

May 2023

2023 NMC Register Leavers Survey

Summary report

NMC Research and Evidence



Objectives

We maintain the register of professional nurses, midwives and nursing associates eligible to practise in the UK – monitoring the number of people joining and leaving the register.

Professionals can tell us why they are leaving our register, but most choose not to.

We have run a leavers' survey since 2017 to try and better understand why people leave our register.

We refreshed our survey in 2023 to give us better insights about the impact of issues in the wider health and social care sector on people's reasons for leaving.

We also wanted to understand better the relationship between professionals' characteristics and their reasons for leaving.

Methodology

A short **online survey** was sent to those who left the register between January and December 2022.

26,618 professionals left in 2022. We **invited 21,975 to take part** in the survey (removing those who do not wish to take part in research for example) and received **7,226 responses** (33% response rate).

The survey was live between **22nd March and 2nd April 2023**.

Questions covered topics such as reasons for leaving, their likelihood to return to the register and the impacts of Covid.

Results should not be directly compared with previous leavers' survey results for several reasons:

- New question codes and survey structure will impact on the specific percentages and values.
- Previous data was weighted on age and education region to match leaver profile – this has not been repeated due to unreliable weighting factors (see the annexe for more sample details). **3**



Executive Summary

Retirement is still the most common reason for leaving – factors ‘outside the workplace’ such as *‘leaving the UK’* as well as *‘retirement’* account for why most people leave the register.

Several ‘within workplace’ factors are frequently cited, with five often mentioned together: *‘Burnout’*, *‘Lack of colleague support’*, *‘Concern about the quality of care for the public’*, *‘Workload’* and *‘Staffing’*.

Professionals who cite one of these five factors are among those least likely to return to a career as a nurse, midwife or nursing associate – in addition to a high proportion leaving earlier than planned.

A trend of leaving our register earlier than planned is also true of most leavers generally. Perhaps unsurprisingly, very few intend to return to nursing and midwifery in the future.

Certain cohorts are less likely to return or recommend a career in nursing or midwifery – those working in the NHS, midwives, younger and UK educated professionals.

As in previous years, pay and benefits is cited as a reason for leaving by those who were educated outside the UK – for younger professionals this is linked to the cost of living crisis.

Section 1:

Retirement remains the most common reason for leaving. Factors ‘outside the workplace’ are the main drivers for leaving but ‘within workplace’ reasons frequently cited

The main reasons for leaving are broadly consistent with previous years

What was your main reason for leaving the NMC Register?

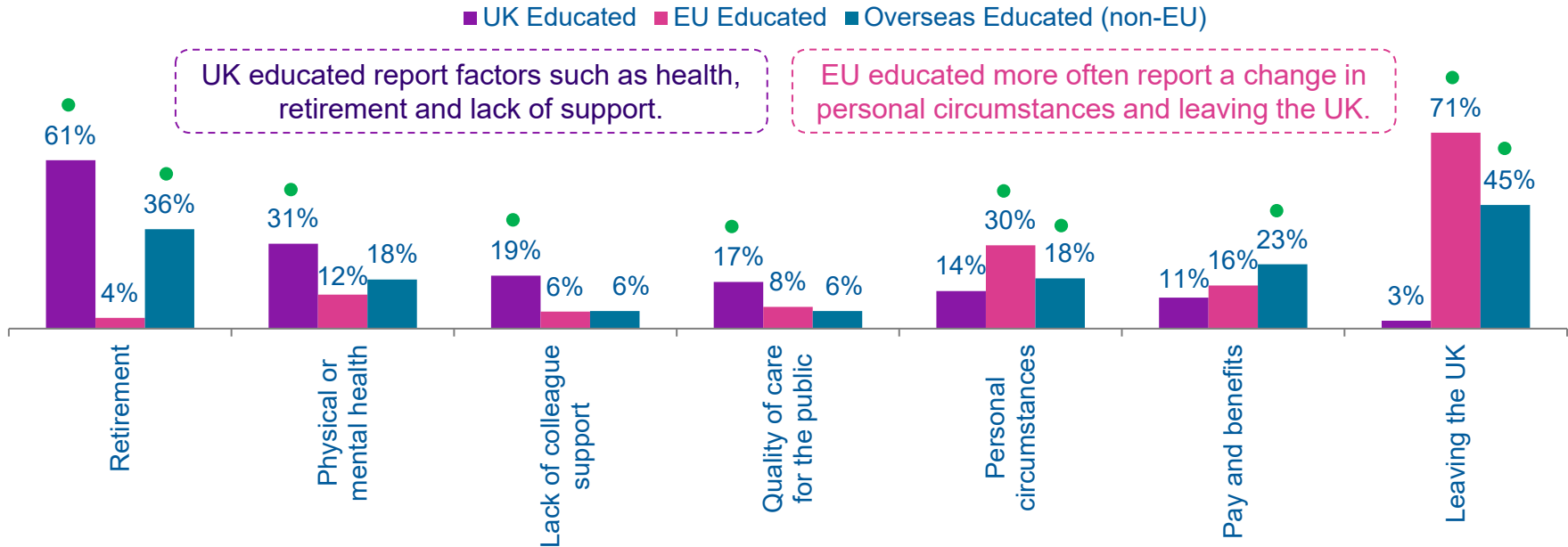
All respondents – Top 10 reasons selected.

Rank	Reason
1	Retirement
2	<input checked="" type="radio"/> My physical or mental health
3	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Burnout or exhaustion
4	A change in personal circumstances
5	I am leaving/have left the UK
6	Concern about meeting the revalidation requirements
7	Other
8	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Lack of support from colleagues or senior members of staff
9	Quality of care provided to members of the public and people who use services
10	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination

While we can't compare directly with previous years, the Top 10 reasons for leaving are consistent with themes identified in previous iterations of the survey.

Education region remains a differentiator – nuances to the reasoning for each group

Why did you leave the NMC Register: Reasons with significant differences.
All respondents – split by education region.



