

POLICY BRIEF

No. 2/2022

Promoting decent work opportunities for older persons in the Asia-Pacific region in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Publication
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Printed in Bangkok
ST/ESCAP/3064

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Acknowledgements

This paper was drafted by Marco Roncarati and Sabine Henning, ESCAP staff, over the period October – December 2022, based on desk research. Ms. Supatra Kaewchana provided research assistance and editorial support. The paper is based on research originating from a project on “Expanding education and training opportunities for older persons in the Asia-Pacific region: Strengthening their labour force participation in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution” funded by the Republic of Korea.

Table of Contents

Contents

Table of Contents.....	3
Summary	4
I. Introduction	4
II. Older persons and the world of work	7
III. Harnessing the potential of older persons in the labour market	14
IV. Way forward: policy responses and recommendations	15
V. Conclusion.....	17
References	18

Summary

The populations of countries in the Asia-Pacific region are ageing at an unprecedented pace. There are variations across countries, yet all are moving in the direction of increasing absolute numbers and proportions of older persons. Population ageing is driven by declining fertility and mortality, coupled with increased longevity, or the demographic transition. Overall, it is the result of successful economic and social development, and as such, rising life expectancy should be celebrated as one of humanity's major achievements. While the region is still demographically diverse and the pace and onset of the demographic transition varies, sooner or later, all countries will experience population ageing. These changes are affecting the future of work, as the number of people in the workforce eventually declines and the number of older persons increases. Individuals may work longer, continuing to contribute to society. Moreover, the future of work will be affected by climate change, future health crises/pandemics, and the technological advancements of the Fourth Industrial

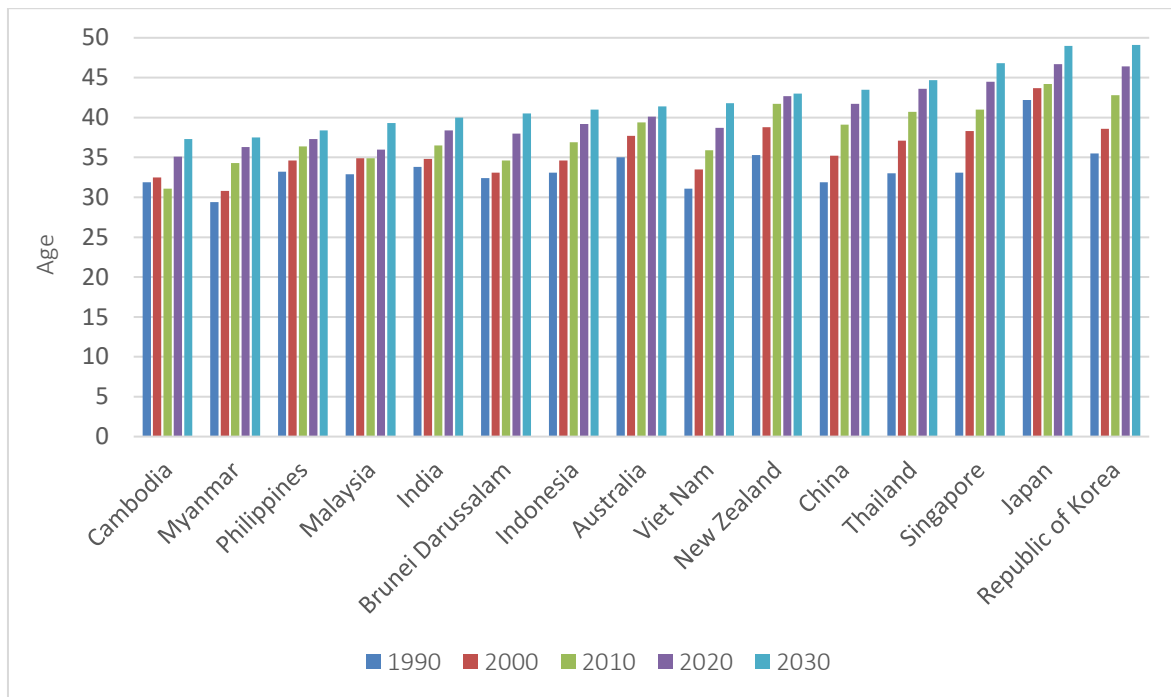
Revolution. All of these changes are expected to particularly affect older persons, while requiring investments in skills development, decent work for all and age-friendly work environments. To prepare for these changes, solutions should be sought to continue, and build upon, the successes of economic and social development seen over the past decades. This paper concludes with a number of recommendations to ensure that older persons have opportunities for decent work in old age. The main recommendations refer to the creation of decent and sustainable work for all, regardless of age; the elimination of mandatory retirement ages; the introduction of flexible work arrangements and age-friendly workplaces; incentives for employers to rehire and retain older workers; reskilling and retraining of older workers, in particular with a view to digital literacy; and support to women over the life course, to invest in education and work, so that they have an opportunity to seek work outside the home, if they want.

