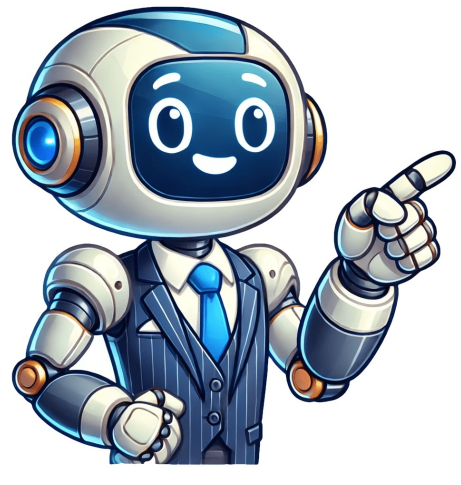


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Skip to main content The Office of the Chief Nurse was established by the WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in 2017. The mission of the Office is to advocate for and amplify the voices of nurses and midwives across the world and to support the work of WHO to strengthen nursing and midwifery in regions and countries. The Office of the Chief Nurse is led by the Chief Nursing Officer, Dr Amelia Latu Afuhamango Tuipulotu, from the Kingdom of Tonga. Dr Tuipulotu was appointed to the role in December 2022, taking over from Elizabeth Iro, the first Chief Nursing Officer at WHO, who held the position from 2017-2022.A key role of the Office is to provide leadership to nurses and midwives worldwide. To facilitate this, the Office set up the Nursing and Midwifery Global Community of Practice, a virtual network enabling collaboration and networking. Network participants benefit from discussion forums, live lecture programmes, facilitated workshops and dissemination of WHO documents and tools. The first major initiative in the tenure of Dr Tuipulotu is theGlobal 25 x 25 Campaign, which aims to provide access to Basic Emergency Care training for nurses and midwives from 25 countries by the end of 2025. Dr Amelia Latu Afuhamango Tuipulotu WHO Chief Nursing Officer Skip to main content The global nursing workforce has grown from 27.9million in 2018 to 29.8million in 2023, but wide disparities in the availability of nurses remain across regions and countries, according to the State of the Worlds Nursing 2025 report, published by the World Health Organization (WHO), International Council of Nurses (ICN) and partners. Inequities in the global nursing workforce leave many of the worlds population without access to essential health services, which could threaten progress towards universal health coverage (UHC), global health security and the health-related development goals. The new report released on International Nurses Day provides a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the nursing workforce at global, regional and country levels. Consolidating information from WHOs 194 Member States, the evidence indicates global progress in reducing the nursing workforce shortage from 6.2million in 2020 to 5.8million in 2023, with a projection to decline to 4.1million by 2030. But, the overall progress still masks deep regional disparities: approximately 78% of the worlds nurses are concentrated in countries representing just 49% of the global population. Low- and middle-income countries are facing challenges in graduating, employing and retaining nurses in the health system and will need to raise domestic investments to create and sustain jobs. In parallel, high-income countries need to be prepared to manage high levels of retiring nurses and review their reliance on foreign-trained nurses, strengthening bilateral agreements with the countries they recruit from. "This report contains encouraging news, for which we congratulate the countries that are making progress, said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. However, we cannot ignore the inequalities that mark the global nursing landscape. On International Nurses Day, I urge countries and partners to use this report as a signpost, showing us where weve come from, where we are now, and where we need to go as rapidly as possible.Key findingsThe State of the Worlds Nursing 2025 (SoWN) report, based on data reported by 194 countries through the National Health Workforce Accounts, shows a 33% increase in the number of countries reporting data since the last edition in 2020. It includes detailed country profiles now available for public access online. The report reveals complex disparities between and among countries, regions and socio-economic contexts. The data and evidence are intended to support country-led dialogue to contextualize the findings into policies and actions.We welcome the SoWN 2025 report as an important milestone for monitoring progress on strengthening and supporting the nursing workforce towards global health goals, said Pam Cipriano, President, International Council of Nurses. The report clearly exposes the inequalities that are holding back the nursing profession and acting as a barrier to achieving universal health coverage (UHC). Delivering on UHC is dependent on truly recognizing the value of nurses and on harnessing the power and influence of nurses to act as catalysts of positive change in our health systems.Gender and equity remain central concerns in the nursing workforce. Women continue to dominate the profession, making up 85% of the global nursing workforce. Findings suggest that 1 in 7 nurses worldwide and 23% in high-income countries are foreign-born, highlighting reliance on international migration. In contrast, the proportion is significantly lower in upper middle-income countries (8%), lower middle-income countries (1%), and low-income countries (3%).Low-income countries are increasing nurse graduate numbers at a faster pace than high-income countries. In many countries, hard-earned gains in the graduation rate of nurses are not resulting in improved densities due to the faster pace of population growth and lower employment opportunities. To address this, countries should create jobs to ensure graduates are hired and integrated into the health system and improve working conditions. Age demographics and retirement trends reveal a mixed picture. The global nursing workforce is relatively young: 33% of nurses are aged under 35 years, compared with 19% who are expected to retire in the next 10 years. However, in 20 countries mostly high-income retirements are expected to outpace new entrants, raising concerns about nurse shortfalls, and having fewer experienced nurses to mentor early career