

Allianz SE

Group Communications

Press

The centenarians club is booming

- The number of centenarians will increase ten-fold by 2050
- Every second newborn baby in Germany will live to over 100 years old
- East-African naked mole rats could be the key to the secret of longevity

The nine siblings in the Melis family have a combined age of 818 years and 205 days. According to Guinness World Records, this makes the family from Sardinia the longest-living in the world. Together the sisters and brothers have survived more illnesses, wars and blows of fate than many other people in the world. More than anything else, however, the family offers an insight into what societies - particularly in industrialized nations - will face in the future: "In the future, people and families who reach a very old age will no longer be a rarity," says Allianz expert Michaela Grimm, political economist at Allianz Group Economic Research and Corporate Development.

According to UN estimates, there are currently around 343,000 centenarians worldwide, and by 2050 this figure is likely to have risen to 3.2 million, i.e. to ten times as many. According to the German Federal Statistics Office, there are around 17,000 people living in Germany today who have already celebrated their 100th birthday, and the number is set to rise. "On average, every second new-born baby in Germany will see in their 100th birthday," says Grimm. According to experts, Japan will remain the nation with the most centenarians: in 2050; around 1 percent of its total population will be 100 or older. However, the number of so-called 'supercentenarians' - people older than 110 - is still extremely low. Today there are only 70 people across the world aged over 110, but 27 of those, according to official information, have already turned 115.

Allianz Leben already has around 635 pension recipients over the age of 100

An aging society necessitates a complete conceptual rethink of many areas of life: when planning the infrastructure of a town, planners must give greater consideration to the needs of older people, including, for example, short routes with disabled access to shops, service providers and doctors' surgeries. Banks and insurance companies need to adapt their financial products. At Allianz Leben, for example, more than 105,000 customers who are over 85 years old are receiving a regular private retirement pension. And around 635 pension recipients at Allianz Leben are even 100 or older.

Societal aging will not only cause a further shift in the relationship between people in work and pensioners, but will also mean a change in the age structures within companies. Workplaces must be designed with a view to an aging society, so that companies can make effective use of the skills and opportunities that an aging workforce has to offer.

Preventive healthcare and “retirement adequacy”

Each of us – young and old alike – needs to assume responsibility for ourselves, for example with early preventative healthcare. No less important is what is called “retirement adequacy”, which means asking if the income we expect from sources such as state, company and private retirement plans is enough to secure our individual standard of living when we grow old.

If we act in good time, there is no need to fear demographic change. In fact, it can provide a lot of opportunities. Getting older offers an excellent perspective on life, as thanks to medical progress, people can remain active into old age. The economy can profit too, if companies manage to develop solutions for sustainable growth - in spite of resources that are becoming ever more scarce.

Consolata Melis, who, at 105, is the oldest sister in the Melis family, gets her 'elixir of life' from her 9 children, 24 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren. Perhaps it is also the Mediterranean way of life, often praised as a recipe for longevity, that has given her such a long life: Astonishingly, seven of the 70 over-110 year olds across the globe were born in Italy. Grimm recommends that, "not smoking and keeping physically fit are, from a statistical perspective, good tips for anyone who wants to live a long life." Well-educated women have the best prospects of one day being able to join the centenarians club. "Today the number of hundred year old women is almost four times as high as that of men" emphasizes Grimm.

Does the East African naked mole rat hold the key to the secret of longevity?

Gerontology, the science of ageing, has been investigating many lines of enquiry into the phenomenon for a long time now. Since 1984, Allianz too has been engaging with the topic of longevity through a large variety of projects. Last December, Allianz France, for example, awarded a joint science prize for the best research into longevity for the first time, in partnership with the organization "*Les Associations de Prévoyance Santé*". At the time, Professor Rochelle Buffenstein (University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio/Barshop Institute for Longevity and Aging Studies) received the prestigious award for her pioneering work studying East African naked mole rats (*Heterocephalus glaber*). What sounds unusual at first could fundamentally change our knowledge, or maybe even reveal the secret to longevity. While most rats reach an average age of three, these small animals, who primarily live in East Africa, have an impressive life expectancy of over 30 years and even then they develop virtually no dreadful illnesses when they become elderly. They also display hardly any other signs of aging.

It is currently impossible to foresee whether, thanks to the research into the East African naked mole rat or other varieties of research, one day we will have to open a club for 150-year-olds. Such thoughts are by no means ridiculous. Nevertheless, there are currently only a few people documented as being proven to have reached the age of 120. But our society will certainly pose a serious challenge to the current figures.

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In 2011, around 142,000 employees in over 70 countries achieved total revenue of 103.6 billion euros and an operating profit of 7.9 billion euros. Benefits for our customers reached 86.5 billion euros.

This business success with insurance, asset management and assistance services is based increasingly on customer demand for crisis-proof financial solutions for an ageing society and the challenges of climate change. Transparency and integrity are key components of sustainable corporate governance at Allianz SE.

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