Finding Employment as a Newly Licensed Registered Nurse in Louisiana

Louisiana Center for Nursing

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Executive Summary

The 2017 Newly Licensed Registered Nurse (RN) Survey represents the fourth biennial survey of newly licensed RNs conducted by the Louisiana Center for Nursing. The initial survey, originally entitled the New Graduate Survey, was conducted in 2011 using the 2012 California New Graduate Hiring Survey as a template. The name of the survey was changed to better identify the target population – graduates from pre-RN licensure nursing programs that successfully passed the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Licensure Examination and received their initial RN license. Conducting the Newly Licensed RN Survey every two years allows for an assessment of employment trends reported by newly licensed RNs in Louisiana which will be described in the current report.

Findings from Louisiana's 2017 Newly Licensed RN Survey are in line with national studies that have been conducted across the country which reveal that there are definite trends related to the frustrations voiced by newly licensed RNs because of what they perceive to be overwhelming expectations upon entrance into the workforce. This is evident in the relatively high turnover rates among newly licensed RNs across the country within their first year of employment (Welding, 2011). In a study conducted by Blegen, Spector, Lynn, Barnsteiner & Ulrich (2017), the low retention rate of newly licensed RNs is a major concern because not only does the loss of a nurse affect the quality of care given, but each nurse who leaves costs the institution up to 1.3 times their salary to replace. Thus, it will be extremely important to continue to monitor the employment trends of newly licensed RNs.

Ninety-eight percent of the RNs that responded to the 2017 Newly Licensed RN Survey were able to find jobs. These findings are in alignment with findings from the 2017 National Student Nurses Association annual survey of new graduates (Feeg & Mancino, 2018) which showed an "upward movement for new graduates finding jobs and employment opportunities in all areas of the country up until last year – while continuing to show job rates of 90% with the higher employment opportunities existing in the Central and South regions of the country" (p. 2).

Key Findings from the 2017 Newly Licensed RN Survey:

In 2017, 69% of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey were White/Caucasian compared to 74% in 2011 which indicates that newly licensed RNs in Louisiana are more diverse than the current nursing workforce which is 80% White/Caucasian (2017 LSBN Annual Report).

➢ Findings from each of the Newly Licensed RN Surveys beginning in 2011, revealed that the vast majority of respondents completed their education in Louisiana (92% in 2017).
➢ In 2015 and 2017, over half of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey were prepared at the baccalaureate level which was a shift from 2013 where 53% of the respondents were prepared at the Associate Degree level.
➢ For those newly licensed RNs having a degree or certificate in another field (37% in 2017), the greatest percentage reported having a Bachelors' degree in another field (49%), followed by an Associate degree (17%).
➢ Since 2013, over one fourth of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey indicated that they graduated from accelerated nursing programs.
➢ In 2017, 85% of the respondents indicated that they plan to advance their education; 31% planned to pursue a Baccalaureate degree in nursing, 39% planned to pursue a Masters' degree in nursing, and 13% planned to pursue a doctorate.

- The majority of the respondents took the NCLEX-RN exam between two to seven weeks after graduation; 71% in 2015 and 78% in 2017.
- The vast majority of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey were successful in passing the NCLEX-RN exam on first take both in 2015 (89% pass rate) and 2017 (92% pass rate).
- The number of respondents that reported seeking employment prior to graduation increased by 16 percentage points between 2013 (57%) and 2017 (73%).
- Fifteen percent (82) of the respondents reported having participated in a nurse residency program in 2017.
- In 2013 and 2015 newly licensed RNs were asked what would motivate them to voluntarily participate in a nurse residency program? Increasing skills and confidence was reported as the number one motivating factor, yet in 2017 when salary/stipend was added as an option, 72% of the respondents selected salary/stipend and 71% selected increasing skills and confidence. Forty-six percent of the respondents also indicated student loan deferment as a motivating factor.
- In 2011 and 2013, 94% of the respondents indicated that they were working at the time of the survey and in 2017, 98% of the respondents reported working as an RN.
- The majority of respondents were working full-time at the time they participated in the Newly Licensed RN Survey each year (97% were working full-time in 2017) with a smaller percentage reporting working part-time and per diem.
- In 2017, 97% of the respondents reported finding a position as a RN in less than three months compared to 68% in 2011.
- Since 2013, the percentage of respondents reporting that they were not working in their job of choice decreased by nine percentage points (27% in 2013; 18% in 2017).
- The most frequently used methods for seeking employment as a RN were the website (hospital/health facility), clinical experience at the healthcare facility, previous employment, and/or knowing someone at the healthcare facility.
- In 2017, 75% of the respondents reported being employed in an acute hospital compared to 79% in 2015.
- In 2017, 64% of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey reported a starting salary of $22-$24 dollars an hour, which represents an increase of 25 percentage points since 2013 (39%).
- The percentage of respondents that were not employed at the time of the survey decreased each year of the survey: six percent in 2013, three percent in 2015, and two percent in 2017. Reasons respondents were given for not being hired in 2017 included lack of experience, no positions available for new graduates, currently not hiring, BSNs preferred, out of school too long, and one respondent reported not passing the pre-hire assessment test.

Narrative Comments by Newly Licensed RNs

Over the last eight years there have been hundreds of compelling comments shared by newly licensed RNs related to successes and challenges they faced during their pursuit of employment as a RN in Louisiana. Keep in mind that the majority of the respondents were employed at the time they participated in the survey, therefore the vast majority of these comments are coming from newly licensed RNs that were employed and wanted to share information about their experience in seeking and finding employment as a RN in Louisiana. The comments were placed within the context of the following themes: newly licensed RNs that found it relatively easy to find employment as a RN in Louisiana; lack of experience and not feeling prepared; salary; hiring processes; difficulty finding

positions as RNs; nurses eating their young; nurse patient ratio; and other. The following are examples of some of the comments shared by respondents to the 2017 Newly Licensed RN Survey.

Newly licensed RNs that found it relatively easy to find employment as a RN in Louisiana
> "Finding employment was easy as a new nurse. I was offered 3 positions before I had even graduated due to under staffing issues. It was nice that it was easy to find a job, however it is extremely hard as a new grad to keep up with all the demands of a busy hospital that is not adequately staffed."

Lack of experience and not feeling prepared
> "Some hospitals have very short orientation periods, forcing new nurses to be fully responsible before being ready. Nursing school does what it can to prepare its graduates, but employers need to understand we not come out of school knowing everything and fully competent. "Throwing new graduates to the wolves" only increases the chance for failure, death, and lawsuits."

Salary
> "Finding employment is not a difficult task, it's the lack of pay for what Nurses are worth, that makes it difficult to decide to stay and practice in LA. I have had and heard of a lot of Nurses leaving LA to practice due to being underpaid and underappreciated. It's not all about the money, but it is a risky job that take a huge toll on both the RN and their families. What can we do to increase pay for RN's. We are worth it!!!"

Hiring processes
> "I found it impossible to get a call back or move forward in the hiring process at all without a connection. The job that I accepted was only offered because I had precepts and made a good impression on the unit there. However, once I started working I see that almost every unit is understaffed. So why are new graduates not getting call backs or being hired?"

Difficulty finding positions as RNs
> "My main concerns is that there aren't enough facilities in this area to choose from. There is very little variety in different RN positions as well. Some of us choose the hospital settings because we have no other choice. It's either work at 1 of 3 area hospitals, be unemployed as a licensed nurse, or move out of the area altogether. I am a native to this area and would hate to leave because I can't find the type of nursing position I really desire."

Nurses eating their young
> "I was very fortunate and blessed to have found my calling early and having been in the medical field for more than half my life I have a thick skin. We as nurses need to put a curtail of bullying and end once and for all the xx of 'nurses eat their young." Sadly it is a very true statement and I'm sure that my horrific experience with my employer (yes it was and addressed and taken care of) is one of the main reasons we as a career have such a turnover rate. The time to stop this is now."

Nurse patient ratio
> "Staffing ratios are more strenuous on nurses in Louisiana than compared to most states. My concern is that I have noticed an increase in turnover/burnout on floor nurses. I have seen many leave to work in other states for this reason. Louisiana needs to have safer ratios to retain nurses."

Other
> "As a new RN, the problem is not finding a job, but finding a career that is rewarding and satisfying. Nursing offers a diverse range of areas in which to practice. As a new grad, I took the first job I was offered (as a med/surg RN) and now feel stuck in a job I dislike. Several of my co-workers, also new grads, feel as I do and may explain why our turnover rate is so high. We've

barely trained/oriented new hires before they've quit because they're looking to find "greener and better pastures."

Recommendations

Recommendations that stem from this report include but are not limited to the following:

➢ Leaders in academia and practice should work together to identify the competencies that are needed by newly licensed RNs to ensure that they obtain these competencies and are acclimated as valued members of the profession.

➢ Develop comprehensive nurse residency programs across the state that will allow for a seamless transition from academia to practice for newly licensed RNs.

➢ Develop nurse mentoring / coaching programs for newly licensed RNs that will allow them to achieve competency, confidence, and autonomy as a RN.

➢ Create a work environment that is supportive, safe, and provides opportunities for newly licensed RN to increase their skills and advance professionally within the organization.

➢ Utilize innovative strategies such as flex scheduling and decreased nurse patient ratios on large units, such as medical surgical units, to create an environment where newly licensed RNs can enhance their skills, feel valued and productive, and grow as leaders.

➢ Develop collaborative innovative partnerships between universities and community colleges that will allow newly licensed RNs prepared at the Diploma and Associate Degree level to advance their education.

➢ Explore the role of repayment of student loans as a determent to newly licensed RNs advancing their education.

➢ Repeat the New Graduate Survey every two years to monitor trends in hiring practices experienced by newly licensed RNs as changes occur in the state's health care system, economy, and nursing workforce, in order to better inform policy makers, schools of nursing, prospective nursing students, and other interested stakeholders.

Introduction

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook (2018), employment of registered nurses (RNs) is projected to grow 15% from 2016 to 2026 with an expected demand for 438,100 RNs. New graduates continue to be the largest source of RNs for recruitment and although many of the job-seeking challenges experienced by new graduates during the period of the Great Recession have eased partially due to vacant positions left behind by the retirement of those Baby Boomers that maintained their positions because of the instability in the economy and are now feeling more financially secure. Yet, there are significant concerns amongst employers about the attrition rate of newly licensed RNs within their institutions. Newly licensed RNs face significant challenges that impact successful transition into the workforce. Finding employment begins either before graduation or sometime soon thereafter for the majority of new graduates. Once employed, they are exposed to a world that may often time overwhelm them. It is no secret that new nurses feel stressed and fatigued during the transition from academia to practice. They must learn to manage patients, families, caregivers, relationships with their healthcare team, as well as their personal lives, and in some situations, they may be placed in managerial or supervisory positions that they have not been adequately prepared to handle. If not given the proper support during this very critical time, newly licensed RNs may experience anxiety, frustration, and burnout which could lead to attrition (Hofler & Thomas, 2016).

Purpose

The Louisiana Center for Nursing has conducted the Newly Licensed RN Survey (formerly called the New RN Graduate Survey) every other year beginning in 2011 in an effort to obtain objective data about the actual and potential employment challenges experienced by newly licensed RNs in Louisiana. Findings from the Newly Licensed RN Survey are shared with nurse educators, employers, policy makers, student nurses, and other interested stakeholders to identify employment issues or concerns that could potentially impact the current and future nursing workforce in Louisiana. It is imperative that nurse educators and employers of newly licensed RNs are informed about the concerns of this segment of the RN workforce if we are to ensure that Louisiana will continue to have a nursing workforce that is safe, effective, and qualified to care for an increasingly diverse and aging population with complex healthcare needs.

