The Growing Demand for Healthcare Workers in Texas

The United States has faced shortages of healthcare workers for years; a challenge that was only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the pandemic in 2018, there were 27 open healthcare worker jobs—such as doctors, surgeons, and registered nurses—for every available unemployed healthcare worker across the country[1]. And the situation in Texas is no exception. Despite the many barriers that internationally trained healthcare workers face to practicing medicine in the state, immigrants[2] routinely punch above their weight in the field. In 2019, they made up 19.1 percent of the state's healthcare workers[3]—including 32.3 percent of all physicians and surgeons[4]—while making up 17.1 percent of the population.[5]

For Texas 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 that also build 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 each year, Texas has seen an increase in demand for healthcare workers.

From 2017 to 2021, there were **1,628,046** unique healthcare worker job postings in Texas,[6] an increase of

+63.3%

During the same time, the advertised wages also rose from **$34.65 to $36.12 per hour**,[7] or

+$1.47/hr

From 2017 to 2021, the **top five in-demand healthcare jobs** in Texas were:[8]

1. Registered Nurses
2. Medical Records Specialists
3. Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
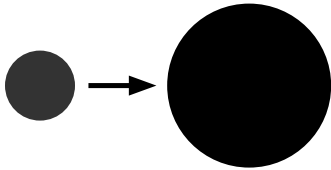4. Clinical Laboratory Technicians
5. Physicians

During the same period, the **top Texas employers** hiring healthcare workers were:[9]

1. HCA Healthcare
2. Baylor Scott & White Health
3. Christus Health
4. Houston Methodist
5. Texas Health Resources

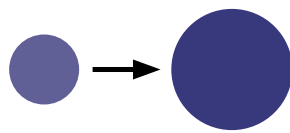## ONLINE JOB POSTINGS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS, 2017 – 2021[10]

Opticians, Dispensing
+486.5%

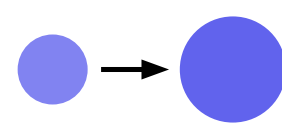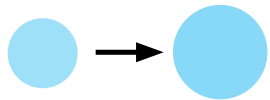Respiratory Therapists
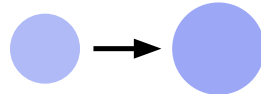# +199.7%

Dental Hygienists
+130.8%

Licensed Practical
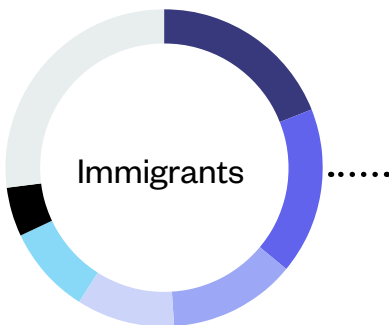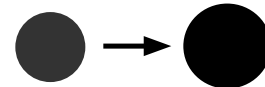and Vocational Nurses
+118.1%

Emergency Medical
Technicians (EMTs) and
Paramedics
+75.0%

Magnetic Resonance
Imaging (MRI) Technologists
+58.1%

Immigrants

The average share of healthcare workers from
2015 to 2019 who were immigrants:[11]

Respiratory Therapists - **18.5%**
Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)Technologists - **17.2%**
Licensed Practical and Vocational Nurses- **13.2%**
Opticians- **9.7%**
Dental Hygienists- **9.2%**
EMTs and Paramedics- **4.9%**

As employers struggle to recruit and retain specialized healthcare workers, immigrants play a critical 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 2017 to 2021, the number of
healthcare job postings that required
bilingual skills in Texas increased by[12]
+167.0%
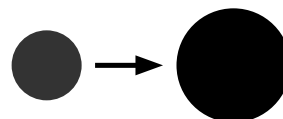
HEALTHCARE JOB POSTINGS BY RURAL-URBAN CLASSIFICATION[13]

The number of job postings between 2017 and 2021 by Texas County Classification:

For small/medium metro counties[14] the number of postings increased by

+82.8%

For rural counties[15] the number of postings increased by

+46.8%

PHYSICIANS

In 2015, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Texas faced dire physician shortages, with some counties across the state registering zero physicians per 100,000 residents.[16] Projections remain dire. Texas is expected to need an additional 6,260 primary care physicians by 2030,[17] significantly impacting the accessibility of healthcare, particularly in rural communities.

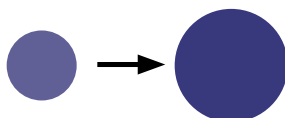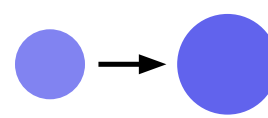## ONLINE JOB POSTINGS FOR PHYSICIANS, 2017 – 2021[18]
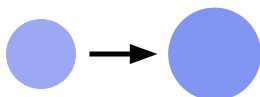
Orthodontists
+169.7%
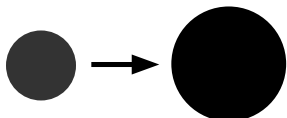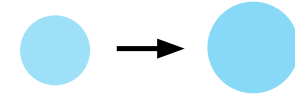
Podiatrists
+161.7%

