

Data Quality

Accuracy

Figures in this publication are based on information systems at NHS Prescription Services, part of the NHS Business Services Authority.

The Prescription Services data was extracted from the primary care version of their ePACT system which allows the NHS IC to extract data via the NHSNet. NHS Prescription Services quality assures the data they provide.

Relevance

This publication allows users to see how the use of medicines has changed over time and to compare Primary Care Trusts at a fairly detailed level (British national Formulary section). However comparisons between PCTs need to allow for the differences in population which range from under 100,000 to over one million patients.

Compatibility and Coherence

The Prescription Services data presented here differs from that presented in the NHS IC publications based on the Prescription Cost Analysis system. This is because the PCA database is based on all prescriptions dispensed in England irrespective of where they were written and includes prescriptions written by dentists and hospital doctors. The figures here are based on prescriptions written in primary care in England and dispensed anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Timeliness and punctuality.

The timing of this publication is influenced by the availability of the data (usually six weeks after the end of the quarter to which it refers) and the requirement not to publish the data for the final quarter of the calendar year until after the publication of the National Statistic, Prescription Cost Analysis, which is published in April each year.

Accessibility

The data is made available through a system called iView which allows the user to analyse the data by selecting time periods, geographical areas or different parts of the BNF. More detailed data on primary care may be requested from Prescription Services.

Performance cost and respondent burden.

The figures used in this publication are collected as part of the process of reimbursing dispensers for drugs supplied. The publication therefore uses an existing administrative source.

Confidentiality, Transparency and Security.

The standard IC data security and confidentiality policies have been applied in the production of these statistics. The data is published as a comma separated variable file under the requirements of the Transparency agenda. Note that the data in the csv file does not match that in PCT Prescribing as changes have been made to PCT names in the PCT Prescribing data to increase compatibility over time. The data in the csv file may also reflect a change in the name of an organisation which took place after the period to which the data relates because of the way Prescription Services process the data.