

Leavers' survey 2019

Why do people leave the NMC register?



Summary

- Since 2017, we have been running an annual survey to understand why people leave our register. This report presents findings from the most recent survey, which was carried out in October 2019, before the current Covid-19 pandemic.
- Just over 15,600 nurses and midwives left our register between November 2018 and June 2019. In October 2019, we invited a sample of 6,333 of these to complete a survey about the reasons why they left the register. In total, 1,626 nurses and midwives responded (a response rate of 26 percent).
- The three most commonly cited reasons for people leaving our register are the same as in previous years: retirement, too much pressure, and changes in personal circumstances.

NMC Nursing &
Midwifery
Council



What's in this report?

Since 2017, we have been running an annual survey to understand why people leave our register. This report presents findings from the latest survey.

The report is divided into three sections:

- Section 1** describes the people who responded to our survey, including their demographic characteristics and the settings in which they used to work
- Section 2** outlines the reasons people selected for leaving the register
- Section 3** gives an overview of the differences in reasons for leaving between particular respondents, including people who had trained in the UK, EU or outside of the EU; people who had practised in different countries; people of different age groups; people of different scopes of practice; and people who had worked in the NHS or independent sectors.

More information about our approach, including how the sample of people invited to take part was selected and subsequently analysed, is provided in **Annexe 1**.

Section 1

The people who responded to our survey

Just over 15,600 nurses and midwives left our register between November 2018 and June 2019.

We contacted around 40 percent of these (6,333 people) and invited them to take part in our survey. In total, 1,626 people responded, which is a response rate of 26 percent. This is a statistically valid sample size.

Most respondents had trained in the UK (82.2 percent, equivalent to 1,337 respondents). The remainder had trained outside the UK: 10.1 percent (164 respondents) had trained in the EU and 7.7 percent (125 respondents) outside of the EU.

Similar to the proportions on our register as a whole, most respondents had worked in England prior to leaving the register (77.7 percent or 1,264 people), with 9.8 percent working in Scotland, 4 percent in Wales, 2 percent in Northern Ireland, 2.2 percent in the EU and 4.2 percent outside of the EU.

Most respondents were women (88.3 percent or 1,435 people), and were aged 51 years and above (79.2 percent or 1,287 people). The majority were also nurses (90.3 percent or 1,468).¹

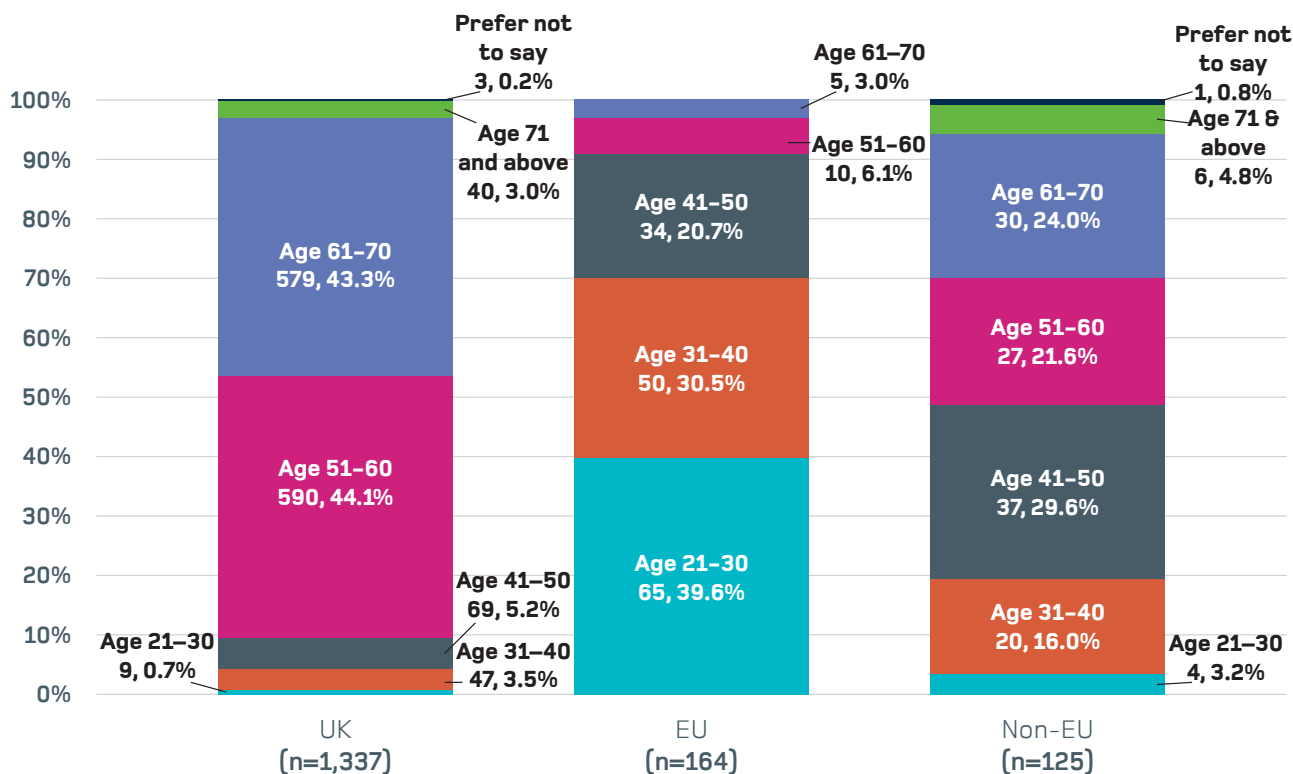
Just under half of people had worked in adult and general care nursing (49.5 percent or 805 people) with smaller proportions in mental health nursing (9.9 percent or 161 people); general practice nursing (9.7 percent or 157 people); midwifery (7.4 percent or 121 people); and children's and neonatal nursing (7.1 percent or 116 people). Other scopes of practice were also represented in smaller numbers.

