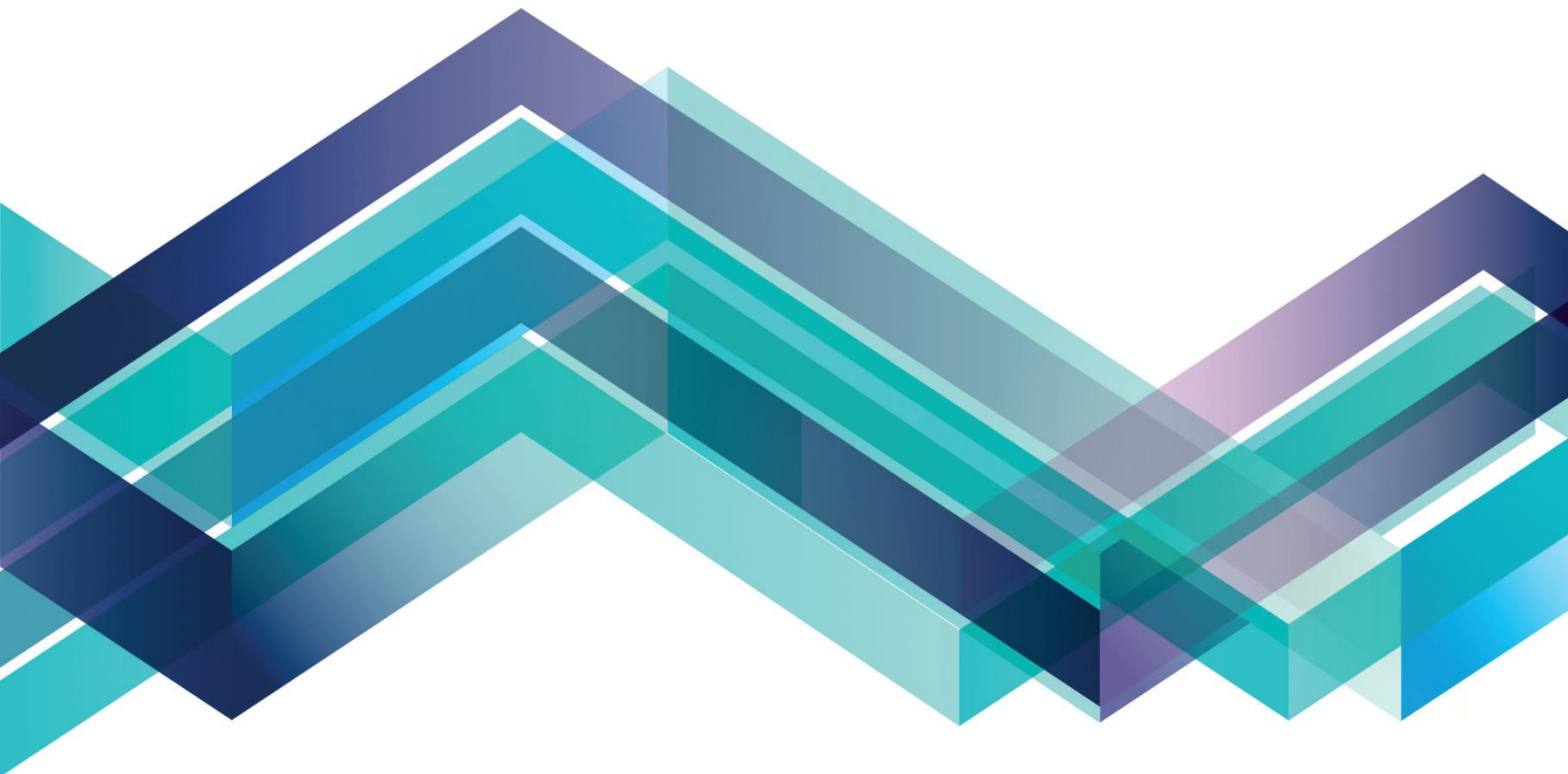


# The relationship between primary medical qualification and nationality, 2017 and 2018

November 2018



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# Introduction

## Background

Since the European Union Referendum on 23 June 2016, we have been reviewing and monitoring our registration data about the numbers of doctors of different nationalities licensed to practise in the UK.

