

The National Organ Retrieval Service and Usage of Organs

Key messages

- National Organ Retrieval Service teams attended 643 possible DBD donors and 991 possible DCD donors; 99% of these DBD donors and 80% of these DCD donors proceeded to donation
- Overall, 59% of organs offered from those donors that did proceed were transplanted, but individually, these rates were 84% for kidneys, 64% for livers, 26% for pancreases, 41% for hearts, 30% for lungs and 9% for bowels
- Overall, 83% of organs retrieved were transplanted, but individually, these rates were 87% for kidneys, 77% for livers, 51% for pancreases, 97% for hearts, 88% for lungs and 94% for bowels
- The number of deceased donors per million of population was 20.5, however 6% of actual donors resulted in no organ transplants, an increase on the previous year (5%)

4.1 The National Organ Retrieval Service (NORS)

There are 16 NORS teams in total, ten abdominal and six cardiothoracic. Since January 2020, the abdominal aspect of the service increased capacity to eight abdominal NORS teams available to retrieve organs from deceased donors in the UK for transplantation, at any given time. Three cardiothoracic NORS teams are available at any given time, an arrangement that has been in place since April 2016.

NORS teams are mobilised using a sequence. The first and second teams in the sequence are defined for each UK hospital (largely based on travel times but adjusted to give a more even workload across NORS teams), while subsequent teams in the sequence are ordered based on travel time and availability, known as 'closest available'.

If a team is first in sequence for a particular donor hospital, they are required to attend possible donors at that hospital within an agreed timescale if at least one organ has been accepted for transplantation. If the team is already retrieving when they are called to attend, then a second team is called in to retrieve and so on.

The number of possible DBD and DCD donors that were attended by each of the teams in 2025-2026 is shown in **Table 4.1**. The geographical distribution of donors and the on-call arrangements lead to variation in these numbers across teams. The figures are broken down by whether the possible donor proceeded to organ donation (proceeding donors) or not. Non-proceeding donors are more common in the pool of potential DCD donors as prolonged time to death after treatment withdrawal can result in unsuitability of organs for transplantation. A small number of possible donors may be attended by local kidney transplant teams. This is typically for DCD donors when only the kidneys have been accepted for transplantation and the teams are appropriately reimbursed if they are willing and able to retrieve.

Table 4.1 Number of proceeding and non-proceeding donors attended by each NORS team in the UK, 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

NORS team	DBD				DCD			
	Proceeding ²	Non-proceeding	% non-proc	No. attended	Proceeding ²	Non-proceeding	% non-proc	No. attended
Abdominal								
Birmingham ¹	79	-	-	79	84	18	18	102
Cambridge	86	-	-	86	115	33	22	148
Cardiff ¹	25	-	-	25	33	7	18	40
Edinburgh	40	2	5	42	87	17	16	104
King's	97	-	-	97	116	20	15	136
Leeds ¹	64	1	2	65	70	19	21	89
Manchester ¹	66	-	-	66	65	13	17	78
Newcastle	52	-	-	52	59	17	22	76
Oxford ¹	64	3	4	67	67	30	31	97
Royal Free ¹	59	1	2	60	90	24	21	114
Abdominal total	632	7	1	639	786	198	20	984
Cardiothoracic¹								
Birmingham	57	24	30	81	11	16	59	27
Glasgow	20	14	41	34	30	10	25	40
Harefield	24	28	54	52	39	27	41	66
Manchester	56	18	24	74	8	15	65	23
Newcastle	33	15	31	48	8	11	58	19
Papworth	20	13	39	33	56	25	31	81
Cardiothoracic total	210	112	35	322	152	104	41	256
Total donors attended	636	7	1	643	792	199	20	991

¹ Part-time teams

² For abdominal, at least one abdominal organ retrieved. For cardiothoracic, at least one cardiothoracic organ retrieved

For more detailed information regarding the National Organ Retrieval Service and individual team activity, an annual NORS report is available here: <https://www.odt.nhs.uk/statistics-and-reports/annual-national-organ-retrieval-service-report/>

4.2 Retrieval and usage of organs

The number of 'consented' donors ('authorised' donors in Scotland) and 'offered' donors (where at least one organ was offered for transplant) are shown in **Table 4.2**. Note that organs are not always offered from 'consented' donors, e.g. because the donor's condition deteriorates, or it is discovered the donor is unsuitable for organ donation. The number of organs offered from 'offered' donors is also shown. Each year a number of actual organ donors result in no transplants. Donors resulting in at least one transplant are termed 'utilised' donors and the number of actual and utilised donors is shown in **Table 4.2**. The number of donors per million of population (pmp) is also shown. In 2025-2026, 6% of actual donors resulted in no organ transplants, an increase of 1% compared to the previous year.