Optometrists
+107.5%

Obstetricians and Gynecologists
+78.7%

Anesthesiologists
+71.5%

General Internal Medicine Physicians
+52.2%
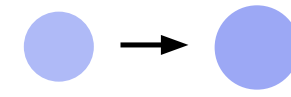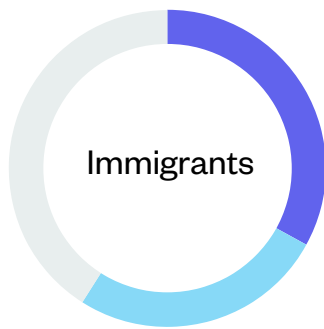
Immigrants ...... The average share of workers from 2015 to 2019 who were immigrants:[19]
Physicians - **32.7%**
Surgeons - **25.5%**

BRAIN WASTE IN TEXAS

Although there is a growing need for healthcare workers in Texas, many immigrants who have received specialized education, training, and licensing abroad are unable to practice in the state, facing challenges such as recredentialing and language proficiency. Their skillsets are all too often underutilized—in what is known as "brain waste"—which frequently leads to under- or unemployment.[20]

In 2021, across Texas:[21]

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:

20.6% FOREIGN-BORN

21.1% U.S.-BORN

32.4%

of immigrants with professional and doctorate degrees[22] worked in occupations in the healthcare industry that did not require a medical doctorate or professional degree.

Addressing the barriers that prevent additional qualified, internationally trained healthcare workers from practicing in Texas 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. 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.

3. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year Sample.

4. Ibid.

5. American Immigration Council analysis of data from the 1-year 2019 American Community Survey. See American Immigration Council, "Map the Impact: Texas," accessed on July 31, 2022, https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/texas/.

6. American Immigration Council analysis of data compiled by Lightcast 2022, https://kb.emsidata.com/methodology/emsi-data-basic-overview/.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2019 American Community Survey, 1-Year Sample.

12. American Immigration Council analysis of data compiled by Lightcast 2022, https://kb.emsidata.com/methodology/emsi-data-basic-overview/.

13. Using the 2013 NCHS Urban–Rural Classification Scheme for Counties, Texas 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 countries were identified using the micropolitan and non-core NCHS classifications.

14. Small and medium metro counties in Texas include Aransas, Armstrong, Bell, Cameron, Carson, Coryell, Crosby, El Paso, Falls, Hardin, Hidalgo, Hudspeth, Jefferson, Lampasas, Lubbock, Lynn, McLennan, Newton, Nueces, Oldham, Orange, Potter, Randall, San Patricio, Webb, Archer, Bowie, Brazos, Burleson, Callahan, Clay, Ector, Goliad, Grayson, Gregg, Irion, Jones, Martin, Midland, Robertson, Rusk, Smith, Taylor, Tom Green, Upshur, Victoria, and Wichita counties.

15. Rural counties in Texas include Anderson, Andrews, Angelina, Bee, Brown, Calhoun, Cherokee, Cooke, Dawson, Deaf Smith, Erath, Gillespie, Glasscock, Gray, Hale, Harrison, Henderson, Hockley, Hopkins, Howard, Hutchinson, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kerr, Kleberg, Lamar, Matagorda, Maverick, Moore, Nacogdoches, Navarro, Nolan, Palo Pinto, Reeves, Scurry, Starr, Titus, Trinity, Uvalde, Val Verde, Walker, Washington, Wharton, Wilbarger, Willacy, Zapata, Bailey, Baylor, Blanco, Borden, Bosque, Brewster, Briscoe, Brooks, Burnet, Camp, Cass, Castro, Childress, Cochran, Coke, Coleman, Collingsworth, Colorado, Comanche, Concho, Cottle, Crane, Crockett, Culberson, Dallam, Delta, DeWitt, Dickens, Dimmit, Donley, Duval, Eastland, Edwards, Fannin, Fayette, Fisher, Floyd, Foard, Franklin, Freestone, Frio, Gaines, Garza, Gonzales, Grimes, Hall, Hamilton, Hansford, Hardeman, Hartley, Haskell, Hemphill, Hill, Houston, Jack, Jackson, Jasper, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Karnes, Kent, Kimble, King, Kinney, Knox, Lamb, La Salle, Lavaca, Lee, Leon, Limestone, Lipscomb, Live Oak, Llano, Loving, McCulloch, McMullen, Madison, Marion, Mason, Menard, Milam, Mills, Mitchell, Montague, Morris, Motley, Ochiltree, Panola, Parmer, Pecos, Polk, Presidio, Rains, Reagan, Real, Red River, Refugio, Roberts, Runnels, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, San Saba, Schleicher, Shackelford, Shelby, Sherman, Stephens, Sterling, Stonewall, Sutton, Swisher, Terrell, Terry, Throckmorton, Tyler, Upton, Van Zandt, Ward, Wheeler, Winkler, Wood, Yoakum, Young, and Zavala counties.

ENDNOTES (CONTINUED)

16. 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.

17. Stephen M Petterson, Angela Cai, Miranda Moore, and Andrew Bazemore, "Texas: 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/Texas.pdf.

18. American Immigration Council analysis of data compiled by Lightcast 2022, https://kb.emsidata.com/methodology/emsi-data-basic-overview/.

19. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2019 American Community Survey, 1-Year Sample.

20. 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.

21. American Immigration Council analysis of data compiled by Lightcast 2022, https://kb.emsidata.com/methodology/emsi-data-basic-overview/.

22. Doctorate degrees include the fields of Biology and Life Sciences, Nuclear, Industrial Radiology and Biological Technologies, and Medical and Health Sciences and Services.