



Dental Statistics

NHS Registration and Participation

A National Statistics release for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland reports on NHS dental registrations in Scotland between September 2001 and September 2021. In addition, it provides data on contact with an NHS dentist between September 2006 and September 2021.

Generally, the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak has had little impact on registration rates due to the 'lifetime registration' policy. It has had a slight impact on new patient registrations particularly amongst children in the younger age groups. Participation is a measure of patient attendance at an NHS dentist in the two years prior to the time point of interest. As a result, it could take up to two years before we see the full impact from COVID-19 on participation rates.

Main points

Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions

- With the closure of General Dental Services (GDS) dental practices, in March 2020, there was an abrupt fall in the number of patients seen by an NHS dentist.
- Despite the reopening of GDS practices and attendances subsequently climbing, the number of patients seen in 2021 was less than half when compared to 2019.

Registration

- 95.5% of the Scottish population were registered with an NHS dentist as at 30 September 2021.
- As at 30 September 2021, 87.7% of children were registered, down from 91.4% in 2020.
- Nearly all adults living in the most deprived areas were registered with an NHS dentist compared to 91.5% in the least deprived areas.
- The percentage of registered children in the highest and lowest SIMD quintiles were similar; SIMD1 86.6% and SIMD5 87.9%.

Contact with a Dentist (Participation)

- As at 30 September 2021, 2.7 million registered patients had seen an NHS dentist within the last two years (52.6% compared to 65.1% in 2020). Children were more likely than adults to have seen an NHS dentist within the last two years (63.9% compared to 50.2%).

- In 2021, children and adults from the most deprived areas were less likely to have seen their dentist within the last two years (55.3% compared to 73.1% for children and 45.1% compared for 56.4% of adults).

Background

This report only includes data on patients registered with an NHS dentist; data for patients registered with or treated by private dentists are not available.

Registration policy has changed over the years; originally, registration with an NHS dentist lapsed after 15 months, increasing to 36 months in April 2006 then to 48 months in April 2009. In April 2010, 'lifetime registration' was introduced. These changes have driven up registration rates and affected rates of participation.

Participation is a measure of patient attendance at an NHS dentist in the two years prior to the time point of interest. This relates only to those patients who are registered with an NHS dentist, not those who only see a dentist for occasional or emergency treatment.

On the 23 March 2020, the nation entered a period of 'lockdown' and dental practices were asked to suspend all dental treatments. This means all planned appointments were cancelled long before they were due to take place. A few dental care centres were made available for patients with acute problems during lockdown. However, dentists at these facilities only offered a limited number of treatments in a bid to minimise the risk of coronavirus being spread. Dentists reopened on Monday 22 June. This was initially for emergency care only as part of a planned four-phase return. From 13 July, dentists were able to see patients for the full range of routine non-aerosol associated dental care. From 17 August, aerosol associated treatment was permitted for urgent dental care only.

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Further information

Further information can be found in the [Dental Registration and Participation Report](#).

Public Health Scotland publishes a wide range of dental statistics. You can find all our dental information [PHS Dental website](#).

The next release of this report is expected in January 2023 and will present data as at 30 September 2022.

PHS and Official Statistics

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. [Further information about our statistics](#).