

# 1. HEALTH STATUS

## 1.2. Life expectancy at age 65

Life expectancy at age 65 has increased significantly among both women and men over the past several decades in all OECD countries. Some of the factors explaining the gains in life expectancy at age 65 include advances in medical care combined with greater access to health care, healthier lifestyles and improved living conditions before and after people reach age 65.

In 2007, life expectancy at age 65 in OECD countries stood, on average, at over 20 years for women and close to 17 years for men (Figure 1.2.1). This represents a gain of almost five years for women and four years for men on average across OECD countries since 1970. Hence, the gender gap in life expectancy at age 65 increased slightly in many countries between 1970 and 2007.

Similarly, life expectancy at age 80 also increased slightly more rapidly among women than among men on average in OECD countries over the past 37 years (Figure 1.2.2). In 2007, life expectancy for women at age 80 stood at 9.2 years (up from 6.5 years in 1970) on average in OECD countries, while the corresponding figure for men was 7.6 years (up from 5.6 years in 1970).

Japan registered particularly strong gains in life expectancy at age 65 in recent decades, with an increase of over eight years for women and six for men between 1970 and 2007. As a result of these large gains, Japanese women and men enjoyed the longest life expectancy at age 65 across all OECD countries in 2007, with respectively 23.6 and 18.6 remaining years of life. These gains in Japan can be explained in part by a marked reduction in death rates from heart disease and cerebro-vascular disease (stroke) among elderly people. Many other OECD countries have also registered significant reductions in mortality from cardio-vascular and cerebro-vascular diseases among elderly populations over the past decades (OECD, 2003a; Moon *et al.*, 2003).

Some countries exhibit different standings when comparing their life expectancies at birth and at age 65. Females in Belgium, the United States and New Zealand improve their position relative to other countries, as do males in the United States, France and Mexico. However, males in the Netherlands, Sweden and Luxembourg, rate lower at 65 years of age, compared with at birth.

Gains in longevity at older ages in recent decades in OECD countries, combined with the trend reduction in

fertility rates, are contributing to a steady rise in the proportion of older persons in OECD countries (see Annex Tables A.2 and A.3).

Life expectancy at age 65 is expected to continue to increase in coming decades. Based on the United Nations/World Bank Population Database, life expectancy at age 65 is projected to reach 21.6 years for women and 18.1 years in 2040 for men on average in OECD countries (OECD, 2007d).

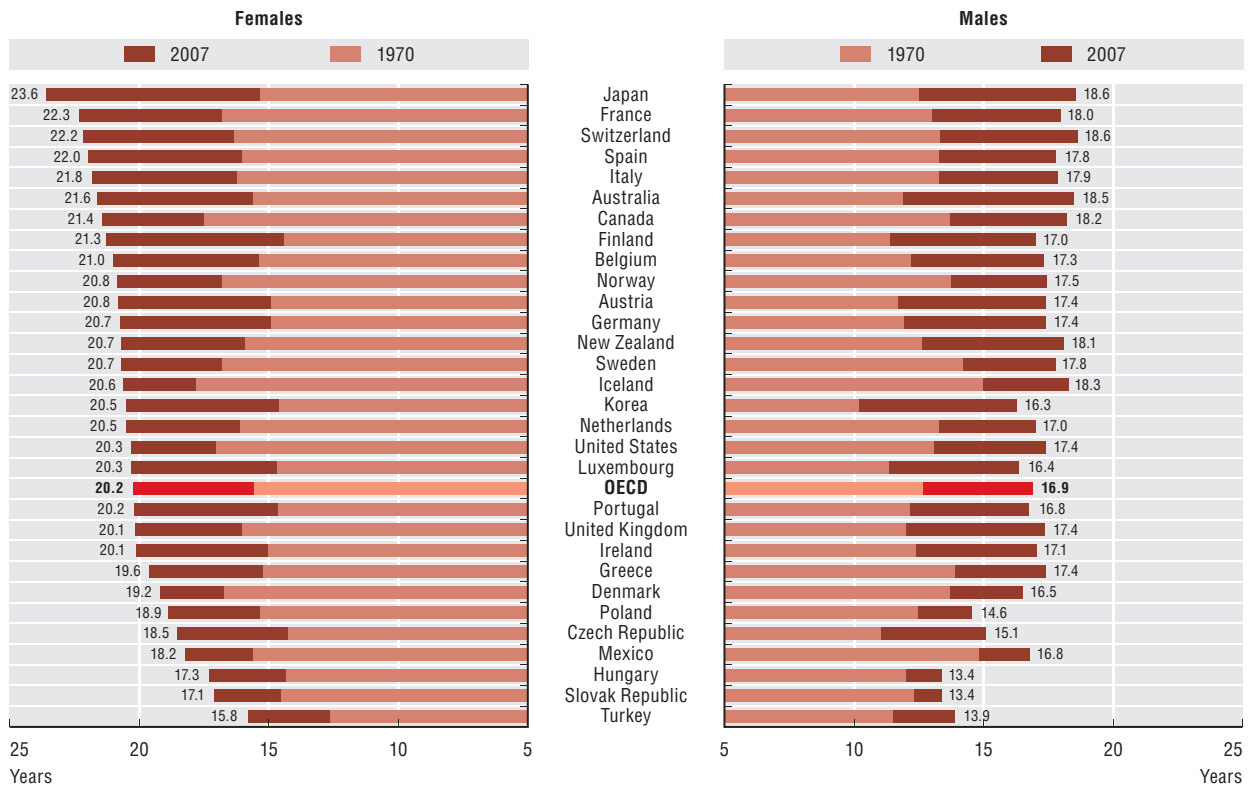
Whether longer life expectancy is accompanied by good health and functional status among ageing populations has important implications for health and long-term care systems. Recent OECD work has found that although there is a declining trend in severe disability among elderly populations in some countries (*e.g.* in the United States, Italy and the Netherlands), this is not universally true (Figure 1.2.3). In some other countries (*e.g.* in Australia and Canada), the rate of severe disability is stable, and in yet other countries (*e.g.* in Sweden and Japan) severe limitations in activities of daily living appear to be on the rise over the past five to ten years. Combined with population ageing, these trends suggest that there will be increasing need for long-term care in all OECD countries in coming decades (Lafortune *et al.*, 2007).

