

Country profile:

The rights and wellbeing of older persons in Libya

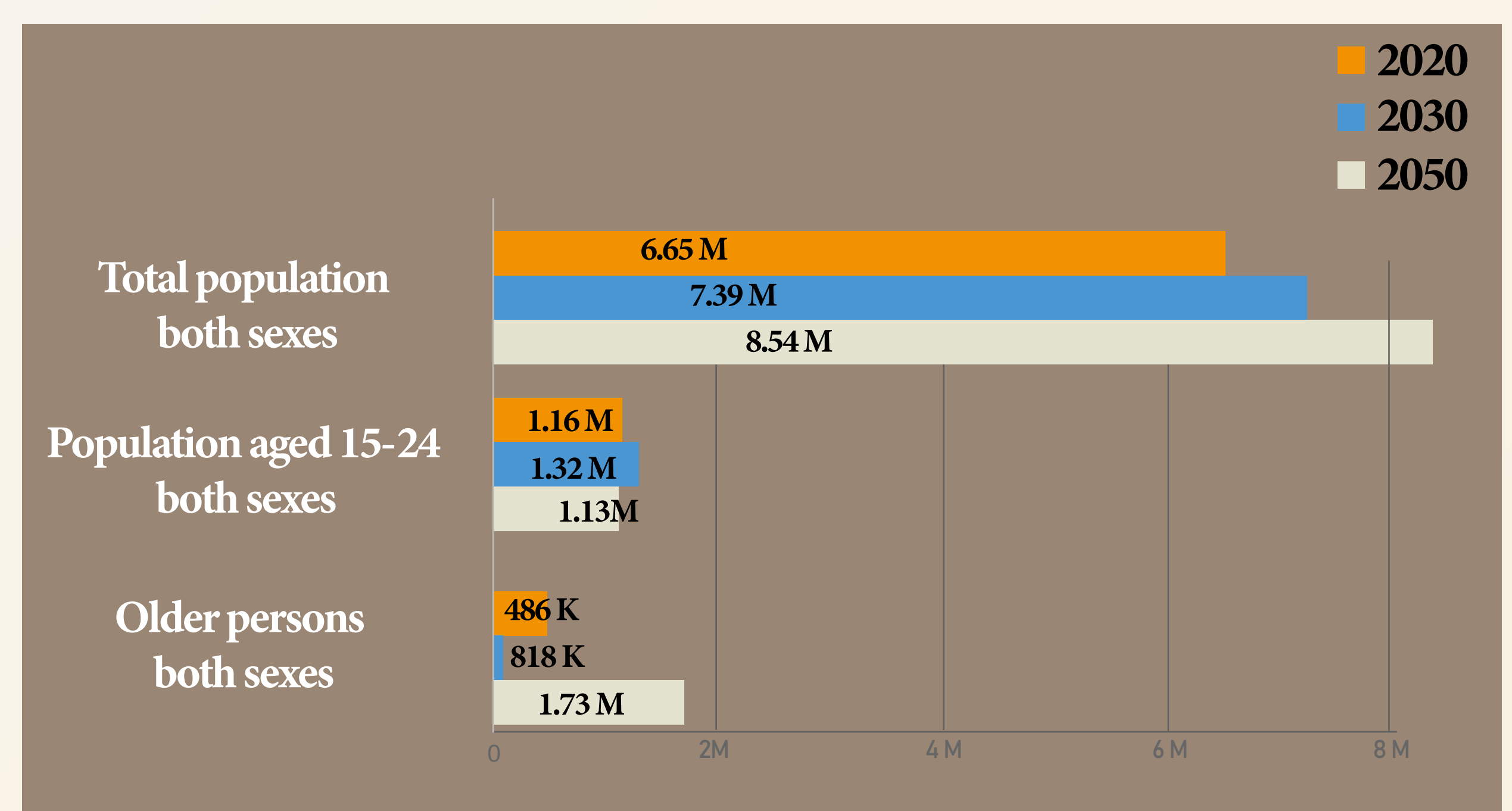
This infographic is part of the set of country profiles on ageing across the Arab region. Drawing on the latest openly available data from 2015 - 2020, it highlights the situation of older women and men¹ in relation to income, health, education, autonomy and safety, and how national systems and national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

Libya is undergoing a demographic shift as the number of persons aged 60+ is expected to increase threefold between 2020 - 2050 from 486,000 (7.3% of the total population) to 1.7 million (20.2%).

