

FINANCIAL SECURITY OF OLDER WOMEN: PERSPECTIVES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA



Tsao Foundation
Longevity is Opportunity



ASIAN WOMEN'S FORUM
ON FINANCIAL SECURITY



ILC Singapore
International Longevity Centre
A Tsao Foundation Initiative

The 'Financial Security of Older Women: Perspectives from Southeast Asia' is the first cross-country comparative study that assesses the status of financial security of older women in six countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Despite wide variations in levels of development, culture and population size, the feminisation of ageing is a major demographic trend being witnessed across the region. Within the next 35 years, there will be more than 70 million older women in the six countries.

Are older women financially prepared for old age?

Do they have sufficient resources to meet their financial needs in old age?

Issues ranging from family support, pensions and savings, employment and caregiving affect women. The report suggests that women's financial security in old age is the outcome of gender disadvantages earlier in women's lives (whether it is lower labour force participation or lower levels of education), underlining the need for policy interventions much before women actually get old.

The report argues that without a change in entrenched gender norms on work and caregiving, future cohorts of women will also be at risk of financial insecurity in old age. For change to occur, there is an urgent need for policy interventions that involve multiple stakeholders – from individuals and community to governments and businesses.

FINANCIAL SECURITY OF OLDER WOMEN

About Tsao Foundation

The Tsao Foundation's vision is of an inclusive society for all ages that optimizes opportunities in longevity. The goals of the non-profit family foundation, which was established in Singapore in 1993, are aligned to the MIPAA (Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing) and WHO's healthy ageing frameworks. The Foundation's work is undertaken through four synergistic initiatives:

- Hua Mei Centre for Successful Ageing
- Hua Mei Training Academy
- International Longevity Centre Singapore
- Community For Successful Ageing (ComSA)

For more information, please visit www.tsaofoundation.org

About the International Longevity Centre Singapore

The International Longevity Centre Singapore (ILC Singapore) aims to promote the well-being of older persons and contribute to national development through supporting policy, practice and capacity building.

ILC Singapore is a member of the ILC Global Alliance.

As an initiative of the Tsao Foundation, ILC Singapore's mission is to strive for constructive change in how society approaches and responds to ageing.

For more information, visit <https://tsaofoundation.org/index.php/what-we-do/research-and-collaboration/about-ilc-singapore>

About Citi Foundation

The Citi Foundation works to promote economic progress and improve the lives of people in low-income communities around the world. The Foundation invests in efforts that increase financial inclusion, catalyse job opportunities for youth, and reimagine approaches to building economically vibrant cities. The Citi Foundation's "More than Philanthropy" approach leverages the enormous expertise of Citi and its people to fulfill its mission and drive thought leadership and innovation.

For more information, visit www.citifoundation.com

FINANCIAL SECURITY OF OLDER WOMEN: PERSPECTIVES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

Edited by

SUSANA CONCORDO HARDING

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First published in Singapore in 2018 by
Tsao Foundation
298 Tiong Bahru Road, #15-01/06 Central Plaza, Singapore 168730

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ISBN 978-981-11-9762-8

Cover Design by Qu'est-ce Que c'est, Singapore
Typeset and Printed in Singapore by Superskill Graphics Pte Ltd

Preface

The Asia-Pacific region is poised to become one of the oldest regions in the world, with an estimated 1.3 billion older persons by 2050. The face of this future will be female, as more than half of the older persons aged 60 years and over will be women. However, available evidence also suggests that women have less income and assets for old age, and are therefore more vulnerable to financial insecurity.

Governments in the region need to be prepared for the challenges of the feminisation of ageing. They need to understand the factors that currently influence women's old-age financial security, and anticipate the impact of trends that may change the future trajectories of women's lives. While there has been increasing interest in the policy implications of population ageing, the gender dimensions of ageing have been relatively under-explored. In particular, there is a lack of research on older women's financial security in the Southeast Asian region.

The "Financial Security of Older Women: Perspectives from Southeast Asia" provides a comprehensive overview of the status of financial security of women in the region. It is the first publication of the Regional Learning Network on Women's Financial Security, catalysed by the International Longevity Centre Singapore, one of the four initiatives under Tsao Foundation in Singapore, in response to the need for a better understanding of these issues. We hope that this inaugural research will pave the way for a series that will increase our knowledge of women's financial security, and enhance awareness about effective strategies and best practices to secure the financial future of older women.

Through a review of secondary sources, the chapters in this volume examine the gendered dimensions of ageing in six countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. An important contribution of the volume is that it incorporates the life-course perspective into the analysis of gender and ageing. By highlighting that the financial status of women in old age is the cumulative outcome of gendered inequalities in access to assets and opportunities, including employment, throughout women's lives, it calls for policymakers to adopt a holistic approach to gender and ageing. In order to ensure that women are financially secure in old age, this approach requires implementing policy interventions throughout the course of women's lives, particularly targeting risk points in the life-trajectory, such as when women have children or become widows.

The first chapter of the volume presents an overview of the regional trends on gender and ageing, and identifies some of the common regional themes that emerge from the analysis. The opening chapter reiterates two key issues. First, women's caregiving responsibilities are the primary reason for women's lower labour-force participation, which in turn has a follow-on effect on income, savings, and pensions. Second, most of the countries in the

region rely on family as the central pillar of social protection for older women, but this is under threat as families become smaller and more nuclear. The remaining chapters focus on the situation and main issues in each individual country, but the central message remains the same: women's financial security is the outcome of gender disadvantages that women encounter throughout their lives. The volume also cautions against a regional cookie-cutter approach to older women, underscoring the diversity of women's experiences. In particular, the chapters identify different groups of older women that may be particularly vulnerable, from single women to women in conflict-affected areas.

At Tsao Foundation, we have a long history of advocacy for an inclusive society for all ages. Our founder, Madam Tsao Ng Yu Shun, understood women's challenges in old age and envisioned a Foundation dedicated to their welfare. While we went on working with all older persons, women and ageing remain a major commitment and undertaking. We are therefore honoured and privileged to catalyse this initiative, to work closely with like-minded partners to bring this project to fruition. Citi Singapore and Citi Foundation have been a strong ally in a decade-long journey that allowed us to reach out to thousands of women in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia through our financial education programme and to bring the issue to the fore in critical platforms and gather more support.

We hope this collected volume will serve not only as a useful reference on the situation of the financial security of older women for policymakers and practitioners alike but also an impetus to propel policymakers and all stakeholders to work together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of gender equality by 2030, ensuring that no older woman is left behind.

Dr Mary Ann Tsao

Chairman, Tsao Foundation

Acknowledgements

The Regional Learning Network on Women's Financial Security started in 2015 with a bold vision to work together. As an inaugural collaboration, many were instrumental in bringing this book to publication.

This peer-reviewed collective volume was made possible by the vision of Dr Mary Ann Tsao and Citi Foundation. Behind this strong partnership are two committed advocates: Mr Adam Abdur Rahman, Managing Director and Head of Corporate Affairs, Citi Singapore & ASEAN and Ms Cheryl Chen, former Head of Corporate Citizenship, Citi Singapore.

The report received invaluable guidance from Ms Peh Kim Choo, CEO of Tsao Foundation and the Board of Advisers of the International Longevity Centre (ILC) Singapore: Professor Locknie Hsu, Professor of Law, Singapore Management University; Dr Paul Ong, Technical Officer, WHO Kobe Centre; Professor Brenda Yeoh, Provost's Chair, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore; Dr Belinda Yuen, Professorial Fellow and Research Director, Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, Singapore University of Technology and Design; and Dr Joanne Yoong, Director, University of Southern California Center for Economic and Social Research-East, and her team deserve special mention for patiently reading through and providing insightful comments on the various drafts, as well as providing technical assistance.

Various members of staff from the Tsao Foundation have worked tirelessly to produce this report. In particular, without the quiet, unassuming, but efficient support of Ms Leong Yuet Chun, the report would not have been completed so smoothly.

Ms Triena Ong provided excellent and professional editorial support, which was instrumental in the efficient publication process of the report. Thanks also to Ms Ivy Heng for her assistance in checking the accuracy of publicly available data on all the chapters.

The book has also benefited greatly from excellent comments and feedback from several academics and practitioners, who agreed to review the preliminary drafts of the country chapters, and each of them deserves special thanks, especially for sparing their valuable time to do so.

The initial findings from this report were presented at the Third Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing on 12 September 2017 with support from UNESCAP. The input from participants at the event, including government officials, and representatives of non-governmental organisations, international organisations and academics is gratefully acknowledged. The papers provided by Dr Asghar Zaidi have enhanced the content of the report, especially the conceptual framework.

Extracts of the discussion on family, gender and ageing in this book were presented at a conference organised by the Asia Research Institute (ARI) on 'Trends and Determinants of Retirement and Related Policies in Asia' on 8-9 February 2018. Comments and feedback from the participants at this conference which have enhanced the final research output are also gratefully acknowledged.

This book is the result of collaborative efforts by multiple individuals and organisations in different countries. Without the expertise and commitment of each of the contributors from the six countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, this report would not have been possible. The editorial team would like to thank each of the contributors for their cooperation, dedication and friendship during this journey together.

Within each country, the country authors would like to thank specific individuals and organisations.

In Indonesia, the authors wish to thank the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Faculty of Human Ecology, Bogor Agricultural University, the Association of Centre for Women's Resources Development (PPSW-Indonesia), and the Centre for Ageing Studies, University of Indonesia.

In Myanmar, colleagues from HelpAge International in Myanmar provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research. Thanks to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Government of Myanmar for providing valuable feedback and supporting a platform of dialogue and discussion with other government stakeholders.

The Gender Equality Network in Myanmar shared their expertise on gender and women's issues, in particular Aunty Pansy Tun Thein provided comments that greatly improved the manuscript. Finally, the efforts of all organisations whose primary research and publications have assisted in the compilation of our research in Myanmar is gratefully acknowledged, and the authors recognise their contribution in making data and information available for public use.

In Malaysia, the authors would like to thank the Department of Statistics Malaysia and MyAgeing for the data used.

In Singapore, the authors would like to thank the members of SAWA (Singapore Alliance of Women in Ageing) for their encouragement and invaluable insights: AWARE (Association of Women for Action and Research), PPIS (Persatuan Pemudi Islam Singapura or the Singapore Muslim Women's Association), and the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO). Ms Georgette Tan from Mastercard very kindly shared data on women's financial literacy and savings for Singapore and the region. The team at the Asia Pacific Risk Centre has also provided helpful background information, as part of their research on the risks faced by low-income paraprofessional women in the Asia-Pacific region. Ms Aw Su

assisted in collecting information for the chapter. Finally, the authors wish to thank the organisations whose primary research, data and publications have been used for compiling the information in the chapter on Singapore. By collating this data, and more importantly, making it available for public use, these organisations have enabled an analysis of the status of older women in Singapore.

From the Philippines, the author wishes to thank the Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE), headed by the Executive Director Ms Emily Beridico for their unwavering support in completing the report and in giving access to technical data; and Mr Charles Knox-Vydmanov for providing guidance and advice on writing the report.

In Thailand, the authors would like to thank Ms Usa Khiewrord, Regional Programme Manager, HelpAge International, Asia-Pacific Regional Office for her support to this research.

For the Regional Overview, the authors would like to thank Professor Julie Byles, Dr Evi Nurvidya Arifin and Dr Aris Ananta for providing useful feedback and references for the chapter.

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**REGIONAL OVERVIEW:
THE FACE OF AGEING
IS WOMEN**

CHAPTER 1



REGIONAL OVERVIEW: THE FACE OF AGEING IS WOMEN

Susana Concorde Harding, Mary Ann Baquero Geronimo
and Supriti Bezbaruah

1. Introduction

With more than half (about 60%) of the world's total population of older persons aged 60 years and over,¹ the Asia-Pacific region is fast becoming one of the oldest regions in the world. It is estimated that the number of older persons will increase from 576 million in 2017 to approximately 1.3 billion, or 1 in 4 persons by 2050.² Ensuring the financial security of the rising number of older persons will be a major economic and social challenge for Asia in the coming years. Given the speed of ageing, there is a growing urgency for governments to put in place a comprehensive policy response.

One policy focus should be directed towards older women, who will form the majority

of the older population. A review of the progress made by governments in Asia-Pacific on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) since 2002 finds that "Particular gaps exist with regard to gender equality and addressing the needs of older women".³ In addition, the review calls for "specific attention" to be given to the income security needs of older women.⁴ The first step towards addressing this would be a comprehensive understanding of the current status of, and factors influencing the financial security of older women in the region, and the factors that have driven or will drive this in the future.

The objective of this research is to contribute towards this understanding by providing an overview of the status of the financial



... older women are among those most likely to be left behind – so an ageing population could undermine our efforts to reach Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality.



– Shamshad Akhtar, at the Intergovernmental Meeting for the Review and Appraisal of the MIPAA, 2017⁵

security of older women in six countries in Southeast Asia – Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Through a review of secondary sources, the authors assess the current status of financial security of older women in each country, examine the main underlying factors driving that financial status, and identify key stages of life at which women become most at risk of insecurity. By providing this systematic cross-country analysis of the financial security of older women in Southeast Asia, this collective volume underlines the need for urgent policy action at the country and regional levels.

Section 2 focuses on drawing out some of the key themes that emerge from the country chapters and describes the overall demographic trends in the region. The authors of the various chapters in this book incorporate a life-course perspective in their analyses recognising that ageing is a lifelong process, the different phases of a woman's life are interconnected, and that women's financial status in old age is the outcome of the cumulative experiences and events throughout women's lives. This is discussed in Section 3 where the main elements of the life-course perspective are examined in more detail. Included in Section 4 are some of the common methodological limitations such as the lack of gender and age disaggregated data highlighted in the country studies. Sections 5 to 10 focus on the life-course factors affecting financial security. The final sections (Sections 11 and 12) present a regional "policy wish-list" based on the analyses that have been identified in the country chapters, and considers potential ways forward for policymakers and researchers, and the role of intergovernmental organisations.



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This chapter defines older persons as those aged 60 years and over unless otherwise stated. Financial security is defined as the ability to meet both current and future expenses, as well as to be able to meet unforeseen events such as health shocks. The discussion that follows is based on information from the individual country chapters, unless other sources are provided.

2. Different Countries, Similar Trends

2.1 Rapid Population Ageing

The six countries that are the focus of this book – Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – are extremely varied in terms of geographical and population size and levels of development (Table 1.1). However, population ageing is a shared challenge.

Although the speed and the extent of ageing vary between the different countries, the trends show a common point of convergence: by 2050 all the six countries

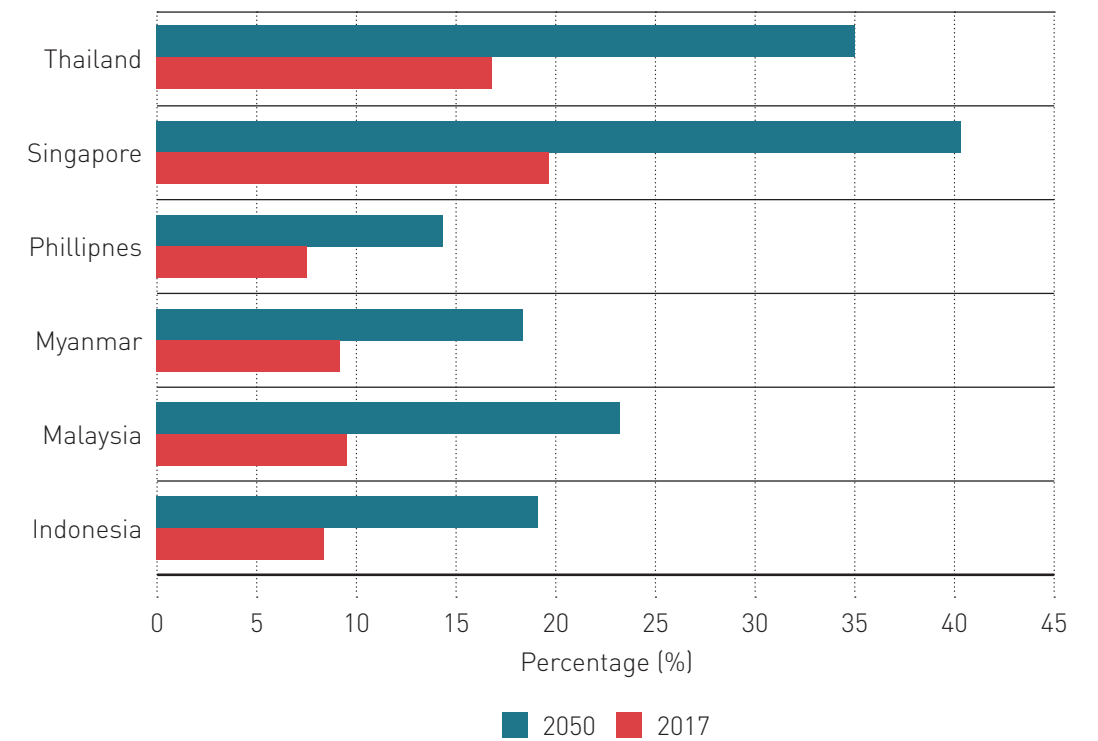
Table 1.1: Country Profile, Selected Indicators

Indicators	Indonesia	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
Surface area (sq km), 2017	1,910,931	330,800	676,590	300,000	719	513,120
Population (thousands), 2016	261,115.46	31,187.26	52,885.22	103,320.22	5,607.28	68,863.51
GDP per capita (US\$), 2016	3,570.30	9,508.20	1,195.50	2,951.90	55,243.10	5,979.30
Income classification	Lower Middle Income	Upper Middle Income	Lower Middle Income	Lower Middle Income	High Income	Upper Middle Income
Human Development Index ranking, 2015	113	59	145	116	5	87

Notes:

- (i) Surface area: a country's total area, including inland bodies of water and some coastal waterways. Source: World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.SRF.TOTL.K2?view=chart>.
- (ii) Population: data counts all residents regardless of legal status or citizenship. Values shown are mid-year estimates. Source: World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>
- (iii) GDP per capita. Source: World Bank Open data, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>.
- (iv) Classification by Income: Low Income countries (GNI per capita of \$1,005 or less); Lower Middle Income (GNI per capita of \$1,006 to \$3,955); Upper Middle Income (GNI per capita of \$3,956 - \$12,235); High Income (GNI per capita of \$12,236 or more). Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Aging", pp. 92 - 93. (New York: UN, 2017).
- (v) Human Development Index: "Human Development Report 2016".

Fig. 1.1: Proportion of Population over 60 Years or over, 2017 and 2050 (%)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2017. "World Population Aging", pp. 100, Table A.III.1 (New York: UN, 2017).

Note: Figures for 2050 are projections.

will have over 10% of the population over 60 years of age (Figure 1.1). Across all six countries combined, the total number of older persons is projected to more than double from 52 million in 2017 to 130 million in 2050.⁶

This process is most advanced in Singapore. In 2017, Singapore was ranked 54 out of 201 countries, in terms of the percentage of older persons in the total population.⁷ By 2050, it will be among the top ten oldest countries in the world, and with an estimated 40% of the population over 60 years, it will be a "super-aged" country.⁸

Singapore is closely followed by Thailand which is also listed among the top 100 countries with an ageing population in 2017 (ranked 61). By 2050, Thailand will also be close to becoming a super-aged country, with an estimated 35.1% of older persons, making it among the top 30 oldest countries in the world.

Developing countries like Thailand face a dual challenge: they have limited time to adapt to this change, and fewer resources compared to developed countries that have previously experienced this demographic transition at a more gradual pace.



Population ageing will have profound impacts on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It can impact productivity and economic growth and, if not managed properly, may further increase social inequalities, particularly those related to gender, and erode gains in poverty reduction.¹⁰



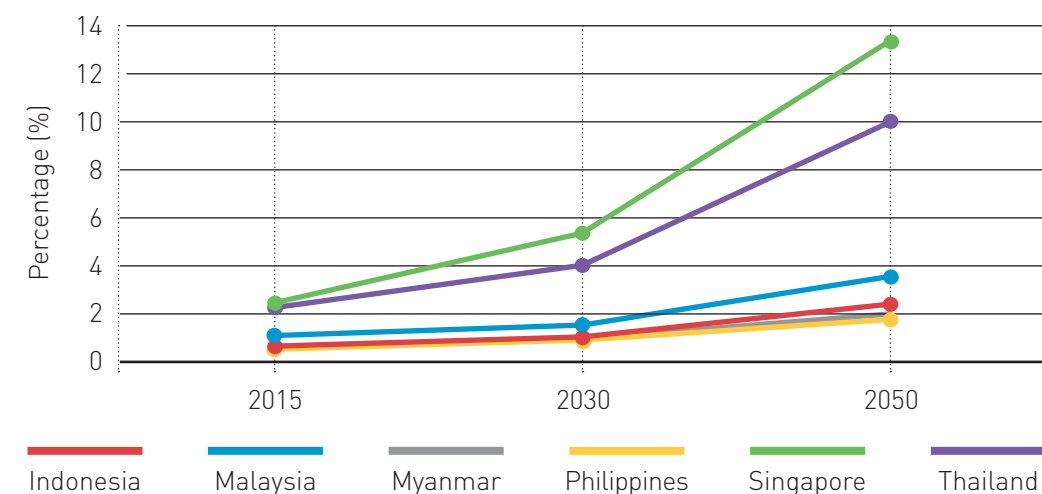
In some countries, the sheer number of older persons can be significant. In Indonesia, for instance, the projected share of older persons in the total population in 2050 is a relatively low 19.2%. However, in absolute numbers, this translates to 62 million persons, which is more than the combined total population of older persons for the same year for Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand (Annex 1.1).⁹ In all 6

countries, therefore, the old age dependency ratio is increasing (Annex 1.2), leading to pressures on social security and public health systems.

2.2 The Rise in the 'Oldest-old' Population

Within the overall trend towards ageing, the rise in the population of the "oldest-old" (above 80 years old) (Figure 1.2)

Fig. 1.2: Proportion of the Population Aged 80 Years and Over, (estimates and projections) (%)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision" (New York: UN, 2017). Custom data acquired via website.

is a significant development. The total population of the oldest-old is expected to increase almost fivefold from 4.6 million in 2015 to 20.5 million in 2050. The growth of the projected population of 80+ will

be sharper in Singapore and Thailand. However, in all six countries, this trend will have implications for policies on long-term care, health systems, caregiving and financial security, among others.

Fig. 1.3a: Changes in Fertility Rates, 1975-2050, (estimates and projections)

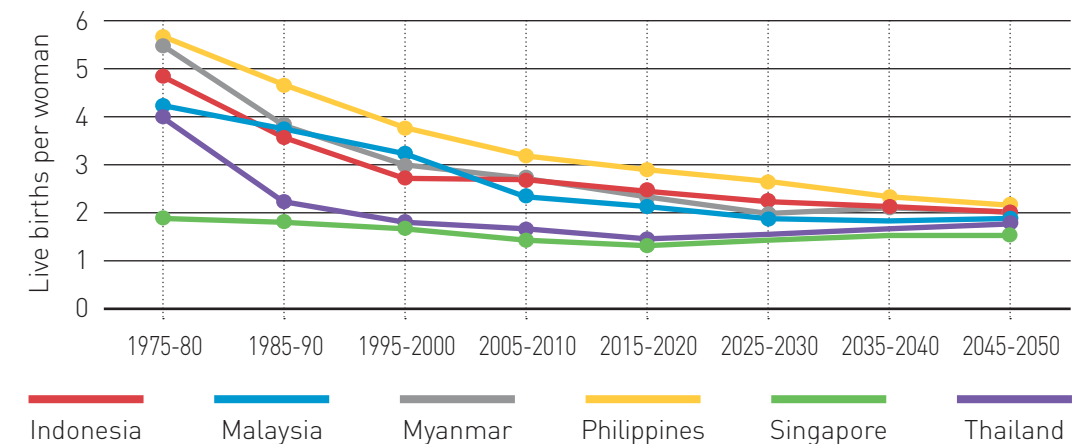


Fig. 1.3b: Life Expectancy at Birth (years), Both Sexes Combined, 1975-2050, (estimates and projections)

Country	Total fertility (live births per woman)		
	1975-80	2015-2020	2045-2050
Indonesia	4.73	2.32	1.90
Malaysia	4.20	2.01	1.74
Myanmar	5.15	2.18	1.80
Philippines	5.46	2.88	2.21
Singapore	1.84	1.26	1.37
Thailand	3.92	1.46	1.59

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision" (New York: UN, 2017), custom data acquired via website.

2.3 Common Drivers of Demographic Change

The main drivers for these trends are a combination of declining fertility and increasing longevity, albeit at different rates (Figures 1.3a and 1.3b). Singapore and Thailand lead in relation to low fertility rates and higher life expectancy. This is mirrored in the relative sizes of the older population, as these two countries are presently also the countries with the highest share of older persons in the population.

2.4 The Feminisation of Ageing

There is also growing recognition of the female face of population ageing. Since women live longer than men (Table 1.2), older women outnumber older men in all six countries (Figures 1.4a and 1.4b). In this group as a whole, women comprise 55% of the population aged 60 years and over, and this increases to over 60% among the oldest-old.

While the predominance of women among the older population is projected to continue, the gender balance at the regional level is projected to become more even among the oldest-old, by 2050. This is in line with global trends,¹¹ as the life expectancy of men at older ages is increasing. However, at the country level, there is strong disparity – while Singapore is moving towards a more even gender balance among the oldest-old by 2050, the gender imbalance actually increases in the other countries. These intra-regional variations suggest that while some policy interventions can be coordinated at a regional level, it is critical that country-level specific trends are always the main focus. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that even in 2050, women will comprise the significant majority of the older population, including the oldest-old (ranging from 56% to 66%), and therefore, gender will remain an important aspect of population ageing for some time to come.

Table 1.2: Life Expectancy at Birth (years), (estimates and projections)

Country	2015-2020		2030-2035		2045-2050	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Indonesia	71.65	67.35	74.15	69.18	76.28	70.87
Malaysia	77.92	73.37	80.10	75.74	82.07	78.27
Myanmar	69.11	64.38	71.42	66.14	73.46	67.65
Philippines	72.90	66.01	75.07	67.76	77.04	69.59
Singapore	85.26	81.25	87.34	83.67	89.32	85.62
Thailand	79.34	71.91	81.80	75.13	83.91	78.41

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision" (New York: UN, 2017), custom data acquired via website.

Fig. 1.4a: Share of Population Aged 60 Years or over, by Sex, 2017 and 2050 (%)

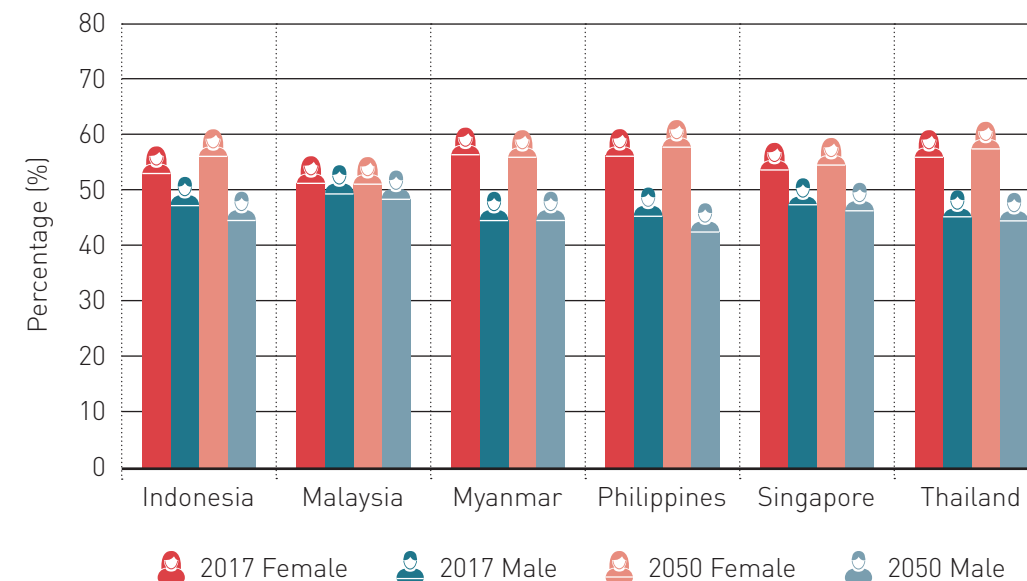
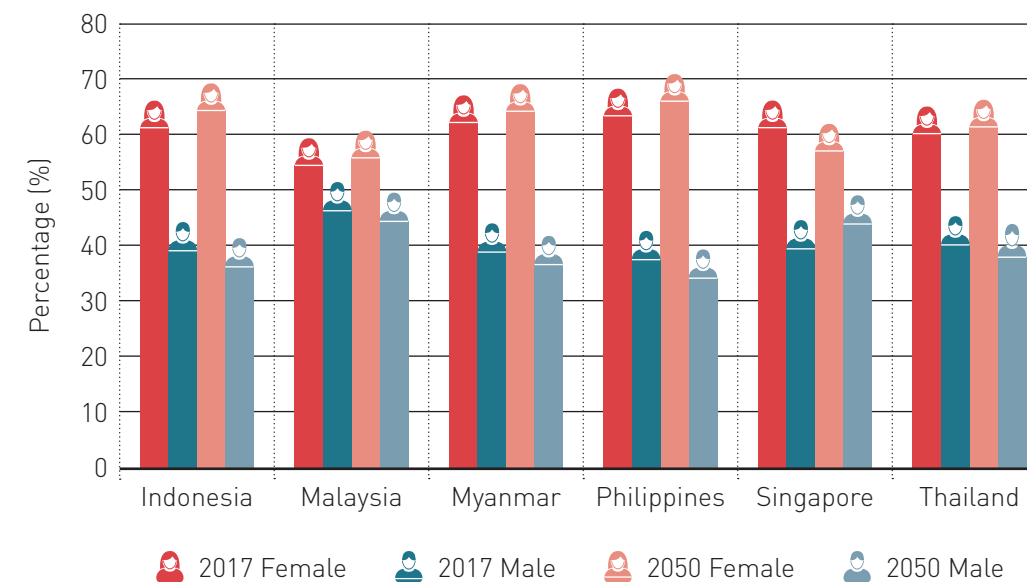


Fig. 1.4b: Share of Population Aged 80 Years or over, by Sex, 2017 and 2050 (%)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision" (New York: UN, 2017), custom data acquired via website.

Note: Data for 2050 are projections.



If not addressed, the feminization of aging has the potential to become one of the biggest challenges to gender equality of this century.¹²



**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,
UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN Women**

3. Adopting a Life-Course Perspective

The analyses in this book adopt a life-course perspective to be able to identify the connections between the different stages of women’s lives, and trace how outcomes in old age are dependent upon opportunities, events and behaviours earlier in women’s lives. The life-course perspective focuses on how important life events and transitions can influence the life trajectories of individuals.

The key principles of the life-course perspective were incorporated into the analysis, as much as feasible given the limited availability of longitudinal data. This perspective was used to inform the understanding of gendered differences in ageing.

First, the authors followed a dynamic, rather than static analysis of women’s lives that looks at women’s lives in their entirety, not just women in old age. Women go through



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different life stages, for instance, from childhood to working age to retirement, but the analyses recognise that there is significant overlap between the factors that affect women’s financial security across these different life stages. There are also some factors that affect women throughout

their lives such that each stage of life cannot be viewed in isolation, but must be linked together. For example, lower levels of education in childhood would affect the type of work opportunities available during working age. Initial inequalities can also pull down an individual’s efforts to make

Five Principles of the Life-Course
<p><i>Life-Span Development</i></p> <p>Human development and ageing are life-long processes. From the moment one is born, one starts ageing. Changes (biological, psychological and social) occur throughout one’s lives, and development does not stop at age 18.</p>
<p><i>Agency</i></p> <p>Individuals can make choices and decisions within the opportunities and constraints of their social and economic contexts.</p>
<p><i>Time and Place</i></p> <p>The life-course of an individual will be affected both by historical context and geographical place. Different birth cohorts will have different life experiences. For example, those born after World War II would have a different life experience than those individuals born in the 1970s. Individuals in different geographical locations may experience the same historical event differently. For instance, Indians who lived near the border areas during independence and partition may have been affected differently by these events than those who lived in remote rural areas.</p>
<p><i>Timing</i></p> <p>Individuals within the same birth cohort may have different experiences of similar events if the timing is different. For example, a woman who marries at a young age will have a different life-course from her contemporary who marries later in life.</p>
<p><i>Linked Lives</i></p> <p>Individuals’ lives are interdependent, and so individuals are affected by their relationships with others. For example, if a daughter decides to migrate leaving her children behind, this would also affect the roles and responsibilities and life-course experience of their mothers, who may be expected to take on the responsibility of looking after their grandchildren.</p>

Source: Glen H. Elder, Monica Kirkpatrick Johnson and Robert Crosnoe, “The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory”, in Jeylan T. Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan, eds., *Handbook of the Life Course* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003).

beneficial life transitions. Shocks, or life events such as divorce and widowhood, can also change the trajectory of women's lives. A full-time homemaker may have been financially secure, due to the financial support from her husband. Widowhood would make her financially vulnerable.

Second, the impact of financial security on individual lives is set within the wider social, historical and institutional context. In all the six countries, it is evident that changing social trends, from improving education of women, to declining family size will have an impact on the financial security of future cohorts of older women.

Analysing women's lives within the wider social and cultural context also allows the authors to understand the different constraints faced by women. While women do have some agency to make their own choices, labour-force participation is clearly the outcome of not only individual choice, but also a range of constraints, from gender discrimination in the labour market to caregiving responsibilities.¹³ Women's decisions are often made in relation to changes in the lives of people significant to them such as when someone in the family falls sick or grows old and needs care – it is usually women who leave their jobs to perform that role.

Finally, by adopting the life-course perspective, the authors identify key stages at which women are most at risk of becoming financially insecure. A common risk point in all six countries is when women leave the labour-force to undertake care responsibilities, thereby moving into a pathway of reduced earnings and savings with a consequent impact on financial security in later life. Appropriate policy

interventions could be made at this juncture that could potentially have a major impact on women's future financial status.

The analyses also point to two types of policies based on a life-course perspective: long-term positive "assets building" policies¹⁴ that enable individuals to develop their human capital and other forms of capital earlier in their lives; and short-term policies to mitigate the impact of sudden shocks. The policy recommendations in this book encompass, on the one hand, long-term investments in education, health, employment and skills training, and on the other hand, safety nets such as health insurance, unemployment insurance and social protection.

4. The Importance of Data

In order to identify the key stages at which women become at risk of financial insecurity, and to design appropriate policy interventions, the availability of comprehensive, sex and age disaggregated data is essential. In practice, however, this has proved to be challenging. The country analyses echo the findings of the review of the MIPAA that such sex and age disaggregated data is "largely missing".¹⁵ A review of the secondary sources used (Table 1.3) shows that data on labour-force participation is usually disaggregated by sex and age. However, data by sex and age on other indicators such as income, pensions and government benefits were less widely available.

Another challenge was the absence of a standard definition of older persons, which hindered comparisons across and within countries. Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines,

and Thailand followed the UN definition of older persons as 60 years and over, whereas Myanmar and Singapore defined them as over 65 years. Even within countries, there was considerable variation. For example, in Myanmar and Singapore, most government statistics identified older persons as those

over 65 years, but the National Survey of Senior Citizens in Singapore was conducted among those over 55 years.

Finally, data related to poverty, income and expenditure was based on the household, not the individual as the main unit of

Table 1.3: Selected Sources of Data Used in the Country Studies

Country	Selected Data Sources
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census 2010 • National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS 2009) • Indonesian Family Life Survey 2007 • People's Welfare Indicator 2015
Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malaysian Housing and Population Census 2010 • Household Income Survey, 2009, 2014
Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census 2014 • 2009-2010 Integrated Housing Living Conditions Assessment (IHLCA) survey data • Situation of Older Persons in Myanmar (Survey), 2013
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census of Population and Housing • Demographic and Health Survey 2013 • Labour-Force Surveys • Annual Poverty Indicators Survey 2014 • Philippine Study on Ageing
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census 2000, 2010 • Population Trends, 2016, 2017 • General Household Survey 2015 • Labour Force Surveys, 2000 - 2017 • National Survey of Senior Citizens, 2011
Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of Older Persons in Thailand, 2014 • Population and Housing Census, 2010 • Socio-Economic Survey, 2014

Source: Country Studies, Regional Research Project on Financial Security of Older Women from a Life Course Perspective.

Note: This is not a comprehensive list of all the data sources and surveys used in the country chapters, but is a selection of some of the main sources used.

analysis. Using the household as a unit of measurement can be problematic for several reasons. First, it obscures intra-household inequalities in the distribution of resources. Second, it does not consider the contribution of unpaid domestic labour to the total income of the household. Third, it assumes the homogeneity of all household members, whereas in reality, men and women have widely differing time use and expenditure patterns.

5. Are Older Women Financially Less Secure than Older Men?

Based on current available data, and the limitations of this data, it is difficult to provide a conclusive assessment of the financial security of older women. However, within these limitations, existing evidence suggests that older women are financially more vulnerable than older men primarily due to gender inequalities in the factors influencing financial security.

In terms of poverty, in Indonesia the proportion of older women below the poverty line was marginally higher than older men. Singapore does not have an official poverty line, so very little can be discerned about the actual poverty situation of older women. In Myanmar, there is an official poverty line, but poverty has been examined using different measures from “food poverty” to income poverty, and the poverty line has also been revised a few times. As a consequence, it is difficult to establish whether there has been a feminisation of elderly poverty in Myanmar.

In the Philippines, on the other hand, older women were less likely to be poor than older men. But when the black box of the household is opened up, and income is measured at the individual level, data shows that women are more likely to have income in the lowest quartile than men.

Similarly, in Malaysia, the percentage of older women receiving income below the



poverty line was lower than that of older men. However, a different picture emerges when a distinction is made between poverty and income. This is an important distinction as financial security is broader than poverty, and also includes the receipt of regular and sufficient income in old age.

Viewed from this perspective, older women received less income than older men in all six countries. The gap was highest in Malaysia where the percentage of older women receiving an income was almost half that of the percentage of older men. The mean income of older women was also significantly lower. The gender difference was less marked in Myanmar, where only a marginally higher proportion of older

women reported household income of less than US\$1 a day. Marginally more older women in Singapore and Thailand also perceived their income to be inadequate compared to older men.

This disparity in incomes can be traced to differences in the sources of income of men and women in old age (Figure 1.5).

6. Sources of Financial Security: Employment and Work

In the context of limited social welfare systems in Southeast Asia, income from work is of critical importance for financing the costs of old age.¹⁶ However, gender inequalities persist across the different

Fig. 1.5: Sources of Financial Security in Old Age

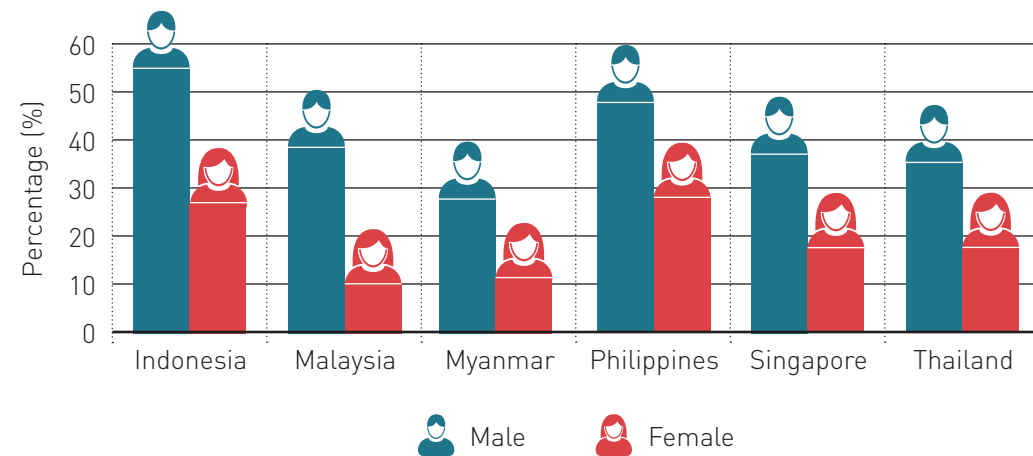


dimensions of work, from labour-force participation rates to type and quality of jobs and level of earnings.

The gender gap is most evident in labour-force participation rates across all ages.¹⁷

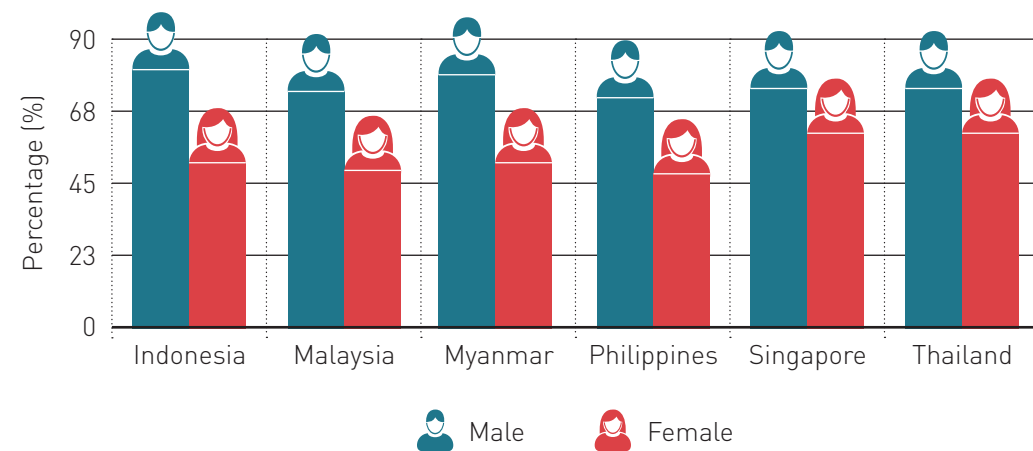
For the current cohort of older women, the majority (more than half) are not in the labour-force, and correspondingly, do not receive income from work (Figure 1.6a). The labour-force participation rate of younger age groups is higher (Figure 1.6b), but a

Fig. 1.6a: Labour-Force Participation Rates, ILO Modelled Estimates, by Sex, 65 Years and Over, July 2017 (%)



Source: ILOStat. Available at: ILOStat <http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/>

Fig. 1.6b: Labour-Force Participation Rates by Sex, 15 Years and Over, ILO Modelled Estimates, 2017 (%)



Source: World Bank open data. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.ZS>

significant proportion of women remain outside the labour-force.

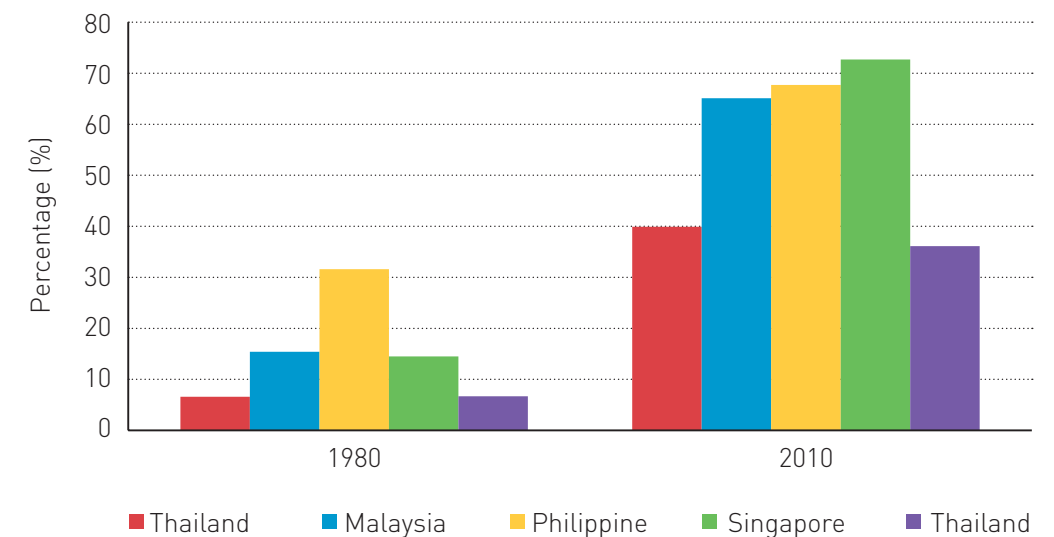
6.1 Levels of Education

Studies¹⁸ suggest that education is an important determinant of labour-force participation rates. In Southeast Asia, driven in part by government investments in education, the education levels of women have been steadily rising (Figure 1.7). Based on the Global Gender Gap Report 2017, the six countries covered in this book have either achieved gender parity or near gender parity in educational attainment (Annex 1.3). Reflecting improvements in education levels, labour-force participation rates have also been increasing over the last few decades in most of the countries. However, education may be important, but not the only

determinant of labour-force participation (which will be discussed further below).¹⁹

In addition to influencing labour-force participation rates, education levels are also correlated with earnings and nature of employment. In general, less educated women earn less than highly educated women as well as less educated men.²⁰ In Singapore, where only 5.1% of older women had a degree in 2017, the gross median income from work of females aged 60 years and over with primary school education was \$1,290 whereas a woman of the same age with a degree could earn \$8,173. Older men with primary school education earned \$1,635 per month. In the Philippines, income from work was also positively related to education levels. Therefore, while there is near parity in primary school level education

Fig. 1.7: Proportion of Female Population Ages 25 and Over that Attained or Completed Lower Secondary Education (%)



Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

Note: Data for Indonesia is for 2011, not 2010, as that was the closest available year in which data was available.

between men and women, the subsequent gap (albeit not as large as in other countries) in higher levels of education translates into gender differences in income received from employment.

Less educated women are also more likely to be in part-time work, or in informal, lower-skilled, lower-paid jobs. Increasing education levels can change the nature of employment undertaken by women. For instance, in Indonesia, women with primary school education were less likely to be in regular employment. It is estimated that having a college education increases the probability of working in a regular job by 25.6%, and having a senior secondary education increases it by 10.3%.²¹

6.2 Unpaid Care Work

Despite near gender parity in education levels, the persistence of gender gaps in labour-force participation rates demonstrates that education is not a sufficient condition to achieve gender equality at work. Instead, the analyses indicate that the main barrier to female labour-force participation is women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work (which includes caregiving for children and older persons, and domestic work such as cooking and cleaning).²² Globally, women undertake 76.2% of the total amount of unpaid care work. In the Asia-Pacific region, women spend 262 minutes per day on unpaid care work compared to only 64 minutes per day by men.²³ Among Southeast Asian countries, in Malaysia, women spent 19.1% of their total time on unpaid work compared to 6.0% for men.²⁴ In Thailand, women spent 75.5% of their total time per day on unpaid care work compared to 35% for men.²⁵

The cost of unpaid care work is manifested in two ways: by excluding women from the labour-force and by creating divergent patterns of work compared to men. Unpaid care work is consistently cited as the main reason for women being outside the labour-force: 64% and 31% of women who were not in the labour-force in Myanmar and the Philippines respectively mentioned this was the main factor. The impact of domestic responsibilities is felt across all age groups – in Indonesia, in a survey conducted in 2007, 58.4% of older women cited housekeeping as a reason for not being in the labour-force compared to only 13.0% of men.²⁶ The role that women fulfil may differ from childcare in younger ages to spousal care or grandchild care among older women, but the premise remains the same across the life cycle: women are the primary caregivers.

For women with children in particular, the disproportionate share of unpaid care work results in a 'motherhood' penalty. According to a panel data study of 97 countries, on average, a birth reduces a woman's labour supply by almost two years during her reproductive years.²⁷ In Malaysia, for example, female labour-force participation rates decline after 30 years, which corresponds to women's primary years of childbearing and childrearing.

In addition to the 'motherhood' penalty, unpaid care work also results in a 'job quality' penalty, as it affects the number of hours women work, and the type of work they do.²⁸ In order to accommodate their unpaid care responsibilities, women have a higher propensity towards part-time work (Table 1.4). Unpaid care work also "limits options for decent work, even to the point of restricting women to low-status, part-time

Table 1.4: Proportion of Part-time Workers and Contributing Family Workers (%)

Country	Part-time workers		Contributing family workers	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Indonesia	28.2	15.8	26.2	6.0
Malaysia	8.2	3.9	7.7	2.3
Myanmar	11.5	7.5	34.5	14.2
Philippines	20.0	18.3	12.0	5.4
Singapore	10.9	5.3	0.5	0.3
Thailand	9.6	8.4	25.1	12.4

Source: World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2017).

Note: Part-time workers and contributing family workers are calculated as a% of total female, male employment. The original source of the data is from the International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT, Annual Indicators, 2016 or latest available data.

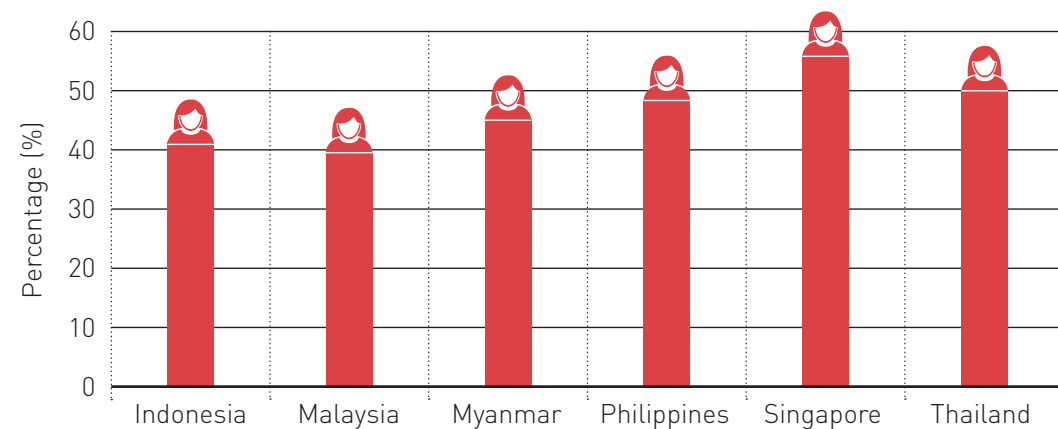
jobs in the informal sector".²⁹ In Thailand, female home-based workers had low wages and limited social protection. A significant number of women in the labour-force in Malaysia were working as own account or unpaid family workers. Women in the informal sector are often more vulnerable as they tend to work for low wages, in poor working conditions and with limited social protection.

One group of women that are particularly vulnerable to lack of social protection are women migrant workers. Female migration is an issue that impacts all six countries, either as receiving countries (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand) or sending countries (Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia). The Philippines and Indonesia are among the world's top twenty sending countries, and Thailand is among the top twenty hosting

countries. The rapid rise of female migration in the region – often referred to as the feminisation of migration – is also a major way in which trends of financial security of future cohorts of women will differ from the older cohorts. Women comprise almost half of all international migrants (Figure 1.8) in the six Southeast Asian countries. Of the estimated 6.9 million intra-ASEAN migrant workers, nearly half (48.7%) are women.³⁰

Females also constitute a significant proportion of internal migrants. In Myanmar, 53% of all internal migrants in 2015 were women.³¹ In Thailand, according to the 2012 Migration survey, 47.8% of internal migration flows were female.³² In the Philippines, in some regions such as rural Mindanao, females constituted 56.3% of migrants moving from rural to urban areas.³³

Fig. 1.8: Percentage of Females among International Migrants, 2017 (%)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "International Migration Report 2017: Highlights" (ST/ESA/SER.A/404), p. 27 (New York: UN, 2017).

Note: The data is for country of destination.

The economic contribution of migrants can be sizeable. In the destination countries, time series analysis suggests that women domestic workers increase the domestic wages in ASEAN destination countries by an average of 14%.³⁴ In the Philippines, migrants send annual remittances equivalent to about 8-10% of GDP.³⁵ Migrants (of both sexes) in Indonesia sent over US\$8.9 billion worth of remittances in 2016, which can make a vital difference in reducing poverty. For female migration, research has shown that remittances by female migrants reduces child labour participation by between 17 and 32%.³⁶ Remittances (from both international and internal migrants) can improve household expenditure in areas such as education.³⁷

In terms of employment, female migrant workers are mainly concentrated in domestic work. Other sectors include agriculture, construction and manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, tourism and entertainment.³⁸

In general, they are concentrated at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, in low-skilled manual labour.³⁹ This reflects their education, as the majority of female migrants have basic education levels. For instance, 91% of migrants in Malaysia had either primary or intermediate level of education.⁴⁰

Women migrants are paid less than migrant men (in Malaysia, the wage gap is about 30-50%),⁴¹ and face a range of risks. Usually working with weak or no contracts, female migrant workers have poor working conditions, including long working hours. In the case of current Indonesian migrants, 18% have long working hours, 30% do not receive any days off and 73% do not receive any payment for overtime work.⁴² Females are more vulnerable to gendered abuse, violence and harassment at work. In the entertainment industry, trafficking has also been reported.⁴³ Migrants face inadequate or inappropriate accommodation, limited and

sometimes no access to healthcare (which can sometimes leave migrant workers unable to pay medical bills) and limited social protection. In general, female migrants lack access to unemployment insurance, and adequate maternity protection.⁴⁴

There is also a social cost of female migration, which is often shouldered by older women left behind. Research suggests that grandparents, usually grandmothers, provide care for the children left behind by female migrant workers. In the Philippines, family responsibilities, which include care for grandchildren was one of the main reasons for not working among older women.⁴⁵

This also points to the need for a multi-generational analysis of the risks of migration through the life-course. For younger women, sustaining the benefits of migration is essential for financial security in old age. The remittances of female migrants are mostly spent on covering daily needs, instead of savings for old age. In Indonesia, only 22% of migrant households report putting their money into savings. Moreover, once they return from working abroad, 49% of female migrants fall out of the labour-force.⁴⁶ For older women, the responsibility of looking after grandchildren could affect their potential to work to earn income in old age.

For all women, the differences in types of jobs and hours worked between men and women feeds into the gender wage gap. The gender wage gap, as studies have noted, can be attributed to multiple factors, from differences in education and skills levels to gender discrimination, as well as women's divergent patterns of employment. It is also notable that the gender wage gap is present

in all six countries, regardless of levels of economic development (Table 1.5).

Juggling family and work responsibilities also poses barriers to women's promotion and progression in the workplace. In recent years, there has been an increase in women's entry into more highly skilled, higher-paid professional and managerial occupations⁴⁷ (which is reflected in the increase in the number of female tertiary graduates from business degrees in some countries), but women still remain underrepresented in leadership positions. An ILO survey of women in business in Asia found three main challenges for women at the workplace. First, there is a "leaking pipeline", with women concentrated in junior levels of management. At senior management

Table 1.5: Gender Wage Gap, Selected Countries

Country	Wage equality for similar work (female/male ratio)	Estimated earned income (PPP, US \$) (female/male ratio)
Indonesia	0.71	0.49
Malaysia	0.78	0.67
Myanmar	-	0.69
Philippines	0.76	0.68
Singapore	0.81	0.70
Thailand	0.76	0.77

Source: World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. [Geneva: World Economic Forum].

Note: no data available for Myanmar.

levels, in 68% of the companies surveyed, less than 30% of their senior managers were women.⁴⁸ Second, even fewer women are represented at the board and CEO levels (Table 1.6.) Finally, women tend to get concentrated into specific areas within companies, such as human resources or public relations whereas men dominate in areas such as sales and operations. This segregation leads to different career paths for men and women, as experience in certain areas such as sales and operations is often vital to reaching top positions.

The end outcome is clear: women are penalised for their domestic and care responsibilities in the form of foregone wages and lower earnings, resulting from either lower labour-force participation rates, interrupted working lives or different working patterns from men. These differences polarise in later life into greater financial vulnerability compared to older men.

Table 1.6: Representation of Female Directors

Country	Female Directors on Boards (%)
Indonesia	11.6
Malaysia	12.5
Philippines	14.9
Singapore	10.3
Thailand	9.0

Source: Human Capital Leadership Institute and Boardgender, “20 by 2020: Gender Diversity on Singapore Boards: A Path to Action”, p. 6 (Singapore: BoardAgender).





A different picture would require a shift towards equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities. Therefore, it is concerning that the pace of change has been extremely slow – between 1997 and 2012, the gender gap in time spent on unpaid care work has declined by only 7 minutes (based on time series data from 23 countries).⁴⁹ Instead of being accompanied by an increase in men’s share of unpaid care work, the proportion of time spent by men on unpaid care also declined. Labour-force participation and care work are closely intertwined, and without changes in the distribution of care work, progress in gender equality in the labour-force is unlikely, with attendant implications for women’s financial security in old age.

6.3. Underlying constraints throughout the life course

Underlying the gender gaps in education and caregiving responsibilities are social norms that impact upon gender equality. Social norms about women’s roles and responsibilities constrain women’s agency and ability to maximise their opportunities in the world of work.⁵⁰ Social norms begin early in a woman’s life, during childhood, and the impact of these are compounded throughout their lives (Figure 1.9).

During childhood, adolescence and youth, norms dictate that women are responsible for housework and caregiving, while men are the main income earners. This results in girls being excluded from school. In Indonesia, starting from late childhood, girls tend to stay at home to undertake caregiving responsibilities. The data reflects this bias: in 2007, 99% of men aged 15-19 years were not in the labour-force because they were in school, whereas a much lower

Fig. 1.9: Impact of Social Norms throughout the Life Course

Constraints	Stage of Life	Consequences
Gender bias towards males, stereotypes about women’s roles and responsibilities	Childhood 	Less nutrition and lower health outcomes; girls not sent to school
Domestic responsibilities, fears about women’s safety and mobility, early marriage and pregnancy, gender stereotypes about women’s roles	Adolescence and early youth 	Girls drop out of school; educational streaming
Caregiving and domestic responsibilities, particularly during childbearing and childrearing years, legal and workplace discrimination, lack of control over resources	Working Age 	Less time for paid work – outside the labour-force or in part-time, vulnerable and informal work; less opportunities for career progression and promotion; occupational segregation, lower wages
Caregiving responsibilities, including of grandchildren; differences in retirement age and pensions	Old Age 	Leave the workforce; less savings, less economic opportunities

Source: Adapted from Matthew Morton, Jeni Klugman, Lucia Hanmer and Dorothe Singer, *Gender at work: a companion to the world development report on jobs (English)*, Figure 3.1, p. 34 (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2014).

proportion of women of the same age (79%) were in school. About 16% of women aged 15-19 years were outside the labour-force and outside of school because of caregiving responsibilities. These gender stereotypes are also reinforced in the educational curriculum. In Myanmar, school textbooks depicted girls helping with domestic chores while boys were depicted doing sports or other activities.

Even when women enter the education system, gender stereotypes result in women being segregated into more “feminine” fields of study, such as education or health services, while men dominate in science, engineering and information technology. This educational streaming in turn contributes to occupational segregation, which has a knock-on effect on earnings and wages. For instance, in the United States, if women

work in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, they earn 33% more.⁵¹

Gender norms also disadvantage women when they enter the workplace, constraining their ability to progress to senior positions. Most workplaces still function around the norm of the “ideal worker”, a worker who is available to work full-time, and can relocate and travel as requested.⁵² For women, this expectation conflicts with the norms that require women to be responsible for unpaid care and domestic work. For example, in a series of focus group surveys conducted in 2016 by Willis Towers Watson in Singapore, China, Hong Kong and Malaysia, 58.4% of respondents said that the conflict of family responsibilities with career was the key barrier to success/promotions. Unless there is a change in norms that require women to take on the main share of unpaid work, these trends are likely to continue. Furthermore, the rapidly ageing populations of Asia suggest that elderly care demands may actually increase.⁵³ In the same survey, 42% of respondents said they had responsibility for caring for the older persons.

