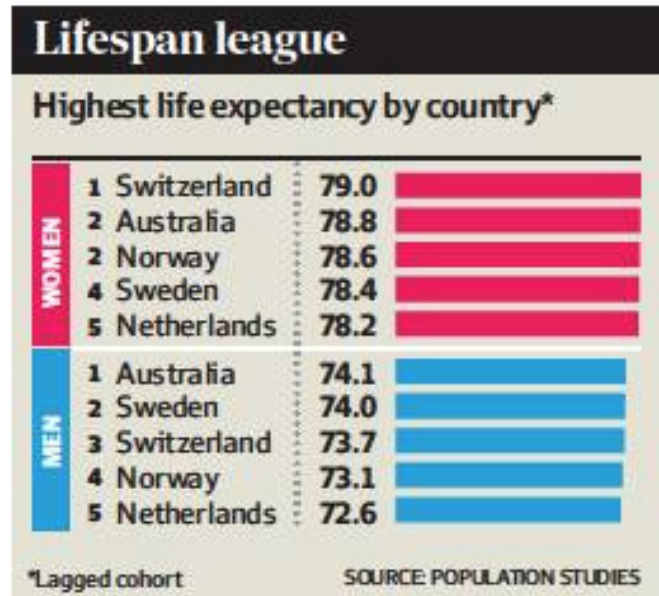


# AUSSIE MEN LIVE LONGEST

by Jill Margo in AFR on 24 Aug 2019

Men's health



A more complex measure of life expectancy saw the Nordic countries fall behind, writes Jill Margo.

Australian men can take a bow. On a new measure of life expectancy, they are living longer than any other group of males in the world.

This is partly because, for a very long time, Australia has enjoyed stability and a high standard of living. That the country is relatively egalitarian has helped too, according to researchers from the Australian National University.

We are accustomed to conventional measures of life expectancy, which are simply based on death rates at a given time. In 2016, that gave Australian men a life expectancy of 80.9, behind Switzerland at 81.3 and Iceland at 81.2.

However, researchers have now applied a different measure of life expectancy, which is more complex and accounts for historical mortality conditions, such as war and economic depression, that today's older generations have lived through.

By this measure, Australian men live 74.1 years on average, ahead of Sweden at 74 and Switzerland at 73.7. Australian women did well, too, with an LCLE of 78.8. They ranked second to Swiss women. Among the reasons for this are that Australia's prosperity has grown and the gap between rich and poor is not that big. "Simple things like having enough to eat and not seeing a lot of major conflict play a part," co-leader of the study, Dr Collin Payne, said. "Popular belief has it that Japan and the Nordic countries are doing really well in terms of health, wellbeing, and longevity. But Australia is right there." The research, published in the journal Population Studies, used a measure called the Lagged Cohort Life Expectancy, or LCLE. It was introduced into demographic literature about 15 years ago then abandoned. The team, from ANU's school of demography, found new uses for it. In this context, it compares a group of people who were born in the same year and experienced similar conditions throughout life. But apart from the glow of coming first, what does this finding actually mean for men?

Payne said by grouping men by year of birth and separating 'early' deaths from 'late' deaths, it came up with the age at which a man could be considered an 'aboveaverage' survivor compared to his peers.

"It means, with 100 per cent certainty, that any Australian man above 74 today has outlived half of men his age and is now in 'above average' territory."

It also allows researchers to see whether someone is reaching their age group's life expectancy. Australia used to lag, but now figures for men are higher than anywhere else the study measured.

It used data from 15 countries with high life expectancies across Europe, North America and Asia.

"In the 1930s, '40s and '50s, mortality was really high in Japan and really low in Australia," he said. "In France, males dropped in the rankings because a giant war was fought on their soil and a lot died from direct conflict or childhood conditions."

He expected, on this measure, that the life expectancy of Australian men would continue to rise.