

The Future of Nursing: A Profession in Crisis

Their heroic work continues as the pandemic wanes. But without tangible industry support, the profession seems destined to decline.



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Introduction: Foundational Change Is Required

Nurses comprise the most significant component of the US healthcare workforce. They are the primary providers of hospital patient care and deliver most of the nation’s long-term care. While nurses provide essential services, the profession is facing a crisis as the growing demand for patient care outweighs the available staff. In addition, many professionals are leaving due to poor working conditions, burnout, stress, pay/benefits, and retirement.

It’s been a year since Cross Country Healthcare first conducted this study on the profession’s state, and nothing has changed. We had hoped that at this point, we would be past the pandemic and our nurses would have better balance, mental health and working conditions, but we are not there. Nurses are leaving the profession or changing careers in droves. The drumbeat is getting louder. We need to fix this. Healthcare industry leaders require a foundational change to refresh and salvage this essential profession.

Nurses are widely accepted as the backbone of every healthcare system, ensuring individualized patient-centered care, seamless clinical workflows and optimal treatment through vigorous observation, training and attention. This high and constant level of responsibility comes with great weight.

Nurses fulfill diverse and essential clinical roles

Nurses deliver a wide array of healthcare services, including primary and preventive care by nurse practitioners with specialized education in pediatrics, family health, women’s health, and gerontological care. Nursing’s scope also includes services by certified nurse-midwives and nurse anesthetists, as well as care in cardiac, oncology, neonatal, neurological, obstetric/gynecological nursing and other advanced clinical specialties.



Demand continues to grow

It is projected there will be about 194,500 openings for registered nurses (RN) every year through 2030. That represents a 9% growth rate in RN jobs by 2030. Further, it is estimated that demand for nurse practitioners (NP) will be remarkably higher than RNs – with an overall employment increase of 45% between 2020 and 2030, which is much faster than the average growth rate for other occupations. This growth is attributed to:

- Increased focus on preventative care;
- Demand for healthcare services from the aging baby-boomer population;
- Heightened use of team-based models of care;
- Changes in legislation that allow advanced practice RNs to perform more services; and,
- Growing cultural awareness of NPs as primary healthcare sources.

Nurses are in great demand. With approximately 4.2 million RNs and over 325,000 licensed NPs, the profession is not without its challenges.

Rising exodus

According to one article , the US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the healthcare sector has lost nearly half a million workers since February 2020. Morning Consult, a survey research company, reported that 18% of healthcare workers have quit since the pandemic began, while 12% have been laid off. Another article reported that more than one-third (34%) of nurses said they likely would quit their job by the end of 2022, primarily because of burnout and a high-stress working environment. How will healthcare facilities stem the tide of attrition while continuing to provide exceptional patient care?

¹ Registered Nurses : Occupational Outlook Handbook: : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov)

² Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners : Occupational Outlook Handbook: : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov)

³ The 2020 National Nursing Workforce Survey - Journal of Nursing Regulation

⁴ Why Health-Care Workers Are Quitting in Droves - The Atlantic



“Many of the reasons for job dissatisfaction point directly to the nursing shortage, which has been building for decades. An aging population leaving the workforce and requiring chronic care, outdated regulations, and a younger workforce seeking more flexibility and work-life balance have all contributed. These challenges combined with unprecedented burnout and fatigue coming out of the pandemic have deeply affected the culture of nursing.”

—
JOHN A. MARTINS

President and Chief Executive Officer,
Cross Country Healthcare



“We recognize the huge demand for nurses in Florida and across the nation. The good news is people are living longer, but that means more complex health issues that require quality primary and acute care in some cases. The university is addressing the nursing crisis by producing highly-skilled, prepared and compassionate nurses to enter the workforce. We also encourage our students to prioritize self-care to reduce stress and burnout.”

—
SAFIYA GEORGE

Dean and Professor, Florida Atlantic University’s
Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing

Why we conducted this survey

As a provider of workforce solutions and contingent staffing, supporting healthcare organizations is the genesis of what we do. To better understand the challenges and opportunities facing the profession, Cross Country Healthcare, in partnership with Florida Atlantic University’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing, conducted its second annual “Future of Nursing Survey.” We surveyed nearly 2,000 employed nursing professionals and students. Our research intends to inform the healthcare industry’s state and equip healthcare facility leaders and academia, nursing students and professionals with an update on some of the most pertinent issues transforming this occupational specialty. We learned that it is time for a change, and healthcare facilities are running out of time.

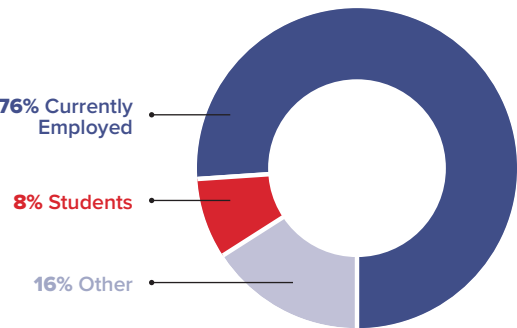
The survey addressed numerous aspects of the nursing profession. It revealed that overall, the career satisfaction of nurses outweighs their dissatisfaction, although many are challenged with burnout, stress and staff shortages. Nurses also shared their thoughts on critical skills, essential career development opportunities, and the importance of national licensure. Their insights can help inform healthcare employers’ priorities, practices and policies as they build efficient and effective staffing models.

Methodology

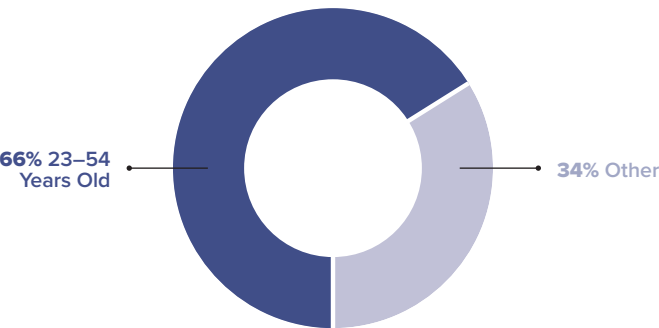
This national survey was conducted with 1,811 nursing professionals and students at healthcare and hospital facilities. The online survey was conducted between May 11 and June 24, 2022, in partnership with Florida Atlantic University’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing. The 2021 survey was conducted with 571 practicing nurses and students between April 1 and May 31 and was also completed in partnership with Florida Atlantic University’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing.

Summary of respondent characteristics

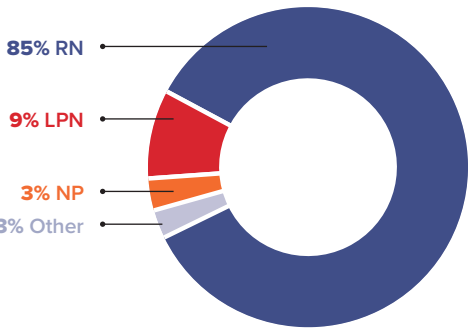
76% were currently employed, and 8% were students.



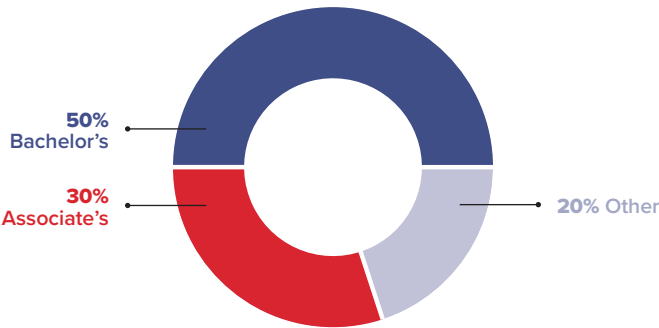
66% were aged 23 to 54 years.



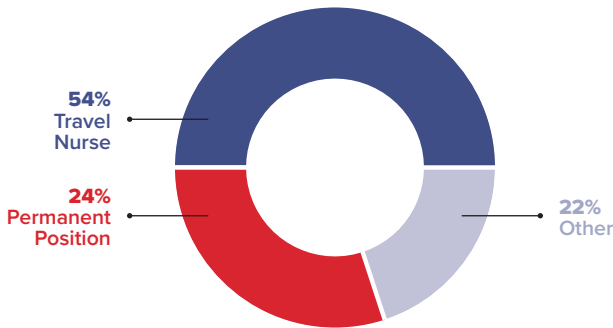
85% were registered nurses (RN), 9% were licensed practical nurses (LPN/LVN), and 3% were nurse practitioners (NP).



