

## LIFE EXPECTANCY

Life expectancy at birth remains one of the most frequently quoted indicators of health status.

Gains in life expectancy in OECD countries in recent decades, reflecting sharp reductions in mortality rates, 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 countries with developing economies.

It is difficult to estimate the relative contribution of the numerous non-medical and medical factors that might affect variations in life expectancy over time and across countries. Higher national income (as measured by GDP per capita) is generally associated with higher life expectancy at birth across OECD countries, although the relationship is less pronounced at higher levels of income.

### Long-term trends

On average across OECD countries, life expectancy at birth for the whole population reached 79 years in 2006, more than ten years greater than in 1960. In one-third of OECD countries, life expectancy at birth exceeded 80 years in 2006. The country with the highest life expectancy was Japan, with a life expectancy for women and men combined of 82.4 years. At the other end of the scale, life expectancy in OECD countries was the lowest in Turkey, followed by Hungary. However, while life expectancy in Hungary has increased only modestly since 1960, it has increased sharply in Turkey, rapidly catching up with the OECD average.

The gender gap in life expectancy stood at 5.6 years on average across OECD countries in 2006, with life expectancy reaching 76.1 years among men and 81.7 years among women. This gender gap increased by half-a-year on average across countries between 1960 and 2006. But this result hides different trends between earlier and later decades. While the gender gap in life expectancy increased substantially in many countries during the 1960s and the 1970s, it narrowed during the past 25 years, reflecting higher gains in life expectancy among men than among women in most OECD countries. The narrowing of the gender gap in life expectancy over the past 25 years can be attributed at least partly to the narrowing of differences in risk-increasing behaviours, such as smoking, between men and women, accompanied by sharp reductions in mortality rates from cardio-vascular diseases among men.

### Definition

Life expectancy measures how long on average people would live based on a given set of age-specific death rates. However, the actual age-specific death rates of any particular birth cohort cannot be known in advance. If age-specific death 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 with current death rates.

### Comparability

Each country calculates its life expectancy according to methodologies that can vary somewhat. These differences in methodology can affect the comparability of reported life expectancy estimates, as different methods can change a country's estimates by a fraction of a year.

### Source

- OECD (2008), *OECD Health Data 2008*, OECD, Paris.

### Further information

#### Analytical publications

- OECD (2002), *Measuring Up: Improving Health System Performance in OECD Countries*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2003), *A Disease-based Comparison of Health Systems: What is Best and at what Cost?*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2004), *The OECD Health Project: Towards High-Performing Health Systems*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2006), *Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers (Vol. 1): Norway, Poland and Switzerland*, OECD, Paris.

#### Statistical publications

- OECD (2007), *Health at a Glance 2007: OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2007), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators – 2006 Edition*, OECD, Paris.

#### Online databases

- OECD Health Data.

#### Websites

- OECD Health Data, [www.oecd.org/health/healthdata](http://www.oecd.org/health/healthdata).

