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**Coverage**  
United Kingdom

**Theme**  
Health and Care



## UK residents are living longer in good health

The length of time people can expect to live free from a limiting chronic illness or disability has increased for all countries in the UK, according to a report published today in the Office for National Statistics journal *Health Statistics Quarterly*.

New figures show that disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) at birth for males in the UK increased from 60 years in 2000–02 to 62 years in 2004–06. For females it increased from 63 years in 2000–02 to 64 years in 2004–06.

DFLE for males in 2004–06 was highest in England, at 63 years, compared with 62 years in Scotland and 60 years in Northern Ireland and Wales. For females, DFLE was 64 years in England, around 63 years in Wales and Scotland, and 61 years in Northern Ireland.

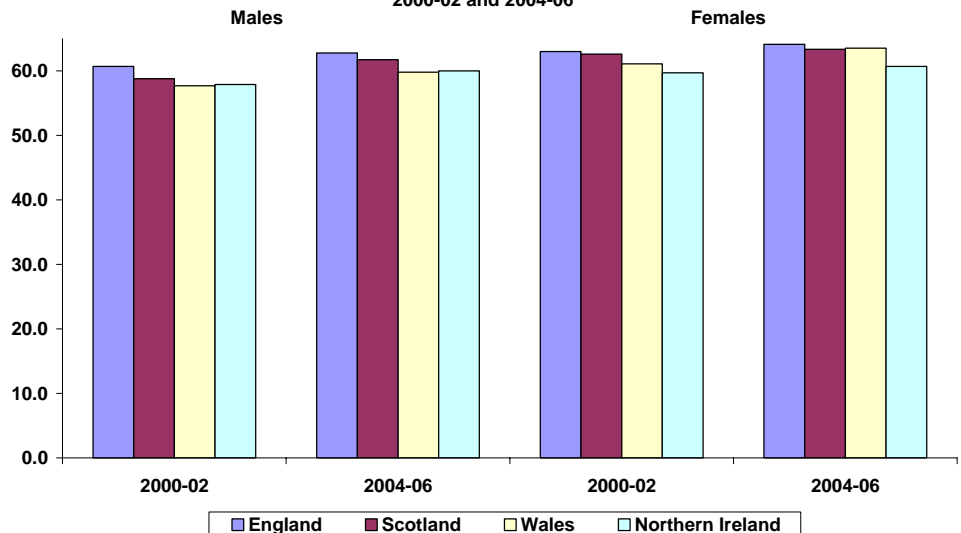
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Disability-free life expectancy at birth by sex and constituent country of the UK, 2000-02 and 2004-06



The increases in DFLE between 2000-02 and 2004-06 were generally greater than the increases in life expectancy so the proportion of life spent disability-free has risen. These increases in DFLE represent for males an additional 11 months of life free from a limiting chronic illness or disability more than the increase in life expectancy in England and Wales, 14 months in Northern Ireland and 20 months in Scotland. For females, gains were three months in England, one month in Northern Ireland and 19 months in Wales.

There was no additional gain for females in Scotland.

This pattern contrasts with the trend between 1981 and 1999 when LE was increasing more rapidly than DFLE at birth for both men and women, causing the proportion of life with a chronic limiting illness or disability to increase.

The report also showed that healthy life expectancy (HLE) – defined as years spent in ‘good’ or ‘fairly good’ health – for males in the UK increased from 67 years in 2000–02 to 68 years in 2004–06. For females it increased slightly, from just under 70 years in 2000–02 to just over 70 years in 2004–06.

This report is published today in *Health Statistics Quarterly* 40 winter 2008 (p77), available free on the Office for National Statistics website:

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

This year’s winter HSQ publication also includes articles on:

- Geographical trends in infant mortality: England and Wales, 1970–2006
- Standardised Mortality Ratios – the effect of smoothing ward-level results
- Regional differences in male mortality inequalities using the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, England and Wales, 2001–03

It also contains reports on:

- Infant and perinatal mortality in England and Wales by social and biological factors, 2007
- Cancer incidence and mortality in the United Kingdom and constituent countries, 2003–05
- Excess winter mortality in England and Wales, 2007/08 (provisional) and 2006/07 (final)
- Life expectancy at birth and at age 65 by local areas in the United Kingdom, 2005–07

For further news releases see the Office for National Statistics website:

[www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/prep/6725.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/prep/6725.asp)

## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. **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.

2.

Disability-free life expectancy and the proportion of life spent free from disability, at birth: by country and sex, 2000-02 and 2004-06										
Country	Males					Females				
	Disability-free life expectancy (Years)		Proportion of life free from disability (Per cent)		Absolute gain over the period	Disability-free life expectancy (Years)		Proportion of life free from disability (Per cent)		Absolute gain over the period
	2000-02	2004-06	2000-02	2004-06	Months	2000-02	2004-06	2000-02	2004-06	Months
England	60.7	62.8	79.9	81.3	11	63.0	64.1	78.2	78.7	3
Scotland	58.8	61.7	80.2	82.7	20	62.6	63.4	79.4	79.6	-
Wales	57.7	59.8	76.5	78.1	11	61.1	63.5	76.3	78.5	19
Northern Ireland	57.9	60.0	77.0	78.8	14	59.7	60.7	74.5	74.9	1