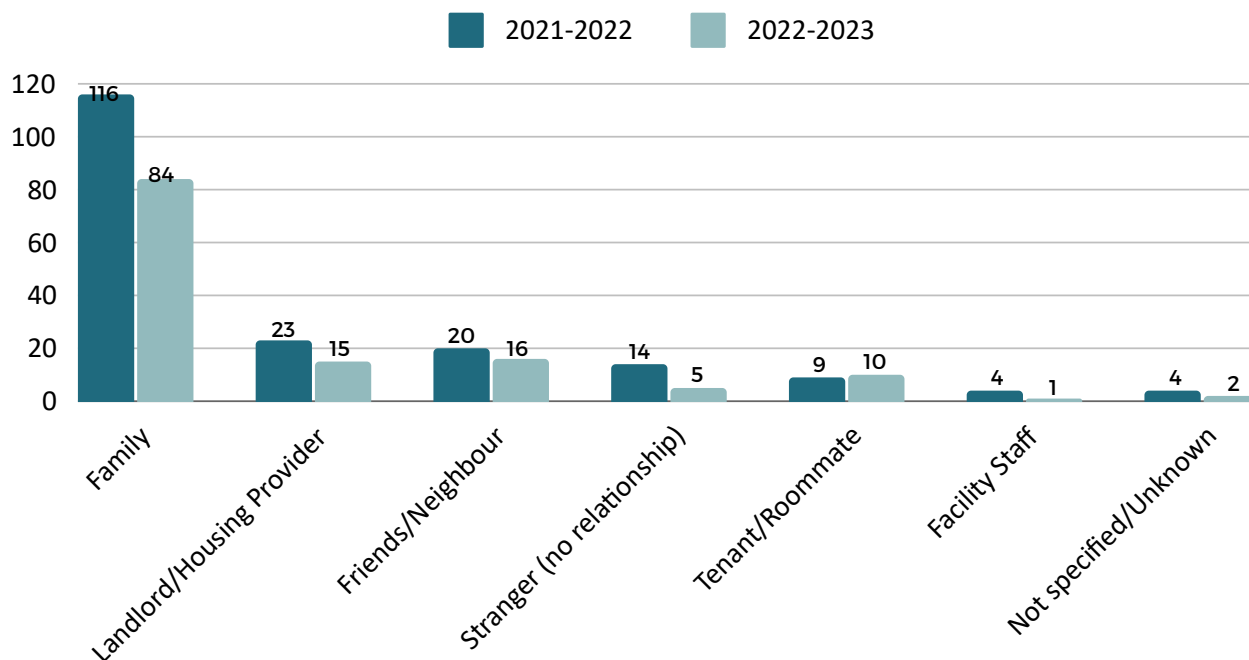
VICTIM SERVICES REPORT

5

Our community-based Victim Services program supported 159 clients who continue to benefit from the wraparound service offered at Seniors First BC. Clients who access our Victim Services program for ongoing support may also be clients of our legal programs; 21 percent of our clients were also referred to the Elder Law Clinic and 20 percent to the Legal Advocacy Program. Like previous years, most of our clients self-identify as female (77 percent) and between the ages of 61 and 70 (51 percent).

We saw a rise of clients seeking victim services from the Vancouver Coastal Health (increased by 6 percent) and Vancouver Island Health (increased 4 percent) regions compared to the previous fiscal year. Nonetheless, the majority of our clients reside within the Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health area.

Our clients continue to identify the majority of the alleged abuser as someone they know during this fiscal year: family members, landlords/housing providers, friends/neighbours, and tenant/roommates. Please see detailed graph below for the changes in type of relationship with alleged abuser between previous and current fiscal years.



As our Victim Services program provides telephone-based services to older folk (50 years of age and older) across the province, our program staff regularly liaise and coordinate with community partners to facilitate client’s access to additional services and help establish a network of support. These community partners include other Victim Service Workers, local law enforcement, Designated Agencies, and housing navigation and transition house workers. Counselling, legal services, financial assistance, and housing outreach/assistance continue to be the top needs for clients of our Victim Services program.

Currently, our Victim Services program are members of the following network:

- Community of Practice for EVA BC
- Vancouver Victim Services Coordinating Committee

While referrals to our program decreased 21 percent during this period, there was an increased need to provide timely, and sometimes urgent, support to clients, particularly those who were still living with the alleged abuser. Our Victim Services program utilizes a trauma-informed and strength-based approach to supporting clients, meeting clients where they are. Exceptions have been made on a case-by-case basis to clients whose privacy may be compromised because of ongoing abuse and who would need in-person services at our office in Vancouver.

