



Life Expectancy in Northern Ireland 2021-23: Headline Figures

A product of the NI Health and Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

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Life Expectancy in Northern Ireland

2021-23: Headline Figures

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Link to reports: <http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/dhssps-statistics-and-research/health-inequalities-statistics>

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Information Analysis Directorate (IAD) sits within the **Department of Health (DoH)** and carries out various statistical work and research on behalf of the department. It comprises four statistical areas: Hospital Information, Community Information, Public Health Information & Research and Project Support Analysis.

IAD is responsible for compiling, processing, analysing, interpreting and disseminating a wide range of statistics covering health and social care.

The statisticians within IAD are outposted from the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) and our statistics are produced in accordance with the principles and protocols set out in the UK Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

About Public Health Information and Research Branch

The role of Public Health Information and Research Branch (PHIRB) is to support public health policy development through managing the public health survey function while also providing analysis and monitoring data. The head of the branch is the Principal Statistician, Mr. Bill Stewart.

In support of the public health survey function, PHIRB is involved in the commissioning, managing and publishing of results from departmental funded surveys, such as the Health Survey Northern Ireland, All Ireland Drug Prevalence Survey, Young Persons Behaviour & Attitudes Survey, Patient Experience Surveys and the Adult Drinking Patterns Survey.

The branch also houses the NI Health and Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System which covers a range of different health inequality/equality based projects conducted for both the region as well as for more localised area levels. In addition, PHIRB is responsible for the production of official life expectancy estimates for NI, and areas within the region.

PHIRB provides support to a range of key DoH NI strategies including Making Life Better, a 10 year cross-departmental public health strategic framework as well as a range of other departmental strategies such as those dealing with suicide, sexual health, breastfeeding, tobacco control and obesity prevention. It also has a key role in supporting the Departmental Alcohol and Drug Strategy, by maintaining and developing key departmental databases such as, the Substance Misuse Database, Impact Measurement Tool and the Census of Drug & Alcohol Treatment Services, which are all used to monitor drug misuse and treatments across Northern Ireland. In addition to Departmental functions, PHIRB also supports the executive level Programme for Government and its strategic outcomes through a series of performance indicators.

Feedback

We invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to: healthinequalities@health-ni.gov.uk

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Introduction

The Official Life Expectancy Figures for Northern Ireland

The Department of Health are the official producers of life expectancy figures for Northern Ireland. This report presents the latest estimates of life expectancy, healthy life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy estimates including an assessment of trends over the last five years.

The analysis in this report is based on the latest official deaths statistics, which include deaths registered up to 2023 published in the Registrar General Annual Report and does not reflect deaths occurring in 2024. Further provisional deaths statistics for more recent periods are available from the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) within the [NISRA Weekly Deaths Tables](#).

This publication is one of a series of reports produced as part of the NI Health & Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System (HSCIMS)¹. A guide on the terminology and technical notes are set out in [Appendix B](#).

Analysis limited to headline figures only

Due to a delay in the publication of sub-regional population estimates for Northern Ireland, this report has been limited to **headline regional figures only** and will be followed-up with the full report once sub-population estimates have been released. The follow-up report will contain estimates for HSC Trust and Local Government Districts in addition to an analysis of deprivation gaps and an assessment of the extent to which mortality within certain ages and causes of death contributed to gaps and changes in life expectancy.

¹ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/dhssps-statistics-and-research/health-inequalities-statistics>

Life Expectancy at Birth

- In 2021-23, life expectancy in Northern Ireland (NI) was 78.8 years for males and 82.5 years for females.
- Since 1980-82, life expectancy has risen by 7.0 years for females and 9.6 years for males. However, life expectancy growth has slowed over the past decade for both males and females.
- Following a downward trend in male and female life expectancies between 2017-19 and 2020-22, life expectancy has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Life Expectancy at 65

- In 2021-23, life expectancy at age 65 in NI was 18.5 years for males and 20.7 years for females, with no significant change over the last five years.

Healthy Life Expectancy

- In 2021-23, males could expect to live 60.3 years in good health compared with 59.2 years in 2017-19, however the change was not statistically significant.
- Female Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) stood at 61.4 years in 2021-23 and, similar to males, there was no significant change over the last five years.

Disability-Free Life Expectancy

- As with HLE, there was no significant change in Disability-Free Life Expectancy (DFLE) over the recent five-year period (2017-19 to 2021-23) for males or females.
- Female DFLE stood at 57.4 years in 2021-23, compared with 58.4 years in 2017-19.
- In 2021-23, males could expect to live 58.2 years free of disability, compared with 57.9 years in 2017-19.

