



**HelpAge**

**International**

**Country profile:**

**The rights and wellbeing of older persons in Iraq**

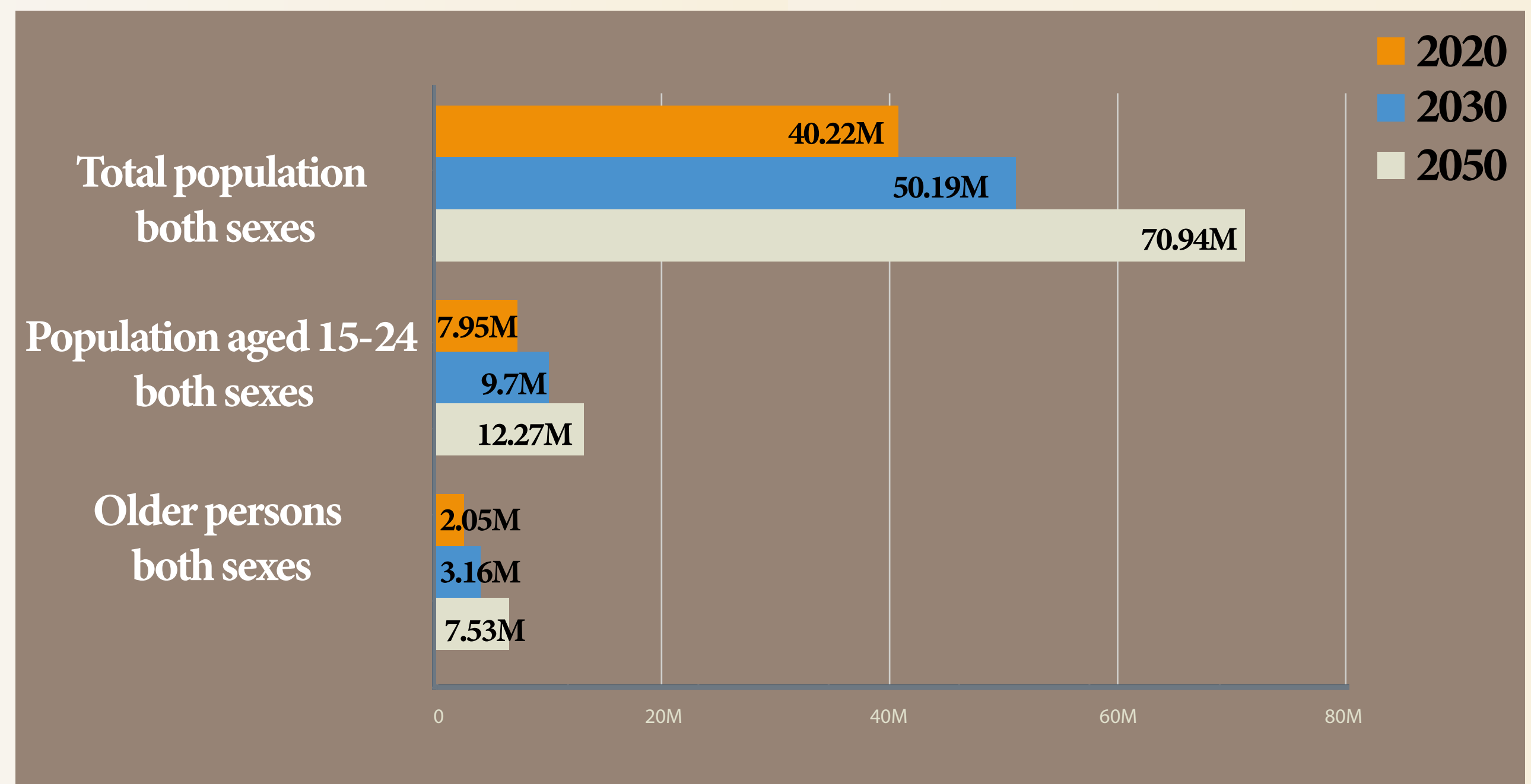
This infographic is part of the set of country profiles on ageing across the Arab region. Drawing on the latest openly available data from 2015 - 2020, it highlights the situation of older women and men<sup>1</sup> in relation to income, health, education, autonomy and safety, and how national systems 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 i</sup>**

