



# More than a career

The 2022 UK census of consultant physicians: findings from Wales



## The medical workforce in Wales at a glance

- > 57% of consultant physicians in Wales report vacant consultant posts.
- > 61% of consultant physicians report daily or weekly trainee rota gaps.
- > Only 33% of consultant physicians feel in control of their workload.
- > 74% of consultant physicians feel that rota gaps are having a negative impact on patient care.
- > 82% of consultant physicians routinely work above their contracted hours.
- > 41% of consultant physicians say that they have an excessive workload.
- > 52% of consultant physicians working full time would like to reduce their hours.
- > 47% of consultant physicians intend to retire in the next decade.

### It's not all bad ...

- > 84% of consultant physicians in Wales say that they feel valued by patients.
- > 77% said that they would recommend their organisation to friends and relatives as patients.
- > 87% have job satisfaction working in their specialty area of medicine.

## What is the UK census of consultant physicians?

Every year, the Medical Workforce Unit of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) conducts a consultant physician census on behalf of the RCP, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. The data that we collect provide us with insight into the state of the physician workforce across the four nations of the UK. These are the findings from Wales in the 2022 census.

- > **Consultant posts are not being filled:** 57% of consultant physicians in Wales report vacant consultant posts, with an average of 2.4 vacant posts per department. 47% report locum doctors in their department. 83% say that the main barrier to recruitment is that the posts are not attractive.
- > **Consultants are frequently seeing gaps in the trainee rota:** 61% of consultant physicians were aware of gaps on trainee rotas, either daily or weekly.
- > **Rota gaps are impacting patient care:** 74% felt that rota gaps had impacted patient care, with the most-cited impacts being the assessment of patients in emergency departments (22%), reduced access to outpatient care (22%) and increased length of stay (21%).
- > **The generalist workforce has room to grow:** the biggest medical specialty in Wales is geriatric medicine, followed by cardiology, respiratory medicine, gastroenterology/hepatology, and endocrinology/diabetes. While 62% of consultants are qualified to work in acute internal medicine or general internal medicine, only 49% have a work commitment to do so, and only 41% participate in the acute medical take.
- > **The model of care is changing:** 33% now routinely deliver care on a same-day emergency care (SDEC) unit, either daily (14%), weekly (41%) or monthly (42%). Only 6% deliver care on a virtual ward, but of those who do, 46% work on a virtual ward daily, 15% weekly and 38% monthly.
- > **Consultants continue to work beyond their job plans:** 90% of consultant physicians have a current job plan. However, 82% say that they routinely work more than the agreed hours in their contract – most commonly to do administrative work related to patient care (72%) or to provide direct patient care (49%).
- > **Flexible working is likely to grow:** 22% of consultants work less than full time or flexibly, with 52% saying that they'd like to reduce their hours, underlining the importance of workforce planning in full-time equivalents (FTE) rather than headcount.

- **Working practices continue to change and evolve:** 87% of consultants now carry out some of their work remotely – most commonly CPD, followed by administration and meetings related to patient care, education and audit / quality improvement. Only 19% hold outpatient clinics remotely. Of those not currently undertaking remote work, 54% said that they wanted to undertake remote work in the future.
- **Consultants feel that their workload is unmanageable:** only 33% feel in control of their workload. 41% of consultants said that they had an excessive workload almost always or most of the time, and 41% said that they worked excessive hours. 44% did not take their full leave entitlement in 2022 – mainly because they were too busy or unable to organise cover for their clinical service. 50% took unexpected time off for illness, with 63% of these taking time off due to COVID-19. Over half (52%) were contacted by work about clinical matters while on leave.
- **However, most consultants still feel valued:** 84% say that they feel valued by patients, 81% by their medical colleagues and 79% by their non-medical colleagues.
- **Leadership roles are key to job satisfaction:** 44% of consultants said that they had an additional leadership role (either clinical or educational) and 73% of these said that they enjoyed their job more because of it. Most felt supported by both management and specialty colleagues to carry out a leadership role, although only 58% had protected time in their job plan for it and only 45% felt that it was adequately recognised in their appraisal.
- **Consultant physicians in Wales would still recommend their organisation to colleagues, friends and family:** 81% said that they would recommend their organisation to other consultants, 84% said that they would recommend their organisation to trainees and 83% said that they would recommend it to SAS doctors. 77% said that they would recommend their organisation to their friends and relatives if they were patients.
- **Despite the challenges, most consultant physicians report job satisfaction:** 87% said that they found their specialty work satisfying almost always or often. 34% said that they found their work in GIM satisfying almost always or

often. This difference in job satisfaction between specialty work and GIM is consistent with previous years.

- **The multi-professional team is changing:** 31% of consultant physicians reported working with a physician associate (PA). However, only 11% have time in their job plan to supervise PAs. 83% report working with a clinical nurse specialist as part of the core clinical team, followed by pharmacists (63%), physiotherapists (39%) and occupational therapists (33%).
- **There is a looming retirement crisis:** 47% of consultant physicians in Wales are expected to reach their intended retirement age in the next decade, which is likely to remove more than 400 doctors from the medical workforce.
- **The consultant physician workforce in Wales is diverse:** 54% identify as White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British, 28% as Asian/Asian British, 7% White other, 3% mixed ethnicity, 2% Black/Black British, 2% White Irish and 5% identify as other. 94% of consultant physicians in Wales are UK citizens. 64% are men and 36% are women. 38% graduated from medical school in England, 33% overseas and 26% in Wales.

## Educating, improving, influencing

Through our work with patients and doctors, the RCP is working to achieve real change across the health and social care sector in Wales. We represent 40,000 physicians and clinicians worldwide – educating, improving and influencing for better health and care. Over 1,600 members in Wales work in hospitals and the community across 30 different clinical specialties, diagnosing and treating millions of patients with a huge range of medical conditions. We campaign for improvements to healthcare, medical education and public health.

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