

Healthcare personnel statistics - physicians

*Data extracted in October 2015. Most recent data: Further Eurostat information, Main tables and Database .
Planned article update: October 2016.*

This article presents an overview of [European Union \(EU\)](#) statistics on [physicians](#) . It provides information on [specialist healthcare personnel](#) , as well as data pertaining to the number and ratio of graduates in this field (note that all physicians need to possess a degree in medicine).

Physicians are licenced to provide services to patients as consumers of healthcare, including: giving advice, conducting medical examinations and making diagnoses; applying preventive medical methods; prescribing medication and treating diagnosed illnesses; giving specialised medical or surgical treatment.

Physicians are split into two broad occupational groups:

- generalist medical practitioners (which includes general practitioners (GPs));
- specialist medical practitioners, which can, in turn, be subdivided into:
 - medical specialists (doctors specialising in the diagnosis and non-surgical treatment of physical disorders and diseases);
 - surgical specialists (doctors who specialise in the use of surgical techniques to treat disorders and diseases).

This article is one of a set of statistical articles concerning [healthcare resources](#) in the EU which forms part of an online publication on [health statistics](#) .

Main statistical findings

Healthcare personnel

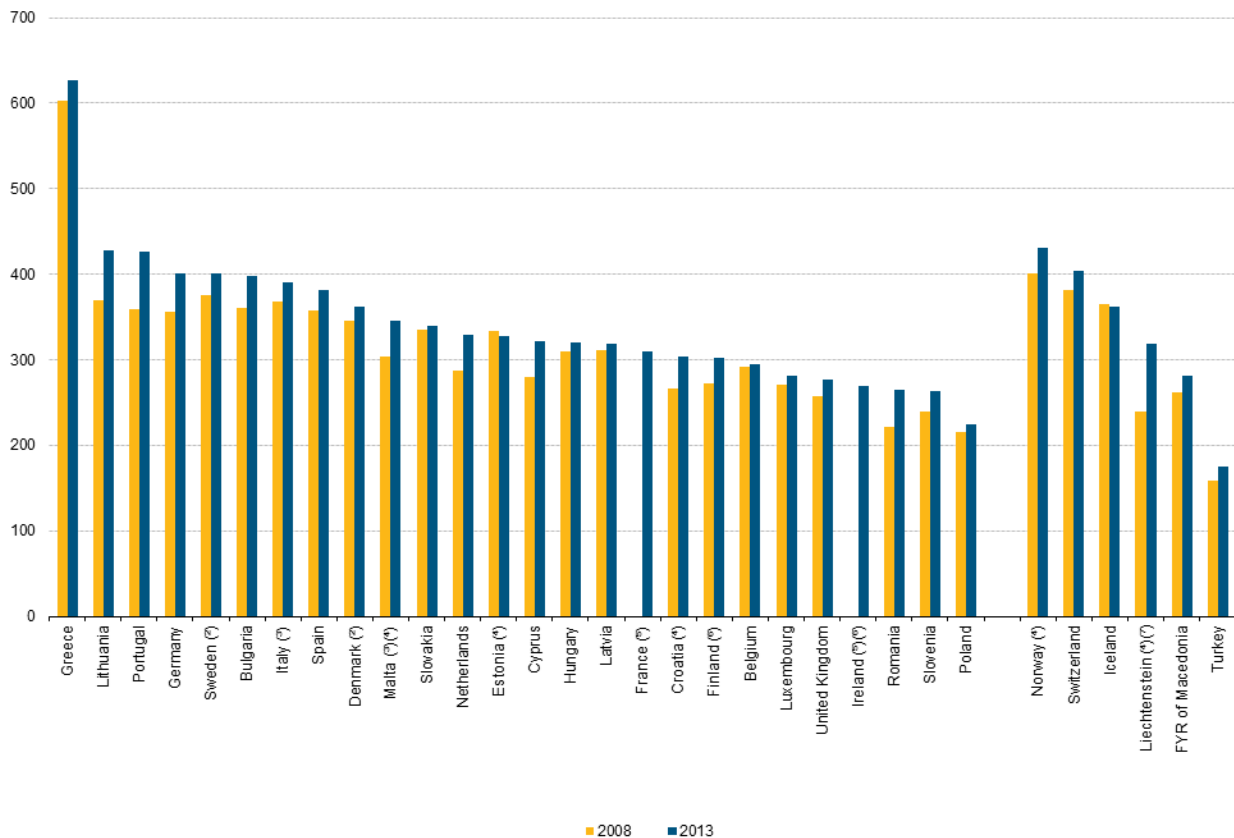
For [physicians](#) , Eurostat collects data for three concepts:

- 'practising', in other words, physicians providing services directly to patients;
- 'professionally active', in other words, 'practising' physicians plus physicians for whom their medical education is a prerequisite for the execution of their job;
- 'licensed', in other words, physicians who are registered and entitled to practise as physicians.

In this article preference is given to the concept of 'practising' physicians which is also used for the [European core health indicator](#) (ECHI) on practising physicians. For some EU Member States data are not available for this concept and therefore data are presented for one of the alternative concepts instead: footnotes indicate these exceptions in each table and figure.

There were approximately 1.7 million physicians working in the EU

In 2013, there were approximately 1.7 million practising physicians in the EU-28 (based on the same data availability as shown in Figure 1 in terms of the latest available reference period for each of the EU Member States and the different concepts used for some Member States).