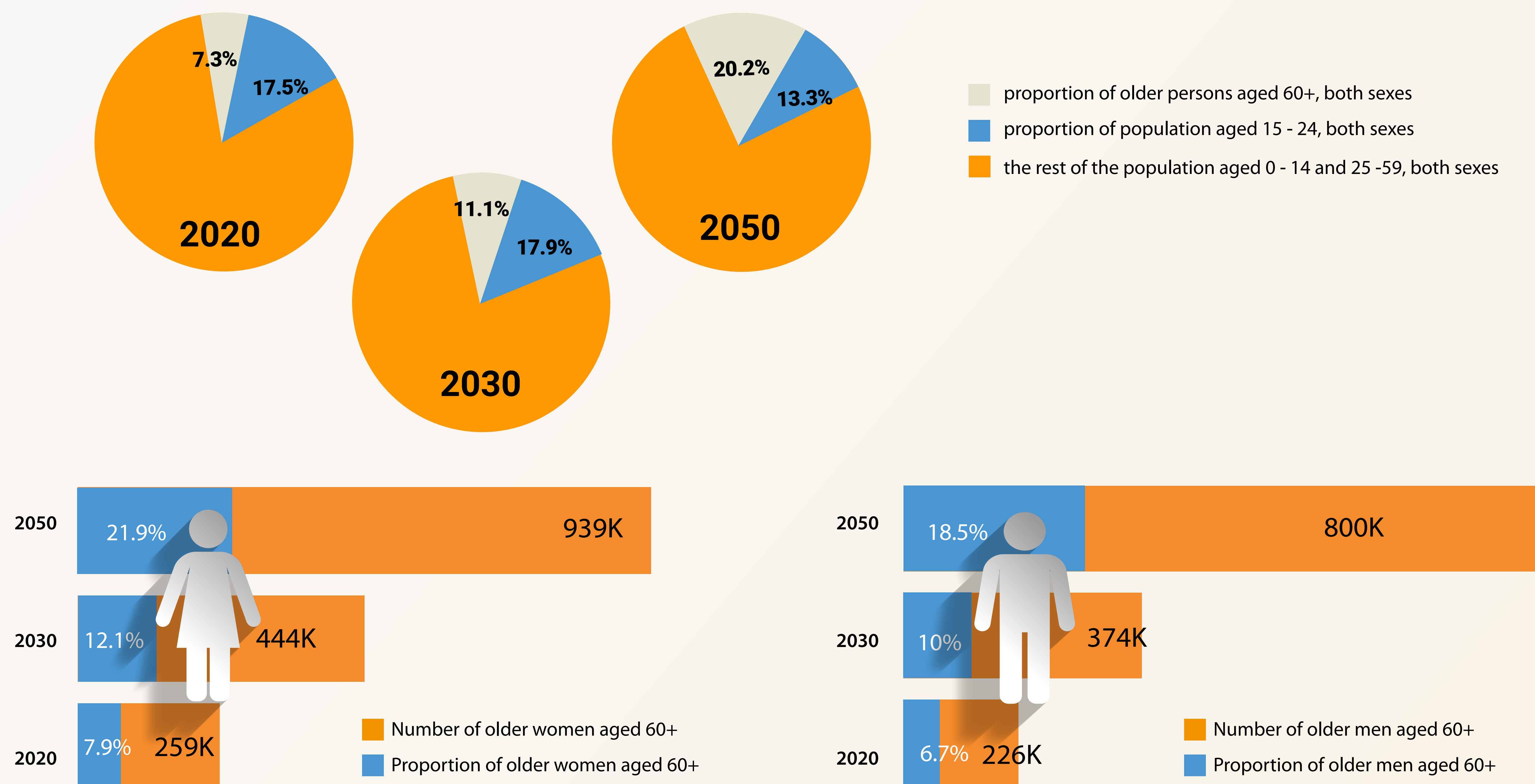


Over the same period, the number of persons aged 15 - 24 will decline from 1.16 to 1.13 million.

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.



National data on the number of older persons living with disability is not available.

The country is in a state of protracted humanitarian crisis as nearly 823,000 persons, including host communities, returnees, internally displaced persons, refugees, and migrants require humanitarian assistance.ⁱⁱ 5% of all those affected are older persons aged 60 and over.ⁱⁱⁱ Among the migrant population, 4.4% are older persons aged 65 and over.^{iv} Healthcare and food are top priority needs for all population groups. The 2023 natural disaster and subsequent floods further increased need for humanitarian assistance.^v

To ensure every person is able to lead an independent and dignified life at any age, and their communities benefit from the demographic dividend,⁴ national policies and systems across all sectors must address the wellbeing and rights of individuals across the life course⁵.

The 2011 Constitutional Declaration^{vi} provides broad protection of older persons by explicitly (Article 5 'The State shall guarantee the protection of motherhood, childhood, and the elderly.') referring to this population group. Libya also has a National Strategy for Active and Healthy Ageing and Older People Care (2009). However, the document is not publicly available. To assess the sectoral policy response, the profile examines the Active and Healthy Ageing Charter (henceforward the Charter) by the National Center for Disease Control.^{vii}

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.helppage.org/what-we-do/life-course-approach-to-ageing/>

