

2019

# SURVEY OF Registered Nurses

**A Challenging Decade Ahead**

A survey of nearly 20,000 Registered Nurses throughout the nation



[AMNHEALTHCARE.COM](http://AMNHEALTHCARE.COM)

©AMN Healthcare 2019

# Table of Contents

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **METHODOLOGY**

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

## **KEY FINDINGS**

## **FINDINGS**

- The Burden of Second Jobs
- Exposure to Workplace Violence
- Satisfaction: Career vs. Job
- Factors in Job Turnover
- Diversity and Job Satisfaction
- Commitment to Education
- Support for Professional Development
- Positive Influences on Care Quality
- Nurse Shortages from the Front Lines
- Midway Through the Retirement Wave
- Views on Travel Nursing

## **CONCLUSION**

## **REFERENCES**

# Introduction

The AMN 2019 Survey of Registered Nurses reveals growing pressures on millions of nurses in the United States who provide hands-on care and other services to patients every day. Nurses are working longer hours, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data, showing average weekly hours for hospital employees at their highest level in nearly 30 years. At the same time, care provided by nurses is becoming more complex as they cope with an aging patient population with greater acuity and comorbidities, requiring greater coordination of care.

Demand for services is rising along with the average age of the US population, because people over 65 are hospitalized three times as often as middle-aged people (CDC, 2010). Our nation's aging population is also fueling a wave – some say a tsunami – of retirements among Baby Boomer nurses, which is draining the nursing corps of experienced and specialty nurses. While the number of older Americans continues to climb, college-age and middle-age populations remain relatively static, so the pool of replacement candidates will be limited (Ortman, 2014).

All of these problems will continue throughout the next decade. In fact, the 2020s could be dubbed the decade of the healthcare worker, because workforce challenges facing healthcare organizations will peak in the coming years. Compounding the direct pressures on nurses and other healthcare professionals are indirect pressures, such as the impact of healthcare consolidation, the movement to value-based care, uncertainty over national healthcare policy, and the overall direction of the economy.

This report identifies many warning signs of pressures and challenges facing nurses related to rising demand for healthcare services coupled with growing shortages of nurses and other workplace and industry issues, all of which will likely get worse in the coming decade. These warning signs include:

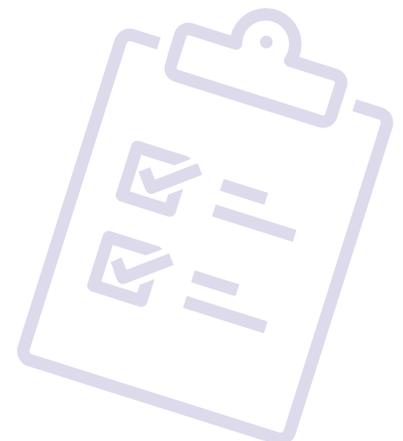
- significant percentages of nurses working second jobs
- nurses unable to spend the time they need with patients
- worry about workplace violence
- concern that their jobs are affecting their health
- plans to leave their current job soon
- desire for work-life balance

The survey also shows that solutions will be available, too. Healthcare organizations can effect change to improve work-life balance for nurses and reduce workplace violence. They can provide support for education and other professional development, improve diversity in the workplace, and enhance safety practices and other positive influences that help nurses provide quality patient care. In addition to revealing the challenges nurses face, the 2019 AMN RN Survey also shows where solutions can be applied to address those challenges.

With a total of 19,967 completed surveys received, the 2019 AMN Survey of Registered Nurses represents the most robust data set compiled to date in this biennial inquiry into the state of nursing. In addition to this survey report, the data set will also be utilized for reports on violence against nurses and the generational viewpoints of nurses about their jobs and careers.



**Cole Edmonson,**  
*DNP, RN, FACHE, NEA-BC, FAONL, FAAN*  
Chief Clinical Officer  
AMN Healthcare



Throughout the current decade, the AMN Survey of Registered Nurses has been directed by Marcia Faller, PhD, RN, a respected leader at AMN and the healthcare industry, and my immediate predecessor as Chief Clinical Officer at AMN Healthcare. Just as she built AMN’s industry-leading reputation for clinician quality, she also has developed the RN Survey into an authoritative data set and reports series that reveal the views of nurses on the challenges and opportunities they face. Marcia’s many contributions to quality nursing have helped raise standards for the entire industry.

– Dr. Cole Edmonson

# Methodology

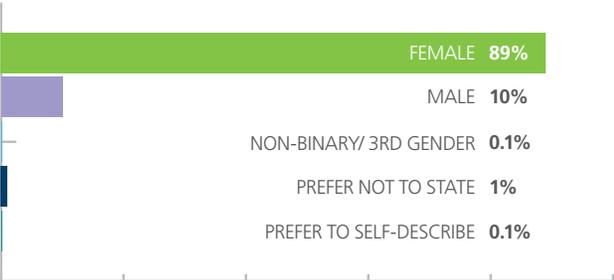
Responses to the 2019 AMN Survey of Registered Nurses were collected between March 27, 2019 and May 1, 2019. AMN received 38,245 responses with a total of 19,967 finished surveys from registered nurses in the United States. Responses were incentivized by the opportunity to enter a drawing for a \$300 VISA gift card. The data in this survey report were generated from the 19,967 survey responses by Registered Nurses.

# Demographics

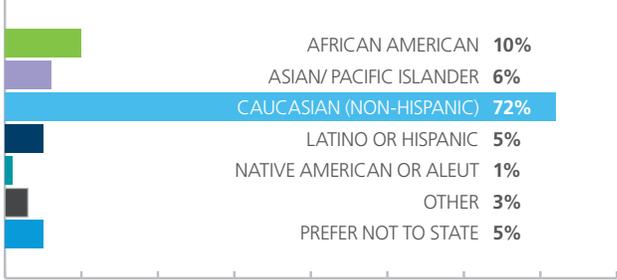
Demographic and work-related information are provided for nurses who submitted completed surveys. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, which may result in totals slightly more or less than 100%.

- Average age: 47
- Average years of nursing experience: 19
- Average number of hours worked each week: 39
- Average number of years at current organization: 6.5

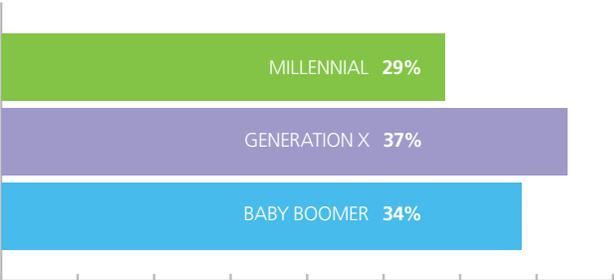
## GENDER



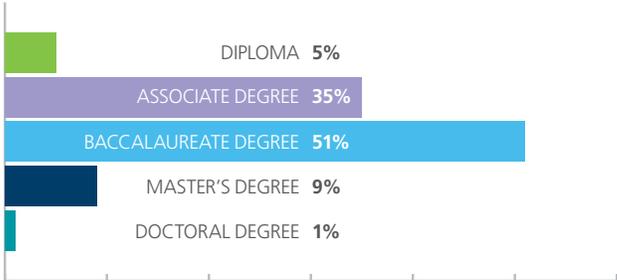
## ETHNICITY



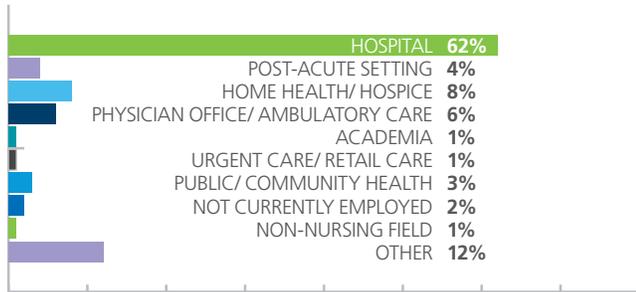
## GENERATION



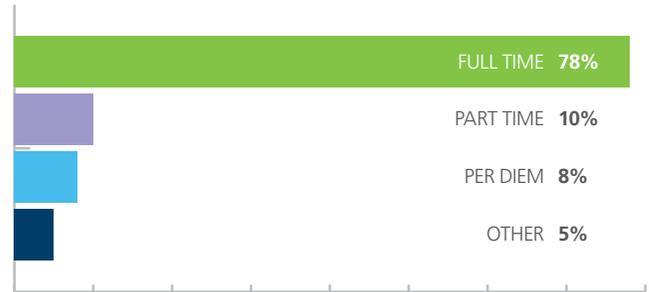
## HIGHEST DEGREE IN NURSING



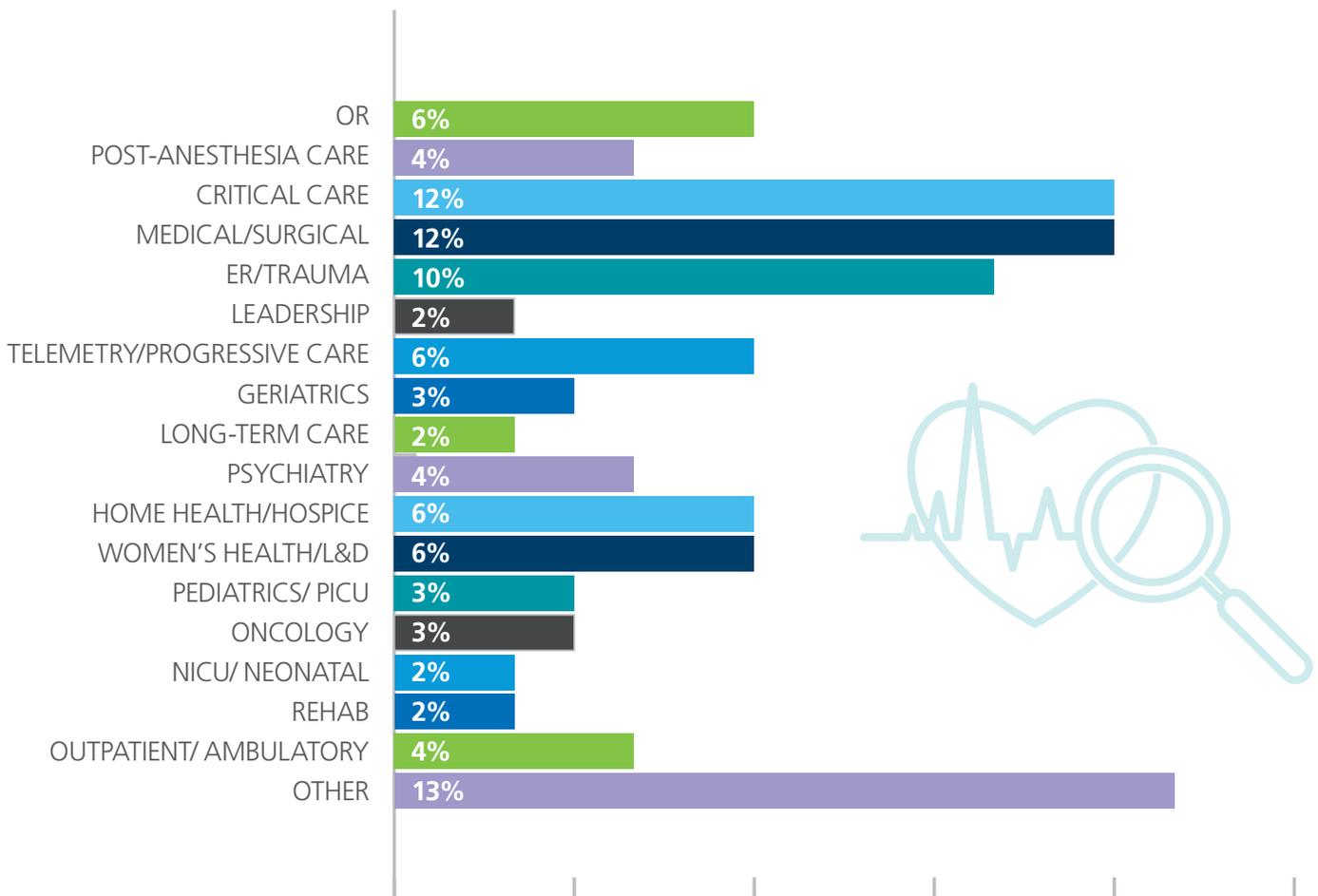
### CURRENT PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT SETTING



### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR JOB?

