

Country profile:

The rights and wellbeing of older persons in Tunisia

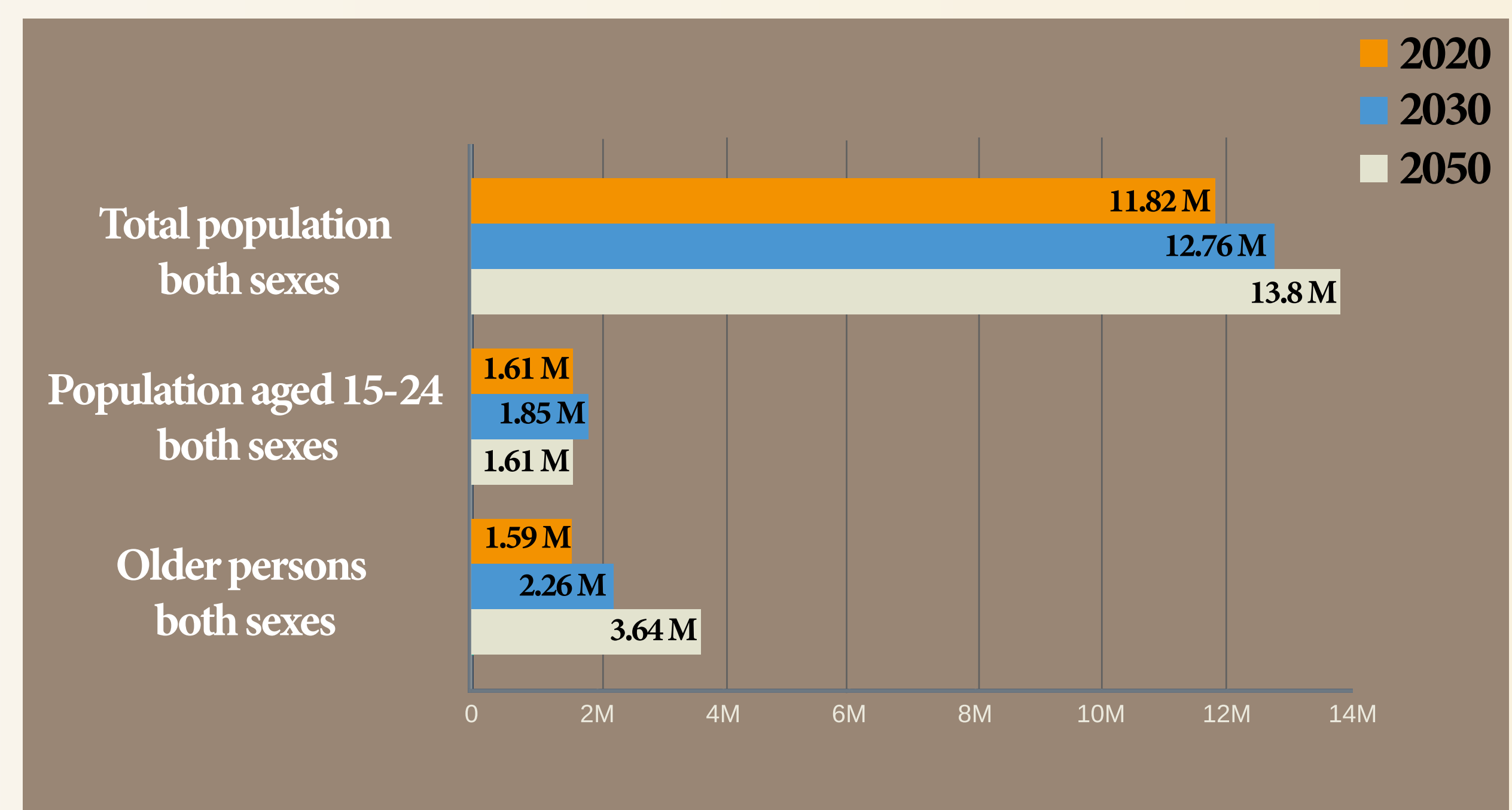
This infographic is part of the set of country profiles on ageing across the Arab region. Drawing on the latest openly available data from 2015 - 2020, it highlights the situation of older women and men¹ in relation to income, health, education, autonomy and safety, and how national systems and national 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.²



GENERAL CONTEXT

Number and proportion of older and younger persons, 2020 - 2050³

Tunisia is going through a demographic transition as the number of persons aged 60+ is expected to double between 2020 - 2050 from 1,587,122 (13.4% of the total population) to 3,644,295 (26.4%). Over the same period, the number of persons aged 15 - 24 will decrease.