In our working paper *The relationship between primary medical qualification region and nationality at the time of registration*, published in March 2017,<sup>\*</sup> we noted that we hold accurate information on the primary medical qualification (PMQ) region for every licensed doctor, but we have no nationality information for almost 67,000 doctors who joined the register before 2004. We used other registration data about these doctors to impute the missing nationalities at a broad group level. We then published estimated counts by nationality group.

## Updating our analysis to 2018

In this working paper we give an update to the 2017 data presented in the previous version. We want to share the latest available data and to show the changes in the numbers of licensed doctors between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2018 by nationality group and PMQ region.

Figures are presented at both an overall UK level and, where available, for each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For the UK, we've also included the flow of doctors taking up and relinquishing licences.

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<sup>\*</sup>The published version of the working paper is at [https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/final-nationality-update\\_pdf-74268027.pdf](https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/final-nationality-update_pdf-74268027.pdf).

# Analysis method

## Calculating counts, flows and net changes

The approach taken to measuring the number of doctors licensed to practise in the UK in each year, and the flows in and out over the last year, is summarised in Figure 1 (below).

**Figure 1:** Flows of licensed doctors between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2018



In total, 226,665 doctors remained licensed. 10,067 doctors from the 2017 dataset did not appear in the 2018 dataset, and were counted as having relinquished their licences. 15,768 new doctors appeared, and were counted as having taken up licences.

## Defining nationality groups and PMQ regions

The three nationality groups we are reporting on here are:

### **British (including Irish citizens born in Northern Ireland\*)**

This group comprises doctors where at least one of their nationalities is British, or is from a country that qualifies them for British citizenship. These countries are set out on the UK government's website<sup>†</sup> and include territories such as Gibraltar and Bermuda.

### **EEA national**

This group is made up of doctors who are not in the group above and where at least one of their nationalities is from a country in the European Economic Area (EEA). For the purposes of registration, the EEA is the 27 EU countries (without the UK), plus Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

\* Northern Ireland is part of the UK. However, under [the Belfast Agreement](#), also known as the Good Friday Agreement, people born in Northern Ireland can choose to be British citizens, Irish citizens or both. If they choose to be both British and Irish citizens, this means they have a dual citizenship.

<sup>†</sup> See the full list at <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-british-nationality/>

In this paper, EEA nationality therefore excludes British doctors and those doctors from outside the EEA with enforceable European Community rights.

### **Non-EEA national**

Doctors with all of their nationalities from countries outside the EEA are placed in this group.

The countries where primary medical qualifications (PMQ) are obtained are, by convention, grouped into three regions. We refer to doctors who qualified in these regions as:

### **UK graduates**

Doctors who gained their PMQ in the UK.

### **EEA graduates**

Doctors who gained their PMQ in the EEA, but outside the UK, and who are EEA nationals or have European Community rights to be treated as EEA nationals.

### **International medical graduates (IMGs)**

Doctors who gained their primary medical qualification outside the UK, EEA and Switzerland and who do not have European Community rights to work in the UK.

## Results

The results of the analysis are presented in three sections:

- UK counts for 2017 and 2018
- UK in-flow and out-flow between 2017 and 2018
- England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland counts for 2017 and 2018

In each section, the results are presented by nationality group then by PMQ region.

### UK counts for 2017 and 2018

The number of doctors licensed to practise in the UK in 2017 and 2018, together with the net changes between the two years, are shown in table 1.

