



**HelpAge**

**International**

**Country profile:**

**The rights and wellbeing of older persons in Saudi Arabia**

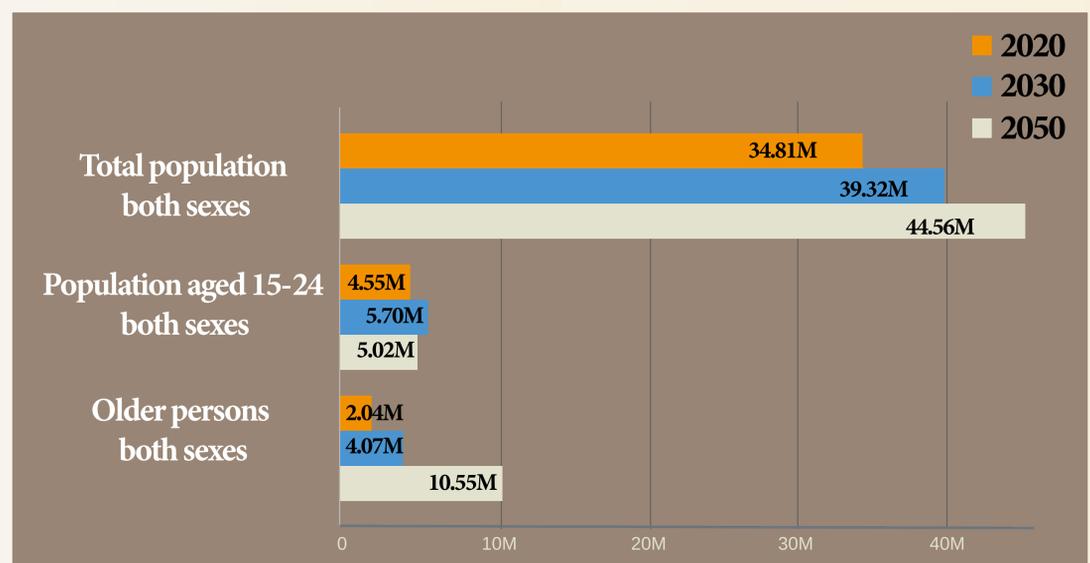
This infographic is part of the set of country profiles on ageing across the Arab region. Drawing on the latest openly available data from 2015 - 2020, it highlights the situation of older women and men<sup>1</sup> in relation to income, health, education, autonomy and safety, and how national systems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

