

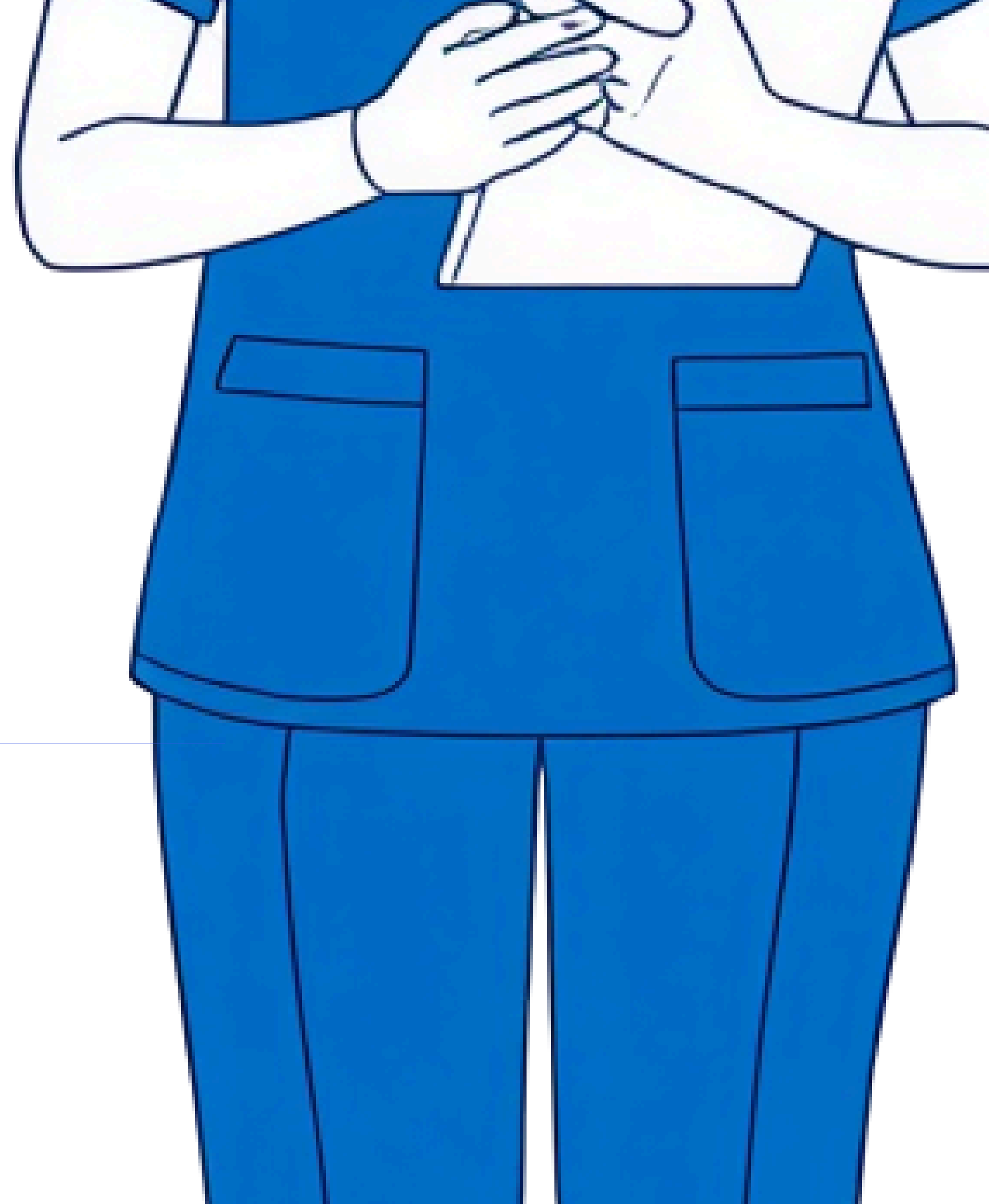


NHS
Staff Survey 2021

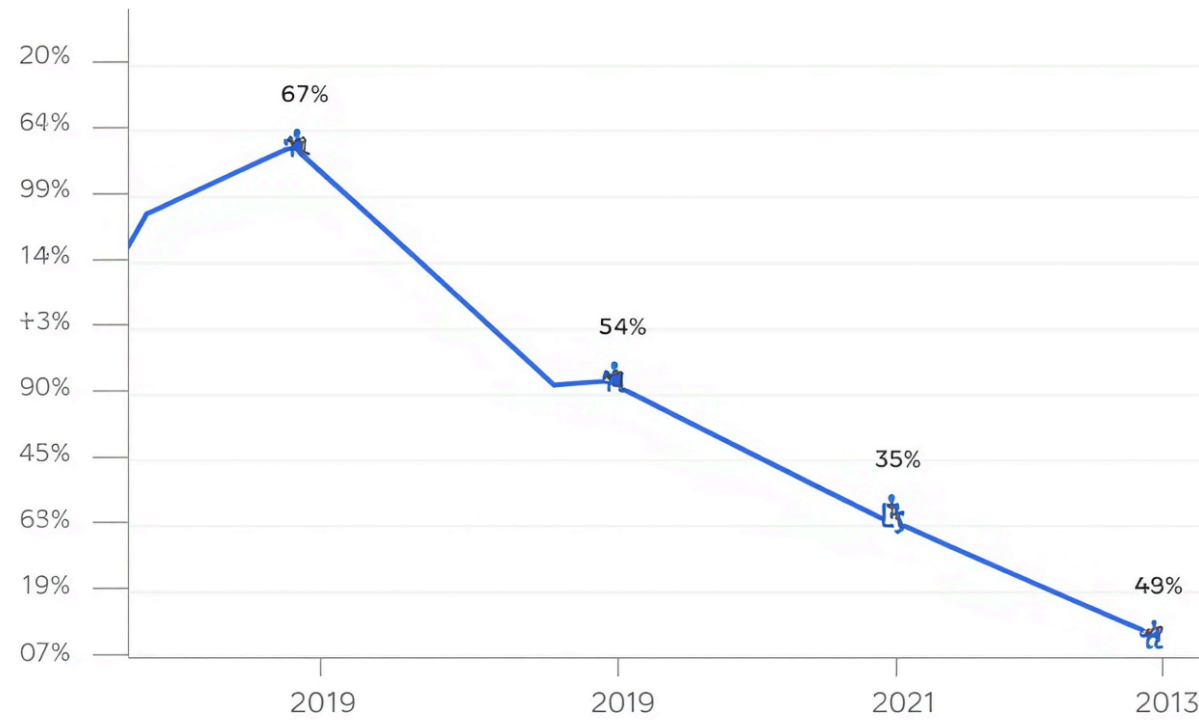
NHS Job Satisfaction Challenges

Human Capital Challenges in the National Health
Service – An Academic Group Presentation