Life expectancy at birth in 2021-23 was 78.8 years for males and 82.5 years for females.

Life expectancy refers to the average number of years a person could expect to live if the current mortality patterns remain constant.

In 2021-23, females in Northern Ireland could expect to live 3.7 years longer than males.

Male and Female Life Expectancy at Birth (2021-23)



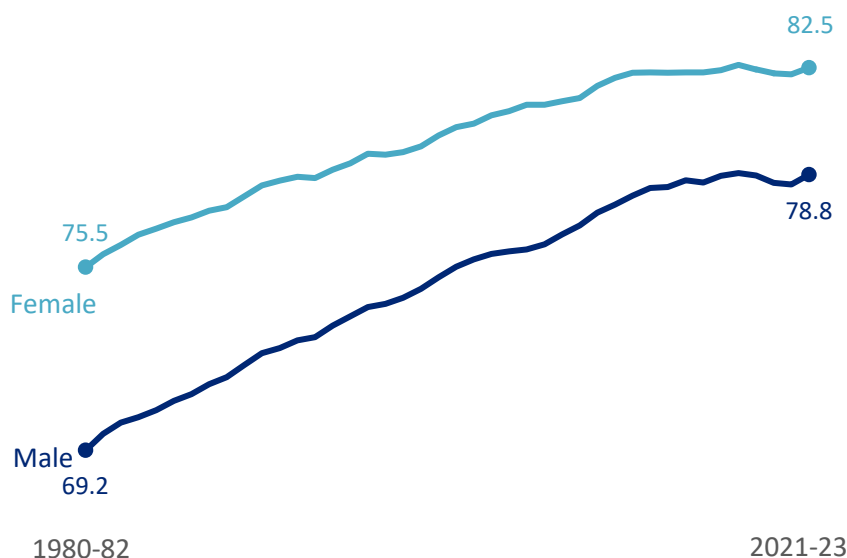
Life expectancy for both males and females has grown steadily since 1980-82 but has slowed in recent years.

Since 1980-82, life expectancy at birth has increased by 7.0 years for females and 9.6 years for males.

However, over the last ten years, life expectancy growth has slowed for both males and females.

While the male-female gap had generally narrowed since 1980-82, it has remained fairly steady in recent years, with no change over the last eight years.

Life Expectancy at Birth (1980-82 to 2021-23)

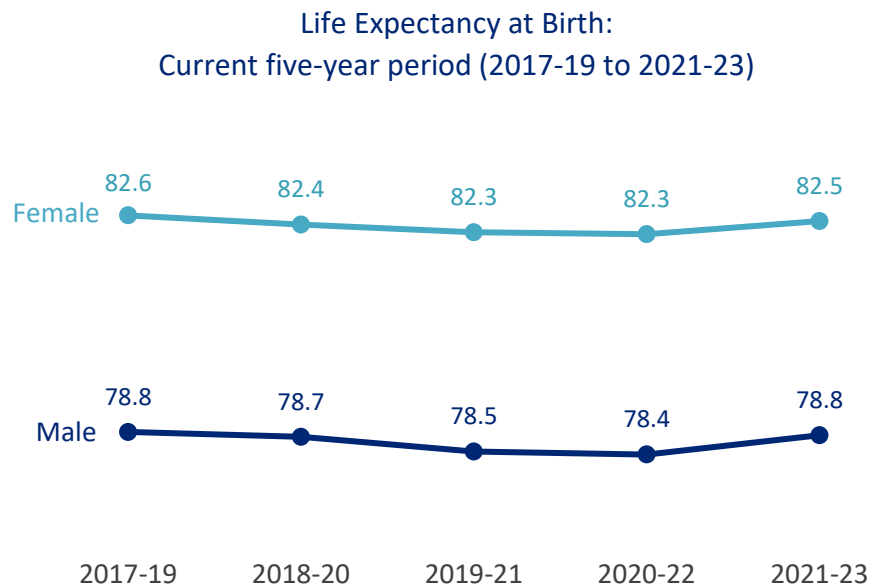


There has been no change in life expectancy over the last five years.

Following a downward trend in male and female life expectancies between 2017-19 and 2020-22, life expectancy has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Although male life expectancy increased by 0.4 years between 2020-22 (78.4 years) and 2021-23 (78.8 years), it remains similar to the estimate in 2017-19 (78.8 years).

