

## A PROFILE OF HOSPITAL RNs WITH PREVIOUS HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCE

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### BACKGROUND

Registered nursing is the largest health profession in New York and hospitals are the major employers of registered nurses (RNs). Hospitals and other health care providers in the state have reported increasing difficulties recruiting and retaining RNs, and there is growing concern about the adequacy of the supply of RNs in New York to meet demand for them in the delivery of health care services.

To better understand the hospital RN workforce and to gain insight into improved efforts to recruit and retain RNs, the Center for Health Workforce Studies (the Center) conducted a survey of RNs working in New York's hospitals in the spring and summer of 2007. In all, more than 5,000 RNs from 100 hospitals, primarily located in the greater New York City metropolitan area, responded to the survey.

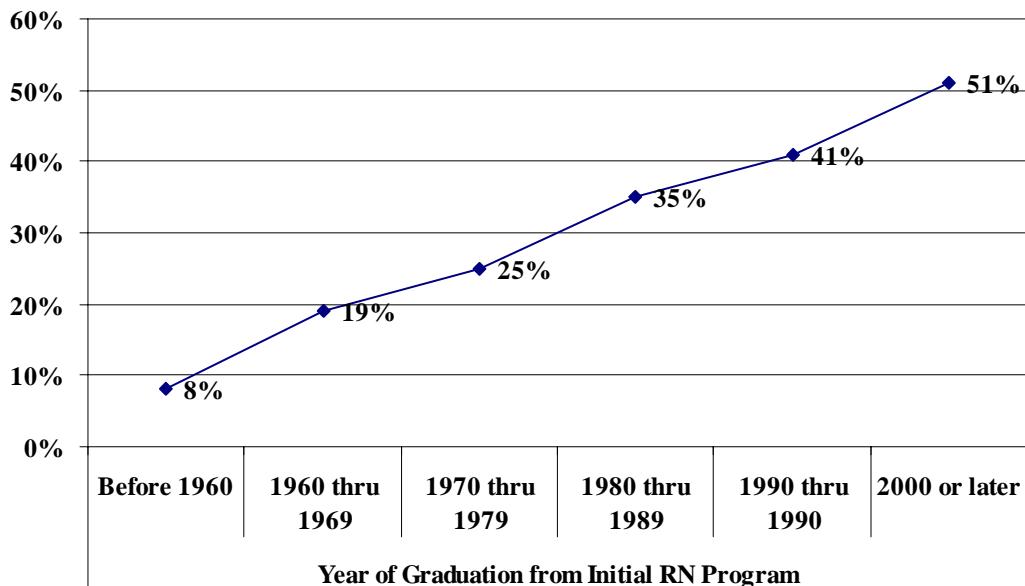
The survey included questions about health care employment prior to becoming a RN. This brief highlights findings about hospital RNs working in New York City who had previous health care experience before to becoming RNs.

