

## Healthy Life Expectancy in Scotland

Update of trends to 2011

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### About this Release

This is the annual update of the Healthy life expectancy topic on the Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) website. This publication includes previously unpublished data on life expectancy (LE) and healthy life expectancy (HLE) for 2011 at Scotland level, and an update of international comparisons using information from other published sources.

Note that HLE estimates for geographies such as CHP and NHS board cannot be updated until after the 2011 Census data on self-assessed health are released.

### 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 2011 to live 76.6 years on average, 60.4 of these in a 'healthy' state. Girls born in 2011 would be expected to live 80.9 years on average, 62.7 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.
- Time trends show that the gap between the sexes, in both LE and HLE at birth, has narrowed over time. For LE at birth the difference between males and females was 6.4 years in 1980, falling to 4.3 years in 2011. For HLE at birth the difference between males and females was 3.3 years in 1980, falling to 2.3 years in 2011.

- LE is significantly worse (lower) in Scotland than in the UK as a whole, for both males and females. HLE is significantly worse (lower) in Scotland than in the UK for males, but similar for females.
- 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, healthy life years (HLY), it would appear that, in comparison with many European countries, Scotland fares badly for males but compares better for females.

## 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.

Note that this publication was delayed from December 2012 pending the release by National Records of Scotland of an important component of the LE and HLE calculations; the 2011 Scotland mid-year population estimates rebased to the 2011 Census.

## Contact

### Dr Alison Burlison

Principal Information Analyst

[Alison.Burlison@nhs.net](mailto:Alison.Burlison@nhs.net)

0131 275 6216

### Ruth Gordon

Senior Information Analyst

[r.gordon@nhs.net](mailto:r.gordon@nhs.net)

0131 275 6335

## Further Information

The [publication](#) and [further information on methodology](#) can be found on the ScotPHO website.

[Metadata and pre-release access information](#) for this publication are also available.

### 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.

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### 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.