Proportion of older persons with disabilities



Existence of national strategy on ageing^{viii} **YES**

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

THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND WORK

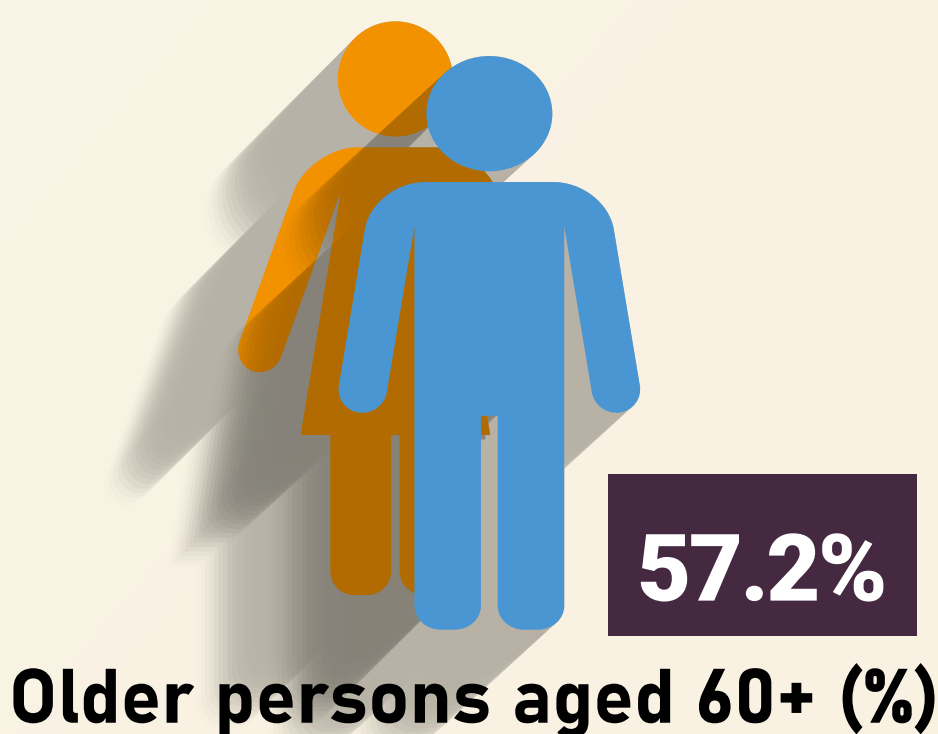
Official statistics on poverty rate of older women and older men in Libya is not available. The Arab barometer data show that 31% of older persons aged 60 and over face some difficulties and additional 26% experience significant difficulties to cover household expenses. In comparison, 30% of Libyan population aged 18 and over have some difficulty and 15% face significant challenges to pay household expenses.^{ix} Libya Labour Force Survey was conducted in 2022, however age disaggregated data on employment rate of older women and older men is not publicly available. The Arab Barometer data show that every second older person aged 60 and over is employed or self-employed, 57% of older persons. Sex disaggregated data is not available due to small sample size. Older women are less likely to receive a pension than older men, as less than half of women of retirement age (42%) and nearly three-quarters of men of retirement age (73%) have a pension.

The Charter acknowledges the poverty in older age and the inability of systems to address comprehensively the needs of older persons. While the Charter does not explicitly address the universality of social protection, it calls for a broad mix of interventions - provision of support by the Ministry of Endowments, monthly benefits to older persons who do not have a pension, support for older women who are divorced, widowed or without a family, as well as ensure that the amount of benefits and pensions equal the pre-retirement income. The Charter recognises the need to eliminate age-based discrimination in the labour market and policies, as well as for flexible retirement, allowing older persons to remain active in the labour market.

How many older persons live in poverty?



