

References

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Further information on the WHO website

HALE estimates for WHO Member States are available in Annex Table 4 of the *World Health Report* on the WHO website at

<http://www.who.int/whr>

Discussion Paper 38 on HALE methods and data sources is available on the WHO website at

<http://www.who.int/evidence>

Key contacts

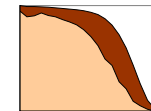
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Healthy life expectancy Measuring average levels of population health in WHO Member States



Annual reporting on levels of population health

Healthy life expectancy summarizes total life expectancy into equivalent years of "full health" by taking into account years lived in less than full health due to diseases and injuries. The World Health Organization (WHO) has for the last three years published estimates of healthy life expectancy as well as total life expectancy for its Member States in its annual World Health Report.

Global patterns of healthy life expectancy

Average healthy life expectancy at birth for the world in the year 2000 is estimated to be 56.0 years. Healthy life expectancy at birth ranges from a low of 39 years for sub-Saharan Africa to 66 years for developed countries (Table 1). It is even higher at 72 years for developed countries, when Eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union countries are excluded.

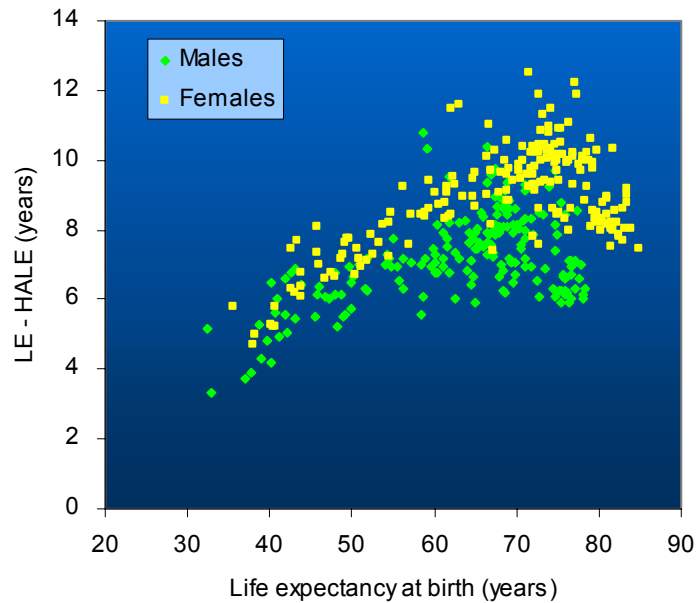
Healthy life expectancy at birth, by UN region, year 2000.

REGION	HALE (years)	REGION	HALE (years)
WORLD TOTAL	56.0		
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES	66.1	Asia ¹	55.5
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES	53.6	Eastern Asia	60.9
Latin America & Caribbean	58.0	South-Central Asia	51.8
Africa	41.4	South-Eastern Asia	55.8
Northern Africa	57.3	Western Asia	50.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	38.7	Oceania ¹	49.6

¹ Regional averages and totals exclude Japan and Australia/New Zealand.

Healthy life expectancy at birth has declined in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union from 62 years in 1990 to 58 years in 2000, reflecting a substantial increase in incidence and mortality due to diseases and injuries during the 1990s in these countries. It has also declined in sub-Saharan Africa from 42 years in 1990 to 39 years in 2000, reflecting the impact of HIV/AIDS. Without HIV/AIDS, healthy life expectancy at birth in sub-Saharan Africa would be almost 6 years higher in 2000. If malaria and tuberculosis were also eliminated, it would have been almost 9 years higher in 2000.

The gap between total life expectancy and healthy life expectancy represents the average lost years of good health. It is plotted below against total life expectancy for 192 WHO Member States for 2002.



Summary measures of population health

Summary measures of population health are measures that combine information on mortality and non-fatal health outcomes. Substantial resources are devoted to reducing the incidence of major diseases that cause ill health but not death and to reducing their impact on people's lives.

So it is important to capture both fatal and non-fatal health outcomes in any summary measure of average levels of population health. Healthy life expectancy adds up expectation of life for different health states with adjustment for severity distribution and thus is sensitive to changes over time or differences between countries in the severity distribution of health states.

Summary measures of population health are used by the World Health Organization to report on levels of health and inequalities in health for its Member States, to report on the causes of loss of health in terms of diseases, injuries and risk factors, to advise on potential gains in health through cost-effective interventions, and in the analysis of the efficiency of health systems around the globe.

Methods and data sources

HALE estimates are based on analysis of mortality data for all WHO Member States, country-specific estimates of health state prevalences for 135 causes from the Global Burden of Disease 2000 study, and an analysis of 71 health surveys in 61 Member States, using new statistical methods to improve the comparability of self-report data.

Healthy life expectancy and economic development

The diagram below shows healthy life expectancy at birth for 191 WHO Member States in 2001, together with 95% uncertainty ranges, plotted against Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita for 2000 in international dollars (purchasing power parity conversion).

