

Healthy Life Expectancy in Scotland

Update of trends to 2010

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About this Release

An annual update of the Healthy life expectancy topic has been completed on the Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) website. It includes previously unpublished data on life expectancy and healthy life expectancy up to 2010 for Scotland overall and its deprivation quintiles, along with updates using information from other published sources on deprivation decile trends and within-UK comparisons.

Key Points

Whereas **life expectancy (LE)** is an estimate of how many years a person might be expected to live, **healthy life expectancy (HLE)** is an estimate of how many years they might live in a 'healthy' state. HLE is a key summary measure of a population's health.

- The most recent annual estimates for Scotland are for boys born in 2010 to live 76.3 years on average, 59.5 of these in a 'healthy' state. Girls born in 2010 would be expected to live 80.7 years on average, 61.9 of these years being 'healthy'.
- Underlying trends in both LE and HLE at birth show a general improvement in Scotland over recent years.
- There is a major discontinuity in the HLE series between 2008 and 2009 due to a change in methodology to align with the European Union. This results in estimates of HLE at birth from 2009 onwards being over 8 years lower for each sex. These new estimates form the start of a new time trend for future years.
- The gap between LE and HLE (the years expected to be spent in a 'not healthy' state during the average lifetime) has been fairly constant for females between 1980 and 2008, but tended to increase for males.
- There are considerable variations in LE and HLE at birth in Scotland between males and females and among different geographical and socio-economic groupings.
- For example, in 2009-10, male LE at birth ranged from 81.0 years in the least deprived quintile to 70.1 years in the most deprived quintile (a difference of 10.9 years). For male HLE at birth, the figures were 68.5 and 50.0 years respectively (a difference of 18.5 years). For females, LE at birth ranged from 84.2 years in the least deprived quintile to 76.8 years in the most deprived quintile (a difference of 7.4

years) while for HLE at birth, the figures were 70.5 and 52.5 years respectively (a difference of 18.0 years).

- LE and HLE both tend to be worse (lower) in Scotland than in the UK as a whole.
- Scotland has one of the lowest LEs in Western Europe. International comparisons of HLE are hampered by the lack of consistent health measures. However, on the basis of a related indicator, disability-free life expectancy, Scotland would appear to compare poorly with many Western European countries, particularly for males.

Background

HLE at birth is a theoretical measure of the number of years that a newborn baby would live in a 'healthy' state if they experienced the death rates and levels of general health of the local population at the time of their birth, throughout their life. It is not a true prediction of HLE, since death rates may increase or decrease during a person's lifetime, and people may move to areas with different mortality risks and views of their own health.

LE and HLE estimates should be interpreted as providing a general indication of these measures over time, rather than precise and robust figures. The results include 95% confidence limits to give some indication of the stability of the estimates. The ScotPHO website [HLE introduction page](#) and [technical paper](#) provide further details on methodology.

The ScotPHO website contains comprehensive information on a wide range of topics including: behaviour; health, wellbeing and disease; and clinical risk factors. Along with summary data and statistics, the website provides background information, interpretation, policy notes, commentaries on data sources, references and links to further information.

Contact

Dr Alison Burlison

Senior Information Analyst

Alison.Burlison@nhs.net

0131 275 6216

Further Information

Further information can be found on the [ScotPHO website](#) or on the [ISD website](#).

About ISD

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up.

Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland - and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government Health Department and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

About ScotPHO

The Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) collaboration is led by ISD Scotland and NHS Health Scotland, and includes the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, National Records of Scotland and Health Protection Scotland. Our aim is to make public health information more accessible and usable to improve health and reduce inequalities in Scotland. Metadata and pre-release access information for this publication is available [here](#).