

Family Practitioner Services

General Medical Services

for Northern Ireland, Annual Statistics 2021/2022



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We want your feedback We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics,
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Additional information about these statistics is located at the back of this publication.

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Introduction

This annual report contains high level summary information in relation to General Practitioners (GPs), GP Practices and Registered Patients including registration activity and payments processed by Business Services Organisation (BSO) towards the overall cost of GP Services in Northern Ireland. A number of United Kingdom (UK) comparisons are also included. The report does not contain data on the treatment of patients as individual GPs maintain their own clinical information systems.

Headline results, supported by relevant charts, infographics, commentary, and user guidance are included in the main body of the report. The detailed tables which underpin each of the sections, and which provide further trend, demographic and regional breakdowns at Local Government District (LGD), Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust) and GP Federation level, are included as [Annex Tables](#).

This publication has been produced by independent statisticians within the FPS Information Unit. They are on secondment from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). It has been compiled in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Further information about the work of FPS and the manner in which these statistics were produced can be found at the back of this publication.

User Engagement

Statisticians in the Information Unit are regularly in contact with key users of the statistics. While previously readership surveys alone were used to provide an overall assessment of whether user needs were being met, the current approach employed is to supplement these surveys with focused consultations with key users on a rolling basis. This approach helps to gain greater insight into how the statistics are used and to identify additional specific requirements. In addition, any ad hoc requests for information are recorded centrally in a database and these records are used to provide intelligence from a wider set of users in relation to changing requirements. An outline of future developments as a result of user engagement is provided in the [General Medical Services Statistics User Engagement Action Plan](#).



This is a National Statistics Publication

The UK Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics on 11th May 2022. National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). They are awarded National Statistics status following an [assessment](#) by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. These statistics were considered as part of a wider assessment of the BSO Family Practitioner Services statistics. Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvement:

- A new suite of tables has been produced detailing the number of registered patients at each GP Practice in NI broken down by age and gender. These tables are available from 2012 to 2022 and are published [here](#).

Find out more about National and Official Statistics by clicking [here](#).

Key Facts



- **Northern Ireland had 319 active GP Practices**
This was a reduction of 2 compared to 2021 and a reduction of 31 (8.9%) since 2014.
- **There were 1,419 GPs (excluding Locums)**
Of these, 59% were female and 41% were male, a notable shift in gender profile since 2014 (46% female, 54% male).
- **A total of 2,022,000 individuals were registered with a GP Practice**
During 2021/2022, there were approximately 52,500 new patient registrations and 39,000 patients transferred between NI GP Practices.
- **BSO processed £342.7m of payments towards overall cost of GP Services in Northern Ireland**
This was an average payment of £169 per registered patient.

1. GP Practice Statistics

This section contains basic summary statistics on GP Practices including number of practices and their distribution geographically and proximity for patients. Where a practice is split over more than one site the location of the Primary Practice is used for analysis.

1.1 Number of GP Practices

There were 319 GP Practices in Northern Ireland on 31st March 2022. This is a reduction of 2 practices since 2021 and a reduction of 31 (8.9%) since 2014. The change in the number of practices is as a result of closures, as well as mergers (where practices have combined).

Belfast Local Government District (LGD) has the largest number of GP Practices in 2022 (76) while Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD has the smallest number (15).

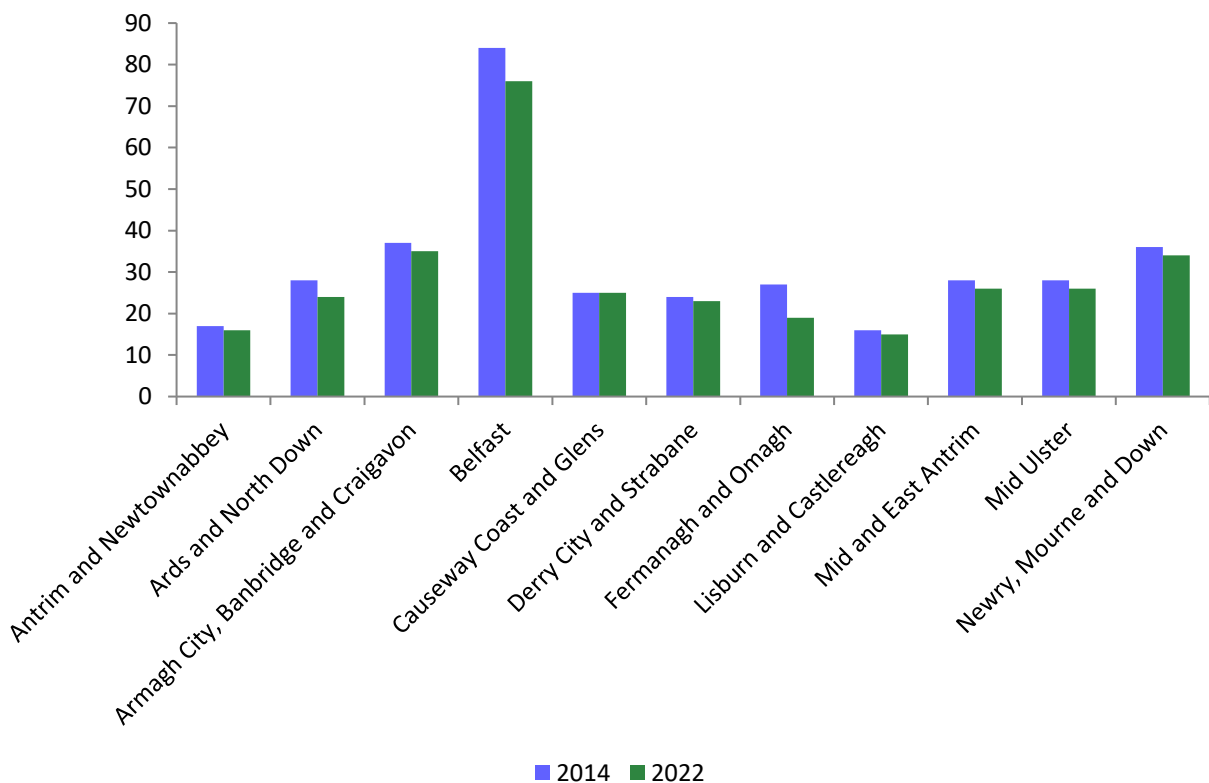


Figure 1.1: Number of GP Practices by Local Government District, 31st March 2014 and 31st March 2022