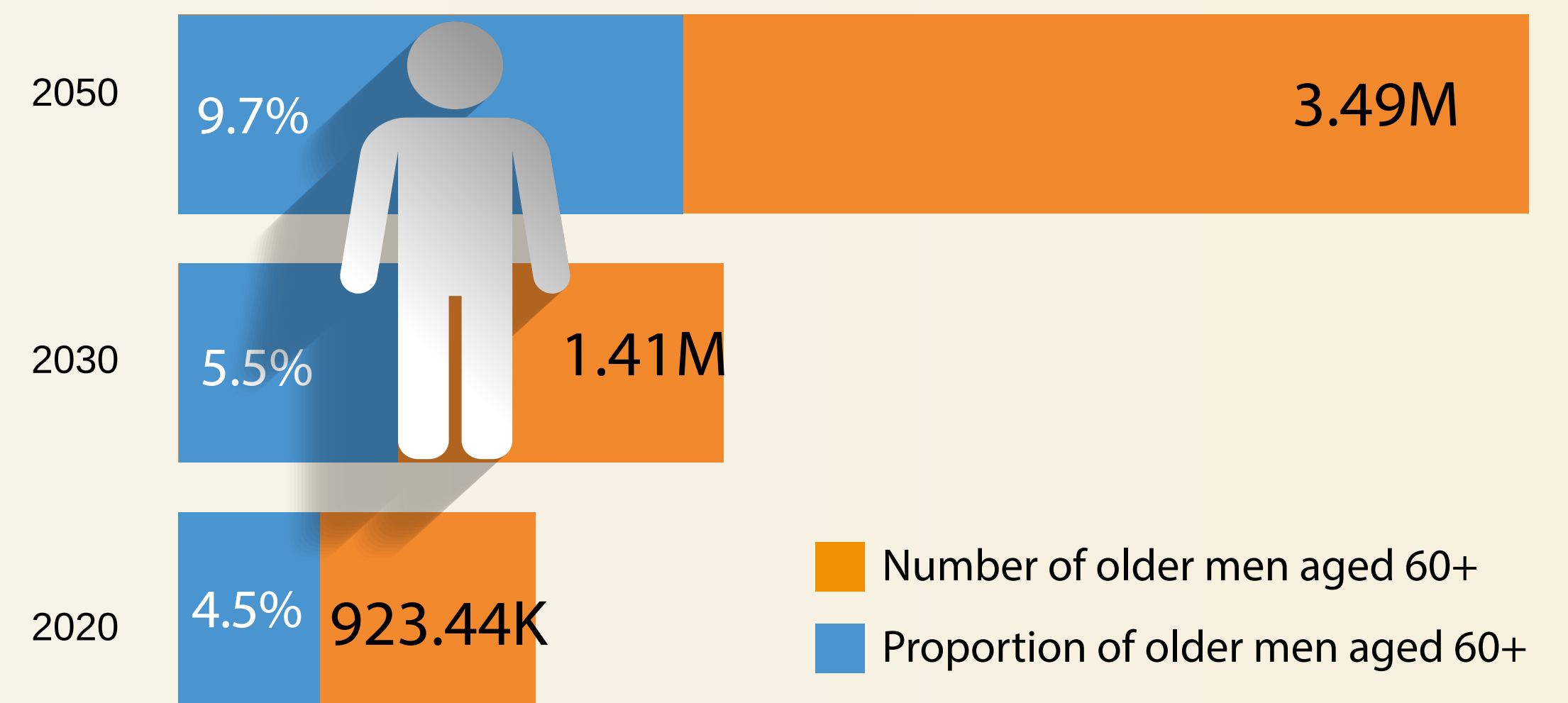
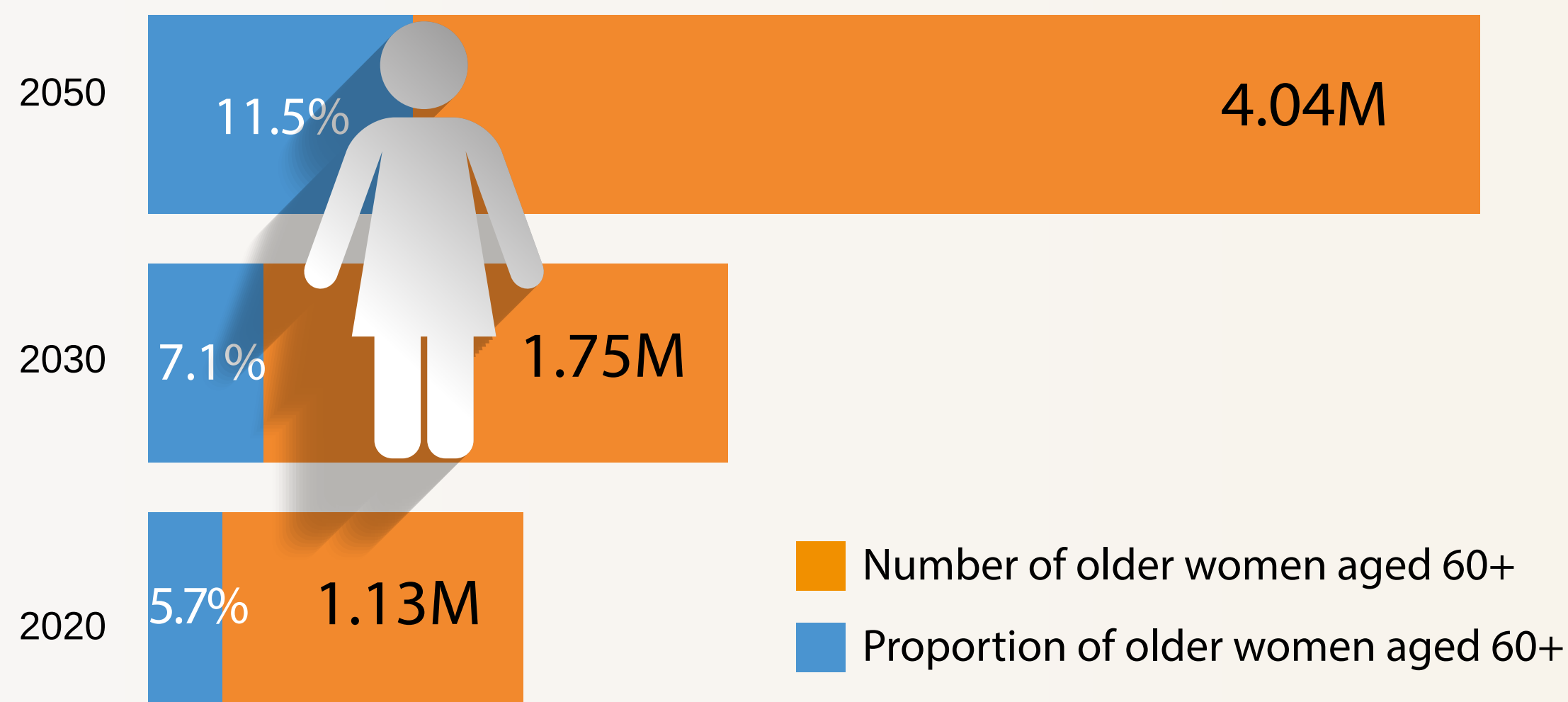
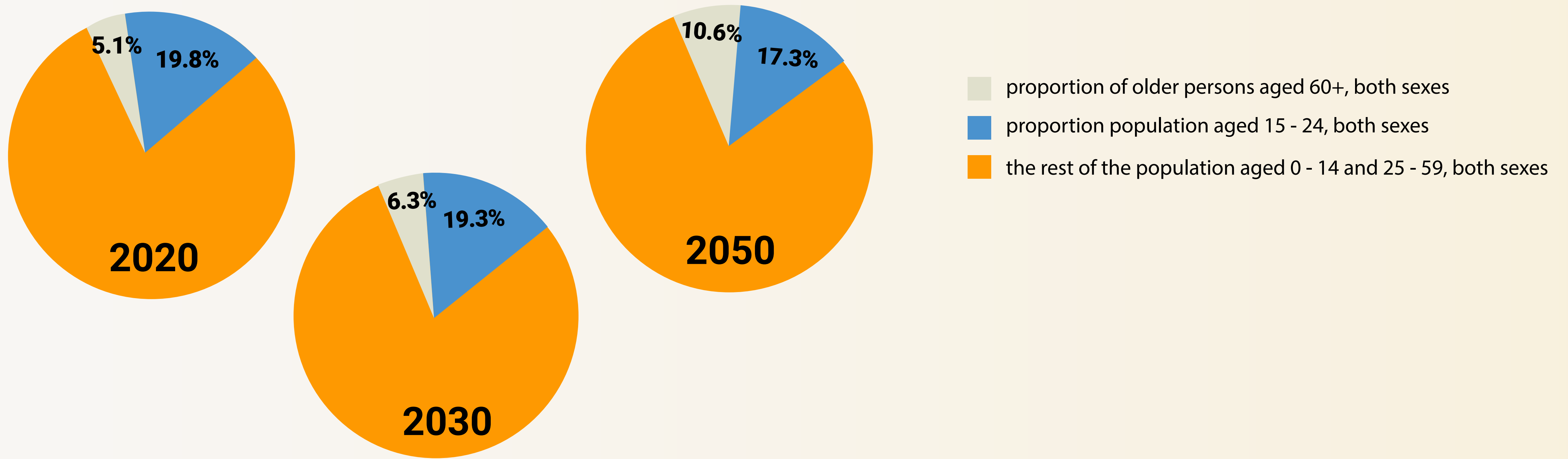
Iraq is going through a demographic transition as the number of persons aged 60 and over is expected to more than triple between 2020 - 2050 from 2 million (5.1% of the total population) to 7.5 million (10.6%). Over the same period, the number of persons aged 15 - 24 will increase 1.5 times.