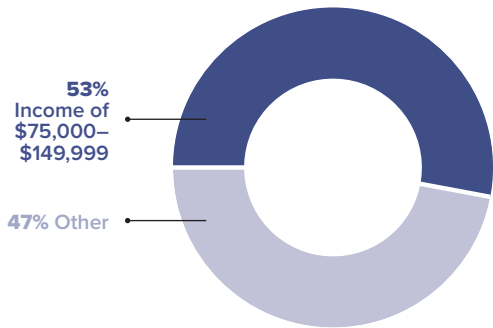
Most respondents had completed a bachelor’s degree (50%), and a further 30% had completed an associate degree.



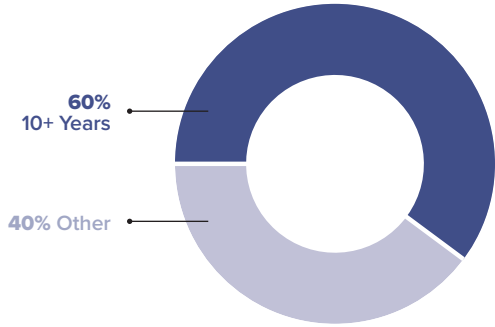
54% were in the role of a travel nurse, and 24% were in permanent positions.



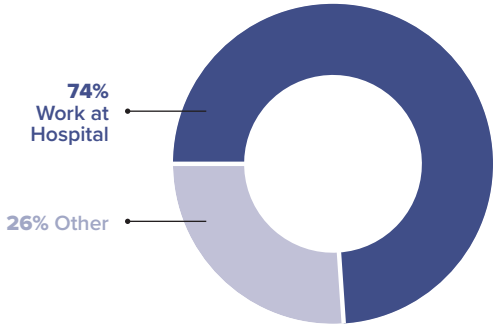
Approximately half (53%) reported between \$75,000 to \$149,999 in annual income.



60% had been in practice for ten or more years.



Most nurses surveyed (74%) worked at a hospital.



See Appendix I for more details on the characteristics of the survey participants.

If tables and charts do not add up to 100%, it is due to rounding. Multiple responses were allowed if tables and charts add up to more than 100%.



New graduates that transitioned into nursing during COVID did so after online and remote education with limited hands-on experience. Overall, COVID negatively impacted their career introduction and increased their stress, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation levels.

Survey Findings

“Should I stay, or should I go?” Career satisfaction outweighs dissatisfaction

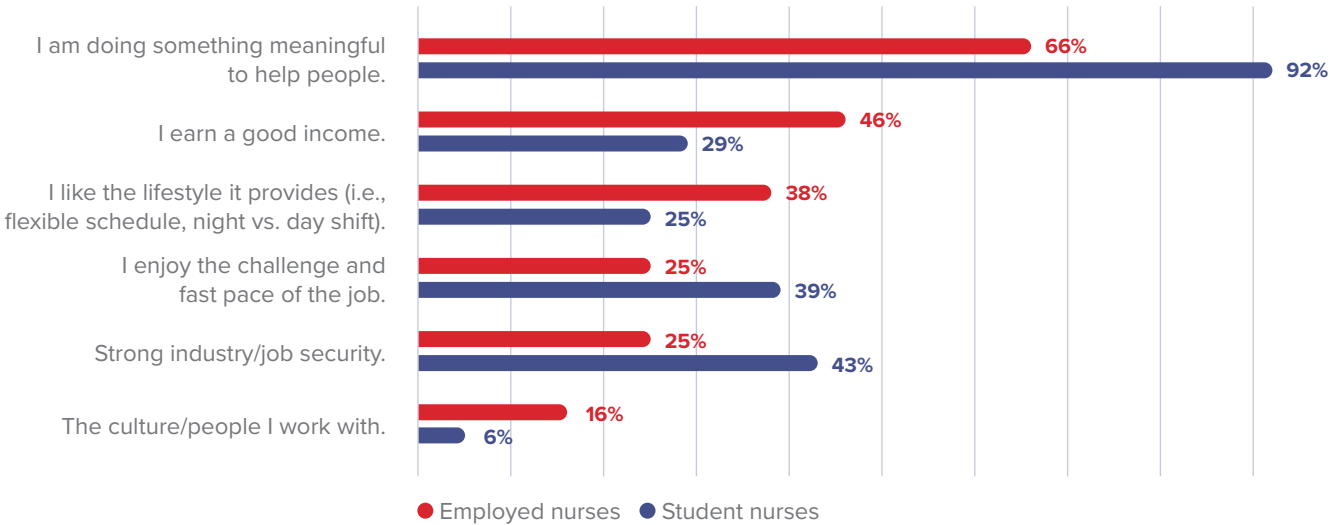
Doing meaningful work, income and lifestyle are the main drivers for staying in the field. Forty percent of nurses felt very satisfied with becoming a nurse, compared to only one in 10 who felt very dissatisfied/dissatisfied. However, almost half (48%) of currently employed nurses said they would not become nurses again if they could talk to their former selves or did not know if they would.

Seventy-three percent of student nurses said they were completely/very satisfied with their career choice. More than one in two (52%) employed professionals would become a nurse again if they could talk to their former self, and a further 16% said they “don’t know” if they would follow the same career path.

Student nurses held stronger convictions about the value of doing meaningful work compared to the employed nurses we studied, 92% versus 66%, respectively. We attribute those in the student phase as more focused on learning about the importance of delivering patient care. They don’t yet have insight into what happens behind the scenes, such as administration and documentation. It’s not until they are on the floor doing the job that they can understand all the work entails. This may account for why so many nurses leave in the first two years of being on the job; they don’t have a sense of reality until they do it.

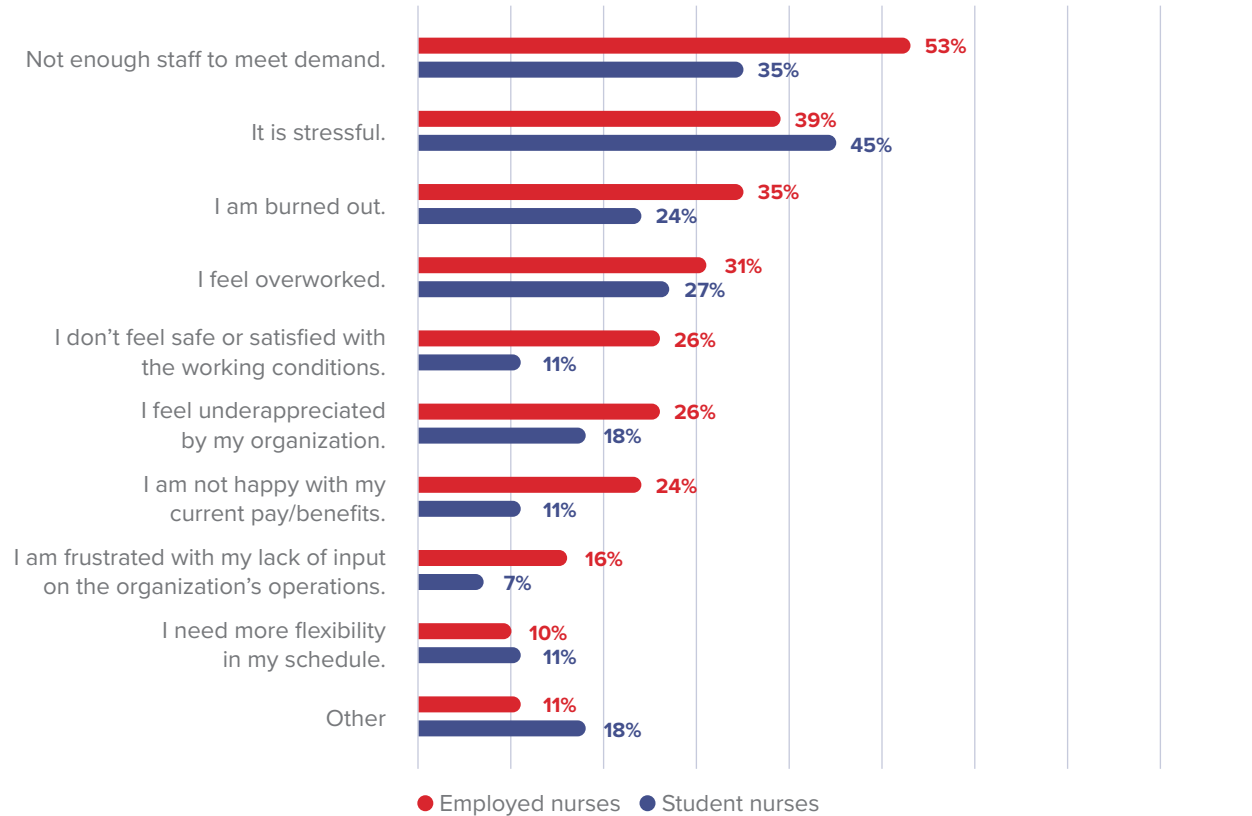
⁵ Czeisler M.K., Lane R.I., Petrosky E. CDC Report: Mental health, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation during the COVID-19 pandemic – the United States, June 24-30, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2020;69(32):1049–1057. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm>

What do you most enjoy about being a nurse, and why do you stay in your field? (Select top two responses.)



