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## STATISTICS

# Sickness absence in the NHS: January to March 2022

Data on sickness absence rates for directly employed NHS staff for January to March 2022.

**First published:** 17 August 2022

**Last updated:** 17 August 2022

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# Introduction

New information is shown for the quarter that ended on 31 March 2022 and data for October to December 2021 has been revised.

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a separate data collection of **management information (StatsWales)** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Hospital-Activity/nhs-activity-and-capacity-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/nhsstaffabsences-by-date-staffgroup>) about the sickness absence of NHS staff has been established. The management information provides a more timely indication of sickness absence rates, but it is not collected via the same method as data in this statistical release and is not subject to the same level of quality assurance. For these reasons, the data in the two collections will differ and the official statistics in this release should continue to be considered the authoritative source of data on sickness absence of NHS Wales staff.

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

All data included in this release is published on **StatsWales** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence>).

## **Main points**

### **Longer term trends**

The 12 month average sickness absence rate had risen gradually from close to 5.0% throughout 2017 to close to 6.0% throughout 2020. The rate dropped slightly in spring 2021 before rising more sharply in the following months, reaching 6.7% for the 12 months ending 31 March 2022. This is the highest rate since data was first published in 2009.

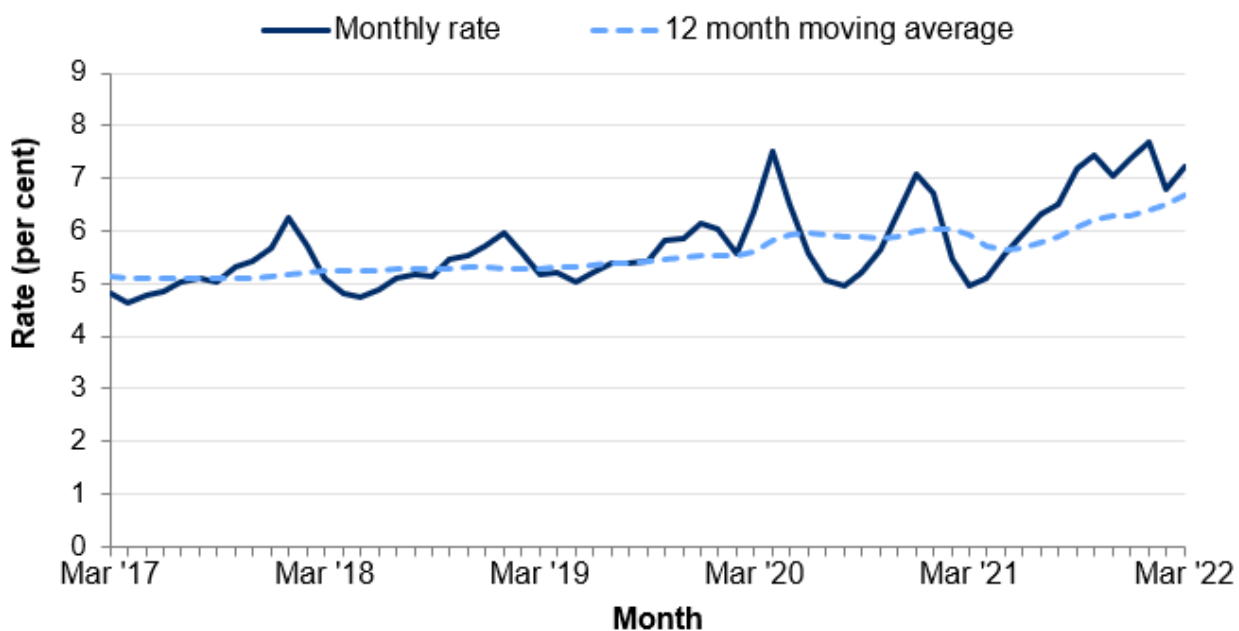
### **Quarter ending 31 March 2022**

- Sickness absence rate was 7.2%, up 1.5 percentage points compared to the quarter ending 31 March 2021. This is the second highest quarterly rate on record.
- At NHS organisation level, the rate ranged from 11.7% in the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust to 2.2% in Health Education and Improvement Wales.
- At staff group level, the rate ranged from 13.5% for ambulance staff to 2.3% for medical and dental staff.