The decreased number of referrals to our program, compared to the previous fiscal year, is largely due to program changes and the carryover of files from previous years to 2021. In recent months, we received more cases where clients are experiencing abuse from their spouse or partner for whom they care and who have limited capacity. In such cases, our program staff connects the client to family caregiver programs for peer support and explores healthcare resources to help alleviate caregiving.

We are grateful to Queen Adonri, our frontline Victim Services Worker, who has worked tirelessly to support clients' mental wellbeing, respond to their diverse needs, and coordinate with community partners. We thank the Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG), Province of BC, for funding our Victim Services program.

Tina Chang, Manager, SAIL and Victim Services Programs

September 13, 2023

Vancouver, BC



LEGAL ADVOCACY REPORT

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From April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, there were 6,501 calls to the Seniors Abuse and Information Line ("SAIL"). The Advocate handled 644 cases, 9 information/referrals files, 527 summary legal advice files, and closed 108 full representation files. The Advocate worked on 123 full representation files during this reporting period.

Fifty-two clients obtained full representation for residential tenancy matters, 21 received full representation on pension and old age security issues, and 13 received full representation in debt matters.

Residential Tenancy

During this reporting period, the Advocate attended 26 hearings before the Residential Tenancy Branch ("RTB") and the Small Claims Courts of the Province of British Columbia.

The Advocate assisted a client in the Residential Tenancy Branch (the "RTB") hearing in a tenancy matter where the client received an eviction notice for non-compliance with the park rules. The client had severe health issues and was unable to focus. Plus, the client moved to the park with her new trailer in August 2022. The client was at the edge of losing her tenancy and home (trailer), as removing the trailer would cost \$20,000 if the eviction had happened. After reviewing the case, The Advocate recommended to the client that Advocate could initiate the settlement with the landlord instead of going for a formal hearing. The Advocate proposed a settlement to the landlord and asked for four months to do the necessary work. The landlord accepted the proposal, and the RTB entered the settlement between the landlord and tenant as an RTB order. The client was thankful to Seniors First BC.

Income Security

Most Old Age Security (OAS) applications need the information to prove the residency history of clients to qualify for benefits. Unfortunately, many clients did not submit satisfactory evidence to satisfy the residence requirement to receive OAS. The Advocate assisted those clients in obtaining the information from Canada and overseas. The Advocate also communicated with Service Canada's Integrity Service and complied with the requests as requested by the integrity officers.

One of our clients received over \$17,000 as retroactive payment for the GIS when Service Canada stopped paying GIS to them and did not reinstate it even after their return to Canada in 2019. The Advocate helped the client reinstate it with retroactive payments from 2019 to 2021.

The Advocate assisted a client where the client applied for Old Age Security in 2015. The client submitted the OAS application to her community's local branch of Service Canada. The client expected to receive the benefits as soon as she turned 65. The client never received her benefits. Service Canada told her that according to its record, Service Canada received no applications in 2015. On the recommendation of one of the call centre agents, the client submitted a new application to Service Canada in 2021. After applying, she contacted SFBC. After interviewing the client, the Advocate found that the client received a stamped copy from an employee of the local office of Service Canada, which showed the date and the year of filing the OAS application in 2015. The Advocate sent the stamped copy with a cover letter and explained that the OAS application was misplaced or lost in Service Canada. The Advocate stated that the client has been eligible for OAS since 2015, when she turned 65. After an investigation conducted by Service Canada, Service Canada approved OAS and granted the benefits to the client from the original date of 2015.

The client sent a thank you card to SFBC, saying:

*Thank you, Nighat Afsar, for your help in my 5 1/2 year
journey in getting my Old Age Pension.*

*Sincerely,
[Redacted]*

SAIL received a call from an older adult who attended the webinar on Government Benefits and wanted to know whether she would qualify for Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD). SAIL referred that caller to LAP mid-March 2022. The Advocate interviewed the client and gathered medical evidence from them, along with information from their family doctor. The Advocate completed and submitted the CPPD application with Service Canada in July 2022. Service Canada approved the CPPD application in the first week of December 2022. Service Canada granted the CPPD benefits retroactively from October 2021 with a total amount of over \$23,000 (when the client stopped working due to their disability), in addition to \$1,500+ monthly CPPD payments.

