

The Next Two Years in Healthcare: Where to Focus Workforce Strategy

Insights from the Talent Resilience Index

Based on analysis from the Talent Resilience Index, a data framework measuring workforce mobility and skill evolution across the U.S. labor market.

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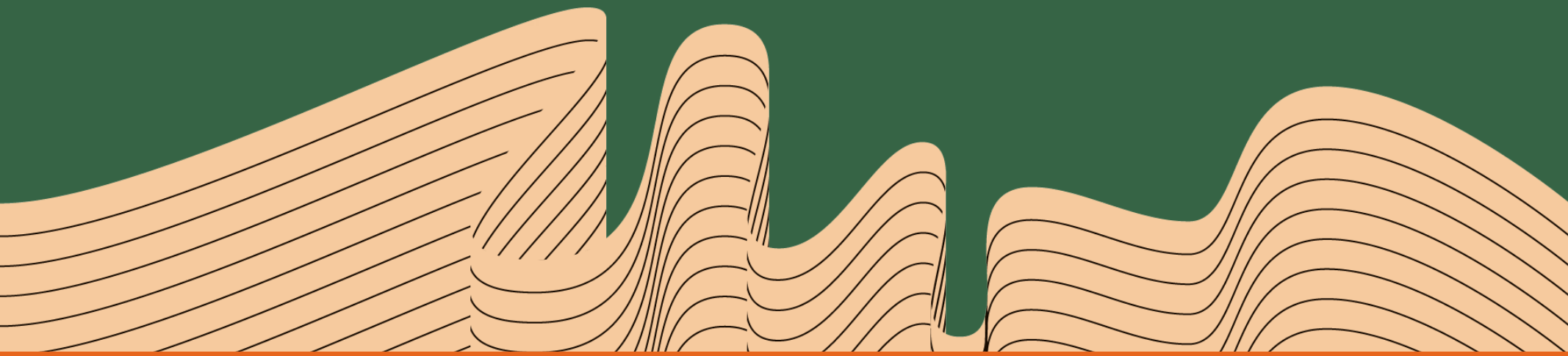
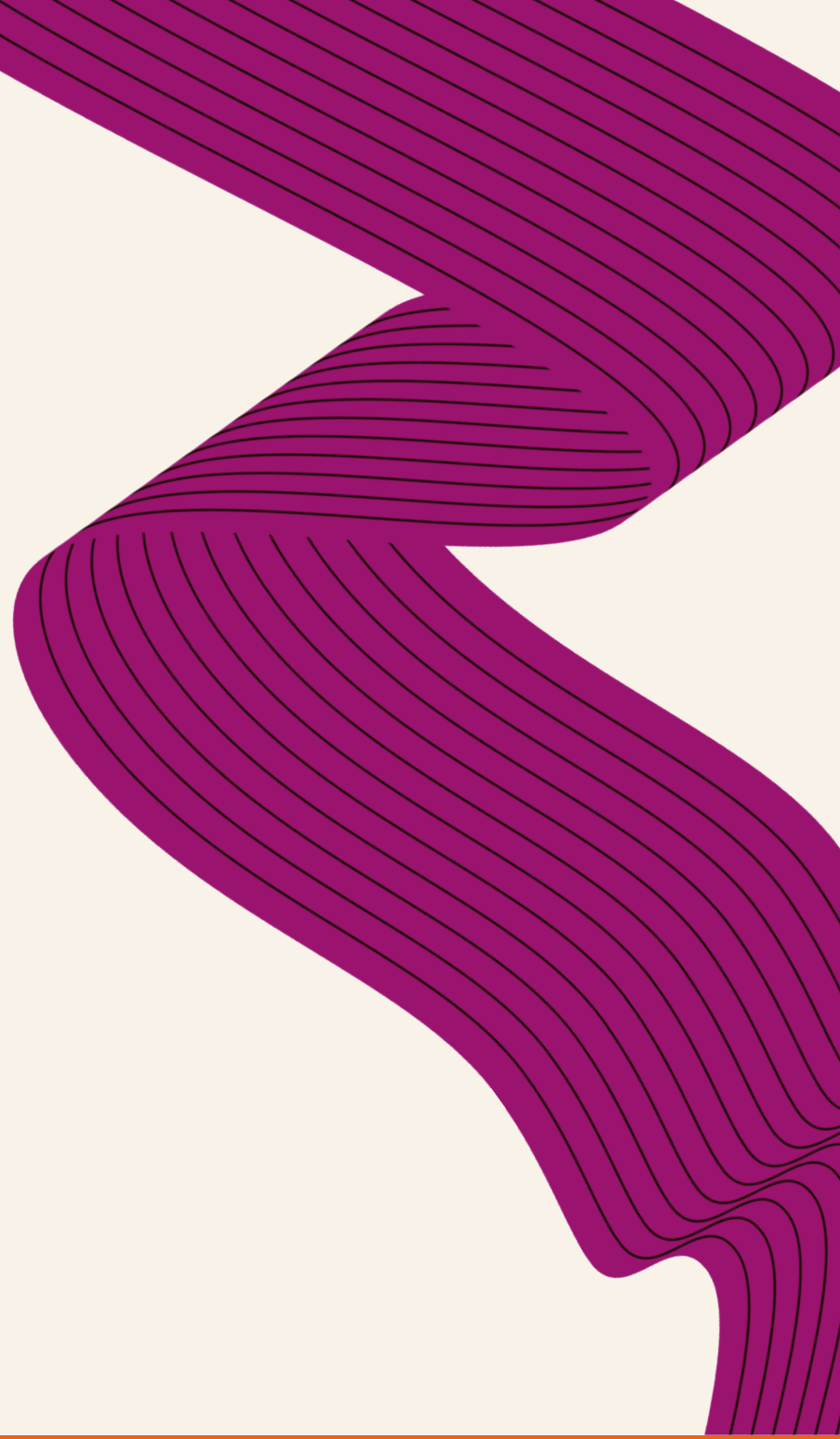