¹ People were able to select as many registration types as applied to them (for example 'Nurse' and 'Midwife'). 128 or 7.9 percent of respondents were midwives; and 80 or 4.9 percent were registered as specialist community public health nurses (SCPHNs).

The age profile of people who had trained in the UK, EU and outside of the EU differed (see Figure 1). Respondents who had trained in the UK were older (over 90 percent were aged 51 years and over) with those who had trained in the EU being the youngest (just over 70 percent were aged between 21 and 40 years). Respondents who had trained outside of the EU fell somewhere in between, with just over half (51.2 percent or 64 people) aged between 41 and 60 years. This is similar to what we have seen in previous surveys.

Figure 1

Age group of respondents by where they trained



Section 2

Reasons for leaving the register

We asked respondents to select their top three reasons for leaving the register from a list of 19 options. The options given were the same as in last year’s survey. People were asked to select their first, second or third choice of reason. As respondents were asked to select up to three reasons for leaving, the total number of reasons is greater than the number of respondents.

Figure 2 (on the next page) outlines the number of people who selected each reason for leaving in order of frequency. As we received a larger number of responses from people who had trained in the UK, responses have been weighted to give more significance (or ‘weight’) to responses from people who trained in the EU and outside of it. This means that the survey data is more representative of the wider group of people who left our register between November 2018 and June 2019 (see **Annexe 1**). The figures in the rest of this report refer to weighted numbers and percentages, unless otherwise stated.

Figure 2

Reasons for leaving: all respondents

Reason	Number of respondents citing this as one of their top three reasons for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing this as one of their top three reasons for leaving
I have retired	859	52.7%
Too much pressure (stressful, poor mental health)	430	26.4%
My personal circumstances changed	399	24.5%
Concerned about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements	300	18.4%
Other - please provide more details in the comments box	263	16.2%
I was disillusioned by the quality of the care provided to patients	259	15.9%
I am leaving or have left the UK	245	15.0%
Staffing levels	239	14.6%
I was concerned about my workload	192	11.8%
I still work in healthcare but my role no longer requires NMC registration	140	8.6%
Brexit has encouraged me to consider working outside the UK	111	6.8%
I no longer work in healthcare	110	6.8%
Poor pay and benefits	95	5.8%
I have not had sufficient opportunity to do continuous professional development	88	5.4%
The work is physically challenging	76	4.7%
Flexible working was not available	69	4.3%
Being a nurse or midwife is not what I expected when I trained	31	1.9%
I have returned to education	29	1.8%
I had difficulty in finding suitable employment	26	1.6%
Total respondents	1,630	

Six of the top seven reasons for leaving are the same as last year's survey, though in a slightly different order. The top three reasons selected are unchanged from last year.

- As in previous years, the most frequently selected reason for leaving the register is **retirement**. Over half of respondents (52.7 percent) cited this. Given the overall age profile of survey respondents (as shown in Figure 1), this is not surprising.
- **Too much pressure (stressful, poor mental health)** is the second most frequently cited reason for leaving, in line with last year's results. Just over a quarter of respondents, (26.4 percent) selected this as one of their top three reasons for leaving.
- Around one in four respondents (24.5 percent) cited a **change in personal circumstances** as a reason for leaving. This was also the third most frequent option in previous years.

The four options that were then most frequently selected were:

- I was concerned about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements
- Other
- I was disillusioned by the quality of the care provided to patients
- I am leaving or have left the UK



Comments made by respondents

People were given the option to provide further information if they wished. In total, 666 (41 percent) people provided more detailed comments. These centred on six main themes:

- Retiring
- Level of pressure
- Meeting revalidation requirements
- Changes in personal circumstances
- Leaving the UK
- Other comments

All of these reasons (apart from the other comments) were mentioned by at least 10 percent of respondents who provided additional comment. More detail about the themes is provided below:

1. Retiring

Just over a quarter of people who provided additional comments (27 percent) mentioned retirement as a reason for leaving the register.

Some noted that they had reached state pension age, or had reached a natural end point in their careers (73 comments, 11 percent of all comments). However, others commented that they had taken early retirement due to the pressure and stress of their workloads (37 comments, 6 percent):

'I did consider renewing my registration but all things considered, I was nursing from 1976 until 2018 - 42 years! I know there is a lot of negative press but I had a wonderful nursing career; absolutely loved it and ended my career in a very privileged position as a Macmillan Nurse. I decided at 60 that it was time to hang up my hat, not due to exhaustion or any other reason other than I had earned my retirement and time for me, my husband and family.'

