

Old Age in Belarus: Global AgeWatch Index

In the [previous article](#), we talked about the Active Aging Index (AAI). The Global AgeWatch Index is another tool for measuring the quality of life at an older age. It covers all regions of the world, but not all countries. While AAI is calculated only for 28 EU members, the Global AgeWatch Index reflects the situation in 96 countries on which comparable data on aging are available. Belarus is 64th in the Index rating.



Photo by Stefan Maurer

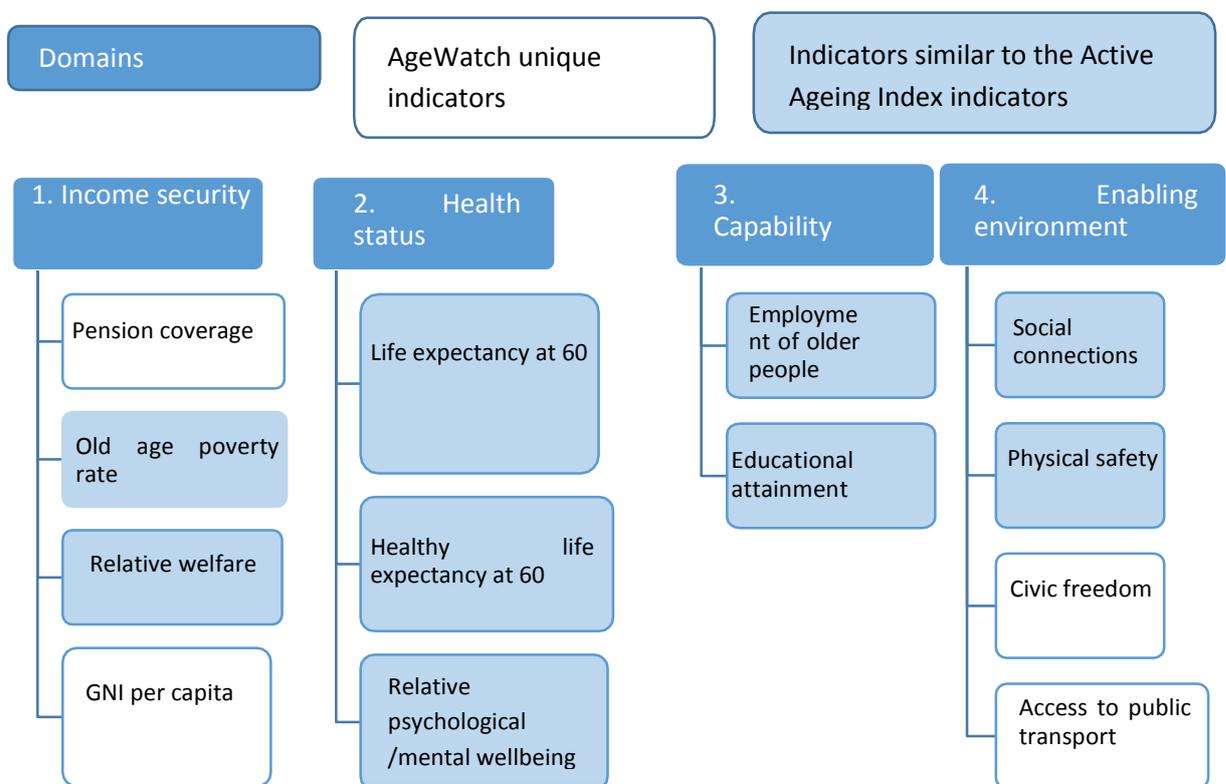
It is considered a moderately good result. Among our neighbors, Poland has the highest rating (32), followed by Latvia (35), Lithuania that is next to Belarus in the list (63), Russia (65), and Ukraine (73). Switzerland tops the list, Norway, Sweden, Germany and Canada are in the top five. Afghanistan is the last country in the rating. Due to the lack of information on most countries in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Middle East, they are not included in the rating.

