

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Life expectancy at birth is one of the most frequently used health status indicators. Gains in life expectancy at birth in OECD countries in recent decades can be attributed to a number of factors, including rising living standards, improved lifestyle and better education, as well as greater access to quality health services. Other factors, such as better nutrition, sanitation and housing also played a role, particularly in emerging economies.

Overview

On average across OECD countries, life expectancy at birth for the whole population reached 79.7 years in 2010, a gain of almost 10 years since 1970. Japan leads a large group (including almost two-thirds of OECD countries) in which the total life expectancy at birth is currently 80 years or more. A second group, including Portugal, the United States and a number of central European countries have a life expectancy of between 75 and 80 years. Life expectancy among OECD countries was lowest in Turkey and Hungary, followed by the Slovak Republic. However, while life expectancy in Hungary has increased only modestly since 1970, it has increased sharply in Turkey, so that it is quickly approaching the OECD average.

Nearly all OECD and emerging countries have experienced large gains in life expectancy over the past 40 years. Life expectancy at birth in Turkey, Korea and Mexico has increased by twenty years or more over the period 1970-2010. Among emerging countries, Indonesia, India and Brazil also show strong gains. Other countries such as the Russian Federation and South Africa are still characterised by high mortality rates and by a length of life well below the OECD average.

The gender gap in life expectancy stood at 5.6 years on average across OECD countries in 2010, with life expectancy reaching 76.9 years among men and 82.4 years among women. While the gender gap in life expectancy increased substantially in many countries during the 1960s and the 1970s, it narrowed during the past 30 years, reflecting higher gains in life expectancy among men than among women in most OECD countries. This can be attributed at least partly to the narrowing of differences in risk-increasing behaviours between men and women, such as smoking, accompanied by sharp reductions in mortality rates from cardiovascular diseases among men.

Higher national income (as measured by GDP per capita) is generally associated with higher life expectancy at birth, although the relationship is less pronounced at higher levels of national income.

Definition

Life expectancy at birth measures how long on average a newborn can expect to live, if current death rates do not change. However, the actual age-specific death rate of any particular birth cohort cannot be known in advance. If rates are falling (as has been the case over the past decades in OECD countries), actual life spans will be higher than life expectancy calculated using current death rates.

Comparability

The methodology used to calculate life expectancy can vary slightly between countries. These differences can affect the comparability of reported life expectancy estimates, as different methods can change a country's estimates by a fraction of a year. Life expectancy at birth for the total population is calculated by the OECD Secretariat for all countries, using the unweighted average of life expectancy of men and women.

Sources

- OECD (2012), *OECD Health Statistics*, OECD Publishing.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2010), *Health Care Systems: Efficiency and Policy Settings*, OECD Publishing.

Statistical publications

- OECD (2012), *Health at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2012*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), *Health at a Glance: Europe 2012*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2011), *Health at a Glance: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

Online databases

- OECD Health Statistics.

Websites

- OECD Health Data, www.oecd.org/health/healthdata.
- OECD Health at a Glance (supplementary material), www.oecd.org/health/healthataglance.



