



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# Sickness absence in the NHS: July to September 2022

Data on sickness absence rates for directly employed NHS staff for July to September 2022.

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# Introduction

This statistical release presents official statistics about sickness absence of staff directly employed in the NHS in Wales.

New information is shown for the quarter that ended on 30 September 2022 and data for April to June 2022 has been revised.

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a separate data collection of **management information** 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**.

## Main points

### Long term trend

Longer-term sickness absence rates are measured by taking the average sickness rate for the 12 months prior to the last day of each reference month. The 12-month average sickness absence rate increased gradually from close to 5.0% throughout 2017 to close to 6.0% throughout 2020. Following a slight

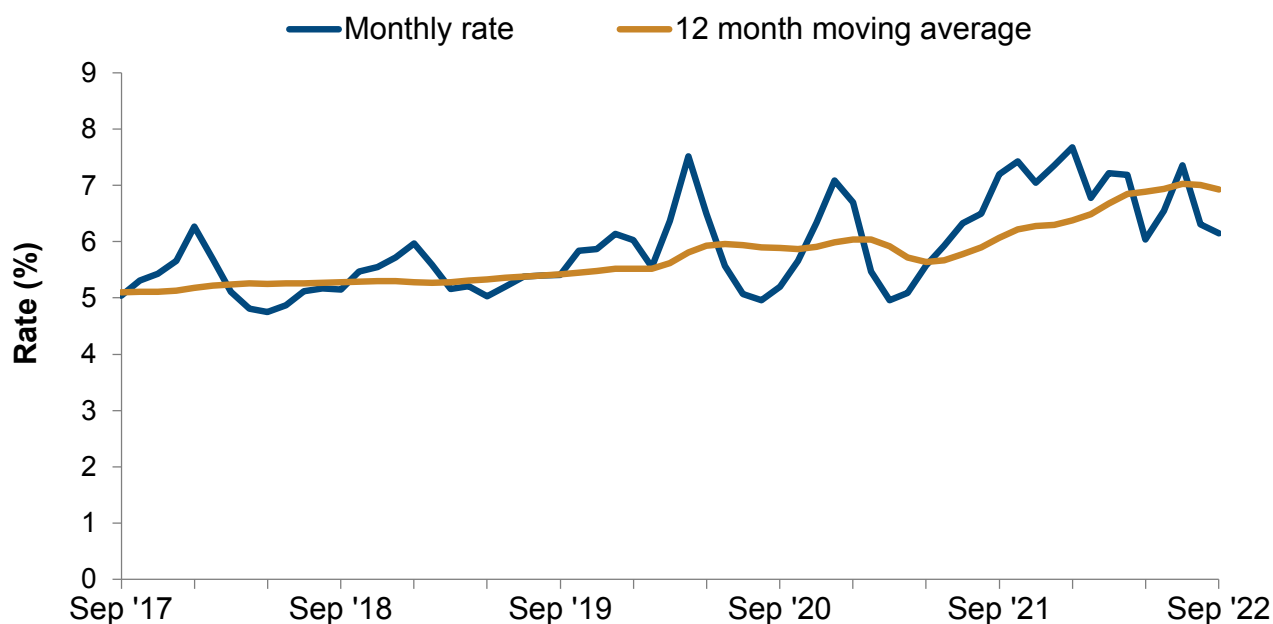
decrease in spring 2021, the rate increased more sharply and was 6.9% for the 12 months ending 30 September 2022. This is the fourth highest sickness absence rate of any 12-month period since data was first published in 2009.

## Short term trend

- Sickness absence rate was 6.6%, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points compared to the quarter ending 30 September 2021. This is the joint fourth highest quarterly rate since data was first published in 2009.
- When comparing NHS organisations, the rate ranged from 9.1% in the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust to 2.2% in Digital Health and Care Wales.
- When comparing staff groups, the rate ranged from 10.1% for healthcare assistants and other support workers to 1.9% for medical and dental staff.

## Trends in the sickness absence rate

**Figure 1: Trends in sickness absence rates in NHS Wales by month, September 2017 to September 2022**



Description of Figure 1: Line chart showing that the sickness absence rate varies from month-to-month but has been on a broadly upward trend since 2017. The increases over time have been greatest since spring 2021.

