Canada's health workforce: Regional vacancy trends, 2024

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As demand for care continues to grow in the context of an aging population, Canada has faced persistent challenges filling health-related job vacancies. Moreover, trends in unmet labour demand can vary significantly by region. Differences may reflect disparities in population needs, labour supply, as well as access to training infrastructure and opportunities. Rural or remote areas may face more challenges in attracting and retaining health care professionals compared with larger and more accessible urban centres.

Released today is a new article titled "Regional dynamics of vacancies in health-related occupations in Canada, 2024". This article uses data from the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey and the Labour Force Survey to explore differences in unmet labour demand for nursing and personal support work occupations by regional remoteness.

Remoteness is examined at the economic region level where regions are classified as "accessible," "less accessible," or "remote" using the 2021 Index of Remoteness. This index takes into account population density and the relative proximity to larger population centres, which are considered a proxy for service availability and economic activity.

Vacancy rates for health-related occupations higher in remote regions

From 2016 to 2024, the vacancy rate (the proportion of all positions that are vacant) for health-related occupations nearly tripled, increasing from 2.1% to 5.8%. The vacancy rate was generally higher for nursing occupations and personal support workers compared with other health occupations and was highest among licensed practical nurses, at 12.8% in 2024.

In 2024, the majority (88.1%) of job vacancies for health-related occupations were in accessible economic regions, consistent with the higher demand associated with their larger population. However, the job vacancy rate for these occupations was nearly twice as high in remote regions (9.3%) compared with accessible regions (5.5%). This was observed for registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, with the vacancy rates for these occupations about twice as high in remote regions as in accessible ones.

Vacancies more likely to be long-duration in remote regions

In 2024, vacancies for nursing occupations and for personal support workers in less accessible regions and remote regions were more likely to be long-duration—defined as vacancies for which active recruitment efforts have been ongoing for 90 days or more.

Over 6 in 10 vacancies for registered nurses (61.8%) and licensed practical nurses (62.3%) in remote regions were long-duration vacancies in 2024, higher than the corresponding proportions in accessible regions (52.5% of vacancies for registered nurses and 47.8% of vacancies for licensed practical nurses). Similarly, 47.5% of vacancies for personal support workers in remote regions were long-duration compared with 42.9% in accessible regions.

Vacancies in remote regions offer higher wages for nursing occupations and lower wages for personal support workers

In 2024, the average offered hourly wage for registered nursing vacancies in remote regions ($37.49) was slightly higher than the corresponding offered hourly wage in accessible regions ($35.66).

Similarly, the average offered hourly wage for licensed practical nurses in remote regions ($31.53) was higher than in accessible regions ($29.59). On the other hand, offered hourly wages for personal support workers were on average slightly lower in remote regions ($22.63) (correction) compared with accessible regions ($23.91) (correction).

Note to readers

The Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (JVWS) provides comprehensive data on job vacancies and offered wages by industrial sector and detailed occupation for Canada and the provinces, territories and economic regions. Additional information is also available by occupation, such as the proportion of job vacancies for full-time and part-time positions, the duration of job vacancies, the offered wage for vacancies, and other characteristics.

A job (full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary, casual, or seasonal) is vacant *if it meets all of the following conditions:*

- *it is vacant on the reference date (first day of the month) or will become vacant during the month*
- *there are tasks to be carried out during the month for the job in question*
- *the employer is actively recruiting outside the organization to fill the job.*

In Canada, ***licensed practical nurses (LPNs)*** *and* ***registered nurses (RNs)*** *are regulated health care professionals who provide essential health care services but differ in their education, scope of practice, responsibilities and career opportunities.*

LPNs provide basic nursing care under the supervision of RNs or physicians. They help in the assessment, planning, and implementation of care for patients in various settings (e.g., hospitals, long-term care homes, clinics, and private residences). In Ontario, LPNs are referred to as registered practical nurses.

RNs provide comprehensive and/or complex care to individuals, families and communities across a wide range of settings. RNs can work autonomously, often taking on leadership roles in patient care, health education and care coordination.

Personal support workers (PSWs) *are defined as the combination of nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates (National Occupational Classification [NOC] code 33102) and home support workers, caregivers and related occupations (NOC code 44101) that work within the health care sector (based on the North American Industry Classification System).*

*The "**health-related occupations**" category was defined for the purpose of this analysis and refers to all occupations under the broad category of "health occupations" (one-digit NOC code 3) with the exclusion of those directly pertaining to animal care (NOC code 31103—Veterinarians and NOC code 32104—Animal health technologists and veterinary technicians) and the addition of the subset of NOC code 44101 mentioned above.*

Job vacancy rates *for health-related occupations were calculated using annual vacancy counts from the JVWS and annual employment counts from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) adjusted to align with JVWS coverage. The LFS is a monthly household survey of approximately 65,000 households, which provides information on the labour force characteristics of the Canadian population.*

Remoteness-based economic region groupings *were created using the 2021 Index of Remoteness developed at Statistics Canada. Using this index, economic regions (ERs) were assigned a remoteness score equal to the weighted average of remoteness scores of their component Census Subdivisions (CSDs) weighted by CSD population proportion. Based on assigned remoteness scores, ERs were then classified into three remoteness categories:* ***accessible****,* ***less accessible*** *and* ***remote*** *regions.*

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers 3701 and 5217.

The article "Regional dynamics of vacancies in health-related occupations in Canada, 2024" is now available online in the *Labour Statistics at a Glance* series (**71-222-X**).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; **infostats@statcan.gc.ca**) or Media Relations (**statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca**).