Information on the existence of the National Strategy on Ageing for Iraq is not available. This profile examines Iraq's Vision for Sustainable Development 2030, hereafter referred to as the National Vision, a road map and plan to build a safer and fairer society.<sup>ii</sup> Lack of inclusion of older persons in the National Vision highlights the need for the development of the National Strategy on Ageing to address the needs and rights of older women and men.

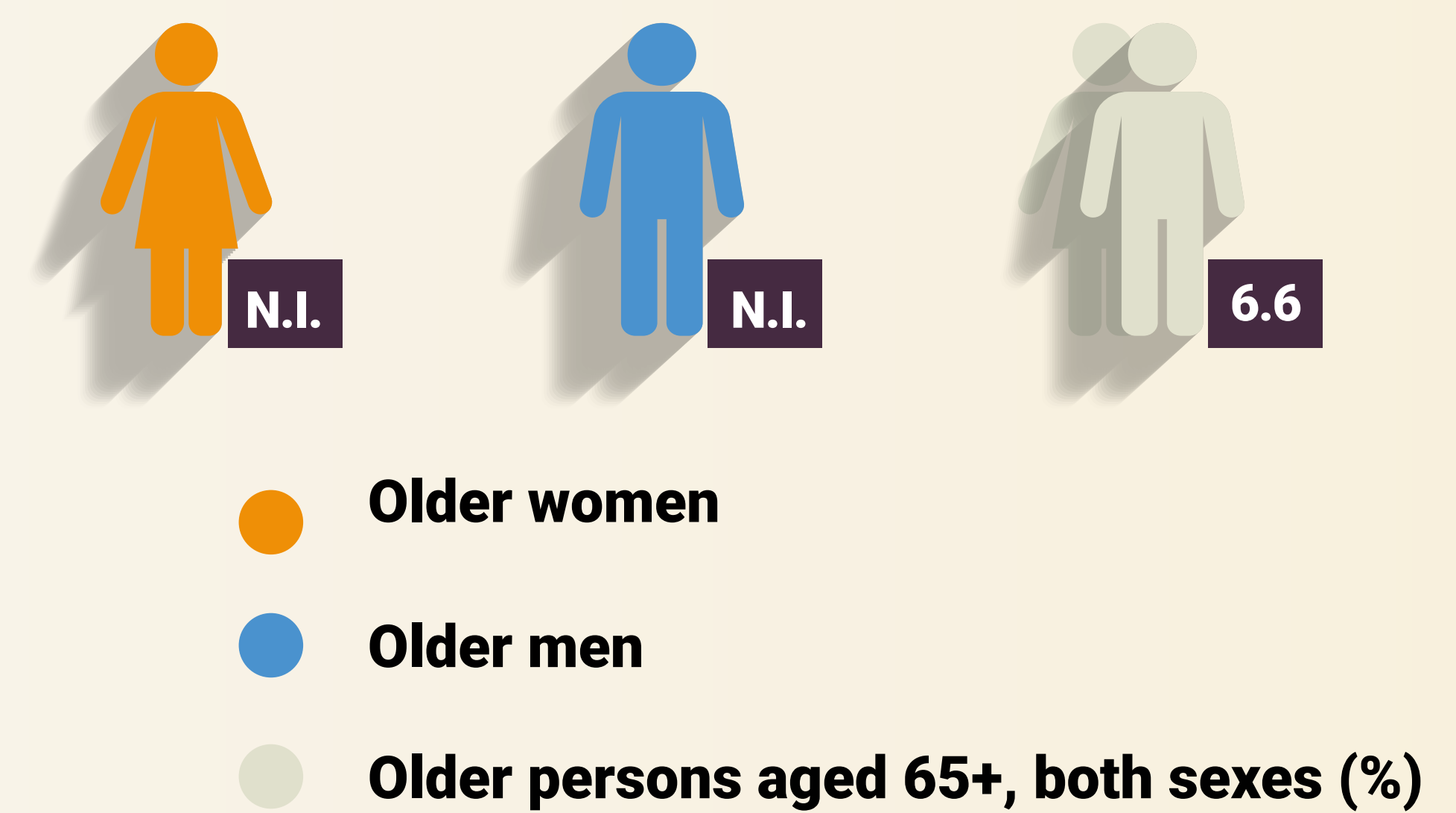
<sup>1</sup> For statistical purposes, 'older person' is defined as an individual aged 60 and over.  
<sup>2</sup> The profiles were prepared by HelpAge International. The profiles do not reflect the views of UNFPA and any errors are attributed to the researchers.  
<sup>3</sup> Proportion of older women (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.

