

# Scotland's NHS workforce

The current picture



AUDITOR GENERAL 

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February 2017

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- examine how public bodies spend public money
- help them to manage their finances to the highest standards
- check whether they achieve value for money.

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Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. We help the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission check that organisations spending public money use it properly, efficiently and effectively.

# Introduction

Major challenges lie ahead for the NHS in Scotland. [As I reported last year](#), there are growing pressures on NHS boards which are struggling to juggle service delivery and progress major reform, at the same time as managing considerable financial challenges.

Nearly 160,000 people work in Scotland's NHS, which provides vital services for millions of us every year. Their hard work and commitment, sometimes in life-or-death circumstances, is always to be admired. However, the NHS faces challenges if the workforce is to meet the growing demands of our ageing population and adapt to new ways of working.

We know that our audit work on [health and social care in Scotland](#) has a role to play in the wider debate about what's needed to transform these services and make them sustainable for the future.

Building on our recent findings, we've begun a new two-part audit to evaluate how the Scottish Government and NHS boards are tackling the issues, through workforce planning and national and local initiatives.

The first report focuses on overall workforce planning and workforce pressures in hospitals and will be published in summer 2017. The second is due out in 2018/19 and will explore primary care and GP workforce issues.

In advance of our first report, this briefing provides some key information on the shape of the current NHS workforce and sets out some of the issues that we're delving into during the course of our audit.




**Caroline Gardner**  
Auditor General for Scotland

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## Links

 PDF download

 web link

 **Interactive Tableau exhibit**, where further information can be viewed at an NHS board level

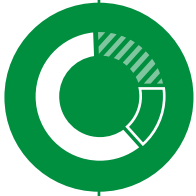
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# Key issues for the NHS workforce

NHS staff numbers are at their highest ever level, but there are key issues relating to the workforce.



**Vacancy rates** among some groups of NHS staff have been increasing, along with spending on agency staff.



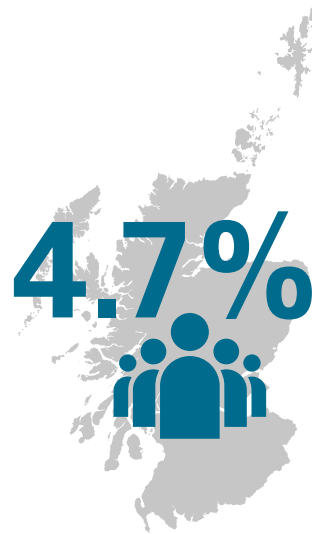
**Turnover rates**, a measure of **retention**, and **sickness absence rates** have increased slightly over the last few years, and vary widely by NHS board.



There is a trend towards an increasingly **ageing workforce** with 38 per cent of NHS staff aged over 50, compared with 34 per cent in 2012. Nursing and midwifery have particularly high rates of older staff.



# The NHS workforce



4.7 per cent of the Scottish working age population is employed by the NHS.

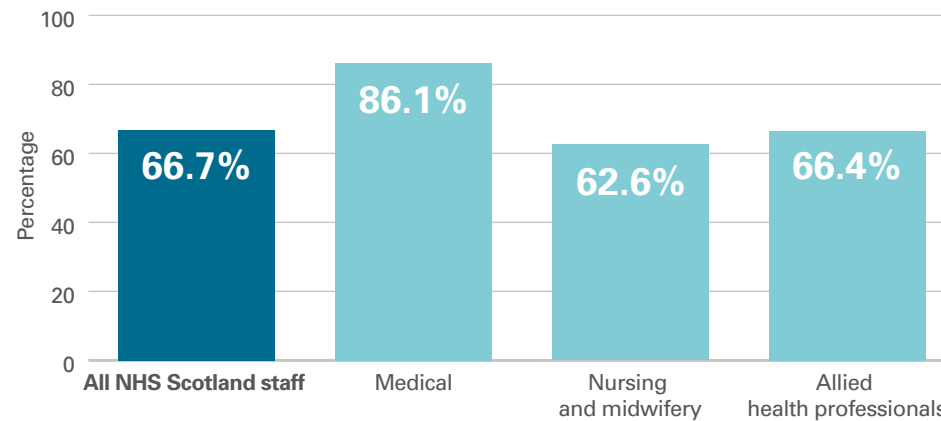
In 2015/16 just over £6 billion (55 per cent) of NHS spending was on staff costs.

**138,458:**

**Whole-time equivalent (WTE)**

NHS staff, March 2016: up 5 per cent since 2012.

