



NMC Leavers' survey: Understanding why professionals left the NMC register in 2025/26

June 2026

Research and Evidence

Background

The NMC maintains the register of nurses and midwives eligible to practise in the UK and nursing associates eligible to practise in England.

When professionals leave the register, we send out a short **online survey** via email asking about their reasons for leaving, likelihood of returning, and what they are doing now. Survey completion is optional.

The survey has been conducted since 2017 and was **refreshed in 2022/23** to try to **better understand** why people leave our register.

This report includes findings from **2022/23 to 2025/26**. Some new questions were added in 2023/24 so only three years of data can be reported on for these.

In the year from April 2025 to March 2026, **25,266** leavers were invited to participate in the survey (excluding leavers who had opted out of NMC communications), and **27%** (6,739) responded to the survey.

The main objectives of the survey are to understand:

Why have professionals left our register?

Are professionals leaving when they intended to?

Would leavers recommend or return to their profession?



Executive Summary

As in previous years, **retirement, physical or mental health, and burnout or exhaustion** were the most **common reasons** for leaving the register. The proportion leaving to **retire** has **increased** over time, while the proportions leaving due to their physical or mental health and burnout or exhaustion have decreased.

Physical or mental health was the most common reason for **professionals with disabilities** leaving, though there was a slight decrease from previous years and an increase in those leaving to retire.

For professionals who were educated **outside the UK** or aged **under 40** the top reason for leaving the register was **leaving the UK**, which is consistent with previous years.

Reasons for leaving for **EU/EEA educated** professionals have become more **similar** to those **educated internationally**.

Around half of those leaving the register **left earlier than they planned**. This has slightly decreased over time while the proportions leaving on time or later than planned have increased.

The **Net Promoter Score** has been **stable**, although still negative, over the past three years. This means that most leavers are **unlikely to recommend their profession**, however those aged over 65 or educated outside the UK are more likely to.

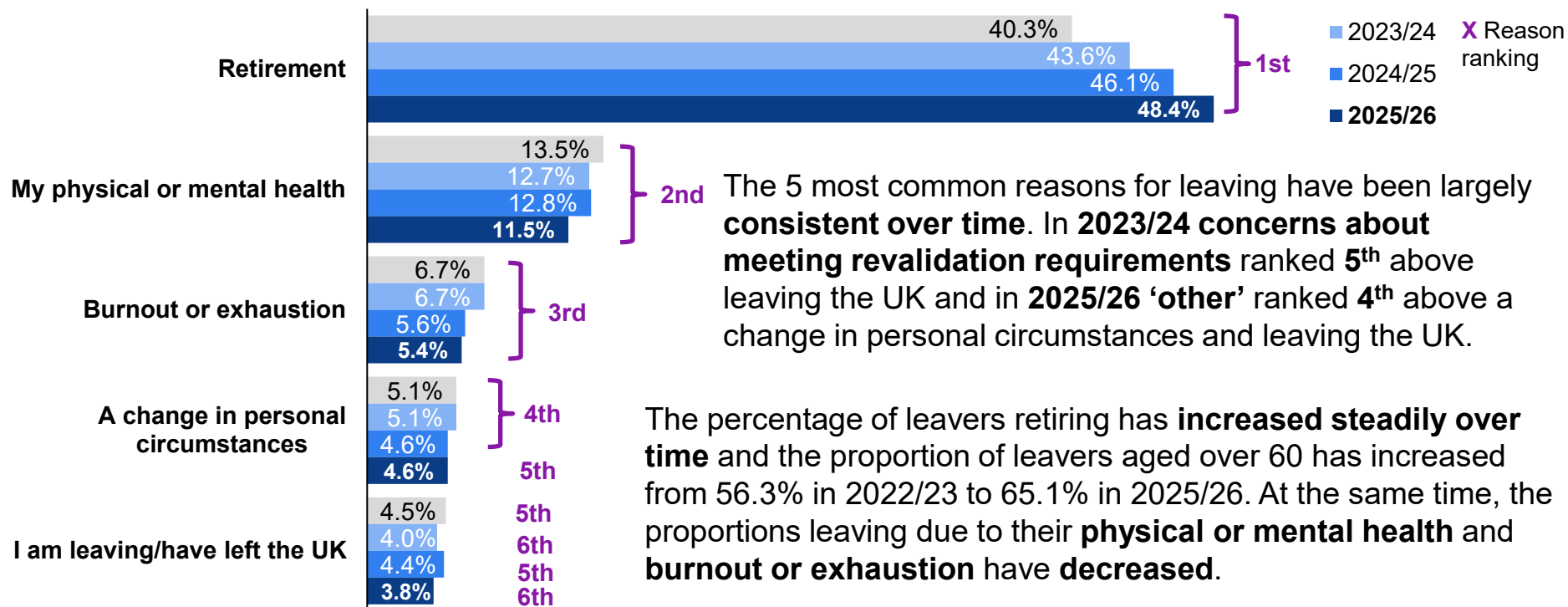
A small group of leavers (8%) intended to **return to their profession** in the future, within or outside the UK.

Section 1

Retirement is consistently the most common reason for leaving the register

Retirement has consistently been the most common reason for leaving the register

Most common main reasons for leaving the register across 2022/23 to 2025/26

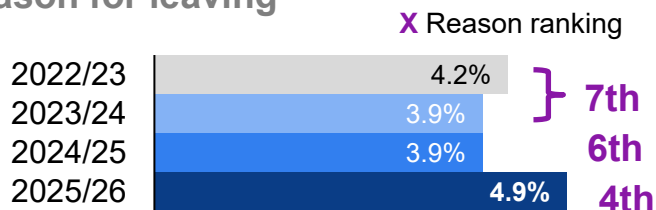


More leavers gave 'other' reasons for leaving than in previous years

In 2025/26 there was a **higher proportion of leavers selecting 'Other'** as their main reason than in previous years at 4.9%.

The most common 'Other' reasons provided were previous **employment ending** (either through redundancy or end of contract) and/or **not being able to find a new role**, particularly for Bank staff. Difficulties with **revalidation** and having **caring responsibilities** were also frequently mentioned by those who selected 'other'.

Proportion selecting 'other' as main reason for leaving



“

I was very happy working as a bank nurse and have continued and revalidated but my hospital stopped using bank staff to save money. I was informed by text which was upsetting as I had worked on the dermatology department for nearly 50 years. I was hardworking and reliable it was extremely hurtful

– Nurse, England, aged 72

”

“

Not enough newly qualified positions for the amount of nurses that qualify each year. Very competitive. Lots of roles needing more experience than newly qualified nurses have

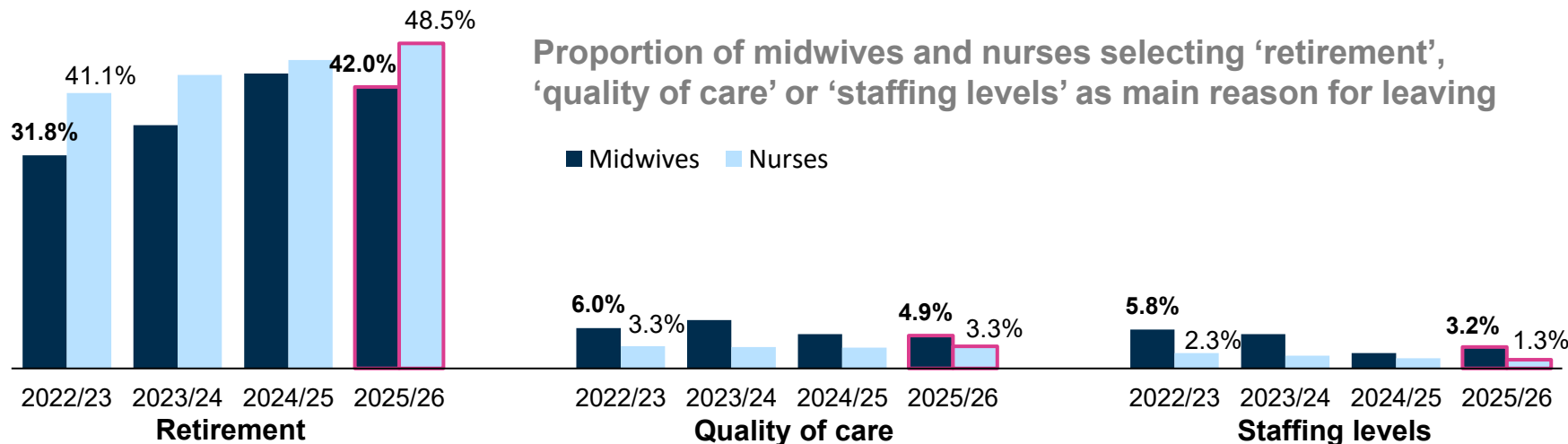
– Nurse, England, aged 23

”

