

The NMC register Scotland 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 nursing and midwifery workforce in Scotland.

Our unique data provide the definitive account of how many professionals are eligible to practise in the country, how many are joining and leaving the workforce, where in the world they were educated, their demographic characteristics and more.

The big picture

Our register has seen continued growth in the number of registered nurses and midwives in Scotland. There are now a total of **73,420** – that’s an increase of **464** (0.6 percent) since April, and a more substantial **4,471** (6.5 percent) over the past five years. This is encouraging given the well-publicised pressure on health and care services at a time of rising demand for care.

The total includes a record **69,370 nurses**, three quarters of whom are registered as adult nurses. The only field of nursing practice which has shrunk in Scotland is learning disabilities, which fell marginally from **1,826** in April to **1,811** in September.

There are now **3,714 midwives** in Scotland and **331 dual registrants** (those registered as both a nurse and midwife). There is also a handful of nursing associates* living in Scotland who are eligible to practise in England only.

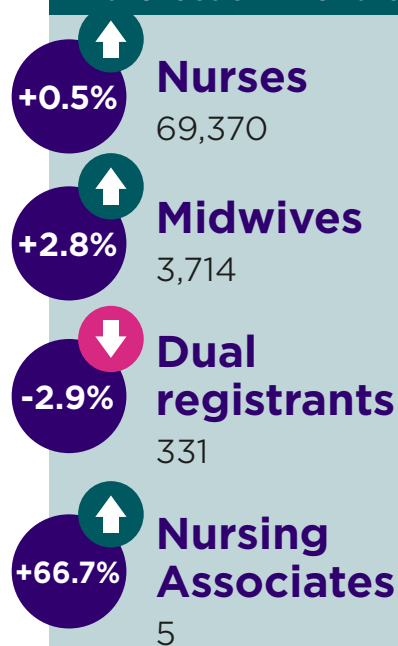
Steady rates of recruitment and retention underpin the slight growth of the register in Scotland. In total there were **1,364 new joiners** between April and September (22 percent higher than the **1,118** who joined in the same period last year). There were **1,403 leavers**, which is more than the **1,319** who left in 2022, but only a marginal increase as a proportion of the register.

73,420

professionals on the register in Scotland



In the last six months



*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.

Strong rate of domestic recruitment

Most of the joiners in Scotland since April were educated in the UK: **1,192**. As an indicator of the pace of domestic recruitment in Scotland, that's **17.2 percent** greater compared to the **1,017** UK joiners between April and September 2022, and **14.9 percent** higher compared to the same period five years ago.

International recruitment also gaining pace

The pace of international recruitment in Scotland is accelerating, with **172** joiners in the six months to September – a **70.3 percent** rise compared to the **101** international joiners during the same period in 2022. During the equivalent timeframe five years ago, only 18 international professionals joined. And the true figure will be even higher because professionals aren't required to give us a UK address in order to join the register. Professionals can help us to further enhance the value of our data by giving us their UK address as soon as they have one which they can do through [NMC Online](#).

As with the rest of the UK, India is the single largest source of international recruitment in Scotland, representing **20.9 percent** of all international joiners since April. However, the data also show that Nigeria – a 'red list' country' from which active recruitment isn't permitted – is the second largest at **16.9 percent** and **9.3 percent** of joiners were educated in Ghana – another red list nation.*

We're calling on employers and agencies across health and care in Scotland to be mindful to the Scottish Government's code of practice for international recruitment of health and social care personnel: it is essential not to undermine health systems in countries with the most pressing workforce challenges.

*The [Scottish Government's code of practice for international recruitment of health and social care personnel](#) on ethical recruitment prohibits active recruitment from 'red list' countries designated by the World Health Organisation. The Code does 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

+22.0%  **1,364** joined the register

+6.4%  **1,403** left the register

As of September 2023:

95.1% domestically educated 

4.7% internationally educated 

Top countries of education and change, since April

1  **India**
791  +9.7%

2  **Philippines**
740  +5.9%

3  **Nigeria**
230  +23.7%

Steady retention rate welcome

There will always be a level of turnover of the register as professionals retire, or in some cases leave the register early, often citing workplace factors. We therefore welcome the steady retention rate we're seeing in Scotland – the number of leavers in the past six months being equivalent to **1.9 percent** of the register (**1.8 percent in the six months to September 2022** and in the same period five years ago).

A continued focus on retaining skilled, knowledgeable people in their profession, will support the sustainable growth of the workforce. Our 2023 [Spotlight on Nursing and Midwifery report](#) highlights some areas for further improvement. For example, more consistent delivery of 'preceptorship' programmes that welcome and integrate new professionals into their new teams and workplaces.

Our research has also found that many professionals leave the NMC register due to workplace factors. Therefore, we welcome initiatives such as the Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce in Scotland which will bolster retention by improving working conditions for nurses and midwives.

The changing profile of professionals on the register in Scotland

Increased international recruitment is contributing to a gradual change in the ethnic profile of people in Scotland who are on the register. Nurses and midwives from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds now account for **6.1 percent** of professionals in Scotland – a slight increase from **5.8 percent** in April, and from **5.0 percent** five years ago.

The age profile in Scotland is also changing slowly and steadily. The total proportion of professionals who are aged 21-40 is now **39.7 percent**, which is marginally higher than six months ago, and a notable rise compared to **36.8 percent** five years ago.

In the last six months



Improving the quality of our data

We hope these key insights, together with our [comprehensive data tables](#), will support workforce planning in Scotland, ensuring the most effective delivery of services that people and communities across the country rely on for their health and wellbeing.

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



Andrea Sutcliffe,
Chief Executive and Registrar



44 years, 6 months

average age of
professionals
in Scotland

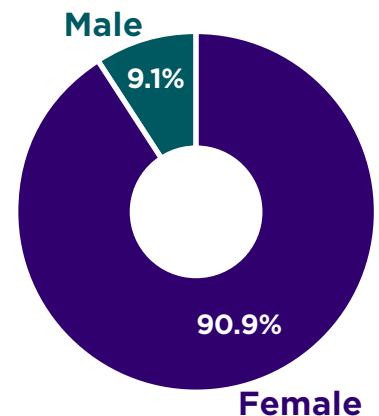


6.1%

of register in
Scotland from
Black and minority
ethnic backgrounds.
In 2018, **5.0%** of
register in Scotland
from Black and
minority ethnic
backgrounds.



Gender split of the register



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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