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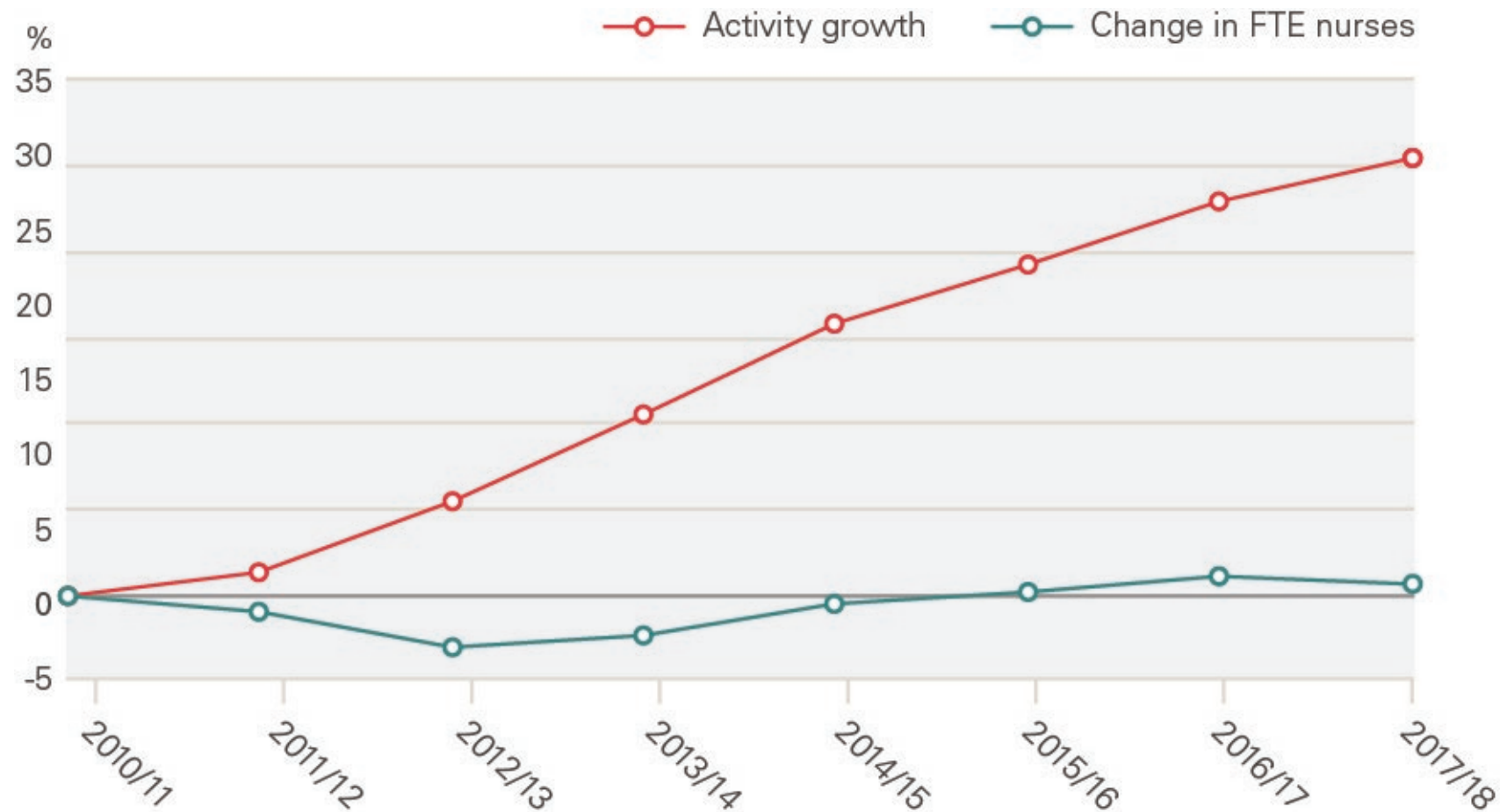# Workforce pressure points

Building the NHS nursing workforce in England

**Figures and tables | December 2020**

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Figures

Figure 1: Service output and FTE nursing staff numbers in the NHS Hospital and Community Health Service, 2010/11-2017/18


Source: NHS Digital, NHS Workforce Statistics; ONS, Public service productivity: healthcare, England.
Note: output is cost and quality adjusted activity.

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Figure 2: Change in registered nursing workforce by work area (index 100 = June 2010), June 2010 - June 2020
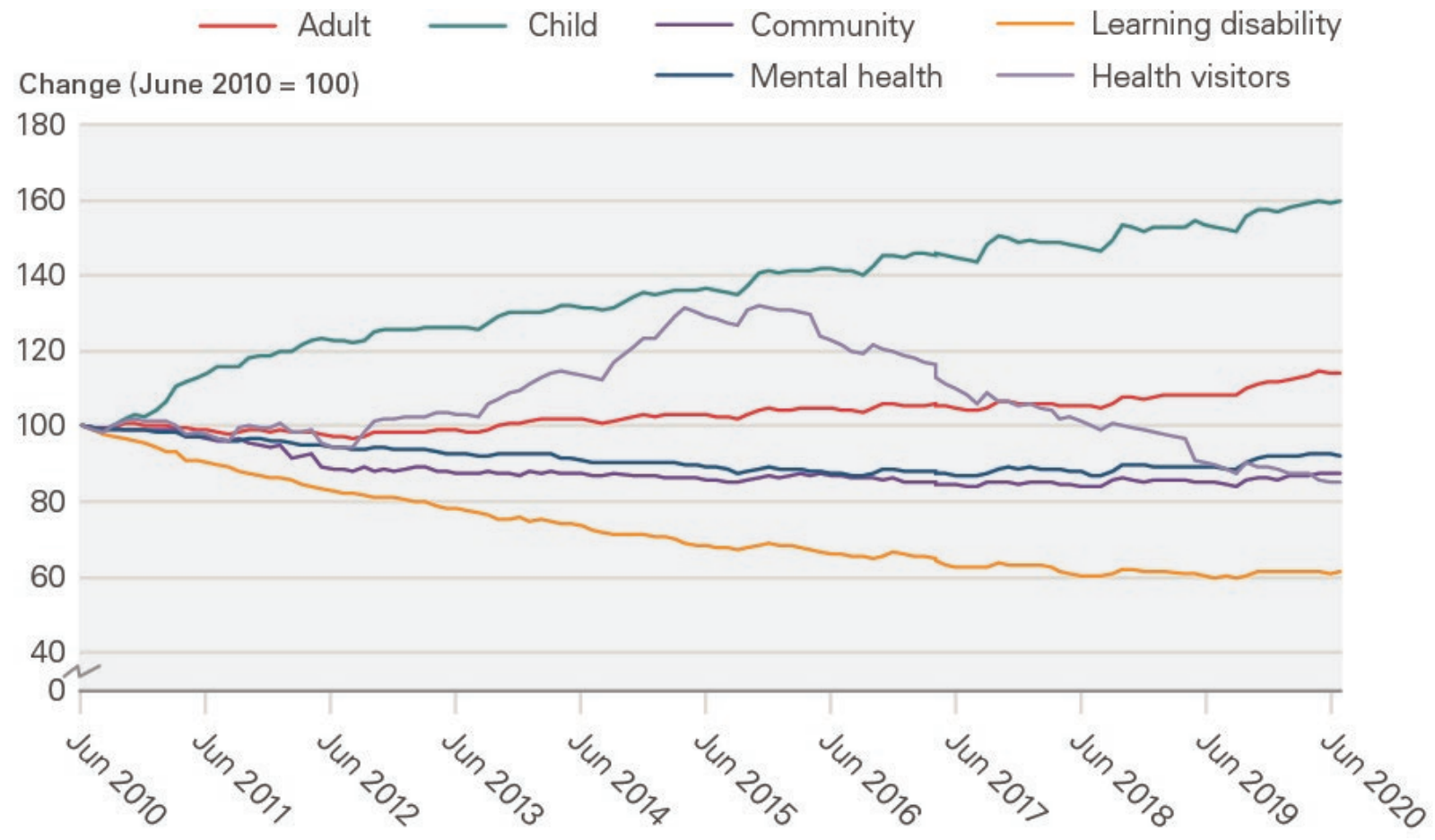

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics – June 2020 (2020)

Figure 3: Change in community nursing and health visiting, selected occupations (index 100 = June 2010), June 2010 - June 2020

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics – June 2020 (2020)