The cumulative effect of these social constraints, lower levels of education and labour-force participation and different patterns of employment, result in lower levels of savings and pensions leaving women vulnerable in old age. Moreover, older women themselves are subject to social norms, often taking on care responsibilities for spouses and grandchildren. In countries with high levels of migration of young women like Indonesia, Philippines and Myanmar, there is a rising phenomenon of “skip generation” households where grandmothers take on the disproportionate

share of unpaid care. This can also impact on older women’s ability to work for income in old age. Older women also face the double impact of sexism and ageism: “Numerous studies have documented the prevalence of stereotypes of older workers as less able, less motivated and less productive...”.⁵⁴

7. Sources of Financial Security: Savings and Investments

The economic life-cycle suggests that in order to rely on personal savings in old age, it is necessary to earn adequately during working age. However, gender differences in labour-force participation, employment and earnings have cumulative effects that negatively impact women’s savings and access to pensions in old age.

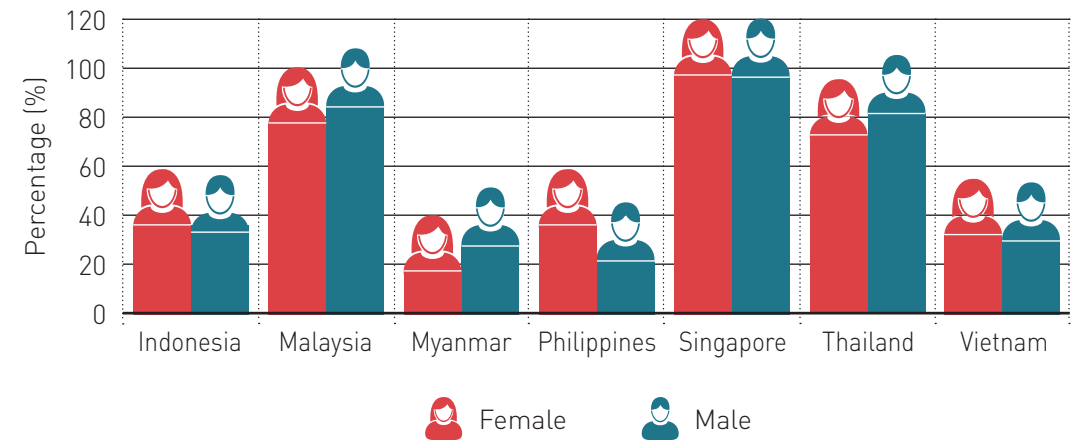
In general, even in countries with high levels of financial inclusion such as a savings account in a financial institution (Figure 1.10), women have lower levels of savings. A survey conducted in Malaysia shows that among women aged 40 years and over, only 11% saved regularly and 10% had no savings. It is notable that the majority of those with no savings were homemakers, underlining the vulnerability created by lack of participation in the labour-force.

The Mastercard Survey of Consumer Purchasing Priorities conducted in 2017 reveals that women in the six countries plan to save between 11% to 25% of income in the next six months. However, with the exception of Thailand and the Philippines, women were marginally less likely compared to men to cite retirement as the main reason for saving (Figure 1.11). This is in contrast to the attitudes towards financial planning, with the majority of women in all countries

across all age groups agreeing that “It is never too early to have a financial plan” and “I should have 3 - 6 months of cash savings to meet my emergency needs (e.g., if I lose my job).”

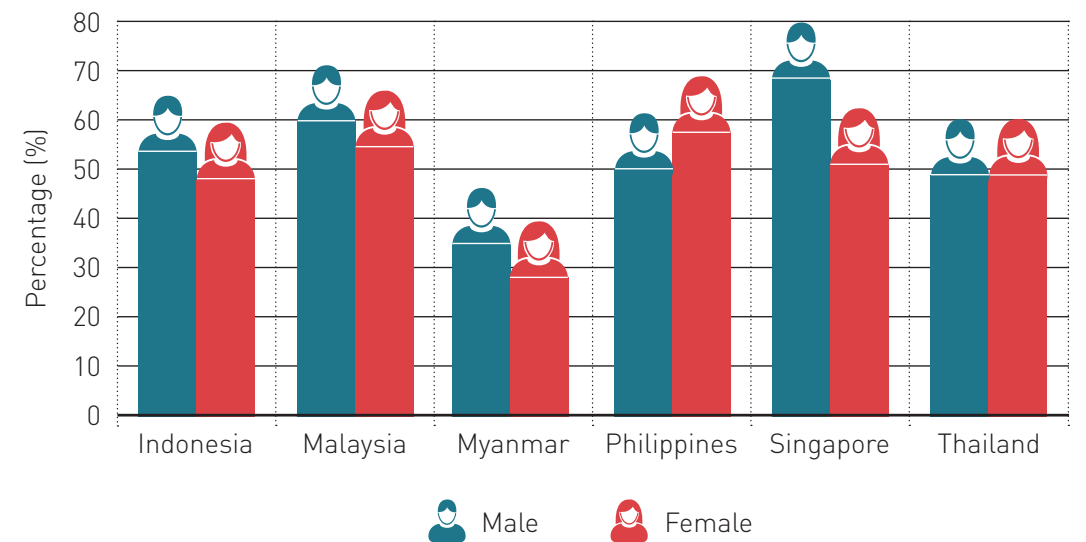
There is also a disjoint between perceptions of financial planning and actual knowledge of money management and finances, reinforcing the importance of financial education and financial literacy

Fig. 1.10: Percentage of Men and Women with an Account at a Financial Institution (%)



Source: World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2017).

Fig. 1.11: Retirement as the Main Reason for Saving (%)



Source: Mastercard Survey on Consumer Purchasing Priorities 2017.

Table 1.8: Pension Schemes in the Six Countries

Country	Contributory/Earnings related Pension	Social Pension	Estimate of legal coverage for old age as a percentage of the working-age population (Total)	Active contributors to a pension scheme (% of labour-force, 15+)	Old age pension beneficiaries (%)
Indonesia	Provident Fund	Social Assistance for Older Persons • Means tested • Eligibility: 70 +	69.7	10.5	14
Malaysia	Civil Service Pension Scheme; Employees Provident Fund; LTAT (armed forces); PRS (Private Retirement Scheme)	Elderly Assistance Scheme • Means tested • Eligibility: 60+	100	43.2	19.8
Myanmar	Pensions to retired civil servants, military personnel and political personnel	Social Pension • Universal • Eligibility: 90+
Philippines	Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and Social Security System (SSS)	Social Pension • Means-tested • Eligibility: 60+	100	30.9	39.8
Singapore	Central Provident Fund (CPF)	Provides Social Assistance: Silver Support • Means-tested • Eligibility: 65+	100	61.7	n.a.
Thailand	National Social Security System; Old Civil Service Scheme; Government Pension Fund	Old Age Allowance • Pensions-tested • Eligibility: 60+	100	31.9	83

Source: Adapted from C. Knox-Vydmanov, *Work, family and social protection: Old age income security in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam*, Table 3 (Chiang Mai: HelpAge International, 2017); www.pension-watch.net; Country studies; ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*, p. 78 (Geneva: ILO, 2017); ILO (International Labour Office). World Social Protection Database. <https://www.social-protection.org>

programmes. What is also notable is that the level of financial knowledge for three out of the four indicators is lower for the younger age groups, pointing to the need for early interventions in financial literacy programmes.

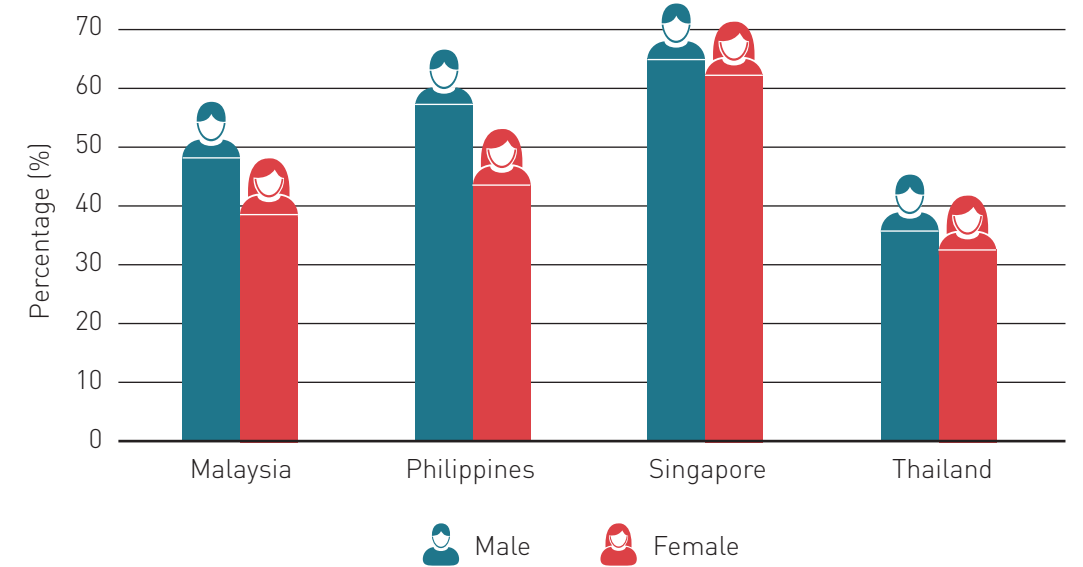
8. Sources of Financial Security: Pensions and Government Transfers

If women enter old age with no private savings, can they at least rely on income from pensions? The main objective of pension systems is to enable older persons to maintain their standard of living after retirement.⁵⁵ The type of pension systems in different countries varies based on different

financing systems and different methods of risk pooling. From a gender and age lens, an assessment of the pension systems of the six countries in this book highlights two main issues: coverage and benefit levels.

In terms of legal coverage, except for Indonesia,⁵⁶ the rest of the countries have universal legal coverage. However, apart from Thailand, where it is quite high, effective coverage, or the proportion of older persons who receive pension benefits is much lower (Table 1.8). When the data is disaggregated by gender, it is evident that women are particularly disadvantaged. Legal coverage of women in contributory schemes is lower than men, and effective coverage rates are even lower than legal coverage rates. (Figure 1.12). For example,

Fig. 1.12: Legal Coverage, Old Age Pensions, Mandatory Contribution Schemes (%)



Source: ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*, Table B.9 (Geneva: ILO, 2017).

Note: No data was available for Indonesia and Myanmar. The year for the data for Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand were not specified.

in the Philippines, based on 2015 data, the proportion of female old-age pension beneficiaries (29%) is almost half that of men (53.2%).⁵⁷ In Indonesia, according to the 2007 Indonesian Family Life Survey, older men are three to five times more likely to receive a pension than older women. In Malaysia, in 2016, only 11% of women aged 60 years and over received pension benefits.

The main driver for these gender gaps in pension systems is the discrimination faced by women in labour markets. Pensions systems are still based on the assumption of a male breadwinner model, of continuous life-long employment with increasing earnings.⁵⁸ This disadvantages women in three ways. First, women are underrepresented in the labour-force. Some women are excluded entirely from contributory pension schemes (such as full-time homemakers, or women in the informal sector). Second, as women take on a greater share of family responsibilities, they often have interrupted employment histories (taking breaks), work part-time (or shorter hours) or in the informal sector (with no pension contributions). Third, even in the formal sector, women earn less than men. This means they make lower amounts of contributions, which results in lower levels of benefits in old age, in pensions systems that are based on earnings.⁵⁹ Women's lower or disrupted earnings flow results in significantly lower amounts of pensions.⁶⁰ To illustrate, in the Philippines, 44% of women under the SSS scheme received less than 2,000 Peso compared to 29% of men.

The rising trend of social pensions has made a notable impact on expanding the reach of benefits to women. For example, in Thailand, 84.6% of women above retirement age receive this non-contributory pension,

compared to 77.9% of men.⁶¹ One of the major advantages of social pensions is that they provide coverage to women in the informal sector. Furthermore, they are more likely to reach women who are often poorer. Also, since women are usually less likely to receive earnings-related pensions, schemes that target those who are not already receiving pensions, such as in Thailand, are likely to benefit women.⁶² In addition, given the rise in "skip-generation" households where grandparents, usually the grandmother, are taking care of grandchildren, these cash transfers can supplement income received from remittances sent by migrants. This would be of particular importance in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar, where migration of younger women has become a major trend.

While universal social pensions would provide the most coverage, at present, only Myanmar provides a universal coverage while Thailand is near-universal. In Myanmar, the scheme covers older persons aged 90 years and over, but is presently being expanded to younger age groups. In Thailand, the Old Age Allowance, which ranges from 600 Baht to 1000 Baht per month has been effective in expanding coverage but is not sufficient protection for income security, given the official poverty line is 2,439 Baht per month. For gender equality in pension benefits, social pensions, therefore, still need to be supplemented by greater gender equality in contributory pensions.

9. Sources of Financial Security: Transfers from Family

In light of the gender gaps in pension benefits and the disadvantages faced in work and employment, it is not surprising

Table 1.9: Main Sources of Income by Gender

	Children	Spouse	Savings (includes private savings and pensions) ^{^^}	Employment	State transfers/ allowances
Malaysia					
Male	67.1	n.p.	25.2	68.0	n.p.
Female	79.5	n.p.	29.7	31.3	n.p.
Myanmar (2012)					
Male	51.9	n.p.	12.2	31.8	0
Female	67.3	n.p.	9.3	15.5 [^]	0
Philippines (2007)					
Male	23.9	n.p.	18.5	31.9	n.p.
Female	34	n.p.	20.6	19.6	n.p.
Thailand (2014)					
Male	28.7	2.6	10.6	44.9	12.2
Female	43.4	5.8	7	24.8	17
Singapore (2011)					
Male	57.5	8.6	56.9	48.3	3.9
Female	74.8	20.5	51.3	30.6	2.9

^{^^} except for Malaysia. n.p. Data not provided.

Sources: Kang Sook Hock, Tan Ern Ser and Yap Mui Teng, National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011, (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, commissioned by Elderly and Disability Group, Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2013). Cruz et al. cited in Aura Sevilla (2018) (Philippines chapter in this book). (unpublished);

John E. Knodel, John E., Vipin Prachuabmoh and Napaporn Chayovan, "The Changing Well-being of Thai Elderly: An Update from the 2011 Survey of Older Persons in Thailand", PSC Research Report No. 13-793. 6 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2013); John E. Knodel, Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan, Vipin Prachuabmoh and Wiraporn Pothisiri, The Situation of Thailand's Older Population: An Update based on the 2014 Survey of Older Persons in Thailand (HelpAge International, 2015); T. Peng and T. Hamid, "Gender differentials in work and income among older Malaysians", in T. Devasahayam, ed., *Gender and Ageing: Southeast Asian Perspectives*, pp. 267-287 (Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2014); M.B. Ofstedal, J. Knodel and E. Reidy, "Gender differences in economic support and well-being of older Asians", PSC Research Report, Report no 03-540 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2003).

Notes: Data for Myanmar, Thailand, and the Philippines refers to older persons over 60 years. The Singapore and Malaysia data covers older persons over 55 years. For some countries, the total may be over 100% as the survey answer allowed for multiple sources of income. The data on income from employment for Malaysia also includes pensions; while savings is considered investment-related income and excludes pensions.

that a consistent pattern in the six countries is the reliance of older women on family as the main source of income in old age (Table 1.9).

In addition to receiving financial support from families, living with other family members (mainly children and spouses) is also the norm. In Malaysia, more than half of households co-reside with their children, grandchildren or both.⁶³ In Thailand, more than half of older women (56.8%) live with at least one child, while this figure rises to 75.2% in Myanmar.⁶⁴ These trends can be viewed as positive for older women's financial security, as co-residence is variously described as a "safety net",⁶⁵ as a means to "enhance financial exchange", a means to "ameliorate their economic hardship" and a "hedge against poverty among elderly".⁶⁶ In addition to financial transfers from children, co-residence may reduce household expenditure due to associated economies of scale in utilisation of fuel, utilities and so on.⁶⁷ For older persons who are increasingly frail, co-residence provides the added benefit of providing care and assistance with the activities of daily living (ADLs).⁶⁸

However, a gender breakdown of living arrangements points to some areas of concern. Older women are more likely to live alone. In Thailand and Myanmar, double the proportion of older women were living alone compared to older men. Knodel (2013, p.55)⁶⁹ explains this in relation to women's life expectancy and gender norms about marriage: "Given substantially higher widowhood among women, and because their chances to remarry if they are widowed are likely lower than for men, it is not surprising then that they are considerably more likely than men to live alone."

Although women rely primarily on family support, it is questionable whether the level of family support is adequate. For instance, in Thailand, among those who received support from their children, about half (48%) received less than the national poverty line. One reason for the limited amount of family support, as Knox-Vydmanov (2016 p.23)⁷⁰ points out is the "poverty and insecurity faced by older people's families". Families where the household heads are middle-aged often face the greatest pressure, as they have to juggle supporting elderly parents and raising their own children.

In future, any form of family support, however limited, may be under threat, as family sizes decline throughout Southeast Asia. Research⁷¹ suggests that due to the decrease in fertility in the last few decades, the older women of tomorrow will have fewer children to rely on. In the rapidly ageing economies of Singapore and Thailand, demographic trends point to a decline in the number of children born for each successive age cohort (Table 1.10). Even in the Philippines, where the fertility rate is still relatively higher than replacement rate, the 2000 census reveals that the number of children born to women aged 15-49 years was 2.82, lower than the previous census number of 3.3 in 1990.⁷²

These trends potentially signal a decline in income for older persons. In Thailand, for instance, the percentage that report children as the source or main source of income increases with the number of adult children.⁷³ Only 30.3% of older persons with one child reported children as the main source of income compared to almost half (48.9%) of older persons with four or more children. This could be the reason why in Singapore, where fertility rates (and

Table 1.10: Children Ever Born, by Age Group of Woman

	Indonesia (2003)	Malaysia (1980)	Myanmar (2001)	Philippines (2003)	Singapore (2005)	Thailand (2005)
15-19	0.09	0.07	0.03	0.07		0.16
20-25	0.63	0.70	0.47	0.71	0.19	0.63
26-29	1.47	1.85	1.24	1.70		1.04
30-34	2.20	3.13	2.16	2.70	1.30	1.5
35-39	3.01	4.33	3.12	3.53		1.8
40-44	3.78	5.10	3.68	4.10	1.81	2.02
45-49	4.30	5.46	3.99	4.57		2.20
50-54	...	5.41	...		3.03 (for 50+)	2.78
55-59	...	5.19	...			

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Fertility Data 2008" (POP/DB/Fert/Rev2008) <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/dataset/fertility/data.shtml>.

Note: Some data is not available for some years.

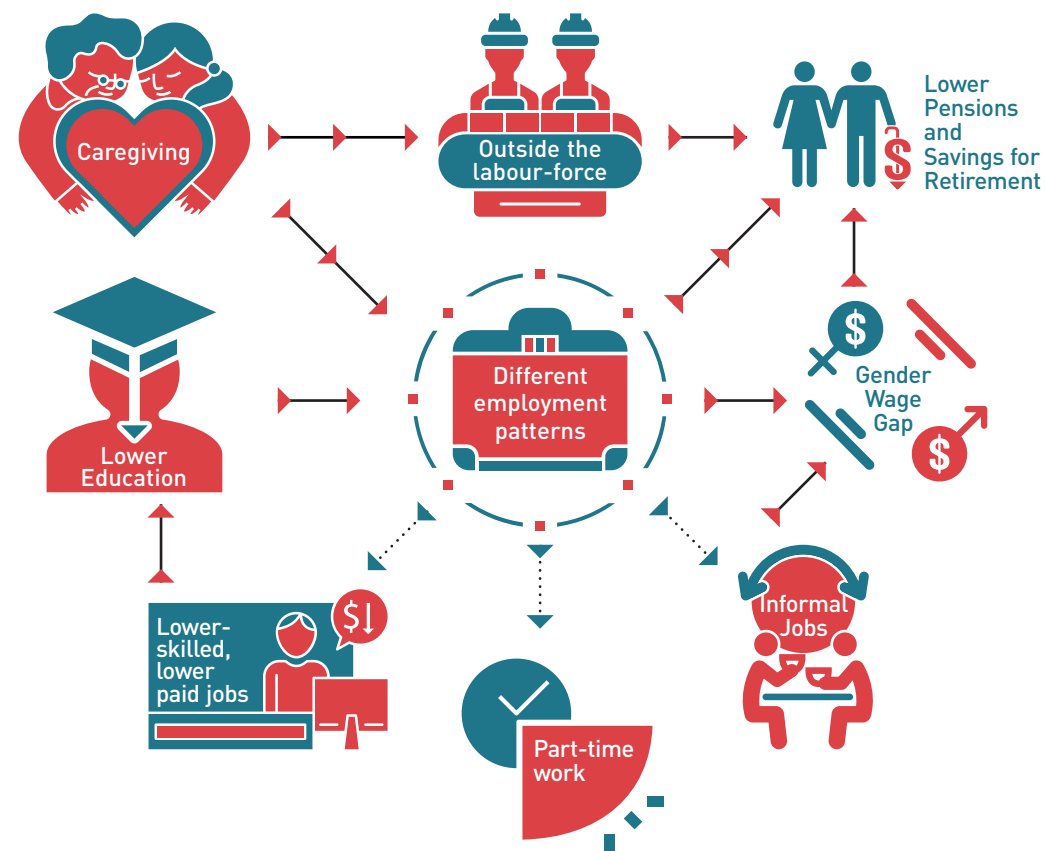
number of children) have dropped, there has also been a fall in the proportion of older women (65 years and over) citing income transfers from family as the main source of income from 84.3% in 2000 to 72.9% in 2010.⁷⁴ In addition to this, a combination of delayed marriage and increased rates of non-marriage among women has resulted in a rise in childlessness.⁷⁵

The trend towards smaller family sizes is also associated with changes in living arrangements among the elderly.⁷⁶ Although co-residence remains the predominant family form, there has been a steady decline in co-residence with adult children.

In reality, however, the picture is more nuanced. First, changing family structures

and declining co-residence do not necessarily imply a corresponding decrease in family support or intergenerational transfers.⁷⁷ Research indicates that family support for older persons continues to flow from children, even when they are no longer co-residing. For instance, in Thailand, it was found that the level of support from co-resident and non-resident children was approximately the same, and in fact, older persons received a higher proportion of money from non-resident children.⁷⁸ Children also continue to provide material and financial support through living nearby. For example, in Myanmar, 95% of older persons have children living in their locality, an arrangement that has been termed as "quasi-co-residence".⁷⁹

Fig. 1.13a: Pathways to Financial Insecurity



Even if children do not live nearby, they can still provide financial support through remittances. In countries with high levels of migration (both domestic and international), this can be significant. In the Philippines, in 2007, almost a quarter of respondents surveyed for the Philippines Living Standards Survey had at least one child abroad. Of these, 34% of women cited financial remittances from overseas as their main source of income.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, with rising living costs, the capacity of smaller families to provide financial support may diminish in future, putting women's financial security at risk.

10. Pathways to Financial Insecurity

It is evident from the analyses in this book that women face higher levels of insecurity due to the cumulative disadvantages that accrue over the life-course in education, employment and access to assets, income and other opportunities. The pathways that lead to financial insecurity are the outcome of multiple and overlapping constraints. Events in one stage of life can affect subsequent changes, and the impact can be compounded into old age. These life trajectories occur simultaneously along four different dimensions: family/household;

Fig. 1.13b: Multidimensional Factors and Risks Influencing Financial Security

RISK EVENTS	AGE	FACTORS AFFECTING FINANCIAL SECURITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness • Death of parent • Conflict • Natural disaster 	Childhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (type of education system, gender stereotypes in education)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness • Teenage pregnancy • Early marriage • Death of parent • Conflict • Natural disaster 	Adolescence and youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education – level of education, type of education subject chosen • Marriage history • Childbearing history • Work and employment (type of work, earnings etc) • Provision of care responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of job • Widowhood/divorce • Ill health • Conflict • Natural disaster 	Working age/ Childbearing age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work history • Marriage history • Childbearing history • Informal care • Skills training, reskilling for re-entry into labour market • Activity in community groups/self-help groups • Taxation systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retirement • Widowhood • Ill health/disability • Conflict • Natural disaster 	Old age (retirement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work history • Marriage history • Number of children (family support) • Care for grandchildren • Volunteer work • Participation in old-age support groups • Pension and social protection systems

Source: Adapted from Policy Research Initiative, "A Life-Course Approach to Social Policy Analysis: A Proposed Framework", Discussion Paper (August 2004); Asghar Zaidi, "Life cycle Transitions and Vulnerabilities in Old Age: A Review", Occasional Paper (UNDP Human Development Report Office, 2014).

education (learning); work and employment; and community participation. At each point in the life-cycle, a woman's life-course trajectories are influenced by risk events (such as illness or divorce or widowhood) or long-term life-course influences (such as work history or childbearing history), underpinned by structural factors such as gender, class and ethnicity, among others.

11. Policy Implications

The assessment of the current status of women's financial security suggests that

current policy frameworks need to be reworked to recognise the gendered aspects of ageing, and to address women's specific requirements through the life-course. The "Policy Wish-List" from each of the countries studies can be distilled into nine key recommendations (Table 1.11).

11.1 Collect Disaggregated Data and Undertake Further Research on Gender and Ageing

Without sufficient data to assess and understand the problem of financial security, it is impossible to respond with effective

Table 1.11: The Policy Wish-List

Policy Issue	Policy Recommendation	Policy Measure
1. Lack of data and insufficient gendered research and analysis	Improve data collection, research and gender analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender analysis of existing programmes and policies, with an age sensitive lens • Collection of gender disaggregated data, especially on economic and financial indicators • Focused research e.g. on women migrants, women in remote areas
2. Access to education	Increase access to education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships • Vocational training • Free education and skills training for women who drop out of school
3. Access to employment opportunities	Increase female labour-force participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable and accessible childcare • Increase in maternity and paternity leave • Flexible working arrangements • Back to work initiatives
4. Social norms and ideologies	Change cultural mindsets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education and awareness campaigns • Gender sensitisation of employers and HR managers • Review of portrayal of gender roles in school curriculum
5. Greater share of caregiving responsibilities	Provide more support for full-time caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matched savings schemes • Special pension programmes for caregivers • Review of nomination of wives for husband's pension schemes
6. Low levels of Social Protection	Enhance Social Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand social protection e.g. mandatory coverage of overseas foreign workers • Universal social pension • Subsidies to pay premiums for contributory pension schemes for poorer women

Policy Issue	Policy Recommendation	Policy Measure
7. Low levels of Financial Literacy	Increase financial literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate financial literacy into school curriculum • Target financial education programmes at working women • Employers to increase financial literacy among employees
8. Limited institutional support for gender and ageing	Strengthen institutional support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create National Commissions/Councils/Task Force focused on Older Women • Better coordination and implementation of programmes among government ministries • Strengthen and review programmes by existing institutions
9. Limited community support	Strengthen community support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community based home care services • Community based support for creating alternative sources of income

and appropriate policies. Hence, it is critical that governments step up their efforts to collate and make available in public sex and age disaggregated data. Specific focus is required on:

- Expanding the scope of sex and age disaggregated data beyond demographic indicators to include financial security indicators such as savings, investments, assets, income and expenditure
- Examining the methodological limitations of current measurements of poverty and income, and identifying the inherent gender biases in these measurements

- Collecting data on a commonly accepted (both inter-country and intra-country) definition of older persons. This would reduce confusion in targeting policies.

- Collecting data on an individual, not household level for income and expenditure.

- Undertaking a gender review of existing policies and programmes to understand how older women and men are differently affected by policies.

11.2 Strengthen Educational Opportunities

In order to develop the skills and knowledge of women throughout their lives, it is essential to target the gender-specific impediments to women's schooling and education. The World Bank's STEP (Skills Toward Employment and Productivity)⁸¹ framework identifies five basic steps required to enhance women's education: getting children off to the right start, ensuring that all students learn, building job-relevant skills, encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation and facilitating labour mobility and job matching. In particular, the emphasis should be to:

- **Reduce the gender gap in education**

In order to ensure that more girls enrol and remain in school, the opportunity cost of

schooling for girls needs to be reduced. This can be done through targeted scholarships. For older girls or women who have dropped out of school, scholarships or cash transfers may increase the incentive to rejoin.⁸²

- **Provide education that is job-relevant**

To maximise the opportunities from education, girls need to be provided with job-relevant skills demanded by employers. This can be done through vocational training, but in order for this training to benefit women, it needs to be multi-dimensional, combining on the job training, life-skills training, and linkages to the private sector. The training programme should also be gender-sensitive, with interventions such as information sessions to avoid streaming of women into "feminine" subjects. For instance, providing participants



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of vocational training courses with better information about the market prospects of each course (such as the difference between hair dressing and mechanics) has been known to influence subsequent choices.⁸³

11.3 Improve Female Labour-Force Participation

For the majority of the world's population, income from work is a main source of old-age security. Ensuring that women have the opportunity to participate effectively and equitably in the labour market is vital for their financial security. However, women's labour market choices are constrained by the time allocated to unpaid care. Policies for improving women's labour-force participation cannot be simply about making markets work. It needs to be accompanied by a recognition that labour markets depend on non-market institutions to function. Policies to improve female labour-force participation, therefore must consider the correlation between unpaid care work and paid work. Suggested measures include:

- **Increase in maternity and paternity leave**

Evidence from European countries indicates that legal expansion of maternity leave has a positive effect on job retention and tenure among women. Mandatory leave combined with public provision of childcare also reduces the number of women not working or working part-time.⁸⁴ Increasing maternity leave alone, however, could serve to reinforce gender norms about women as the primary caregivers. Instead, both maternity and paternity leave should be expanded. By positioning care as a joint responsibility, research from Europe and North America has shown that it can

promote greater sharing of domestic work by men and women, and can also increase mother's employment.⁸⁵

- **Access to childcare facilities**

The provision of childcare facilities has been shown to be effective in increasing women's labour-force participation: countries with more widely available childcare also had higher maternal labour-force participation rates.⁸⁶ There can be different models of childcare services and financing (ranging from public funding to community care centres to private childcare centres) but the key factor is to ensure affordability and quality.

- **Implement family-friendly work arrangements for all workers**

The lack of flexible work arrangements and the challenge of juggling work and care responsibilities is one of the main barriers to women's entry as well as progression within the workplace. Companies should be encouraged to implement family-friendly work arrangements for all employees, regardless of sex or family status. Flexi-work arrangements could range from shorter hours, shorter working weeks, telework, and part-time work to working from home. The type of arrangement should be tailored to best meet the needs of both the individual company and employee involved.

- **Support back-to-work initiatives**

Initiatives to encourage women to return to work can play a significant role in influencing women's labour market choices. Initiatives could include:

- Focused training on relevant skills for women to retrain to meet contemporary job demands
- Childcare support for job seekers
- Awareness campaigns among HR managers to reduce biases about the commitment of returning women.

11.4 Changing Social Norms about Unpaid Care

Interventions to redistribute the burden of care are unlikely to be successful without any underlying change in gender norms. Yet gender norms are challenging to change and some norms, for example, about women's primary role as caregivers to children, can be particularly "sticky".⁸⁷ A change in mindsets can be facilitated

through public awareness campaigns to changes in the education curriculum. Interventions that have had success in changing norms include: well-designed participatory programmes that include men and boys, toolkits about gender roles, well-implemented laws and reform of school textbooks to incorporate gender related material.⁸⁸

11.5 Support for Unpaid Caregivers

With a rapidly ageing population, the demands for caregiving, particularly of eldercare are increasing. In the absence of large-scale institutional support for caregiving, and the prevalence of filial norms of care, it is likely that women will continue to remain outside the labour-force for caregiving responsibilities. It is essential that these unpaid carers be provided with



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income support for financial security in old age. Schemes could include:

- **Matched Savings Scheme**

The government would provide dollar for dollar savings for women who are unpaid carers to put into their retirement savings account. In Singapore, research shows that matched savings can be effective in sustaining savings for retirement behaviour among low income women.

- **Special pension programmes for caregivers**

Women's contribution through their domestic work could be acknowledged and compensated by government provision of pensions for full-time unpaid carers. Caregiver credits are already an established part of public pension programmes in the European Union, and are one of the tools used to recognise women's social contributions through caregiving. The European experience demonstrates that caregiver credit schemes can be designed in multiple ways depending on the objective of the programme (whether to increase the coverage of benefits, to improve equity between men and women or to target vulnerable populations). The associated costs are not necessarily prohibitive and most importantly, these programmes have had a positive impact on improving pension entitlements and benefit adequacy for women.⁸⁹

- **Enhancing the support of husbands for wife's retirement security**

In Singapore and Malaysia, there are provisions for the husband to nominate their wives for their pension schemes, and also to

contribute to their wife's pension schemes. Detailed evaluation of these provisions, their effectiveness and uptake is required. This evaluation should include issues including whether nominations should be made mandatory, and whether incentives could be provided to husbands to contribute to their wife's pension schemes.

11.6 Enhance Social Protection

Social protection can make substantial contributions to reducing poverty and inequality: universal social protection is a central element of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While there is a range of social protection instruments from unemployment insurance to maternity benefits, old age pensions are the most widespread form of social protection coverage. However, policies are still required to target two main challenges of old-age pensions for women: insufficient coverage and inadequate levels of benefits.

Coverage can be increased by implementing universal social pensions. Social pensions have been shown to be effective in reaching older women, and they can also play a role in supplementing income from family. For example, in Thailand, while family remains the central source of income for older women, a sizeable proportion of women (17%) cite old age allowance as a main source of current income.⁹⁰ The benefits of social pensions, however, will need to be balanced against the feasibility and costs of implementation.

In the Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar, migrant women are potentially most at risk of falling behind in old age with no pension contributions during their working years. For these women, mandatory contributory



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pension schemes could be introduced. Technological advances have enabled migrants to continue sending remittances to support their older parents through mobile phones, internet transfers and so on. These technologies should be utilised by governments to create accessible pension systems that would allow migrant female workers to contribute to pension schemes back in their respective countries.

11.7 Enhance the Financial Literacy of Women across All Age Groups

Empowering women with the knowledge, confidence and skills for financial planning and money management are vital prerequisites for financial security in old age. Several countries in the region, from Indonesia to Singapore and Malaysia have implemented financial education programmes for older women. This

includes the Citi-Tsao Financial Education Programme for Mature Women, initiated in Singapore in 2008, that has reached over 6,000 women in Singapore, and has also been rolled out in Indonesia and Malaysia. This programme has increased the financial literacy of low-income women and empowered women to build up savings programmes, and develop a clear plan for retirement. Similar financial education programmes need to be implemented on a nation-wide and regional level, and should target women earlier in their working lives. Financial education should also be incorporated into the education curriculum at schools and universities.

11.8 Strengthen Institutional Support for Older Women

The success of policies is dependent upon well-formulated programmes and effective

implementation, which requires strong institutional support. In order for the needs of older women to be visible in policy circles:

- There should be a specific focus on the policy needs of older women through the establishment of National Commissions on Older Women/National Task Force on older women
- Better coordination of programmes across different ministries for a holistic perspective on gender and ageing.

11.9 Strengthen Community Support for Older Women

For older women, the main question is to bridge the gap between the ability of families to provide support and actual support provided. Solutions include strengthening community ties and expanding the scope of non-family support systems, such as neighbours or non-governmental

organisations (NGOs). In Singapore, the Tsao Foundation is pilot testing the Community for Successful Ageing (ComSA) programme, a community-wide approach to support ageing in place through providing services, programmes, and support systems in the community, and also building the capacity of older persons to manage their bio-psycho-social wellness.⁹¹ In the Philippines, people's organisations and organisations for older persons such as the Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc (COSE) have evolved to promote older persons' rights, and to facilitate programmes for the elderly. In some countries, such as Myanmar, older people's associations (OPAs) are providing a range of livelihood programmes, health care support and promotion of political representation of older people's needs, among others. In Myanmar, the capacity of communities to support older persons is improving through increased NGO and donor support – namely through leadership trainings, intergenerational vocational skills



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Fig. 1.14: Types of Vulnerable Groups of Older Women



trainings, increased care giving, and the creation and increased support of Village Development Committees (VDCs).

Finally, a gender analysis of ageing necessitates the recognition that older women are not a homogenous group. In each country, policymakers will need to ensure that the most relevant vulnerable groups are identified and policies are tailored to meet their specific needs (Figure 1.14).

12. Role of Intergovernmental Organisations

The policies outlined in the preceding section can be adopted in different countries based on individual country needs and capacity. Some policies, however, require concerted regional level efforts. These include:

12.1 Promote the Long-term Economic Empowerment of Migrant Workers

The economic contribution of female migrant workers is well-established. However, reflecting their working conditions, in particular, the lack of social protection, female migrant workers are among the most vulnerable to financial insecurity in old age. In order to improve the financial security of female migrant workers, policies are required at the regional level, which include:

- Ensure the gender-responsive implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers
- Synchronise social security systems, in particular pension programmes for migrant workers

At present the social security schemes for migrant workers vary across countries. Through inter-country cooperation, these schemes should be reviewed and efforts should be made to ensure that migrants in all countries receive the same level of social security coverage. In particular, a pension scheme for migrant workers should be introduced. Migrant workers should be able to make the contributions to this scheme in their host country, but the benefits will be accumulated in their country of origin, to be accessed upon return.

- Promote skills development training of migrant workers with regionally recognised certification

There should be vocational training programmes available to migrant workers in both countries of destination and origin that enable migrants to upgrade their skills and increase their job mobility. This would also reduce the proportion of migrants who are out of the labour-force when they return to their country, and assist them in building sustainable incomes and marketable

skills. The training schemes should have a certification system that is regionally recognised.

12.2 Coordinate Content of Financial Education Programmes for Women of All Age Groups

The importance of financial education for ensuring the financial security of older women has been outlined above. Details of the modules of the financial education programmes can be made country-specific, but some aspects of the course should be based on regional standards. These include:

- The ability to understand and answer the three big financial literacy questions
- The focus on gender-specific constraints to financial security in old age
- Emphasis on the life-course approach
- Integration of perspectives of all age groups of women, to identify key stages of risk at each life stage



12.3 Undertake Capacity Building and Training of Policymakers and Civil Society Organisations on Gender and Ageing

As Asian countries are ageing at an unprecedented pace, the implications of ageing will be felt differently by men and women. Addressing the needs of older women will be critical to sustaining economic development, growth and equity in the region. Yet, as noted earlier, the gender dimensions of ageing are still relatively less understood and are not being addressed adequately. This is in part based on the mindsets of policymakers and civil society organisations of separating ageing and gender issues. Changing this mindset will require training and capacity building for a two-way process; of mainstreaming gender into the ageing sector, and mainstreaming ageing into the gender sector. The importance of the life-course approach should also be built into this framework.

12.4 Build a Knowledge Repository of Data and Research on Gender and Ageing

The lack of sufficient data, the problems of comparisons (inter-country and intra-

country) and methodological limitations was a common refrain of the analyses of the financial security of older women. This points to a clear need for the collection of gender and age disaggregated data, and a review of the methodological limitations of available data from a gender perspective. These country-level efforts should be supplemented and coordinated at the regional level, to ensure:

- Common definitions of key terms such as older persons, labour-force participation and unpaid care
- The data collected is harmonised to enable cross-country comparisons
- The data covers different aspects of gender and ageing, from health to finance.

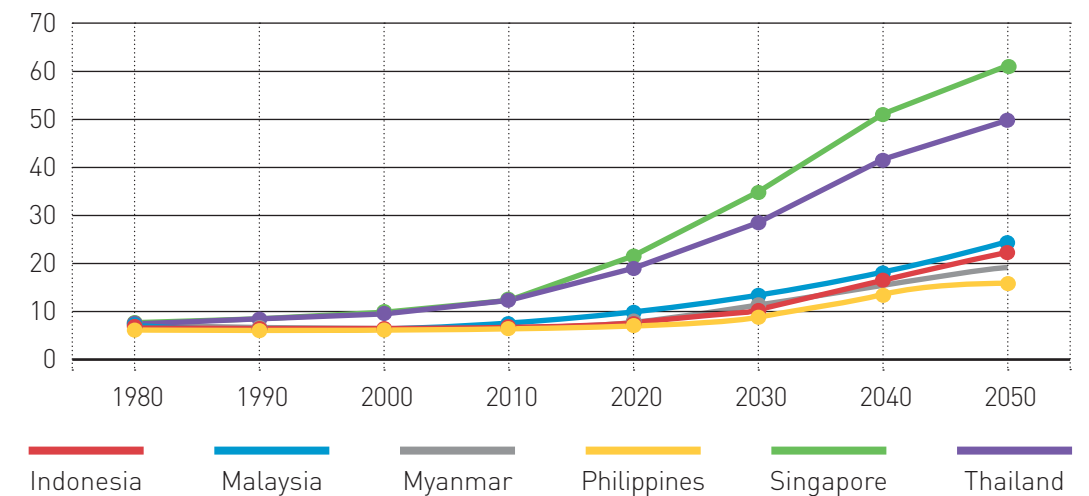
There should also be a common regional knowledge repository on gender and ageing, which covers relevant data, publications, policy interventions and best practices. The Regional Learning Network on Women's Financial Security is already performing this role in a limited manner. The breadth and scope of this role could be expanded further to convert the Network into a Regional Knowledge Depository.

Annex 1.1: Population Aged over 60 Years, 2017 and 2050 (in thousands)

Number of persons aged 60 years and over (thousands)	2017	2050
Indonesia	22743	61729
Malaysia	3074	9647
Myanmar	5043	11544
Philippines	8023	21417
Singapore	1115	2638
Thailand	11691	22954
Total	51689	129929

Source: United Nations (UN), Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population aging*, pp. 100, Table A.III.1 (New York: UN, 2017). Figures for 2050 are projections.

Annex 1.2: Dependency Ratios (per 100), Estimates and Medium Variant



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, (*World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables (ST/ESA/SER.A/399)*, Table A.33, pp. 324-327 (New York: UN, 2017).

Annex 1.3: Educational Attainment

Country	Score on gender equality in educational attainment	Enrolment in primary education (female,% of total population)	Enrolment in secondary education (female,% of total population)	Enrolment in tertiary education (female,% of total population)	Literacy rate (female,% of total population)
Indonesia	0.986	89.1	76	25.7	93.6
Malaysia	0.991	98.4	72.3	31.8	90.7
Myanmar	0.975	87.3	48.6	14.9	71.8
Philippines	1.00	97.9	73.5	40.3	96.8
Singapore	0.977	-	48.2	-	95.4
Thailand	0.958	87.4	82.2	57.3	91.2

Source: World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2017).

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INDONESIA

CHAPTER 2



INDONESIA

**Herien Puspitawati, Vita Priantina Dewi, Yayah Sobariyah,
Tin Herawati, Diah Krisnatuti, Eka Wulida Latifah and
Bina Gubhaju**

1. Introduction

The population is ageing in Indonesia. The latest 2010 Census in Indonesia enumerated 18 million persons 60 years and over, accounting for 7.6% of Indonesia's total population. Just four decades ago in 1971 the number of older persons was only 5 million (4.5% of the total population). It is estimated that the proportion of older persons will continue to rise. Projections based on the 2010 Census show that the proportion of older persons will reach 15.8% by 2035 (Adioetomo and Mujahid 2014). By 2050, this proportion is estimated to increase to 19.2% with the number of older persons reaching 61.9 million (Arifin et al. 2017). A threefold increase in the number of older persons 80 years and over (the oldest-old) is expected — from 1.8 million in 2010 to 7.5 million in 2050 (Arifin et al. 2017). While studying ageing is not yet a priority in Indonesia, the need for studying older persons has become imperative in the past 10 years. This is because not only of the increasing proportion of older persons but also the speed and magnitude at which this is occurring in Indonesia.

With a rapidly growing older population, particularly among the oldest-old, it is important to assess whether there is adequate support for Indonesia's elderly. The available support base can be assessed through the potential support ratio which is

defined as the population aged 15-64 years divided by the population 65 years and over. Census results show that the potential support ratio has fallen from an average of 21 persons of working age in 1971 to 13 in 2010. This support ratio is projected to shrink even further to 6.4 persons of working age available to support an older Indonesian by 2035 (Adioetomo and Mujahid 2014).

Women have higher life expectancy than men and hence, women make up the majority of Indonesia's older population. According to the 2010 Census, 54% of the older population 60 years and over are women. The proportion of women increases with age. While 52% of the population aged 60-64 years are women, this exceeds 65% in the oldest age group of 95 years and older. Population projections based on the 2010 Census show that this trend will continue. Older women, particularly in the oldest cohort, will continue to outnumber men resulting in a phenomenon known as the feminisation of ageing (Adioetomo and Mujahid 2014). As older women live longer than older men, this long life can be particularly challenging because older women in Indonesia have low education, low employment, and limited life skills. These conditions can make women vulnerable to financial insecurity in their senior years. It is also important to assess women's financial security separately to men's

due to intra-household inequalities in resource allocation. The position of women in Indonesia is largely subordinate in the family and society – this in turn may lead to women's weaker bargaining power over distribution of resources in the household.

The main objectives of this chapter are to: (i) assess the status of financial insecurity of older women; (ii) identify the main determinants of financial insecurity of older women; (iii) determine whether older women are more vulnerable to poverty and financial insecurity due to the cumulative effects of gender inequities over their life-course and (iv) highlight current policy and social welfare schemes on poverty and suggest appropriate policy recommendations to reduce/mitigate older women's risk of financial insecurity.

In this chapter older persons are defined as those who are 60 years and older. Financial security is assessed through estimates of official poverty rates, receipt of pension, labour-force participation rates, living arrangements and inter-household transfers. Other measures of financial security — including absolute levels of income, income versus expenditure, savings, and ownership of assets — are not included in the report due to limited publicly available data in Indonesia.

This chapter is based on data and information sourced from a review of several secondary sources of publications including research articles and reports from various government, non-government, and international organisations.

Section 2 assesses the status of financial security of older women by examining gender differences in official poverty



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rates, pension, labour-force participation, living arrangements and inter-household transfers. Section 3 examines the causes of financial insecurity of older women particularly focusing on the cumulative disadvantages that women face throughout their life-course that make them vulnerable to financial insecurity in old age. Section 4 outlines existing policies and policy recommendations. Section 5 provides some concluding observations.

2. Status of Financial Security of Older Women

Older persons are more vulnerable to financial insecurity as their income earning capacity declines with age. According to data from the National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS) 2009, the proportion of older persons below the poverty line increases with age (Table 2.1). Data disaggregated by gender in Table 2.1 shows that there are minimal gender differences in the percentage of the population below the poverty line, although the prevalence of

Table 2.1: Incidence of Poverty in the Older Population (60+) by Age, Gender and Residence: Indonesia 2009

Older Population by Age/Gender/Residence	Percentage of Population below:		
	Poverty line	1.5 x poverty line	2 x poverty line
Age (years):			
60-69	7.8	34.3	58.5
70-79	10.1	39.8	64.2
80+	11.8	43.3	67.5
Gender:			
Male	8.5	36.5	60.8
Female	9.3	37.2	61.5
Residence:			
Urban	7.7	30.7	51.9
Rural	9.9	41.6	68.3

Source: National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS) 2009, Table 15, page 44, in Adioetomo and Mujahid (2014).

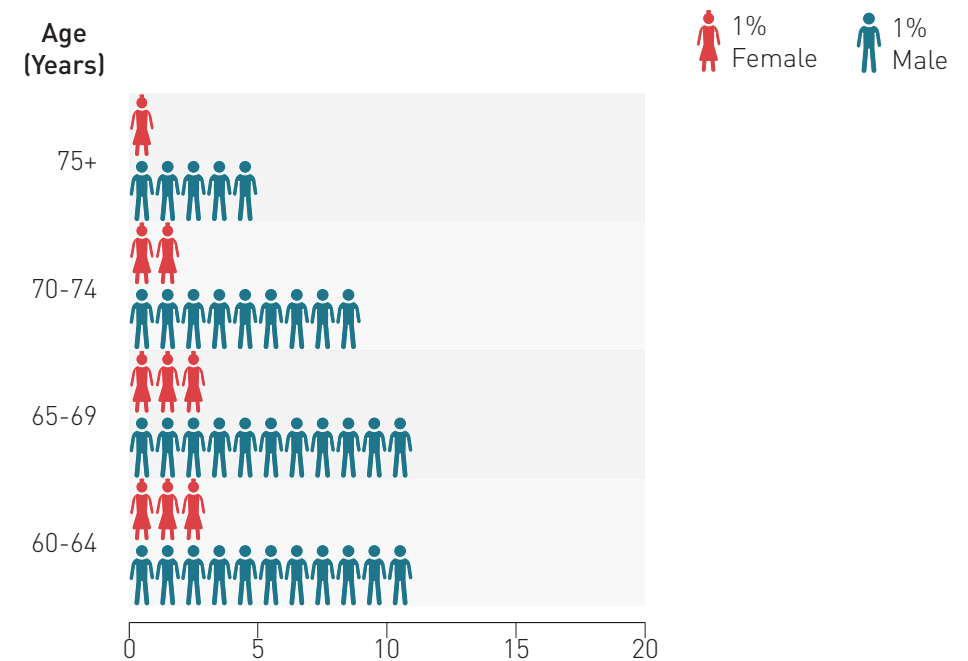
poverty is slightly higher among older women compared to older men. Also, it is to be noted that poverty rates for the older persons in the rural areas is higher than in urban areas.

While there are minimal differences in the official poverty rates between older men and women, gender differences are prominent when considering who is entitled to or receiving a pension at old age in Indonesia (Priebe and Howell 2014). It should be noted, however, that the level of pension coverage for the current generation of older persons in Indonesia is very low. Only about 5 to 6% of all older persons receive any form

of pension payments. Nonetheless, among older persons that do receive a pension, older men are significantly more likely to be entitled to or receiving a pension than women. Figure 2.1 shows that older men are three to five times more likely to receive a pension than older women.

Priebe and Howell (2014, p.37) further note that pension coverage in rural Indonesia is almost non-existent — only 1 to 2% of the older population are covered by pensions and thus the majority of older persons in rural areas do not have any formal sources of income. In a study conducted by the Centre for Ageing Studies, University of

Fig. 2.1: Share of Older Males and Females with Pension Coverage (%)



Source: Indonesian Family Life Survey 2007, Figure adapted from Table 34, page 37, in Priebe and Howell (2014).

Notes: The percentages do not add to 100% as the proportion without pension coverage for each gender and age group is not shown in the figures. For example, for elderly aged 60-64, 89% of men and 97% of women do not have pension coverage.

Indonesia (Centre for Ageing Studies 2012, p.18) in 2011 among 350 women over 40 years and in 6 provinces in Indonesia (Aceh, Riau, DKI Jakarta, Banten, West Java and West Kalimantan), the majority (91.9%) had no pension, and only 5.3% had some form of insurance.

Hence, for the majority of older persons in Indonesia there is a need to continue working well into their very senior years to be able to adequately finance their living costs. Indeed, data shows that the labour-force participation rates of older persons in Indonesia is high – about half of all older persons 60 years and above were actively

involved in the labour market according to the 2010 population census (Table 2.2). Table 2.2 shows that the labour-force participation rate was higher for older men (69.4%) than older women (34.5%). The rate was highest for elderly aged 60-69 (78.6% men; 43.4% women) and continued to be high even at the very old ages of 80 years and above (37.1% men; 12.3% women)

Census 2010 findings on the distribution of the economically active population by age, sex, and employment status further show that the large majority (89%) of older persons 60 years and over are employed as informal workers. The proportion of

Table 2.2: Labour-Force Participation Rates by Age, Sex and Residence: Indonesia 2010 (%)

Age Group (years)	Males			Females			All		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
60-69	66.3	88.2	78.6	29.9	53.8	43.4	47.3	70.3	60.3
70-79	46.4	69.2	59.9	17.3	32.5	26.1	29.8	48.7	40.9
80+	28.2	42.7	37.1	8.3	15.0	12.3	16.1	26.7	22.5
60+	57.6	78.1	69.4	23.7	42.5	34.5	39.2	59.0	50.5

Source: Population Census 2010, Table 16, page 45, in Adioetomo and Mujahid (2014).

older persons in informal work is higher for women — 92.1% for women vs 86.5% for men. Moreover, about one-third of older women 60 years and above were working as unpaid family workers compared to only 5% of older men. Older women were mostly working in the agriculture sector (65.8%) while about one-third were working in the service sector and six per cent in manufacturing. This distribution is similar for older men though a slightly higher percentage of older men are in agriculture and manufacturing and a lower percentage in the service sector compared to women (Adioetomo and Mujahid 2014).

Data from Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), SUSENAS (2014) shows that the average monthly income for the elderly was relatively low and decreased with age. The average monthly income was Rp 1,176,93 for those aged 60-69, Rp837,320 for those aged 70-79 years and Rp769,350 for those aged 80+. Data disaggregated by gender (Table 2.3) further shows that the proportion of older

women with equivalent monthly revenue/income of less than Rp500,000 or between Rp500,000 – 999,999 a month was higher than that of men. About one-third of older women earned less than Rp500,000 a month compared to about one-fifth of men. However, a higher proportion of older men earned income above Rp1 million. Among men, 16.5% earned Rp1 to 1.5 million, 10.7% earned Rp1.5-1.9 million, 5.6% earned Rp2 to 2.5 million and 8.5% earned more than Rp2.5 million per month. In comparison, the percentages are much lower for women: 8.1% earned Rp1 to 1.5 million, 5.0% earned Rp1.5 to 1.9, 1.8% earned Rp2 to 2.5 million and only 3.2% earned more than Rp2.5 million per month. Relevant data on income versus expenditure, savings, or ownership of assets of older men and women in Indonesia to further assess financial security could not be found.

The results above highlight that most older persons in Indonesia, particularly women, are working in the informal sector

Table 2.3: Proportion of Older Males and Females Earning Equivalent Monthly Revenue/Income in Indonesian Rupiah (Rp) (%)

Average Revenue/Month	Males	Females
<500.000	18.1	33.0
500.000 – 999.999	40.6	49.0
1.000.000-1.499.999	16.5	8.1
1.500.000-1.999.999	10.7	5.0
2.000.000-2.499.999	5.6	1.8
>2.500.000	8.5	3.2

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik, SUSENAS (2014).

Notes: As of 13 June 2018, US\$1 equalled Rp13,983. Hence the majority of Indonesian older men and women earn between US\$36-72 (Rp500,000 – 999,999) equivalent per month or roughly US\$1 to US\$2 a day.

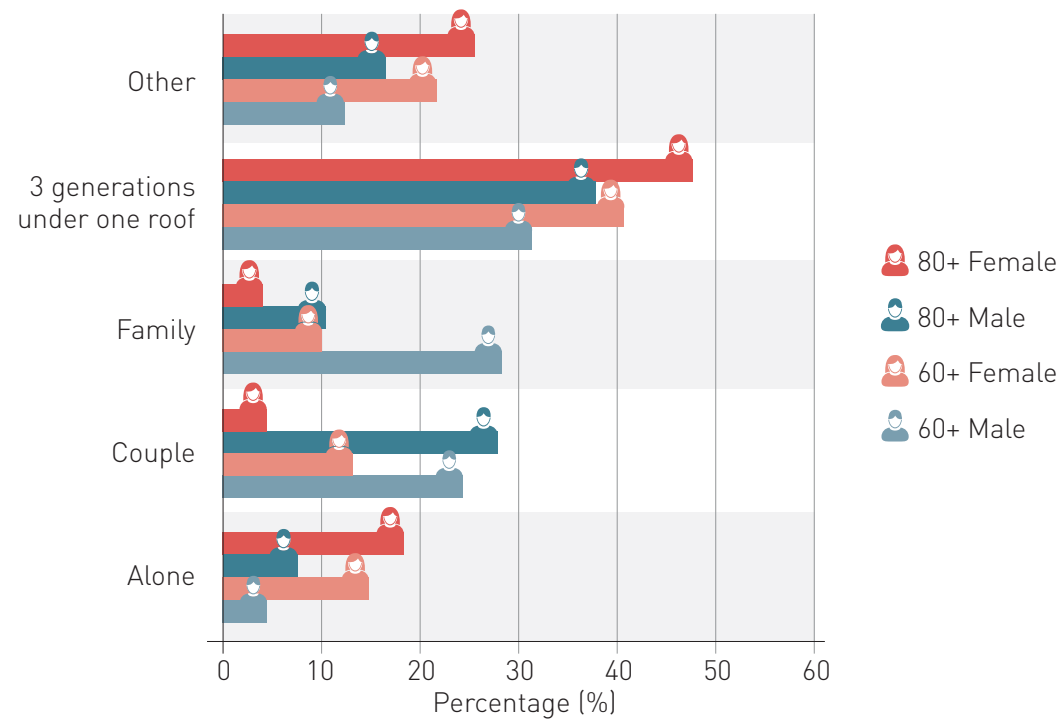
as unpaid family workers. Hence, they are living under a high degree of income uncertainty given the lack of formal avenues of social security. Nevertheless, there are other forms of monetary and non-monetary support that older adults in Indonesia can rely on for income and social support. Census data from 2010 shows that the majority (72%) of older adults 60 years and above live with their families either in a two-generation 'Family' (parent and child) or 'three generations under one roof' (parent, child, grandchildren) or even more complex multi-generational families listed as 'Other'. Figure 2.2 shows further that a higher proportion of older men compared to women live as a couple or family in their older ages which can be explained mostly by the higher incidence of re-marriage in old age after losing a spouse among males. Women, however, are more likely than men to live in multi-generational families – three generations under one roof as well

as more complex families including with other relatives and friends. These findings indicate that the traditional family system continues to hold and provides beneficial social support in old age.

Of concern is the proportion of older persons who live alone. While only a minority (7.7%) of those aged 60-69 live alone, this proportion increases with age to 14% of elderly 80+ living alone. In each age group the proportion of women who live alone is substantially higher than men. At ages 80+ the proportion of women who live alone is 18% compared to 8% for men. This is mainly due to women's longer life expectancy and the higher incidence of widowhood among older women (Adioetomo and Mujahid 2014).

Direct forms of monetary support are also provided by children to supplement the lack of access to formal pensions, savings and insurance. Traditionally, family has been the

Fig. 2.2: Population by Age, Sex and Living Arrangement, 2010 (%)



Source: Population Census 2010, table adapted from Table 14, page 42, in Adioetomo and Mujahid (2014).

Note: Except for the category 'Alone', living arrangements are based on family relationship to household head within a household with two or more persons. 'Couple' – if the older person is aged 60 years and over and lived with a spouse in a household with no other persons. 'Family' – when an older person or older person and spouse live with their natural or in-law children only. 'Three generations under one roof' is a household with older person/older person with spouse, adult children (natural or in-law) and children of the adult person. (Adioetomo and Mujahid 2014, p.41).

pillar of support for older persons. Based on a study of 33 provinces, done by the Centre for Ageing Studies, University of Indonesia, about half (49.6%) of older persons received financial support from their family. Data by gender are not available to assess whether there are any gender differences in receipt of financial support from family. Data from the 2007 Indonesian Family Life Survey shows that households with an older person are net receivers of inter-household transfers. This pattern increases with the age of the

older person and is particularly so among older persons in rural areas. There are, however, no significant gender differences between households with older men or older women in receiving inter-household transfers (Priebe and Howell 2014, p.38).

