



AAI 2014

Active Ageing Index
for 28 European Union Countries

November 2014

The 2014 Active Ageing Index for the EU28

This Brief presents the latest results for the Active Ageing Index (AAI), covering all 28 EU Member States. It also reviews the main changes since the publication of the 2012 Index.¹

The results confirm the stability of the relative position of most countries during the two year period in question. Sweden remains the top ranked country, whereas a good majority of the Central and Eastern European countries and also Greece are ranked at the bottom.

In absolute terms, a rise in the AAI score is observed for the majority of EU countries, except for Greece and Cyprus. As a consequence, Cyprus lost its position among the top ranking countries of the EU, and Greece slumps further to become the bottom-ranked country, below Poland. France improved its ranking to be placed among the top 10 countries within EU28

The development of the Active Ageing Index offers a framework that can be used by policymakers and stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities linked with population ageing. This work also enables them to identify priorities and set targets for improvements based on international comparisons.

Policy messages

1. **Greater policy efforts are required to fully mobilise the potential of active ageing in EU countries:** Overall, while active living in older age is already a reality for older people in many parts of Europe, there is considerable scope for improving active ageing experiences within many countries. Such policy efforts towards higher active ageing for older populations will need to be pursued by joined-up policies and programmes at the European, national, regional and local levels. In particular, Greece and the majority of Central and Eastern European countries lag behind their EU neighbours, and thus greater policy efforts are required to fully mobilise the potential of active ageing within these countries.
2. **Generating higher capacity and stronger enabling environments for active ageing will be a key prerequisite, particularly for Central and Eastern European Union countries:** The policies and programmes required are multi-faceted, in terms of not just improving labour market outcomes of older people but also incentivising their social participation and facilitating their independent, healthy and autonomous living. Policies which generate higher capacity and stronger enabling environments for active ageing are an essential requirement, especially in many Central and Eastern European Union countries.

3. **Stability observed in the relative position of EU countries:** Comparing with 2012 AAI results, a certain degree of stability is observed in the relative position of EU28 countries: Sweden, Denmark and Finland as well as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom remaining at the top, while Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Greece continue to trail in the ranking.
4. **Index rise observed for the majority of EU countries:** In absolute terms, a small rise in the AAI score is observed for the majority of EU countries during the two year period in question, especially for Latvia. Greece and Cyprus are the only exceptions where a decline in the AAI score is observed. As a consequence, Cyprus lost its position among the top ranking countries of the EU. Greece slumps further to become the bottom-ranked country in active ageing, below Poland.
5. **Specific focus identified for additional policies to reduce gender disparity:** The 2014 AAI results confirm the specific policy priority in improving older women's experiences of active ageing in many EU countries (particularly in Malta and Cyprus, but also in Luxembourg and the Netherlands). The improvement is required particularly in employment experiences for older women in many EU countries.

Key findings

- **Three Nordic countries** (Sweden, Denmark and Finland), and the Netherlands are confirmed as the top performers across the four domains of active ageing, while Greece and Central and Eastern European countries (excepting Estonia and the Czech Republic) remain at the low end of the 2014 AAI results.
- **The highest 2014 AAI score** stands at 44.8 points (Sweden). The AAI score for the bottom-ranked countries (in particular Poland, Greece, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania) is considerably lower, hardly reaching 30 points. Thus, much greater policies and programmes are required in Greece and in the Central and Eastern European countries to follow the good practice of active ageing in Nordic and Western European countries.
- **In terms of gender differentials**, only two EU Member States, Estonia and Latvia, have better results for women than for men, while gender differences are minimal in Finland. In all other cases, women fare worse than men, particularly so in Malta and Cyprus but also in Luxembourg and the Netherlands.
- **The gender disparity** is observed across all domains of AAI, although it is most notable in the first (Employment) and the third (Independent living) domain where the gender gap of financial security is considerable in most EU countries. This disparity to a large extent arises from the unequal experiences of

employment during the life course, a legacy which impacts severely on the income and employment experiences of current generations of elderly women.

- **The employment gap between men and women remains high**, despite considerable improvements of women's labour force participation in the EU in recent decades. Therefore there is a need for additional policy reforms in improving further older women's employment in many EU countries.
- **The overall picture reveals a slight rise in the AAI score** for the majority of countries comparing with 2012 results,: eleven EU Member States observe a rise that approximates 1.0 point in the AAI score. For Latvia, the rise is close to 2.0 points in the AAI score, and above average improvements are also noted for Estonia, France and Germany.
- **A notable exception is the decline in the AAI score** for two southern European states (Greece and Cyprus). Small decline in the AAI score is also observed for Slovenia and Portugal. As a consequence, Cyprus lost their position among the top 10 countries of the EU, as observed previously in the 2012 AAI. Slovenia's ranking also declined from 20th in 2012 to 23rd in the 2014 AAI. France improved its ranking to be placed among the top 10 countries within EU28