I. Introduction

In the Asia-Pacific region, one in four people are projected to be aged 60 years or older by 2050 (amounting to 1.3 billion people), more than double the current figure (UNDESA, 2022). Population ageing affects all aspects of society, including the labour force, which has experienced a steady increase in its median age in recent years (figure 1). Because of significant reductions in fertility, the labour force is not only projected to age further, it will also start declining in size. This

could lead to reduced economic growth, strained savings and public finances, and increased demands on health-care services and pension funds. In order for people and societies to prepare for population ageing, it is crucial to invest in training, retraining and reskilling of the work force over the life course, to provide opportunities for more decent and productive work for those of all ages, and to ensure universal social protection throughout the life course.

FIGURE 1: Median age of the labour force (years) in selected Asia-Pacific countries, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 and 2030



Source: ILO (2019). Preparing for the future of work. National policy responses in ASEAN+6 (accessed 29 July 2022). Additional source: https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_818956/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 15 August 2022).

Understanding demographic change is important in this context. Growing old in the future will include dealing with the concomitant challenges of environmental and climatic change, rapid digitalization and possible pandemics or health crises that will affect all aspects of life in Asia-Pacific countries. Older persons are especially vulnerable to the effects of heat waves and rising temperatures. The social determinants of health, such as livelihood security and housing, will additionally affect older persons, especially those who work in sectors at high risk of climate change, such as agriculture and tourism. Furthermore, the challenges and opportunities faced are heightened by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is characterized by rapid technological advances, including through artificial intelligence. Technological change will affect the nature of work regarding what jobs exist and how and where work is carried out (ILO, 2019). More jobs will be replaced by the automizing and digitizing effects of technology; this will especially affect older persons, who, in turn, may be less prepared for technological change.

Rapid technological progress has the potential to disrupt employment flows, creating a need for workers to reskill and upskill. At the same time, new but different jobs can be created as part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, opening opportunities for older persons to meaningfully engage in the labour force. These phenomena have major implications for the future of work and the income security of most persons. Expanding education and training opportunities for older persons so that they can have up-to-date skills, and ensuring the quality and coverage of income security constitute major challenges for governments of countries with ageing populations. Given such a context, this paper draws largely from research undertaken as part of the ESCAP project “Expanding education and training opportunities for older persons in the Asia-Pacific region: Strengthening their labour force participation in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution”, funded by the Republic of Korea. It considers recent levels and trends, as well as good practices, and puts forward a series of policy recommendations. While the paper mainly

covers the target countries of the project (Malaysia and Thailand) and other countries covered by project activities, including as having good practices (China, Japan, the

Republic of Korea and Singapore), many issues dealt with are relevant for all countries of Asia and the Pacific.

II. Older persons and the world of work

A. The Madrid International Plan of Action and the 2030 Agenda

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing is the global guiding framework on population ageing, aiming to build a sustainable society for all ages. The Madrid Plan of Action takes a whole-of-life approach to human development and aims to ensure that persons everywhere are able to age with security and dignity, and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights. Under the Madrid Plan of Action priority direction on older persons and development, are calls to increase awareness of the benefits of maintaining an ageing work force and creating decent employment opportunities for all older persons who want to work, as well as the need for equality of opportunity throughout life with respect to continuing education, training and retraining. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its central transformative promise to leave no one behind, has many interlinkages with the Madrid Plan of Action, including, but not limited to: SDG 3, healthy ageing and access

to care services; SDG 4, lifelong learning; SDG 5, gender equality in old age; SDG 8, longer working lives and ability to work; and SDG 10, reduced inequalities in later life.

ESCAP member States committed to accelerate the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action at the recently-held Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Fourth Review and Appraisal, convened from 29 June to 1 July 2022. In the meeting's outcome document, member States called for promoting the right to work of older persons by providing them access to full and productive employment and decent work under healthy, flexible and age-friendly conditions. They also highlighted the importance of ensuring life-long learning through training, retraining and skills development, and of combatting abuse, neglect, all forms of discrimination, inequalities and ageism directed at older persons in the workforce.¹

B. Demographic trends and the future of work

Governments and other stakeholders across Asia and the Pacific face numerous challenges and opportunities in the context of population ageing and maintaining equitable and sustainable development. The region is experiencing population ageing at a rate faster than any other region of the world. While the number of older persons (aged 65 years or older) continues to increase, the

number of people in the work force (aged 15–64 years) is projected to decline, starting in 2035. By 2045, the number of older persons will be greater than the number of youth in the region (figure 2). Although levels and trends might differ between countries, demographic change will significantly affect the future of work in the entire region.

