

Research Briefing

20 November 2023

By Carl Baker

NHS staff from overseas: statistics



Summary

- 1 Nationality of NHS staff
- 2 Differences between English regions
- 3 Joiners and leavers by nationality
- 4 Differences between staff groups

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One NHS, many nationalities

Nationality reported by NHS staff in England as of June 2023

Data: NHS Digital. Graphic by @commonslibrary - read more at tinyurl.com/nhsnationality

 British/UK	1,151,394	 Nigerien	1,146	 Syrian	307
 Indian	60,533	 Slovak	983	 Congolese	272
 Filipino	34,652	 Trinidadian	917	 Libyan	265
 Nigerian	22,851	 Swedish	843	 Eritrean	260
 Irish	13,711	 Myanmar	843	 Russian	246
 Polish	11,606	 Czech	819	 Mauritanian	242
 Portuguese	8,339	 Ugandan	797	 Albanian	229
 Italian	7,302	 Zambian	785	 Afghan	222
 Pakistani	7,082	 Latvian	778	 Motswana	220
 Ghanaian	6,134	 Brazilian	766	 Swiss	210
 Romanian	6,018	 New Zealander	743	 Lebanese	210
 Zimbabwean	5,917	 Hong Kong	736	 Tanzanian	209
 Spanish	5,114	 Iranian	638	 Palestinian	207
 Egyptian	4,148	 Sierra Leonean	616	 Slovenian	204
 Nepalese	3,562	 Singaporean	611	 Estonian	201
 Greek	3,469	 Jordanian	605	 Colombian	182
 Malaysian	3,123	 Iraqi	549	 Saint Vincentian	175
 Jamaican	2,709	 Guyanese	526	 Barbadian	171
 Sri Lankan	2,683	 Belgian	525	 Ethiopian	170
 German	2,576	 Turkish	470	 South Korean	164
 Australian	2,468	 Cypriot	467	 Algerian	158
 Dutch	2,433	 Danish	466	 Indonesian	149
 South African	2,226	 Cameroonian	457	 Saint Lucian	147
 French	1,972	 Thai	442	 Bahraini	141
 Lithuanian	1,948	 Austrian	434	 Grenadian	134
 Kenyan	1,936	 Finnish	415	 Saudi Arabian	129
 American	1,734	 Somali	395	 Mexican	120
 Bangladeshi	1,659	 Gambian	378	 Moroccan	120
 Chinese	1,476	 Norwegian	365	 Central African	111
 Sudanese	1,465	 Malawian	355	 Serbian	100
 Hungarian	1,448	 Japanese	353	 Namibian	99
 Mauritian	1,354	 Croatian	351	 Dominican	98
 Bulgarian	1,353	 Maltese	349	 Israeli	95
 Canadian	1,318	 Ukrainian	344	 Tunisian	85

Top 102 nationalities shown of 216 total. Total number of staff: 1.51 million. For 2.0% of staff (29,659), nationality is unknown. Nationality is self-reported & might sometimes reflect cultural heritage instead of country of birth. FAQ: Nigerian & Nigerien are separate nationalities. 'Motswana' is a singular term for a person from Botswana. 'Congolese' covers Congo and DRC. 'UK/British' includes English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish. Flags: © 2017 Go Squared Ltd. <http://www.gosquared.com/>

Nationality of NHS staff in England

**UK nationals
(81.3%)**



Trends in NHS staff nationality have changed over the past decade.

In the early 2010s there was a rise in the proportion of staff reporting EU nationality. After the EU referendum this increase stopped and the proportion has fallen slightly.

In recent years there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of NHS staff reporting an Asian or African nationality.

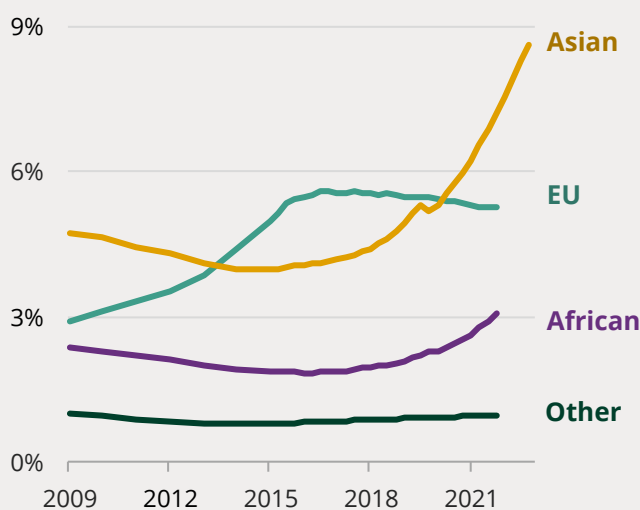
As of June 2023, 81.3% of NHS staff in England are British. 8.6% report an Asian nationality and 5.2% are EU nationals.

This varies in different parts of the country. In London, 30% of staff report a non-British nationality. In the North East and Yorkshire NHS region the proportion is 11%.

In total, 214 different nationalities were represented among NHS staff in June 2023.

Change in non-UK NHS staff since 2009

As a percentage of staff with known nationality



UK nationality in different NHS occupations



The reported nationality of NHS staff varies substantially between staff groups.

Overall, 18.7% of staff report a nationality other than British. For doctors this figure is 35.0%, and for nurses it is 27.2%.

18% of doctors and 16% of nurses report an Asian nationality.

Data source: NHS Digital, NHS Workforce Statistics, HCHS staff in post tables

1

Nationality of NHS staff

Understanding nationality data

Nationality as discussed here is self-reported, meaning that it may not always reflect a person's citizenship or country of birth. It may instead reflect cultural heritage. It is not a measure of immigration. For 2% of NHS workers, nationality is not recorded. Dual nationality is not captured.

The data measures staff working for NHS trusts and central organisations. It doesn't include contracted-out staff, GP practice staff, independent sector healthcare workers, or social care staff.

Sources

The data in this publication is sourced from NHS Digital – mostly from the quarterly supplements to [NHS Workforce Statistics](#) and supplementary information requests. The data is for June 2023 except where otherwise stated.

Devolved nations

The data covers England only, and in most cases there is no equivalent data available for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Most NHS staff in England are British, but a substantial minority are not. As of June 2023, 264,822 NHS staff reported a non-British nationality, accounting for 18.7% of all staff for whom a nationality is known. This is an increase from 222,107 (16.5%) in June 2022.

Between them, these staff reported over 200 different nationalities. The graphic on page 4 (above) shows the most common 102 nationalities among NHS staff. Indian, Filipino and Nigerian are the most-reported non-British nationalities.

The table below shows the number of staff in each nationality group. 122,000 staff (8.6%) reported an Asian nationality in June 2023, while 74,000 staff (5.2%) reported an EU nationality.

Nationality of NHS staff by country grouping

June 2023, England

Nationality group	Number	% of staff whose nationality is known
UK	1,151,419	81.3%
South Asia	75,573	5.3%
Sub-Saharan Africa	48,677	3.4%
EU (pre-2004 members)	47,617	3.4%
South East Asia	39,968	2.8%
EU (post-2004 members)	26,525	1.9%
Central & South America	6,634	0.5%
North Africa	5,018	0.4%
Middle East & Central Asia	3,828	0.3%
Oceania	3,321	0.2%
North America	3,063	0.2%
East Asia	2,850	0.2%
Europe (non-EU)	1,748	0.1%

Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#) (HSHC staff in post summary tables)

1.1

Changes over time: What happened after the 2016 EU referendum?