Methods

In addition to demographic questions, newly licensed RNs in Louisiana were asked to respond to questions related to their experiences in finding initial employment as a RN. Some of the questions addressed were: When did they begin seeking employment? How many jobs did they apply for prior to securing a RN position? and, Was their initial position their job of choice. Additional questions have been added to the survey over the years in an attempt to acquire additional information about the employment experiences of newly licensed RN's in Louisiana.

The statewide survey included 64 parishes which make up the eight regional labor market areas (RLMAs) identified by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (2018). On September 5, 2017 an email blast with the link to the 2017 LCN Newly Licensed RN Survey went out to a total of 4,212 new RNs that received their initial RN license between January 1, 2015 and May 31, 2017 via survey monkey. Follow-up email blasts were sent at two- and three-week intervals, and one week prior to the close of the survey. The survey was closed on November 4, 2017 with a total of 562 new RNs completing the survey

yielding a 13.3% response rate which is lower than the 16.6% response rate obtained with the 2015 Newly Licensed RN Survey (Figure 1). The response rate for California's 2017 New Graduate Employment Survey was 27.9%, yet the National Council of State Boards of Nursing 2017 RN Nursing Knowledge Survey yielded an 11.4% response rate. Although there may be multiple factors contributing to low response rates, research has shown that decreased response rates for this target population (millennials) may be attributed to the technology used to conduct the surveys. According to the Adobe Campaign (2018), 88% of millennials use smart phones to check their email. Findings obtained by FocusVision (2017) in tracking more than 160 million online survey starts globally, revealed that over one third of all surveys were carried out on mobile devices. "Smartphones are quickly eating away at desktop share, with every sign that this trend will continue" (FocusVision, 2017). Based on these findings, in 2019, the Center for Nursing will be exploring the use of text and email blasts containing the link to the Newly Licensed RN Survey as a strategy to increase response rates. In addition, we will also request that chief nursing officers encourage their newly licensed RNs to complete the survey.
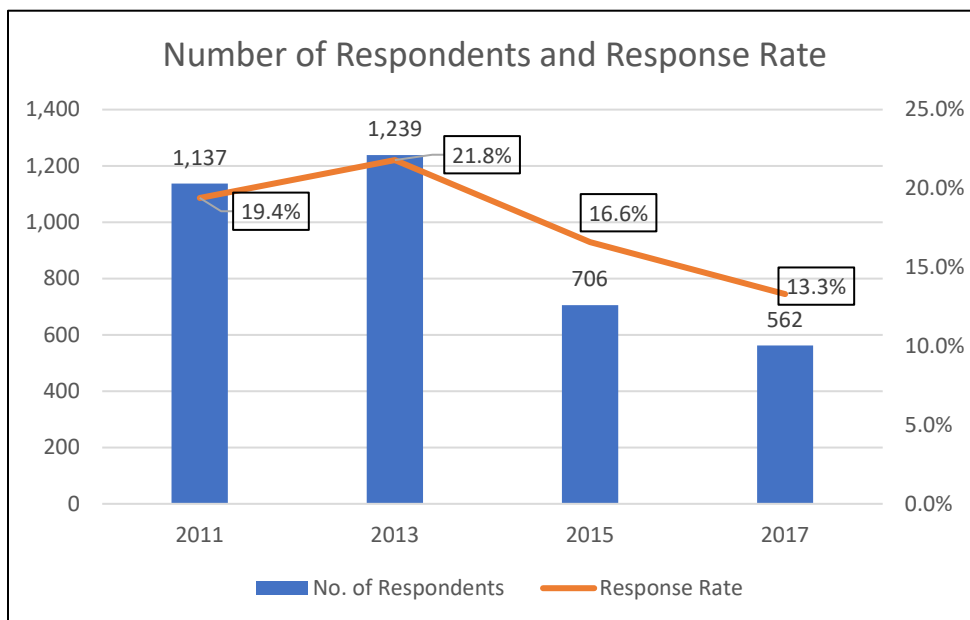

Figure 1. The number of respondents participating in the survey and the response rate.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 18) was used to conduct the analysis of the survey. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the population and findings.

Limitations

Valuable information about the employment of newly licensed RNs in Louisiana has been gained from data obtained with the Newly Licensed RN Surveys over the past eight years. Findings obtained from these types of surveys are used to inform potential employers, nursing faculty, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders. Yet, because of the low response rate, survey findings must be used cautiously, and it should not be assumed that the entire target population of newly licensed RNs in Louisiana would respond in a similar fashion.

Residents of Respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey

Newly licensed RNs were asked to provide information about the parish in which they lived while in nursing school and the parish in which they lived at the time they responded to the Newly Licensed RN Survey. Parishes were then converted to the eight Regional Labor Market Areas (RLMA) used by the Louisiana Workforce Commission. In 2017, the majority of the respondents lived in the New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport RLMAs, which was consistent with the 2015 and 2013 Newly Licensed RN Surveys (Table 1). There was very little mobility in terms of place of residence during school and place of residence after becoming licensed as a RN. In 2015 and 2017 there was no change in the percent of respondents that lived outside of Louisiana during school and after becoming licensed.

Table 1. Residence of Respondents According to Regional Labor Market Area (RLMA) While in School and After Obtaining Their RN License

Regional Labor Market Areas	Residence while in School (2017)		Current Residence as a RN (2017)		Residence while in School (2015)		Current Residence as a RN (2015)		Residence while in School (2013)		Current Residence as a RN (2013)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
RLMA 1 - New Orleans	154	27%	155	28%	190	27%	206	28%	343	28%	356	29%
RLMA 2 – Baton Rouge	114	20%	117	21%	131	19%	118	21%	239	19%	226	18%
RLMA 3 – Houma	32	6%	26	5%	40	6%	33	5%	52	4%	40	3%
RLMA 4 – Lafayette	45	8%	50	9%	66	9%	72	9%	99	8%	121	10%
RLMA 5 – Lake Charles	28	5%	31	6%	51	7%	49	6%	111	9%	88	7%
RLMA 6 – Alexandria	30	5%	34	6%	39	6%	42	6%	62	5%	68	6%
RLMA 7 – Shreveport	97	17%	92	16%	111	16%	105	16%	213	17%	200	16%
RLMA 8 – Monroe	43	8%	39	7%	46	7%	37	7%	62	5 %	63	5%
Not Sure of Region	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	4	0.6%	3	0.4%	3	0.2%	7	0.6%
Do not live in Louisiana	18	3%	16	3%	28	4%	41	3%	55	4%	70	6%
Total	**562**		**562**		**706**		**706**		**1,239**		**1,239**	

Note: Complete data was not available for the 2011 survey.

Gender

As shown in Figure 2, the vast majority of respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey were females which is in alignment with both the RN workforce (88% female in 2016) and students enrolled in Louisiana's pre-RN programs (87% female in 2017) (LSBN Annual Report, 2017).
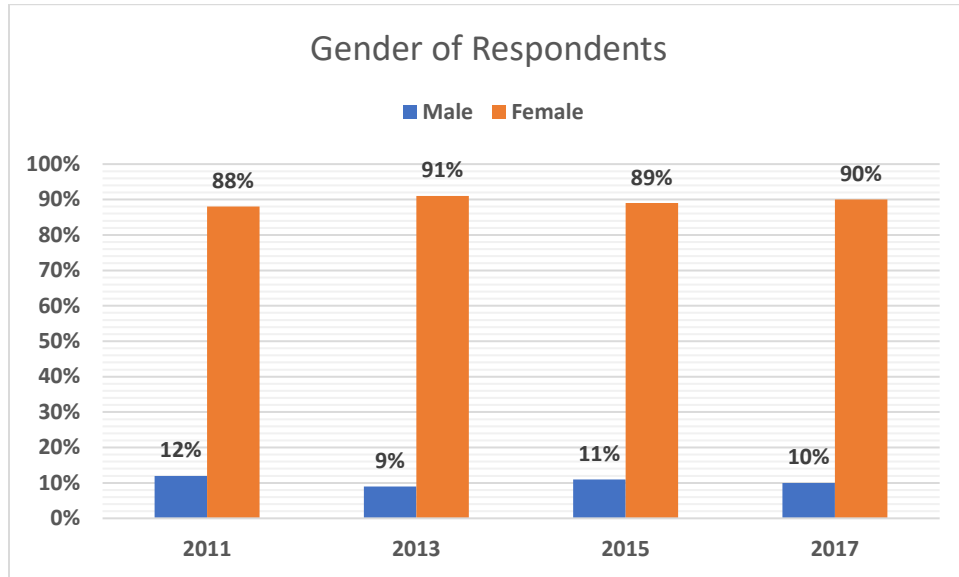

Figure 2. Gender of respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey.

Race

In 2017, 69% of the newly licensed RN respondents were White/Caucasian compared to 74% in 2011 (Figure 3) which indicates that newly licensed RNs in Louisiana are more diverse than the current nursing workforce which is 80% White/Caucasian (2017 LSBN Annual Report). Also, 2017 was the first time 'Two or More Races' was presented as an option on the survey with four percent of the respondents selecting this option.
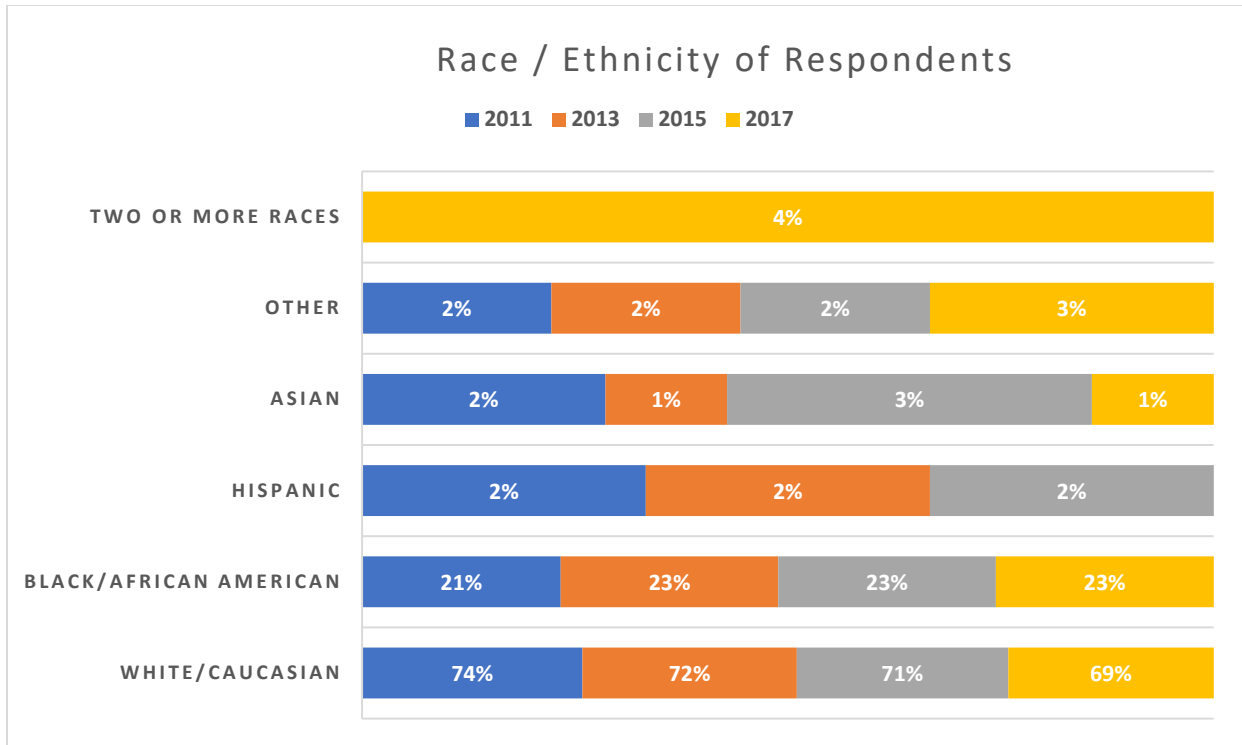
Figure 2. Race and ethnicity of respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey.