More than 16 million healthcare openings are projected in the next two years.

Demand is rising. Mobility is constrained. Resilient systems depend on movement.



The Next Two Years Will Test Healthcare Workforce Strategy

Healthcare systems are operating under sustained structural demand. In this strained reality, core care roles remain durable and essential, and advanced specialties continue to expand. But durability at the role level does not automatically create resilience at the system level.

What we are seeing nationally: Workforce mobility has declined, even as demand intensifies. Critical roles are growing, skill requirements are evolving, and internal pathways are not always designed to move talent into the areas where capacity is needed most.

The Talent Resilience Index provides a data-driven view of how workforce mobility and skill evolution shape resilience across the U.S. labor market. Applied to healthcare, it highlights where growth is concentrating, how work is being redistributed, and where systems may need to recalibrate.

Over the next two years, healthcare leaders will need to prioritize carefully where workforce investment can most effectively strengthen system capacity.



The Most Resilient Healthcare Roles

Occupation Group Name (LOT)	Highlighted Specialized Occupations (LOT)	Latest 12-Months Online Job Postings	YOY Online Job Postings Growth Rate	2027 Projected Employment	2-Years Projected Employment Growth Rate
Registered / Practical Nursing	Registered Nurse (General), OB-GYN Registered Nurse	2.7M	12%	3.9M	3%
Healthcare Patient Support	Home Health Aide, Medication Aide / Technician	601.5K	11%	3.5M	4%
Physicians	Physician (Other), Radiologist	708.6K	27%	933.6K	2%
Advanced Healthcare Therapists	Speech Language Pathologist, Physical Therapist	667.3K	75%	698.1K	5%
Advanced Nursing and Physician Assistants	Nurse Anesthetist, Advanced Nurse Practitioner	343.8K	43%	639K	7%
Mental Health Therapy	Psychologist, Family / Behavioral Therapist	336.5K	36%	529.6K	7%
Diagnostic Technologists and Technicians	MRI Technician / Technologist, Radiation Therapist	706.7K	65%	509.1K	3%
Mid-Level Healthcare Therapists	Speech Language Pathology Assistant, Respiratory Therapist	238.1K	41%	404.4K	4%
Therapy Support	Physical Therapy Assistant, Occupational Therapy Assistant	143.1K	24%	232.2K	5%

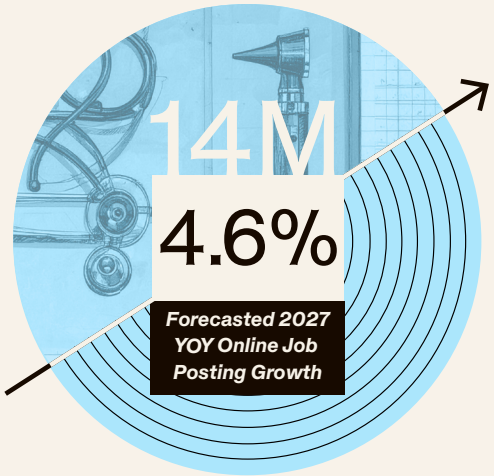
Growth is concentrating in a defined set of durable and expanding roles. The Talent Resilience Index identifies healthcare as the most future-resilient sector, with projected growth concentrated in core care roles and advanced support positions.