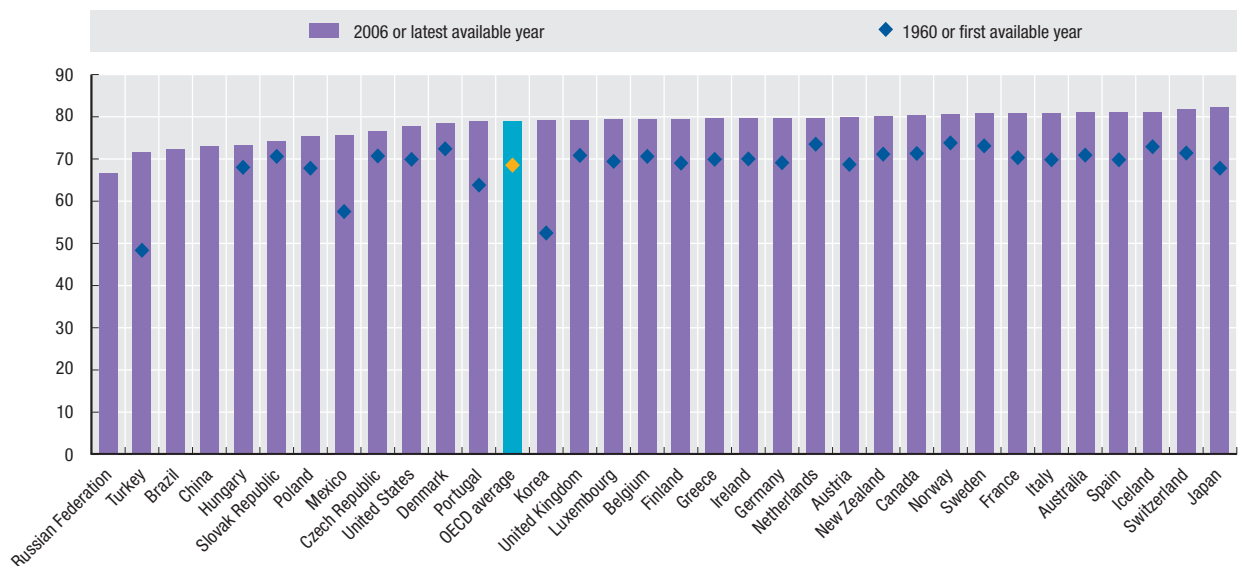

**Life expectancy at birth: total**

Number of years

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australia	70.9	70.8	74.6	77.0	77.9	79.3	79.7	80.0	80.3	80.6	80.9	81.1
Austria	68.7	70.0	72.6	75.5	76.6	78.1	78.6	78.8	78.8	79.3	79.5	79.9
Belgium	70.6	71.0	73.3	76.1	77.0	77.8	78.1	78.2	78.2	78.9	79.1	79.5
Canada	71.3	72.9	75.3	77.6	78.1	79.3	79.6	79.7	79.9	80.2	80.4	..
Czech Republic	70.7	69.6	70.5	71.6	73.3	75.1	75.4	75.4	75.3	75.9	76.1	76.7
Denmark	72.4	73.3	74.3	74.9	75.3	76.9	77.0	77.1	77.4	77.8	78.3	78.4
Finland	69.0	70.8	73.4	75.0	76.6	77.7	78.2	78.3	78.5	79.0	79.1	79.5
France	70.3	72.2	74.3	76.9	77.9	79.2	79.3	79.4	79.3	80.3	80.2	80.9
Germany	69.1	70.6	72.9	75.3	76.6	78.2	78.5	78.5	78.6	79.2	79.4	79.8
Greece	69.9	72.0	74.5	77.1	77.7	78.0	78.5	78.7	78.9	79.1	79.3	79.6
Hungary	68.0	69.2	69.1	69.4	69.9	71.7	72.3	72.6	72.6	72.8	72.8	73.2
Iceland	72.9	74.3	76.7	78.0	78.0	80.1	80.2	80.6	81.2	81.0	81.2	81.2
Ireland	70.0	71.2	72.9	74.9	75.6	76.6	77.2	77.9	78.4	78.9	79.5	79.7
Italy	69.8	72.0	74.0	77.2	78.4	80.0	80.2	80.3	80.0	80.9	80.9	..
Japan	67.8	72.0	76.1	78.9	79.6	81.2	81.5	81.8	81.9	82.1	82.0	82.4
Korea	52.4	62.2	65.9	71.4	73.5	76.0	76.4	77.0	77.4	78.0	78.5	79.1
