

The NMC register Northern Ireland 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 Northern Ireland.

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 Northern Ireland. There are now a total of **28,338** – that's **651** (2.4 percent) more than just six months ago, and **3,949** (16.2 percent) more than five years ago. This is encouraging given the well-publicised pressure on health and care services at a time of rising demand for care.

This total includes a record **26,723 nurses**. A growing majority of these are registered as adult nurses.

There are now **1,297 midwives** and **318 dual registrants** (both a nurse and midwife).

The growth we're seeing in Northern Ireland follows a period of strong recruitment and steady retention. There were **776 new joiners** between April and September, compared to **419** in the same period last year (an 85.2 percent rise in joiners during this period). There were **402 leavers**, which is higher than the **364** who left in 2022, but only a marginal increase as a proportion of the register.

28,338

professionals on the register in Northern Ireland



In the last six months

+2.5% **Nurses**
26,723

-0.2% **Midwives**
1,297

-1.9% **Dual registrants**
318

Strong rate of domestic recruitment

UK educated professionals account for the majority of these new joiners by a long stretch: **644** (83 percent). That's more than double the number of domestic joiners during the same period last year (318).

International recruitment also gaining pace

The number of internationally educated joiners in Northern Ireland also continues to rise, with **132** coming onto the register since April. That's **30.7 percent more** compared to the same period last year (101), and more than four times higher than the number of international joiners five years ago (28). 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](#).

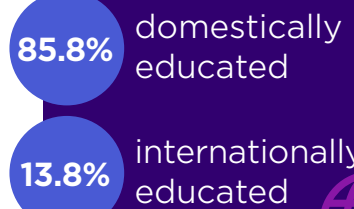
As with the rest of the UK, India is the single largest source of international recruitment in Northern Ireland, representing **37.9 percent** of all international joiners since April. This means professionals educated in India have now surpassed those from the Philippines as the largest cohort of international professionals overall on the register in Northern Ireland (**32.8 percent** compared to **31.4 percent**).

However, the data also show an increase in the number of people joining the register in Northern Ireland from 'red list' countries where active recruitment isn't permitted, particularly from Ghana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.* Together, professionals from these countries represent **22.7 percent** of all international joiners in Northern Ireland during the six months to September.

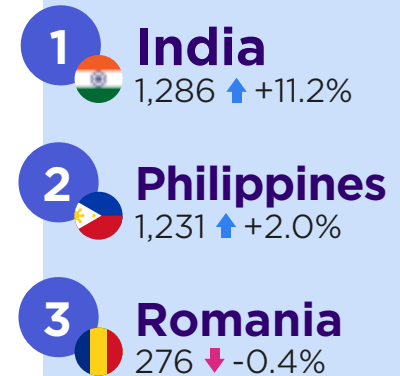
In the last six months, compared to the same period last year



As of September 2023:



Top countries of education and change, since April



*The [Department of Health and Social Care's code of practice for international recruitment of health and social care personnel](#) 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.

We're calling on employers and agencies across health and care in Northern Ireland to be mindful of the UK 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.

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 Northern Ireland – the number of leavers in the past six months being equivalent to **1.5 percent** of the register (1.4 percent in the six months to September 2022 and 1.5 percent 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.

The changing profile of professionals on the register in Northern Ireland

Increased international recruitment is contributing to a gradual change in the ethnic profile of people on the register in Northern Ireland. Nurses and midwives from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds now account for **12.2 percent** of professionals in Northern Ireland, compared to **11.4 percent** in April, and **8.1 percent** in September five years ago.

We're also seeing a gradual shift in the age profile. Strong growth in the number of joiners, who tend to fall within the lower age brackets, means the total proportion of nursing and midwifery professionals in Northern Ireland who are **aged 21-40** is now **44.9 percent**. That's only a slight increase from **44.3 percent** six months ago, but significantly higher than **39.5 percent** in September 2018.

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 Northern Ireland, 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



43 years, 7 months

average age of
professionals in
Northern Ireland

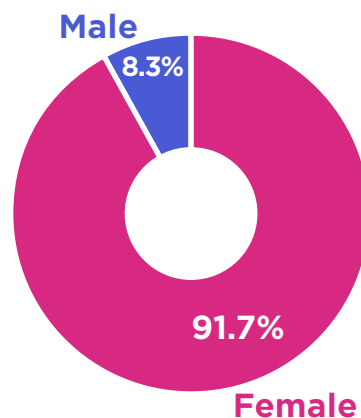


12.2%



of register in
Northern Ireland
from Black and
minority ethnic
backgrounds.
In 2018, **8.1%** of
register in Northern
Ireland 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.

23 Portland Place,
London W1B 1PZ
+44 20 7637 7181

www.nmc.org.uk

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