

I was deprived of my liberty
and a decent and meaningful life
for 18 months.

Who am I?



I am Vera, 72 years old, living in Croatia.

After I retired and my partner died, I moved to a residential care home. That was endurable up to a certain point, but COVID changed everything. My life suddenly turned into a horror story. They locked us in our rooms, put one chair in front of the door, brought our meals, knocked on the door, and left them on a chair. Later, they picked up the empty plates, without knocking. For one hundred and thirty days, I was treated like a prisoner sentenced to solitary confinement.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- Many nursing home residents across Europe experienced extreme isolation, which had negative effects on their mental and physical health.
- They were often denied visitors and their interactions with staff members were also limited.
- Vulnerable residents were frequently forced to stay in their rooms for prolonged periods with no opportunities to go outside or to access green spaces.



**Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?
How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?**



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question.
Picture: Manfred Antranas Zimmer via Pixabay.



This project has received funding from the EU Horizon2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101015990.

Despite my husband's severe health condition, I did not have any social or medical support.

Who am I?



I am Romina, 67 years old, living in Romania.

My husband has Alzheimer's disease, and I am his sole carer. My whole life revolves around caring for him. When he suddenly became very ill in 2021, I called an ambulance. When the medics arrived, they advised me not to send him to hospital. They said that going to hospital might be the end of him and that he was also likely to catch the virus. They also said that I would not receive any information or have any input regarding his treatment. In the end, I kept him at home and did my best to keep him alive and well. Thankfully, after a few weeks, he recovered.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- Older people, their families, and sometimes health professionals, feared that accessing health care settings greatly increased the risks of them catching COVID-19.
- Older people suffering from chronic illnesses became even more vulnerable as they lost their access to essential treatment.
- Families were often not allowed to visit their older relatives regularly. The lack of regular, face-to-face communication with the medical team negatively affected the way in which they could influence further treatment.



**Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?
How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?**



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question. Picture via rawpixel.

Isolated in the countryside,
I suffered from psychological
and financial abuse.

Who am I?



I am Nininha, 82 years old, living in Portugal.

When we moved to the countryside, my husband said it would only be for a short time and that we had to move because of financial issues, but I did not believe him. As time passed, he gave me lots of excuses about not moving back to the city. Then, when the pandemic started, everything got worse. He began to act increasingly strangely, even accusing me of behaving inappropriately with men. His behaviour brought me to the decision to leave him. I was upset with that prospect because I have nowhere to go, and I do not have money to live by myself.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- A lot of support for survivors of domestic violence moved online. However, older survivors often do not have adequate access to the Internet or sufficient digital skills.
- There are not enough places in shelters for survivors of domestic violence particularly for people over certain age.
- Services for survivors of violence are scarce in rural areas and survivors are more isolated.



Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?

How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question. Picture via canva pro.



This project has received funding from the EU Horizon2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101015990.

Not having a bank card prevented me from buying my bread.

Who am I?



I am Joseph, 65 years old, living in Luxemburg.

I used to go every morning to a local bakery, to buy my bread. But one morning I was told: "No sir, not cash, only card". I do not have a bank card, so that was a big problem for me during the pandemic. It is a big bakery, and the staff did not adapt to the needs of the customers.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- Many businesses across Europe stopped accepting cash and moved to card-only payments.
- Access to digital financial services is often limited for older people. The increasing use of digital banking has created barriers to financial independence, financial control, and management for many older people.
- This shift, combined with the restrictions on movements, affected vulnerable older people more severely as their access to purchasing basic products became limited.



**Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?
How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?**



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question.
Picture: rawpixel



This project has received funding from the EU Horizon2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101015990.

When the pandemic started,
my income stream ended.

Who am I?



I am Arita, 66 years old, living in the Netherlands.

