

## **Singapore 3rd in global life expectancy rankings**

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Singaporeans are expected to remain among the longest-lived people in the world in 2040, according to a new study published in the medical journal, *The Lancet*.

Researchers estimate the average lifespan in Singapore will go up from 83.3 years in 2016 to 85.4 years by 2040, placing it third out of 195 countries.

Spain is expected to place first with an average lifespan of 85.8 years, while Japan will come in second at 85.7 years.

Other countries predicted to be in the top 10 include Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, Israel, France, Luxembourg and Australia.

As a general rule, said researchers in the paper, their forecasts "point to a world where most populations are living longer and many health improvements are likely to occur if current trajectories hold".

The study was carried out by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, an independent health research organisation at the University of Washington. Its findings were released yesterday.

The researchers' conclusions were based on data from the 2016 Global Burden of Disease study, which highlighted the main factors behind sickness, disability and death in individual countries.

The current study is "unprecedented in scope" and provides more robust statistical modelling than previous forecasts, said Dr Kyle Foreman, the lead author.

The study also predicted that several high-income countries, such as the United States, Canada and Norway, are expected to slip significantly in the rankings, as other countries make larger gains.

The average life expectancy in the US was forecast to go from 78.7 in 2016 to 79.8 by 2040. However, this relatively small increase means the US will fall from 43rd to 64th place.

Dr Foreman cautioned that nothing is set in stone. "The future of the world's health is not pre-ordained and there is a wide range of plausible trajectories," he said.

The director of data science at the Washington institute noted: "But whether we see significant progress or stagnation depends on how well or poorly health systems address key health drivers."

The study also highlighted the top 10 causes of death in each country. For Singapore, the top three in 2040 are forecast to be lower respiratory infections, such as pneumonia, followed by dementia and ischaemic heart disease.

Mr Christopher Gee, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, said Singapore's investment in public health over the past few decades has meant most people have grown up in "an ever-improved environment with high standards of healthcare".

He said an area to focus on in the coming years is community care.

Associate Professor Angelique Chan, executive director of the Centre for Ageing Research and Education at Duke-NUS Medical School, also noted: "The right mix of planning, policies and programmes can mean the difference between reaping the longevity dividend with healthy, active and socially engaged seniors staying productive longer, or bearing an increasing public health bill due to more sickly, frail and poorly ageing older adults."