Life expectancy at birth

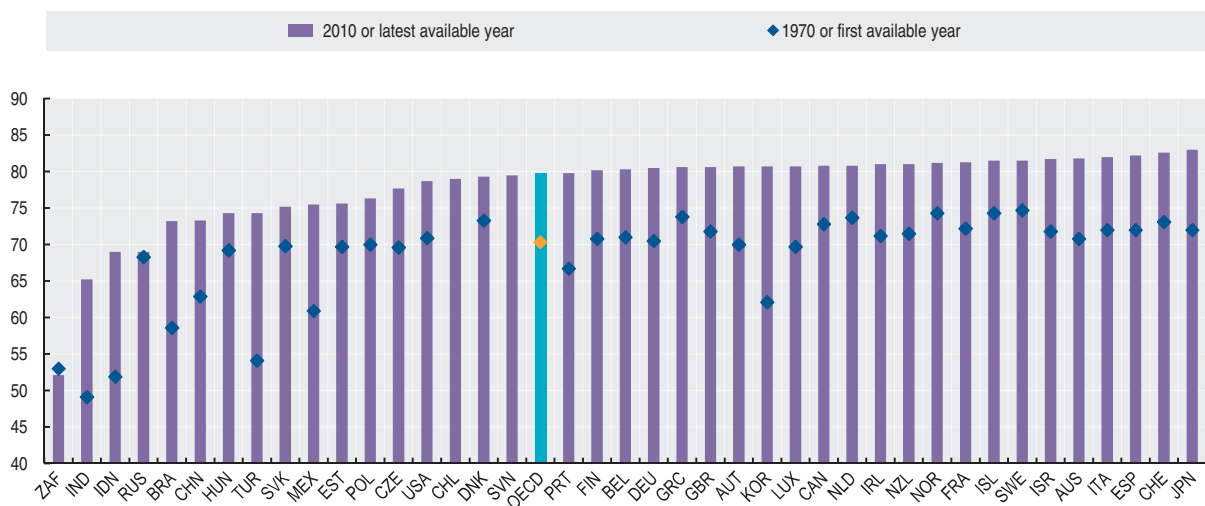
Number of years

	Women				Men				Total			
	1970 or first available year	1990	2000	2010 or latest available year	1970 or first available year	1990	2000	2010 or latest available year	1970 or first available year	1990	2000	2010 or latest available year
Australia	74.2	80.1	82.0	84.0	67.4	73.9	76.6	79.5	70.8	77.0	79.3	81.8
Austria	73.5	79.0	81.2	83.5	66.5	72.3	75.2	77.9	70.0	75.6	78.2	80.7
Belgium	74.3	79.5	81.0	83.0	67.8	72.7	74.6	77.6	71.0	76.1	77.8	80.3
Canada	76.4	80.8	81.7	..	69.3	74.4	76.3	..	72.8	77.6	79.0	..
Chile	..	76.5	80.0	82.0	..	69.4	73.7	75.9	..	72.9	76.8	79.0
Czech Republic	73.1	75.5	78.5	80.9	66.1	67.6	71.7	74.5	69.6	71.5	75.1	77.7
Denmark	75.9	77.8	79.2	81.4	70.7	72.0	74.5	77.2	73.3	74.9	76.8	79.3
Estonia	74.0	74.7	76.0	80.5	65.4	64.5	65.1	70.6	69.7	69.6	70.6	75.6
Finland	75.0	79.0	81.2	83.5	66.5	71.0	74.2	76.9	70.8	75.0	77.7	80.2
France	75.9	80.9	82.8	84.7	68.4	72.8	75.3	78.0	72.2	76.8	79.0	81.3
Germany	73.6	78.5	81.2	83.0	67.5	72.0	75.1	78.0	70.5	75.3	78.2	80.5
Greece	76.0	79.5	80.6	82.8	71.6	74.7	75.5	78.4	73.8	77.1	78.0	80.6
Hungary	72.1	73.7	75.9	78.1	66.3	65.1	67.4	70.5	69.2	69.4	71.7	74.3
Iceland	77.3	80.5	81.8	83.5	71.2	75.4	78.4	79.5	74.3	78.0	80.1	81.5
Ireland	73.5	77.7	79.2	83.2	68.8	72.1	74.0	78.7	71.2	74.9	76.6	81.0
Israel	73.4	78.4	80.9	83.6	70.1	74.9	76.7	79.7	71.8	76.7	78.8	81.7
Italy	74.9	80.3	82.8	..	69.0	73.8	76.9	..	72.0	77.1	79.8	..
Japan	74.7	81.9	84.6	86.4	69.3	75.9	77.7	79.6	72.0	78.9	81.2	83.0
Korea	65.6	75.5	79.6	84.1	58.7	67.3	72.3	77.2	62.1	71.4	76.0	80.7
Luxembourg	73.0	78.7	81.3	83.5	66.2	72.4	74.6	77.9	69.7	75.5	78.0	80.7
Mexico	63.2	73.5	76.5	77.8	58.5	67.7	71.3	73.1	60.9	70.6	73.9	75.5
Netherlands	76.5	80.1	80.5	82.7	70.8	73.8	75.5	78.8	73.7	77.0	78.0	80.8
New Zealand	74.5	78.4	80.8	82.8	68.4	72.5	75.9	79.1	71.5	75.5	78.3	81.0
Norway	77.5	79.9	81.5	83.3	71.2	73.5	76.0	79.0	74.3	76.7	78.8	81.2
Poland	73.3	75.2	78.0	80.6	66.6	66.2	69.7	72.1	70.0	70.7	73.8	76.3
Portugal	69.7	77.5	80.2	82.8	63.6	70.6	73.2	76.7	66.7	74.1	76.7	79.8
Slovak Republic	72.9	75.4	77.4	78.8	66.7	66.6	69.1	71.6	69.8	71.0	73.3	75.2
Slovenia	..	77.2	79.1	82.7	..	69.4	71.9	76.3	..	73.3	75.5	79.5
Spain	74.8	80.6	82.9	85.3	69.2	73.4	75.8	79.1	72.0	77.0	79.4	82.2
Sweden	77.1	80.4	82.0	83.5	72.2	74.8	77.4	79.5	74.7	77.6	79.7	81.5
Switzerland	76.2	80.9	82.8	84.9	70.0	74.0	77.0	80.3	73.1	77.5	79.9	82.6
Turkey	56.3	69.5	73.1	76.8	52.0	65.4	69.0	71.8	54.1	67.5	71.0	74.3
United Kingdom	75.0	78.5	80.3	82.6	68.7	72.9	75.5	78.6	71.8	75.7	77.9	80.6
United States	74.7	78.8	79.3	81.1	67.1	71.8	74.1	76.2	70.9	75.3	76.7	78.7
EU 27	74.0	77.7	79.6	81.8	67.9	70.5	73.0	75.5	71.0	74.1	76.3	78.7
OECD	73.4	78.1	80.2	82.4	67.2	71.4	74.0	76.9	70.3	74.7	77.1	79.7
Brazil	60.7	70.2	74.1	76.7	56.5	62.7	66.4	69.7	58.6	66.5	70.3	73.2
China	63.6	71.1	72.9	75.0	62.2	67.9	69.6	71.6	62.9	69.5	71.3	73.3
India	48.5	58.7	62.6	66.7	49.8	58.1	60.6	63.6	49.1	58.4	61.6	65.2
Indonesia	53.5	63.8	67.3	70.6	50.3	60.5	64.1	67.3	51.9	62.1	65.7	69.0
Russian Federation	73.5	74.3	72.3	74.9	63.0	63.8	59.1	63.0	68.3	69.0	65.7	69.0
South Africa	55.6	65.3	57.3	52.8	50.3	57.9	52.3	51.4	53.0	61.6	54.8	52.1

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Life expectancy at birth

Number of years



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