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24th October 2025

Deputy Peadar Tóibín TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 55221 25: *To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons recruited to work in the HSE via recruitment agencies in each of the past ten years and to date in 2025, in tabular form.*

PQ 55222 25: *To ask the Minister for Health the amount paid by the HSE for agency workers in each of the past ten years and to date in 2025*

PQ 55224 25: *To ask the Minister for Health the current percentage of persons working in the HSE who are agency workers.*

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. Your PQs above have been referred to me for response.

Context:
The available supply in the labour market for health workforce continues to be a challenge. This is not unique to Ireland, but rather a global health workforce challenge. Recruitment and retention of Clinical, Nursing and other key staff is a constant challenge and impacts adversely on the ability to maintain safe and effective services. Therefore, as part of the HSE's overarching resourcing approach whereby direct employment does not meet the needs of service delivery requirements, agency staff are utilised. This can be for a variety of reasons, including sick absence replacement, both long and short term, to replace vacancies currently being actively recruited to, to replace maternity leave etc.

In advance of the filling of these hours via direct employees, there is a need to prioritise critical services for replacement through agency and overtime. Collectively, these give rise to the utilisation of agency resources while simultaneously running large scale domestic and international recruitment campaigns to fill through direct employment. At times the HSE have been unable to fill a vacancy even via agency. The agencies have indicated that they are experiencing difficulty in recruiting themselves due to a lack of availability and also accommodation availability and costs.

While operating within spend limits, the HSE Senior Leadership Team have committed to fully deliver on the planned activity levels as set out in the HSE National Service Plan 2025 including the Waiting List Action Plan and Urgent and Emergency Care Operational Plan. This requires the dual approach of improving the productivity of key services and managing the level and affordability of our workforce through the application of both the HSE's Pay and Non-Pay control limits. This is particularly focused around staffing levels, including getting to levels of agency and overtime which is sustainable into the future.

The HSE is focussed on maximum delivery of the savings agreed to as part of the two-year funding agreement agreed by Government in July 2024. As part of the overall financial stabilisation of the HSE, significant progress has been made on pay in terms of planning, allocation and control and the new control environment ensures there is absolute clarity on staffing parameters whilst embedding a culture of continuous improvement in productivity. There remains work still to do to achieve the level of agency and overtime savings required and fundamentally hospitals will be more challenged in terms of living within overall pay allocation including direct pay. The focus is on reducing this challenge.

Regarding your PQ 55221 25 seeking the number of persons recruited to work in the HSE via recruitment agencies in each of the past ten years, this data is not collated centrally within the HSE and therefore is not available. HSE Agency staffing is recorded and monitored based on costs.

Total HSE agency pay costs for HSE Statutory Services is disclosed every year in Note 6 – Summary Analysis of Pay Costs in the HSE Annual Financial Statements (AFS). A link to the HSE Annual Reports and Financial Statements is provided below for your convenience.
https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/annualrpts.html

In response to your PQ 55222 25, please see **Appendix 1 Table 1** below which shows the total agency costs in each of the years 2015 to 2024 and for the period January to August 2025 which is the most recent data available. The data is for HSE Statutory services only and was sourced from the HSE Annual Financial Statements for the years 2015 to 2024 and from the HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence system for YTD August 2025. Please note that the figure for 2025 is draft only and is subject to change.

The majority of agency spend is salary and statutory pay costs such as PRSI, holiday allowance etc. In line with the Protection of Employees (Part -Time Work) Act agency staff have the right to the same basic employment conditions, this includes basic pay, shift premiums, unsocial hours and Sunday rates.

In Note 6 to the HSE AFS, which provides a breakdown of HSE Pay costs, total Agency staff costs in the year 2024 amounted to approximately 8.8% of total pay costs excluding superannuation.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah.anderson1@hse.ie or tel: 087 9423319.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Anderson
Bainisteoir Ginearálta | General Manager
HSE Airgeadais Corparáideach, An Rannóg Airgeadais Náisiúnta agus Soláthair HSE
Teach Darach, Páirc na Mílaoise, An Nás, Co. Chill Dara, W91 KDC2.
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Appendix 1 to PQ 55222 25

Table 1

Total HSE Agency Staff Costs for the years 2014 to 2024 and for the period January to August 2025											
HSE Statutory services only											
	2015	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	***YTD Aug 2025**
	€'m	**€'m**	**€'m**	**€'m**	**€'m**	**€'m**	**€'m**	**€'m**	**€'m**	**€'m**	**€'m**
Agency Staff	259.3	277.3	301.0	330.7	349.4	390.1	568.5	619.5	644.2	726.0	545.3

***Sources** : HSE Annual Financial Statements and HSE Consolidated Financial Intelligence System for YTD Aug 2025*

****Note** : 2025 figures are draft only and are subject to change*