### Percentage of NHS staff absent by organisation on StatsWales

Sickness absence shows seasonal variation throughout the year with lower rates in summer and higher rates in winter. To provide more stable analysis of longer term changes, a 12-month moving average is shown in Figure 1.

The 12-month moving average has been increasing over the long term, with sharper increases over the last year. It reached its highest peak on record

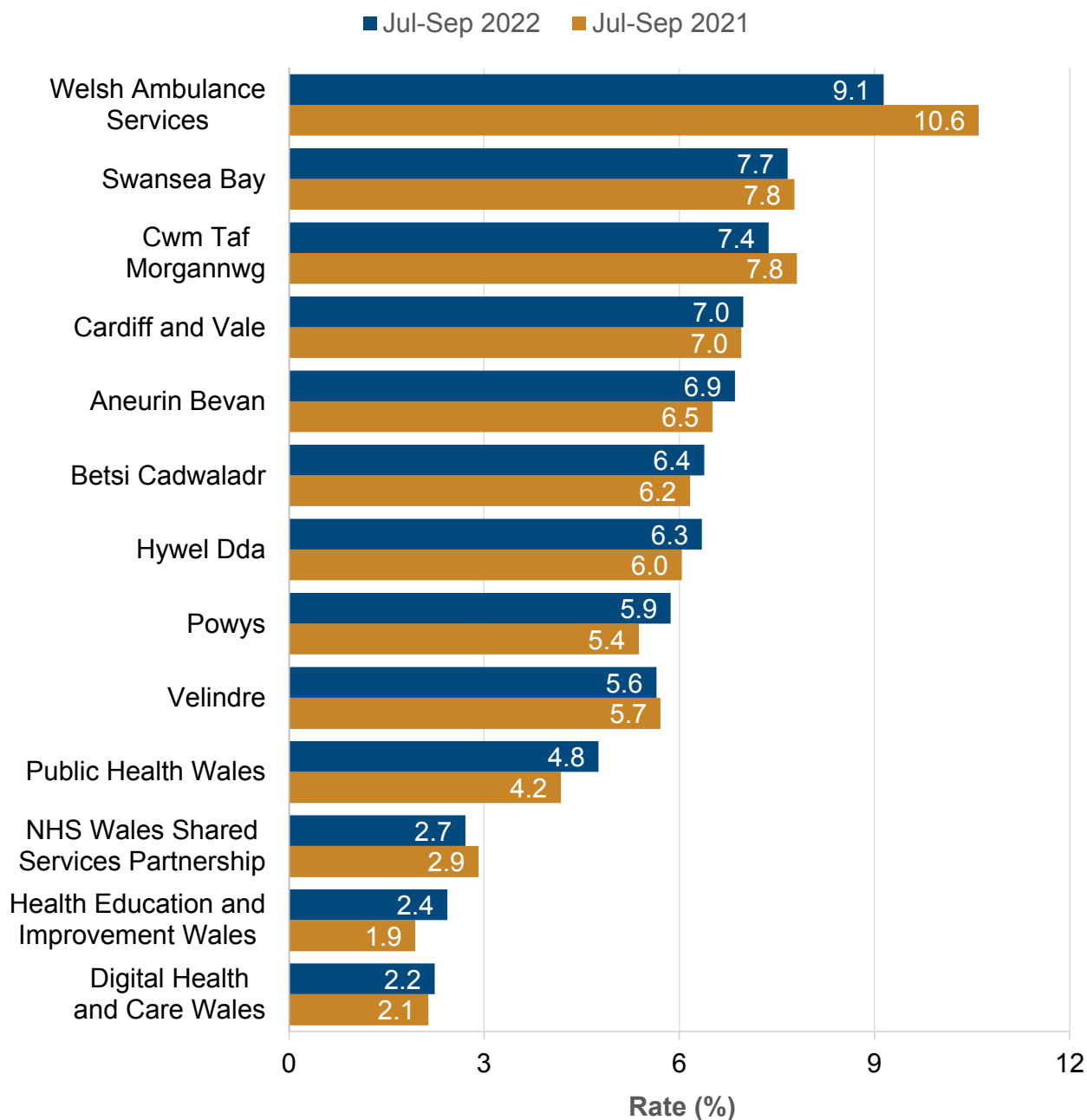
(7.0%) for both 12-month periods ending on 31 July and 31 August 2022.