Table 4.2 Consented, offered, actual and utilised deceased donors in the UK, 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026					
	DBD (pmp)		DCD (pmp)		Total (pmp)
Consented donors ¹	689	(9.9)	1139	(16.4)	1828 (26.3)
Offered donors ²	657	(9.5)	1049	(15.1)	1706 (24.5)
<i>Kidneys offered</i>	1248		2011		3259
<i>Livers offered</i>	632		973		1605
<i>Pancreases offered</i>	354		358		712
<i>Bowels offered</i>	191		0		191
<i>Hearts offered</i>	353		215		568
<i>Lungs offered</i>	770		778		1548
Actual donors ³	636	(9.2)	792	(11.4)	1428 (20.5)
Utilised donors ⁴	609	(8.8)	729	(10.5)	1338 (19.3)

¹ Consented donors defined as patients where consent for at least one organ was given
² Offered donors defined as donors where one or more organs were offered for transplantation
³ Actual donors defined as donors where one or more organs were retrieved
⁴ Utilised donors defined as donors where one or more organs were retrieved and transplanted

There were 1,428 actual deceased organ donors in 2025-2026, but not all organs from these donors were offered for transplantation. **Table 4.3** shows the number of organs offered, retrieved and transplanted from the 636 DBD and 792 DCD actual donors. The number of organs from these donors that were subsequently used for research purposes is also shown. The number of organs offered for transplantation excludes those where the donor did not meet the nationally agreed age criteria for suitability for donation of that specific organ. There are no nationally agreed age criteria for kidney and liver donation.

Table 4.3 Donation and transplantation of organs from 1428 deceased donors in the UK, 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

Organ	Organs meeting initial suitability criteria and offered for transplantation	Organs retrieved for transplantation		Organs transplanted			Organs used for research (from actual organ donors)
		N	% of offered	N	% of retrieved	% of offered	
DBD donor organs							
Kidney	1210	1167	96	1035	89	86	62
Liver	611	582	95	495	85	81	44
Pancreas	342	183	54	103	56	30	25
Bowel	186	18	10	17	94	9	0
Heart	342	125	37	124	99	36	0
Lung	750	251	33	231	92	31	18
Total	3441	2326	68	2005	86	58	149
DCD donor organs							
Kidney	1533	1497	98	1275	85	83	93
Liver	742	545	73	373	68	50	75
Pancreas	287	146	51	64	44	22	28
Heart	150	91	61	86	95	57	3
Lung	598	202	34	167	83	28	26
Total	3310	2481	75	1965	79	59	225
Deceased donor organs							
Kidney	2743	2664	97	2310	87	84	155
Liver	1353	1127	83	868	77	64	119
Pancreas	629	329	52	167	51	26	53
Bowel	186	18	10	17	94	9	0
Heart	492	216	44	210	97	41	3
Lung	1348	453	34	398	88	30	44
Total	6751	4807	71	3970	83	59	374

Suitability Criteria:

Pancreas: donors with a BMI < 40 and aged < 60 years (DBD) or aged < 55 years (DCD)

Bowel: donors aged < 60 years and weighing < 90kg

Heart: donors aged < 65 years (DBD) or aged < 50 years (DCD) and did not die due to myocardial infarction (DBD)

Lung: donors aged < 70 years

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show line graphs of the pathway for all donor organs through to transplantation. The charts start at 100% for each organ, representing all organs from the 636 DBD and 792 DCD donors. The proportion of these organs where any national donor age criteria are met is then shown, followed by the proportion with consent, the proportion offered, the proportion retrieved and finally the proportion transplanted. For example, **Figure 4.2** shows that 80% of the kidneys from the 792 DCD donors were transplanted. Transplantation rates for kidneys and livers are generally high, while for other organs, even after allowing for the agreed age criteria, the rates are generally low.