Why comparisons are not straightforward

Because of improvements to the coverage of NHS nationality data over time, comparisons of nationality in the NHS with earlier years should be made only with caution.

In June 2016 there were 89,548 NHS staff in England with an unknown nationality. By June 2023 this had fallen to 29,659 – a fall of two-thirds – while the total number of staff employed by the NHS has increased. This means that some apparent increases in staff numbers for nationalities or nationality groups are likely to result from improved data coverage rather than genuine increases.

In other words: because a higher proportion of NHS staff now have a recorded nationality, we would expect to see increases in the recorded number of staff with a given nationality even if there were no genuine changes in the actual number of staff with that nationality.

For example, in June 2016 there were 58,702 NHS staff with a recorded EU nationality, and in June 2023 there were 74,142 – an apparent rise. **But to present this as the full story would be misleading** because there are around 60,000 more staff for whom nationality is known now than in 2016. It is very likely that there has been an overall increase in the number of NHS staff with EU nationality since 2016, but we can't be sure about the scale of the change, and it would be misleading to calculate an increase based solely on the two numbers above.

Claims about changes in the number of EU staff (or other nationality groups) which don't mention the importance of staff with unknown nationality should be regarded with due scepticism.

Changes from 2010 onwards

The table overleaf shows changes the number and percentage of staff reporting UK, EU, Asian and African nationalities for selected dates since 2010 – for doctors, and nurses, and all staff. The table shows differing approaches to recruitment over time. Between 2010 and 2016, EU staff increased as a proportion of staff with known nationality (from 3.1% to 5.5%) while the number of Asian and African staff was static or declining.

This changed after 2016. In recent years there has been a large increase in the number and percentage of staff reporting Asian and African nationalities. The percentage of staff reporting an Asian nationality has risen from 4.1% to 8.6%, while the percentage reporting an African nationality has risen from

1.9% to 3.8%. Meanwhile the percentage of staff reporting an EU nationality fell slightly to 5.3%, and UK nationality fell from 87.8% to 81.3%.

Changes in the number and percentage of staff by nationality group since 2009

All staff							Headcount basis			
Date	Total	UK	Asia	EU	Africa	Unknown	UK as % of known	Asian as % of known	EU as % of known	African as % of known
Sep 2010	1,165,992	856,508	44,892	30,033	22,139	203,178	89.0%	4.7%	3.1%	2.3%
Sep 2013	1,111,823	881,681	40,733	38,335	19,938	123,149	89.2%	4.1%	3.9%	2.0%
Jun 2016	1,165,458	944,574	43,798	58,702	20,019	89,548	87.8%	4.1%	5.5%	1.9%
Dec 2018	1,226,733	1,009,572	52,317	63,949	23,012	67,804	87.1%	4.5%	5.5%	2.0%
Jun 2020	1,316,816	1,094,409	66,028	69,477	29,002	45,962	86.1%	5.2%	5.5%	2.3%
Jun 2022	1,377,148	1,122,931	96,965	70,735	41,330	32,110	83.5%	7.2%	5.3%	3.1%
Jun 2023	1,445,901	1,151,419	122,219	74,142	53,695	29,660	81.3%	8.6%	5.2%	3.8%

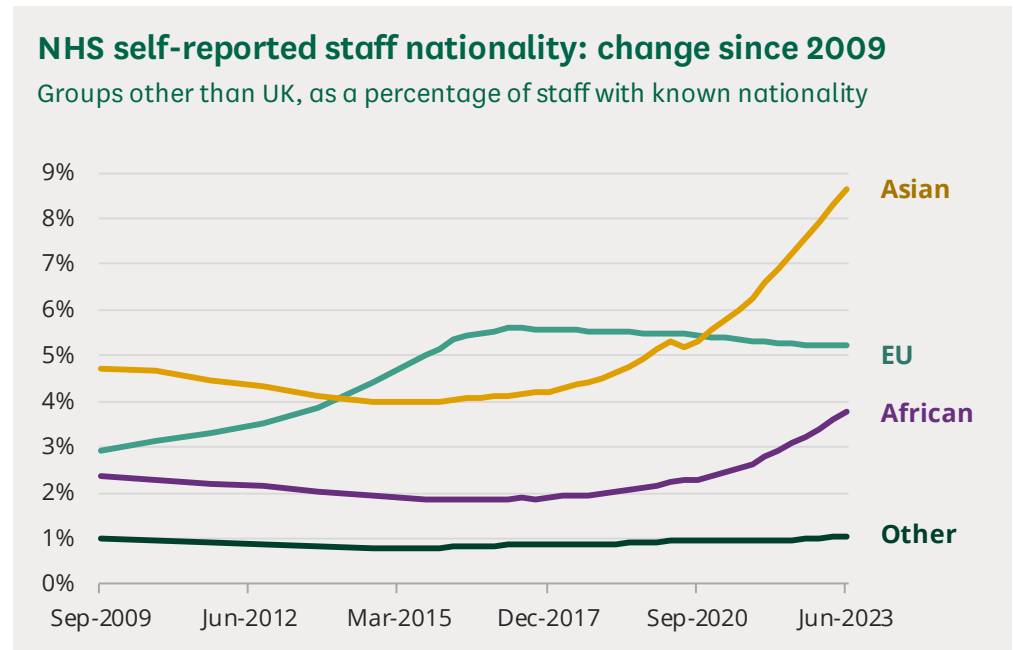
Hospital Doctors										
Date	Total	UK	Asia	EU	Africa	Unknown	UK as % of known	Asian as % of known	EU as % of known	African as % of known
Sep 2010	104,187	63,720	15,938	6,363	3,031	13,872	70.6%	17.6%	7.0%	3.4%
Sep 2013	107,832	73,724	13,026	8,531	2,667	8,605	74.3%	13.1%	8.6%	2.7%
Jun 2016	110,212	77,365	12,701	10,106	2,791	5,812	74.1%	12.2%	9.7%	2.7%
Dec 2018	119,723	83,245	14,638	10,872	4,243	4,977	72.5%	12.8%	9.5%	3.7%
Jun 2020	128,784	89,379	16,831	11,177	6,222	3,145	71.1%	13.4%	8.9%	5.0%
Jun 2022	136,322	90,355	21,650	10,862	8,909	2,258	67.4%	16.1%	8.1%	6.6%
Jun 2023	142,901	91,541	25,624	10,928	10,201	2,080	65.0%	18.2%	7.8%	7.2%

Nurses and Health Visitors										
Date	Total	UK	Asia	EU	Africa	Unknown	UK as % of known	Asian as % of known	EU as % of known	African as % of known
Sep 2010	317,171	224,334	17,335	7,895	10,280	54,504	85.4%	6.6%	3.0%	3.9%
Sep 2013	308,451	237,965	15,471	10,866	8,561	33,331	86.5%	5.6%	3.9%	3.1%
Jun 2016	317,508	246,759	16,238	21,828	7,132	23,537	83.9%	5.5%	7.4%	2.4%
Dec 2018	322,776	256,551	20,819	19,781	7,174	16,430	83.7%	6.8%	6.5%	2.3%
Jun 2020	337,653	266,733	30,791	19,155	8,326	10,004	81.4%	9.4%	5.8%	2.5%
Jun 2022	356,395	266,955	47,727	17,875	14,181	6,566	76.3%	13.6%	5.1%	4.1%
Jun 2023	372,648	266,948	60,331	17,785	18,313	5,843	72.8%	16.4%	4.8%	5.0%

Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#) (HSHC staff in post summary tables)

Nurses and health visitors are the only staff group to record a sustained fall in the **number** of recorded EU nationals since 2016. 17,785 (4.8%) of nurses reported an EU nationality in June 2023, compared with 21,828 (7.4%) in June 2016. In June 2023, 7.8% of doctors reported an EU nationality, down from 9.7% in June 2016 and a high of 9.9% in March 2017.

