



ESCAP

Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific

Social Development Priorities for Asia and the Pacific

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ESCAP

Preparations for the World Social Summit under the title “the Second
World Summit for Social Development”



Context and ESCAP's contribution to preparations to the WSSD.

Special Event during the eighth Committee on Social Development

- October 10, 2024, Bangkok
- Initial Brainstorming

Multi-stakeholder consultation back to back with 12th APFSD

- February 24, 2025, Bangkok.
- Organized in collaboration with ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNWOMEN
- Report to inform the thought paper under preparation.

Second World Summit for Social Development 2025

- November 4 to 6 November 2025, Qatar

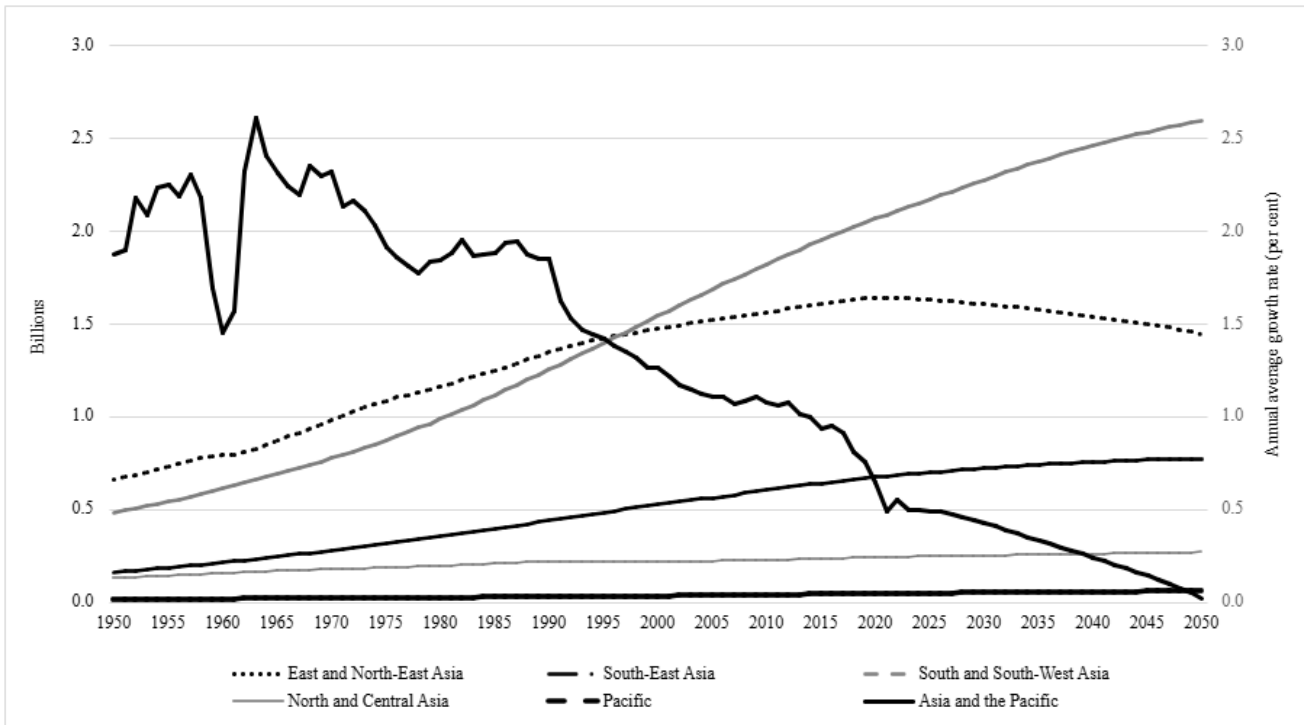
The Copenhagen Declaration:

- Brought a consensus of Member States on the need of putting **people at the center** of development.
- Emphasized eradicating **poverty**, promoting full and productive **employment** and fostering social **inclusion** as key objectives of social development.
- Recognized that economic development, social development and environmental protection are **interdependent**, and **integration** of these areas was needed to achieve a higher quality of life for all people.
- Recognized the importance of **regional frameworks** for social development and requested the Regional Commissions to regularly evaluate progress made towards fulfilling the outcome of the Summit.

