

Date 18 October 2001
Venue Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales
Title **Comparative data on health in Wales and the UK**

Purpose

1. To invite the Committee to note the report on comparative data on health in Wales and the UK.

Summary

2. The attached Annexe A includes information about the demographic characteristics of the population, mortality (deaths), morbidity (levels of illness) and lifestyle. The key findings are:

- Wales has a higher proportion of elderly population than the other UK countries.
- Teenage conception rates are higher in Wales than the other GB countries.
- A range of mortality and morbidity indicators suggest that people in Wales generally have poorer health than those in England, but better than in Scotland. Northern Ireland has a similar profile.
- Wales has relatively high levels of adults who assess their own general health as poor, and of long-term disabled people of working age.

Timing

3. Routine.

Background

4. The report was requested by the Health and Social Services Committee at its meeting on 6 June during discussion of the Minister's monthly report.

Consideration

5. See Annexe A.

Compliance

6. There are no issues of regularity or compliance.

Financial implications

7. Not relevant to this paper.

Cross-cutting themes

8. Health is an issue that cuts across policy areas. The Assembly's major themes of tackling social disadvantage and promoting equal opportunities are fundamental to improving people's health, while investment in improving people's health is essential for sustainable development.

Action for Subject Committee

9. The Committee is invited to note the paper.

Jane Hutt
Minister for Health and Social Services

Contact Point

Dr Ruth Hall
Chief Medical Officer
Ext 3911

Annexe A Comparative data on health in Wales and the UK

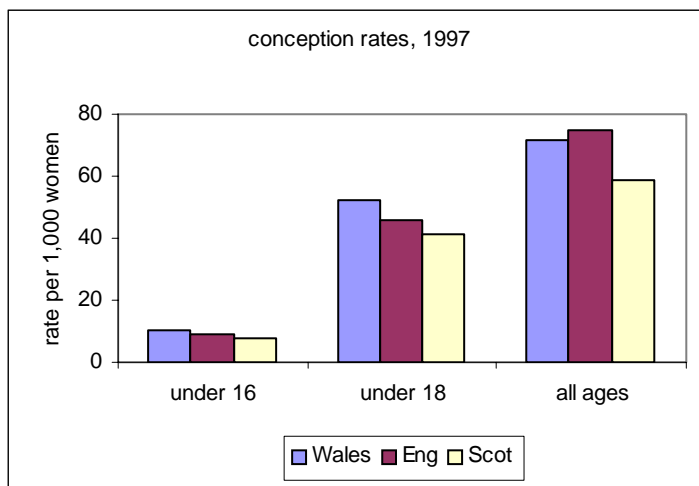
A comparative overview of health in Wales and the other UK countries is given below (see notes, definitions and table 1 for further information). This paper presents information for the four UK countries, but note that there will be variations within countries as well as between them. For instance, some areas in England also have relatively high mortality rates.



Population

The Welsh population of 2.9 million people represents 5% (one twentieth) of the UK population.

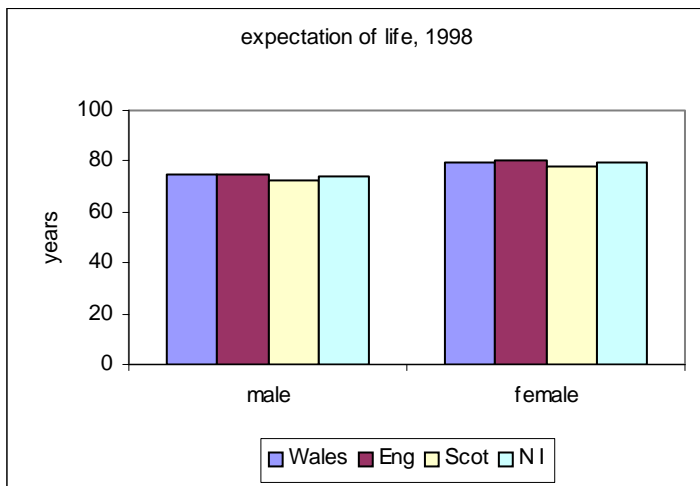
Just over 17% of the Welsh population is aged 65 and over, with 8% aged 75 and over - these proportions are higher than in the other UK countries (around 10% higher than in England).