[See Annex Table 1.3b](#)

Only one LGD has maintained its number of GP Practices since 2014 (Causeway Coast & Glens). All others have shown a proportionate decrease ranging from 4.2% in Derry City & Strabane to 29.6% in Fermanagh & Omagh.

At Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust) level, Western had the largest proportionate decrease in GP Practices between 2014 and 2022 (15.8%). The smallest decrease in GP Practices during this period is in the Northern LCG (5.1%). For further information see [Annex Table 1.3a](#)

1.2 GP Practices per 100,000 population

Clearly the number of registered patients in any given LGD will have an influence on the service required. Fig 1.2 presents the number of GP Practices per 100,000 registered patients in order to provide a better indication of service provision. Note, however, this does not take account of the different age profiles or levels of morbidity across areas which will also impact on service requirements. It should also be noted that GP Practices vary in size and number of live GP contracts associated with them.

Local Government District	GP Practices per 100,000 population
Mid & East Antrim	17.9
Belfast	17.6
Newry, Mourne and Down	17.6
Causeway Coast & Glens	16.6
Mid Ulster	16.5
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	15.4
Fermanagh & Omagh	15.3
Ards & North Down	14.6
Derry City & Strabane	13.1
Lisburn & Castlereagh	12.5
Antrim & Newtownabbey	12.0
Northern Ireland	15.8

Figure 1.2: GP Practices per 100,000 registered patients, by Local Government District, 31st March 2022

Mid & East Antrim LGD has the highest number of GP Practices per 100,000 registered patients (17.9), almost one and a half times the number in Antrim & Newtownabbey LGD (12.0). However, when considering the number of GPs per 100,000 registered patients, Mid & East Antrim has 75.2 compared with 66.2 in Antrim & Newtownabbey meaning that, in general, GP Practices in Antrim & Newtownabbey are larger and have more GPs operating out of them. For further information on the average number of GPs per practice and the number of GP Practices per 100,000 see [Annex Tables 1.4e and 1.5b](#)

At GP Federation level, North Belfast has the highest number of GP Practices per 100,000 population (20.3), closely followed by Antrim Ballymena (19.5) and East Belfast (19.3). The number of GP Practices per 100,000 population has decreased across all GP Federations since 2017 with a reduction of 8.7% at Northern Ireland level during this time. This decrease across GP Federations ranges from 28.0% in Ards to 1.8% in Causeway. For further information see [Annex Table 1.5c](#)

1.3 Distance to nearest GP Practice

At Northern Ireland level, 97.6% of the population¹ live within five miles of a GP Practice. At least 88.0% of the population live within a three mile radius of a GP Practice; with the more urban LGDs (Belfast, Antrim & Newtownabbey, Lisburn & Castlereagh and Ards & North Down) showing upwards of 92%.

