

FINDING EMPLOYMENT AS A NEWLY LICENSED REGISTERED NURSE IN LOUISIANA 2024



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Executive Summary

Newly licensed registered nurses (NLRNs) face significant challenges that impact successful transition into the workforce. Finding employment begins either before graduation or sometime soon thereafter for most new graduates. Once employed, they are exposed to a world that may often 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 they have not been adequately prepared to handle. If not given the proper support during this very critical time, NLRNs may experience anxiety, frustration, and burnout which could lead to attrition (Hofler & Thomas, 2016).

The 2023 Louisiana Center for Nursing (LCN) NLRN Survey represents the seventh biennial survey of NLRNs conducted by LCN. The initial survey, originally entitled the New Graduate Survey, was conducted in 2011. 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 Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) and received their initial RN license. Conducting the LCN NLRN Survey every two years allows for monitoring of employment trends and challenges reported by NLRNs in Louisiana which will equip employers of NLRNs and nurse educators with information that can be used to help create a seamless transition from academia to practice.

Key Findings from the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey

A total of 640 NLRNs completed the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey yielding a 12.8% response rate which is a 0.1 percentage point higher than the 12.7% response rate obtained with the 2021 LCN NLRN Survey. Because of the low response rate, it should not be assumed that the entire target population of NLRNs in Louisiana would respond in a similar fashion. It is also important to note that findings from this study are in line with similar studies that have been conducted across the country (Orlowski & Berg, J, 2020; Feeg & Mancino, 2018).

Education and Transition to Practice for NLRNs

- Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the NLRNs were employed at the time they completed the survey.
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the NLRNs were minorities, which is equivalent to the percentage of minorities in the 2022 graduates from Louisiana's Pre-RN nursing programs (2022 LSBN Annual Report).
- Ninety percent of the NLRNs completed their education in Louisiana compared to 83% in 2021, an increase of eight percentage points.
- The percentage of NLRNs prepared at the associate degree level went from 43% in 2015 to 49% in 2023, an increase of 6 percentage points.
- Thirty-seven percent (236) of the NLRNs reported having a degree or certificate in another field, with the greatest percentage having a bachelors' degree in another field (39%), followed by an associate degree (21%).
- Twenty-one percent (21%) of the NLRNs that had a degree or certificate in another field reported that they were licensed practical nurses.

- Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the NLRNs indicated that they graduated from an accelerated nursing program.
- Eighty percent (80%) of the NLRNs plan to advance their education: 37% planned to pursue a baccalaureate degree in nursing, 38% a masters' degree in nursing, and 10% planned to pursue a doctorate.
- Seventy-four percent (74%) of the NLRNs took the NCLEX-RN between two to seven weeks after graduation; 40% between 2-4 weeks; and 34% between 5-7 weeks.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the NLRNs reported passing the NCLEX-RN on first take.
- The percentage of NLRNs seeking employment prior to graduation went from 75% in 2021 to 78% in 2023, an increase of 3 percentage points.
- In 2023, 54% of the NLRNs reported that they had participated in a nurse residency program compared to 38% in 2019 and 43% in 2021.
- Fifty-eight percent (171) of the NLRNs that had not participated in a nurse residency program reported that a nurse residency/transition to practice program was not offered by their employer.
- The top two motivating factors reported by NLRNs for participating in a nurse residency program were increasing skills and confidence (64% of respondents) and receiving a salary/stipend (59% of respondents).

NLRNs Find Employment

- Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the NLRNs were employed at the time they completed the survey which was consistent with the 2021 survey.
- Ninety-one percent (91%) of the NLRNs submitted less than three job applications before finding a position as a RN compared to 74% in 2015.
- Ninety-six percent (96%) of the NLRNs found employment as a RN in less than three months.
- Methods used by NLRNs to seek employment included: clinical experience at the healthcare facility (36%), previous employment (34%), hospital/health facility websites (31%), knowing someone at the healthcare facility (19%), job fair (13%); and referral (8%).
- Seventy percent (70%) of the NLRNs had worked as a RN for more than a year at the time they completed the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey, followed by 12% that reported being employed ten to twelve months.
- The vast majority (95%) of NLRNs were working full-time, three percent reported working part-time and two percent were working on a per diem basis.
- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the NLRNs reported being employed in an acute care hospital at the time of completion of the survey, eight percent were working in clinic/ambulatory care, five percent in long term care/skilled nursing facilities, and four percent were working in home health/community health/public health.
- Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the NLRNs reported that they were working in their job of choice.
- Thirty-three percent (33%) of the employed NLRNs reported starting salaries of \$25-\$27 an hour compared to 36% in 2021. The percentage of NLRNs reporting a starting salary of greater than \$28 an hour increased by 42 percentage points over the last two years (26% in 2021; 13% in 2019).
- Thirty-four percent (208) of the NLRNs reported that they had changed employment settings at least once since their initial position as a RN.

- Reasons given for changing positions included uncomfortable work environment (33%), which included bullying, inadequate training, unsafe staff/patient ratios and lack of support by management/administration; need for better pay/benefits (15%); better opportunities (14%); relocation (7%); travel nursing (4%); and other (19%).

NLRNs That Were Not Employed

- Three percent of the NLRNs reported that they were unemployed at the time they completed the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey.
- Seventeen of the NLRNs reported that they were not actively seeking employment and three said they had been seeking employment for less than three months.
- Reasons given for not being hired included: lack of experience and not vaccinated for COVID.

Narrative Comments by NLRNs

Each year the LCN NLRN Survey is conducted, respondents are asked to share comments/concerns about their employment seeking experiences in Louisiana and each year there have been hundreds of comments shared about their successes and challenges in pursuing employment as a RN in Louisiana, as well as their experiences as newly employed RNs. The following represent a few of the NLRNs comments that are presented with grammatical edits. More of their comments as written and without edits can be found at the end of this report. To maintain anonymity, the letter ‘X’ was used when NLRNs referred to specific health care agencies or cities.

NLRNs that found it relatively easy to find employment in Louisiana

- I didn’t have a problem finding a job as a nurse, I had four offers of employment from four different hospitals months before I even graduated.
- I did not have any problems finding employment as a new grad. Nurses are needed, and from my experience, most medical facilities are willing to hire new grads.

Lack of experience and not feeling prepared

- The pay is not great, and it is hard finding a job for new grads without experience. Most jobs require hospital experience.
- Most applications require one-year previous experience to be eligible for employment. It is impossible for new nurses to get a year experience if this is a requirement on all applications. It’s hard to find employers willing to give new nurses a chance.

Nurse residency /transition to practice programs

- The current onboarding process for new graduates lacks a structured training program. It often involves inexperienced individuals instructing their peers, which can be likened to a situation where individuals with limited experience are guiding others.
- The transition from new grad into their career as a registered nurse can be an obstacle for people that aren’t coming from a previous healthcare profession. Some direction just before or right after graduation would have been extremely helpful. What to do after you’ve acquired your license, what to expect after you’ve been hired, etc.