Before the pandemic I earned a living as a professional singer. Because of events being cancelled I had no income. I thought that I would get help from the government, but I could not claim benefits because I had not earned enough pre COVID. I could have challenged this decision, but because I would have had to gather so much paperwork, I decided not to. In the end, I closed my business, and this led to me having to tap into my pension savings. That is now almost gone.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- Many people across different European countries did not receive adequate financial support to offset their financial losses resulting from the pandemic.
- Artists and self-employed people were particularly affected.
- Insufficient pension entitlements remain an important issue for many women reaching retirement age.



**Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?
How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?**



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question.
Picture: Connor Hall via Unsplash.

Balancing my work and caring responsibilities is a daily struggle.

Who cares for me?

Who am I?



I am Halina, 68 years old, living in Poland.

I am a lecturer and researcher at a university. My daughter who has mental health issues lives with me and I also care for my mother. Before the pandemic, two carers attended to my mother in my absence. But because of COVID-19 restrictions and the fear of contagion, I moved in with my mother and worked remotely. I pay a lot for my mother's care, and it is hard to source carers, especially for a bedridden person. Being a carer is difficult physically and mentally. I don't have time for my own life and needs. Some people are trapped between caring for parents and caring for children.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- Women are more likely than men to provide unpaid care for their relatives, including older members of their families.
- The travel restrictions during COVID forced home carers to drop their paid work abroad.
- With the aging of the population, more adult children who are reaching retirement age are juggling their own needs with looking after their parents. This has an impact on their rights to work and future pension rights.



Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?

How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question. Picture: Sabine van Erp from Pixabay.



I was not allowed to say
goodbye to my friend before
she died, how can I grieve?

Who am I?



I am Nina, 75 years old, living in Slovenia.

I used to visit my friend in her nursing home at least three times a month. But during the pandemic visits were stopped, so it was impossible to see her. She was in a room with another woman who tested positive for COVID-19. My friend was not moved from this room, and she caught COVID too. Eventually, the nursing home moved her to the hospital because her condition was so severe. She died after 2 days. Even when she was dying, they would not let me see her to say goodbye.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- Family and friends of senior citizens in nursing homes, who were often older people themselves, had no right to visit. In many countries, only one visitor was allowed per resident and visits were restricted with a perplex screen between people.
- Those who were infected with COVID-19 in their nursing home, or in hospital often died alone and their loved ones were not allowed to say their goodbye.
- Funerals were restricted to a limited number of family members.



**Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?
How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?**



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question. Picture via Canva Pro.

I haven't been able to see
a doctor for over 18 months.

Who am I?



I am Ken, 70 years old, living in the UK.

I have a heart condition, gout, and type 2 diabetes. Due to the pandemic, I had 8 cancelled appointments and my blood tests have been very irregular. I have not had an appointment about my diabetes for 18 months. It's a dire picture. Daily, I take 15 tablets and my drugs regime hasn't been reviewed since the pandemic began. I feel that because the health system is under pressure that I won't be seen unless it is urgent. Living alone has made me anxious as I am worried no one would find me if I became unwell.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- In many countries, regular treatments, elective surgeries, and diagnostic screenings were postponed.
- This was particularly an issue for those who could not afford screenings and treatment delivered through the private sector. Older patients were often among those who were the most affected.
- For many older patients, delayed diagnostics, and postponement of treatment, can have severe consequences.



**Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?
How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?**



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question.

Picture: CDC via Unsplash



This project has received funding from the EU Horizon2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101015990.

I don't understand why my age should dictate when I shop.

Who am I?



I am Tanya, 65 years old, living in Bulgaria.

During the pandemic I missed getting out and being able to see people. Isolating older people during this pandemic was truly unpleasant. There was a rule that elderly people could only do their shopping at certain times. When I went to the shop, and they asked me how old I was, I found this puzzling. A few times they did not allow me to buy groceries because it was not the time for me to be in the shop because of my age.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- Isolation and social distancing measures were particularly strict for older people, including restrictions of freedom of movement based on a fixed age limit and not on the reality of risks.
- Pandemic policies did not include older people in decision-making processes. The measures introduced were often imposed without consultation.
- The pandemic exposed and increased age-based inequalities with many older people experiencing discrimination daily.



**Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?
How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?**



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question.
Picture: Kaique Rocha via pexels.

I am not allowed to work anymore so how can I cope financially?

Who am I?



I am Tuulikki, 73 years old, living in Finland.

I'm retired, but before the pandemic I used to work whenever extra workers were needed in kindergartens. This ended when the pandemic began as they were hesitant to employ extra people who were over 70 years old. I feel that the media portrays middle or upper-class experiences, while the money problems that many people are facing are not discussed. Many COVID-19 related recommendations and restrictions cost money, such as buying face masks and ordering food deliveries online.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- Many older people, particularly women, rely on extra income and financial aid due to the insufficient income provided through the pension system.
- In many countries, inequalities between the high- and low-income households widened during the pandemic. This also affected many senior people.
- Before the pandemic, older workers often experienced discrimination at work. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, many found it even more difficult to get a job.



Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?

How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question. Picture: Andrew Khoroshavin via Pixabay.



How could we get out
and about without access
to public toilet facilities?

Who am I?



I am Magda, 75 years old, living in Slovenia.

I am an active person and enjoy traveling with my friends. But some of my female friends would not leave their houses because of the unavailability of toilets during the pandemic. Men can go to the toilet outside if they must, but women cannot. We put off a trip to a nearby lake because the bar there was closed due to COVID restrictions, and we knew that there was not another toilet nearby. Elderly women cannot go to the toilet in the nature, so it is easier to stay at home.



PUBLIC NOTICE Toilet's closed

West Oxfordshire District Council has taken the decision to close these toilets in response to the developing situation with Coronavirus.

We are sorry for the
inconvenience

healthmatic



24-hour helpline for enquires and comments: 01249 823143

The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- COVID-19 restrictions on movement and meetings highlighted the importance of access to adequate outdoor spaces.
- However, there was unequal access to public outdoor spaces, particularly for members of vulnerable groups, such as senior people or those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- The lack of facilities –including public toilets– has been recognized as one of the factors preventing some groups, such as older people, from accessing outdoor and green spaces.



Which rights do you think were
undermined in this case?

How can this be prevented in the
future, even in the absence of crises?



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question.
Picture: P L Chadwick.



This project has received funding from the EU Horizon2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101015990.

I was not allowed to have face-to-face interactions while grieving.

Who am I?



I am Julia, 73 years old, living in Belgium.

A year before the pandemic my husband died, and I lost my life companion. This took a huge toll on my mental health, and I am still processing his loss. To grieve properly, I reduced my social interactions during that time, only continuing my volunteer work and signing up with a grieving support group. About a month or two before Covid started, I slowly began to go out more again, but this all stopped when the pandemic broke out. The grieving support group did move online, but because a lot of the participants are on the older side we struggled to communicate via Zoom, and it was just not the same. I can handle a computer, but a lot of people my age in the [grieving] group don't really know how it works, so our online meetings went very slowly.



The rights of older people were frequently undermined during the pandemic:

- A lot of support services moved online, and while face-to-face interactions are now allowed, the shift to online provision of services was not completely reversed.
- Many older people adjusted to online interactions, however not all felt comfortable and many were excluded from access.
- For many, this has limited their access to information, health care and social support services, as well as curtailing contact with friends and relatives.

Which rights do you think were undermined in this case?

How can this be prevented in the future, even in the absence of crises?



Disclaimer: The real-life story presented in this card was collected through narrative interviews undertaken in the context of the RESISTIRÉ project in EU-27, Serbia, UK, Turkey and Iceland. The experiences shared by this respondent are not claimed to be representative of those of the general older population in the country in question. Picture: Tumisu via Pixabay.



This project has received funding from the EU Horizon2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101015990.