2021
Analysis



NHS (Clean

NHS-Job Satisfaction phoired tyct daryl lweeders

BISSRALY

-22%

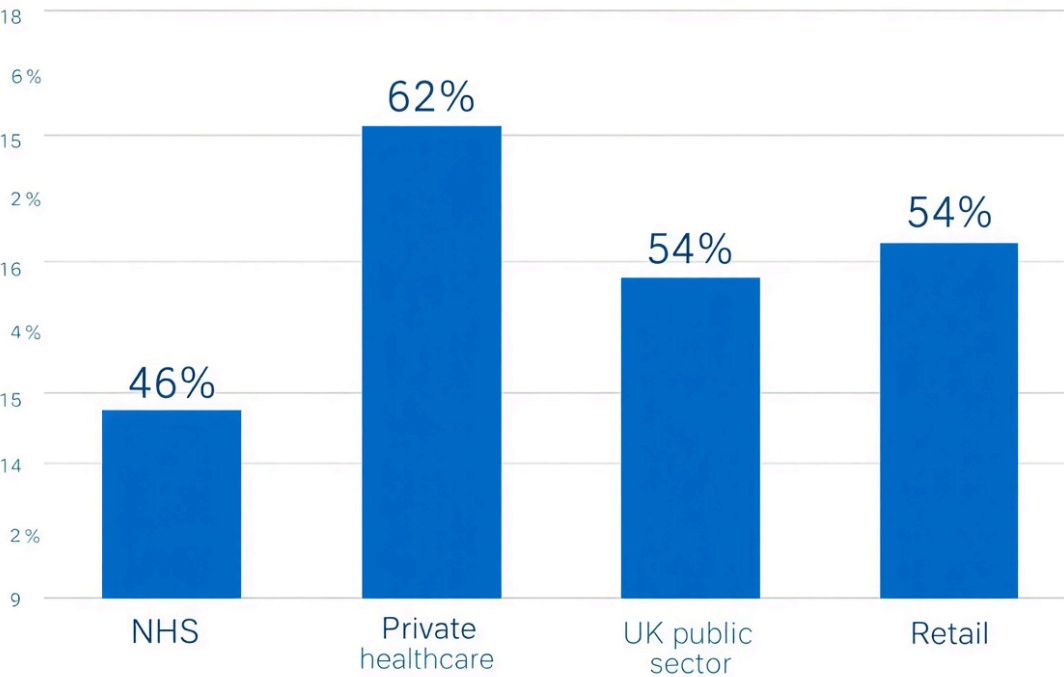
Decline in overall staff satisfaction 2019–2021

Introduction to NHS Job Satisfaction Crisis

NHS STAFF SURVEY DATA 2019–2021



The NHS Staff Survey reveals a sharp decline in job satisfaction among healthcare workers between 2019 and 2021. Overall satisfaction dropped from 68% in 2019 to 64% in 2020, before falling dramatically to just 46% in 2021. This 22 percentage point decline over two years represents the steepest fall in staff morale since records began. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated existing structural pressures including chronic understaffing, increased workload demands, and pay erosion, creating unprecedented challenges for workforce retention and wellbeing across all NHS trusts.



46%

NHS satisfaction vs
sector average

Scale of the Problem

COMPARING NHS STAFF SATISFACTION WITH OTHER UK SECTORS

NHS Staff Survey 2021 data reveals a stark reality: NHS job satisfaction at 46% significantly trails behind comparable sectors. Private healthcare leads at 62%, while the broader UK public sector achieves 54% and even retail outperforms NHS at 58%. This 16-percentage-point gap between NHS and private healthcare highlights systemic challenges unique to the national health service, including chronic underfunding, workforce pressures, and policy constraints that private providers can more flexibly address.

Root Causes



WORKLOAD PRESSURE

74% report unmanageable workload due to increased patient demand and reduced capacity.

STAFF SHORTAGES

68% cite insufficient staffing levels affecting care quality and team morale.

PAY EROSION

55% dissatisfied with pay relative to inflation and private sector comparisons.

74%

WORKLOAD CITED AS
TOP ISSUE

WORKLOAD

01

Excessive patient-to-staff ratios and administrative burden create unsustainable working conditions. Staff report insufficient time for breaks and proper patient care, leading to burnout and compassion fatigue.

STAFF SHORTAGES

02

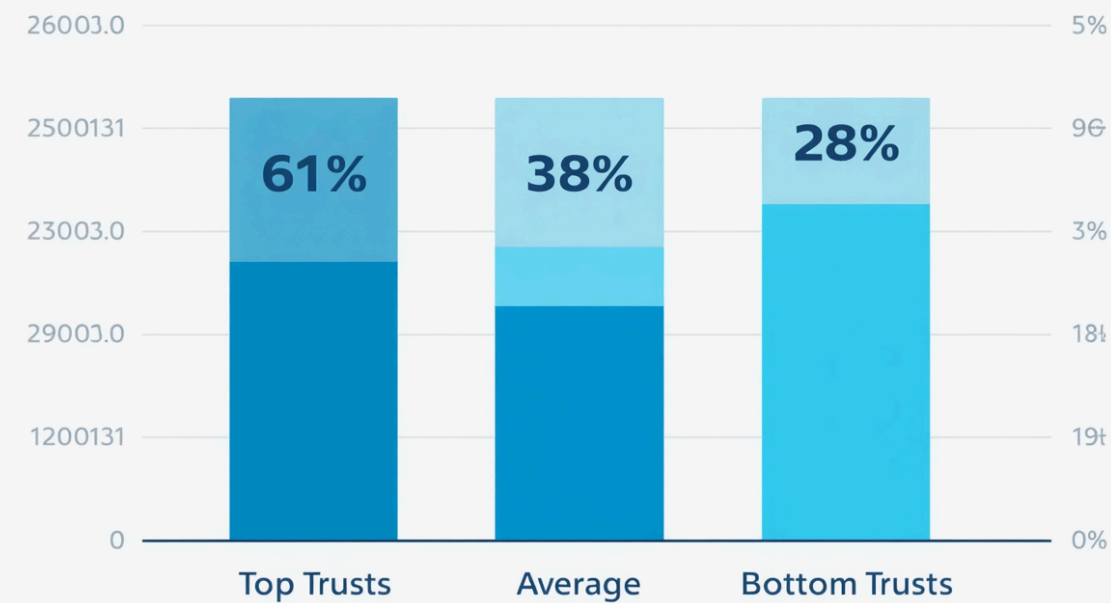
Over 100,000 NHS vacancies in 2021 created significant pressure on existing staff. Recruitment challenges and high turnover rates compound the problem, with many trusts relying heavily on expensive agency staff.

LACK OF AUTONOMY

03

47% of staff feel they have limited control over their work. Rigid protocols, top-down management, and lack of involvement in decision-making reduce professional satisfaction and sense of ownership.

