



# General Practice Trends in the UK

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## Introduction

1. This paper aims to collate information on General Practice trends in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
2. The paper includes figures on country level workforce trends, as well as average practice list sizes and population projections. There is also a new section on breakdown of contract types in England.
3. The latest figures available are for 2009, and these are taken from each of the country's General Practice publications, and from the Office of National Statistics.

**Table 1: GP trends in England**

		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>A</b>	Number of GP Practices	8,542	8,451	8,325	8,261	8,230	8,228
<b>B</b>	Number of GP Providers	28,781	29,340	27,691	27,342	27,347	28,607
<b>C</b>	Number of Other GPs	2,742	3,398	5,400	6,022	6,663	7,310
<b>D</b>	GP registered patients (millions)	52.528	52.818	53.284	53.588	53.945	54.609
<b>D/A</b>	Average patients per practice	6,149	6,250	6,400	6,487	6,555	6,637
<b>E</b>	Residential Population (millions)	50.110	50.466	50.764	51.106	51.465	51.810
<b>E/A</b>	Average population per practice	5,866	5,972	6,098	6,186	6,253	6,297

**Table 2: GP trends in Wales**

		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>A</b>	Number of GP Practices	501	497	496	495	499	488
<b>B</b>	Number of GP Providers	1,767	1,819	1,778	1,778	1,788	1,768
<b>C</b>	Number of Other GPs	49	30	104	158	152	172
<b>D</b>	GP registered patients (millions)	3.040	3.052	3.093	3.094	3.115	3.135
<b>D/A</b>	Average patients per practice	6,069	6,140	6,236	6,250	6,242	6,424
<b>E</b>	Residential Population (millions)	2.943	2.950	2.962	2.976	2.990	2.999
<b>E/A</b>	Average population per practice	5,875	5,936	5,972	6,012	5,992	6,146

**Table 3: GP trends in Scotland**

		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>A</b>	Number of GP Practices	1,038	1,035	1,022	1,019	1,015	1,014
<b>B</b>	Number of Performer GPs	3,782	3,785	3,794	3,812	3,805	3,836
<b>C</b>	Number of Performer salaried GPs	188	277	340	402	451	480
<b>D</b>	GP registered patients (millions)	5.373	5.390	5.408	5.440	5.470	5.493
<b>D/A</b>	Average patients per practice	5,177	5,208	5,291	5,338	5,389	5,417
<b>E</b>	Residential population (millions)	5.078	5.095	5.117	5.144	5.169	5.194
<b>E/A</b>	Average population per practice	4,892	4,923	5,007	5,048	5,092	5,122

**Table 4: GP trends in Northern Ireland**

		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>A</b>	Number of GP Practices	366	364	363	362	358	357
<b>B</b>	Number of GPs	1,078	1,084	1,110	1,128	1,148	1,156
<b>C</b>	Number of Other GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>D</b>	GP registered patients (millions)	1.792	1.794	1.810	1.833	1.849	1.867
<b>D/A</b>	Average patients per practice	4,897	4,930	4,986	5,063	5,164	5,230
<b>E</b>	Residential Population (millions)	1.710	1.724	1.742	1.759	1.775	1.789
<b>E/A</b>	Average population per practice	4,673	4,737	4,798	4,860	4,958	5,011

Note: No information is available on Other GPs in Northern Ireland due to small numbers.

## Notes on Data Source

- (1) The differences between the figures for GP registered patients and residential population is expected and there are a number of reasons contributing to the differences.
- (2) All population figures are updated Mid-Year Estimates (2001 Census Based), produced by the Office for National Statistics. The most recent update took place in May 2010.
- (3) GP workforce information has been grouped according to current definitions of GPs used by each individual country. See Annex A for definitions.
- (4) GP workforce figures are taken from the following sources:
  - NHS Information Centre, General and Personal Medical Services, England  
[www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/nhsworkforce](http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/nhsworkforce)
  - Welsh Assembly Government, General Medical Practitioners in Wales  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2010/100325/?lang=en>
  - ISD Scotland, General Practice  
<http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/6113.html>
  - Northern Ireland Central Services Agency, General Medical Services
  - Northern Ireland Business Services Organisation, General Medical Services  
[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/workforce\\_census\\_march\\_2009\\_web.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/workforce_census_march_2009_web.pdf)
- (5) Figures for Scotland have been revised for 2004-2008 due to improvements in source data quality.
- (6) Figures for Northern Ireland may not be shown on the website for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety due to website redevelopment.
- (7) The number of GPs represents headcount and do not therefore reflect changes in working patterns such as, a shift to more part-time working.
- (8) GP numbers are across all contract types for each of the countries.

## Breakdown of contract types for England

4. The 2009 *General and Personal Medical Services, England* publication (published in march 2010)<sup>1</sup> showed a breakdown of the number of practitioners and the number of practices into the various contract types. These are shown in tables 5 and 6 below. GP Practitioners are GP Providers + Other GPs.