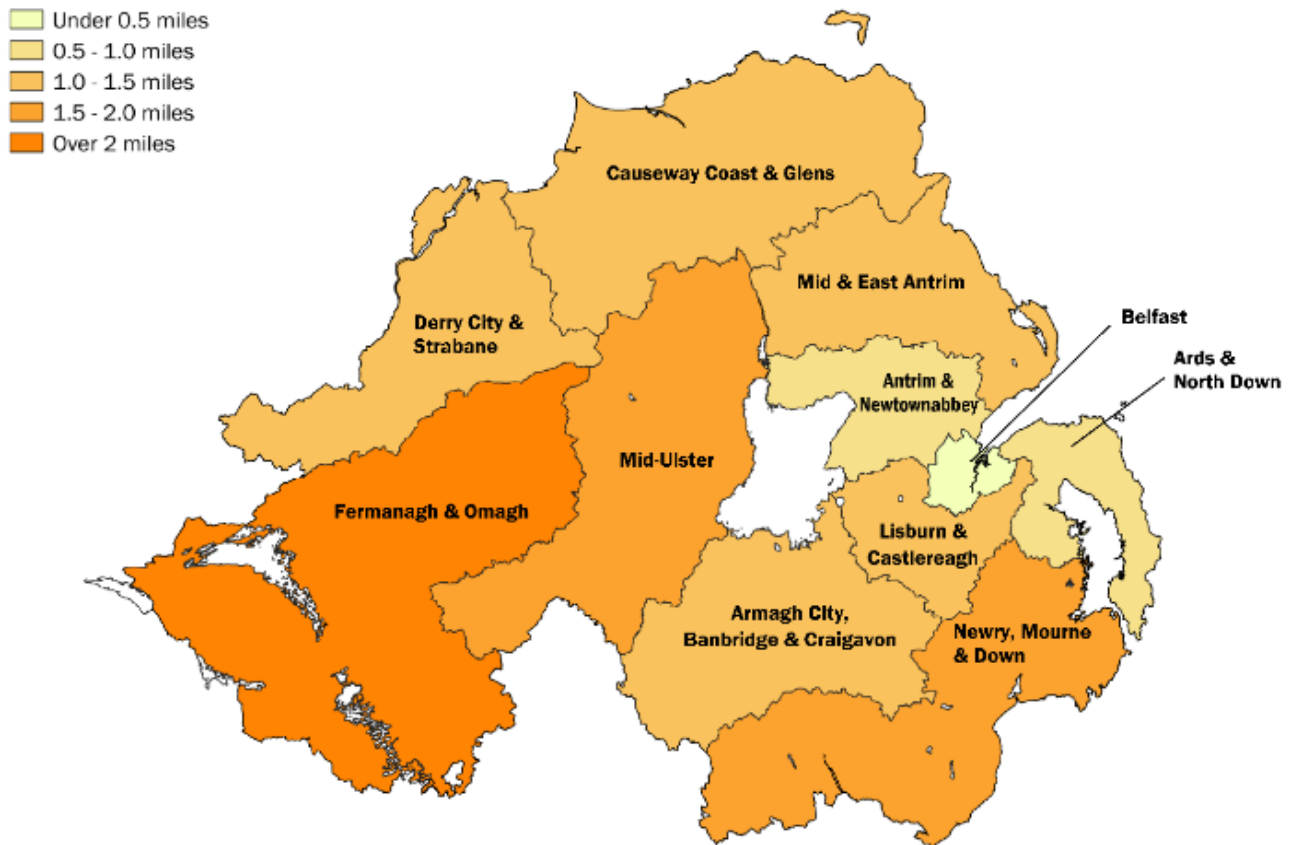


Figure 1.3: Average Distance to nearest GP Practice by Local Government District, 31st March 2022

[See Annex Table 1.7b](#)

¹ Population is defined as active GP registration person counts at postcode level at March 2022. Distance is calculated as the straight line distance between the centroids of the population home postcode to the postcode of the nearest GP Practice.

GP registration data were analysed using Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) quintiles where 1 represents the most deprived areas and 5 represents the least deprived areas.

Figure 1.4 shows that patients from the most deprived (0.8 miles) and least deprived (0.9 miles) deprivation quintiles lived closest to a GP Practice on average, while those in the middle quintile (1.8 miles) lived furthest away on average. These findings may be influenced by the often urban location of GP Practices typically characterised by areas of high and low deprivation.

Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017	Average Distance (miles)
Most Deprived	0.8
	1.5
	1.8
	1.5
Least Deprived	0.9
Northern Ireland	1.3

Figure 1.4: Population weighted average distance to nearest GP Practice, by Deprivation Quintile, 2022

For average distances to nearest GP Practice by Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust), Local Government District, and, Deprivation Quintile detail refer to [Annex Tables 1.7a, 1.7b and 1.7c](#)

2. GP Workforce

This section contains basic summary statistics on GP Practitioners (GP) (excluding Locums) including number, age and gender and patients per GP Practitioner. GP figures presented are headcount and do not reflect different working patterns individual GPs may operate.

2.1 GPs by Gender and Age Profile

There were 1,419 active GPs (headcount) across Northern Ireland at 31st March 2022. This is a 0.6% increase in the number of GPs since 2021 and a 20.3% increase since 2014. It should be noted that not all GPs work full-time hours so changes in headcount may not reflect the change in full time equivalent GPs.

While quality-assured working patterns are currently unavailable for active GPs, unpublished management information, sourced from the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA), providing an analysis of GP appraisals up to the 2019/20 year would tend to suggest that the 20% increase in headcount was not replicated in terms of whole-time equivalent (WTE) GPs. Instead, it reflects a fairly stable WTE position in respect of GP Partners and salaried GPs across the period, with potentially even a small decrease coinciding with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to bear in mind, however, that this self-reported information is largely unvalidated - alternative methodologies may have been used to produce the analysis at different points in the series, a small proportion of GPs may not have undergone appraisal, the use of locums to provide GP sessions may not be fully captured and the pandemic itself may have impacted the propensity to report. That said, it does highlight the need for users to exercise caution when making comparisons, particularly across time, based purely on headcount figures alone.

In terms of gender profile of GPs, 59% are female and 41% are male. Fig 2.1 shows that since 2014 there has generally been a gradual downward trend in the number of male GPs with a steeper increase in the number of female GPs.

The number of male GPs is 9.5% lower than in 2014, while the number of female GPs has increased by more than half (55.9%) during the same period.

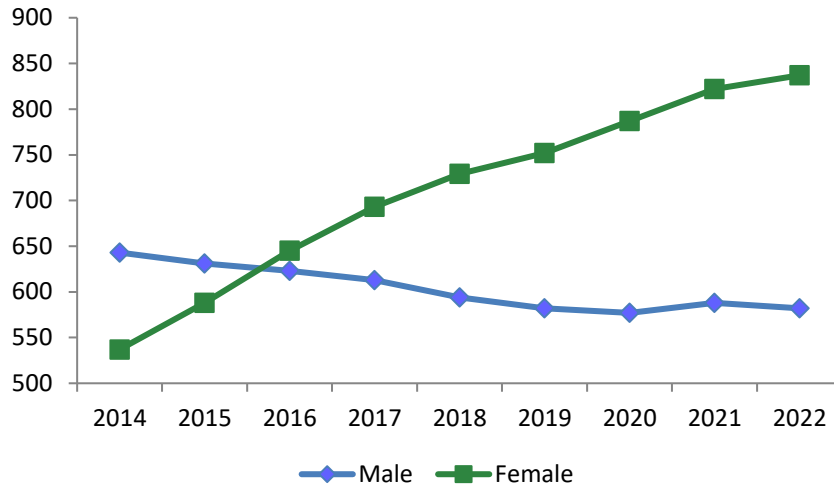


Figure 2.1: Number of GPs in NI by gender, 2014 to 2022

[See Annex Table 1.2d](#)

The changing demographics of the GP workforce are reflected in Fig 2.2. Over half of GPs in the 55-59 and 60+ age-groups are male, while there are more female GPs in the younger age groups.