3. Factors that Lead to Older Women Becoming Financially Insecure

Based on available data, results shown in the previous section suggest that older

women in Indonesia are likely to be at a high risk of financial insecurity. Older women have slightly higher poverty rates than older men. Moreover, compared to older men, a larger proportion of older women are working in the informal sector and many as unpaid family workers. Hence, they are significantly less likely to receive a pension in their old ages. In this section we examine the factors that lead to older women's financial insecurity highlighting the fact that financial insecurity at old age is in fact a result of conditions that occur over the life-course.

For instance, gender discrimination in childhood may lead to lack of opportunities for girls to attend school. Overall, educational attainment is higher for older men than older women. The 2010 Census data shows that almost 40% of older women had never been to school compared to 23% of older men. At higher education levels, 4% of older men have a university degree while only 1% of older women do (Adioetomo and Mujahid 2014.).

These differences can have significant consequences since studies suggest that education is an important determinant of female labour force participation (Kanjilal-Bhaduri and Pastore 2017; Heath and Jayachandran 2017; Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos 1992). Low education levels may account for the lower female labour-force participation rates of women across all age groups in Indonesia. Female labour-force participation in Indonesia is approximately 51%. The rate is significantly lower than the labour force participation rate of men (82%) (World Bank Open Data). It is also low relative to other countries in the region at a comparable stage of development. In Vietnam, for example, a similar lower-

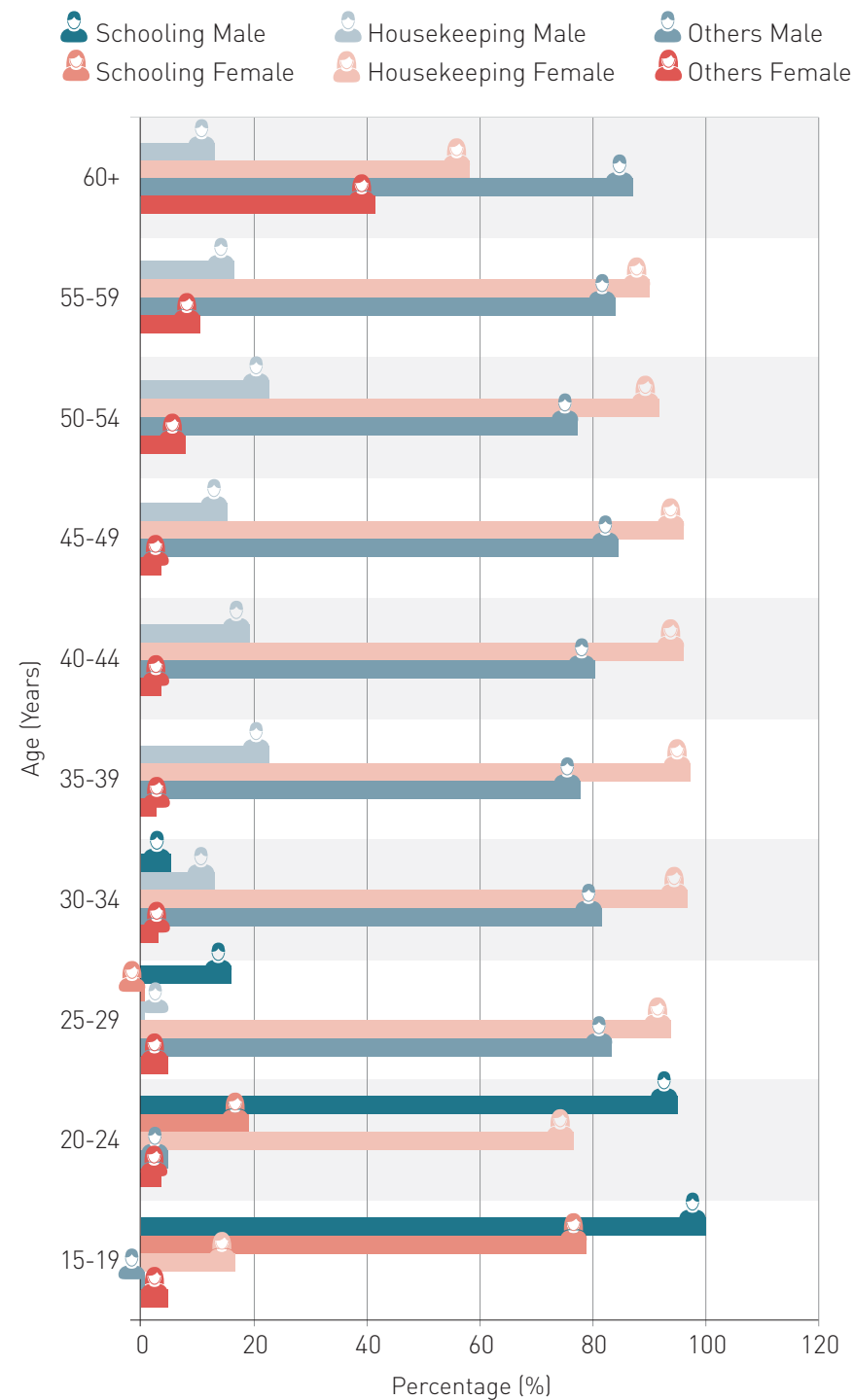
middle income country, female labour-force participation rate is 73%. Thailand, a middle-income country, has a female labour-force participation rate of 64%. Moreover, in Indonesia female labour-force participation has only increased very slightly from 50% in 1990 to 51% in 2013 (AIPEG 2015).

“Estimates suggest that Indonesia loses about US\$2.4 billion a year in possible earnings due to inequalities in labour market participation between men and women”

(AusAid 2012, p.10).

One of the major reasons for women's lower labour-force participation rates and lower levels of education is the existing gender norms in Indonesia. Women bear the brunt of housework and caregiving responsibilities for children and the elderly while men are expected to be the main income earner. Indeed, the 2007 data from Statistics Indonesia shows that among men aged 15-19 who are not in the labour force, 99% are in school while for women of the same age group, only 79% are in school and 16% are engaged in housekeeping activities (Ananta 2014). This indicates that starting from late childhood to early adulthood, girls tend to stay at home taking care of the household while boys tend to go to school and eventually join the labour force. These gender norms are also evident in later ages, when a significantly higher proportion of women are not in the labour force due to housekeeping, compared to men (Figure 2.3).

Fig. 2.3: Persons Not in the Labour Force, by Gender and Activity, 2007 (%)



Source: Adapted from Table 10.3 in Ananta (2014, p. 249).

Note: It is not clear what "Others" includes, but it could include taking care of older persons, social activities, or doing nothing (Ananta 2014, p. 248). For Housekeeping Male, for the ages 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, the figure is close to zero and therefore does not show in the graph.

Even when women work, their wages are often lower than that of men. Table 2.4 shows that overall gross monthly wages are higher for men than for women (Rp1.9 million for men versus Rp1.5 million for women). Monthly wages are higher for men than women in almost every industry, except for electricity, gas and water, construction, and transport and communication. An earlier study of wages by industry suggested that higher female wages in some sectors could be explained by relatively well-paid women being mainly in office jobs in these sectors. It is possible that the same reasons may still hold for the more recent data (Klaveren et al. 2010).

A report by AIPEG (2017) found that in the formal sector, the average hourly wage gap of women is 20-30% lower than that of men. In the informal sector, the gender wage gap

is even greater and shows a worsening trend over time where women earn only half of what men earn. Additionally, women at the lower end of the wage distribution face a bigger wage gap compared to women at the higher end of the wage distribution. The wage gap at the 10th quantile of the wage distribution is 63% and then decreases to 13% at the 90th quantile. The wage gap is highest in the agricultural sector. Among women working in the services sector, wages are lowest among women working in services in private households, where they receive 65% of the average wage of males. However, in finance, the highest paying sector, women earn 6.2% less than men.

Some parts of the gender wage gap are explained by industrial segregation such that women work predominantly in female-dominated industries like services and trade

Table 2.4: Average Wage / Salary / Monthly Net Income (Rupiah as at 2015) of Workers by Main Employment and Gender

Main Job Fields	Male Wage	Female Wage
Agriculture	1.041.585	590.506
Mining and Quarrying	2.961.355	1.269.628
Manufacturing Industry	1.763.908	1.215.118
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	2.339.272	2.895.814
Construction	1.589.889	1.958.403
Trade, Hotel and Restaurants	1.710.286	1.337.251
Transport and Communication	2.573.057	3.345.790
Financial, Ownership and Business Services	2.867.967	2.770.737
Mean	1.903.303	1.525.406

Source: BPS, People's Welfare Indicator 2015.



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while men are in industries like agriculture and mining. They are also more likely to be in wage or unpaid family employment. Traditional laws (*adat*) also place strict limits on what women can or cannot do and these continue to reinforce social norms about the role of women. While a small portion of this gap is due to women having less experience than men, on average, as a result of career interruptions related to childrearing and having a disproportionate share of caring and household responsibilities, a significant proportion (60%) of the gender wage gap remains unexplained and is likely due to discriminatory practices in the labour market (AusAID 2012; AIPEG 2015).

This section has highlighted that financial insecurity of older women does not exist suddenly in old age but is the outcome

of many factors that occur over the life course. The main factors are the many facets of gender inequalities that girls and women face. In their early childhood many more boys are in school compared to girls that contributes to the overall lower levels of education of women. In their early adulthood, due to caregiving and domestic responsibilities women are less likely to be in the labour force. Even when they are working, women are often engaged in agricultural work of low productivity, receive lower wages for the same job, do not have access to training, and own businesses that have less capital. Furthermore, women do not have rights that guarantee them land ownership and due to their limited earning capacity have less access to curative medical treatment than men (AIPEG 2015; ILO 2004). The position of women is largely

subordinate in the family and society; this tends to weaken women's bargaining position, the distribution of resources, ownership and decision-making. Hence, at their older ages, women have less savings and depend heavily on their spouses and/or children for financial security.

On the optimistic front, these trends are likely to change with cohort changes in education and labour-force participation. Ananta (2014, p.261) notes that the educational attainment of the current younger persons (future older persons) is better than that of the current older persons. Data from the 2007 National Labour Force Survey shows that among women in the labour force, 34% of older women 60 years and above did not have any schooling while only 10% of women in the 35-59 age group had no

schooling. Moreover, while less than 1% of older women in the labour force had a university degree, 6% of women aged 35-59 in the labour force had a university degree (Ananta 2014, p.251). Gender equality in education in Indonesia has increased in recent years to near parity. In fact, amongst younger cohorts, Indonesian women are on average slightly better educated than Indonesian men (AIPEG, 2015). Women's higher educational attainment contributes to reducing the wage gap. Female labour-force participation is also expected to increase. While at the aggregate level female labour-force participation has only increased very slightly in the past two decades, a cohort analysis done by AIPEG (2015), reveals that female participation in the labour force has been increasing from around 40% for women born in the 1940s to



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around 60% for those born in the 1980s. This suggests that the underlying propensity for women to participate in the labour force has been increasing which may reflect changes in cultural norms. At the same time, fertility has declined from 5.6 children per woman in 1969 to 2.4 in the first decade of the 2000s while average household size has declined gradually from 4.9 members per household in 1971 to 3.9 in 2013. As older cohorts exit the labour force this will have an effect of increasing women's labour-force participation in the near future (AIPEG 2015; Qibthiyah and Utomo 2016). With increasing participation of women in the formal labour force it is likely that future cohorts of older women will have greater access to pensions providing for greater financial security in their old age.

Greater participation of women in the labour force will be contingent upon changes in gender norms of caregiving that posit women as the primary caregivers. Studies of trends in labour-force participation over

the past 20 years (Schaner and Das 2016) suggests that caregiving responsibilities continue to constrain women's labour-force participation – women with young children are either significantly less likely to work or exit the labour force to take care of children. At the same time, the rapidly ageing population will increase the pressure for more caregivers, a demand that is usually fulfilled by females. For instance, a study using the 2000 Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS3) found that caregiving for elderly household members had an adverse impact on female labour-force participation. Significantly, similar effects were not observed for males (Magnani and Rammohan 2010).

4. Existing Policies and Policy Recommendations

The number of older persons in Indonesia will continue to increase, particularly among the oldest-old. The majority of older persons are working in the informal sector and have little access to social security. Indonesia currently does not have a universal pension programme and thus only older persons who have previously worked in formal employment are eligible to receive a pension. Hence, a vast majority of older adults in Indonesia have very limited income security. First and foremost, it is critical for the government to provide social protection for its poor and vulnerable older persons so that they are able to afford a reasonable standard of living in their old age.

To help reduce financial insecurity, and in particular, poverty, the government has put in place a variety of social protection programmes to families of older persons. These include *Raskin* or "Rice for the Poor",

which is a food subsidy of 15kg of rice per month at a subsidised price. It is estimated that about 17.5 million poor households were beneficiaries of this programme in 2012 (ILO 2012, p.10). *Jamkesmas* or National Health Insurance for the Poor and Near Poor provides free basic medical services with a referral system to public hospitals. It targets the chronic poor, poor and near poor, based on household welfare conditions. It is estimated that 76.4 million poor households or 32% of the population were beneficiaries of the programme in 2010 (ILO 2012, pp. 8, 18). A critical issue with *Jamkesmas* is targeting accuracy: 52.6% of the poor population remains without health insurance (ILO 2012, p.18). *Jamkesda* or Regional Health Insurance for the Poor and Near Poor is provided by provincial or district governments and targets people identified by local authorities as poor but are not covered by *Jamkesmas*. It is estimated that *Jamkesda* covers 13.5% of the population (ILO 2012).

One social pension that specifically targets the older persons is the ASLUT (Social Assistance for Older Persons), previously known as JSLU (Social Cash Transfer for the Vulnerable Elderly). ASLUT provides a monthly pension of approximately IDR300,000 to 2,500 older persons, 60 years and above who are poor and are non-recipients of other programmes. This programme was launched in 2006 across six provinces and in 2013, expanded to all 34 provinces, reaching out to 26,500 recipients but with a reduced monthly pension of IDR200,000. While ASLUT has been effective at targeting the poor and neglected older adults particularly older women, 70 years and older who are living alone, the programme has only reached 0.6% of poor older people. The government

is reluctant to expand the coverage of this programme. It is estimated that there are around 1.7 million vulnerable older persons in Indonesia (ILO 2012; Thristiawati 2017).

There are several limitations to existing policies and programmes in Indonesia. The most significant is the gap in coverage. Only 13% of Indonesian citizens are covered by old-age benefits and the vast majority of Indonesians who have access to old-age benefits are working in the formal sector (ILO 2012, p. 32). There is almost no protection for non-poor workers in the informal sector. Almost 40% of Indonesians are not covered by health insurance (ILO 2012, p.37). These problems arise due to lack of coordination, targeting issues and data limitations. Programmes that target vulnerable groups require information about their target beneficiaries. However, there is a lack of updated data enumerating such groups. Additionally, there are target overlaps in programmes that are meant to complement each other such as *Jamkesmas* and *Jamkesdas* (ILO 2012). There are also significant gaps in how these policies incorporate gendered risks and vulnerabilities. There is a misconception that social protection programmes such as *Jamkesmas* or *Raskin* are gender neutral as they are seen to benefit the family and men and women equally (ILO 2012). Hence, there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data to assess whether these policies and programmes are in fact benefitting men and women equally.

Policy interventions will need to be designed to address gender inequalities throughout the life-course, by identifying key stages at which women become at risk of becoming financially insecure in old age. The discussion earlier in the paper has



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highlighted the importance of doing this, as gender inequalities that women face earlier in their lives such as lower labour force participation rates or lower levels of education lead to financial insecurity in old age.

4.1 Risk Factor: Access to Education

The preceding discussion highlighted that in Indonesia, the first major stage at which women become at risk of becoming financially (in)secure is in accessing higher education. Appropriate policies should be implemented to improve access to formal education and particularly target compulsory education for all citizens aged 9-12 years. It is also important to ensure that young girls continue on their education beyond high school. Increasing college scholarships for girls would be an important step.

4.2 Risk Factor: Getting Married and Having a Family

The next stage at which women are at risk of changing their life trajectories toward lower financial security in later life is when they get married and start a family. To ensure that women remain in the workforce, initiatives that support women in the workforce, such as providing appropriate childcare services, should be implemented. As this chapter has highlighted, caregiving responsibilities can negatively impact women's employment. While women's organisations have recognised the importance of addressing women's burden of caregiving responsibilities, the state's actions in this area have been limited. Proposed policies, such as reducing work hours for women to allow them to take care of children, often reinforce norms about

women as the primary carers. Initiatives such as the New Men's Alliance in East Lombok advocating campaigns for equal sharing of unpaid domestic work between husbands and wives is a step towards the right direction (Eddyono et al. 2016). In addition, the implementation of equal opportunity in the workforce for all, based on competency and certification, should be strengthened.

Furthermore, promoting community level women's groups to provide skills in entrepreneurship, family financial management, productive economic activities and old age security are important for equipping the current generation of young and older women with appropriate knowledge.

4.3 Risk Factor: Financial Education for Working Women

It is imperative that women understand how to manage their financial resources to ensure financial security for the rest of their lives. If they are not provided with adequate financial education on how to manage their income and savings in preparation for old age, they are at risk. Based on evaluation studies of the Association of Center for Women Resources Development (PPSW) conducted in 2013 of over 700 women between 40 and 60 years old, it is proven that financial education for women has positive impacts on the economic improvement of the family. It has increased income between 10-100%, increased family assets, increased productive business, generated new businesses for additional income, reduced debts, increased the ability of economic self-reliance, and increased the habit of saving and managing a budget for family finances. Financial education for women has also had

positive changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour among women. It has improved the quality of women's self-esteem, their knowledge of financial management, and communication skills between women and their families concerning finances and budget (PPSW 2013). The programme also highlighted that women are not aware of the importance of financial preparedness for old age, nor what would happen if they did not prepare for old age. A common response to questions about financial preparedness for old age was "I do not know, never thought about that" (Centre for Ageing Studies 2012, p.18).

In light of these findings, it is evident that financial education programmes need to target women earlier in their working lives, so that they understand the implications of their financial decisions, such as the loss of income that would follow if they leave the labour force for caregiving responsibilities. The programmes will also create greater awareness and the ability to save and generate income for old-age financial security.

4.4 Risk Factor: Financial Insecurity in Old Age

In addition to programmes that target women earlier in their lives, there will continue to be a need to address the specific needs of older women, through a variety of programmes, including training and social protection. The different aspects of older women's needs, from financial support to healthcare needs require a holistic perspective. Better coordination between the different government ministries is required to create an integrated, holistic response to older persons needs. The National Commission for Older Persons,

established in 2004 at the national level, was tasked to coordinate efforts towards the improvement of social welfare of older persons. Its implementation efforts should be strengthened to assist in coordinating programmes for older persons. The commission should cooperate with government agencies, community, experts, international organisations and other necessary parties in implementation of its tasks (BPS, SUSENAS 2014).

5. Conclusion

The speed and magnitude at which the population of Indonesia is ageing is of concern. The number of older persons 60 years and above has increased substantially from just 5 million in 1971 to 18 million according to the latest 2010 Population Census. By 2050, Indonesia's older population is projected to be 62 million reaching almost 20% of the total population. Given women's higher life expectancy, it is not surprising that women make up the majority of Indonesia's older population particularly among the oldest-old.



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It is important to assess the financial security of older women in Indonesia. Gender discrimination and lack of opportunities during their life course have caused women to be in a vulnerable position at old age where they are heavily dependent on their spouse and children for income support. This chapter has shown that the factors leading to financial insecurity of older women starts early in childhood. Girls are less likely to attend school compared to boys and in early adulthood women tend to stay home to take care of household duties. Women have lower labour-force participation rates compared to men, in part due to their lower education and in part due to their caregiving responsibilities to children and elderly. Even when they are working, women are more likely than men to be working in the informal sector or as unpaid family workers and are less likely to be entitled to or receive a pension in their old age. They earn significantly less than their male counterparts even when working in similar occupations. As a result, women reach their older ages with inadequate savings and limited life skills.

Family continues to be the main source of support for older persons in Indonesia. The majority of older persons live in multi-generation households, with children and grandchildren, and receive monetary transfers from children. However, it is important to take into account that increasing proportions of older persons, particularly women, are living alone. In addition to providing income support for the current generation of the poor and vulnerable, it is imperative that policy be directed at equipping the current generation of young and older women with adequate life skills to enable their financial security when they grow older.



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Finally, more research and data are needed to comprehensively examine older women's financial position at old age. This chapter has only assessed financial security through data on labour-force participation, education, living arrangements and to some extent inter-household transfers. There is currently limited data at the individual level disaggregated by age and sex on

absolute levels of income, the gap between income versus expenditure, sources and amount of income support from family or friends, investments, government benefits, ownerships of assets, and savings. There is also a lack of gendered analyses of existing social welfare policies to assess whether such programmes and policies are benefitting men and women equally.

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MALAYSIA

Jariah Masud and Tengku Aizan Hamid

1. Introduction

Malaysia, with a current population of slightly more than 32 million, is projected to become an aged nation by 2030 when those age 60 and older will comprise 15% of the population. Similar to many other developing countries, Malaysia is growing old before growing rich although it is projected to achieve developed country/high-income country status between 2020 and 2024 (World Bank 2017). The poverty rate declined from 6.0% in 2002 to 0.6% in 2014 but pockets of poverty remain a challenge to the country. Urban poverty was only 0.3% compared to rural poverty of 1.6% in 2014 (Economic Planning Unit n.d.). The elderly population aged 60 and older in Malaysia increased from 7.87% in 2010 to 9.09% in 2015 and is projected to reach 10.6% in 2020. With rapid ageing, financial security or old-age poverty is becoming an emerging challenge as most women will outlive men.

Financial security is often associated with the level of savings, the ability of the individual to meet an emergency, the adequacy of financial resources in retirement and the availability of income (Lange, Prenzler and Zuchandke 2012; Mahal et al. 2012; Suwanrada 2009). For the purpose of this chapter, financial security is defined as the ability to control day-to-day, month-to-month finances and the capacity to absorb a financial shock (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

2015). In understanding financial security in old age, we applied the vulnerability framework that takes into account four key elements — exposure, threat, coping and outcome — in discussing the factors contributing to financial (in)security of older women (Schröder-butterfill and Marianti 2006). The vulnerability framework revealed how multifaceted factors contributed to financial insecurity in old age especially among women.

Financial security in old age also depends on the inflow of resources in the form of income or transfers, and assets or investments accumulated during younger years which can be converted into cash when in need. Those with financial resources can gain access to better health facilities throughout their life stages compared to the poor. In contrast, individuals without savings will have to rely on a pension or social transfer to support old-age living. Factors such as marital status, living arrangements and access to resources particularly education, employment and health have an impact on current and future income.

Gender inequalities in financial resources in later life result from the combined effect of a woman's atypical life course, which includes interrupted employment records, periods of care provision, and pension systems (Vlachantoni 2012). Ofstedal, Reidy & Knodel (2004) examined multiple economic indicators, including sources of income, receipt of financial and material



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support, income levels, ownership of assets, and subjective well-being. Results show substantial variations in gender differences across indicators and provide an important qualification to widely held views concerning the globally disadvantaged position of older women (Ofstedal, Reidy & Knodel 2004). The lower labour-force participation rate and shorter working life lead to lower savings in later years, both of which pose a great challenge in old age. The main reason why women drop out of the labour market is due to childcare or family responsibilities (Khalid 2016). Morrone (2007) highlighted that there are serious future insecurity issues for certain groups of pre-retirees popularly referred to as “the baby-boomers”. Older women in Malaysia face a similar situation due to their disadvantaged position in their younger years, such as illiteracy, low level of education, being out of the labour force and lack of access to income.

This chapter is organised into several sections: methodology, population ageing

in Malaysia, profile of older women in Malaysia, older women's financial security, financial protection of older women, factors associated with financial security, policy implications, data limitations/areas for further research and finally conclusions.

2. Methodology

This chapter uses secondary data obtained from the Department of Statistics Malaysia. The data sets used are:

- 2.1 The 2% Malaysian Population and Housing Census 2010. The 2% census data is the census raw data which comprised 126,579 households with 532,298 members. The data set contained information on 91,011 individuals age 50 and older; of these 52% persons were age 50-59 and the rest 60 and older. This data set was used to provide a profile of older women in Malaysia.

2.2 The Household Income Survey 2009 with 92,754 male and 91,693 female individuals and 43,023 households was used to examine women's individual and household income.

2.3 The Household Income Survey 2014 with data on 10,072 households, 8,576 male and 1,496 female household heads was used to examine household income.

In addition to the three main data sets listed above, micro data accessible to the researchers was used to explore components not available in the Department of Statistics data sets such as savings and assets. Specifically the data sets were the Income Adequacy and Consumer Behaviour among Older Consumers (Jarrah et al. 2016) and Citi-UPM Financial Empowerment Among Mature Women (Aizan et al. 2017) (2017). Descriptive statistics were used in the data analysis and comparisons were made by sex and age group.

This chapter presents data comparing young old (50-59 years) and older women (60 years and older) as well as comparisons by sex.

3. Population Ageing in Malaysia

The Department of Statistics Malaysia population projection 2010-2040 revealed that the population age group 60-74 and older was 1.8 million in 2010 and will increase to 4.5 million in 2040 — an increase of almost 2.5 times in four decades. Meanwhile, the population age 75 and older in the same year will increase from 0.5 million to 1.8 million in 2040 — a fourfold increase in the same period. By 2030, the population structure of Malaysia is projected

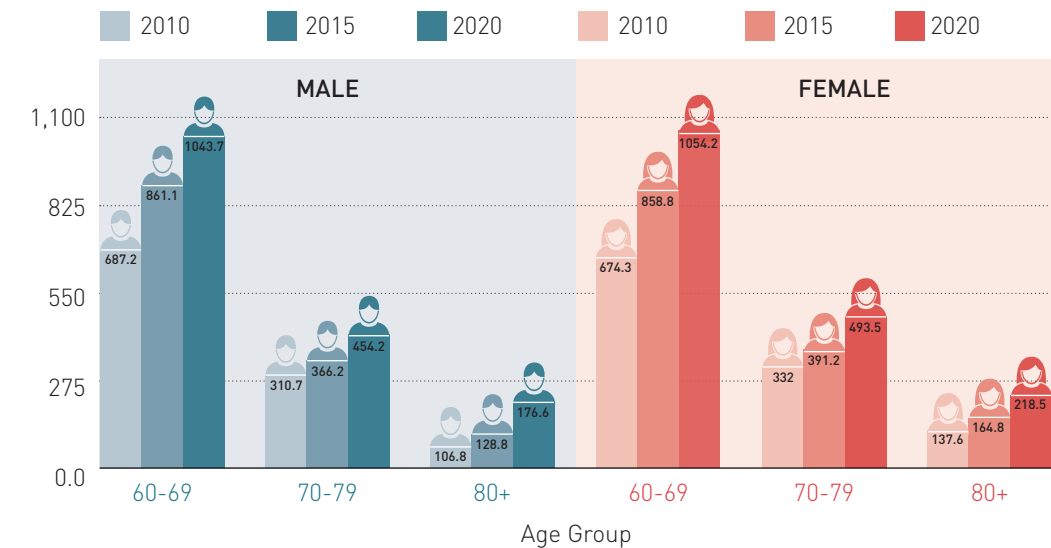
to comprise less than 23% of age 14 and younger; 68% of age 15 to 64; and less than 9% of 65 and older (RM11, p.325). By 2050, the population of age 40 and older both for men and women will exceed the proportion of younger cohorts.

Malaysia's ageing population is attributed to the decline in fertility and increase in life expectancy, the outcome of a better standard of living. Life expectancy of Malaysians increased from 69.2 years for males in 1991 to 72.7 years in 2017. For women, life expectancy at birth increased from 73.4 years to 77.4 years in 2017. There was an ethnic difference in life expectancy with the Chinese having the longest life expectancy (75.0 years for men and 79.1 years for women), followed by 71.3 years for Malay men and 76.1 years for Malay women (Khalid, 2016). Life expectancy of Indian men was 67.9 years and 76.2 years for Indian women.

Using the definition of older persons as 60 years and older, the current and projected elderly population in 2020 is shown in Figure 3.1. In addition to an increasing number of those in age 60+, Malaysia is also experiencing a steady increase in the age group of 80+. From 2010 to 2020, there will be a 51% increase in the number of men and 56% increase in the number of women age 60-69. The percentage increase in male population age 80+ was 65% compared to 59% among women but the number of older women in the older age group remain higher compared to men. In 2016 there were 2.89 million older persons age 60+ in Malaysia of which 51.1% were women.

The sex ratio of older women (60 +) compared to older men is projected to increase from 103.55 to 104.33 in 2015 and

Fig. 3.1: Number (in Thousands) of Male and Female Population age 60+, 2010, 2015 and 2020



Source: Department of Statistics. *Social Statistics Bulletin* Malaysia, various years.

will reach 110.51 in 2030. An increase in the number of older persons and a decline in fertility have affected the dependency ratio. The young dependency ratio will drop from 40.4% in 2010 to 28.3% in 2030 while old age dependency ratio will increase from 7.4% (2010) to 16.6% (2030). There were 14 workers to support one older person in 2010 compared to only 10 workers estimated for 2020. The number will decline to only seven workers to support one older person in 2030.

4. Profile of Older Women in Malaysia

The profiles presented are closely related to financial security among older women. They are marital status; living arrangement and household headship; education; and employment and health. A comparison by sex will be made with those age 50-59

(<60 group) and 60>. The 50-59 age group was used to provide some indication of the scenario of Malaysian women in the future.

4.1 Marital Status

The marital status of women and men aged 50 and older is shown in Figure 3.2. The majority of men were married while the percentage of women age 50 and older who were widowed was much higher compared to men. The number of women who were widowed, divorced or separated were four times more than men. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) reported in 2010 that on average 77 Muslim couples divorce every day. Also, 22% of marriages among Malaysians aged between 18 and 50 ended in divorce in 2010 compared to only 13% in 2000 (Economic Planning Unit 2011). With women living longer than men and culturally women marry older men, it

is expected that more older women will live without a husband or partner. Traditionally, when the wife dies, the man will remarry but the likelihood of women re-marrying is less. As such their marital status remains unchanged till old age.

4.2 Living Arrangements

The family remains as a key social unit in Malaysian society. Children are still expected to care for their elderly parents. As families increasingly opt to have fewer children, the burden of caring for elderly parents is being shouldered by few siblings. The Fifth Malaysian Population and Family Survey revealed that 66.4% of families in Malaysia are nuclear families followed by 20.8% extended families (NPFDB 2016). The 2% Census 2010 Data revealed that 20.9% of 50,853 households were headed by females aged 50 and older while 79.1% were

headed by males of the same age group. The majority of females heading households were widowed, separated or divorced.

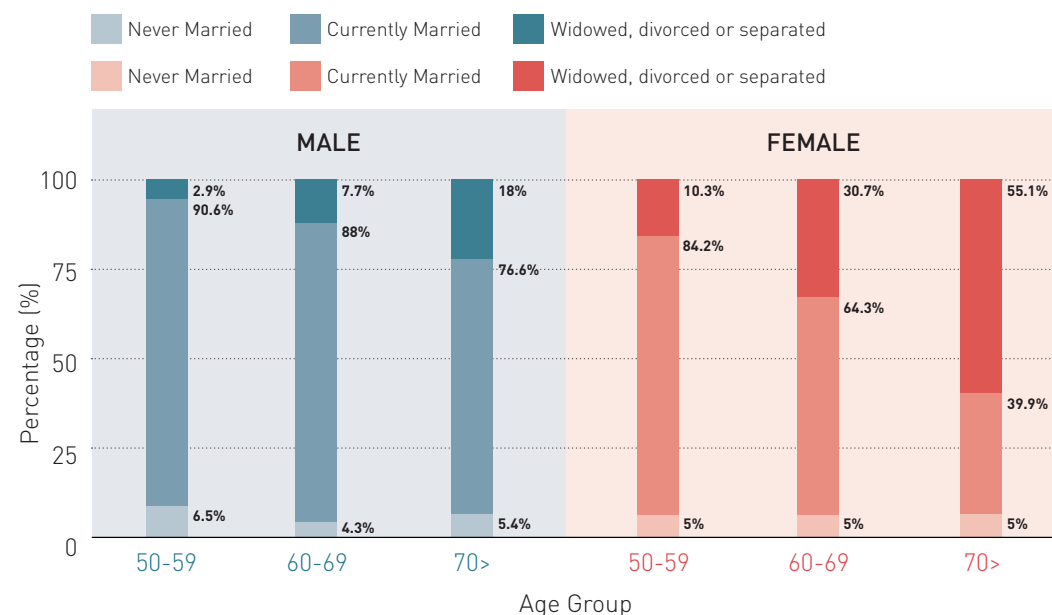
In this research, living arrangements were derived based on the different generations residing in the same household. Table 3.1 shows the living arrangements among households headed by males and females aged 50 and older using the 2010 Census Data. One-generation households comprised 24.8% (of which 8.3% were living alone, 11.4% were living with spouse and 5.1% with other adults). The proportion of one generation households was much higher among households headed by persons aged 60 and older. Though the extended family structure is declining, co-residing is still a common living arrangement in Malaysia. More than half of households co-reside either with their children, grandchildren or both. The living arrangement of the

Table 3.1: Living Arrangement by Household Head, Age and Sex, 2010 (%)

Type of Household	Male Household Head		Female Household Head		All
	<60 (n=21,829)	60> (n=18,397)	<60 (n=4,166)	60> (n=6,461)	
One Generation (adults only)	16.7	30.4	24.4	36.7	24.8
Two Generation Up (household head with parents)	1.0	0.9	2.1	0.8	1.1
Two Generations Down (household head with children)	70.7	50.8	56.3	40.0	58.4
Three Generations Up and Down (household head with parents and children)	3.6	1.3	2.4	0.7	2.3
Three Generations down (household head with children and grandchildren)	7.6	16.2	14.4	21.6	13.1
Four Generations (household head with parents, children and grandchildren)	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3

Source: Authors' calculations using data from the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia.

Fig. 3.2: Marital Status by Age Group and Sex, 2010 (%)



Source: Department of Statistics 2013. Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2010.

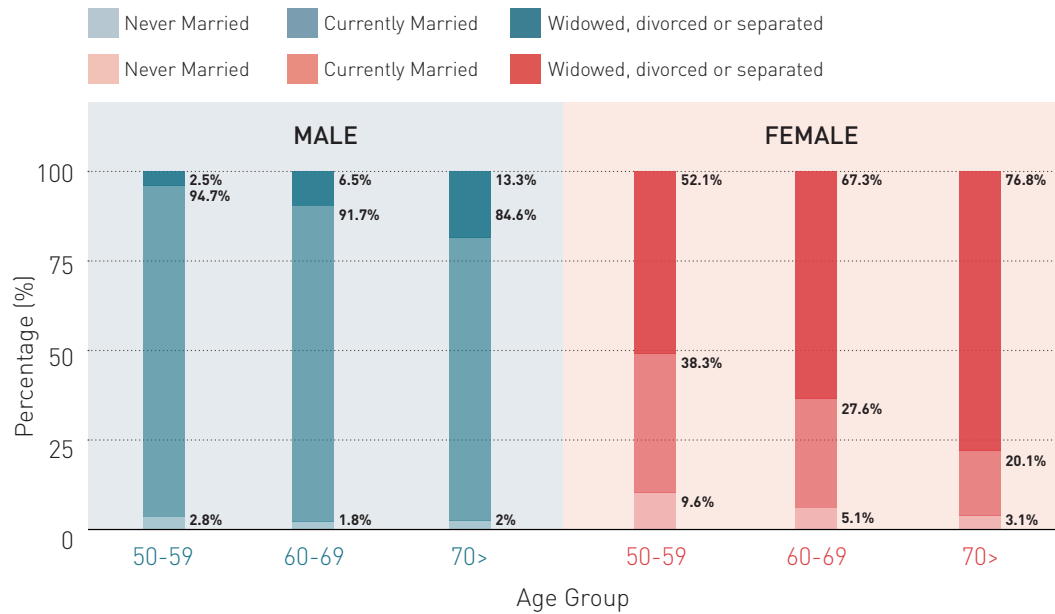
household will have a direct effect on the financial security of older women especially among households headed by women. With many members to support, the households may have to allocate financial resources to meet present needs instead of saving for old age.

4.3 Household Headship

The 2010 Census data revealed that 15.6% of households in Malaysia were headed by women and 38.1% of all households headed by women were living with elderly members. There were 67.3% women household heads aged 60-69; 76.8% aged 70 and older were widowed, divorced or separated. As cases

for divorce continue to rise, more women have to become head of the household and assume responsibilities for its economic survival. The likelihood of remarriage among divorced or widowed women has been low as they tend to continue being the household head till old age. As single mothers or heads of household, women have to bear all responsibilities including sole responsibility for raising the children. Divorce often leads to a decline in available resources that can affect their future life such as loss of wealth and loss of income. UNDP (2012) concluded that single mothers in Malaysia, especially those aged 40 years and above, often have very minimal savings and often face great difficulties entering or

Fig. 3.3: Marital Status of Household Head Age 50 and Older by Sex, 2010 (%)



Source: Authors' calculations using the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia.

re-entering the workforce — this eventually has an impact on their financial security in old age.

4.4 Education

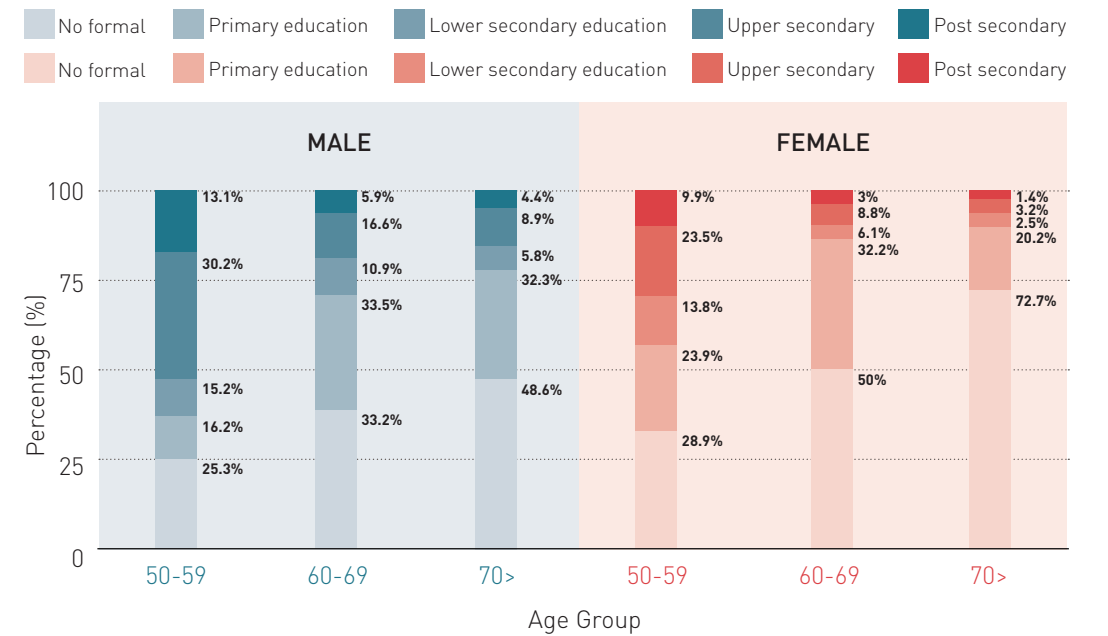
Figure 3.4 shows educational attainment by age group and sex and 2010. A higher percentage of older women had no formal education compared to men. The percentage of women with secondary or post-secondary education was also much lower compared to men. Although the rate of school enrolment has increased since Malaysia gained independence in 1957, data showed that almost 27% of women aged 50 and older were illiterate compared to only 9% of men. The educational attainment of the group below 50-59 years old was much better. Compared to females aged 60 years and over, a higher proportion of females aged 50-59 had completed secondary and

post-secondary education. The lack or low levels of education limits access to productive activities and eventually can lead to financial insecurity in old age.

4.5 Employment

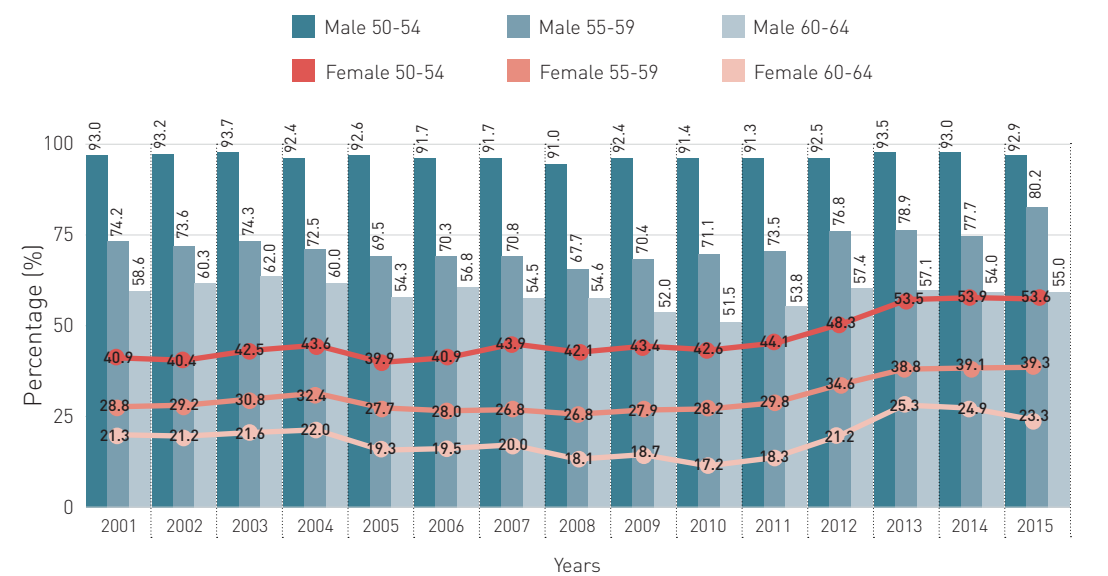
This section will highlight women's labour-force participation rate using official Department of Statistics data. Figure 3.5 shows trends in labour-force participation from 2001 to 2015 by sex for age group 50-64. Labour-force participation rate among females across age groups has been low compared to males. It also declined with age — the lowest was among females aged 60-64. More than half of older men and women were out of the labour force. With the mandatory retirement age, the majority of those in the formal sector are forced to retire. Figure 3.5 shows that from 2010 onwards the labour force

Fig. 3.4: Highest Educational Attainment by Age Group and Sex, 2010 (%)



Source: Department of Statistics. 2013. Population and Housing Census 2010.

Fig. 3.5: Labour-Force Participation Rate Age 50-64 by Sex, 2001-15 (%)



Source: Department of Statistics, "Labour Force Survey Report", various years.

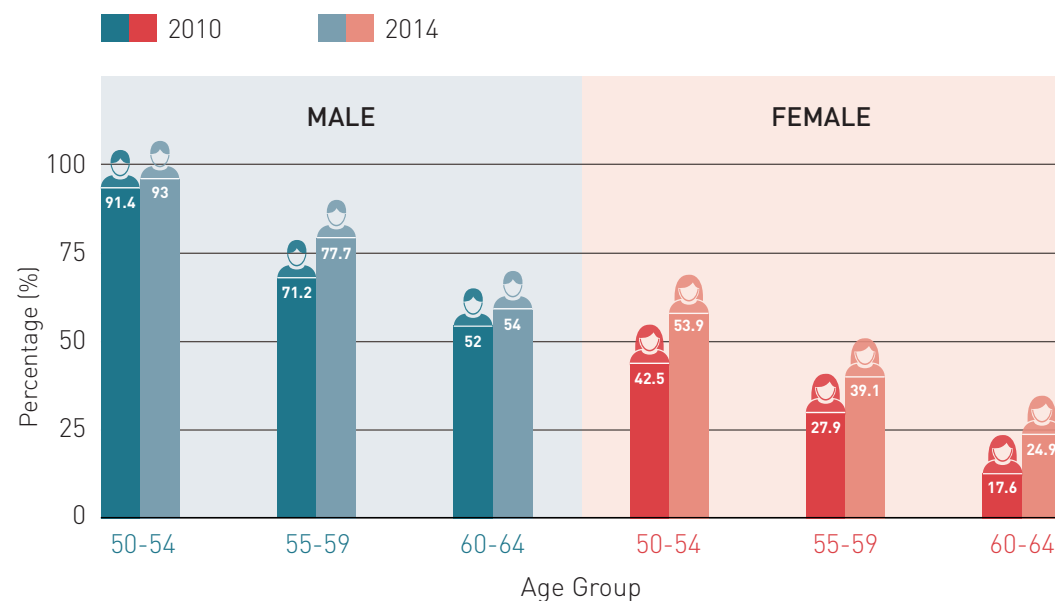
participation rate among women aged 50-55 has risen slightly. By the year 2012, it had crossed the 50% mark. This can be attributed to programmes launched by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development in 2011 to encourage more women to join the workforce. Labour-force participation rate among males has not changed substantially except among the 60-64 year-old group which declined slightly in 2014 in comparison to previous years.

Figure 3.6 shows that among women below 60 years old, more than 60% were outside the labour force. This situation can be expected to continue as they enter old age. Among younger women who work, the majority were self-employed with no social protection. The labour-force rate was much higher in 2014 compared to 2010 for both

men and women but the rate for women was much lower compared to men and the rate declined with increasing age.

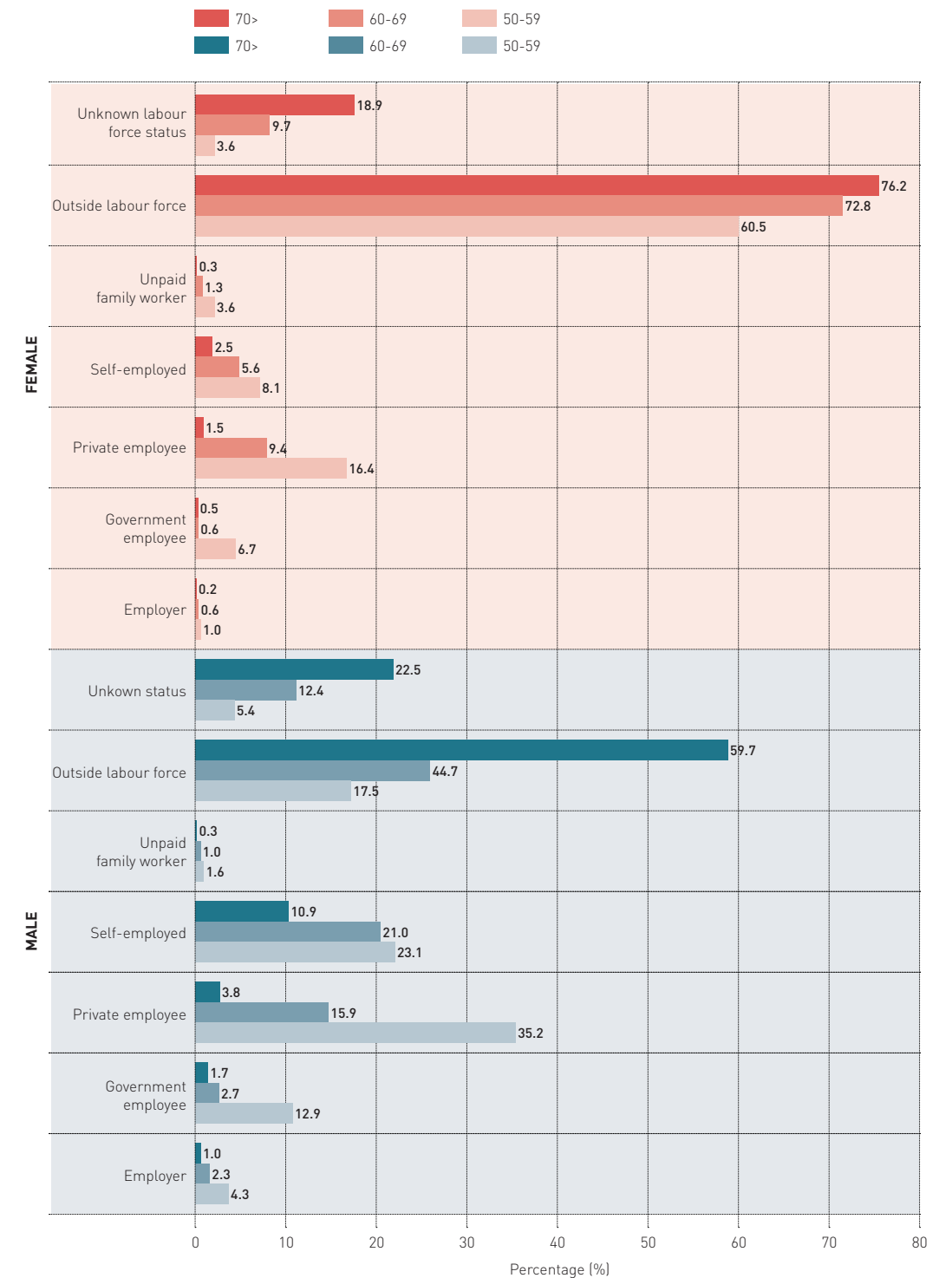
Figure 3.7 shows the labour-force status of men and women age 50 years and older. The figure clearly indicates that the majority of women age 60 and older were outside the labour force as were more than half of women age 50-59. Since they were not in the labour force to begin with when they were younger, it is less likely for them to join the labour force and earn an income in their old age. Women outside of the labour force were full-time housewives and not currently covered by any social protection schemes available in Malaysia. Gratton (1996) indicated that security in old age often relies on intra-familial exchanges. Older persons with limited accumulated financial resources and declining physical

Fig. 3.6: Labour-Force Participation Rate by Age Group and Sex, 2010 and 2013 (%)



Source: Department of Statistics, Labour Force Survey Report, 2010, 2014.

Fig. 3.7: Employment Status by Age Group and Sex, 2010 (%)



Source: Department of Statistics. 2013. Population and Housing Census 2010.

Table 3.2: Prevalence of Cardio Vascular Disease and Other Illnesses by Sex and Age Group, 2015

	Prevalence of Overall Diabetes	Overall Hypertension	Under-weight BMI	Overweight	Muscle wasting	Physically active	Anaemia	Mental Health
Male	16.7	30.8	6.2	35.8	76.7	71.1	14.3	27.6
Female	18.3	29.7	7.3	30.9	83.1	61.7	35.5	30.8
40-44	17.9	32.2	4.4	36.9	0	73.4	25.3	28.1
45-49	22	38.8	2.8	38.4	0	72.4	26.9	27.7
50-54	27	49.3	2.5	41.1	0	72.3	24.4	24.8
55-59	32.9	55.5	1.7	39.7	0	63.3	25.8	24.8
60-64	38.3	65	3.7	37.9	86.1	60.9	30.1	27.4
65-69	38	67.8	4.1	37.9	83.8	57.4	31	19.6
70-74	39.1	75.4	5.8	39.2	76.5	48.1	34.4	28.8
75+	37	73.4	10.9	37.3	66.4	30	48.7	35.2

Source: "National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015", Institute of Public Health, Ministry of Health Malaysia.

Note: Measurement of muscle wasting was only administered to those age 60 and older.

ability to earn income have to rely on children or others to support old age living. Being out of the labour force deprives women of current and future earning opportunities as well as the opportunity to be part of a formal social protection systems such as the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), pensions, or Malaysia's Social Security Organization (SOCSO). Only 29% (2,988,198) of Malaysian women age 15 and older are members of EPF. In 2016 only 32% (150,557) of pension recipients were women. This figure represents an estimated 11% of all women aged 60 and older in Malaysia. In addition, more than two-thirds of poor households have a head working in the informal sector. Other groups experiencing higher than average poverty rates are households headed by housewives or unemployed persons and unpaid family workers.

4.6 Health

This chapter extracted data from the 2015 National Health and Morbidity Survey Ministry of Health (2015) to discuss the prevalence of chronic diseases among older Malaysians. The prevalence across age groups is shown in Table 3.2 although it is not gender disaggregated. The prevalence of hypertension and overweight were higher among males while that of diabetes, muscle wasting and anaemia were higher among females. The prevalence of chronic diseases tended to increase with age indicating the risk as people age. This was also shown in research by Teh, Tey and Ng (2014).

Figure 3.8 shows the prevalence of disability by sex and age group. There was a high prevalence of disability in seeing, listening, walking, remembering among women compared to men. In contrast, there was

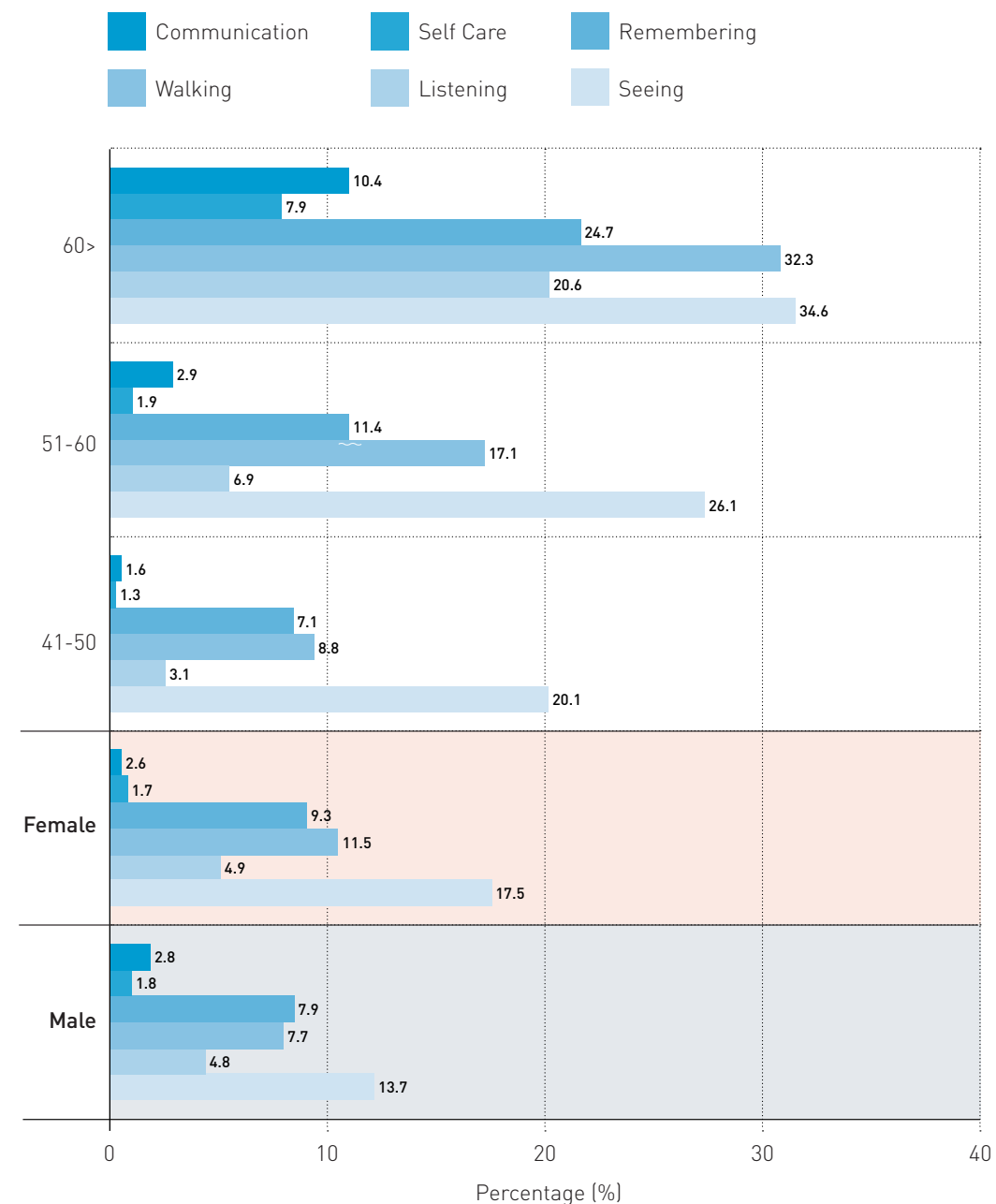


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high disability among men in self-care, and communication. The risk of losing eyesight, hearing, memory and walking was much higher among women and tended to increase with age. With longer life expectancy, women will be more susceptible to disabilities. Females require more healthcare services than men due to childbearing, and certain diseases are more common in women than in men (Sarma & Simpson 2006; Windmeijer & Santos-Silva 1997) and they tend to live alone due to longer life expectancies compared to men (Iceland 2013; Teh et al. 2014).

5. Older Women's Financial Security

Objective measures such as income, expenditure and net worth have been widely used to measure financial security. Net worth calculated by deducting the value of liabilities or loans from value of assets or stock wealth (investment, property,

Fig. 3.8: Prevalence of Disability by Sex and Age Group, 2015 (%)

Source: "National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015", Institute of Public Health, Ministry of Health Malaysia.

gold, etc.) can reflect the value of financial resources available in old age. Those who have financial planning or savings (such as personal savings, Employees Provident Fund, etc) for old age will tend to have some form of financial resources as compared to those who have not had any financial planning. Without assets, older persons will have to rely on earnings from work or transfer income. Older women were more likely than older men to depend on financial support from their spouse and children (Tey et al. 2016) since the majority were not involved in the labour force. Meanwhile, having insurance is also a form of financial security providing protection in case of calamity. This section presents data on income and poverty, savings and insurance, and assets ownership among women in Malaysia.

Poverty line income has been widely used to measure individuals' or household financial security or vulnerability. In line with the Malaysian National Policy for Older Persons, having one's own income provides the elderly with dignity as they do not have to rely on others for money – hence, having some income is crucial. Unfortunately, available data indicates that even for those with income, the majority had incomes below the poverty line. Warren and Britton (2003) did use objective measurement to show that older persons might have less financial security in their later life. Although research focusing on financial aspects of ageing is rather limited (Jarrah & Sharifah 2008; Aizan et al. 2004), it has revealed that the majority of older persons in Malaysia have limited sources of income in old age. Wealth distribution is highly skewed to the youth, particularly those with higher educational attainment, males,

currently working, in good health, with higher wages, smaller family size and married.