**Table 1:** Licensed doctors in the UK 2017 to 2018, by nationality and by PMQ region

Nationality	2017		2018		Change	
	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent
<b>British</b>	157,700	66.6	160,439	66.2	+ 2,739	+ 1.7
<b>EEA</b>	24,929	10.5	25,213	10.4	+ 284	+ 1.1
<b>Non-EEA</b>	54,103	22.9	56,760	23.4	+ 2,657	+ 4.9
<b>Total</b>	236,732		242,412*		+ 5,680	

PMQ region	2017		2018		Change	
	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent
<b>UK graduate</b>	158,120	66.8	161,070	66.4	+ 2,950	+ 1.9
<b>EEA graduate</b>	21,610	9.1	21,791	9.0	+ 181	+ 0.8
<b>IMG</b>	57,002	24.1	59,572	24.6	+ 2,570	+ 4.5
<b>Total</b>	236,732		242,433		+ 5,701	

\*This number differs from the 2018 total licensed doctors number shown in figure 1 due to 21 doctors who provided no nationality information when taking up a license in 2018. This issue is discussed in the Limitations of the analysis section.

Between 2017 and 2018 there were 5,680 additional licensed doctors, the strongest relative growth by nationality group was for non-EEA nationals and, by PMQ, for IMGs.

### Growth in Non-EEA and EEA nationals was higher than growth of IMGs and EEA graduates

It is interesting to note that the growth in the number of doctors with EEA nationality is higher than the growth in doctors who graduated in the EEA, and the same is true of non-EEA nationality and IMG doctors.

Table 1 (above) shows that the number of licensed EEA graduates increased by only 181 (a 0.8 % increase from 2017), while the number of licensed EEA nationals increased by 284 (a 1.1 % increase). Also, the number of licensed IMGs increased by 2,570 (4.5%), while the number of non-EEA nationals increased by 2,657 (4.9%). This observation is broadly consistent with non-UK nationals qualifying at UK medical schools and going on to practise medicine in the UK, which we see in the data we have already published in our GMC reference tables.\*

This difference must be cautiously interpreted because the number of EEA nationals relinquishing their licence will include some doctors whose nationality at time of registration has been imputed, rather than known for certain. In contrast, we know the nationality of the EEA nationals who gained a licence for certain. The figures do, however, indicate a material difference in trend, also described in the next section.

## UK in-flows and out-flows between 2017 and 2018

The net changes in numbers of licensed doctors discussed in the previous section represent a balance between in-flows (doctors taking up licences) and out-flows (doctors relinquishing their licences). These flows are analysed in table 2.

**Table 2** In-flows and out-flows of licensed doctors in the UK by nationality from June 2017 to June 2018<sup>†</sup>

Nationality	2017 count	Taking up a licence 2017-18		Relinquishing a licence 2017-18	
		Count	Rate (per cent)	Count	Rate (per cent)
<b>British</b>	157,700	7,651	4.9	5,131	3.3
<b>EEA</b>	24,929	2,519	10.1	2,223	8.9
<b>Non-EEA</b>	54,103	5,577	10.3	2,713	5.0
<b>Total</b>	236,732	15,747	6.7	10,067	4.3

PMQ region	2017 count	Taking up a licence 2017-18		Relinquishing a licence 2017-18	
		Count	Rate (per cent)	Count	Rate (per cent)
<b>UK graduate</b>	158,120	8,080	5.1	5,130	3.2
<b>EEA graduate</b>	21,610	2,154	10.0	1,973	9.1
<b>IMG</b>	57,002	5,534	9.7	2,964	5.2
<b>Total</b>	236,732	15,768	6.7	10,067	4.3

\*Data about the nationalities of UK medical students is in the GMC reference tables ([www.gmc-uk.org/somep2017](http://www.gmc-uk.org/somep2017)). Please note, updated reference tables will be available in November 2018.

<sup>†</sup>A small proportion of doctors (234) changed nationality group between 2017 and 2018.

### **EEA nationals are a highly mobile workforce**

Out of the doctors with British nationality who had a licence to practise in 2018, 4.9% (7,651) had taken up their licence in that year, and 3.3% (5,131) relinquished their licence that year (table 2).