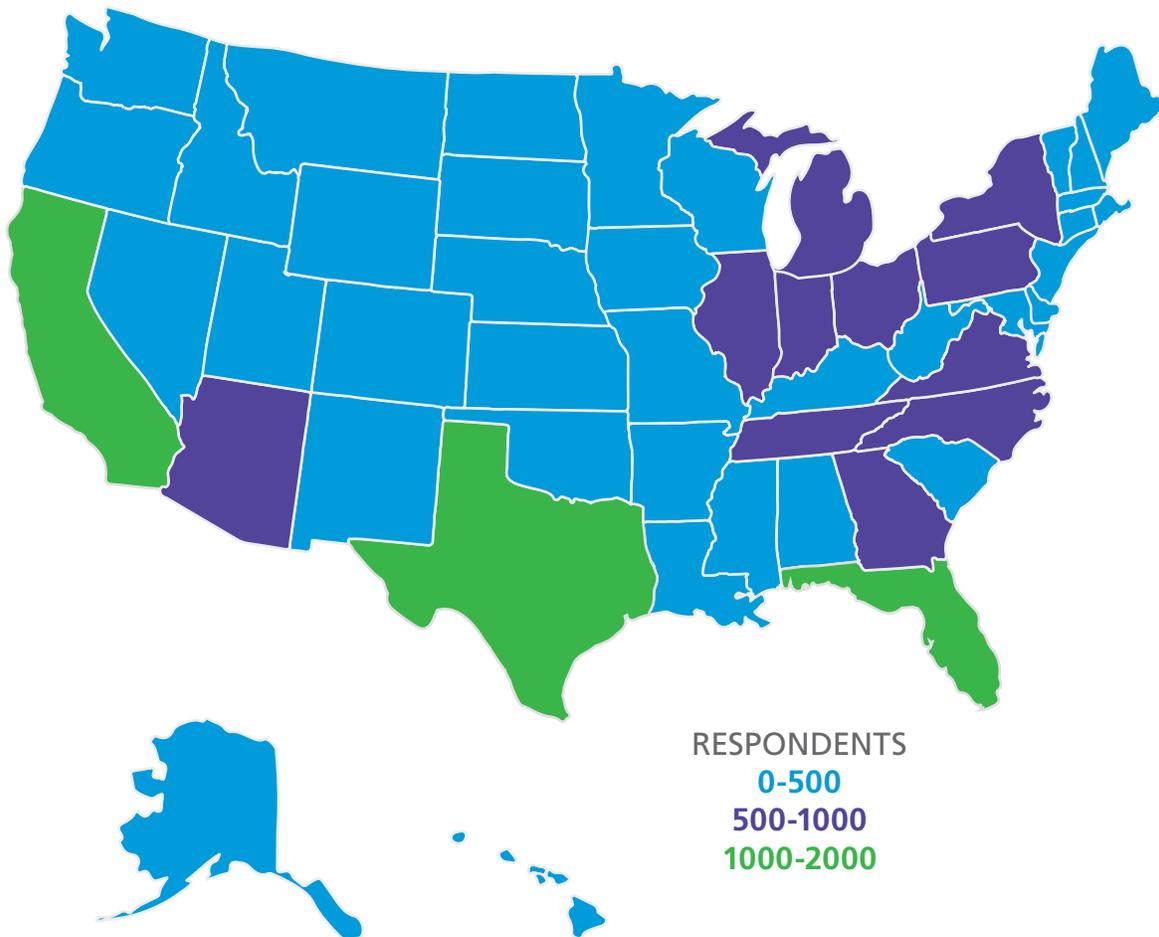


### WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY NURSING SPECIALTY?



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS FROM EACH STATE:

<b>Alaska</b>	64	<b>Illinois</b>	729	<b>Montana</b>	107	<b>Rhode Island</b>	59
<b>Alabama</b>	446	<b>Indiana</b>	516	<b>North Carolina</b>	749	<b>South Carolina</b>	352
<b>Arkansas</b>	237	<b>Iowa</b>	253	<b>North Dakota</b>	53	<b>South Dakota</b>	71
<b>Arizona</b>	548	<b>Kansas</b>	227	<b>Nebraska</b>	112	<b>Tennessee</b>	513
<b>California</b>	1,565	<b>Kentucky</b>	326	<b>New Hampshire</b>	93	<b>Texas</b>	1,448
<b>Colorado</b>	487	<b>Louisiana</b>	278	<b>New Jersey</b>	371	<b>Utah</b>	177
<b>Connecticut</b>	171	<b>Massachusetts</b>	425	<b>New Mexico</b>	187	<b>Virginia</b>	577
<b>District of Columbia</b>	45	<b>Maryland</b>	414	<b>Nevada</b>	187	<b>Vermont</b>	56
<b>Delaware</b>	71	<b>Maine</b>	124	<b>New York</b>	808	<b>Washington</b>	345
<b>Florida</b>	1,557	<b>Michigan</b>	613	<b>Ohio</b>	727	<b>Wisconsin</b>	415
<b>Georgia</b>	640	<b>Minnesota</b>	337	<b>Oklahoma</b>	221	<b>West Virginia</b>	131
<b>Hawaii</b>	101	<b>Missouri</b>	473	<b>Oregon</b>	198	<b>Wyoming</b>	43
<b>Idaho</b>	116	<b>Mississippi</b>	214	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	857		



# Key Findings

## SECOND JOBS

- More than one in five (22%) nurses hold more than one job as a nurse – approximately 858,000 nurses
- 7% hold a second full-time job as a nurse – approximately 273,000 nurses
- Nearly one in five nurses (18%) working more than one job say it negatively impacts the quality of their work
- 37% of nurses working more than one job say it negatively affects their quality of life
- One quarter say that working more than one job negatively influences their post-shift driving ability due to drowsy driving

## EXPOSURE TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- 41% of nurses say they have been victims of bullying, incivility or other forms of workplace violence
- 27% of nurses say they have witnessed workplace violence
- 10% say their organization addressed the situation extremely well or very well
- 63% say their organization did not address the situation well at all

## CAREER VS. JOB SATISFACTION

- 81% of nurses say they are satisfied with their career choice, with “extremely satisfied” as the largest category
- 65% say they are satisfied with their jobs, with “somewhat satisfied” as the largest category
- 75% say they are satisfied with the quality of care they are able to provide to patients
- 70% say they would encourage others to become nurses
- 66% worry that their job is affecting their health
- 44% say they usually don’t have the time they need to spend with their patients
- 44% say they often feel like resigning from their jobs

## FACTORS IN JOB TURNOVER

- 39% of nurses say flexibility and work-life balance are the most important factors that influence their intent to remain at their current organizations
- 31% say compensation and benefits are the biggest influences on their intent to remain at their current organizations
- 27% say it is unlikely they will be working at their current job in one year

## DIVERSITY AND JOB SATISFACTION

- 60% of nurses say their organizations support diversity in the workplace extremely well or very well
- 16% say their organization supports diversity only slightly well or not well at all
- Of those nurses who say their organizations support diversity extremely well, 43% are also extremely satisfied with their jobs, compared to only 5% of those whose organizations do not support diversity well at all
- Of nurses who say their organizations do not support diversity well at all, 45% strongly agree that they often feel like resigning from their position, compared to only 11% of those whose organizations do extremely well at supporting diversity
- Of nurses who say their organizations support diversity extremely well, 59% say they are extremely likely to be working in their jobs one year from now, compared to only 18% of those whose organizations do not support diversity well at all

## COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

- 18% of nurses say they are currently enrolled in a program to advance their nursing education
  - Of those who are enrolled: Millennials – 25%, Generation X – 21%, Baby Boomers – 7%
- 18% who are not enrolled are planning to enroll in a program to advance their nursing education in the next three years
  - Of those planning to enroll in the next three years: Millennials – 34%, Gen X – 22%, Baby Boomers – 4%
- 7% are currently enrolled in an Advanced Practice program; 20% plan to enroll in an Advanced Practice program
- 12% of Millennial nurses are currently enrolled in an Advanced Practice program; 39% of Millennial nurses plan to enroll in an Advanced Practice program

*“Nurses cannot give holistic patient care, nurturing minds, bodies, and spirits, if they are depleted physically, mentally, and spiritually themselves. They cannot give from an empty well. Self-care must be a top priority, for their sakes and that of those they serve.”*

**LeAnn Thieman**

*Nationally Acclaimed Professional Speaker, Author, & Nurse*

## SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 43% of nurses say their organizations does extremely well or very well in supporting professional development; 29% say their organization does slightly well or not well at all
- 57% say their organization offers tuition reimbursement, while 53% say they offer continuing education. 18% say their organization provides no professional development support at all
- Nurses working for organizations that do extremely well at supporting their professional development are significantly more likely to be satisfied with their career, job, and ability to provide quality care, and they are more likely to remain at their current job

## NURSE SHORTAGES

- The percentage of nurses who say the nurse shortage has grown worse over the last five years has risen from 37% in 2015 to 48% in 2017 to 52% in 2019
- The percentage of nurses who say the shortage is not as bad as five years ago has declined from 34% in 2015 to 22% in 2017 to 17% in 2019

## RETIREMENT WAVE

- 20% of nurses say they are planning to retire in the next five years
- 86% of Baby Boomer nurses say they are planning to retire in the next five years
- Of Baby Boomers planning to retire, 39% say they will retire in one year or less
- Of all nurses who say they are not planning to retire, 10% say they will leave direct patient care in the next year

# Findings

## THE BURDEN OF SECOND JOBS

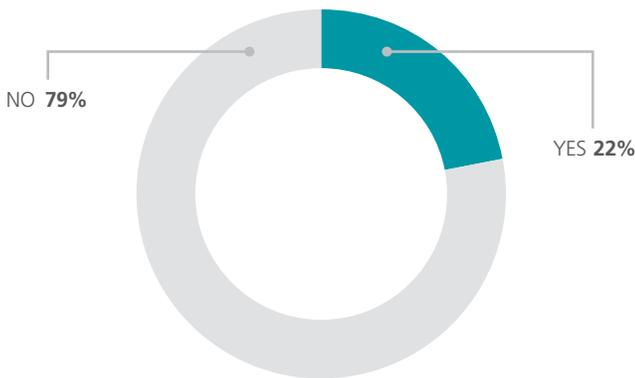
Working as a registered nurse is physically, emotionally, and mentally demanding. The fact that 22% of nurses also hold more than one job as a nurse is a concern, even though most say it does not negatively impact the quality of their work.

