

# Businesses in human health and social work activities sector

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in March 2025  
Planned article update: March 2026*

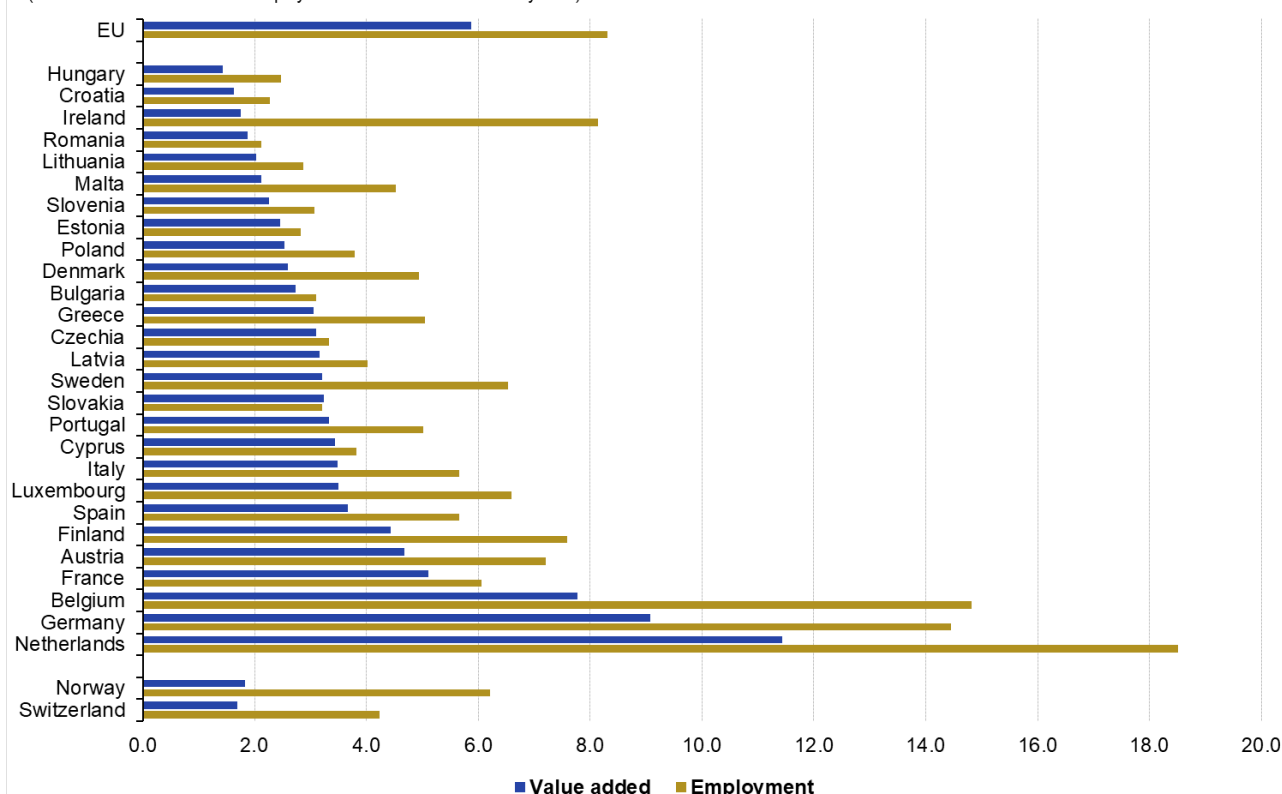
## Highlights

**" 13.3 million persons, representing 8.3% of the workforce in the EU's business economy, were employed in 2022 in businesses in the human health and social work activities sector. "**

**" In 2022, businesses in the human health and social work activities sector generated 5.9% of the EU's value added (€ 590 billion). "**

## Relative importance of Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q; only market activities), EU, 2022

(% share of value added and employment in the business economy total)



Ranked on value added

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs\_oww\_act)

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## Relative importance of Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q; only market activities), EU, 2022 (% share of value added and employment in the business economy total) Source: Eurostat (sbs\_oww\_act)

This article presents an overview of statistics on businesses in the [European Union's \(EU\)](#) human health and social work activities sector (hereafter referred to as health and social work), as covered by [NACE Rev. 2](#) Section Q. It belongs to a [set of statistical articles](#) on 'Business economy by sector'.