Hiring / Interview process

- I was encouraged to work as a nurse tech in the area I wanted to be a nurse in. This helped me to get my desired job.

- I would recommend starting the application process early and applying to units/specialties that you are interested in.

Work environment

- The truth concerning employment for new grads is that big healthcare systems are engaging in the cycle of hiring new grads for very little money, preying on their innocence and naivety and burning them out in two years. I am a direct product of this cycle. I plan on leaving the bedside over the coming year because in Louisiana the systems that now monopolize the market do not offer quality bedside positions.
- There's a reason why studies show 60% of newly graduated RN's transfer jobs, bullying and a hostile work environment are real. Very real. It's why I'm leaving my unit currently.

Nurse patient ratio

- Unless the nurse-to-patient ratio improves, I would avoid med-surg. Six patients is unsafe for one nurse. However, one exception is to work for a facility where pharmacists administer medications to med-surg patients.
- Finding employment isn't the difficult part, it's finding employers that will keep your license safe with safe staffing ratios. We all know there is a nursing shortage, but if you ask 80% of our staff if they would rather an increase in pay or better ratios, the answer is ratio. Caring for my patients is my #1 priority, but all is lost in what was taught in school when it's just about keeping them alive in critical ratios.

Salary

- It's not hard to find an RN job in Louisiana because the pay is bad for full time nurses. This is why people are moving to other states to make more money and Louisiana has a nurse shortage.
- Finding employment is easy. Getting a living wage is hard.

Other

- My concerns are the monopoly created by X and X, which prevents nurses having a clear choice in where they would like to work, it's either one or the other, and I believe nurse's will leave for an opportunity to have that choice in other states.
- Teach more in nursing schools and graduating about non bedside positions. Not everyone needs to start in an acute care setting and that should be taught in school.

Recommendations

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

- Implement collaborative, innovative academic-practice partnerships between pre-RN nursing programs in universities and community colleges and healthcare systems that will create an environment that allows the NLRN to attain the critical thinking, clinical, communication and professional skills that are needed to become a safe, effective, compassionate member of the nursing profession.
- Develop accredited comprehensive nurse residency programs across the state that will allow for a seamless transition from academia to practice for NLRNs.
- Develop nurse mentoring / coaching programs for NLRNs 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 NLRNs 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 NLRNs can enhance their skills, feel valued and productive, and grow as leaders.
- Explore the role of repayment of student loans as a mechanism for keeping NLRNs at the bedside for at least two years before advancing their education.
- Repeat the NLRN Survey every two years to continue to monitor trends in hiring practices experienced by NLRNs as changes occur in the state's health care system, economy, and nursing workforce, 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 (2023), employment of registered nurses (RNs) is projected to grow 6% from 2022 to 2032. About 193,100 openings for RNs are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire. New graduates continue to be the largest source of RNs for recruitment. Yet, there are significant concerns amongst employers about the attrition rate of newly licensed registered nurses (NLRNs) within their institutions. About 17% of NLRNs leave their first job within the first year; 31% by the second year; and by four and a half years, the turnover rate is 49% (Feister, 2013). By six years after graduation, the rate is about 55%. By better understanding the viewpoints and desires of NLRNs regarding the nursing profession, healthcare organizations can be better prepared to attract and retain nurses from a generation which is fast becoming one of the largest cohorts of the nursing profession.

Purpose

The Louisiana Center for Nursing (LCN) has conducted the NLRN Survey (formerly referred to as the New RN Graduate Survey) every other year, beginning in 2011, to obtain objective data about the actual and potential employment challenges experienced by NLRNs in Louisiana. Findings from the LCN NLRN 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 NLRNs are informed about the concerns of this very important segment of the RN workforce if we are to ensure that Louisiana will continue to have a thriving 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 information, 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 asked were: When did you begin seeking employment? How many jobs did you apply for prior to securing a RN position? and, Was your initial position as a RN your job of choice? Additional questions have been added to the survey over the years to gain more information about the employment experiences of NLRNs in Louisiana.

On September 19, 2023, an email blast with the link to the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey went out via SurveyMonkey to a total of 4,983 new RNs that received their initial RN license between June 1, 2021, and May 31, 2023. Follow-up email blasts were sent at two- and four-week intervals, and again one week prior to the close of the survey. The survey was closed on Friday, November 10, 2023, with a total of 640 NLRNs completing the survey yielding a 12.8% response rate (Figure 1). Louisiana's response rate is higher than the National Council of State Boards of Nursing 2021 RN Nursing Knowledge Survey which yielded a 12.7% response rate.

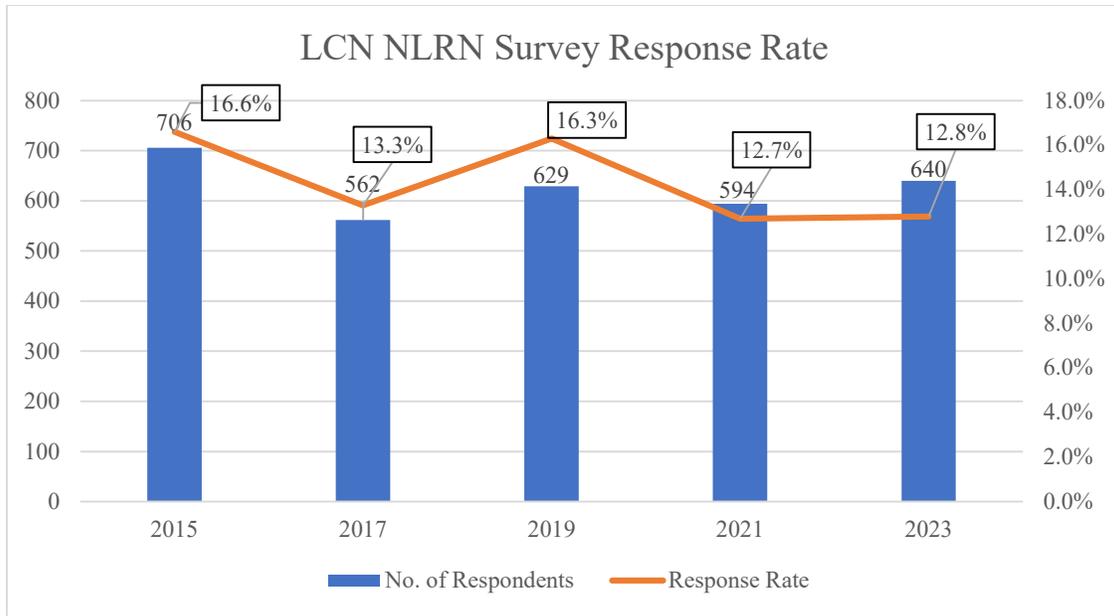


Figure 1. Number of respondents that completed the LCN NLRN Survey.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 28) 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 NLRNs in Louisiana has been gained from data obtained with the LCN NLRN Surveys over the past 14 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 NLRNs in Louisiana would respond in a similar fashion. It is also important to note that findings from this study are in line with other studies that have been done across the country (Orlowski & Berg, J, 2020; Feeg & Mancino, 2018).

