

## NHS Staff Survey results 2023

On 7 March 2024, NHS England (NHSE) published the annual NHS staff survey [results](#). Since 2021, the survey questions have been aligned with the [NHS People Promise](#), and this year, new questions were included which related to experiences of unwanted sexual behaviour in the workplace. 707,460 staff responded (2% up from 2022), with responses from 268 NHS organisations, including all 213 trusts. This briefing gives a summary of the national level findings, and NHS Providers' view.

The success metrics for a number of High Impact Actions (HIAs) in NHSE's [Equality Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Improvement Plan](#) are closely linked to the NHS Staff Survey. This is the first set of national staff survey results published since the EDI plan was launched in summer 2023 and it will be important for trusts and NHS organisations to track their local results against the EDI plan in the years that follow. We have indicated where a HIA is relevant throughout the briefing.

### Key findings

- Staff satisfaction with pay remains low, with only 31.2% of staff happy with their level of pay. Pay satisfaction remains lowest among nursing and healthcare assistants (19.9%) and ambulance staff (23.6%).
- Under a third (32.4%) of staff think their organisation has enough staff for them to do their job properly, and only 26.3% say they never or rarely experience unrealistic time pressures.
- Despite slight positive improvements, all measures relating to burnout have remained persistently high. Four in ten (42.7%) staff often or always feel worn out at the end of their shift and three in ten (30.4%) staff feel burnt out because of their work. The measure related to burnout increases to four in ten (41.7%) for staff working in ambulance trusts.
- Instances of staff experiencing discrimination at work are at their highest levels since 2019. However, there has been an increase in staff who think their organisation respects individual differences, such as cultures, working styles, backgrounds and ideas.
- Almost 9% of staff report experiencing unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature from patients, relatives and the public, while 3.8% of staff report experiences of the same behaviour from colleagues. Reports of these incidents is highest among ambulance staff.

- Ethnic minority staff remain more likely to experience harassment, bullying or abuse from patients, their families and the public (28.6%), compared to their white colleagues (24.7%). This is also the case regarding these behaviours from a manager or other colleague.
- Disabled staff are slightly more likely to report that their organisation acts fairly with regard to promotion opportunities and career progression compared to 2022. However, only 36.9% of disabled staff feel valued for their work compared to 47.8% of non-disabled staff, a gap of 10.9%.
- There have been improvements in staff perception of the quality of care provided at their organisation, although measures remain lower than in 2019 – 65% of staff reported being happy with the standard of care provided compared to 71.5% in 2019.
- Staff confidence in speaking up about any concern has slightly increased, however, staff confidence in raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice has slightly decreased.
- Over half (53.8%) of staff said they eat nutritious and affordable food while working – a new question for 2023. The proportion who can often or always eat well while they are working varies by trust type, with staff working in community trusts reporting the highest levels and ambulance trust staff reporting the lowest levels.
- Measures relating to line management are at a five-year high, with more staff reporting that their immediate manager takes a positive interest in their health and wellbeing and seven in ten respondents agreeing that their immediate manager values their work.
- Staff satisfaction with the opportunities for flexible working patterns has improved and is now at a five-year high (57.4%). Across trust types, satisfaction remains highest amongst staff working in community trusts (67.9%).

## Burnout, health, and wellbeing

### Workload and staffing pressures

Given the context of a challenging economic environment, severe staff shortages, ongoing pressures to tackle care backlogs and widespread industrial action, it is worrying, but unsurprising, that staff morale and wellbeing remain low. It is positive to see areas of improvement, such as an increase in staff reporting that their organisation takes positive action on health and wellbeing (57.9% compared to 56.6% in 2022) but it is important for further progress to be made.

The survey also found that:

- Only 32.4% of staff think there are enough staff in their organisation for them to do their job properly. While still markedly low, this is up from 25.6% in 2022.
- Only 26.3% of staff say they never or rarely have unrealistic time pressures (23.4% in 2022).