Conceptions / births

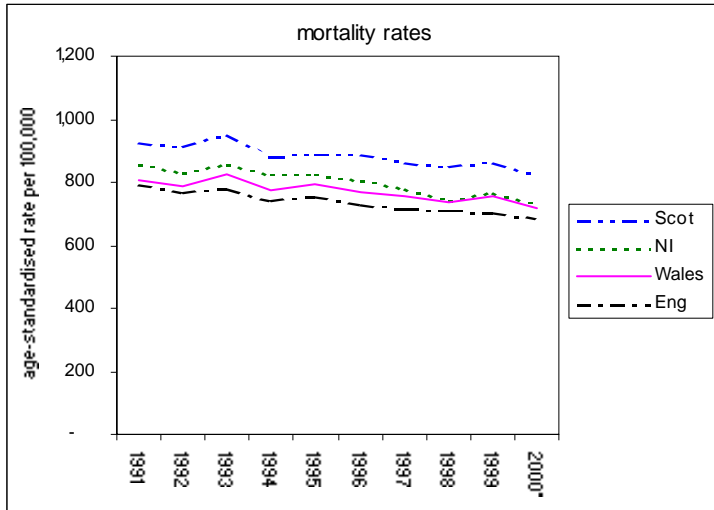
Overall conception and birth rates are slightly lower in Wales than England, but higher than Scotland. (Northern Ireland has a high overall birth rate).

Wales has higher rates of teenage conceptions than the other GB countries.



Expectation of life

In Wales, average life expectancy is 74.5 years for a man born now, and 79.5 years for a woman. This is similar to Northern Ireland. It is around 6 months less than in England, but slightly greater than in Scotland

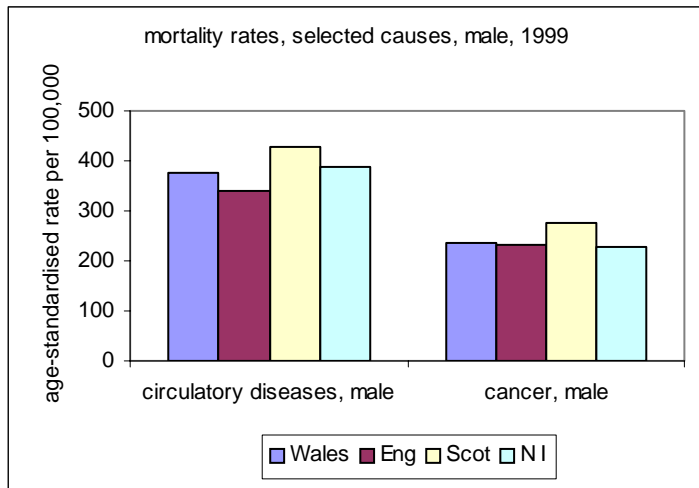


Mortality

There are around 35,000 deaths a year in Wales. Throughout the 1990s, mortality rates in Wales were consistently higher than in England (around 5% higher in 2000), but lower than in Scotland. Rates in Northern Ireland were slightly higher than Wales.

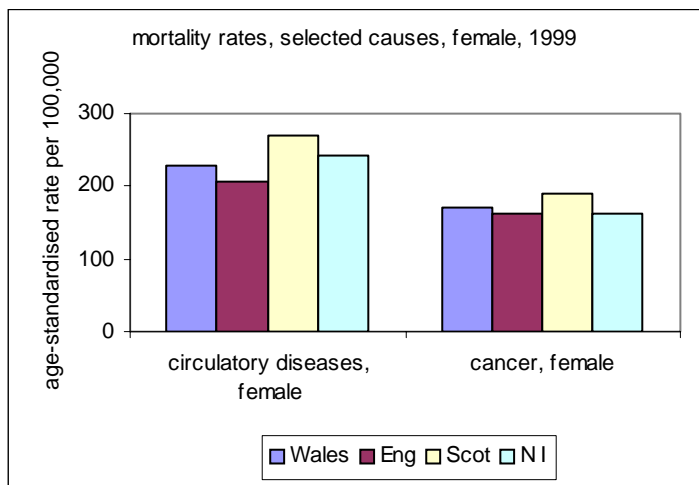
Mortality rates in all 4 countries declined over the decade, but there was no narrowing of the gap between Wales and England. Northern Ireland did narrow the gap slightly towards Wales.

