G20 countries in EMEA are not prepared for the needs of ageing populations, according to new research from the Economist Intelligence Unit

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- UK leads the EMEA region in creating an enabling environment supportive of longevity and healthy ageing with an overall score of 68.4 out of a possible 100, ranking fifth globally behind the US, Australia, Canada and South Korea
- This is closely followed by Germany (6th), France (7th), Italy (9th) and Russia (10th) who performed above the global average of 59.4
- Countries with the oldest populations are better positioned to address the needs of older people across the globe
- While high-income countries are more prepared, upper middle-income countries such as Brazil are making progress
- Availability of health and social care remains a concern with supply of services increasingly failing to keep up with demand

More people are living into old age than ever before. In 2018 The World Health Organization predicted that by 2020 there would be more people aged over 60 years than there are children under 5 years. This prediction is on track to be correct, and numbers in the older cohort continue to rise. This has created challenges in providing health and social services for burgeoning older populations and governments across the globe have been slow to react. Priorities are now shifting from solely addressing the health of older people, to how societies can maximise this opportunity and provide effective, inclusive environments in which to age.

This report from The Economist Intelligence Unit describes findings from the "*Scaling Healthy ageing, Inclusive environments and Financial security Today (SHIFT) Index*", a benchmarking analysis around ageing societies, supported by Amgen. The *SHIFT Index* benchmarks against a set of national-level leading practices in creating an enabling environment supportive of longevity and healthy ageing for societies in the 19 countries comprising the Group of Twenty (G20). The *SHIFT Index* captures the multifactorial variables that impact ageing across three domains: adaptive health and social care systems; accessible economic opportunity; and inclusive social structures and institutions.

The research found that no G20 country is fully prepared to support healthy, financially secure, socially-connected older people. The US, Australia, Canada and South Korea ranked highest in our index with scores in the 70s out of 100 (see table below). Broadly, those countries with a higher proportion of people aged over 50—including the three highest ranking countries plus South Korea, Germany, France and Japan—are implementing more leading practices to enable inclusive environments. Wealthy countries may find it easier to respond, but wealth is not a prerequisite for providing supportive environments. The best scoring health systems tend to be high-income countries, but upper-middle income Brazil, and lower-middle income Indonesia are also making strides to improve health systems.

As a whole, the G20 countries perform best in providing adaptive healthcare systems and worst in providing inclusive social structures and institutions, indicating that countries still have work to do to shift the focus towards building more welcoming societies for older adults as they age. Countries also have room to improve in providing more accessible economic opportunities to older workers.

Jesse Quigley Jones, managing editor of the report said: "The Economist Intelligence Unit forecasts that the proportion of adults aged above 50 in G20 countries will range from 15% in India to 37% in South Korea by 2030, up from 9% and 18% in 2000, respectively. This has prompted questions about what policies and infrastructure are in place to support this population as personal, social and financial needs change. With the Covid-19 pandemic impacting the global population in drastic ways, more than ever it is important for older people to lead healthy, independent lives for as long as possible, avoiding the need for institutional care. Covid-19 may serve as a wakeup call for governments across the globe in providing appropriate environments in which populations can age."

Despite clear progress made, governments have more work to do to make sure their health systems are adaptive to the needs of older adults as they age, while also fostering inclusion and ensuring individual economic security. A key barrier to addressing this is lack of robust age-disaggregated data collection by governments in areas such as dedicated health professionals, the extent of isolation and loneliness as well as mental health.

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The SHIFT Index reveals several priority areas that may form the basis of policy responses to develop more accessible and inclusive societies for older people:

1. Collect better data: Countries should collect and publish detailed, age-disaggregated health and economic data annually so policymakers can develop evidence-based programs and policies.
2. Address poverty among older people: Some older adults choose to work longer, others must. Governments can ensure the financial health and security of older adults by creating more inclusive work environments. This starts with removing barriers to working longer that exist in some markets.
3. Prevent a care crisis among the elderly: The provision of care for older adults—both formal and informal—and the accessibility of, or access to, long-term care is ill-defined and is an area for further research.
4. Enable older people's voices to be heard: The views and needs of older people are not routinely collected and they are not represented well in policy consultation.
5. Address age-related discrimination: Few countries categorise age-discrimination as a crime outside of employment practices. Fighting discrimination as well as physical, emotional and financial abuse of older adults, will encourage greater social cohesion across generations.
6. Support training and upskilling of older people: Supporting older people with the skills and help needed to navigate increasingly complex and digitised health and social care systems should be an area of focus.

Jesse Quigley Jones, managing at The Economist Intelligence Unit and editor of the report, said, "The challenges that ageing populations present for economies and health systems have long-been understood, yet provision of inclusive, supportive environments for older people has not been a high-profile policy priority. Although wealth has emerged as a theme in the Index as a contributing factor towards healthy ageing indicators, it is not necessarily a prerequisite for providing supportive environments. Lower-income nations can take low-cost measures that improve ageing societies, such as enacting inclusive work environment policies and fostering inclusive and enabling social environments.

With older people particularly vulnerable to the health and societal impact of the covid-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever for older people to lead healthy, independent lives for as long as possible and avoid the need for institutional care. While our data were collected pre-pandemic, the priorities identified in the report are now thrown into sharper light and may serve as a wakeup call for governments across the globe for providing adaptable, accessible and inclusive environments in which populations can age."

For the whitepaper, infographic and index workbook, please visit ageingshift.economist.com

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About the research

Shifting demographics: a global study on inclusive ageing is a report by The Economist Intelligence Unit, supported by Amgen. It considers policy efforts to address active and inclusive ageing in 19 countries based on a first-of-its-kind index that benchmarks each country's performance across accessible and affordable healthcare, social connectivity among older adults, and finance security practices and policies.

The "Scaling Healthy ageing, Inclusive environments and Financial security Today" (SHIFT) Index and the related research programme whose findings form the basis for this report were informed by extensive research and guided by an international panel of experts from across academia, government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international financial institutions.

The following 19 countries (comprising the G20 and excluding the EU) are included in this analysis: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US. These were selected to

broadly represent the world: covering roughly 65% of the population and 75% of global GDP.

About The Economist Intelligence Unit

The Economist Intelligence Unit is the world leader in global business intelligence. It is the business-to-business arm of The Economist Group, which publishes The Economist newspaper. The Economist Intelligence Unit helps executives make better decisions by providing timely, reliable and impartial analysis on worldwide market trends and business strategies.

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