



# Healthcare Skills Trends Report

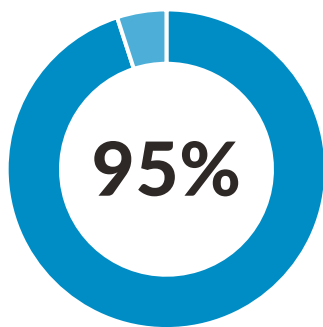
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# Introduction

## *Healthcare Is Now the Primary Engine of U.S. Job Growth*



**of job gains in January 2026 came from healthcare and social assistance.**

The U.S. labor market is increasingly being shaped by one sector above all others: healthcare. In January alone, healthcare and social assistance accounted for 95% of the 130,000 jobs added nationwide.<sup>[1]</sup>

This is not a temporary surge tied to recovery cycles, but a structural shift driven by demographic change, expanded access to care, and the growing complexity of healthcare delivery. As the U.S. population ages, demand for chronic disease management, diagnostic services, rehabilitation, and behavioral health continues to rise. At the same time, the system is managing delayed care and its downstream complications. Together, these forces are increasing both the volume and acuity of cases entering the system, expanding the need for clinical, specialty, and support staff across the care continuum.

Rising employment alone does not fully capture what is changing. The healthcare workforce is not only growing but also evolving. The skills required to deliver care, coordinate teams, and operate safely in increasingly complex clinical environments are shifting in measurable ways.

This report provides a data-driven analysis of the occupations and skills shaping the healthcare workforce today. Our findings highlight not only which roles are in demand, but how healthcare organizations are redefining the skills required to deliver care effectively.

## Methodology

### Data Source and Timeframe

This report is based on an analysis of job posting data from U.S. Healthcare sector, powered by Lightcast. Lightcast provides a hybrid dataset that combines job posting analytics with government labor market sources, creating a comprehensive view of employer demand. The dataset integrates information from more than 65,000 sources daily and includes over 4.2 million job postings. Our analysis compares two periods—January 2024 to December 2024 versus January 2025 to December 2025—to calculate year-over-year change and isolate recent trends.

### Scope and Filtering

- **Occupation-Level Analysis:** We identified the 20 occupations with the highest job posting volume over the past year, tracking changes in demand and advertised wages for each.

- **Skills-Level Analysis:** We examined the top 500 most-posted skills within healthcare roles, assessing growth in demand alongside movements in advertised compensation

*Note: Insights reflect advertised employer intent and market trends, not finalized hiring or payroll data.*

### Core Metrics

- **Change in Job Postings:** Shifts in employer demand for specific skills and occupations.
- **Change in Advertised Wages:** The changing market value and competitive intensity for skills and roles.
- **Skill Bucketing:** Skills are categorized into five thematic groups to identify broader patterns beyond individual skill trends.

## Why This Report Matters

In a landscape of ongoing transformation, reactive hiring is a liability. Without a clear, data-backed view of market direction, healthcare organizations risk falling behind in securing the talent needed to sustain care delivery and remain competitive.

### The LevelUP Perspective

At LevelUP, we believe that talent intelligence is the foundation of competitive advantage. Our goal is to equip you with the clarity and insight needed to turn workforce disruption into a sustained competitive advantage, moving from generic talent sourcing to a skills-based workforce architecture designed for hospitals and healthcare organizations.

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[1] The Washington Post, [If not for this one industry, the U.S. labor market would look a lot worse](#), February 14, 2026