The chart on the next page shows the percentage of staff with a known nationality in different nationality groups since 2009, and illustrates the trends shown in the table above.



Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#) (HSHC staff in post summary tables)

The largest recorded increases in staff for individual nationalities since the pandemic are Indian, Nigerian, Filipino, Ghanaian, Pakistani and Egyptian.

2

Differences between English regions

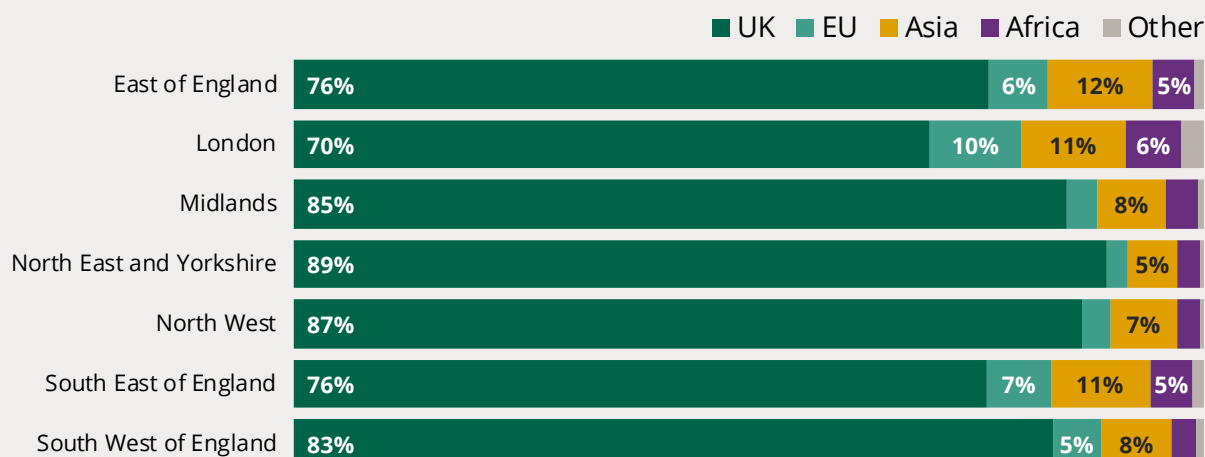
81.3% of NHS staff in England report a British nationality, but this percentage varies substantially between different regions.

In the North East and Yorkshire, 89.3% of staff with a known nationality are British, 5.3% report an Asian nationality, and 2.4% report an EU nationality. By contrast, in London, 70% of staff are British, 10% report an EU nationality, and 11.4% report an Asian nationality.

Outside of London, the percentage of staff with an EU nationality is highest in the South East (7.1%), while the percentage with an Asian nationality is highest in the East of England (11.5%).

The table and chart on the next page show differences between English regions as of June 2023.

NHS staff by region and nationality group, June 2023



NHS staff by region and nationality group, June 2023

Region	UK	Asia	EU	Africa	Other	Unknown	Total
East of England	99,845	15,031	8,443	6,003	1,278	5,201	135,801
London	164,882	26,893	23,609	14,277	5,960	5,775	241,396
Midlands	227,926	20,616	8,829	9,238	1,850	3,444	271,903
North East and Yorkshire	210,856	12,546	5,676	6,125	1,010	2,107	238,320
North West	190,004	15,807	6,950	5,621	1,081	909	220,372
South East	144,579	20,642	13,555	8,810	2,432	6,332	196,350
South West	113,770	10,706	7,108	3,640	1,159	5,892	142,275
England	1,151,419	122,219	74,142	53,695	14,766	29,660	1,445,901

The nationality group totals in this table do not exactly match those in other tables above. This is because they are aggregated from a different source table.

Source: [NHS Digital, Supplementary information on NHS staff by nationality and region](#)

2.1 Data for NHS hospital trusts

The table below shows estimates for the percentage of EU/EEA and non-EU/EEA staff at NHS trusts as of June 2023. The 20 trusts with the highest proportion in each category are shown.

Imperial College trust in London had the highest proportion of staff reporting EU/EEA nationality, at 14.4%. King's College trust in London had the highest proportion of staff reporting a nationality of a non-EU/EEA country, at 31.4%.

Organisations with a larger percentage of EU/EEA staff are mostly in London and the South East. Organisations with a larger percentage of non-EU/EEA staff were mostly in London and the East of England.

These percentages exclude staff with unknown nationality. Some trusts have a substantial number of staff with unknown nationality, so comparisons should be made with some caution.

Staff with non-UK nationality by Trust, June 2023

EU/EEA nationality (top 20 trusts)

Imperial College Healthcare Trust (London)	14.4%
St George's Univ Hospitals Trust (London)	13.8%
Royal Papworth Hospital Trust (Cambridge)	13.4%
Camden and Islington Trust	13.2%
Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children Trust	13.1%
University College London Hospitals Trust	12.8%
Tavistock and Portman Trust (London)	12.4%
Guy's and St Thomas' Trust (London)	12.4%
Whittington Health Trust (London)	11.7%
Oxford University Hospitals Trust	11.6%
Royal Berkshire Trust	11.6%
Chelsea and Westminster Hospital Trust	11.3%
Royal Free London Trust	11.0%
Moorfields Eye Hospital Trust (London)	10.6%
Royal Marsden Trust (London)	10.5%
West London Trust	10.3%
University Hospital Southampton Trust	10.3%
Central and North West London Trust	10.2%
Kingston Hospital Trust	10.0%
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey MH Trust	10.0%

Non-EU/EEA nationality (top 20 trusts)