The percentages 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, March 2017 to March 2022**



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

**Sickness absence on StatsWales** ([https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence?\\_ga=2.219015071.744232592.1644220899-1086771297.1619441781](https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence?_ga=2.219015071.744232592.1644220899-1086771297.1619441781))

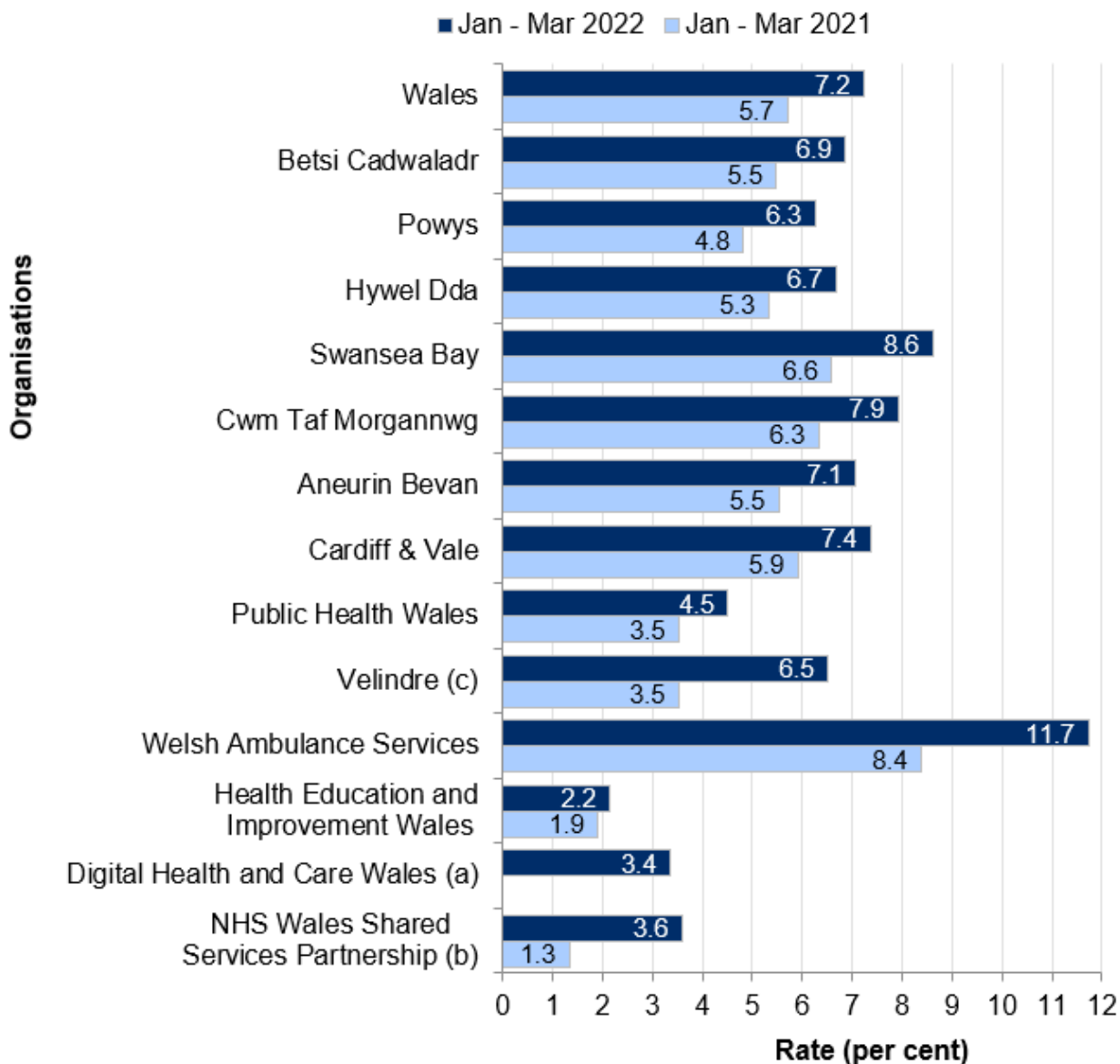
Sickness absence shows wide seasonal variation throughout the year with lower rates in summer and higher rates in winter. To provide clearer information on longer term changes to the rate of sickness absence a 12 month moving average is shown in Chart 1.