Debt Issues

The Advocate assisted the common law spouse of the deceased with life and debt insurance claims, which spouses owed to the bank. The couple had a mortgage debt of \$30,000 for the trailer, which the couple financed from the bank. The Advocate collected the documents of the deceased cause of death from the BC Coroners Service, Victoria and communicated with the insurance company in Ontario. Finally, the life insurance claim was approved, and the insurance company paid off the debt of \$30,000 to the bank.

Program Changes

More recently the Law Foundation of British Columbia generously provided funds to hire a full-time new legal advocate. We warmly welcome Ms. Preetkamal Brar, a lawyer for passion for social justice and equity. With increased capacity, we hope to report on our growing successes in the next report!

September 13, 2023

Nighat Afsar, Legal Advocate

Marie-Noel Campbell, Legal Advocacy Program Supervisor

Legal Advocacy Program Statistics April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

Legal Issue	Level of Service			
	Info & Referral	Advice/ Summary Service	Full Rep Files Closed	Total
Income Security (includes CPP, WCB, Welfare, Disability, EI)	1	155	21	177
Housing (includes Residential Tenancy)	3	246	52	301
Debt	2	44	13	59
Family	0	2	1	3
Child Protection	0	1	0	1
Other (Criminal, Mental Health, Immigration/Refugee, Wills/Estates, Human Rights, Consumer, Employment etc)	3	79	21	103
Total	9	527	108	644

ELDER LAW CLINIC REPORT

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It has been 7 years since the Elder Law Clinic was reshaped to provide a full range of legal services to British Columbia seniors, a change that was approved by our then Executive Director, Martha Jane Lewis. Martha Jane's willingness in 2016 to revamp the work of the Elder Law Clinic led to continuous expansion of the range and volume of legal services offered and has assisted countless numbers of British Columbians. In the past year, Seniors First BC's legal programs have taken another giant step forward by establishing 8 Advance Planning Clinics outside the Lower Mainland (Haida Gwaii, Bella Coola, Prince Rupert, Prince George, Nanaimo, Nelson, and soon Chilliwack and Sechelt), by offering specialized legal services to indigenous clients, and by providing legal service to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

This year has seen changes within the staffing of the Elder Law Clinic. Edith Szilagyi left Seniors First BC to practice with other organizations. In September 2022, we were joined by articling student Zack Uganec. Zack is a graduate of the University of Victoria Law School, became a member of Law Society of British Columbia on his being admitted to the Bar on September 6, 2023 and is now a practicing lawyer with the Elder Law Clinic and the Advance Planning Clinic. The Elder Law Clinic legal staff is presently comprised of Zack, Marie-Noël Campbell and Gordon Marshall.

Another new member to the Elder Law Clinic and Advance Planning Clinic is Natalija Maksimovic. Natalija is an experienced paralegal who joined us this spring having been recruited from a major Vancouver Law firm. Natalija brings skill and experience in the areas of law that form the major portion of Seniors First BC's legal services. One of Natalija's first tasks has been to create a database of Wills, Representation Agreements and Powers of Attorney and to create a directory of standard provisions. This has been a major undertaking by Natalija and one for which our lawyers are most grateful.

The anchors of our administrative staff, Nataliya Ivannikova and Suad Seddiq, work with endless patience in assuring an efficient administrative office, scheduling appointments for clients and responding to callers seeking legal assistance. Our legal staff are able to focus on their client responsibilities knowing that Nataliya and Suad have the office administration well in hand.

A brief word about the statistics that accompany this year's Annual Report. It will be noted that the total number files closed by the Elder Law Clinic is down slightly from the previous year. This is not a cause for alarm and is attributable to a number of factors.

- The nature of the legal work taken on by the Elder Law Clinic is becoming more complex and more time consuming. In particular, the litigation and contentious cases we are now able to accept require a greater time commitment and remain active for longer periods of time than the summary advice/short service files. As well, an increased number of files in the areas of estates and estate planning work (Wills, Representation Agreements, Powers of Attorney) require more service hours from legal staff thereby impacting the number of clients that can be served and files closed.
- The type of case referrals accepted by the Elder Law Clinic have been restricted. Subject to urgency and special circumstances, matters not taken by the Elder Law Clinic (for example, criminal cases, family law, bankruptcy, strata and insurance claims) are now being diverted at the intake level. In the result we have fewer cases in the Information Referral and Summary Service categories. There has been an increase however in Short Service matters (over two hour's service), document preparation (Wills, Representation Agreements, Powers of Attorney) and Full Representation matters (principally litigation and estate administration.)
- The preparation and presentation of webinars and in-person seminars while time consuming are important components of the services delivered by our legal staff. This work, as well as student time spent at mandatory Law Society of British Columbia programs for articling students, legal staff supervision of students and providing them training are not reflected in statistics.