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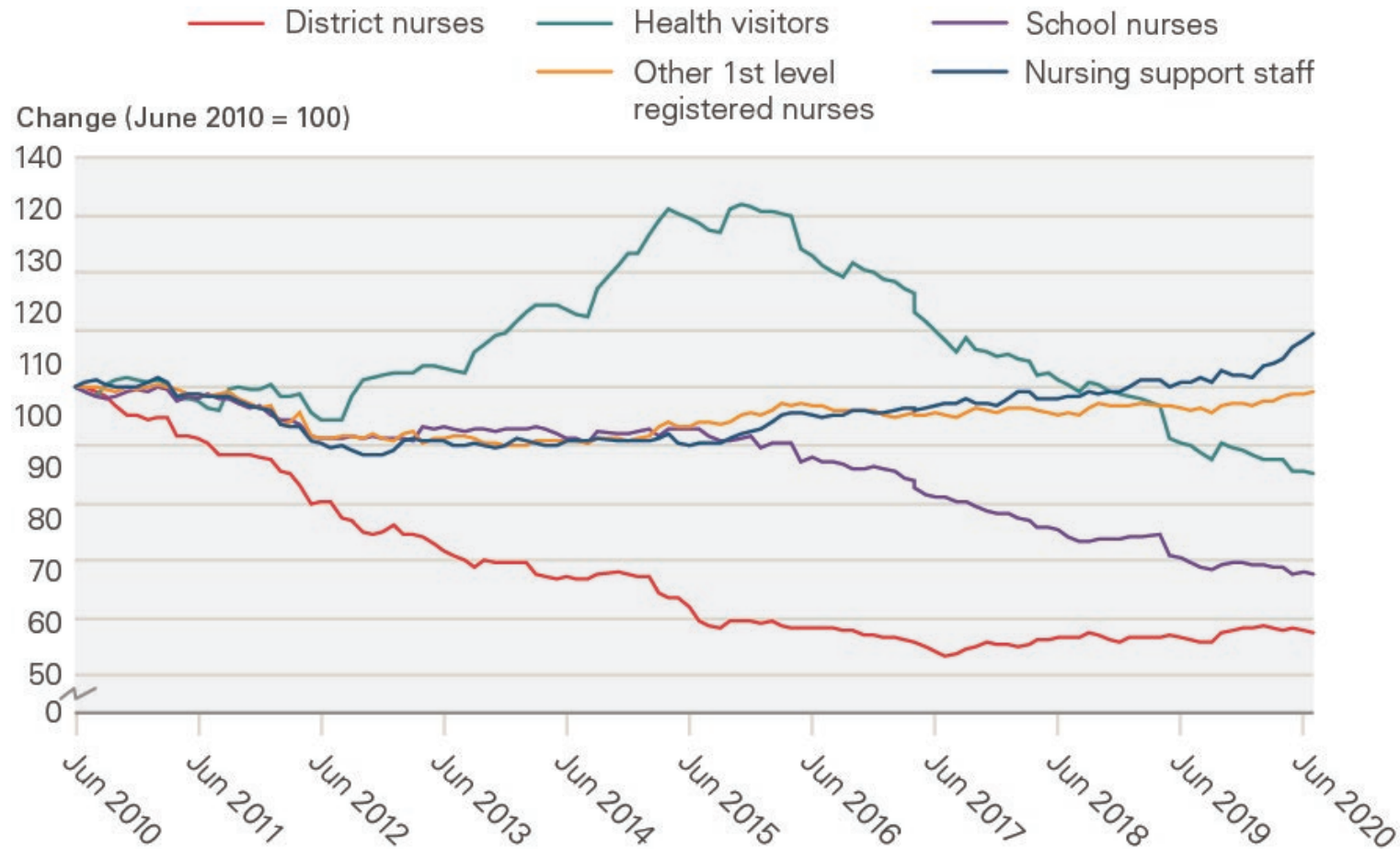
Figure 4: Change in adult hospital nursing and community nursing/health visiting in the NHS in England (index 100 = June 2010), June 2010 - June 2020

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics – June 2020 (2020)
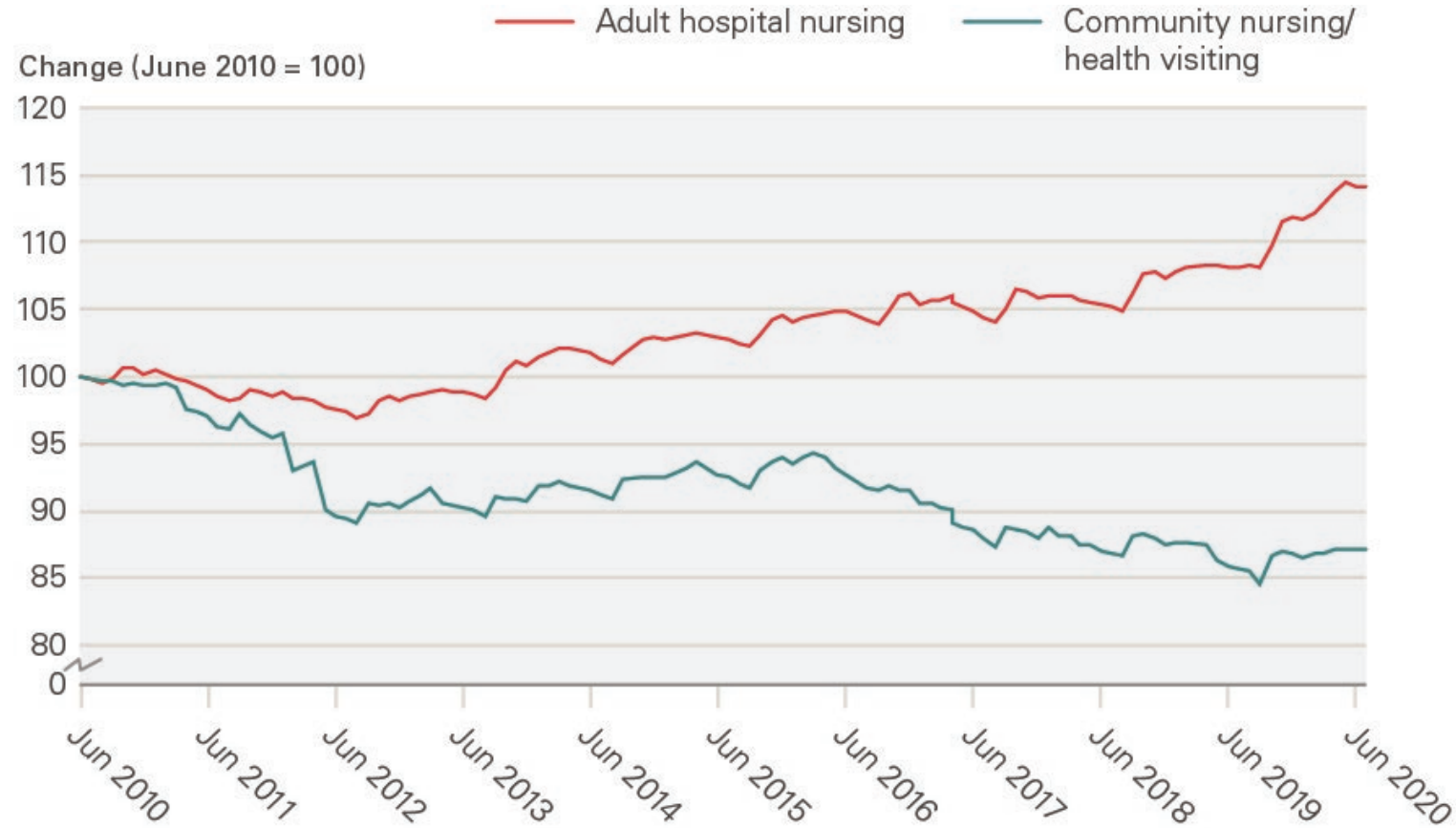
Figure 5: Change in FTE nurses, health visitors, midwives and nursing support staff in the NHS in England (index 100 = June 2010), June 2010 - June 2020

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics – June 2020 (2020)