These roles represent where workforce investment will have the greatest long-term impact. They form the structural backbone of healthcare capacity over the next two years.

Skill Clusters Shaping the Future of Care

Healthcare resilience is concentrating in clusters of related capabilities. Across these clusters, a common thread stands out: hybridity. The most future-resilient roles blend human-centered strengths — clinical judgment, coordination, communication — with technical fluency in diagnostics, imaging, and data-enabled workflows.

These clusters indicate where capability investment will matter most in the coming two years. They show that resilience isn't driven by a single credential or skill; it's built through blended skill sets that increasingly define both advanced support roles and specialized medicine.



Cluster 2

The Future of Advanced Healthcare Support

- General Medicine
- General Medical Tests & Procedures
- Nursing & Patient Care
- Patient Education & Support



Cluster 3

Resilience Pillars of Specialized Medicine

- Hepatology
- Oncology
- Medical Imaging
- Nuclear Medicine

Figure 8: Future-Resilient Skills by Cluster
Skills are grouped into thematic clusters based on relatedness. Each cluster combines Lightcast Skill Subcategories and individual Lightcast Skills, showing both the forecasted 2-year online job postings growth rate and the total projected job openings requiring these skills.
Source: Lightcast Calculations - Lightcast Job Postings Analytics (JPA) Database & Lightcast's Proprietary Skills Demand Projections Model

Building Resilience in a Constrained System

Healthcare resilience takes two forms.

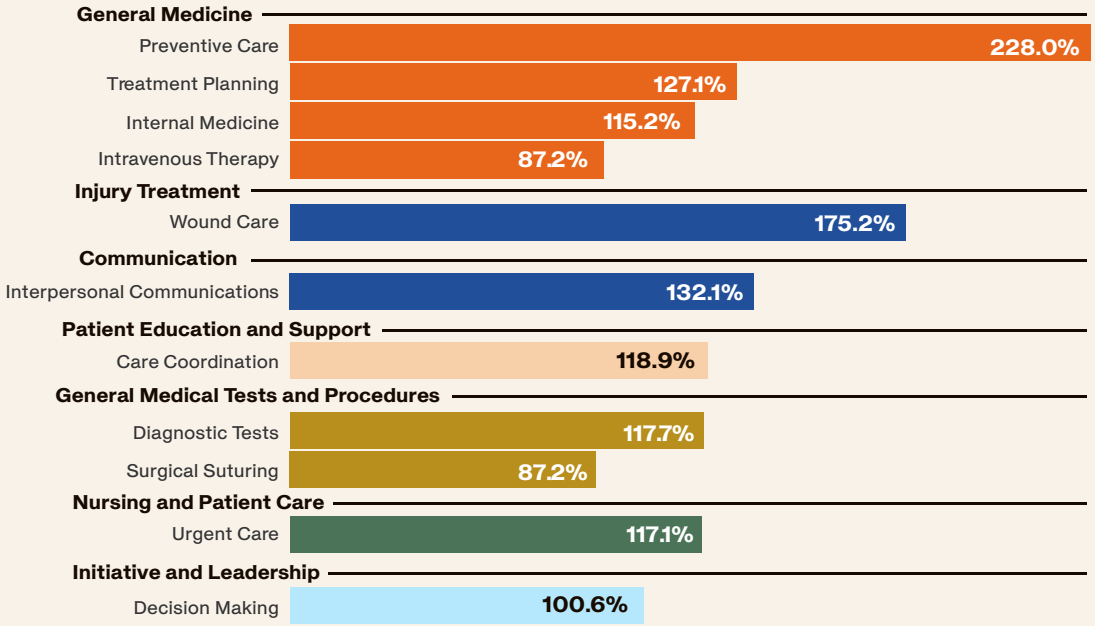
First are the enduring human foundations of care — nursing, patient support, and general medicine — roles that remain indispensable at scale. Second is the rise of advanced specialties such as oncology, medical imaging, and nuclear medicine, reflecting the growing precision of diagnostics and treatment.

Together, these role categories account for more than 16 million projected openings in the next two years. Healthcare is both critical and constrained.

What matters now is where roles are growing, how work is evolving inside them, and what that means for building system capacity.



Rising demand for resilient skills is redistributing healthcare work.



The data shows how healthcare work is being redistributed.

Support roles are increasingly becoming clinical decision-makers. Advanced nurses, physician assistants, and diagnostic technicians are gaining greater autonomy in treatment planning and urgent care. Employers are also easing experience barriers, prioritizing skill readiness and adaptability over tenure alone.

At the same time, physicians are becoming more specialized and more technologically integrated, with growth concentrated in diagnostic-intensive fields, such as oncology and OB-GYN.