By comparison, 10.1% (2,519) of doctors with EEA nationality took up a licence to practise between 2017 and 2018 and 8.9% (2,223) relinquished their licence that year.

### **More EEA nationals than EEA graduates are joining the workforce**

The increase in the number of licensed EEA nationals between 2017 and 2018 was driven mainly by the larger number of EEA nationals who took up licences compared to the smaller number who relinquished them (table 2).

This shows a greater increase in the number of EEA nationals taking up a licence compared with EEA graduates. There is no uncertainty about the nationalities of those doctors taking up licences between June 2017 and June 2018, as we now record nationality at the time of registration.

## **UK country counts for 2017 and 2018**

Country level nationality statistics are less robust than those at the UK level presented in the previous sections. They are based on smaller numbers, especially in Wales and Northern Ireland, and subject to uncertainty in both the definition of nationality for those doctors with missing data and the quality of data available about where those doctors work.

As a consequence, only counts of the number of licensed doctors and net changes are presented here, not the numbers relinquishing and taking up licences. Nationality group is shown in table 3 and PMQ region in table 4.



**Table 3:** Licensed doctors by UK country and nationality in June 2017 and 2018

Region	Nationality	2017		2018		Change	
		Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent
England	British	129,112	66.5	131,790	66.0	+ 2,678	+ 2.1
	EEA nationality	17,894	9.2	18,546	9.3	+ 652	+ 3.6
	Non-EEA nationality	47,057	24.2	49,321	24.7	+ 2,264	+ 4.8
	Total	194,063		199,657		+ 5,594	+ 2.9
Scotland	British	16,180	80.1	16,266	80.2	+ 86	+ 0.5
	EEA nationality	1,558	7.7	1,576	7.8	+ 18	+ 1.2
	Non-EEA nationality	2,468	12.2	2,428	12.0	- 40	- 1.6
	Total	20,206		20,270		+ 64	+ 0.3
Wales	British	6,750	68.3	6,886	68.0	+ 136	+ 2.0
	EEA nationality	671	6.8	706	7.0	+ 35	+ 5.2
	Non-EEA nationality	2,468	25.0	2,539	25.1	+ 71	+ 2.9
	Total	9,889		10,131		+ 242	+ 2.4
Northern Ireland	Non-EEA nationality	336	5.4	341	5.4	+ 5	+ 1.5
	Total	6,279		6,282		+ 3	+ 0.0
Non-UK or location not recorded	British	811	39.6	717	37.1	- 94	- 11.6
	EEA nationality	825	40.3	785	40.6	- 40	- 4.8
	Non-EEA nationality	410	20.0	430	22.3	+ 20	+ 4.9
	Total	2,046		1,932		- 114	- 5.6

Comparing first the results for England and Scotland, tables 3 and 4 show that England has higher proportions of non-EEA national doctors and IMGs, and Scotland has higher proportions of British doctors and UK graduates. England has a greater rate of increase in the number of non-UK nationals than in the number of doctors with non-UK PMQs (both EEA nationals higher than those with EEA PMQs and non-EEA nationals higher than IMGs). Scotland, however, had an increase of EEA nationals yet a decrease of doctors with EEA PMQ.

Wales, like England, had relatively high proportions of non-EEA national doctors and IMGs. In Wales, the percentage increases in the numbers of doctors are similar for corresponding nationality and PMQ region categories, but they are based on fewer doctors.

