



Epilepsy statistics

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Section: Social and General Statistics

1 Prevalence

Globally, the World Health Organisation estimates 50m individuals have epilepsy, a prevalence of around 8.5 per 1,000 individuals¹.

402,000 individuals in the UK and 327,000 in England were registered with GP practices as having epilepsy in 2008/09. This represents a prevalence rate of 6.2 per 1,000 population. Epilepsy prevalence increases with age: it is around 3 per 1,000 in under 16s and 12 per 1,000 in the over 65s².

The map overleaf shows prevalence of epilepsy in each Primary Care Trust area in England, and in the health boards of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Outside London, prevalence tends to be higher in more deprived areas, particularly in the North of England and South Wales: Blackpool Primary Care Trust area has the highest prevalence in the country, at 8.6 per 1,000 population. Prevalence is low in London, around 4.4 per 1,000 individuals.

2 Misdiagnosis

Epilepsy is misdiagnosed in 20-30% of cases: most commonly, non-epileptic conditions are incorrectly diagnosed as epilepsy. In 2004, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) estimated the direct costs of epilepsy misdiagnosis (including inappropriate treatment, but not including individuals' lost productivity from misdiagnosis) to be between £130m and £190m per year³.

3 Deaths

In 2008, there were 973 deaths in England, 565 men and 408 women, where epilepsy or *status epilepticus* was cited as the primary cause⁴. Although deaths from epilepsy are relatively rare, victims are generally younger: half of all deaths in 2008 occurred among those aged between 15 and 54. A clinical audit of epilepsy deaths in 2002 found that 64 per cent of adult deaths and over half of child deaths were possibly or probably avoidable⁵.

4 Control of epilepsy

In 2008/09, around 80 per cent of epilepsy sufferers registered at GP practices were recorded as being seizure-free for at least 12 months. In more deprived areas, epilepsy

¹ WHO (2009) [Epilepsy Factsheet](#)

² ONS (2002) [Epilepsy Prescribing Patterns in England and Wales](#)

³ NICE (2004) [Epilepsy, second consultation, Appendix G](#)

⁴ ONS [Mortality Statistics 2008](#) (ICD-10 codes G40 and G41)

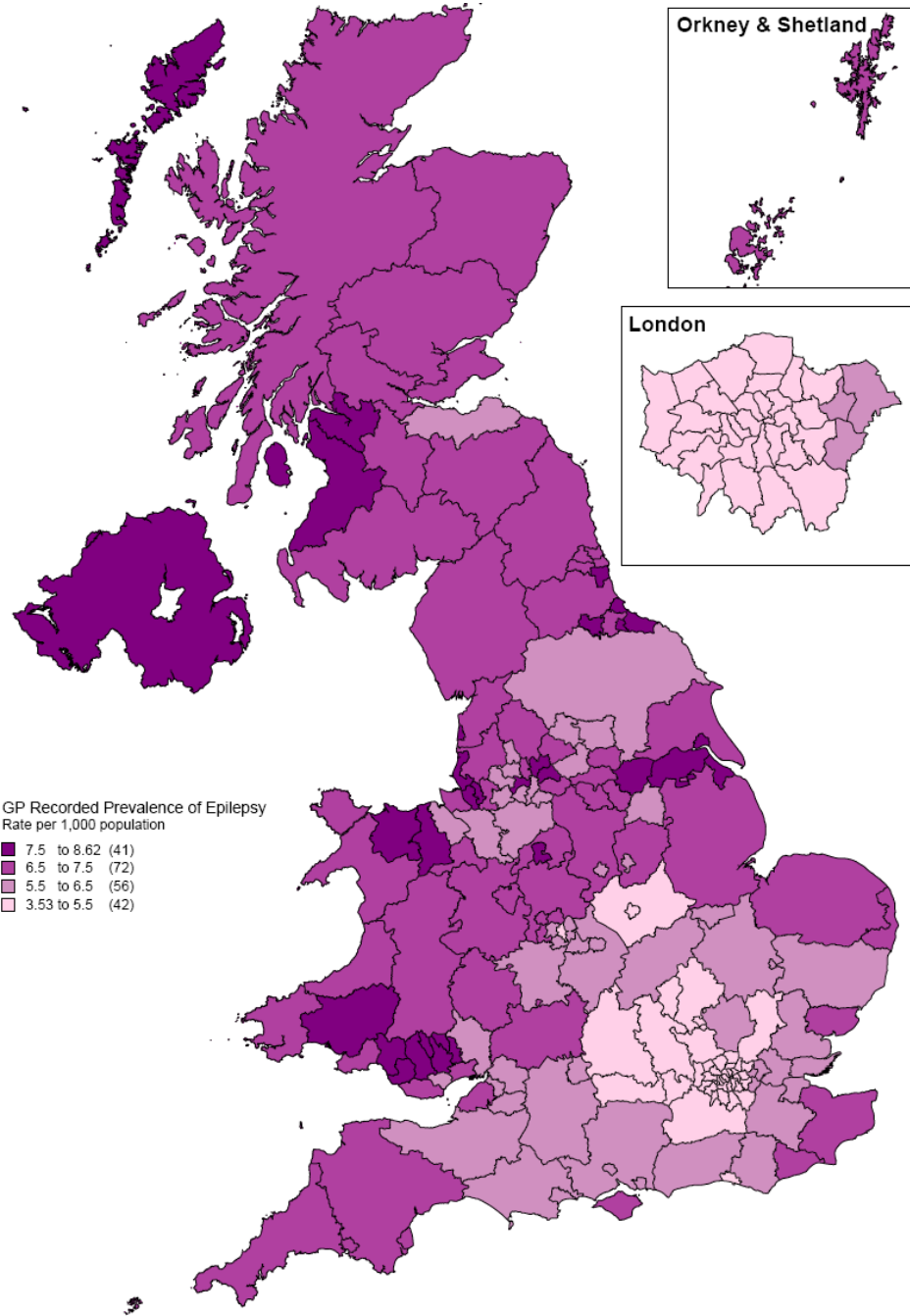
⁵ [National Sentinel Clinical Audit of Epilepsy-related Deaths](#)

tends to be less well-controlled: in Knowsley Primary Care Trust area, for instance, the figure was 63 per cent.

The Joint Epilepsy Council estimates that 52 per cent of people with epilepsy are completely seizure-free, but that with better treatment and diagnosis the figure could be as high as 70 per cent⁶.

In 2009, there were 13 million prescription items of anti-epileptic drugs dispensed in the community in England, at a net ingredient cost of £300 million⁷.

5 GP recorded prevalence of epilepsy by health authority area, 2008/9



⁶ Joint Epilepsy Council (2007): *The Human and Economic Cost of Epilepsy in England*

⁷ NHS Information Centre *Prescription Cost Analysis 2009*. The net ingredient cost is the cost of the drug before discounts, not including any dispensing costs of fees.