Luxembourg	69.4	70.3	72.5	75.6	76.8	78.0	77.9	78.1	77.8	79.1	79.5	79.4
Mexico	57.5	60.9	67.2	71.2	72.7	74.1	74.4	74.6	74.9	75.2	75.5	75.7
Netherlands	73.5	73.7	75.9	77.0	77.5	78.0	78.3	78.4	78.6	79.2	79.4	79.8
New Zealand	71.1	71.5	73.2	75.5	76.8	78.4	78.7	79.0	79.2	79.6	79.9	80.2
Norway	73.8	74.4	75.9	76.7	77.9	78.8	78.9	79.0	79.6	80.1	80.3	80.6
Poland	67.8	70.0	70.2	70.7	72.0	73.9	74.3	74.6	74.7	75.0	75.1	75.3
Portugal	63.8	66.6	71.4	74.1	75.4	76.7	77.0	77.2	77.4	78.3	78.1	78.9
Slovak Republic	70.6	69.8	70.6	71.0	72.4	73.3	73.6	73.8	73.9	74.1	74.0	74.3
Spain	69.8	72.0	75.4	77.0	78.1	79.4	79.7	79.8	79.7	80.3	80.4	81.1
Sweden	73.1	74.7	75.8	77.6	78.8	79.7	79.9	79.9	80.2	80.6	80.6	80.8
Switzerland	71.4	73.1	75.7	77.5	78.7	79.9	80.4	80.6	80.6	81.2	81.4	81.7
Turkey	48.3	54.2	58.1	66.1	67.9	70.5	70.6	70.8	71.0	71.2	71.4	71.6
United Kingdom	70.8	71.9	73.2	75.7	76.7	77.9	78.2	78.3	78.4	78.9	79.1	..
United States	69.9	70.9	73.7	75.3	75.7	76.8	77.1	77.2	77.5	77.8	77.8	..
OECD average	68.5	70.3	72.6	74.9	76.0	77.4	77.7	77.9	78.0	78.5	78.7	79.0
Brazil	..	..	62.7	66.6	68.6	70.5	70.8	71.1	71.4	71.7	72.0	72.3
China	..	..	..	68.6	..	71.4	..	..	..	..	73.0	..
Russian Federation	..	..	67.5	69.2	64.5	65.3	65.2	65.0	64.9	65.3	65.3	66.6

