

Understanding and Responding to Registered Nursing Shortages in Hospitals

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Healthier Communities/Healthier People

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Mother Cabrini Health Foundation



Center for Health Workforce Studies

- An academic research center established in 1996 and based at the School of Public Health, University at Albany, State University of New York
- Mission: To provide timely, accurate information and conduct policy-relevant research about the health workforce
- Goal: To assist stakeholders to understand health workforce issues and challenges in order to inform workforce development

Research Study:

NY Hospital Registered Nurse Recruitment and Retention Issues

- Conducted by CHWS and supported by Mother Cabrini Health Foundation
- Mixed methods research study
 - Qualitative
 - Hospital focus groups and key informant interviews
 - Quantitative
 - State and federal data sources
- Purpose of the study
 - To describe the State's RN workforce
 - To identify the key factors contributing to registered nurse (RN) recruitment and retention challenges
 - To describe the most promising strategies to address these challenges, especially for safety-net hospitals
- Research team
 - Robert Martiniano
 - Sage Shirey
 - Jean Moore

Two-Thirds of Licensed RNs Actively Work in Nursing in NYS

- Two-thirds of licensed RNs are active in NYS
Of those:
 - 61% work in patient care
 - 51% of active RNs work on hospital units and in hospital emergency departments
 - 11% work in hospital outpatient settings
- Hospital patient care RNs are younger than all patient care RNs (38 vs. 42)
- 69% of hospital patient care RNs have BSNs as their highest degree compared to 62% of all patient care RNs.

Source: NYS RN Re-registration Survey

RNs Who Are Hispanics/Latinx Are Underrepresented in New York's Nursing Workforce

- 8.7% of patient care RNs are Hispanic/Latinx compared to 19.5% of New York State's population
- The percentage of patient care RNs who are White, non-Hispanic or Black/African American, non-Hispanic are comparable to their percentage in New York State's population
- 15.0% of patient care RNs are individuals who are Asian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic compared to 8.8% of New York State's population

Sources: NYS RN Re-registration Survey; American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2018–2022

Registered Nursing Shortages in the US

- Periodic shortages of RNs in the US, particularly in acute care hospitals
- Previous shortages were attributed to an aging RN workforce, lack of interest in nursing careers, changes in the health care delivery system, attrition from patient care
 - Strategies included:
 - New candidate pools for careers in nursing (LPN career ladder, second career, men)
 - Increased recruitment of foreign-trained RNs
 - National campaign promoting the value of a nursing career