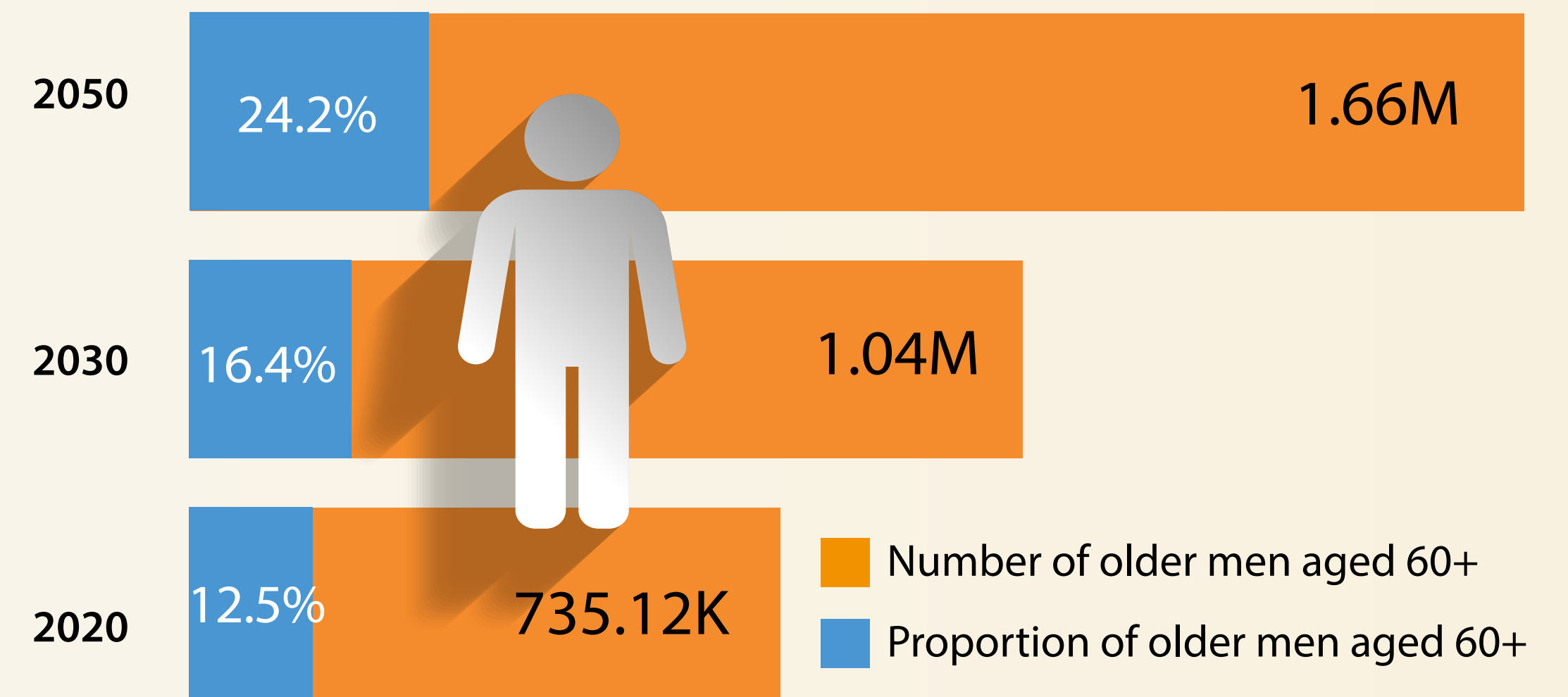
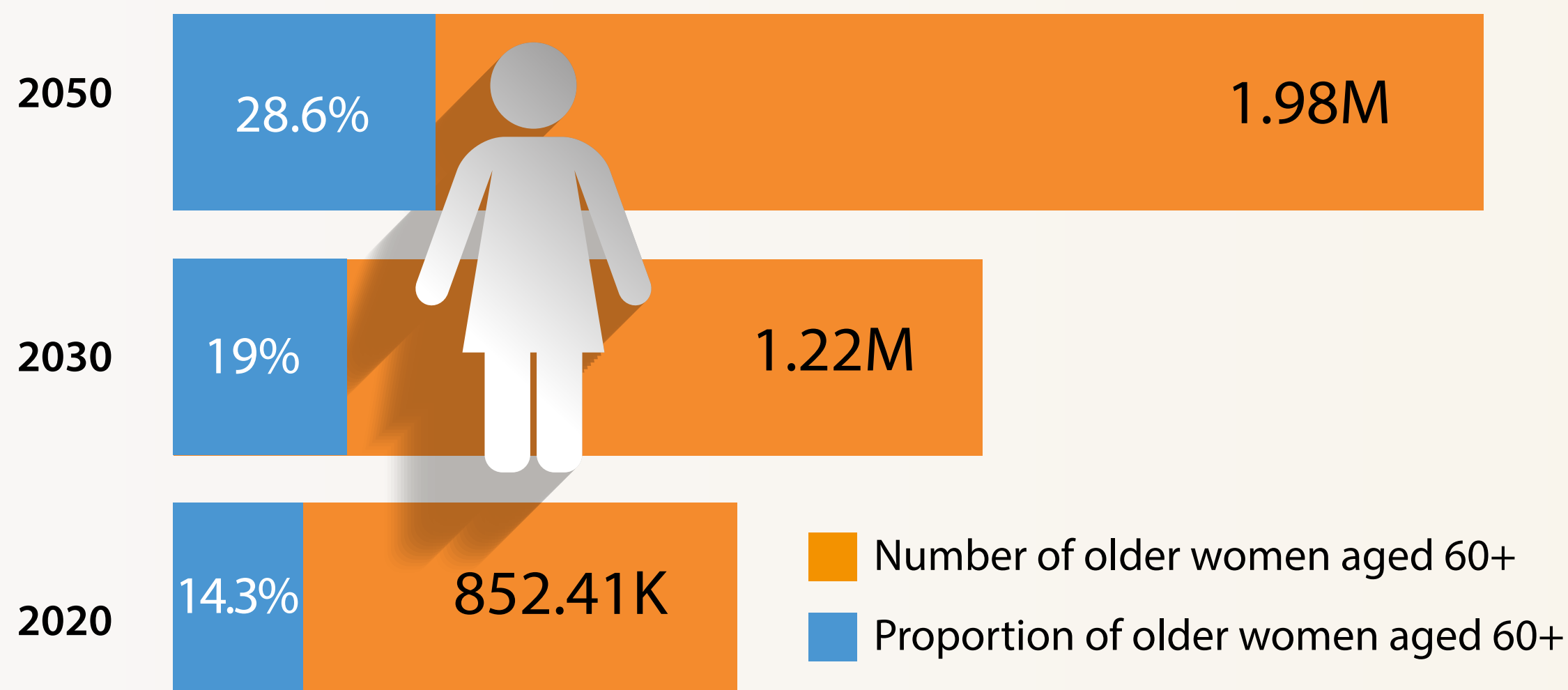
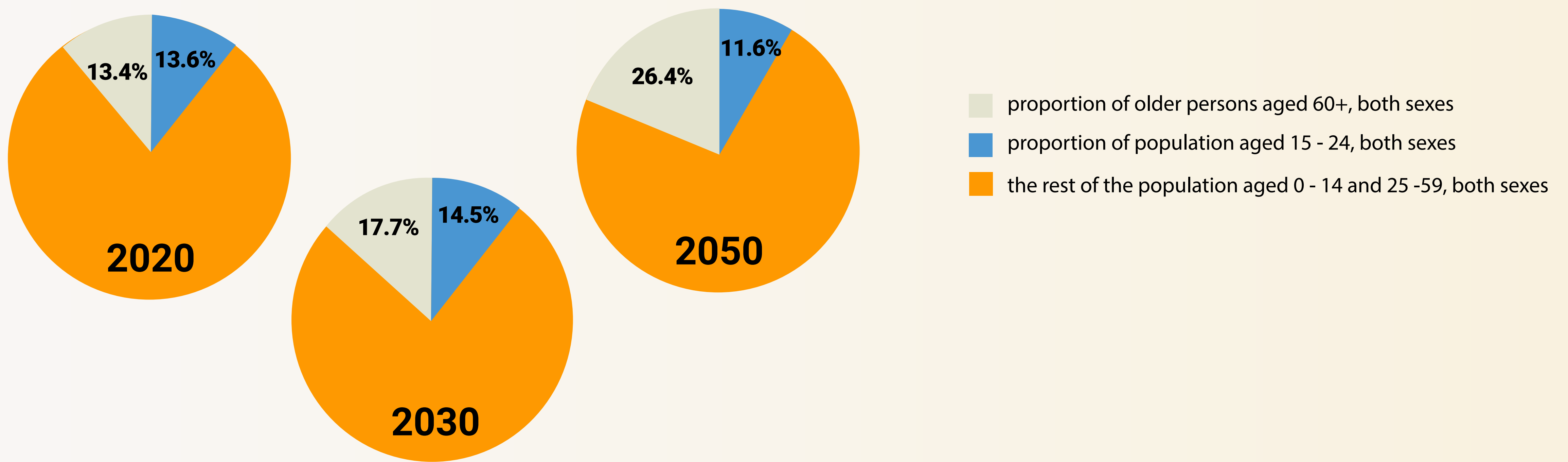


At the time of the production of this profile, the Multi-Sectoral National Strategy for Older Persons 2021- 2030 was at a draft stage. To assess the policy response, the profile examined the 10 Years Plan for Elderly 2003 – 2012.

