



# HelpAge

## International

### Country profile:

# The rights and wellbeing of older persons in the Syrian Arab Republic

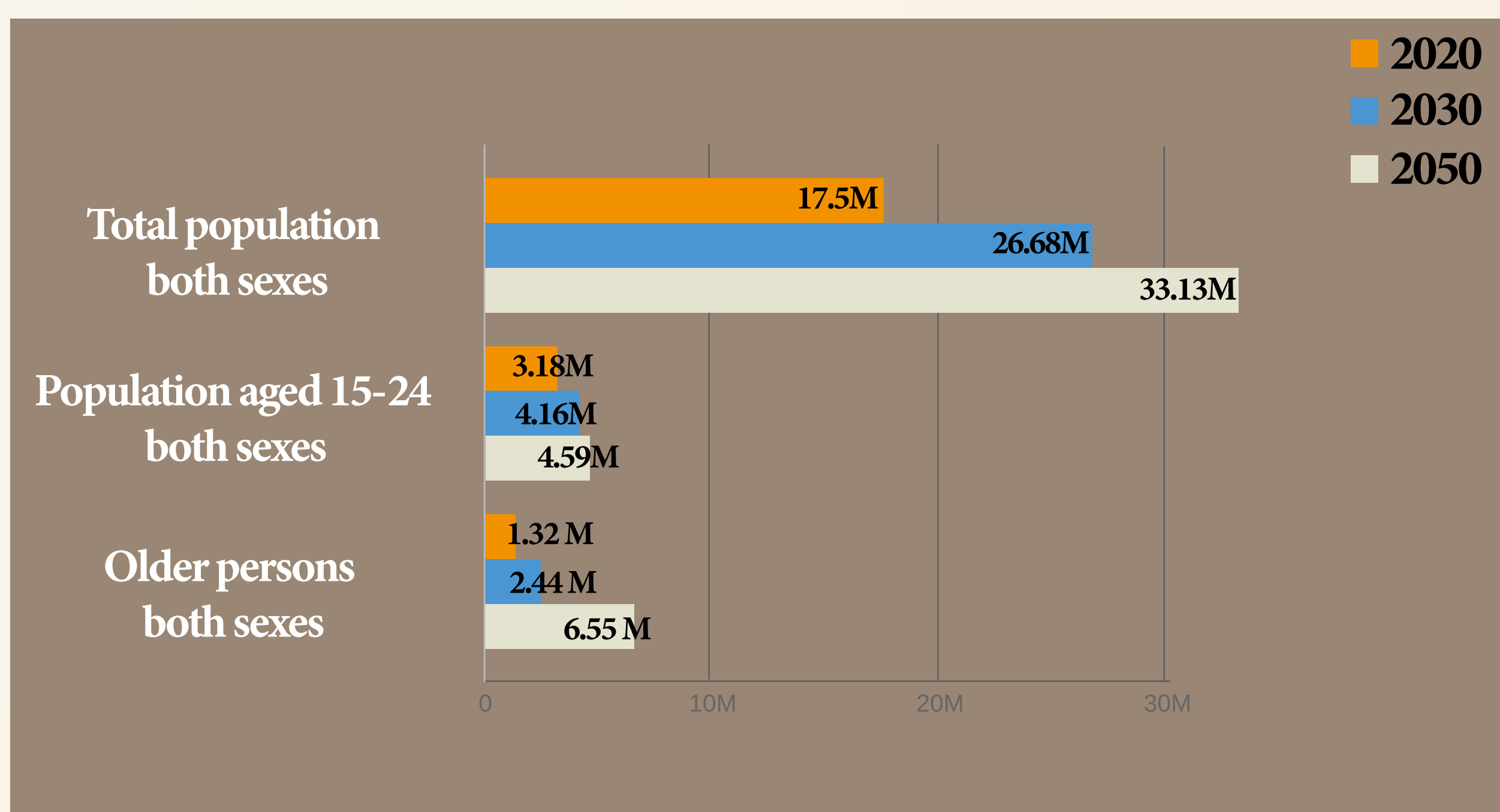
This infographic is part of the set of country profiles on ageing across the Arab region. Drawing on the latest openly available data from 2015 - 2020, it highlights the situation of older women and men<sup>1</sup> in relation to income, health, education, autonomy and safety, and how national systems and national strategies on ageing address their needs and their rights in these areas. These country profiles aim to help examine the progress towards older persons' inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to identify opportunities to strengthen national strategies and data.<sup>2</sup>



## GENERAL CONTEXT

### Number and proportion of older and younger persons, 2020 - 2050<sup>3</sup>

The Syrian Arab Republic is in a state of protracted conflict and is undergoing a demographic shift as the number of persons aged 60+ is expected to increase nearly five-fold between 2020 - 2050 from about 1.3 million (7.5% of the total population) to 6.5 million (19.8%).