(*) Greece, the Netherlands, Slovakia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey: professionally active physicians or doctors. Portugal: physicians or doctors licensed to practise. The Czech Republic and Austria: not available.
 (*) 2012 instead of 2013.
 (*) 2009 instead of 2008.
 (*) Break in series.
 (*) 2008: not available.
 (*) 2013: estimate.
 (*) 2008: excluding interns.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth_rs_prs1)

Figure 1: Practising physicians, 2008 and 2013 (1)(per 100 000 inhabitants)Source: Eurostat (hlth_rs_prs1)

The highest overall number of practising physicians was recorded in the largest EU Member States: Germany (327 thousand), followed at some distance by Italy (235 thousand), France (203 thousand), Spain (178 thousand) and the United Kingdom (also 178 thousand). Together, these five Member States accounted for two thirds (67 %) of the total number of practising physicians in the EU, above their combined 63 % share of the EU’s population. The next highest number of practising physicians was in Poland, 85 thousand, equivalent to just over 5 % of the EU total.

Greece had the highest number of physicians per 100 000 inhabitants

On the basis of a comparison in relation to population numbers, Greece (professionally active) recorded the highest number of physicians among the EU Member States, at 627 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2013. This was considerably higher than in any of the other EU Member States, as Lithuania (428) and Portugal (426; physicians licensed to practise) had the next highest ratios of practising physicians to inhabitants and were the only other Member States to record over 425 practising physicians per 100 000 inhabitants. By contrast, there were fewer than 265 practising physicians per 100 000 inhabitants in Romania, Slovenia and Poland, where the lowest ratio was recorded (224 physicians per 100 000 inhabitants).

The ratio of physicians per 100 000 inhabitants rose rapidly in Portugal, Lithuania and Germany between 2008 and 2013

The number of physicians per 100 000 inhabitants increased in each of the EU Member States between 2008 and 2013 (see Figure 1 for the data availability), except in Estonia which may reflect a break in the time series.

Note that the increases could result from a higher absolute number of physicians or from a smaller number of inhabitants.

The largest increases for this ratio were recorded in three of the four EU Member States that had recorded the highest ratios of physicians per 100 000 inhabitants in 2013. The biggest gain was recorded in Portugal, where the number of physicians or doctors licensed to practise rose from 359 per 100 000 inhabitants to 426 per 100 000 inhabitants, while Lithuania and Germany recorded the next highest increases. By contrast, there were increases of less than 5.0 physicians per 100 000 inhabitants in Slovakia (professionally active physicians or doctors) and Belgium.

Spain was the only EU Member State to report having more surgical specialists than general medical practitioners or medical specialists

The three most common types of physicians across the EU Member States (see Table 1 for data availability; no data available for Cyprus or Slovakia) were generalist medical practitioners, the medical group of specialists and the surgical group of specialists.

	Generalist medical practitioners		General paediatricians		Gynaecologists and obstetricians		Psychiatrists		Medical group of specialists		Surgical group of specialists		Other specialists not elsewhere classified	
	(number)	(per 100 000 inhab.)	(number)	(per 100 000 inhab.)	(number)	(per 100 000 inhab.)	(number)	(per 100 000 inhab.)	(number)	(per 100 000 inhab.)	(number)	(per 100 000 inhab.)	(number)	(per 100 000 inhab.)
Belgium	12 483	111.6	1 414	12.6	1 377	12.3	1 899	17.0	9 157	81.9	6 261	56.0	.	.
Bulgaria	4 781	65.8	1 448	19.9	1 408	19.4	586	8.1	9 636	132.6	6 842	94.2	4 190	57.7
Czech Republic	7 371	70.1	1 296	12.3	2 662	25.3	1 533	14.6	16 002	152.2	9 397	89.4	.	.
Denmark (*)	3 862	69.1	388	6.9	565	10.1	990	17.7	3 498	62.6	3 143	56.2	.	.
Germany	136 267	167.4	9 983	12.3	16 522	20.3	17 566	21.6	75 653	92.9	69 084	84.9	1 870	2.3
Estonia	1 168	88.6	177	13.4	289	21.9	222	16.8	1 301	98.7	1 032	78.3	138	10.5
Ireland	10 799	234.8	453	9.9	334	7.3	896	19.5	3 047	66.3	2 237	48.6	51	1.1
Greece	3 494	31.8	3 326	30.3	2 862	26.1	1 909	17.4	21 399	194.8	11 829	107.7	458	4.2
Spain (*)	35 017	75.1	11 896	25.5	5 528	11.9	4 844	10.4	35 473	76.1	42 510	91.2	11 595	24.9
France	102 140	155.5	7 710	11.7	8 090	12.3	14 831	22.6	53 936	82.1	29 925	45.5	2 007	3.1
Croatia	3 335	78.4	788	18.5	761	17.9	637	15.0	4 778	112.3	2 557	60.1	50	1.2
Italy	53 525	88.9	17 472	29.0	11 847	19.7	10 900	18.1	84 276	139.9	56 898	94.5	0	0.0
Cyprus	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Latvia	1 357	67.4	255	12.7	431	21.4	321	15.9	1 903	94.6	1 412	70.2	744	37.0
Lithuania	2 709	91.6	796	26.9	744	25.2	645	21.8	4 542	153.6	3 014	101.9	200	6.8
Luxembourg	467	85.9	81	14.9	86	15.8	112	20.6	446	82.1	330	60.7	14	2.6
Hungary (*)	3 353	33.5	2 665	26.6	1 220	12.2	1 055	10.6	7 837	78.4	3 736	37.4	.	.
Malta	340	80.3	59	13.9	56	13.2	36	8.5	288	68.0	269	63.5	.	.
Netherlands	24 380	145.1	1 592	9.5	1 447	8.6	3 692	22.0	14 004	83.3	6 847	40.7	3 298	19.6
Austria	13 924	164.2	1 374	16.2	1 768	20.9	1 368	16.1	9 350	110.3	8 251	97.3	72	0.8
Poland	12 846	33.8	5 008	13.2	5 049	13.3	3 329	8.8	38 654	101.6	20 104	52.8	256	0.7
Portugal	22 744	217.5	1 861	17.8	1 677	16.0	1 196	11.4	10 933	104.5	6 905	66.0	694	6.6
Romania	15 923	79.7	2 452	12.3	2 389	12.0	2 011	10.1	19 615	98.2	9 945	49.8	493	2.5
Slovenia	1 204	58.4	540	26.2	345	16.7	249	12.1	1 836	89.1	1 088	52.8	29	1.4
Slovakia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Finland	6 517	119.8	468	8.6	619	11.4	1 125	20.7	3 376	62.1	2 215	40.7	215	4.0
Sweden (*)	6 105	64.1	987	10.4	1 323	13.9	2 098	22.0	8 687	91.3	6 154	64.6	1 193	12.5
United Kingdom	51 011	79.6	9 683	15.1	7 551	11.8	12 041	18.8	42 629	66.5	48 052	75.0	6 693	10.4
Iceland	188	58.1	15	4.6	44	13.6	71	21.9	354	109.3	228	70.4	0	0.0
Liechtenstein	34	91.9	6	16.2	8	21.6	10	27.0	33	89.2	27	73.0	0	0.0
Norway	4 437	87.3	707	13.9	546	10.7	1 173	23.1	3 568	70.2	2 515	49.5	256	5.0
Switzerland	8 986	111.1	1 548	19.1	1 601	19.8	3 975	49.1	5 657	69.9	5 972	73.8	192	2.4
FYR of Macedonia	2 017	97.7	400	19.4	367	17.8	193	9.4	1 693	82.0	872	42.2	262	12.7
Serbia	6 480	90.5	1 983	27.7	1 296	18.1	982	13.7	6 142	85.7	3 902	54.5	1 463	20.4
Turkey	41 128	54.0	7 066	9.3	6 865	9.0	3 288	4.3	38 808	51.0	31 436	41.3	5 184	6.8