Staff shortages, stress and burnout are the top career dissatisfiers. These findings are consistent with last year’s study, and these issues were prevalent in the profession before the pandemic.

What do you least enjoy about being a nurse? (Select top two responses.)



For those nurses who selected “other,” some of their verbatim responses included:

“Staffing issues affect patient care; if adversely affected, nurses are held criminally liable.”

“Not happy with the drop in pay.”

“The way they treat agency staff.”

“I feel nurses don’t have a voice in the medical industry.”

“Lack of support from staff nurses.”

“Poor leadership.”

“Burnout, lack of decent respect, and pay.”

“My mental health is at risk because of the staff shortage and the demand for patient care. On top of the mental and physical stress, we must provide customer service to patients, and it’s hard to be the happiest customer service person when you are exhausted!”

Student nurses reported that they are most concerned about:

45%

STRESS

35%

NOT ENOUGH STAFF TO MEET DEMAND

27%

FEELING OVERWORKED



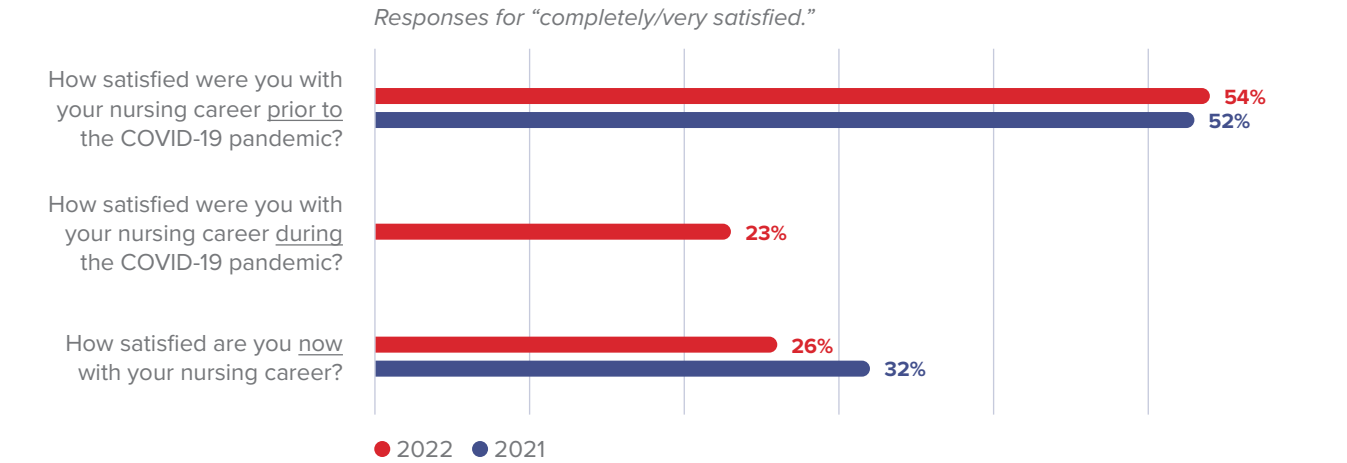
“There has been a significant departure of mid-level managers in healthcare. As a result, good clinicians are often promoted into management, but a good clinician does not necessarily make a good manager. Are we equipping those in management roles with the right tools, experience and support to be the best manager they can be? This may explain some comments about dissatisfaction with the current leadership.”

DR. HANK DRUMMOND
Ph.D., MDiv, BA, RN, Chief Clinical Officer, Cross Country Healthcare

The pandemic exacerbated existing challenges.

Before COVID-19 entered the healthcare field, there was already a shortage of nurses, and patients have only become older and sicker and grown in numbers. Throw a national public health emergency into that mix, and you have a recipe for disaster. Unfortunately, many nurses still have not recovered.

Before the pandemic, more than one-in-two (54%) employed nurses felt satisfied in their profession – both in this year’s survey and the survey from the prior year. However, only about one-in-four nurses (26%) feel satisfied with their careers now, down from 32% in 2021.

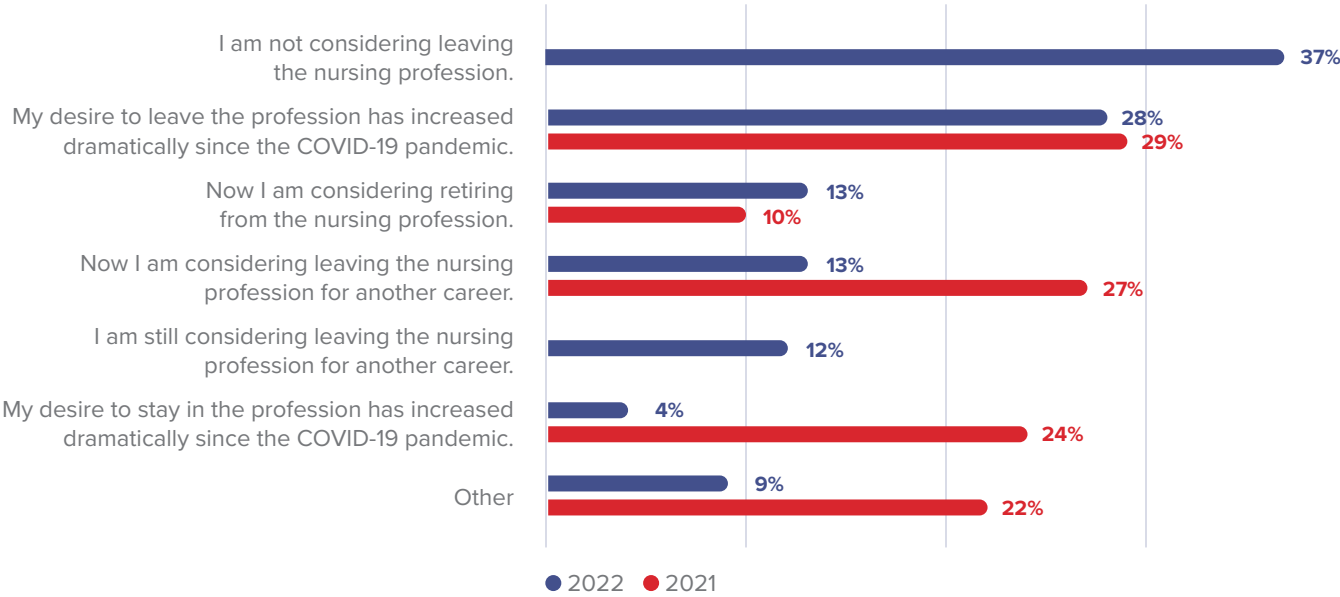


Concerning the student nurses, 72% felt very satisfied/satisfied with their career choice before the COVID-19 pandemic, and 69% feel very satisfied/satisfied now.

Nearly one-third (28%) of respondents indicated their desire to leave the profession had increased dramatically. (There has been no significant decrease in that number over the past year, even as the pandemic has waned.) Another point of interest is that the percentage saying there was a dramatic increase in their desire to stay in the profession dropped from 24% last year to 4% this year. The popularity of crisis rates may have caused the 2021 number to skew higher; however, the pandemic clearly illustrated the gap between nurse essentiality and “normal” pay rates.

While 13% said they are considering leaving the nursing profession, a further 13% are considering staying in healthcare but switching their career out of nursing.

Which of the following statements best describes how your career perspective has changed since the pandemic? (Select all that apply.)



