

UK sees huge decline in health care visa applications

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The number of migrants applying to work in health and social care in Britain has plummeted since visa regulations were tightened, the government said on Wednesday.

The fall of more than 75 percent for the first four months of this year comes despite the sector struggling to fill tens of thousands of posts, in part because of tougher immigration rules post-Brexit.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is trying to slash record levels of regular and irregular immigration before a general election due sometime this year.

His Conservative government announced in December that [social care](#) workers arriving from overseas would no longer be allowed to bring dependants on their visa.

It also hiked the minimum salary for [skilled workers](#) from £26,200 (\$33,000) to £38,700.

The number of health and care skilled worker visa applications fell 76 percent between January and April compared to the same period last year, according to provisional data released by the interior ministry.

That was down from 50,900 to 12,400, the Home Office figures showed.

Care England, which represents independent care providers, has warned that there are 152,000 vacancies in the sector in the country.

Many of the posts were previously filled by overseas workers, including from the European Union, before freedom of movement ended when the UK left the bloc.

"The plan to deliver the largest-ever cut to legal migration in our country's history is working," said Home Secretary James Cleverly.

The data also showed that number of other skilled worker visa applications actually rose year-on-year by 41 percent.

Annual net migration—the difference between the number of people arriving and those leaving—topped a record high of 745,000 in 2022, data released in November showed.

The government's crackdown on regular migration includes tougher rules governing overseas students, which has led to criticism about its impact on universities, many of which depend on the higher fees paid by non-UK undergraduates and graduates.

The latest figures showed a 12-percent decrease in applicants for a sponsored study [visa](#), from 49,400 in January-April 2023, to 43,600 in the same period this year.

There was also a 79-percent reduction in applications from dependants, from 38,900 to 8,300.

On irregular migration, the government wants to deport 5,700 irregular migrants to Rwanda this year under a controversial scheme to stop small boats carrying [asylum seekers](#) from crossing the Channel from northern France.

The Conservatives lag well behind the main opposition Labour Party in most [opinion polls](#) ahead of the nationwide vote, the date of which Sunak is yet to announce.

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