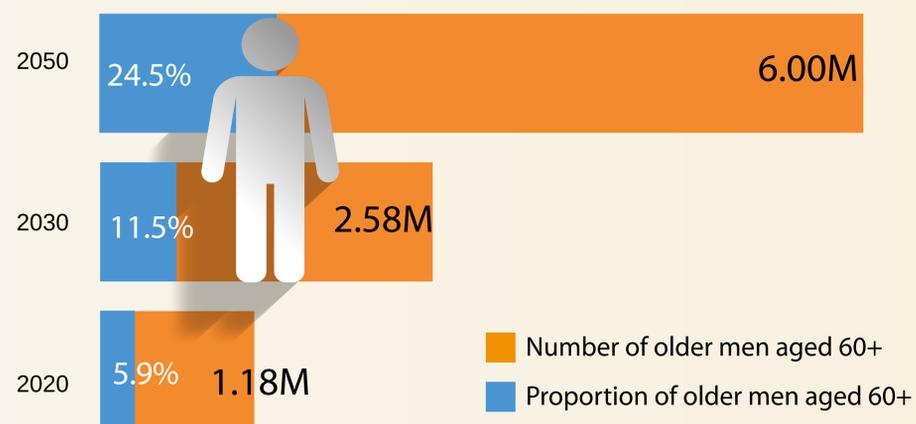
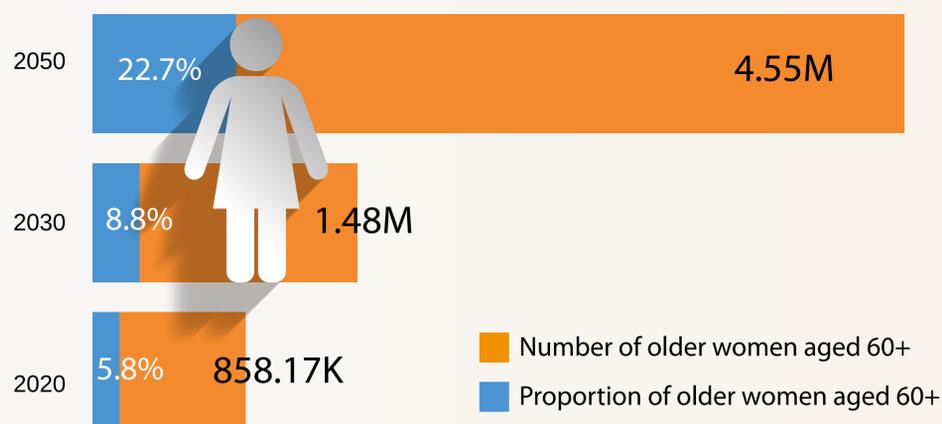
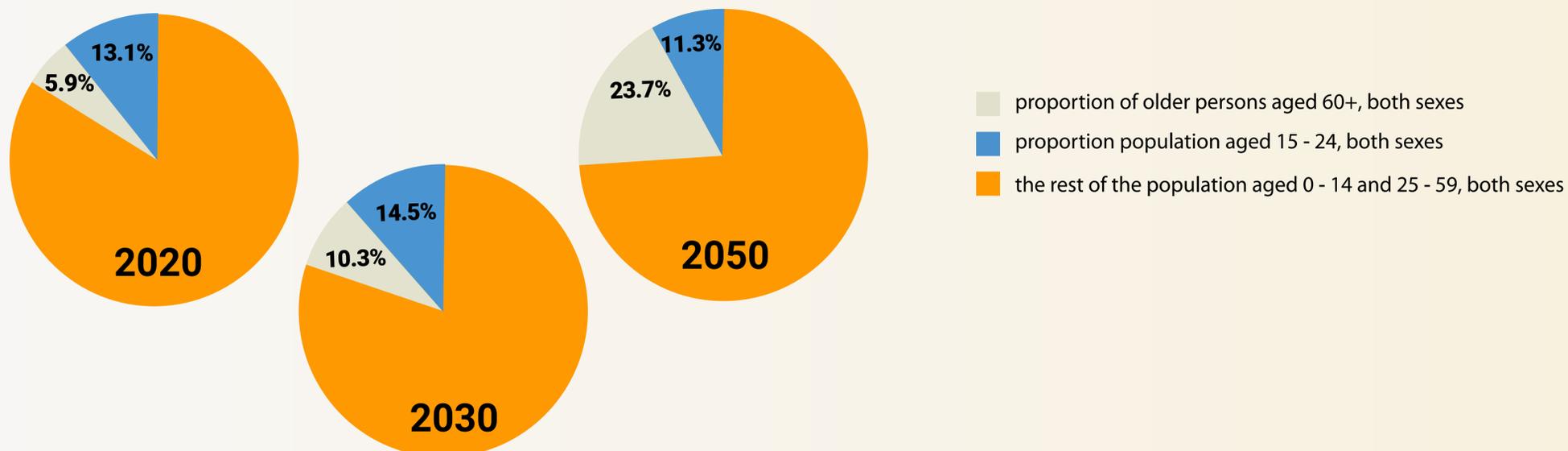
Saudi Arabia is going through a demographic transition as the number of persons aged 60+ is expected to increase five-fold between 2020 - 2050 from 2 million (5.9% of the total population) to 10.5 million (23.7%). Over the same period, the number of persons aged 15 - 24 will increase by a tenth.