Nurse, aged 61-70
Previously worked in the NHS, England

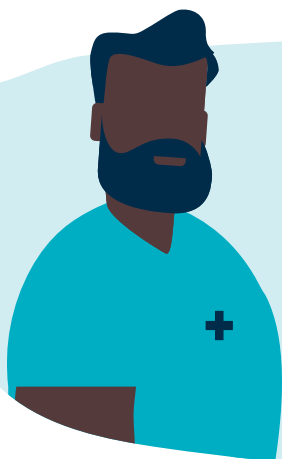


Others had taken early retirement due to health problems (36 comments, 5 percent). Other reasons mentioned for retirement included: being able to afford to retire earlier than anticipated; work becoming too physically challenging; caring responsibilities; and the perception that revalidation was too onerous to 'bother' with when approaching retirement.

2. Level of pressure

Just under a quarter (23 percent) of those commenting said that they left the register, at least in part, due to experiencing too much pressure at work.

Respondents noted (67 comments, 10 percent) that highly demanding work environments arising from a combination of high expectations, pressure of responsibility and volume of work, contributed to high stress levels.



'Never enough staff and over-worked and over-stressed is the main reason I became totally burned out. I love my job, but I must admit I would never allow anyone I care for to go into being worked to the bone like that.'

Nurse, aged 41–50
Previously worked in NHS, England

A number of respondents (62, 9 percent) also made comments about feeling under-supported, particularly around their concerns not being addressed by management, for example around bullying.

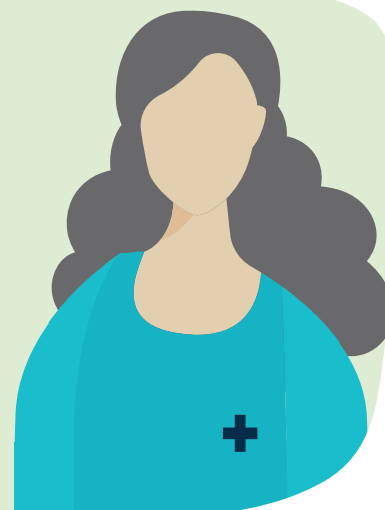
Others (47, 7 percent) had become disillusioned or dissatisfied due to a combination of factors including increased administration, increased regulation, overwork and lack of support.

3. Meeting revalidation requirements

Just under a fifth (18 percent) of respondents who provided further comments mentioned concerns about meeting the revalidation requirements. Some people, particularly those working outside the UK or who were self-employed, had difficulty finding a manager or fellow NMC registrant to act as a confirmer and/or reflective discussion partner in revalidation (35 comments, 5 percent):

'I still work full-time in healthcare in Finland, as before. But the point of the NMC revalidation application, where I had to mention the details of an NMC registered nurse, midwife, or nursing associate who has agreed to provide a supporting declaration of health and character for me made my registration renewal impossible, as I do not have around a nurse, midwife or nursing associate with NMC registration and NMC pin in Finland.'

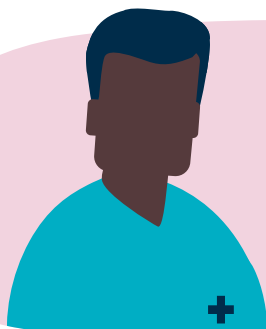
Nurse, aged between 51–60
Previously worked in EU/EEA



Others (20, 3 percent) were unable to meet the minimum number of practice hours required for revalidation. A similar number (18, 3 percent) noted that they had left the register because they could not justify the cost of renewing their registration, in some cases because they were no longer working. There were also comments made by some that they felt unable to keep up with the written requirements of revalidation or training, and the perceived complexity of the process.

4. Changes in personal circumstances

Around one in six (16 percent) of those commenting noted that they had left the register due to a change in their personal circumstances. Some of these (53, 8 percent) were people who had experienced health problems which meant that they were no longer able to work as a nurse or midwife.



'After a hip replacement and a cancer diagnosis, I felt that I could no longer function fully as a nurse even though I was in a managing position.'

Nurse, aged between 61–70
Previously worked outside of the NHS in England

Others (45, 7 percent) had left the register in order to look after relatives, including partners who had health problems, elderly parents, and grandchildren. A small number also mentioned other changes to their personal circumstances, such as unexpected relocation or sudden bereavement.

5. Leaving the UK

Around one in ten (10 percent) comments were about leaving the UK. Some (39, 6 percent) said that they had left the UK to work in another country, and therefore did not need to remain on the NMC register. Others (26, 4 percent) had relocated abroad to return to their home country, and generally for personal or family reasons.

'I moved because of my family otherwise I enjoyed being a nurse in the UK.'

Nurse, aged between 41–50
Previously worked in the NHS in England

6. Other comments

Other comments made by respondents about their reasons for leaving included the following:

Disillusionment about the quality of care (58 comments, 9 percent). Respondents felt that too much focus was given to administration and bureaucracy, at the expense of providing quality care. Factors that contributed to disillusionment included workload concerns, staffing levels and the perception that patient care is driven by protocols and paperwork.

'As a senior specialist nurse I found myself spending too much time auditing and reporting to commissioners and not actually caring for my patients. The culture in the NHS has become far too much about numbers and not about the people who really matter, the patients.'

