



PMAC | PRINCE MAHIDOL
AWARD CONFERENCE **2026**



**Navigating Global
Demographic Transition**
through Innovative Policy: An Equity-Centered Approach



India Centre
University of Southampton



**University of
Southampton**

Advancing intergenerational solidarity and equity in an unsettling world

Bridging Generations: Evidence-Informed Policy Pathways and Actions

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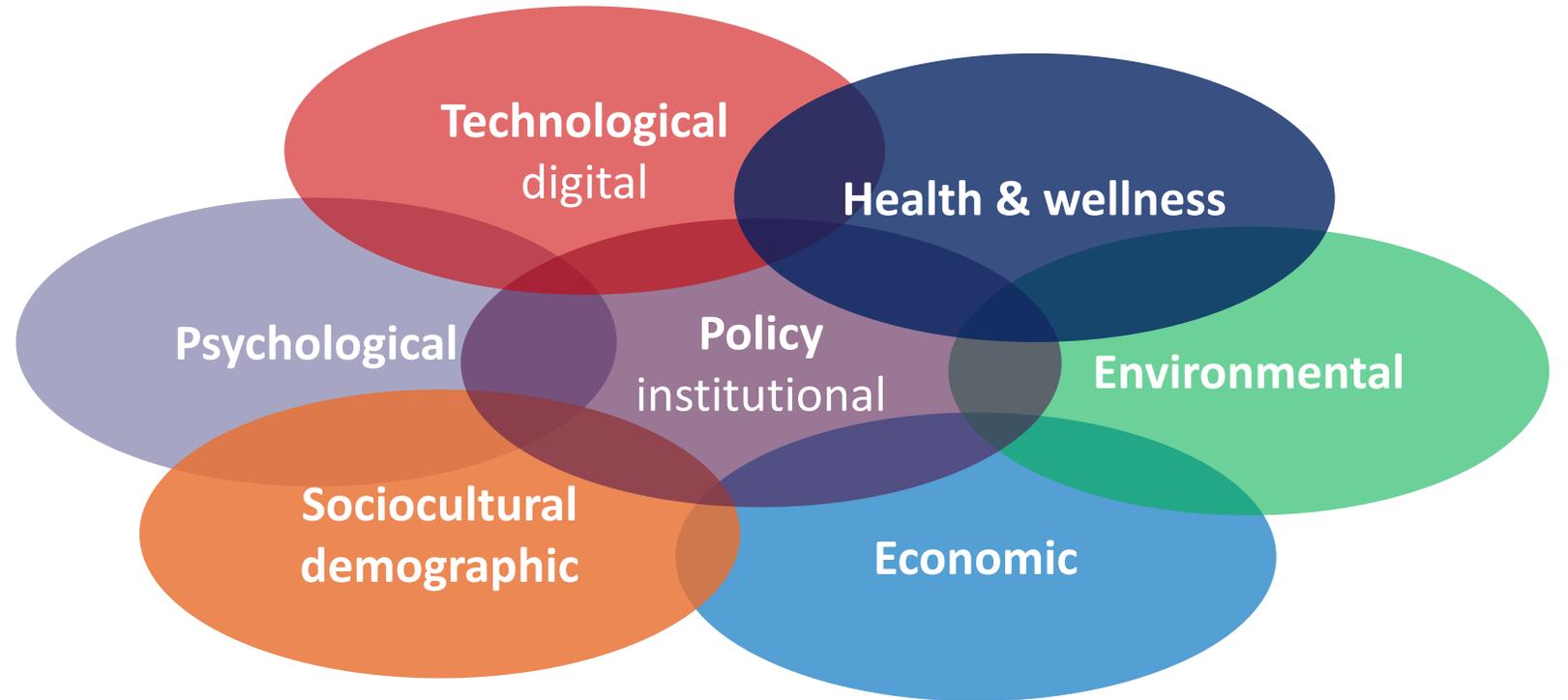




Key questions

- How can public policy reconcile intergenerational needs, while safeguarding equity and social cohesion?
- What data gaps undermine evidence-based policymaking on intergenerational equity?
- How can institutions move beyond age-based silos to build inclusive, resilient communities, and how should progress be measured?
- What scalable, evidence-based models effectively strengthen intergenerational relations and family cohesion during overlapping crises?

Intergenerational equity, solidarity, and cohesion are shaped by multiple interacting factors



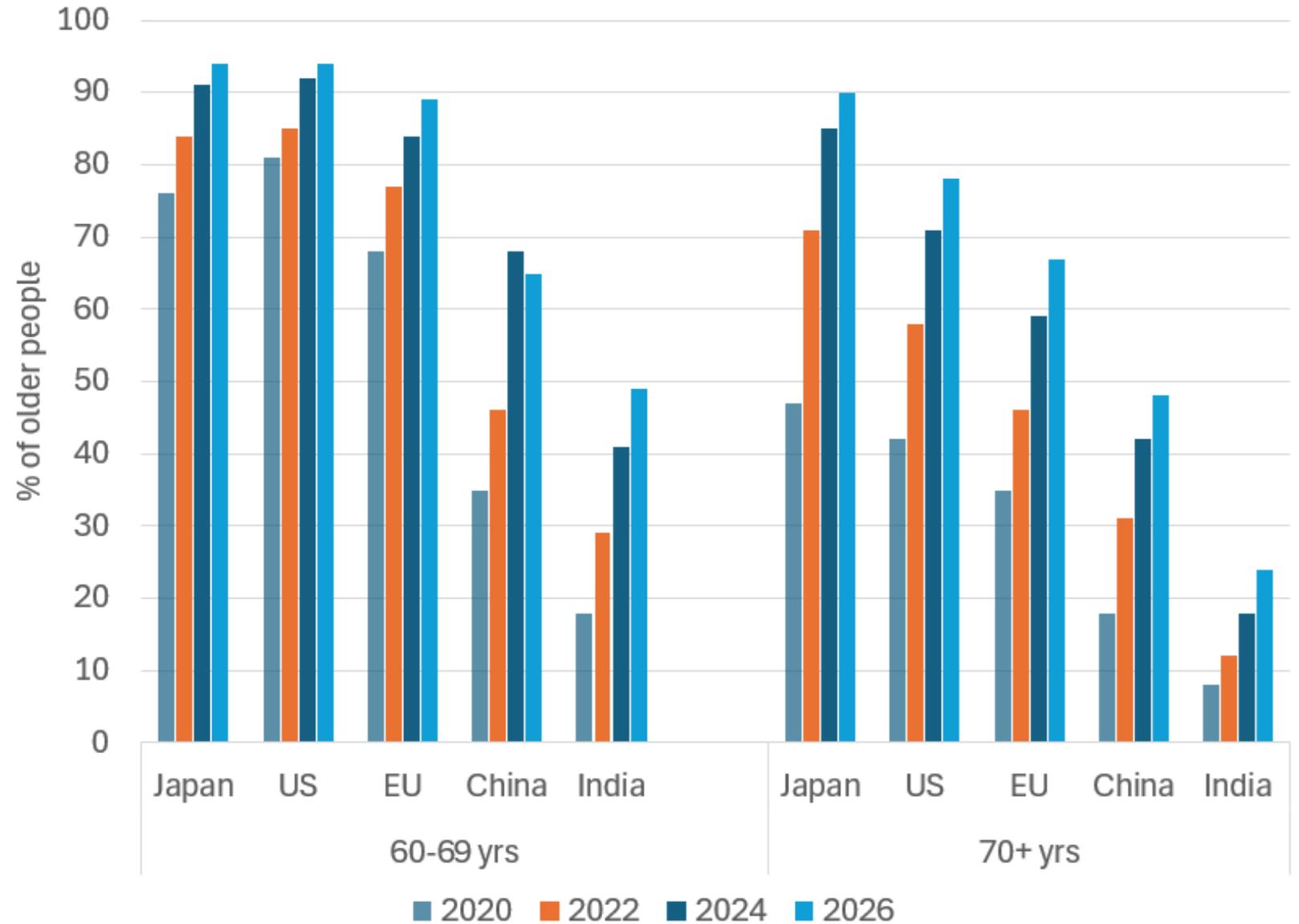
Higher level policy frameworks

- **The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002-present):** Older persons and development, advancing health and wellbeing to old age, creating enabling and supportive environments.
- **The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030):** Adding life to years: from caring for older adults to fostering their capacities.
- **UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons (2025):** Intergovernmental Working Group, focus on comprehensive, legally binding international human rights instrument specifically to protect older persons.