Manager wellbeing perception prescription: across NHS trusts



iprofessigns intrallyation

61%

"Manager values my wellbeing" – Top trusts

Leadership & Cultural Drivers

IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP QUALITY ON STAFF WELLBEING AND SATISFACTION[↗]

NHS Staff Survey 2021 data reveals significant variation in staff perceptions of whether their manager values their wellbeing. Top-performing trusts achieve 61% positive responses, while the average across all trusts sits at just 38%, and bottom-performing trusts record only 28%. This 33-percentage-point gap between top and bottom trusts demonstrates that leadership quality is a critical determinant of staff satisfaction. Trusts with managers who actively prioritise wellbeing see measurably higher engagement, lower turnover intentions, and improved team morale.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

UNDERSTANDING NHS STAFF SATISFACTION DRIVERS

Hygiene Factors (Prevent Dissatisfaction):

- Pay – 32% satisfaction with pay (NHS Staff Survey 2021)
- Policy – Rigid NHS policies limiting autonomy
- Supervision – Only 38% feel managers value wellbeing

Motivators (Drive Satisfaction):

- Recognition – 58% feel undervalued
- Achievement – 68-74% find meaning in patient care
- Growth – 52% report no career progression

Herzberg's theory explains why addressing pay alone cannot improve NHS satisfaction; motivators must also be enhanced.



Key Statistics Summary

NHS STAFF SURVEY 2021 KEY DATA



01

OVERALL SATISFACTION

46% of NHS staff
report satisfaction
with their job

02

TURNOVER RATE

11.5% annual staff
turnover across NHS
trusts

03

SICKNESS ABSENCE

5.6% average
sickness absence rate
among NHS workforce

04

NURSE WORKLOAD

78% of nurses report
unmanageable
workload levels

01



WORKLOAD

Heavy patient loads, staff shortages, and administrative burden create unsustainable pressure. 78% of nurses report unmanageable workload levels.

02



LEADERSHIP

Manager support and acknowledgement significantly impact staff morale. Only 44% feel their manager values their work and wellbeing.

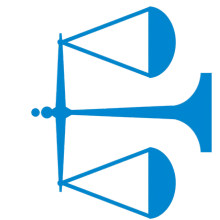
03



RECOGNITION

Declining satisfaction with pay and recognition affects motivation. Recognition rates dropped from 48% in 2017 to 36% in 2021.

04



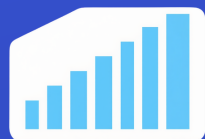
WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Balancing demanding shifts with personal life remains challenging. Only 34% report good work-life balance, with 25% rating it as poor.

Job Satisfaction Determinants

Four key determinants shape NHS staff job satisfaction. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective retention and engagement strategies.

Workload & Resources



NURSES

Highest workload burden with 78% reporting unsustainable demands.

ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

72% of AHPs face unmanageable workload pressures.

DOCTORS

69% report workload exceeds sustainable levels.

78%

NURSES REPORT
UNMANAGEABLE
WORKLOAD

NURSES (78%)

01

Nursing staff face the highest workload burden across all NHS staff groups. The 2021 Staff Survey reveals critical understaffing, excessive patient-to-nurse ratios, and administrative burdens contributing to unsustainable working conditions and burnout risk.

AHPS (72%) & DOCTORS (69%)

02

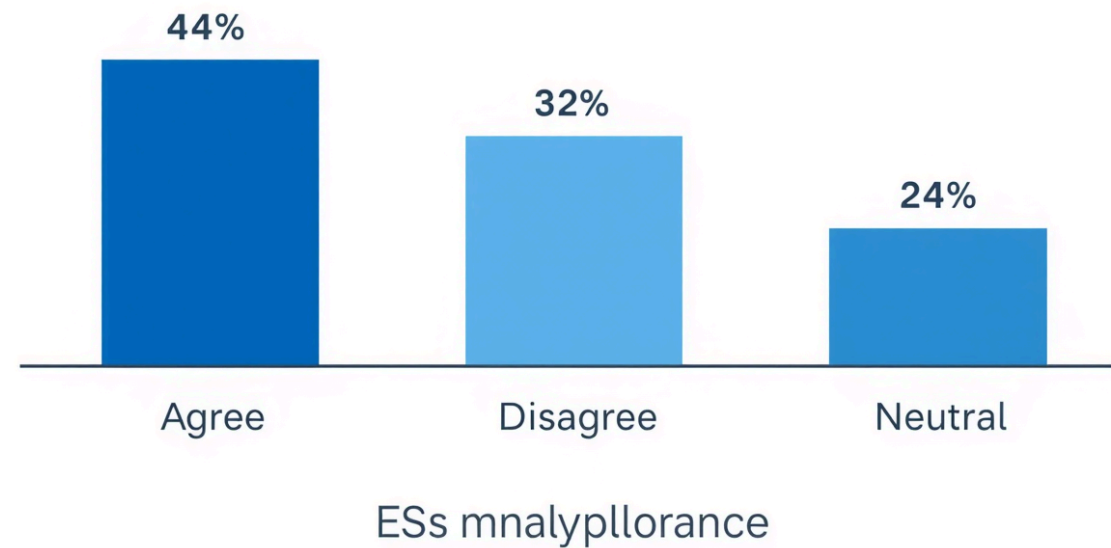
Allied Health Professionals and medical staff report similarly high unmanageable workload levels. Key factors include increased patient complexity, reduced support staff, and post-pandemic backlogs creating sustained pressure across clinical roles.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF (54%)

03

While administrative staff report lower unmanageable workload rates, over half still experience excessive demands. This reflects system-wide resource constraints affecting all NHS workforce categories, though clinical roles bear the greatest burden.

FMHs-waccourcet inbr clear manager
actmmumng manshy NHS staff responsess
dell-amangeareiv question?



44%

Staff who agree their manager
acknowledges their work

Leadership Quality Perceptions

NHS STAFF SURVEY 2021: MANAGER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PERCEPTIONS [↗](#)

The NHS Staff Survey 2021 reveals concerning patterns in how staff perceive leadership acknowledgement. When asked "My manager acknowledges my work," only 44% of staff agreed, while 32% disagreed and 24% remained neutral. This data highlights a significant gap in leadership communication and recognition practices across NHS trusts. Research consistently shows that employees who feel acknowledged by their managers demonstrate higher engagement, lower turnover intentions, and improved patient care outcomes.

