

**CANADIAN NETWORK** *for*  
*the PREVENTION of ELDER ABUSE*

**RÉSEAU CANADIEN** *pour la PRÉVENTION*  
*du MAUVAIS TRAITEMENT des AÎNÉS*

# **Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse Responses to the OEWGA questionnaire**

Identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them.

## **About CNPEA**

CNPEA is the sole pan-Canadian network dedicated to the prevention of elder abuse. Our mission is to build awareness, support, and capacity for a coordinated pan-Canadian approach to the prevention of elder abuse and neglect. We promote the rights of older adults through knowledge mobilization, collaboration, policy reform and education so that all older adults have the support they need to thrive within their communities and live free from violence and neglect. We:

- Create opportunities for stakeholders, older adults, and individuals of all ages to rethink and reshape how we view and incorporate aging in our communities.
- Empower people to protect themselves and each other through practical, evidence-based, community-centered resources.
- Build a holistic approach to prevention, intervention, and support across sectors.

CNPEA is supported by individual and organizational members -leaders in healthy aging, research, healthcare, social services, elder law and more. CNPEA draws on its 900+ members' expertise to enrich its work and collaborates regularly with multi sectoral organizations. These collaborative projects have allowed us to focus on the specific needs of underserved groups of older people. Our partners represent the voices women experiencing systemic barriers including Indigenous women, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, women residing in northern, rural, and remote communities, immigrant and refugee women, women living with a disability, and Francophone women. Our work and practices are dedicated to equity; we approach our work with a GBA+ and intersectional lens.

# THE QUESTIONS

## I- Identification Of Gaps

Please state possible gaps your Government/Organization has identified in the normative framework and practical implementation for the protection of human rights of older persons.

### **Equality and non-discrimination**

The 2021 World Health Organization's Global Report on Ageism<sup>1</sup> states that globally, one in two people are ageist against older people. 11 years ago, a Canadian survey<sup>2</sup> of 1,500 adults already found that 80% of survey respondents believed seniors age 75 and older were seen as less important and were more ignored than younger generations, while 63% of respondents age 66 and older said they had been treated unfairly because of their age.

Ageism is a pervasive force, manifesting through stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination based on age and a personal and systemic level. It has deeply permeated the fabric of our society, posing significant threats to the human rights, health, and well-being of older people. This issue demands urgent attention and action to protect the rights of older adults.

Seniors across all demographics are vulnerable to age discrimination. According to a report by the Forum of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors<sup>3</sup>, "there has been limited research conducted on ageism in Canada". Even less so for marginalized groups. According to the federal government's Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors<sup>4</sup>, seniors who are newcomers/immigrants, disabled and/or LGBTQ face additional barriers to social inclusion. Meanwhile, the National Seniors Council has included gender as a risk category because women live longer. A critical gap emerges from the omission of intersectionality and equity in discussions on elder abuse and gender-based violence against older adults (American Society on Aging<sup>5</sup>). The compounded inequality affecting individuals who are marginalized due to age and its intersection with race, gender, sexual orientation, (dis-)ability, economic status, religion, and other social identities cannot be overlooked. This intersectionality magnifies the isolation experienced by marginalized older adults, leading to higher rates of discrimination and violence.

Governmental programs and policies add to these challenges, frequently neglecting the distinct needs of older adults. Research reveals that a substantial percentage (87%) of seniors feel neglected in program design, with an alarming 78% reporting experiences of complaints being dismissed as an inevitable part of aging<sup>6</sup>. This resulting sense of invisibility contributes significantly to the prevalence of discrimination and the lack of equality afforded to older adults.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://cnpea.ca/images/who\\_globalreportageism\\_en\\_2021.pdf](https://cnpea.ca/images/who_globalreportageism_en_2021.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://ifa.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Revera-IFA-Ageism-Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/national-seniors-council/programs/publications-reports/2014/social-isolation-seniors/page05.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://generations.asaging.org/equity-framework-elder-abuse>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ifa.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Revera-IFA-Ageism-Report.pdf>

The manifestation of discrimination against older adults often takes the form of social exclusion, rendering them invisible in society. Professions like health care and law, critical for addressing the unique needs of seniors, often lack specialized focus on older persons. Consequently, older individuals find themselves marginalized and underserved, which contributes further to their social exclusion, and to negative outcomes for their safety, and economic, physical and mental well-being.

