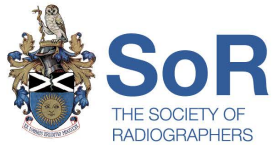


SoR Diagnostic Radiography Workforce Census 2025

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Foreword

Each year the Society of Radiographers (SoR) undertakes a UK-wide diagnostic radiography workforce census to gain intelligence about the clinical imaging radiography workforce.

SoR is the professional body and trade union for the radiographic workforce, and we collect this data to support and advance the interests of our profession, for example as evidence to the Pay Review Body. We publish this report publicly to ensure the findings are widely available to all stakeholders.

We collect data that encompasses the whole of the radiographic workforce, from clinical support workers to advanced and consultant practitioners. Our data also allows recognition of the breadth of professional activities carried out by our workforce over and above the activities of imaging acquisition and reporting, allowing us to provide evidence to support workforce modelling, education and training requirements across the whole of the United Kingdom.

This census focuses on the diagnostic radiography workforce. A separate survey is published for the therapeutic radiography workforce.

As ever, the census collection was undertaken at a time when services were facing significant pressures, with an increasing demand for imaging services. We would like to express our sincere thanks to those services who submitted their data.



Executive summary

- The SoR Diagnostic Radiography Workforce Census 2025 provides a UK-wide snapshot of the diagnostic radiography workforce as of 1 May 2025. The census is undertaken annually to generate robust workforce intelligence to support service planning, education and training, professional development, and national policy discussions, including submissions to Pay Review Bodies. Data were collected between May and July 2025 from 54 responding organisations across NHS England, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales, Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI), and the independent sector, representing just over one third of NHS services. As such, the findings should be interpreted with caution, and overall workforce figures are likely to be higher.
- The workforce continues to be concentrated at Agenda for Change (AfC) bands 5, 6 and 7, with band 6 representing the largest proportion of the establishment. Advanced (bands 8a–8d) and consultant-level roles remain a smaller but important component of the workforce, supporting service leadership, specialist practice, research, education and service development.
- Vacancy rates remain a significant concern. Across all respondents, the average vacancy rate was highest in NHS England at 9.2%, with lower but still notable vacancy rates in HSCNI (7.3%), NHS Scotland (6.7%) and NHS Wales (6.1%). Vacancies were reported across all AfC bands, particularly at bands 5, 6 and 7, reflecting persistent recruitment and retention challenges within core practitioner and senior practitioner roles.
- Staff turnover continues to place pressure on services. Respondents reported diagnostic radiography leavers between 1 May 2024 and 30 April 2025, with the most commonly cited reasons including career development or promotion within another imaging department or education institution, retirement, personal reasons, and movement into agency or independent sector work. Although professional progression remains a positive indicator of workforce development, it also contributes to staffing gaps in frontline services and highlights the limited capacity for succession planning within constrained establishments.
- Internationally educated radiographers form an important component of the diagnostic radiography workforce, with most respondents reporting that between 0% and 20% of their workforce trained outside the UK. This



underscores the continued reliance on international recruitment to sustain services, alongside the need for robust induction, supervision and ongoing professional support.

- Apprenticeships are contributing to workforce supply in England, particularly within the support and assistant workforce and at diagnostic radiographer degree level. However, take-up remains variable, and apprenticeship routes are not applicable across the devolved nations, limiting their overall impact on UK-wide workforce sustainability.
- The census highlights the substantial proportion of time staff spend in direct clinical contact, particularly practitioners and support staff. More senior and advanced roles reported lower levels of direct clinical time, reflecting their additional responsibilities in leadership, education, research and service improvement. This finding reinforces the importance of recognising the full scope of radiographic practice when planning workforce capacity and funded establishments.
- Education and training capacity remains limited. Respondents reported a total of 70.35 WTE practice educator and learning support posts, with wide variation between organisations. The proportion of staff participating in postgraduate education and training was generally low, especially within registered staff groups, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of advanced and specialist roles.
- Overall, the 2025 census reinforces long-standing concerns that funded diagnostic radiography establishments have not kept pace with rising demand for imaging services. Respondents consistently reported that apparent recruitment stability does not equate to adequate capacity, with services continuing to operate under significant pressure. The findings emphasise an urgent need for investment in workforce growth, education and career development to ensure safe, effective and sustainable diagnostic imaging services across the UK.



Methodology

The 2025 workforce census captures data about the diagnostic radiography workforce in the UK at a census date of 1 May 2025. Radiology service managers (or equivalents) were asked to respond on behalf of all diagnostic radiography (clinical imaging) services in their hospital, workplace or organisation.

They were asked to include details of all practitioners and their levels of practice as documented in the College of Radiographers [Education and Career Framework](#), from clinical support workers and assistant practitioners through to advanced and consultant practitioners, including apprenticeship posts (England only) and trainee assistant practitioners. Together, these are referred to as the 'diagnostic radiography workforce' in this report.

Excluded are clerical workers, clinical scientists, therapeutic radiography staff, nursing colleagues and third-party managed services where the staff are employed by a third party.

Respondents were asked about their:

- Contact details and details of the workplaces and medical imaging modalities on behalf of which they were responding
- Total diagnostic radiography workforce establishment (whole time equivalent) by Agenda for Change (AfC) band
- Establishment per reported by AfC band (or equivalent) and career framework
- Vacancy rates by AfC band or equivalent
- Leavers (headcount) and reasons for leaving
- Internationally educated radiographers
- Apprenticeships
- Clinical contact time
- Education and training
- Practice educator posts
- Agency staff data
- Additional comments



Data collection was carried out using the online survey tool Alchemer® between May 2025 and July 2025. Email invitations were sent to 147 providers of medical imaging services in the UK, identified using the SoR's database.

The census was also promoted via the Society and College of Radiographers (SoR | CoR) publications, website and social media.

