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# TOM TOM ENGLISH



## VOCABULARY

### Longevity =

Long life

### Mirthful =

Merry, amusing, easy  
to laugh

### Conducive =

Conditions that make a  
certain outcome likely

### Incapacitated =

Deprived of strength or  
power; debilitated;  
unable to move

### Conventional

### Wisdom =

A generally accepted  
theory or belief

## Read the article overleaf and discuss these questions:

1. Did you know that laughing - even for no reason - is associated with long life?
2. Do you agree with Sapio that Japan is an “unhealthy longevity superpower”? Why? Why not?
3. Are you surprised that “connectedness” is so important, especially for men?
4. The article says that cooperative associations are important for longevity. What associations are you a member of? Do you feel that they will help to increase your longevity?
5. Do you consider yourself to be liberal or conservative? Now that you know that liberals live longer, will you change your thinking? Why? Why not?
6. What do you do to prolong your life?

## VOCABULARY

### Fostering =

Encourage the  
development of  
something

### Conviviality =

Being cheerful, friendly,  
lively

### Go astray =

To become lost or  
mislaid

### Notorious =

Famous or well-known  
for a negative reason.

### Anomaly =

Something that deviates  
from the standard,  
normal or expected.

Want to live long? Laugh. Got nothing to laugh about? Laugh anyway. Many factors go into **longevity**, some obvious, others mysterious. It makes sense, somehow, that a **mirthful** disposition would be **conducive** to long life – people who laugh naturally live, on average, seven years longer than those of sour mien. The surprise is that even forced laughter is life-promoting – not as much so a natural laughter, but by roughly two years over non-laughers.

Japan's longevity is world-leading, men living on average 79 years, women 86. A closer look blunts the celebration that seems to call for, says Sapio: "Japan is an unhealthy longevity superpower." Health ministry statistics illustrate the point. On average, they show, Japanese spend the last 10 years of their lives ill or **incapacitated** to the point of needing care.

The conventional wisdom on health and longevity is deceptively misleading, the magazine finds. Eat sensibly, exercise moderately, rest sufficiently – and live long. It's still good advice, but far from the whole story. It fails to include what medical experts now consider the most important point of all – "connectedness." Isolation is the biggest killer, and promotes illness.

Dr Yoshiki Ishikawa cites American research comparing the longevity of married people versus single or divorced; people who socialize or engage in volunteer activities versus people who don't. The difference is too marked to be mere chance: the death rate for "unconnected" men versus "connected" men is 2.3 times higher; 2.8 times higher for women.

Particularly striking in Japan are regional differences in longevity. Yamanashi and Shizuoka Prefectures top the list. Nature in both places is abundant and beautiful,

leading to much hiking, climbing and vegetable consumption. Shizuoka in particular boasts an old tradition of **fostering** "connectedness". It's rich in "cooperative associations," where membership dues finance group travel, group dinners and other forms of life-stretching, health-promoting conviviality.

Okinawa on the other hand, with nature, sunshine and **conviviality** to spare, somehow **went astray**. For years it was Japan's longest-living prefecture. Women still do well, ranking 3rd nationwide, but men have fallen to 30th place. The Westernized diet gets the largest share of the blame, with lack of exercise likely a close second. "I see this as where Japan as a whole is heading," Dr. K Nagao tells Sapio.

Laugh. It's good for you, as was shown above, and life is funny, if you look at it correctly. Liberals, it seems, live longer than conservatives. Why? Perhaps the conservative fight to preserve the past is a losing battle and this takes a toll. Poverty does too, and it's no surprise to find the rich living longer than the poor – but rich people with solid academic records live longer than rich people who were mediocre scholars. Intellectual capacity may be life-enhancing, but why should it should be life-prolonging?

Cancer varies remarkably by region. Akita, Niigata and Yamagata are **notorious** for stomach cancer. All are snowed in in winter so have diets heavy on salt. Bowel cancer rages in Akita, Aomori, and Kyoto; lung cancer in Wakayama and Ishikawa; liver cancer in Fukuoka, Osaka and Wakayama.

A final **anomaly**: cancer death rates tend to be lower in prefectures where cancer rates are highest. That's where the best