- 46.7% feel able to meet the conflicting demands on their time. This is an increase from 43.0% in 2022.
- 58.5% of staff said they have adequate materials, supplies and equipment to do their work. This is an increase from 55.6% in 2022.
- There has been a slight decrease in staff reporting working additional paid hours (36.5% compared to 38.2% in 2022).
- There has also been a decrease in staff reporting working additional unpaid hours (52.7% compared to 56.5% in 2022).
- Staff working in community trusts continue to report the highest levels of working additional unpaid hours (58.6%).

## Physical and mental wellbeing

Due to an issue with the quality of data related with experiences of physical violence these results have not been included in this year's report. We hope this can be resolved and published at a later date as this a key area of concern for trusts leaders and staff.

It is positive to see the proportions of staff who have experienced harassment, bullying and abuse from patients/service users, relatives or the public (25.88%), managers (10.2%) or other colleagues (18.1%) are all at a five-year lows. It is concerning that staff from ambulance trusts continue to be more likely to report experiencing harassment, bullying and abuse from their manager (13.8%), however, we know that the recent [review into ambulance sector culture](#) has set out recommendations to address this. It is encouraging that among staff who have experienced incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse in the past 12 months, more than half (51.9%) indicated reporting these incidents, which is a five-year high.

As with previous years, burnout markers remain persistently high, and despite a slight increase, it is worrying that only just over half (55.9%) of staff said they have a good work/life balance. Further results showed:

- 41.7% of staff have felt unwell due to work-related stress in the last 12 months (down from 44.8% in 2022 but still above 2019 levels).
- 54.8% of staff attended work despite not feeling well enough on at least one occasion in the past three months of the survey period (down from 56.6% in 2022).
- 36.2% of staff said their work often or always frustrates them (down from 39.9% in 2022), 29.8% do not have enough time for family and friends during leisure time (down from 31.8% in 2022), and 19.0% feel that every working hour is tiring (down from 21.4% in 2022).

- 42.7% of staff often or always feel worn out at the end of their shift (down from 46.3% in 2022), 30.4% feel burnt out because of their work (down from 34% in 2022), and 27.7% feel exhausted at the thought of another day/shift at work (down from 30.8% in 2022).
  - Staff working in ambulance trusts continue to report the highest levels of burnout (39.1%) and feelings of exhaustion at the thought of another day/shift at work (38.9%).
- 34.2% of staff find work emotionally exhausting (down from 37.4% in 2022).
- 28.7% of staff experienced musculoskeletal (MSK) issues due to work in the last 12 months (compared to 30.1% in 2022).

For the first time this year, a question was included about staff experience of access to food while working. The provision of healthy food options for staff is an important way employers can support the health and wellbeing of their workforce. 53.8% of staff said they eat nutritious and affordable food while working. The proportion who can often or always eat well while they are working varies by trust type. The proportion is lowest among staff working in ambulance trusts, with only four in ten reporting eating nutritious and affordable food while working.

#### NHSE EDI improvement plan

**High impact action 4** calls for trusts and NHS organisations to develop and implement an improvement plan to address health inequalities within the workforce. One success metric for this is linked to improvements on NHS Staff Survey questions related to organisational action on health and wellbeing.

**High impact action 6** calls for trusts and NHS organisations to create an environment that eliminates bullying, discrimination, harassment and physical violence. Success metrics from the NHS Staff Survey are linked to improvements on questions on bullying, harassment and abuse from managers or other colleagues, as well as questions on discrimination from the same groups.

## Inequalities

- 56.4% of all staff report that their organisation acts fairly regarding promotions and career progression, compared to 56% in 2022.
  - Staff aged between 16 – 20 years are more likely to report their organisation acts fairly regarding promotion and progression (72.4%) than older staff (66+, 54.6%).
  - Staff identifying as Caribbean or selecting 'Other – Black/African/Caribbean background' are the least likely to report their organisation acts fairly regarding promotion and progression (35.9%

and 34.1% respectively). Staff from Gypsy or Irish Traveller communities also report low scores on this measure (36.7%).