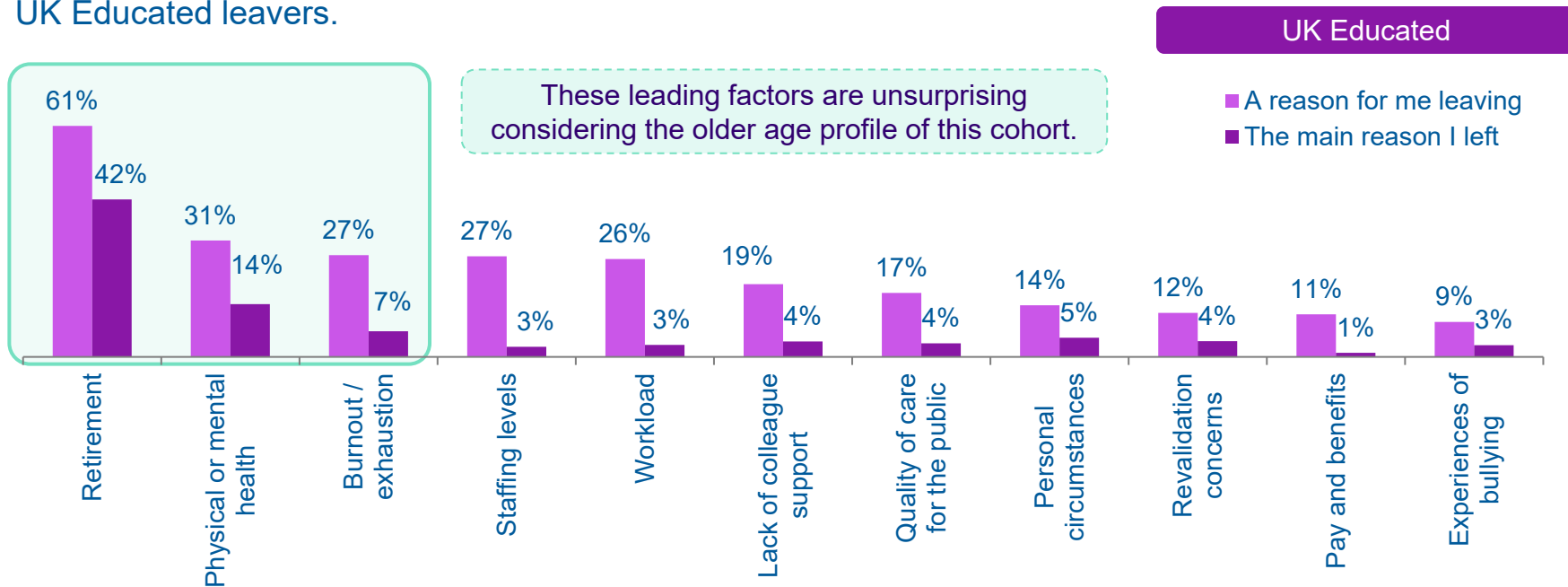
Q8: Using the list below, please tell us the reasons why you left the NMC register: You can select up to five reasons. Base: UK Educated N=6,810 EU Educated N=178, Overseas Educated N=218

● =significant difference at 95% significance level

Retirement a standout reason among UK leavers – health and burnout secondary factors

Why did you leave the NMC Register?

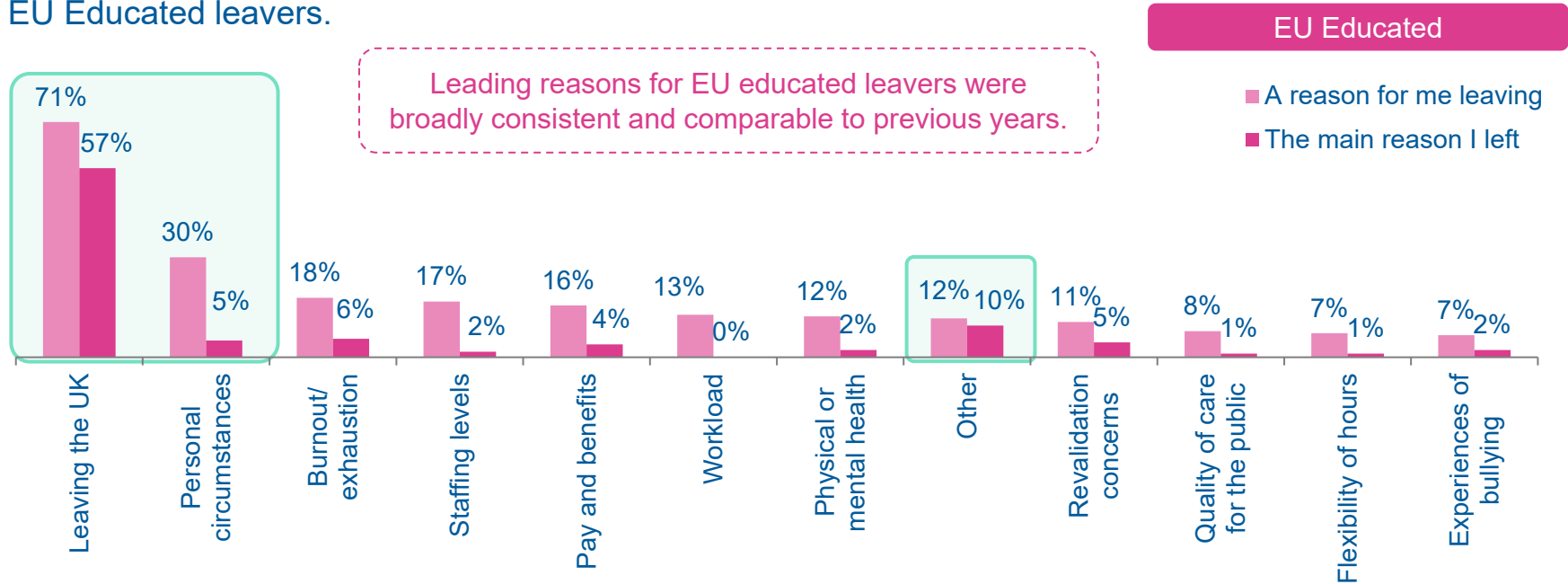
UK Educated leavers.



'Leaving the UK' a key reason for EU leavers – personal circumstances are often tied to this

Why did you leave the NMC Register?

