

2023 Survey of Michigan Nurses

Recent Changes in the Nursing Workforce

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Office of Nursing Safety and Workforce Planning
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

**Prepared by the
Michigan Public Health Institute**

Introduction

The Survey of Michigan Nurses has been supported by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) annually since 2004 to gather information about the supply of nurses in Michigan. Information gathered from this survey is used to inform state and local decision-making about the recruitment, education, and employment status of the nurse population.

This survey includes questions that focus on 1) license type and educational background; 2) employment status, including current practice setting; 3) length of time practicing and plans to continue practicing as a nurse; and 4) demographic information.

The 2023 Survey of Michigan Nurses report emphasizes changes in the nursing workforce population since 2019 or 2017 when the data were available. Information comparing previous years' data were provided where the survey questions and response options were capable of comparison.

Methodology

The MDHHS-Office of Nursing Safety and Workforce Planning (ONP) contracted with the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) to update the annual Survey of Michigan Nurses, collect, and analyze the data, and report findings to nursing stakeholders in a variety of formats.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

MPHI used the email addresses provided by the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) for all licensed nurses recorded in their licensure system to send electronic invites to complete the survey. Nursing associations and organizations were also notified about the survey and reminded nurses to complete the annual survey by using the emailed survey link or completing the survey through a general link. LARA also sent an email reminder to nurses to complete the survey. In 2023, the general survey link was also distributed via social media.

DATA ANALYSES

All percentages reported in the results section are presented as weighted estimates that reflect Michigan's overall nurse population. To see complete reports from previous years, visit www.minurse.org.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS & RESPONSE RATES

A total of 22,754 nurses participated in the 2023 Survey of Michigan Nurses and are included in this report, which is lower than the 27,489 nurses who completed the 2022 survey. Even though the number of respondents was lower this year compared to last year, there were no significant differences between age, gender, race, ethnicity, or residence for nurses between the two years. As with previous years, RNs make up around 91 percent of respondents, while LPNs only make up about nine percent of respondents.

Results of the 2023 Survey of Michigan Nurses

EDUCATIONAL PATH

In 2023, 47.1 percent of RNs started with a bachelor's degree in nursing, which has been increasing significantly almost every year since 2017. There is no clear trend regarding RNs who started with a master's degree in nursing since 2017; however, there was a significant increase in these nurses between 2021 and 2023.

The highest level of nursing education for RNs has consistently been a bachelor's degree in nursing, with the trend increasing significantly from 2017 to 2023. There has also been a significant increase among RNs qualifying for their first license with a master's degree since 2021 and among RNs qualifying with a Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) since 2017.

To better understand the educational path of nurses, analyses were performed to examine the first nursing-related degree in comparison to the highest nursing degree achieved. The trend for all nurses whose first nursing degree remained their highest nursing degree significantly decreased across the years with the exception of nurses whose first and highest nursing degree was a master's degree which has significantly increased since 2019. The results suggest that nurses continue to pursue continuing education even after obtaining their first degree and qualifying to be nurses.

EMPLOYMENT

Overall, all employment statuses for both RNs and LPNs have decreased since 2019, except for actively employed in a field other than nursing. The percentage of RNs and LPNs actively working in fields other than nursing has significantly increased since 2017. Even though these numbers are still relatively small at this point, there has been almost a three-fold increase in RNs working in non-nursing fields and an almost six-fold increase in LPNs working in non-nursing fields since 2017.

While most respondents indicated they live out of state, 19.8 percent of RNs and 17.0 percent of responding LPNs indicated they were a travel nurse and 19.4 percent of RNs and 16.9 percent of LPNs indicated it was due to remote work. Respondents also indicated that better pay/wage/benefits were the reason for employment outside of Michigan.

Among both RNs and LPNs, there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of nurses working three to nine years since 2019. Conversely, there has been a significant increase among both RNs and LPNs working 10 to 19 years. This suggests that new nurses are leaving after approximately three years of being in the workforce, although if nurses make it past that point, they typically stay for 20 or more years.

The number of years nationally certified APNs had been working was also measured as a subset of RNs. The percentages of APNs working less than three years has been significantly decreasing since 2019, as well as the percentage of nurses working three to nine years. This suggests that new nurses are not pursuing APN certification at the same rate they previously were and may not be pursuing this certification until 10 or more years of working in the nursing workforce.

Practice Setting

It is important to note that the 2019 data categories and questions were structured differently compared to 2021 and 2023. Categories were mapped to 2021 and 2023 categories where it was possible. Additionally, 2021 categories were also restructured to better match the 2023 categories. Overall, for both RNs and LPNs, there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of nurses working across almost all settings. Most notably, RNs and LPNs working in acute care has decreased the most since 2019.

Position and Role

Across the years, both RNs and LPNs most commonly indicated that they worked as a staff nurse, which has been the case since 2019. There has been a significant increase in RNs working as travel nurses, executives, APRN or nurse anesthetists, and managerial positions since 2019. For both RNs and LPNs, the percentage of nurses working as patient educators has decreased the most since 2019.

Specialties

The top specialty for RNs in 2023 was adult health and for LPNs, the top specialty was geriatric care. Overall patterns among both RNs and LPNs suggest a decrease in nurses across several specialties since 2019. Notably, for both RNs and LPNs, the percentage of nurses working in specialty care was among one of the highest specialties to significantly decrease since 2019.