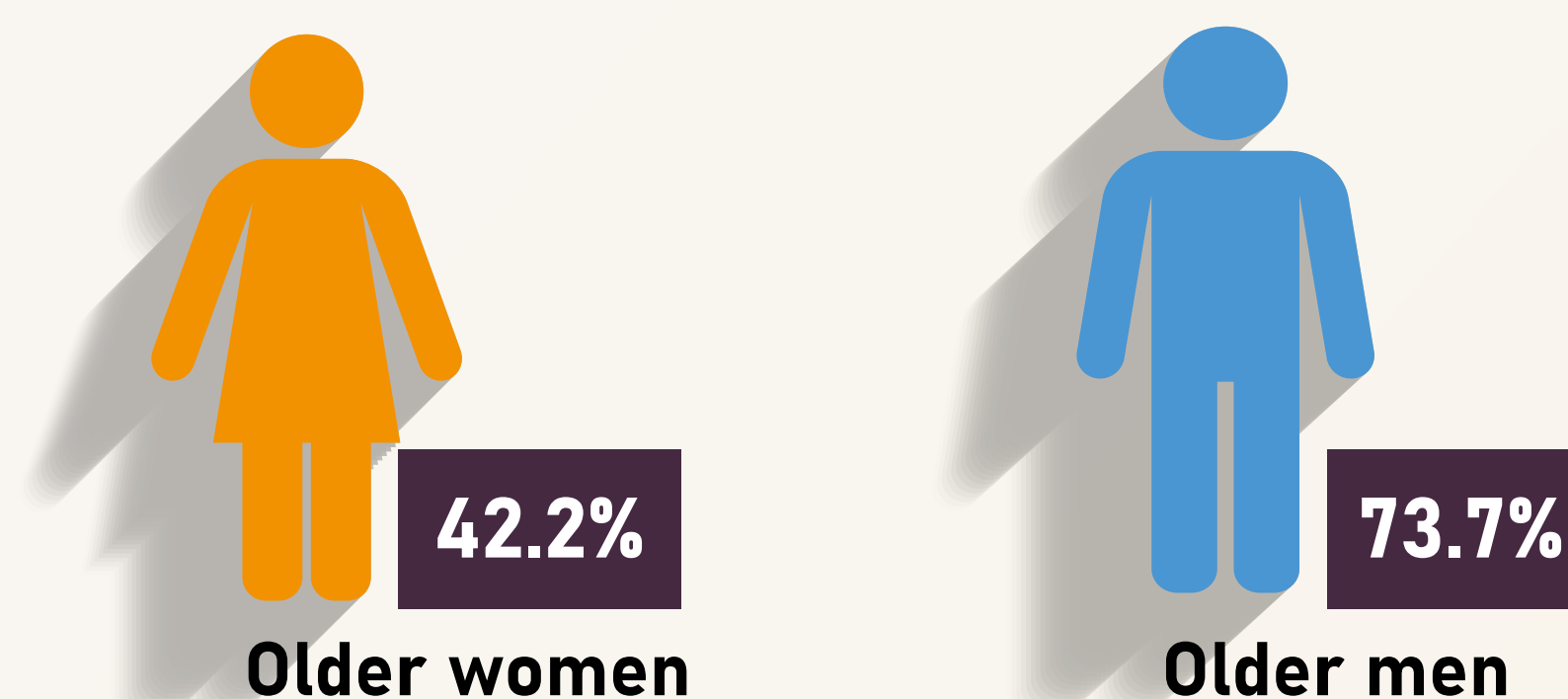
Who works in older age?^x



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

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

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



Active and Healthy Ageing Charter addresses:

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

THE RIGHT TO AUTONOMY, EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In 2022, Libyan persons aged 65 and over and those aged 16 and over broadly had similar sentiments about their freedom of choice and control over their life. 57 per cent of older persons expressed high satisfaction with their freedom of choice, while 3 per cent said they had limited ability to make their own decisions about their finances, health, family life and other aspects of their lives.

The Charter acknowledges that older persons have the right to participate in and enjoy social, cultural, civic, political and spiritual aspects of public life on equal basis with others, and highlights the need to ensure older women’s participation and decision-making in political processes. The Charter explicitly recognises the protection of older persons’ right to autonomy and independence, but it does not address the legal capacity of older persons to make their own decisions.

How much freedom of choice and control older persons feel they have over their life?^{xii}

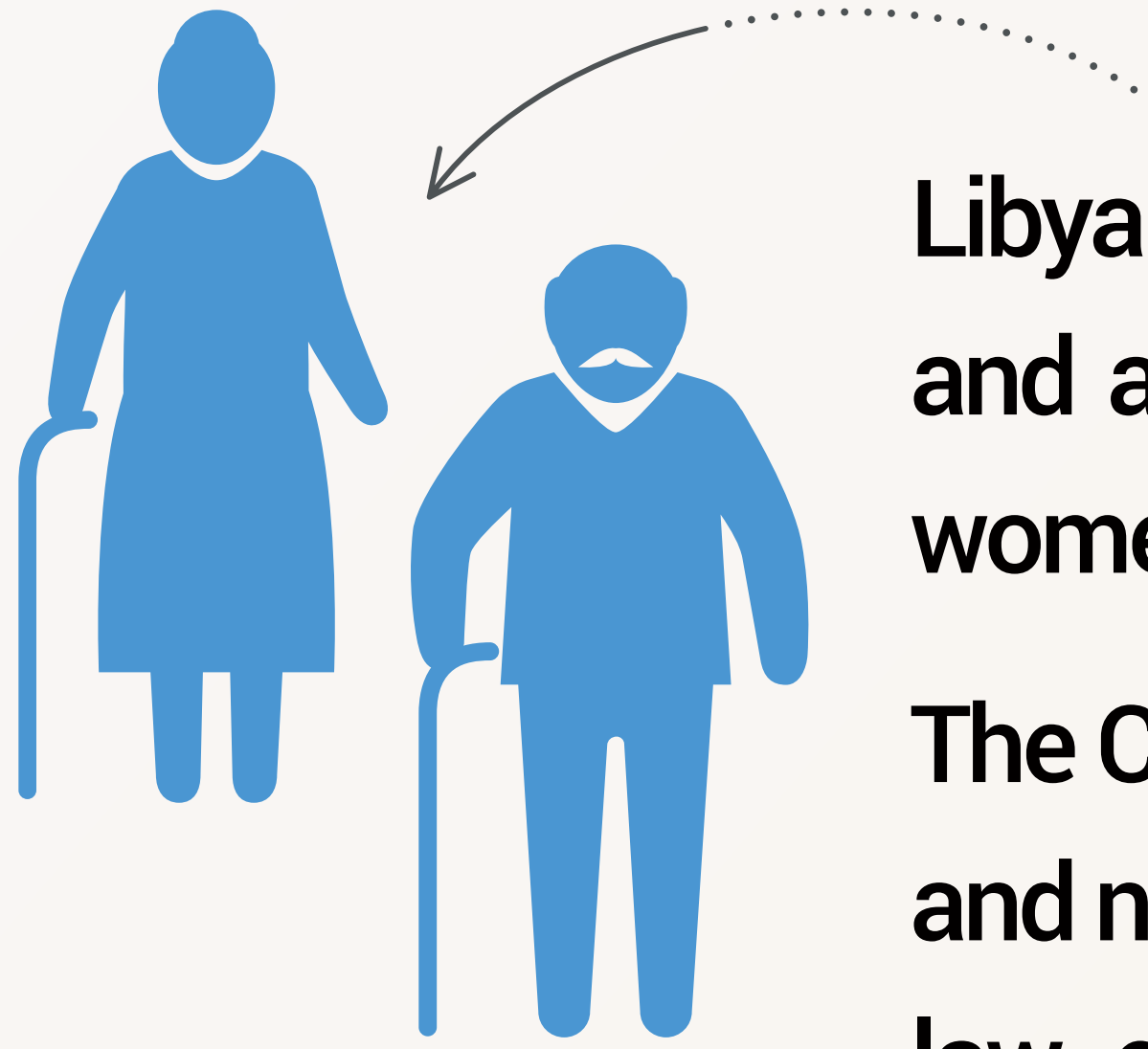
	Older persons aged 65+, both sexes (%)	Total population aged 16+(%)
None at all	0	1.1
Limited	3	5.8
Moderate	39.4	36.5
High	57.5	54.2
Don’t know	-	2.5