- Instances of discrimination from patients, their families and the public for all staff have increased to 8.5% from 8.3% in 2022 and are higher than in 2019 (7.2%).
  - 26.5% of staff identifying as African and 24.0% of staff identifying as 'Asian -Any other Asian background' reported discrimination from patients, their families and the public.
  - Non-binary staff identifying as 'Asian/British Asian – Any other Asian background' report the highest levels of discrimination from patients, their families and the public (39.8%).
- 9.1% of all staff report facing discrimination from a manager or colleague, this is a slight increase from 9.0% in 2022, and is higher than 2019 (7.7%).
  - This increases to 24.2% for staff from Gypsy or Irish Traveller communities and 21.9% for staff identifying as 'Any other Black/African/Caribbean background'.
- 70.6% of all staff think their organisation respects individual differences, compared to 68.6% in 2021.
- 9.95% of internationally recruited staff reported experiencing bullying, harassment or abuse from a manager in the last 12 months, compared to 9.99% of staff recruited from the UK.
- 70.5% of internationally recruited staff reported feeling valued by their team, compared to 70.8% of staff recruited from the UK.
- The national Workforce Race and Disability Equality Standard (WRES and WDES) reports are expected to be published by NHS England imminently, however the Staff Survey results do include some WRES and WDES metrics on the experiences of ethnic minority and disabled staff.

## Ethnic minority staff

- Ethnic minority staff remain more likely to experience harassment, bullying or abuse from patients, their families and the public (28.6%), compared to their white colleagues (24.7%).
- This is also the case regarding these behaviours from a manager or other colleague, with 25.5% of ethnic minority staff reporting experience of bullying, abuse or harassment (27.7% in 2022), compared to 21.0% of their white colleagues (22.0% in 2022).
- 48.9% of ethnic minority staff agree that their organisation acts fairly regarding promotion and progression (46.4%), compared to 59.4% of their white colleagues (59.1% in 2022), however as above, there is considerable variation by ethnicity.
- 15.5% of ethnic minority staff report experiencing discrimination from a manager or colleague in the last 12 months, compared to 6.7% of their white colleagues. This represents a gap of 8.75 percentage points, which has marginally narrowed since 2022 when it was 9.88 percentage points.

## Disabled staff

- The number of disabled staff reporting experiences of harassment, bullying or abuse from a manager has reduced to 14.9% (16.4% in 2022). Experiences of these behaviours from non-disabled members of staff have also decreased to 8.5%, compared to 9.4% in 2022. However, a gap of 6.40 percentage points remains between the experience of disabled and non-disabled staff.
- Incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse by members of the public, their families and patients have decreased to 30.6% compared to 33.1% in 2022.
- 26.6% of disabled staff report feeling pressure from a manager to come to work when unwell compared to 28.0% in 2022.
- This year's report shows disabled staff were slightly more likely to report that their organisation acts fairly with regard to promotion opportunities and career progression (52.6% compared to 51.7% in 2022).
- 74.5% of disabled staff report that their employer has made reasonable adjustments to help them do their job, a slight increase on 73.0% in 2022.
- 36.9% of disabled staff feel valued for their work compared to 47.8% of non-disabled staff, a gap of 10.92 percentage points.

### NHSE EDI improvement plan

**High impact action 2** calls for trusts and NHS organisations to overhaul their recruitment processes and embed talent management processes that target under-presented groups. One success metric is linked to improvements on NHS Staff Survey questions related to access to career progression, training and development opportunities.

**High impact action 5** calls for trusts and NHS organisations to implement comprehensive induction, onboarding and development programmes for internationally recruited staff. The success metrics linked to this from the NHS staff survey include improvements on questions related to a sense of belonging for internationally recruited staff and a reduction in bullying, harassment and abuse experienced by these staff by managers and teams.

## Quality of care and working environment

It is positive that a significant majority of staff (87.6%) feel their role makes a difference to patients. The report also shows improvement in staff perception of the quality of care provided at their organisation, although measures remain lower than in 2019:

- 75.1% reported that care of patients is their organisation's top priority, compared to 77.4% in 2019.