When looking at the rate for individual months, the sickness absence rate for January 2022 was the highest recorded monthly rate (7.7%) followed by April 2020 (7.5%). These high points coincide with waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

NHS staff who are self-isolating, including shielding staff (shielding advice was paused from 1 April 2021), are not counted as being on sick absence and are therefore not included in these sickness absence rates.

# Sickness absence rate by NHS organisation

**Figure 2: Sickness absence rates by NHS Wales organisation, quarter that ended on 30 September 2022 compared to the same quarter in the previous year**



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Description of Figure 2: Bar chart showing that sickness absence rates vary widely by NHS organisation and is higher among health boards and the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust. Sickness absence was higher in 8 of the 13 organisations than in the previous year.

### Percentage of NHS staff absent by organisation on StatsWales

The overall sickness absence rate for the quarter that ended 30 September 2022 was 6.6%, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points compared to the quarter ending 30 September 2021.

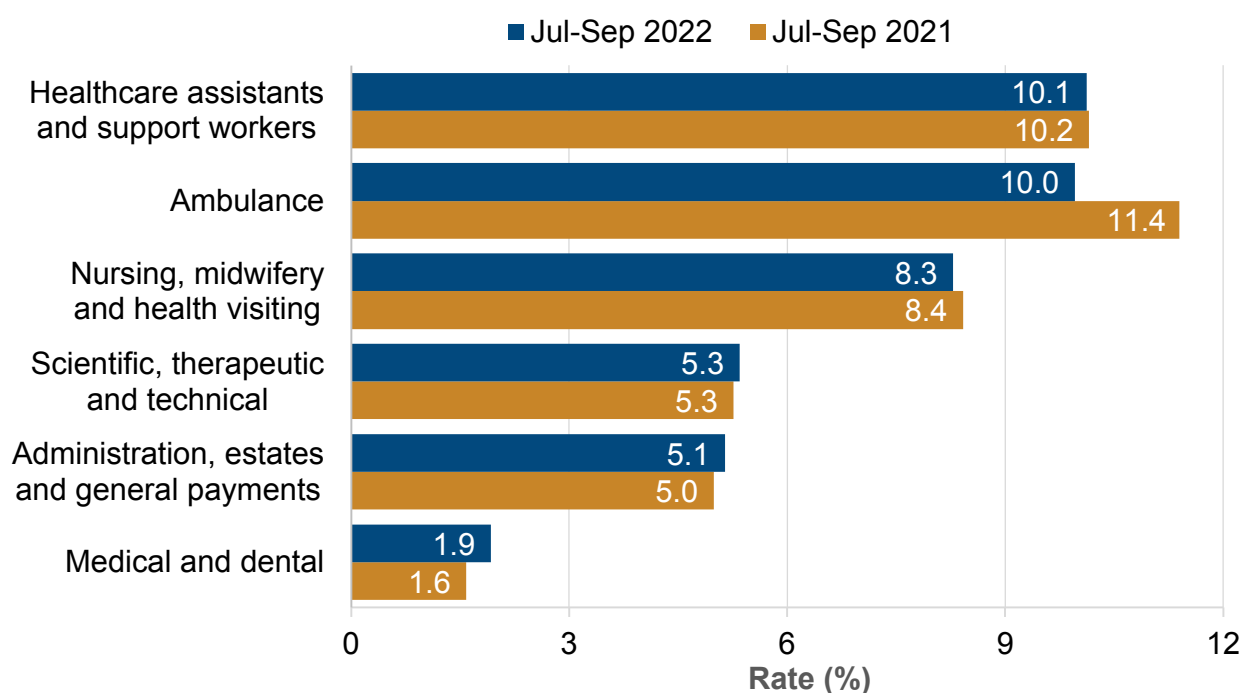
The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust had the highest sickness absence rate (9.1%) of all NHS organisations in July to September 2022. However, it also had the largest decrease in sickness absence rate (1.5 percentage points) compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

The lowest rates were in two organisations which largely provide administrative services, Digital Health and Care Wales (2.2%) and Health Education and Improvement Wales (2.4%).