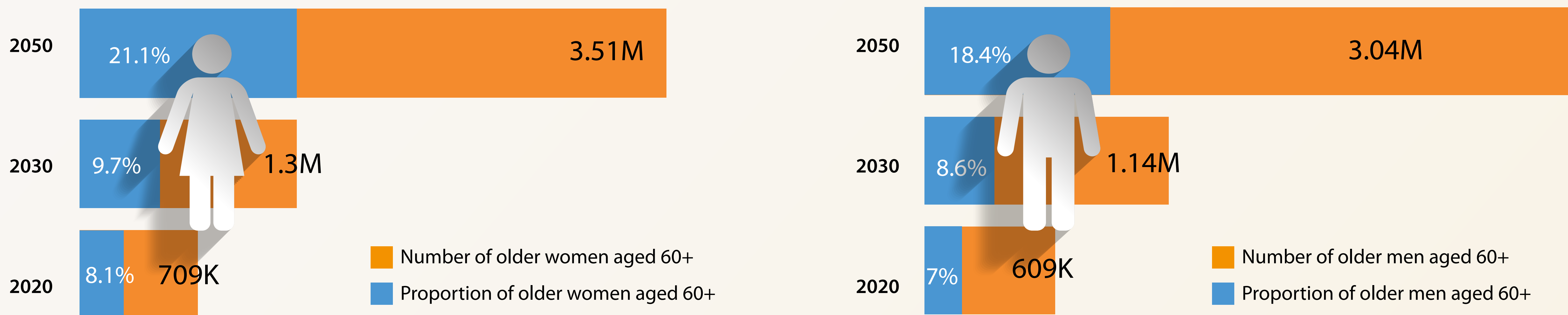
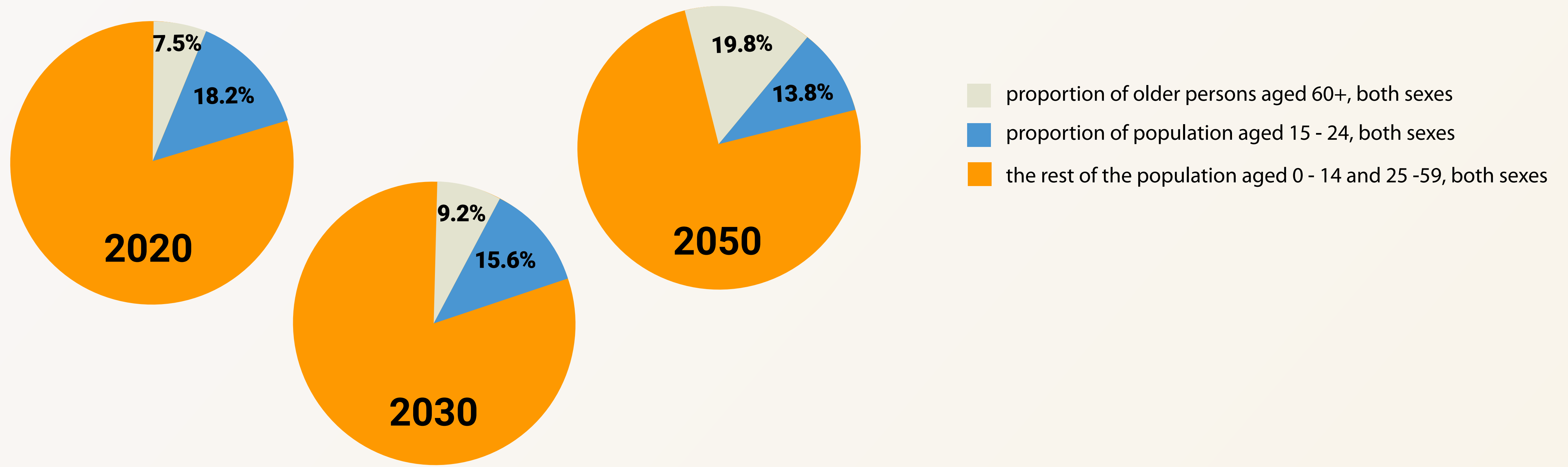


Over the same period, the number of persons aged 15 - 24 will increase by about 1.5 times.

<sup>1</sup> For statistical purposes, 'older person' is defined as an individual aged 60 and over.

<sup>2</sup> The profiles were prepared by HelpAge International. The profiles do not reflect the views of UNFPA and any errors are attributed to the researchers.

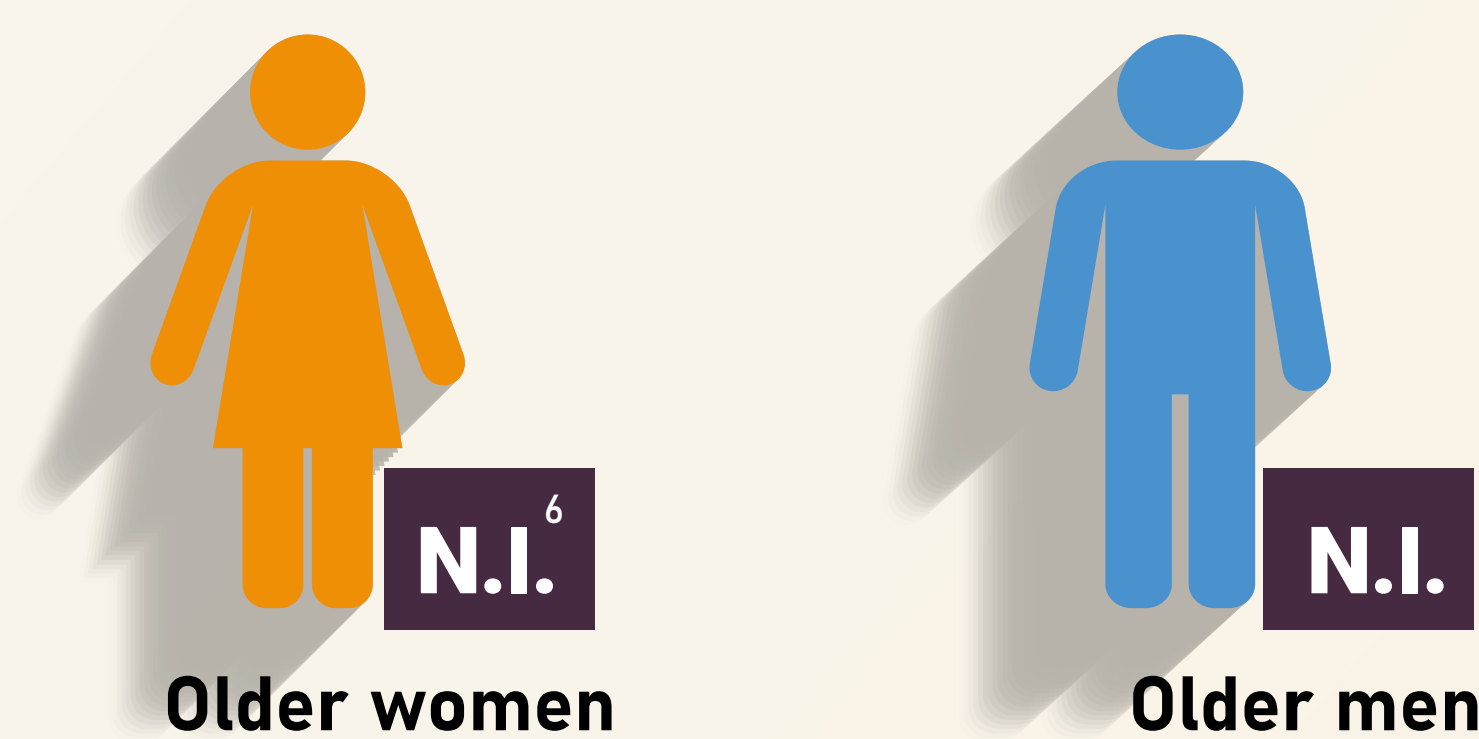
<sup>3</sup> Proportion of older women (men) is defined as the percentage of women (men) aged 60 and over of the women (men) of all ages. Throughout the profile some of the indicators are expressed as 'proportion of older persons/women/men'. Such indicators should be interpreted as a percentage of persons/women/men aged 60 and over of the respected population group, unless expressed otherwise. For example, '9.3% of older men have a disability' means that of all men aged 60 and over 9.3 per cent have a disability.