(*) 2012.

(*) General medical practitioners: excluding private sector. Specialists: excluding physicians working outside of hospitals.

(*) 2010.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth_rs_spec)

Table 1: Physicians, by speciality, 2013 Source: Eurostat (hlth_rs_spec)

Generalist medical practitioners do not limit their practice to certain disease categories or methods of treatment, and may assume responsibility for the provision of continuing and comprehensive medical care to individuals, families and communities.

The medical group of specialists includes doctors who specialise in the diagnosis and non-surgical treatment of physical disorders and diseases, for example specialists in internal medicine, cardiology, oncology and radiology.

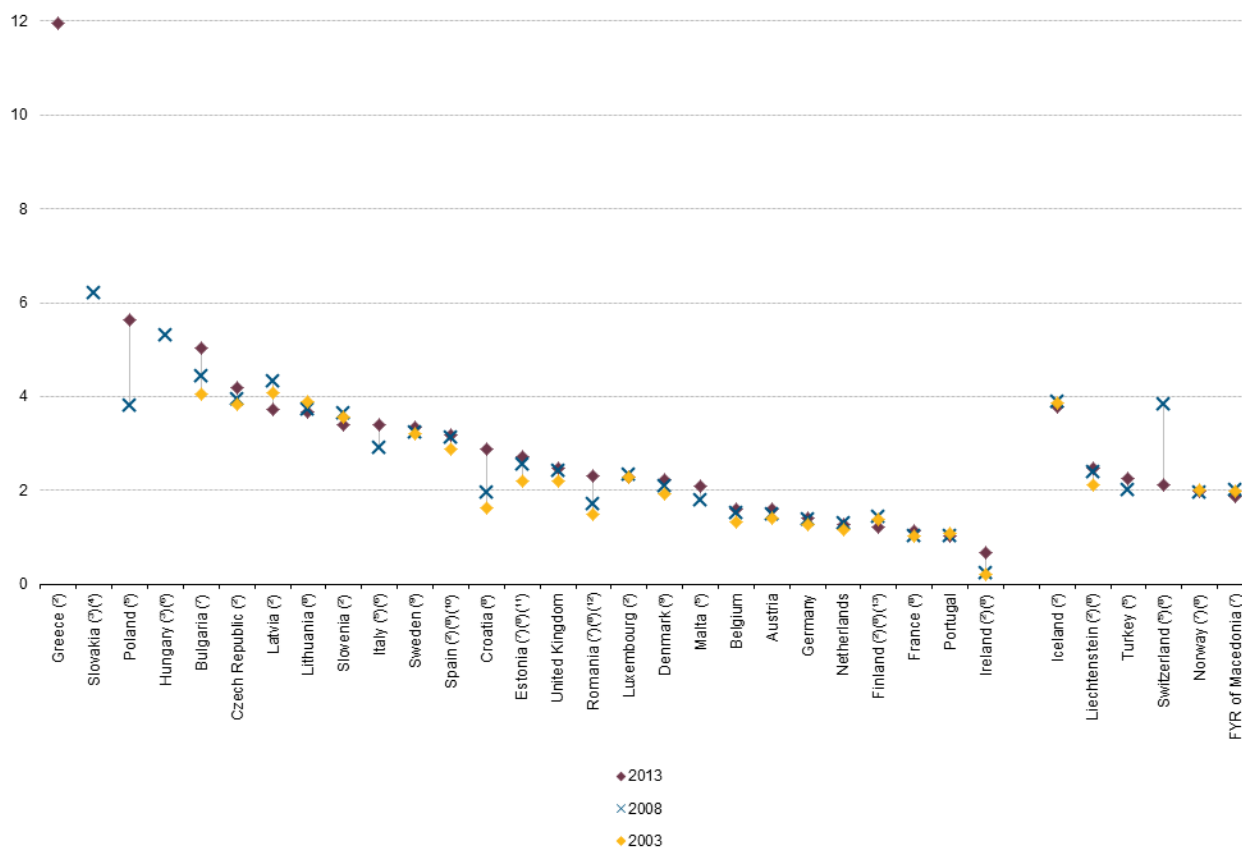
The surgical group of specialists includes doctors who specialise in the use of surgical techniques to treat disorders and diseases, for example, specialists in general surgery, neurological surgery, plastic surgery, anaesthesiology as well as accident and emergency medicine.

