

The NMC register

2012/13 - 2016/17

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Background

The NMC's register increased in size year on year from 2013, reaching a peak of 692,556 in March 2016. However, between March 2016 to March 2017, the register reduced by 1,783 registrants to 690,773.ⁱ

This reduction continues into the first quarter of the financial year 2017/18 (April 2017 onwards). Figures for April and May 2017 show a reduction of a further 3,264 registrants. This is a cumulative reduction in the register of 5,047 people between March 2016 and May 2017.

The overall numbers on the register follow a seasonal pattern. The highest numbers on the register each year are after the September – October peak of initial registrations, followed by a drop off in subsequent months.

The majority of the NMC's register is made up of nurses and midwives first registeredⁱⁱ in the UK (85%). Those first registered overseas make up the second largest group (10%) and those first registered in EU countries account for the smallest group (5%).

It is important to note that the NMC register consists of the total number of nurses and midwives who are registered to practise in the UK. Importantly, this does not mean that all registrants are currently working as registered nurses and midwives in the NHS, the independent sector or other settings.

Table 1: Size of the NMC register by year and origin of initial registration 2013-2017

	March 2013	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017
UK	590,390	592,960	593,548	590,991	585,404
EU	16,798	20,916	27,012	34,572	38,024
Overseas	68,118	67,023	66,251	66,993	67,345
Total	675,306	680,899	686,811	692,556	690,773

Table 1 shows the total number of effective practitioners on the register on the 31 March in the last five years, broken down by the origin of their registration.

Table 2: NMC register by year and registration type 2013-2017

	March 2013	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017
Midwife	29,564	30,535	31,312	32,278	33,464
Midwife & SCPHN ⁱⁱⁱ	377	556	801	968	1,090
Nurse	608,133	612,066	615,911	620,797	618,863
Nurse & Midwife	10,806	10,257	9,721	9,167	8,164
Nurse & SCPHN	25,891	26,962	28,530	28,871	28,742
Nurse, Midwife & SCPHN	532	513	536	475	450
SCPHN	3	10	-	-	-
Total	675,306	680,899	686,811	692,556	690,773

Table 2 shows the total number of effective practitioners on the register on the 31 March in the last five years broken down by their registration type(s).

Chart 1: Numbers of registrants on the NMC’s register whose initial country of registration was the UK 2013-2017