<https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/life-course-approach-to-ageing/>



### Proportion of older persons with disabilities<sup>iii</sup>

Persons aged 65 and over with limited functional abilities constitute nearly 7% of the total population with disabilities. 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>



Existence of national strategy on ageing **N.I.**<sup>6</sup>

Existence of national legislation and enforcement strategy against age-based discrimination<sup>iv</sup> **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>

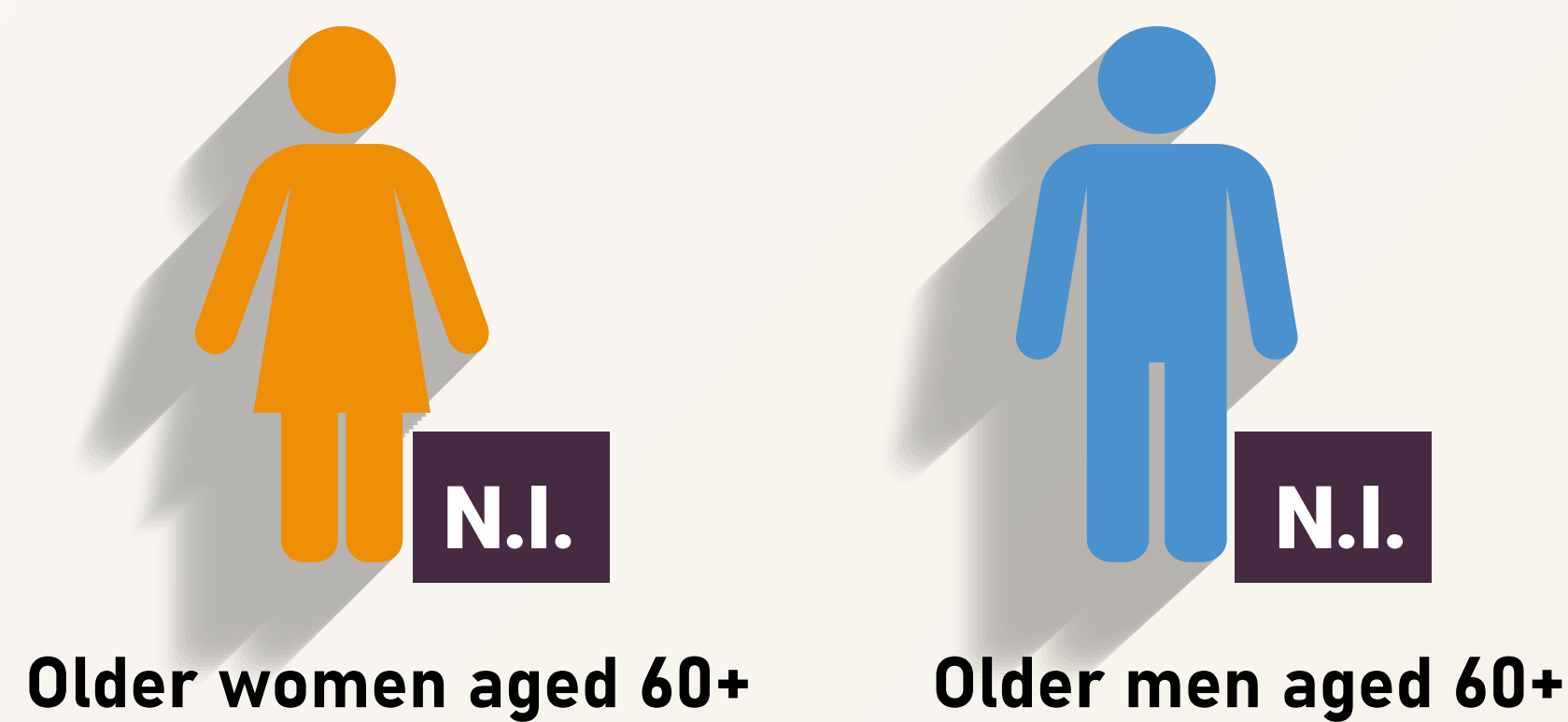
<sup>5</sup> Life course approach to policy recognises that individuals' roles, abilities, and needs are shaped by positive and negative experiences, and as we age these experiences accumulate. To mitigate immediate and long-term impacts of disadvantages, policies must consider how intersecting identities 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.

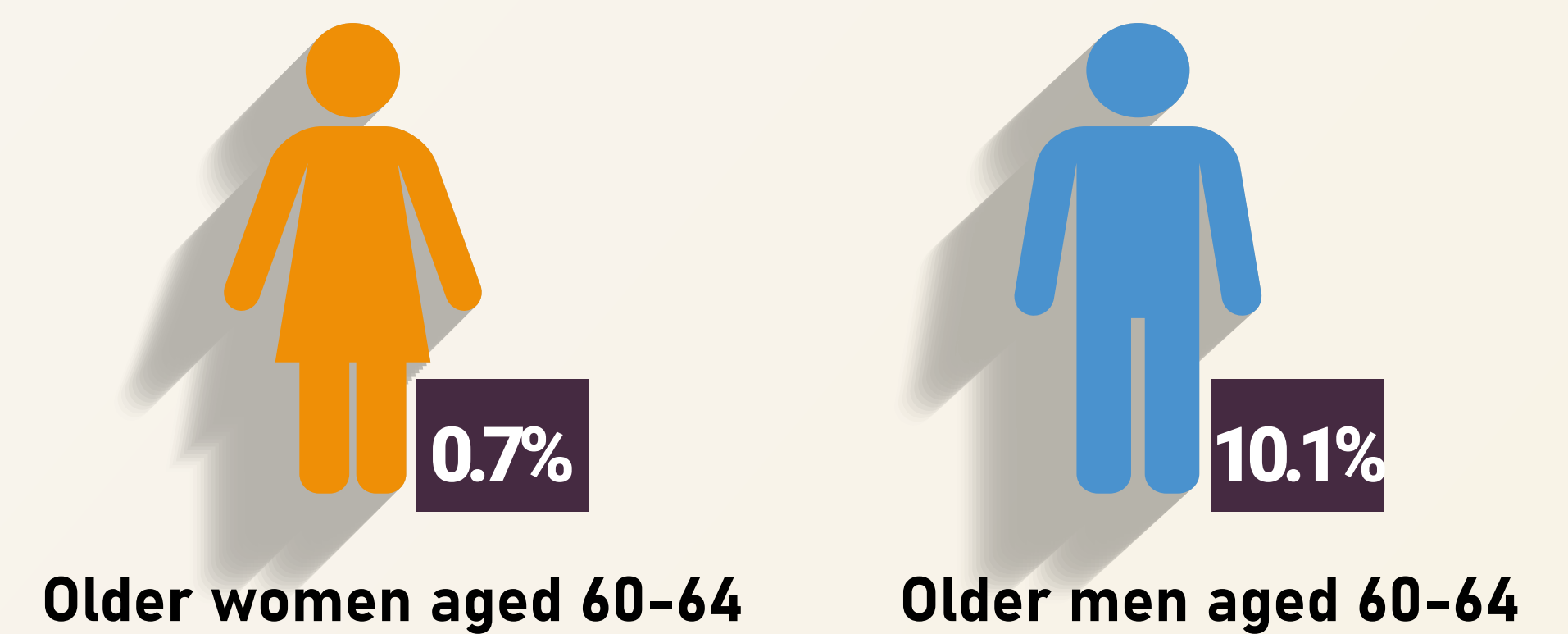
# THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND WORK

Data on poverty among older women and men is not available. 10% of older men and 0.7% of older women continue to work past the retirement age. The National Vision recognises individuals' right to social protection and security. However, only 17.8% of older adults have a pension, and the National Vision does not address the adequacy of social protection or the right to work when receiving a pension.