For all countries, rates for men are around 50% higher than for women.



In all countries, the two main causes of death in 1999 were circulatory diseases (mainly coronary heart disease and strokes) and cancer, between them accounting for around two thirds of all deaths.

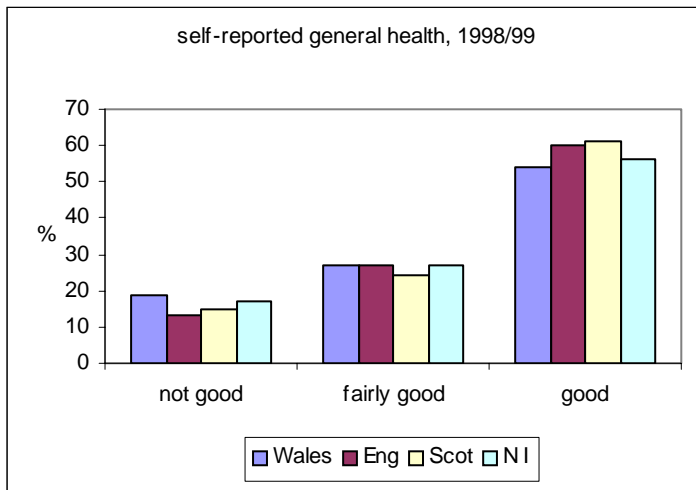
The picture for circulatory disease mortality was generally similar to that for overall mortality (ie, lowest rates in England, followed by Wales and N Ireland, with rates highest in Scotland).



For cancer mortality, rates in Scotland were highest, but there was relatively little variation between the other countries (Welsh rates were very slightly above England and Northern Ireland). Wales had slightly higher rates of breast cancer mortality than elsewhere.

Infant mortality

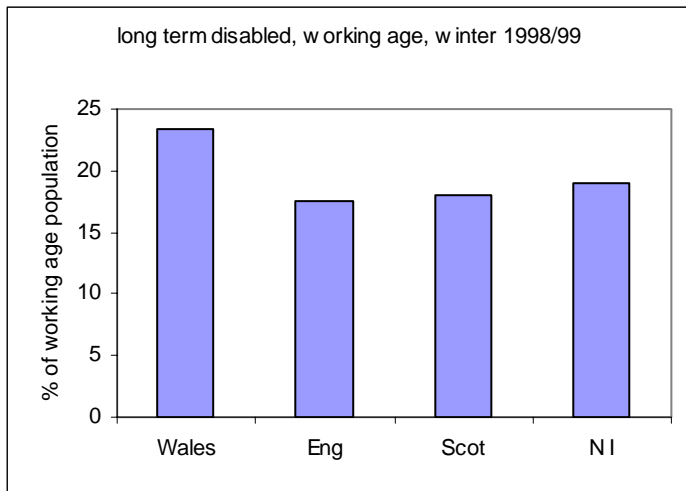
Infant mortality rates (deaths under one year) are based on small numbers (around 200 a year in Wales) and thus subject to fluctuation. However, during the 1990s the Welsh rate rarely exceeded that for England.



Self-reported general health

According to a survey, Wales has the highest proportion of adults who report that their health is 'not good' (19%). Interestingly, despite its generally poor health profile, Scotland had a high proportion reporting that their health is 'good'.