Recognition Trends 2017–2021

DECLINING SATISFACTION WITH PAY AND RECOGNITION OVER FIVE YEARS

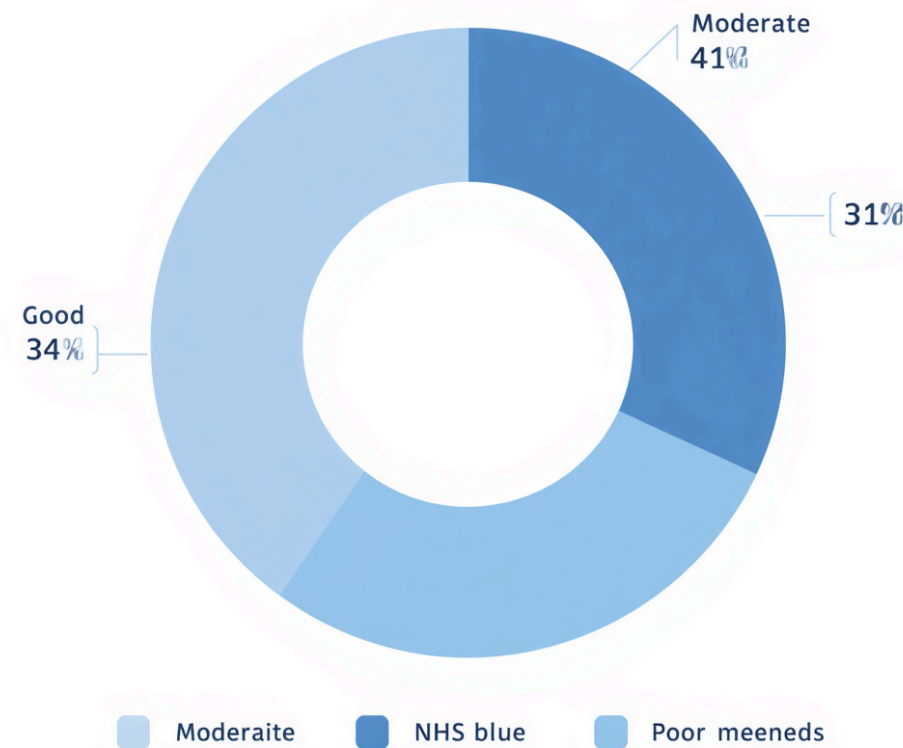
NHS Staff Survey data reveals a consistent downward trend in staff satisfaction with recognition and pay. From 48% in 2017, satisfaction declined steadily to just 36% by 2021—a 12 percentage point drop over five years. This erosion reflects growing concerns about pay erosion, inadequate acknowledgement of staff contributions, and the psychological impact of feeling undervalued. The trend accelerated during the pandemic, highlighting the urgent need for formal recognition programmes and fair compensation strategies.

36%

RECOGNITION
SATISFACTION
IN 2021



work-life balance



41%

Report moderate
work-life balance

Work-Life Balance

NHS STAFF SURVEY 2021 – WORK-LIFE BALANCE DISTRIBUTION[↗]

The NHS Staff Survey 2021 reveals significant work-life balance challenges across the workforce. Only 34% of staff report good work-life balance, while 41% describe it as moderate and 25% rate it as poor. These figures reflect the mounting pressures on NHS employees, including increased workloads, staff shortages, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Poor work-life balance is strongly associated with higher turnover intentions, increased sickness absence, and reduced job satisfaction. Addressing these challenges requires flexible working arrangements, manageable workloads, and supportive leadership cultures.

Psychological Contract Theory

2021

NHS STAFF
SURVEY DATA

UNDERSTANDING HOW UNMET EXPECTATIONS DAMAGE STAFF MORALE[↗]

The psychological contract represents unwritten expectations between employer and employee. When breached, staff experience reduced commitment, lower morale, and increased turnover intentions.

67% report regular unpaid overtime
58% felt unsupported post-COVID
Breach indicators signal eroded trust
Direct impact on retention and wellbeing

Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Drivers Overview

STUDENT 3: COMPARING MOTIVATION FACTORS AFFECTING NHS JOB SATISFACTION

Understanding what drives NHS staff satisfaction requires examining both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic drivers include sense of achievement, meaningful work, professional growth, and autonomy in clinical decisions. Extrinsic drivers encompass pay and benefits, working conditions, job security, and organisational policies. NHS Staff Survey 2021 data reveals significant gaps in both areas, with intrinsic satisfaction averaging 68% while extrinsic satisfaction falls to just 54%. This distinction, rooted in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, is crucial for developing targeted interventions that address the full spectrum of staff needs.

Intrensic factors	Extrinesic factors
Achivement	
Growth	
Purpose	
Alak::idetrlivent	

Intrinsic Drivers



SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Staff reporting satisfaction with feeling of achievement in their role.

DOCTORS: 71%

Clinical expertise and patient outcomes drive strong intrinsic motivation.

NURSES: 68%

Direct patient care provides meaningful purpose despite workload pressures.

74%

AHPS REPORT HIGHEST ACHIEVEMENT

ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS (AHPS)

01

AHPs report the highest sense of achievement at 74%. This group includes physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and radiographers who often see direct, measurable patient progress. Their specialised roles allow for greater autonomy and visible impact on patient recovery journeys.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

02

Admin staff report the lowest achievement satisfaction at 58%. Despite being essential to NHS operations, their contributions are often less visible and less directly connected to patient outcomes. This disconnect from frontline impact reduces intrinsic motivation and sense of purpose.

KEY INSIGHT

03

Intrinsic motivation remains relatively strong across clinical staff groups, demonstrating that NHS workers derive significant satisfaction from patient care itself. However, the gap with administrative staff highlights the need for better recognition and connection to organisational purpose for non-clinical roles.

Benefits of Intrinsic Satisfaction

+18%

PATIENT EXPERIENCE
IMPROVEMENT



PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Higher intrinsic satisfaction correlates with improved patient care quality.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

Reduction of 2.6% in sickness absence among satisfied staff.

TEAM COLLABORATION

22% improvement in team collaboration and workplace cohesion.

PATIENT EXPERIENCE

16

NHS Staff Survey 2021 data demonstrates that trusts with higher intrinsic job satisfaction scores show an 18% improvement in patient experience ratings. Staff who feel fulfilled in their roles deliver more compassionate, attentive care.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

-2.6%

Intrinsically motivated staff demonstrate 2.6% lower sickness absence rates. Meaningful work and sense of achievement contribute to better mental health and reduced burnout, leading to improved attendance and workforce stability.