### Definition and deviations

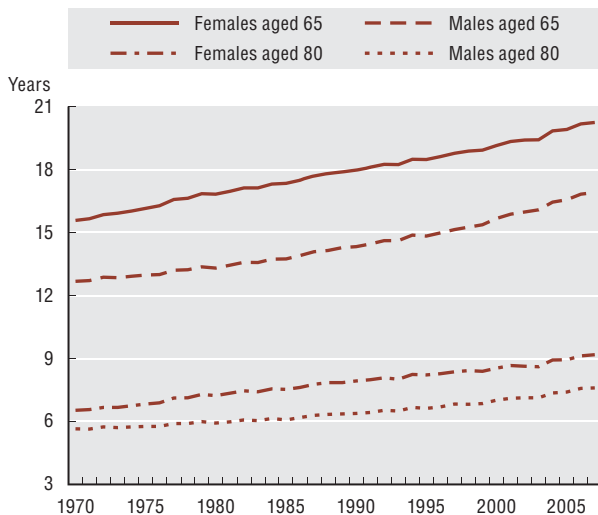
Life expectancy measures how long on average people at a particular age would live based on current age-specific death rates. However, the actual age-specific death rates of any particular birth cohort cannot be known in advance. If age-specific death rates are falling – as has been the case over the past decades in OECD countries – actual life spans will be higher than life expectancy calculated with current death rates.

Countries may calculate life expectancy using methodologies that can vary somewhat. These differences in methodology can affect the comparability of reported life expectancy estimates by a fraction of a year.

### 1.2.1 Life expectancy at age 65 by gender, 1970 and 2007 (or nearest year available)

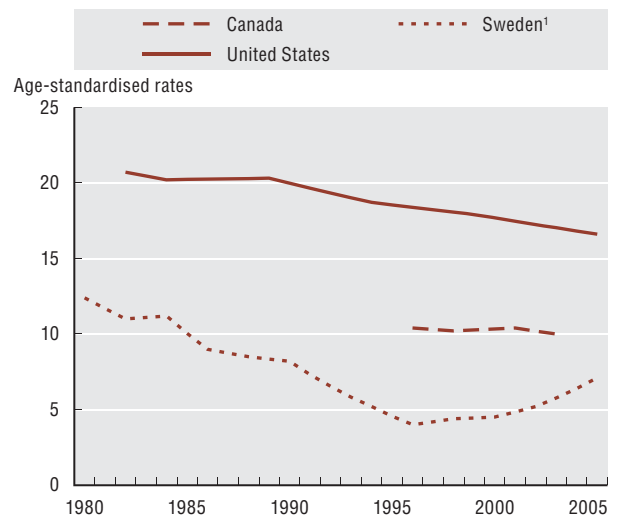


### 1.2.2 Trends in life expectancy at age 65 and at age 80, males and females, OECD average, 1970-2007



Source: OECD Health Data 2009.

### 1.2.3 Trends in severe disability among the population aged 65 and over, selected OECD countries, 1980-2005



1. For Sweden, the data relate only to the population aged 65-84.  
Source: Lafortune et al. (2007).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/717451135213>



**From:**  
**Health at a Glance 2009**  
OECD Indicators

**Access the complete publication at:**  
[https://doi.org/10.1787/health\\_glance-2009-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2009-en)

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2009), "Life expectancy at age 65", in *Health at a Glance 2009: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1787/health\\_glance-2009-4-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2009-4-en)

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to [rights@oecd.org](mailto:rights@oecd.org). Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at [info@copyright.com](mailto:info@copyright.com) or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at [contact@cfcopies.com](mailto:contact@cfcopies.com).