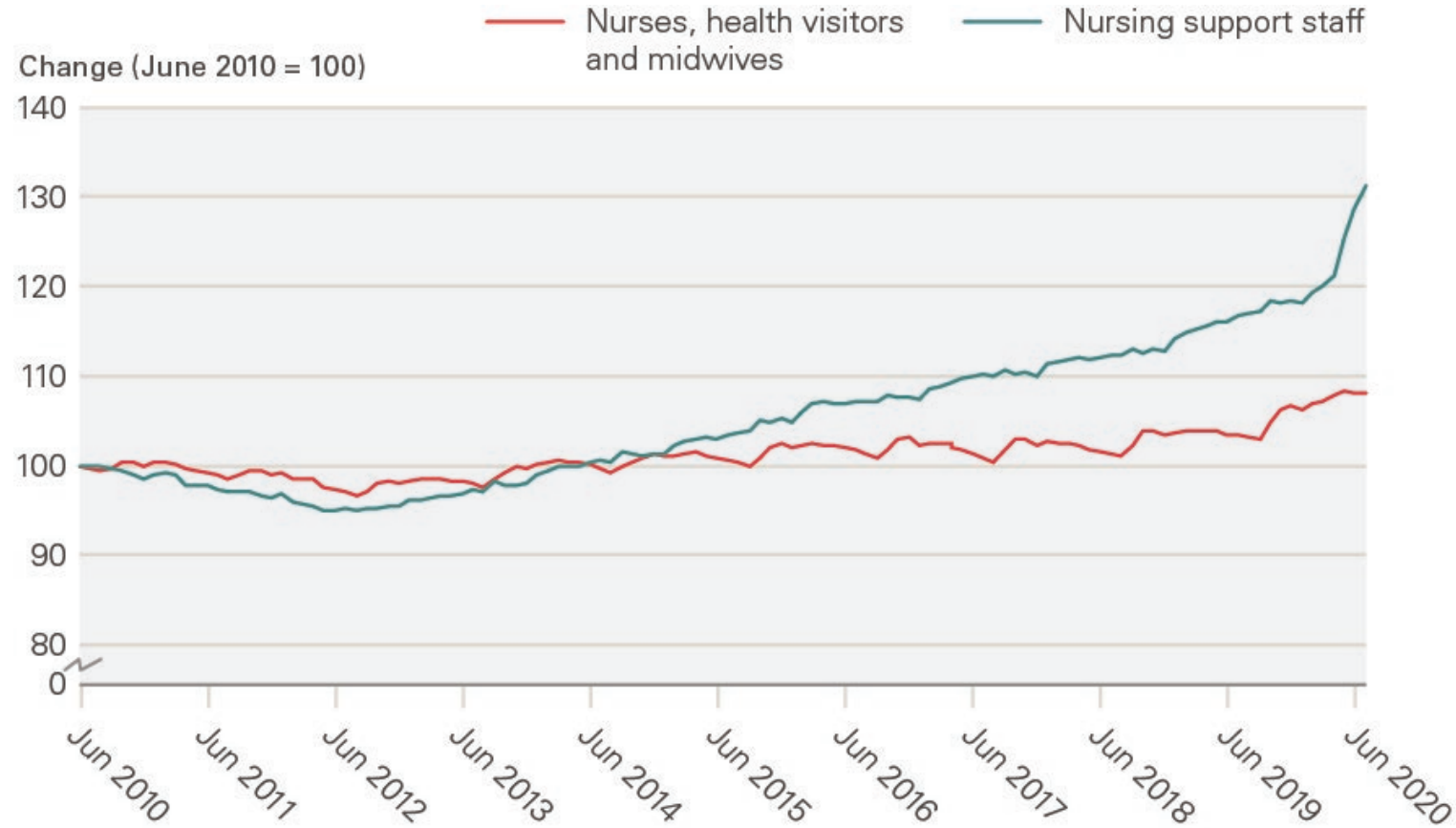# Figure 6: Age profile of nurses and health visitors in NHS England by work area, 30 June 2010–30 June 2020 (headcount*)
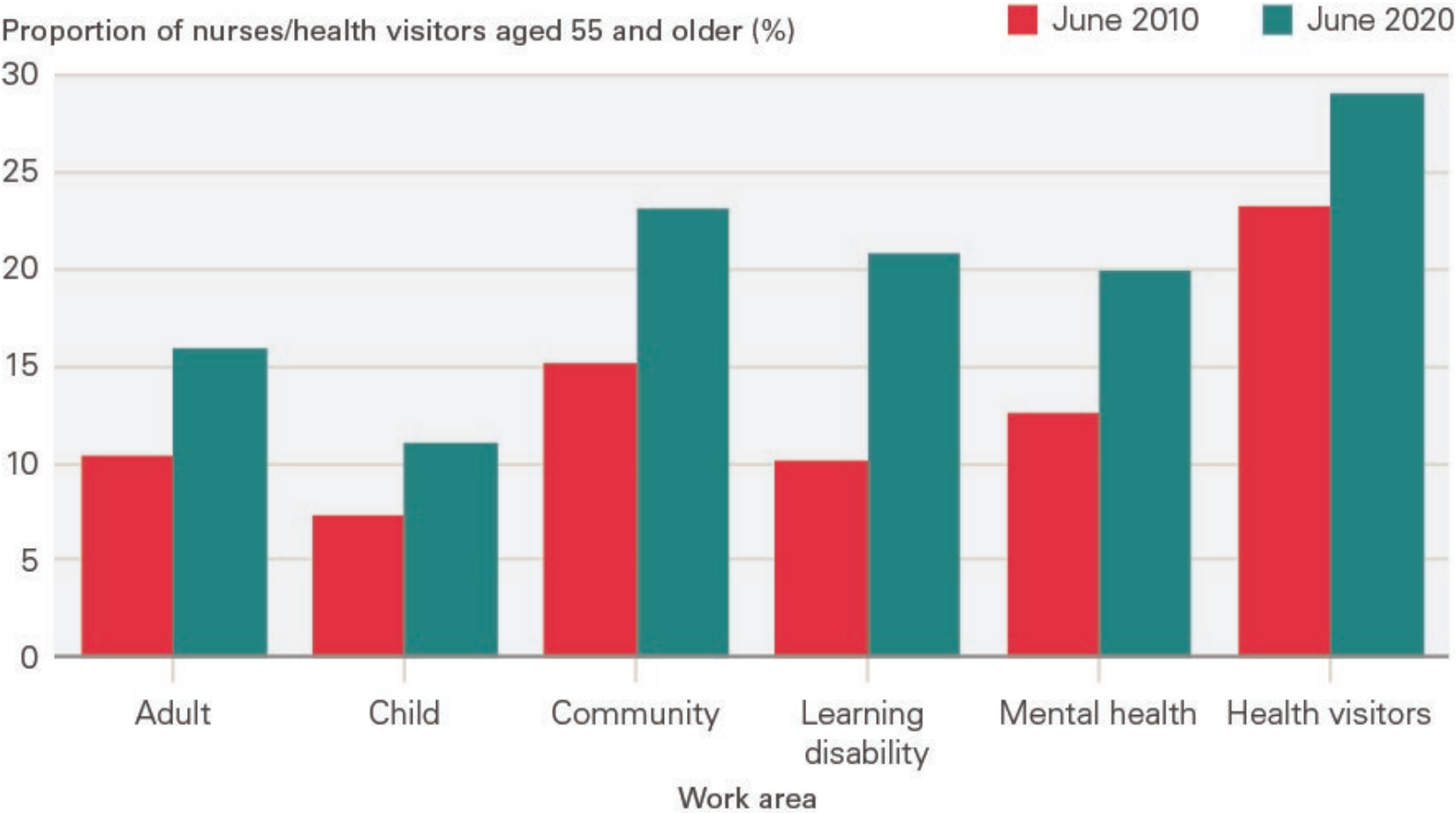
Proportion of nurses/health visitors aged 55 and older (%)

Work area

June 2010 ▇ June 2020 ▇

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Figure 7: Proportion of employed registered nurses working full time in 2015 and 2020 (headcount*)

% of employed registered nurses working full time

Legend: 2015, 2020

Age in years

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey data for England (April to June 2015, and April to June 2020)

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Figure 8: Practising nurses per 1,000 population, 2019 or most recent year

Practising nurses per 1,000 population

Country

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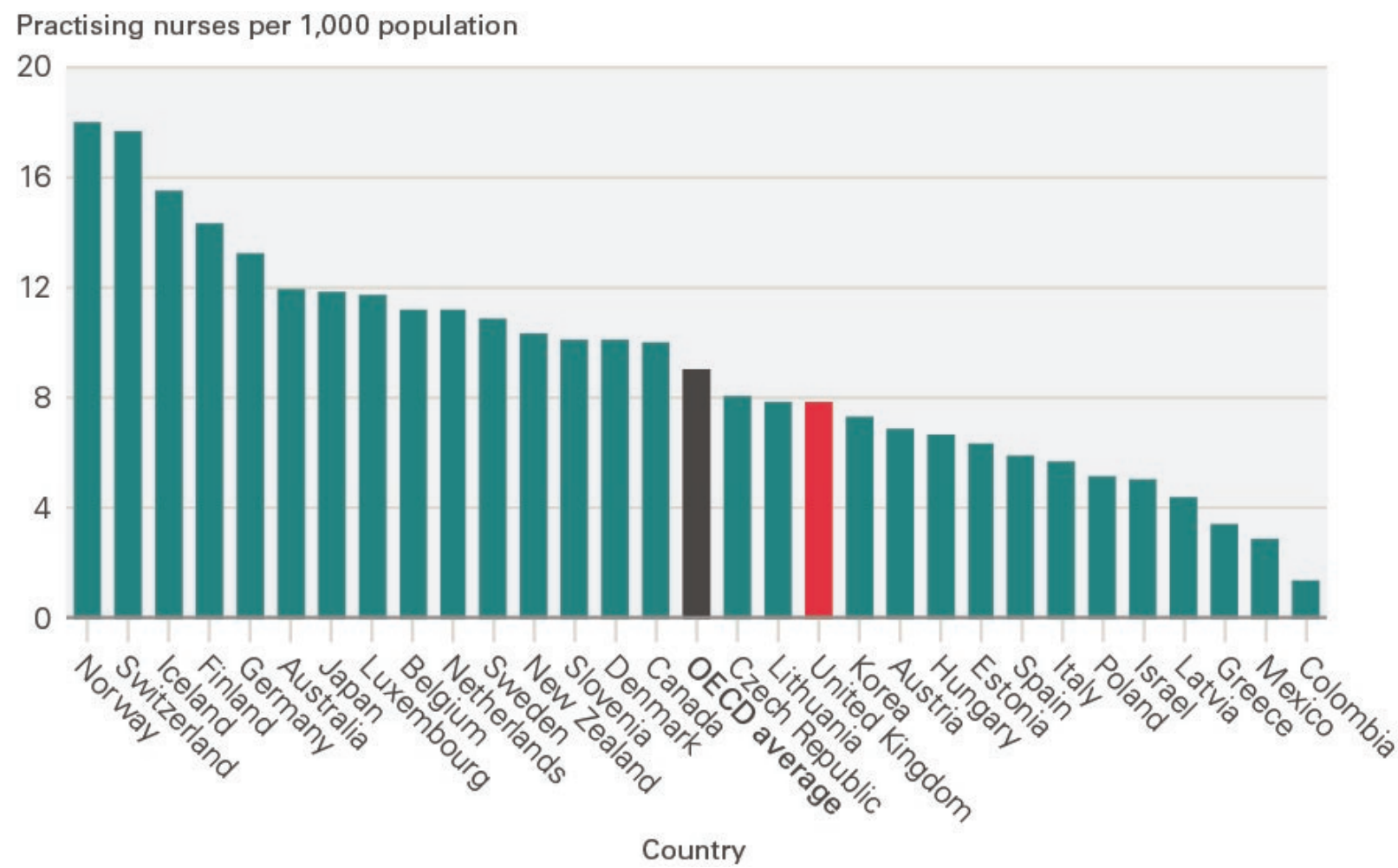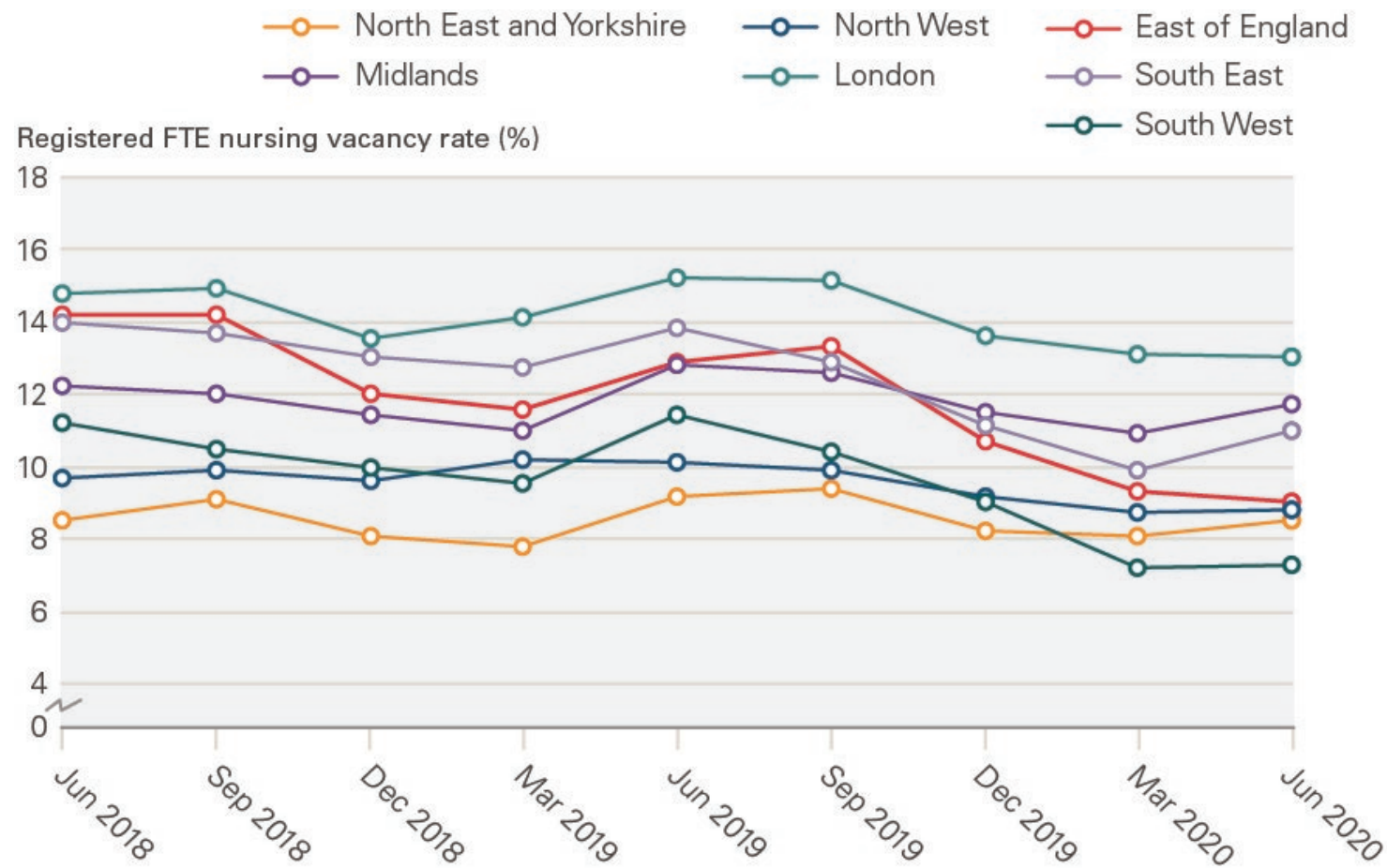Foundation