In 12 of the EU Member States, including Germany, France and the United Kingdom, the most common specialisation in 2013 was generalist medical practitioners. By contrast, there were more medical specialists in 13 of the Member States (including Italy), leaving Spain as the only Member State to record a higher number of surgical specialists.

In 2013, the highest ratios of generalist medical practitioners to population size — in excess of 200 per 100 000 inhabitants — were recorded in Ireland and Portugal. The highest ratios for medical specialists were found in Greece (195 per 100 000 inhabitants), Lithuania (154 per 100 000 inhabitants) and the Czech Republic (152), while the highest ratios for surgical specialists were recorded in Greece (108 per 100 000 inhabitants) and Lithuania (102).

A widespread — but not uniform — increase in the ratio of specialist to generalists

Apart from Ireland, in all of the EU Member States there were more specialist physicians than generalists in 2013. Over time there has been a widespread — but not uniform — movement towards more specialists relative to the number of generalists. Figure 2 shows the ratio of specialists to generalists for 2003, 2008 and 2013: see the footnotes for precise information concerning the years covered for each Member State or non-member country.



(*) Cyprus: not available.
 (†) 2005 instead of 2003.
 (‡) 2003 and 2013: not available.
 (†) 2007 instead of 2008.
 (‡) 2003: not available.
 (†) 2009 instead of 2008.
 (†) 2003–08: break in series.
 (‡) 2008–13: break in series.
 (†) 2012 instead of 2013.
 (†) General medical practitioners: excluding private sector. Specialists: excluding physicians working outside of hospitals.
 (†) 2003: estimate.
 (†) 2004 instead of 2003. 2008: estimate.
 (†) 2013: estimate.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth_rs_spec)

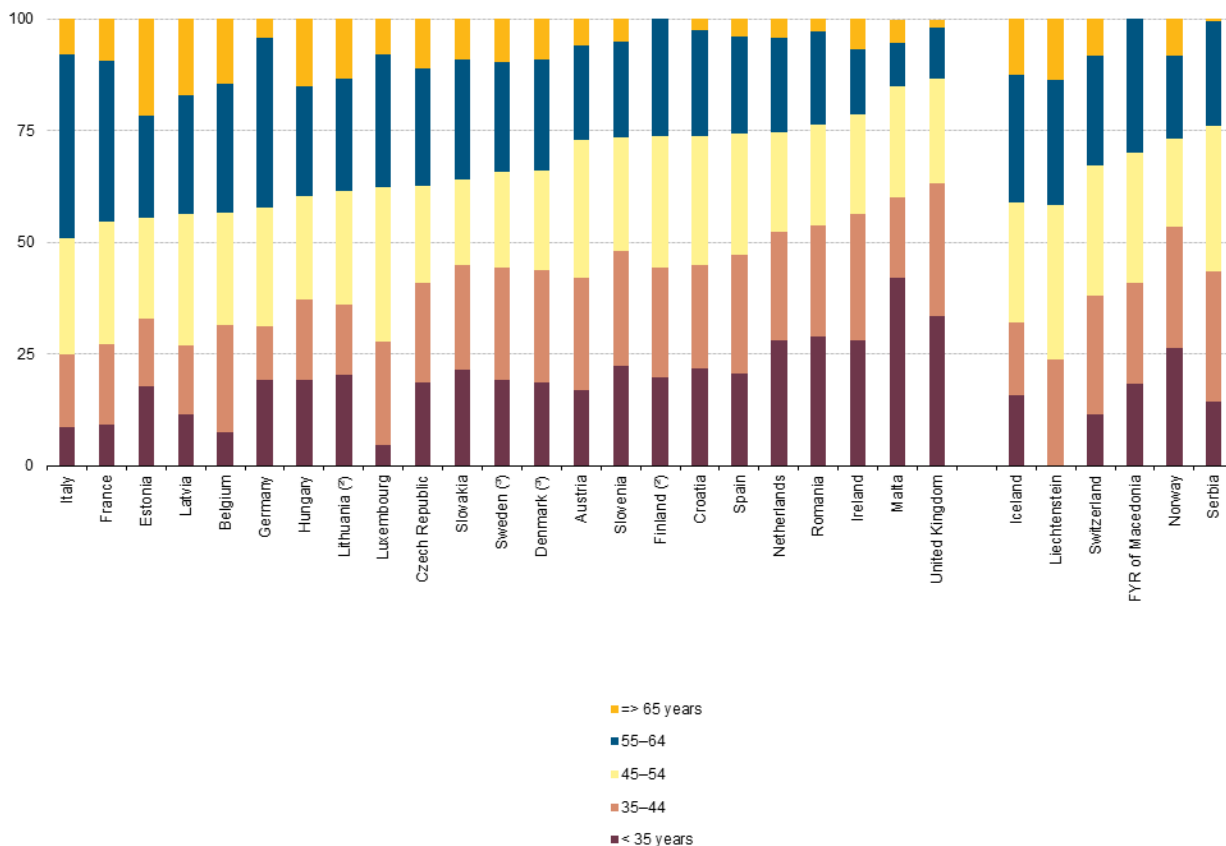
Figure 2: Physicians — ratio of specialists to generalists, 2003, 2008 and 2013 (1)(%) Source: Eurostat (hlth_rs_spec)