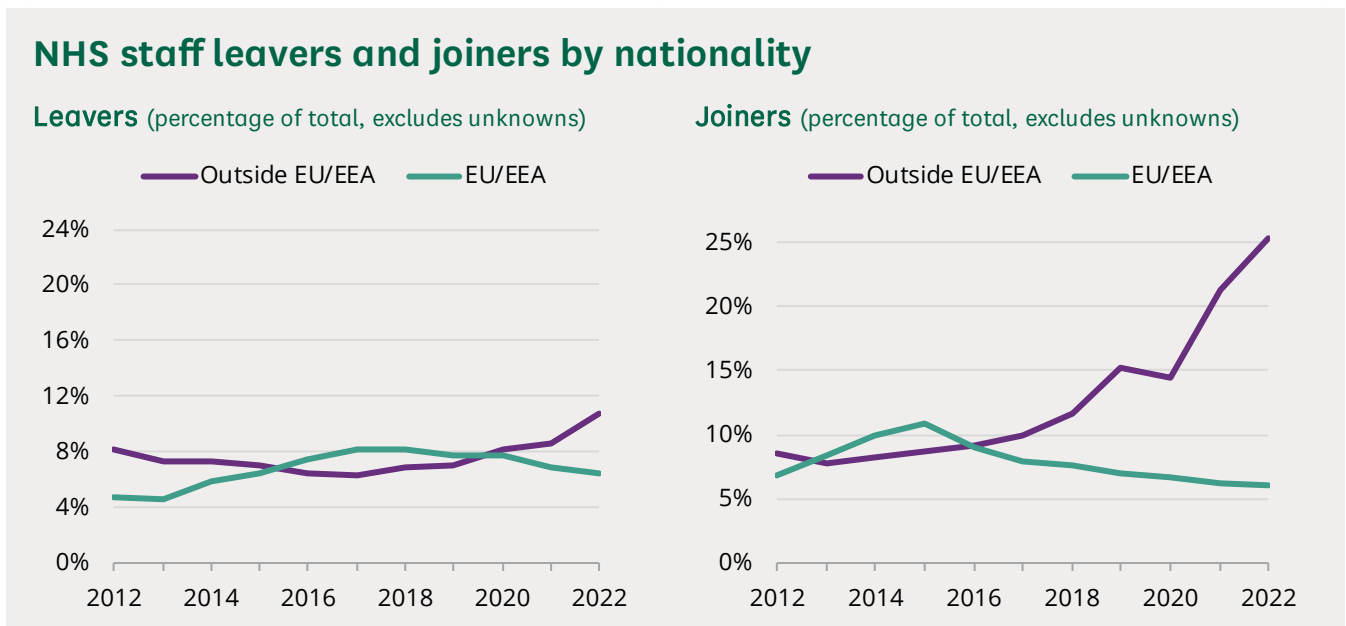
King's College Hospital Trust (London)	31.4%
London North West University Healthcare Trust	30.3%
Surrey and Sussex Healthcare Trust	29.0%
Barking, Havering and Redbridge Trust	27.9%
West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals Trust	26.2%
Royal Berkshire Trust	25.5%
Lewisham and Greenwich Trust	25.5%
Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals Trust	25.4%
Frimley Health Trust	25.3%
Princess Alexandra Hospital Trust (Harlow)	24.7%
East and North Hertfordshire Trust	24.7%
Medway Trust	24.4%
Imperial College Healthcare Trust (London)	24.4%
East Kent Hospitals University Trust	24.4%
Chelsea and Westminster Hospital Trust	24.2%
Hillingdon Hospitals Trust	24.2%
Milton Keynes University Hospital Trust	24.0%
Kingston Hospital Trust	23.5%
Royal Free London Trust	23.5%
Cambridge University Hospitals Trust	23.2%

Source: [NHS Digital, Supplementary information on NHS staff by nationality and region](#)

3 Joiners and leavers by nationality

The charts below show the percentage of people leaving or joining the NHS by nationality. Being a leaver in this data does not necessarily mean the person has left the UK – just that they have left NHS employment.¹ As with other calculations in this document, these charts show the percentage of staff for whom a nationality is known.

The data shows that the proportion of all joiners reporting an EU/EEA nationality has fallen since 2015/16, from 10.9% to 6.0%. Meanwhile the percentage of joiners with a non-EU/EEA nationality rose sharply between 2017/18 and 2022/23, from 9.9% to 25.3%.



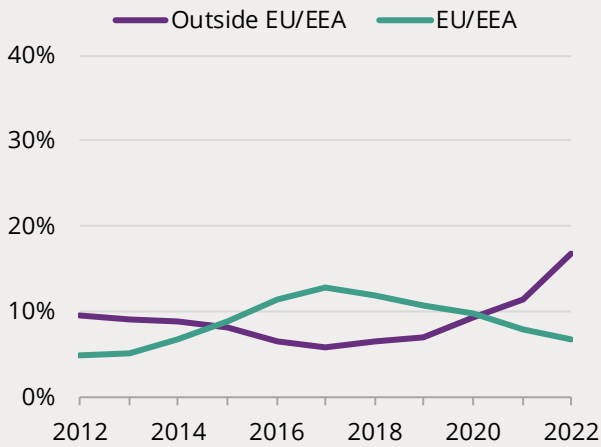
Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#) (Turnover tables)

These trends are more pronounced for nurses and health visitors, as shown in the chart on the next page. The proportion of EU/EEA joiners in this staff group rose as high as 19% in 2015/16 before falling sharply, and stood at 5% in 2022/23. This fall corresponded with a large rise in the proportion of nurse joiners reporting a non-EU/EEA nationality, which rose to 40% in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

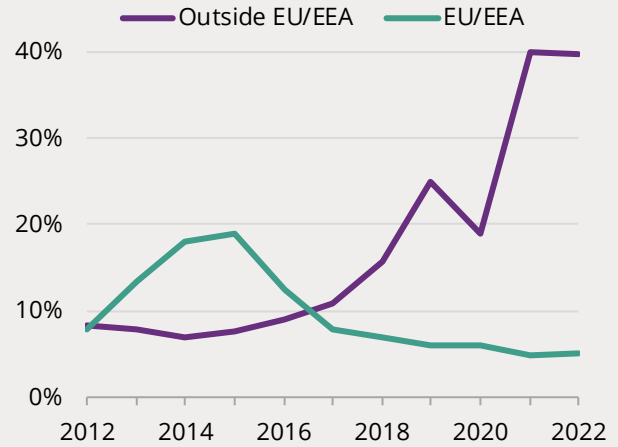
¹ Older data here is sourced from [NHS Digital supplementary information \(xlsx\)](#), while newer data is sourced from the turnover tables associated with the [quarterly detailed workforce publications](#).

Nurses and health visitors leavers and joiners by nationality

Leavers (percentage of total, excludes unknowns)



Joiners (percentage of total, excludes unknowns)