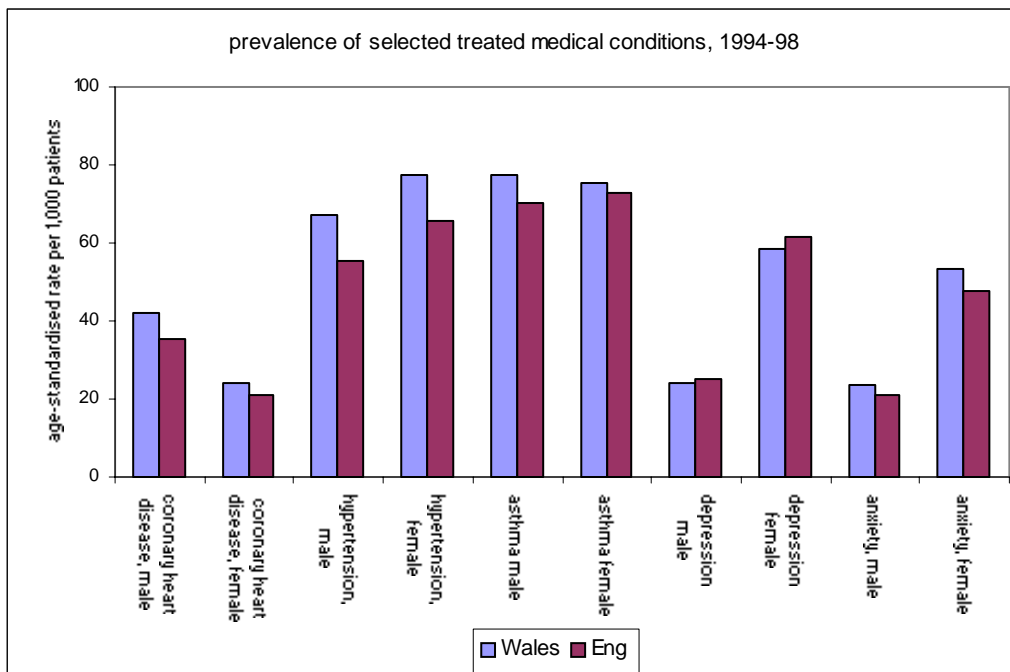
The 2001 census included a new question on self-reported general health, and the results of this, when available, may provide some useful information.



Long-term disabled

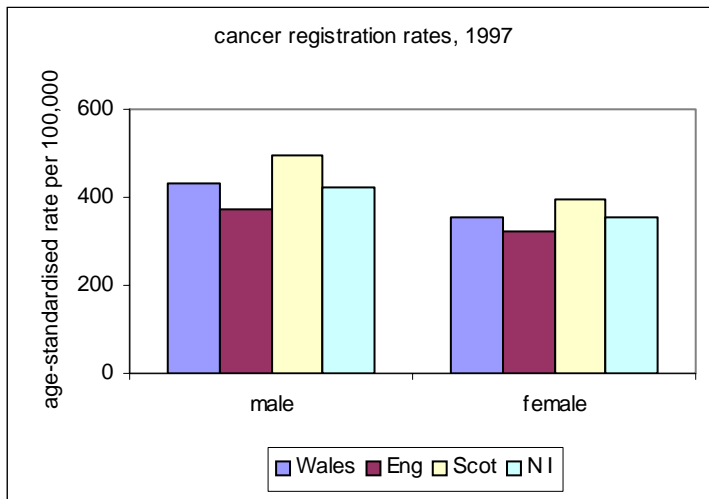
Wales has the highest percentage of people of working age with a self-reported long-term disability (23%).

The 1991 census also showed a higher proportion of people reporting a limiting long term illness in Wales than the other GB countries.



Illnesses

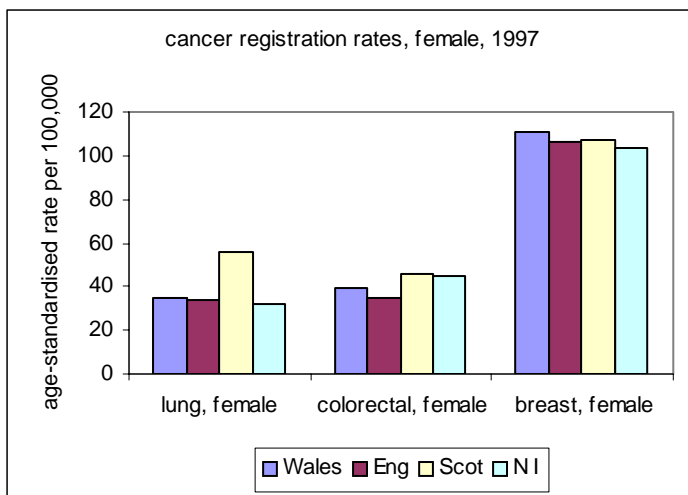
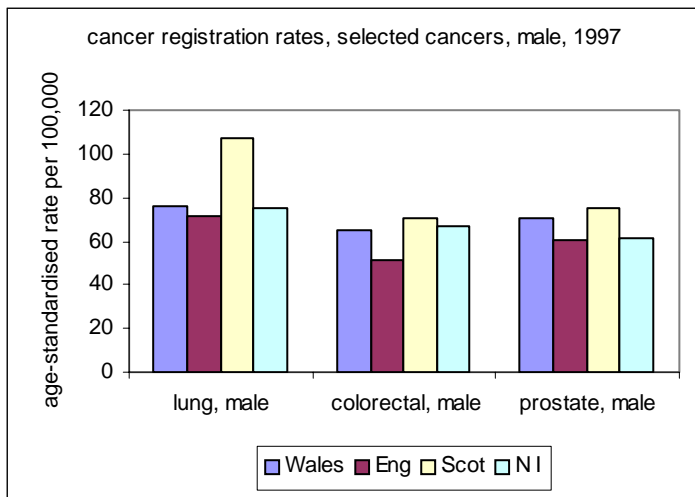
Prevalence of a range of treated illnesses (including coronary heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, asthma, anxiety - but not depression) is estimated to be higher in Wales than England.