**Table 5: Contract type breakdown for GP Practices in England, 2009**

GP Practices	8,228
APMS	113
APMS administered by a limited company	60
GMS	4,538
GMS administered by a limited company	16
PCTMS	66
PMS	3,397
PMS administered by a limited company	23

Note: The contract types for some practices could not be determined, therefore the total does not equal the sum of the contract categories.

**Table 6: Contract type breakdown for GP Practitioners in England, 2009**

Practitioners	35,917
GMS	18,027
PMS	16,200
APMS	412
PCTMS	161

Note: The contract types for some GP practitioners could not be determined, therefore the total does not equal the sum of the contract categories.

5. Alternative Provider Medical Services (APMS) are primary medical services commissioned from non-GMS or non-PMS providers, e.g. from the voluntary sector, commercial sector, other NHS trusts or other PCTs.
6. Primary Care Trust Medical Services (PCTMS) are primary medical services provided directly by the PCT, e.g. through directly employing a salaried GP.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/nhsworkforce](http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/nhsworkforce)

7. APMS figures were published for the first time in 2010 (showing a September 2009 snapshot) – this was largely because of the recent growth in this area following the opening of many new GP-led health centres and polyclinics who contracted with the NHS in this way. It was felt that data quality of sources available on this was initially poor so a field/data item was added to the partnership dataset extracted from NHAIS/‘Exeter’. With some specific extra validation and cleaning of the Exeter data, the IC were able to publish a count of pure APMS general practitioners in England. The 2010 position is expected to be published in March 2011.
  
8. PCTMS practices have also been better identified as another benefit of the new ‘contract’ data item, and with cross checking with the Electronic Staff Record (by which means most of these PCTMS contracted staff are paid), these are also now published with confidence in the workforce census.

## Background to definitional changes of GPs

There was a re-classification of GPs in Great Britain in 2004 when the new nGMS contract was introduced, with a further change in 2006 in the classification for GPs in England and Wales which means that contracted and salaried partners are now known as GP Providers. Table 8 shows the extent of re-classification over the period.

**Table 8: Change in definition of GP categories reported in the annual GMP Censuses for England and Wales**

Prior to 2004?	Census 2004 & 2005	Census 2006 (onwards)	All censuses
UPEs <sup>†</sup>	Contracted and Salaried partners <sup>†</sup>	GP Providers <sup>†</sup>	Practitioner (excluding GP registrars and retainers)
RPs			
Assistant	GMS Others	Other GPs	
PMS Other	PMS Other		
Salaried Doctors	Salaried Doctors		
Flexible Career Scheme GPs	Flexible Career Scheme GPs / GP Returners		
GP Returners			
GP Registrars	GP Registrars	GP Registrars	GP Registrars
GP Retainers	GP Retainers	GP Retainers	GP Retainers

<sup>†</sup>Note that the Unrestricted Principle Equivalent (UPE) category includes both unrestricted principals and salaried partners (n.b. salaried partners can also be known as fixed share partners). The UPE category also includes the Contracted and Salaried partners and GP Provider categories. However, in the 2006 census there is a marker for their removal that is currently being validated.

There was also a refinement of the Exeter system (which affects England and Wales figures) in 2004 following the introduction of the nGMS contract. Prior to 2004 only GP Providers (formerly known as Contracted and Salaried partners) were included on the Exeter system. The revision allowed all GP types to be included. Previously, numbers of Other GPs, GP Retainers and GP Registrars came from the PCT on a separate return for census purposes. Therefore in 2004 and 2005 some non-Providers, but not all, were included on the system without a method for identifying them, and were included in the GP Provider figures for these years.

For the 2006 census the Exeter system could now identify these non-Provider GPs and this has led to an overall decrease in the GP Provider figures for England and Wales and an increase in the number of Other GPs, which can be seen in the census data for England and Wales in Tables 1 and 2. This amendment therefore mainly affects the Practitioner (excluding GP registrars and retainers) category of GPs as it is comprised of GP Providers and Other GPs. This change in the Exeter system helps to explain the differences in the trends of those GPs in England and Wales compared to those in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The introduction of nGMS also brought a number of changes to the information collected by Scotland. All GPs are now termed 'Performers'. Table 9 shows the mapping of old to new terminology for GPs in Scotland.

**Table 9: Change of definition/terminology for GPs in Scotland**

<b>Old term</b>	<b>Equivalent new term</b>
Unrestricted principal equivalent (UPE)	Performer
Restricted principal	Performer
Associate	Performer salaried
Assistant	Performer salaried
Salaried GP (in GMS)	Performer salaried
PMS other	Performer salaried
GMS other	Performer salaried
GP registrar	Performer registrar
Retainee	Performer retainee

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