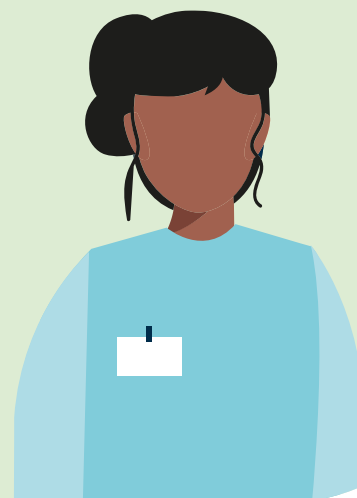
Nurse, aged between 51–60
Previously worked in NHS in England



Workload concerns (49 comments, 7 percent). Here, respondents spoke about feeling 'burnt out' and exhausted from the volume of work, longer working hours and lack of time off. These workload concerns were commonly linked to staff shortages.

'I had to come home after working my 8th consecutive weekend (12-hour rotational shift pattern) and tell my husband that I could not work until I was 60 doing 10 hours at least on my feet; no breaks or snatched/ interrupted breaks and still being made to feel that staff were to blame for it. I felt exhausted and burned out.'

Midwife, aged between 51-60
Previously worked in NHS in Scotland



There were a similar number of comments (44, 7 percent) about reduced **staffing levels**, with respondents reporting that they felt unable to provide the quality of care that they wanted.

Other comments (33, 5 percent) included a change in circumstance for their employer, such as a restructuring or closure. There was also a small number who said that their position had become untenable because they had acted as a 'whistleblower' or had been 'scapegoated' for a particular incident.

Section 3

Differences between respondents

We looked at whether particular groups of respondents had different reasons for leaving our register. For example, whether people who trained in different countries left for different reasons; or those that had previously worked in different parts of the UK, job roles or in the NHS².

Reasons for leaving by country of training

Figures 3 to 5 outline the six most frequently selected reasons for leaving by those who trained in the UK (Figure 3), those who trained in the EU (Figure 4), and those who trained outside of the EU (Figure 5).

- **Changes in personal circumstances** is cited as a top six reason for leaving by all groups.
- **Retirement** is by far the most common reason for leaving the register for people who had trained in the UK (62.1 percent of this group) and also features as a top six reason for those who trained outside the EU (23.9 percent). This is most likely due to the older age profile of those UK leavers who responded to the survey (see Figure 1). It is only cited by 2 percent of those who trained in the EU.
- **Leaving or having left the UK** is the most common reason for people who trained in the EU (73.5 percent) and outside of the EU (39.8 percent). Nurses and midwives from the EU (36.4 percent, 16 of 44) and outside the EU (48.6 percent, 36 of 74) mention this significantly more often in their comments than those from the UK (2.9 percent, 16 of 546).
- **Too much pressure** is the second most frequently cited reason for leaving the register by UK leavers (29 percent) and the fourth most common reason selected by EU leavers, (18.4 percent). It is cited by only 4.5 percent of non-EU leavers, who were more likely to cite **poor pay and benefits** as one of their most frequently selected reasons (14.8 percent).
- **Concern about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements** was cited more frequently by non-EU leavers (28.4 percent) and UK leavers (18.9 percent) than by EU leavers (10.5 percent). Again, this is a similar pattern to previous years. In the free text comments, this reason was mentioned by 33.8 percent of non-EU leavers, compared to 15.2 percent of UK leavers.
- People trained in the EU cite **Brexit** as their second most frequently selected reason for leaving (50.2 percent), but this is only cited by a small proportion of non-EU leavers (5.7 percent) and UK leavers (0.4 percent).

² Analysis of the free text comments included in this section has been tested for significance using Z-tests to explore the differences by sub-group. The differences reported here for the free text comments were all statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

Figure 3**Top six reasons for leaving given by people who had trained in the UK**

Reason	Number of UK trained respondents citing this as one of their top three reasons for leaving	Percentage of UK trained respondents citing this as one of their top three reasons for leaving
I have retired	833	62.1%
Too much pressure (stressful, poor mental health)	389	29.0%
My personal circumstances changed	345	25.7%
Concerned about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements	254	18.9%
I was disillusioned by the quality of the care provided to patients	241	18.0%
Other reason	211	15.7%

Figure 4**Top six reasons for leaving given by people who trained in the EU**

Reason	Number of EU trained respondents citing this as one of their top three reasons for leaving	Percentage of EU trained respondents citing this as one of their top three reasons for leaving
I am leaving or have left the UK	147	73.5%
Brexit has encouraged me to consider working outside the UK	101	50.2%
My personal circumstances changed	39	19.4%
Too much pressure (stressful, poor mental health)	37	18.4%
Other reason	28	13.9%
Staffing	27	13.5%

Figure 5

Top six reasons for leaving given by people who trained outside of the EU

Reason	Number of respondents trained outside of the EU citing this as one of their top three reasons for leaving	Percentage of respondents trained outside of the EU citing this as one of their top three reasons for leaving
I am leaving or have left the UK	35	39.8%
Concerned about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements	25	28.4%
Other - please provide more details in the comments box below	24	27.6%
I have retired	21	23.9%
Personal circumstances	16	18.2%
Poor pay and benefits	13	14.8%

Reasons for leaving by country of practice

A higher proportion of people who had practised in the UK gave **retirement** as a reason for leaving than those who had practised outside the UK. Please note the small sample sizes for some countries.