Midwives were less likely to be retiring than nurses

The proportion selecting **retirement** as their main reason for leaving has consistently been lower for **midwives** than for nurses. Similarly, midwives tend to be **younger** when they **leave the register**. In 2025/26 19.5% of midwives who responded to the survey were over the age of 65 compared to 30.6% for nurses.

Midwives have also been consistently **more likely** than nurses to select **quality of care** provided to members of the public and people who use services or **staffing levels** as their main reason for leaving.

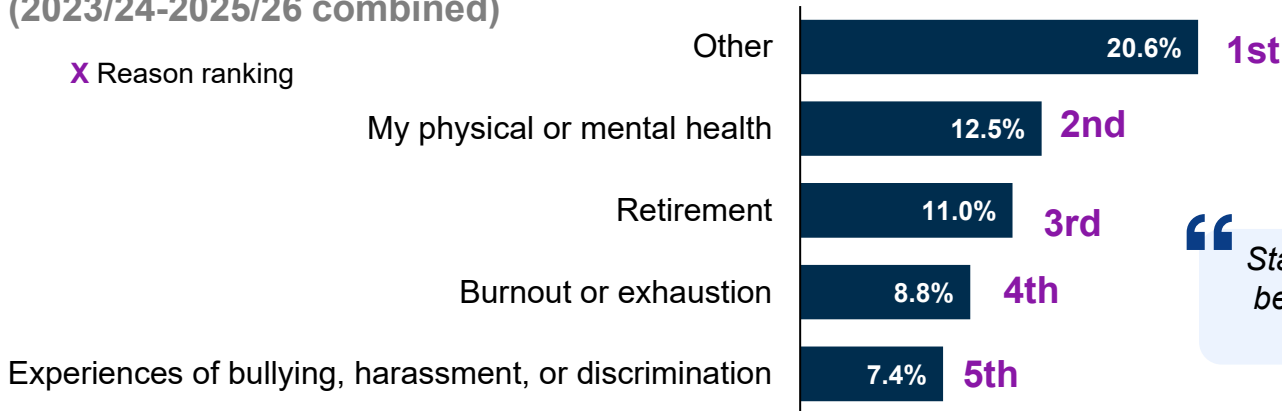


Some nursing associates are leaving the register to undertake further study

Limited numbers of nursing associates leave the register. This year for the first time we looked at reasons for leaving by combining the 136 nursing associate responses from the past 3 years.

Nursing associates most commonly selected 'other' as their main reason for leaving (20.6%). The 'other' reasons for leaving often related to returning to further nursing study.

Nursing associate most common main reasons for leaving (2023/24-2025/26 combined)



“

I am doing the top-up to Band 5 so back being a student – Nursing associate, England, aged 58

”

“

Started a MSc adult nursing course to become a RGN – Nursing associate, England, aged 36

”

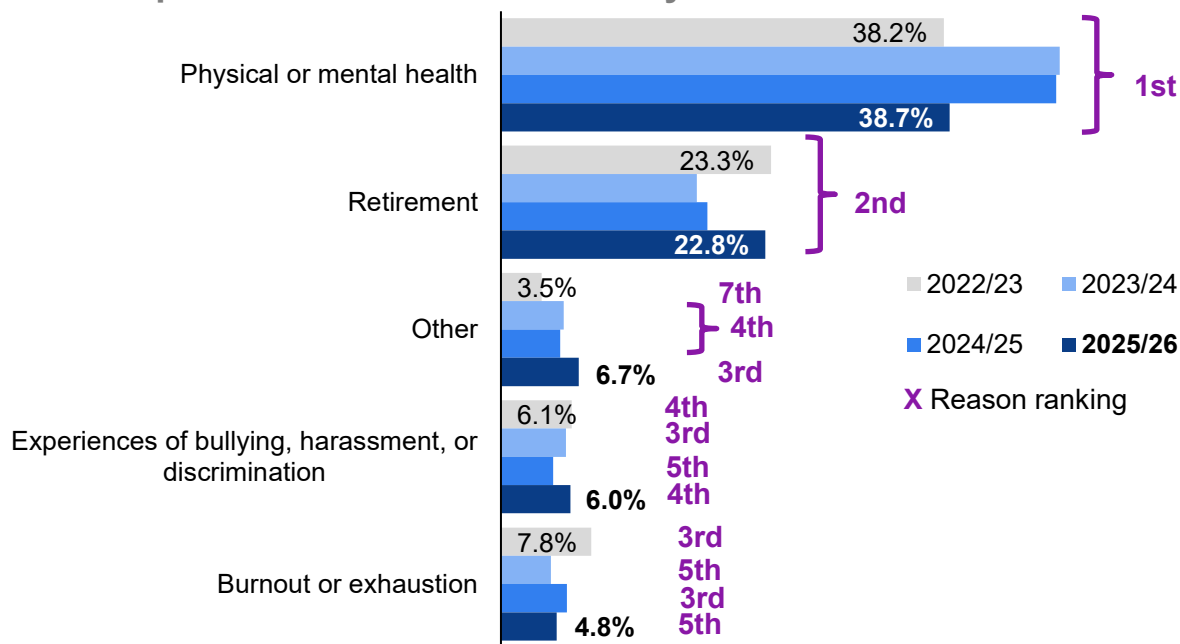
Nursing associates who change registration type but don't leave the NMC register are not contacted for the survey.

The top reason for leaving for professionals with disabilities was health

For professionals with disabilities, **physical or mental health** has consistently been the top reason for leaving over time, followed by retirement.

From 2024/25 to 2025/26 there was a **decrease in those leaving due to health** and an **increase in those leaving to retire**.

