

Statistical bulletin

Health state life expectancies, UK: 2015 to 2017

The number of years people are expected to spend in different health states among local authority areas in the UK.



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Release date:
12 December 2018

Next release:
December 2019

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1 . Main points

- In the period 2015 to 2017, males in the UK had a life expectancy (LE) of 79.2 years at birth while females had a life expectancy of 82.9 years.
- Male life expectancy (LE) at birth increased by seven months since 2009 to 2011 while female LE increased by four months only.
- The region of London improved its life expectancy at birth more quickly than other regions since 2001 to 2003 (the start of the life expectancy series) and in 2015 to 2017 had the highest life expectancy in the UK for females and the second-highest for males.
- The London Borough of Camden had the highest life expectancy at birth for females across all local authority areas of the UK.
- In the UK in 2015 to 2017, healthy life expectancy (HLE) at birth was 63.1 years for males and for females was 63.6 years.
- Female HLE at birth in the UK decreased by three months since 2009 to 2011 (the start of the HLE time series) while HLE for males increased by five months over the same period.
- HLE at birth across local authority areas of the UK varies by 21.5 years for females and 15.8 years for males in 2015 to 2017.

2 . Statistician's comment

“Overall, across the UK, females can expect to live a greater number of years in poor health than males, partly because female healthy life expectancy has slightly fallen while male healthy life expectancy has increased. At birth males in the UK can expect to live 16.5 years with a disability and females 20.9 years. However, it is important to note that periods of ill-health may not be experienced during the same point in a person's life, and the majority of years lived with disability for most occur post-retirement age. For example, a person may be seriously unwell, but recover and remain healthy for a long period before becoming unwell again.”

Asim Butt, Senior Research Officer, Office for National Statistics

3 . Things you need to know about this release

This bulletin reports on life expectancy estimates for local authority areas across the UK, in addition to constituent countries and English regions, from 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017. It also includes healthy life expectancy (HLE) and disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) for males and females, at birth and at age 65 years, for these areas over these periods:

- Constituent countries in the UK, English regions and upper tier local authority areas (UTLAs) in England from 2009 to 2011 to 2015 to 2017
- local authority areas in Scotland and Northern Ireland from 2013 to 2015 to 2015 to 2017
- local authority areas in Wales from 2011 to 2013 to 2015 to 2017
- Metropolitan Counties, Combined Authorities and Welsh Health Boards from 2011 to 2013 to 2015 to 2017

These estimates are available in datasets and include confidence intervals to assist users in making judgments about the statistical significance of period-specific differences and changes over time.

We have revised healthy life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy estimates using a new method agreed following a [consultation in December 2017 to February 2018](#).

To better analyse the slowdown in life expectancy observed since 2011, several comparisons are made in this bulletin. These mainly contrast the gain in life expectancy at birth between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 compared against the gain between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017.

Dynamic interactive maps are available for tracking an area's life expectancy over time using a national ranking of local authority areas. Local authority areas include lower tier local authorities (LTLAs) in England, unitary authorities in Wales, council areas in Scotland and local government districts in Northern Ireland.

Each local authority area's ranking of life expectancy applies to a specific time-period, but their relative move upwards or downwards provides a guide to how well they are performing on this measure against other areas. The ranking thereby acts as a tool to benchmark itself with other local authority areas over time. However, if you wish to more objectively compare the improvement in life expectancy across the time series between areas, you would need to take into account the confidence intervals provided in the pivot table.

Local authority areas with small populations, such as Orkney Islands, have been included in the datasets but tend to have a wider confidence interval than areas with larger populations such as Essex.

We have also revised the subnational health state life expectancy estimates for local authority areas in England and Wales from 2012 to 2016 and, for life expectancy only, Scotland's local authority areas from 2002 to 2010, to take account of published revisions to their mid-year population estimates.

The median and modal ages at death for 2015 to 2017 have also been calculated and are provided separately in an attached dataset.

The life expectancy estimates reported in this release are period life expectancies. This is a measure of the average number of years a person would live from a given age, if he or she experienced the particular area's age-specific mortality rates for that time period throughout his or her life. This measure makes no allowance for any future actual or projected changes in mortality. In practice, a population's death rates are likely to change in the future, and individuals move between areas, so period life expectancy does not give the number of years someone will actually live.

Healthy life expectancy (HLE) is an estimate of the number of years lived in "Very good" or "Good" general health, based on how individuals perceive their general health. Disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) is an estimate of the number of years lived without a long-lasting physical or mental health condition that limits daily activities.

4 . Wales has the least gain in life expectancy at birth since 2009 to 2011

Figures 1 and 2 compare the gain in life expectancy at birth between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010, with that between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017 across the constituent countries of the UK for both males and females.