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

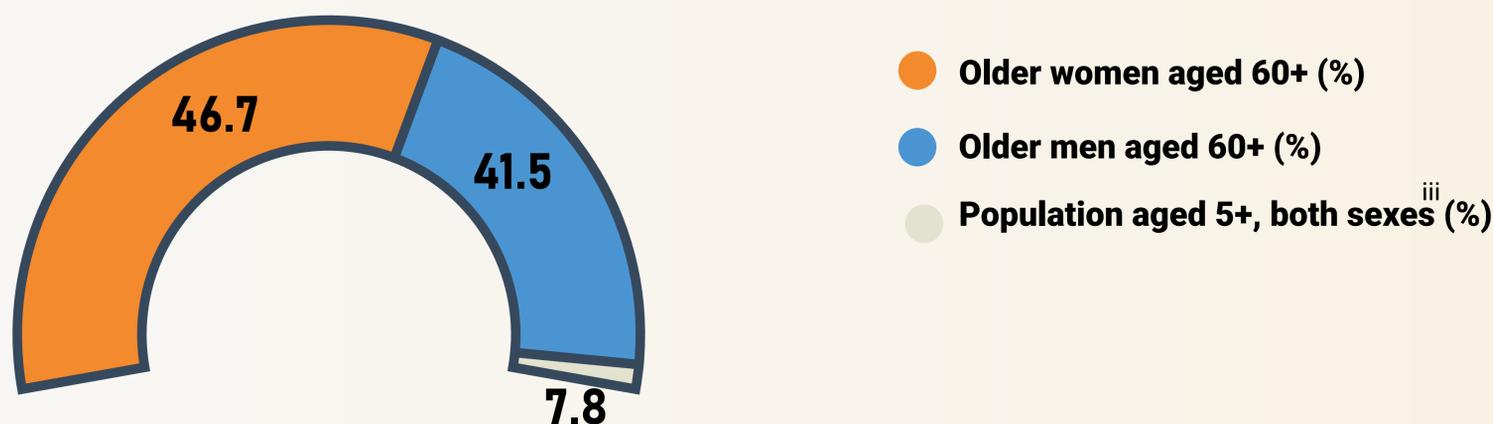
<sup>2</sup> The profiles were prepared by HelpAge International. The profiles do not reflect the views of UNFPA and any errors are attributed to the researchers.

<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.



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

Disability rates increase with age as 46.7% of women and 41.5% of men aged 60+ have limited functional ability compared with 7.8% of the population aged 5 and older. To ensure every person is able to lead an independent and dignified life at any age, and 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<sup>iv</sup> **YES**

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

<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>

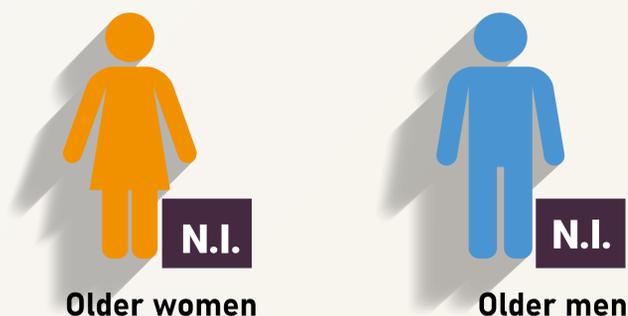
<sup>5</sup> Proportion of older women (men) is defined as the percentage of women (men) aged 60 and over of the women (men) of all ages. Throughout the profile some of the indicators are expressed as 'proportion of older persons/women/men'. Such indicators should be interpreted as a percentage of people/women/men 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.