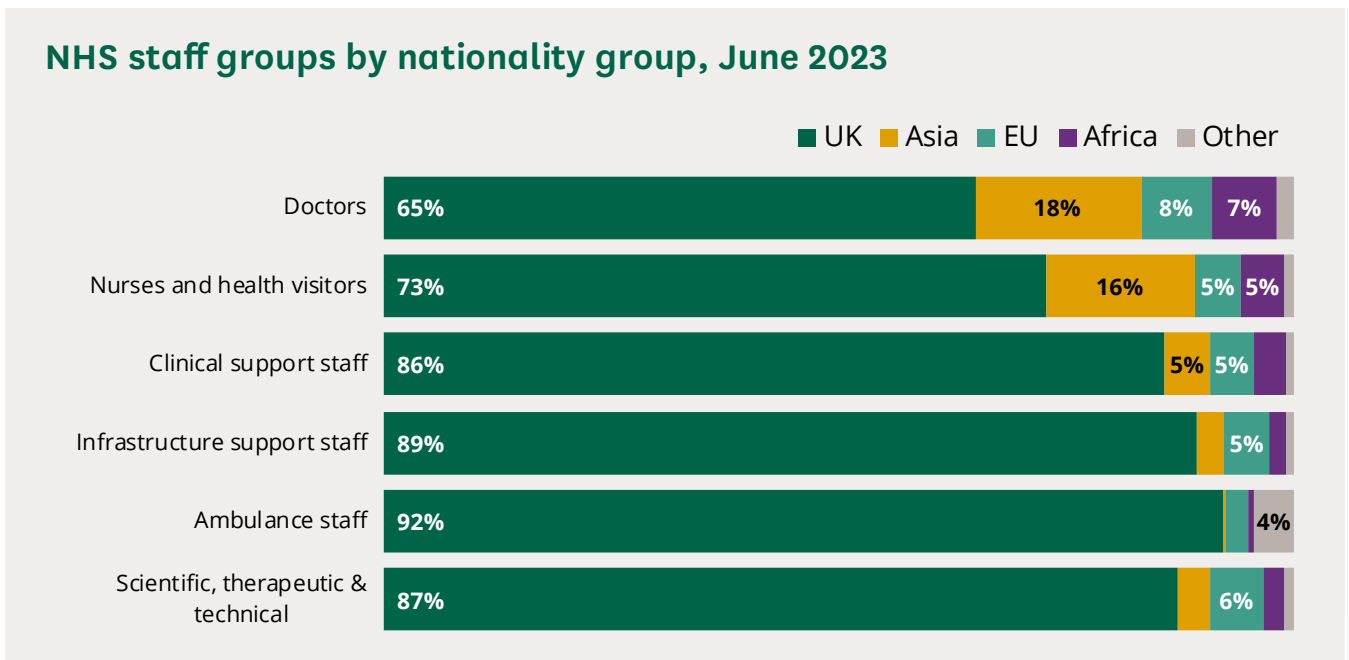
Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#) (Turnover tables)

Correspondingly, the proportion of joiners with UK nationality has fallen in recent years. In total, 68.7% of joiners had UK nationality in 2022/23, down from a range of 80-85% in the pre-pandemic years. For nurses it fell to 55.3%, down from a range of 75-85% in the years before the pandemic.

4 Differences between staff groups

The nationality of staff varies between staff groups. The chart below shows that doctors are most likely to report a non-British nationality, while ambulance staff are least likely to report a non-British nationality.

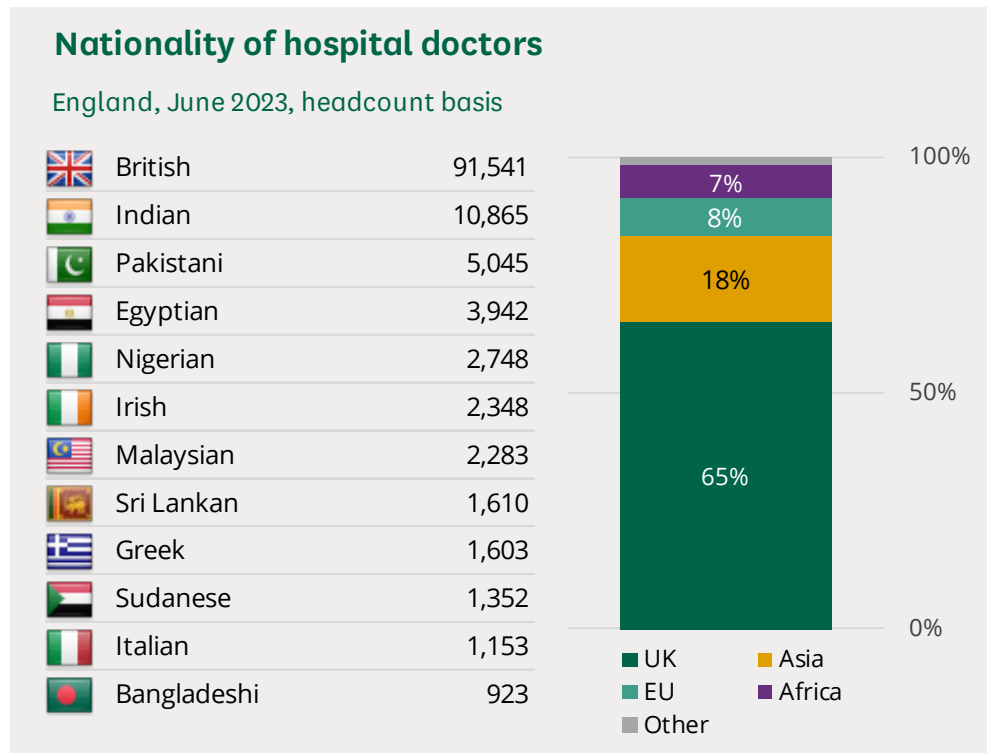
The charts and tables on the following pages explore data for selected staff groups.



Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#) (Staff in post summary tables)

4.1 Doctors

65% of doctors working in English hospital and community health services in June 2023 reported a British nationality. This category doesn't include GPs.



Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#) (staff in post summary tables)

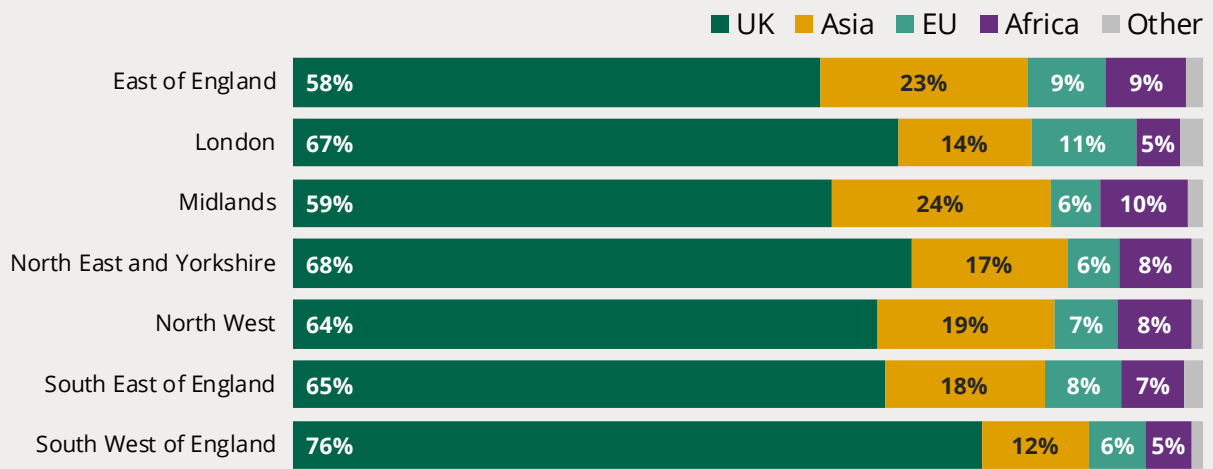
18% of doctors (25,634) reported an Asian nationality. 8% of doctors (10,936) reported an EU nationality, and 7% of doctors (8,909) reported an African nationality.

Since March 2020 the largest increases in reported nationality among doctors have been British, Indian, Egyptian, Pakistani and Nigerian. There have been small falls in the number of reported Greek, German, Romanian and Polish doctors.

These figures vary by English region, as the chart on the next page shows. However, the percentage of non-British doctors has the most uniform regional distribution of any staff category.