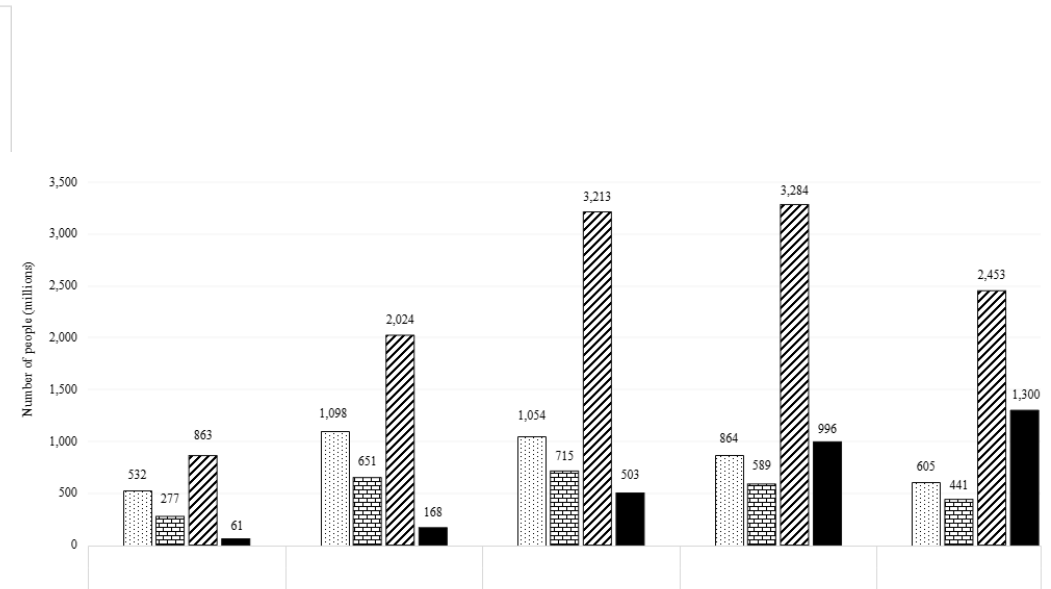


Rapid demographic transitions require focus on intergenerational solidarity.

Population size by Asia-Pacific subregion and annual growth rate for Asia and the Pacific, 1950–2050



Child, youth, working-age and older persons in Asia and the Pacific, 1950, 1990, 2024, 2050, and 2100



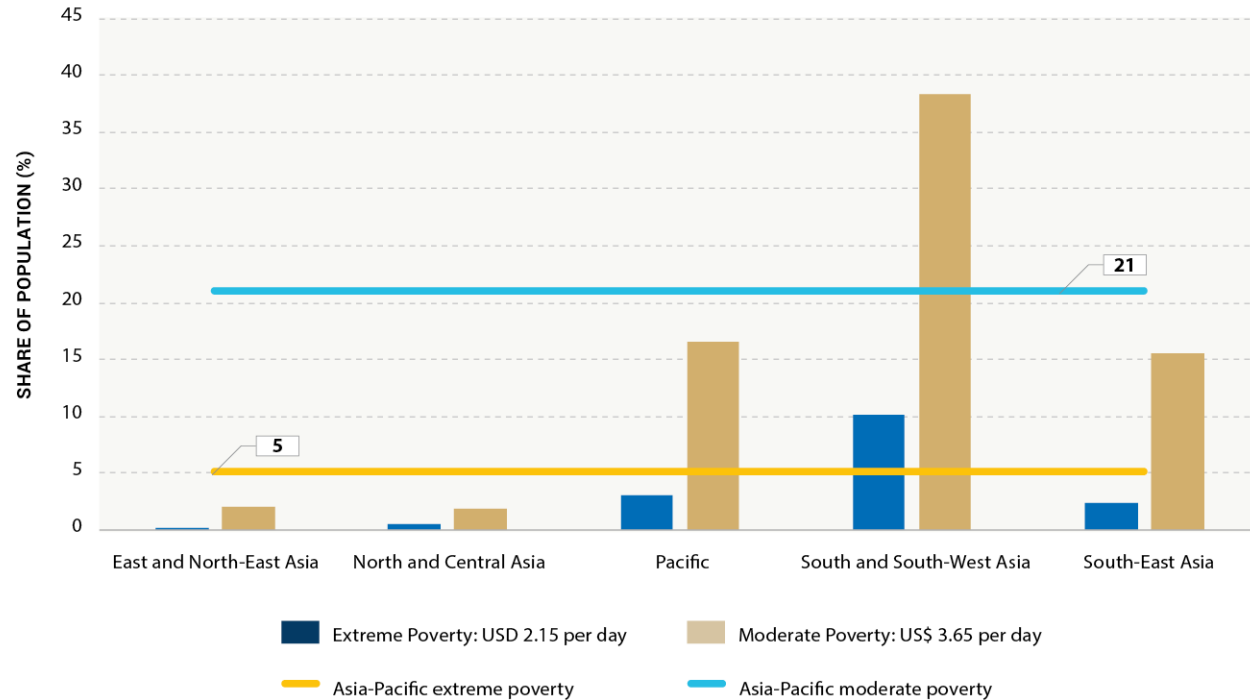
Source: ESCAP calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). World Population Prospects 2024, Online Edition.