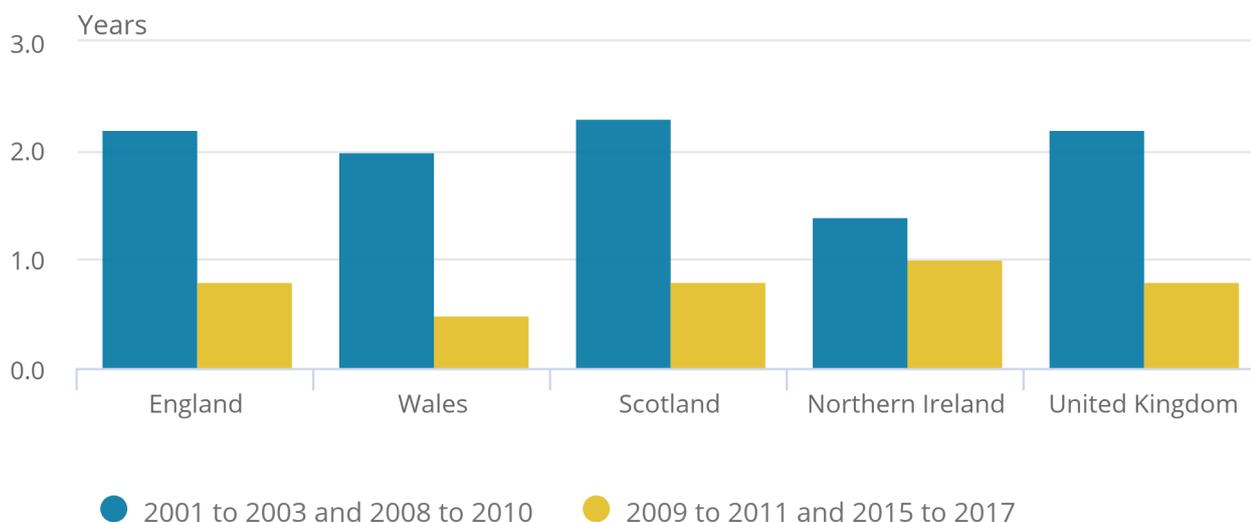
For males in Wales, the gain in life expectancy was less than half a year between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017, compared with two years in the previous period. All constituent countries saw their rate of improvement in life expectancy fall in the later period compared with the previous period. This is consistent with the evidence accumulated pointing to substantial reductions in life expectancy improvements.

Figure 1: The gain in life expectancy at birth for males between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 and between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017

Constituent countries and the UK

Figure 1: The gain in life expectancy at birth for males between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 and between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017

Constituent countries and the UK



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Gain in life expectancy was calculated by subtracting life expectancy at birth from 2008 to 2010 from 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017 from 2009 to 2011.

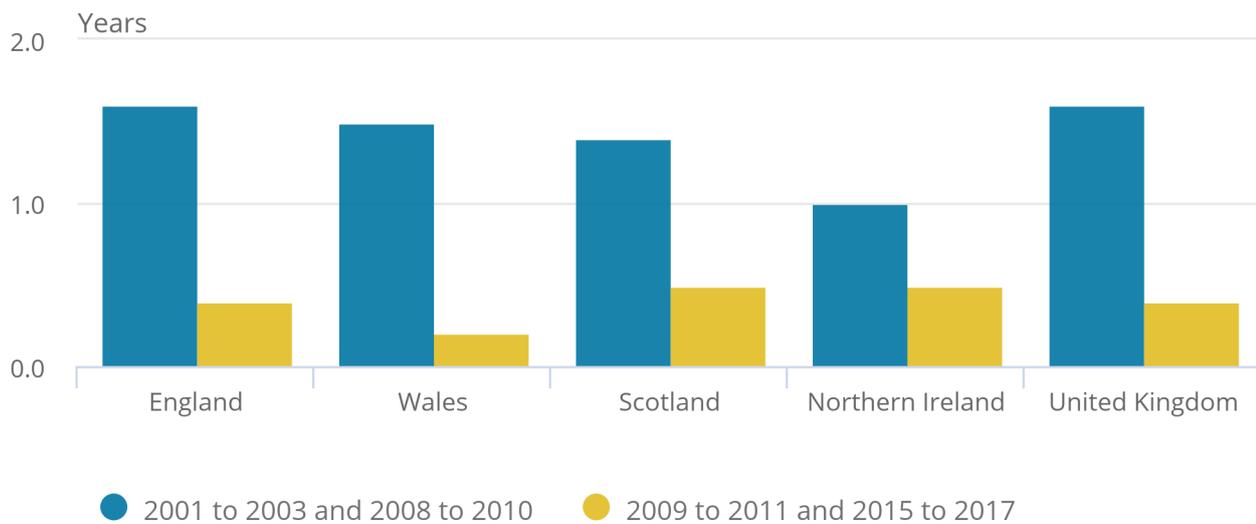
For females the picture is similar, with Wales having the smallest increase in the most recent period of only 0.2 years, but all constituent countries improving less quickly between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017 than in the first decade of the century.