Age

As seen in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey were between 20 and 30 years of age (60% in 2017) followed by 31-40 years of age (24% in 2017). Eleven percent of the respondents were between 41 and 50 years of age. There continues to be a very small percentage of newly licensed RNs that are between 51 and 60 years of age (4% in 2017).
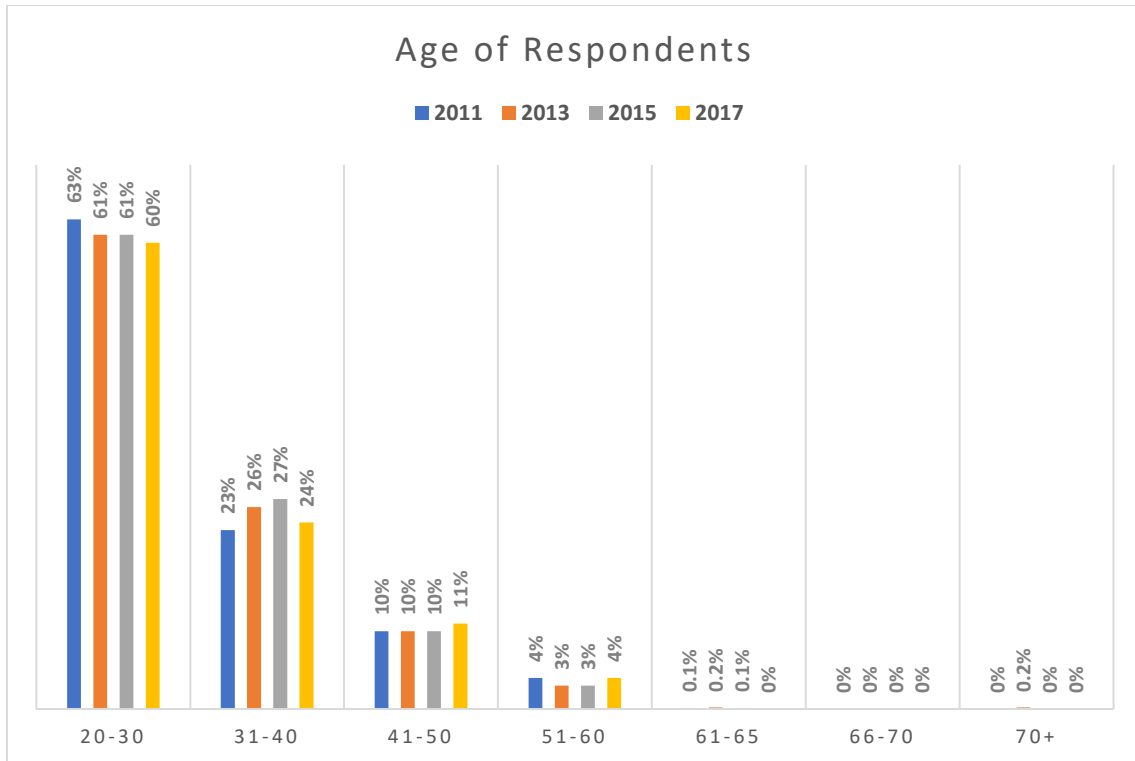
Figure 3. Age of respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey.

Location of Nursing Education

Findings from each of the Newly Licensed RN Surveys beginning in 2011, revealed that the vast majority of respondents completed their education in Louisiana (92% in 2017). There was only one respondent in 2013 that reported receiving their nursing education in another country (see Figure 4).
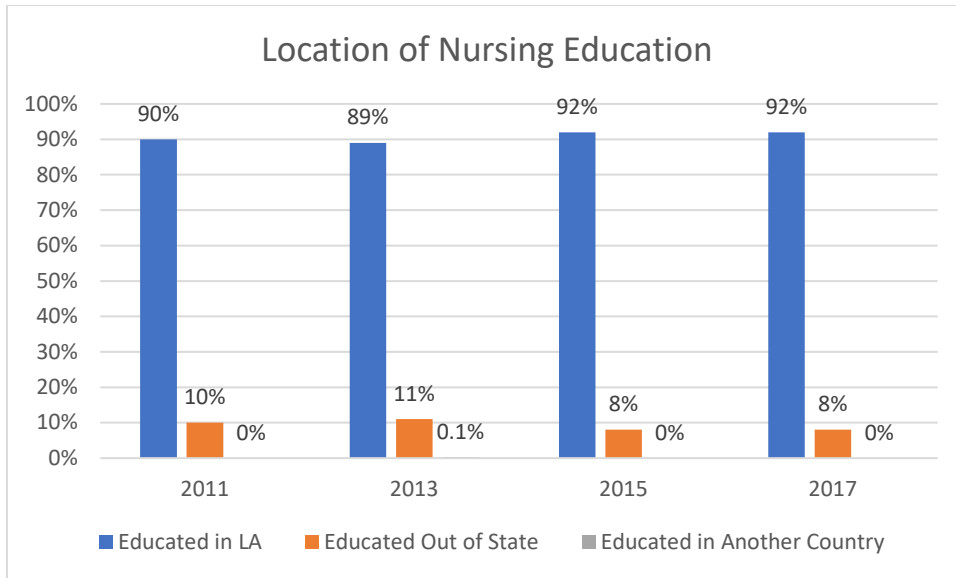
Figure 4. Location of nursing education of respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey.

Educational Preparation

In 2015 and 2017, over half of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey were prepared at the baccalaureate level which was a shift from 2013 when 53% of the respondents were prepared at the Associate Degree level (Figure 5). Less than two percent of the respondents were prepared at the Diploma level which may equate to the fact that there was only one Diploma nursing program in the state and the number of graduates from that program were relatively small when compared to the Associate and Baccalaureate programs (see Figure 5).
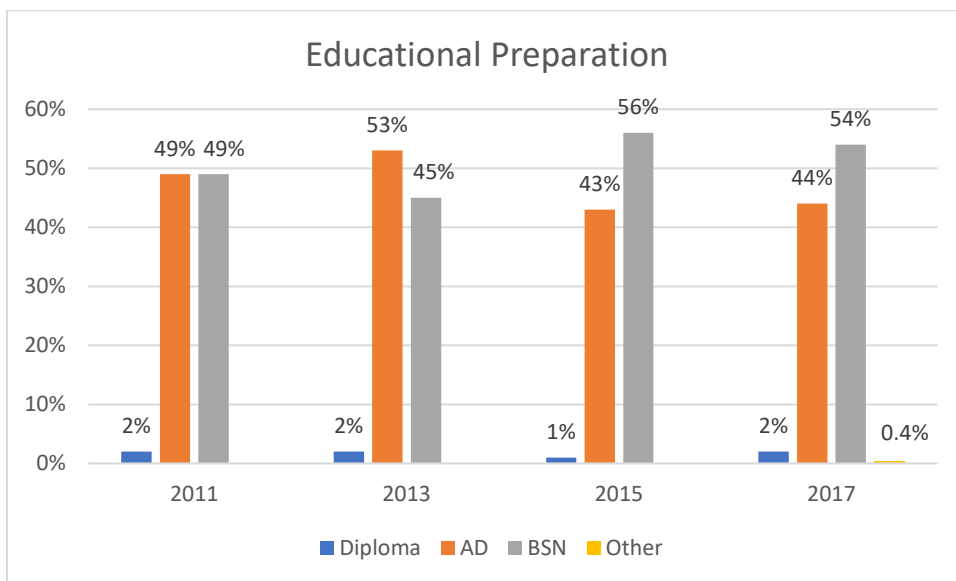

Figure 5. Educational preparation of respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey.

Degrees or Certificates in Other Fields

Beginning in 2013, newly licensed RNs were asked to identify degrees or certificates they had acquired in fields outside of nursing. For those newly licensed RNs having a degree or certificate in another field (37% [208] of the respondents in 2017), the greatest percentage reported having a Bachelors' degree in another field (49%), followed by an Associate degree (17%) (Figure 6). In 2017, 15% (32) of the respondents having a degree or certificate in another field reported that they were licensed practical nurses.
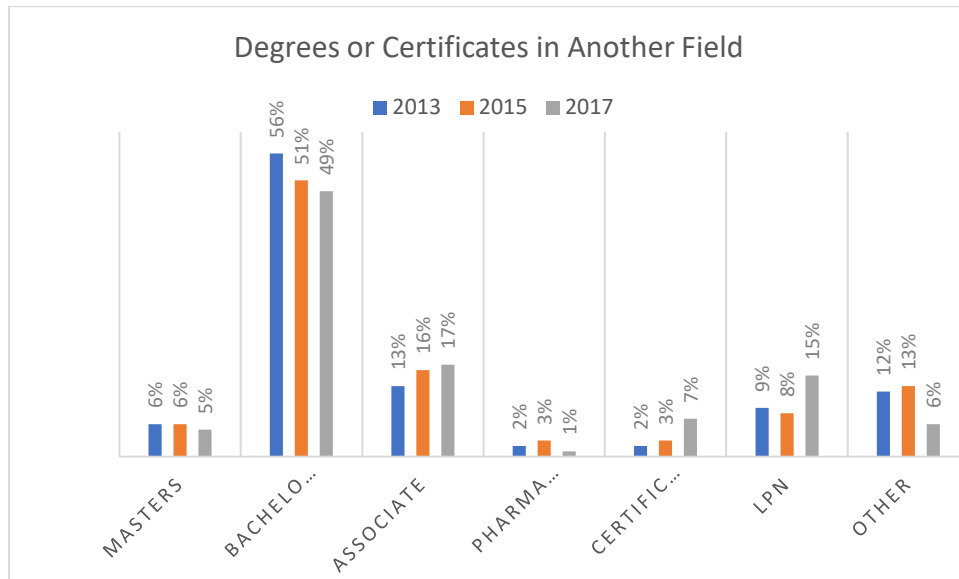

Figure 6. Respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey with degrees or certificates in other fields.

