

2024

NURSING SHORTAGE STATISTICS

An overview of staffing trends





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OVERVIEW OF NURSE SENTIMENT

LIKELIHOOD TO STAY

46% are considering leaving their position in the next six months²



22% have changed positions in the past six months²

13% are considering leaving the profession entirely²

WHAT THEY WANT

Safe nurse-to-patient ratios

Real mental health resources

Adequate staff support

New nurse training & support programs



"I have seen more nurses recommend other career choices to friends and family. I have seen many caring people step aside from nursing, because they have found it is no longer worth it."²

TOP REASONS FOR LEAVING³

Burnout	54.2%
Inadequate Staffing	49.5%
Stressful Work Environment	47.3%
Lack of Good Management/Leadership	36.5%
Better Pay or Benefits	36.1%

12% feel no symptoms of burnout¹

56% felt symptoms of burnout¹

65% average burnout for those with less than 20 years of experience¹

26% of RNs felt burnout every day in 2021³

38% say staff shortages contribute to burnout²

53% say verbal abuse from patients has increased²

58% say work-life balance is most important for their satisfaction²

78% are somewhat satisfied with their primary nursing position³

16% are planning to retire in the next 5 years³

GROWING DEMAND FOR NURSES

2022 - 2032



177,400

ADDITIONAL JOBS

Number of additional RN jobs that will be available



3.35M

TOTAL POSITIONS

Number of RN positions will increase from 3.17M to 3.35M



45%

NP GROWTH RATE

Growth of job opportunities for Nurse Practitioners

To say that nurses are in high demand would be an understatement. The demand for nurses has been steadily growing over the years and is expected to continue. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that about 177,400 additional Registered Nurses will be needed from 2022 to 2032 bringing the total RN employment from 3,172,500 in 2022 to a projected 3,349,900. Employment opportunities for RNs are predicted to grow about 6% from 2022 to 2032, which is about 3% faster than the total occupational average.⁴

The Nurse Practitioner field is experiencing high occupational growth rates as well. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the overall employment for NPs will increase 45% from 2022 to 2032, adding 118,600 positions. This growth rate is 42% higher than the occupational average of 3%.⁵

The increase in demand for nurses means it's even more critical that medical institutions across the nation make a concerted effort to engage their existing nurse population and retain recent RN graduates.

AGING NURSE & PATIENT POPULATIONS



47.9

AVERAGE AGE OF LICENSED RNs



56%

OF CURRENT RNs ARE OVER THE AGE OF 45



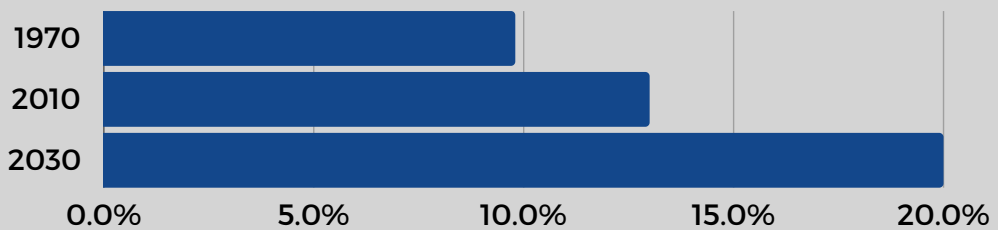
1 MIL

TOTAL RNs EXPECTED TO RETIRE BY 2030

INCREASING HEALTHCARE NEEDS OF AGING BABY BOOMERS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF NURSING JOBS

HIGH NUMBERS OF NURSES ARE RETIRING, CONTRIBUTING TO THE ONGOING RN SHORTAGE

US POPULATION OVER THE AGE OF 65



By 2030, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), more than 20 percent of U.S. residents are projected to be age 65 and over, compared to just 9.8 percent of the population in 1970. There will be about 78 million Americans over the age of 65, surpassing the number of people under the age of 18 (76M). The increasing healthcare needs of the aging Baby Boomer population are contributing to the growth rate for nursing jobs. Skilled nurses are needed to provide preventative healthcare services and to treat chronic conditions, such as diabetes and obesity, that are on the rise in the aging Baby Boomer population. ⁶

Nurses are no exception to the increasing number of retirement-age individuals. A large portion of the nursing workforce is heading toward retirement. Between 2000 and 2022, the average age of employed registered nurses increased from 42.7 to 47.9 years old. Today over half (56%) of all RNs are over the age of 45. ⁷

A recent [study](#) predicted that over one million RNs will retire from the workforce between now and 2030. This spike in retirements will only contribute to the ongoing shortage of nurses. ⁸

NURSING SHORTAGE OVER TIME

The nursing shortage has been increasing over the last decade and skyrocketed in the past few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data shows that the shortage has improved since 2021, but should still remain a concern.