## How many older persons live in poverty?<sup>v</sup>



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



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

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



### National strategy on ageing addresses:

- Social protection and social security systems which provide universal coverage **YES**
- 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

Persons aged 65 and older are four times as likely to feel they have no control over their lives than the general population. This data should be considered with caution due to the small sample size. The National Vision does not address the right of older women and men to autonomy and legal capacity to make decisions over all aspects of their lives.

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

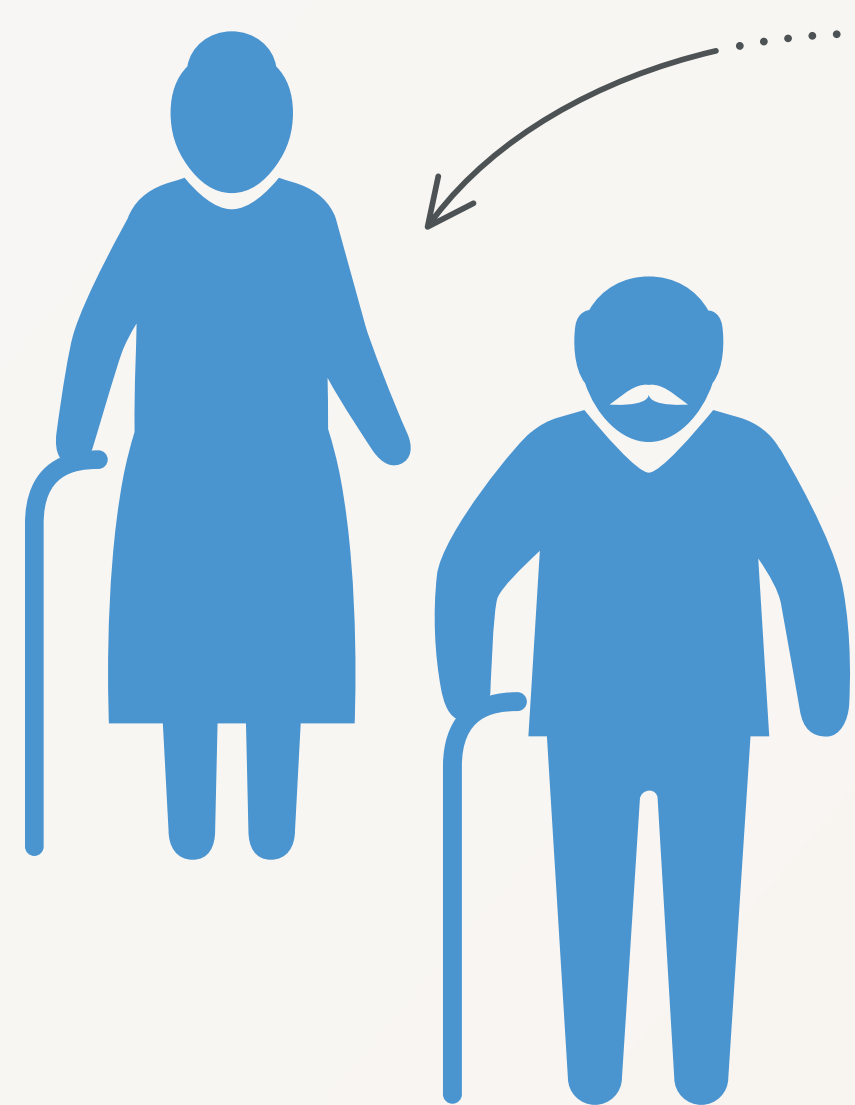
	Older persons, both sexes (%)	Population aged 16+, both sexes (%)
	+65	+16
None at all	13	3.2
Limited	8.6	9.3
Moderate	30.3	45.9
High	47.8	41.7

## 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**

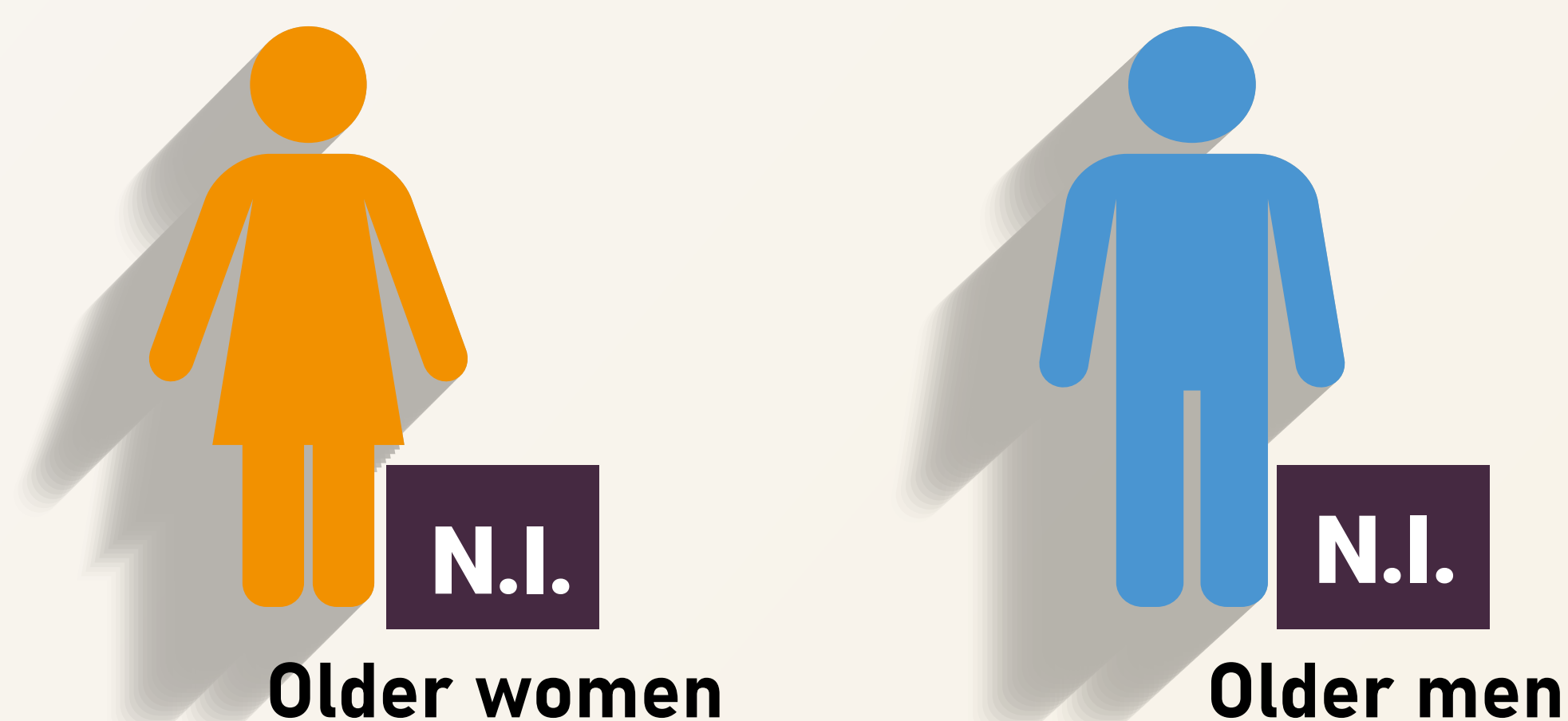
# THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT



Nearly 10% of older women and 8% of older men were victims of violence in 2015. Evidence on physical and sexual violence, psychological and financial abuse, and neglect of older persons in private settings is not available. The National Vision does not address all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, or the production and dissemination of timely and disaggregated statistics on this topic.

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## 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:

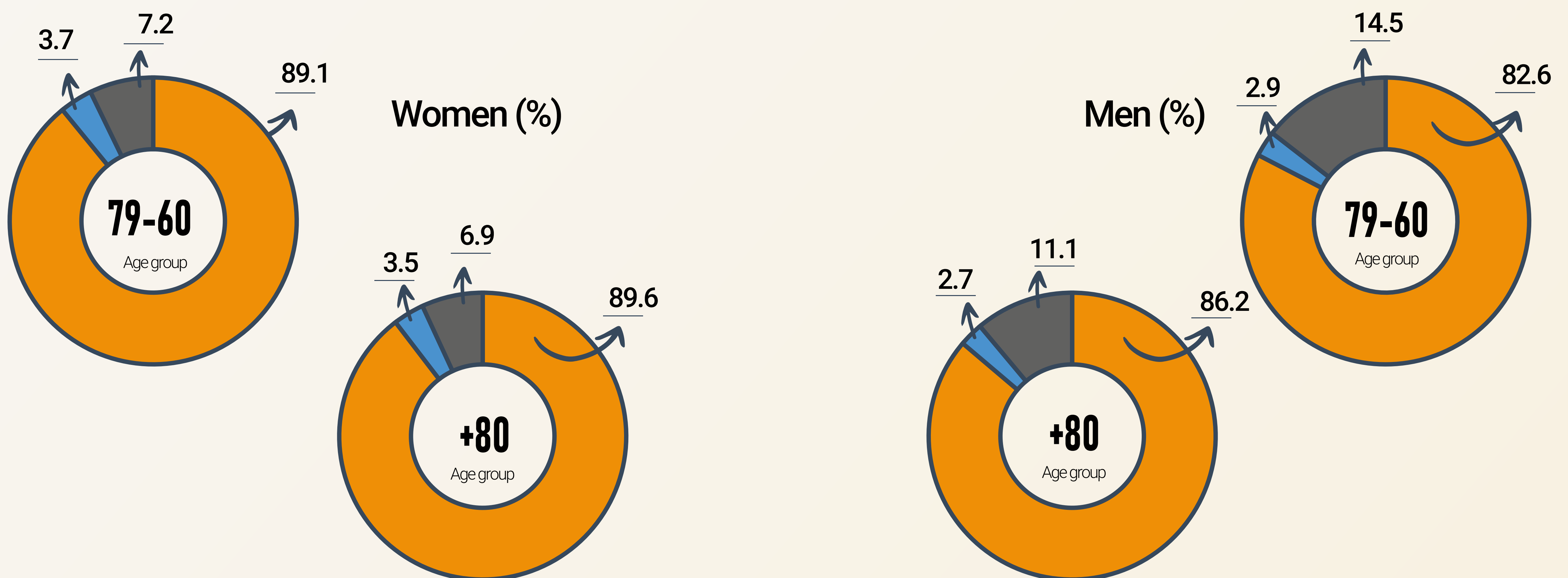
- All forms of violence, abuse and neglect in public and private settings **NO**
- Regular collection, analysis, utilisation and public dissemination of disaggregated information and statistics on all forms of violence, abuse and neglect **NO**

# THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

Non-communicable diseases account for more than 80% of years lived with disabilities among older adults. Diabetes and kidney diseases, cardiovascular diseases, and sense organ diseases are leading causes of disability for both older women and men. The prevalence of diabetes among older persons is at least five times higher than the population average. Data on health insurance coverage among older persons is not available. The National Vision addresses the right to affordable and accessible health services. However, it does not include provision for integrated health and social care or palliative care.

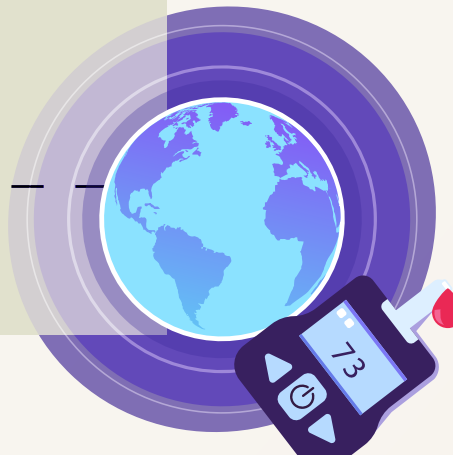
## What are the key causes of disability in older age?<sup>x</sup>

