



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# Sickness absence in the NHS: July to September 2020

Data on sickness absence rates for directly employed NHS staff for July to September 2020.

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This statistical release presents information about sickness absence of staff in the NHS in Wales. New information is shown for the quarter ended 30 September 2020, which includes the first summer of the coronavirus pandemic. Data for April to June 2020 has been revised.

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 around 2,650 (2.7%) staff were self-isolating over the quarter ended 30 September 2020, with the number decreasing each month to an average of under 2,000 during September itself. The pausing of shielding in mid-August is likely to be the cause of this reduction as those shielding are included in the self-isolating count. 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

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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 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).

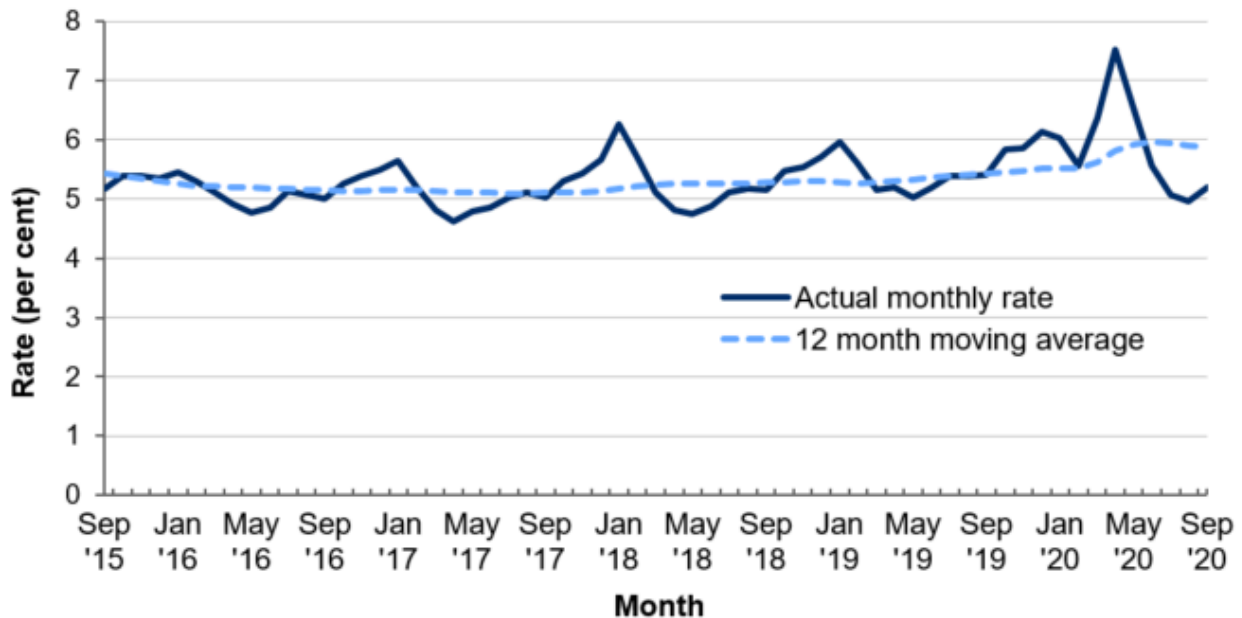
Data included in this release is published on [StatsWales](#).

## 1. Main points

- Sickness absence was 5.1%, down 0.3 percentage points compared to the quarter ending September 2019.
- After a gradual fall during 2015 to 2017, the average has been rising and was 5.9% over the last year, mainly due to the increase in the April to June 2020 quarter during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Swansea Bay local health board had the highest sickness absence rate, 6.2%.
- Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) had the lowest sickness absence rate, 1.2%.
- The staff group with the highest sickness absence rate was Healthcare Assistants and other Support Workers, 7.3%.
- The staff group with the lowest sickness absence rate was Medical and Dental staff, 1.4%.