Figure 2: The gain in life expectancy at birth for females between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 and between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017

Constituent countries and the UK

Figure 2: The gain in life expectancy at birth for females between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 and between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017

Constituent countries and the UK



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Gain in life expectancy was calculated by subtracting life expectancy at birth from 2008 to 2010 from 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017 from 2009 to 2011.

5 . There has been a noticeable improvement in life expectancy at birth in London

Table 1 shows male life expectancy at birth for England's regions between 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017. This table confirms that London has had the largest improvement in life expectancy compared with other regions in England since 2001 to 2003. While London was ranked fifth at the start of the 21st century, it is now ranked second, with males gaining 4.5 years of life.

London's trajectory is in sharp relief to the South West region, which was ranked first in 2001 to 2003, but in the latest period was ranked fourth, with males gaining only 2.8 years.

Table 1: English regions rank of male life expectancy at birth in 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017

English regions	2001 to 2003		2015 to 2017	
	Life expectancy (years)	Life expectancy rank	Life expectancy (years)	Life expectancy rank
South East	77.4	2	80.6	1
London	76.0	5	80.5	2
East of England	77.3	3	80.4	3
South West	77.4	1	80.2	4
East Midlands	76.2	4	79.4	5
West Midlands	75.6	6	78.8	6
Yorkshire and The Humber	75.5	7	78.7	7
North West	74.8	8	78.2	8
North East	74.7	9	77.9	9

Source: Office for National Statistics

In 2015 to 2017, London was ranked first for life expectancy at birth for females, having risen from fourth in 2001 to 2003 (Table 2). The gain in London was 3.5 years. In 2001 to 2003, female life expectancy in the South West was ranked first. However, by 2015 to 2017 it was ranked third, explained by it gaining only two years over that interval, the least gain across all regions.

Table 2: English regions rank of female life expectancy at birth, in 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017

English Regions	2001 to 2003		2015 to 2017	
	Life expectancy (Years)	Life expectancy rank	Life expectancy (Years)	Life expectancy rank
London	80.8	4	84.3	1
South East	81.6	2	84.0	2
South West	81.7	1	83.7	3
East of England	81.4	3	83.7	4
East Midlands	80.5	5	82.9	5
West Midlands	80.4	6	82.7	6
Yorkshire and The Humber	80.3	7	82.4	7
North West	79.5	9	81.8	8
North East	79.5	8	81.6	9

Source: Office for National Statistics

Figures 3 and 4 show the gain in life expectancy at birth for each of England's regions for both males and females. These figures emphasise that there is a pronounced slowdown in life expectancy across all regions during the second decade of the 21st century; however, London's gain exceeded that of all other regions.

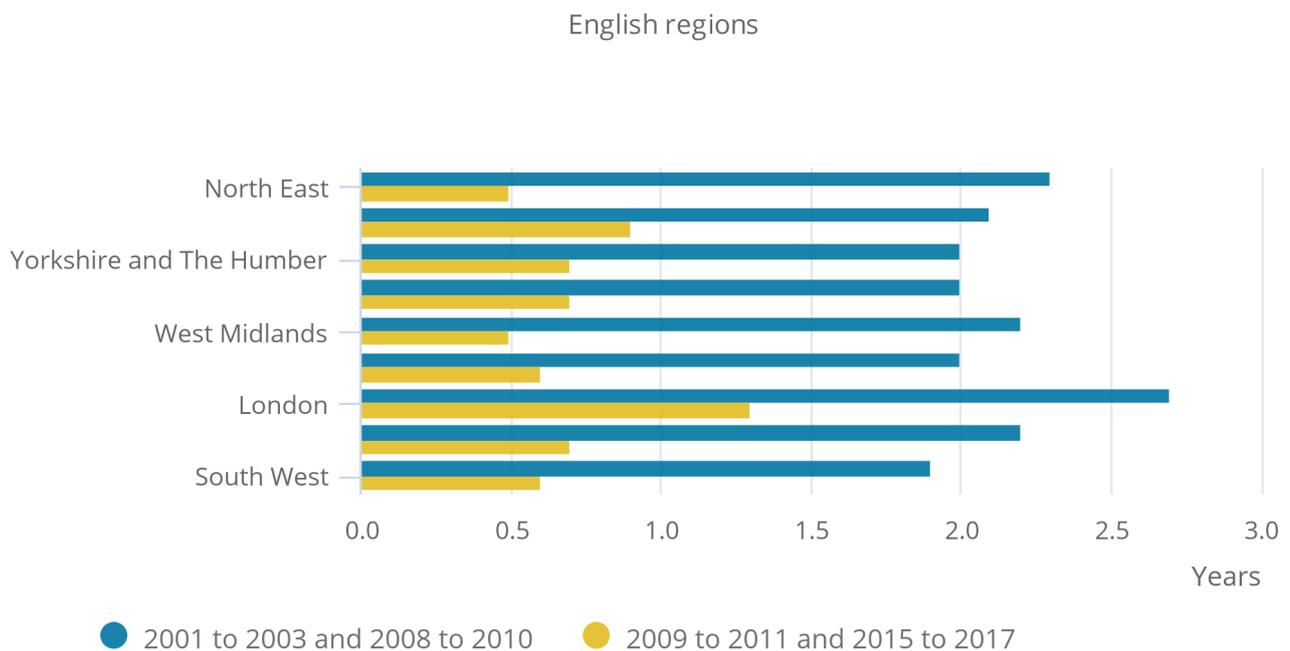
Between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017, male life expectancy at birth increased by 1.3 years in London (Figure 3). West Midlands and North East both recorded the least gain in life expectancy at birth for males, at 0.5 years. In 2015 to 2017, the difference in the gain in life expectancy between London region and West Midlands and North East was 0.8 years.

