

Bottleneck Vacancies in Finland

The health care sector is most affected by recruitment bottlenecks

Main bottlenecks appear within the health care sector. Demand for qualified professionals is acute for nurses, practical nurses and doctors. Other affected sectors are education and other social services.

High demand for highly-skilled workers

Bottleneck vacancies mainly appear with high-skilled occupations, such as doctors and nurses. Of the top 20 bottlenecks, the only occupation with an elementary skills level is cleaner. Overall, the identified bottlenecks have been persistent since 2008. However, several private sector occupations have disappeared from the list (e.g. welder), reflecting the effects of the economic crisis. The heavy emphasis on the health care sector reflects Finland's challenges linked to the ageing of the population, as demand for health care services increases.

Lack of qualified professionals

In occupations characterised by a high skills level, the main reason for bottlenecks is a lack of qualified workforce, with experienced workers in high demand (nurses, medical doctors, practical nurses). For many of the listed bottlenecks, law requires the applicants to hold appropriate qualifications (degree). Nurse, medical doctor, practical nurse, special education teacher and dentist are good examples of professions with strict qualification requirements. A significant proportion of qualified nurses and practical nurses work outside their field, partly explained by the demanding nature of the occupations. When it comes to the nature of the job as an explaining factor in the bottlenecks, a few occupations are highlighted. For example, cleaners are hard to find due to the nature of the job: the salary is considered low and the working hours undesirable. Telemarketing suffers from the poor image of the job and low salary.

The number of new places at educational institutions has been increased

The educational system can be considered to have reacted to the bottlenecks, as the quotas of new students at educational institutions have been increased in the case of many of the bottleneck professions, such as nurses and practical nurses. In addition, measures have been taken to re-educate unemployed workers and immigrants into these professions, with varying success.

Assessment of data availability



Good. See page 5 for more information.



Top 20 Bottleneck Vacancies in Finland 2013

Occupation (ISCO-08)*	Development since 2008
Nurse	↗
Medical doctor	↗
Practical nurses [...] personal care*	↗
Sales worker and telemarketer*	→
Special needs teacher	↗
Social worker	→
Dentist	↗
Early childhood educator	→
Dental assistant	→
Cleaner	→
Social work associate professionals	↗
Dental hygienist*	↗
Psychologist	→
Accountant	→
Laboratory nurses and radiographers*	↗
Pharmacist	↗
Speech therapist	↗
Entrepreneur*	↗
Senior social worker and [...] manager	↗
Chefs and cooks*	↗

*Where an occupation has been identified on a more specific level than ISCO 4-digit, this is used.

Top 20 Bottleneck Vacancies

The Bottleneck Vacancies have been identified using two main sources: 1) the regional occupation barometers, which examine the supply and demand of labour in the Finnish regions combining this information with a qualitative assessment of near future developments; 2) the national occupation barometer, produced by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, which combines the findings of the regional barometers.

Overall, the health care sector shows the greatest unmet demand for labour. Despite pressures to cut expenditures in the sector, the ageing population and the high expected outflow of workforce due to the ageing of workforce are likely to ensure that the demand for labour persists also in the future. The significant demand for qualified professionals in the health care sector is well illustrated in the case of nurses and practical nurses. For nurses, there were only 992 applicants for the 7,828 open vacancies in 2013. For practical nurses (nurses with an upper secondary level qualification), the number of new applicants for the 8,293 new vacancies was only 2,858. Demand greatly outstrips supply.

The findings in this study suggest that vacancies in health care, social services and education are likely to stay on the top 20 bottleneck lists in the future years. The population is ageing, ensuring demand for health care services. At the same time, a large proportion of the workforce (majority are women) will retire by 2025, further contributing to the demand for labour in these fields. Simultaneously the newer generations joining the workforce are smaller by absolute numbers, and the competition between different fields for these about to become students intensifies. It is becoming somewhat more difficult to attract young women to jobs previously identified as "women's jobs".

Vacancies for social work professionals are hard to fill. Other bottleneck vacancies include doctors, sales representatives/telemarketers, dentists, cleaners, social workers and psychologists.