Figure 4.1 Donation and transplantation rates of organs from DBD organ donors in the UK, 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

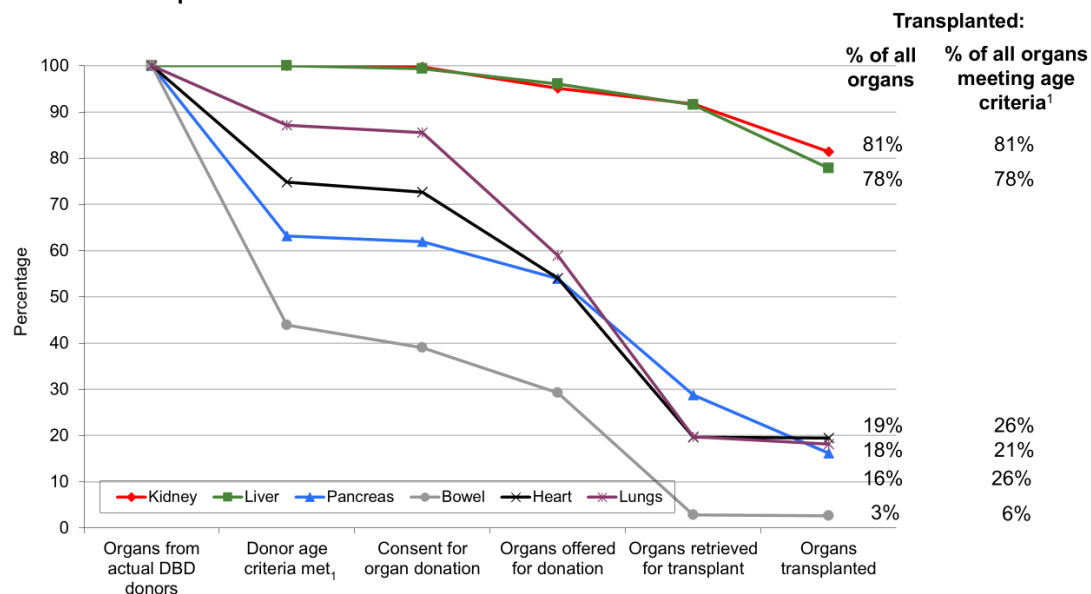
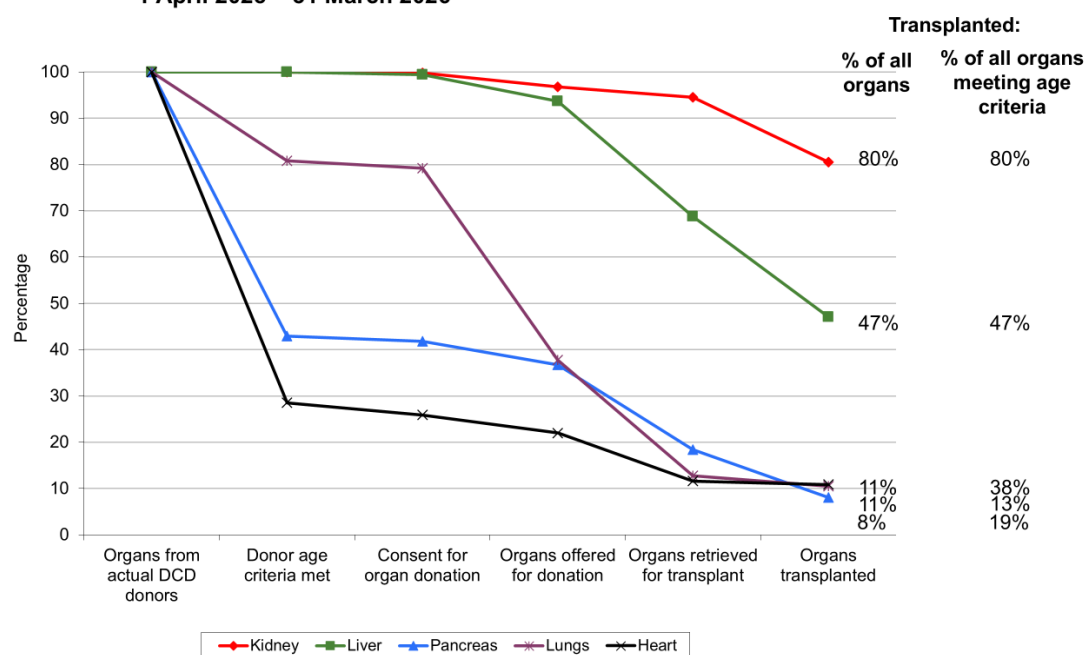


