

Country profile:

The rights and wellbeing of older persons in the United Arab Emirates

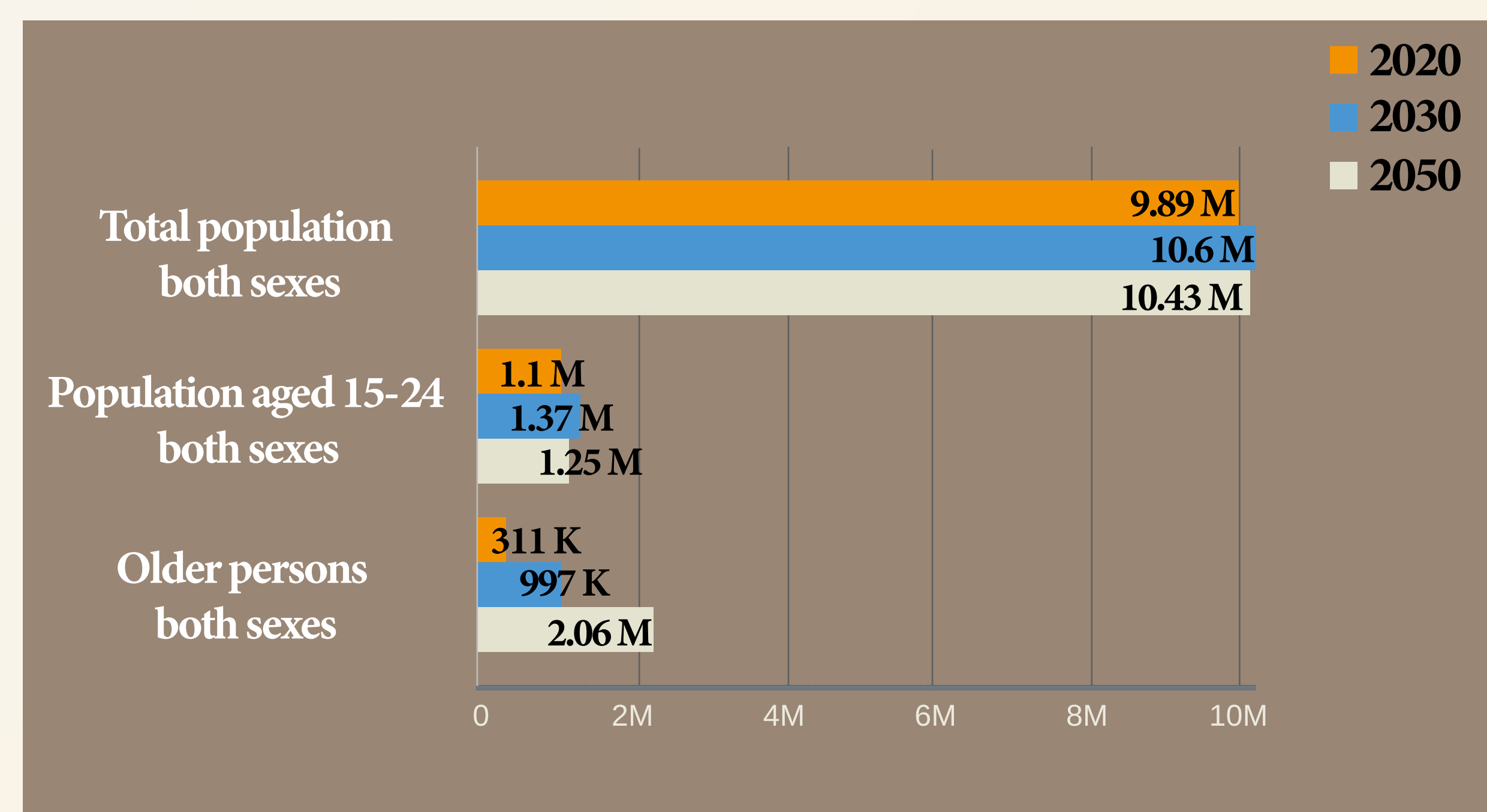
This infographic is part of the set of country profiles on ageing across the Arab region. Drawing on the latest openly available data from 2015 - 2020, it highlights the situation of older women and men¹ in relation to income, health, education, autonomy and safety, and how national systems and national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



GENERAL CONTEXT

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

United Arab Emirates is going through a demographic transition as the number of persons aged 60+ is expected to increase more than six-fold between 2020 - 2050 from about 311,000 (3.1% of the total population) to 2 million (19.7%).

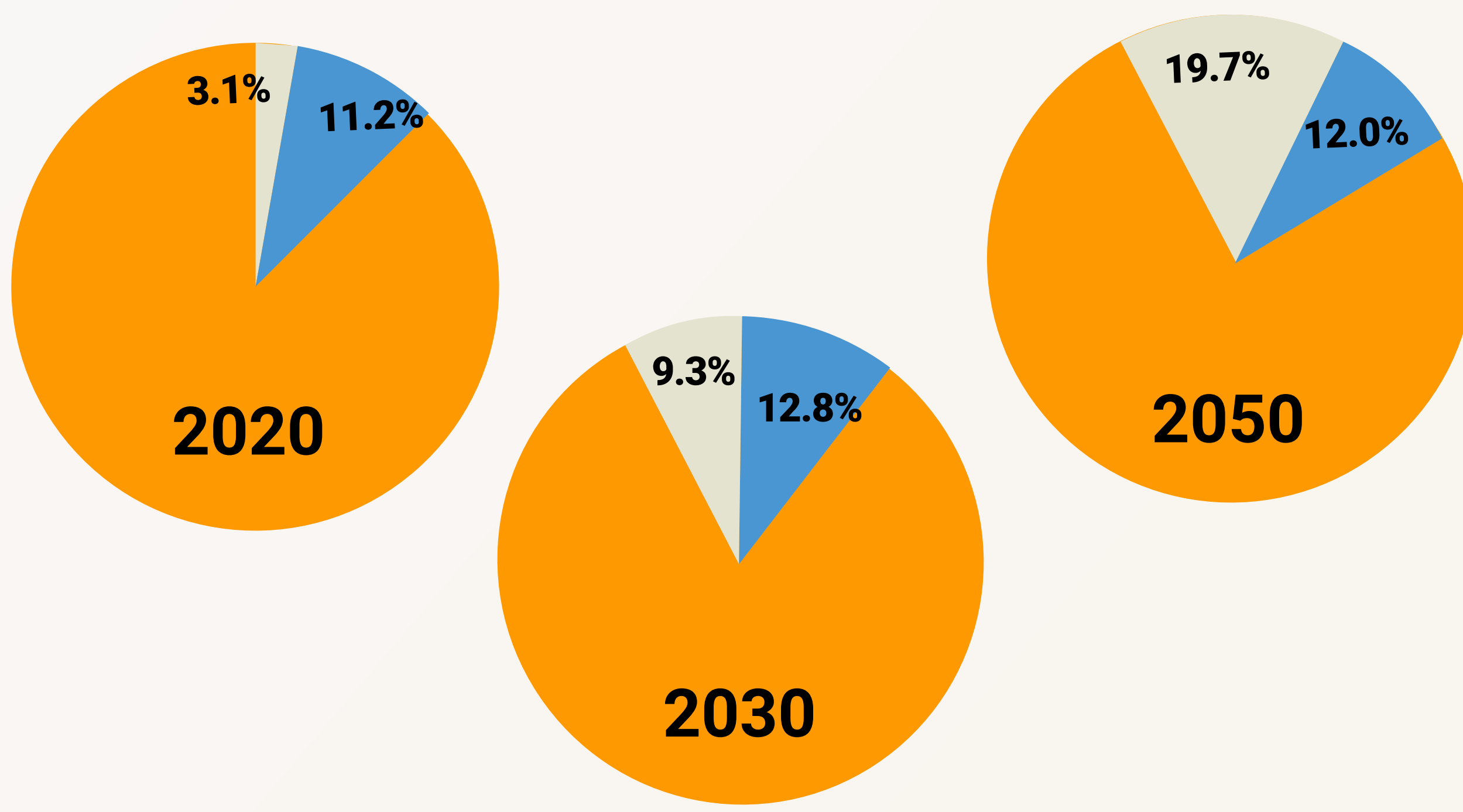


Over the same period, the number of persons aged 15 - 24 will increase by 12 percentage points. Available information on the non-Emirati population in the Abu Dhabi region estimates that 1.9% of women and 1.2% of men are age 60 and over.