More details on the 2014 findings

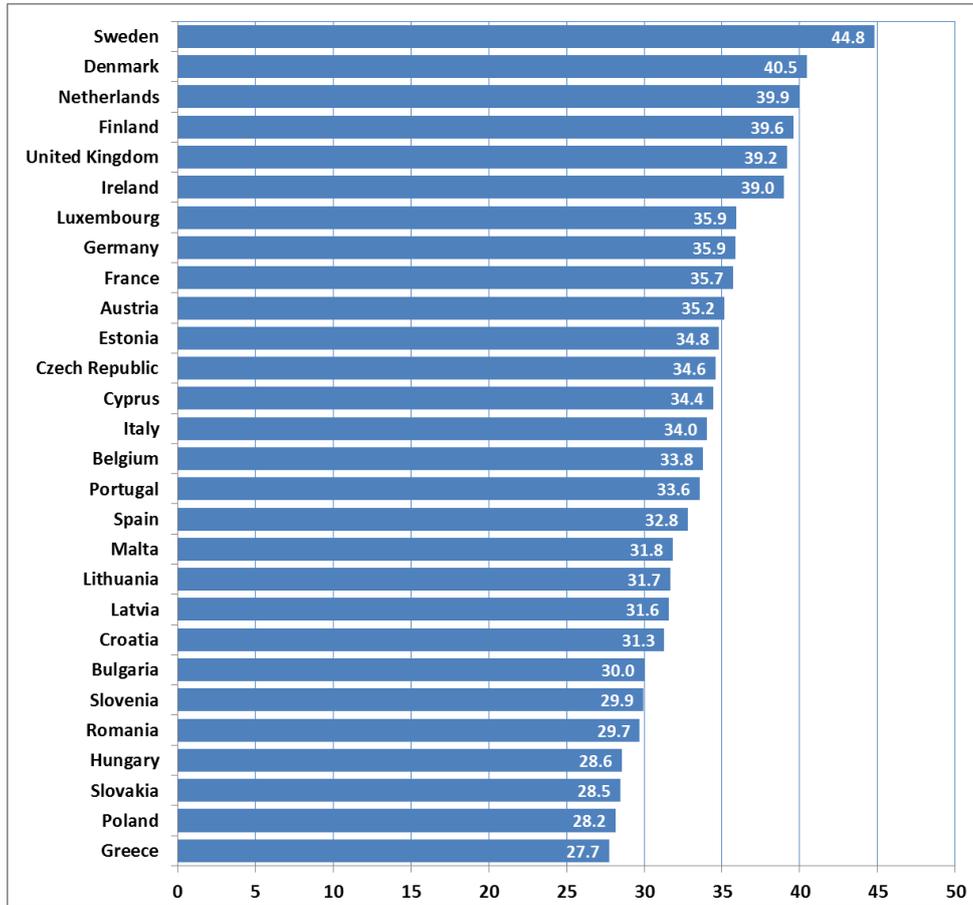
Sweden on top of overall ranking

The latest 2014 AAI results for the EU28 are presented in Figure 1. It ranks all EU countries on the basis of the overall 2014 AAI score. Sweden comes at the top of the ranking across the 28 EU Member States, followed closely by Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, the United Kingdom and Ireland. The four southern European countries (Italy, Portugal, Spain and Malta) are middle-ranked countries. In contrast, Greece and the majority of the Central and Eastern European countries are at the bottom of the ranking.

Notably, the current top-ranked countries like Sweden, Denmark or the Netherlands barely pass the 40 point mark which highlights the room for further improvements even in these top performing countries. The countries at the other end of the spectrum (Greece, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia) have AAI values below 30, suggesting much greater untapped potentials of active ageing among older people and a need for greater policy efforts to mobilise these potentials.

Two countries, Estonia and the Czech Republic, perform exceptionally well in comparison to other EU Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, as they are ranked 11th and 12th, respectively. However, their AAI score is also considerably lower (around 35 points) than Sweden (44.8) - the best performing country in the EU.

Figure 1: Ranking of 28 EU Member States on the basis of the 2014 Active Ageing Index (using the overall index, for men and women together)



Contrasting performances from one domain to another

The rank order of countries differs across the four domains of the AAI (Table 1; Figure 2). The three Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark and Finland), as well as the Netherlands, are among a few countries that perform the best in all four domains. Most countries, however, show dissimilar patterns across domains.

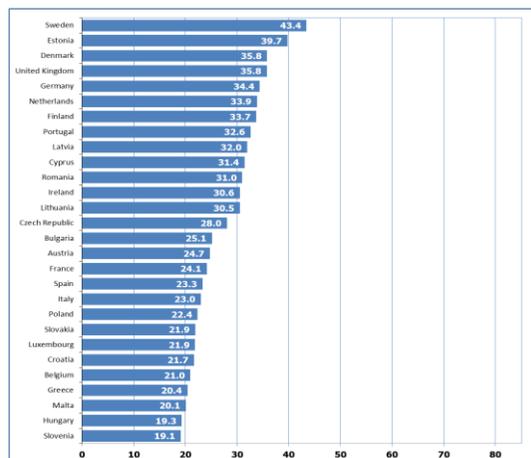
Ireland is the top-ranked country in the second domain (Social participation), but it is not among the top 10 countries in the first domain (Employment). Luxembourg, on the other hand, ranks among the top in the second, third and fourth domains, but it is one of the lowest-ranked countries in the first domain.

