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# Facts and figures on ambulance staff

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# Ambulance staff: the basics

**17,847**

The number of **full-time equivalent professionally qualified ambulance staff** in the NHS in England as of June 2022 (of which 16,900 are paramedics). There are also 25,000 ambulance support staff, such as technicians and assistant practitioners. Across both groups, the numbers have increased by **43%** in a decade.

**11%**

In the year to June 2022, **around one in nine (11%) paramedics** who joined the NHS in England were non-UK nationals.

**1 in 10**

The proportion of paramedics that **left active service** in the year to June 2022 (1,760), exceeding the number of joiners in the same period (1,650)

Over **1 in 4** paramedics reported that they **would leave their role** as soon as they could find another job. This compares to under one in five nurses signaling the same intention.

**Working experiences** of paramedics have been a longstanding concern. Compared to other staff groups, they have consistently lower levels of satisfaction, which have deteriorated further in the last year.

**10  
minutes**

Staff are increasingly frustrated at being unable to provide an adequate service for patients – with category 1 (life-threatening) calls waiting 9 minutes 56 seconds on average, compared to the target of 7 minutes. For category 2 calls (such as for heart attack or stroke), the average waiting time now exceeds one hour (against a target of 18 minutes).

# Ambulance staff pay: the facts

**£46,643**

The **average NHS earnings** of a paramedic in England in the year to March 2022 (i.e. prior to the new pay settlement), including those working part-time. The full-time equivalent average salary is around **£48,900 or £49,900** depending on how you calculate it.<sup>1</sup>

Across all ambulance staff (including those not professionally qualified), the average NHS earnings in the year to March 2022 was around **£39,300**.

**£27,055**

The **starting basic salary for paramedics** in England and Wales. This has increased by more than inflation since 2012/13. It is higher than the average graduate starting salary, which ranges from £24,000 to £26,999.<sup>2</sup>

**£91**

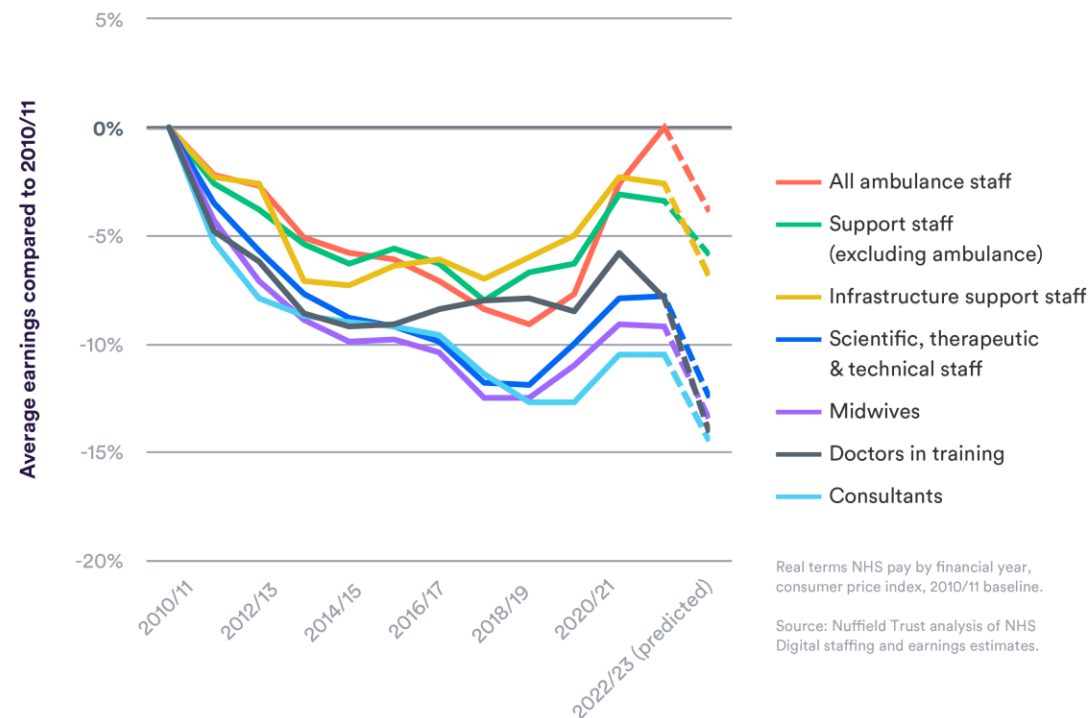
The amount the average NHS earnings across all ambulance staff had risen above inflation between 2010/11 and 2021/22. In the last three years, the real-terms increase has been around **£3,600**.

1. Nuffield Trust analysis of NHS Digital annual earning estimates.

2. HESA Graduate Outcomes 2019/20: Summary Statistics. Starting salary excludes non-basic pay, including any high-cost area supplement (i.e. London weighting) which, across all paramedics, accounts for some £13,600 annually.

# Ambulance staff pay: the facts

Pay has fallen in real terms for most NHS staff groups since 2010



This year **ambulance workers may see their pay fall to around 4% behind inflation.** However, ambulance staff were a notable exception in pay trends to 2021/22, with their average earnings being restored to levels seen in 2010/11.

This may be partly due to the nature of the work as a 24-hour emergency service, with ambulance staff receiving the highest level of overtime and shift work payments, but also due to differences in how unsocial hours payments are calculated for this group.

Nearly one in four ambulance staff will benefit from progression payments, as well as the 4.2% average increase to their basic pay.

*To calculate the ambulance staff pay we have combined ambulance staff groups due to changes in how these staff were defined in the data.*

# Strikes: what do we know?

**Three unions** representing ambulance workers – GMB, UNISON, and Unite – balloted their members over strike action. This has resulted in **all but one** ambulance trust voting in favour of strike action across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (with the East of England being the only area unaffected).

Ambulance trust	GMB	UNISON	Unite
East of England			
London		✓	
South West	✓	✓	
South East Coast	✓		
South Central	✓		
North East	✓	✓	✓
North West	✓	✓	✓
Yorkshire	✓	✓	
East Midlands	✓		
West Midlands	✓		✓
Welsh	✓		
Northern Ireland		✓	

# Strikes: what do we know?

GMB's ask is for a “catch-up settlement” that makes substantial progress towards restoration of real earnings. UNISON has called for an above-inflation pay rise (this currently equates to at least 11.1% when using the CPI rate of inflation)

GMB, UNISON and Unite members – including paramedics, call handlers and other 999 crew staff – have planned for strike action to take place on 21<sup>st</sup> December in England and Wales, with GMB members also striking on 28<sup>th</sup> December.

UNISON members are taking action short of a strike in Northern Ireland, meaning that staff will work to their contracts, end their shifts on time, and refuse overtime. Full strike action is planned on 12<sup>th</sup> December.

Unions have confirmed that **strike action will not affect immediate life-threatening injuries**, but those with non-life-threatening conditions may need to travel via taxi to get to their nearest emergency department for treatment.

Military personnel will be drafted in to cover for striking ambulance workers, including ambulance drivers, logistical support, and some qualified paramedics.



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