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# Dental Strategic Workforce Plan

## Data Technical Document



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# Dental Strategic Workforce Plan – General Dental Service

## Data Technical Document

### Purpose

The purpose of this technical document is to provide a summary of the workforce data and intelligence reviewed as part of the development of the strategic workforce plan, and read as a companion piece alongside: -

- Dental Strategic Workforce Plan.
- A review of literature and strategy mapping
- A summary of consultation report

### Introduction

The majority of dental care in Wales is delivered through independent practices and contractors that are contracted by Local Health Boards to provide General Dental Services (GDS) treatment and care to patients. This is accompanied by intermediate and specialist care provided through the Community Dental Services and Hospital services. A key factor that must be considered and is unique in the delivery of dental services is the mixed economy of NHS and private dental care which is difficult to quantify in terms of provision. General Dental Practices operate as Independent Contractors within the NHS GDS Contract commissioned by LHBs. Practices have the ability to depart from delivering NHS dental care and move wholly into the private sector which creates challenges with regards to workforce data and planning.

Based on information provided by Welsh Government in 2022-23 there has been a post Covid-19 year on year increase, and there are currently 1,434 dentists with NHS activity recorded in Wales. However, this is still lower than pre Covid-19 levels. (Welsh Government, 2023)

### Data Limitations

As these are independent contractors and practices, obtaining workforce data is extremely challenging and there is no single source of workforce data available. The intelligence sources we can use only provide a high-level summarised output on certain areas or specialities, although work is currently ongoing to improve this.

In view of the lack of availability of comprehensive dataset across primary care, other data sources have been used in this document to assist in reporting the workforce challenges across Wales. These include nationally published data, and/or research material from Wales and the UK, supplemented by local data where available.

There are 7 roles in the dental workforce registered with the General Dental Council. These are: dentist, dental nurse, dental therapist, dental hygienist, dental technician, clinical dental technician and orthodontic therapist. The latter two roles are presently not in scope for the workforce plan.

Table 1 provides a list of the data sources available within GDS for each role in the dental workforce.

### Patient Demand

There is no definitive data available to report how many people are currently waiting to see an NHS dentist. Welsh Government are in discussions with Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) to scope a design for an all-Wales dental waiting list. (Minister for Health and Social Services, 2023) , while HEIW is working in collaboration with Dental Public Health Wales to develop a patient needs based modelling framework.

**Table 1 - Workforce Data Sources per registration category**

Data Source	Dentists	Dental Nurse	Dental Hygienists	Dental Therapists	Dental Technicians
Electronic Staff Record	x	x	x	x	x
NHS Quality Assurance System (QAS) annual report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
General Dental Council registers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NHS Business Services Authority	✓	x	x	x	x
Stats Wales (Welsh Government)	✓	x	x	x	x
Wales National Workforce Reporting System (Live from Q3 2023/2024)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

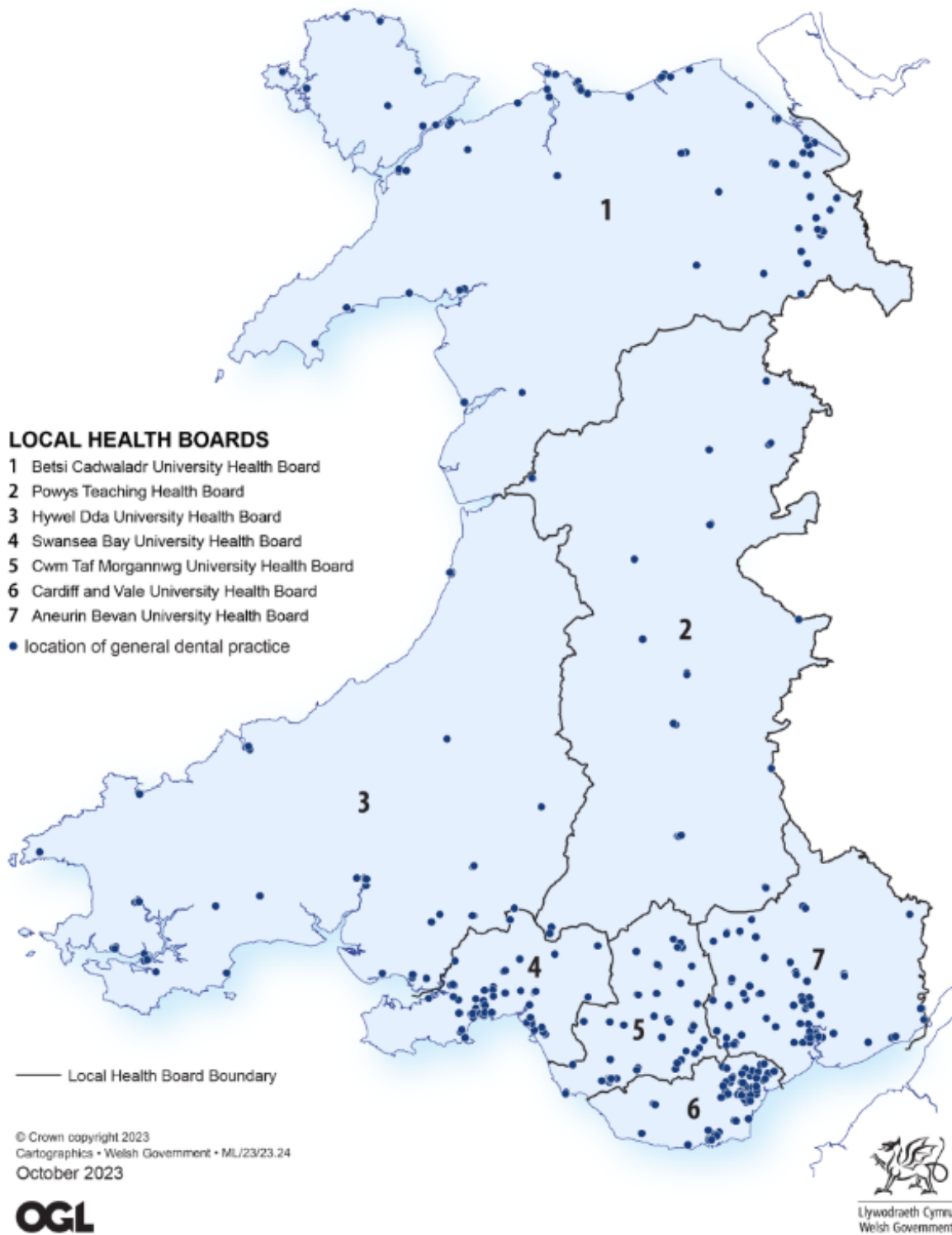
## Dental Contracts in Wales

The following table sets out the number of dental contracts and practices in Wales, however more than one dental practitioner can perform NHS dental work under the same contract. The number of dental practices is down from 435 (Welsh Government, 2020) in 2019-2020 to 434 in 2022-23

**Table 2 Number of Dental Contracts and practices by local health board 2022-23**

	Number of dental contracts	Number of dental practices
Betsi Cadwaladr	132	88
Powys	34	29
Hywel Dda	66	53
Swansea Bay	74	63
Aneurin Bevan	111	77
Cardiff and Vale	76	68
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	59	56
<b>Wales</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>434</b>

Source (StatsWales, 2022-23)



Source - (Welsh Government, 2023)

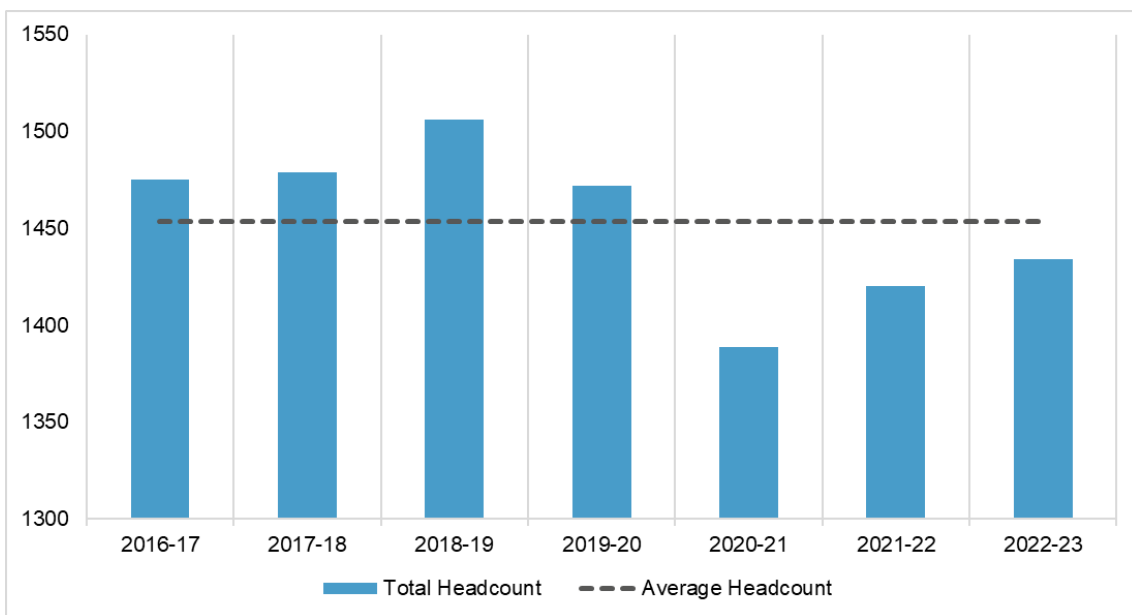
# Dentist Workforce - General Dental Service

The dental workforce is made up of a team which includes dentists, dental nurses, hygienists, or therapists but information on the number of staff for some of these roles is not readily available.

