

International Day of Older Persons, 1 October 2019

Key messages¹

- 1. Population ageing is a global phenomenon: virtually every country in the world is experiencing growth in the size and proportion of older persons in the population.** There were 703 million persons aged 65 years or over in the world in 2019. The number of older persons is projected to double to 1.5 billion in 2050. Globally, the share of the population aged 65 years or over increased from 6 per cent in 1990 to 9 per cent in 2019. That proportion is projected to rise further to 16 per cent by 2050, so that one in six people in the world will be aged 65 years or older.
- 2. Between 2019 and 2050, the share of older persons is projected at least to double in several regions.** Between 2019 and 2050, the share of older persons is projected at least to double in four regions: Northern Africa and Western Asia, Central and Southern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. By 2050, one in four persons living in Europe and Northern America could be aged 65 or over.
- 3. Globally, the number of persons aged 80 years or over is projected to triple, from 143 million in 2019 to 426 million in 2050.**
- 4. Throughout the world, survival beyond age 65 is improving.** Globally, a person aged 65 years in 2015-2020 could expect to live, on average, an additional 17 years. By 2045-2050, that figure will have increased to 19 years. Between 2015-2020 and 2045-2050, life expectancy at age 65 is projected to increase in all countries.
- 5. The gender gap in survival beyond age 65 is expected to narrow.** Globally, women currently outlive men by 4.8 years, but this gender-gap is expected to narrow over the next three decades.
- 6. The old-age dependency ratio is projected to rise in all regions of the world.** The old-age dependency ratio, the number of persons aged 65 years or above relative to number of persons aged 20 to 64 years, is projected to more than double in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa and Western Asia, and Central and Southern Asia.
- 7. Population ageing does not lead inevitably to macroeconomic decline — with well-chosen policies, just the opposite may be true.** To maximize the benefits and manage the risks associated with population ageing, governments should support continuing and lifelong education and health care for all; encourage savings behaviour and healthy lifestyles throughout the life course; promote employment among women, older persons and others traditionally excluded from the labour force, including through a gradual increase in the official retirement age; and support family-friendly policies to facilitate work-life balance and increased gender equality in both public and private life.

¹ Source: World Population Prospects, 2019 (www.unpopulation.org).