The graphs and tables are based on responses from 54 participants representing the following sectors: HSCNI, NHS England, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales, and the independent sector.

Breakdown of respondents:

- HSCNI: $n = 5$
- NHS England: $n = 40$
- NHS Scotland: $n = 5$
- NHS Wales: $n = 2$
- Independent sector: $n = 2$

Due to the relatively low number of returns, which represent approximately one third of NHS services, any assumptions made regarding the main findings are based purely on the number of responses received.

Furthermore, please treat figures for NHS Wales and the independent sector with caution due to low response numbers. Where $n = 52$, this refers to the combined UK country responses (HSCNI, NHS England, NHS Scotland and NHS Wales). Where $n = 54$, this refers to the total workforce, inclusive of independent sector responses.



Total establishment by band

Respondents were asked to report the diagnostic radiography workforce establishment, in whole time equivalents (WTE), as of 1 May 2025. The table and graphs below present this information by UK country and independent sector, and by AfC band or equivalent for independent sector providers.

Category/ AfC band	2	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	8c	8d	9	N/A	Total	Average
HSCNI	0	46.66	16.2	75.52	207.66	140.55	23.45	5	0	0	0	0	515.0	103.0
NHS England	589.0	547.7	222.3	790.7	1850.8	1258.7	284.9	73.5	40.0	6.0	1.0	6.0	5670.8	141.8
NHS Scotland	0.0	72.9	9.1	84.2	212.1	72.1	32.1	4.4	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	487.9	97.6
NHS Wales	41.1	14.6	9.0	46.0	120.4	50.1	11.8	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	297.2	148.6
UK total	630.1	635.3	240.4	920.9	2183.3	1380.8	328.9	82.2	41.0	6.0	1.0	6.0	6970.9	580.9
Independent sector	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.8	4.1	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.5	9.7
Total workforce	630.8	635.3	240.4	920.9	2196.0	1384.9	330.8	82.2	41.0	6.0	1.0	6.0	6475.4	397.7

Table1. Total and average establishment by AfC band — total workforce (n=54).



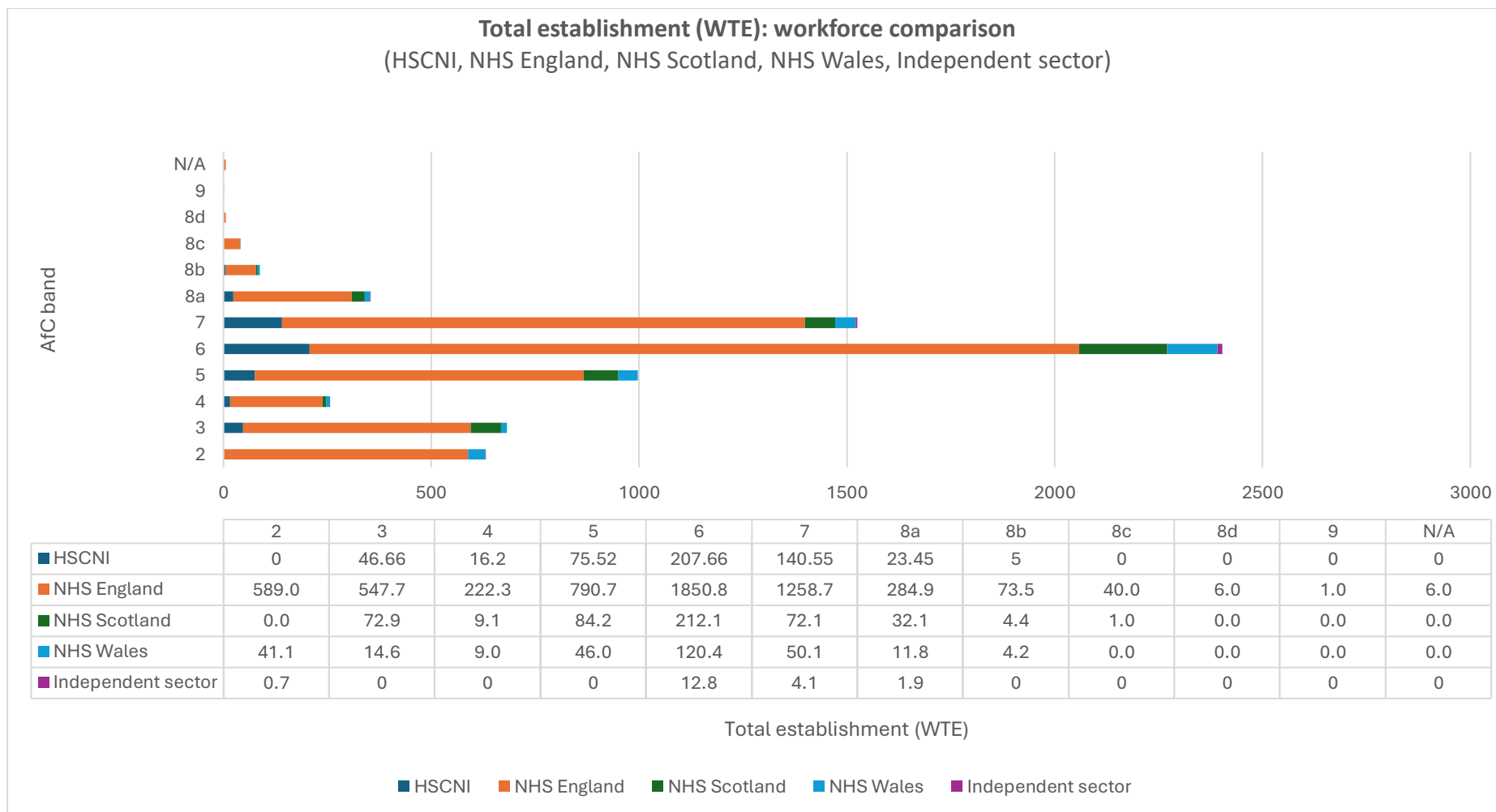


Figure 1. Total diagnostic radiography workforce establishment (WTE) comparison across UK countries, including independent sector, by AfC band or equivalent for independent sector (n=54).



