

Social exclusion and social protection for older persons

Expert Group meeting:

Report on the World Social Situation 2017

Promoting inclusion through social protection

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

New York, 1–2 December 2016

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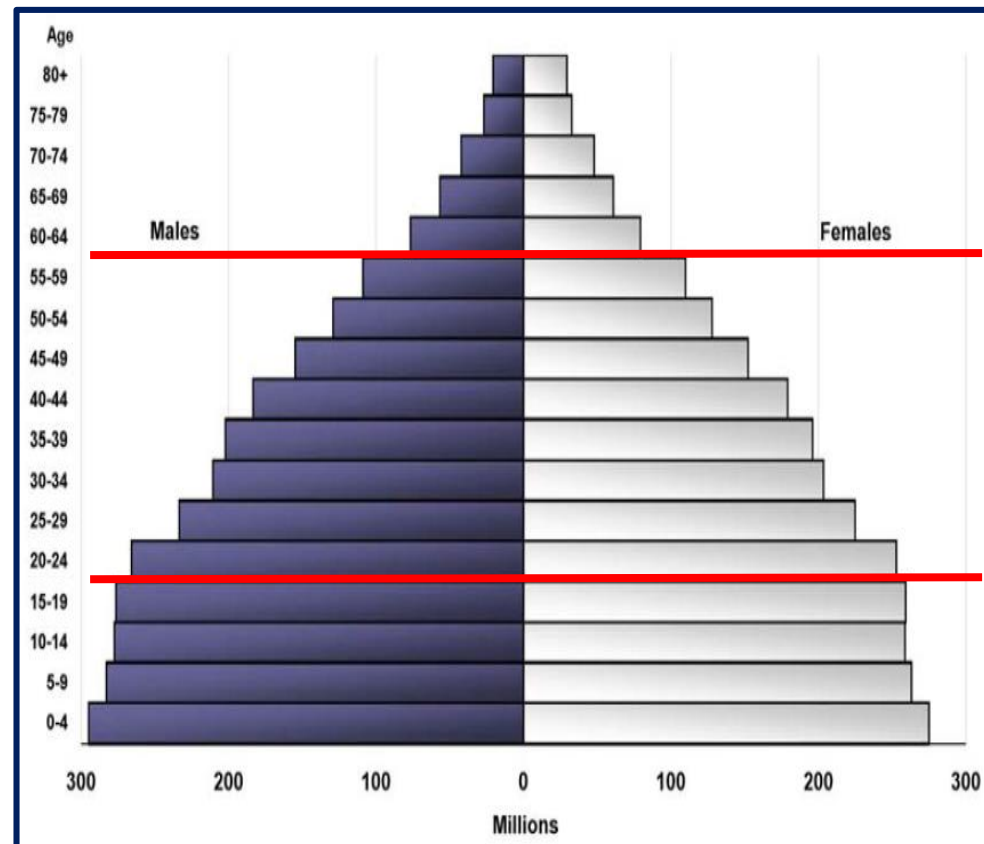
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Social pensions for older persons

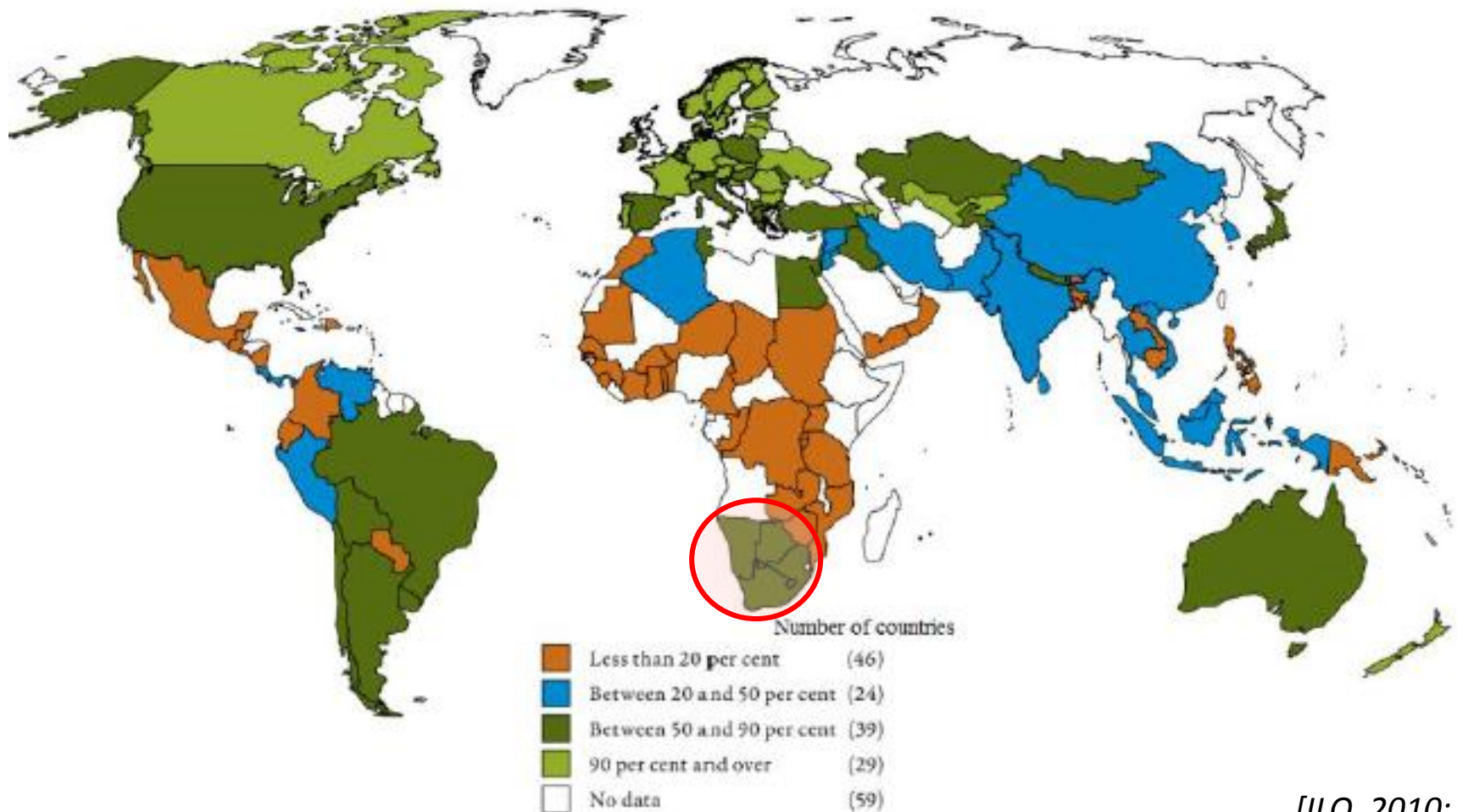
- Social pensions are politically popular because they cost less, so are fiscally affordable, unlike other 'demo-grants' such as family benefits or child grants.
- Even universal pensions reach only a small percentage of the population (and a small percentage of the poor).
- Because of the triangular population pyramid: developing countries have fewer older persons than children.
- Costs stay low by setting a high age eligibility threshold: 90 in Vietnam, 70 in Lesotho (= 70,000 pensioners).