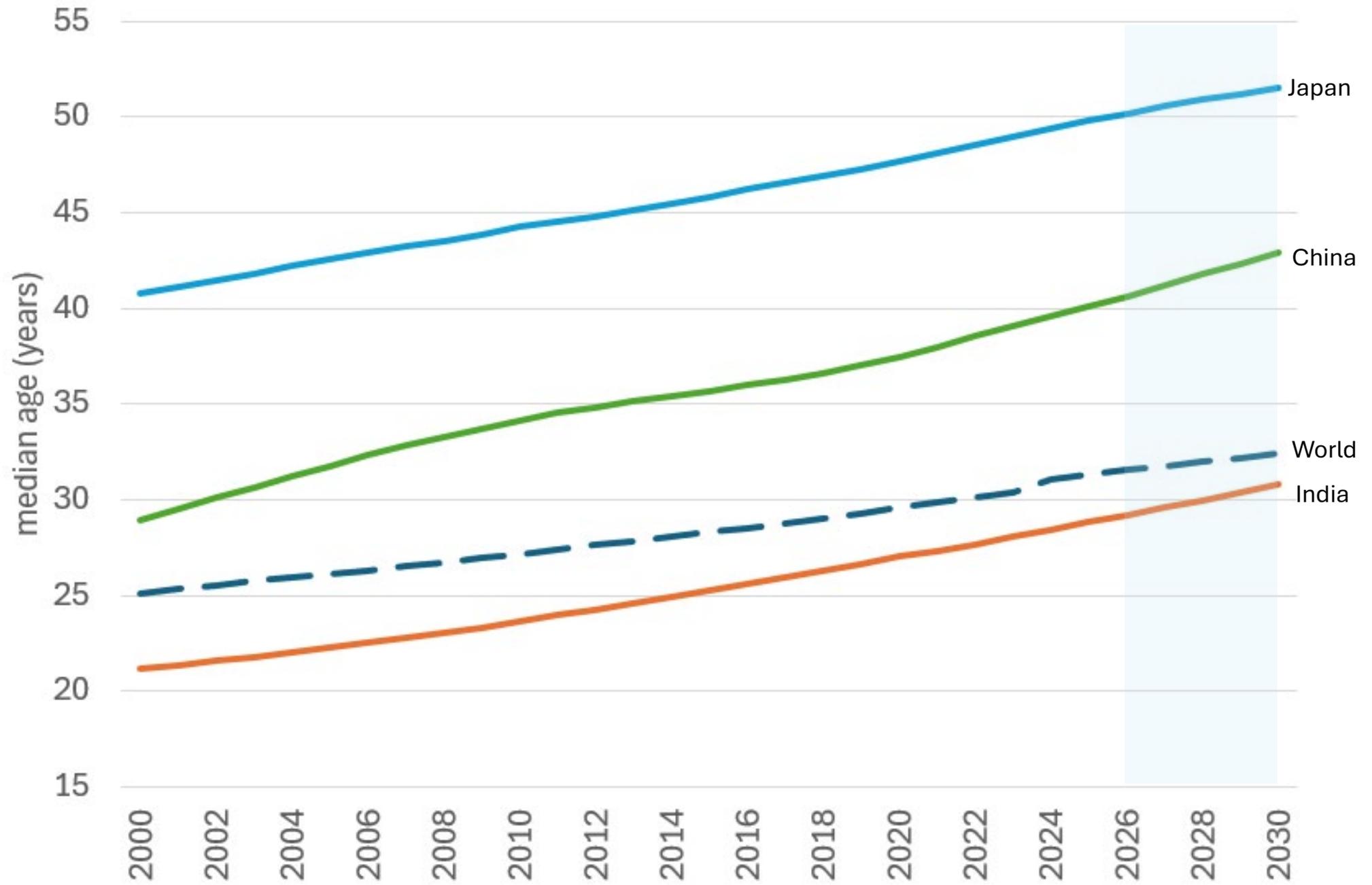
The unsettling world



Digital divide in older people
Smart phone users (%)

