

No detectable limit to how long people can live: study

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Emma Morano passed away last April. At 117 years old, the Italian woman was the oldest known living human being.

Super-centenarians, such as Morano and Jeanne Calment of France, who famously lived to be 122 years old, continue to fascinate scientists and have led them to wonder just how long humans can live. A study published in *Nature* last October concluded that the [upper limit](#) of [human](#) age is peaking at around 115 years.

Now, however, a new study in *Nature* by McGill University biologists Bryan G. Hughes and Siegfried Hekimi comes to a starkly different conclusion. By analyzing the [lifespan](#) of the longest-living individuals from the USA, the UK, France and Japan for each year since 1968, Hekimi and Hughes found no evidence for such a limit, and if such a maximum exists, it has yet to be reached or identified, Hekimi says.

"Far into the foreseeable future"

"We just don't know what the age limit might be. In fact, by extending trend lines, we can show that maximum and average lifespans, could continue to increase far into the foreseeable [future](#)," Hekimi says. Many people are aware of what has happened with average lifespans. In 1920, for example, the average newborn Canadian could expect to live 60 years; a Canadian born in 1980 could expect 76 years, and today, [life expectancy](#) has jumped to 82 years. Maximum lifespan seems to follow the same trend.

It's impossible to predict what future lifespans in humans might look like, Hekimi says. Some scientists argue that technology, medical interventions, and improvements in living conditions could all push back the upper limit.

"It's hard to guess," Hekimi adds. "Three hundred years ago, many people lived only short lives. If we would have told them that one day most humans might live up to 100, they would have said we were crazy."

More information: Brief Communications Arising: Contesting the evidence for limited human lifespan, [nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22784](https://www.nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22784)

Brief Communications Arising: Many possible maximum lifespan trajectories, [nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22786](https://www.nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22786)

Brief Communications Arising: Is there evidence for a limit to human lifespan? [nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22788](https://www.nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22788)

Brief Communications Arising: Questionable evidence for a limit to human lifespan, [nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22790](https://www.nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22790)

Brief Communications Arising: Maximum human lifespan may increase to 125 years, [nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22792](https://www.nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature22792)

Provided by McGill University

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