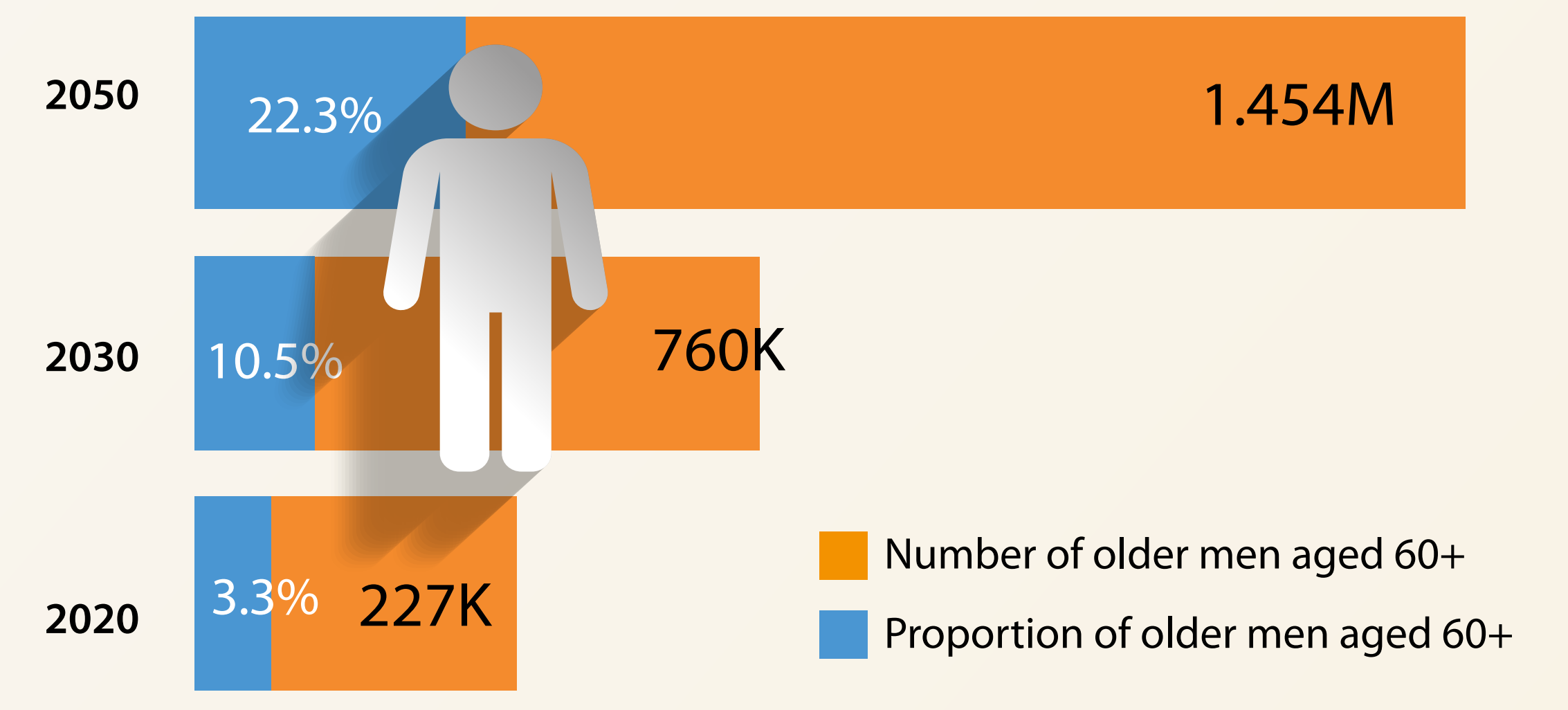
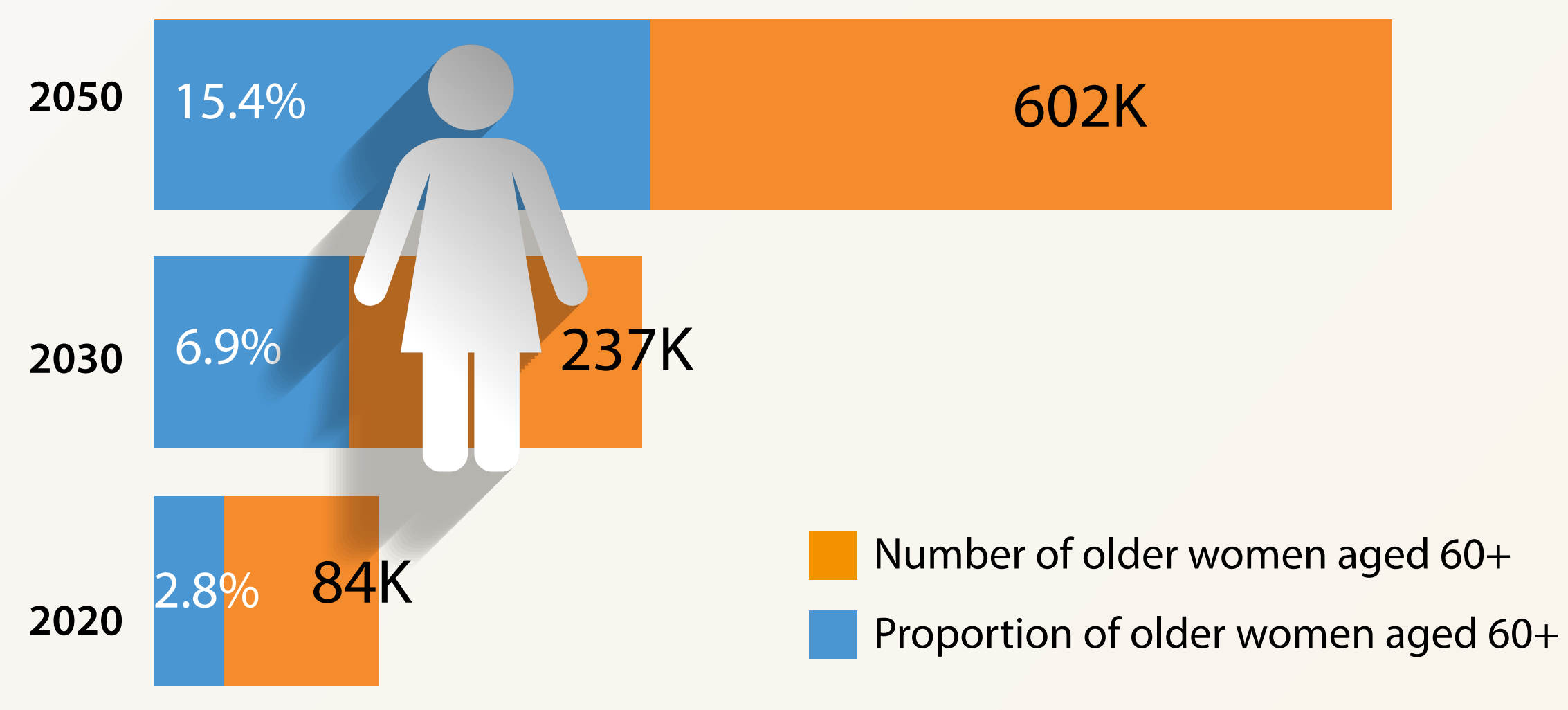
¹ For statistical purposes, 'older person' is defined as an individual aged 60 and over.

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.

