

# POPULATION NOTES

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## MINNESOTA LIFE EXPECTANCY IS NOW 77.9 YEARS

Minnesotans can expect to live longer than ever before. The average life expectancy of Minnesotans in 1990 was 77.9 years, up 1.7 years from the 1980 figure. The life expectancy of males in 1990 was 74.6 years, while females could expect to live 81.0 years (Table 1).

The life expectancy increases during the past decade compare favorably with those of the 1950s and 1960s, especially for males (Figure 1). Though the increases of the 1980s were substantial, they were not as great as the previous decade. The 1970s were a time of dramatic increases in life expectancy. Between 1970 and 1980 Minnesota life expectancy increased 3.2 years.

Table 1. Life Expectancy by Age and Sex

Minnesota: 1989-1990

Age	Average Expected Years of Life Remaining		
	Total	Males	Females
0	77.9	74.6	81.0
1	77.4	74.2	80.5
5	73.5	70.3	76.6
10	68.6	65.4	71.7
15	63.7	60.5	66.7
20	58.9	55.8	61.9
25	54.1	51.1	57.0
30	49.3	46.4	52.1
35	44.5	41.6	47.2
40	39.8	37.0	42.4
45	35.1	32.4	37.6
50	30.5	27.8	33.0
55	26.2	23.5	28.5
60	22.0	19.5	24.2
65	18.2	15.8	20.2
70	14.7	12.6	16.3
75	11.6	9.8	12.8
80	8.8	7.3	9.6
85	6.5	5.5	7.0

### At A Glance...

- During the 1980s, life expectancy increased 2.1 years for Minnesota males and 1.2 years for females.
- Life expectancy gains, though substantial, were lower in the 1980s than in the 1970s.
- Minnesota life expectancy is higher than the national average.
- Life expectancy for African Americans and American Indians is below the state average.
- Life expectancy for Asians and Pacific Islanders is considerably higher than the state average.

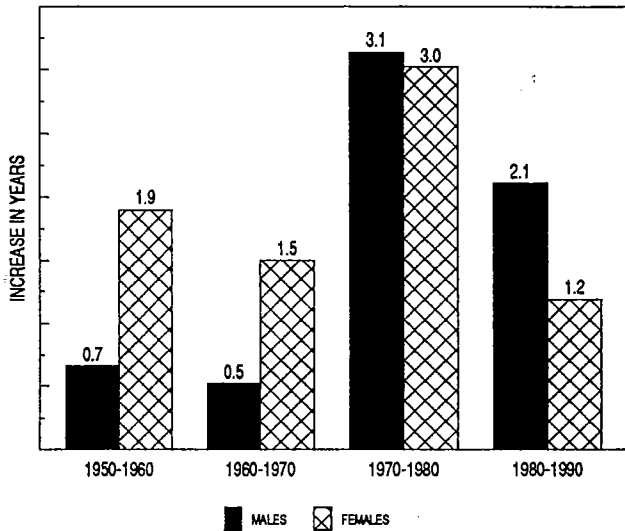
### What Is Life Expectancy?

The 1990 life expectancy figures are derived from models called life tables. A life table shows what would happen if a constant number of people were born each year and mortality rates by age remained constant at current levels. Life expectancy is a widely used measure and is considered a good indicator of the overall mortality experience of a population. Since real-life mortality rates are unlikely to stay constant, the true life expectancy of babies born in 1990 could prove to be higher or lower than the figures shown in the life table.

The Minnesota life expectancy figures are based on one and one-half years of mortality data centered on the April 1, 1990 census date. Although life tables tend to be fairly stable, the results may fluctuate in cases where the population is very small or where data sources are not completely reliable.



**Figure 1. Increases in Life Expectancy at Birth Minnesota 1950-1990**



### Life Expectancy Increases More for Males than Females

Males enjoyed greater increases in life expectancy during the 1980s than females did. Life expectancy went up 2.1 years for males compared to 1.2 years for females. This is in marked contrast to earlier decades. During the 1950s and 1960s life expectancy gains for females far outstripped those for males. In the 1970s males had a larger gain, but the difference was very small, only 0.1 year.

Male increases in life expectancy exceeded those of females only under age 75. After age 75, female increases in life expectancy outstripped those of their male counterparts (Figure 2). Females age 85 in 1990 could expect to live another 7.0 years, an increase of 0.4 years over the 1980 figure. Males age 85 could also expect to live longer in 1990 than in 1980, but the gain was smaller, only 0.2 years.