According to a [2024 report](#), in 2021, the RN turnover rate was at its peak reaching 27.1%. In the years since then, the turnover rate has improved dropping to 22.5% in 2022, and 18.4% in 2023. Registered Nurses in the Telemetry, Step Down, and Emergency specialties had the three highest percentages of turnover over the past five years.⁹

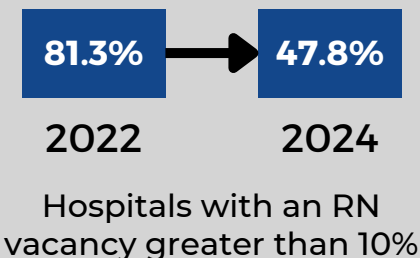
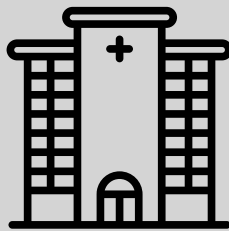
In 2023, the average job vacancy rate for RNs fell 5.8%, going from 17% in 2022 and currently sitting at 9.9%. As of 2024, 47.8% of hospitals reported a vacancy rate higher than 10%, a huge improvement from 81.3% in 2022.⁹

Depending on the specialty it took recruiters between 59 to 109 days to fill empty RN positions—an average decrease of more than 9 days when compared to 2021. These high nurse turnover and vacancy rates affect the entire hospital and have an impact on the stress level and mental health of the nurses who are managing understaffed units.⁹



RN TURNOVER RATE

27.1%	22.5%	18.4%
2021	2022	2023



DAYS SPENT RECRUITING



Average time to recruit an RN, depending on specialty

MOST SEVERE SHORTAGES EXPECTED BY 2036

Based on projected numbers for 2036, the following states are predicted to have the largest shortages of registered nurses.¹⁰

RANK	STATE	PROJECTED SHORTAGE (%)	PROJECTED SHORTAGE (# Of Employees)
1	Georgia	29%	34,800
2	California	26%	106,310
3	Washington	26%	22,700
4	New Jersey	25%	24,450
5	North Carolina	23%	31,350
6	New Hampshire	23%	4,120
7	South Carolina	21%	13,570
8	Maryland	20%	14,700
9	Michigan	19%	21,870
10	Oregon	16%	7,410

Source: Health Resources & Services Administration, Health Workforce Projections, "Nurse Workforce Projections 2021-2036" March 2024: <https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/nursing-projections-factsheet.pdf>

COST OF NURSING TURNOVER

EVERY

**1% INCREASE IN
TURNOVER**

**WILL COST THE
AVERAGE HOSPITAL**

**\$262,500
PER YEAR**



\$56,300

AVERAGE COST

of turnover for
a bedside RN

**\$4.8
Million**

An icon of a trash can with three dollar signs (\$\$\$) falling into it, representing financial loss.

AVERAGE LOST

per hospital from RN
turnover in 2023

The longer a nursing position is vacant, the more costly it becomes in terms of overtime, and staff burnout. The average cost of turnover for a bedside RN is about \$56,300, ranging from \$45,100 to \$67,500. The average financial loss from RN turnover per hospital is \$3.87-5.79M, with the average hospital losing \$4.8M in 2023. Each percentage increase in turnover will cost the average hospital \$262,500 per year. It is interesting to note that although average cost of turnover for a bedside RN increased since 2021, the average amount lost per hospital fell by \$2.3M since the turnover rate started to stabilize.⁹

Healthcare organizations can reduce turnover costs by investing in programs to entice nurses to stay. Collecting feedback from current staff is a good way to determine factors that would make them stay in the long run. Also, utilizing exit interviews provides the opportunity to hear from nurses who are leaving to gain insights into their exit factors so that improvements can be made. It's ultimately more cost-effective to understand what would enhance engagement and job satisfaction within the organization to attempt to lower turnover than it is to pay the price of losing skilled, trained nurses.

TURNOVER BY TENURE

Research indicates that the majority of nurse turnover happens within the first year of service with an organization. About a third (34%) of newly hired RNs leave within one year. Turnover begins to decrease once a nurse has been at the organization for over five years (11.9%) and continues to fall with the lowest rates among those with over ten years of tenure (9.9%). Although this is the case now, it is predicted that turnover rates will begin to increase among those with the highest tenure as they begin to hit retirement age in the coming years.⁹

Recently, there has been a large number of new nurses entering the workforce as more experienced ones leave. According to this [article](#), between March 2021 and March 2022, the median nursing tenure fell by 19.5% to an average of 2.78 years, and the number of shifts filled by newly hired nurses increased by 55%.¹¹ Since then average tenure has increased and stabilized, currently sitting at an average of 5.7 years.¹²

New hires report feeling pressure not to ask questions, and describe situations in which nurses with more experience often aren't willing to mentor or offer help. Training and orientation are the second biggest issues cited by nurses as to why they left a position within the first three months. These factors, along with undesirable shift hours, high levels of job-related stress and insufficient staffing, all lead to lower job satisfaction causing many new nurses to change jobs.