- 70.6% agree that their organisation acts on concerns raised by patients, compared to 74.0% in 2019.
- When asked about the standard of care provided by their organisation, 65.0% of staff reported being happy compared to 71.5% in 2019, a concerning decrease of 6.49 percentage points.
  - Staff working in acute specialist trusts are more likely to report being happy with the standard of care provided by their organisation (87.5%), while staff at ambulance trusts were the least likely to report being happy with care provided (61.8%).

This year's report contains the second dataset of year-on-year comparator of measures related to patient safety. The report shows a slight increase in staff seeing errors, near misses or incidents that could have hurt staff and/or patients/service users. Results also show improvements this year in the perception of fair treatment of staff who are involved in errors, near misses and incidents, and in receiving feedback about changes made in response to such incidents being reported. Specifically:

- 33.2% of staff reported seeing errors, near misses or incidents that could have hurt staff and/or patients/service users in the last month (at the time of completing the survey). This is down from 33.4% in 2022.
  - The percentage of staff reporting these incidents is highest at ambulance trusts (38.3%), despite seeing an improvement this year, and lowest in community trusts (24.0%). This mirrors the sector-specific breakdown reported in 2022, with staff reporting incidents to be highest in ambulance trusts (40.3%) and lowest in community trusts (23.2%).
- 86.3% of staff say their organisation encourages staff to report errors (up from 86.1% in 2022) and 59.5% believe their organisation treats staff involved in incidents fairly (up from 58.2% in 2022).
  - Staff working in community trusts are the most likely to agree that their organisation treats staff involved in incidents fairly (68.0%), compared to 49.8% at ambulance trusts.
- 68.2% of respondents agreed that their organisation takes action to ensure that reported incidents, errors or near misses do not happen again. This is up from 67.4% in 2022.
  - As in 2022, the ambulance sector sees the lowest proportion of respondents agreeing that their organisation takes action to ensure reported incidents do not happen again, while staff at community trusts are the most likely to agree (76.2%).
- 60.9% of staff reported that they were given feedback about the changes that are made in response to reported errors, near misses and incidents (up from 59.8% in 2022).
  - 67.9% of staff at community trusts reported receiving feedback about changes made in response to a reported error, compared to 48.7% of staff at ambulance trusts.

This year's report contains new questions on experiences of unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature in the workplace. While this means we are unable to see year-on-year comparators, these are a

welcome addition and will provide useful longitudinal data in the future. The report shows 8.7% of staff report experiencing unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature from patients, relatives and the public, rising to 27.3% for staff in ambulance trusts. When asked about their experience of unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature from colleagues, 3.9% of staff reported that an incident had taken place in the last 12 months, with this rising to 9.4% for operational ambulance staff. Admin and clerical staff were the only occupation group to report more experiences of unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature from colleagues than from patients, relatives and the public.

It is important to build an open culture where staff feel confident in raising issues and concerns. It is therefore positive to see that the number of staff who feel safe to speak up about any concern has slightly increased to 62.3% from 61.5% in 2022. The report further shows:

- 71.3% of staff feel secure in raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice (a slight decrease compared to 71.9% in 2022) and 56.8% report feeling confident that their organisation would address their concern in this area (56.7% in 2022).
  - 79.8% of staff working in community trusts report feeling secure to raise concerns about unsafe clinical practice compared to 65.7% of staff at ambulance trusts.

## Flexible working

Work/life balance is now the most common reason for staff leaving the NHS and staff are increasingly seeking opportunities to work in more flexible ways. There is also a clear link between increased opportunities for flexible working and better staff engagement and retention. It is therefore positive to see that 70.7% of staff reported being able to approach their line manager to talk about flexible working, an increase from 68.6% in 2022. Over half (57.4%) of staff report being satisfied with the opportunities available to them for flexible working, with staff at ambulance trusts being less likely to report satisfaction in this area (40.5%).

