

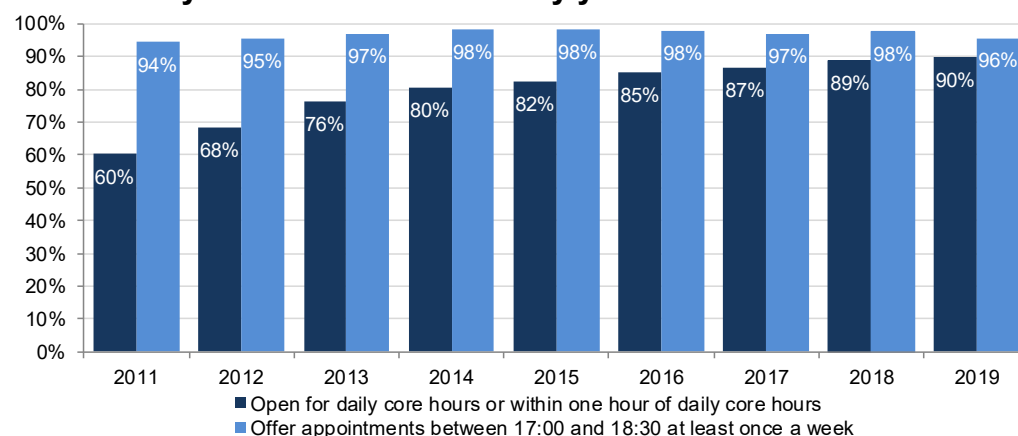
12 March 2020
SFR 17/2020

GP Access in Wales, 2019

The purpose of this report is to provide statistics on the opening hours and availability of GP appointment times at GP practices across Wales. The statistics are intended to inform the public and Welsh Government policy.

Due to variations in the way services are provided, this release does not include any data relating to branch surgeries. Throughout this report, 'a practice' refers to a GP practice main surgery.

Chart 1: Key GP Access statistics by year



Main points

- There were 407 GP practices in Wales, 9 fewer than in 2018.
- Nearly all (96%) of practices in Wales offer appointments at some point between 17:00 and 18:30, at least one day a week.
- Just under half (48%) of GP practices were open for all of daily core hours in 2018, four percentage points lower than in 2018.
- 90% of GP practices in Wales were open for all of core hours or within one hour of core hours, one percentage point higher than in 2018.
- Less than a quarter (24%) of practices offer appointments before 08:30, up two percentage points on 2018.
- 40% of people found it difficult to make a convenient GP appointment; this proportion has increased over time, up from 33% in 2012-13, but was slightly lower than in 2017-18 (42%).

About this release

The main source of data for this report has been collected directly from health boards. They were asked to provide opening times data for all GP practices in their area, (excluding branch surgeries) for the week commencing 9th December. Data collection forms were returned to us for validation and analysis in January 2020.

In addition, data collected from the National Survey for Wales is also included in this report to provide a broader picture of access to GP services in Wales.

The statistics in this report allow users to monitor access to GP practices at health board level and for Wales as a whole.

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What does the data show?

The trend of fewer GP practices in Wales has continued in 2019 where there were 407 GP practices in total, 9 fewer than in 2018.

Just under half of GP practices were open for all of daily core hours in 2018, a decrease (four percentage points) since 2018. As in previous years this varied greatly between health boards.

In total around nine out of ten GP practices in Wales were open for all of core hours or within one hour of core hours. The vast majority of practices in Powys, Aneurin Bevan and Swansea Bay were open for this duration, but one in five practices in Hywel Dda and Betsi Cadwaladr were not.

When considering core hours as an overall number of service hours per week, just under half (49%) of practices were open for 100% or more of core hours (i.e. at least 52 hours and 30 minutes). This is a decrease (four percentage points) on the previous year.

Very few (1%) practices in Wales now close for half a day. There are four health board areas which have no practices with half day closures.

Just over three quarters (76%) of practices do not offer appointments before 08:30, two percentage points lower than two years ago.

Nearly all (96%) of practices in Wales offer appointments at some point between 17:00 and 18:30, at least one day a week. However, there is much variation in later appointments offered between health boards with 37 per cent of practices in Cwm Taf Morgannwg offering appointments every week day for the whole half hour period between 18:00 and 18:30, whereas over 90% of practices in Betsi Cadwaladr, Swansea Bay and Cardiff and Vale do not offer appointments for this half hour period on any day.

In 2018-19 a higher proportion of people found it easy to book a convenient appointment with the GP than those who found it difficult; however, the proportion who found it difficult is higher compared with five years ago.

Since 2013-14 the proportion of those finding it very difficult to make a convenient appointment has increased across all age groups.

The most common reasons given for those finding it difficult to make an appointment were the long wait for an appointment; not being able to get through by phone; needing to make an early morning phone call and no appointment being available on the same day.

Introduction

Data collection forms were issued to health boards in December 2019 and data was returned in January 2020. The total number of practices may differ to the number included in the [General Medical Practitioners](#) report as data was collected at a different point in time.

There were 407 GP practices in Wales, 9 fewer than in 2018, continuing the recent downward trend in the number of GP practices across Wales

Note, the analysis in this release is based upon 406 GP practices. Data for practice W95047 (Park Surgery, Cwm Taf Morgannwg) was not provided due to its closure on 16/01/2020.

From 1st April 2019 health service provision for residents of Bridgend local authority moved from Abertawe Bro Morgannwg to Cwm Taf. The health board names have changed with Cwm Taf University Health Board becoming Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board becoming Swansea Bay University Health Board.

