



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**

COVID-19 AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE

A DANISH PERSPECTIVE

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DENMARK

Demography

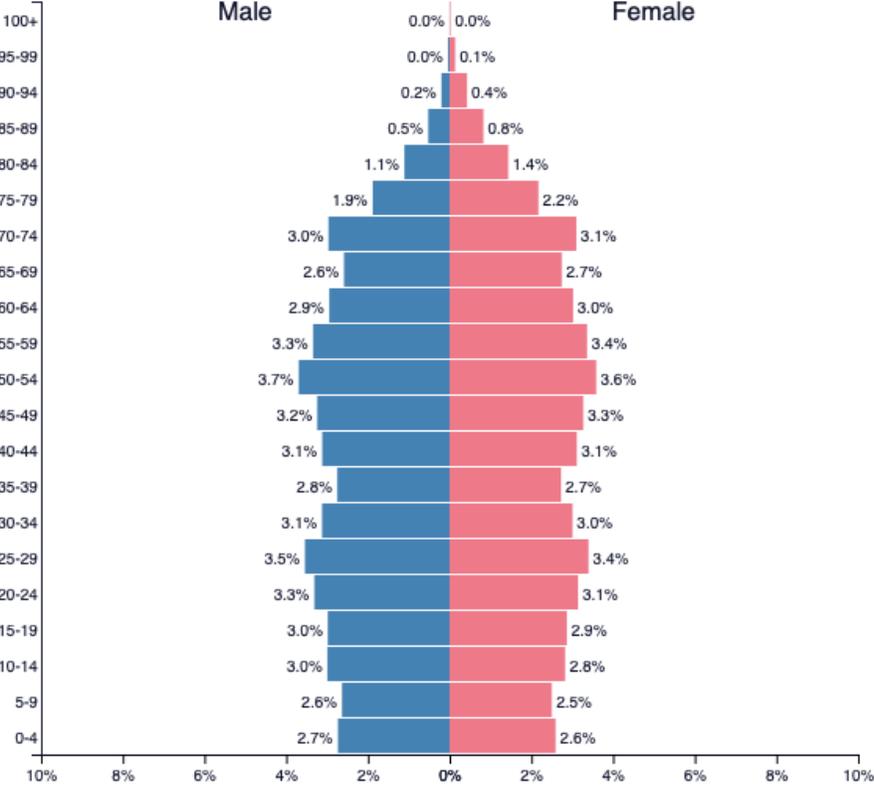
5.8 million people