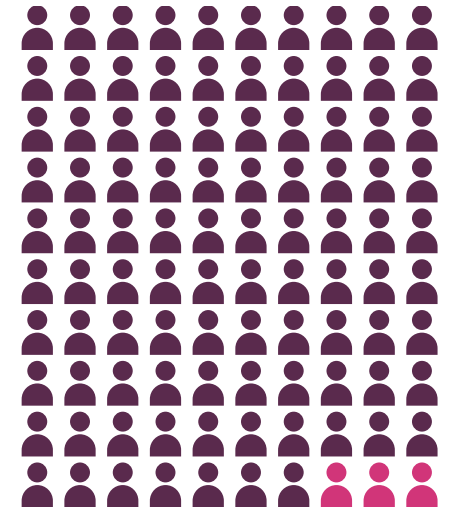
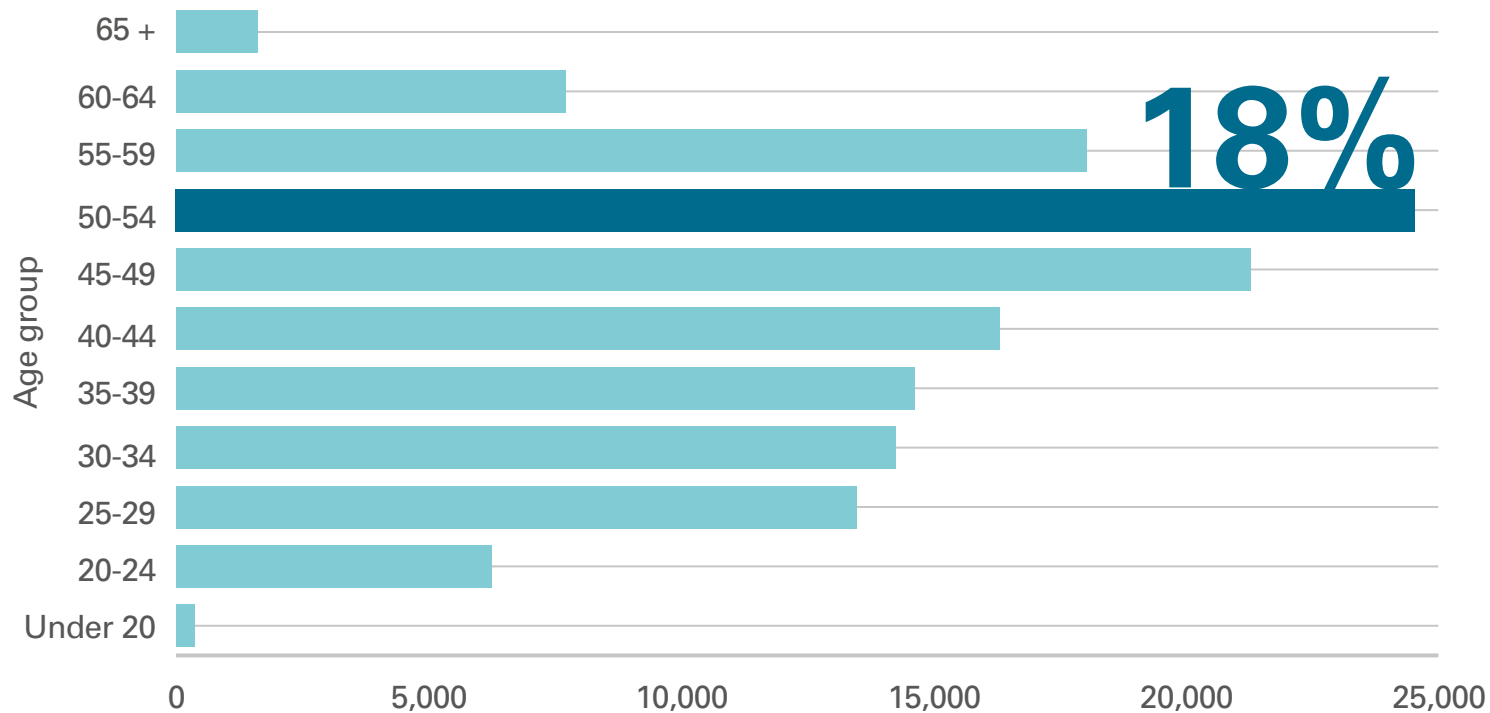
**Percentage of staff working full time**



# The NHS workforce

## Age of NHS staff (March 2016)

The largest age group among NHS staff is 50-54, around 18 per cent of staff



**Three per cent** of NHS staff are from a minority ethnic group.

Four per cent of the overall population are from a minority ethnic group.