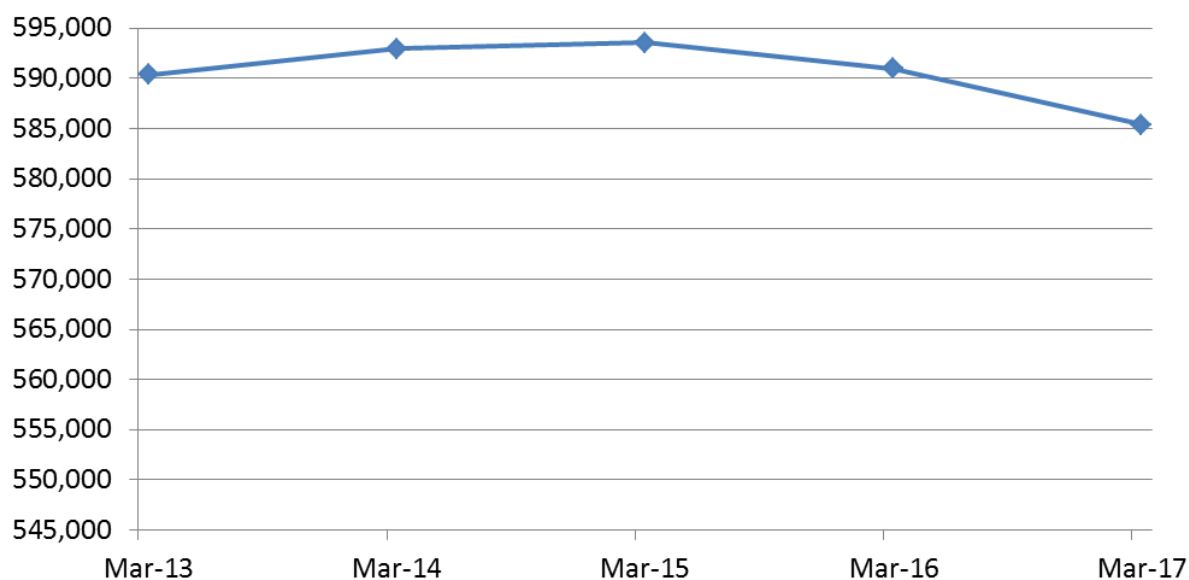


Chart 1 shows the number of people on the register as at 31 March in the last five years whose initial country of registration was the UK. (These figures are derived from the first row in Table 1 on page 1).

Chart 2: Numbers of EU and overseas registrants on the NMC’s register 2012-2017

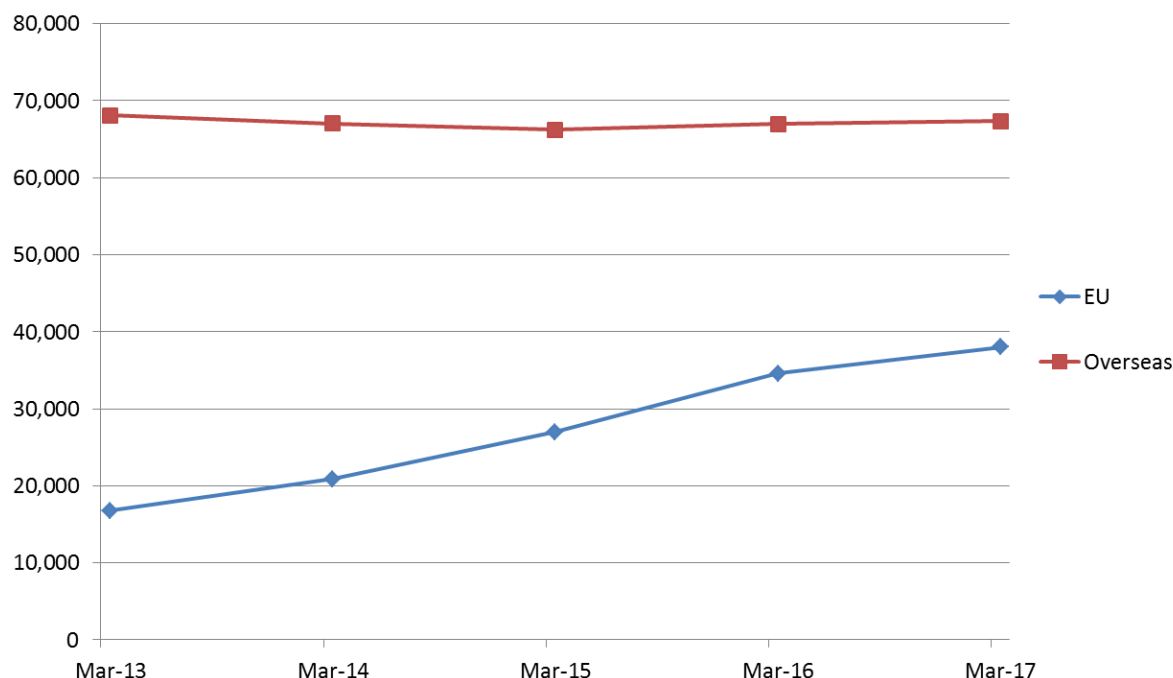


Chart 2 shows the number of people on the register as at 31 March in the last five years whose initial country of registration was in the EU or Overseas. (These figures are derived from the second and third rows in Table 1 on page 1).

Initial joiners to the NMC register

The overall number of initial joiners^{iv} to the register has fluctuated year on year.

The overall number of initial joiners – which includes UK, Overseas and EU registrants – increased from 25,208 in the year 2012/13 to 30,638 in 2015/16. This then dropped to 29,025 in the year 2016/17.

The number of UK initial joiners, which make up the majority of all joiners, has fluctuated over the last few years, with a high point of 22,728 initial joiners in the year 2013/14. This has tailed off to 20,240 initial joiners in 2016/17.