The ranking of occupations is based on the Finnish occupational barometer. The study covers the whole labour market. The data is collected by the public Employment and Economic Development Offices (see p. 5).

Rank	Bottleneck Vacancies ISCO-08	Number of Employed in Occupation 2010	Skills level (ISCO-08)	Geographical aspects
1	Nurse	51 226	HS	National (rural and urban)
2	Medical doctor	19 353 (2011)	HS	National (remote regions)
3	Practical nurses and personal care workers	77 244 (2009)	SNM	National
4	Sales worker and telemarketer	55 659	SNM	National
5	Special needs teacher	6700	HS	National (remote regions)
6	Social worker	11 019	HS	National (remote regions)
7	Dentist	4199	HS	National (remote regions)
8	Early childhood educator	16 012	SNM	National
9	Dental assistant	4935	HS	National
10	Cleaner	77 976	Elem	National (capital region)
11	Social work associate professionals	25 185	HS	National
12	Dental hygienist	1534	HS	National
13	Psychologist	4625	HS	National
14	Accountant and payroll clerk	28 869	HS	National
15	Laboratory nurses and radiographers	N/A	HS	National
16	Pharmacist	5073	HS	National
17	Speech therapist	1137	HS	National
18	Entrepreneur	N/A	N/A	National
19	Senior social worker and admin. manager	2076	HS	National
20	Chef and cook	22 182	SNM	National (urban regions)

Main sectors with Bottleneck Vacancies

Sectors	Bottleneck vacancies
Health care	Nurses, medical doctors, dentists, dental assistants, dental hygienists, Laboratory nurses and radio-graphers
Social services	Social workers, social work associate professionals
Education	Practical nurse, special education teacher

The health care sector has seen a strong demand for qualified professionals, caused by an ageing population and increasingly specialised skill requirements. Recruitment difficulties also affect the social services sector, and there is particular demand for social workers. Special education teachers and qualified nursery school teachers are also identified as difficult to source. Albeit not on the list there is continued need for software developers in the gaming industry, which is considered a growing sector.

Bottleneck problems in healthcare

Demand for health care services is steadily rising in Finland, increasing the demand for qualified professionals. The bottlenecks are most acute in the public sector. Jobs which are part-time or temporary are most difficult to fill. As health care becomes more and more specialised, the required educational qualifications and levels of work experience increase. Graduates cannot start work immediately, but require an extensive period of training. Importantly, the lack of sufficient starting places at educational institutions is not the main reason for bottlenecks in the health care sector. A key problem is that a significant proportion of the qualified workforce works in other sectors. For example, there are 20,000 qualified practical nurses working outside the health care sector. This can partly be explained by fairly low salaries in the health care sector, that the work is physically and mentally demanding and that the working conditions are often unfavourable.

Main reasons for Bottleneck Vacancies

The bottlenecks reflect the increased need for health care services in the whole country.

Most of the jobs require a formal education (degree) and are regulated. Nurses, doctors and dentists are good examples. However, the key reason for the bottlenecks in the health care sector is above all the lack of applicants. At the same time, more remote and rural areas do not attract doctors. In the health care sector, many of the jobs are physically demanding and involve a stressful working environment, which partly explains the difficulties in finding workers

Gender

The health care sector is characterised by a significantly higher proportion of women in the labour force. According to Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, women represented 91.4 % of the workforce in the health care and social services sectors in 2005. This includes occupations such as nurses, practical nurses, nursery school teachers, dental nurses and dental hygienists. These occupations do not attract men. This for its part contributes to the emergence and existence of bottlenecks.

Healthcare

The findings in this study suggest that despite budget cuts, vacancies in health care, social services and education are likely to stay on the top 20 bottleneck lists in the future years due to the ageing population. At the same time, a large proportion of the workforce will retire by 2025, further contributing to aggravating the shortage. Smaller sized cohorts will be insufficient to close all the gaps as different fields will have to compete to attract students. It is becoming somewhat more difficult to attract young women to jobs previously identified as "women's jobs".