This indicates that the slowdown in improvement in life expectancy observed nationally in the second decade of the 21st century was less visible in London than elsewhere. This was also reflected at local area level, in that a high proportion of London boroughs had a statistically significant improvement in their life expectancy at birth since 2009 to 2011.

Figure 3: The gain in life expectancy at birth for males between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 and between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017

English regions

Figure 3: The gain in life expectancy at birth for males between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 and between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Gain in life expectancy was calculated by subtracting life expectancy at birth from 2008 to 2010 from 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017 from 2009 to 2011.

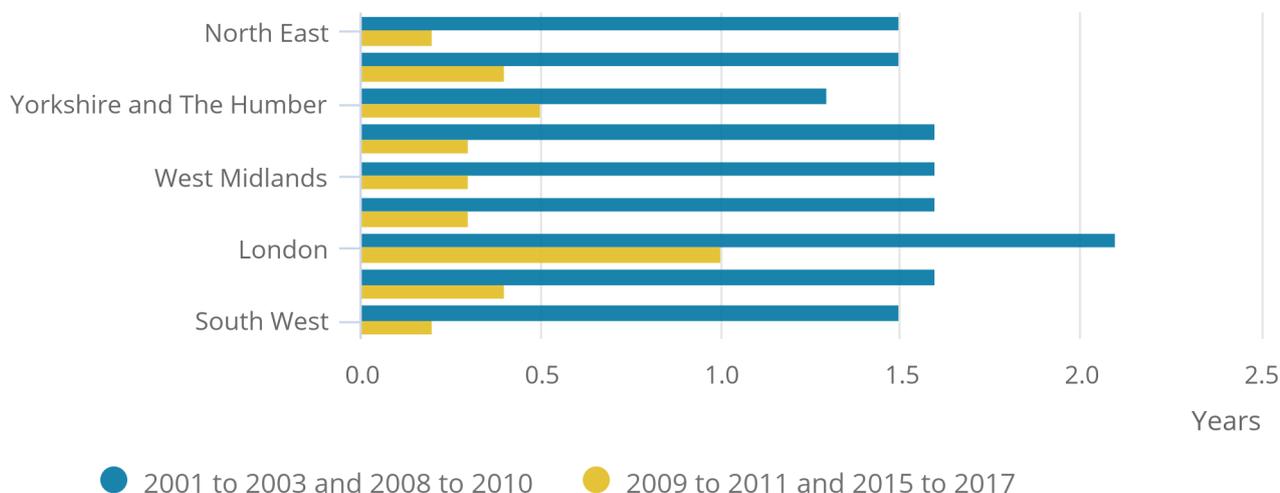
For females, the gain in life expectancy at birth across the nine English regions is smaller than observed for males. However, London also showed the highest gain in life expectancy (1.0 years) between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017. In contrast, the South West and North East both had the lowest gain in life expectancy at birth, gaining only 0.2 years.

Figure 4: The gain in life expectancy at birth for females between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 and between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017

English regions

Figure 4: The gain in life expectancy at birth for females between 2001 to 2003 and 2008 to 2010 and between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017

English regions



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Gain in life expectancy was calculated by subtracting life expectancy at birth from 2008 to 2010 from 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017 from 2009 to 2011.

6 . Females in the London Borough of Camden expected to live 86.5 years in 2015 to 2017, the highest across all local authority areas in the UK

In this release, we have used rank ordering to illustrate the change in life expectancies at birth and age 65 years across the local authority areas in the UK. By tracking the local area rank between 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017, users can assess comparative improvement in life expectancy against other areas.