### KEY FINDINGS

**A growing number of recent nursing graduates worked in health care prior to becoming RNs.**

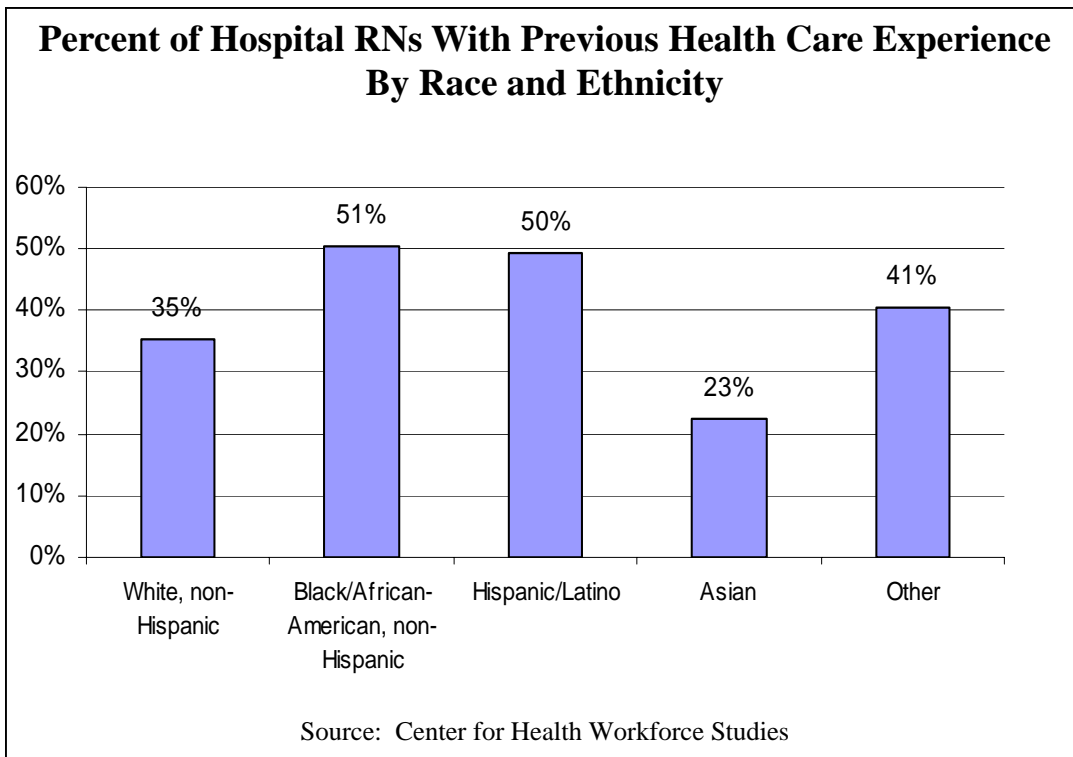
More than one-third (36%) of hospital RNs indicated they were employed in health care prior to becoming RNs. Nearly two-thirds of those RNs worked as nursing aides or LPNs before becoming RNs. More than half of hospital RNs who graduated since 2000 worked in health care prior to becoming RNs, compared to less than 10% of hospital RNs who graduated before 1960.

**Percent of Hospital RNs With Previous Health Care Experience by Year of Graduation from Initial RN Education Program**



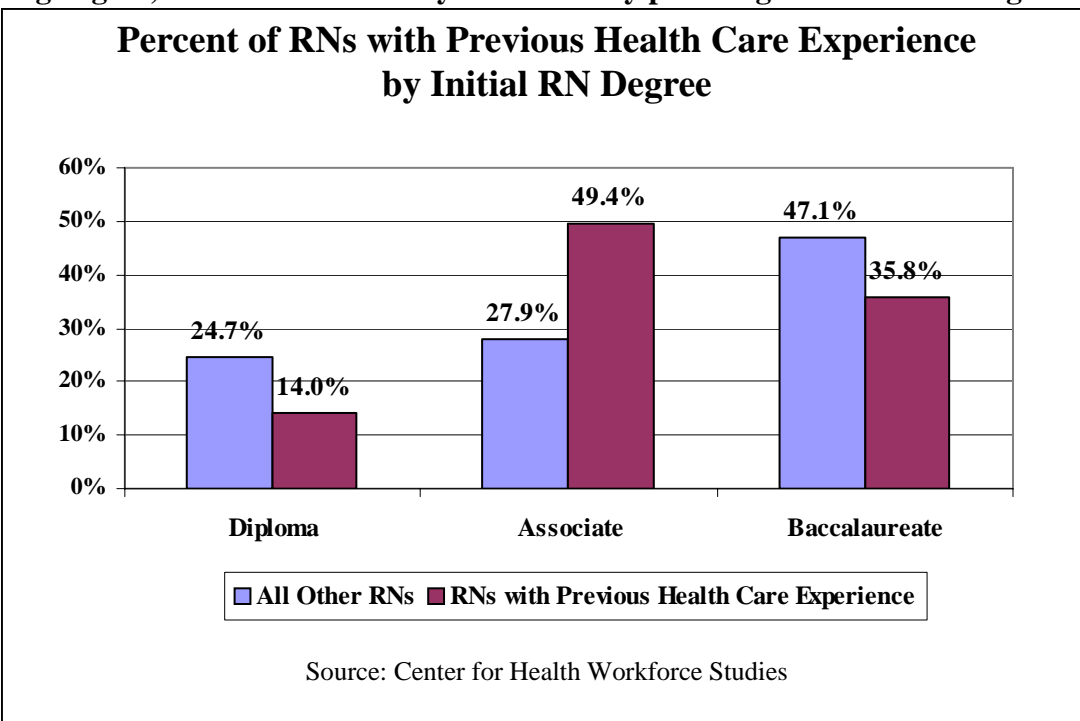
**Hospital RNs with prior health care experience contributed substantially to diversity in the nursing workforce.**