Figure 4.2 Donation and transplantation rates of organs from DCD organ donors in the UK, 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026



Reasons for organs not being offered for transplantation, being offered but not accepted and being retrieved but not subsequently transplanted are shown in **Table 4.4** and **Table 4.5** for abdominal organs from DBD and DCD donors, respectively. **Table 4.6** shows the same information for cardiothoracic organs. Reasons for the medical unsuitability of an organ include infections, tumours, anatomy and disease. Non-medical reasons include donor size and donor instability. Clinical unsuitability of an organ encompasses poor perfusion, prolonged ischaemia, past history of the donor and, in the case of pancreases for islet usage, insufficiency of viable islet yield. Reasons reported under 'other' primarily include recipient related issues (such as no suitable recipients), but may also include logistical reasons and un-coded reasons reported of a miscellaneous nature.

These tables also show how many of the transplanted organs from UK donors were transplanted overseas.

These organs were not accepted for transplantation by any UK transplant centre, but were accepted for suitable recipients identified elsewhere, usually in Europe. In 2025-2026 only a small number of livers and lungs were exported for transplantation outside the UK. Organs from outside the UK are occasionally imported for transplant. Further information on the import and export of organs can be found in **Appendix IV**.

The percentage of organs retrieved that were not transplanted are shown in **Figure 4.3**, **Figure 4.4**, **Figure 4.5**, **Figure 4.6** and **Figure 4.7** for kidneys, livers, pancreases, hearts, and lungs respectively. The rates are shown over the last decade. Some organs are found not to be suitable for transplantation after they have been retrieved. A number of organs retrieved but found not to be suitable for transplantation are instead used for research (with appropriate consent).

Table 4.4 Reasons for non-retrieval and non-use of abdominal organs from DBD donors in the UK, 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

	Kidney	Liver	Pancreas	Bowel
All actual DBD organ donors	636	636	636	636
Donors from whom organs not offered for donation	31	25	293	450
Reasons for organs not being offered¹				
Family permission refused	2	4	8	31
Permission refused by coroner	1	2	2	1
Permission refused other	0	1	4	4
Donor unsuitable - medical	0	0	0	2
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	0	0	13	2
Donor unsuitable - age	0	0	204	5
Organ unsuitable - clinical	19	14	51	22
Poor function	9	4	3	1
Donor age>=60 or donor weight >=90kg	0	0	0	357
Other	0	0	8	25
Organs offered for donation	1210	611	343	186
Organs not retrieved (% of organs offered for donation)	43 (4)	29 (5)	160 (47)	168 (90)
Donor unsuitable - medical	8	5	14	7
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	0	2	12	52
Donor unsuitable - age	2	0	9	4
Organ unsuitable - clinical	17	17	77	65
Poor function	15	3	14	5
Other	1	2	34	35
Organs retrieved (% of organs offered for donation)	1167 (96)	582 (95)	183 (53)	18 (10)
Organs transplanted in the UK	1035	493	103	17
Organs transplanted overseas	0	2	0	0
Organs not transplanted	132	87	80	1
Reasons for organ not being transplanted				
Donor unsuitable - medical	32	11	6	0
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	3	3	2	0
Donor unsuitable - age	1	0	0	0
Organ unsuitable - clinical	69	60	58	0
Poor function	15	8	3	0
Other	12	5	11	1
TOTAL ORGANS RETRIEVED, NOT TRANSPLANTED (Number used for research)	132 (62)	87 (44)	80 (25)	1 (0)

