



# Impact of COVID-19 on Older Adults

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## DESCRIPTION

The COVID-19 pandemic causes untold fear and suffering for older people around the world. Mortality in the elderly can be even higher, as the virus spreads rapidly in developing countries and is likely to overwhelm health and social protection systems. Rejection of the health care services for conditions unrelated to the COVID-19; Neglect and abuse in facilities and long-term care facilities; Increased poverty and unemployment dramatic impact on well-being and mental health and trauma of stigma and discrimination. Efforts to protect the elderly should not overlook many variations within this category, their incredible resilience and positivity, and the multiple roles they play in society such as caregivers, volunteers and community leaders. We need to fully understand the human diversity of the older persons. For example, women are over represented both among the elderly and among paid and unpaid caregivers who care for them. We must also recognize the important contributions of older people, such as health care workers and caregivers, to crisis response. Each of us—States, businesses, international organizations, businesses, communities, friends and families all need to step up their efforts to help the elderly. We must always do everything we can to protect their rights and dignity. Throughout society, COVID-19 poses many specific risks to the older people. All age groups are at risk of being infected with COVID-19, but older people are at very high risk of death, serious illness develops after infection and people over the age of 80 die on average five times as often. An estimated 66% of people over the age of 70 have at least one underlying disease and are at increased risk of serious effects from COVID-19. Older people can also be discriminated against because of their age when making decisions about medical care, triage, and life-saving therapies. Global inequality means that even before COVID-19, up to half of the elderly in some developing countries did not have access to basic medical services. Pandemics can also lead to a reduction in critical services unrelated to COVID-19, further increasing the risk to life for the older persons. Some older people are currently facing

additional vulnerabilities. The epidemic of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities and institutions has had a devastating impact on the lives of the elderly, with disturbing reports pointing to cases of neglect and abuse. Elderly people who are quarantined or imprisoned by their families or caregivers may also be at increased risk of violence, abuse and neglect. Elderly people living in vulnerable situations such as refugee camps, informal settlements and prisons are particularly at risk, due to overcrowding, medical services, restricted access to water and sanitation and potential difficulties. In addition to this, older people are often among the caregivers who respond to the pandemic, increasing their risk of exposure to the virus. This is especially true for older home care workers, who are primarily women who care for the elderly, especially in situations where the health care system and long-term care provision are weak. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic vary by socio-demographic group. Older people are more likely to already have underlying illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or coexisting respiratory illness, which are now found to increase the risk of severe COVID-19 related mortality. In addition to this, the immune system can be weak, making it difficult for older people to fight the infection. As a result, the impact on the older adults is significant. Race is not biological, we know that it's not race itself that causes disparities in co-morbidities and in COVID outcomes it's the relationship between race and resources. If we had a society that was structured so that everyone had the same chance at health, we would not see the disparities we are seeing. A lot of the potential solutions to health disparities among older adults don't exist in the health care system itself they occur further upstream. Things like widening access to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, addressing food deserts, and supporting returning citizens in the workforce all relate directly to health, but we don't always think that way. First, if family caregivers have jobs that require them to be in regular contact with others, such as bus drivers or nurses, they may have to decide between not providing essential help to an older loved one and risking passing the virus to that person.

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