Based on the most recent release, the workforce has seen an increase in the general dental service compared to the previous year, but there is a 5% reduction in the workforce in 2022-23 compared to pre-Covid levels in 2019-20. (Stats Wales, 2023)

Figure 1 represents the total headcount of the GDS Dentists over the last 7 years. The COVID-19 virus has a significant impact on the way dental services have been provided in Wales and influenced the data collection on 2019-20 and 2020-21, which likely attributed to large decreases in the activity levels in these two years. The most recent data collection is still lower than the overall average, however it has the highest headcount post COVID-19.

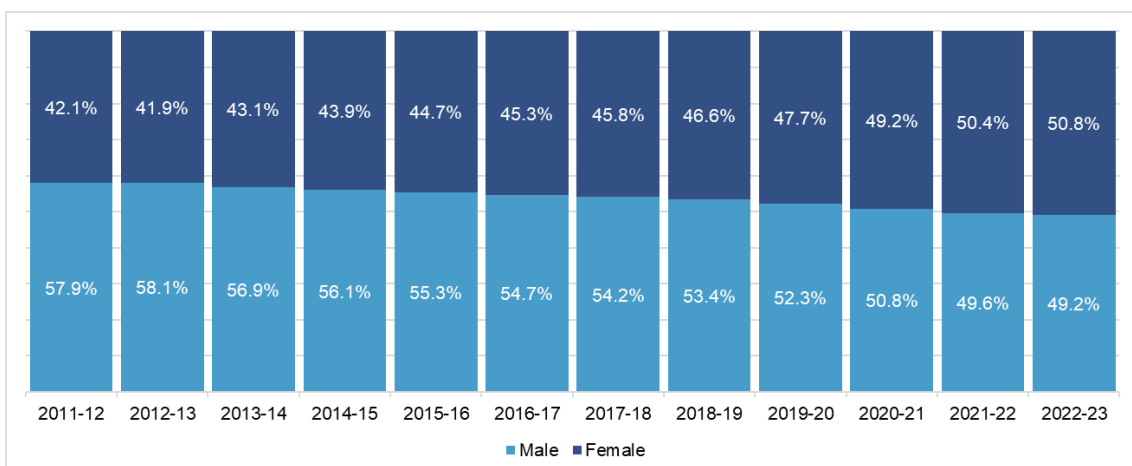
Figure 1 - GDS Dentist Headcount 2015/16 to 2022/23



## Dentist Characteristics

Historically the dental workforce has been male dominated, however the last two years has seen a shift in the gender split of the workforce, which is now more balanced with over 50% female dentists working in GDS. Figure 2 represents the split between the genders the last eleven years, during which the male workforce has reduced by over 8%.

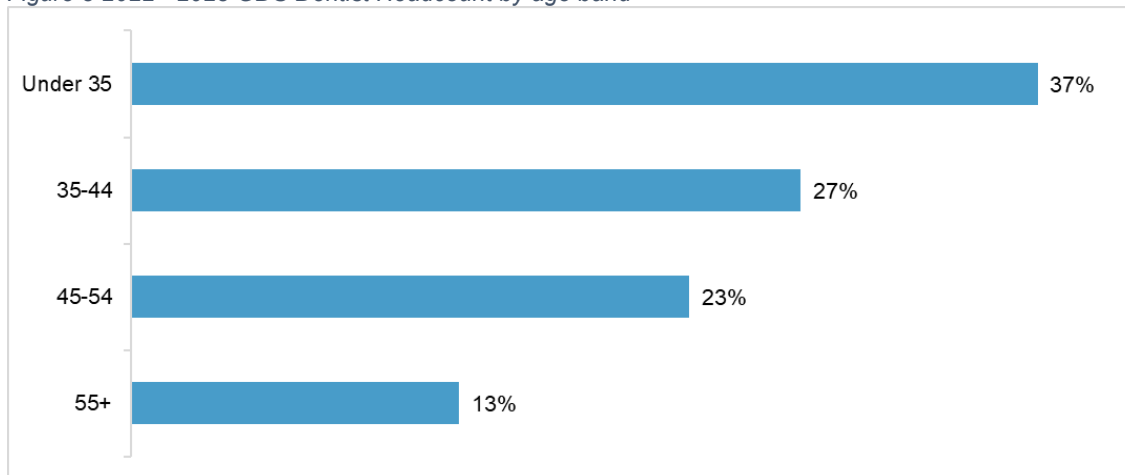
Figure 2 – GDS Dentist Workforce % by Gender



## Age Band

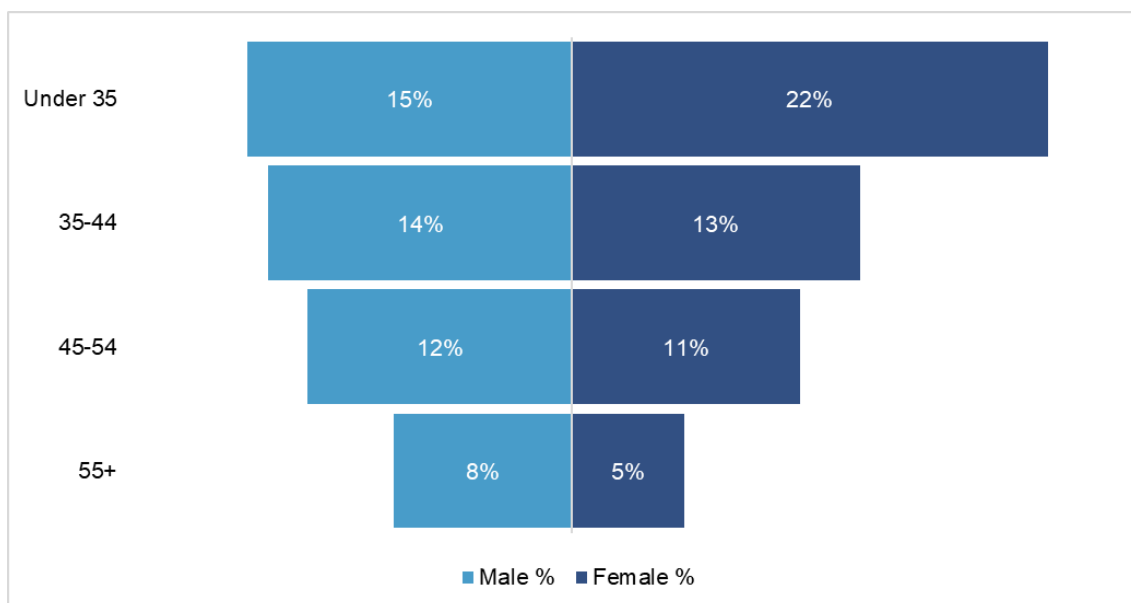
The most recent age band of the workforce shows that over a third of the workforce are under the age of 35, while almost 13% of the GDS dentist workforce are over the age of 55.

Figure 3 2022 - 2023 GDS Dentist Headcount by age band



Split by gender, for each age band there is a greater percentage of female dentists in the workforce under the age of 44 compared the male workforce in the same age bands.

Figure 4 - 2022-23 GDS Dentist Age Band % Split by Gender



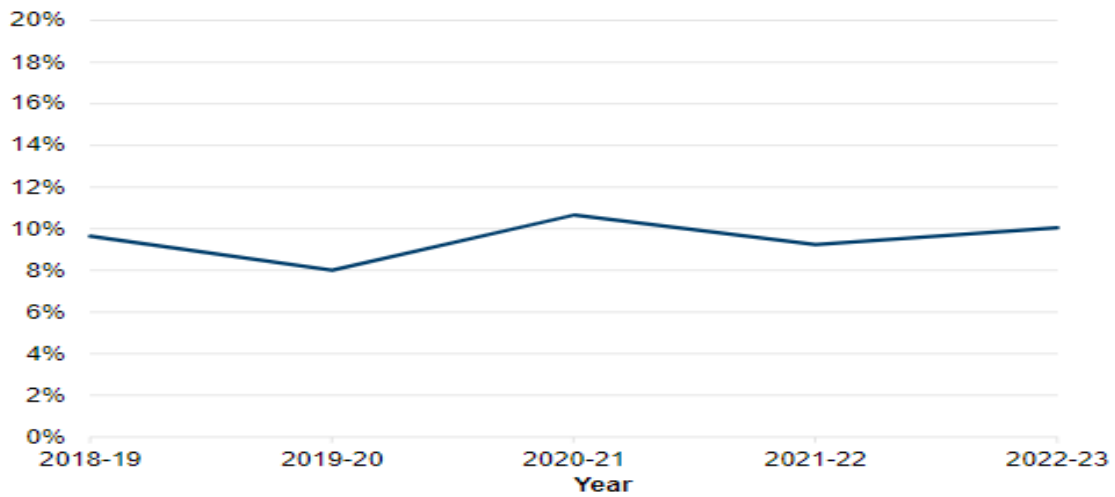
## Welsh language

Dentists registered on the performers list self-report on their Welsh language skills, however this is a “Yes” or “No” response and does not grade their level of fluency and is not typically updated throughout their tenure as a dentist.

The percentage of dentists recorded as Welsh speakers has remained relatively static in the last five years, however, the information provided may not represent the number of dentists who currently consult in Welsh or are able to consult in Welsh. (Welsh Government, 2023)

There is no data available on the equivalent language skills of other team member roles (.e.g. Dental Nurses, Dental Hygienists etc.)