By country, the proportion of people who gave retirement as a reason for leaving is:

- **53.6 percent** (685 of 1,277) of people who had practised in England
- **62.7 percent** (96 of 153) of people in Scotland
- **73.4 percent** (47 of 64) of people in Wales
- **59.4 percent** (19 of 32) of people in Northern Ireland
- **9.5 percent** (4 of 42) of people in the EU
- **13.6 percent** (8 of 59) of people in countries outside the EU

This may reflect the different age breakdowns by country of practice. Respondents who had practised in the UK had the highest proportions of people who were aged 51 and over (England, 73.5 percent; Scotland, 85.7 percent; Wales, 95.4 percent; Northern Ireland, 78.2 percent) compared to those who had practised outside the EU (54.2 percent aged 51 and over) and those who had practised in the EU (19 percent).

These findings tally with those for the free text comments on retirement. Retirement was mentioned significantly more often in the free text comments by those who had worked in England (29.7 percent, 152 of 511), Scotland (28.8 percent, 15 of 52) or Wales (25 percent, 7 of 28) compared to those who had worked outside the EU (4.1 percent, 2 of 49).

Higher proportions of people who had practised in the UK cited **too much pressure** as a reason for leaving than those who had practised outside of the EU.

The proportion of people who cited 'too much pressure' by country of practice was:

- **28 percent** (358 of 1,277) of people who had practised in England
- **27.3 percent** (42 of 154) of people in Scotland
- **25 percent** (16 of 64) of people in Wales
- **15.6 percent** (5 of 32) of people in Northern Ireland
- **19.0 percent** (8 of 42) of people in the EU
- **3.4 percent** (2 of 59) of people in countries outside the EU

Likewise, in the free text comments, this reason was mentioned more by people who worked in England (24.3 percent), Scotland (21.2 percent) and Wales (32.1 percent) compared to those who had worked in non-EU countries (4.1 percent).

People who had practised outside the UK prior to leaving the register have, as might be expected, higher proportions who cite **leaving the UK** compared to those who had worked in the UK countries.

- **13.7 percent** (175 of 1,276) of people who had practised in England
- **5.2 percent** (8 of 153) of people in Scotland
- **1.6 percent** (1 of 64) of people in Wales
- **21.9 percent** (7 of 32) of people in Northern Ireland
- **48.8 percent** (20 of 41) of people in the EU
- **54.2 percent** (32 of 59) of people in countries outside the EU

Similarly, in the free text comments, leaving the UK was mentioned significantly more by people who worked in the EU (72.7 percent) or in a non-EU country (63.3 percent) compared to England (5.3 percent), Scotland (1.9 percent), Wales (0 percent) and Northern Ireland (9.1 percent).

Disillusionment with the quality of care offered to patients is cited more often by people who had practised in the UK (16.8 percent, 256 of 1,525) than those who had practised outside the UK, either in the EU or outside the EU (3 percent, 3 of 101). In the free text comments, people who had worked in England prior to leaving the register were significantly more likely to say that they left the register due to being disillusioned by the quality of care (10.2 percent) than those who were working outside the EU (0 percent).

Reasons for leaving by age group

The reasons for leaving broken down by age group show a similar pattern to last year.

Older groups were more likely to cite:

- **Retirement.** As might be expected, retirement is only a major reason for the over 50s. For those aged 51-60, 62.1 percent (355 of 572) cite it as a reason for leaving; 80.5 percent (454 of 564) of 61-70 year olds and 72.6 percent (45 of 62) of people aged 71 and over. It is interesting to see that such a high proportion of 51-60 year olds cite retirement as a reason for leaving the register, as for most people, this would mean that they were retiring early. Retirement is also mentioned significantly more often in comments made by older respondents.
- **Concern about meeting the revalidation requirements** was most frequently selected by those aged 41-50 years (23.3 percent, 37 of 159). As in previous years, concern about revalidation seems to be greater in those over 30 years, compared to those aged 21-30 (only 5 percent, 6 of 120). Those aged 41-50 also made more comments about concern about meeting the revalidation requirements compared to those in other age groups (30.9 percent of people aged 41-50 who made a comment compared to 9.8 percent of those aged 31-40, 18.9 percent of respondents aged 51-60 and 13.9 percent of those aged 61-70).
- **Disillusionment with the quality of care** was more commonly cited by people in the older age groups as their reason for leaving the register. For those aged 21-30, 8.3 percent (10 of 120) cite it as a reason for leaving; 11.4 percent (17 of 149) of people aged 31-40; 13.9 percent (22 of 158) of people aged 41-50; and 17.5% of those aged 51 and above (210 of 1,198).

