

Global life expectancy up five years since 2000: WHO

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

Global life expectancy increased by five years between 2000 and 2015, the World Health Organization said Thursday, crediting progress in Africa against HIV, AIDS and malaria.

The gains made over the last 15 years are the largest since the 1960s, when the world—especially Europe and Japan—saw broad socio-

economic improvements linked to the recovery from World War II, WHO said.

On average, a child born in 2015 can expect to live 71.4 years—with females (73.8 years) having better prospects than males (69.1 years), according to data published in WHO's annual World Health Statistics report.

Director-general of the UN agency, Margaret Chan, said major strides had been made against "preventable and treatable diseases", especially through widened access to [antiretroviral therapy](#) for HIV.

The last 15 years have helped reverse the regressions seen through 1990s, when the AIDS epidemic ravaged much of Africa sparking declining health indicators across the continent.

Despite progress in the world's [poorer countries](#), WHO stressed that there remain significant [life expectancy](#) gaps between developed and developing nations.

The data indicates that a female child born in Japan currently has the longest [average lifespan](#) at 86.8 years. For men, Switzerland offers the most promising outlook, with a life expectancy of 81.3 years.

Sierra Leone ominously holds last place for both women and men, at 50.8 years and 49.3 respectively.

WHO pointed to several key areas where advances were essential in order to raise the average lifespan further, including reducing the number of smokers worldwide—currently 1.1 billion—and providing clean water to the 1.8 billion people who drink contaminated water on a regular basis.

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