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

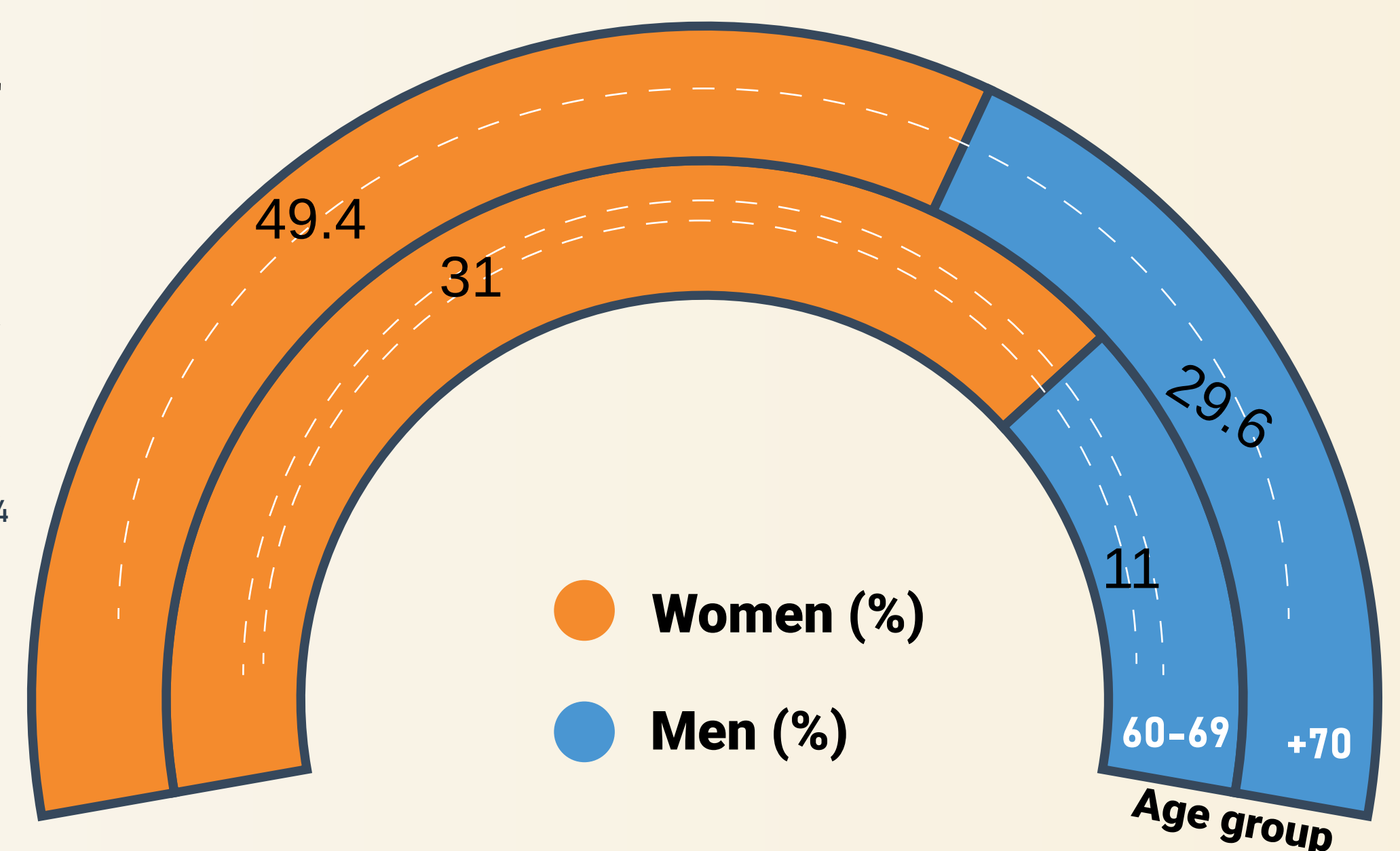
² The profiles were prepared by HelpAge International. The profiles do not reflect the views of UNFPA and any errors are attributed to the researchers.

³ 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.



Proportion of older persons with disabilitiesⁱⁱ

Disability rates increase with age as 31% of women and 11% of men aged 60 - 69 have limited functional ability compared with 49.4% of women and 29.6% of men aged 70+. To ensure every individual is able to lead an independent and dignified life at any age, and communities can benefit from the demographic dividend,⁴ national policies and systems across all sectors must address the wellbeing and rights of individuals across the life course.⁵



Existence of national strategy on ageing **YES**ⁱⁱⁱ

Existence of national legislation and enforcement strategy against age-based discrimination **N.I.**^{iv 6}