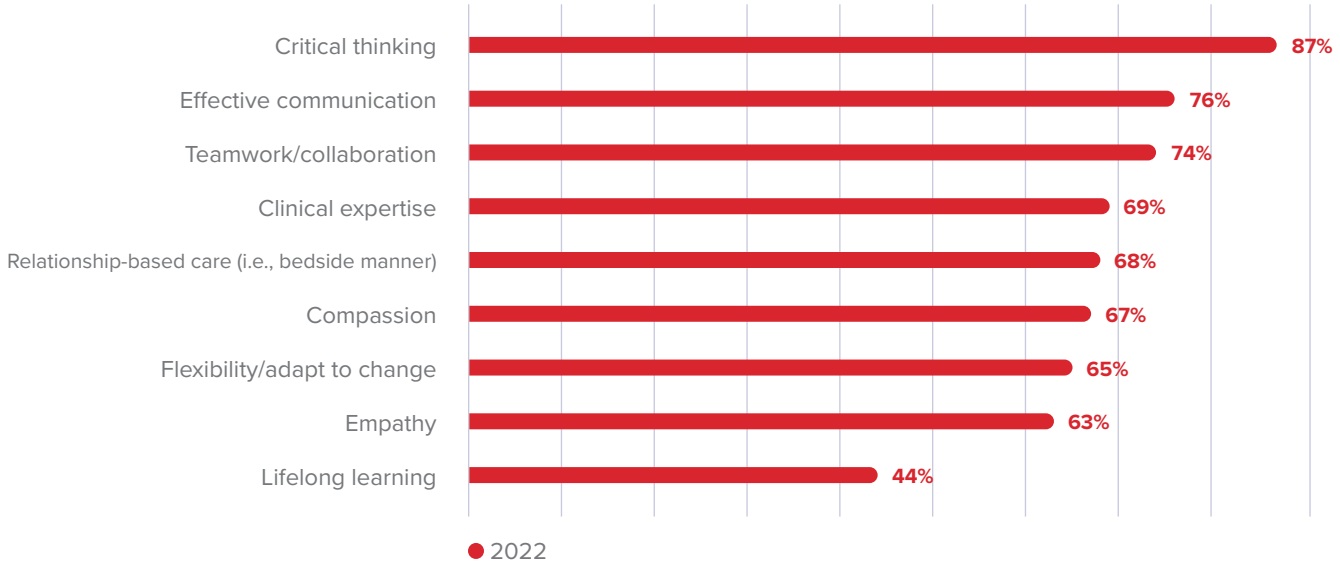
Critical skills required for success

The essential skills nurses say are most crucial to delivering quality patient care include critical thinking, effective communication, teamwork/collaboration, clinical expertise, relationship-based care, and compassion. Nurses’ opinions of the importance of these skills have changed since the height of the pandemic in 2021. In last year’s study, they said the most important skills were flexibility/ability to adapt to change, clinical expertise and compassion.

“Our nationally-ranked academic programs at the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing are grounded in caring science, which prepares students in critical thinking, compassion, teamwork and clinical expertise. We continue to develop and offer programs including certificate courses in dermatology and telehealth to help nurses level up their skills and enable them to move into other areas as healthcare evolves with the latest technology and cutting-edge research.”

SAFIYA GEORGE
Dean and Professor, Florida Atlantic University’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing

Which skills do you feel are the most important in the patient care you provide? (Select all that apply.)



“Turnover intention reflects the organization’s level of support. At Cross Country Healthcare, we are driving a proactive, solution-focused, technology-enabled initiative to reach all generations and cater to the needs of our new graduates with mindfulness sessions, upskilling opportunities, education offerings and more that can be accessed with a handheld device. Meeting learners where they’re at allows us to quickly and easily enhance engagement, self-accountability, and empowerment.”

DR. ALLISON VASILJ
Vice President – Education Operations, Cross Country Healthcare

“Nurses make life and death decisions daily. For example, one medication error could cause a patient’s death. Immediate intervention and critical thinking are essential for positive patient outcomes. Effective communication with the team, family, and patient are required to deliver care compassionately. These skills are not gained overnight. They come with time and experience.”

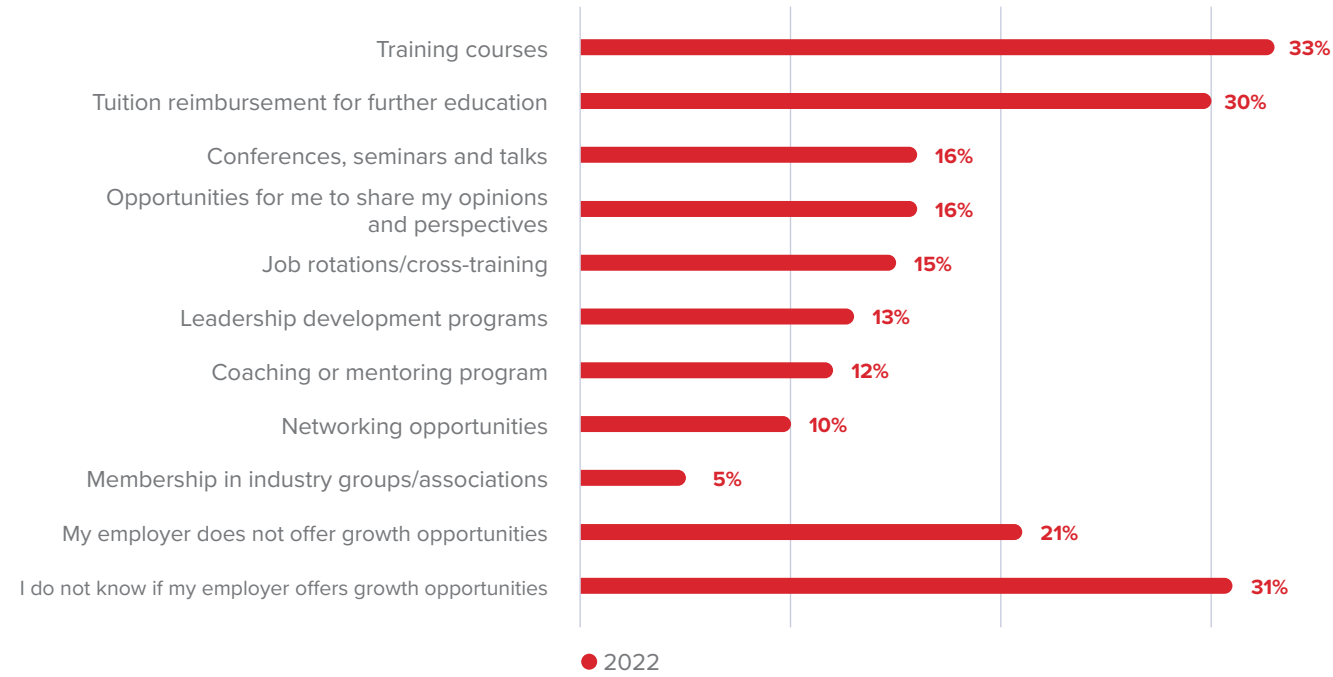
DR. HANK DRUMMOND
Ph.D., MDiv, BA, RN, Chief Clinical Officer, Cross Country Healthcare



Employer impact on careers and well-being

The top professional development opportunities from employers include training courses, tuition reimbursement for further education, conferences/seminars, and opportunities to share opinions and perspectives. However, 31% of respondents did not know what professional development opportunities their employer offered, and 21% said: “My employer does not offer professional development opportunities.”

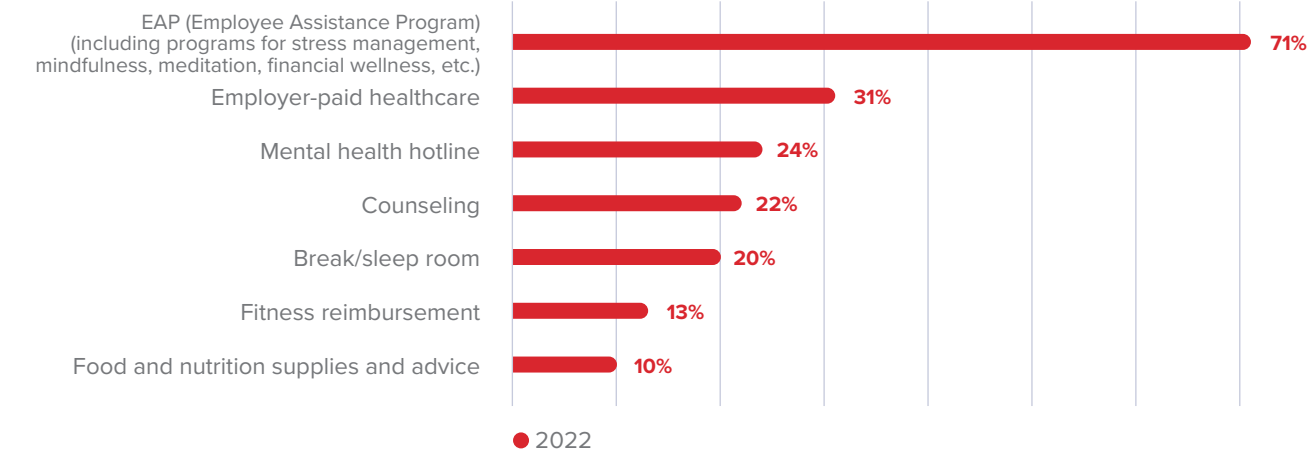
What growth opportunities for career advancement and development does your employer offer?
(Select all that apply.)



Training, growth, and education never end in the healthcare arena. There are always new techniques, medications, procedures, and skills to be learned. Education is a requirement to keep fresh and current. Continuing education is necessary for all healthcare providers.

Forty-one percent of respondents said employers offer well-being resources, although 33% did not know what was offered. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), employer-paid healthcare, and mental health hotlines were the most popular resources to aid well-being.

What well-being resources does your employer offer? (Select all that apply.)



The initial onboarding/orientation experience is critical in clearly communicating the company’s resources and employee support. There needs to be more investment in that initial touchpoint. Employees will be more satisfied and productive if they know the available resources and feel supported.