5.1 Income and Poverty

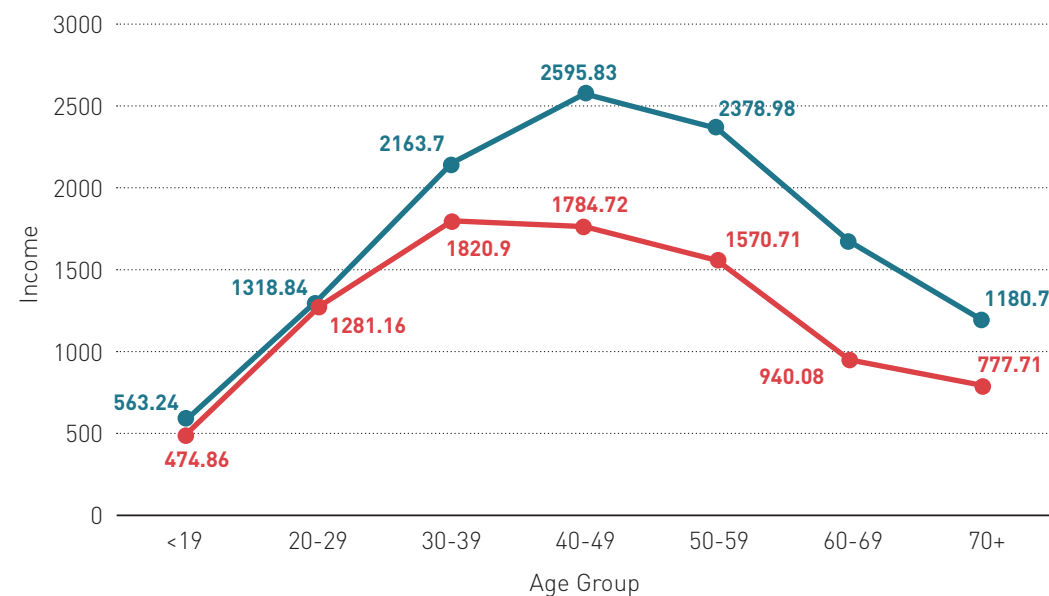
The government's national policy has accorded high priority for poverty eradication. The poverty line has been used on assessments of the minimum consumption requirements of an average sized household for food, shelter, clothing and other non-food needs (Hatta & Isahaque 2013). As such in 2009, households with monthly incomes of less than RM760 in Peninsular Malaysia, less than RM1,050 in Sabah and less than RM910 in Sarawak were defined as poor. Hardcore poverty (half of Poverty Line Income) was reduced from 1.2% in 2004 to 0.7% in 2009 and the incidence of overall poverty fell from 5.7% in 2004 to 3.8% in 2009 (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2011). To date the Poverty Line Income (PLI) has been revised to RM950 for Peninsular Malaysia, RM1170 for Sabah and RM990 for Sarawak. Figure 3.9 shows the percentage of men and women who reported having income, by age group, percentage of individuals receiving income below the poverty line and mean income received using the Household Income Survey 2009. The figure clearly shows that the percentage of men and women receiving income declined with age but the percentage of women receiving income was much lower compared to men. Within the age group of 40-49, almost all men reported having income compared to only 46% among women and the percentage declined with increasing age. The lower percentage of women receiving income is a reflection of the lower labour force participation rate among women in Malaysia.

The mean income received by women was much lower compared to that of men. Looking at the poverty rate by different cohorts, the 2009 data revealed that the poverty rate (those receiving income) among older men was much higher compared to women but the mean income received by women was much lower compared to

men. Men tended to lose their employment income upon reaching 60 while women continue to enjoy whatever income they receive especially remittance from children.

Poverty rates reported above were measured using income. The Household Income Survey 2009 revealed that there were people

Fig. 3.9: Percentage Receiving Income, Poverty Rate and Mean Income by Age Groups and Sex, 2009



Age & Gender Group	<19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70>
Male with Income	3.4%	75.3%	96.1%	97.7%	95.1%	87.4%	74.5%
Female with Income	2.2%	52.7%	52.9%	46.2%	39.5%	34.9%	34.4%
Male (poor)	2.7%	25.7%	14.5%	11.2%	14.3%	21.6%	30.9%
Female (poor)	1.9%	19.8%	14.8%	16.6%	16.7%	19.7%	23.7%
Male (Mean)	563.24	1318.84	2163.70	2595.83	2378.98	1670.94	1180.70
Female (Mean)	474.86	1281.16	1820.90	1784.72	1570.71	940.08	777.71

Source: Department of Statistics 2009. Malaysia — Household Income and Basic Amenities Survey.

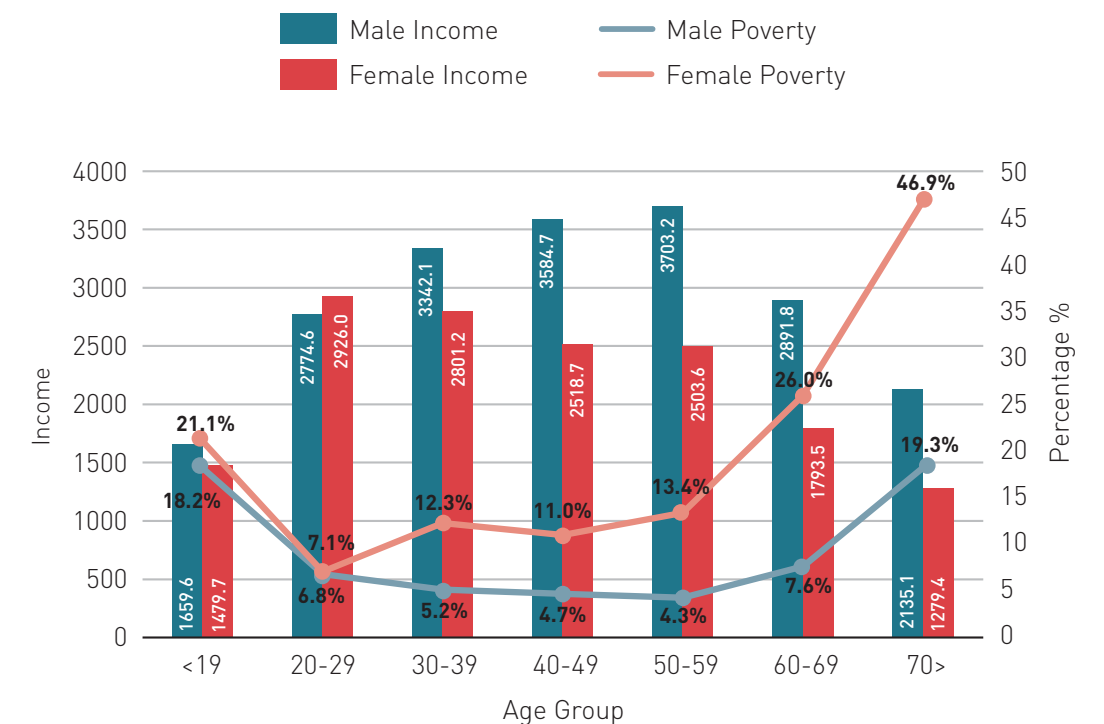
with no income who are in a worse state than those with income below the poverty line. Having one's own income is critical, especially among older persons, to be financially independent and live in dignity. Women who never work have to rely on others financially. Out of 6,652 older women who co-resided with their children, 83.5% reported having no income. Among women with income the main source was in the form of transfer income.

Figure 3.10 shows mean household income and poverty rate according to age group and sex of head of household. The figure clearly shows that the poverty rate among households headed by women increased with age. At the same time, mean income

declined with age. The percentage of households headed by women living in poverty was more than three times the percentage of male headed household. Household headed by women aged 70 and over had the highest rate of poverty compared to other age groups. According to the World Bank (2014) more than 75% of Malaysian poor households were headed by individuals with lower secondary education or below, even though these types of households only account for around 43% of all Malaysian households.

There are numerous poverty eradication programmes undertaken by the Malaysian Government. Under KARISMA 1Malaysia People's Welfare programmes, it uses a

Fig. 3.10: Mean Household Income and Poverty Rate by Household Head, Age Group and Sex, 2009



Source: Department of Statistics 2009. Malaysia — Household Income and Basic Amenities Survey.

combination of household income test and priority social categories (single mothers, people with disabilities, poor older persons). Since the majority of older women co-reside with their children, they also benefit from many other poverty eradication programmes implemented in the country. Unfortunately, there is no available data to show the extent of their impacts on women.

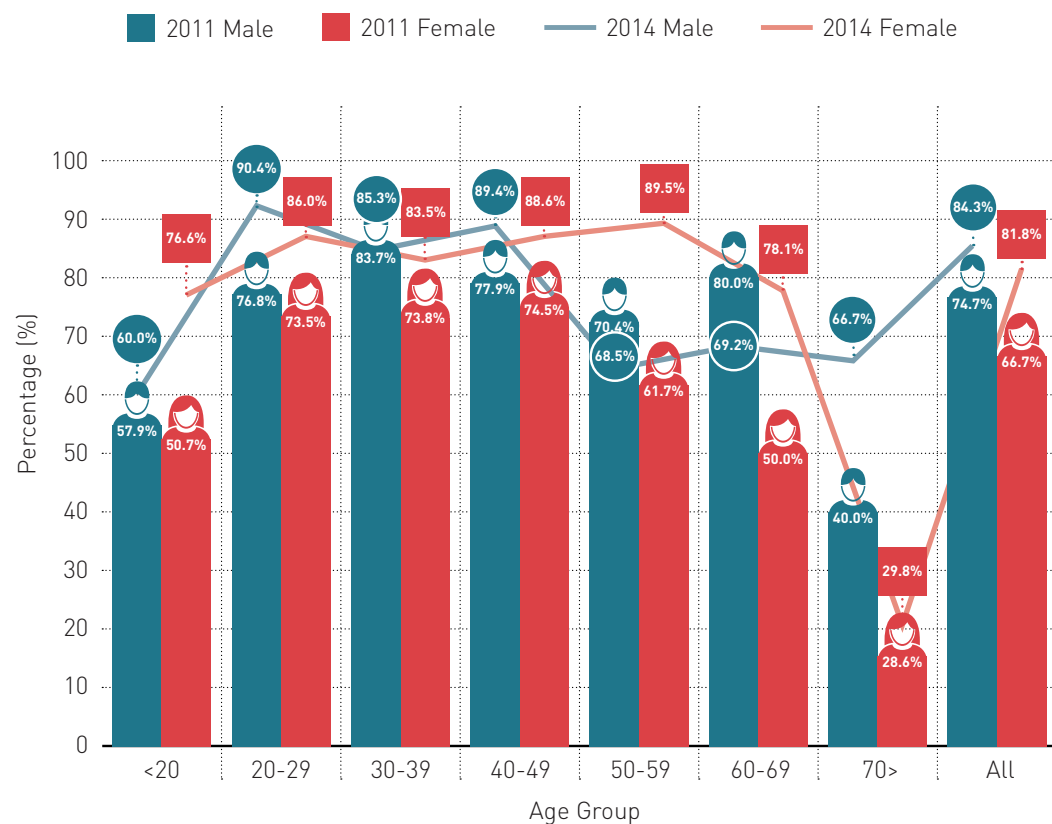
5.2 Savings and Assets

This section presents available data on savings and assets derived from several data sets accessible to the researchers. Data used are from the Global Financial

Inclusion (Global Findex) Database, Citi-UPM Financial Empowerment for Mature Women (Citi-UPM) and Older Persons as Consumers Research (OPASCON) collected in 2016. The Citi-UPM data were collected among mature women participants in the programme implemented by the Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing (MyAgeing). In micro studies such as Citi-UPM and OPASCON, savings were used in general terms and asset ownership was also considered as an asset.

Savings in the form of cash, investment or assets are prime means by which older Malaysians can have a good quality of life

Fig. 3.11: Percentage Respondents with Account at a Financial Institution by Sex, 2011 and 2014



Source: World Bank. 2017. The Global Findex Database 2017. <https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>

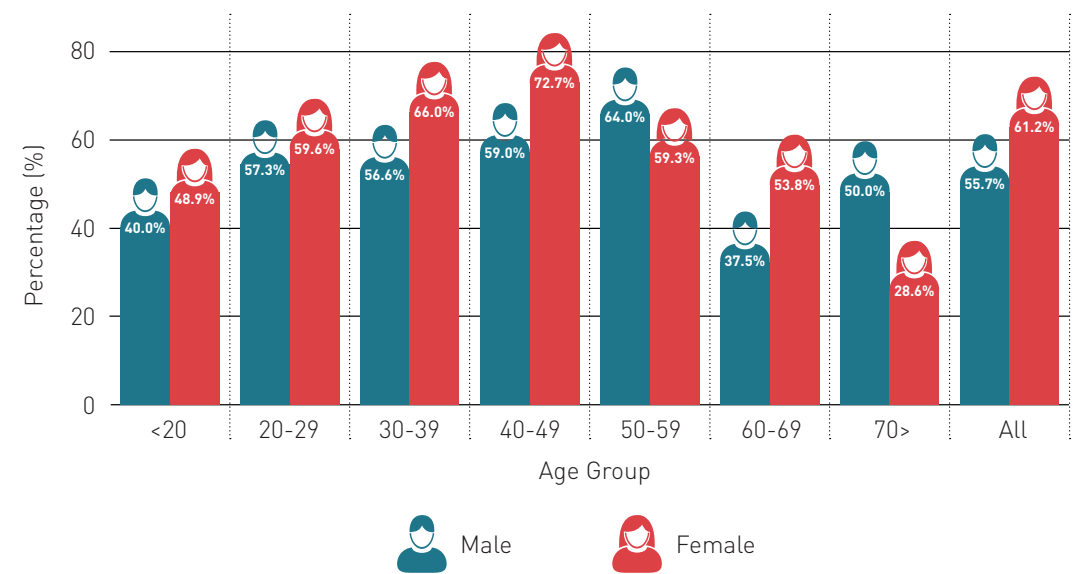
and economic sufficiency for the remainder of life. It enables older individuals to manage financial emergencies and reduce the risk of having inadequate resources to sustain themselves through old age (Haron et al. 2013).

The Global Financial Inclusion (Global Findex) database revealed that more than half of male and female Malaysians have an account with a financial institution especially among the younger age group and among men (Figure 3.11). Figures also show that the percentage of male respondents with an account at a financial institution was higher compared to females for all age groups. The percentage of both male and female respondents with an account increased significantly in 2014 compared to 2011. The availability of financial institutions in most of the small towns made it accessible for people to open an account. However, this

does not guarantee they have the money to save in the bank. A study conducted in 2004 revealed that more than half of older Malays did not have savings (Sharifah Azizah et al. 2012). Delafrooz and Paim (2011) in their study on savings behaviour concluded that financial literacy, income, and marital status were found to be the most influential predictors of saving behaviour but the study did not reveal the percentage of respondents with savings. Figure 3.12 shows the percentage of respondents who saved for old age in the last 12 months of the study duration by age group. The proportion of females who saved was slightly higher compared to males except among age group of 50-59 and 70>.

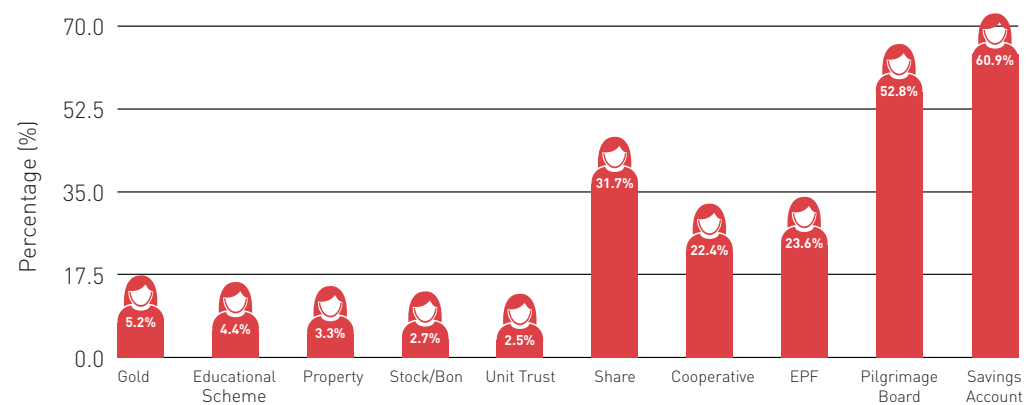
Data collected among 1,067 participants of Citi-UPM women (age 40 and older) revealed that only 10% indicated they had no savings; 11% saved regularly; and the rest had some

Fig. 3.12: Percentage Respondents who Saved in Last 12 Months for Old Age, 2014



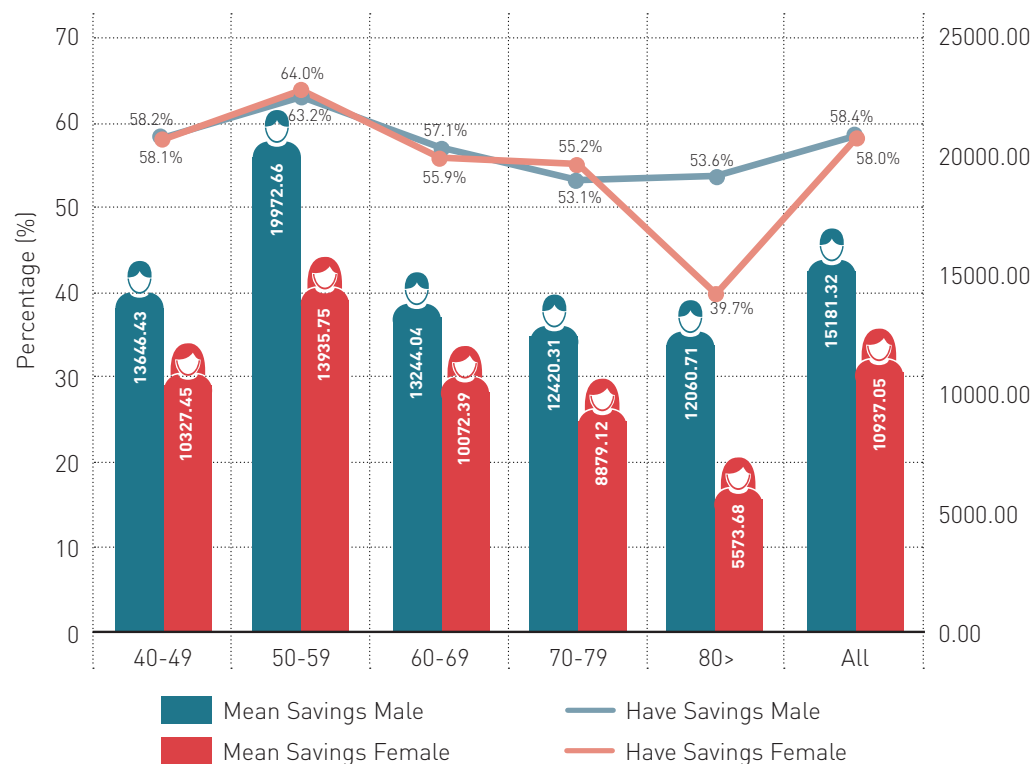
Source: The Global Financial Inclusion (Global Findex) Database, World Bank. <https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>

Fig. 3.13: Percentage of Women with Savings in Various Institutions, 2017



Source: Aizan H., M. Jariah, A. Siti Farra and E. Zatul. 2017. Citi-UPM Financial Empowerment for Mature Women Report. Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing, UPM.

Fig. 3.14: Percentage with Savings and Mean Amount of Savings by Age Group and Sex



Source: Jariah, M., Sharifah Azizah H., Zumilah Z., Syuhaily O. and Farra Zilla A. (2016) Consumer Behavior and Income Adequacy Among Elderly Consumers, 2016. Research funded by Ministry of Domestic trade, Cooperatives and Consumer Affairs Malaysia.

form of savings when they had extra money. The majority (89%) saved their money in a financial institution. Data also showed that 61% had savings in a bank, 53% had savings in the Pilgrimage Board; 32% in the form of unit trusts; 24% in the Employee Provident Fund; and 22% in cooperatives (Figure 3.13). Half of all working women had three or more types of account while the rest had one or two account. Almost all Malays have a savings account with the Pilgrimage Board and those working full time will have Employee Provident Fund (EPF) savings. How much EPF they have depends on their basic salary. Government programmes to encourage savings through unit trusts are also reflected in the study. About one third of women in the study have savings in the form of unit trusts. The majority of those without savings were full-time homemakers who have no sources of income and are potentially financially vulnerable in old age.

The OPASCON study conducted among 4,428 respondents aged 40 and older throughout Malaysia revealed that 58% of all respondents indicated they have savings. Though the percentage of females with savings was almost equal except for age group 80 and older, the mean savings for female at all age groups was much lower compared to that of men. (Figure 3.14). Data from the same study also revealed that about one third of male and female respondents own land and more than half own a house. As for women, 31% indicated they own gold jewellery which can be converted into cash.

5.3 Protection: Insurance

Insurance or takaful (Islamic Insurance) is one way to protect oneself and family members from various risks such as loss

of income, health, property damage and liability which may bring financial burden to individuals of family. The penetration rate of life insurance remains low and Malaysia remains a large untapped life insurance market.

While socio-demographic factors are important determinants of life insurance demand, wealth and education levels are associated with purchase likelihood and amount of life insurance premiums purchased across ethnic groups. Household size, regional location, strata, and occupation type are associated with life insurance demand within certain ethnic groups only (Tan et al. 2014). Though services have been in the market for many years, the percentage of those with insurance is still low despite a general increase in earning power. Data collected among 4,428 consumers age 50 and older throughout Malaysia shows that there were only 13% female and 18% male respondents with life insurance; less than 15% for both male and female respondents had health insurance; and less than 10% had education and property insurance. Data collected among 1,064 mature women (40+) who participated in Citi-UPM Financial Empowerment for Mature Women showed that 38.6% had health insurance, 34.6% had life insurance, 20.3% had property insurance and 16.3% had education insurance. As good healthcare services are accessible to all in Malaysia, the majority of people do not see the need to have health insurance since they can avail themselves of such services at minimal fees.

As for public service employees, the healthcare services they enjoy are also extended to family members. As such, paying for health insurance is not a priority to many people even if they can afford it. The

low percentage of male respondents with life insurance has an implication to women who are full-time homemakers since they are not protected against the loss of the breadwinner's income in case of death or major illness.

5.4 Expenditure

There is no available data for researchers to examine whether women have sufficient financial and non-financial resources to cover the costs of living, including healthcare, or in other words, to maintain a basic standard of living. Since data on expenditure was collected based on households, the analysis of mean expenditure of household head by sex may be able to provide some insight into this issue. Table 3.3 shows mean expenditure for three main expense categories — food, health and transport — by poverty status and sex of household head for 2014. Poverty status was

determined using data from the Poverty Line Income Economic Planning Unit (RM950 for Peninsular Malaysia, RM1,170 for Sabah and RM990 for Sarawak). In general, the mean expenditure for households headed by women was much lower compared to men. Younger age groups tended to report higher expenditure compared to older groups for food and transport. As for health expenditure, the older age group spent more than the younger group on average and female headed households tended to spend less on health compared to male headed household.

5.5 Access to Credit

Access to credit can enable women to obtain initial capital to start income-generating activities especially among poor women. Mokhtar & Ashhari (2015) in their article summarised that there are three large micro finance institutions in

Malaysia namely Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM), Yayasan Usaha Maju (YUM) and the National Entrepreneur Group Economic Fund (TEKUN Nasional). AIM and YUM are poverty-oriented institutions that give microcredit loans only to people who live at, or below, the country's poverty line. TEKUN provides microcredit loans to people with poor and below average incomes. AIM and TEKUN provide microcredit services throughout Malaysia (Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak). Yayasan Usaha Maju (YUM) focuses on providing microcredit loans to the poor of Sabah. Each of these microfinance institutions has its own lending system and has been subsidised by the government since their existence. Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM), which replicated the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, was established in 1987 to expedite the government's effort to eradicate poverty.

AIM provides microcredit to the very poor households (the majority in the rural areas) identified through a three-stage process: (i) deriving district-based estimates of household income based on data of the Statistics Department; (ii) conducting 'house indexing' to identify the degree and density of poverty to prepare a preliminary listing of the estimated number of poor households based on the crude housing index; and (iii) conducting a means test to further analyse income and poverty status. Currently, those with a household income below RM3,050 are eligible to apply for financing. In addition to micro finance, AIM also provides an avenue for compulsory savings/group, welfare and well-being funds (voluntary) and Economic Development funds. AIM not only offers financial products and services, but also a wide range of services including financial education, entrepreneurship training, value chain support and social services.

In 2007 Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia had reached out to 82% of poor households (257,000 households) and 69.4% of these households received micro credit. Micro credit decreases the level of economic vulnerability among hardcore poor households a majority of women in Peninsular Malaysia (Abdullah et al. 2014). Data published in Amanah Ikhtiar's website revealed that in 2017 AIM had 396,923 members, mostly women. To date, AIM has special micro credit schemes for the elderly known as "i emas" (i gold) with a maximum loan of RM2,000. It is AIM's goal to expand its outreach to the remaining hardcore poor. However, the existing members are growing old and likely to be vulnerable to poverty due to the nature of their income generating projects.

6. Financial Protection of Older Women

Malaysia has yet to develop a comprehensive social protection system. Analysing existing social protection for women using the World Bank's framework for social protection, it can be concluded that many women are not covered by the existing social protection programme. Table 3.4 shows the five pillars of social protection in Malaysia and an analysis of how older women have benefited from such a scheme. Labour-force participation of Malaysian women in 2014 was 51% of which 25% worked as own account workers and unpaid family workers (DOS, Labour Force Survey 2015). Only about 35% of all women aged 15-64 in Malaysia had some form of social security either in the form of a pension or EPF (Pillars 1 and 2). The rest of the women are under Pillar 0 (social assistance) or Pillar 5 (informal and/ or personal assets).

Table 3.3: Mean Monthly Expenditure on Food, Health and Transportation by Poverty Status and Age Group, 2014

		Food		Health		Transport	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Poverty	Poor	276.02	273.49	15.80	13.38	51.01	28.43
	Non poor	713.85	608.17	55.14	54.89	518.71	351.46
Age group	40-49	708.84	630.87	47.95	49.38	520.66	384.54
	50-59	737.44	648.23	55.53	50.84	567.31	405.20
	60-69	684.52	503.02	64.07	53.89	452.29	256.81
	70>	609.93	433.90	71.25	62.43	318.97	101.29
All		708.69	588.00	54.68	52.38	513.19	331.98

Source: Department of Statistics 2014. Report on Household Expenditure.

Table 3.4: The Five Pillars of Social Protection in Malaysia

Pillar	Name of Programme Institution	Benefit Type	Financing Type	Older Women Beneficiary**
Pillar 0: Basic benefits through social pensions or at least social assistance	Cash benefits (BOT)	Cash benefit of RM300/ month	General revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~ 85,000+ women recipients
	Retirement homes	In-kind benefit		
	Elder daycare centres	In kind benefit		
	BR1M	Cash		
Pillar 1: Mandated, unfunded, defined benefit or contribution schemes	Civil Service Pension Fund	Old-age, disability, survivorship	General revenue Employer contribution;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150,000+ (Estimated 11% of women age 60+) • 2,2001 women beneficiaries
	SOCSO	Work injury, disability, survivorship	Employer and employee contribution	
Pillar 2: Mandated, fully funded, occupational or personal schemes	LTAT (armed forces)	All benefits Lump-sum/phased withdrawal	Employer and employee contribution;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (No available data) • 2,988,198 women members (29% of women age 15+)
	EPF (private sector)		Employer and employee contribution Voluntary contribution by self-employed	
Pillar 3: Voluntary, fully funded, occupational or personal schemes	PRS: Private Retirement Scheme	Lump sum, (fixed term) annuity	Voluntary premium, tax incentives RM 3,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13,725 subscribers (2013)
Pillar 4: Access to informal and other formal provisions, and personal assets	Family	Cash and in kind benefits	Family members, budget-financed, budget support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2002-79% received money from children • 2016-58% received money from children • Public health services
	Basic health care Public housing			

Source: Holzmann, R. and R. Hinz. 2004. *Old Age Income Support in the 21st Century: The World Bank's Perspective on Pension Systems and Reform*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Notes: ** author's own calculation and estimation.

Pillar 1: Defined Benefit

This pillar refers to the mandated, unfunded, defined benefit or contribution schemes which mainly cover public sector employees under the Civil Service Pension scheme provided by the government. It is a defined benefit which starts once a civil servant retires, at age 60, the same retirement age as those working in the private sector (Khalid 2016). As of July 2016, the total number of individuals who received a civil service pension was 627,295. Out of these, 74% were former public servants and the rest were surviving spouses and children of pensionable officers (PSD 2016). Government workers received a pension and the surviving spouse receives a derivative pension. In 2016, there were slightly (Khalid 2014) more than 150,000 women who received a government pension, of whom about 11% are women aged 60 and older.

Pillar 2: Mandated, Fully Funded

The Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) is the key social protection scheme in Malaysia for private sector employees. The Armed Forces Fund Board (LTAT) scheme caters to the armed forces. EPF is compulsory for those working with employers with more than five employees. According to the 2015 EPF report, there were 2,988,198 active female EPF members and they comprised almost 44% of all EPF members. Male members on average had more savings than female participants in 2015. Active male members at age 54 had an average savings of RM 214,910.61 while females at age 54 had average savings of RM 162,295.51 (EPF 2015). This retirement saving scheme's objective is to provide social security protection for old age retirement and during unforeseen occurrences such as death or

incapacity. As an increasing number of Malaysian employees make pre-retirement withdrawals, it is likely that they will face difficulties sustaining their finances in old age. Women, in particular, will face a higher risk of poverty during old age regardless of their level of education compared to men. An EPF study in 2003 found that the majority of retirees surveyed depleted their entire EPF savings upon retirement within three to five years (Yusuf et al. 2014).

Pillar 3: Voluntary Pension Plan

Two main plans are available under this pillar: the Malaysia Retirement Savings Scheme introduced in 2010 and the Private Retirement Scheme introduced in 2012. The 1Malaysia Retirement Savings Scheme is for the self-employed and informal sector employees who are self-employed and for those without a fixed monthly income. The Private Retirement Scheme is a voluntary long-term investment established to complement small EPF savings among the low income group. This scheme is designed to help salaried workers who are also EPF contributors and the self-employed to accumulate savings for retirement. Unfortunately, no data was available to show the extent of women's subscriptions on these schemes.

The Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia provides social protection to its Sahabats through a social welfare fund known as Tabung Kebajikan dan Kesejahteraan Sahabat (Welfare and Well-Being Fund). Established in 2006, the fund was created to support borrowers who are facing financial difficulties due to death, accidents, illnesses, chronic diseases or unexpected losses due to natural disasters. Sahabats voluntarily contribute RM2 a month while AIM contributes RM500,000

yearly to this fund, which can be drawn on in times of need. In March 2017, for example, AIM channelled a total of RM111.02 million for various calamities such as death, hospitalization, housing, natural disaster as well as project failure.

Pillar 4: Informal Support

Holzman and Hinz (2004) defined the fourth pillar as informal support; other formal social programmes like healthcare or housing and other individual assets such as home ownership and reverse mortgages serve as sources of income for the elderly. Older Malaysians rely heavily on remittances from children to support their old age living. Culturally, children are expected to provide support for their elderly parents. A study conducted in 2016 among 624 older persons throughout Malaysia revealed that 58% of older women compared to 54% of older men received income from their children (Aizan et al. 2016). In another study conducted among 2,327 older persons in 2004 throughout Malaysia, 79% of respondents reported receiving money from their children (Hamid and Masud 2010). A study conducted in 2016 among 1,077 respondents age 50 and older revealed that 47% of male respondents and 53% of female respondents received money from their children (Aizan et al. 2016). The majority of women have to rely on others for their old age and there is enough evidence that adult daughters are more likely than sons to provide support for their older parents or parents-in-law (Chesley & Poppie 2009; Sarkisian & Gerstel 2004). In addition to financial support, ageing parents also co-reside with adult children. A study in 2015 conducted among 2,321 older persons in Selangor revealed that 65.8% of elderly co-reside with children (Masud & Hamid 2017) who take full responsibility in

caring for their elderly parents. A residual concept of social welfare means that the economically disadvantaged older Malaysians are expected to seek assistance through private means before turning to state aid. Government initiatives have reinforced the role and responsibilities of the family unit via income tax relief and deductions (for the medical expenses of parents), extension of civil service medical benefits to parents and virtually free public health access, conditional cash transfer programmes and federal-funded old folks homes only for the elderly without dependents (Aizan and Chai 2013).

Pillar 0: Social Pensions or Social Assistance

The Malaysian Government provides benefits, both in kind and in cash, for the elderly through the ministries and departments led by the Department of Social Welfare, under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. Existing social assistance schemes, the Bantuan Orang Tua (BOT) (Financial assistance for elderly), Zakat and 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) are means-tested. The BOT benefited 142,032 poor elderly recipients in 2014, an increase of almost 18% compared to 2010 (Department of Social Welfare 2015). Women comprised more than 60% of all BOT recipients. This figure represents 5.5% of the total population age 60 and older in 2014. In 2016, a total of 133,352 older persons received RM300 in financial assistance through the BOT. The Department of Welfare also provided a welfare home (Rumah Sri Kenangan) for older persons with no existing relatives. In addition to direct financial assistance to the elderly, the government implements various poverty eradication programmes.

Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) introduced in 2011 is a subsidy mechanism providing direct cash assistance to a group of targeted poor with household monthly incomes of less than RM3,000 (BR1M Performance Management & Delivery Unit 2012). One-off assistance of RM500 was distributed in 2011. Subsequently the, BR1M value was increased. In 2017, a total of 6,320,769 received BR1M. Data showed 3,242,048 households (with incomes less than RM3,000) received RM1,200; 291,918 households (with income RM3,001 to RM4,000) received RM900; and 2,786,803 individuals (with income less than RM2,000) received RM450. Age and gender disaggregated data are unavailable.

Older women in Malaysia particularly those outside the labour force will remain financially insecure in old age due to the lack of comprehensive social protection, shrinking family size, rural-urban migration, increasing cost of living and low labour force participation rate.

7. Factors that Lead to Financial Insecurity/Poverty of Older Women

The 'feminisation' of poverty in old age, which takes different forms in developed compared to developing countries, is likely to occur as a result of the combined effects of behavioural or life-course differences between men and women on the one hand, and institutional features of a modern pension (social protection) systems on the other (Arifin 2009). Across the developed world, women are more likely than men to experience lower levels of financial security in old age as a result of earlier life events;

the way their work, care and life patterns interact with the entitlement rules of pension systems (Ginn et al. 2001).

The Census 2010 data clearly shows that women in Malaysia, particularly older women, had a low level of education; the majority were tied down with traditional roles as homemakers since young; and they were involved in low paying jobs or in the informal sector. With a social protection system heavily focused on the formal sector, those in the informal sector were unable to participate. Women's vulnerability to poverty over the life course has been exacerbated by the lack of a comprehensive social protection system that takes into account those not in the labour force which at the outset, already limits their opportunities to be actively and effectively involved in income generation.

Changing family living patterns due to a growing rate of divorce (Rahman et al. 2017) contributed to increasing poverty among women. Marital breakups left women to care for their children and survive with whatever they have. The Fifth Malaysian Population and Family Survey indicated that among women respondents only 84.7% were currently married while 6.3% were widowed and 9% were divorced (NPFDB 2016). Married women, particularly full-time homemakers, are at risk of suffering a severe decline in their living standard if they become widowed or divorced which can continue through old age.

The decline in fertility rates, alongside such processes as modernisation and urbanisation, has resulted in changes in the level and nature of family support available to older people in later life (Vlachantoni 2012). With longer life expectancy and late

marriage, older persons are continuing the role as household head. In 2014, 35% of households were headed by older persons (58% male and 13% female). Households headed by older persons also have higher vulnerability rates on average. The finding is of particular concern given the ageing of the Malaysian population and what is essentially a partial coverage of the pension/EPF system (Holzmann 2014). With fewer children, potential financial sources for women also declined. The percentage of elderly parents receiving money from children declined from 79% in 2004 to 50% in 2008. The mean amount received was higher in 2008 (RM387 per month) compared to RM229 per month in 2004 (Hamid & Masud 2010).

The cost of health is one of the main concerns with population ageing. Older persons are heavy users of health services as they are more prone to health problems, both non-communicable and chronic diseases. A study in 2014 found that older women's demand for physician's services depended on income or living arrangements (Abdullah et al. 2014). Malaysia has one of the more efficient public health services in the Asia Pacific after Singapore and in 2013, 4% of GDP was spent on health. Health programmes for older persons started in 1997 and as of today, nine hospitals have geriatric wards (Ministry of Health 2015). The 2008 National Health Policy for Older Persons was to ensure integrated and efficient delivery of healthcare services for the elderly. Public healthcare services are still affordable to the older persons. The availability of affordable healthcare service is reflected in the recent household income survey. On average, Malaysians spent 1.6% of total expenditure on medical costs in 2014 (Department of Statistics 2015).

Despite availability of services, some women were not able to access healthcare due to lack of transportation, cultural beliefs or financial constraints. A study conducted by Lim, Sivasampu and Fatimah Mahmud (2016) found that while there was equity in access to healthcare among rural residents, there was inequity in unmet needs. The increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as hypertension and diabetes among younger age groups means that more people will grow old with NCDs (National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015). Living longer with limited or no money as well as having fewer children to rely on can be detrimental to older women who are expected to continue their caring role through old age. The rising cost of living can pose a greater challenge to older persons, in general and women, in particular. Although there is no published data on expenditure by age group, the Household Expenditure survey in 2014 revealed that mean household expenditure in 2009/2010 was RM2,190 and mean expenditure in 2014 was RM3,578 (Department of Statistics 2015), an increase of 63% within 5 years. Such an increase in the cost of living will definitely impact women who have limited financial resources.

It is not possible to pinpoint specific factors contributing to the financial security/insecurity of older women since the factors are interrelated. Available data showed that lack of access to productive resources in the early years will continue through old age and impact the financial security of women. Traditional gender role expectations and lack of available support systems often mean that women assume responsibility to care for the family and do not join the labour force.

8. Policy Recommendations

The situation of older women in Malaysia today and in the future will depend on life style and the ability to accumulate financial resources at a younger age. Policies should focus on:

8.1. Expansion of Social Protection

The Malaysian Government is in the process of developing a social protection scheme for the country — social protection for older women is part of the agenda. The Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing (MyAgeing) has shared research findings with relevant authorities to take into account the different needs of elderly Malaysians including older women. Several relevant policies are in place but implementation and monitoring are yet to be fully operational.

8.2. Review of Existing National Plans and Policies for Women from a Gender and Age Perspective

Three key policies can be enhanced to address financial security of older women. The National Policy for the Elderly established in 1995 and reviewed in 2011, the National Policy for Women established in 1985 and the National Family Policy 2010. The plan of action for the National Policy for the Elderly was reviewed in 2016 and 2017 and a special focus on older women was integrated into the plan to address the financial security of older women. The challenge now is the implementation of the plan of action. The National Policy for Women has a special focus on economic empowerment among women of all ages and if implemented effectively, will help address financial insecurity in old age. The National Family Policy provides guidance and reminds all stakeholders involved

in the national development process to mainstream the family perspective in legislations, policies, procedures, regulations and overall development programmes to ensure the development of quality human capital imbued with exemplary values.

8.3 Support for Younger Women together with Recognition of Women's Caregiving Responsibilities

Efforts should be intensified to increase women's participation in the labour force by providing flexible working arrangements and affordable support services (nursery, child care, after-school care and elderly care) to enable women to work. However, since the majority of women are not involved in the labour force due to family responsibilities, efforts to increase women's labour-force participation should be complemented by recognition of women's domestic roles. To enable financial security in old age, the government should provide some income provision in old age to this group of women through special pension programmes. Women's contribution in the domestic sphere needs to be acknowledged and compensated at least in the form of income support programmes in old age. Provisions for the husband to contribute to the EPF for his wife have been in place but very few husbands have so far made the contribution. Husbands should be encouraged to contribute for their wife and the government should provide some incentives for husbands to make the contributions.

8.4 Changing Cultural Stereotypes

Education is the key factor in addressing poverty. Heavy investments in the



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educational system have enabled Malaysia to succeed in poverty eradication. Malaysian women have succeeded in improving their educational attainment but cultural ideology has not changed. Gender sensitisation and awareness have to be revisited and given a stronger push since Malaysia lags behind in addressing gender issues as compared to the neighbouring countries. Despite advancements in various aspects of development, socio-cultural bias, ageism and gender stereotypes have persisted. Both men and women, boys and girls need to be made more sensitive to the issues of an ageing population and gender stereotypes. How older persons and gender stereotypes are being portrayed in the school systems need to be explored to address this. Financial socialization must be emphasised at an early age to enhance financial capability and enable children to grow up with the right financial values, knowledge and skills.

In general, Malaysia needs champions who have the political will to make drastic changes to address the population ageing

issues including the financial security of older women. In general, Malaysians rely on the government to provide financial support for older persons. There is a need to strengthen volunteerism, non-governmental organisations and civil society groups to enable them to play more effective roles in addressing financial security among older women.

9. Data Limitations and Areas for Further Research

Gender disaggregated data at macro level are available and specific data on older women are accessible. But these are general data and limit researchers' ability to have a better understanding of the dynamic of older women's lives especially when the majority are living with their children or co-residing. The ageing population is heterogeneous; hence research focusing on specific groups of elderly is necessary to enable a better understanding of issues and challenges faced by older women. Since data available from the Department of Statistics is household data focusing on head of household, in order to determine their level of financial security/insecurity, there is an urgent need to do specific studies on older women especially among those co-residing with their children and those living alone. Those co-residing with their children may be vulnerable if the family is living in poverty. Those living alone — they are likely to be the most vulnerable — also face the risk of poverty.

10. Conclusions

Malaysia is still struggling to put in place programmes as it moves closer to achieving

the aged nation status. Data presented shows that older women rely heavily on informal support for their old age. Women are not well covered under the existing social protection programmes. While younger cohorts have better education, the labour force participation rate among women remains low. With a non-changing gender role ideology, women remain responsible for childcare and to a certain extent, elder care. As quality and affordable child and elder care services are unavailable, women will continue to bear caregiving responsibilities which offer no guaranteed

financial protection in old age. With changing lifestyles and an increase in the cost of living, older women can no longer rely on their children. There is a need to gather more evidence on older women to understand their needs and concerns. Further research is needed to examine the issues and challenges faced by elderly and near older women in Malaysia for input into the National Policy for the Elderly plan of action. Integration of all key policies on older persons, women and family can facilitate a cohesive strategy to achieving financial security among older women in Malaysia.

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MYANMAR

CHAPTER 4



MYANMAR

Shagun Gupta and Thomas Opdyke

1. Introduction

Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) is classified as a lower middle-income country,¹ with an estimated 26.1%² of the population currently living in poverty. In terms of human development, Myanmar is considered to have achieved medium levels of human development, ranking 145 out of 188 countries in 2015, with life expectancy (at birth) of 66.1 years, and 9.1 years of expected schooling.³

Since 2011, the country has gradually opened up and undertaken political and economic reforms to better integrate with the international economic system. The medium-term growth projection for Myanmar is currently well-positioned at 6.7% in 2018/19 and 7% in 2019/2020.⁴ However, the country continues to grapple with entrenched poverty and social inequality as barriers to its economic growth and progress. Poverty is concentrated in the rural areas, although migration in recent years has resulted in increased economic pressures on the population living in urban areas.

In terms of demographics, 51.5 million⁵ people were counted as part of the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census. Out of these, approximately 24 million (48.22%) were male and 26 million (51.78%) were female. Between the 1983 Census and 2014 Census, the proportion of older people (defined in the 2014 Census as those in

the 65+ age group) has risen and currently stands at 5.8%⁶ (more than 2 million) of the total population. The elderly (65+) population is projected to rise to 4.4 million by 2020, to 7.7 million by 2035, and to 11.8 million by 2050.⁷ With its median age set to increase in the coming years due to a decline in fertility and rise in overall life expectancy, Myanmar now has an ageing population. This is a trend that has also been observed regionally in other Southeast Asian countries.

Data on older persons in Myanmar is sparse. In terms of official data, the 2014 Census is the only representative source of information on demographics, combined with the 2009-2010 Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment (IHLCA) survey data.

For the purpose of this research, it is important to note that no prior population-based enquiry has been undertaken on the financial security of women (including older women) in Myanmar. In the current domestic environment, financial inclusion and microfinance projects being implemented by national and international NGOs across Myanmar provide some evidence-based insight into the subject — but the data is sparse and not comparable. This research therefore primarily relies on the 2014 Census Main Report (Union) and related thematic reports, and survey figures from a 2013 report titled “Situation of Older Persons in Myanmar”.⁸ Apart from these sources, information has also been collected



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from reports and fact sheets published by international and local organisations, including the UN. Key informant interviews were also used for qualitative information. It should be noted that since information has been extracted from sources that were based on different individual methodologies of their own, it is often difficult to compare data at macro-level. Where possible, such difficulties have been highlighted in the footnotes. This report tries to ensure that where comparisons are made, data is drawn from the same source, or sources that have been produced in a similar time frame.

Older Population in Myanmar: Demographics, Trends and Dependency

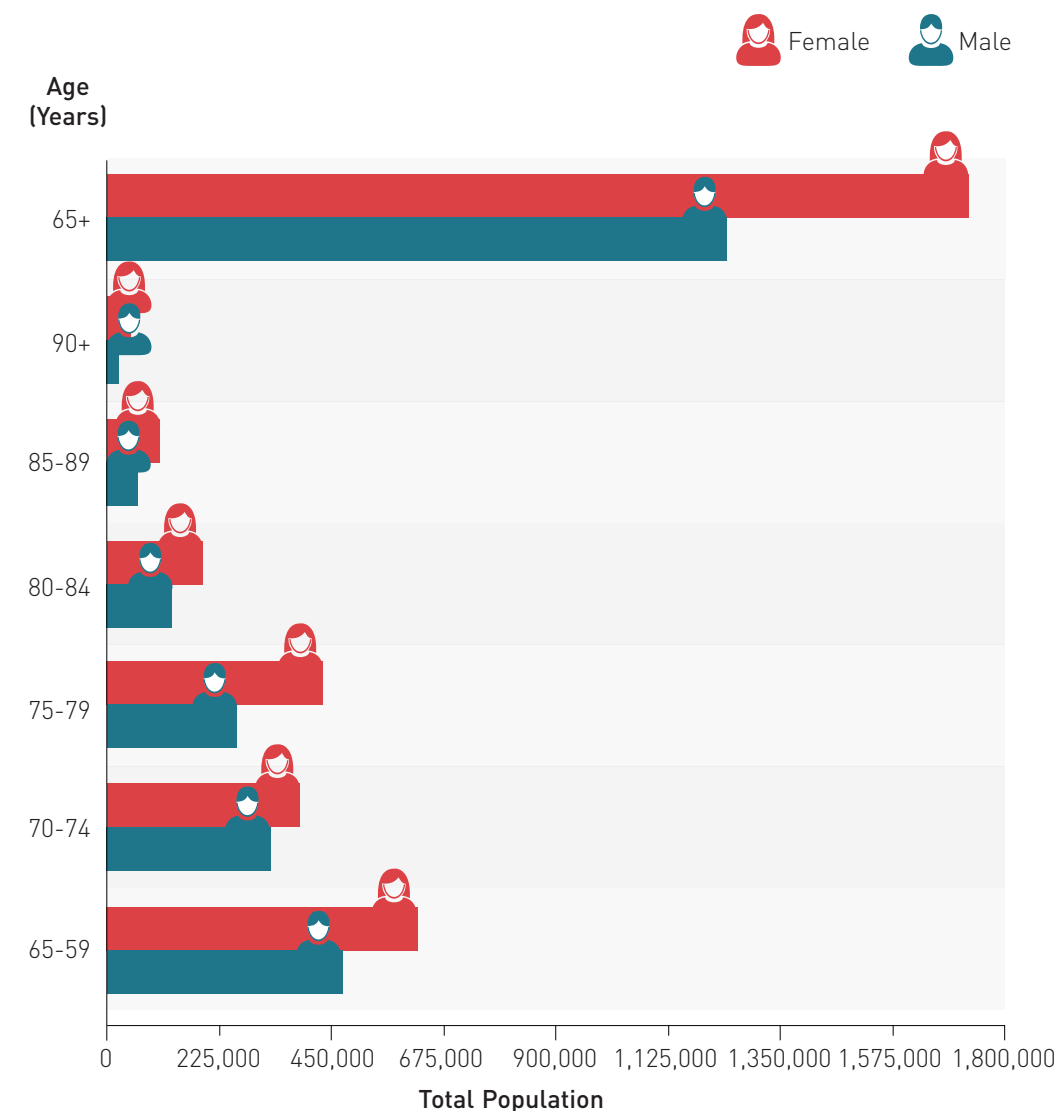
In Myanmar, the broadly accepted definition of the elderly is 65 years and older. The 2014 Census counted the elderly population as all adults above the age of 65, although the 2009-10 IHLCA survey included those above 60 years of age as well. It should be noted,

however, that the retirement age for public sector employees is 60 years.

Since the 2014 Census gives the most accurate and up to date information on actual numbers, this report shall also define older persons as all adults over the age of 65. According to official estimates, there are 2.8 million (5.8%) older persons in Myanmar.⁹ Women comprise 58% of the elderly population (Figure 4.1).¹⁰ The highest proportion of older people was found to be in the age group of 65 - 69 years, with 466,618 males and 597,875 females.¹¹ Almost 70% of older people (both men and women) live in rural areas.¹²

The population of Myanmar has gradually grown older. Between 1983 and 2014, the median age of the population increased from 20.2 to 27.1 years.¹³ The change in the age structure also affects the type of household. While nuclear households are still the most common type of household,

Fig. 4.1: Population Age 65 Years and Over, by Sex



Source: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, The Union Report: Census Report Volume 2* (Nay Pyi Taw: Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2015), p.93, Table A-6a. http://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Census%20Main%20Report%20%28UNION%29%20-%20ENGLISH_0.pdf (Accessed 20 August 2018).

the second largest type of household is extended households (3,613,242 households or 31.2% of all households counted in the 2014 census). Most older persons live in an extended household, or a household with other family members. In other words,

extended households tend to have more household members aged 65 and older than nuclear households.¹⁴

The continued existence of extended households in Myanmar is characteristic

of an ageing population. As the number of older persons increases, families are organised around their care needs with children continuing to live with their parents throughout their adulthood.

Within Myanmar the difference in mortality between sexes is very large; women on average live 9.1 years longer than men.¹⁵ Projections based on the 2014 Census findings indicate that by 2020, 7.6% of the female population in Myanmar will be in the 65+ age group, and by 2040 this figure will rise to 13.6%. During the same period, the proportion of females in the 0-14 age group will fall from 25.7% in 2020 to 20.4% in 2040.¹⁶

Fertility rates have also been changing: total fertility rate (TFR) dropped during the 1980s, from 4.7 children per woman in 1983 to 2.9 children per woman by 1991, and to 2.5 children per woman in 2014.¹⁷ With the reduction in fertility, the age profile of the population has gradually started to grow older during the period 1983-2014. The old age dependency ratio in 2014 was found to be 8.8%, compared to 6.8% in 1983.¹⁸

Although fertility rates have declined, Myanmar still has a high rate of fertility compared to other Southeast Asian countries (Table 4.1). There is also wide variation between different regions in Myanmar, with women in poorer or conflict areas having more children. For example, in 2014, in Chin State, the total fertility rate was 5 children per woman compared to Yangon, which had the lowest fertility rate at 1.9 children per woman.¹⁹ Fertility rates were also higher in rural areas (2.8 children per woman) than in urban areas (1.9 children per woman).²⁰

Table 4.1: Total Fertility Rates, Southeast Asian and Neighbouring Countries, 2014

Country	Total Fertility Rates
Timor Leste	5.7
Philippines	3.0
Lao PDR	2.9
Cambodia	2.8
Myanmar	2.5
Indonesia	2.3
Malaysia	2.0
Brunei Darussalam	2.0
Vietnam	1.7
Thailand	1.4
Singapore	1.3

Source: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population, "Thematic Report on Population Dynamics: Census Report Volume 4-E" (December 2016), p.8. <http://myanmar.unfpa.org/publications/thematic-report-population-dynamics>

The combination of the declining percentage of children aged 0-14, together with a rise in the older population, is also reflected in Myanmar's rapidly increasing ageing index. In 1973, the index was 8.8 and rose only slightly to 10.2 in 1983. Since then the ageing index has almost doubled to 20.1, indicating that in 2014 twice as many older persons (aged 65 and over) were present per 100 young persons (aged under 15) than in 1983.²¹

Although 70% of the older population lives in rural areas, the difference in old age dependency ratio between rural (8.9) and urban areas (8.5) was not significant.²²

2. Financial Security of Older Women in Myanmar

The 2012 Survey of Older Persons in Myanmar found that in terms of income and assets, older people in Myanmar “can be described as generally poor”.²³ The report highlights that:

“**Older people in Myanmar typically live in low income households. Almost 10% report that their household has a monthly income of no more than 25,000 kyat, or less than US\$ 1 per day (at current rates) and just over 60% report that their household income is no more than US\$3 per day. Less than one in five older persons has savings in the form of money or gold and are twice as likely to have debts as savings. Only 55% of older people feel that their income is regularly adequate to meet their daily needs.**”

It is difficult to establish whether there is feminisation of poverty in Myanmar through the currently available data. However, given that the number of older women is more than the number of older men, as well as current projections that suggest the older female population is set to rise in the next few years, it can be assumed that older women are more likely to be impoverished.

This chapter defines impoverishment in terms of low social and material well-being and an overall poor quality of life. The definition has been kept intentionally broad to allow for an analysis that can take into account non-economic factors such as cultural barriers to resource access and control, and lack of institutional representation.

Poverty in Myanmar has been looked at through various measures. For instance, the 2009-10 IHLCA survey analysed poverty through a “food poverty line” (274,990 kyat per adult per year) that measured how much consumption expenditure is required to meet basic caloric needs of an individual, along with a “poverty line” (376,151 kyat per adult per year) that added an allowance for non-food expenditures per person.²⁵ In 2014, the World Bank re-analysed the IHLCA survey data and estimated a higher “poverty line” of 440,345 kyat per adult per year.²⁶ It is important to note that the IHCLA survey was conducted using a sample that was based on population figures reported by the 1983 Census. Therefore, although official poverty lines provide insight into the spread of poverty across the country, it is not useful for analysing the impoverishment of older women at present. Since figures from the IHLCA survey and the Census (as well as other population based statistical efforts) rely on household level data, any poverty analysis based on such data will have limitations that mask the intra-household inequalities in resource allocation. Unless the data is particular to a female headed household, it is unclear from household level data as to whether women in the household are financially secure simply by looking at the average earnings of its members.

Financial security is dependent on a number of individual factors, including absolute levels of income, level of savings, social pensions and retirement funds, ownership of assets, as well as environmental factors such as government sponsored care, family support and community support. The 2012 survey of older persons looked at factors such as income, living arrangements, family support, and health instead of a standard poverty line. For the purpose of this report, a similar methodology based on overall quality of life shall be used to analyse the evidence.

2.1 Financial Security of Older Women from a Quality of Life Perspective

For older persons, sources of financial security may include income from work, savings, land ownership, and pensions. Financial security that contributes to a higher quality of life is also dependent on social and material support available from the government or through family support (particularly children). For instance, welfare

services provided by the government are an important component of support for the elderly in countries like Thailand and Singapore, while in countries like Myanmar the elderly tend to rely more on support given to them by their children.

In Myanmar, government support to the elderly is low. The government has historically provided pensions to retired civil servants, military personnel, and political personnel. The wage gap between men and women is negligible among government employees.²⁷ In 2018, a national universal social pension was introduced targeting persons aged 90 years and above. However, government pensioners still account for only a proportion (approximately 25%)²⁸ of the older population, and mostly concentrated in urban areas. Beyond the public sector, social and material support for the elderly, especially for older women, is primarily provided by the family unit.²⁹ Children tend to provide allowances for their elderly parents, although older people in Myanmar typically live in low-income households. In the 2012



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survey, while a significant proportion of both sexes report a household income of US\$3 or less, almost 10% report that their household has a monthly income of no more than 25,000 kyat, or less than US\$1 per day (at current rates) and just over 60% report that their household income is no more than US\$3 per day.³⁰ A marginally higher proportion of older women (12%) compared to older men (7.2%) reported household income of less than 25,000 kyat a month (or less than US\$1 per day).³¹

The 2012 Survey also shows that for 67.3% of older women, the main source of income and support is through children,³² while only 15.5% tend to rely on the work done by themselves or their spouse. On other indicators of financial security such as ownership of assets, the survey found that 83% of older women live in a house owned by themselves or their spouse, 39% own land and 36.1% own livestock.³³ Significantly, the quality of housing is poor and the security of ownership in itself does not indicate a better quality of life for both genders. It is interesting to note, however, that more older women (19%) than older men (16%) have savings in the form of money or gold, and both genders report saving for emergencies rather than retirement.³⁴ Overall, among the survey respondents, 54.5% of women reported their income adequacy as “adequate or better”, indicating that they do not consider themselves particularly vulnerable.³⁵ There might be various reasons for this, including the relative prosperity of the general population in Myanmar which has been historically low.

Nevertheless, income adequacy among older women is dependent overwhelmingly on children, and family support is a

significant variable in relation to financial security among the elderly in Myanmar due to the absence of state support. It influences the availability of social and material support, quality of living arrangements, and healthcare access. Notably, the 2012 survey also found that living alone is more common among older women (7%) than older men (2.5%), reflecting their greater likelihood to be widowed.³⁶ Slightly more than half of older women (51.8%) are widowed, and as a consequence, they must rely more heavily on their children. In contrast, three quarters (75%) of older men are still married.³⁷ Additionally, in times of economic hardship, families are responsible for taking care of immediate household members, including vulnerable dependents. People prefer to borrow money from relatives instead of non-kin, and outright assistance from non-kin is generally offered to the elderly or people with disabilities.³⁸ In the absence of relatives, therefore, informal community-based social protection assistance may or may not always be available to poor families with elderly dependents.

Overall, older women on average are more likely to have access to financial and non-financial resources to cover the costs of living, particularly for healthcare, if they live with their children. At present, public healthcare services in Myanmar are poor and insufficient to meet the requirements of an ageing population that resides primarily in rural areas.

The lack of data on female financial security in Myanmar makes it difficult to distribute causal factors across different life stages. This report, however, attempts to classify factors that lead to poverty among women based on the following life stages:

- 1 Childhood and Adolescence
- 2 Youth and Early Working Age
- 3 Middle Working Age
- 4 Late Working Age
- 5 Retirement
- 6 Post-Retirement³⁹



There is significant overlap of factors across stages. The next section shall therefore present a discussion of specific factors as well as overall conditions that affect female poverty through the life course.

3. Factors that Lead to Financial Insecurity among Older Women

As mentioned in the previous section, there are a host of factors leading to financial insecurity among older women, many of which overlap their various life stages as listed below:

3.1 Childhood and Adolescence

In recent years, Myanmar has been successful in enrolling more girls in school and coming close to reaching gender parity in schools.⁴⁰ This gives hope to the future for girls growing up in Myanmar now, but it is still a recent trend. Trends in illiteracy according to sex and age from the 1983 and

2014 censuses reveal that past inequality in access to education has affected the older female population in Myanmar. Although the literacy levels have risen from 1983 to 2014 for both men and women, the 2014 Census also reflects that the difference between illiteracy for men and women increases with age.⁴¹ Similar trends were also observed in higher educational attainment.⁴² Furthermore, even though more girls are now enrolled in school today, the education they are receiving still lags behind the education systems of neighbouring countries; Myanmar is simply not investing as much in education as other ASEAN states are.⁴³ The quality of an education – for both boys and girls – is therefore lacking.