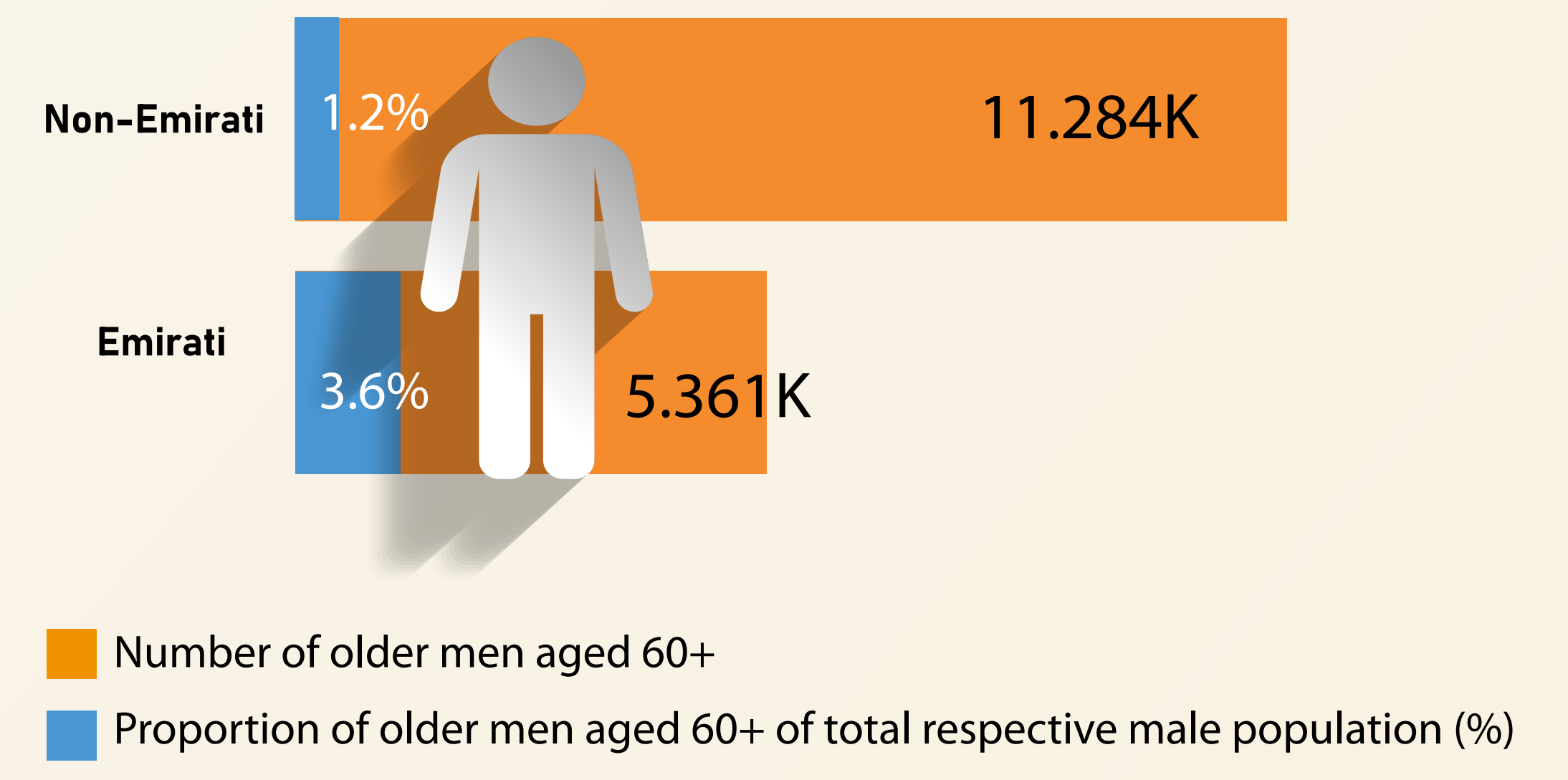
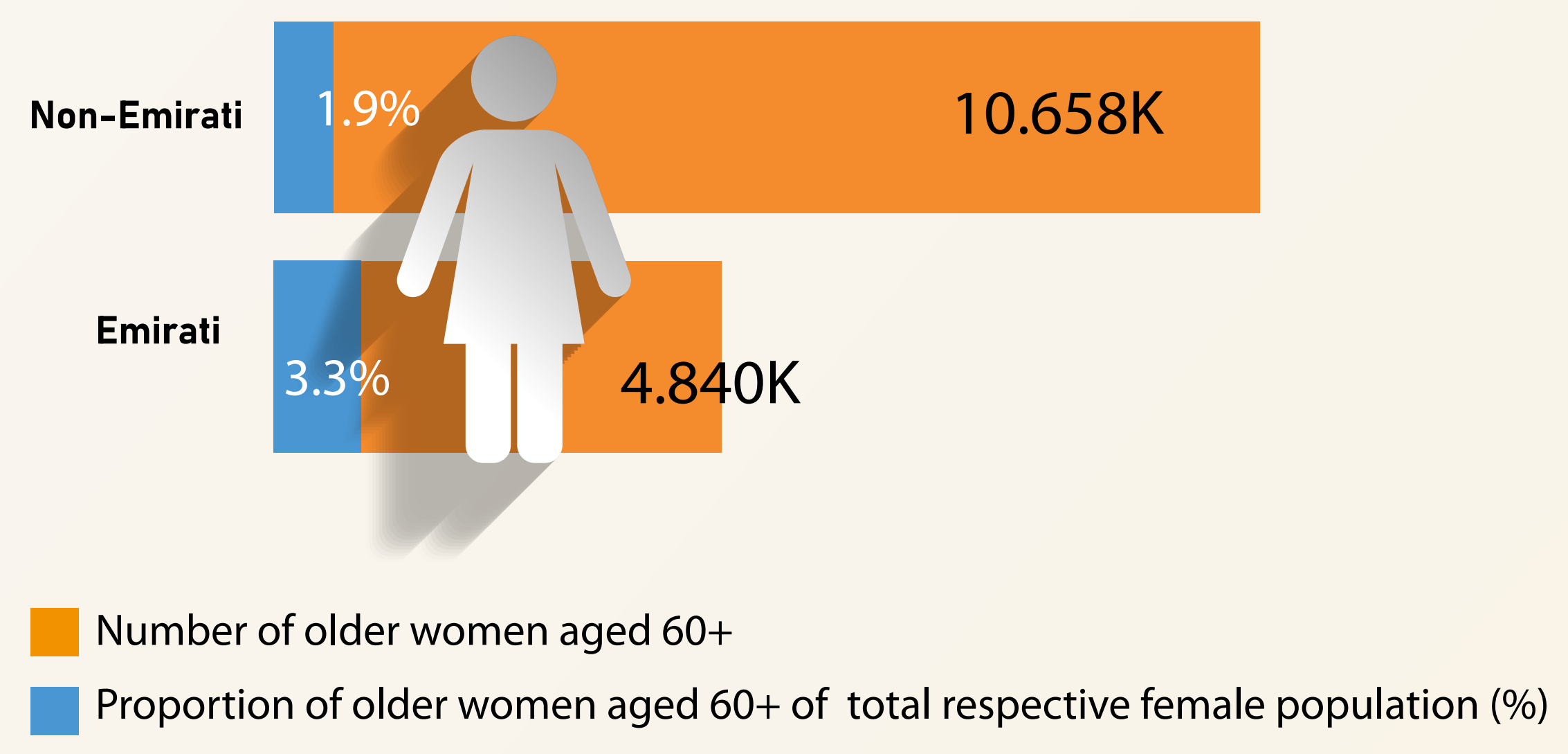
³ Proportion of older women (men) is defined as the percentage of women (men) aged 60 and over of the women (men) of all ages. Throughout the profile some of the indicators are expressed as 'proportion of older persons/women/men'. Such indicators should be interpreted as a percentage of persons/women/men 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 aged 60+, both sexes
- proportion of population aged 15 - 24, both sexes
- the rest of the population aged 0 - 14 and 25 -59, both sexes



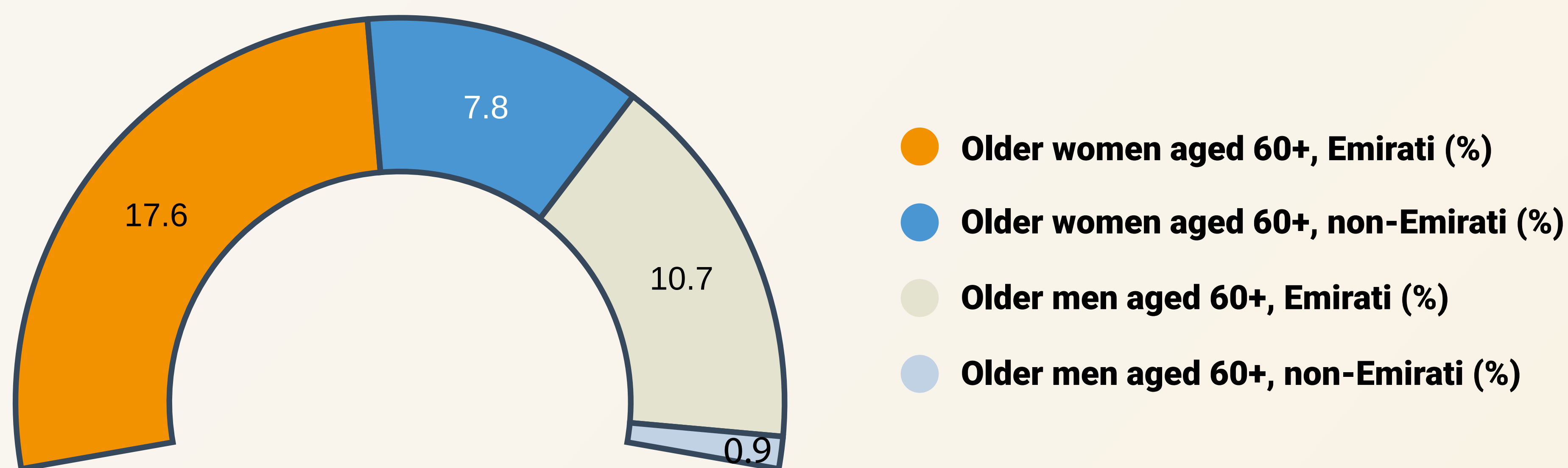
Emirati and Non-Emirati population of older persons, Abu Dhabi region ⁱⁱ



Disability rates vary by nationality and gender as an Emirati person aged 60+ is more likely to have functional limitations than the non-Emirati person of the same age. 17.6% of older Emirati women have severe or extreme functional difficulties when performing household tasks compared with 7.8% of older non-Emirati women and 10.7% of older Emirati men.