“Many of the most effective career development opportunities include nurses encouraging and showing other nurses what upskilling and higher degrees can do for them and others by sharing their education, experience, and expertise. One would be surprised at how many different options are available in nursing alone, but often nobody knows where or how to start. “

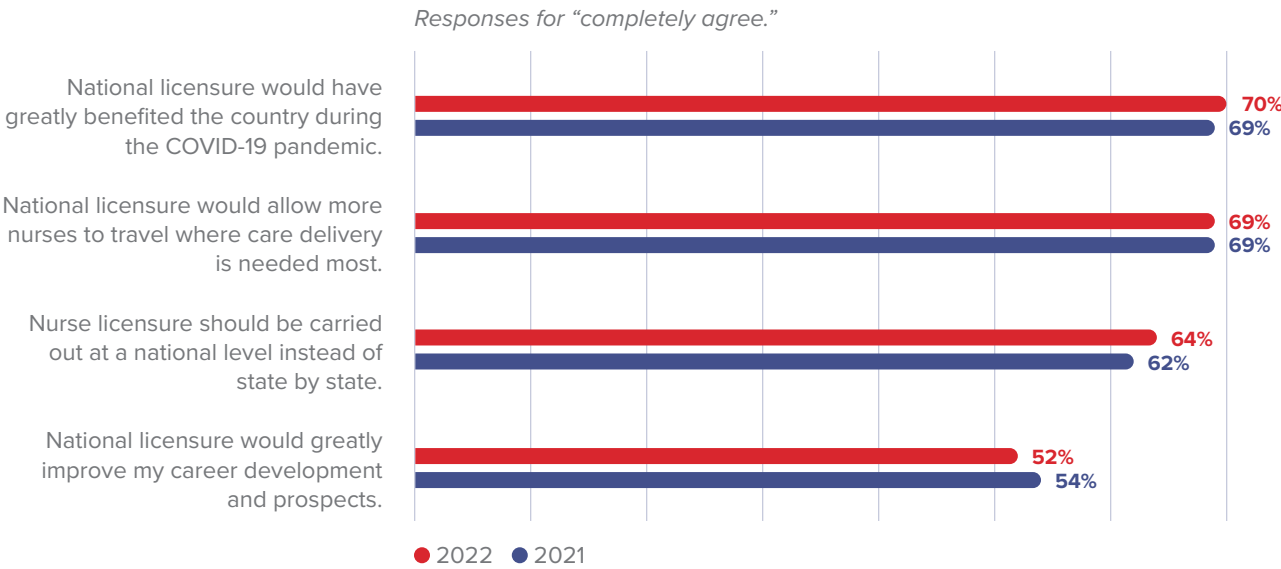
DR. ALLISON VASILJ
Vice President – Education Operations,
Cross Country Healthcare



Nurses call for change

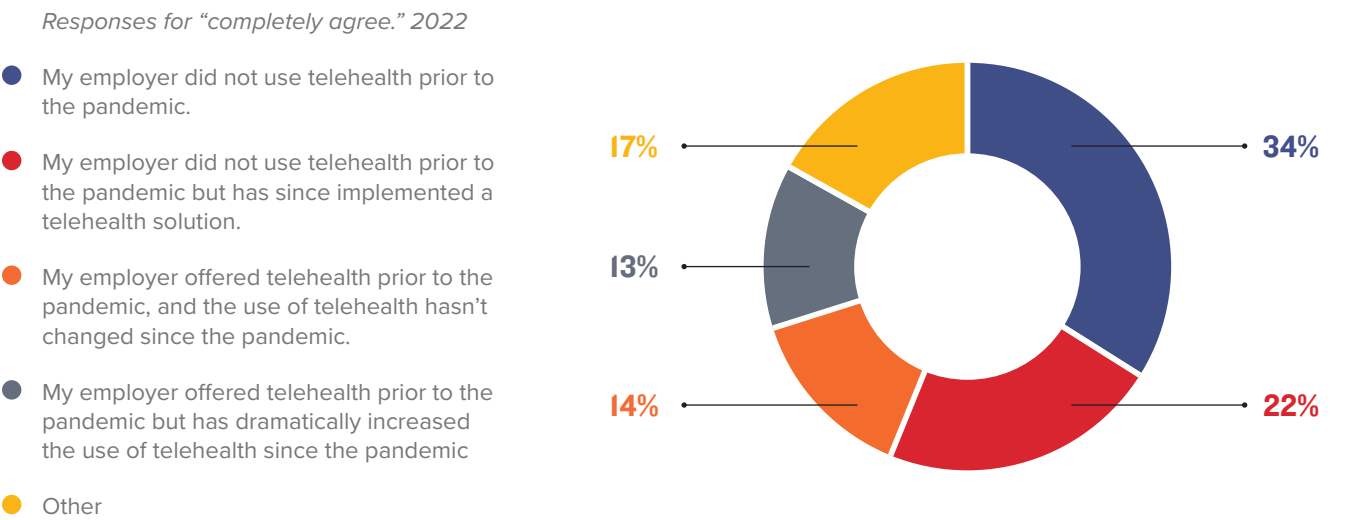
The findings from the 2022 study are consistent with the 2021 study and reinforce nurses’ compelling desire for a centralized licensure system versus a state-by-state function. Seventy percent believe that “national licensure would have greatly benefited the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements related to nursing licensure.



Telehealth and its future

Most respondents said their employers (34%) did not use telehealth prior to the pandemic. Additionally, 14% said their employers offered telehealth before the pandemic, and the use hasn’t changed. In comparison, 13% said their employers offered telehealth before the pandemic, and they have dramatically increased its use since the pandemic.



For the 17% of respondents who selected “other,” some of their verbatim comments included:

- “I hate telehealth care. It’s impersonal and misses the whole point of care.”
- “Telehealth use has varied from each facility I have contracted in.”
- “We have some telehealth visits, but they are rare.”
- “Don’t know” or “unsure.”

Our point of view

We must strive toward national licensure and simplified onboarding requirements that will make it easier to bring on new staff. For example, during the first waves of COVID-19, credentialing presented a significant challenge to expedite the delivery of nursing talent needed to meet the crisis. The situation forced federal and state policymakers to acknowledge that clinician-licensing laws block access to care. The findings from our survey point to a growing urge among nurses to adopt national licensure, with most respondents agreeing that the move would have significantly benefited the country during the pandemic. Looking beyond the pandemic now is the time to make the change.

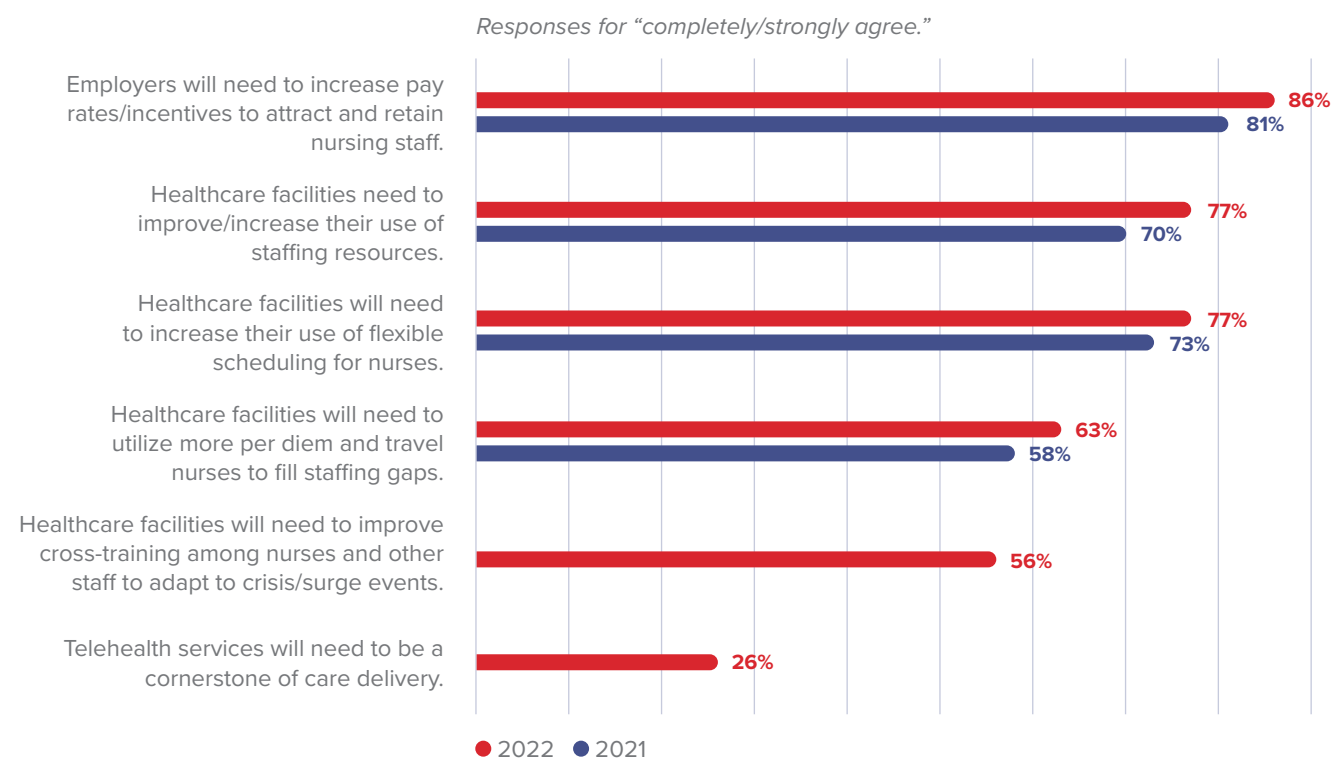
Our point of view

Telehealth is here to stay. The public expects it and will continue to demand it in the future. Therefore, we must ensure that nurses are trained to incorporate telehealth services as technology is increasingly integrated within patients’ primary care systems. The Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing provides students with the essential skills to deliver telehealth services with competence and care through its online and on-demand Telehealth Certificate Course.