This survey shows that 7% of nurses are working a full-time second job as a nurse. With approximately 3.9 million people holding active registered nurse licenses in the United States (Smiley, 2018), that means about 273,000 are working two full-time jobs as nurses. Among the 19% who chose “other” to describe their second jobs, a complex array of alternatives were described, ranging from school nurse to management roles.

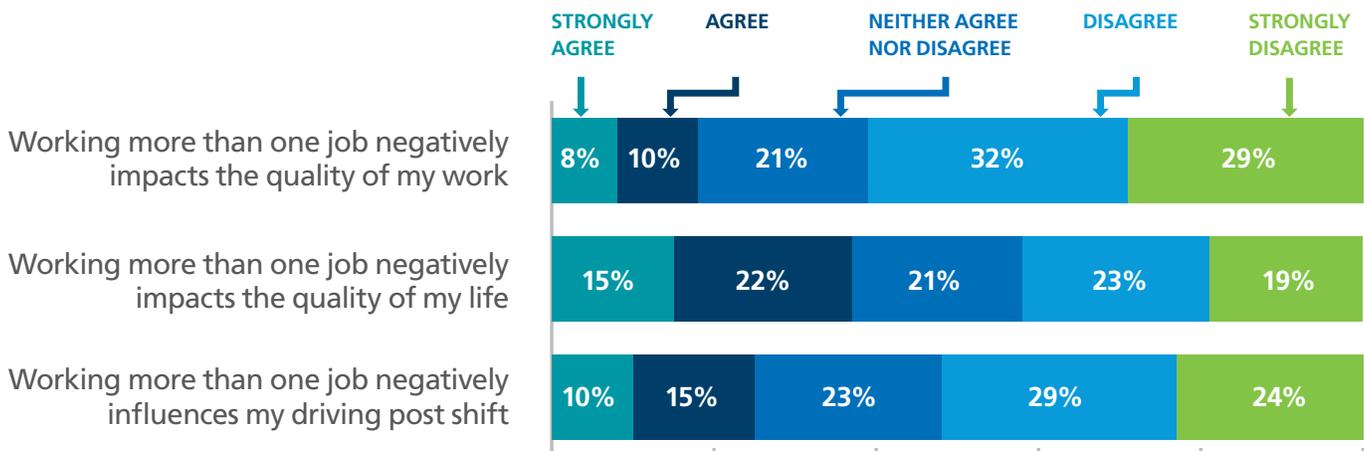
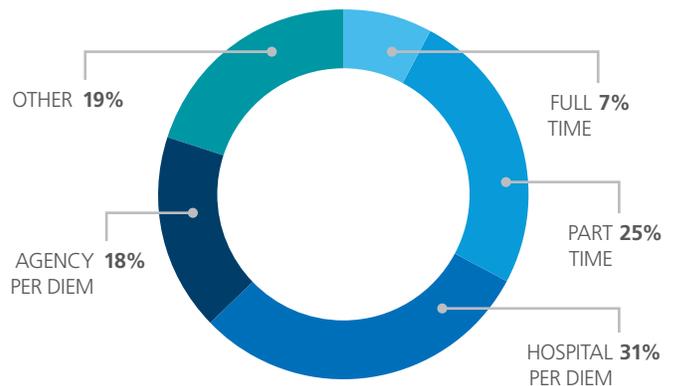
Nearly one in five nurses (18%) working more than one job agree that it negatively impacts the quality of their work, while 61% disagree. Thirty seven percent agree that working multiple jobs has a negative impact on their quality of life, and 42% disagree.

A major concern should be that one in four nurses say that working more than one job negatively influences their driving after their shift. A certain health risk, “drowsy driving” resulted in about 91,000 police-reported

DO YOU HOLD MORE THAN ONE POSITION AS A NURSE?



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR SECOND JOB?



car crashes in 2017, causing 800 fatalities and 50,000 injuries, according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates (NHTSA, 2017). The real numbers may be much higher; another study estimated more than three times that number of crashes caused by drowsy drivers (Tefft, 2014). This represents a significant health risk to nurses working more than one job.

A growing body of research shows the negative impact of extended hours for nurses on patient safety and the well-being of nurses themselves (Stimpfel, 2012). Nurses working shifts of 13 hours or more experience a greater likelihood of burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover. The Institute of Medicine recommends that hospitals should limit nurses to a maximum of 12 hours per day and 60 hours per week (IOM, 2003).

## EXPOSURE TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace violence is a chronic and deep-seated problem that’s a recognized hazard of the healthcare industry, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Nurses and other healthcare workers face an increased risk of work-related assaults primarily from patients, caused by agitation and violent behavior related to pain, disease progression, devastating prognoses, mood-altering medications, and dementia combined with unfamiliar surroundings. Workplace violence in healthcare also is underreported. While under 20% of all workplace injuries happen to healthcare workers, they are subject to half of all workplace assaults. (OSHA, 2016).

Nurses and nurses aides experience the highest rates of assault, particularly in emergency departments and psychiatric units. But violence also occurs in clinics and home healthcare, with the latter linked to the presence of weapons and drugs, and to domestic violence (Phillips, 2016).

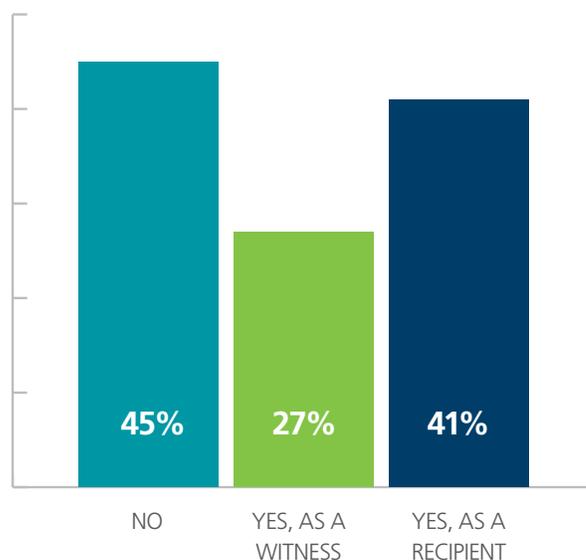
However, workplace violence by patients is not the only problem faced by nurses and other healthcare workers. Another prevalent problem is known as lateral violence, which includes hostile and aggressive behavior among coworkers, incivility, and bullying. New graduate nurses are particularly vulnerable.

Not surprisingly, workplace violence can have an impact on retention (Weaver, 2013). Workplace bullying is a significant factor in nurses’ intentions to quit their job or leave the field of nursing (Johnson, 2009). Nurses and other healthcare workers who are victims of assault may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, leading to a range of difficult symptoms, decreased productivity, and high job turnover (Gates, 2011).

*“I work in the ER. For me to tell about one specific violent event would be useless, because this happens every single day. We take care of patients on drugs and alcohol, with violent histories, and lots of psychiatric and incarceration issues... Nurses are always on the front line for backlash from patients and the community.”*

**Survey Respondent**

HAVE YOU PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED BULLYING, INCIVILITY OR ANY OTHER FORM OF VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE IN THE PAST YEAR?



## HOW WELL DID YOUR ORGANIZATION ADDRESS THIS SITUATION?

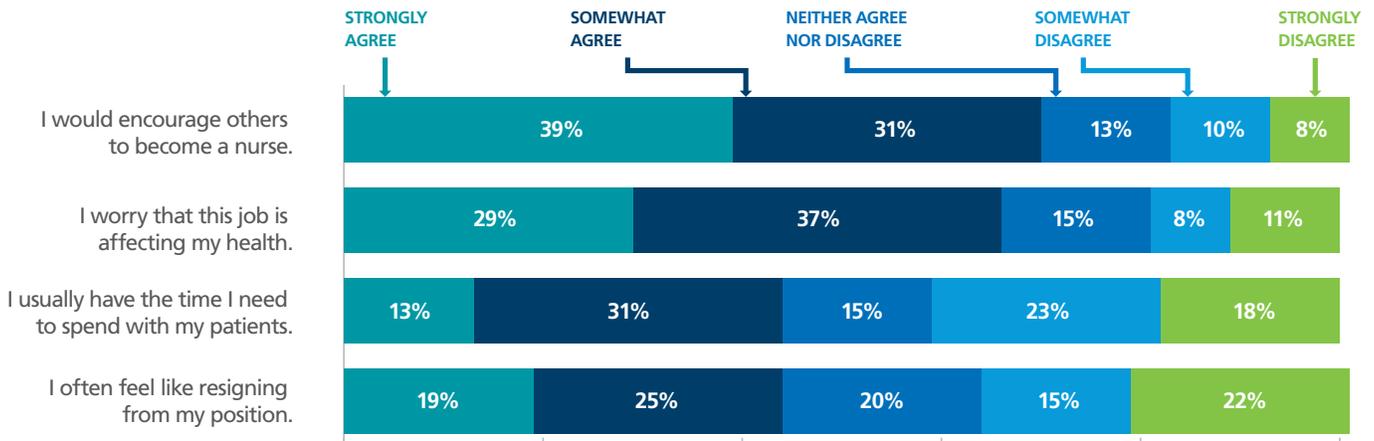
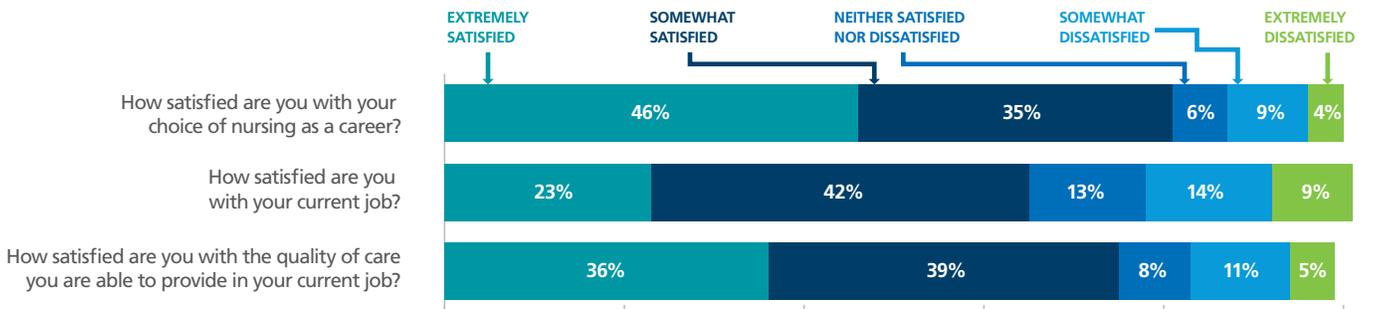


Forty-one percent of nurses say they have been victims of some form of workplace violence, while another 27% have witnessed such violence. Healthcare organizations have not done a good job of addressing workplace violence, according to nurses. Only 11% say that their organization has addressed violence extremely well or very well, while 63% say their employers have not done well at all in addressing specific instances of workplace violence.

## SATISFACTION: CAREER VS. JOB

Career satisfaction and job satisfaction are two very different matters for nurses. Nurses are intensely proud of their careers, a fact that has been consistently shown throughout a decade of RN Surveys by AMN Healthcare.

In 2019, 81% of nurses said they were extremely satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their choice of nursing as a career, and “extremely satisfied” was the largest category. Only 13% said they were dissatisfied. When it came to their jobs, however, 65% said they were satisfied, with “somewhat satisfied” representing the largest cohort. And 23% said they were dissatisfied with their jobs. These percentages have remained roughly the same in RN Surveys over the years.