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 course.⁵ To assess the policy response, the profile examines the Federal law No. 9 on the rights of senior Emirati citizens.

Proportion of older persons with disabilitiesⁱⁱⁱ



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

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

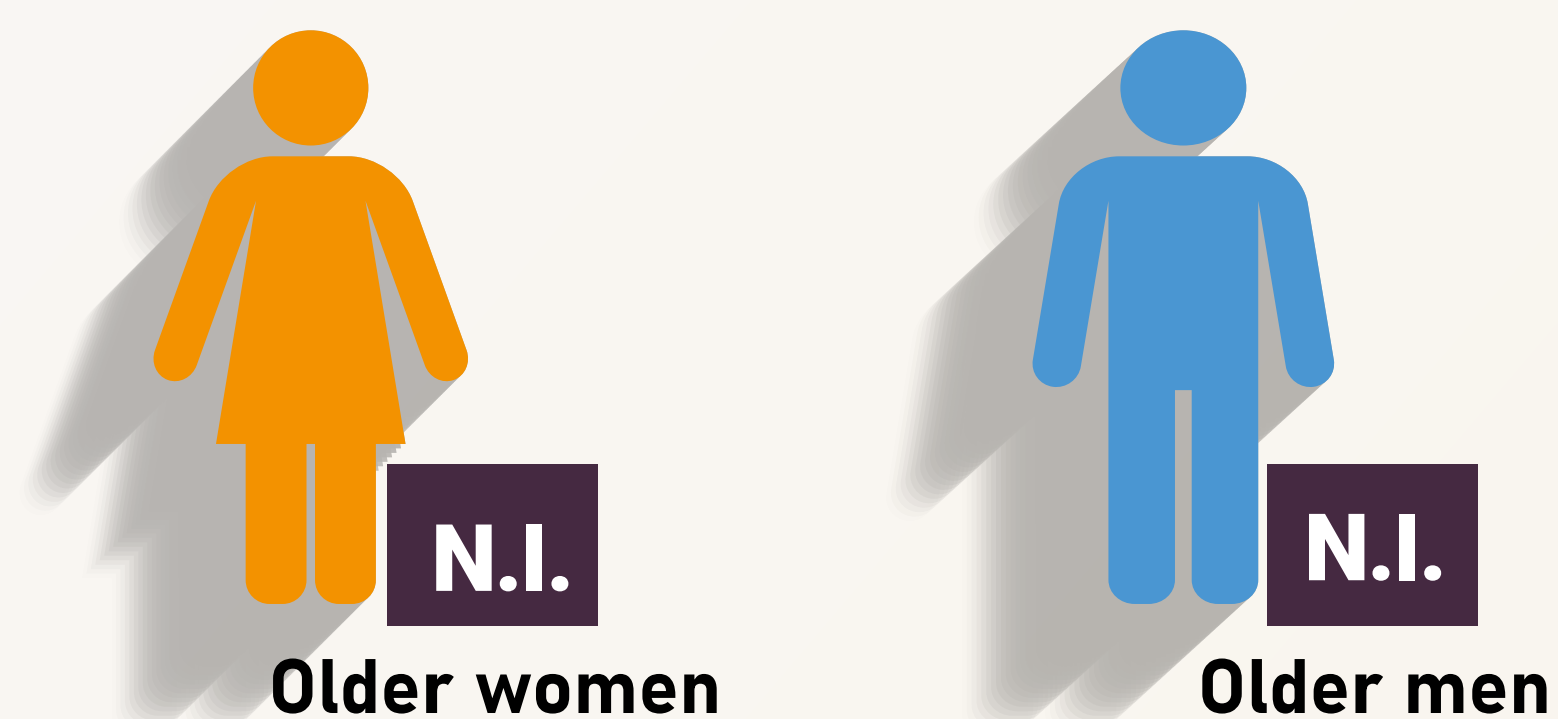
⁵ Life course approach to policy recognises that individuals' roles, abilities, and needs are shaped by positive and negative experiences, and as we age these experiences accumulate. To mitigate immediate and long-term impacts of disadvantages, policies must consider how intersecting identities and varying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

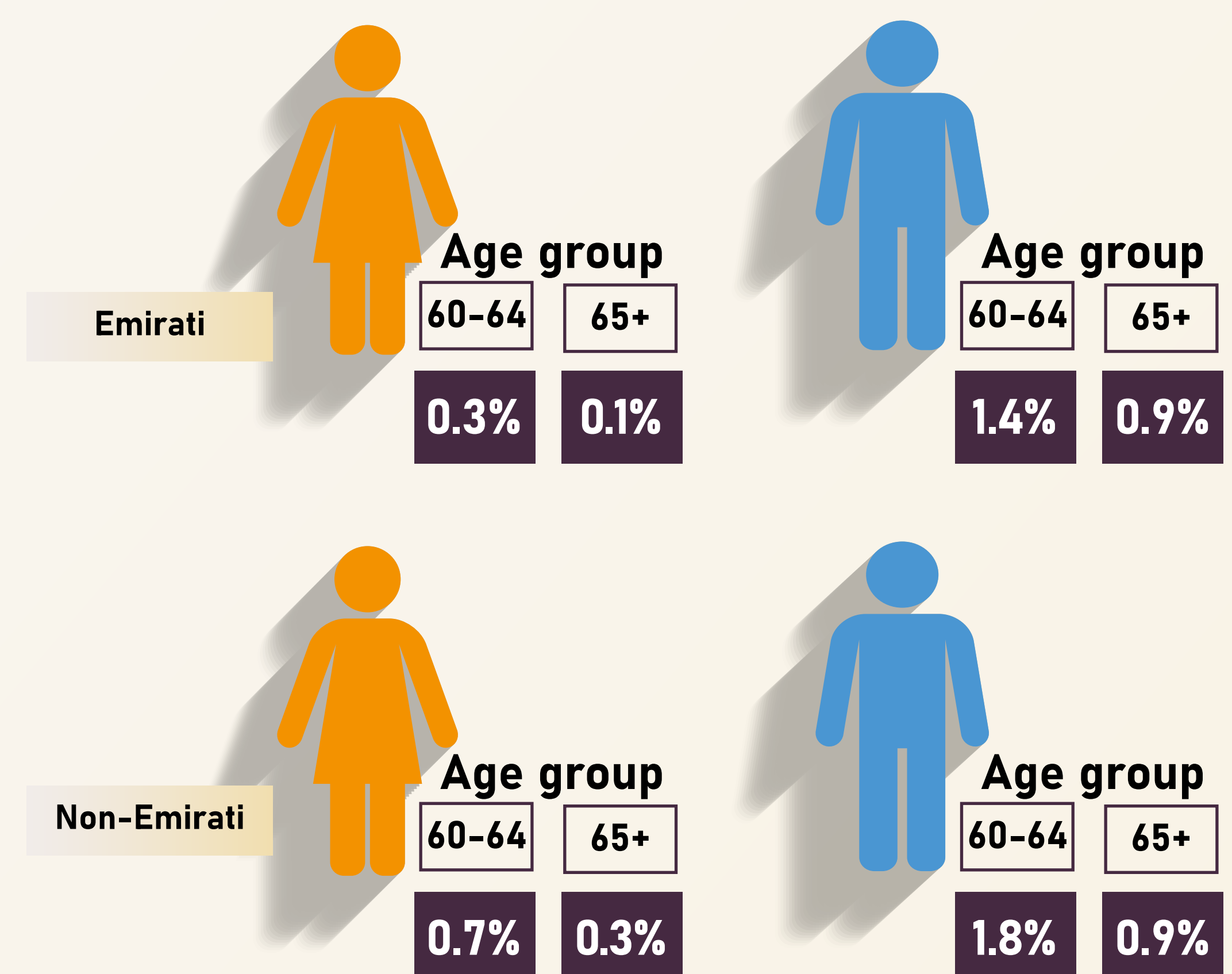
THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND WORK

Data on poverty among older persons is not available. Older persons, primarily men, continue to work past the retirement age, as 1.4% of Emirati and 1.8% of non-Emirati men aged 60 - 64 are in employment . The Federal law does not include provisions on older persons' rights to social protection and a pension, so they can lead independent and dignified lives on an equal basis with others. Only 22.6% of older persons receive a pension.

