

# Healthcare personnel statistics - physicians

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in September 2025  
Planned article update: September 2026*

## Highlights

There were an estimated 1.98 million practising physicians across the EU in 2023.

In 2023, more than half of all physicians in Bulgaria were aged 55 years or over.

In 2023, more than 70% of physicians in Latvia, Estonia, Romania and Lithuania were women.

The number of graduating medical doctors per 100 000 inhabitants rose between 2013 and 2023 in nearly all EU countries.

This article presents an overview of [European Union \(EU\)](#) statistics on [physicians](#) . It provides information on specialist healthcare personnel, as well as data on the number and ratio of graduates in this field (note that all physicians need to possess a degree in medicine). It is one of a set of 3 articles on healthcare personnel, the others concerning [nursing and caring professionals](#) and [dentists, pharmacists and physiotherapists](#) .

Physicians provide licensed healthcare services to patients. They give advice, conduct medical examinations, diagnose diseases and conditions, apply preventive medical methods, prescribe medication, treat illnesses and provide specialised medical or surgical treatment.

This article is included in a set of statistical articles concerning healthcare resources in the EU which forms part of an online publication on [Health in the European Union – facts and figures](#) .

## Healthcare personnel

Eurostat collects data on 3 concepts of [physicians](#)

- ' [practising](#) ' – physicians providing services directly to patients
- ' [professionally active](#) ' – 'practising' physicians plus physicians for whom their medical education is a prerequisite for the execution of their job
- ' [licensed](#) ' – physicians who are registered and entitled to practise as physicians

In this article, preference is given to the concept of 'practising' physicians; for some EU countries, data aren't available for this concept and therefore data are presented for 1 of the alternative concepts instead: notes indicate these exceptions in each table and figure. Comments on data on physicians licensed to practice or professionally active are not included in the text when referring to per 100 000 inhabitants.

**There were an estimated 1.98 million physicians working in the EU in 2023**

In 2023, there were an estimated 1.98 million practising physicians in the EU (see the footnotes of Table 1 for more details). The highest overall numbers of practising physicians were recorded in the largest EU countries: Germany (388 343, equivalent to 19.6% of the EU total), followed at some distance by Italy (315 720), France (266 380) and Spain (212 201). Together, these 4 EU countries accounted for 59.6% of the total number of practising physicians in the EU. Poland was the only other country with more than 100 000 practising physicians, with 141 452, equivalent to 7.1% of the EU total.

