

9 June 2008

**Coverage**  
United Kingdom

**Theme**  
Health and Care



## Marked differences between UK's four National Health Services

UK health and social care spending per head varied from £1,915 in England to £2,313 in Scotland in the financial year 2006/07.

Scotland had the lowest life expectancy at birth with 74.6 years for men and 79.6 years for women, compared with figures in England of 77.2 years for men and 81.5 years for women in 2005.

The rate of hospital in-patient admissions was highest in Northern Ireland, at 205 per 1,000 population, and lowest in Scotland at 135 per 1,000 population in 2005/06.

Waiting times for some common operations varied widely. For example, for cataract surgery, 90 per cent of patients were admitted within 116 days in England compared with 172 days in Northern Ireland in 2006/07. For hip replacements, 90 per cent of patients were admitted within 221 days in Scotland compared with 367 days in Wales. All four countries had reduced their waiting times compared with previous years.

These are among a wide range of statistics that illustrate the variations in health and healthcare across the four countries of the UK, published in a report today from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

As well as UK-wide data, *United Kingdom Health Statistics No.3* brings together international comparisons on population, fertility, mortality and health behaviours.

### Some other key findings include:

#### *Health outcomes*

- Deaths from heart disease were highest in Scotland. In 2006, 168 men per 100,000 in Scotland died from ischaemic heart

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disease, compared with 137 in England. The equivalent figures for women were 87 and 64 per 100,000.

- Men in England could expect to live an average of 68 years in good health, compared with 66 years in Scotland. The figures, measuring healthy life expectancy at birth in 2004, also show women could expect an average of 71 years in good health in England compared with 68 years in Wales.
- Scotland had the highest death rate related to drug poisoning for both males at 17 deaths per 100,000 population, and females at 6 per 100,000 in 2006. Northern Ireland had the lowest rate for males at 6 deaths per 100,000 and England had the lowest rate for females at 3 deaths per 100,000.

#### *Health-related behaviour*

- Smoking among children in Great Britain in 2006 was at its lowest level in over ten years. The fall in smoking was greatest in England, where the number of 15-16 year olds who were regular smokers almost halved since 1998. Girls aged 15-16 years had the highest 2006 smoking rates among children in all countries, with 18 per cent in England and 23 per cent in both Wales and Scotland. For boys the figure was 13 per cent in England, 12 per cent in Wales and 15 per cent in Scotland.
- The proportion of women who started breastfeeding increased between 1995 and 2005 in all four countries of the UK. In 2005, the highest rate of breastfeeding was 77 per cent in England and Wales, and the lowest was 63 per cent in Northern Ireland.

#### *International comparisons*

- The average life expectancy at birth in the European Union was 76 years for males and 82 years for females in 2005. Life expectancy for males in the UK was slightly above the EU average at 77 years and that for females was slightly below the EU average at 81 years.
- Sweden had the highest survival rate for infants in Europe in 2005 with just 2.4 deaths per 1,000 live births for babies under one year old. The highest infant mortality rate was in Romania with 15 deaths per every 1,000 live births. The

equivalent UK figure was 5.1 per 1,000 live births, higher than the European Union average of 4.5 per 1,000.

- The UK had the sixth lowest proportion of male adults who smoked in 2003 at 28 per cent but the third highest rate of women who smoked at 26 per cent.
- The Total Fertility Rate for the EU in 2005 was 1.5. The UK was slightly higher than the EU average at 1.8. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is the average number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if current age and specific fertility rates were to continue. The highest TFR was in France and Ireland at 1.9 for both countries.

***United Kingdom Health Statistics 3, 2008 edition***

Palgrave Macmillan £50.00 ISBN 978-0-230-21096-7

**Available free on the Office for National Statistics website:**

[www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=6637](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=6637)

## **BACKGROUND NOTES**

1. *United Kingdom Health Statistics* updates a report previously published in 2006.
2. *United Kingdom Health Statistics* highlights a number of important topics where figures for the four countries of the UK cannot be directly compared. It marks a strong commitment from ONS, the Department of Health, and Scottish Executive Health Department, the National Assembly for Wales and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland to a programme of further development to provide easy access to key health and care statistics, regularly updated, on a comparable basis across the UK.
3. Not all the statistics contained within the publication are national statistics because it is a compilation from various sources.
4. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the Media Office.
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