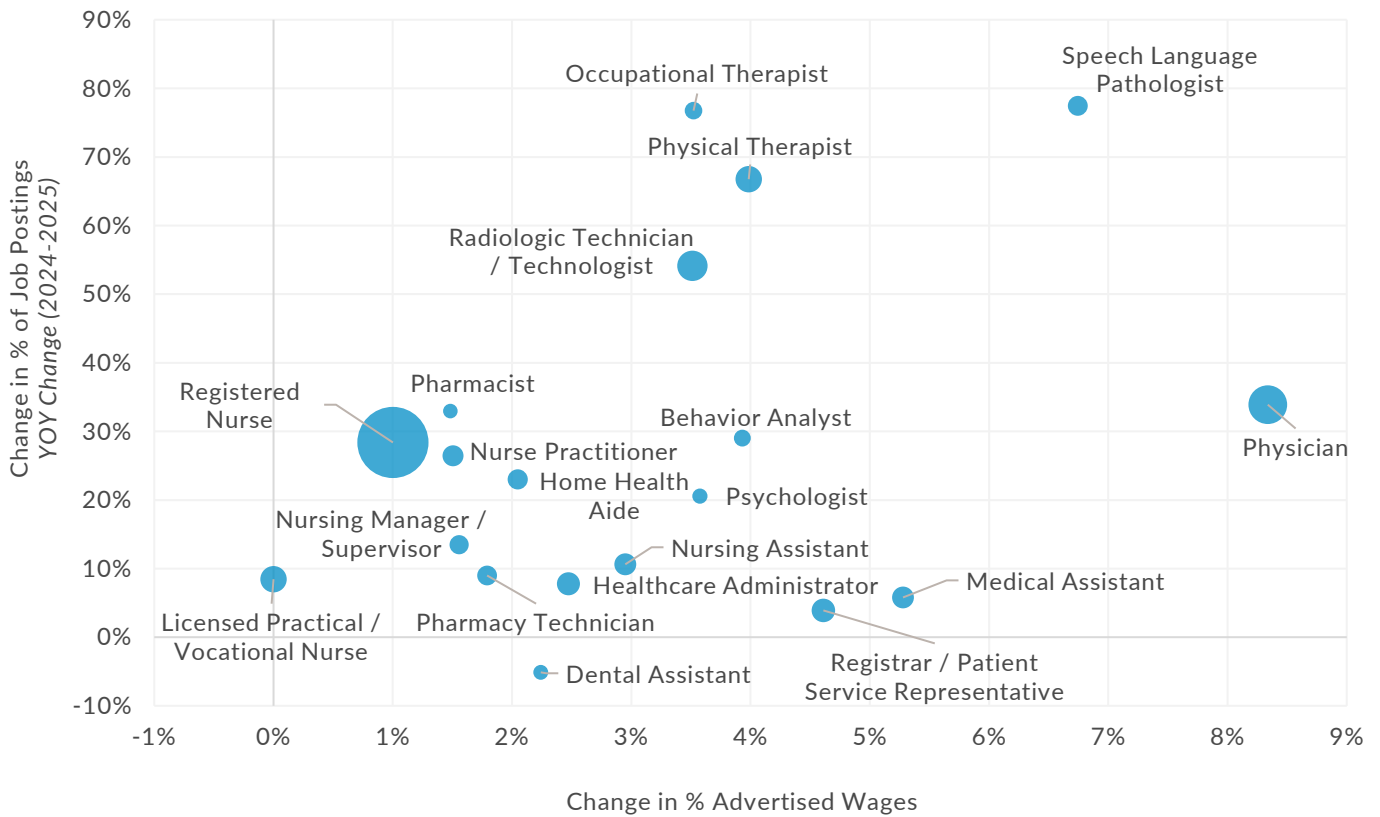


# The Roles Driving Healthcare Hiring Demand

What do the most-advertised healthcare roles tell us about where the industry is headed? Why do wages rise sharply in some occupations but barely budge in others? The answers go beyond which jobs are hard to fill. This chapter analyzes job growth and wage trends across the top 20 occupations by posting volume, revealing where competition is intensifying, where talent pipelines are structurally constrained, and where healthcare organizations are placing their bets for the future.

**The data shows a market being pulled in four distinct directions: sustaining core acute care, expanding into specialty and post-acute services, rebuilding a strained workforce infrastructure, and scaling behavioral and mental health services.**

# Hiring and Wage Trends Among the Top 20 Healthcare Roles by Posting Volume



Bubble sizes are based on the number of unique job postings, while position reflects changes in job demand and advertised wages. On average, advertised wages increased 3% while postings increased 20%.