### Physicians, by speciality, 2023

	(number)								(per 100 000 inhabitants)							
	Total	General medical practitioners	General paediatricians	Gynaecologists and obstetricians	Psychiatrists	Medical group of specialists	Surgical group of specialists	Other specialists not elsewhere classified	Total	General medical practitioners	General paediatricians	Gynaecologists and obstetricians	Psychiatrists	Medical group of specialists	Surgical group of specialists	Other specialists not elsewhere classified
Belgium	39 723	14 555	1 712	1 619	2 073	10 388	8 831	337.2	123.6	14.5	13.7	17.6	88.2	75.0	4.6	
Bulgaria	29 846	3 908	1 445	1 808	685	13 060	8 532	463.0	60.6	22.4	28.1	10.6	202.6	132.4	4.6	
Czechia	45 820	8 297	1 741	3 166	1 791	17 532	10 962	421.8	76.4	16.0	29.1	16.5	161.4	100.9	2.0	
Denmark	26 942	4 099	561	743	1 117	5 141	4 131	453.0	68.9	9.4	12.5	18.8	86.5	69.5	4.4	
Germany	388 343	88 340	15 887	22 319	24 107	129 312	106 174	466.3	106.1	19.1	26.8	28.9	155.3	127.5	2.7	
Estonia	4 772	1 209	147	311	272	1 690	1 143	348.3	88.2	10.7	22.7	19.9	123.3	83.4	0.0	
Ireland	20 135	10 922	712	466	1 173	3 899	2 891	379.1	205.6	13.4	8.8	22.1	73.4	54.4	1.4	
Greece	68 752	4 888	4 596	3 537	2 708	28 520	15 915	660.6	47.0	44.2	34.0	26.0	274.0	152.9	4.7	
Spain (*)	212 201	45 818	13 846	6 202	6 417	60 035	51 541	438.9	94.8	28.6	12.8	13.3	124.2	106.6	1.8	
France	266 380	95 095	8 814	8 111	15 705	56 234	34 281	389.6	139.1	12.9	11.9	23.0	82.3	50.1	7.8	
Croatia	15 480	3 178	1 005	892	728	6 276	3 373	401.4	82.4	26.1	23.1	18.9	162.7	87.5	0.7	
Italy	315 720	59 230	18 745	14 343	14 303	132 032	77 067	535.3	100.4	31.8	24.3	24.3	223.8	130.7	0.0	
Cyprus	5 119	1 160	315	226	134	1 611	1 388	285	534.5	121.1	32.9	23.6	14.0	168.2	144.9	29.8
Latvia	6 309	1 423	230	360	275	2 039	1 417	565	336.0	75.8	12.3	19.2	14.7	108.6	75.5	30.1
Lithuania	13 256	3 042	512	667	733	4 825	3 340	461.6	105.9	17.8	23.2	25.5	168.0	116.3	4.8	
Luxembourg	2 668	779	.	.	.	.	.	400.3	116.9	.	.	.	.	.	.	
Hungary	34 743	6 980	2 428	1 613	1 481	13 607	7 554	980	362.2	72.8	25.3	16.8	15.4	141.9	78.8	10.2
Malta	2 515	485	117	92	78	598	532	455.0	87.7	21.2	16.6	14.1	108.2	96.3	0.0	
Netherlands	69 985	32 415	1 993	1 749	4 569	17 191	7 841	4 227	391.5	181.3	11.2	9.8	25.6	96.2	43.9	23.6
Austria	50 356	13 026	1 720	2 104	2 039	11 973	10 449	58	551.4	142.6	18.8	23.0	22.3	131.1	114.4	0.6
Poland	141 452	38 503	8 839	6 871	5 563	50 504	28 947	2 221	385.6	105.0	24.1	18.7	15.2	137.7	78.9	6.1
Portugal	61 423	32 565	2 386	1 977	1 631	14 641	8 705	908	580.7	307.9	22.6	18.7	15.4	138.4	82.3	8.6
Romania	70 965	15 118	3 170	3 021	3 084	31 094	14 977	501	372.3	79.3	16.6	15.9	16.2	163.1	78.6	2.6
Slovenia (*)	7 430	1 511	691	417	380	2 486	1 727	69	350.4	71.3	32.6	19.7	17.9	117.2	81.4	3.3
Slovakia	20 753	.	.	.	.	.	.	382.4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
Finland	16 102	7 035	388	439	582	2 169	1 960	3 529	288.4	126.0	7.0	7.9	10.4	38.8	35.1	63.2
Sweden (*)	46 918	6 602	1 080	1 456	2 334	10 977	7 421	890	447.4	63.0	10.3	13.9	22.3	104.7	70.8	8.5
Iceland (*)	1 735	217	21	69	78	409	303	0	449.9	56.3	5.5	17.9	20.2	106.1	78.6	0.0
Liechtenstein	133	45	4	5	15	33	30	1	333.8	112.9	10.0	12.6	37.6	82.8	75.3	2.5
Norway	27 455	5 785	1 001	699	1 312	4 930	3 237	522	497.4	104.8	18.1	12.7	23.8	89.3	58.7	9.5
Switzerland	40 440	10 272	2 180	2 061	4 690	7 682	7 901	193	455.0	115.6	24.5	23.2	52.8	86.4	88.9	2.2
Montenegro	1 764	355	173	122	61	720	333	0	284.4	57.2	27.9	19.7	9.8	116.1	53.7	0.0
Moldova	12 038	1 620	463	577	246	4 295	2 362	1 839	487.8	65.6	18.8	23.4	10.0	174.0	95.7	74.5
North Macedonia (*)	6 316	1 888	396	432	214	2 167	1 063	156	323.4	96.7	20.3	22.1	11.0	111.0	54.4	8.0
Serbia (*)	21 776	6 595	1 893	1 329	814	5 946	4 067	1 132	328.8	99.6	28.6	20.1	12.3	89.8	61.4	17.1
Türkiye	204 223	63 900	10 364	10 047	6 656	60 336	48 689	4 231	239.3	74.9	12.2	11.8	7.8	70.7	57.1	5.0

Note: practising physicians except for Slovakia, Moldova, North Macedonia and Türkiye (professionally active physicians) and for Greece and Portugal (physicians licensed to practise).

(\*) Analysis by speciality only concerns physicians in hospitals as well as certain specialists who work in primary health care centres of the national health system.

(\*) Total and surgical group of specialists: includes specialists for oral surgery and maxillo-facial surgery.

(\*) 2022.

(\*) May include a very small number of non-practising physicians. Gynaecologists and obstetricians: includes specialists for female endocrinology.