In addition, as they grow older, children tend to drop out of school. Once a child – male or female – in Myanmar reaches the age of ten, the rate at which he or she leaves formal schooling begins to increase dramatically. This is increasingly the case

with girls in rural areas; they are often enrolled in schools at much lower rates than their urban counterparts.⁴⁴ Some of this is because of the longer distances between villages, concerns for their safety, traditional attitudes that they stay near their families, or a mix of all three.⁴⁵

Even those who attend school may find themselves at a disadvantage. A report by the Gender Equality Network (GEN) in Myanmar found that textbooks used in grades one through seven had very clear gender norms and expectations. Boys were shown taking on active roles such as sports and climbing trees, whereas girls were depicted helping their families with domestic chores.⁴⁶

3.2 Youth and Early Working Age

Once girls leave school, they are quickly faced with the economic realities of being a woman in Myanmar. According to the 2014 census, only 50.5% of working age women (those 15 years or older) were part of the labour force (compared to the 85.2% of men). The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLES) reported that, in 2015, 48% of women (15+) were outside the labour force; 64% cited housework and family responsibilities as the main cause for being outside the labour force.⁴⁷ This divide was most pronounced in rural areas, but the reality was the same for women across the Union of Myanmar: access to work becomes more difficult for women because of social expectations that women will take on a larger share of household duties.⁴⁸ This was reflected in the 2011-2015 Framework for Economic and Social Reform (2011-15), in which women were depicted as mothers and as experiencing economic vulnerabilities, and not as being active in the economy.⁴⁹

Even if women do enter the workforce, they are faced with norms about which industries to work in. Most women find jobs overwhelmingly in the agriculture sector, followed by the service sector and industry.⁵⁰

Regardless of their profession, women overall receive consistently lower wages than men. Myanmar's society typically values men's work as more valuable than women's and therefore pays both genders accordingly.⁵¹ It is estimated that this pay gap now stands at approximately 30%.⁵² In order to find better paying work, women often migrate to urban areas – namely Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw – to look for better paid work. However, this relocation comes with its own risks including human trafficking, isolation from family, and continued wage discrimination.⁵³

The disparity women face when entering the workforce only further weakens their ability to ensure stability as they age – from the time they start having children to when they reach retirement age. It also puts them at a risk of lower financial security in old age due to wage discrimination, and limited opportunities to step out of industries that are thought to be more suitable for female labour. However, financial inclusion has emerged as a significant area of development work in Myanmar in recent years, and projects focused on increasing microfinance access to women have the potential to manage the risk of financial insecurity among younger female cohorts in Myanmar. A detailed discussion is available in a later section of this chapter.

3.3 Middle Working Age

Women of middle working age – those who have been working for a number of years

and may be having children of their own – mark the point in the life cycle where certain factors begin to grow that will affect their financial stability later in life. Women still face the same issues as in the early working age life stage, but their situation is further complicated by other factors.

At this age, if women were engaged in the workforce, there is high potential that they would withdraw in order to care for families and/or start their own. Myanmar society pressures women to prioritise such care over any career goals – this in turn perpetuates the culture's tendency to depict women only as mothers and not active members of the economy.⁵⁴ There is potential then for women who prioritize their career to be marginalized.

Women who are involved in the economy tend to be working in agriculture and the service sector, as noted in the section above, and therefore become less likely to benefit directly from major economic growth such as that currently happening in Myanmar. In addition, those who continue working are often not promoted into management roles and are not involved in decision making in the workplace.⁵⁵ This, coupled with society's depiction of women as mainly responsible for the family, helps perpetuate norms that men are the real economic agents and breadwinners in society.⁵⁶ Women therefore find themselves increasingly dependent on men to provide income, which then erodes women's financial independence and security later in life.

3.4 Late Working Age

Whether a part of the workforce or not, women in Myanmar age in ways in which they are at risk of financial insecurity in

later life. Already faced with smaller wages, careers in limited sectors, and a large share of family duties, two other factors are highlighted for women at this age.

The first is that women have limited access to assets; they are rarely able to build long-term financial futures through things like land. As highlighted in previous sections, the 2012 survey found that 39% of older women have land owned by themselves or their spouse. However it is unclear as to how many older women are exclusive owners. In the absence of land ownership, women have even fewer options for accessing assets. Other studies have found that those who do have some land ownership are typically listed as being a dependent of a man and therefore are not considered full owners in their own right.⁵⁷ As Faxon (2015:6) notes, "Intra-household bargaining and marital and kinship relations are central mediators of women's land access throughout their life cycle."⁵⁸

The second factor that becomes more pronounced at this age is that women have fewer leadership roles in the community. Despite being responsible for the majority of household work, women are rarely able to speak for their families in the community.⁵⁹ This inability to direct community affairs or take the initiative on certain issues – such as schooling and health services – creates more barriers for women seeking to improve their livelihoods. Some women who were able to become leaders in the community in the past have been forced to step back in recent years. In southeast Myanmar, for example, women cited the reduction in conflict and the return of men in the village as the reason they were less likely to take on positions of authority.⁶⁰

Without leadership or access to financial assets, women face increased risks of being marginalized or impoverished should the men in their lives no longer be able to care for them. It is only in rare cases – and often those of well-off women in urban areas – that are able to sustain themselves without additional support from a male earning member of the household.⁶¹

3.5 Retirement/Reduction in Levels of Work

When women leave the workforce or reach the age of 60+, they have very little support outside of families. Pensions are very rare in Myanmar – for men and women – outside of those who worked in the public sector. In addition, there is almost no welfare support provided by the government to older persons. Almost half of older persons report that they do not have enough income to meet their daily needs.⁶²

As they leave the workforce and/or are less able to contribute to the family in some way, women are forced to rely more on younger members of their family for support. The 2012 Survey found that 67.3% of older women rely on their children as the main source of support. It is important to note that just the existence of support from children does not in itself mean that the support is adequate or sufficient to meet the needs of an older family member. The children, now adults themselves and likely with children of their own, become increasingly burdened with having to care for multiple generations of family. Some cope with this by seeking work in urban areas, but migrating with ageing members of the family is increasingly difficult because the work is often seasonal in nature and finding affordable housing in urban areas (especially Yangon) is burdensome for a large family.⁶³



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As women grow older the same factors they face at 60 + years continue on into their later years. As these factors become more exacerbated, they become increasingly vulnerable. It is likely that a majority of them would be single or widowed. They may continue to work beyond the age of 65 years, but their social networks weaken and they become more at risk of discrimination and social exclusion.⁶⁴ In terms of financial security, the weakening of social networks could mean fewer options for community support (material and social). Single women – those who were widowed or whose husbands were not living with them – especially report heightened vulnerability regarding their livelihood security⁶⁵ or even from land confiscation.⁶⁶

Having experienced the full range of her life cycle, the average older woman in Myanmar today is therefore at a high risk of financial insecurity, including poverty – and likely higher than her male counterparts – due to the overarching economic and cultural factors that placed them at a disadvantage at every stage.

As girls, they were likely to have unequal access to education compared to their male counterparts. As young women, they were presented with a limited number of industries in which they could find work, if they even sought to enter the labour force at all. These responsibilities are further exacerbated as they grow older and begin having children of their own. If they did remain in a career, they were unlikely to be given leadership roles both at home or in the community. In addition, any reforms or growth in the overall Myanmar economy likely did not trickle down to the industries in which they were employed.

When no longer able to work, women in Myanmar likely begin to rely on male members in their households to provide care. In the absence of this gendered support, their risk of financial insecurity increases, and even if such figures can provide care, it places an additional strain on a family with other dependents. Older women are therefore less likely to live a dignified and secure life in Myanmar due to factors that affect their social and economic situations through the life cycle.

3.6 Additional Factors Outside of the Life Cycle

There are other factors outside the normal life cycle of a woman that affect women's financial security in old age:

- Natural disasters and emergencies have disproportionately affected women and children in Myanmar. Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and Cyclone Komen in 2015, for example, affected thousands of women. The impact of the disasters also affected their families, destroyed livelihoods, and dismantled community structures they had relied on for support.⁶⁷ Since women have fewer savings, they have less resilience to withstand such shocks.
- Myanmar has traditionally relied on low-productivity subsistence agriculture as a source of livelihood for its predominantly rural population. However, a lack of mechanisation and absence of opportunities to scale up and/or step out of agriculture has contributed to poverty. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Myanmar has recognized that although women form the backbone of Myanmar's agricultural economy, they are

paid less than men, their contribution is overlooked, and they get fewer opportunities to step out of low paying agriculture into other productive sectors. This can have lasting effects on women's financial security over the life course, although it can manifest in any or all life stages.⁶⁸

- Decades of conflict and insecurity in the peripheries of the Union have particularly affected women from ethnic minorities in Myanmar. Although the conflict situation has stabilized since the initiation of the Myanmar Peace Process in 2014, ongoing instability in several states limits the opportunities for financial savings and support for older women who have been affected by previous years of conflict. This is compounded further through the demographic shift in ethnic areas, where there are more women in traditional community support roles, while men are engaged in fighting.⁶⁹

3.7 Risk Factors Leading to Financial Insecurity

Given the factors that women face throughout their life cycle, as discussed in the above section, we can begin to narrow down the most important risk factors that lead to the financial insecurity of older women in Myanmar.

We have identified three main risk factors:

- Traditional cultural norms that have historically affected access to education for women and girls, and existing disparities in labour force participation and wages.

- A lack of support from the government throughout a woman's life cycle – including lack of investment in education, lack of welfare support, and limited platforms for advancement of women's issues.

- Ethnic conflict that has bracketed the above two factors, and increased the incidence of poverty among women from ethnic minorities.

Demographic transitions in fertility, marriage, and life expectancy are therefore distributed across the spectrum of these risk factors for older women.

4. Are the Factors Causing Financial Insecurity in Older Women being Replicated in Younger Age Cohorts?

The factors outlined in the above section look at the different stages of a woman's life cycle in Myanmar. However, it is important to explore whether these factors are still being replicated among younger women. As Myanmar undergoes dramatic transformation and continues to pass reforms, are women still facing the same factors? In short, will the young women of today face the same challenges when they become older women themselves?

According to the 2014 census, 50.5% of working age women participated in the labour force, as compared to 85.2% of men. As already highlighted above, of those women not in the labour force, 64% cited family duties and housework as the main cause for this.⁷⁰ In addition, the average daily wages for women workers are still

much lower than the average daily wage for men.⁷¹ It is difficult, however, to pinpoint which sectors pay women more on average and which pay less.⁷² Given what this data shows – that far fewer women than men are working, those who do are paid less, and those who don't cite family responsibilities – there seems to be little change in how work has traditionally affected a woman's life cycle in Myanmar.

Government support services – such as childcare – continue to be low for women. More than double the number of women as compared to men continue to be considered unpaid family workers and there are few policies set in place by the government to assist such women in entering the labour force.⁷³ The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women is one such government-led effort to institutionalise research, planning and implementation of policy efforts that focus on women across all ages. The focus on older women, however, is still very limited. Overall, women have yet to benefit from reforms in a way that will substantially impact their ability to work. This continues to hinder their ability to be financially independent in later life and live without the support from children or their spouse.

The most dramatic difference between younger women and their older peers is the rate at which younger women are migrating to urban centres. Though it is difficult to know the exact rate at which older women migrated in earlier years, an overall look at the growth of Myanmar's urban areas, shows that more women are now migrating internally. The 2014 Census confirms this trend. Almost 20% of the population now comprises of internal migrants. Of the

over nine million internal migrants (which is significantly higher than the 2.9 million migrants who go abroad), more than half are women.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the Census numbers may be an underestimate, with the Ministry of Immigration and Population providing an unofficial estimate of internal migrants of 4.25 million.⁷⁵ The main reason for movement of female migrants is to follow family, but 23% also move for employment and economic reasons, and a vast majority of women who migrate prefer long-term domestic migration to the urban areas of Yangon and Mandalay.⁷⁶

Women's experiences in Myanmar's urban centres in some ways mirror the experience of women who choose to migrate to neighbouring countries for work. Unfortunately, this experience tends to be one with low wages in sectors including garment factories, food/beverage services and as domestic helpers.⁷⁷ Some women have decided to pursue work as sex workers in karaoke bars or massage rooms due to the allure of higher wages.⁷⁸ Female migrants are also more vulnerable to gender discrimination and exploitation. While working conditions for all migrants are poor – with 60% of migrant workers working 7 days a week and 41% working overtime⁷⁹ – in general, female migrant workers earned less than male migrant workers. A survey of 7,295 migrant workers conducted by the ILO (2015) reveals that on average, females earned 82,319 kyat (US\$65) per month, while men earned 121,775 kyat (US\$ 95) per month. 26 % of females surveyed earned less than 50,000 kyat per month.⁸⁰ Similarly, while only 7% of all migrants had a written contract, despite it being mandated by Myanmar law, 47% of the women did not fully understand

their contract, compared to 38% of men.⁸¹ Although research on sex work has been limited, the ILO survey suggests that often women are trafficked into the industry, and then remain voluntarily. However, they are caught in a vicious cycle of being unable to leave the industry despite the availability of vocational training, due to a combination of stigma, lack of identity cards and household registration lists, among others.⁸²

In addition, as stated in the previous section, the difference in experience between women in rural areas and women in urban settings is quite dramatic. There are challenges to both. Women continue to face economic dependency in either scenario. In urban areas particularly, incomes are not rising fast enough to meet the needs of individuals trying to care for their children as well as ageing parents.⁸³ With regard to rural areas, as more women migrate away, those who stay in rural areas become a small minority; when it comes time for determining policy, their needs may be neglected.

Given these insights on younger women in the labour force, the lack of government support, and the continued migration to cities, it is very possible that today's women are at risk of financial insecurity in their old age. However, as highlighted in a previous section, financial inclusion of women has emerged as an important area of development work in Myanmar. For instance in May 2017, a new partnership was announced between the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and Early Dawn Microfinance that aims to increase microfinance access for low-income female micro entrepreneurs in Myanmar.⁸⁴ Financial inclusion partnerships between donors, private companies and NGOs have emerged as a significant tool

to combat the risk of female financial insecurity.

Some of the key development projects on financial inclusion are being implemented by the Pact Global Microfinance Fund (PGMF) and BRAC. Both organisations focus on providing micro-loans that focus on inculcating savings habits among target population. Results from the PGMF's programme show that 96% of microfinance borrowers are women.⁸⁵ At the community level, microfinance provides women the opportunity for community leadership and financial empowerment. This has contributed to an increase in decision-making power for women at the household and community levels, which includes having the autonomy to decide how to manage daily expenses. Although age-disaggregated data is not available, we find that younger cohorts are well-positioned to benefit from these initiatives across the country.

Overall, although younger women might be slightly better off, there is still much work to be done to ensure that women across the country do not face insurmountable odds in order to ensure a more secure future. Unless development projects are able to intersect with financial reforms, it is likely that the change will be slow and the benefits that do come will struggle to sustain themselves nationally.

5. Emerging Trends that Could Impact on Future Financial Security

In addition to the factors we know about younger women's life cycles, it is important to take a closer look at trends throughout the country that may help provide insight into future financial security.

For example, Myanmar is still a very traditional society with strict gender roles and there is little evidence to show that these roles are changing quickly enough to match the country's economic growth.⁸⁶

It is important to note that Myanmar is not a society that discourages women from working. More women are entering the labour force. However, much of that work is still in traditional roles that are informal, unpaid, or underpaid.⁸⁷ And though there have been efforts to move beyond this – for example, the government's 2013 decision to enact a national minimum wage and subsequent increases in the minimum wage in early 2018 to 4800 kyat per day (US\$3.60)⁸⁸ – there is still no clear evidence on just how much women have benefitted from such policies.

Another trend that remains rooted in tradition is that the family unit generally provides support for older persons. Yet this may also change or lead to problems for

future generations. The declining fertility rate across the country is also reducing family size. Moreover, the 2012 survey of older persons in Myanmar found that daughters and grandchildren are prominent sources of support for unmarried elders in Myanmar.⁸⁹ Given the steady increase in the number of unmarried women in the country (12.4% of women over the age of 50 were not married according to the 2014 Census),⁹⁰ it is possible that ageing parents will have fewer children they can rely on for support and their risk for financial insecurity may increase. Although it is unclear as to why the number of unmarried women has increased, the implications of this trend on financial insecurity are important. It has been observed as early as 2007 that many of the women who remain unmarried comprise the proportion of women (44.7%) who live alone in old age.⁹¹

Those with children still face challenges. Though tradition means that children will likely care for their parents, migration



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means that this might not always be the case; the needs of older persons may be neglected as the younger generations pursue more prosperous opportunities. In some instances, opportunities in rural areas like Kayin State are so rare and migration is so necessary that workers are leaving both their children and their parents behind. Grandparents are raising grandchildren and they are doing so with incredibly limited resources. When possible, the working children send money back to their villages, but all too often, the elderly are faced with poverty as they try to raise another generation.⁹²

However, there is potential that new factors will create positive trends to ensure that the younger generation does not face the same challenges as today's ageing population. The government has increased homecare services for the elderly, rolled out pensions for those older than 90 (and if it is well received, it is possible the age requirement may be lowered to 85), and a National Action Plan on Ageing is currently being drafted.⁹³

In addition, the capacity of communities to support older persons is improving through increased NGO and donor support – namely through leadership trainings, intergenerational vocational skills trainings, increased care giving, and the creation and increased support of Village Development Committees (VDCs).⁹⁴

6. Recommendations

Based on the life cycle factors and additional stressors identified in previous sections, the following recommendations can be made to build upon existing support:

- 6.1 The government, in collaboration with local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), NGOs and private entities should consider initiating research on the financial security of women across their life course in Myanmar at a national level.
- 6.2 The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) should initiate a systematic analysis of the impact of minimum wage policies on men and women in the formal and informal economy.
- 6.3 At the moment, the focus of the government in the National Strategic Plan for Advancement of Women is more on young girls, but equal attention needs to be paid to services for working and older women since these young girls will serve to benefit from them.
- 6.4 The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs must be included in meetings of economic ministries to foster understanding of the gender and ageing impact of economic reforms.
- 6.5 Productive and healthy ageing for the needs of older persons to be promoted, including expansion of Inclusive Self Help Groups (ISHGs) across the country.
- 6.6 Community based homecare services for older persons need to be expanded in conflict-affected areas, especially focusing on participation of young people and further intergenerational dialogue on issues affecting older persons.

- 6.7 Budgetary allocations should be proposed to underpin policy commitments that are favourable to women or to the sectors that are female intensive, e.g. garment factories and domestic work.
- 6.8 National efforts on advancement of women, social protection, and migration need to consider push and pull factors for women across the life cycle. When applicable, it must be ensured that these efforts are applied in both rural and urban areas, with attention to the needs of older women.
- 6.9 In line with the Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan (passed in 2014), the government must continue its efforts to expand social pension coverage for all older persons aged 65 and above.

- 7.1. Female poverty and financial insecurity in Myanmar at Union and State/Region level, disaggregated according to sex, age, and economic activity.
- 7.2 A small-scale sample survey on financial security among older women in urban areas can be initiated to explore the scope for a national level study that addresses the urban/rural divide in financial security over the female life-course.
- 7.3 Financial insecurity as an aspect of migration affecting younger and older women can be explored in Census data collection in the future.
- 7.4 The impact of conflict on female financial security, especially in areas that are experiencing protracted conflict such as Kachin State and Shan State.
- 7.5 Financial literacy in Myanmar at Union and State/Regional level, disaggregated according to sex, age, and area of residence (urban/rural).

7. Areas for Further Research

This report has identified key areas for further research which can strengthen both policy engagement and advocacy, and for planning by the key decision-makers. Further research can be initiated on:

Notes

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- 14 Ibid., p. xiii and p.75. Note: An "extended" household is defined as a non-nuclear household consisting of persons who are all related through blood, marriage or adoption.
- 15 Ibid., p. 12.
- 16 Ibid., p. 85.
- 17 Ibid., p. 7.
- 18 Ibid., p. 36.
- 19 Ibid, p. 8.
- 20 Ibid, p. 9.
- 21 Ibid., p.36.
- 22 Ibid., p.44.
- 23 John Knodel and HelpAge International, "The Situation of Older Persons in Myanmar: Results from the 2012 Survey of Older Persons" (2013), p. vi. <http://ageingasia.org/eaprdc0013/>.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 "Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar (2009-2010): Poverty Profile" (June 2011), p. 6.
- 26 Adam McCarty, Myanmar Times, "Data tweaks change face of poverty" (19 May 2014). <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/opinion/10400-data-tweaks-change-face-of-poverty.html>.
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- 30 John Knodel and HelpAge International, "The Situation of Older Persons in Myanmar" (2013), p. vii.
- 31 Ibid, p. 44, Table 4.5.
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- 33 Ibid., p. 45.
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- 43 ADB et al. (2016), p. 90.
- 44 Ibid., p. 91.
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- 88 Nyan Linn Aung and Pyae Thet Phyp, "Government sets new daily minimum wage at K4,800", *Myanmar Times*, 6 March <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-sets-new-daily-minimum-wage-k4800.html>.
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PHILIPPINES

CHAPTER 5



PHILIPPINES

Aura Sevilla

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, the Philippines did well in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. This is evident in the inclusion of gender equality principles in development programmes and processes and legislative reforms. The Philippines is one of the few countries with a gender provision in its Constitution, and one of the earliest signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified by the Philippines in 1981. The Convention established a comprehensive framework for the advancement of women and has been mainstreamed in the Magna Carta of Women or Republic Act 9710.

While these efforts are plausible, a significant number of older women remain in poverty and are vulnerable to financial insecurity. They lack access to a formal support system and end up relying on their children for support, which for many, results in a loss of dignity and lack of self-worth.

This chapter contains four main sections. The first section provides background on the approach and methodology of the research and key demographic data highlighting the feminisation of the population. The second discusses whether older women are less secure than older men, using poverty data and other indicators of financial security. This is followed by a discussion on the

factors that have led to financial security or insecurity of older women. The final section provides key policy recommendations for specific age groups on how to fully achieve financial security of older women.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

Using existing data and research collected, this chapter primarily aims to review and assess the financial security of older women in the Philippines through a life-course perspective. Specifically, it aims to show how cumulative gender disadvantages affect financial security in old age, particularly for older women. This research examines the main stages in the life-course at which women are most 'at risk' of becoming financially insecure and correspondingly, draws appropriate policy recommendations to reduce/mitigate these risks. It attempts to answer the following research questions:

- Are older women financially less secure than men?
- What are the factors that make older women financially insecure? Are the factors that make older women less financially secure the cumulative effect of gender inequities over the life course?
- At what stages of a woman's life do these factors become significant? Or, what are the main stages at which women become 'at risk' of becoming financially insecure?

This research adds to the emerging body of Philippine literature on ageing and ageing issues, particularly using a gender lens. It also contributes to the development of a regional overview on financial security of older women in select countries in Southeast Asia.

1.2 Methodology and Scope

This research, primarily a desk review, delves into the wide array of existing Philippine data-sets and research cutting across the following intersecting topics: financial security, poverty, gender, and ageing. It uses the life-course approach in understanding the financial security of older women which "looks at the history of every individual over time, examining the choices he or she made and the changing economic, demographic, environmental, and cultural forces that influenced the person's decisions and experiences".¹ This approach veers away from the simple and static approaches of "before" and "after" and moves towards understanding the various factors at different stages of a woman's life and how these factors shaped her financial security in older age. Such an approach is used as it offers a way to link the earlier life experiences to later life outcomes. For instance, one assumption is that gender disadvantages of girls and younger women have later consequences to financial security of older women. Using descriptive analysis, this research gathered secondary data from the existing national data-sets: "Census of Population and Housing" (CPH) including the recently released 2015 CPH; the "2013 National Demographic and Health Survey" (NDHS); the "Labor Force Survey" (LFS) from various years; and the recently published *Women and Men in the Philippines Statistical Handbook (2016)* obtained from



Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc. (COSEI)

the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). This chapter has also puts together findings from various studies, namely: "Gender and Development Mainstreaming: Country Gender Assessment 2012" (World Bank 2013); "Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equity Plan 2013-2016" (Philippine Commission on Women 2013); and "Gender Equality in the Labor Market in the Philippines" (Asian Development Bank 2013). These studies employed different methodologies, definitions and measures making it challenging to fully adopt a comprehensive life-course approach. Despite these limitations, this research still recognizes the importance of examining different factors that affect women in given life stages such as education, labour-force participation, financial literacy, etc.

As there is no prescribed framework of financial security in the Philippines yet, the financial security of older women was

assessed using the four main sources of income as identified in the multi-country report “Work, family, and social protection: Old age income security in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam” (Knox-Vydmanov 2017).

The main sources of data for the analysis of financial security of older women were the “Labor Force Participation 2012”; “Annual Poverty Indicators Survey 2014” (APIS) (PSA 2014); and the *2007 Philippine Study on Aging* (PSOA) (Cruz et al. 2016). APIS 2014 measures poverty (income and expenditure) using the household (HH) as a unit of analysis while the PSOA 2007 includes economic indicators such as the individual’s median income, main sources of income, assets and liabilities, and self-assessed measure of economic well-being. An attempt to identify the points of intersection between poverty, gender and old age, however, in existing datasets has conceptual and methodological weaknesses to generate such analysis. For example, endorsers of the gender perspective maintain that the “methodology based on per capita household income and poverty lines is insufficient to sustain an analysis of poverty from a gender perspective” (Desarrollo 2004). While this is ideal, measuring poverty in the individual level is difficult in the Philippine context since resources are generally pooled at the family or household level. Furthermore, there has been limited analysis undertaken to measure old age poverty, highlighting the fundamental limitations of household data for measuring poverty of different age groups (Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla 2017).

While the PSOA 2007 provides a clear picture of older women’s economic well-

being, it has limitations in reflecting the most recent situation of older women in the Philippines. The data was collected a decade ago and assumed to have disparity with latest statistics (e.g., in 2007, there was no single older man or woman receiving a social pension, but in 2017, there were around 2.8 million social pensioners in the country). Thus, PSOA 2007 was cross-referenced with data including LFS 2012 which were derived from a background analysis of authors of the recently published “Feasibility of a Universal Social Pension in the Philippines” (Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla 2017).

Additionally, as part of the analysis of the financial security of older women, an analysis of the coverage and distribution of social protection is also included in this chapter with data from the previously mentioned feasibility study. Social protection, such as public and private pensions, are important sources of income security in old age. A pension is reflective of the historic



Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc. (COSE)

disadvantage faced by women during their working lives. Some of the data on old age income security in the Philippines was also derived from the “Work, family, and social protection: Old age income security in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam” (Knox-Vydmanov 2017).

1.3 Definition

The Philippine laws describe senior citizen or elderly (alternatively referred to as older persons in this chapter) as any resident citizen of the Philippines at least sixty (60) years old. Meanwhile, there is no single definition of financial security of older women, but for the purpose of this chapter, the concept of income security in Knox-Vydmanov (2017) was adopted: “There are four broad sources that an older person can receive income from. These are (i) work and income-generating activities (sometimes described as ‘labour income’); (ii) private transfers such as support from families and remittances; (iii) income from assets and savings; and (iv) social protection, such as pensions and other cash transfers.”

In the Philippines, a household is considered poor when per capita income is below the poverty line.² There is no standard definition of life stages of Filipino women. However, following the life stages under the Philippine Health Agenda (2016-2022),³ it includes the following: pregnancy, newborn, infant, child, adolescent, adult and elderly (or older persons).

1.4 Feminisation of the Population

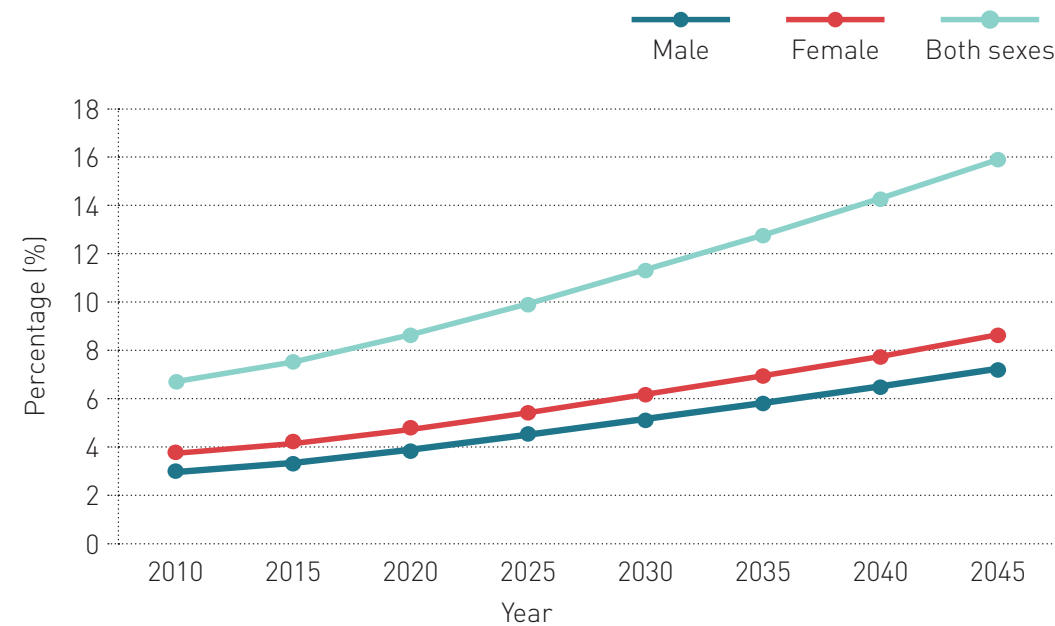
The Philippines is one of the most populated countries in the world. It ranked 12th globally, 7th in Asia, and 2nd in Southeast

Asia. Its population continued to increase with a growth rate of 1.72% annually, during the period of 2010 to 2015. In the 2015 Census of Population and Housing (CPH), the household population was 100,981,437. The latest figure is 8.64 million or 9.36% higher than in 2010 when the population was recorded at 92.3 million.⁴

The older population in the Philippines is increasing both in absolute numbers and in proportion as the overall population increases. Filipinos over the age of 60 accounted for 4.6 million or 5.97% of the total population in 2000, versus 6.3 million or 6.8% in 2010 and 7.5 million or 7.5% in 2015. Based on the latest population census in 2015,⁵ older women (56%) outnumbered older men (44%). While ageing prevalence in the Philippines is relatively low, the share of the older persons in total population will continue to increase. Demographers foresee a nearly threefold increase in the next 35 years from 6.8% in 2010 to 15.9% in 2045 (Figure 5.1). By 2045, the number of older Filipinos is projected to reach 22.6 million, of which 12.3 million will be older women and 10.3 million older men.⁶

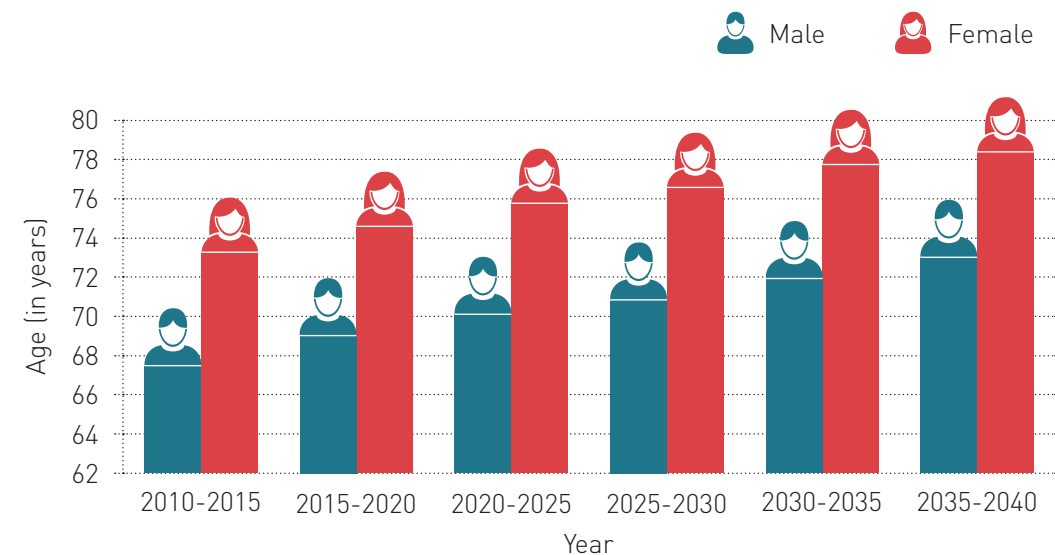
The expected trend towards the graying of the population is brought about by increasing life expectancy and decreasing fertility rates, which are evident for both sexes. The projected average life expectancy at birth of a female born between 2010-2015 is 73.1 years, or 5.53 years longer than their males counterparts who have life expectancy of 67.6. This is foreseen to improve further to 78.34 and 73.01 in 2035-2040 for females and males, respectively.⁷ Life expectancy at 60⁸ shows a slightly smaller gender difference, with women who have reached the age of 60 expecting to live to 80 and men to 76 and a half years

Fi. 5.1: Projected Population of 60+, by Sex, and by Five-Calendar Year Intervals, Philippines: 2010 - 2045 (Medium Assumption) (%)



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, "2010 Census-based Population Projections in Collaboration with the Inter-Agency Working Group on Population Projections".

Fig. 5.2: Projected Life Expectancy at Birth, By Sex, and Five-Year Intervals 2010-2040 (Medium Assumption)



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, *Women, and Men in the Philippines Statistical Handbook (2016)*, Figure 1.5 Projected Life Expectancy at Birth, by Sex and Five-year Intervals, 2000 to 2040 (Medium Assumption).

old. The 2013 National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) indicated a decline in fertility at three children per woman — from 3.3 in 2008 and 6.0 in 1973.⁹ The mean ideal family size of 2.8 in 2013 NDHS remains unchanged from the 2008 NDHS figure.

Consequently, as the Philippine population grows older, old-age dependency increases. In 2015, there were six old dependents per 100 working-age population¹⁰ compared to 5.5 in 1990.¹¹ This is projected to increase to 10.5 in 2025.¹² Rising old-age dependency is often seen as an indicator of the added pressures on social security and public health systems. However, one limitation of this indicator lies on the simplistic assumption that people stop being economically active at age 65. While older persons often require more economic support from others, they still have their own economic resources and provide support to their adult children.¹³ This holds true in the Philippines where a substantial number of older persons are still in the labour force and intergenerational support within the family is still apparent.

To date, there has been limited analysis undertaken in the Philippines to appropriately measure old age poverty, particularly on older women. Official poverty statistics in the Philippines is measured by *per capita income* from the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (formerly National Statistics Office). It takes the total income of a household, divides it by the number of household members and is compared with the poverty line. A household is considered poor when per capita income is below the poverty line.¹⁴ The same methodology is being used in measuring poverty of the basic sectors¹⁵ identified in the Republic Act 8425, Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act, which among the basic sectors is the sector of older persons. This section provides a picture of poverty among older persons, particularly older women, based on the national poverty statistics, and also analysis of other indicators of economic well-being of older persons.

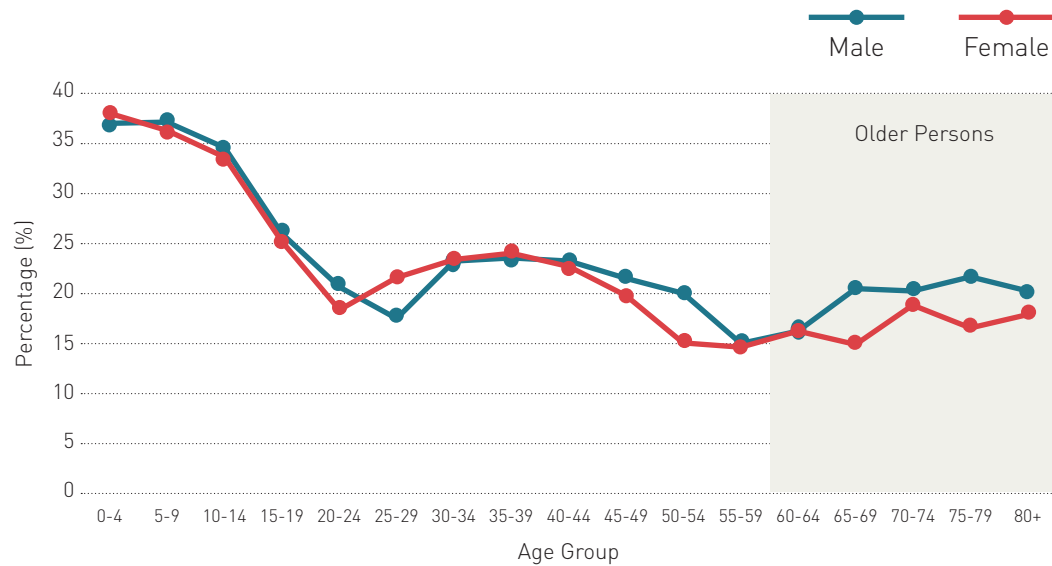
2.1 National Poverty Rate

2. Status of Financial Security of Older Women

This section looks into the financial security of older women starting off with an examination of their poverty status. However, as poverty provides a limited analysis of women's economic well-being and financial security, the discussion of poverty will be followed by an analysis of other aspects of financial security including (i) work and income-generating activities; (ii) private transfers such as support from families and remittances; (iii) income from assets and savings; and (iv) social protection, such as pensions.

Since 2003, the percentage of households headed by older persons considered as poor has been increasing. Mapa et al. (2011) observed that using the data from the FIES, poverty estimates among elderly-headed household increases following the general trend of the increasing percentage of Filipinos who are poor. In 2000, the poverty report shows that about 20.68% of the households headed by older persons considered as poor, decreased to 19.33% in 2003 and increased again to 22.2% in 2006.¹⁶ However, ADB (2005) and Raquiza (2012) caution about the analysis of poverty trends in the Philippines because of the inconsistency in measuring poverty in

Fig. 5.3: Population that is Living in a Poor Household, by Sex and Age Group (%)



Source: Philippines Statistics Authority, "2014 Annual Poverty Indicator Survey". Derived from unpublished computation from Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).

the country. There have been two major methodology changes since the poverty incidence was first estimated for 1985, resulting in two overlapping series – the first from 1985 to 2000 and the second from 1997 to 2003 – making the trends in income poverty not as straightforward as some scholars expect it to be.

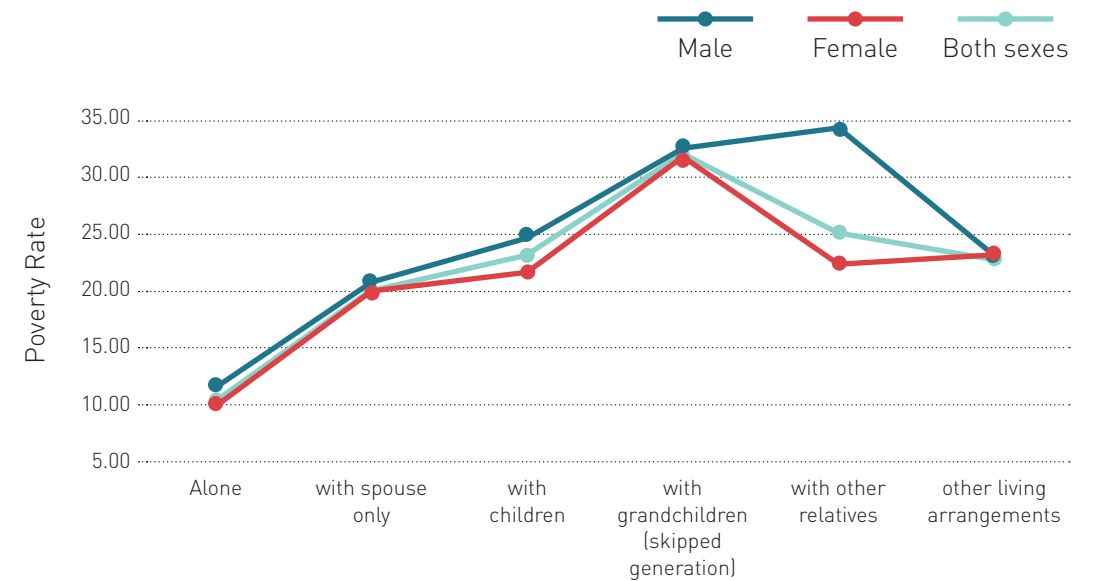
In 2014, using the standard poverty methodology in the Philippines, older women are less likely to be poor than older men. An analysis of the Annual Poverty Income Survey (APIS) 2014 suggests that 16% of older persons over 60 years old are poor, compared to 25% of the total population.¹⁷ Figure 5.3 shows that the highest poverty rates are among older persons aged 70-74. By the same measure, poverty rates are higher in older men than older women across age groups, where 18.96% of older men are poor compared to 16.65% of older women. Women aged 70-74

also reflected the poorest among the other older age groups.

Poverty rates for males and females are the same throughout childhood, then increase for women during the early reproductive years, and again in old age. The poverty gap between men and women widens significantly between 25-29 where 21% of women are poor at that age, compared to 17.5% of men. The gap narrows and closes between working age and widens again between ages 50-54, 65-69 and 75-79. Poverty rates for both sexes also dipped lowest during pre-retirement age, 50-59. The data also suggests that older groups are less likely to be poor than younger groups.

Further, poverty data indicates that older persons with young dependents face high rates of poverty. Figure 5.4 shows that older persons living with their grandchildren alone face particularly high rates of

Fig. 5.4: Poverty Rates of People Aged 60+, by Living Arrangement



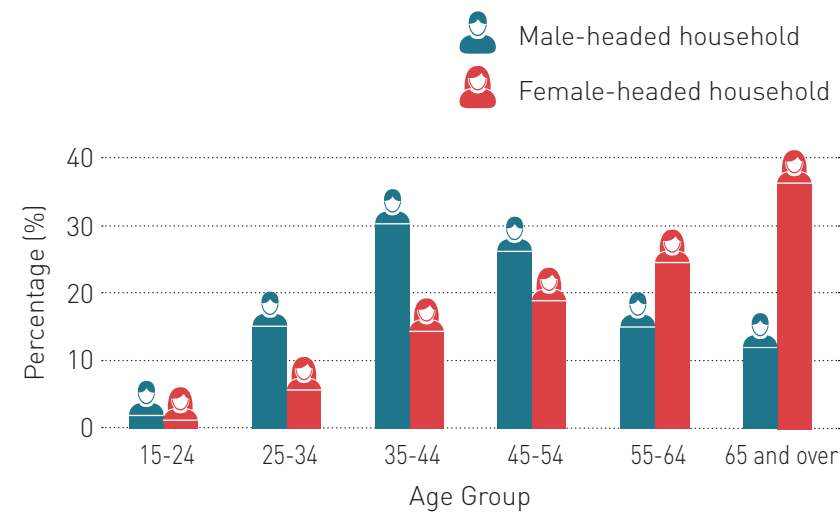
Source: Philippines Statistics Authority, "2014 Annual Poverty Indicator Survey". Derived from unpublished computation from Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).

poverty. Older women who also live with their grandchildren are far more likely to be poor than other family compositions. Using an econometric model, Mapa et al. (2011) explains that the rapid population growth resulting in a large share of young dependents in the household negatively affects the economic welfare of the older persons, decreasing their savings rate and making them vulnerable to poverty. Newer evidence on this has emerged in the four-year review of the Social Pension programme of the government where senior citizens were asked how they allocate their income in the household. One in five responded that they tend to prioritize food for other family members.¹⁸

While household headship data suggests female-headed households fare better in income distribution than male-headed households, almost two-thirds of the poorest 30% of female-headed households

tend to be older. Female household headship has been used as an indicator of feminisation of poverty. It has been argued that female-headed households were the "poorest of the poor" by the late 1970s.¹⁹ The overrepresentation of women among the poor was because "female heads of household earn a lower average income on the labour market than their male counterparts, and they face greater discrimination in securing paid employment and other kinds of resources due to time and mobility constraints".²⁰ However, recent empirical evidence from the analysis of household headship in the Philippines reveal a weak link between poverty and female household headship.²¹ Based on the 2014 Annual Poverty Indicator Survey, only about 20% of female-headed households are in the bottom 30%²² versus 33% of male-headed household. While data shows that at higher income levels, female-headed households fare better in economic terms

Fig. 5.5: Household-Heads in the Bottom 30%, by Sex (%)



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, "Annual Poverty Indicators Survey, 2014".

than their male counterparts, it is the female-headed households in the lowest-income groups that may indeed require more assistance.²³ In fact, the majority of those in the poorest 30% are older female-heads. Figure 5.5 shows that of the female-headed households in the bottom 30%, almost two-thirds (60.7%) are 55 years old and above.

However, a growing body of research casts doubts on using household as a unit of analysis in measuring poverty from a gender perspective, more so, when factoring age which influences poverty and increases women's vulnerability to it. ADB (2005) observes that in contrast to most developing countries, both incidence and severity of income poverty among female-headed households are lower than among male-headed households in the Philippines. Poverty measurement that is based on household data (as is the norm in Philippines statistics) "misses intra-household inequalities in well-being and

masks gender issues".²⁴ For example, as is the custom in Filipino families, when the food is limited, the woman tends to feed the man first, children next, and herself only after everyone has eaten.²⁵ As most mothers would say "Isusubo ko na lang, ibibigay ko pa" (Rather than eat myself, I'd rather give or share it).²⁶

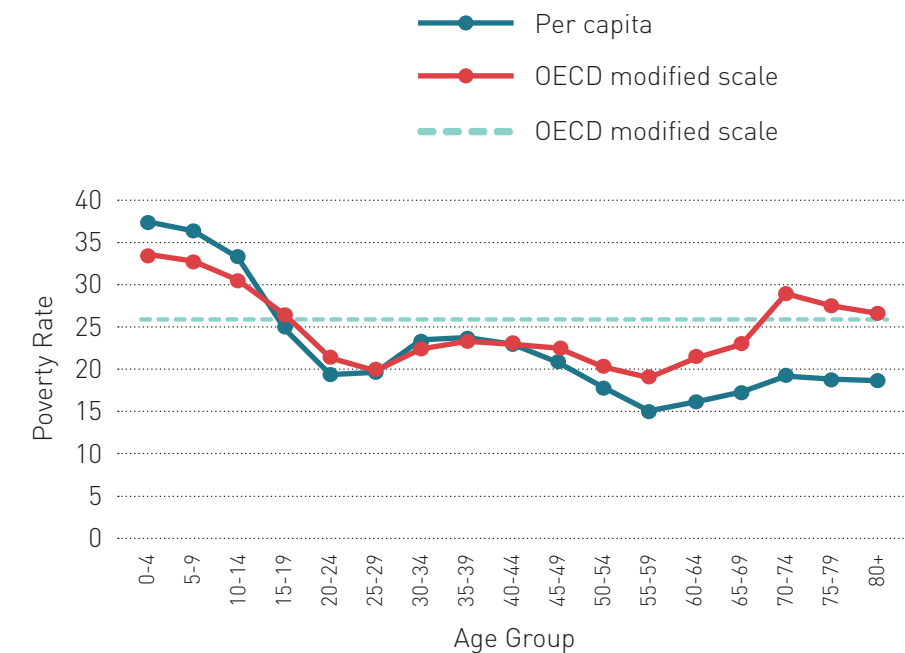
Endorsers of the gender perspective agree that "per capita household income and poverty lines are insufficient to sustain an analysis of poverty from a gender perspective"²⁷ and cite major limitations. As pointed out above, since household is treated as a unit of analysis, it assumes that resources are equitably distributed among its members. This assumption fails to analyse the phenomenon of poverty within households and to reflect processes that men and women experience in a different manner within this environment. Another limitation in revealing the gender inequalities of this methodology is its failure to consider the fact that "unpaid

domestic labour constitutes a type of income in households where an individual is devoted to domestic and caregiving tasks". Considering that male-headed households are more likely to rely on their spouse's free domestic labour, this can make a large difference to household income by avoiding the expenses associated with running the household. Moreover, another limitation of this measurement is it does not allow the "observation of differences between men and women as regards their use of time and their expenditure patterns, two aspects that allow poverty to be charted from a gender perspective." In terms of distribution of time, women devote more time to unpaid activities than men. While in respect of expenditure patterns, women

spend more of their income on the welfare of their children²⁸ and on the home than on their personal needs versus men who tend to reserve a significant part of their income for personal consumption.²⁹

In 2017, Brown, Ravallion and De Valle enumerated relevant evidence on the reliability of the standard household data in reaching poor individuals. These include: (i) evidence that rejects a unitary model of the household, suggesting new sources of inequality within households; (ii) studies explaining the 'missing women' phenomenon; (iii) evidence of discrimination against certain household members such as orphans and widows; and (iv) evidence of unequal exposure to transitory shocks.

Fig. 5.6: Poverty Rate by Age Group, with Alternative Equivalence Scales



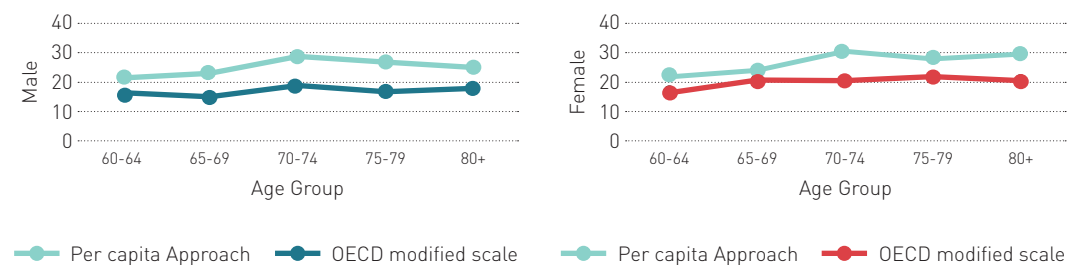
Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, "Annual Poverty Indicators Survey, 2014". The OECD modified approach assigns a value of 1 to the household head, 0.5 to each additional adult member and 0.3 to each child. Figure 1.3 in C. Knox-Vydmanov, D. Horn and A. Sevilla, 2017. *The Feasibility of a Universal Social Pension in the Philippines* (Quezon City: COSE and HelpAge International).

Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017) explains how the approaches in poverty measurement in the Philippines “make implicit assumptions that may be biased against older persons” and proposes alternative model such as “equivalence scales” as adopted in many countries including those in the OECD. Equivalence scales take into account these two factors: that there are economies of scale in larger households and that adults usually have greater needs than children. To illustrate this, Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017) compares in Figure 5.6 the poverty levels by older age groups using the standard “per capita” approach versus the OECD modified scale. The alternative method suggests that old age poverty could be higher and the extent of poverty among children could be lower.

Even with the OECD modified approach, older women are still less likely to be poor than their male counterparts, but not as how it was pictured using the per capita approach. Figure 5.7 shows that the gender gap narrowed with the OECD modified scale than when poverty is measured by per capita income.

Previous analyses of income at the individual level in the Philippines revealed gender differences, showing women are more likely to have incomes in the lowest quartile than men. Part of the gender perspective’s contribution to a broader definition of poverty consists of the call for new forms of measurement, that can represent its complexity, dynamic nature and multi-dimensionality, by means of successive approximations.³⁰ Another proposal in measuring poverty from a gender perspective is by measuring income at the individual level. As poverty can be analysed on the basis of economic autonomy, i.e., the income that individuals have to satisfy their needs, it is necessary to “open up the black box of the household” (Desarrollo, 2004, p. 19) in order to do this. While it is not proposed to replace the poverty measurement by household with poverty measurement at the individual level, the latter seeks to use advantage of the individual level to capture poverty of those who have no income of their own, even in non-poor households, thereby revealing gender differences.³¹ Evidence showing the advantage of this approach is the analysis

Fig. 5.7: Poverty Rate of People Aged 60+, by Age and Sex, Using Equivalence Scales



Source: C.Knox-Vydmanov, D. Horn and A. Sevilla. 2017. *The Feasibility of a Universal Social Pension in the Philippines*. Quezon City: COSE and HelpAge International.

of economic well-being of older Filipinos based on their individual and household income³² – it revealed that for both, women are more likely to fall in the low income category than men. Specifically, Filipino women are just under two times as likely (1.85) as men to have incomes in the lowest quartile.³³ However, it should be noted that measuring poverty at income level cannot be used to estimate the poverty of the total population.³⁴

2.2 Indicators of Financial Security

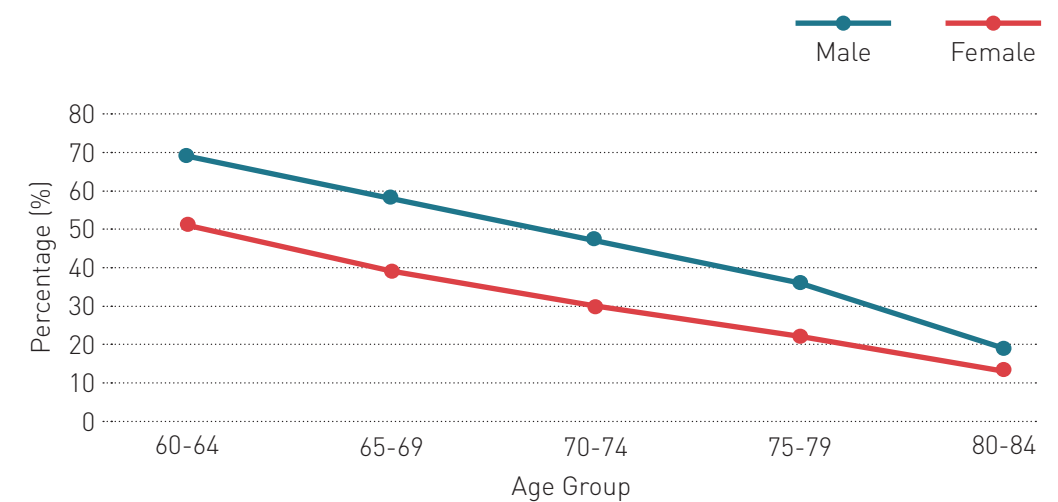
As described above, poverty analysis using methodology in the Philippines reveals older women are less poor than older men. However, relying on this alone can give a misleading picture of financial security, especially when using the gender lens. Thus, the following section describes how older women fare in terms of other indicators of financial security using other

sources of income of older persons, namely: (i) work and income-generating activities (sometimes described as “labour income”); (ii) private transfers such as support from families and remittances; (iii) income from assets and savings; and (iv) social protection, such as pensions and other cash transfers. The following section uses data from the Labor Force Survey 2012, and the 2007 Philippine Study on Aging conducted by the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) (Cruz et al. 2016). The analysis of the pension coverage came from the recently published, Feasibility of a Universal Social Pension in the Philippines (Knox-Vydmanov et al. 2017).

(i) Work and Income-Generating Activities

Key findings from the 2007 PSOA survey and the recent Labor Force Survey (LFS) reveal that significant gender difference is evident in the work status of older persons. Based

Fig. 5.8: Levels of Employment by Age Group (60-84 Years Old), LFS 2012 (%)

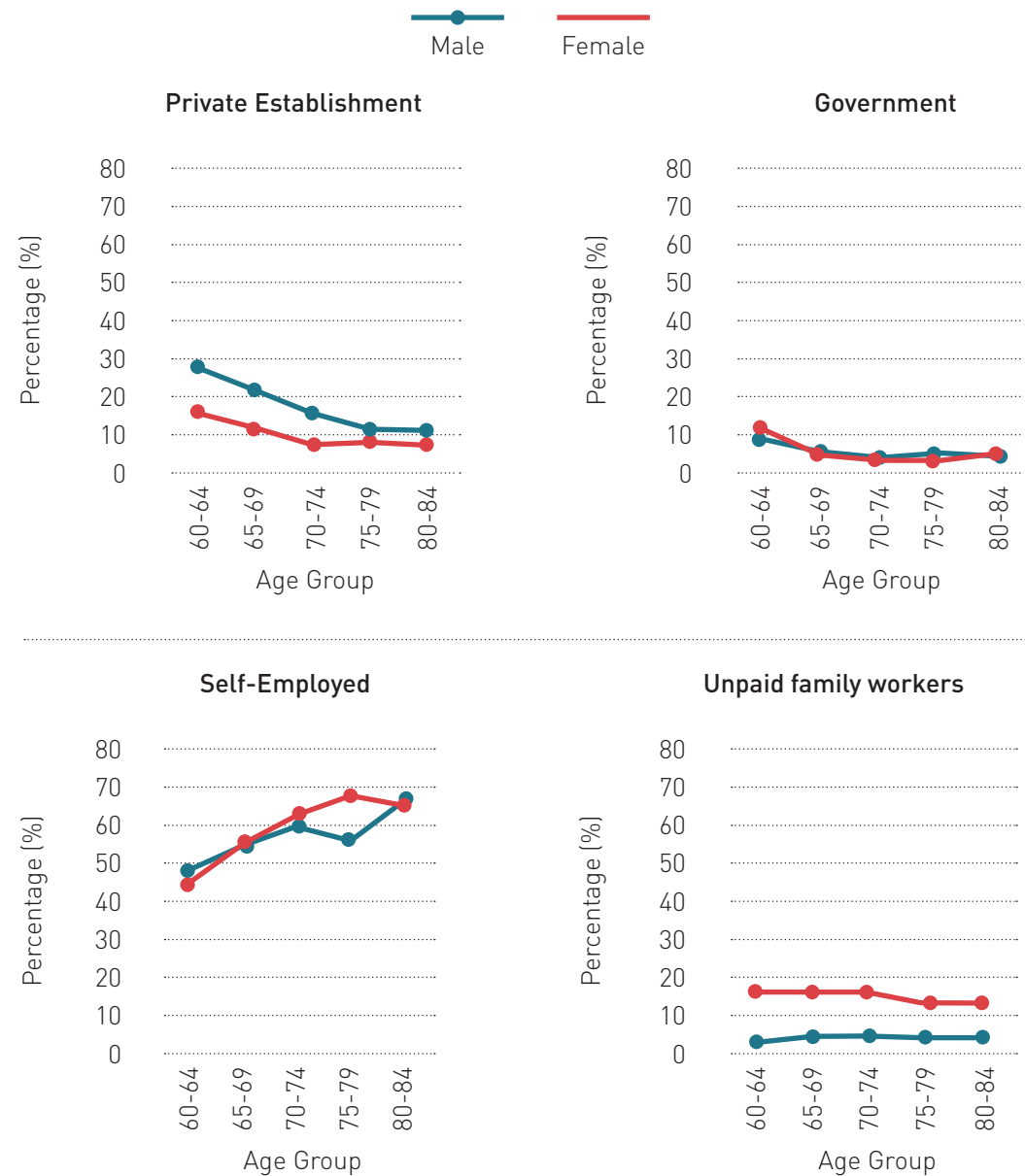


Source: Levels of employment by age group, author’s calculation using LFS 2012. Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).

on the PSDA 2007 survey, while generally older persons continue to be economically productive, only a third or 33% of older women are working compared with nearly

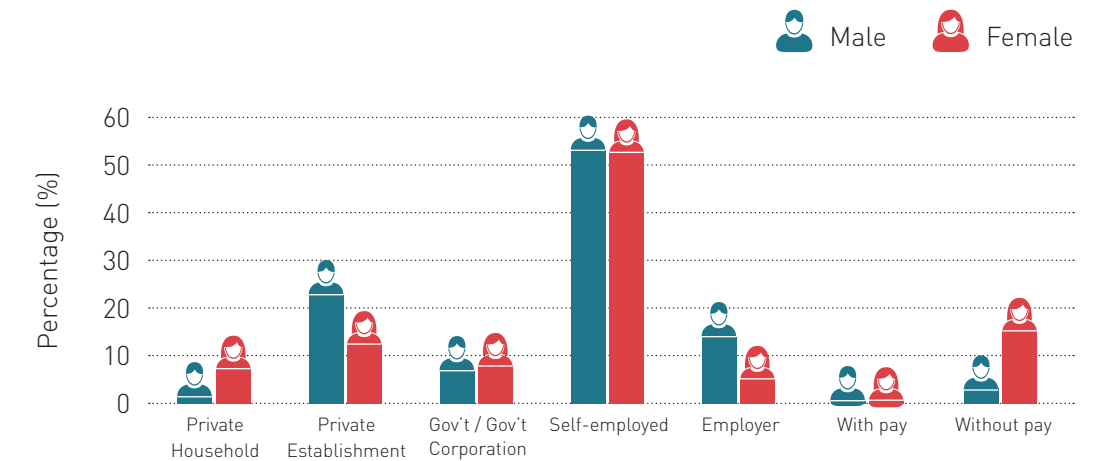
half or 47% of older men. Similarly, data from the Labor Force Survey (2012)³⁵ reveals that on average a third of older women (35%) and one-half of older men (55%)

Fig. 5.9.1: Older Women Employed in Four Key Sectors, LFS 2012 (%)



Source: Background analysis (unpublished) for levels of employment, author's calculation using LFS 2012. Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).