An increased percentage of staff also report their organisation is committed to helping them improve their work/life balance (49.6% compared to 45.8% in 2022). Staff at community trusts are more likely to agree on this question, while the lowest level of agreement is among staff at ambulance trusts. Overall, 55.9% of staff report achieving a good work/life balance (compared to 52.6% in 2022).

## Team working

73.6% of staff said their team has a set of shared objectives (compared to 72.4% in 2022), while 81.6% reported enjoying working with their colleagues (unchanged from 2022). There is a slightly improved sense of team working among colleagues, with further results showing:



- 54.2% of staff agree their team works well together to achieve objectives (compared to 51.4% in 2022).
- 57.1% of staff agree that disagreements are handled constructively (compared to 56.0% in 2022).
- Staff feel increased freedom to decide how work is done (59.9% compared to 57.5% in 2022).

Measures looking at respect and civility have seen small improvements compared to 2022:

- When asked if they feel a valued member of their team, 70.4% of staff agreed (compared to 69.4% in 2022) and 64.1% report feeling a strong personal attachment to their team.
- 71.2% of staff report they work with colleagues who are understanding and kind, while 72.3% agree their colleagues are polite and treat each other with respect.
- 72.0% of staff report receiving the respect they deserve from their colleagues.

There are a number of factors that influence whether staff would recommend their organisation as a place to work. After decreasing for two consecutive years, this measure increased in 2023 to 61.1%, compared to 57.4% in 2022.

It is positive to see a high percentage (90.1%) of staff feel trusted to do their job (compared to 90.3% in 2022) and that 86.1% of staff report always knowing what their responsibilities are (compared to 85.5% in 2022). There is an increase in the number of staff reporting they feel involved in decision making (51.2% compared to 50.2% in 2022), while 55.9% say they feel they are able to make improvement happen in their area of work.

## Pay, recognition, and management

### Career development

It is positive to see continued increases in findings related to access to opportunities for learning and development:

- 60.4% of staff report they are able to access the right learning and development opportunities (up from 57.3% in 2022), and 56.0% said there are opportunities for them to develop within their organisation (up from 54.5% in 2022).
- 70.8% of staff report that they have opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills (up from 68.8% in 2022), with 57.4% feeling supported to develop their potential (up from 54.7% in 2022).

There have been slight increases in the proportion of staff who see value in their appraisal, however confidence in the constructiveness of appraisals remains low:

- Only 25.5% of staff report appraisals have improved how they do their job (compared to 21.9% in 2022).
- 35.5% found appraisals helpful for agreeing clear objectives (compared to 32.1% in 2022).
- Only 33.6% left their appraisal feeling that their work was valued by their organisation (compared to 31.1% in 2022).

## Relationship with managers

Results relating to immediate line managers remain positive overall and it is welcome to see 71% of staff reporting that their immediate manager takes a positive interest in their health and wellbeing (up from 69.1% in 2022). Further, 72.7% of respondents agreed that their immediate manager values their work (up from 71.5% in 2022), 72.8% said that their manager encourages them at work (up from 71.1% in 2022); and 59.9% said their immediate manager asks for their opinion before making decisions that affect their work (up from 58.2% in 2022).

## Pay and recognition

Given the ongoing industrial dispute by doctors, and previous industrial action that took place across agenda for change professions, it is unsurprising that staff satisfaction with pay remains low, with only 31.2% of staff reporting satisfaction with their pay. This does, however, represent a 5.6% increase on last year's results.

The percentage of staff feeling their work is recognised, valued and appreciated has improved slightly from 2022:

- 54.7% of staff were satisfied with the recognition they receive for good work (up from 52.5% in 2022).
- 44.9% were satisfied with the extent to which their organisation values their work (up from 42.2% in 2022).
- 68.3% said the people they work with show appreciation to one another (up from 68.0% in 2022).