Table 1: Ranking of EU 28 countries on the basis of the overall Active Ageing index and its domain specific indices

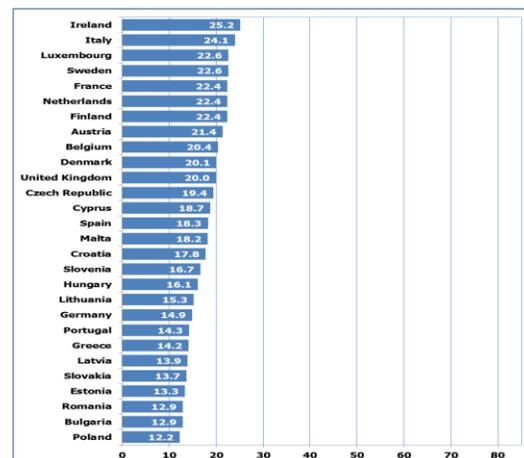
OVERALL			Employment			Social participation			Independent living			Capacity for active ageing		
Country	Index	Rank	Country	Index	Rank	Country	Index	Rank	Country	Index	Rank	Country	Index	Rank
Sweden	44.8	1	Sweden	43.4	1	Ireland	25.2	1	Denmark	79.0	1	Sweden	69.2	1
Denmark	40.5	2	Estonia	39.7	2	Italy	24.1	2	Finland	79.0	2	Denmark	65.1	2
Netherlands	39.9	3	Denmark	35.8	3	Luxembourg	22.6	3	Netherlands	78.9	3	Luxembourg	63.6	3
Finland	39.6	4	United Kingdom	35.8	4	Sweden	22.6	4	Sweden	78.6	4	Netherlands	61.8	4
United Kingdom	39.2	5	Germany	34.4	5	France	22.4	5	Luxembourg	76.7	5	United Kingdom	61.3	5
Ireland	39.0	6	Netherlands	33.9	6	Netherlands	22.4	6	France	75.9	6	Finland	60.5	6
Luxembourg	35.9	7	Finland	33.7	7	Finland	22.4	7	Ireland	74.9	7	Belgium	60.3	7
Germany	35.9	8	Portugal	32.6	8	Austria	21.4	8	Germany	74.4	8	Ireland	60.0	8
France	35.7	9	Latvia	32.0	9	Belgium	20.4	9	Slovenia	74.2	9	France	59.1	9
Austria	35.2	10	Cyprus	31.4	10	Denmark	20.1	10	Austria	73.8	10	Austria	58.2	10
Estonia	34.8	11	Romania	31.0	11	United Kingdom	20.0	11	United Kingdom	73.7	11	Malta	57.1	11
Czech Republic	34.6	12	Ireland	30.6	12	Czech Republic	19.4	12	Belgium	72.5	12	Spain	56.3	12
Cyprus	34.4	13	Lithuania	30.5	13	Cyprus	18.7	13	Czech Republic	71.2	13	Germany	55.8	13
Italy	34.0	14	Czech Republic	28.0	14	Spain	18.3	14	Malta	70.1	14	Czech Republic	54.3	14
Belgium	33.8	15	Bulgaria	25.1	15	Malta	18.2	15	Spain	69.8	15	Italy	53.4	15
Portugal	33.6	16	Austria	24.7	16	Croatia	17.8	16	Croatia	69.5	16	Croatia	52.8	16
Spain	32.8	17	France	24.1	17	Slovenia	16.7	17	Italy	69.0	17	Bulgaria	52.2	17
Malta	31.8	18	Spain	23.3	18	Hungary	16.1	18	Hungary	68.0	18	Portugal	52.1	18
Lithuania	31.7	19	Italy	23.0	19	Lithuania	15.3	19	Cyprus	68.0	19	Cyprus	50.4	19
Latvia	31.6	20	Poland	22.4	20	Germany	14.9	20	Estonia	67.3	20	Slovenia	50.0	20
Croatia	31.3	21	Slovakia	21.9	21	Portugal	14.3	21	Portugal	67.3	21	Latvia	48.2	21
Bulgaria	30.0	22	Luxembourg	21.9	22	Greece	14.2	22	Lithuania	66.2	22	Poland	47.9	22
Slovenia	29.9	23	Croatia	21.7	23	Latvia	13.9	23	Slovakia	65.8	23	Estonia	47.5	23
Romania	29.7	24	Belgium	21.0	24	Slovakia	13.7	24	Poland	64.9	24	Slovakia	47.1	24
Hungary	28.6	25	Greece	20.4	25	Estonia	13.3	25	Greece	64.9	25	Hungary	46.9	25
Slovakia	28.5	26	Malta	20.1	26	Romania	12.9	26	Bulgaria	62.7	26	Greece	45.8	26
Poland	28.2	27	Hungary	19.3	27	Bulgaria	12.9	27	Romania	61.8	27	Lithuania	45.3	27
Greece	27.7	28	Slovenia	19.1	28	Poland	12.2	28	Latvia	58.7	28	Romania	40.9	28