(\*) 2021.

(\*) Only includes physicians in institutions under the Ministry of Health. Excludes the private health sector.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: hlth\_rs\_prs2 and hlth\_rs\_physcat)

**Table 1: Physicians, by speciality, 2023 Source: Eurostat (hlth\_rs\_prs2) and (hlth\_rs\_physcat)**

Among the EU countries, Austria recorded the highest number of practising physicians, relative to population, with 551 practising physicians per 100 000 inhabitants. Italy (535 per 100 000 inhabitants) and Cyprus (535 per 100 000 inhabitants) had the next highest ratios. By contrast, the lowest ratio was 288 practising physicians per 100 000 inhabitants in Finland. Elsewhere, there were between 336 (Latvia) and 466 (Germany) practising physicians per

100 000 inhabitants.

### **In a large majority of EU countries, there were more medical specialists than general medical practitioners**

Generalist medical practitioners don't limit their practice to certain disease categories or methods of treatment; they may assume responsibility for the provision of continuing and comprehensive medical care to individuals, families and communities. By contrast, medical specialists include 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. Surgical specialists include doctors who specialise in the use of surgical techniques to treat disorders and diseases, for example, specialists in general surgery, neurological surgery, anaesthesiology or accident and emergency medicine.

A closer examination of the data in Table 1 reveals that there were approximately 500 200 generalist medical practitioners across the EU (excluding data for Slovakia and including 2022 data for Sweden) in 2023. The highest number of generalists was recorded in France (95 095, followed by Germany (88 340). The highest number of practising generalists relative to population was reported in Ireland, with 206 per 100 000 inhabitants. The share of physicians who were generalist medical practitioners was highest in Ireland (54%) and the Netherlands (46%). The lowest share was recorded in Bulgaria (13%), which was the only country to report a share of less than 15%.

There were 18 EU countries (among 25 for which recent data are available) where there were more medical specialists than generalists. The EU countries with the highest number of medical specialists in 2023 were Italy (132 032) and Germany (129 312). In terms of practising medical specialists per 100 000 inhabitants Italy reported the highest number (224 per 100 000 inhabitants), followed by Bulgaria (203 per 100 000 inhabitants). The lowest number of medical specialists was reported in Finland, with 38 per 100 000.

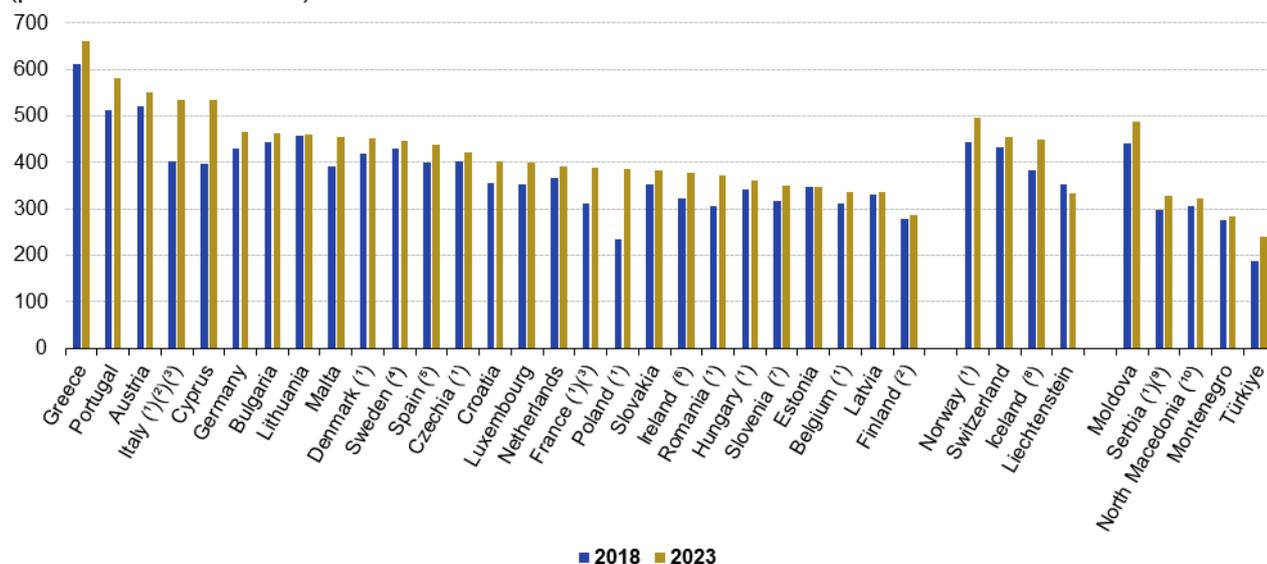
There were more surgical specialists than generalist medical practitioners in 14 of the 25 EU countries for which recent data are available. In 2023, the highest numbers of surgical specialists were reported in Germany (106 174), the only country to report more than 100 000 surgical specialists. This was followed by Italy (77 067) and Spain (51 541). The highest number of practising surgical specialists was recorded in Cyprus (145 per 100 000), followed by Bulgaria (132). The lowest number of surgical specialists was reported in Finland, with 35 per 100 000 inhabitants.

