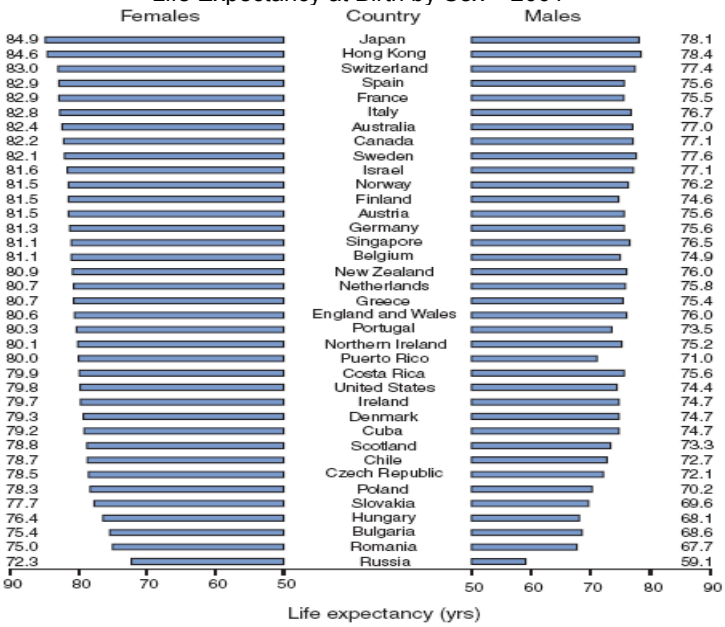
# Health Minute

Life expectancy at birth…

Where you are born can determine how long you will live. The United States spent 16% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on health care yet was ranked 24th for life expectancy at birth. Japan ranked number one for life expectancy but only spent 7.9% of its GDP on health care. Although one third of the amount spent on US health care is spent on people 65 and older, Japan has a similar number of over 65 year olds. The remaining differences between the two countries include health care delivery system and diet. Powerful evidence that health is a result of more than medicine alone.

Life Expectancy at Birth by Sex – 2001




| Japanese Diet | Japanese Health Care |
|---|---|
| Low in saturated fat<br>Twice as much fish as the US<br>Higher food variety (average of 100 different foods per week in Japan vs 30 per week in US)<br>High intake of soy<br>High intake of green tea | Universal coverage<br>Privately owned clinics and hospitals<br>Full coverage for elderly, including prescription medicines<br>Problems on the horizon because of predicted increase in elderly population |