Graduates from Accelerated Nursing Programs

With an increasing emphasis on preparing nurses at the baccalaureate and higher degree level, one innovative approach to nursing education that has gained significant momentum is the accelerated degree program for non-nursing graduates. These programs build on previous learning experiences and provide a way for individuals with undergraduate degrees in other disciplines to transition into nursing (AACN, 2017). Since 2013, over one fourth of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey indicated that they graduated from accelerated nursing programs (Figure 7).
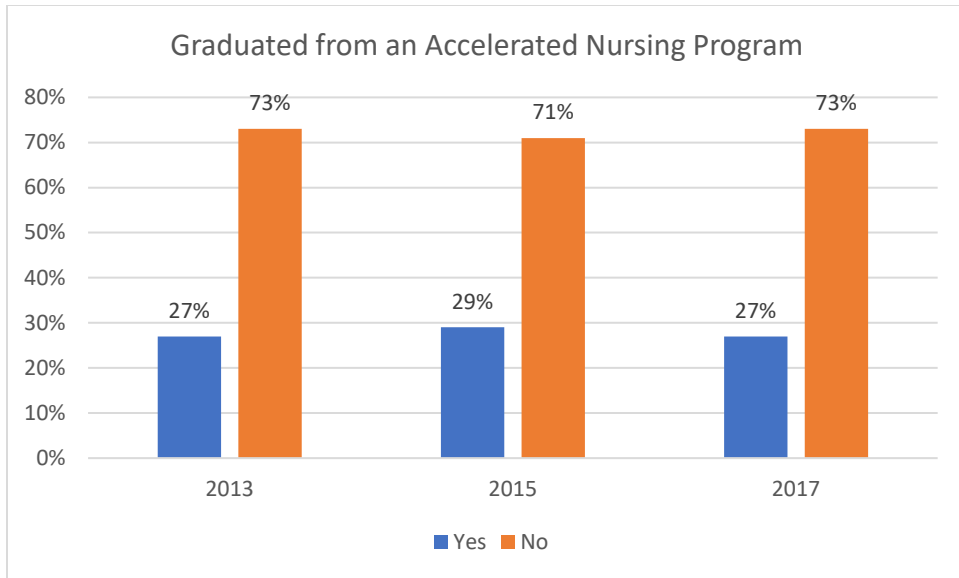
Figure 7. Respondents that graduated from accelerated nursing programs.

Newly Licensed RNs Plans to Advance Their Education

According to the Institute of Medicine Report on the Future of Nursing (2011), education should serve as a platform for continued lifelong learning and include opportunities for seamless transition to higher degree programs. This concept of continued lifelong learning is evident in the responses from the newly licensed RNs in Louisiana (Figure 8). In 2017, 85% of the respondents indicated that they plan to advance their education.
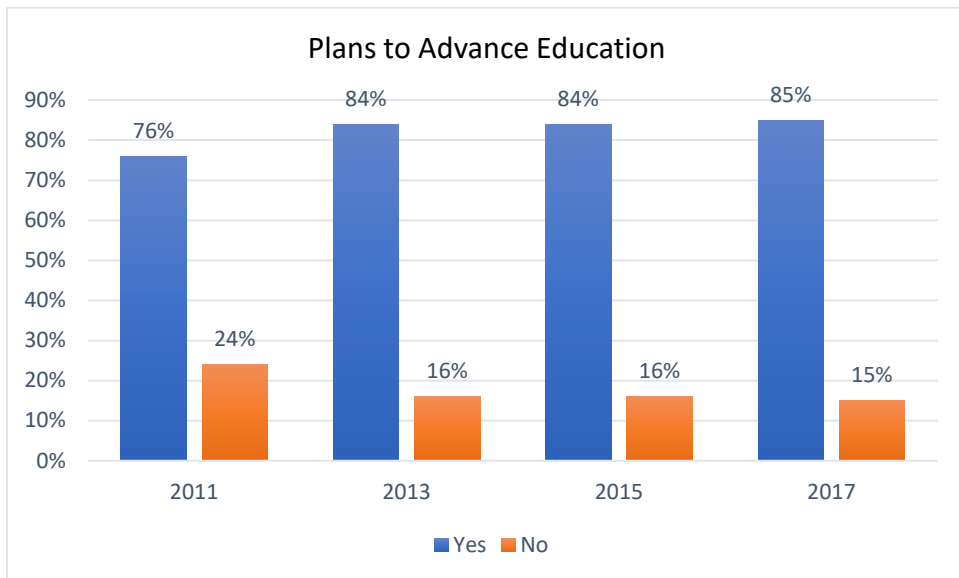

Figure 8. Respondents plans to advance their education.

Over two thirds of the respondents indicated they planned to pursue a Baccalaureate or Masters' degree in nursing (Figure 9). In 2017, 31% of the respondents planned to pursue a Baccalaureate degree in nursing, 39% planned to pursue a Masters' degree in nursing, and 13% planned to pursue a doctorate.
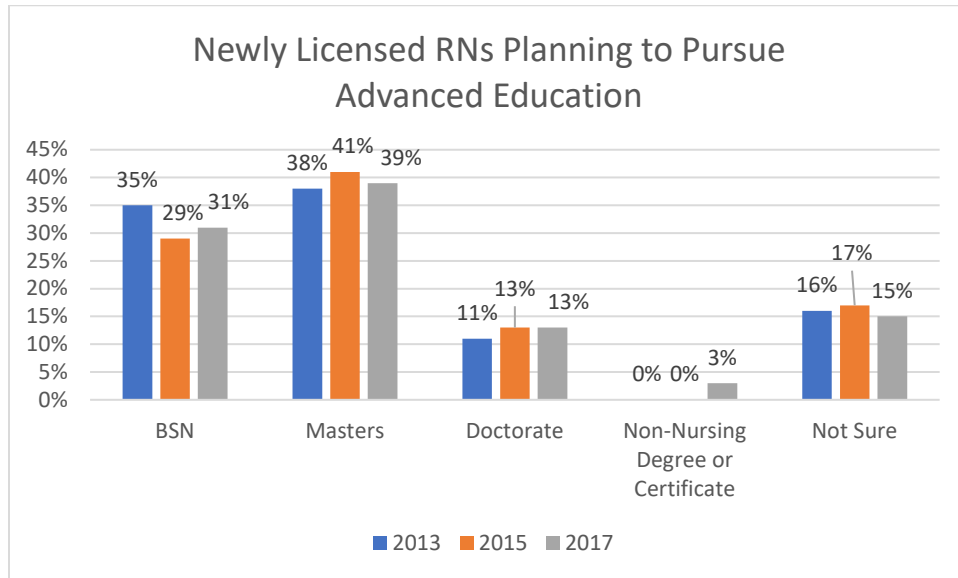

Figure 9. Type of advanced education that respondents plan to pursue.

Length of Time Between Graduation and Taking the NCLEX-RN Examination

Length of time between graduation and taking the NCLEX-RN varied among responders (Figure 10). The majority of the respondents took the NCLEX-RN exam between two to seven weeks after graduation; 71% in 2015 and 78% in 2017 (Figure 10). In 2017, 21% of the respondents took the exam two months after graduation, nine percent took it three months after graduation, and two percent took the exam greater than three months after graduation.
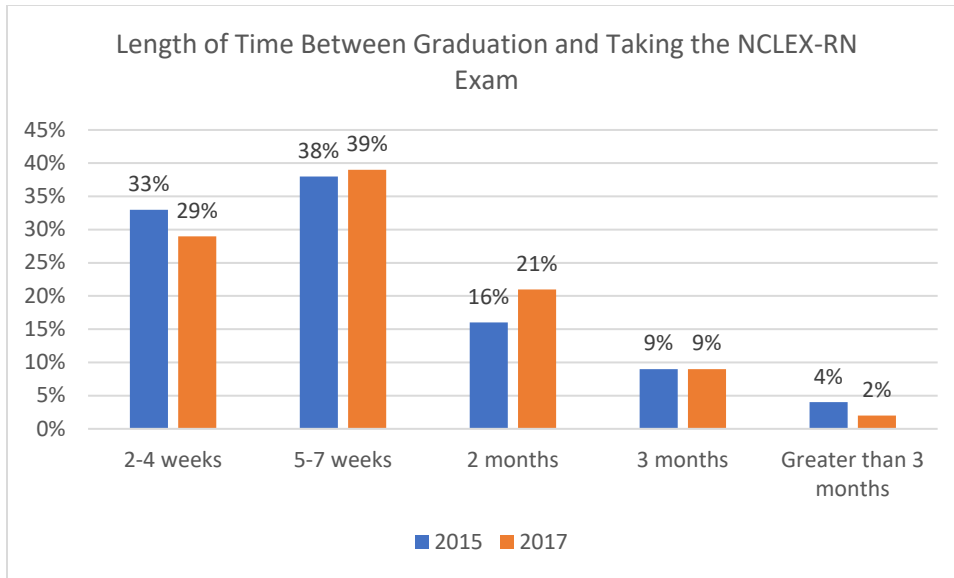
Figure 10. Length of time between graduation and taking the NCLEX-RN Type of advanced education that respondents plan to pursue.

Passage on the NCLEX-RN Exam on First Take

As seen in Figure 11, the vast majority of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey were successful in passing the NCLEX-RN exam on first take both in 2015 (89% pass rate) and 2017 (92% pass rate).
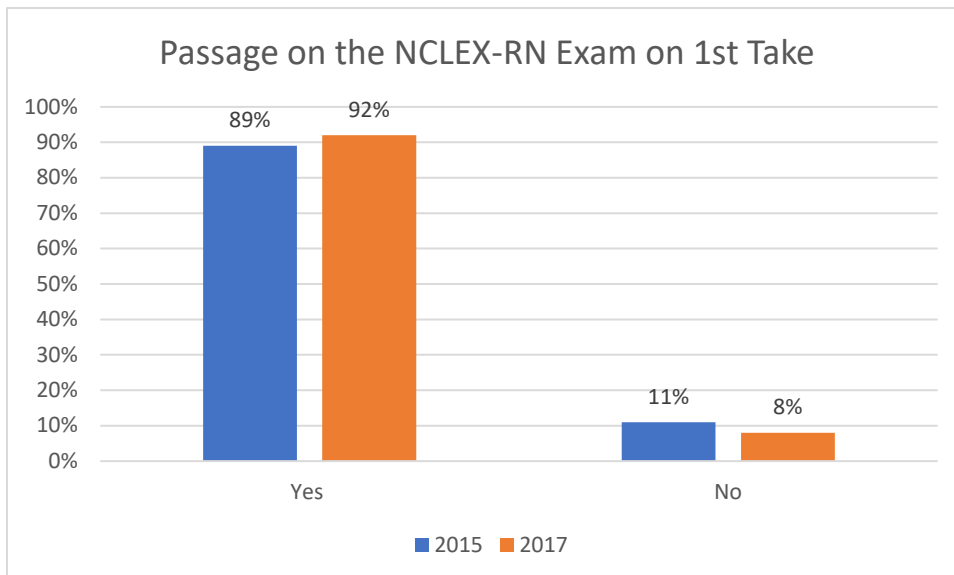

Figure 11. Passage on the NCLEX-RN exam on first take (This question was not asked on the 2011 and 2013 Newly Licensed RN Surveys.)