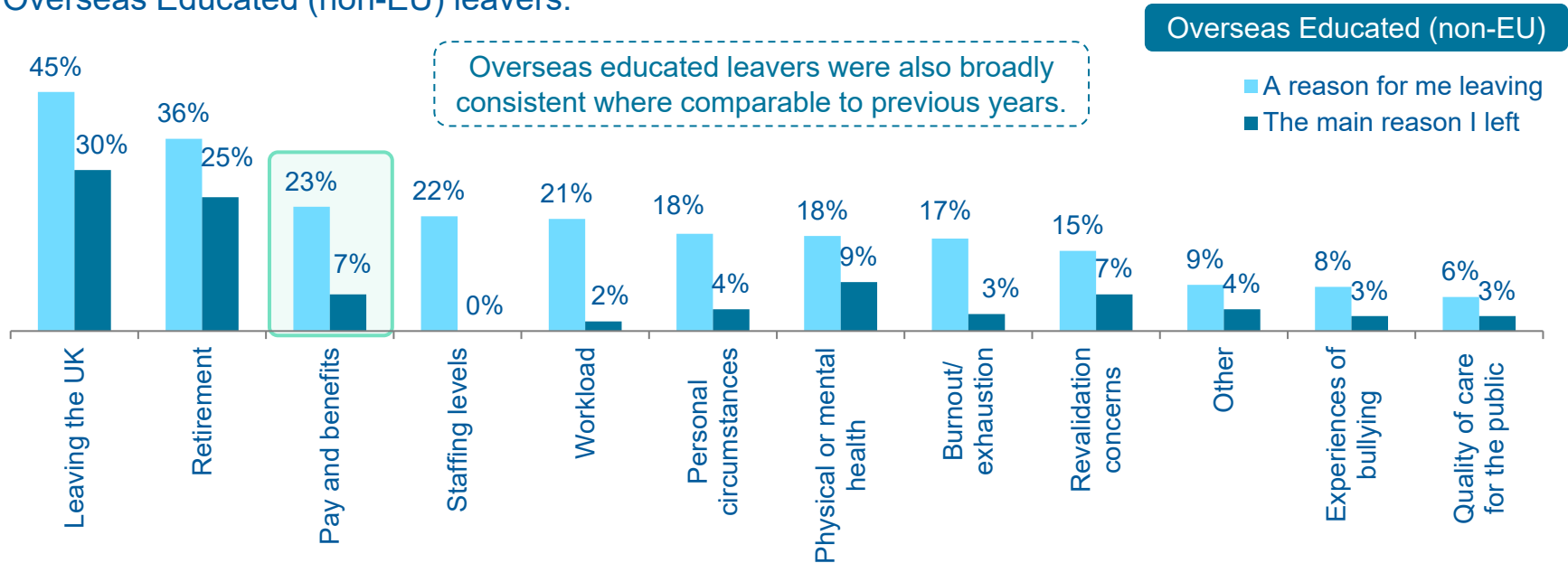
EU Educated leavers.



Overseas leavers sit between UK and EU trends – albeit with ‘pay’ significantly more important

Why did you leave the NMC Register?

Overseas Educated (non-EU) leavers.



Reasons for leaving can broadly be grouped into those *'outside'* or *'within'* the workplace

Outside Workplace

Within Workplace

"A new job in the UK that doesn't need NMC registration"

"Retirement"

"A change in personal circumstances"

"I am leaving/have left the UK"

"Other"

"Don't know"

"My physical or mental health"

"Workload"

"Experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination"

"Flexibility of hours"

"Pay and benefits"

"Quality of care for the public"

"Concern upholding NMC standards"

"Burnout or exhaustion"

"Staffing levels"

"Lack of development or training opportunities"

"Lack of support from colleagues or senior staff"

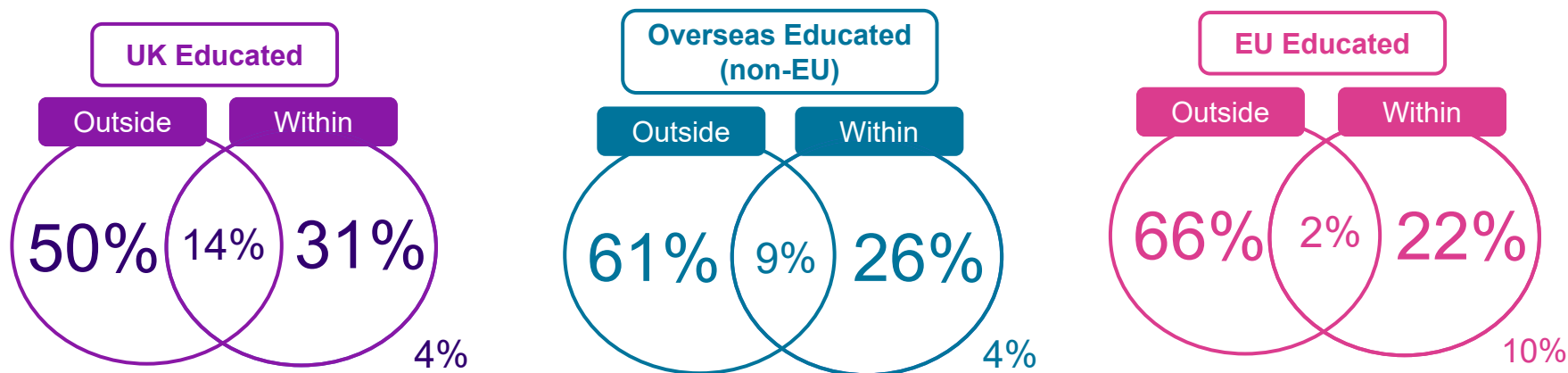
"Felt unable to raise concerns"

"Concern about meeting the revalidation requirements"

Across all groups, factors ‘outside the workplace’ drive reasons for leaving...

What was your main reason for leaving the NMC Register?

All respondents – Split by education region.



Despite there being **fewer ‘outside’ reasons**, these **account for most people’s reasons** for leaving.