Fertility rate: 1.8

Life Expectancy: 81.4

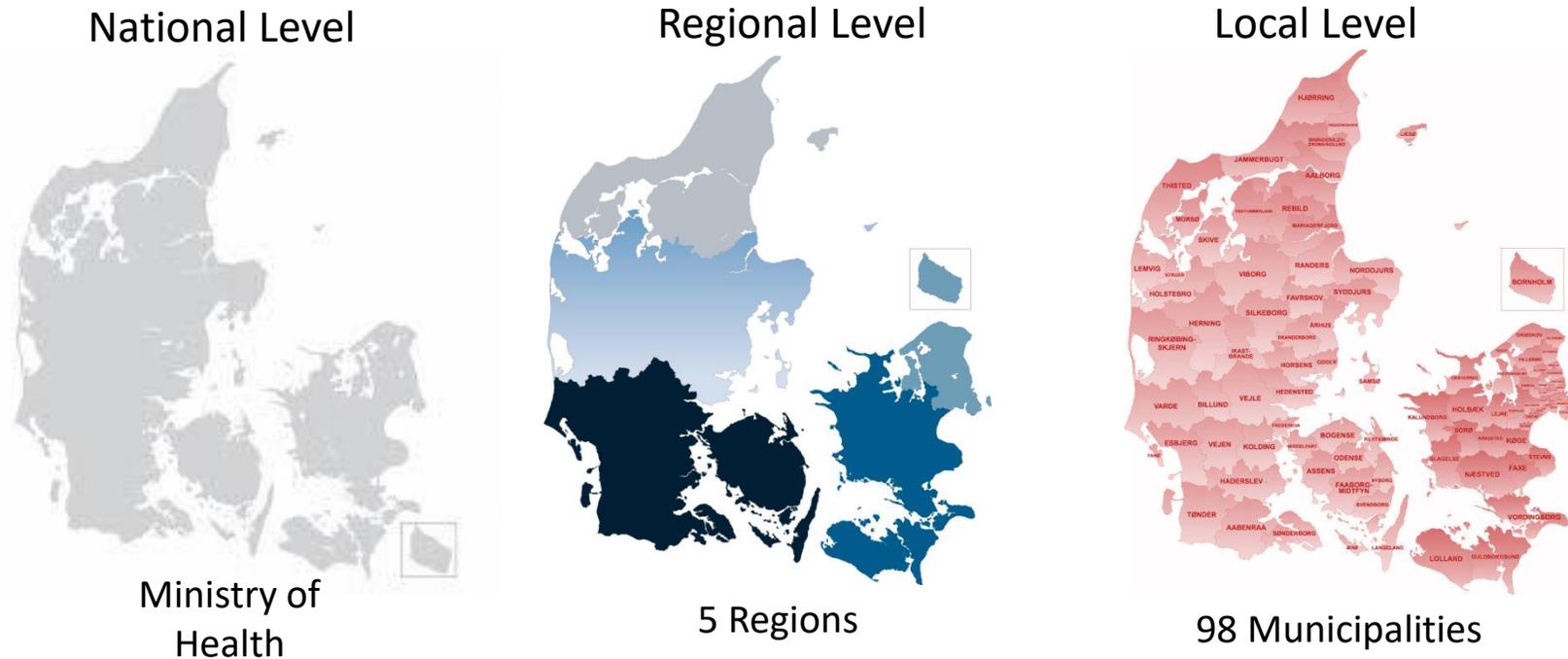
Females: 83.3

Males: 79.5



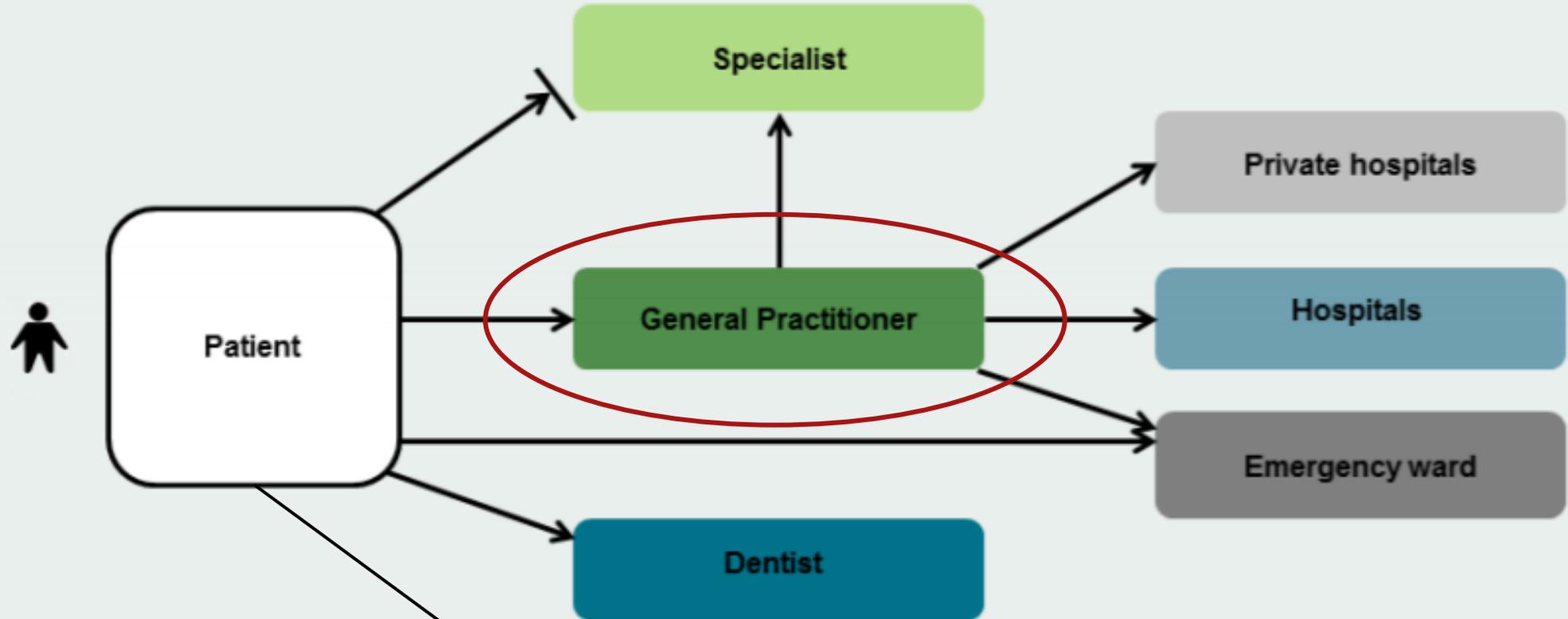
THE DANISH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Tax funded healthcare → free at the point of delivery incl. treatment for COVID-19



