

Commentary on United States of America 's domain ranks in the 2014 Global AgeWatch Index

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Global AgeWatch Index rank

8

out of 96

The United States of America ranks at 8 overall on the Index, ranking consistently high in all four domains. It performs best in the capability domain (4), with a significant change in value points from 2013 due to an increase in the employment rate which now stands at 60.9%. It also has a high rate of educational attainment among older people for its region (95.6%).

It ranks at 17 in the enabling environment domain, slightly below average on the civic freedom indicator (84%), but above average on the indicators of safety (71%), social connectedness (94%) and satisfaction with public transport (62%).

It ranks at 22 in the income security domain with a pension income coverage of 92.5%, although it has a higher than average old age poverty rate for its region at 14.6%. It ranks lower in the health domain (25), with values that are slightly below the regional average for the indicators of life expectancy (23) and healthy life expectancy at 60 (17).



Income security

22

78.7/100

The relatively high percent of older Americans receiving pension income reflects the nearly universal coverage of the state pension programme (Social Security). Eligible individuals can elect to receive retirement benefits through the state pension programme as early as age 62. Benefits from the state pension are modest. The United States does not have a mandatory second tier system for workers, so for most Americans the state pension is their primary resource in retirement.

The incidence of poverty amongst older people is higher than many other countries. This reflects, among other things, the modest benefits provided by the state pension, which varies based on average career earnings, and that the programme does not have a guaranteed minimum benefit. Old age poverty rates vary significantly between different racial and ethnic groups.



Health status

25

70.1/100

Nearly all Americans aged 65 and older have public health insurance which provides good access to medical services including preventive care. Among older adults ages 50 to 64, however, 15 percent were uninsured in 2012; lack of insurance is a significant barrier to obtaining affordable medical services. Beginning in 2014, availability of affordable health insurance for people under age 65 has expanded under national health reform legislation enacted in 2010. As

more adults obtain affordable health insurance, their access to preventive care and medical services is expected to improve. In contrast to medical care, most older adults do not have insurance coverage for long-term care services and many people with long-term care needs face barriers to obtaining affordable, good quality long-term care services that meet their needs and preferences.

Recent public and private efforts are focusing on improving the coordination of care, especially for people with multiple chronic conditions and complex health care needs. Over time, improved coordination should lead to improvements in health and well-being among older adults.



Capability

4

65.0/100

Unemployment remains a concern in the United States. While average annual unemployment rates among workers ages 55 to 64 decreased to 5.3 percent in 2013 from their recent peak of 7.1 percent in 2010, they have still not returned to their 2007 rate of 3.1 percent. The United States has not made it a priority to reduce long-term unemployment among older jobseekers. The percent of older jobseekers, who have been looking for work for 27 weeks or longer, has remained around 50 percent for much of the post-recession period.

In July 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law. The law, which supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, is designed to enhance jobseeker and worker access to employment, education, training, and support services. The law places an emphasis on meeting the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, among whom older people, displaced homemakers, the long-term unemployed, and other groups are singled out.



Enabling environment

17

76.8/100

Studies have shown that the number of regular social interactions that older Americans have is a key factor in their longevity. The promotion of social connections is largely done at the local and state governmental/non-governmental levels in the United States, rather than federal.

AARP survey research indicates that personal security is a particularly important concern for older adults, caregivers, people with disabilities, non-drivers, and people with lower incomes. If people do not feel safe on streets and in public spaces it can negatively impact the sense of community in a neighbourhood. Personal safety can be measured for each US County using Uniform Crime Reports.

Communities need convenient transportation options so that people have healthy alternatives to driving, and so that people who do not - or cannot - drive have a way to get around. One in five adults aged 65 and older in the US do not drive; children, and many people with disabilities either choose not to or are unable to drive. The transportation system needs to be accessible to everyone so that people with mobility issues can use it to reach their destinations.

The Global AgeWatch Index ranks countries by how well their older populations are faring.

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