¹ Includes donors whose organ may have been offered but are outside of organ specific criteria

Table 4.5 Reasons for non-retrieval and non-use of abdominal organs from DCD donors in the UK, 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

	Kidney	Liver	Pancreas
All actual DCD organ donors	792	792	792
Donors from whom organs not offered for donation	28	50	501
Reasons for organs not being offered¹			
Family permission refused	2	5	9
Permission refused by coroner	0	4	0
Permission refused other	2	1	6
Donor unsuitable - medical	4	0	2
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	1	0	15
Donor unsuitable - age	1	1	399
Organ unsuitable - clinical	7	33	61
Poor function	10	5	3
Other	1	1	6
Organs offered for donation	1533	742	291
Organs not retrieved (% of organs offered for donation)	36 (2)	197 (27)	145 (50)
Donor unsuitable - medical	2	34	12
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	0	6	14
Donor unsuitable - age	4	26	10
Organ unsuitable - clinical	16	97	71
Poor function	14	19	11
Other	0	15	27
Organs retrieved (% of organs offered for donation)	1497 (98)	545 (73)	146 (50)
Organs transplanted in the UK	1275	373	64
Organs transplanted overseas	0	0	0
Organs not transplanted	222	172	82
Reasons for organ not being transplanted			
Donor unsuitable - medical	74	18	22
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	0	4	0
Donor unsuitable - age	0	4	3
Organ unsuitable - clinical	106	99	48
Poor function	14	35	1
Other	28	12	8
TOTAL ORGANS RETRIEVED, NOT TRANSPLANTED (Number used for research)	222 (93)	172 (75)	82 (28)

¹ Includes donors whose organ may have been offered but are outside of organ specific criteria

Table 4.6 Reasons for non-retrieval and non-use of cardiothoracic organs from deceased donors in the UK, 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

	Heart (DBD)	Lung (DBD)	Heart (DCD)	Lung (DCD)
All actual organ donors	636	636	792	792
Donors from whom organs not offered for donation	292	261	618	493
Reasons for organs not being offered¹				
Family permission refused	14	10	21	13
Permission refused by coroner	20	14	17	15
Permission refused other	3	3	4	6
Donor unsuitable - medical	4	11	2	15
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	0	0	7	0
Donor unsuitable - age	153	93	459	237
Organ unsuitable - clinical	68	52	57	111
Poor function	23	76	27	94
Other	7	2	24	2
Organs offered for donation	344	750	174	598
Organs not retrieved (% of organs offered for donation)	219 (64)	499 (67)	83 (48)	396 (66)
Reasons for non-retrieval				
Donor unsuitable - medical	9	42	6	46
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	23	60	4	54
Donor unsuitable - age	16	6	1	6
Organ unsuitable - clinical	80	104	36	88
Poor function	73	188	18	100
Other	18	99	18	102
Organs retrieved (% of organs offered for donation)	125 (36)	251 (33)	91 (52)	202 (34)
Organs transplanted in the UK	124	221	86	157
Organs transplanted overseas	0	10	0	10
Organs not transplanted	1	20	5	35
Reasons for organ not being transplanted				
Donor unsuitable - medical	0	4	2	0
Donor unsuitable - non-medical	0	0	0	0
Donor unsuitable - age	0	0	0	0
Organ unsuitable - clinical	0	6	0	10
Poor function	0	8	3	18
Other	1	2	0	7
TOTAL ORGANS RETRIEVED, NOT TRANSPLANTED (Number used for research)	1 (0)	20 (18)	5 (3)	35 (26)

¹ Includes donors whose organ may have been offered but are outside of organ specific criteria

Figure 4.3 Percentage of kidneys retrieved that were not transplanted from deceased organ donors in the UK, 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2026