Table 1: Number of GP practices, by health board and year

Local health board	Number of practices								
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017(r)	2018(r)	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	119	119	115	114	112	109	107	105	104
Powys	17	17	17	17	17	17	16	16	16
Hywel Dda	55	55	56	54	54	53	51	51	48
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	77	77	76	75	73	73	69	65	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49
Cwm Taf	48	48	48	46	46	42	41	39	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53
Aneurin Bevan	92	90	87	87	85	81	79	78	75
Cardiff and Vale	68	67	67	66	66	66	63	62	62
Wales	476	473	466	459	453	441	426	416	407

Source: Welsh Government/NHS Wales Informatics Service

(r) From 2017 onwards, the number of practices have been revised and sourced from NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS). The data submitted from practices in previous years has not been resubmitted and therefore is not revised. A list of all practices that closed in 2019 is included in the [Key Quality Information](#).

The [General Medical Services contract](#) provides the framework between general practices and primary care organisations for delivering primary care services to local communities. Under this Services contract, GP practice core hours are Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 18:30, except Good Friday, Christmas Day and Bank Holidays, and for the purpose of this report a 'week' refers to Monday to Friday. GP practices are responsible for providing essential and additional services within core hours at times which are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of its patients.

This is management information and the data was reported and verified by health boards and Welsh Government statisticians. The data presented is taken at a point in time and may not reflect the current opening hours or appointment times of GP practices.

There remain significant differences in the way GPs organise their practices in relation to opening hours and appointment times and users should be cautious when interpreting the results. See the [Key Quality Information](#) section for more information.

Caution should be taken when comparing percentage changes year-on-year at local health board level as the number of practices in some areas is small.

Opening hours

“Opening hours” are defined as the times when the main surgery doors are physically open and a patient can have face-to-face contact with a receptionist. Therefore it does not include any hours where a telephone service is provided prior to doors opening, which is offered in some GP practices. Health boards were asked to provide the following information about their practices:

- the times the practice physically opens and closes every day
- the times of lunchtime opening and closing
- details of any half day closures
- details of extended hours Direct Enhanced Services (DES) – any extra hours commissioned.

The methodology used to aggregate the GP opening hours is the same one used in the first GP Access release published in February 2013.

Daily opening hours

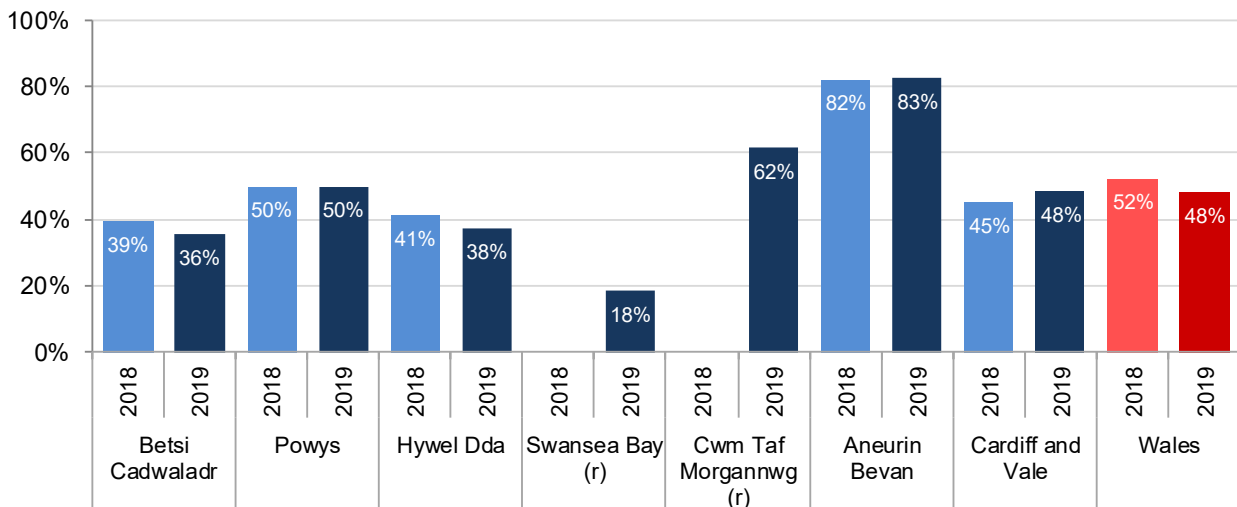
Opened for daily core hours is defined as:

- practices which were open Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:30 each day, with no lunch time closure (as set under the General Medical Services contract).

Opened within one hour of daily core hours is defined as:

- practices which were open Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:30 each day, but closed for one hour or less for lunch on one or more days, or
- practices which opened between 08:00 to 08:30 and closed between 18:00 to 18:30 with no lunch time closure.

