

2020 SHAPE update

The SHAPE Analyser has been updated from 24 February 2020. This reflects the Australian Government Actuary's report on the effect of the 2016 Census on the Australian Life Tables.

What's happening?

Life expectancies increased over the past five years but not at the same rate as the past 25 years. The slowdown has been more obvious in middle ages (30-50) and in the 90's.

What are the implications?

The Australian report does not speculate on causes. However, a recent report reviewed declining life expectancies in the USA, despite it's having the highest per capita health spending in the world.

A similar pattern emerged of higher mortality in the midlife group. The report suggests this has been years in the making and will be many years in the solution. This is a clear message for all 'developed' countries like Australia.

Alongside the medical solutions pursued in the past, it's clear the social determinants of health need much more attention. Income inequality, poverty, employment stability and psychological distress are all involved and become more 'visible' as medical conditions such as hypertension, obesity and renal failure. To some extent their rise may have been masked by success in other areas such as cancer and heart disease.

Our focus should not be diverted from the big impact of the baby boomer bulge on aged care services and our ability to fund them

However it looks like another bulge is coming down the track. What we need to improve now will have to be maintained.

What can we do?

At the community level we have to steer a careful course between challenging short term issues and the relentless march of longer term consequences.

Effective longer term action requires better education about the social issues that drive or obstruct increasing longevity and the problems that will arise if we don't act now.

What about me?

Firstly, refresh your SHAPE Analyser results. We change over time anyway but to step back and get our perspective on what might lie ahead is a good basis for reviewing our personal plans.

As a reminder, try a focus on two important action areas that have been reinforced by research since the last Analyser update – our social connectedness and the need for regular exercise.

Social connectedness

Refresh your plans by looking under the Knowledge tab in Surroundings at our article **Interacting with Others**.

Regular exercise

Some very recent research suggests that the goal should be 'to steadily improve', regardless of where we are now. We don't have to feel defensive about ourselves – just do what we can to improve, in conjunction with our health advisers.

After updating your SHAPE results, use the suggested **Immediate** action items in your Longevity Plan to make the best of your future.