Figure 5 - Percentage of dentists recorded as being Welsh speakers 2018-19 to 2021-22

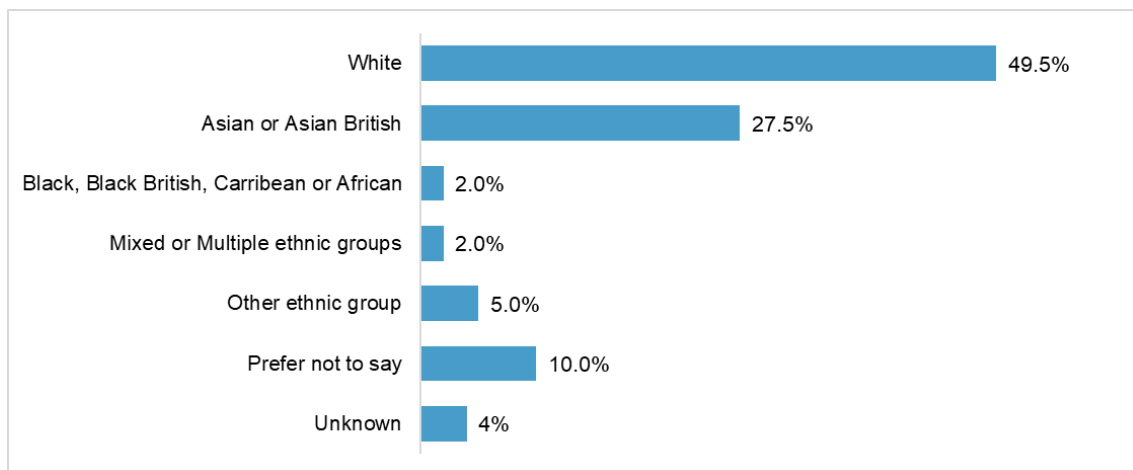


Source - (Welsh Government, 2023)

## Dental Professionals Ethnic Origin

There is no information available on the ethnicity of the dental workforce in Wales, however the GDC published information based on the ethnic origin of their registered members in the UK. According to their figures almost half of the registered dental professionals where the ethnic origin is stated are of white ethnicity. (General Dental Council, 2022)

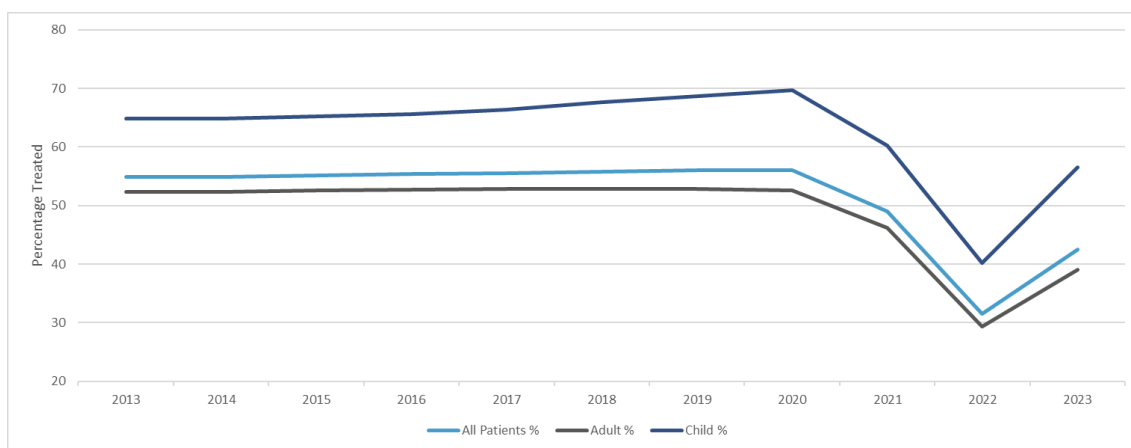
Figure 6 – GDC registered members ethnicity



## Patient Treatment

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends that patients are recalled for dental check-ups at intervals of three to twenty-four months depending on the individual's oral health status. The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on information collected carried out by Stats Wales, as the most recent data capture overlaps with the pandemic period.

Figure 7 - Percentage of adult and child population treated in the 24-month period ending March each year between 2013 and 2023



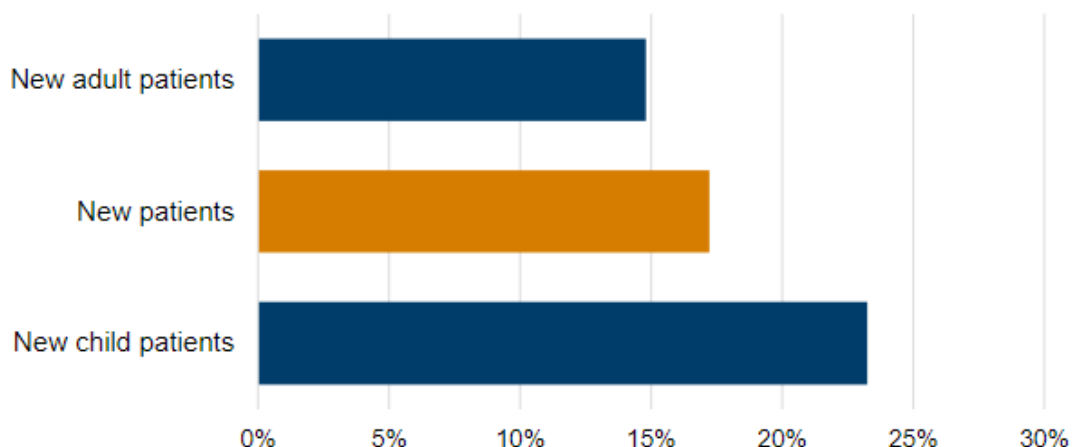
Source: (StatsWales, 2022-23)

The percentage of overall patients treated was relatively static up until the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, where they understandably reduced. Although the treatments have increased significantly in 2023 compared to 2022, the percentage of all patients treated is down by 12% compared to pre-Covid levels.

## New Patients Treated

New patients are those treated with an Assessment of Clinical Oral Risks and Need (ACORN)<sup>1</sup> indicated in the current period, who had not completed a course of Band 1, 2 or 3 treatments in the four years prior to the date of acceptance for the current treatment.

Figure 8 - New NHS dental patients as a percentage of all patients treated 2022/23



Source - (Welsh Government, 2023)

Based on the information provided by Stats Wales, new patients accounted for 17% of all patient treatments for 2022/23 (StatsWales, 2022-23)

## Dentist Working Patterns, Motivation and Morale

The Dentists' Working Patterns, Motivation and Morale report has been developed and produced by NHS Digital (NHS Digital, 2020). The UK wide survey provides insight into the dental working patterns, motivation, and morale for dentists across the UK.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/nhs-dental-services-april-2022-march-2023-html#acorn>

The analysis is based on a sample determined by dentists who have completed the voluntary Dental Working Patterns (DWP) survey, which is runs every two years. The survey opened on 16 January 2020 and officially closed on 26 February (although the collection remained open until 2 March 2020). As the Coronavirus did not gain widespread coverage (with subsequent lockdown measures) until the second week of March, it is unlikely that answers to the survey were affected by the pandemic.

The data is derived from data sets provided by NHS Business Service Authority (NHSBSA), NHS National Services Scotland and Northern Ireland Business Services Organisation (BSO).

The DWP survey categorised the dentist into Associate Dentist and Providing - Performer

### Associate Dentist

For the definition of the survey an Associate Dentist is a dentist that performs activity on a contract but does not hold a contract with a local health board themselves (also known as a Performer only dentist)

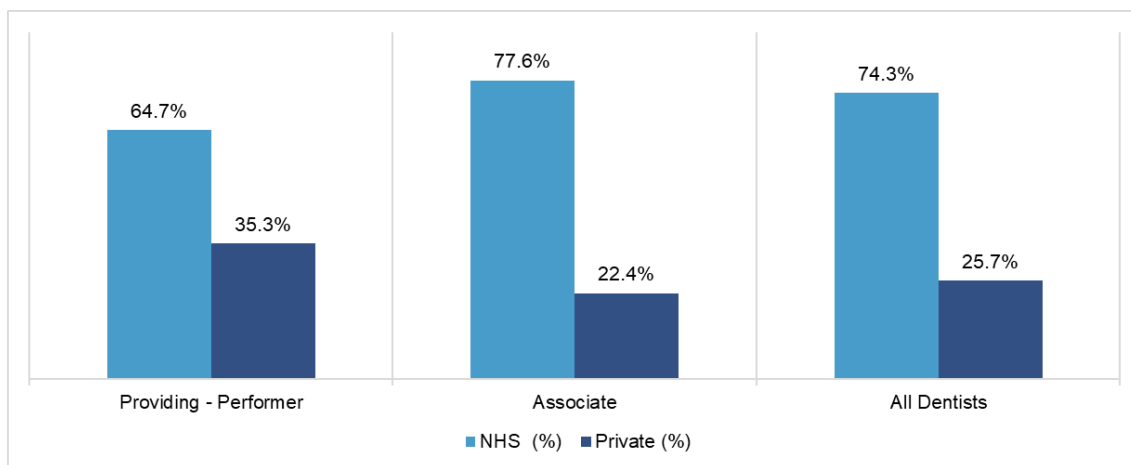
### Providing - Performer

A dentist that holds a contract with a local health board and performs NHS dentistry on this or another contract.

## Headline Working Patterns

Based on the responses received, dentists (full and part-time) reported working an average of 36 hours per week with just under 27 hours per week devoted to NHS dental services, with the rest of the activity time spent on private dentistry.