In a number of EU Member States the increase in the number of specialists relative to the number of generalists between these years is clear, for example in Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania (note that all had at least one break in series during the period studied); some other Member States also followed this pattern although the development was smaller in scale, as was the case in Estonia, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Spain, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Austria, Germany, France and Sweden (note that there were breaks in series for Estonia, Ireland, Spain and France). Two Member States had data for all three years but reported downward or stable developments: in Lithuania the ratio fell between 2003 and 2008 and between 2008 and 2013 (note there is a break in series between 2008 and 2013); in Portugal the ratio fell slightly during the first period and was unchanged during the second period. The remaining six Member States with data available for all three years reported an initial increase in the ratio of specialists to generalists followed by a decrease, as was the case for example in Greece and Latvia. The three EU Member States for which data are only available for two of the three years — Poland, Italy and Malta — all recorded an increase in the ratio of specialists to generalists between 2008 and 2013.

Italy had the highest number of physicians who were aged 55 or over

There has been a rapid ageing of the healthcare workforce in the EU as the baby-boom generation started to reach retirement age. This is reflected in the proportion of the total number of physicians who were aged 55

or over, which rose from 24 % in 2003 to 36 % in 2013¹. The share of physicians aged 55 or over in the total number of physicians was within the range of 40–45 % in Hungary, Germany, Belgium, Latvia, Estonia and France, peaking at 49 % in Italy. By contrast, the relative importance of this age group was less than one sixth in Malta (15 %) and the United Kingdom (13 %).



(*) Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Poland and Portugal: not available. The figure is ranked on the share of those aged 55 or more in the total number of physicians.

(*) Estimates.

(*) 2012.

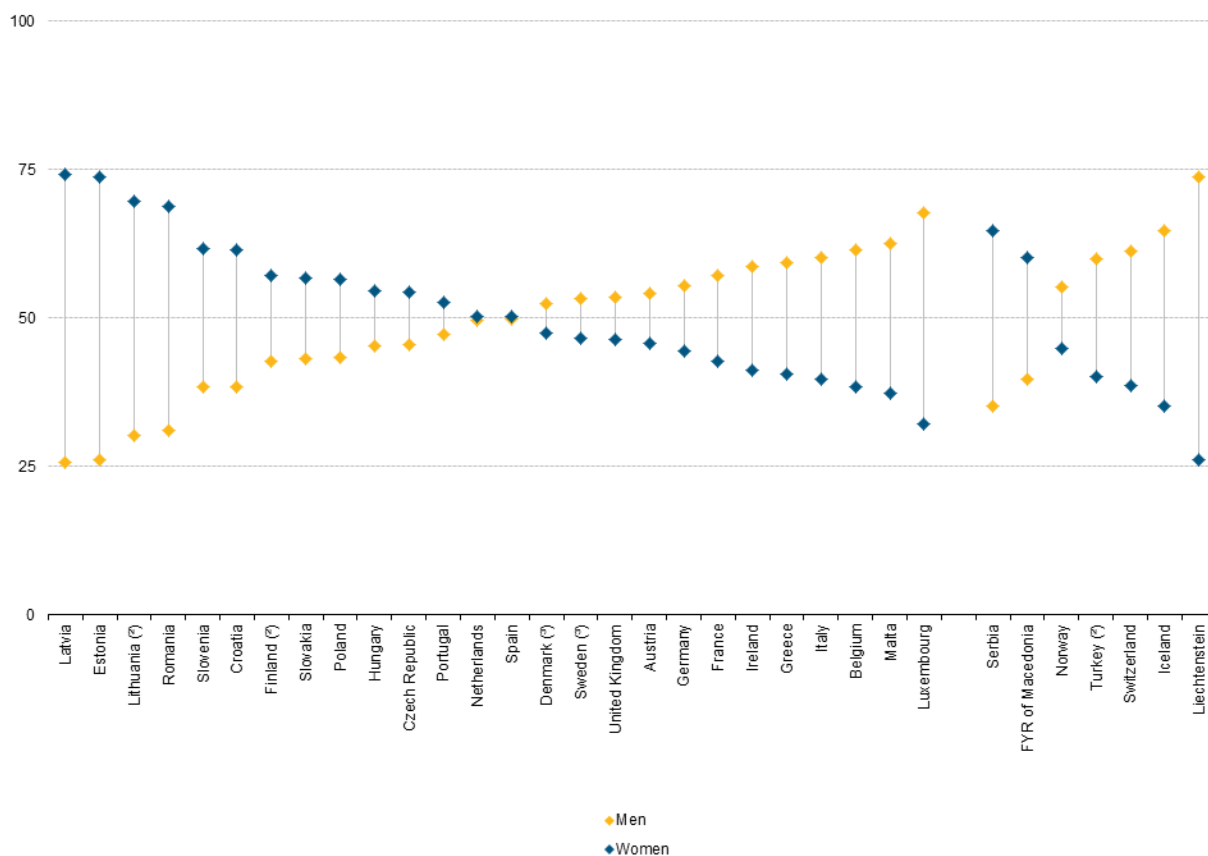
Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth_rs_phys)

Figure 3: Physicians, by age, 2013 (1)(%)Source: Eurostat (hlth_rs_phys)

Almost three quarters of the total number of physicians in Estonia and Latvia were women

An additional analysis is presented in Figure 4, which shows that there were considerable differences between EU Member States with respect to the share of physicians accounted for by each of the sexes. Between 2003 and 2013 the proportion of female physicians in the total number of physicians generally rose. In 2013, there were 12 EU Member States where the share of male physicians was higher (than that for women), while the 14 remaining Member States (no data for Bulgaria or Cyprus) reported a higher share of female physicians.