In addition, for RNs, there has also been a significant decrease in nurses working in geriatric care, phlebotomy, testing, and diagnostics, and other non-clinical specialties nurses since 2019. Conversely, there have been significant increases among RNs working in anesthesia, child and family care, critical care, occupational health and transitions of care, and surgical services.

Among LPNs, there has been a decrease in nurses working in academia, behavioral health, critical care, occupational health and transitions of care, and rehabilitation. The only specialty that has had an increased among LPNs since 2019 is medical-surgical and wound care nurses.

Change in Employment Setting

Since 2019, for both RNs and LPNs, most nurses had not made a change. This has significantly decreased for RNs since 2019, meaning more RNs are making changes to their employment, but has been increasing for LPNs since 2019, which means fewer LPNs are making changes to their employment. Interestingly, the trends from 2019 to 2021 and the trends from 2021 to 2023 seem to differ, which may have been caused with the changing workforce environment due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. One theory is that nurses moved to the settings where they were needed the most during the pandemic and then went back to what their position was before the pandemic.

When looking at categories that increased for RNs, only movement from an acute setting to a sub-acute setting and some “other type” of change were significant. However, from 2021 to 2023, there was a decrease in nurses moving to other settings across all categories, and these decreases were considered

significant except for LPNs who moved from specialty care to primary care and LPNs who moved from sub-acute care to acute care.

Reason for Change in Employment

Most RNs and LPNs were seeking a less stressful position/setting or wanted a better schedule. Other common reasons for RNs and LPNs to change their employment settings were work culture, workload, and wages. RNs were statistically more likely compared to LPNs to change their employment due to caring for home or family, changing to a preferred nursing position, violence or safety issues, and work culture. LPNs were statistically more likely compared to RNs to change their employment due to wages.

PLANS TO CONTINUE NURSING

To assist in projecting the supply of nurses in the future, nurses who were currently working were asked to indicate how many more years they plan to continue working as a nurse. In 2023, most RNs and LPNs estimated that they will continue working as a nurse for more than 10 years. However, this percentage has significantly decreased since 2019. Conversely, there has been a significant increase among both RNs and LPNs planning to work less than two years since 2019. Interestingly, there has also been a significant increase among both RNs and LPNs not knowing how long they plan to continue working.

Overall, among both RNs and LPNs, there has been an increase in the percentage of nurses who plan on working five years or less across most practice settings. Most notably, for both RNs and LPNs, the largest increase was among nurses working in other community care-based healthcare. In 2023, among RNs and LPNs, the highest percentage of nurses planning on leaving the workforce in the next five years was in corrections settings.

While the percentages of nurses who planned on working five years or less in acute care and ambulatory care may not be as high as some other areas, the impact of the rates is concerning. The absolute number of nurses in these settings is so large that they need to be highlighted and addressed for the impact they will have on the healthcare system in the state and the number of new nurses required to replace these members of the workforce (Acute Care: RNs = 1,792; Ambulatory Care: RNs = 1,083). While there are fewer nurses who practiced in school of nursing settings, the educational level of master's or doctoral degree preparation for faculty make them harder to quickly replace. In 2023, among RNs, the highest percentage of nurses planning on leaving the workforce in the next five years was in other health non-nursing related fields, while for LPNs, the highest percentage was among those working in education, research, and consulting.

Among RNs since 2019, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of nurses working as staff nurses, patient educators, in other health related fields, and in other health non-nursing related fields, which had the largest increase. LPNs had no significant increases or decreases in the percentage of nurses working in the positions listed in the survey.

The number of staff nurses who plan to only work for five years or less is large and it will take a lot of effort to replace these nurses, as will replacing patient educators and faculty nurses as they require more and specialized training. The number of APRNs and nurse anesthetists who plan on leaving the workforce in the next five years is also concerning considering educational level entry requirements for both positions.

In 2023, among RNs the highest percentage of nurses planning on leaving the workforce in the next five years were in other non-clinical specialties, followed by academia. For LPNs, the highest percentage of

nurses planning on leaving the workforce in the next five years was among those working in community care, followed by child and family health.

Among RNs, between 2019 and 2023, there was a significant increase in the percentage of nurses planning on leaving the workforce within the next five years among those working in care management critical care, hospice, medical-surgical & wound care, other non-clinical fields, and specialty care.

Reasons for Leaving Nursing

For both RNs and LPNs, leaving nursing due to retirement has significantly decreased since 2019. Among RNs, there has also been a significant increase in nurses leaving the workforce due to violence or safety reasons. For both RNs and LPNs, the largest and most significant increase in the reason why nurses are leaving were related to nurses being too stressed or burned out. Another reason that had a significant increase since 2019 was workload for both RNs and LPNs.

Additional Information

For specific information regarding New Nurse Experience and Workplace Violence data analyses, as well as further information on the sections included in this summary, please access the full report [here](#). For additional information related to the 2023 Survey of Michigan Nurses results, past years' reports, and data produced from Michigan's nurse licensure data, please visit www.minurse.org. For questions or comments related to the content presented in this report, please contact Christopher Wojcik, Associate Program Director, Michigan Public Health Institute (cwojcik@mphi.org).