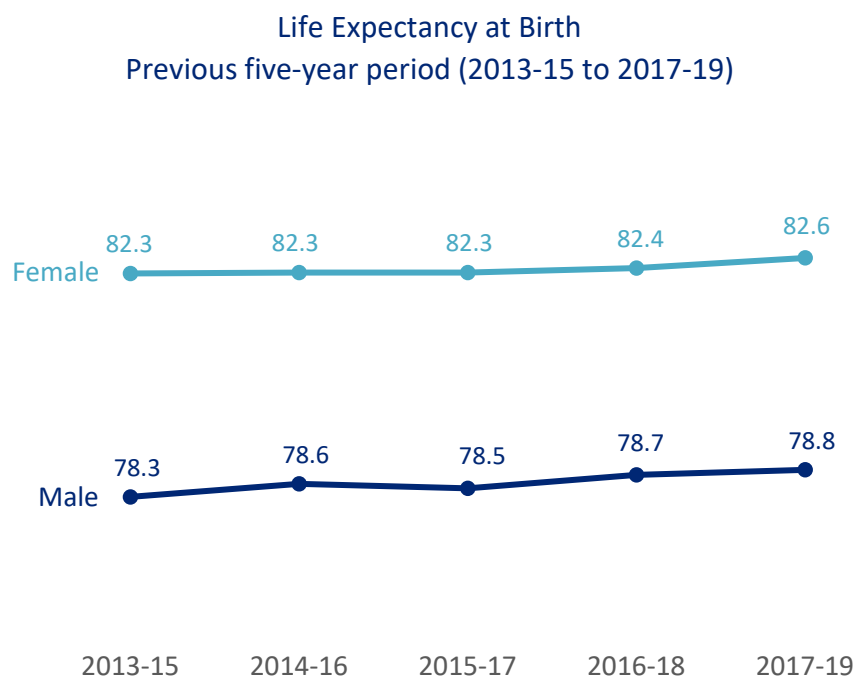
Female life expectancy increased by 0.2 years between 2020-22 (82.3 years) and 2021-23 (82.5 years). Like males, there has been no significant change in female life expectancy in over the latest five-year period.



There was a significant increase in life expectancy in the previous five-year period.

In contrast with the latest five-year period, where no changes were observed, life expectancy increased for both males and females in the previous five-year period (2013-15 to 2017-19).

Male life expectancy increased by 0.5 years from 78.3 years in 2013-15 to 78.8 years in 2017-19, while female life expectancy increased by 0.3 years from 82.3 years to 82.6 years over the same period.

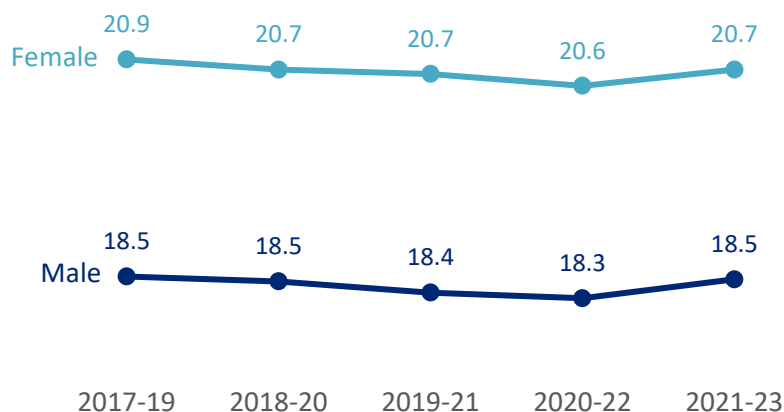


Life expectancy at age 65 in 2021-23 was 18.5 years for males and 20.7 years for females.

Life expectancy at 65 remained similar for both males and females between 2017-19 and 2021-23.

This contrasts with the previous five-year period (2013-15 to 2017-19), which saw a significant increase of 0.3 years for both male and female life expectancy at age 65.

Male and Female Life Expectancy at 65 (2017-19 to 2021-23)