⁴ 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>

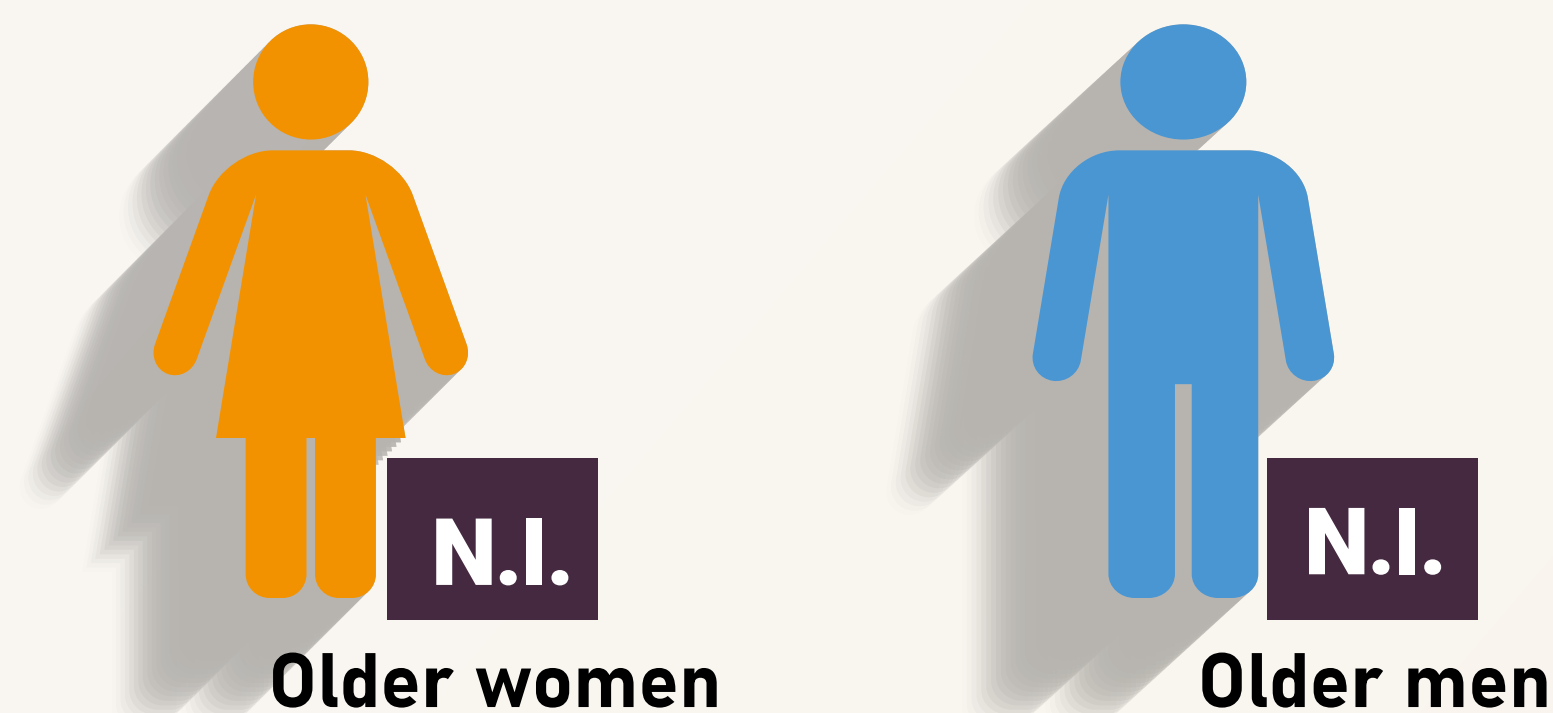
⁵ Life course approach to policy recognises that individuals' roles, abilities, and needs are shaped by positive and negative experiences, and as we age these experiences accumulate. To mitigate immediate and long-term impacts of disadvantages, policies must consider how intersecting identities and varying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

⁶ n.i. - data or information is not available.

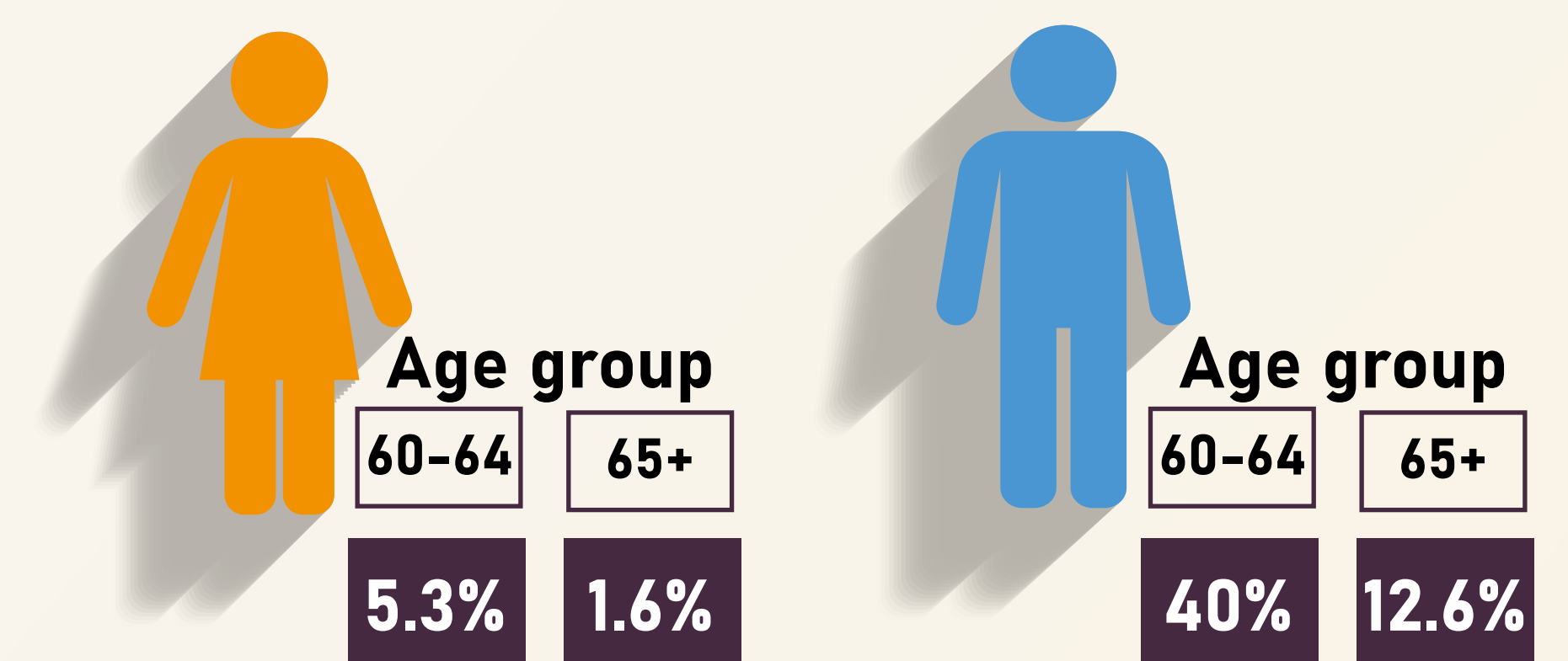
THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND WORK

Data on poverty of older adults is not available. 40% of men aged 60 - 64 are in employment compared with 5% of women of the same age. Older men are eight times more likely to continue working past the age of 65 than women. The National Strategy on Ageing does not address the right of older women and men to social protection and an adequate pension so they can lead independent and dignified lives on an equal basis with others. Only 17% of older women have a pension compared with 94% of men. The strategy also does not address the right to work when receiving a pension.

How many older persons live in poverty?

