

Examining the economic pressures facing healthcare workers

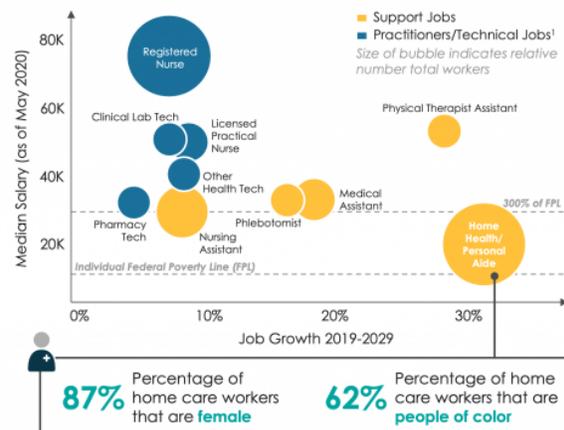
As health systems look to address the “social determinants of health”, one obvious but often overlooked place to start is with their own employees. The left side of the graphic below shows forecasted employment growth and salaries across a range of healthcare occupations. **Many of the fastest-growing healthcare jobs—including home health and personal aides, medical assistants, and phlebotomists—are among the lowest-paid.**

Case in point: home health and personal care aides are among the top [20 fastest-growing occupations](#) in the US, and median wage for these jobs is only about \$12 per hour, or around 200 percent of the federal poverty level—well below the living wage in many parts of the nation. (Note that this analysis does not include support staff who are not healthcare specific, like custodial or dietary workers, so the number of low-wage workers at health systems is likely higher.)

Among of the many struggles lower-income healthcare employees face is finding affordable housing. Using fair market rent [data](#) from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the right side of the graphic shows that **healthcare support workers, even at the 90th percentile salary level, struggle to afford rent in the majority of the 50 largest US metros areas.** In particular, home health aides in the top decile of earners can only afford rent in 14 percent of major cities. These disparities have caught the attention of lawmakers. The \$400B in President Biden’s proposed infrastructure [plan](#) devoted to home healthcare for seniors includes tactics to increase the wages and quality of life for these caregivers. But as we await policy solutions, health systems should pay careful attention to issues of housing insecurity and other structural challenges facing their workers and look to increase wages and provide targeted support to these critical team members.

Low-Pay, High-Demand Healthcare Workers Are “Housing Insecure”

Comparing Forecasted Job Growth and Median Salary Among Most Common Healthcare Occupations

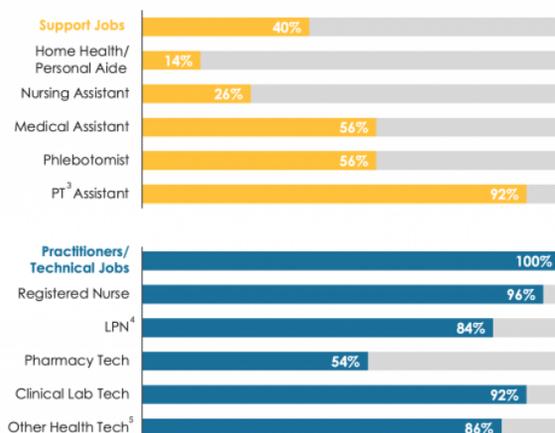


1. Excluding physicians.
2. Enough qualifying income (three times rent) for one person to afford 2021 fair market rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom home in largest 50 metro areas.
3. Physical Therapy.
4. Licensed Practical Nurse.
5. Includes Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, Health Technologists and Technicians, and all other health techs.



Percentage of Largest Metro Areas Where Renting is Affordable² For Workers in Most Common Healthcare Jobs

For workers with annual salary in the 90th percentile



Source: ¹Home: Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Dec. 2020; HUD Economic and Market Analysis Division, “FY2021 Final Fair Market Rents Documentation System,” FY 2021 Final Fair Market Rents Documentation System - Select Geography; ²May 2020 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 31 Mar. 2021; U.S. Home Care Workers: Key Facts, PHI National, Sept. 2019; Gist Healthcare analysis.