Since the entry into force of the European Business Statistics (EBS) Regulation, the service coverage for [structural business statistics \(SBS\)](#) data includes the human health and social services sector. Additional information on health is also available from other data collections such as [health statistics](#).

## Structural profile

In 2022, there were 2.3 million [enterprises](#) classified within the [EU](#)'s human health and social work activities sector (Section Q), which represented 7.3% of all enterprises active in the [business economy](#) (Sections B to N and P to R, as well as Divisions S95 and S96). These enterprises [employed](#) 13.3 million persons, generating € 590.4 [billion](#) in [value added](#) and accumulating a [net turnover](#) of € 910.6 billion. The EU's human health and social work activities sector contributed 8.3% of all persons employed in the business economy in 2022, and accounted for 5.9% of the value added.

SBS only cover the activities of market producers. Contrary to most activities covered by SBS, non-market producers represent a significant part of the human health and social work activities sector (and also, for example, the education sector). It should be noted that the data in this article only cover the market producers, meaning those acting under market conditions, active in this sector.

## Key indicators: Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022

	Value
<b>Main indicators</b>	
Number of enterprises (number)	2 342 535
Number of persons employed (number)	13 319 880
Net turnover (€ million)	910 579
Purchases of goods and services (€ million)	350 379
Employee benefits expense (€ million)	427 787
Value added (€ million)	590 449
Gross operating surplus (€ million)	162 671
<b>Share in business economy total (%)</b>	
Number of enterprises	7.3
Number of persons employed	8.3
Value added	5.9
<b>Derived indicators</b>	
Apparent labour productivity (thousand € per head)	44.3
Employee benefits expense (thousand € per head)	38.1
Wage-adjusted labour productivity (%)	116.5
Gross operative rate (%)	17.9

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs\_oww\_act)



**Table 1: Key indicators: Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022** Source: Eurostat (sbs\_oww\_act)

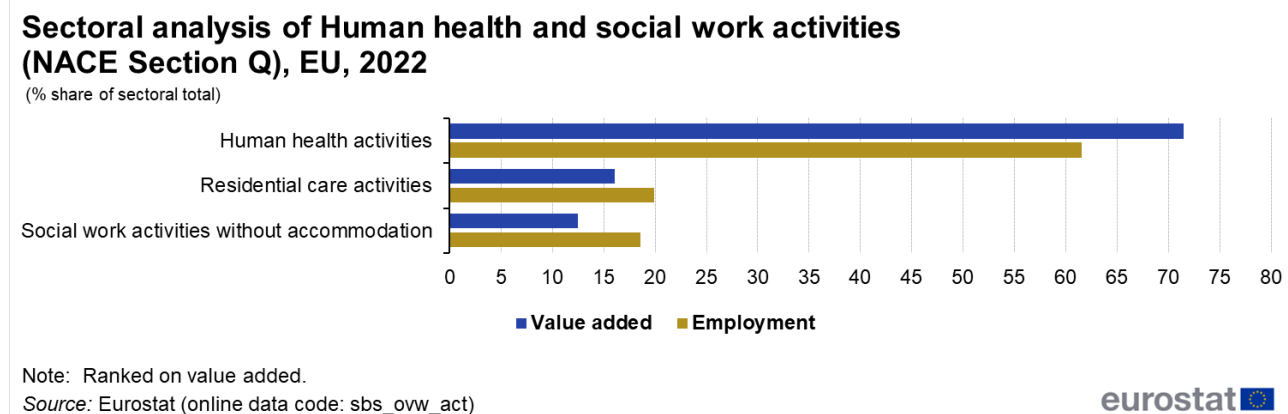
The [apparent labour productivity](#) recorded in the human health and social work activities sector in 2022 was € 44 300 per person employed, indicating a difference of € 18 400 from the business economy average of € 62 700 per employee. The [average employee benefits expense](#) within the human health and social work activities sector stood at € 38 100 per employee, quite close to the business economy average of € 41 100 per employee. By combining these 2 ratios into [wage-adjusted labour productivity ratio](#), it shows the extent to which value added per person employed covers average personnel costs per employee. In 2022, the human health and social work activities sector recorded a wage-adjusted labor productivity ratio of 116.5%, below the average for the EU's total business economy of 152.6%. On the other hand, the [gross operating rate](#), representing the share of [turnover](#) remaining after covering for purchased goods and services as well as employee benefits expense (commonly known as the [gross operating surplus](#)) stood at 17.9% for the EU's human health and social work activities sector in 2022. This figure surpassed the 11.7% average of gross operating rate for the business economy. These results reflect the high labour intensity in the health and social work sector.