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For the first time in decades poverty and inequality in Asia and the Pacific are on the rise.

Share of population living in extreme and moderate poverty, by ESCAP subregions excluding high-income countries



Source: ESCAP estimates based on World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform accessed on 15 May 2024.

Average Gini coefficients for income and wealth inequality by ESCAP subregions

Subregions	Income inequality (2023)	Wealth inequality (2022)
East and North-East Asia	0.519	0.748
North and Central Asia	0.547	0.752
Pacific	0.512	0.729
South and South-West Asia	0.561	0.765
South-East Asia	0.565	0.754

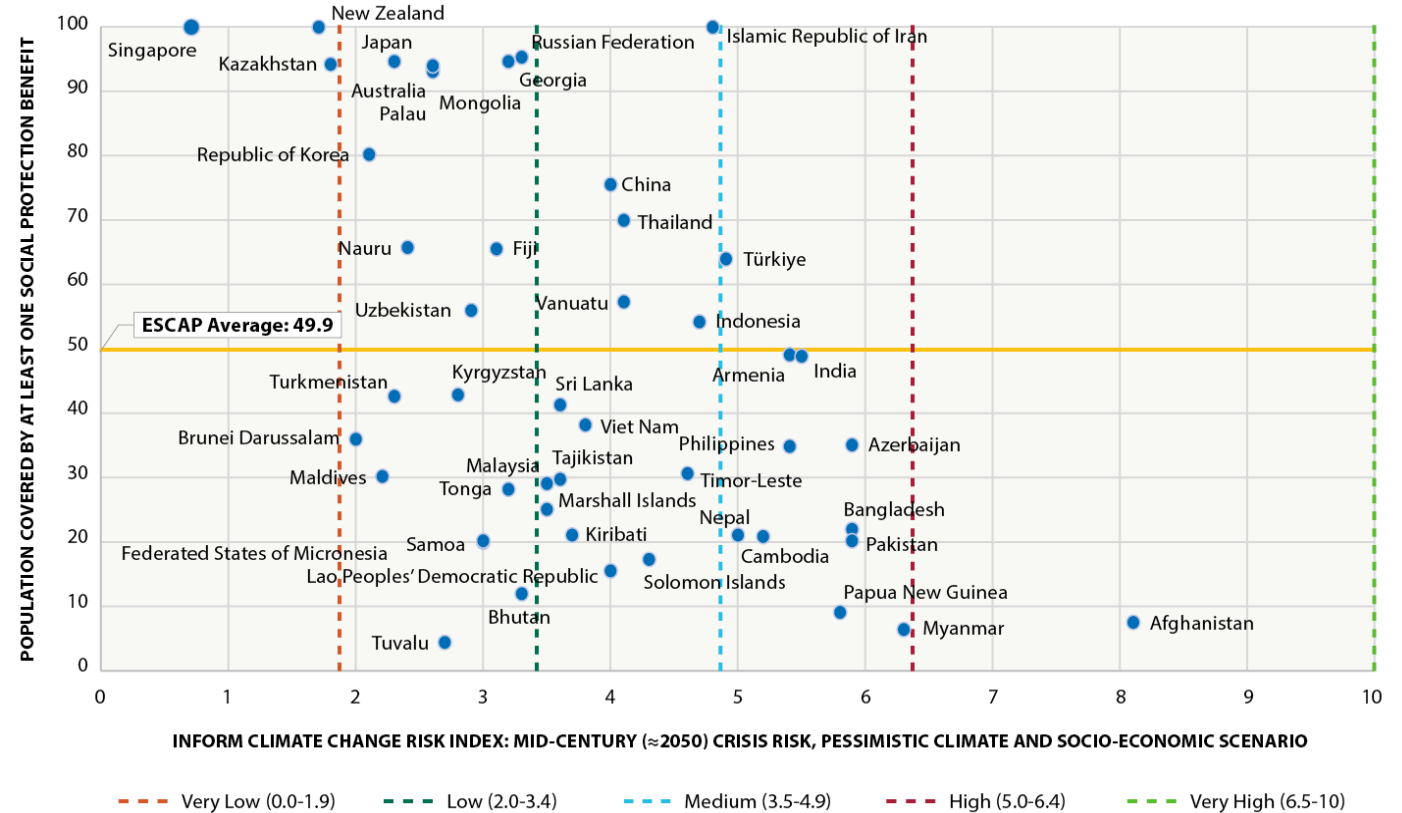
ESCAP estimates based on World Inequality Database accessed online on 24 January 2025.