The chart shows the 12 month moving average was at its highest for the 12 months ending on 31 March 2022. The chart also shows that the sickness absence rate for January 2022 is the highest recorded monthly rate (7.7%) followed by April 2020 (7.5%) which coincide with the waves of 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)** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence/percentageabsent-by-organisation-date>) and **staff group (StatsWales)** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence/percentageabsent-by-staffgroup-date>) are published on **StatsWales** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence>).

# **Sickness absence rate by NHS organisation**

**Chart 2: Sickness absence rate in NHS Wales by organisation, quarter that ended 31 March 2022 compared to the previous year**



(a) Data for Digital Health and Care Wales available from 1 April 2021 only.

(b) NHS Wales Shared Service Partnership (NWSSP) data for Jan-Mar 2021 only includes certain NWSSP staff (including foundation dentists, F1 trainees and specialty registrars). NWSSP data for Jan-Mar 2022 includes all NWSSP staff.

(c) Velindre data for Jan-Mar 2021 includes NWSSP staff for certain staff groups but excludes some foundation dentists, F1 trainees and specialty registrars. Velindre data for Jan-Mar 2022 does not include any NWSSP staff.



## Percentage absent by organisation and date on StatsWales

([https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence/percentageabsent-by-organisation-date?\\_ga=2.41468196.744232592.1644220899-1086771297.1619441781](https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence/percentageabsent-by-organisation-date?_ga=2.41468196.744232592.1644220899-1086771297.1619441781))

The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust had the highest sickness absence rate (11.7%) of all NHS organisations this quarter, with the lowest rate being in Health Education and Improvement Wales (2.2%).

