

# Chapter 8: Issues That Impact Older Women

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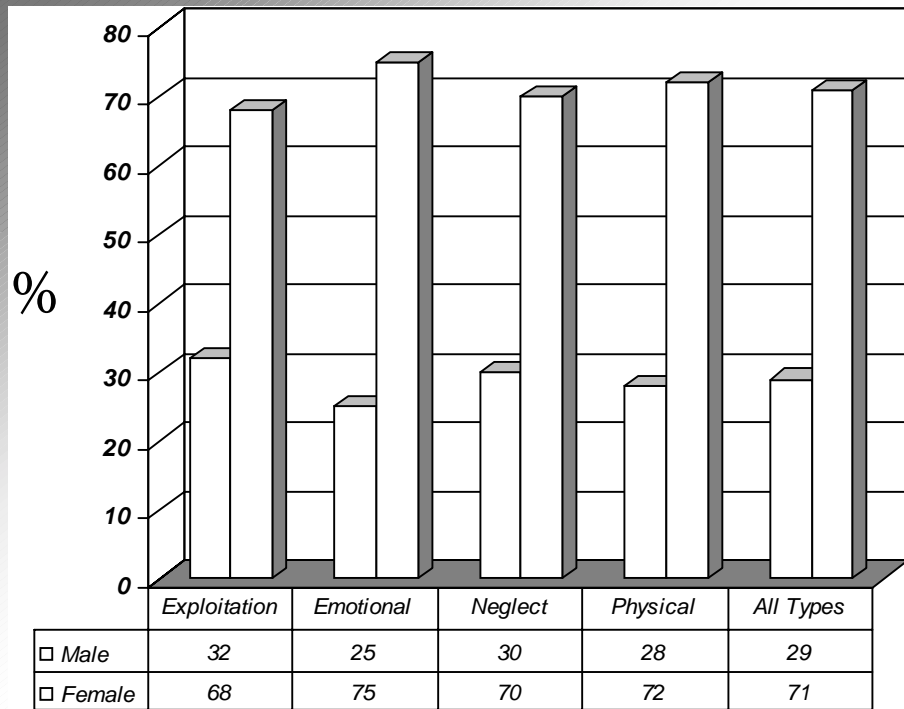
## Caregiving Demands on Society

Source: National Family of Caregivers Association Web Site [www.nfcacares.org](http://www.nfcacares.org) and Stone, et. al., Gerontologist Vol. 27, pg. 616-626 1987.

- The National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA) estimates that 25 million Americans provide care for loved ones who are chronically ill, disabled or cannot function independently. According to results from the NFCA member survey, 82% of these caregivers are female.
- The mean age of caregivers is 57 years old. (Stone, 1987)
- Care is provided, on average, 4 hours daily with 80% of the caregivers being available 7 days per week. (Stone, 1987.)

# Elder Abuse in Illinois

Source: Illinois Department on Aging. *Elder Abuse and Neglect Annual Report*. Fiscal Year 1998.



- The most common forms of abuse reported were financial exploitation, emotional abuse, passive neglect, and physical abuse.
- Approximately 3 out of every 4 elder abuse victims were women.

# Life Expectancy for Women

Source: Illinois Department on Aging. *Older Women in Illinois . . . The Differences They Face*. December 1997.

- Women on average, live 7 years longer than men
- Life expectancy at birth is 79.6 years for white women and 74.5 years for black women.
- Life expectancy for black females has increased 18% since 1950 when the life expectancy was 62.7 years.

## Language Barriers for Older Women

Source: Illinois Department on Aging. *Older Women in*

*Illinois . . . The Differences They Face.* December 1997.

- In Illinois, there are over 25,000 women aged 65 years and older who are considered linguistically isolated. This means that not only do these women not speak English, but also they live in households in which no person 14 years of over is fluent in English.
- Of these women who are linguistically isolated, 33% speak no English and 67% speak English “not well.”

## Economic Issues that Impact Older Women

Source: Illinois Department on Aging. *Older Women in Illinois. . . The Differences They Face*. December 1997.

- On the national level, Older Women's League reported only 13% of women age 65 and older receive private pension income, compared with 33% of men.
- The mean private pension for older women is \$3,940 annually, compared to \$7,468 for men.

# Social Security for Women

Source: Illinois Department on Aging. *Older Women in Illinois. . . The Differences They Face*. December 1997.

- In 1996, the average monthly Social Security benefit for retired or disabled workers was \$835.39 for men and \$552.13 for women.
- The average monthly benefit amount for aged widows was \$702.41.
- The average monthly benefit for female spouses of retired workers was \$307.12.

