

**Submission on behalf of SIPTU  
Health Division to Public Service  
Pay Commission - Phase 2:  
Recruitment and Retention**



**Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery**



## Table of Contents

1. Nurses and Midwives.....	3
-----------------------------	---

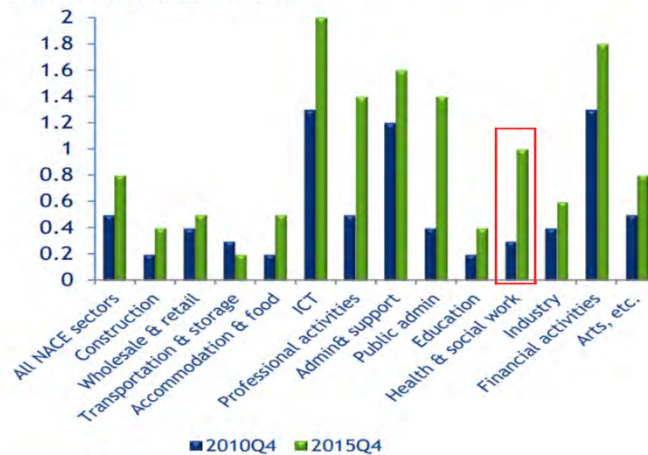
**Note: Only submissions that relate to grades considered in Module 1 are presented**

## Nurses and Midwives

Nursing - Ireland, as is the case with most developed countries, suffers from an acute shortage of

doctors and nursing professionals<sup>1</sup>

Figure 8.4: CSO vacancy rate by sector, quarter 4 2010 and quarter 4 2015



Source: CSO EHECS

The recruitment moratorium, which was in place across the Irish health service (effective from March 2009) prevented the replacement of staff members who left the public health service, or of those who were on various types of leave. Imposed recruitment controls in relation to permanent employment contracts in the publicly funded healthcare sector resulted in frequent movements of doctors and nurses/midwives between employers.

The number of unemployed qualified healthcare workers is negligible while reliance on importing healthcare skills has been an important part of HR practices: in 2015, over 1,500 employment permits were issued to non-EEA doctors and a further 282 to nurses/midwives<sup>2</sup>.

Shortages continue to persist for the following occupations:

- medical practitioners (especially locum and non-consultant hospital doctors, registrars and medical specialists)
- **nurses - advanced nursing practitioners (e.g. intensive care, operation theatre, theatre nurse managers), registered nurses (e.g. general nurse, cardiovascular care, elder persons' care, children's care; intellectual disability care, mental health care) and clinical nurses**
- radiographers (clinical specialists; MRI and CT radiographers)
- niche area specialists (radiation therapists, audiologists, prosthetists, orthotists, cardio-technician)

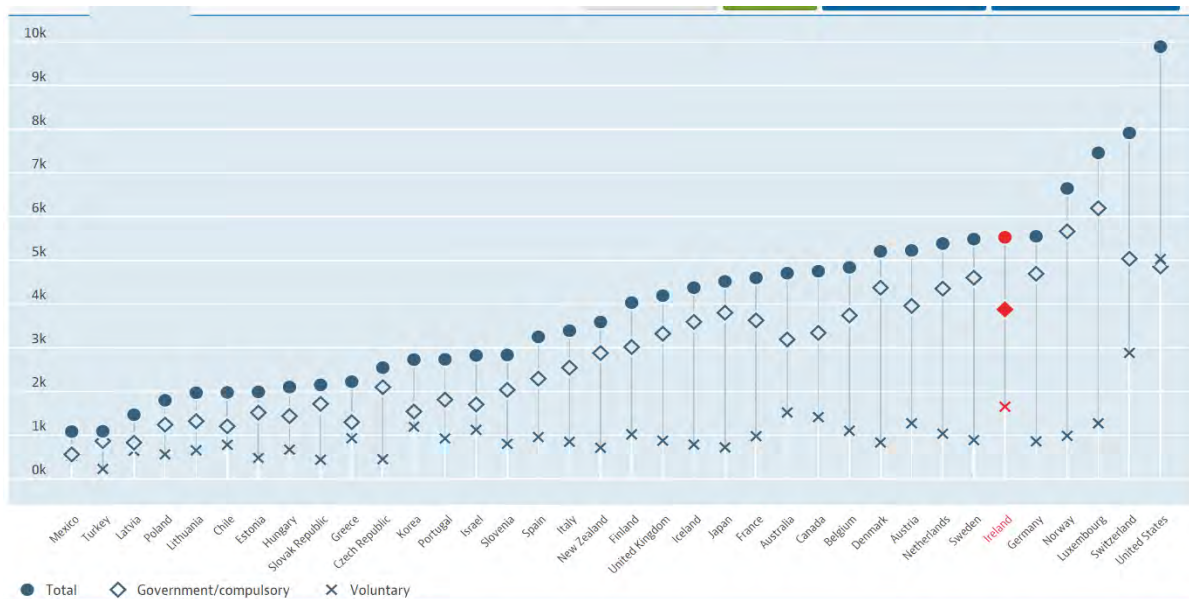
<sup>1</sup> OECD - Health Spending Total / Government/compulsory / Voluntary, US dollars/capita, 2016  
Source: Health expenditure and financing: Health expenditure indicators.