Figure 2: Ranking of 28 EU Member States in each of the four domains of the 2014 AAI (for men and women together)

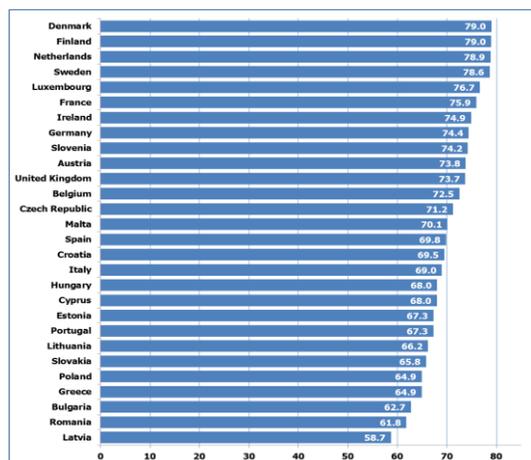
1. Employment



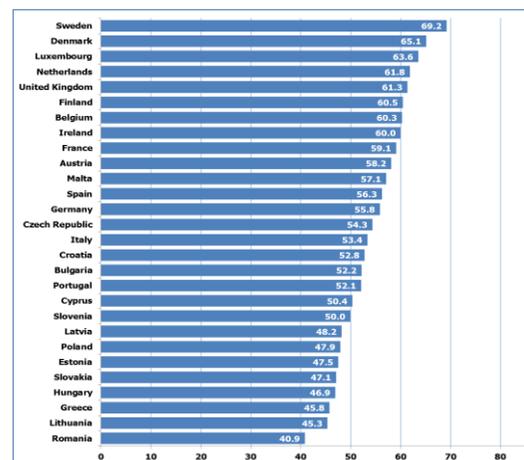
2. Social participation



3. Independent, healthy and secure Living



4. Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing



The top two performers from Central and Eastern Europe, Estonia and the Czech Republic, exhibit different patterns across the domains. Estonia's high overall AAI score is entirely due to its second best score (after Sweden) in the employment domain while Estonia's scores in the other three domains are among the five lowest. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, is a middle-ranked country consistently in all four domains.

The results observed for **Portugal, Romania and Latvia** across the four domains exhibit patterns that are similar to results for Estonia: a high position in the employment domain coupled with a position in the lower half in the other three domains. This might be attributed to low pension incomes that constrain older people to stay in employment for longer in these countries. The reverse is true for Luxembourg where higher retirement income may contribute to low participation of older people in the labour market.

The ranking for France also varies significantly from domain to domain, with a particularly low rank in the employment domain (17th). Two large southern European countries (Spain and Italy) are also ranked rather low in the employment domain (18th and 19th, respectively). In contrast, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Germany are among the best-performing countries in the employment domain, at 1st, 4th and 5th position).

The overall AAI scores for three largest EU Member States Germany, France and Italy are rather similar, ranging between 34 and 35.9 points; however, these countries show quite different patterns in domain-specific results. Germany, for instance, is way ahead in the employment domain, whereas France and Italy are ranked higher in the social participation domain.

These results point to different institutional settings and cultural preferences towards different forms of activities in old age. Older people in Italy and France have a tendency to take an early exit from the labour market, but they seem to fare much better in terms of their social contributions to the society, in terms of voluntary activities, in providing care to their children and grandchildren, services to elderly or disabled relatives and in their political participation.

The United Kingdom and the Netherlands perform rather similarly in two domains. One exception is the domain of 'Independent living' where the United Kingdom falls considerably behind the Netherlands. The underlying indicators reveal that the older population in the United Kingdom fares considerably worse, compared to the Netherlands, in their financial security, highlighting the importance of policy changes in the United Kingdom aimed at improving financial security in old age.

Hungary and Slovakia are the bottom-ranked countries on the basis of the overall index, with a rather similar AAI score of around 29 points. These two countries also

have comparable index score for the fourth domain ‘Capacity for active ageing’ – around 47 points. However, Slovakia is notably stronger in the employment domain. Hungary, on the other hand, is ranked higher in the social participation and independent living domains. Poland, which is ranked only above Greece in the overall ranking, has a bottom-ranked position only in the social participation domain.

Situation of men and women differs

Ageing experiences of women and men are expected to differ considerably. The AAI takes this into account and allows assessing active ageing outcomes separately for men and women for individual domains and for the overall index in each country. This has been done by making use of gender-disaggregated data for all 22 AAI indicators.

Women fare worse than men in almost all countries, particularly in Malta and Cyprus, but also in Luxembourg and the Netherlands (Figure 3). Only two EU Member States, Estonia and Latvia, have better AAI results for women than for men, while gender differences are minimal in Finland.

