Introduction

This publication describes NHS-funded outpatient activity in England in 2017-18.

The data source for this publication is Hospital Episode Statistics (HES).

Records in the HES Outpatient database are called ‘appointments’. There is one row per appointment, regardless of whether or not it is attended. Appointments which are attended are called ‘attendances’. A patient is often invited to a series of appointments, the first of which is known as the ‘first appointment’. An individual patient may have more than one series of attendances in a given period, so first appointments are not the same as a count of patients.

For the 2017-18 financial year, HES has collected over 119 million records detailing outpatient appointments at NHS hospitals in England or performed in the independent sector, and commissioned by the English NHS.
In 2017-18, there were 119.4 million outpatient appointments, of which 93.5 million were attended by patients.

Outpatient appointments (66.6 million to 119.4 million) and attended appointments (54.4 million to 93.5 million) have both nearly doubled between 2007-08 to 2017-18.

Source: NHS Digital

For more information: Summary Report 1, Hospital outpatient activity, 2017-18
Summary of outpatient appointments and attendances, 2007-08 to 2017-18

Attendances, whether first or subsequent, as a proportion of total appointments has decreased over the period from 81.6 per cent in 2007-08 to 78.4 per cent in 2017-18.

Source: NHS Digital

For more information: Summary Report 2, Hospital outpatient activity, 2017-18
Outpatient appointments for selected attendance types, 2007-08 to 2017-18

The number of appointments where the patient ‘Did not attend’ continues to be less than that for Hospital or Patient Cancellations.

Between 2007-08 and 2017-18 ‘Did not attend’s have increased by 44 per cent. Whereas Hospital and Patient Cancellations have almost trebled in the same period with increases of 175 per cent and 172 per cent respectively.

Source: NHS Digital
For more information: Summary Report 3, Hospital outpatient activity, 2017-18
Percentages of outpatient appointments by attendance type, 2007-08 to 2017-18

The proportion of attendances has **decreased** from **81.6 per cent** in 2007-08 to **78.4 per cent** in 2017-18

The proportion of attendances which were not attended by the patient without notice (‘did not attend’) **declined** over the period from **8.3 per cent** in 2007-08 to **6.7 per cent** in 2017-18

However, the proportion of all appointments that were cancelled by either the hospital or patient has **increased**, from **9.6 per cent** to **14.6 per cent** over the same period

Source: NHS Digital

For more information: **Summary Report 4, Hospital outpatient activity, 2017-18**
The North of England recorded the most outpatient activity with the highest numbers of both attendances with 26.9 million (28.7 per cent) and appointments with 33.4 million (28.0 per cent).

London has recorded the lowest outpatient activity with 17.7 million attendances (19.0 per cent) and 23.4 million appointments (19.6 per cent).

For more information: Summary Report 5, Hospital outpatient activity, 2017-18
Proportion of 1st attendances and subsequent attendances by Region, 2017-18

The Midlands and East of England recorded the highest number of first attendances with 8.6 million (29.2 per cent).

Whilst subsequent attendances in the North of England recorded the most activity with 19.1 million (29.8 per cent).

Source: NHS Digital

For more information: Summary Report 6, Hospital outpatient activity, 2017-18
Five Treatment Specialties with the greatest number of attendances with the corresponding non-attendances, 2017-18

Ophthalmology, Trauma & Orthopaedics and Physiotherapy specialities have recorded the highest levels of attendances in 2017-18 with 7.6 million, 7.5 million and 5.0 million attendances respectively.

The five most common treatment specialties account for 30 per cent of all outpatient attendances.

Diagnostic Imaging recorded the lowest ratio between attended and did not attend appointments with approximately 83 attendances for each appointment where the patient did not attend.

Source: NHS Digital
For more information: Summary Report 7, Hospital outpatient activity, 2017-18
Women comprised 54.0 million attendances (57.8 per cent), compared to 39.4 million for men (42.2 per cent).

For women, the age group with greatest number of attendances was 30-34 years; for men it was 70-74 years.

In general, numbers of attendances for women aged 20 to 39 years were higher than those for adjoining age groups.

38.9 percent of attendances for women in this age range were for maternity services, defined as where the treatment specialty was either ‘Obstetrics’ or ‘Midwife Episode’.
Outpatient did not attends by age and gender, 2017-18

4.3 million (54.1 per cent) of did not attends were for females with a corresponding 3.7 million (46.0 per cent) for males.

The young adult phase, 20-39 years old, accounts for the largest proportion (34.6 per cent) among females.

For males, 40-59 years has the corresponding proportion primacy (27.5 per cent).

Source: NHS Digital
For more information: Summary Report 9, Hospital outpatient activity, 2017-18
Rate of 1st attendance per 100,000 population by IMD decile, 2017-18

The IMD decile with the highest attendance rate was 'more deprived 20-30%' with just over 80,000 attendances per 100,000 people.

The 'more deprived 40-50%' group had the lowest rate with just under 33,000 attendances per 100,000 people.

The 'more deprived 10-20%' group had the highest volume of 1st attendances (3.1 million).

Source: NHS Digital

For more information: Summary Report 10, Hospital Outpatient Activity 2017-18
Rate of 1st attendance by ethnicity (grouped) for every 100,000 population and proportion of 1st attendances against all attendances, 2017-18

Source: NHS Digital

For more information: Summary Report 11, Hospital Outpatient Activity 2017-18

Around one-third of attendances were first attendances for all ethnic groups.

The ‘Other’ ethnic group recorded both the highest proportion of 1st attendances (31.5 per cent) against all attended appointments within the ethnic group (2.3 million) and the highest rate of 1st attendances by population with just over 96,000 for every 100,000 people.
Rate of did not attends (DNAs) by ethnicity (grouped) for every 100,000 per population, 2017-18

The ‘Black’ ethnic group recorded the highest proportion of did not attends (11.2 per cent) against all appointments within the ethnic group (3.7 million).

‘Other’ ethnic group recorded the highest rate of did not attends by population with just under 35,000 for every 100,000 people.

Source: NHS Digital
For more information: Summary Report 12, Hospital Outpatient Activity 2017-18
Additional Information

Further guidance and associated documentation