1

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-Documents/MIPAA_IGM.3_3_Add.1_E.pdf

FIGURE 2a: Change in the total population by broad age group in Asia and the Pacific, 1950-2100

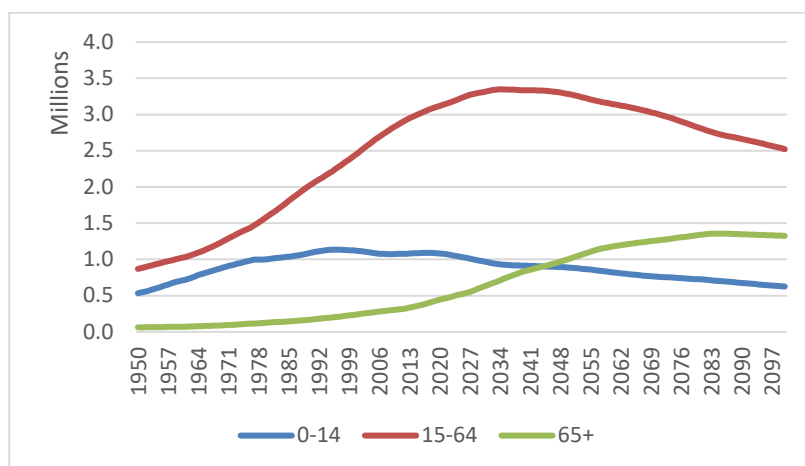
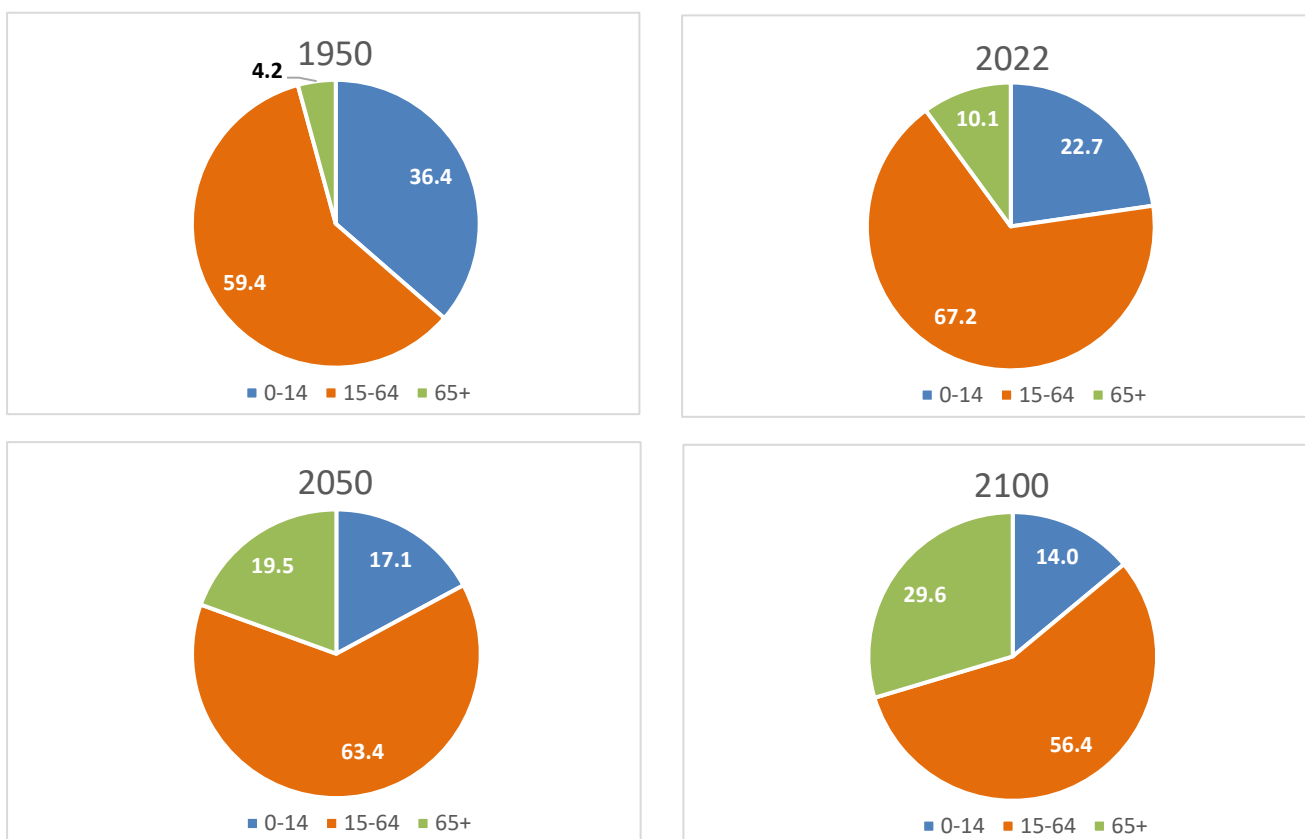


FIGURE 2b: Change in the proportionate share (percentage) of the population by broad age group in Asia and the Pacific, 1950-2100



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects: The 2022 Revision. <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

It is important to also recognize, however, that the concept of old age is changing. As countries have gone through the demographic transition, people are generally living longer and have the opportunity to remain active in society, including in the labour market, for longer time periods.² This requires investments in health, education and social protection, the support of countries to create decent work opportunities and age-friendly work environments for all people, and their action to address age discrimination and bias in the workplace.