...but 'within workplace' factors are still common – often co-existing with other factors

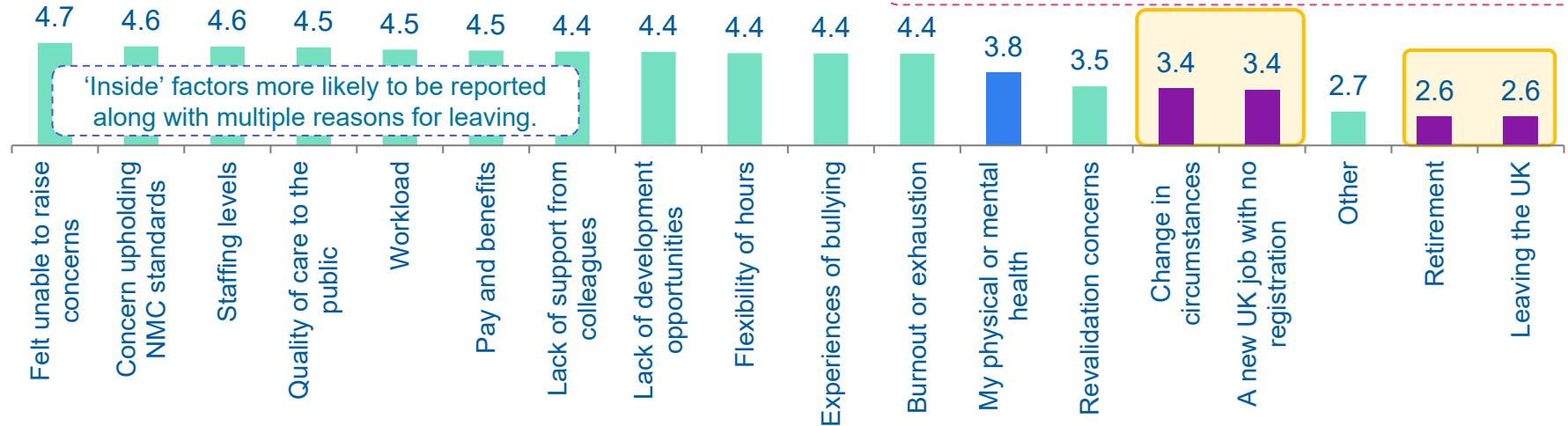
Why did you leave the NMC Register?

All Respondents – number of 'reasons' chosen (out of five).

■ = within workplace ■ = outside workplace ■ = both

Values are the number of reasons selected for leaving when choosing a factor (scores could range from one to five).

A score of three means people selected three reasons for leaving – this being the variable shown and two more reasons.



Section 2:

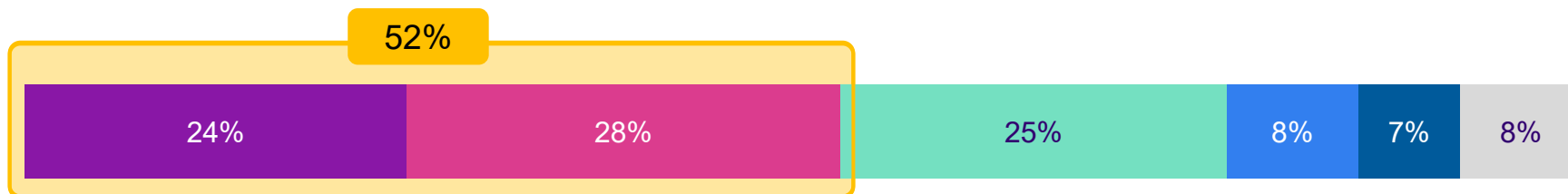
**Most professionals are
leaving the register
earlier than planned –
with very few intending
to return in future**

Only one in four professionals leave when they planned – most left earlier than expected

Have you left the register earlier than planned?

All respondents.*

■ Much earlier ■ A little earlier ■ Roughly when expected ■ A little later ■ Much later ■ N/A - I hadn't planned



Over half of professionals leave the register sooner than planned...

...EU educated professionals, midwives and disabled professionals are significantly more likely to say they left earlier than expected.

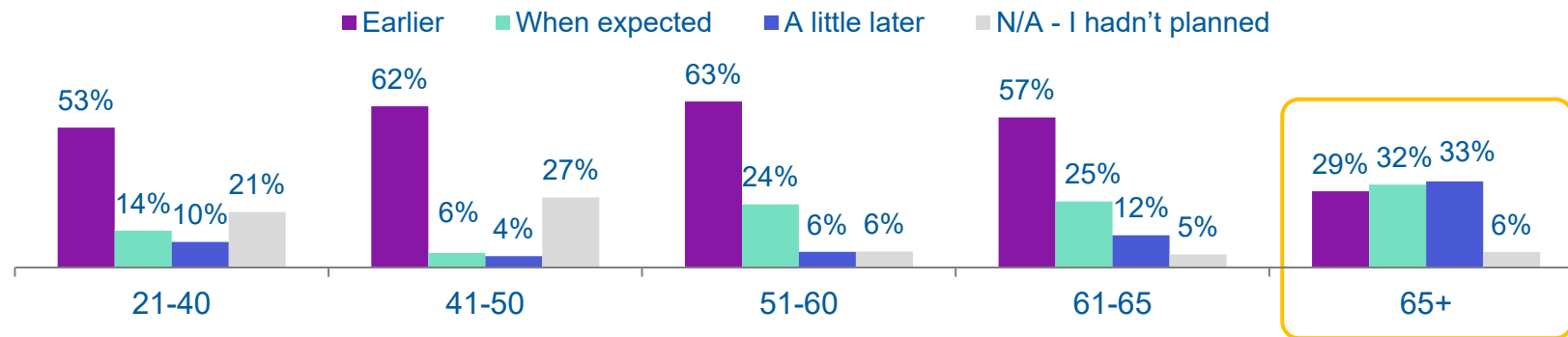
A minority (14.9%) do work for longer than they expected.

*Don't know not listed = 0.5%

While this tapers with age, most older professionals still leave before they planned

Have you left the register earlier than planned?

All respondents by age.



One in five aged under 50 hadn't thought about leaving the register. Those aged 50-65 likely to have thought about when they want to leave but most are still leaving earlier than planned.

