

Bhutan

Population¹ (000s)
(2024)
792



Urban population² (%)
(2024)
45.0



GDP per capita³
(current US\$) (2022)
3 704



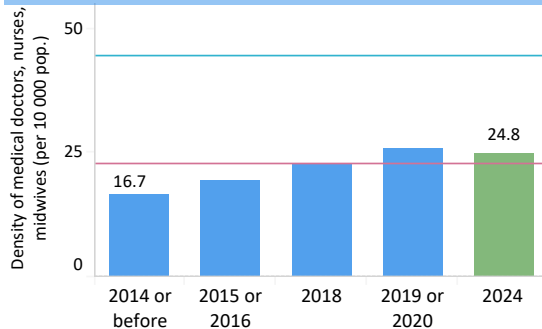
Life expectancy at birth⁴
(years) (2021)
74.9



UHC SCI⁵ (2021)
60

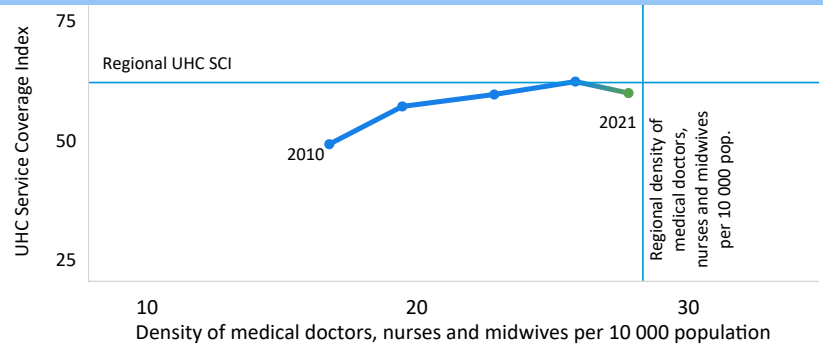


Trend in the density of medical doctors, nurses and midwives⁶ (SDG indicator 3.c.1)

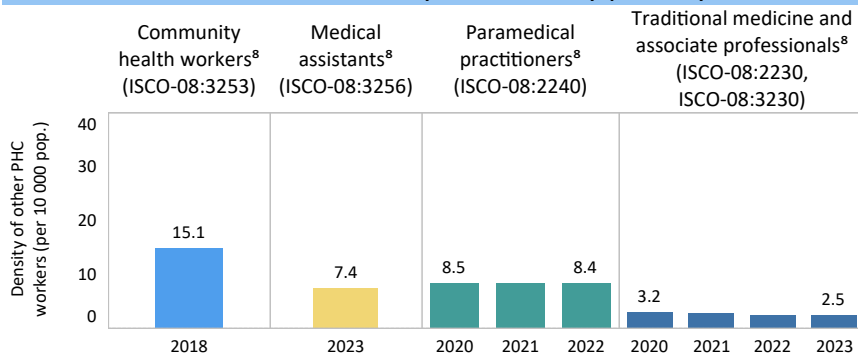


— 44.5 per 10 000 pop.: GSHR:2030 (2016) — 22.8 per 10 000 pop.: World Health Report (2006)

Trends in UHC Service Coverage Index (SDG indicator 3.8.1) and the density of medical doctors, nurses and midwives (SDG indicator 3.c.1), 2010–2021⁷



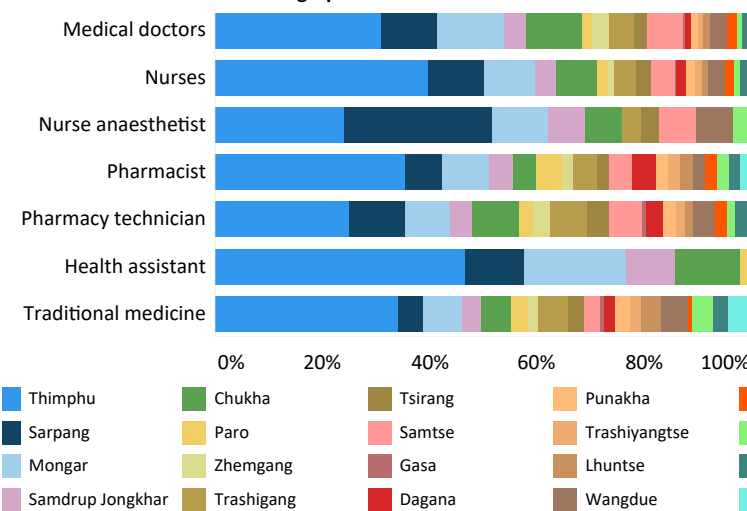
Density of other key primary health care (PHC) workers



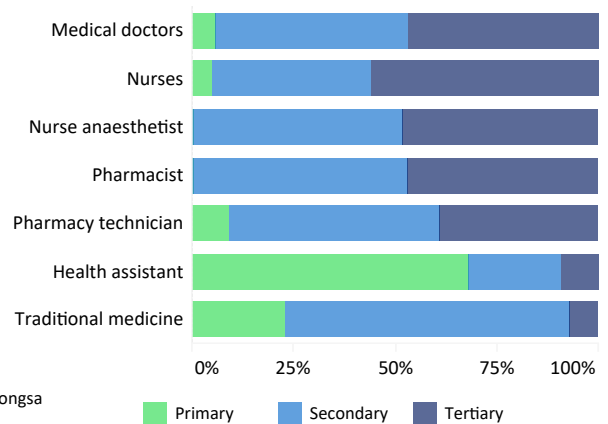
Countries in the SE Asia Region benefit from a range of key occupations close to communities. These health workers, central to the effective functioning of primary health care and district health systems, are often the first point of contact for those most vulnerable and for emergency response.

