

## Life expectancy at 65 and 80 years by sex



## Key points

- Over the past two decades, older women have experienced more gains in longevity than older men. Women at age 65 are expected to outlive their male counterparts by about 3 years (women are expected to live an additional 18.3 years and men an additional 15.6 years), and by almost 1.5 years for women at age 80.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Southern Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), women's survival advantage over men is lower than one year at age 65; overall, these regions have the lowest life expectancy at older ages.
- Increased longevity coupled with unequal survival rates between older women and men call for gender-sensitive approaches to ensure the provision of social services and protections for them.
- In many cultural contexts, the care burden for older persons falls on unpaid female relatives, which has financial and other implications for their welfare.

## Background

Within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goal 3 expresses commitment to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".<sup>1</sup> Over the years, social commitments to improve the lives of populations worldwide have resulted in recognizable gains in reducing mortality and accompanying increases in survival, as well as in life expectancy, in most countries.

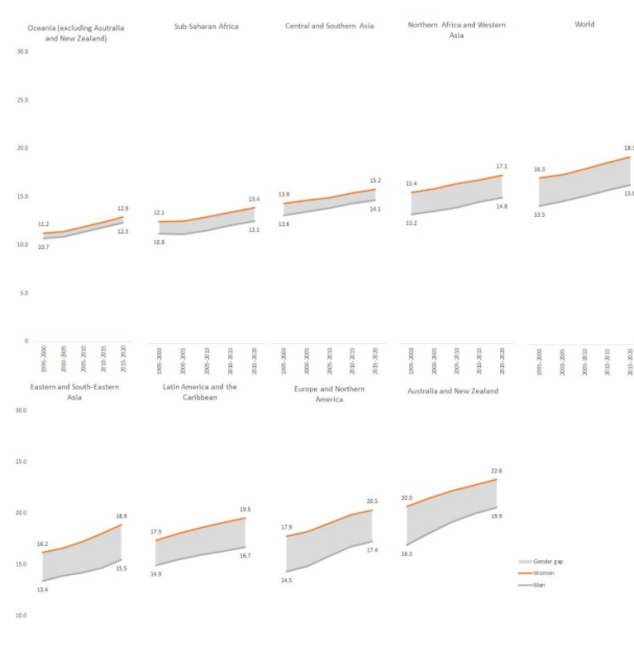


## Increases in survival and longevity for older persons

**Women's survival advantage** (gender gap) has recorded a slight increase over the past two decades. Recent United Nations estimates<sup>2</sup> show that, for the world as a whole, women at age 65 are expected to outlive their male counterparts by about 3 years (women are expected to live an additional 18.3 years and men an additional 15.6 years), and by almost 1.5 years for women at age 80.

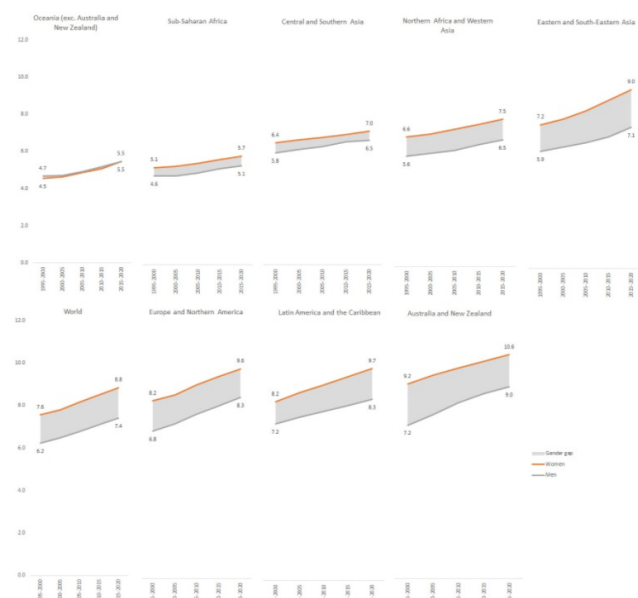
The gender gap in life expectancy at age 65 is estimated at about 3 to 4 years in all geographical regions, except Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (1 year), Central and Southern Asia (1 year) and sub-Saharan Africa (1 year). These are also the regions where life expectancy at age 65 is the lowest: on average, women in these regions are expected to live an additional 13 years and men an additional 12 years (see figure I).

**Figure I: Life expectancy at age 65 by sex and major geographical region: 1995—2020**



The gender gap in life expectancy among the population aged 80 and older is highest in Australia and New Zealand and in the Eastern and South-Eastern Asia region (about 2 years). In addition, Australia and New Zealand, the countries with the highest life expectancy both at age 65 and at age 80 for both women and men, have experienced a decline in the gender gap in favour of males over the last two decades. The reverse has been observed in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), men at age 80 have a slightly longer expected number of years to live than women of the same age (see figure II).

**Figure II: Life expectancy at age 80 by sex and major geographical region: 1995–2020**



Source: UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Rev. 1, online edition (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>).

The observed increases in survival and longevity into advanced ages call attention to the need for adequate policies and programmes to enable older persons to live decent and fulfilled lives. At advanced ages, older persons require greater care and assistance in their daily lives,<sup>3</sup> and this is even more so the case for women, who tend to live longer than men, are likely to outlive their spouses or partners and are thus disproportionately represented in the **older population**. Older women are also more likely than older men to have a **disability**<sup>4</sup> and are more vulnerable to poverty.<sup>5</sup>

Because women tend to outlive their spouses, and oftentimes without economic independence, they tend to become more dependent on the support of others. Research shows that, globally, the bulk of the provision of care for older persons falls on female family members, usually on an unpaid basis, with a consequent socioeconomic stress on the caregivers, including on their mental and physical health.<sup>6</sup> In the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the pledge to leave no one behind, more needs to be done to ensure economic security for the population later in life, particularly for older women, including those who provide care for them.



## About the data

### Definitions

Life expectancy at age  $x$  is the number of years a person at age  $x$  is expected to live if current mortality patterns remain constant in the future. Life expectancy at age 65 or age 80 of a given period is the number of additional years a person at those ages is expected to live if exposed throughout the remainder of life to age-specific mortality rates of that period.

### Coverage

The present analysis covers the global population at age 65 and age 80 and above by sex and corresponding life expectancy. Information is presented by regional grouping under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.<sup>7</sup>

### Availability

Data for these indicators have been provided by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.<sup>8</sup>





## Footnotes

1. United Nations, Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, General Assembly resolution 70/1, adopted on 25 September 2015 .
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Ageing 2019: Highlights, New York, 2019 .
3. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Long-term care for older people – A new global gender priority, Policy Brief No. 9.
4. Ibid.
5. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Bringing Older Women to the Forefront of Global Discussions .
6. UN-Women, Long-term care for older people – A new global gender priority, Policy Brief No. 9 .
7. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework .
8. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Division, World Population Ageing 2019: Highlights, New York, 2019 ; UNDESA, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, Rev. 1, online edition .