Figure 3: Differences in the overall AAI between men and women for EU 28 countries

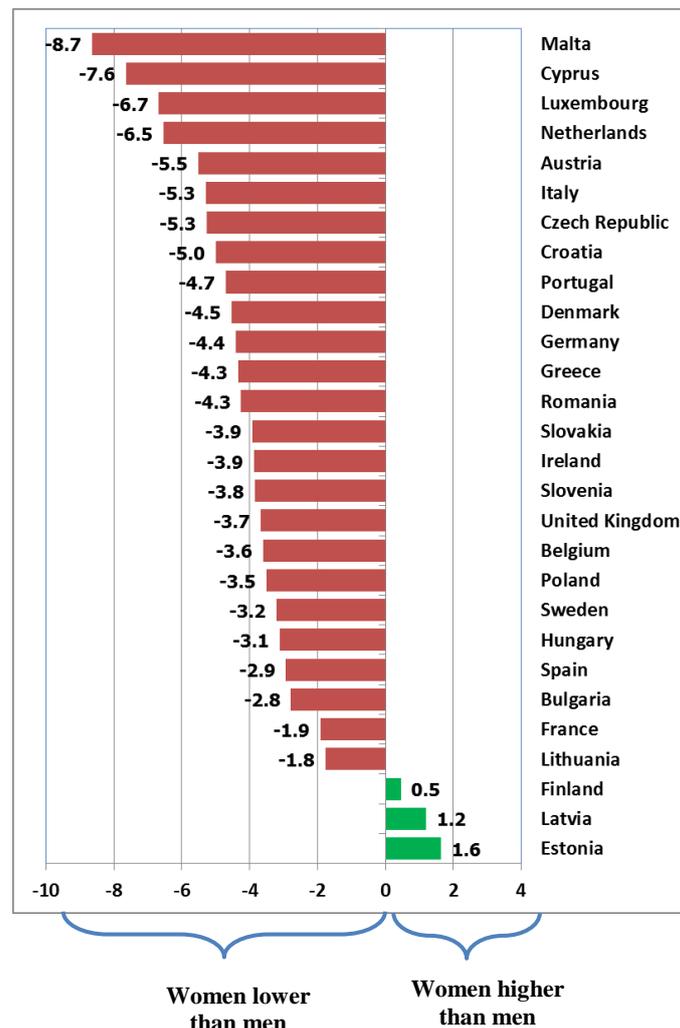
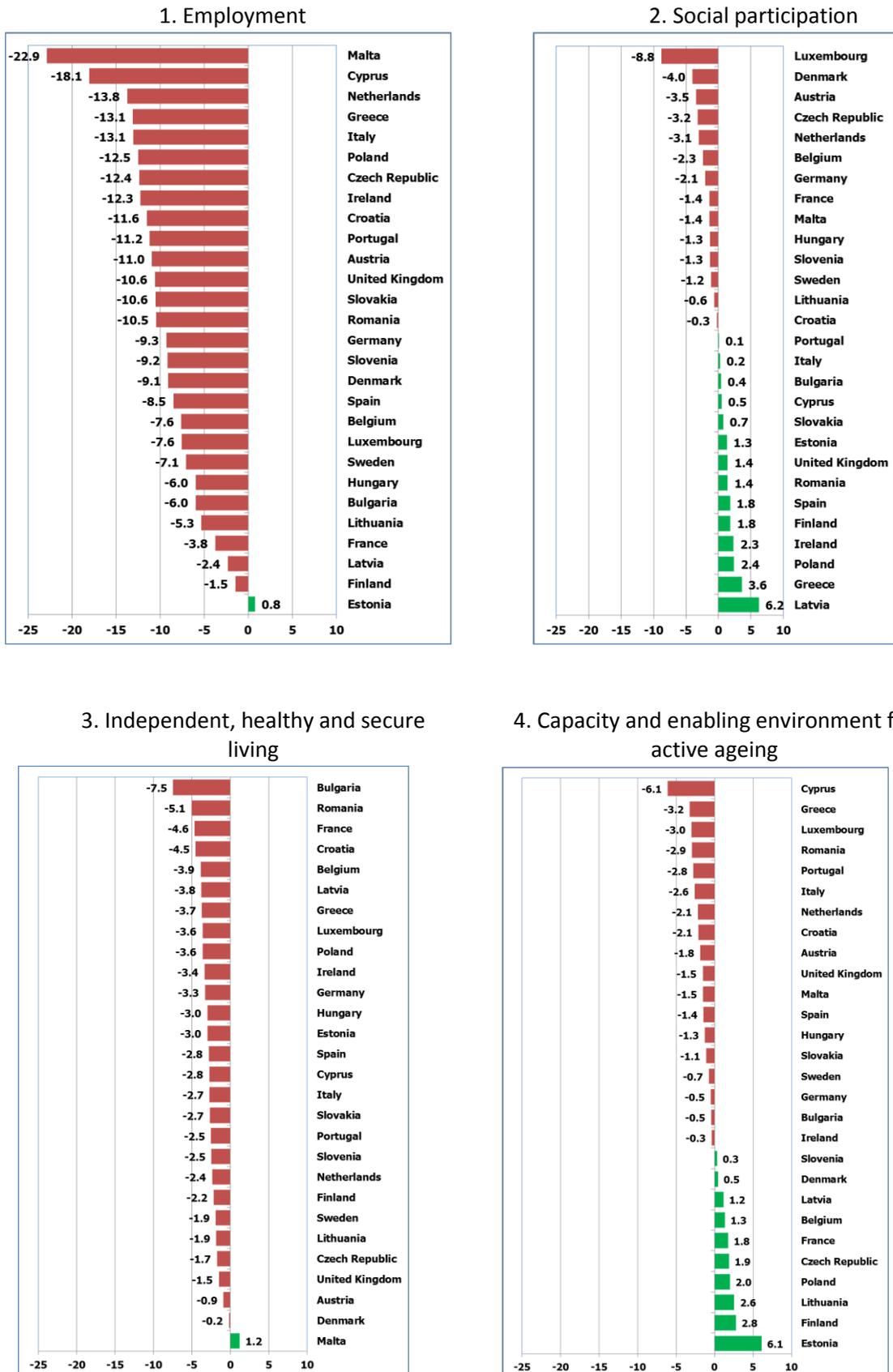