Findings

Residence of NLRNs While in School and at the time of Completion of the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey

NLRNs 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 2023 LCN NLRN Survey. Parishes were then converted to the eight Regional Labor Market Areas (RLMA) designated by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (2018). One hundred percent of the eight RLMA's and 92% of parishes (59 of the 64 parishes) in Louisiana were represented in the survey. Since 2015, most of the respondents lived in the New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Shreveport RLMA's while in nursing school and at the time that they completed the survey (Table 1).

Table 1. Residence of NLRNs while in school and at the time of completion of the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey according to Regional Labor Market Area (RLMA)

Regional Labor Market Areas	Residence while in School (2023)		Current Residence as a RN (2023)		Residence while in School (2021)		Current Residence as a RN (2021)		Residence while in School (2019)		Current Residence as a RN (2019)		Residence while in School (2017)		Current Residence as a RN (2017)		Residence while in School (2015)		Current Residence as a RN (2015)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
RLMA 1 - New Orleans	151	24%	156	24%	143	24%	167	28%	164	26%	186	30%	154	27%	155	28%	190	27%	206	28%
RLMA 2 – Baton Rouge	129	20%	138	22%	97	16%	104	18%	113	18%	131	21%	114	20%	117	21%	131	19%	118	21%
RLMA 3 – Houma	33	5%	23	4%	39	7%	25	4%	41	7%	27	4%	32	6%	26	5%	40	6%	33	5%
RLMA 4 – Lafayette	97	15%	93	15%	87	15%	80	13%	52	8%	57	9%	45	8%	50	9%	66	9%	72	9%
RLMA 5 – Lake Charles	29	5%	29	5%	40	7%	32	5%	29	5%	26	4%	28	5%	31	6%	51	7%	49	6%
RLMA 6 – Alexandria	30	5%	29	5%	35	6%	34	6%	31	5%	25	4%	30	5%	34	6%	39	6%	42	6%
RLMA 7 – Shreveport	94	15%	88	14%	96	16%	94	16%	108	17%	100	16%	97	17%	92	16%	111	16%	105	16%
RLMA 8 – Monroe	59	9%	50	8%	42	7%	42	7%	50	8%	49	8%	43	8%	39	7%	46	7%	37	7%
Not Sure of Region	0	0%	2	0.3%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	2	0.3%	4	0.6%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	4	0.6%	3	0.4%
Do not live in Louisiana	18	3%	32	5%	14	2%	15	3%	39	6%	24	4%	18	3%	16	3%	28	4%	41	3%
Total	640		640		594		594		629		629		562		562		706		706	

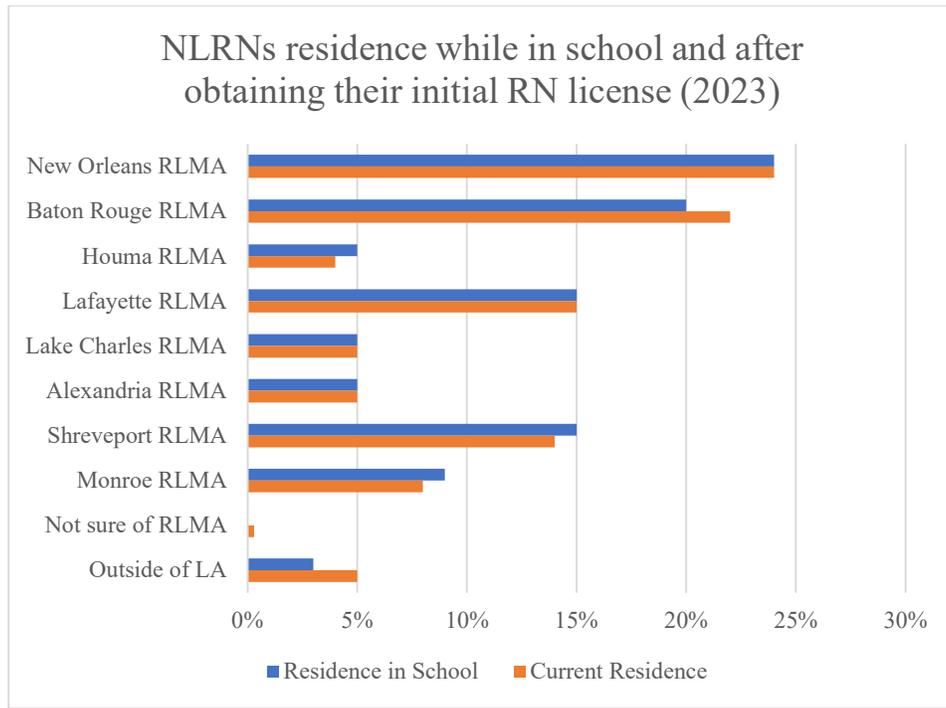


Figure 2. Place of residence for NLRNs pre- and post-graduation in 2021.

Gender

As shown in Figure 3, each year most respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey have been females, which is in alignment with Louisiana’s RN workforce (88% female in 2022) and students enrolled in Louisiana’s Pre-RN programs (89% female in 2022) (LSBN Annual Report, 2022; LCN 2022 Education Capacity Report; LCN 2022 Nurse Supply Addendum Report).

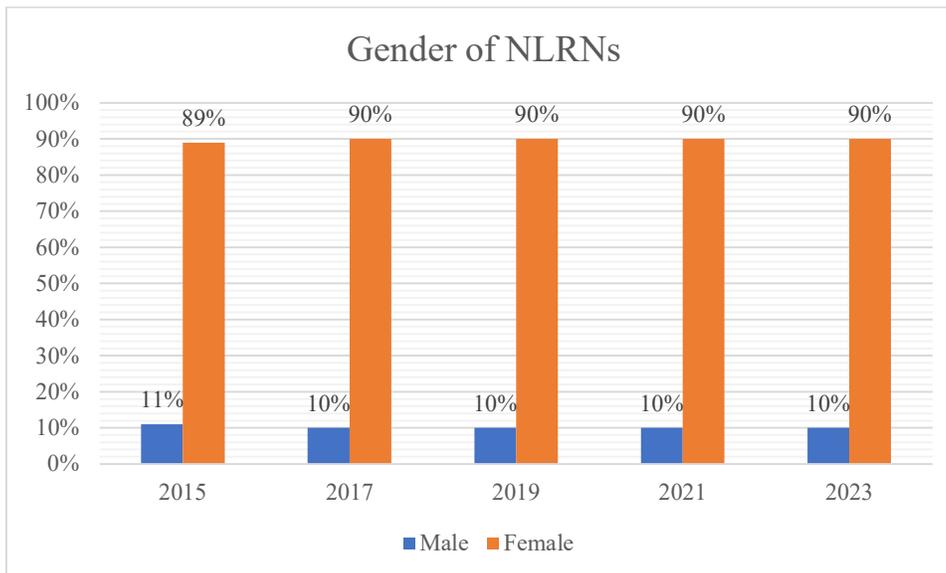


Figure 3. Gender of respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey.

