

Leavers' survey 2022

Why do people leave the NMC register?



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Summary

Since 2017, we've been running an annual survey to understand why people leave our permanent register.

A total of 22,549 nurses, midwives and nursing associates left our permanent register between January 2021 and December 2021.

Throughout February 2022, we asked a sample of 21,035 of these people to tell us why they left the register. In total, 6,458 people responded (a response rate of 30.7 percent).

Reasons people left the register

Respondents could select up to three options from a pre-defined list of 21 options. The three most commonly selected reasons for leaving the register were the same as in previous years: retirement (42.9 percent), personal circumstances (21.7 percent), and too much pressure (18.3 percent).

Workplace culture was ranked the same as last year, being the fourth most frequently cited reason (13 percent). The fifth most commonly cited reason was leaving the UK (12 percent), and the sixth was the Covid-19 pandemic (11.8 percent). With the exception of the Covid-19 pandemic moving from the 18th most cited reason for leaving last year up to sixth this year¹, there are few other notable changes. This year was the first year that the survey has been run that all people invited to respond had left after the Covid-19 pandemic started.

In response to the question about whether the Covid-19 pandemic affected their decision to leave the register, 36.5 percent of respondents said it had had either 'some' or a 'strong' influence.

Differences by respondent group

As with previous years, reasons for leaving differed between groups of respondents.

By country of training

People trained in the UK were older and many said they were retiring. Those who had trained in the EU/EEA were younger and many said they were 'leaving or had left the UK' or cited Brexit or the Covid-19 pandemic as a reason for leaving. The Covid-19 pandemic having a strong influence on the decision to leave the register was most evident among respondents who trained outside the EU/EEA.

¹ In last year's survey, only around a fifth of respondents had left during the pandemic, therefore this reason for leaving was not applicable to most respondents that year. However, this year, all survey respondents had left after the pandemic started. Therefore, the percentage choosing this reason is not directly comparable between the two years.

By country of practice

Similar to previous years, respondents who had most recently practised in the UK cited retirement more commonly than those who had most recently practised in the EU/EEA or outside the EU/EEA. This may reflect the different age breakdowns by country of practice. Respondents who had most recently practised in the UK had the highest proportions of people who were aged 51 and over, which is also comparable to previous years. Within the UK, more English respondents were likely to leave the register for reasons other than retirement. Retirement was slightly more commonly selected by respondents from Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. This may be because England has overall a younger population of nurses, midwives and nursing associates.

By age group

Older groups, aged 51 and over, most frequently left because they were retiring. Younger respondents (aged 21-50) most frequently left because they were leaving the UK. In general, older people said more commonly than younger registrants that the Covid-19 pandemic had a 'strong influence' on their leaving.

By scope of practice

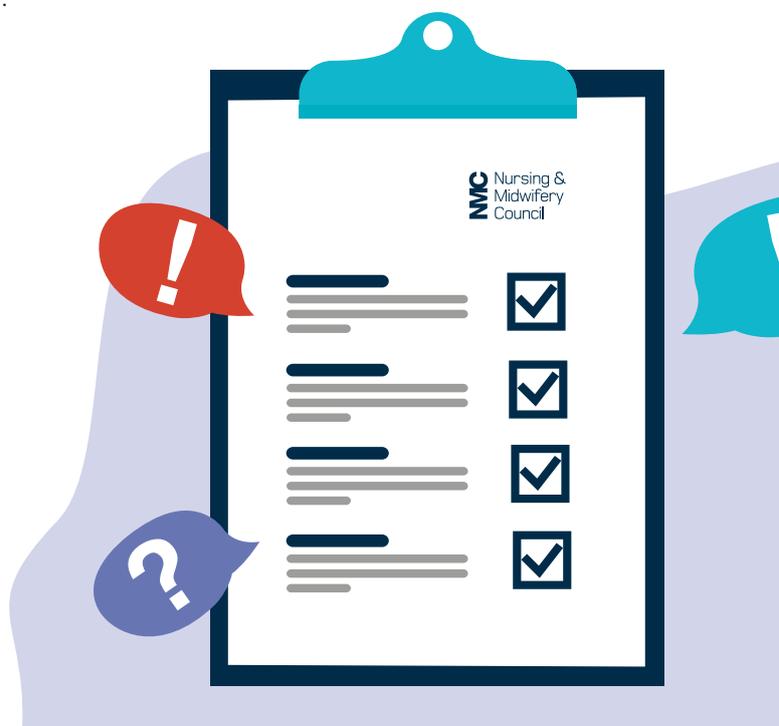
People who had worked in midwifery, and in mental health, were more likely than other scopes of practice to cite too much pressure as a reason for leaving. Changes in personal circumstances were most frequently selected by those who worked in children's and neo-natal nursing. Adult and general care nurses and social care nurses most commonly reported that the Covid-19 pandemic had a strong influence on reasons for leaving the register. Respondents working in research and health visitors most frequently said that Covid-19 had some impact on their leaving. The pandemic not influencing their leaving was the most common among policy workers, commissioning staff and midwives.

By sector of work

People who worked in the NHS were significantly more likely to say they were retiring or leaving because of too much pressure. Of those people who cited concerns about meeting revalidation requirements, proportionally more had worked in a non-NHS role. There were no notable differences between the NHS and non-NHS respondents in terms of the impact of the pandemic on their leaving.

By disability status

People with a self-declared disability were less likely than those without a disability to leave because of the Covid-19 pandemic. People with a disability were more likely than people without a disability to say that they were leaving due a change in personal circumstances. They were also more likely to be leaving due to workplace culture. People who did not have a disability were more likely than disabled people to be leaving because of retirement.



Background

Since 2017, we've been running an annual survey to understand why people leave our register. This report presents findings from the latest survey which ran in February 2022.

The report is divided into four sections:

- Section 1** describes the people who responded to the 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** provides an insight into the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on people's decision to leave the register.
- Section 4** gives an overview of the differences in reasons for leaving between different groups of respondents. This includes differences by where people had trained, how old they were; the UK country that people had worked in, the type of job they had done and whether they had worked in the NHS.

A larger proportion of responses was received from people who had trained in the UK, compared to the proportion of this group in the population who had left the register between January and December 2021. To prevent this from skewing the results, more weight was given to responses from people who trained in the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA. Likewise, a smaller proportion of responses were received from younger people, compared to their proportion in the population of people who had left the register during this period. Therefore, responses have also been weighted to give more significance to responses from younger people.

This means that the survey data are more representative of the wider group of people who left the register between January and December 2021.

It's worth noting that the charts may not add to 100 percent due to rounding. The number of respondents to each part of a question may not add to the total base number of respondents to a question due to the rounding that has occurred during the weighting process.

More information about the 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

From January to December 2021, a total of 22,549 people left our register.

We contacted 93.2 percent of these (21,035 people) and invited them to take part in the survey. Not all of those who had left the register were contacted – more detail on this is contained in **Annexe 1**. In total, 6,458 people responded, representing a response rate of 30.7 percent. This represents a statistically valid sample size.

- Most respondents had trained in the UK (91.7 percent, equivalent to 5,927 respondents). The remainder had trained outside the UK: 4.8 percent (310 respondents) had trained in the EU/EEA and 3.4 percent (221 respondents) outside the EU/EEA. We received a higher proportion of responses from those training in the UK than in the population of leavers in 2021. To make the sample more representative by country of training we weighted the data as done in previous years (see **Annexe 1**).
- Most respondents had most recently worked in England prior to leaving the register (78.0 percent, equivalent to 5,038 people), with 10.2 percent (659) working in Scotland, 5.9 percent (383) in Wales, 2.6 percent (168) in Northern Ireland, 1.2 percent (80) in the EU/EEA and 1.7 percent (111) outside of the EU/EEA. This is broadly in line with the proportions of people on our register living in each country.
- Most respondents were women (90 percent or 5,813 people) and were aged 51 years and above (84.2 percent or 5,438 people). The gender of the sample is representative to the proportions on our register (89.1 percent or 664,381 women), while respondents are older in comparison to the population of people leaving our register (34.7 percent or 258,954 people above the age of 51). To make the sample more representative by age group we weighted the data (see **Annexe 1**).
- Most respondents were nurses (91 percent or 5,880 people); 6.8 percent (or 440 people) were midwives; (4.1 percent or 265 people) were registered as Specialist Community Public Health Nurses (SCPHNs); and 17 (0.2 percent) were nursing associates². These proportions are similar to the proportions of these groups who left the register in the 12 months to September 2021: Nurses (94.1%); Midwives (6.6%); Nursing Associates (0.3%).
- Over half of respondents had worked in adult and general care nursing (52.2 percent or 3,376 people) with a smaller number in mental health nursing (10.9 percent or 161 people); general practice nursing (8.4 percent or 543 people); children's and neonatal nursing (6 percent or 390 people); midwifery (6 percent or 389 people); and education (4.5 percent or 296 people). Other scopes of practice were represented in smaller proportions.

- Around one in ten respondents (9.6 percent or 623 people) said they had a disability. This is higher than the proportion of people on our register with a disability. At the end of March 2021, 3.6% of people on the register had declared a disability.
- Most respondents were White British (83.1 percent or 5,373 people). There were smaller proportions who were Any other White background (5.7 percent or 370 people); White Irish (3.2 percent or 209 people); Black Caribbean (1.3 percent or 90 people); Asian or Asian British: Filipina/Filipino (0.8 percent or 56 people); and Black African (0.8 percent or 55 people). Other ethnic groups were also represented in smaller numbers. The survey respondents as a group were less ethnically diverse than people who left the register in the 6 months to 30 September 2021. In the latter group of leavers, the proportion of White British people was lower (70.7%) than in the survey respondents. The proportions of some of the other ethnic groups in this group of leavers, such as Any other White Background (8.4%) and Black African (4.1%), were higher than in the survey respondents.
- The age profile of people who had trained in the UK, EU/EEA, and outside the EU/EEA differed (see Figure 1). The majority of respondents who had trained in the UK, were aged 51 years and over (88.7 percent or 5,263 people). In contrast, most respondents who trained in the EU/EEA were younger, aged between 21 and 40 years (73.5 percent or 228 people). Respondents who had trained outside the EU/EEA were aged in between, with just under a third of respondents (30.7 percent, or 68 people) aged between 31 and 50 years. These data are similar to results in previous years of the survey.