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



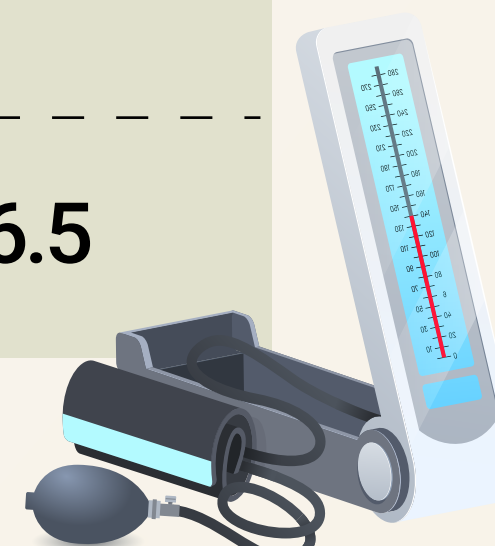
## How many older women and men have diabetes?<sup>xi</sup>

Age group	Women (%)	Men (%)
6079-	36.5	33.8
80+	38.4	35.4
All ages	6.4	6.0



## How many older women and men have hypertension?<sup>xii</sup>

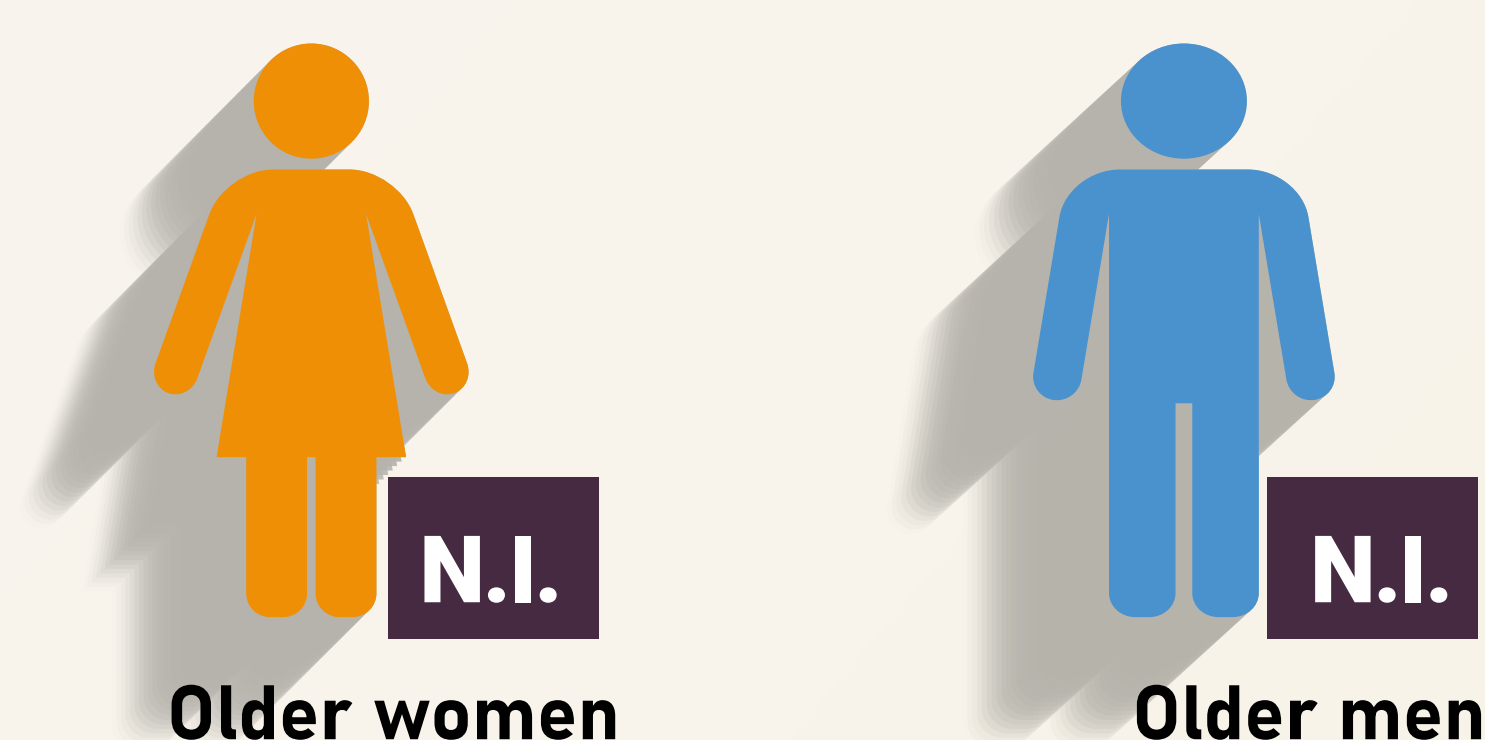
Age group	Women (%)	Men (%)
60+	80.1	76.6
18+	34.5	36.5



## 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 **NO**
- Holistic palliative care, including access to essential drugs and controlled medicines **NO**