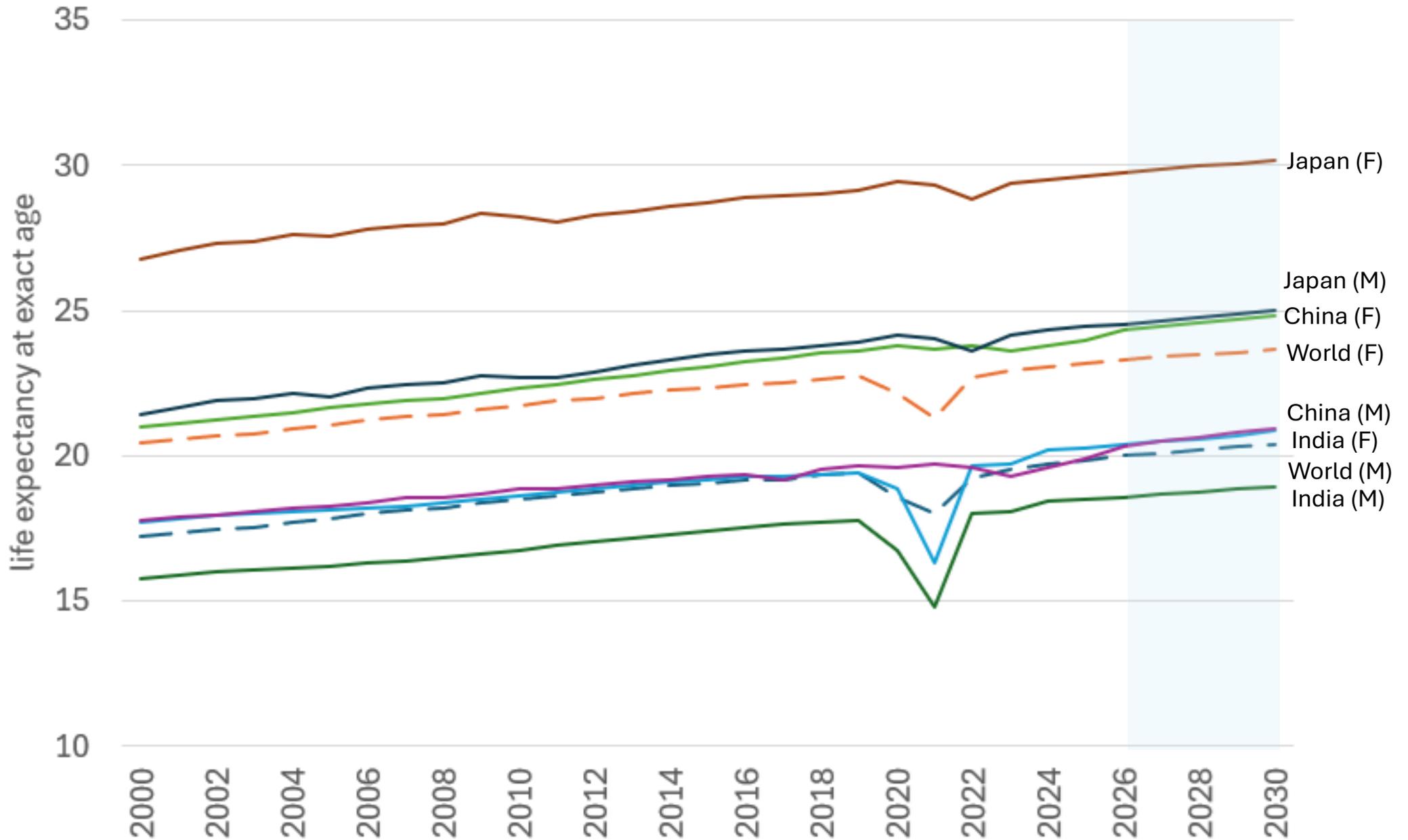


Median age



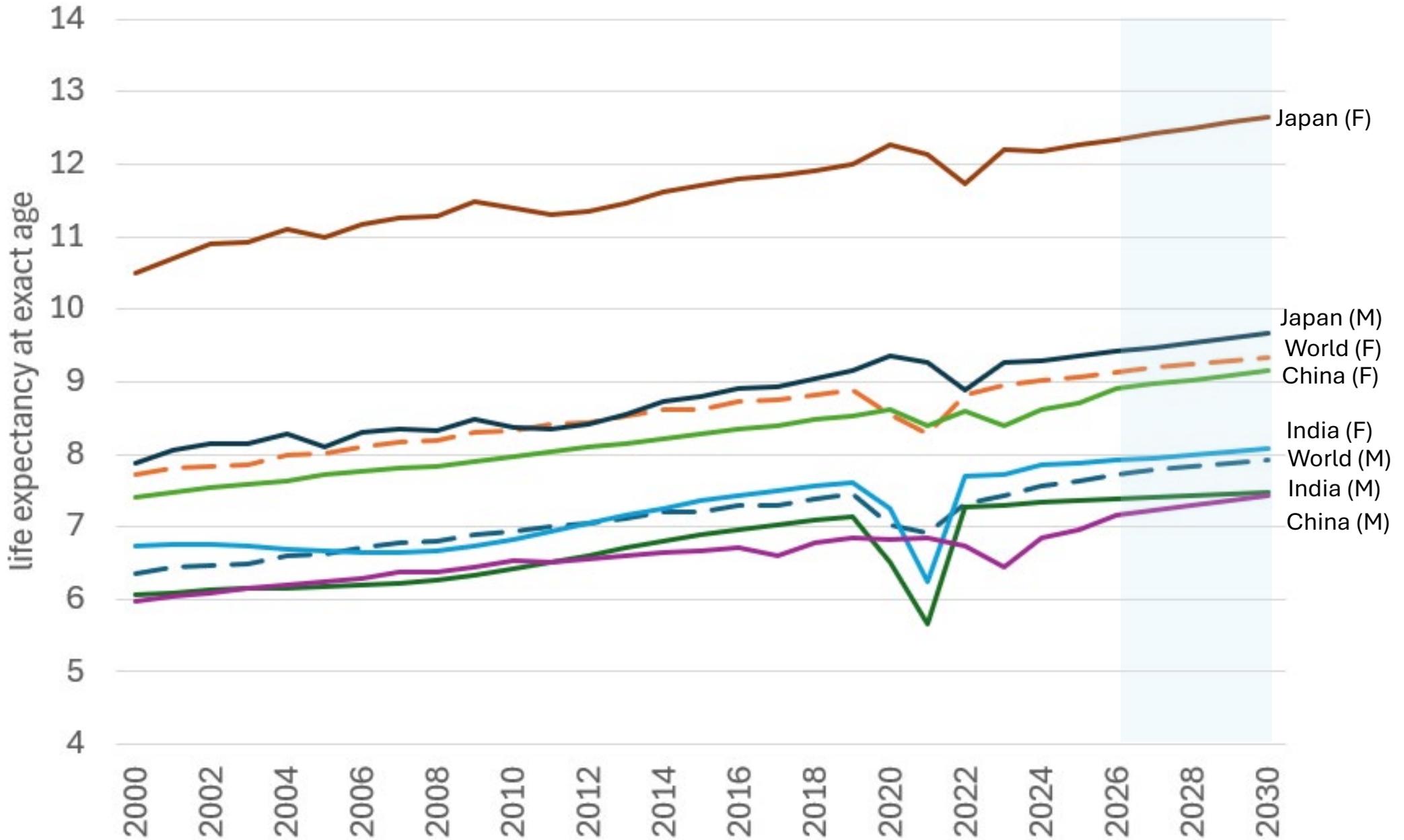
Data source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). *World Population Prospects 2024, Online Edition*.

Life expectancy at 60



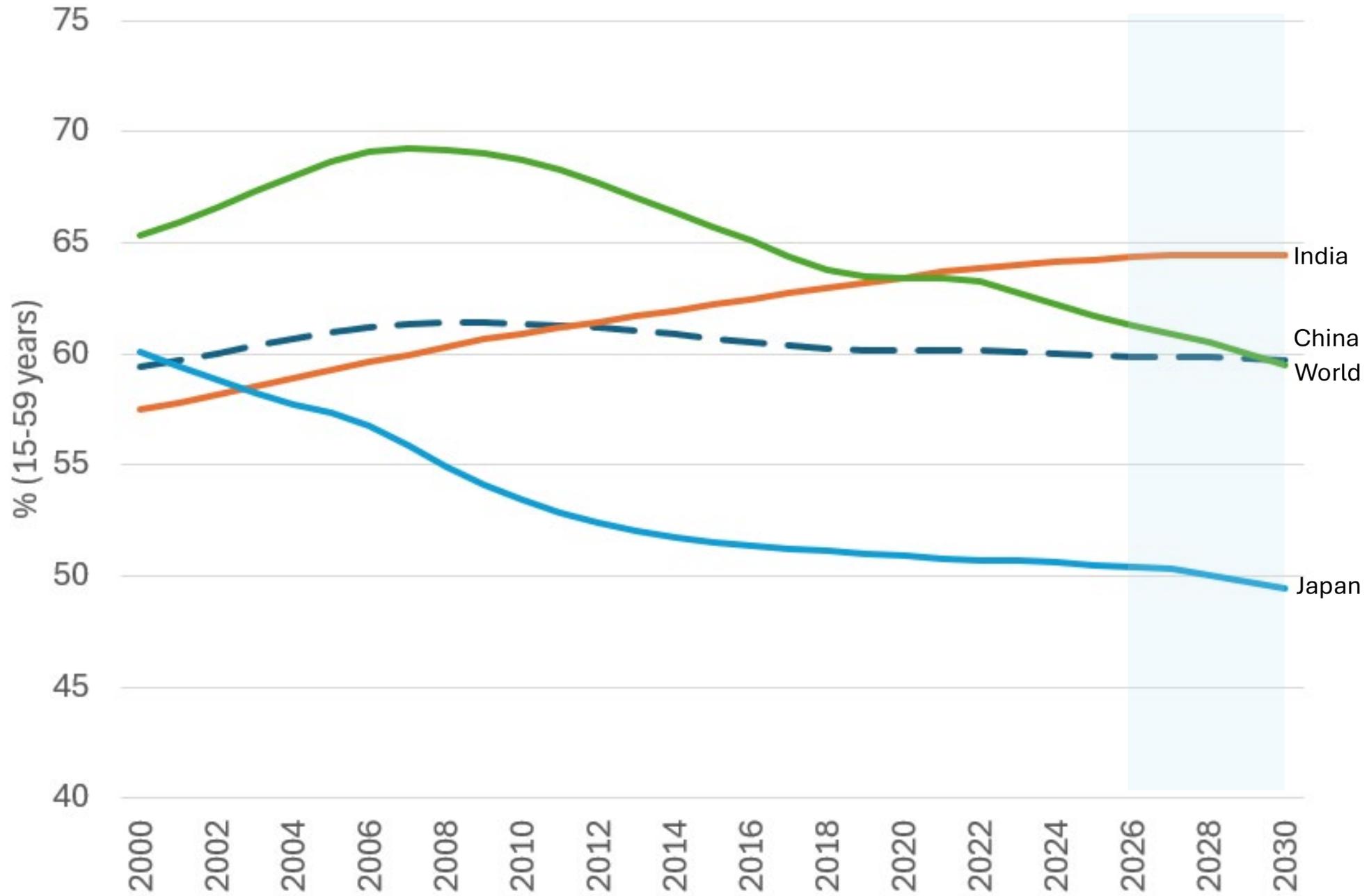
Data source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). *World Population Prospects 2024, Online Edition*.