Race

In 2023, 63% of the NLRN respondents were White/Caucasian (Figure 4) with 38% of the NLRNs that responded to the survey reporting that they were minorities. This is equivalent to the percentage of minorities that were represented in the 2022 graduates from Louisiana’s Pre-RN nursing programs (2022 LSBN Annual Report). In contrast, 78% of the nursing workforce in Louisiana were White/Caucasian in 2022. These findings indicate that NLRNs in Louisiana are more diverse than the current nursing workforce (2022 LCN Nurse Supply Report). Beginning in 2017, NLRNs were given the option to select ‘Two or More Races’ which may have contributed to the decrease in the percentage of NLRNs selecting White/Caucasian since 2017.

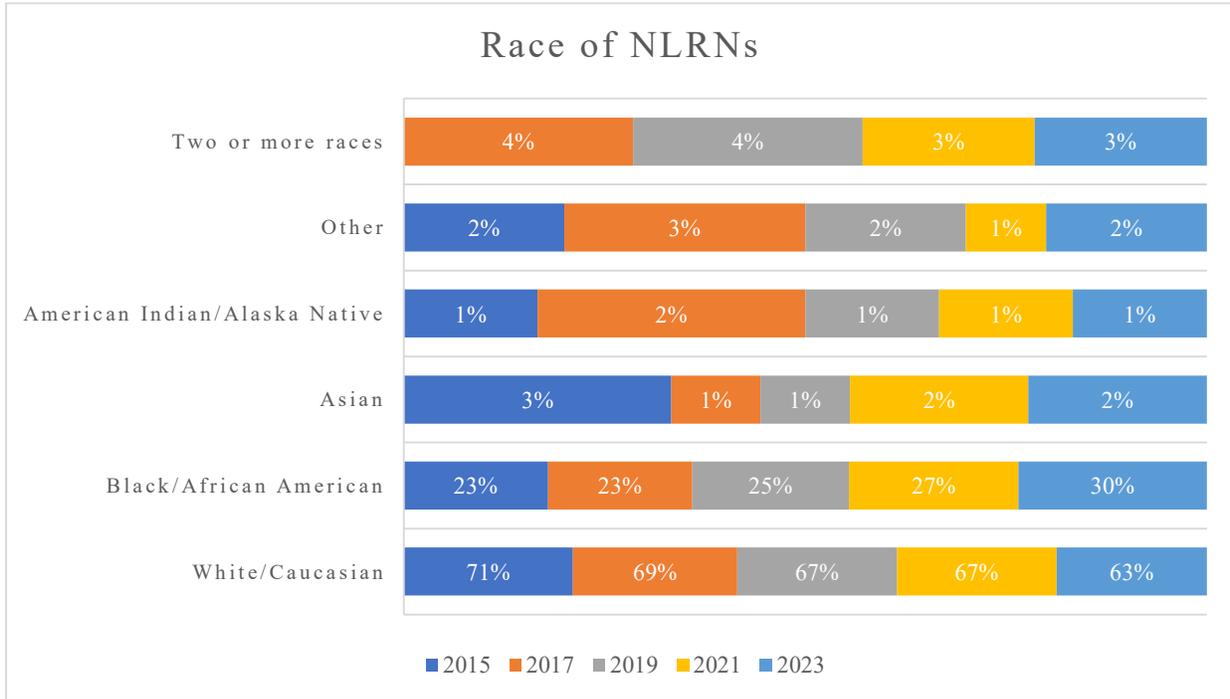


Figure 4. Race of respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey.

Ethnicity

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), 18.9% of the U.S. population is Hispanic/Latino, whereas 5.6% of Louisiana’s population is Hispanic/Latino. Four percent of the respondents to the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey reported their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino (Figure 5), five percent of Louisiana’s 2022 pre-RN graduates and three percent of Louisiana’s RN workforce are of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity (LCN 2022 Nurse Supply Report).

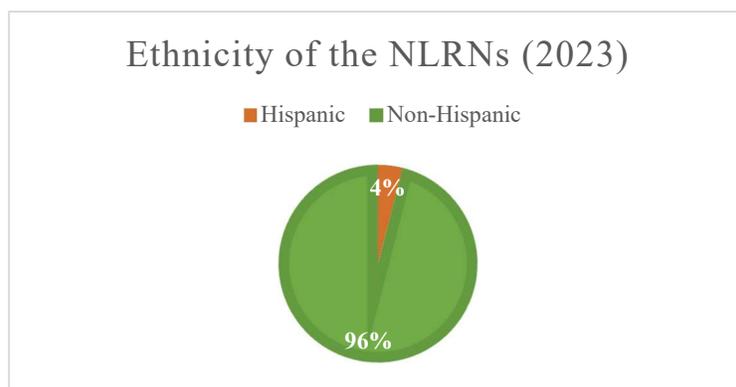


Figure 5. Ethnicity of respondents to the 2021 LCN NLRN Survey.

Age

As seen in Figure 6, over the years, most of the respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey were between 20 and 30 years of age (49% in 2023) followed by 31-40 years of age (30% in 2023). Sixteen percent of the NLRNs were between 41 and 50 years of age. There continues to be a very small percentage of NLRNs that are between 51 and 60 years of age (4% in 2023).