Figure 4: Differences in AAI between men and women across four domains



Most notably, there is a great deal of gender disparity in the employment experiences of older people (Figure 4). Despite considerable improvements in the EU with respect to employment of women in recent decades, in particular among older women, the gap remains high. These results show that additional policy reforms are required in mobilising the full potential of older women's employment in many EU countries.

The gender disparity in employment is particularly large in the two Mediterranean countries Malta and Cyprus, but also in the Netherlands, Greece and Italy. In 14 EU Member States, the gender differential in employment exceeds 10 points.

In other domains, the difference in AAI for men and women is smaller. In some cases, the gender differential is opposite to that observed for the employment domain.

- In the second domain **'Social participation'**, women fare worse than men particularly in Luxembourg and also in Denmark, Austria, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands, where higher men's involvement in voluntary and political activities outweighs women's prevalence in care provision. In contrast, Latvia, Greece, Poland, Ireland, Finland and Spain are the countries that exhibit higher AAI in this domain for women than for men.
- In the third domain **'Independent, healthy and secure living'**, the AAI for women is lower than the AAI for men in almost all countries as the underlying financial and physical security indicators are notably worse for women. An exception is observed for Malta, where the AAI for women is slightly higher than the AAI for men in this domain. A better outcome for older Maltese women in this domain is almost entirely due to their higher physical activity every day.
- In the fourth domain **'Capacity for active ageing'**, women fare worse than men particularly in Cyprus, but also in Greece and Luxembourg. An opposite trend is observed for Estonia where AAI is notably higher for women than for men. The Estonian older females fare better than their male counterparts in almost all individual indicators, but noticeably better in the remaining life expectancy and social connectedness.

A slight index rise in most countries between 2012 and 2014

The comparison of the latest 2014 AAI to the 2012 AAI results show a certain degree of stability in the relative position of countries (Table 2). Sweden, Denmark and Finland as well as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom remain at the top while Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Greece continue to trail the ranking. There are also some interesting changes in the mid-ranking countries.

Table 2: Change between the 2014 AAI and 2012 Active Ageing Index on the basis of the overall one

Country	Total				Men				Women			
	AAI_2014	Rank	AAI_2012	Rank	AAI_2014	Rank	AAI_2012	Rank	AAI_2014	Rank	AAI_2012	Rank
Belgium	33.8	15	33.3	15	35.7	16	35.7	14	32.1	13	31.1	16
Bulgaria	30.0	22	29.5	23	31.6	23	31.4	24	28.8	21	28.0	22
Czech Republic	34.6	12	34.0	13	37.4	11	37.1	10	32.2	12	31.3	14
Denmark	40.5	2	40.2	2	42.8	3	42.6	2	38.3	3	37.9	3
Germany	35.9	8	34.7	9	38.2	9	37.0	11	33.8	9	32.6	9
Estonia	34.8	11	33.1	16	33.9	19	32.3	20	35.5	7	33.7	7
Ireland	39.0	6	38.9	6	40.9	5	41.2	5	37.0	5	36.6	5
Greece	27.7	28	29.2	25	30.0	28	32.0	21	25.7	28	26.6	25
Spain	32.8	17	32.6	17	34.3	17	34.5	16	31.4	17	30.8	17
France	35.7	9	34.2	11	36.7	13	35.3	15	34.8	8	33.3	8
Italy	34.0	14	33.8	14	36.8	12	36.7	12	31.5	15	31.2	15
Cyprus	34.4	13	35.9	7	38.3	8	40.6	6	30.7	19	31.4	13
Latvia	31.6	20	29.6	22	30.8	24	28.5	28	32.1	14	30.4	18
Lithuania	31.7	19	30.9	18	32.8	20	31.7	23	31.0	18	30.4	19
Luxembourg	35.9	7	35.4	8	39.4	6	39.0	8	32.8	10	32.0	11
Hungary	28.6	25	27.8	26	30.3	26	29.4	26	27.2	25	26.5	26
Malta	31.8	18	30.9	19	36.0	15	34.4	17	27.4	24	26.8	24
Netherlands	39.9	3	38.9	5	43.3	2	42.4	3	36.8	6	35.6	6
Austria	35.2	10	34.7	10	38.1	10	37.7	9	32.6	11	32.0	12
Poland	28.2	27	27.2	28	30.1	27	29.1	27	26.6	27	25.5	28
Portugal	33.6	16	34.2	12	36.1	14	36.5	13	31.5	16	32.2	10
Romania	29.7	24	29.5	24	32.0	21	31.8	22	27.8	23	27.6	23
Slovenia	29.9	23	30.6	20	32.0	22	33.2	18	28.1	22	28.2	21
Slovakia	28.5	26	27.7	27	30.6	25	30.1	25	26.7	26	25.6	27
Finland	39.6	4	39.0	4	39.4	7	39.1	7	39.9	2	39.1	2
Sweden	44.8	1	44.0	1	46.5	1	46.0	1	43.2	1	42.2	1
United Kingdom	39.2	5	39.2	3	41.2	4	41.2	4	37.5	4	37.3	4
Croatia	31.3	21	30.5	21	33.9	18	33.1	19	28.9	20	28.2	20