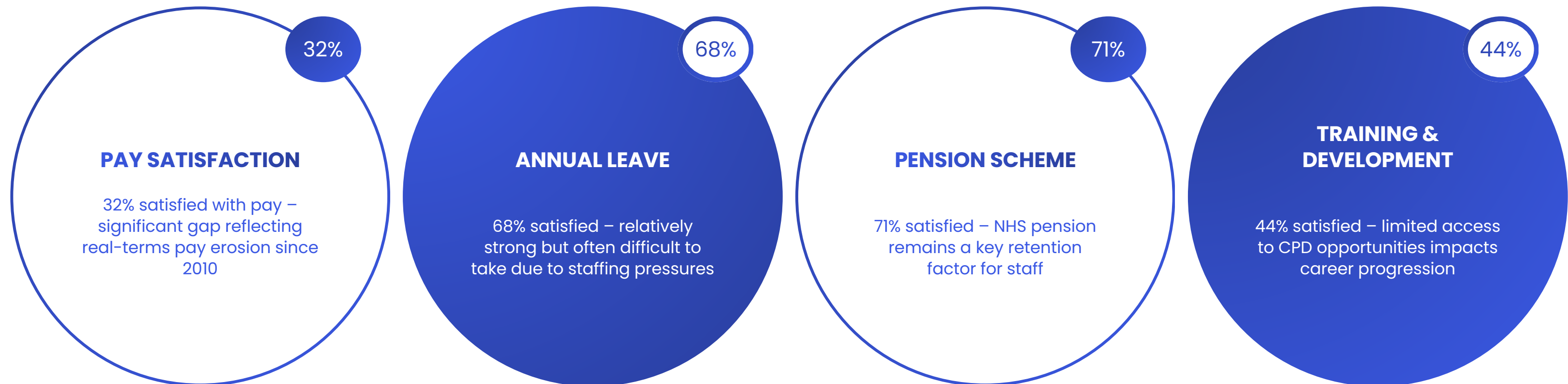
TEAM COLLABORATION

+22%

A 22% increase in team collaboration is observed where staff report high intrinsic satisfaction. Engaged employees communicate more effectively, support colleagues, and contribute to positive workplace culture and patient safety.

