

1.1. Workforce reserve (R-12)

1.1.1. Documentation sheet

Description	Number of health professionals registered in workforce reserve.
Calculation	Number of health professionals registered in workforce reserve in each of the Federated entities.
Rationale	<p>In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, countries had to expand their workforce capacity and mobilising additional staff from reserve lists (often created during the crisis) was one of the strategies implemented by various countries including Belgium.¹</p> <p>At the level of Federated entities, list of reserves have been organised to provide assistance in the health services under their competences (nursing homes, vaccination, etc.) in cases where additional support was required. People could register via the respective platforms created by Iriscare (Brussels), the Flemish Agency for Care and Health (Agentschap Zorg en Gezondheid), the Walloon Agency for a quality life (AViQ), and the German-speaking Community (Ostbelgienlive).²⁻⁵</p>
Data source	Flemish Agency for Care and Health (Agentschap Zorg en Gezondheid), the Walloon Agency for a quality life (AViQ), IrisCare, and the German-speaking Community (Ostbelgienlive). ²⁻⁵
Technical definitions	<p>Data from the German-speaking Community include the following professions: physicians, nurses, midwives, first aid/ambulance workers, pharmacists and nursing assistants. No time period is given, but data were provided in February 2023.</p> <p>Data from Flanders refer to persons with a health background registered on the list on 28 April 2021 (no further breakdown by profession available).</p> <p>Data from Wallonia concern both the year of registration (new registrations in 2020, 2021, 2022 (until September 2022)) and the number of people still available in September 2022 (always available or no end date given) for the following professions: physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, dentists, occupational therapists, psychologists, nursing assistants and other health professionals.</p> <p>Data from Brussels refer to health professionals (nursing assistants, nurses, or other health professionals) registered between August 2020 and December 2020. People with double registrations were excluded (when identified).</p> <p>It should be noted that people with professions other than a health-related profession or without profession could also register on these reserve lists (e.g. to help with administrative or logistic tasks), but only data on health professionals are used here.</p>
International comparability	No data available in international databases
Limitations	<p>As these reserve lists were hastily created during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide rapid support to the health workforce but without the objective of measuring such an aspect, the quality of the data is very limited. The format and definition of the data vary greatly between the Federated entities (period, professions, etc.). Comparison and generalisations of data for Belgium should therefore be used with caution.</p> <p>People working in the public sector were also invited to register on reserve lists (both at the Federal, Federated and Local level), but these data are not included below. A lot of local initiatives were also taken but are not included here. Moreover, because the reserve lists mentioned below were dedicated to health services under the competences of Federated entities and not to all health services, and because the total number of</p>

	<p>practising health professionals was unknown, it was not possible to precisely determine the share of people registered in these reserve list in relation with the current practising health workforce.</p> <p>It should also be noted that it is possible for people to be on two different reserve lists (e.g. both for the German-speaking Community and for Wallonia). Such double registrations could not be excluded from the data.</p> <p>Finally, no data was available on the use of these people, except for the German-speaking Community and no data are expressed in full-time-equivalent (FTE).</p>
Dimension	Resilience
Related indicators	A-10 Practising physicians and A-11 Practising nurses
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1.1.2. Results

Although the quality of the data is very low, Flanders seems to have the largest number of health professionals on its reserve list (12 779 on 28 April 2021, no breakdown by profession available) (see Table 1).

Wallonia had 2 945 health professionals available on its reserve list in September 2022, mostly nurses (41%). The largest number of registrations took place in 2021, with 4 228 new registrations of health professionals. Between 2020 and 2022, a total of 5 865 new registrations were done.

In Brussels, 133 health professionals registered in 2020 (and 30.8% were nurses).

In the German-speaking community, 37 people were registered as health professionals on their reserve lists (mostly nurses, 43.2%) and about two (2/37) of them were actually used.

According to the FPS Public Health, Belgium counts around 670 000 health professionals licensed to practice in 2022 (no data available on the total number of practising health professionals).⁶ By assuming that all people registered in the reserve lists are licensed to practice, their number (18 937) represent 2.8% of this total.

Table 1 Health professionals that registered as volunteer on reserve list during the COVID-19 pandemic

	Wallonia New 2020	Wallonia New 2021	Wallonia New 2022	Wallonia Yet available on September 2022	Flanders Situation on 28 April 2021	Brussels	German - speaking Community
Physicians	125 (8.4 %)	616 (14.6 %)	14 (9.5 %)	327 (11.1 %)			6 (16.2 %)
Nurses	236 (15.8 %)	2203 (52.1 %)	100 (68 %)	1210 (41.1 %)		41 (30.8%)	16 (43.2 %)
Nursing assistants	381 (25.6 %)	210 (5 %)	10 (6.8 %)	370 (12.6 %)		20 (15.0%)	9 (24.3 %)
Pharmacists	7 (0.5 %)	589 (13.9 %)	12 (8.2 %)	294 (10 %)			2 (5.4 %)
Physiotherapists	161 (10.8 %)	55 (1.3 %)	(0 %)	119 (4 %)			(0 %)
Dentists	16 (1.1 %)	49 (1.2 %)	(0 %)	24 (0.8 %)			(0 %)
Occupational therapists	41 (2.8 %)	20 (0.5 %)	1 (0.7 %)	37 (1.3 %)			(0 %)
Psychologists	202 (13.6 %)	52 (1.2 %)	2 (1.4 %)	153 (5.2 %)			(0 %)
Midwives	(0 %)	(0 %)	(0 %)	(0 %)			1 (2.7 %)
First aid/ambulance workers	(0 %)	(0 %)	(0 %)	(0 %)			3 (8.1 %)
Other health professionals	321 (21.5 %)	434 (10.3 %)	8 (5.4 %)	411 (14 %)			(0 %)
Total	1490	4228	147	2945	12 779	133	37

Key points

- **Belgium has set up reserve lists to support the actual practising health workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, with registration possible via dedicated platforms.**
- **Based on data from the Federated entities, it appears that almost about 19 000 health professionals have registered on their platforms: 12 779 were registered in Flanders on 28 April 2021, 5 865 new registrations were done in Wallonia between 2020 and 2022, 133 registrations were done in Brussels between August 2020 and December 2020 and 37 registrations were done for the German-speaking Community (no reference period given).**
- **Some people who were not health professionals also registered, but these figures are not presented here. Other initiatives also took place and are not taken into account here.**
- **These numbers can be seen as additional health workers brought on the top of those already practising in the health sector. Furthermore, assuming that all people registered in these reserve lists are licensed to practise, these numbers represent about 2.8% of all health professionals licensed to practise in 2022.**
- **However, due to many methodological weaknesses, these data should not be compared or generalised for Belgium.**

References

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