Initiatives to cope with Bottleneck Vacancies

Overall, the Finnish educational system has responded to the bottlenecks, as numbers of new starting places at educational institutions have been increased. New qualifications have been introduced, for example, a new type of qualification for the position of 'care assistant' to help respond to shortages of certain types of nurses.

Other measures from the national level policy-makers include raising the minimum pension age and measures aimed at ensuring the welfare of workers in these professions. Within the health care sector, the focus is shifting to homebased care, with the aim that this will lower the costs of health care.

As the most of the bottleneck vacancies are registered in health care, the mitigation strategies presented hereinafter focus on this sector.

Skills Strategies

Health care occupations are highly regulated. Attempting to mitigate the significant labour shortages in health care, especially for nurses and practical nurses, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy introduced the job of "care assistant".

The idea is to lower the criteria for educational qualifications in order to educate assisting workers to hospitals and other health care institutions. Potential target groups for the new degree are unemployed and immigrants. The degree takes 9 months to complete.

Working conditions

The government has adopted several measures aimed at improving the working conditions in health care. Two good examples are the KASTE and HYVÄ programmes/projects, which aim at improving working conditions and welfare of workers, the attractiveness of care work and the quality and productivity of health care, while ensuring the ready supply of workforce.

The key challenges are to keep the workforce in the health care sector and to ensure the wellbeing of workers to prevent early retirement.

Sector strategies

Several campaigns have been undertaken to improve the image of the health care sector jobs (esp. nurses and practical nurses). Given the difficulty of attracting men to the sector, several campaigns have also been aimed at men to make health care occupations more attractive. For example, the website <http://www.arvostan.fi/> is a part of a wider campaign to improve the image and attractiveness of the health care sector.

The site contains information on various health care occupations and the sector in general. In addition it provides information on different study opportunities in the field, and practical advice on how one can apply for the educational institutions.

Mobility

In health care, campaigns to recruit professionals (nurses, doctors) from abroad have been undertaken. Spain and the Philippines have been the target countries for recruitment for nurses and practical nurses.

In addition, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy started a cooperation project in 2012 with the name "Hyvä hoitajarekry" (English: Effective nurse recruitment). The aim of the project is to clarify the means of recruiting nurses and practical nurses from outside EU and EEA countries. The goal is to streamline and improve the recruitment process, and ultimately, to alleviate the bottlenecks in the health care sector through international recruitments.

Main sources used to identify Bottleneck Vacancies in Finland

The Bottleneck Vacancies have been identified using two main sources:

- The regional occupation barometers for the first half of 2013, which examine the supply and demand of labour in the Finnish regions combining this information with a qualitative assessment of near future developments
- The national occupations barometer for the first half of 2013, which combines the findings of the regional barometers.

The occupational barometer contains information on the employment situation in the whole country. The national level aggregate results are formed on the basis of information from 15 regions. The regional occupation barometers, respectively, are created on the basis of information from the local employment offices, the number of which varies between regions. The top 20 list from the occupational barometer was discussed and tested with the interviewees.

Six interviews were carried out to elaborate further on the reasons for the bottlenecks, including two interviews with organisations from the healthcare sector, reflecting the prominence of the healthcare sector on the list.

The Regional Development Prospects 2013 report by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy has been utilised to further examine the regional aspects of bottlenecks.

Overall, the data quality is assessed to be good. However, as the primary information sources used derive their data from information gathered by the public employment offices, it is likely that the public sector is somewhat overemphasised in the findings. The private sector companies often use other recruitment channels, and the information on the recruitment bottlenecks in individual private sector occupations is thus not as likely to show in the occupation barometers. The key advantage of the occupational barometer is that it lists the occupations on a detailed level, whereas other (e.g. employer) studies mostly discuss the results on the sectoral, or at best, the industry branch level.

The key figures used are the **number of new vacancies** and the **number of applicants** for the vacancy. In addition to the supply and demand ratio calculation, the barometer contains a qualitative assessment of employment officials in the individual employment offices.

The occupational barometer utilises the Nordic occupation classification system as the framework of analysis. The key difference between ISCO-08 classification and the Nordic classification is that ISCO-08 places more emphasis on the skills level of the worker. The Nordic classification system used in Finland does not involve this aspect.

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