Extrinsic Drivers Satisfaction Levels

NHS STAFF SURVEY 2021 – SATISFACTION WITH EXTRINSIC FACTORS



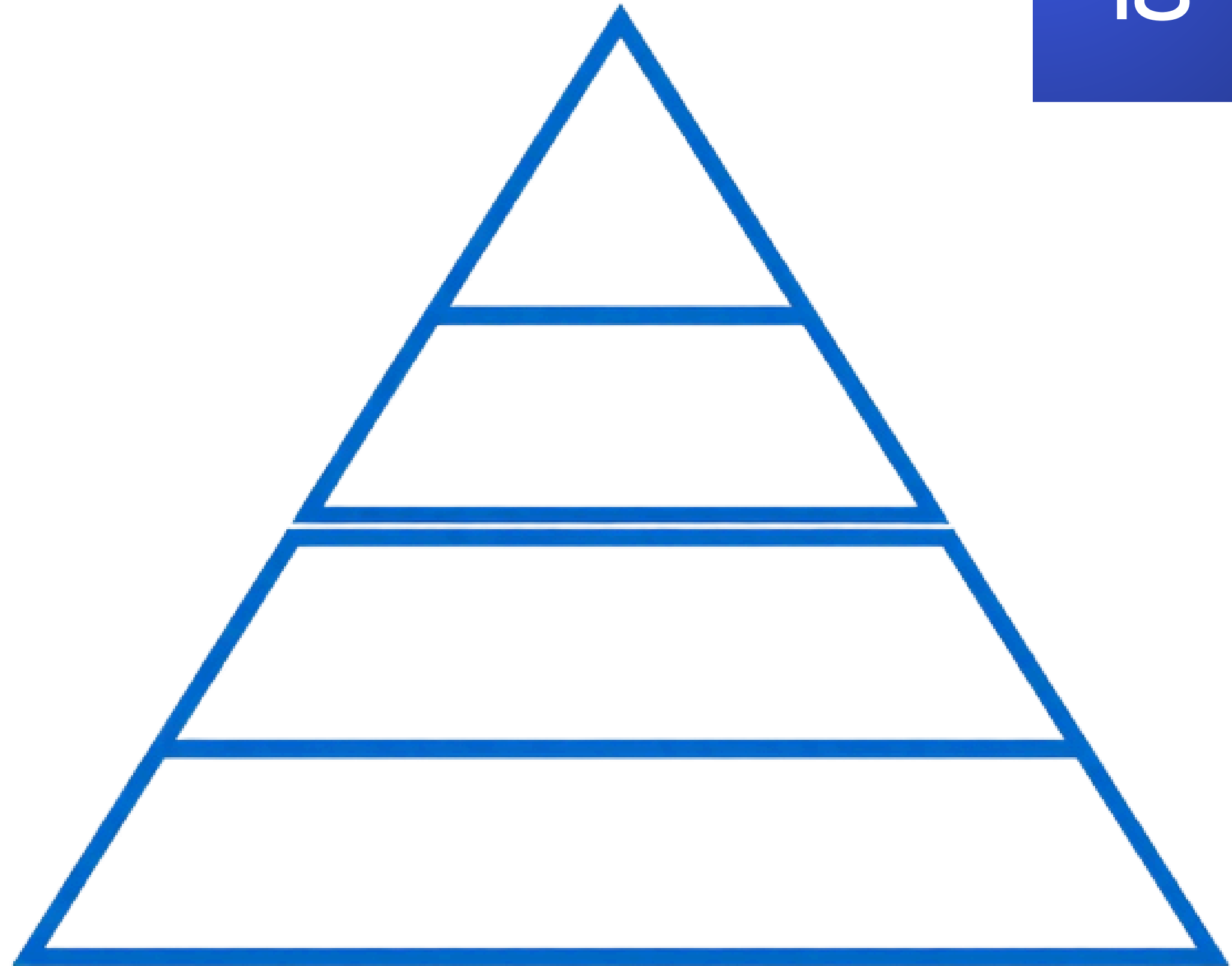
Maslow's Hierarchy Applied to NHS

LINKING THEORY TO NHS STAFF EXPERIENCE ↗

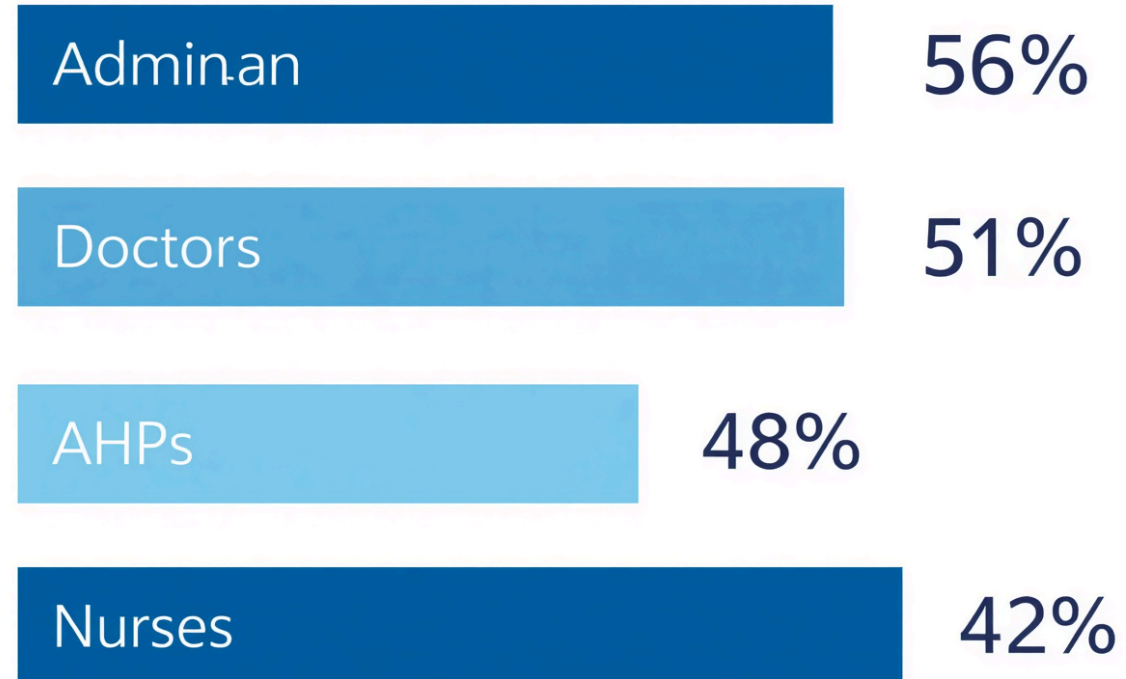
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs reveals critical gaps in NHS staff support:

- Basic Needs: 67% report unsafe staffing levels, compromising safety and security foundations
- Psychological Needs: 58% lack adequate recognition from management, undermining belonging and esteem
- Self-Actualisation: 52% see no clear career progression pathway, limiting growth potential

When lower-level needs remain unmet, staff cannot reach higher motivation states, directly impacting job satisfaction and retention.



NHS Staff Group Job Satisfaction



42%

Nurses report lowest
satisfaction levels

Staff Group Comparison

COMPARING JOB SATISFACTION LEVELS ACROSS DIFFERENT NHS STAFF GROUPS [↗]

NHS Staff Survey 2021 reveals significant variation in job satisfaction across staff groups. Administrative staff report the highest satisfaction at 56%, potentially due to more predictable hours and less direct patient-facing pressure. Doctors follow at 51%, while Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) show 48% satisfaction. Nurses report the lowest satisfaction at just 42%, correlating with their higher workload burden and staffing pressures. These differences highlight the need for targeted interventions addressing role-specific challenges rather than one-size-fits-all approaches to improving NHS workforce wellbeing.

01



FLEXIBLE WORKING
OPTIONS

Implementing flexible schedules, remote work options, and shift pattern choices to improve work-life balance for NHS staff across all roles.

02



RECOGNITION SCHEMES

Formal recognition programmes to acknowledge staff contributions, celebrate achievements, and boost morale through meaningful appreciation.

03



LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT

Training managers in supportive leadership, communication skills, and staff wellbeing to create positive workplace cultures.

04



AI WELLBEING
MONITORING

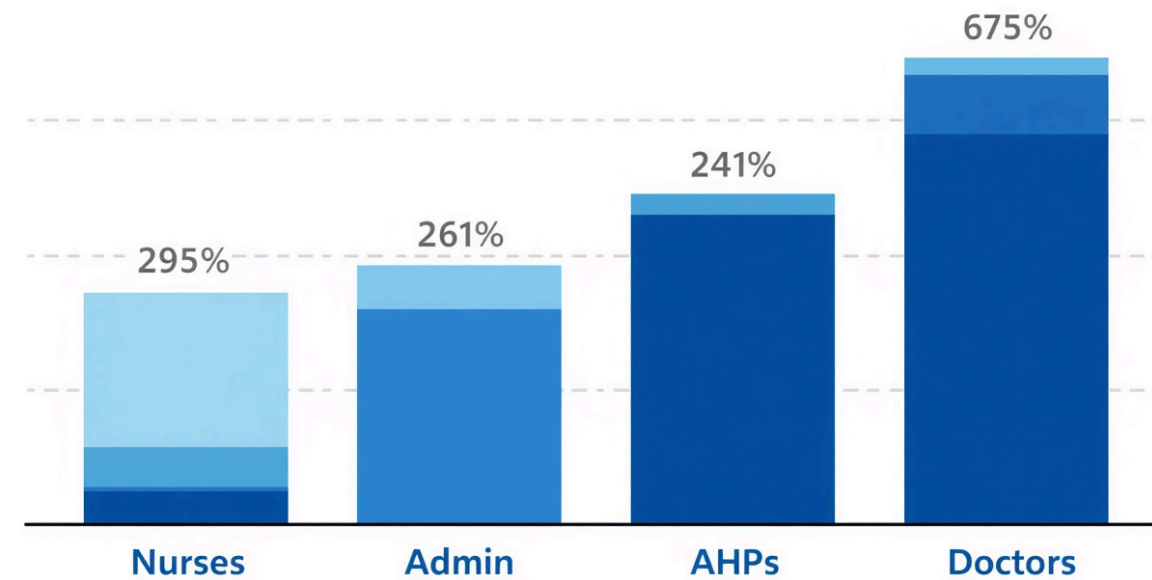
Piloting AI-enabled predictive analytics to identify burnout risk early and provide targeted wellbeing interventions.

Solutions &
Recommendations

Student 4 presents evidence-based interventions to address NHS job satisfaction challenges, focusing on four key strategic areas identified from NHS Staff Survey 2021 data.

Flexible working impact

■ Lootingloat (NHS) staff aq, 79% cnlelpimnopic



NHS)stafgroups : ThHSinddisiation Norsperstatidy and the cinod. specal batists: 75
Our Missterfly worighan framation dindcorporaation dende ath.

NGG | BLUE

Impact of Flexible Working

STAFF REPORTING FLEXIBLE WORKING WOULD IMPROVE THEIR JOB SATISFACTION 

81%

Nurses would improve satisfaction with flexible working

NHS Staff Survey 2021 data reveals strong demand for flexible working across all staff groups. Nurses show the highest desire at 81%, reflecting the intense shift patterns and burnout pressures they face. Admin staff (76%) and Allied Health Professionals (74%) also demonstrate substantial interest, while doctors report 67% support. These findings suggest that implementing flexible working policies could significantly boost satisfaction and retention across the NHS workforce.

Recognition Schemes

NHS STAFF SURVEY 2021: IMPACT OF FORMAL RECOGNITION PROGRAMMES[↗]

+11%

Higher satisfaction in trusts
with formal recognition

NHS trusts with formal recognition programmes demonstrate significantly higher staff satisfaction levels. Analysis of the 2021 Staff Survey reveals that structured recognition initiatives—including peer nomination awards, long service acknowledgements, and team achievement celebrations—correlate with measurably improved morale. Recognition programmes address the psychological need for appreciation identified in Herzberg's motivation theory, transforming routine acknowledgement into systematic workforce engagement. Trusts implementing these schemes report improved retention rates, reduced absenteeism, and enhanced team cohesion alongside the satisfaction gains.