There was some variation between the local health boards, with highest sickness absence rate in Swansea Bay (7.7%) and the lowest rate in Powys (5.9%).

## Sickness absence rate by staff group

**Figure 3: Sickness absence rates by NHS Wales staff group, quarter that ended on 30 September 2022 compared to same quarter in the previous year**



Description of Figure 3: Bar chart showing that sickness absence rate varied widely between different staff groups, with the rate in 'healthcare assistants and support workers' and ambulance staff five times greater than in medical and dental.

### Percentage of NHS staff absent by staff group on StatsWales

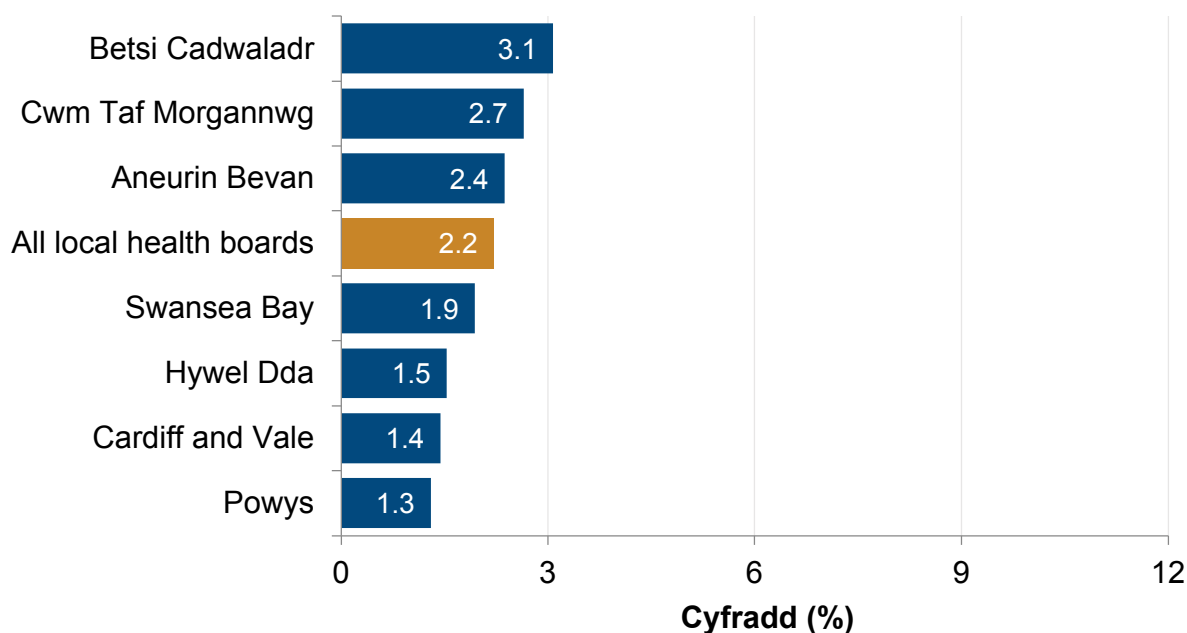
The majority of staff groups had broadly similar rates of sickness absence in the latest quarter as they did in the same quarter last year.

Ambulance staff had the largest change in sickness absence rate, which decreased by 1.4 percentage points since the same quarter in the previous year.

Healthcare assistants and support workers had the highest sickness absence rate in July to September 2022 (10.1%). Medical and dental staff had the lowest sickness absence rate (1.9%) and has since data was first collected in 2009.

