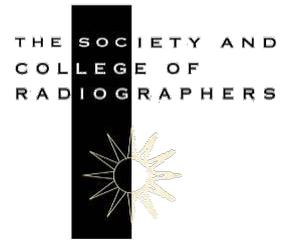


# Ultrasound workforce survey analysis



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## Executive Summary

In April and May 2011, the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR) surveyed ultrasound departments in the UK. The aim of the survey was to obtain data on the number of sonographers employed and the number of vacancies. Over 50 ultrasound departments responded to an online questionnaire covering a range of questions about staffing and vacancy levels. This document presents the results of this survey and the following bullet points highlight the main findings.

- The departments responding to the survey have an average of 7.7 whole time equivalent (WTE) funded sonographer posts per department.
- The sonographer vacancy rate across the responding departments is 10.9%. The two main reasons for vacancies are that departments are waiting for a trainee to qualify or that they are unable to recruit suitable applicants.
- Over three-fifths of sonographers in the responding departments work part time.
- Nearly a quarter of responding departments employ agency sonographers regularly (on more than ten days per month).
- In nearly two-thirds of responding departments, sonographers work extra hours on at least one day a month to meet demand.
- Nearly two-thirds of responding departments have at least one trainee sonographer due to qualify in the next year.
- Whilst around a quarter of responding departments reported no problems with the recruitment, retention and training of sonographers, one third commented that they do have difficulties recruiting sonographers.

## 1. Introduction

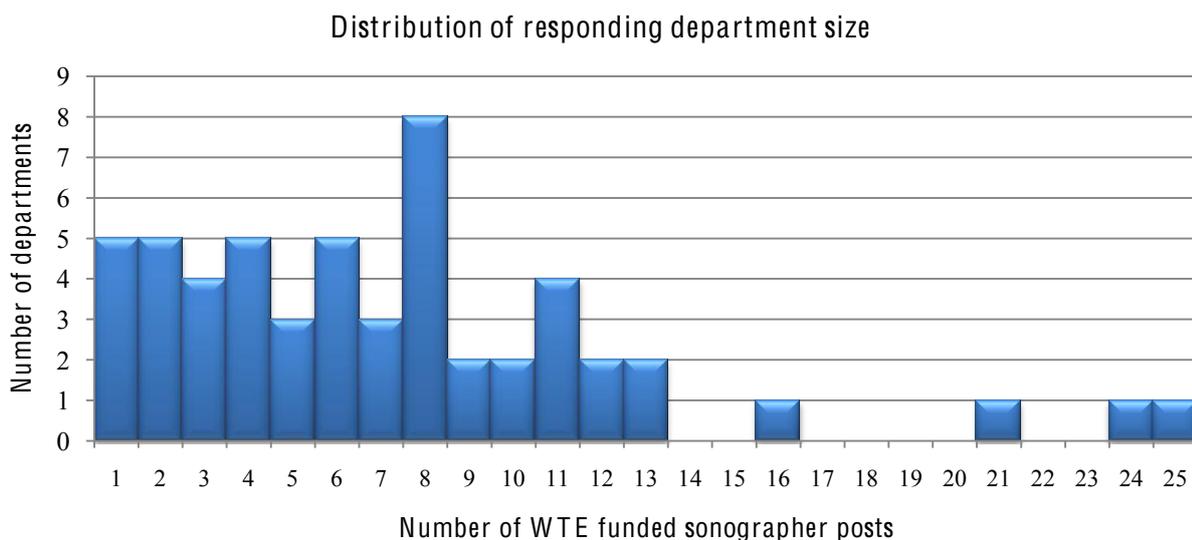
In April and May 2011, SCoR surveyed ultrasound departments in the UK. The aim of the survey was to obtain reliable data on the number of sonographers employed and the number of vacancies.

An email containing a link to an online questionnaire was sent to approximately 150 lead ultrasound practitioners asking them to answer the questionnaire on behalf of their departments. 54 ultrasound departments (37%) responded to the survey, answering a range of questions about staffing and vacancy levels in their department. None of the questions were mandatory so different questions may have different response rates.

51 of the responding departments (94%) are within NHS health boards or trusts; 2 (4%) are within the independent/private healthcare sector; and 1 (2%) is a Medical Research Council / University funded research unit. The breakdown by country is: Scotland (5); Wales (5); England (43); plus 1 unknown.