Fewer than **one per cent** of NHS staff are recorded as having a disability.

# The NHS workforce



Over three-quarters of NHS staff are female



Among medical staff the percentages of men and women are almost even



One in ten nurses is male

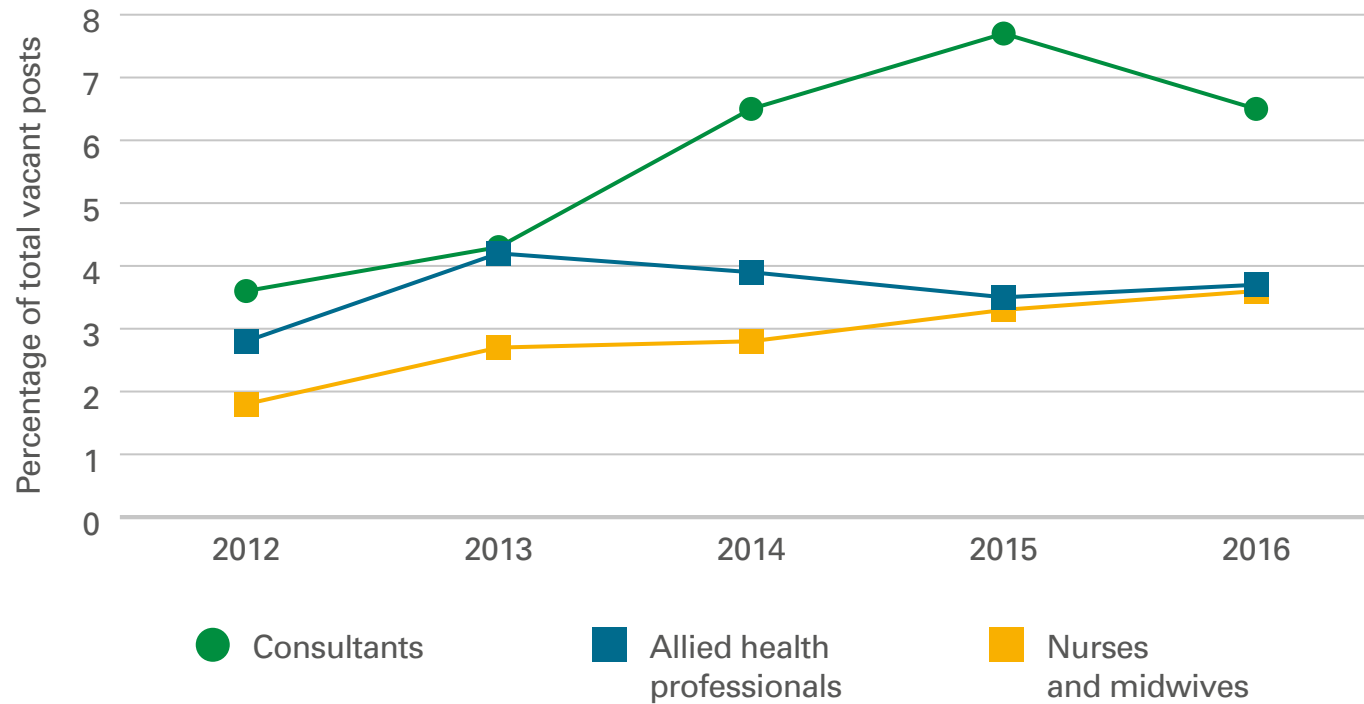


Two in ten allied health professionals are male

Note: Allied health professionals (AHPs) include physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists, among others.

Source: ISD, Annual Population Survey and 2011 census. Excludes GPs

# Vacancies



- Consultants have the highest vacancy rate of the three staff groups.
- The vacancy rate has increased for all staff groups over the period, though consultant vacancies dropped between 2015 and 2016.
- Vacancies that have been open for three or six months have also been increasing, particularly for consultants.

Note: Data not available for most other staff groups.