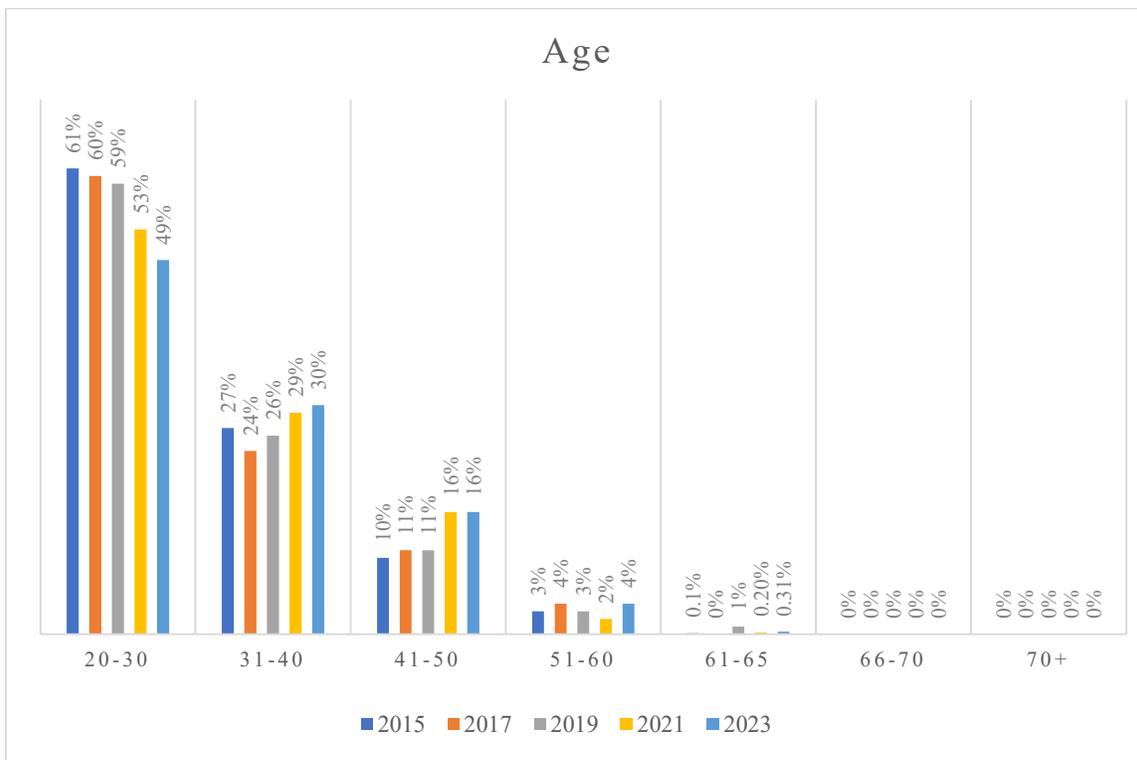


Figure 6. Age of respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey.

Location of Nursing Education

Findings from each of the NLRN Surveys beginning in 2011, revealed that most respondents completed their education in Louisiana. In 2023, 90% of the NLRNs responding to the survey completed their education in Louisiana compared to 83% in 2021, an increase of eight percentage points (see Figure 7).

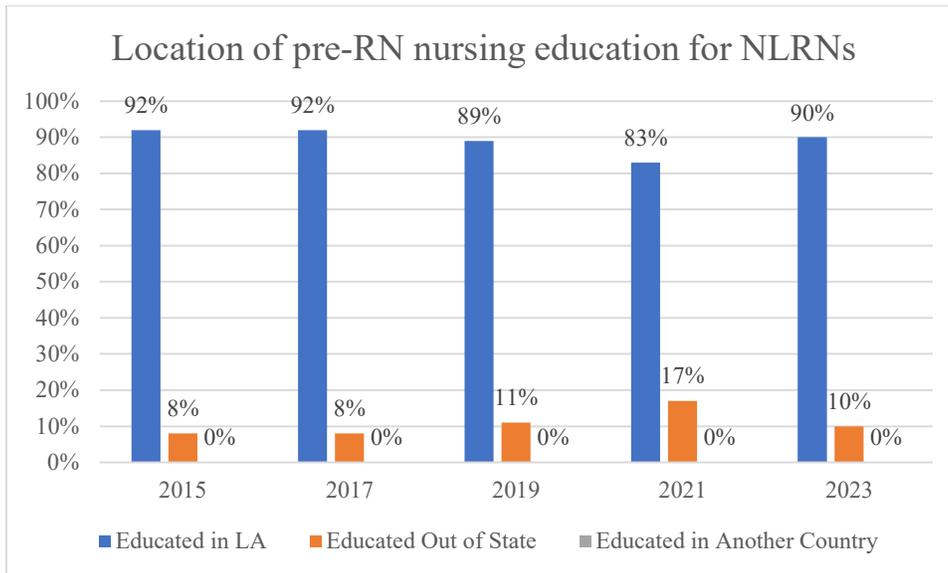


Figure 7. Location of nursing education of respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey.

Educational Preparation

A larger proportion of the respondents to the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey were prepared at the associate degree level (49%) when compared to the baccalaureate level (48%). Only 2% of the respondents were prepared at the diploma level (Figure 8).

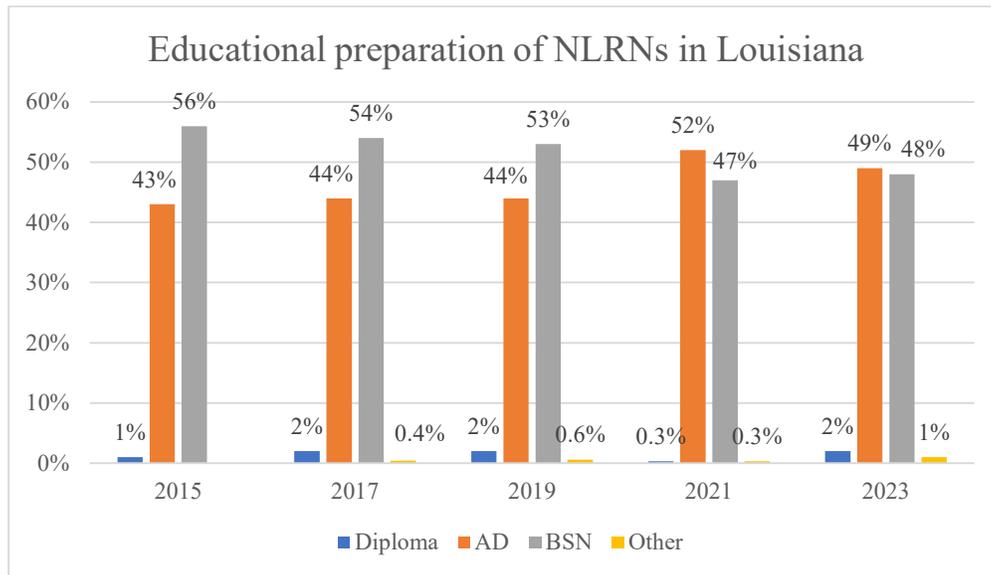


Figure 8. Educational preparation of respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey.

Degrees or Certificates in Other Fields

Beginning in 2013, NLRNs were asked to identify degrees or certificates they had acquired in fields outside of nursing. Thirty-seven percent (236) of the respondents to the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey reported having a degree or certificate in another field, with the greatest percentage having a bachelors' degree in another field (39%), followed by an associate degree (21%) (Figure 9). In 2023, 21% (49) of the respondents having a degree or certificate in another field reported that they were licensed practical nurses.