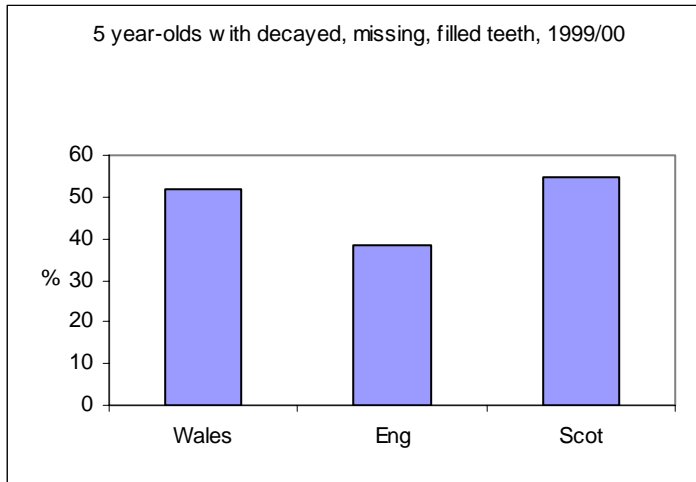


Cancer

There are around 15,000 new cases of cancer each year in Wales (malignant neoplasms, excluding non-melanoma skin cancer). In 1997, overall cancer incidence rates were similar in Wales and Northern Ireland: higher than in England, but lower than in Scotland. (Welsh rates were around 15% higher than England for men, around 10% higher for women).

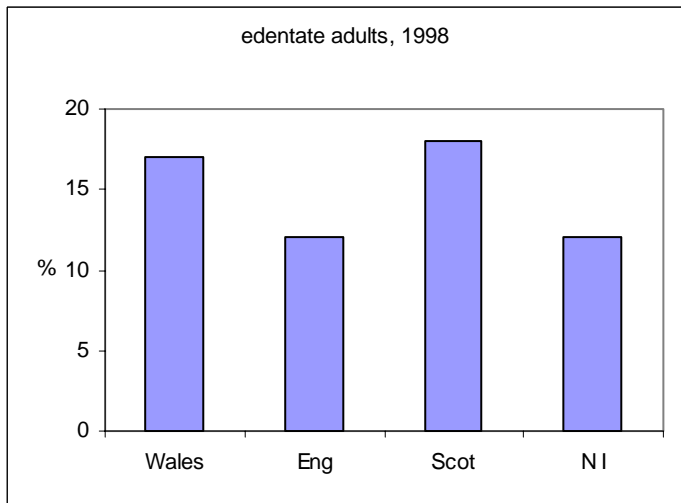
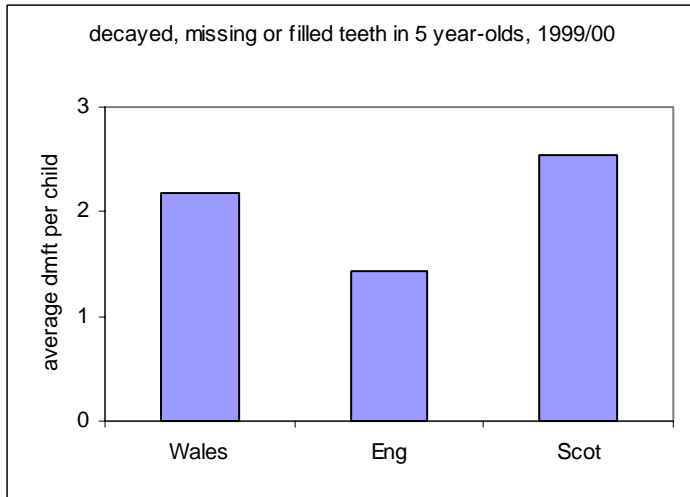
The three commonest cancers for each sex (lung, colorectal, prostate (male), breast (female)) account for around half of all cancers. The pattern was generally similar for these, although Wales did have a high breast cancer rate.



