

The NMC register mid-year update

1 April - 30 September 2023



Welcome to our mid-year report on the NMC register, and what it tells us about the UK's nursing and midwifery workforce.

At a time of rising demand for health and care, our unique data sets hold invaluable insight that we hope leaders and policy makers across the sector will use to enhance their workforce strategies. We see this as vital for the benefit of the wider public, whose health and wellbeing relies on the skills and knowledge of the professionals on our register.

What follows is a summary of the most salient changes and trends emerging from the latest data. For those seeking a more granular understanding of our register of all the nurses, midwives and nursing associates* who are eligible to practise, please find the link to the comprehensive data tables on page five.

The big picture

Our register of nurses, midwives and nursing associates has reached a record **808,488**. This is encouraging given the well-publicised pressure on health and care services at a time of rising demand for care.

This means there are **19,857** (2.5 percent) more professionals eligible to practise in the UK than there were just six months ago, and **114,874** (16.6 percent) more than five years ago.

The number of registered nurses and midwives now sits at **748,528** and **42,974**, respectively. We've also reached a milestone of **more than 10,000 nursing associates** – good news for people using services in England, where this relatively new role bridges the gap between health and care assistants, and registered nurses.

*The nursing associate role was introduced in 2019. Nursing associates may live in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, but can only practise in this role in England.

A record
808,488
registered
professionals.

In the last six months

An increase of
19,857 **+2.5%**

+2.4%
Nurses
748,528

+3.0%
Midwives
42,974

-1.5%
Dual registrants
6,426

+13.1%
Nursing Associates
10,560

Strong domestic growth

We've seen the number of professionals joining the register for the first time between April and September **more than double** in the last five years – from **14,311** joiners in the six months to September 2018, to **30,103** in the same period this year. This includes the highest number of UK educated joiners we've seen in the first half of a financial year: **15,067**, which is almost **25 percent more** than in the same period last year (12,104), and **35.7 percent more** than in the six months to September 2018 (11,103).

This follows the well reported increase in students accepted onto nursing programmes in 2020, the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, since 2020, the NMC has clarified for education institutions that newly qualified professionals can join the register once they've finished their programmes after the set number of academic years rather than calendar years. This means that people using services can benefit from graduates' knowledge and skills as soon as possible.

A quarter (24.9 percent) of the UK joiners since April are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. That's compared to **23.6 percent** last year, and **18.9 percent** of UK joiners in the six months to September 2018, reflecting the increasing ethnic diversity of the homegrown nursing and midwifery workforce.

International growth equally strong


The pace of international recruitment shows no signs of slowing. In the last six months, nigh on as many internationally educated professionals (**15,036**) have joined the register as their domestically educated peers.

In particular, we've seen a further jump in the number of joiners who were educated in India – **7,223** in the last six months compared to **4,849** this time last year, which is a **49 percent rise** for the period. This means India moves further ahead as the biggest single source of international recruitment to the UK workforce.

In the last six months, compared to the same period last year

+27.7%  **30,103** joined the register

+1.1%  **13,308** left the register

49.9% of new joiners were educated outside the UK 

As of September 2023:

78.1% domestically educated 



21.3% internationally educated 

Top non-UK countries of education and change, since April

1  **India**
55,429  +14.5%

2  **Philippines**
47,569  +4.6%

3  **Nigeria**
12,099  +13.7%

4  **Romania**
7,352  -0.03%

5  **Ghana**
4,708  +22.8%

However, our data show some concerning trends in the number of people joining the UK register from 'red list' countries where active recruitment isn't permitted, including significant proportional rises in joiners from Ghana and Zambia, plus a steadily high number from Nigeria.*

There's also been a rise in international midwifery joiners. This follows a recent NHS recruitment drive in England – the Maternity International Recruitment Programme. A total of **345 international midwives** joined in the last six months compared to **115** in the same period last year and just **27** in the six months to September 2018. Increasing the available midwifery workforce is positive for women, babies and families in the UK, however the note of caution is that professionals from the 'red list' countries make up a large proportion of these newly registered midwives.

Once again, we call on all employers and agencies across health and care to be mindful of the UK and Scottish Government's codes of practice for international recruitment of health and social care personnel. People from across the world want to come and work in the UK but this must not undermine health systems in countries with the most pressing workforce challenges.

The changing profile of the register

With UK joiners becoming more ethnically diverse, and with strong recruitment from countries such as India, the Philippines and Nigeria, the ethnic profile of the NMC register continues to change. The proportion of all registered professionals from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds has now reached **29.1 percent**, which is **1.4 percentage points higher** than just six months ago (27.7 percent), and **10 percentage points more** than five years ago.