Figure 1
Age group of respondents by where they trained

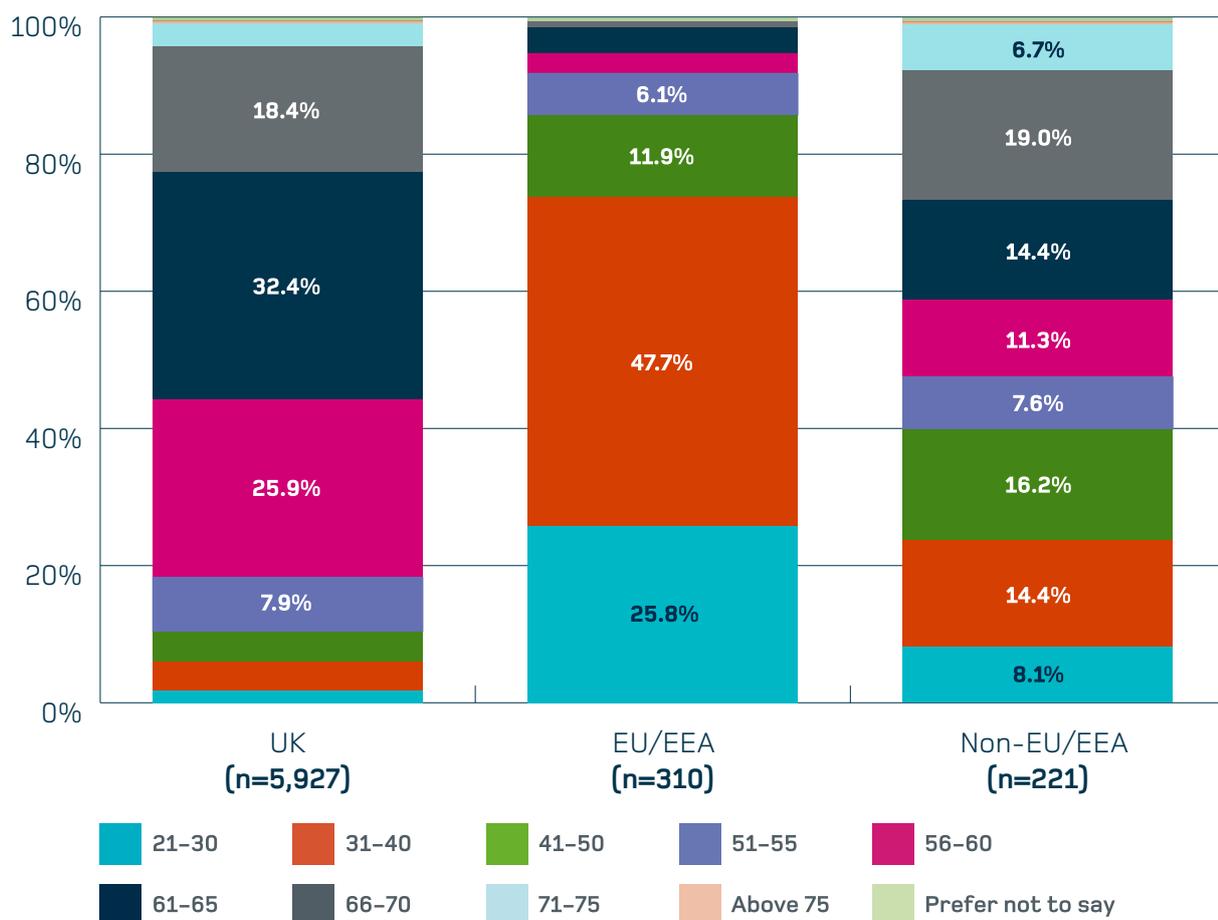


Table 1
Age group of respondents by where they trained

Age	UK	EU/EEA	Non-EU/EEA
21-30	109 (1.8%)	80 (25.8%)	18 (8.1%)
31-40	244 (4.1%)	148 (47.7%)	32 (14.4%)
41-50	271 (4.5%)	37 (11.9%)	36 (16.2%)
51-55	473 (7.9%)	19 (6.1%)	17 (7.6%)
56-60	1,538 (25.9%)	9 (2.9%)	25 (11.3%)
61-65	1,926 (32.4%)	12 (3.8%)	32 (14.4%)
66-70	1,094 (18.4%)	3 (0.9%)	42 (19.0%)
71-75	201 (3.3%)	n/a	15 (6.7%)
Above 75	31 (0.4%)	n/a	1 (0.4%)
Prefer not to say	40 (0.6%)	2 (0.6%)	3 (0.6%)

Section 2

The reasons people left the register

The top reasons for leaving the register are largely similar to last year, that is retirement, change in personal circumstances, too much pressure, the workplace culture, and leaving the UK. With the exception of the Covid-19 pandemic now being the sixth most common reason, up from 18th last year³, there are few other notable changes.

Respondents were asked to select their **top three reasons** for leaving the register from a list of 21 options. The options given were the same as in last year's survey. As people were asked to select up to three reasons for leaving, the total number of responses is greater than the number of respondents.

Table 2 outlines the number of people who selected each reason for leaving from the 21 response options in order of frequency. All figures in the report refer to weighted numbers and percentages, unless otherwise stated.

Table 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	2,771	42.9%
My personal circumstances changed	1,406	21.7%
Too much pressure (stressful, poor mental health)	1,186	18.3%
The workplace culture was having a negative effect on me	844	13.0%
I am leaving or have left the UK	778	12.0%
The Covid-19 pandemic influenced my decision to leave	765	11.8%
I was concerned about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements	644	9.9%
I was disillusioned by the quality of the care provided to patients	525	8.1%
Staffing levels	412	6.3%
Other	352	5.4%
Poor pay and benefits	278	4.3%
I was concerned about my workload	277	4.2%
Brexit has encouraged me to consider working outside the UK	270	4.1%
I no longer work in health and care	192	2.9%
I still work in healthcare but my role no longer requires NMC registration	189	2.9%
Flexible working was not available	128	1.9%
I have not had sufficient opportunity to do continuous professional development	124	1.9%
The work is physically challenging	108	1.6%
Being a nurse or midwife is not what I expected when I trained	51	0.7%
I have returned to education	35	0.5%
I had difficulty in finding suitable employment	30	0.4%
Total respondents	6,458	

The top five reasons for leaving are the same as last year's survey.

- The most frequently selected reason for leaving the register remains **retirement**. Over two in five (42.9 percent) cited this in comparison to 51.6 percent in last year's survey. This is, as in previous years, most commonly cited among people aged 51 and over.
- Over a fifth of people (21.7 percent) cited a **change of personal circumstances** as one of their top three reasons for leaving. This is the second most frequent option this year, the same as last year's survey.
- **Too much pressure (stressful, poor mental health)** is the third most frequently cited reason for leaving this year. Just under one in five people (18.3 percent) selected this as one of their top three reasons for leaving. This was also the third most frequently selected reason for leaving last year.
- The fourth reason, **workplace culture** (added in as an option in last year's survey) was chosen by 13 percent. In last year's survey, it was chosen by 18.1 percent, and was also the fourth most frequently selected reason for leaving.

The three options that were then most frequently selected were:

- 'I am leaving or have left the UK.'
- 'The Covid-19 pandemic influenced my decision to leave.'
- 'I was concerned about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements.'

Leaving the UK and concern about the revalidation requirements were respectively the fifth and sixth most frequently selected reasons for leaving last year. The Covid-19 pandemic only ranked 18th last year, but as noted, this was because most respondents to last year's survey had left the register before the pandemic started, so it was not applicable to them.

Of the 6,458 respondents, 2,345 (36.3 percent) provided additional information in free text comments (with further details provided below) that are mainly focused on the following themes in order from most to least mentioned:

- retirement
- the Covid-19 pandemic
- workplace culture
- changes in personal circumstances
- staffing levels
- leaving the UK.

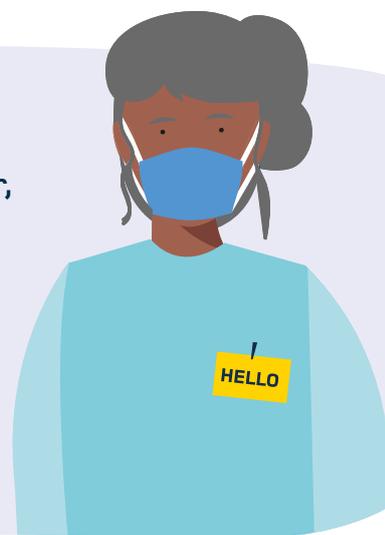
2.1 Retirement

As well as being the most frequently selected reason for leaving the register, just over a third of people who gave further information in the free text comments mentioned retirement (809 people or 34 percent). Of these respondents, 613 (75.8 percent) had selected retirement as one of their top three reasons for leaving the register.

Some of the reasons given by respondents for retirement include feeling that they had **no other option due to the pressure, stress** and **unrealistic workload** expected of them (159; 6.7 percent of all additional comments), **reaching an appropriate retirement age** (145; 6.2 percent), and **reaching a natural conclusion to their careers** (104; 4.4 percent). Some also felt **pressured into an early retirement due to the Covid-19 pandemic**, feeling that they, or their families, were too vulnerable, and they wished to retire to be with their loved ones during times of uncertainty or bereavement (164; 7 percent).

“I retired at 60 and that is something I had planned to do about two years earlier. As I was getting older, I didn’t feel I could keep up with the challenges of working in such a demanding environment. I loved my 41.5 years in the NHS and now I am loving my retirement. I feel I thoroughly deserve it.”

Nurse, aged 61–65, England,
adult and general care nursing



Additional reasons for retirement include: health problems such as injury, mental health issues or illness (88; 3.7 percent) and becoming a primary carer of a family member (86; 3.7 percent).

2.2 Covid-19 pandemic

Slightly less than a quarter of respondents who provided additional comments (544 comments; 23.2 percent) refer to the Covid-19 pandemic as being at least partially responsible for them leaving the register. Of these respondents, 192 (35.3 percent) had selected Covid-19 as one of their top three reasons for leaving the register.

The key themes noted by respondents in additional comments include an increase in **caring responsibilities** such as young children, elderly relatives, partners etc. (109; 4.6 percent of all additional comments), concern for their **safety returning to work** (75; 3.2 percent), an **inability to meet revalidation criteria** due to the pandemic, despite the three month extension offered by us (64; 2.7 percent), and pressure caused by the **Covid-19 vaccine mandate**⁴ (29; 1.2 percent). These themes are discussed in more detail in section 4.

“I had family abroad and because of the pandemic I was afraid that I was not close enough to them. I was afraid also that, because they are old, they would pass away when I’m not with them. I have two children...it is difficult in the UK with childcare when there is no help from parents. When the pandemic settles down, I would be more happy to re-join the register then because at least I would know that my family is safe and I can concentrate on my career.”

Nurse, aged 31–40, In the EU/EEA,
adult and general care nursing



⁴ The Covid-19 vaccine mandate was introduced for care home workers (unless exempt) in England from November 2021. The mandate was intended to be extended to frontline health and social care workers in England from April 2022 but was revoked for all groups on 31 January 2022.

2.3 Workplace culture

Just over one fifth of people providing further comment (499 or 21.3 percent of all comments) said that they left the register due to the workplace culture. This could be **problems with employers, organisational policies, managers, or colleagues**.

They noted that such conditions were highly detrimental to mental health, and they left due to **feeling unappreciated and under too much pressure**, which caused high levels of unnecessary associated stress (296; 12.6 percent of total additional comments).

“Pressure at work and the change of working practice did not allow me to provide the care I wanted to give. Covid restrictions compounded this. I was becoming stressed, tired and not sleeping well. Changes to workplace management structure also meant I did not feel I was listened to in the way I had previously been.”

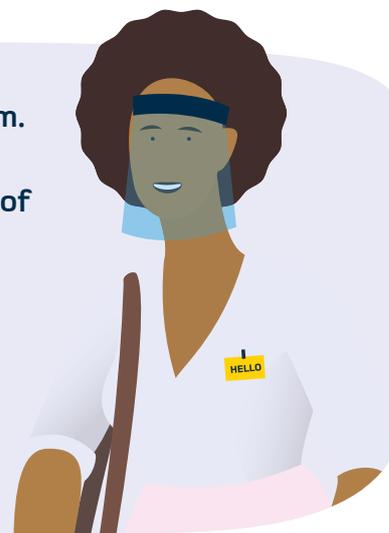
Nurse, aged 61–65, England,
general practice nursing



A number of respondents (113; 4.8 percent) described the environment as toxic, and directly noted that **bullying in the workplace** was a reason for their leaving.

