



# Country profile: The rights and wellbeing of older persons in Lebanon

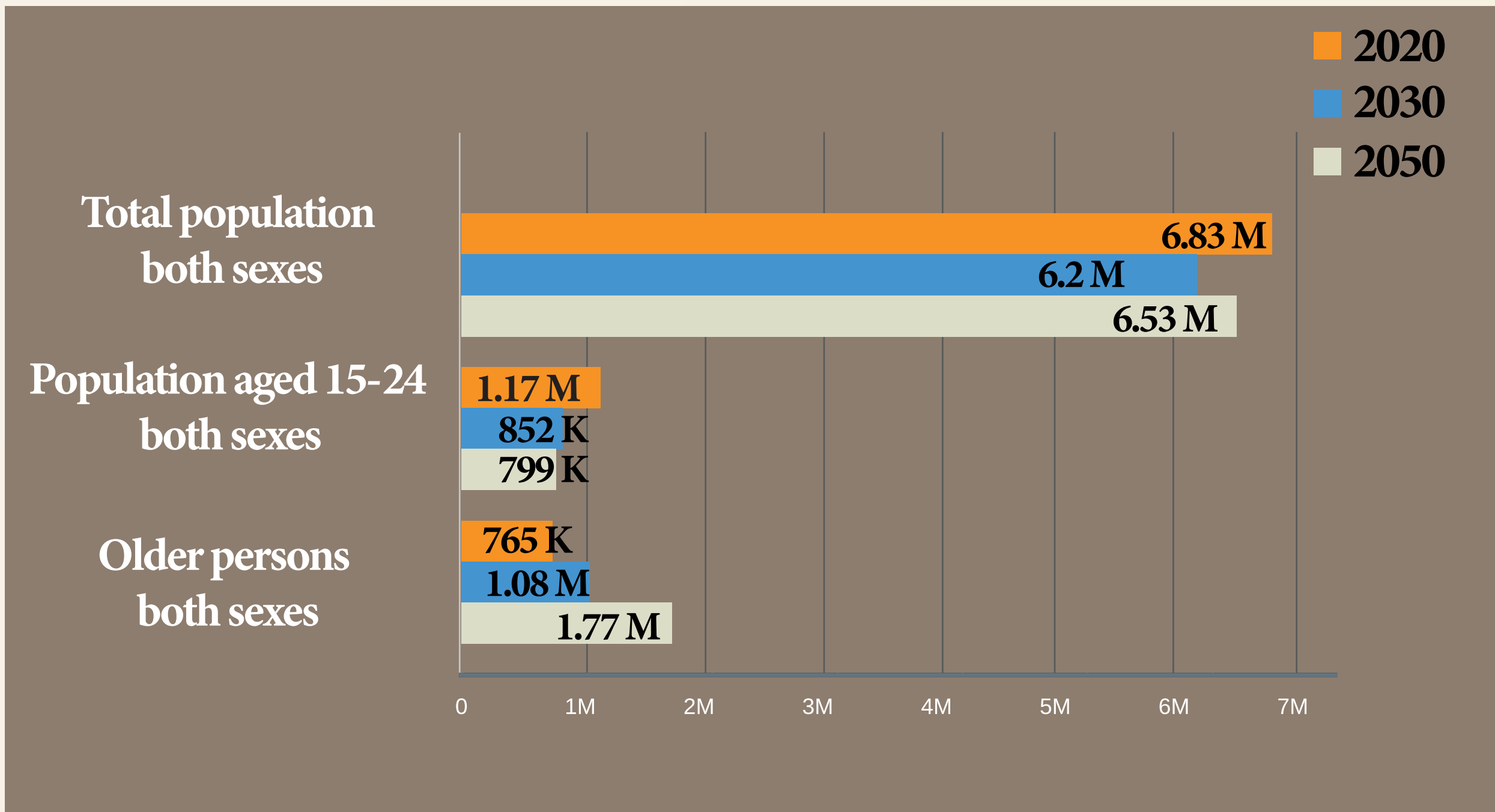
This infographic is part of the set of country profiles on ageing across the Arab region. Drawing on the latest openly available data from 2015 - 2020, it highlights the situation of older women and men<sup>1</sup> in relation to income, health, education, autonomy and safety, and how national systems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



## GENERAL CONTEXT

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

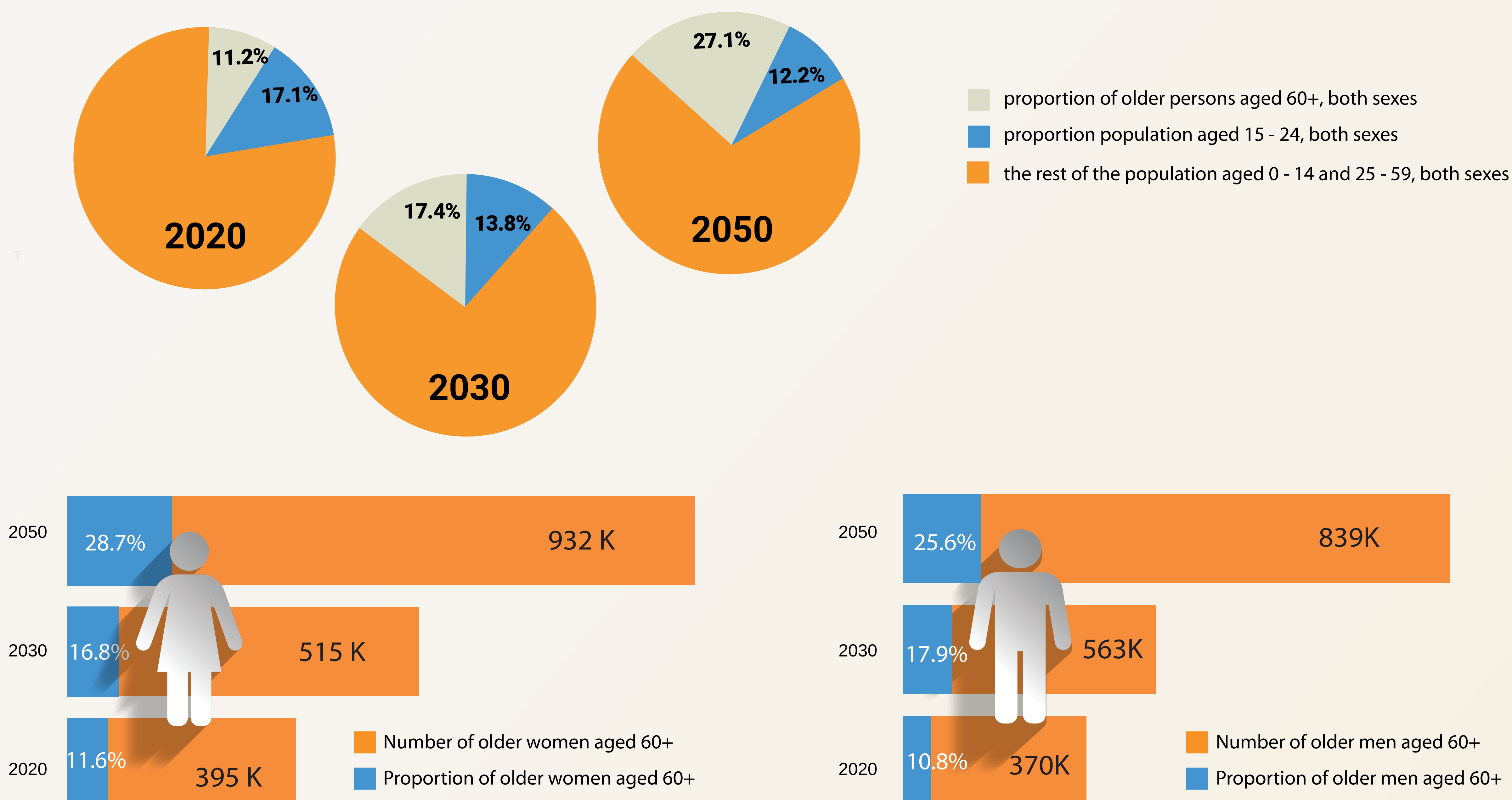
Lebanon is going through a demographic shift as the number of persons aged 60+ is expected to more than double between 2020 - 2050 from about 765,000 (11.2 % of the total population) to 1.7 million (27.1%).



