

Commentary on Germany's domain ranks in the 2015 Global AgeWatch Index

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Global AgeWatch Index rank

4
out of 96

Germany is fourth overall and ranks consistently high in all domains. It performs best in the capability domain (3). Employment rate among older people (63.5%) is higher than the regional average, and their educational attainment (96.4%) is second highest in the region. It ranks highly in the enabling environment domain (11), ranking above the regional average in all indicators. It also ranks at 11 in the health domain with life expectancy at 60 (24) and healthy life expectancy at 60 (18) close to regional averages. Germany ranks at 15 in the income security domain, with a below average relative welfare of older people (87%), and an above regional average poverty rate (9.7%) but 100 per cent pension coverage.



Income security

15
80.9/100

Germany ranks lowest in this domain. This may be due to pension reforms in 2001 and 2004 which have led to reduced pension coverage and is a trend which will likely continue. In order to reduce poverty in later life a tax-financed, needs-based pension supplement has been established. While this is a form of social assistance it is not a replacement for a minimum pension, although debate about a minimum pension is ongoing.

In 2014, Germany celebrated the 125th anniversary of the public pension introduced by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. This influenced the development of pension systems across the world. To commemorate this event, HelpAge Deutschland and HelpAge International, with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and Allianz insurances, co-hosted the "Thanks Otto – 125 years of pensions" event in Berlin in October 2014.



Health status

11
75.6/100

Life expectancy at 60 for men and women is 22 and 25 years. International data shows that both life expectancy at 60 and healthy life expectancy is relatively high and consistent with the regional averages.

According to data from the German Federal Office of Statistics at the end of 2011 there were nearly 2.5 million people who were dependent on care; 83% of those were aged 65 or over and 36% were aged 85 or over. It is noted that dependency on care services is significantly higher in the age group of over 90s (58%), whereas only one in every 20th older person (5%) aged 70-75 is care-dependent.¹

The care situation for older people in Germany is a highly controversial topic at the moment; especially around abuse and violence issues, financial feasibility and

the inclusion of older people with cognitive and psychological limitations into the financing scheme. Improved support of home-based care is also being demanded by many organisations although some legislative measures have been implemented recently.



Capability

3

68.4/100

Employment rates among persons between ages 55 and 64 are increasing in Germany as a result of recent government policies and programmes as well as corporate sector initiatives. This is reflected by the current employment rate of 63.5% among older persons, over seven percentage points higher than the regional average.

While the retirement age in Germany is gradually increasing, appropriate conditions in the workplace for an older workforce are yet to be implemented.



Enabling environment

11

78.6/100

The German government acknowledges the growing numbers of older people and the importance of creating an enabling and supportive environment.

The Ruhr metropolitan region in Germany has been actively involved in the programme "Age-friendly cities", developed in association with the World Health Organization. It aims to improve services and infrastructure to respond to the needs of the older population. Older people identified a number of challenges in the area – infrequent public transport to the outer areas of the city and at night, as well as difficulties transporting wheelchairs and luggage within the main railway station.²

The government promotes and supports healthy and independent living through programs such as "Active and fit life", "Communal housing, independent living" and others.³ In Cologne, the Senior Network programme encourages older people to participate and remain active in the community and the "Living for help" programme aims to reduce levels of social isolation by bringing older people and students to share households.⁴

To protect older people from violence and crime the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs in collaboration with the German Police University have developed the action program "Safe living in old age" (Silia) for the last four years. Similarly, the project "Safety Potential in Advanced Age" focused specifically on how older people can take responsibility for their own safety.⁵

The government is also raising profile of ageing. The initiative “New images of ageing” aims to show the public current, realistic and diverse images of ageing.⁶

¹ Heiko Pfaff, Statistisches Bundesamt, 2013. Retrieved from: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Gesundheit/Pflege/PflegeDeutschlandergergebnisse5224001119004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

² WHO, Ageing and lifecourse, family and community health, *Global age-friendly cities: a guide*, 2007 http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf

³ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, <http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Aeltere-Menschen/zuhaus-im-alter.html> (27/08/2015)

⁴ OECD, *Ageing in Cities*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264231160-en>

⁵ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, <http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Aeltere-Menschen/sicher-leben-im-alter.html> (27/08/2015)

⁶ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, <http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Aeltere-Menschen/neue-bilder-vom-alter.html> (27/08/2015)

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