Underrepresented minority<sup>1</sup> hospital RNs were more likely to have worked in health care prior to becoming RNs than were non-Hispanic White or Asian hospital RNs. More than half of Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino RNs reported prior health care experience compared to just 35% of non-Hispanic White and 23% of Asian hospital RNs.



<sup>1</sup>Underrepresented minorities are those minority populations that have smaller representations in the RN workforce than in the general population. They include Black/African-Americans, non-Hispanic; and Hispanic/Latinos

**Hospital RNs with prior health care experience were more likely to report an ADN as their highest nursing degree, and were more likely to be actively pursuing advanced nursing education.**



More hospital RNs with prior health care experience reported an ADN as their highest nursing degree compared to all other hospital RNs (35% versus 18%) and were somewhat less likely to report a BSN as their highest nursing degree (43% versus 49%). However, hospital RNs with prior health care experience were more likely to pursue advanced nursing education compared to all other hospital RNs (53% compared to 47%).

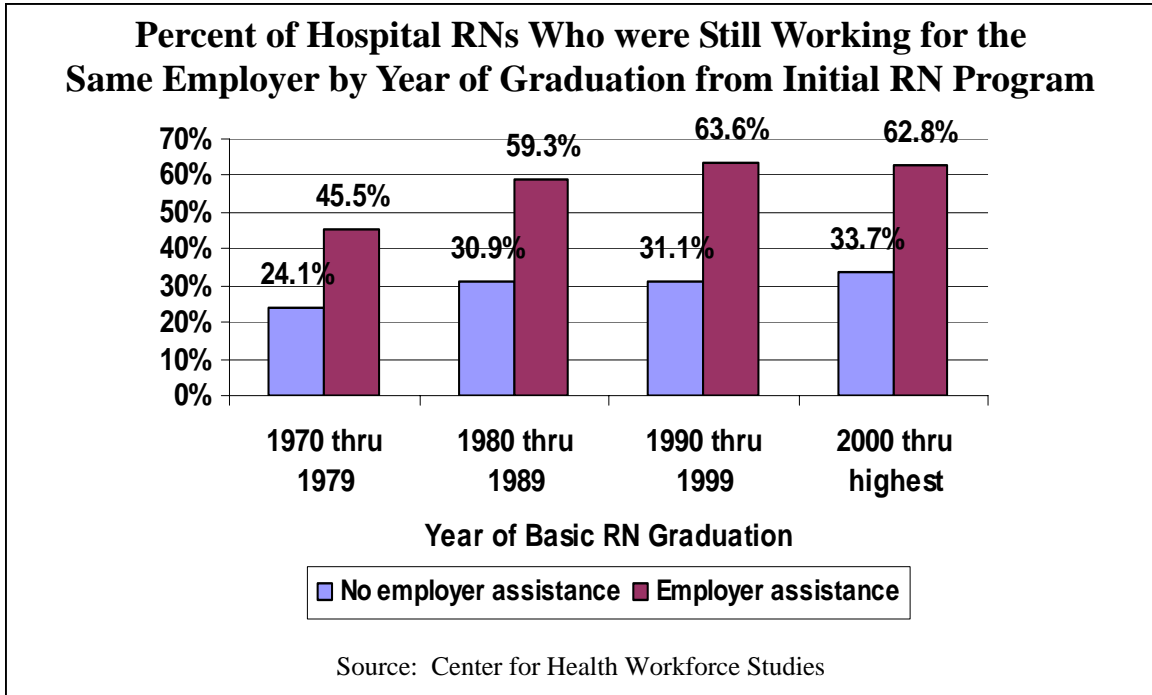
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**While hospital RNs with prior health care experience were somewhat younger than all other hospital RNs, they completed their RN education at older ages.**