## 2. Trends in the sickness absence rate

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



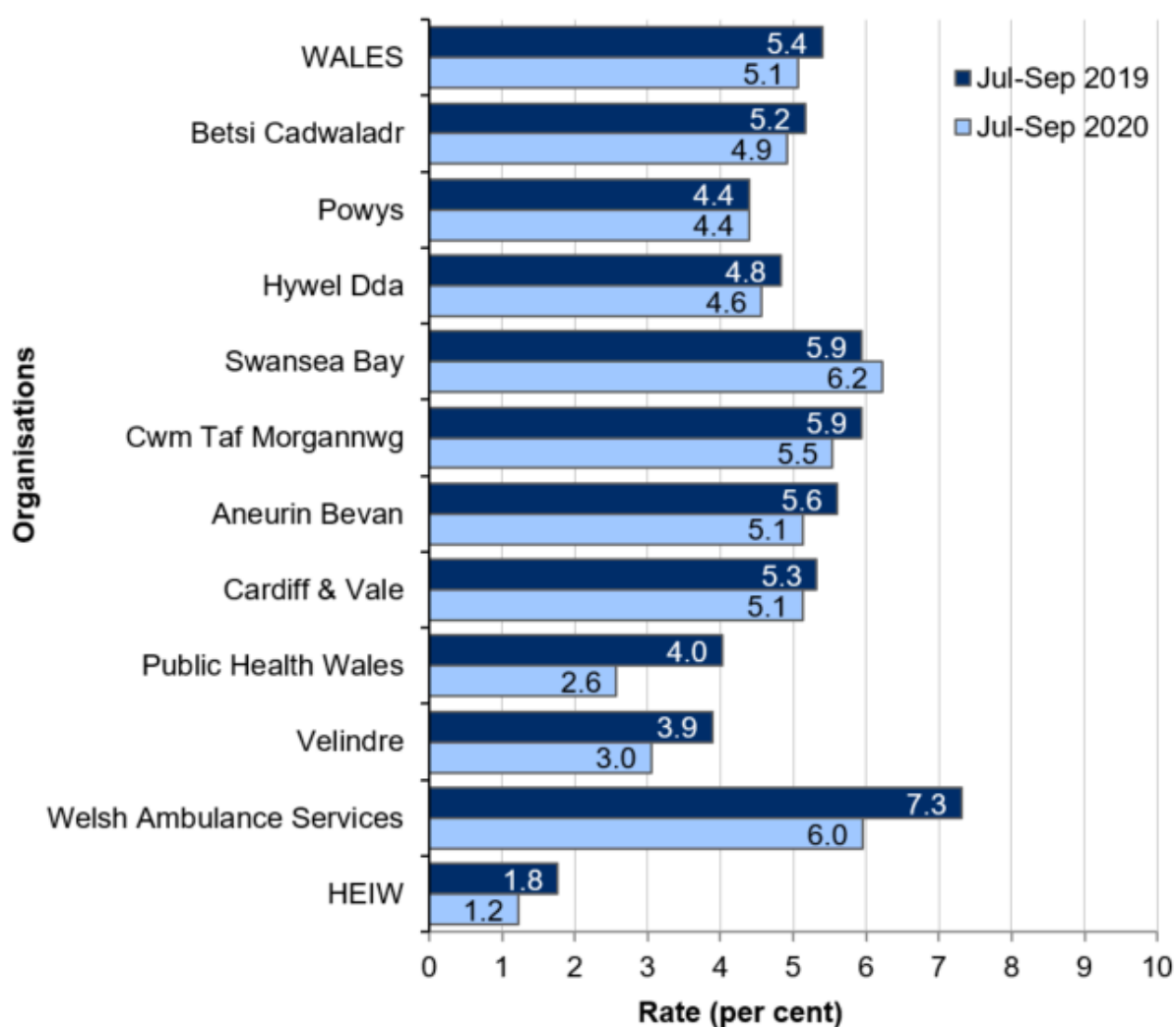
Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

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 has gone down slightly in recent months (following a high of 6.0% in the 12 months ending June 2020) with the average for the 12 months ending September 2020 being 5.9%.

The chart also shows that the sickness absence rate for April 2020 is the highest recorded monthly rate (7.5%); 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](#).