¹These percentages are estimates based on data for 15 EU Member States (including the five largest ones) with data available for 2003 as well as a recent year (2012 or 2013).



(*) Bulgaria and Cyprus: not available.

(*) Estimates.

(*) 2012.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth_rs_phys)

Figure 4: Physicians, by sex, 2013 (1)(%)Source: Eurostat (hlth_rs_phys)

In 2013, the highest female shares (60 % or more of the total number of physicians) were recorded in the [Baltic Member States](#), Romania, Slovenia and Croatia, peaking in Estonia and Latvia, where women accounted for almost three quarters of the total number of physicians. By contrast, the highest share of male physicians (68 %) was recorded in Luxembourg; relatively high shares for men were also recorded in Malta (63 %), Belgium (62 %), Italy (60 %), Greece and Ireland (both 59 %).

Hospitals employed more than half of the total number of physicians in the EU

Table 2 provides further information in relation to the number of medical doctors who were employed in hospitals; note that these data refer to the number of physicians directly employed by a hospital and physicians with service contracts (for example, self-employed physicians employed to treat hospital patients).

Medical doctors employed in hospitals accounted for just over four fifths (82 %) of the total number of physicians in France and 74 % in Denmark (2012 data). By contrast, medical doctors employed in hospitals accounted for around one quarter of the total number of physicians in Cyprus (29 %) and Belgium (25 %; 2012 data); elsewhere the share ranged from 40 % to 66 %.

	Head count (number)			Full-time equivalents (number)			Full-time equivalents (per 100 000 inhabitants)		
	2003	2008	2013	2003	2008	2013	2003	2008	2013
Belgium (*)	7 357	7 356	8 078	5 853	6 031	6 640	56.4	56.3	59.7
Bulgaria	13 093	13 708	15 668	.	.	.	.	.	.
Czech Republic (*)	20 162	20 762	22 669	17 931	19 053	20 377	175.2	182.8	193.8
Denmark (*)	11 463	13 486	14 931	11 311	13 376	15 120	209.8	243.5	269.3
Germany	138 000	148 000	174 000	122 000	136 000	155 000	147.8	165.6	190.4
Estonia (*)	.	3 015	2 835	.	2 772	2 814	.	206.7	213.5
Ireland	5 739	6 555	6 807	5 088	6 085	6 328	127.3	137.5	137.6
Greece (*)	24 227	26 063	28 021	.	.	.	.	.	.
Spain	78 520	97 939	101 793	.	.	.	.	.	.
France (*)	148 660	157 242	166 847	94 264	105 029	121 041	151.8	163.7	184.2
Croatia	.	6 695	7 697	.	.	.	.	.	.
Italy (*)	121 817	127 705	127 697	.	.	.	.	.	.
Cyprus (*)	496	618	797	.	.	.	.	.	.
Latvia	.	.	3 523	.	.	.	.	.	.
Lithuania	6 404	7 386	8 171	8 513	9 645	10 007	246.5	287.2	338.3
Luxembourg	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Hungary	.	15 179	19 313	.	13 564	17 209	.	135.1	174.0
Malta (*)	.	690	969	.	686	887	.	167.7	209.4
Netherlands (*)	16 541	20 642	23 516	14 896	18 706	22 272	91.8	113.7	132.5
Austria	18 982	21 103	23 676	18 282	19 936	21 514	225.1	239.1	253.7
Poland	.	42 963	42 873	.	.	.	.	.	.
Portugal	20 773	21 100	21 880	.	.	.	.	.	.
Romania (*)	19 026	24 389	26 282	.	24 112	26 011	.	112.1	130.2
Slovenia	2 502	2 811	2 988	.	.	.	.	.	.
Slovakia (*)	.	.	.	.	7 770	8 749	.	143.7	161.6
Finland (*)	7 240	7 716	7 863	6 919	7 946	.	132.7	149.5	.
Sweden	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
United Kingdom	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Iceland	.	907	899	.	627	578	.	197.5	178.5
Liechtenstein	7	9	17	6	9	12	18.2	25.3	32.7
Norway (*)	9 474	11 000	11 986	9 156	10 638	11 631	200.6	223.1	229.0
Switzerland (*)	15 509	18 523	22 863	13 677	16 563	19 026	186.4	216.6	235.2
FYR of Macedonia (*)	1 904	2 003	1 961	.	.	.	.	.	.
Turkey	72 402	89 939	104 177	.	.	.	.	.	.

(*) 2012 instead of 2013.

(*) 2005 instead of 2003.

(*) Head count: 2012 instead of 2013.

(*) 2008–13: head count, break in series.

(*) 2012 instead of 2013.

(*) 2008–13: break in series.

(*) 2007 instead of 2008.

(*) 2003–08: break in series.

(*) 2003–08: full-time equivalents (number and per 100 000 inhabitants), break in series.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth_rs_prshp1)

Table 2: Medical doctors employed in hospitals, 2003, 2008 and 2013 Source: Eurostat (hlth_rs_prshp1)

In 2013, the highest absolute number of medical doctors employed in hospitals was recorded in Germany (174 thousand), ahead of France (167 thousand). Italy (128 thousand) and Spain (102 thousand) were the only other EU Member States (for which data are available; note there are no data for the United Kingdom) to record in excess of 43 thousand medical doctors employed in hospitals.

Although only a partial set of information is available for 18 of the EU Member States (see Table 2 for data availability), this shows that the number of medical doctors employed in hospitals systematically increased between 2003 and 2013 for these Member States. In absolute terms, the highest increases in doctor numbers were recorded in Germany (an additional 36 thousand doctors), Spain (23 thousand more) and France (18 thousand more). In relative terms, the fastest growth rates were recorded in Cyprus, the Netherlands (2002–11) and Romania, where the number of medical doctors employed in hospitals increased by at least one third over the period under consideration, although in all three cases there was a break in series.

