# Exploring Burnout Levels Among Patient Care Registered Nurses in New York State

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## BACKGROUND

- Registered nurses (RNs) are the largest component of the health care workforce, working in all facets of health care—from physician offices to hospital inpatient units
- RNs provide and coordinate patient care, monitor patients' conditions, and provide patient and family education
  - For many patients, RNs are the primary and consistent point of contact
- Demanding workloads, poor management and leadership, and overall stressful work environments are known to be associated with RN burnout[1]
- Burnout is defined by physical or emotional fatigue or exhaustion, increased cynicism at work, and ultimately reduced effectiveness[2]
- Burnout leads to increased RN turnover, poor job performance, and threats to patient safety and quality of care[3,4]

## METHODS

- In New York State (NYS), RNs complete a mandatory survey at time of their tri-annual licensure re-registration
- Survey questions cover education, demographics, practice characteristics, future plans, job satisfaction, and burnout
- Burnout questions are only asked of those actively practicing as RNs in NYS
- Burnout was measured using the 7-question workforce Copenhagen Burnout Inventory
- Each burnout question was scored on a scale of 0–100
- Scores from the 7 burnout questions were averaged to get one burnout score
- Nearly 43,000 patient care RNs identified as actively practicing in NYS and completed the burnout questions
- Descriptive analysis was conducted on all variables
- Linear regression was run comparing burnout to selected survey variables

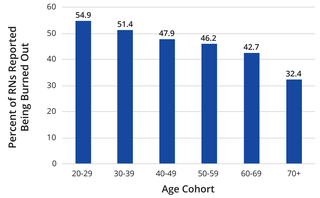
> **Increased turnover of RNs due to burnout can impact the delivery of health care services, ultimately leading to poorer quality of care and patient outcomes.**

## RESULTS

**Average burnout scores for RNs decrease with age.**

- RNs ages 20-29 had the highest average burnout scores
- RNs ages 70 and older had the lowest average burnout scores

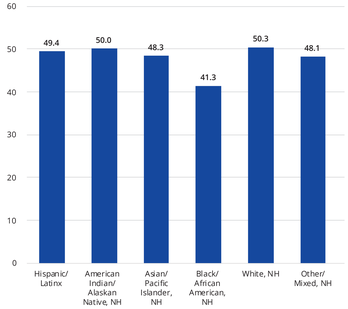
FIGURE 1. Average Burnout Scores for NYS Patient Care RNs by Age Cohort, 2023




**White, non-Hispanic RNs reported the highest average burnout scores.**

- White RNs reported the highest average burnout scores, followed by American Indian/ Alaskan Native (50.0) and Hispanic/Latinx (49.4)
- Black/African American RNs had the lowest average burnout scores

FIGURE 2. Average Burnout Scores for NYS Patient Care RNs by Race and Ethnicity, 2023




**RNs working in hospitals had the highest average burnout scores.**

- RNs who worked in hospitals, either in inpatient units or emergency departments, had the highest average burnout scores
- RNs working in hospital outpatient clinics reported the second highest average burnout scores

TABLE 1. Average Burnout Scores for NYS Patient Care RNs by Health Care Setting, 2023

| Practice Setting | Average Burnout Score |
|---|---|
| Hospital Inpatient/ED | 52.0 |
| Hospital Outpatient | 46.7 |
| Other Outpatient | 44.6 |
| Other Inpatient/Long-Term Care | 44.8 |
| Other Health Care Settings | 43.0 |

**A number of factors influence levels of burnout, including RN roles.**

- In addition to age, race and ethnicity, and practice setting, gender was also associated with RN burnout, with female RNs having lower burnout scores
- RNs with less patient contact lower burnout scores
- Despite a number of factors being statistically significant, only 8% of RN burnout can be explained by these factors

TABLE 2. Results From Regression on RN Burnout Scores, 2023

| Variables | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 56.383 | 0.558 | | 101.015 | 0.000 |
| Age | -0.285 | 0.007 | -0.190 | -38.629 | 0.000 |
| Direct Patient Care | 1.869 | 0.210 | 0.045 | 8.911 | 0.000 |
| Female | -1.424 | 0.274 | -0.025 | -5.197 | 0.000 |
| Highest Nursing Degree | -0.107 | 0.143 | -0.004 | -0.750 | 0.453 |
| Hospital Inpatient | 5.217 | 0.203 | 0.133 | 25.666 | 0.000 |
| White, non-Hispanic | 4.154 | 0.189 | 0.105 | 22.023 | 0.000 |

## DISCUSSION

Increased turnover of RNs due to burnout can impact the delivery of health care services, ultimately leading to poorer quality of care and patient outcomes.

Strategies need to be employed to address burnout in RNs, including:

- Identifying risk factors for burnout
- Developing and/or expanding resources for stress management such as employee assistance programs, wellness teams, and tranquility rooms
- Providing access to mental health services on- and off-site
- Addressing violence against RNs through zero tolerance policies, de-escalation training, and increased security
- Fostering a supportive work environment through nurse engagement and empowerment
- Promoting work-life balance

## CONCLUSIONS

- Burnout can impact recruitment and retention of RNs throughout health care
- Additional analysis is needed to better understand the causes of RN burnout and to assist in addressing those causes

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