Over the same period, the number of persons aged 15 - 24 will decrease by about a third. Additionally, the country hosts nearly 1.5 million refugees of which 4.4% are persons aged 65+<sup>ii</sup>.

<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.





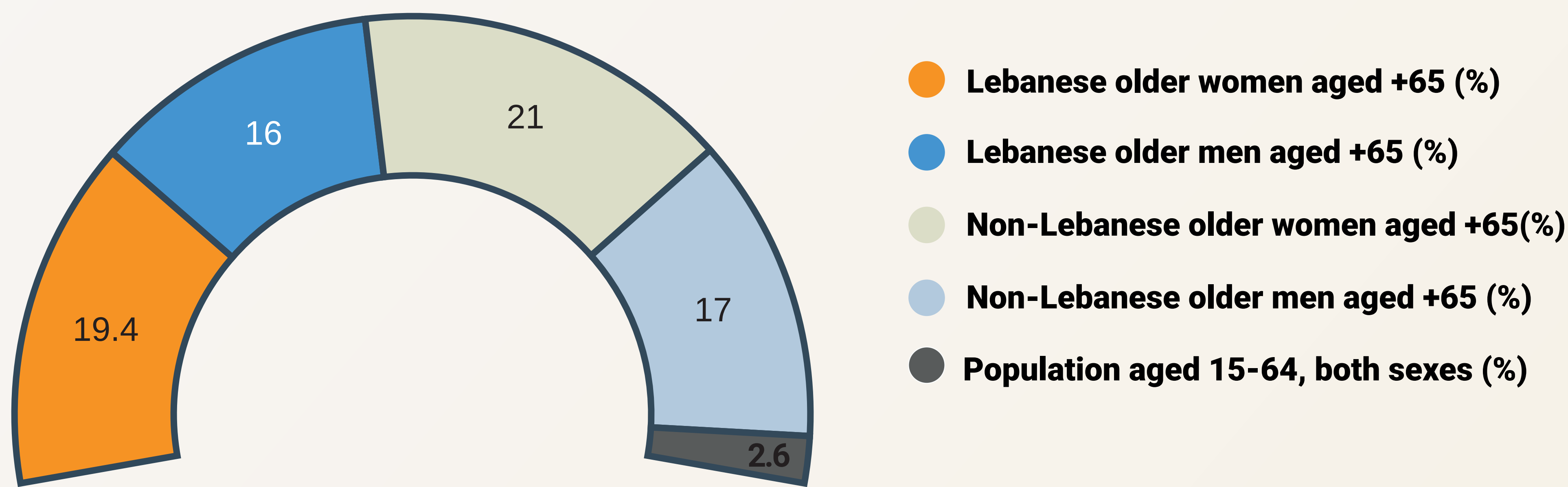
Disability rates increase with age as 16 - 21% of persons aged 65+ have a disability compared with 2.6% of the population aged 15 - 64. Across the ethnic backgrounds, older women (19.4% Lebanese and 21% Non-Lebanese) are more likely to have functional difficulties than older men (16% Lebanese and 17% Non-Lebanese).

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 National Strategy for Older Persons in Lebanon 2020 – 2030 by the Ministry of Social Affairs, UNFPA, ESCWA and CSA.