“I was working within a Community Mental Health Team. A Social Worker joined the team as the ‘integrated Team Manager’ and within 18 months the entire team of nurses and social workers had left due to her bullying and lack of compassion for patients. I was the last to leave but had to after the stress resulted in me collapsing in work.”

Nurse, aged 61–65, Wales,
mental health nursing



2.4 Changes in personal circumstances

Approximately a fifth (465 or 19.8 percent) of those providing comments note that they had left the register due to a change in their personal circumstances. Some (191; 8.1 percent of total additional comments) noted that this was due to **illness** or disease either impacting themselves or a family member. They said that they **felt forced to leave their position either through concern over their own, or their family members', wellbeing, or through the belief that they would no longer meet revalidation requirements**, due to time off work, missing the revalidation deadline because of caring commitments or the inability to complete certain tasks whilst ill.

I took early retirement as I developed a serious medical issue...and was struggling to maintain my full-time commitment as a senior nurse...I needed a break to see how my medical condition progressed and may return to nursing in a couple of years. Unfortunately, this means that I would not be able to meet requirements for current revalidation, so had no option other than leave the register.

Nurse, aged 61-65, Wales,
mental health nursing

Additional respondents noted that they left the register due to child minding responsibilities (91, 3.9 percent), bereavement (35; 1.5 percent) or debilitating injuries (18; 0.8 percent).

2.5 Staffing levels

Around one in six respondents (389 comments, 16.6 percent) providing additional comments believed that the health and care sector, particularly within the NHS, is greatly understaffed, which directly contributes to a negative workplace environment in terms of **overworking, too much pressure on individuals, and unreasonably long shifts**. Of these respondents commenting on this, 324 (83.2 percent) worked in the NHS.

The respondents attributed their choice of leaving the register to **poor staffing management**, and **overall staff shortages**. They noted that the **ratio of nurses to patients and people using services was borderline unsafe**, both in terms of higher chance of malpractice, and unreachable workload expectations for the nurse.

Such pressures were noted by 58 respondents (2.5 percent) to be damaging to mental and physical health, and overall, they believe there to be a clear lack of input or driven change from the leading management teams to support this.

"I enjoyed my job as a midwife but increased demands, lack of staff, increased admin expectation and lack of support was adversely affecting my health. I have concerns for the newly qualified midwives and feel they will "burn out" very quickly despite being very motivated."

Nurse, Midwife, aged 66-70, England,
midwifery

2.6 Leaving the UK

Leaving, or not currently residing in, the UK was mentioned by 123 respondents (5.2 percent) commenting as a partial reason for leaving the register. These respondents either noted they were **not able to return to the UK as a result of the pandemic, had moved away from the UK, found the revalidation process too hard to complete in another country**, or that they **preferred the work conditions in other countries** and didn't wish to be registered within the UK.

"I have worked outside the UK since 1996 and it is becoming increasingly hard to find an NMC registered nurse to help with the revalidation process... There is also the cost associated with maintaining registration in both countries. After a long process I decided to let my UK registration lapse, but I [have] not left the profession, I'm just working in another country."

Nurse, aged 41-50, Outside the EU/EEA,
Quality and Safety

2.7 Other comments

Other comments made by respondents about their reasons for leaving include the following.

Low pay concerns were highlighted by 137 (5.8 percent) respondents. The primary issue being that they believe nurses don't receive a high enough pay for the hours they work. Several of these respondents noted that salary and pay conditions are significantly better in Australia, commenting that their NHS salary didn't reflect the high stress environment in which they worked.

Being unable to meet the revalidation criteria was noted by 110 (4.7 percent) respondents in additional comments as being a primary reason for leaving the register. The reasons given for not meeting the requirements include: becoming a parent or carer of a child, needing to care for elderly relatives or family members, not being able to complete the required number of hours during the pandemic due to restrictions, not being mentally or physically able to complete the revalidation process, and not being able to pay the registration fee for financial reasons or for monetary issues associated with Covid-19.

"Having not had a pay rise for the last ten years, it is no wonder that nurses are leaving the profession... Nurses are so undervalued. Why are nurses on the bottom of the pay scales?"

Nurse, aged 61-65, Scotland,
adult and general care nursing

"I would like to have continued working, and I still miss it, but because of the pandemic, together with caring responsibilities, it meant I was unable to fulfil the revalidation requirements."

Nurse, aged 66-70, England,
adult and general care nursing

Section 3

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic had either 'some' or a 'strong' influence on 36.5 percent of respondents choosing to leave the register.

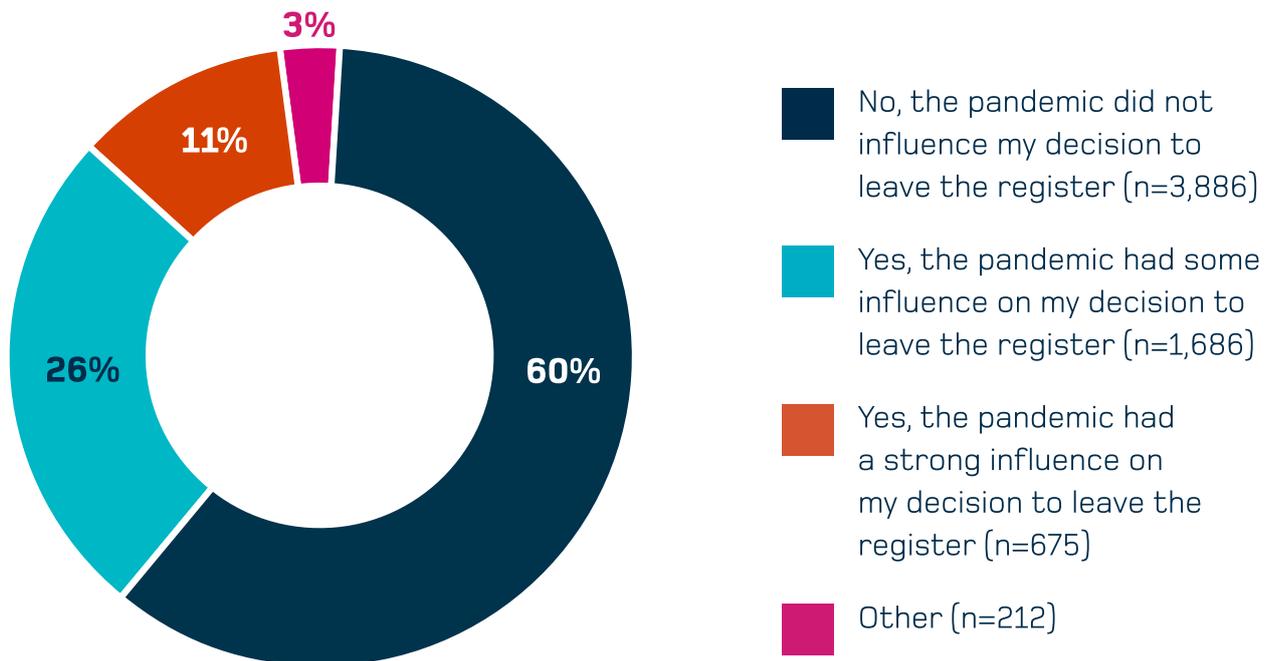
The main themes of the impact of the pandemic were health concerns about contracting Covid-19, spreading the virus to other people, changed work environment and duties, and increased workload and stress in combination with a lack of staff. The vast majority (80.5 percent) said they hadn't deferred leaving the register due to the pandemic.

3.1 Influence on leaving the register

Leavers were asked whether their decision to leave the register was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. **Three in five said the pandemic hadn't influenced their decision to leave** (3,886 people or 60.1 percent), while 26.1 percent (1,686 people) claimed it had had 'some' influence on their decision and 10.4 percent (675 people) said it had had a 'strong' influence on their decision to leave (Figure 2).

Figure 2

The Covid-19 pandemic's impact on respondents' decision to leave the register



Base: 6,458 respondents

Respondents who said that the pandemic had had 'some' or a 'strong' influence on their decision to leave the register (36.5 percent or 2,361 people) were asked to provide comment on what about their experience had had a particular impact on that decision.

There were 2,159 substantive comments received and the following themes emerged, in order from most to least frequently mentioned:

- Health and safety concerns
- Increased workload, lack of staff, feeling pressured
- Changes to work environment and duties
- Feeling unsupported and unappreciated
- Personal reasons
- Health issues
- Retirement
- Disagreement with the handling of the pandemic.

People commonly cited a multiple number of these reasons, as demonstrated in the sub-sections below.

3.1.1 Health and safety concerns

Almost one in three respondents (30.2 percent of those commenting or 653 people) said that **health and safety concerns relating to the Covid-19 pandemic and availability of PPE equipment** particularly influenced their decision to leave the register. That included worrying about their own health due to age, underlying conditions or medical history; distress about their family members' health due to their vulnerability; and in some cases, concerns about infecting patients and people using services and colleagues and health implications for them. Safety concerns were mainly caused by the lack of PPE, questionable quality of available PPE, and changes in practices and standards introduced to accommodate the demands of the pandemic.

“I can’t really eloquently explain the adjustment required to the realisation that I was expected to join a “frontline” in response to an unknown medical enemy when my entire family were sent home to isolate. Then my utter disbelief at the lack of adequate PPE and the unrealistic expectations of staff. The poor management locally (although of little surprise).”

Nurse, aged 56-60, England,
adult and general care nursing



3.1.2 Increased workload, lack of staff and feeling pressured

A similar proportion of those commenting (28.3 percent, 613 people) said that an **increased workload, progressively stressful work and staff shortages** influenced their decision to leave the register. Respondents largely commented how colleagues being off sick impacted on increasing their own workload. In parallel, the expectations of patients and people using services and those of respondents' leadership teams were noted to be higher, triggering stress, anxiety, and exhaustion among staff.

"It was not the virus itself, it was the working conditions it led to. Regularly caring for 2, 3, 4 women who should have been 1-2-1 was terrifying and exhausting. Wearing the same mask all day because there were no others, begging for sterile gowns for crash sections, holding pee in all day because you are so short staffed, the list goes on."

Nurse, Midwife, aged 31-40, England,
midwifery

3.1.3 Changes to work environment and duties

Approximately 18.4 percent (398) of comments were related to changes that the pandemic brought to respondents' work duties and environment, e.g. **moving between different hospitals or wards, being redeployed, or working remotely without face to face contact with patients and people using services and colleagues.**

Respondents reported that they didn't feel like they were providing good care while working remotely and that experience for them overall wasn't pleasant. Others were unhappy with changing locations of work and being redeployed largely because they felt inexperienced, untrained and such changes were taking place with very short notice which was causing additional stress.

"In a community setting I was expected to assess mothers, children, and babies by phone contact which I did not feel was acceptable. I was expected to complete records stating I had done this and was hugely concerned regarding any comeback from this was all done with my registration. It was all well and good, the Trust stating they would back anyone of us should something happen, but I felt very uneasy and unhappy regarding this."