## Core Clinical Demand Remains Persistently High

### RNs Anchor Healthcare Hiring

RNs remain the center of gravity in healthcare hiring. Strong year-over-year growth in postings (+28%) confirms that demand is here to stay, not a passing trend. However, modest wage growth (+1%) suggests that while hospitals are hiring in large numbers, reimbursement pressures limit how aggressively they can compete on pay. Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses show more modest posting growth (+9%), indicating steadier expansion in support layers compared to frontline RN demand.

## Physician Demand Drives Wage Momentum

Physician roles tell a different story. Strong posting growth (+34%) paired with the most significant wage increases (+8%) in the top 20 points to a market where supply simply cannot keep up.

Physician supply is inherently constrained by multi-year training pathways and capped residency capacity, forcing hospitals and medical groups into direct competition for a fixed pool of candidates. This makes physician recruitment one of the most expensive and strategically critical investments in healthcare.

## Specialty Care Is Experiencing True Scarcity Pressure

The highest job posting growth is occurring in outpatient care, post-acute services, and diagnostics, with Therapy and Imaging emerging as two critical pressure points. The surge in demand for Speech-Language Pathologists (+78%), Occupational Therapists (+77%), Physical Therapists (+67%), and Radiologic Technicians (+54%) reflects a shift toward population health and timely diagnosis.

Unlike general support staff, these positions cannot be backfilled by adjacent talent. They require specialized education, clinical training hours, and strict licensure, thus creating a pipeline that is relatively fixed.

## Support and Leadership Capacity Is Being Rebuilt

### Support Roles Are Expanding at a Measured Pace

Roles such as Medical Assistants, Nursing Assistants, and Patient Service Representatives show continued hiring activity. However, posting growth for many of these positions trails the broader healthcare average of roughly 20%, suggesting they are expanding more slowly than overall market hiring.

Advertised wage growth in these positions remains moderate, tracking around the broader market average of 3%, suggesting that employers are drawing from broader labor pools and accepting some level of turnover rather than investing heavily in retention. This approach creates vulnerability, especially as competition for the same workers intensifies across healthcare and other sectors.

## Nursing Leadership Demand Is Rising

The presence of Nursing Managers and Supervisors among the top 20 roles signals growing investment in frontline oversight and a healthcare system reinforcing its middle-management layer to support larger clinical teams and maintain operational continuity. This is not explosive growth, but it is visible and sustained, indicating structural reinforcement rather than temporary hiring spikes.

## Behavioral Health Demand Is Sustained

Posting growth for Behavior Analysts (+29%) and Psychologists (+21%) signals that demand for mental health services is now a structural feature of the healthcare labor market. What stands out, however, is that wage growth has remained comparatively moderate (<4%). This may reflect the fact that these roles are more concentrated in public-sector and non-profit settings, where compensation is less responsive to market pressure. It may also indicate that while training and licensure requirements still constrain supply, the workforce can scale more readily than physician supply through a wider mix of training routes and delivery models.

## Chapter Takeaways

- ✔ High-credential specialties show clear scarcity signals.
- ✔ Core clinical roles continue to anchor hiring volume.
- ✔ Support functions expand steadily within normal wage parameters.



# The Skills Transforming Healthcare

The skills data provides a different view of healthcare hiring demand than job titles alone. While job roles show titles employers are hiring, skill signals show how job requirements are changing inside those roles. Across the top 500 skills, the market shows broad growth in job postings, but only modest wage movement. On average, advertised wages increased 3% while postings increased 24%, suggesting demand is rising faster than compensation across much of the healthcare workforce.