nurses. Around two thirds (62%) of countries reported the existence of advanced practice nursing roles marking significant progress since 2020 (where only 53% reported advanced practice nursing roles). These types of nurses have been shown to expand access to and quality of care in many different settings. The report also highlights improvements in nursing leadership: 82% of countries reported having a senior government nursing official to manage the nursing workforce. However, leadership development opportunities remain uneven. While 66% of countries report having such initiatives in place, only 25% of low-income countries offer structured leadership development.Mental health and workforce well-being remain areas of concern. Only 42% of responding countries have provisions for nurses mental health support, despite increased workloads and trauma experienced during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing this is essential to retain skilled professionals and ensure quality of care. Policy priorities for 20262030The report introduces forward-looking policy priorities, calling on countries to:expand and equitably distribute nursing jobs, especially in underserved regions;strengthen domestic education systems and align qualifications with defined roles;improve working conditions, pay equity, and mental well-being support;further develop nursing regulation and advanced practice nursing roles;promote gender equity and protect nurses working in fragile, conflict-affected settings;harness digital technologies and prepare nurses for climate-responsive care; andadvance nursing leadership and ensure leadership development opportunities are equitable. The evidence in the report provides an impetus for continued alignment to the policy priorities in the WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 20212025, and the actions recommended in the resolution submitted to the 78th World Health Assembly: Accelerating action on the health and care workforce by 2030. Note to editors:The State of the Worlds Nursing 2025 report presents the most contemporary evidence on the global nursing workforce, including education, employment, migration, regulation, working conditions, leadership and more. The report includes updated indicators and robust estimates on global and regional-level nursing stock, shortage, and projections to 2030. Online country profiles provide national level data in a downloadable (PDF) format. Skip to main content · Select language · français espao portugus The WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 20212025 presents evidence-based practices and an interrelated set of policy priorities that can help countries ensure that midwives and nurses optimally contribute to achieving universal health coverage and other population health goals. It was developed in response to Decision WHA73(30) which requested WHO, to engage with all WHO regions to update the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 20162020 and, following consultations with Member States, submit this update to the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly for its consideration. World Health Organization Skip to main content WHO is currently developing the State of the Worlds Nursing 2025 (SoWN 2025) report, which will be launched on 12 May 2025. This report will offer an updated, comprehensive analysis of the nursing workforce at national, regional, and global levels. This report is built on the SoWN 2020 report that provided critical insights and informed policy decisions on optimizing nurses roles and investing in education, jobs and leadership.The SoWN 2025 report will reflect the post-COVID-19 landscape, identifying key gaps and opportunities to strengthen nursing at key focus areas, including in primary health care.Raise awareness about the upcoming launch of the SoWN 2025 report on May 12, ensuring nurses and stakeholders are informed about its release and significance.Provide key insights on what to expect from the SoWN 2025 report, including its focus areas, methodology, and anticipated impact.Guide nurses and participants on how to effectively use the report, encouraging engagement and practical application in their respective contexts.Highlight the importance of nursing leadership at all levels within the health systems to drive UHC. Central to the achievement of the Agenda for Sustainable Development is an adequate, equitably distributed and fully supported health workforce. Nurses are the largest occupational group and represent an indispensable force with which to combat inequities in access to health services and progress towards health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while advancing gender equality through the strengthening and empowerment of a highly feminized profession. The 2025 edition of the State of the worlds nursing provides the most comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the nursing workforce. The report features new indicators on critical areas for nursing, such as education capacity, advanced practice nursing and remuneration. In addition to the 12 policy priorities from the Global strategic directions for nursing and midwifery 20212025, there are five additional policy priorities and a compilation of data from each WHO region. Country profiles reflect each countrys national data and are available for download from the WHO National Health Workforce Accounts data portal.With 5 years left of the SDG era and rising geopolitical tensions, economic retrenchment and concurrent protracted crises, we are at a strategic juncture. We can continue down the path of stagnated progress on universal health coverage and slower progress in reducing the health worker shortage. Or we can seize the opportunity this report presents to drive country-level investments and actions in support of nurses providing essential life-saving