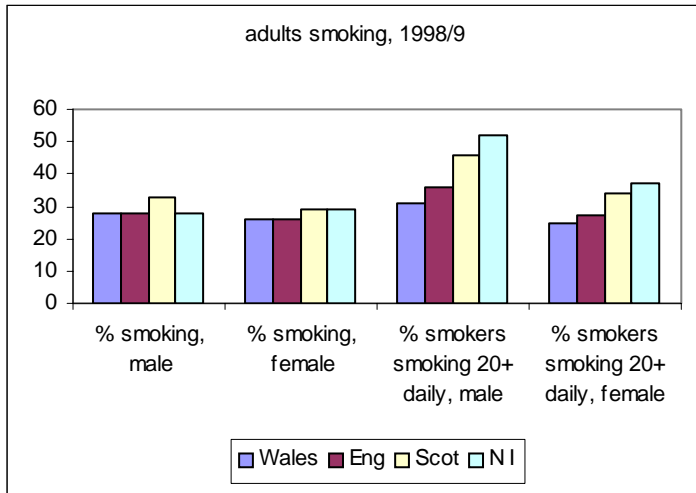


Dental health

Children in Wales have more experience of dental decay than those in England - a higher proportion of 5 year-olds have decayed, missing or filled teeth, and the average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth per child is also higher. 5 year-old children in Scotland also have poor dental health - slightly poorer than in Wales.

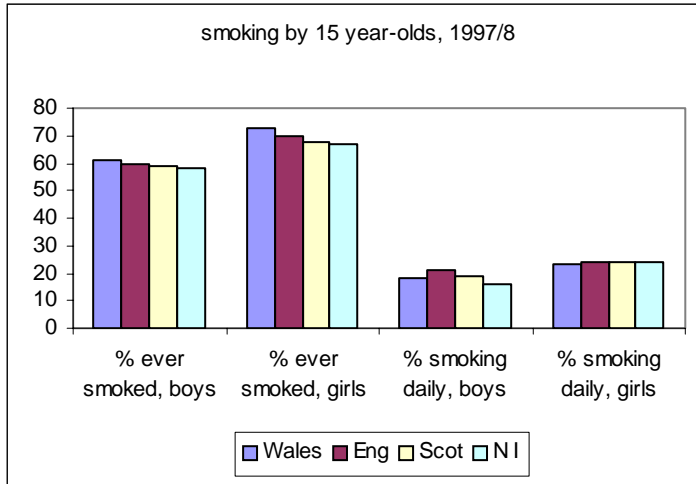


Adult oral health tends to be poorer in Wales than England, with a higher proportion of adults (17%) having no natural teeth (also high in Scotland).

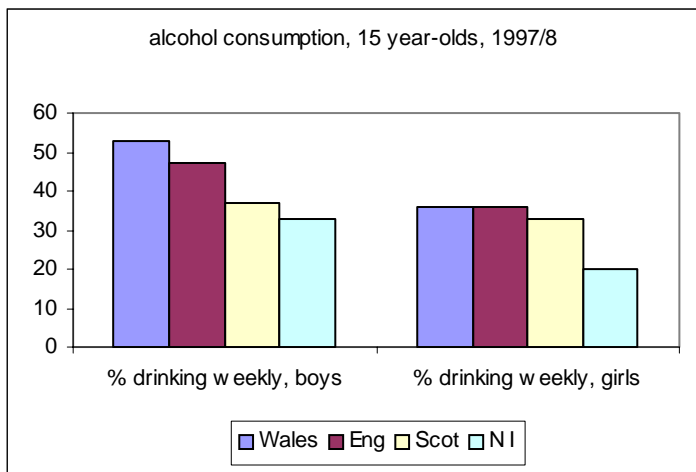


Smoking

Just over a quarter of adults smoke in Wales - a similar proportion to England (less than in Scotland). Smokers in Wales are less likely to smoke 20 or more a day than elsewhere (particularly Northern Ireland and Scotland). Almost as many women as men now smoke, although they are a little less likely to be heavy smokers.