### **The number of physicians per 100 000 inhabitants rose in all EU countries between 2018 and 2023**

The number of physicians per 100 000 inhabitants increased in all EU countries between 2018 and 2023 (see Figure 1). The increasing trend may reflect demographic shifts linked to ageing populations in Europe; as the proportion of older generations in the EU increased in recent years, demand for health and social care services also increased.

## Practising physicians, 2018 and 2023

(per 100 000 inhabitants)



Note: practising physicians except for Slovakia, Moldova, North Macedonia and Türkiye (professionally active physicians) and for Greece and Portugal (physicians licensed to practise). The figure is ranked according to the total number of practising physicians in 2023.

(1) Break in series.

(2) 2023: provisional.

(3) 2018: excludes most or all interns and resident doctors.

(4) 2022 instead of 2023.

(5) Estimates.

(6) 2023: estimate.

(7) Includes specialists for oral surgery and maxillo-facial surgery.

(8) May include a very small number of non-practising physicians.

(9) Only includes physicians in institutions under the Ministry of Health. Excludes the private health sector.

(10) 2021 instead of 2023.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth\_rs\_prs2)

eurostat

Figure 1: Practising physicians, 2018 and 2023 Source: Eurostat (hlth\_rs\_prs2)

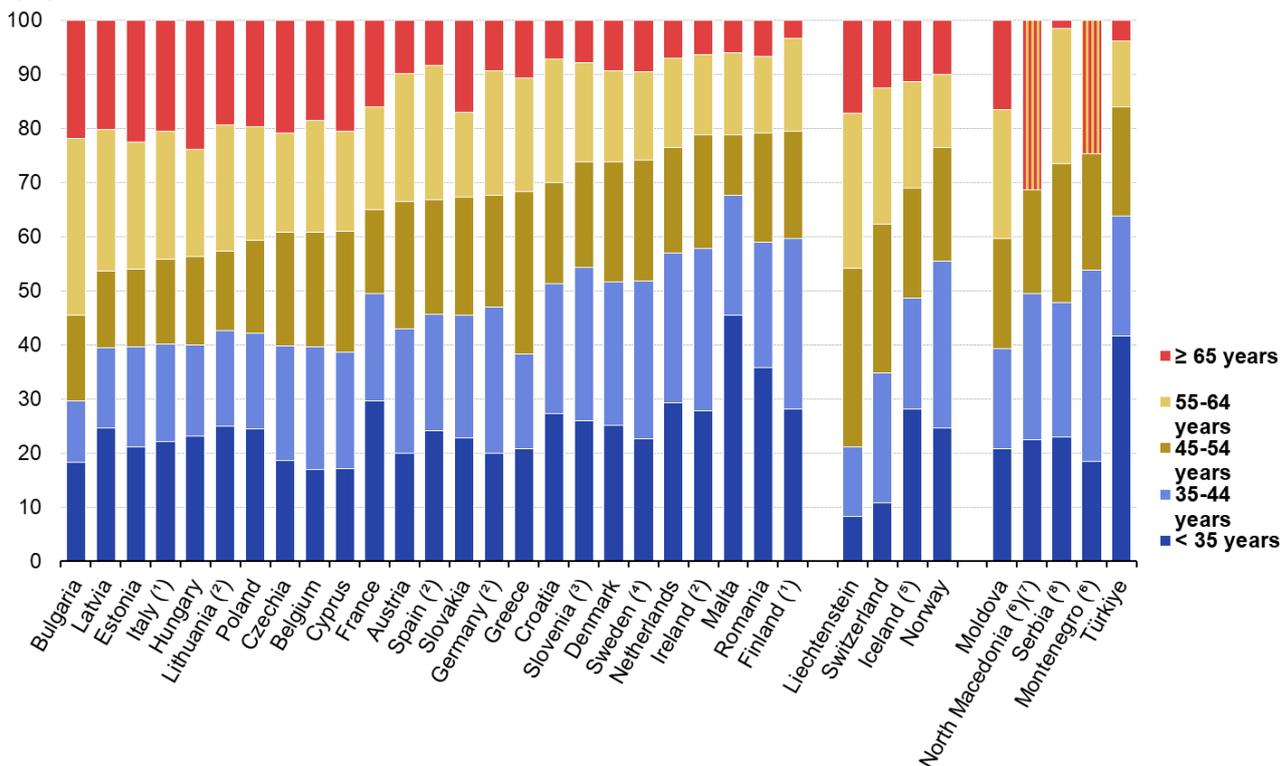
Excluding EU countries which recorded a break in time series (Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Romania), the largest relative increase was recorded in Cyprus, where the number of physicians rose from 398 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2018 to 535 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2023 (an overall increase of 34.3%). The smallest increases in this ratio were in the [Baltic countries](#): Estonia (up 0.2%), Lithuania (up 0.8%) and Latvia (up 1.3%).