Chart 2: Percentage of practices open for all of daily core hours, 5 days a week, by health board

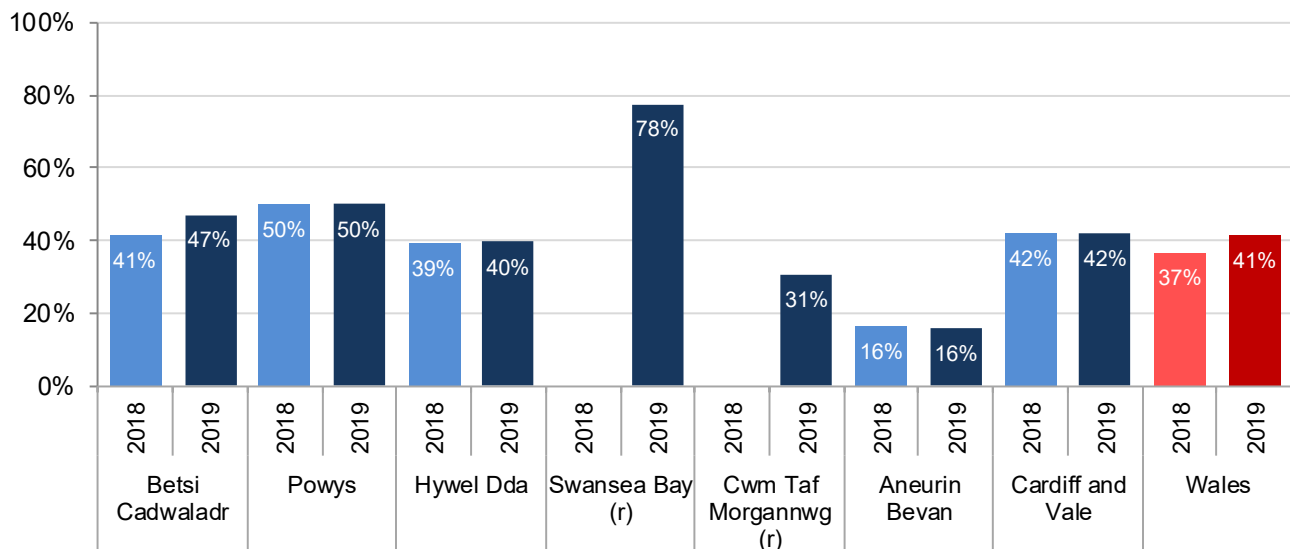


Source: Welsh Government

(r) Data revised March 2020

Chart 2 shows that just under half (48%) of GP practices were open for all of daily core hours in 2019, a four percentage point decrease since 2018. As in previous years, this varied greatly between health boards, with 83% of practices open for all of daily core hours in Aneurin Bevan compared to 18% in Swansea Bay.

Chart 3: Percentage of practices not open for all of daily core hours, but open within one hour of daily core hours, 5 days a week by health board



Source: Welsh Government

(r) Data revised March 2020

Chart 3 shows that 41% of GP practices were not open for all of daily core hours but were open within one hour of core hours, a four percentage point increase since 2018.

In total, 89% of GP practices in Wales were open for all of core hours or within one hour of core hours, the same as in 2018. The vast majority of practices in Powys, Aneurin Bevan and Swansea Bay were open for this duration, but one in five practices in Hywel Dda and Betsi Cadwaladr were not.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of how many practices were open for core hours by the number of days of the week they were offered.

Table 2: Number and percentages of practices open for core hours, by health board and days per week

Local health board	0 week days			1-4 week days			5 week days		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Numbers									
Betsi Cadwaladr	58	58	61	10	8	6	41	43	37
Powys	8	8	8	0	0	0	9	8	8
Hywel Dda	28	27	29	3	3	1	20	21	18
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	37	32	-	0	0	-	36	33	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	40 (r)	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	9 (r)
Cwm Taf	15	15	-	2	2	-	24	22	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	18 (r)	-	-	2 (r)	-	-	32 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	15	13	9	1	1	4	63	65	62
Cardiff and Vale	36	34	32	1	0	0	29	28	30
Wales	197	187	197	17	14	13	222	220	196
Percentages									
Betsi Cadwaladr	53	53	59	9	7	6	38	39	36
Powys	47	50	50	0	0	0	53	50	50
Hywel Dda	55	53	60	6	6	2	39	41	38
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	51	49	-	0	0	-	49	51	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	82 (r)	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	18 (r)
Cwm Taf	37	38	-	5	5	-	59	56	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	35 (r)	-	-	4 (r)	-	-	62 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	19	16	12	1	1	5	80	82	83
Cardiff and Vale	55	55	52	2	0	0	44	45	48
Wales	45	44	49	4	3	3	51	52	48

Source: Welsh Government

(r) Data revised March 2020

Table 2 shows that the majority of practices either offer appointments during core hours every day of the week, or not on any day of the week. Over the past three years, across Wales there has been a decrease in the percentage of practices open for core hours (three percentage point decrease) and an increase in the percentage not open for core hours on any day of the week (four percentage points). This pattern has varied between different health boards.

Weekly opening hours

A small number of GP practices were close to meeting the full duration of the daily core hours but fell slightly short of the criteria set out in the Daily Opening Hours section. For example, if a practice was open between 08:00 and 18:30 with no lunch break for four days but closed at 17:00 on the other day, then it fails the criteria but would be very close to the daily core hours.

To take these practices into account, the number of hours GP practices across Wales were open for during a week is shown in Chart 4 and Table 3. GP practice opening times have been considered against a weekly total of 52 hours and 30 minutes (10 hours and 30 minutes per day). The number of hours a practice provides for Direct Enhanced Services (DES) are counted in addition to regular working hours here.