Unlike in other categories, London does not have an above-average percentage of doctors with a non-UK nationality. In the East of England, 42% of doctors report a nationality other than British, with 23% reporting an Asian nationality.

Hospital doctors by region and nationality group, June 2023



Source: [NHS Digital. Supplementary information on NHS staff by nationality and region](#)

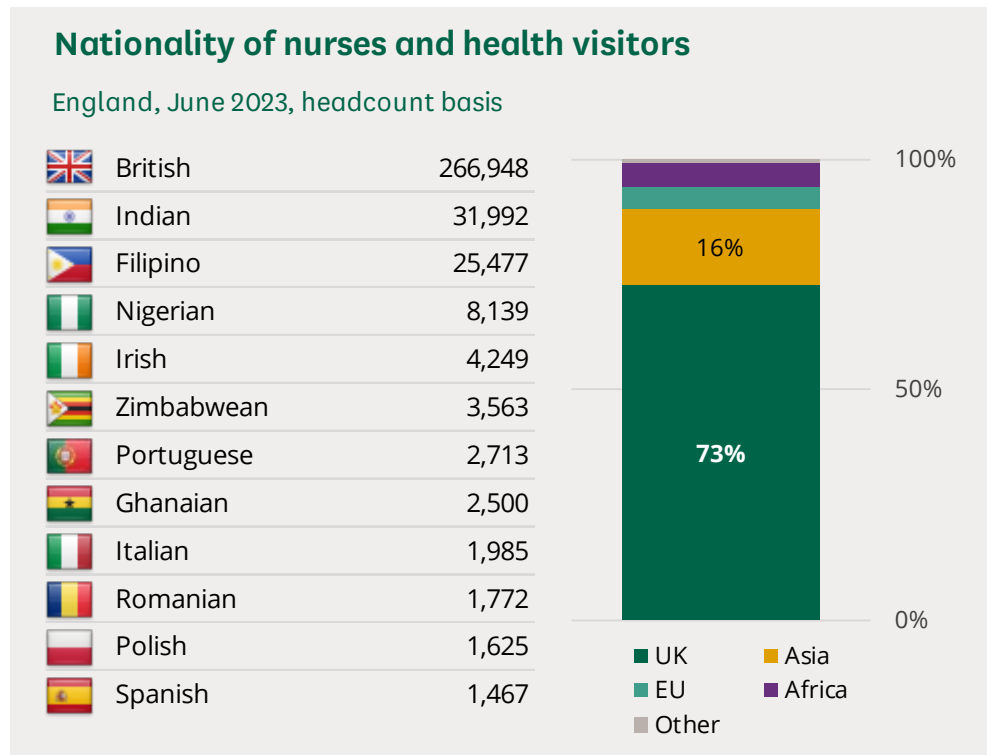
4.2

Nurses

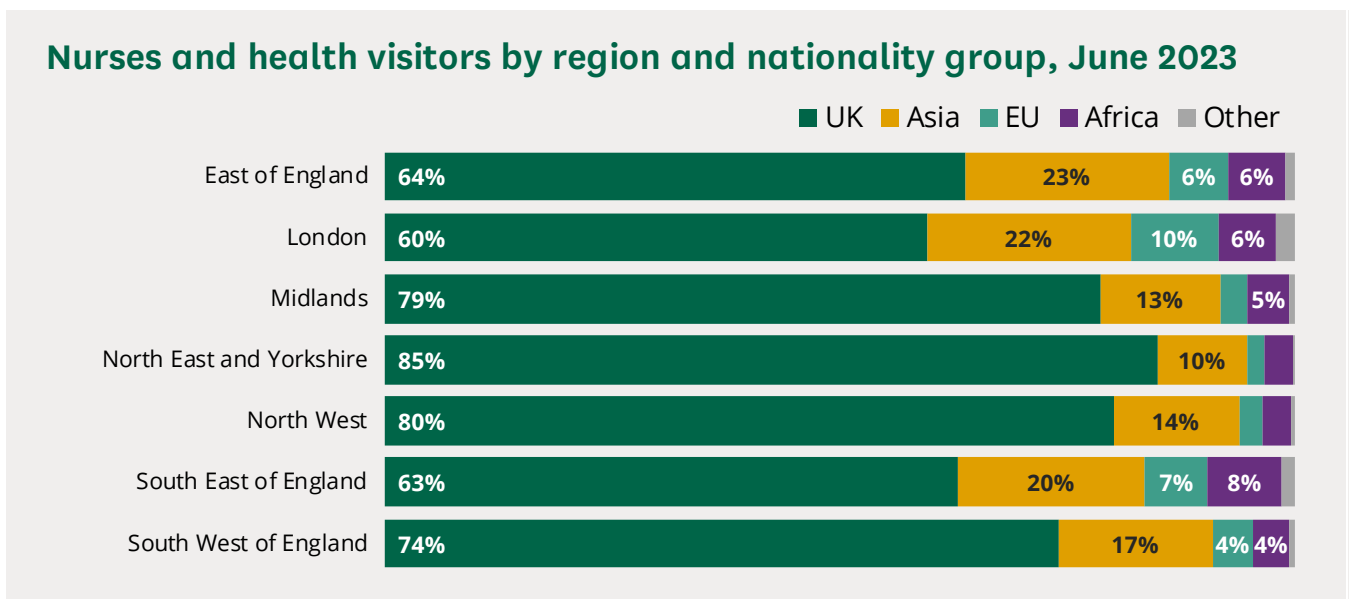
73% of nurses and health visitors in England’s hospital and community health services reported a British nationality in June 2023.

16% of nurses (60,336) reported an Asian nationality, up from 7% in March 2019. 95% of these were either Filipino or Indian. 5% of nurses reported an EU nationality (17,788), and 5% of nurses reported an African nationality (18,313).

These figures vary more between English regions than those for doctors, as the chart on the next page shows. In the North East and Yorkshire, British nurses make up 85% of the total, while in London the figure is 60%. The proportion of EU nurses is highest in London (10%), while the proportion of Asian nurses is highest in the East of England (23%).



Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#)