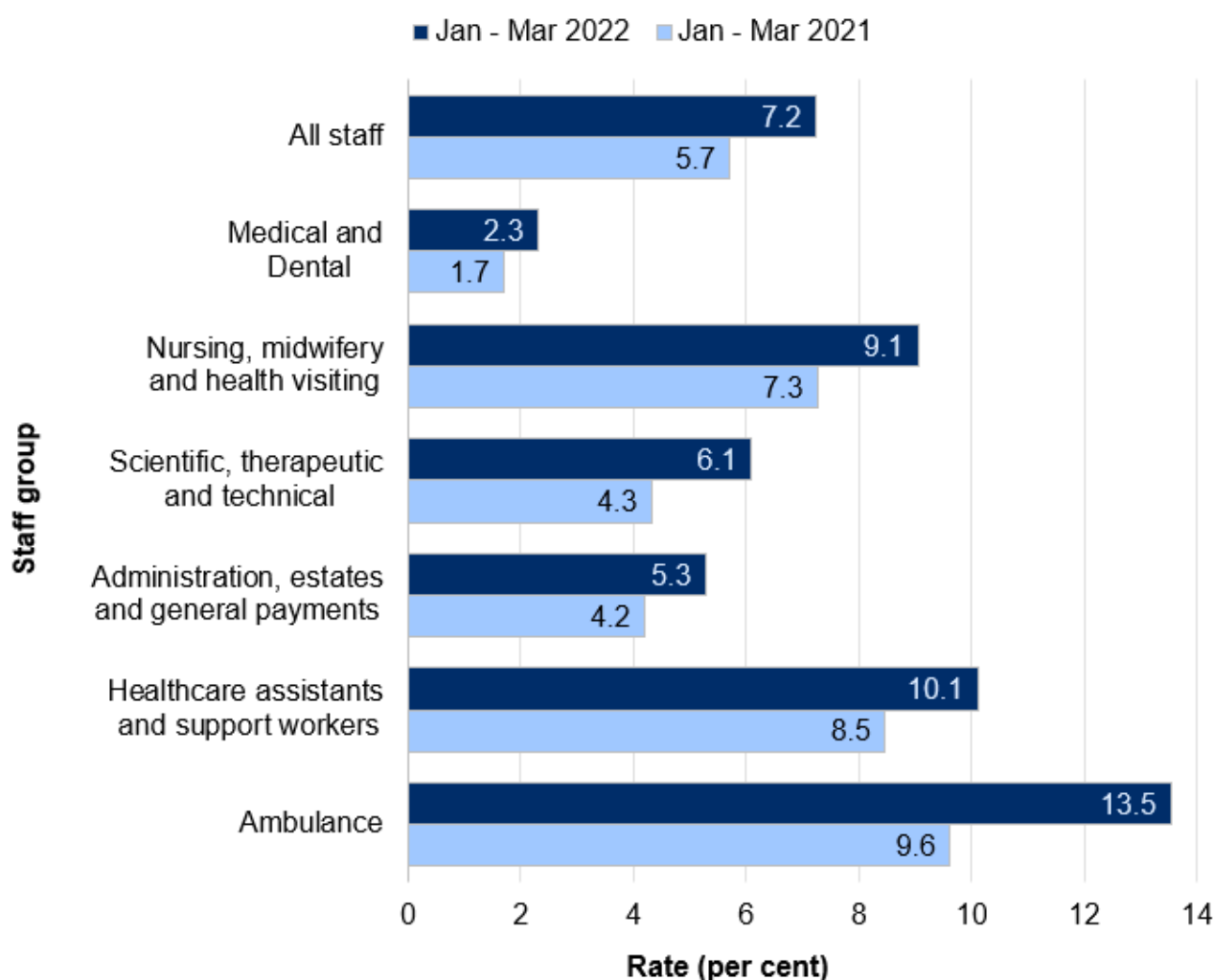
Swansea Bay had the highest sickness absence (8.6%) of all local health boards for this quarter, with the lowest rate being in Powys (6.3%).

The staff sickness absence rate in the quarter that ended on 31 March 2022 was higher in all the NHS organisations in Wales, compared with the same quarter in 2021.

Data for all organisations is available on **StatsWales** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence/percentageabsent-by-organisation-date>).

## Sickness absence rate by staff group

**Chart 3: Sickness absence rate in the NHS by staff group, quarter ended 31 March 2022 compared to the previous year**



Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales

## Percentage absent by staff group and date on StatsWales

([https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence/percentageabsent-by-staffgroup-date?\\_ga=2.220587678.744232592.1644220899-1086771297.1619441781](https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence/percentageabsent-by-staffgroup-date?_ga=2.220587678.744232592.1644220899-1086771297.1619441781))

Of the six staff groups, ambulance staff had the highest sickness absence rate this quarter (13.5%).

Medical and dental staff had the lowest sickness absence rate for this quarter (2.3%) and has done so since data started to be collected in 2009.

In the quarter that ended on 31 March 2022, 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** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Sickness-Absence/percentageabsent-by-staffgroup-date>).

## 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** (<https://gov.wales/sickness-absence-nhs-quality-report>).

## Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

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 **Wellbeing of Wales report** (<https://gov.wales/wellbeing-wales>).

Further information on the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** (<https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015-guidance>).

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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SFR 183/2022

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