Compounding this lack of equality is the deficiency in clear guidance on fulfilling equality and non-discrimination obligations towards older adults, as has been noted by HelpAge International in their submission<sup>7</sup>. This absence of visibility, not only regarding one's experiences as an aging individual but also about specific elements of an effective guarantee of non-discrimination and equal participation for older persons creates vulnerabilities and gaps in protections and undermines older people's right to equal treatment.

Addressing these challenges necessitates the establishment of a UN convention protecting older persons' rights under international law. Such a convention would serve as a crucial anti-discrimination tool to combat ageism, reinforcing that older individuals are fully-fledged human beings, deserving of equal rights. This proactive approach is essential for rectifying the current gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and promoting a society that values and respects the dignity of every individual, regardless of age<sup>8</sup>. Research illustrates that current UN Conventions (i.e., for women, children, persons with disabilities) have positively changed the lives of recipients by providing a universal position and legally binding protection.

## **Violence, neglect and abuse**

### Prevalence and types of abuse

Elder abuse is the most damaging and harmful consequence of ageism. Ageism renders older adults who experience abuse invisible<sup>9</sup>.

It is estimated that at least 1 in 10 older person experiences one form or more of abuse every year<sup>10</sup> though the abuse remains largely under reported. A 2015 Canadian prevalence study<sup>11</sup> reported that in 81% of reported abuse, it was a spouse, family member, friend, neighbour, or acquaintance causing the harm.

Mistreatment can manifest as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, violation of rights and freedom (the interference of the older adult's ability to make choices, which are protected under law), systemic violence / structural violence (rules, regulations, policies, or

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<sup>7</sup> [https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/documents/Intersessional%20Events/NGOs/HelpAge\\_OEWGA%20questionnaire.pdf](https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/documents/Intersessional%20Events/NGOs/HelpAge_OEWGA%20questionnaire.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/610bfbe35920f747f490fc40/t/6115581a3e152f0a6fc59c3e/1628788762675/Why\\_We\\_Need\\_A\\_United\\_Nations\\_Convention.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/610bfbe35920f747f490fc40/t/6115581a3e152f0a6fc59c3e/1628788762675/Why_We_Need_A_United_Nations_Convention.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [CNPEA, 2023 Ageism position statement](#)

<sup>10</sup> Elder abuse prevalence and risk factors: findings from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging. Burnes, D., Pillemer, K., Rosen, T. et al.),

<sup>11</sup> Into The Light: National Survey On The Mistreatment Of Older Canadians 2015, National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly <https://cnpea.ca/images/canada-report-june-7-2016-pre-study-lynnmcdonald.pdf>

social practices that harm or discriminate against older adults). Multiple forms of abuse and neglect can occur at once.

During the global pandemic, we witnessed many examples of abhorrent neglect and physical abuse<sup>12</sup> in long-term care across Canada, where residents were neglected, unwashed, dehydrated and starved, leading to death. However, mistreatment, neglect and violation of rights were an issue in long-term care settings, long before Covid-19. The pandemic only served to expose the shocking truth about the harm that older adults in Canada continue to experience. A wide majority of older adults live at home, in the community, where they too experience abuse and neglect. Most available data on elder abuse concerns community settings.

Prevalence of mistreatment of older populations is transversal, across all social arenas/domains, socio-economic and ethno-cultural populations. Intersectionality of age with other factors such as gender, race, ability, economic status, sexual orientation etc., often lead to increased vulnerabilities to abuse in later life. Ageist stereotypes compounded by other intolerances and 'isms' increase the likelihood that older adults not only fall prey to violence and abuse, but that their ability or access appropriate care and/or supports are significantly diminished and their marginalization increased.

Marginalized older adults report having access to fewer resources and adequate support services, resulting in poorer health, increased economic difficulties and significant impacts to their quality of life.