Leadership Training Impact

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS

NHS Staff Survey 2021 data reveals that teams with trained leaders show +9% higher job satisfaction compared to teams without leadership development programmes. In 2021, over 8,500 managers across NHS trusts completed formal leadership training. This investment in management capability demonstrates measurable returns in staff morale, engagement and retention. Trained leaders are better equipped to support wellbeing, acknowledge contributions, and create psychologically safe environments for their teams.

NHS job Satisfaction

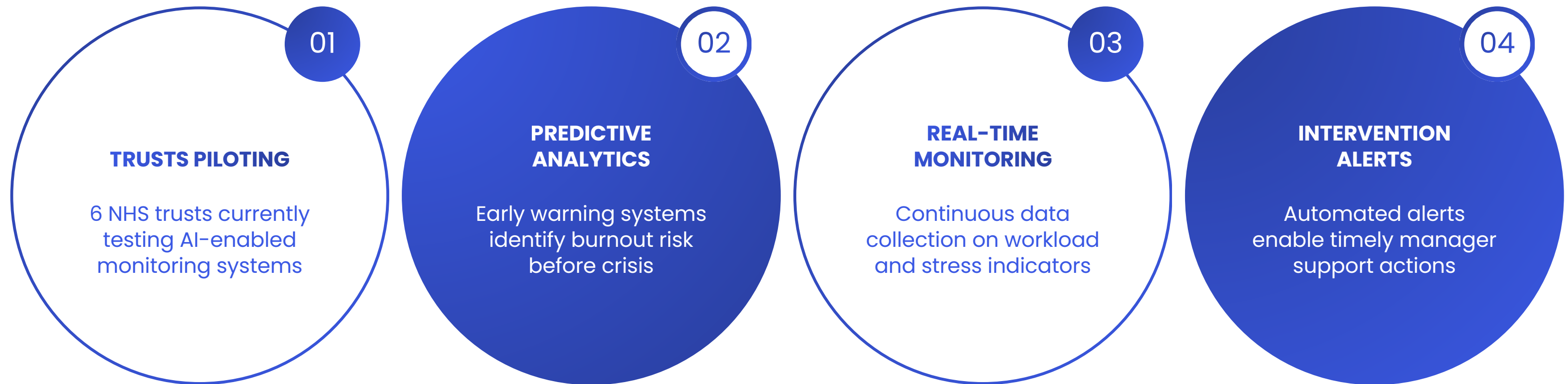
**Moley's inbenefl and thatts say
happarive with trained leadersd
iusuisaor fole of bathizon ition.**



Enppys lif las no induetrine' reelget
Luaidnee connectdb&slarea&ns, n'yon clotur on urfainres trainedy of NHS
940 seadenion bong wale speandhoor instanfestibeating vratisotiontical compir.

AI Wellbeing Monitoring Pilots

INNOVATIVE PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS FOR NHS STAFF BURNOUT RISK



Intervention Effectiveness

+12%

FLEXIBLE
WORKING IMPACT

FLEXIBLE WORKING

- 01 The highest impact intervention at +12% satisfaction improvement. NHS Staff Survey 2021 data shows strong correlation between flexible working options and overall job satisfaction across all staff groups.

RECOGNITION PROGRAMMES

- 02 Formal recognition schemes deliver +11% satisfaction gains. Trusts implementing structured appreciation programmes report higher staff morale and reduced turnover intentions among clinical staff.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- 03 Teams with trained leaders show +9% higher satisfaction. With 8,500+ managers trained in 2021, leadership capability directly influences staff engagement and wellbeing outcomes.

WELLBEING HUBS

+7% improvement in staff satisfaction scores across participating trusts.

RECOGNITION SCHEMES

+11% higher satisfaction in trusts with formal recognition programmes.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

+9% job satisfaction improvement in teams with trained managers.