Population pyramid in developing countries



[Haub, 2009]

Older persons covered by public pensions



Targeting older persons: good or bad?

'Universal' social pension

*1st level targeting:
categorical 'demo-grant'*

- ✓ targets all older persons
- ✓ rights-based entitlement
- ✓ overcomes stigma
- ✓ 100% inclusive
- ✓ 0% exclusion error
- ✓ politically irreversible.
- ✗ 'inclusion error' by design
(non-poor older persons)

Means-tested social pension

*2nd level targeting:
poverty targeted transfers by age*

- ✓ more affordable (smaller group)
- ✗ discretionary, not rights-based
- ✗ can be stigmatising
- ✗ exclusion error in practice
(poor older persons not reached)
- ✗ politically weak ("Programmes
that target poor people end up
being poor programmes" – Sen)

Why are older persons vulnerable to social exclusion?

Social exclusion as processes (multiple drivers):

- vulnerabilities related to **life-course** (e.g. old age) or inability to work (e.g. infirmity)
- limited human **capabilities** (e.g. inadequate levels of education, skills, and health)
- laws and policies that institutionalise **inequalities** (e.g. gendered property rights)
- inequitable **access to services**, and lack of meaningful **political participation**
- **bad governance** (e.g. unaccountable institutions, corruption, excessive bureaucracy)
- **discriminatory social practices** based on personal characteristics (e.g. age, gender).

Social exclusion as outcomes (multiple deprivations):

- exclusion from **income** sources
- exclusion from essential **services**
- exclusion from social and political **participation**

Older persons face risks of multiple deprivations.

Widows can suffer from all of these exclusionary processes and outcomes.

[Babajanian, 2013: 9]

Social inclusion for older persons in Australia

1. **Retirement income:** a means tested pension: “Australia’s retirement income system is designed to ensure that all Australians have security and dignity in retirement and those who have not been able to save will not be left in need.”
2. **Health care:** “taxation-funded health insurance provides universal access to subsidised medical and pharmaceutical services, and free hospital treatment. Older people receive additional assistance with the costs of medicines”.
3. **Indigenous peoples:** Australia has a “target to close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.”
4. **Housing access:** “Access to appropriate housing is critical to healthy ageing, participation and social inclusion. Significant investment is being made in new and upgraded housing and support services for older people on low incomes”.
5. **Economic participation:** “Productive Ageing Package to help older people who want to work remain in the labour market [and] to challenge employer and community attitudes that can lead to discrimination against older workers”.

Social inclusion for older persons in Mauritius

1. Financial support:

- (1) universal non-contributory pension for all persons aged 60 and over;
- (2) mandatory contributory pension schemes for all private sector employees;
- (3) rent allowance to elderly persons living alone;
- (4) free transport for older persons.

2. Health care:

- (1) free health services, including a fast-track system for older patients;
- (2) free assistive devices (wheelchairs, hearing aids, spectacles);
- (3) free home medical visits to bedridden persons aged 75 and above.

3. Institutional support:

- (1) Residential Care Homes – those run by Government are subsidised;
- (2) Day Care Centres – “to help elderly persons integrate in society”;
- (3) Senior Citizens Council – to improve the welfare of senior citizens, and to promote “their rights to dignity and independence”.

Dignity in older age vs. shaming older persons

“Why water a dying plant?” – African government official, arguing against social pensions

a) **Discriminatory payment modalities:** making poor pensioners queue for hours, while the rich have pensions paid directly into their bank accounts

b) **Pejorative attitudes of service providers and the public:** Pensioners having to queue at ATMs outside banks, because customers object to “smelly poor people”



What is social inclusion for older persons?

1. **Valued recognition:** conferring recognition and respect to individuals as they age and not pathologising elderly populations.
2. **Human development:** ensuring that older persons have the resources and autonomy to age in a dignified manner.
3. **Involvement and engagement:** making sure that older persons have the right and necessary support to make decisions on their own health, housing and well-being.
4. **Proximity:** closing social and physical distances between older persons and their community, which may in turn reduce isolation, marginalisation and depression.
5. **Material well-being:** ensuring that older persons obtain the financial assistance and housing necessary to allow them to participate fully in society.

References

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