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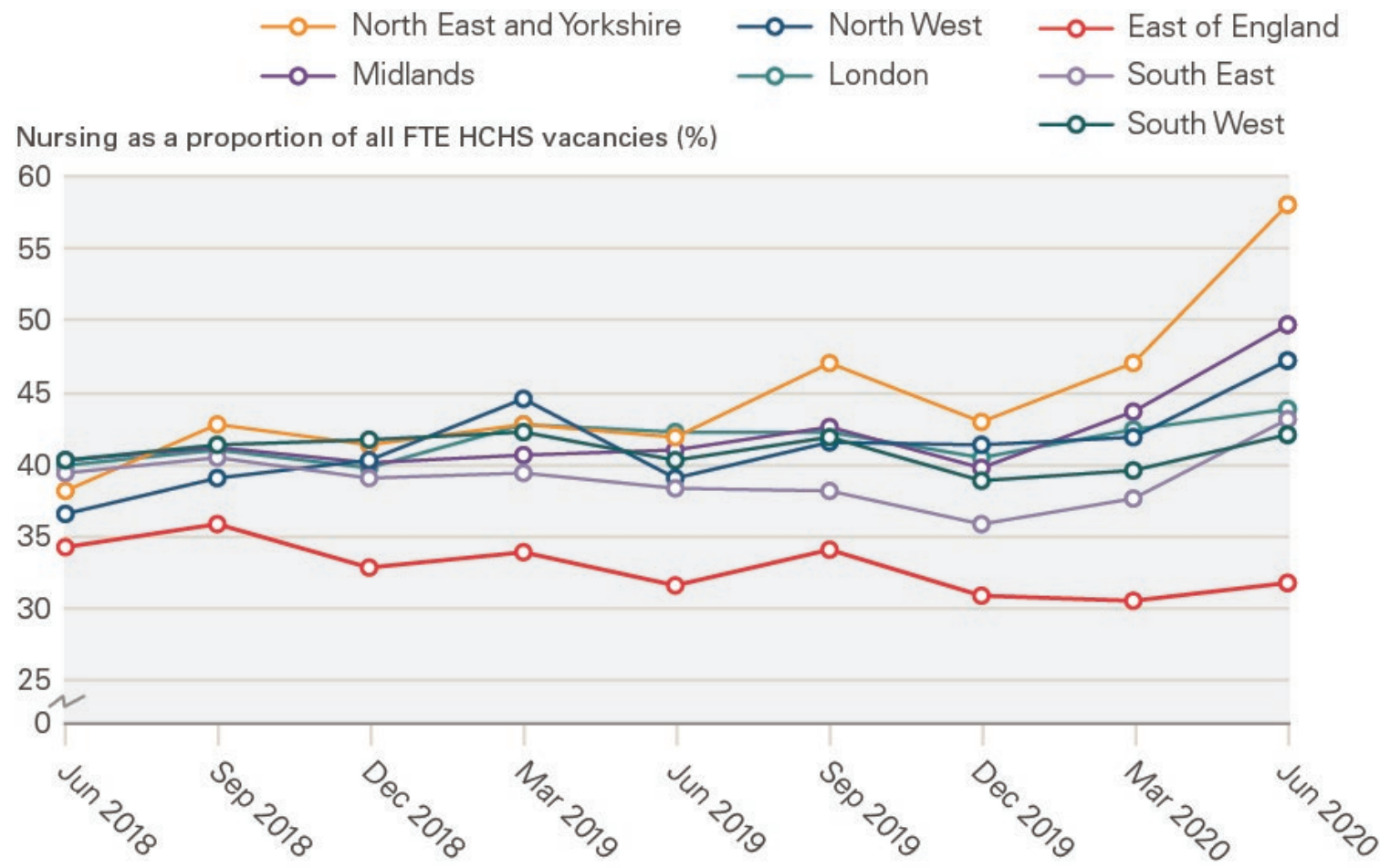
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Figure 9: Registered FTE nursing vacancy rates by region, 2018–2020

Source: NHS Digital (NHS Vacancy Statistics England April 2015–June 2020 Experimental Statistics – June 2020)

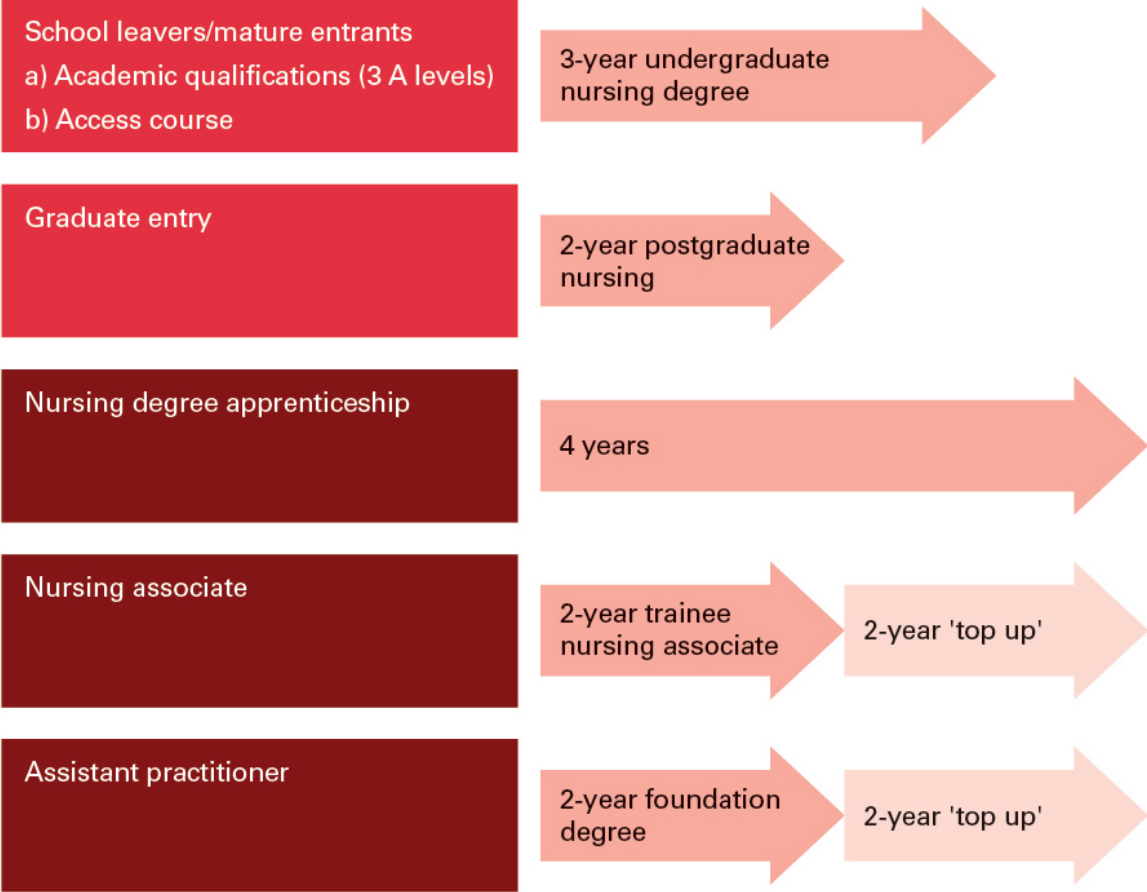# Figure 10: Proportion of NHS FTE vacancies accounted for by nursing by region, 2018-2020