In absolute terms, the overall picture is that **there is a slight rise in the AAI score for the majority of countries**. This positive trend is observed in particular for Latvia, where the rise is close to 2.0 points in the AAI score, but also in France, Estonia and Germany. Altogether, eleven EU Member States observe a rise that approximates 1.0 point in the AAI score.

A notable exception of the above result is the decline in the AAI score for two southern European states (Greece and Cyprus) and also for Portugal and Slovenia. As a consequence, **Cyprus lost its position among the top 10 countries of the EU**, as observed previously in the 2012 AAI. **Greece's position slumped further, and it is now ranked at the bottom, below Poland**. Slovenia's ranking declined from 20th in the 2012 AAI to 23rd in the 2014 AAI. In contrast, Estonia improved its AAI score and the relative position between the 2012 AAI and 2014 AAI.

The drivers

The trends observed between 2012 and 2014 show that:

- **The positive changes in the AAI score have been similar for men and women in Germany, France and Estonia**, whereas the rise for Latvian AAI score is higher for men than for women. By contrast, in Greece, the reduction in the AAI score is observed more strongly for men than for women.
- **The decline in the relative position of Cyprus and Greece is largely attributed to the decline in the AAI value in the domain of employment**, where employment decline is observed across all four age groups.
- The improvement in the position of **Latvia** is a mix of change in the domains of employment and capacity for active ageing, whereas for **Estonia** the change is almost entirely due to changes in the employment domain.
- **For Latvia, the improvement in employment is greater for men than for women** during the period in question. For Estonia, on the other hand, the improvement in the employment situation is observed for both men and women.
- **France improved its ranking to be placed among the top 10 countries within EU28**, and this improvement in active ageing is observed mainly in employment outcomes, and the changes are higher for men than for women.

Active ageing strategies help dealing with economic and social challenges

A concern is often expressed that adopting and implementing a comprehensive active ageing approach may be expensive, in particular for those countries that are resource-constrained and only now emerging from the economic downturn. In fact, active ageing strategies based on social investment principles help to prevent the loss of valuable expertise and wisdom of older people, as well as strengthen society's human and structural resilience to deal with the longer-term economic and social challenges.

The Active Ageing Index offers a credible contribution to this discussion on how best to measure and mobilise the potential of active and healthy ageing in Europe. It can be used by policymakers and stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities and to set targets for improvements, based on international comparisons. The AAI evidence is raising awareness of the challenges and opportunities for older people as well to seek ways to develop their full potential, not just to enhance their own well-being but also contribute towards improving the future sustainability of public welfare systems of the countries in which they live.

Annex: What does the Active Ageing Index offer?

The Active Ageing Index provides unique multi-faceted evidence on the contribution of older people across EU countries to their social and economic lives. It covers not only employment of older people but also their unpaid familial, social, and cultural contributions, and their independent, healthy, and secure living. It also captures how the EU countries differ with respect to capacity and enabling environments for active and healthy ageing. As the ageing experiences of men and women are expected to be different, the AAI also provides a breakdown by gender.

The Active Ageing Index serves as a flexible tool to enable a range of stakeholders to develop evidence-based strategies to address the challenges of population ageing and its impact on society. It was developed in the course of the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (EY 2012). It is also being used to monitor the implementation of national ageing-related policies in the context of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

The first wave of AAI was launched in 2012, largely based on data from 2010. For the latest 2014 AAI, the survey data used corresponds to the calendar year 2012. Thus, the results released in this Brief highlight the baseline situation observed across EU countries during the EY 2012. The methods used in calculating the 2014 AAI are the same as those used for the 2012 AAI, with some minor exceptions for changes in the definition of the indicators and in the data sources used.

How is the Active Ageing Index constructed?

The Active Ageing Index is constructed on the basis of four distinct domains (Figure 5):

- (1) Employment
- (2) Participation in Society
- (3) Independent, Healthy and Secure Living
- (4) Capacity and Enabling Environment for Active Ageing.

