



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

Sickness absence in the NHS: October to December 2020

Data on sickness absence rates for directly employed NHS staff for October to December 2020.

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In response to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, additional and timelier management information is collected on sickness absence. It is not collected on the same basis as that published in this quarterly release, and therefore the figures will differ.

The management information suggests that a daily average of just over 2,000 (2.1%) staff were self-isolating over the quarter ended 31 December 2020, with the number increasing each month to an average of about 2,400 during December itself. Following a pause of shielding in mid-August 2020, a form of shielding was re-introduced on 22 December 2020 but this is likely to have a minimal effect on the data in this quarter. Some of these staff will have been working from home. Information on [coronavirus and NHS activity and capacity](#) is published in a weekly update.

Clinically extremely vulnerable staff on the shielding list, and therefore not in work due to that, are included in the self-isolating count. In these official statistics, NHS staff who are self-isolating or shielding are not counted as being off sick, and are therefore not included in these quarterly sickness absence

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statistics. The official statistics should continue to be considered the authoritative source of data on sickness absence in the NHS in Wales.

The data is sourced from the NHS Electronic Staff Record provided by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW).

Data included in this release is published on [StatsWales](#).

Main points

After a gradual fall during 2015 to 2017, the sickness absence 12 month moving average has been rising and was 6.0% over the last year, mainly due to an increase from the April to June 2020 quarter during the COVID-19 pandemic.

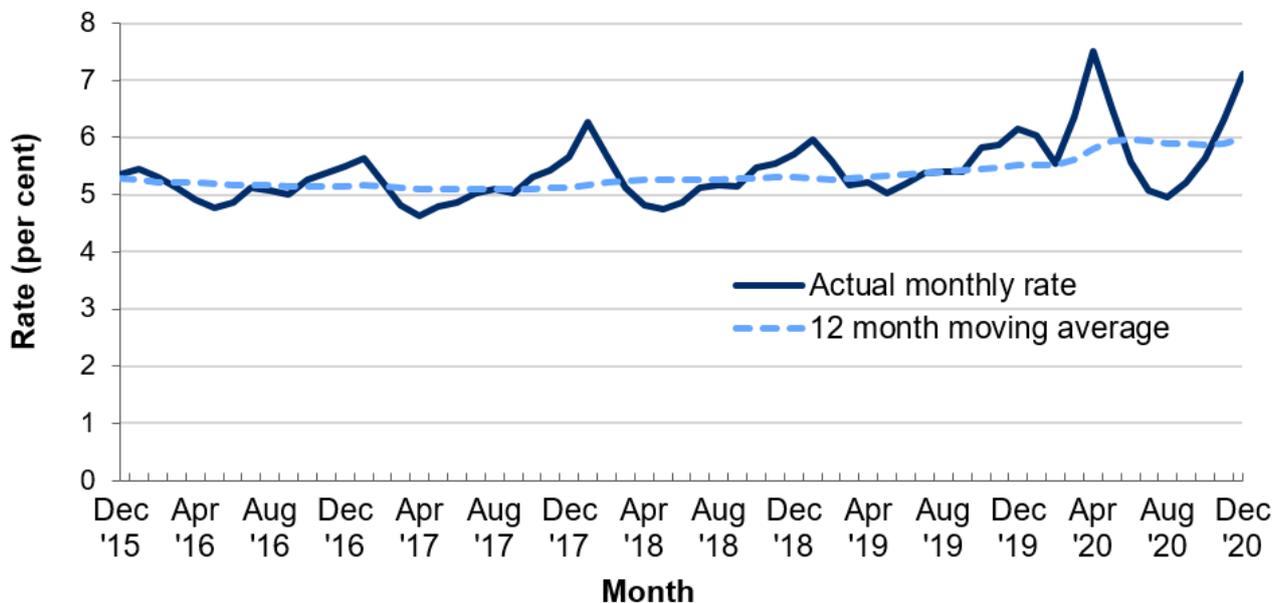
Quarter ending 31 December 2020

- Sickness absence rate was 6.4%, up 0.4 percentage points compared to the quarter ending 31 December 2019.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg local health board had the highest sickness absence rate, 8.5%.
- Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) had the lowest sickness absence rate, 2.7%.
- The staff group with the highest sickness absence rate was the Ambulance group, 9.6%.
- The staff group with the lowest sickness absence rate was Medical and Dental staff, 2.1%.

The numbers in this release are rounded to the nearest 0.1; percentage point changes are calculated based on the unrounded numbers.