Most Recent RN Shortage Exacerbated by COVID-19 Pandemic

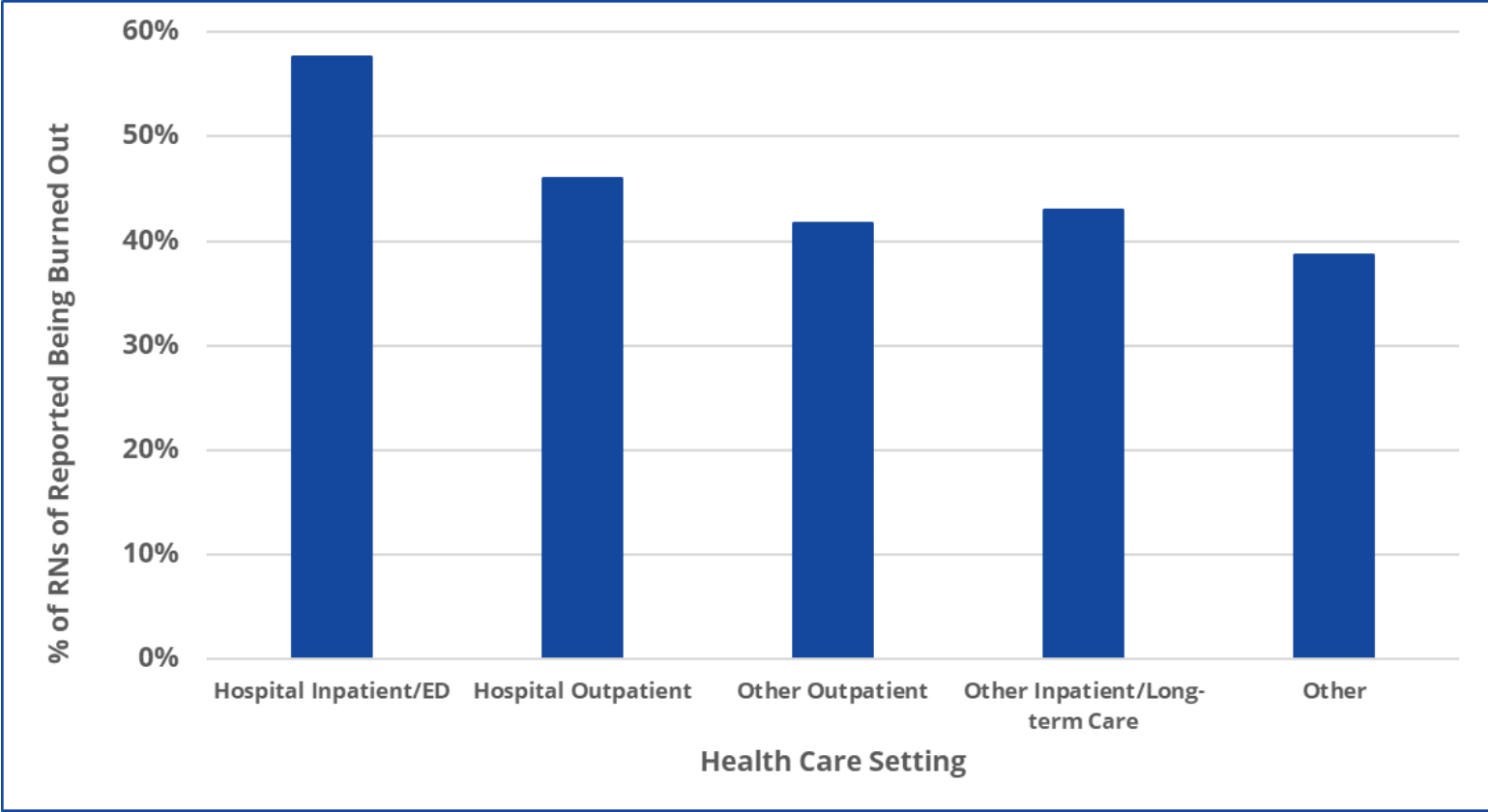
- Attrition of patient care RNs during and after COVID-19
 - Contracted COVID-19 or feared contracting the disease
 - Refused vaccine mandate
 - Found better jobs
 - Left for family obligations
 - Retired
- Nursing education pipeline faced challenges
 - Moved to virtual classroom learning
 - Clinical rotations paused and use of simulation increased dramatically
 - Mostly on-time graduations
 - NCLEX pass rates dropped
- While the pandemic eased, RN shortages persisted

Factors Contributing to Current RN Shortage

- Key informants reported and literature review confirmed:
 - Work environment
 - New RN graduates are less prepared for transition to practice
 - Generational shift
 - Younger applicants – less mission driven
 - More concerned with work-life-balance, flexibility, hybrid work models
 - Less concerned with long-term job benefits