Moreover, the health of older persons has generally improved over the past several decades. Life expectancy at age 60 has increased from 12.6 years in 1950 to 19.9 years in 2022. By 2050, persons at age 60 are projected to live an additional 23.9 years. Data from the World Health Organization show that healthy life expectancy has also increased significantly for many countries in Asia and the Pacific, suggesting that older persons are healthy enough to participate in the labour market for more years than previously. Yet, demographic and epidemiological transitions have resulted in a rise in non-communicable diseases. These have become the leading cause of death in older persons, both in Asia and the Pacific, and globally. While risk factors associated with these diseases – such as a sedentary lifestyle, tobacco use, excessive use of alcohol, and underlying physiological factors – can be identified over the lifespan, they account for the largest share of cases of ill-health and are the main reason why older persons seek health care.

In addition to health, education is an important factor influencing labour force participation of older persons in the future. As of today, primary school net enrolment rates are above 90 per cent in almost every

country around the Asia-Pacific region (ESCAP, 2018). Gross enrolment rates for secondary education, however, vary widely among countries. Moreover, both higher education enrolment rates and educational attainment rates vary by country and within countries by sex, urban/rural residence and other criteria. Older persons in the region are generally less educated than those of younger age cohorts. Given the considerable improvements in educational attainment of recent years, older persons in the future are expected to be far more educated than current older persons. This will have a significant impact on their ability to remain active in the labour force.

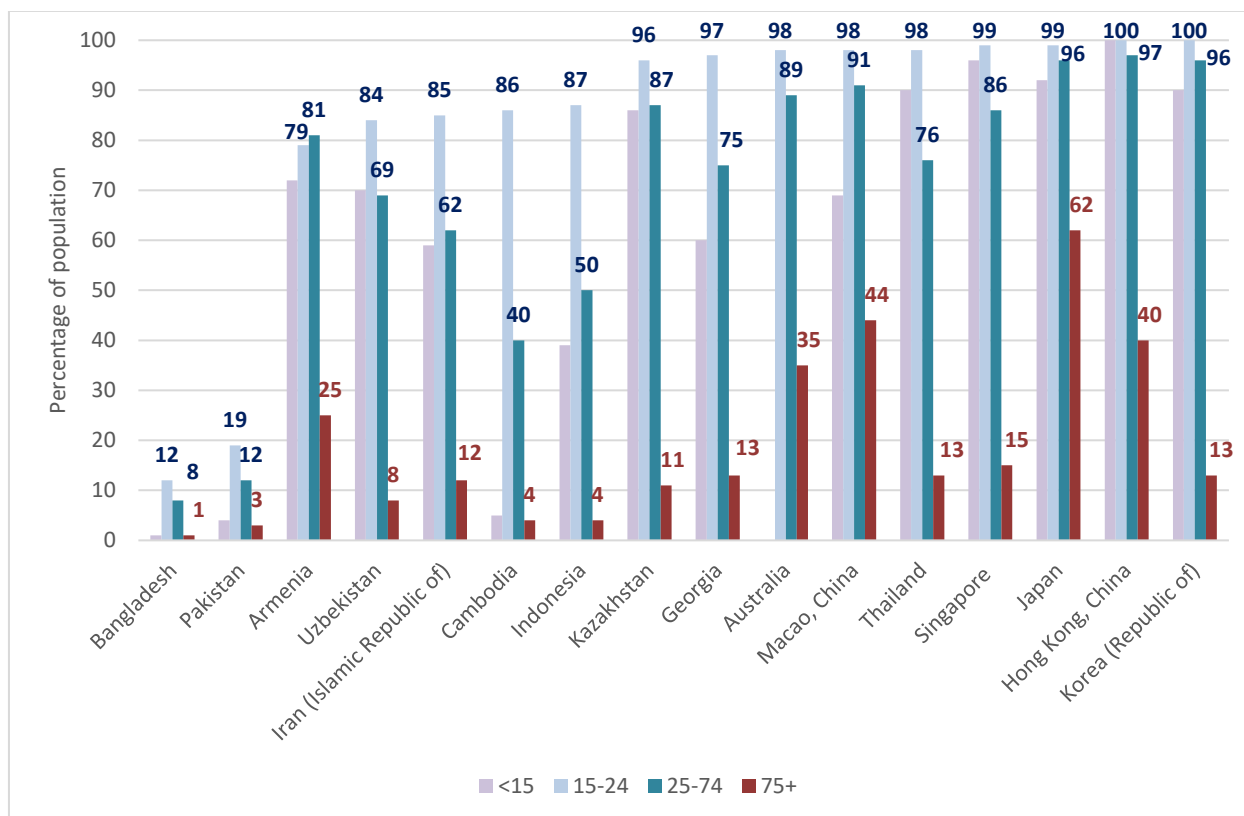
C. Technological change

While Asia and the Pacific has made much progress in connecting countries in the region through information and communication technologies, it remains the most digitally divided region in the world. Approximately half of its population lacks access to the Internet. Older persons, especially women, are among those least likely to be digitally connected (figure 3). Technological and organizational changes may render an employee's skills obsolete and dramatically depreciate the value attached to the work experience they have accumulated over their life. At the same time, technological change also offers opportunities for older persons to remain active in the labour force. Remote work, for example, allows older persons to work from home part-time while looking after grandchildren or other family members. Reskilling and retraining in digital skills and improved connectivity are important for older persons to remain active in a rapidly digitalizing labour market.