These skills highlighted here reflect that shift: greater responsibility in advanced support roles and deeper specialization in complex clinical domains. This is the operating model change behind healthcare resilience, and it raises the next question: Can talent move into these evolving roles fast enough to meet system needs?

Figure 7: Future-Resilient Healthcare Skills
This figure highlights the most resilient healthcare skills, showing year-over-year online job postings growth (September 2023–August 2024 vs. September 2024–August 2025). Each skill is labeled, with a legend indicating its corresponding Lightcast Skill Subcategory.
Source: Lightcast Calculations - Lightcast Job Postings Analytics (JPA) Database

Resilience Depends on Movement

Growth and capability shifts are clear. The constraint is movement.

National workforce mobility is at its lowest point since 2016. Internal mobility — the movement of workers into new roles within the same organization — remains limited relative to overall workforce transitions.

For healthcare systems, this creates structural friction. When talent cannot move efficiently into expanding roles, organizations rely more heavily on external hiring — increasing costs and slowing the development of sustainable pipelines.

Resilient systems are defined not only by the roles they employ, but by how effectively they move talent into the roles that matter most.

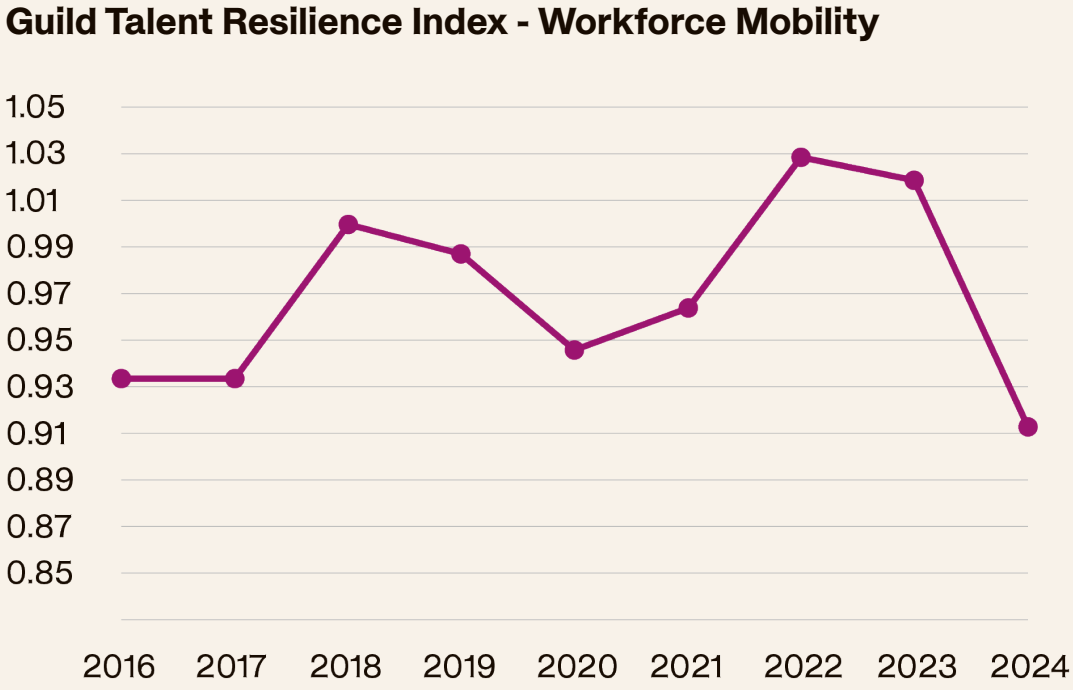


Figure 2: Guild Talent Resilience Index - Time Series

The index is normalized to a 2018 baseline (1.0). Values above or below 1 indicate higher or lower workforce mobility than 2018, with relative changes over time reflecting approximate percentage increases or decreases.

Mobility in Practice: Lessons from New England

To understand how mobility supports resilience, it helps to examine a labor market where movement is strong.

Within healthcare, the New England region leads the nation in external mobility and ranks second in internal mobility. Since 2018, the region has strengthened its mobility profile across multiple categories, signaling a more dynamic healthcare labor market.



This example highlights a dual engine of resilience:

- **Internal mobility builds capacity**, accelerating progression into high-demand roles.
- **External mobility increases competitive pressure**, encouraging investment in development and retention.