Younger groups were more likely to cite:

- **Leaving the UK** is a much more common reason for the younger age groups for those respondents who had trained in the UK. Of those respondents who were trained in the UK and aged under 40 years, 29.2 percent (26 of 89) cited leaving the UK as a reason for leaving our register. However, only 3 percent (37 of 1,249) of UK-trained respondents aged over 40 cited leaving the UK. For respondents who were trained in the EU, although the proportions citing leaving the UK are higher, responses don't vary as much by age group. For example, over 70 percent of those aged 21-30, 31-40 and 41-50 (141 of 188) cite leaving the UK, as do 46.2 percent (6 of 13) of those aged 51 and above.
- **Brexit** is also more commonly cited as a reason for leaving by the younger groups. Just under half (47.1 percent, 57 of 121) of those aged 21-30 selected Brexit as a reason for leaving. Less than a quarter (24.2 percent, 36 of 149) of people aged 31-40 did so, 8.8 percent (14 of 159) of those aged 41-50, and 0.5 percent (6 of 1,186) of those aged 51 and above. As noted above, most of the people citing Brexit as a reason for leaving are from the EU (90.2 percent, 101 out of 112), which are a younger group than UK leavers.
- **Poor pay and benefits** is cited as a reason for leaving by 16.7 percent (45 of 269) of people aged under 40 compared to only 3.6 percent of those aged 41 and above.

- **Staffing** is selected as a reason for leaving by 20.8 percent of those aged under 40; 11.4 percent of people aged 41–50; 14.9 percent of people aged 51–60; and 12.8 percent of people aged 61 and above. Concerns around staffing levels were raised significantly more often in the free text comments by people aged 31–40 (17.1 percent) than by those aged 61–70 (4.9 percent).

Reasons for leaving by scope of practice³

We compared reasons for leaving for the four most common scopes of practice:

- Adult and general nursing – 805 respondents in the weighted sample
- Mental health nursing – 159 respondents
- General practice nursing – 156 respondents
- Midwifery – 129 respondents

Mental health nurses cited **retirement** as a reason for leaving most often but it was also cited by around half of people working in other job roles:

- **64.7 percent** (103 of 159) of mental health nurses
- **55 percent** (86 of 156) of general practice nurses
- **52.5 percent** (68 of 129) of midwives
- **48.8 percent** (392 of 805) of adult and general care nurses

A possible reason for this may be the older age profile of respondents who said they worked in mental health compared to those who had worked in other job roles (83.1 percent of mental health nurses were aged 51 and over, compared to 74.4 percent in general practice; 69 percent in adult and general nursing; and 65.9 percent in midwifery).

Around a third of midwives (37.4 percent) and mental health nurses (33.2 percent) cited **too much pressure** as a reason for leaving, with a quarter of those who had worked in adult and general care (26.8 percent), and general practice (23.7 percent) citing it. This is a similar pattern to the findings from last year.

Leaving the UK and **Brexit** was more likely to be cited by those who worked in adult and general nursing (19.4 percent and 9.4 percent respectively), and general practice nursing (17.6 percent and 10.4 percent respectively), and least likely to be cited by those in mental health nursing (3.8 percent and 3.6% respectively). These results may be linked to the demographic breakdowns of the people in these scopes of practice. For example, a greater proportion of respondents who worked in adult and general care nursing were trained outside the UK, than respondents who were mental health nurses.

³ The figures given in this section are weighted. In addition, Z-Tests were also run to investigate whether there were statistically significant differences by respondents' scope of practice. However it was difficult to determine significance due to the small sample size of most sub-groups (see Annexe 1).

Reasons for leaving by whether people worked in the NHS or not

We compared reasons for leaving for those who had worked in the NHS in their most recent job (77.1 percent, 1,257) and those who had not (22.4 percent, 366).

People who worked in the NHS were more likely to cite:

- **Retirement as a reason for leaving.** This was selected by over half (56.4 percent) of people who had worked in the NHS, compared with 40.2 percent of those who had not. Although respondents who had worked in the NHS had a slightly higher proportion of people aged 51 and over (74.2 percent) compared to non-NHS workers (72.1 percent), retirement was selected by higher proportion of younger groups (specifically those aged 51-60) compared to those outside of the NHS (see Figures 6 and 7).
- Concerns around working conditions including **too much pressure** (selected by 29.2 percent of those who had worked in the NHS, compared with 17.2 percent who had not), **staffing levels** (cited by 16.1 percent of those who had worked in the NHS, compared to 9.6 percent of those who had not), **workload concerns** (selected by 13.0 percent of people who had worked in the NHS, compared with 7.9 percent of people who had not), and **disillusionment with the quality of care** (cited by 16.4 percent of those who had worked in the NHS, compared with 13.7 percent of those who had not).

People who had **not** worked in the NHS were more likely to cite:

- **Concerns about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements.** This was cited by 30.7 percent of those who had not been working in the NHS, compared to 14.9 percent of those who had.
- **Leaving the UK.** This was selected by 19.1 percent (70 of 366) of those who had not been working in the NHS, compared to 13.8 percent (173 of 1,257) of those who had. These results may be at least partly linked to the demographic breakdowns of these two groups. The non-NHS group had a higher proportion of people who trained in the EU or a non-EU country (21.6 percent, 79 respondents) than the NHS group (16.4 percent, 206 respondents).