Nurse, SCPHN, aged 61-65, England,
health visiting



3.1.4 Feeling unsupported and unappreciated

Around 14 percent (303) of those commenting said that they felt **unsupported, devalued, and unappreciated by their managers, wider teams, NHS, or government.** This was reported across the groups of respondents who had different experiences of work during the pandemic. It was mentioned by nurses in general practice surgeries, by respondents working in hospitals, by those working remotely, and by respondents in managerial positions.

“I worked in GP surgery, where the doctors hid behind closed doors, and the nurses provided the front-line services, seeing patients face to face, in fully booked clinics. Public criticism of GPs ignored the fact the nurses were working and at risk, with poor PPE and a lack of support from management. The pandemic reporting focused mainly on hospitals when primary care was struggling just as much.”

Nurse, aged 56-60, Scotland,
general practice nursing

3.1.5 Personal reasons

Some 11.6 percent (252) of those commenting said that due to personal reasons, with the **pandemic impacting on their personal/family life**, they decided to leave the register. This included illness of family members, caring responsibilities, and re-evaluating priorities in life.

“I care for my elderly extremely vulnerable Mother. I felt I was handing her a death sentence every day when I returned home!”

Nurse, aged 56-60, England,
adult and general care nursing

3.1.6 Health issues

Approximately 11.3 percent (246) of those commenting reported that they left the register due to their own health issues. This included various **physical and mental health problems** respondents either had prior to the pandemic or developed since.

“I had long Covid. Between that and the lockdown, I was confined to my bedroom for over eight months. My mental and physical health suffered greatly. My family from the US couldn’t visit. I had no support.”

Nurse, aged 41-50, England,
adult and general care nursing

3.1.7 Retirement

Around 7.6 percent (166) commented that they had already retired or were close to **retirement age**, and that the **pandemic encouraged them to leave the register**. This reason was often mentioned **in combination with other factors including health and safety concerns, increased workload, and lack of support**. There was approximately an equal split of respondents who said they had already retired and returned to work during the pandemic, and those who had retired earlier than planned due to the pandemic.

“Working remotely and not seeing people, unable to visit families everything was so different and away from the things I had always enjoyed most about my work. I was retirement age and had had some health issues as well as being a carer for my son.”

Nurse, SCPHN, aged 66-70, England,
health visiting



3.1.8 Disagreement with the handling of the pandemic

Around 6.0 percent (131) of those commenting expressed their **disagreement with the management of the Covid-19 pandemic** by the **NHS or the government** as reasons for leaving the register. This included disapproval of rules and regulations put in place and particularly those in care homes and mandatory Covid-19 vaccines for health and care staff. The latter has since been revoked and that was acknowledged by some respondents, however they reported this regulation influencing their decision to leave the register.

“The constant changes introduced in care homes that severely affected resident wellbeing, particularly around visiting. Also the compulsory vaccine program for carers meant so many excellent staff had to leave.”

Nurse, aged 56-60, England,
social care

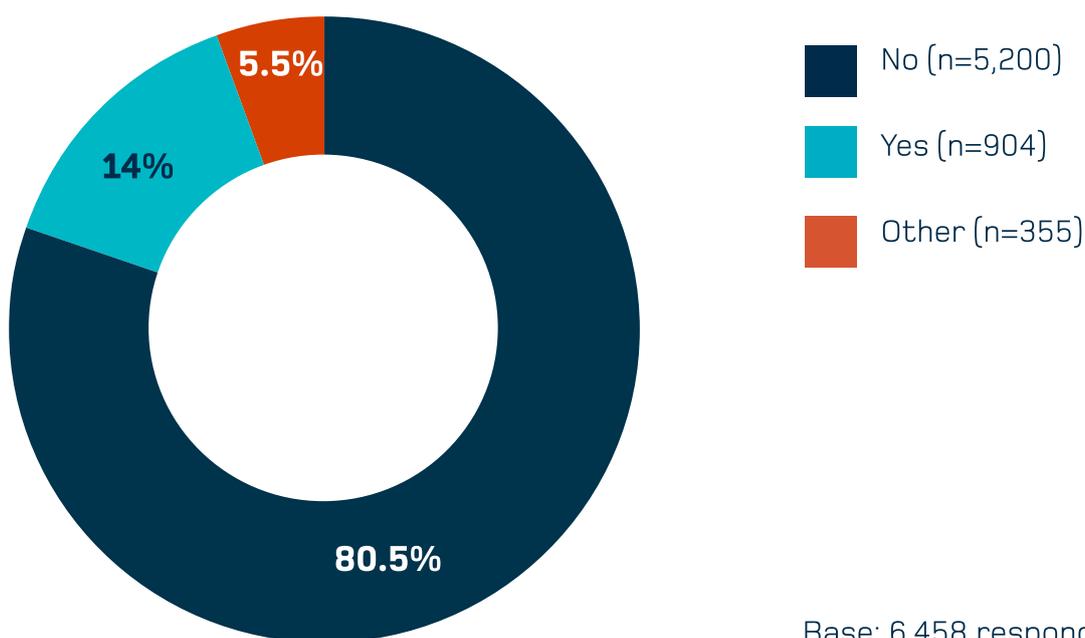


3.2 Deferring leaving the register due to the Covid-19 pandemic

All respondents were also asked whether they had deferred leaving the register due to the Covid-19 pandemic. **The vast majority (80.5 percent or 5,200 people) said that they hadn't deferred leaving the register due to the pandemic.** Some 14 percent (904) said they had deferred their decision to leave as the result of the pandemic, and 5.5 percent (355) chose 'Other' as their response option. All respondents were then given the chance to provide further comment.

Figure 3

Respondents deferring leaving the register due to the pandemic



There were 661 substantive comments received to this question. The largest group of those (316, or 47.8 percent) were from people who chose 'Other', followed by 174 (26.3 percent) comments from those who answered 'No' and 171 (25.8 percent) comments from people who selected 'Yes'.

The main themes that emerged across the board, in order from most to least frequently mentioned, are listed here:

- retirement
- decision to leave the register and/or the UK was made before the pandemic
- not meeting the requirements to stay on the register
- health reasons
- family or personal reasons
- Covid-19 partly deferred their leaving the register
- renewing registration after leaving the register
- high workload and stress.

These factors were often combined in the comments with people often citing multiple reasons.

Open ended comments around deferral of retirement were analysed across all respondents who answered regardless of whether they did or didn't defer. Due to small sample sizes we haven't broken down comment themes by those selecting Yes/No/Other and as such percentages quoted reflect respondents sharing details on their decision. However, there were some differences between those who commented, for example respondents who answered 'Yes' unsurprisingly said that Covid-19 partly deferred them from leaving the register and some noted renewing their registration after leaving the register. Those who answered 'No' or 'Other' largely cited retirement and that their decision to leave was made before the pandemic. Respondents who answered 'Other' also commented on not meeting the requirements to stay on the register.

Just over one in five (146 people or 22 percent) commented that they retired before the pandemic or during the pandemic for various reasons including reaching retirement age, health, and family reasons.

"I retired during the pandemic then worked through the bank for the same team for just over a year before leaving the register."

Nurse, Aged 61-65, England,
adult and general care nursing



Some 13.9 percent (92 comments) said that they had planned to leave the register before the pandemic, for example due to retirement plans, plans to move to another country, or a planned career change.

"I retired before the pandemic in December 2019 although I couldn't face deregistration for another year after that. I have been a theatre scrub nurse almost my whole career. When the pandemic came I offered to help by going back to my previous job but they wanted me to commit to too many hours which I couldn't do because of other family caring commitments."

Nurse, Aged 61-65, England,
adult and general care nursing



Around 12.5 percent (83) of those commenting said they didn't meet the requirements to remain on the register. That was because of a lack of hours worked, lack of training completed, being late with the renewal, or financial reasons.

"I left the NHS to work as a volunteer in... I stayed on the register as I wished to continue to serve... The pandemic meant that I couldn't meet the required hours of work as the service was suspended and so I left."

Nurse, Aged 61-65, Outside the EU/EEA,
adult and general care nursing

A similar proportion (12.1 percent or 80 people) said that they left the register due to health concerns. That included physical or mental health problems that started either before or during the pandemic, and in some cases there were worries about working in changed conditions due to Covid-19 and the possible implications on personal and family members' health.

"I was retired due to illness I had already been on sick leave just short of 12 months. I was due to revalidate in Sept 2021 so wouldn't have had enough practice hours in. I did ask if I could freeze my subscription due to my situation as my mobility could improve over time and get back to working however when I asked the person I spoke to said this wasn't an option. I was really sad to go as I worked really hard progressing from a Band 2 to B3, B4 then B5 in my 50's."

Nurse, Aged 61-65, England,
general practice nursing



Approximately one in ten respondents (9.6 percent or 64 people) commented on their family or personal situation that contributed most to their decision to leave the register. This reason was often mentioned in combination with retirement or leaving the UK.

"Over a period of time, I came to the decision that even though I loved my job and the work I was involved with, the pandemic had highlighted how I felt about my self-worth. It's not something I had ever really given much thought to as I always felt confident in my worth and contribution to my job and society in general."

Nurse, Aged 56-60, England,
adult and general care nursing



Some 8.9 percent (59 people) of those commenting said that the pandemic partly led to them deferring leaving the register. One of the most frequently cited factors was a feeling of a duty of responsibility to support the public throughout the pandemic.

“Perhaps a little, as whilst I was working remotely this wasn’t as physically demanding and the other specialist nurses were redeployed to Covid wards. Without myself working remotely our stoma service would have been completely suspended until they returned.”

Nurse, Aged 41-50, England,
adult and general care nursing



Around 7.8 percent (52) of those commenting reported renewing their registration in light of the pandemic and wanting to help with their highly sought knowledge and experience.

“Renewed twice after retiring. The first time in case I change my mind about working the second time because I had signed up for track and trace.”

Nurse, Aged 61-65, England,
public health



Section 4

Differences between respondents

Many people trained in the UK said they were retiring. Those who had trained in the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA said they were ‘leaving or had left the UK’ or cited the Covid-19 pandemic.

Older respondents, aged 51 and over, most frequently left because they were retiring or there was too much pressure. Those aged 21-50 most commonly cited leaving the UK. Generally, older groups were more impacted by Covid-19 in their decision to leave.

Respondents who had most recently worked in midwifery, and in mental health, were more frequently leaving because of too much pressure. Changes in personal circumstances were most commonly cited by those who worked in children’s and neo-natal nursing.

Leavers who most recently worked in the NHS were significantly more likely to select retirement or too much pressure as a reason for leaving.

4.1 Reasons for leaving by where people had trained

The majority of respondents (5,928 respondents; 91.7 percent) trained within the UK, with a smaller number having trained within the EU/EEA (310 respondents; 4.8 percent) or outside the EU/EEA (221 respondents; 3.4 percent). Of the respondents who provided additional comments on the reasons they left the register, 2,153 trained in the UK, 93 trained within the EU/EEA, and 103 trained outside the EU/EEA.

Tables 3 to 5 show the top five reasons for leaving the register by where respondents had trained. The numbers and percentages in the tables below are based on the weighted sample.

