

International comparison

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) separates certified nurses into two categories: First Level—those who have had a minimum of 3 years of formal training; and Second Level—those who have had between 1 and 2 years of formal training. These categories correspond to *registered* and *enrolled* nurses respectively in Australia.

Not all OECD countries use the same definition for certified nurses, and formal training varies considerably across countries. A footnote has been used in Table 26 to indicate where the definitions are known to differ from the standard OECD definition.

These differences mean that comparisons with the OECD 'average' are limited and caution should be used in the interpretation of these values. Australia appears, however, to have a higher provision of nurses per 1,000 population compared with many other countries in the OECD. Australia's level of 10.5 nurses per 1,000 population is ranked fourth highest after Finland (14.7), Iceland (14.2), and the Netherlands (13.0) (Table 26).

Table 26: Certified nurses, OECD countries, 2000

Country	Certified nurses ^(a)	Population ('000)	Nurses per 1,000
Australia (1999)	200,049	19,044	11.8
Austria	74,601	8,112	9.2
Canada ^(b)	232,412	30,750	7.6
Czech Republic ^(c)	86,694	10,272	8.4
Denmark (1999)	38,601	5,319	7.3
Finland (1997)	76,240	5,140	14.7
France ^(c, d)	347,918	58,892	5.9
Germany ^(c)	765,000	82,205	9.3
Greece (1999)	41,151	10,538	3.9
Hungary	48,709	10,024	4.9
Iceland (1999)	3,926	277	14.2
Ireland ^(c)	35,013	3,787	9.2
Italy ^(e) (1999)	256,860	57,646	4.5
Japan (1998)	985,821	126,486	7.8
Korea	65,898	47,275	1.4
Luxembourg ^(c, f)	3,120	438	7.1
Mexico ^(g)	105,495	97,379	1.1
Netherlands	206,500	15,926	13.0
New Zealand ^(h)	36,976	3,831	9.7
Norway ^(c)	46,128	4,491	10.3
Poland	189,632	38,646	4.9
Portugal	37,477	10,211	3.7
Slovak Republic	39,650	5,401	7.3
Spain ^(e)	147,500	39,466	3.7
Sweden ^(d) (1999)	74,657	8,858	8.4
Switzerland ^(d) (1990)	93,781	6,712	14.0
Turkey ^(d)	71,344	66,835	1.1
United Kingdom ^(c, e)	318,693	59,756	5.3
United States ^(d) (1999)	2,271,300	272,691	8.3

(a) The OECD definition of certified nurses is the number of nurses certified or registered and actively practising in public and private hospitals, clinics and other health facilities. It excludes nurses who are working abroad, and those working in administration, research or industry. Numbers should be reported as full-time equivalents, but in most cases are reported as head counts: those that are reported as full-time equivalents are noted. Most countries include nursing auxiliaries numbers, where this category exists.

(b) Excludes licensed nursing assistants, psychiatric nurses, nurse aides and orderlies; includes nurses working administration, education, research and industry.

(c) Numbers reported as full-time equivalent.

(d) Includes nurses in industry, education, administration and research.

(e) Includes nurses working in the National Health System only.

(f) Includes nurses working in hospitals only.

(g) Includes nurses in public institutions only.

(h) includes all nurses on the nursing register.

Source: OECD 2002.