Source: ISD





# Specialty vacancy rates

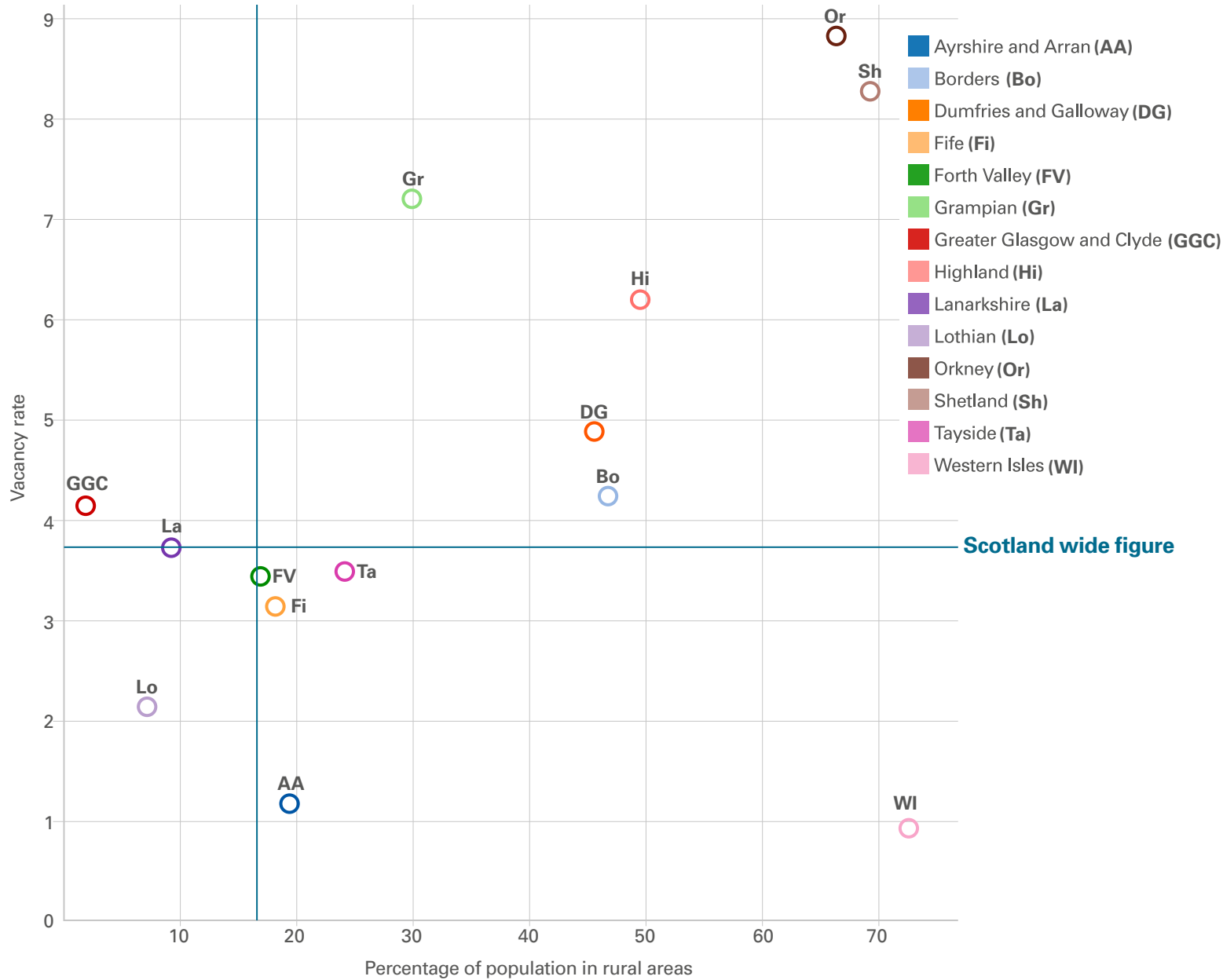
Specialty	2016 WTE in post	2016 Vacancy rate (%)	2016 Percentage of training establishment that is unfilled
General Practice	3,645.0*	5.0*	8.3
Consultants	5,115.6	6.5	6.5
Psychotherapy	12.5	22.8	0
Occupational Medicine	14.0	22.2	0
Intensive Care Medicine	9.0	18.2	5.0
Old Age Psychiatry	51.4	17.4	32.0
Orthodontics	25.5	15.3	Not available
General (acute) Medicine	145.6	12.9	Not available
Clinical Radiology	324.4	11.1	Not available
Histopathology	103.7	10.9	0
Respiratory Medicine	98.3	10.9	0
Medical Oncology	16.7	10.7	4.8

- The table shows the overall consultant WTE in post, along with the vacancy rate and unfilled training places. It also shows the ten specialties with the highest consultancy vacancy rates, along with the unfilled training place rates, where available.

Note: \*From the 2015 primary care survey. Our second NHS workforce audit will focus on GP issues.