Life expectancy at 80

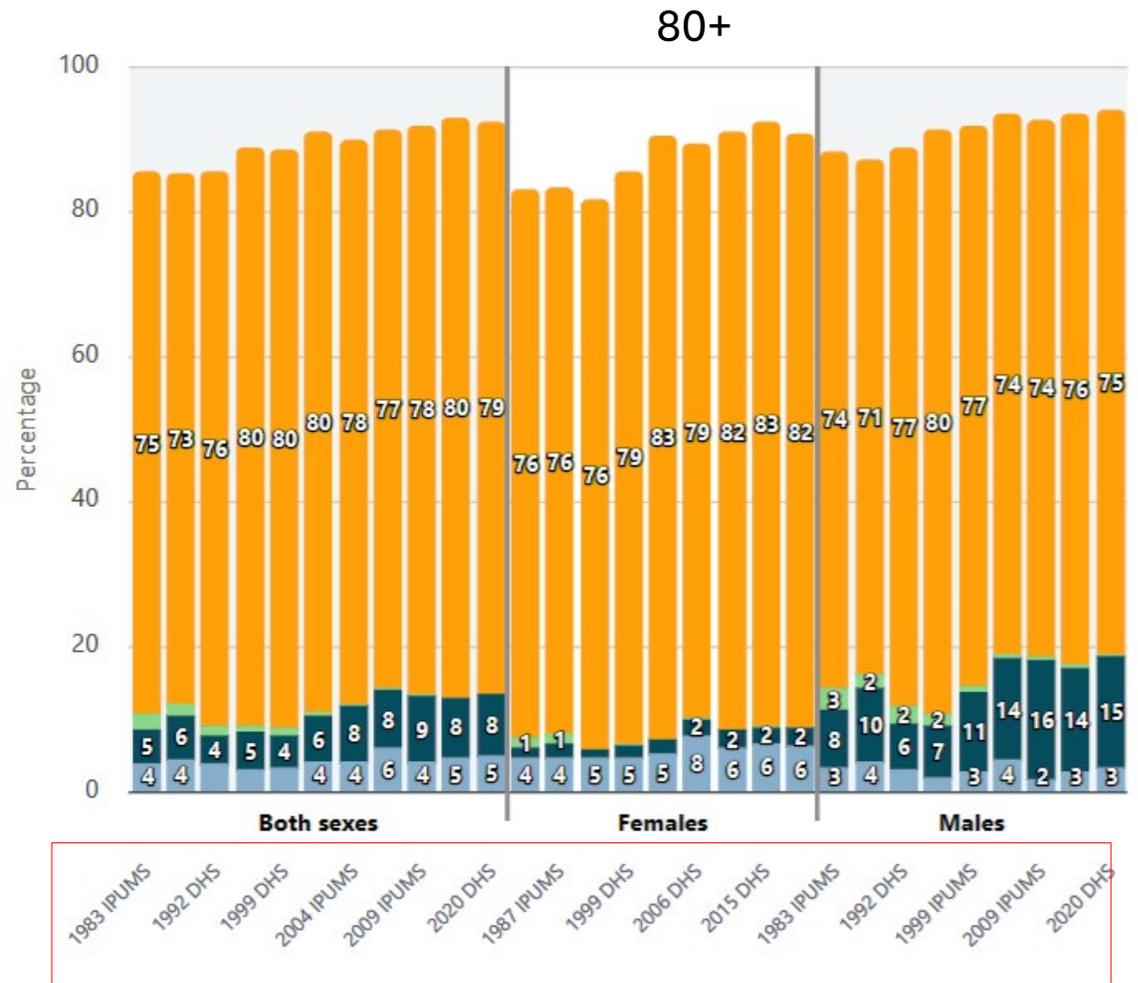
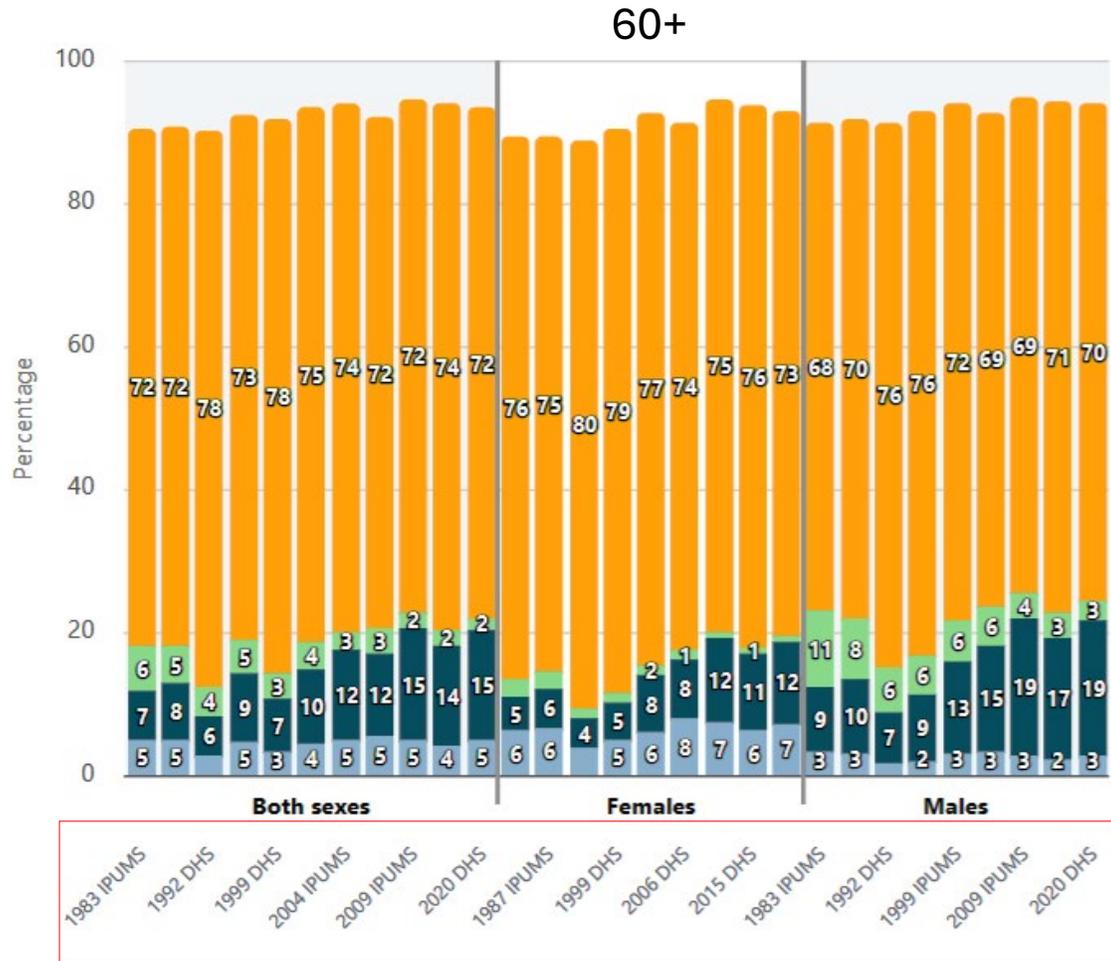


Data source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). *World Population Prospects 2024, Online Edition*.

