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Information Centre

General Practice Trends in the UK to 2014

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This product may be of interest to remuneration boards, employers, stakeholders, policy officials, commissioners and members of the public. Interests will range from comparisons of the NHS workforce at local, regional and national levels to managing recruitment, staffing and training and prioritising commissioning.

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1. Introduction

This paper collates information on General Practice trends in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The paper includes figures on country level workforce trends, as well as average practice list sizes and population projections. There is also a section on breakdown of contract types in England.

The latest figures available are for 2014 and these are taken from each country's General Practice publications and from the Office of National Statistics, which compiles and publishes population estimates for each of the UK constituent countries. All residential population figures are updated mid-year estimates for 2014, which have been revised and rebased using the 2011 Census.

The differences between the figures for GP registered patients and residential population are expected and there are a number of reasons contributing to the differences. This GP "list inflation" may be caused, for example, by patients who have not been removed from patient lists following death, emigration or moving home, patients being dual registered at practices following a change of address or due to registered patients not completing the 2011 census.

GP numbers are across all contract types for each of the countries and the GP numbers in Tables 1-5 represent headcount and do not therefore reflect changes in working patterns. Figures shown may differ from those previously published due to improvements in source data quality.

2. GP Trends in the UK

Table 1: GP trends in the UK

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 ¹	2011	2012	2013	2014
A	Number of GP practices	10,205	10,136	10,102	10,087	10,175	10,154	9,906	9,771	9,667
B	Number of GP providers ²	34,349	34,033	34,066	34,342	33,749	33,886	33,551	33,241	32,838
C	Number of other GPs ²	5,858	6,598	7,275	8,963	9,016	9,358	9,671	9,995	10,767
D	GP registered patients (millions)	63.593	63.939	64.379	65.104	65.570	65.898	66.354	66.659	67.167
D/A	Average patients per practice	6,232	6,308	6,373	6,454	6,444	6,490	6,698	6,822	6,948
E	Residential population (millions)	60.827	61.319	61.824	62.260	62.759	63.285	63.706	64.106	64.597
E/A	Average population per practice	5,961	6,050	6,120	6,172	6,168	6,233	6,431	6,561	6,682

1. The new headcount methodology is not fully comparable with data for years prior to 2010 due to improvements that make it a more stringent count of absolute staff numbers. Headcount totals are unlikely to equal the sum of components. Further information on the headcount methodology is available in <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/genpermssep14>

2. The sum of GPs Providers and Other GPs is not the total headcount or total number of GPs, as these tables exclude Registrars, Retainers and Locums.

Table 2: GP trends in England

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 ¹	2011	2012	2013	2014
A	Number of GP practices	8,325	8,261	8,230	8,228	8,324	8,316	8,088	7,962	7,875
B	Number of GP providers ²	27,691	27,342	27,347	27,613	27,036	27,218	26,886	26,635	26,183
C	Number of other GPs ²	5,400	6,022	6,663	8,304	8,319	8,585	8,898	9,153	9,885
D	GP registered patients (millions)	53.284	53.588	53.945	54.609	55.019	55.308	55.737	56.007	56.470
D/A	Average patients per practice	6,400	6,487	6,555	6,637	6,610	6,651	6,891	7,034	7,171
E	Residential population (millions)	50.965	51.381	51.816	52.196	52.642	53.107	53.494	53.866	54.317
E/A	Average population per practice	6,122	6,220	6,296	6,344	6,324	6,386	6,614	6,765	6,897

1. The new headcount methodology is not fully comparable with data for years prior to 2010 due to improvements that make it a more stringent count of absolute staff numbers. Headcount totals are unlikely to equal the sum of components. Further information on the headcount methodology is available in <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/genpermssep14>

2. The sum of GPs Providers and Other GPs is not the total headcount or total number of GPs, as these tables exclude Registrars, Retainers and Locums.