### Bulgaria had the highest share of physicians aged 55 years and over

There has been a rapid ageing of the healthcare workforce across much of the EU. In 10 EU countries, the share of physicians aged 55 years and over was greater than 39.0% in 2023. Among these, the share was over 50.0% in Bulgaria (54.5%). In most of the remaining EU countries for which data are available, the relative proportion of this age group in the total number of physicians was between 23.6% (the Netherlands) and 35.0% (France); smaller shares were recorded in Finland (20.6%), Romania (21.0%), Malta and Ireland (both 21.2%). Reflecting these smaller shares for physicians aged 55 years and over, the highest proportions of younger physicians (under 35 years) were in Malta (45.4%) and Romania (35.8%).

## Physicians, by age, 2023

(%)



Note: practising physicians except for Slovakia, Moldova, North Macedonia and Türkiye (professionally active physicians) and for Greece (licensed to practise). Luxembourg and Portugal: not available. The figure is ranked on the share of physicians aged 55 years or over in the total number of physicians.

(1) Provisional.

(2) Estimates.

(3) Includes specialists for oral surgery and maxillo-facial surgery.

(4) 2022.

(5) May include a very small number of non-practising physicians.

(6) Age groups 55–64 and ≥ 65 years combined.

(7) 2021.

(8) Only includes physicians in institutions under the Ministry of Health. Excludes the private health sector.

eurostat

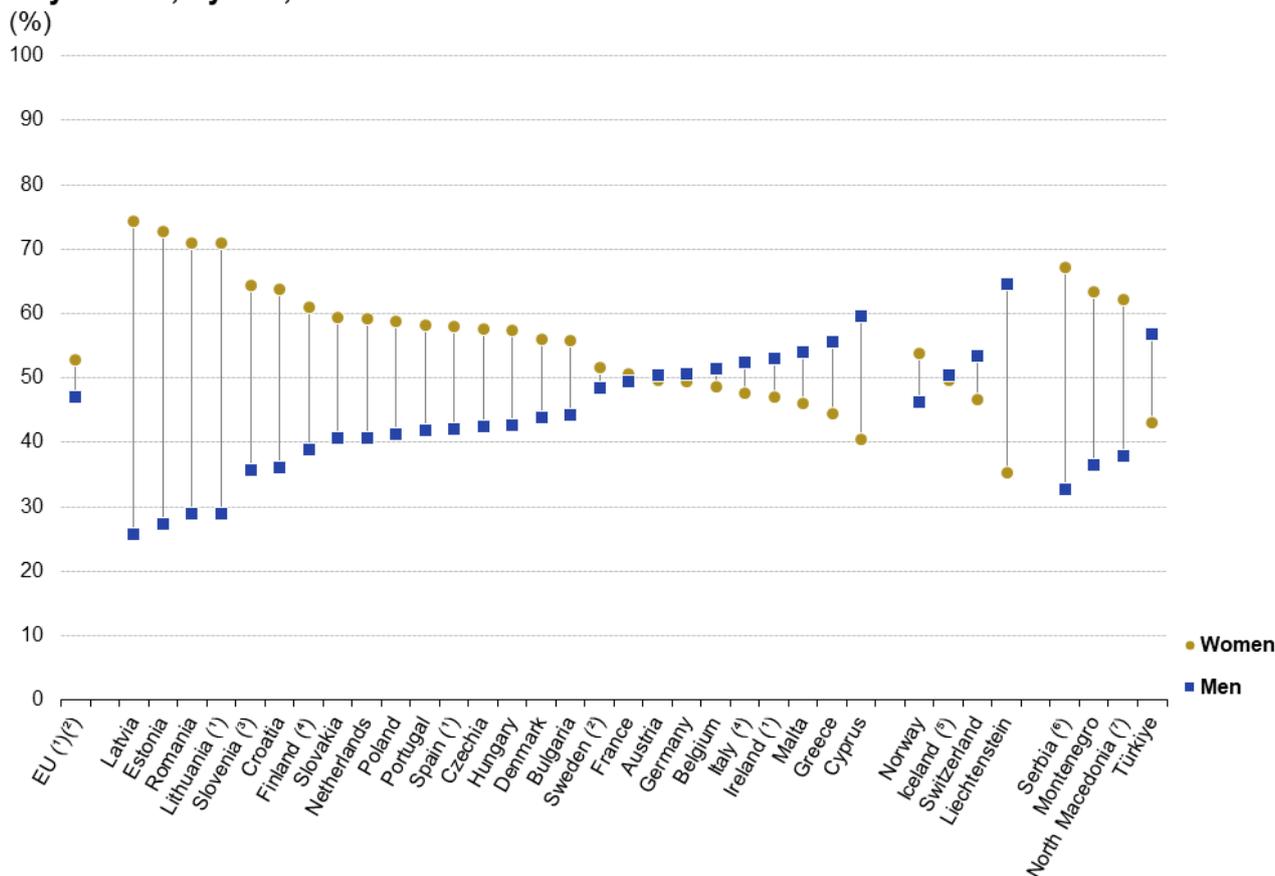
Figure 2: Physicians, by age, 2023 Source: Eurostat (hlth\_rs\_phys)