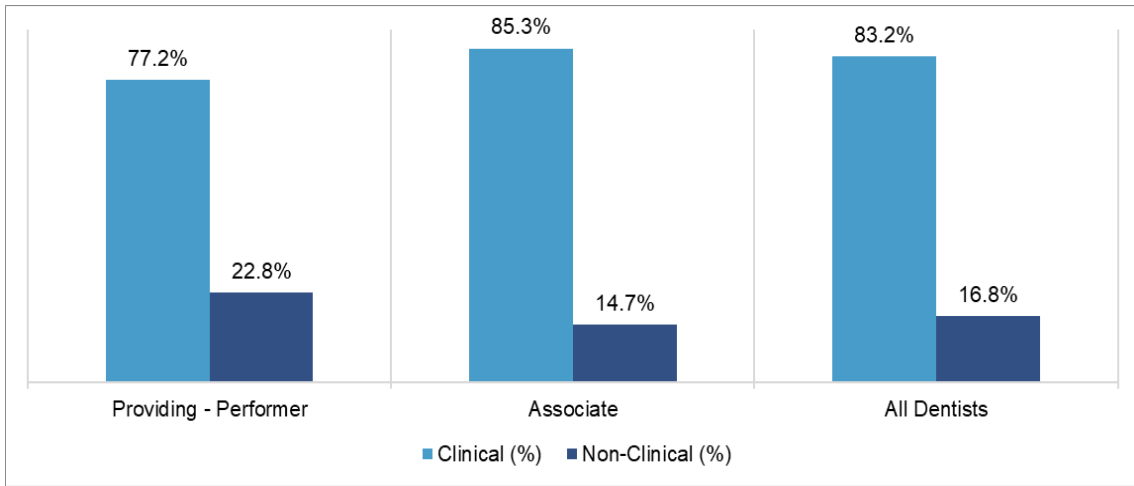
Figure 9 - Percentage of time spent on NHS / Private patients.



## Clinical and Non-Clinical work

Overall, dentists reported that their time spent on dentistry was split into 83.2 per cent on clinical work and 16.8 per cent on non-clinical work. Associate dentists spent more of their dental time on clinical work compared to Provider-Performers.

Figure 10 - Percentage of time spent on Clinical and Non-Clinical work



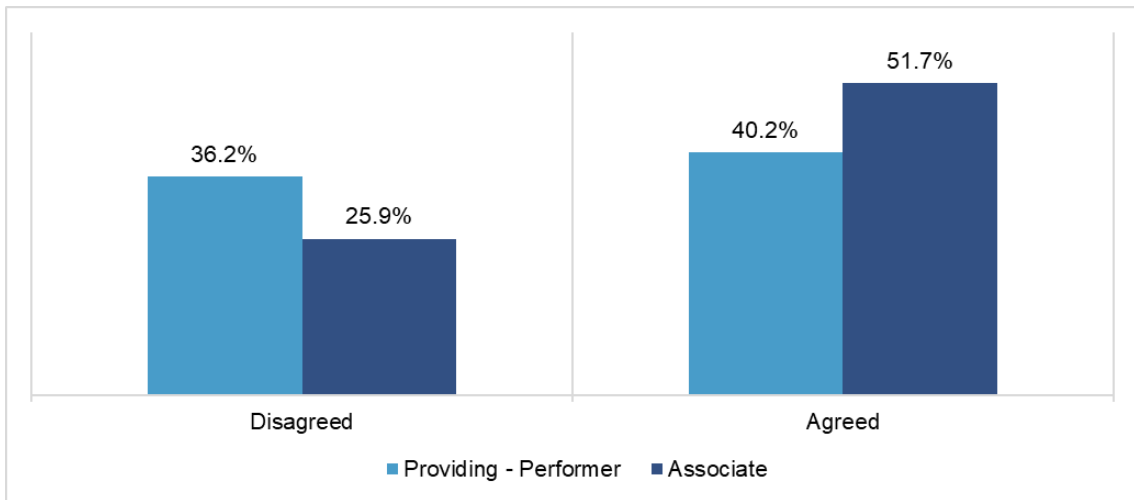
## Individual Motivation

Dentists were asked a series of motivational questions where answers ranged between “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. For the purpose of this report, we have excluded neutral responses (neither agreed or disagreed).

### I feel good about my job as a dentist

Over a third of Providing – Performers (36.2%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that they feel good about their job as a dentist, while over a quarter of Associates (25.9%) also strongly disagreed or disagreed with the same statement. This had the highest positive response for Associates out of the all the surveyed statements.

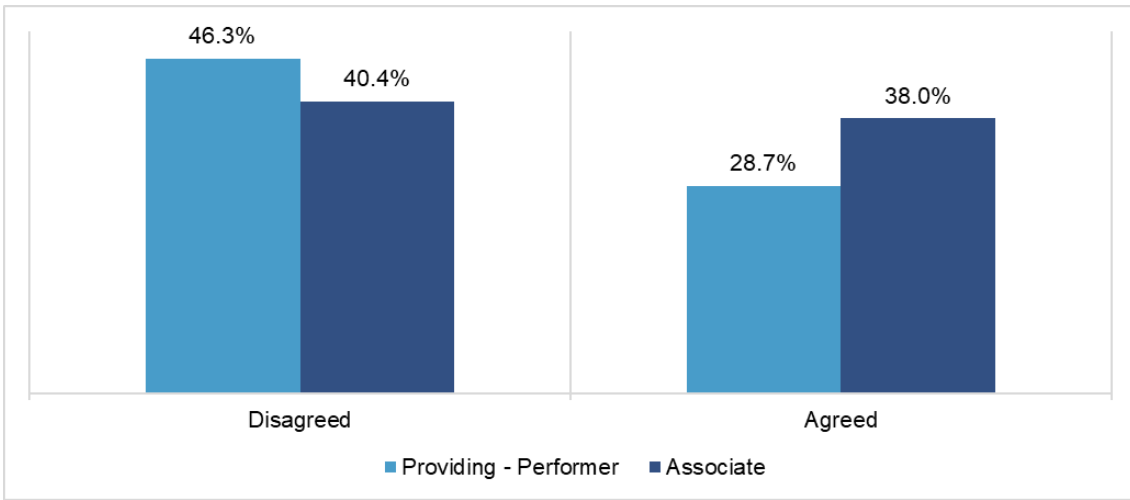
Figure 11 - Responses for motivational question of I feel good at my job as a Dentist



### I receive recognition for the work I do

Over 40% of both Providing – Performers and Associates disagreed with this statement, while a quarter of Providing – Performer respondents neither agreed or disagreed with this statement.

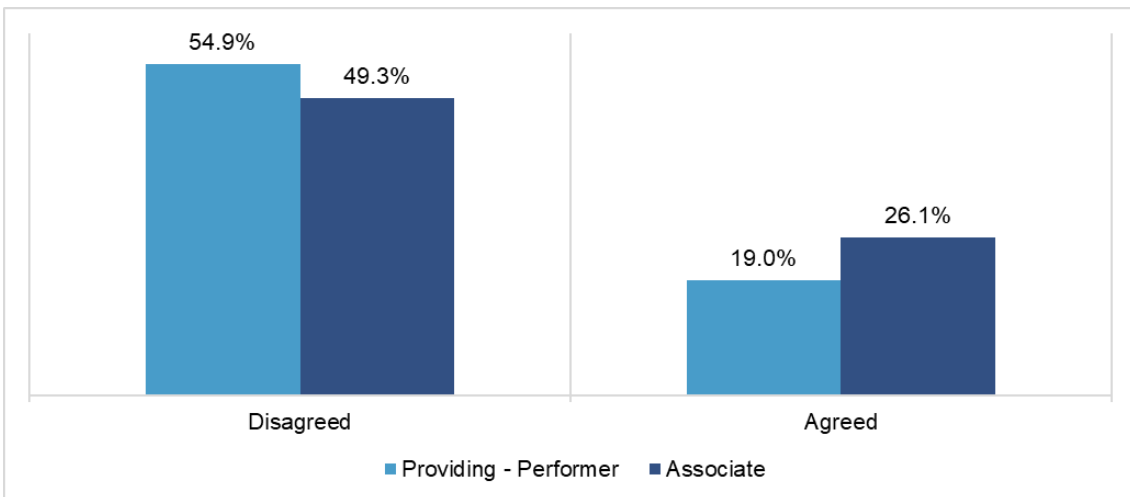
Figure 12 - Responses for I receive recognition for the work I do



**I feel my pay is fair**

This statement had the highest percentage of negative responses of all the statements surveyed. Over half of Provider – Performers disagreed with this statement, and almost half of the Associates disagreed. This was also the lowest positive response with less than 20% Provider – Performer and just over a quarter of Associates agreeing with this statement.

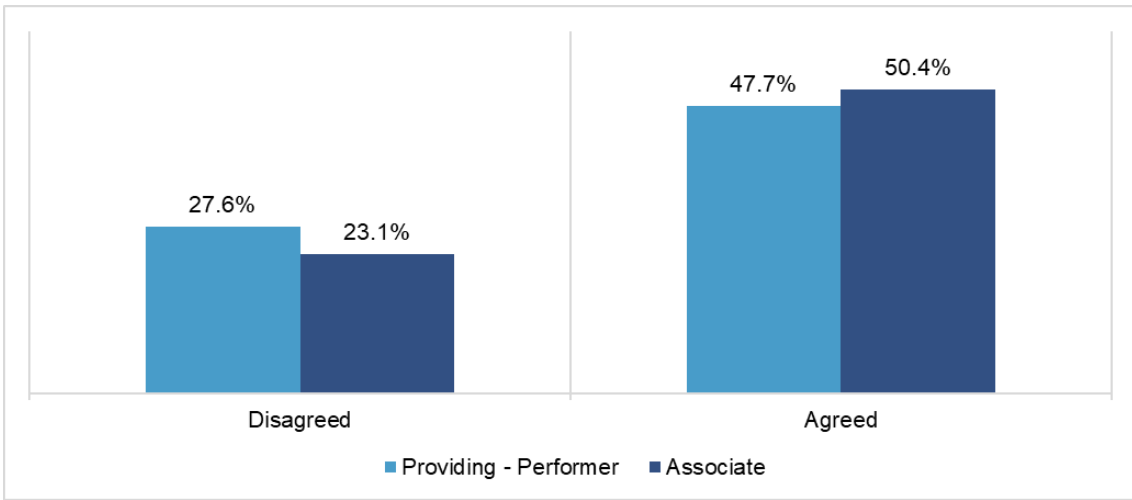
Figure 13 - Responses for I Feel My Pay Is Fair



**My job gives me the chance to do challenging and interesting work**

Over a quarter of Provider – Performers disagreed with this statement, however almost half of the respondents did agree with this statement, while over 50% of Associates also agreed with this statement.