When New Graduates Begin to Seek Employment

The majority of new graduates began seeking employment prior to graduation based on findings from the Newly Licensed RN Surveys (Figure 12). The number of respondents that reported seeking employment prior to graduation increased by 16 percentage points between 2013 and 2017. The percentage of new graduates waiting to seek employment immediately after graduation decreased between 2013 and 2017 by 11 percentage points. Additionally, those respondents waiting to seek employment after passing the NCLEX-RN exam also decreased in 2017 by six percentage points when compared to 2015.
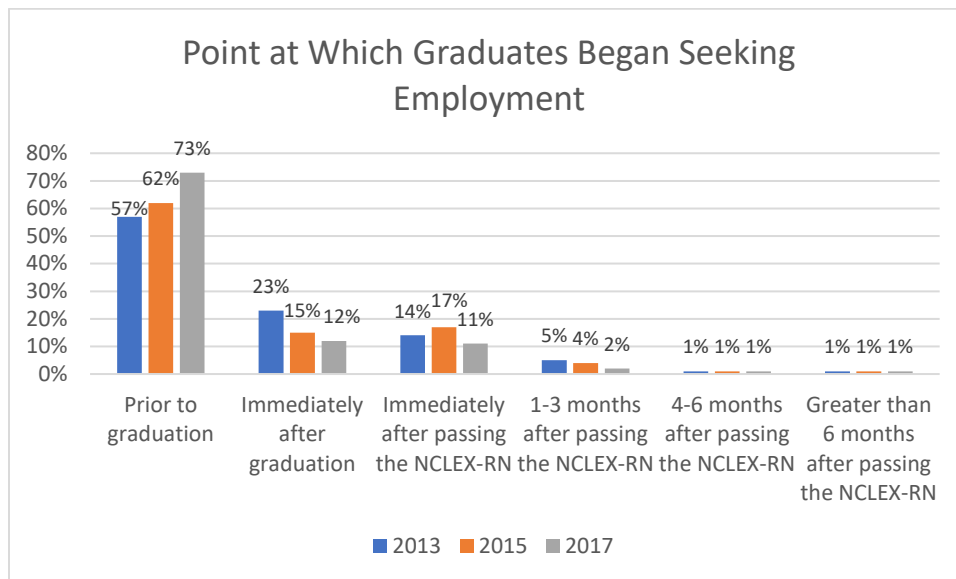
Point at Which Graduates Began Seeking Employment

Category	2013	2015	2017
Prior to graduation	57%	62%	73%
Immediately after graduation	23%	15%	12%
Immediately after passing the NCLEX-RN	14%	17%	11%
1-3 months after passing the NCLEX-RN	5%	4%	2%
4-6 months after passing the NCLEX-RN	1%	1%	1%
Greater than 6 months after passing the NCLEX-RN	1%	1%	1%

Figure 12. Passage on the NCLEX-RN exam on first take.

Participation in a Nurse Residency Program

The need for nurse residency programs to improve the transition from academia to practice for Newly Licensed RNs was one of the major recommendations that came out of the Institute of Medicine Report on the Future of Nursing (2011). In 2013 and 2015 newly licensed RNs were asked what would motivate them to voluntarily participate in a nurse residency program? Increasing skills and confidence was reported as the number one motivating factor, yet in 2017 when salary/stipend was added as an option, 72% of the respondents selected salary/stipend and 71% selected increasing skills and confidence (Figure 13). Forty-six percent of the respondents also indicated student loan deferment as a motivating factor. For the first time in 2017 newly licensed RNs were asked if they had participated in a nurse residency program post-graduation and 15% (82) reported having participated in a nurse residency program.
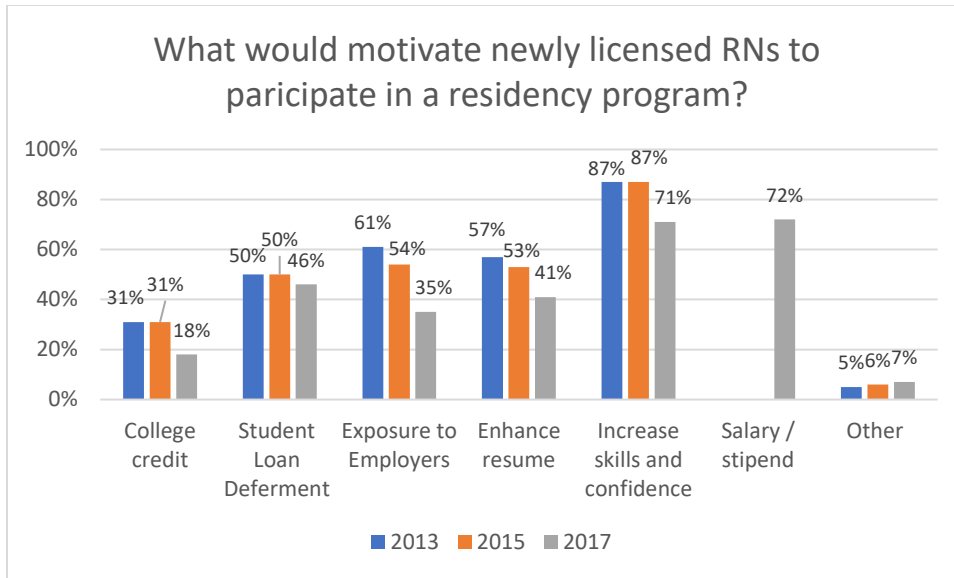
Figure 13. Motivating newly licensed RNs to participate in a nurse residency program.

Newly Licensed RNs Working as a RN at the Time of the Survey

It is exciting to note that the vast majority of respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey were working at the time they participated in the survey (Figure 14). In 2011 and 2013, 94% of the respondents indicated that they were working as a RN, and in 2017, 98% of the respondents reported they were working. These findings are in alignment with findings from the 2017 National Student Nurses Association annual survey of new graduates (Feeg & Mancino, 2018) which showed an "upward movement for new graduates finding jobs and employment opportunities in all areas of the country up until last year – while continuing to show job rates of 90% with the higher employment opportunities existing in the Central and South regions of the country" (p. 2).
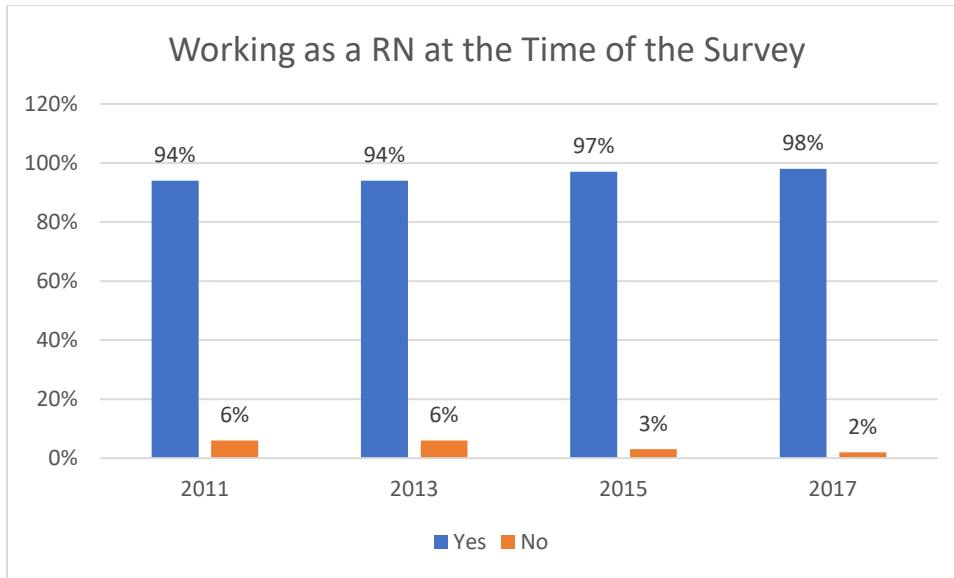
Figure 14. Newly licensed RNs working at the time of the survey.

Length of Employment as a RN

The majority of respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey had been working as a RN for more than a year at the time they participated in the survey, followed by seven to ten months in 2013, 2015, and 2017 (Figure 15).
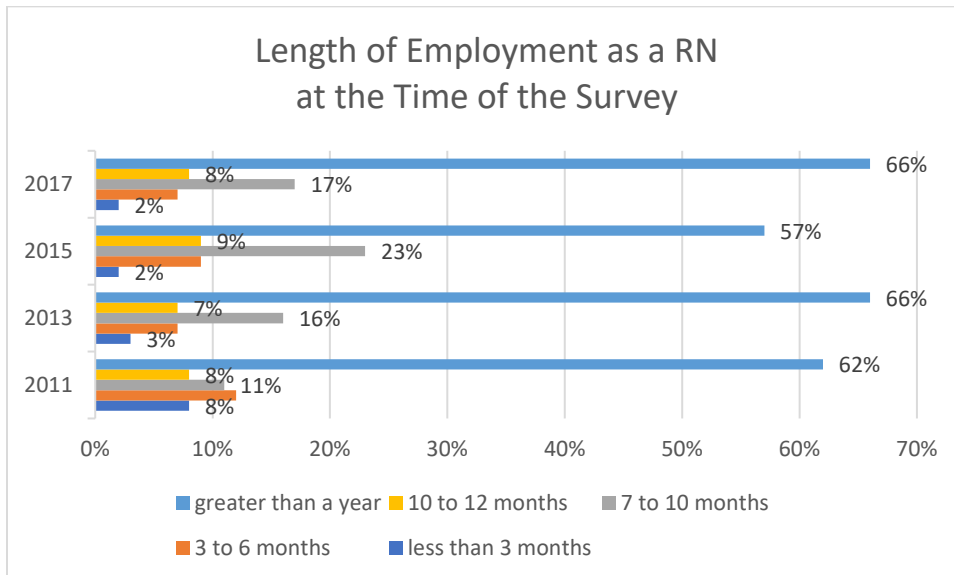

Figure 15. Length of employment at the time of the survey.

Employment Status as a RN

The majority of respondents were working full-time at the time they participated in the Newly Licensed RN Survey with five percent or less reporting working part-time and/or per diem each year (Figure 16). It is interesting to note that in 2011 four percent of the respondents reported that they were not working as a RN. This was at a time when the country was beginning to come out of the Great Recession of 2008 and when many retired nurses had returned to work and newly licensed RNs were having difficulty finding positions (Alameddine, Baumann, Laporte & Deber, 2012).
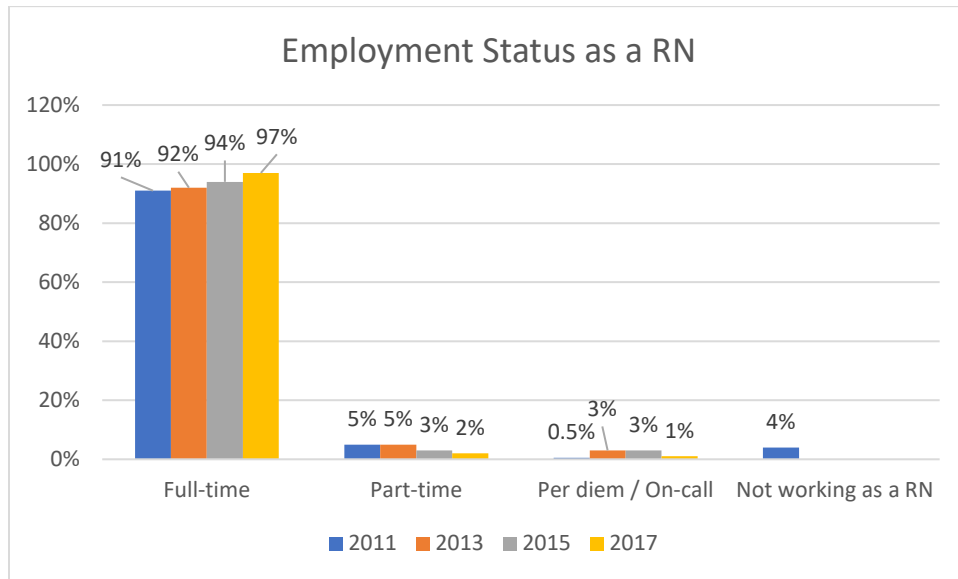

Figure 16. Employment status at the time of the survey.