**% population
15-59 years**

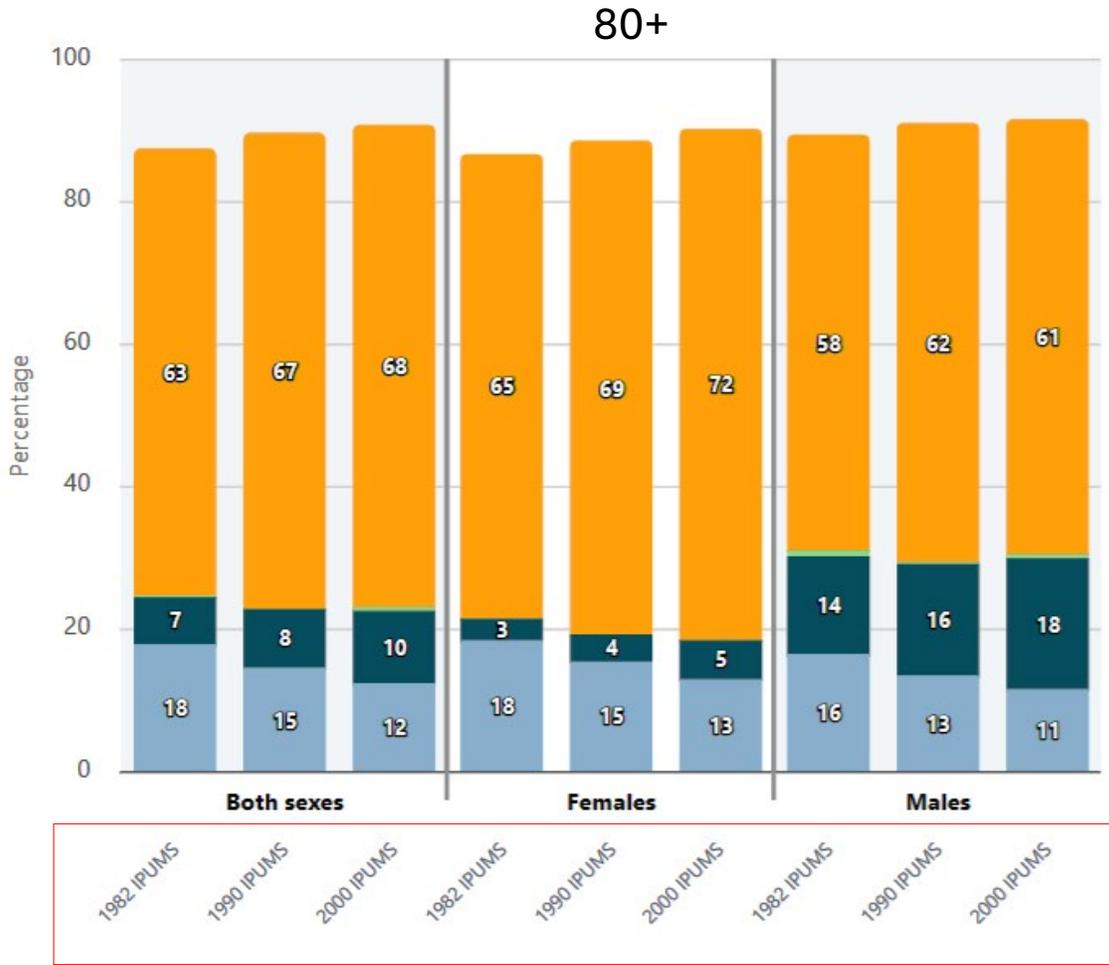
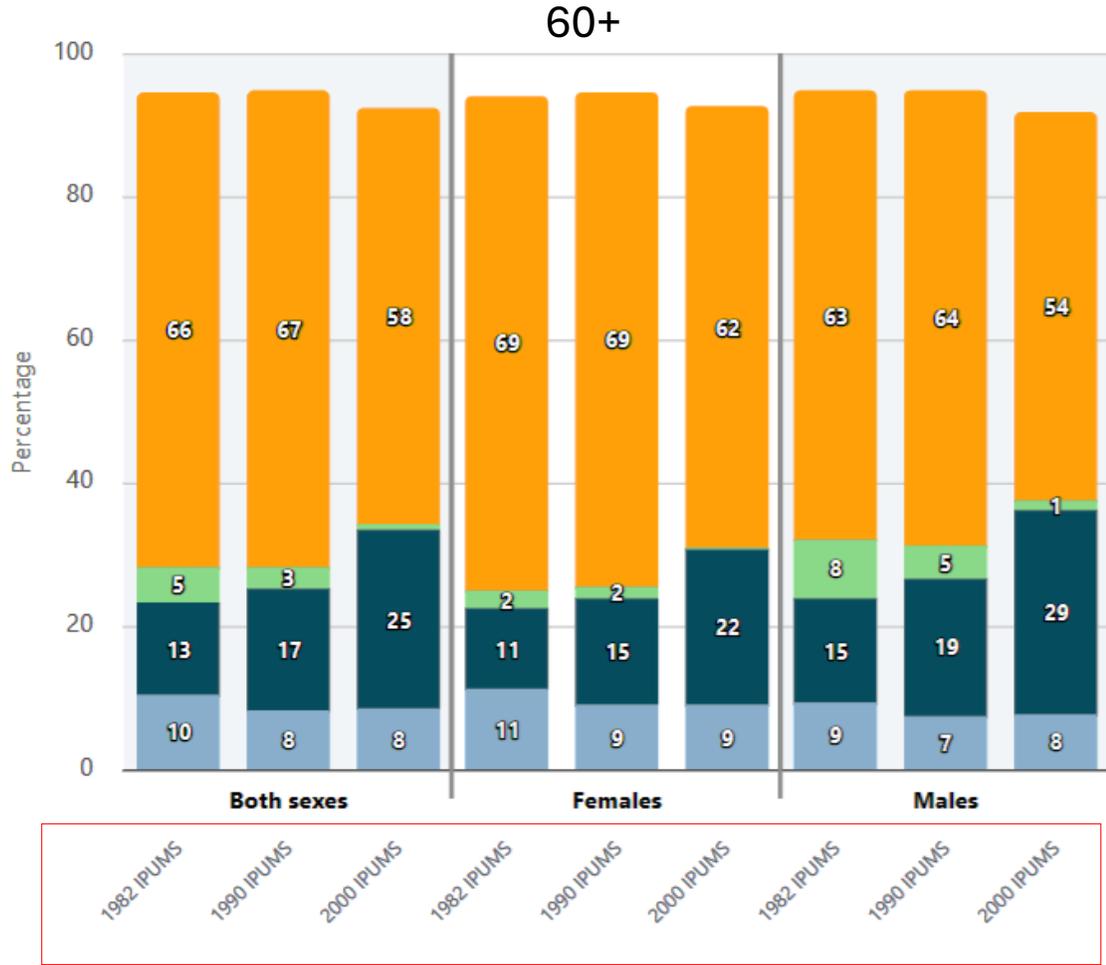


India: living arrangements of older persons



- One person
- Couple only
- With children < 20 years of age
- With children ≥ 20 years of age

