



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

Sickness absence in the NHS: October to December 2021

Data on sickness absence rates for directly employed NHS staff for October to December 2021.

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Introduction

New information is shown for the quarter ended 31 December 2021. Data for July to September 2021 has been revised.

In response to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, additional and timelier **management information (StatsWales)** is collected on sickness absence. This data is not collected on the same basis and has not undergone the same level of quality assurance as that published in this quarterly release, and therefore the figures will differ. The official statistics in this release should continue to be considered the authoritative source of data on sickness absence

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in the NHS in Wales.

Information on [coronavirus and NHS activity and capacity](#) is published in a weekly update.

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

The average sickness absence rate for the 12 months ending December 2021 was 6.3%, a record high. The average had been rising slowly since 2018 but increased noticeably from April 2020 (the start of the pandemic), remaining at about 6.0% before decreasing from January 2021. It has however risen markedly again since June 2021.

Quarter ending 31 December 2021

- Sickness absence rate was 7.3%, up 0.9 percentage points compared to the quarter ending 31 December 2020. This is the highest quarterly rate on record.
- The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust had the highest sickness absence rate, 11.6%.
- Health Education & Improvement Wales had the lowest sickness absence rate, 2.5%.
- The staff group with the highest sickness absence rate was the Ambulance group, 12.7%.
- The staff group with the lowest sickness absence rate was Medical and Dental staff, 2.2%.

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

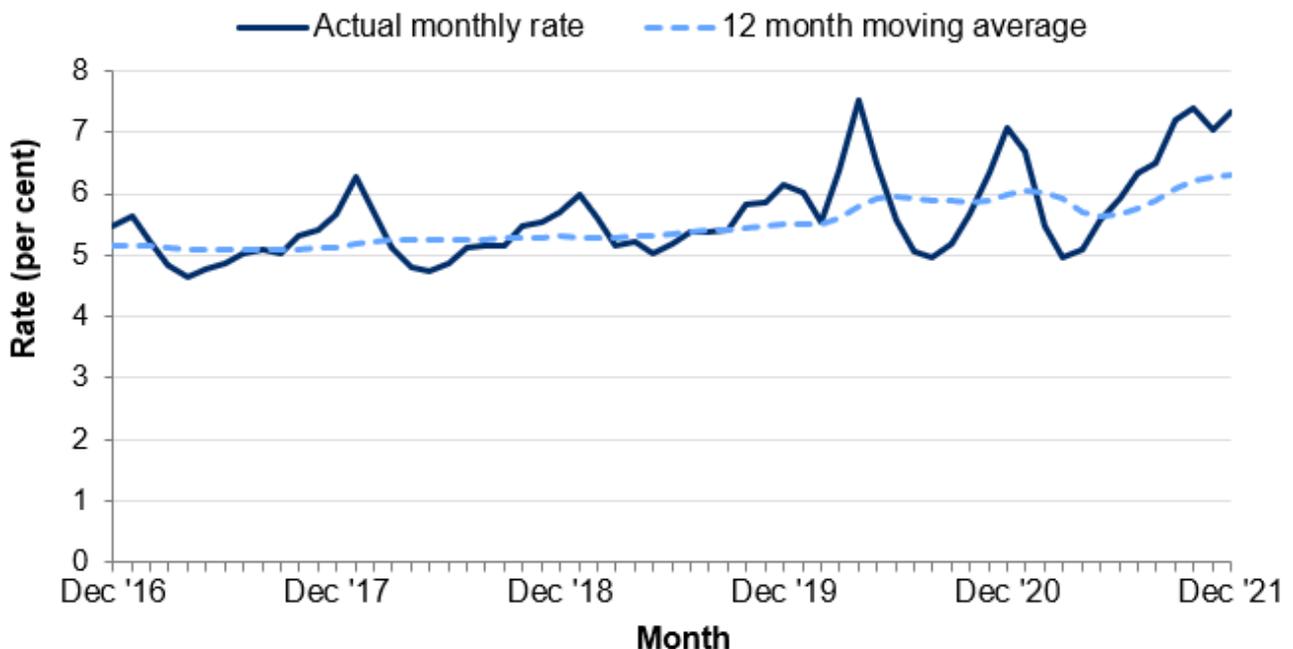
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Trends in the sickness absence rate

Chart 1: Trends in the sickness absence rate in the NHS in Wales by month, December 2016 to December 2021



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

Sickness absence on StatsWales

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 has remained at around 6.0% since May 2020 and started to decrease during the first half of 2021; it has since started to increase again to a record high for the 12 months ending 31 December 2021.

