



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY (#WEAAD2025)

ADDRESSING ABUSE OF OLDER ADULTS IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES: THROUGH DATA AND ACTION

*INPEA/ UN DESA WEAAD
2025 Commemoration - A Virtual Event
Monday 16 June 2025, 1:15 - 2:45 p.m. ET*

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Long-term care (LTC) services were recognized by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as one of the emerging issues that the international community needs to act upon¹. Nursing homes, memory care units, and other institutional settings play a critical role in supporting older persons experiencing physical or cognitive decline, as well as those with care and support needs, yet they also present unique challenges. Meeting these challenges is critical when ensuring the protection of residents from abuse and neglect. Abuse of older persons in institutional settings, such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities, is often an unrecognized public health issue (www.un.org/development/desa/ageing).

¹ Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 7 June 2023, entitled "Fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002" (E/RES/2023/15)



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY (#WEAAD2025)

A World Health Organization (WHO)-led meta-study² from 2017 reviewed published studies that conducted long-term care staff interviews to address the difficulty of gaining access to and obtaining informed consent from nursing home residents. Researchers found that 62.2 per cent of those interviewed believed that in the past year, either they or other staff perpetrated physical, sexual, or psychological abuse and neglect against residents. Unsupervised residents, particularly those living with dementia, can also pose risks to co-residents who may require additional support³.

These data, collected in reports and studies, emphasize the pervasive nature of abuse in institutional settings and the need for continued data collection as well as evidence-based interventions that protect the human rights and dignity of residents. They also emphasize the need for training and support of staff working with and overseeing diverse resident populations. (Vračević, et al, 2025)⁴.

The United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) established action areas and enablers, with older persons at the centre, including combating ageism, collecting better global data on healthy ageing, developing cost-effective solutions, making an investment case, and raising funds⁵. Recognizing that older persons in long-term care facilities are especially vulnerable to abuse and neglect, WHO recommends strengthening oversight and regulation of long-term care facilities, promoting a culture of respect and dignity, and providing residents and their families with access to support systems⁶. These include information, advocacy, and legal support if they witness or experience abuse or neglect.

Implementing these recommendations can be both impactful and cost-effective. For example, with trained volunteers as part of Ombudsman programmes, care homes can ensure the availability of cost-effective access points⁷. Long-term care facility management can reduce

² Yongjie Yon and others, "Elder abuse prevalence in community settings: a systematic review and meta-analysis", *The Lancet Global Health*, vol.5, No.2 (2017), pp. 147–156.

³ Eilon Caspi, "Residents' fear of retaliation in America's nursing homes: an exploratory study", *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, vol. 43, No. 5 (2024), pp. 497–514.

⁴ Milutin Vracevic and others, "Compassion fatigue and satisfaction among frontline staff in long-term care facilities: psychometric properties of the Serbian version of the Professional Quality of Life Scale", *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, vol. 16 (2025), article 1479190.

⁵ <https://www.decadeofhealthyageing.org/>

⁶ Promoting quality management in long-term care: principles, key components and directions for policy action. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2024. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

⁷ Robert J. Brent, "Valuing the prevention of elder abuse", *Applied Economics*, vol. 47, No. 58 (2015), pp. 6362–6373.



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY (#WEAAD2025)

staff-caring stress with training and stress-reduction interventions. Governments collaborating with universities can expand knowledge about the prevalence and incidence of abuse in residential care settings through jointly developed research studies. Mandating the reporting of incidents to Government health departments and law enforcement can also promote knowledge, particularly if researchers have access to Government reports for analysis. Integrating palliative care into residential long-term care programmes helps ensure attention to end of life and pain management, supporting residents with chronic and life-threatening illnesses in realizing their right to health and living with dignity. Training all staff on the human rights of long-term care residents, drawing on applicable human rights principles and standards where they exist, can strengthen awareness and promote more respectful, person centred care and support.

The right to justice is another important human right that is not always observed in residential long-term care settings. Ensuring that residents and their families are made aware of complaint procedures, implementing resident-focused complaint handling, and providing access to an external advocate, such as a volunteer ombudsman, can lead to the realization of that right.

Women live longer but tend to be more marginalized and disadvantaged than men, leading to higher rates of poverty in old age⁸. Women are also overrepresented in long-term care facilities both as residents and as workers. Lack of resources can limit access to needed care for care-dependent older women and can also perpetuate poverty through the low wages of the long-term care workforce, which is largely female. Member States subsidizing the cost of care and support for residents at the poverty level and raising wages for long-term care workers could ensure the right to access for residents and fair wages for workers⁹.

⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Social Report 2023: Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World (New York, 2023).

⁹ International Labour Organization, World Social Protection Report 2014/15: Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice (Geneva, 2014).



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY (#WEAAD2025)

Alignment between staff levels and knowledge, and quality care is paramount. Supporting residents living with dementia in a way that upholds the right to safety requires specialized training for staff and a person-centred approach tailored to each individual. Because resident-to-resident harm is a known issue in long-term care settings, particularly in memory care units¹⁰, management and staff should implement both structural and behavioural measures to help ensure the safety and well-being of all residents¹¹.

Challenges of a universal unified data system for human rights violations in long-term care facilities for Member States are highlighted in both the thematic and country reports by the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Ms. Claudia Mahler¹². Her reports highlight that long-term care facilities in both developed and developing countries face deficiencies that can result in human rights violations against residents; however, as noted in her findings, developed countries tend to have more resources allocated to protection mechanisms, surveillance, and data reporting. This disparity exists despite the fact that many developing countries are experiencing population ageing at a faster pace than developed ones.

An important overarching recommendation for strengthening long-term care systems and standardizing data reporting globally is the elaboration of a legally binding instrument on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. A significant step in this process was taken by the Human Rights Council in April 2025 by adopting a resolution to establish an intergovernmental working group to draft a new legally binding international Convention¹³. This effort aims to create a comprehensive legal framework to combat age-based discrimination and ensure the full recognition and protection of human rights in older age across all settings.

In parallel, the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) provides a policy framework for strengthening national and regional action. The findings of the upcoming fifth global review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, commencing in 2026, will offer valuable insights into progress made and remaining gaps in the protection of older persons' rights, including in long-term care. These findings can serve to inform the elaboration of a legally binding instrument, helping to ensure alignment between normative advances and practical implementation on the ground.

¹⁰ Eilon Caspi, "Deaths as a result of resident-to-resident altercations in dementia in long-term-care homes: a need for research, policy, and prevention", *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association*, vol. 17, No. 1 (2016), pp.7-11.

¹¹ Anja Botngård and others, "Resident-to-resident aggression in Norwegian nursing homes: a cross-sectional exploratory study," *BMC Geriatrics*, vol.20 (2020), article 35.

¹² Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-older-persons/ms-claudia-mahler-independent-expert-enjoyment-all-human-rights-older-persons>

¹³ A/HRC/RES/58/13



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY (#WEAAD2025)

The Event

An expert panel will explore the often-overlooked issue of abuse and neglect in long-term care facilities, with a focus on protecting the rights, dignity, and safety of older persons. Panelists will discuss data, practical challenges, and human rights-based solutions to improve oversight, staff training, resident safeguards, and accountability in institutional care settings, drawing on global experiences and recent developments. The event will mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and highlight the urgent need for action across systems and settings.

THE EVENT

Monday, June 16, 2025
1:15 pm - 2:45 pm ET

An expert panel will explore the often-overlooked issue of abuse and neglect in long-term care facilities, with a focus on protecting the rights, dignity, and safety of older persons. Panelists will discuss data, practical challenges, and human rights-based solutions to improve oversight, staff training, resident safeguards, and accountability in institutional care settings, drawing on global experiences and recent developments. The event will mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and highlight the urgent need for action across systems and settings.

REGISTER

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/_SCRKOleT6ScGJCTnhL58Q](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/_SCRKOleT6ScGJCTnhL58Q)

The Provisional Programme

- Welcome remarks **Amal Abou Rafeh**, Chief of the Programme on Ageing Section, UN DESA and Permanent Co-Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing
- Moderator **Sara Salman**, Population Affairs Officer, UN ESCWA and 2025 Co-Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing
- Panel members **Natasa Todorovic**, MPH, INPEA Regional Representative, Europe
Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons
Lucia Vidovičová, Masaryk Univ | Faculty of Social Studies, INPEA Rep to Czech Republic
Wenche Malmedal, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Department of Public Health and Nursing NTNU, INPEA Rep to Norway
Eilon Caspi PhD, Gerontologist and Elder Mistreatment Researcher USA
Robert Brent, PhD, Fordham Univ NYC, LTC Ombudsman, USA, INPEA UN Representative
- Closing **Susan Somers**, President, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

For questions, please contact:

Susan Somers, President, INPEA sbsomers5@aol.com
Natasa Todorovic, INPEA natasa.nt.todorovic@gmail.com