**At the same time, the skills with the strongest growth are not random. They cluster into a few clear themes: increasing emphasis on leadership capability, more explicit credentialing requirements, sustained demand for high-acuity clinical coverage, and a stronger focus on patient-centered care.**

24%



Average Posting Growth

3%



Average Wage Growth

YOY Change (2024-2025)

# The Fastest-Growing Skills in Healthcare

## The Top 20 In-Demand Skills by YOY Posting Growth

Skill	YoY Change in Postings
Team Management	427%
Speech-Language Pathology License	126%
Postpartum Care	116%
Active Listening	110%
Medical Guideline	103%
Certificate Of Clinical Competence In Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP)	101%
Patient Comfort	99%
Medical Ventilators	98%
Safety Standards	94%
Holistic Health	92%
Pharmacy Operations	89%
Respiratory Therapy	81%
Patient-Centered Care	75%
Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)	75%
Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT)	74%
Patient Monitoring	72%
Speech-Language Pathology	71%
Individualized Education Programs (IEP)	71%
Basic Cardiac Life Support	70%
Infection	69%

### Team Management and the Move Toward Coordinated Care

The most significant outlier in job posting growth is not a clinical skill, but a management one: Team Management (+427%). This level of growth reflects how healthcare is becoming increasingly team-based, requiring coordination across clinicians, specialists, and support staff.

As patient volumes rise and cases grow more complex, the ability to delegate effectively and maintain continuity of care is becoming critical. In this environment, individual expertise is no longer sufficient on its own. Organizations are placing greater value on professionals who can operate within and help optimize a broader care system.

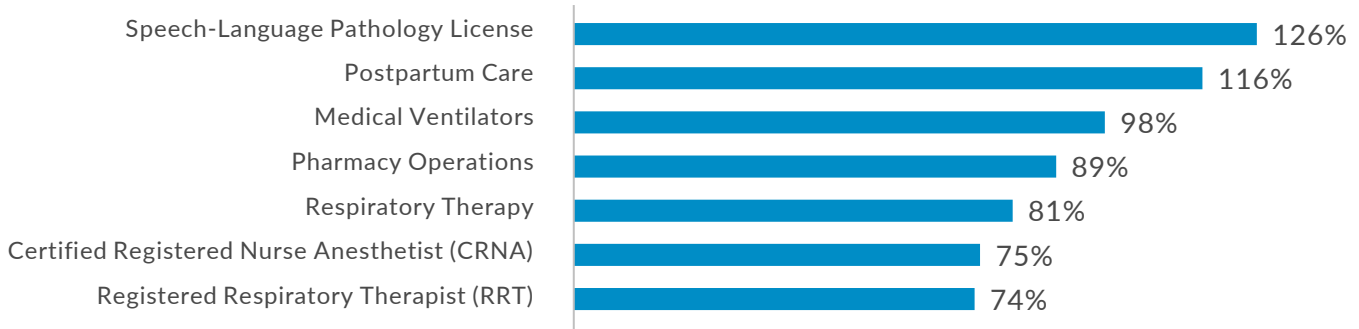
### Credentialing Requirements Are Becoming More Explicit

Both the Speech-Language Pathology License and the CCC-SLP credential show year-over-year growth above 100%, while Speech-Language Pathology also appears as a high-growth skill (+71%). A similar pattern is emerging in respiratory therapy.

This clustering indicates employers are becoming more specific in defining qualified talent. In practice, this reflects a tightening labor market, where organizations reduce ambiguity in job descriptions to screen more efficiently, limit compliance risk, and improve candidate fit.

## Specialization Is Expanding Across Clinical Care Delivery

### Specialist Skills and Credentials Leading YoY Job Posting Growth



At the clinical level, demand is accelerating for skills and credentials across highly specialized areas, including Speech-Language Pathology, Postpartum Care, Respiratory Therapy, and Pharmacy Operations.