Length of Time to Find a Job as a RN

As seen in Figure 17, in 2017, 97% of the respondents reported finding a position as a RN in less than three months compared to 68% in 2011. This represents a significant decrease in the length of time it has taken newly licensed RNs in Louisiana to find a position as a RN over the last eight years.

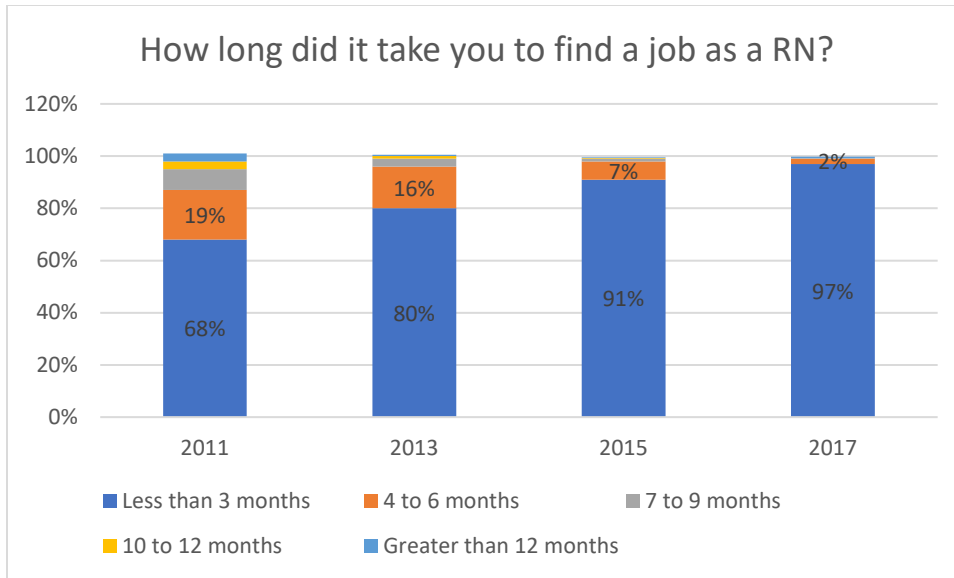*Figure 17*. Length of time to find a position as a newly licensed RN.

Job of Choice

According to Figure 18, over the last eight years, the majority of newly licensed RNs reported that they were working in their job of choice. Since 2013, the respondents reporting that they were not working in their job of choice decreased by nine percentage points.
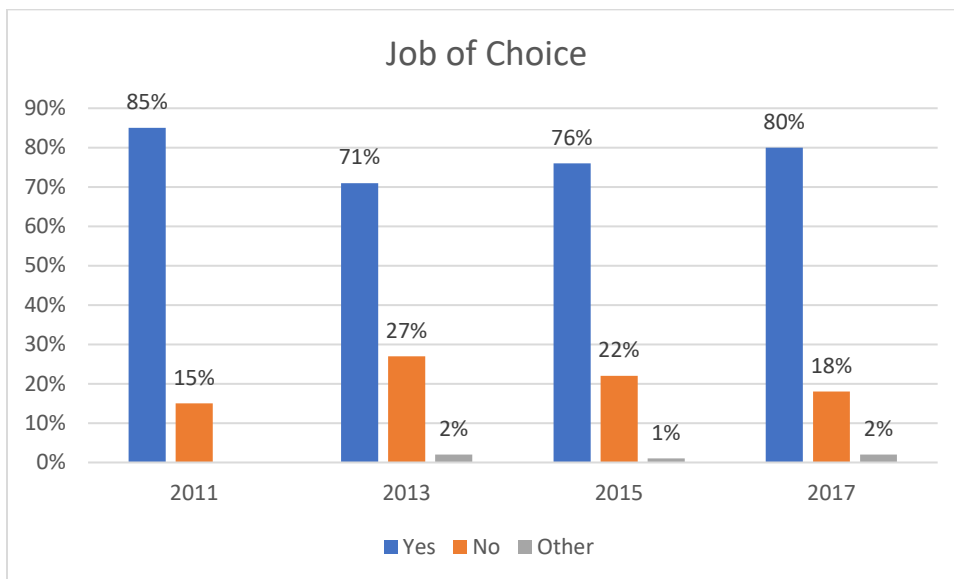

Figure 18. Newly licensed RNs reporting working in their job of choice.

Number of Jobs Applied for Before Finding Employment as a RN

Newly Licensed RNs have had to apply for fewer positions before finding employment as a RN according to Figure 19. In 2017, 88% of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey reported having to submit less than three job applications before finding a position as a RN compared to 53% of the respondents in 2011 (Figure 19).
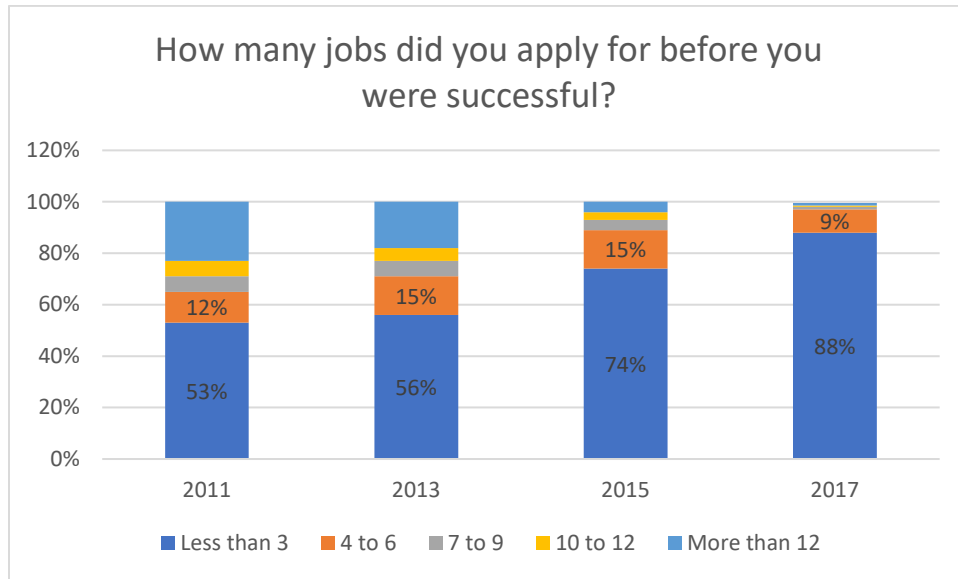
Figure 19. Number of jobs newly licensed RNs applied for before finding a position as a RN.

Methods Used by Newly Licensed RNs to Find a Position as a RN

A variety of methods were used by Newly Licensed RNs to find RN positions (Figure 20). The most frequently used methods were the website (hospital/health facility), clinical experience at the healthcare facility, previous employment, and/or knowing someone at the healthcare facility. Referral and job fair were also identified as methods used for finding a job as a RN.
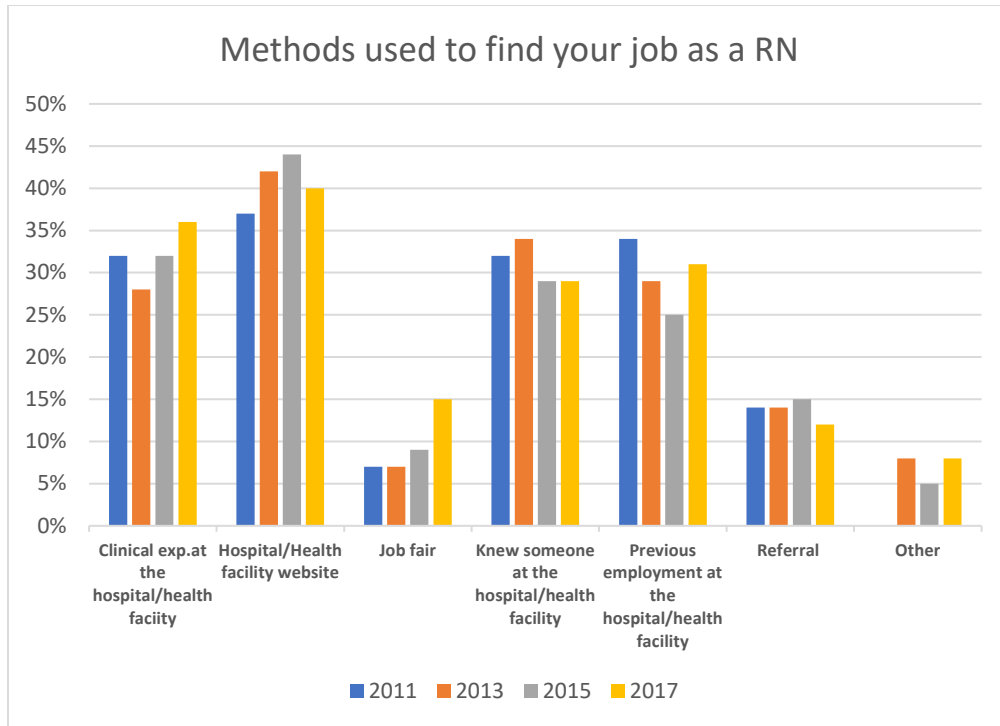
Figure 20. Methods used by Newly Licensed RNs to find RN positions.

Types of Healthcare Facilities in Which Newly Licensed RNs found Employment

The majority of newly licensed nurses reported finding employment in acute care hospitals. In 2017, 75% of the respondents reported being employed in an acute care hospital which is a decrease in percentage points when compared to 79% in 2015. In 2017, five percent of respondents reported working in clinic/ambulatory care settings (an increase of two percentage points since 2015) and 4% reported working in long term care/skilled nursing facilities (a decrease of one percentage point since 2015). The nine percent of respondents reporting 'Other' included specialty areas in acute care hospitals such as the emergency room, critical care and the outpatient cardiac catherization lab.

Where are you currently working?