## Engagement and motivation

The staff engagement measure has remained broadly static since 2021 but was higher in 2019 and 2020. This year's results show that:

- 55.2% of staff report looking forward to going to work, an improvement on 2022 (52.6%) but a reduction on 59.5% in 2019.
- 69.0% of staff reported being enthusiastic about their job, compared to 74.9% in 2019.

- 72.8% of nursing staff and healthcare assistants report being enthusiastic about their job, closely followed by registered nurses and midwives (72.0%). The lowest scores by staff group were reported by ambulance (operational) staff (61.8%) and admin and clerical staff (63.9%, which has remained static since 2021).

Staff do, however, feel that they have opportunities to show initiative in their roles (73.9%) and 71.6% feel that they are able to make improvements in their area of work (down from 73.1% in 2019). It is positive to see a slight increase in the number of staff who feel they are able to make suggestions to improve the work of their team/department (55.9%, up from 54.4% in 2022 but down from 56.1% in 2019).

It is also positive to see some improvements in measures related to staff morale compared to 2022, but motivation (7% compared to 7.3% in 2019), advocacy (6.8% compared to 7.% in 2019) and thinking about leaving (6.1% compared to 6.2% in 2019) scores remain lower than 2019.

- 29.12% of staff reported often thinking about leaving their organisation, this is down from 32.4% in 2022.
  - 38.0% of ambulance staff report often thinking about leaving their organisation, the highest when these results are broken down sector. Staff in community trusts are the least likely to report often thinking about leaving (25.0%).
- 21.4% of respondents stated that they would likely look for a job at a new organisation in the coming 12 months, this is down from 23.7% in 2022.
- 15.7% said that they will leave their organisation as soon as they find an alternative role, this is down from 17.4% in 2022 but higher than the 14.8% reported in 2019.
  - 13.6% said they would look for another job in the same organisation (marginally up from 13.0% in 2022), 14.7% said they would look for a role in another NHS organisation (down from 15.7% in 2022), 5.2% said they would look for a job in healthcare but outside the NHS (down from 6.0% in 2022) and 7.9% said they would look for a role outside healthcare (down from 9.2% in 2022).

## NHS Providers' view

Responding to the NHS Staff Survey results, Saffron Cordery, deputy chief executive at NHS Providers said:

“The survey reveals important progress has been made but the NHS still has a long way to go. It's very worrying that a significant proportion of staff, especially healthcare assistants and nursing and

ambulance staff, report being the target of unwanted sexual behaviour from colleagues, patients, their families and the public.

"More organisations have signed up to NHS England's Sexual Safety Charter, but much more needs to be done to address this issue and keep staff safe. It's also deeply distressing that frontline staff have faced record levels of discrimination from the public. All staff should be treated with dignity and respect.

"Trusts' efforts to create better working conditions have helped raise staff morale, with fewer health workers considering leaving and more recommending the NHS as a place to work. However, this is still below pre-pandemic levels.

"Similarly, while pay satisfaction has increased for some, it remains below 2019 levels for all staff groups. It's vital the government and unions resolve their ongoing pay disputes to end the disruptive strikes. Work-related stress also continues to impact a significant proportion of staff. The cut to national funding for staff wellbeing hubs is hugely disappointing as it takes away vital mental health support.

"While it's encouraging to see fewer instances of harassment, bullying, and abuse reported, this behaviour shouldn't be happening at all.

"Trust leaders will be very concerned that staff confidence in raising concerns about unsafe clinical practices is at a five-year low. It is essential staff feel free to speak up and work in a psychologically safe environment.

"While more staff are reporting confidence in their organisation addressing concerns, further action is needed to ensure patients get the safe, high-quality care they deserve. It's also troubling to see persistent concerns around equality and diversity, as shown by persistent gaps in experiences among different demographic groups. Trusts are working hard to tackle staff discrimination and ensure equal opportunities.

"More work is needed to ensure the NHS remains an attractive place to work for current and future staff. Addressing these findings will require a redoubling of efforts across the sector, on a local and national level, to ensure the wellbeing and satisfaction of NHS staff, who are vital to delivering high-quality care to patients."