2025/26 most common main reasons for leaving for professionals with a disability



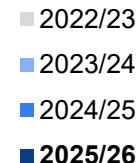
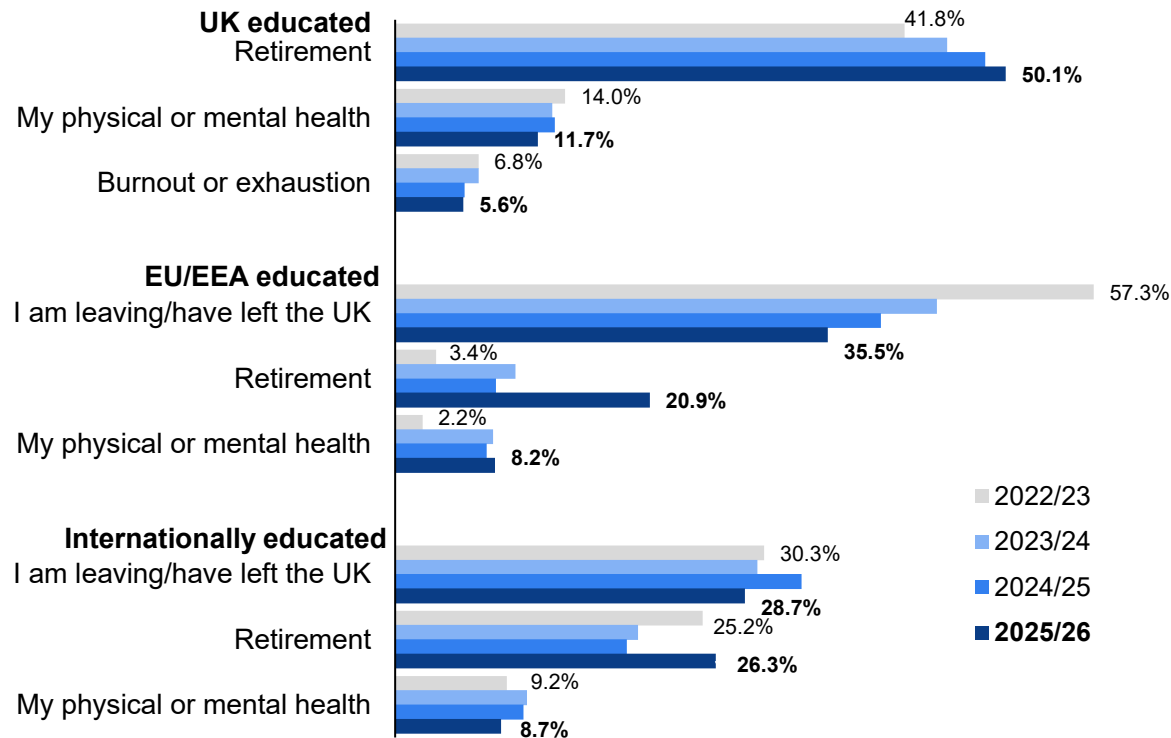
Leaving the UK is the top reason for leaving among those educated outside the UK

For those outside of the UK, **leaving the UK** has been the **top reason** for leaving the register over the past 4 years.

Over time, reasons for leaving for **EU/EEA educated** leavers have become more **similar** to those **educated internationally**.

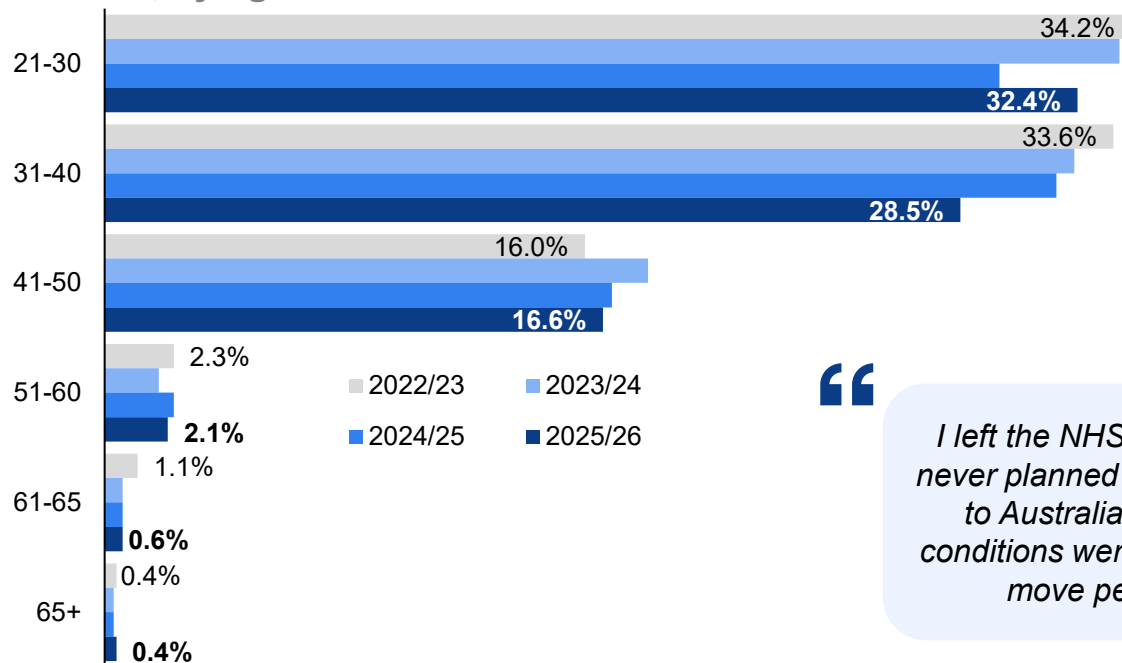
For those **educated in the EU/EEA** the percentage selecting '**leaving the UK**' as their main reason for leaving the register has **decreased** over time, while the percentage retiring has **increased**.

2025/26 top 3 main reasons for leaving by training region



Leaving the UK was also the top reason for leaving among those aged under 40

Proportion selecting 'Leaving the UK' as main reason, by age



Leaving the UK has been the **most common** reason for leaving for those aged **under 40** over time.

For those aged **over 40**, **retirement** has consistently been the most common reason for leaving.

“

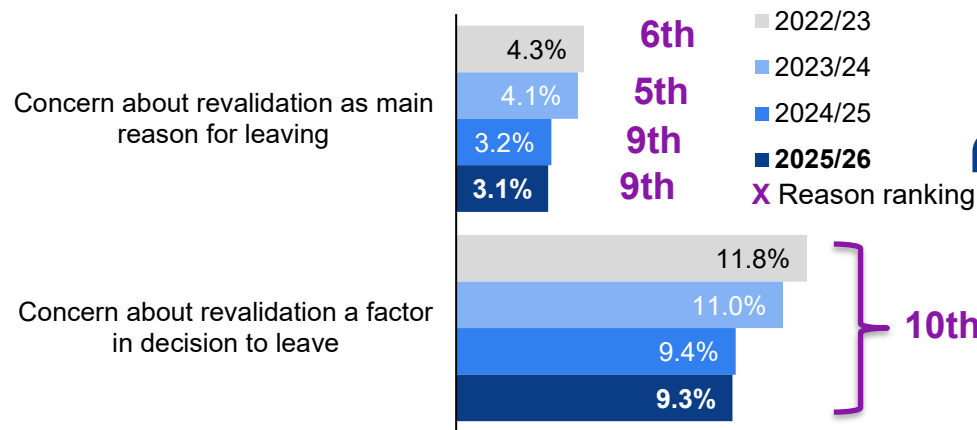
I left the NHS on a career break to go work in Australia, I never planned to leave permanently. However once moving to Australia and seeing how much better the working conditions were for me as a midwife, I decided to make the move permanent – Midwife, Australia, aged 30

”

Revalidation concerns ranked lower than in previous years

Concern about meeting revalidation requirements as a **main reason** for leaving ranked **9th** as a main reason for leaving this year, **this is similar to 2024/25 but lower than 2022/23 and 2023/24**. It has consistently ranked **10th** as a **factor** in professionals' decision to leave.

Proportion selecting revalidation concerns as a main reason and contributing factor to leaving



In 2025/26 **71.0%** of leavers **left in the 12 months before they were due to revalidate**. In previous years this has ranged from 70.8% to 73.1%.