Looking to the future

Healthcare organizations must look for strategies and policies to help curb the rising exodus of nursing staff and ensure a smoother path to success. According to the nurses surveyed, the most prominent areas for improvement include compensation and staffing levels. When asked how healthcare employers will need to change in the future, 86% of nurses agree that increases in pay rates/ incentives are necessary to attract and retain nursing staff, up from 81% in 2021. Additionally, 77% of nurses said staffing levels are most in need of change, up from 70% in 2021.

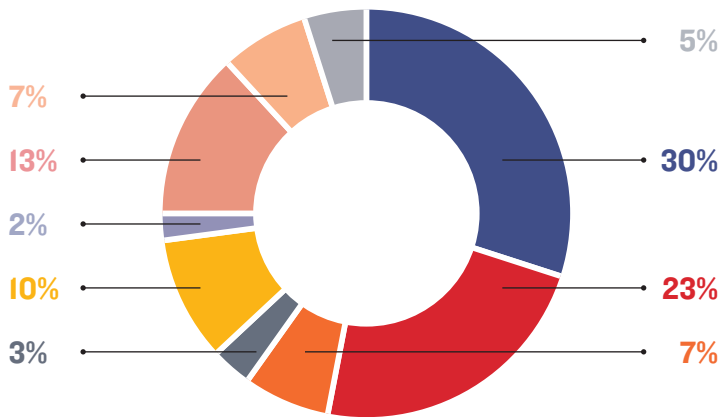
To what degree do you agree with the following statements about how nursing and healthcare employers will need to change in the future?



Thirty percent of nurses said they plan to work in their profession for the foreseeable future, although 23% plan to look for a new profession in 1–2 years and 13% plan to retire in 1-5 years.

What best describes your career plan? 2022

- I plan to work in the profession for the foreseeable future.
- I plan to look for a new position in my current profession in the next 1-2 years.
- I plan to look for a new position in my current profession in the next 3-4 years.
- I plan to look for a new position in my current profession in the next 5-10 years.
- I plan on changing professions in the next 3-4 years.
- I plan on changing professions in the next 5-10 years.
- I plan to retire in the next 1-5 years.
- I plan to retire in the next 6-10 years.
- Other



Our point of view

Nursing is the most trusted profession in the world. A nurse is with you at all life stages – from birth to death and everything in between. They make life-changing decisions each day. Healthcare leaders need to shift their mindsets about what nurses should be paid. Additionally, flexible and innovative staffing solutions should be included in every hospital and health system’s toolkit.



For those respondents who selected “other,” some of their verbatim responses included:

“I am currently actively working on leaving the profession.”

“I plan to leave this profession as soon as possible.”

“I am semi-retired but went back into nurse because it is in ‘my blood,’ so to speak. To me, it is a profession you are called to and never completely leave.”

“I plan to continue to work in healthcare, using my RN experience and degree to move up in my current profession by continuing in healthcare administration.”

“I’m going to start travel nursing for a couple of years and then retire.”

I may retain my RN license, but leave the hospital setting which I have become very disappointed with.

“I plan to leave the RN profession by 12/2022 and not return. I’m done.”

Most student nurses (56%) plan on graduating and staying in the nursing profession for the foreseeable future, and a further 24% plan to see how they like the profession after graduating. Seven percent of nursing students said they plan to graduate but may consider entering a different profession, and 4% plan to stop attending nursing school and pursue a different profession.

When the student nurses were asked about what they like best about their profession, some of the responses included:

“Do what you love. Get involved with decision-making early in your career.”

“The passion you have for the materials you are learning in nursing school is indicative of the passion you will have for your future profession.”

“Understand what the job is and what it is not. Choose nursing because you want to be a nurse rather than money/schedule etc., the money will never be worth how difficult nursing can be if you don’t love what you do.”

“It isn’t easy, but it is very rewarding. Stick it through, and you won’t regret it at all.”

“It’s the best career.”

We also took the opportunity to ask the employed nurses what advice they would offer to nursing students who are entering the profession. The input was enlightening. Responses included:

“Nursing is the greatest profession in the world. The experience you will get is priceless. Make sure you’re getting into nursing for the right reasons because I love coming to work and look forward to caring for patients every day. No two patients are alike, so every day in nursing is like a new experience and adventure. And you make the difference.”

“Nurses need to have the heart for the profession. You will step into people’s lives and make a difference. Some will bless you; some will curse you. Challenges will always surround you.”

“Do not even get your LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse). Go right for your four-year RN.” And “go for your RN right off the bat.”

“Obtain bedside nursing and continue your education. Remain current with advanced technology.”

“Real-life nursing and what you learn in nursing school are not the same. No one can teach you to be caring, compassionate and understanding. The fundamentals of nursing are taught in nursing school. The basics you need to build on are taught in nursing school, but the ability to be a decent, caring nurse cannot be taught.”

“Be flexible, and remember the shift always ends.”

“Be confident in your skills. Trust your instincts and know your worth.”

“Make sure you are becoming a nurse to learn, help others; do not do it for the money; nursing as a whole is understaffed regardless of what you are told.”

“Don’t come to this profession just for a paycheck. Only do it if you actually care about helping others.”

“I wish I would have tried travel nursing sooner. I thought about doing it for years, and the pandemic made it an easy transition.”

“Be flexible; don’t be afraid to travel and don’t commit to long contracts with hospitals. Change is good. Know your worth as you are in demand! You’re the patient’s number one contact person while they are sick, so show them empathy, kindness and respect.”

“Actually, follow a nurse on the floor before deciding to enter this profession.”

“Don’t limit yourself to one specialty. Instead, work in every specialty, starting with general nursing on a medical/ surgical floor. Plan on going into advanced practice so that whether you end up doing that or not, you will have acquired knowledge, skills, and experience that will help you to be a more proficient nurse.”

The nurses were also asked where they see the future of nursing going. It’s clear from the responses that the pandemic was not a positive experience for the profession and consequently had far-reaching impacts on nursing career trajectories. Some of the verbatim responses included:

“We will have a shortage for the next 20 years. The pandemic was the worst experience for us. I see my colleagues retiring early.”

“Unfortunately, I see it going towards more impersonal, standardized care. A one size fits all mentality that misses nuance in the relationship between nurses and patients. I also see this trend that most acute care units will be staffed by RNs overseeing LPNs which is a financially feasible but disastrous setting.”

“Over the last few years, nurse-to-patient ratios have increased, and nurses are asked to take on more tasks. The more we take, the more patients are at risk for bad outcomes and errors. I think there need to be serious changes to retain nursing staff and maintain appropriate ratios.”

“I see it diminishing. I see the whole landscape of nursing cheapened. I see the big hospitals expecting nurses to take too many patients, burning us out. I see patients not getting the care they deserve, making me angrier than anything.”

“We are burnt out. We want more pay for all we do. I see the nursing shortage getting worse.”

“Every nurse being independently contracted because it’s not worth it to be staff.”

“Why would anyone want to go into a nursing career after how we were treated during the pandemic?”

“Hospitals will be filled with travel nurses.”

Paving the Way Forward: It is Time for Change

The results of our survey of nearly 2,000 employed and student nurses point to ongoing challenges that the profession faces, with little proof that working conditions, stress levels and well-being have been addressed since our prior study. Nurses are exhausted, questioning their career choices and evaluating different opportunities. It’s time for a change.



Based on our 36 years of experience in working with the nursing profession and our industry leadership, Cross Country Healthcare and the Florida Atlantic University’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing recommend four ways the healthcare sector can play an active role in turning this profession around.

