

FRAGILE HEALTH:

Recruitment from the
WHO Red List



The UK has taken over 100,000 healthcare professionals from “world’s most fragile health systems” since 2020.

Between Q4 2020 and Q3 2023 the UK awarded 108,000 entry visas to healthcare professionals from countries described as having “the world’s most fragile health systems”.

There are currently 55 countries on the WHO’s “health workforce support and safeguards list”, the so-called “red list”.

The list identifies countries that “require priority support for health workforce development and health system strengthening, along with additional safeguards that limit active international recruitment.”¹

Countries must not “actively recruit” healthcare workers from these countries

In December, the Migration Advisory Committee’s annual report to Parliament warned that: “the labour shortages in health and social care sectors in red list countries are in part due to the workforce crisis caused by health and social care workers leaving their home countries. Government should consider careful planning within the UK to reduce reliance and consequent negative effects on red list countries.”²

Discussing the need for the Red List, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General: “Health workers are the backbone of every health system, and yet 55 countries with some of the world’s most fragile health systems do not have enough and many are losing their health workers to international migration,”³

As part of its Code of Practice, the Department of Health and Social Care says “health and social care organisations in England do not actively recruit from those countries the World Health Organization (WHO) recognise as having the most pressing health and care workforce-related challenges”⁴

However, of the 222,308 entry clearance visas awarded to individuals arriving on the “Skilled Worker – Health & Care” route since late 2020, 48.6% (108,105) were given to individuals from the “world’s most fragile health systems”.

Five of the top seven countries of origin for UK Health and Care workers arriving on a visa since 2020 are on the list of vulnerable nations.

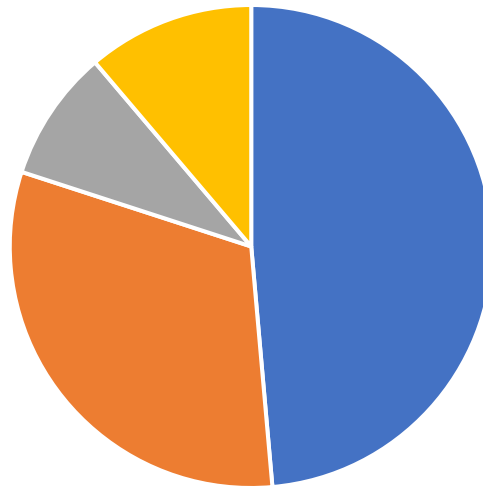
¹ [WHO renews alert on safeguards for health worker recruitment](#)

² [Migration Advisory Committee \(MAC\) annual report, 2023 \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

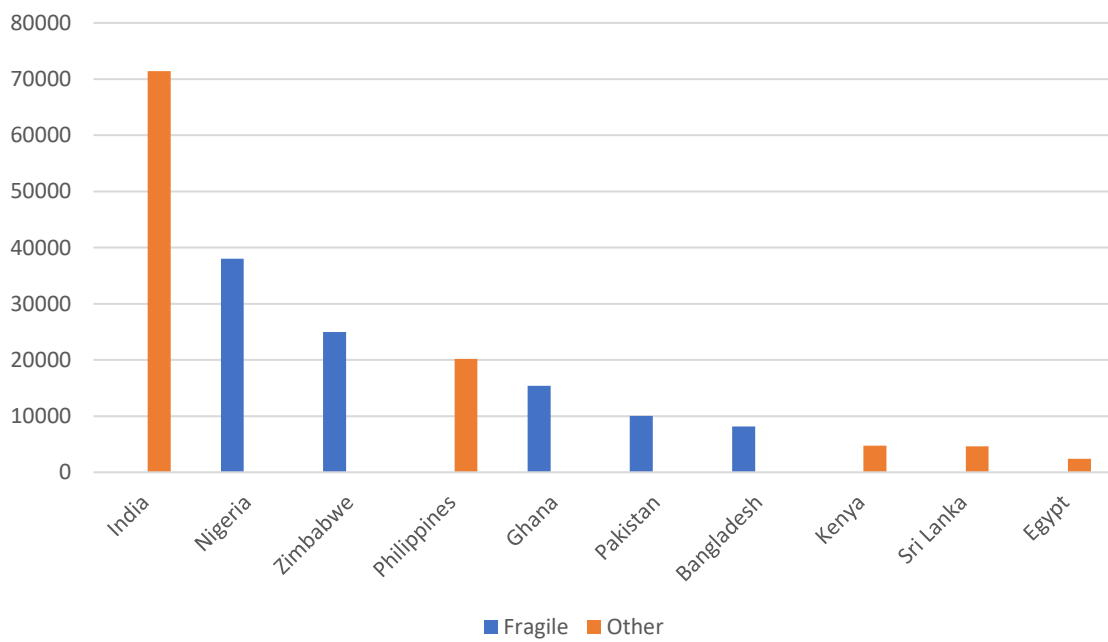
³ [WHO renews alert on safeguards for health worker recruitment](#)

⁴ [Code of practice for the international recruitment of health and social care personnel in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Origin of UK health and care visa recipients 2020 - 2023



■ Vulnerable countries ■ India ■ Philippines ■ Rest of World



Total UK Health and Care Worker visas awarded by vulnerable country:

Source: [Entry clearance visas granted outside the UK](#)

Nigeria	38003
Zimbabwe	24976
Ghana	15391
Pakistan	10054
Bangladesh	8135
Uganda	1567
Zambia	1447

Cameroon	1366
Sudan	926
Malawi	340
Sierra Leone	202
Gambia, The	139
Lesotho	105
Somalia	70
Afghanistan	68
Yemen	45
Rwanda	36
Ethiopia	29
Congo (Democratic Republic)	21
Liberia	15
Mozambique	11
Benin	7
Djibouti	6
Burundi	5
Eritrea	5
Senegal	5
Guinea	4
Angola	3
Niger	3
Burkina Faso	1
Comoros	1
Congo	1
Mauritania	1
South Sudan	1
Togo	1