How many older persons live in poverty?



Who works in older age?



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

Pension systems provide income security for all older persons



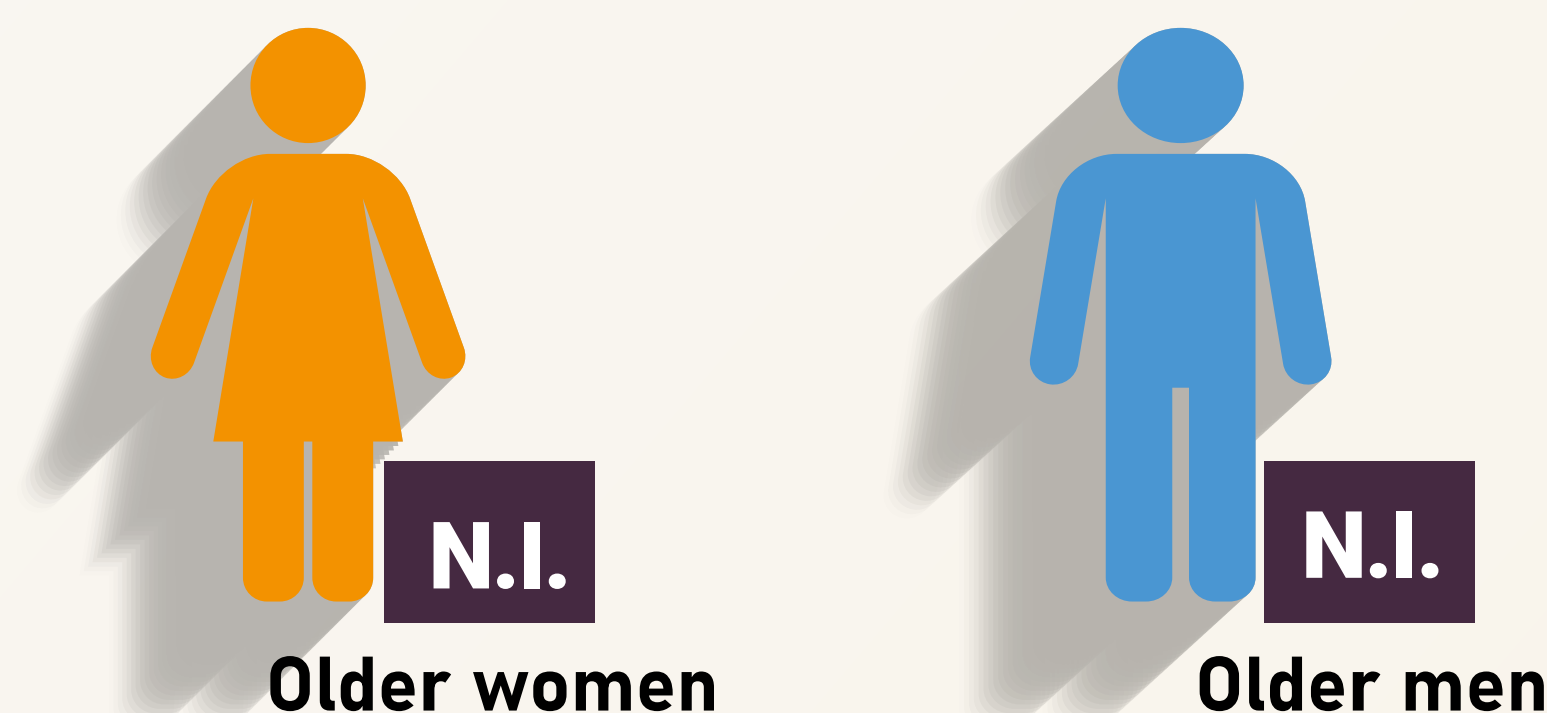
National Strategy on ageing addresses:

- 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
Partial (limited to adequate job opportunities)
- Right to work when receiving a pension **NO**

THE RIGHT TO AUTONOMY, EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

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 Federal law partially recognises the right of older women and men to autonomy. However, it does not address older persons' legal entitlement 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?

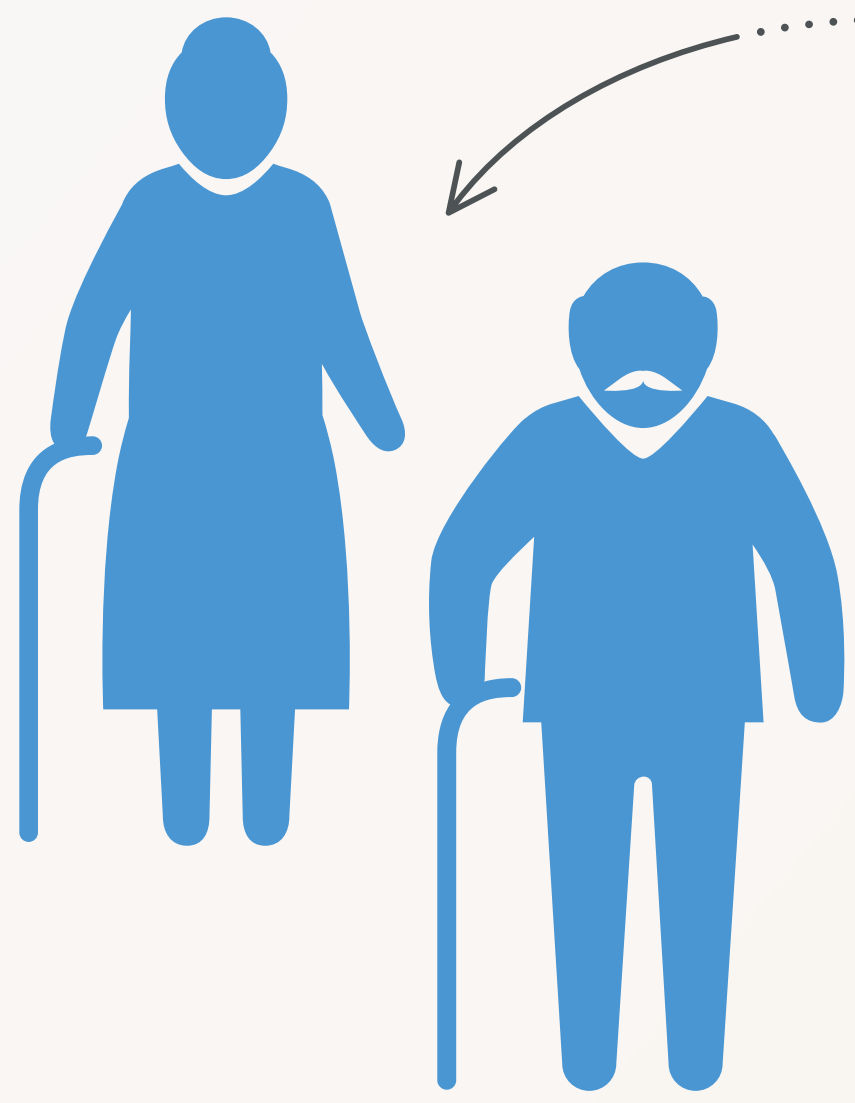


How national systems and policies address the needs and rights of older persons

National strategy on ageing addresses:

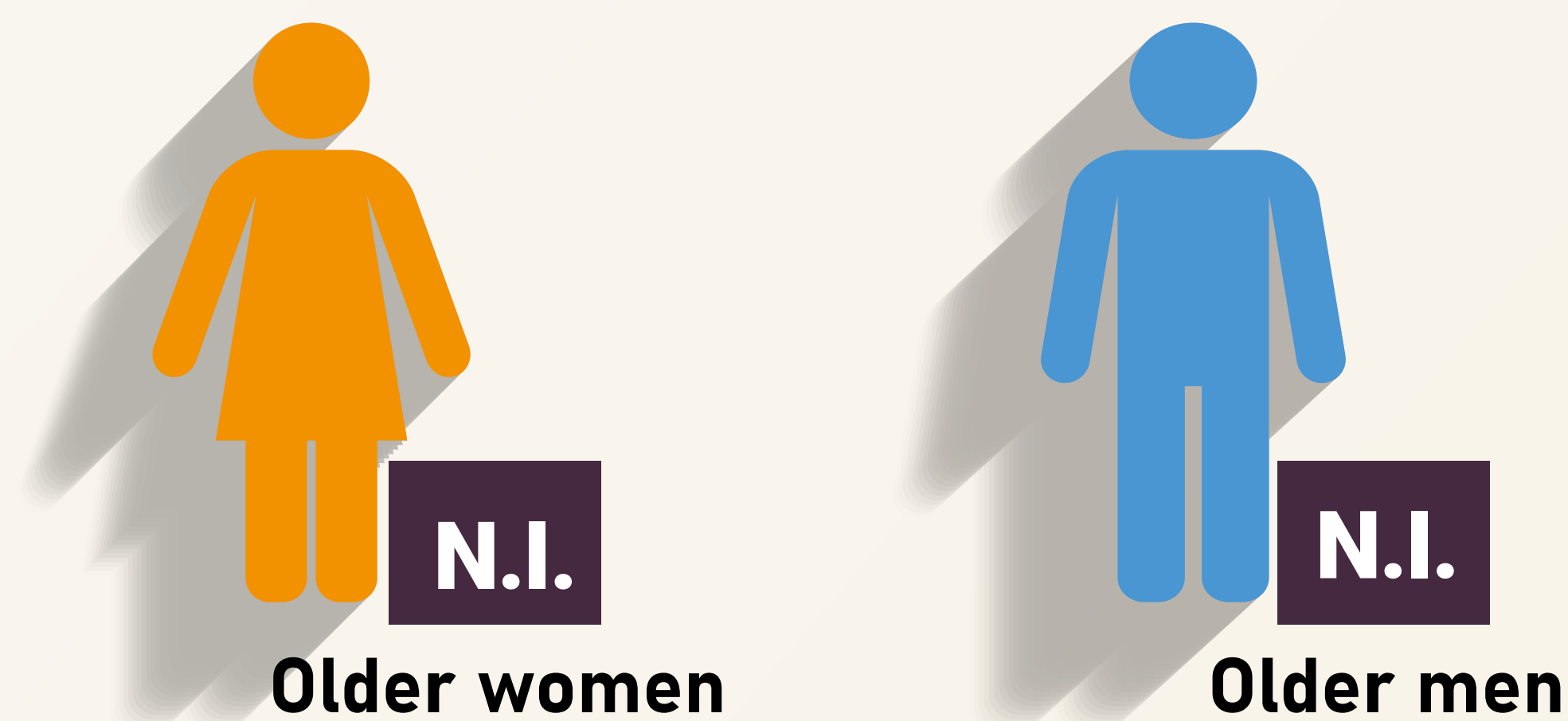
- Older persons' autonomy and independence over all aspects of their lives
Partial (limited to certain aspects of life)
- Enjoyment of legal capacity to make decisions, to determine life plans and to lead autonomous and independent lives
NO

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT



Data on physical and sexual violence against women is collated and published by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority (FCSA). However, the data does not include cases of gender-based violence against older women. It is not possible to establish whether this reflects the actual experiences of older women or is the result of underreporting. While the Federal law recognises some forms of violence against older persons, it does not address the need for production and dissemination of timely and disaggregated statistics on different types of abuses, e.g. financial, psychological or neglect. A specialised survey on different forms of elder abuse can close some of the knowledge gaps.

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 **Partial (not all forms)**
- Regular collection, analysis, utilisation and public dissemination of disaggregated information and statistics on all forms of violence, abuse and **NO** neglect

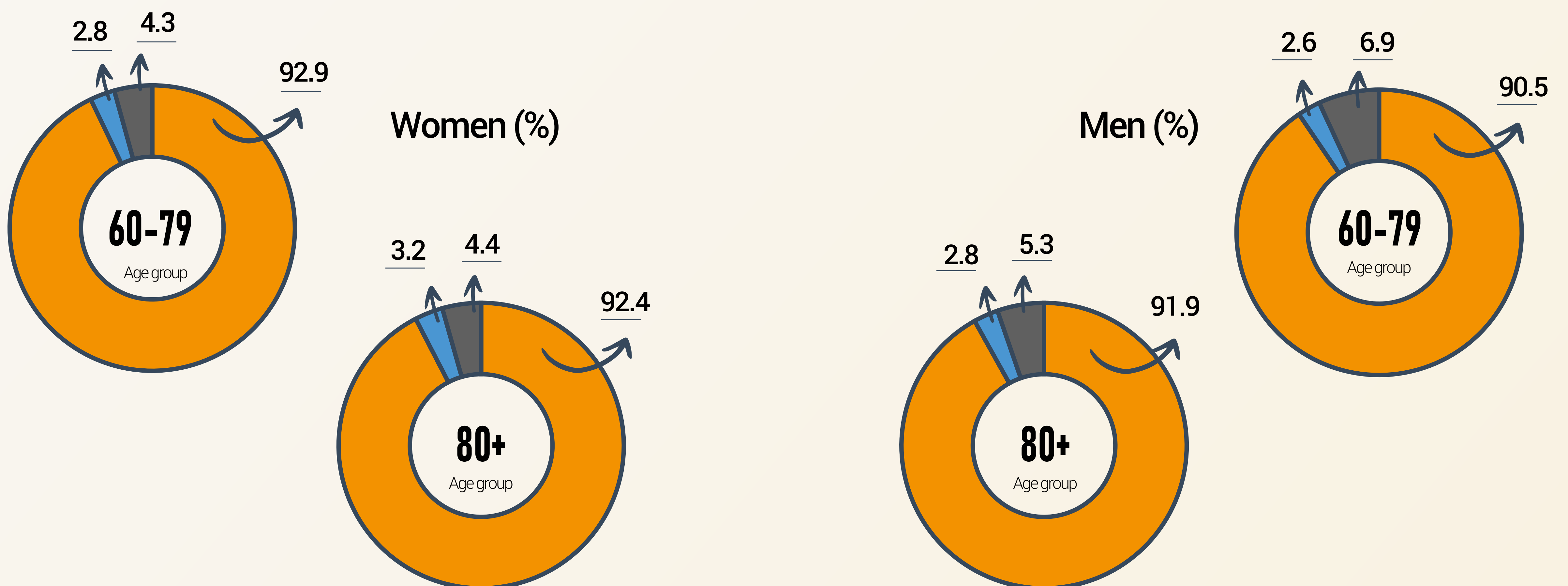
THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

Non-communicable diseases account for more than 90% of years lived with disabilities among older persons. Musculoskeletal disorders, diabetes and kidney diseases, and cardiovascular diseases are leading causes of disability for both older women and men. Prevalence of diabetes and high blood pressure is higher among Emirati older persons, as 28.7% of older Emirati women have diabetes compared with 12.6% of non-Emirati women of the same age, and 30.8% of older Emirati men have hypertension compared with 14.7% of non-Emirati men of the same age.