Chart 4: Percentage of practices open for different percentage intervals of weekly total hours

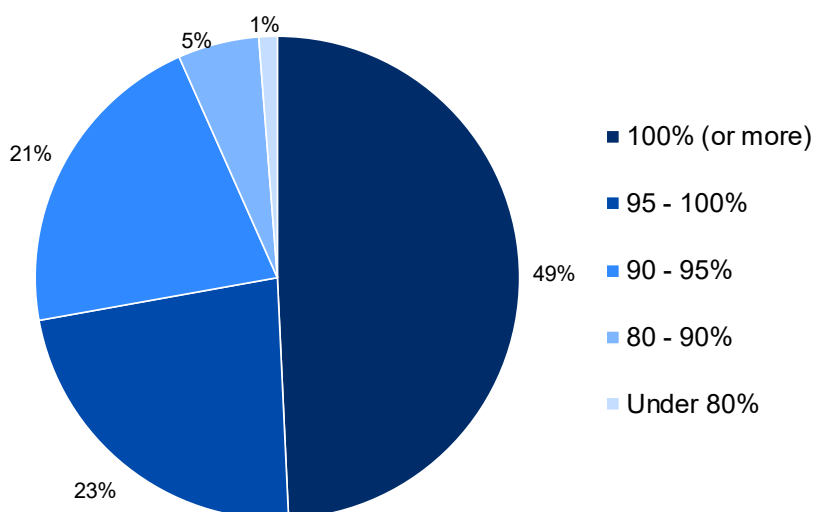


Table 3: Percentage of practices open for different percentage intervals of weekly total hours, by health board, 2017 to 2019

Local health board	Percentage														
	Under 80% (<42.00)			80% to under 90%			90% to under 95%			95% to under 100%			100% or more (>52.30)		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	6	5	3	10	7	7	29	28	31	17	19	23	38	40	37
Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	19	19	35	31	31	53	50	50
Hywel Dda	2	0	0	16	12	15	16	18	23	25	29	25	41	41	38
ABMU	1	2	-	7	3	-	26	26	-	16	18	-	49	51	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	4 (r)	-	-	45 (r)	-	-	33 (r)	-	-	18 (r)
Cwm Taf	2	3	-	2	3	-	10	10	-	27	28	-	59	56	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	4 (r)	-	-	2 (r)	-	-	6 (r)	-	-	27 (r)	-	-	62 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	5	7	11	8	5	84	86	87
Cardiff and Vale	0	0	0	9	10	6	17	15	16	30	31	29	44	45	48
Wales	2	2	1	7	6	5	18	18	21	21	21	23	52	53	49

Source: Welsh Government

(a) time shown in column titles as hh.mm (for example 80% of total core hours is the equivalent to 42 hours)

(r) Revised March 2020

Chart 4 and Table 3 show that just under half (49%) of practices were open for 100% or more of core hours (i.e. at least 52 hours and 30 minutes). This is a decrease (four percentage points) on the previous year. This is higher than the percentage of practices open for core hours because some practices are not open for core hours every day but offer Direct Enhances Services (DES) which when added to the weekly total number of hours, sum to greater than or equal to 52 hours and 30 minutes. Only a small number of practices (6%) were not open for 90% of core hours or more (i.e. 49 hours and 53 minutes).

There is much variation between health boards with 87% of practices open for 100% or more of core hours in Aneurin Bevan, while less than half of practices in Cardiff and Vale, Hywel Dda and Betsi Cadwaladr were open for 100% or more of core hours.

All practices in Powys were open for 90% or more of core hours.

Half day closures

A half day closure is defined as a practice which closes before 14:00 on one or more days a week. Table 4 shows the numbers and percentages of practices that had at least one half day closure per week.

Table 4: Number and percentage of practices with half day closure, by health board

Local health board	Number of practices			Percentage of practices		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	9	7	4	8	6	4
Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hywel Dda	2	0	0	4	0	0
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	1	1	-	1	2	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	1 (r)	-	-	2 (r)
Cwm Taf	0	0	-	0	0	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	0 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cardiff and Vale	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	13	9	6	3	2	1

Source: Welsh Government

(r) Revised March 2020

Table 4 shows that very few (1%) practices in Wales now close for half a day. There are four health board areas which have no practices with half day closures, while Betsi Cadwaladr has the most with four.

Appointment times

'Appointment times' are defined to be the times when the practice regularly offers planned consultation sessions with a GP to patients. Health boards were asked to provide the following information about their practices:

- the first appointment time offered in the morning, where a patient can have a face-to-face contact with a GP, Monday to Friday
- the appointment times offered in the morning and the afternoon sessions
- the finish time of the last appointment offered in the evening, where a patient can have a face-to-face contact with a GP, Monday to Friday

This report only considers appointment times offered to patients and where a patient can have a face-to face contact with a GP, and does not account for any other the other range of contacts offered at general practices.

Analyses by half hour periods are included to provide more detail of appointments offered earlier in the morning (before 08:30) and later in the afternoon (between 17:00 and 18:30).

The methodology used to aggregate the GP appointment times is the same one used in the first GP Access release published in February 2013.

Table 5: Percentage of practices offering appointments before 08:30, by number of week days and health board

Local health board	Percentage								
	0 week days			1-4 days			5 week days		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	85	87	84	6	5	7	9	8	10
Powys	88	81	81	0	0	0	12	19	19
Hywel Dda	65	65	71	20	22	17	16	14	13
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	85	83	-	4	3	-	11	14	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	90 (r)	-	-	2 (r)	-	-	8 (r)
Cwm Taf	88	87	-	0	0	-	12	13	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	79 (r)	-	-	2 (r)	-	-	19 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	63	62	61	19	22	21	18	16	17
Cardiff and Vale	74	74	73	6	6	6	20	19	21
Wales	78	77	76	9	9	9	14	14	15

Source: Welsh Government

(r) Revised March 2020

Table 5 shows that the majority (76%) of practices do not offer appointments before 08:30, though this has decreased by two percentage points since 2017.