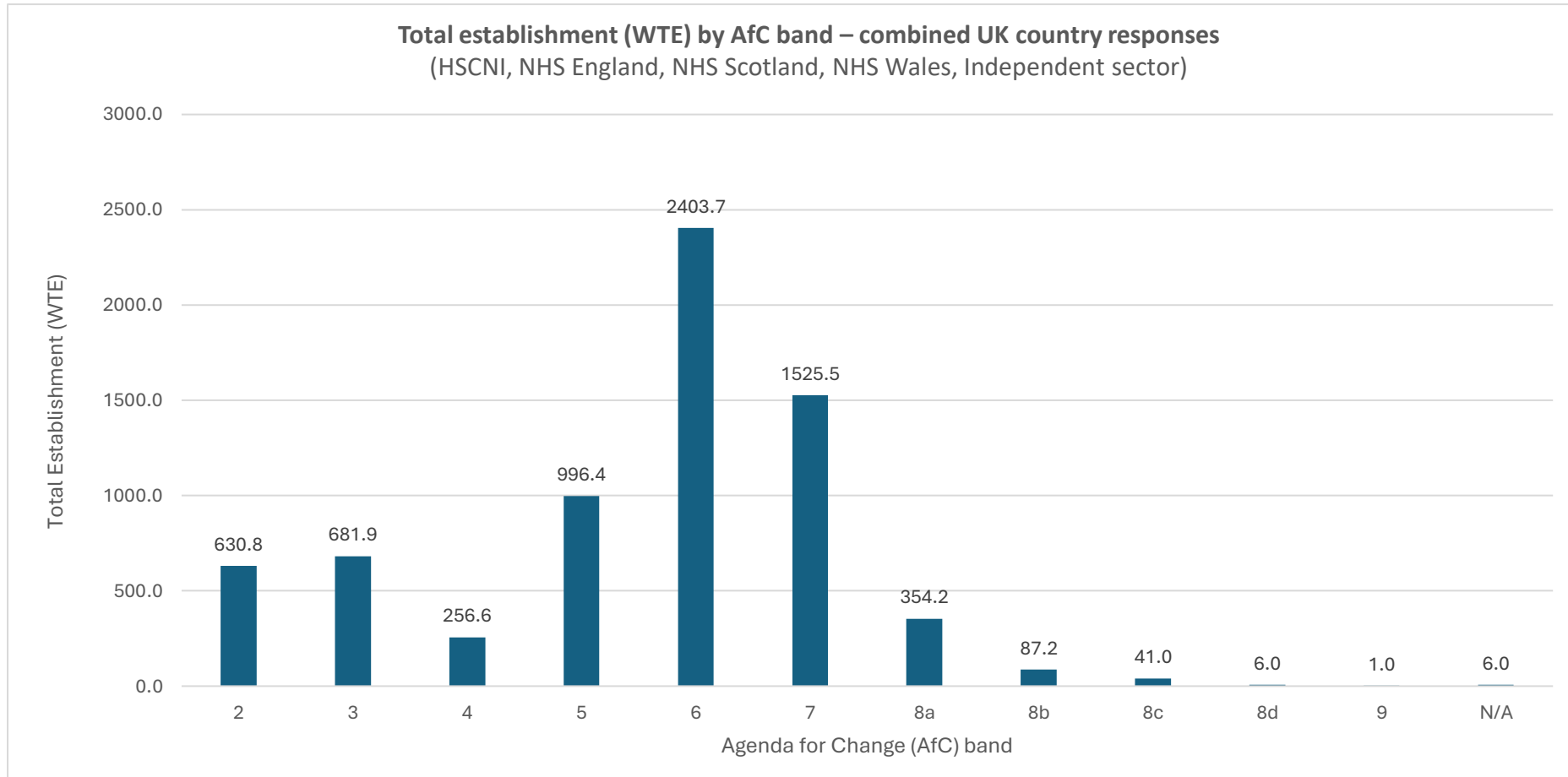


Figure 2. Total diagnostic radiography workforce establishment (WTE) for UK countries, including independent sector, by AfC band or equivalent for independent sector (n=54).