The number of EU initial joiners steadily increased from 3,436 in the year 2012/13 to 9,389 in the year 2015/16; however this declined to 6,382 in 2016/17.

The number of overseas initial joiners has increased steadily from 869 in 2012/13 to 2,403 in 2016/17, but this is still a relatively small proportion of all initial joiners.

Chart 3: Initial joiners to the NMC register by origin of initial registration 2012-2017

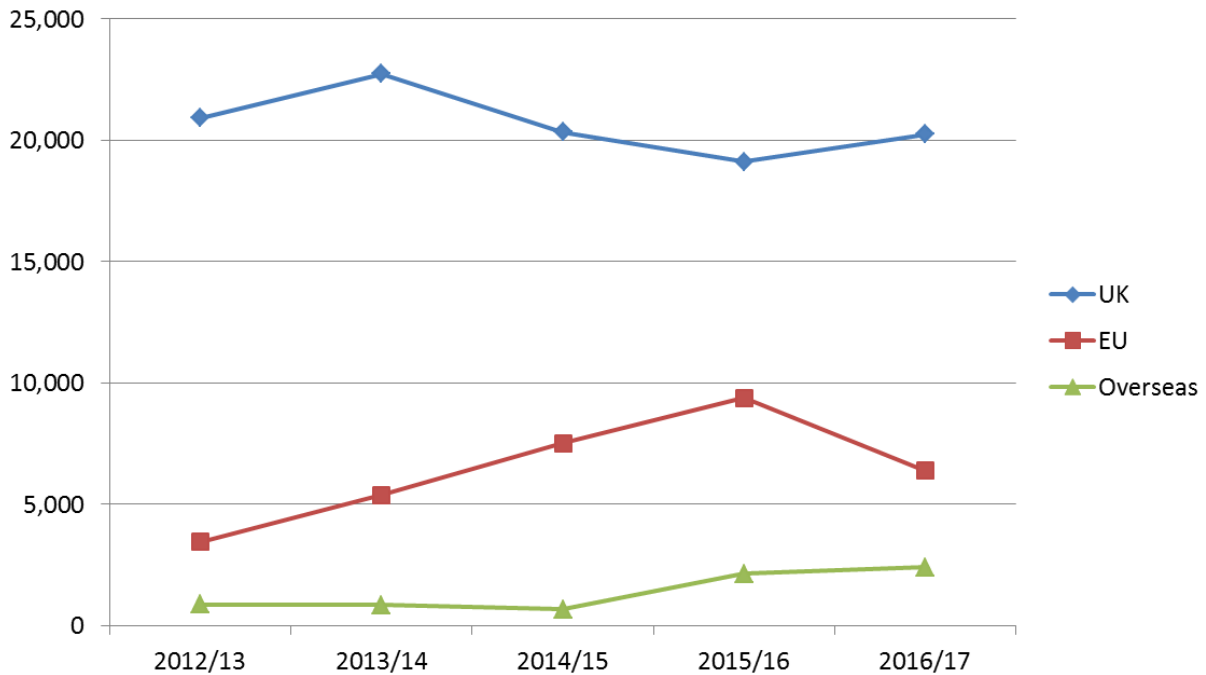


Chart 3 shows the number of people joining the register for the first time (initial joiners) during the five financial years between April 2012 and March 2017.

Numbers leaving the NMC register

The number of people leaving^v the NMC's register is increasing. However, it should be noted that as the number of people on the register had increased by several thousand a year until 2016/2017, it is to be expected, to a certain extent that the overall numbers leaving will have increased. The overall number of leavers – which includes UK, Overseas and EU registrants - has increased from 23,087 in 2012/13 to 34,941 in 2016/17.

