

# I DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS HERE OR SOMEONE I CAN TALK WITH

*Michiyo (100) from Western Tokyo (Japan), lives alone in a low-cost home for the elderly*

## INCONVENIENT

Since the COVID crisis, I haven't been able to see people outside the facility. That's what I miss the most. I was able to see them regularly. Since I don't have any family, I used to see my friends. But I can't make friends in this facility. I don't have any friends here or someone I can talk with. I have lived for 100 years, and times have changed. So I don't have anyone I can have conversation with in this facility. Before you know it, the Taisho era (from 1912 to 1926) will be all forgotten... So, I never worried about COVID. It's just inconvenient.

## PRECAUTIONS

Other than that, my life hasn't changed much. I spend most of the time in my room. When the facility organizes an event I can go, like an exercise program, I do participate. Everyone takes precautions against the virus, such as wearing a mask, using sanitizer, and washing hands.

## SHOPPING TOGETHER

Shopping? Oh, we're supposed to go shopping today! The facility staff takes us shopping once a month, by bus from here. Usually, 4 to 5 people go together. I usually go to three places: a supermarket, a shopping mall, and a convenience store. Today, I'm going to a convenience store.

## MY CHURCH

I kept going to the same church even after I moved into this facility in the mid-1990s. But I can't do that anymore because it is too far away. I need to take a bus to the nearest station and take two trains to get there. It didn't bother me when I was younger, but it is too hard now. The pastor of that church called me the other day to celebrate my 100th birthday. He also sent me a postcard and flowers. He is really considerate. I feel like he's my family.

## PRAYING IN MY ROOM

There is a church of the same denomination near here, but I don't feel comfortable going there alone because I don't know much about that place. The church is not within walking distance, so I also need to have a friend of mine give me a ride. But she is quite busy and sometimes needs to work on Sunday. So I usually pray in my room, in the morning and in the evening. I can do that by myself.

*Michiyo was interviewed on 24 September 2020. Her story was shared with us by **International Longevity Center (ILC) Japan** – 国際長寿センター, member of the ILC Global Alliance, an international federation researching and advocating the vitality and the societal and economical position of older people. In the Netherlands, the ILC network is represented by Leyden Academy.*