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

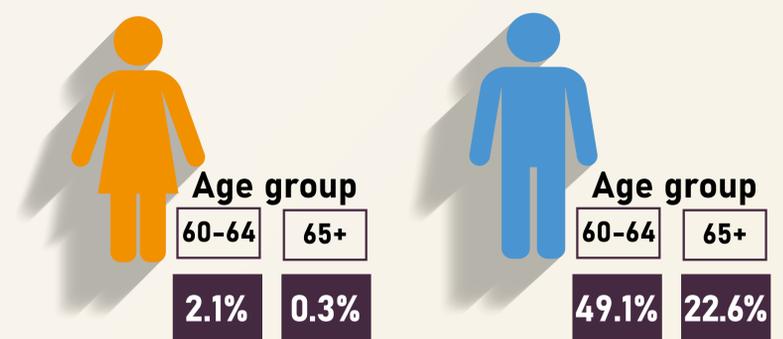
# THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND WORK

Data on poverty of older adults is not available. 49% of men aged 60 - 64 are in employment compared with 2% of women of the same age. 22% of older men continue to work beyond the age 65. The National Strategy on Ageing does not address older persons' right to social protection and pension so they can lead independent and dignified lives on an equal basis with others. Only 33% of older adults have a pension, and the strategy does not recognise the right of older persons to work when in receipt of a pension.

## How many older persons live in poverty?



## 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>



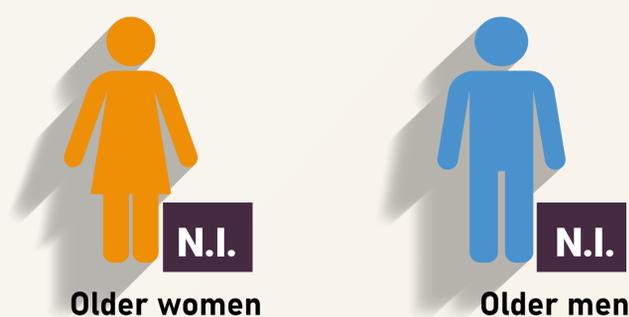
### National strategy on ageing addresses:<sup>viii</sup>

- 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

The data on the ability of older women and men to make their own decisions about their finances, health, family life and other aspects of their lives is not available. The National Strategy address the right to autonomy of older women but not older men.

**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:**

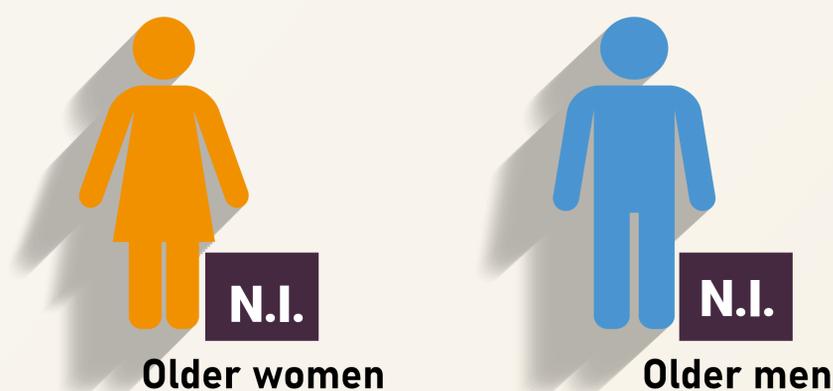
- Older persons' autonomy and independence over all aspects of their lives **Partial (older women only)**
- Enjoyment of legal capacity to make decisions, to determine life plans and to lead autonomous and independent lives **NO**

## THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT



Published statistics on gender based violence covers girls and women aged 15 - 49. Data on physical and sexual violence, psychological and financial abuse, and neglect of older women and men is not available. The National Strategy on Ageing does not address all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, or the need to collect 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:

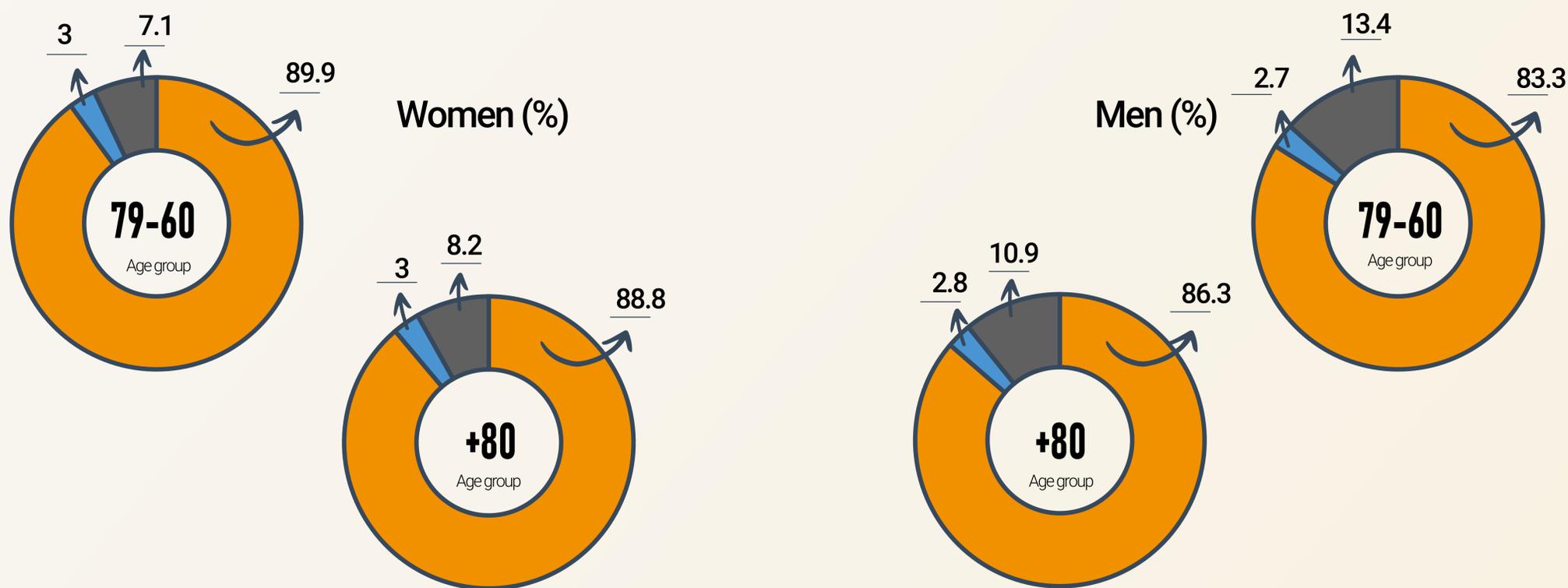
- All forms of violence, abuse and neglect in public and private settings **NO**
- Regular collection, analysis, utilisation and public dissemination of disaggregated information and statistics on all forms of violence, abuse and neglect **NO**

# THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

Non-communicable diseases account for more than 80% of years lived with disabilities among older adults. Diabetes and kidney diseases, and sense organ diseases are leading causes of disability for both older women and men. Overall, the prevalence of diabetes and hypertension increases with age and is higher among women than men. The national health system and the National Strategy support older persons' right to affordable and accessible essential care, as nearly all persons aged 60+ have health insurance or are entitled to free services. However, the National Strategy does not address access to palliative care.

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

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



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

| Age group | Women (%) | Men (%) |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 6064-     | N.I.      | N.I.    |
| 6569-     | 33.1      | 37.1    |
| 7074-     | 45.0      | 36.4    |
| 7579-     | 45.6      | 43.4    |
| 80+       | 41.2      | 36.5    |



