

Average life expectancy is set to increase in many countries by 2030

February 21 2017



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Average life expectancy is set to increase in many countries by 2030—and will exceed 90 years in South Korea, according to new research.

The study, led by scientists from Imperial College London in collaboration with the World Health Organization, analysed long-term

data on mortality and longevity trends to predict how life expectancy will change in 35 industrialised countries by 2030.

Nations in the study included both [high-income countries](#), such as the USA, Canada, UK, Germany, Australia, and emerging economies such as Poland, Mexico and the Czech Republic.

The study, published in *The Lancet* and funded by the UK Medical Research Council, revealed all nations in the study can expect to see an increase in life expectancy by 2030.

The results also found that South Koreans may have the highest life expectancy in the world in 2030.

The team calculated life expectancy at birth, and predicted a baby girl born in South Korea in 2030 will expect to live 90.8 years. Life expectancy at birth for South Korean men will be 84.1 years.

The researchers also calculated how long a 65-year-old person may expect to live in 2030. The results revealed that the average 65-year-old woman in South Korea in 2030 may live an additional 27.5 years.

Scientists once thought an [average life expectancy](#) of over 90 was impossible, explained Professor Majid Ezzati, lead researcher from the School of Public Health at Imperial: "We repeatedly hear that improvements in human longevity are about to come to an end. Many people used to believe that 90 years is the upper limit for life expectancy, but this research suggests we will break the 90-year-barrier. I don't believe we're anywhere near the upper limit of life expectancy -if there even is one."

Professor Ezzati explained that South Korea's high life expectancy may be due to a number of factors including good nutrition in childhood, low

blood pressure, low levels of smoking, good access to healthcare, and uptake of new medical knowledge and technologies.

French women and Swiss men were predicted to have the highest [life expectancies](#) at birth in Europe in 2030, with an average life expectancy of 88.6 years for French women and nearly 84 years for Swiss men.

The results also revealed that the USA is likely to have the lowest life expectancy at birth in 2030 among high-income countries. The nation's average life expectancy at birth of men and women in 2030 (79.5 years and 83.3 years), will be similar to that of middle-income countries like Croatia and Mexico. The research team say this may be due to a number of factors including a lack of universal healthcare, as well as the highest child and maternal mortality rate, homicide rate and obesity among high-income countries.

The UK's average life expectancy at birth for women will be 85.3 years in 2030. This places them at 21st in the table of 35 countries. The average life expectancy of a UK man meanwhile will be 82.5 years in 2030. This places them at 14th in the table of 35 countries.

The team also predicted a 65-year-old UK man in 2030 could expect to live an additional 20.9 years (12th in the table of countries), while a 65-year-old woman in the UK could expect to live an additional 22.7 years, up (22nd in the table of countries).

The research also suggested the gap in life expectancy between women and men is closing.

Professor Ezzati explained: "Men traditionally had unhealthier lifestyles, and so shorter life expectancies. They smoked and drank more, and had more road traffic accidents and homicides. However as lifestyles become more similar between men and women, so does their longevity."

Along with the US, other countries who may see only small increases in life expectancy by 2030 included Japan, Sweden and Greece, while Macedonia and Serbia were projected to have the lowest life expectancies at birth for women and men respectively in 2030.

Life expectancy is calculated by assessing the age at which people die across the whole population. For instance if a country has high childhood mortality rate, this will make average national life expectancy much lower, as would a country in which many young people die in injuries and violence.

Professor Colin Mathers, co-author from the World Health Organization explained: "The increase in average life expectancy in high income countries is due to the over-65s living longer than ever before. In middle-income countries, the number of premature deaths - i.e. people dying in their forties and fifties, will also decline by 2030."

The team developed a new method to predict longevity, similar to the methods used for weather forecasting, which takes into account numerous different models for forecasting mortality and life expectancy. All the predictions in the study come with some uncertainty range. For instance, there is a 90 per cent probability that life expectancy for South Korean women in 2030 will be higher than 86.7 years, and a 57 per cent probability that it will be higher than 90 years.

The researchers chose the 35 industrialised countries in the study as they all had reliable data on deaths since at least 1985. The team then used this data, together with their new methodology to predict life expectancy to 2030.

Professor Ezzati added that these results suggest we need to be thinking carefully about the needs of an ageing population: "The fact that we will continue to live longer means we need to think about strengthening the

health and social care systems to support an ageing population with multiple health needs. This is the opposite of what is being done in the era of austerity. We also need to think about whether current pension systems will support us, or if we need to consider working into later life."

Other findings from the research include:

- The five countries with the highest life expectancy at birth for men in 2030 were: South Korea (84.1), Australia (84.0), Switzerland (84.0), Canada (83.9), Netherlands (83.7)
- The five countries with the highest life expectancy at birth for women in 2030 were: South Korea (90.8), France (88.6), Japan (88.4), Spain (88.1), Switzerland (87.7)
- The five countries with the highest life expectancy for 65-year-old men in 2030 were: Canada (22.6 additional life years), New Zealand (22.5), Australia (22.2), South Korea (22.0), Ireland (21.7)
- The five countries with the highest life expectancy for 65-year-old women in 2030 were: South Korea (27.5 additional life years), France (26.1), Japan (25.9), Spain (24.8), Switzerland (24.6)
- The five countries in Europe with the highest life expectancy at birth for men in 2030 were: Switzerland (84.0), Netherlands (83.7), Spain (83.5), Ireland (83.2) and Norway (83.2)
- The five countries in Europe with the highest life expectancy at birth for women in 2030 were: France (88.6), Spain (88.1), and Switzerland (87.7), Portugal (87.5) and Slovenia (87.4).
- The UK's average life expectancy at birth for women will increase from 82.3 years in 2010 to 85.3 years in 2030. This places them 21st in the table of 35 countries (compared to 22nd in 2010).
- The average life expectancy of a UK man at [birth](#) will increase

from 78.3 years in 2010 to 82.5 years in 2030. This places them 14th in the table of 35 [countries](#) (compared to 11th in 2010).

Provided by Imperial College London

Citation: Average life expectancy is set to increase in many countries by 2030 (2017, February 21) retrieved 6 February 2023 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-02-average-life-countries.html>

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