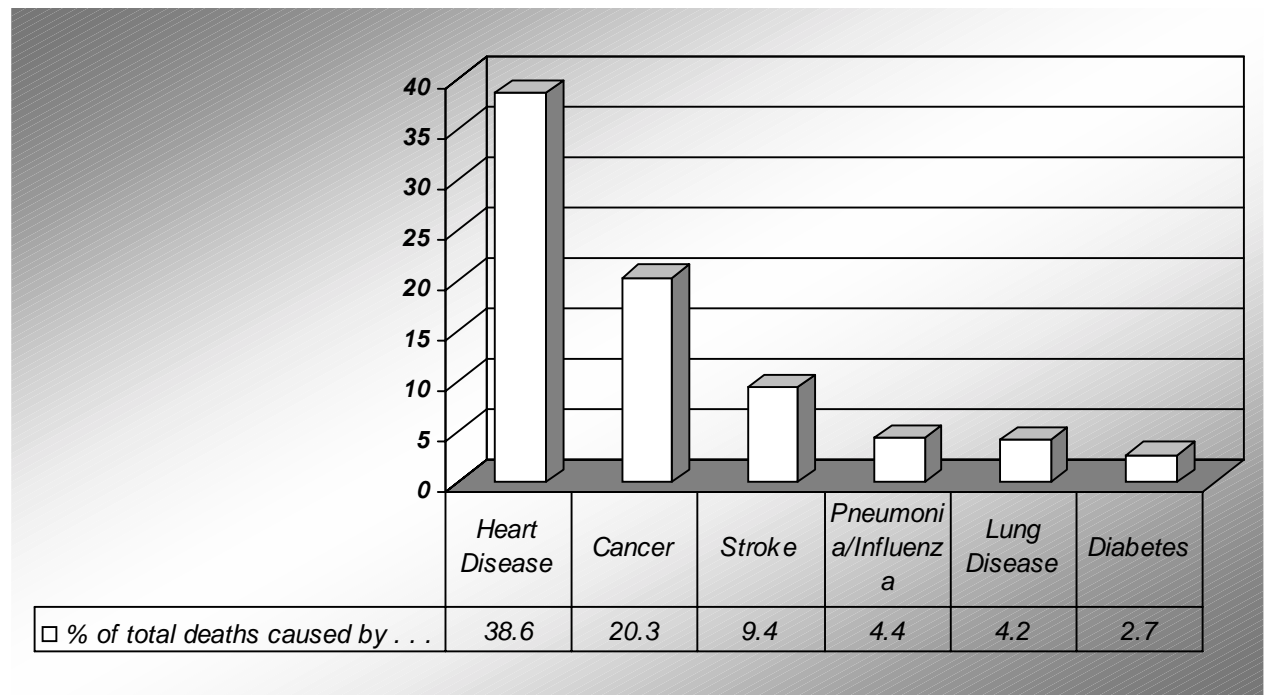
## **Physical Health Issues for Older Women**

**Source: Illinois Department on Aging. Older Women in Illinois . . . The Differences They Face. December 1997.**

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in older women. Women who have heart attacks are more than twice as likely as men to die from them within the first year. After age 50, women develop and die from heart disease at a rate equal to men.
- Cancers are the second leading cause of death in older women. Lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer deaths among older women and breast cancer is number two.
- Stroke is the third leading cause of death for older women. Older women with diabetes, especially those with hypertension, are at greater risk of stroke.

## Percentage of Deaths from the Leading Causes in Women, 65 Years and Older

Source: U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health. Older Women's Health Fact Sheet. April 1995.



## **Mental Health Issues for Older Women**

**Source: Illinois Department on Aging. *Older Women in Illinois . . . The Differences They Face*. December 1997.**

- Older women are twice as likely as men to experience depression. Additionally, one in seven women will suffer from depression during her lifetime, but nearly two-thirds will not seek help.
- Depression is not a normal part of the aging process. Depression is not a sign of senility. Rather depression is a medical illness that requires medical attention.

## **Women and Alzheimer's Disease**

**Source: Illinois Department on Aging. *Older Women in Illinois . . . The Differences They Face*. December 1997.**

- In 1995, there were 9,388 female Alzheimer's patients in long-term care facilities in Illinois, compared to 2,878 men.
- Women are at higher risk for being affected by Alzheimer's simply because there are more older women than men. Approximately 10% of the population aged 65 years and older suffer from Alzheimer's disease. For persons aged 85 years and older, the percentage increases to 47.2%.

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