National data on the disability of older women and men is not available.

To ensure every person is able to lead an independent and dignified life at any age, and their communities benefit from the demographic dividend,<sup>4</sup> national policies and systems across all sectors must address the wellbeing and rights of individuals across the life course.<sup>5</sup> To assess the policy response, the profile examines the General Directions of the National Strategy for Older Persons' Care in the Syrian Arab Republic 2014 - 2020.

### Proportion of older persons with disabilities



Existence of national strategy on ageing<sup>ii</sup> **YES**

Existence of national legislation and enforcement strategy against age - based discrimination **N.I.**

<sup>4</sup> The demographic dividend is the economic growth resulting from the number of persons in employment exceeding the number of persons outside of the labour market. Demographic dividend, <https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/topics/demographic-dividend-6>

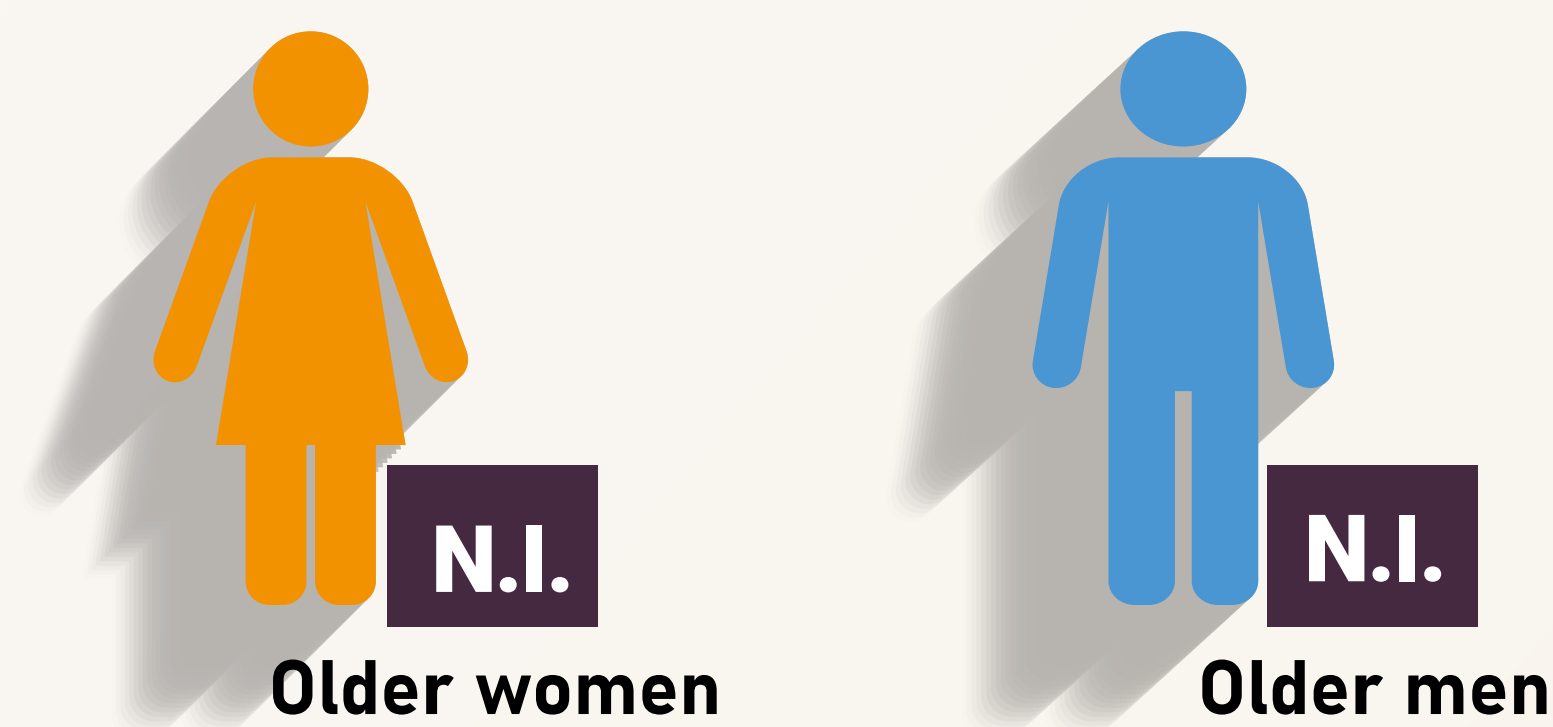
<sup>5</sup> Life course approach to policy recognises that individuals' roles, abilities, and needs are shaped by positive and negative experiences, and as we age these experiences accumulate. To mitigate immediate and long-term impacts of disadvantages, policies must consider how intersecting identities and varying forms of discrimination experienced across the life course can lead to individual 'being left behind'. Life course approach to ageing, <https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/life-course-approach-to-ageing/>

<sup>6</sup> n.i. - data or information is not available.