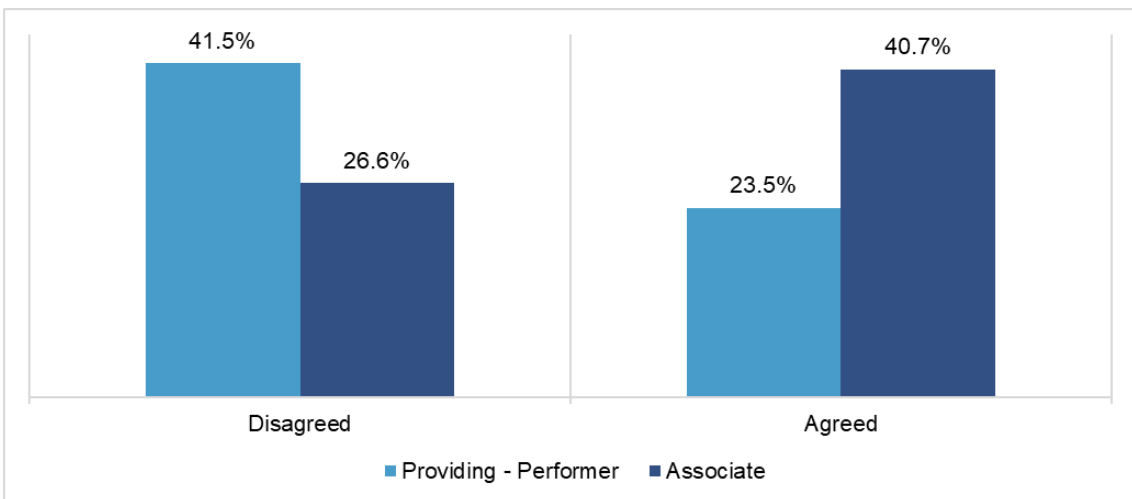
Figure 14 - My job gives me the chance to do challenging and interesting work



### There Are Opportunities for Me To Progress In My Career

Over 40% of Provider – Performers disagreed with this statement, together with over a quarter of Associates. Less than a quarter of Providing - Performers agreed with this statement.

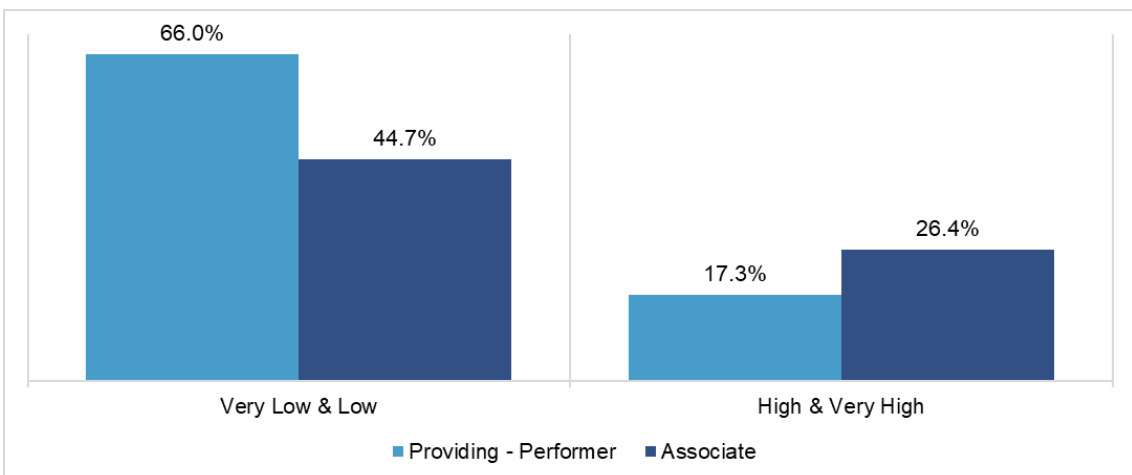
Figure 15 - There Are Opportunities For Me To Progress In My Career



### How would you rate your morale as a dentist?

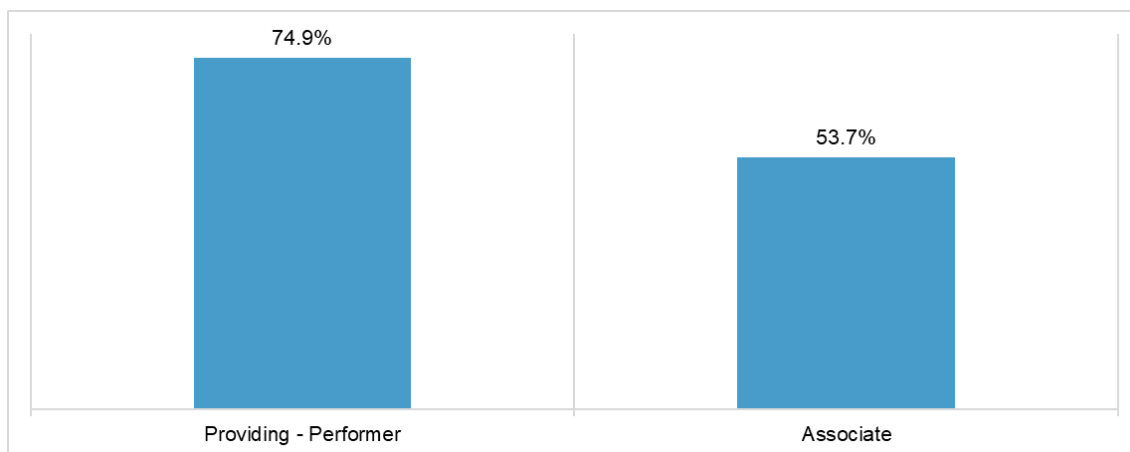
Staff morale is low at both Providing – Performer and Associates, with two-thirds of Providing – Performer reporting they have very low or low morale, and just under half of Associates. 17% of Providing – Performer reported high or very high morale, and just over a quarter of Associates reported the same.

Figure 16 - How would you rate your morale a dentist?



## I often think about leaving NHS general dental practice

Almost three-quarters of Providing – Performer and over half of Associates respondents either strongly agree or agree that they often think about leaving general dental practice.



## UK Comparison

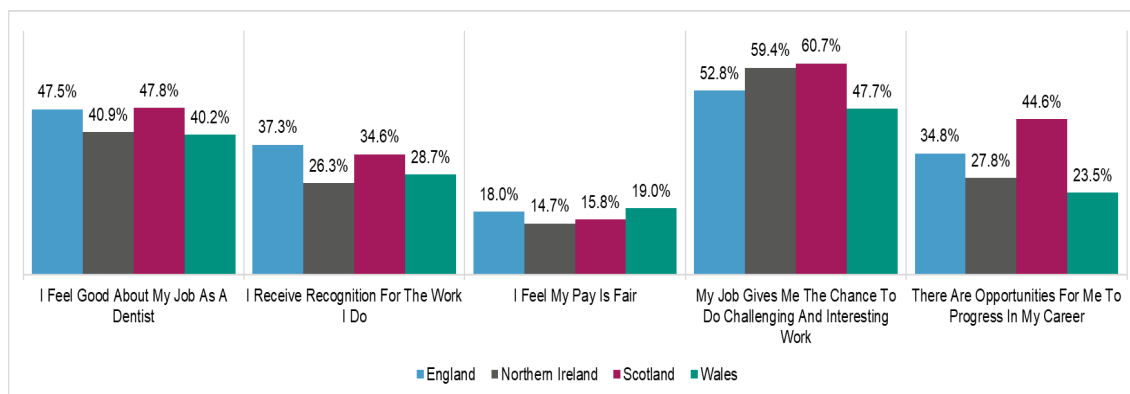
Although there are differences between the definitions of the dentist categories, NHS Digital has compiled a matrix comparing the UK by nation, however due to the contractual arrangements in each country this would have to be accounted for when comparing the countries.

For the sake of simplicity of prose, Provider – Performer dentists in England and Wales are referred to as Principal, matching dentists in Scotland and Ireland, while any neutral responses (e.g. neither agree nor disagree) was excluded from the calculation.

### Principal (Provider – Performer)

Northern Ireland had the lowest response for the statement “I Feel My Pay is Fair”, and less than 20% of all countries agreed to that same statement. Collectively, Wales had the lowest response from all the questions with a combined average of 36% agreed.

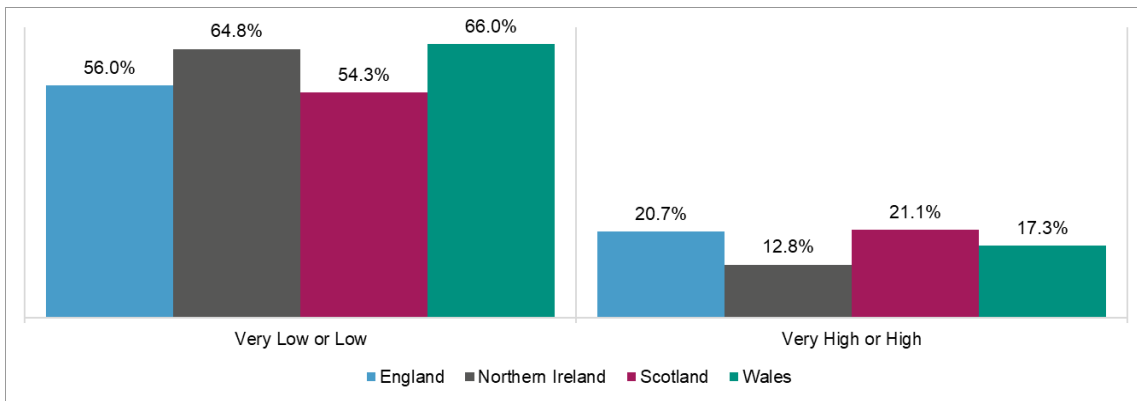
Figure 17 - Percentage of Principal (Provider – Performer) dentists that answered "strongly agree" or "agree" by statement.