Distribution of public-sector health workforce (geographical location and levels of care) (2023)

Geographical location⁹

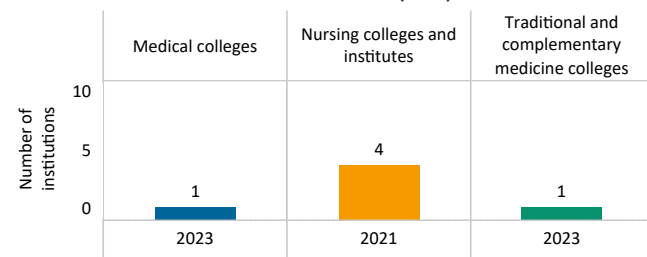


Levels of care⁹



Production of select health workers

Number of institutions¹⁰ (2023)



To strengthen the sustainability of its health workforce, Bhutan established the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences (KGUMS) in 2013. KGUMS launched its first MBBS course in 2023 with 24 students.

The increasing production of health workers across countries of the SE Asia Region speaks of a further increase in the availability of health workers in the near future. It is crucial to align this growth with evolving population health and health system needs.

Progress over the decade

Strategic direction & governance	2022 Civil Service Reform Act, including creation of the National Medical Service
	2022 Establishment of the Bhutan Qualifications and Professional Certification Authority, with merging of Medical and Health Professionals Council, Higher Education Council, TVET Council
	Bhutan Human Resource Development Plan, 2022–2026 and Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB), Strategic Document, 2022–2026
Transformative education	The KGUMSB, established in 2012 through an Act of Parliament, had by 2023 produced 1 127 graduates from across the faculties of Nursing, Public Health, Traditional Medicine and Postgraduate Medicine, including private nursing colleges in Bhutan
	The KGUMSB Faculty of Undergraduate Medicine offers competency-based medical education and was launched in October 2023 with a first batch of 24 students
	Continuous professional development and competency assessment frameworks have been launched; KGUMSB has developed 12 emergency life-saving courses for the Bhutanese context
Rural retention	Policies have been developed ensuring secure employment, resource availability and transparent civil service rules, with preferential incentives for promotion, training and scholarships for health professionals working in rural areas
	Health workers educated or trained with support from government funds are required to serve in the public sector for double the duration of their education or training
	Health assistants managing basic health units in rural areas are provided with housing, amenities and opportunities for professional advancement
Key innovations for strengthening the PHC workforce	The health assistant programme was upgraded to a 3-year diploma course, with the first graduates joining the Civil Service in 2019; an associated career pathway for health assistants to undertake a bachelor's in public health at the KGUMSB has been provided
	The Service with Care and Compassion Initiative (SCCI) was launched as a team-based outreach programme to address noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)
International migration	Major challenge, with an estimated departure of 14 doctors and 259 nurses in 2023
	This represents a 3.5% attrition rate of medical doctors and 16% attrition rate of nurses in one year alone
Identified achievements, challenges and future priorities	Achievements: expansion in HRH production and self-sufficiency, with introduction of the MBBS programme with 24 students, MD programmes in 12 specialties, establishment of 4 nursing institutes and accreditation of these institutions
	Challenges: significant shortages in medical and health professionals, particularly specialists; insufficient capacity development and training opportunities for staff; serious understaffing, including workload burden due to international migration of staff
	Priorities: continue to increase domestic production, create a unique career pathway and performance management system for health professionals' retention, ensure quality through a competency assessment framework, strengthen HRH Information system, implement e-governance policy for the Royal Government of Bhutan, including national flagship project, and electronic patient information system (e-PIS)

References

1. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2024: Revision*. United Nations, 2024, <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2024 Revision*. <https://population.un.org/wup/Download/>. Accessed 29 July 2024.
3. World Development Indicators database, World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/accessed> 03 July 2024).
4. World Health Organization. *World Health Statistics 2024*. World Health Organization, 2024, <https://www.who.int/data/gho/publications/world-health-statistics>.
5. *UHC Global Monitoring Report 2023*. World Health Organization, 2023, <https://www.who.int/publications/item/9789240066060>.
6. Latest data is from National Medical Services, Human Resources Division, Bhutan. United Nations World Population Prospects 2024 was used to calculate latest density. For prior years' and for consistency, previous progress report-identified health workforce densities are presented.
7. See for UHC SCI: WHO Global Health Observatory, accessed on 7 July 2024; See for density of medical doctors, nurses and midwives: Latest data is from National Health Workforce Account (Ministry of Health) online portal as of 10 September 2024. United Nations World Population Prospects 2024 was used to calculate latest density. For prior years' and for consistency, previous progress report-identified health workforce densities are presented.
8. National Health Workforce Account (Ministry of Health, Other databases) online portal as of 10 September 2024; National Medical Services, Human Resources Division, Bhutan. United Nations World Population Prospects 2024 was used to calculate latest density.
9. National Medical Services, Human Resources Division, Bhutan (2023).
10. Annual Report 2022-2023 Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan; Bhutan Qualifications & Professionals Certification Authority website - <https://www.bmhc.gov.bt/registered-and-recognized-institutes/>; National Strategic Direction for Nursing and Midwifery 2021-2025 (Ministry of Health, Bhutan).