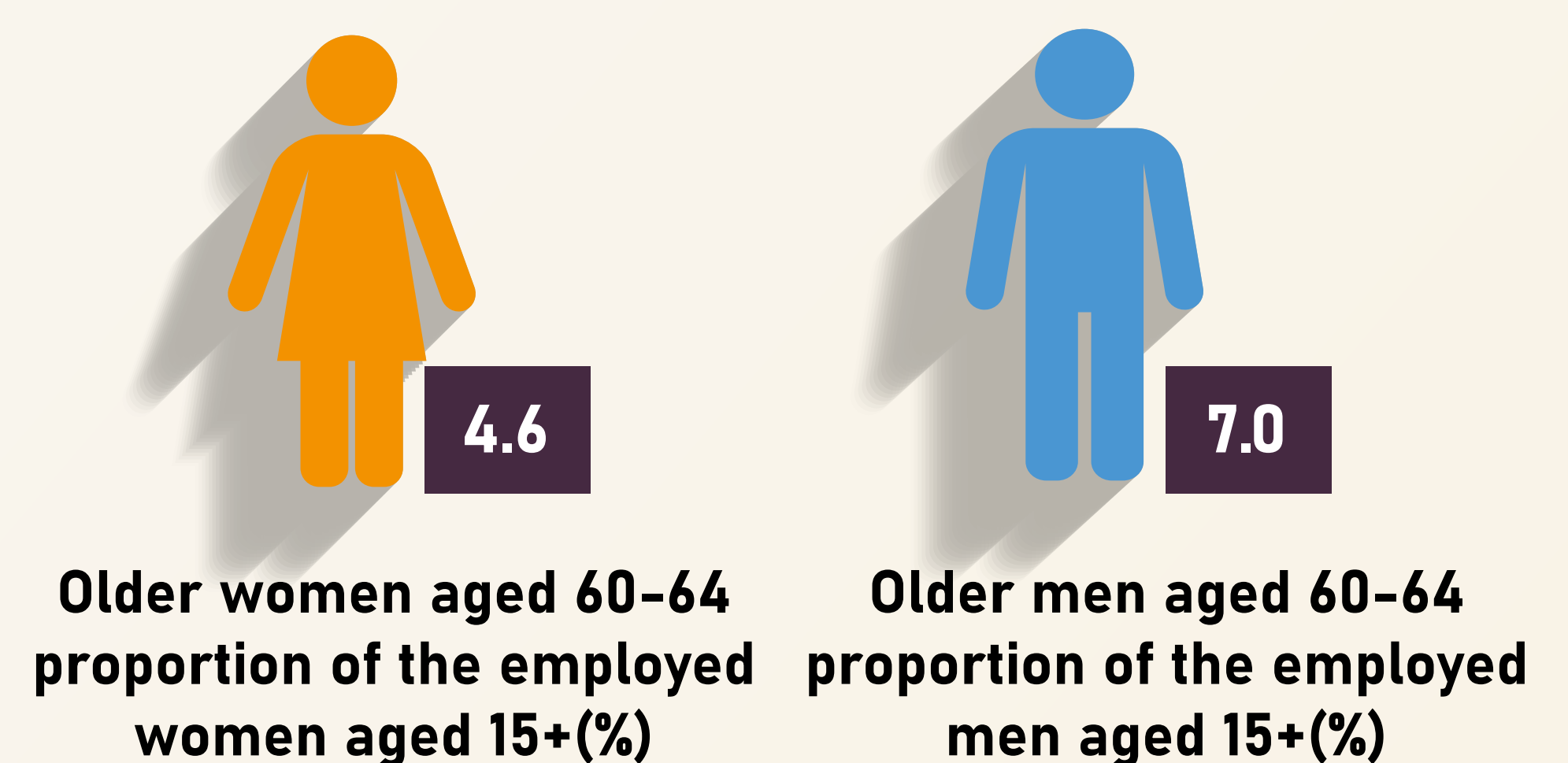
# THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND WORK

Data on poverty among older persons is not available. Older persons, primarily men, continue to work past the age of 60, as 7% of men aged 60 - 64 are in employment. The National Strategy does not address older persons' right to social protection and a pension, so they can lead independent and dignified lives on an equal basis with others. Only 16.7% of older persons received a pension in 2016.