#### Violence against older women

Older women are particularly harmed - Indigenous women, women living in rural communities, immigrant women, and women with disabilities and 2SLGBTQ+ women and gender diverse people are at greater risk for violence, abuse and neglect.

Despite progress on gender equality, the failure to achieve societal level change to economic and social systems is shockingly clear as women age. Structural violence and functional misogyny experienced by women worsens as they age, reinforced by gendered ageism. In their 50s and 60s, women start to lose ground as they are perceived to be less valuable, less competent, and invisible. These structural injustices seed the ground for increased vulnerability to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Intersections with race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, status pile on additional inequities. Femicides of older women are rising<sup>13</sup>: between 2018 and 2020, older women represented about 1/3 of all women and girls killed by violence in Canada.

Bias against older women is structured into research, service sectors and funding opportunities. Older women have not been included in global gender-based violence research studies beyond age 49<sup>14</sup>. In Canada there is no dedicated sector to support older victims/survivors of violence. Older women are not even included in the Federal National Action Plan on gender-based violence.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/military-report-details-horrifying-conditions-at-two-toronto-long-term-care-homes-1.5422006>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.femicideincanada.ca/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/neglect-abuse-violence-older-women.pdf>

## Data

Overall, data on abuse and neglect of older persons at all levels is sparse and referred to as “*the invisible crime*”. There are multiple challenges to data gathering:

- Gaps and inconsistencies in definitions and reporting mechanisms across sectors and jurisdictions.
- Ageism renders older adults and their struggles as invisible. Incidents of abuse go unnoticed, misinterpreted as “signs of aging” or simply dismissed, often in healthcare settings.
- Significant factors contributing to underreporting: victims experience stigma and shame; lack of services or awareness of them; fear that reporting may get a loved one/care provider into trouble; fear of a drastic change to one’s lifestyle, or autonomy (losing one’s home, or); or distrust/fear of law enforcement and the legal system.

From the start of the pandemic the rates of family violence and gender-based violence have skyrocketed, fueled by social isolation, increased time spent at home often with one’s abuser. Again, this has especially affected older women.

Statistics Canada put out a new report<sup>15</sup> (October 2022) about rates of police reported family and intimate partner violence. The section on older adults 65+, highlighted a general increase of reported violence against older adults over the past decade, especially since the pandemic.

- Since 2009, family violence against seniors has increased by 37%
- In 2021, family violence against seniors was 8% higher than in 2020 and 14% higher than before the pandemic in 2019.
- Women accounted for nearly 57% of older victims.

The data available does not provide a fulsome picture of this issue. Data about cultural minorities, older LGBTQ people and people with physical or cognitive disabilities is limited. Limited studies specific to abuse in rural/remote areas, makes it difficult to understand what is occurring.

A recent report<sup>16</sup> published by Dr. Marie Beaulieu for Justice Canada, outlines key challenges to data collection with recommendations to improving it. There are four specific objectives regarding data collection practices on abuse and neglect:

1. obtain information on the challenges and gaps;
2. document the differences between abuse and neglect;
3. design pragmatic approaches to successful research/data collection; and
4. identify important data points to collect.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221019/dq221019c-eng.htm>

<sup>16</sup> [https://cnpea.ca/images/enhancementofdatacollection\\_beaulieureport\\_eng.pdf](https://cnpea.ca/images/enhancementofdatacollection_beaulieureport_eng.pdf)

## Right to work and access to labour market

In the workplace, age bias negatively impacts mature workers' engagement, wellbeing, and continued workforce participation. Employers are among the most commonly identified sources of age discrimination (along with younger people, health care professionals, and government policies).

Incidences of professional training declines with age. Older workers have lower participation in job-related training, and a similar trend emerges<sup>17</sup> for employer-supported training among those age 55-64 compared to those age 25-54 (Statistics Canada). This may be due to perceived barriers to training among older workers such as confidence, interest, motivation. Many older employees also report being overlooked for training, new opportunities, or promotions, because they are perceived as less valuable than younger employees, too slow, inflexible, or out of touch. Slowly they are pushed to the side or pushed out. This is another form of discrimination that leads to negative economic outcomes for older people, as well as increased mental health challenges and social isolation.