Looking briefly at some of the legal matters (excluding advance estate planning consultations and document production) handled by Elder Law Clinic lawyers:

- Defending a Supreme Court of British Columbia claim by a person contesting the validity of the last Will of a deceased person, alternatively, a variation of the terms of the last Will.
- Representing a person in a Supreme Court of British Columbia claim challenging the validity of the last Will of a deceased person, alternatively, a variation of the terms of the last Will to provide adequate and equitable provision for the claimant.

The above cases demonstrate the ability of our legal staff to argue both sides of an issue, something not always possible in small legal clinics.

- Challenging a residential care provider's refusal to provide a resident's medical records to the resident's legal representative.
- Assisting a person who is the subject of a statutory guardianship order in challenging the medical basis for the guardianship. Assisting persons who are subjects of statutory guardianship orders seeking changes in the financial allowances and provision of collateral benefits by the statutory guardian.
- Bringing contempt proceedings in a Small Claims matter where a judgment debtor failed to abide by an order of the court to the detriment of our client.
- Preparing an urgent application for an interim injunction in a case where an elderly, disabled person inadvertently failed to pay rent at a storage facility. We were consulted only days before the scheduled auction of their property. The application was not pursued once the opposing party became aware of the basis for the application but it took that measure to preserve our client's property.
- Two matters where financial institutions required a surviving 'common law' spouse to obtain a grant of probate or administration for the estate of the deceased spouse before releasing bank deposits well under \$25,000. The issue in both cases related to proving the marriage-like relationship to the satisfaction of the financial institution, often a challenging task when people live in relative isolation and do not have documents reflecting their relationship.
- An elderly owner of a small home in rural British Columbia in which there is very little equity, owns the property jointly with a much younger family member. The young owner seeks to compel sale of the property under the Partition of Property Act. If the court grants the order the elderly owner will be homeless with few if any options for affordable housing.

These examples show the range of matters addressed by the Elder Law Clinic on a daily basis. When the telephone rings, one never knows what it brings. But our staff are equal to the challenge and are eager to begin each workday.

In closing and on behalf of the Elder Law Clinic staff we are grateful for the leadership and support we receive from Marie-Noël.

J. Gordon Marshall

Senior Lawyer, Elder Law Clinic

Statistics for Closed Files During Reporting Period

Legal Issue	Info & Referral	Advice/ Summary Service	Doc Prep	Short Service	Assistance to Self-Rep	Full Rep Files Closed	Total
Income Security /Pensions	0	6	0	0	1	0	7
Debt/ Consumer	1	26	0	4	1	1	33
Institutional Care	4	27	0	3	0	0	34
Housing/ Assisted Living	1	29	1	4	1	0	36
Financial Abuse	1	115	3	14	2	4	139
Human Rights	1	16	0	1	0	0	18
Guardianship/ Capacity	1	45	1	7	0	1	55
Advance Planning	9	160	47	23	0	1	240
Physical Abuse/Safety Issues	2	37	2	7	0	1	49
Other	15	219	18	67	5	13	337
Total	35	680	72	130	10	21	948

PUBLIC EDUCATION & OUTREACH REPORT

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The Public Education and Outreach Program had another busy year that was filled with learning and outreach events, new communications projects, and technology updates.

During this period, we gave our best wishes to Lin Chen, our Education Manager, as she started a new position at Vancouver Coastal Health. In her place, Justin Lee, previously Workshop and Outreach Coordinator and later Communications and Outreach Coordinator, started his new role as Program Manager.

Additionally, we were pleased to onboard Linda Yauk, long-standing volunteer educator, as our new Workshop and Outreach Coordinator. Linda brings an educational background in Social Work and Gerontology and fifteen years' experience working in long-term care and education. She continues to make many positive contributions both to the program and the organization.