² Alternative measures of ageing have, therefore, been proposed, such as those based on remaining life expectancy (for instance, prospective age) instead of the number of years of life left, or functional ability, to define healthy ageing (see Sanderson, W.C., Scherbov, S., *Prospective Longevity: A New Vision of Population*

Ageing, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2019; and Sanderson, W.C., Scherbov, S., 2020, "Choosing between the UN's alternative views of population ageing" *PLoS ONE* 15 (7): eo233602. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0233602>

FIGURE 3: Access to the Internet of the population by broad age groups in selected Asia-Pacific countries/areas, latest available year



Source: ITU (2022). ITU, Digital Development Dashboard. <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Dashboards/Pages/Digital-Development.aspx> (accessed 19 August 2022).

D. Country studies – population ageing

Turning to the specific experiences of countries studied for this project, most of them belong to either “ageing” or “aged” societies, with, respectively, 7 to 14 per cent, and 15 to 19 per cent of their total

populations aged 65 years or older. In about 10 years, all countries listed below, except Malaysia, will be “super-aged”, with the number of older persons accounting for more than 20 per cent of the total population.

TABLE 1: Population ageing in selected countries in Asia and the Pacific: ageing, aged and super-aged societies

	Ageing society: year when population share aged 65+ reached 7 per cent	Aged society: year when population share aged 65+ reached/will reach 14 per cent	Super-aged: year when population share aged 65+ reached/will reach 20 per cent	Number of years to transition from “ageing” to “aged” society	Share of population aged 65+ and ageing status (as of 2022)
China	2001	2023	2033	22	13.7 (ageing)
Japan	1969	1994	2004	25	29.9 (super-aged)
Malaysia	2020	2043	2055	23	7.5 (ageing)
Republic of Korea	2000	2018	2025	18	17.5 (aged)
Singapore	2006	2021	2027	15	15.1 (aged)
Thailand	2004	2021	2029	17	15.2 (aged)

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects: The 2022 Revision. <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

Most countries are also in the post-dividend or late-dividend stages of the demographic transition, when considering levels of total fertility and shares of the working age population. China, for example, saw significant declines in mortality and fertility over recent decades, leading to an increase in the share of the working-age population (15–64 years). However, with rapid population ageing, this demographic dividend is disappearing, as the share of the working-age population has started to decline, a process that began in 2010. The further promotion of older persons in the labour force could provide a feasible path for China to address the effects of population ageing by transforming the human capital of older persons into a source of economic growth. However, the existing retirement system generally discourages older

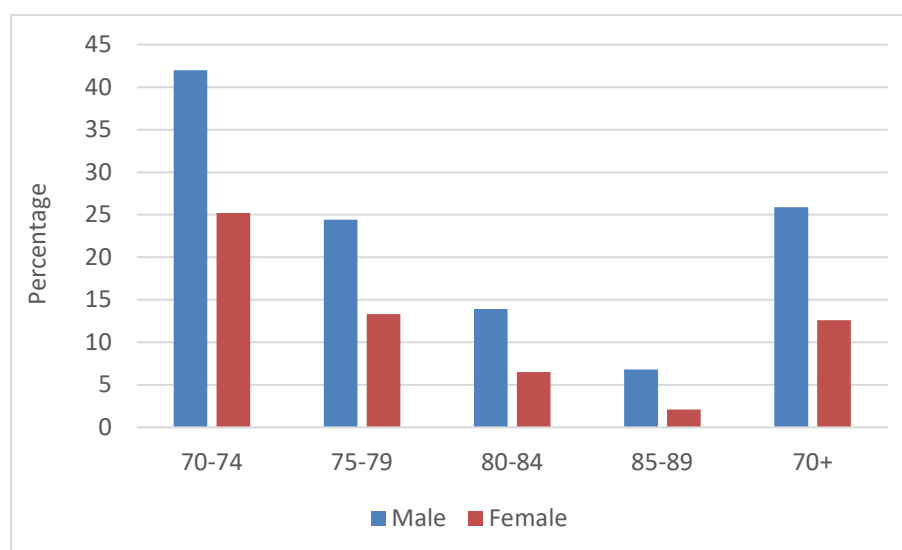
workers from continued economic engagement (Gu and Dupre, 2021). Other issues relate to technological requirements associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, strongly endorsed by the country, which could put older workers, if they are not reskilled or retrained, at a disadvantage in the labour market (Jin, 2021; Thompson and Mayhorn, 2012). Often older persons, especially women, are in vulnerable situations and would benefit from enhanced opportunities to engage in decent work. Singapore and Thailand face similar circumstances to China; the shares of their working-age populations are already declining and stand at 69.3 and 73.0 per cent, respectively. In Malaysia, however, the share of the working age population is still growing and is projected to peak at 63.3 per cent in 2033.

