



Comhairle na  
nDochtúirí Leighis  
Medical Council

# **Doctors Clinically Active Abroad Only and Doctors not Clinically Active in 2024**

**Supplementary Workforce Report**



# The role of the Medical Council

The [Medical Council](#) is the regulator of doctors in Ireland and maintains the Register of Medical Practitioners - the register of all doctors who can practise medicine in Ireland. The Medical Council also sets the standards for medical education and training in Ireland. It oversees lifelong learning and skills development throughout doctors' professional careers through its professional competence requirements. It is charged with promoting good medical practice. The Medical Council is also where the public may make a complaint against a doctor.

You can find out more about the Medical Council's work by visiting [www.medicalcouncil.ie](http://www.medicalcouncil.ie).

## Background

Further to data released in the Medical Council's 2024 Medical Workforce Intelligence Report, we are pleased to publish this research, which is the first in a series of shorter bulletin-style reports prepared by the Medical Council's Research and Regulatory Data Insights team.

The purpose of these bulletins is to spotlight cohorts of doctors, including those working in Ireland and abroad, as well as doctors working in different specialties in Ireland. Through these shorter reports, we aim to highlight opportunities, trends, and challenges within the medical workforce.

This bulletin was prepared by the Medical Council's Research and Regulatory Data Insights team in October 2025.

## Introduction

In 2024, 26,591 doctors retained their place on the Medical Council Register. This bulletin provides a description of two cohorts of doctors who retained their place on the Register but were not clinically active in Ireland in 2024:

- Doctors who were clinically active outside the Republic of Ireland only (abroad only)
- Doctors who were not clinically active at all (neither in the Republic of Ireland or abroad)

Some similarities and differences between these two groups can be observed from the data reported here. For example, in terms of age composition, doctors who were clinically active outside of Ireland tended to be only slightly younger than those not clinically active at all, with the latter group having most doctors either in the younger or older age brackets.

In relation to gender and medical qualifications, most clinically active doctors abroad were male and obtained their qualification internationally, whereas in the case of non-clinically active doctors, most were female and had Irish qualifications. In terms of the Divisions of the Register, both cohorts were similar, with more than 60% registered on the General Division, followed by around a third on the Specialist Division.

# Doctors Clinically Active Abroad Only

In 2024, there were 4,160 doctors who were clinically active abroad only. The mean age of this group was 43.7 years (SD = 12.0 years) and a slight majority were between 35 and 44 years of age ( $n = 1,184$ , 28.5%).

Just over two thirds were male ( $n = 2,819$ , 67.8%), and two thirds were registered on the General Division ( $n = 2,781$ , 66.9%). Most doctors had obtained their basic medical qualification abroad ( $n = 2,408$ , 57.9%), and of these 38.8% ( $n = 934$ ) had graduated in Pakistan.

Table 1 offers more detailed information on demographics and registration division.

Table 1. Clinically Active Doctors Abroad Only

| Doctors Clinically Active Abroad Only ( $n = 4,160$ ) |       |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|
| Age                                                   | Mean  | SD   |
|                                                       | 43.7  | 12.0 |
| Age group                                             | n     | %    |
| 34 and younger                                        | 1,137 | 27.3 |
| 35 to 44                                              | 1,184 | 28.5 |
| 45 to 54                                              | 997   | 24.0 |
| 55 and older                                          | 842   | 20.2 |
| Gender                                                | n     | %    |
| Male                                                  | 2,819 | 67.8 |
| Female                                                | 1,341 | 32.2 |
| Division                                              | n     | %    |
| Trainee Specialist                                    | 42    | 1.0  |
| Supervised                                            | 3     | 0.1  |
| General                                               | 2,781 | 66.9 |
| Specialist                                            | 1,334 | 32.1 |
| BMQ                                                   | n     | %    |
| Irish                                                 | 796   | 19.1 |
| EU or UK                                              | 956   | 23.0 |
| International                                         | 2,408 | 57.9 |
| Top 3 Countries of International Graduates            | n     | %    |
| Pakistan                                              | 934   | 38.8 |
| Sudan                                                 | 483   | 20.1 |
| South Africa                                          | 333   | 13.8 |

In relation to medical disciplines, most doctors were practising in the area of medicine ( $n = 1,049$ , 25.9%), surgery ( $n = 687$ , 16.9%) and general practice ( $n = 630$ , 15.5%) (see Table 2).