Table 3: GP trends in Wales

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
A	Number of GP practices	496	495	499	488	487	483	474	470	462
B	Number of GP providers ¹	1,778	1,778	1,788	1,768	1,776	1,757	1,753	1,740	1,722
C	Number of other GPs ¹	104	158	152	172	215	250	243	286	284
D	GP registered patients (millions)	3.093	3.094	3.115	3.135	3.153	3.163	3.173	3.178	3.173
D/A	Average patients per practice	6,236	6,250	6,242	6,424	6,474	6,549	6,694	6,762	6,868
E	Residential population (millions)	2.986	3.006	3.026	3.039	3.050	3.064	3.074	3.082	3.092
E/A	Average population per practice	6,019	6,073	6,064	6,227	6,263	6,343	6,485	6,558	6,693

1. The sum of GP Providers and Other GPs is not the total headcount or total number of GPs, as these tables exclude Registrars, Retainers and Locums.

Table 4: GP trends in Scotland

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
A	Number of GP practices	1,021	1,018	1,015	1,014	1,009	1,002	991	988	980
B	Number of performer GPs ¹	3,770	3,785	3,783	3,805	3,777	3,748	3,742	3,695	3,722
C	Number of other GPs ¹	354	418	460	487	482	523	530	556	598
D	GP registered patients (millions)	5.406	5.424	5.470	5.493	5.515	5.530	5.536	5.555	5.587
D/A	Average patients per practice	5,295	5,328	5,389	5,417	5,466	5,519	5,586	5,622	5,701
E	Residential population (millions)	5.133	5.170	5.203	5.232	5.262	5.300	5.314	5.328	5.348
E/A	Average population per practice	5,028	5,079	5,126	5,160	5,215	5,289	5,362	5,392	5,457

1. The sum of Performer GPs and Other GPs is not the total headcount or total number of GPs, as these tables exclude Registrars, Retainers and Locums.

Table 5: GP trends in Northern Ireland

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
A	Number of GP practices ¹	363	362	358	357	355	353	353	351	350
B	Number of GPs ²	1,110	1,128	1,148	1,156	1,160	1,163	1,170	1,171	1,211
C	Number of Other GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
D	GP registered patients (millions)	1.810	1.833	1.849	1.867	1.883	1.897	1.908	1.919	1.937
D/A	Average patients per practice	4,986	5,064	5,165	5,230	5,304	5,374	5,406	5,467	5,533
E	Residential population (millions)	1.743	1.762	1.779	1.793	1.805	1.814	1.824	1.830	1.841
E/A	Average population per practice	4,802	4,867	4,970	5,023	5,084	5,140	5,166	5,213	5,259

1. Number of GP Practices is not available directly from Northern Ireland Data. The Number of GP Practices is calculated from GP registered patients divided by the Average Practice List Size from www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/1804.htm

2. The number of GPs is not the total headcount or total number of GPs, as these tables exclude Registrars, Retainers and Locums.

3. Breakdown of Contract Types for England

The “General and Personal Medical Services, England - 2004-2014, as at 30 September” (published in March 2015) report showed a breakdown of the number of practitioners and the number of practices into the various contract types.

These are shown in tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: Contract type breakdown for GP Practices in England, 2009 to 2014

	2009 ¹	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GP Practices	8,228	8,324	8,316	8,088	7,962	7,875
GMS	4,538	4,519	4,553	4,451	4,339	4,421
GMS administered by a limited company	16	19	28	7	6	7
PMS	3,397	3,393	3,316	3,270	3,197	3,143
PMS administered by a limited company	23	52	65	20	12	14
APMS	113	142	141	179	173	191
APMS administered by a limited company	60	120	135	81	98	99
PCTMS ²	66	79	78	80	137	-

1. Total number of GP practices contains some unknown contract values due to data not being available for a small number of practices at the time of the 2009 GP census publication.