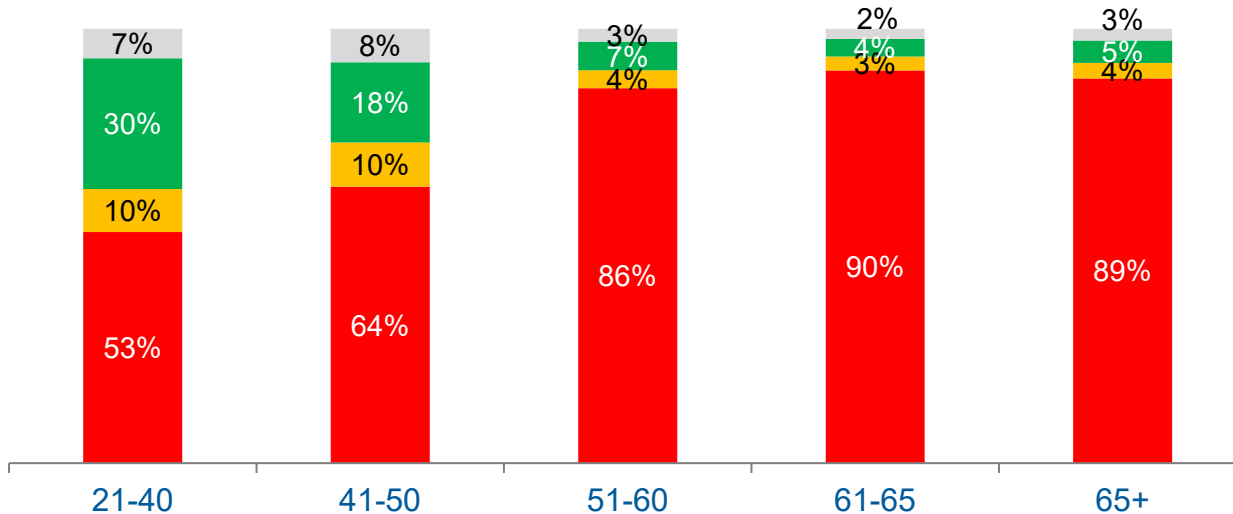
Leaving expectations linked to pension age – 65+ being the only age group with more people leaving 'later' rather than 'earlier' than planned.

Leave means leave, as many are unlikely to return – particularly true for those aged 40+

Likelihood of returning to nursing and midwifery.

All respondents and by age.

■ Don't know ■ Likely ■ Neutral ■ Unlikely



A similar trend seen with duration of time on the register.

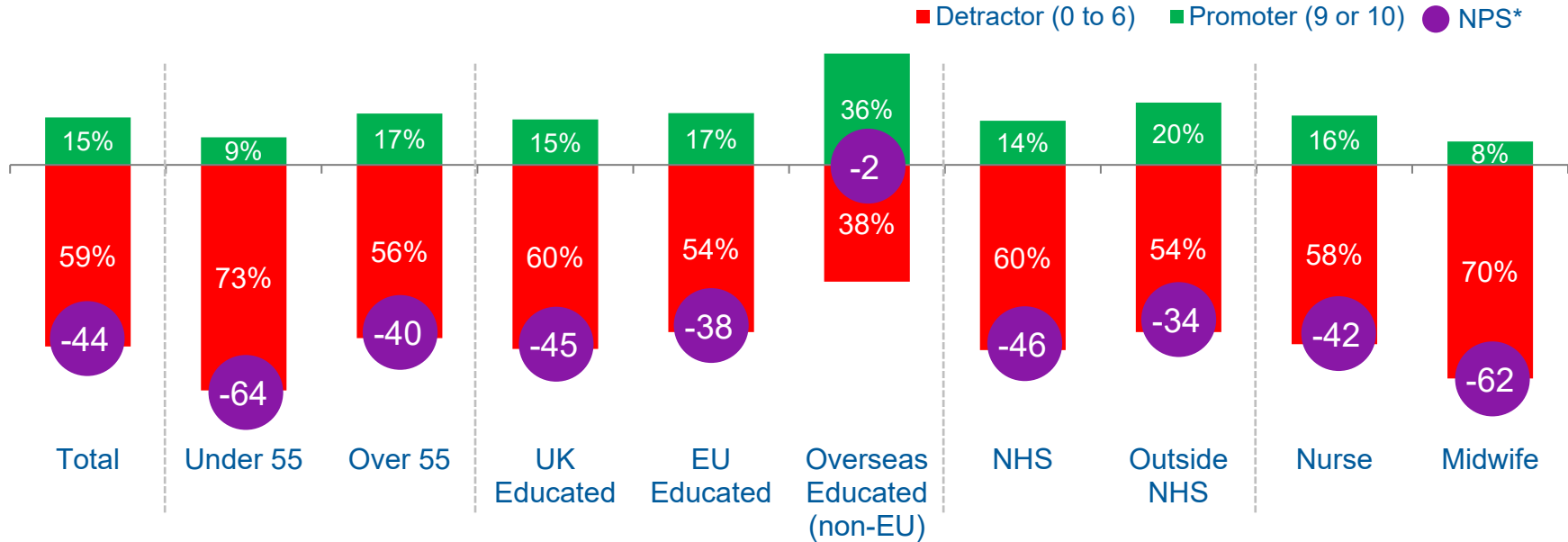
21-40's 'likely' score boosted by EU and Overseas leavers who are more likely to return to a career in the sector – but this could be continuing their careers outside the UK.

“My intention was to come back a few days a week, following my retirement, but the pressure was too much, and the thought of nursing ever again makes me feel unwell.” *Nurse, England, 51-60*

Professionals leaving the register are doing so with weak endorsement of the career

Likelihood to recommend a career in nursing or midwifery.

All respondents – Net Promoter Score.



*NPS= NET promoter score: Proportion of detractors subtracted from the proportion of promoters

Q5: On a scale of 0-10, how likely would you be to recommend a career as a nurse, midwife or nursing associate to friends or family? Base: N=7,226, U55 N=1,157 O55 N=6,069, UK Educated N=6,810 EU Educated N=178, Overseas Educated N=218, NHS N=5,651 Outside NHS N=2,208, Nurse N=6,627, Midwife N=500

“
I've enjoyed my career in the NHS and as a community nurse, but I'm unsure if I would recommend this career as the stress and pressure on nurses these day is almost intolerable.”

Nurse, England, aged 65+

The pandemic had a direct influence on one in five professionals' decision to leave the register

Did the pandemic influence your decision of when to leave?

All respondents by age.