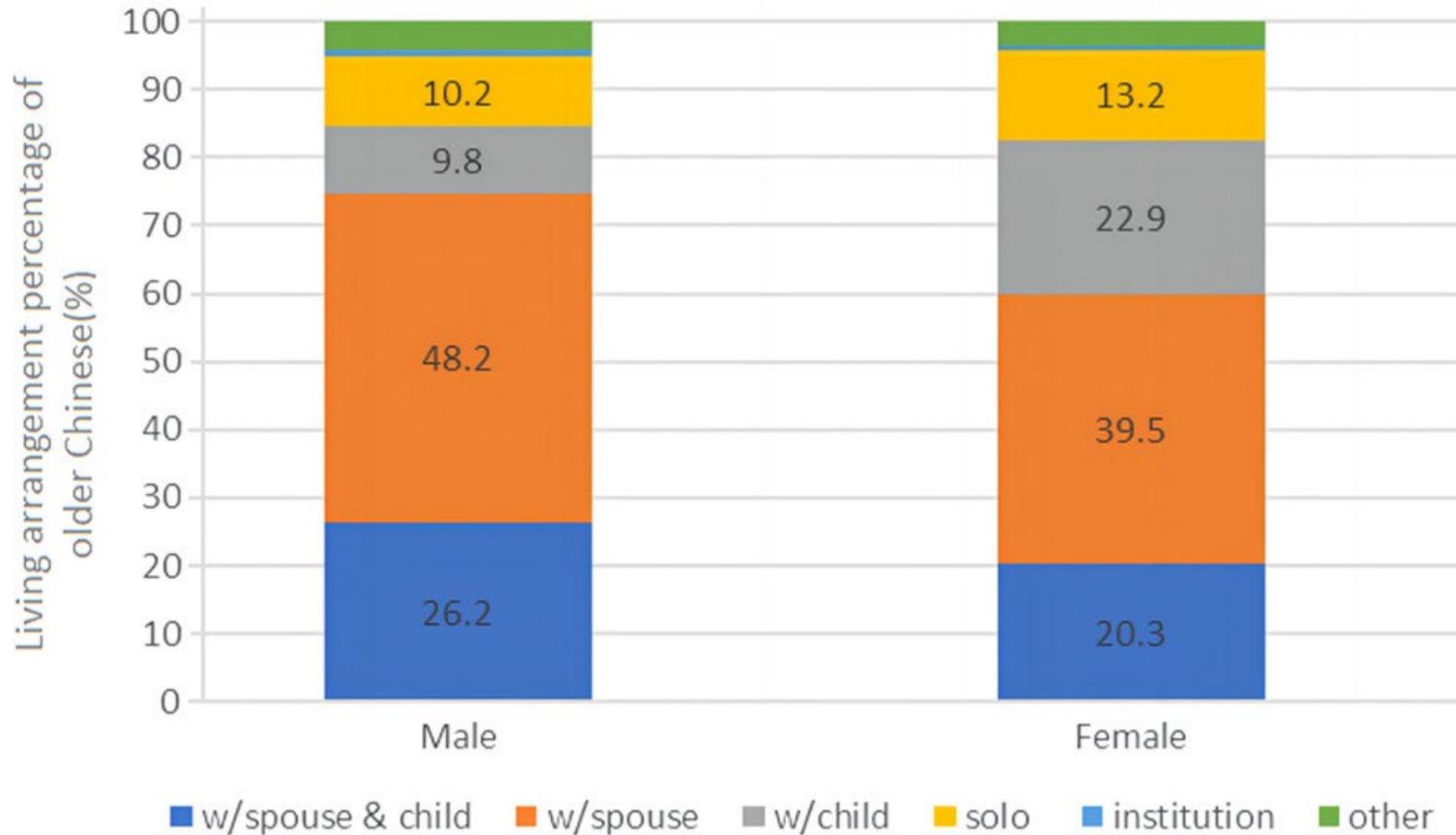
China: living arrangements of older persons



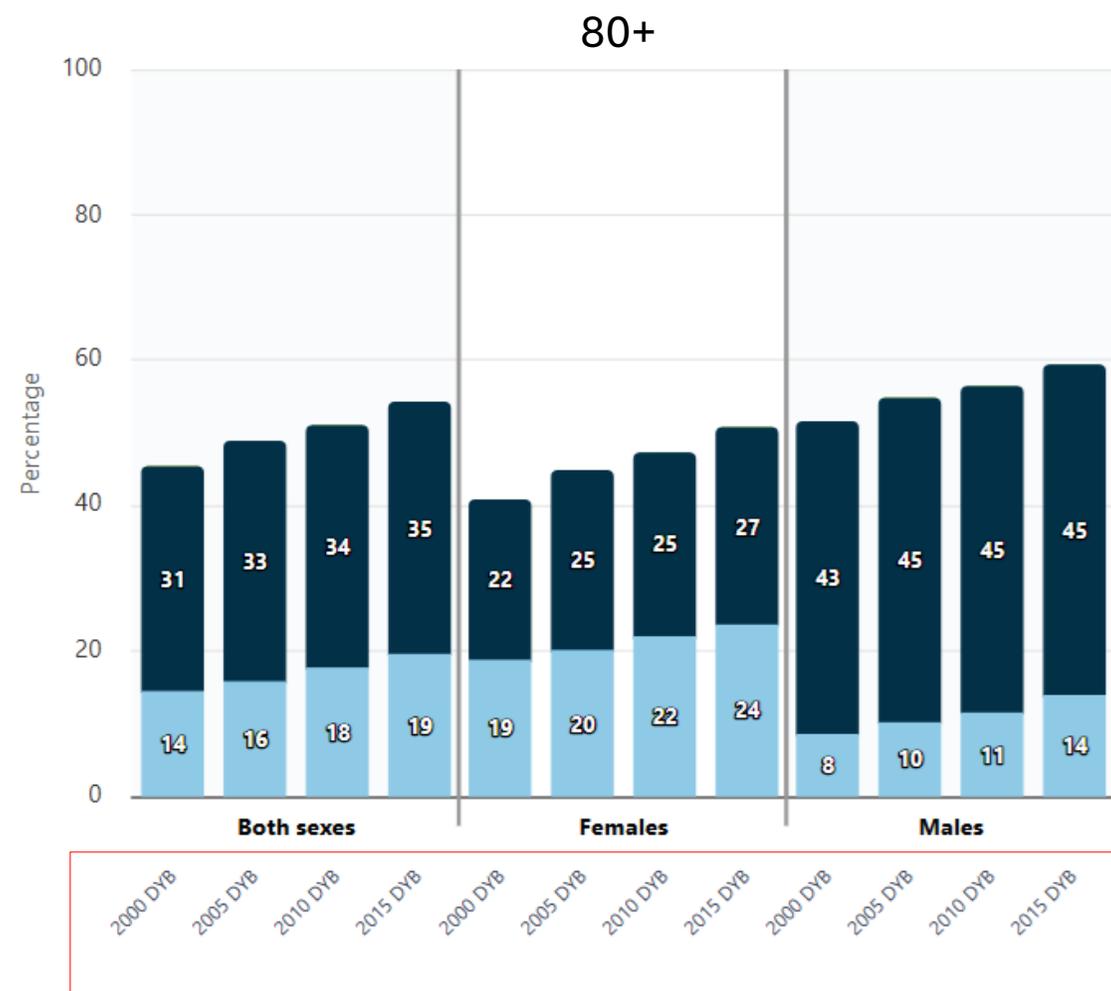
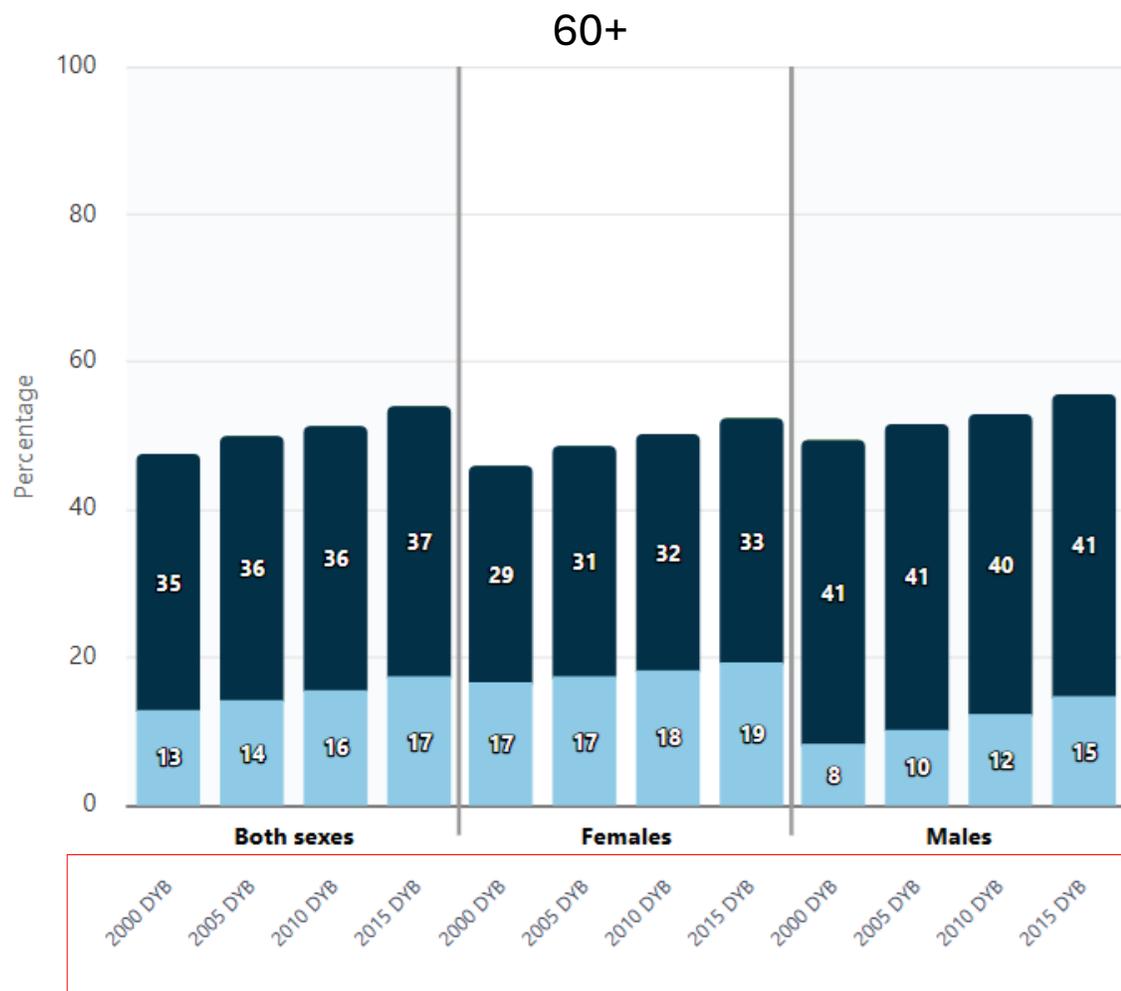
- One person
- Couple only
- With children < 20 years of age
- With children ≥ 20 years of age