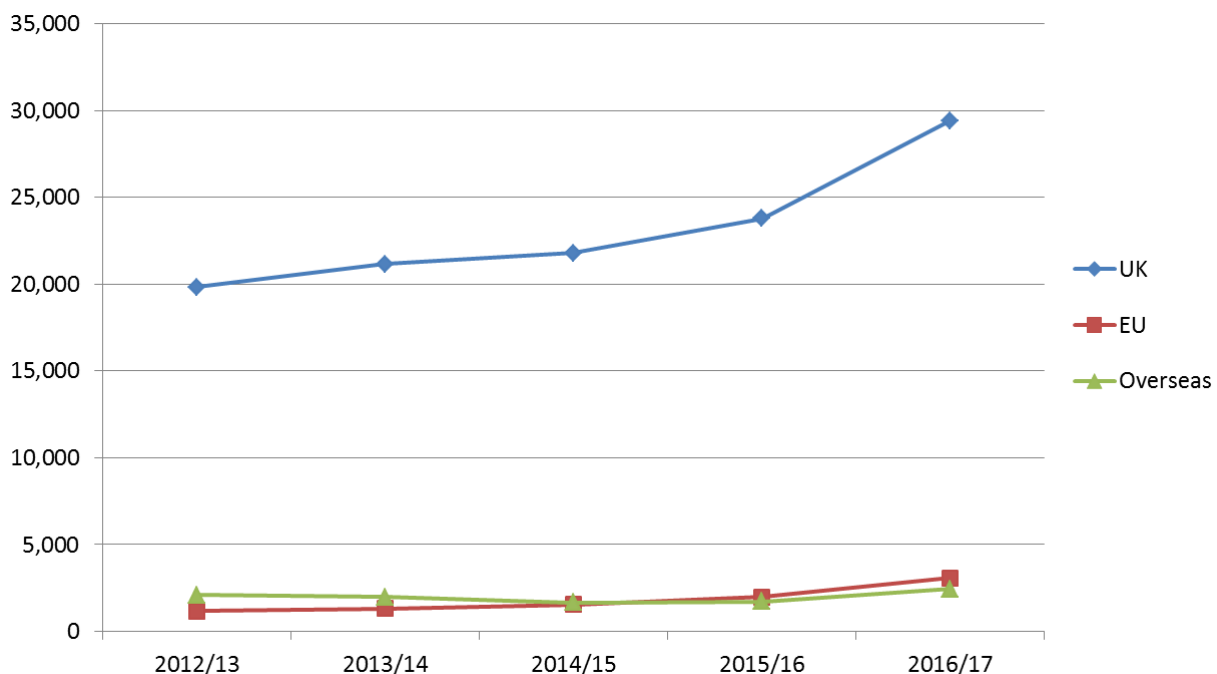
The numbers of UK registrants leaving has increased from 19,819 in 2012/2013 to 29,434 in 2016/2017.

The numbers of EU registrants leaving has increased from 1,173 in 2012/2013 to 3,081 in 2016/2017.

The numbers of overseas registrants leaving has increased from 2,095 in 2012/2013 to 2,426 in 2017.

The increase in overall volumes of overseas and EU joiners in recent years appears to have masked the growing trend of UK registrants leaving the register.

Chart 4: Numbers leaving the NMC register by origin of initial registration 2012-2017

