

Fewer nurses coming to EU due to Brexit cost £61.9 million per year, affects readmission rates

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A reduction in nurses coming in from the European Union as a result of Brexit may have cost the NHS an estimated £61.9 million per year,

according to a [study](#) from the University of Surrey.

Researchers found that a reduction of 100 EU [nurses](#) per 1,000 staff increased emergency readmission rates for elective patients by 2.2% yearly in the three years following the Brexit referendum. This amounts to just under 30,000 readmissions per year, costing the NHS £61.9 million annually.

Despite the findings on staff costs and readmissions, the study also found that Brexit did not have a significant effect on hospital-related mortality.

Dr. Giuseppe Moscelli, principal investigator and co-author of the study from the University of Surrey, said, "Our study has highlighted that NHS hospitals saw a significant decrease in new EU nurses, and as a result, the quality of care for planned treatments deteriorated.

"This change not only affects [patient care](#) but also poses financial challenges for the NHS, as unplanned readmissions bring extra costs, estimated at around £61.9 million per year. This amount could have funded around 2,000 more senior nurses or 2,500 entry-level registered nurses, helping to alleviate the NHS's current staffing crisis."

The study, funded under a research award from the Health Foundation, investigated 144 acute care hospital Trusts in the NHS—from July 2015 to June 2019. It found that, before the 2016 Brexit referendum, about 22 EU nurses per 1,000 staff joined the NHS annually. This rate fell by 66% after the 2016 referendum.

The number of non-EU nurses joining the NHS increased by 50% post-referendum, and the average total number of nurses in each hospital Trust fell by 19 workers in the three years post-Brexit.

Dr. Giuseppe Moscelli said, "Our research sends a clear message: [political decisions](#) impacting immigration and workers' expectations about the future, like Brexit, can have far-reaching effects on sectors dependent on skilled foreign labor, such as the NHS and the wider health care sector.

"In particular, [skilled workers](#) tend to have attractive employment opportunities elsewhere and are often the first to refrain from migrating once the uncertainty about their life prospects in a new country increases."

Dr. Henrique Castro-Pires, co-author of the study, said, "Even in a context where policymakers and the voters are welcoming to skilled foreign workers, targeting low-skilled workers in the U.K.'s immigration policy makes it a less attractive destination. Understanding both the short and long-term effects of immigration policies remains a crucial topic for future research."

More information: Foreign Nurses and Hospital Quality: Evidence from Brexit. [www.iza.org/publications/dp/16 ... evidence-from-brexit](http://www.iza.org/publications/dp/16...evidence-from-brexit)

Provided by University of Surrey

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