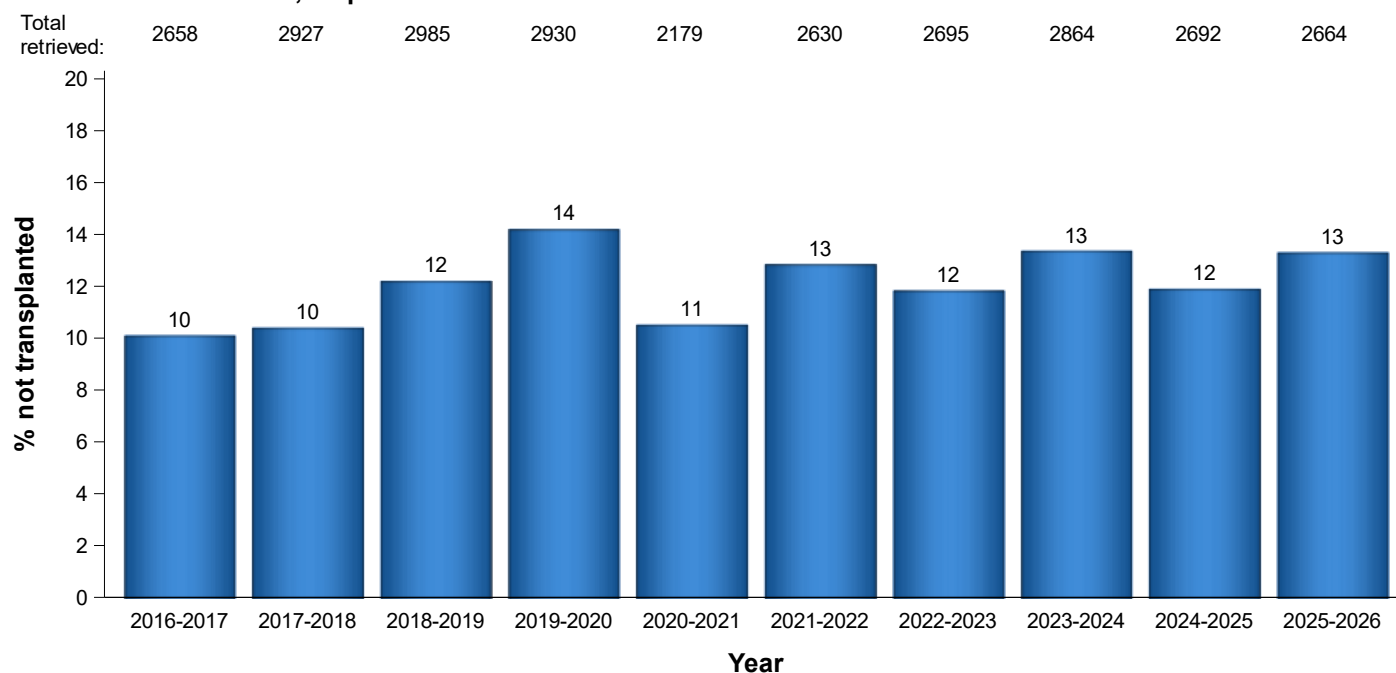


Figure 4.4 Percentage of livers retrieved that were not transplanted from deceased organ donors in the UK, 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2026