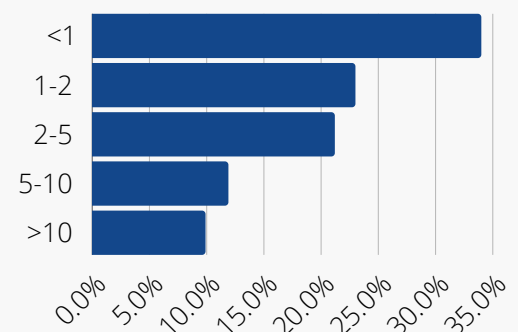


34% of RNs
LEAVE WITHIN 1 YEAR
OF BEING HIRED

AVERAGE NURSING TENURE

5.7
YEARS

TURNOVER BY YEARS OF TENURE



IMPACT ON QUALITY OF PATIENT CARE

High nurse turnover and vacancy rates affect access to healthcare and impact the level of care patients receive. Several studies suggest a correlation between appropriate levels of RN staffing, safe patient care, and mortality rate. According to [research](#) published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, a review of nearly 200,000 nursing shifts showed that staffing of RN's below target levels is directly related to increased patient mortality. The study found the risk of death increased 2% for patients exposed to shifts below target RN staffing levels. The average patient was exposed to 3 nursing shifts below target levels thereby creating a 6% higher risk of death per stay.¹³

Patients exposed to shifts below staffing levels had

6% HIGHER

RISK OF DEATH PER STAY



4-6 FEWER DEATHS

For each additional mean year of nurse experience

EVERY PATIENT ABOVE THE

1:4 NURSE-TO-PATIENT RATIO

INCREASED LIKELIHOOD OF PATIENT DEATH BY 7%

Further, it has been found that increased nurse-to-patient ratios can create unsafe outcomes and lead to higher mortality rates. Another [study](#) notes that for every additional patient above the recommended 1:4 nurse-to-patient ratio, it increased the likelihood patient death within 30 days by 7%.¹⁴

The high number of RNs expected to retire in the upcoming years creates an influx of experienced nurses leaving the field and thus leads to imbalanced staffing mixes. [Research](#) found that years of nurse experience is inversely related to patient mortality. For each additional mean year of nurse experience on the clinical unit, there were 4–6 fewer deaths for every 1000 patients.¹⁵

NURSING SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

A 2023 study from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing found that entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs decreased in 2022 for the first time in over 20 years. Enrollment fell 1.4%, marking the first non-growth year since 2000. Alternatively, 2023 enrollment bounced back with a modest 0.6% positive growth rate.¹⁶

Despite the growing need for RNs and nurses across the board, thousands of qualified students were turned away from nursing programs. In 2022, over 77,000 qualified applications were not accepted from entry-level baccalaureate, RN-to-BSN, master's, DNP, and PhD nursing programs due to lack of nurse faculty and resources.



71%

PERCENTAGE OF RNs

who hold a bachelors degree or higher



77,000

Qualified applicants turned away from nursing programs in 2022



217,000+

NUMBER OF GRADUATES

from a nursing program in 2022

On a positive note, over about 217,000 students graduated from a nursing program in 2023 adding to the much needed supply of nurses in the workforce. Among these graduates, we are seeing more racial and gender diversity enter the profession.¹⁷

Additionally, the percentage of RNs who hold a bachelor's degree or higher is at an all time high with a national average of 71%. This number is growing rapidly, up more than 10 points from 56% in 2021, with some states like Delaware with over 20 points of growth.¹⁸

ABOUT PEOPLE ELEMENT

When you lose your star RN or have to say goodbye to a promising employee early in their career at your health care facility, it's a tough blow to endure. The costs associated with high RN turnover are enough to make any organization cringe, not to mention the impact losing your best and brightest has on your team and your patients' lives outside of the dollar amount.

The unique People Element approach to workforce intelligence will help significantly lower turnover rates while simultaneously helping you identify where employees are disengaged and where leadership may be unaware of certain challenges and obstacles the RNs and other employees face. From this valuable insight, we will help you create a roadmap that leads to a more engaged workforce and a more engaging work environment to help attract top talent and keep them a happy part of your team for years to come.

Learn more at peopleelement.com



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