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). *Database on Household Size and Composition 2022*. UN DESA/POP/2022/DC/NO. 8.

Government–society cooperation and enduring filial piety are central to supporting China’s aging population and shaping older adults’ well-being



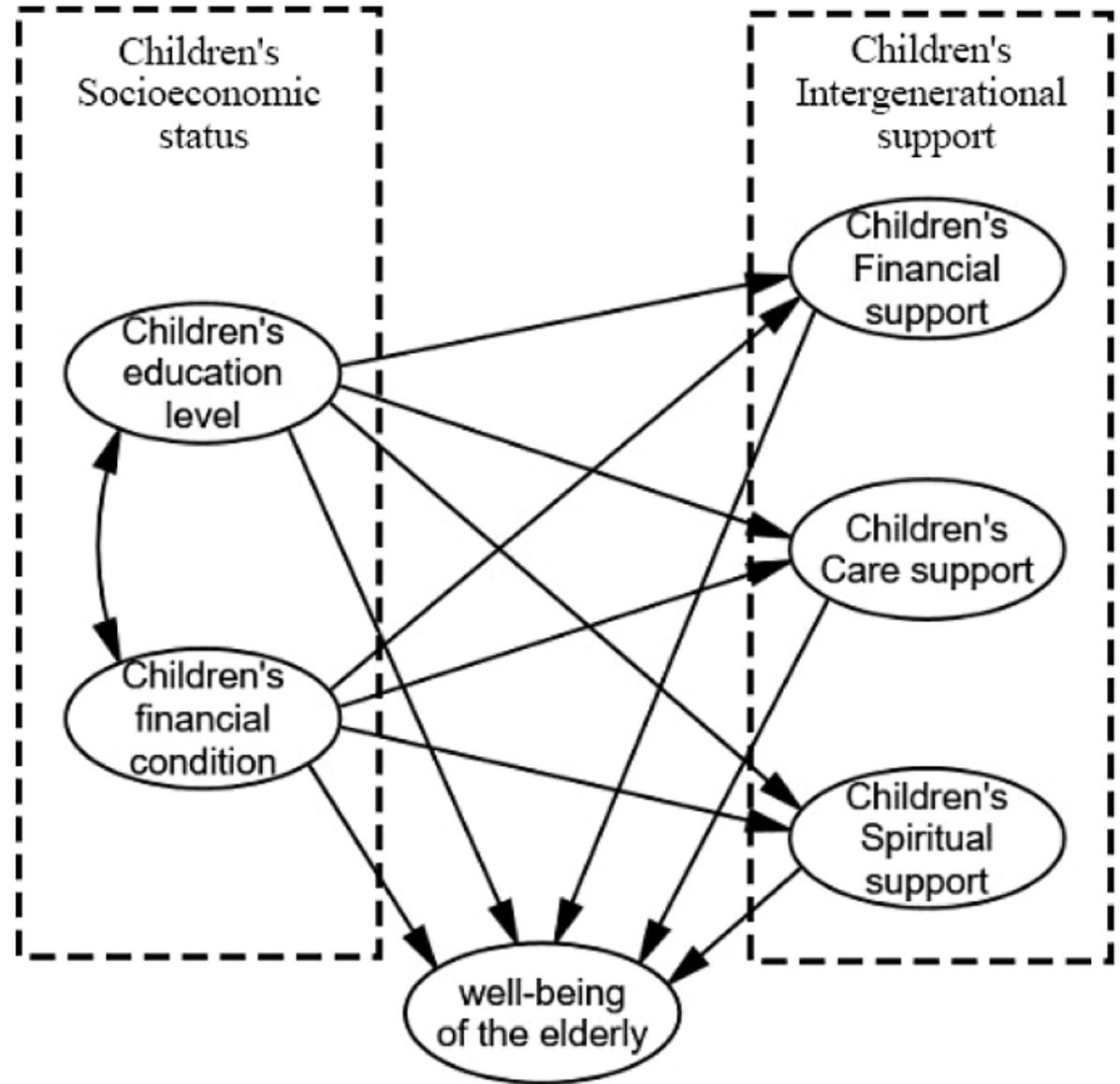
Japan: living arrangements of older persons