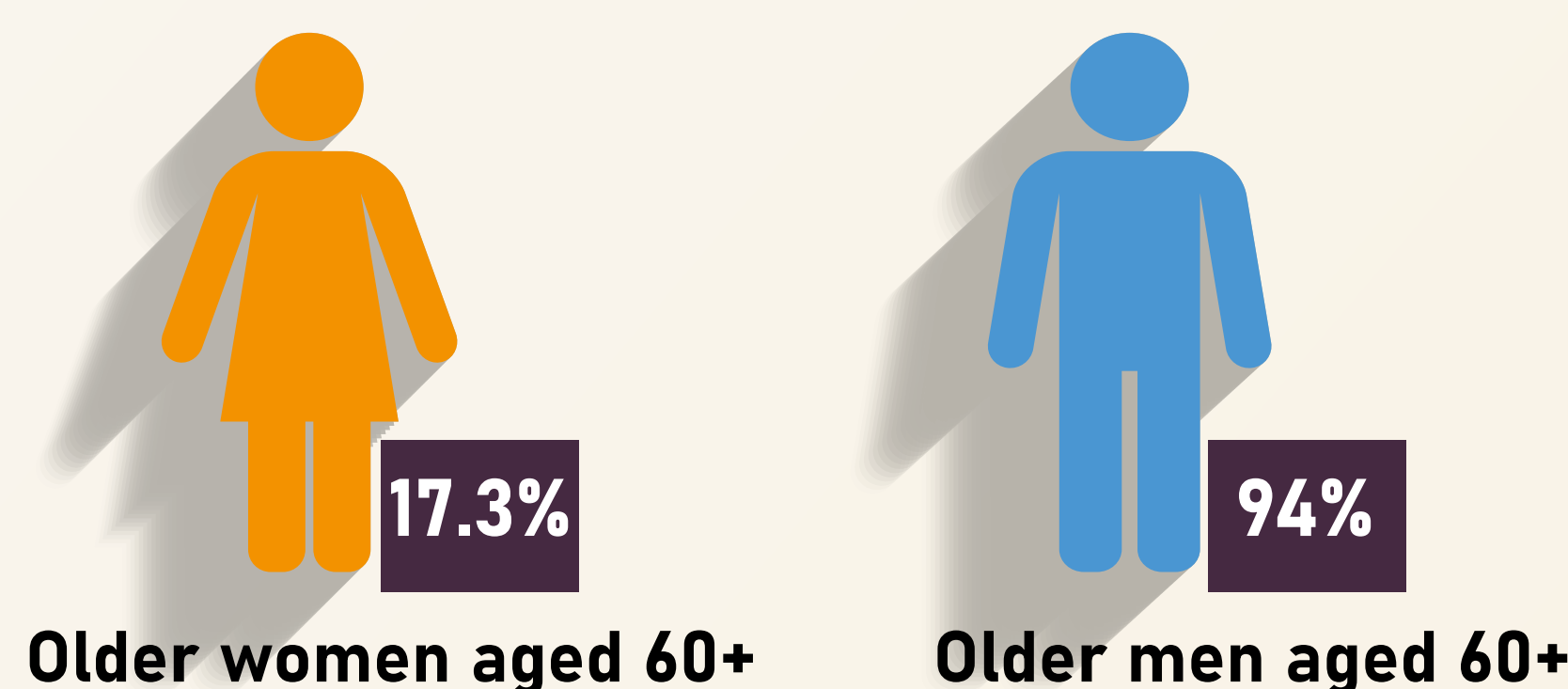


Who works in older age?^v



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

Pension systems provide income security for all older persons^{vi}



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 in receipt of a pension **NO**

THE RIGHT TO AUTONOMY, EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Nearly 5% of persons aged 65+ feel they have no control over their decisions, while 18.6% of older persons say they have some freedom in their life. This data should be considered with caution due to the small sample size. The National Strategy addresses the right of older women and men to make their own decisions however, only in relation to family life. The strategy does not recognise older persons' 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? ^{vii}

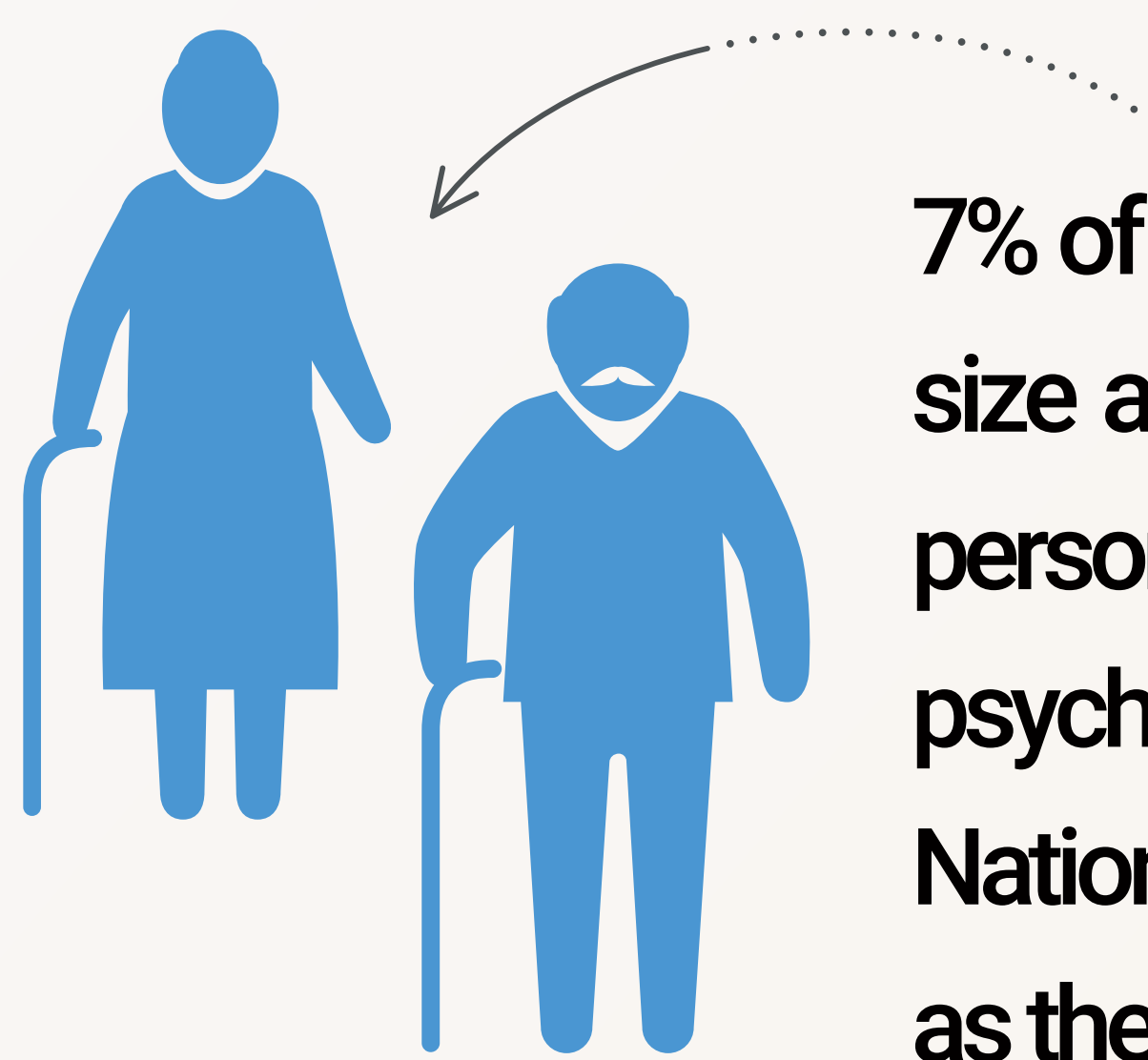
| | Older persons, both sexes (%) | Total population aged 16+ (%) |
|-------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | +65 | +16 |
| None at all | 4.7 | 5.8 |
| Limited | 18.6 | 17.5 |
| Moderate | 36.5 | 42.9 |
| High | 40.3 | 34.1 |