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

Active and Healthy Ageing Charter addresses:

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



Libya Voluntary National Review 2020 reports information on the incidence of violence and abuse of girls and women aged 15 - 49. However, data on violence against older women and older men is not available.

The Charter calls for the recognition and prevention of different forms of violence, abuse and neglect experienced by older women and older men, and the strengthening of policy, law enforcement and community responses. While the Charter does not explicitly address regular production of data on violence, abuse and neglect of older persons, it highlights the importance of collecting data on key aspects of older persons' life to inform policy.

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



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

Active and Healthy Ageing Charter 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 **Partial**

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

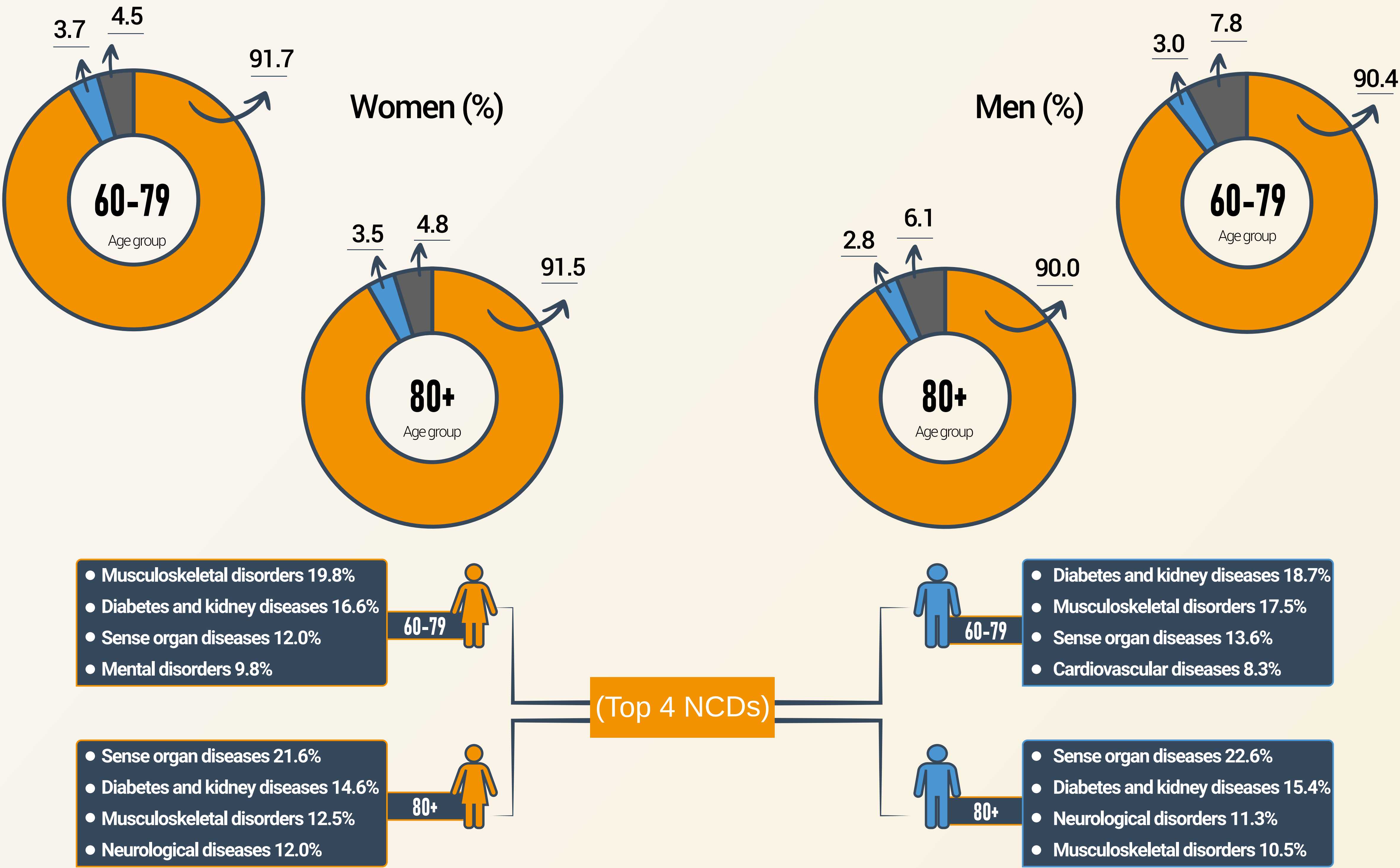
Non-communicable diseases account for more than 90% of years lived with disabilities among older persons. Diabetes and kidney diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, and sense organ diseases are leading causes of disability for both older women and older men. According to the 2016 Key indicators report by the Libyan Bureau of Statistics and Census, diabetes and hypertension are the most prevalent chronic conditions. However, the latest available national data on the prevalence of diabetes and hypertension among older persons is from 2009, and is not included in this profile.

