

The Growing Demand for Healthcare Workers in Massachusetts

The United States has faced a shortage of healthcare workers for years; a challenge that was only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018, even before the pandemic, there were 27 open healthcare practitioner jobs — such as doctors, surgeons, and registered nurses — for every available unemployed healthcare practitioner across the country.¹ The situation in Massachusetts is no exception.² Despite the many barriers that internationally trained healthcare workers face to practicing medicine in the state, immigrants routinely punch above their weight in the field.³ From 2015 to 2019, immigrants on average made up 17.7 percent of the state's healthcare workers⁴ — including 29.5 percent of all physicians and surgeons⁵ — while making up 9.9 percent of the population.⁶

For Massachusetts to remain competitive and address critical shortages of physicians and other healthcare workers, it will be crucial to implement policies that not only attract and retain global talent that is complementary to the U.S.-born workforce, but also builds career pathways for immigrants who already call the state home.

One way to achieve this goal is to join states like Minnesota and Washington in reducing barriers for international medical graduates (IMGs) and other internationally trained healthcare workers.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, labor shortages, and a growing number of baby boomers who are reaching retirement age, Massachusetts has seen an increase in demand for healthcare workers.

From 2018 to 2022,
there were

641,803

unique healthcare worker
and technical job postings
in Massachusetts.⁷

During the same period,
the number of online
healthcare practitioner job
postings in Massachusetts
increased from **110,028 to
179,042**,⁸ an increase of

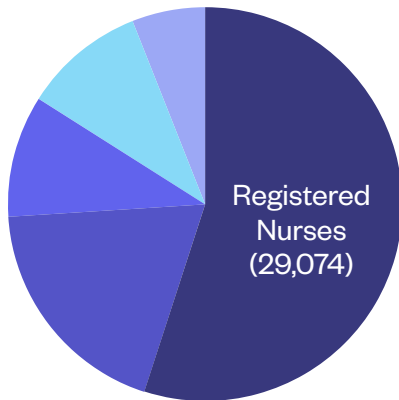
+62.7%

During this time period,
the average advertised
annual salary for
healthcare workers also
rose from **\$77,312 to
\$101,205**⁹ an increase of

+30.9%

HEALTHCARE JOB DEMAND IN MASSACHUSETTS (CONTINUED)

From 2018 to 2022, the **top five in-demand healthcare jobs** in Massachusetts were¹⁰



- 1 Registered Nurses (29,074)
- 2 Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses (10,074)
- 3 Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other (5,216)
- 4 Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians (4,619)
- 5 Nurse Practitioners (2,883)

During the same period, the **top Massachusetts employers** hiring healthcare workers were **Mass General Brigham**, **Massachusetts General Hospital**, **Baystate Health**, **CVS Health**, and **Boston Medical Center**.¹¹

17.5%

..... The average share of health technicians in Massachusetts who were immigrants from 2015 to 2019 ACS.¹²

ONLINE JOB POSTINGS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN MASSACHUSETTS BETWEEN 2018-2022¹³

Psychiatric Technicians

+407.5%

Orthodontists

+272.7%

Diagnostic Medical Sonographers

+206.1%

Nuclear Medicine Technologists

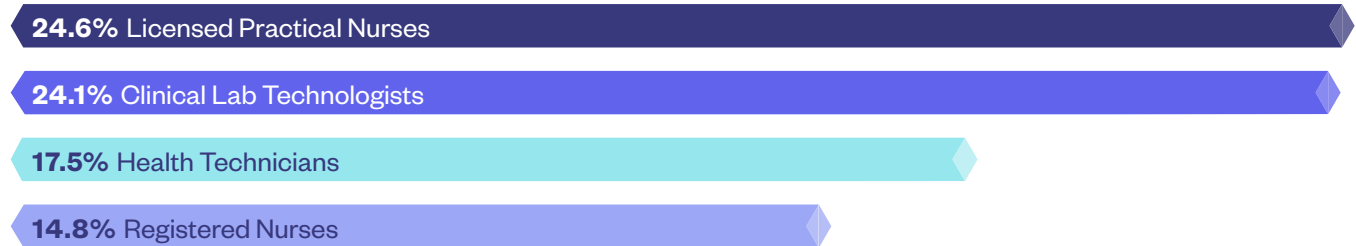
+204.3%

Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses

+197.4%

ONLINE JOB POSTINGS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS (CONTINUED)

The average share of healthcare workers from 2015 to 2019 who were immigrants¹⁴



As employers struggle to recruit and retain specialized healthcare workers, immigrants play a crucial role in helping to address labor shortages. With an increase in demand for multilingual and culturally competent employees, internationally trained healthcare professionals are uniquely positioned to provide support across all healthcare settings.

From 2018 to 2022, the number of healthcare job postings that required **bilingual skills** in Massachusetts increased by¹⁵

+91.7%

HEALTHCARE JOB POSTINGS BY RURAL-URBAN CLASSIFICATION¹⁶

The number of job postings between 2018 and 2022 by Massachusetts County Classification:

For **small/medium metro counties**¹⁷ the number of postings increased by

+84.3%

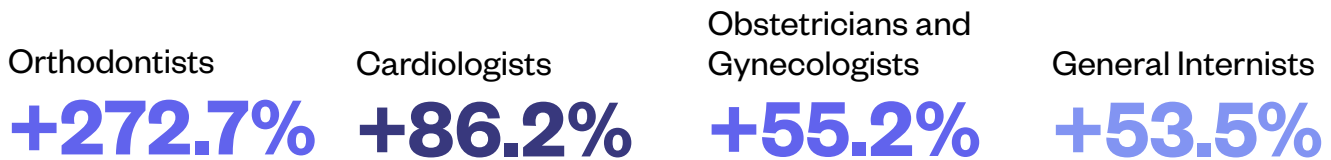
For **rural counties**¹⁸ the number of postings increased by