No

It didn't influence my decision of when to leave the register

66%

Yes

22% I left earlier than planned because of the pandemic

10% I left later than planned because of the pandemic

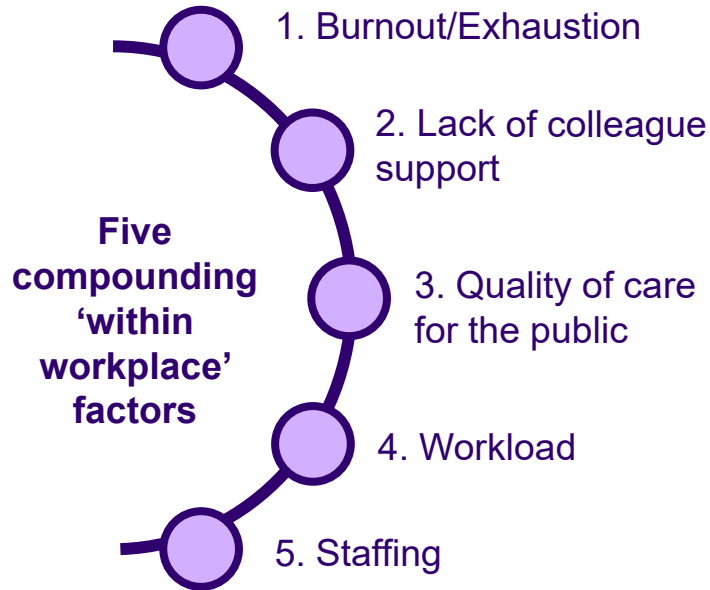
Don't know = 2%

Section 3:

**Addressing poor
workplace experiences
could help retain more
early leavers – pay
concerns were more
prevalent for those
educated overseas**

In focus:
Understanding
Workplace Factors

A group of five 'within workplace' factors are often cited together



Individual rank in 'Main Reason' for Leaving

3rd
8th
9th
11th
12th

Collective rank in 'Main Reason' for Leaving

2nd

Retirement remains the leading reason.

“ A lack of support from management and constantly working short staffed. I felt unable to provide good nursing care due to staffing levels and lack of community services available. ”

Nurse, Scotland, aged 31-40

These factors were particularly influential for UK educated leavers who are 'non-retirees'

Why did you leave the NMC Register?

UK Educated professionals – with and without 'Retired'.

The five factors **collectively rank second** as the 'main reason for leaving' among UK Educated leavers.

1st Retirement
42%

2nd 'Five Factors'
20%

3rd Health
14%

For UK educated leavers those not selecting 'retirement', the 'five factors' are the top 'main reason' for leaving.

1st 'Five Factors'
33%

2nd Health
23%

3rd Personal Circumstances
8%

Two thirds of UK educated non-retirees report that one of the 'five factors' was 'one of the reasons' why they left.

1st 'Five Factors'
67%

2nd Health
44%

3rd Personal Circumstances
18%

Certain cohorts across the workforce are particularly feeling these collective pressures

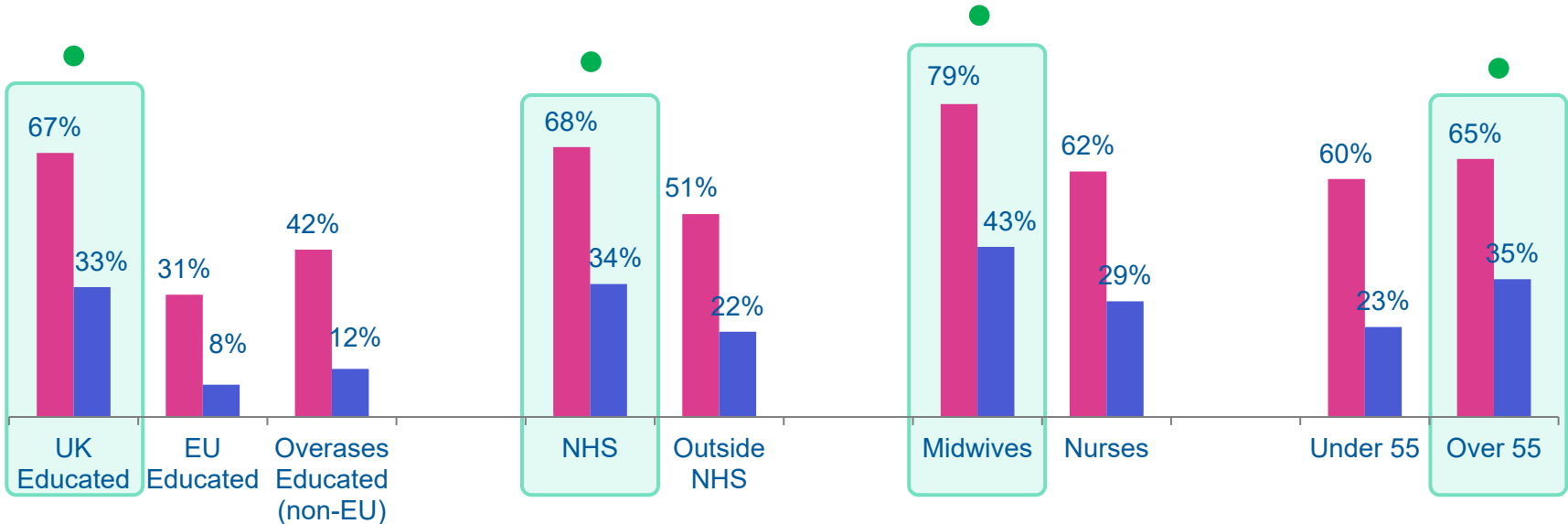
Why did you leave the NMC Register?: Selecting 'Five Factors'

All respondents excluding those who 'retired'.