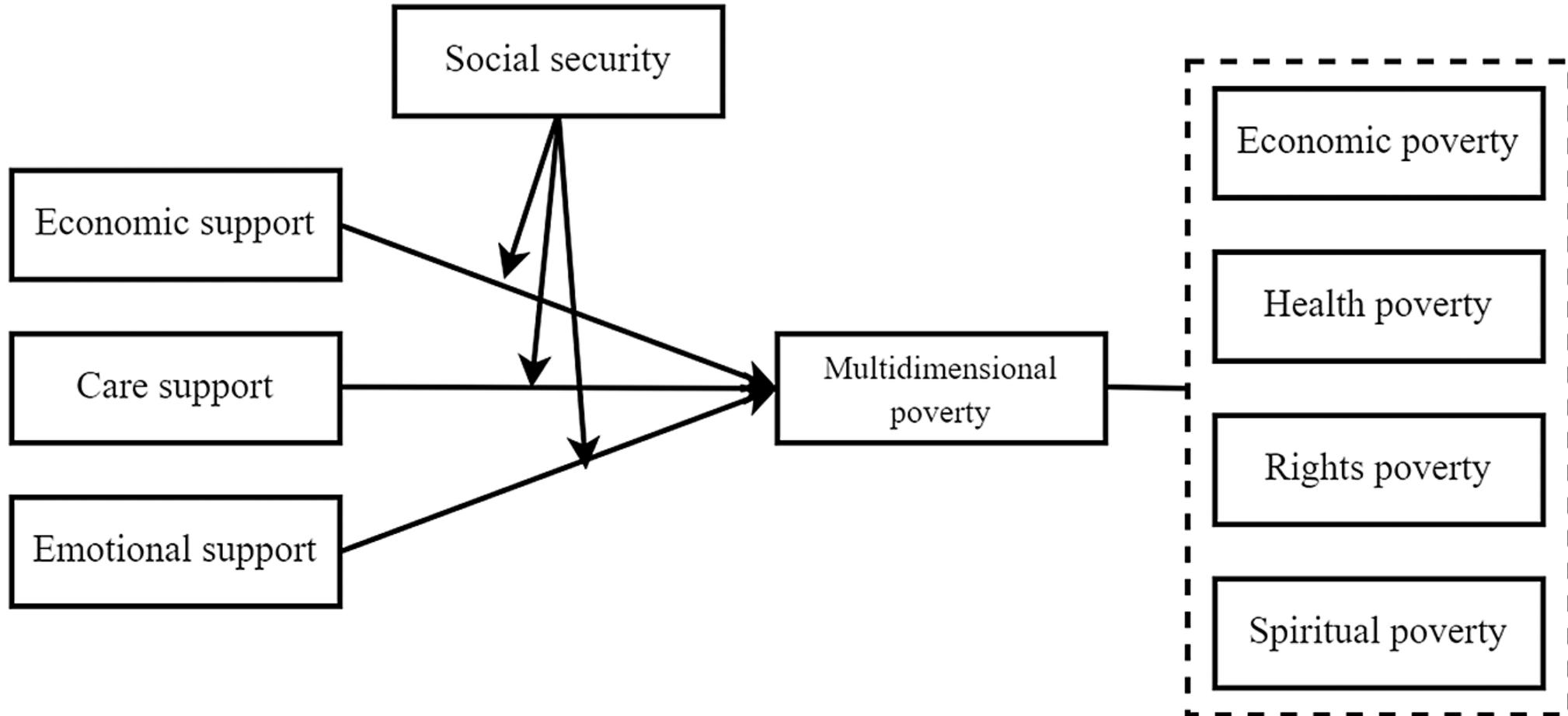
- One person
- Couple only
- With children < 20 years of age
- With children ≥ 20 years of age

Features	India	China	Japan
Demographic phase	Peak youth / early aging onset, state/ regional variations.	Rapid aging / shrinking population, youth vibe shift, 4-2-1 burden, shrinking mother pool, get old before rich trap.	Super-aged / population stabilising
Median age	29 yrs	41 yrs	50 yrs
Care provision	Strong family safety net but diminishing as nuclear families evolve alongside rapid urbanisation.	State-driven institutionalisation, high child and elderly care costs, massive push to build nursing homes (previously stigmatised)	Silver democracy, rise of robotic (companion) surrogates to fight loneliness and extreme isolation, intergenerational housing.
Equity tension	Lack of formal pension, slowly diminishing family support.	Delayed retirement, rural-urban divide	Massive public debt, shrinking youth influence.
Financial security	Minimal (<22% have pension, dependent on children's goodwill or manual labour).	Fragile (pension funds strained; recent retirement age hikes force elders to work longer).	Robust but stagnant (high savings, but silver inflation, weakening pension returns).
Orientation	Formalising the care economy.	Expediting a birth-friendly society.	Tech/AI to offset labour shortages.

Children's wealth/
financial conditions, **not**
support, determines older
adults' happiness and
wellbeing in China

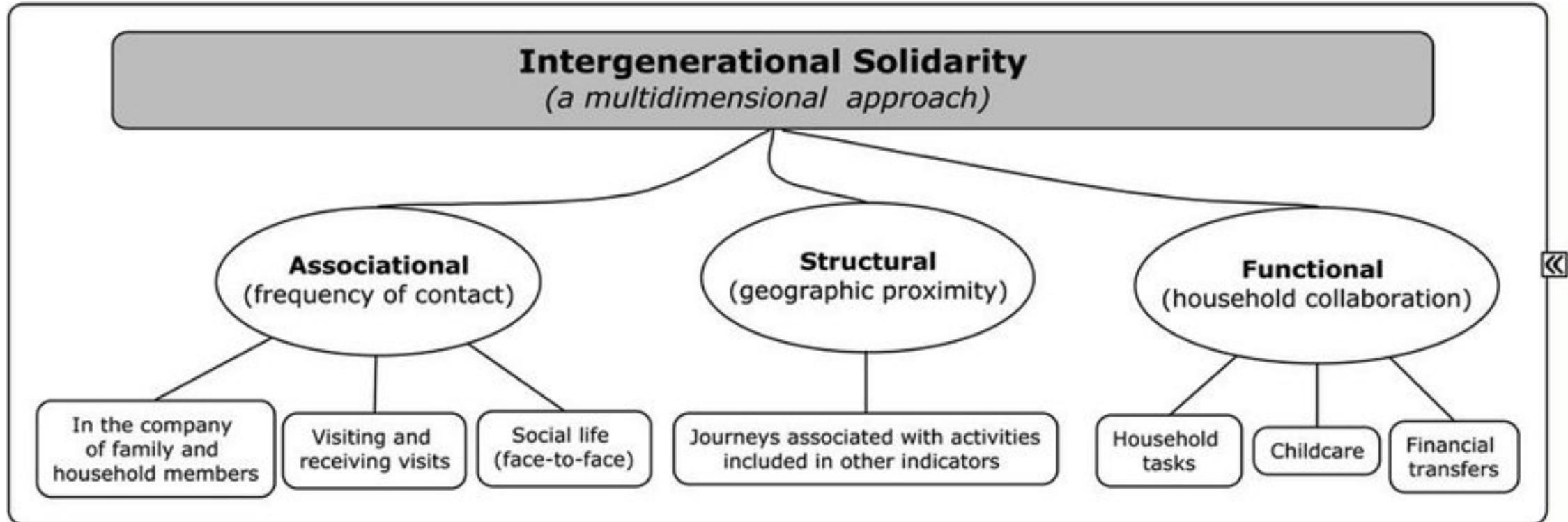


Emotional support and social security reduce multidimensional poverty among elderly



Source: Tan H, Dong Z, Zhang H. 2023. The impact of intergenerational support on multidimensional poverty in old age: empirical analysis based on 2018 CLHS data. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communication*. 10, 439.

Families in Spain actively supported each other during Spain's economic crises, distributing time and resources across generations, demonstrating resilience beyond public welfare systems.



Source: Fuentes AJS, López TL, Hincapié VG. 2019. Determinants of family solidarity during the great recession: the Spanish Case. *Research on Ageing and Social Policy*. 7(2), 363-401.

Adapted from Bengtson VL., Roberts REL. 1991. Intergenerational solidarity in aging families: An example of formal theory. Construction. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 53(4), 856-870.



Reconciling intergenerational needs

Public policy should balance generational interests by integrating redistributive measures, inclusive decision-making, and collaborative frameworks that uphold equity and social cohesion.

Data gaps

Insufficient longitudinal, disaggregated, and comparable cross-sectoral data on economic, social, health and caregiving undermine evidence-based intergenerational policy.

Moving beyond age-based silos

Institutions should adopt life-course frameworks and multi-dimensional metrics that capture intergenerational participation, cohesion, and well-being across communities.

Scalable models during crises

Evidence-based, adaptable programs linking policy and community initiatives and measurable outcomes strengthen intergenerational relations and family cohesion.