Females continue to have a much higher life expectancy than males. Minnesota females can expect to live 6.4 years longer than males, down slightly from 7.4 years longer in 1970 (Figure 3). The shrinking gender gap can be attributed to the faster improvement in male life expectancy during the past two decades.

### Survival Rates Improve for All Ages

The increase in life expectancy reflects lower death rates at almost every age for both sexes. Infant

mortality rates have declined, and death rates at older ages also have decreased.

The major reason for the decline in death rates at older ages has been a decline in the rate of death from cardiovascular disease. Cancer death rates have not gone down. Cardiovascular disease and cancer are the two major causes of death.

Minnesotans who retire at age 65 can expect a lengthy retirement. Men who survive to age 65 can expect to live to be 80.8, while women can expect to live to be 85.2 years old.

Some experts on life expectancy believe that growing levels of HIV infection will reduce life expectancy in the future. National data indicate that this is already occurring in the nonwhite population. Unless infection levels are controlled, the increases could offset the lower mortality rates from other causes. This is particularly true because HIV infection affects primarily young and middle-aged people.

### Minnesota Life Expectancy Is High

Minnesota life expectancy is high by national standards. In 1980, Minnesota ranked second in life expectancy, trailing only Hawaii. Minnesota will probably continue to rank among the upper echelon of states in 1990. National life expectancy figures for 1990 are not available, but in 1988 U.S. life expectancy was 74.9, three years below the Minnesota figure for 1989-1990.

**Figure 2. Increase in Life Expectancy 1980-1990**

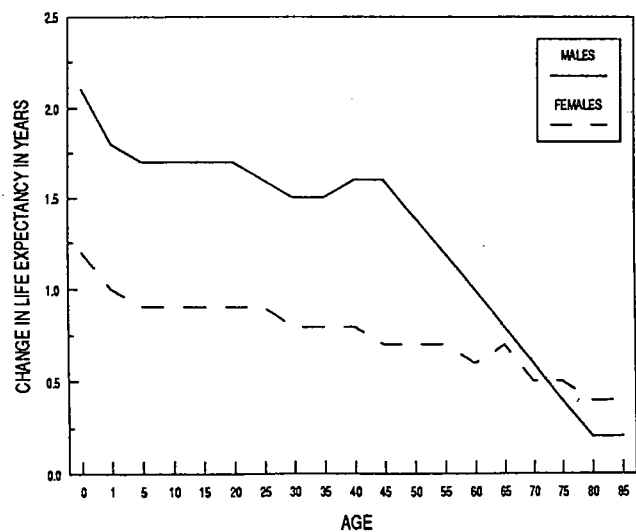
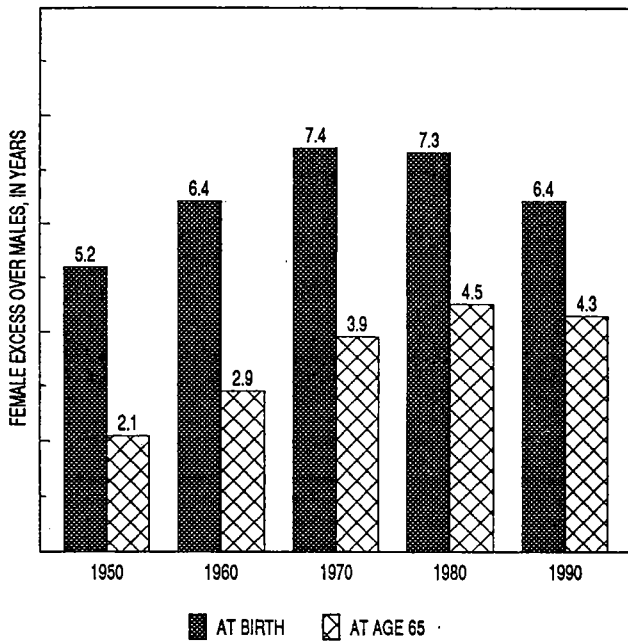


Figure 3. Sex Differences in Life Expectancy



The reasons for the higher Minnesota life expectancy are not known. It may be partly explained by differences in racial composition. Minnesota's population is predominantly white and white life expectancy is higher than nonwhite life expectancy. Racial composition does not explain all of the difference between Minnesota and the U.S., however. White Minnesotans live about two years longer than the national average for whites.