● = significant difference at 95% significance level

■ A reason for me leaving

■ The main reason I left



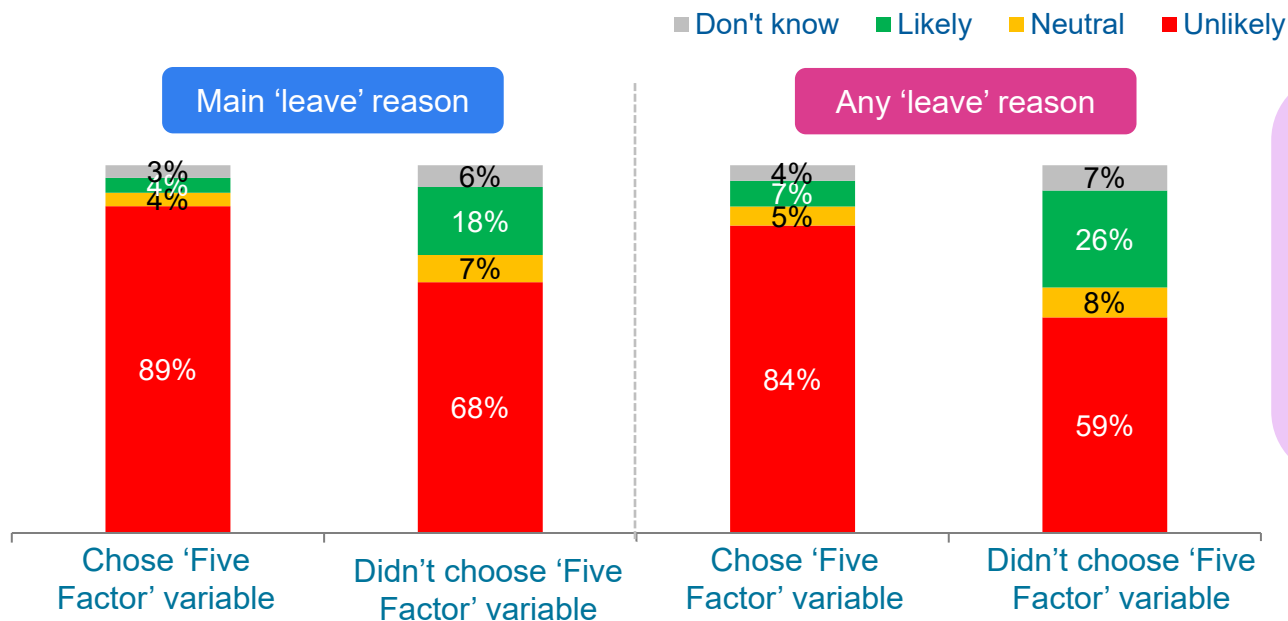
“ I enjoyed my career however working conditions have changed dramatically. The pressure placed on staff has increased and felt I could no longer continue in the profession. ”

Midwife, Wales, 51-60

These professionals are not only leaving the workforce sooner but also for good

Likelihood to return to a career as a nurse, midwife or nursing associate.

All respondents excluding those who 'retired'.



“I always worked in A&E and enjoyed the teamwork and fast pace of the department. However, even before Covid there was a lot of pressure on the system. Lack of staff and support was dwindling. Sadly, it came to the stage of burnout for me.”
Nurse, Northern Ireland, 31-40

In focus:
Contextualising
Pay and Benefits

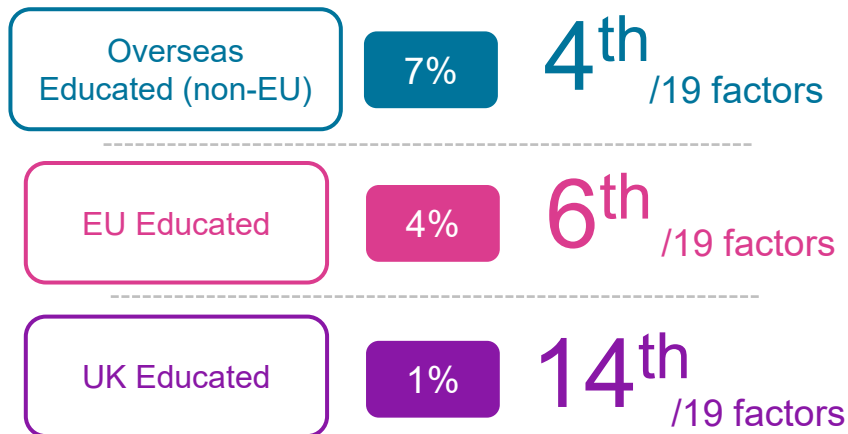
Pay and benefits are an issue for professionals educated outside the UK and who are younger

Pay and benefits are a higher ranking reason for leaving among non-UK educated professionals.

Pay and Benefits are a factor for one in four under 55's – while impacting less than one in 10 over 55's.

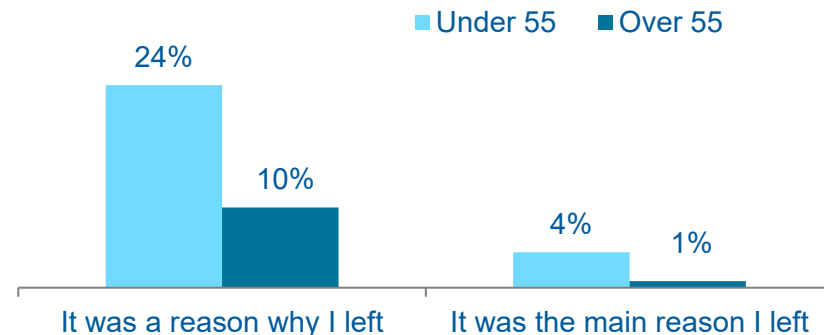
Pay/Benefits as a reason for leaving.

'Main reasons' score and rank by education region.