Social isolation is often defined as a low quantity and quality of contact with others with few mutually rewarding relationships. It is linked to the undervaluing of seniors in our society and leads to the loss of seniors from the volunteer sector and the paid economy.

A new report<sup>18</sup> by the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) examined numbers from Statistics Canada and highlights a shortage of entrepreneurs in Canada (less than half the rate from twenty years ago). Numerous studies have indicated that successful entrepreneurs are often older ones. Older entrepreneurs have skills, resources and experience that can enrich and dynamize the sector, yet they are not engaged or supported to do so, with focus tightly pointed at supporting younger entrepreneurs.

As CNPEA identified in its pan Canadian strategy for elder abuse prevention, Future Us<sup>19</sup> that many employers, across sectors, are already working toward greater equity and have prioritized the need to root out all forms of discrimination in their operations, policies and procedures. Ageism prevention and pro-active age-inclusivity, as well as elder abuse prevention, should be included in education, professional development, and policy review.

There is also federal and regional legislation that identifies workplace violence and harassment as workplace hazards and employers are responsible to protect the safety of all workers.

. Stereotypes about older adults can create barriers to recognizing warning signs of harassment, violence, or discrimination that older staff may be experiencing.

The National Seniors Council asserts that the social isolation of seniors can cause communities to suffer from a lack of social unity, higher social costs, and the loss of the wealth of experience that older people bring to our neighbourhoods, communities, and workplaces.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-001-x/2012002/article/11652-eng.htm>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bdc.ca/en/about/analysis-research/entrepreneurship-skills>

<sup>19</sup> [www.futureus.cnpea.ca](http://www.futureus.cnpea.ca)

Excluding older persons from professional training and work opportunities on the basis of their age is a form of discrimination. It infringes on their right to work and to fully participate in social and economic life, creating additional financial and social vulnerabilities and increasing their overall risk for mental and physical health challenges and for abuse.

## **Social Inclusion**

People of all ages need to be safe, to belong, to be valued and respected, to have a sense of purpose and to have opportunity to contribute to society. Individuals with strong social relationships are more likely to live longer than individuals with poor social relations<sup>20</sup>.

The UN finds<sup>21</sup> that ageism leads to social isolation, poorer health, earlier deaths and costs to economies in the billions.

The nexus between social inclusion and the overall well-being of older individuals involves a complex interplay of risk and protective factors, unique challenges faced by specific demographic groups such as older adults, and the overarching influence of societal attitudes, often precipitated by ageism. Ageism emerges as a significant factor influencing social inclusion and a root cause of social isolation.

The Global Report on Ageism highlights how ageism diminishes the quality of life for older persons, fostering social isolation and loneliness. Addressing ageist attitudes becomes pivotal in cultivating an inclusive society that values and respects the contributions of older people, especially considering that the consequences of social isolation are profound and far-reaching.

Reduced social participation and contact contribute to emotional distress, with ramifications extending to lower general well-being, an increased chance of premature death, depression, poor mental health, reduced quality of life, and caregiver burden<sup>22</sup>. Socially isolated seniors cannot fully participate and contribute to their communities, resulting in a loss for organizations and society. Research, such as the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging, reinforces the critical role of social inclusion in the well-being of seniors. The study recognizes social isolation as a risk factor for poor health and reduced overall well-being. Moreover, evidence from other research highlights that individuals with strong social relationships tend to live longer (e.g., Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015), emphasizing the life-affirming benefits of fostering social connections among older persons. Being socially active and involved in one's community is a preventive factor against elder abuse.

Risk factors for social isolation and loneliness often overlap with those for elder abuse. These include being age 80 or older, having compromised health status, living on low income, and lacking awareness of or familiarity with community services.