GENERAL PRACTITIONERS AS GATEKEEPERS

Access structure of the Danish healthcare system

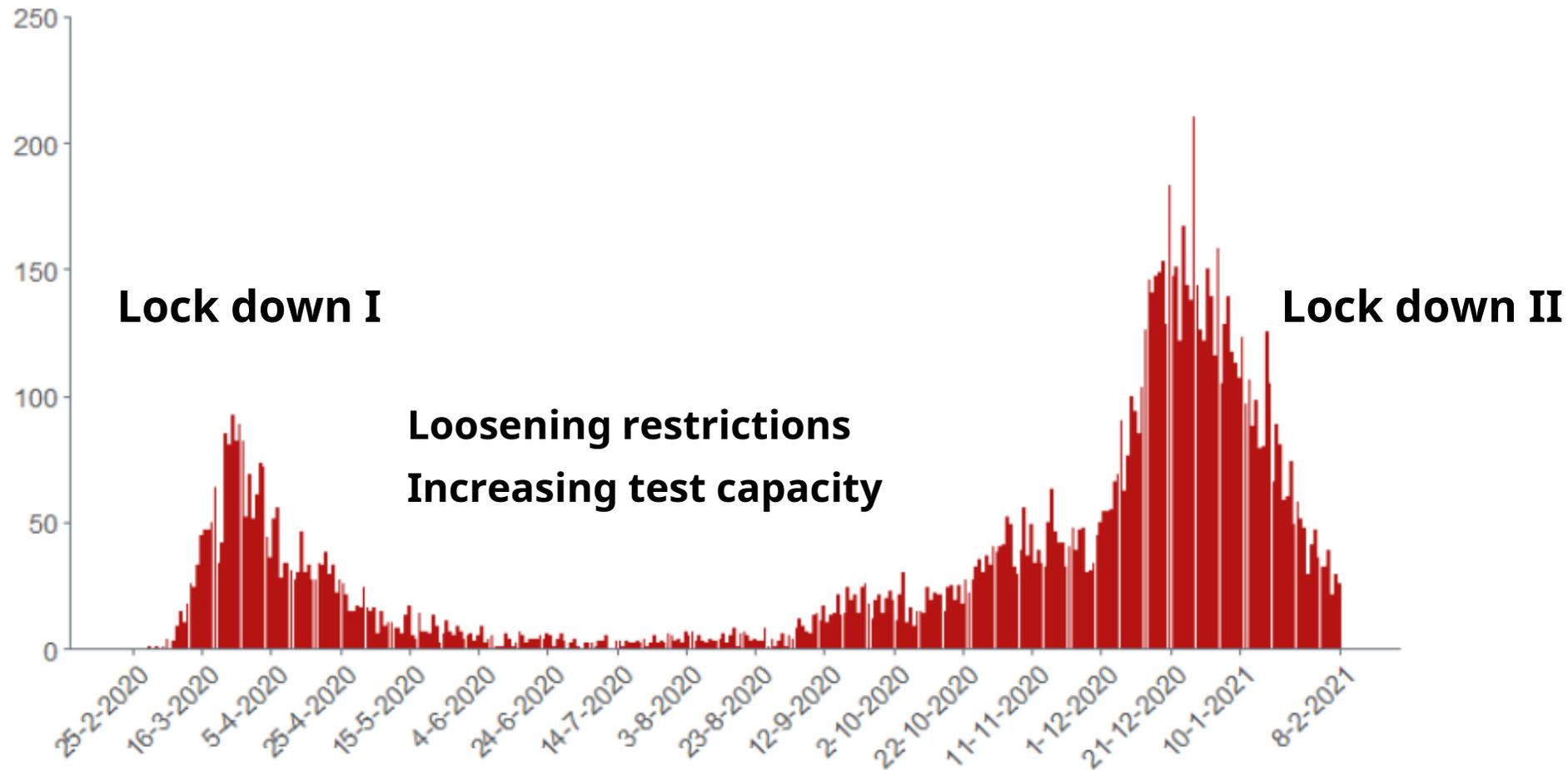


Covid-19 testing



GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO COVID-19

Hospitalisations according to date

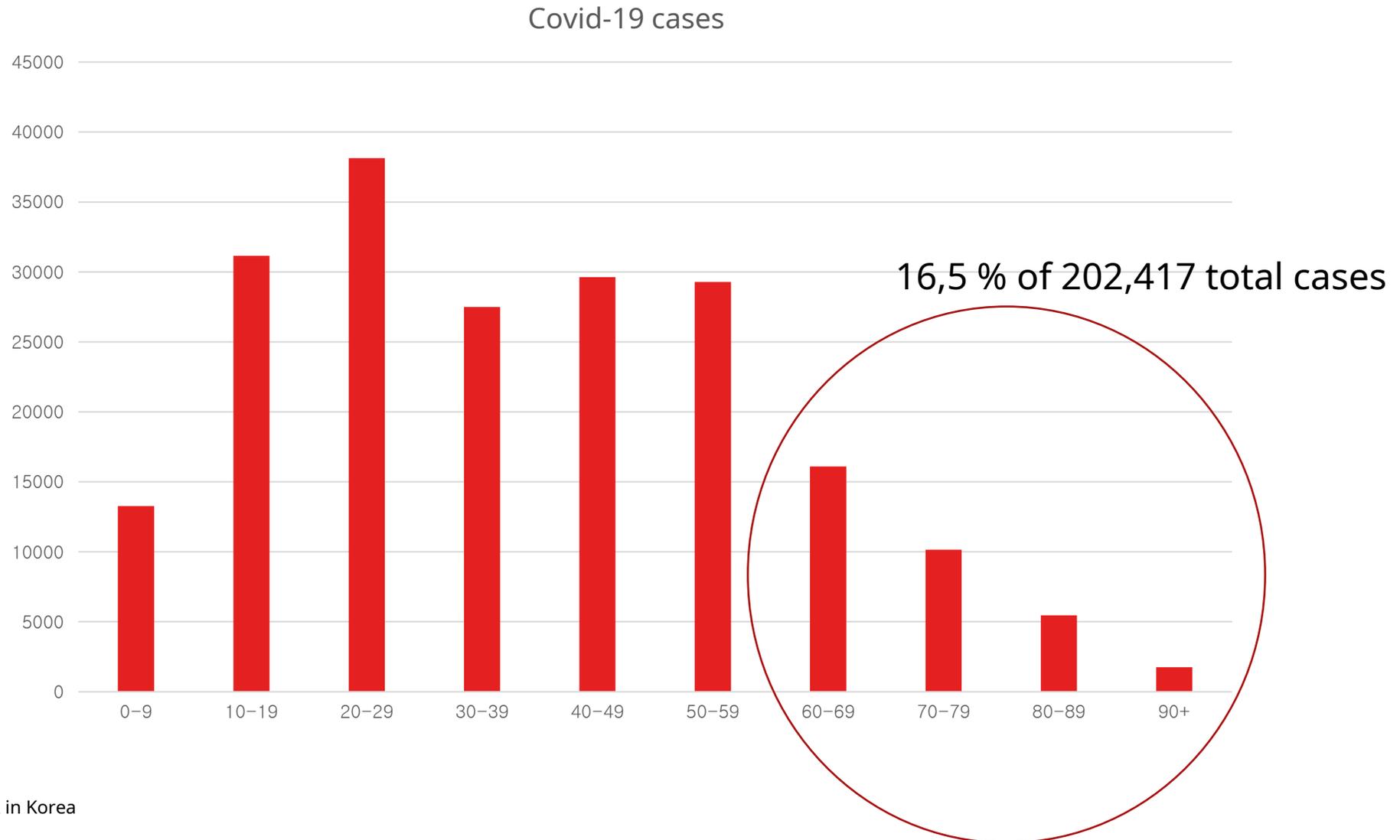


GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO COVID-19, FEBRUARY 2021

- Second 'lock-down'
- Further restrictions due to the fear of the mutated virus
- The level of risk has been raised from 4 to 5, the highest
- All stores, entertainment venues, cultural institutions, restaurants and cafes are closed (except grocery stores and pharmacies)
- All schools and universities are closed (except primary school)
- All workers but essential staff are sent home / advised to work from home
- People are advised to stay at home and not see friends nor family
- Assembly ban: Reduced from 10 to 5 people
- Social distancing rules in public spaces: Increased from one to two meters

CASES OF COVID-19 SINCE MARCH ACCORDING TO AGE

(FEBRUARY 10, 2021)



”CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE EU

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS: WITH A FOCUS ON OLDER PEOPLE”

