

# FACTSHEET

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## Dementia-Capable Workforce

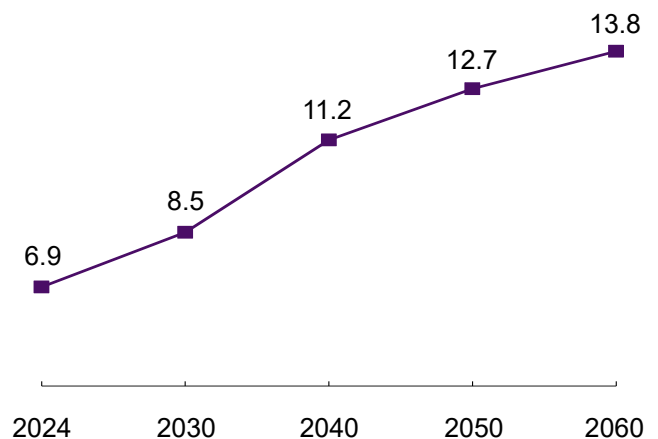
**The older American population is rapidly increasing — and so will the number of people with Alzheimer’s.**

- In 2050, there will be an estimated 82 million seniors, compared with 58 million in 2022.
- In 2022, 11% of seniors were over the age of 85. This proportion is projected to double in 2050.
- In 2024, an estimated 6.9 million Americans aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer’s. That number is projected to reach 13.8 million in 2060.

**Despite the growing older population, not enough physicians specialize in geriatrics or were even taught about Alzheimer’s.**

- Because of the extra years of training required and relatively low reimbursement rates, health care professionals are less likely to specialize in geriatrics.
- More than half of the 411 geriatric medicine fellowship positions offered in 2023 went unfilled.
- More than half of primary care physicians (PCPs) receive questions from patients age 65 and older about Alzheimer’s or other dementias at least every few days.
- However, 69% of PCPs say they learned little to nothing about dementia diagnosis and care in medical school.
- A lack of exposure during medical training means that most physicians enter the workforce with little exposure to the care needs of older adults.

**Millions of Americans Age 65 and Older with Alzheimer’s**



**The consequence is an older population whose care needs are insufficiently met. And the problem will only get worse with time.**

- In 2017, 20 states were deemed “neurology deserts” due to a shortage of neurologists. More than half of PCPs report dementia specialist shortages in their area relative to demand.
- According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) the supply of geriatricians is projected to actually decrease from 2018-2030, despite a simultaneous 50% increase in demand.
- In order to meet the needs of those with Alzheimer’s in 2050, the number of geriatricians will be need to nearly triple from 2021 levels.

### Non-physician health care providers also rarely have specialized expertise in treating older Americans.

- Less than 1% of physician assistants (PAs) specialize in geriatrics.
- Sixteen percent of nurse practitioners have special expertise in gerontological care; but only 9% have expertise in geriatric care with a primary care focus.
- Even though nearly three-quarters of social workers serve adults aged 55 and older, only 4% of them have formal geriatrics certifications.

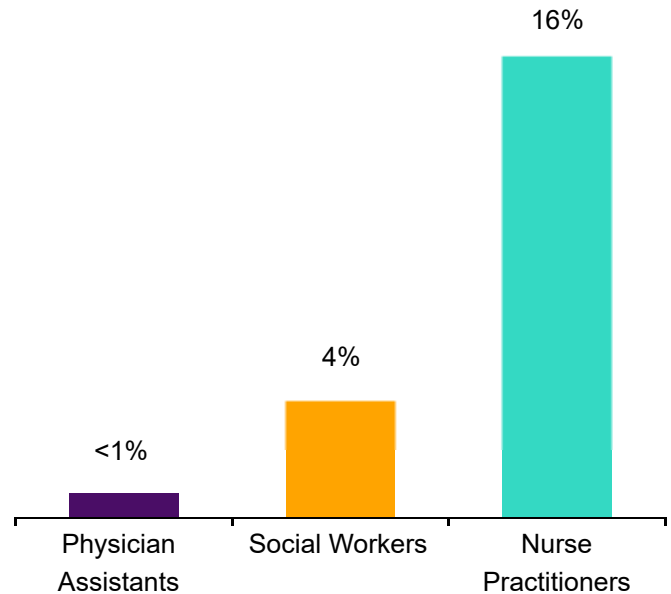
### The workforce shortage also includes direct care workers — those who support individuals with dementia with daily activities and who are critical to maintaining their quality of life.

- Based on 2020 estimates, a 32.6% increase in the number of home health and personal care aides are needed to meet 2030 demand.
- Nursing homes experienced the worst job losses of any health care sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 13% of, or 200,000, nursing home jobs lost.

#### What Can States Do?

- Incorporate dementia and geriatrics into workforce policies and commissions
- Support financial incentives — such as loan forgiveness and grant programs — to encourage students and recent graduates to enter neurological and geriatric specialties.
- Develop career growth opportunities and educational assistance for direct care workers that would enhance the education pipeline, improve recruitment and retention, and maximize the existing workforce.

### Percentage of Professionals Specializing in Geriatrics by Occupation



### These shortages will have a profound impact on individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

- A 2017 study concluded that between 2020 and 2040, approximately 2.1 million individuals with mild cognitive impairment were likely to develop dementia while on waiting lists for treatment.
- The main cause of this tremendous projected backlog is the limited number of dementia specialists in the workforce.
- In 2023, more than half of nursing home providers limited new admissions due to staffing shortages, and more than two-thirds were concerned staffing shortages might lead to permanent closures.
- Shortages in direct care workers will place an even bigger burden on family and friends — unpaid caregivers who already provided care valued at \$346.6 billion in 2023.