Other identity characteristics, intersecting with age, lead to additional challenges. For instance, language barriers for immigrant older adults (challenges related to English or French proficiency),

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<sup>20</sup> Holt-Lunstad, J. et al. (2015). "Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-analytic Review." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10.2: 227–237

<sup>21</sup> <https://social.desa.un.org/sdn/ageism-is-a-global-challenge>

<sup>22</sup> <https://helpagecanada.ca/resources/social-isolation-and-loneliness/>

and dependence on family members to obtain sponsorship or citizenship, further compound the difficulties they face. These complexities underscore the importance of tailoring social inclusion initiatives to account for the diverse needs of the older population. In shaping policies and interventions, it is imperative to recognize social isolation as a critical consideration across various policy areas linked to seniors. This acknowledgment underscores the need for a dedicated focus on social inclusion in its own right.

Addressing the multifaceted nature of social inclusion for older persons requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. By recognizing shared risk factors, understanding the unique challenges older adults face, challenging ageist attitudes, and prioritizing social inclusion across various policy domains, society can work towards fostering environments that celebrate the contributions of seniors and ensure their overall well-being.

A United Nations convention protecting the rights of older persons under international law would be instrumental in addressing these challenges. Such a convention can act as a global framework, guiding nations in developing policies that prioritize social inclusion, combat ageism, and ensure the well-being of older individuals. The convention would foster a global culture that celebrates and respects the participation and contributions of older people<sup>23</sup>.

## **II- Options on how best to address the gaps**

### **1. Please state how your government/organization has engaged with international and regional human rights mechanisms (for example: universal periodic review (UPR) treaty bodies, special procedures, regional mechanisms), specifically with regard to older persons. (500 words)**

CNPEA has submitted reports and statements to a wide range of international human rights mechanisms, as well national outfits including:

- the Human Rights Council;
- the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons;
- The House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
- The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women

### **2. Have those engagement resulted in positive impact in strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons? Please elaborate. (500 words)**

In her recent report on violence against and abuse and neglect of older persons<sup>24</sup>, the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons examined the different manifestations of abuse in older age and reviewed prevention and protection measures. Ms. Mahler noted that violence against older persons remains overlooked and is not a priority at the national, regional or global levels. International human rights law currently lacks a clear and

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<sup>23</sup> [2022 CNPEA position statement on the rights of Older Adults](#)

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2023/report-violence-abuse-and-neglect-older-persons>

comprehensive prohibition of age discrimination. The lack of a prohibition of age discrimination allows for unfair, discriminatory treatment of older people to be tolerated to this day. There are also no specific provisions in the current human rights framework addressing elder abuse and neglect, the unique challenges and risks faced by older persons, or multiple grounds for unequal treatments. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, developed over 20 years ago, remains the main international policy addressing the protection of older persons but is not a legally binding document.

The United Nations, Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) and Sustainable Development Goals have proven to be positive steps in the right direction, putting forward targets and strategies supporting the well-being, safety and inclusion of older adults -such as age-friendly communities- which can serve as effective measures of prevention and protection.

In Canada, Government initiatives to invest in better data collection and establish new offences and penalties in the *Criminal Code* related to elder abuse have been announced for several years but significant steps forward have yet to be made. The 2022 National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence made no mention of violence against older women. There is currently no federal strategy to address elder abuse in Canada, and no specific crime of elder abuse in the *Criminal Code*. In 2022, CNPEA released its own pan Canadian engagement strategy to increase elder abuse prevention. The Future Us strategy<sup>25</sup> presents recommendations for individuals, communities and government to achieve three overarching goals:

- Make elder abuse a priority in every community,
- Develop and support elder abuse prevention networks at the local, Provincial/Territorial and national levels,
- Teach everyone to recognize warning signs of abuse and neglect, how to respond safely and effectively and where to refer in the community to find help.

Future Us also recommends aligning with international initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Decade of Healthy Aging and calling for a UN Convention on the human rights of older people.

The absence of a comprehensive, international, legally binding instrument prevents the international community from truly addressing the challenges facing older persons, including abuse and neglect. A dedicated instrument on the human rights of older persons would help keep a sustained focus on older people and on ageism, provide guidance for regional bodies, and hold states accountable for protecting and promoting the rights of their older citizens.

### **3. What other options can be considered to strengthen the protection of older persons? Please elaborate. (500 words)**

States should ratify and implement regional conventions, strategies and laws that specifically address and protect the human rights of older adults, recognize the diversity of this group, and pointedly address ageism, age discrimination and elder abuse and neglect.