<sup>2</sup> SOLAS - National Skills Bulletin 2016, pages 65, 105-106

- health service managers; nursing home directors

**As a result, the total annual recruitment requirement for healthcare professionals and associate professionals is estimated at over 4,000 annually, *just over 50% is for nurses*<sup>3</sup>.**

According to OECD figures, funding levels of the overall health service by the government (pictured below) are lower in comparison to some of the European counterparts<sup>4</sup>. This poses further risk of poor retention within organisations.



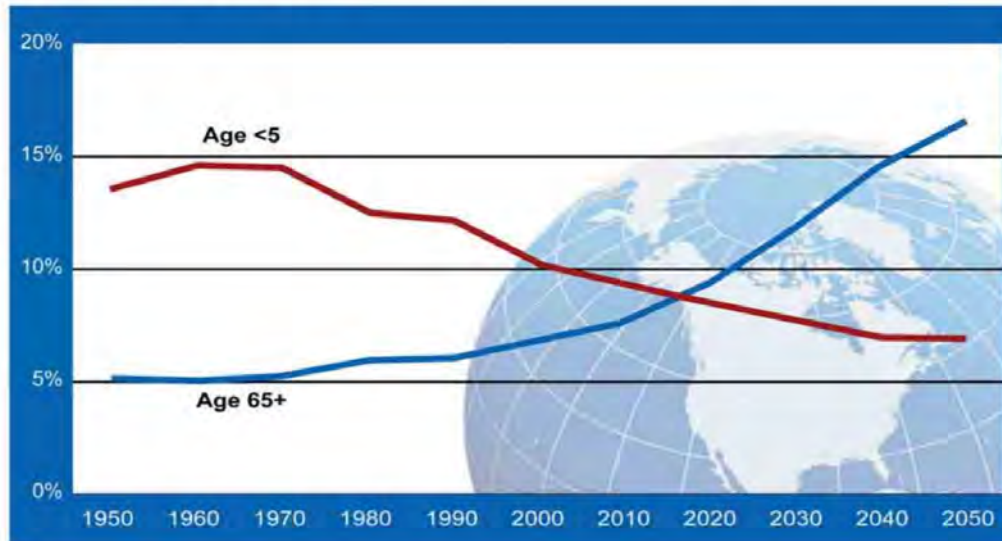
Furthermore, figures collected by the 2016 Census, show the ageing trend among the Irish population. The number of males aged 65 and over increased by **22%** to 296,837, while females aged 65 and over increased by **16.7%** to 340,730.

This is in line with the analysis made by the WHO, which predicts that by 2020 persons aged 65 and over will outnumber those under the age of 65.

<sup>3</sup> SOLAS - National Skills Bulletin 2016, pages 105-106

<sup>4</sup> OECD - Health Spending Total / Government/compulsory / Voluntary, US dollars/capita, 2016  
Source: Health expenditure and financing: Health expenditure indicators

**Figure 1.**  
**Young Children and Older People as a Percentage of Global Population: 1950-2050**



Source: United Nations. *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*.  
Available at: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp>.

The ageing trend among the Irish population also poses the need to increase the roles for nurses and midwives. However, since 2009 over 3,200 professionals have left their positions. Figures below show that in the period between 2010-2015 it was reported -1.1% employment rate for nurses and midwives<sup>5</sup>.

A combination of the uncompetitive payment rates, a lack of commitment to further

**Figure 9.5.2 Average Annual Growth (%) in Selected Healthcare Occupations**



education, which are available in the private sector and abroad and unattractive working conditions, have resulted in a public health system which has been unable to retain nurses and midwives.

<sup>5</sup> SOLAS - National Skills Bulletin 2016, pages 105

HSE's 'Bring Them Home' campaign, which was launched in July 2015, and aimed to attract up to 500 nurses and midwives from the UK and elsewhere to Ireland, managed to attract very low numbers of professionals.

RN4CAST, funded by the European Commission, in their *National Report for Ireland*, identified that the nursing and midwifery professionals employed in hospitals are lacking:

- a formal annual appraisal review with managers
- revision of the nursing staff training needs
- annual professional development review
- financial support for professional development and training
- study leave support for professional development and training

Nurses play a critical role in providing access to care not only in traditional settings such as hospitals and long-term care institutions, but increasingly in primary care (especially in offering care to the chronically ill) and in-home care settings.

Increases in the nursing/midwifery workload, caused by the constant staff shortages, results in far reaching consequences, including increases in patients' mortalities and morbidities. It has been scientifically proven that an increased workload by one patient increases the likelihood of an inpatient dying within 30 days of admission by 7%<sup>6</sup>.

Nursing is a so-called soft target because savings can be made quickly by reducing the number of nurses, whereas savings through improved efficiency are difficult to achieve. The consequences of trying to do more with less were shown in the UK, where nurses were highly criticised for failing to prevent poor care after levels of staff were reduced to meet financial targets<sup>7</sup>.

In mental health, in particular area directors of nursing in mental health agreed to take on geographical counties, rather than locations, at the existing pay of directors of nursing, in 2012, taking into consideration the financial constraints. This was on the basis that pay would be reviewed when the country would be on a more financially stable footing.

HR Circular 001/2017 issued this year and increasing the salaries of group directors of nursing to assistant national director level, created the anomaly for Area Mental Health directors of nursing and indeed directors of nursing in other sectors outside of the acute, such as social care.

This should be taken into consideration and appropriate steps taken to remove similar anomalies.

---

<sup>6</sup> Linda Aiken PhD & others - Nurse staffing and education and hospital mortality in nine European countries: a retrospective observational study.

<sup>7</sup> Same source as above.