



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

Sickness absence in the NHS: October to December 2022

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Contents

Introduction

Main points

Trends in the sickness absence rate

Sickness absence rate by NHS organisation

Sickness absence rate by staff group

Sickness absence rate by staff group and local health board

Quality and methodology information

Contact details

Introduction

This release presents official statistics about sickness absence of staff in the NHS in Wales. New information is shown for the quarter that ended on 31 December 2022 and data for July to September 2022 has been revised.

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

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 31 December 2022
- this is the seventh highest sickness absence rate of any 12-month period

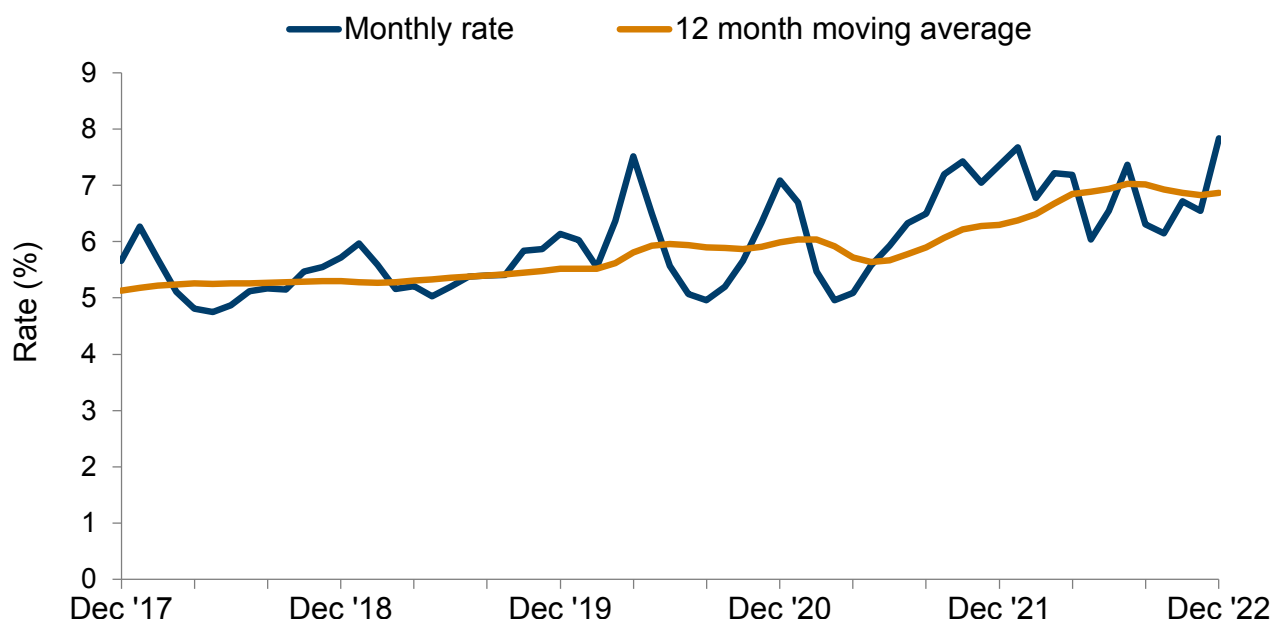
since data was first published in 2009

Short-term trends are measured by the sickness rate in each quarter. The latest data for the quarter which ended on 31 December 2022 shows:

- the sickness absence rate was 7.0%, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points compared to the quarter ending 31 December 2021; this is the third highest quarterly rate since data was first published in 2009.
- when comparing NHS organisations, the rate ranged from 9.6% in the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust to 2.7% in Health Education and Improvement Wales.
- when comparing staff groups, the rate ranged from 10.4% for ambulance staff to 2.2% for medical and dental staff.

Trends in the sickness absence rate

Figure 1: Trends in sickness absence rates in NHS Wales by month, December 2017 to December 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.

Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

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.