I would have retired a year later if my revalidation wasn't due, but the amount of work required for revalidation wasn't worth the part time hours I wanted to work
 – Nurse, England, aged 65

Section 2

Under half of the professionals leaving the register left early, slightly fewer than in previous years

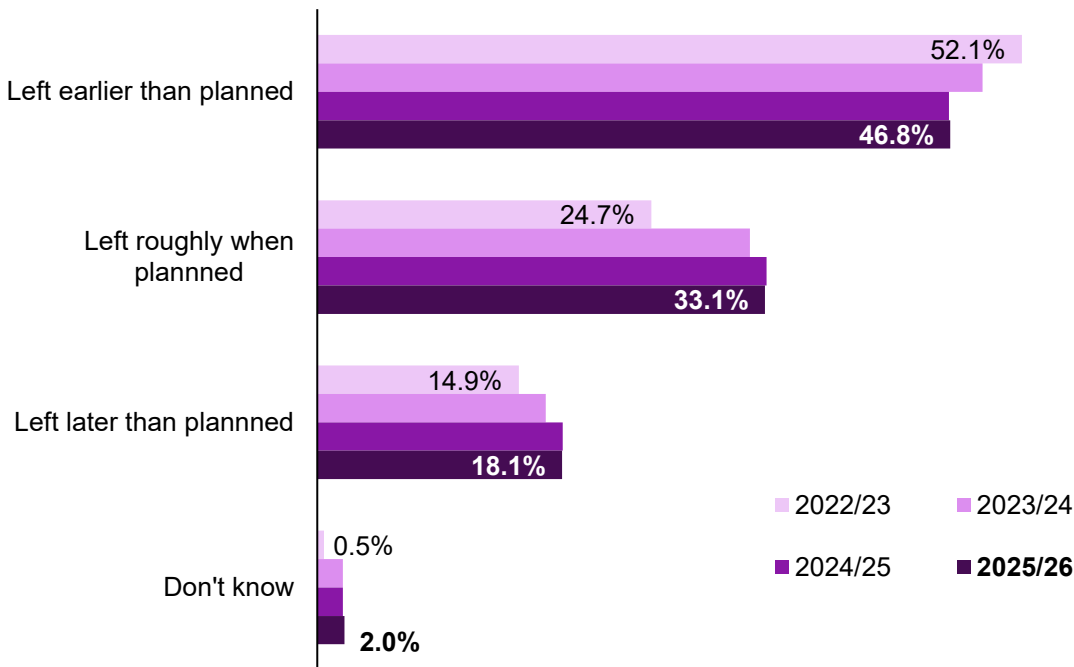
Almost half of the professionals leaving the register left early

46.8% of leavers left earlier than they had planned, around a **third of leavers** left the register roughly **when they had planned** and **18.1% left later than planned**.

The proportion **leaving early** has **decreased** over time, while the proportions **leaving when planned or later** have **increased**.

Midwives, leavers aged **under 50**, or those **with a disability**, were more likely to have left earlier than planned.

When professionals left the register compared to their plans

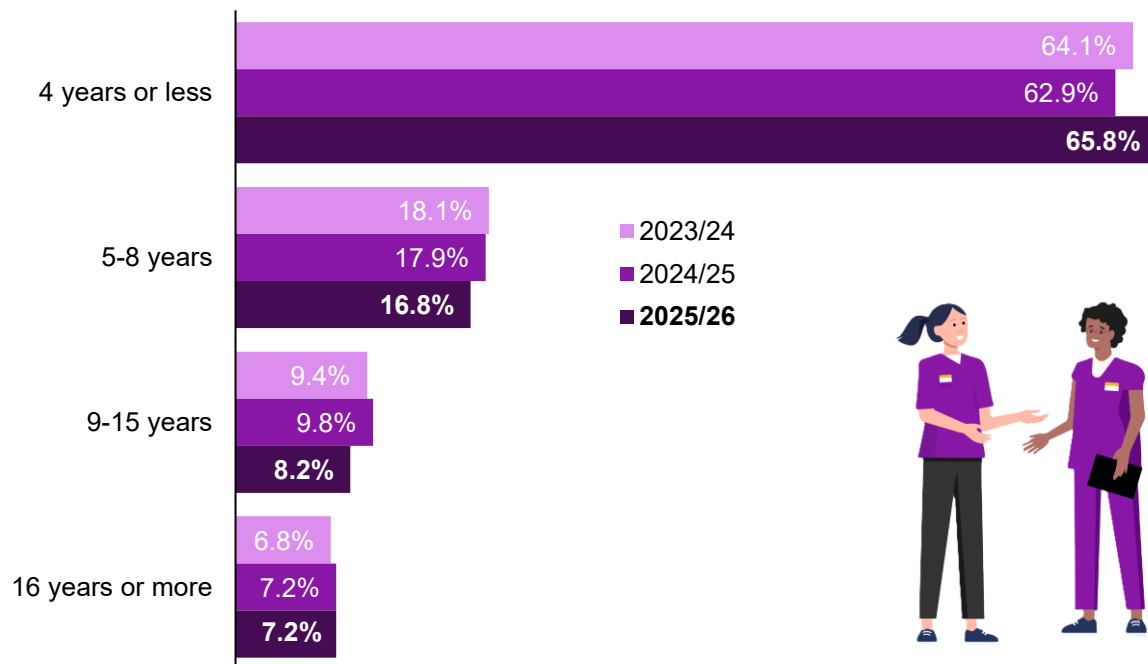


Two thirds of early leavers left within 4 years of when they had planned

Around **two thirds** of professionals leaving early left **within four years** of when they had planned.

The percentage **leaving less than 4 years early** has **increased** slightly since 2024/25, while the percentage leaving between **5-8 or 9-15 years** has **decreased**.

How much earlier professionals left the register than they had planned



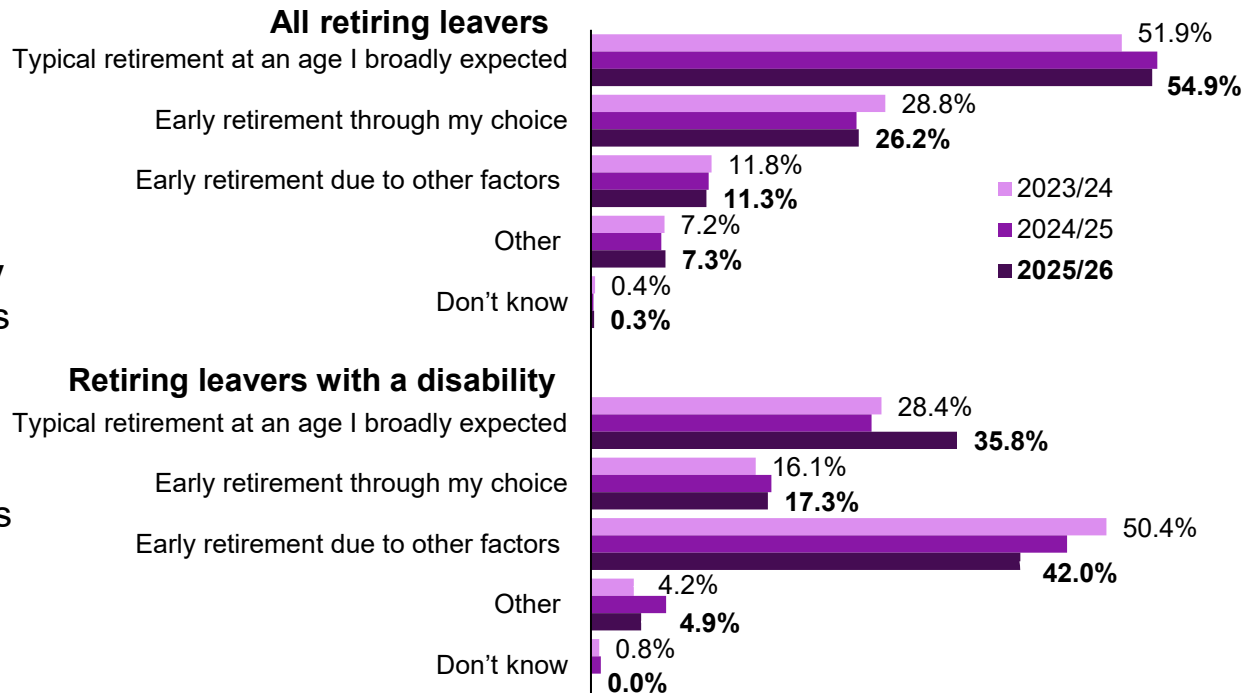
Half of the professionals retiring were doing so at an age they had expected

Around **half** of those **retiring** had done so **at an age they expected**. Around **a quarter retired early** through their **choice**, and 11.3% had **retired early** due to **other factors**.