Almost two fifths of female GPs (37.4%) are in the 25-39 age band compared to just under a quarter of male GPs (23.8%). Conversely only 3.5% of female GPs are aged 60 and over compared to 13.7% of male GPs.

The 25-39 age band is made up of 30.8% male and 69.2% female GPs. As age increases, so does the percentage of male GPs until the oldest age bracket (60+) where the figures are more than reversed at 73.4% male and 26.6% female.

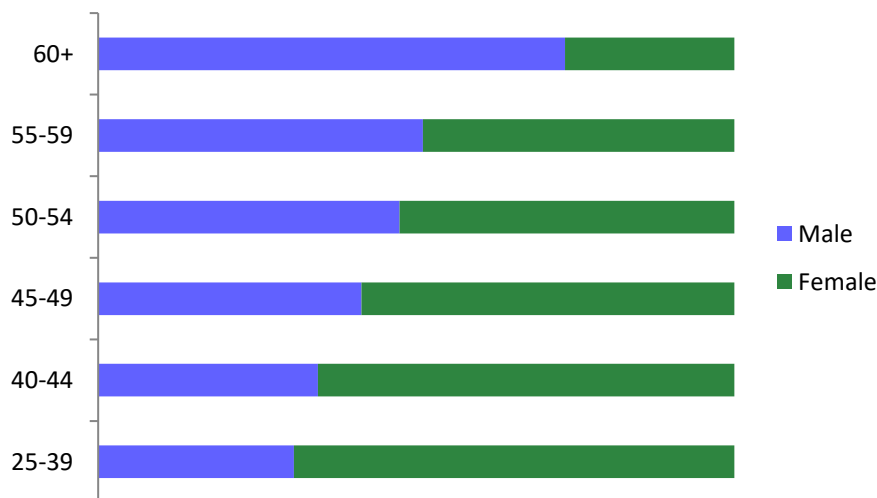


Figure 2.2: GPs in Northern Ireland by age and gender, 31st March 2022

[See Annex Table 1.2a](#)

The average age of Northern Ireland GPs is 45 years old. At GP Federation level, average age ranges from 43 years old in Craigavon to 48 years old in South Belfast and West Belfast.

The GP Federation with the highest proportion of GPs aged 55 and over is South West where just over one third (35%) of GPs are in this age group. West Belfast has the next highest proportion of GPs aged 55 and over (32%) followed by Down and Armagh & Dungannon (each 29%).

South Belfast, East Antrim, Lisburn, Mid-Ulster, North Belfast, North Down, Ards, East Belfast and Craigavon GP Federations have a lower proportion of GPs aged 55 and over than the Northern Ireland average of 21.2%.

GP Federation	No. of GPs	Average age of GPs	% of GPs aged 55+
South West	84	48	35%
West Belfast	62	48	32%
Armagh & Dungannon	77	46	29%
Down	55	46	29%
Antrim Ballymena	91	47	26%
Derry	134	46	25%
Newry & District	106	46	23%
Causeway	78	46	22%
South Belfast	88	45	19%
East Antrim	110	44	17%
Lisburn	66	45	17%
Mid-Ulster	54	44	17%
North Belfast	99	45	16%
North Down	61	45	15%
Ards	56	44	14%
East Belfast	95	44	14%
Craigavon	103	43	13%
Northern Ireland	1,419	45	21%

Figure 2.3: Age of GPs in Northern Ireland, by GP Federation, 31st March 2022

2.2 GPs per head of population

Belfast LGD has the largest number of GPs (335) and registered patients² (432,360). Fermanagh & Omagh LGD has the smallest number of GPs (82) while Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD has the fewest registered patients (120,125). Fig 2.3 presents the number of GPs per 100,000 registered patients.

Belfast LGD has the highest number of GPs per 100,000 registered patients (77.5), more than one third higher than the number in Mid Ulster LGD (57.2) which had the lowest. The Northern Ireland average is 70.2 GPs per 100,000 registered patients (or 1 GP for every 1,425 registered patients). Again, this analysis takes no account of varying levels of full and part-time working by GPs across areas which may, in part, help explain some of the differences.

Local Government District	GPs per 100,000 population
Belfast	77.5
Mid & East Antrim	75.2
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	71.7
Ards & North Down	71.1
Lisburn & Castlereagh	70.8
Newry, Mourne & Down	68.4
Causeway Coast & Glens	67.9
Antrim & Newtownabbey	66.2
Derry City & Strabane	66.2
Fermanagh & Omagh	66.0
Mid Ulster	57.2
Northern Ireland	70.2

Figure 2.4: GPs per 100,000 registered patients, by Local Government District, 31st March 2022

² Patients may not necessarily reside in the same LGD as the GP Practice to which they are registered.

3. Registered Patients

This section contains basic summary statistics on Registered Patients including new patient registrations during 2021/2022.

3.1 Total Registered Patients³

There were just over 2,022,000 individuals on the index of patients registered with a GP Practice at 31st March 2022.

At 31st March 2022, Belfast Local Government District⁴ had the highest number of patients registered with GP Practices within its boundary (432,360) and is over 90% higher than the next highest LGD (Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon: 227,248). Lisburn & Castlereagh had the smallest number of GP Registered Patients (120,125).

Local Government District	Registered Patients
Belfast	432,360
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	227,248
Newry, Mourne & Down	192,951
Derry City & Strabane	175,323
Ards & North Down	164,545
Mid Ulster	157,412
Causeway Coast & Glens	150,290
Mid & East Antrim	144,986
Antrim & Newtownabbey	132,883
Fermanagh & Omagh	124,243
Lisburn & Castlereagh	120,125
Northern Ireland	2,022,366

Figure 3.1: Registered Patients, by Local Government District, 31st March 2022

³ There are differences between the figures for GP Registered Patients and the NI residential population. For more detail see Data Quality Summary in the Technical Notes section on page 27 of this report.