Source: NHS, NES and ISD. Includes the top ten specialties where the establishment was more than ten

# Vacancies



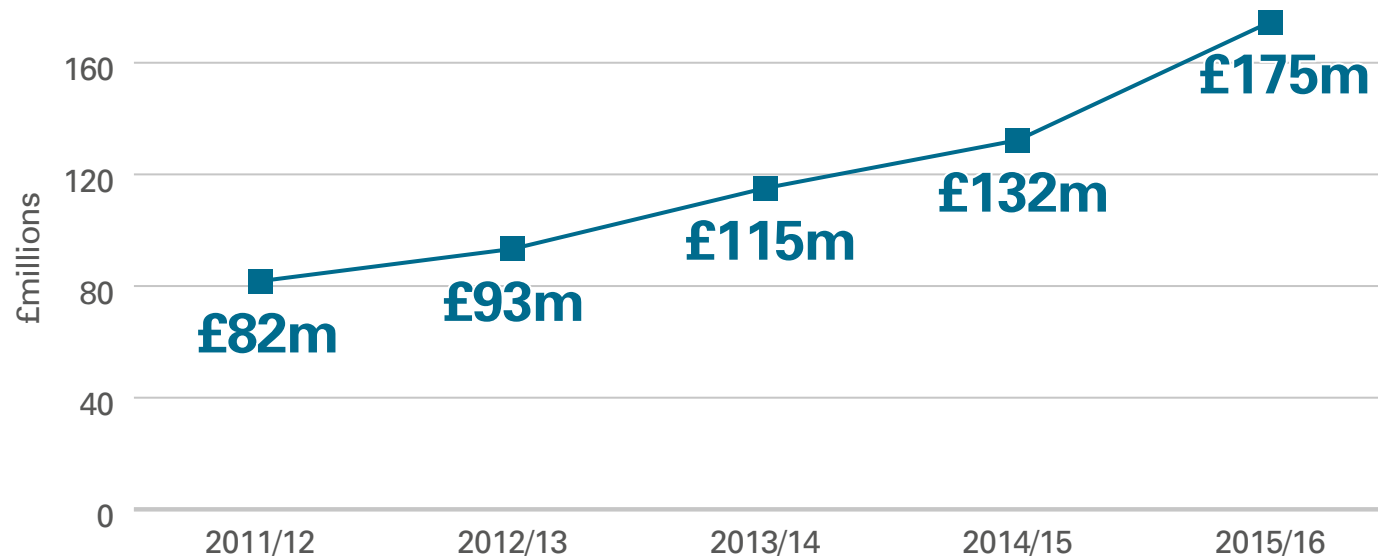
- Consultant, allied health professionals and nursing vacancies in 2016 show that generally the more rural the area the higher the vacancy rate.
- There are exceptions to this, for example NHS Ayrshire and Arran and NHS Western Isles have higher rurality levels than the Scottish average, but low vacancy rates.

Source: ISD, SG measure of rurality. Excludes special boards



# Spending on clinical and non-clinical agency staff

Total spending on agency staff (£millions), real terms



Source: NHS board accounts

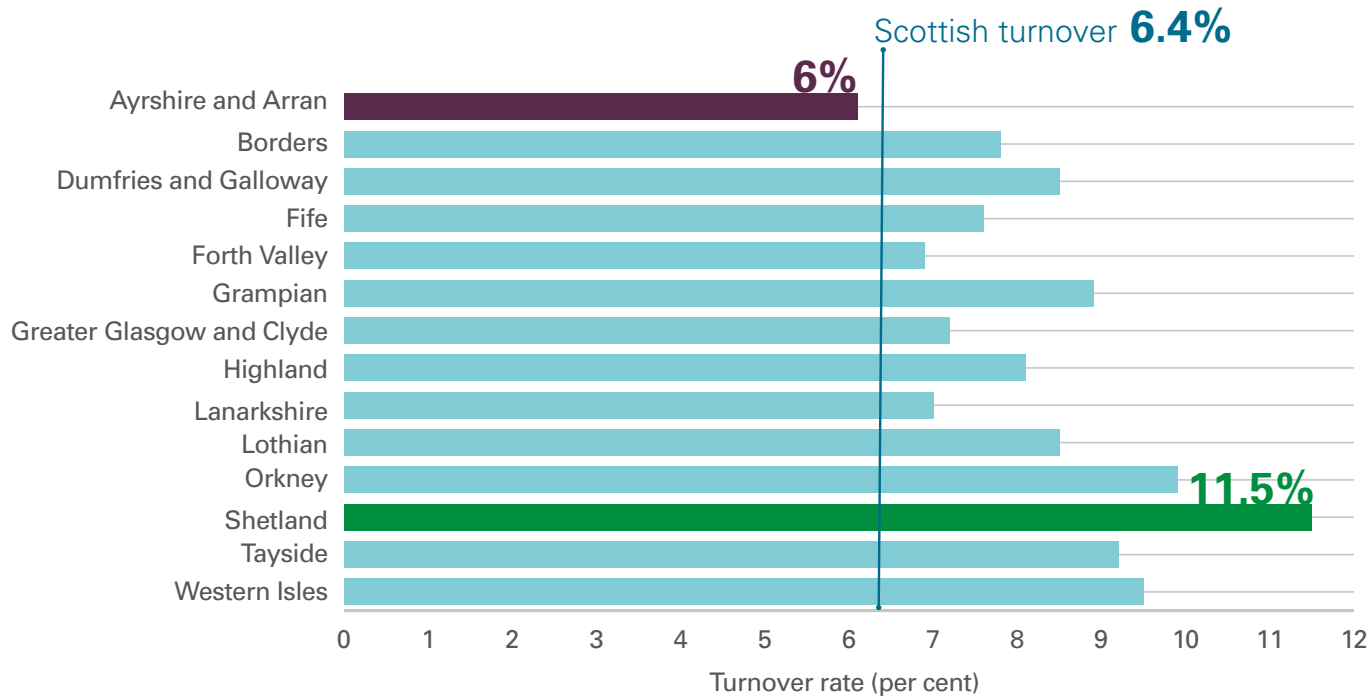
- Total staff spending increased by 7.7 per cent between 2011/12 and 2015/16, while WTE staff increased by five per cent.
- The percentage of staff spending that was on agency staff increased during that time, from 1.4 per cent to 2.8 per cent. Among the territorial boards, this ranged from 1.9 per cent at NHS Tayside to 6.8 per cent at NHS Shetland.
- The amount of spending on other non-core staff costs, like internal bank\* (except for nurses) or overtime, is not available.