<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/>

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



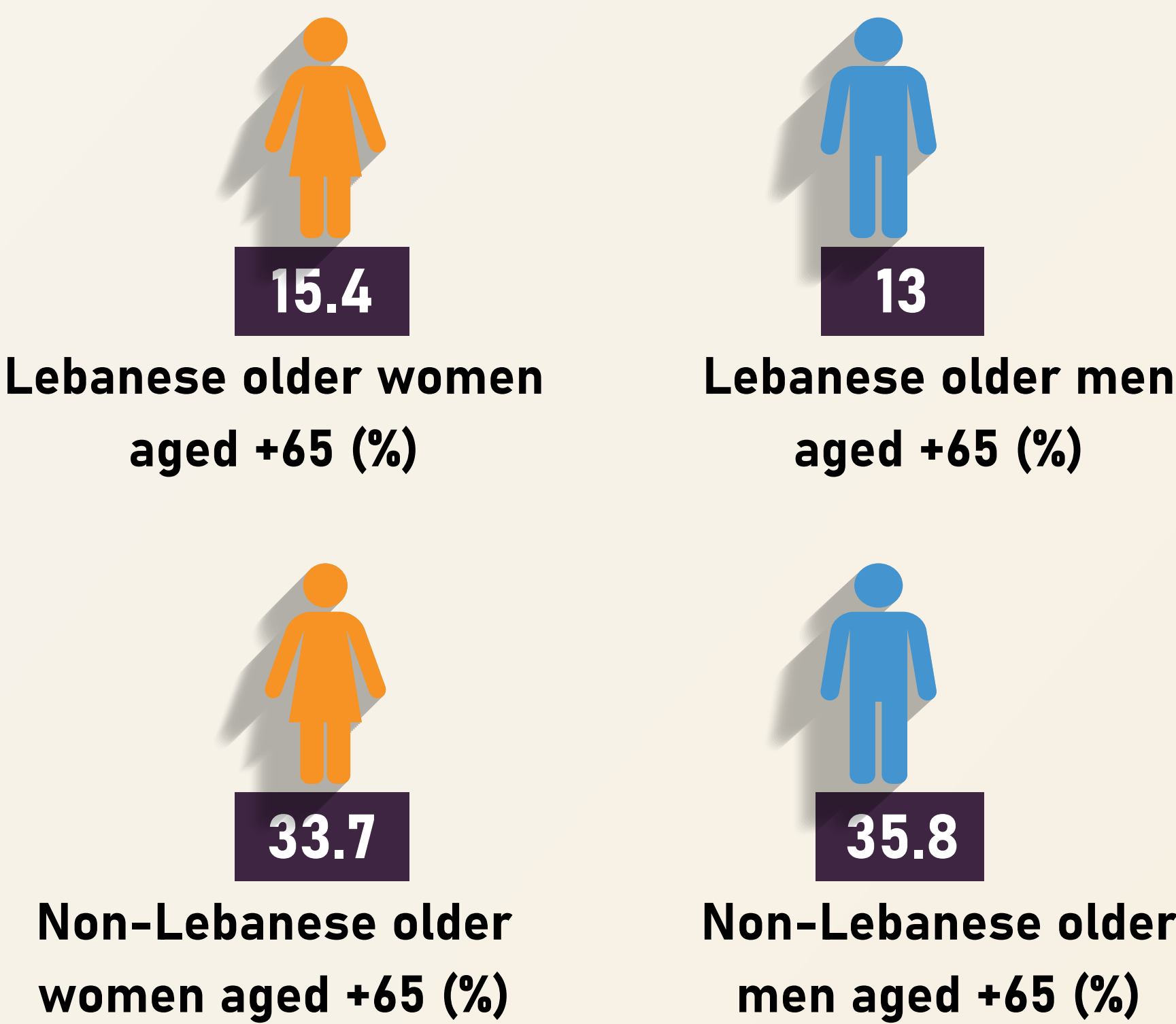
Existence of national strategy on ageing<sup>iv</sup> **YES**

Existence of national legislation and enforcement strategy against age-based discrimination **N.I.**<sup>6</sup>

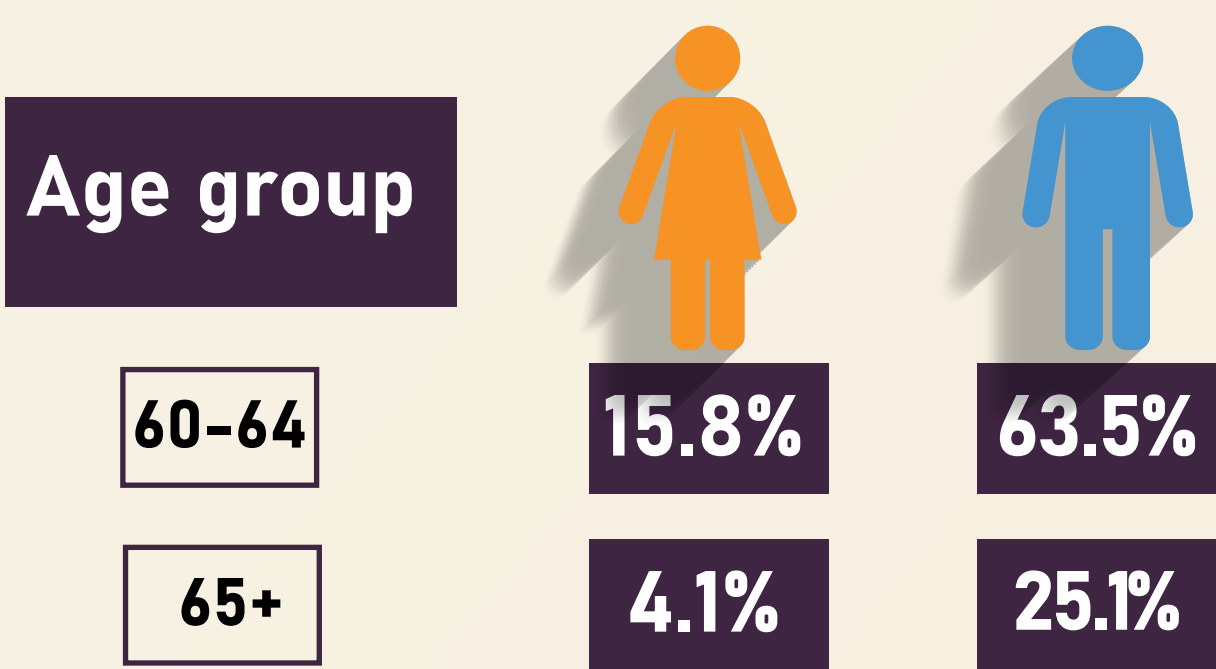
THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND WORK

Within the Lebanese population 15.4% of older women and 13% of older men live on less than half of the average national income. The poverty rate among Non-Lebanese older women and men is significantly higher, 33.7% and 35.8% respectively. It is estimated that only 9.8% of older persons received a pension in 2020. Older persons continue to work past the age of 60, as 63.5% of men and 15.8% of women aged 60 - 64, and 25.1% of men and 4.1% of women aged 65+ are in employment. The National Strategy addresses older persons’ rights to social protection and a pension, and sets a strategic objective for the Government to establish comprehensive and fair social protection coverage so older persons can lead independent and dignified lives on an equal basis with others.

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



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



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



# How national systems and policies address the needs and the 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 **YES**
- Freedom from discrimination on the basis of age and other grounds in all matters related to employment  
**Partial (focus on removing barriers that preclude individuals from continuing to work as they age)**
- Right to work when receiving a pension **Partial (focus on flexible retirement schemes)**

# THE RIGHT TO AUTONOMY, EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

23.5% of older persons feel they have control over their lives. 25.5% of older women and men report limited control over their own decisions about their finances, health, family life and other aspects of their lives, and nearly 4% feel they have no control. This data should be considered with caution due to the small sample size. While the National Strategy recognises the autonomy of older people as one of its guiding principles, it does not explicitly mention their right to autonomy over all aspects of their lives or the legal capacity to make decisions.