Source: NHS Digital (NHS Vacancy Statistics England April 2015–June 2020 Experimental Statistics – June 2020)

Figure 11: Overall and registered nursing FTE vacancy rates by region, June 2020

Source: NHS Digital (NHS Vacancy Statistics England April 2015–June 2020 Experimental Statistics – June 2020)

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Figure 12: The supply pipeline: routes into the registered nurse workforce in the UK

School leavers/mature entrants
a) Academic qualifications (3 A levels)
b) Access course

3-year undergraduate nursing degree

Graduate entry

2-year postgraduate nursing

Nursing degree apprenticeship

4 years

Nursing associate

2-year trainee nursing associate

2-year 'top up'

Assistant practitioner

2-year foundation degree

2-year 'top up'

Source: Health Foundation

Figure 13: Estimate of annual supply of registered nurses in England by source

61% Undergraduate
6% Postgraduate pre-registration
3% Nursing degree apprentices
4% Post vocational conversion (NA, AP)
3% Return to practice
23% International recruits

Legend:
- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate pre-registration
- Nursing degree apprentices
- Post vocational conversion (NA, AP)
- Return to practice
- International recruits

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Figure 14: Acceptances to nursing degree courses in England (28 days after A level results)

Number of acceptances (28 days after A level results)

Source: UCAS 2020
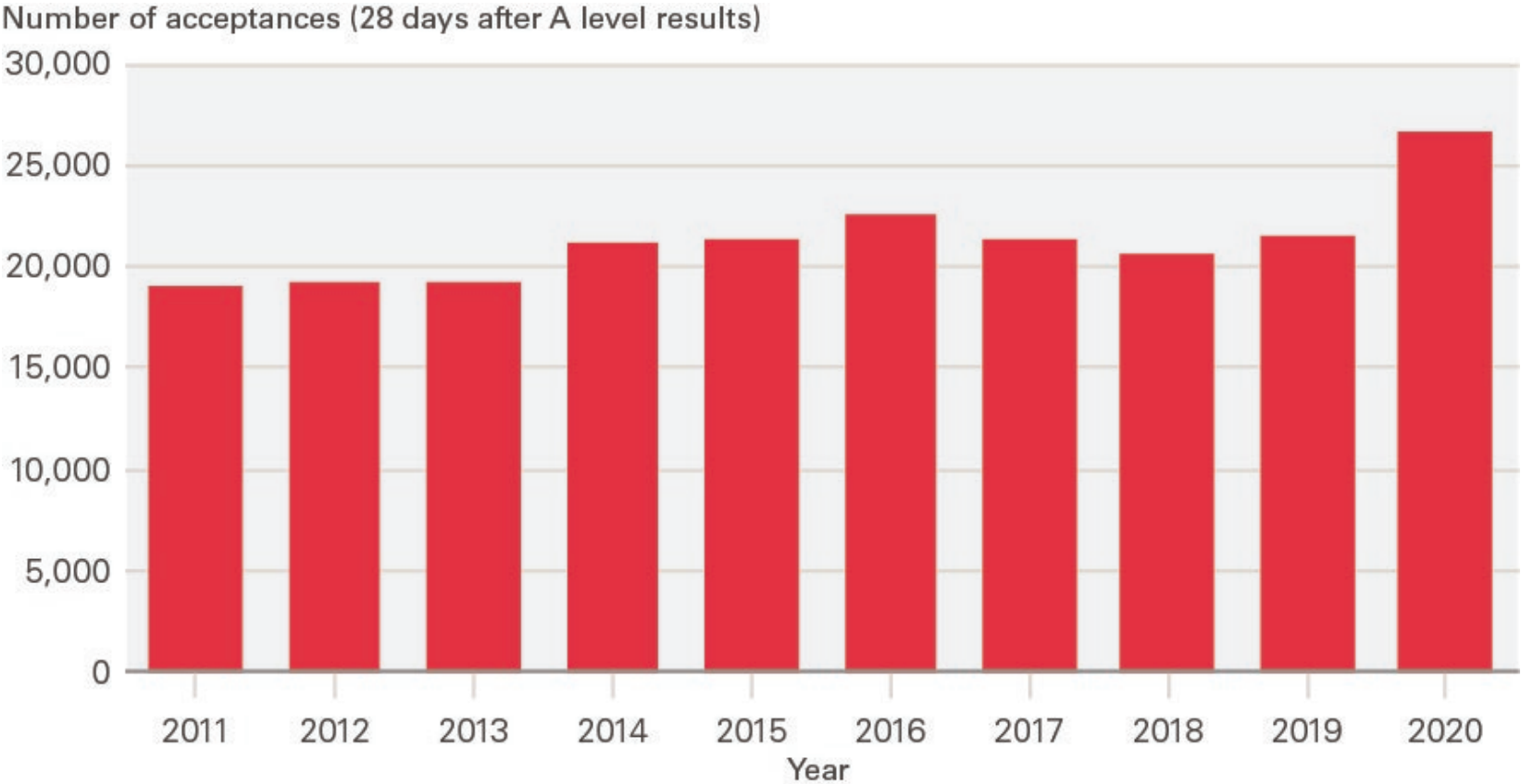
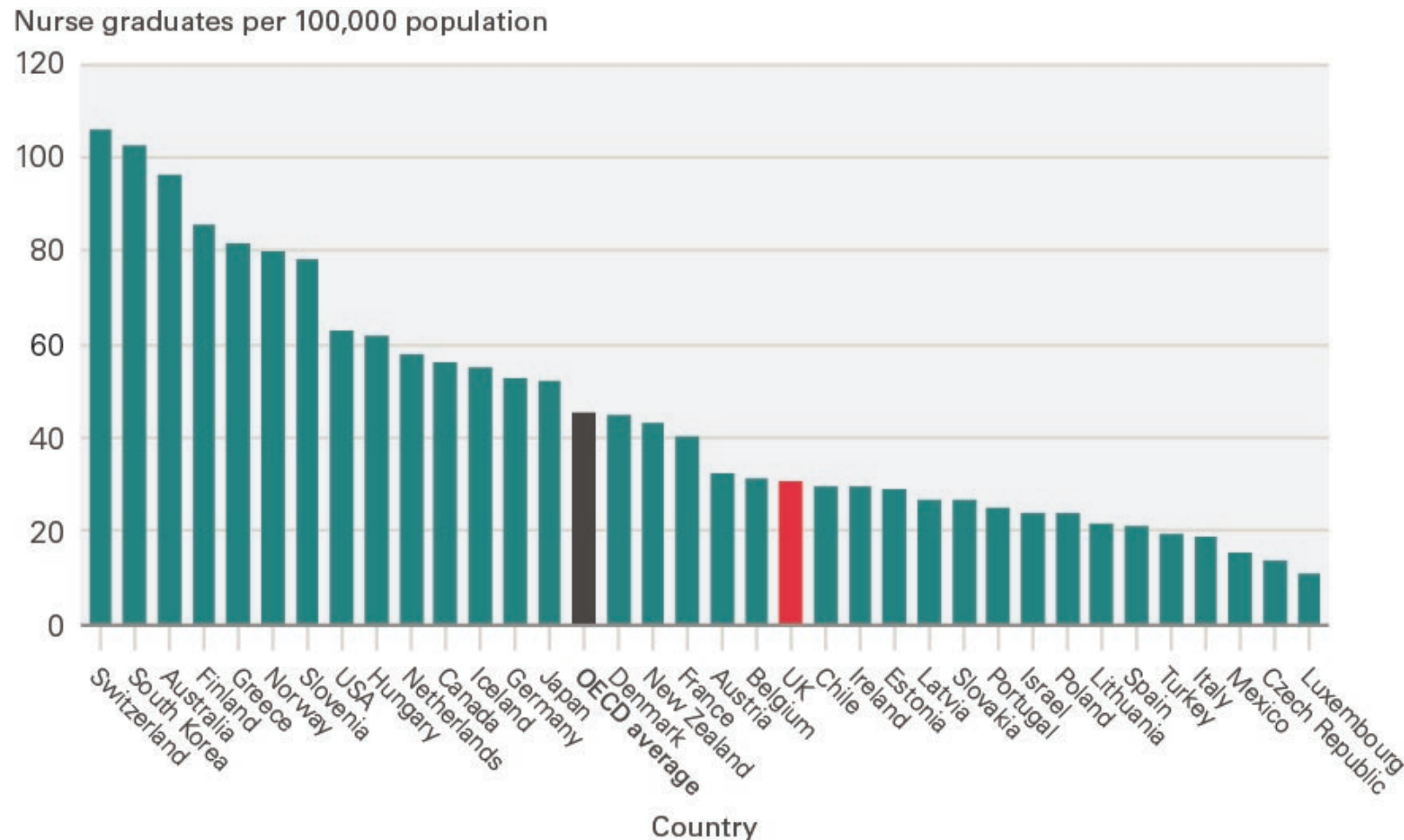# Figure 15: Number of nurse graduates per 100,000 population, OECD countries, 2019 or most recent year

Source: OECD data on health resources - nursing graduates (https://doi.org/10.1787/777a9575-en)

Figure 16: Foreign-trained nurses working in OECD countries, 2019 or most recent year

Proportion of foreign trained nurses (%)