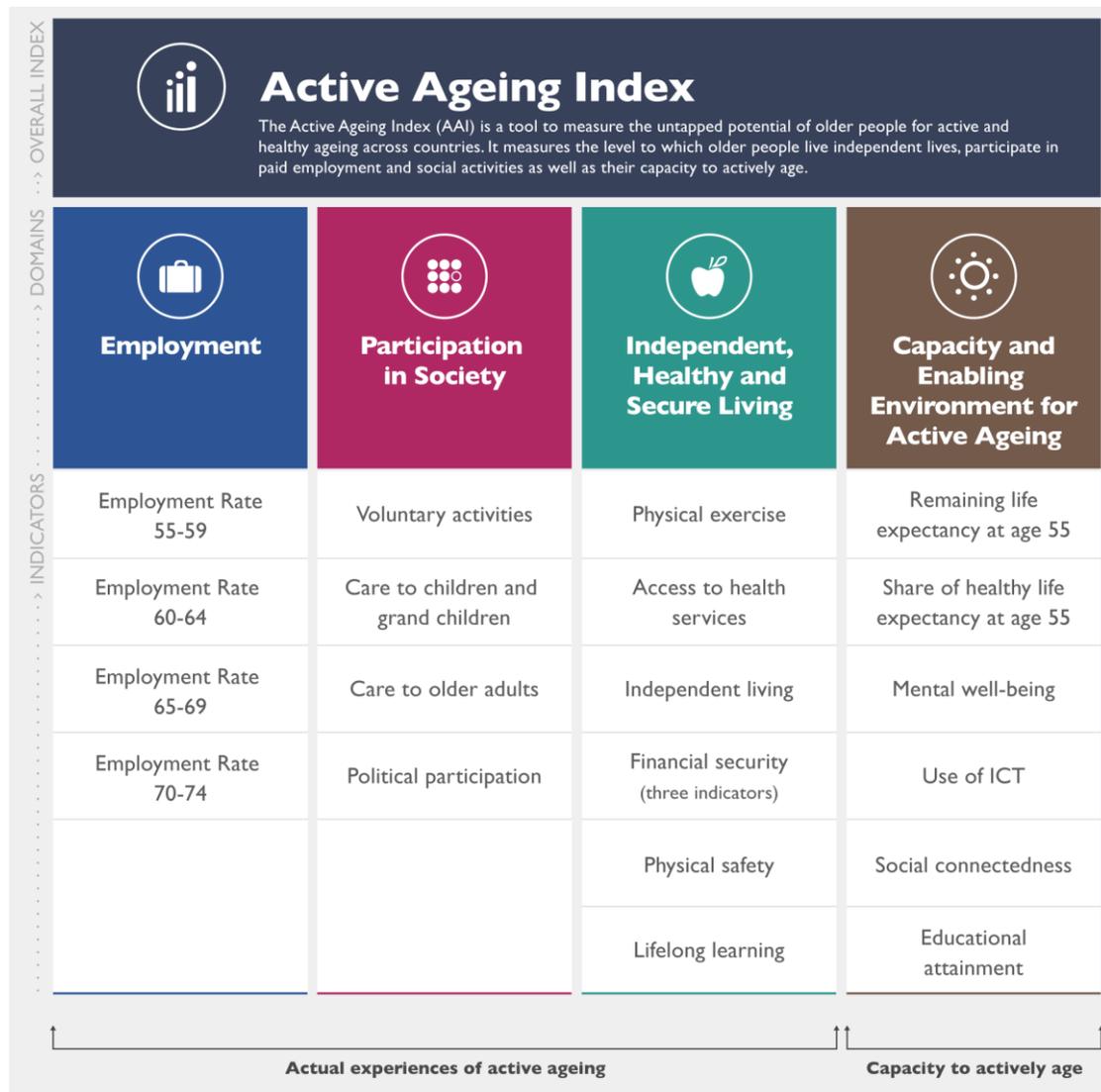
The first three domains together refer to the 'actual experiences' of active ageing, reflecting various activities that older persons are involved in as well as their experiences of independent, autonomous and secure lives. The fourth domain captures the capacity and enabling environment for active ageing, as determined by individual characteristics of older persons which can facilitate or hinder active ageing.

The four domains are populated by a set of 22 indicators, drawn mainly from four major European household surveys. The surveys used in constructing the 2014 AAI are:

- EU Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2012
- EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2012
- European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) 2011/1012
- European Social Survey (ESS) 2012.

In addition, the indicators for life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are provided by the EU project JA-EHLEIS (Joint Action-European Health and Life Expectancy Information System, 2011-2014), drawn using the SILC dataset. The data for one indicator 'Use of ICT' was collected using Eurostat's ICT Survey of 2012.

Figure 5: The domains and indicators of the Active Ageing Index



Note: Financial security aspects are captured by three indicators: (1) Relative median income of 65+ relative to those aged below 65 (2) No poverty risk for older persons and (3) No severe material deprivation rate.

Using older people's potential

The Active Ageing Index score for individual countries shows the extent to which their older people's potential is used, and the extent to which older people are enabled and encouraged to participate in the economy and society. The theoretical maximum for AAI, as it is constructed, is 100. It is an "idealistic" score which in practice could not be reached as it implies a much higher life expectancy and the unreasonably high active participation of all older people in the labour market and society.

Contact

Comments and suggestions for improving the Active Ageing Index are most welcome. Please email to aai@unece.org, mentioning 'The 2014 AAI' in the subject of the email.

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