Health insurance coverage is mandatory for all citizens in Libya.^{xiii} However, official data on the proportion of older people with health insurance is not available.

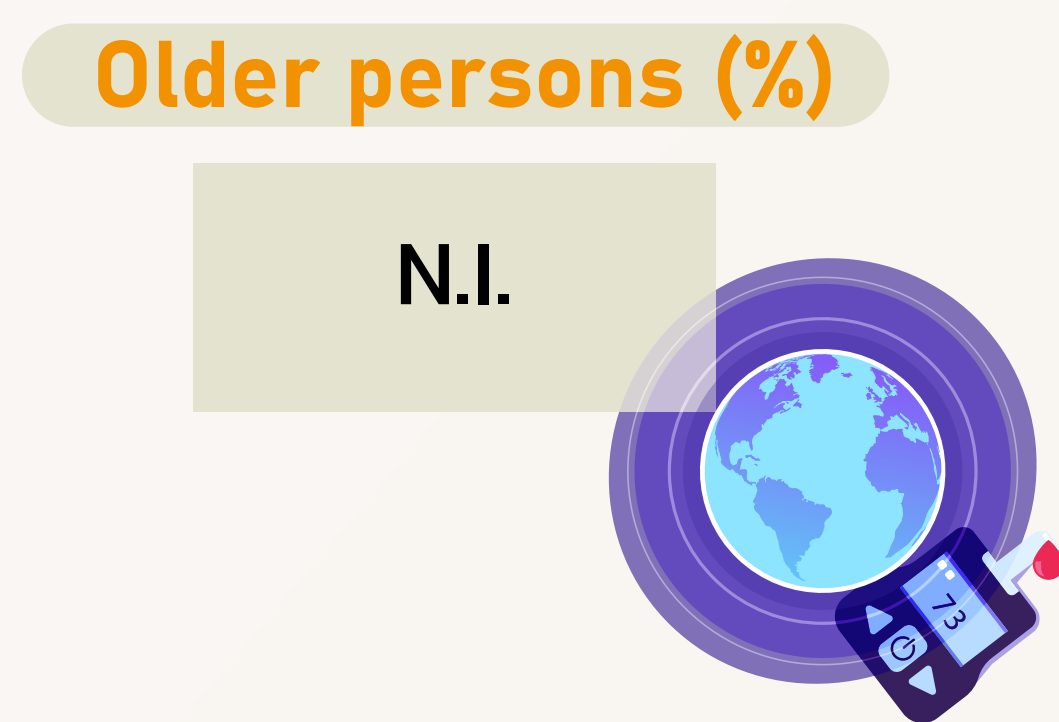
The Charter calls for cross-sectoral response to prevent, diagnose, and treat diseases, including chronic conditions, affecting older persons. While it addresses the continuum of quality care by strengthening primary, social and community-level services across different settings, ensuring the availability of geriatric and age-friendly health services, the Charter does not address older persons' access to palliative care.