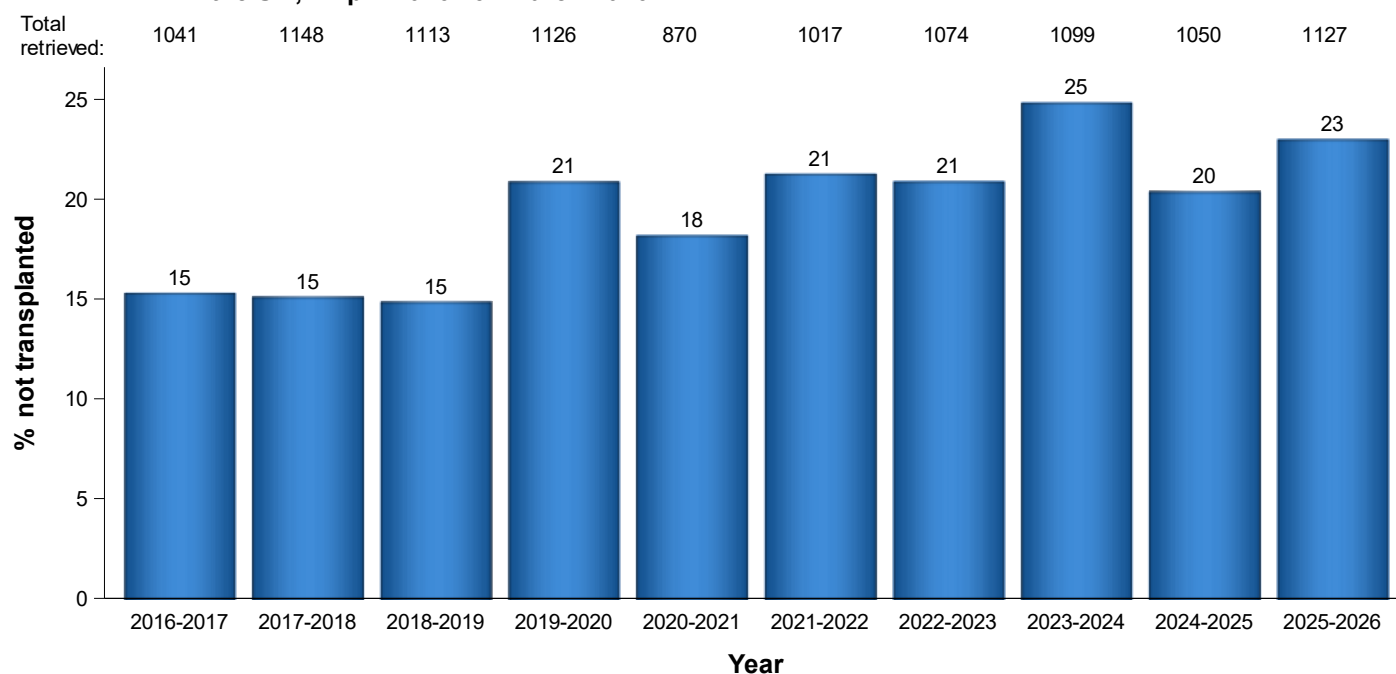
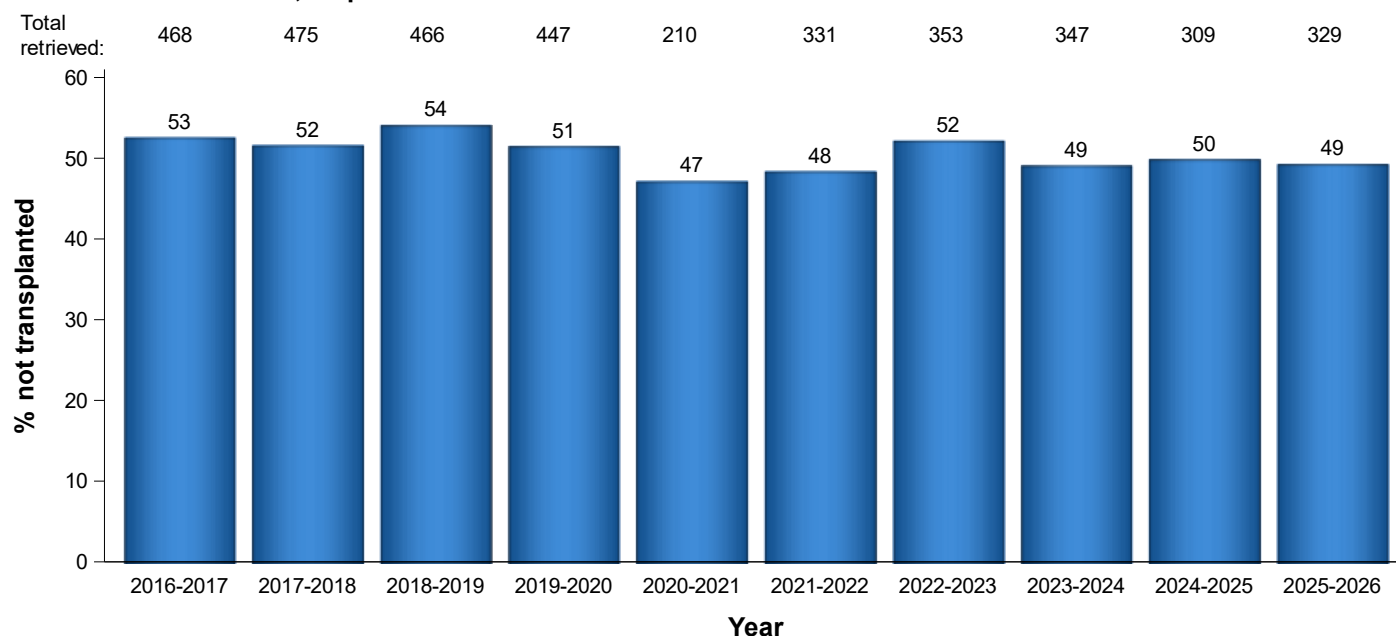


