

# The general practice workforce survey: promotion from statistics in development to Official Statistics.

Since the General Practice Workforce Survey was first published in 2013 it has been designated as Official Statistics in Development (previously known as Experimental Statistics). The survey has undergone numerous developments over this period in terms of content, delivery and analytical methods, and it has been published by two separate organisations. For these reasons it has retained the “in development” designation for an extended period.

Following an internal review, we believe we can now begin to move these statistics out of development and incorporate them into our other Official Statistics on the general practice workforce. The reasons behind this decision are:

- The past two survey cycles have seen a major improvement in the survey delivery method, with the creation of a new web application for gathering data. This is likely to remain in place as the data collection method.
- The overall response rate has been 75% or above for the past three cycles, and we have established methods for handling both incomplete returns and missing returns.
- Users are comfortable with the methods for estimating staff whole time equivalent (WTE), a key measure derived from the survey. Users at Scottish Government have requested that General Practitioner (GP) WTE be included in our GP workforce data alongside GP headcount.

However, as our publications have highlighted, there are ongoing quality concerns over the sections of the survey dealing with vacancies and absences (data completeness and quality). These metrics remain of major interest to our users, and we intend to keep publishing them; but until the quality issues have been resolved, we cannot recommend moving them out of development.

We will therefore take a phased approach to removing the “in development” label from the survey statistics.

1. Statistics on WTE numbers of GPs will be included in our Official Statistics from December 2025. This brings our presentation of the GP workforce into line with other occupations in our dashboard where both headcount and WTE are available as standard.
2. The 2026 GP workforce survey will be split between two designations: numbers of staff in post (all occupations) and the characteristics of those staff will be released as Official Statistics, while statistics on vacancies, absences and Locum/Sessional GP use will remain “in development”. We will take advice from users and statistical governance experts on whether to release the 2026 survey results as two separate reports, or a

single report with clear delineations between sections that are official statistics and sections that are still in development.

3. We will seek to resolve the remaining quality issues with a view to publishing the entire survey as Official Statistics in 2027. Our approach will involve reviewing the survey guidance notes for the sections on vacancies and absences, more data quality control during the survey period, and working with a selection of practices to better understand the challenges in completing these sections.