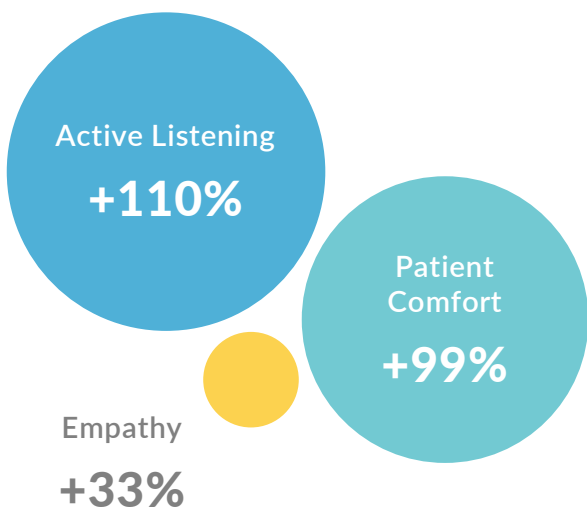
This trend reflects a move toward more precision-driven care models, where outcomes depend on targeted interventions rather than generalized treatment approaches.

As healthcare systems respond to demographic changes, rising care complexity, and increased demand for specialized services, hiring is becoming more granular.

Rather than scaling headcount alone, organizations are prioritizing depth of expertise in critical areas of care delivery.

## Human Interaction Is Becoming a Core Clinical Skill

### YOY Posting Growth in Human-Centered Healthcare Skills



Alongside clinical specialization, there is a clear rise in demand for skills traditionally viewed as “soft.” The growth of these skills in job postings signals a meaningful shift: how care is delivered is now as important as the care itself. This shift reflects broader industry priorities around:

- 1 Patient Satisfaction and Outcomes
- 2 Continuity of Care
- 3 Engagement Across the Patient Journey

As a result, interpersonal capabilities are no longer adjacent to clinical work, but becoming core to clinical performance.

## Posting Growth and Wage Changes Across the Top 500 Healthcare Skills by Job Posting Volume

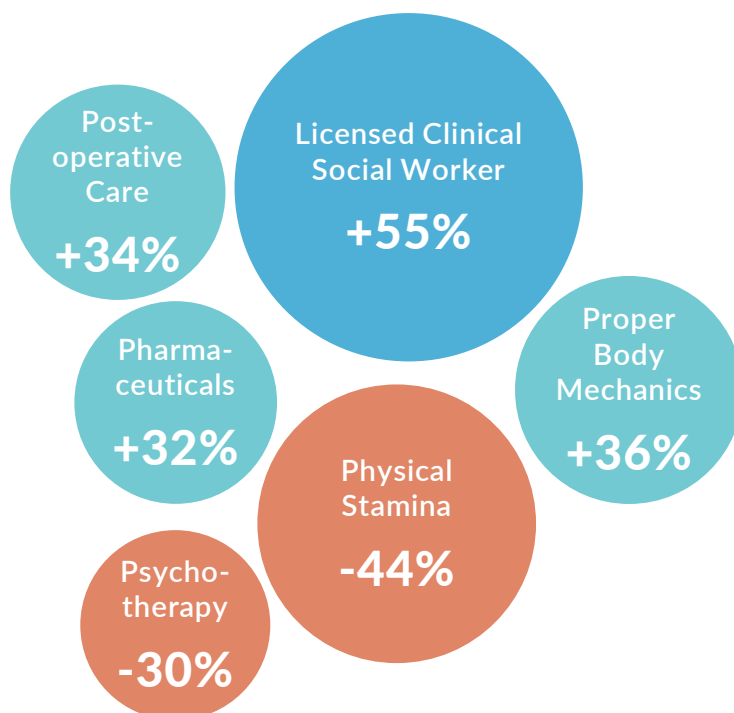


### Notable Wage Outliers

While overall wage growth across healthcare skills remains modest (averaging 4%), the outliers reveal where compensation is truly concentrating. Strong wage growth in roles requiring skills and credentials such as Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Postoperative Care, and Pharmaceuticals point to sustained demand in specialized, patient-critical areas where talent remains constrained. Proper Body Mechanics also stands out, reflecting increased focus on safety in physically demanding care environments.

Psychotherapy and physical stamina are declining in both demand and wages, year-over-year but remain among the top 500 most-posted skills, indicating they are still widely required but not driving current growth or pay pressure.