 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/544223472072>
**Life expectancy at birth: total**

Number of years



 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/538382241346>

## LIFE EXPECTANCY

## Life expectancy at birth: men

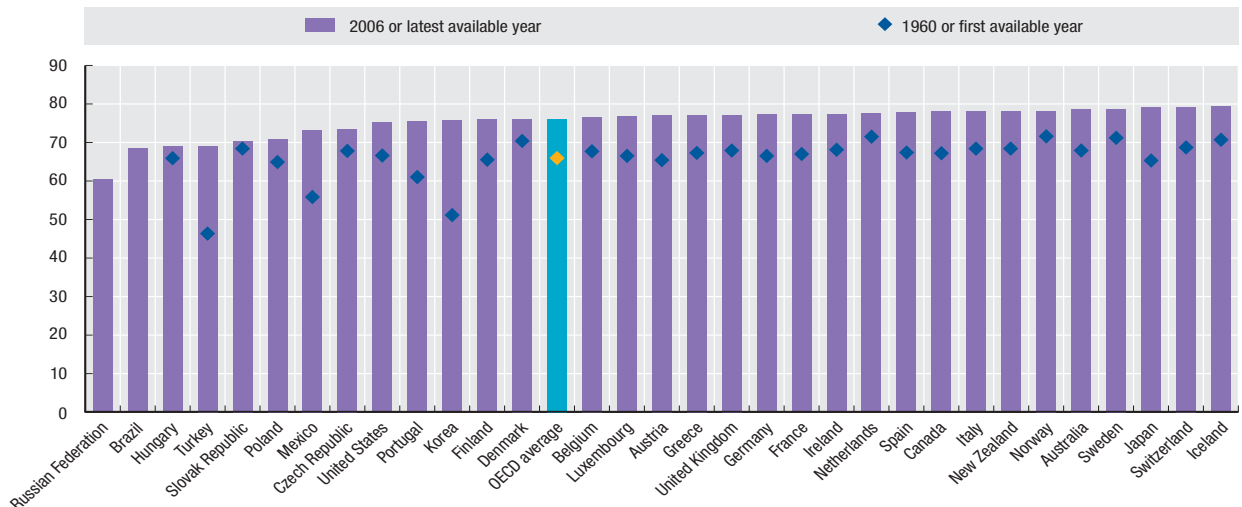

Number of years

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australia	67.9	67.4	71.0	73.9	75.0	76.6	77.0	77.4	77.8	78.1	78.5	78.7
Austria	65.4	66.5	69.0	72.2	73.3	75.1	75.6	75.8	75.9	76.4	76.7	77.1
Belgium	67.7	67.8	69.9	72.7	73.5	74.6	75.0	75.1	75.3	76.0	76.2	76.6
Canada	68.4	69.3	71.7	74.4	75.1	76.7	77.0	77.2	77.4	77.8	78.0	..
Czech Republic	67.8	66.1	66.9	67.6	69.7	71.7	72.1	72.1	72.0	72.6	72.9	73.5
Denmark	70.4	70.7	71.2	72.0	72.7	74.5	74.7	74.8	75.0	75.4	76.0	76.1
Finland	65.5	66.5	69.2	71.0	72.8	74.2	74.6	74.9	75.1	75.4	75.6	75.9
France	67.0	68.4	70.2	72.8	73.9	75.3	75.5	75.7	75.8	76.7	76.7	77.3
Germany	66.5	67.5	69.6	72.0	73.3	75.1	75.6	75.7	75.8	76.5	76.7	77.2
Greece	67.3	70.1	72.2	74.6	75.0	75.5	75.9	76.2	76.5	76.6	76.8	77.1
Hungary	65.9	66.3	65.5	65.1	65.3	67.4	68.1	68.4	68.4	68.6	68.6	69.0
Iceland	70.7	71.2	73.7	75.4	75.9	78.4	78.1	78.7	79.7	79.2	79.2	79.4
Ireland	68.1	68.8	70.1	72.1	72.8	74.0	74.5	75.2	75.9	76.4	77.3	77.3
Italy	67.2	69.0	70.6	73.9	75.1	77.0	77.2	77.4	77.1	77.9	78.1	..
Japan	65.3	69.3	73.4	75.9	76.4	77.7	78.1	78.3	78.4	78.6	78.6	79.0
Korea	51.1	58.7	61.8	67.3	69.6	72.3	72.8	73.4	73.9	74.5	75.1	75.7
Luxembourg	66.5	67.1	69.1	72.4	73.0	74.6	75.1	74.6	74.8	75.9	76.7	76.8
Mexico	55.8	58.5	64.1	68.3	70.0	71.6	71.9	72.1	72.4	72.7	73.0	73.2
Netherlands	71.5	70.8	72.5	73.8	74.6	75.5	75.8	76.0	76.2	76.9	77.2	77.6
New Zealand	68.4	68.4	70.1	72.5	74.1	75.9	76.3	76.7	77.0	77.5	77.9	78.1
Norway	71.6	71.2	72.4	73.4	74.8	76.0	76.2	76.4	77.1	77.6	77.8	78.2
Poland	64.9	66.6	66.0	66.2	67.6	69.7	70.2	70.4	70.5	70.7	70.8	70.9
Portugal	61.0	63.6	67.9	70.6	71.7	73.2	73.5	73.8	74.2	75.0	74.9	75.5
Slovak Republic	68.4	66.7	66.8	66.6	68.4	69.1	69.5	69.8	69.9	70.3	70.1	70.4
Spain	67.4	69.2	72.3	73.4	74.4	75.8	76.2	76.3	76.3	76.9	77.0	77.7
Sweden	71.2	72.2	72.8	74.8	76.2	77.4	77.6	77.7	77.9	78.4	78.4	78.7
Switzerland	68.7	70.0	72.3	74.0	75.4	77.0	77.5	77.9	78.0	78.6	78.7	79.2
Turkey	46.3	52.0	55.8	63.8	65.6	68.1	68.2	68.4	68.6	68.8	68.9	69.1
United Kingdom	67.9	68.7	70.2	72.9	74.0	75.5	75.8	76.0	76.2	76.8	77.1	..
United States	66.6	67.1	70.0	71.8	72.5	74.1	74.4	74.5	74.8	75.2	75.2	..
OECD average	65.9	67.2	69.3	71.6	72.7	74.3	74.7	74.9	75.1	75.6	75.8	76.1
Brazil	..	..	59.6	62.8	64.8	66.7	67.0	67.3	67.6	67.9	68.1	68.4
Russian Federation	..	..	61.5	63.7	58.1	59.0	58.9	58.7	58.6	58.9	58.9	60.4