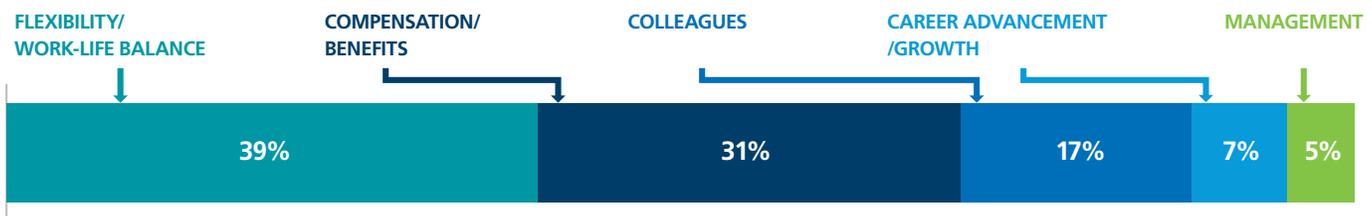
In 2017, 83% of nurses said they were satisfied with their careers and 60% were satisfied with their jobs. In 2015, 85% were satisfied with their careers and 63% with their jobs. The responses to other survey questions shed light on the reasons why many nurses feel greater affinity toward their careers and to their own abilities as nurses than they do to their current jobs and workplaces. For example, 75% say they are satisfied with the quality of care they are able to provide, but only 44% say they have the time they need to spend with their patients. Seventy percent said they would encourage others to become nurses; while 66% worry that their job is affecting their health, and 44% say they often feel like quitting their jobs. This deviation in sentiment between careers and jobs reflects both that nursing jobs can be very difficult and fraught with challenges, yet nurses are deeply devoted to their calling.

## FACTORS IN JOB TURNOVER

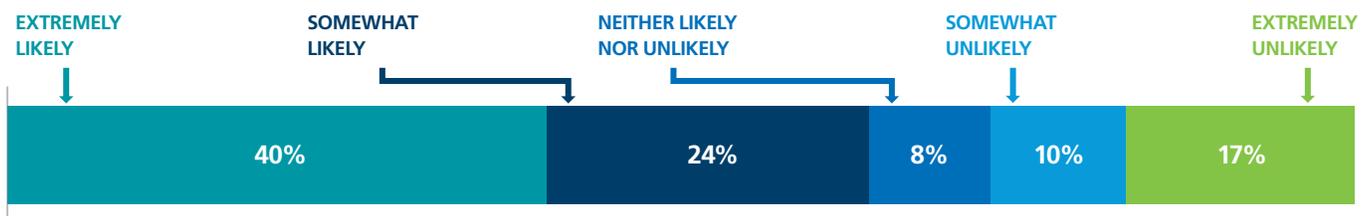
An important influence on job retention for nurses is flexibility and work-life balance. While compensation and benefits come in second, nearly 40% of survey respondents said that flexibility and work-life balance are most likely to keep them at their jobs. However, with shortages of nurses growing, and with overtime and average work hours increasing (AMN Healthcare, 2019), flexibility and work-life balance could become more elusive for many registered nurses.

About two-thirds of nurses say it is likely that they will still be working at their current jobs in a year, but more than one in four say it is unlikely. The nurse turnover rate has been rising steadily for years, but it took a significant leap in 2018 when it rose to 18.1% (Advisory Board, 2019).

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MOST INFLUENCES YOUR INTENT TO REMAIN AT YOUR CURRENT ORGANIZATION?



WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD YOU WILL BE WORKING IN YOUR CURRENT JOB ONE YEAR FROM NOW?

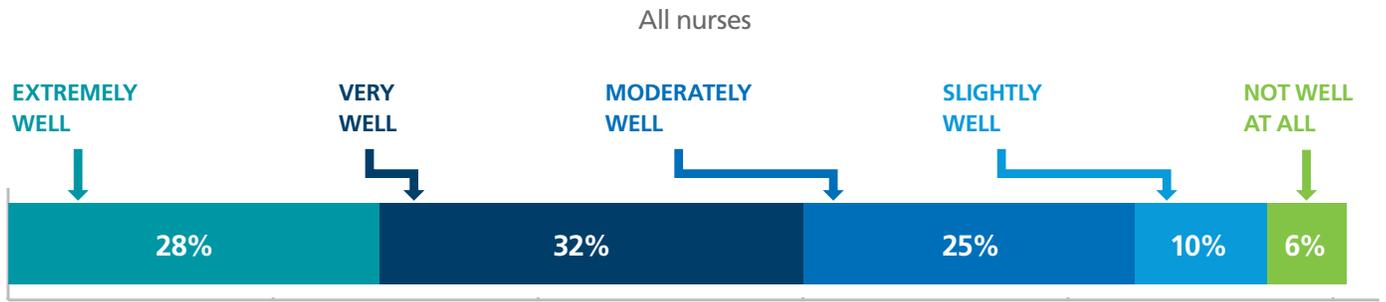


## DIVERSITY AND JOB SATISFACTION

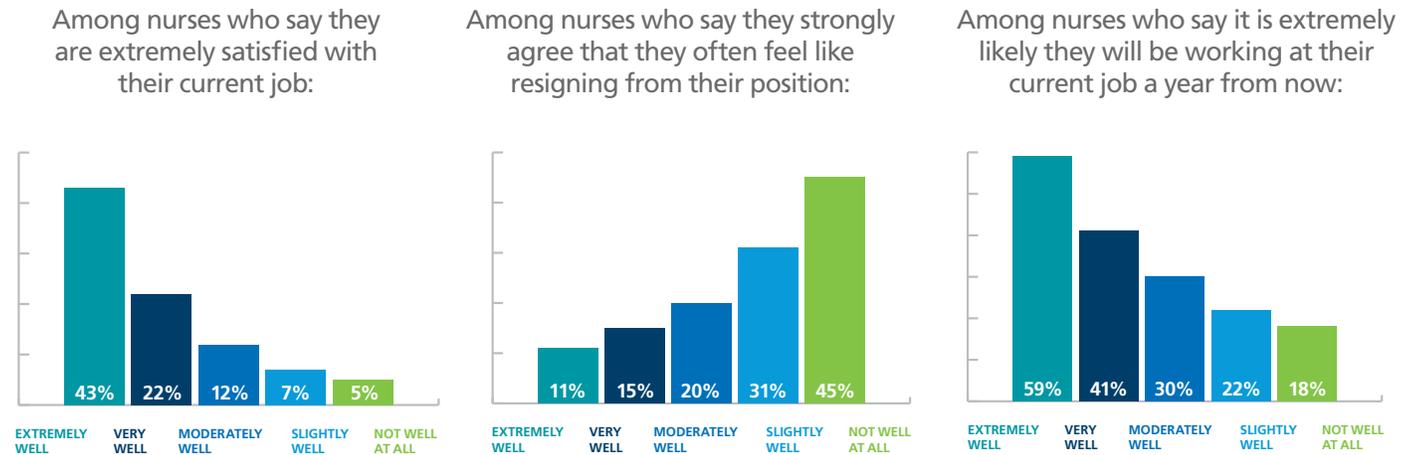
For the first time, the AMN 2019 RN Survey included survey questions on how well nurses' current organizations support diversity in the workplace. The results found that 60% said their organizations supported diversity extremely well or very well, while another 25% said this was done moderately well. About 16% of nurses surveyed said their organizations support diversity only slightly well or not well at all.

When nurse views on organizational support for diversity are compared to issues related to turnover and retention, the results are significant. Of those nurses who say their organizations support diversity extremely well, 43% are also extremely satisfied with their jobs, compared to only 5% of those whose organizations do not support diversity well at all.

## HOW WELL DOES YOUR CURRENT ORGANIZATION SUPPORT DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE?



## HOW WELL DOES YOUR CURRENT ORGANIZATION SUPPORT DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE?



Of nurses who say their organizations do not support diversity well at all, 45% strongly agree that they often feel like resigning from their position, compared to only 11% of those whose organizations do extremely well at supporting diversity. Among nurses who say their organizations support diversity extremely well, 59% say they are extremely likely to be working in their jobs one year from now, compared to only 18% of those whose organizations do not support diversity well at all.

Organizational support for diversity significantly correlates to nurses' job satisfaction and their feelings about leaving their current jobs. Diversity efforts may be an important and overlooked factor in improving nurse retention.

### COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

Education is critical to quality in nursing practice. This important fact was driven home by the 2010 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, "The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health," which recommended that "nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training, through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression." The report recommended aggressive targets for 80% of nurses holding Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees and a doubling of nurses with Master of

*"To transform our healthcare system to a wellness system, we must continue to advance the preparation of nurses as leaders in practice, education, and research."*

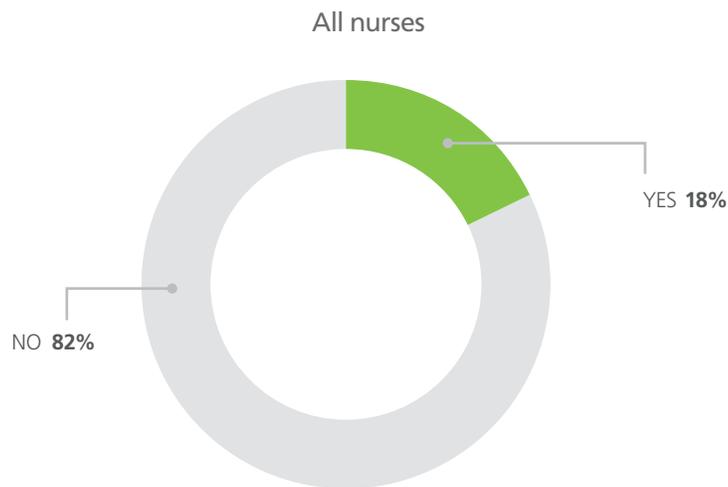
**Adriana Perez**  
 PhD, ANP-BC, FAAN  
 Assistant Professor of Nursing  
 University of Pennsylvania

Science in Nursing degrees by 2020, along with fostering a culture that encourages and supports lifelong learning (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2010).

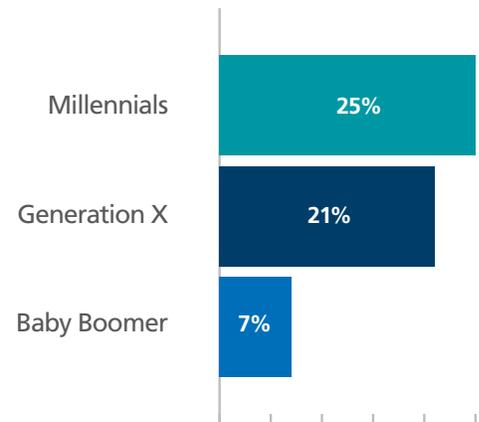
Achieving the 2020 IOM education goals continues to be a challenge for the nursing community. A trend from AMN RN Surveys in 2015, 2017, and 2019 shows a growing percentage of nurses who say they won't pursue further education in the next three years. This may be due to the increasing hours that nurses are working (AMN Healthcare, 2019) and greater demand for their immediate services because of growing nurse shortages.

However, the AMN RN Surveys from 2017 and 2019 have shown strong interest among younger nurses in furthering their education and training, and this is especially true for Millennial nurses. The 2019 RN Survey shows that more than one in four Millennials and one in five Gen Xers are currently enrolled in programs to advance their nursing education. Of those nurses not currently enrolled in nursing education programs, 34% of Millennials and 22% of Gen Xers plan to enroll in the next three years.