The availability of data converted into [full-time equivalent](#) units indicates that physicians working in hospitals generally worked close to full-time: among the 13 Member States with data available for 2013 (or another recent year), the ratio between the data in head counts and that in full-time equivalents was 82 % or higher except in France where it was notably lower at 73 %. As such, despite Germany having only 4 % more medical doctors employed in hospitals than France when measured as a head count, after converting to full-time equivalents the number in Germany was around 28 % higher.

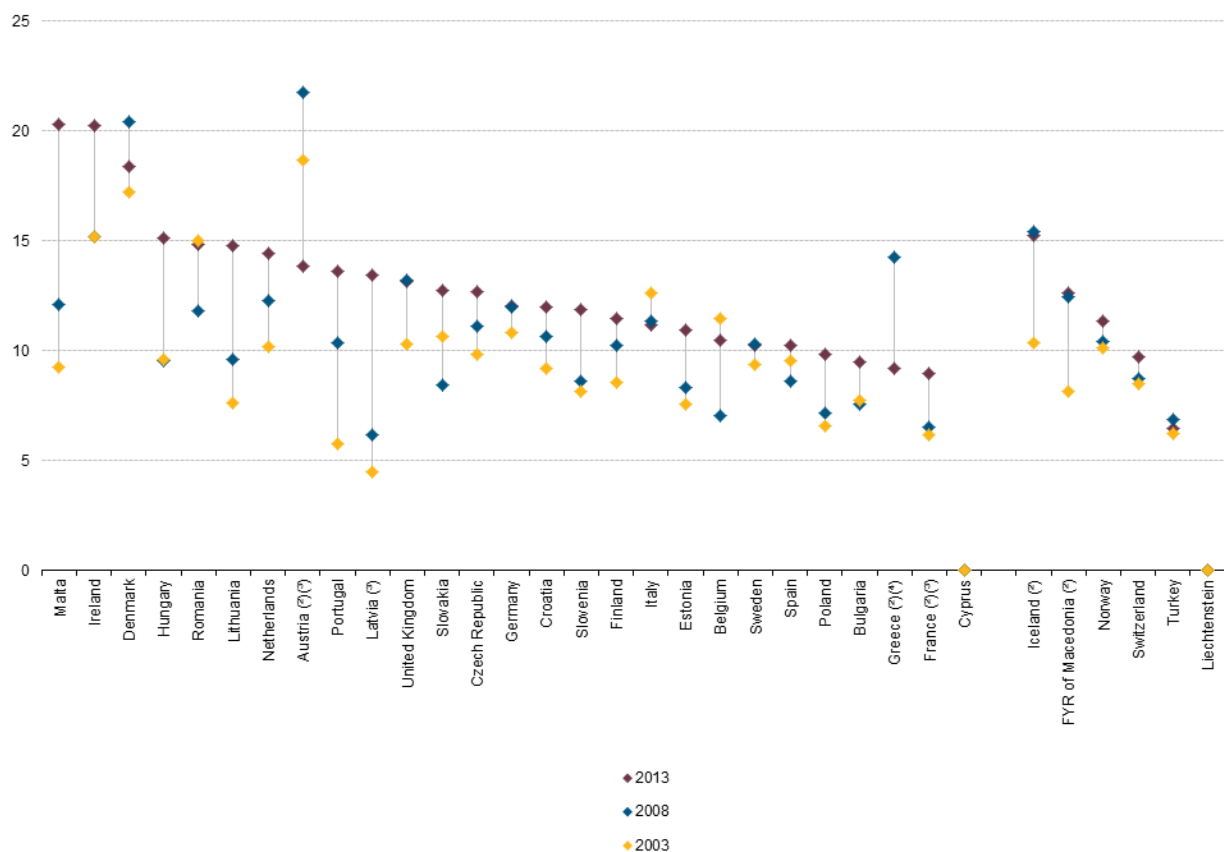
A comparison between 2003 and 2013 for the number of medical doctors employed in hospitals expressed in full-time equivalents confirmed the pattern of an increase already observed for the data based on head counts, although in this case the comparison is limited to nine EU Member States. Excluding the Netherlands (for which there was a break in series), the increases ranged from 13.4 % in Belgium (2003–12) to 33.7 % in Denmark.

The final three columns in Table 2 show the number of medical doctors employed in hospitals in full-time equivalents calculated as a ratio per 100 000 inhabitants. In general, this number ranged between 130 and 214 medical doctors per 100 000 inhabitants in 2013 (see Table 2 for data availability), with Belgium recording a value less than half the lower limit of this range and Austria, Denmark and Lithuania recording values above this range, peaking in Lithuania (338 full-time equivalent medical doctors employed in hospitals per 100 000 inhabitants).

Health graduates

Some EU Member States face concerns over a lack of supply in relation to future numbers of physicians available to work in their healthcare workforces and this has led some to promote measures that are designed to encourage more students to follow medical degrees.

Figure 5 provides information on the number of medical doctors graduating per 100 000 inhabitants. In 2013, there were 20.3 medical graduates per 100 000 inhabitants in Malta, 20.2 in Ireland, and 18.4 in Denmark; most of the remaining Member States for which data are available recorded ratios of 10.0–15.1 graduates per 100 000 inhabitants, although Poland, Bulgaria, Greece (2012 data) and France (also 2012 data) had ratios in single-digits, while there were no medical students graduating in Cyprus.



(*) Luxembourg: not available.

(*) 2012 instead of 2013.

(*) 2003–08: break in series.