Pay/Benefits: A reason for leaving

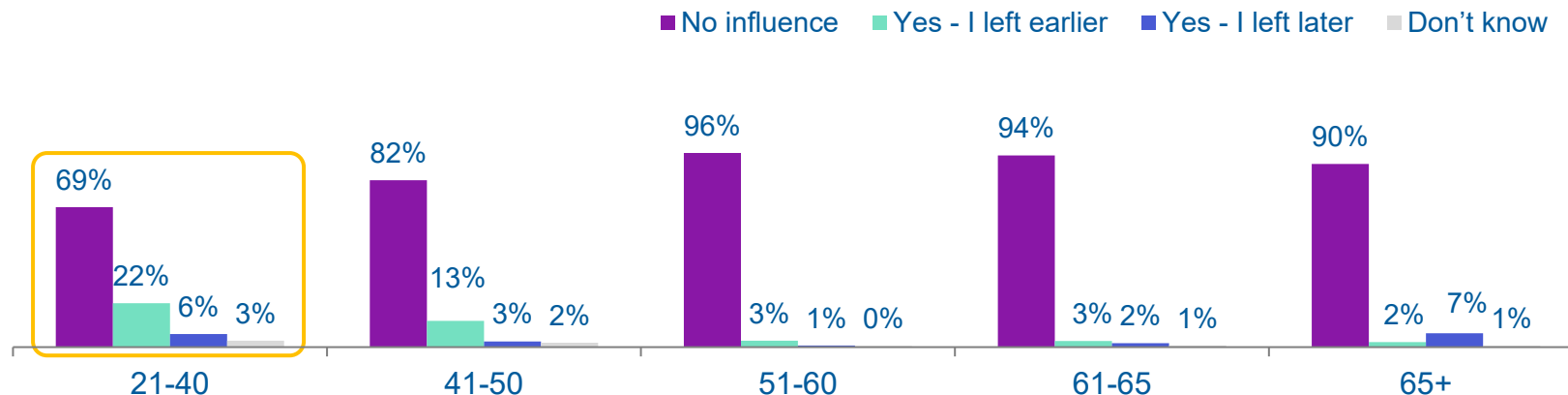
All respondents



This is consistent with those impacted by the cost of living crisis – under 40's feel this most

Did the cost of living crisis influence your decision of when to leave?

All respondents by age.



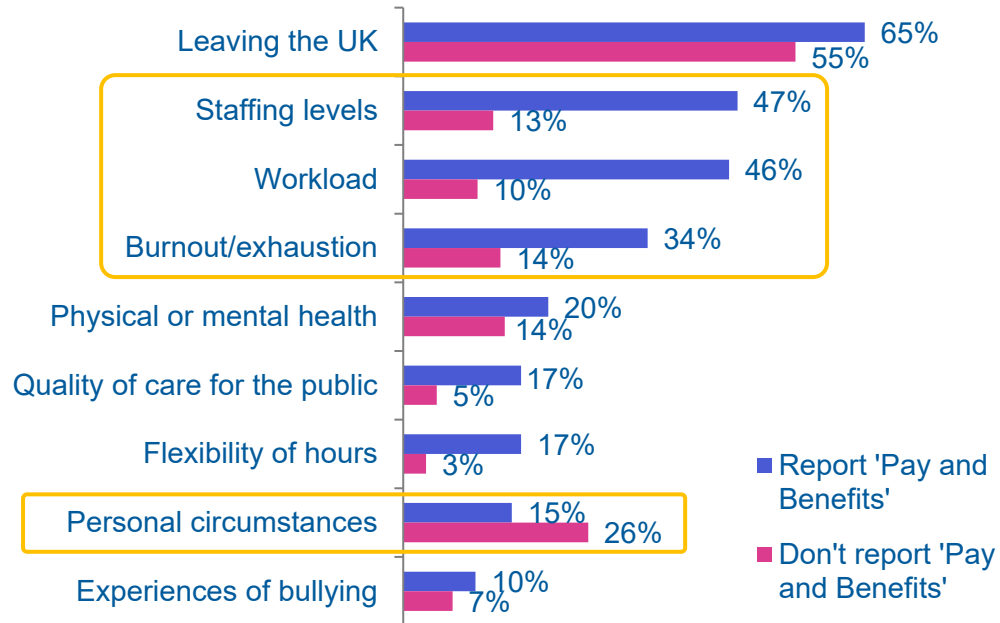
Younger professionals report cost of living has **impacted** them – with **more opting to leave** the register earlier than planned.

There is **less impact** on decision making reported by on **older cohorts** – a small group aged 65+ are extending their time on the register.

Staying on the UK register is unattractive for those citing poor pay educated outside the UK

Why did you leave the NMC Register?

Top 9 reasons selected – EU and Overseas Educated professionals.



A high proportion of all non-UK educated professionals leaving the NMC register say they are **leaving the UK**.

Those mentioning **'Pay and Benefits'** cite **wider workplace factors** – they are less likely to report a change in personal circumstances.

Is this an indication that this group are **looking elsewhere to continue their career? 29% of this group 'Likely' to return to a career in nursing or midwifery in future.**

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Thank you

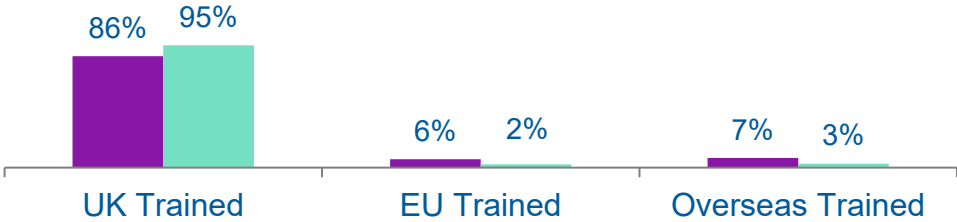
researchandevidence@nmc-uk.org

Annexe

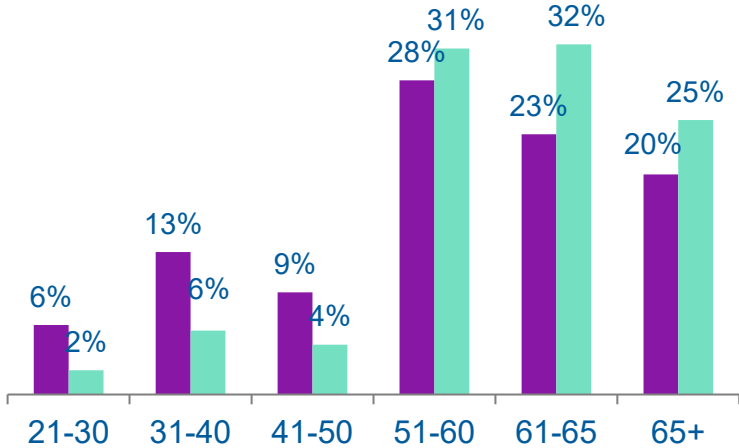
Sample skews giving a slightly older and UK educated set of respondents vs. all 2022 Leavers

■ All 2022 Leavers ■ Leaver survey respondents

education Region



Age



Registration Type

