Nursing and Midwifery Council Register linked to Census 2021 – England & Wales Research Priorities

Background

The nursing and midwifery professions are facing challenges to recruitment and retention internationally,[3, 8] including in the UK. Evidence suggests that almost half of nursing vacancies in England were filled by people who trained outside of the UK,[2] and there are concerns that 2,500 more midwives are needed in England.[6] The healthcare workforce, of which nursing and midwifery are key components, is the focus of policy initiatives across the UK.[7,4,1,5]

Data has the potential to contribute to informing further recruitment and retention policy development. To that end, a flagship dataset has been developed for secure research use for the public good. De-identified data from the Census 2021 for England and Wales has been linked to a cross-section the register held by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) for those on the register in 2018, 2021 and 2022. A further dataset provides de-identified information on those who left the register between 2018 and 2021. The resulting dataset provides an opportunity to better understand the lives of nurses and midwives and reasons for remaining on or leaving the register.

About the dataset

All practicing nurses and midwives in the UK must meet set standards and be registered with the NMC. That involves them completing a recognised degree course, and already qualified nurses and midwives from outside the UK, passing a test. They then must revalidate their registration every three years. These requirements provide reassurance to the public. They also generate longitudinal data that can be used to understand these key professions.

Registrant data includes:

- basic demographics
- date of first registration
- type of registration (nurse, nursing associate, midwife)
- field (adult, mental health, children's, learning disability)
- post-qualification registrations
- areas of practice (from first revalidation onwards).

Linkage to the Census 2021 for England and Wales opens the potential to address key policy questions considering social dimensions in relation to nurse and midwives' such as housing, households, migration, health, and unpaid care. **Read more detail about the census variables**.

Research themes

Research using this data should align to relevant government Areas of Research Interest where possible.

These datasets could be used to explore:

- workforce planning
- geographical disparities
- retention and career progression
- factors affecting specialisation and career trajectories
- the influence of demographic characteristics on careers
- the role of household support systems, families and gender dynamics.

We welcome applications looking at the following research topics for this round of ADR UK Research Fellowships:

1. How does the retention rate of early career professionals differ demographically and geographically for nurses, nursing associates, or midwives?

2. Does acquiring post-registration qualifications impact on retention rate of? How does retention differ for part-time relative to full-time nurses? For nurses, how does retention vary across different fields of practice (adult, mental health, children's, learning disability) within the first four years of qualification? Or comparing nurses who studied on UK courses relative to those who qualified overseas? How do age and length of time on register influence likelihood of remaining or leaving?

3. What demographic factors (such as age and gender) are associated with variations in the types of registration (nurse, nursing associate, midwife) and fields of practice among early career professionals?

4. What social drivers influence early retirement? How does that differ between nurses, nursing associates, and midwives?

5. What factors influence moves from nursing associate to registered nurse?

6. What is the health profile of nurses and midwives and what are the implications for retention?

7. What are the implications of overseas recruitment for the sustainability of the nursing and midwifery professions?

This is not an exhaustive list and other questions are also welcomed providing you can demonstrate policy-relevance and likelihood of impact and uptake.

References

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