Increasing prevalence of extreme climate events affects all households – but especially those who are already vulnerable and marginalized.



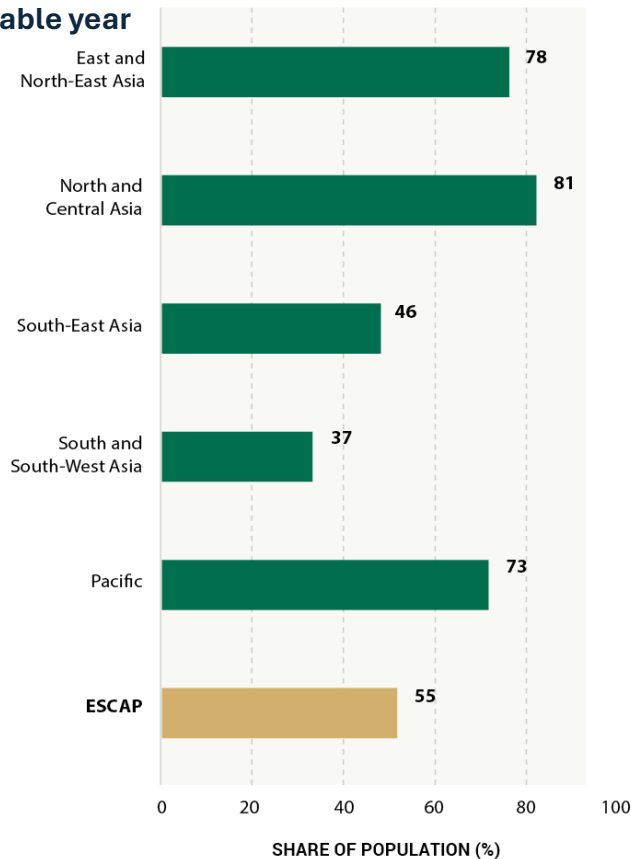
Share of population covered by at least one social protection benefit and the projected level of climate change induced risk by mid-century in a pessimistic climate and socioeconomic scenario



