

# TeachEcoKnowmics Blog Post 4

Jonathan Lam

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This week I read “These countries may soon have the highest life expectancies,” by Ashley Welsh on CBS News on October 18, 2018. Unlike the other articles I’ve read so far, this one was written before the coronavirus was widely known, and thus unencumbered by it. This is especially interesting as this article is about a health issue, and it would definitely be interesting to see what the current trends and predictions are and how they differ from just four years ago.

This article uses data and predictions from a medical journal called The Lancet. The study is simply about where countries currently stand with regard to their life expectancies, as well as their life expectancies in 2040 (22 years after the article was written). As expected, life expectancies are generally expected to increase; however, on the lower-end of the predictions, life expectancies for almost half of the countries may decrease. In particular, the U.S., which has a very mediocre ranking of 43rd out of 195 countries, is expected to decrease to a ranking of 64th by 2040 with a modest life expectancy increase of only 1.1 years. Japan, which currently holds the top spot, is expected to become second to Spain in 2040.

The article explains that there is a range of predictions, due to whether we address “key risk factors, levels of education, and per-capita income.” This is stated before the extended coronavirus pandemic is known, which definitely affects life expectancies. Not only does the coronavirus directly cause an increase in deaths (key risk factors?), it is also widening the inequality gap (levels of education and per-capita income). And now, with the latest wave of coronavirus waning, financial anxiety is still very high with the high rates of inflation and the international conflict in Eastern Europe (which may also affect life expectancies in many ways in the relevant countries, especially if the sanctions on Russia have long-term effects).

In summary, while medical journals may place trends on life expectancies based on medical data and other trends, it seems that there is a large volatility in the world at this time (health-wise, economically, and politically) that may cause large variations in future health and life-expectancies.