

Nurses

Nurses, including midwives, are an integral component of primary and tertiary care provision across the Latin American and Caribbean region. While roles in both care settings differ by country, nurses and midwives tend to feature in the front lines of tertiary care provision, a context brought to the forefront by persistent capacity challenges in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although countries in the region have tended to feature a lower density of nurses and midwives by population compared to OECD counterparts, recent OECD research notes that seven Latin American and Caribbean countries have reported improved densities of both care professions in national reports (OECD, 2022^[1]).

While OECD member states average a high rate of nurses when adjusted for population at approximately 10.3 nurses per 1 000 people, some variation is observed in countries of the region. Antigua and Barbuda, reporting a rate just under 9.1 nurses per 1 000 people, is the highest in the 33 countries of the region. Haiti featured the lowest rate of nurses when adjusted for population, at approximately 0.4 nurses per 1 000 people. Overall, the LAC region observed a rate of under 3.6 nurses per 1 000 people (Figure 8.4).

The ratio of nurses to doctors is an indicator of the quality of patient care in the clinical environment. Among OECD member states, the average is 2.7 nurses for every doctor when adjusted for population. Several countries in the region feature ratios above this figure, including Dominica, the highest in the region at 5.5 nurses per doctor in the country. The lowest in the region, Colombia, observed a ratio of 0.6 nurses per doctor. Overall, accounting for differences in population, a ratio of 1.9 nurses to every doctor was observed on average for the Latin American and Caribbean region (Figure 8.5).

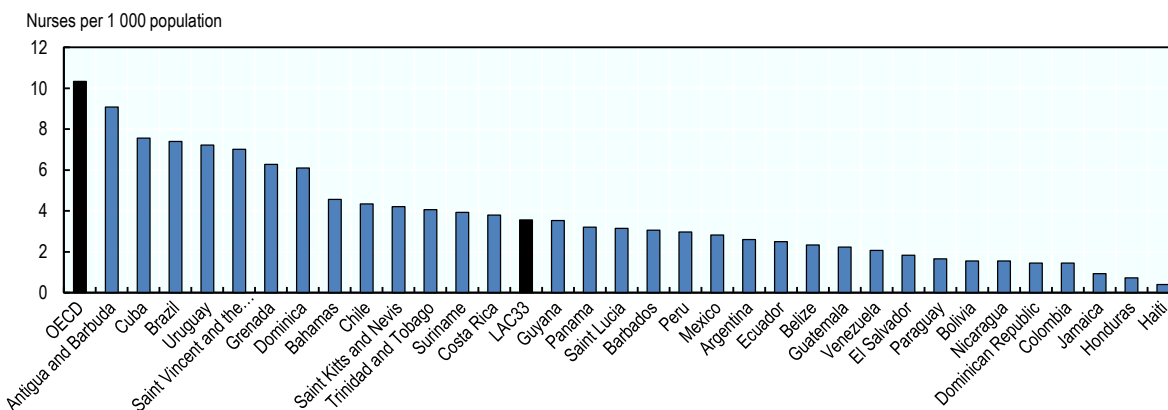
Definition and comparability

Counts for nurses in this report include practising nurses and midwives as reported in OECD Health Statistics. Nurses comprise all professional nurses and associate professional nurses practising and providing services directly to patients. Nursing professionals include those assuming responsibility for the planning and management of the care of patients, and may supervise other healthcare workers, work autonomously or in teams, and apply preventive or curative measures. Nursing associate professionals work under the supervision of medical, nursing, and other health professionals. Nursing aids, assistants, and personal care workers who do not have any recognised qualification or certification in nursing are excluded. Midwives working most of the time as nurses are reported as nurses. Midwives include those practising and providing services directly to patients, such as midwifery professionals and midwifery associate professionals. Nurses working most of the time as midwives are reported as midwives. Data for counts reported separately under nurses and midwives were included together. Population figures for the calculation of ratios were sourced from the United Nations World Population Prospects (WPP) for the year of the latest data reported in each country.

References

- OECD (2022), *Primary Health Care for Resilient Health Systems in Latin America*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/743e6228-en>. [1]

Figure 8.4. Nurses and midwives per 1 000 population, latest year available



Source: WHO GHO 2022.


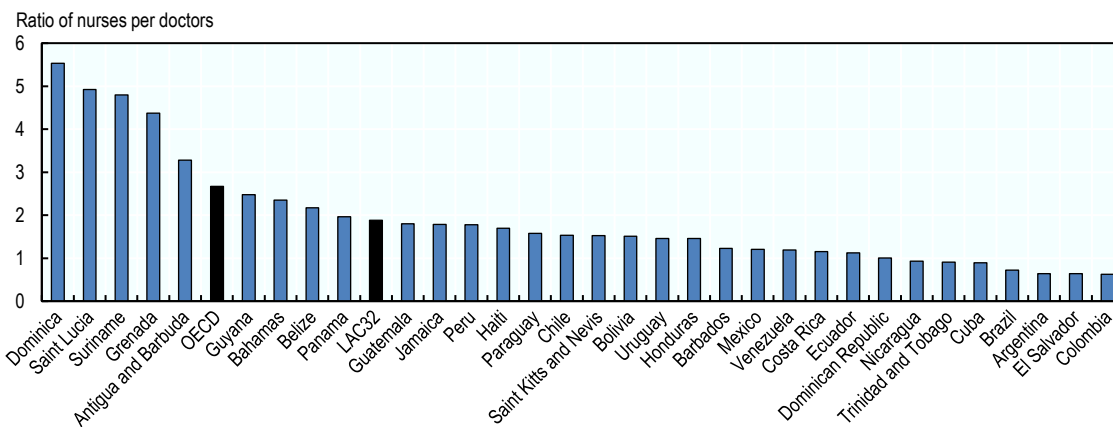
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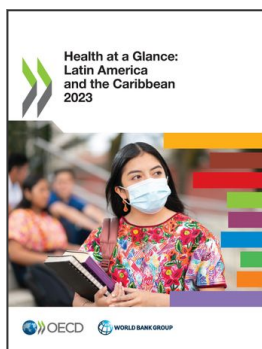
Figure 8.5. Ratio of nurses to doctors, latest year available



Note: Ratio is derived from data reported for nurses per 1 000 population and doctors per 1 000 population.

Source: WHO GHO 2022; OECD Health Statistics 2022 for OECD average; Ministries of Health for number of doctors in Argentina, Peru, Brazil and Mexico.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/asln7k>



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