15 year-olds in Wales are slightly more likely to have ever tried smoking than elsewhere, but not to smoke daily. More girls than boys smoke (23% girls and 18% boys smoke daily).



Alcohol

15 year-old boys in Wales, and 15 year-old girls in England and Wales, are more likely to drink at least weekly than those elsewhere in the UK.

Comparative data on health in Wales and the UK

Table 1

	Wales	England	Scotland	N Ireland
Population				
population (million), mid-2000:	2.946	49.997	5.115	1.698
% aged 65 and over	17.3	15.6	15.4	13.0
% aged 75 and over	8.2	7.4	6.8	5.8
Fertility				
Conceptions per 1000 women, 1997 ¹ :				
all ages	71.8	74.6	58.9	
under 16	10.3	8.8	7.6	
under 18	52.2	45.5	41.0	
Live birth rate per 1000 women, 1999 ² :				
all ages	56.6	57.6	50.8	62.9
under 20	37.3	30.4	30.0	28.9
Expectation of life, 1998 ³:				
male	74.5	75.1	72.6	74.3
female	79.5	80.0	78.1	79.5
Mortality				
Age-standardised mortality rates, selected causes, 1999 ⁴ :				
all causes, male	930.0	870.7	1,068.8	958.6
circulatory diseases, male	374.1	339.8	429.5	389.0
coronary heart disease, male	233.1	205.5	263.3	248.1
stroke, male	70.0	66.2	92.1	80.2
cancer, male	235.2	231.2	275.2	229.4
lung cancer, male	60.5	60.7	83.8	60.9
colorectal cancer, male	28.5	24.7	32.7	25.9
prostate cancer, male	25.8	27.1	28.0	24.3
respiratory illness, male	152.9	140.3	142.3	175.2
all causes, female	617.8	581.7	707.0	629.7
circulatory diseases, female	227.7	206.6	269.5	241.9
coronary heart disease, female	105.9	96.6	130.8	119.9
stroke, female	64.4	61.5	83.9	73.1
cancer, female	170.1	161.4	190.0	162.5
lung cancer, female	28.5	28.8	43.9	28.4
colorectal cancer, female	16.8	16.0	19.4	16.9
breast cancer, female	33.0	31.6	32.3	29.3
respiratory illness, female	98.9	94.3	102.9	123.8
all causes, persons, 2000 (provisional)	718.7	683.7	827.5	731.4
Infant mortality rate, 2000 (provisional) ⁵	5.2	5.6	5.7	5.0
Self-reported general health, 1998/99 ⁶:				
% reporting their health is "good"	54	60	61	56
% reporting their health is "not good"	19	13	15	17
Long-term disabled, winter 1998/99 ⁷:				
% of population of working age	23.3	17.5	18.1	19.0
Limiting long-term illness, 1991				
% of residents with limiting long-term illness	17.1	12.8	13.7	

