

Japanese people living longer than ever: govt

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Elderly people work out with wooden dumb-bells at a temple in Tokyo in September 2008. Japanese people are living longer than ever, with the average life expectancy now a world-record 86.44 years for women and 79.59 years for men, the health and welfare ministry said Monday.

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Japanese women extended their life expectancy by more than four months in 2009 from the previous year, while men added some three months.

Japanese women's longevity set a world record, followed by 86.1 years for women in Hong Kong and 84.5 years for French women, said the ministry.

Japanese men's average life expectancy came fifth globally, compared with 81.0 years for men in Qatar, the world's highest, followed by Hong Kong,

Iceland and Switzerland, the ministry said.

The Japanese people are renowned for their longevity, attributed in part to a healthy diet, active [lifestyle](#) and good [health care](#).

But the long life expectancy is also set to cause problems for Japan, which has one of the world's lowest birth rates, leaving a shrinking working [population](#) to support a growing mass of retirees.

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