## Sectoral analysis

The human health and social work activities sector is organised into 3 NACE divisions: human health activities (Division 86), residential care activities (Division 87) and social work activities without accommodation (Division 88). As mentioned in the introduction, SBS cover only the market producers in the health and social work sector, i.e. those acting under market conditions.

In 2022, more than two-thirds of the EU's value added in the human health and social work activities sector were recorded in the subsector of human health activities (Division 86). This covers hospital activities, medical and dental practices activities and other human health activities, like speech therapy, homeopathy or acupuncture, among others — see Figure 1. Among the 3 subsectors, Division 86 also employed the highest number of persons,

more than half of the whole sector of human health and social work activities.



**Figure 1: Sectoral analysis of Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022 (% share of sectoral total) Source: Eurostat (sbs\_ovw\_act)**

In 2022, human health activities comprised 2.1 million enterprises and a workforce of 8.2 million persons, contributing to the EU's business economy with a value added of € 422.0 billion. This positioned the division of human health activities (only market activities) in fifth place in terms of employment and value added among all the other NACE subsectors within the business economy.

The subsector of residential care activities (Division 87) recorded the least number of enterprises among the 3 subsectors, 34 800. Despite the low number of enterprises, it employed 2.6 million persons, as seen in Table 2a. This division includes the provision of residential care combined with nursing, personal care services for elderly and disabled and for people with intellectual disability, mental health and substance abuse as well as people who are unable to fully care for themselves or who do not desire to live independently. It was followed by the subsector of social work activities without accommodation (Division 88), which includes visiting, day-care and similar activities for the elderly or for disabled adults and activities of day nurseries for pupils, including day-care activities for disabled children. In this subsector (only market activities), there were 1 844 000 enterprises active in 2022, which employed 2.5 million people and generated € 73.7 million in value added (an increase of 9.2% from 2021 when the generated value added stood at € 67.5 million).

**Sectoral analysis of key indicators: Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022**

	Number of enterprises (thousands)	Number of persons employed	Net turnover	Value added (€ million)	Employee benefits expense
<b>Human health and social work activities</b>	<b>2 342.5</b>	<b>13 319.9</b>	<b>910 579.3</b>	<b>590 449.0</b>	<b>427 787.4</b>
Human health activities	2 123.3	8 193.3	677 590.9	421 998.6	268 573.1
Residential care activities	34.8	2 647.4	135 716.2	94 753.0	91 278.7
Social work activities without accommodation	184.4	2 479.2	97 272.2	73 697.5	67 935.6

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs\_ovw\_act)

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**Table 2a: Sectoral analysis of key indicators: Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022 Source: Eurostat (sbs\_ovw\_act)**

## Sectoral analysis of key indicators: Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022

	Apparent labour productivity (thousand € per head)	Average employee benefits expense	Wage-adjusted labour productivity (%)	Gross operative rate
<b>Human health and social work activities</b>	44.3	38.1	116.5	17.9
Human health activities	51.5	42.9	120.1	22.6
Residential care activities	35.8	34.8	103.0	2.6
Social work activities without accommodation	29.7	28.9	102.8	5.9

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs\_ovw\_act)



**Table 2b: Sectoral analysis of key indicators: Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022 Source: Eurostat (sbs\_ovw\_act)**

In 2022, apparent labour productivity within the EU's health and social work subsectors ranged from € 29 700 per person employed for social work activities (without accommodation) to € 51 500 for human health activities. The subsector of human health activities also recorded the highest average employee benefits expense among the EU's human health and social work activities sector, at € 42 900 per employee — see Table 2b.