What are the key causes of disability in older age?^{xiv}

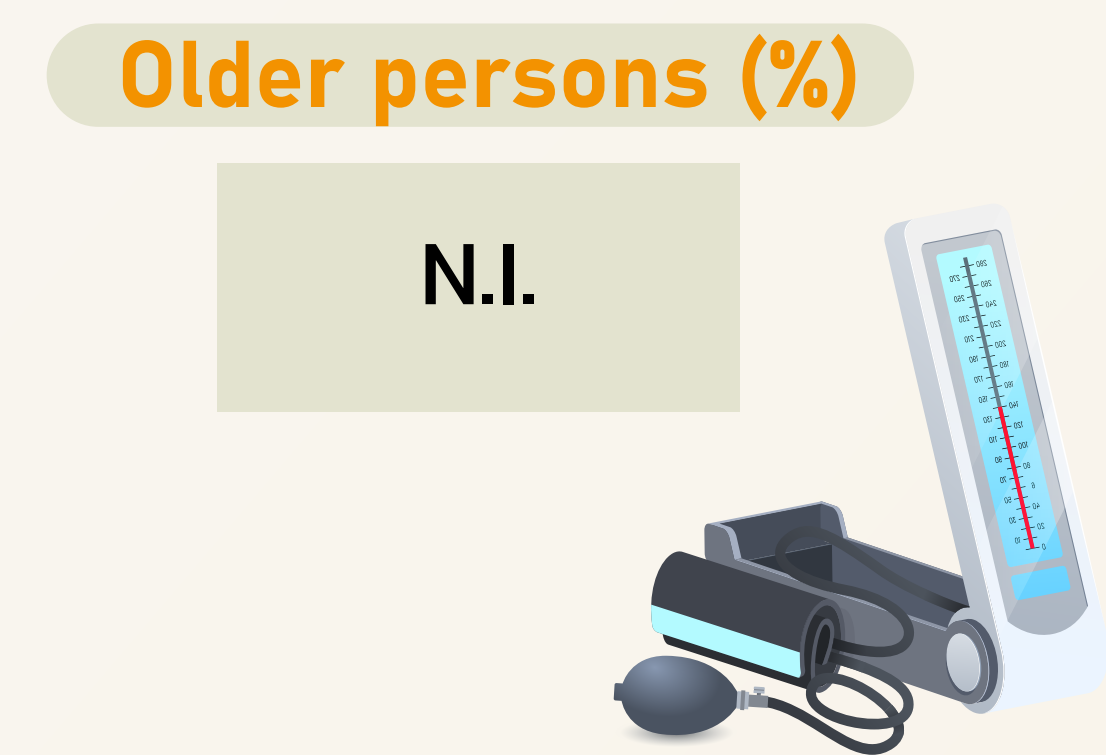
● Non-communicable diseases ● Communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases ● Injuries



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

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



Active and Healthy Ageing Charter addresses:

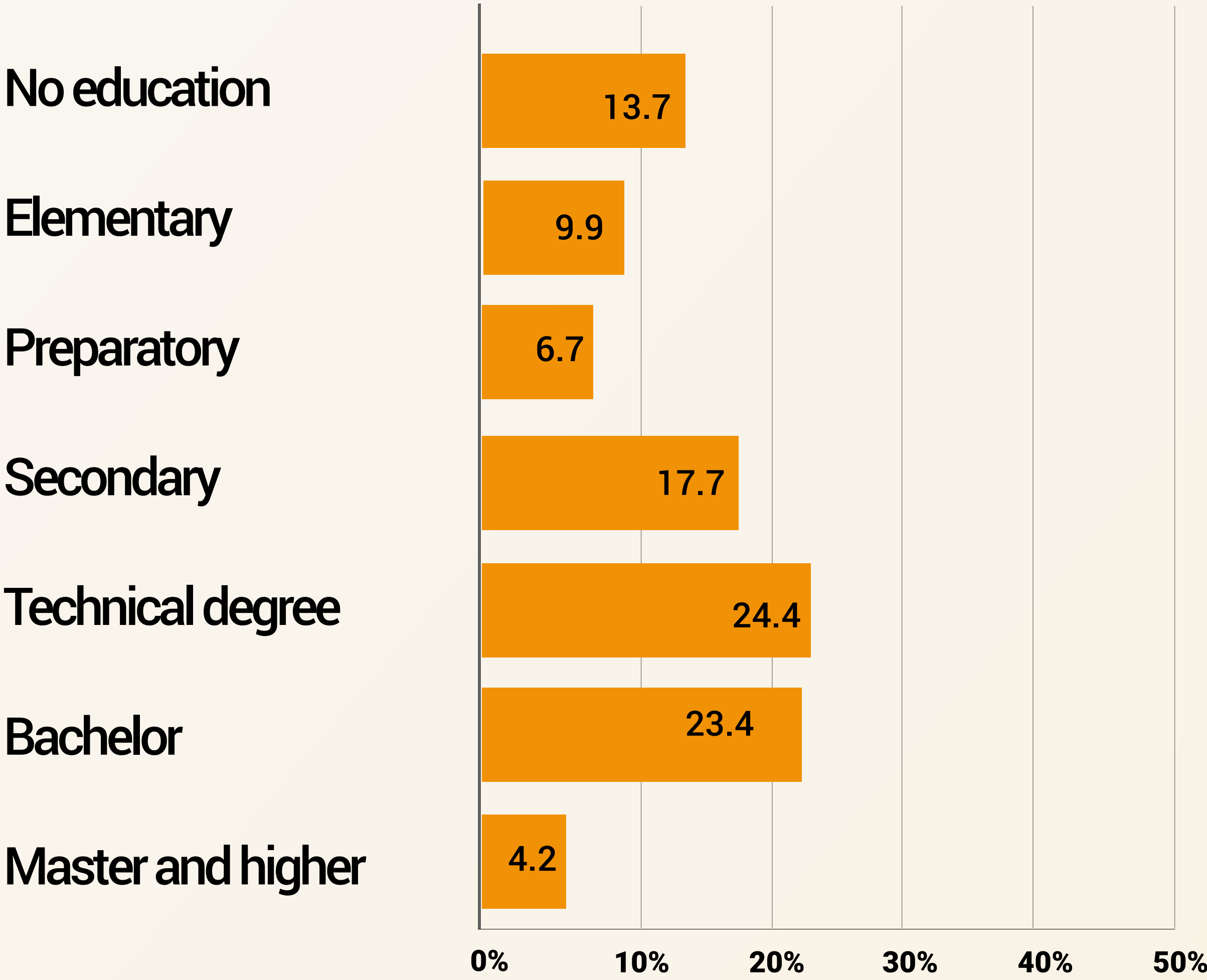
- Continuum of quality and appropriate physical, mental and cognitive health services available and accessible to older persons and which deliver primary, secondary and tertiary health care integrated with care and support, wherever they may reside **Yes**
- Holistic palliative care, including access to essential drugs and controlled medicines **NO**