## How many older persons live in poverty?



## Who works in older age?<sup>III</sup>



## How national systems and policies address the needs and rights of older persons

### Pension systems provide income security for all older persons<sup>IV</sup>



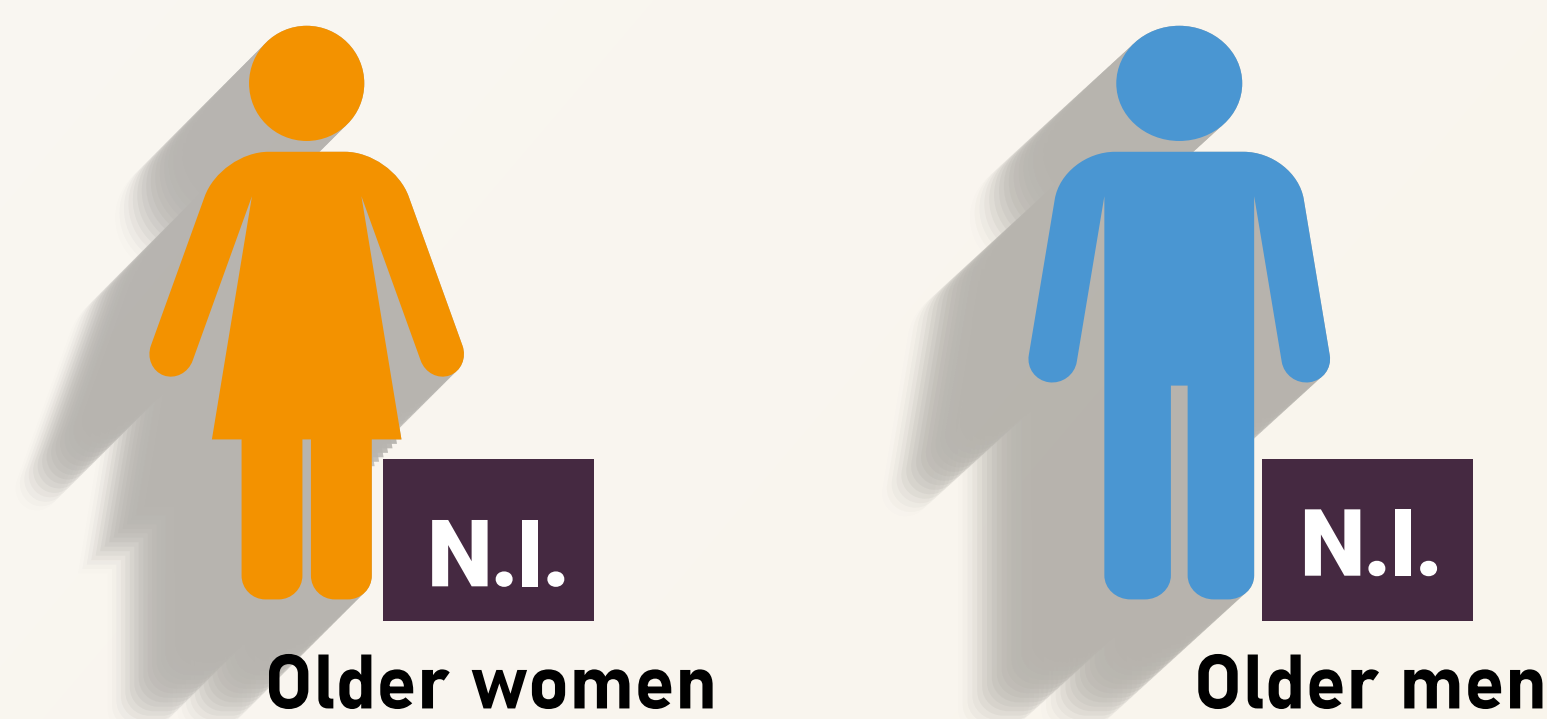
### National Strategy on ageing addresses:

- Social protection and social security systems which provide universal coverage **NO**
- Social protection and social security measures that are of a high enough value, quantity and quality, and for the full period of life **NO**
- Freedom from discrimination on the basis of age and other grounds in all matters related to employment **NO**
- Right to work when receiving a pension **NO**

# THE RIGHT TO AUTONOMY, EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Data on the ability of older women and men to make their own decisions about their finances, health, family life and other aspect of lives is not available. The National Strategy does not include provisions on the right of older women and men to autonomy and their legal capacity to make decisions over all aspects of their lives.

**How much freedom of choice and control do older persons feel they have over their life?**



**How national systems and policies address the needs and rights of older persons**

**National strategy on ageing addresses:**

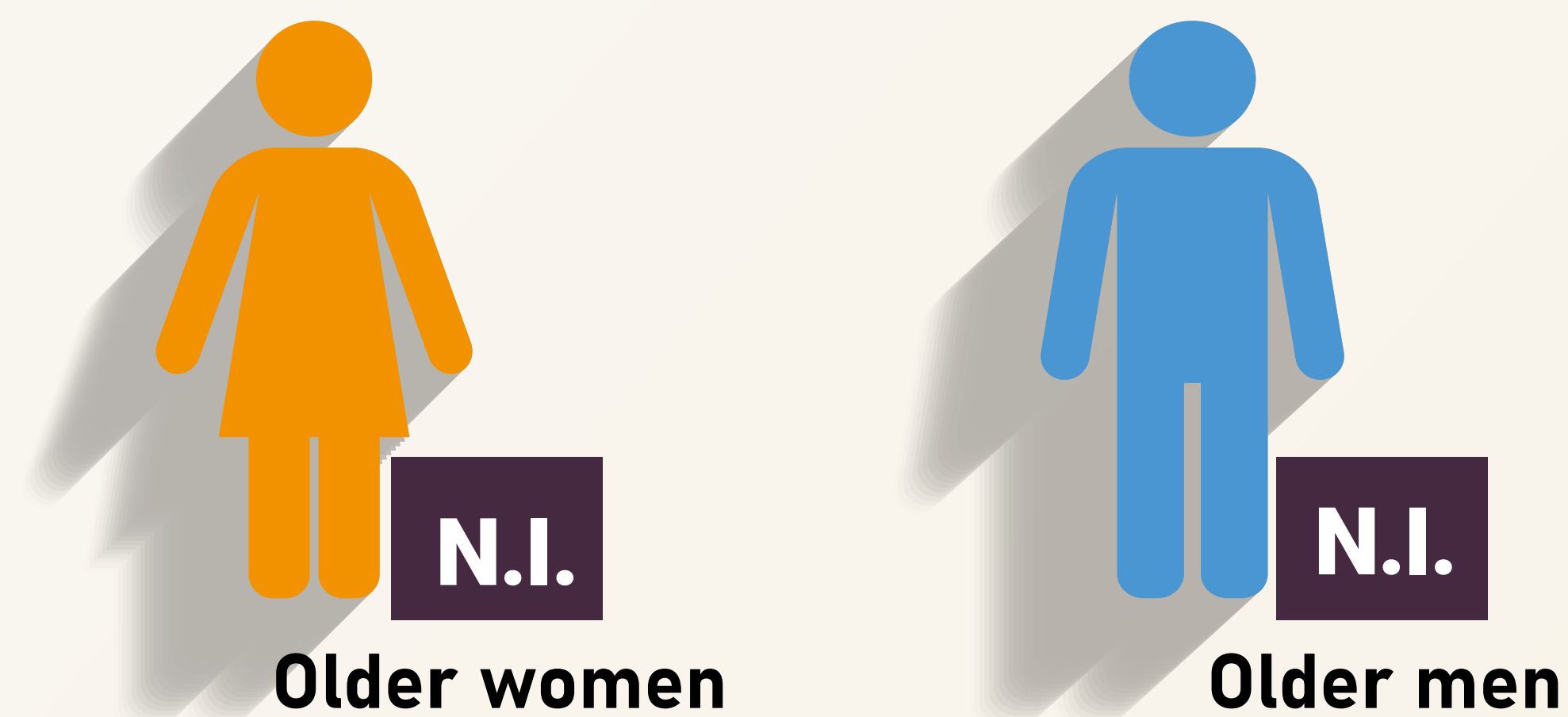
- Older persons' autonomy and independence over all aspects of their lives **NO**
- Enjoyment of legal capacity to make decisions, to determine life plans and to lead autonomous and independent lives **NO**

# THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT



National data on physical and sexual violence, financial and psychological abuse, and neglect of older women and men is not available. While the National Strategy recognises all these forms of violence against older persons, it does not address the need for production and dissemination of timely and disaggregated statistics on this topic.

## How many older persons have experienced violence, abuse or neglect?



## How national systems and policies address the needs and rights of older persons

### National strategy on ageing addresses:

- All forms of violence, abuse and neglect in public and private settings **YES**
- Regular collection, analysis, utilisation and public dissemination of disaggregated information and statistics on all forms of violence, abuse and neglect **NO**

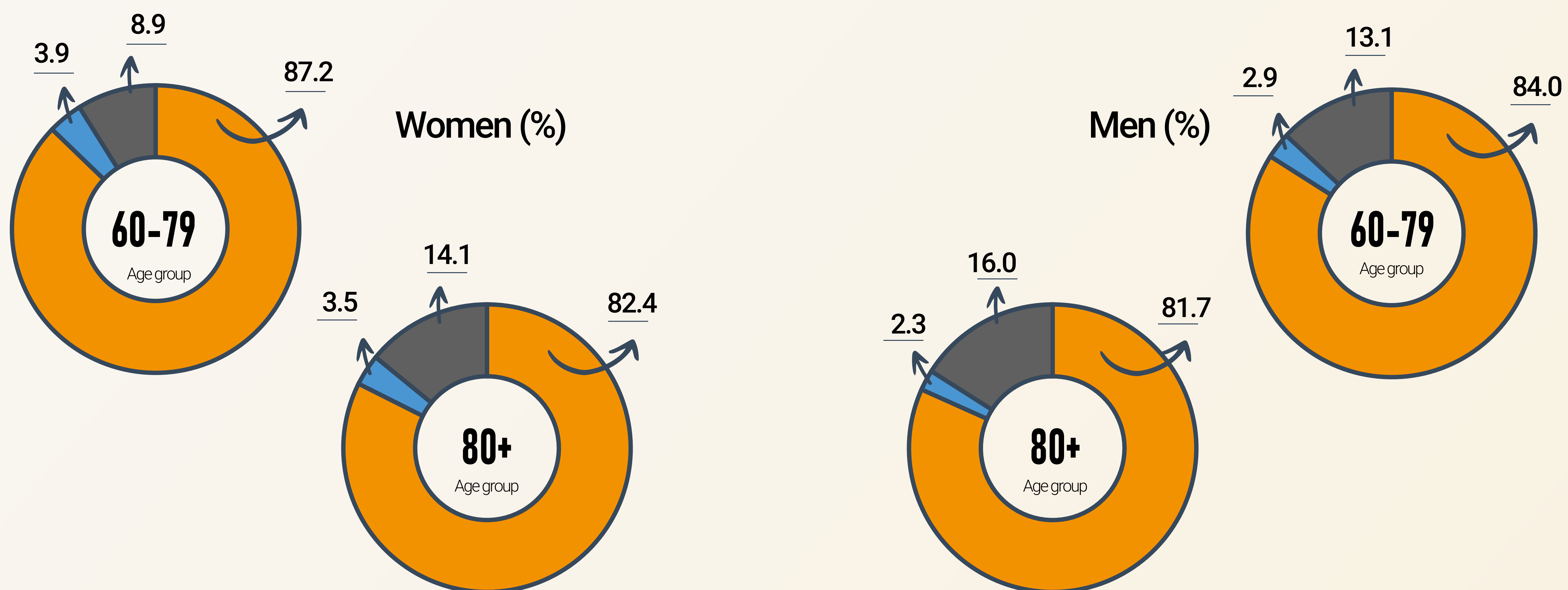
# THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

Non-communicable diseases account for more than 80% of years lived with disabilities among older persons. Diabetes and kidney diseases, and sense organ diseases are leading causes of disability for both older women and men. National data on the prevalence of diabetes and high blood pressure among older persons is not available.

The National Strategy partially recognises a continuum of good quality physical, mental and cognitive health services but is missing provisions for integrated health and social care or palliative care. Additionally, official information on the proportion of older persons protected by health insurance is not available.

## What are the key causes of disability in older age?<sup>v</sup>

● Non-communicable diseases    ● Communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases    ● Injuries



## How many older women and men have diabetes?

Older women

N.I.

Older men

N.I.