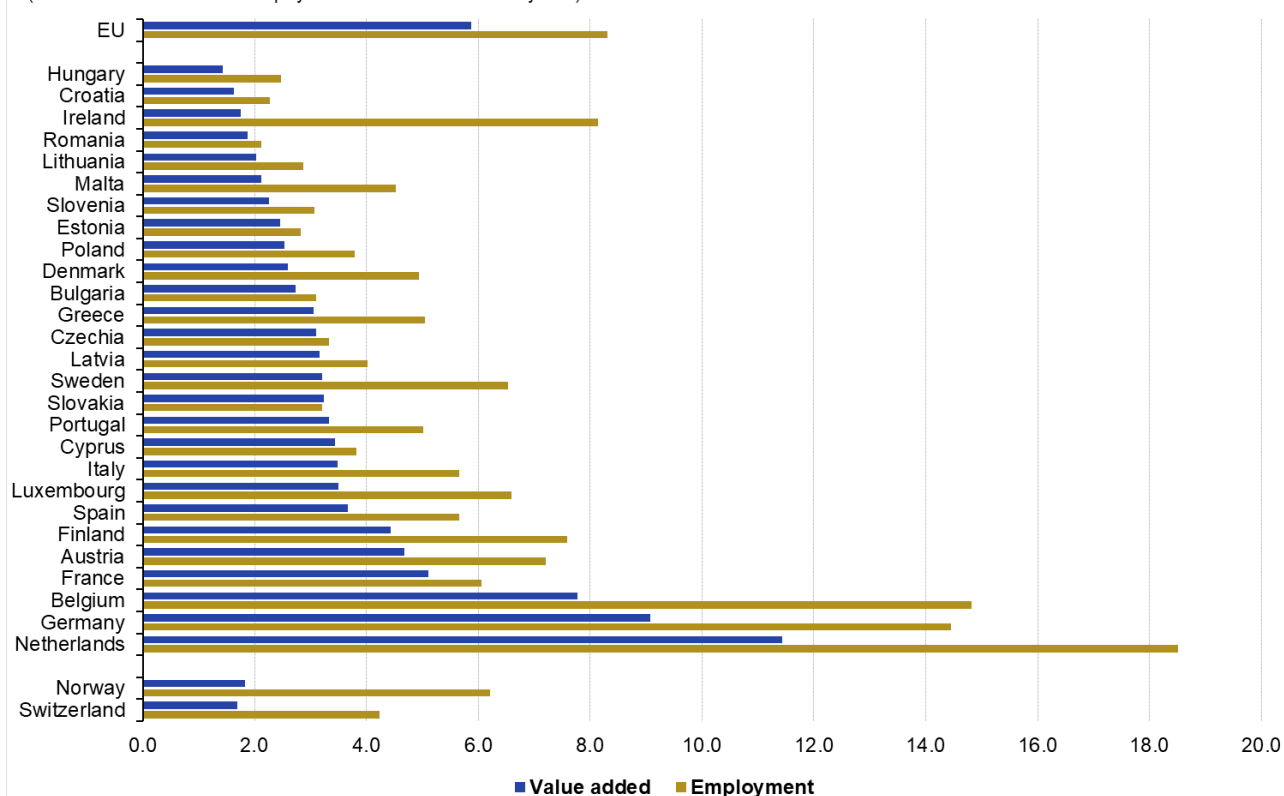
## Country overview

Across EU countries the SBS data on the human health and social work activities sector showed varying contributions to the value added of the business economy, with an average of 5.9% at the EU level. At the higher end of the scale, it stood at 11.4% in the Netherlands, 9.1% in Germany and 7.8% in Belgium. Hungary (1.4%), Croatia (1.6%), and Ireland (1.7%) were at the lower end of the scale.

In terms of employment, the sector's contribution to the business economy stood at an average of 8.3% in the EU. This varied from 2.1% in Romania, 2.3% in Croatia and 2.5% in Hungary to 14.4% in Germany and 14.8% in Belgium, and has reached the highest share at 18.5% in the Netherlands. Again, it is relevant in this context that SBS cover only market activities, therefore, differences in the structure and organisation of the health and social work sector in the countries can impact on the relative importance reported above.

## Relative importance of Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q; only market activities), EU, 2022

(% share of value added and employment in the business economy total)



Ranked on value added

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs\_oww\_act)