Table 3

The top five reasons selected by people trained in the UK

Reason	Number of UK respondents citing this as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of UK respondents citing this as a top three reason for leaving
I have retired	2,683	49.3%
My personal circumstances changed	1,263	23.2%
Too much pressure (stressful, poor mental health)	1,097	20.1%
The workplace culture was having a negative effect on me	779	14.3%
The Covid-19 pandemic influenced my decision to leave	628	11.5%

Table 4**The top five reasons selected by people trained in the EU/EEA**

Reason	Number of EU/EEA respondents citing this as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of EU/EEA respondents citing this as a top three reason for leaving
I am leaving or have left the UK	401	66.6%
Brexit has encouraged me to consider working outside the UK	231	38.3%
The Covid-19 pandemic influenced my decision to leave	77	12.7%
My personal circumstances changed	62	10.2%
Too much pressure (stressful, poor mental health)	53	8.8%

Table 5**The top five reasons selected by people trained outside of the EU/EEA**

Reason	Number of outside the EU/EEA respondents citing this as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of outside the EU/EEA respondents citing this as a top three reason for leaving
I am leaving or have left the UK	151	35.5%
My personal circumstances changed	80	18.8%
I have retired	78	18.3%
The Covid-19 pandemic influenced my decision to leave	60	14.1%
Poor pay and benefits	54	12.7%

Similarly to last year, for people who had trained in the UK, retirement is by far the most common reason for leaving the register (49.3 percent or 2,683 of 5,432 respondents).

UK registrant leavers were significantly more likely to say that they were retiring than leavers from outside the EU/EEA (18.3 percent, 78 of 425 respondents) or EU/EEA registrant leavers (1.6 percent, 10 of 602 respondents). This may reflect the difference in the age profile between these three groups (see Figure 1). In the additional comments, retirement was mentioned notably more often by those who had trained in the UK (36.7 percent, 792 of 2,153 people), than by those from outside the EU/EEA (16.5 percent, 17 of 103 respondents) and from the EU/EEA (1 percent, one of 93 respondents).

Leaving or having left the UK is the most common reason for both people who trained in the EU/EEA (66.6 percent, 401 of 602 respondents) and outside the EU/EEA (35.5 percent, 151 of 425 leavers). In the free text comments, this reason is mentioned far more often by former registrants from the EU/EEA (39.7 percent, 37 of 93 people) and outside the EU/EEA (29.1 percent, 30 of 103) than by those from the UK (2.6 percent, 57 of 2,153). This trend and proportions of respondents citing leaving the UK is similar to last year.

My personal circumstances changed is the second most common reason for leaving for both UK and outside the EU/EEA registrants, with 23.2 percent (1,263 of 5,432) and 18.8 percent (80 of 425) respectively citing this. It's cited significantly less by EU/EEA leavers (10.2 percent or 62 of 602). There are no notable differences between sub-groups in the proportions who gave a free text response about this reason.

Brexit is the second most frequently selected reason for leaving by people trained in the EU/EEA (38.3 percent, 231 of 602). Only 1.4 percent (six of 425) of those trained outside the EU/EEA and 0.6 percent (34 of 5,432) of respondents trained in the UK have selected Brexit as their top reason for leaving. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is a significant difference between EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA registrants and between EU/EEA and UK registrants. This is similar to last year's survey.

The Covid-19 pandemic ranked high for each of the three groups, however, there is no significant difference evident between them, with 14.1 percent (60 of 425) of outside the EU/EEA registrants citing it as their top reason for leaving, followed by 12.7 percent (77 of 602) of EU/EEA registrants, and 11.5 percent (628 of 5,432) UK respondents. In the free text comments, the pandemic was most commonly mentioned by UK-trained respondents (24.8 percent, 536 of 2,153), which is slightly higher than the proportion of comments from outside the EU/EEA trained respondents (18.4 percent, 19 of 103), and somewhat more than the EU/EEA respondents (12.9 percent, 12 of 93).

Too much pressure was one of the top five reasons for leaving for UK and EU/EEA trained respondents, with 20.1 percent (1,097 of 5,432) and 8.8 percent (53 of 602) respectively selecting it. For people trained outside the EU/EEA, it ranked slightly lower – 8.7 percent or 37 of 425 citing it. There's significant difference between UK and non-UK trained registrants, suggesting that the UK group may feel more pressured and that's impacting their decision to leave. Too much workplace pressure or stress was quoted more frequently in additional comments by people who trained in the UK (288; 13.4 percent), compared to people who trained in the EU/EEA (7; 7.7 percent) or outside the EU/EEA (4; 4 percent).

The workplace culture was selected commonly by UK registrants (14.3 percent, 779 of 5,432). It was cited in notably lower proportions by outside the EU/EEA (7.5 percent, 32 of 425 people) and EU/EEA (5.4 percent, 33 of 602) respondents. This distinction is reflected in free text comments with the workplace culture most frequently mentioned by those who trained within the UK (23.7 percent, 511 of 2,153 comments) in comparison to those who trained in the EU/EEA (9.6 percent, 9 of 93) or outside the EU/EEA (8.7 percent, 9 of 103).

Poor pay and benefits ranks higher for outside the EU/EEA registrants (12.7 percent, 54 of 425) compared with EU/EEA (8.1 percent, 49 of 602) and UK (3.2 percent, 175 of 5,432) respondents.

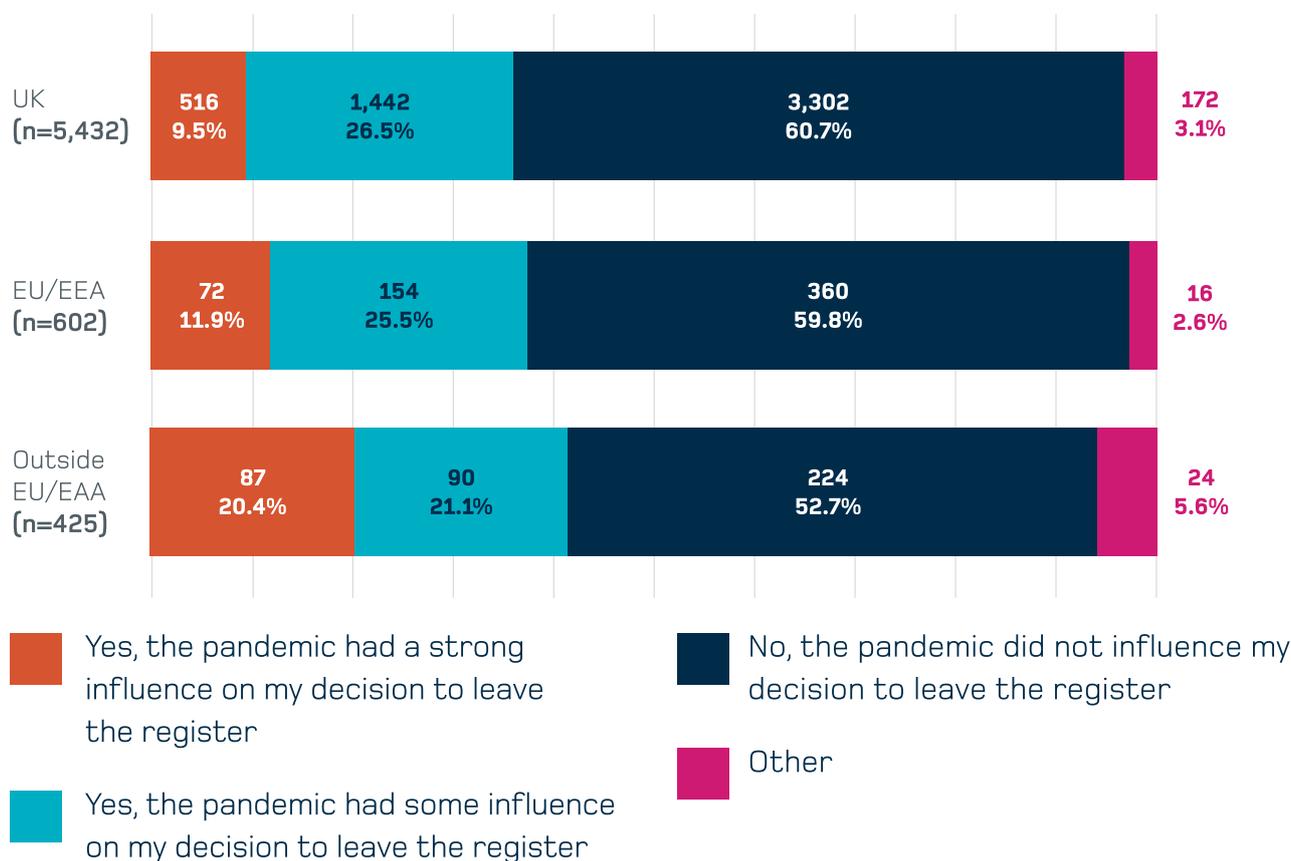
Disillusioned by the quality of the care provided was mentioned more frequently by UK-trained people (9.2 percent, 503 of 5,432) than by those trained in the EU/EEA (2.3 percent, 14 of 602) and outside the EU/EEA (2.1 percent, nine of 425).

4.1.1 The impact of Covid-19 by where respondents had trained

There was a **significant difference** between outside the EU/EEA trained respondents (20.4 percent or 87 of 425) compared with those who trained in the EU/EEA (11.9 percent, 72 of 602) and in the UK (9.4 percent, 516 of 5,432) **when affirming whether the Covid-19 pandemic strongly influenced their decision to leave.**

In the same vein, there's a similar difference between UK (60.7 percent, or 3,302 of 5,432) and EU/EEA registrants (59.8 percent, 360 of 602) in comparison to those trained outside the EU/EEA (52.7 percent, 224 of 425) who said that the pandemic didn't influence their decision to leave.

Figure 4
The impact of Covid-19 by country of training



In free text comments following this question, the most notable difference was in proportions of respondents citing leaving the UK, with 33.3 percent (24 of 72) EU/EEA trained people mentioning this, 19.5 percent (18 of 92) of outside the EU/EEA registrants and 0.8 percent (16 of 1,995) UK registrants. People from outside the UK were more likely to be leaving the UK due to the pandemic.

In the question about deferring leaving the register due to the pandemic, there were no noteworthy differences between the three groups of respondents.

4.2 Reasons for leaving by country of practice

Retirement was given as a top reason for leaving by a significantly higher proportion of people who had practised in the UK than those who had practised outside the UK.

Table 6

Respondents by country of practice citing retirement as a top three reason for leaving

Country respondents most recently had practised in	Number of respondents citing retirement as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing retirement as a top three reason for leaving
England	2,202 of 5,029	43.7%
Scotland	294 of 611	48.1%
Wales	167 of 352	47.4%
Northern Ireland	84 of 158	53.1%
EU/EEA	4 of 133	3.0%
Outside the EU/EEA	16 of 159	10.0%

This may reflect the different age breakdowns by country of practice. Respondents who had most recently practised in the UK had the highest proportions of people who were aged 51 and over (England, 74.3 percent; Scotland, 81.5 percent; Wales, 84.6 percent; Northern Ireland, 82.9 percent) compared to those who had practised outside the EU/EEA (45.2 percent) and those who had practised in the EU/EEA (20.3 percent).

Within the UK, more people in England were likely to leave the register for reasons other than retirement. The retirement was slightly more commonly selected by respondents from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

These findings align with the free text comments for retirement. Retirement was mentioned as a reason for leaving far more often in the free text comments by registrants who worked in England (34.9 percent, 645 of 1,843), Scotland (40 percent, 92 of 230), Wales (40.4 percent, 49 of 121), or Northern Ireland (36.1 percent, 17 of 47) than by those who were working outside the EU/EEA (9.6 percent, six of 62) or in the EU/EEA (3.1 percent, one of 32) prior to leaving.

