

Life Expectancy



Noteworthy:

- The life expectancy of Alberta men in 2003 was 77.6 years while women were living to 82.5 years, on average.
- In 2004, most Albertans (59.7%) rated their own health as excellent or very good, with only 3.5% reporting poor health. These numbers are lower than in 1996 when 64.1% of Albertans rated their health as excellent or very good and only 3.0 rated their health as poor.
- Healthy lifestyles lead to longer life — 52% of Albertans in 2004 reported that they had made changes within the previous 12 months to improve their health. Key changes made to improve health include increased exercise, a changed diet and quitting or reducing smoking.

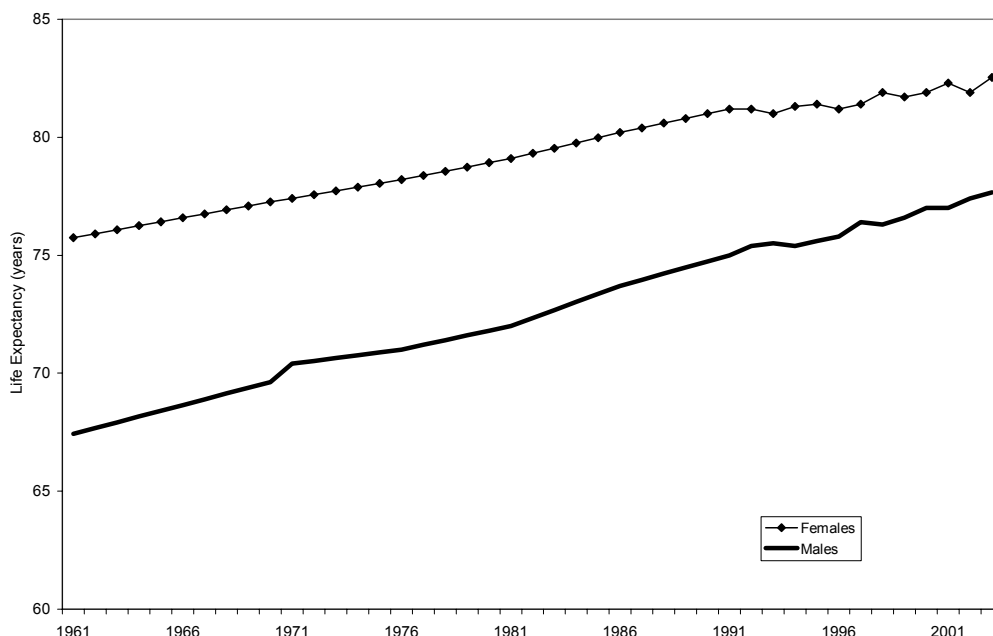
Life Expectancy in Alberta: How Much?

Life expectancy is one of the key indicators of human health and wellness. Most people wish to live long and fulfilling lives. Life expectancy data for Alberta suggest that both men and women in Alberta are living longer than ever before. In 2003, Alberta men were living to an estimated 77.6 years on average while women were living an average of 82.5 years. This is

a significant increase of 6.8 years for women compared with 1961, and 10.2 years of longer life for men. The estimated increase in life expectancy between 1961 and 2003 was greater for men (15%) than for women (9%). This may be due, in part, to more women being in the workforce where they experience more stress and may be more likely to smoke, both of which can

contribute to a range of diseases and illnesses. In 2004 Alberta's average life expectancy for males (77.4 years) was higher than the Canadian average (77.2 years) and Alberta's average life expectancy for females (82.0 years) was lower than the Canadian average (82.3 years).

Life Expectancy for Alberta Men and Women, 1961 to 2003



Source: Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 82-001, 82-003, 91-209 and 84-210, Stats Can CANSIM data Table 102-0511. Data extrapolated over study period.