⁴ Patients may not necessarily reside in the same LGD as the GP Practice to which they are registered.

At GP federation level, Derry has, by a considerable margin, the highest number of registered patients (206,992), while Down (78,087), Mid-Ulster (79,925) and Ards (80,599) have the smallest numbers. The number of registered patients in each GP federation is within 2% of the number in 2021. For further information see [Annex Table 1.1c](#)

GP Federation	Registered Patients
Derry	206,992
Newry & District	159,999
East Antrim	150,680
Craigavon	138,241
Armagh & Dungannon	137,395
Antrim Ballymena	133,576
South West	127,635
South Belfast	121,775
East Belfast	114,092
North Belfast	113,096
Causeway	108,842
Lisburn	94,843
West Belfast	92,643
North Down	83,946
Ards	80,599
Mid-Ulster	79,925
Down	78,087
Northern Ireland	2,022,366

Figure 3.2: Registered Patients, by GP Federation, 31st March 2022

3.2 Patients Registering with a GP Practice during 2021/2022

During 2021/2022, GP Practices in Northern Ireland registered 91,000 patients. This comprised 52,000 new patients (first time registrations in NI) and 39,000 patients transferring from another Northern Ireland GP Practice.

Fig 3.2 shows the trend in registrations over the last five financial years. The increase in registrations in 2018/19 from the previous year may be explained by the introduction of a new registration form. Issues with this new form resulted in a backlog building up in 2017/2018 that was relieved in 2018/2019 leading to the 2018/2019 figure being slightly higher than expected. A further significant drop can be observed during 2020/2021, in large part driven by the impact of Covid-19 on registration services and population movement. The number of registrations processed in 2021/2022 is more in line with 2019/2020 (91,000) when there were no atypical external factors influencing the processing of registrations.

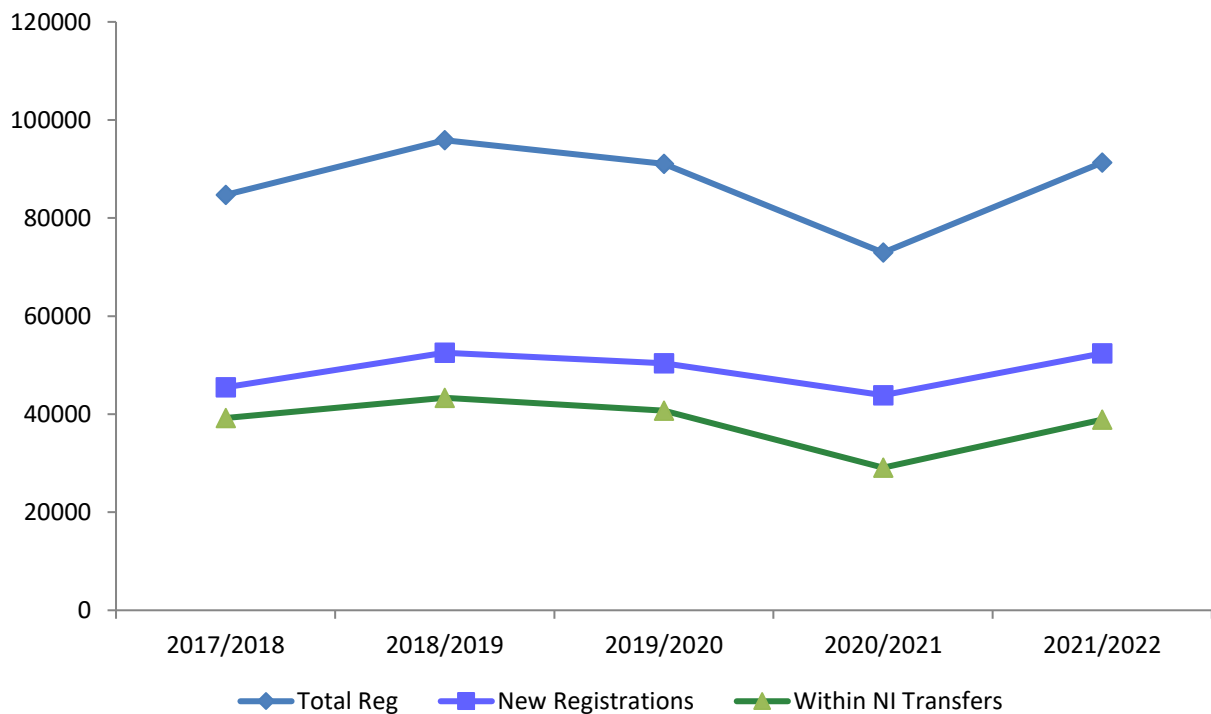


Figure 3.3: Total GP Registrations (new and within Northern Ireland transfers), 5 year trend

[See Annex Table 1.1d](#)

Practices in the South Belfast GP Federation registered the largest number of patients (10,857) during 2021/2022. This is despite South Belfast being only the 8th largest GP Federation in terms of patient numbers. However, this may in part be explained by registration of students who moved address, with much student accommodation being located in the area served by this GP Federation. With the exception of South Belfast and West Belfast, where registrations were somewhat lower than expected, the number of patients registering with a GP Practice during 2021/2022 broadly reflects the number of registered patients in the GP Federation.

Derry, the largest GP federation in terms of patient numbers, registered the second largest number of patients (7,272). Meanwhile West Belfast (2,603) and Mid-Ulster (2,855) registered the smallest number of patients during 2021/2022. West Belfast is the fifth smallest GP Federation in terms of the number of registered patients, while Mid-Ulster is the second smallest.

