The 2020 National Nursing Workforce Survey

Background: E... a... Na... a C... S.a. B a N... (NCSBN) a... Na... a F... S.a. N... W... C... (F...) ... a... a-... U.S. ... T... a aa... (RN)a ... a a... / ... a a... (LPN /LVN). T... a a a ... a ... a ... a... 2020 a... a... b... a ... a... a... a... b... a... (COVID-19) a ... .

Aging of the Workforce

The median age of RNs was 52 years, up from 51 years in 2017. Nurses aged 65 years or older account for 19.0% of the RN workforce, up from 14.6% in 2017 and 4.4% in 2013. They also comprise the largest age category. The median age of LPNs/LVNs was 53 years, up from 52 years in 2017. LPNs/LVNs who are aged 65 years or older account for 18.2% of the workforce. This cohort has grown by 5.0 percentage points since 2017 and by 8.3 percentage points since 2015. The aging of the nurse workforce is expected to continue: In 2020, more than one-fifth of all nurse respondents replied positively when asked if they plan to retire in the next 5 years.

Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Males accounted for 9.4% of the RN workforce, an increase of 0.3 percentage points since 2017. Additionally, males accounted for 8.1% of all LPNs/LVNs, an increase of 0.4 percentage points since 2017. In 2020, a third gender response option of "other" was added to the survey and was selected by 0.1% of nurses. Nearly 81% of RNs reported being White/Caucasian. RNs who reported being Asian accounted for 7.2% of the workforce, representing the largest non-Caucasian racial group in the RN workforce. Black/African American RNs increased from 6.0 % in 2013 to 6.7 % in 2020 and the proportion of RNs reporting being Hispanic/Latinx also increased from 2017. LPNs/LVNs who reported being Black/African American represent the second largest racial group in the workforce (17.2%) after White/Caucasian (69.5%). LPNs/LVNs who reported being Hispanic/Latinx account for 10.0% of the workforce, an increase of 2.6 percentage points since 2017.

Education

Approximately 42% of nurses in 2020 reported the baccalaureate nursing degree as their first U.S. nursing license, an increase of 5.8 percentage points from 2013. The percentage of respondents who initially earned a diploma or associate degree decreased by 7.5 points. Diploma (almost 50%) and associate degree (17.2%) were associated with RNs who were aged 65 years or older. Increasingly, a baccalaureate degree is more common in younger age groups for initial licensure (13.5% for RNs younger than 30 years and aged 30–34 years), which suggests the RN workforce is becoming increasingly educated at initial licensure. The most common highest level of nursing education is a baccalaureate degree across all groups (65.2% of RNs), which increased by 7.8 percentage points between 2013 and 2020. RNs achieving a doctorate of nursing practice (DNP) as their highest level of nursing education increased by a full percentage point from 0.4% in 2013 to 1.4% in 2020.

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