## How much freedom of choice and control do older persons feel they have over their life?<sup>viii</sup>

	Older persons aged +65, both sexes (%)	Total population aged +16 (%)
None at all	3.9	2.8
Limited	25.5	26.7
Moderate	47.1	39.8
High	23.5	30.7

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

### National strategy on ageing addresses:

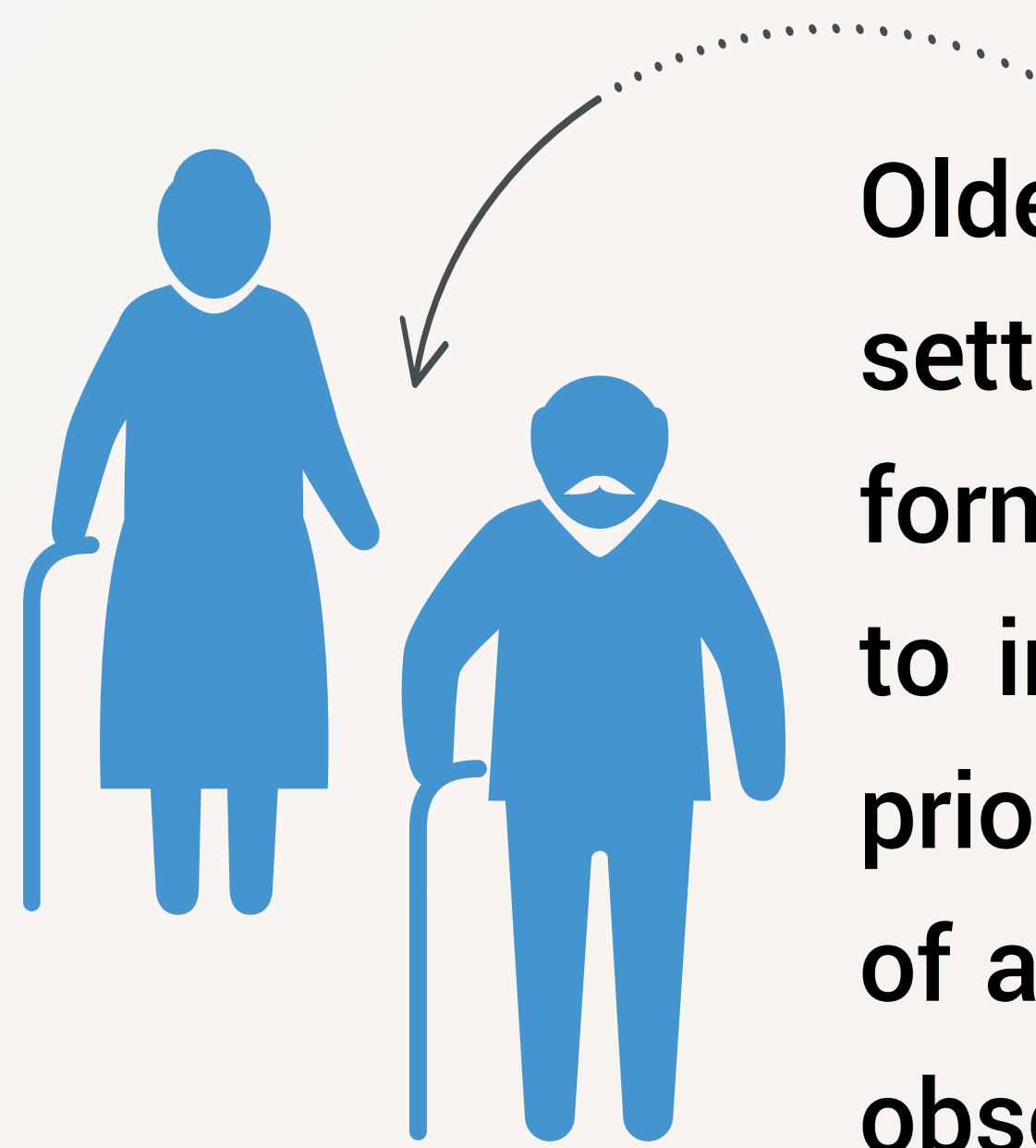
- Older persons’ autonomy and independence over all aspects of their lives  

Partial (does not mention all aspects of lives)
- Enjoyment of legal capacity to make decisions, to determine life plans and to lead autonomous and independent lives  

NO



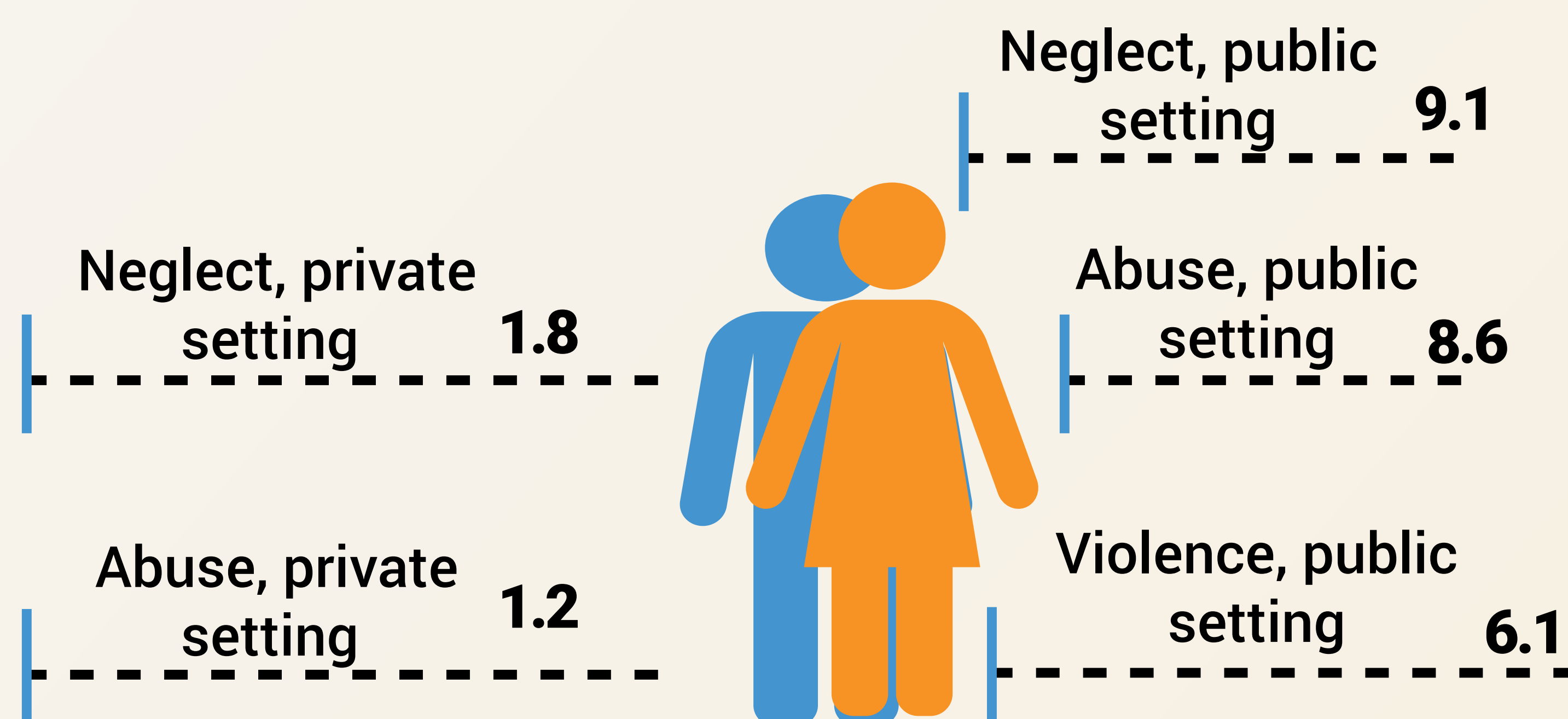
# THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT



Older persons are most likely to experience violence, abuse and neglect in public settings (8.6%) than at home (1.2%). The National Strategy recognises all these forms of violence against older persons, as well as the need for data and research to inform, support, monitor and raise awareness in relation to this and other priorities on ageing. Specifically, the National Strategy calls for the development of a road map for research and data on ageing, the establishment of a national observatory on ageing issues, and the allocation of dedicated funding for this work.

## How many older persons have experienced violence, abuse or neglect?<sup>ix</sup>

older persons aged 65+, both sexes (%)



## 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 **YES**

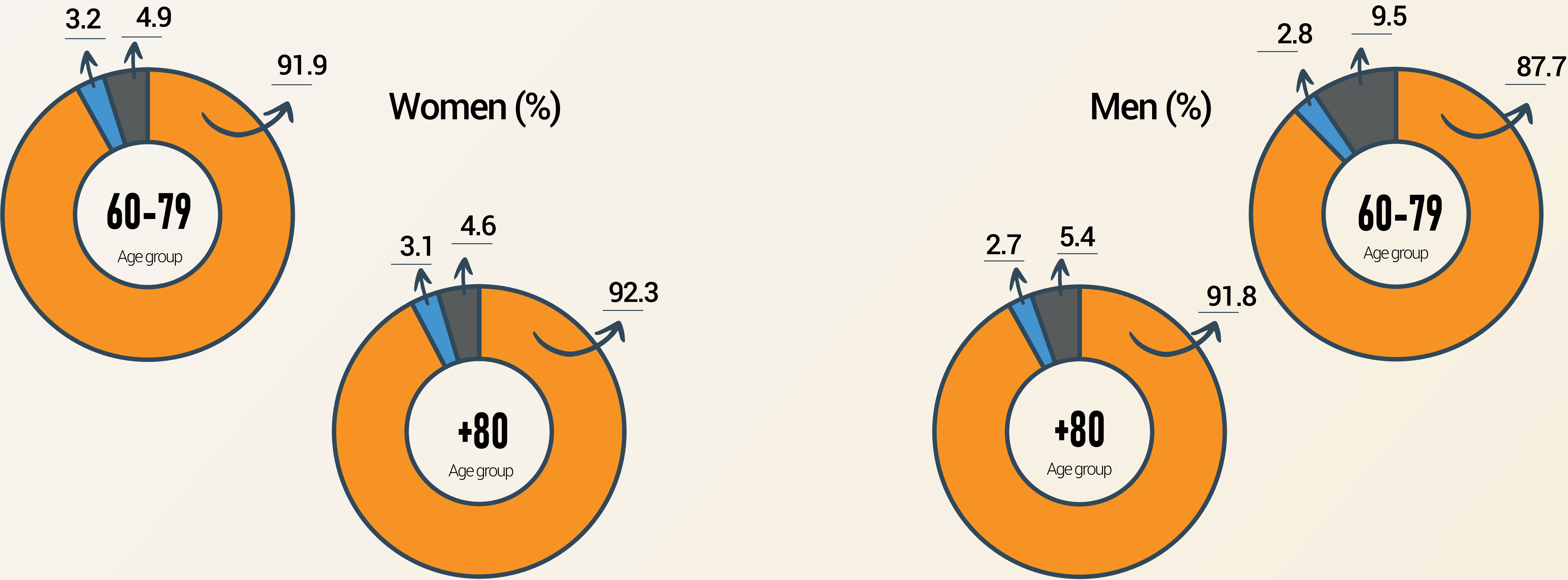
# THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

Non-communicable diseases account for more than 88% 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 collected and published, however, it was not possible to include it here as it is reported for a single age cohort 49 - 69.<sup>7</sup>

The National Strategy recognises a continuum of good quality physical, mental and cognitive health services, including provisions for integrated health and social care or palliative care. However, it is estimated that 64% of older women and 69% of older men are protected by health insurance.

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

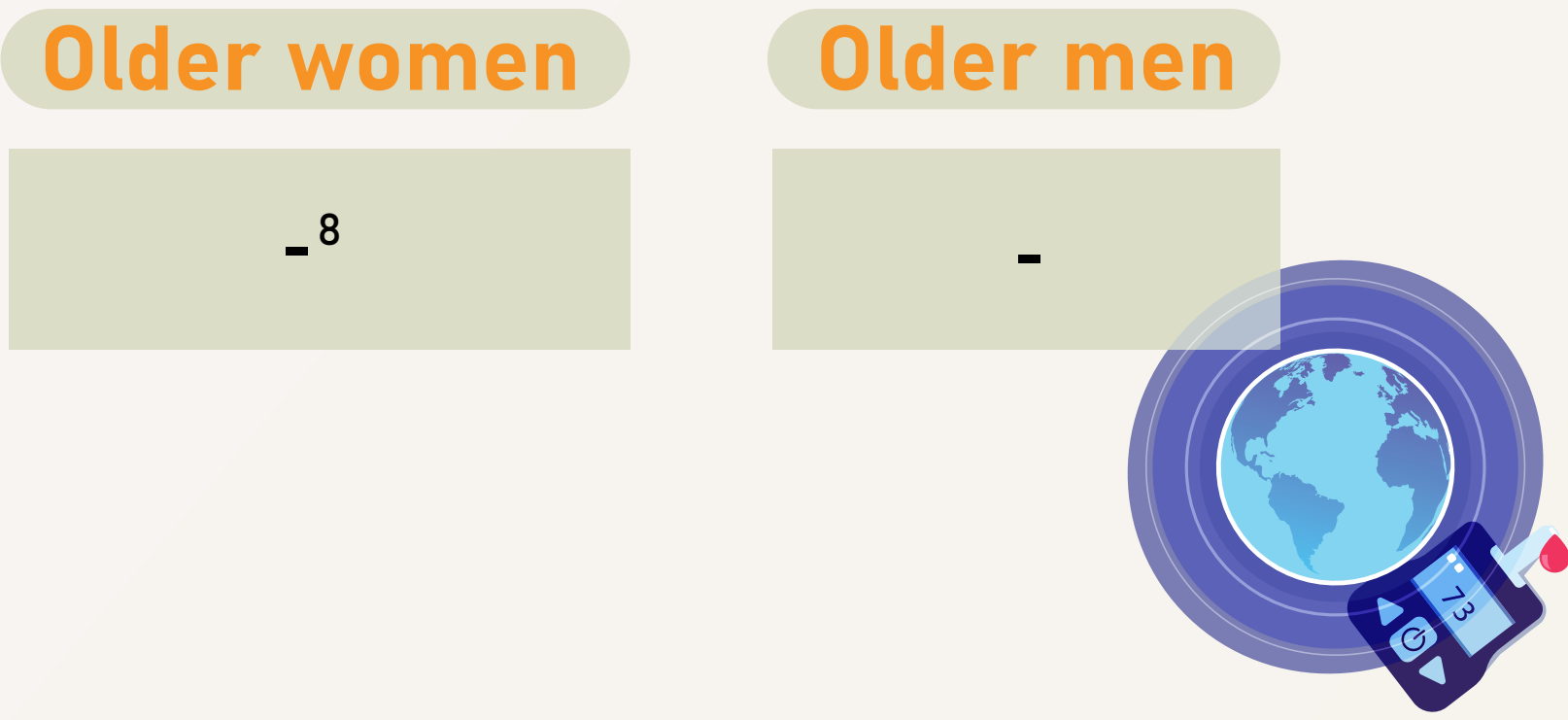
● Non- communicable diseases    ● Communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases    ● Injuries