Country
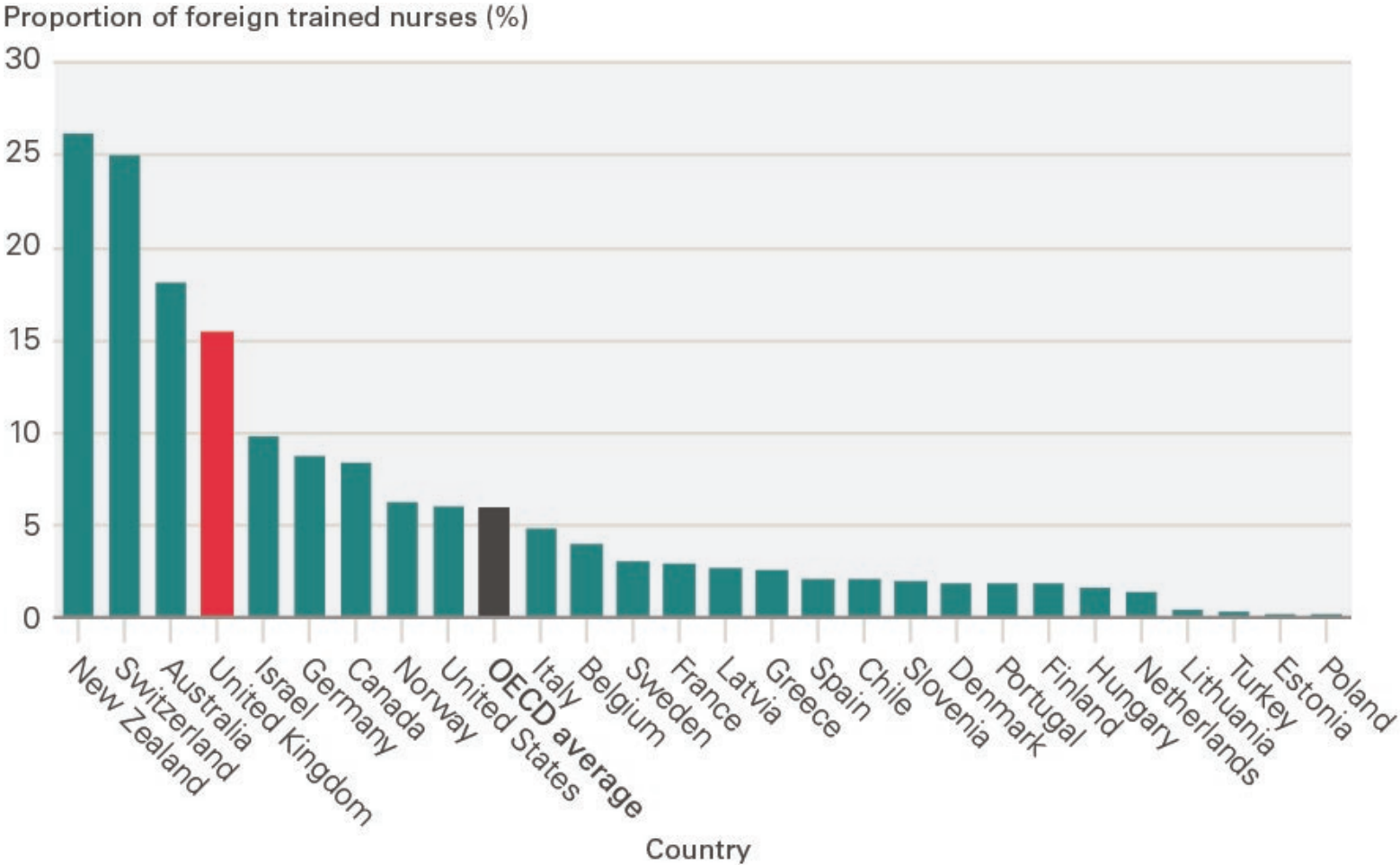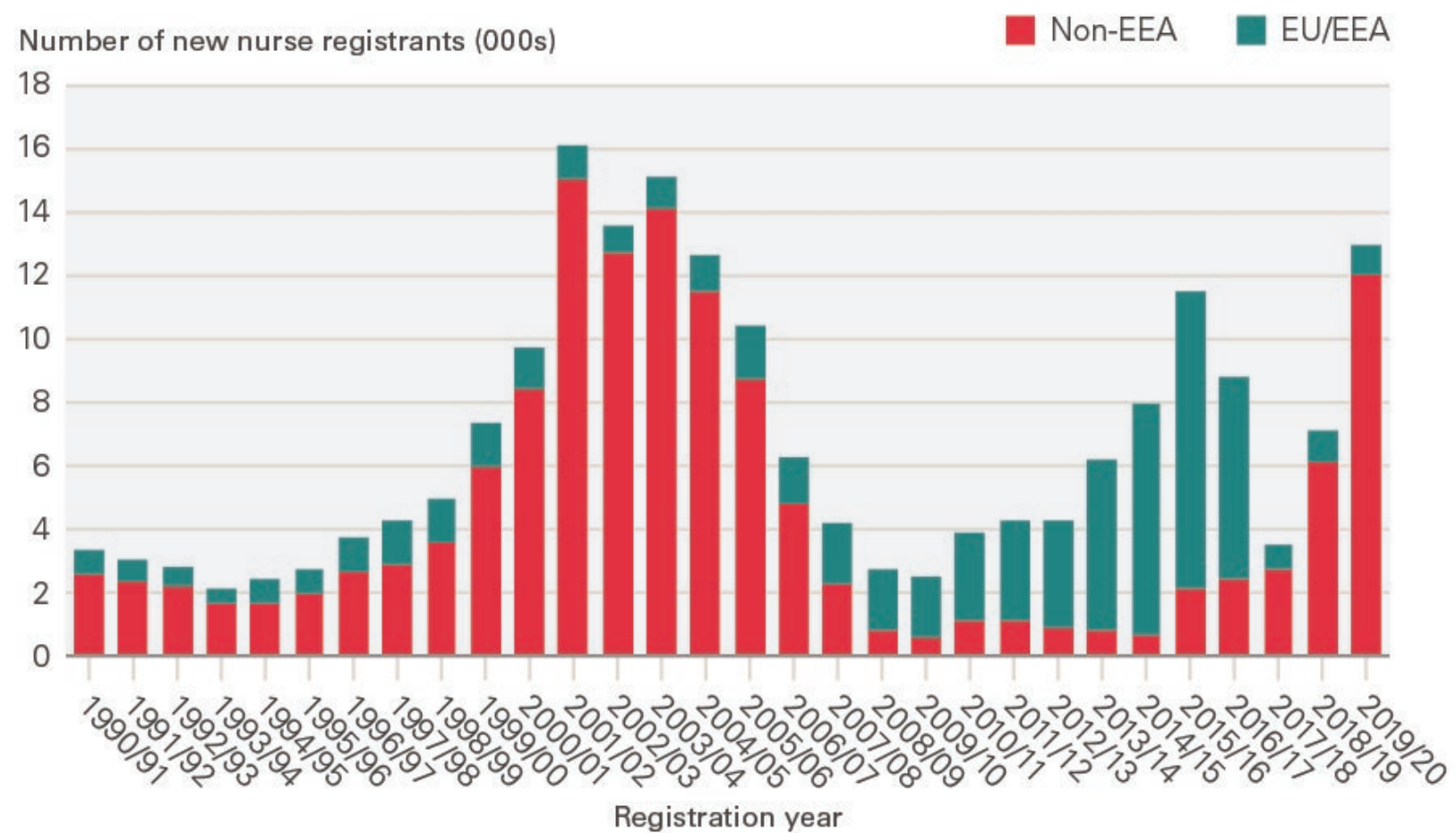
Source: OECD Health Statistics 2020 – Health Workforce Migration, stats.oecd.org

Figure 17: Annual growth in rate of emergency hospital admissions by age and gender (2000/01 to 2017/18)

Number of new nurse registrants (000s)