“Media, legislators and analysts have put their crosshairs on the national nursing shortage. There is finger pointing and a sole desire to blame this on pandemic economics. But that’s just the tip of the iceberg. The central parts of the conversation are much broader and fundamental and are being completely ignored. They can sink our profession.”

JOHN A. MARTINS
President and Chief Executive Officer, Cross Country Healthcare

“The Florida Hospital Association (FHA) projects that the state will face a shortage of more than 59,000 nurses by 2035. A recent Physician and Nursing Workforce study sponsored by FHA and the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida indicates that approximately 2,300 additional RNs and an additional 1,700 LPNs must enter the workforce each year in Florida to meet the demand. In addition, nursing schools are addressing a faculty shortage. We must provide the resources and support services to recruit and retain students and faculty to build a stronger workforce pipeline.”

SAFIYA GEORGE
Dean and Professor, Florida Atlantic University’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing

Four recommendations to transform the nursing profession

The nursing shortage is complicated and multifaceted. As an industry, we have the tools and resources to change the nursing field. Cross Country Healthcare recommends four strategies to get started.

1. Identify new pathways for education and talent developments

The demand for care outweighs the supply of nurses. This is a long-term problem because nurses require years of education and training before being qualified to care for patients. This makes education a priority. The industry will need to come together to identify new pathways to invest in nurse education at the high school, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It cannot fall solely on the shoulders of nursing colleges to recruit and train the next generation of nurses.

A significant hurdle is that more people are applying for a nursing degree than slots available in the community and four-year colleges. An immediate solution is to find a way to incentivize and recruit more faculty. Here’s a sobering statistic: 80,000 prospective nursing students did not get accepted to four-year colleges in 2020 – in a year where nurses were front and center. Unfortunately, there were not enough classes available.

Another initiative would include training and experiential opportunities in the learning phase to help nursing students understand the reality of doing the work once they are on the floor. Students must access state-of-the-art simulation labs to apply what they learned in the classroom to real-life settings. This training, combined with the in-depth learning, will enable students to improve patient outcomes. In addition, partnerships between academia and local health facilities for clinical practice will give students the critical thinking and decision-making skills to maximize positive patient engagement. Knowing what they are getting into before they start may help to stem the tide of turnover that is so great in the first two years in the job.

⁶ Student Enrollment Surged in U.S. Schools of Nursing in 2020 Despite Challenges Presented by the Pandemic (aacnnursing.org)

2. Offer flexibility and growth opportunities

When it comes to patient safety, following rigorous guidelines is paramount. However, we can afford to be more flexible with career mobility and growth. For example, open every door possible to expedite the transition from the university to the hospital floor, not working around outdated obstacles. Or offer more career paths that match their skills and ambitions. If nurses play such a valuable role in healthcare, then why are we holding them back?

Nursing career paths must be fluid to evolve and grow with the individual. One way this can be achieved is through cross-training initiatives. Cross-training offers new opportunities and new challenges that can reinvigorate a long-held position that now feels stagnant. It also provides new perspectives and a diversified understanding of the different departments in each organization. This understanding breeds collaboration and cross-functional empathy and increases productivity.



“While our study identified that critical thinking is an essential skill to be successful as a nurse, we should also be investing in the training of managers to support their staff on the floor. In addition to technical training, psychosocial assessment training should be a component, such as Emotional Intelligence (EQ test), Conflict Assessment (TKI test), etc., to address the high-stress working environments that nurses are placed in.”

MICHAEL SKOVIRA
Chief Medical Officer, Cross Country Healthcare

3. Invest in retention strategies

Simultaneously, we need to focus on enriching the careers of current and future nurses to ensure long-term satisfaction and subsequent retention. This requires resources and support that address the physical and emotional impact on nurses and ensure they are aware of the available resources. Our recent survey found that many nurses are burned out, stressed and/or overworked. Nurses should be encouraged to meet with provided mental health professionals to discuss the grief and pain that goes together with the profession. Supervisors should monitor these issues closely and give opportunities for nurses to come forward with suggestions or needs. And employers should be prioritizing resources to support nurses in this capacity. For instance, we launched a dedicated mental health hotline at Cross Country Healthcare. We offered a licensed clinical social worker so that employees and clinicians can safely and openly express their emotions and have an immediate resource for assistance.

How can we continue to help the heroes?

During the pandemic, nurses were celebrated in a time of crisis. However, nurses continue to do heroic work every day. How can we continue this momentum and celebrate and recognize these heroes in an ongoing way?

We recommend six initiatives to continue to support our healthcare heroes:

- Support the move to national licensure. The pandemic crisis reinforced the need like never before.
- Continue the recognition and appreciation for what nurses do each day.
- Provide adequate mental health care and/or EPA programs. The emotional toll on nurses is real and life-changing.
- Offer education/training avenues for nurses to advance their skills, knowledge, and experience.
- Deliver empathy and support via a system always there to sustain and encourage nurses to succeed.
- Provide a safe work environment so nurses can work without fear of assault or injury from patients, families or co-workers.

4. Innovation will drive the future

Modern problems require modern solutions. Telehealth is an excellent example of how technology can revolutionize healthcare for patients. But it can also change how we identify, engage and retain healthcare staff. We must better utilize technology for equitable workforce distribution, workflow management and patient safety. Current technology-based workforce solutions offer data analytics that can aid healthcare managers in understanding why they are losing staff and where they are going. These resources help organizations evolve to the needs of their talent and better reflect the market conditions to remain competitive. This will keep nurses happier and provide them with greater job satisfaction.

We also need to use technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to automate and streamline repetitive administrative tasks so nurses can focus on patient care. This requires us to look at the job responsibilities differently and innovate ways to improve efficiencies.

The demand for patient care is increasing exponentially. Therefore, we must change how we educate, train, hire, manage and treat our nurses. We have all the tools to start now, but we cannot implement these practices if we continue to blame the pandemic for a situation that has been growing for years. So, we need to come together as an industry and start immediately.

“The implementation of high potential career development programs sponsored by the employer would go a long way in giving nurses a line of sight for growth opportunities while aiding retention. Such programs develop future leaders by providing employees with an immersive, holistic program that includes executive coaches, mentors, leadership training, psychosocial assessments, opportunity to further one’s education and more.”

MICHAEL SKOVIRA

Chief Medical Officer, Cross Country Healthcare



“Nurses are problem-solvers and provide a valuable perspective in the engineering industry. The Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the College of Engineering and Computer Science have come together to offer two combined degree (BSN and MS) programs in nursing and artificial intelligence and biomedical engineering to better position nursing students to participate as future healthcare innovators and inventors.”

—

SAFIYA GEORGE

Dean and Professor, Florida Atlantic University’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing

About Cross Country Healthcare

Cross Country Healthcare, Inc. (Nasdaq: CCRN) is a market-leading workforce solutions, tech-enabled talent platform, and staffing, recruitment, and advisory firm with 36 years of industry experience and insight. We solve complex labor-related challenges for customers while providing high-quality outcomes and exceptional patient care. As a multi-year Best of Staffing® award winner, we are committed to an exceptionally high level of service to our clients, home care, education, and clinical and non-clinical healthcare professionals.

Our locum tenens line of business, Cross Country Locums, has been certified by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), the leader in healthcare accreditation, since 2001. We are the first publicly traded staffing firm to obtain The Joint Commission Certification, which we still hold with a Letter of Distinction. Cross Country Healthcare is rated as the top staffing and recruiting employer for women by InHerSights.

For two consecutive years, we have received the Top Workplaces USA award and were recently recognized as a recipient of the Top Workplaces Award for Innovation and Leadership by Energage. We have a history of investing in diversity, equality, and inclusion as a critical component of the organization’s overall corporate social responsibility program. It is closely aligned with its core values to create a better future for its people, communities, and stockholders.

Visit www.crosscountryhealthcare.com or www.crosscountrynurses.com.

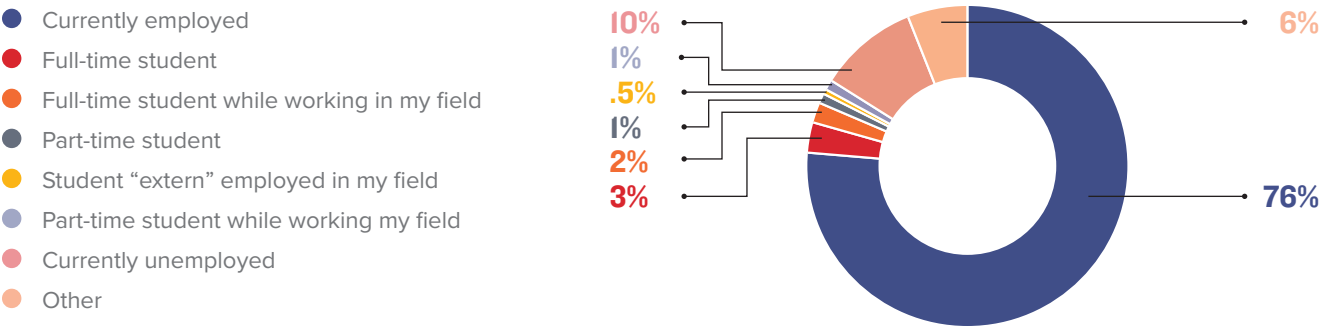
About the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing

FAU’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing is nationally and internationally known for its excellence and philosophy of caring science. The College was ranked No. 11 nationwide by US News and World Report in 2021 for “Best Online Master’s in Nursing Administration Programs” and No. 20 for the “Best Online Master’s in Nursing Programs in 2022. In 2020, FAU graduates earned a 95.9% pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN®) and a 100% AGNP Certification Pass Rate. FAU’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing is fully accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). For more information, visit nursing.fau.edu.