### How would you rate your morale as a dentist?

Across the UK, over 60% of respondents rated their morale as low or very low. Wales had the lowest morale out of the four nations for Principal (Provider – Performer), with two thirds reporting very low or low morale. Although Scotland had the highest percentage of dentists reporting very high or high morale, this accounted for less than a quarter of their respondents.

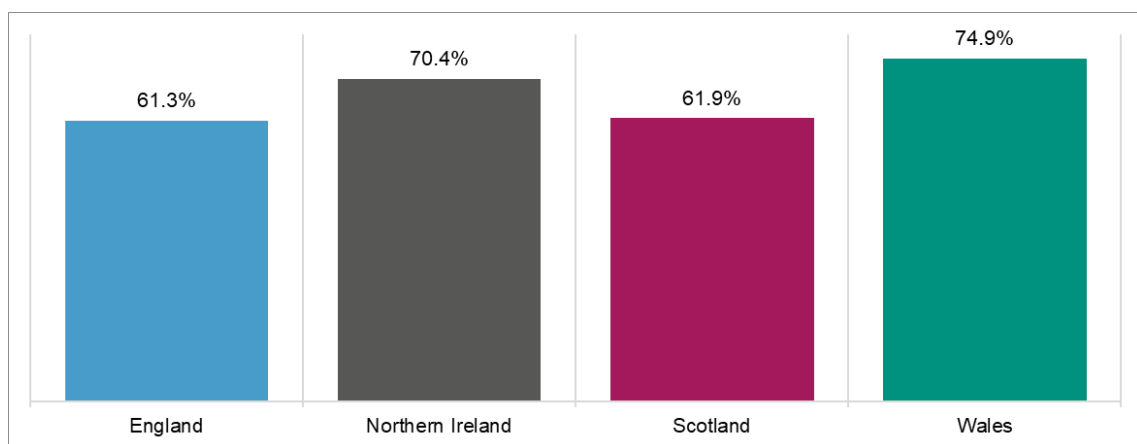
Figure 18 - Principal (Providing - Performer) How would you rate your morale a dentist?



### I often think about leaving NHS general dental practice

Over two-thirds of all Principal (Providing – Performer) respondents from across the UK agreed that they often think about leaving general dental practice, while almost three quarters of Welsh respondents agreed with the statement.

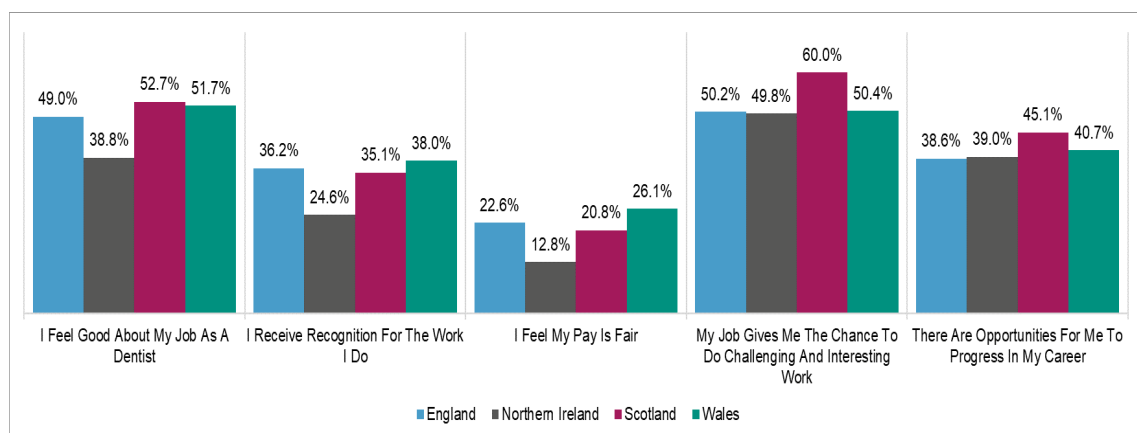
Figure 19 - Principal (Providing - Performer) I often think about leaving NHS general dental practice



### Associate

There is a similar pattern for Associate, where the statement “I Feel My Pay is Fair” scored the lowest across all countries, and included the lowest percentage of all the responses made.

Figure 20 - Percentage of Associate dentists that answered "strongly agree" or agree by statement



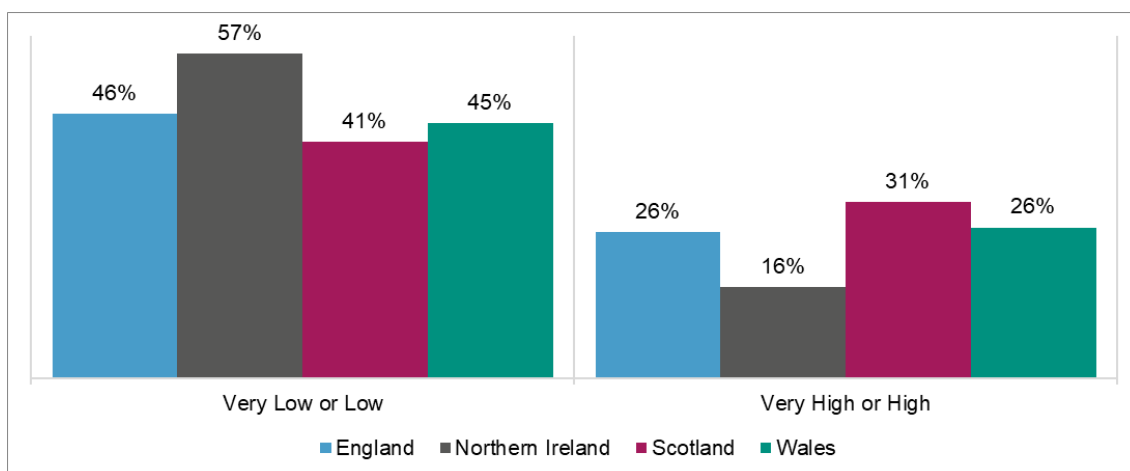
The statement of “My Job Gives me the chance to do challenging and interesting work” had the highest average score for both the Principal and Associate categories.

Northern Ireland had the lowest percentage of agreed Associates, while Scotland had the highest responses for both the Associate and Principal (Provider-Performer)

## How would you rate your morale as a dentist?

On average, just under 50% of all UK Associate respondents had low or very low morale, with Northern Ireland reporting the lowest morale with over half the Associates reporting low or very low morale.

Figure 21 - Associate How would you rate your morale a dentist?

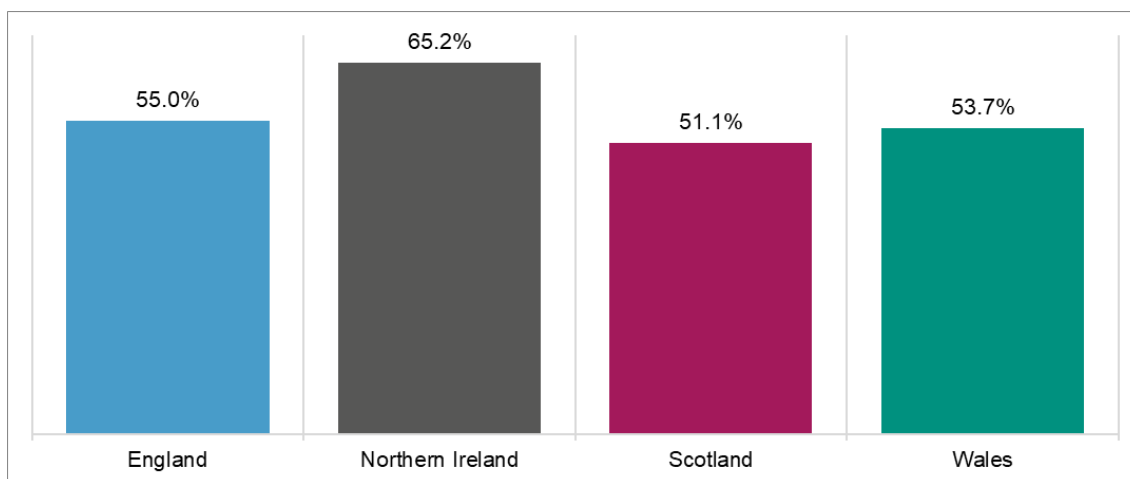


Collectively, Scotland has the highest morale of Principal (Performing – Provider) and Associate dentists reporting high or very high morale, however this accounts for just over a quarter of their respondents (26%). Northern Ireland has on average the lowest morale with 60% of Principal (Performing – Provider) and Associate dentists reporting low or very low morale.

## I often think about leaving NHS general dental practice

Over half of the Associates from each nation agreed that they often think about leaving general dental practice. Northern Ireland had the highest number of respondents agreeing with this statement with over 62%.

Figure 22 - Associate I often think about leaving NHS general dental practice



Although collectively Scotland has the least amount of Principal (Performing – Provider) and Associate dentists reporting that they considered leaving general dental practice, it was just over half of the respondents. Northern Ireland has on average the lowest morale with 60% of Principal (Performing – Provider) and Associate dentists reporting low or very low morale.