services in stronger health systems. We call on policy-makers in countries, nursing associations, regulators, development partners, partner organizations and other stakeholders to utilize this report for policy dialogue and decision-making on how and where to strengthen nursing to achieve universal health coverage and the other health-related SDGs. These next 5 years are our final opportunity to do so. Skip to main content There are an estimated 29 million nurses worldwide and 2.2 million midwives, WHO estimates a shortage of 4.5 million nurses and 0.31 million midwives by the year 2030 (1).That will bring the a global shortage of health workers estimated for 2030 to 4.8 million nurses and midwives, with the greatest gaps found in countries in Africa, South-East Asia and the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, as well as some parts of Latin America (1).Nurses and midwives play a pivotal role in improving health and contributing to the wider economy. Investing in them is imperative to achieve efficient, effective, resilient and sustainable health systems. They not only provide essential care but also play a critical role in shaping health policies and driving primary health care. Nurses and midwives deliver care in emergency settings and safeguard the sustainability of health systems globally.Globally, 67% of the health and social workforce are women compared to 41% in all employment sectors. Nursing and midwifery occupations represent a significant share of the female workforce.More than 80% of the worlds nurses work in countries that are home to half of the worlds population. And one in every eight nurses practices in a country other than the one where they were born or trained.Higher levels of female nurses are positively correlated with health service coverage, and life expectancy and negatively correlated with infant mortality.Nurses and midwives are central to Primary Health Care and are often the first and sometimes the only health professional that people see and the quality of their initial assessment, care and treatment is vital. They are also part of their local community sharing its culture, strengths and vulnerabilities and can shape and deliver effective interventions to meet the needs of patients, families and communities.WHO responseWHOs work relating to nursing and midwifery is currently directed by World Health Assembly resolution WHA74.15 (2021) which calls on WHO Member States and WHO to strengthen nursing and midwifery through the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery (SDNM) 20212025. The SDNM is an interrelated set of policy priorities that can help countries to ensure that midwives and nurses optimally contribute to achieving universal health coverage (UHC) and other population health goals .The SDNM comprises four policy focus areas: education, jobs, leadership, and service delivery Each area has a strategic direction articulating a goal for the five-year period, and includes between two and four policy priorities If enacted and sustained, these policy priorities can support advancement along the four strategic directions: 1) educating enough midwives and nurses with competencies to meet population health needs; 2) creating jobs, managing migration, and recruiting and retaining midwives and nurses where they are most needed; 3) strengthening nursing and midwifery leadership throughout health and academic systems; and 4) ensuring midwives and nurses are supported, respected, protected, motivated and equipped to safely and optimally contribute in their service delivery settings.WHO engages ministries of health, the Government Chief Nurses and Midwives (GCNMOs) and other relevant stakeholders to enable effective planning, coordination and management of nursing and midwifery programmes in countries. The Global Forum for the Government Chief Nurses and Midwives, established in 2004, is organized by WHO and meets every two years. It is a Forum for senior nursing and midwifery officials to develop and inform areas of shared interest. WHO also engages with academic institutions specialised in nursing and midwifery. Forty-seven academic centres are designated as Collaborating Centres for Nursing and Midwifery with WHO. The academic centres are affiliated to the Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Nursing and Midwifery.WHO has established a Nursing and Midwifery Global Community of Practice (NMGCoP). This is a virtual network created to provide a forum for nurses and midwives around the world to collaborate and network with each other, with WHO and with other key stakeholders (e.g WHO collaborating centres for nursing and midwifery, WHO Academy, Nursing and Midwifery Associations and Institutions.) The network will provide discussion forums, a live lecture programme, opportunities to develop and share policies, WHO documents and tools, and facilitated innovation workshops, masterclasses and webinars. The Nursing and Midwifery Global Community of Practice is free to join and available to nurses and midwives everywhere. From May 2022 it will be possible to access the virtual community via a smartphone, by downloading the Nursing and Midwifery Global Community of Practice App Nurses Beyond the Bedside WHO CSW66 Side Eventavailable for Android and IOS system via the APP store. A 2017Report on the history of nursing and midwifery in the World Health Organization 19482017, demonstrates how WHO, since its inception, has given this workforce a voice, and highlights the critical role nurses and midwives play in improving health outcomes across the world.ReferencesBoniol M, Kunjumen T, Nair TS, et al.The global health workforce stock and distribution in 2020 and 2030: a threat to equity and universal health coverage?BMJ Global Health 2022;7:e009316. Skip to main content On 12 May 2025, International Nurses Day, the World