\*Bank is the use of internal supplementary staff for single or groups of shifts.



# Turnover

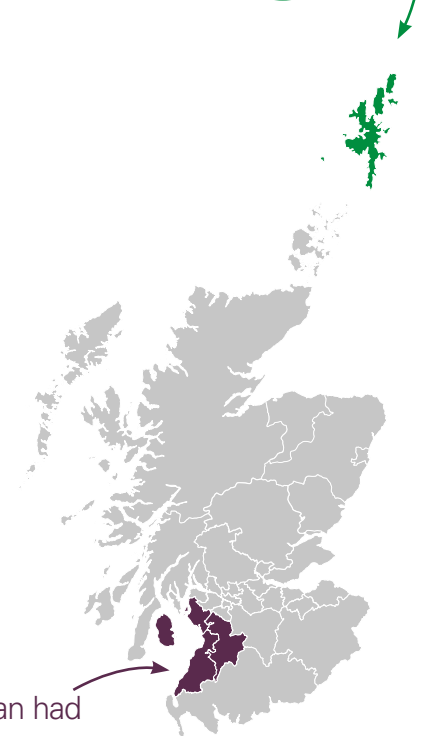
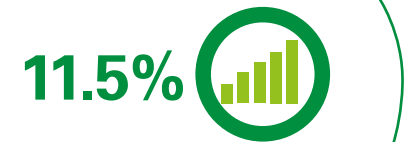
## Turnover rate in 2015/16



Source: ISD. Excludes GPs and special boards

- Staff turnover is a measure of retention, and is calculated by dividing the number of leavers by the total staff establishment.
- Nationally, turnover rates have increased slightly since 2012 from 6.1 to 6.4 per cent.