E. Country studies – labour force participation of older persons

In Asia and the Pacific, nearly all countries have a set statutory retirement age for those who are covered by a pension scheme (ESCAP, 2022), which ranges from 55 to 65 years. Some countries have increased the retirement age over time, yet for many, it remains in the 50s

and 60s. As can be seen for Japan (figure 4), for example, the labour force participation rate declines rapidly for those aged 70 or above, with labour force participation among women significantly lower than among men.

FIGURE 4: Labour force participation of older persons in Japan by broad age group, latest available data



Source: Statistics Bureau of Japan (2022).

The situation is similar for Malaysia, where the labour force participation rate of older persons, aged 60—64 years, was 39.2 per cent in 2020, with the figures for older men and older women being 55.3 and 23.1 per cent, respectively (ESCAP, forthcoming). Moreover, the labour force participation rate of older persons has been declining, except for 2020, when it increased due to older workers re-joining the labour market to cope with financial difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Thailand, the labour force participation of older persons is relatively low, compared to other age cohorts. In 2020, 37.1 per cent of those aged 60 or above participated in the formal labour market, compared to figures of between 64.0 and 89.3 per cent for those aged 20 to 59. Older females participated less in the labour market than older men. In Singapore, labour force participation of older persons is relatively high, compared to other countries, but low compared to other age cohorts within the country. In 2021, 50.9 per cent of those aged 65 to 69 and 21.3 per cent of those above age 70 were still in the labour force. Interestingly, the proportion of employed older persons has been increasing in recent years, regardless of gender.

Once people have retired, they find it difficult to get back into the formal labour market. Data from Japan show, for example, that employment of older persons is characterized by higher rates of part-time and non-regular work. Women face higher

rates of non-regular employment due to difficulties in returning to regular work after bearing children; this also leads to lower annual incomes for women when compared to men, in particular in old age. In China, women, regardless of age, are generally less likely to engage in economic activities than men of the same age. Due to the national retirement policy of China, women also retire much earlier than men. Gendered divisions of labour, with women generally considered as responsible for household tasks, also contribute to older women looking after the home rather than engaging in outside work.

In the Republic of Korea, similar circumstances are found, and older persons, particularly older women, find it difficult to find work outside the home. Survey data show that, in 2021, 68 per cent of older persons (aged 55—79 years) wanted to work either at present or in the future. Often, this interest in work is largely driven by financial needs. The majority of older persons in the Republic of Korea desire to work in order to cover living expenses (59 per cent) and only 33 per cent indicate a continued joy of employment (Statistics Korea, 2022). In a similar study for China, rural older adults were particularly interested to work for economic reasons (Liu and Sun, 2016).

Despite the fact that labour force participation of older persons is generally lower than of younger age cohorts, older

persons often continue to work in the informal sector of the economy. In Thailand, for example, 86.1 and 88.4 per cent, respectively, of men and women aged 60 years or over were working in the informal sector in 2020 (ESCAP, forthcoming). Such work generally does not provide social protection, the wages are low and working conditions can be hazardous. Furthermore, women are often engaged in unpaid care and domestic work over their life course, which prevents them from investing more in their education and seeking paid work outside the home. In Asia and the Pacific, the time women spend on paid and unpaid care and domestic work is the highest among all regions in the world. A lifetime of gender-based disadvantage regarding education and paid work will continue to affect women in old age and increase their risk of working in the informal sector or continuing to provide unpaid care and domestic work.

Added to the above challenges, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, along with geopolitical volatility and associated rises in costs of living, have posed further obstacles to the continued participation of older persons in the labour force. During the COVID-19 pandemic, labour markets across the target countries of this project contracted, affecting millions of livelihoods and jobs. Older persons were at a particularly high risk of death and contracting the disease, in particular when working outside the home.

Evidence suggests that older persons are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation due to pre-exposure health status, psychological well-being and social and economic factors associated with ageing (ESCAP, 2022). Moreover, sectors of the economy highly affected by climate change are agriculture, tourism and construction. Older persons are very likely to work in some of these sectors, often in an informal status, making them particularly vulnerable to losing their jobs

and livelihoods once climate change affects the sectors in question. Greening of jobs, however, provides an opportunity for older persons to build on their experience of how to deal with the impacts of climate change and apply this knowledge to their work.

