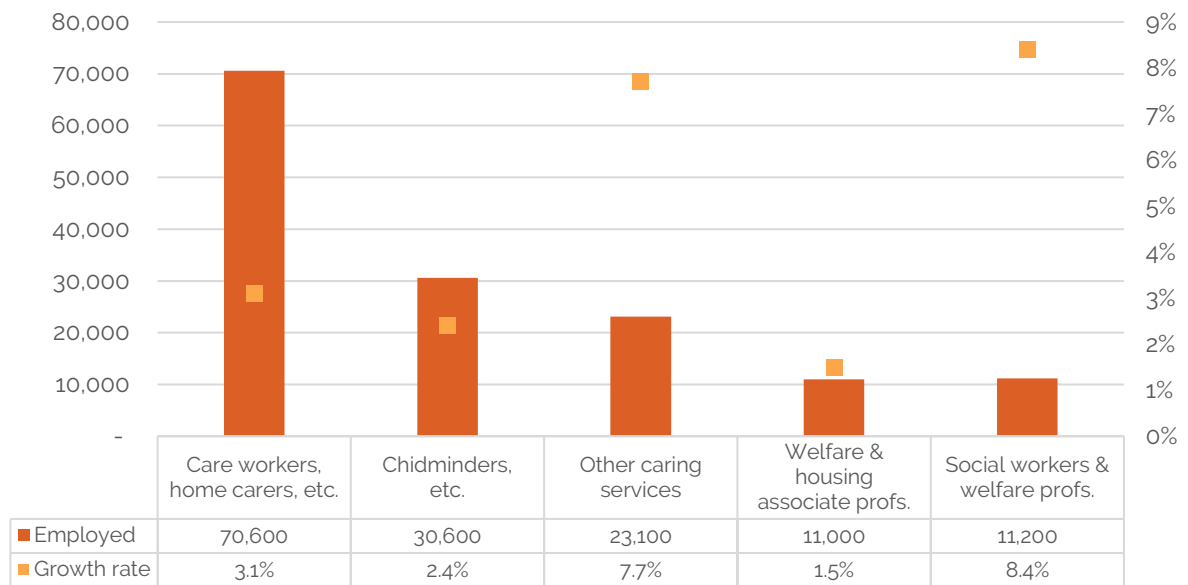


## 10.6 Social & Care Occupations

Figure 10.6 Annual Average Employment (2023) & Annual Average Growth Rates (2018-2023)



<b>Overall employment</b>	<b>146,500</b>
<b>Share of total workforce</b>	5.0%
<b>Main sectors of employment</b>	86% - Health 8% - Other NACE activities [3%] - Education
<b>Employment growth</b>	25,000 between 2018 and 2023 +3.8% on average annually (compared to +3.5% for total workforce)

2023	% Female Q4	% Full-time Q4	% Aged 55 years & over Q4	% Irish citizens Q4	% Third level graduates Q4	Number of new employment permits	Recruitment Agency Survey
Welfare & housing associates profs.	[59%]	[83%]	...	92%	90%	1	
Childminders, etc.	97%	59%	...	79%	[35%]	40	
Other caring services	65%	73%	...	73%	[39%]	2,728	✓
Social workers & welfare profs.	[52%]	90%	...	86%	97%	14	
Care workers, home carers, etc.	80%	67%	25%	87%	40%	438	✓
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>3,221</b>	

Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO (LFS) data, DETE, and SLMRU Recruitment Agency Survey (RAS)  
Numbers in square brackets should be treated with caution; an ellipsis (...) denotes numbers too small to report

## Overall Outlook for these Occupations

Employment levels grew slightly above the national average for social and care occupations, with an additional 25,000 persons employed since 2018. This primarily related to increases in employment of care workers and healthcare assistants (in the other caring services category). These two occupations also accounted for the largest share of employment permits issued in this occupational group in 2023. Over three-quarters of those employed in social and care occupations were female with almost a third employed part-time. With an ageing population, demand for care roles is likely to be in increasing demand in the years to come.

Occupation	Economic summary
Welfare & housing associate profs.	Employment growth was below average for this occupation with employment declining between 2022 and 2023. Despite this, the number of online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) grew for this occupation, one of the few occupations to increase in the last year. Youth and community workers account for the largest share of occupations within this group.
Childminders, etc.	Employment growth was below average for childminders and related roles; employment declined in 2022 but returned to 2021 levels by 2023. Almost all persons employed in these roles were female, with a high share working part-time. The high volume of recent job hires for this occupation indicates that job churn is a significant factor for these roles; in addition, a relatively high number of jobseekers registered with DSP in December 2023 were classified as previously employed in childcare roles. Future demographic factors (i.e. the falling number of 0–4-year-olds in the population) along with levels of childcare usage (Census 2022 indicates that 28% of under 5s are in some form of formal childcare) and Government childcare strategies such as the National Childcare Scheme will be the main drivers of demand for childcare workers in the coming years. Supply from education and training is significant; there were approximately 4,400 early childhood care and education awards in FET and HE in 2022, as well as over 850 higher education awards for pre-school teaching related subjects.
Social workers & welfare profs.	The strong employment growth rate for this occupation masks a fall in employment levels in 2021 and 2022; employment grew in 2023, returning to 2021 levels. A small number of employment permits were issued for social workers in 2023. Issues with recruitment and retention of social workers have been identified, particularly in key areas such as child protection and adult safeguarding <sup>1</sup> but the data does not currently point to a shortage. The embargo on recruitment in the HSE until mid-2024 is likely to have subdued recruitment of these occupations. There were over 1,400 awards made in 2022 at level 8 or higher in the broad social work field and it is expected that in the medium term two new pathways to careers in social work, launched in summer 2024 (new apprenticeship leading to a level 9 qualification and a tertiary degree (Bachelor of Social Work)) will alleviate some of the current difficulties in recruiting social workers.
Care workers, home carers, etc.  <b>Labour shortage: Care workers</b>	Despite a small decline in employment levels between 2022 and 2023, employment growth for this occupation was only marginally below average. Although employment numbers fell, the high level of recent job hires in 2023 indicates that job churn is a significant feature for these roles. Most employed in these roles were female, with a third working part-time; in addition, a quarter were aged 55 years and over which point to a potential high level of replacement demand in the coming years. With 40% of those employed with third level qualifications, over-qualification may be a feature. There was a high volume of job posts advertised through DSP for carers. The data points to issues with attracting and retaining staff for these roles and demand is likely to increase in future years as a result of our ageing population.
Other caring services  <b>Skills shortage: Healthcare assistants</b>	Employment levels have grown strongly in this occupation since 2021, resulting in a strong employment growth rate over the period. There was a high volume of online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) and posts for healthcare assistants accounted for the largest share of vacancies advertised through DSP Jobs Ireland across all occupations. In addition, there was 2,700 employment permits issued in 2023 and a small number of difficult-to-fill mentions in the Recruitment Agency Survey. The number of healthcare support awards has risen each year for the last three years, reaching 2,329 in 2023, although still well below the 2019 level of 2,771. Demand for this role does not appear to be abating, with shortages expected to continue in the coming years, particularly given increased demand across the hospital and nursing home sectors for healthcare assistants linked to Ireland's ageing demographics.

<sup>1</sup> O'Meara, K & Kelleher, K. (2022): Training, Recruiting & Retaining Social Workers in Ireland: A Scoping Exercise to Assess and Respond to Significant Challenges, Irish Association of Social Workers