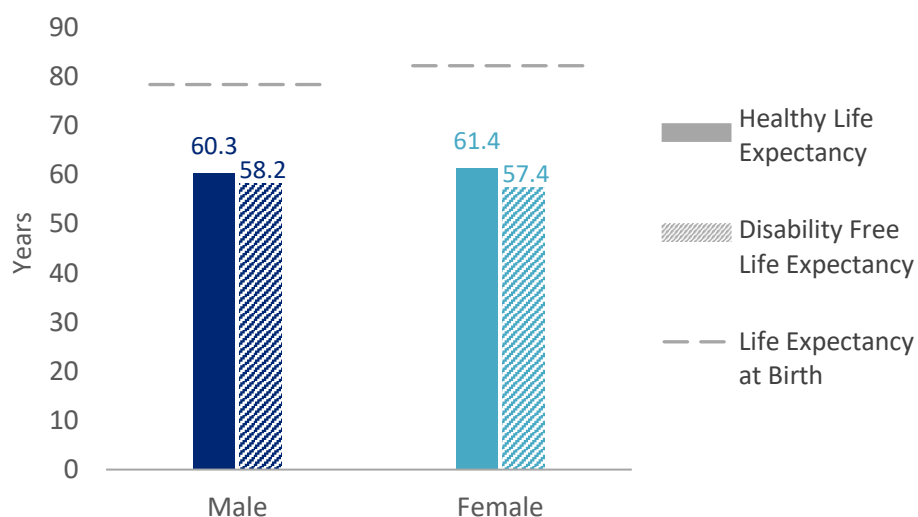
Males and females could both expect to live around three-quarters of their lives in good health.

In 2021-23, males could expect to live 60.3 years in good health, while females could expect to live 61.4 years.

Disability free life expectancy (DFLE) was 58.2 years for males and 57.4 years for females.

For Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) and DFLE, the male-female gap is not as wide as that for life expectancy at birth.

Healthy and Disability Free Life Expectancy (2021-23)

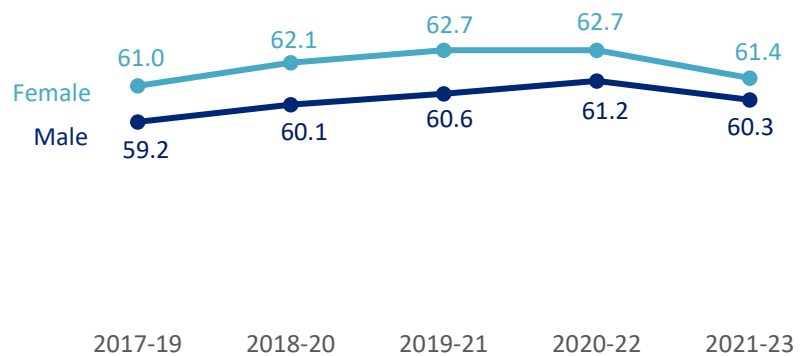


There was no significant change in HLE between 2017-19 and 2021-23, for males or females.

Male HLE increased by 1.1 years from 59.2 years in 2017-19 to 60.3 years in 2021-23, while female HLE increased by 0.4 years from 61.0 to 61.4 years. However, these changes were not statistically significant.

Conversely to life expectancy, HLE had an upward trend between 2017-19 and 2020-22 for males and females before returning to pre-pandemic levels in 2021-23.

Healthy Life Expectancy (2017-19 to 2021-23)

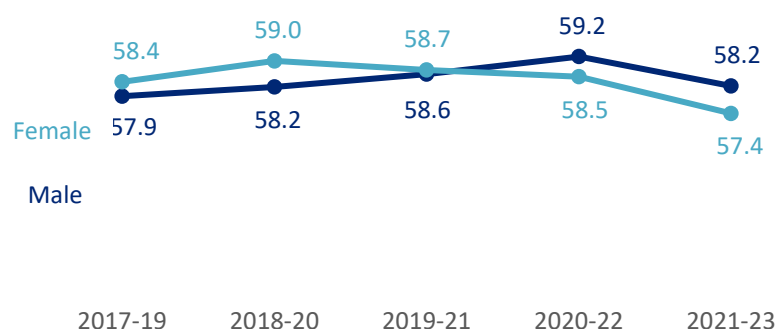


Similar to HLE, there was no significant change in DFLE for males or females between 2017-19 and 2021-23.

Over the five-year period (2017-19 to 2021-23), male DFLE increased by 0.3 years, from 57.9 years to 58.2 years.

Female DFLE decreased by 1.0 years over the same period, from 58.4 years to 57.4 years. However, changes in male and female DFLE were not statistically significant.