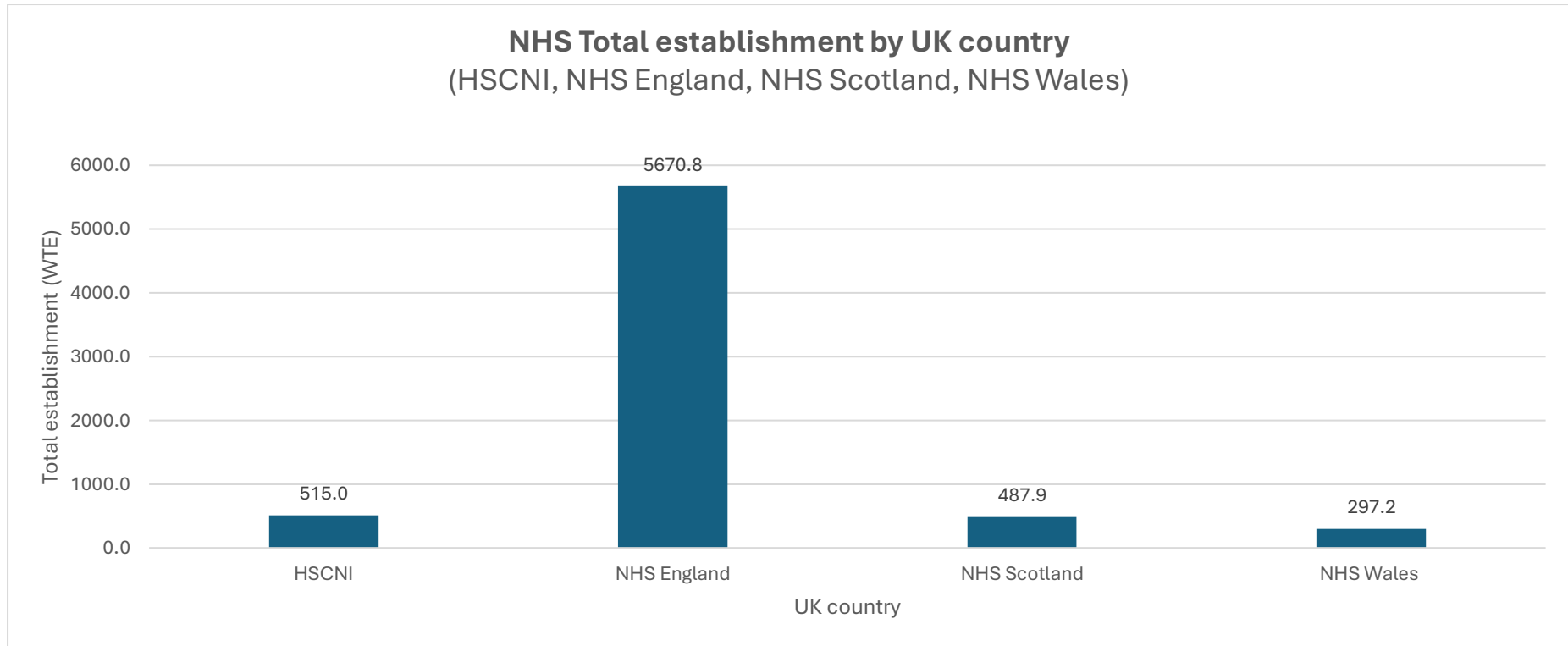


Figure 3. Total diagnostic radiography workforce establishment (WTE) by UK country (n=52).



Total establishment by career framework

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their establishment by career framework level. Please note that the practitioner, enhanced practitioner, advanced practitioner and consultant practitioner categories include the following roles: radiographer, sonographer, nuclear medicine technologist, and mammographer.

Career framework	NHS England	HSCNI	NHS Scotland	NHS Wales	Independent sector
Clinical support worker	18%	8%	18%	18%	11%
Senior Clinical support worker	8%	3%	8%	8%	5%
Assistant Practitioner	8%	8%	5%	6%	5%
Practitioner	53%	35%	27%	40%	0
Enhanced Practitioner	22%	36%	12%	0%	11%
Advanced Practitioner	15%	17%	8%	0%	8%
Consultant Practitioner	5%	1%	5%	5%	5%

Table 2. Average estimated percentage of establishment by career framework across all respondents (n=54).



Vacancies (WTE)

Respondents were asked to report the diagnostic radiography workforce posts that were vacant (WTE) as of 1 May 2025. The table and graphs below present this information by AfC band and by UK country and sector. The vacancy rate is defined as the total number of WTE vacancies as a percentage of the WTE establishment number of staff.

Category/AfC band	2	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	8c	8d	9	N/A	Vacant WTE	Vacancy rate
HSCNI	0	7	0	8.6	15.8	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	37.4	7.3%
NHS England	82.5	37.9	24.4	93.0	135.4	118.6	19.0	6.9	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	523.5	9.2%
NHS Scotland	0.0	8.1	0.0	6.6	10.9	4.0	3.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	32.7	6.7%
NHS Wales	1	2	1	5	7.2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	18.2	6.1%
Independent sector	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	5.1%

Table 3. Vacancies (WTE) by AfC band — total workforce (n=54).