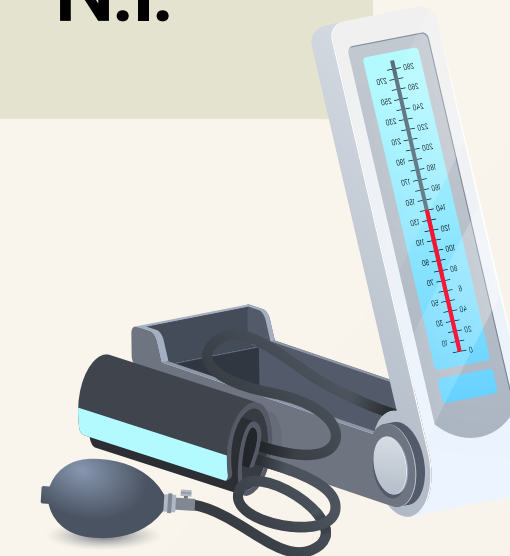
## How many older women and men have hypertension?

Older women

N.I.

Older men

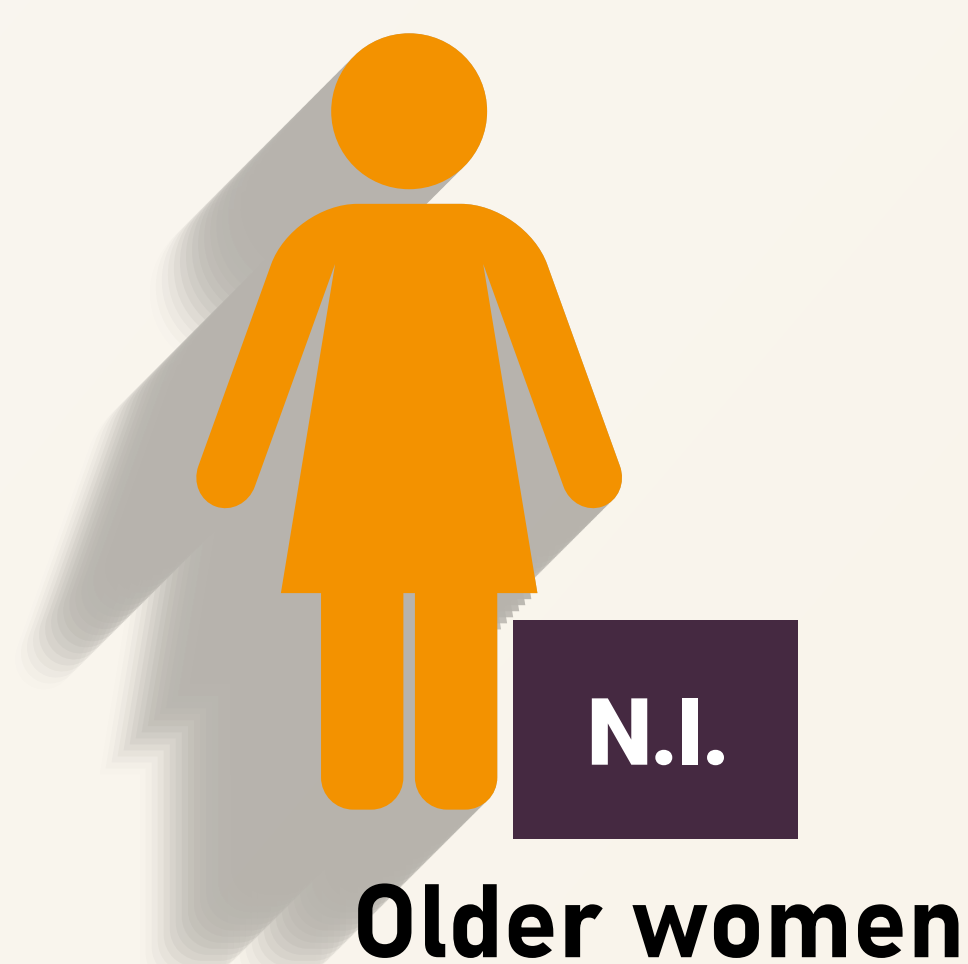
N.I.



## How national systems and policies address the needs and rights of older persons

### Health protection covers all older persons

Proportion of older persons covered by any type of health insurance.