**Table 4:** Licensed doctors in the UK by UK country and by PMQ region in June 2017 and June 2018

Region	PMQ	2017		2018		Change	
		Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent
England	UK	128,103	66.0	130,902	65.6	+ 2,799	+ 2.2
	EEA	16,447	8.5	17,004	8.5	+ 557	+ 3.4
	IMG	49,513	25.5	51,770	25.9	+ 2,257	+ 4.6
	Total	194,063		199,676		+ 5,613	+ 2.9
Scotland	UK	16,762	83.0	16,874	83.2	+ 112	+ 0.7
	EEA	1,187	5.9	1,174	5.8	- 13	- 1.1
	IMG	2,257	11.2	2,223	11.0	- 34	- 1.5
	Total	20,206		20,271		+ 65	+ 0.3
Wales	UK	6,663	67.4	6,806	67.2	+ 143	+ 2.1
	EEA	623	6.3	656	6.5	+ 33	+ 5.3
	IMG	2,603	26.3	2,669	26.3	+ 66	+ 2.5
	Total	9,889		10,131		+ 242	+ 2.4
Northern Ireland	UK	5,373	85.6	5,388	85.8	+ 15	+ 0.3
	EEA	550	8.8	544	8.7	- 6	- 1.1
	IMG	356	5.7	350	5.6	- 6	- 1.7
	Total	6,279		6,282		+ 3	+ 0.0
Non-UK or location not recorded	UK	828	40.5	733	37.9	- 95	- 11.5
	EEA	726	35.5	666	34.5	- 60	- 8.3
	IMG	492	24.0	533	27.6	+ 41	+ 8.3
	Total	2,046		1,932		- 114	- 5.6

The greatest decreases in tables 3 and 4 are for doctors who were non-UK nationals and for whom there was no location recorded. This could result from an increase in the number of doctors with a prescribed connection to a geographically specific body between 2017 and 2018.

# Discussion

## Summary of trends

We have not seen a decrease in non-UK (EEA or international) licensed doctors on the medical register from June 2017 to June 2018, and this is true whether we look at their place of medical qualification, or their nationality.

Between 2017 and 2018, the number of licensed EEA nationals grew faster than licensed EEA graduates; and the number of non-EEA nationals grew faster than licensed IMGs. This was driven by a relatively large number of EEA and non-EEA nationals taking up licences. This finding is consistent with EEA nationals qualifying in the UK medical education system and continuing to practise in the UK once qualified.

Licensed EEA nationals and EEA graduates are a highly mobile workforce, with higher rates of turnover (taking up and relinquishing licences) than those of other nationality groups and PMQ regions. Around one in ten licensed EEA doctors relinquished their licence in a single year; and around one in ten EEA doctors gained their licence in a single year. By way of comparison this is almost twice and three times as high as the turnover in non-EEA and British nationals respectively (Table 2).

## Limitations of the analysis

There are uncertainties in the data underlying this analysis, and these should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. The nationality information recorded by the GMC is mainly from the time of registration and, for some doctors, this may have changed since. The method used to model missing nationality in the March 2017 working paper was not reliable to use for doctors in Northern Ireland because, under the Belfast Agreement, people born in Northern Ireland can choose to be British citizens, Irish citizens, or both.

There were 21 doctors in 2018 for whom we did not hold nationality information. These doctors first joined register before nationality was recorded, relinquished their licence and then took up a licence again in 2018. Due to not being licensed at the time, their nationality was not modelled for 2016. As they represent only 0.1% of doctors taking up a licence in 2018 and 0.001% of all licensed doctors in 2018, we have omitted them from our analysis.

Unlike the previous publication, changes in numbers of doctors by region were made using the same location algorithm but separately for each year. Depending on availability, the algorithm uses a doctor's contract data, GMC designated body, training records or registered address to determine their work location. Therefore, the changes in numbers reported do reflect relocations in the workforce between UK countries in the study period.

The algorithm that assigns doctors to practice locations left 2,046 doctors in a 'non-UK or not recorded' category for 2017 and 1,932 for 2018. Therefore it is uncertain where in the UK (or even if) they were practising in 2017 and 2018.

## **Further information**

For further information about this project, please contact the General Medical Council's Data, Research and Insight Hub (DRIH) team at [DRIH@gmc-uk.org](mailto:DRIH@gmc-uk.org).