Ageing in the Middle East and North Africa

Measuring Population Ageing Using Prospective Instead of Chronological Age

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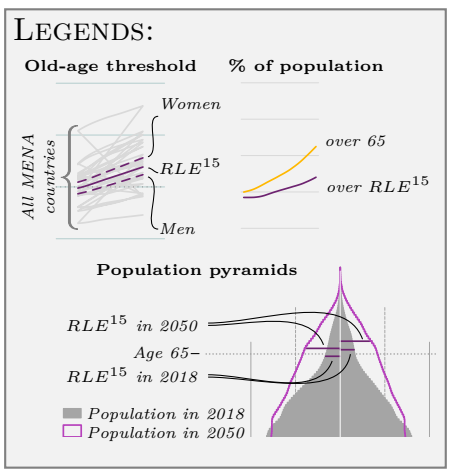
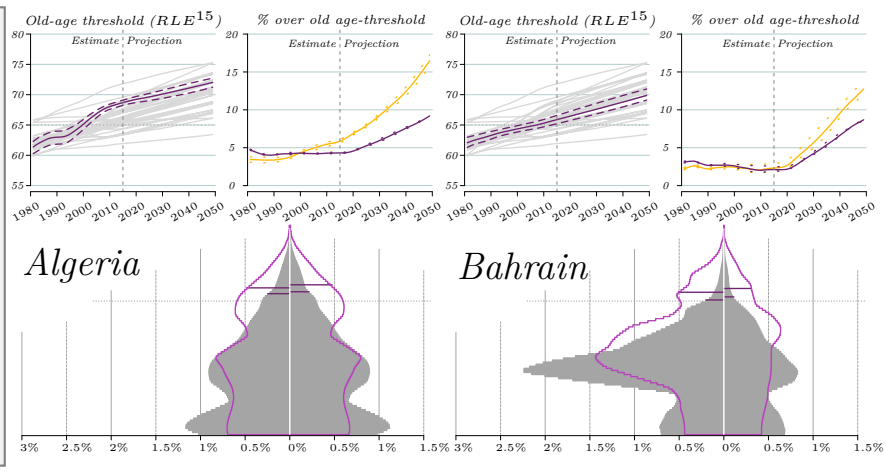
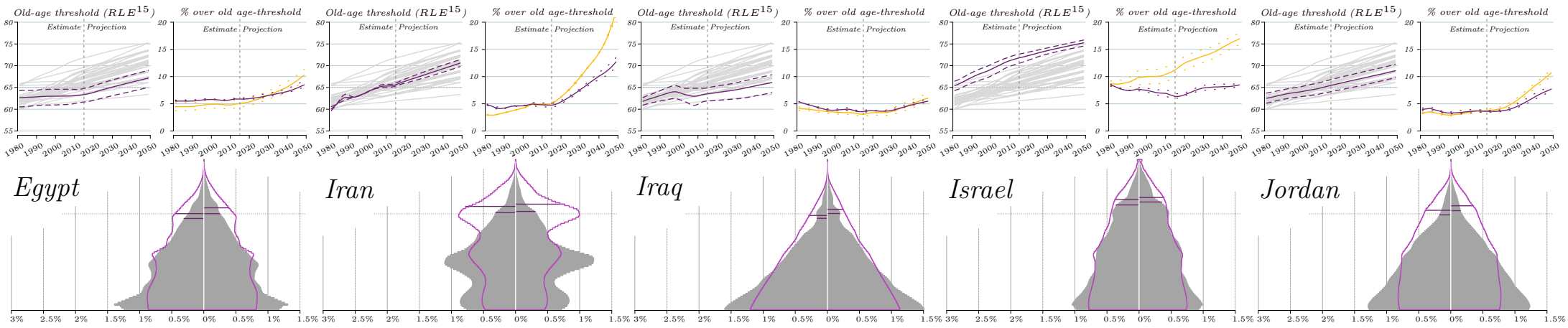
This factsheet explores the ageing of the populations of Middle Eastern and North African countries using *prospective age* instead of chronological age (Sanderson and Scherbov, 2008). Using prospective age is akin to adjusting for inflation when comparing prices. It acknowledges the fact that a particular chronological age—e.g. the age of 65—means something very different in populations with low life expectancy than it does in a population with high life expectancy.