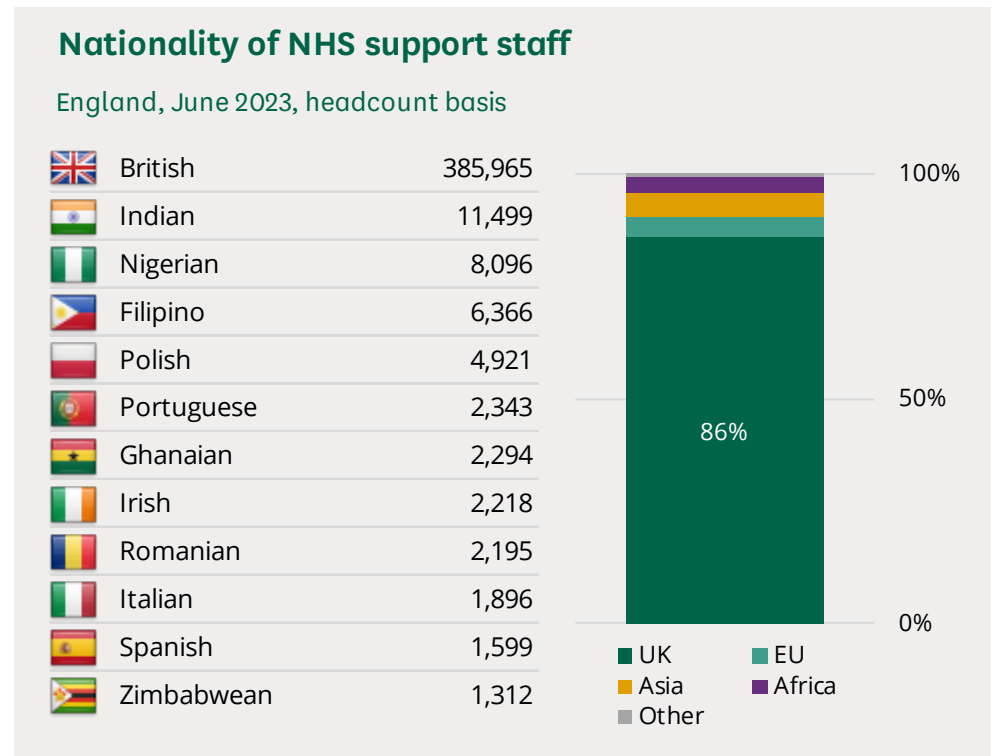
Source: [NHS Digital, Supplementary information on NHS staff by nationality and region](#)

Since March 2020 there has been a fall in the number of nurses reporting Spanish, Portuguese, Irish and Italian nationality. The nationalities with the largest reported increases are Indian, Filipino, Nigerian and Ghanaian, while the number of nurses reporting British nationality has remained static.

4.3 Clinical support staff

Clinical support staff includes those who provide support to doctors and nurses, to ambulance staff, and to scientific and therapeutic services, such as healthcare assistants.

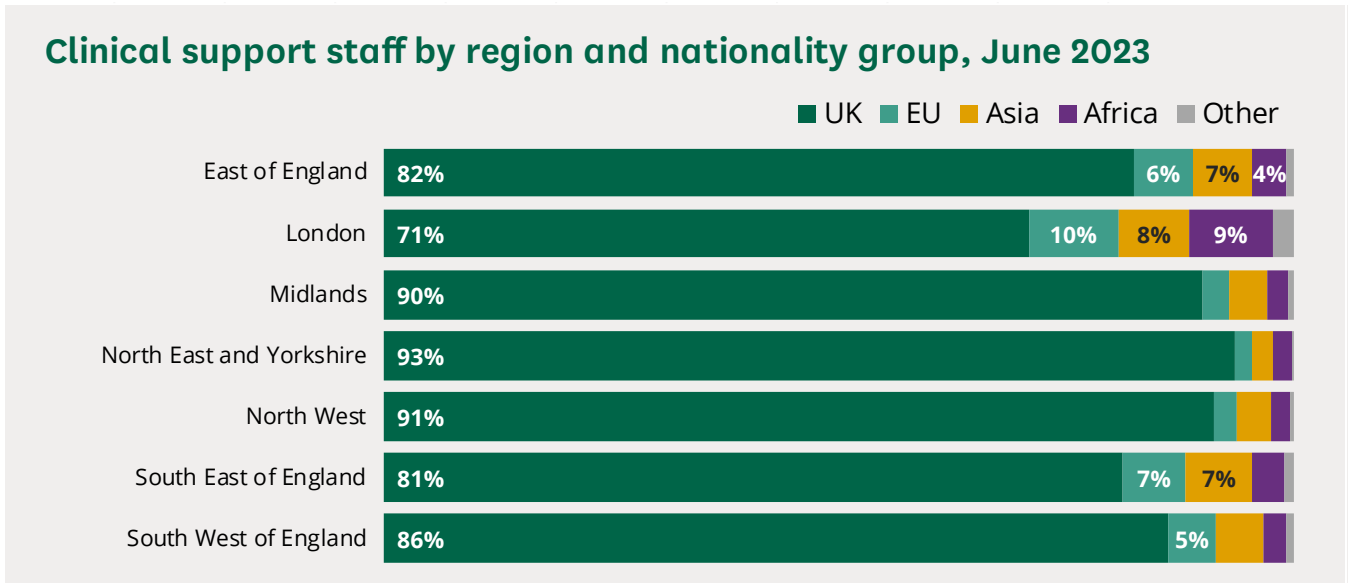
86% of clinical support staff reported a British nationality in June 2023.



Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#)

5% of support staff (21,144) reported an EU nationality. 5% of support staff (22,787) reported an Asian nationality, and 4% (16,014) reported an African nationality.

The chart overleaf shows variation by region. 29% of support staff in London reported a non-UK nationality. Meanwhile the proportion of British support staff is above 90% in the North East and Yorkshire region and the North West region.



Source: [NHS Digital, Supplementary information on NHS staff by nationality and region](#)

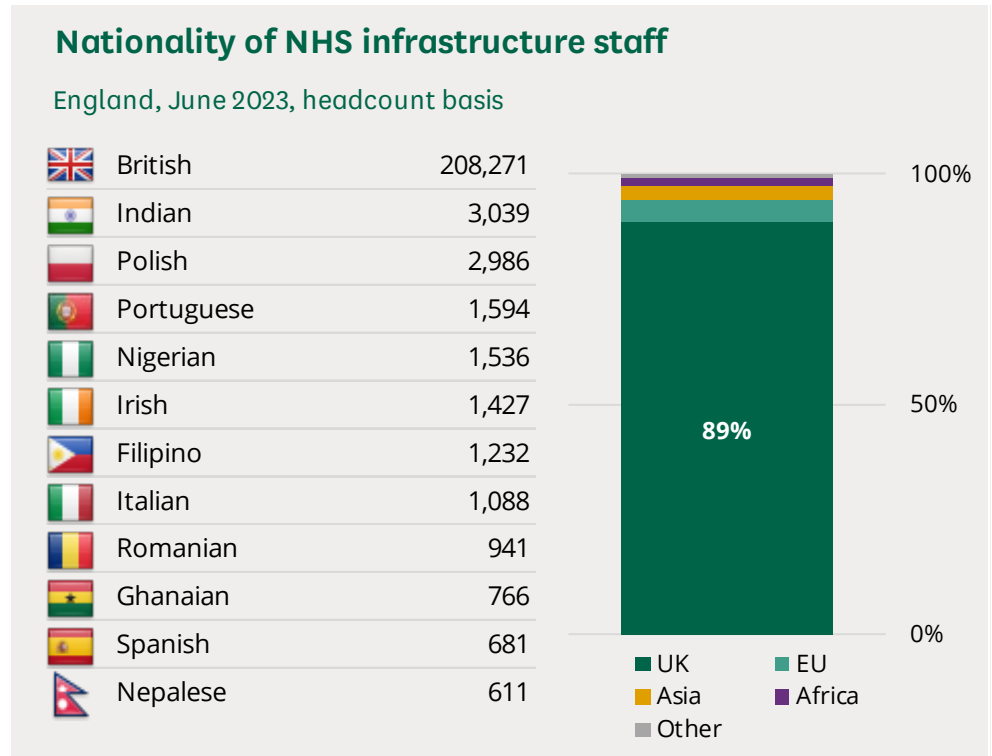
4.4 Infrastructure support staff

This category includes those working in central functions, hotel property and estates, as well as managers and senior managers. These figures include only staff directly employed by the NHS, and not contracted-out posts.

