

Methods for the Health Workforce Explorer

July 2026

The Health Workforce Explorer is an interactive data tool that provides an overview of the U.S. health workforce for 41 health professions. It is part of the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) effort to assist states, policymakers, workforce planners, researchers, and the public in understanding the U.S. health workforce. Data from the Health Workforce Explorer may also be used as a baseline to track changes in the health workforce.

This documentation provides details on the data sources and methodology used in the Health Workforce Explorer.

In the July 2026 release of 2024 data, some health professions and their work settings undergo significant definition updates. Please see the "**Health Workforce Explorer_Definitions.xlsx**" document for more detail.

Dashboard Tabs

- Location – Displays the number and rate (per 100,000 population aged 16+ years old) of health professions in map view and the number and percentage of health professions by work setting
- State Table – Displays the number and rate (per 100,000 population aged 16+ years old) of health professions by state in table format
- Demographics – Displays the number and percentage of health professions by sex, age, and race/ethnicity
- Education – Displays the completion number and percentage of health profession programs of study by sex, race/ethnicity, and program length
- Physician Specialty – Displays the number and percentage of physician specialties (including and excluding residents) by age, sex and professional activity

Data for Location, State Table, and Demographics

The location, state table, and demographics tabs of the Health Workforce Explorer consist of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data files.

- The ACS, an annual household survey, provides detailed self-reported data about U.S. households and persons, including information on individuals working across various industries and professions.
- The health professions included are classified based on the 2018 Standard Professional Classification (SOC) system. Some health professions are further classified using applicable industry restrictions based on the 2022 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).
- The "workforce" is defined as individuals aged 16 and older who worked within the last five years. It does not include individuals seeking employment for the first time who have not yet

secured their first job, nor individuals no longer in the labor force. For employed individuals, the profession refers to the person's job during the previous week. For those who worked two or more jobs, the profession refers to the job where the person worked the greatest number of hours (primary job). For people who are unemployed or not in the labor force, but report having had a job within the last five years, the data refer to their last job.

- A value of N/A (Not Available) indicates the data is suppressed or not available. ACS data are suppressed for any value where the percent relative standard errors (PRSE) is greater than 30%.
- Only selected health professions from the ACS data file are included. Some professions and their classifications are updated in 2024. Please see the **"Health Workforce Explorer_Definitions.xlsx"** document for further details on professions and associated classification information.
- Work setting categories varies depending on the profession. All work settings are derived from NAICS codes present in the ACS data files, which consist of either the original NAICS code or a composite or edited NAICS code (indicated by "Z", "M", and "P" suffixes). Some work settings data are updated in 2024 to reflect the respective updates in profession classifications. Please see the **"Health Workforce Explorer_Definitions.xlsx"** document for a list of work settings and corresponding NAICS codes.

Demographic Element

In the demographic tab of the Health Workforce Explorer, health professions derived from the ACS data file can be stratified by the following demographic dimensions. Both counts and percentage are available to view.

1. Sex:
 - Male
 - Female
2. Age (in years):
 - Under 30
 - 30 to 39
 - 40 to 49
 - 50 to 59
 - 60 and older
3. Race/Ethnicity:
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - White (Non-Hispanic)
 - Black or African-American (Non-Hispanic)
 - Asian (Non-Hispanic)
 - American Indian or Alaska Native (Non-Hispanic)
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non-Hispanic)
 - Two or More Races (Non-Hispanic)
 - N/A – Race/ethnicity information is missing

Data for Education

The education tab of the Health Workforce Explorer consists of the most recently available data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) on individuals completing programs of study in health professions. IPEDS is maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education.