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

- The rights to life and the rights to health

- Five specific challenges facing older persons during the pandemic in the EU:
 - 1. Systematic testing for COVID-19**
 - 2. Hospital triage**
 - 3. Specific restrictive measures affecting older people**
 - 4. Social isolation**
 - 5. Access to wider healthcare**

1. SYSTEMATIC TESTING FOR COVID-19

“CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE EU - FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS: WITH A FOCUS ON OLDER PEOPLE” European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

- High rates of deaths in nursing homes in all of Europe
- Human rights bodies and NGOs in the EU has called on establishing regular testing prioritizing staff and residents at care homes
- Some EU countries introduced national strategies for systematic testing, while Denmark primarily has relied on regional coordination
- Until June, Denmark only tested staff and residents in care homes when a case was detected
- Regular testing of staff at nursing homes is now required, and residents moving into nursing homes or returning from hospital are also being tested

2. DISCRIMINATION CONCERNS IN HOSPITAL TRIAGE

“CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE EU - FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS: WITH A FOCUS ON OLDER PEOPLE” European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

- Tremendous pressure on national health systems and medical staff facing difficult choices about prioritizing treatment in light of scarce resources
- Most EU countries did not stipulate age as a decisive criterion and issued national guidelines stressing the importance of equal access to healthcare
- A few exceptions in EU countries have been reported focusing on a patient's age as a key criterion when prioritizing life-saving treatment
- Some EU countries also reported that older people in residential care struggled to access healthcare and treatment in hospitals

3. SPECIFIC RESTRICTING MEASURES AFFECTING OLDER PEOPLE

“CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE EU - FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS: WITH A FOCUS ON OLDER PEOPLE” European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