### National Strategy on ageing addresses:

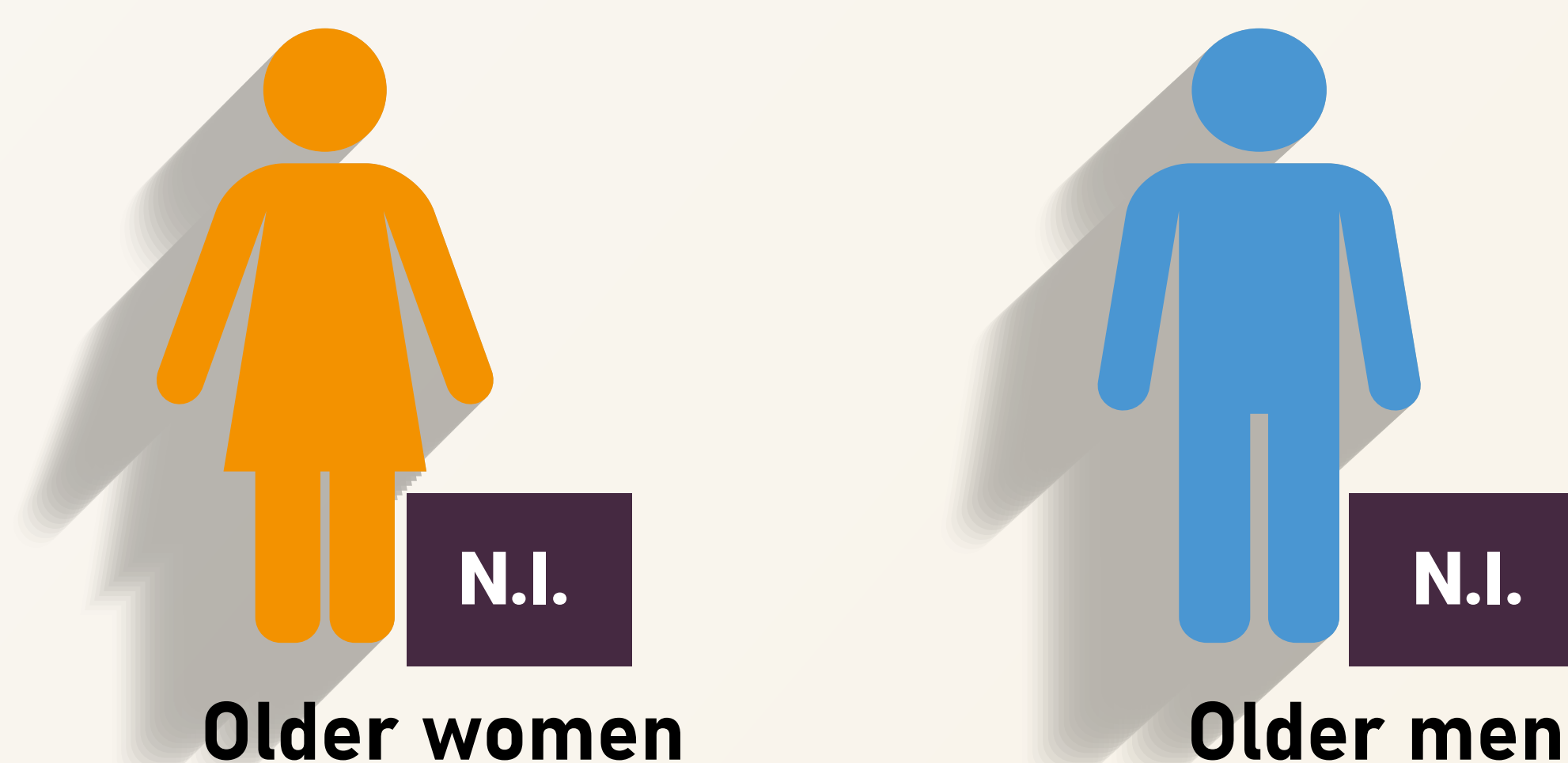
- Continuum of quality and appropriate physical, mental and cognitive health services available and accessible to older persons and which deliver primary, secondary and tertiary health care integrated with care and support, wherever they may reside **Partial (does not include integration of health and social care)**
- Holistic palliative care, including access to essential drugs and controlled medicines **NO**

# THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

While the statistics on the current cohort of students is collected, the timely national data on the educational attainment of older persons is not available. The National Strategy recognises the right of older persons to affordable and accessible continued education. However it offers limited considerations for other types of education and lifelong learning opportunities, e.g. self, informal recreational and community-based education.

## How many older persons have an education?

Educational attainment of older persons by the highest level of education completed



## How national systems and policies address the needs and rights of older persons

### National strategy on ageing addresses:

- All forms of lifelong learning, education and skill building<sup>vi</sup>  
**Partial (limited to literacy, vocational skills, preparing for retirement, digital skills, their rights)**
- Learning opportunities adapted to the specific needs of older persons  
**YES**
- Lifelong learning, education and skills-building opportunities that are affordable and financially accessible  
**NO**



The review of statistics published during 2015 - 2021 by the Syria Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Ministry of Health, as well as UN agencies shows that data on older women and men is collected across a limited number of socio-economic indicators. A number of barriers to better data on ageing limit our understanding of the diverse needs of older women and men, and hinders our ability to monitor progress on their rights.

Firstly, existing national data on demography, health, education and labour force collated and published by the CBS is rarely disaggregated by age. For example, the annual Statistical Abstract and the summary report for the 2017 Demographic and Social Survey present the relevant data at an aggregate level for the total population without a more granular break down across age, sex, and disability.

Secondly, data gaps exist on violence, abuse and neglect of older women and men, old-age poverty, autonomy of older persons and the wellbeing of older persons with disabilities. Additionally, the Ministry of Health prioritises statistics on the health service delivery as data on the health status of older persons is not published.

In addition to concerted efforts to close data gaps and provide consistent analysis and reporting of data by age, sex, and disability, there is a need for a specialised survey to build more in-depth and comprehensive evidence on ageing and the situation of older persons in Syria.

## NOTES



- i United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019, Online Edition. Rev. 1. Excel files used: Population by broad age groups – male, population by broad age groups – female, percentage by broad age groups – male, percentage by broad age groups – female. <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/> Accessed 6 November 2021
- ii The profile covers information in the General Direction of the National Strategy of Older Persons' Care in the Syrian Arab Republic 2014 - 2020 presented in HelpAge International and UNFPA , 2020, The rights of older persons: a review of national ageing strategies in the Arab region. [https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/the\\_rights\\_of\\_older\\_persons\\_a\\_review\\_of\\_national\\_ageing\\_strategies\\_in\\_the\\_arab\\_region.pdf](https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/the_rights_of_older_persons_a_review_of_national_ageing_strategies_in_the_arab_region.pdf)
- iii Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract 2020, Table 8/3 Percentage distribution of employees aged 15+ by age group, 2019. <http://cbssyr.sy/yearbook/abstract2020.rar>
- iv UNDESA, the Global SDG Indicators Database, SDG 1.3.1, Proportion of population above statutory pensionable age receiving a pension, by sex (%), 2016. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> Accessed 30 November 2021
- v Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network. Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 (GBD 2019) Results. Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), 2020. Years lived with disabilities 2019. Available from <http://ghdx.healthdata.org/gbd-results-tool> Accessed 6 November 2021
- vi This includes tertiary education, vocational training, digital and new technology-based education, adult education, self, informal recreational and community-based education, lifelong learning programmes, legal literacy, and skills training in literacy, numeracy and technological competences. HelpAge International and UNFPA (2020)

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