## Sickness absence rate by staff group and local health board

**Figure 4: Medical and dental staff, July to September 2022**

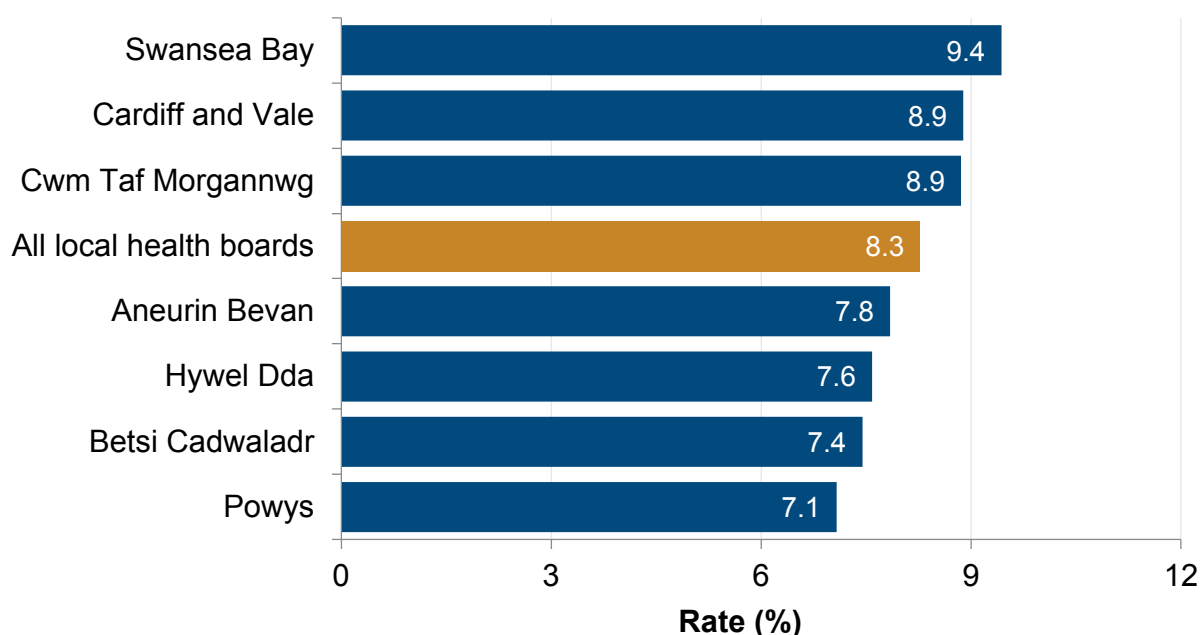


Description of Figure 4: Bar chart showing that the sickness absence rate for medical and dental staff varies by local health board, but all are within one percentage point higher or lower than the combined health board average.

## Percentage of NHS staff absent by staff group on StatsWales

The sickness absence rate among medical and dental staff for the combined health boards was 2.2%. This varied by health board, with the rates in Powys, Cardiff and Vale and Hywel Dda less than half the rate in Betsi Cadwaladr.

**Figure 5: Nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff, July to September 2022**



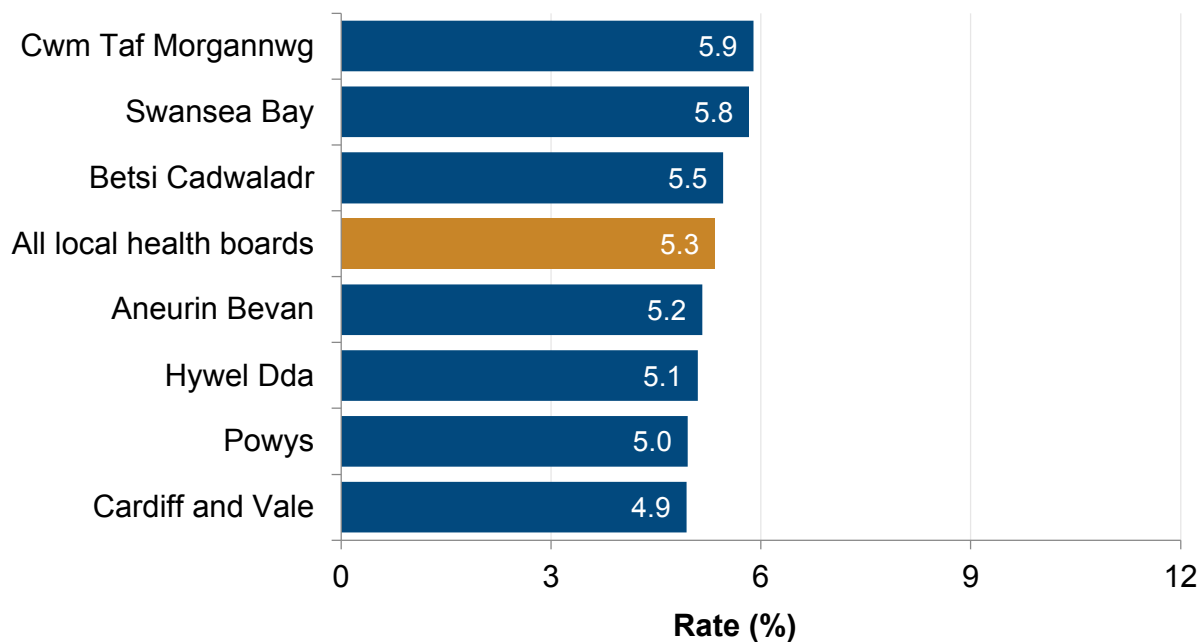
Description of Figure 5: Bar chart showing that the sickness absence rate for nurses, midwives and health visitors varies between health boards but all are within 1.2 percentage points higher or lower than the combined health board average.