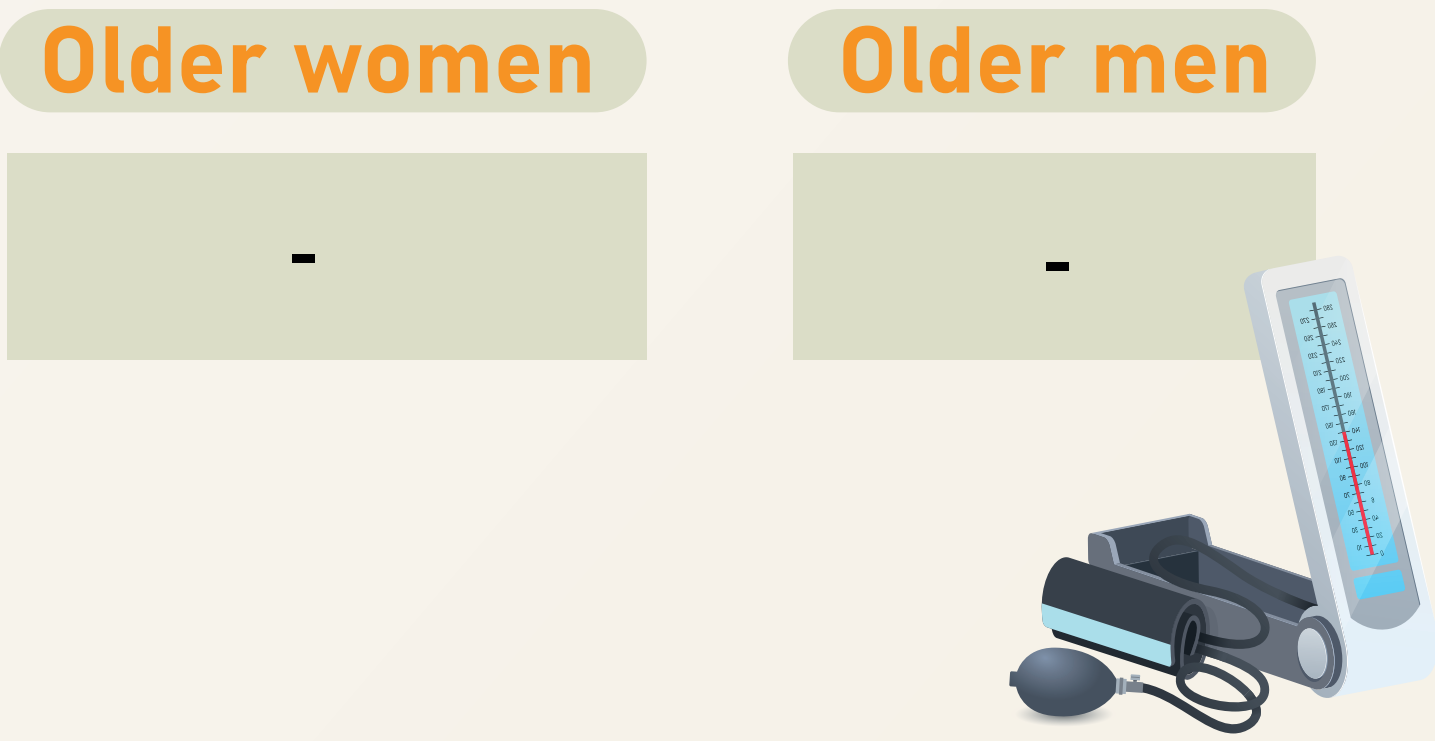
<sup>7</sup> World Health Organisation, 2016 - 2017 STEPS Country report Lebanon. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/20162017--steps-country-report-lebanon>