*Table 2. Medical Discipline of Clinically Active Doctors Abroad Only*

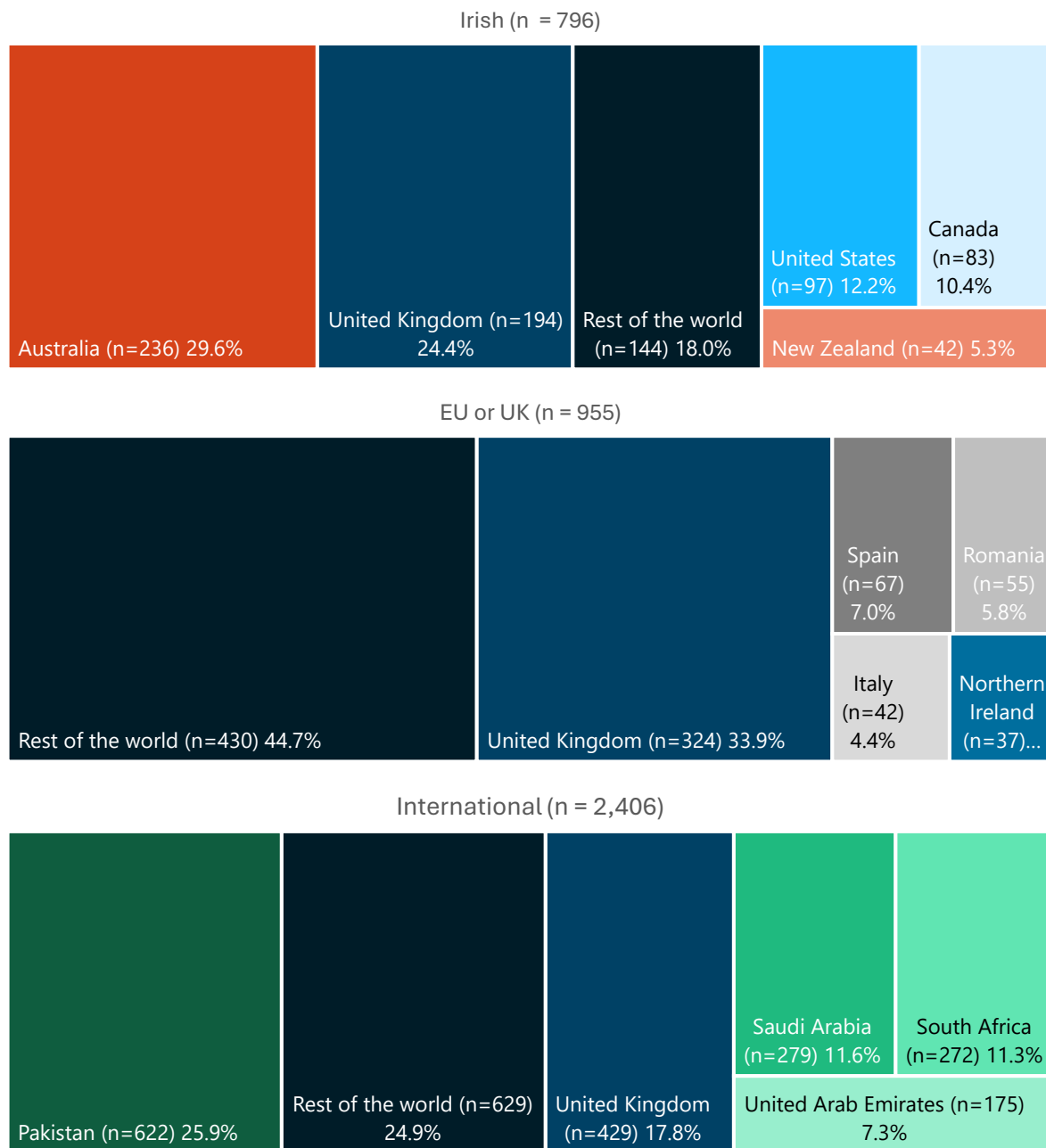
| Medical Discipline           | N            | %            |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Anaesthesiology              | 354          | 8.7          |
| Emergency Medicine           | 323          | 8.0          |
| General Practice             | 630          | 15.5         |
| Medicine                     | 1,049        | 25.9         |
| Obstetrics and Gynaecology   | 152          | 3.7          |
| Occupational Medicine        | 27           | 0.7          |
| Ophthalmology                | 41           | 1.0          |
| Paediatrics                  | 225          | 5.5          |
| Pathology                    | 79           | 1.9          |
| Psychiatry                   | 198          | 4.9          |
| Public Health Medicine       | 20           | 0.5          |
| Radiology                    | 262          | 6.5          |
| Sports and Exercise Medicine | 10           | 0.2          |
| Surgery                      | 687          | 16.9         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>4,057</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

*Note.* 103 doctors declared a scope of practice that was limited to urgent care only, aesthetics only, gynaecology only or medicolegal only. These doctors have not been included in this table.

For the first time in 2024, doctors who reported working abroad only were asked to report also the country in which they practise medicine. This information was then cross tabulated with qualification categories. This refers to doctors' basic medical qualification, and is grouped as doctors with an Irish qualification, doctors with a qualification from either the EU or UK, or doctors with a qualification from outside of Ireland, the EU or the UK (international). For the purposes of reporting, doctors practising in Northern Ireland are counted separately from those practising in the rest of the United Kingdom. Results are shown in Figure 1.