GP Federation	Patients registering with a GP Practice
South Belfast	10,857
Derry	7,272
Craigavon	6,752
East Antrim	6,634
East Belfast	6,300
Newry & District	6,085
Armagh & Dungannon	5,826
Antrim Ballymena	5,660
South West	4,779
North Belfast	4,740
Lisburn	4,560
Causeway	4,220
North Down	4,121
Ards	4,116
Down	3,466
Mid-Ulster	2,855
West Belfast	2,603
Northern Ireland	91,288

Figure 3.4: Total GP Registrations (new and within Northern Ireland transfers), by GP Federation, 2021/2022

3.3 Non UK Nationals Registering with a GP Practice during 2021/2022

At Northern Ireland level, three out of every ten (30%) first time GP registrations during 2021/2022 were Non-UK Nationals. This figure had decreased in 2020/2021 (22.2%), potentially due to impact of Covid-19, after remaining consistent at around 28% during both 2019/2020 (28.4%) and 2018/2019 (27.5%).

At Northern Ireland level, almost half (49.7%) of all Non-UK National first time registrations during 2021/2022 were with a GP Practice in Belfast LGD. At LGD level, the proportion of first time registrations attributable to Non-UK Nationals ranged from 48.8% in Belfast to 12.2% in Causeway Coast and Glens.

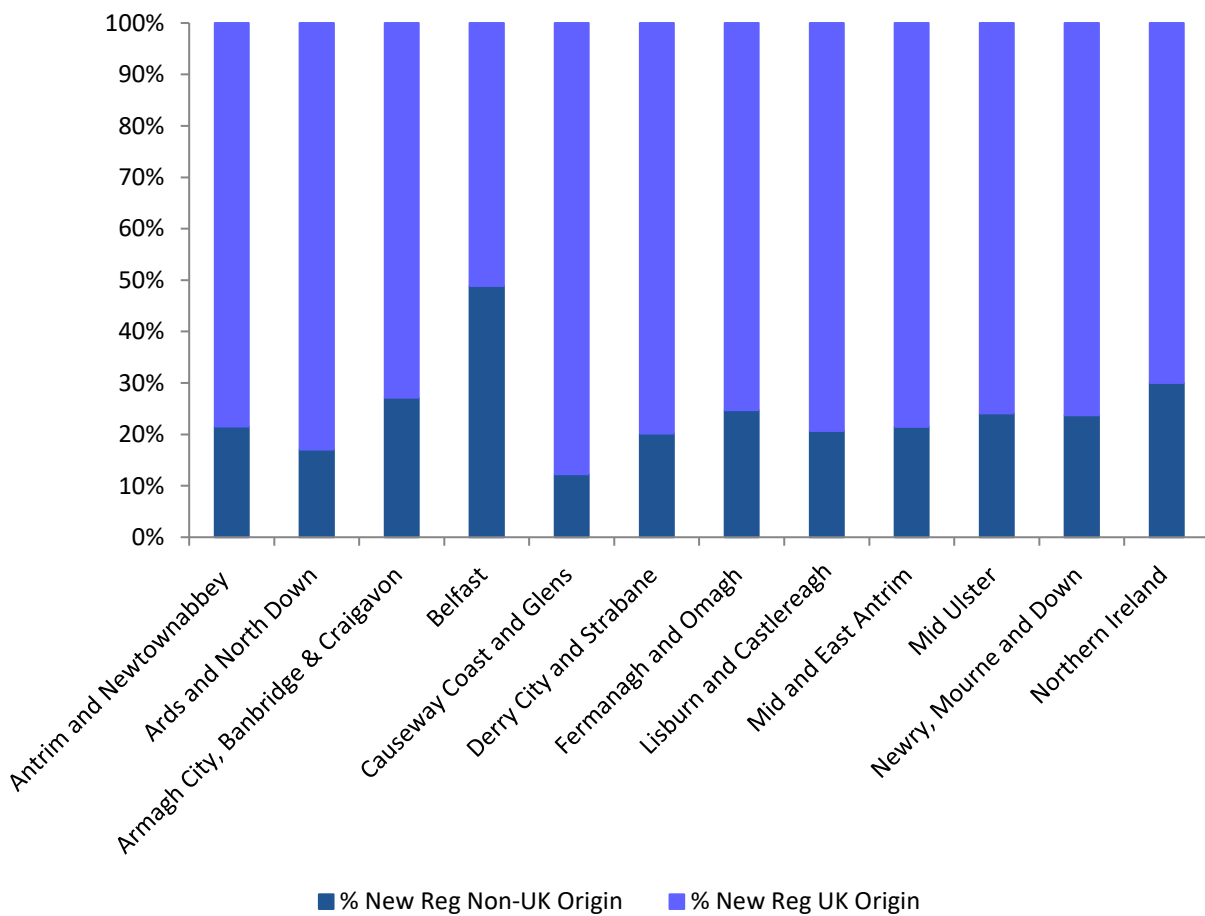


Figure 3.5: New (first time in NI) GP Registrations by UK Nationals and non-UK Nationals, by Local Government District, 2021/2022

[See Annex Tables 1.1e and 1.1h](#)

4. BSO Payments towards GP Services

This section contains basic summary statistics on payments processed by BSO towards the overall cost of GP Services in Northern Ireland.

4.1 BSO Payments by Local Commissioning group (Health Trust)

During 2021/2022, BSO processed £342.7m of payments towards the overall cost of GP services in Northern Ireland.

Fig 4.1 presents BSO payment towards GP services by Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust). At £81 million, GP Practices located in the Northern Local Commissioning Group received the highest payment towards GP services. GP Practices located in South Eastern received the lowest payment towards GP services (£55.5 million).

The average BSO payment towards GP services per registered patient for 2021/2022 was £169, an increase of £11 per patient since 2020/2021. This increase can be attributed to factors such as annual uplifts to Global Sum and GP Federation Payments as well as payments made due to Covid-19 e.g. vaccine rollout.

At Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust) level, the highest average payment towards GP services per registered patient was £184 in Western while the lowest was £161 in Southern.

Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust)	Payment towards GP services (£ m)	Average payment per patient (£)
Northern	81.0	169
Belfast	75.6	171
Southern	69.1	161
Western	61.5	184
South Eastern	55.5	164
Northern Ireland	342.7	169

Figure 4.1: BSO payments towards GP services, by Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust) of GP Practice in receipt of payment, 2021/2022

Factors that can influence variation in payment towards GP services per patient include age profile of patients, additional services available, level of deprivation, rent and rates variation, locum use, trial programs etc.

4.2 BSO Payments by Local Government District

Fig 4.2 presents BSO payment towards GP services by Local Government District (LGD). GP Practices located in the Belfast LGD, which comprises more than one fifth of Northern Ireland's registered patients, received the highest payment towards GP services (£73.9 million), more than twice the amount received by the next highest recipients (GP Practices located in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon: £36.1m). At £18.2m, practices located in Lisburn & Castlereagh, the LGD with the smallest number of registered patients, received the lowest payment towards GP services.

In terms of payment per registered patient, the highest amount was £190 per registered patient in Derry City & Strabane while the lowest was £152 in Lisburn & Castlereagh. GP Practices located in Ards & North Down saw the largest increase in payment per patient from 2020/2021 (11.0%) while those in Derry City & Strabane had the smallest increase (4.4%).

Local Government District	Payment towards GP services (£ m)	Average payment per patient (£)
Belfast	73.9	171
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	36.1	159
Newry, Mourne & Down	34.0	176
Derry City & Strabane	33.3	190
Causeway Coast & Glens	27.6	184
Ards & North Down	26.6	162
Mid Ulster	25.7	163
Mid & East Antrim	24.7	170
Fermanagh & Omagh	21.8	175
Antrim & Newtownabbey	20.7	156
Lisburn & Castlereagh	18.2	152
Northern Ireland	342.7	169

Figure 4.2: BSO payments towards GP services, by Local Government District of GP Practice in receipt of payment, 2021/2022

4.3 BSO Payments by GP Federation

Fig 4.3 presents BSO payment towards GP services by GP Federation. Given the Derry GP Federation has the largest number of registered patients, it is unsurprising that GP Practices located here also recorded the highest total payment towards GP services (£38.9m). At £188, the Derry and Down GP Federations recorded the joint highest average payment per registered patient during 2021/2022. West Belfast (£186) and Causeway (£184) GP Federations also show average payments per registered patient in excess of £180.

GP Practices located in the Mid-Ulster and North Down GP Federations received the lowest total BSO payment towards GP services during 2020/2021 (£13.1m). Practices located in the Craigavon and Lisburn GP Federations (both £150), followed by those in the South Belfast GP Federation (£152) recorded the lowest average payment per registered patient during the financial year.

GP Federation	Payment towards GP services (£ m)	Average payment per patient (£)
Derry	38.9	188
Newry & District	26.7	167
East Antrim	23.9	159
Armagh & Dungannon	22.9	167
Antrim Ballymena	22.7	170
South West	22.5	176
Craigavon	20.8	150
North Belfast	20.1	178
Causeway	20.0	184
East Belfast	19.7	173
South Belfast	18.5	152
West Belfast	17.2	186
Down	14.7	188
Lisburn	14.2	150
Ards	13.5	167
Mid-Ulster	13.1	164
North Down	13.1	156
Northern Ireland	342.7	169

Figure 4.3: BSO payments towards GP services, by GP Federation of GP Practice in receipt of payment, 2021/2022

5. General Medical Services UK Comparisons

This section contains General Medical Services comparisons with other UK nations. Data for GPs reflect what is reported at Northern Ireland level i.e. headcount and includes Unrestricted Principals or Equivalents (UPEs), Salaried GPs and Retainers.

5.1 GPs by Gender UK Comparisons

Like Northern Ireland, the gender profiles of GPs in England, Scotland and Wales are majority female. The proportion of GPs that are female ranges from 61% in Scotland to 58% in England. The proportion presented in Figure 5.1 for Wales (57% female) relates to 2019/2020 (the most recently available data). It should be noted that proportions are calculated using headcount meaning individual work patterns are not reflected.

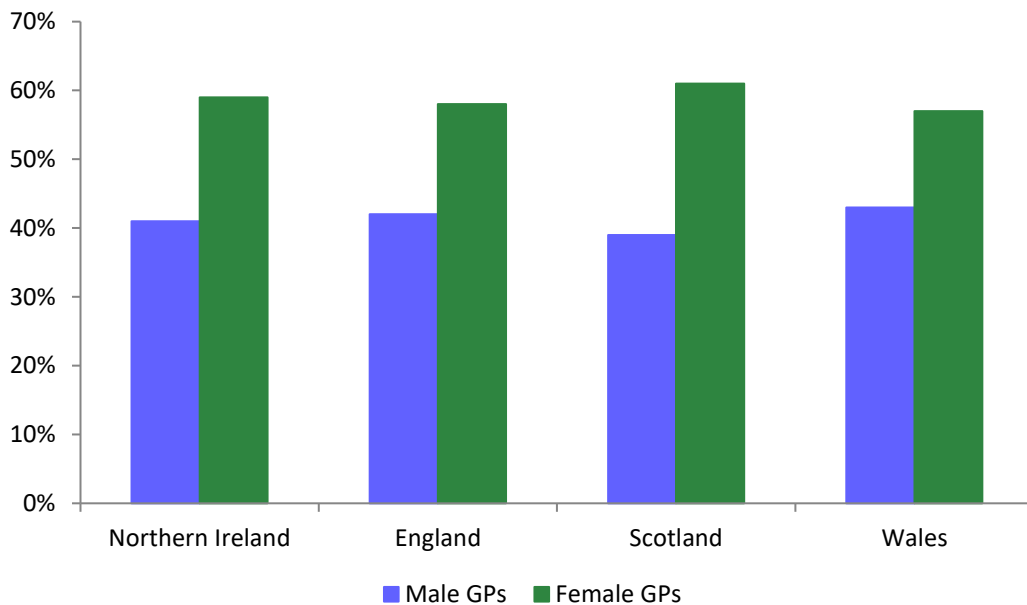


Figure 5.1: GPs by Gender, 2021/2022* (*data for Wales relates to 2019/2020)

[See Annex Table 1.8a](#)

5.2 GPs per head of population UK Comparisons

Scotland has the highest headcount number of GPs per 100,000 registered patients (78.5) followed by Northern Ireland (70.2). Wales had 61.4 GPs per 100,000 registered patients while England had the lowest ratio at 58.0.