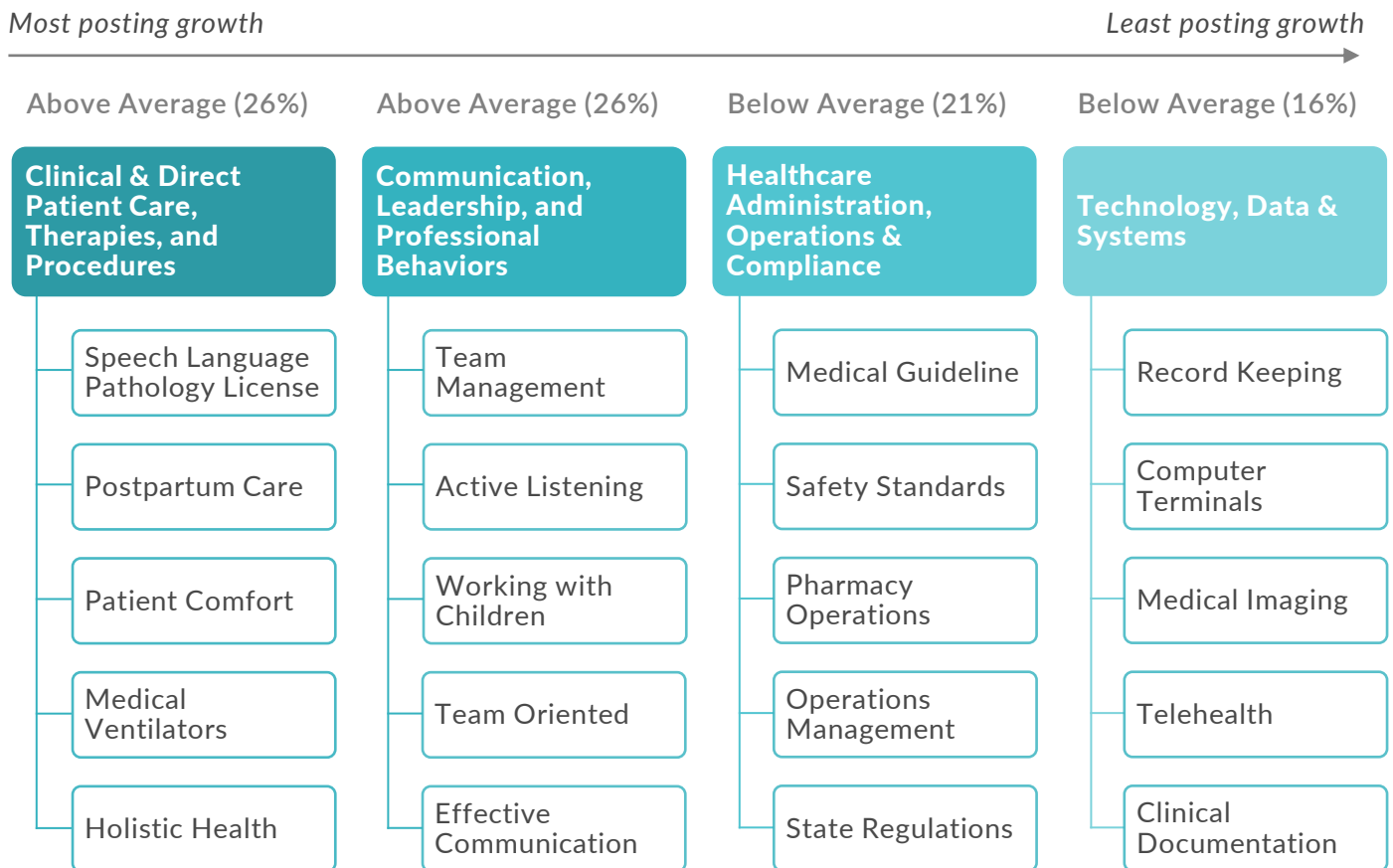
### Wage Outliers Across Healthcare Job Postings



## Skill Category Performance

When viewed by skill buckets, the pattern becomes even clearer: Posting growth is strongest in categories tied to direct care delivery and the human capabilities needed to operate effectively in patient-facing environments. Meanwhile, categories tied to systems and documentation show weaker posting growth, suggesting the strongest hiring signals are concentrated in clinical coverage and frontline execution rather than back-office enablement.