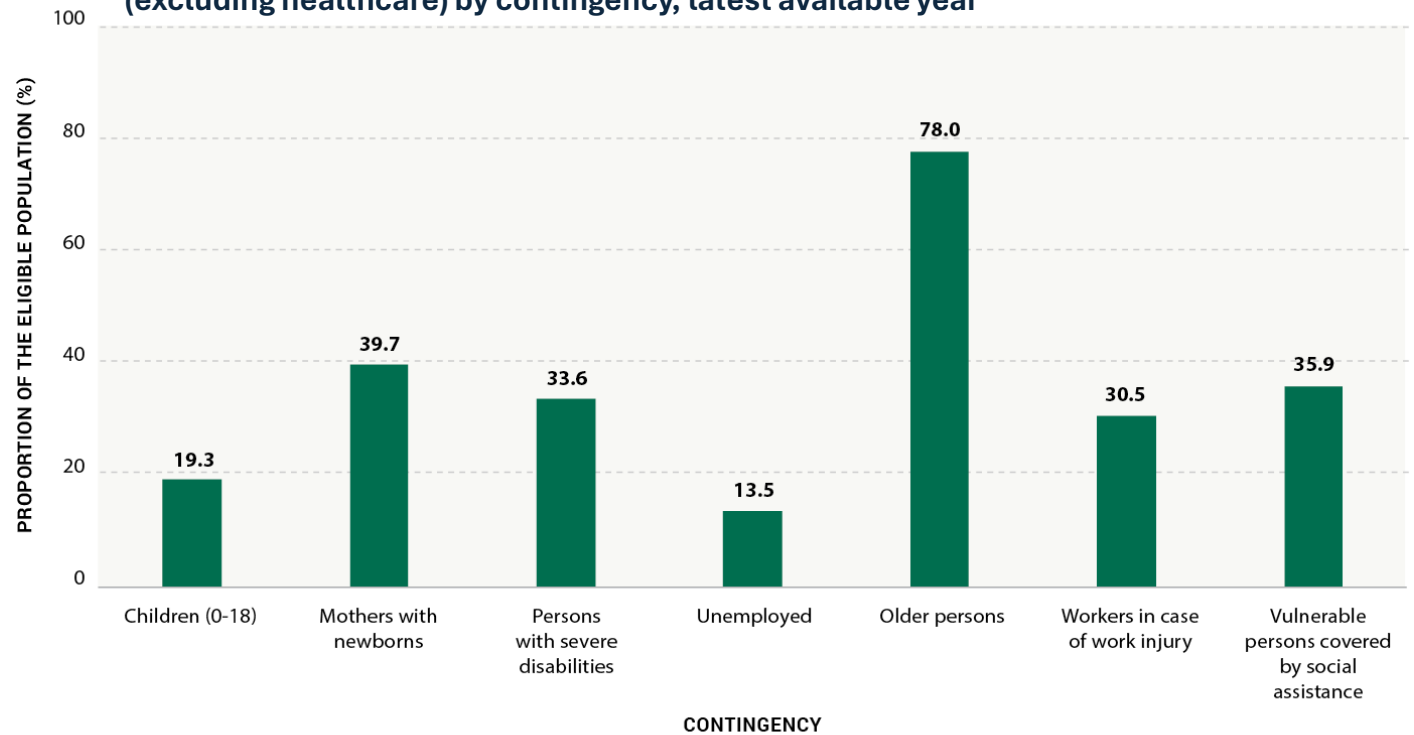
Source: ESCAP elaborations using data from the European Commission, “INFORM Climate Change Risk Index” and ILO estimates, 2024; World Social Protection Database, based on the Social Security Inquiry; ISSA Social Security Programs Throughout the World; ILOSTAT; national sources.

Despite positive developments across life cycle contingencies, coverage and adequacy levels in social protection remain low.