- At the onset of the pandemic, many EU countries put in place specific restrictive measures – or recommendations – targeting older persons
- In Denmark: No restrictions specifically targeting the older people
- However, Denmark introduced initiatives to meet older persons’ basic needs like all other EU countries e.g. help with grocery shopping, technology, illness, quarantine, getting to the doctor etc.
- Continued isolation restrictions of older people, while not mandatory, could raise concerns about discrimination if they apply for an indefinite period

4. SOCIAL ISOLATION

“CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE EU - FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS: WITH A FOCUS ON OLDER PEOPLE” European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

- Physical distancing requirements has posed particular challenges to older persons, many of whom live alone and may face digital challenges
- Complete lockdown of nursing homes: Banning of visits
- Deprivation of the individual right to freedom and to deciding over your own home and family relations due to COVID-19 safety measures
- While many countries in Europe have made restrictions on nursing homes, most countries have made exceptions making it possible for relatives to visit
- Quality of life in a HR perspective: Adding years to life or life to years?

5. ACCESS TO WIDER HEALTHCARE SERVICES

“CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE EU - FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS: WITH A FOCUS ON OLDER PEOPLE” European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

- The challenge of ensuring access to health services and medical treatment while treating patients with COVID-19 and containing the outbreak
- Online consultations with general practitioners in Denmark
- Regular care and treatment at hospitals postponed → greater impact on the elderly that have medical conditions requiring treatment
- No visitors allowed at hospitals
- Home-care services significantly reduced
- Older people with dementia has suffered from reduced basic services in addition to the fact that they have a higher risk of contracting covid-19

INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE ELDERLY IN LOCK-DOWN

- Initiatives to help the elderly with grocery shopping and medication
- Guidance and psychological support
- Digital visits and phone service specifically targeted older persons e.g. “Phone friends”

Ældre @Sagen



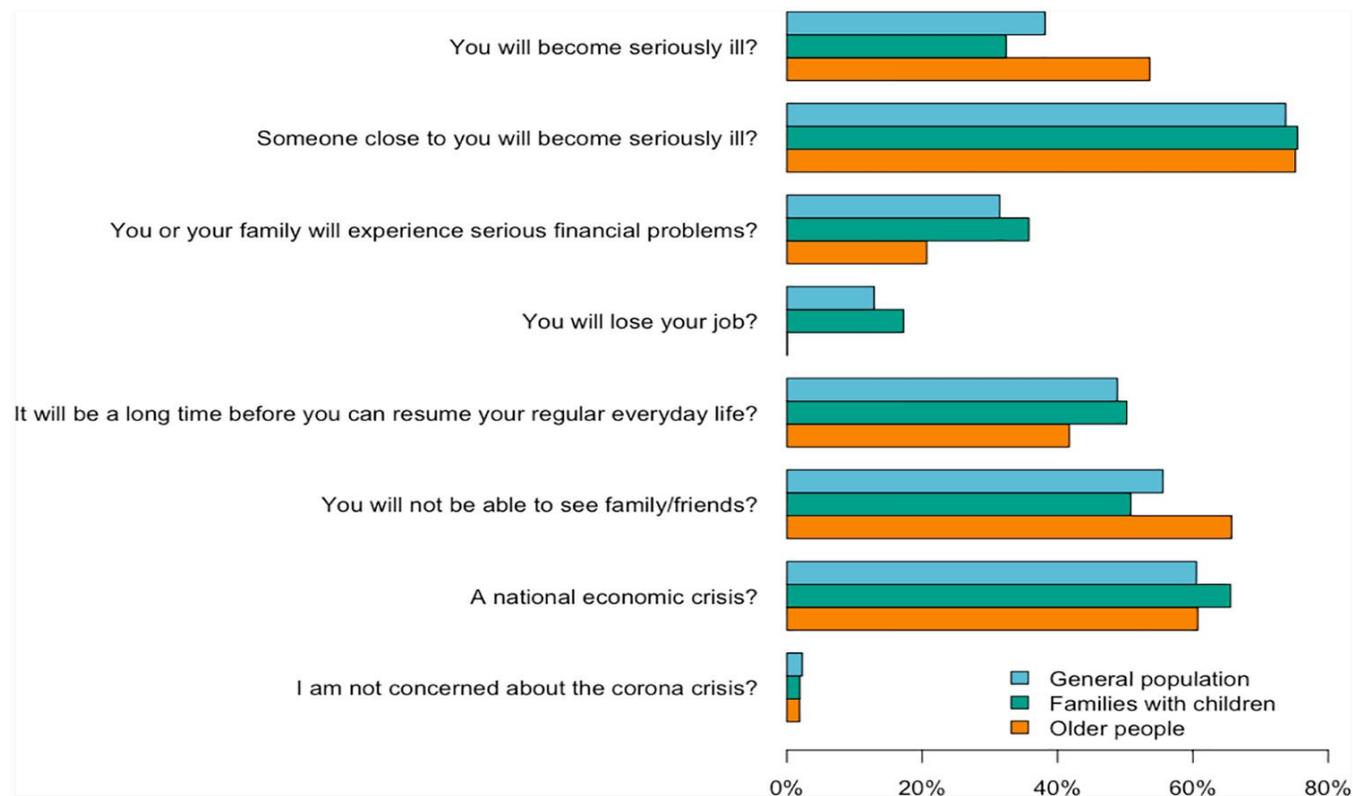
INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE ELDERLY IN LOCK-DOWN

