



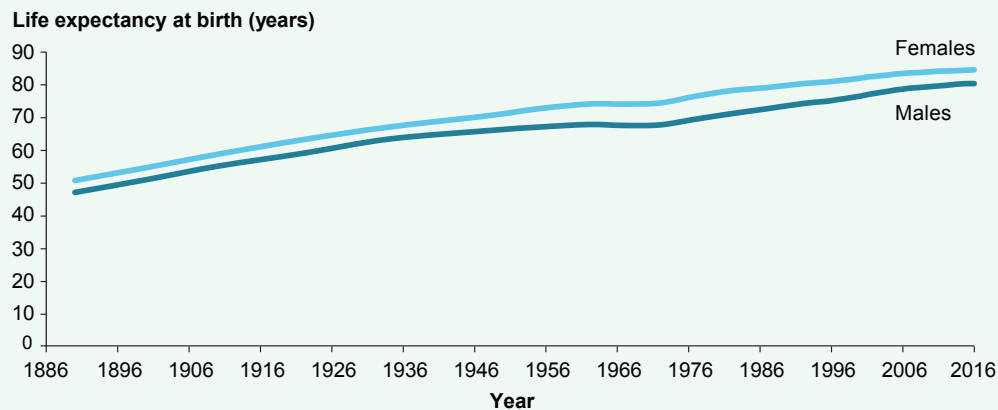
1.3 How healthy are Australians?

Australians generally have good health. We know this based on the range of measures we use (see Chapter 1.1 'What is health?') to compare our health over time or with that of other countries (see Chapter 1.5 'International comparisons').

Australians are living longer...

Life expectancy at birth in Australia has risen steadily over time. In 2016, life expectancy at birth was 80.4 years for males and 84.6 years for females (Figure 1.3.1).

Figure 1.3.1: Life expectancy at birth, by sex, 1886–2016



Sources: ABS 2014, 2017; Table S1.3.1.

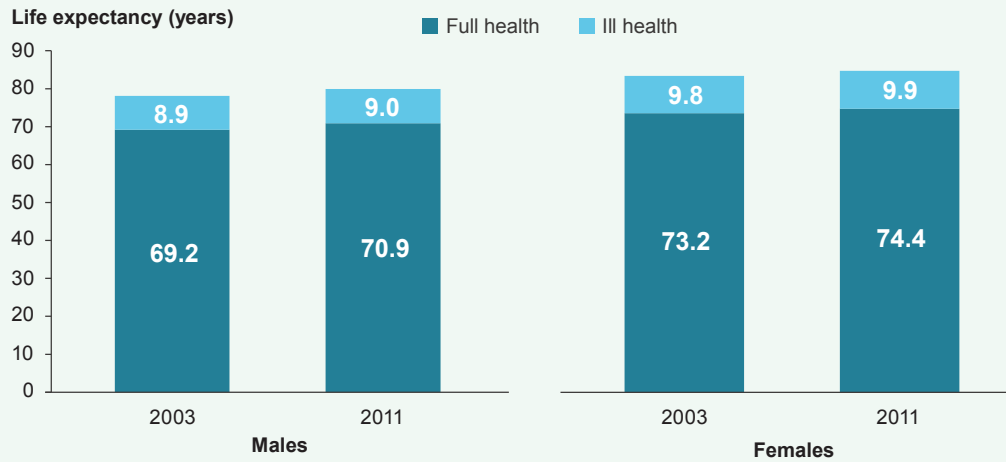
Life expectancy measures how long, on average, a person is expected to live, based on current age and sex-specific death rates. Life expectancy changes over a person's lifetime; as they survive through birth, childhood and adolescence, their chance of reaching older age increases. Men aged 65 in 2016 could expect to live another 19.6 years and women aged 65 could expect to live another 22.3 years (ABS 2017).

...and with more years in good health

Are longer lives also healthier lives? During their lifetime, a person can have different states of health. The health-adjusted life expectancy (HALE) estimates, on average, how many years a person will live in full health. As life expectancy has increased, so, too, has the HALE—meaning people are living longer, and with more years of full health. Males born in 2011 could expect 1.7 more years in full health than males born 8 years earlier; females could expect 1.2 more years. These gains in healthy years are comparable to the gains in life expectancy. We are still, however (in 2011), living the same number of years in ill health as we were in 2003: 9.0 years for males and 9.9 for females (Figure 1.3.2).