Trends in the sickness absence rate

Chart 1: Trends in the sickness absence rate in the NHS in Wales by month, December 2015 to December 2020



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

Sickness absence shows wide seasonal variation throughout the year with the rate lower in summer and higher in winter. To provide clearer information on long term changes to the rate of sickness absence a 12 month moving average is shown in Chart 1. The chart shows the 12 month moving average went down slightly in the July to September 2020 quarter following a high of 6.0% in the 12 months ending June 2020, but has now increased again, with the average for the 12 months ending December 2020 being back to 6.0%.

The chart also shows that the sickness absence rate for April 2020 is the highest recorded monthly rate (7.5%) followed by December 2020 (7.1%), given the timing this is more than likely attributed to COVID-19. Those NHS staff self-isolating, which includes shielding staff, are not counted as being off sick and are therefore not included in these sickness absence rates. Monthly sickness absence rates by **NHS organisation** and **staff group** can be found on **StatsWales**.

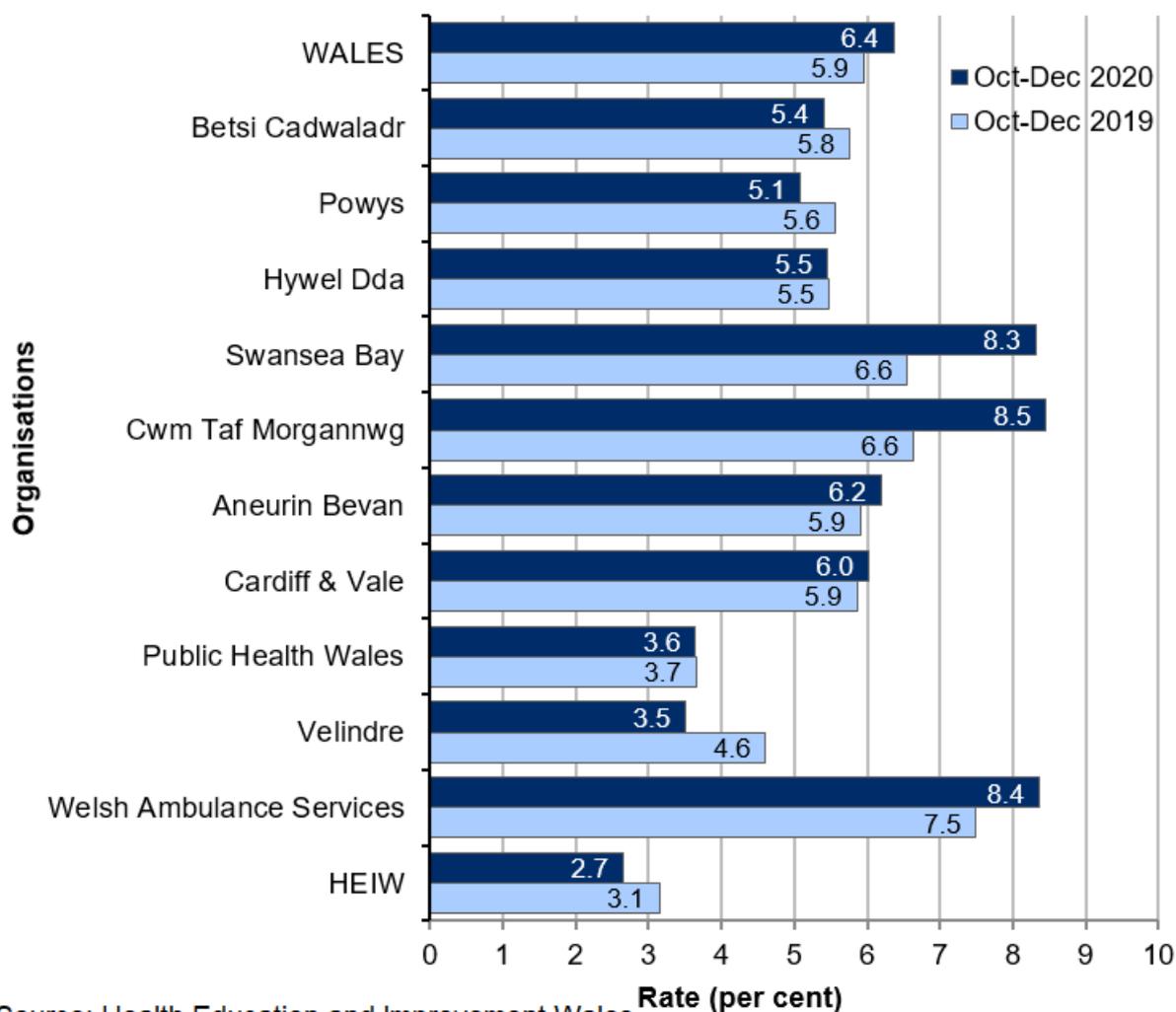
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Sickness absence rate by NHS organisation

Chart 2: Sickness absence rate in the NHS by organisation, quarter ended 31 December 2020 compared with the previous year



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

Cwm Taf Morgannwg local health board had the highest sickness absence rate (8.5%) of all NHS organisations this quarter, with the lowest rate being in Health Education and Improvement Wales (2.7%).