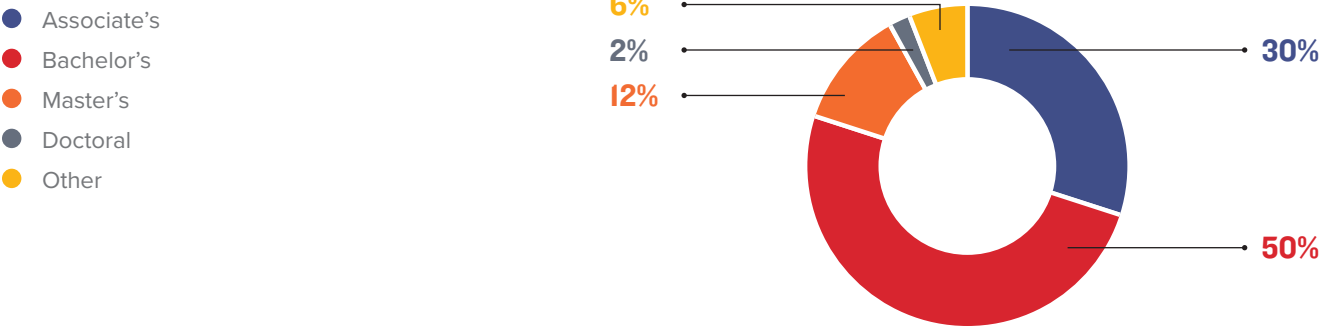
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APPENDIX I: Characteristics of Survey Participants

What is your employment status?

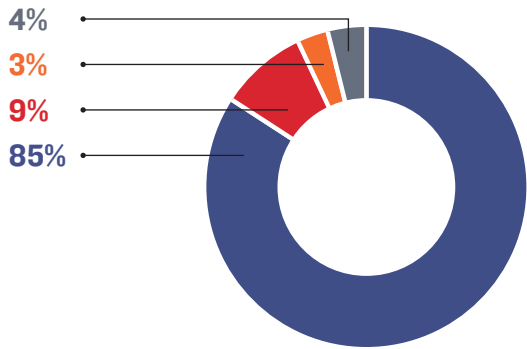


What educational degree do you hold or are you pursuing?



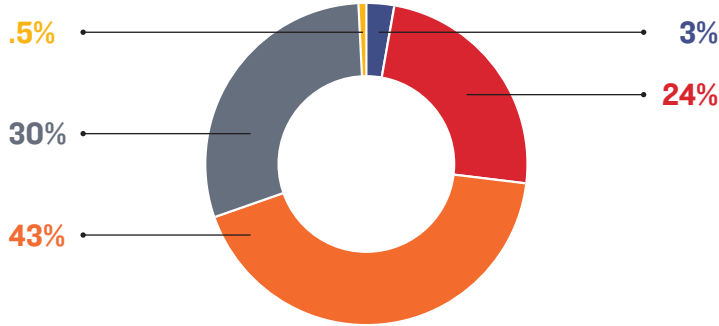
Which of the following best describes the nursing specialty you are working in or pursuing in school?

- Registered Nurse (RN)
- Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN/LVN)
- Nurse Practitioner (NP)
- Other



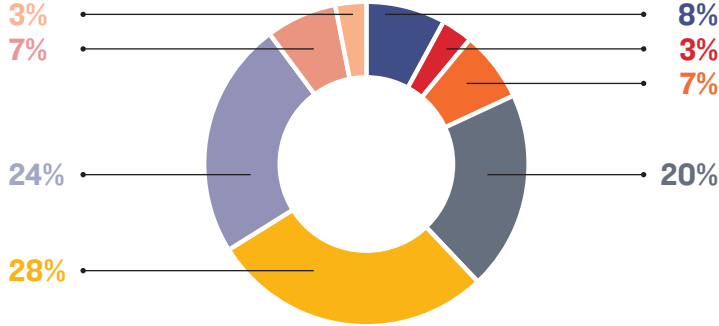
Which category below best defines your age?

- 18–22
- 23–38
- 39–54
- 55–73
- 74+



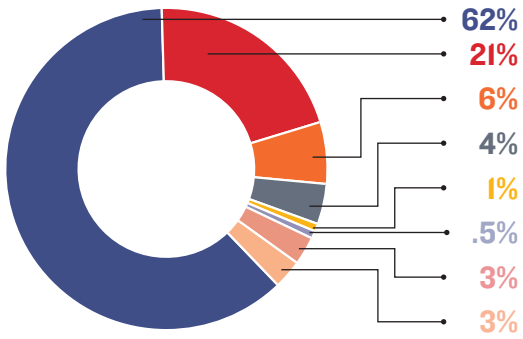
What is your approximate annual income?

- Less than \$26,500
- \$26,500 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- 150,000 to \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more



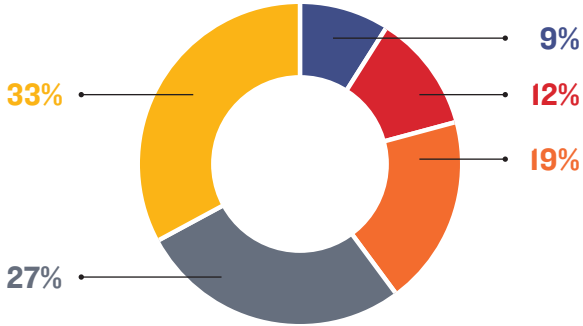
How would you best describe yourself?

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Asian American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Another race
- Other



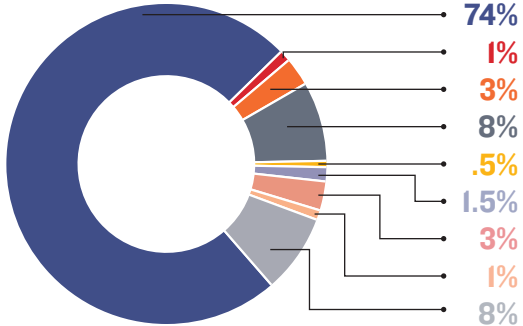
How many years have you been in practice?

- 0–2
- 2–5
- 5–10
- 10–20
- 20+



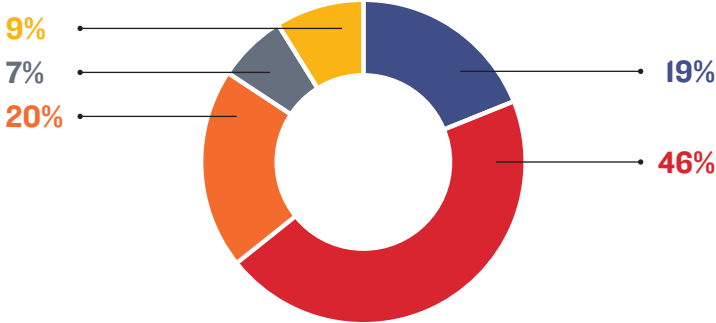
What best describes the organization where you are currently employed?

- Hospital
- Medical Group Practice
- Home Health
- Assisted Living/Nursing Home Facility
- Individual Practice
- Hospice
- Outpatient/Clinic
- Telehealth Position
- Other



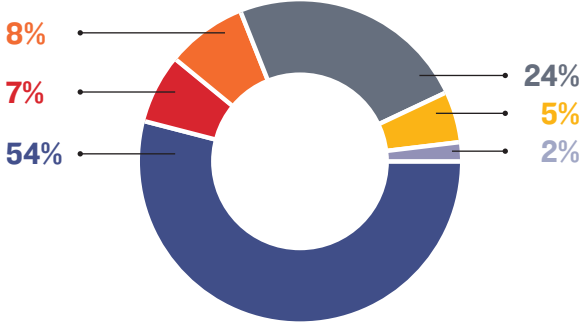
What is the size of your healthcare organization?

- 1–100 beds
- 101–500 beds
- 501–1,000 beds
- 1,001+ beds
- Other (please specify)



What role are you in?

- Travel Nurse
- Per diem
- Local contract
- Permanent
- Part-time
- Other





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