Changed personal circumstances was a top reason for leaving for a significantly greater number of respondents who practised in the UK compared to those who practised in the EU/EEA or outside the EU/EEA.

Table 7

Respondents by country of practice citing changed personal circumstances as a top three reason for leaving

Country respondents most recently had practised in	Number of respondents citing change in personal circumstances as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing change in personal circumstances as a top three reason for leaving
England	1,115 of 5,029	22.1%
Scotland	136 of 611	22.2%
Wales	83 of 352	23.5%
Northern Ireland	51 of 158	32.2%
EU/EEA	9 of 133	6.7%
Outside the EU/EEA	11 of 159	6.9%

Notably, within the UK, this reason was the most commonly cited by people who practised in Northern Ireland compared to other nations.

These findings are reflected in the numbers of free text comments, with the greatest frequency of mentioning changed personal circumstances coming from respondents who practised in Northern Ireland (21.2 percent, ten of 47) and the smallest number of comments related to this reason coming from outside the EU/EEA respondents (8.0 percent, five of 62).

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

Table 8**Respondents by country of practice citing too much pressure as a top three reason for leaving**

Country respondents most recently had practised in	Number of respondents citing too much pressure as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing too much pressure as a top three reason for leaving
England	954 of 5,029	18.9%
Scotland	122 of 611	19.9%
Wales	65 of 352	18.4%
Northern Ireland	32 of 158	20.2%
EU/EEA	4 of 133	3.7%
Outside the EU/EEA	6 of 159	3.7%

Likewise, in the free text comments, this reason was mentioned more by people who worked in England (12.5 percent), Scotland (19.5 percent), Northern Ireland (10.4 percent) and Wales (12 percent) compared to those who had worked in non-EU/EEA countries (3.2 percent).

People who had practised outside the UK, and specifically in the EU/EEA, prior to leaving the register have, as might be expected, cited **leaving the UK** in notably higher proportions compared to those who had worked in the UK countries.

Table 9**Respondents by country of practice citing leaving the UK as a top three reason for leaving**

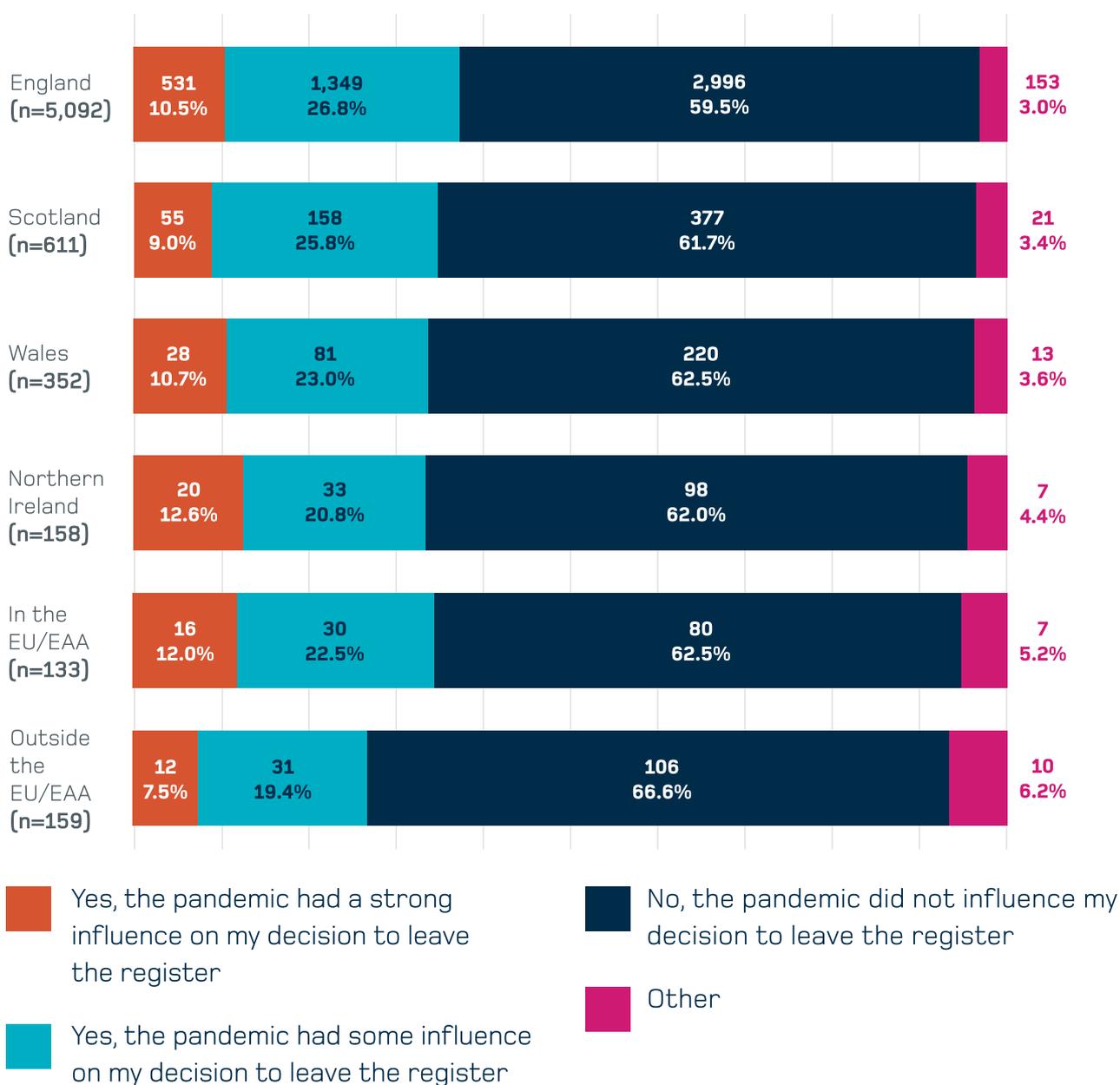
Country respondents most recently had practised in	Number of respondents citing leaving the UK as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing leaving the UK as a top three reason for leaving
England	558 of 5,029	11.0%
Scotland	22 of 611	3.6%
Wales	16 of 352	4.5%
Northern Ireland	3 of 158	1.8%
EU/EEA	90 of 133	67.6%
Outside the EU/EEA	86 of 159	54.0%

Similarly, in the free text comments, leaving the UK was mentioned more by people who worked in the EU/EEA (45.5 percent) or in a non-EU/EEA country (46 percent) compared to England (4 percent), Scotland (1.2 percent), Wales (3.3 percent) and Northern Ireland (6.3 percent).

4.2.1 The impact of Covid-19 by country of practice

The two groups most commonly reporting Covid-19 having a 'strong' influence on their decision to leave were respondents who had practised in Northern Ireland (12.6 percent, 20 of 158) and in the EU/EEA (12 percent, 16 of 133). Among those who said that the pandemic had 'some' impact on their decision to leave, the majority had practised in England (26.8, or 1,349 of 5,029) and in Scotland (25.8 percent, 158 of 611). The group that had the highest proportion which said that Covid-19 didn't influence their decision to leave, were respondents who practised outside the EU/EEA (66.6 percent, 106 of 159). Those who had practised in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the EU/EEA provided answers in a similar range, from 59.5 percent to 62.5 percent. These findings are potentially at odds with the findings in 4.1.1 where we found people who had trained outside the EU/EEA were more likely to leave.

Figure 5
The impact of Covid-19 by country of practice



In terms of **deferring leaving the register because of the pandemic**, the groups most frequently confirming doing this were those who had practised in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland (each around 14 percent of respondents). Conversely, people who practised in Wales (86.6 percent, 305 of 352) said they didn't defer leaving the register in significantly higher proportions than those practising in the EU/EEA, Northern Ireland, Scotland and England (each in range from 75.1 percent to 80.3 percent). Other groups who notably reported not deferring leaving the register because of the pandemic were respondents practising outside the EU/EEA (84.2 percent, 134 of 159).

There were no notable differences in the free text comments about the impact of Covid-19.

4.3 Reasons for leaving by age group

As shown in Figure 1, the age groups differed widely between UK-trained leavers, EU/EEA leavers and leavers from outside the EU/EEA .

People aged over 50 cited **retirement** as one of their top three reasons for leaving far more often than those under 50.

Table 10
Respondents aged 51 and above citing retirement as a top three reason for leaving

Respondents age group	Number of respondents citing retirement as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing retirement as a top three reason for leaving
Age 51-55	138 of 487	28.3%
Age 56-60	769 of 1,382	55.6%
Age 61-65	934 of 1,567	59.6%
Age 66-70	733 of 1,035	70.8%
Age 71-75	137 of 236	58.0%
Age above 75	34 of 64	53.1%

This shows that a high proportion of 51-60 year olds cite retirement as a reason for leaving, indicating that a fair proportion are retiring earlier than state pension age. As noted in the previous section, the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have encouraged some respondents to retire earlier than planned, so that may at least partially explain the higher rates of retirements among people aged 51-60.

As perhaps expected, retirement is mentioned more in additional comments by respondents who are over 50 (797; 39.4 percent of additional comments, in comparison to 9; 2.7 percent for under 50-year-olds).

Leaving the UK is the most frequently selected reason for the younger age groups for leavers (aged 21-50). The proportion of respondents citing leaving the UK as a reason for leaving the register is demonstrated in the below table.

Table 11**Respondents by age group citing leaving the UK as a top three reason for leaving**

Respondents age group	Number of respondents citing leaving the UK as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing leaving the UK as a top three reason for leaving
Age 21-30	224 of 435	51.4%
Age 31-40	287 of 706	40.6%
Age 41-50	152 of 547	27.7%
Age above 50	115 of 4,771	2.4%

Likewise, in the free text comments, leaving the UK is primarily noted by people under the age of 50 (63; 18.9 percent), in comparison to people aged above 50 (62; 3.1 percent). The age group who mentioned this most frequently is aged 21-30 (9; 20 percent).

Changes in personal circumstances was one of the most common reasons by respondents between the ages of 31 and 70, with a more detailed breakdown in Table 12.

Table 12**Respondents by age group citing changes in personal circumstances as a top three reason for leaving**

Respondents age group	Number of respondents citing changes in personal circumstances as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing changes in personal circumstances as a top three reason
Age 21-30	9 of 133	6.7%
Age 31-40	165 of 706	23.3%
Age 41-50	143 of 547	26.1%
Age 51-55	149 of 487	30.5%
Age 56-60	313 of 1,382	22.6%
Age 61-65	387 of 1,567	24.6%
Age 66-70	168 of 1,035	16.2%
Age 71-75	32 of 236	13.5%
Age above 75	5 of 64	7.8%

This reason was more often mentioned by people aged 50 and below in additional comments (89; 26.7 percent of respondents under 50-years-old commenting), with likely causes being caring responsibilities (children, elderly parents, sick family members etc.) or bereavement.

Too much pressure has been selected as one of the top reasons for significantly more of those aged under 65, compared to people over 65.