Healthcare Occupation Mobility Transitions – New England, 2024

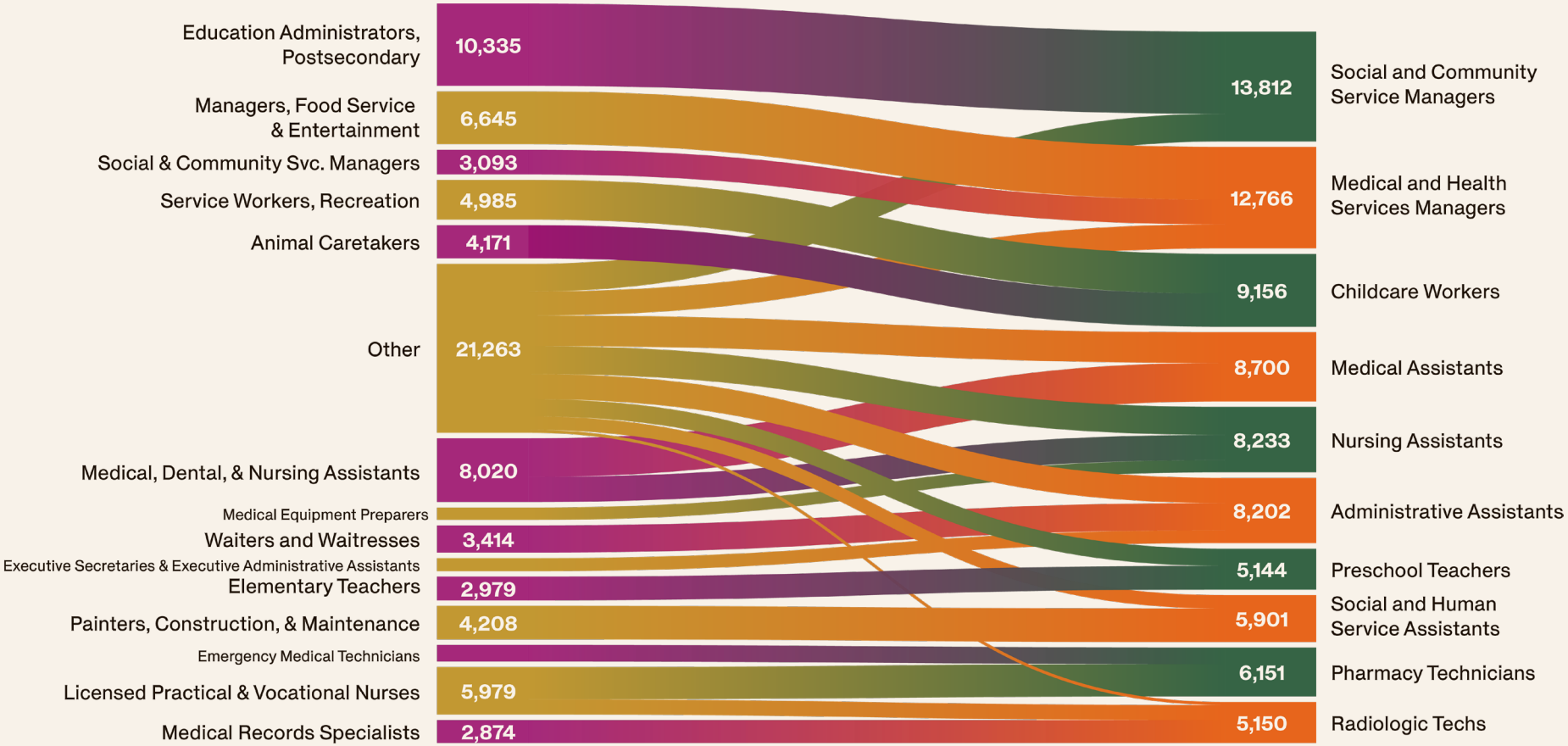


Figure 13: Healthcare Occupation Mobility Transitions – New England, 2024
This figure maps occupational transitions within the New England healthcare sector in 2024. Occupations on the left represent origin roles, and those on the right represent destination roles. The visualization highlights which roles workers moved from to enter each occupation of interest.
Source: Lightcast Calculations – ASEC CPS & Lightcast's Social Profiles Database

Conclusion

What Resilient Healthcare Systems Prioritize

System resilience is not automatic. It depends on alignment — between growth signals, evolving capabilities, and mobility patterns.

Resilient healthcare systems consistently:

- Focus workforce investment on expanding and high-resilience roles
- Strengthen internal mobility into advanced support and specialty positions
- Balance broader autonomy with deeper specialization
- Measure movement into critical roles — not just hiring volume

Resilience at the system level is ultimately a workforce planning outcome. The leaders best positioned for the next 18–24 months will be those who align planning with where healthcare is actually headed.

→ For more, read the full Talent Resilience Index report.