For those that had a **disability**, **early retirement due to other factors** was significantly **more common**, at 42%.

Since 2024/25, the percentage retiring at the **age they expected** has **increased**, while the proportion taking **early retirement** had **decreased**.

Retirement timing for all leavers vs those with a disability



Section 3

As in previous years, most leavers would not recommend or return to their profession

As in previous years, most leavers are unlikely to recommend their profession

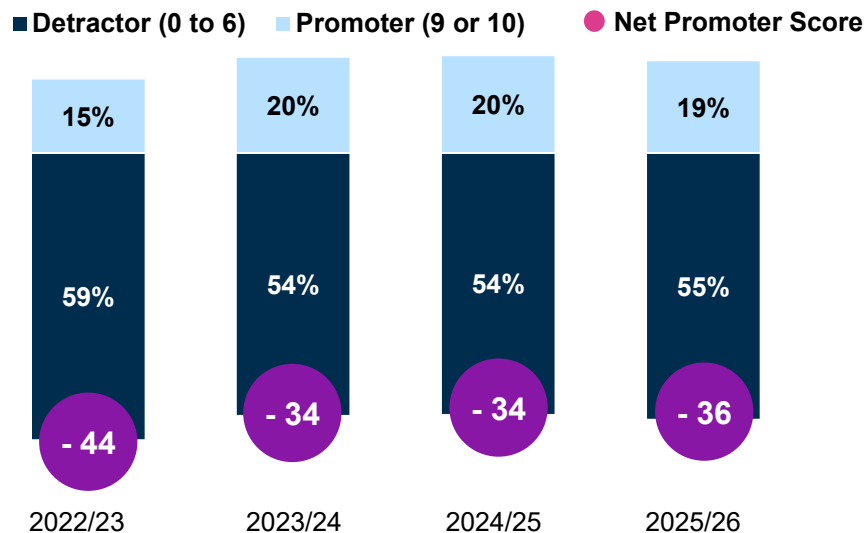
Net promoter scores have been **similar** over the past three years. In 2025/26 the net promoter score was **-36**, as 19% of leavers were promoters and 55% were detractors.

Those **educated outside the UK** or those **aged 65+** had **higher** net promoter scores, at **-17** for EU/EEA educated professionals, **+1** for internationally educated professionals, and **-13** for those aged 65+.

Midwives, those **under 60**, and those with a **disability** had **lower** net promoter scores, at **-57** for midwives, between **-80** and **-51** for age groups under 60, and **-49** for those with a disability.

Net promoter score is calculated by the proportion of detractors (those who rated their likelihood of recommending their profession from 0-6 out of 10) subtracted from the proportion of promoters (those who rated their likelihood of recommending their profession a 9 or 10 out of 10).

2025/26 net promoter score: likelihood of leavers to recommend their profession



Perspective from a promoter:



Loved being a Nurse, but felt 75 years old and 54 years on the register was perhaps enough!

– Nurse, England, aged 75



Perspective from a detractor:



Nursing is not a career I would recommend to anyone. The culture of the wards, the workload and the general stress of the job is not worth it to any degree. The support of the NHS is abysmal and there is no sense in staying

– Nurse, Scotland, aged 27

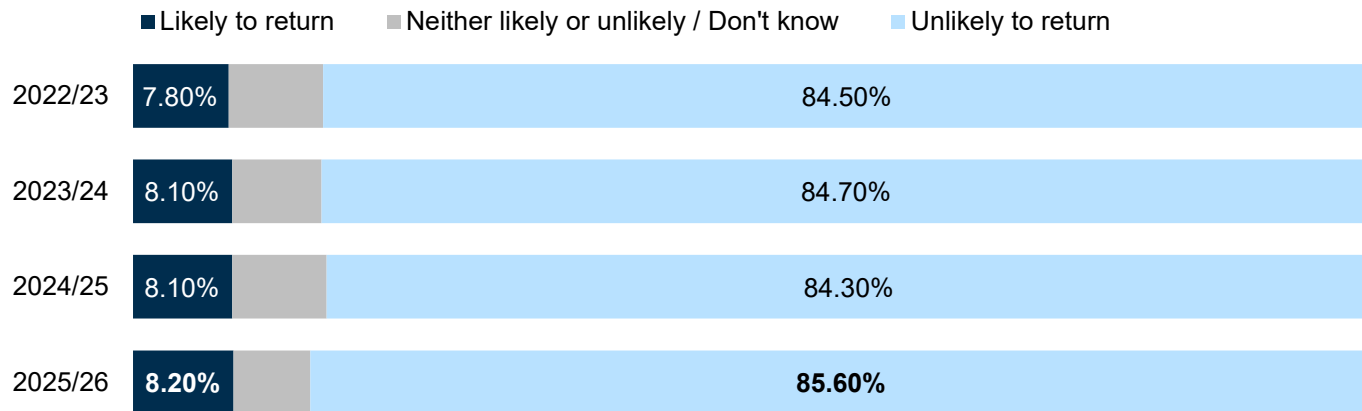


A small proportion of leavers intended to return to their profession

Around **8%** of leavers said they were **likely to return** to a career as a registered nurse, midwife, or nursing associate, while the majority were unlikely to return. This has been **consistent over time**.

For **nursing associates** the proportion was much **higher**, at **30.1%** (for 2023/24 to 2025/26 combined). This aligns with nursing associates returning to study to become registered nurses.

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

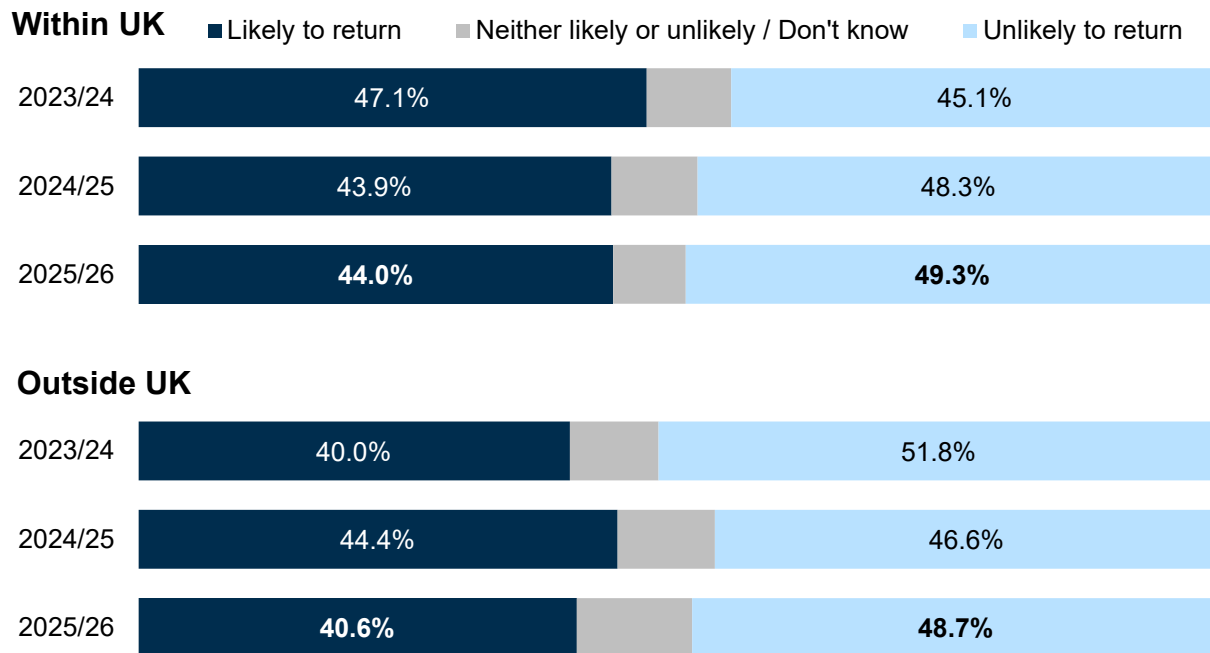


Overall, similar proportions of leavers were likely to return within or outside the UK

In 2025/26, **44.0%** of those who were likely to return said they were likely to return **within the UK**, while a **similar proportion** (40.6%) said they were likely to return **outside the UK**.