(*) 2007 instead of 2008. 2003: not available.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth_rs_grd)

Figure 5: Graduates — medical doctors, 2003, 2008, 2013 (per 100 000 inhabitants) Source: Eurostat (hlth_rs_grd)

A comparison between 2003 and 2013 shows that the number of graduates of medical doctors per 100 000 inhabitants rose in most of the EU Member States; note that in some Member States this may have reflected a fall in the population as opposed to an increase in the number of graduates. The biggest increases were recorded in Malta, Latvia (note there is a break in series), Portugal and Lithuania.

Data sources and availability

Key concepts

Practising physicians provide services directly to patients. They include people who have completed studies in medicine at university level and who are licensed to practice, be they salaried or self-employed, irrespective of the place of service provision. Unemployed physicians, retired physicians and students who have yet to graduate are excluded, as are physicians working in administration, research and other posts that exclude direct contact with patients.

Employment data cover the number of health care staff (head counts) and the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) persons directly employed in hospitals (both general and specialised hospitals); the self-employed working in hospitals are also included, for example, those working with service contracts as non-employed health professionals.

Data on medical graduates for any given year cover the number of students who have graduated in medicine from medical faculties or similar institutions. The data exclude those who have graduated in pharmacy, dentistry/stomatology, or public health and epidemiology, as well as individuals who have completed post-graduate studies or training in medicine.

Healthcare resources

Statistics on healthcare resources (such as personnel and medical equipment) are documented in this [background article](#) which provides information on the scope of the data, its legal basis, the methodology employed, as well as related concepts and definitions.

Common definitions have been agreed between [Eurostat](#), the [OECD](#) and the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) with respect to the employment of various health care professionals. Three main concepts are used to present this data; Eurostat gives preference to the concept of 'practising' physicians:

- 'practising', in other words, health care professionals providing services directly to patients;
- 'professionally active', in other words, 'practising' professionals plus health care professionals for whom their medical education is a prerequisite for the execution of their job;
- 'licensed', in other words, health care professionals who are registered and entitled to practise as health care professionals.

Data on physicians are classified according to the [International Standard Classification of Occupations \(ISCO\)](#); they are defined under ISCO 08 as code 221:

- 221 Medical doctor;
 - 2211 Generalist medical practitioner;
 - 2212 Specialist medical practitioner.

For country specific notes, please refer to these background information documents:

- [physicians](#) ;
- [physicians by speciality](#) ;
- [health personnel employed in hospitals](#) ;
- [health graduates](#) .

Note on tables: the symbol ':' is used to show where data are not available.

Context

An increasing number of health professionals seek jobs in another EU Member State: aside from the potential benefits for the individuals concerned, their movement can help rectify labour market imbalances between countries. [Directive 2005/36/EC](#) on the recognition of professional qualifications provides a Europe-wide legal framework enabling Member States to recognise each other's qualifications. A range of health professionals — including doctors — enjoy automatic recognition, in other words, if they are a certified practitioner in their home country then they are automatically entitled to practice anywhere else in the EU. The directive defines basic medical training as comprising a total of at least six years of university study or 5 500 hours of theoretical and practical training.

In the coming decades, population ageing will be a major challenge for the EU's health sector. The demand for healthcare will increase dramatically as a result of an ageing population and at the same time the proportion of the people in work will likely decline. As a result, there could be staff shortages in certain medical specialisations or geographic areas. In 2012, about one third of all doctors in the EU were aged 55 or over. According to the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, more than 60 thousand doctors (or 3.2 % of the workforce) are expected to be leaving the profession each year by 2020.

An [action plan for the EU health workforce](#) seeks to help EU Member States tackle this challenge, by: improving workforce planning and forecasting; anticipating future skills' needs; improving the recruitment and retention of health professionals; mitigating the negative effects of migration on health systems. The plan is part of the broader strategy ' [Towards a job-rich recovery](#) ' (COM(2012) 173).

See also

Online publications

- [Health in the European Union – facts and figures](#)
- [Disability statistics](#)

Healthcare human and physical resources

- [Nursing and caring professionals](#)
- [Dentists, pharmacists and physiotherapists](#)
- [Beds](#)
- [Medical technology](#)

Methodology

- [Healthcare non-expenditure](#)

General health statistics articles

- [Health statistics introduced](#)
- [Health statistics at regional level](#)
- [The EU in the world — health](#)

Further Eurostat information

Main tables

- [Health care \(t_hlth_care\)](#)

Database

- [Health care](#) (hlth_care)

Health care resources (hlth_res)

Health care staff (hlth_staff)

Health personnel employed in hospital (hlth_rs_prshp1)

Physicians by medical speciality (hlth_rs_spec)

Physicians by sex and age (hlth_rs_phys)

Health personnel by NUTS 2 regions (hlth_rs_prsrg)

Health graduates (hlth_rs_grd)

Health personnel (excluding nursing and caring professionals) (hlth_rs_prs1)

Dedicated section

- [Health](#)
- [Health care](#)

Methodology / Metadata

- [Healthcare resources](#) (ESMS metadata file — hlth_res)

Source data for tables and figures (MS Excel)

- [Physicians: tables and figures](#)

External links

European Union, OECD and WHO

- [European Commission — Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety — European core health indicators \(ECHI\)](#)
- [European Commission — Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety — Health workforce](#)
- [OECD — Health policies and data](#)
- [WHO Global Health Observatory \(GHO\) — Health systems](#)
- [World Health Organisation \(WHO\) — Health workforce](#)

Other external links

- [European Association of Senior Hospital Physicians](#)
- [The European Union of General Practitioners \(UEMO\)](#)
- [The Standing Committee of European Doctors \(CPME\)](#)

Notes

View this article online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Healthcare_personnel_statistics_-_physicians