## 2. Establishment size

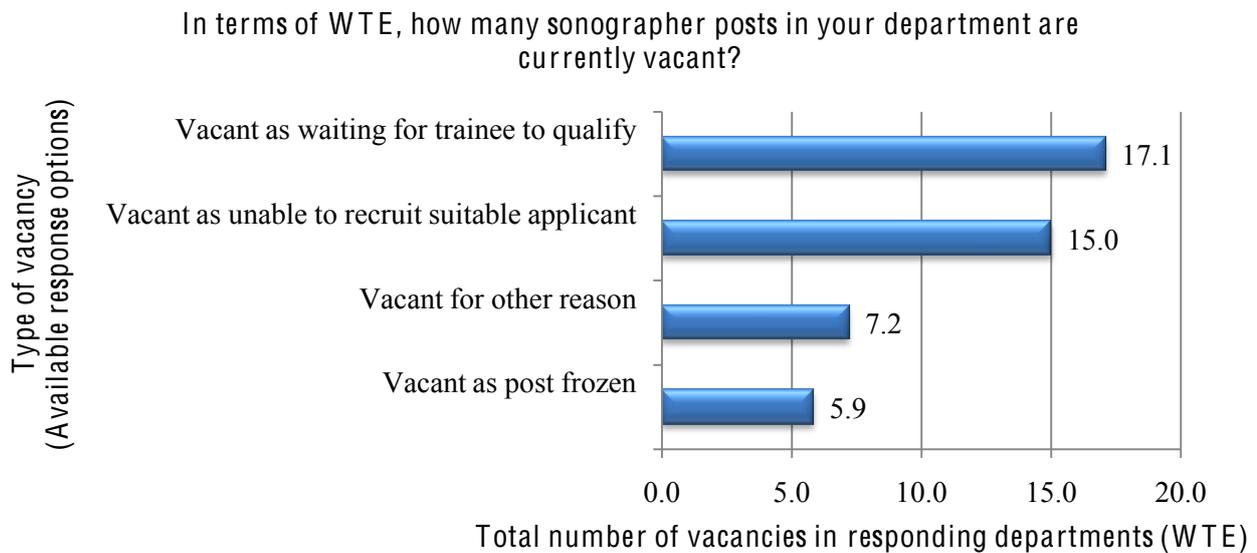
Across the 54 responding departments there are a total of 414.2 WTE funded sonographer posts, giving an average per department of 7.7 WTE funded sonographer posts. The size of responding departments ranges from the smallest departments with only 1 WTE funded sonographer post to the largest department with 25.6 WTE funded sonographer posts.



### 3. Vacancies

22 responding departments (40%) report sonographer vacancies in their department. The sonographer vacancy rate across all 54 responding departments is 10.9%. (The vacancy rate is calculated using the number of WTE vacancies as a percentage of the WTE establishment figures.)

The two main reasons for vacancies are that the department is waiting for a trainee to qualify or that they are unable to recruit suitable applicants.