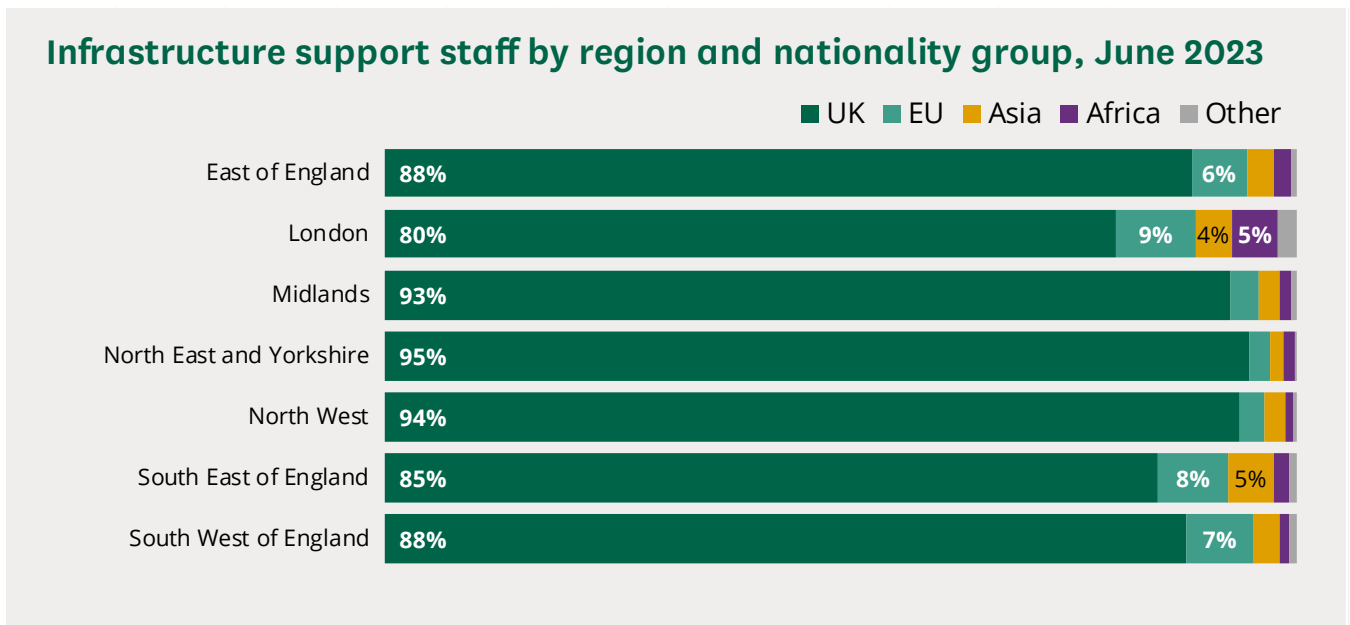
In June 2023, 89% of infrastructure support staff reported a UK nationality.

4.9% of infrastructure support staff (11,876) reported an EU nationality. 3% of infrastructure support staff (6,640) reported an Asian nationality, and 2% (4,237) reported an African nationality.

In each region of England, over four-fifths of infrastructure support staff reported a UK nationality. The proportion varies from 80% in London to 95% in North East and Yorkshire.



Source: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics June 2023](#)



Source: [NHS Digital, Supplementary information on NHS staff by nationality and region](#)

4.5

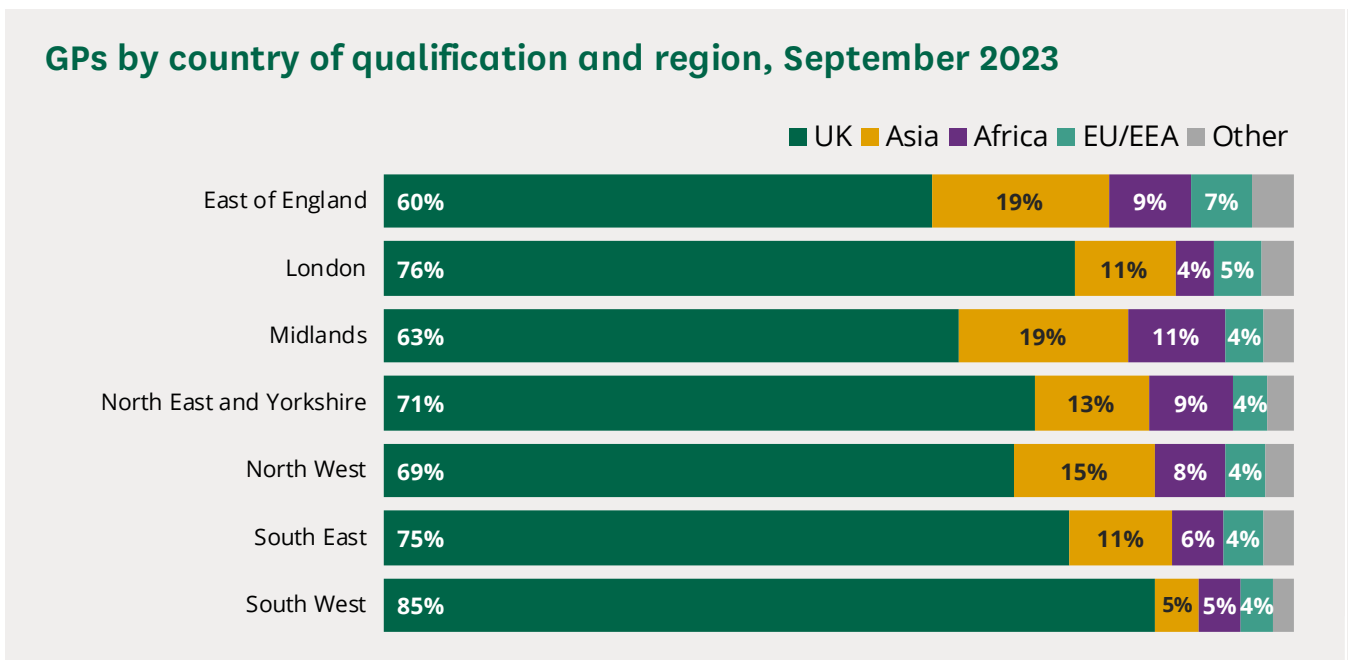
GPs

No data is collected on the nationality of GPs. However, NHS Digital publishes data on the country where GPs gained their primary medical qualification as part of the individual-level data in the [GP Practice Workforce publication](#). Country of qualification is recorded for 97% of GPs. This data is only recorded by country group, so we do not know how many GPs qualified in specific countries.

71% of GPs qualified in the UK, and this varies by region. As the chart below shows, 60% of GPs in the East of England qualified in the UK, compared with 85% of GPs in the South West.

2,110 (4.6%) of GPs in England qualified in EU or EEA countries, while 13.6% (6,254) qualified in Asia and 7.4% (3,431) qualified in Africa.

London has the second lowest proportion of GPs qualifying overseas of all NHS regions.



Source: NHS Digital, [General Practice Workforce](#), September 2023, individual-level data file

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