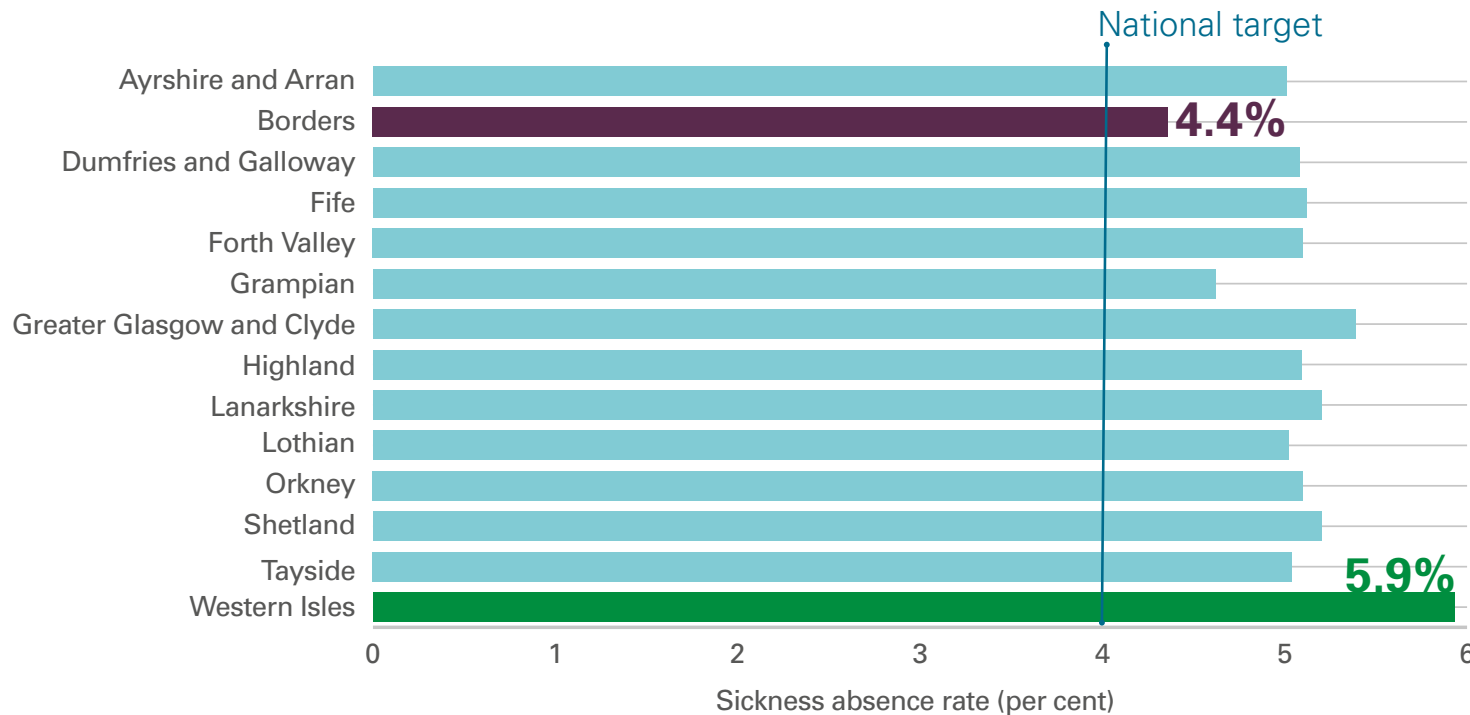
NHS Shetland had the highest turnover rate



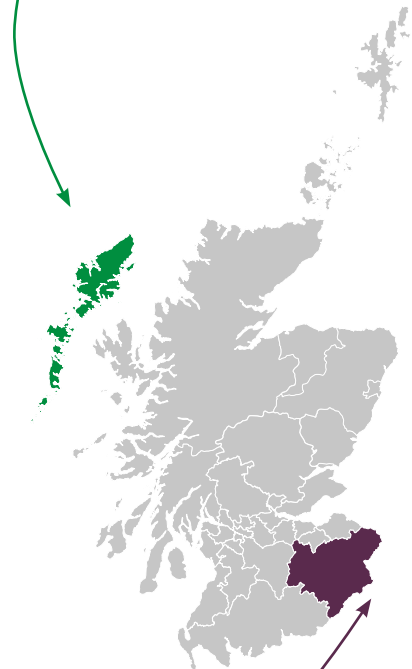
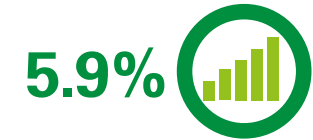
NHS Ayrshire and Arran had the lowest turnover rate



