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## It's never too late A spotlight on sexual violence and older women

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### Housekeeping

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- Confidentiality
- Respect
- No such thing as a silly question
- Look after yourself - know your own limits
- Not a place for self-disclosure
- Questions
- Keep yourself on mute
- Turn off email alerts etc
- Child and pet-bombing is ok!

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## What do we do? SARSAS: Listening, Believing, Supporting



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## What do we mean by “older woman”?



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# Why 'older women'?

The Chilling Silence Project

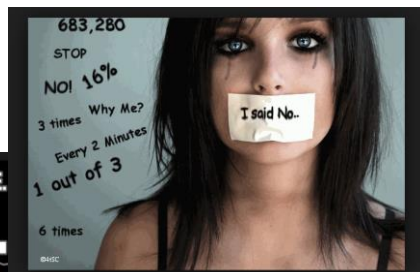
- Lack of representation of older women in campaigns
- Older women are under-represented in services, generally
- Lack of research in sexual violence against older women (SVAOW)
- 85,000 women and 12,000 men experience rape or sexual assault each year
- 1-3% of older women have experienced sexual violence
- 1 in 3 older women will have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime
- 33 women 55+ referred to SARSAS in the last year for recent sexual violence
- Women (of all ages) are over 3 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than men.



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## How do we talk about rape and sexual assault?



...one you leave behind  
Many sexual assaults could be prevented  
Stick together and don't let your friend leave with a stranger or go off on their own



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2015 – revenge pornography

1994 – marital rape

*“On the subject of marital rape, “more than a third of over-65s” do not consider forced marital sex rape, along with 16% of people aged 16 to 24.”*

Attitudes to Sexual Consent Research for the End Violence Against Women Coalition by YouGov December 2018

2015 – coercive control

2019 - upskirting



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QUIZ TIME



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## The Chilling Silence Project

What did we learn?

- Most common perpetrator – partner/ex-partner/spouse or an acquaintance
- The most common location of assault is the victim's home, followed by care home
- An assault is more likely to involve physical violence
- 32% didn't disclose to anyone
- 3% reported to the police
- 63% impact on mental/physical health
- 59% never accessed support
- 39% felt their experience wasn't "serious enough"
- Women were pleased that they were being asked about their experiences.



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## Barriers for older women disclosing or accessing support

- Dwindling support networks
- Physical mobility
- Fear of/previous experience of not being believed
- Rural isolation
- Not wanting to leave family home
- Fear of being put into care
- Reliance on perpetrator
- Increased shame and stigma
- Reduced cognitive ability
- Symptoms or disclosure misinterpreted as dementia
- Not recognising experience as abuse



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## Things were different “back then”

“Because you are older, you are considered.....to have got over something. It’s all about the young these days.”

“It appeared to be the way of the world then”

“happened often in the workplace in the 80’s – a different time then”

“in 1966, nobody talked about anything!”

“Those networks didn’t exist in my younger years”

“support was not available when I needed it”

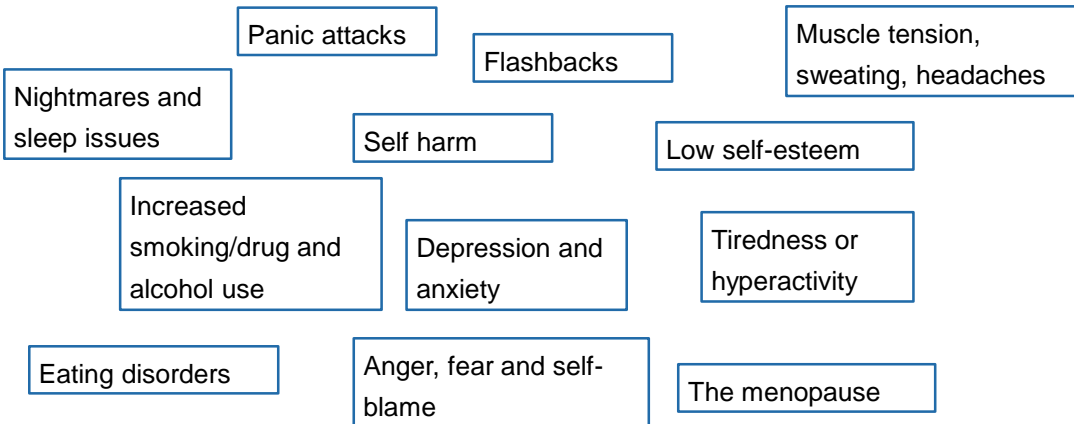


“At the time, years ago, I felt it was not named as what it was...it was down played”

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## The impact of sexual violence

### Trauma Symptoms



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## Signs to look out for

### Physical signs

- Unexplained bruising
- Cuts, bruises or bleeding in inner thighs or genitals
- Unexplained difficulty walking or sitting
- Problems urinating
- Complaints of pain/discomfort in intimate areas
- Damaged or missing clothing (e.g. underwear)

### Non-physical signs

- Anger
- Withdrawal
- Increased anxiety or startle response
- Increased levels of confusion
- Refusing help from a carer with intimate needs
- Trauma symptoms



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## The impact of Covid-19

Increase in violence against women and girls

Increased isolation for some older women

Change in the way we deliver support

Lack of oversight in care homes



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## What can I do?

Listen and believe

Find out more

Look out for signs and symptoms



Think about language

Challenge assumptions

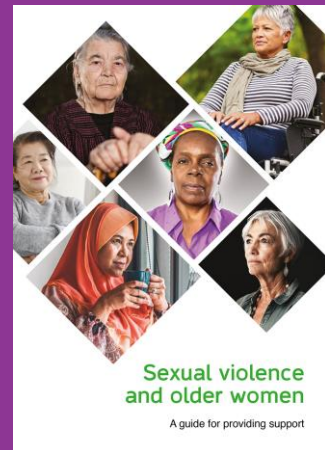
Ask the questions

Raise awareness



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## Don't forget to look after yourself!



It is absolutely okay  
to take time for self care.



you can't do things well  
if you don't feel well.

chibird.com!

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## Useful information

SARSAS Helpline  
0808 801 0456 or 0808 801 0464  
support@sarsas.org.uk

Rape Crisis England and Wales  
www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Age UK  
0800 169 8787  
www.ageuk.org.uk

Hourglass  
0808 808 8141  
www.wearehourglass.org

The Chilling Silence – sexual violence and  
older women  
www.sarsas.org.uk/olderwomen/

  
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Thank you for listening



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[www.sarsas.org.uk](http://www.sarsas.org.uk)

Any questions?



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