Figure 4.5 Percentage of pancreases¹ retrieved that were not transplanted from deceased organ donors in the UK, 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2026



¹Includes pancreases retrieved for islet transplantation and not transplanted due to the outcome of the islet isolation

Figure 4.6 Percentage of hearts retrieved that were not transplanted from deceased organ donors in the UK, 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2026

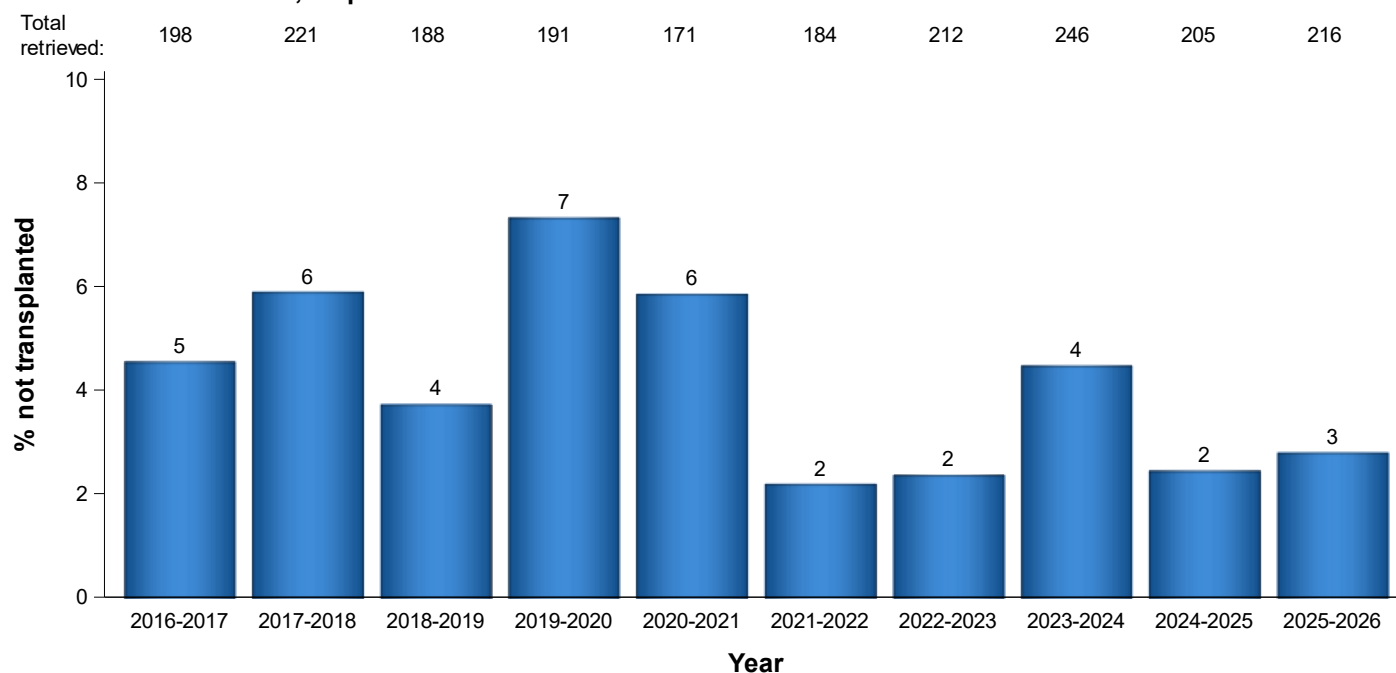


Figure 4.7 Percentage of lungs retrieved that were not transplanted from deceased organ donors in the UK, 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2026