Table 6: Percentage of practices offering appointments at any time between 17:00 and 18:30, by number of week days and health board

Local health board	Percentage								
	0 week days			1-4 days			5 week days		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	4	5	13	28	28	27	69	67	61
Powys	0	13	13	0	0	0	100	88	88
Hywel Dda	2	0	0	18	10	10	80	90	90
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	7	2	-	15	11	-	78	88	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	10 (r)	-	-	90 (r)
Cwm Taf	0	0	-	5	5	-	95	95	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	6 (r)	-	-	94 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	1	0	3	1	1	1	97	99	96
Cardiff and Vale	5	3	2	3	3	10	92	94	89
Wales	3	2	4	13	11	12	84	86	84

Source: Welsh Government

(r) Revised March 2020

Table 6 shows that nearly all (96%) of practices in Wales offer appointments at some point between 17:00 and 18:30, at least once a week.

The percentage offering appointments within this time range, on every week day, has decreased over the year by two percentage points, reverting back to the percentage (84%) in 2017.

Table 7: Percentage of practices offering appointments during the whole half hour between 17:00 and 17:30, by number of week days and health board

Local health board	Percentage								
	0 week days			1-4 days			5 week days		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	12	12	20	27	28	25	61	60	55
Powys	0	13	13	0	0	0	100	88	88
Hywel Dda	10	8	2	22	18	15	69	75	83
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	8	2	-	16	12	-	75	86	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	4 (r)	-	-	12 (r)	-	-	84 (r)
Cwm Taf	0	0	-	5	5	-	95	95	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	6 (r)	-	-	94 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	3	1	4	1	1	3	96	97	93
Cardiff and Vale	6	5	6	2	2	6	92	94	87
Wales	7	6	8	13	12	12	80	82	80

Source: Welsh Government

(r) Revised March 2020

Table 7 shows that 92% of practices offer appointments for the whole half hour between 17:00 and 17:30 at least once a week.

The percentage offering appointments every week day within this time range has decreased over the year by two percentage points, reverting back to the percentage (80%) in 2017.

Table 8: Percentage of practices offering appointments during the whole half hour between 17:30 and 18:00, by number of week days and health board

Local health board	Percentage								
	0 week days			1-4 days			5 week days		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	61	61	71	12	12	9 #	27	28	20
Powys	29	31	31	6	0	0	65	69	69
Hywel Dda	29	29	31	22	20	15	49	51	54
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	42	42	-	11	9	-	47	49	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	29 (r)	-	-	6 (r)	-	-	65 (r)
Cwm Taf	0	3	-	10	10	-	90	87	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	10 (r)	-	-	12 (r)	-	-	79 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	4	3	5	5	5	5	91	92	89
Cardiff and Vale	39	40	37	8	8	10	53	52	53
Wales	34	33	34	11	10	9	56	57	57

Source: Welsh Government

(r) Revised March 2020

Table 8 shows that just over a third (34%) of practices do not offer appointments during the whole half hour between 17:30 and 18:00. There is significant variation between health boards with 71% of practices not offering appointments for the whole of this time range in Betsi Cadwaladr compared to 10% and 5% in Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Aneurin Bevan respectively.

Table 9: Percentage of practices offering appointments during the whole half hour between 18:00 and 18:30, by number of week days and health board

Local health board	Percentage								
	0 week days			1-4 days			5 week days		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	94	94	94	2	2	2	4	5	4
Powys	88	88	81	0	0	0	12	13 (r)	19
Hywel Dda	78	78	69	8	6	2	14	16	29
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	89	89	-	0	0	-	11	11	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	94 (r)	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	6 (r)
Cwm Taf	41	44	-	10	10	-	49	46	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	58 (r)	-	-	6 (r)	-	-	37 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	67	63	64	25	28	25	8	9	11
Cardiff and Vale	92	92	94	0	0	2	8	8	5
Wales	81	80	80	7	7	6	12	12	13

Source: Welsh Government

(r) Revised March 2020

Table 9 shows that four out of five practices (80%) in Wales do not offer appointments for the whole half hour period between 18:00 and 18:30 on any week day. There is variation between health board areas with 37% of practices in Cwm Taf Morgannwg offering appointments every week day for the whole half hour period, whereas over 90% of practices in Betsi Cadwaladr, Swansea Bay and Cardiff and Vale do not offer appoints for the whole half hour period on any day.

Extended opening hours

In 2008-09, four new clinical [Directed Enhanced Services](#) (DES) and the Extended Opening Hours were introduced. Directed Enhanced Services are an enhanced level of service or activity provided by some GP practices that have been negotiated nationally. Where health boards were satisfied that GP practices were meeting the reasonable need of its patients within core hours (08:00 to 18:30, Monday to Friday), GP practices were encouraged to participate in the Extended Opening Hours DES and open for additional hours outside of their core hours to meet the needs of patients in their local area. The extended hours included appointments offered before 8:00 and after 18:30.

Health boards undertook an updated review of extended access arrangements after 18:30 on week nights in 2014, which resulted in two health boards decommissioning their extended opening hours.

Table 10 displays the percentage of practices open for extended hours at least one week day, and the percentage of practices offering appointments after 18:30 at least one week day.

Table 10: Percentage of practices with extended opening hours and offering appointments after 18:30 at least one week day

Local health board	<i>Percentage</i>									
	Open for Extended Hours at least one week day (a)					Offer appointments after 18:30 at least one week day				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Betsi Cadwaladr	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	1
Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (r)	0
Hywel Dda	7	8	8	8	8	13	11	10	10	10
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg (b)	0	0	0	0	-	1	0	0	0	-
Swansea Bay	-	-	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	-	-	0 (r)
Cwm Taf (b)	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	-	-	-	-	0 (r)	-	-	-	-	0 (r)
Aneurin Bevan	34	44	42	46	45	34	43	41	43	44
Cardiff and Vale	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	7	9	8	10	10	8	9	8	10	10

Source: Welsh Government

(a) Extended hours include appointments offered before 8am and after 18:30.

