
Facts and figures on the nursing workforce

Nurses: the basics

330,000

The number of **full-time equivalent nurses** in the NHS in England (excluding health visitors) as of June 2022, which represents an **18% increase** in a decade. Despite this increase, this is **behind the level** needed to meet the Conservative manifesto commitment for an additional 50,000 nurses in England by 2024.

43%

In the year to June 2022, **over four in 10 (43%) nurses** who joined the NHS in England were non-UK nationals.

60,900

The number of full-time equivalent nurses working in NHS hospital and community health services in Scotland.¹

22,900

The number of full-time equivalent nurses working in NHS hospital and community health services in Wales.^{1,2}

15,900

The number of full-time equivalent nurses working in NHS hospital and community health services in Northern Ireland.^{1,3}

1. Includes health visitors but excludes general practice nurses.
2. As of March 2022.
3. Estimates derived by applying the proportion of nurses on the NMC register with an address in Northern Ireland to the number of staff employed in health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland.

Nurse pay: the facts

£27,055

The **starting basic salary for nurses** in England and Wales. This has increased by more than inflation since 2012/13. It is higher than the average graduate starting salary, which ranges from £24,000 to £26,999.¹

£35,989

The **average annual NHS earnings** of a nurse in England in the year to March 2022 (i.e. prior to the new pay settlement), including those working part-time. The full-time equivalent average salary is around **£39,900 or £40,500** depending on how you calculate it.²

£2,500

The amount this average had fallen behind inflation between 2010/11 and 2021/22. We estimate this may rise to **£4,800 in 2022/23** depending on how inflation changes over the rest of the year.

The average NHS doctor salary is **2.3 times** more than the average NHS nurse salary. The NHS earnings of an average consultant is 3.3 times higher.

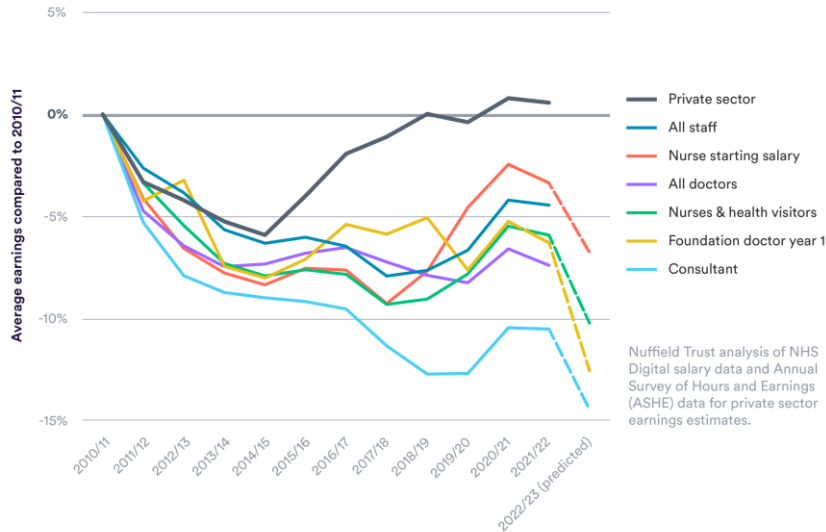
1. HESA Graduate Outcomes 2019/20: Summary Statistics. Starting salary excludes non-basic pay, including any high cost area supplement (i.e. London weighting).

2. Nuffield Trust analysis of NHS Digital annual earning estimates.

Nurse pay: the facts

NHS staff pay and the cost of living compared to 2010

Financial years, earnings in real terms based on consumer price index



The average nurse salary has not kept pace with inflation, or with wage increases from the private sector, for over a decade now.

Before the new pay settlement, typical salaries for nurses had fallen by 5.9% in real terms compared to 2010/11 levels – this compares to a 0.6% real-terms increase in private sector pay over the same period.

Depending on how inflation changes over the remainder of the year, we predict that nurses' real-terms pay this year will fall to around 10% below levels in 2010/11.