Figure 6

NHS respondents – retirement by age group (n=1,254)⁴

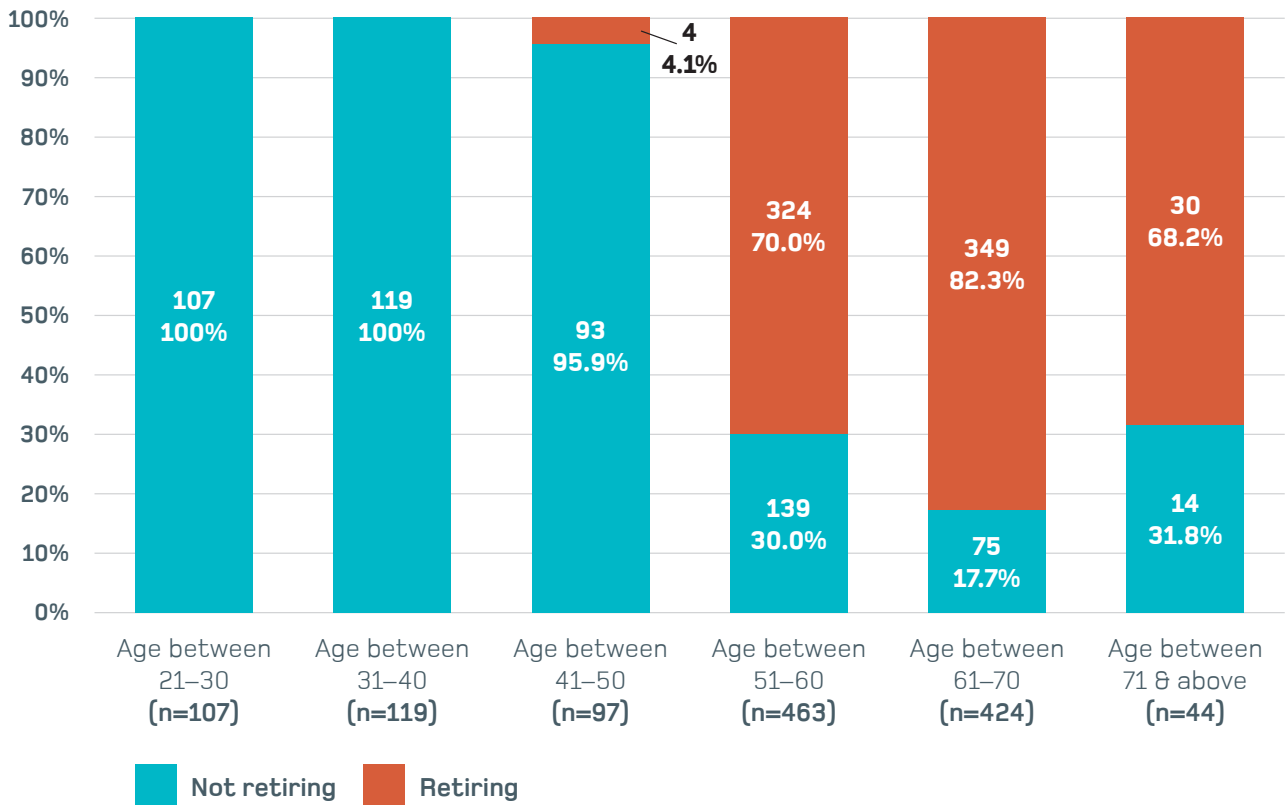
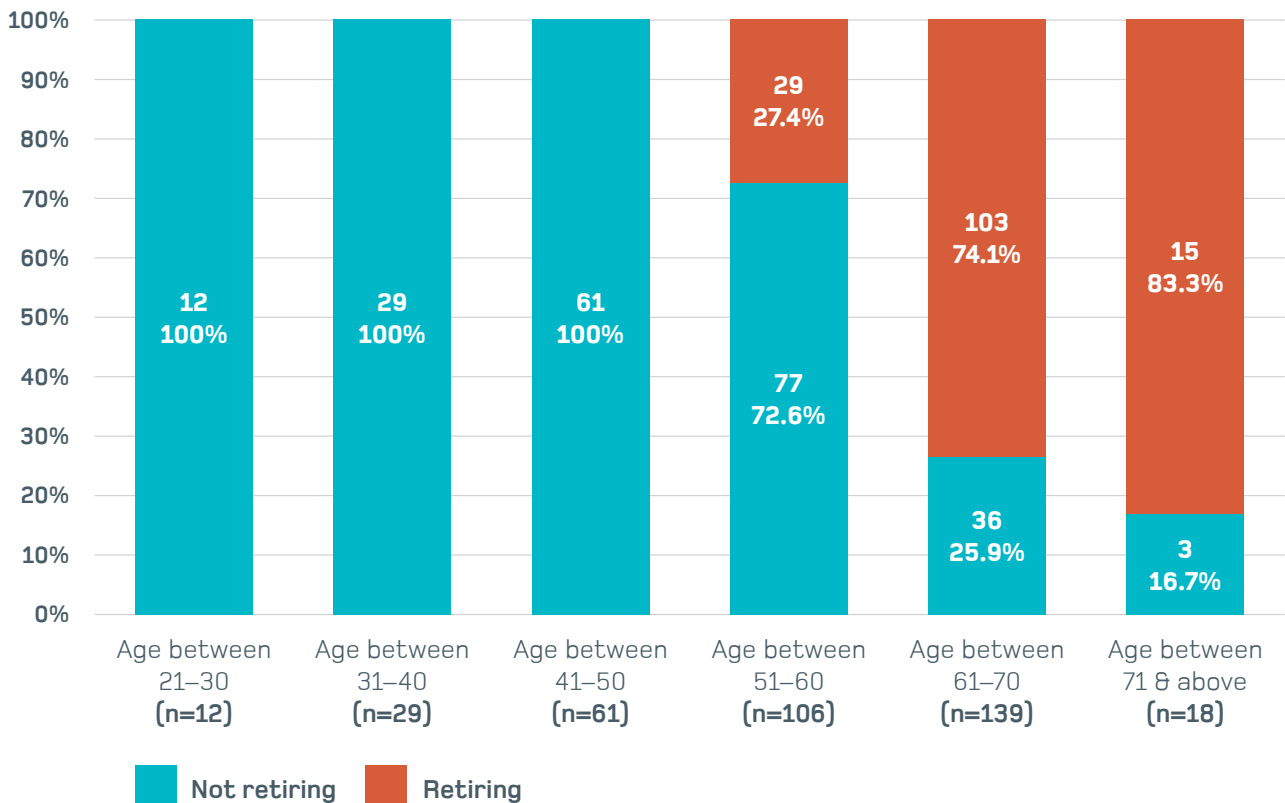


