

# The NMC register

1 April 2023 –  
31 March 2024



# Welcome to our annual report on the NMC register of nurses, midwives and nursing associates which provides insights into the nursing and midwifery workforce across the UK.

The annual data analysis of the NMC register and accompanying leavers' survey allow us to build a picture of our whole register including the total number of registered professionals, where they were educated, and some of their reasons for leaving. It also shows trends and changes year-on-year.

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery practice that improves everyone's wellbeing. We hope the health and social care sector will benefit from the data and insights in this report, and our comprehensive data tables (linked below) by using them to address workforce challenges and to help improve the experience of professionals in the workplace and the care that people receive.

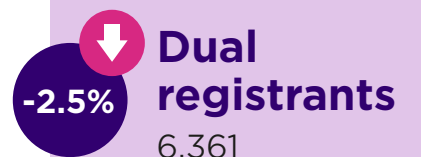
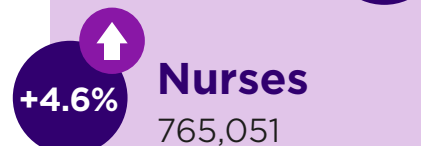
## The big picture - record numbers on the register

There are more nurses, midwives and nursing associates<sup>1</sup> on the NMC register than ever - **826,418**. That's **37,723 (4.8 percent)** more registered professionals than 12 months ago, and **128,184 (18.4 percent) more** than five years ago. Total numbers include **2,533** professionals who moved on to our permanent register from the Covid-19 temporary register - set up in March 2020 to support the UK's response to the coronavirus pandemic and which closed in March 2024.

These record numbers are welcome given the challenges of increasing demand for health and social care services, changing needs and workforce pressures.



### In the last 12 months



<sup>1</sup> The nursing associate role was introduced in 2019. Nursing associates can only practise in this role in England.

## Rising number of joiners with almost equal split between UK and international

The number of first-time joiners across the UK continues to rise, with **nearly 60,000** new nursing and midwifery professionals registering with us this year alone. These were split almost equally between UK educated joiners (**30,363**) and those educated internationally (**29,628**).

The year-on-year growth was even higher among international joiners, which shows an increase of **more than 18 percent** compared to the previous year. **Almost half (14,615)** of this year's new joiners were educated in India.

We continue to see proportional rises in first time joiners from several 'red list' countries from which active recruitment is not permitted. We remind employers and agencies to follow the relevant codes of practice to help maintain ethical standards and support global health equity.

There's also been a continued rise in internationally educated midwifery joiners this year following initiatives such as NHS England's Maternity International Recruitment Programme, part of the NHS Maternity Workforce Programme. A total of **711** internationally educated midwives joined from outside the UK in the last 12 months compared to **348** in the same period last year.

## Proportion of leavers is going down, but some are leaving earlier

In the last year, **27,168** people left the register. Overall, we've seen a slight decrease in those leaving the register in line with a steady downward trend as a proportion of the register – from **4.2 percent** in the year 2018-2019, to **3.4 percent** in the last year.


While a decline in leavers is always welcome, it's worth noting that **one fifth (20.3 percent)** of nursing and midwifery professionals who left the register last year (**5,508**), did so within the first ten years of joining their chosen profession. This compares to **18.8 percent** in the year 2020-2021 and reflects a rise over the last three years. Of the leavers who completed our leavers' survey (please read more below), **49 percent** stated they left earlier than expected.