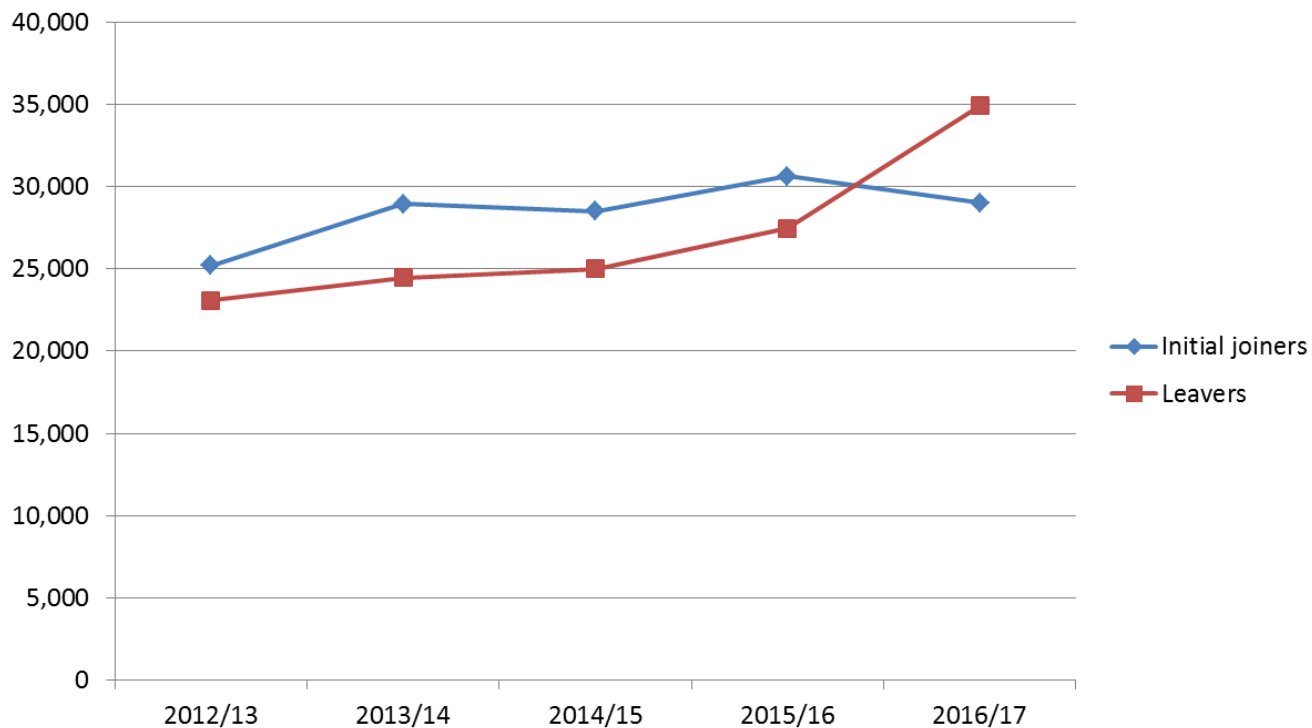


Net impact of numbers joining and leaving the NMC register

The overall pattern of joiners and leavers has shifted between 2012 and 2017. **There are now more people leaving the register than there are joining it.** For example, between 2016 and 2017, 20 per cent more registrants left the register than joined. This compares to previous years 2015 and 2016, when there were more joiners than leavers.

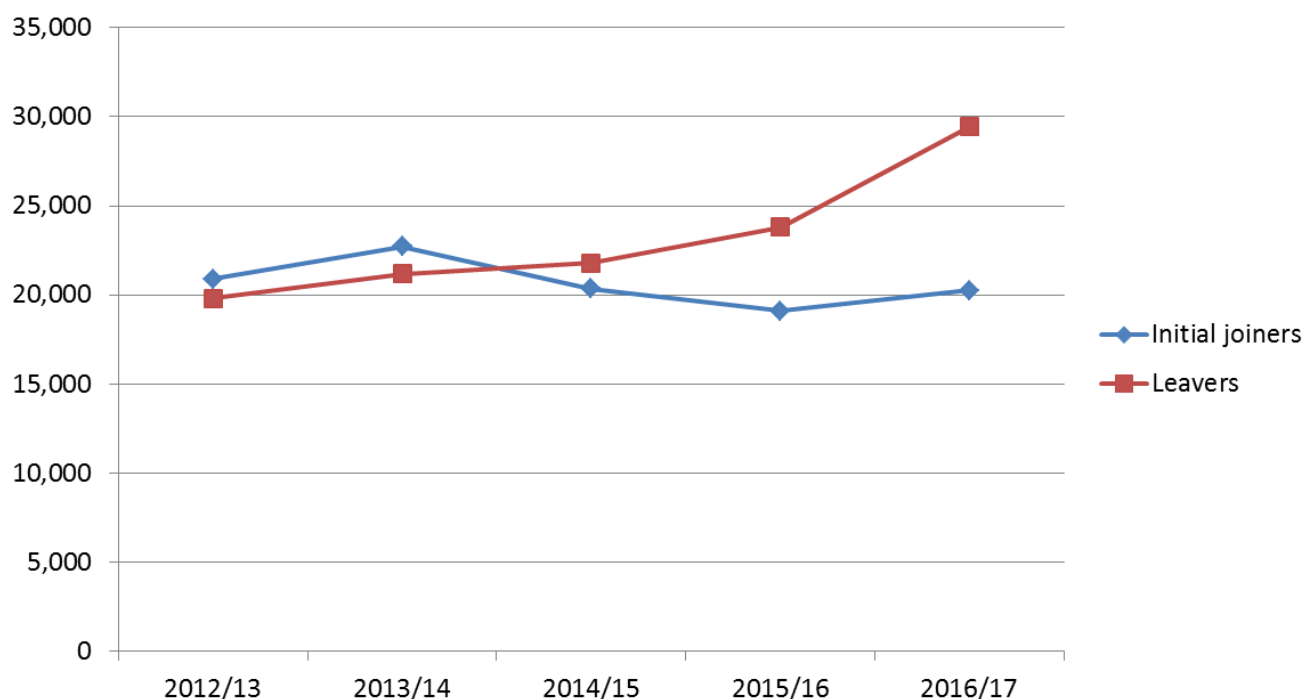
The analysis shown includes all registration types (nurse/ midwife/SCPHN or any combination of these); there may be some variation by registration type, and we will look at these in due course.

