

Japanese women retake top spot for life expectancy

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Japan's women retook their place as the world's longest-lived last year, edging out Hong Kongers as their life expectancy bounced back from the dip caused by the 2011 tsunami, officials said Thursday. © 2013 AFP

Health ministry data showed girls born in Japan in 2012 could expect on average to live to 86.41, up from 85.90 in 2011 when the average was dragged lower when thousands of lives were cut short by the natural disaster.

"Death rates rose in 2011 due to the disaster but the life expectancy picked up again with that factor coming off," a health ministry official said.

The Japanese are renowned for their longevity, attributed in part to a healthy diet, active lifestyle and good medical system.

"Generally speaking, the high level of welfare is contributing" to national longevity, the ministry official said.

The health ministry compiled international rankings using data from Japan and 48 other countries plus Hong Kong.

Japanese women in 2011 lost the longest-lived title for the first time in more than 25 years, with Hong Kong women claiming the top place.

In 2012, Hong Kong [women](#) came second with a [life span](#) of 86.30 years, followed by Spain, France and Switzerland.

Japanese men's life expectancy also rose to a record 79.94 years from 79.44 in 2011, becoming fifth longest-lived.

The longest-lived men were Icelanders at 80.8 years, with Hong Kong coming second, Switzerland third and Israel fourth.

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