(b) Abertawe Bro Morgannwg and Cwm Taf University health boards decommissioned this service in 2014.

(r) Revised March 2020

Summary: One in ten practices were open for extended hours at least one day a week; the vast majority of these were in Aneurin Bevan. Similarly, Aneurin Bevan provided the most number of practices which offered appointments after 18:30 at least one day a week.

Weekend appointments

The only practice in Wales that offer appointments on Saturdays is in the Aneurin Bevan health board area.

Satisfaction with GP access

Every year, [the National Survey for Wales includes questions about whether people have seen their GP in the last 12 months](#), satisfaction with GP care, and ease of getting an appointment.

In 2018-19, 74% of people had seen their GP in the previous 12 months – this proportion has been fairly consistent for all years of the survey. However, the percentage satisfied with the care they received from their GP has risen from 86% in 2017-18 to 93% in 2018-19, and returned to the levels in 2012-13 to 2016-17. 5% of people who had not seen their GP in the previous 12 months said they had wanted an appointment but could not get one.

Chart 5 shows that of those who made an appointment, 40% found it difficult to make a convenient appointment; this proportion has increased over time, from 33% in 2012-13.

Chart 5: Ease of booking a convenient GP appointment, by year, 2012-13 to 2018-19

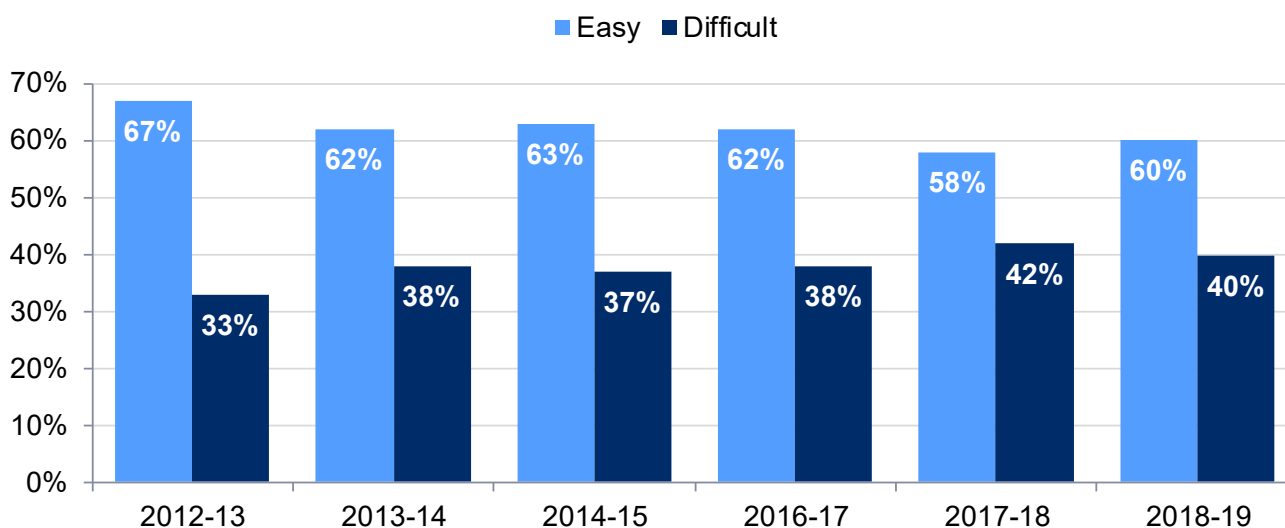


Chart 5 shows that in 2018-19 a higher proportion of people (60%) found it easy to book a convenient appointment with the GP than those who found it difficult (40%). However, the proportion who found it difficult was seven percentage points higher compared with six years ago.

Chart 6: Very difficult to make a convenient appointment, by age group and year, 2013-14-2018-19