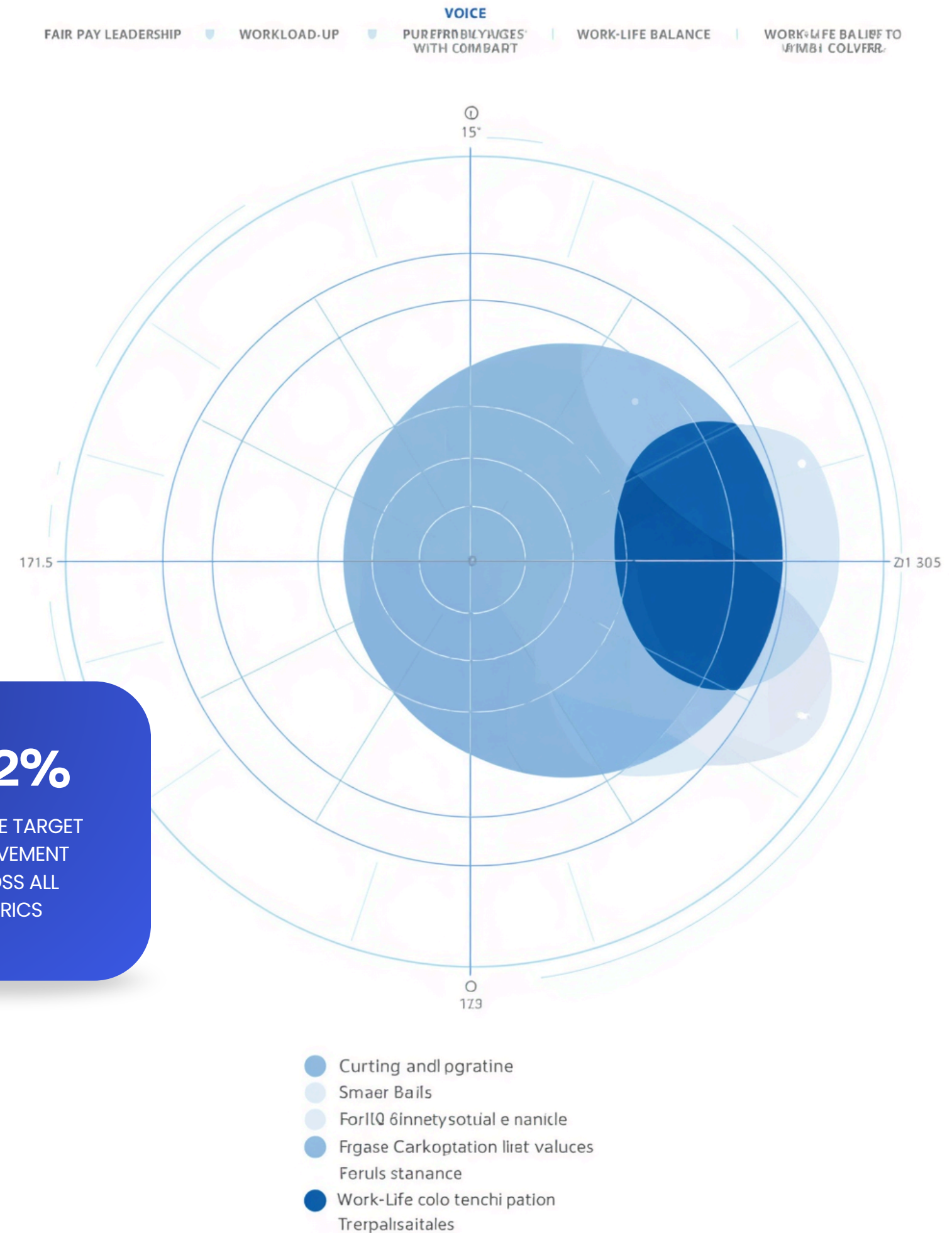
Group Synthesis – Key Findings

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CURRENT NHS STAFF SATISFACTION METRICS AGAINST STRATEGIC 3-YEAR IMPROVEMENT TARGETS

The radar chart illustrates the significant gap between current satisfaction levels and our ambitious 3-year targets. Fair pay shows the largest required improvement (35% to 65%), while work-life balance has the strongest current baseline at 41%. Leadership quality and staff voice both require substantial investment to reach targets of 70% and 68% respectively. Workload management remains the most challenging area, currently at just 28%, reflecting the persistent staffing crisis. These integrated targets form the foundation of our recommended HRM strategy.

+32%

AVERAGE TARGET
IMPROVEMENT
ACROSS ALL
METRICS



Integrated HRM Strategy Overview

18-MONTH IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR NHS SATISFACTION IMPROVEMENT[↗]



01

Herzberg (1959)

Two-factor theory of motivation and job satisfaction in workplace settings.

02

NHS Staff Survey 2021

Primary data source documenting 46% satisfaction rate and staff group variations.

03

West & Dawson (2012)

King's Fund research linking engagement to NHS performance outcomes.

04

Locke (1976)

Foundational framework for measuring job satisfaction components.

References

Herzberg, F. (1959) The Motivation to Work. New York: John Wiley & Sons. This seminal work establishes the two-factor theory distinguishing hygiene factors from motivators, providing the theoretical foundation for understanding NHS staff satisfaction drivers and the distinction between factors that prevent dissatisfaction versus those that promote genuine job satisfaction.

NHS England (2022) NHS staff survey 2021: National Results Briefing. Available at: nhsstaffsurveys.com. This comprehensive report presents the primary data source for this presentation, documenting the decline in overall job satisfaction to 46% and providing detailed breakdowns by staff group, trust, and demographic factors.

West, M. and Dawson, J. (2012) 'Employee engagement and NHS performance', The King's Fund. This research establishes the critical link between staff engagement, job satisfaction, and patient outcomes, demonstrating that higher satisfaction correlates with improved care quality and reduced mortality rates.

Locke, E.A. (1976) 'The nature and causes of job satisfaction', in Dunnette, M.D. (ed.) Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Chicago: Rand McNally, pp. 1297-1349. This foundational text provides the theoretical framework for measuring and understanding job satisfaction components applicable to healthcare settings.

01

Bakker & Demerouti

Job demands-resources theory framework for understanding workload impact.

02

West et al. (GMC)

Healthcare environments and leadership effects on staff wellbeing.

03

Rousseau

Foundational psychological contract theory in organisational contexts.

04

NHS People Plan

Official NHS workforce strategy addressing leadership development.

References

WORKLOAD, LEADERSHIP, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT THEORY SOURCES

Bakker, A.B. and Demerouti, E. (2017) 'Job demands-resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), pp. 273-285. doi:10.1037/ocp0000056.

West, M. et al. (2020) 'Caring for doctors, caring for patients: How to transform UK healthcare environments to support doctor and medical student mental health', *General Medical Council*. Available at: www.gmc-uk.org.

Rousseau, D.M. (1989) 'Psychological and implied contracts in organizations', *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 2(2), pp. 121-139.

NHS England (2021) 'We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/21 – action for us all', NHS England and NHS Improvement. Available at: www.england.nhs.uk/ournhspeople.

01

Herzberg (1968)

Two-factor theory: hygiene factors and motivators in employee satisfaction.

02

Maslow (1943)

Hierarchy of needs theory applied to understanding NHS staff unmet needs.

03

Deci & Ryan (2000)

Self-determination theory on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation drivers.

04

West et al. (2020)

GMC report linking job satisfaction to patient care quality in NHS.

References

Herzberg, F. (1968) 'One more time: How do you motivate employees?', Harvard Business Review, 46(1), pp. 53-62. Classic foundation for understanding hygiene factors versus motivators in workplace satisfaction, directly applicable to NHS staff retention challenges.

Maslow, A.H. (1943) 'A theory of human motivation', Psychological Review, 50(4), pp. 370-396. Seminal work establishing the hierarchy of needs framework used to analyse unmet staff needs within NHS organisations.

Deci, E.L. and Ryan, R.M. (2000) 'The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior', Psychological Inquiry, 11(4), pp. 227-268. Foundational research on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation with applications to healthcare workforce engagement.

West, M.A. et al. (2020) 'Caring for doctors, caring for patients: How to transform UK healthcare environments to support doctor and medical student mental health', General Medical Council. Evidence linking intrinsic job satisfaction to patient care quality in NHS settings.

ACADEMIC SOURCES ON MOTIVATION THEORY AND HEALTHCARE APPLICATIONS

01

Flexible Working Research

Kelliher & Anderson (2010) on flexible working practices and work intensification.

02

Recognition Frameworks

Brun & Dugas (2008) analysis of employee recognition in HR practices.

03

Leadership Evidence

West et al. (2015) King's Fund report on healthcare leadership development.

04

NHS Guidance

NHS Employers (2021) reward and recognition good practice guidance.

References

STUDIES ON FLEXIBLE WORKING, RECOGNITION, AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN NHS

Kelliher, C. and Anderson, D. (2010) 'Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work', *Human Relations*, 63(1), pp. 83-106. doi: 10.1177/0018726709349199.

Brun, J.P. and Dugas, N. (2008) 'An analysis of employee recognition: Perspectives on human resources practices', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(4), pp. 716-730.

West, M. et al. (2015) 'Leadership and Leadership Development in Health Care: The Evidence Base', The King's Fund. Available at: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/leadership-and-leadership-development-health-care>

NHS Employers (2021) 'Reward and Recognition: Good Practice Guide'. Available at: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/reward-and-recognition>

Thank You! Questions?



NHS
Presentation

We welcome your questions, comments, and discussion on NHS job satisfaction and human capital challenges. Please feel free to reach out for further information.

2021
Staff Survey