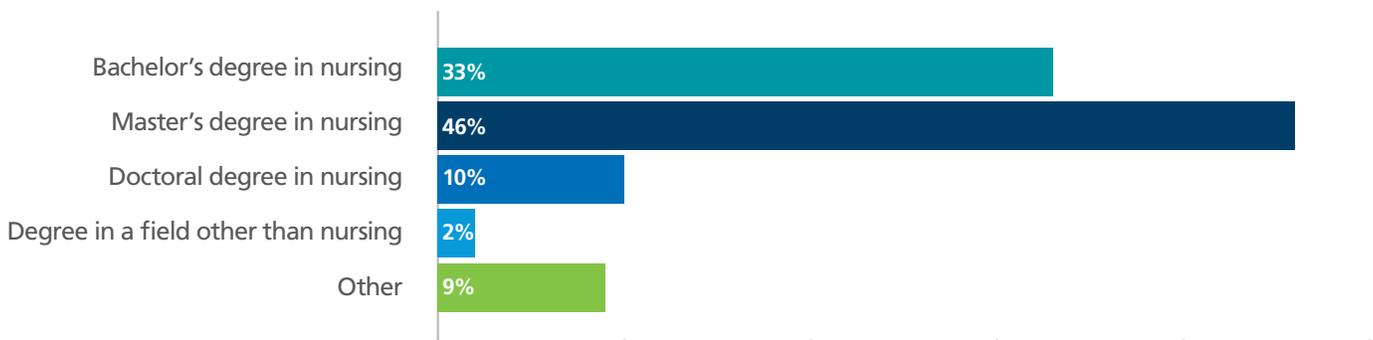
### ARE YOU CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN A PROGRAM TO ADVANCE YOUR NURSING EDUCATION?



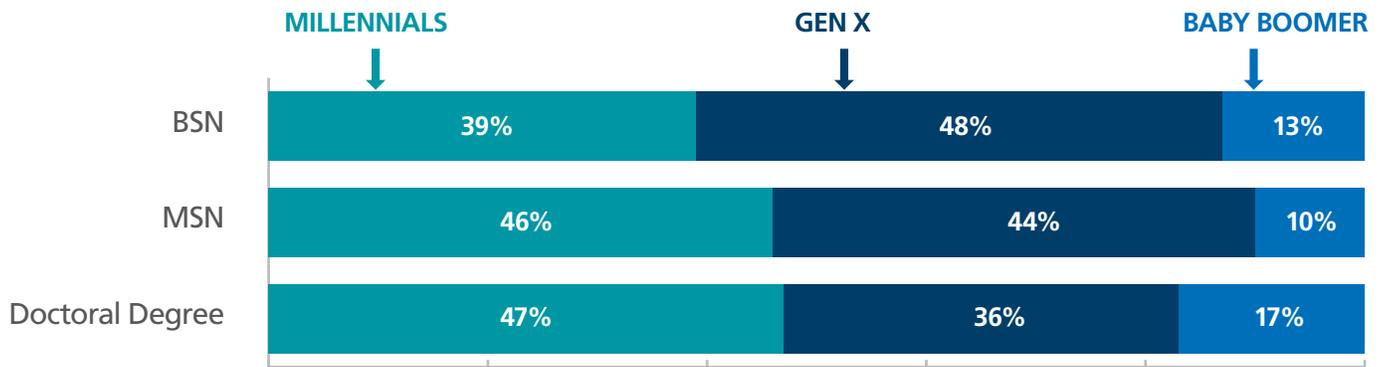
### OF THOSE ANSWERING YES



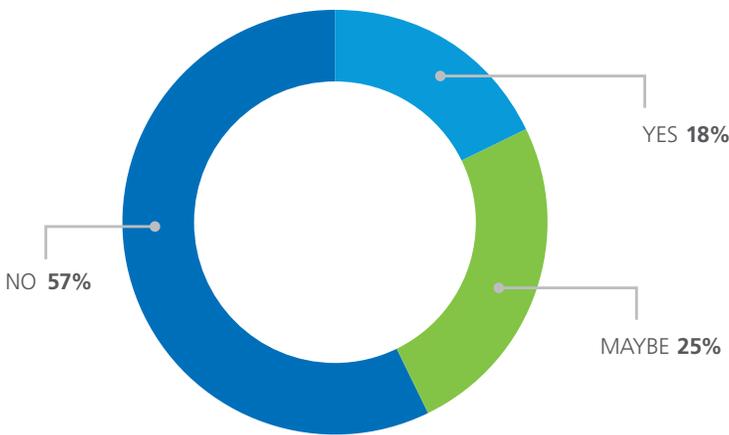
### WHICH PROGRAM ARE YOU ENROLLED IN?



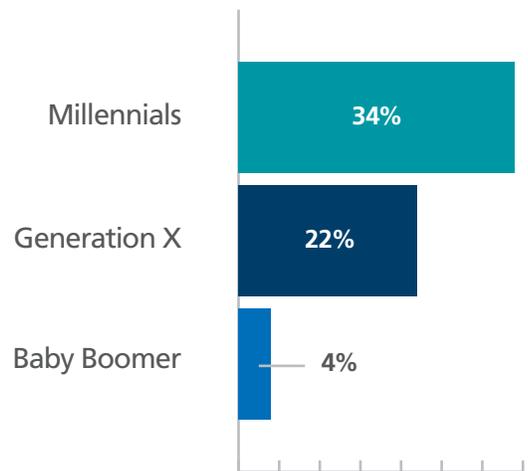
PERCENTAGE FOR EACH NURSING PROGRAM



FOR THOSE NOT CURRENTLY ENROLLED, ARE YOU PLANNING TO ENROLL IN A PROGRAM TO ADVANCE YOUR NURSING EDUCATION IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS?

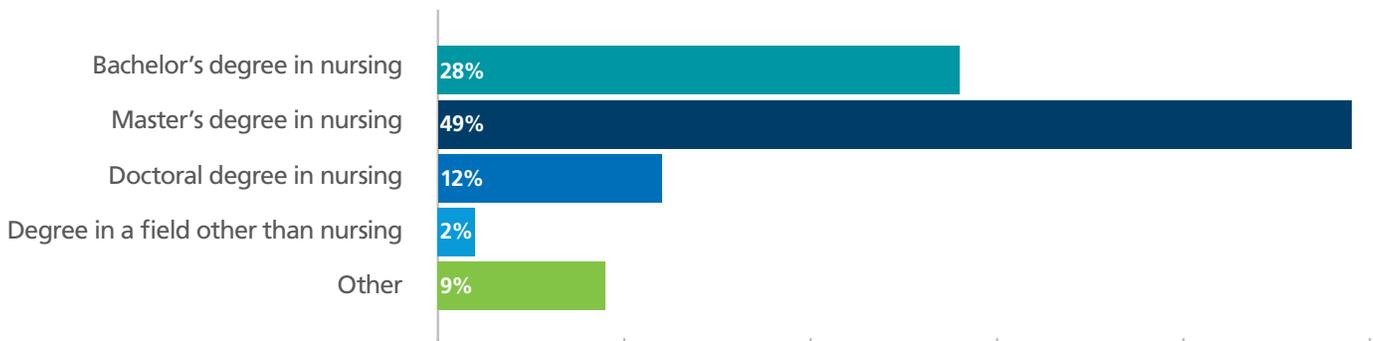


OF THOSE PLANNING TO ENROLL IN NEXT 3 YEARS

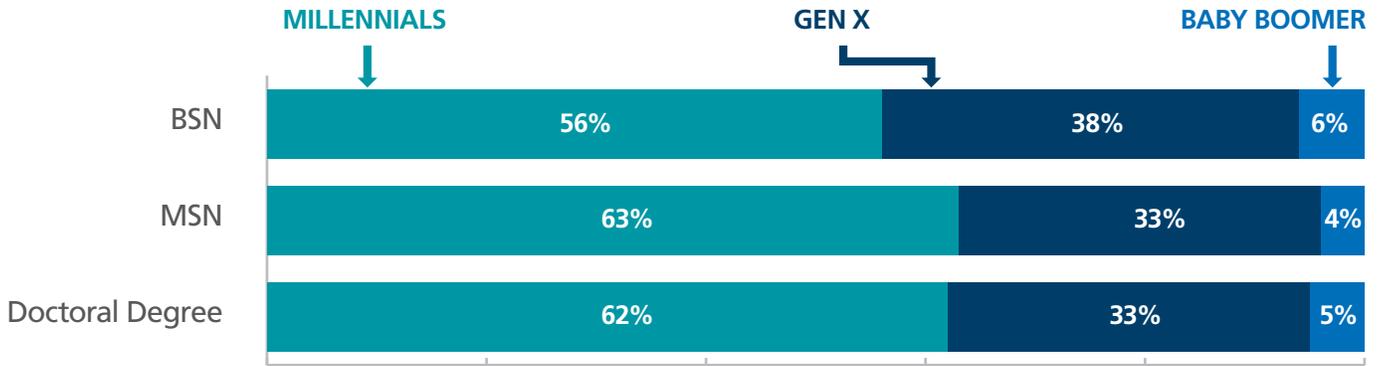


WHICH PROGRAM DO YOU PLAN TO ENROLL IN?

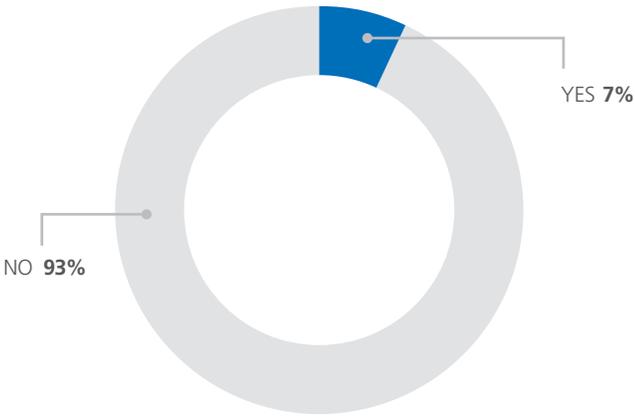
All nurses



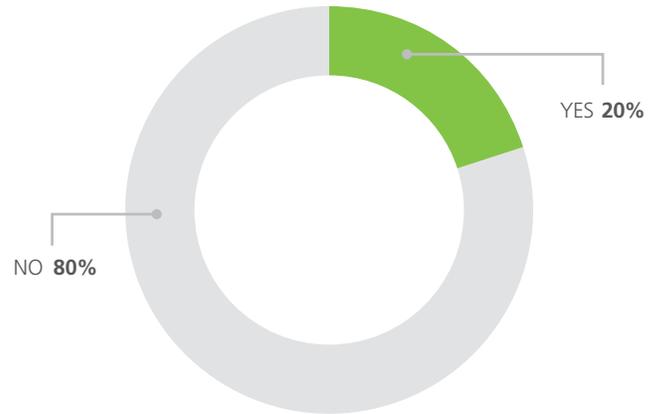
PERCENTAGE FOR EACH NURSING PROGRAM



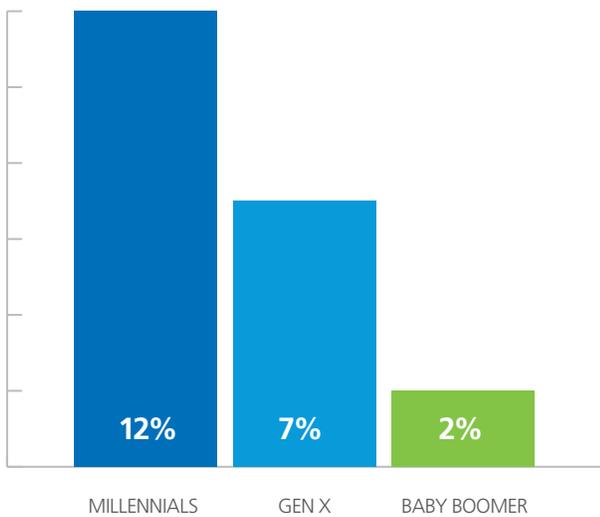
ARE YOU CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN AN ADVANCED PRACTICE PROGRAM?