Figure 1.3.2: Life expectancy at birth in full health (HALE) and ill health, by sex, 2003 and 2011



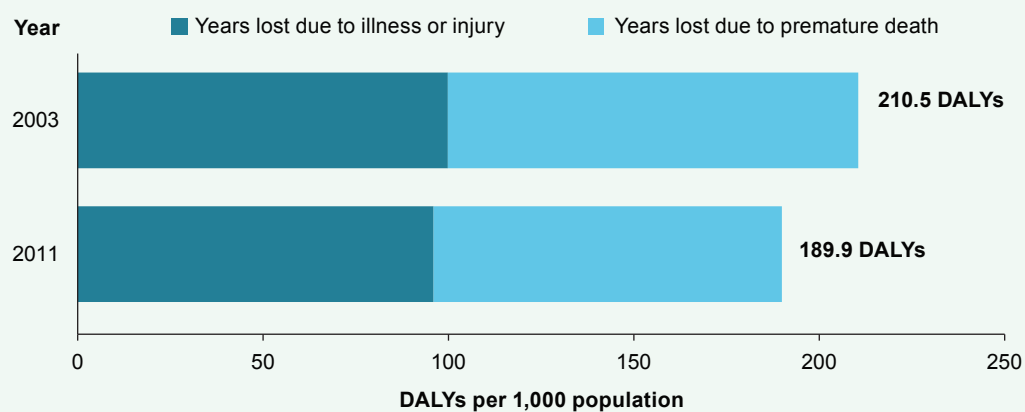
Source: AIHW 2017; Table S1.3.2.

Australia is making population health gains

We can assess the current health status of the population by looking at the impact of living with illness and dying early. We call this the 'burden of disease' and express it as disability adjusted life years (DALYs). (DALYs measure the number of years of healthy life lost due either to premature death—dying before the ideal life span—or to living with ill health due to illness or injury.)

There were good gains in the health of the Australian population between 2003 and 2011. Based on findings from the 2011 Australian Burden of Disease Study, the age-standardised DALY rate fell by 10%, mostly due to reductions in premature death (Figure 1.3.3).

Figure 1.3.3: Composition of total burden of disease (DALY rate), 2003 and 2011



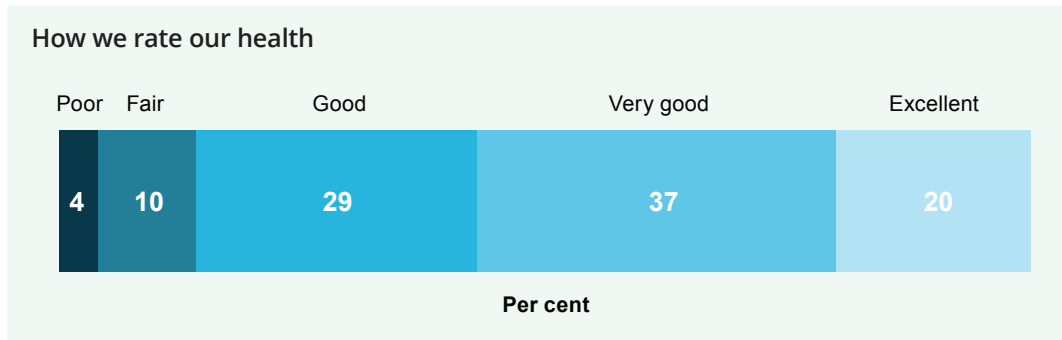
Source: AIHW 2016; Table S1.3.3.





Australians rate their health well

In 2014–15, more than half (57%) of Australians aged 15 and over self-rated their health as ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’—similar to the proportion recorded a decade earlier, in 2004–05 (ABS 2015).



These self-assessed health measures provide insight into the health of Australians at a population level. Health indicators are an important way to assess not only the health of our population but also the success of our health services and the health system. The health indicators currently agreed for national reporting are presented in Chapter 1.4 ‘Indicators of Australia’s health’. This report also presents disease-specific measures of mortality and morbidity in Chapter 3. Some population groups have higher rates of illness, health risk factors and death than others. Chapters 5 and 6 present information on health inequalities and measure the health of selected population groups.

Where do I go for more information?

Self-assessed health measures are collected in the Australian Bureau of Statistics National Health Survey. The most recent results for the [2014–15 National Health Survey](#) and measures of life expectancy are available at www.abs.gov.au.

The reports *Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011* and *Health-adjusted life expectancy in Australia: expected years lived in full health 2011* are available for free download from www.aihw.gov.au.

References

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