Health Organization will launch the WHO State of the Worlds Nursing (SoWN) report. The official global launch will take place at 13:00 CEST.To complement the global launch and mark this important moment, the Nursing Now Challenge,Challengers Committee Regional Hubs will hold a series of events to celebrate and discuss the significance of the report, highlighting how it can be used as a tool to shape policy dialogue and drive change.The Challengers' Committee Regional Hub Leads for Europe will celebrate the launch of the State of the World's Nursing report along with Margrieta Langins, Nursing & midwifery policy advisor to the WHO Regional Office for Europe and a panel of esteemed nursing leaders for their session. This event will provide the opportunity to unite early-career nurses and nurse leaders from across the region to discuss the data and recommendations, with the aim of driving meaningful change, with early-career nurses at the forefront of the discussions.State of the World's Nursing report launch events and resources will enable participants to lead powerful conversations, share key messages across platforms and confidently facilitate evidence-based policy dialogues. Together, participants can amplify the voice of nursing and shine a light on the critical data that will inform the future of the profession globally. WHO/Europe, in partnership with the European Commission and the Polish European Union (EU) Presidency, will launch Nursing Action, a new EU-funded initiative designed to tackle critical shortages in the nursing workforce across the EU. The launch event will take place on 17 January 2025 in Warsaw, Poland, as part of a day-long series of events and activities organized by the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU. The event will include the Minister of Health of Poland, partners representing nurses in the European Region, and high-level representatives from WHO and the European Commission. Why Nursing Action The EU is experiencing a significant shortage of nurses, exacerbated by high demand and systemic issues. This shortage is part of a broader health workforce crisis across Europe. Projections indicate a shortfall of approximately 18 million health-care workers globally by 2030, including nurses, as outlined in WHO workforce strategies. Many EU countries report challenges in retaining nurses, further increasing this gap. The nursing workforce in Europe is ageing. A substantial number of nurses are approaching retirement age, with limited younger replacements entering the profession. This imbalance puts additional strain on health-care systems. Additionally, nurses often face challenging working conditions, including long hours, high patient-to-staff ratios, and emotional strain, particularly during crises such as COVID-19. Many nurses report burnout, impacting retention rates. With support and funding from the EU, WHO/Europe aims to galvanize concrete actions at national and regional level to address these challenges and support nurses in the EU as key to the achievement of sustainable and resilient health systems. About Nursing Action The Nursing Action project aims to develop evidence-based solutions to increase the supply of nurses and improve their retention within the EU. By leveraging the expertise of European nursing associations and their partner organizations, the initiative will also engage policy-makers to implement necessary measures to address the nursing workforce crisis. Working with national health authorities and nursing associations across Europe, WHO will aim to retain the existing nursing workforce, and recruit more into the workforce, also by making the profession more attractive to younger generations. Over the course of 36 months, Nursing Action will pursue targeted activities tailored to the needs of individual EU Member States. Key areas of focus include: developing evidence-informed strategies to improve nurse retention and recruitment scaling up mentorship programmes to support the next generation of nurses promoting measures to protect nurses health and well-being supporting countries in implementing safe staffing practices enhancing the integration of digital solutions into nursing workflows. The State of the worlds nursing 2020 report provides the latest, most up-to-date evidence on and policy options for the global nursing workforce. It also presents a compelling case for considerable yet feasible investment in nursing education, jobs, and leadership. The primary chapters of the report outline the role and contributions of nurses with respect to the WHO triple billion targets; the health labour market and workforce policy levers to address the challenges to nurses working to their full potential; the findings from analysis of National Health Workforce Account (NHWA) data from 191 Member States and progress in relation to the projected shortfall of nurses by 2030; and forward-looking policy options for an agenda to strengthen the nursing workforce to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, improve health for all, and strengthen the primary health care workforce on our journey towards universal health coverage.The report concludes with a call to Member States and other stakeholders to commit to this agenda. The investments called for will drive progress toward Universal Health Coverage and across the Sustainable Development Goals including health but also education, gender, decent work and economic growth.For copies of the full report in the 5 other official WHO languages, please see the language tabs on the top of the pageCountry profilesAn online section available on the NHWA online portalcontains individual country profiles presenting key statistics on nursing workforce, including health but also education, gender, decent work and economic growth.

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