Fig. 5.9.2: Older Persons Employed in Different Sectors, by Sex, LFS 2012 (%)



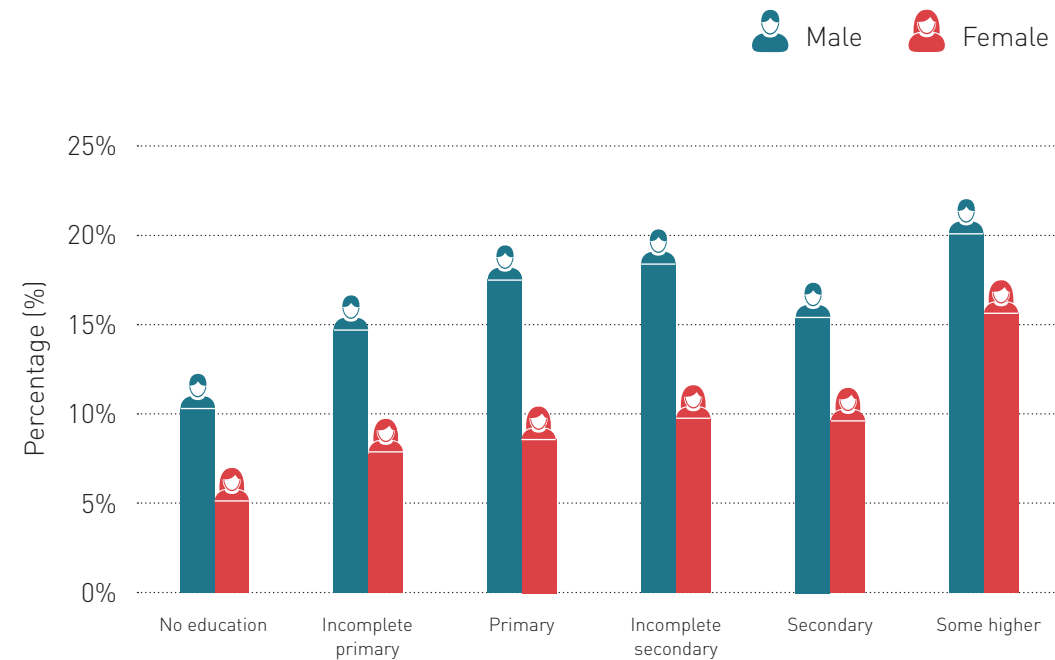
Source: Background analysis (unpublished) for levels of employment, author's calculation using LFS 2012. Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).

are employed. While the data in Figure 5.8 highlights diversity amongst older people, it is noteworthy that the levels of employment for older women remain lower across age groups. In general, most older persons in the labour force reported ill health as the reason for not working. Particular to older women, most of the women are not working because of family responsibilities. Family responsibilities are more significant reasons in younger age groups while ill health tends to dominate in advanced ages (i.e., 52% of older women age 60-64 vs 5% of older women ages 80+). This clearly indicates that "these family responsibilities are often a continuation of the substantial role that they have played in caring for children, grandchildren and others within their families throughout their lives".³⁶

Older women are more likely than men to be more in informal and vulnerable work with lower or no incomes. Data from PSDA 2007 also reveals that older women are more likely to be blue collar workers

(69.2%) than in white collar jobs which usually have a formal retirement age. This finding is strongly supported by the LFS 2012 where more older men (22%) are employed in the private sector compared with only 12.33% of older women. Figure 5.9.2 illustrates that while self-employment is high for both sexes, older women are far more likely to be in informal earning groups such as Private Household³⁷ and Unpaid Family Workers or those who worked without pay on own family-operated farm or business.³⁸ The proportion of older women (aged 60 and above) earning from work in private households accounts for 6.99% versus 1.41% of older men. Notably, 15.29% of older women are unpaid family workers compared to only 3.12% of older men. As pointed out earlier, informal sectors like self-employment do not have a retirement age nor access to a pension income. This suggests that individuals working in these sectors "have little other option but to keep working".

Fig. 5.10 Older Persons Aged 60 Years and Over Receiving Income from Work, LFS 2012 (%)

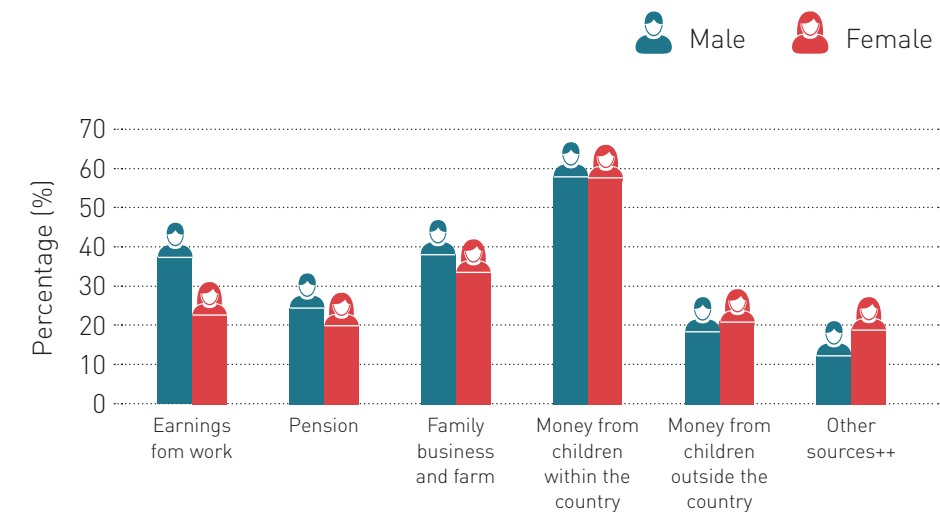


Source: Background analysis (unpublished) for levels of employment, author’s calculation using LFS 2012. Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).

Reports of having income from work are significantly higher among “young-old” older women and those with higher education. As reported in LFS 2012, the rate of older women receiving income from work shows a steady decline with increasing age but an increase with higher education levels. Around 18.2% of older women aged 60-64 receive an income from work but this rate falls sharply to 9.2% for women aged 65-69 years old, mainly as a result of the mandatory retirement age of 65. The rate of older women reporting receiving income from work reduced to 4.9% and to 2.8% upon reaching ages 70-74 and 75-79, respectively. On the other hand, as illustrated in Figure 5.10, the percentage of older women reporting receiving income from work is higher for older women with

higher education (15.6%) than those with no education at all (5%). Notably, educational advantage seems to be an important driver of employment for women in older age than men. While reports of receiving income from work are also greater for older men with higher education, the gap to those with relatively lower levels of formal education are not as wide as observed in women. This could be partially explained by the higher expectations that men should be the breadwinner of the family, regardless of their educational level, that puts pressure on them to earn an income. Meanwhile, women are likely to be involved in unpaid care work, and thus not reporting income. However, further empirical evidence is still needed to support this observation.

Fig. 5.11: Sources of Income by Sex, PSOA 2007 (%)



Source: Table 4.1 Sources of income and median monthly income by sex, in G.T.Cruz, Josefina N. Natividad, Melissa L. Gonzales and Yasuhiko Saito, *Aging in the Philippines: Findings from the 2007 Philippine Study on Aging* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Population Institute and Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc., in collaboration with the Nihon University Population Research Institute of Japan, 2016).

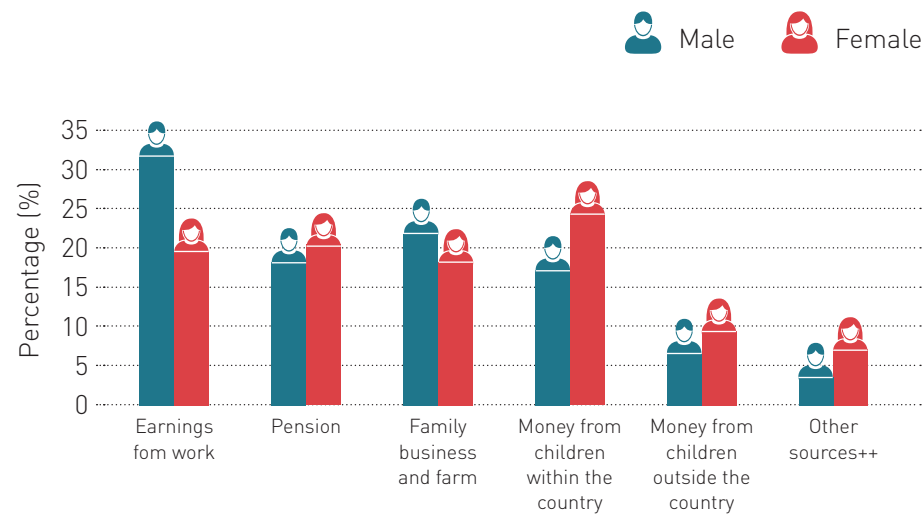
(ii) Private Transfers such as Support from Family and Remittances

Significantly, older women are more likely than men to rely on informal sources of income. For both sexes, PSOA 2007 survey shows that children inside the country is the main source of income (Figure 5.11). However, fewer women than men report receiving income from work (22.7% vs 37.5%), family business and farm (33.9% vs 38%), and pension (20% vs 24.8%). Consequently older women are likely to rely on informal sources of income (e.g., from family within and outside the country). Older women’s income from other sources (interest of time deposits, income from rentals, savings, real estate, stocks and money from other relatives outside the household) are also significantly higher than older men. In fact, older women reported that their most important source of income

is from children within the country, followed by a pension then work (Figure 5.12). In contrast to older men who reported that their most important source of income is work, followed by income from family business and farm and lastly, pension. These findings echoed the earlier study by Ofstedal, Reidy and Knodel (2003) on high reliance of older Filipino women on informal sources of income.

More older women than men rely on their children’s overseas remittances. Based on PSOA 2007 data, about a quarter (26%) of older people have a child living abroad. Among those with children abroad, 34% of older women and 22% of older men consider their children’s remittances as their most important source of income. While international remittances have a potential to support older people, only a minority receives this, and they are found

Fig. 5.12: Most Important Source of Income by Sex, 2007 PSOA (%)



Source: Table 4.2 in Cruz, Natividad, Gonzales and Saito (2016).

to be those with higher levels of education than average.³⁹

However, there are signs of the limitation of family support in terms of adequacy and regularity. Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017) observes that “financial support from children appears to be more of a last resort when continued work ceases to be an option”. The issue is not likely because the older person has no family to look to for support, as in some cases, but lies on the assumption that “children and other family members are either unable or unwilling to provide support”. Because of the wider context of poverty and vulnerability across the country, most Filipino families are either poor or have low incomes — this seems to be the main factor for their limited support for their ageing parents.⁴⁰

Moreover, while support from the children is important to older persons, particularly among women, some researchers suggest that relying on their children for support

can negatively affect the dignity, autonomy and also mental health of older persons.⁴¹ As pointed out by Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017), long before they have reached old age, older persons, whether men or women, have assumed responsibilities in their family and work. In later years, having to fully rely on their children for financial support they can find this situation demeaning for their years of independence and hard work. Most of the time, their children also face poverty and insecurity and thus are struggling with a “broad variety of competing priorities which include investing in children’s education and in their own livelihoods”.⁴² In order not to become a burden to their children, older persons continue to work to avoid this issue. The economic dependence on their family seems to have a negative effect on the mental health well-being of older persons. PSOA 2007 also found that “one in four older people (26%) are depressed, and levels are high amongst those experiencing some or considerable difficulty meeting household expenses.”⁴³

A statement of an older woman oddly captures the complexity of family support to older persons:

“S’yempre’yung mga ...naghihirap talaga yung..walang pambiling pagkain, kulang sa pera. Saka wala ka naming malapitan na mga anak na magbibigay talaga ng sapat na suporta. Minsan nga sila rin kinakapos.” (Of course, the poorest are the ones who do not have enough money to buy food, they don’t have enough money. Aside from that, you cannot really ask help from or rely on any of your children. Sometimes they also do not have enough for themselves.)⁴⁴

Lola Rosalina (84), social pension recipient, Quezon City

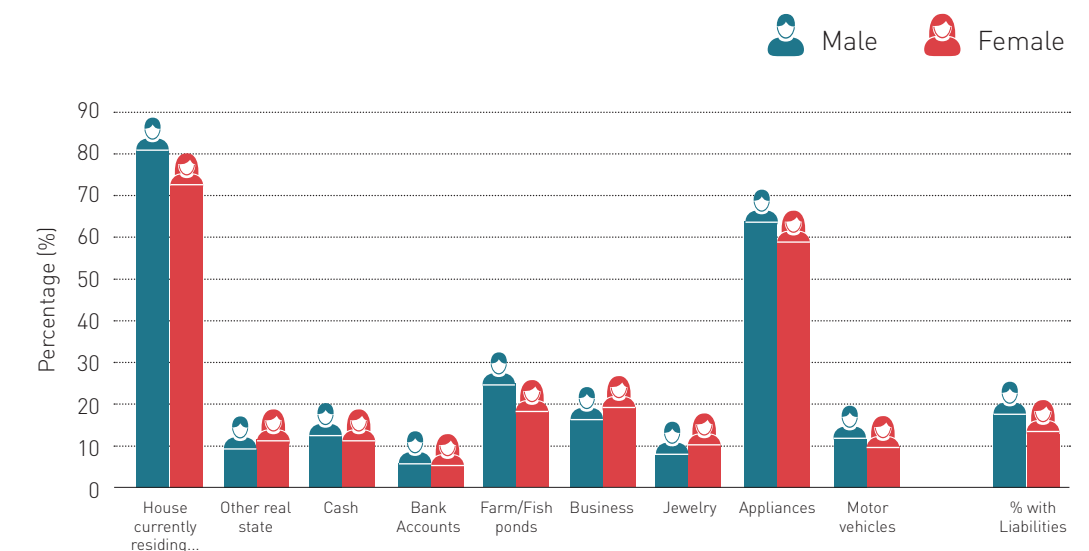
Source: Knox-Vydmanov, Horn & Sevilla (2017).

(iii) Income from Assets and Savings

There is limited gender difference in ownership of assets and having liabilities. Figure 5.13 illustrates that the most commonly owned asset among older women is the house they are currently residing in (72.8%). Older men are still at an advantage in terms of home ownership as 82% of them reported they own the house they currently live in. While more men report having appliances and farms/fishponds, more women reported having jewellery and owned a business. On the other side, the proportion of the older persons having liabilities is less among women (13%) than among men (18%).

Significant gender disparity in wealth inequality of older persons is more

Fig. 5.13: Older Persons who Own Various Assets and Percent who Have Liabilities, by Sex, 2007 PSOA (%)



Source: Table 4.3: Percent of older persons who own various assets and percent who have liabilities, by sex, in Cruz, Natividad, Gonzales and Saito (2016).

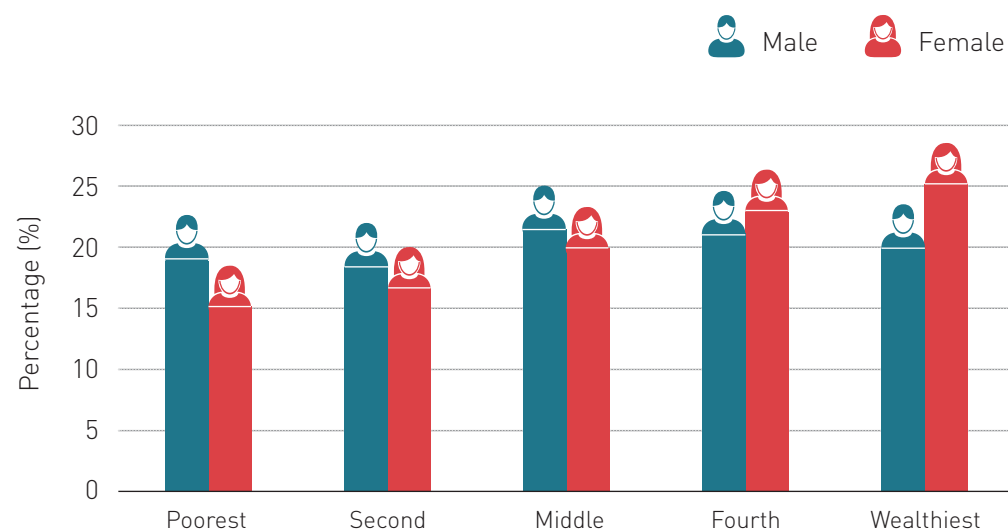
pronounced, in favour of older women. Similar to proxy means testing, the wealth index of older persons was computed based on their household assets (e.g., ownership of appliances and vehicles) and housing structure (e.g., type of housing materials, source of water, availability of electricity). It was then used as a proxy measure of the long-term standard of living of the household.⁴⁵ Cruz et al. (2016) used the methodology in the Demographic and Health Surveys where for each household, a score was constructed using the weighted sum of selected household assets and housing characteristics, with the weights assigned based on principal component analysis. The households were then ranked and divided into five equal groups of 20% each (quintiles), with 1 being the poorest 20% and 5 being the richest 20%. Surprisingly, almost half of older women were found in

the wealthiest fourth and fifth of the older population. The proportion belonging to the poorest quintile for women was only 15% compared to almost 20% for older men (Figure 5.14).

(iv) Social protection, including pensions

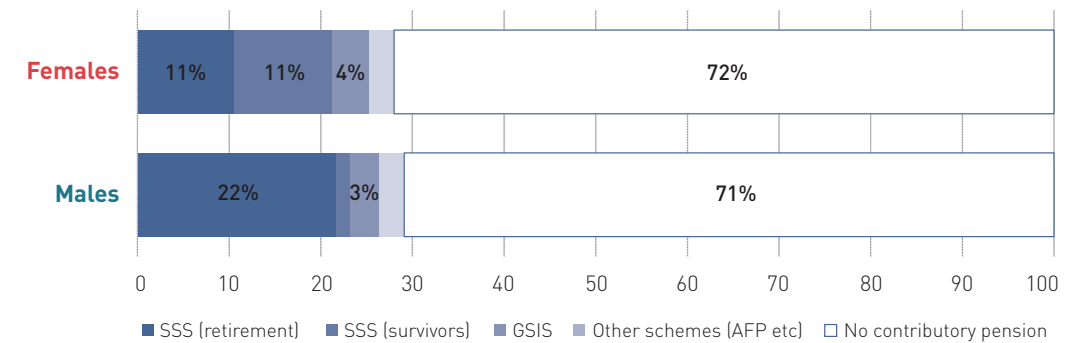
The result of the gender disparity faced by women during their working life is that women are less likely than men to access contributory pensions. Filipino women are discriminated against in terms of pension coverage, largely as a result of the labour market structure and also because of the social insurance inclusion policy.⁴⁶ Citing the results from the 2017 study the *Feasibility of a Universal Social Pension in the Philippines* (Knox-Vydmanov 2017), fewer than a third (29%) of older persons receive a contributory pension, where the

Fig. 5.14: Distribution of Older persons by Wealth Index by Sex, 2007 PSOA (%)



Source: Table 4.4. Percent distribution of older persons by wealth index, by sex, in Cruz, Natividad, Gonzales and Saito (2016).

Fig. 5.15: Share of Population 60+ by Receipt of Contributory Pensions (Multiple Years) (%)



Source: Figure 2.2 in Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017). Authors' calculations based on administrative data shared by SSS (September 2015) and GSIS (December 2015). Gender disaggregation of survivor benefits had to be estimated due to limitations of existing data. GSIS data includes old age and disability pensioners. The share of older people covered by other schemes is based on figures from Mesa-Lago, Viajar and Castillo (2011).

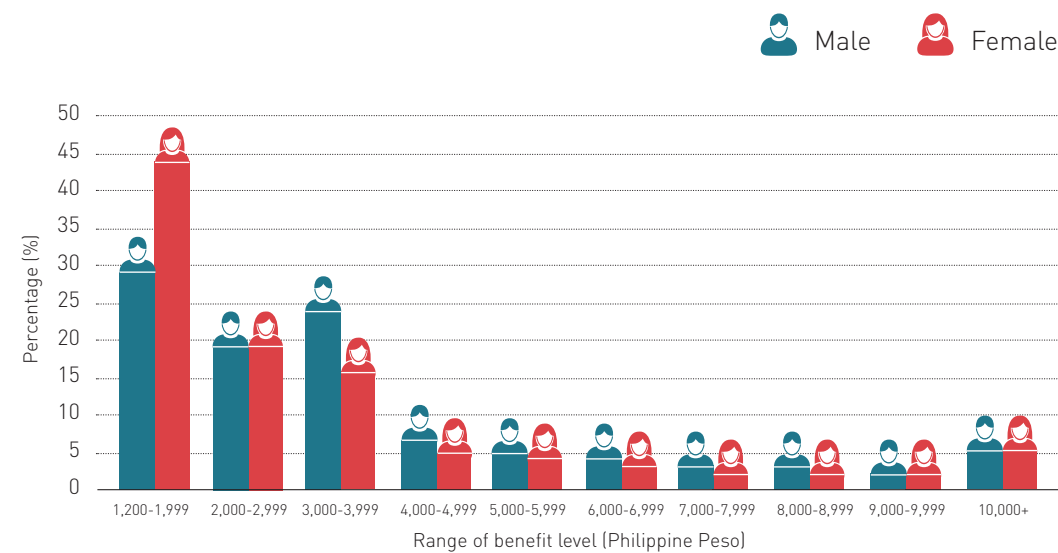
coverage rate of both sexes sits almost squarely (Figure 5.15). Pensioners from the public sector (i.e., Government Social Insurance System) are slightly greater in number among women (4%) than men (3%). However, among pensioners from private sector-employees or self-employed (i.e., Social Security System or SSS), only half of the women (50%) receive a pension based on regular payroll contributions. The other half of women receive a survivor's pension which was an entitlement given after the death of their spouse. This is significantly lower when compared to their counterparts where almost all (99%) receive an old-age pension based on pay-roll contributions.

Women have lower pension benefits. In general, most SSS retirement pensioners receive low or modest pensions⁴⁷ but these are lower among women. Meso-Lago et al. (2011) explained "private pension systems accentuate gender inequality because ownership of individual accounts precludes

any transfers from men to women, and such systems commonly use mortality tables differentiated by sex that discriminate women". Although women live longer, they get inferior pensions because, women's accumulated funds in the individual accounts are lower than men's.⁴⁸

As shown in Figure 5.16, many women fall into the lowest retirement benefit bracket with 44% of SSS women pensioners receiving below P2,000 in contrast to men pensioners at only 29%. Notably, across the rest of the pension benefit bracket (above P2,000), the percentage of women is always lower than men: 71% of males and 79% of females. Moreover, survivor's benefits – which are mainly received by women – are also low. Furthermore, based on the analysis of Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017), the minimum benefit for survivors is just P1,000 and the average benefit of P2,880 is P700 lower than the average for retirement benefits.

Fig. 5.16: Share of SSS Retirement Pensioners, by Benefit Level and Sex (%)



Source: Figure 2.4 in Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017). Authors' calculations based on SSS administrative data (September 2015).

The introduction of the Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens in 2011 has in some way closed the pension gap among older persons. In 2010, by virtue of Republic Act 9994 or the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010, a social pension of P500 per month (which is paid as P1,500 per quarter) was introduced to indigent senior citizens⁴⁹ to support them in augmenting their daily subsistence and medical needs. Since its introduction in 2011, the scheme's coverage has rapidly expanded. It started off prioritising only 77 years old and above in 2011 and reduced the age prioritization to 65 years old in 2015, and finally in 2016, the scheme covered the mandated eligibility age of 60 years old.⁵⁰ In 2017, a budget of P17.9 billion was allocated to cover around 2.8 million social pensioners,⁵¹ of which the majority are poor older women. In an estimate by Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017) using the administrative data from the Department of Social Welfare (DSWD) Social Pension Management Office,⁵² 65% of social

pensioners were older women. However, while the social pension covers a significant number of poor women, two major issues limit the impact of the social pension. First, by design, the means-targeted nature of the scheme excludes "a large proportion of vulnerable older people" and may also mean "many of the very poorest older people are left out" because of targeting errors. Secondly, the scheme provides a limited level of income security with a benefit level of P500 – this is low relative to both Filipino and international benchmarks.⁵³

In 2007, the reported monthly median income of older persons barely breached the poverty threshold. According to PSOA 2007, older persons have meagre incomes, registering a monthly median of P3,000 (or US\$65 assuming the exchange rate of P46.15). Older women reported a lower median monthly income of P3,000/month versus the P3,300 median income of older men.⁵⁴ It should also be noted that older

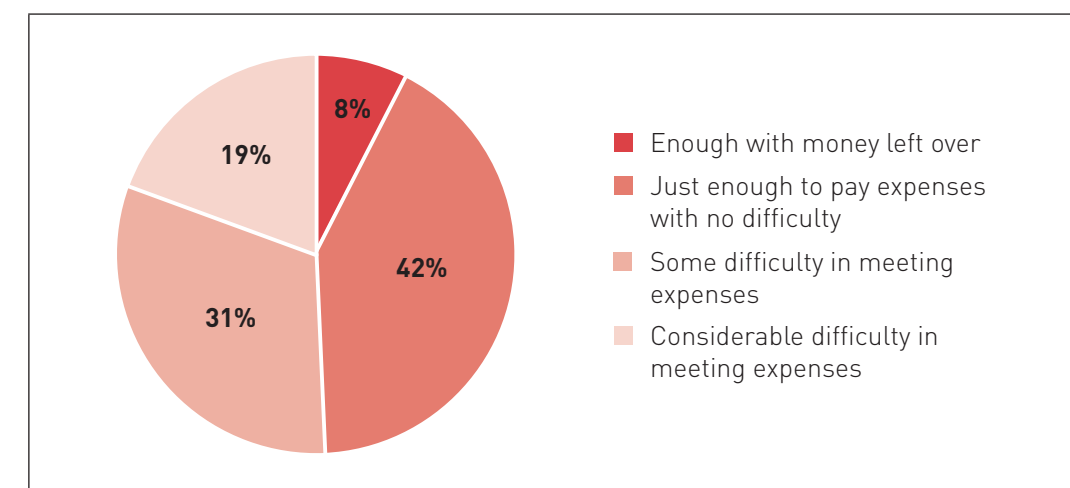
women's incomes are mostly from informal sources, particularly support from children.

While PSOA 2007 shows that in general, older Filipinos are in a "precarious economic condition", the limited access of older women to formal sources of income, as supported by Labor Force surveys and pension data, indicates that older women are more financially insecure than older men. Financial security is not just merely an absence of poverty but also includes the regularity and adequacy of financial income received in old age, especially when work ceases. Previous analyses in this section show disadvantages faced by older women in terms of income from formal employment and pensions, which are relatively regular and more predictable than family support is. The absence or limited predictable income means older women become more increasingly dependent on children's income. While this is important

to older persons, there are signs that the wide poverty and vulnerability amongst family limits their capacity to support their ageing parents, especially older women. In particular, data on income from work, pension and international remittances suggests that older women with limited formal education faces more insecurity than older women who have higher educational attainment.

The economic insecurity of older persons, especially older women, is reflected in their self-rated economic well-being. Based on self-assessment, half of older women reported poor economic well-being. As shown in Figure 5.17, 19.4% and 31.3% of older women reported considerable and some difficulty in meeting their household expenses, respectively. Nearly half or 41.8% of older women reported they have enough to pay expenses, with no difficulty. A modest proportion (7.5%) of older women reported

Fig. 5.17: Self-Assessed Sufficiency of Household Income to Meet Household Expenses of Older Women, 2007 PSOA (%)



Source: Table 4.5. Self-assessed sufficiency of household income to meet household expenses of older women in Natividad, Gonzales and Saito (2016).

they have enough with some left over. While subjective assessment of economic well-being reveals there is no gender difference in perceived sufficiency of their household income to meet everyday expenses, Ofstedal, Reidy and Knodel (2003) observes that it is possible that “women are less apt to report negative feelings about their financial situation, particularly if they are dependent on others for financial support”. However, this observation is yet to be supported with future research.

3. Factors Leading to Financial Insecurity of Women

Evidence from the Philippines clearly shows that there are differences between older men and women in terms of financial security. As discussed in the previous section, when measuring financial security using the four main sources of incomes, older women are less secure than men. This section describes how past sex differentials in younger years of women have led to the status of older women as described in Section 2. It describes how a number of inter-related factors have put women at risk of financial insecurity in old age.

3.1 Gaps in Human Capital and Access to Health and Education

High fertility is likely to affect women’s economic status. As discussed earlier, there is a steady decline in the fertility rate of women 15-49 years old. However, this remains high compared with neighbouring countries, making Philippines a relatively young country. Evidence points to the fact that high fertility has links to poverty and low participation of women in the labour force. Fertility is to be observed high in women

with low education and in the poorest wealth quintile. Based on NDHS 2013, women with at least some college or higher education have an average of 2.1 children, while women with only elementary education have 4.6 children. The poorest women have more than twice as many children as women who live in the wealthiest households (5.2 versus 1.7 children per woman). Women with high school and college education are much more likely to delay childbearing than women with only elementary education.⁵⁵ Further, Orbeta and Aniceto (2005) concludes that the low labour-force participation rate (LFPR) of women is linked to the country’s high fertility rates.

Women lack access to reproductive health services and information. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health education, information, and services improves health, saves lives, and reduces poverty.⁵⁶ However, in 2011, Philippines ranked highest in Southeast Asia in terms of teenage pregnancy, accounting for 54 per 1,000 live births. This is mainly attributed to the lack of comprehensive sexuality education and limited access to adolescent-friendly reproductive health services in the country.⁵⁷ In the same year, an unmet need for family planning was found among 19.3% of married Filipino women of reproductive age, a slight decrease from the 22% indicated in the 2008 NDHS. Unmet need was highest among poor women (25.8%), adolescent girls (37%), women with no education (29.2%), and women in ARMM (35.8%).⁵⁸ This is likewise linked to the lack of proper information on family planning.

Literacy rates show females are slightly ahead of males. Based on the 2008 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media survey (FLEMMS), females scored

significantly higher in Functional Literacy Rate (FLR) which are lifelong literacy skills that can translate to higher survival skills.⁵⁹ FLR stands at 88.7% for females and 84.2% for males while Simple Literacy Rate (SLR) for females stand at 96.1% and 95.1% for males. Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for 2010-2011 was computed at 91.07 while male NER was lower at 88.78. More girls are enrolled in elementary education than boys during that period with a 1.03 score in Gender Parity Index (GPI) or 103 girls to every 100 boys. While the NER is lower in public secondary level than elementary level, female NER is still higher than their male counterparts. Likewise, more girls were able to complete the prescribed number of years in both elementary and secondary education. Females also have an advantage in terms of higher education where in 2005-2006, females accounted for more than half of the total enrollees compared with males at 45.52%.⁶⁰ Major findings from NDHS 2008 reveal that about a third of women from age 15-49 have gone to college and almost all (97%) Filipino are literate.⁶¹

Despite the increase in women’s education rates and completion, continued systemic segregation in the education system was observed by World Bank (2013) and ADB (2013), primarily at the tertiary or university levels. Women continue to choose fields that perpetuate their socially ascribed roles, reflecting the persistence of gender stereotyping pattern in chosen areas of study. Women dominate education, medical and allied fields, and business administration but are unlikely to take engineering and technology courses. GLMS (Philippines Gender Labour Market Study) points out that women’s concentration in certain fields contributes to the occupational and industrial segregation by sex⁶² and limits

women’s opportunities for employment in more technical fields.

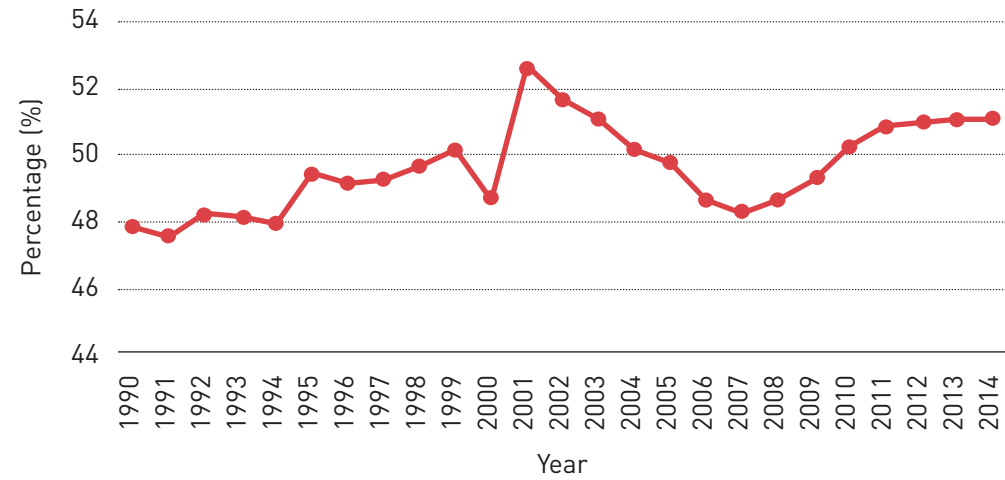
3.2 Gender Gaps in Economic Opportunities

Clearly, women’s strides in education have not translated to improved economic outcomes for women overall. The Philippines is regarded as one of Asia’s fastest growing economies. The economic growth however is unable to effectively promote inclusive growth that will benefit women.⁶³ To achieve inclusive growth for women, employment opportunities and decent work outcomes for women are necessary to promote gender equality in labour markets.⁶⁴ The Asian Development Bank (2013) ascertained gender inequality in the Philippines by referencing to seven gender gaps (or deficits in women): labour-force participation, human capital, the unpaid domestic and care work burden, vulnerable employment, wage employment, decent work and social protection. While generally, ADB (2013) observes gender gaps have been significantly reduced, women still suffer from the persistent gender deficits as discussed below.

- **Women are less likely to be employed than men.** The average rate of Filipino women’s participation in labour-force activities has been remarkably stable for the last 25 years. Figure 5.18 shows the average Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of women has hovered around 50% for the last 25 years, going from 48% in 1990 to 51% in 2014. ADB (2013) attributed this to inadequate employment and decent work opportunities, domestic labour and care constraints, and social norms.

However, the Philippine Commission on Women (2013) observes that one factor

Fig. 5.18: Women’s Labour-Force Participation Rate in the Philippines, 1990-2014 (%)



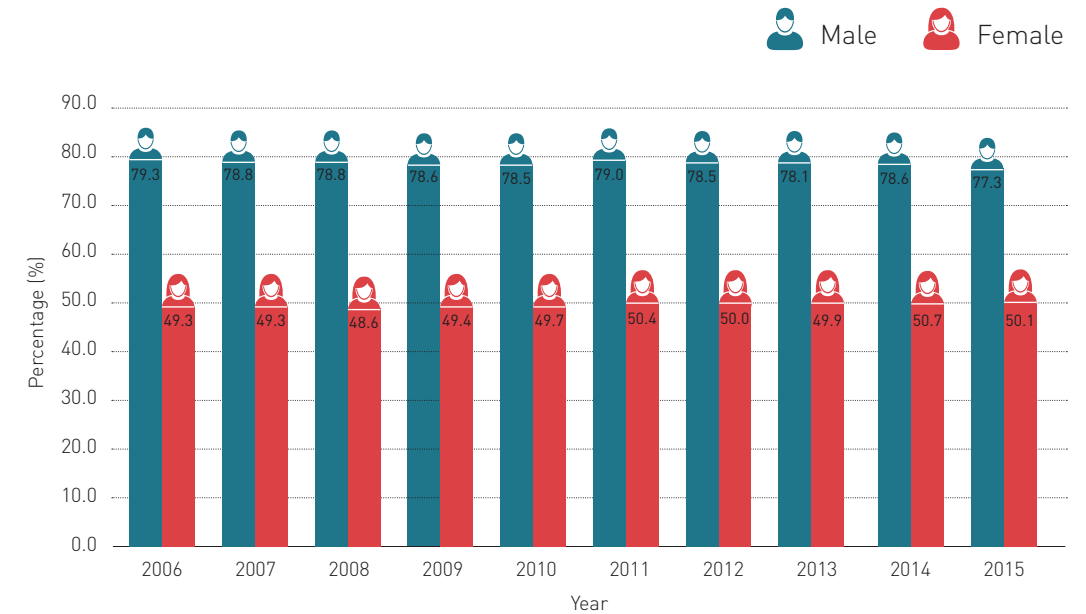
Source: World Bank, “World Development Indicators”, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?end=2014&locations=PH&start=1990> (Accessed April 2017).

in the low LFPR of women could be “the definition of LFPR itself and of persons who are and who are not in the labor force”. They argued that the definition⁶⁵ used by the National Statistics Office or NSO (now Philippine Statistics Authority) to identify persons in the labour force “effectively excludes women who take care of their families but whose work is not counted”.

Over the last decade, the gender gap has narrowed but Filipino women have consistently low LFPR compared to Filipino men. As shown in Figure 5.19, the gender gap declined from 30 percentage points in 2006 to 27.2 in 2015. This is partly because of a small decline in male participation rates in the labour force. The low LFPR among women than men despite their advantage in literacy is quite unique to the Philippines compared to other countries with low LFPR of women, as noted by the PCW (2013).

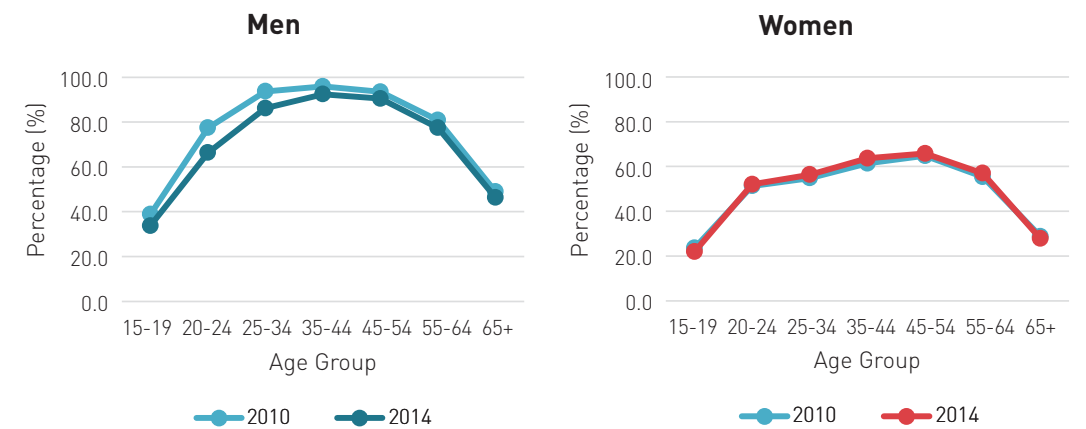
• **Domestic and care duties affect women’s work more than men’s.** 31% of working-age Filipino women said they were unable to join the labour force due to household and family obligations while only 3% of men reported the same experience.⁶⁶ Women’s participation in the labour force varies greatly with men across age groups as women are more likely to be interrupted during the childbearing age (25-34) (Figure 5.20). Likewise, as observed by the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, across the life course, low LFPR were observed among ever married women than that of those never married. It was lowest at ages 15–24 but started to peak during the late 40s, the gap being more pronounced during the childbearing age of 29–39 years.⁶⁷ It should be noted that aside from the difficulties young women face raising children and working in the paid labour market, the drop in younger age groups

Fig. 5.19: Labour-Force Participation by Sex in the Philippines, 2006-2015 (%)



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2017).

Fig. 5.20: Labour-Force Participation Rates by Age and Sex in the Philippines, 2010 and 2014 (%)



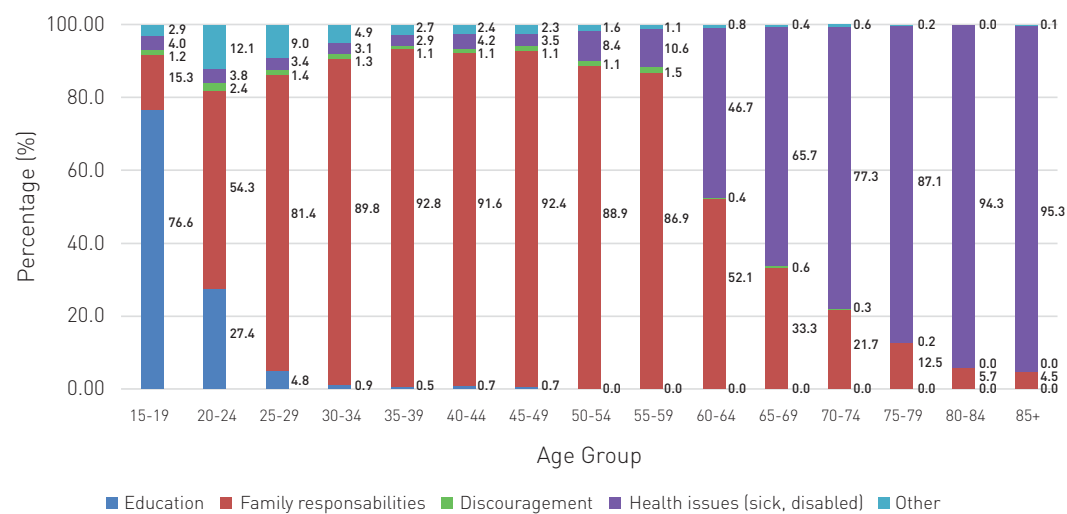
Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2017).

also reflects the increased enrolment of women in education compared to men.⁶⁸ Further, Horn (forthcoming) observes that the “core values of the country tend to be geared towards family formation and maternal care”.⁶⁹ Figure 5.21 illustrates that the reason for economic inactivity of women in working age is family responsibilities. This unique challenge to women is recognised in the Philippine Development Plan 2016-2022 where it is cited “there is no legal framework promoting work-life balance that will resolve the dilemmas faced by many women wanting to join the labor force”. Women workers also face additional vulnerability during pregnancy and maternity since current maternity leave benefits are not sufficient to ensure that mothers have enough time to rest, recuperate, and regain their full health and adequately breastfeed their newborn.⁷⁰ Relatively high fertility rates will continue to raise the demand for women’s

unpaid labour time, especially given the low availability of childcare services.⁷¹

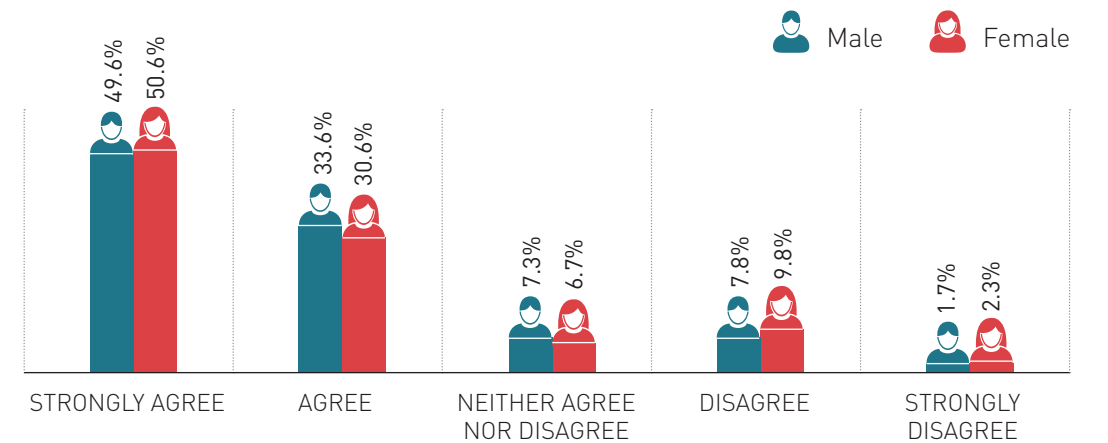
Complicating the picture on unpaid care work, the lack of a formal care system for older persons often puts more pressure on the family. Traditionally, care of older members of the family is often delegated to women and girls. Since care of elderly family members is full-time work and often unpaid work, this impacts on women’s labour-force participation and on girl’s school attendance. On the other hand, care work for older persons also breeds inequalities based on gender, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. For instance, in the Philippines, the distribution of unpaid care work is often delegated only among women but paid care work can be delegated to men; also, the right to receive care work is often determined by economic status.⁷³

Fig. 5.21: Reasons for Economic Inactivity among Women by Age Group, 2012 (%)



Source: Author’s computation Labor Force Survey 2012, Horn (forthcoming).

Fig. 5.22: “Is it a Man’s Job to Earn Money and a Woman’s Job to Take Care of the Home?” (%)



Sources: International Social Survey Programme (2012); Author’s calculations from Horn (forthcoming).

Further, as Horn (forthcoming) observes, the distinct example of intrinsic values reveals the strength the country places on the traditional breadwinner model. According to the country data of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2012, in the vast majority of respondents surveyed (both men and women), the role of men was considered as breadwinners and women as home workers (Figure 5.22).

economic shocks, and often are incapable of generating sufficient savings to offset these shocks. They are less likely than wage workers to contribute to pension plans and other social insurance programmes, and workplaces are less likely to be regulated by health and safety standards or regulation on working conditions. Although some own-account workers may be able to attain high productivity, high and stable incomes, voice through networks, and ability to purchase social security, the majority of own-account workers experience low productivity, low and unstable demand for their products and services, and few opportunities for decent work.⁷⁵

- **Women are more likely to hold lower quality employment or vulnerable employment.** In 2004, the vulnerable employment⁷³ rate was 5.7 percentage points higher for women than men.⁷⁴ In the same year, low-wage work, defined as work that pays a daily wage of less than two-thirds of the median daily wage work, is also higher among women with a 17.6% rate compared with 13.15% for men. World Bank (2013), ADB (2013), and ILO (2015) cited that own-account workers or contributing family workers have limited security, social protection, and safety nets against

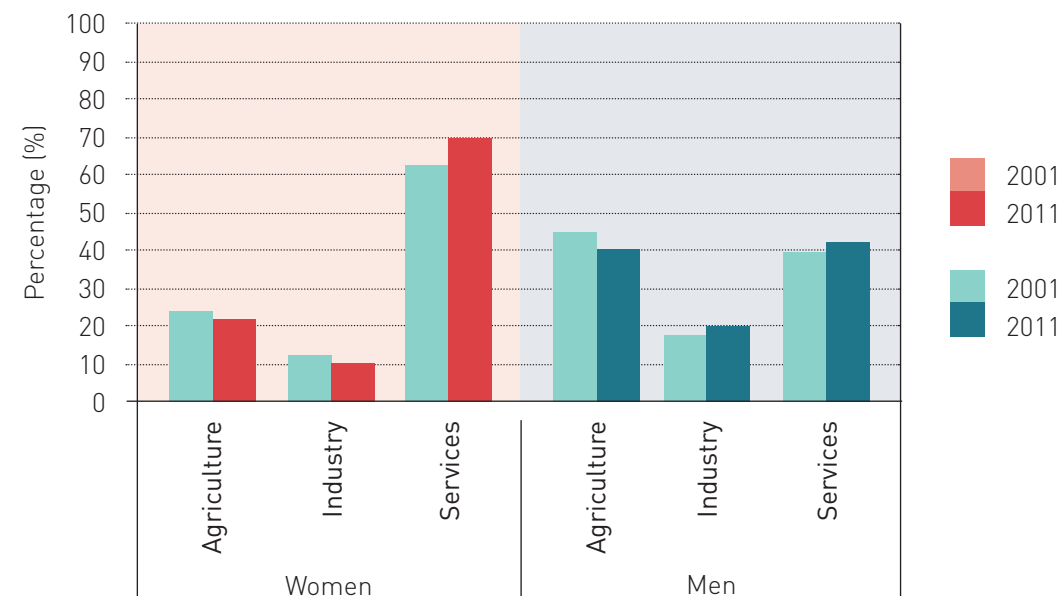
- **Women are likely to experience discrimination in the labour market.** According to ADB 2003, indicative of the challenges in promoting productive and decent work for women is the low employment of women (accounted at 10%) in the industry sector. From 2000-2011, there was a shift in women’s employment

out of both agriculture and industry into services (Figure 5.23). The declining share of women’s employment in the industry sector suggests a deteriorating environment for decent work of women. The considerable horizontal segregation exhibited in paid work, with women concentrated into different and fewer industries than men, reflects discrimination against women in the labour market. And as pointed out earlier, there is also discrimination and cultural stereotyping in education and training. Industrial segregation by sex, as stressed by ADB (2013), reduces opportunities for women, constrains productivity and growth by not attracting the most productive workers, and tends to confine women to low-wage industries.

Further, as pointed by activist and feminist Princess Nemenzo, there exists in the country the domestication of women where women are stereotyped and isolated to low-paying domesticated tasks such as secretarial jobs, domestic work, entertainment, hospitality and service industries. The over-emphasis on women’s “caring nature” has a tendency to dismiss their other abilities, opportunities, and needs.⁷⁶

• **Women are more likely to receive lower wages than men.** One of women workers’ vulnerabilities is lower wages arising from lower-level jobs. The Decent Work Country Profile of the Philippines notes that from 2001 to 2004, women declared a higher

Fig. 5.23: Employment Share by Economic Sector, Women and Men in the Philippines, 2001 and 2011 (%)



Source: Government of the Philippines, Department of Labor and Employment. Decent Work Statistics Online Database, <http://www.bles.dole.gov.ph/dews/>, Figure 6, ADB (2013).

average real daily basic pay than men. The reverse happened from 2005 to 2008, but women’s pay was marginally higher in 2009 and continued to increase slightly in 2010 (ILO 2012). Still overall, the average daily basic pay of women in real terms was lower than that of their male counterparts.⁷⁷

ADB (2013) noted that the gender (daily) wage gap in the Philippines in 2011 was -3%, indicating women’s advantage (Table 5.1). However, it should be emphasised

that this is only based on the average daily rate of pay, and does not take into account differences in amounts of paid work. If the fact that women spend less time at “paid work” than men is taken into account, the adjusted gender wage gap is estimated to range from 23% to 30%.⁷⁸

The gender wage gap for the paid labour market as a whole masks vast differences across occupations and industries. In the Philippines, the gender wage gap in the

Table 5.1: Gender Wage Gap by Major Occupation Group: Philippines, 2001-2015

Major Occupation Group	Year			
	2001	2006	2011	2015
Officials of Government and Special Interest-Organizations, Corporate Executives, Managers, Managing Proprietors and Supervisors	-2.3	3.9	-3.2	-3.3
Professionals	10.8	12.3	10.6	8.5
Technicians and Associate Professionals	5.9	13.6	11.9	11.3
Clerks	5	-3.2	2.7	3.7
Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers	33	37.2	34.3	30.8
Farmers, Forestry Workers and Fishermen	20.5	25.1	13.3	-19.6
Trades and Related Workers	19.4	24.8	26	27.5
Plant & Machine Operators and Assemblers	0.6	0.3	-1.1	6
Laborers and Unskilled Workers	20.4	30.9	27.1	26.5
Special Occupations	39	37.3	36.8	5.7
TOTAL	-3.9	2.7	-3.2	-5.4

Source: Decent Work Statistics Online Database, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). Table 2 in Albert & Vizmanos (2017).

service workers, shop, and market sales occupations is 34%. Thus, the service workers occupations offer relatively low daily wages on average than other occupations for women and the gender wage gap is higher.⁷⁹

3.3 Other factors

Between raising their children and striving for their everyday needs, working adults are expected to support their ageing parents. Unlike many developing countries, the Philippines lacks a formal support system in caring for its ageing population. The children are expected to provide care and economic security to their parents in old age, mainly because the children are said to incur “*utang na loob*” (debt of gratitude) not only for the sacrifices their parents have made in the process of raising them but for giving them life itself.⁸⁰ This is reflected in the recent analysis conducted by Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017) on the views of working adults in securing income in old age. This was captured in a statement of a young female respondent: “Our basic task is to get an education for the children that really will give a good future because only the child can return the investment. We will be able to eat delicious food when the child has work if the (child) has his/her own source of income. This is what I really long for at this time. If they have an income, they can share with the family. That’s what I’m really longing for, Sir”.

Roces and Roces (2013) wrote that probably one of the greatest sins in the eyes of the Philippine society is when a son or daughter does not love his or her parents. Further they stressed “greater service is usually expected from the daughter than from the son when it comes to satisfying

a mother’s need”.⁸¹ This strong social norm may favour older women as more filial support from children is a substitute for a lack of formal mechanisms provided through work or private and public pension. However, there is a strong indication that depending completely on family for support often shatters the dignity and worth of older persons.

There is also age discrimination among older working adults. Many local employers practice discrimination against older workers not only when they enforce age limits during hiring, but also when promoting or firing workers. Service institutions like malls and restaurants rarely keep attendants beyond 25 years of age.⁸² There are also reports that returning Overseas Filipino Workers or OFWs also have difficulty looking for employment because of the employer’s preference for younger employees. Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the extent that age discrimination affects women and which age groups are affected most. While the Philippines has also set a mandatory retirement age at 65 years, advocates promote that it should be optional rather than mandatory to protect older women’s right to continue working and accumulate pension benefits where they choose to do so.

3.4 Vulnerable Groups of Women

a) Children and child labour. An NSO and ILO 2011 survey reported that there were 5.49 million working children, aged 5-17, in the Philippines. About 58.4%, or an estimated 3.21 million of them, were considered as child labourers.⁸³ Of the 3.21 million, 2.99 million are in hazardous labour, while 217,000 are in other forms of child labour. Of the 2.99

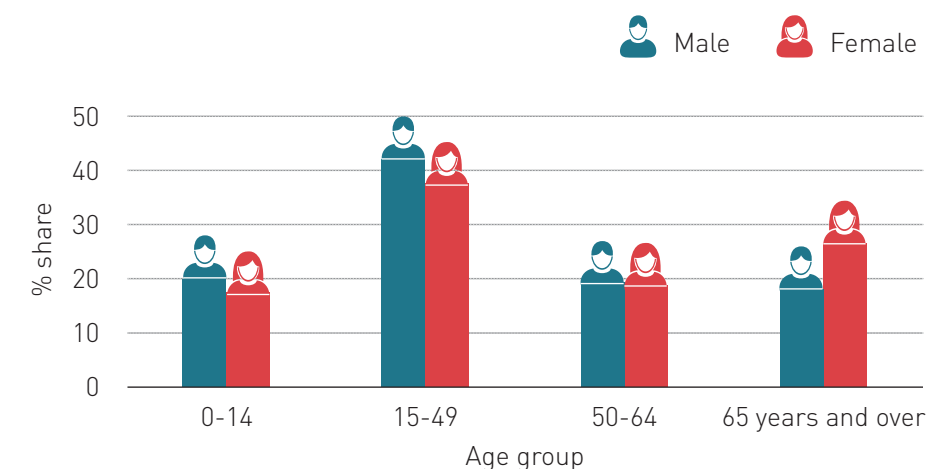
million children in hazardous labour, 1.999 million are boys, while 994,000 are girls. Among girls in hazardous labour, 61.8% are unpaid workers in household-operated farm/business, while 20% are workers in private establishments. While child labour is predominantly a phenomenon of the male child, the latest figures showed the patent sex-segregation of work in the household and communities, which often continues until adulthood. In the agricultural sector, the girl child and other female members in the family usually assume the role of an unpaid worker, since the tasks assigned to them are deemed to be extensions of their roles in the household.⁸⁴

outnumbering women (50.9% versus 49.1%). As shown in Figure 5.24 the most productive age groups (15 to 49 years) had the highest proportion of PWDs among women. A significant proportion of PWDs was found among children below 14 years old. This could be an indicator of the level of early onset of congenital disabilities. The combined percentage of disabilities among those of pre-working age (14 years and below) and the elderly (65 years and over) was 43.7%. This finding has very telling implications for the dependency (if they are not working) and healthcare requirements of these groups.⁸⁵

b) Women and girls with disabilities. The 2010 National Census of Population and Housing reports that of 92.1 million Filipinos, 1.4 million were persons with disabilities (PWDs), with men slightly

c) Women engaging in informal sector. According to the Philippine Commission on Women, “feminization of poverty and discrimination mean that the most vulnerable and marginalized groups tend to end up in the informal

Fig. 5.24: Household Population with Disability, by Broad Age and Sex: Philippines (%)



Source: PSA, “Persons with Disability in the Philippines”, 2013. (Results from the 2010 Census).

economy”.⁸⁶ Based on its 2008 survey, the National Statistics Office (NSO) estimated about 10.5 million workers in the informal sector, of whom two-thirds (66%) were males and the remaining one-third (34%) were females. Being unregistered, informal sector workers are presumably outside the reach of government services. Thus, while most of them operate without paying their taxes, they could be exposed to exploitative working conditions, including low wages, violation of workers’ rights, hazardous working environment, and lack of social protection. While this type of work is seen as a flexible alternative source of income that is suitable especially for wives and mothers, the short-term gains may be outweighed by the long-term negative impact on economic growth and job creation.⁸⁷ Women are considered as marginalised because they are generally unpaid or underpaid, unprotected, unorganised home-based workers (counted statistically as self-employed or own-account workers).⁸⁸

d) Migrant workers. Migration for work abroad has been recognized as a long-term structural feature of the national economy, with women making up 50 to 60% of the overseas workforce.⁸⁹ Data from POEA shows that from 2001 to 2012, more women than men were consistently deployed, except in 2007 and 2008. The 2011 Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF) indicates that the largest proportion of OFWs belonged to the 25–29 and 30–34 age groups.⁹⁰ Female OFWs were younger compared to the males. About 3 of 10 female OFWs (26.6%) were aged 25 to 29 years,

and 1 of 4 (24.8%) were aged 30 to 34 years. This predominance of relatively younger migrant women implies that they could be leaving behind their relatively younger children, whose care is now left to the husband or other relatives,⁹¹ oftentimes, to their ageing parents. Cruz and Camhol (2014) noted that “international migration is not without a cost, as older persons became the surrogate parents of children of OFWs”. On the other hand, overseas workers can be subjected to abuse and exploitation. Women in domestic and entertainment work are particularly vulnerable.⁹² This sector is also particularly vulnerable because of lack of social protection. While the number of OFWs rose from 933,419 to 1,470,826 in 2004-2010 (POEA 2005-2010), only 16.8% were SSS members in 2010. Higher estimates show that there are 8 million documented OFWs and 2 million undocumented, with a net emigration of 300,000 annually. The minimum salary for contributions of OFWs is higher than those self-employed because they earn higher wages abroad, with P5,000 for OFWs and P1,000 for the self-employed.⁹³

e) Women experiencing violence. ADB (2005) observed that violence against women is also widespread in the Philippines. This includes sexual harassment in schools and at work, domestic violence, human trafficking and forced prostitution. Violence against women causes severe health problems, affects earnings, job performance, and job security. It is one of the factors that causes low productivity among women and makes them vulnerable to poverty.

f) Indigenous peoples. Indigenous Peoples (IPs) living in highly fragile and vulnerable ecosystems, people in the Cordillera highlands and in Mindanao Island, are among the poorest in the country. This brings to mind another important dimension of social protection which is property ownership and inheritance rights of women — particularly significant for rural women and IP women.⁹⁴

4. Conclusions

When looking at the financial security of older women, it is vital to look into the “connection between the individual and the historical and socioeconomic context in which these individuals lived” (Kertzer, n.d.). The life-course approach provides a different picture of financial security of women as it goes beyond the present situation and analyses the factors or processes experienced throughout life. However, existing data-sets in the Philippines have conceptual and methodological weaknesses to generate such analyses. For an instance, the use of per capita household income and poverty lines has fundamental limitations in analysing poverty of older people and from a gender perspective. As argued in this chapter, while it is ideal to conduct an analysis at the individual level, it is difficult to do so since resources are generally pooled at the family or household level in the Philippines.