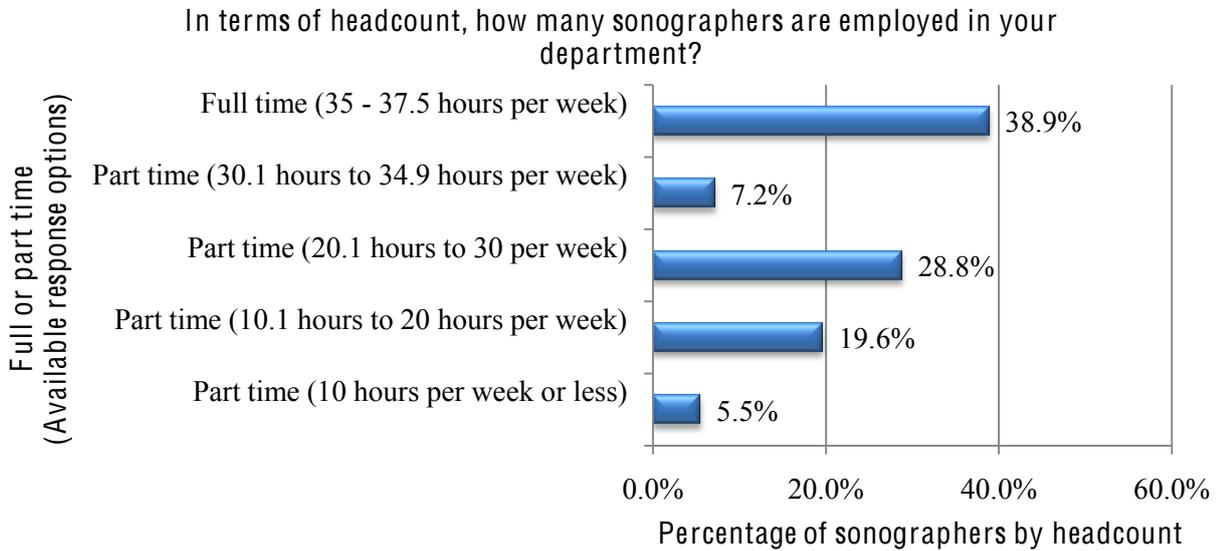


Respondents selecting the “Vacant for other reason” option gave the following additional explanations:

- There are plans in place to fill the vacancy e.g. the post has been offered to a successful applicant.
- The post was offered to a successful applicant but they declined.
- The post holder is taking a career break.
- The post holder is on maternity leave.
- The vacant post is only a small number of hours per week and the department is, therefore, waiting for more hours to become available or to combine the role with another department.

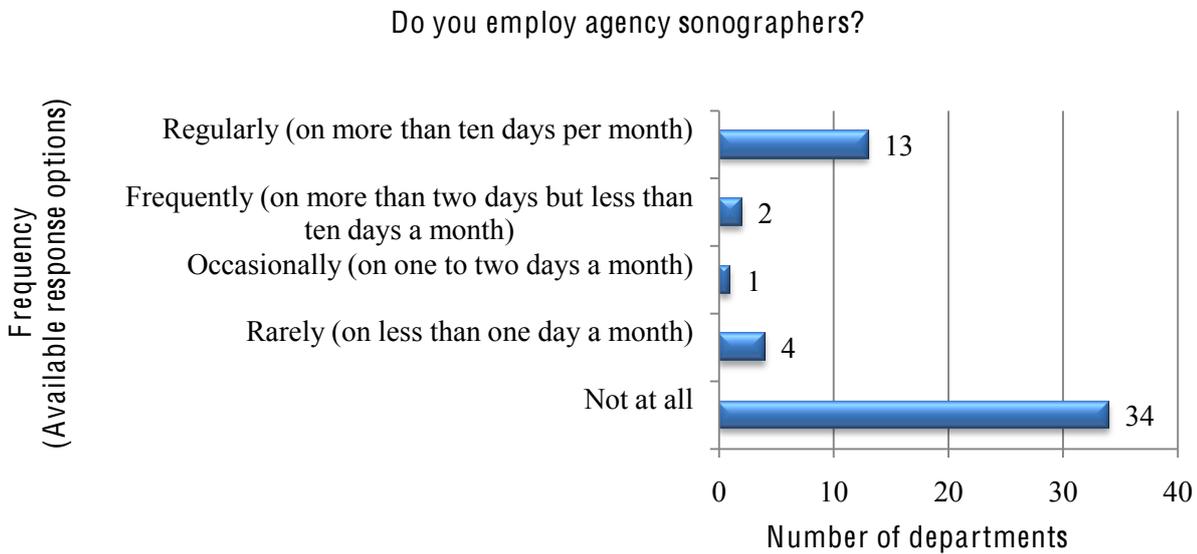
#### 4. Full or part time

The majority of sonographers (61.1%) in the responding departments work part time.