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

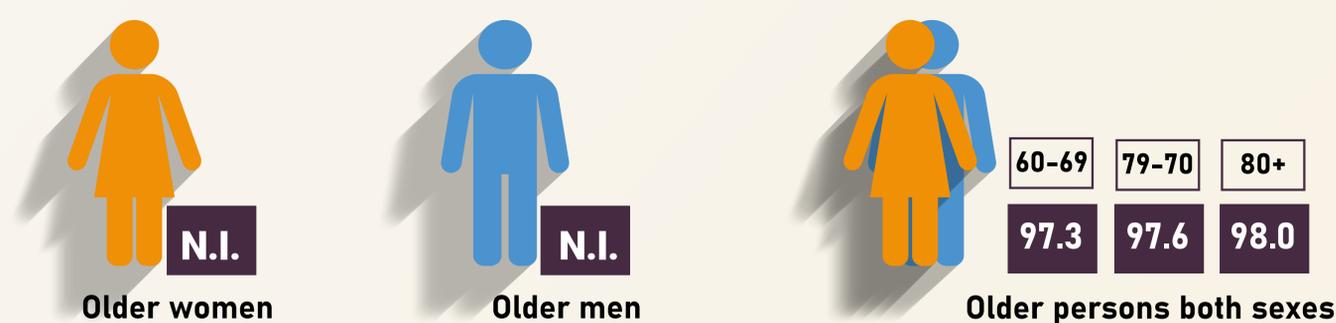
| Age group | Women (%) | Men (%) |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 6064-     | N.I.      | N.I.    |
| 6569-     | 36.6      | 31.2    |
| 7074-     | 43.8      | 29.7    |
| 7579-     | 51.0      | 39.7    |
| 80+       | 48.6      | 37.7    |



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

### Health protection covers all older persons<sup>xii</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 **Partial (does not include integration of health and social care)**