Share of population covered by at least one social protection benefit (excluding healthcare), by subregion, latest available year



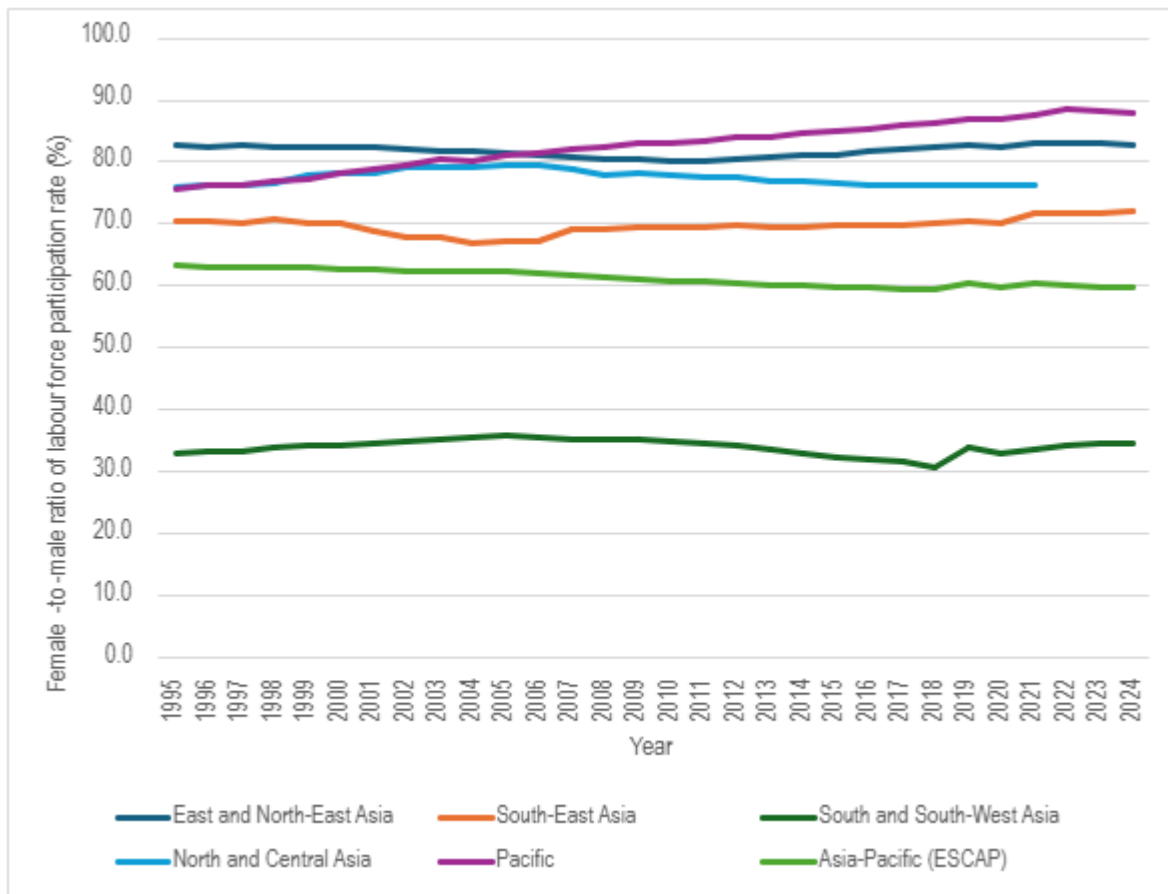
Proportion of the population covered by at least one social protection benefit (excluding healthcare) by contingency, latest available year



Source: ILO estimates, 2024; World Social Protection Database, based on the Social Security Inquiry; ISSA Social Security Programs Throughout the World; ILOSTAT; national sources.