## How many older women and men have diabetes?



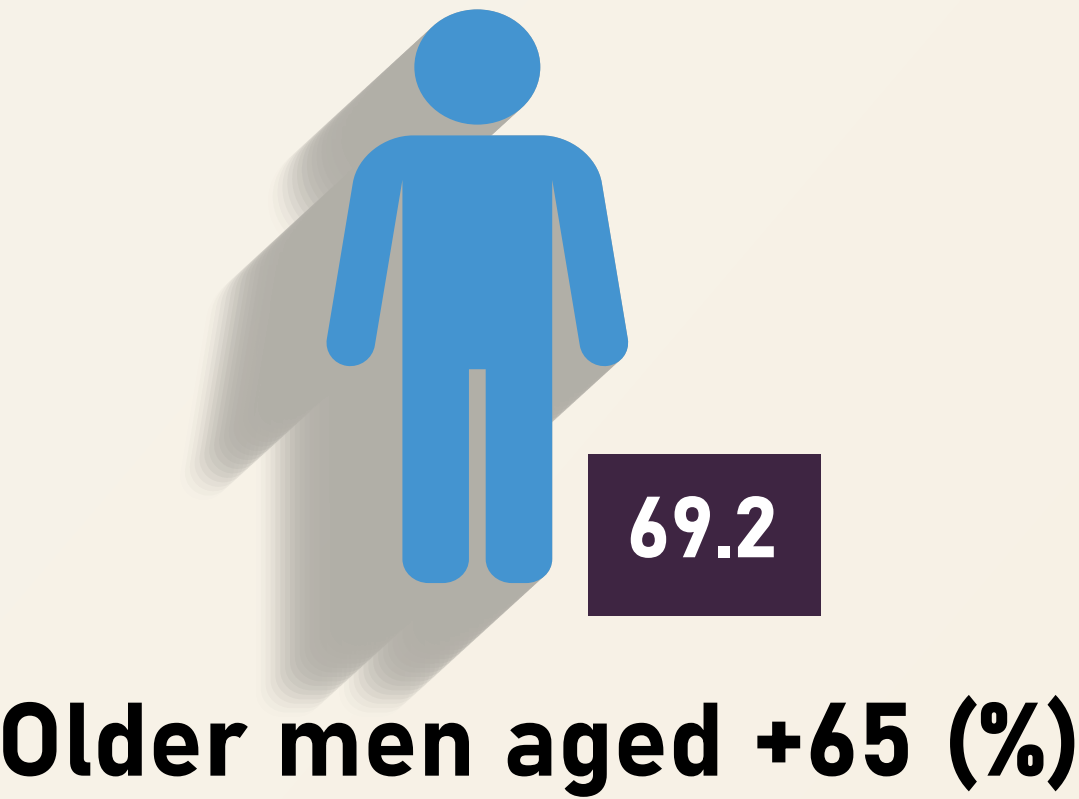
## How many older women and men have hypertension?



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

### Health protection covers all older persons<sup>xi</sup>

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 **YES**
- Holistic palliative care, including access to essential drugs and controlled medicines **YES**

<sup>8</sup> Data is available but is published for non-standard age cohort 49 - 69