Table 13

Respondents by age group citing too much pressure as a top three reason for leaving

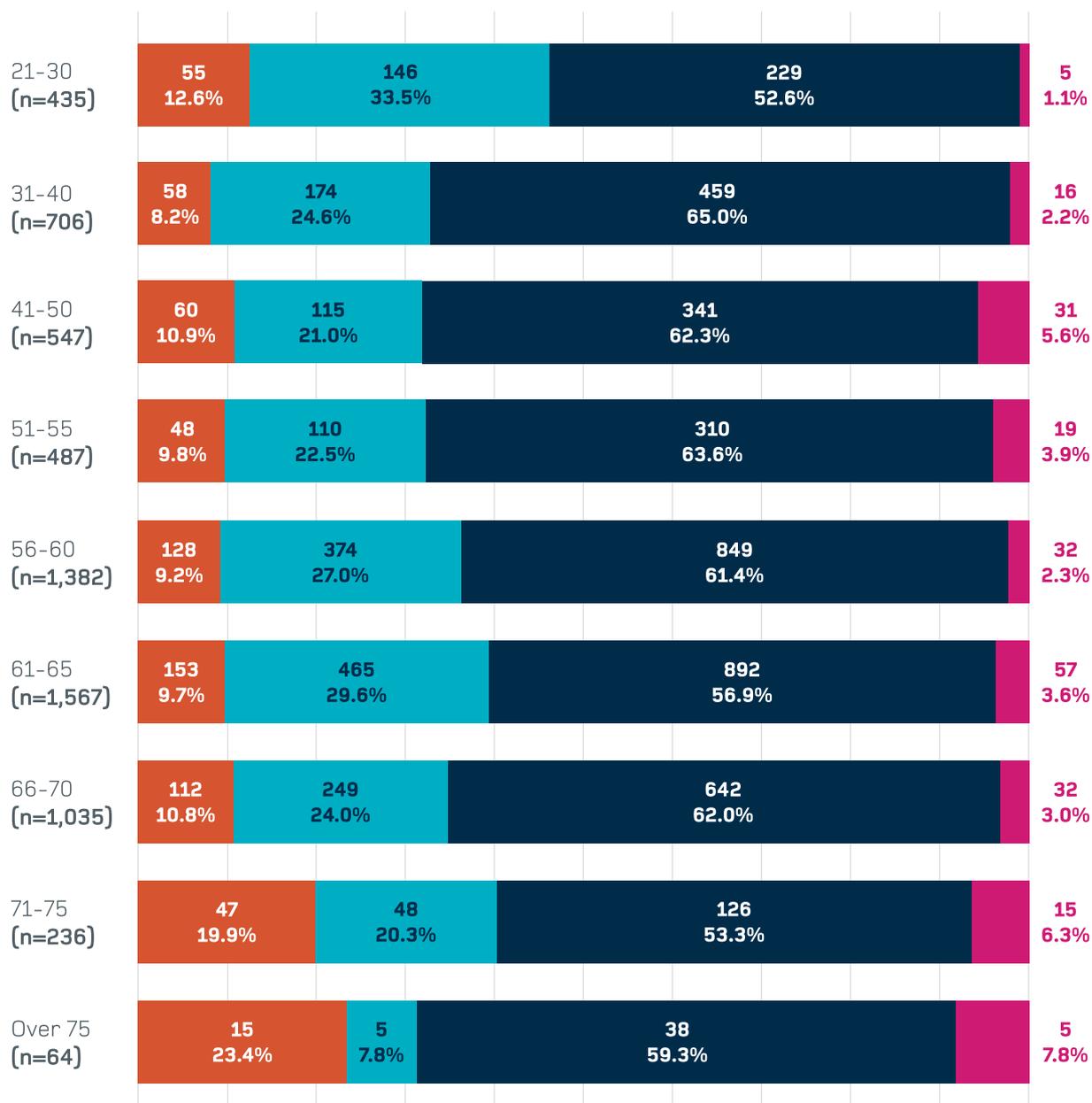
Respondents age group	Number of respondents citing too much pressure as a top three reason for leaving	Percentage of respondents citing too much pressure as a top three reason for leaving
Age 21-30	105 of 435	24.1%
Age 31-40	143 of 706	20.2%
Age 41-50	120 of 547	21.9%
Age 51-55	115 of 487	23.6%
Age 56-60	343 of 1,382	24.8%
Age 61-65	256 of 1,567	16.3%
Age 66-70	96 of 1,035	9.2%
Age 71-75	6 of 236	2.5%
Age above 75	2 of 64	3.1%

Similarly, in the free text comments a larger percentage of people under the age of 50 made additional comments that they were stressed or felt pressured within the workplace (57; 17 percent of respondents under 50-years-old commenting), more so than respondents aged 50 and above (238; 11.8 percent). The age group that provided the largest proportion of comments regarding workplace pressure were 21–30-year-olds (9; 20 percent).

4.3.1 The impact of Covid-19 by age group

Respondents above the age of 71 reported the pandemic having a strong influence on their leaving (20.6 percent, 62 of 300) in significantly higher numbers than younger registrants. People of various ages said that Covid-19 had some impact on their decision to leave, with these two groups expressing it the most commonly: aged 21-30 (33.5 percent, 146 of 435) and aged 61-65 (29.6 percent, 465 of 1,567). Among those who said the pandemic didn't influence their leaving, the most common groups were people aged 31-60 and 66-70 (each in the range of 62 percent to 65 percent).

Figure 6
The impact of Covid-19 by age group



Yes, the pandemic had a strong influence on my decision to leave the register
 No, the pandemic did not influence my decision to leave the register

Yes, the pandemic had some influence on my decision to leave the register
 Other

In free text comments about the impact of Covid-19, health concern was the most evident factor for those aged 51 and above, with 21.4 percent (397) of respondents citing it. For the youngest group of leavers, those aged 21-30 and 31-40, increased workload was the most commonly mentioned issue (18.3 percent, or 20 of 109 and 14.8 percent or 28 of 189 people).

4.4 Reasons for leaving by scope of practice

We compared reasons for leaving for the five most common scopes of practice.

Table 14
Respondents by scope of practice

Respondents scope of practice	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Direct clinical care – adult and general nursing	3,461	53.5%
Direct clinical care – mental health nursing	670	10.3%
Direct clinical care – general practice nursing	555	8.5%
Direct clinical care or management – children’s and neo-natal nursing	408	6.3%
Direct clinical care – midwifery	404	6.2%

Nursing associates’ responses weren’t included in this analysis due to the small sample size (17 of 6,458 respondents or 0.2 percent). However, it’s worth noting that the top reasons for leaving among this group of respondents are: the workplace culture (cited by five people), returned to education (four people), the Covid-19 pandemic, and still working in health and care but no longer need the NMC registration (each selected by three people). Other scopes of practice weren’t included in analysis due to the small sample sizes.

Retirement was the most cited reason for leaving across these groups, with the largest number of respondents in mental health nursing selecting it as their top reason.

Table 15
Respondents citing retirement as a reason for leaving based on scope of practice

Respondents scope of practice	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Mental health nurses	309 of 670	46.1%
Children’s and neo-natal nurses	180 of 408	44.1%
General practice nurses	239 of 555	43.0%
Adult and general care nurses	1,398 of 3,461	40.3%
Midwives	146 of 404	36.1%

The proportion of mental health nurses who were aged 51 and above wasn't as high in this group (11.3 percent, 541 of 4,771), however it was the second largest group after adult and general care nurses (51.7 percent or 2,471 of 4,771).

In the free text comments, retirement was most commonly mentioned by general practice nurses - 36.5 percent (75 of 205), followed by midwives (35.2 percent, 50 of 142).

Changes in personal circumstances was one of the top reasons for each of the five respondent groups, and the most frequently selected among children's and neo-natal nurses (27.4 percent, 112 of 408), while mental health nurses, adult and general care nurses, midwives, and general practice nurses have cited this in proportion ranging from 21 percent to 21.9 percent.

Too much pressure was cited the most by midwives (23 percent, 93 of 404), followed by mental health nurses (21 percent, 159 of 670), adult and general care nurses (18.6 percent, 646 of 3,461), children's and neo-natal nurses (16.4 percent, 67 of 408), and general practice nurses (16 percent, 89 of 555). These results are similar to the previous years' findings, and they are reflected in the free text comments, with mental health nurses (32.3 percent, 86 of 266) and midwives (30.2 percent, 43 of 142) mentioning pressure in the work environment the most.

4.4.1 The impact of Covid-19 by scope of practice

The impact of Covid-19 could be explored by all scopes of practice as this question generated larger sample sizes. **The groups who most commonly reported that the pandemic had a strong influence on their leaving were adult and general care nurses (12.3 percent or 427 of 3,461), social care nurses (12.1 percent, 12 of 99), general practice nurses (11.3 percent, 63 of 555), and children's and neo-natal nurses (9.8 percent, 40 of 408).** Of respondents who reported Covid-19 having some impact on their leaving, this was by far the most common among respondents working in research (37.9 percent, 52 of 137), followed by health visitors (29.4 percent, 58 of 197). Respondents working in policy (75.4 percent, 43 of 57), and commissioning (73 percent, 46 of 63) followed by midwives (69.8 percent, 282 of 404) were the least likely to cite the pandemic as a reason for leaving.

The groups that deferred leaving the register due to the pandemic in significantly higher proportions than others were public health nurses (23.6 percent, 18 of 76) and nurses working in social care (24.2 percent, 24 of 99). Those who most commonly reported not deferring leaving were school nurses (88.7 percent, 63 of 71), midwives (87.1 percent, 352 of 404) and health visitors (85.7 percent, 169 of 197).