22.6% were likely to return only **within the UK**, **21.8%** were likely to return only **outside of the UK**, and **15.3%** were likely to return to **both**. These proportions were similar in previous years.

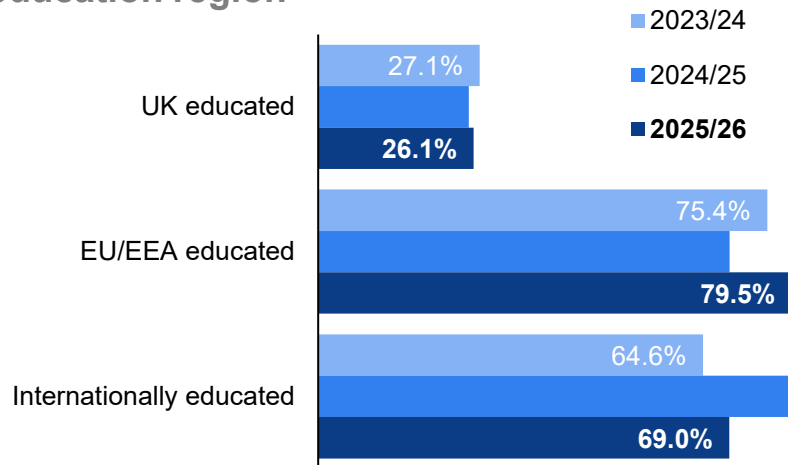
Proportion of leavers likely to return, by whether they are likely to return within or outside the UK



Those educated outside the UK or under 40 were more likely to return outside of the UK

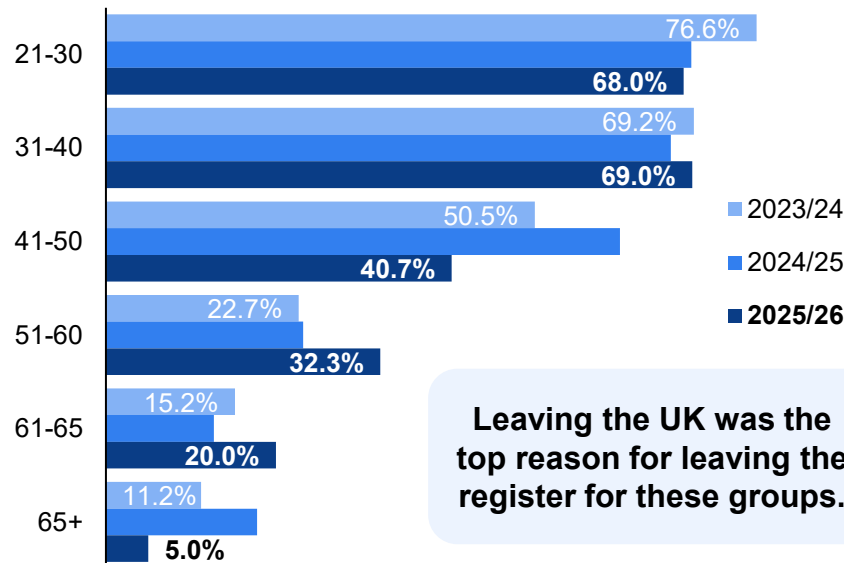
Those who were **educated outside of the UK** were significantly **more likely to return outside of the UK** than those educated in the UK.

Leavers likely to return outside of the UK, by education region



Those aged **under 40** were more likely to **return outside of the UK** than older professionals.

Leavers likely to return outside of the UK, by age



Leaving the UK was the top reason for leaving the register for these groups.

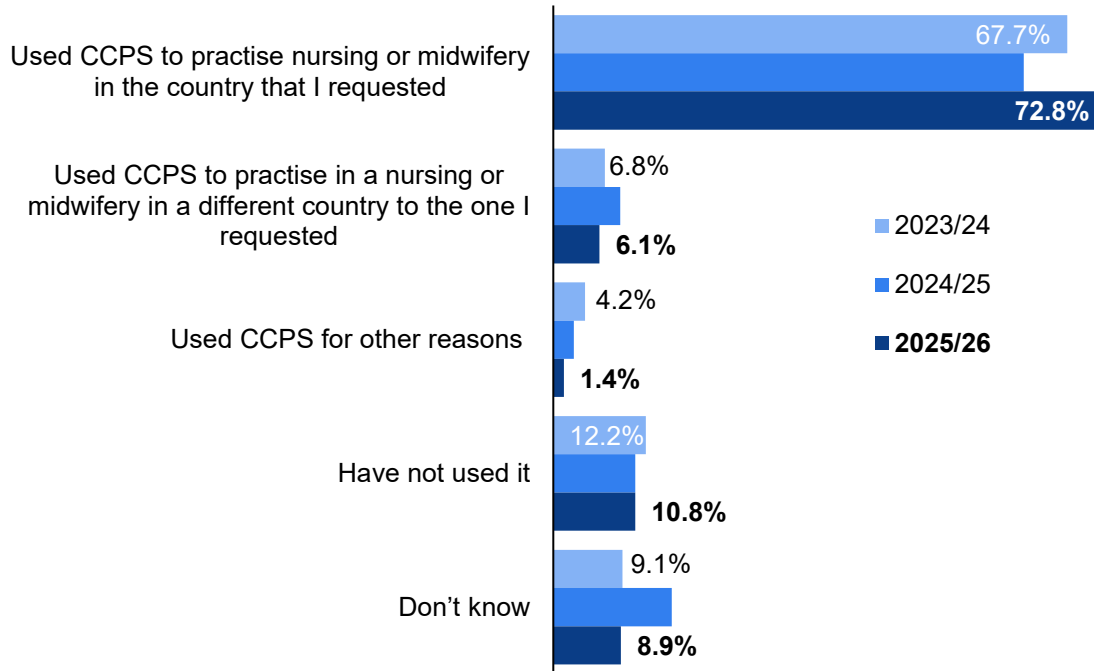
Most professionals who request a CCPS use it to practise overseas

Professionals who plan to practise overseas require a Certificate of Current Professional Status (CCPS) from NMC.

In **2025/26**, **3.2%** of leavers who completed the survey had **requested a CCPS**. This was slightly less than in 2024/25 (4.4%), but comparable to 2023/24 (3.4%).

As in previous years, in 2025/26 most leavers who had requested a CCPS had used it **to practise in the country they requested** it for.

2025/26 use of CCPS



Executive Summary - recap

As in previous years, **retirement, physical or mental health, and burnout or exhaustion** were the most **common reasons** for leaving the register. The proportion leaving to **retire** has **increased** over time, while the proportions leaving due to their physical or mental health and burnout or exhaustion have decreased.

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The **Net Promoter Score** has been **stable**, although still negative, over the past three years. This means that most leavers are **unlikely to recommend their profession**, however those aged over 65 or educated outside the UK are more likely to.

A small group of leavers (8%) intended to **return to their profession** in the future, within or outside the UK.