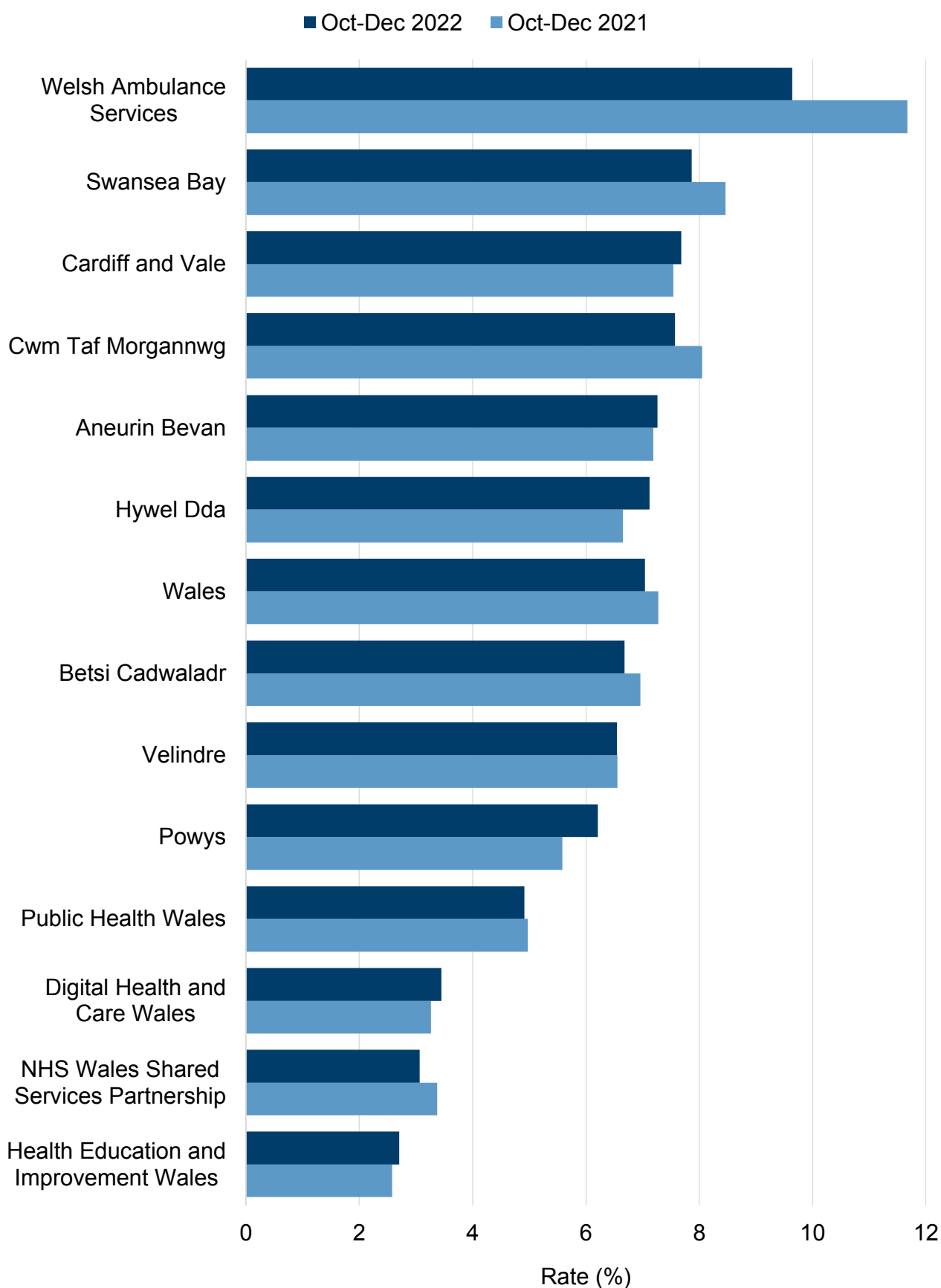
The 12-month moving average has been increasing over the long term, with sharper increases from June 2021. It reached its highest peak on record (7.0%) for both 12-month periods ending on 31 July and 31 August 2022.

When looking at the rate for individual months, the sickness absence rate for December 2022 was the highest recorded monthly rate (7.8%) followed by January 2022 (7.7%) and 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 31 December 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 the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust and health boards. Sickness absence was higher in 6 of the 13 organisations than in the same quarter of the previous year.

Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

Percentage of NHS staff absent by organisation on StatsWales

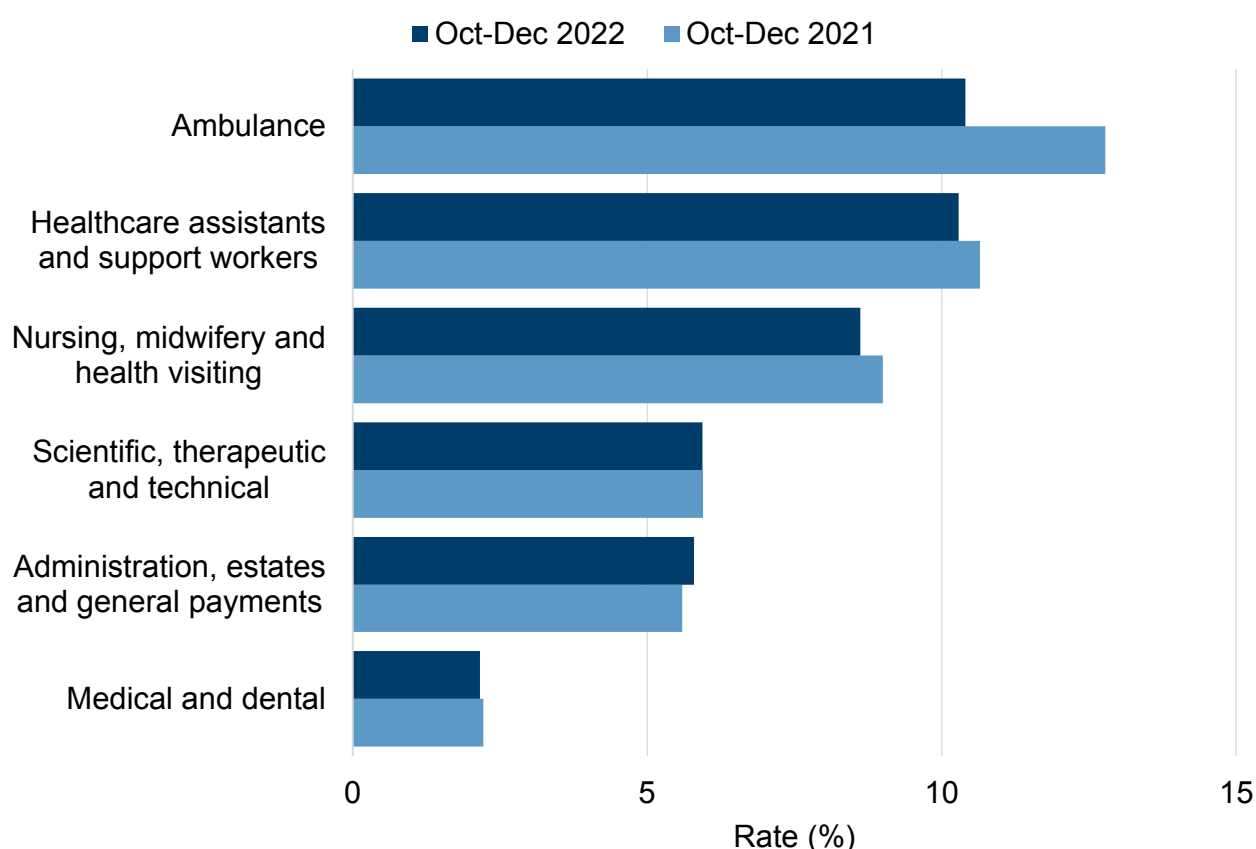
The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust had the highest sickness absence rate (9.6%) of all NHS organisations in October to December 2022. However, it also had the largest decrease in sickness absence rate (2.0 percentage points) compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

The lowest sickness absence rates were in Health Education and Improvement Wales (2.7%), NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (3.1%) and Digital Health and Care Wales (3.4%).

There was some variation between the local health boards, with highest sickness absence rate in Swansea Bay (7.9%) and the lowest rate in Powys (6.2%).

Sickness absence rate by staff group

Figure 3: Sickness absence rates by NHS Wales staff group, quarter that ended on 31 December 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 groups nearly five times greater than in medical and dental. Sickness absence was lower in all but the administration, estates and general payment group when compared to the same quarter of the previous year.

Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

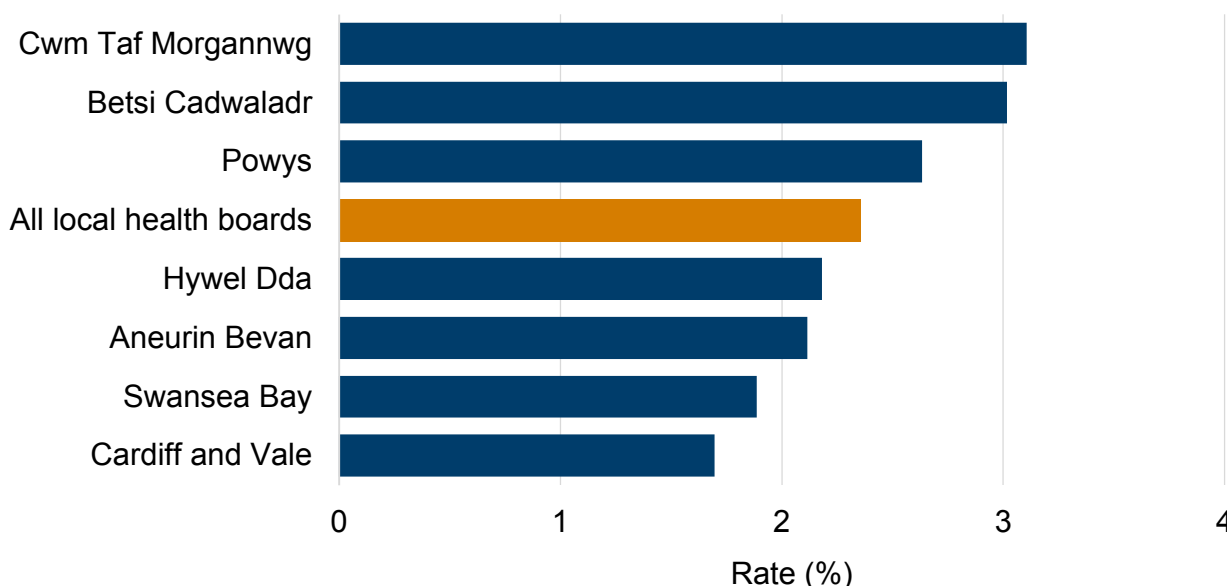
Percentage of NHS staff absent by staff group on StatsWales

Ambulance staff had the highest sickness absence rate in October to December 2022 (10.4%). Medical and dental staff had the lowest sickness absence rate (2.2%) and has since data was first collected in 2009.

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, although the rate amongst ambulance staff fell by 2.4 percentage points, from 12.8% to 10.4%.

Sickness absence rate by staff group and local health board

Figure 4: Medical and dental staff, October to December 2022



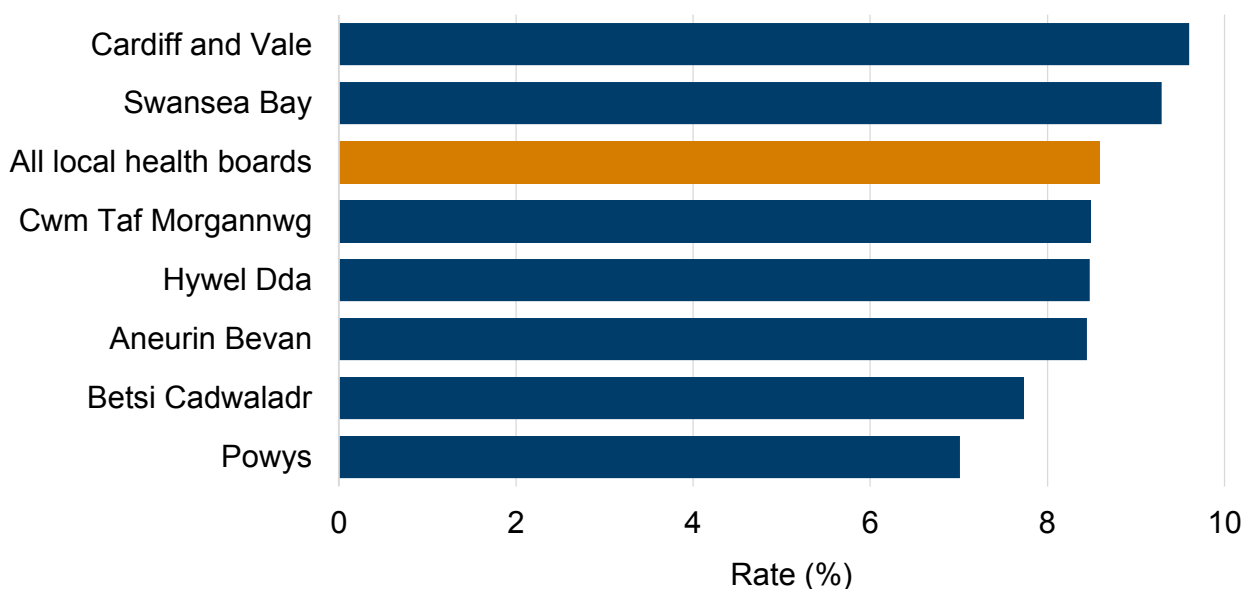
Description of Figure 4: Bar chart showing that the sickness absence rate for medical and dental staff varies by local health board, but all are within a percentage point higher or lower than the combined health board average.

Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

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 2.4%. This varied by health board, with the rate in Cardiff and Vale almost half the rate in Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Betsi Cadwaladr.

Figure 5: Nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff, October to December 2022



Description of Figure 5: Bar chart showing that the sickness absence rate for nurses, midwives and health visitors varies between health boards but, with the exception of Powys, all are within a percentage point higher or lower than the

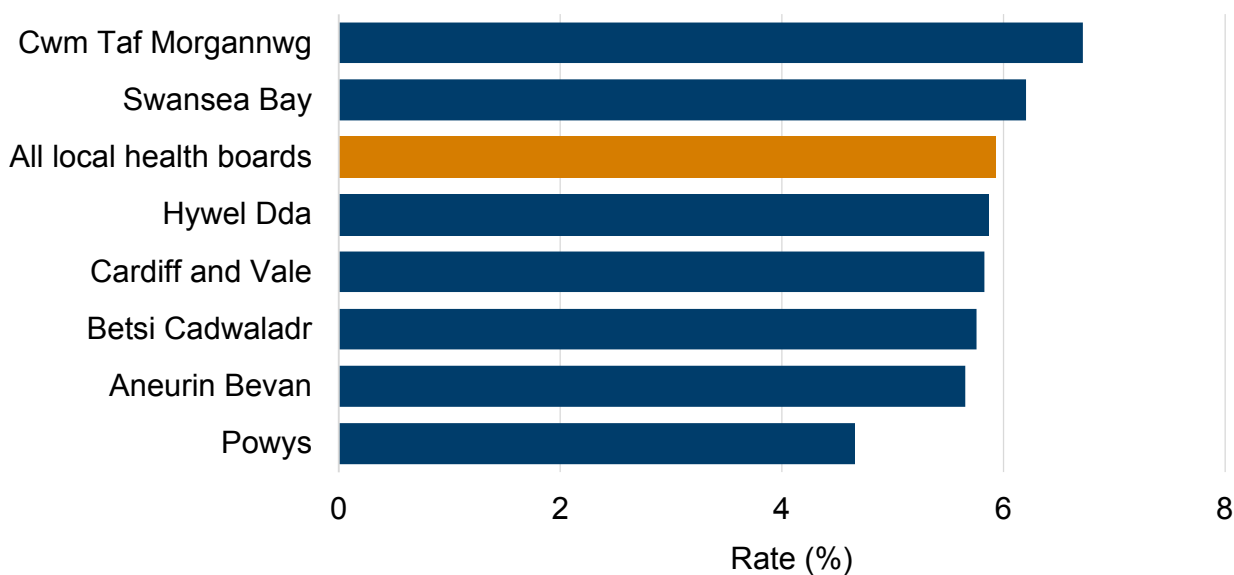
combined health board average.

Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

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 8.6%. There was some variation by health board with the rate in Powys 2.6 percentage points lower than in Cardiff and Vale.

Figure 6: Scientific, therapeutic and technical staff, October to December 2022



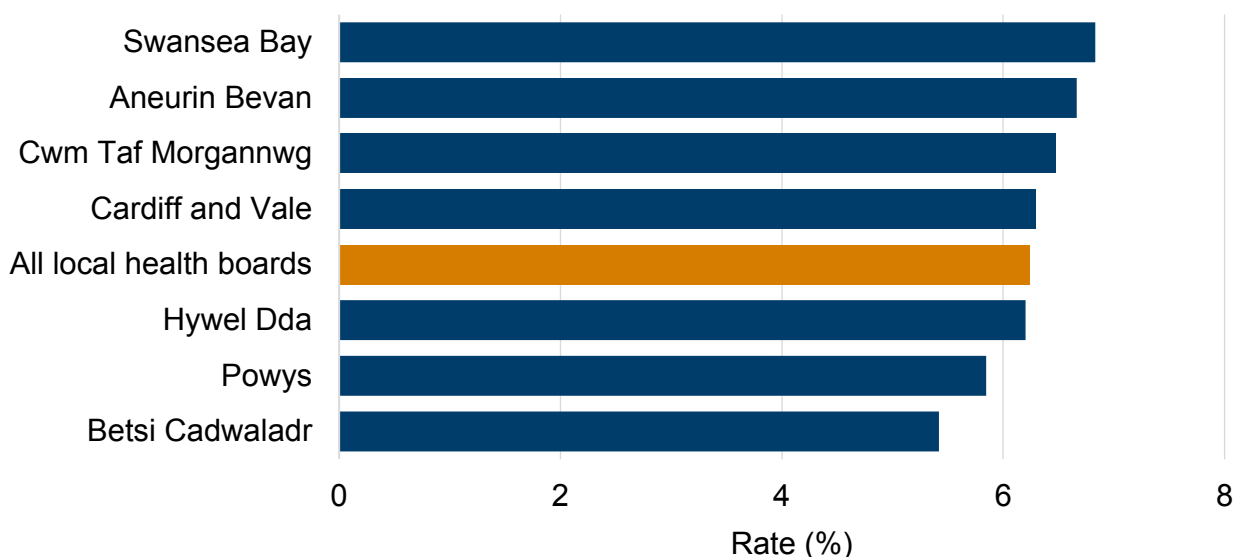
Description of Figure 6: Bar chart showing that the sickness absence rate for scientific, therapeutic and technical staff are similar for all health boards with the exception of Powys. Rates for all health boards, except Powys, are within a percentage point higher or lower than the combined health board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

Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

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 5.9%. There was a 2.1 percentage point variation between the highest rate (Cwm Taf Morgannwg) and the lowest rate (Powys).

Figure 7: Administration, estates and general payments staff, October to December 2022



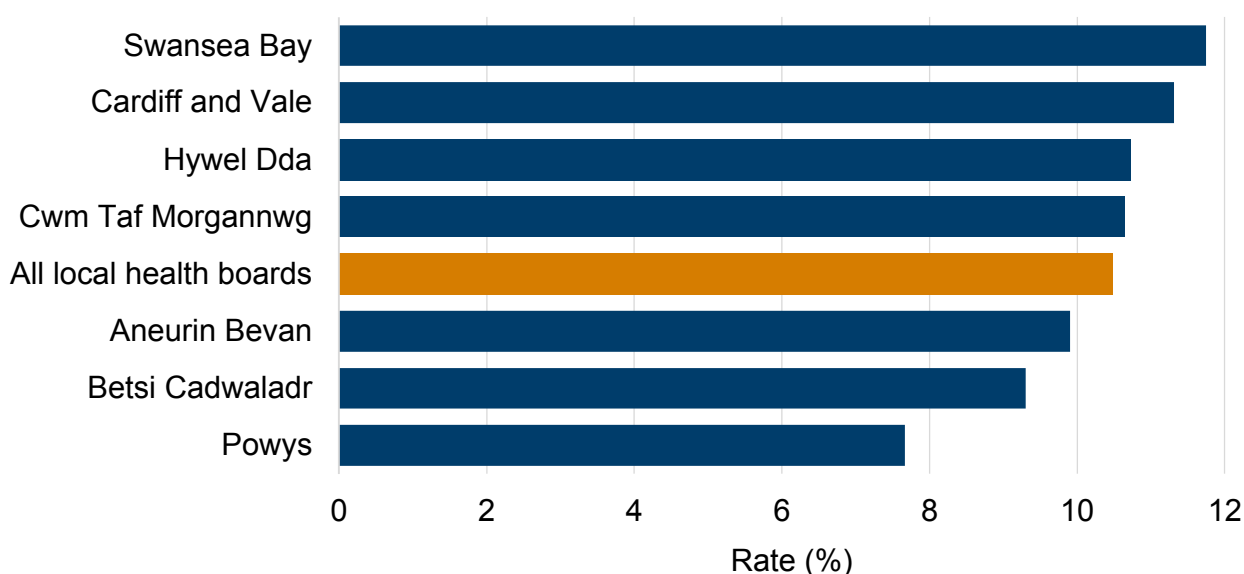
Description of Figure 7: Bar chart showing that the sickness absence rate for administration, estates and general payments staff varies between health boards, but all are within a percentage point higher or lower than the combined health board average.

Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

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 6.2% and varied from 6.8% in Swansea Bay to 5.4% in Betsi Cadwaladr.

Figure 8: Healthcare assistants and support staff, October to December 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 have relatively similar rates, within 1.3 percentage points higher or lower than the combined health board average.

Source: Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

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 10.5%. The rate in most health boards was within 1.3 percentage points of the combined local health board average; however the rate was much lower in Powys (7.7%) 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 [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.

Contact details

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SFR 42/2023

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