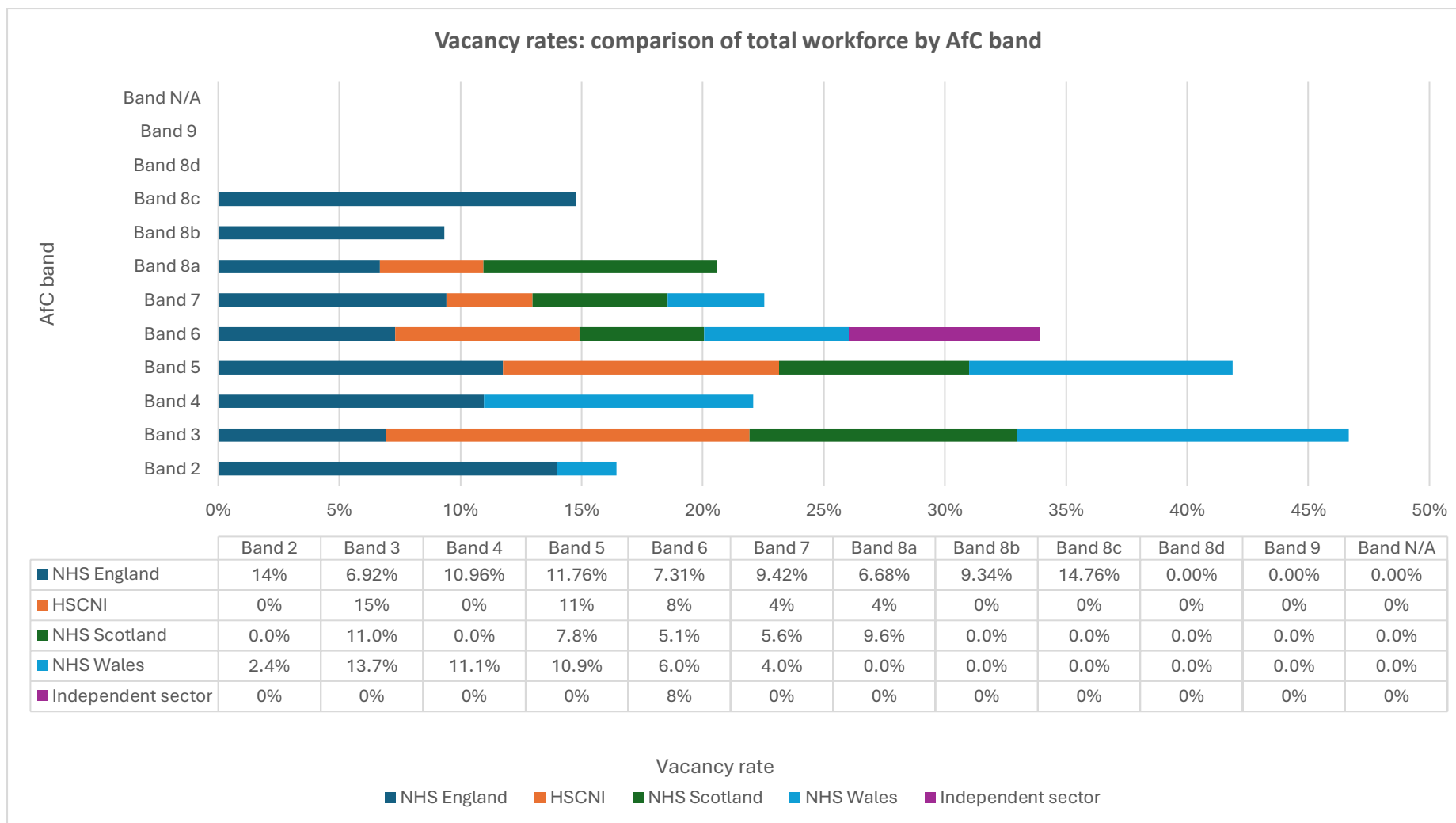


Figure 4. Comparison of total workforce vacancy rates (n=54).



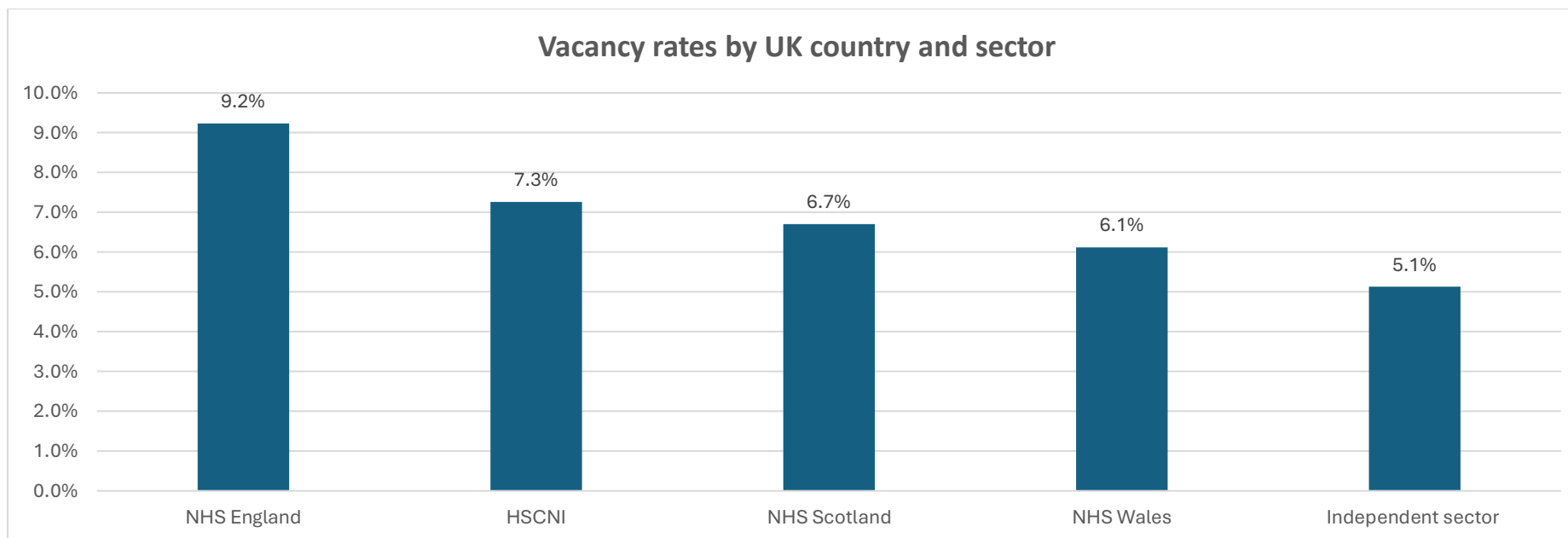


Figure 5. Vacancy rates by UK country and sector (n=54).



Leavers

Respondents were asked to report the number of diagnostic radiography workforce posts (headcount) where the postholder left between 1 May 2024 and 30 April 2025. They were then asked to indicate the reason(s) for leaving that applied to their establishment from a predefined list. The table and graph below presents leaver reasons by UK country and independent sector (headcount).

Reason for postholder leaving	HSCNI	NHS England	NHS Scotland	NHS Wales	Independent sector
No postholders have left	1	1	1	1	1
Career development or promotion within another NHS imaging department OR education institution	3	30	3	1	2
Left to undertake work as an agency or independent sector radiographer	2	12	0	1	0
Left profession entirely	2	6	1	1	0
Personal reasons	2	19	2	1	1
Reasons unknown	1	7	0	0	0
Retirement	2	20	3	0	0
Other	1	9	0	0	0

Table 4. Reasons for leaving (n=48).