Chart 5: Overall numbers joining and leaving the NMC register 2012-2017



The widening gap between initial joiners and leavers is most notable among UK registrants (Chart 6 overleaf). Since the year 2014/15, there have been more UK registrants leaving the register than joining it for the first time. In 2017, 45 per cent more UK registrants left the register than joined.

Chart 6: Numbers of UK registrants joining and leaving the NMC register 2012-2017



Age profile

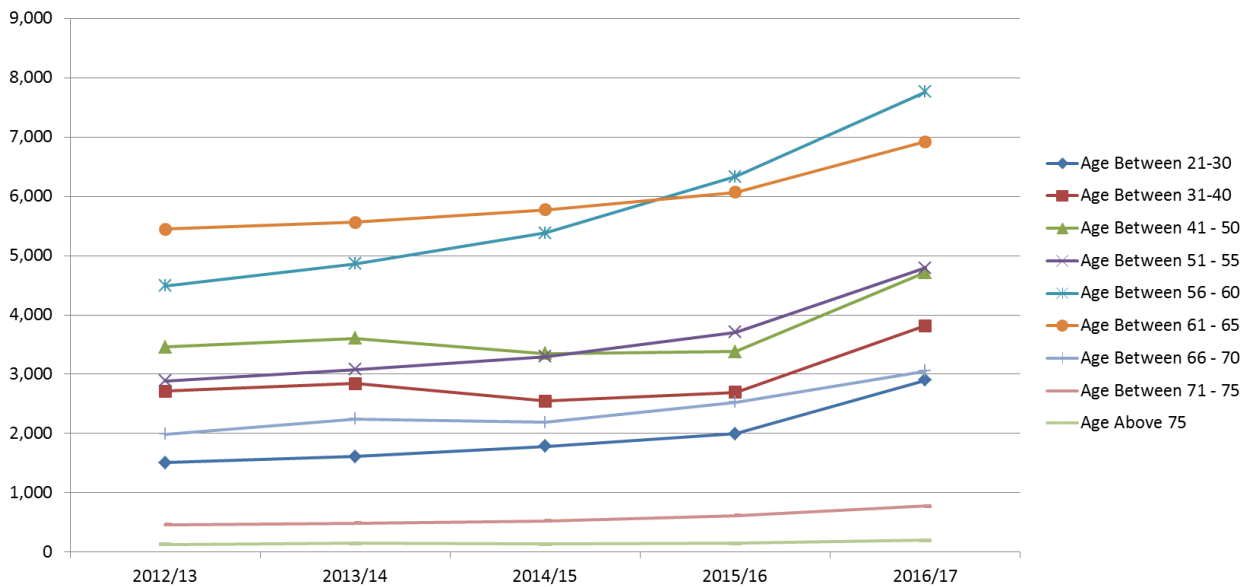
The number of registrants leaving the register below retirement age appears to be increasing. When we consider those people who have not cited retirement as their reason for leaving, the average age of leaving the register has reduced steadily from an average of 55 years of age in 2013 to 51 years of age in 2017.