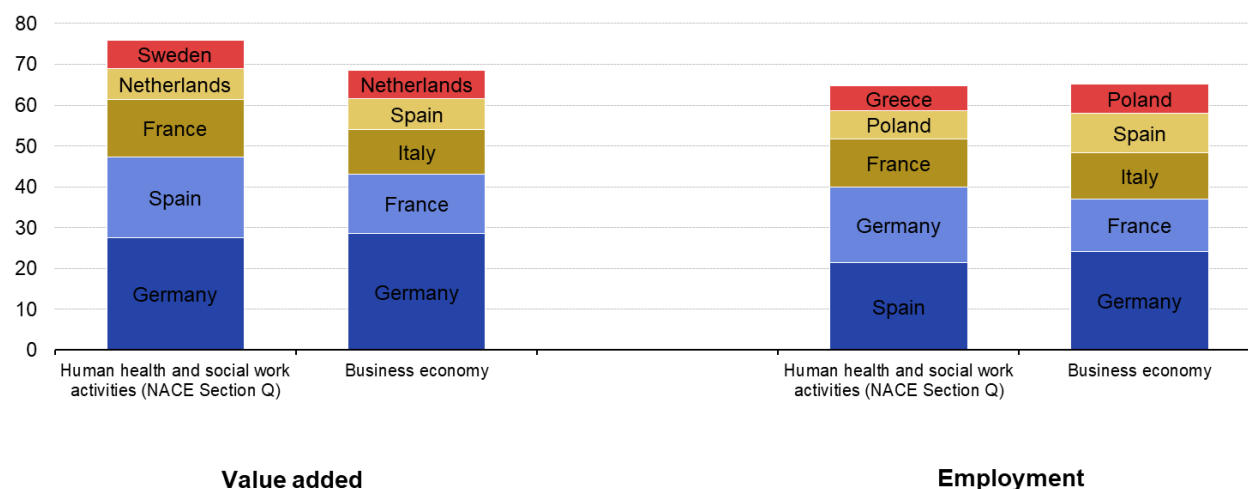
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**Figure 2: Relative importance of Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q; only market activities), EU, 2022 (% share of value added and employment in the business economy total) Source: Eurostat (sbs\_oww\_act)**

In terms of the contribution made by the 5 largest EU countries, Germany had the highest contribution in both value added and employment terms in 2022, accounting for 44.2% of the EU valued added and 42.0% of the EU employment of market activities in the human health and social work activities sector in 2022. Both values significantly surpassed the shares of value added and employment within the EU's business economy as a whole. With a much lower value than Germany, the second-highest share of value added in the human health and social work activities sector (only market activities) was recorded by the Netherlands, while France placed third. The contribution of the top 5 countries in the human health and social work activities sector accounted for 81.7% of the value added and 77.6% of employment — see Figure 3.

## Concentration of value added and employment, Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022

(cumulative share of the five principal Member States as a % of the EU total)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs\_ovw\_act)

eurostat

**Figure 3: Concentration of value added and employment, Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022 (cumulative share of the five principal EU countries as a % of the EU total) Source: Eurostat (sbs\_ovw\_act)**

### Largest and most specialised Member States in Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022

	Highest value added	(% share of EU value added)	Most specialised	(% share of the business economy value added)
<b>Human health and social work activities</b>	Germany	44.2	Netherlands	11.4
Human health activities	Germany	31.5	Germany	6.5
Residential care activities	Germany	6.8	Netherlands	3.2
Social work activities without accommodation	Germany	5.9	Netherlands	2.0

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs\_ovw\_act)

eurostat

**Table 3: Largest and most specialised EU countries in Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022 Source: Eurostat (sbs\_ovw\_act)**

In value added terms, Germany was the largest EU country in all 3 subsectors in 2022 (see Table 3), the highest share being in human health activities (31.5% of the EU value added). As seen in Table 4, in absolute terms, Germany recorded the highest level of value added (€ 261.2 billion) and of turnover (€ 374.1 billion) within the human health and social work activities sector in 2022. Germany also employed the highest number of persons within the human health and social work activities sector in 2022 (5.6 million persons) and was followed by the Netherlands (1.6 million persons), France (1.2 million persons) and Italy (1.0 million persons).