Key findings for selected groups

Midwives

- Compared to nurses, a **smaller proportion of midwives selected retirement** as their main reason for leaving and **more selected staffing levels or quality of care**
- Midwives were **more likely** to have **left earlier** than planned
- Midwives had **lower net promoter scores**

Nursing associates

- The most common reason for leaving selected by Nursing Associates was '**other**'. Many of these responses referred to going **back to study**
- Consistent with this, nursing associates were **more likely to return to the register** than others

Professionals with a disability

- The most common reason for professionals with a disability leaving was **health**
- They were **more likely** to **retire early** (not by choice), though this is decreasing
- They had **more negative net promoter scores**

Professionals educated outside the UK

- For professionals educated outside the UK the top reason for leaving was **leaving the UK**
- They were also more likely to plan to **return to practice outside the UK**
- They had **more positive net promoter scores**

Younger leavers

- For leavers under 40 the top reason for leaving was **leaving the UK**
- They were also more likely to plan to **return to practice outside the UK**
- They had **more negative net promoter scores**

Annex 1

Top 10 main reasons for leaving and changes in rankings 2022/23-2025/26

2022/23 and 2023/24 top 10 main reasons for leaving and changes in rankings

2022/23 top 10 reasons selected
1. Retirement (40.3%)
2. My physical or mental health (13.5%)
3. Burnout or exhaustion (6.7%)
4. A change in personal circumstances (5.1%)
5. I am leaving/have left the UK (4.5%)
6. Concern about meeting the revalidation requirements (4.3%)
7. Other (4.2%)
8. Lack of support from colleagues or senior members of staff (3.9%)
9. Quality of care provided to members of the public and people who use services (3.5%)
10= Workload (3.1%)
10= Experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination (3.1%)

2023/24 top 10 reasons selected	Rank change
1. Retirement (43.6%)	-
2. My physical or mental health (12.7%)	-
3. Burnout or exhaustion (6.7%)	-
4. A change in personal circumstances (5.1%)	-
5. Concern about meeting the revalidation requirements (4.1%)	+1 ▲
6. I am leaving/have left the UK (4.0%)	-1 ▼
7. Other (3.9%)	-
8. Lack of support from colleagues or senior members of staff (3.4%)	+1 ▲
9. Quality of care provided to members of the public and people who use services (3.3%)	-1 ▼
10. Workload (3.1%)	-

2024/25 and 2025/26 top 10 main reasons for leaving and changes in rankings

2024/25 top 10 reasons selected	Rank change
1. Retirement (46.1%)	-
2. My physical or mental health (12.8%)	-
3. Burnout or exhaustion (5.6%)	-
4. A change in personal circumstances (4.6%)	-
5. I am leaving/have left the UK (4.4%)	+1 ▲
6. Other (3.9%)	+1 ▲
7. Lack of support from colleagues or senior members of staff (3.5%)	+1 ▲
8. Quality of care provided to members of the public and people who use services (3.3%)	+1 ▲
9. Concern about meeting the revalidation requirements (3.2%)	-4 ▼
10. Experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination (2.9%)	+1 ▲

2025/26 top 10 reasons selected	Rank change
1. Retirement (48.4%)	-
2. My physical or mental health (11.5%)	-
3. Burnout or exhaustion (5.4%)	-
4. Other (4.9%)	+2 ▲
5. A change in personal circumstances (4.6%)	-1 ▼
6. I am leaving/have left the UK (3.8%)	-1 ▼
7= Quality of care provided to members of the public and people who use services (3.5%)	+1 ▲
7= Lack of support from colleagues or senior members of staff (3.5%)	-
9= Concern about meeting the revalidation requirements (3.1%)	-
9= Experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination (3.1%)	+1 ▲

Annex 2

Findings for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales

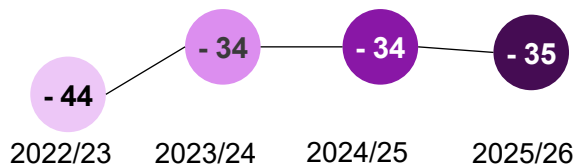
England

In England, the most common reason for leaving was **retirement**, followed by **physical or mental health**, **burnout or exhaustion**, a **change in personal circumstances**, or 'other'.

Close to **half** (46.9%) of leavers in England left **earlier than planned**, **33.7%** left roughly **when planned** and **17.5%** left **later** than planned.

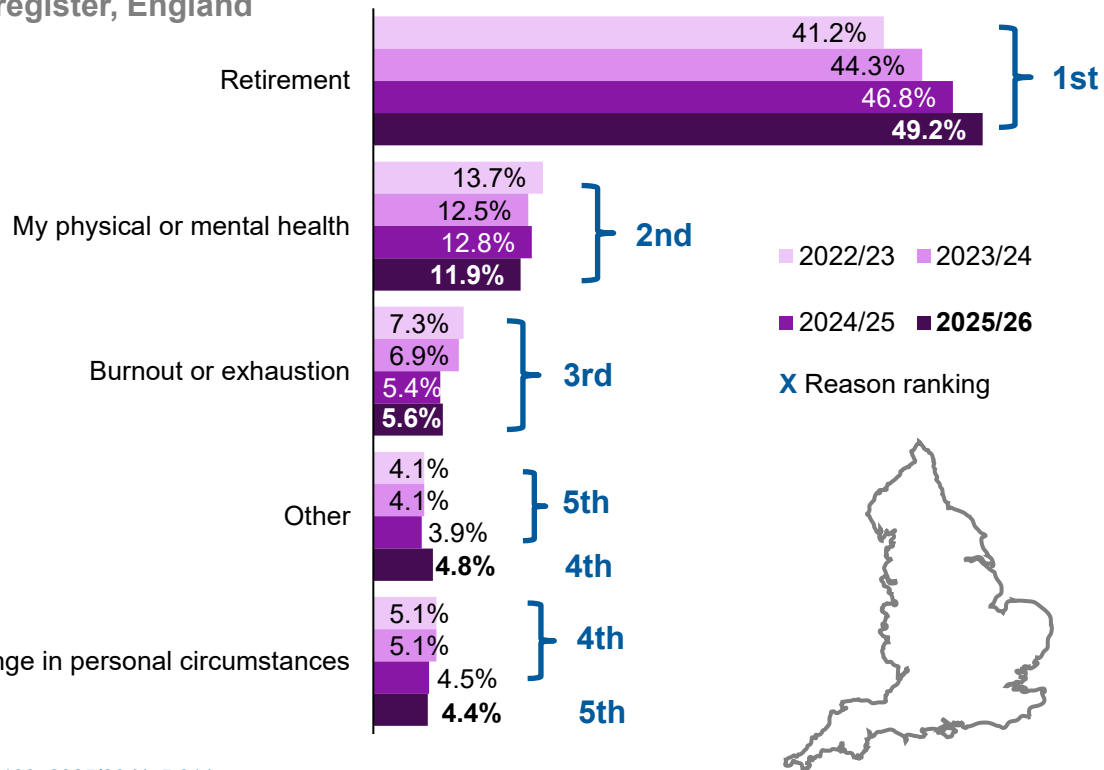
In 2025/26 the **net promoter score** for leavers in England was **-35**, a small decrease from -34 in 2024/25.

Net Promoter Score for England



A change in personal circumstances

2025/26 most common main reasons for leaving the register, England



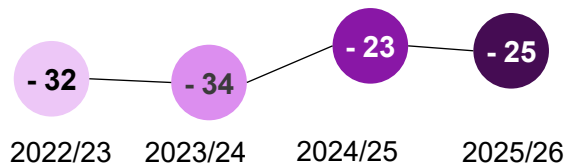
Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland the top reason for leaving was **retirement**, followed by **physical or mental health**, **burnout or exhaustion**, a **change in personal circumstances**, and concern meeting **revalidation requirements**.