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

National strategy on ageing addresses:

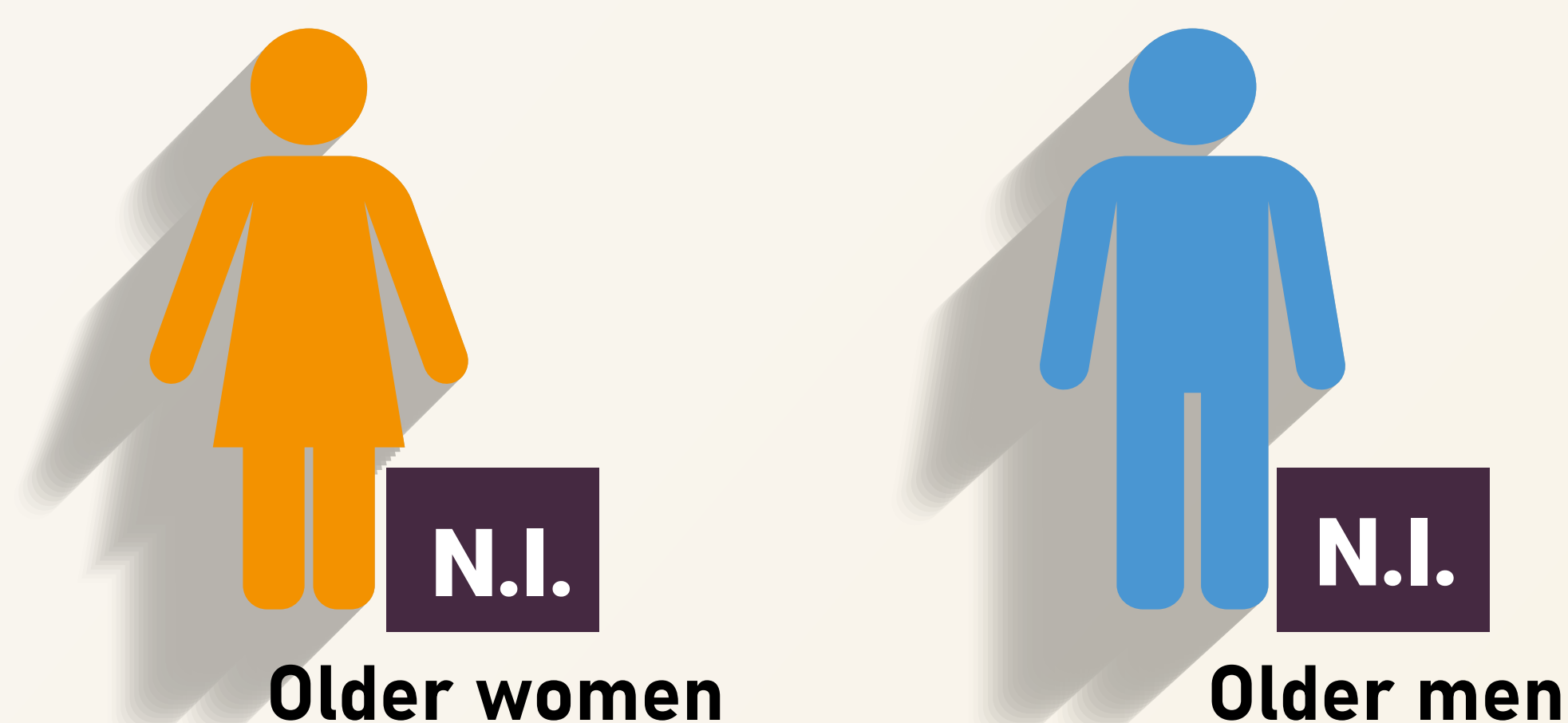
- Older persons' autonomy and independence over all aspects of their lives **Partial (limited to family life)**
- Enjoyment of legal capacity to make decisions, to determine life plans and to lead autonomous and independent lives **NO**

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT



7% of older persons have been a victim of crime.^{viii} This evidence is based on the small sample size and should be treated with caution. While a small-scale study on violence against older persons was conducted in 2019, nationally representative data on physical and sexual violence, psychological and financial abuse, and neglect of older women and men is not available.^{ix} The National Strategy on Ageing does not address all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, as well as the need to produce and disseminate 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:

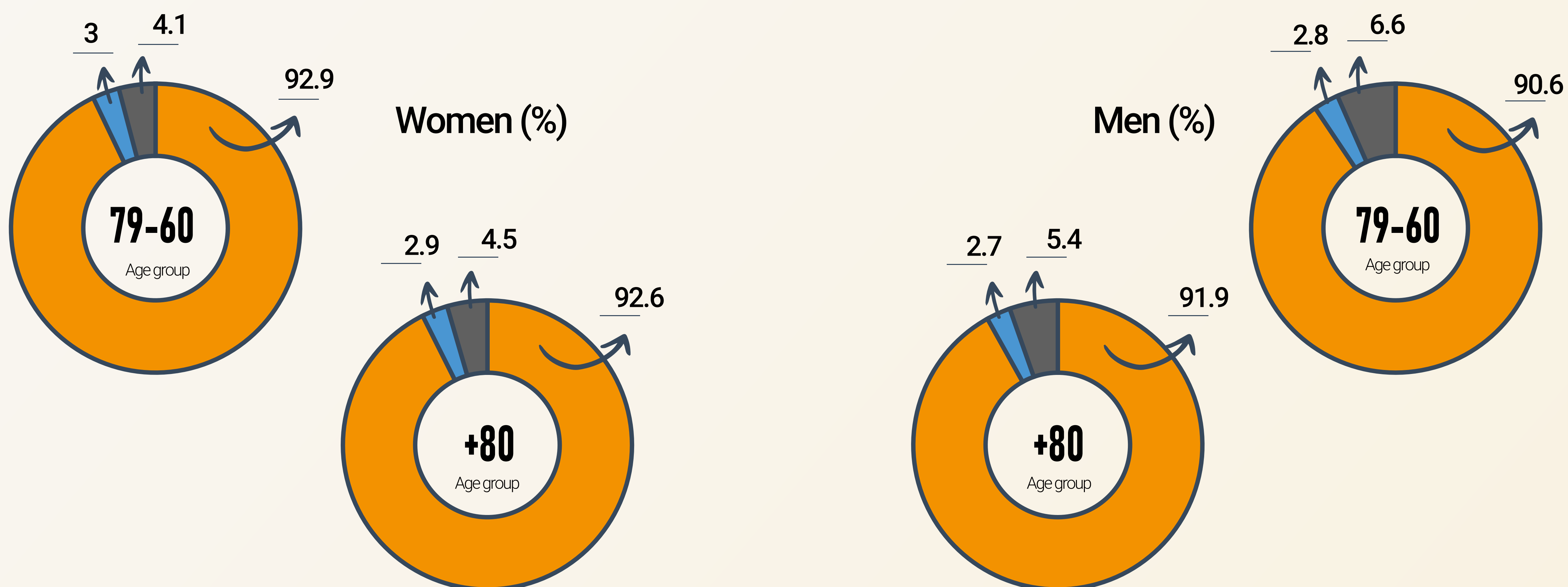
- All forms of violence, abuse and neglect in public and private settings **NO**
- Regular collection, analysis, utilisation and public dissemination of disaggregated information and statistics on all forms of violence, abuse and neglect **NO**