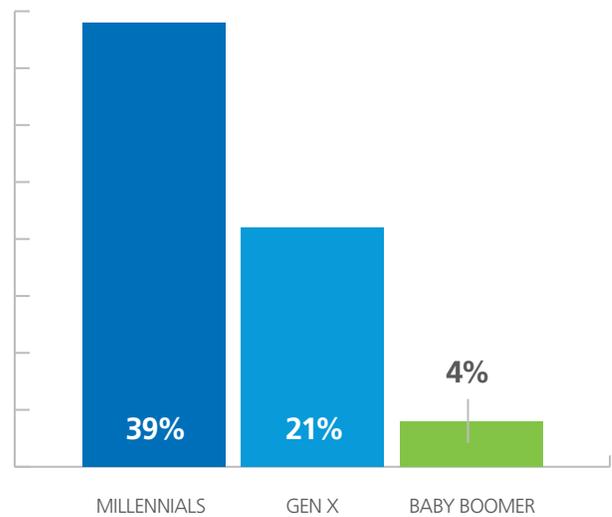
DO YOU PLAN ON PURSUING FURTHER EDUCATION AS AN ADVANCED PRACTITIONER?



CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN ADVANCED PRACTICE PROGRAM?



PLANNING TO ENROLL IN ADVANCED PRACTICE PROGRAM?



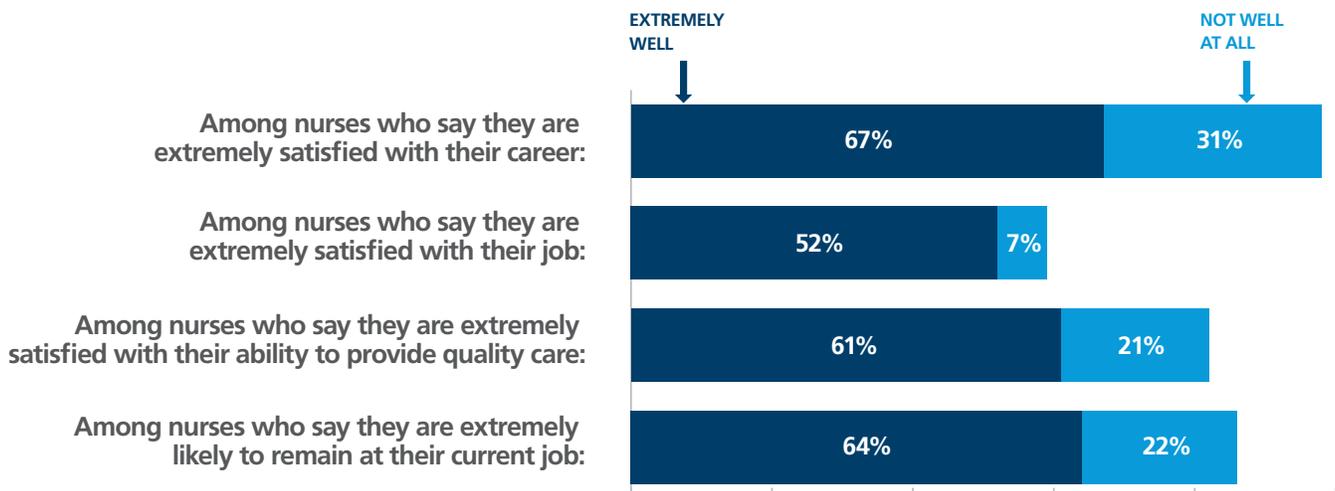
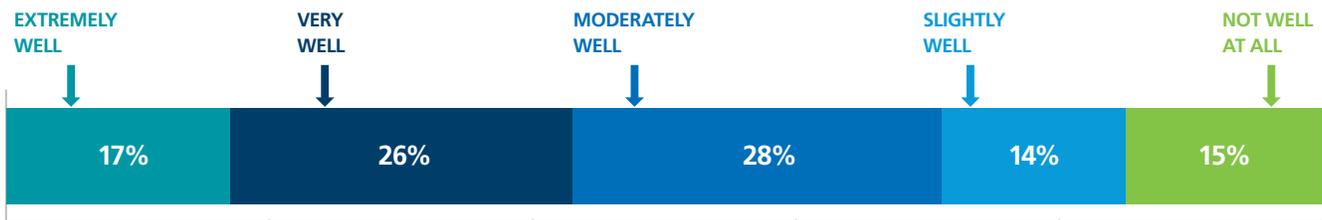
Advanced Practice nursing, and Nurse Practitioner in particular, is one of the fastest growing occupations in the United States. Survey responses on nurses' pursuit of Advanced Practice education are startling. While only 7% of respondents say they are currently enrolled in an Advanced Practice program, 20% – one in five – of all nurses say they plan to pursue education to become an advanced practitioner. For Millennials, Advanced Practice is extremely popular; 12% are currently enrolled in a program, and 39% who are not currently enrolled in an Advanced Practice program say they plan to enroll in the future.

The higher level of authority and autonomy of Advanced Practice nursing, plus the higher pay, is likely a compelling enticement for many nurses, and particularly for Millennials. However, the scale of interest in Advanced Practice among younger nurses has a discernible downside: With a limited supply of nurses, more Advanced Practice nurses means fewer bedside nurses. In an era of growing nurse shortages, when the numbers of college-age people are forecast to remain static for many years, increasing percentages of nurses opting for Advanced Practice could exacerbate nursing shortages in other specialties.

## SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

HOW WELL DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION SUPPORT YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

All nurses

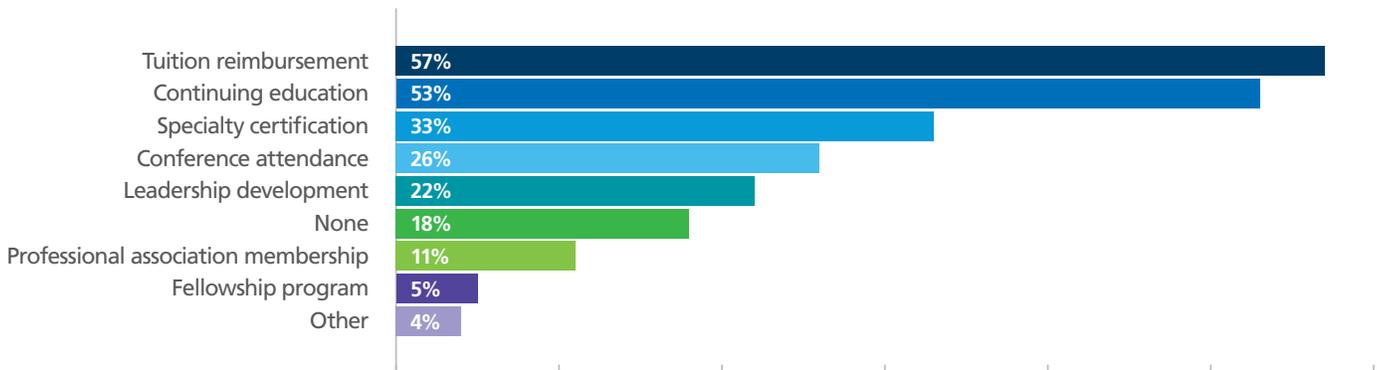


*“Engaging front-line staff in decision making is essential to improved workplace environments, quality of care, and patient experience.”*

**Dr. Bob Dent**

FACHE, FAAN, FAONL Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer, Emory Healthcare

## WHICH FORMS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU FROM YOUR EMPLOYER?



Organizational support for education, training, and other professional development is necessary to maintain and improve the quality of nursing. Nurse responses to questions on how their organizations support their professional development show a mixed experience. While most organizations offer some support, nearly one in five nurses say their employers offer none at all, and only 57% say their employers provide tuition reimbursement and 53% offer continuing education. Forty-three percent of nurses say that their organization does extremely well or very well at supporting their professional development, while 29% say their organization does slightly well or not well at all.

Support for professional development is also tied to higher career satisfaction and job satisfaction among nurses, along with better ability to provide quality care and greater likelihood of remaining at their current jobs. Fifty-two percent of nurses who work at organizations that do extremely well at supporting nurses' professional development are also extremely satisfied with their jobs. Of those nurses who work at organizations that do not do well at all supporting their professional development, only 7% are extremely satisfied with their jobs.

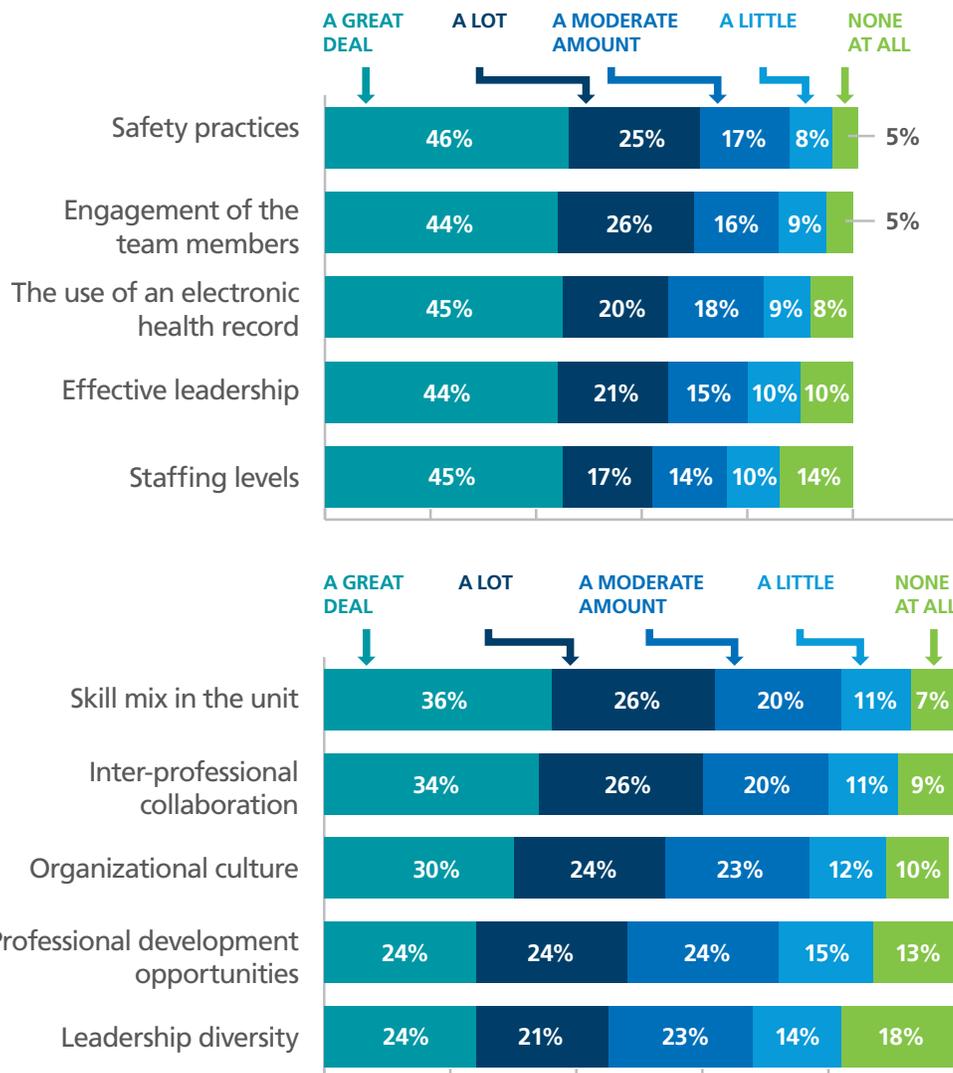
Professional development is important not only to maintain and improve patient-care quality but also for nurse retention. Internships, residency programs, and transition-to-practice programs are promising interventions to improve nurse retention (Brook, 2019). Organizations that strongly support professional development for nurses would likely see improved retention.