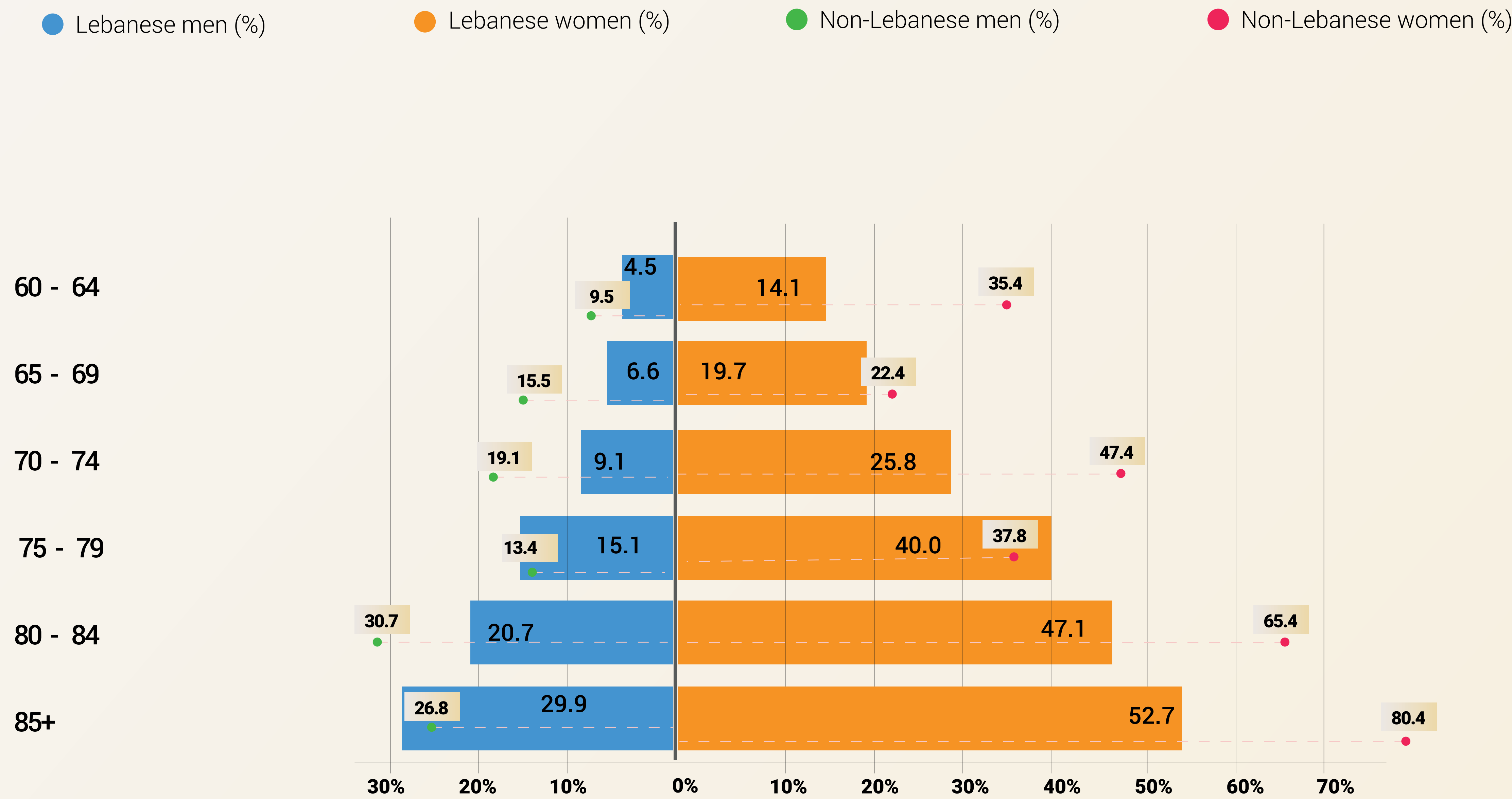


# THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

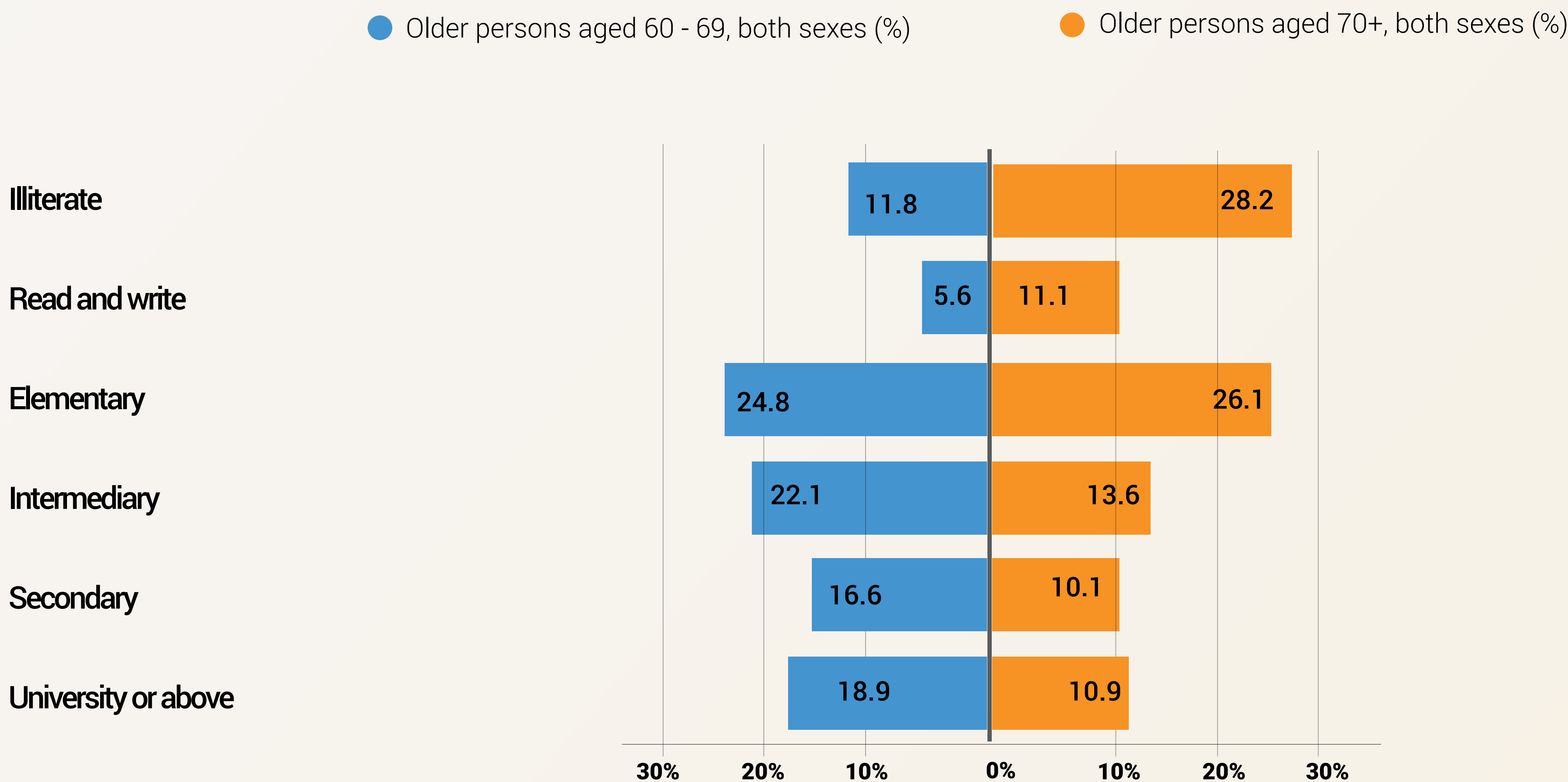
Gender, age and ethnic inequality is observed in educational outcomes. Persons aged 85+ are more likely to be illiterate than individuals aged 60 - 64. Nearly 53% of Lebanese women aged 85+ and 80% of Non-Lebanese women aged 85+ are illiterate compared with 30% of Lebanese and 27% of Non-Lebanese men of the same age. The National Strategy recognises the right of older person to lifelong learning and different forms of education and skill building. However it offers limited considerations for their affordability and accessibility.

## How many older persons have an education?

Illiteracy rate by age group, nationality and sex<sup>Xii</sup>



**Educational attainment of older persons by the highest level of education completed**<sup>xiii</sup>



**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>

YES
- 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 Lebanon Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs as well as UN agencies shows that data on older women and men is collected across a variety of socio-economic indicators with very few gaps. 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 and the National Strategy.

Firstly, while the data on older persons is collected and published, its presentation is inconsistent. For example, statistics on illiteracy is disaggregated by five age cohorts, e.g. 60 - 64, 65 - 69 etc. with an upper age band 85+, across gender and ethnicity. In comparison, health insurance coverage is disaggregated by gender for a single cohort 65+. Data on hypertension 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 the wellbeing of older persons with disabilities as well as hypertension and diabetes of older persons, because the survey on non-communicable diseases excluded older women and men age 70 and over.

Concerted efforts are required to close data gaps and provide consistent analysis and reporting of data by age, sex, and disability to build more in-depth and comprehensive evidence on ageing and the situation of older persons in Lebanon.



## 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://bit.ly/347nTkl>
- ii Lebanon Ministry of Public Health, Statistical bulletin 2019, Table B.6 Resident population distribution by age group, Qada and Nationality, 2019. <https://bit.ly/3HrnyHr>
- iii Central Administration of Statistics, The life of women and men in Lebanon. A statistical portrait. Table H 1 Disability (self-reported) by sex, nationality and core functioning, 2018 - 2019. <https://bit.ly/3roYjzX>
- iv The profile covers information in the National Strategy for Older Persons in Lebanon 2020 - 2030 produced by the Ministry of Social Affairs, UNFPA, ESCWA, and CSA, <https://bit.ly/3uqgpUr>
- v Central Administration of Statistics, The life of women and men in Lebanon. A statistical portrait. Table C 2 Proportion of resident population living below 50 per cent of median of equivalised income, by sex, age, governorate and nationality (%), 2018 - 2019. <https://bit.ly/3roYjzX>
- vi ILOSTAT explorer, Employment-to-population ratio by sex and age (%) – Annual, 2019. <https://bit.ly/3AYQqof> Accessed 14 December 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://bit.ly/3L8ES6r> Accessed 30 November 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: 102. <https://bit.ly/3sjtdt1> Accessed 14 December 2021
- ix Usta J., Kronfol N. and Sibai AM, 2017, Elder Abuse in Lebanon: A call for policies and programs. Table 3. <https://bit.ly/3rqOhyt>
- 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 <https://bit.ly/35Ho5Y1> Accessed 6 November 2021
- xi Central Administration of Statistics, The life of women and men in Lebanon. A statistical portrait. Table C 3 Proportion of resident population that benefit from at least one type of health insurance, by sex, age, person with disabilities and governorates (%), 2018 - 2019. <https://bit.ly/3roYjzX>
- xii Central Administration of Statistics, Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey 2018 - 2019, Table 2.10 Illiteracy rate by age group, nationality and sex. <https://bit.ly/3HuxmjY>



Author calculations based on the Central Administration of Statistics, Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey 2018 - 2019, Table ED.20A: Distribution of all residents (aged 3 years and above) according to attained educational level and age group, Lebanon, 2018.

<https://bit.ly/3L5lt5g>

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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