The Global AgeWatch Index had come on the scene subsequent to the creation of the Active Aging Index. Data for comparison are taken from various sources, including the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, UNESCO and the Gallup International Index. The Global AgeWatch Index focuses on the quality of life and well-being of elderly people, while its predecessor, the Active Aging Index, captures, first of all, the capacity for active aging.

The Global AgeWatch Index takes into account 13 indicators from four domains: income security, health status, personal capability, and enabling environment.

Most of the indicators overlap with AAI sub-indexes, but are grouped differently and include such indicators as old age poverty rate, relative welfare of older people, life expectancy at 60, healthy life expectancy at 60, relative psychological/mental wellbeing, employment of older people, educational attainment, social connections and physical security. In addition, the Global AgeWatch Index reflects the pension coverage, GNI per capita, civic freedom, and the access to public transport. Unlike the AAI, the Global AgeWatch Index does not take into account such indicators as physical exercise, access to health services, participation in society, including political participation, in public life, including voluntary activities and care to grandchildren, lifelong learning and use of information and communication technologies at an older age.

Picture 1. The Global AgeWatch Index structure



Different Index structures cause different results: for instance, Poland occupies lower position than Lithuania and Latvia in the Active Ageing Index, while we find it in a higher position in the Global AgeWatch Index.

To assess each of the four domains, a separate calculation is made. Belarus received quite many points due to the best performance in the enabling environment domain: our country is ranked 44th, and the results are higher than the regional average by all four indicators of this domain. Our country ranks moderately in the income security domain (50) with a high pension income coverage but with a relatively high old-age poverty rate for its region. It ranks below average in the capability domain (66). It ranks lowest in the health domain (84).

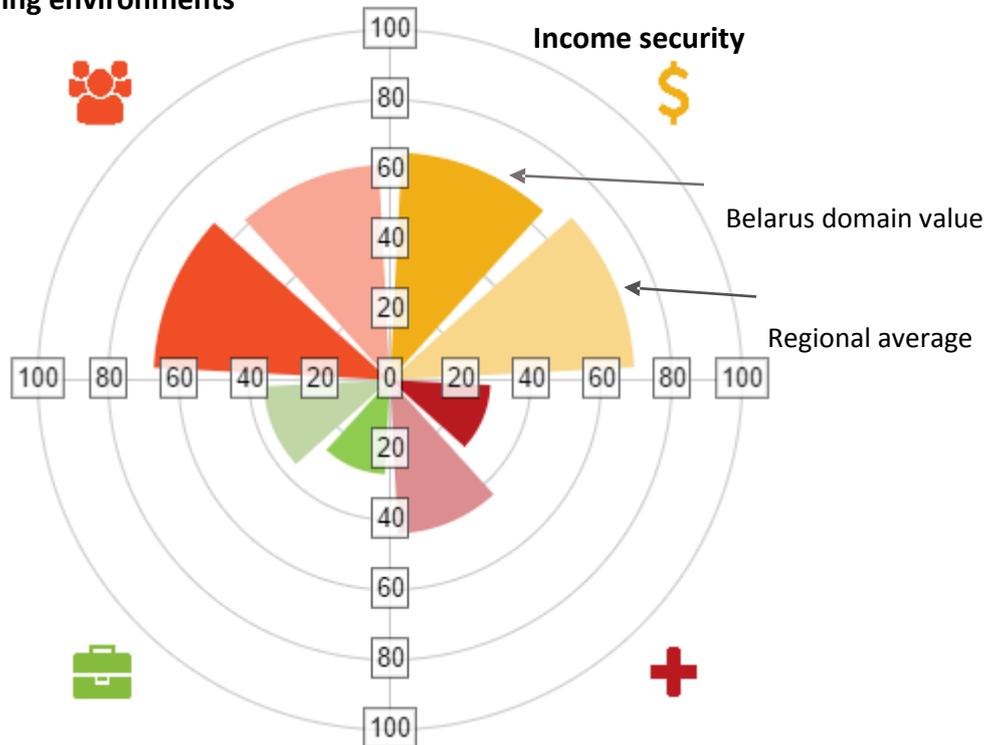
Picture 2: Belarus in the Global AgeWatch Index: country indicators and regional averages in 2015

44

50

Enabling environments

Income security



66

84

Capability

Health status

Global AgeWatch Index was calculated three times: in 2013, 2014, and 2015. Below, indicators data from the latest Global AgeWatch Index are represented.