- Several initiatives to improve older people's digital skills, so they can stay in touch with their family
- Materials for relatives and professionals about COVID-19 and people with dementia
- Hotline services to support people with dementia, their caregivers and families



EXPERIENCES OF LOCKDOWN AMONGST THE ELDERLY

“Standing together – at a distance: Documenting changes in mental-health indicators in Denmark during the COVID-19 pandemic”,
Clotworthy A, Dissing A.S., Nguyen T-L, et al.



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- On average, the elderly (65-85) reported feeling less lonely than did younger people
- Elderly people living at home showed good coping and mental resilience, using their network and the opportunities/technologies available to them
- Low degree of financial insecurity because of the Danish pension system – more worries for the young at risk of losing their job/main sources of income
- However, the experience in nursing homes have probably been different

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH – VACCINATION IN DENMARK

Three main objectives of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Denmark:

1. Minimising death and severe illness due to COVID-19.
2. Minimising the spread of infection and epidemic control.
3. Ensuring key societal functions.

PRIORITIZING VACCINATIONS IN DENMARK

1. Residents in nursing homes, etc.
2. People aged ≥ 65 years who receive personal care at home
3. People aged ≥ 85 years.
4. Personnel in healthcare who are at particular risk of infection or has been identified as performing a critical function
5. Selected persons with conditions and diseases that result in a significantly increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
6. Selected relatives of persons at significantly increased risk.
7. People aged 80-84.
8. People aged 75-79.
9. People aged 65-74.
10. People under 65 years of age at risk of severe illness
11. Staff in other sectors critical to the functioning of society.
12. The remaining population

HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE ELDERLY IN THE FUTURE I

- Cooperation between local authorities, civil society organisations, volunteers, and the private sector.
- As societies reopen, it is more important than ever to keep a focus on the elderly for whom the passage to the 'new normal' will be slower and more difficult
- Anchoring responses to the pandemic in the recognition that equal treatment is a right, regardless of age, will ensure that older people can live full lives in dignity and respect



HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE ELDERLY IN THE FUTURE II

Denmark will continue to:

- Include the elderly in decision making
- Prioritize vaccination of the elderly and the vulnerable
- Use initiatives to support older people during the lockdown periods
- Support older people with dementia and their relatives
- Make online consultations with general practitioners
- Test the health staff and staff at nursing homes regularly
- Improve older people's digital skills, so they can stay in touch with relatives online



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**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION**

**PLEASE BE IN CONTACT:
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