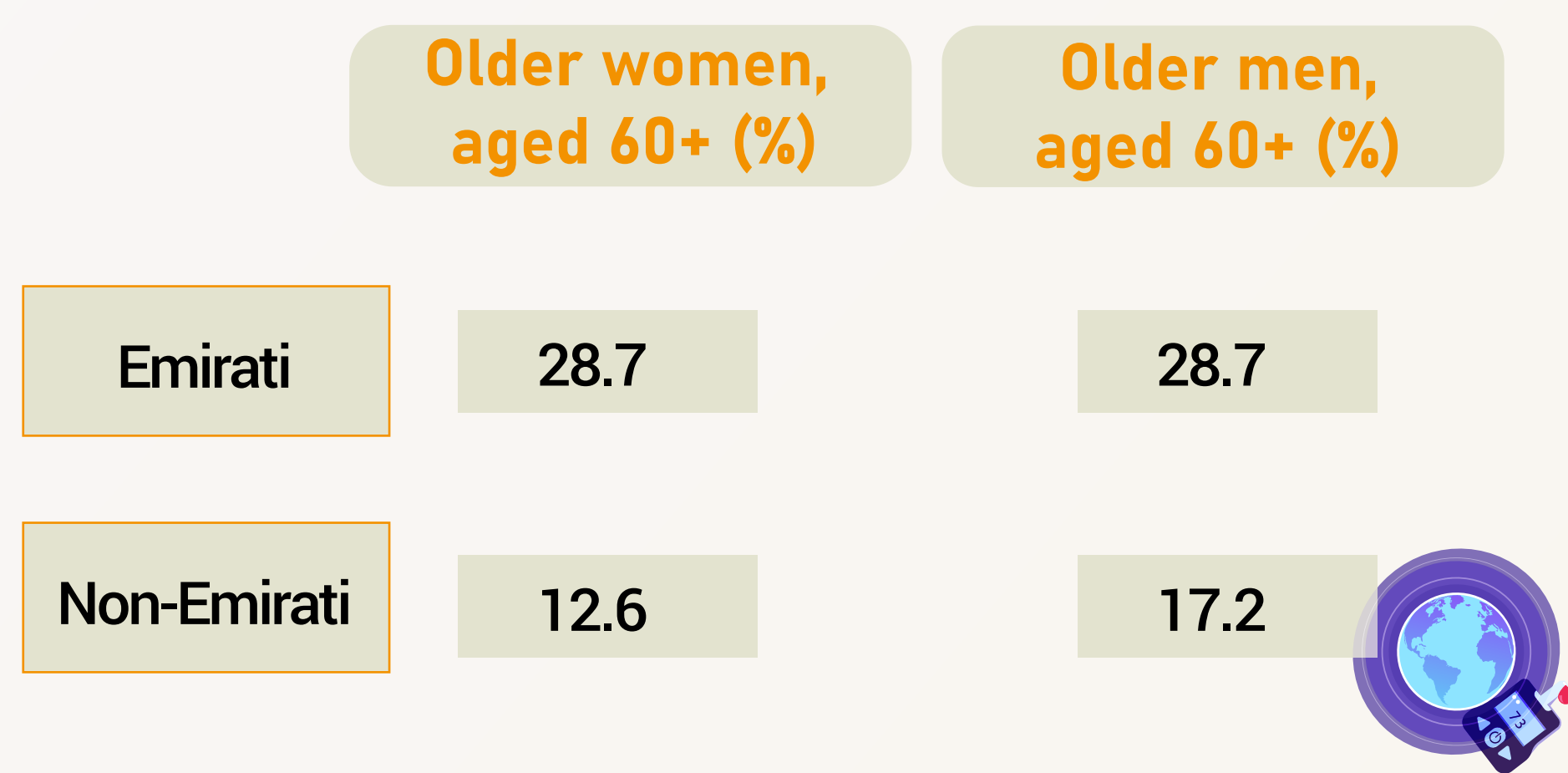
National-level data on the health insurance coverage among older persons is not available. However, data reported for the Emirate of Dubai shows that at least 97% of older persons are protected by health insurance. This data is not disaggregated by the residence status. The Federal law addresses continuum of good quality physical, mental and cognitive health services but is missing provisions for integrated health and social care or palliative care.

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

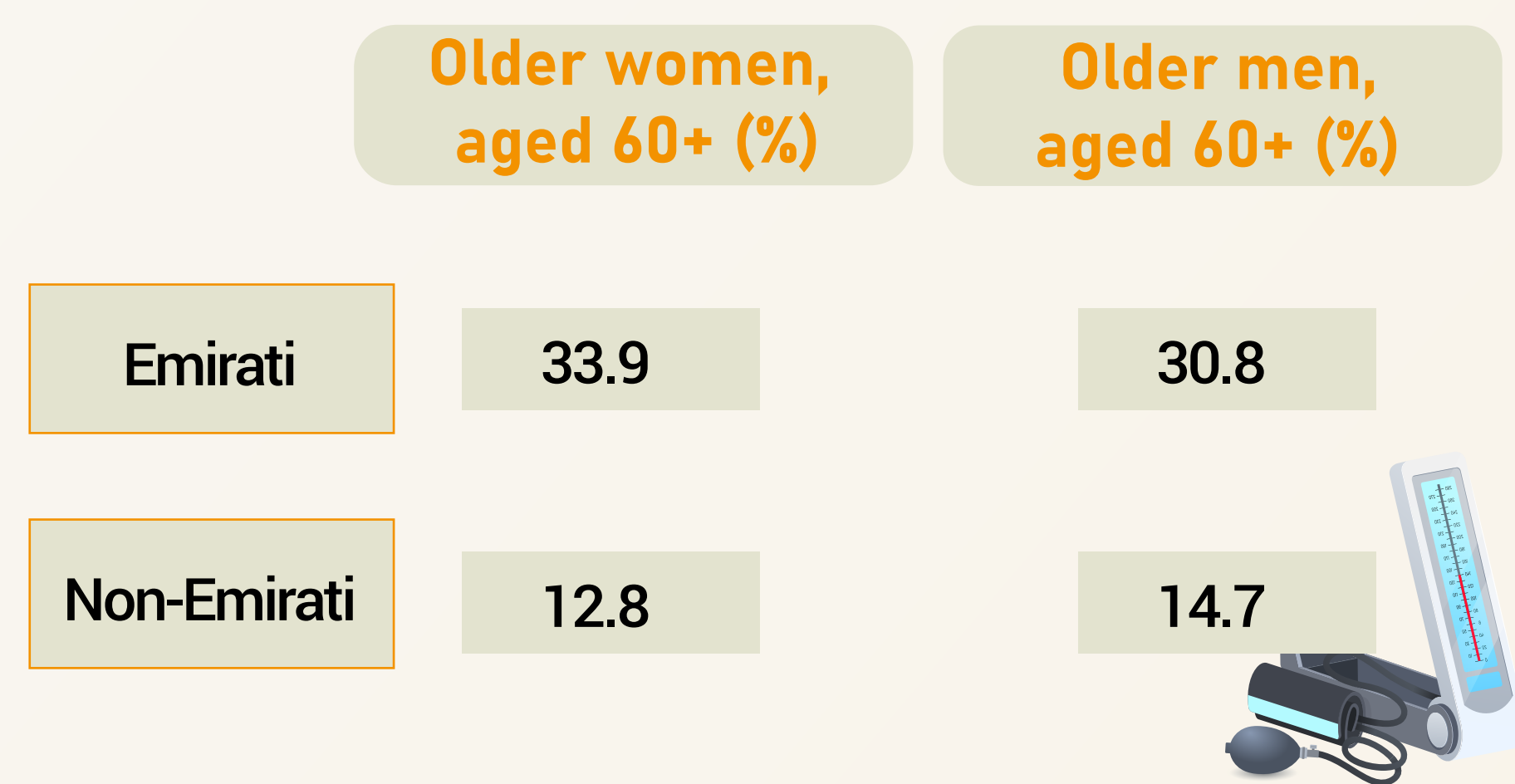
● Non-communicable diseases ● Communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases ● Injuries