Problems in the workforce

1 in 9

NHS nurses in England **left active service** in the year to June 2022 (**40,365 nurses**). A similar proportion (one in nine) left their roles in Scotland (**7,470** in year to March 2022).

While over **44,500 nurses joined the NHS** in England (8,680 in Scotland) in the year to June 2022 – a record number – this is not enough to meet targets or fill vacancies.

46,800

The number of nursing vacancies in England as of June 2022. Some of these were filled with temporary (bank or agency) staff. However, when including other reasons for shortfalls, such as sickness absence, we estimate some **17,000 posts went unfilled** on any given day.

A survey from the RCN found that **feeling undervalued**, being under **too much pressure**, or **feeling exhausted** were the most common reasons why nurses think of leaving.

Staff retention is a concern across all staff groups. Published information on the reasons for leaving is inadequate, but out of the known reasons for leaving, in the three months to June 2022 almost as many hospital and community staff in England left due to **work-life balance** (6,900) as **retirement** (7,000).

Nurse pay: the settlement

Starting salaries and pay uplifts for full-time nurses, by UK country

Country	Pay settlement 2022/23		Pay settlement 2021/22		
	Starting salary (Band 5)	Uplift from previous year (across all bands)	Starting Salary (Band 5)	Uplift from previous year (across all bands)	One-off Covid-19 payment
England ¹	£27,055	Typically £1,400 ² (1.3% to 5.5%)	£25,655	£748 to £3,148 (3%)	£0
Wales					£735
Scotland	£27,409	£1,305 to £5,223 (5%)	£26,104	£800 to £1,004 (0.75% to 4%)	£500
Northern Ireland	£25,655	n/a	£25,655	£748 to £3,148 (3%)	£500

1. Nurses working in London and in the 'fringe' areas receive an additional high cost area supplement, worth between 5% and 20% of their basic salary.

2. The exceptions to this being the lowest pay band, which retains an additional £324 living wage uplift, and some pay levels where the increases were between £161 and £434 above the flat rate (equivalent to 4%).

For this current year, there was no pay deal in Northern Ireland in the absence of an Executive.

The Scottish government have since offered a flat-rate pay rise of £2,205 for 2022/23 (instead of the 5% uplift), which has not yet been applied to Scotland's pay scales.

In the previous year, on average, the deal was most generous in Scotland and least in England.

Nurse pay: the current dispute

The RCN are calling for a pay increase of **5% above the RPI rate** of inflation.

The government adopted the independent Pay Review Body's recommendations in full, which typically means a **£1,400 uplift to pay levels** for nurses and other staff on the Agenda for Change contract (excluding nurses working in GP practices).

Around one in seven (16%) of existing nurses are due an annual increment to reflect their years of service. These are worth between **5% and 16%** (or £1,048 to £14,340).

This means that, while the pay deal alone was equivalent to, on average, 4.3% for qualified nurses, the pay packet of an existing nurse is expected to rise by an **average of 5.8%** by March 2023.

The Pay Review body estimates that, for the year 2022-23, each 1% increase in pay adds around **£500 million to the Agenda for Change pay bill** in England. (£30 million in Northern Ireland and £38 million in Wales). NHS employers have expressed concern that any pay uplift needs to be fully funded to ensure they can employ enough staff to meet service needs.

The Scottish government's revised offer is a flat rate of **£2,205 for staff on the Agenda for Change** contract.

Strikes: what do we know?

104 NHS provider trusts in England reached the 50% turnout threshold needed for strike action – around half the total of all trusts.

Across the organisations where nurses voted in favour of strike action, this equates to **roughly half (51%) of all nurses** working in hospital and community services in England. However, not all of these nurses will be members of the RCN, nor will all of them have voted in favour of striking.

When nurses strike, they will not be paid their regular salary but will receive **£50 per day** from the RCN.

In the South West, industrial action is planned at **all but one of 20 trusts** in the region. In London, just over **one quarter (26%)** plan to take strike action.