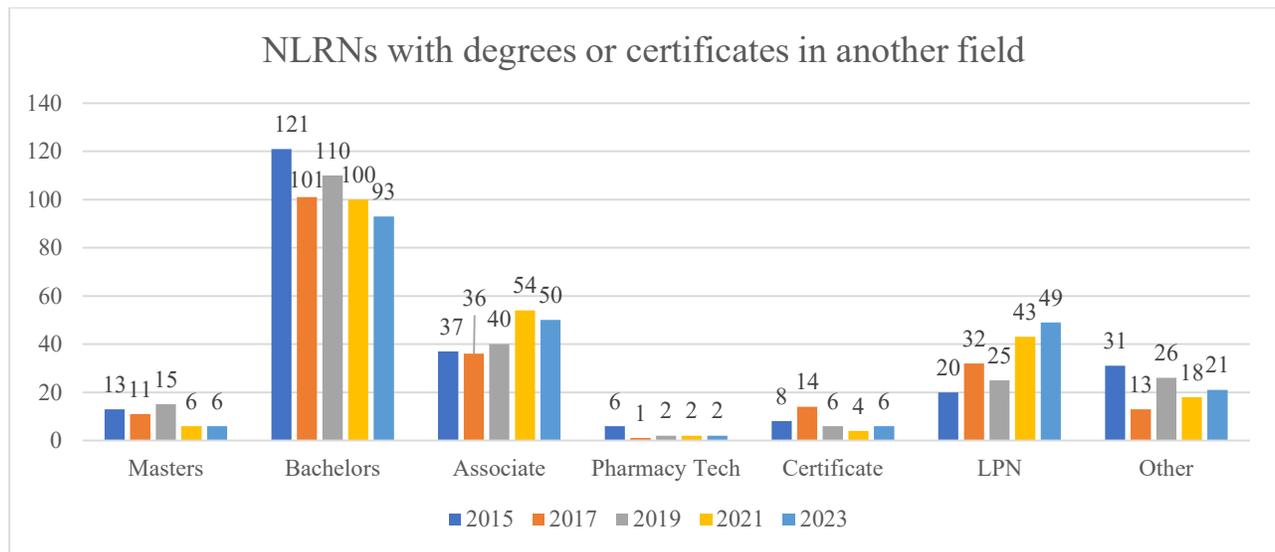


Figure 9. Respondents to the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey with degrees or certificates in other fields.

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 2015, over one fourth of the respondents to the 2023 LCN NLRN survey indicated that they graduated from accelerated nursing programs (Figure 10).

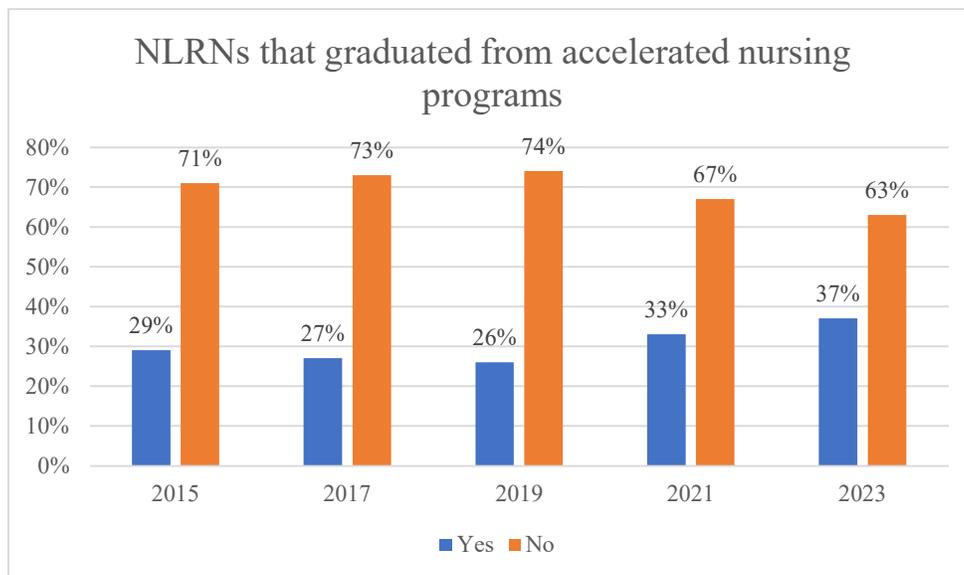


Figure 10. Respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey that graduated from accelerated nursing programs.

NLRNs 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 NLRNs in Louisiana (Figure 11). In 2023, 80% of the NLRNs indicated that they plan to advance their education.

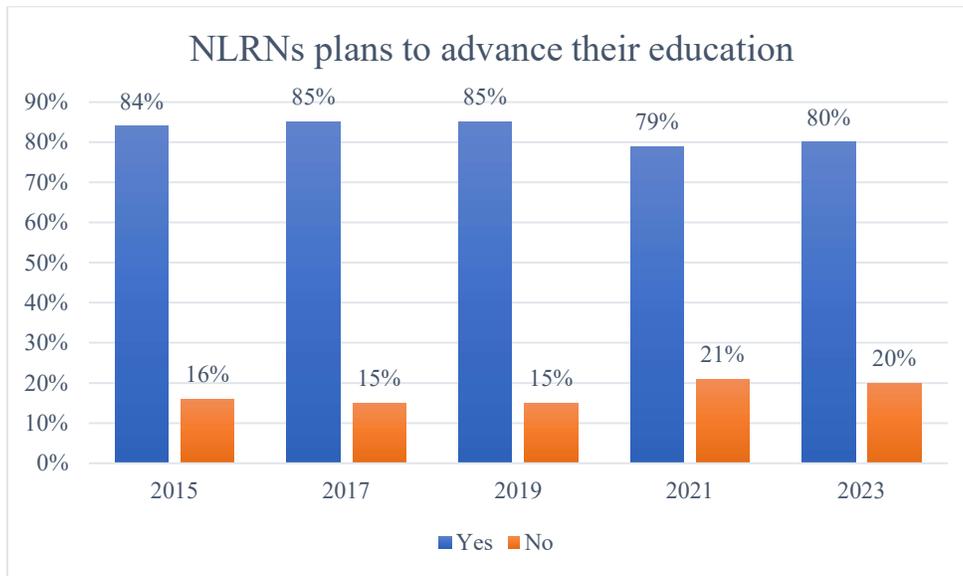


Figure 11. Plans of respondents to the LCN NLRN to advance their education.

In 2023, 37% of the NLRNs planned to pursue a baccalaureate degree in nursing, 38% planned to pursue a masters' degree in nursing, and 10% planned to pursue a doctorate (Figure 12).