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



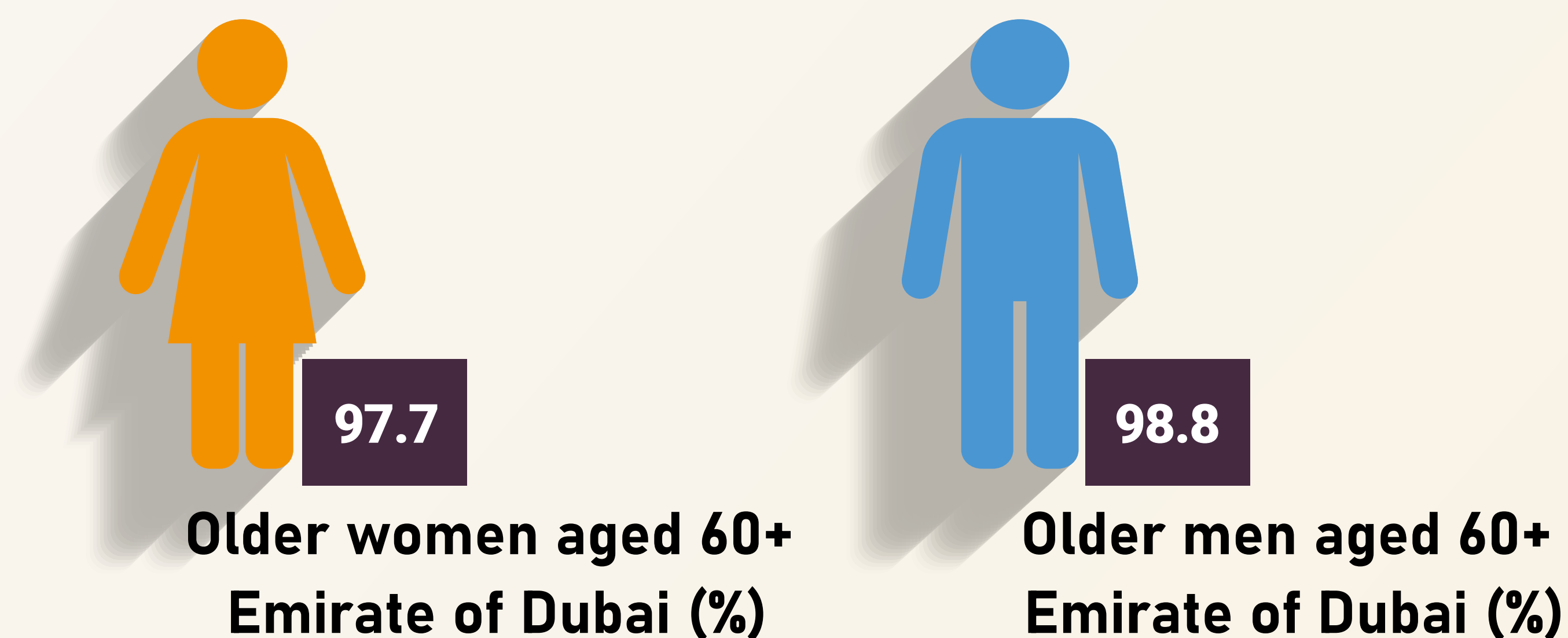
How many older women and men have hypertension?^{ix}



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

Health protection covers all older persons^x

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**

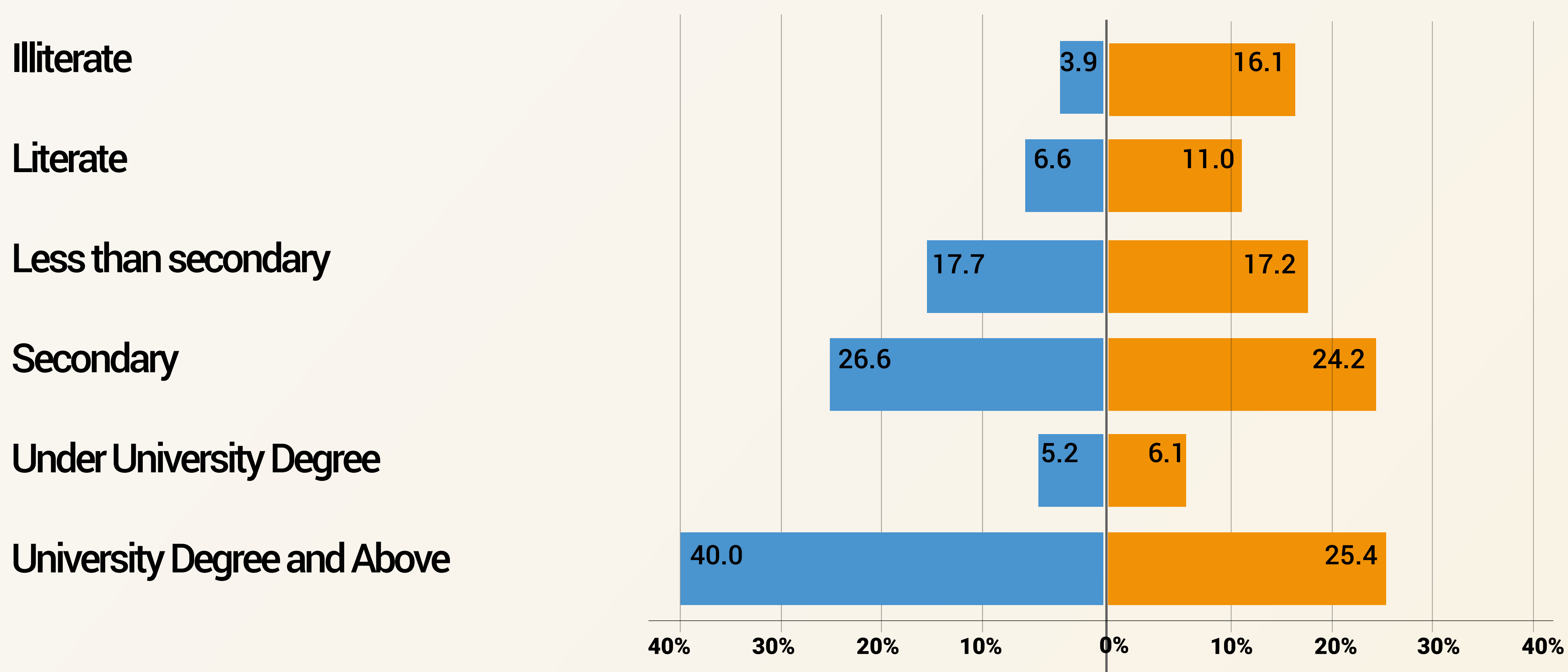
THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Timely national-level data on educational attainment of older persons is not available. However data for the Emirate of Dubai shows gender inequalities across some levels of education, as 16% of older women aged 60+ are illiterate, compared with 3.9% of older men of the same age. While the Federal law recognises the right of older persons to continued 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?^{xi}

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

● Older men aged 60+, Emirate of Dubai (%) ● Older women aged 60+, Emirate of Dubai (%)



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^{xii}
Partial (limited to continuing education programmes and adult 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 FCSA, Ministry of Health, UAE.Stat, national open data portal Bayanat, as well as 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.

Firstly, the most recent national-level data on health insurance coverage and educational attainment is not disaggregated by age, and data on older persons that is available covers a few Emirates. Similarly, regular statistical releases such as the Statistical Yearbook or the national open data portal include limited disaggregation of socio-economic indicators by age.

Secondly, data gaps exist on violence, abuse and neglect of older women and men, old-age poverty, autonomy of older persons and the wellbeing of older persons with disabilities.

In addition to concerted efforts to close data gaps and provide consistent analysis and reporting of data by age, sex, and disability, 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://bit.ly/347nTkl>
- ii Author calculations based on the Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi, Statistical yearbook of Abu Dhabi 2020, Table 3.1.11 Citizen Population Estimates by Age Group and Gender, Abu Dhabi Region, Mid 2016, Table 3.1.12 Non-Citizen Population Estimates by Age Group and Gender, Abu Dhabi Region, Mid 2016. <https://bit.ly/34aQJjY>
- iii United Arab Emirates Ministry of Health and Prevention UAE National Health Survey Report 2017 - 2018, Table 40 Summary of the functional state assessments, Proportion of the population aged 60+ who have severe or extreme difficulties in taking care of household responsibilities, <https://bit.ly/3HsSRBZ>
- iv The profile covers information in the Federal law No. 9 on the rights of senior Emirates presented in HelpAge International and UNFPA, 2020, The rights of older persons: a review of national ageing strategies in the Arab region. <https://bit.ly/3uj99ta>
- v UAE Stat, Percentage distribution of employed persons (15 years and over) by nationality, gender, and age group, 2019. <https://bit.ly/3GqhhKT>
- 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://bit.ly/3L8ES6r> Accessed 30 November 2021
- vii 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
- viii United Arab Emirates Ministry of Health and Prevention UAE National Health Survey Report 2017 - 2018, Diabetes 2.9.2 Proportion of respondents who have ever been told by a doctor or other health worker that they have raised blood sugar or diabetes. <https://bit.ly/3omCclM>
- ix United Arab Emirates Ministry of Health and Prevention UAE National Health Survey Report 2017 - 2018, Blood pressure 2.9.1 Proportion of respondents who have ever been told by a doctor or other health worker that they have raised blood pressure or hypertension. <https://bit.ly/3omCclM>

x

Dubai Statistics Center, Gender Statistics Emirate of Dubai 2019, Table 7.3 Percentage distribution of population 60+ by gender and health insurance status, Emirate of Dubai, 2019. <https://bit.ly/3scbzap>

xi

Dubai Statistics Center, Gender Statistics Emirate of Dubai 2019, Tables 7.2 Percentage distribution of population 60+ by gender and educational level, Emirate of Dubai, 2019. <https://bit.ly/3scbzap>

xii

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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