Key indicators: Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022

	Number of enterprises	Number of persons employed	Turnover	Value added	Employee benefits expense	Gross investment in tangible non-current assets
	(thousands)				(€ million)	
<b>EU</b>	<b>2 342.5</b>	<b>13 319.9</b>	<b>910 579.3</b>	<b>590 449.0</b>	<b>427 787.4</b>	<b>51 333.9</b>
Belgium	54.4	575.3	48 266.3	30 100.7	25 055.8	5 292.8
Bulgaria	14.3	67.1	2 312.7	1 356.3	867.9	97.8
Czechia	26.7	140.7	7 930.9	4 725.2	2 740.1	434.1
Denmark	20.7	109.5	11 979.7	5 882.4	4 435.7	110.3
Germany	242.0	5 593.2	374 051.7	261 162.5	208 202.0	25 295.7
Estonia	2.6	15.3	874.9	517.0	397.6	37.1
Ireland	23.5	186.8	11 725.4	7 408.4	5 564.0	566.1
Greece	63.0	171.8	5 485.9	2 775.7	1 371.8	394.9
Spain	179.9	880.1	48 441.6	28 394.4	19 101.5	2 671.5
France	560.1	1 240.6	115 267.8	74 527.8	42 340.0	4 162.5
Croatia	6.9	28.6	1 085.8	589.4	363.5	22.4
Italy	349.3	1 031.3	67 314.1	37 976.1	17 869.5	2 384.5
Cyprus	6.0	14.5	980.4	612.6	269.7	42.8
Latvia	6.2	27.6	822.8	630.4	436.6	70.6
Lithuania	5.4	35.7	1 268.4	790.8	564.3	102.2
Luxembourg	2.4	26.0	2 477.3	1 844.0	1 231.4	80.7
Hungary	42.7	83.1	2 590.2	1 377.4	1 004.5	137.1
Malta	1.5	10.7	438.5	273.7	181.2	10.7
Netherlands	221.2	1 585.5	116 626.4	78 512.2	62 882.7	5 691.8
Austria	74.4	270.5	20 681.6	13 396.5	7 394.4	614.6
Poland	220.0	435.6	23 003.2	9 678.5	4 942.1	922.7
Portugal	116.0	218.7	9 864.3	4 725.2	2 510.5	846.4
Romania	25.1	99.4	4 810.0	2 511.8	1 113.1	409.8
Slovenia	6.3	24.0	1 327.9	825.3	526.9	97.4
Slovakia	10.3	58.4	3 084.5	1 883.1	1 245.6	167.1
Finland	26.4	134.0	10 617.1	5 950.1	4 819.6	203.1
Sweden	35.1	255.7	17 250.2	12 021.7	10 355.4	467.4
Norway	37.3	121.3	11 947.6	7 779.7	5 170.1	279.8
Switzerland	3.4	150.6	9 987.0	7 702.7	:	1 054.3

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Source: Eurostat (online data code: sbs\_ovw\_act)

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**Table 4: Key indicators: Human health and social work activities (NACE Section Q), EU, 2022** Source: Eurostat (sbs\_ovw\_act)

## Source data for tables and graphs

- [Businesses in the human health and social work activities sector - 2022 data](#)

## Data sources and availability

### Coverage

Human health and social work activities sector includes activities of short- or long-term hospitals, general or specialty medical, surgical, psychiatric and substance abuse hospitals, sanatoria, preventoria, medical nursing homes, asylums, mental hospital institutions, rehabilitation centers, leprosaria and other human health institutions which have accommodation facilities and which engage in providing diagnostic and medical treatment to patients with any of a wide variety of medical conditions. It also includes medical consultation and treatment in the field of general and specialised medicine by general practitioners and medical specialists and surgeons. It includes dental practice activities of a general or specialised nature and orthodontic activities. Additionally, it includes activities for human health not performed by hospitals or by practicing medical doctors but by paramedical practitioners legally recognised to treat patients.

SBS only cover the activities of market producers. Contrary to most activities covered by SBS, non-market producers represent a significant part of the human health and social work activities sector (and also, for example, the education sector). It should be noted that the data in this article only cover the market producers, meaning those acting under market conditions, active in this sector.

The activities covered by human health and social work activities sector are categorised as follows:

- hospital activities (Division 86)

- hospital activities (Division 861)
- medical and dental practice activities (Division 862)
- other human health activities (Division 869)

This division covers activities of short- or long-term hospitals, general or specialty medical, surgical, psychiatric and substance abuse hospitals, sanatoria, preventoria, medical nursing homes, asylums, mental hospital institutions, rehabilitation centres, leprosaria and other human health institutions which have accommodation facilities and which engage in providing diagnostic and medical treatment to inpatients with any of a wide variety of medical conditions. It also includes medical consultation and treatment in the field of general and specialised medicine by general practitioners and medical specialists and surgeons. It includes dental practice activities of a general or specialised nature and orthodontic activities. Additionally, this division includes activities for human health not performed by hospitals or by practicing medical doctors but by paramedical practitioners legally recognised to treat patients.

