

# BULLYING AMONG OLDER ADULTS: AN UNSEEN EPIDEMIC



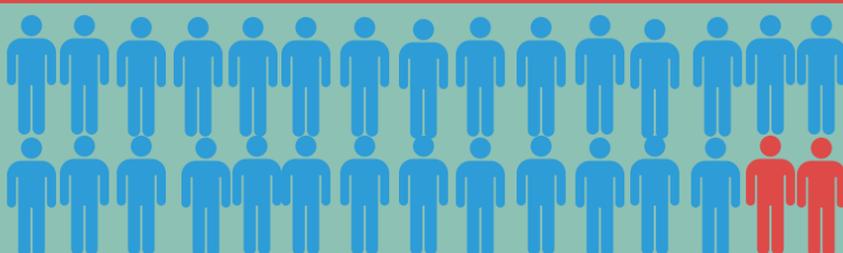
Bullying among older adults in senior care settings is a serious issue that continues to grow. Little research has been done on the topic so far, but here's what you need to know.

## HOW MANY?

# 20%



of older adults in assisted living facilities report having experienced some form of peer bullying, much of it verbal abuse.



## A pilot study

examining bullying behaviors among older adults reported **28** of **30** assisted living residents interviewed had experienced bullying in their facility, and *all* had witnessed other residents being bullied.

Research studies on peer-to-peer bullying have found:

**50%** of residents in independent senior living communities in which tenant required no hands-on assistance experienced at least some form of peer bullying in the preceding year.

**20%** of residents in assisted living facilities who were slightly lower functioning and had more cognitive impairments experienced peer bullying.

## WHO IS BULLIED?

Senior living environments with higher functioning residents tend to have more problems with bullying because such individuals possess the necessary memory and organizational skills to engage in planned behavior.



## WHO DOES THE BULLYING?

Peer-to-peer bullying behaviors are likely to occur in small groups composed of members who interact regularly and are difficult to leave, including senior centers, congregate meal settings, and all forms of senior housing.



*There is currently no evidence that links the existence of bullying behaviors to poor care or unmet resident needs.*

Relational aggression and associated indirect forms of bullying are the most common types of bullying among older adults.



Some experts have suggested that bullying is likely to occur to some extent in all senior living settings!

**Feelings of loss**  
due to physical health declines, and greater dependence on others for functional assistance



**Cognitive declines**  
can lead to aggressive and confused behaviors

**Discomfort**  
due to forced interactions with people they may not like

**Self-devaluation**  
due to life changes that create a loss of control

**Generational divides**  
between residents

## FACTORS THAT LEAD TO BULLYING

Older adults may show bullying and aggressive behavior towards their peers for a variety of reasons.



**Social isolation**

**Intense feelings of anger and fearfulness**

**Exacerbated physical and mental health conditions**



**Low self-esteem**

**Anxiety**

**Reduced life satisfaction**

## OUTCOMES OF BEING BULLIED

Older adults who are bullied experience an array of negative outcomes. Additionally, people who witness their peers being bullied and do not step in may experience feelings of guilt. Bullying among older adults affects *everyone* in the community.

*Depressive symptoms among targets of bullying are **9 times** higher than those who don't experience peer bullying*

REDUCE BULLYING AMONG OLDER ADULTS AT [WWW.HEALTHPROGRESS.COM/BONIFAS](http://WWW.HEALTHPROGRESS.COM/BONIFAS)

Sources: *Bullying Among Older Adults: How to Recognize and Address an Unseen Epidemic* by Robin Bonifas  
American Senior Housing Association