#### 5. Agency workers

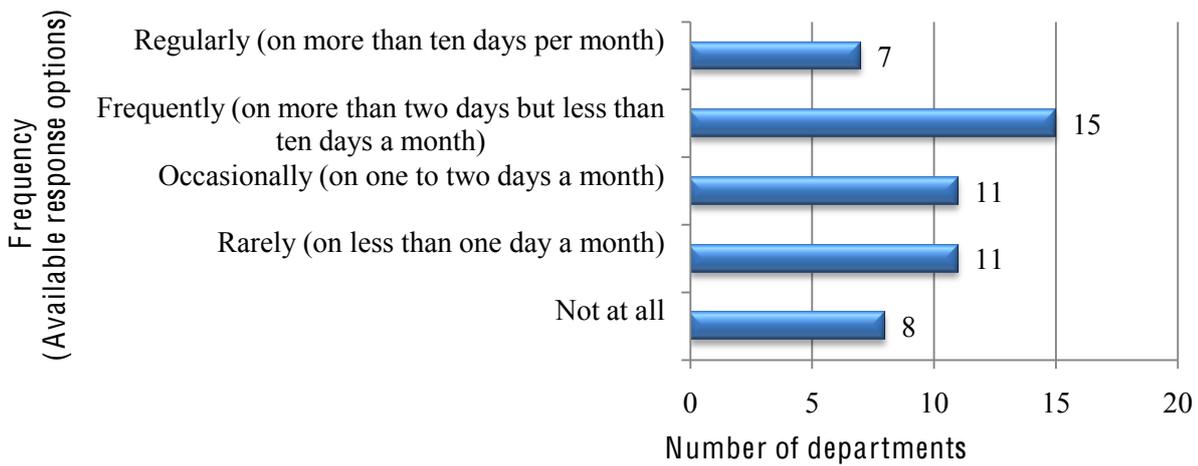
13 responding departments (24.1%) employ agency sonographers regularly (on more than ten days per month).



## 7. Extra Hours

In 33 responding departments (63.5%) sonographers work extra hours on at least one day a month to meet demand.

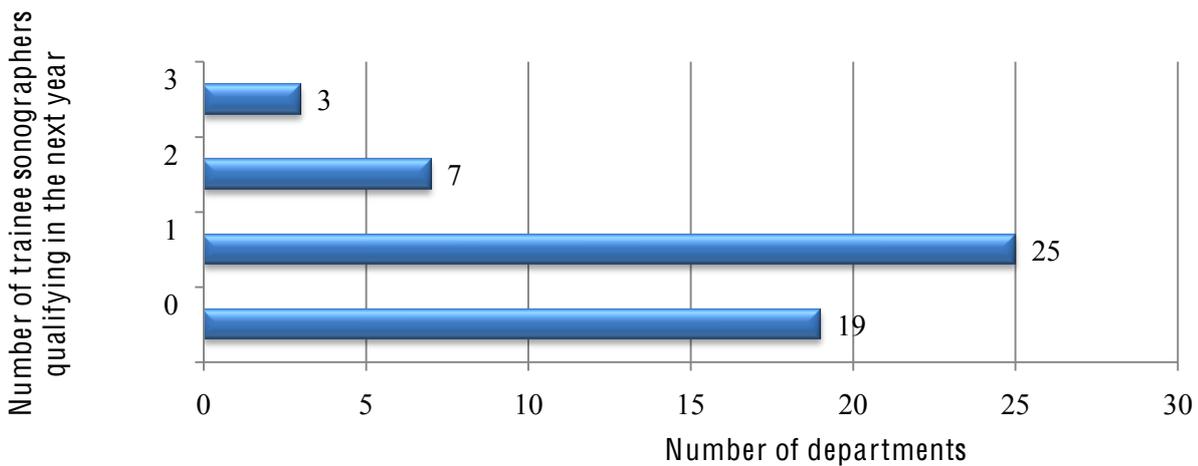
Do your sonographers work extra hours to meet demand?



## 8. Trainee sonographers

A total of 48 trainee sonographers are due to qualify in the next year across the responding departments. 35 of the responding departments (64.8%) have at least one trainee sonographer due to qualify in the next year.

In terms of headcount how many trainee sonographers (CASE accredited PGC/PGD) are likely to qualify in your department in the next year?



## 9. General comments

Respondents were asked to comments on their local circumstances with respect to sonographer recruitment, retention and training. The themes in the table below were mentioned by three or more responding departments. Whilst 25.9% of departments have no problems with the recruitment, retention and training of sonographers, 33.3% commented that they do have difficulties recruiting sonographers.

