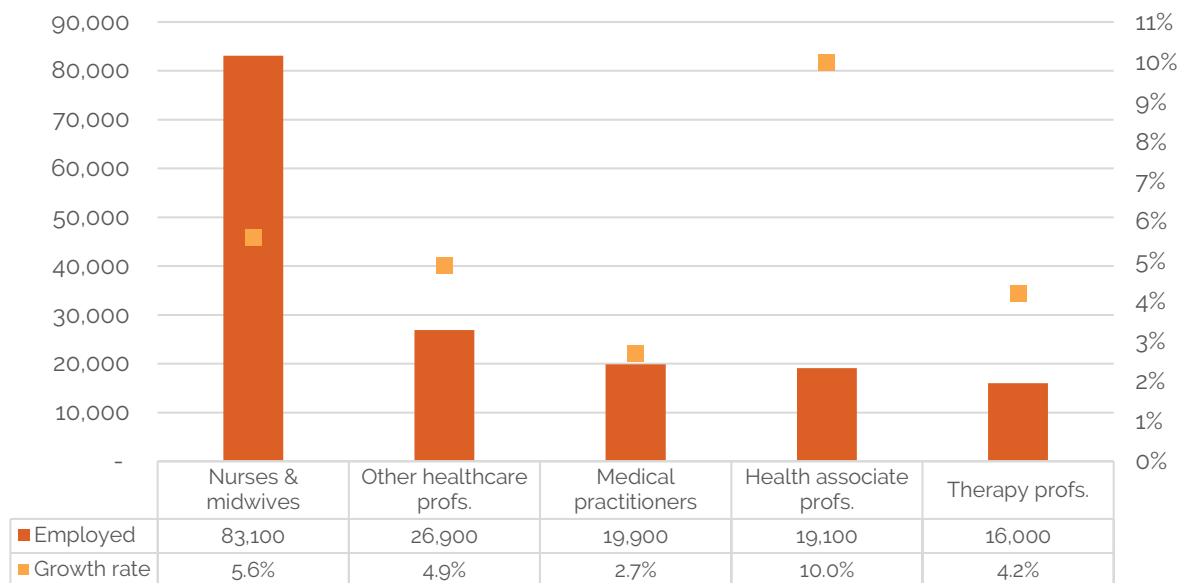


## 10.4 Healthcare Occupations

Figure 10.4 Annual Average Employment (2023) & Annual Average Growth Rates (2018-2023)



<b>Overall employment</b>	<b>165,000</b>
<b>Share of total workforce</b>	6.0%
<b>Main sectors of employment</b>	89% - Health sector
<b>Employment growth</b>	+38,100 between 2018 and 2023 +5.4% 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
Medical practitioners	53%	92%	...	76%	99%	1,632	✓
Therapy profs.	83%	65%	[27%]	91%	99%	78	
Nurses & midwives	90%	84%	13%	63%	99%	4,346	✓
Other healthcare profs.	69%	79%	[22%]	90%	97%	409	
Health associate profs.	65%	74%	...	76%	65%	19	
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>6,484</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 growth over the five-year period for healthcare occupations was above the national average; employment growth was particularly strong between 2021 and 2023, with an increase of over 15,000 persons employed annually, relating mainly to nurses. Over three quarters of those employed were female, most were in full-time roles, and most held third level qualifications; the share of non-Irish citizens varied across occupations. Employment permits continued to be a significant source of skills for these occupations with almost 6,500 new permits issued in 2023, the highest number across all occupational groups.

The Sláintecare Progress Report 2021–2023 notes an increase of 26,172 whole time equivalent (WTE) staff working in the health service when compared to 2020; this breaks down into an additional 8,038 nurses and midwives, 4,017 health and social care professionals, and 2,904 doctors and dentists.<sup>1</sup> A 2022 ESRI report estimated that the healthcare workforce (e.g. doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants, various therapists) will need to grow by between 1.7% and 2.1% on average annually, or by between 12,400 and 15,500 WTE posts, for the forecast period to 2035 in order to meet recruitment demands in acute hospitals alone arising from a number of factors (including the implementation of Sláintecare).<sup>2</sup>

The number of training places for many healthcare occupations is expected to increase strongly in the coming years, particularly for nursing, medicine, and therapy related courses, which may go some way in alleviating current issues with sourcing many of the healthcare occupations. A HSE recruitment embargo, introduced in October 2023, was lifted in July 2024 and may alleviate some shortages across the healthcare system.