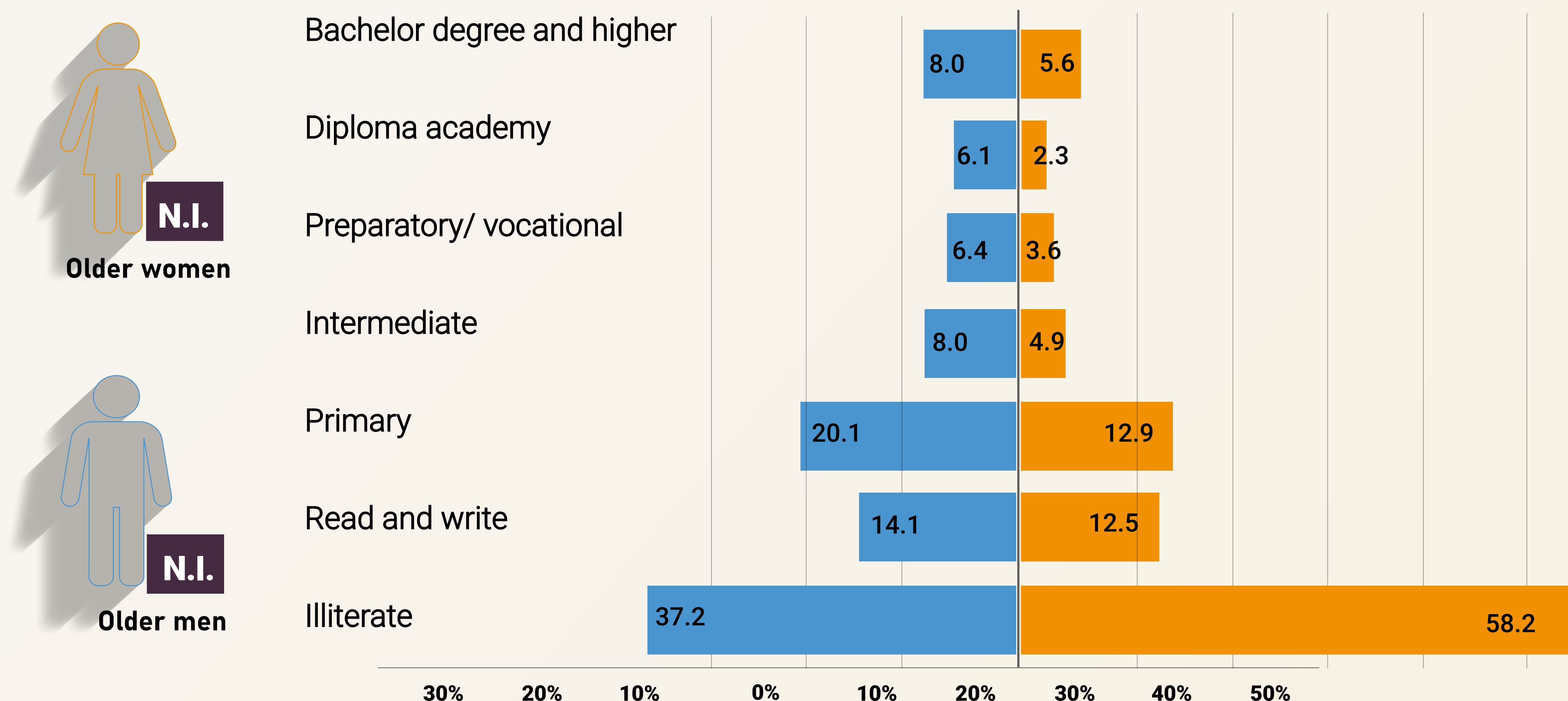
# THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

58% of persons aged 70 and over are illiterate compared with 37% of persons aged 60 - 69. While the National Vision aims to enhance opportunities for lifelong learning, it does not address different forms of lifelong learning, or adequacy, affordability and accessibility of learning opportunities for older persons.

## How many older persons have an education?<sup>xiii</sup>

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

● Older persons aged 60 - 69, both sexes (%) ● Older persons aged 70+, both sexes (%)



## 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>xiv</sup>  
**NO**
- Learning opportunities adapted to the specific needs of older persons  
**NO**
- Lifelong learning, education and skills-building opportunities that are affordable and financially accessible  
**NO**



The review of statistics published during 2015 - 2021 by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) and UN agencies shows that data on older women and men is collected across various socio-economic indicators. However, 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.

- When data is collected it is not always fully analysed or disaggregated. For example, data on pension coverage, educational status and disability are not further disaggregated in terms of age and sex. Similarly, reports published by the CSO on the state of the population, e.g. Statistical overview of Iraq (2019), Women and men report (2018), and the SDG report (2020) do not include age-disaggregated data.
- There are knowledge gaps on violence, abuse and neglect of older women and men, poverty rate, health insurance coverage among older persons, and the wellbeing of older persons with disabilities.

Iraq CSO administered two surveys that could close some of the knowledge gaps, i.e. Survey on the Social and Health Status of Older Persons in Care Homes (2013) and Iraq Women Integrated Social and Health Survey (I-WISH 2011). However, these surveys are at least 8 years old, and there is a need for a regular specialised survey to build more in-depth and comprehensive evidence on ageing and the situation of older persons. Additionally, a concerted effort is needed to produce consistent analysis and reporting of data by age, sex, and disability.

## 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 17 May 2021
- ii Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, 2019, The future we want. Iraq vision for Sustainable Development 2030. [https://mop.gov.iq/en/min\\_publications/view/list?id=18&lastcontent=474](https://mop.gov.iq/en/min_publications/view/list?id=18&lastcontent=474)
- iii Central Statistical Organization Iraq, Indicators of the National Disability Survey in Iraq, 2016. Demographic characteristics of the disabled, <http://cosit.gov.iq/ar/2018-08-29-07-56-45> Accessed 3 July 2021
- iv WHO Maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and ageing data portal, Number of countries with national legislation and enforcement strategies against age-based discrimination. As of 14 June 2012 country level information was not available.
- v Central Statistical Organization Iraq, Statistical group 2018 - 2019, Chapter 19: Human development statistics, Table 191/ Sustainable Development Goals 2015 - 2030, SDG 1.2.1, <http://cosit.gov.iq/ar/2018-2019> Accessed 5 July, 2021

- vi ILOSTAT explorer, Employment-to-population ratio by sex and age (%) – Annual, 2017. <https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer52/> Accessed 1 June 2021
- vii UNDESA, the Global SDG Indicators Database, SDG 1.3.1, Proportion of population above statutory pensionable age receiving a pension, by sex (%), 2020. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> Accessed 10 May 2021
- viii World Values Survey wave 7, 2018. Question 48. Percentage of respondents who rated their freedom of choice and control over their life on the scale 1 - 10, where 1 means “none at all” and 10 means “a great deal”. Authors grouped scores into the following categories: ‘Not at all’ -1; ‘Limited’ – 2, 3, 4; ‘Moderate’ – 5, 6, 7; ‘High’ – 8, 9, 10. Number of persons aged 65+ surveyed: 23; number of persons aged 16+ surveys: 1,200. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp> Accessed 2 July 2021
- ix World Health Organization, 2015, Noncommunicable Diseases Risk Factors STEPS Survey Iraq 2015. Table 3.8.2.1 Percentage of respondents who were subjected to violence in the past 12 months, p. 44. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/2015-steps-country-report-iraq>
- x 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 16 May 2021
- xi Ibid. Prevalence of diabetes mellitus 2019
- xii World Health Organization, 2015, Noncommunicable Diseases Risk Factors STEPS Survey Iraq 2015. Table 3.9.1.3 Prevalence of Hypertension (SBP140 and/or DBP90 mmHg or currently on medication for raised blood pressure) among the respondents, by age and sex, Iraq 2015, p. 47. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/2015-steps-country-report-iraq>
- xiii Central Statistical Organization Iraq, Survey of well-being via instant and frequent tracking 2017 - 2018, Table 3-5 Distribution of individuals aged 10+ according to their educational attainment, <http://cosit.gov.iq/documents/Living%20conditions/2018-%202017مسح%20رصد%20وتقويم%20الفقر%20في%20العراق%20لسنة%202017.pdf>
- xiv 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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