The chart also shows that the sickness absence rate for April 2020 is the highest recorded monthly rate (7.5%) followed by October 2021 (7.4%); given the timing

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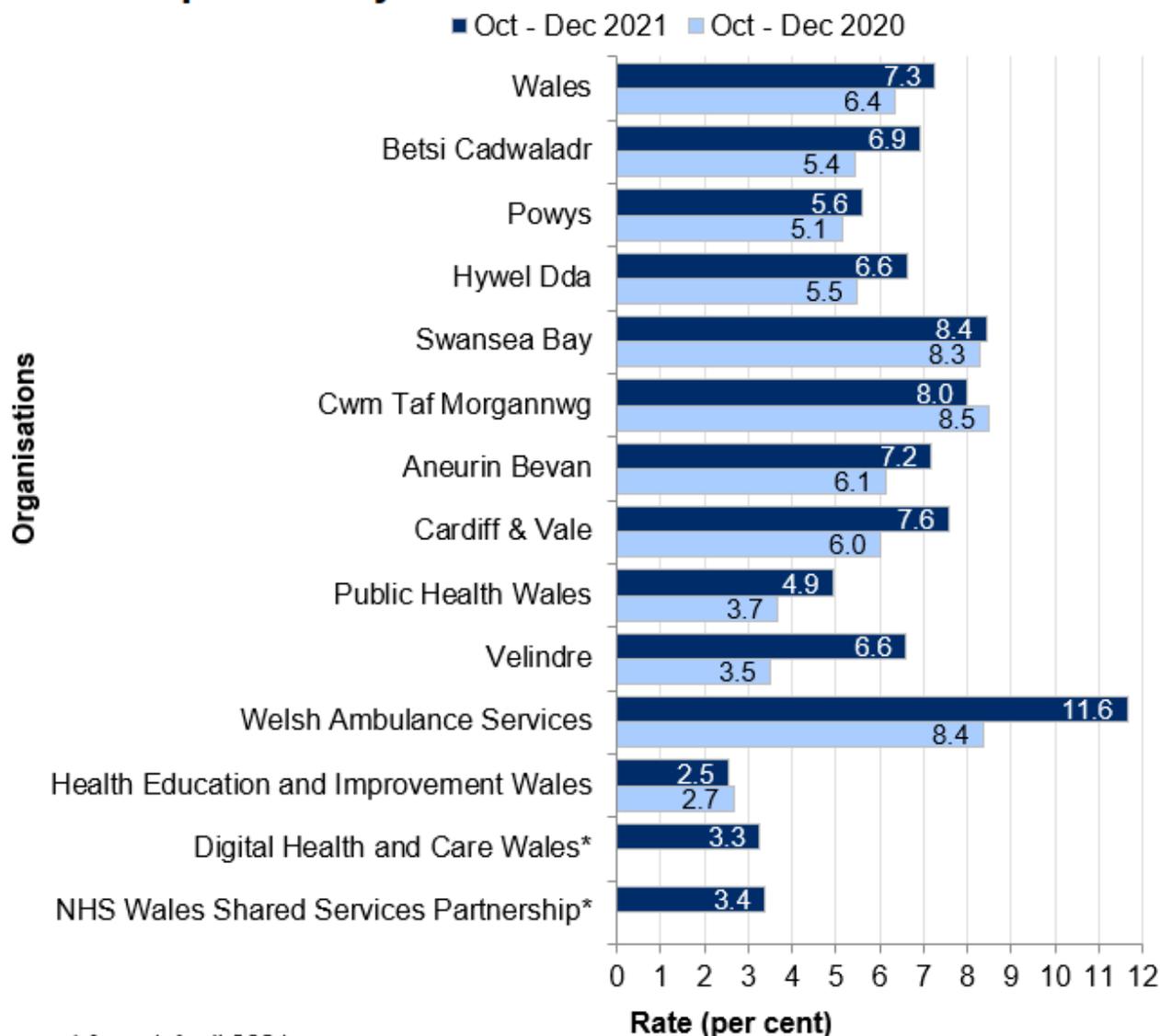
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this is more than likely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Those NHS staff self-isolating, which includes shielding staff (shielding advice was paused from 1 April 2021), are not counted as being off sick and are therefore not included in these sickness absence rates. Monthly **sickness absence rates by NHS organisation (StatsWales)** and **staff group (StatsWales)** can be found on **StatsWales**.

Sickness absence rate by NHS organisation

Chart 2: Sickness absence rate in the NHS by organisation, quarter ended 31 December 201 compared with the previous year



Percentage absent by organisation and date on StatsWales

The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust had the highest sickness absence

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rate (11.6%) of all NHS organisations this quarter, with the lowest rate being in Health Education and Improvement Wales (2.5%).