Occupation	Economic summary
<p>Medical practitioners</p> <p><b>Skills shortage:</b> <b>Medical practitioners</b></p>	<p>The annual average employment growth for medical practitioners was below average over the five-year period, with marginal increases in employment between 2022 and 2023. The share of females in employment was slightly above average as was the number of non-Irish citizens. Employment permits remain a key source of supply of skills for these roles although the number of new permits issued in 2023 was 500 fewer than in 2022; permits were issued across a range of specialities. The Recruitment Agency Survey identified issues with sourcing psychiatric registrars/consultants, emergency medicine consultants and locum GPs. In particular, issues with attracting GPs have been highlighted with increased training places and the International Medical Graduate (IMG) scheme being used to alleviate some of the shortfall.<sup>3</sup> Overall supply from the third level education system is set to expand by 200 additional places by 2026 (having commenced in 2022). Given the duration of medical training, however, this increased supply is not expected to have an impact on the labour market in the short-to-medium term. The increasing demand for medical practitioners due to the roll-out of the Sláintecare Action Plan, the ageing population and the continued tackling of lengthy waiting lists will result in shortages for this occupation persisting.</p>
<p>Therapy profs. (e.g. occupational, speech &amp; language, physiotherapist)</p> <p><b>Shortage:</b> <b>Inconclusive</b></p>	<p>Employment growth was above average for therapy professionals, mostly related to an increase in employment between 2022 and 2023 of 3,000 persons. Over four-fifths of those employed were female and a third were working part-time (the highest share across healthcare occupations); this occupation also had a high share who were aged 55 years and over which will have future implications for replacement demand. A small number of employment permits were issued mainly for physiotherapists, but also for occupational and speech and language therapists. The delivery of Sláintecare, particularly in terms of community care and mental health services, will require additional staffing in these occupations. Provision in the education/training system for these occupations has expanded, with 100 places added in 2023 (across Ireland and Northern Ireland), and further places announced for September 2024. Given the duration of training programmes, recruitment difficulties for these posts are unlikely to ease in the short-to-medium term. However, the numbers employed in each of the therapy categories are too small to allow for detailed analysis and to determine if shortages exist.</p>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/SlaintecareProgressReport>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS147.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.rte.ie/news/health/2024/0313/New measures put in place to tackle shortage of GPs](https://www.rte.ie/news/health/2024/0313/New%20measures%20put%20in%20place%20to%20tackle%20shortage%20of%20GPs)

<p>Nurses &amp; midwives</p> <p><b>Skills shortage: Nurses</b></p>	<p>This occupation is the second largest (after sales assistants) across all occupations. Employment growth was above average, with particularly strong growth between 2021 and 2023 (an additional 20,500 persons employed). There was also a high number of recent job hires for this role, reflecting both the employment growth and turnover in roles with short-term contracts. Almost all employed were female (90%) and 37% were non-Irish citizens. This is also reflected in the high number of employment permits, the highest across all occupations, with staff nurses the most common role where permits were issued. There was a relatively high volume of jobs advertised online (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) and of posts notified to DSP for nurses; difficult-to-fill vacancies in the Recruitment Agency Survey included for staff nurses, theatre, ICU, oncology, and nurse managers.</p> <p>Recent changes to the education/training for nurses has seen additional places on existing courses and new routes (e.g. tertiary programmes and allocated places for students from the Republic of Ireland to study in Northern Ireland) which will go some way to alleviating issues with sourcing nurses in the coming years. A high demand for nurses is likely to persist and replacement demand alone for such a large occupation will also contribute to continued job openings.</p>
<p>Other healthcare profs.* (e.g. dentists, pharmacists, psychologists, radiographers, opticians &amp; health services managers)</p> <p><b>Shortage: Inconclusive</b></p>	<p>Employment growth for this occupation was above the national average, although employment levels have declined annually since 2021. Employment was spread across a large number of roles, with low numbers in employment in each making it difficult to determine any changes in individual occupations. Overall, 69% were female, a quarter were in part-time roles and there was a slightly higher than average share who were aged 55 years and over. Online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) were primarily for health services and public health managers/directors, and to a lesser extent, pharmacists. Employment permits issued were mainly for radiographers, but also included cardiac physiologists, dentists, psychologists and pharmacists. Evidence of shortages is difficult to determine for these roles due to the small numbers employed.</p>
<p>Health associate profs. (e.g. pharma/medical technicians, dental nurses, paramedics, dispensing opticians)</p>	<p>This occupation had the largest employment growth rate across all the healthcare occupations, relating mainly to growth between 2021 and 2022. Two thirds of those employed were female, a quarter were working part-time and 24% were non-Irish citizens. At 58%, this occupation had the lowest share employed in the health sector with employment also in wholesale and retail and industry. The small number of employment permits issued related to paramedics and prosthetists/orthotists. This was one of the few occupations not to experience a decline in the number of online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) between 2022 and 2023; adverts included roles for medical/dental and pharmaceutical technicians. The available data sources do not currently point to issues with sourcing suitably qualified personnel for these roles.</p>

*\*This occupation has been updated from previous editions with veterinarians removed (now included in the animal carers occupation in the Agriculture & Animal Care Occupations section).*