A noticeable finding from Figure 5 is that Camden is ranked first again across the UK for female life expectancy at birth. Camden was positioned at 180th, close to the middle of the national ranking, in 2001 to 2003, when life expectancy was 81.0 years. In 2015 to 2017 it is ranked first with a life expectancy at birth rising to 86.5 years.

Female life expectancy in Haringey had the largest positive change in the national ranking of local authority areas. In 2001 to 2003 it was ranked 301st, but by 2015 to 2017 its rank improved to 54th, jumping 247 places.

Norwich saw the largest drop in rank for females between 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017, falling 160 places from 62nd in 2001 to 2003 to 222nd in 2015 to 2017.

For males, the Hampshire district of Hart is ranked first in 2015 to 2017, with life expectancy at birth at 83.3 years. Except for 2007 to 2009, Hart for males has been ranked within the top ten life expectancies at birth across the time series. The largest gain in male life expectancy at birth in the time series was observed in Camden, an increase of 7.6 years.

In 2015 to 2017, Glasgow City was ranked 389th (the lowest rank) for life expectancy at birth for both males and females, with life expectancy at 73.3 years for males and 78.7 years for females. There was therefore a local area gap of 10 years for men between the highest and lowest ranked local area and a gap of 7.8 years for females in 2015 to 2017.

For males, Ceredigion recorded the biggest drop in the national ranking between 2001 to 2003 and 2015 to 2017, declining from 33rd to 195th place.

Figure 5: Ranking life expectancy (LE) at birth and at age 65 years by sex across local authorities (LA) in the UK

[Download the data](#)

Table 3 shows the number of local authority areas that have had a statistically significant change in life expectancy at birth between 2012 to 2014 and 2015 to 2017. There are only 12 areas for males and seven areas for females in the UK where life expectancy at birth has statistically significantly increased between 2012 to 2014 and 2015 to 2017. Most of these areas are located in London and the South East region.

There were also four areas for males and two areas for females where life expectancy at birth significantly fell. These were Gloucester, Hartlepool, Norwich and Dundee City for males and for females Blackburn with Darwen and Southend-on-Sea.

Table 3: Number of local areas across UK where changes in life expectancy at birth were statistically significant, between 2012 to 2014 and 2015 to 2017

Sex	Number of local authority areas with significant increase	Number of local authority areas with significant decrease
Males	12	4
Females	7	2
Total	19	6

Source: Office for National Statistics

7 . Healthy life expectancy fails to keep pace with life expectancy for males and females

If the UK experienced the same self-reported health and mortality rates that were observed during 2015 to 2017, males could expect to live 63.1 years in good health (79.7% of their life) and females 63.6 years (76.7% of their life).

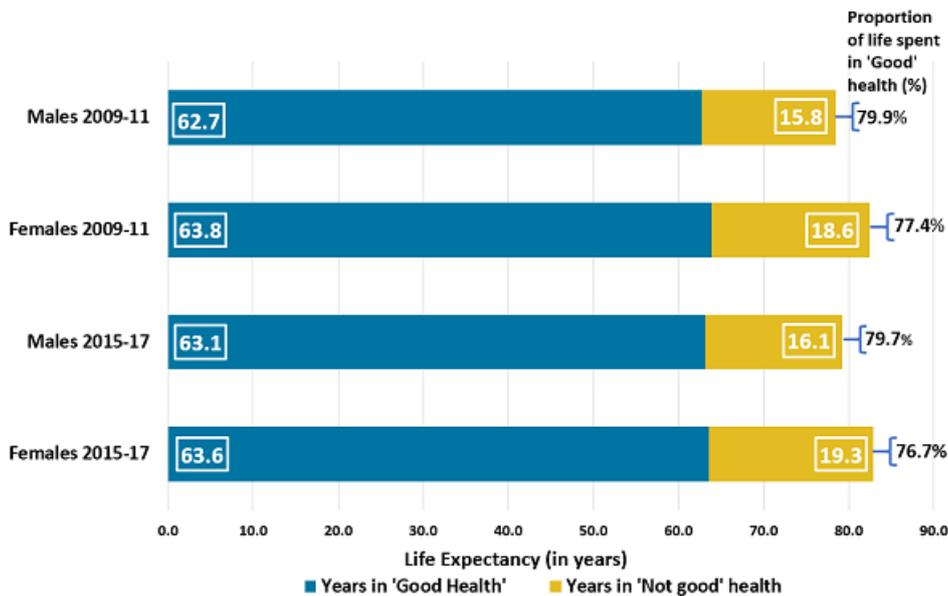
When compared with the earliest period 2009 to 2011, HLE at birth has increased by 0.4 years for males and reduced by 0.2 years for females in the UK. This has the effect of closing the gender gap in years lived in good health to 0.5 years in 2015 to 2017 from 1.1 years in 2009 to 2011.