Based on the indicators of financial security, older women are found to be less secure than men. Poverty analysis methodology in the Philippines reveals older women are less poor than older men. However,

based on the limitations on the use of household data in analysing the poverty levels of older women, other indicators of financial security were used in this chapter. These indicators include: (i) work and income-generating activities (sometimes described as “labour income”); (ii) private transfers such as support from families and remittances; (iii) income from assets and savings; and (iv) social protection, such as pensions and other cash transfers. Generally, older women were found to be in a more disadvantaged position than men in terms of formal sources of income such as work and income-generating activities and social protection (including pensions and cash transfer). However, older women are in a better position in terms of informal sources, primarily private transfers from families and remittances. On the other hand, older women fare equally with older men in terms of income from assets and savings. When savings exists, these are not usually sufficient to guarantee income security until the end of their lives.

Older women report higher incomes than men mainly because of private transfers and their engagement in self-employment and not because of formal work and social protection. As mentioned above, poverty tends to be lower among older women than older men. However, based on the 2012 Labor Force Survey and 2007 Philippine Study on Aging, there are fewer older women in the workforce than older men because of family responsibilities. If they are working, older women are more likely than men to be more in informal (e.g., self-employment) and vulnerable work (e.g., unpaid family work) with lower to no incomes. Engagement in this kind of work leaves older women no option



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but to continue working. Consequently, contributory pension coverage and benefits received are significantly lower for women as the result of the gender disparity faced by them during their working lives. With limited formal income from work and pensions, this suggests that the reported higher incomes are mainly because of older women's reliance on informal incomes such as support from the family and remittances. However, customary family-based support tends to be insufficient and irregular or unpredictable, and relying completely on family support affects the dignity and autonomy of older women.

Gender inequalities over the life course have accumulated effects in older women's

financial security. Women's strides in education at a younger age have not translated into improved economic outcomes for women, overall. Loopholes are found in the systemic segregation in the education system at tertiary and university levels where women tend to choose fields that perpetuate their socially ascribed roles, reflecting the persistence of gender stereotyping patterns in chosen areas of study. Unfortunately, these career choices are undervalued in society and have relatively lower wages. During working life, the traditional breadwinner model results in lower labour-force participation of women and lower wages. A large number of women engage in self-employment, and have shorter or interrupted careers due to

the reproductive roles expected of them. Although women do engage in paid work or income-generation activities, "they tend to lose out in terms of access to, control over, and benefits from productive resources" (ILO 2008). Younger women's lack of access to reproductive health services and information results in high fertility which also has an impact on women's economic status. As pointed out above, women's access to social protection in old age is closely associated with gender equalities they have experienced during their working lives.

Younger women workers are considered at greater risk of financial insecurity due to family responsibilities. A significant number of women were unable to join the labour force due to household and family obligations. Women's labour-force participation is also likely to be interrupted during their childbearing age (25-39). Unfortunately, the existing legal framework in the country is limited in acknowledging women's multiple roles, particularly productive and reproductive roles. Women workers of childbearing age also face additional vulnerabilities because of current maternity leave benefits in the country. The family obligations of women also extend in old age where a significant number of young-old women retire from formal work because of the substantial role that they have to play in caring for their children, grandchildren and also, for their ageing parents. The unpaid care work often delegated to women also undermines their ability to plan and save for retirement.

Social Protection policies have improved recently and benefits more women. The introduction of Social Pension or the tax-financed pension has benefited more

women than men since it is designed to cover poorest of the poor including those who do not receive a contributory pension, which majority are older women. However, the built-in targeting errors, and low benefit level limit the full impact of the social pension to guarantee income security in old age.

5. Policy Recommendations

Numerous laws have been institutionalised to remove barriers that impede women and girls access to their rights in terms of productive capital, justice, and participation in economic development. However, unless we move towards a life-course approach, there would be certain age groups of women who will be left furthest behind. Policies battling gender inequality and age discrimination should be deliberately advanced to harness women's full potential and growth.

For the younger age groups of girls, strategic interventions should aim at developing human capital through universal access to education (including secondary and tertiary), improving maternal mortality and increasing access to reproductive healthcare, thereby increasing their economic opportunities and agency. Data and analysis show how unequal access to education and health contribute to the population growth, rise of informal settlements, food insecurity, maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, high prevalence rate of STI and HIV transmission, and violence against women and children. Further, it leaves no resources towards more strategic endowments such as social protection that will benefit the most vulnerable and marginalized women.

During working and childbearing age, the focus should shift towards providing more economic opportunities to keep women in the labour force during their productive years, and increase productivity of women who dominate the informal economy and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises or MSMEs. Social protection should also be strengthened to protect them from economic and life-cycle risks such as maternity, disability and unemployment. In more advanced age groups, it must be ensured that the current economic policies and practices are not discriminatory to them. Innovative means should also be explored to enable them to choose whether they continue participating in the labour force, reaping the fruits of their hard labour through access to a quality and adequate pension system or doing both. At the onset of physical deterioration, older women should not only be covered by public health insurance but also have access to affordable long-term care. Where current social protection coverage is inadequate, significant investment has to be made through expanding the current non-contributory pension or social pension to help close the gap.

Policy recommendations for each age group are summarised below:

Pre-working age (15-19 years old)

- Provide scholarships for college and high-end technical and vocational courses that are not traditionally taken by females. Incorporate this in the recently signed Free Tertiary Education Act or Republic Act 10931.

- Advocate for sustained budgetary allocation needed to implement the Reproductive Health (RH) Law effectively at the Local Government Unit level and for the implementation of the RH Law.

Early Working age (20-39) and Middle Working age (40-49)

- Develop affordable and accessible childcare services
- Increase paid maternity leave from the current 60 days to at least 98 days or 14 weeks as per International Labor Standards on Maternity Protection
- Introduce Compassionate Care Leave and provide incentives to families taking care of ageing parents
- Expand social protection including subsidies of contributory premiums of low and informal sector and unpaid family care workers, and provide unemployment insurance and mandatory coverage of OFWs
- Formulate a gender- and rights-based framework in forging bilateral agreements, pacts, etc., among migrant-receiving countries

- Amend the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) Act of 1999 toward the establishment, operation, and maintenance of PESOs in provinces, cities, and first-class municipalities by Local Government Units, with the end in view of enhancing and expanding gender-responsive jobs fairs and labour market awareness programmes.

Late working age (50-59)

- Create age-friendly employment and livelihood
- Institutionalise pre-retirement programmes for private and public employees

60 years and above (retirement and post-retirement age)

- Adjust retirement age based on the current longevity and/or move towards flexible retirement. This should be complemented by creation of age-friendly employment and livelihood
- In the short term, expand the current coverage of non-contributory or social pensions to those not receiving any pension while gradually moving to a Universal Social Pension
- Institutionalise long-term care services in the National Health Insurance Program

- Create a national council on Older Person's Welfare that provides leadership positions for older women.

6. Areas for Further Research

There are wide array or researches on ageing in the Philippines but are limited in understanding gender and poverty in older persons. Longitudinal studies are likewise needed since the latest study was the 2007 Philippine Study on Aging (cited in Section 1). There is a need for a comprehensive study on ageing to aid in advocating for age-inclusive policies. Such a study should cover different dimensions of well-being of older persons. Areas for further research include:

- Contributory and savings capacity of younger women
- Perceptions of younger women on debt of gratitude
- Prevalence of elder abuse
- Extent of age discrimination

Notes

- 1 D. Kertzer (n.d.), "Household and gender in a life-course perspective", <http://archive.````.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu10we/uu10we05.htm> (Accessed 29 Dec 2017).
- 2 The poverty line, also known as poverty threshold, is the minimum income required to meet basic food needs and other non-food requirements such as clothing, housing, transportation, health, and education expenses.
- 3 http://www.doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/basic-page/Philippine%20Health%20Agenda_Dec1_1.pdf.
- 4 Philippine Statistics Authority, "Highlights of Philippine Population 2015 Census of Population", 2016. <https://www.psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-philippine-population-2015-census-population> (Accessed 25 Mar 2017).
- 5 Philippine Statistics Authority, "2015 Census of Population Statistical Table" <https://psa.gov.ph/content/philippine-population-surpassed-100-million-mark-results-2015-census-population> (Accessed 9 Nov 2017).

- 6 Philippine Statistics Authority, "2010 Census-Based Population Projections in Collaboration with the Inter-Agency Working Group on Population Projections", <https://www.psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-2010-census-based-population-projections> (Accessed 23 October 2015).
- 7 Philippine Statistics Authority (2015).
- 8 Cruz and Camhol (2014).
- 9 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2014a.
- 10 Philippine Statistics Authority (2010), <https://psa.gov.ph/content/philippine-population-surpassed-100-million-mark-results-2015-census-population> (Accessed 28 Dec 2017).
- 11 Philippine Statistics Authority (2010), <https://www.psa.gov.ph/statistics/census/population-and-housing> (Accessed 25 March 2017).
- 12 Biddlecom & Domingo (1992).
- 13 United Nations, Dependency Ratio, http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/methodology_sheets/demographics/dependency_ratio.pdf (Accessed 25 March 2017).
- 14 Virola (2005) mentioned in Werner et al. (2009), "Measuring Poverty in the Philippines Using Equivalised Household Income" <https://www.scribd.com/doc/22356182/Measuring-Poverty-In-The-Philippines-Using-Equivalised-Household-Income> (Accessed 25 Mar 2017); C. Knox-Vydmanov, D. Horn and A. Sevilla (2017), "The Feasibility of a Universal Social Pension in the Philippines". Quezon City.
- 15 Philippine Statistics Authority releases report providing poverty incidence of 9 out of 14 basic sectors, which includes: Fishermen; Farmers; Children; Self-employed and Unpaid Family Workers; Women; Youth; Migrant and Formal Sector; Individuals Residing in Urban Areas and; Senior Citizens.
- 16 Mapa, Bersales, Albis and Daquis (2011).
- 17 Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).
- 18 Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).
- 19 Desarrollo (2004).
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Bernandino (2011).
- 22 Based on PSA technical notes "Families are grouped into two income strata, the Bottom 30% and Upper 70%. This grouping of families was used as a proxy for those falling below the poverty line. The Bottom 30% refers to the lowest 30 percent of the total families in the per capita income distribution, arranged in descending order. These families are considered the poor families."
- 23 Miralao (1992).
- 24 Asian Development Bank (2005).
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Rodriguez (2015).
- 27 Desarrollo (2004).
- 28 Buvinic (2007) mentioned in Desarrollo (2004).
- 29 Desarrollo (2004).
- 30 Desarrollo (2004)
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Authors (Ofstedal et al. 2003) asked respondents to report the amount of own and household income received in the year prior to the survey as represented in five categories: (1) work, (2) pension/retirement/Central Provident Fund, (3) income from investments, (4) income from children or relatives, and (5) other. To define the lowest quartile, we first recorded specific amounts into their corresponding range categories, and then combined range categories as needed to cover the lowest quartile of the income distribution.
- 33 Based on the logistic regression model from Ofstedal, Reidy and Knodel (2003).
- 34 Desarrollo (2004b).
- 35 Cited in Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).
- 36 Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).
- 37 Worked for private household: these are employed persons working in a private household for pay, in cash or in kind. Examples are domestic helper, household cook, gardener, family driver.
- 38 Unpaid Family Workers or Those Who Worked without pay on own family-operated farm or business. These are members of the family who assist another member in the operation of the family farm or business enterprise and who do not receive any wage or salary for their work. The room and board and any cash allowance given as incentives are not counted as compensation for these family workers.
- 39 Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017).
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Cruz et al., *Aging in the Philippines: Findings from the 2007 Philippine Study on Aging*; Josefina N. Natividad, "Depression, Social Connectedness and Health in Older Filipinos" (2014) in Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).
- 44 Knox-Vydmanov, Horn and Sevilla (2017).
- 45 NSO and ICF Macro (2009) mentioned in Cruz, Natividad, Gonzales and Saito (2016).
- 46 Mesa-Lago, Viajar and Castillo (2011).
- 47 Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017).
- 48 Mesa-Lago et al. (2011).
- 49 Indigent senior citizen refers to "any elderly who is frail, sickly, or with disability, and without pension or regular source of income, compensation, or financial assistance from his/her relatives to support his/her basic needs as determined by the DSWD in consultation with the National Coordinating and Monitoring Board (NCMB)."
- 50 Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017).
- 51 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/161747-social-pension-senior-citizens-dswd>.
- 52 Data from number of Male and Female Social Pension Beneficiaries for CY 2015, requested from the DSWD SPMO for the study *Feasibility of a Universal Social Pension in the Philippines, 2017*.
- 53 Knox-Vydmanov et al. (2017).
- 54 Cruz and Camhol (2014).
- 55 World Bank (2013).
- 56 Philippine Commission on Women (2013).
- 57 UNFPA Philippines cited in Philippine Commission on Women (2013).
- 58 Philippine Commission on Women (2013).
- 59 World Bank (2013).
- 60 Philippine Commission on Women (2014).
- 61 NDHS (2008) cited in World Bank (2013).
- 62 World Bank (2013).
- 63 Celis, Magsombol and Sobritchea (2012) mentioned in World Bank (2013).
- 64 Asian Development Bank (2013).
- 65 NSO defines persons not in the labour force as those who are "15 years old and over as of their last birthday who are neither employed nor unemployed (e.g., housewives, students, disabled, retired persons, and seasonal workers)." Explanatory Notes, 2012 Philippine Yearbook of Labor Statistics, mentioned in Philippine Commission on Women (2013).
- 66 ILO (2011) cited in Rodriguez (2015).
- 67 Philippine Commission on Women (2013).
- 68 Celis, Magsombol and Sobritchea (2012) cited in World Bank (2003).
- 69 Daniel Horn, *Social Pension in the Philippines: Views of Working Aged Adults* (forthcoming).
- 70 National Economic and Development Authority (2017).
- 71 Asian Development Bank (2013).
- 72 World Bank (2013).

- 73 Workers in vulnerable employment refer to those employed as: (i) self-employed workers without any paid employee and (ii) unpaid family workers in own-family operated farm or business. These categories are synonymous with the ILO status in employment of: (i) own-account workers and (ii) contributing family workers, respectively. Source: Explanatory Note, BLES Labstat Updates, August 2011.
- 74 Labor Force Survey (2001).
- 75 Asian Development Bank (2013).
- 76 Rodriguez (2015).
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Rodgers and Menon (2012); Sakellariou (2004) cited in ADB (2013) and Rodriguez (2015).
- 79 Asian Development Bank (2013).
- 80 Hollnsteiner (1973), cited in Lopez (1991) and Abejo (2004).
- 81 A. Roces and G.Roces, *Culture Shock! A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette Philippines*, 8th Edition (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2014).
- 82 <http://gabrielawomensparty.net/tags/age-discrimination>.
- 83 World Bank (2013) noted that these figures significantly differ with that in the PDP 2011-2016 which puts the number of “economically active children (aged 5-17)” to 2.1 million only and majority of those aged 15-17 are boys (DOLE BLES).
- 84 PLAN;WAGI (2012, p.28) cited in World Bank (2013).
- 85 Philippine Commission on Women (2013).
- 86 Cited in <http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/hunger/53801-gender-inequality-women-hunger>.
- 87 Spaeth, Franco and Raras (2010), cited in World Bank (2013).
- 88 Philippine Commission on Women (2013).
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 National Statistics Office 2011, cited in Philippine Commission on Women (2013).
- 91 Asian Development Bank (2013).
- 92 Asian Development Bank (2005)
- 93 Mesa-Lago et al. (2011).
- 94 World Bank (2013).

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SINGAPORE

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1. Introduction: Silver Singapore

Singapore is witnessing a greying of its population: the proportion of older persons (defined as over 65 years) has increased from 3.4% of the population in 1970 to 13% of the population in 2017.¹ In Singapore, older persons are defined as over 65 years of age. In this chapter, where other definitions of older persons are used, this will be indicated. At present, one in eight Singaporeans is aged 65 and above. Singapore will become a super-aged society in 2026, according to the United Nations World Population Prospects (UNWPP), when one in five persons (numbering 1,258,441) will be aged 65 or above.² By 2030, it is estimated that this will increase to one in four Singaporeans.³ Corresponding with these trends, the old age support ratio

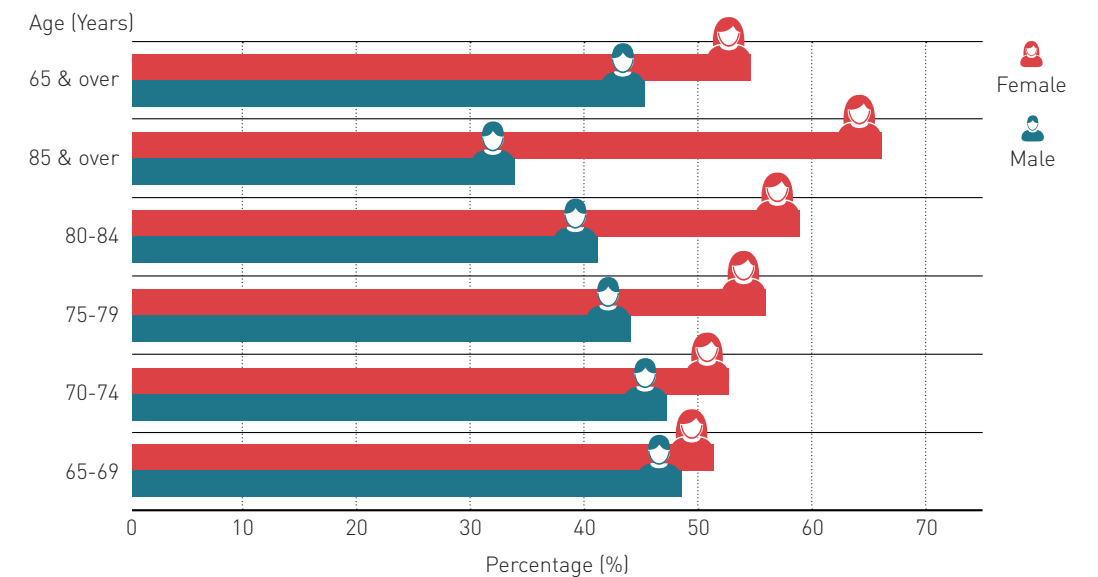
(persons aged 15-64 years per person aged 65 years and over) has also been gradually decreasing from 17 in 1970 to 5.5 in 2017.⁴

While this phenomenon is not unique to Singapore, what is unprecedented is the speed of ageing: it took France 115 years and Japan 26 years to increase their elderly population from 7% to 14%, but the same increase will occur in just 19 years in Singapore.⁵

2. Singapore's Ageing Population has a Female Face

If current trends continue, it is expected that the majority of the older population will be female, particularly among older age groups (Figure 6.1).

Fig. 6.1: Proportion of Singapore Residents, by Age and Sex, June 2017 (%)



Source: Department of Statistics, *Population Trends 2017*, p.41, Table A1.3 (Singapore: Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2017).

Note: The total may not equal 100, due to rounding off.

This reflects the differences in life expectancy between men and women. In 2016, the life expectancy at birth of Singaporean women was 85.1 years, compared to 80.6 years for men.⁶ The difference is even higher among older age groups — a female at age 65 could expect to live another 22.4 years, compared to 19 years for males.⁷ Therefore, the number of older females exceeds that of older men. (See Annex 6.1.)

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the financial security of older women in Singapore and to identify the factors that affect women's financial security in old age.

3. Methodology

The chapter examines how changing social and economic contexts, for instance, in

education levels of different age cohorts may influence the financial security of older women.⁸ While the influence of historical events is recognised, a thorough analysis of this influence is limited. For example, while the current cohort of 65+ years forms part of the Pioneer Generation (born on or before 31 December 1949 and aged 65 and above before 2014) who witnessed the independence of Singapore and participated in the early stages of nation-building, an assessment of the impact of this on women's lives is incomplete without longitudinal data as well as qualitative data such as life histories. Finally, the chapter acknowledges the diversity of women's experiences, namely that while the same birth cohorts share similar experiences, particular life events such as divorce or widowhood, could also change the trajectory



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of individual lives, making some groups of women more vulnerable than others.

Methodologically, this research relies on secondary data — mainly, government statistics, existing literature on the elderly, and the findings of qualitative studies conducted by voluntary welfare organisations and civil society organisations. The findings and observations are qualified as there is variation to the quality of data that is already from secondary sources.

While there are many different definitions and uses of the term “financial security”, for the purposes of this chapter, financial security is defined as the ability to meet everyday expenses with sufficient savings for unforeseen contingencies, as well as future financial needs in old age.⁹

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section will provide an overview of the status of financial security of older women in Singapore, followed by an analysis of the factors that affect women’s financial security in old age. The chapter then examines whether future cohorts of women will

replicate the current patterns of financial security among older women, in the context of changing social trends. The final sections will provide policy recommendations, based on the key findings of the research.

4. Overview of Status of Financial Security of Older Women in Singapore

For women to be financially secure in old age, their monthly income (from all sources, including savings and assets) should be sufficient to cover daily expenses as well as any unforeseen contingencies.¹⁰ However, there is limited data available to provide a comprehensive assessment of older women’s financial security in Singapore. For instance, the data on long-term assistance (LTA) (through ComCare)¹¹ is not disaggregated by both gender and age. Another way to assess financial security would be to measure the proportion of older women in the lowest income groups. However, household income and expenditure data are not disaggregated by gender. Furthermore, available data on income and expenditure is based on household income, and not on individual income. Using the household, not the individual, as the unit of analysis masks gender differences in intra-household resource allocation and may not provide an accurate reflection of individual women’s financial security.¹²

The National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011,¹³ finds that women over 55 years received less monthly income than men of the same age (Figure 6.2). However, the majority of women (70.8%) perceived their current financial situation as adequate or more than adequate. Older women who do not receive income from sources such

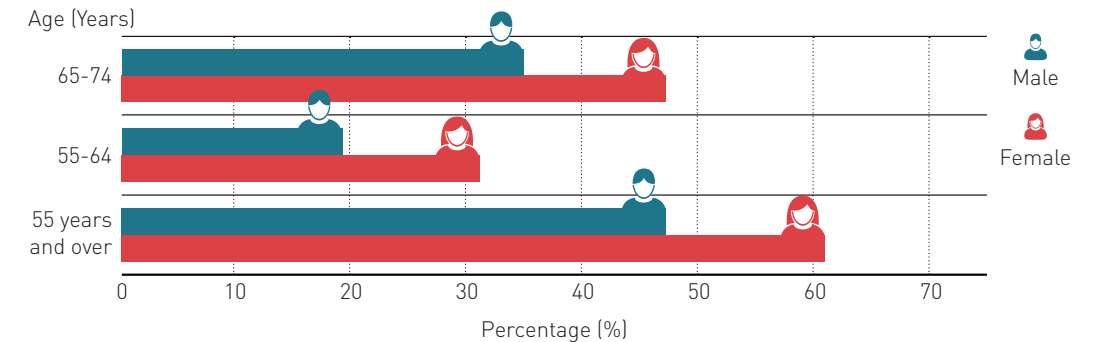


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as employment can supplement their income through public assistance such as ComCare, which helps increase their financial security.¹⁴

Differences in income levels and, linked to this, financial security are rooted in gender differences in sources of income among older men and women. As Kang, Tan and

Fig. 6.2: Monthly Income (all sources) of Less than \$1,000, by Gender, 2011 (%)



Source: Kang Sook Hock, Tan Ern Ser and Yap Mui Teng, *National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011*, p. 39, Table 5.2. (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, commissioned by Elderly and Disability Group, Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2013).

Table 6.1: Main Sources of Income, Selected Sources, by Gender of Persons Aged 55 and Over, 2011 (%)

Main Sources of income	Male recipients	Female recipients
Income transfers from children	57.5	74.8
Personal savings	47.9	46.6
Paid employment	48.3	30.6
CPF savings	9.0	4.7
Income transfers from spouse	8.6	20.5
Income transfers from other family members	3.0	5.0

Source: Kang Sook Hock, Tan Ern Ser and Yap Mui Teng, *National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011*, p. 39, Table 5.3 (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, commissioned by Elderly and Disability Group, Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2013).

Note: This table has been extracted from Table 5.3 of Kang, Tan and Yap (2013) which states all the main sources of income by gender of persons aged 55 and over. This Table takes the top 6 sources cited by each gender. The total percentage in each column does not add up to 100% as individuals can cite more than one top main source of income.

Yap (2013, p. 38) state, older males received more income, as they were “more likely to be better educated, and be employed and hold higher status jobs”. A review of the main sources of income shows that older women were significantly less likely to receive income from paid employment or CPF savings. (See Table 6.1). The following section will examine the effect of different sources of income or financial support on women’s financial security in old age.

5. Sources of Income of Older Women

5.1 Employment

One of the most common routes by which the elderly can improve their retirement income is through earnings from employment. This is confirmed by the National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011, which found that the main reason for working or returning to work for persons aged 55 years and over was related to money.¹⁵ However,

older women are almost half as likely to be working in relation to older men (Table 6.2). This difference varies according to marital status, with the largest gender gap between married men and married women. Male labour-force participation rates are not significantly affected by marriage, whereas among women, older single women are significantly more likely to be in the labour force. It is important to analyse further the reasons for these differences to identify the impact of marital status, particularly of life events such as widowhood and divorce, on women’s financial security over the life-course.

Even when older women work, they receive less income from work than older men: in 2017, 69.4% of women over 65 years earned less than \$1,500 per month.¹⁶ This was more than the proportion of men over 65 years (48.1%) with the same monthly income. Furthermore, older women over 60 years¹⁷ who worked full time earned a median income of \$1,733 in 2017, much lower than the median income for older men (\$2,058), and significantly lower than the median income for females of all ages (15+ years) (\$3,500).¹⁸

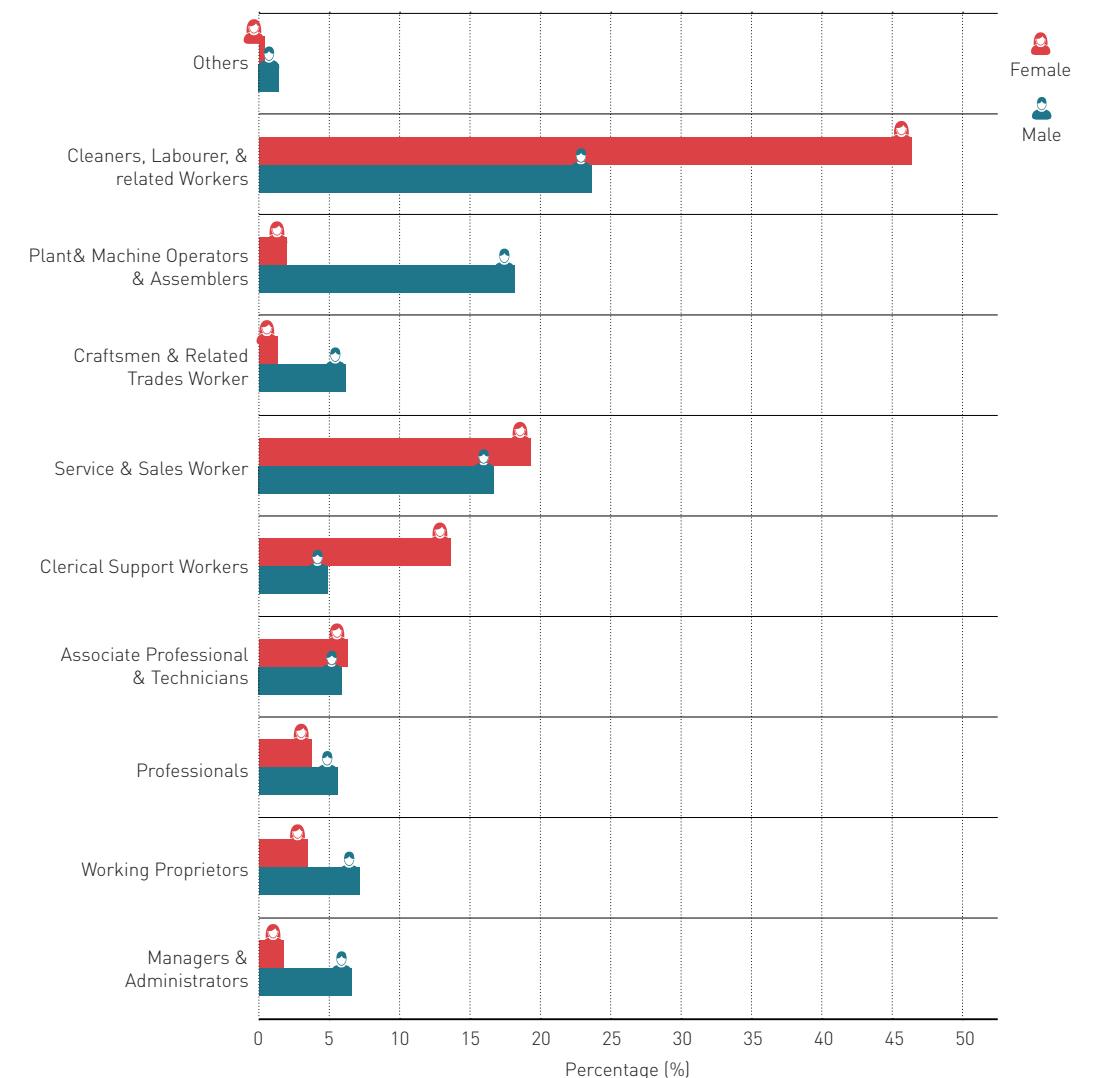
These disparities in monthly income may be due to the concentration of older women in lower-skilled, lower-paid occupations (Figure 6.3). Of all women over 65 years who were working in 2017, almost half (45.9%) were cleaners, labourers and related workers. In comparison, only 23.9% of all older men aged 65 years and over who were working were in such occupations. The proportion of women in such occupations increases with age: of all women aged 70 years and over who were working, 56.7% years and over were cleaners, labourers and related workers in 2017. Since cleaners,

Table 6.2: Labour Force Participation Rates of Residents over 60 Years, by Sex and Age, June 2017 (%)

Age	Male	Female
60-64	77.8	49.9
65-69	54.8	32.9
70+	24.8	9.6

Source: Ministry of Manpower, Manpower Research and Statistic Department, *Labour Force in Singapore 2017*, T10, Table 6 (Singapore: Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower, 2017).

Fig. 6.3: Proportion of All Employed Residents over 65 Years, in Each Occupation, by Sex, June 2017 (%)



Source: Ministry of Manpower, *Labour Force in Singapore 2017*, T64, T65, Table 35 (Singapore: Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower, 2017).

labourers and related workers are the lowest paid occupation (Table 6.3), the predominance of older women in this occupation is then reflected in lower median income and lower gross monthly income for older women. It also explains why the

majority of women over 65 years earn less than \$1,500 per month.

Another factor that contributes to older women’s lower income is their propensity to work part-time. More than one in five

Table 6.3: Median Gross Monthly Income from Work (excluding Employer CPF) of Full-time Employed Residents by Occupation, June 2017 (excludes full-time National Servicemen)

Occupation	All ages (15 + years)	60 years & over
Total*	3,749	2,000
Managers & Administrators	9,750	10,000
Working Proprietors	4,000	3,500
Professionals	6,218	7,650
Associate Professionals & Technicians	3,744	4,000
Clerical Support Workers	2,500	2,383
Service & Sales Workers	2,000	1,500
Craftsmen & Related Trades Workers	2,383	2,138
Plant & Machine Operators & Assemblers	1,897	1,650
Cleaners, Labourers and Related Workers	1,300	1,200

Source: Ministry of Manpower, *Labour Force in Singapore 2017*, T32, Table 20 (Singapore: Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower, 2017).

Note: Data is only available for 60 years and over, and therefore, it is not provided for 65 years and over.

women aged 65 years and over were working part-time in 2017. This can have a significant impact on income, as the median gross monthly income from work for female residents working full-time (\$4,027) in 2017 was about four times the median gross monthly income for part-time work (\$1,000).¹⁹

This has implications for women's financial security through employment. An analysis of the labour-force survey by the Ministry of Manpower in 2008 found that in 2006, 59.4% of women aged 50 and over seeking re-employment wanted to work because

they needed money for current expenses.²⁰ However, the preceding discussion suggests that old-age employment may not be a viable route to financial security for older females.

The lower labour-force participation rates of older women, as well as their concentration in lower skilled, lower paid occupations could be largely due to differences in education levels between men and women. To illustrate, in the National Survey of Senior Citizens conducted in 2011, more than a third (39.7%) of women aged 55 years and over had no formal education or limited

primary education, while the corresponding figure for men of the same age was 18.9%.²¹ More recently, in 2017, half the women aged 65 years and over in the labour force had only primary school education and below. Among men of the same age, slightly less (39%) were educated up to primary school level. Only 5.1% of older women had a university degree. Older age cohorts had even lower education levels. Among women aged 70 years and over, 63.2% had been educated only up to primary level, compared to 47.7% of men of the same age who went on to higher levels of education.²²

For these older women, lower educational attainment can directly translate into lower incomes. For instance, in 2017, the median gross monthly income from work (including employer's contribution to the CPF) for full-time employed female residents aged 60 and over with primary school education and below was \$1,290, whereas a woman

with a degree in the same age cohort earned \$8,173.²³

Apart from lower levels of education, women's greater share of caregiving and household responsibilities also affect their ability to participate in the labour force. In 2017, 35.8% of women over 60 years cited household responsibilities, caregiving and childcare²⁴ as the main reasons for not working, compared to only 2.7% of men. The main reasons for not working among older men of the same age were retirement, poor health and disability.²⁵

5.2 Savings and Pensions

Patterns of employment — that is, of not being in the labour force, of working part-time or in lower-paid occupations — directly affect women's ability to save and accumulate pensions. A survey of senior citizens conducted in 2011 reveals that



only 47.3% of females aged 55 and above had CPF (Central Provident Fund) savings, compared with 72.6% of males.²⁶ Even when women had CPF savings, the amount saved at age 60 was lower than men's savings. Of the women who had CPF savings, in 2017, the average CPF balance was about \$22,000 lower than men's. In 2017, the average net CPF balance for females aged 60 years and over was \$69,732, compared to \$91,620 for men. This is lower than the Basic Retirement Sum of \$85,500 in 2018, and the Full Retirement Sum of \$171,000.

5.3 Lower Levels of Savings may be compounded by Lack of Financial Literacy and Planning

Women's lower levels of savings are compounded by the lack of financial planning. Studies reveal that this is a global phenomenon: worldwide, men are likely to be more financially literate (35%) compared to women (30%). While older persons in general have lower levels of financial literacy compared to younger age groups, older women in particular are found to have significantly less financial literacy.²⁷

In Singapore, there is no gender difference in financial inclusion — with 96% of both men and women having a bank account.²⁸ There are, however, no survey findings disaggregated by gender and age to indicate whether older women in Singapore are more vulnerable to lack of financial planning. Surveys support worldwide findings that women in general have lower levels of financial literacy and financial planning than men.

Available surveys also suggest that women are less likely to make financial investments than men. For instance, a survey conducted

by the Tsao Foundation and the Asia Pacific Risk Centre in 2017 of women aged 30 years and over indicates that only 33% of women invest their money through different financial instruments such as bonds or unit trusts, and not just in savings and fixed deposits. About 8% of women also had no savings at all.²⁹

Lower levels of financial literacy and financial planning affect women's financial security in old age. Women need to stretch their savings for longer as they outlive men. Longer life expectancy also means they spend more years in disability than men, shoulder a larger portion (5.5% more) of the total disease burden, tend to be less mobile than men, have more difficulty carrying out the activities of daily living (ADLs), and are more likely to be bedridden or require physical assistance.³⁰ Women also tend to suffer more from chronic illnesses, while men have fatal illnesses, therefore, women generally require more long-term care.³¹ The National Survey of Senior Citizens finds that in 2011, among those aged 55 years and over, relatively more women spent on healthcare (61.3%) compared to men (54.9%).

Singapore has a wide-ranging and comprehensive healthcare system. Under the public healthcare system, the government provides a range of subsidies, including subsidised wards, Eldershield and the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS). It is estimated that the government pays up to 70% of the subsidised healthcare system.³² However, the rising costs of healthcare,³³ a concern that is being addressed by policymakers,³⁴ has implications for the financial security of older women.

5.4 The Importance of Family Support

Clearly, employment and savings have not been the main sources of income for older women. Instead, older women rely heavily on family for financial security in old age.

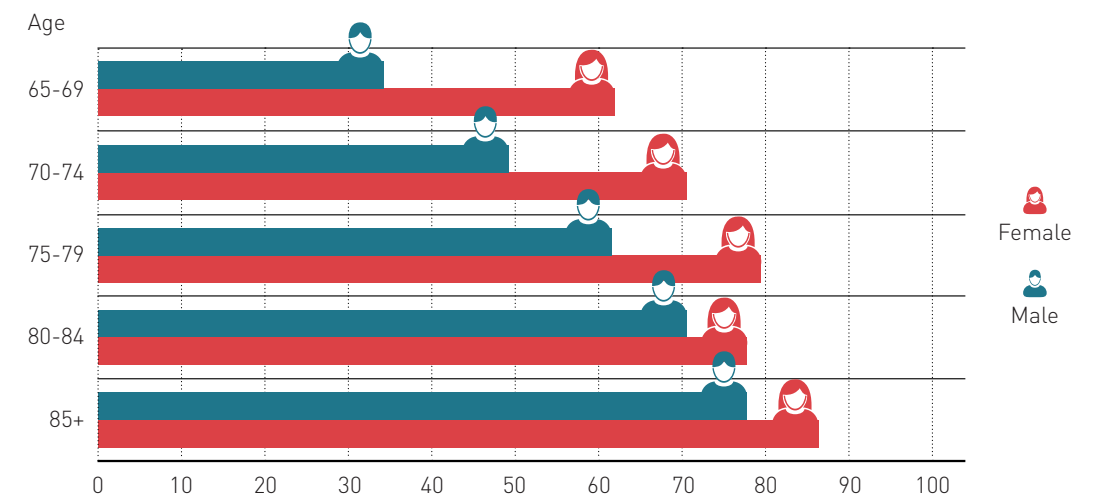
The National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011 finds that family was the single most important source of income for older women: in 2011, 74.8% of females aged 55 years and over cited income transfers from children as one of the main sources of income, compared to 57.5% of men.³⁵

This is similar to the findings of the Census 2010, which reveals that 72.9% of female residents age 65 years and over cited allowances given by children as their main source of financial support, compared to

49.9% of men in the same age cohort. The reliance on children increases with age, with over 85% of the 'oldest-old' females (85 years and over) dependent on allowances from children (see Figure 6.4 below).

Women benefit from cultural norms that value intergenerational dependency — because women gave care in earlier life, it is considered acceptable to turn to children for help in old age.³⁶ The role of the family is reinforced by government policies that include the ability to use Medisave funds to care for dependent parents, incentives to buy homes close to parents and income tax relief for elderly dependents.³⁷ However, as will be shown below, there is concern about the reliance on children for financial security in old age, as family size is steadily shrinking.

Fig. 6.4: Proportion of Resident Population aged 65 Years and Over who Identified Allowances from Children as their Main Source of Financial Support, by Gender and Age, 2010 (%)



Source: Department of Statistics, *Census of Population 2010 Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Language, Education and Religion*, p.86, Table 27 (Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2011).

6. Government Policies for Older Women

Since the 1980s, the government has recognised the need to tackle the challenges of rapid ageing. In 1982, it appointed the Committee on the Problems of the Aged to study the implications of an ageing population. The Committee commissioned the first National Survey of Senior Citizens in 1985.³⁸ Since the 1980s, several high-level committees have been appointed to review the various issues and problems of ageing, including the National Advisory Council on the Aged in 1988, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Ageing Population in 1998, and the Committee on Ageing Issues in 2002. In 2007, the Ministerial Committee on Ageing was established to focus on active ageing and strategies to enable Singaporeans to age in place. The Committee coordinates the strategies on ageing across different government agencies. In 2015, the Committee released the \$3-billion Action Plan on Successful Ageing, which includes 60 initiatives covering 12 areas related to the health and

well-being of older Singaporeans, including retirement adequacy.³⁹

In terms of financial security, the CPF remains the central pillar of the social security system. In recent years, the government has also been systematically strengthening the social security system, refocusing the CPF system towards retirement and the healthcare needs of Singaporeans. Recent initiatives to improve retirement adequacy and to increase levels of support for lower income groups, particularly the older persons, include the national annuity scheme called “CPF Life”, introduced in 2009,⁴⁰ which provides a steady stream of income for life, the Lease BuyBack Scheme and the Silver Housing Bonus (which enable the older persons to monetise the value of their public housing), introduced in 2015.⁴¹ CPF interest rates and CPF contribution rates for older workers have been increased to enable older Singaporeans to accumulate more CPF savings. The Silver Support programme gives regular quarterly payouts to the bottom 20% to 30% of elderly Singaporeans.⁴²

On the healthcare front, Medifund Silver was introduced in 2007 to deliver targeted assistance to needy elderly patients, while the Seniors’ Mobility and Enabling Fund was expanded in 2013 to help seniors live independently through subsidies for assistive devices such as wheelchairs. Subsidies for a host of items, from long-term care to drugs, have also been progressively increased to improve the affordability of care.

Meanwhile, ElderShield, a disability insurance scheme introduced in 2002 provides monthly cash pay-outs of \$300 or \$400 to the severely disabled for up to five or



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six years.⁴³ The premiums for the Eldershield can be paid from the Medisave Accounts of the older persons, or their spouse, parents, children and grandchildren.⁴⁴

The Pioneer Generation Programme (PGP), introduced in 2014, provides additional subsidies, Medisave top-ups and cash assistance for citizens born in 1950 or earlier.⁴⁵ Since the number of women aged 65 years and over exceeds that of men, most of the beneficiaries of the PGP are women.⁴⁶ Pioneer Generation citizens also receive support to pay the premiums for Medishield Life, a health insurance plan to protect against large hospital bills.⁴⁷

In addition to this, poorer older persons also receive support from Public Assistance programmes such as ComCare, that provides monthly cash assistance, as well as secondary assistance for items such as adult diapers and one-off discretionary assistance for special needs such as one-off medical assistance.⁴⁸

These social security schemes undoubtedly provide much needed support for retirement, particularly for the lowest income groups. Furthermore, there is also greater recognition of the gender-specific aspects of healthcare. For example, in the Action Plan for Successful Ageing, it clearly states that health and wellness talks need to be conducted on gender-specific issues.⁴⁹

The reach of these policies could be further enhanced by taking into consideration that older women may face different disadvantages than older men. For instance, since means-testing is based on the size of the Housing and Development Board (HDB) flat, it may not include older women who may be “asset rich but cash

poor” since they cannot use the money locked in the flat as property. Moreover, means-testing also excludes women in the 20th percentile (below middle income) of household income, who may also be financially vulnerable, particularly if they are living in sole breadwinner households. In these households with a sole breadwinner, the women are vulnerable to sudden life changes, such as divorce or widowhood.

Even among women who are eligible for public assistance, existing schemes may not always be sufficient to cover their expenditure needs. For such women, ways to supplement their expenditure needs through other routes, such as family or community can be explored.

Cultural attitudes may also prevent some women from accessing social support. For instance, Mehta (2014) in her survey of widows in Singapore found that despite financial hardship, some widows did not seek help from government agencies because they felt it would “‘shame’ the rest of the family members”.⁵⁰

7. Will Future Generations of Women Replicate the Current Patterns of Financial Security among Older Women? The Impact of Social Changes

The preceding discussion reveals that the financial security of older women is affected by lower levels of education and lower levels of labour-force participation. In the recent few decades, however, Singapore has witnessed dramatic social and economic changes which have altered the contexts and opportunities for ageing persons. In light of this, the following sections will

assess the implications of these social changes for the financial security of future cohorts of older women.

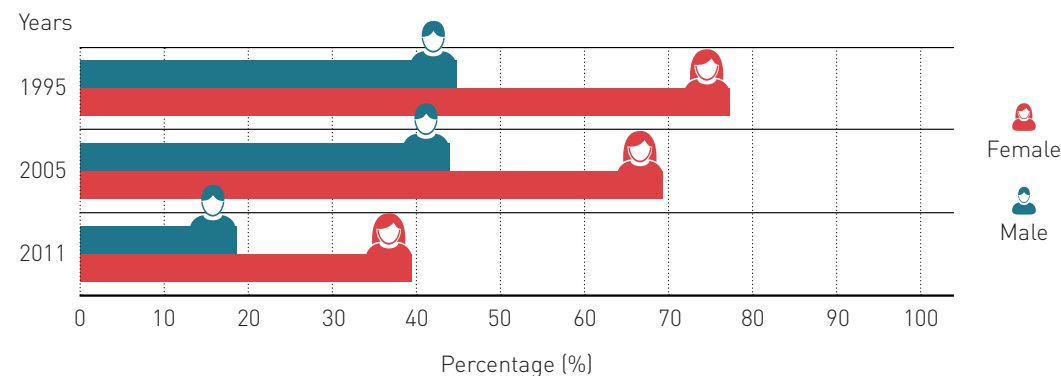
8. Improvements in Education and Labour-Force Participation Rates

One of the biggest social achievements of the past 60 years in Singapore has been the rapid increase in the educational attainment of women, a direct result of the Singapore Government’s investment in education and the provision of universal primary education. In 2011, only 39.7% of women over 55 years had no qualifications or lower primary level education. This is a marked decline from 1995 and 2005 when the proportion of women aged 55 years and over with no qualifications constituted 76.9% and 69.4%, according to the National Survey of Senior Citizens (1995, 2005) (see Figure 6.5).

Gender parity in education has been achieved for younger age groups, with equal numbers of women and men enrolling in primary, secondary and tertiary education. For university education, women outnumber men by a small margin: by 2015, the intake of full-time university students was 50% females compared to 49.3% males.⁵²

This could have a significant impact, as labour-force participation is closely related to educational levels. Not surprisingly, the increase in education levels has been accompanied by an increase in the labour-force participation rates of women aged 65 years and over, from 5.1% in 1996 to 8.0% in 2007 to 18.2% in 2017. Similar increases in labour-force participation rates can be seen across age groups over 25 years (see Figure 6.6).

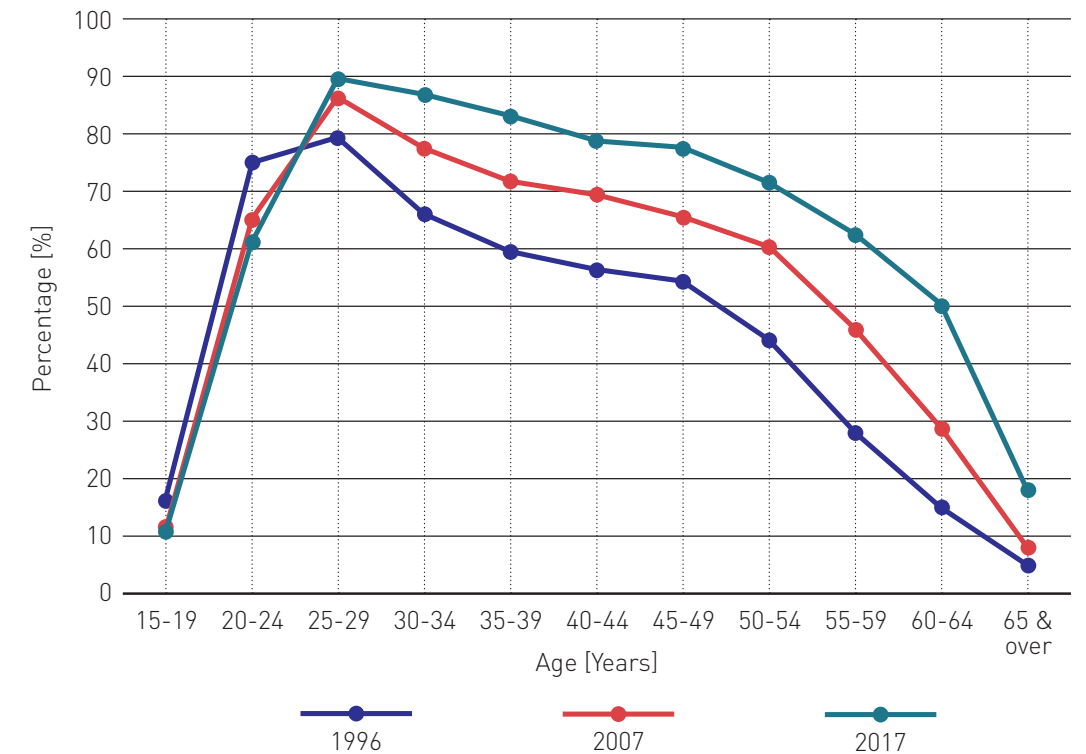
Fig. 6.5: Proportion of Persons Aged 55 Years and Over, with no Educational Qualifications, Selected Years, by Sex (%)



Source: Kang, Tan and Yap (2013); Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, *National Survey on Senior Citizens in Singapore 2005*, p. 21, Table 2.4 (Singapore: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, 2005).

Note: In the 2011 survey, “no qualifications” also includes lower primary level education. Whether lower primary level education is included in the 1995 and 2005 surveys is not mentioned. It is assumed that for all three years, the category is “no qualifications”.⁵¹

Fig. 6.6: Female Labour Force Participation Rates, by Age Group, Selected Years (%)



Source: Ministry of Manpower, *Labour Force Survey* (2006, Chart 1) and (2017, Table 5).

Note: The decline in LFPR of younger age groups can be attributed to rising pursuit of education, especially higher education.

Better educational outcomes in each age cohort (Table 6.4) have positive implications for women’s employment opportunities. As mentioned earlier, almost half (45.9%) of women aged 65 years and over were employed as cleaners, labourers and related workers in 2017.⁵³ For younger age cohorts, higher education levels have enabled women to enter more higher-skilled, higher-income jobs. In 2017, 47.8% of women aged 20-34 years had degree level education.⁵⁴ Not coincidentally, less than 5% of all females working as cleaners, labourers and related workers were between 20-34

years old.⁵⁵ Instead, an increasing number of younger women are joining managerial and professional positions and in equal numbers as men of the same age: 34.5% of women between 20-35 years who were working were managers and administrators and professionals respectively.⁵⁶

This has a twofold impact. First, earnings for females have been steadily rising in recent years — median gross monthly income from work (including employer CPF) has increased from \$2,236 per month in 2007 to \$3,543 in 2017.⁵⁷ The increasing

Table 6.4: Female Labour Force by Educational Qualification Attained, 2006 and 2017 (%)

Age	No formal qualifications/lower primary/primary		Secondary		Diploma		Degree	
	2006	2017	2006	2017	2006	2017	2006	2017
15-19	3.4	0.8	93.9	82.6	4.1	14.9	n.d.	0.8
20-24	1.0	0.6	43.2	26.7	33.9	36.9	21.9	35.9
25-29	1.6	0.7	32.6	14.1	21.3	24.1	44.7	61.0
30-34	3.8	1.2	43.5	16.5	12.1	21.4	40.7	60.9
35-39	5.7	2.3	55.1	21.4	9.3	22.2	29.8	54.1
40-44	13.4	4.3	60.9	30.2	6.0	22.2	19.8	43.3
45-49	22.2	7.5	61.7	39.2	4.0	19.8	11.9	33.6
50-54	29.6	15.2	59.4	50.9	3.1	13.8	8.0	20.0
55-59	41.7	21.2	51.0	54.6	1.4	12.2	5.9	12.1
60-64	56.3	31.7	38.1	54.7	1.1	6.9	4.5	6.6
65 & over	79.7	50.0	16.2	41.4	1.4	3.8	2.7	5.1

Source: Ministry of Manpower (2017, Table 9); Ministry of Manpower (2006, Table 11).

Note: Secondary includes post-secondary (non-tertiary) qualifications in 2017 and Upper Secondary (which includes other diploma and professional qualifications) in 2006. In 2006, diploma refers to polytechnic diploma.

representation of women in higher-paid, higher skilled occupations also means that unlike older women, fewer women in the younger age cohorts are clustered in the lower income earning group.

Second, as earnings increase, CPF contributions are also increasing. Not only has year-on-year growth of average net CPF balances of females between 2006 and 2016 been higher than that of males, the gap between women and men's average CPF balance has declined from 16% to 11%.⁵⁸ A CPF Board analysis of the average balance of active CPF members aged 25-54 in their Ordinary and Special Account (OASA) shows that the OASA balance has increased for females in all age groups between 2006 and 2016. Due to increasing participation in the labour force, the older age group of 50-54 saw a greater improvement.⁵⁹ Summarising these trends, the CPF report notes, "If the trend is sustained, an improvement in the retirement adequacy of females can be expected."⁶⁰

However, it is crucial that women are able to translate this increase in earnings, including CPF contributions into adequate retirement preparedness, financial planning and awareness. It was noted above that retirees in Singapore including older women have lower levels of financial literacy. While there is still limited data to ascertain whether subsequent cohorts of older women are more financially literate than previous cohorts, financial literacy surveys in the last decade suggest that women's knowledge of what is required to achieve financial security still lags behind that of men. In Standard and Poor's Global Financial Literacy Survey conducted in 2014, 52% of women in Singapore were financially literate, in contrast to 67% of men.⁶¹

This difference in understanding finances may also explain women's differential savings and investment behaviour. A survey by Blackrock in 2015 found that women in Singapore invested less than men, with 72% of women having investments compared to 80% of men. The survey found that women tended to hold more conservative assets such as cash and insurance linked assets, while men invested in riskier assets, such as foreign exchange or bonds. The survey also highlighted the lack of confidence of women in managing their finances and investments, with only 37% saying investing is for them, while 54% of men thought the same.⁶²

Combined with this lack of confidence, another sharp reminder of the need for the financial education of younger women comes from a survey of 600 mothers (both stay-at-home and working mothers) in their 30s. The Singapore Mums Retirement Aspirations Survey 2015 found that 75% of mothers had not planned for their retirement and only 25% felt that they will have sufficient funds for retirement.⁶³

Similarly, a study of the retirement landscape in Singapore in 2011 found that one in five women in their 30s did not know what their main source of income in retirement would be.⁶⁴ Such findings suggest that, even with increased earnings, enhancing the financial security of younger age cohorts will require increasing women's awareness, knowledge and ability for financial planning.

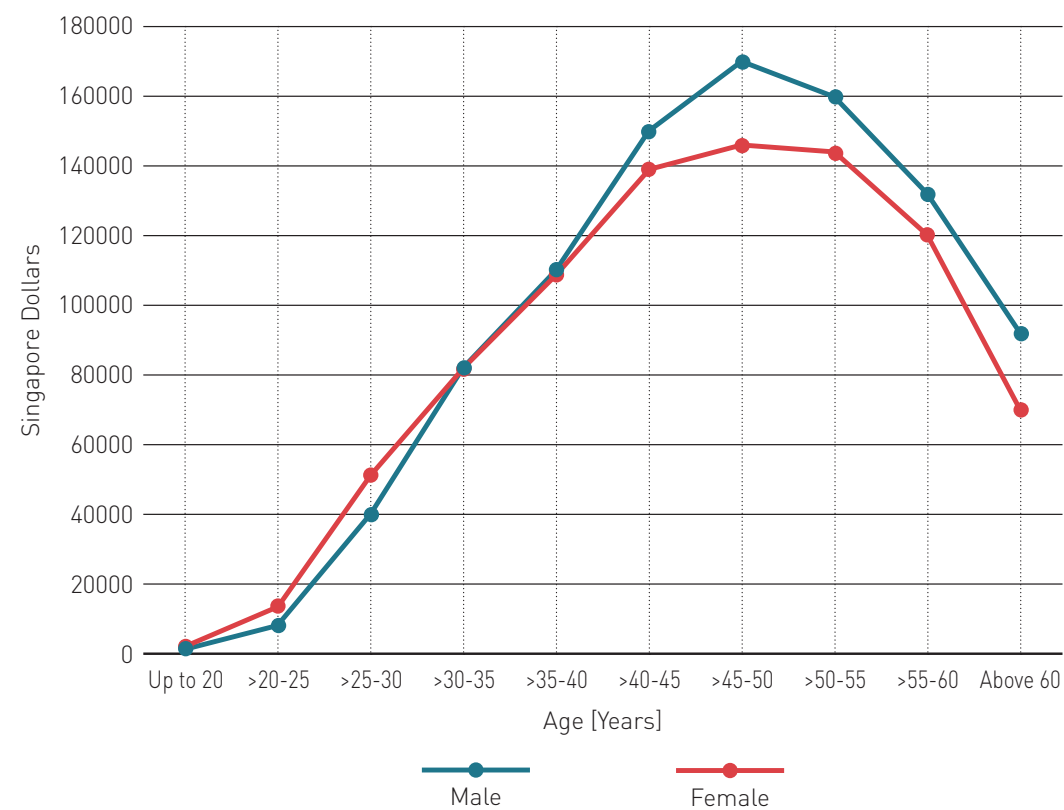
9. Gender Differences in Caregiving Responsibilities

Financial literacy, however, is not the only challenge to future financial security. Despite gender parity in education, a large

proportion of women of childbearing age continue to drop out of the labour force due to caregiving responsibilities. In 2017, 42% of women aged 15 years and over said they were not working because of family responsibilities (which includes caregiving). Among women of prime working age of 30-39 years, 50% said they were not working because of childcare.⁶⁵ This is a notable improvement from 2006, when 56% of women aged 15 years and over cited family responsibilities as the main reason for not working. Nevertheless, when compared to the number of men aged 15 years and over in 2017 who cited family responsibilities as

the main reason for not working (2.7%), it is clear that “the traditional notion of wife as homemaker and husband as the breadwinner appears to hold”.⁶⁶ It is also of concern that caregiving (and not housework) has actually increased in the last decade: in 2006, 26.3% of women aged 25-54 years were not working because of childcare/caregiving for relatives, which increased to 34% in 2016. A similar trend can be observed for the older age cohort of 55-64 years: in 2006, 6.3% of women were not working because of caregiving; in 2016, 15.6% of older women were not working for the same reasons.⁶⁷

Fig. 6.7: CPF Balances by Age and Sex, 2017



Source: Central Provident Fund, Annual Report (Review of Operations, Financial Statements and Annexes, Annex H, p. 141 (Singapore: CPF, 2017).

Note: Data does not include group of unspecified age.

