

Older People Are Invisible in Key Data, Study Warns

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Vast gaps in data on older people threaten to undercut new goals established by the [United Nations](#) for raising living standards over the next 15 years, advocates for the aging said in a report being released on Wednesday.

Poverty rates among older people, a rapidly growing segment of the global population, are missing from data in at least 93 countries, many of them among the least equipped to compile this information, [according to the report](#), the 2015 Global AgeWatch Index. It is created by HelpAge International, a nonprofit organization that calculates an index of the best and worst countries in which to grow old. But the index is based on data from only 96 countries, including all of the most developed and affluent.

“The big story this year in the index is that millions of older people are invisible, living their lives in countries where information on the quality of older age is missing from international data sets,” Toby Porter, chief executive of the organization, said in releasing the 2015 ranking. Of 54 countries in Africa, he said, there was enough data available to include only 11 in the index.

“Consequently, we know more about the needs of older people in [Norway](#) and Luxembourg, two of the richest countries in the world, than we do about those in Liberia and Burundi, two of the poorest,” Mr. Porter said.

The index showed that [Switzerland](#) is the best place for older people to live, followed by Norway. The rest of the top 10 in order are Sweden, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, Iceland, Japan, the United States and Britain. The bottom 10, starting with the worst, are [Afghanistan](#), Malawi, Mozambique, the [Palestinian](#) territories, Pakistan, Tanzania, Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda and Iraq.

The organization issued the report as members of the United Nations prepare this

month to formally approve the Sustainable Development Goals, a list of objectives aimed at eliminating poverty, protecting the environment and ensuring universal prosperity by 2030.

Against a backdrop of global aging, HelpAge International said, the missing information on older people could distort actual trends, and “there is a danger that well-being in older age is going backwards, not forwards.”

Even for countries included in the index, data showed a widening disparity between the richest and poorest. The gap in life expectancy at age 60 between the countries at the top and bottom has increased to 7.3 years, compared with 5.7 years in 1990.