For each sex, the years lived in “Not Good” health has increased both in relative and in absolute terms, because life expectancy has risen more quickly than healthy life expectancy. This is consistent with a scenario of increasing prevalence of ill-health in the UK since 2009 to 2011, as the years of life gained were spent in less favourable health states.

The gender gap in years lived in “Not Good” health for females compared with males has increased to 3.2 additional years, because of the coexistence of female healthy life expectancy falling and male healthy life expectancy rising. However, both sexes have seen their years lived in “Not Good” health increase. For males, it increased by 0.3 years, but for females it grew more substantially, by 0.7 years.

Figure 6: Healthy life expectancy at birth, years lived in “Not Good” health and the proportion of life spent healthy, by sex

UK, 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017



Source: Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Survey respondents who answered their general health as “Very Good” and “Good” were classified as having “Good” health. Those who answered “fair” “bad” and “very bad” were classified as having “Not good” health.
2. Figures may not sum because of the rounding

Healthy life expectancy (HLE) and disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) across constituent countries in the UK between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017 can be accessed in the accompanying datasets. The trend in DFLE is not reported on because of changes in the survey questions used to estimate disability in the Annual Population Survey (APS) between 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017.

However, it is important to note that DFLE estimates for the period 2014 to 2016 and 2015 to 2017 are based on the latest harmonised standard questions exclusively for the first time. More information is available in the health state life expectancies [Quality and Methodology Information report](#).

8 . People living in Wales spend the lowest proportion of life disability-free

When looking at disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) at birth for males, disability-free life years were lowest in Wales (59.9 years) and highest in England (63.1 years), with a 3.2-year gap.

If Wales experienced the same self-reported rates of disability and mortality that were observed during 2015 to 2017, males could expect to live 18.4 years with an activity limiting long-term physical or mental health condition, whereas in England it was 16.5 years. Consequently, males in England not only have a longer life than males in Wales, they were also living fewer years with disability and thereby spend a higher proportion of their lives disability-free (Table 4).

DFLE at age 65 years is an important summary measure as it informs fitness for work after the current State Pension age of 65 years. DFLE at age 65 years was highest in England (9.9 years) and lowest in Wales (8.5 years). In both countries men at age 65 years could expect to live a further 8.9 and 9.7 years respectively with an activity limiting long-term physical or mental health condition. Men in all four constituent countries are expected to spend less than half their remaining life disability-free from age 65 years.

Table 4: Health state life expectancy at birth and at age 65 years for males across constituent countries in the UK, 2015 to 2017

	Life expectancy (years)	Healthy life expectancy (years)	Years in 'Not good' health (years)	Proportion of life expectancy (%)	Disability-free life expectancy (years)	Years with disability (years)	Proportion of life expectancy (%)
At birth							
England	79.6	63.4	16.2	79.7	63.1	16.5	79.3
Wales	78.3	61.4	16.9	78.4	59.9	18.4	76.4
Scotland	77.0	62.3	14.7	80.9	61.4	15.6	79.8
Northern Ireland	78.5	61.2	17.3	77.9	61.1	17.4	77.8
United Kingdom	79.2	63.1	16.1	79.7	62.7	16.5	79.2
At age 65							
England	18.8	10.4	8.3	55.6	9.9	8.9	52.7
Wales	18.2	9.6	8.6	52.9	8.5	9.7	46.5
Scotland	17.4	10.0	7.5	57.2	9.4	8.0	54.1
Northern Ireland	18.2	10.1	8.2	55.2	9.5	8.7	52.4
United Kingdom	18.6	10.3	8.2	55.6	9.8	8.8	52.5

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Figures may not sum because of the rounding. [Back to table](#)

When looking at DFLE at birth for females, disability-free life years were lowest in Wales (59.5 years) and highest in England (62.2 years), with a 2.7 year gap. Females in Wales were expected to live 22.8 years with a limiting long-term physical or mental health condition, whereas in England it was 21.0 years. Consequently, females in England have a longer life than females in Wales and spend a higher proportion of their lives disability-free (Table 5).

At birth, females across all countries spend a smaller proportion of their lives disability-free than in good health, and also a smaller proportion than males.

For women at age 65 years, DFLE was highest in England (9.8 years) and lowest in Wales (8.7 years). In Scotland, women at age 65 years can expect to live 10.0 years with a limiting long-term physical or mental health condition, whereas in Wales, it was 11.8 years. Women in Wales at age 65 years could expect to spend only 42.5% of their remaining life disability-free. However, across all constituent countries, females at age 65 years spend less than half their remaining years disability-free.

Females born in England in 2015 to 2017, are expected to live 1.2 more years in good health and 1.0 more years in “Not Good” health compared to females born in Scotland. Females and males living in Scotland spend the highest proportion of life in “Good” health, despite having the lowest life expectancy.

