

Japanese women fall behind Hong Kong in longevity

July 26 2012

(AP) — Japanese women are no longer the world's longest living, their longevity pushed down in part by last year's devastating earthquake and tsunami, according to a government report Thursday. The top of the global life expectancy rankings now belongs to Hong Kong women.

The annual report by Japan's health ministry said the expected lifespan for Japanese women slipped to 85.90 years in 2011 from 86.30 the year before, mainly due to disease and other natural causes of death. The life expectancy for men also declined slightly, from 79.55 to 79.44.

The report said that the earthquake and tsunami, which killed nearly 20,000 people, contributed to pushing the [statistics](#) down. It noted that if deaths related to the disaster were not included, the life expectancies would be higher for both men, at 79.70 years, and women, at 86.24.

But the official [life expectancy](#) for women in Hong Kong — 86.70 years in 2011 — would still be longer than Japan's even without the disaster deaths, the report said.

It said suicides among Japanese women have been on the rise, and that was a contributing factor, although disease and other natural causes remained the most important issues.

Officials said it was the first time since 1985 that Japan's [women](#) had ranked second.

The ministry's [report](#), which uses statistics supplied by other countries or the U.N. for its comparisons, noted that international statistics are hard to compare because of differences in calculation methods.

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Citation: Japanese women fall behind Hong Kong in longevity (2012, July 26) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-japanese-women-fall-hong-kong.html>

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