Patient Care RNs in Hospitals Reported High Levels of Burnout

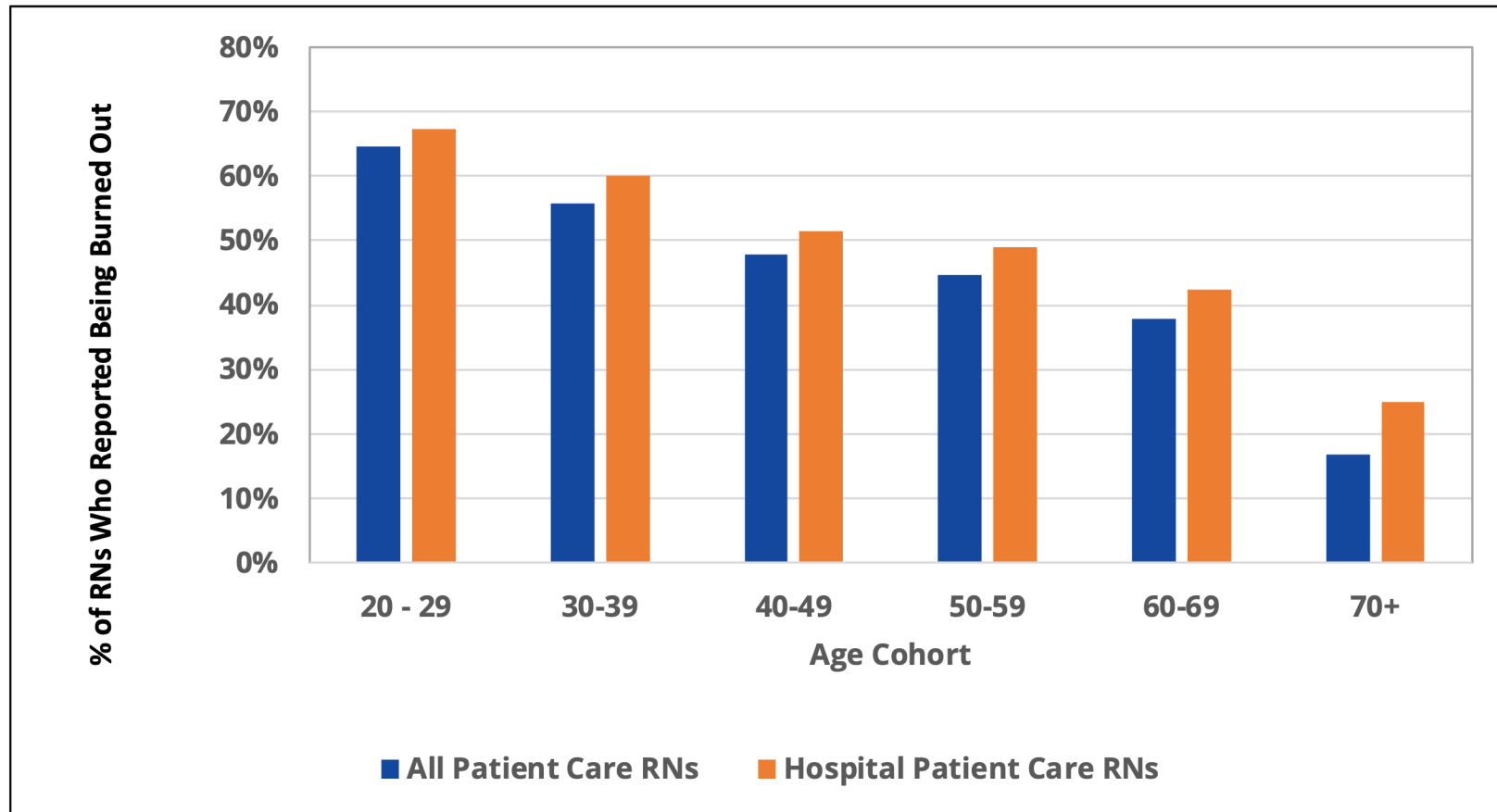
Level of Burnout Reported by Patient Care RNs by Health Care Setting, 2023