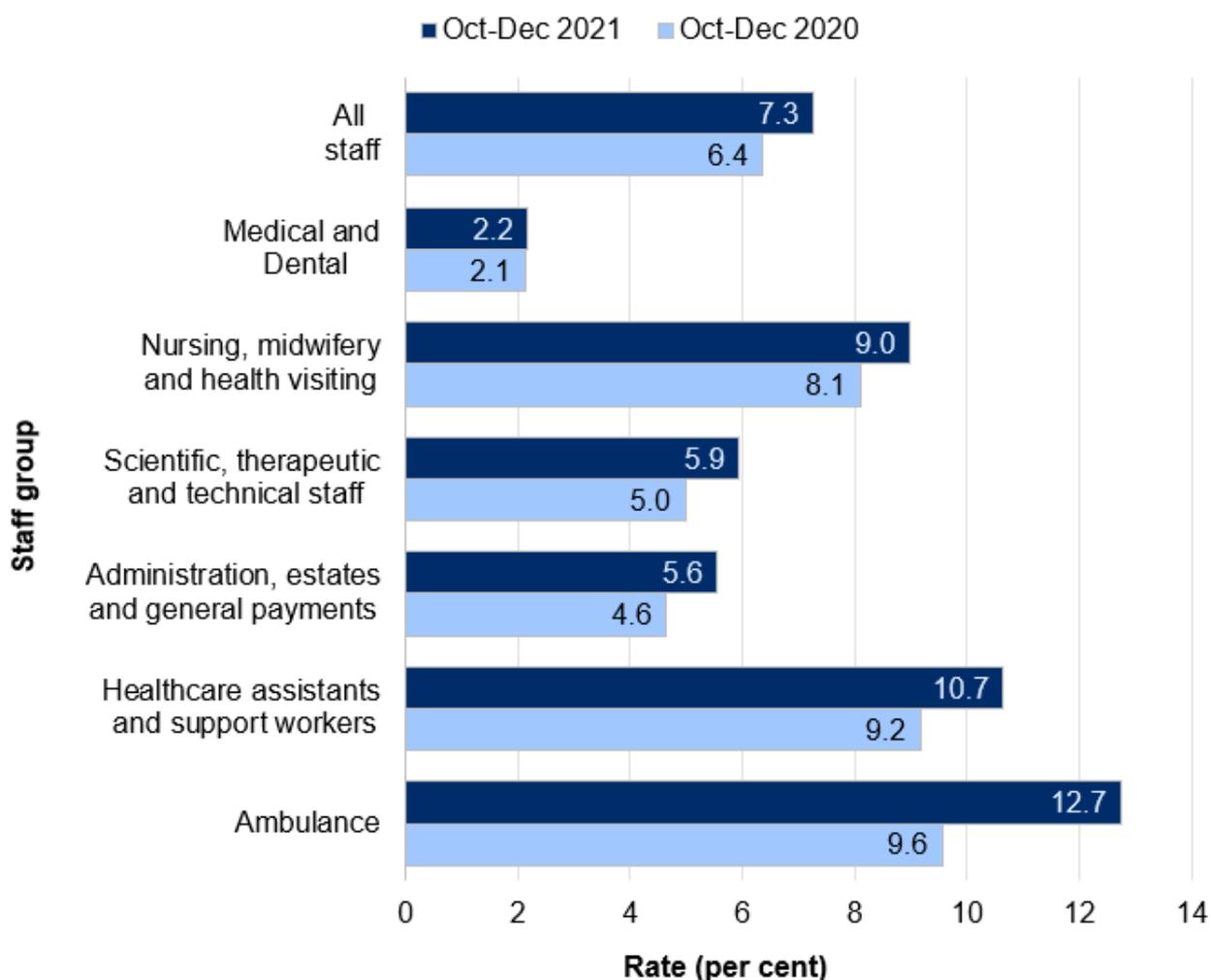
Swansea Bay had the highest sickness absence (8.4%) of all local health boards (LHBs) for the quarter ended 31 December 2021, with the lowest rate being in Powys (5.6%).

Compared with the same quarter in 2020, the staff sickness absence rate was higher in all the NHS organisations in Wales, except for Cwm Taf Morgannwg LHB and Health Education and Improvement Wales.

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 2021 compared to the previous year



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

Percentage absent by staff group and date on StatsWales

Of the six staff groups, the Ambulance group had the highest sickness absence rate this quarter (12.7%).

Medical and Dental staff had the lowest sickness absence rate for this quarter

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(2.2%) and has done so since data started to be collected in 2009.

In the quarter ended 31 December 2021, the staff sickness absence rate was higher compared with the previous year in all staff groups.

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. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

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

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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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About this document

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