Disability Free Life Expectancy (2017-19 to 2021-23)



NI Life Expectancies (2017-19 to 2021-23) (All figures in years)		2017-19	2018-20	2019-21	2020-22	2021-23
Male	Life Expectancy at Birth	78.8	78.7	78.5	78.4	78.8
	Life Expectancy at 65	18.5	18.5	18.4	18.3	18.5
	Healthy Life Expectancy	59.2	60.1	60.6	61.2	60.3
	Disability-Free Life Expectancy	57.9	58.2	58.6	59.2	58.2
Female	Life Expectancy at Birth	82.6	82.4	82.3	82.3	82.5
	Life Expectancy at 65	20.9	20.7	20.7	20.6	20.7
	Healthy Life Expectancy	61.0	62.1	62.7	62.7	61.4
	Disability-Free Life Expectancy	58.4	59.0	58.7	58.5	57.4

NI Life Expectancies (2013-15 to 2017-19) (All figures in years)		2013-15	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18	2017-19
Male	Life Expectancy at Birth	78.3	78.6	78.5	78.7	78.8
	Life Expectancy at 65	18.2	18.3	18.2	18.4	18.5
	Healthy Life Expectancy	58.4	59.1	59.1	59.7	59.2
	Disability-Free Life Expectancy	57.2	55.3	55.0	57.3	57.9
Female	Life Expectancy at Birth	82.3	82.3	82.3	82.4	82.6
	Life Expectancy at 65	20.6	20.7	20.6	20.7	20.9
	Healthy Life Expectancy	61.0	60.9	60.3	60.8	61.0
	Disability-Free Life Expectancy	58.9	56.4	55.4	57.2	58.4

Official Figures

This report produced by Information Analysis Directorate (IAD) presents the latest official life expectancy, Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) and Disability Free Life Expectancy (DFLE) estimates for NI.

Life Expectancy

The average number of years an individual born within a specified period can expect to live providing mortality patterns remain constant. Life expectancy figures are calculated using the [Chiang II²](#) abridged life table method. This method has been adapted to extend the open-ended final age group to those aged 90 and over. Figures are presented for the expected years of life at time of birth, or at age 65, for both males and females and are aggregated by three years.

Limited Analysis

Due to a delay in the publication of sub-regional population estimates for Northern Ireland, this report has been limited to **headline regional figures only** and will be followed-up with the full report once sub-population estimates have been released. The follow-up report will contain estimates for HSC Trust and Local Government Districts in addition to an analysis of deprivation gaps and an assessment of the extent to which mortality within certain ages and causes of death contributed to gaps and changes in life expectancy.

Life Expectancy Gap

This is defined as the difference between life expectancy estimates, either between two populations at a given point in time, or within a single population between two points of time.

Healthy Life Expectancy and Disability-Free Life Expectancy

Healthy Life Expectancy is the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health. HLE provides an estimate of lifetime spent in 'Very Good' or 'Good' health, calculated using respondents' perception of their own health according to the [Health Survey Northern Ireland \(HSNI\)](#). Disability-Free Life Expectancy is the average number of years a person can expect to live disability free. DFLE provides an estimate of lifetime spent free from a limiting persistent (twelve months or more) illness or disability, based upon a self-rated functional assessment of health recorded in the HSNI. Each figure is calculated using the [Sullivan³](#) method excluding populations that reside in communal establishments.

It should be noted that due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, data collection for the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 surveys moved from face-to-face interviewing to telephone mode. This may have influenced the responses given by respondents. In addition, the sample size was lower as a result and children were not included in the survey between 2020/21 and 2022/23. As a result, data relating to children in 2019 was held constant from 2020 to 2022.

Rounded Figures

Values presented are rounded to one decimal place independently. As a result, the sum of component items may not therefore always add to the totals shown.

² http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/62916/1/15736_eng.pdf

³ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/chafea_pdb/assets/files/pdb/2006109/2006109_d5sullivan_guide_final_jun2007.pdf

Sources of Information

All life expectancy analyses and calculations are based on official deaths data sourced from the General Register Office and population data published by NISRA. Information used to calculate Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) and Disability Free Life Expectancy (DFLE) have been sourced from the Health Survey Northern Ireland (DoH), and the Mid-Year Population Estimates (NISRA).

Year of Death

All death figures used in this report are based on the year in which the death was registered, and therefore not necessarily the year in which the death occurred. While the majority of deaths are registered shortly after death, there may be some delay in registering others, particularly involving events such as infant death or suicide.

Other regular reports in this series include⁴:

Health Inequalities Annual Report – This annual publication analyses health inequality gaps within NI and presents a comprehensive analysis of health inequality gaps between the most and least deprived areas of NI, and within HSC Trust and LGD areas across a range of indicators.

Making Life Better: Key Indicators – Monitoring report for the key indicators of the wider social determinants of health & wellbeing, contained in the Making Life Better, the public health strategic framework for NI.

⁴ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/dhssps-statistics-and-research/health-inequalities-statistics>

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