

Healthy Life Expectancy in Scotland

Executive Summary

Further information

The full Healthy Life Expectancy in Scotland report is available on the website of the Information and Statistics Division at www.isdscotland.org/HLE. Production of the report was funded by the Scottish Executive Health Department and overseen by the Healthy Life Expectancy Measurement in Scotland Steering Group.

What is Healthy Life Expectancy?

Healthy life expectancy (HLE) is defined as the number of years people can expect to live in good health. The discrepancy between healthy and total life expectancy (LE) therefore indicates the length of time people can expect to spend in poor health.

Why is it useful?

HLE provides a single summary measure of a population's health, which takes account of the population's health status whilst alive, and the death rate at different ages. HLE measures can be used to look at health trends, to compare the health of different populations or population subgroups, and to assist resource allocation, planning of health and other services, and evaluation of interventions.

First published estimates of HLE for Scotland

The Healthy Life Expectancy in Scotland report provides the first published estimates of HLE for the Scottish population. The report provides estimates of HLE for females and males separately, at birth and at age 65. Estimates are available for Scotland as a whole, for deprivation quintiles, and for NHS Board and Local Council areas. This executive summary provides selected results from the full report, and summarises recommendations for future monitoring of HLE.

Estimates of HLE depend on the way good health is defined, and on the source of the health status data used in the calculations. The two main approaches to defining good health used in the report are:

- use of limiting longstanding illness (LLI), where 'good health' is defined as reporting the absence of LLI, and
- use of self-assessed general health status (SAH), where 'good health' is defined as reporting health as 'good' or 'fairly good'.

The sources of health status data used are the Scottish Household Survey, the General Household Survey, and the 2001 Census.

Estimates of HLE

Healthy and total life expectancy, Scotland 2000

	At birth		At age 65	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Life Expectancy	78.7	73.3	17.9	14.8
Healthy Life Expectancy (SAH)	67.2	64.6	13.4	11.5
Healthy Life Expectancy (LLI)	57.5	54.5	8.9	7.7

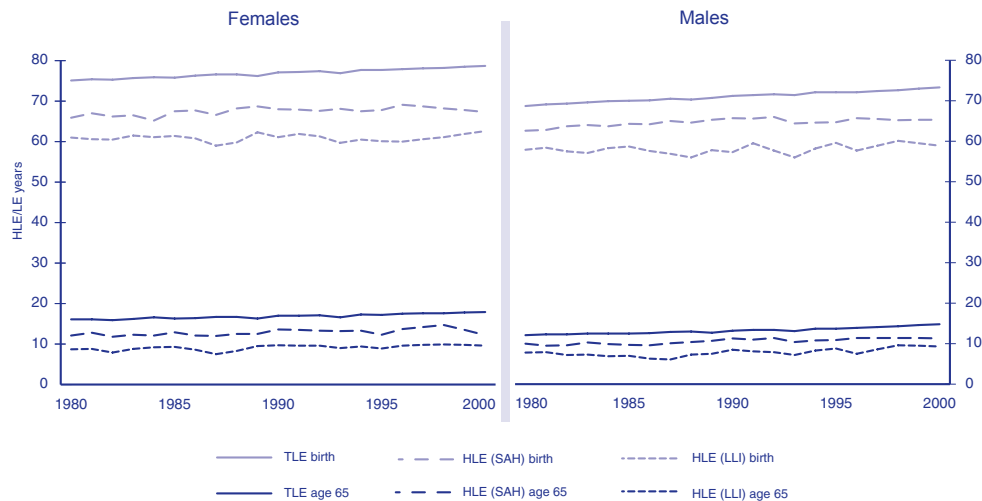
Health status data source: Scottish Household Survey

The results show that:

- A girl born in Scotland in 2000 could expect to live for 78.7 years: 57.5 (73%) of these years could be expected to be spent free from limiting longstanding illness, and 67.2 (85%) years could be expected to be spent in good or fairly good general health.
- At the time of his 65th birthday, a man living in Scotland in 2000 could expect to live for a further 14.8 years, 7.7 (52%) of which would be spent free from LLI and 11.5 (78%) in good or fairly good general health.
- In general, HLE is higher for women than men but the differences are smaller than the differences in LE.

Trends in HLE

Healthy and total life expectancy, Scotland 1980-2000



The results show that:

- HLE (LLI) at birth has remained relatively constant over time.
- HLE (SAH) at birth has increased over time, but has not kept pace with the increases in LE at birth.
- Both measures of HLE at age 65 have increased at a similar rate to LE at age 65.
- The increases in HLE and LE are larger for males than females.

Inequalities in HLE

Inequalities in HLE are apparent between areas with different levels of deprivation, and between different geographical areas as shown below.

HLE (SAH) by deprivation quintile, Scotland 2000

	At birth		At age 65	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
5 (most deprived)	61.6	55.9	11.6	9.7
4	64.9	62.8	12.1	10.7
3	68.0	64.6	13.7	11.6
2	70.8	68.8	15.0	12.9
1 (least deprived)	72.7	73.3	16.0	14.5

HLE (SAH) by NHS Board area of residence, Scotland 1999-2000

	At birth		At age 65	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Argyll & Clyde	65.6	62.6	12.7	11.1
Ayrshire & Arran	66.3	62.3	13.0	10.7
Borders	70.8	68.3	15.1	12.2
Dumfries & Galloway	69.2	68.1	14.0	12.6
Fife	66.1	65.9	13.9	11.5
Forth Valley	65.6	65.1	13.1	10.7
Grampian	70.5	66.2	13.9	12.3
Greater Glasgow	63.3	60.3	11.7	10.0
Highland	69.0	66.1	13.7	12.8
Lanarkshire	63.5	60.6	11.3	9.5
Lothian	69.3	66.6	14.2	12.0
Orkney	71.6	70.6	15.7	13.5
Shetland	71.6	71.1	13.8	14.0
Tayside	65.9	65.6	14.5	12.4
Western Isles	70.4	66.6	13.5	11.6
Scotland	66.8	64.3	13.2	11.3

Health status data source: Scottish Household Survey

The results show that:

- Inequalities in HLE are wider for males than females, and relatively wider at age 65 than at birth.
- Results from the full report also show that inequalities in HLE are wider than inequalities in LE, as deprived populations and geographical areas with low life expectancy also tend to have a relatively low proportion of life spent in good health.

Future monitoring of HLE

Technical aspects of calculating HLE, and the level of uncertainty inherent in the estimates produced are discussed in the full report. In addition, the results obtained using the Scottish Household Survey as the source of health status data are compared to those obtained using the 2001 Census, which provides complete information for the whole population and hence a 'gold standard' snapshot measure of HLE for Scotland. Taking these issues into consideration, the recommendation is made that regular estimates of HLE for Scotland can and should be produced. More specifically it is recommended that HLE (SAH) at birth calculated using health status data from the Scottish Household Survey is the focus for future monitoring of HLE for Scotland.