Figure 7 – part 1
The impact of Covid-19 by scope of practice

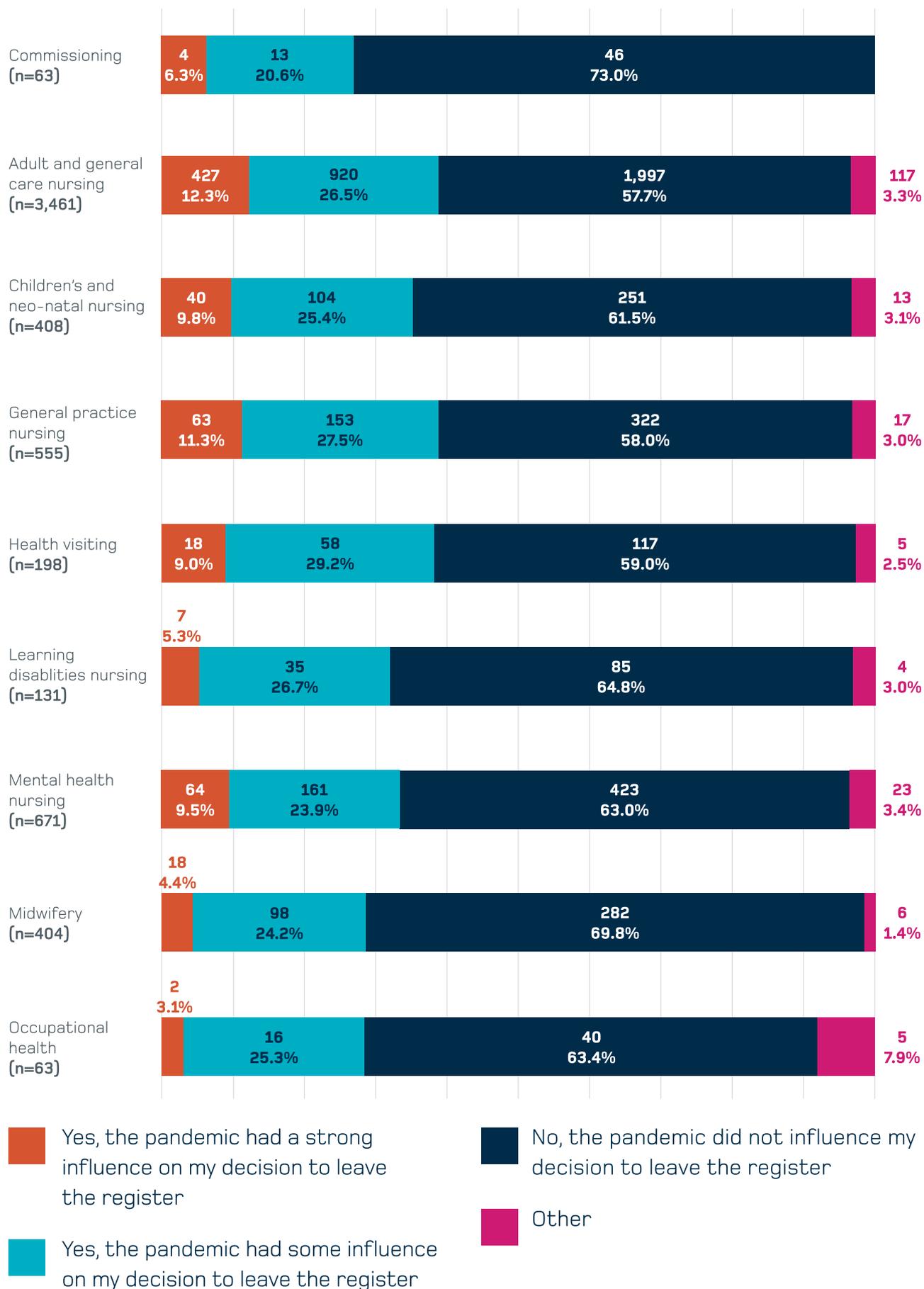
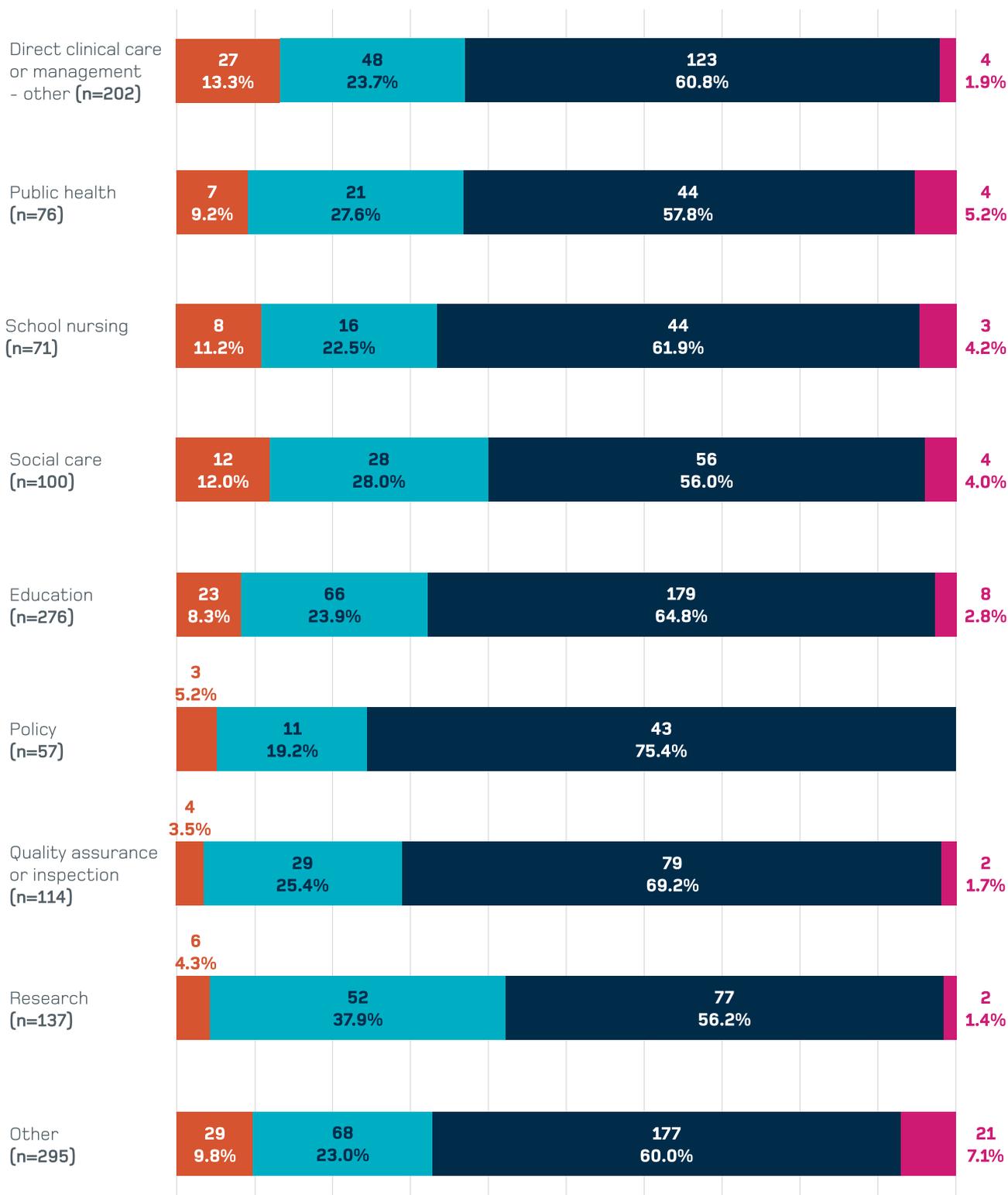


Figure 7 – part 2
The impact of Covid-19 by scope of practice



■ Yes, the pandemic had a strong influence on my decision to leave the register
■ Yes, the pandemic had some influence on my decision to leave the register
■ No, the pandemic did not influence my decision to leave the register
■ Other

Within the five largest groups of nurses, in the free text comments about the impact of Covid-19, health concerns were the most commonly flagged by midwives (27.7 percent, 28 of 101) and mental health nurses (23.2 percent, 53 of 228) in comparison to children's and neo-natal nurses, adult care nurses and general practice nurses who all mentioned this factor in the range of 19.6 percent to 20.6 percent. Increased workload was most notably cited by midwives (26.7 percent, 27 of 101), as well as safety concerns and lack of PPE (14.8 percent, 15 of 101).

4.5 Reasons for leaving by sector of work

We compared reasons for leaving for those who had worked in the NHS in their most recent job (77.3 percent or 4,993 people) and those who hadn't (21.8 percent or 1,412 people).

There were several reasons for leaving which were more likely to be selected by people who worked in the NHS.

Retirement was selected by 44.5 percent (2,225 of 4,993) of respondents who had most recently worked in the NHS, compared with 37.9 percent (536 of 1,412) of those who hadn't most recently worked in the NHS.

There were also a number of concerns around **too much pressure** which were cited significantly more by NHS workers than non-NHS workers, 19.4 percent (969 of 4,993) compared with 14.4 percent (204 of 1,412).

Another reason for leaving that revealed differences between the NHS and non-NHS respondents was a worry about not being able to meet the revalidation requirements. This concern was significantly higher among the non-NHS group, 13.8 percent (198 of 1,412), compared with 8.8 percent (443 of 4,993) of the NHS workers. These findings are similar to those from 2020.

4.5.1 The impact of Covid-19 by whether respondents worked in the NHS or not

There were no notable differences between the NHS and non-NHS sector respondents in terms of the impact of the pandemic on their leaving.

4.6 Reasons for leaving by whether people were disabled or not

We compared reasons for leaving for those who have a disability (618 people or 9.6% of all respondents) and those who do not have a disability (5,691 people or 88.1%). A minority of respondents (2.2% or 148 people) preferred not to answer the question about disability.

It should be noted that a large majority of survey respondents who were disabled were trained in the UK (94%), and the proportion of disabled people steadily increased through the age groups from 21-30 (4% are disabled) through to 61-65 (23% are disabled).

Therefore the responses of disabled people largely reflect the responses of UK-trained and older leavers.

Respondents who have a disability reported leaving because of a **change in personal circumstances** significantly more frequently than those who do not have a disability (53.4%, 330 people compared to 18.0%, 1,024 people).

Respondents with a disability say significantly more frequently they left the register because of **workplace culture** (17.2% or 106 people) than those who do not have a disability (12.2% or 697 people).

Retirement was selected by a significantly higher number of respondents who do not have a disability (44.2% or 2,514 people) compared to those who said they have a disability (34.3% or 212 people).

Leaving the UK was selected significantly more often by respondents who do not have a disability (13.3%, 759 compared to 1.8%, 11).

4.6.1 The impact of Covid-19 by whether respondents were disabled or not

The Covid-19 pandemic was selected as a top three reason for leaving the register significantly more often by those who do not have a disability (12.4% or 706 people) compared to those who have disability (7.3% or 45 people).

Respondents who have a disability said that the pandemic had not influenced their decision to leave in significantly higher proportions to those without a disability (65.4%, 404 compared to 59.5%, 3,384).

Leavers who have a disability significantly more frequently said that they did not defer leaving the register due to the pandemic (84.3%, 521 compared to 80.0%, 4,557).

Annexe 1: Our approach

The people who left the register

A total of 22,549 nurses, midwives and nursing associates left our register between January 2021 and December 2021.

Selecting people to take part in the survey

Before inviting people to take part in the survey, we removed anyone whom it wouldn't be appropriate to contact. This included:

- people who had previously indicated that they didn't wish to be contacted for research purposes
- people who had died
- people who had had a current or recent fitness to practise case, or were subject to fitness to practise sanctions
- people who had since re-joined the permanent register
- people who had joined the emergency temporary register set up during the covid-19 pandemic.

An email was sent to the remaining 21,035 people inviting them to take part in the survey.

The people who responded to the survey

Overall, we received 6,458 responses to the survey. This represents a statistically significant response rate of 30.7 percent. This is slightly lower than 2020 (37.6 percent), but higher than the year before that (26 percent).

Analysing the responses

Analysis of the survey responses was carried out by Pye Tait Consulting, an external, independent research organisation.

To make the survey data more representative of the wider group of people who had left the register, we applied a 'weight' to the data. The weighting took account of two factors: age 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 outside of the UK have been given more significance, or 'weight' in our analysis. This is to compensate for the lower number of responses from this group of 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 we received fewer responses from them.

T-tests were undertaken to explore the differences by respondent sub-groups across the responses. A T-test is a type of statistical analysis test used to determine if there's a significant difference between the means of two groups.

Analysing free text comments in the survey

Some respondents (36.3 percent or 2,347 people) provided free text comments about their reasons for leaving the register. Further, 33.7 percent (2,180 people) commented on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their decision to leave. Finally, 10.4 percent (674 people) provided additional comments to the question about whether they deferred leaving the register due to the pandemic.

The comments were analysed thematically using the same analytical framework of 21 main options outlined in the pre-coded question. Within each theme, a number of sub-themes were identified. Some comments were given multiple codes, if the response covered several different themes.

The free text comments about the impact of Covid-19 were analysed within the analytical framework created based on emerging themes. The themes were similar to those outlined in the question about reasons for leaving the register.

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