### More than 70% of physicians in Latvia, Estonia, Romania and Lithuania were women

The analysis presented in Figure 3 shows that there were considerable differences between EU countries with respect to the proportion of male and female physicians. Over the last decade, the overall proportion of female physicians gradually increased; by 2018, there was a slight majority of physicians in the EU who were female (50.4%), and this proportion continued to rise in the next 5 years to reach 52.9% in 2022.

In 2023, a majority (18) of the 26 EU countries for which data are available (no recent data for Luxembourg) reported that they had a higher number of female than male physicians. In Finland, Croatia and Slovenia, more than 60.0% of all physicians were women, while in Romania and the Baltic countries this proportion exceeded 70.0%. The highest shares of female physicians were recorded in Latvia (74.3%) and Estonia (72.7%). By contrast, the greatest share of male physicians was recorded in Cyprus (59.6%). Relatively high proportions of male physicians were also recorded in Greece (licensed to practice), Malta, Ireland and Italy (all within the range of 52.4% to 55.6%). The narrowest gender gap was observed in Austria, where men accounted for a marginally higher share of all physicians (a difference of 0.8 percentage points).

## Physicians, by sex, 2023



Note: practising physicians except Slovakia, North Macedonia, and Türkiye (professionally active physicians) and Greece and Portugal (licensed to practise). Luxembourg: not available. The figure is ranked according to the proportion of female doctors.

(\*) Estimates.

(\*) 2022.

(\*) Includes specialists for oral surgery and maxillo-facial surgery.

(\*) Provisional.

(\*) May include a very small number of non-practising physicians.

(\*) Only includes physicians in institutions under the Ministry of Health. Excludes the private health sector.

(\*) 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth\_rs\_phys)