- residential care activities (Division 87)
  - residential nursing care activities (Division 871)
  - residential care activities for mental retardation, mental health and substance abuse (Division 872)
  - residential care activities for elderly and disabled (Division 873)
  - other residential care activities (Division 879)
  - post-secondary non-tertiary health and social work

This division includes the provision of residential care combined with either nursing, supervisory or other types of care as required by the residents. Facilities are a significant part of the production process and the care provided is a mix of health and social services with the health services being largely some level of nursing services

- social work activities without accommodation (Division 88)
  - social work activities without accommodation for the elderly and disabled (Division 881)
  - other social work activities without accommodation (Division 889) – for example child day-care activities

This division comprises the provision of a variety of social assistance services directly to clients. The activities in this division do not include accommodation services, except on a temporary basis.

## Data sources

Structural business statistics cover the 'business economy', which includes industry, construction and many services (NACE Rev. 2 sections B to N, P to R as well as division S95 and S96). Structural business statistics do not cover agriculture, forestry and fishing, nor public administration.

Structural business statistics describe the business economy through the observation of units engaged in an economic activity; the unit in structural business statistics is generally the enterprise. An enterprise carries out 1 or more activities, at 1 or more locations, and it may comprise 1 or more legal units. Enterprises that are active in more than 1 economic activity (plus the value added and turnover they generate, the people they employ, and so on) are classified under the NACE heading corresponding to their principal activity; this is normally the one which generates the largest amount of value added.

The analysis presented in this article is based on the main dataset for [structural business statistics \(SBS\)](#), size class data and regional data, all of which are published annually. SBS only cover the activities of market producers, meaning those acting under market conditions. Contrary to most activities covered by SBS, non-market producers represent a significant part of the human health and social work activities sector.

The main series provides information for each EU country as well as a number of non-EU member countries at a detailed level according to the activity classification NACE. Data are available for a wide range of variables.

In structural business statistics, size classes are generally defined by the number of persons employed. A limited set of the standard structural business statistics variables (for example, the number of enterprises, turnover, persons employed and value added) are analysed by size class, mostly down to the 3-digit (group) level of NACE. The main size classes used in this article for presenting the results are:

- small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): with 1 to 249 persons employed, further divided into

- micro enterprises: with less than 10 persons employed;
  - small enterprises: with 10 to 49 persons employed;
  - medium-sized enterprises: with 50 to 249 persons employed;
- large enterprises: with 250 or more persons employed.

Structural business statistics also include regional data. Regional SBS data are available at NUTS levels 1 and 2 for most of the EU countries, Iceland and Norway, mostly down to the 2-digit (division) level of NACE. The main variable analysed in this article is the number of persons employed. The type of statistical unit used for regional SBS data is normally the local unit, which is an enterprise or part of an enterprise situated in a geographically identified place. Local units are classified into sectors (by NACE) normally according to their own main activity, but in some EU countries the activity code is assigned on the basis of the principal activity of the enterprise to which the local unit belongs. The main SBS data series are presented at national level only, and for this national data the statistical unit is the enterprise. It is possible for the principal activity of a local unit to differ from that of the enterprise to which it belongs. Hence, national SBS data from the main series are not necessarily directly comparable with national aggregates compiled from regional SBS.

## Explore further

### Other articles

- [Other analyses of the business economy by NACE Rev. 2 sections](#)
- [Structural business statistics – overview article](#)

### Thematic section

- [Structural business statistics webpage](#)
- [Other health statistics](#)
- [Other disability statistics](#)

### Publications

- [Recent Eurostat publications on SBS](#)
- [Key Figures on Europe – 2024 edition](#) – see subchapter on Business
- [Eurostat's Regional Yearbook](#) – see chapter 8. Business
- [News Release SBS](#) – 2022 final data

### Selected datasets

- [Structural business statistics \(sbs\)](#)

## Methodology

### Glossary

- [SBS glossary](#)

### ESMS metadata files

- [Structural business statistics](#) – SBS metadata file

## External links

- [European Commission – Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety](#)
- [European Education Area – Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021–2030\)](#)
- [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training \(CEDEFOP\)](#)
- [Eurydice – Information network on education in Europe – National education systems](#)
- [OECD – Education](#)
- [UNESCO – Education transforms lives](#)

## Legislation

- [Details on SBS Legislation](#)
- [European Business Statistics Regulation](#)