

28 February 2008

**Coverage**

United Kingdom

**Theme**

Health and Care

## Married people have a lower risk of suicide than non-marrieds

### *Health Statistics Quarterly* spring 2008

New statistics published today by the Office for National Statistics, \* show that the long recognised protective effect of marriage against suicide has persisted over the past 25 years, despite changes in marriage patterns.

The report, in *Health Statistics Quarterly* 37, on trends in suicide by marital status in England and Wales 1982-2005, shows that despite an overall reduction in suicide rates since the early 1980s, there has been no narrowing of the gap in suicide rates between those who are married and those who are single (never married) or divorced.

Between 1983 and 2004, suicide rates for single and divorced men and divorced women were around three times higher than for married men and women. For single women, the differential with married women widened from just over two times to around three times between 1983 and 2004.

There was a small decrease in the differential between single and married men aged 25-44. Suicide rates were three times higher for single men in 1984 but two and a half times higher in 2004.

Among men aged 45 and over, the gap in suicide rates between widowed and married men fell from just over four times to around three times between 1983 and 2004. For widowed women, the differential was around two and a half times throughout.

Issued by  
National Statistics  
1 Drummond Gate  
London SW1V 2QQ

Telephone  
Press Office 020 7533 5702  
Email [press.office@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:press.office@ons.gsi.gov.uk)  
Public Enquiries 0845 601 3034

Internet  
[www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

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[www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=6725](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=6725)



*Health Statistics Quarterly 37* also contains new statistics on:

### **Health expectancies in the United Kingdom, 2004**

Most people in the UK in 2004 were living a greater proportion of their lives free from disability compared with 2001. During that period, males have seen their Disability Free Life Expectancy (DFLE) increase at birth by around a year more than the increase in life expectancy and females by around half a year.

The length of time that people can expect to live in good health or without a disability varies across the constituent countries of the United Kingdom. Updated annual estimates for males and females for 2004 show:

Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) at birth for males was 67.9 years in the UK. In England, HLE was 68.3 years, significantly higher than in Wales (66.5), Scotland (65.6) and Northern Ireland (66.8). HLE for males at birth increased significantly between 2001 and 2004 in the UK, England and Northern Ireland, but not in Scotland or Wales.

HLE at birth for females was 70.3 years in the UK, and significantly higher in England (70.6) than in Wales (68.3) and Northern Ireland (68.4). The figure for Scotland was 69.6. HLE for females at birth increased significantly between 2001 and 2004 in Northern Ireland only.

DFLE at birth for males in 2004 was 62.3 years in the UK. DFLE increased significantly for males in all countries other than Wales between 2001 and 2004.

DFLE at birth for females was 63.9 years in the UK. DFLE at birth for females increased significantly for the UK and England between 2001 and 2004.

In Northern Ireland, gains in DFLE at birth for females were slightly lower than gains in life expectancy.

	Country	Healthy Life Expectancy (years)	Disability-Free Life Expectancy (years)
At Birth			
Males	United Kingdom	67.9	62.3
	England	68.3	62.6
	Wales	66.5*	60.6*
	Scotland	65.6*	61.0*
	Northern Ireland	66.8*	59.7*
	Females	United Kingdom	70.3
	England	70.6	64.2
	Wales	68.3*	62.2*
	Scotland	69.6	63.4
	Northern Ireland	68.4*	60.3*

\* Significantly lower than England at the 95% level

This issue also contains new reports on deaths involving *Clostridium difficile*: England and Wales 1999 and 2001 – 06 and deaths involving MRSA, England and Wales, 1993 – 2006. See separate News Release:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/mrsa0208.pdf>

There is also a feature article assessing the quality of a new dataset – NHS Numbers for Babies (NN4B). This follows on from the publication in 2007 of new statistics using this powerful source.

## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
2. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2008.