	GP per 100,000 population
Scotland	78.5
Northern Ireland	70.2
Wales	61.4
England	58.0

Figure 5.2: GPs per 100,000 registered patients, 2021/2022* (*data for Wales relates to 2020/2021)

5.3 GP Practices per head of population UK Comparisons

Scotland and Northern Ireland (both 15.8) have more GP Practices per 100,000 registered patients than Wales (12.3) and England (10.5). GP Practices vary in size and number of live GP contracts associated with them. This means comparisons using this measure have to be treated with a degree of caution.

	GP practices per 100,000 population
Scotland	15.8
Northern Ireland	15.8
Wales	12.3
England	10.5

Figure 5.3: GP Practices per 100,000 registered patients, 2021/2022* (*data for Wales relates to 2020/2021)

Publication Notes

Family Practitioner Services

Family Practitioner Services (FPS) is part of the BSO's Operations Directorate. It provides a range of essential services to Health and Social Care organisations, primary care contractors and patients.

FPS calculates payments to health professionals in the dental, pharmacy, general practice and ophthalmic sectors through Northern Ireland. It also maintains the central register of patients registered with GP Practices in Northern Ireland, issuing medical cards and processing changes such as name, address and doctor.

It provides professional advice, support and information to customers and members of the public and maintains the pharmaceutical, dental and the Northern Ireland Primary Medical Performers lists. FPS also provides the call and recall services for breast, cervical and bowel cancer screening in Northern Ireland.

Next edition

This publication is issued annually. It is expected that the next edition shall be published in June 2023. In the interim, quarterly tables are published separately [here](#). The quarterly figures are provisional until the annual publication for that year issues, at which point they are finalised. The release calendar for future statistical publications is available on the [BSO website](#).

Technical Notes

Target Audience

The target audience for this publication has been defined as: the Department of Health, Strategic Planning and Performance Group (formerly HSC Board) and Health Trusts in Northern Ireland, health professionals, academics, HSC Stakeholders, the media and the general public.

Main usages

This publication contains National Statistics on General Medical Services for the most recent financial year (and earlier years where available on a comparable basis).

They can be used to monitor trends in General Medical Services over time and across Northern Ireland.

The information can be used to support decision making, inform policy, provide advice to ministers, answer a wide range of Assembly Questions and Freedom of Information requests, for national and local press articles and, where appropriate, for international comparison.

Data Quality Summary

Figures presented for GPs refer to Unrestricted Principals or Equivalents (UPEs), Salaried GPs and Retainers and do not include Locums. GP numbers are based on headcount and do not therefore reflect changes in working patterns. GP Practice characteristics vary in terms of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) number of GPs assigned to a practice, number of sites a practice operates from, and number of patients registered to a practice.

The count of registered patients is based on live registrations at the 31st March each year. There may be a lag between a patient presenting themselves at a GP Practice and completion of registration. This lag may be greater for patients who have to provide

additional documentation as proof of entitlement to services. Similarly for deductions, there may be a lag in removing individuals from the index of registered patients.

There are differences between the figures for GP Registered Patients and residential population. At March 2021, the number of individuals on the index of registered patients was approximately 5.5% higher than the Northern Ireland population in the same month, as measured by the 2021 Census.

This discrepancy can arise from a number of factors, for example, time lags in removing patients from GP lists following death or emigration, Cross Border Workers registered with a Northern Ireland GP, or registered patients not completing the 2021 Census.

GP Registered Patient counts by Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust), Local Government District and GP Federation are based on the location of the practice the patient is registered to as opposed to the patient's home address.

In cases where a GP Practice is split over more than one site it is only counted as one practice and data presented including average patient counts per practice and distance to nearest practice are based on the Primary Practice.

BSO Payment towards GP Services presented in this report refers to the payments that BSO has processed on behalf of Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), replaced by the Strategic Planning and Performance Group in April 2022, towards the overall cost of GP Services in Northern Ireland. This expenditure relates to payments processed in a given year and not the cost of the service provided in that year.

Further details relating to Data Quality are provided [here](#) in the Background Quality Report and the FPS Quality Assurance of Administrative Data Report.

National/International comparisons

This publication contains comparisons between General Medical Services in Northern Ireland and other regions of the United Kingdom. The comparative data is available from the following sources:

England

[Statistics on General Medical Services](#)

Wales

[Statistics on General Medical Services](#)

Scotland

[Statistics on General Medical Services](#)

Further Information

Further information about Northern Ireland and its health services, which may assist readers in interpreting this publication, is available from the following sources:

[BSO GP Prescribing data](#)

[BSO data on HSC Pharmacy Services](#)

[Department of Health information relating to Community Pharmacists](#)

[BSO Quarterly GP Practice List Sizes](#)

[NISRA demographic statistics on the population of Northern Ireland, including mid-year estimates and population projections](#)

[Results | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

[The Honest Broker Service \(Providing Access to Health Care Data to internal HSCNI and External Researchers\)](#)