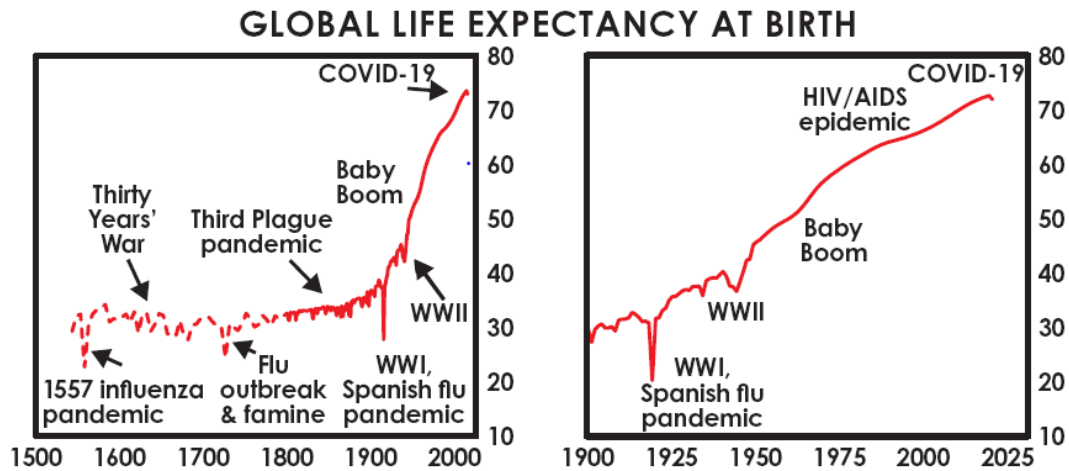


Largest Events Driving Changes to Life Expectancy Through Time

In my book *The Changing World Order: Why Nations Succeed and Fail*, I show these charts of how life expectancy has changed through time. Here, I wanted to share some of the largest events that drove these historical moves up and down. Note that prior to 1800, these charts only reflect shifts in UK life expectancy, but I am listing global events here and including events over a longer time frame.



This list is necessarily incomplete, due to both missing data and the difficulty of determining the death toll of some events. Our goal here is to provide some color on the types and frequency of large death events through time as opposed to creating a complete catalogue.

| Event | Type | Dates | Region | Death Toll (Million) | Death Toll (% Wld Pop) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Conquests by Genghis Khan | War | 1206-27 | Asia | 40 | 10.2% |
| Great Famine | Famine | 1315-17 | Europe | - | - |
| Hundred Years' War | War | 1337-1453 | Europe | 3.5 | 0.9% |
| Black Death | Pandemic | 1347-52 | Europe/Asia/Africa | 150 | 38.3% |
| Fall of Yuan Dynasty | Internal Conflict | 1340-70 | China | 7.5 | 1.9% |
| Conquests by Tamerlane | War | 1370-1405 | Asia | 17 | 4.4% |
| New World smallpox | Pandemic | Starting 1520 | Americas | - | - |
| Cocoliztli epidemic | Pandemic | 1545-48 | Mexico | 12 | 2.4% |
| Russian Time of Troubles | Internal Conflict | 1606-13 | Russia | 5 | 0.9% |
| Thirty Years' War | War | 1618-48 | Europe | 7.5 | 1.3% |
| Deccan famine | Famine | 1630-32 | India | 7.4 | 1.3% |
| Fall of Ming Dynasty | War/Internal Conflict | 1635-52 | China | 25 | 4.4% |
| Great Bengal famine | Famine | 1770-76 | India | 10 | 1.1% |
| Chalisa famine | Famine | 1783-84 | India | 10 | 1.1% |
| Doja bara famine | Famine | 1791-92 | India | 10 | 1.0% |
| Revolutionary/Napoleonic Wars | War | 1792-1815 | Europe | 4 | 0.4% |
| Four Famines in China | Famine | 1810-49 | China | 45 | 4.3% |
| Taiping Rebellion | Internal Conflict | 1850-64 | China | 20 | 1.6% |
| Madras famine | Famine | 1876-78 | India | 8 | 0.6% |
| North China Famine | Famine | 1876-79 | China | 11 | 0.8% |
| Mahdist War | War/Internal Conflict | 1881-98 | Sudan | 5.5 | 0.4% |
| Third plague | Pandemic | Starting 1885 | Global | 12 | 0.8% |
| Congo Free State | War | 1885-1908 | Africa | 10 | 0.7% |
| WWI | War | 1914-18 | Largely Europe | 15 | 0.8% |
| 1918 flu | Pandemic | 1918-20 | Global | 50 | 2.7% |
| Russian Civil War | Internal Conflict | 1918-22 | Russia | 9 | 0.5% |
| Famine in Russia | Famine | 1921-22 | Russia | 5 | 0.3% |
| Chinese Civil War | Internal Conflict | 1927-49 | China | 7 | 0.4% |
| Famine in China | Famine | 1927-29 | China | 6.5 | 0.3% |
| Famine in Ukraine | Famine | 1932-33 | USSR | 5 | 0.2% |
| WWII | War | 1939-45 | Global | 65 | 2.8% |
| Great Leap Forward famine | Famine | 1958-60 | China | 32 | 1.1% |
| Vietnam War | War | 1954-75 | Vietnam | 4.2 | 0.2% |
| HIV/AIDS | Pandemic | 1981-Present | Global | 35 | 0.8% |
| Famine in North Korea | Famine | 1995-99 | North Korea | 2.5 | 0.0% |
| Second Congo War | War | 1998-2003 | Africa | 3.8 | 0.1% |
| COVID-19 (through Nov 2021) | Pandemic | 2019-Present | Global | 5 | 0.1% |

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