+52.5%

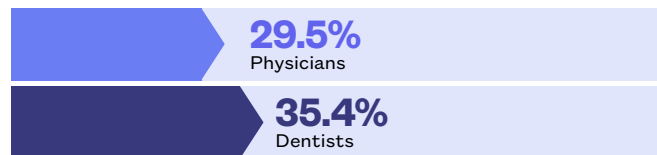
PHYSICIANS

In 2015, long before the COVID-19 pandemic, Massachusetts faced severe physician shortages, with some counties across the state registering 138 physicians per 100,000 residents.¹⁹ Future projections remain dire. Massachusetts is expected to need an additional 725 primary care physicians by 2030,²⁰ significantly impacting the accessibility of healthcare, particularly in rural communities.

ONLINE JOB POSTINGS FOR PHYSICIANS²¹



In Massachusetts, the average share of physicians and surgeons who were immigrants was **29.5%** and the average share of dentists who were immigrants was **35.4%** from 2015-2019.²²

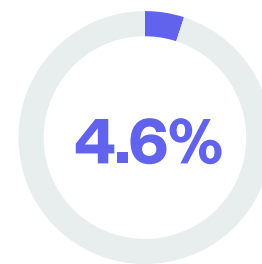
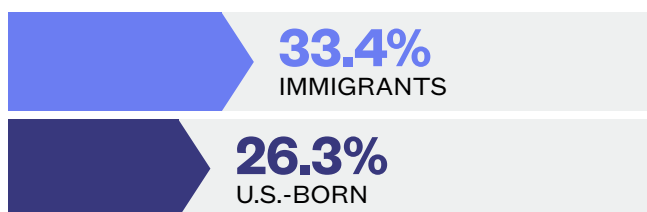


BRAIN WASTE IN MASSACHUSETTS

Although there is a growing need for healthcare workers in Massachusetts, many immigrants who have received specialized education, training, and licensing abroad are unable to practice in the state, facing challenges related to skill recognition and recredentialing pathways. Their skill sets are often underutilized — known as “brain waste” — which frequently leads to under- or unemployment.²³

In 2015-2019, across Massachusetts²⁴

Share of residents who had a biology or healthcare-related bachelor’s degree but worked in an occupation that did not require a bachelor’s degree



Share of immigrants with professional and doctorate degrees²⁵ who worked in occupations in the healthcare industry that did not require a medical doctorate or professional degree.

Addressing the barriers that prevent qualified, internationally trained healthcare workers from practicing in Massachusetts will be vital to helping the state meet its growing healthcare needs.

ENDNOTES

1. New American Economy, “Immigrant Healthcare Workers Are Critical in the Fight Against Covid-19,” April 2020, <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/covid-19-immigrant-healthcare-workers/>.
2. Unless stated otherwise, all data in this report is reflective of Massachusetts.
3. We define an immigrant as anyone born outside the country to non-U.S. citizen parents who is a resident in the United States. This includes naturalized citizens, green card holders, temporary visa holders, refugees, asylees, and undocumented immigrants, among others.
4. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2015-19 American Community Survey, 5-Year Sample.
5. Ibid.
6. American Immigration Council analysis of data from the 1-year 2019 American Community Survey. See American Immigration Council, “Map the Impact: Massachusetts,” https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/the_growing_demand_for_healthcare_workers_in_massachusetts.pdf.
7. American Immigration Council analysis of data compiled by Lightcast 2023, <https://kb.emsidata.com/methodology/emsi-data-basic-overview/>.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2015-19 American Community Survey, 5-Year Sample.
13. American Immigration Council analysis of data compiled by Lightcast 2023, <https://kb.emsidata.com/methodology/emsi-data-basic-overview/>.
14. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2015-19 American Community Survey, 5-Year Sample.
15. Ibid.
16. Using the 2013 NCHS Urban–Rural Classification Scheme for Counties, Massachusetts counties were grouped into two different population groups: medium and small metropolitan, and rural counties. NCHS medium and small metropolitan counties were combined for the middle classification. Rural counties were identified using the micropolitan and non-core NCHS classifications.
17. Small and medium metro counties in Massachusetts include Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire, Barnstable, and Berkshire counties.
18. Rural counties in Massachusetts include Franklin, Dukes, and Nantucket counties.
19. New American Economy, “Life Support: The Shortage of Physicians in America’s Rural Counties and How Foreign-Born Doctors Can Help,” September 2015, <http://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/lifesupport929-1.pdf>.
20. Stephen M. Petterson, Angela Cai, Miranda Moore, and Andrew Bazemore, “Massachusetts: Projecting Primary Care Physician Workforce, 2010-2030,” Robert Graham Center, September 2013, <https://www.graham-center.org/content/dam/rgc/documents/maps-data-tools/state-collections/workforce-projections/Massachusetts.pdf>.
21. American Immigration Council analysis of data compiled by Lightcast 2023, <https://kb.emsidata.com/methodology/emsi-data-basic-overview/>.
22. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2015-19 American Community Survey, 5-Year Sample.
23. New American Economy, “Untapped Talent: The Costs of Brain Waste Among Highly Skilled Immigrants in the United States,” December 2016, http://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NAE_BrainWaste_V4_Digital.pdf.
24. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2015-19 American Community Survey, 5-Year Sample.
25. Doctorate degrees include the fields of Biology and Life Sciences, Nuclear, Industrial Radiology and Biological Technologies, and Medical and Health Sciences and Services.