For over 50% of doctors with an Irish qualification, the most common destinations where they worked were either Australia ( $n = 236$ , 29.6%) or the United Kingdom ( $n = 194$ , 24.4%). A third of doctors with qualifications from the EU or UK ( $n = 324$ , 33.9%) also worked in the United Kingdom. For doctors with international qualifications, slightly over a quarter worked in Pakistan ( $n = 622$ , 25.9%) and a further 17.8% ( $n = 429$ ) worked in the United Kingdom.

Figure 1. Country of Practice by Qualification Category



Note. Data on country of practice was missing for one EU or UK Graduate and two International Graduates.

# Doctors Not Clinically Active

In 2024, there were 1,468 doctors who retained their registration but reported not practising medicine ('doctors not clinically active')<sup>1</sup>. Table 2 shows demographic and registration division details on this cohort.

The mean age of this cohort was 45.2 years (SD = 15.8 years), and the majority were either in the younger group of 34 and younger ( $n = 509$ , 34.7%) or the older group of 55 and older ( $n = 433$ , 29.5%).

There was a majority of females ( $n = 898$ , 61.2%), and most doctors were registered on the General Division ( $n = 902$ , 61.4%).

Almost half of these doctors obtained their qualification in Ireland ( $n = 713$ , 48.6%), and from those who had an international qualification ( $n = 552$ , 37.6%), the majority obtained their primary medical degree in Pakistan ( $n = 239$ , 43.4%).

Table 2. Doctors not Clinically Active

| Clinically Active Doctors (n = 1,468 )     |      |      |
|--------------------------------------------|------|------|
| Age                                        | Mean | SD   |
|                                            | 45.2 | 15.8 |
| Age group                                  | n    | %    |
| 34 and younger                             | 509  | 34.7 |
| 35 to 44                                   | 378  | 25.7 |
| 45 to 54                                   | 148  | 10.1 |
| 55 and older                               | 433  | 29.5 |
| Gender                                     | n    | %    |
| Male                                       | 570  | 38.8 |
| Female                                     | 898  | 61.2 |
| Division                                   | n    | %    |
| Trainee Specialist                         | 106  | 7.2  |
| Supervised                                 | 5    | 0.3  |
| General                                    | 902  | 61.4 |
| Specialist                                 | 455  | 31.0 |
| BMQ                                        | n    | %    |
| Irish                                      | 713  | 48.6 |
| EU or UK                                   | 203  | 13.8 |
| International                              | 552  | 37.6 |
| Top 3 Countries of International Graduates | n    | %    |
| Pakistan                                   | 239  | 43.4 |
| Sudan                                      | 166  | 30.1 |
| India                                      | 23   | 4.2  |

<sup>1</sup> Practising status was missing for one doctor within our retention cohort.

When retaining their registration, all doctors are asked to report their current *or* most recent area of practice of medicine.

For this cohort not currently practising, in relation to medical disciplines, most doctors reported the area of medicine ( $n = 386$ , 27.1%), general practice ( $n = 321$ , 22.6%) and surgery ( $n = 145$ , 10.2%) (see Table 4).

*Table 4. Most Recent Medical Discipline of Doctors not Clinically Active*

| Medical Discipline           | N            | %            |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Anaesthesiology              | 69           | 4.9          |
| Emergency Medicine           | 94           | 6.6          |
| General Practice             | 321          | 22.6         |
| Medicine                     | 386          | 27.1         |
| Obstetrics and Gynaecology   | 62           | 4.4          |
| Occupational Medicine        | 11           | 0.8          |
| Ophthalmology                | 17           | 1.2          |
| Paediatrics                  | 69           | 4.9          |
| Pathology                    | 41           | 2.9          |
| Psychiatry                   | 114          | 8.0          |
| Public Health Medicine       | 52           | 3.7          |
| Radiology                    | 37           | 2.6          |
| Sports and Exercise Medicine | 4            | 0.3          |
| Surgery                      | 145          | 10.2         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>1,422</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

*Note.* 46 doctors declared a previous scope of practice that was limited to urgent care only, aesthetics only, gynaecology only or medicolegal only. These doctors have not been included in this table.

## Conclusion

This supplementary report highlights that not all doctors retaining their place on the Register are actively practising medicine in the Republic of Ireland.

In 2024, 26,591 doctors retained their place on the Register and 21.2% ( $n = 5,628$ ) of these doctors were either practising medicine abroad only ( $n = 4,160$ ) or not actively practising medicine ( $n = 1,468$ )<sup>2</sup>.

Of note, 20,962 (78.8%) were clinically active within the Republic of Ireland, all or some of the time. This cohort is explored in detail within our main Medical Workforce Intelligence report.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Practising status was missing for one doctor within our retention cohort.

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/news-and-publications/reports/medical-workforce-intelligence-report-2024.pdf>



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