Legend: Non-EEA, EU/EEA

Registration year

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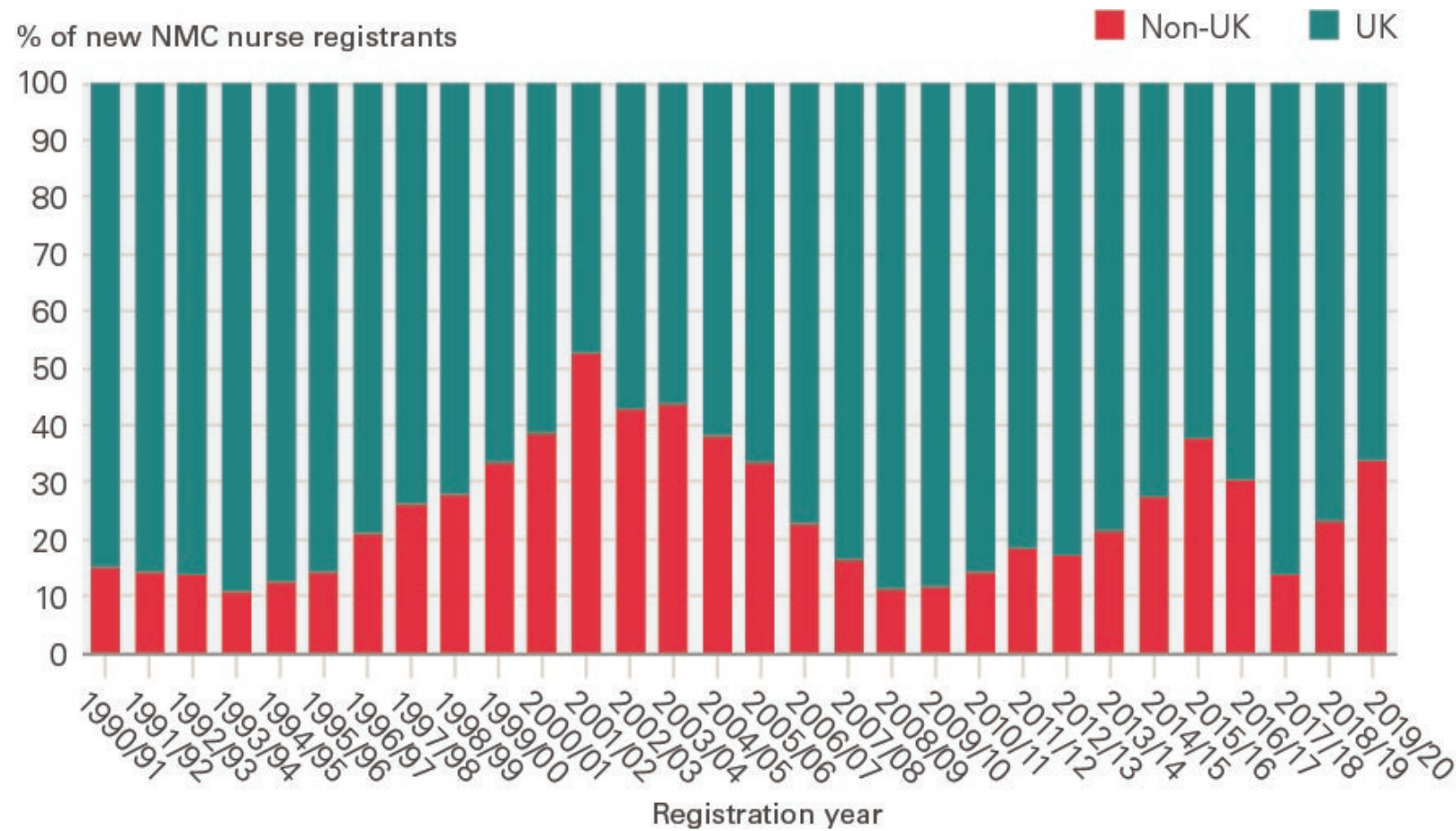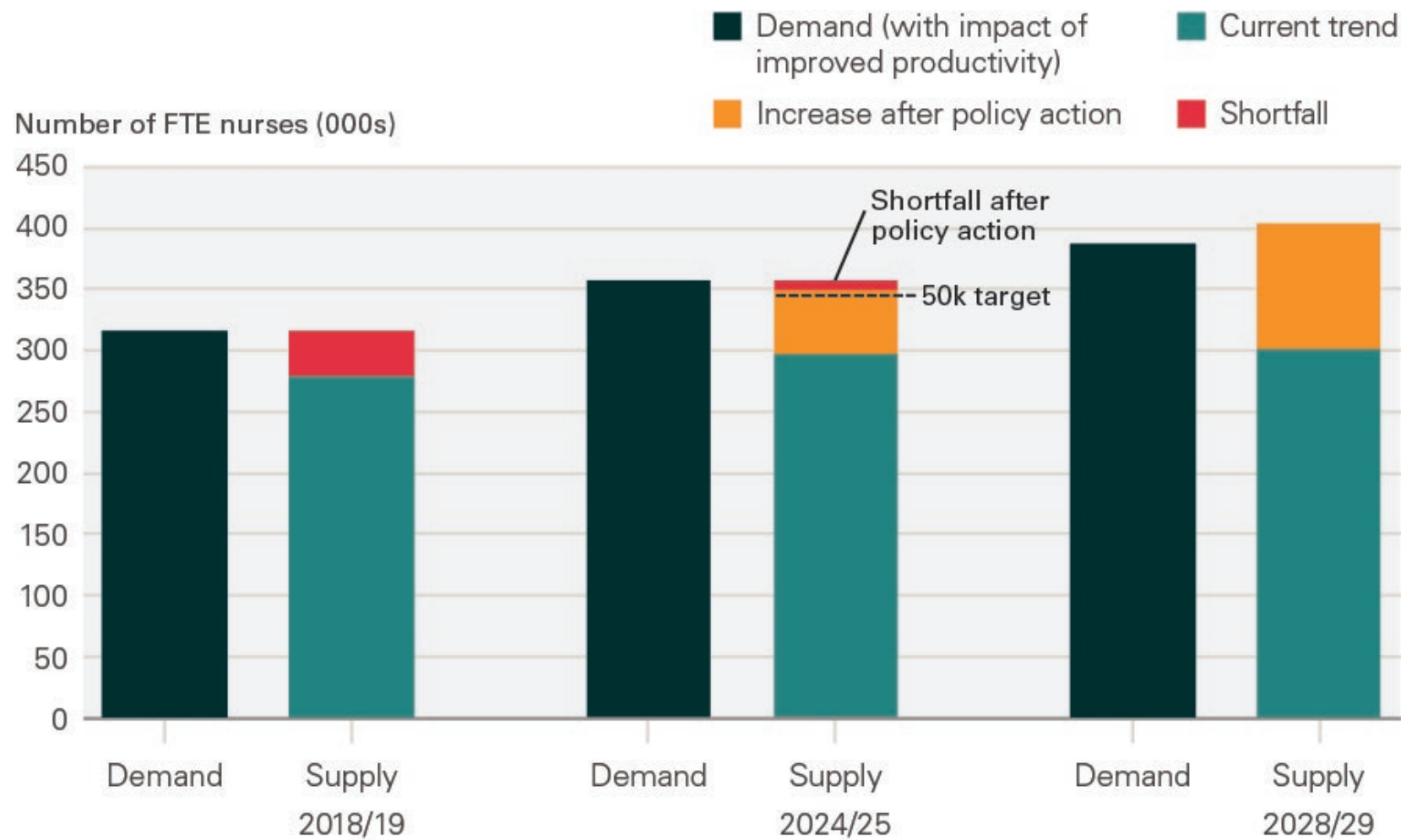# Figure 18: Annual percentage intake of new NMC registrants from UK and international sources, 1990/91 to 2019/20

Source: NMC/UKCC data, authors' analysis

Figure 19: Nurse demand and supply, 2018/19, 2024/25 and 2028/29

Number of FTE nurses (000s)

Legend:
- Demand (with impact of improved productivity)
- Current trend
- Increase after policy action
- Shortfall

Shortfall after policy action

50k target

X-axis labels: Demand, Supply 2018/19, Demand, Supply 2024/25, Demand, Supply 2028/29

Source: NHS Digital, UCAS and NMC data and authors' analysis

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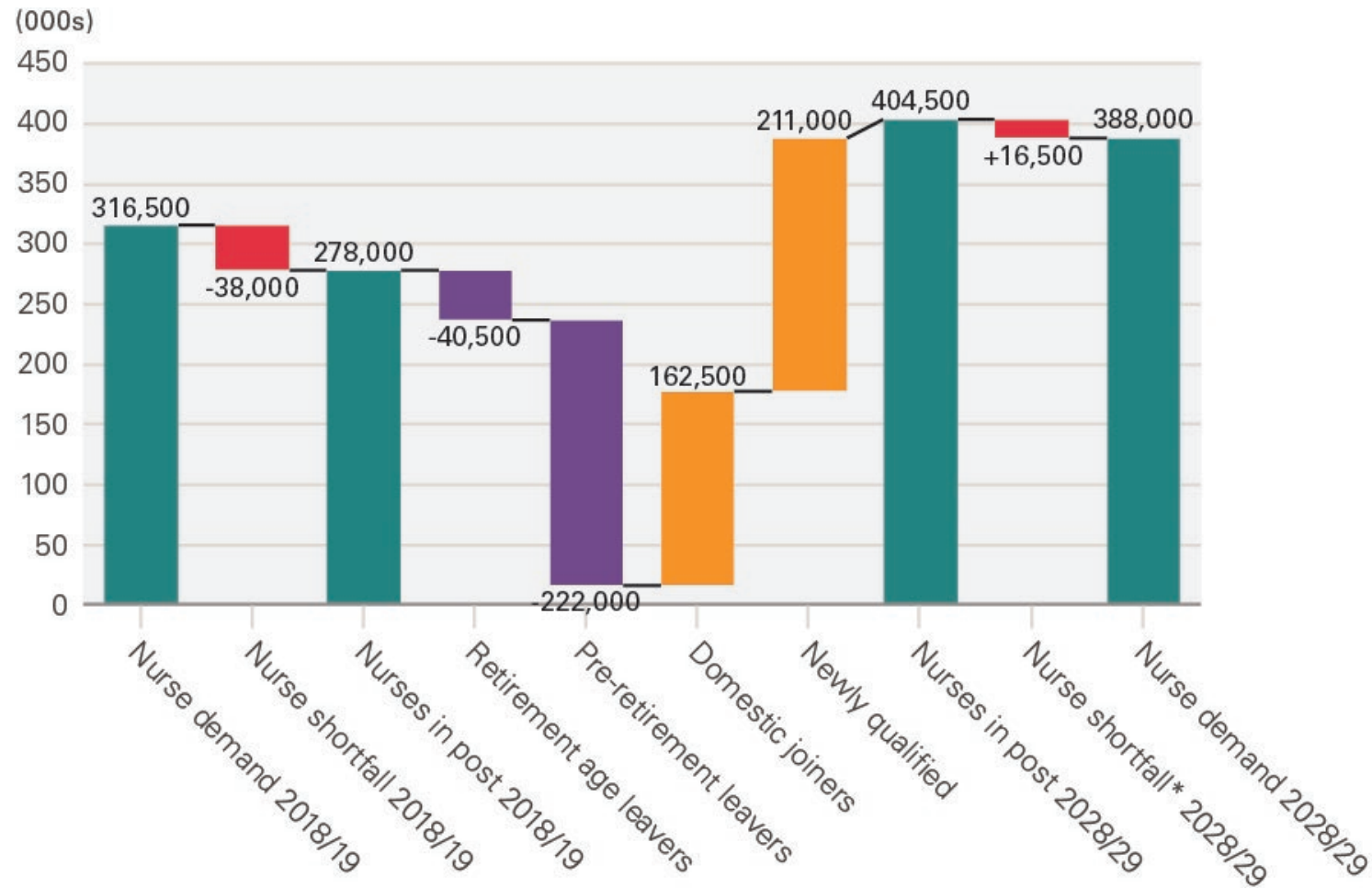REAL Centre

Figure A1: a) Nursing demand and supply projections for England based on policy action to increase the supply of nurses, 2018/19 - 2024/25