As mentioned earlier, Asia and the Pacific is undergoing rapid digitalization. Countries in the region are leading the way in future technologies and trends such as e-health, artificial intelligence or e-learning. Nevertheless, rapid technological changes are occurring at a pace that is leaving many people behind, thereby widening the digital divide. The digital divide for older persons is particularly stark. Their access to technology is often limited due to lack of digital literacy, which also makes them less likely to benefit from technological change in the workplace. The Fourth Industrial Revolution will most likely create a greater segregation of jobs into low-skilled, low-paying and high-skilled, high-paying segments (ESCAP, forthcoming). There will also be job displacement from automation and increased productivity of technology, often affecting low-skilled workers, many of them older workers.

With this in mind – along with rising work capabilities of older persons associated with better health, improved education and prolonged longevity – there is a need to offer more opportunities for economic engagement of people in later life in order to realize the latent economic potential of the older labour force. Hence, it is urgent to identify barriers, such as relatively low statutory retirement ages and limited pensions, especially for women, that hinder labour force participation, while also promoting opportunities for older persons to stay in, or rejoin, the workforce, if they wish. The next section looks at efforts made by governments in the project countries that foster employment opportunities for older persons.

III. Harnessing the potential of older persons in the labour market

Health is the foundation for social and economic development. Many countries in the region have prioritized improving the health of their older populations, including through healthy ageing strategies or the expansion of national health insurance systems. In China, has been recently accomplished by offering full national health insurance coverage for all citizens. However, the system is still in an initial stage and benefit levels are low, in particular in rural areas. In Singapore, the Ministry of Health rolled out the Eldercare Center Model in May 2021 to provide services with regard to active ageing, befriending and information, and referral to care services for older persons. In addition, the needs of older persons are to be assessed regularly, to ensure if any new social or care needs are required (ESCAP, 2022). The United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (United Nations, 2020a), stresses “the important role of public health policies and programmes in enabling the rapidly growing number of older persons to remain in good health and maintain their many vital contributions to the well-being of their families, communities and societies”.

Moreover, some countries apply greater flexibility in implementing retirement ages to allow more older persons who want to work to do so. Japan, under the 2020 amendment to the Law Concerning Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons, imposes an obligation to ensure employment up to 65 years of age, with efforts to be made to ensure employment up to the age of 70, including through raising the retirement age to 70, abolishing the mandatory retirement age and introducing a continuous employment system until age 70. Other countries have also raised the retirement age, such as Malaysia, which raised it in 2012 from 58 to 60 years. In Singapore, the government provides grants for employers that are willing and able to increase both the retirement age and re-employment age ahead of the national schedule. Introducing a re-employment age may accommodate the

surge of older persons into the labour market and help increase their labour force participation. Since 2013, Singapore has introduced such initiatives, whereby, upon retirement, older workers may opt to work longer up until they are aged 65 years old. Implementation of these initiatives has been successful in increasing the labour force participation of older persons. Furthermore, re-employment initiatives have been promoted in parallel with various programmes, such as the WorkPro, to support enterprises in accepting older workers.

Educational attainment of older persons is another important consideration. In China this has improved considerably over the past four decades. The proportion of the population with a high school education, or more, among those aged 60 or older, increased from 1 per cent in 1982 to 11 per cent in 2020, while the proportion of illiterate older persons fell from 80 to 11 per cent over the same period (NBSC, 1984, 2022). China has developed several national policies to promote the digital and innovative economy, including the Made in China 2025 and New Infrastructure Creation initiatives. At the core of these projects are the key technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including 5G networks, industrial internet and artificial intelligence. The fourteenth Five-Year Plan (2021—2025) requires the proportion of the digital economy to increase from 7.8 per cent in 2020 to 10.0 per cent by 2025. To help older persons develop relevant skills, China has launched a nationwide programme to support them to learn about and use digital devices. In China, as elsewhere, the service sector is likely to witness an increase in jobs which are not easily replaceable by automation; this opens windows of opportunities for older persons, with certain jobs being particularly suitable for women.

Turning to Malaysia and Thailand, programmes have been established to train older workers and prepare them for further

work opportunities. For example, Thailand has created employment service centres for older workers to provide them with labour market information and job search support, while in Malaysia, University of the Third Age courses have been provided in community-level training. Many of these initiatives are still relatively small in scope, yet have the potential to be scaled up.

Income support initiatives can also play an important role in promoting the well-being of older persons and stimulating their capacity to be more productive from an employment

perspective. Introduced in 2004, the Republic of Korea Senior Employment and Social Activity Support Programme has strengthened the income support for older persons in the country. The Programme complements the national pension system, the old age income security and the national basic living security aid. It also serves to augment the retirement income provided by the social security system and encourage community activities well into old age, and, in doing so, contributing to the realization of active ageing in society.