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

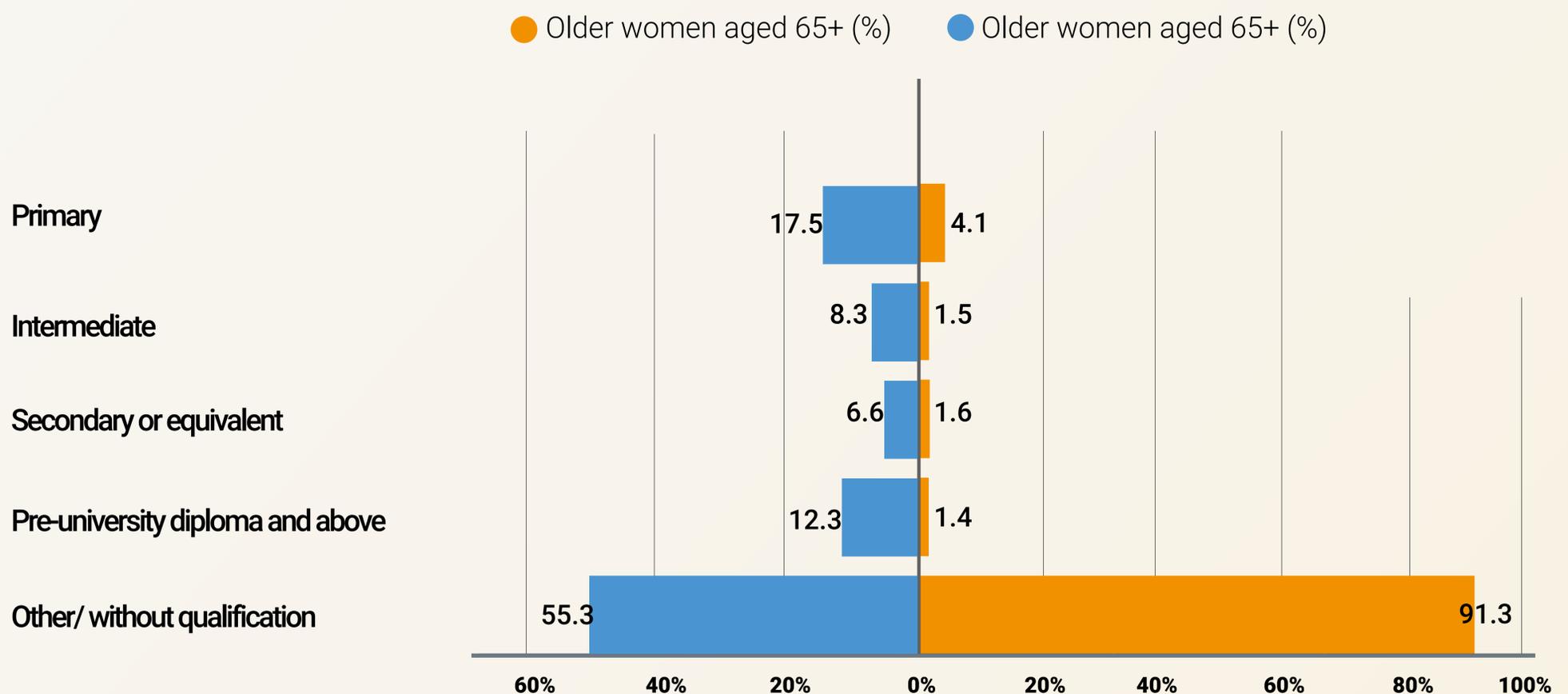
**NO**

# THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

91% of women aged 65 and older are either illiterate or do not have a primary, secondary or higher degree, compared with 55% of men of the same age. The gender gap exists across all levels of education. Older persons' right to education is guaranteed by the legislation, and various services support realisation of this right.<sup>xiii</sup> However, policy-related information on the accessibility and adequacy of education for older persons is limited. While the National Strategy partially addresses the need to develop older women's literacy skills and education, it offers limited considerations for other types of education and lifelong learning opportunities, e.g. self, informal recreational and community-based education, as well as their affordability and accessibility.

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

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>xv</sup>

Partial (limited to older women's literacy skills and education)

- 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 General Authority for Statistics, Ministry of Health and UN agencies shows that data on older women and men is collected across various socio-economic indicators, including as part of the specialised survey on ageing. 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, information on health insurance coverage is disaggregated by a single characteristic e.g. age, or sex, location, education, or income status. The data is not reported across age and sex. Similarly, data on pension coverage is not age and gender sensitive.
- There are knowledge gaps on the situation of older women and men in relation to violence, abuse and neglect, poverty and autonomy, possibly because this information is not collected through population surveys.

## 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 Author calculation based on data by the General Authority for Statistics, 2017, Disability survey 2017, Table 4 Saudi Population by Age Groups, sex and difficulty status. <https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/904> The indicator measures proportion of women (men) aged 60+ with functional difficulties of the female (male) population aged 60+.
- iii General Authority for Statistics, 2017, Disability survey 2017, page 17. <https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/904>
- iv The profile covers information in the National Strategy for the Health of Older Persons in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2010 - 2015, Ministry of Health.
- v 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.
- 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 Information about the National Strategy on Ageing is from 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)

ix

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

x

Author calculations based on the data by the General Authority for Statistics, Results of the Elderly Survey 2017, Tables 6 - 1 and 6 - 2 Saudi Males and Females population (aged 65+) by age groups and chronic diseases, Table 2 Saudi population (aged 65+) by sex, age groups and nationality.  
<https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/909>

xi

Ibid.

xii

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Health, World Health Survey Saudi Arabia 2019, Table 10.3 Governmental and health insurance coverage.  
<https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Ministry/Statistics/Population-Health-Indicators/Documents/World-Health-Survey-Saudi-Arabia.pdf>

xiii

Education of Older Persons, National Platform GOV.SA,  
[https://www.my.gov.sa/wps/portal/snp/careaboutyou/elderly#header2\\_9](https://www.my.gov.sa/wps/portal/snp/careaboutyou/elderly#header2_9) Accessed 23 August, 2021.

xiv

Author calculations based on the data by the General Authority for Statistics, Results of the Elderly Survey 2017, Table 3 Saudi population (aged 65+) by educational status, gender and marital status.  
<https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/909>

xv

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 competencies. HelpAge International and UNFPA (2020)

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