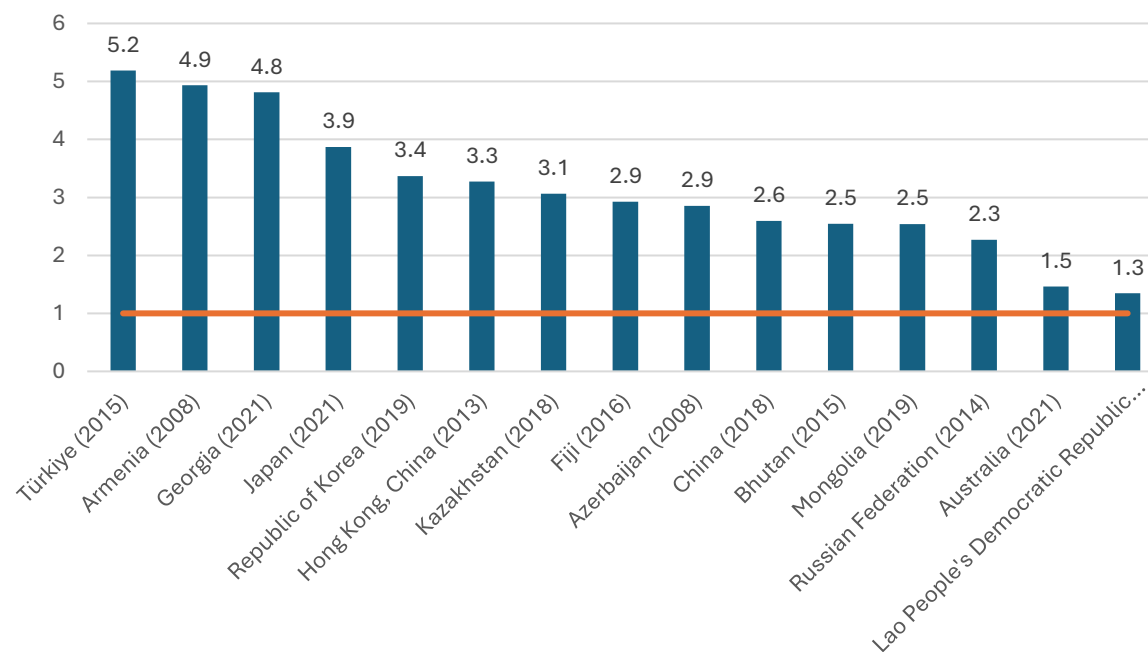
Change in gender gap in labour force participation (female-to-male ratio) between 1995 and 2024, by subregion



Source: ESCAP calculation based on ESCAP Data Explorer: Labour force participation (ILO est.) 15+, by sex, percentage (accessed 27 July 2024).

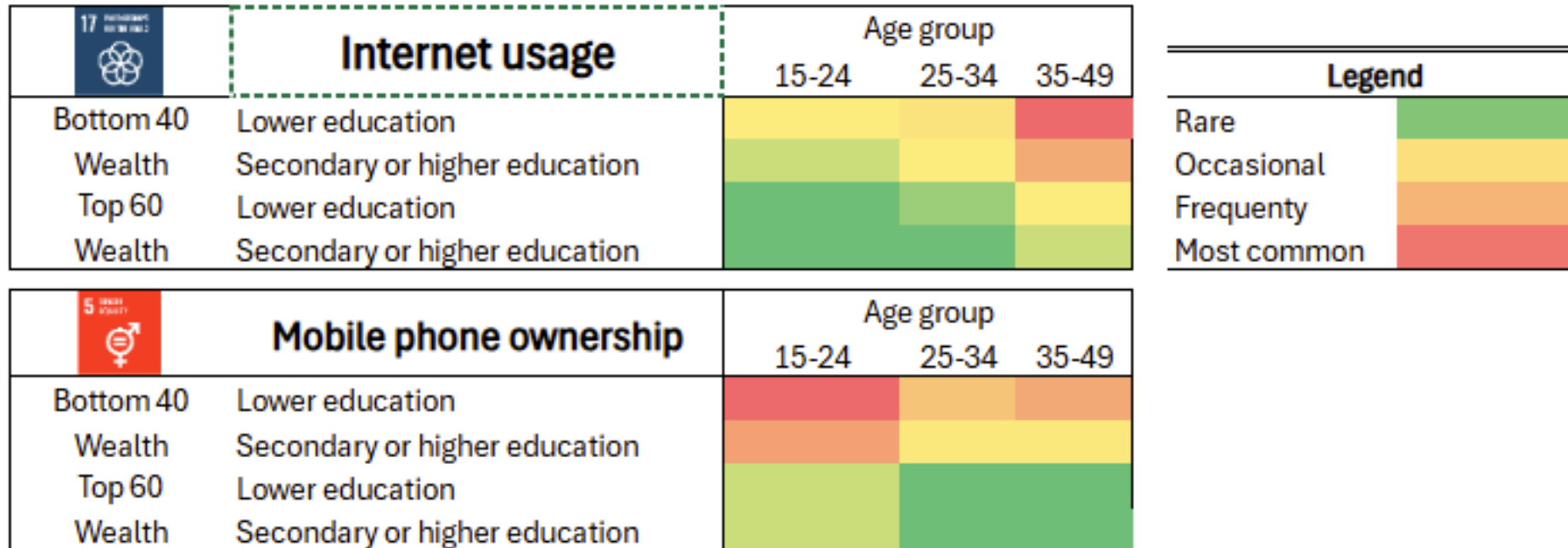
The unequal burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women and girls significantly contributes to ongoing gender inequalities in the labor market in the region.