Instead of defining old age as being over 65, we define it as being over an *old-age threshold*: the age where the remaining life expectancy is 15 years or less (RLE^{15})

We use population pyramids to outline current and future (2050) age structures in each country, and the horizontal lines allow you to compare the prospective old-age thresholds (in purple) with the more common definition of old age as 65 years old (dashed horizontal line).

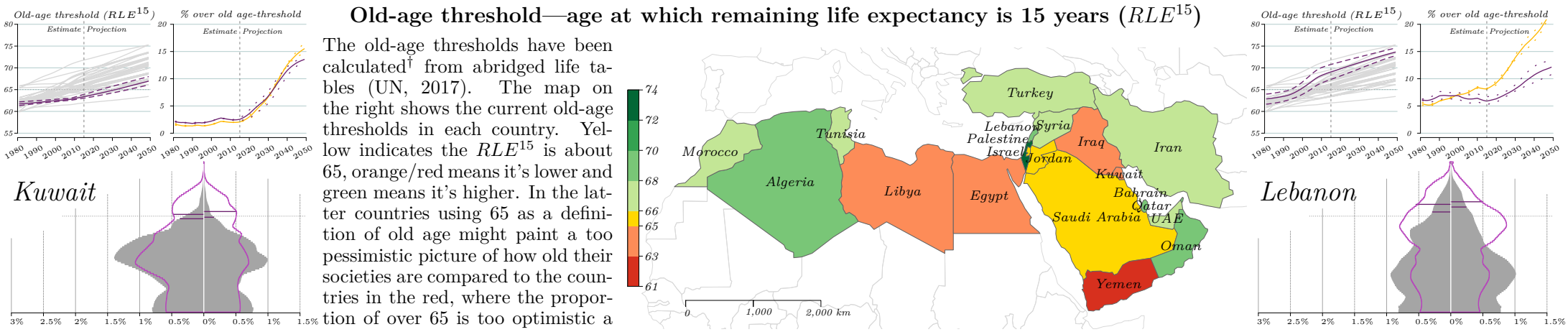






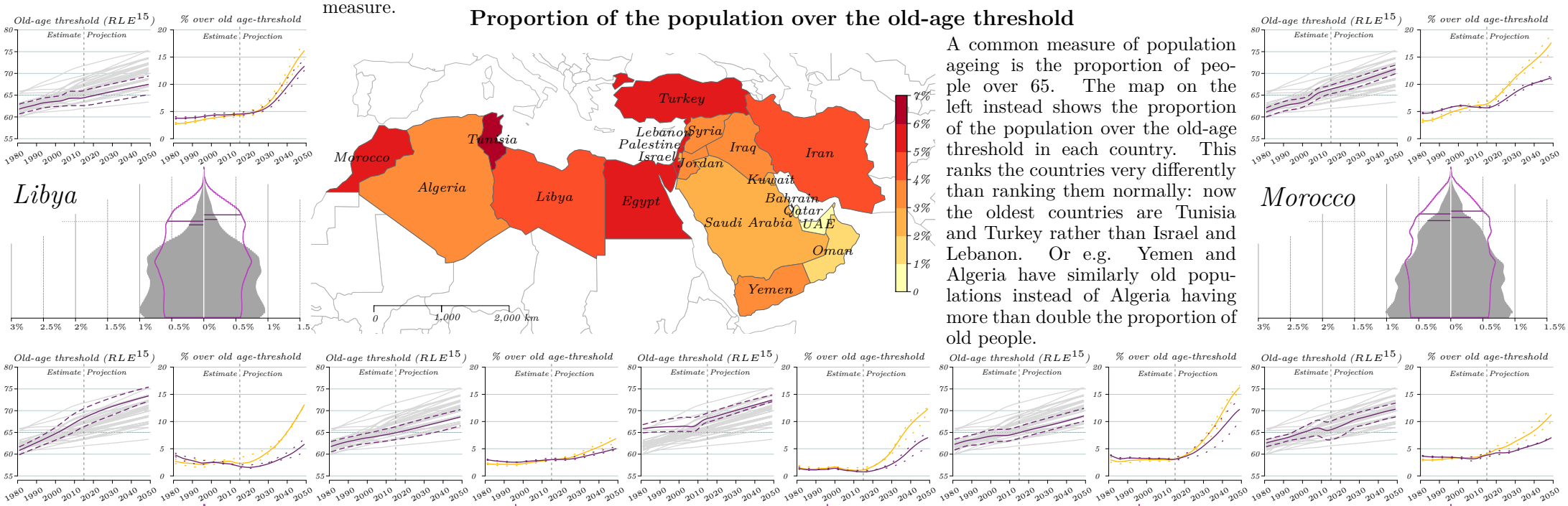
Old-age threshold—age at which remaining life expectancy is 15 years (RLE^{15})