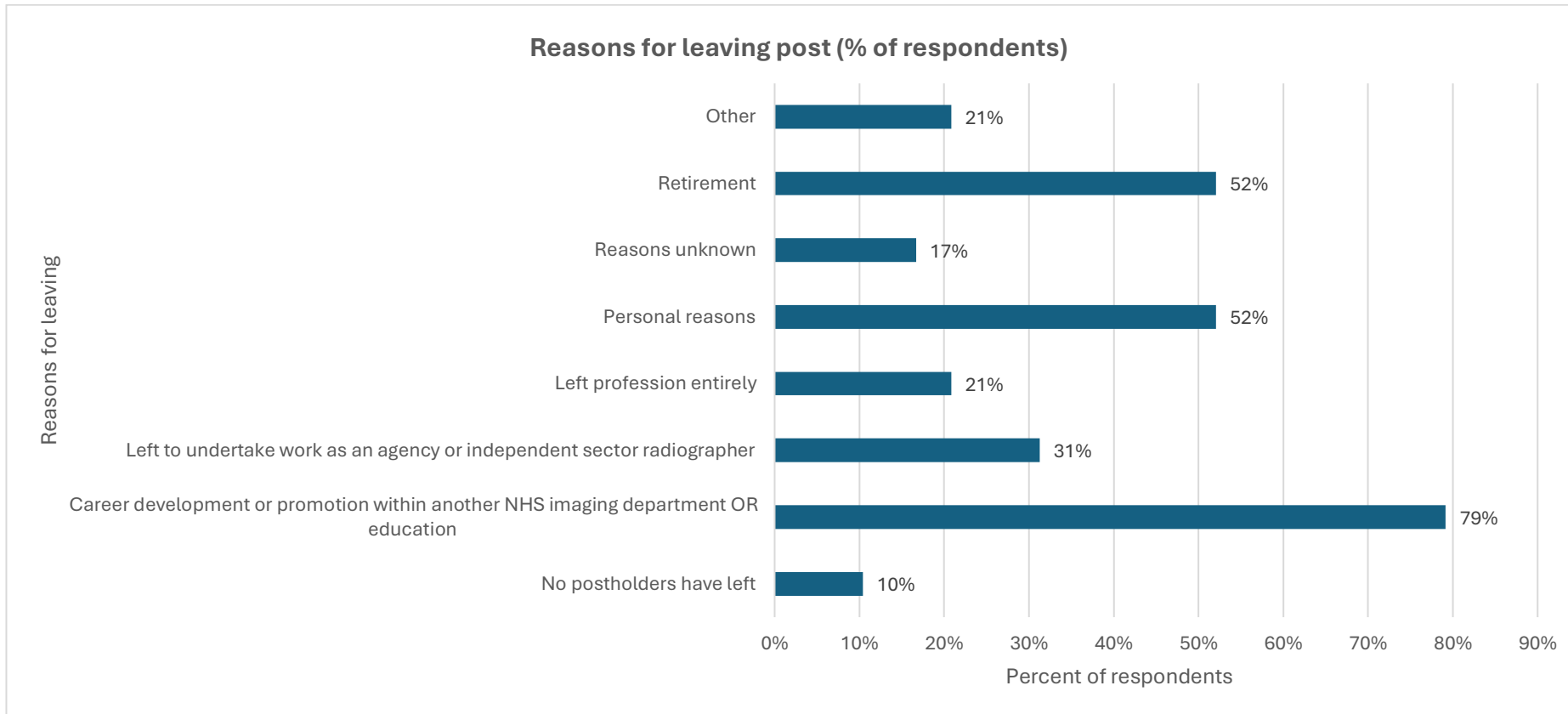


Figure 6. Reasons for leaving post shown as a percentage of respondents to this question (n=48)*.

* Multiple responses were permitted, so total percentage may exceed 100%.

The graph below shows the number of postholders (WTE) who left between 1 May 2024 and 30 April 2025 separated by UK country and sector.



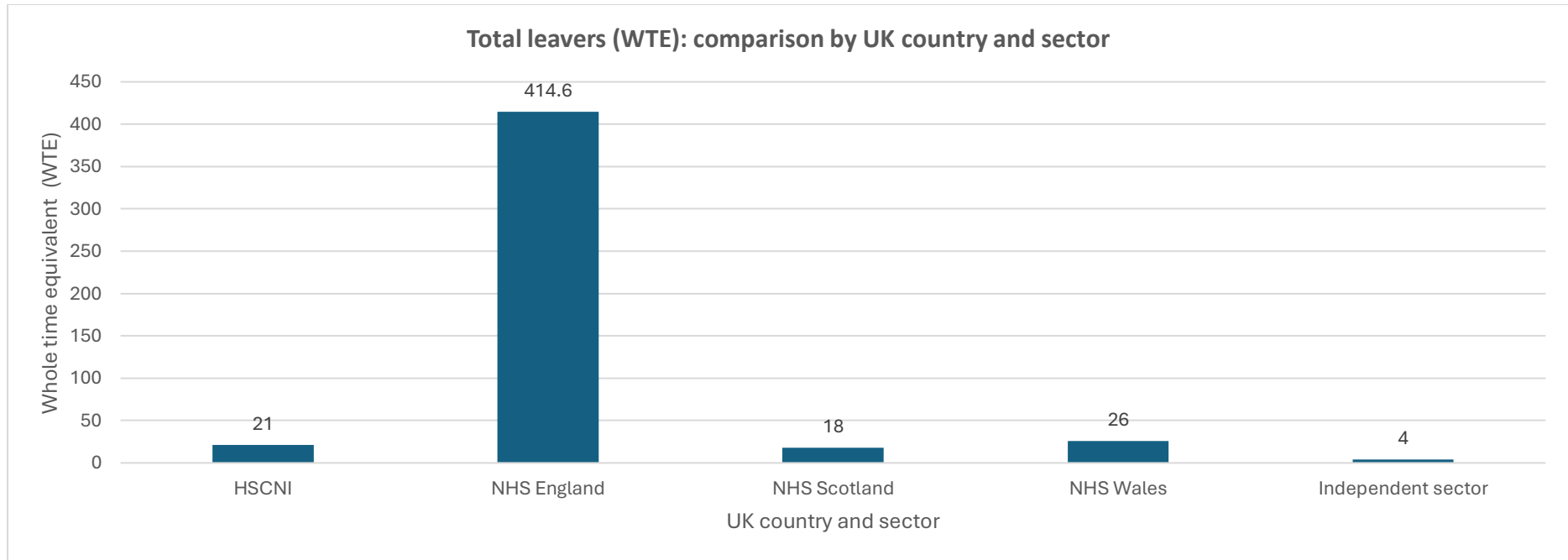


Figure 7. Total leavers (WTE) by UK country and sector (n=48).