In the last 12 months, compared to same period in 2022-2023

**+14.9%**  **59,991** joined the register

**+1.5%**  **27,168** left the register

In the last 12 months

**49.4%** of new joiners were educated outside the UK 

As of March 2024:

**77%** UK educated 



**23%** internationally educated 

Top non-UK countries of education as of March 2024, compared to last year

**1**  **India**  
62,413  +28.9%

**2**  **Philippines**  
49,092  +7.9%

**3**  **Nigeria**  
13,656  +28.3%

**4**  **Romania**  
7,378  +0.3%

**5**  **Ghana**  
5,536  +44.2%

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## The profile of the register continues to change

Various factors are introducing further shifts in the diversity and profile of our register. The overall numbers of male professionals on our register have shown a small but steady increase rising from **10.7 percent** of the total register in March 2019 to **11.1 percent (91,678)** in March 2024. However, the number of male professionals who trained in the UK as a proportion of all joiners has steadily declined from **7.1 percent** in March 2019 to **4.7 percent** in March 2024. This contrasts with the number of internationally educated male professionals joining which has risen during the same period from **5 to 7.8 percent**.

Continued growth in international registrations, together with an ethnically diverse cohort of UK educated joiners, is also changing the ethnic profile of the register. At **30,363**, the number of joiners from the UK was **11.9 percent higher** than in the previous year. Of the latest cohort of UK educated joiners, **almost a third (29.4 percent)** were from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds. Professionals from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds now make up **nearly a third (30.6 percent)** of the register. That's **2.9 percentage points higher** than last year and **10.8 percentage points more** than five years ago.

Inequality and discrimination affect nursing and midwifery professionals and the people they care for, with the need for safe, fair working environments and services across the sector. We know we have more to do to support all professionals and we are working towards this through initiatives such as our new International Nursing and Midwifery Association Forum, which amplifies the voices of internationally educated and/or diaspora professionals working in the UK.

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## Fields of nursing practice

Across the four fields of nursing practice (adult, children's, mental health and learning disabilities) our data for March 2024 reflect a fairly consistent trajectory over the last five years. In line with past years, the number of adult, children's and mental health nurses rose again this year and with the exception of a slight increase in September 2021, the volume of learning disabilities nurses has continued to decline in the last 12 months.

### In the last 12 months

**14.6%**

of people leaving the register were internationally educated

### As of March 2024

**43 years, 9 months**

average age of professionals on register

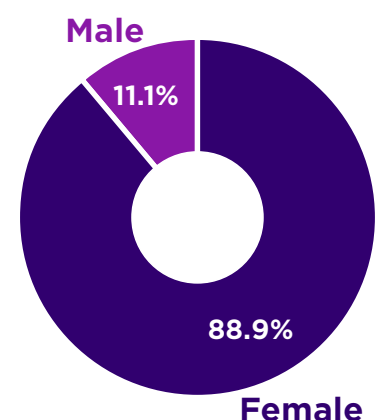


**30.6%**

of register from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2019, **19.8%** of register from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.



### Gender split of the register



## SCPHN and specialist practice qualifications

The total number of professionals registered as specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN) fell again slightly in the last year (**-0.7 percent**). However, when looking across the four nations, there have been increases in Northern Ireland, Wales and most notably in Scotland, whereas in England there continues to be a downward curve.

The total number of combined community specialist practice qualifications (SPQ) has continued to rise, with **an increase of 2.9 percent**.

## Reasons for leaving continue to show concerning trends across the UK

Our annual survey of professionals who have left the register in the UK allows us to understand people's reasons for leaving the nursing and midwifery professions. You can read more detail in our [NMC Register Leavers' Survey Summary](#).

In this year's survey, retirement continued to be the main reason for leaving, with respondents reporting poor health as the second most common reason. While poor health was commonly reported as both physical and mental (**75 and 62 percent respectively**), in answer to a new question this year, **four in five (81 percent)** of those citing poor mental health specifically said their role negatively contributed to this. In the UK-wide picture, burnout was also the third most common reason given for leaving.