Theme	Number of responding departments	Illustrative comment
Recruitment is difficult	18	<i>“The post for Sonographers has been advertised four times in the last 4 months with no success. We are training more sonographers. Meanwhile, we are meeting the demand by overtime and using agency staff.”</i>
Recruitment, retention and training situation is good	14	<i>“We are fortunate that [our Strategic Health Authority] fund training places and tuition fees. We train 2 PGDip per year for the region and have employed at least one per year ourselves. There is very little attrition from the department so retention is good. The department encourages sonographer development which helps keep people interested and in post and I have several specialist sonographers in post.”</i>
Increasing demand	7	<i>“Workload is increasing in all aspects of US and we have to keep within waiting times of &lt;5weeks.”</i>
Difficult to get funding for training	5	<i>“We find it very difficult to recruit to our departments as there is a shortage of suitably trained staff throughout Scotland as very little money has been made available to train students.”</i>
Difficult to find time for training	5	<i>“Logistically difficult to provide hands on practical training for trainees and other medical staff due to workload which is dictated by government targets.”</i>
Frozen posts	4	<i>“Unable to recruit to vacant post 2 years ago. Post now frozen - cost cutting measure.”</i>
Competition for staff from independent/agency organisations	3	<i>“Many sonographers have cut their hours in favour of working within the community/privately for an increased wage.”</i>
Staff retiring	3	<i>“Currently preparing case for training post as staff age demographic mean that we will lose several key staff in three years.”</i>

## Appendix A – Survey questionnaire (pdf version only)

The questionnaire was designed by Nigel Thomson (SCoR Professional Officer for Ultrasound) and Claire Dumbleton (SCoR Knowledge Manager).

# Ultrasound workforce

Thank you for participating in this ultrasound workforce survey by the Society and College of Radiographers. It should take between 5 and 10 minutes to complete. Please be assured that your individual department responses will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions about this survey contact Nigel Thomson at [nigelt@sor.org](mailto:nigelt@sor.org).

Click on Next to start the survey.

## How many funded whole time equivalent (w.t.e) sonographer posts do you have in your department?

## In terms of w.t.e how many sonographers are employed in your department?

## In terms of headcount how many sonographers are employed in your department?

Full time (35 - 37.5 hours per week)

Part time (30.1 hours to 34.9 hours per week)

Part time (20.1 hours to 30 per week)

Part time (10.1 hours to 20 hours per week)

Part time (10 hours per week or less)

## In terms of w.t.e how many sonographer posts in your department are currently vacant?

Vacant as post frozen

Vacant as waiting for trainee to qualify

Vacant as unable to recruit suitable applicant

Vacant for other reason (please give details below)

## Details of 'Vacant for other reason' if applicable.

## Do you employ agency sonographers?

- Not at all
- Rarely (on less than one day a month)
- Occasionally (on one to two days a month)
- Frequently (on more than two days but less than ten days a month)
- Regularly (on more than ten days per month)

# Ultrasound workforce

## Do your sonographers work extra hours to meet demand?

- Not at all
- Rarely (on less than one day a month)
- Occasionally (on one to two days a month)
- Frequently (on more than two days but less than ten days a month)
- Regularly (on more than ten days per month)

## In terms of headcount how many trainee sonographers (CASE accredited PGC/PGD) are likely to qualify in your department in the next year?

## Please comment on your local circumstances with respect to sonographer recruitment, retention and training.

## Which sector best describes your organisation

- NHS Trusts or Health Boards
- Private/Independent healthcare
- Charitable healthcare
- Self-employed

Other (please specify)

## Country

- Northern Ireland
- England
- Scotland
- Wales

## Your name

## Your department & hospital name

## Ultrasound workforce

*We, the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR), ask for the name of your department so we can check we get no more than one response from each department. We may store these details to contact you in future about your answers. We will not publish the details requested on this page. Any personal data which the SCoR collects, records or uses in any way will have appropriate safeguards applied to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act.*

*The questionnaire is hosted by Survey Monkey who are based in the United States. Survey Monkey are listed as a "Safe Harbor" organisation by the US Department of Commerce. The "Safe Harbor" list is designed to list US organisations complying with the European Commission's Directive on Data Protection. Data is collected and stored by Survey Monkey, but only made available to the account holder (The SCoR). All information collected is kept confidential and secure and is not shared with any third-parties by Survey Monkey.*

*By completing this questionnaire you are giving your consent for the personal data you provide to be processed by Survey Monkey and the SCoR.*