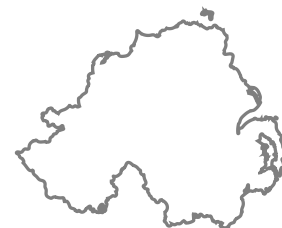
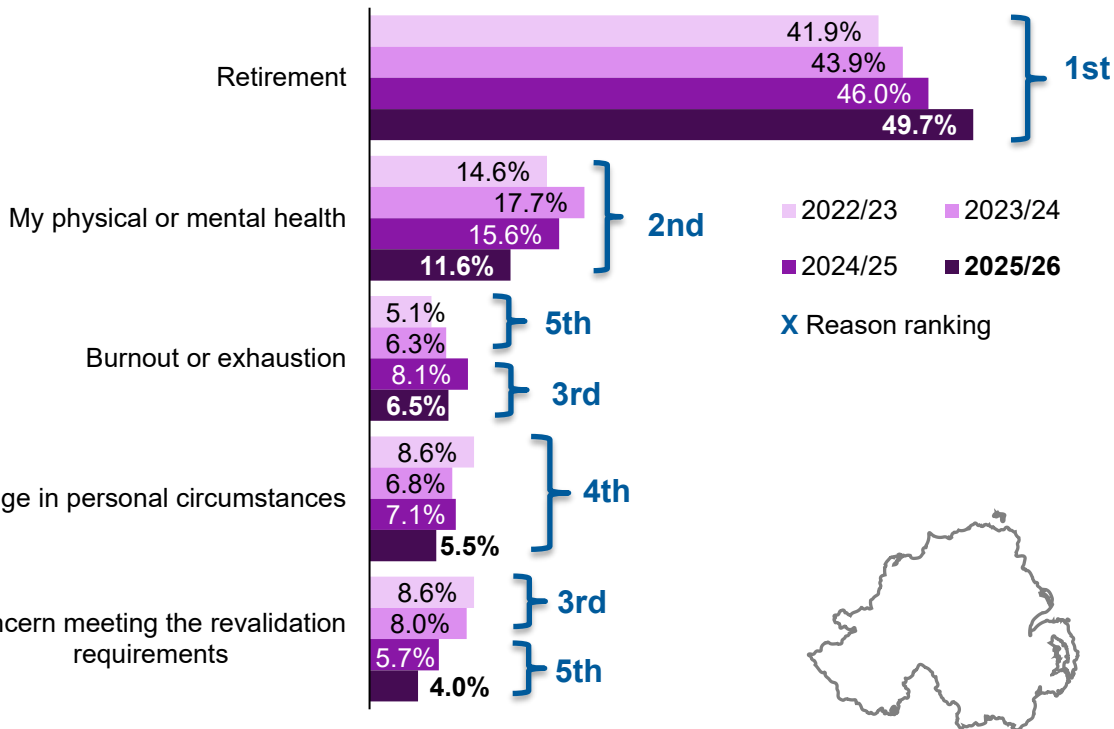
Close to **half** (45.7%) of leavers in Northern Ireland left **earlier than planned**, **30.7%** left roughly **when planned** and **22.6%** left **later than planned**.

In Northern Ireland, the **net promoter score** was **-25** for 2025/26. This is similar to 2024/25 and more positive than the other countries.

Net Promoter Score for Northern Ireland



2025/26 most common main reasons for leaving the register, Northern Ireland



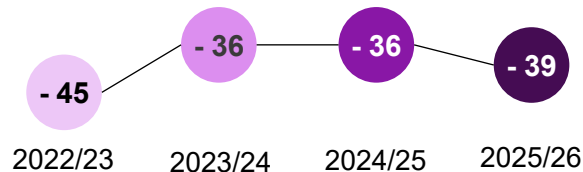
Scotland

In Scotland the most common reason for leaving was **retirement**, followed by **physical or mental health**, 'other', a change in **personal circumstances**, and **burnout or exhaustion**.

Close to **half** (45.7%) of leavers in Scotland left **earlier than planned**, **34.7%** left roughly **when planned** and **19.0%** left **later** than planned.

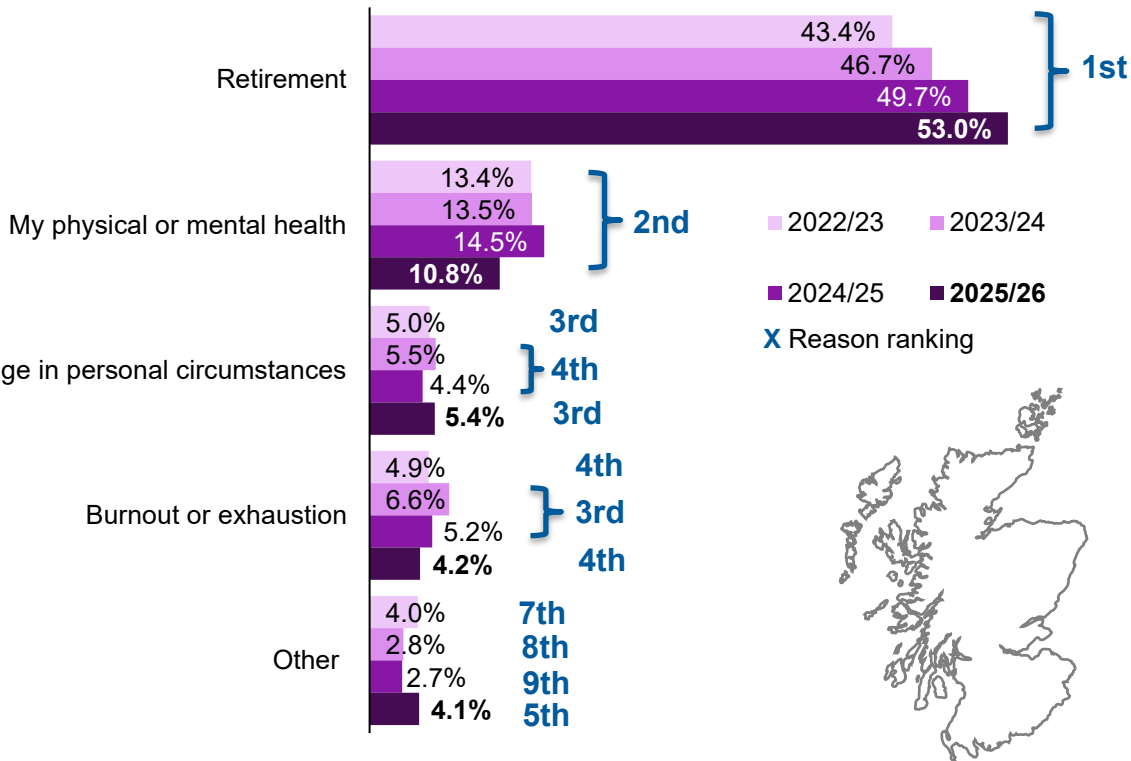
In Scotland, the **net promoter score** for leavers was **-39**, slightly lower than 2024/25.

Net Promoter Score for Scotland



Survey respondents in Scotland 2022/23 N=865; 2023/24 N=980; 2024/25 N=781; 2025/26 N=757

2025/26 most common main reasons for leaving the register, Scotland



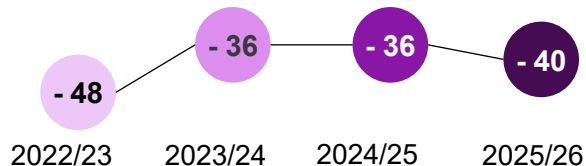
Wales

In Wales, the most common reason for leaving was **retirement**, though this had **decreased slightly** from 2024/25. Other common main reasons selected for leaving were **physical or mental health**, **lack of support** from colleagues, **burnout or exhaustion**, and 'other'.

Just over **half** (50.4%) leavers in Wales **left earlier than planned**, **27.4%** left roughly **when planned**, and **21.4%** left **later** than planned.

In 2025/26 the **net promoter score** for leavers in Wales was **-40**, a decrease from 2024/25.

Net Promoter Score for Wales



Survey respondents in Wales 2022/23 N=425; 2023/24 N=455; 2024/25 N=399; 2025/26 365

2025/26 most common main reasons for leaving the register, Wales

