



# NHS bed availability in England

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This note provides an overview of bed availability in NHS hospitals in England. Current estimates are provided along with information on trends since 1979 in the number of available beds.

Further information on hospital bed availability is available from the Department of Health [hospital activity](#)<sup>1</sup> website.

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## A. Bed availability and occupancy

In 2008/09 an average of 159,386 beds were available each day in NHS hospitals in England (excluding day only beds). Of these, an average of 136,203 (85.5%) were occupied by patients at midnight. Table 1 shows details of available and occupied beds by sector in 2008/09.

Table 2 shows trends in available beds between 1987/88 and 2008/09. The average daily number of available beds fell by 46% over this period; from 297,364 in 1987/89 to 159,386 in 2008/09. Over the same period the number of day only beds has increased by over 400 per cent from 2,000 day beds in 1987/88 to 10,959 in 2008/09.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.performance.doh.gov.uk/hospitalactivity/index.htm>

**Table 1 Average daily number of available and occupied beds by sector, England, 2008/09**

Sector	Available beds	Occupied beds	% occupancy
All ward types	159,386	136,203	85.5%
General & acute (acute plus geriatric)	121,688	105,499	86.7%
Acute	100,892	86,363	85.6%
Geriatric	20,796	19,136	92.0%
Mental illness	26,430	22,779	86.2%
Learning Disabilities	2,882	2,393	83.0%
Maternity	8,386	5,532	66.0%

Source: *Department of Health, Hospital Activity Statistics*

**Table 2 Average daily number of available beds, by sector, England, 1987/88 to 2008/09**

Year	All specialties (exc day only)	General & acute	Acute	Geriatric	Mental illness	Learning disability	Maternity	Day only
1987/88	297,364	180,889	127,616	53,273	67,122	33,421	15,932	2,000
1988/89	282,918	174,491	123,450	51,041	63,012	30,048	15,367	2,473
1989/90	270,301	169,901	121,170	48,731	59,288	26,406	14,706	2,861
1990/91	255,479	162,691	116,788	45,902	55,239	23,379	14,170	3,068
1991/92	242,677	157,247	115,140	42,107	50,278	21,383	13,770	3,399
1992/93	232,201	153,208	112,862	40,346	47,308	18,519	13,167	3,972
1993/94	219,476	147,153	109,713	37,440	43,532	16,269	12,521	4,908
1994/95	211,812	144,803	108,008	36,795	41,827	13,211	11,971	5,699
1995/96	206,136	142,624	108,296	34,328	39,477	12,676	11,358	6,541
1996/97	198,848	140,515	108,869	31,646	37,640	9,693	11,000	6,766
1997/98	193,625	138,047	107,807	30,240	36,601	8,197	10,781	7,125
1998/99	190,006	136,426	107,729	28,697	35,692	7,491	10,398	7,568
1999/00	186,290	135,080	107,218	27,862	34,173	6,834	10,203	7,938
2000/01	186,091	135,794	107,956	27,838	34,214	6,316	9,767	8,155
2001/02	184,871	136,583	108,535	28,047	32,783	5,694	9,812	8,036
2002/03	183,826	136,679	108,706	27,973	32,753	5,038	9,356	8,544
2003/04	184,019	137,247	109,793	27,454	32,252	5,212	9,309	8,813
2004/05	180,966	136,184	109,544	26,641	31,286	4,415	9,081	9,160
2005/06	175,646	133,033	108,113	24,920	29,802	3,927	8,883	9,726
2006/07	167,019	126,976	104,079	22,897	27,914	3,486	8,643	10,342
2007/08	160,297	121,780	101,080	20,700	26,929	3,147	8,441	10,511
2008/09	159,386	121,688	100,892	20,796	26,430	2,882	8,386	10,959

Source: *Department of Health, Hospital Activity Statistics*

## B. Critical care beds

The Department of Health conduct a bi-annual census of available critical care beds in January and July of each year. The latest data available is at 15 July 2009 and is shown in Table 3. There were a total of 3,647 general and specialist beds, of which 54% were used for level 3 intensive care and 46% were used for level 2 high dependency care.

**Table 3 Open and staffed adult critical care beds at 15 July 2009, by location and level of care, England**

Location	Total available adult critical care beds	Used for intensive care (level 3) on census day	Used for high dependency care (level 2) on census day
<b>General Beds</b>			
General IC <sup>1</sup> unit or general HD <sup>2</sup> unit	1,198	656	542
Combined IC and HD unit	1,284	833	451
Combined IC or HD and coronary care unit	96	27	69
Other general HD beds not in a unit	109		109
<b>Specialist Beds</b>			
Cardiothoracic unit	581	329	252
Liver unit	22	15	7
Neurological (neurosciences) unit	242	108	134
Spinal injury unit	21	5	16
Burns unit	26	9	17
Other specialist HD beds not in a unit	68		68
<b>Total general and specialist beds</b>	<b>3,647</b>	<b>1,982</b>	<b>1,665</b>