## POSITIVE INFLUENCES ON CARE QUALITY

Supporting nurses so they can provide the highest quality care to patients is one of the most important responsibilities for any healthcare organization. As the largest healthcare profession, and the one with the most hands-on interaction with patients, nurses make the most impact on patient experience (Cleveland Clinic, 2018). A study examining the relationship between nursing and patient satisfaction at 430 hospitals found that the nurse work environment was directly related to all patient satisfaction measurements in the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems, or HCAHPS (Kutney-Lee, 2009).

In order to provide the best support for quality nursing care, healthcare organizations need to consider the factors that nurses themselves say are the most important positive influences on their work. When asked about the level of positive influence each factor has on their ability to provide quality patient care, 71% of nurses responded "a great deal" and "a lot" for safety practices, 70% for engagement of team members, 65% for effective leadership, 62% for staffing levels, 62% for skill mix on the unit, and 62% for inter-professional collaboration.

INDICATE THE LEVEL OF POSITIVE INFLUENCE EACH HAS ON YOUR ABILITY TO PROVIDE QUALITY PATIENT CARE:



*“Leadership must be rooted in a commitment to serve. You cannot be an effective leader unless you see yourself – and act – first as a servant. By meeting the needs of others – and helping others to grow and develop – effective servant leaders beget more servant leaders. The commitment to serve is the fuel of the engine, and the output is another generation of leaders ready to fill up the tank.”*

**Linda J Knodel**

MHA, MSN, NE-BC, CPHQ, FACHE, FAAN Senior Vice President/Chief Nurse Executive Kaiser Permanente

## NURSE SHORTAGES FROM THE FRONT LINES

The growing problem of nurse shortages is widely acknowledged in the healthcare industry, but working nurses themselves have the most proximate view of the problem. Shortages are caused by a confluence of factors, including an aging U.S. population, which is both increasing the numbers of patients while constraining the supply of nurses due to retirements and a static college-age population. The population of Americans over 65 will grow from 15% in 2016 to 24% of the population by 2060, while the percentage of young people shrinks. By 2035, for the first time in US history, older adults will outnumber children (US Census Bureau, 2018).

Older people use much more healthcare than the general population, plus their medical conditions are marked by greater acuity and comorbidities. Healthcare utilization and expenditures for people 65 and older are about three times more than the average working age adult and about five times more than the average child (Lassman, 2014). All of this translates into growing demand for healthcare services and greater complexity of services, which in turn translates into rising demand for healthcare professionals and others who provide those services, particularly in the specialties.

In addition, the post-recession economic expansion has resulted in millions of new jobs, many with health insurance, and more money for consumers to spend on healthcare, all of which increased demand for healthcare services.

The rising percentages of nurses who say that shortages are getting worse, and the declining percentages who say shortages are not as bad as they were, reflect the reality of the growing nursing shortage crisis. Since the population of older Americans will continue to grow, and the college-age population will remain static, the impact of nurse shortages on the healthcare industry could become severe in the next decade.

### VIEWS ON NURSE SHORTAGES FROM RN SURVEYS

2019	2017	2015	
52%	48%	37%	The shortage is worse than five years ago.
17%	22%	34%	The shortage is not as bad as five years ago.
31%	30%	29%	There has been no change.

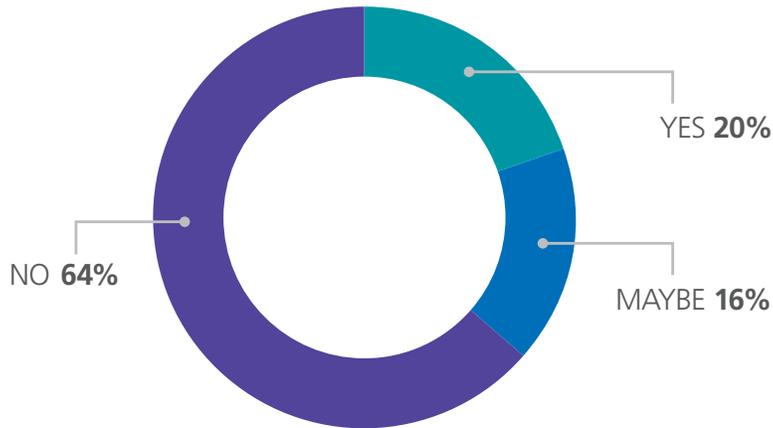
## MIDWAY THROUGH THE RETIREMENT WAVE

A wave of retirements among Baby Boomer nurses is well underway, with 10,000 people turning 65 every day, a number that is set to increase to 12,000 daily in the next decade. By 2030, all Baby Boomers will be 65 or older (US Census Bureau, 2018). The number of Baby Boomer RNs peaked at 1.26 million in 2008. Since 2012, approximately 60,000 nurses have been retiring each year, and that number is now climbing. By 2020, there will be only 660,000 Baby Boomer nurses in the healthcare workforce (Buerhaus, 2017). The healthcare industry appears to be approximately halfway through the wave of Baby Boomer nurse retirements.

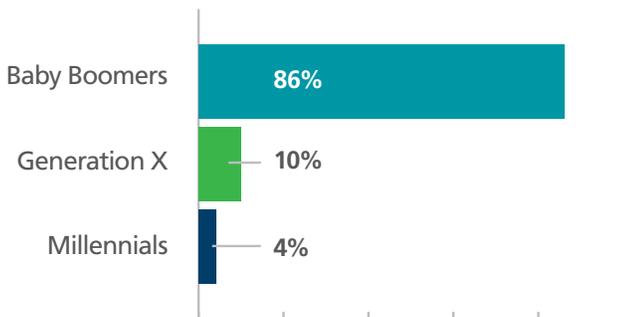
Not surprisingly, the largest percentage of nurses planning to retire in the next five years are Baby Boomers. And, of all Baby Boomers planning to retire, 39% say they will do so in one year or less.

Many nurses who are not contemplating retirement still intend to make a change in the coming years. Notable among those changes are that 10% say they will remain in nursing but move to a job outside of direct patient care and another 8% will return to school. On top of that, 2% say they will leave nursing for another field. Taken together, this suggests that of all nurses who are not planning to retire, one in five say they will leave bedside practice.

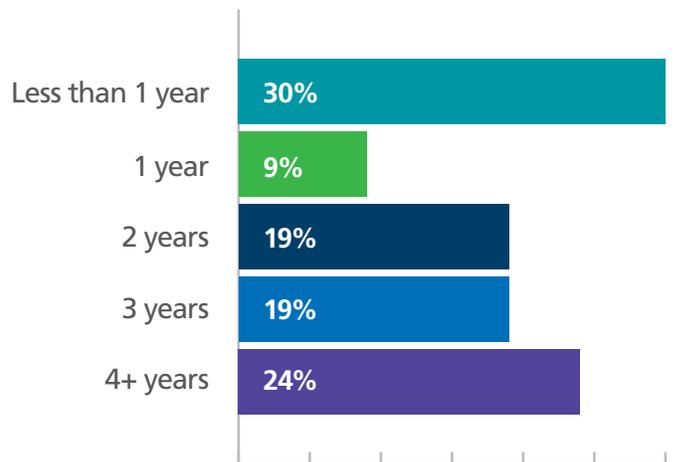
## ARE YOU PLANNING TO RETIRE FROM NURSING IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS?



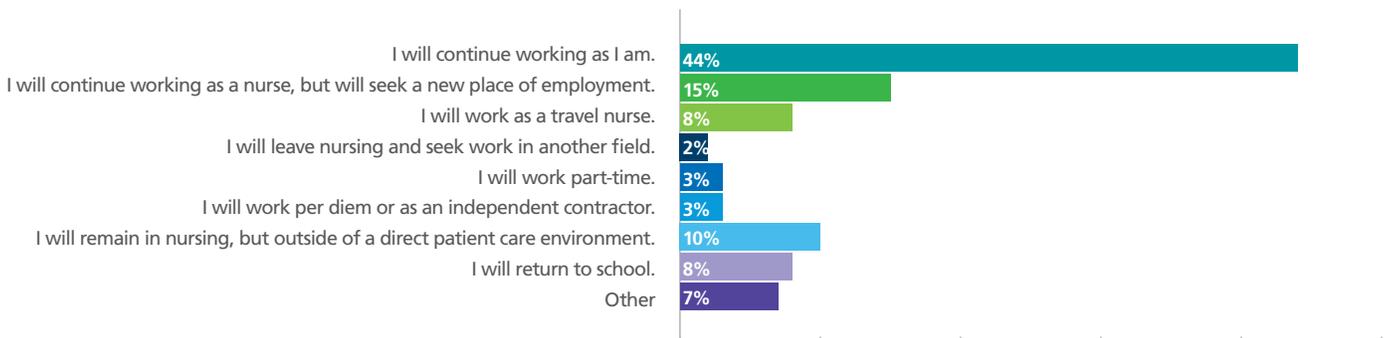
### OF THOSE ANSWERING YES



### OF ALL BABY BOOMERS PLANNING TO RETIRE IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



## WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS TO CHANGE YOUR WORK STATUS IN THE COMING YEAR?

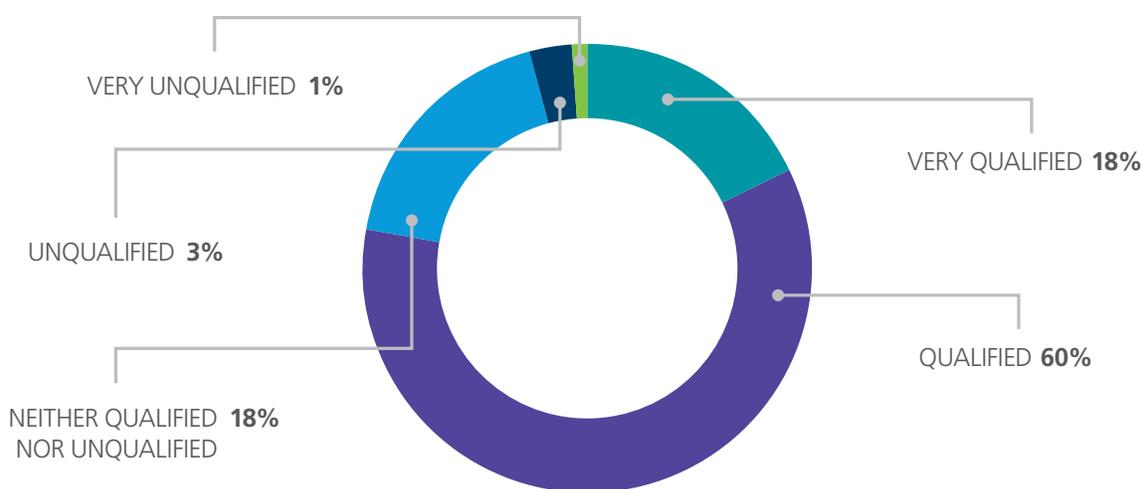


## VIEWS ON TRAVEL NURSING

Views expressed about the quality of travel nurses show that past biases about temporary nursing are rapidly fading. A considerable body of research has shown that travel and other temporary nurses possess the same quality of expertise as staff nurses (Aiken, 2007), and that patient satisfaction is not affected by the use of temporary nurses (Lasater, 2015). Research specific to travel nurses shows that comparisons using patient experience and quality of care metrics indicate no significant differences on nursing units with varying levels of travel nurse coverage (Faller, 2017).