Picture 3. Belarus in the Global AgeWatch Index: indicators data, 2015

Rank by domain	Indicator	Result	What does this mean?
Income security Rank: 50 Value: 65.1/100	Pension coverage	93,5 %	% people over 65 receiving a pension.
	Old age poverty rate	18,4 %	% of people aged 60+ with an income of less than half the country's median income.
	Relative welfare	73,0 %	Average income/consumption of people aged 60+ as a % of average income/consumption of the rest of the population.
	GNI per capita	USD 16418,1	This is a proxy for standard of living of people within a country.
Health status Rank: 84 Value: 28.6/100	Life expectancy at 60		The average number of years a person aged 60 can expect to live.
	Healthy life expectancy at 60:		The average number of years a person aged 60 can expect to live in good health.
	Relative psychological/mental wellbeing		% of people over 50 who feel their life has meaning compared with people aged 35-49 who feel the same. The indicator measures self-assessed mental well-being.
Capability Rank: 66 Value: 27.0/100	Employment of older people	40,6 %	% of the population aged 55-64 that are employed. The indicator measures older people's access to the labor market and their ability to supplement pension income with wages
	Educational attainment	45,0 %	% of population aged 60+ with secondary or higher education. Education is a proxy of lifetime accumulation of skills and competencies that shows social and human capital potential inherent among older people.
Enabling societies and environment Rank: 44 Value: 67.2/100	Social connections	84 %	% of people over 50 who have relatives or friends they can count on when in trouble.
	Physical safety	61 %	% of people over 50 who have relatives or friends they can count on when in trouble.
	Civic freedom	64 %	% of people over 50 who are satisfied with the freedom of choice in their life.
	Access to public transport	62 %	% of people over 50 who are satisfied with the local public transportation systems.

“People over 60 now outnumber children under five; by 2050, they will outnumber those under 15. Our third report shows that creating a better world for all ages is within reach,” state the authors of the Global AgeWatch Index 2015. Countries at the top of the Index develop social and economic policies aimed at supporting older people, their independence and wellbeing.

There are other tools allowing to access different aspects of active ageing worldwide or in a particular country, including [Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index](#), Global Retirement Index, and Intergenerational Fairness Index developed by the [UK Intergenerational Foundation](#).

Studying indexes, one should take into account not only the results, but also the context. For example, [according to Kenneth Howse](#), a Senior Research Fellow at the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing, “High employment rates at older ages undoubtedly tell us something about productive activity in the older population population; they do not tell us whether continuing engagement in the labour market should be understood ‘as a positive choice’ or rather as an unwelcome necessity forced on individuals by their circumstances. The fact that both Romania and Sweden have high employment rates in their 65+ population does not mean that the reasons for continuing engagement in the labour market are the same. By the same token we should not suppose that high scores are a clear marker for policy success. Active ageing is something that governments should try to promote, but it surely matters how they achieve it.”

Swiss Red Cross



Sources:

[Глобальный индекс ЭйджВотч 2015. Глобальный обзор. Аналитическая записка](#)

[AgeWatch report card: Belarus](#)

[Global AgeWatch Index 2015: Insight report summary](#)

Howse, K. [Measuring active ageing](#). The Oxford Institute of Population Ageing, blog, 27 Oct 2015.

Karpinska, K., Dykstra, P. [Active Ageing Index and its extension to the regional level](#). Peer Review on the Active Ageing Index, Discussion paper, Poland 2014.