Time spent on unpaid domestic chores and care work, female-to-male ratio



Source: ESCAP calculation based on ESCAP Data Explorer. Time spent on unpaid domestic chores and care work (% of time in a day, total female and male aged 15+, most recent year) (Accessed 14 June 2024).

Digital transformation creates opportunities but is also a new sources of risks and vulnerabilities



Note:

"Bottom 40 per cent and Top 60 per cent" are based household wealth index.

Source:

ESCAP elaborations based on Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) platform accessed online in 15 November 2024.



Recommended policies and actions.

- Understanding the **structural barriers and social norms** that underpin **inequalities of opportunity** is essential. Tackling structural and social barriers and norms should be an objective integral to legislative reforms, policy action and other investments to achieve transformative, sustainable impacts.
- **Social protection** is a human right and an important tool to protect people from life cycle risks and build resilience against emerging risks (e.g. climate change), essential for preventing poverty and reducing inequalities and improving overall wellbeing. Countries should establish **robust and integrated legislative and policy frameworks** in line with international standards (e.g. ILO social security conventions), close coverage and financing gaps while addressing intersectionality.
- The shift in population age structures with more people of different age cohorts co-existing calls for **strong intergenerational relations and solidarity** to build inclusive societies for all ages. Countries may expand old-age pensions systems with a view to providing financial security to older persons as well as support their mental and physical health, while promoting active and healthy ageing policies and strengthening intergenerational relations.
- Addressing the **multifaceted care** demand requires a combination of gender-smart financing and budgeting and care-sensitive and gender-responsive policy action in the areas of care infrastructure, care-related social protection, care services and employment-related care policies. Social protection systems, tailored to the needs of caregivers, especially women and girls, can play a pivotal role in reducing poverty, building resilience against economic and social crises, and fostering gender equality.
- **Disaggregated data are needed** so that the invisible can be made visible. Investments in the collection, analysis and dissemination of such data, accompanied by capacity-building in these areas, are important.
- An **integrated perspective on key challenges** —such as ageing, lack of social protection, lack of universal healthcare coverage and informality in the labour market— is critical to tackling intersectional issues and momentum effects early on.



Areas for discussion

- How do we look beyond economic growth and recommit to social (and environmental) aspects of development? What can governments do to rebalance their development priorities towards people-centered development?
- How can governments strengthen their social protection systems to ensure people have income security, including during economic and social transitions and disruptions (e.g. climate change) and to foster inclusive development?
- How are governments preparing for an ageing population and harnessing opportunities to strengthen intergenerational solidarity and relations, including healthy and active ageing, while also addressing challenges such as underfunded pension funds or lack of youth in Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) in many countries?
- With increasing care demand in the region, how can governments design and implement gender-responsive social protection and care policies that effectively meet these demands while also taking into account gender equality considerations?
- How can governments ensure inclusive development to reduce poverty and inequality and create opportunities across all groups of society? What are governments doing to address the interconnectedness of social developmental challenges?
- How can civil society and social partners help to tackle structural barriers and social norms with a view to enable inclusive policymaking and successful implementation of policies?





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