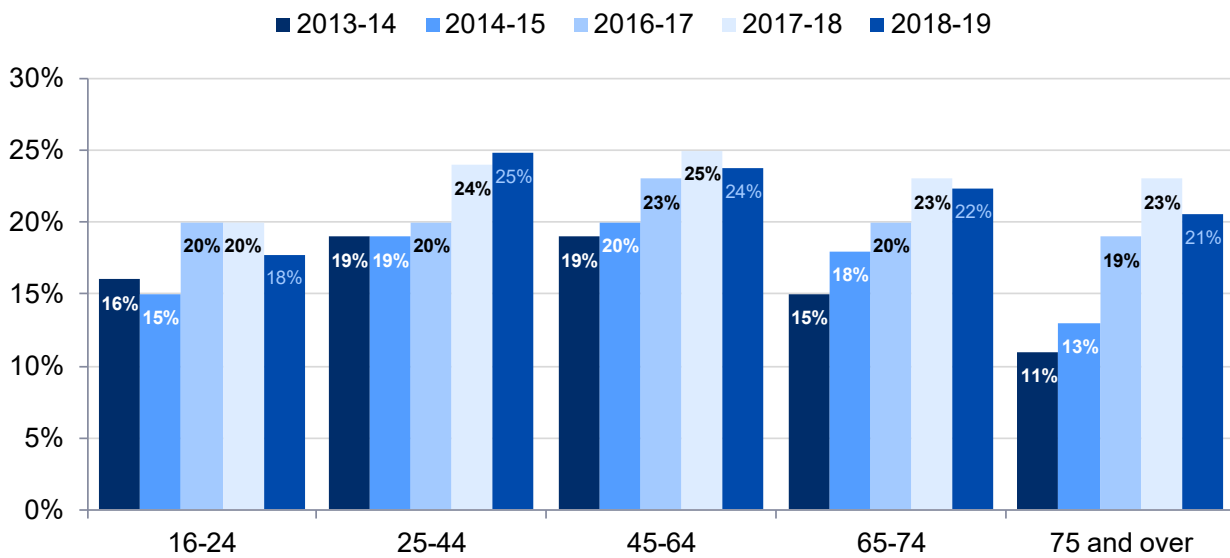


Chart 6 shows that since 2013-14 the proportion of those finding it very difficult to make a convenient appointment has increased across all age groups; the largest increase is seen in those aged 75 and over. However, over the year the percentage fell slightly in each of the age groups except for 25-44.

Chart 7: Reasons why difficult to get GP appointment at a convenient time, 2013-14 and 2018-19

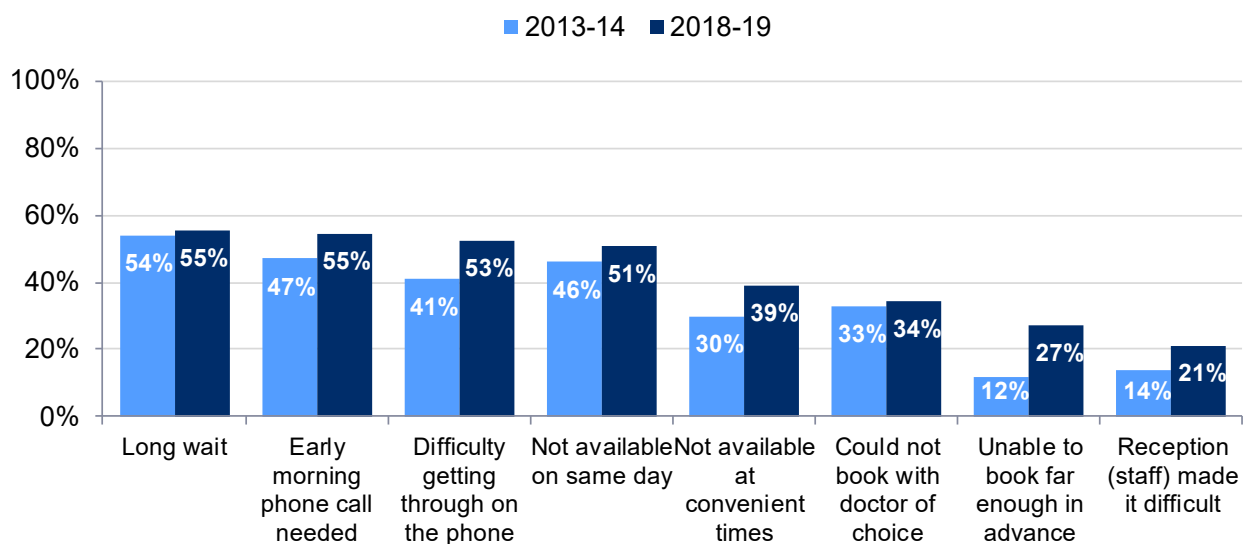


Chart 7 shows that those who were not able to book a convenient appointment and those who found it difficult to do so were asked the reason for their difficulties; the most common were the long wait for an appointment (reported by 55%), needing to make an early morning phone call (55%) and not being able to get through by phone (53%).

The changes over the years are statistically significant for all reasons with the exception of 'long wait for appointment' and 'could not book with doctor of choice'. Since 2013-14 there has been an increase in people finding it difficult to get through on the phone (up from 41%) and being unable to book far enough in advance (up from 12% to 27%). In 2018-19, 39% said that GP reception staff had made it difficult to get an appointment at a convenient time.

Difficulty in booking a convenient appointment continues to be more of an issue for those in material deprivation (47%) compared with those not in material deprivation (39%).

Key Quality Information

Note

Accompanying spreadsheets are likely to be republished in April 2020. These will provide a short back series of data for Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Swansea Bay, following the changes to their boundaries in 2019. This will allow users to make comparisons between 2019 and previous years for these new health board areas.

Data coverage

1. The [General Medical Services contract](#) is the contract between general practices and primary care organisations for delivering primary care services to local communities. Under the General Medical Services contract, GP practice core hours are Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 18:30, except Good Friday, Christmas Day and Bank Holidays. GP practices are responsible for providing essential and additional services within core hours at times which are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of its patients.

In addition, GP practices are required to have arrangements in place for patients to access such services throughout core hours in case of emergency. However, appointments are not necessarily available for the full duration of these opening times, as time also needs to be allocated to deal with referral letters, updating patient notes, domiciliary consultations, telephone consultations etc.

2. For the purpose of this release, GP practice opening hours have been considered against a weekly aggregated total of 52 hours and 30 minutes. It should however be noted that under the General Medical Services contract, GP practice core hours are based on daily opening times and there is no weekly requirement for GP practices.
3. In 2008-09, four new clinical [Directed Enhanced Services](#) (DESSs) and the Extended Opening Hours DES were introduced. Directed Enhanced Services are an enhanced level of service or activity provided by some GP practices that have been negotiated nationally. Where health boards were satisfied that GP practices were meeting the reasonable need of its patients within core hours (08:00 to 18:30, Monday to Friday), GP practices were encouraged to participate in the Extended Opening Hours DES and open for additional hours outside of their core hours to meet the needs of patients in their local area. This could be before 08:00 or after 18:30.

