

Growing Demand for Healthcare Workers in Washington State

Washington has faced several healthcare worker shortages for years, and the coronavirus pandemic has only exacerbated these needs. In 2015, there were about 10 open healthcare jobs for every unemployed worker in the United States. By 2018, even before the coronavirus outbreak, this number had risen by more than 30 percent, with 13 open jobs for every unemployed healthcare worker. As states brace for a second wave of coronavirus infections, addressing these shortages will become even more critical.

In Washington State, the demand for healthcare workers in general has been increasing from 20.3 open healthcare jobs for every available unemployed healthcare worker in the state in 2015 to 21.0 open jobs per unemployed healthcare worker in 2018.

However, the demand is much higher for high-skilled healthcare workers, called healthcare practitioners (including doctors, specialists, registered nurses, etc.), in Washington State.

In 2018, the ratio was 36.7 to 1 open healthcare practitioner jobs for each available healthcare practitioner who was unemployed.

Respiratory Therapists¹

715 to 1

Nurses

56.3 to 1

Health Aides

7.3 to 1

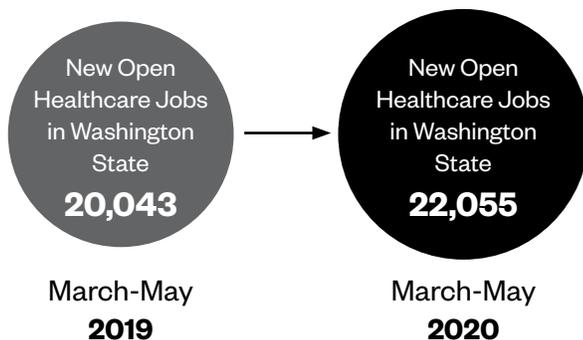
Even as Washington State faces these shortages, demand for healthcare workers is growing. Despite record levels of job losses in other sectors in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, the number of open healthcare jobs increased from March 1, 2020 to May 31, 2020 compared to the same period last year.

From March-May 2020, there were

22,055 new open healthcare jobs in Washington State

This is an increase of

+10.0% over the same period in 2019.



Physicians

+58.5%

Registered Nurses²

+32.4%

Given these growing shortages and the imminent need for healthcare workers during the COVID-19 crisis, the role of immigrants in the healthcare industry is vital to the fight against the disease and to a successful recovery in its aftermath.



Immigrants make up a large share of the overall healthcare workforce in Washington State, with **16.9% of all healthcare workers being immigrants.**

From 2015-2019, demand for bilingual healthcare workers in Washington State grew by

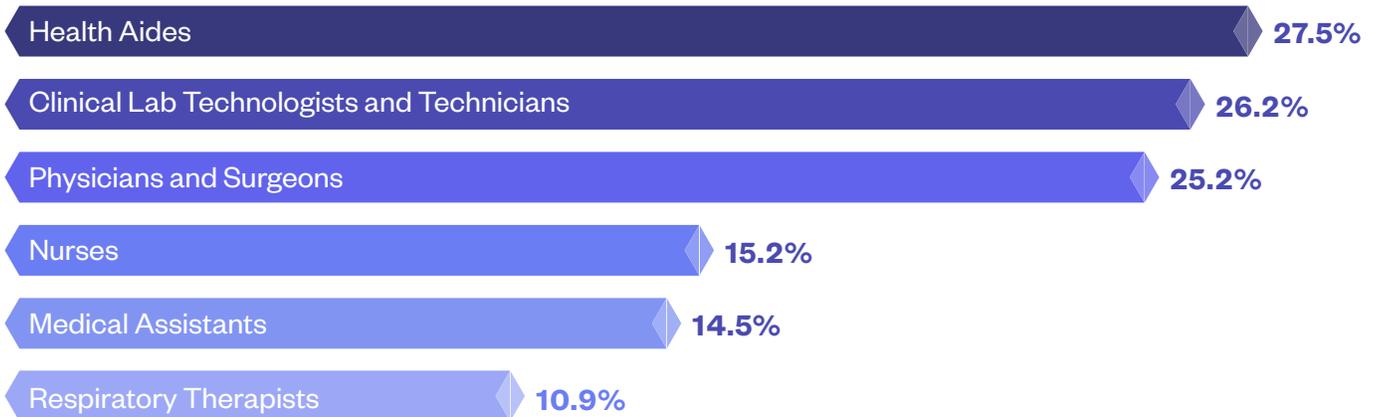
+46.6%



Three-quarters of Washington State's immigrant healthcare workers are bilingual, with **75.0% proficient in English and another language.**

More specifically, we find that immigrants are well represented from the highest skilled specialists to the equally vital day-to-day healthcare support workers.

Immigrant shares of select healthcare occupations in Washington State, 2018...



- 1 For Respiratory Therapists the number of unemployed was so insignificant that no accurate estimate is available. Nevertheless, there were more than 715 open Respiratory Therapist positions open in 2018 alone in Washington State.
- 2 Demand is measured by new job postings.