This trend of stepping out of the workforce affects women across all occupations, including women in professional jobs: a survey published in 2017 shows that 72% of female have taken a break at some point in their careers.⁶⁸

The pattern observed in older age cohorts — that is, women participating in the workforce at a younger age, and leaving after marriage and childbirth — remains largely unchanged. In other countries, there are usually two distinct peaks in labour-force participation — that is, women withdraw from the workforce after marriage and childbirth but re-enter when the children are older. The second peak is less evident in Singapore (Figure 6.6). Based on this, the observation made in 2004 may still be relevant: “The absence of a second peak may hint of the difficulty for women here to re-enter the workforce possibly due to scarcity of family-friendly work arrangements”.⁶⁹ For example, in 2018, a survey conducted by online hiring company Monster.com found that 82% of new mums were reluctant to return to work because of the lack of flexible working options.⁷⁰ Another reason for the low number of returning women could be due to the biases of human resource Managers against hiring returning women. For instance, in 2017, 49% of hiring managers in Singapore had not employed any returning women in the past year.⁷¹ Employers were unsure whether returning women would benefit the workplace, and perceptions of returning women included that they wouldn’t be as good at their jobs, would not be as committed and would be unwilling to stay late.

Even if women do not drop out of the labour force, they tend to look for employment options that enable them to combine

caregiving with work, such as part-time work. Perhaps reflecting the persistence of household and care responsibilities, the percentage of women as a total proportion of part-time workers has declined only marginally from 65.7% in 2006 to 64% in 2017.⁷² There is also an age dimension to this, with the proportion of female part-time workers increasing after the age of 30.

Furthermore, despite the increase in women’s labour-force participation across all age groups and the rising educational attainment, the higher likelihood of women dropping out of the labour force after 30 years (Figure 6.6) also limits women’s ability to progress in their careers. A survey conducted in 2018 found that females accounted for 30% of senior management.⁷³ In terms of Board diversity, females represented 12.2% of directors in the 100 largest companies in Singapore,⁷⁴ which lags behind countries like Germany and the US.

When women do not work or work part-time, this results in lower levels of earnings and savings, including CPF balances. Among younger age cohorts, females in fact have higher CPF balances, but after the age of 35 years, the malefemale CPF balance starts diverging.⁷⁵ (Figure 6.7)

10. Changing Family Structure Affects Scope and Nature of Support

Historically, in Singapore, labour income has not been the main route for financial security of older women. Instead, as discussed above, the family has been at the heart of old-age income support. However, changing family structures will have implications for future financial support.

First, Singapore’s total fertility rate was 1.16 in 2017, marking a continuing decline: 1.25 in 2014, 1.24 in 2015 and 1.2 in 2016.⁷⁶ An analysis of recent demographic trends indicates that the number of children born is declining for each successive age cohort (Table 6.5).

Accordingly, the old-age support ratio has also declined from 7.4 persons aged 20-64 to support one older person in 2010 to 5.1 younger persons in 2017.⁷⁷

Reflecting the trend towards smaller family sizes and fewer children to support older persons, the National Survey of Senior Citizens conducted in 1995, 2005 and 2011 show a decline of about 20% in the proportion of older persons (55 years and above) citing income transfers from children as the top income source.⁷⁸ The decline in family support is also confirmed by a comparison of Census results between 2000 and 2010 (Table 6.6).

This does not necessarily suggest a decline in the strength of family ties - filial piety and relationships with family remain extremely strong in Singapore. In the HDB sample

household survey conducted in 2013, 95% of younger married residents said they would take care of their parents in old age, regardless of their circumstances.⁷⁹ Similarly, majority of the majority of Singaporeans (more than 80%) would turn to family for financial or emotional support.⁸⁰ However, rising costs of living may hinder children’s capacity to support older parents, regardless of their desire to be filial. A recent survey by the AIA insurance company found that caring for ageing parents was among the top financial concerns of those aged 25-45.⁸¹

There have also been other changes in family structures that have implications for family support for older persons. A notable trend has been the increase in the number of single women across all age groups. Among females aged 30-34, the proportion of singles has increased from 22.2% in 2006 to 26.5% in 2016.⁸² There were also more females who were widowed, divorced or separated compared to men. In 2016, 8.5% of women over 15 years were widowed, and 4.4% were divorced/separated compared to 1.9% and 2.7% of men of the same age respectively.⁸³

Table 6.5: Average Number of Children Born by Age Group of Resident Ever-Married Females, 2010-2015

	Total	15-29	30-39	40-49	50 & over
2006	2.32	0.77	1.55	2.08	3.15
2012	2.17	0.80	1.42	1.94	2.75
2016	2.09	0.78	1.45	1.84	2.53

Source: Department of Statistics, *Population Trends 2017*, Table A4.1, p.131 (Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2017).

Table 6.6: Females (aged 65 years and over) Citing Income Transfers from Children as Main Source of Financial Support (%)

	Total (65 years and over)	65-69 years	70-74 years	75-79 years	80 years and over
2000	84.3	77.6	85.5	89.1	90.4
2010	72.9	60.8	70.5	79.8	85.6

Source: Department of Statistics, *Singapore Census of Population 2000* (Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2002); and Department of Statistics, *Singapore Census of Population 2010* (Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2011).



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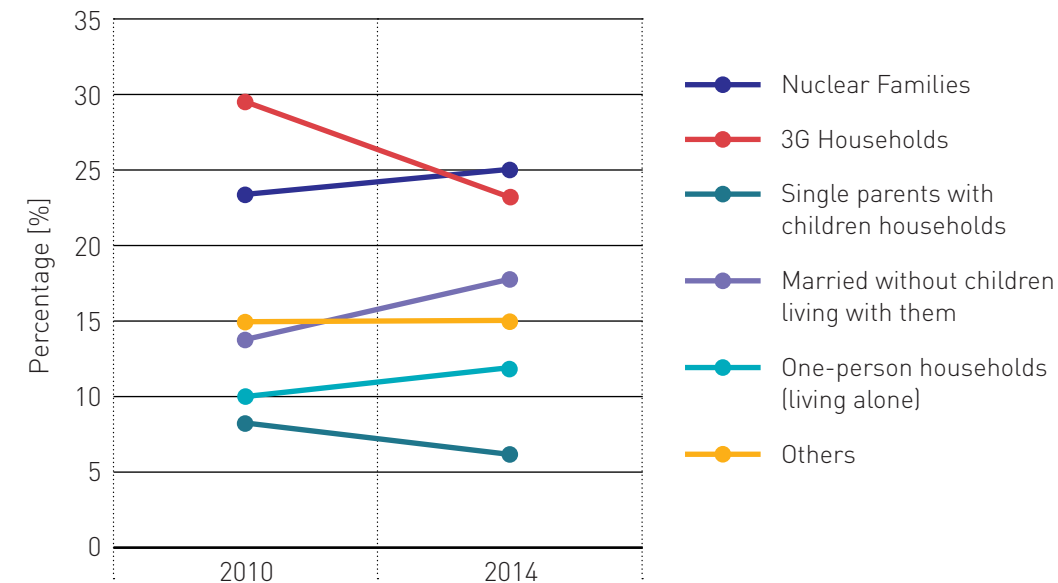
There has also been a change in living arrangements. Elderly residents increasingly live without their children, as evidenced by the decline in the number of 3G (three generation) households, and a corresponding increase in one-generation and one-person households (see Figure 6.8). Household size has diminished from 3.46 persons per household in 2006 to 3.35 persons per household in 2016.⁸⁴

There has also been a rise in the proportion of older persons living alone (Figure 6. 8).

An analysis of the profile of older persons living alone in 2003 shows that the majority are female (63.7%) and widowed (60.2%).⁸⁵ Since these women cannot rely on their spouse, changes in family support from children increases their vulnerability to financial insecurity.

These changes in the family landscape, from smaller family sizes, more aged households and “reconstituted families”⁸⁶ will, as Minister Tan Chuan Jin noted in 2015, “portend possibly greater challenges

Fig. 6.8: Change in Aged Residents (65 years and over) by Household Structure, 2010-2014 (%)



Source: Adapted from Chart 3 in Ministry of Social and Family Development, "Ageing Families in Singapore", *Insight Series Paper 02/2015*, p.7.

in marshalling immediate family support" which will need to be reinforced by reviewing individual and community support.⁸⁷

11. Enhancing Women's Financial Security: Recommended Action

In Singapore, two main stages can be identified at which women are most at 'risk' of becoming financially vulnerable. The discussion above suggests that women over 65 years have less income than older men. They are also expected to live longer, requiring them to stretch their income over a longer period of time. Ensuring adequate financial resources for these older women is important.

Older women in the future will be better educated, with better employment prospects and correspondingly, have more income for retirement than previous generations. However, women are at risk of altering their trajectory of financial security after 30-35 years. At this stage, women tend either to drop out of the labour force or change their employment patterns towards part-time work, affecting their prospects of accumulating sufficient income for old age.

Addressing these trends requires innovative solutions that involve all stakeholders, from individuals, employers, community and government. As the Prime Minister outlined in his National Day Rally Speech in 2013:⁸⁸



Today, the situation has changed. If we rely too heavily on the individual, their efforts alone will not be enough, especially among the vulnerable like the low-income families, like the elderly. And there are some things which individuals cannot do on their own and there are other things which we can do much better together. So we must shift the balance. The community and the Government will have to do more to support individuals. The community can and must take more initiative, organising and mobilising ourselves, solving problems, getting things done.



Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister

12. Key Recommendations

Based on the preceding analysis, five key recommendations can be distilled:

12.1 Implement programmes that encourage women to remain at work or return to work

There are two key concerns relating to women's labour-force participation. First, large numbers of women still drop out of the labour force due to caregiving responsibilities. Second, the second peak (when women re-enter the labour force at a later age) is still not evident in Singapore. How can these trends be changed? What can be done to improve women's representation in the labour force? Suggested measures include:

- Focused back-to-work initiatives for women

Recently, several initiatives have been launched by both employers, non-

governmental organisations and other partners to enable women who have taken a career break to transition back into the workforce, from NTUC's Returner Work Trial Scheme,⁸⁹ JumpStart by Career Navigators⁹⁰ to MomsMatter by Standard Chartered Bank.⁹¹ These are important initiatives to tap into female talent, but for these programmes to be successful, they need to be accompanied by :

- Gender sensitisation of HR managers, through programmes and training conducted with HR associations to reduce biased perceptions about returning women.
- Targeted SkillsFuture programmes that provide training on relevant skills for returning women to meet present workforce needs such as upgrading technology skills that can maximise their opportunities in the current SmartNation initiatives.

- Encourage women entrepreneurs through provision of start-up spaces, training and creating awareness of the different platforms and tools available for starting a business.
- b. Strengthen diversity and inclusion programmes

Despite achieving gender parity in education, women often do not progress from junior/middle management levels, and it is this 'leak' in the pipeline between middle to senior positions that needs to be addressed. To do so:

- A detailed national study to identify what are the main drivers and obstacles to women's career progression needs to be conducted. Through these findings and related data, employers can

better understand what policies and programmes should be implemented to achieve gender diversity.

- Encourage all organisations to adopt actions that can improve diversity. Two well-established factors include having internal male champions of diversity and implementing formal mentoring programmes.
- Encourage all organisations to adopt gender diversity targets — 50 by 2050. Similar to Boardgender's target of achieving 20% Board Diversity by 2020, organisations could adopt a target of 50% by 2050, i.e., gender equality in senior management positions.
- Some groups of females, such as single mothers may face particular



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- constraints in balancing work and family responsibilities. Targeted support through networks, guidance and even caregiving support from volunteers could be considered.
- c. Encourage all companies to implement the Tripartite Standard on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA).⁹²

Since different companies may have different workplace needs, the work requirements of a multinational company will be different from that of a small and medium enterprise (SME) with a few employees. Therefore, each company should be encouraged to develop clear FWA policies tailored to meet the needs of their specific workplace.

The existence of policies on FWA does not necessarily equate to effective implementation. Effective implementation will require a change in organisational culture in two main ways. First, flexiwork needs to be formalised and institutionalised with clear procedures for application, approval and assessment. Second, line managers who are usually the 'gatekeepers' for implementing flexiwork in practice need to be trained and sensitised on the importance of flexi-work and ways to effectively implement it in practice, particularly as research shows that there is "rampant scepticism of flexiwork at the managerial level".⁹³

12.2 Strengthen support for caregivers

Given that support for institutional care remains low among Singaporeans (in 2013, only 7.3% of younger married residents felt institutional care was an ideal living

arrangement),⁹⁴ it is likely that women will continue to leave the labour force to undertake caregiving responsibilities in the immediate future. Greater support for retirement adequacy is required for these caregivers through:

- a. A matched savings scheme

The government could provide a dollar for dollar matched saving for women in the age group of 30-49 years who have not yet achieved half of their Retirement Sum. A study commissioned by the Tsao Foundation found that matched savings can be effective in sustaining commitment for retirement savings among low income women.

- b. Review of the CPF Nomination Scheme

Unless otherwise specified by the CPF member, women who are homemakers or caregivers should be 'automatic nominees' for their spouses CPF account.

- c. Enhanced community-based support for creating alternative sources of income for caregivers

Home-based entrepreneurship could be one way in which the income of caregivers could be supplemented. Community spaces for entrepreneurial activity, such as start-up spaces could be created near where women live, so that women can get involved in home-based enterprises such as social enterprises, even on a part-time basis. Such schemes could provide income for older women and caregivers.



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12.3 Change mindsets around caregiving and work

Ultimately, for a change in the traditional division of caregiving responsibilities, a wider societal shift in mindset will be required. This can be facilitated through:

- a. Public education and awareness campaigns

Education and mass media campaigns have already been making inroads in reducing gender stereotypes relating to childcare. These need to continue and also can be extended to remove stereotypes about eldercare, and increase awareness that eldercare is a responsibility for both males and females. For instance, campaigns like 'Dads for Life' can be replicated for similar campaigns on eldercare. Organisations could also organise programmes on eldercare for men, similar to the Centre for Fathering's parenting programmes. Together, these campaigns can change the mindset that women should be the primary caregivers.

- b. Gender sensitisation of employers and HR associations

As Lim (2016) noted, "Our workplaces have yet to fully adapt to a workforce who are all, at the same time, caregivers. Companies must recognise that we do not — and cannot — have the traditional workforce, where the typical worker is a work-obsessed man supported by his full-time, homemaker wife."⁹⁵ As outlined above, there needs to be gender sensitisation training of employers and HR managers that incorporates the following:

- Reducing the emphasis on face-time
- Awareness of the benefits of effective flexi-work arrangements
- Recognition of the dual responsibilities of all employers, of career and caregiving, including of elderly caregiving

12.4 Promote financial literacy throughout the life-course

Equipping women with the knowledge, skills and awareness of financial planning is vital for women's economic empowerment, and for developing their financial capability, and consequently, their financial security in old age.

MoneySense⁹⁶ and the Institute of Financial Literacy⁹⁷ e-learning resources are good existing platforms. Public uptake of these resources could be expanded by increasing public awareness through media campaigns. In addition to this:

- a. Gender-informed financial education

needs to be institutionalised and start from a young age.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) already infuses financial education into the school curriculum in core subjects such as Social Studies. This is complemented by games and workshops organised by MoneySense in primary and secondary schools,⁹⁸ as well as training for teachers through the Citi-NIE Financial Literacy Hub for Teachers.⁹⁹ These efforts need to be developed further by including gender informed modules on financial literacy in the curriculum starting in primary schools and continuing through to universities and polytechnics (with increased levels of information at each stage of education).

- b. A nation-wide financial education programme targeted at all women of all age groups should be implemented.

Financial literacy programmes tailored with specific content for different age groups should be implemented across the country. The Citi-Tsao Financial Education programme for Mature Women has already been implemented by People's Association Women's Integration Network (PA-WIN) and has reached about 6,000 women aged between 40-60 years. The programme has had a positive impact on women's financial literacy. According to an impact assessment, 80% of graduates had a clear financial plan after completing the programme (compared to only 37% who had a plan before they attended the programme); and 79% said there were prepared in case of unexpected events such as illness (compared to 48%).¹⁰⁰ Ways in which this programme can be replicated on a larger, national-level scale should be explored.

- c. The Central Provident Fund (CPF) could



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provide gender-informed content on retirement planning and retirement adequacy. For instance, in their retirement planning roadshows,¹⁰¹ they could include a component addressing the unique circumstances of women who are caregivers, homemakers or working part-time.

- d. Employers should implement programmes to increase financial awareness among their female employees

Employers can be pivotal in increasing financial education. According to a Mercer study in 2018, 79% of respondents said they “trust employers to give sound, independent advice on planning, saving and investing.”¹⁰² Ways in which employers could do this include:

- Developing a digital platform that provides information and tools on financial planning and retirement adequacy

- Creating a guide or booklet that could be distributed to all women that outlines the impact of women choosing not to work. It could provide comparisons of the loss of income (and consequently, impact on retirement adequacy) if women drop out of work, versus remaining in the labour force.

- Including gender-sensitive financial literacy programmes in the orientation of new employees¹⁰³

- Developing a guidance/support programme for female employees reaching retirement age (from 55 years) to help prepare for retirement.¹⁰⁴

12.5 Undertake further research on gender and ageing and collect disaggregated data

Reliable, good data and research evidence are pre-requisites for informed policy-making and programme development. At present, there is insufficient gender

and age disaggregated data to make a comprehensive assessment of women’s financial security. Research focused on the gender dimensions of ageing are also limited. Specific research initiatives that could be implemented include:

- a. A gender review of existing policies

A gender review of existing policies would create a greater appreciation of how older men and women are affected differently by policies. A gender analysis would ensure that all older women who are vulnerable and needy are reached by existing policies and programmes. If women face particular cultural constraints in accessing social support, a gender analysis would enable policies to target these particular factors.

- b. Collection of gender and age disaggregated data

Data on demographic trends and socio-economic circumstances disaggregated by gender and age are essential to compare the differential impact of ageing on men and women. Collection of data

disaggregated by age and sex is also a key recommendation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

- c. Longitudinal studies of older women

In a rapidly changing world, longitudinal data is an important tool for tracking and understanding the impact of social and economic changes over time on individuals. It enables researchers to study how individuals change over time, and to analyse the trajectories of different facets of individual lives, ranging from health, work to family support.

The Singapore Life Panel is a step in the right direction.¹⁰⁵ To enrich the insights further and provide detailed micro-data on the qualitative aspects of women’s life course trajectories, this should be supplemented by:

- Regular face to face interviews with older women over a long period of time.
- Life History data, or retrospective information about women’s lives that could be collected through different methods, such as interviews or written essays.

This data should be harmonised with other global longitudinal studies such as the US Health and Retirement Study so that the data collected is internationally comparable. It should be nationally representative, and have a multi-disciplinary focus, studying issues such as health, finance, family and work.



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Annex 6.1: Older Singapore Residents by Age Group and Sex, June 2017

Age group (Years)	Total Population	Total Male Population	Total Female Population
65-69	203,969	99,351	104,618
70-74	119,494	56,463	63,031
75-79	91,953	40,524	51,429
80-84	54,341	22,400	31,941
85 & over	46,935	15,934	31,001
65 & over	516,692	234,672	282,020

Source: Department of Statistics, *Population Trends, 2017*, Table A1.3.

Annex 6.2a: Perceived Current Financial Adequacy by Gender, 55 years and over, 2011 (%)

Financial adequacy	Male	Female
More than adequate	3.7	4.9
Adequate	74.5	65.9
Occasionally inadequate	14.4	20.2
Usually inadequate	7.4	8.9

Source: Kang, Tan and Yap, *National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011*, Table 5.14 p. 45.

Annex 6.2b: Perceived Future Financial Adequacy by Gender, 55 years and over, 2011 (%)

Future Financial adequacy	Male	Female
More than sufficient	4.5	4.4
Sufficient	64.7	64.0
Insufficient	30.8	31.5

Source: Kang, Tan and Yap, *National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011*, p. 46.

Notes

- 1 Department of Statistics, "Elderly, Youth and Gender Profile, Key Indicators of the Elderly" (Singapore: Department of Statistics customised tables, Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2016) <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/find-data/search-by-theme/population/elderly-youth-and-gender-profile/latest-data> (Accessed 10 August 2018). Data refers to resident population.
- 2 Tan Teck Boon, "CO15193 | A super-aged Singapore: Policy implications for a smart nation", RSIS Commentary No. 193, p.1. (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2015).
- 3 Population.sg, "Older Singaporeans to double by 2030", <https://www.population.sg> (Accessed 10 August 2018).
- 4 Data refers to resident population. See Department of Statistics Singapore, *Population Trends 2017*, p. 40, Table A. (Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2017).
- 5 Kevin Kinsella and David Rosser Phillips, "Global aging: the challenge of success", *Population Bulletin* 60, no.1(2005): 15.
- 6 Department of Statistics, *Population Trends 2017*, p. 36. Data for 2016 is still preliminary.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Laurie Russell Hatch, *Beyond Gender Differences: Adaptation to Ageing in a Life-Course Perspective*. (Amityville, US: Baywood Publishing, 2000); Phyllis Moen, Donna Dempster-McClain, and Robin M. Williams, "Ageing: A Life-Course Perspective on Women's Multiple Roles and Health", *American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 6 (1992):1612-1638; Glenn Elder, "The Emergence and Development of Life-Course Theory", in Jeylan T. Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan, eds., *Handbook of the Life Course*, pp. 3-19 (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003).
- 9 This definition is based on several different sources including Siti Yuliandi Ahmad and Mohamad Fazli Sabri, "Understanding Financial Security from Consumer's Perspective: A Review of Literature", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4, no. 12 (2014):110-117; Angelique Chan, "Singapore's changing structure and the policy implications for financial security, employment, living arrangements and health care", *Asia MetaCentre Research Paper Series*, no. 3 (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2001); Worawet Suwanrada, "Poverty and Financial Security of the Elderly in Thailand", *Ageing International* 33, nos. 1- 4 (2008): 50-61.
- 10 It is recognised that measuring financial security in terms of income ignores non-monetary aspects that contribute to financial security such as welfare services or caregiving services provided by government, non-governmental organisations or family. Moreover, Sen's capability approach underlines how non-income factors such as social inclusion or community participation can also affect the well-being of older persons (see Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* [New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999]). However, a detailed examination of these non-monetary aspects of well-being is beyond the scope of this chapter.
- 11 ComCare is the main social safety net for low-income Singaporeans. There are different types of assistance – ComCare Long Term Assistance (LTA), ComCare Short to Medium Term Assistance, Student Care Fee Assistance, Centre-based Financial Assistance for Childcare and Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (Ministry of Social and Family Development, *Comcare Trends Report FY 2012-FY 2015*). The ComCare LTA has been used here to examine older persons' financial security as this scheme is primarily targeted at older persons (Ministry of Social and Family Development, "ComCare Long Term Assistance", <https://www.msf.gov.sg/Comcare/Pages/Public-Assistance.aspx>).
- 12 Bina Agarwal, "Bargaining' and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household", *Feminist Economics* 3, no. 1 (1997):1-51; Naila Kabeer, *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought* (London: Verso, 1994).
- 13 The National Survey of Senior Citizens was conducted in 2011 among the resident population aged 55 years and over. Over 10,000 households with at least one household head over 55 years was surveyed, and from this survey, 5,000 senior citizens were interviewed. Kang Sook Hock, Tan Ern Ser and Yap Mui Teng, *National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011*, p.ii (Singapore: Institute

- of Policy Studies, commissioned by Elderly and Disability Group, Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2013).
- 14 Includes responses for both incomes being inadequate and more than inadequate. Kang, Tan and Yap, *National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011*, p.45, Table 5.14.
 - 15 Kang, Tan and Yap, *National Survey of Senior Citizens 2011*, p.52.
 - 16 Ministry of Manpower, *Labour Force in Singapore 2017*, T54, Table 30 (Singapore: Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower, 2017). Data refers to gross monthly income from work [excluding employer CPF], June 2017.
 - 17 The data here is for older women above 60 years, as the data for women over 65 years was not available.
 - 18 Ministry of Manpower, *Labour Force in Singapore 2017*, T38-T39, Table 23. Data refers to full-time employed residents (excluding employer CPF).
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THAILAND

CHAPTER 7



THAILAND

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1. Introduction

Population ageing has increasingly become a burden in Thailand. The number of older persons (residents aged 60 years and above) has increased sevenfold in the last 50 years, from approximately 1.5 million in 1960 to 10.7 million in 2015 (or 16.0% of the total population) (Knodel et al. 2015, p.vii). The speed of population ageing has also been unprecedented. It is projected that with the current increase in the older population (at a rate of 4% a year), one in five Thais will be over 60 years by 2021. It was projected that by 2031 Thailand will be a super-aged society, with older persons comprising 28% of the population (Mahidol University 2015, p.7). The proportion of older females is higher: in 2017, older females constituted 55.1% (6.2 million) of the older population (National Statistical Office 2018, p.63). This is in line with previous projections which indicated that the proportion of older women in the population would increase continuously from 10.2% of the total female population in 2000 to 27.8% in 2030 (Knodel and Chayovan 2008). The gender imbalance will become even more notable at older ages, with the share of women aged 80 years and over expected to be 59% in 2050 (Knodel et al. 2015, p. 13).

The changing age structure of the population has also resulted in an increase in the old-age dependency ratio (i.e., number of persons aged 65 and older per one hundred

persons 15-64 years) over the years from 5.8 in 1975 to 7.7 in 2000, and is projected to rise to 34.1 by 2050 (United Nations 2001, p.439). This demographic change holds an important concern in Thailand where the concept of filial piety is deeply ingrained in the Thai culture.

The Thai Government plays a significant role in securing the financial situation of its senior citizens. Policies and measures have been designed to respond to this challenge faced by the ageing population. The aim of these policies is to help the older people live with security, safety and dignity; promote equitable access to good quality healthcare; and promote a stable and sustainable income.

The focus of this chapter is the gender perspectives of the financial situation of older persons in Thailand. It aims to stimulate further discussion among policy-makers and key stakeholders to move Thailand towards a society where people, regardless of gender, can live together with dignity and equality. The data was based on secondary research that involved a review of existing literature, including plans and policies of the Thai Government, with emphasis on data related to the financial security of Thai older women. A search in the databases of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the National Statistical Office was conducted to obtain statistical data on



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factors that shed light on the financial situation of older women, such as income, poverty, expenditure, employment and living arrangements.

The chapter is organized into the following sections: (1) Current status of financial security among older women; (2) Contributory factors to financial insecurity among older women; (3) Policy recommendations; (4) Limitations and further research; and (5) Conclusions.

2. Current Status of Financial Security among Older Women

Financial security is the condition in which the person has a stable income or enough resources to support his/her standard of living now and in the future. According to the report published by the United Nations

in 2010-2015, life-expectancy of women at birth (78.4 years) is higher than that of men (70.9 years) (United Nations 2017, p.184, Table A28). Hence, women's expenses extend further into the future. Older women are often widowed and have inadequate means of support. They are also likely to have poorer health and a worse financial situation compared to older men.

In 2017, 12.6% of older women reported having either no income or income of less than 10,000 Baht compared to only 8.9% of older men. (National Statistical Office 2018, pp.115-116).¹ Older women were also less likely to have savings: 27.3% of older women had no savings, compared to 22.1% of older men (National Statistical Office 2018, pp. 120-121).² Older women are also marginally more likely to report that their income is inadequate (19.1%) than older

men (17.7%) (National Statistical Office 2018, pp. 115 -116).

Older women are hence considered a more vulnerable group and deserve special attention and assistance (Jitapunkul 1998). In order to reduce the risk of becoming economically vulnerable at old age, women need to have sufficient savings for retirement and this poses great challenges that are outlined later in this chapter. In old age, the primary sources of income include work, savings, investments, government transfers, pensions and support from families. As the following discussion will demonstrate, there are gender disparities in access to most of these sources of income.

Older women are less likely to work, and therefore are less likely to receive income from employment. In 2017, the labour-force participation rate of women aged 65 years and over was 17.9%, while the labour-force participation rate of men aged 65 years and over was 34.8% (ILOSTAT, customized data). The labour-force participation rate was higher for women aged 60-64 years (46.5%), but was still significantly lower than male labour-force participation rates (70.6%). The survey of older persons in 2017 by the National Statistical Office mirrors these nationwide trends. While the majority of older persons of both sexes said they did not work, a significantly higher proportion of older women (71.4%) compared to older men (51.2%) were not working (National Statistical Office 2018, pp. 89,90).³

An analysis of the work status of the elderly also shows that older men are in a better position to earn more income and have more financial security than older women (Table 7.1). Older men have disproportionately higher numbers of own-account workers,

implying that they are running their own businesses. A higher proportion of older women are unpaid family workers, i.e. they are working without earning any salary. This is then reflected in the gender differences in annual income received by the elderly, with a higher proportion of older women (29.5%) in the lowest income group compared to older men (21.9%) [Table 7.2].

Older women are also much less likely to be recipients of pensions, primarily because employment is directly linked to access to pensions. Women's labour-force participation even in younger ages is lower than men. In general, in Thailand, only those who work as civil servants, state enterprise officers or long-term employees of private companies have access to pensions. Therefore, pensions are often the main source of income for only a small sub-group of the aged population. In 2017, 16.4% of older persons cited pensions as a source of income (National Statistical Office, 2018, p.107). Older women, who are more likely to be informal sector workers or housewives are more likely to be denied access to pensions. According to a survey conducted by the National Statistics Office in 2017, among older persons aged 60 years and over receiving a pension, only 38% were women.

Citizens aged 60 and above in Thailand who are not covered under any pension scheme receive an Old Age Allowance (OAA) from the government. Since women are less likely to receive pensions, they form the majority of older persons receiving the OAA. In 2017, 57% of older persons receiving the Government Living Allowance were female (National Statistical Office 2018, p.108). This social pension is 600 Baht per month for those between 60-69 years of age, 700

Table 7.1: Proportion of Older Men and Women by Work Status, 2017 (%)

Work Status	Male	Female
Employer	4.9	3.1
Own account worker	71.5	49.0
Unpaid family worker	8.4	34.2
Government employee	1.9	1.5
Government enterprise employee	0.2	0.1
Private employee	13.0	11.8
Member of producer's cooperatives	0.1	0.2
Volunteer	0.04	0.03
Unknown	0.02	0.02

Source: National Statistical Office, Table 15, pp. 92-93 (2018).

Table 7.2: Proportion of Older Men and Women According to Annual Income Range, 2017 (%)

Annual Income range in Thai Baht	Male	Female
No income	0.03	0.04
< 20,000	21.9	29.5
20,000 – 39,999	23.5	28.1
40,000-59,9999	16.6	17.6
60,0000 – 79,999	10.6	9.5
80,0000 – 99,999	5.2	3.6
100,000 – 299,999	16.2	8.8
>300,000	5.6	2.5
Unknown	0.3	0.3

Source: National Statistical Office, Table 26, pp. 115-116 (2018).

Baht for 70-79 year old persons, 800 Baht for those aged between 80-89 years and 1000 Baht for those aged 90 years and older (Suwanrada and Wesumperuma, 2013). However, the OAA's allowance lies below the poverty line, according to a report published by the National Statistical Office in 2014. Therefore, older people who rely on the OAA as their main source of income will not have enough to live on. Older people living in rural areas may rely on homegrown food from their garden or livestock to cater to basic consumption needs. However, the OAA allowance is hardly enough for older people living in urban areas especially if they lack family support and savings, as they need to fork out money for food. Furthermore, as mentioned above, a higher percentage

of older women receive a social pension than older men, which suggests that older women are more financially vulnerable.

Instead of depending on income from employment, older women tend to rely more on financial support from children. However, higher dependency on offspring for financial support leaves older women more vulnerable to financial insecurity. It is a common expectation in Thai society for children to take care of their elderly parents. Hence, older women are about 1.5 times more financially dependent on their children than their male counterparts (Table 7.3).

Marital status is also a social factor contributing to financial security. As Knodel

Table 7.3: Most Important Source of Income of Older Men and Women in 2017 (%)

Source of income	Male	Female
Work	41.9	22.1
Remuneration/pension	8.2	3.9
Social security fund	0.1	0.05
Government living allowance	16.8	22.6
Saving interest/saving/assets	2.2	2.3
Spouse	2.6	6.3
Child	27.3	40.8
Parent	0.0	0.0
Brother/sister/relative	0.7	1.9
Others	0.1	0.1

Source: National Statistical Office Table 24, pp. 111, 112 (2018).

Note: Data only refers to those who have income and the source of their income, but not those without income or unknown,

et al. (2015, p 14) noted, "An older person's marital status has important implications for their well-being. Spouses can provide material, social and emotional support as well as personal care during times of illness or frailty." There are also gender differences in this support, with women more likely to rely on the spouse for material support. For instance, in a survey conducted in 2014, among married older persons, women (51%) were more likely than men (31%) to report a spouse as a source of income.

In 2017, a higher proportion of older men (78.2%) were married and living with their spouse in contrast to 45% of older women. The proportion of widowed older women (42%) is just over three times higher than the proportion of widowed men (13.8%) (National Statistical Office 2018 pp. 78,79). Among older people in their 80s, only 18% of women had a current surviving spouse, whereas among men, over 60% had a current surviving spouse (Knodel et al. 2015, p.15). This gender difference reflects two trends: women live longer than men, and men tend to be older than their wives as men tend to marry women who are younger than them. Moreover, when there is marital dissolution, men have higher remarriage rates than women (Knodel and Chayovan 2008). These trends, combined with the gender disparities in access to employment and pensions further underline the greater vulnerability of older women. It also suggests that certain groups of older women, such as widows may be even more susceptible to financial insecurity.

3. Factors Contributing to Financial Insecurity among Older Women

There are several factors contributing to financial insecurity among older women

accumulated through different stages of life. This section will elaborate on the socio-economic status of women that affects their financial security.

3.1 Employment Trends

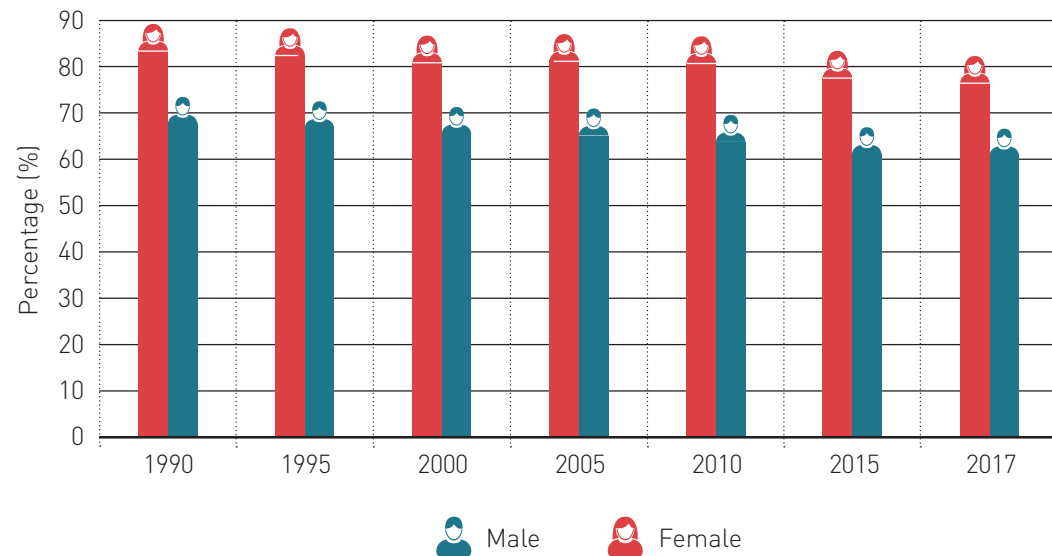
As discussed in the previous section, older women have less savings and less access to pensions. This is directly related to lower levels of employment of women throughout their lives. Historically, women have been underrepresented in the labour force. (Table 7.4 and Figure 7.1) The reasons for women's lower labour-force participation include

Table 7.4: Labour-Force Participation Rates by Sex, July 2017 (ILO modelled estimates) (%)

Years	Male	Female
Total (all ages)	77.3	60.5
15-19	25.1	12.1
20-24	72.1	54.6
25-29	93.1	80.2
30-34	95.3	82.8
35-39	95.8	83.1
40-44	95.7	83.0
45-49	95.7	80.9
50-54	93.7	75.3
55-59	89.4	67.6
60-64	70.6	46.5
65+	34.8	17.9

Source: ILOSTAT, customised data, <https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/>.

Fig. 7.1: Labour-Force Participation Rates, Various Years, by Sex (ILO modelled estimates) (%)



Source: ILOSTAT, customized data, <https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/>.

pregnancy and caregiving for children or elderly parents. For instance, in 2016, 43.4% of women who were not in the labour force cited household work as the reason for being outside the labour force. In contrast, only 4.1% of men were outside the labour force due to household work (National Statistical Office 2016, Table 1, Statistical Tables). The proportion of women citing housework as the main reason for being outside the labour force increases to over 85% among women between the ages of 30-50 years. An analysis of women's employment in Asia notes that "because of their reproductive functions women are much more likely than men to leave and re-enter the workforce several times over their life course" (ILO and ADB 2011, p.43). In Thailand, for example, interviews with women factory workers revealed that some women left their jobs as morning sickness during pregnancy made it difficult to maintain the routine

of factory work. These decisions can have long-term implications, as women's non-employment earlier in their lives has a significant impact on their financial security in old age. In 1990, among the female working-age population aged between 35-39 years, 240,000 women were outside the labour force (ILOSTAT, customised data). Assuming these women stayed out of the labour force, these women would now be entering old age, without being able to rely on savings or pensions from employment, increasing their financial vulnerability and dependence on other sources of income. Even in the last 10 years, the trend of lower women's labour-force participation has remained relatively unchanged (Figure 7.1), therefore the problem of financial (in) security is likely to persist.

Even among the women who enter the labour force, they face gender inequality

in employment. Gender pay gap is another major contributor to women's cumulative income disadvantage in the labour market. The overall gender pay gap declined in the past 30 years, from 14.0% in 1996 to 10.0% in 2006 (Bui and Permpoonwiwat 2015). However, the gender pay gap persists primarily as a result of the continued gender discrimination in favour of men in the labour force (Bui and Permpoonwiwat 2015). In the Labour-Force Survey of wages in July-September 2016, for example, women earned about 1,673 Baht less than men per month, a gap of about 17% (National Statistical Office 2016, p.Table 3.17).

3.2 Women in Vulnerable Employment

Apart from lower labour-force participation, another factor that contributes to women's financial insecurity is vulnerable employment. Vulnerable employment is a newly defined measure of people who are employed under relatively precarious circumstances, including inadequate earnings and difficult conditions of work (ILO 2013, p.22). According to the ILO, own-account workers and contributing family workers comprise the main group of vulnerable workers.⁴ Therefore, a considerable number of workers (48.3% of all employed persons in 2016) (ILOSTAT) earned too little to escape poverty. Workers in the informal sector are not protected by employment laws and lack job security. Moreover, although the national minimum wage is US\$9.00 per day, these workers receive low salaries that range from US\$ 4.30 to 5.80 per day. These workers do not have regular jobs and do not have means to earn extra income. They are also at a higher risk of exposure to potential health hazards such as fatigue, physical and mental stress as a result of long working hours, and noise

pollution and chemicals from jobs such as shoe-making, shrimp-peeling, sugar-palm peeling, and sewing. These disadvantages are compounded by the gender pay gap. The average monthly income for home-based workers is about US\$73 for women and around US\$176 for men (ILO 2012).

Despite enactment of laws and regulations with the intention to improve labour welfare, those working in the informal labour sector gain less access to human rights and well-being than those working in the formal labour sector. The Home-Worker Protection Act, B.E. 2553 (2010) has not been fully enforced. This Act includes wage protection for the same job type; employers have to pay the home workers the same rate as those workers in the formal labour sector. The Act also includes matters such as rights and duties of employers and home workers, remunerations, safety in the workplace, and filing of petition(s) to the labour inspector.

3.3 Gender Roles and Responsibilities

In the past, women usually had fewer educational opportunities to acquire skills suitable for the labour market, and hence had less chance to explore career potentials. In 2017, almost double the number of older women (12.6%) had no education compared to older men (6.4%) (National Statistical Office 2018). As a result, despite current efforts to close the gender gap in education, many older women are still affected due to the lack of access to education in their younger years. Shaped by normative ideas of labour that arose from culturally and historically specific definitions of gender, women are assumed to take on the main caregiver role for the family (UNICEF Thailand 2011). This includes taking care of children, the elderly, as well as the sick and

disabled in the family. Thus families rely on women as caregivers from childhood till old age. It is estimated that Thai women spent 2.7 hours per day on average doing unpaid household maintenance and 3.3 hours per day taking the bulk of unpaid caring roles, compared to 1.5 and 2 hours respectively, by men (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and UNDP 2008, pp.153,154).

Although many families have become more aware of gender diversity, they still tend to conform to the pre-conception of traditional gender roles. While there are exceptions in some communities of Thailand, men are generally expected to be the leader and breadwinner of the family while women are involved in domestic and in-door activities. This concept of gendered division of labour has changed over time. Nowadays, married women take on an active role in earning income for the family and shouldering their household expenditure burden.

However, even employed women are still expected to be the primary caregivers and to undertake most of the domestic responsibilities. As a consequence, women often have to drop out of formal employment, with family as the most cited reason, a trend that has not changed over the past 15 years. From 2001 to 2010, the reason most frequently cited for not working was participation in household work, with 44% of women not in the labour force for this reason (ILO 2013, p.15). As seen earlier, in 2016, 46% of women cited the same reason (household work) for not participating in the labour force.

Furthermore, as the proportion of older persons increases, there is greater pressure for caregiving of the elderly. A survey



conducted a decade ago on the Thai population aged 15 to 60 years found that about 80% of them had to take care of their parents. Among those who had to take care of their elderly, approximately 75% were women (cited in UNICEF 2011,p.12).

When the family needs someone to take care of older people, sick, or disabled family members, it is usually women who must leave their jobs to fulfill the caregiver role (UNICEF Thailand 2011.) When women become pregnant, it is often they who have to leave their position in the workplace (UNICEF Thailand 2011). This is the case unless they are employed by the government or hold a high-ranking position in the company where they are eligible for long maternity leave. Therefore, women lose the opportunity to earn their own income. Although they can receive support from their husband or other family members, they have

little or no savings and have to rely on others as a source of financial security. Once they become unemployed, it is hard for them to re-enter the job market.

Women heads of household face even greater economic obstacles and financial insecurity than their male counterparts. About 20% of females were heads of their household and lived alone, and another 15.9% lived with children. These two proportions were higher than that of men (Knodel et al. 2008). The Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board reported an increasing tendency for women to become heads of households and shoulder the burden of taking care of their families. The statistics taken from 2007 to 2014 reflected that although the average household income in Thailand had increased, female headed households have on average lower incomes than male headed households (Knodel and Chayovan 2008, Khorpetch and Kulkokarn 2011). Households headed by the elderly are also more vulnerable to poverty, having higher poverty rates (14%) than the national average (World Bank 2016,p. 65).

3.4 Limited Access to Economic Resources and Social Support for Women

Economic resources and social support are necessary for individuals to sustain their living. For the poor, low access to credit has been a point of concern especially in crisis or emergency situations. This raises a need to design policies for economic empowerment of low-income women. In 2012, the Thai Government initiated the Thai Women's Empowerment Fund to provide small grants for career development and income generation for women aged 15 years and over. Unfortunately, the outcome did not show any evidence of success

(ILO 2012). The fund did not fulfill its objectives of women empowerment and job generation. An evaluation by civil society published in 2014 reported that only 9.6% of the Thai female population aged 15 and above had benefitted from the fund. They also concluded that the fund lacked accountability and efficiency and suffered from poor management (Foundation for Women n.d.). The funds were also said to be governed by government officials who did not have a comprehensive understanding of the gender gap issues. The unsuccessful outcome has led to the fund relocation to the Community Development Department (CDD) of the Ministry of Interior in 2015. However, the CDD did not have the relevant expertise to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Therefore, no concrete plans were developed.

Limited access to economic opportunities is an important barrier that leads to financial insecurity and can cause women to fall into debt during their working age. This situation may lead to poverty in old age. This makes certain groups of women particularly vulnerable, especially single, low-income women who do not have access to social support and specific assistance. In 2015, the government-initiated childcare subsidies for low-income families and provided a monthly allowance of 400 Baht (Sricharatchanya 2016), which was increased to 600Baht per month in 2016. This policy aimed to ensure that all newborns and children up to 3 years of age would be taken care of. However, for a family to qualify, they must earn no more than 3,000 Baht per month. As a consequence, many families are not eligible to receive financial assistance from this policy. Moreover, the allowance of 400 Baht or US\$12 is considered as very small for a single mother to raise a child. Apart

from this support, there is no other specific scheme to support women with children. Low-income women and single mothers are left on their own to take care of their children or seek help from their parents.

If divorce were to occur, women who used to depend on their husband financially may lose all their income. It is burdensome for women to claim spousal compensation due to the husband's unwillingness to comply. Although spousal compensation is stated in the Thai Civil and Commercial Code, there is no obvious penalty in the case of an omission. Hence, this poses a challenge for women to successfully claim compensation from their husband. After the divorce, it is common that children live with their mothers and only few still receive financial support from their fathers (Kramarge and Spencer 2004). It is a major challenge for women to be granted child support and

alimony upon divorce. In cases when men do agree to pay compensation, women will still be at an economic disadvantage because the time spent on caring for their child would limit women's opportunity to undertake a full-time job and earn an income.

During an economic downturn, workers in the formal sector, especially those working in small-scale factories, could be at risk of being laid off. As noted by Paitoonpong and Akkarakul (2009, p.3), women were particularly affected by the global financial crisis of 2008. Women are more vulnerable to lay-offs. In the Asian financial crisis of 1997, it was estimated that women accounted for 80% of the retrenched workers in the textile and electronics industries. During the global financial crisis from 2007 to 2008, there were at least 125,700 women workers in export industries who were laid off or had to move to jobs with lower pay and less secure working conditions.

There was also more underemployment, particularly of homeworkers. In 2008, 337,526 (76.7%) women were home-based workers with unstable income as their livelihood relied on transitory demand in exports (Paitoonpong and Akkarakul 2009).

The views of a group of affected women workers and union leaders were explored in a qualitative study. Findings from the study showed that assistance from the government was made available, but the initiatives were not targeted at solving existing problems and were below the workers' expectations. They were also not gender responsive. If women continue to be disproportionately represented in vulnerable employment, they will be more at risk of lay-offs or underemployment during economic downturns, affecting their long-



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term financial security (Paitoonpong and Akkarakul 2009).

4. Emerging Trends of Financial Security among Women

Financial security for younger cohorts of women workers may be improving. Even though women remain the primary caregivers, there is greater support for women's roles as carers. According to the law, women who work in a public or private company can take up to 90 days of maternity leave. In 2012, the government approved 15 days of paternity leave for government employees. The Ministry of Labour is considering revisions to both maternity and paternity leave to "improve the quality of life of working women" (Ministry of Labour 2017).

At the same time, education levels have also improved among Thai women. Primary and secondary education enrolment rates are high, and exceed male enrolment rates in tertiary education (Table 7.5). Improvements in female education help increase women's

labour-force participation (Heath and Jayachandran 2017) and also allows women to have better and higher paying jobs, which will increase their chances of becoming financially independent in old age (World Bank 2016).

While these are positive trends for future financial security, declining family size poses a threat to women's financial security. Financial support from children is one of the main sources of income for older women. Older women also receive more significant sums of money (30,000 +Baht) than older men (Table 7.6). However, the growing trend of shrinking family size would likely result in decreases in financial support from the children (Knodel et al. 2015). The number of children per woman has declined from 3.92 in 1975-1980 to 1.53 between 2010-2015 and is expected to decline to 1.46 between 2015-2020 (UN 2017⁵). As Knodel et al. (2015, p.63) noted, the proportion of women who reported "children as a source of income and as their main income clearly increase with the number of adult children." The percentage of older persons (men and women) reporting children as a main source

Table 7.5: Educational Attainment, by Sex, 2015 (%)

Education Level	Female	Male
Literacy rate (15+ years)	91.2	94.7
Gross enrolment ratio (primary education) (%)	97.5	103.5
Gross enrolment ratio (secondary education) (%)	118.12	123.0
Gross Enrolment ratio (tertiary education)	54.21	37.8

Source: UNESCO Education Statistics, Thailand <http://uis.unesco.org/country/TH>.

Table 7.6: Percentage Receiving Income from Children during Past Year, 60 Years and Over with at Least One Child, 2014 (%)

Income from Children	Men	Women
Any income from children	80.7	88.3
Children as main source of income	30.4	47.3
Children provide 10,000 + Baht	49.1	54.4
Children provide 30,000 + Baht	25.9	29.8
Children provide 50,000 + Baht	10.6	12.2

Source: Knodel et al.(2015, Table 5.1, p. 59).

of income increases from 30.3% for one adult child to 48.9% for four or more adult children. (Knodel et al. 2015, p. 63).

The challenge posed by declining family size may be offset by increased support from the government for older persons. The National Older Persons' Fund was launched to provide financial support for individuals and groups of older people and grants for income-generating projects to improve their quality of life. The existing programmes are more likely to focus on health promotion and lifelong learning activities. The Thai Local Administrative Organizations have allocated public funding to work with community volunteers in providing health and social welfare support to older persons (Supromin and Choonhakhlal 2017). However, there is no available data on how much support older women, especially those who are living with financial insecurity, will receive and how accessible the support is. Most importantly, government initiatives to promote work opportunities in old age could improve financial security for the elderly. Examples of such initiatives that could be implemented include provision of

assistive equipment, improvement in the environment and physical well-being of old people, and provision of flexible working hours. Although the Thai Government and some private organisations are taking steps to put in place social welfare programmes to help the poor and older people, more efforts need to be invested in this area to ensure the financial security for this group of vulnerable older women.

5. Policy Recommendations

The preceding discussion suggests that the financial security of older women is dependent on events and circumstances earlier in women's lives. In particular, women become more vulnerable to financial insecurity in later life due to their lower labour-force participation at younger ages, or if they work, they tend to work in lower-paid vulnerable employment. Finally, in old age, women are more at risk if they are widowed or living alone. In order to alleviate financial insecurity issues in older women, these stages in women's lives need to be addressed.

5.1 Support for Working Women and Women's Roles as Caregivers

Develop social security support for mothers from low-income households

Developing a social security support system for mothers from low-income households, including female heads of household through provision of living allowances would provide financial support in raising their children. Teenage mothers should receive support for education or vocational training based on their educational background. They should also receive support to find daycare centres near their schools or places of work so that they can continue to take care of their children while pursuing learning and career opportunities. Free education and skills training should be made available and accessible for women who have dropped out of school. Vocational training curriculum needs to offer women necessary skills beyond traditional roles to meet labour market demands. Quality daycare services should be provided at affordable costs so that women can return to work after their maternity leave. The government could start by setting up daycare centres in government office compounds and by expanding its reach to private companies. Subsidies

should be provided to these businesses as a form of corporate social responsibility to ensure that low- and middle-income women can afford childcare.

Promote equal responsibility of childcare between women and men

Paternity leave should be expanded beyond the government sector to include private companies. Private companies should be encouraged to adopt this scheme via awareness programmes. For divorced women with children, a measure to ensure continued child support and alimony from husbands should be implemented. Awareness campaigns to promote shared caregiving responsibilities between women and men should be initiated.

Enforce Gender Equality Act

The Thailand Gender Equality Act should be enforced to promote gender equality in the workplace. The Act has led to the appointment of the National Committee for the Promotion of Gender Equality to define the meaning of gender discrimination and set relevant penalties and compensations. There is a need for the government to review the committee's progress towards achieving the strategic aims and objectives. Provincial and local administrative organisations should be encouraged to enforce this Act. The Act has also established a complaint mechanism as a system of reporting of gender-related discrimination, harassment, bullying and abuse, with the aim of establishing a safe and non-discriminatory workplace. Information on the mechanism should be widely disseminated to the public so that women are aware of any form of discrimination. A recent study has found a strong association between gender



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inequality and income inequality (Gonzales et al. 2015). Hence, promoting gender equality in the workplace is the first yet important step to narrowing the gender pay gaps and improving financial security. Private companies should be given guidance on how to promote gender equality and comply with the Gender Equality Act.

The Gender Equality Fund could be allocated a sufficient budget and allowed application from women's Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) for use in public education.

5.2 Specific Support for Women Entering Old Age

Increase social support to impoverished older women and respond to their gender specific needs

Policy decisions should encompass financial insecurity caused by gender discrepancies in income which result in insufficient savings in increasing numbers of Thai older women. A national taskforce could be set up to respond specifically to the needs of the ageing population. Social support for older women should be increased, especially building more shelter housing, as the number of older women living alone has increased. Co-payment programmes for shelter housing for older people where residents share living costs and medical fees with government co-payment, would ensure that all older people who are in need of services can access the shelters for financial support.

Older people between the ages of 60 and 70 years should receive support for age-appropriate work so that they can continue to earn an income and accumulate savings to maintain their living standards. For older

people aged 80 and above, there should be a home health-care system in place. The government have initiated a programme where community health volunteers pay regular visits to older people to monitor and manage chronic conditions to delay deterioration (Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2017). A budget should be set aside to support the community health volunteers in terms of logistic arrangements such as tokens of appreciation and reimbursements of transportation costs. There is a need to look into the sub-district level scheme initiated by the National Health Security Office aimed at strengthening capabilities in the community and further build on it to meet the needs of older people with high levels of dependency. This would help to ease the financial burden of the elderly.

The government could also increase benefits in the Old Age Allowance to pull the older people living below the national poverty line out of poverty and regularly adjust the cost of living by implementing more comprehensive policies to ensure its sustainability. With the aim to extend pensions to the elderly not covered under any scheme to maintain their living standards post retirement, the National Savings Fund for Old Age Pension was developed and led by the government from 2008 to 2011. Members who qualify for the scheme can contribute up to 13,200 Baht (US\$400) per month. The government will match 50% of savings for workers aged 15–30, 80% for workers aged 31–50, and 100% for workers older than 50. A report by Yamabana (2006) emphasised that in order for this scheme to achieve its intended outcomes, there must be a database of the entire population that is integrated in collaboration with relevant government agencies and local administrative organisations. In addition,

the National Savings Fund should consult the Informal Sector Network in making its benefit package more attractive to the informal sector workers and improve measures in reaching out to them.

5.3 Other General Measures

Programmes that cater to women's specific needs such as reproductive health, counselling in case of financial crisis, debt, and domestic violence should be initiated. Local and provincial administrative organisations and community programmes should assess the needs of middle-aged women in the community and help them, especially those with financial insecurity to cope with supporting their children and their ageing parents at the same time. This preventive measure could help those entering old age to be better prepared financially.

6. Limitations and Further Research

There have been many reports and studies conducted on the older people in Thailand. One such study is the extensive annual report on the situation of the older people in Thailand commissioned by the National Committee for the Older People, in accordance with the Act on Older Persons B.E 2543 (2003 A.D). However, the report has limited analyses on gender disparities and lacks emphasis on older women's needs. Reports published by the National Statistical Office are comprehensive, with gender-disaggregated data for certain items. There is a need to encourage more gender-disaggregated data in more surveys and studies in order to learn more about the unique situation of Thai women. In some cases, even though the data were available,



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most reports did not conduct analyses based on gender and considered older people as a homogenous group. Gender-disaggregated data can be found in health reports, but data on the economic characteristics in all age groups do not include gender analyses. There is a need to study the situation of specific groups, such as older women in remote areas, older women who are ex-prisoners, older women who have to support their grandchildren, and remittances of migrant workers to their parents.

7. Conclusion

Findings from this research show that gender inequality in employment and stereotyping of women as carers are crucial factors causing financial insecurity of older women. There is a need to further advocate for policy formulation to address the specific needs of older women. The plan to include gender perspectives in policies and programmes for older people in Thailand is still in the development stage — it has not yet served the specific needs of older women. Furthermore, policies and programmes for older people should be assessed from a gender perspective, focusing especially on better financial security for older women.

Notes

- 1 Data based on number of elderly by income received during 12 months before the date of interview.
- 2 Savings include cash or assets such as gold, property, land, etc.
- 3 This is based on work status of elderly 12 months before the interview for the survey.
- 4 The ILO defines own-account workers as those who are self-employed and do not employ other persons on a continuous basis. Contributing family workers are those workers who work in "an establishment operated by a related person, with a too limited degree of involvement in its operation to be considered a partner" (ILO, "Status in Employment: Current guidelines", <https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/statistics-overview-and-topics/status-in-employment/current-guidelines/lang--en/index.htm>).
- 5 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, custom data acquired via website.

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Regional Learning Network on Women's Financial Security

The Regional Learning Network on Women's Financial Security aims to bring together key policymakers from the ten member countries and country partners of the ASEAN Plus 3, relevant NGOs, policy think tanks and international organisations and leading academics, to bring attention and action on the issue of financial security among older women.

The Network has the following objectives:

- To raise awareness on the current state of older women in the region with specific focus on their income and financial security;
- To catalyse mainstreaming of gender in policy and program development;
- To build public-private partnerships that will promote more effective policy-action translation in addressing the issue;
- To promote networking and workgroups, learning exchanges and partnerships with broader regional organizations for advocacy;
- To initiate research collaborations for policy analysis and program evaluation; and
- To create an online platform for sharing of findings, data, best practices, model-building programs and other resources.

For more information, visit <http://asiawomen.org.sg>

FINANCIAL SECURITY OF OLDER WOMEN: PERSPECTIVES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

This comparative study of older women in the ageing populations of the Asia-Pacific region is long overdue. It focuses on the financial security issue in six of the ten ASEAN countries. It highlights factors for the unequal and low financial reserves of women, as compared to men, such as educational and employment opportunities, and wage gaps, but especially the unequal burdens of informal care work among women. The research findings and policy recommendations should spur action not only on the part of state and civil society actors but, hopefully, also on an inter-governmental level in terms of development schemes targeted at vulnerable older women within the ASEAN community.

Aline Wong

*Sociologist, and former Singapore Government Representative,
ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children*

This book addresses key demographic and social challenges presently facing Southeast Asian nations. It helps readers connect the dots between gender equity, work-care regimes, and economic security in old age. Its cross-national comparative approach provides nuanced empirical evidence that can assist stakeholders in the public and private sectors in formulating policies that will enhance the wellbeing of the current and future older-aged populations.

Bussarawan Puk Teerawichitchainan

Associate Professor of Sociology, Lee Kong Chian Fellow, Singapore Management University

While there is a great deal of demographic diversity among Southeast Asian countries, the region as a whole is ageing rapidly. The region's demographic transition toward older populations brings to the fore the issue of elderly financial security. The female elderly in particular are at risk of widespread old-age poverty. Southeast Asia continues to grow and develop, and it remains one of the world's most economically dynamic regions. However, growth that impoverishes and marginalises a large and growing segment of the population - i.e. the elderly - cannot possibly be inclusive. This collective volume is a must-read for anybody interested in the issue of female elderly financial security in Southeast Asia. The central message that emerges from this well-written and informative publication is that education and employment hold the key to promoting the financial security of the region's female elderly. The central importance of education and employment resonates across the whole region.

Donghyun Park

Principal Economist, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department, Asian Development Bank

This astute, powerful, gender analysis of demographic ageing in six Asia-Pacific countries accurately describes women's vulnerability in old age. Illustrating the feminisation of population ageing, this book ties lower levels of education, lack of work-force participation, and the unequal gender distribution of domestic work as key contributors to financial insecurity in older women. It chronicles the pressing need for policy change and provides fresh insights into viable solutions to bridge the gaps in financial security faced by women.

Margaret Gillis

President, International Longevity Centre Canada

ISBN 978-981-11-9762-8



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