Learning Events

We delivered 63 presentations to 1,168 attendees, both virtually and in-person, often in collaboration with other programs: SAIL workers have regularly co-presented on elder abuse, offering one-on-one emotional and practical support in person and as needed, and legal staff co-present on residential tenancy and advance planning-related issues. Topics included:

- Elder Abuse – What Is It? How Do We Deal with It?
- Frauds and Scams
- Government Benefits
- Residential Tenancy for BC Older Adults
- Advance Planning: Joint Ownership, Wills, Powers of Attorney, and Representation Agreements
- Wills and Estates – On and Off Reserve
- Introduction to SFBC

The presentations were delivered in partnership with service providers, academic institutions, seniors' networks, libraries, and community centres across BC, notably including:

- BC Association of Community Response Networks
- Bella Coola Legal Advocacy Program
- Cerebral Palsy Association of BC
- Chimo Services
- Downtown Eastside Women's Centre - Chinese Seniors' Outreach Group
- Langara College
- Pacific Association of First Nation Women
- Society for Learning in Retirement
- Vancouver Coastal Health Deaf Well-Being Program
- Vancouver Public Library
- Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre
- Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility



Marie-Noël Campbell presenting about Advance Planning for local elders at the Gitga'at Development Corporation Office in Prince Rupert on March 29, 2023.

Community Outreach

We were involved in several seniors' networks, including the South Vancouver Seniors' Network, Burnaby Seniors' Resources Society, Chinese Community Response Network, and City of Surrey's Age Friendly for Seniors Network. Additionally, we participated in several seniors' events with more than 1,000 total participants, including:



Linda Yauk at the Kitsilano Neighbourhood House's Seniors Resource Fair on March 15, 2023.

- Allard School of Law Social Justice Forum
- Celebrating Burnaby Seniors' Fair
- City of Surrey's Connecting Seniors to Technology Forums
- City of Surrey's Focus on Seniors World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Webinar
- EngAge BC's Senior Living Expo
- Kitsilano Neighbourhood House Seniors Resource Fair
- MOSAIC BC's Multicultural Seniors Day
- Northeast Vancouver Active Aging Network Seniors Resources Fair
- Pacific Association of First Nation Women's World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Event
- Vancouver Police Department's 2nd Annual Senior Health and Safety Fair

We thank each partnering and hosting organization for their invitations to their events, and we value the opportunities to connect with and hear from older adults in attendance.

Website

In January, we launched our new website, which was a project involving collaboration between staff from our programs and feedback from community stakeholders. Some website improvements include:

- New accessibility features, such as a font resizer for each page to improve text readability.
- Improved and simplified user navigation and subpages with the goal of helping users find what they are seeking by navigating between fewer website pages.
- A new quick exit button for those who need to navigate away from the website pages quickly due to personal safety concerns.
- Revamped informational resource pages for various provincial services, such as legal assistance, personal and family supports, financial needs, and transportation.

As improving our website remains a work in progress, we will continue to add informational resources and explore how to keep it user-friendly and accessible.

Communications

As our program gained more capacity for outreach work, we developed new digital and collateral materials to further promote and share information about services with older adults and service providers in communities across the province, including flyers, brochures, rack cards, and posters. In addition, we developed new event swag materials that show our SAIL number, which include medication reminder containers, wallet card-sized magnifiers, and pens.

We released 6 digital newsletters that informed about provincial news and alerts, updates about our programs, and community announcements, and we continued to share digital updates through our social media pages, which include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.



Additionally, in cooperation with the BC Association of Community Response Networks (BCCRN), a valued and important partner of our organization, we developed new pocket-sized resource guide wallet cards that list the contact information of both organizations and the Designated Agencies of BC with the goal of informing about resources to contact when older adults are in need of assistance due to abuse, neglect, and self-neglect. This guide can be ordered for distribution at events through the BCCRN promotional order form online (<https://bccrns.ca/promo-materials-order-form>).



Volunteers

We thank our wonderful volunteers, Daniela Talarico, Grace Hu, and Kiki Yu, whose support and dedication have been an integral part of our accomplishments this year.

We were saddened by the passing of Terry Wright, a dedicated volunteer for the Public Education and Outreach Program, in August 2023. Since 2017, Terry volunteered in various capacities while enjoying his retirement at home in Cloverdale. Bringing more than 30 years of experience from working in technology, he was an engaging and knowledgeable presenter at learning events for older adults in the community, covering topics such as internet safety, fraud and scams, and advance planning. When not presenting, he contributed his wealth of knowledge and experiences by training other volunteers and assisting with developing learning materials for the public. Terry will be remembered dearly by our organization, and we cherish the positive impact he made for both the program and in the community.

This program is funded by the Province of British Columbia.

Justin Lee

Public Education and Outreach Program Manager

OUR FUNDERS

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We wish to thank the Province of British Columbia, the Law Foundation, Vancouver City Savings Credit Union, and the City of Vancouver, for their unwavering support of our organization, as well as our generous private donors.