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## Life expectancy at birth: men

Number of years


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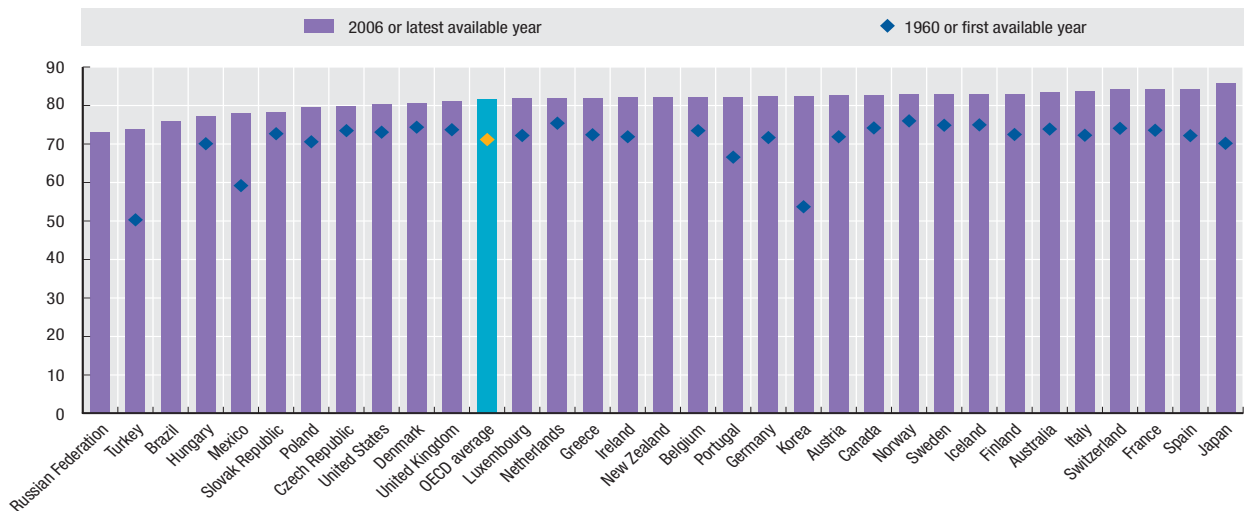