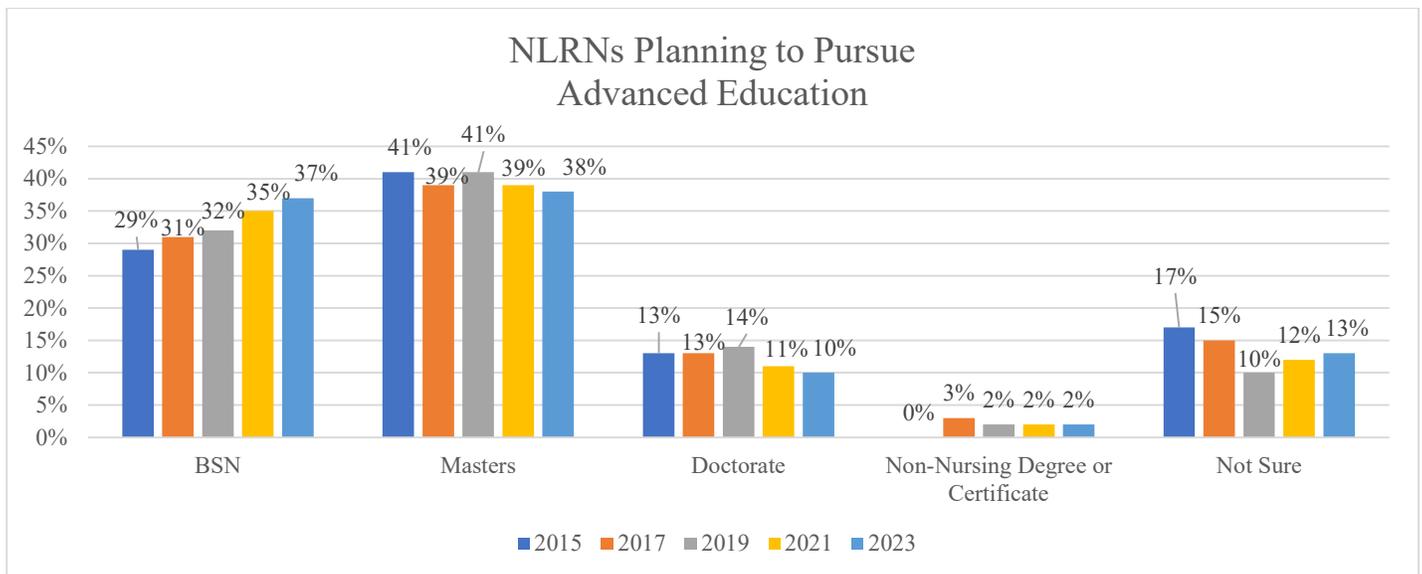


Figure 12. Type of advanced education that NLRNs plan to pursue.

Length of Time Between Graduation and Taking the NCLEX-RN

Taking the National Council Licensure Examination for RNs (NCLEX-RN) as soon after graduation as possible is positively correlated with an increased chance of passing the examination on first take (Zerwekh and Garneau, 2018). It is thought that if graduates wait too long after graduation to take the NCLEX-RN, their level of comprehension of critical information will be decreased. Seventy-four percent of the NLRNs responding to the 2023 survey took the NCLEX-RN between two to seven weeks after graduation; 40% between 2-4 weeks; and 34% between 5-7 weeks (Figure 13). Fourteen percent of the respondents to the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey took the exam two months after graduation, five percent took it three months after graduation, and three percent took the exam greater than three months after graduation.

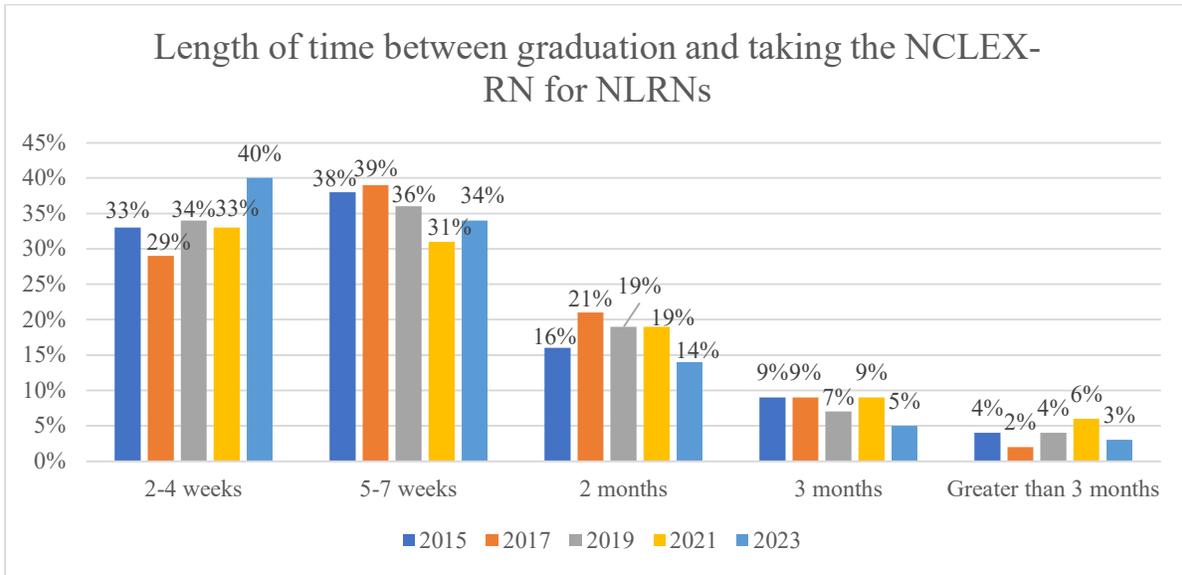


Figure 13. NLRNs report length of time between graduation and taking the NCLEX-RN.

Passage on the NCLEX-RN on First Take

As seen in Figure 14, most of the respondents to the LCN NLRN Survey were successful in passing the NCLEX-RN on first take. In 2023, 88% of the NLRNs reported passing the NCLEX-RN on the first take which is in line with Louisiana’s overall passage rate of 86.58% in 2022.

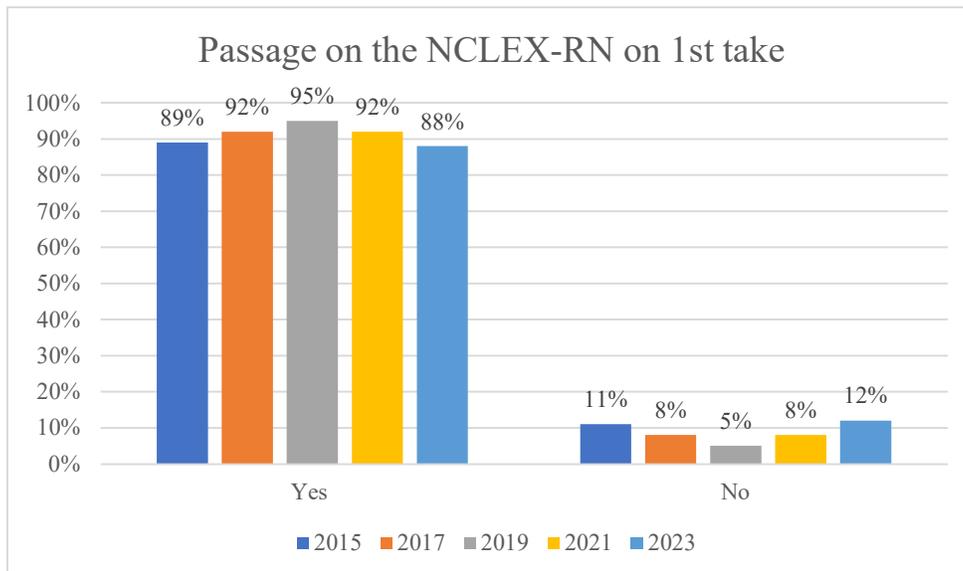


Figure 14. Passage on the NCLEX-RN on first take for NLRNs.