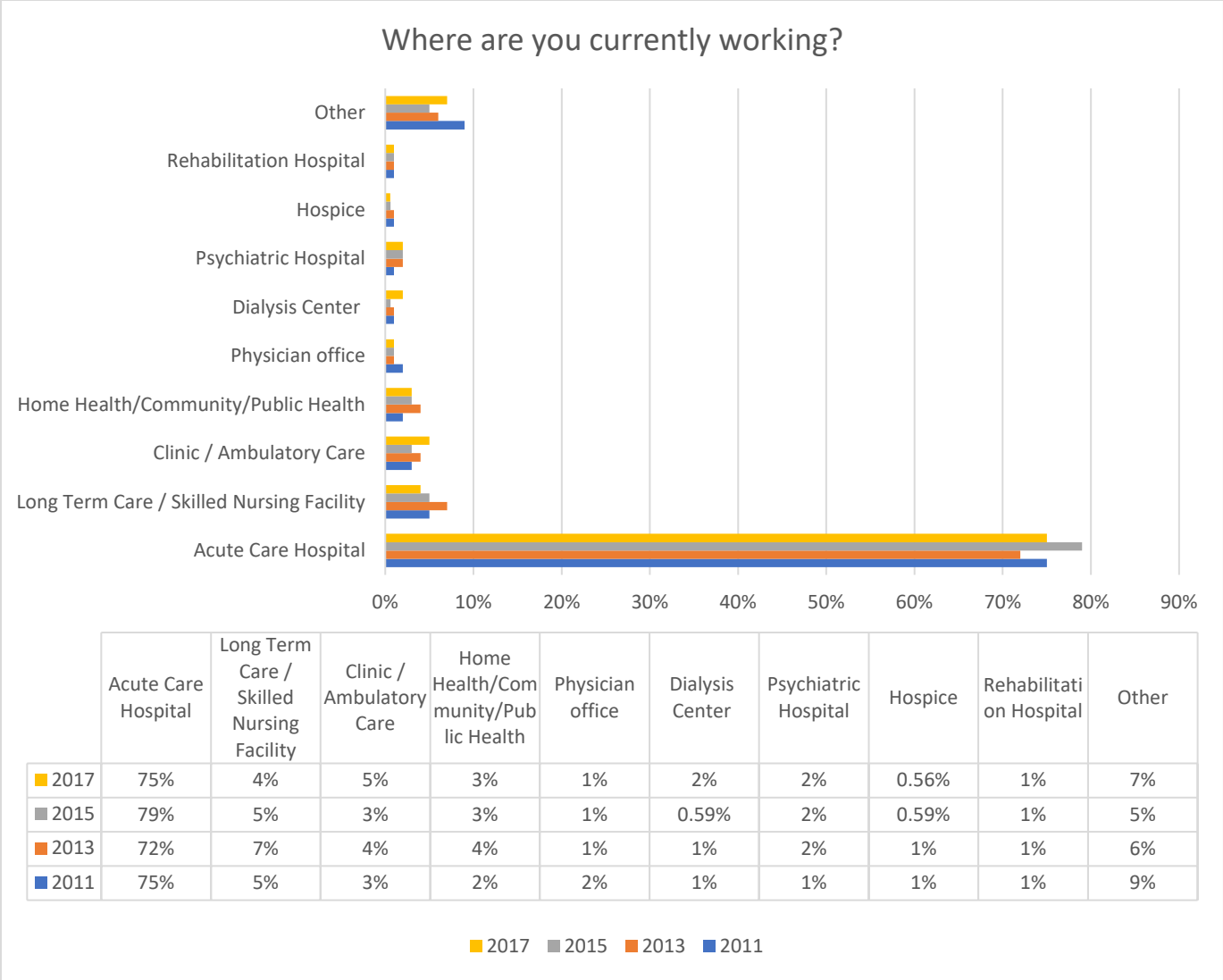|	Acute Care Hospital	Long Term Care / Skilled Nursing Facility	Clinic / Ambulatory Care	Home Health/Community/Public Health	Physician office	Dialysis Center	Psychiatric Hospital	Hospice	Rehabilitation Hospital	Other
2017	75%	4%	5%	3%	1%	2%	2%	0.56%	1%	7%
2015	79%	5%	3%	3%	1%	0.59%	2%	0.59%	1%	5%
2013	72%	7%	4%	4%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	6%
2011	75%	5%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	9%

■ 2017 ■ 2015 ■ 2013 ■ 2011

Figure 21. Types of healthcare facilities where newly licensed RNs found employment.

Starting Salaries for Newly Licensed RNs

In 2017, 64% of the respondents to the Newly Licensed RN Survey reported a starting salary of $22-$24 dollars an hour (Figure 22), which represents an increase of 25 percentage points since 2013 (39%). Fourteen percent of the respondents reported between $19-$21 and 13% reported a starting salary of $25-$27 an hour. Eight percent of the respondents reported a starting salary greater than $28 an hour.
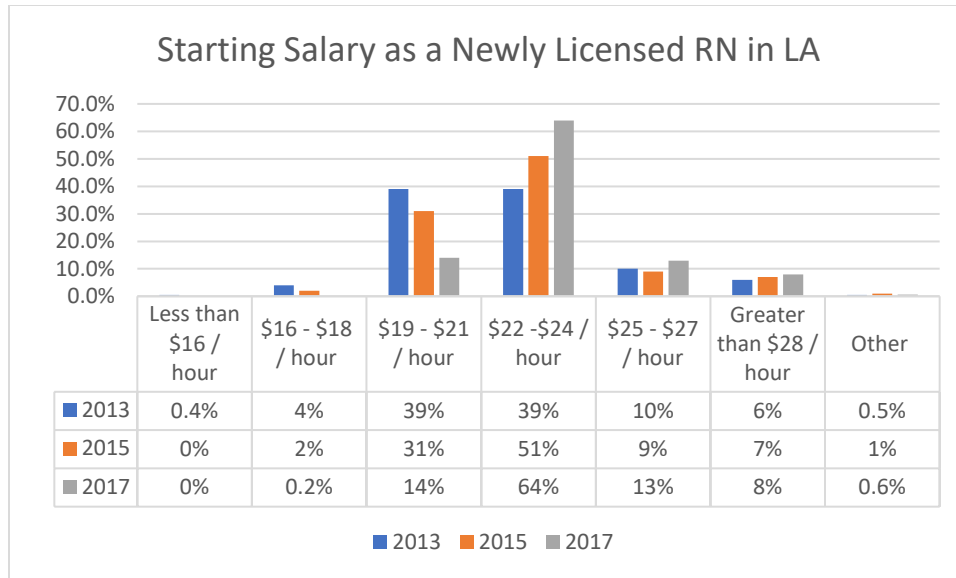
Figure 22. Starting salaries for newly licensed RNs.

Newly Licensed RNs that Had Not Found Jobs

The percentage of respondents that were not employed at the time of completion of the Newly Licensed RN Survey has decreased each year: six percent in 2013, three percent in 2015, and two percent in 2017. Beginning in 2013, respondents that were not employed at the time they completed the Newly Licensed RN Survey were asked how long they had been seeking a position as a RN and what were the reasons they were given for not being hired. In 2017, 13 (two percent of the total respondents) reported that they were not employed at the time of the survey, 22 or three percent in 2015, and 78 or six percent in 2013 reported that they were not employed as RNs. In 2017, ten of the respondents that were not employed indicated that they were not actively looking for employment, whereas the majority of the respondents that were not employed in 2015 and 2013 were actively looking for employment, some for less than three months and others for up to 6 months. Reasons they were given for not being hired included lack of experience, no positions available for new graduates, currently not hiring, baccalaureate prepared nurses preferred, out of school too long, and one respondent reported not passing the pre-hire assessment test.
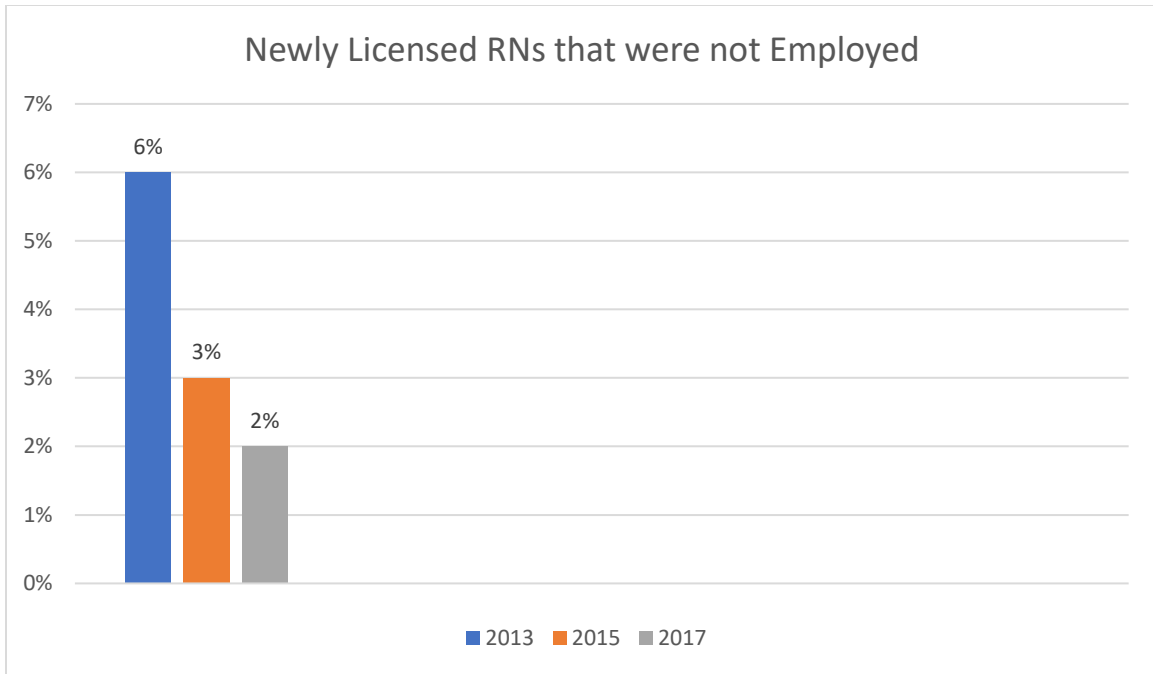
Figure 23. Newly licensed RNs that were not employed at the time of the survey.

Newly Licensed RNs in Louisiana Share Their Narrative Comments About Their Job Seeking Experiences in Louisiana

Each time the Newly Licensed RN Survey has been conducted, respondents were asked to share comments/concerns about their employment seeking experiences in Louisiana and each year there have been hundreds of comments shared by the newly licensed RNs about the successes and challenges they faced during their pursuit of employment as a RN (467 comments in 2011; 397 comments in 2013; 192 comments in 2015; 142 comments in 2017). A few of the comments from the 2017 survey will be shared in this report in an effort to give a voice to the newly licensed RNs. The comments are in the authentic language of the respondent. In order to maintain anonymity for all entities involved, the letter 'X' will be used when referring to a specific health care agency or city. The following represent only a sample of the comments that were shared by the newly licensed RNs.

Newly Licensed RNs that Found It Relatively Easy to Find Employment as a RN in Louisiana

- Finding employment was easy as a new nurse. I was offered 3 positions before I had even graduated due to under staffing issues. It was nice that it was easy to find a job, however it is extremely hard as a new grad to keep up with all the demands of a busy hospital that is not adequately staffed.
- I applied at two hospitals, at which both responded immediately for interviews, and were willing to hire me.
- Finding employment was a fairly easy process for new graduates. The only part I found difficult was finding a job in a specialized field such as NICU, L&D, and Mother Baby.
- It was relatively easy for me to acquire employment as a tech and then as an RN at the hospital I am currently employed with. However, to gain valuable clinical experience, critical thinking

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skills, and confidence it would have been very helpful to have been given the opportunity to participate in a residency program.

- I was already employed as an LPN for 8 yrs. then went back to school for RN degree through education assistance program offered thru my job. I love my job and didn't want to leave so was able to stay after finishing school.