**Life expectancy at birth: women**

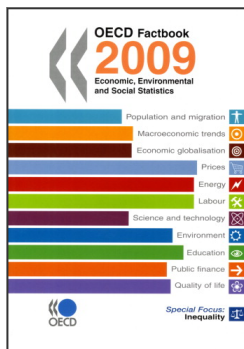
Number of years

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australia	73.9	74.2	78.1	80.1	80.8	82.0	82.4	82.6	82.8	83.0	83.3	83.5
Austria	71.9	73.4	76.1	78.8	79.9	81.1	81.5	81.7	81.6	82.1	82.2	82.7
Belgium	73.5	74.2	76.7	79.5	80.4	81.0	81.2	81.2	81.1	81.8	81.9	82.3
Canada	74.2	76.4	78.9	80.8	81.1	81.9	82.1	82.1	82.4	82.6	82.7	..
Czech Republic	73.5	73.1	74.0	75.5	76.8	78.5	78.6	78.7	78.6	79.2	79.2	79.9
Denmark	74.4	75.9	77.3	77.8	77.9	79.2	79.3	79.4	79.8	80.2	80.5	80.7
Finland	72.5	75.0	77.6	79.0	80.4	81.2	81.7	81.6	81.9	82.5	82.5	83.1
France	73.6	75.9	78.4	80.9	81.8	83.0	83.0	83.0	82.7	83.8	83.7	84.4
Germany	71.7	73.6	76.2	78.5	79.9	81.2	81.4	81.3	81.3	81.9	82.0	82.4
Greece	72.4	73.8	76.8	79.5	80.3	80.5	81.0	81.1	81.3	81.5	81.7	82.0
Hungary	70.1	72.1	72.7	73.7	74.5	75.9	76.4	76.7	76.7	76.9	76.9	77.4
Iceland	75.0	77.3	79.7	80.5	80.0	81.8	82.2	82.5	82.7	82.7	83.1	83.0
Ireland	71.9	73.5	75.6	77.7	78.3	79.2	79.9	80.5	80.8	81.4	81.7	82.1
Italy	72.3	74.9	77.4	80.4	81.6	82.9	83.2	83.2	82.8	83.8	83.7	..
Japan	70.2	74.7	78.8	81.9	82.9	84.6	84.9	85.2	85.3	85.6	85.5	85.8
Korea	53.7	65.6	70.0	75.5	77.4	79.6	80.0	80.5	80.8	81.4	81.9	82.4
Luxembourg	72.2	73.4	75.9	78.7	80.6	81.3	80.7	81.5	80.8	82.3	82.3	81.9
Mexico	59.2	63.2	70.2	74.1	75.3	76.5	76.8	77.1	77.4	77.6	77.9	78.1
Netherlands	75.4	76.5	79.2	80.1	80.4	80.5	80.7	80.7	80.9	81.4	81.6	81.9
New Zealand	73.8	74.5	76.2	78.4	79.5	80.8	81.1	81.2	81.3	81.7	81.9	82.2
Norway	76.0	77.5	79.3	79.9	80.9	81.5	81.6	81.6	82.1	82.6	82.7	82.9
Poland	70.6	73.3	74.4	75.2	76.4	78.0	78.3	78.7	78.8	79.2	79.4	79.6
Portugal	66.6	69.6	74.9	77.5	79.0	80.2	80.5	80.6	80.6	81.5	81.3	82.3
Slovak Republic	72.7	72.9	74.3	75.4	76.3	77.4	77.7	77.7	77.8	77.8	77.9	78.2
Spain	72.2	74.8	78.4	80.6	81.8	82.9	83.2	83.2	83.0	83.7	83.7	84.4
Sweden	74.9	77.1	78.8	80.4	81.4	82.0	82.1	82.1	82.5	82.7	82.8	82.9
Switzerland	74.1	76.2	79.0	80.9	81.9	82.8	83.2	83.2	83.2	83.8	84.0	84.2
Turkey	50.3	56.3	60.3	68.3	70.2	72.8	73.0	73.2	73.4	73.6	73.8	74.0
United Kingdom	73.7	75.0	76.2	78.5	79.3	80.3	80.5	80.6	80.5	81.0	81.1	..
United States	73.1	74.7	77.4	78.8	78.9	79.5	79.8	79.9	80.1	80.4	80.4	..
OECD average	71.0	73.3	76.0	78.2	79.2	80.3	80.6	80.8	80.8	81.3	81.4	81.7
Brazil	..	..	65.7	70.4	72.3	74.3	74.6	74.9	75.2	75.5	75.8	76.1
Russian Federation	..	..	73.0	74.3	71.6	72.3	72.2	71.9	71.8	72.3	72.4	73.2

 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/544284347660>
**Life expectancy at birth: women**

Number of years


 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/538511484418>



**From:**  
**OECD Factbook 2009**  
Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/factbook-2009-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2009), "Life expectancy", in *OECD Factbook 2009: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/factbook-2009-85-en>

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