Hospital RNs who were employed in health care prior to becoming an RN had a median age of 44 compared to age 46 for all other hospital RNs. Less than half of hospital RNs with prior health care experience were age 45 or older compared to nearly 57% of all other hospital RNs. Hospital RNs with prior health care experience were also more likely to have completed their initial nursing degree at an older age compared to all other RNs (median age of 26 versus 22).

**Hospital RNs with prior health care experience were nearly twice as likely to be working at the same hospital that provided them with educational assistance while they were completing their initial RN education.**

Since 1980, more than 60% of hospital RNs who received financial assistance from their hospitals to complete their initial nursing degree continued to work for those hospitals, compared to about 30% of hospital RNs with prior health care experience who did not receive educational assistance from their employer.



**Hospital RNs with prior health care experience were somewhat more likely to stay in nursing compared to all other hospital RNs and less likely to report plans to retire.**

**Plans of Hospital RNs Intending to Leave Their Current Nursing Position Within the Next Three Years**

Plans After Leaving Current Nursing Position	RNs with Previous HC Experience	All Other RNs
Staying in nursing	52.2%	49.7%
Retiring	9.1%	19.9%
Getting job outside of nursing	7.0%	5.1%
Leaving the state	5.8%	4.7%
Returning to school	6.6%	4.0%
Family obligations	2.0%	2.6%

Hospital RNs with prior health care experience were more likely to report plans to remain in their current nursing position for the next three years compared to all other hospital RNs (76% versus 72%). Slightly more than 52% of hospital RNs with prior health care experience were planning to leave their current position within the next three years but intended to continue to work in nursing, compared to 50% of all other hospital RNs. Hospital RNs with prior health care experience were significantly less likely to report plans to retire compared to all other hospital RNs (9% versus 20%).

**Hospital RNs with prior health care experience were somewhat less satisfied with a number of different aspects of their jobs than all other hospital RNs.**

Hospital RNs with previous health care experience were less satisfied with compensation and benefits compared to all other hospital RNs. These RNs were much less satisfied with their work schedule, compared to all other RNs.

A smaller percentage of hospital RNs with previous health care experience felt that they were treated as valued employees and that they went home feeling satisfied that quality of patient care was given.

Satisfied with	RNs with Previous HC Experience	All Other RNs
Work Schedule	66%	80%
Retirement Benefits	36%	41%
Paid Time Off	66%	70%
Pay	54%	56%
Opportunities for Advancement	48%	51%
Felt That They Were Treated as a Valued Employee	50%	53%
Went Home Feeling Satisfied That Quality Patient Care was Given	60%	63%

Source: Center for Health Workforce Studies

## CONCLUSIONS

This research was designed to inform state policy makers, planners and other stakeholders about hospital RNs with prior health care experience and how they compared to all other hospital RNs. The study found that hospital RNs with prior health care experience represented more than one-third of all hospital RNs.

Health care workers, particularly LPNs and nursing aides, are a growing source of new RNs, and working in health care prior to pursuing a registered nursing education has become an increasingly popular route into the nursing profession. RNs with prior health care experience are more likely to be underrepresented minorities, compared to all other hospital RNs, and their diversity makes an important contribution to the cultural competence of the RN workforce.

Hospital RNs with prior health care experience were nearly twice as likely to be working at same hospital that provided them with educational assistance while they were completing their initial RN education. This finding suggests that hospitals using a “grow your own” strategy, such as supporting upgrading opportunities for their workers into registered nursing, may see long-term benefits, including an RN workforce willing to make a long-term commitment to them.

### CENTER FOR HEALTH WORKFORCE STUDIES

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