# All-Wales Dental Practice Quality Assurance Self-assessment (QAS)

The All-Wales Dental Practice Quality Assurance Self-assessment (QAS) is a self-assessment toolkit that dental practices with an NHS contract are required to complete and return annually to comply with their contractual requirements. Some of the information reported on in the most recent QAS surveys include a breakdown on sessions provided and staff vacancies.

The analysis carried out compares the returns received in 2021 and 2022, at the moment we do not have registered and non-registered staff information for pre-Covid, however the 2021 return does include sessional data for pre-Covid.

The analysis is based on practices that have submitted returns in both years only, as it allows a balanced comparison between periods.

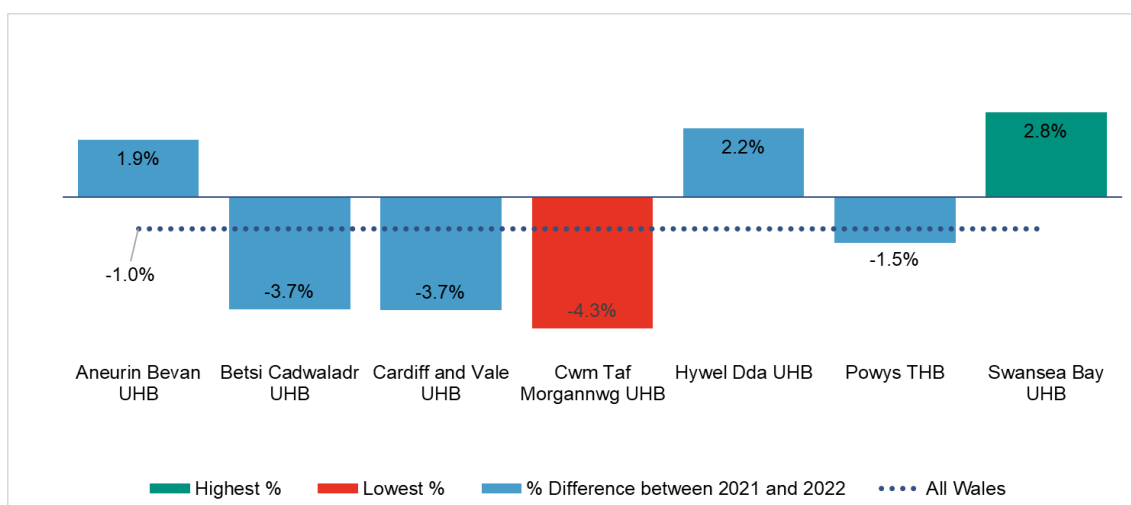
As the returns are self-reported at a single point in time, any interpretation of the data should be taken in this context.

## GDC registrants (including DCP's)

Based on the practices that are undertaking NHS work, there are 38 (1%) registrants fewer in 2022 compared to 2021, with Betsi Cadwaladr having the biggest reduction with 27 (3.7%) registrants in 2022 compared to 2021. Cwm Taf Morgannwg had reduced the most by 4.3% in 2022 compared to 2021.

Swansea Bay had the largest increase with 16 (2.8%) more registrants in 2022 compared to 2021.

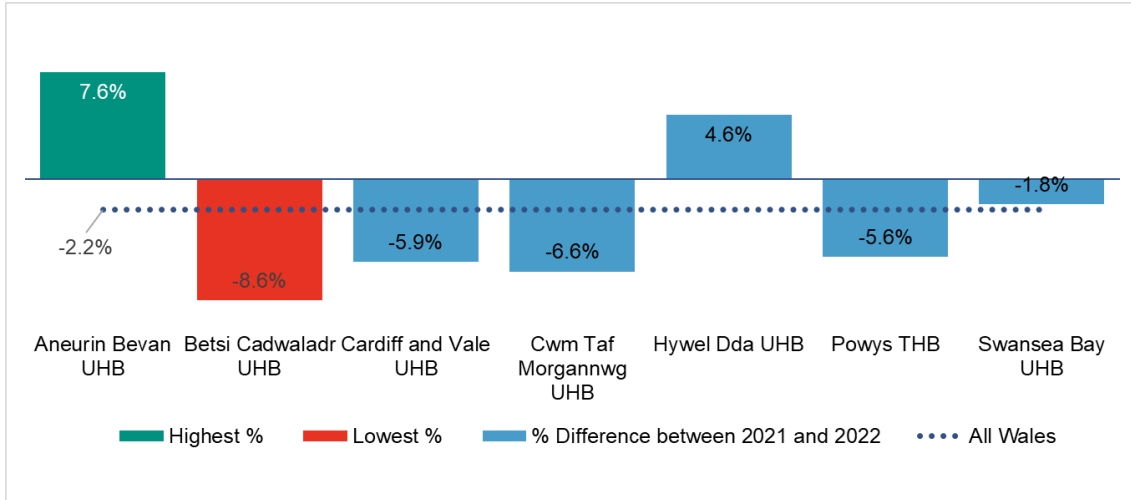
Figure 23 - Percentage of GDC registrants (including DCPs) in practice by Health Board Area for 2022 compared to 2021



## Registered Dental Nurses

Based on the practices that are undertaking NHS work there are 37 (2.2%) fewer GDC registered Dental Nurses in 2022, with Betsi Cadwaladr having the biggest reduction with 31 (8.6%) registrants. Aneurin Bevan had the largest increase in GDC registered Dental Nurses in 2022 with 25 (7.6%) more registrants in 2022

Figure 24 - percentage of Registered Dental Nurses by Health Board Area for 2022 compared to 2021

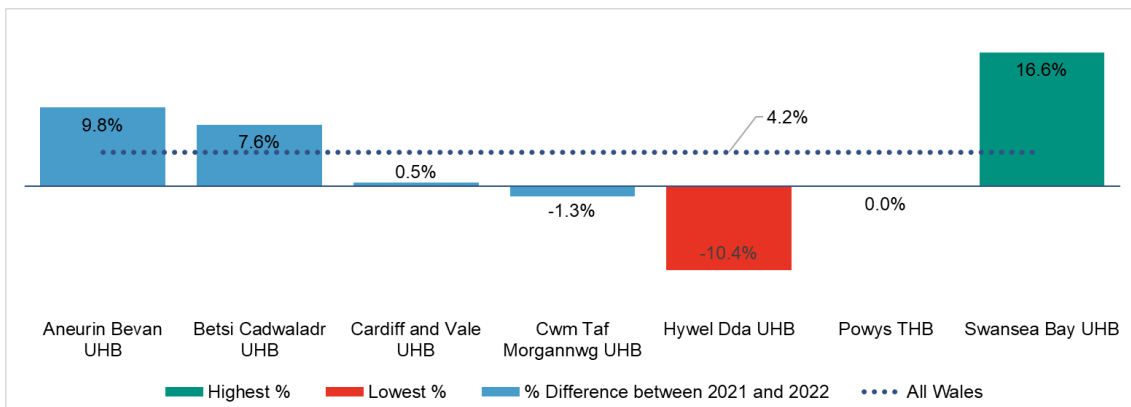


## Non-registered members of staff

Based on the practices that are undertaking NHS work, there are more non-GDC staff (e.g., receptionists etc) in 2022 compared to 2021, with an overall increase of 48 (4.2%) more staff.

Swansea Bay had the largest increase with 28 (16.6%) staff, however Hywel Dda had reduction in staff with 14 (10.4%) fewer staff in 2022 compared to 2021

Figure 25 - percentage of non-GDC registered members of staff (e.g., receptionists etc) in practice per Health Board area for 2022 compared to 2021.

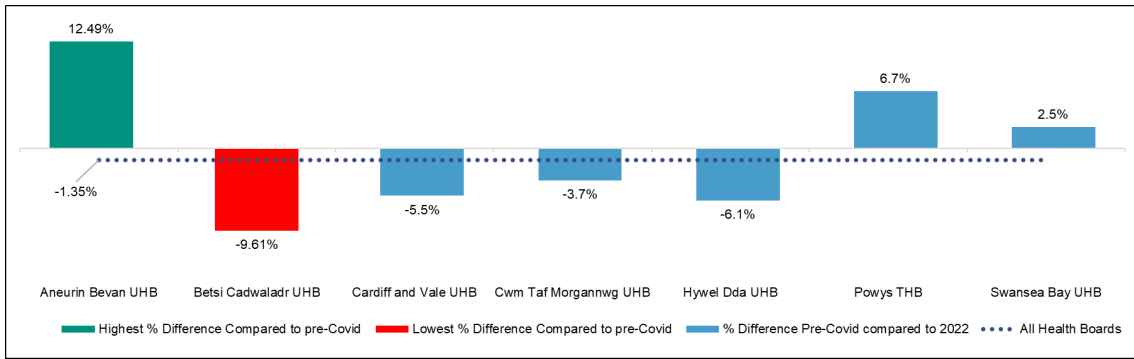


## Delivered sessions per week

### Dentist sessions

QAS submissions for delivered sessions includes pre-Covid number, the analysis shows that overall, the number of sessions in 2022 are just over 1% lower compared to pre-Covid delivered sessions, however some of the dental practices in Health Board areas did deliver more sessions in 2022 than compared to pre-Covid. Practices in Aneurin Bevan UHB area delivered 12.5% more sessions in 2022 compared to pre-Covid.

