# NHS Dental Workforce Survey Statistics - March 2024

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## Summary

These statistics report on the Dental workforce in England.

Data were provided by holders of NHS contracts to provide Dental or Orthodontic services in England.

The data are from the end of March 2024.

Comparable data from previous collections is also included for context.

The staff roles reported on are

**Role**

* Dental Hygienist
* Dental Nurse
* Dental Therapist
* Foundation Dentist
* General Dentist
* Orthodontic Therapist
* Orthodontist
* Other Staff
* Receptionist
* Trainee Dental Nurse

Following respondent feedback data will now be collected once a year and relate to the position at the end of January each year.

## Thanks

We are grateful to the thousands of dental care providers who took the time to provide the data used in this publication.

We also benefitted from advice and feedback from respondents, and discussions with Practice Managers, which helped us create an improved data collection.

We appreciate all of this took time and effort and thank you for it.

## Status of this publication

The publication is classed as 'Management Information'. This is the first set of statistics published using data from this collection so it should be used with caution.

We welcome feedback which will allow us to improve this work and potentially raise the status of the publication to Official Statistics in the future.

## The Purpose of this publication

The Dental Workforce is one of the least understood parts of the workforce delivering NHS care in England.

This publication aims to help understand the facilities available and numbers of staff across a range of professions involved in NHS dental care.

It also aims to illustrate providers’ experience in recruitment, retention and the occurrence of long-term absences.

The data behind this publication provide workforce information to allow local level analysis of workforce numbers alongside NHS dental activity data.

## General issues to consider

Data were collected from providers of Dental care at NHS contract level.

This provides a good level of data to combine with NHS Dental activity data for analysis. However, a provider may have multiple sites and multiple contracts and because of this these statistics will not always represent the workforce at a dental practice or site level.

As this data collection does not require provision of a unique identification number for each member of staff it is possible for a single member of staff to be reported more than once where they work under different contracts, particularly if the contracts are held by different contract holders.

This means the total headcount reported in these figures will be an overestimate of the total number of professionals working in dental services, but the total hours worked should present an accurate picture of the level of working time provided. This issue means that any level of aggregation of headcount may be an overestimate of the actual number of people providing care.

Total hours worked, or hours worked transformed to Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at contractor level, can be aggregated more accurately. The prevalence of dental professionals working in multiple locations is reported in GDC’s working patterns data’.[[1]](#footnote-2)

This method of collection means that the ratio of headcount to hours worked should not be taken as a true picture.

For example, in simple terms – if a Dental Nurse works at one provider for three days a week, and at another provider for two days a week, we would count them as two headcount but total their hours worked to 37.5, equivalent to 1 FTE. So instead of 1 headcount (one person) and 1 FTE, it would appear as 2 headcount and 1 FTE. This would look like 2 people working an average of 2.5 days, rather than 1 person working full time, but across two roles.

So effectively headcount may be more accurately described as role count, and, except when talking about data at contract level, the publication uses role count rather than headcount, to count staff.

Additionally, some dental staff may work full time, but some of that in a purely private practice for which we have no data. So possibly not all each person’s professional activity is reported in this survey.

Therefore, care should be exercised when referring to the figures in this report, they are most accurate at local level, but at Integrated Care Board (ICB), Region and National level they will include duplication of individuals.

However, the estimates of hours worked at practices with an NHS contract and NHS Full Time Equivalent (FTE) will be unaffected at all levels of aggregation.

A very small number of contracts reported they had foundation dentist vacancies. Strictly speaking these should not exist, however contracts may report instances where a foundation dentist has parted ways with a practice mid-way through a year as a vacancy so we have included these as reported by practices. But care should be taken in over-interpreting these numbers.

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## Additional resources on the Dental Workforce

**Dentists' working patterns data**

By the General Dental Council

[Working patterns data (gdc-uk.org)](https://www.gdc-uk.org/about-us/our-organisation/reports/working-patterns-data)

**Dental statistics – England 2023/24**

By NHS Business Services Authority

[Dental - England | NHSBSA](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/statistical-collections/dental-england)

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)