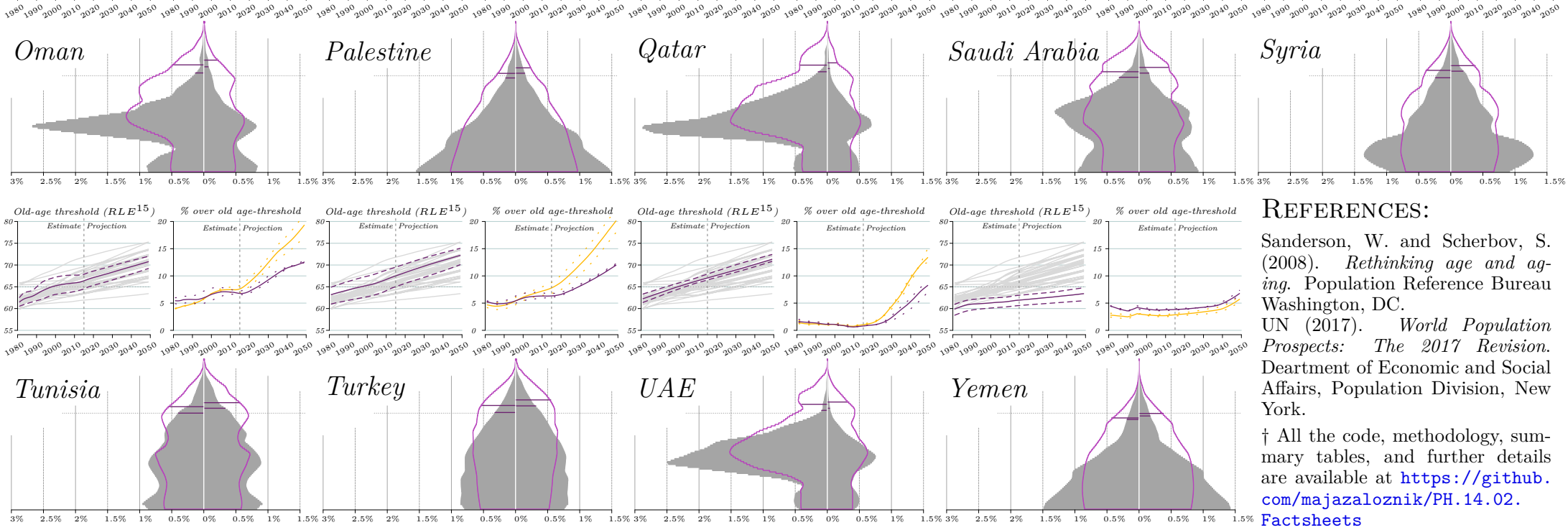
The old-age thresholds have been calculated† from abridged life tables (UN, 2017). The map on the right shows the current old-age thresholds in each country. Yellow indicates the RLE^{15} is about 65, orange/red means it's lower and green means it's higher. In the latter countries using 65 as a definition of old age might paint a too pessimistic picture of how old their societies are compared to the countries in the red, where the proportion of over 65 is too optimistic a measure.



Proportion of the population over the old-age threshold

A common measure of population ageing is the proportion of people over 65. The map on the left instead shows the proportion of the population over the old-age threshold in each country. This ranks the countries very differently than ranking them normally: now the oldest countries are Tunisia and Turkey rather than Israel and Lebanon. Or e.g. Yemen and Algeria have similarly old populations instead of Algeria having more than double the proportion of old people.





References:

Sanderson, W. and Scherbov, S. (2008). *Rethinking age and aging*. Population Reference Bureau Washington, DC.

UN (2017). *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*. Deartment of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, New York.

† All the code, methodology, summary tables, and further details are available at https://github.com/majazaloznik/PH.14.02.Factsheets