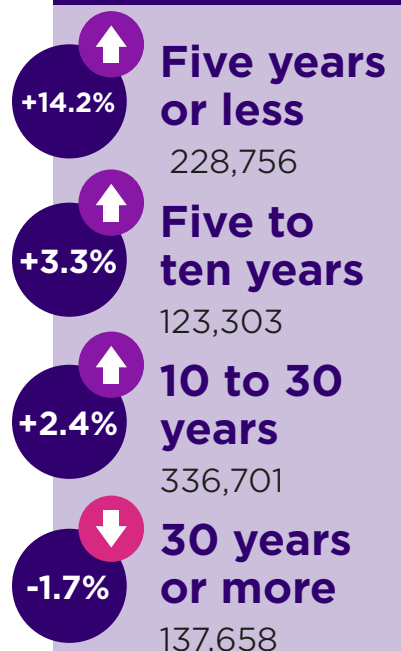
These top three reasons for leaving were consistent among nursing and midwifery professionals, but staffing issues and concerns about quality of care were also more common secondary drivers for midwives.

In line with the findings from last year's survey, around half of respondents are leaving earlier than planned (typically five years sooner than expected). Despite a slight improvement this year, most leavers said they would not recommend nursing or midwifery as a career. Compared to nurses, midwives were less likely to recommend nursing or midwifery as a career path.

As of March 2024



Time on the register as of March 2024, compared to last year



We also found that certain groups, including disabled professionals, are less likely to leave due to retirement and more likely to mention ill health (physical and mental), lack of support and bullying as reasons for leaving.

Most leavers (**85 percent**) said they had no intention of returning to the professions in the future. Of those who said they might return, **one in five** said that they would only return to practice outside the UK.

Given this overall landscape, long term strategies such as supporting early career professionals through preceptorship<sup>2</sup> are crucial for retaining staff across health and social care and to continue growing a skilled, confident and experienced nursing and midwifery workforce able to deliver safe, effective and kind care.

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## Improving the experience of professionals and the public

We hope that this overview of our register, alongside our comprehensive [data tables](#) and [NMC Register Leavers' Survey Summary](#), can be used by partners and the wider sector in their workforce planning.

We will continue to learn from and share further data and insights over the coming months, including our second annual Spotlight on Nursing and Midwifery. As ever, we encourage you to [get in touch](#) with any questions about our data or ideas for how we might improve the usefulness of this and other reports.



**Matthew McClelland**,  
Executive Director of Strategy  
and Insight

Fastest growing religions on the register as of March 2024, compared to last year

**+25.0%** ↑ **Hindus**  
16,782

**+17.4%** ↑ **Muslims**  
20,418

**+11.6%** ↑ **Sikhs**  
2,663

As of March 2024

**25,281** out of  
826,418 people have  
declared a disability

Sexual orientation  
as of March 2024,  
compared to last  
year

**+10.4%** ↑ **33,292**  
Lesbian, gay,  
bisexual or  
other

**+4.5%** ↑ **742,684**  
Heterosexual

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<sup>2</sup> The main aim of preceptorship is to welcome and integrate newly registered professionals, internationally educated professionals or those moving into a new area of practice, into their new team and place of work. It helps these professionals translate their knowledge into everyday practice, grow in confidence and understand how to apply the Code in their day-to-day work.

**We shouldn't forget that behind our data are dedicated professionals who provide safe, effective and kind care to people everyday. We're grateful for everything they do for the people and communities they serve.**



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## What we do

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery practice that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. As the independent regulator of more than 826,000 nurses and midwives in the UK and nursing associates in England, we have an important role to play in making this vision a reality.

We're here to protect the public by upholding high professional nursing and midwifery standards, which the public has a right to expect. That's why we're improving the way we regulate, enhancing our support for colleagues, professionals and the public, and working with our partners to influence the future of health and social care.

Our core role is to **regulate**. We set and promote high education and professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England and quality assure their education programmes. We maintain the integrity of the register of those eligible to practise. And we investigate concerns about professionals – something that affects very few people on our register every year.

To regulate well, we **support** nursing and midwifery professionals and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout professionals' careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address challenges they face. We work collaboratively so everyone feels engaged and empowered to shape our work.

We work with our partners to address common concerns, share our data, insight and learning, to **influence** and inform decision-making and help drive improvement in health and social care for people and communities.

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The nursing and midwifery regulator for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland  
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