### Growth Leaders Across Skill Buckets



## Chapter Takeaway

The fastest-growing skills in healthcare point to a shift in what effective care requires: combining specialized clinical expertise, strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to operate within complex systems. For healthcare organizations, this means rethinking how roles are defined, how talent is assessed, and how teams are structured. Success will depend less on scaling headcount and more on aligning hiring strategies to the capabilities driving modern care delivery.



# Implications for Workforce Planning

The data in this report has documented a workforce under sustained pressure. Clinical specialization is accelerating, leadership capacity is being built at scale, patient-centered care has become a core requirement, and administrative functions face cost containment even as hiring volumes remain high. These trends do not affect all roles equally, and they do not call for a single response.

**Healthcare organizations are not managing one labor market, but several. Effective workforce planning requires distinguishing between them—aligning retention strategies, sourcing approaches, training investments, and operational expectations to the specific talent dynamics at play.**

# The Four Quadrants of Healthcare Talent Dynamics

	Low to Moderate Wage Growth	High Wage Growth
High Postings Growth	<p><b>VOLUME ZONE</b></p> <p><i>Example Job Titles: Registered Nurse, Radiologic Technician</i></p> <p><i>Example Skills: Team Management, Patient Monitoring</i></p> <p><b>High-volume hiring; entry-level or high-supply roles; cost-sensitive</b></p>	<p><b>SCARCITY ZONE</b></p> <p><i>Example Job Titles: Speech Language Pathologist, Physician</i></p> <p><i>Example Skills: Speech-Language Pathology, Postoperative Care</i></p> <p><b>Skills are scarce; supply lags demand; roles carry high responsibility</b></p>
Low to Moderate Postings Growth	<p><b>OPERATIONAL STABILITY ZONE</b></p> <p><i>Example Job Titles: Healthcare Administrator, Pharmacy Technician</i></p> <p><i>Example Skills: Standard Operating Procedures, Psychotherapy</i></p> <p><b>Skills being automated or absorbed; declining strategic importance</b></p>	<p><b>SELECTIVE ZONE</b></p> <p><i>Example Job Titles: Medical Assistant, Psychologist</i></p> <p><i>Example Skills: Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Proper Body Mechanics,</i></p> <p><b>Specialized roles; low turnover; premium skills; selective hiring</b></p>

## The Scarcity Zone: High Postings Growth, High Wage Growth

### Operating Reality:

These roles are difficult to fill, expensive to recruit for, and carry significant operational risk when vacant. Supply cannot keep pace with demand despite rising wages. Employers compete for a fixed pool of candidates, driving up costs and time-to-fill. Hiring managers are frustrated. Agency spend may be high as a stopgap.

### Implications for Talent Acquisition:

- Standard recruiting methods will fail for these roles
- Sourcing requires niche strategies: passive candidate outreach, credential-specific Boolean strings, targeted pipelining
- Time-to-fill metrics will lag other roles unless specialized resources are applied
- Relationship-based recruiting matters more than process efficiency here

### **Implications for Workforce Strategy**

- Vacancies in these roles impact revenue (if procedure-based) or compliance (if regulatory)
- Retention of current staff in these roles is critical—losing one creates months of replacement cost
- Succession planning should identify internal candidates for credential advancement
- Agency spend may be justified temporarily but requires management

### **The Volume Zone: High Postings Growth, Low Wage Growth**

#### **Operating Reality:**

These roles are being hired in large volumes but without corresponding wage pressure. Supply is adequate, or roles are entry-level with limited differentiation. The challenge is not finding candidates but processing high volumes efficiently while maintaining quality. Hiring manager frustration stems from slow processing rather than lack of candidates.