- IPEDS collects information from colleges, universities, and technical and vocational institutions that participate in federal student financial aid programs.
- Each educational institution reports the number of students completing each curriculum program. Type of program is categorized according to the 2020 Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP).
- Each profession can be further stratified by the length of program completed, race/ethnicity, and sex. The length of program denotes the awards and degrees completed in a program of study for each health profession. For most professions, the awards and degrees completed are at the associate degree or above level. However, some professions include completion of certification programs involving coursework that is fewer than one academic year, or between a select number of academic years. The Health Workforce Explorer includes all awards and degree levels indicated above in the education tab.
- The list of professions and their classifications reflect the most recent versions of NCES's CIP and the crosswalk of the CIP and SOC systems by NCES and BLS. Some professions and their classifications are updated in 2024. Please see the **"Health Workforce Explorer_Definitions.xlsx"** document for further details on professions and associated classification information.

Education Data Element

In the Education tab, the total program completions for each health profession can be stratified by the following dimensions. Both counts and percentage are available to view.

1. Length of Program:
 - Award of less than one academic year
 - Award of at least one, but less than two academic years
 - Associate's Degree
 - Award of at least two, but less than four academic years
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Post-Baccalaureate Certificate
 - Master's Degree
 - Post-Master's Certificate
 - Doctoral Degree

2. Race/Ethnicity¹:

- Hispanic or Latino
- White (Non-Hispanic)
- Black or African-American (Non-Hispanic)
- Asian (Non-Hispanic)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (Non-Hispanic)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non-Hispanic)
- Two or More Races (Non-Hispanic)
- Race Not Available – Race/ethnicity information not collected, exclusive category to IPEDS
- Unknown – Race/ethnicity information is missing

3. Sex:

- Male
- Female

Data for Physician Specialty

The physician specialty tab of the Health Workforce Explorer consists of data on active physicians from the American Medical Association (AMA) Physician Professional Data.

- The AMA Physician Professional Data provides information on education, training and professional certification for Doctors of Medicine (MD) and Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) across 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia (DC), and U.S. territories.
- The Health Workforce Explorer only includes data for active physicians from 50 U.S. states and DC. Physicians with following status are considered inactive: retired, semi-retired, working part-time, temporarily not in practice, or not active for other reasons and indicated they worked 20 hours or less per week.
- Physician data can be visualized to include or exclude residents.
- A physician's self-designated practice specialty is determined by the physician from a list of codes included with the AMA Physician's Practice Agreement questionnaire. A total of 23 major physician specialty and 16 subspecialty categories are available in the Health Workforce Explorer based on physicians' self-designated primary specialties. Combined residency programs integrate two specialties in a way that creates physicians who are equipped to work in a hybrid capacity with patients across a wider spectrum of circumstances. Other specialties are all other non-categorized specialties reported by the physicians. Please see the **"Health Workforce Explorer_Definitions.xlsx"** document for further details on the designations of physician specialty and subspecialty categories.

¹ Further information regarding how IPEDS defines race and ethnicity can be found here: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/report-your-data/race-ethnicity-definitions>

Physician Specialty Data Element

In the physician specialty tab, physician data can be visualized with and without the inclusion of residents at the state and national level. Each specialty and subspecialty category can also be stratified by the following dimensions. Both counts and percentage are available to view.

1. Age (in years):
 - 34 or younger
 - 35 to 44
 - 45 to 54
 - 55 to 64
 - 65 or older
2. Sex:
 - Male
 - Female
3. Professional activity (categorized into seven groups [in **bold**]):
 - Patient Care
 - **Office Based Practice:** Physicians in solo practice, in group practice, two physician practice, or other patient care employment
 - **Hospital Based Practice:** Hospital Residents (including Clinical Fellows) and physicians employed under contract with hospitals to provide direct patient care
 - Nonpatient care
 - **Administration:** Physicians in administrative activities in a hospital, health facility, health agency, clinic, group or any similar organization
 - **Medical Teaching:** Physicians with teaching appointments in medical schools, hospitals, nursing schools, or other institutions of higher learning
 - **Research:** Physicians in activities performed to develop new medical knowledge, and potentially leading to publication
 - **Other:** Physicians employed by insurance carriers, pharmaceutical companies, corporations, voluntary organizations, medical societies, associations, etc.
 - **Not Classified:** Physicians who did not provide information on their type of practice or their present employment