Lack of Experience and Not Feeling Prepared

- Some hospitals have very short orientation periods, forcing new nurses to be fully responsible before being ready. Nursing school does what it can to prepare its graduates, but employers need to understand we not come out of school knowing everything and fully competent. "Throwing new graduates to the wolves" only increases the chance for failure, death, and lawsuits.
- The problem I am having in going into a specialty field as a new grad is the "lack of experience" in that certain area. If employers aren't willing to hire new grads, how can any new grads gain experience in a specialty field.
- Plenty of opportunities for employment, but not enough training for the reality of working full time as an RN.
- It is hard to find good jobs without experience, a lot of times you have to accept a job just to get the experience then apply for something you are actually interested in.
- I did not feel prepared & was scared. I have gained comfort with many aspects of nursing, but I still feel like have knowledge and skill gaps after 14 months of practice.
- Everywhere wants a RN with experience and most places want at least a BSN now.
- Please do not limit "new nurses" due to inexperience, we often have a passion for certain fields and get "stuck" in ones we would rather not be trying to pursue that dream; only have to change careers because of unhappiness and no passion for the career!! Possibly leading to depression/burnout for new nurses.
- I have been a LPN for 5 years and its like starting over as a brand new nurse in Louisiana searching for a job. No one wanted to hire me because I didn't have any experience, well its kind of hard to get experience if no one is willing to give it to you. I didn't want to work telemetry I wanted to work in the OR but they want at least 2 years experience.
- Wish there were more residency programs!
- Many who were nurse techs got job jobs faster

Salary

- Finding employment is not a difficult task, it's the lack of pay for what Nurses are worth, that makes it difficult to decide to stay and practice in LA. I have had and heard of a lot of Nurses leaving LA to practice due to being underpaid and underappreciated. It's not all about the money, but it is a risky job that take a huge toll on both the RN and their families. What can we do to increase pay for RN's. We are worth it!!!
- The pay for RNs in our area is very low
- The starting salary and comparative salary with other states is very low
- There needs to be a better starting salary in Louisiana for new graduates
- I was in a small class in an accelerated program with students who all had previous degrees. We had >90% pass rate and everyone in my class passed the NCLEX. Over 50% of my class moved out of state. I as well will be moving out of state. Louisiana, in my opinion, does not offer

enough (Including money, incentives, loan repayment programs, etc.) to keep good nurses here long term.

- A lot of new grad come out nursing school expecting a good salary and that's not the case
- Starting salaries that are on the floor. You'll never be able to make decent money/are required to job-hop to increase pay.
- Louisiana is not a competitive or sought out state to have a RN job. Numerous states offer better benefits, better pay, and better working conditions for registered nurses.

Hiring Processes

- I found it impossible to get a call back or move forward in the hiring process at all without a connection. The job that I accepted was only offered because I had precepts and made a good impression on the unit there. However, once I started working I see that almost every unit is understaffed. So why are new graduates not getting call backs or being hired?
- You have to do more than just fill out the application. In today's online world you have to go above and beyond to be noticed. My advice would be to pick the job you really want and market yourself to that facility and position. Contact the supervisor of the unit. Contact the director. Send emails, letters and make phone calls. Make sure they know who you are.
- Give your first job a year to get comfortable. If you don't like it after a year, then leave. I wouldn't recommend taking any contract money that has a length of employment requirement attached to it. I've seen too many new grad nurses switch specialties and/or hospitals before they met the required length of employment period. Those nurses had to pay their bonus back.
- I believe that new grads are jumping into some positions only to find out that they are not suited or don't like the position. I believe that they should research more and maybe even try to experience these positions before leaving school.
- Don't disregard the smaller hospitals. You may not have the specialty units you want to see at first, but you will see a variety of patients and learn. Don't underestimate perfecting assessment skills, narratives, and bedside manner.
- It is easy to find employment in the hospital setting, but the pay and hours were not accurately depicted in school. I have recently switched to the clinic setting to get away from the long hours and physical demands of floor nursing.
- I think they should give more opportunities to foreign born nurse who completes their nursing education here, so they can serve the country, especially now there is a huge shortage in nurses.

Difficulty Finding Positions as RNs

- My main concerns is that there aren't enough facilities in this area to choose from. There is very little variety in different RN positions as well. Some of us choose the hospital settings because we have no other choice. It's either work at 1 of 3 area hospitals, be unemployed as a licensed nurse, or move out of the area altogether. I am a native to this area and would hate to leave because I can't find the type of nursing position I really desire.
- Limited job options. I don't agree that everyone should be forced into med/Surg area.
- Actually finding a position in the type of nursing you want to do is an concern as a new grad. I feel majority of new grads are forced into med surg and depending on where you work med surg can either make you or break you. I know med surg is very important for your foundation in nursing but if all you want to do is be a labor and delivery RN, etc. it should be residency

programs for that. I think this will help nurse retention and better job satisfaction. Thus, aids in new grads finding employment that best suits there needs.

- It was VERY difficult for me to find work as a new grad RN in Xxxxxxx, LA. Most of the jobs here require you have some experience or you must know someone to get a job. I never would have thought that trying to obtain a job as a nurse would be as hard as it was for me! Finding a job was so depressing and hopeless for me.
- There are not currently a lot of positions available for those of us that want to pursue pediatrics. I found that it was very disheartening when trying to get that dream job after graduating
- Many new grads I have spoke to that struggle to find jobs struggle because they refuse to work med surg floors because of how badly those floors are overworked.

Nurses Eating Their Young

- My concern would be more so about keeping a job rather than finding a job. I found the saying "nurses eat their young" to be disturbing at first but now that I'm the new nurse surrounded by experienced nurses, I find the statement to be extremely accurate. I've encountered nothing but bullying and harassment since my employment as a nurse and it's affected my ability to grow as a nurse and advance my knowledge. In addition, I've been belittled and attacked directly in front of my patients, affecting my caregiver role. It's been nothing like I imagined all throughout nursing school and it's been one of the worst experiences of my life. Something needs to be done to prevent workplace bullying. Many states have in place direct laws for when bullying occurs that immediately either suspends, relocates, or terminates employees and/or at least provides paid leave for the employee having to quit due to a bullying situation. In my case, Human Resources can do nothing for my situation but investigate the adult individuals who so carelessly affected the career I worked so hard to attain while being a single mother and all while suffering my brother's death and meanwhile I'm having to quit my first job and quickly try to find another with only 5 months of experience and no financial assistant from the organization. This is unacceptable in my opinion. No one should be treated this way.
- Employment opportunities are plentiful however the concept "Nurses eat their Young" makes it hard for novice nurses to gain confidence in their newly attained skills in the delivery of competent holistic care.
- I was very fortunate and blessed to have found my calling early and having been in the medical field for more than half my life I have a thick skin. We as nurses need to put a curtail of bullying and end once and for all the bs of 'nurses eat their young." Sadly it is a very true statement and I'm sure that my horrific experience with my employer (yes it was and addressed and taken care of) is one of the main reasons we as a career have such a turnover rate. The time to stop this is now.
- Louisiana is ranked "worst state to work in as nurse"

Nurse Patient Ratio

- Patient to nurse ratio is too much. Everywhere is ran by profit and workload is a lot for even experienced nurses.
- The ratio of nurse to patient should be governed better.
- Staffing ratios are more strenuous on nurses in Louisiana than compared to most states. My concern is that I have noticed an increase in turnover/burnout on floor nurses. I have seen many

leave to work in other states for this reason. Louisiana needs to have safer ratios to retain nurses.

- Nursing staffing is horrible in the state right now and many nurses in Louisiana are leaving the state to go work in states where they are safer to practice. Safe practice is difficult in Louisiana given the patient ratios, policies, and staffing.
- Nurse to patient ratios. I am working on floor that should be a step down unit. And our ratio is 6:1. It is not safe.
- Employment for new graduates doesn't seem so bad. It's the nurse/patient ratio. I think having 6 patients can be overwhelming.
- Making sure they know how to take care of at least 6 patients. Also be prepared to be charge nurse early in employment. Time management is a must.
- Nurses on med surg type units that are caring for 6 or more patients I NOT SAFE! As a new nurse, I learned very quickly that it is near impossible to give my patients the care they need do to nurse load. Unacceptable!

Other

- Job Fairs are an excellent way to learn of positions, meet potential Patient Care Coordinators and Head of Nursing as well as, get a feel for the individuals you would be working with and under as a new nurse.
- As a new RN, the problem is not finding a job, but finding a career that is rewarding and satisfying. Nursing offers a diverse range of areas in which to practice. As a new grad, I took the first job I was offered (as a med/surg RN) and now feel stuck in a job I dislike. Several of my co-workers, also new grads, feel as I do and may explain why our turnover rate is so high. We've barely trained/oriented new hires before they've quit because they're looking to find "greener and better pastures."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Newly licensed RNs across the country face many challenges when transitioning from academia to practice (Hofler & Thomas, 2016). Some of these challenges include having to care for "an increasing number of patients with complex conditions and multiple comorbidities, lack of access to experienced mentors and coaches, generational diversity in the workforce, performance anxiety, and bullying. To compound the problem, these issues often occur simultaneously" (Hofler & Thomas, 2016, p. 133). In addition to these challenges, as the retirement of the baby boomer RNs increases, they will carry with them a tremendous amount of knowledge, skill, experience , and judgement (Buerhaus, Auerbach & Staiger (2017). An exploration of strategies that can be used to garner the expertise and knowledge of the baby boomer RNs and transition that knowledge to newly licensed RNs in an environment that successfully meets the professional, psychological, and physical needs of both entities will be extremely important as we continue to address the challenges and opportunities related to maintaining a competent, efficient, and safe nursing workforce.

Findings from Louisiana's Newly Licensed RN Survey are in line with national studies that have been conducted across the country. Although the vast majority of newly licensed RNs in Louisiana were able to find jobs, there are definite trends related to the frustrations voiced by newly licensed RNs related to what appears to be overwhelming expectations when they enter the workforce. This is evident in the relatively high turnover rates among newly licensed RNs across the country within their first year of employment (Welding, 2011). In a study conducted by Blegen, Spector, Lynn, Barnsteiner &

Ulrich (2017), the low retention rate of newly licensed RNs is a major concern because not only does the loss of a nurse affect the quality of care given, but each nurse who leaves their employing agency costs the institution up to 1.3 times their salary to replace.

New graduates are the largest source of RNs available for recruitment each year. As we prepare these new graduates to enter the workforce there must be partnerships between academia and practice to equip them with the myriad of skills that will be needed for a successful and fulfilling career as a RN. The newly licensed RN is the workforce of the future and if they are not properly prepared to function in the health care system of the future, the citizens of our country will be detrimentally impacted (Little, Ditmer & Bashaw, 2013). Newly licensed RNs must be given the opportunity to work in an environment that equips them with the necessary skills needed to become a safe and effective provider of nursing care.

Recommendations:

Recommendations that stem from this report include but are not limited to the following:

- ➤ Leaders in academia and practice should work together to identify the competencies that are needed by newly licensed RNs to ensure that they obtain these competencies and are acclimated as valued members of the profession.
- ➤ Develop comprehensive nurse residency programs across the state that will allow for a seamless transition from academia to practice for newly licensed RNs.
- ➤ Develop nurse mentoring / coaching programs for newly licensed RNs that will allow them to achieve competency, confidence, and autonomy as a RN.
- ➤ Create a work environment that is supportive, safe, and provides opportunities for newly licensed RN to increase their skills and advance professionally within the organization.
- ➤ Utilize innovative strategies such as flex scheduling and decreased nurse patient ratios on large units, such as medical surgical units, to create an environment where newly licensed RNs can enhance their skills, feel valued and productive, and grow as leaders.
- ➤ Develop collaborative innovative partnerships between universities and community colleges that will allow newly licensed RNs prepared at the Diploma and Associate Degree level to advance their education.
- ➤ Explore the role of repayment of student loans as a determent to newly licensed RNs advancing their education.
- ➤ Repeat the New Graduate Survey every two years to monitor trends in hiring practices experienced by newly licensed RNs as changes occur in the state's health care system, economy, and nursing workforce, in order to better inform policy makers, schools of nursing, prospective nursing students, and other interested stakeholders.

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