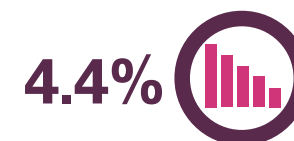
# Sickness absence



NHS Western Isles had the highest sickness absence rate



NHS Borders had the lowest sickness absence rate

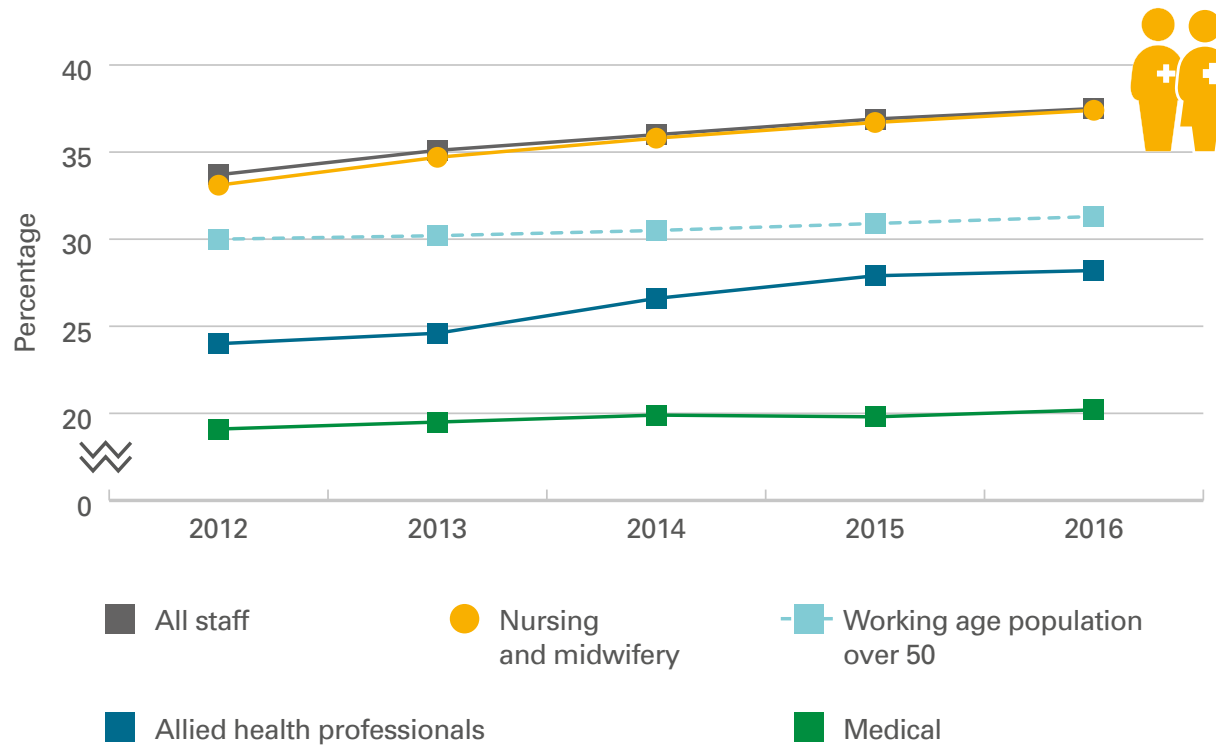


Source: ISD. Excludes GPs and special boards

- The NHS Scotland sickness absence target is four per cent. In 2015/16 no territorial board met this target.
- The national sickness absence rate in 2015/16 was 5.2 per cent, an increase from 4.6 per cent in 2011/12.

# Ageing workforce

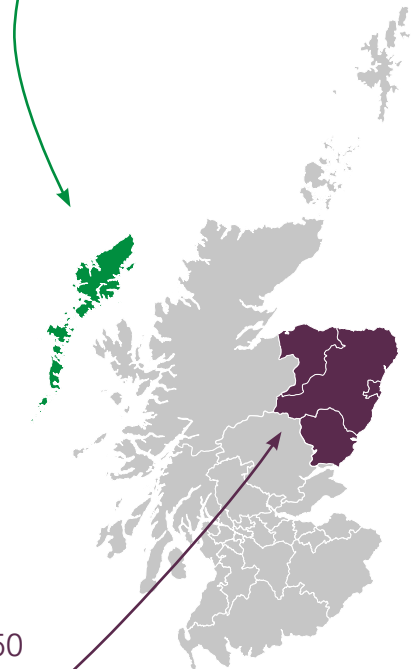
## Percentage of workforce over 50



Over a third of nursing staff are over 50, higher than the overall population percentage.

45% of staff are over 50 in NHS Western Isles

**45%+50**



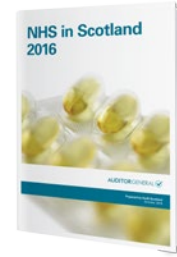
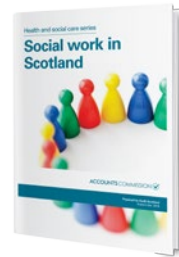
34% of staff are over 50 in NHS Grampian

**34%+50**

Source: ISD and Annual Population Survey. Excludes GPs

- This chart shows the percentage of staff over 50 years old, which gives an indication of the numbers likely to retire over the next few years.
- The proportion of older staff has been growing across each of the staff groups.

# Our work



- Our work on the workforce is part of a wider programme of work on the NHS and social care.
- Future publication dates are indicative.
- Our [transforming health and social care](#) page has more information about our work in health and social care.

If you have any queries about our [NHS workforce audit](#), contact Richard Robinson  
 E: [rrobinson@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:rrobinson@audit-scotland.gov.uk)

# NHS workforce

## The current picture

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats, along with a podcast summary at:

[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) 

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