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Recent official statistics on the educational attainment of older women and older men is not available. Data from the Arab Barometer show that majority of older persons (69.7%) have secondary or higher degree, and 13% of older persons have no education. Gender-disaggregated data is not available due to small sample size. The Charter calls for the Ministry of Education to provide education and lifelong learning opportunities for older women and older men. However, it does not address making education and training affordable and appropriate for older persons.

How many older persons have an education?^{xv}

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^{xvi} **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 Active and Healthy Ageing Charter considers the needs and rights of older women and older men in relation to income security and work, education, health, autonomy, and protection from violence, abuse and neglect. To ensure these rights and the wellbeing of older persons are realised, there is a need for the National Strategy for Active and Healthy Ageing and Older People Care to be publicly disseminated, and for the government to work with civil society and older persons to develop evidence-based policy and programmes to implement, finance, monitor and achieve the Strategy.

The review of statistics on the situation of older persons in Libya focused on national and international sources published during 2015 - 2022. Specifically, it examined data from the Libya Bureau of Statistics and Census, Ministries of Health, Labour, Social Affairs, Planning, Education, Social Security Fund and Citizen Service Center, the Libya Voluntary National Review 2020 report^{xvii}, and UN agencies. Considering the ongoing humanitarian crisis, the existing data is either more than eight years old, or if it is recent, it does not cover older persons. Gaps in data on older persons include poverty rate, violence, abuse and neglect, prevalence of diabetes and hypertension, health insurance coverage, educational attainment of older persons, and the situation of older women and older men with disabilities as well as from migrant communities.

To close data gaps and ensure regular production of statistics on older persons disaggregated by age, sex and disability, concerted efforts across the government, UN agencies and donors are needed to strengthen national data system, including conducting 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 6 November 2021
- ii OCHA, Libya. <https://rb.gy/5jul24>. Accessed 20 November 2023
- iii OCHA, 2021, Libya Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/libya-humanitarian-needs-overview-2022-december-2021-enar>
- iv Global Migration Data Portal, Migration Resource Allocation Committee, Share of international migrants 65 years and older residing in the country/region mid-year 2020, Libya. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=stock_old_perc&t=2020&cm49=434 Accessed 10 November 2023
- v IOM, 2023, Libya Impact of Storm Daniel: displacement and needs of key findings report. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/libya-impact-storm-daniel-displacement-and-needs-key-findings-report-november-2023>
- vi The Constitutional Declaration, 2011, <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Handout%20420-%20Libya%20Draft%20Interim%20Constitution.pdf>
- vii National Center for Disease Control, 2015, Libya Active and healthy ageing Charter, also referred to as the Charter for Older Persons, <https://rb.gy/uhkx14>
- viii UNFPA, 2017, Ageing in the Arab Region: Statistical Trends and Policy Perspectives. Table 10.2: Overview of Institutional Arrangements on Ageing in the Arab world.
- ix Author calculation. Arab Barometer wave 7, 2022. Question 1016. Which of these statements comes closest to describing your net household income? Number of persons aged 60+ surveyed: 77. Analysed data is weighted. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/surveys/arab-barometer-wave-vii/> Accessed 17 November 2023
- x Author calculation. Arab Barometer wave 7, 2022. Question 1005. Employment status. Includes respondents aged 60+ who are employed and self-employed. Number of persons aged 60+ surveyed: 77. Analysed data is weighted. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/surveys/arab-barometer-wave-vii/> Accessed 17 November 2023
- xi ILOSTAT explorer, SDG indicator 1.3.1 - Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems (%) -Annual, 2020. https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer54/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=SDG_0131_SEX_SOC_RT_A Accessed 12 November 2023
- xii World Values Survey wave 7, 2022. 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: 33. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp> Accessed 17 November 2023
- xiii Maya Hammad and Nourjelha Mohamed, 2022, A mapping of Libya’s social protection sector. Working paper no. 194. https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/WP194_A_mapping_of_Lybia_s_social_protection_sector.pdf

xiv 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 18 November 2023

xv Author calculation. Arab Barometer wave 7, 2022. Question 1003. What is your highest level of education. Number of persons aged 60+ surveyed: 77. Analysed data is weighted. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/surveys/arab-barometer-wave-vii/> Accessed 17 November 2023

xvi 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)

xvii Libya Voluntary National Review 2020 Report Part II, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26754Libya_VNRLIBYA2020part2.pdf

UNFPA ASRO
70 A Nahda Street,
intersection with St. #22,
Sarayat El Maadi,
Cairo, Egypt
arabstates.unfpa.org

HelpAge International
PO Box 70156, London WC1A 9GB, UK
4th Floor, 35 – 41 Lower Marsh,
London, SE1 7RL, UK
Tel +44 (0)20 7278 7778