2. PCTMS contracts ceased to exist following the April 2013 restructure of NHS commissioning organisations in England.

Table 7: Contract type breakdown for GP Practitioners in England, 2009 to 2014

	2009	2010 ¹	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of Practitioners (headcount) ^{2,4}	35,917	35,120	35,415	35,527	35,561	35,819
Number of Practitioners (contracts) ^{3,4}	35,917	36,344	36,982	36,974	36,960	37,420
GMS ⁵	18,067	18,448	18,902	18,929	18,879	19,689
PMS ⁵	16,264	16,652	16,699	16,714	16,584	16,715
APMS ⁵	412	836	961	969	960	1,016
PCTMS ^{5,6}	161	237	216	236	468	-
Unknown ⁷	1,013	171	204	126	69	0

1. The new headcount methodology is not fully comparable with data for years prior to 2010 due to improvements that make it a more stringent count of absolute staff numbers. Headcount totals are unlikely to equal the sum of components. Further information on the headcount methodology is available in <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/genpermssep14>

2. Number of Practitioners (headcount) is the headcount of GPs rather than a count of the contracts. The Number of Practitioners (headcount) is expected to be lower than the Number of Practitioners (contracts) as some GPs have more than one contract.

3. This represents a count of contracts and some doctors may have two or more contracts: in September 2014 there were 1,436 with two or more contracts; in 2013 there were 1,227; in 2012 there were 1,353; in 2011 there were 1,482 such GPs and; in 2010 there were 1,224 such GPs.

4. Excludes Registrars, Retainers and Locums.

5. Represents a count of contracts/roles for GPs whose contract is known. Figures are a contract count and not a headcount.

6. PCTMS contracts ceased to exist following the April 2013 restructure of NHS commissioning organisations in England.

7. Number of Practitioners under a contract whose type is unknown. These tend to be GPs which could not be attributed to a specific practice and therefore a practice contract.

4. Data Sources

Population Figures

Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2014
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-uk--england-and-wales-scotland-and-northern-ireland/mid-2014/index.html>

GP Workforce Figures

GP workforce information has been grouped according to the current definitions of GPs used by each individual country.

Health and Social Care Information Centre General and Personal Medical Services, England
<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/genpermssep14>

Welsh Government General Medical Practitioners in Wales
<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/general-medical-practitioners/?lang=en>

Information Services Division Scotland, General Practice
<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/General-Practice/>

Northern Ireland Business Services Organisation, General Medical Services
www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/1804.htm

Previous Reports

The “*General Practice Trends in the UK*” report from earlier years can be found at:

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/workforce/gpfinance>

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/article/2743/Technical-Steering-Committee-TSC-Archive>

and the archived website of the NHS Information Centre at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120802111034/http://ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/supporting-information/primary-care/general-practice/technical-steering-committee-tsc>

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120802111034/http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/supporting-information/primary-care/general-practice/technical-steering-committee-tsc-archive>

5. Definition of GPs

England

GP Provider – is a practitioner, who may be a contracted and salaried partner, who has entered into a contract, to provide services to patients.

Other GPs – GPs that work within partnerships and were formerly known as GMS/PMS others. These practitioners are generally remunerated by salary.

Definition of GP Contract Types in England

General Medical Services (GMS) is the contract under which most GPs are employed. It is a national agreement between the provider and NHS England which sets out the financial arrangements, the services to be provided and support arrangements.

Personal Medical Services (PMS) were first introduced in 1998. They allow the provider to negotiate a local agreement for the services they will provide and payments they will receive, taking into account specific local healthcare needs.

Alternative Provider Medical Services (APMS) and Primary Care Trust Medical Services (PCTMS):

APMS allow contracts to be bid for by the private, voluntary and public sectors. They offer greater flexibility in the nature of service provision which is decided in agreement between the provider and the commissioner.

PCTMS services are provided directly, as well as managed, by NHS England, enabling it therefore to employ health care professionals directly, perhaps as salaried staff, and provide primary medical services itself.

Wales

GP Provider – is a practitioner who has entered into a contract with a Local Health Board to provide services to patients.

Other GPs – GPs that work within partnerships and were formerly known as GMS Others. These practitioners are generally remunerated by salary.

Scotland

Performer – GP performers that are not salaried, i.e. generally the practice partners.

Other GPs – performer salaried GPs who are employed by the practice or NHS Board on a salaried basis.

Northern Ireland

Number of GPs – GPs that are practice partners.

For further information on historical reclassification and changes to definitions of GPs, please see previous versions of the GP Practice Trends report.

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