Chart 7 shows the numbers of people leaving the register in the last five years broken down by age group. The numbers of people leaving the register has increased in all age groups, as might be expected, given that overall numbers of leavers have increased.

The number of leavers in the 56-60 year age group shows the steepest rise, with 4,488 in this age group leaving in 2012/13 and 7,760 leaving in 2016/17. The number of leavers in the 51-55 year age group, increased from 2,887 in 2012/13 to 4,789 in 2016/17. The number of leavers in the 21-30 year age group increased from 1,510 leavers in 2012/13 to 2,901 in 2016/17.

Further analysis of the leavers' figures as a proportion of each age group on the register in each year is underway.

Chart 7: Numbers of registrants leaving the register by age group 2012 to 2017



Verification requests

Verification requests are made by licencing authorities – often the equivalent of the NMC in different countries - when a nurse or midwife wants to practise outside the UK. As part of this process, the licencing authority in that country may require the NMC to verify the nurse or midwife’s UK registration. Verification requests are an important indicator of the number of nurses and midwives who have left or may intend to leave the UK to work in a different country.

The number of verification requests has fluctuated year on year since 2013 to 2017.

The majority of all verification requests are made about UK registrants. UK registrants accounted for 69% of all verification requests in 2013 and rose to 74% of all requests made in 2017.

We receive verification requests from more than 65 countries across the world. Most requests come from licencing authorities in Australia, the Republic of Ireland and the USA. There were 3,562 verification requests made in 2012/13 and 4,153 made in 2016/17 for UK registrants.

There appears to be a correlation between the rise in verification requests and the decrease in the NMC register.

Table 3: Numbers of verification requests received by the NMC about UK registrants 2012-2017

Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
UK verifications	3,562	3,140	3,429	3,403	4,153

Reasons cited for leaving the register

The NMC recently surveyed^{vi} people who had left the register between June 2016 and May 2017. Former registrants were invited to indicate their top three reasons for leaving the register. We received 4,544 responses.

2,240 people who responded to the survey and had left the register did not cite retirement as a reason for leaving. For this group, the top three reasons for leaving were:

- Working conditions - for example staffing levels, workload - 44%
- A change in personal circumstances - for example, ill-health, childcare responsibilities - 28%
- Disillusionment with the quality of care provided to patients - 27%.

Other reasons cited for leaving the register included concerns about their ability to meet revalidation requirements^{vii} (26%), leaving the UK (18%) and poor pay and benefits (16%).

We received 247 responses from former registrants from the EU. Their top three reasons for leaving the register were:

- That they had left or were planning to leave the UK - 58%
- Brexit had encouraged them to consider working outside the UK - 32%
- Working conditions, for example staffing levels, workload - 32%.

ⁱ Figures contained within this analysis, unless otherwise stated, relate to the period April 2012 to March 2017.

ⁱⁱ When using the term UK, EU or Overseas in relation to registrants in this report, we are referring to the place where they received their initial registration.

ⁱⁱⁱ Specialist Community Public Health Nurses

^{iv} 'Initial joiner' refers to new registrants who have joined the NMC register for the first time. It does not include registrants who have subsequently re-joined, returned to practice or applied for readmission to the register. Further analysis of the trends in these groups and their impact on the register is being undertaken.

^v 'Leaver' refers to those registrants who have left our register or lapsed their registration. These figures do not include registrants who re-join within the month of lapsing their registration. For example, if 100 people leave the register and 60 of those re-join within that month the leaver total is 40.

^{vi} *Survey of former NMC registrants*, NMC, 3 July 2017. This survey was sent to 17,375 former NMC registrants who had left our register between June 2016 and May 2017. Between 22 and 26 June 2017 we received 4,544 responses. Of these, 247 responses were from EU former registrants.

^{vii} Revalidation is the new renewal system introduced in April 2016 to ensure nurses and midwives can demonstrate that they remain effective and up to date in their professional practice. The number of nurses and midwives leaving the register during the first year of revalidation is in line with numbers leaving the register under the previous registration renewal system.