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<sup>25</sup> [www.futureus.cnpea.ca](http://www.futureus.cnpea.ca)

Older persons, in their broad diversity, should be meaningfully consulted and involved in the development of these strategies and laws to ensure that their needs and priorities are understood and addressed appropriately.

Increased focus and funding should support scaled up efforts toward elder abuse and ageism prevention. The WHO's Global Report on Ageism highlights three key effective strategies to reduce ageism: policy and law; educational interventions and intergenerational contact interventions. and elder abuse.

In Canada, the recent policy report on elder abuse<sup>26</sup> published by APPTA, AGE-WELL's National Innovation Hub, in collaboration with CNPEA, makes the following five key recommendations:

- **Sustained funding for prevention networks and response organizations:** these organizations play a crucial role in public education and community coordination.
- **Establishing federal, provincial and territorial seniors advocate offices:** these agencies play an important in oversight and leadership on issues involving older adults, including elder abuse and neglect.
- **Amendments to legislation to protect all older adults:** explicitly include abuse of older adults; and amend the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) to clearly define mental capacity and abuse of older adults. Training and education about abuse of older adults for those who enforce and practice law is also recommended.
- **Improved reporting and standardized data:** The adoption of a life-course approach is recommended, as well as collecting disaggregated data that allows analyses taking into account marginalized, racialized and gendered older adults, and minimizing gaps in data collection across populations.
- **Improved awareness and education to combat ageism**

Canada can honour and further its leadership in elder abuse prevention by:

**Ensuring that future research, education, and interventions are developed with an inclusive, community-engaged and community-led framework** to properly address the systemic issues facing many older adults.

**Providing sustained funding** to support meaningful and accessible wraparound services, cross sectoral training, and a sturdy elder abuse prevention infrastructure throughout the country.

**Leading and supporting a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.** Elder abuse is a clear and egregious violation of the basic human rights of Canadian citizens. We continue to strongly encourage Canada to lead the way internationally and to strengthen the human rights of Older Canadians. Systemic change requires the adoption of a new legal instrument and framework at the international level.

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<sup>26</sup> [https://agewell-nih-appta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ELDER-ABUSE-REPORT\\_FINAL\\_Nov20.pdf](https://agewell-nih-appta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ELDER-ABUSE-REPORT_FINAL_Nov20.pdf)

#### 4. If applicable, what is your assessment on the protection of the human rights of older persons according to regional and international instruments? (500 words)

Human rights are the basic civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights and freedoms to which all people are entitled, including older adults without discrimination<sup>27</sup>. Yet, the ageist belief that individuals lose value as they get older is often still socially accepted and unchallenged<sup>28</sup>.

In principle, existing human rights instruments are supposed to apply to older persons just as much as younger ones. However, no one and no system is immune to ageism, and the interpretation and application of these instruments often overlooks older persons, their specific needs and human rights challenges. As such, existing human right treaties do not fully address these nor provide a robust framework to comprehensively protect the rights of older persons. A dedicated international human rights instrument would help enshrine those rights, include a specific provision on the elimination of ageism and age discrimination, and expand the discourse around aging to reflect the full human experience, needs, rights, and opportunities across the life course rather than focus on older adults as a growing “burden” on society or a health-care problem to be solved.

It is essential for a UN Convention of the rights of older persons to ensure that all fundamental rights and freedoms of older people are upheld and protected. A new convention would clarify States’ obligations towards older persons in all areas of life. It should specifically ensure to identify the role and impact of ageism and aim to address elder abuse and age discrimination. This will lead states to re-examine their policies and programs. It will also ensure a sense of accountability and create the necessary impetus to implement long-needed legal reforms nationally.

A UN convention on the rights of older persons will provide a universal, human-rights based framework to ageing and older persons, with an ethical, moral, and legal lens that has been so sorely lacking up until now. As our world population continues to age, it is high time we collectively recognize, celebrate, and uphold the value and rights of older people.

#### For more information

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<sup>27</sup> [2022 CNPEA position statement on the rights of Older Adults](#)

<sup>28</sup> [2022 CNPEA position statement on Ageism](#)