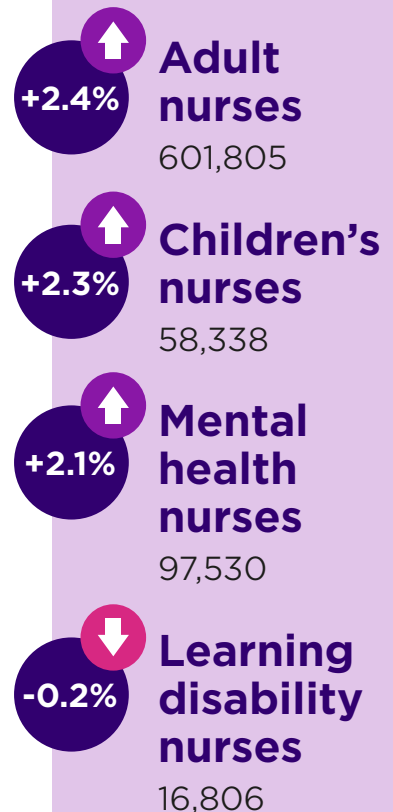
We also know most international joiners to our register are aged 40 or below. This is partly why we're seeing a slow but steady change in the age profile of the register. The total proportion of nursing and midwifery professionals aged 21-40 is now **43.5 percent**, compared to **42.7 percent** just six months ago, and **37.7 percent** in September 2018.

*The Department of Health and Social Care, and the Scottish Government codes of practice for international recruitment of health and social care personnel, prohibit active recruitment from 'red list' countries designated by the World Health Organisation. The codes do not prevent individual health workers from 'red list' countries seeking employment independently, but employers should not be actively recruiting from those countries.

In the last six months, compared to the same period last year



In the last six months



43 years, 10 months

average age of professionals



29.1%

of register from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2018, **19.1%** of register from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.



We need a continued focus on sustainable retention strategies

While recruitment to the register is running at pace, our data show a steady retention rate, with a slight decline in the number of leavers over the last five years as a proportion of the register – from **two percent** in the six months to September 2018, to **1.7 percent** in the last six months.

A continued focus on sustainable retention strategies across health and care is as essential to maintaining the growth of a skilled and experienced nursing and midwifery workforce.

Our 2023 [Spotlight on Nursing and Midwifery report](#) highlights the benefits of effective preceptorship and support for every nurse, midwife and nursing associate to thrive. Research shows that poor preceptorship can negatively impact professionals' psychological safety which can lead to people leaving the register earlier. High quality, early career support is therefore vital, so that professionals can flourish and provide the safe, kind, effective care the public need.

Using our insights to support professionals to deliver high-quality care

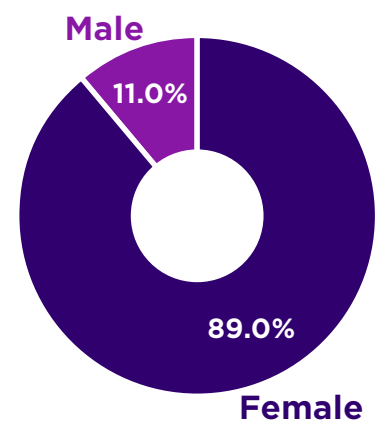
We hope these key insights from our register, together with our [comprehensive data tables](#), can make a positive difference to workforce planning across health and social care.

We're always looking for ways to further improve the accuracy of our data. While all nurses, midwives and nursing associates are required to provide us with a UK address, we encourage new professionals, including internationally educated joiners, to share this information with us at the point of registration. This can be done through [NMC Online](#).

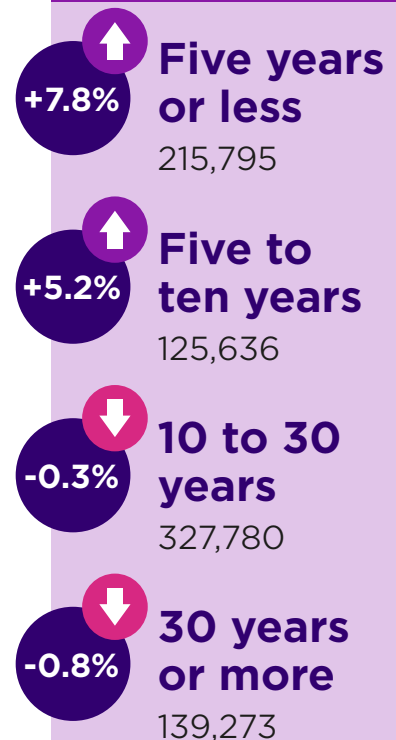


Andrea Sutcliffe,
Chief Executive and Registrar

Gender split of the register



Length of time on the register in the last six months



If you have questions about our data or ideas for how we might improve the usefulness of this report, **please get in touch.**

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 public and communities they serve.



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 808,000 nursing and midwifery professionals, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.

Our core role is to **regulate**.

First, we promote high education and professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England. Second, we maintain the register of professionals eligible to practise. Third, we investigate concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates – something that affects a tiny minority of professionals each year. We believe in giving professionals the chance to address concerns, but we'll always take action when needed.



To regulate well, we **support** our professions and the public.

We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout people's careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address new challenges. We also support people involved in our investigations, and we're increasing our visibility so people feel engaged and empowered to shape our work.

Regulating and supporting our professions allows us to **influence** health and social care. We share intelligence from our regulatory activities and work with our partners to support workforce planning and sector-wide decision making. We use our voice to speak up for a healthy and inclusive working environment for our professions.

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