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

Non-communicable diseases account for more than 90% of years lived with disabilities among older persons. Musculoskeletal disorders, diabetes and kidney diseases, and sense organ disease are leading causes of disability for both older women and men. The prevalence of hypertension highlights gender differences as older women are 1.2 times more likely to have high blood pressure than men. The national strategy addresses older persons' right to accessible physical and mental health services. However, it does not include provisions for cognitive health care or palliative care.

What are the key causes of disability in older age?^x

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



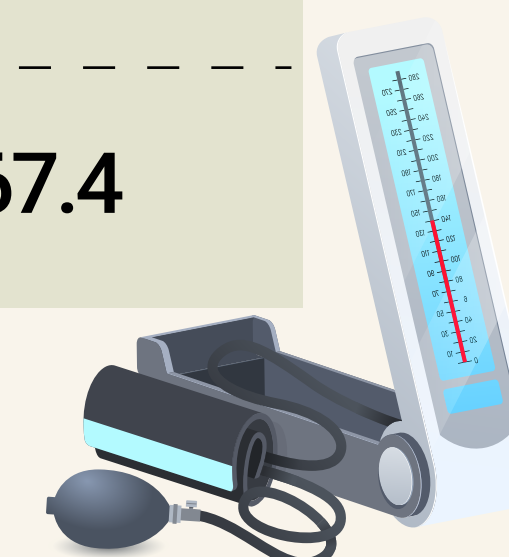
How many older women and men have diabetes?^{xi}

| Age group | Women (%) | Men (%) |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 6079- | 36.9 | 38.0 |
| 70+ | 36.4 | 36.2 |
| All ages | 14.8 | 16.1 |



How many older women and men have hypertension?^{xii}

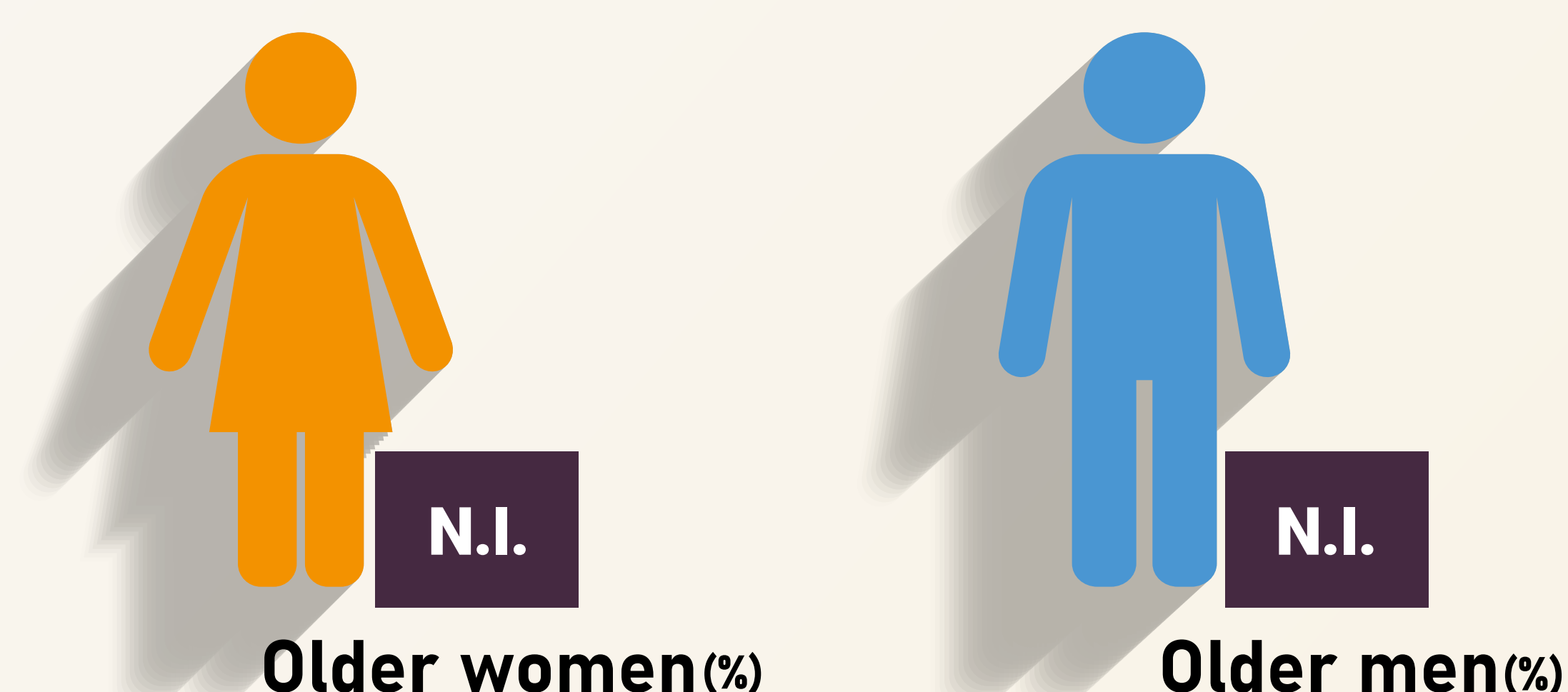
| Age group | Women (%) | Men (%) |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 6069- | 70.4 | 57.6 |
| 70+ | 79.1 | 67.4 |



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:

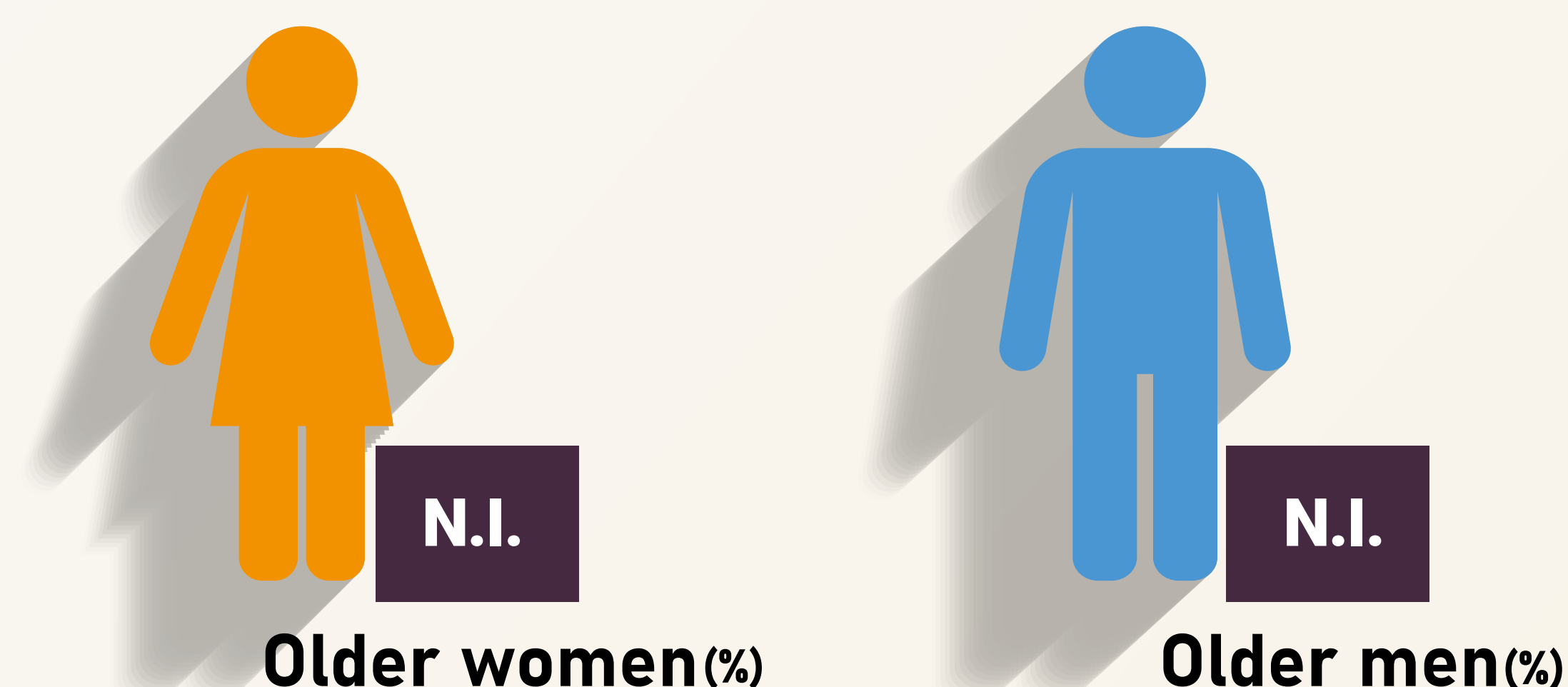
- Continuum of quality and appropriate physical, mental and cognitive health services available and accessible to older persons and which deliver primary, secondary and tertiary health care integrated with care and support, wherever they may reside **Partial (doesn't include integration of health and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

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Since the 2014 Census, more recent statistics on educational attainment of older women and men has not been made available. While the National Strategy identifies the need to develop literacy and professional training, it offers limited considerations for other types of education and lifelong learning opportunities, and their affordability.

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^{xiii}
Partial (limited to family roles, literacy skills, and third generation universities)
- 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 National Institute of Statistics, the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health and Women, Family, Children and Seniors, and UN agencies shows that data is collected across various socio-economic indicators. However, older persons are practically invisible in this data. 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.

- The most recent open data on health insurance coverage and educational attainment is from the 2014 Census.
- There are data gaps on violence, abuse and neglect of older women and men, poverty in older age, and the wellbeing of older persons with disabilities.

In addition to concerted efforts to close data gaps and improve timeliness of statistics, there is a need for a specialised survey to build more in-depth and comprehensive evidence on ageing and the situation of older persons.

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 Ministry of Health and National Institute of Health, 2019, The Health of Tunisians. Results of the Tunisian Health Examination Survey (THES-2016), Table 100 Severe difficulties in carrying out daily activities (at work and at home) during the last 20 days according to socio-economic determinants. <http://www.santetunisie.ms.tn/images/rapport-final-enquete2020.pdf>
- iii The profile covers information in 10 Years Plan for Elderly 2003 - 2012, 2004, Ministry of Social Affairs and Solidarity. At the time of the production of this profile, The Multi-Sectoral National Strategy for Older Persons 2021- 2030 was being drafted.
- iv Various legal frameworks affirm the rights and needs of older persons, e.g. the Constitution Article 21 recognises that all citizens are equal in their rights and cannot be discriminated, and Law 94 - 114 requires public authorities to ensure older persons' access to healthcare, housing, public transportation, and other services. However, based on the forthcoming report by UNFPA Tunisia country office on the state of older people in Tunisia it is not clear whether a law prohibiting age-based discrimination in public and private spheres exists. Additional source of information is 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 2021, country level information was not available.
- v ILOSTAT explorer, Employment-to-population ratio by sex and age (%) – Annual, 2017. <https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer52/> Accessed 1 June 2021
- vi 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
- vii 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: 40. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp> Accessed 20 April 2021

- viii The Arab Women Organization, the Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Seniors, and UNFPA, 2019, Violence against Older People: Tunisia.
https://tunisia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/violences_against_seniors_tunisia_-_en_0.pdf
- ix World Values Survey wave 7, 2019. Q144: Have you been the victim of a crime during the past year? Sample size: both sexes aged 65+= 129, both sexes aged 16+ = 1,208, <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp> Accessed 18 May 2021
- 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 Ministry of Health and National Institute of Health, 2019, The health of Tunisians. Results of the Tunisian Health Examination Survey (THES-2016), Table 17 Distribution of the prevalence of diabetes according to socio-economic determinants. <http://www.santetunisie.ms.tn/images/rapport-final-enquete2020.pdf>
- xii Ministry of Health and National Institute of Health, 2019, The health of Tunisians. Results of the Tunisian Health Examination Survey (THES-2016), Table 23 Distribution of the prevalence of arterial hypertension according to socio-economic determinants. <http://www.santetunisie.ms.tn/images/rapport-final-enquete2020.pdf>
- xiii 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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