Table 5: Health state life expectancy at birth and at age 65 for females across constituent countries in the UK, 2015 to 2017

	Life expectancy (years)	Healthy life expectancy (years)	Years in 'Not good' health (years)	Proportion of life expectancy (%)	Disability-free life expectancy (years)	Years with disability (years)	Proportion of life expectancy (%)
At birth							
England	83.1	63.8	19.4	76.7	62.2	21.0	74.8
Wales	82.2	62.0	20.2	75.4	59.5	22.8	72.3
Scotland	81.1	62.6	18.4	77.3	61.2	19.8	75.5
Northern Ireland	82.3	62.8	19.5	76.3	61.7	20.7	74.9
United Kingdom	82.9	63.6	19.3	76.7	61.9	20.9	74.7
At age 65							
England	21.1	10.9	10.2	51.7	9.8	11.3	46.6
Wales	20.5	10.3	10.2	50.1	8.7	11.8	42.5
Scotland	19.7	10.7	9.0	54.4	9.7	10.0	49.0
Northern Ireland	20.6	10.7	9.9	52.0	9.4	11.2	45.8
United Kingdom	20.9	10.9	10.1	51.9	9.7	11.2	46.5

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Figures may not sum because of the rounding. [Back to table](#)

9 . Healthy life expectancy at birth showed a gap of 21.5 years across the UK local authority areas

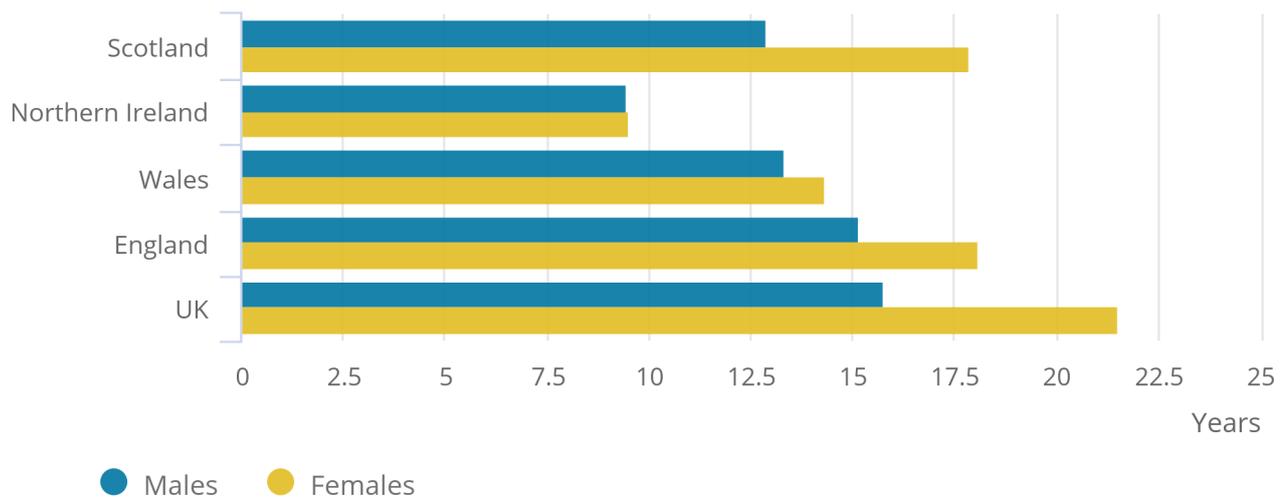
Figure 7 shows the local area gap in years lived in good health across the UK in 2015 to 2017. Healthy life expectancy (HLE) at birth across the UK differs by 21.5 years for females and 15.8 years for males.

When comparing local areas within the constituent countries, the biggest disparity in HLE at birth can be seen in England, at 18.1 years for females and 15.2 years for males. Northern Ireland has the least disparity in HLE, with with males and females showing a difference of 9.5 years.

Across the UK in 2015 to 2017, HLE at birth was highest in Rutland, Wokingham and Sutton for males (69.8 years) and the Orkney Islands for females (75.0 years). The lowest HLE was observed in Blaenau Gwent in Wales for males (54.1 years) and in Nottingham for females (53.5 years). The gap in HLE between local areas stands at 21.5 years for females and 15.8 years for males.

Figure 7: Local area gap in healthy life expectancy (HLE) at birth for males and females by constituent countries and the UK

Figure 7: Local area gap in healthy life expectancy (HLE) at birth for males and females by constituent countries and the UK



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. These figures have been calculated by taking the local authority with the lowest HLE and subtracting it from the local authority with the highest HLE from birth by sex for each nation country.
2. Local authority areas are 150 upper tier local authorities (UTLAs) in England, 22 unitary authorities in Wales, 32 council areas in Scotland and 11 local government districts in Northern Ireland.
3. The Isles of Scilly and City of London are excluded because of small populations.
4. Areas with small populations, such as Orkney Islands, tend to have a wider confidence interval than areas with larger populations such as Essex.