Figure 26 - Percentage difference in dentist delivered sessions in 2022 compared to pre-Covid

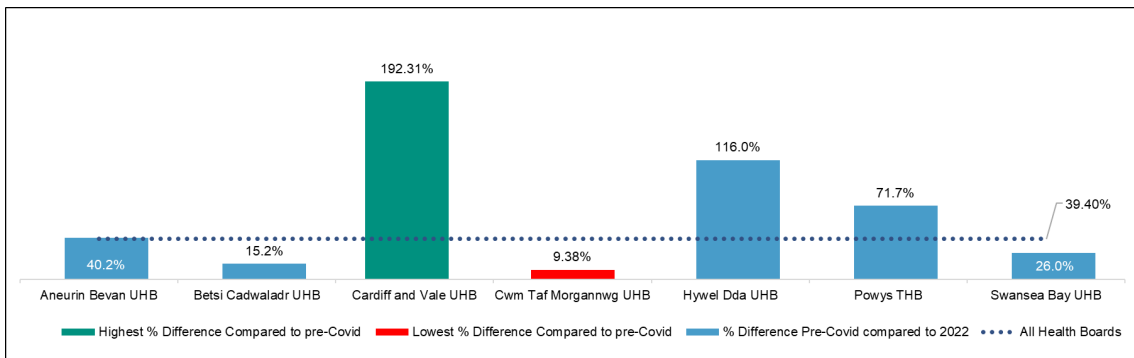


## Therapist sessions

Based on the practices that are undertaking NHS work, the number of Therapist delivered sessions have increased in 2022 compared to both pre-Covid and 2021 session numbers.

While Cardiff and Vale UHB had the highest percentage difference between pre-Covid and 2022, overall, all local health board areas had an increase in therapist sessions for 2022 compared to pre-Covid.

Figure 27 - Percentage difference in therapist delivered sessions in 2022 compared to pre-Covid



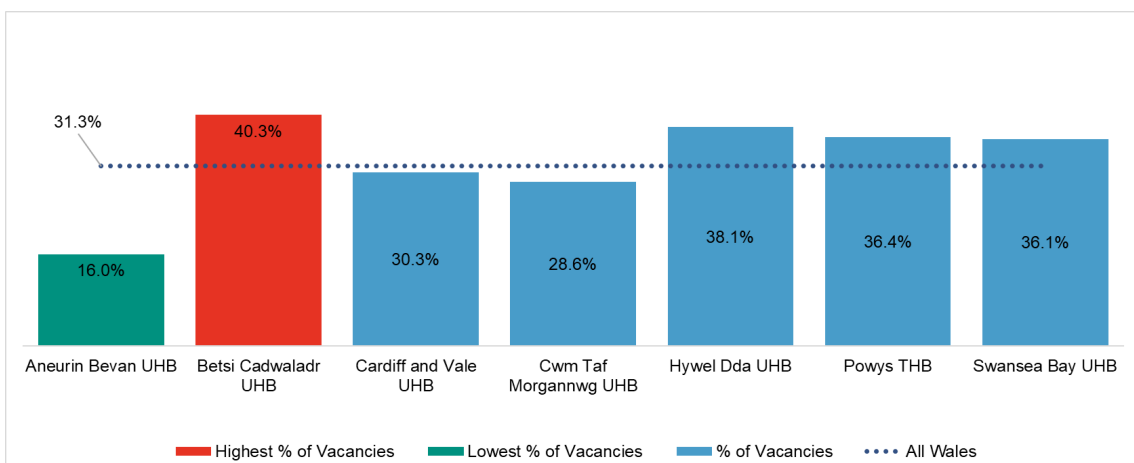
## Vacancies

Based on the QAS workforce survey of 2022, dental practices have reported they have many vacancies across speciality areas. This does not indicate how many vacant posts are in the practice for each speciality, but just that at least one vacancy exists.

### Dentist

Over 30% of practices have reported that they have dentist vacancies, however it does not state how many dentist vacancies exist within the practice.

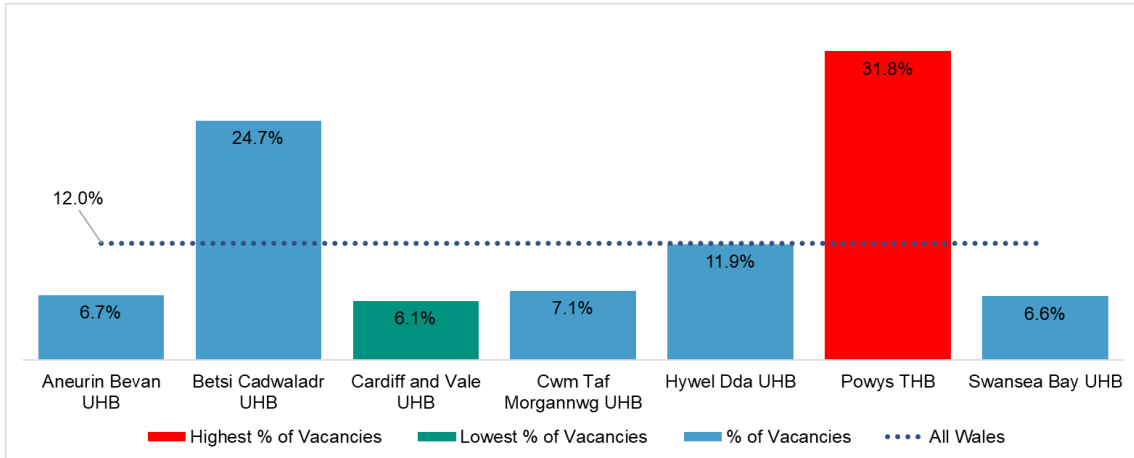
Figure 28 - Percentage of practices with Dentist vacancies



## Dental Therapists

Based on the practices that are undertaking NHS work, 12% of practices advised they have Dental Therapist vacancies. Powys has the highest number of practices with vacancies (31.8%)

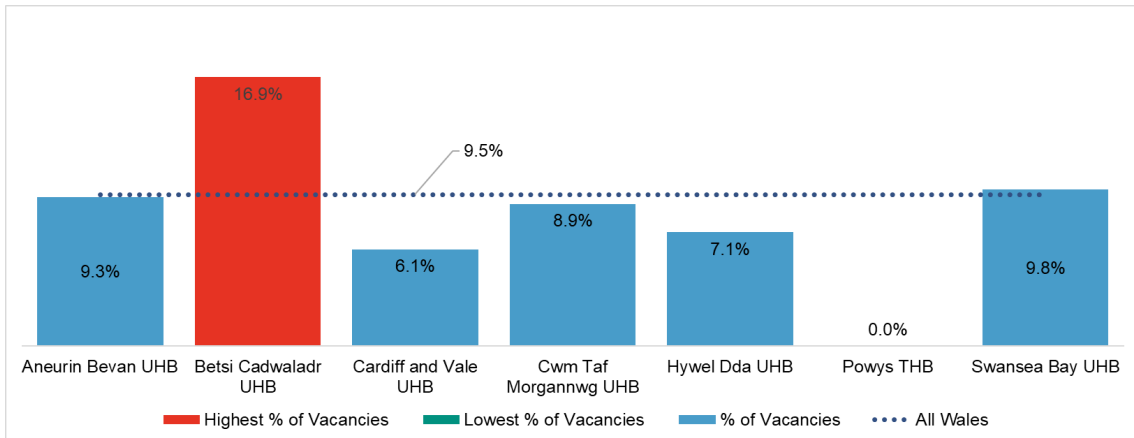
Figure 29 – Percentage of practices with dental therapist vacancies



## Dental Hygienist

Based on the practices that are undertaking NHS work, 9.5% of practices advised they have Dental Hygienist vacancies, with 16.9% Betsi Cadwaladr UHB practices advising that they have vacancies. There are no vacancies in Powys THB practices.

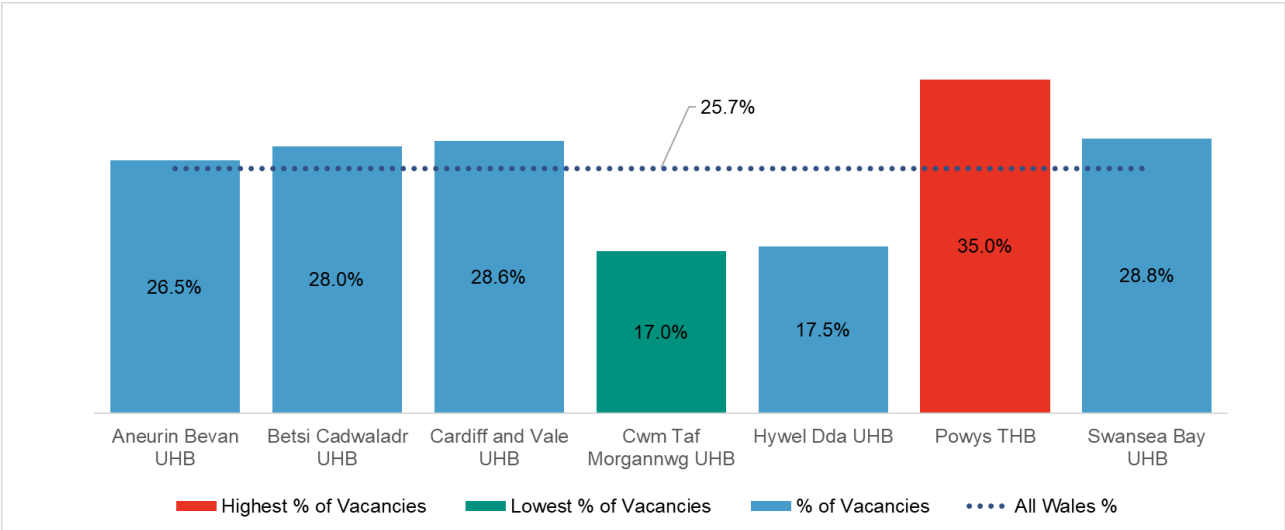
Figure 30 - Percentage of practices with dental hygienist vacancies



## Dental Nurse

Based on the practices that are undertaking NHS work, over a quarter of practices (25.7%) advised they have Dental Nurse vacancies. 21 practices did not respond to this question.

Figure 31 - Percentage of practices with dental nurse vacancies



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