### 3. Sickness absence rate by NHS organisation

**Chart 2: Sickness absence rate in the NHS by organisation, quarter ended 30 September 2020 compared with the previous year**



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

Swansea Bay local health board had the highest sickness absence (6.2%) of all NHS organisations this quarter, with the lowest rate being in Health Education and Improvement Wales (1.2%).

Swansea Bay had the highest sickness absence (6.2%) of all local health boards (LHBs) for the quarter ended 30 September 2020, with the lowest rate being in

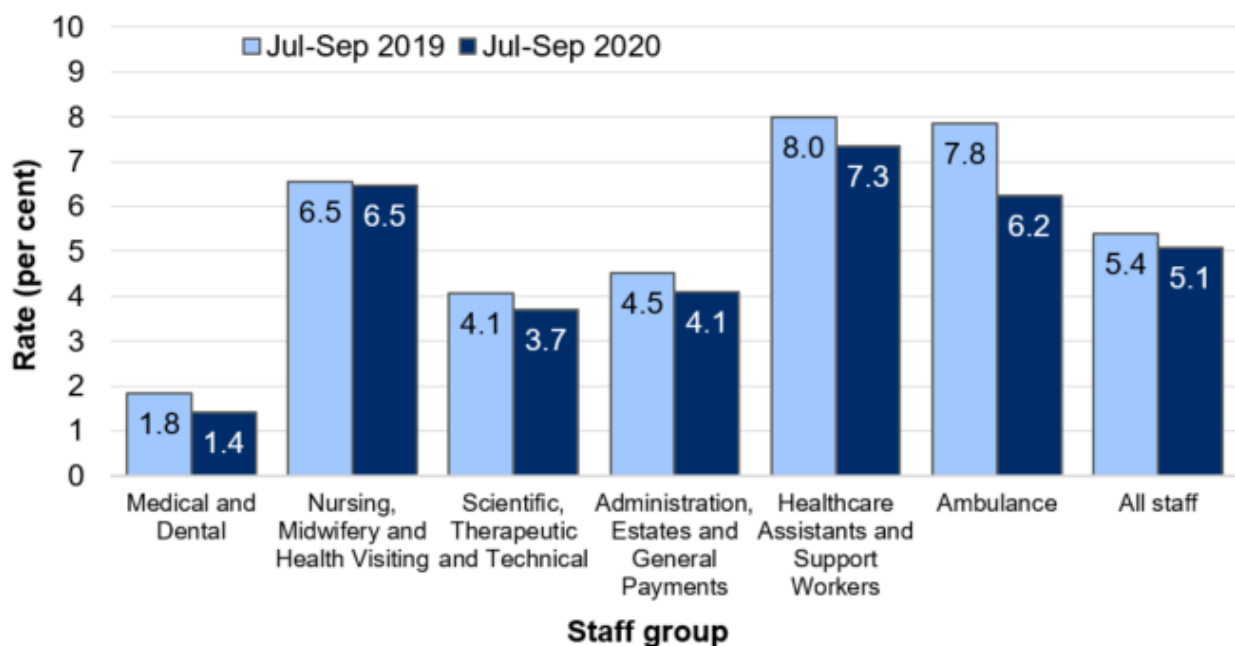
Powys (4.4%).

The staff sickness rate was lower in all but two of the eleven organisations in the June to September 2020 quarter compared to the previous year, the exception being Swansea Bay LHB where the rate was higher; and the rate in Powys remained the same.

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

## 4. Sickness absence rate by staff group

**Chart 3: Sickness absence rate in the NHS by staff group, quarter ended 30 September 2020 compared to the previous year**



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

Of the six staff groups, Healthcare Assistants and Support Workers had the highest sickness absence rate this quarter (7.3%).

Medical and Dental staff had the lowest sickness absence rate for this quarter (1.4%) and has done so since data started to be collected in 2009.

The staff sickness rate was lower in all staff groups in the July to September 2020 quarter compared to the previous year.

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

## 5. 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 the National Assembly. 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.

## Next update

12 May 2021

## 6. Contact details

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