

*Population Aging and the Measurement of Dependency: The Case of Germany**

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Abstract

Many industrialized countries have concerns about aging (and declining) populations and the level of future financial and other support required of the working-age population for the elderly. Concern over this is particularly acute in Germany. However, there are those who argue that these concerns are blown out of proportion. One line of argument is that the burden of caring for a larger elderly population could be offset by reduced spending on the young because of their declining numbers. I use Germany as a case study in examining this debate and analyze changes in the old-age, youth, and total dependency ratios as shown by official population projections for the period 1998-2080. The findings suggest that acute concern about aging in Germany is warranted. As inquiries continue to be made into the ability of Germany and other countries to support their elderly populations, I suggest that the both the youth dependency ratio and the total dependency ratio be used in conjunction with the elderly dependency ratio to guide policy decisions.

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