	Wales	England	Scotland	N Ireland
Cancer incidence				
Age-standardised incidence rates, selected causes, 1997 ⁸ :				
all malignancies, male	429.7	374.7	497.0	420.7
lung, male	75.7	71.6	107.0	74.7
colorectal, male	64.6	51.2	70.3	67.0
prostate, male	70.7	60.7	75.3	61.2
all malignancies, female	355.4	322.6	395.9	353.0
lung, female	34.6	33.6	56.1	32.5
colorectal, female	39.4	34.6	45.9	45.2
breast, female	111.0	105.9	106.9	103.3
Prevalence of selected medical conditions				
Age-standardised prevalence rates, selected conditions, 1994-98 ⁹ :				
coronary heart disease, male	41.8	35.5		
coronary heart disease, female	24.2	21.1		
stroke, male	2.1	2.1		
stroke, female	1.6	1.5		
hypertension, male	67.3	55.6		
hypertension, female	77.4	65.8		
insulin treated diabetes, male	6.6	5.0		
insulin treated diabetes, female	5.5	4.5		
non-insulin treated diabetes, male	11.1	9.8		
non-insulin treated diabetes, female	7.8	7.1		
asthma male	77.2	70.4		
asthma female	75.4	72.6		
depression male	24.0	24.9		
depression female	58.6	61.4		
anxiety, male	23.7	20.8		
anxiety, female	53.3	47.9		
Dental health				
Dental caries in 5 year-old children, 1999/2000:				
% with decayed, missing or filled teeth	51.6	38.3	54.9	
average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth per child	2.18	1.43	2.55	
Adult dental health, 1998:				
% edentate adults ¹⁰	17	12	18	12
mean no. teeth in dentate adults, 1998	24.2	24.9	23.8	24.5
Smoking				
Cigarette smoking among adults aged 16 & over, 1998/99:				
% who smoke, male	28	28	33	28
% who smoke, female	26	26	29	29
% smokers smoking 20+ daily, male	31	36	46	52
% smokers smoking 20+ daily, female	25	27	34	37
Cigarette smoking among 15 year-olds, 1997/98:				
% ever smoked, boys	61	60	59	58
% ever smoked, girls	73	70	68	67
% smoking at least weekly, boys	22	25	22	20
% smoking at least weekly, girls	29	33	28	28
% smoking daily, boys	18	21	19	16
% smoking daily, girls	23	24	24	24

	Wales	England	Scotland	N Ireland
Alcohol consumption				
Alcohol consumption among adults aged 16 & over, 1998/99 ¹¹ :				
% men drinking more than 8 units on heaviest day	22	20	24	22
% women drinking more than 6 units on heaviest day	9	8	12	10
% drinking nothing in last week, male	32	25	29	47
% drinking nothing in last week, female	46	41	40	61
Alcohol consumption among 15 year-olds, 1997/98:				
% drinking beer, wine or spirits at least weekly, boys	53	47	37	33
% drinking beer, wine or spirits at least weekly, girls	36	36	33	20
Physical activity				
Physical activity among 15 year-olds, 1997:				
% exercising at least twice weekly, boys	82	79	85	90
% exercising at least twice weekly, girls	56	50	61	63

(See notes and definitions to table)

Notes and definitions

1 Pregnancies resulting in one or more live or still births or a legal abortion. Spontaneous abortions (miscarriages) are not included. Rates for all ages, under 16 and under 18 are per 1,000 women aged 15-44, 13-15 and 15-17 respectively.

2 Rates for all ages and under 20 are per 1,000 women aged 15-44 and 15-19 respectively.

3 Expectation of life (in years) at birth, based on three year average data centred on the year stated; provisional

4 Rates per 100,000 population, directly age-standardised to the European Standard Population

5 Deaths at less than one year of age per 1,000 live births

6 adults aged 16 and over

7 long-term disabled people of working age as % population of working age

8 Rates per 100,000 population, directly age-standardised to the European Standard Population. Rates for Scotland and Northern Ireland are for 1996. Rates for Wales are from the Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit. Rates for all malignant neoplasms exclude non-melanoma skin cancer. Cancer registration is a dynamic process, and numbers are subject to amendment on an ongoing basis.

9 Rates per 1000 patients, directly age-standardised to the European Standard Population. Figures relate to treated medical conditions recorded in a sample of general practices.

10 adults with no natural teeth

11 consumption last week

Sources and further reading

United Kingdom Health Statistics (Office for National Statistics)

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/products/p6637.asp>

Health Statistics Quarterly (Office for National Statistics)

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/products/p6725.asp>

Key Health Statistics from General Practice, 1998 (Office for National Statistics)

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/products/p4863.asp>

Adult Dental Health Survey, 1998 (Office for National Statistics)

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/products/p4749.asp>

British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry, 1999/2000

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/dhsru/bascd/bascd.htm>

Geographic Variations in Health (Office for National Statistics)

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/products/p6638.asp>

Regional Trends (Office for National Statistics)

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/onlineproducts/default.asp#compendia>