## Percentage of NHS staff absent by staff group on StatsWales

The sickness absence rate among nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff for

the combined health boards was 8.3%. There was some variation by health board with the rate in Powys and Betsi Cadwaladr at least 2 percentage points lower than in Swansea Bay.

**Figure 6: Scientific, therapeutic and technical staff, July to September 2022**



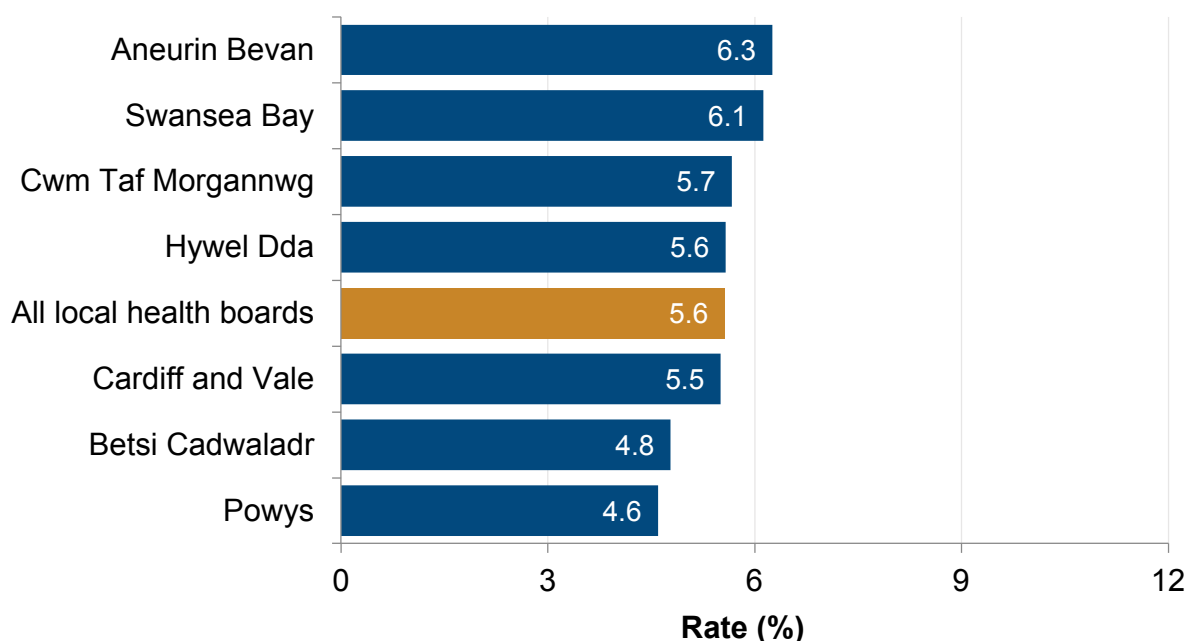
Description of Figure 6: Bar chart showing that the sickness absence rate for scientific, therapeutic and technical staff are similar for all health boards. Rates for all health boards are within 0.6 percentage points higher or lower than the combined health board average.