eurostat

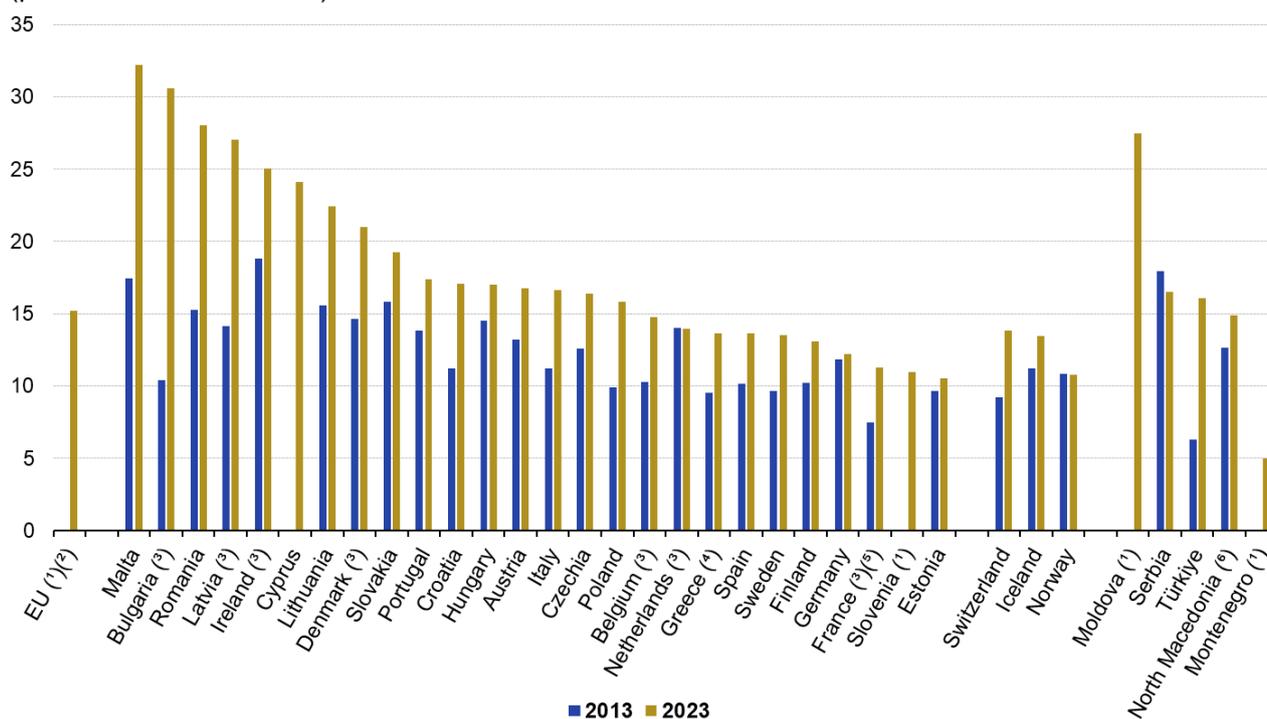
Figure 3: Physicians, by sex, 2023 Source: Eurostat (hlth\_rs\_phys)

## Health graduates

Figure 4 provides information on the number of medical doctors graduating per 100 000 inhabitants. In 2023, there were an estimated 15 medical doctors graduating in the EU for every 100 000 inhabitants. The highest ratios were recorded in Malta (32 per 100 000 inhabitants), Bulgaria (31 per 100 000 inhabitants), Romania (28 per 100 000 inhabitants) and Latvia (27 per 100 000 inhabitants). Most of the remaining EU countries for which data are available recorded ratios of 10.5 to 25.0 medical doctor graduates per 100 000 inhabitants. An exception was Luxembourg, which didn't report any graduates as it doesn't offer full medical training; students therefore officially graduate from a medical school in another country. Prior to 2019, there were no physicians graduating in Cyprus.

## Graduates – medical doctors, 2013 and 2023

(per 100 000 inhabitants)



Note: Luxembourg does not offer full training in medicine therefore there are no graduates. Cyprus, 0 graduates per 100 000 inhabitants for 2013. Liechtenstein, 0 graduates per 100 000 inhabitants for each year. The figure is ranked according to the number of graduates in 2022.

(¹) 2013: not available.

(²) Estimate.

(³) Break in series.

(⁴) 2022 instead of 2023.

(⁵) Students who have completed their training (i.e. basic training and speciality training).

(⁶) 2012 instead of 2013. 2021 instead of 2023.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth\_rs\_grd2)

eurostat

Figure 4: Graduates – medical doctors, 2013 and 2023 Source: Eurostat (hlth\_rs\_grd2)

A comparison between 2013 and 2023 shows that the number of medical doctors graduating per 100 000 inhabitants rose in nearly all EU countries; the exception being the Netherlands (which had a break in series) where there was no change in the ratio. In relative terms, the biggest increase was recorded in Bulgaria, where the ratio almost trebled (note there is a break in series). Among the countries that did not report a break in series, the largest increase was in Malta and Romania, where the number of medical graduates was 1.8 times higher in 2023 than in 2018.

## Source data for tables and graphs

- [Physicians: tables and figures](#)

## Data sources

### Key concepts

Physicians are split into 2 broad occupational groups

- **generalist medical practitioners**, which can be further divided into:
  - [general practitioners \(GPs\)](#)
  - other generalist medical practitioners

- **specialist medical practitioners** , which can be further divided into:
  - [General paediatricians](#)
  - [Gynaecologists and obstetricians](#)
  - [Psychiatrists](#)
  - medical specialists (doctors specialising in the diagnosis and non-surgical treatment of physical disorders and diseases, not elsewhere defined)
  - surgical specialists (doctors who specialise in the use of surgical techniques to treat disorders and diseases).