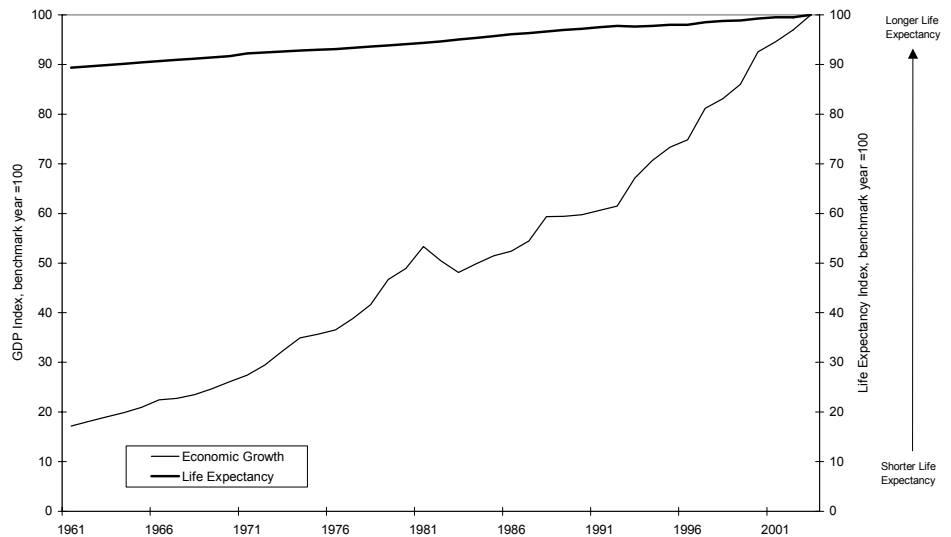
So What?

Living longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives is the ultimate measure of well-being at the individual and household level. Many factors contribute to longer lives, including better diet, good medical facilities and treatment, and improved socio-economic conditions. Although premature mortality and infant mortality are declining, stress is rising, smoking is high among working women, and obesity has increased dramatically. At the same time, citizen surveys reveal that Albertans feel good about their health (see figure below).

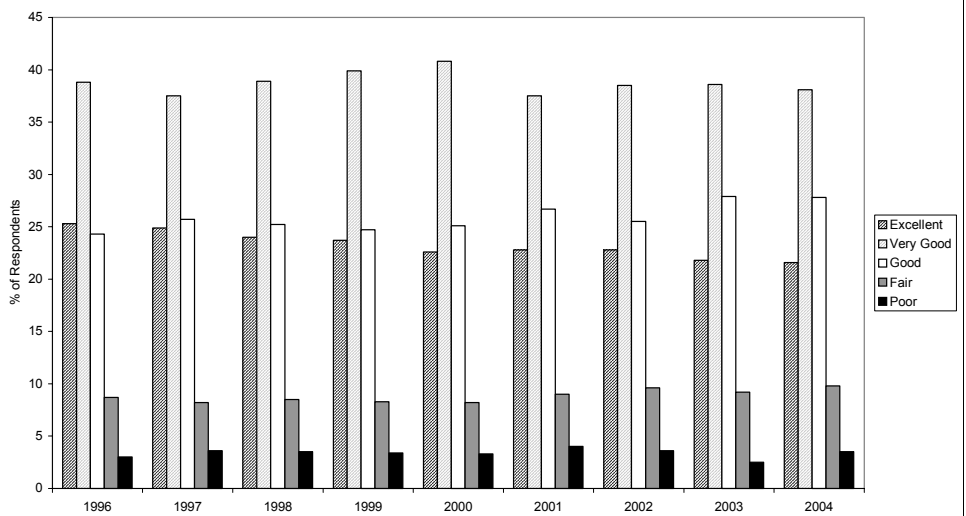
The GPI Accounts include various measures of health and wellness, such as life expectancy and premature mortality, as proxies for health and well-being. Increasing life expectancy contributes to a rising GPI Index. The figure at the above right shows life expectancy expressed as an index, relative to GDP expressed as an index. Life expectancy has continued to rise and was the highest ever in 2003, at 100 points out of a possible 100.

Can this increasing trend in life expectancy be sustained? Some analysts suggest that we might see a saturation point or threshold for life expectancy in both men and women. One of the more important trends to watch is congenital anomalies that can be correlated to environmental influences. Other factors known to influence health and longevity are income and education. Further research into GPI accounting might include examining the complex array of socio-economic and environmental determinants of human health.

Life Expectancy Index: Where are we today?



Self-Rated Health by Albertans, 1996 to 2004



Source: Annual Public Survey About Health and the Health System in Alberta.



Because no price can be placed on human health and wellness, there is no price tag or cost attached to life expectancy within the GPI framework.

As an index, life expectancy index (combined for men and women) reached its peak at 100 in 2003; when the highest level of life expectancy ever achieved was realized.

