

GMC response to the Senedd Health and Social Care Committee Inquiry into the Future of General Practice in Wales

Our Role

- The General Medical Council (GMC) is the independent regulator for doctors, physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs). We work with doctors, PAs, AAs, their employers, their educators, patients and others to:
 - set the standards of patient care and professional behaviours doctors, PAs and AAs need to meet
 - make sure doctors, PAs and AAs get the education and training they need to deliver good, safe patient care
 - check who is eligible to work as a doctor, PA or AA in the UK and check they continue to meet the professional standards we set throughout their careers
 - give guidance and advice to help doctors, PAs and AAs understand what's expected of them
 - investigate where there are concerns that patient safety, or the public's confidence in doctors, PAs or AAs, may be at risk, and take action if needed.

Our submission to the inquiry

- 1 We welcome the opportunity to submit evidence on the future of general practice in Wales to the Committee. The GMC collects extensive data on the general practice workforce in Wales through our medical register and our research. With reference to the terms of the inquiry, our response focuses on:
 - The general practice workforce, including workforce planning
 - Staff workload and wellbeing

Overview of the general practice workforce in Wales

- 2 According to our [register](#), as of 18 February 2025 there are 2,945 GPs with a licence to practice in Wales.
- 3 There are 1,668 female GPs in Wales and 1,277 are male.

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- 4 Of all GPs in Wales, 2,401 attained their Primary Medical Qualification (PMQ) in the UK, 435 are International Medical Graduates and 109 were awarded their PMQ in the European Economic Area (EEA) region.

Workforce planning and changing demographics

- 5 The composition of the GP workforce in Wales has shifted from a majority male to a majority female demographic. In 2012, female GPs made up 45.2% of the workforce, while male GPs accounted for 54.8%. Over the years, the proportion of female GPs has steadily increased. By 2023, female GPs represented 56.4% of the workforce, compared to 43.6% male GPs in Wales.
- 6 In terms of qualifications, in 2012, 80.9% of GPs in Wales held a UK Primary Medical Qualification (PMQ), while 19.1% had a non-UK PMQ (meaning they qualified overseas). By 2023, the percentage of GPs with a UK PMQ had increased slightly to 82.3%, with 17.7% holding a non-UK PMQ.
- 7 To contrast it with the specialist register (a list of doctors who are eligible to take up appointment in any fixed term, honorary or substantive consultant post in the NHS), in 2012, 64.8% of doctors on the specialist register held UK PMQ and 35.2% held non-UK PMQ. By 2023, the percentage of doctors on specialist register with a UK PMQ slightly decreased to 62.3% while the percentage of those with non-UK PMQ increased to 37.7%.
- 8 Our register data and the [National Training Survey \(NTS\)](#) also provide insight into GP trainees. A high proportion of first-year (ST1) GP trainees both in Wales and in the UK, typically go on to qualify, making recent ST1 cohorts reliable indicators of future additions to the GP register.
- 9 Similar to trends in England, the gender and PMQ balance of GP ST1 trainees in Wales is shifting. There is a growing movement away from a historically UK-dominated, female-majority workforce, toward a higher proportion of non-UK PMQ graduates (across both genders). This trend, alongside changes observed in England, strongly suggests that Wales' future GP workforce will likely consist of a larger proportion of non-UK PMQ holders.

Poor experiences and wellbeing

- 10 Our [State of Medical Education and Practice in the UK Workplace experiences 2024](#) report shows that GPs have worse experiences than other groups of doctors, and this has been a persistent pattern since 2019.
- 11 Although these statistics are UK-wide, the experiences reported by doctors in Wales were generally very similar to those of all UK doctors.

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- 12 The report shows that in [2023](#), out of the main doctor groups, GPs were the least likely to be satisfied (42% compared with 53% of all doctors) and the most likely to be struggling with their workload (48% compared with 33% of all doctors).
 - 13 While there has been a small improvement in the proportion of GPs at high risk of burnout seen in 2023 (21% compared with 31% in 2022) it is still very concerning to see that in many metrics, including those above, GPs have both consistently and persistently worse experiences than other groups of doctors.

Further information

- 14 The [State of Medical Education and Practice in the UK](#) is a series of publications released each year using our unique data and research. These publications report analysis and insights on the doctor workforce, how it is changing, its trajectory, and on doctors' workplace experiences.
- 15 The reference tables supplementing our The State of Medical Education and Practice in the UK: Workforce Report 2024 contain valuable data on the workforce demographics, including the GP workforce in Wales. Data for the four UK nations are available here: https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/reference-tables-about-the-register-of-medical-practitioners-by-country-and-region-2024_xl-109217624.xlsx.
- 16 If you have any questions on the information provided or you would like to discuss GMC's data on the medical workforce, please contact Gethin Matthews-Jones, Head of GMC Wales, via GMCWales@gmc-uk.org.