

### Long-term care workers

Long-term care (LTC) is a labour-intensive service. Formal LTC workers are defined as paid staff, typically nurses and personal carers, providing care and/or assistance to people limited in their daily activities at home or in institutions, excluding hospitals. Formal care is complemented by informal, usually unpaid, support from family and friends, which accounts for a large part of care for older people in all OECD countries (see indicator on “Informal carers”).

Relative to the population aged 65 and over, Sweden and the United States have the most LTC workers and Turkey and Portugal the least (Figure 11.17). In all countries except for Israel, Japan, Estonia and Korea, the majority of LTC staff work in institutions, even though the majority of recipients usually receive care at home (see indicator on “Care recipients”). This reflects the fact that those in institutions often have more severe needs and require more intensive care.

Most LTC workers are women and work part-time. Over 90% of LTC workers are women in Canada, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Korea, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Foreign-born workers also play an important role in LTC provision, although their presence is uneven across OECD countries. While Germany has very few foreign-born LTC workers, nearly one in four care workers in the United States is foreign-born (Colombo et al., 2011). The recruitment of foreign-born workers can help respond to growing demand for LTC, but growing migrant inflows have raised issues around the management of irregular migration, and paid work which is undeclared for tax and social security purposes.

The LTC sector represents a small but growing share of total employment in OECD countries, averaging just over 2%. This share has increased over the past decade in many countries, with the broadening of public provision and increased demand for services. In Japan, the number of LTC workers has more than doubled since 2001, following the implementation of a universal LTC insurance programme in 2000 and government policies to professionalise LTC work, while there was a slight decrease in total employment over this period. Similarly, LTC employment in Germany has outstripped the growth in total employment since 2001. In contrast, LTC employment in Sweden and the Netherlands – countries which already had comprehensive LTC systems and high employment in the sector in the early 2000s – has roughly followed trends in overall employment (Figure 11.18).

On average, around 30% of LTC workers are nurses and the other 70% are personal care workers (also referred to as nursing aides, health assistants in institutions or home-based care assistants) with less formal training. Since quality of care depends on all staff having appropriate skills, many OECD countries have set educational and training requirements for personal care workers, although these vary substantially, especially where home-based care is concerned (OECD/European Commission, 2013).

Increasing demand for LTC services and a possible decline in the availability of family caregivers mean that demand for LTC workers is likely to rise. Responding to increasing demand will require policies to improve recruitment (e.g. encouraging more unemployed people to consider training and working in the LTC sector); improve retention (e.g. enhancing pay and work conditions); and increase productivity (e.g. through reorganisation of work processes and more effective use of new technologies) (Colombo et al., 2011; European Commission, 2013).

#### Definition and comparability

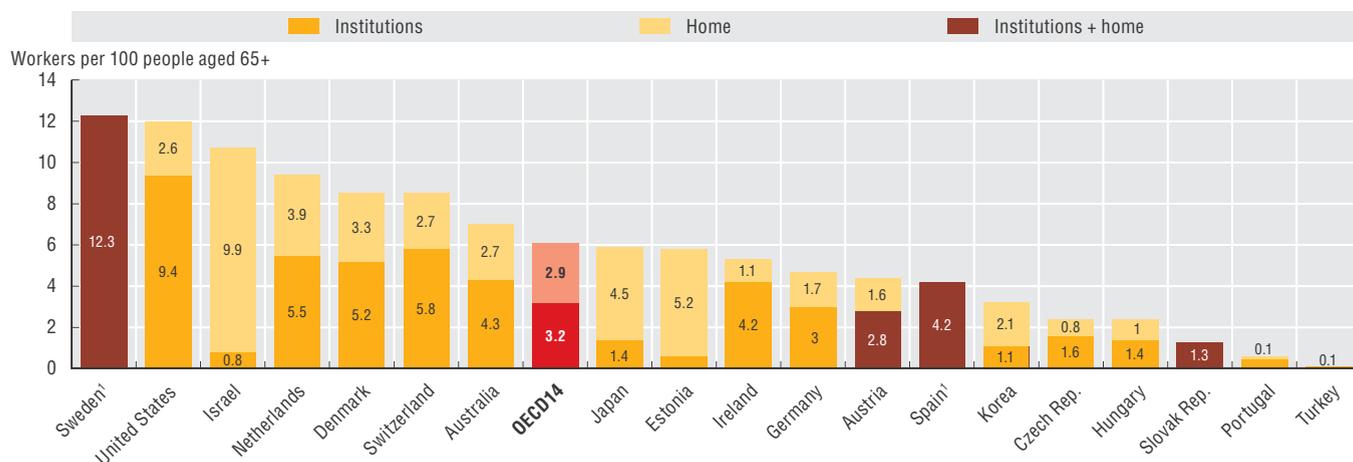
Long-term care workers are defined as paid workers who provide care at home or in institutions (outside hospitals). They include qualified nurses and personal care workers providing assistance with ADL and other personal support. Personal care workers include different categories of workers who may be called under different names in different countries. They may have some recognised qualification or not. Because personal care workers may not be part of recognised occupations, it is more difficult to collect comparable data for this category of LTC workers across countries. LTC workers also include family members or friends who are employed under a formal contract either by the care recipient, an agency, or public and private care service companies. They exclude nurses working in administration. The numbers are expressed as head counts, not full-time equivalent.