Source: NHS Digital, UCAS and NMC data and authors' analysis
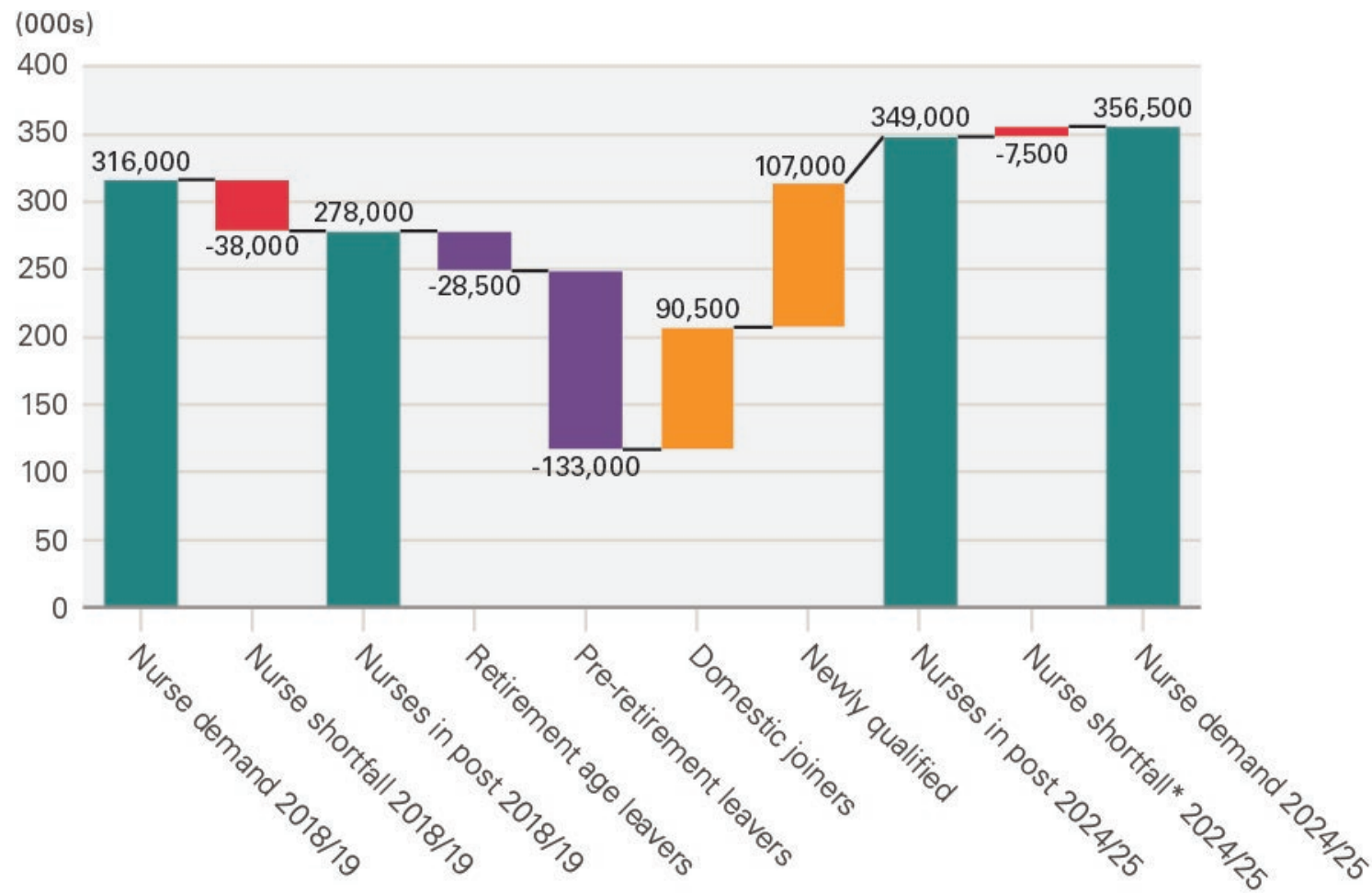
Figure A1: b) Nursing demand and supply projections for England based on policy action to increase the supply of nurses, 2018/19 – 2028/29

Source: NHS Digital, UCAS and NMC data and authors' analysis

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Tables

Table 1: Key points from recent NHS nursing workforce reports

Report	Date published	Key points
NAO: *The NHS Nursing Workforce*	March 2020	• 'Despite increases, the NHS did not have the nurses it needed.' • While the *NHS long term plan* had signalled the need for a step change in the recruitment of overseas nurses 'recent national initiatives to increase numbers had not met targets.' • NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHS E&I) and Health Education England have been working to produce a full NHS People Plan for the period up to 2025, but this had not been published as scheduled. It is anticipated that the NHS People Plan, when published, 'would detail new workforce-related roles for national, regional and local bodies, as well as responsibilities for delivery of the overall plan.'
NHS Pay Review Body: *33rd report*	July 2020	• It 'has been struck by the persistence of the Agenda for Change staff workforce gap, in particular for nursing staff... All parties acknowledge the need to front-load initiatives to bridge this gap.'[12] • 'The extent to which graduate entrants will contribute towards the government's nursing target and to closing the workforce gap, meeting increasing demand for services and delivering on new service models is not clear.' • 'Front-loaded solutions that rely on overseas recruitment might be at risk from the impact of COVID-19 and the UK's exit from the EU'.[13]
House of Commons PAC: *NHS nursing workforce – 18th report of session 2019–21*	September 2020	• 'NHS E&I and Health Education England should update and publish the results of their modelling work on the demand for NHS nurses, including details for regions and specialisms and any impacts arising from the COVID-19 outbreak.' • 'As part of the published people plan, the Department, NHS E&I and Health Education England should include a set of costed and detailed action plans for each of the different supply routes for nursing, and how many nurses each route is expected to contribute to the overall nursing workforce. They should consider what national actions, for example on pay, they may need to take to increase recruitment and retention.'

Table 2: Change in staff groups (FTE) in the NHS in England (%), June 2019–June 2020

Staff group	2019	2020	Change	Percentage change
Professionally qualified clinical staff	**578,875**	**610,267**	**31,392**	**5.4**
HCHS doctors	111,860	121,142	9,283	8.3
Nurses and health visitors	288,646	302,471	13,825	4.8
Midwives	21,632	22,128	497	2.3
Ambulance staff	15,763	16,971	1,208	7.7
Scientific, therapeutic and technical staff	140,975	147,554	6,580	4.7
Support to clinical staff	**336,504**	**372,075**	**35,571**	**10.6**
Support to doctors, nurses and midwives	254,598	283,463	28,865	11.3
Nursing support staff*	157,636	177,509	19,873	12.6
Nursing associates	857	1,832	974	113.7
Trainee nursing associates	2,890	5,012	2,123	73.5
Nursing assistants/auxiliaries	46,145	52,142	5,997	13.0
Nursing assistant practitioners	6,117	7,787	1,669	27.3
Health care assistants	68,020	74,709	6,689	9.8
Support workers	29,701	32,118	2,417	8.1
Nursery nurses	3,906	3,909	3	0.1
Support to ambulance staff	22,262	23,932	1,670	7.5
Support to scientific, therapeutic and technical staff	59,644	64,680	5,036	8.4
NHS infrastructure support staff	**176,711**	**184,029**	**7,317**	**4.1**
Central functions	87,246	93,774	6,528	7.5
Hotel, property and estates	54,908	57,308	2,400	4.4
Senior managers	10,825	11,151	327	3.0
Managers	23,732	21,795	-1,937	-8.2
Other/unknown	**3,098**	**2,035**	**-1,063**	**-34.3**
TOTAL	**1,095,189**	**1,168,406**	**73,217**	**6.7**

Table 3: Registered FTE nurse vacancies by service area in England, percentages* and overall total, June 2017–June 2020

	Jun-2017	Dec-2017	Jun-2018	Dec-2018	Jun-2019	Dec-2019	Jun-2020
Overall total*	38,328	35,934	42,587	39,685	44,195	38,740	37,821
Acute	74%	73%	74%	74%	73%	70%	68%
Ambulance**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community	5%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Mental health	19%	20%	21%	21%	22%	24%	26%
Specialist	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%

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Table 4: Number of applicants for nursing degrees by country of domicile

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change (%)		
											2019-2020	2015-2020	2011-2020
England	48,890	47,950	48,940	52,550	51,160	5,1840	4,0060	3,5260	3,6810	4,2970	17	-16	-12
Scotland	5,910	5,380	5,290	5,860	5,820	5,600	5,470	5,600	6,160	7,130	16	23	21
Wales	2,990	3,090	2,980	2,950	3,040	3,270	2,940	2,980	3,130	3,290	5	8	10
Northern Ireland	1,970	2,010	2,950	2,770	2,710	2,750	2,590	2,400	2,610	2,500	-4	-8	27
EU (exc. UK)	1,660	1,680	1,910	1,810	1,650	1,690	1,290	1,180	1,190	1,260	6	-24	-24
Not EU	600	500	490	550	580	480	670	750	990	1,400	41	141	133
Total	62,020	60,610	62,560	66,490	64,960	65,630	53,020	48,170	50,890	58,550	15	-10	-6%

Source: UCAS, 2020

Table 5: Key stages in the domestic registered nurse supply pipeline and related policy options

Supply pipeline stage	Potential policy interventions
• Perceptions of nursing as career/profile/status • Public image	Generic recruitment campaigns
• Level of interest in nursing by different groups	Targeted recruitment campaigns (eg campaign to increase number of male applicants into nursing)
• Financial support for nursing students (eg fees, cost of living/maintenance grants, accommodation, expenses associated with clinical placements)	England: Loan-based model of £5,000–£8,000 annual maintenance grant every year during students' course
• Entrants make choice of branch(es) • Currently there are under-recruited branches in mental health and learning disability	Specialty/branch-related incentives
• Increasing nurse supply in region with greatest shortages	Regional incentives to increase capacity
• Staying on and completing course (attrition during nursing education)	RePAIR* project recommendations (eg manage prospective student/nurse expectations of programme and career; buddy schemes for student nurses)
• Staying in nurse employment once qualified (ie not leaving the profession in first few years)	Enhance preceptorship Professional development Skills and experience acquisition (rotation) Career paths for progression

Source: Health Foundation
*RePAIR: Reducing pre-registration attrition and improving retention

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