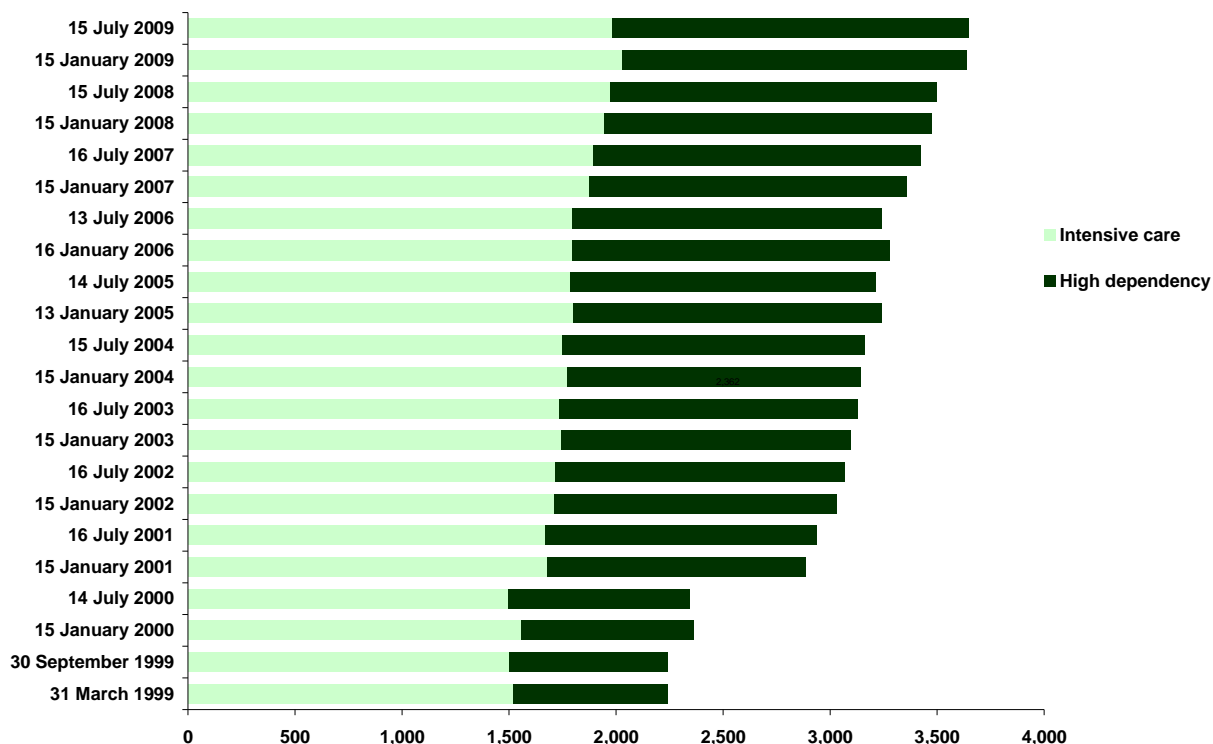
Notes: <sup>1</sup> IC = Intensive care

<sup>2</sup> HD = High dependency

Source: *Department of Health, Hospital Activity Statistics*

Figure 1 shows trends in the availability of critical care beds between the 1999 and 2009 censuses. Over this period there has been a 63% increase in the total number of critical care beds: from 2,240 as at 31 March 1999 to 3,647 as at 15 July 2009. Much of this increase is attributable to the rise in high dependency care beds, from 720 as at 31 March 1999 to 1,665 as at 15 July 2009 (a 131% increase).

**Figure 1 Number of open and staffed critical care beds on census day, England 1999 to 2009**



## C. Residential care beds

In 2008/09 an average of 2,941 residential care beds were available each day in NHS organisations in England. Of these, 56% (1,646) were for individuals with learning disabilities and 40% (1,186) were for those with mental illness.

Table 2 shows trends in available beds between 1986/87 and 2008/09. The average daily number of available beds fell by 40% over this period; from 4,902 in 1996/97 to 2,941 in 2008/09. Over this period, the number of learning disabilities beds has decreased by 52% cent (from 3,433 to 1,646) while the number of mental illness beds has increased by 3% cent from 1,155 in 1987/88 to 1,186 in 2008/09.

**Table 4 Average daily number of available residential beds, NHS organisations in England, 1996/97 to 2008/09**

	Learning disabilities	Mental illness	Other	Total
1996/97	3,433	1,155	314	4,902
1997/98	4,079	1,282	298	5,659
1998/99	4,040	1,364	356	5,761
1999/00	3,761	1,299	443	5,503
2000/01	3,703	1,280	437	5,420
2001/02	1,193	3,393	339	4,926
2002/03	1,633	3,007	923	5,562
2003/04	2,035	2,881	685	5,601
2004/05	1,747	2,792	711	5,250
2005/06	1,562	2,494	389	4,445
2006/07	1,286	2,075	291	3,651
2007/08	1,851	1,537	197	3,585
2008/09	1,646	1,186	109	2,941

Source: Department of Health, Hospital Activity Statistics