The data for Italy exclude workers in semi-residential long-term care facilities. The data for Japan involve double-counting (as some workers may work in more than one home). The data for Ireland refer only to the public sector. The data for Australia are estimates drawn from the 2011 National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey, and underrepresent the numbers of people who could be considered LTC workers.

#### References

- Colombo, F. et al. (2011), *Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264097759-en>.
- European Commission (2013), “Long-term Care in Ageing Societies – Challenges and Policy Options”, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD 41, Brussels.
- OECD and European Commission (2013), *A Good Life in Old Age? Monitoring and Improving Quality in Long-term Care*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264194564-en>.

### 11.17. Long-term care workers per 100 people aged 65 and over, 2013 (or nearest year)

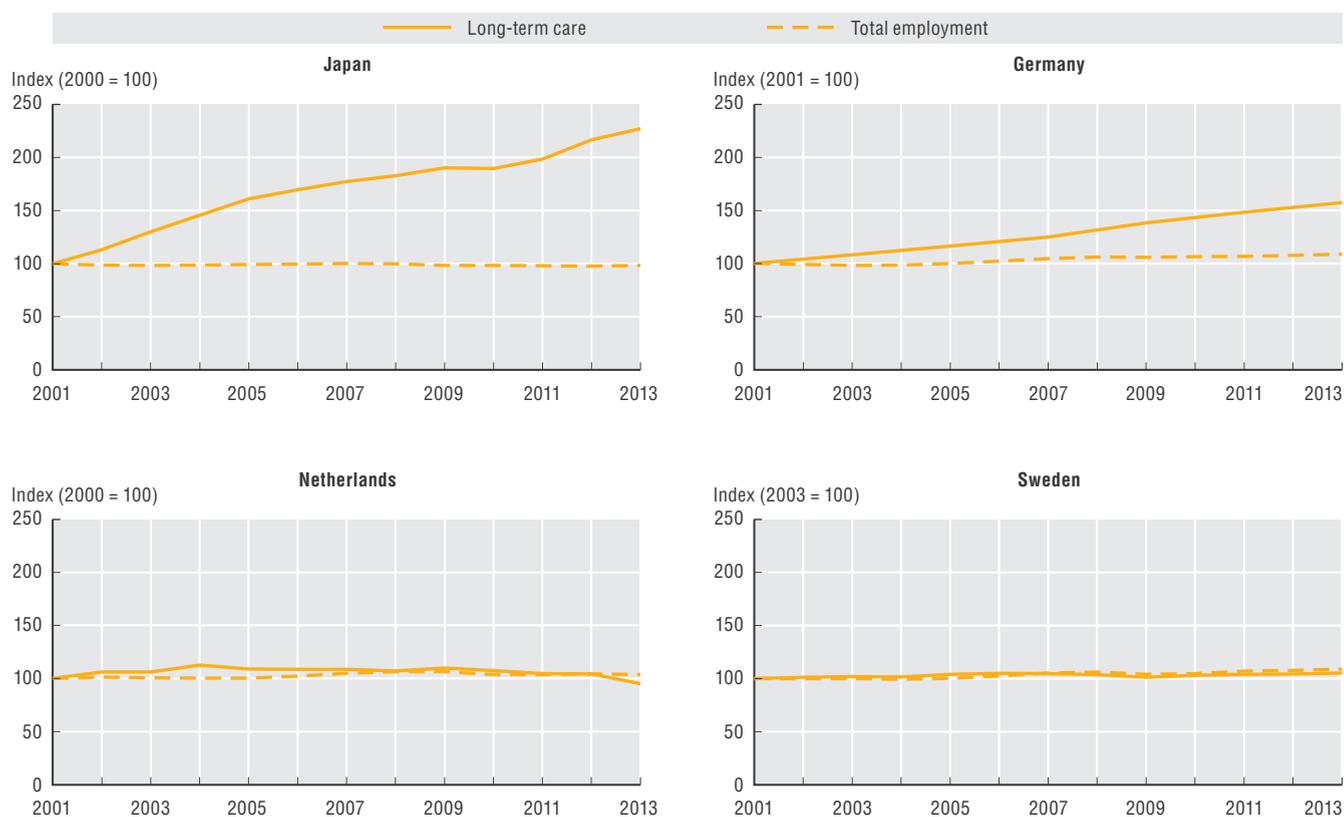


1. In Sweden, Spain and the Slovak Republic, it is not possible to distinguish LTC workers in institutions and at home.

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933281433>

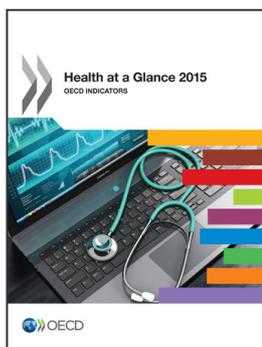
### 11.18. Trends in long-term care employment and total employment, selected OECD countries, 2001-13



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933281433>

Information on data for Israel: <http://oe.cd/israel-disclaimer>



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