Source: NYS RN Re-registration Survey

Young RNs Reported High Levels of Burnout

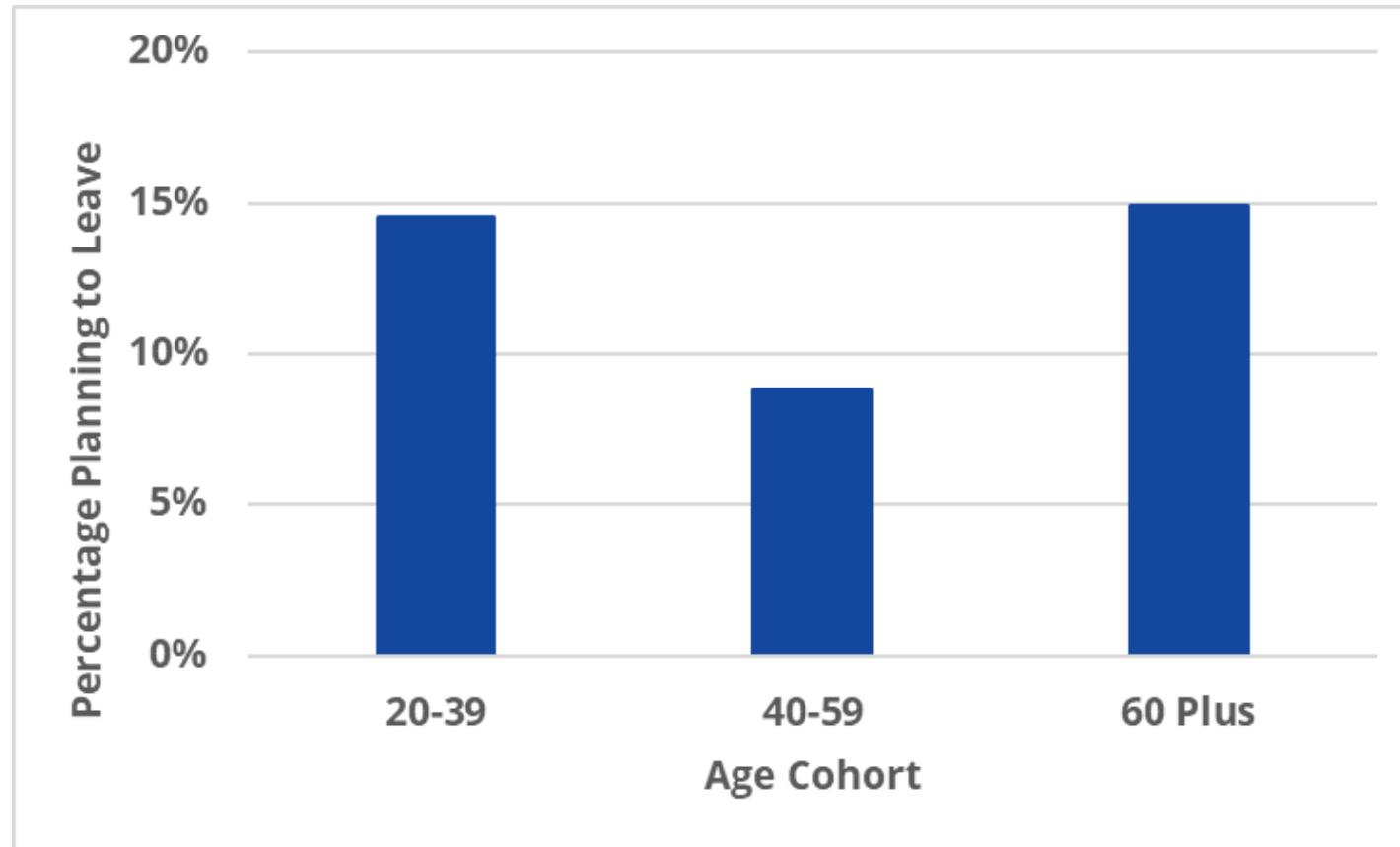
Level of Burnout Reported by Patient Care RNs by Age Cohort, 2023



Source: NYS RN Re-registration Survey

Nearly 15% of Young RNs in Hospitals Reported Plans to Leave Their Jobs Within the Next 12 Months

Percent of Hospital RNs Planning to Leave Their Hospital Position Within Next 12 Months by Age Cohort, 2023



Source: NYS RN Re-registration Survey

Recruitment Strategies

- Educational assistance
- Support for transition to practice - nurse residencies
- Summer student nurse externships
- Competitive wages
- Sign-on bonuses
- Outreach events
- Hospital RNs serving as adjuncts at RN education programs

Retention Strategies

- Improving workplace culture
 - Magnet or Pathways to Excellence status (or adapted concepts)
 - Leadership training
 - Preceptor training
 - Burnout reduction strategies
 - Violence prevention
- Virtual nursing
- Internal float pools

Discussion

- No single strategy emerged as a 'silver bullet'
- Differences in approaches based on geography, hospital size, available resources
- Critical to evaluate both short-term and long-term impacts of strategies on recruitment and retention of RNs
- Sharing 'best practices' creates opportunities for hospitals to learn from each other

Hospital RN Recruitment and Retention Priorities

- Improve Work Environment
 - Increasing RN engagement
 - Virtual nursing
 - Violence prevention
 - Resilience programs
- Educational Assistance
 - Tuition assistance
 - Scholarships
- Nursing Workforce Development
 - Clinical skill training
 - Nurse residency
 - Leadership
 - Preceptor training

Questions?

For more information, please email me at: jmoore@albany.edu

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