

Long-Term Services and Support: Demand Projections, 2023-2038

December 2025

This brief contains highlights of workforce projections for occupations based in long-term services and support (LTSS) in the United States. These include direct care workers (such as nursing aides, home health aides, and personal care aides) as well as registered nurses and licensed practical nurses working in long-term care settings.

These projections were generated using HRSA's Health Workforce Simulation Model (HWSM) and start with the year 2023 and go through 2038. Full data on the workforce projections are available in the [Workforce Projections Dashboard](#).

Key Results and Takeaways

- Forecasting future supply of the LTSS workforce is complicated for several reasons, including low barriers to entry and exit and the presence of unpaid or informal caregivers (such as family members).¹ As a result, future supply projections are not provided.
- Nationally, the overall demand for workers in LTSS settings is projected to grow by 40% between 2023 and 2038, from 2.35 million full-time equivalent (FTE)² LTSS professionals to 3.29 million. Growth in demand varies across the professions, ranging from 30% for physical therapist assistants in LTSS settings, to 141% for psychiatric aides in LTSS settings. Growth in the demand for these services and support is driven by the aging population and increasing longevity.
- Direct care workers – including home health aides, personal care aides, nursing assistants, and psychiatric aides – make up the largest segment of the LTSS workforce, accounting for 66% of the workforce in 2038. Demand for direct care workers is projected to grow as fast as the demand for long-term care nurses (40% growth between 2023 and 2038, see Exhibits 1a and 1b).
- Among direct care workers, demand for psychiatric aides is projected to grow the fastest (141%), followed by nursing assistants (44%), personal care aides (38%), and home health aides (36%). In contrast, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that employment of home health and personal care aides will grow by just 17% over the next decade (2024-2034), which may indicate that supply is growing slower than demand.³
- Among all other LTSS occupations, demand for social workers is projected to grow the fastest (121%) followed by recreational therapists (51%) and dietitians and nutritionists (48%).⁴

About the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis

The National Center for Health Workforce Analysis informs public and private sector decision makers on health workforce issues by expanding and improving health workforce data, disseminating workforce data to the public, and improving and updating projections of the supply and demand for health workers.

For more information, visit the [Health Workforce Analysis](#) webpage.

¹ For more information, see the [HWSM technical documentation](#).

² An FTE is defined as working 40 hours per week.

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#). Accessed on November 19, 2025.

⁴ NCHWA also reports projections under alternative scenarios of demand including improved access to care. The projected estimates under each scenario are available at [Workforce Projections Dashboard](#).

Exhibit 1a – Projected national demand for LTSS occupations: Direct care workers

Occupation	2023	2028	2033	2038	Percent Change (2023-38)
Home Health Aides	387,590	436,560	483,670	526,340	36%
Nursing Assistants	613,750	703,430	793,580	881,950	44%
Personal Care Aides	557,280	628,370	700,880	770,880	38%
Psychiatric Aides	3,380	4,630	6,270	8,150	141%
All Direct Care Workers	1,562,000	1,772,990	1,984,400	2,187,320	40%

Exhibit 1b – Projected national demand for LTSS occupations: Nurses in LTSS

Occupation	2023	2028	2033	2038	Percent Change (2023-38)
Licensed Practical Nurses	264,270	301,100	337,610	372,470	41%
Registered Nurses	360,870	410,030	457,850	503,210	39%
All Nurses in LTSS	625,140	711,130	795,460	875,680	40%

Exhibit 1c – Projected national demand for LTSS occupations: Other LTSS occupations

Occupation	2023	2028	2033	2038	Percent Change (2023-38)
Dietitians and Nutritionists	9,590	11,140	12,710	14,220	48%
Occupational Therapists	26,660	29,760	32,840	35,890	35%
Occupational Therapy Assistants	9,860	10,960	12,170	13,340	35%
Physical Therapist Assistants	20,740	23,080	25,130	27,050	30%
Physical Therapists	42,890	48,050	52,900	57,520	34%
Recreational Therapists	4,050	4,730	5,410	6,120	51%
Social Workers	19,320	25,940	33,820	42,730	121%
Speech-Language Pathologists	25,050	28,240	31,420	34,390	37%
All Other Occupations in LTSS	158,160	181,900	206,400	231,260	46%
Total LTSS Workforce	2,345,300	2,666,020	2,986,260	3,294,260	40%

Note: Demand projections are in full-time equivalents (FTEs), defined as working 40 hours a week.

See the [HWSM technical documentation](#) for details on the methodology and datasets used to generate these projections. For full data on the workforce projections, see the [Workforce Projections Dashboard](#). You can also [download the data](#) from the dashboard in spreadsheet form.