

Health crisis looms as life expectancy soars

LEVEL ONE - ELEMENTARY

1 Pre-reading

Match the words and expressions with the definitions

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. life expectancy | a. the age at which you stop working |
| 2. retirement age | b. all the people who live in a city or country |
| 3. a report | c. to rise, to get bigger |
| 4. population | d. the number of years people live |
| 5. to increase | e. the money you receive when you have retired |
| 6. pension | f. a document that gives information about a specific subject |

Now read the article

Life expectancy in Britain in 2002 is about 75 years for men and 80 years for women. The retirement age is 65 years for men and 60 for women. One hundred years ago, in 1901, life expectancy was just 48 years for men and 49 years for women. This means that men are now living, on average, 27 years longer than 100 years ago and women are living 31 years longer.

Last week a group of scientists published a report about life expectancy. In the report they said that life expectancy would increase even more in the 21st century. In the United States, for example, the official government forecast is that life expectancy for women will be 83.9 years in the year 2070. The report says, however, that it will be much higher than that – it will be as high

as 101 years. The report also says that a baby girl born in France or Japan this year has a 50% chance of living to the age of 100 years. France and Japan have the highest life expectancy in the world.

Life expectancy is an average figure. In the 1880s in Britain, for example, many people lived to the age of 60 or 70, but almost 25% of the population died before the age of 5. So the life expectancy figure for the 1880s was about 46. In the 20th century many scientists said that there was an absolute limit to the human lifespan. The longest time anyone had lived was 122 years. Now, however, many scientists believe that there is no limit to human life and that people in the future will live longer and longer lives.

The report is very important for governments. If life expectancy increases in the 21st century to 85, 90 or even 100, this will cause many problems for the social security, health and pensions systems. There will be more and more old people in the population. If people retire at 65 and live until 100, it will be very expensive to pay pensions and other social costs. Perhaps Western governments will have to increase the retirement age.

The Guardian Weekly 16-5-2002, page 11

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2 Choose the correct answer

1. What is the life expectancy for women in Britain in 2002?
a. 75 years b. 80 years c. 90 years
2. What is the retirement age for men in Britain?
a. 65 years b. 60 years c. 75 years
3. What was the life expectancy for men in 1901?
a. 49 years b. 48 years c. 47 years
4. What is the official forecast for life expectancy for women in the USA for the year 2070?
a. almost 84 years b. more than 84 years c. 101 years
5. Which country has the highest life expectancy?
a. Japan b. the USA c. Britain
6. In the 1880s what percentage of the population died before the age of 5?
a. more than 30% b. more than 25% c. almost 25%
7. What is the longest human lifespan?
a. 101 years b. 122 years c. 129 years

3. Vocabulary work

Fill the gaps using words from the text.

1. Men in Britain are now living 27 years _____ than in 1901.
2. A report on life expectancy was _____ last week.
3. The official government _____ in the USA says that life expectancy will be 83.9 in 2070.
4. The new report says it will be much _____ than 83.9.
5. France and Japan have the _____ life expectancy in the world.
6. In the 1880s many people _____ to the age of 60 or 70.
7. Many scientists think there is no _____ to human life.
8. People in the future will live _____ lives.
9. In future pensions and other social costs will be more _____ .
10. Perhaps the _____ age will increase.

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4. Grammar focus – comparatives and superlatives

Fill the gaps using a comparative or superlative form (eg higher or the highest)

- 1 Life expectancy in Japan is _____ than in Britain.
- 2 Life expectancy in Britain is _____ than in Japan.
- 3 Life expectancy in Japan and France is _____ in the world.
- 4 Life expectancy in 1901 was much _____ than it is now.
- 5 Life expectancy now is much _____ than it was in 1901.
- 6 Pensions will be much _____ in the future.
- 7 Life expectancy in the USA will be _____ in the year 2070 than it is now.
- 8 People today live _____ than they did 100 years ago.

5. Discussion

In future people will live longer and longer lives. Perhaps they will live for 150 or even 200 years. What problems will this cause? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living for 200 years?

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KEY

1 Pre-reading

1 d 2 a 3 f 4 b 5 c 6 e

2 Choose the correct answer

1 b 2 a 3 b 4 a 5 a 6 c 7 b

3 Vocabulary work

- 1 longer
- 2 published
- 3 forecast
- 4 higher
- 5 highest
- 6 lived
- 7 limit
- 8 longer
- 9 expensive
- 10 retirement

4 Grammar focus

- 1 higher
- 2 lower
- 3 the highest
- 4 lower
- 5 higher
- 6 more expensive
- 7 higher
- 8 longer