IV. Way forward: policy responses and recommendations

The Fourth Industrial Revolution presents numerous opportunities to further empower women and men to reach old age in better health and to more actively contribute to society. Concerted action is needed to transform these opportunities into realities and the following recommendations are aimed at making this possible:

First, employment opportunities should be provided for all, age barriers in the formal labour market should be eliminated to ease the fiscal pressure on pension schemes and health-care systems. Older persons should be allowed to work as long as they are able and willing; this would sustain their self-sufficiency and reduce their social alienation. To this effect there is a need to:

- Eliminate mandatory retirement, introduce a re-employment age and increase the retirement age
- Introduce flexible work arrangements and age-friendly workplaces that support the employment and retention of older persons with different abilities to work
- Shift the focus from the conventional labour force participation age (15—64) to the effective labour force participation age (those who actually work) when conducting research

- Increase investments in decent and sustainable work for all
- Include older persons when developing workplaces for older persons

Second, create incentives for employers to retain and recruit older persons, while eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and promoting appropriate legislation and action to ensure equal opportunities for older persons. This would necessitate efforts that:

- Reward employers that retrain and recruit older workers through tax deductions, employment credits or grants
- Encourage employers to offer infrastructure, facilities and technologies to assist older workers, especially those with functional limitations
- Reduce ageism by introducing anti-age discrimination laws to ensure that older persons are not discriminated against in the labour market
- Train older workers in succession planning where younger workers benefit from the transfer of

knowledge, mentoring and on-the-job training

Third, ensure that social protection systems provide non-regular and informal workers with benefits and that benefit levels are adequate to allow for basic income security, paying attention to socially and economically disadvantaged groups, including older women. Specific issues to be addressed are to:

- Include non-regular work arrangements when planning and implementing social security policy, including in national accounts, recognizing the value of informal unpaid productive activities practised by older persons, such as grandparenting, volunteering, homemaking and caregiving
- Tailor entitlements to pensions and contributory systems so that they are more individually-based, without differentiating between employment status (formal or informal sector) and other factors, such as nationality
- Ensure that self-employed older persons contribute to social protection systems and eventually benefit from them

Fourth, address the low labour force participation rate of women in many countries by providing opportunities for women over the life course to gain access to high-level education, employment opportunities in the formal sector and support to shoulder household responsibilities. This could include efforts to:

- Provide quality, affordable and integrated long-term care for older family members at community levels to ensure that women are not made de-facto-caregivers while also pursuing work outside the home
- Provide flexible working time arrangements, including parental leave policies, that enable women to balance their family responsibilities without having to leave the work force
- Ensure that women, over the life course, have opportunities for higher-level education, including in information and communications technologies, that will allow them to

find work in the formal sector of the economy

Fifth, reduce the feminization of poverty, as women tend to outlive men yet experience considerable income inequalities and discrimination throughout their life course, including disadvantages in terms of access to quality education and health care, which also affect their social and economic situation. In order to resolve these inequities, a gender-based lens is needed to:

- Distribute benefits on an individual basis to support single women into old age
- Strengthen the affordability, accessibility and quality of care options to promote the employment of women by alleviating them of the extra burdens of childcare and housework
- Grant maternity and paternity leave policies to support the labour force participation of women across their career trajectory.

Sixth, promote healthy ageing for all over the life course, since health is an important determinant of labour force participation among older persons. In particular,

- Ensure that universal health care is available and affordable to all over the life course
- Promote healthy ageing strategies which help develop and maintain the functional ability of people and enable them to experience well-being into old age
- Improve workplace safety for older persons by integrating age, gender and disability perspectives in workplace risk assessments

Seventh, proactively prepare for challenges and opportunities related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, climate change and other uncertainties, including through building resilience and promoting digital literacy, while narrowing digital skills gaps of older persons through tailored peer-to-peer or intergenerational training programmes. This includes the need to:

- Expand upskilling and reskilling initiatives for older workers,

particularly those with low levels of education and skill, to ensure technological relevancy, reducing or eliminating costs for tuition where these cannot be afforded

- Consider the positive role older persons can have in addressing climate change and factoring in the accelerating exodus of (especially younger) workers from the farming

and agriculture sectors when planning policies on employment

- Ensure that technology contributes to decent work following a human-in-command approach for technological advancement that maximizes the positive spillover effects of technological progress and minimizes the negative effects.

V. Conclusion

When ageing is embraced as an achievement, the human skills and experiences of older persons can contribute to inclusive and sustainable development. It is important to ensure a life-course approach, which includes older persons as active stakeholders when developing and implementing policies and programmes that consider the future of work and well-being with the goal of creating decent and sustainable employment for all. Asia and the Pacific is a region of great diversity and potential. With the inevitable ageing of societies, the largely untapped resource of older persons requires considerably more attention. Through strategic investments and prudent policymaking, far greater progress to attaining the objectives of the Madrid Plan of Action and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing can be made. Older persons, society at large and future generations would all benefit in manifold ways.

ESCAP is compiling publicly available data on population ageing and the situation of older persons for all countries in Asia and the Pacific. The data can inform evidence-based policymaking. Moreover, ESCAP is also compiling information on policies and programmes of population ageing. Good practices and lessons learned are highlighted in a dashboard. The data and dashboard on the policies are available at: <https://www.population-trends-asiapacific.org/population-ageing>

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