Cwm Taf Morgannwg had the highest sickness absence (8.5%) of all local health boards (LHBs) for the quarter ended 31 December 2020, with the lowest rate being in Powys (5.1%).

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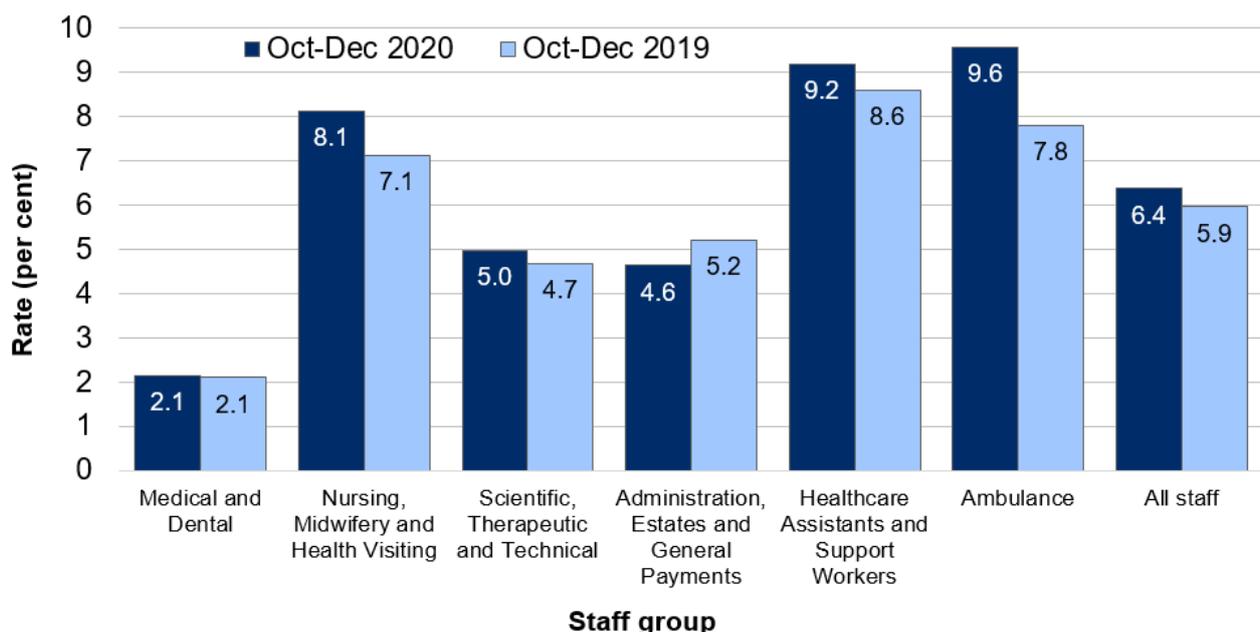
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Compared with the same quarter in 2019, staff sickness absence rate was higher in all the LHBs in south Wales (Swansea Bay, Cwm Taf Morgannwg, Aneurin Bevan and Cardiff & Vale), as well as in the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust. The staff sickness absence rate was lower in Betsi Cadwaladr and Powys LHBs, along with Velindre NHS Trust and HEIW. Hywel Dda LHB and Public Health Wales NHS Trust remained the same.

Data for all organisations is available on [StatsWales](#).

Sickness absence rate by staff group

Chart 3: Sickness absence rate in the NHS by staff group, quarter ended 31 December 2020 compared to the previous year



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

Of the six staff groups, the Ambulance group had the highest sickness absence rate this quarter (9.6%).

Medical and Dental staff had the lowest sickness absence rate for this quarter (2.1%) and has done so since data started to be collected in 2009.

The staff sickness absence rate was higher in all staff groups except for the Administration, estates and general payments group in the October to December 2020 quarter, compared to the previous year. The rate for Medical and Dental staff was unchanged.

Data for all staff groups is available on [StatsWales](#).

Quality and methodology information

The data is sourced from the NHS Electronic Staff Record provided by Health Education and Improvement Wales. Further information is available in the [quality report](#).

Well-being of Future Generations Act

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ('national indicators') that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

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Next update

11 August 2021

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