Most specialist trusts voted for strike action, compared to just over **four in 10 mental health trusts**.

The RCN has said that **urgent and emergency care** will continue to be provided during strikes, and services such as cancer treatment may be partly staffed. But services cannot be viewed in isolation from one another, and strikes are still likely to impact on services that will remain open, such as A&E.

Strikes: other examples

While this is the first time that there has been an RCN nurse strike in England, **nurses from other unions** went on strike in 1974 over pay.

Within the UK, nurses went on strike in **Northern Ireland in 2019** demanding a pay deal matching England and Wales, causing many operations to be cancelled and minor A&Es to be closed.

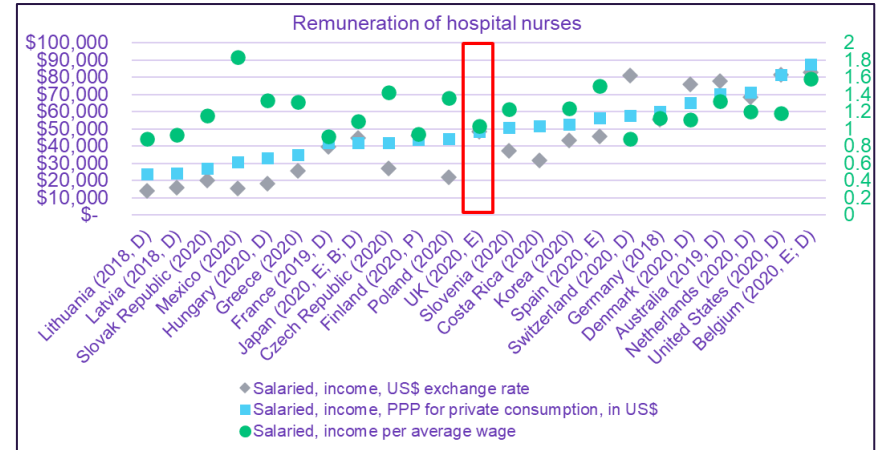
In **Denmark**, more than a tenth of nurses went on strike in 2021 after union members voted against a pay deal, which resulted in tens of thousands of operations and treatments being postponed. The strike was ended when the Danish government passed an emergency law to impose a 5.02% pay deal on the nurses.

Nursing in international context

The UK has **6.7 nurses employed in hospitals per 1,000 population**: fewer than Norway, Switzerland, Denmark and Belgium, and more than Germany, Iceland, Ireland and the Netherlands. Different countries may provide different services within and outside of hospital, so comparisons should be treated with some caution.

Data and definitions vary between countries, but the information available suggests **pay for UK nurses lags behind Anglosphere countries** (such as Australia and the US).

Of the 26 countries with broadly comparable data, on average, **specialist doctors are paid 2.3 times more than nurses**. Only South Korea appear to have a higher pay difference between specialist doctors and nurses (3.7 times more) than England (3.3 times higher).



E: Estimated
D: Different data definition
P: Provisional

Note: Each of the three measures provides a different way to compare salaries between countries; purchasing power parity (PPP) is typically our preferred measure.

Nurse pay: the process

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the NHS pay review body (PRB) present recommendations to the English and Welsh parliaments and the Northern Irish Assembly, based on evidence submitted to them each year. The Scottish government makes its own pay offer in direct negotiations with unions and employers.

Improving the process

Timeliness	There needs to be a stronger requirement to publish the PRB recommendations and response earlier. The most recent was published 110 days after it should take effect.
Affordability	When publishing the response to the PRB, governments need to be clear about how they can be funded through budgets and not efficiency assumptions.
Fairness	Being on a pay framework with the majority of NHS staff risks nurses being less likely to get increases than consultants, for example, as they may look less affordable.
Better consider pay progression	Pay increments in nursing end at five years. The pay deal seeks to retain some senior staff with a higher increase but, for most, this is worth just an additional 43p a day. The process should better account for career progression.
Evidence collection	The pay review bodies should actively commission research into the motivation of staff.



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