Internationally educated radiographers

Respondents were asked to indicate the percentage of internationally educated radiographers within their workforce. Figure 8 shows how frequently each percentage was reported.

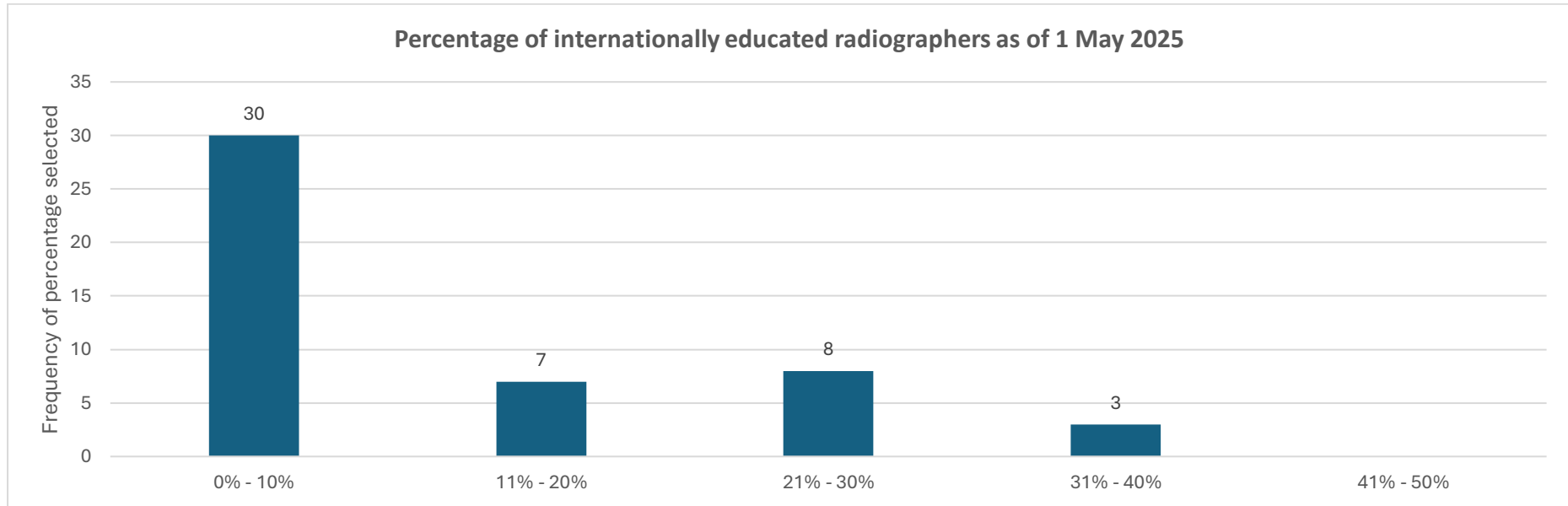


Figure 8. Percentage of internationally educated radiographers in the workforce by frequency of selection (n=48).



Apprenticeships

Respondents, in England, were asked to provide information on apprenticeship posts within the radiography support and assistant workforce under the career framework. Table 5 gives a full breakdown of the data submitted. Although specific apprenticeship levels were not requested, the responses include posts for support workforce apprenticeships, diagnostic radiographer apprenticeships and sonographer apprenticeships. Of the NHS England respondents, 17 reported having apprenticeship posts.

Support workforce apprenticeship posts as of 1 May 2025	Frequency of selection	Diagnostic radiographer apprenticeship posts as of 1 May 2025	Frequency of selection
Clinical support worker	3	Diagnostic radiographer integrated degree	15
Senior healthcare support worker	1	Enhanced clinical practitioner	2
Mammography associate	6	Advanced clinical practitioner	0
Healthcare assistant practitioner	9	Sonographer degree	3

Table 5. Support workforce and diagnostic radiographer apprenticeship posts (England) as of 1 May 2025 (n=17).

Respondents reported 7 additional apprenticeship posts as of 1 May 2025 that were not listed in Table 5.



Clinical contact time

Respondents were asked to estimate, in an average working week, the approximate percentage of time staff groups spend in direct clinical contact with patients. This excludes time spent on leadership and management, service improvement and research, education, training, and development which are essential components of roles to support high-quality service delivery.

Figure 9 shows the estimated percentage of time, by staff group, spent on direct clinical contact with patients. Practitioners reported 92%, Clinical support workers 86.4%, Assistant practitioners 77.3%, Enhanced practitioners 67%, Senior clinical support workers 65%, Advanced practitioners 57% and Consultant practitioners 45%.