This evidence has apparently filtered into the consciousness of the healthcare community. Travel nurses are accepted as high-quality clinicians. Among registered nurses who have never worked as travelers, 78% said that travel nurses are qualified and only 4% said they are not.

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW QUALIFIED ARE TRAVEL NURSES?



*(Responses of nurses who have never worked as a travel nurse)*

## Conclusion

Nurses are the largest group of healthcare professionals in the nation, a profession that blends both science and art -- bringing leadership, care, and healing to the lives of billions worldwide. On the eve of the first international Year of the Nurse and Midwife in 2020, when the impact and importance of nursing will be acclaimed worldwide, it's important to look at the challenges and solutions facing this vital profession through the eyes of registered nurses themselves.

At 3.9 million in the United States and 29 million worldwide, nurses are by far the largest group in the healthcare workforce (Smiley, 2018), and they have the most direct contact with patients among all practitioners. But as the healthcare industry becomes more complex, and as our nation's demographic trends of aging accelerate, the pressures on nurses are growing and spreading. The decade of the 2020s could see an alarming convergence of impacts on nursing, and healthcare in general. But it also could be a time of great opportunity, evidenced by promising new initiatives such as the Year of the Nurse (WHO, 2019), Nursing Now (Nursing Now, 2019), the National Academy of Medicine's Future of Nursing 2020-2030 (NAM, 2019), and the Florence Nightingale Bicentennial (Florence Nightingale Foundation, 2019). These events not only celebrate and demonstrate the power of nursing on health but also focus on strengthening the role of nursing in care delivery and public policy, promoting nursing in public and population health, and transforming health and care through nurse-led digital technology.

The demand for healthcare services will continue to increase due to our country's aging population and other pressures, but the supply of nurses won't be able to keep up with demand due in part to the loss of many experienced nurses who are retiring. This survey shows that a very large majority of Baby Boomers are planning their retirement, and that 39% of them say they will retire in one year or less. In addition, about one in ten nurses who are not planning to retire say they plan to leave direct patient care.

Shortages are worsening, according to nurses themselves, who have perhaps the best view of the situation. As the result of rising demand, and possibly because wages have not risen in proportion to demand, more than one in five nurses work a second nursing job, and nearly one in ten work a second full-time job, which can impact both quality of care and the quality of life for nurses themselves.

While nurses are very proud of their career choice, many admit that the rigors of the job mean they may not have the time they need to spend with their patients. They also worry their jobs are affecting their health, and they often feel like quitting. More than one in four say it's unlikely they will be working at their current job in a year.

Nurse responses in this survey also suggest meaningful, sustainable solutions. Flexibility and work-life balance are very important to them, and this is an area where innovative improvements can be made at most healthcare organizations. Supporting diversity in the workplace also can raise job satisfaction and improve retention. Furthering their education and training is important to nurses, and especially to Millennial nurses; professional development opportunities could be much more robust throughout the healthcare industry. Public policy can also help address this shortcoming. Nurses say that safety measures, engagement of team members, and effective leadership are the top positive influences that support their ability to provide quality patient care. These are areas where all healthcare organizations can make improvements.

Every AMN RN Survey has revealed a disconnect between career satisfaction and job satisfaction, consistently showing an approximate 20 percentage point drop between nurses who say they are satisfied with their careers and nurses who said they were satisfied with their jobs. While the job of nursing will always be challenging, healthcare organizations, the healthcare industry, and public policy at state and federal levels have many avenues to better support and improve the work environment and quality of life for our nursing workforce.

As the National Academy of Medicine launches the Future of Nursing 2020-2030 study to extend the national vision for the nursing profession throughout the next decade, listening to nurses themselves has never been more important. It's particularly critical to hear about the pressures that might drive them away from nursing, and the solutions that might keep them on the job. Perhaps like no other profession, nurses feel immense pride in their profession and in the quality of their work. This personal and professional devotion to the science and art of nursing can be the key to elevating the profession in the coming decade – and with it the health and well-being of the nation through the social determinants of health.

*"Nurses bring ideas and solutions to the table that no one else is able to see. Why? Because they think about people and communities first. Not about power, politics, money, or special interests."*

**Susan Hassmiller**

*RN, PhD, FAAN*

*Senior Advisor for Nursing*

*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

# References

- Advisory Board (2019). Turnover, Vacancy, and Premium Benchmark Generator, HR Advancement Center. Washington, DC. Extracted on Sept. 13, 2019
- Aiken L, Xue Y, Clarke S, Sloane D (2007). Supplemental nurse staffing in hospitals and quality of care, *Journal of Nursing Administration*. 2007 Jul-Aug;37(7-8):335-42.
- AMN Healthcare (2019). Rise in Healthcare Overtime Threatens Patient Safety and Nurse Turnover, *Healthcare Briefings*, July 2019. San Diego, CA <https://www.amnhealthcare.com/rise-in-healthcare-overtime/>
- Brook J, Aitken L, Webb R, MacLaren J, Salmon D (2019). Characteristics of successful interventions to reduce turnover and increase retention of early career nurses: A systematic review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, Volume 91, March 2019, Pages 47-59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2018.11.003>
- Buerhaus P, Auerbach D, Staiger D (2017). How Should We Prepare For The Wave Of Retiring Baby Boomer Nurses? *Health Affairs Blog*, May 3, 2017, 10.1377/hblog20170503.059894
- Cleveland Clinic (2018). Nursing's Role in Today's Patient Experience/A balanced integration of quality, safety and service. *Consult QD*, Cleveland Clinic, May 22, 2018. Cleveland, OH <https://consultqd.clevelandclinic.org/nursings-role-in-todays-patient-experience/>
- Gates D, Gillespie G, Succop P (2011). Violence Against Nurses and its Impact on Stress and Productivity, *Nursing Economic\$*, March-April 2011/Vol. 29/No. 2
- Florence Nightingale Foundation. *Nightingale2020/ Transforming the impact of nursing on global health and care*. London. Extracted Sept. 13, 2019. <https://florence-nightingale-foundation.org.uk/about/annual-conference/>
- Faller M, Dent B, Gogek, J (2017). A Single-Hospital Study of Travel Nurses and Quality: What Is Their Impact on the Patient Experience? *Nurse Leader*, August 2017, Volume 15, Issue 4, Pages 271–275. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mnl.2017.03.016>
- Institute of Medicine. (2010). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Washington, DC
- Institute of Medicine (2003). *Keeping patients safe: transforming the work environment of nurses*. Washington (DC): National Academies Press; 2003
- Johnson S, Rea R (2009). Workplace Bullying: Concerns for Nurse Leaders, *JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration*: February 2009 - Volume 39 - Issue 2 - p 84-90, doi: 10.1097/NNA.0b013e318195a5fc
- Kutney-Lee A, McHugh M, Sloane D, Cimiotti J, Flynn L, Neff D, and Aiken L (2009). Nursing: A Key to Patient Satisfaction. *Health Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. Supplement 3: Building a High Value Nursing Workforce. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.28.4.w669> DOI: 10.1097/NNA.0000000000000174
- Lasater K, Sloane D, Aiken L (2015). Hospital employment of supplemental registered nurses and patients' satisfaction with care. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 2015 Mar;45(3):145-51. doi: 10.1097/NNA.0000000000000174
- Lassman D, Hartman M, Washington B, Andrews K, Catlin A (2014). US Health Spending Trends by Age and Gender: Selected Years 2002–10. *Health Affairs*, Vol. 33, No. 5: US Hospitals: Responding to an Uncertain Environment. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2013.1224>
- National Academy of Medicine (NAM). *The Future of Nursing 2020-2030/A Consensus Study from the National Academy of Medicine*. Washington, DC. Data extracted Sept. 13, 2019. <https://nam.edu/publications/the-future-of-nursing-2020-2030/>
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2017). *Asleep at the Wheel: Drowsy Driving*. Washington (DC): USDOT. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drowsy-driving>

Nursing Now. A global campaign to improve health by raising the status and profile of nursing. Burdett Trust for Nursing. London. Extracted on Sept. 13, 2019. <https://www.nursingnow.org/>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration, US Dept. of Labor (2016). Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Healthcare and Social Service Workers, OSHA 3148-06R 2016 <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osa3148.pdf>

Ortman J, Velkoff V, Hogan H (2014). An Aging Nation: The Older Population in the United States, Current Population Reports, P25-1140. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC. 2014. <https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p25-1140.pdf>

Phillips J (2016). Workplace Violence against Health Care Workers in the United States, *New England Journal of Medicine*, 2016; 374:1661-1669 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMra1501998

Smiley R, Lauer P, Bienemy C, Berg J, Shireman, E, Reneau, K, Alexander, M. (2018). The 2017 National Nursing Workforce Survey. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 9(3), supplement (S1-S54).

Stimpfel A, Sloane D, Aiken L (2012). The Longer The Shifts For Hospital Nurses, The Higher The Levels Of Burnout And Patient Dissatisfaction, *Health Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 11. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2011.1377>

Tefft B. (2014). Prevalence of Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving Drowsy Drivers, United States, 2009 – 2013. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

US Census Bureau (2018). Older People Projected to Outnumber Children for First Time in U.S. History, US Census Bureau. March 13, 2018, Release Number Cb18-41

US Census Bureau (2018). America Counts: Stories Behind the Numbers --The Graying of America: More Older Adults Than Kids by 2035. US Census Bureau. Washington, DC <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/03/graying-america.html>

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Number, percent distribution, rate, days of care with average length of stay, and standard error of discharges from short-stay hospitals, by sex and age: United States, 2010. [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhds/2average/2010ave2\\_ratesexage.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhds/2average/2010ave2_ratesexage.pdf)

Weaver K (2013). The Effects of Horizontal Violence and Bullying on New Nurse Retention, *Journal for Nurses in Professional Development*: May/June 2013, Volume 29, Issue 3, p 138–142. doi: 10.1097/NND.0b013e318291c453

World Health Organization (WHO). Executive Board designates 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife,” Jan. 30, 2019. Geneva, Switzerland. <https://www.who.int/hrh/news/2019/2020year-of-nurses/en/>





For more information, please contact:

**Jim Gogek**  
Jim.Gogek@AMNHealthcare.com

---

**[AMNHEALTHCARE.COM/2019RNSURVEY](https://AMNHEALTHCARE.COM/2019RNSURVEY)**

©AMN Healthcare 2019