#### **Implications for Talent Acquisition:**

- Volume requires different tools than scarcity: screening automation, high-throughput interviewing, streamlined offer processes
- Candidate experience at scale matters; poor experience here damages employer brand
- These roles often feed future pipelines; treating them as transactional misses development opportunities

### **Implications for Workforce Strategy:**

- High turnover in these roles creates constant recruiting volume
- Onboarding efficiency and speed-to-competency are retention drivers
- These roles often interact with patients directly, making quality assurance critical despite volume
- Wage sensitivity means non-monetary retention factors, such as scheduling, culture, and advancement, matter

### **The Selective Zone: Low Postings Growth, High Wage Growth**

#### **Operating Reality:**

These roles are posted less frequently because they turn over slowly. When they do open, they are critical to fill with the right candidate. Wage growth reflects scarcity and the high cost of a bad hire. These are often highly specialized positions that shape organizational direction or clinical quality.

#### **Implications for Talent Acquisition:**

- Quality of hire outweighs speed or cost metrics
- Hiring manager partnership is intensive; understanding of clinical or technical nuance required
- Relationship-building and targeted outreach are required

### Implications for Workforce Strategy:

- These roles shape organizational culture and clinical reputation
- Succession planning is essential to avoid reactive searches
- Retention strategies for these roles differ from volume roles (autonomy, impact, compensation)
- Bad hires here create disproportionate risk (compliance, financial, cultural)

### The Operational Stability Zone: Low Postings Growth, Low Wage Growth

#### Operating Reality:

Demand for these skills is declining. Work is being automated, outsourced, or absorbed into other roles. Employers may no longer list these skills explicitly because they are expected or because the function no longer exists. Investment in these areas is minimal.

#### Implications for Talent Acquisition:

- Recruiting volume in these areas will decline over time
- Incumbents may need reskilling for other roles
- Job descriptions should reflect evolved responsibilities, not legacy tasks

#### Implications for Workforce Strategy:

- Workforce planning should anticipate role elimination or transformation
- Reskilling and upskilling programs can redeploy talent to growing areas
- Technology investment decisions should consider workforce impact
- Change management is required as roles evolve or disappear

## Summary

The healthcare workforce data reveals multiple distinct markets operating simultaneously, each with its own dynamics, challenges, and implications.

- **For some roles, the challenge is scarcity:** candidates simply do not exist in sufficient numbers regardless of price.
- **For others, the challenge is scale:** processing high volumes efficiently without sacrificing quality.
- **For still others, the challenge is planning:** anticipating when a vacancy will occur and being prepared to fill it.



“Understanding these distinctions is the foundation of effective workforce strategy. Organizations that recognize the different dynamics operating across their workforce can set appropriate expectations, allocate resources effectively, and make informed decisions about where to invest and where to accept constraints.”



**Diana Hinojosa**  
SVP of Recruitment  
LevelUP HCS

## The Path Forward: Key Takeaways

### The Workforce Is Not a Single Market

Scarcity-driven roles, high-volume positions, specialized talent, and declining functions each require different expectations, timelines, and investment strategies.

### Clinical Capacity and Credentialing Drive Competitive Pressure

Demand is concentrated in specialized, licensed, and high-acuity roles. Fixed training pipelines and regulatory requirements limit supply, making retention and proactive pipelining critical.

### Leadership and Human Skills Are Workforce Stabilizers

Hospitals and healthcare organizations are formalizing leadership and interpersonal expectations to protect quality, coordination, and workforce resilience.

### Plan for Transformation, Not Just Hiring Volume

Workforce strategy must anticipate where roles will expand, evolve, or contract, aligning reskilling, succession planning, and technology investment to long-term care delivery shifts.

## ABOUT LEVELUP

LevelUP is a talent solutions partner supporting organizations across Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO), Total Talent, and Contingent Workforce Management. We work alongside TA, HR, and procurement leaders to design and deliver talent strategies that balance structure with flexibility and insight with execution.

Our approach combines market intelligence, proven delivery models, and operational rigor to help organizations improve hiring outcomes, optimize workforce mix, and adapt to changing labor markets. Grounded in data and shaped by real-world experience, LevelUP focuses on practical progress to enable sustainable improvement without unnecessary complexity.

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