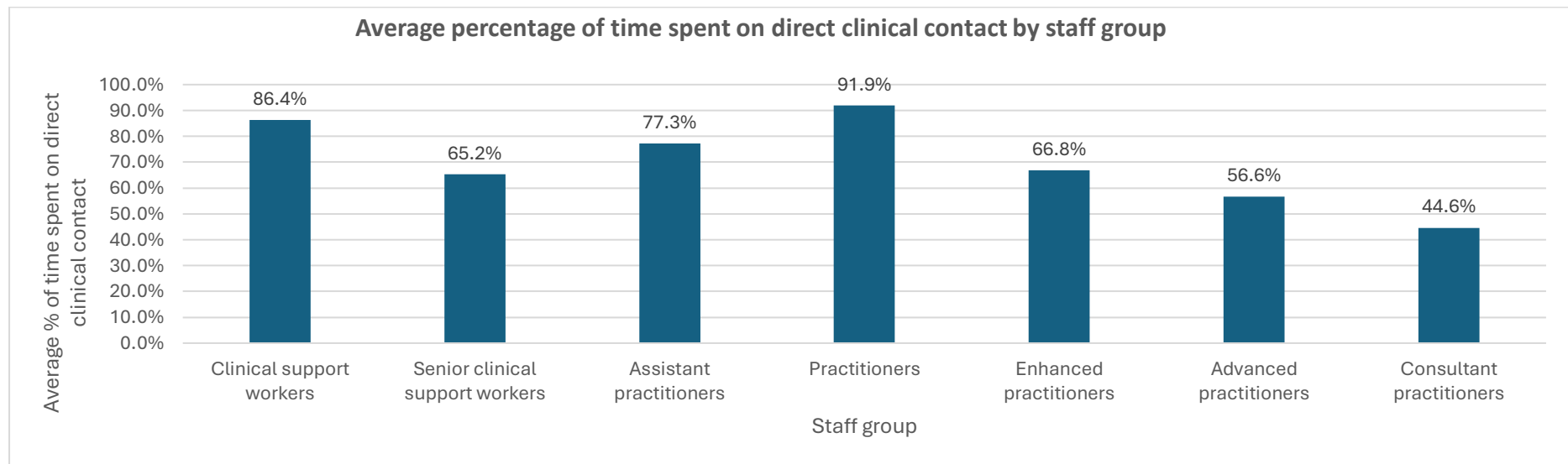


Figure 9. Estimated percentage of time spent on direct clinical contact by staff group (n=46).



Education and training

Practice educator and learning support posts (WTE)

Respondents were asked to report the number of practice educator or learning support posts (WTE) within their establishment as of 1 May 2025. The total reported WTE across respondents was 70.35 WTE with an average of 1.6 WTE reported per establishment. Reported values ranged from 0.25 to 8.8 WTE.

Training and development

Respondents were asked to indicate the percentage of staff supported in training and development as of 1 May 2025. This includes formal postgraduate (PG) qualifications and modular training/education for the support workforce. Figure 10 shows how frequently each percentage was reported by staff group.

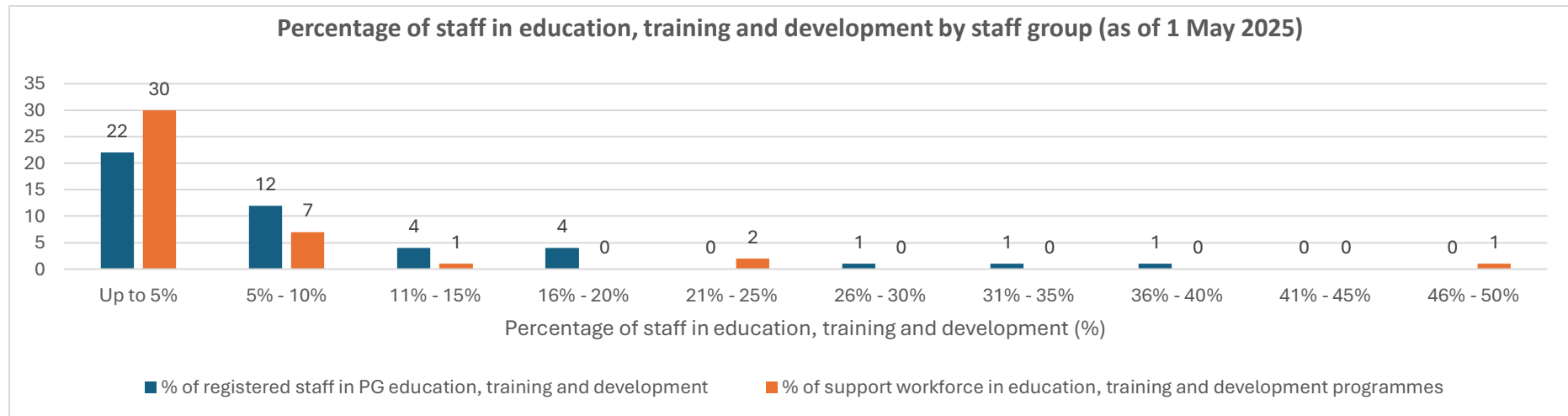


Figure 10. Estimated percentage of registered staff and support workforce participating in education, training and development as of 1 May 2025 (n=45).



Agency

Respondents were asked to state the percentage of the workforce comprised of agency or temporary staff as of 1 May 2025. On average, among the 45 respondents who answered this question, the percentage was 5%.

Comments

Respondents were invited to submit free comments, and these are themed broadly below.

Capacity, demand and funded establishment

A recurring theme was that funded workforce establishments are not keeping pace with rising demand for radiology services. Respondents reported that, despite increasing clinical activity and service demand, establishment numbers have remained static, creating ongoing pressure on services and staff.

Even in organisations with comparatively strong recruitment positions, respondents commented that:

- A lack of vacancies does not equate to adequate capacity.
- Current workforce establishments are still insufficient to meet service demand efficiently and effectively.

Survey methodology

Respondents commented that it was challenging to submit accurate data on specific survey questions, often due to the complexity and diverse range of roles within their organisation.

Many noted that they are required to submit data to various sources, such as NHSE model hospital data, and suggested that SoR should utilise this data rather than collecting a different data set on workforce.