10 . Local area gap in years lived in good health exceeds 10 years among those aged 65 years in the UK

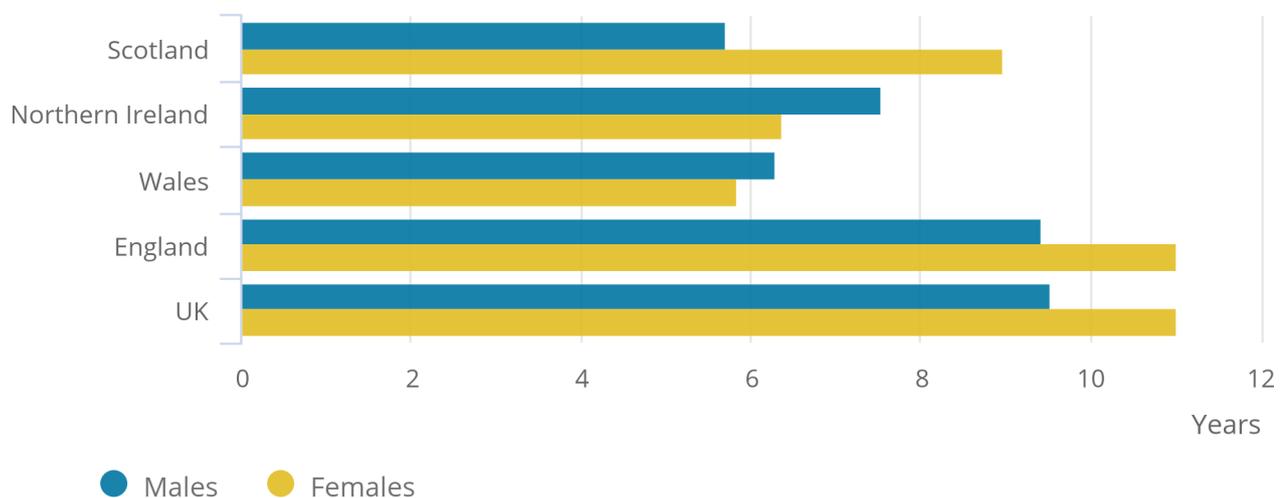
Figure 8 shows that the local area gap in healthy life expectancy at age 65 across local authorities in the UK differs by 11.0 years for women and 9.5 years for men.

Furthermore, of the four devolved nations, the biggest disparity in healthy life expectancy at age 65 years can be seen in England where females differ by 11.0 years and males differ by 9.4 years. Wales had the least disparity in healthy life expectancy for females showing a difference of 5.8 years and Scotland had the least for males, at 5.7 years.

Across the UK in 2015 to 2017, healthy life expectancy (HLE) at age 65 years was highest in Sutton for males (15.7 years) and Southwark for females (17.8 years). The lowest HLE was observed in Merthyr Tydfil in Wales for males (6.1 years) and in Nottingham for females (6.8 years). The gap in HLE between local authority areas stood at 11 years for females and 9.5 years for males.

Figure 8: Local area gap in healthy life expectancy (HLE) at age 65 years for males and females by constituent countries and the UK

Figure 8: Local area gap in healthy life expectancy (HLE) at age 65 years for males and females by constituent countries and the UK



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. These figures have been calculated by taking the local authority with the lowest HLE and subtracting it from the local authority with the highest HLE from age 65 years by sex for each nation.
2. Local authority areas are 150 upper tier local authorities (UTLAs) in England, 22 unitary authorities in Wales, 32 council areas in Scotland and 11 local government districts in Northern Ireland.
3. The Isles of Scilly and City of London are excluded because of small populations.
4. Areas with small populations, such as Orkney Islands, tend to have a wider confidence interval than areas with larger populations such as Essex.

Figure 9 shows healthy life expectancy at birth and at age 65 years by sex for upper tier local authorities in England from 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017. This provides the opportunity to compare the improvement in healthy life expectancy at important ages against the national average over time.

Figure 9: Healthy life expectancy at birth and age 65 by sex, England, 2009 to 2011 and 2015 to 2017

[Download the data](#)

11 . Links to related statistics

Subnational life expectancy estimates for Scotland's council areas and Northern Ireland's local government districts have been calculated using the same method as for England and Wales. Responsibility for the production of other statistics for Scotland and Northern Ireland lies with National Records Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) respectively.

Separate subnational HLE and DFLE estimates for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are also available from the [Public Health Wales Observatory](#), [Scottish Public Health Observatory](#) and [Department of Health Northern Ireland](#).

12 . Quality and methodology

The Health state life expectancies [Quality and Methodology Information report](#) contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- uses and users of the data
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data