### Percentage of NHS staff absent by staff group on StatsWales

The sickness absence rate among scientific, therapeutic and technical staff for the combined health boards was 5.3%. There was little variation between the health boards, with only 1 percentage point difference between the highest rate

(Cwm Taf Morgannwg) and the lowest rate (Cardiff and Vale).

**Figure 7: Administration, estates and general payments staff, July to September 2022**

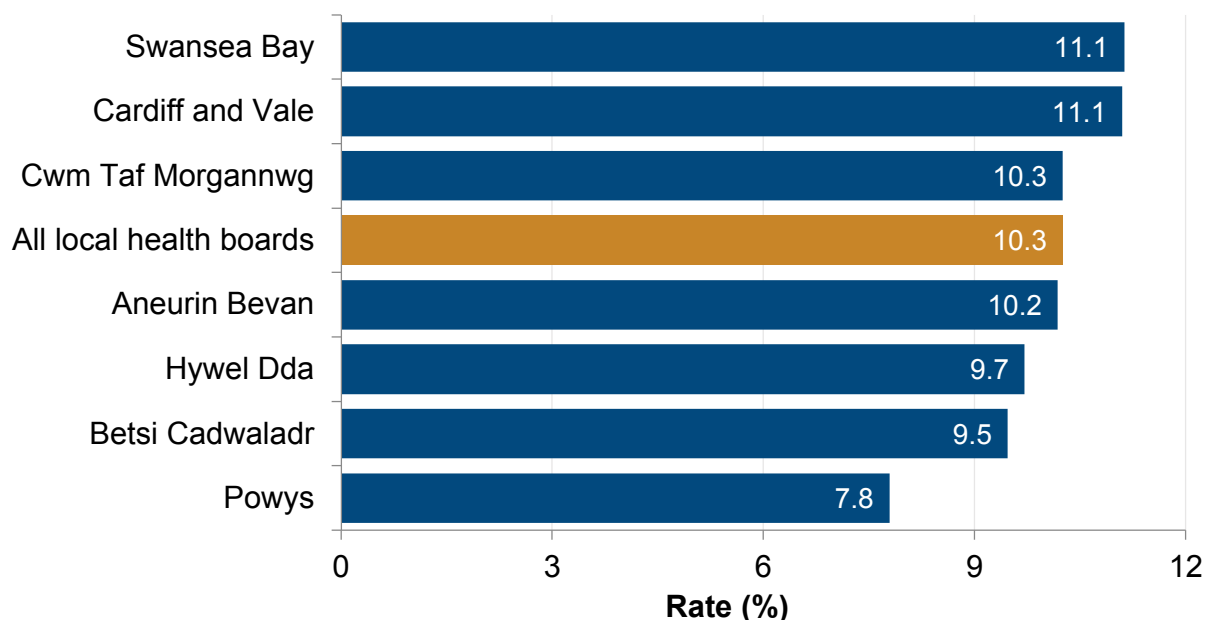


Description of Figure 7: Bar chart showing that the sickness absence rate for administration, estates and general payments staff varies between health boards, but all are within a percentage point higher or lower than the combined health board average.

### Percentage of NHS staff absent by staff group on StatsWales

The sickness absence rate among administration and estates staff for the combined health boards was 5.6% and varied from 4.6% in Powys to 6.3% in Aneurin Bevan.

**Figure 8: Healthcare assistants and support staff, July to September 2022**



Description of Figure 8: Bar chart showing the sickness absence rate for healthcare assistants and support staff varies between health boards. The rate in Powys was much lower than all other health boards. The other health boards has relatively similar rates, within 0.8 percentage points higher or lower than the combined health board average.

### Percentage of NHS staff absent by staff group on StatsWales

The sickness absence rate among healthcare assistants and support staff for the combined health boards was 10.3%. The rate in most health boards was within 1 percentage point of the combined local health board average of 10.3%, however the rate was much lower in Powys (7.8%) than in any other health board.

## 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](#).

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

Data on the number of [Staff directly employed by the NHS Wales](#) (also known as the NHS staff census data) is published on a quarterly basis. Note that there are minor differences in how staff groups are defined between the two releases. These are detailed in the [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](#).

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.

## Contact details

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