Figure 7

Non-NHS respondents – retirement by age group (n=365)⁵



4 This excludes the three people who did not give their age group.

5 This excludes the one person who did not give their age group.

Annexe 1: Our approach

The people who left our register

Just over 15,600 nurses and midwives left our register between November 2018 and June 2019. The majority trained in the UK: 82 percent of the 15,659 leavers trained in the UK; 12 percent trained in the EU; and 6 percent trained in a country outside the EU.

Selecting people to take part in our survey

Before inviting people to take part in our survey, we removed anyone who it would not be appropriate to contact (1,919 people in total). For example, we removed people who had previously indicated that they did not wish to be contacted for research purposes; people who had died; and people who had a current or recent fitness to practise case. The survey sample was selected from the people remaining (13,740).

Previous surveys have seen a higher response rate from people who trained in the UK, compared to those who trained in the EU or outside of the EU. For example, in February 2019, the response rate for UK-trained people was 36 percent; for EU-trained people it was 11 percent; and for people trained outside the EU it was 16 percent. This can skew the findings from the survey by over representing the views of those who trained in the UK, and underrepresenting the views of those who trained outside of the UK.

This year, we introduced a two-stage sampling approach to try to ensure we received a more representative sample of respondents. This involved:

1. Inviting all nurses and midwives who had trained in either the EU or outside of the EU to take part in the survey. In total, 1,654 people who had trained in the EU and 690 people who had trained outside of the EU were invited to take part in the survey.
2. For people who had trained in the UK, we selected a random sample based on the numbers of responses we were expecting from this group, given the response rates in previous years (36 percent). In total, 3,989 people who had trained in the UK were invited to take part in the survey.

The people who responded to our survey

Overall we received 1,626 responses to the survey. This represents a statistically significant response rate of 26 percent (in total, 6,333 people were invited to take part in the survey)⁶.

Response rates differed between groups. As with previous years, we saw a higher response rate from those professionals that had trained in the UK.

- Just over a third (33.5 percent, or 1,337 responses) of people who had trained in the UK responded.
- Less than a tenth (9.9 percent, or 164 responses) of people who had trained in the EU responded.
- Just under a fifth (18.1 percent, or 125 responses) of people who had trained outside the EU responded.

⁶ A response rate of 26 percent is equivalent to 1,626 responses, which is statistically significant at a 99 percent confidence level with a 5 percent margin of error

Analysing the responses

To make the survey data more representative of the wider group of people who had left the register during this period, we applied a 'weight' to the data. The weighting took account of two factors: age group and country of training. These factors have been shown in previous surveys to have an impact on the reasons for leaving that people selected.

In practice, what this means is that responses from people who trained in the EU, or outside of the EU, have been given more significance, or 'weight' in our analysis. This is to overcome the fact that we received a lower number of responses from these people. The weighting also took account of the breakdown of age groups of survey respondents, compared to the whole population of people leaving the register. This meant that younger age groups were given more significance, or 'weight' in our analysis, as they were underrepresented in our sample of respondents.

Analysing free-text comments in the survey

Some respondents (41 percent or 666 people) provided free text comments about their reasons for leaving the register. The analysis of these comments was undertaken by an external research organisation, Pye Tait.

The comments were analysed thematically using the same analytical framework of 19 options outlined in the pre-coded question. Some comments were given multiple codes, if the response covered several different themes.

Z-tests were undertaken to explore the differences by respondent sub-group across the (coded) open-ended responses. A Z-test is a statistical test used to test the hypothesis that proportions from two independent samples differ greatly.

The results were analysed by:

- country of training (UK; EU; outside the EU)
- country in which the respondent worked before leaving the register (England; Scotland; Wales; Northern Ireland; EU; outside the EU)
- respondent age group.

Tests were also run to investigate whether there were statistically significant differences by respondents' work setting or scope of practice. However, as noted in the footnote on page 16, it was difficult to determine significance due to the small sample size of most sub-groups.

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