### Nonwhite Life Expectancy Higher and Lower than Average

White Minnesotans have a considerably higher life expectancy than African American and American Indian residents (Figure 4). Asian and Pacific Islander Minnesotans, however, have a much higher life expectancy than whites.

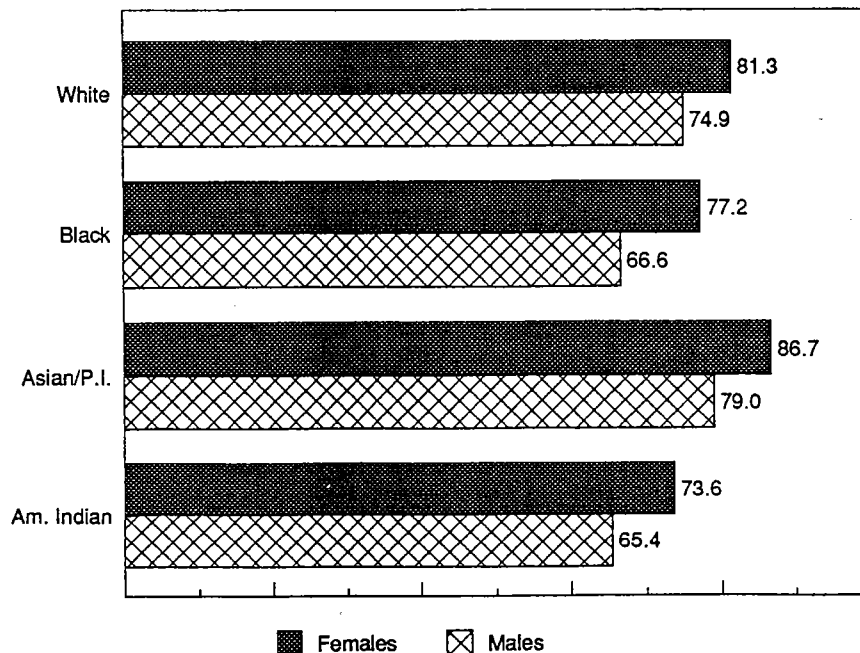
American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts have the lowest life expectancy. American Indian females in Minnesota have a life expectancy of 73.6 years, while for males the figure is only 65.4 years. Life expectancy is also well below average for the black population, 77.2 years for females and 66.6 for males.

Though life expectancy tables are probably less reliable for the nonwhite population because of the relatively small populations, the available figures suggest that American Indians and African American males in Minnesota have not experienced the same gains in life expectancy enjoyed by the rest of the population between 1980 and 1990.

Life expectancy for the Minnesota white population is very close to that of the state's total population: 81.3 years for females and 74.9 years for males.

The life expectancy figures for Asians or Pacific Islanders in Minnesota appear to be unrealistically high. Life expectancy for female Asians or Pacific Islanders was 86.7 years. For males, life expectancy was 79.0 years. These figures exceed by a considerable margin those of any known population. International comparisons, for example, show that the longest life expectancy for women is 83.0 years

Figure 4. Minnesota Life Expectancy by Race 1990



in Switzerland, while the longest life expectancy for males is found in Japan, 76.0 years.

There are several possible explanations for the high life expectancies for Minnesota Asians or Pacific Islanders. One possible explanation is that the Asian or Pacific Islander population is in fact extraordinarily long-lived. Another possibility is that the age and mortality data for Asians are recorded differently or less accurately. A third possibility is that the phenomenon results from a one-time historical event stemming from the mix of immigrant populations, who are on average very young, and native-born Asian populations, whose age distribution resembles that of the general population. The immigrant populations would tend to have low mortality rates because of their youthful age distribution, while the mortality rates for elderly native-born Asians probably compare favorably with those of the white population.

The Minnesota life expectancies for Asians or Pacific Islanders are not unprecedented. They are comparable to unpublished figures produced by the Census Bureau and by the State of California, both based on much larger Asian or Pacific Islander populations. Both these sources show life expectancies for Asians that are much higher than

the national or white averages. Future research may clarify whether Asian life expectancy is really so high or whether the figures result from some other factor.

**Note:**

The data on age, race and sex used to prepare the life tables come from the Modified Age Race Sex file prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. These data are 1990 census data modified to conform with federal guidelines on race classifications. The death data were provided by the Minnesota Center for Health Statistics.

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