**Practising physicians** provide services directly to patients. They include people who have completed studies in medicine at university level and who are licensed to practise, 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.

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 a background article on the [methodology of healthcare non-expenditure statistics](#) . This provides information on the scope of the data, its legal basis, the methodology employed, as well as related concepts and definitions.

For country specific notes on these data collections, please refer to the annexes at the end of the national metadata reports, which can be accessed through the links at the beginning of the [European metadata report](#) .

Common definitions have been agreed between [Eurostat](#) , the [OECD](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) with respect to the employment of various healthcare professionals. There are 3 main concepts which are used to present these data. Eurostat gives preference to the concept of 'practising' physicians

- ' [practising](#) ' – healthcare professionals providing services directly to patients
- ' [professionally active](#) ' – 'practising' professionals plus healthcare professionals for whom their medical education is a prerequisite for the execution of their job
- ' [licensed](#) ' – healthcare professionals who are registered and entitled to practise as healthcare professionals.

The [Healthcare non-expenditure statistics manual](#) provides an overview of the classifications, both for mandatory variables and variables provided on a voluntary basis.

## Symbols

In tables, a colon ':' is used to show where data aren't available. Data in italics are estimates or provisional.

## Context

Some health professionals seek jobs in other EU countries: aside from the potential benefits for the individuals concerned, their movement can help rectify labour market imbalances between EU countries. However, some EU countries may experience important outflows of health professionals, which may exacerbate imbalances. [Directive 2005/36/EC](#) on the recognition of professional qualifications provides an EU-wide legal framework enabling EU countries to recognise qualifications of health professionals from other EU countries. 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 practise anywhere else in the EU. The directive defines basic medical training as comprising a total of at least 6 years of university study or 5 500 hours of theoretical and practical training.

In the coming decades, population ageing is expected to be a major challenge for the EU's health sector. The demand for health care will probably increase substantially as a result of an ageing population and at the same time the proportion of people in work will probably decline. As a result, staff shortages in certain medical specialisations or geographic areas may increase. In 2023, approximately one third of all doctors in the EU were aged 55 years or over.

[An action plan for the EU health workforce](#) (SWD(2012) 093 final) seeks to help EU countries tackle these challenges, by: improving workforce planning and forecasting; anticipating future skills' needs; improving the recruitment and retention of health professionals; and mitigating the negative effects of migration on health systems. Between 2013 and 2016, there was a joint action on health workforce planning and forecasting with 30 associated partners and 34 collaborative partners (from 28 European countries) working together on advancing the issue of planning and forecasting. Between 2017 and 2021, this work continued through [SEPEN – Support for the health workforce planning and forecasting expert network](#) , which released a series of technical reports and regular updates on the EU's health workforce.

On 7 September 2022, the European Commission proposed a [European care strategy](#) . The Commission proposed actions to support EU countries in improving working conditions and work-life balance for carers and to ensure quality, affordable and accessible care services across the European Union.

The European Commission continues to initiate [actions](#) which seek to help EU countries tackle this challenge under the [EU4Health programme](#) .

## Explore further

### Other articles

#### 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

- [Health care resources](#)

#### General health statistics articles

- [Health statistics introduced](#)
- [Regional health statistics](#)

### Database

- [Health](#) (hlth)

Health care (hlth\_care)

Health care resources (hlth\_res)

Health care staff (hlth\_staff)

Health graduates (hlth\_rs\_grd2)

Health personnel (hlth\_rs\_prs2)

Physicians by category (hlth\_rs\_physcat)

Physicians by sex and age (hlth\_rs\_phys)

## Thematic section

- [Health](#)

## Selected datasets

- [Health \(t\\_hlth\)](#)

[Health care \(t\\_hlth\\_care\)](#)

## Methodology

### Manuals and guidelines

- [Healthcare non-expenditure statistics manual and guidelines for completing the Joint questionnaire on non-monetary healthcare statistics – 2025 edition](#)

### Metadata

- [Healthcare non-expenditure statistics](#) (ESMS metadata file – hlth\_res)

## External links

### European Union, OECD and WHO

- [European Commission – Public health](#) , see
  - [European core health indicators \(ECHI\)](#)
  - [Health workforce](#)
- [OECD / European Commission report 'Health at a Glance: Europe'](#)
- [OECD – The future of health systems](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) , see
  - [WHO Global Health Observatory \(GHO\)](#)
  - [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 \(CPME\)](#)