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg (now Swansea Bay) and Cwm Taf (now Cwm Taf Morgannwg) decommissioned this service in 2014.

4. Where practices operate on a fortnightly timetable the week with the most hours has been used.
5. Note that for appointment times, if a practice appointment finish time was on the hour (i.e. 17:00 or 18:00) or past the half hour (i.e. 18:30) then the assumption was that the last appointment offered will be before this time.

6. In relation to access to GP services, NHS Wales Informatics Services (NWIS) has developed [My Health Online \(MHOL\)](#) , a service which enables patients to make GP appointments, order repeat prescriptions and update personal details online.
In addition, GPs are now using [My Health Text](#) with the aim of delivering a number of benefits such as a reduction in DNA (did not attend) rates and improved patient experience.

Relevance

Policy context

Improving access to services is a key priority for Welsh Government, and an important part of the GMS Contract Reform Programme. The 2019-20 contract seen over £12 million investment into GMS for improving access, this including money for infrastructure needs such as new telephony systems.

In March 2019 [a new set of standards, which will raise and improve the level of service for patients in Wales from their GP practices](#), were launched by the Minister for Health and Social Services. The aim of the standards is to provide the clarity needed around what should be expected for both patients and professionals.

[Qualitative research, through focus group discussions, was undertaken and the final report was published in July 2019](#). Welsh Government are currently using this research alongside our engagement with stakeholders to inform future work on improving access to services for the people of Wales.

What are the potential uses of these statistics?

These statistics will be used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to ministers
- to inform debate in the National Assembly for Wales and beyond
- to make publically available data on GP access in Wales.

Who are the key potential users of this data?

These statistics will be useful both within and outside the Welsh Government. Some of the key potential users are:

- ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales
- local health boards
- local authorities
- GP practices
- Department for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government
- other areas of the Welsh Government
- National Health Service (including Workforce, Education & Development Services (WEDS))
- Public Health Wales
- the research community
- students, academics and universities
- individual citizens and private companies.

The statistics may also be useful for other UK governments and devolved administrations:

- Northern Ireland Executive's Department of Health
- Scottish Government
- Department of Health and Social Care in England.

Accuracy

This information was collected by Knowledge and Analytical Services within the Welsh Government, to give a better idea of the opening hours and appointment times of GP practices across Wales.

Each year the seven health boards are contacted directly and asked to provide opening hours and appointment times of their GP main surgeries. The data are captured on a spreadsheet that has guidance which is updated each year. Since 2015, in order to reduce the burden on the NHS, the data from the previous year has been provided to health boards and they are asked to amend the records and add any new practices. Once the forms have been submitted, statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with local health boards to ensure accuracy of the data received, and before tables are published. The latest data was received by Welsh Government in January 2020 and refer to the week of the 9th December 2019. Any revisions to the data supplied by health boards after this date will not be included in this report, but will be revised in future editions.

Due to the variable natures of the services offered by a branch surgery, the information within the release is requested for main surgeries only. As a result, this report does not include any data for branch surgeries. In some instances the main surgery may offer a "full" service spread across several "branch surgeries"; this data, however, will only include the appointment times.

In 2019, health boards provided data for 406 out of the 407 active practices in Wales at the time data was requested. The one practice which did not have data submitted closed shortly after in January 2020.

[Table A1](#) shows a list of GP practices which became inactive during the calendar year 2019. Some of these practices may have been merged with neighbouring practices.

Table A1: GP practices that became inactive during 2019

Practice Name	Practice Code	Local Health Board	Date of Closure
Meddygfa Teifi Surgery	W92034	Hywel Dda	31 January 2019
Ashleigh Surgery	W92065	Hywel Dda	28 February 2019
Meddygfa Wdig	W92061	Hywel Dda	04 March 2019
Brookside Medical Centre	W95634	Cwm Taf Morgannwg	19 March 2019
Eveswell Surgery	W93052	Aneurin Bevan	31 March 2019
Greenmeadow Surgery	W93030	Aneurin Bevan	08 April 2019
Bromfield Medical Centre	W91626	Betsi Cadwaladr	31 July 2019
Markham Medical Centre	W93010	Aneurin Bevan	18 October 2019
Porth Farm Surgery	W95007	Cwm Taf Morgannwg	27 December 2019

Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service

Timeliness and punctuality

Data collection forms were returned to us in January 2020 and data refers to the week of the 9th December 2019. This release was published in March meeting the planned date of publication.

Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the [Statistics and Research website](#).

Comparability and coherence

This statistical report provides figures at a health board level so comparisons can be made across these areas.

The total number of GP practices may differ slightly to the number included in the [General Practitioners statistical report](#) due to data being collected at slightly different points in time.

Revisions

Data is not routinely resubmitted by health boards and is therefore not routinely revised. If there are in future, they will be marked with an “r”, in the relevant tables, charts and in the related text throughout.

In this release, the number of active GP practices in Wales in 2017 and 2018 was revised following additional validation checks with NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) in 2019. The data supplied by health boards in those years remains unchanged.

In March 2020, revisions were made to all data relating to Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Swansea Bay local health boards. An error occurred whereby practices located in Bridgend had not been migrated over to their new health boards and were therefore counted in the wrong local health board.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/gp-access>

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to stats.healthinfo@gov.wales.

Next update

March 2020 (provisional)

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