Seeking Employment as a RN

Most new graduates began seeking employment prior to graduation based on findings from the NLRN surveys (Figure 15). The number of respondents that reported seeking employment prior to graduation increased by 16 percentage points between 2015 and 2023. The percentage of new graduates waiting to seek employment immediately after graduation went from 15% in 2015 to 10% in 2023, a decrease of 5 percentage points. Additionally, those respondents waiting to seek employment after passing the NCLEX-RN has decreased with each survey since 2015.

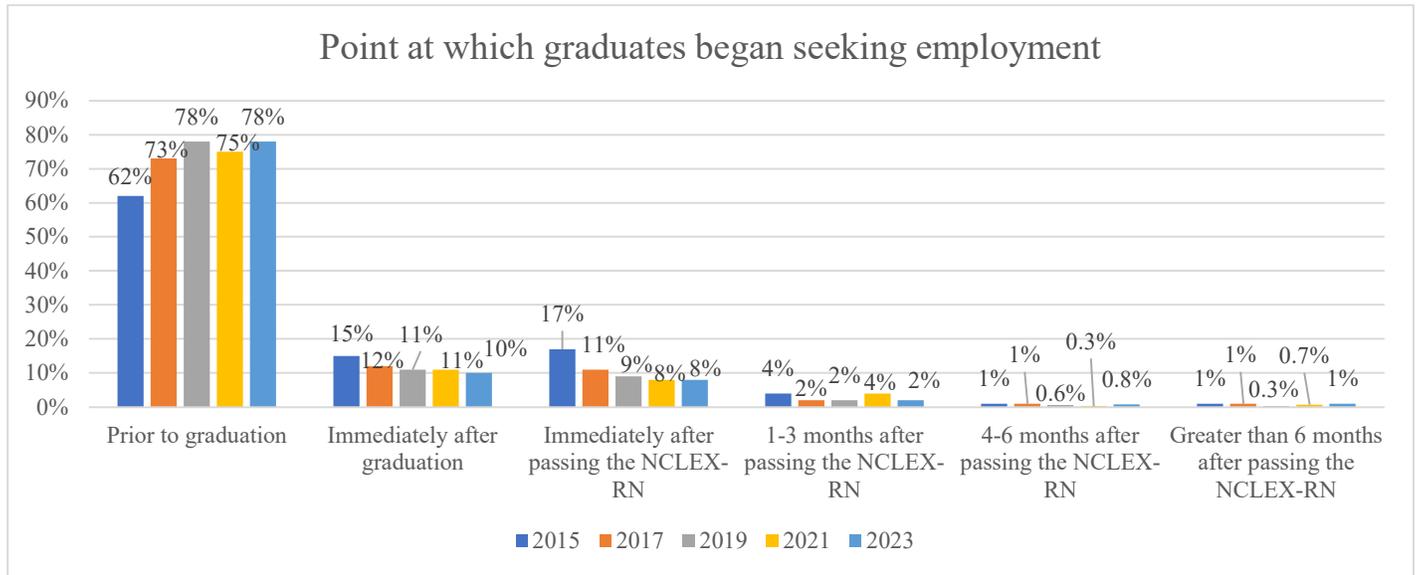


Figure 15. Point at which NLRNs reported that they began to seek employment as a RN.

Participation in a Nurse Residency Program

The implementation of nurse residency programs was one of the major recommendations that came out of the Institute of Medicine Report on the Future of Nursing (2011). In 2017, a question was added to the LCN NLRN Survey to gain insight into the participation of Louisiana’s NLRNs in nurse residency or transition to practice programs. As seen in Figure 16, in 2023, 54% of the NLRNs reported participation in a nurse residency program compared to 15% in 2017, which represents a 39-percentage point increase in the number of NLRNs that completed a nurse residency program.

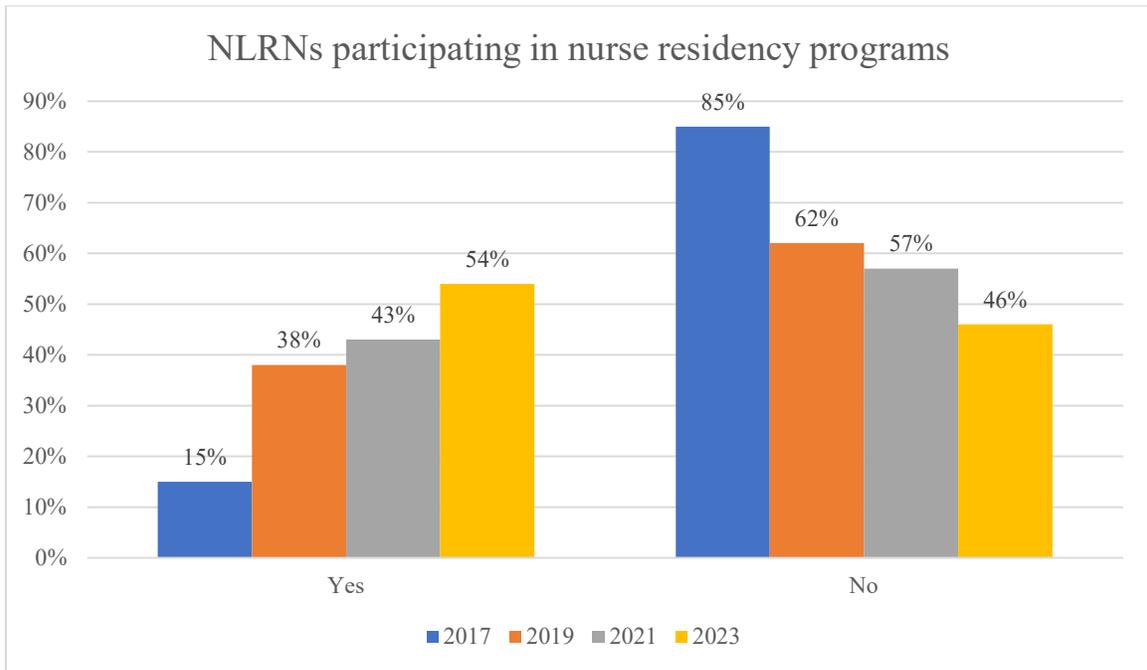


Figure 16. NLRNs report participation in a nurse residency program.

When asked about the barriers that prevented them from participating in a nurse residency program, 58% (171) of the NLRNs that had not participated in a nurse residency program reported that a nurse residency/transition to practice program was not offered by their employer, 21% (63) indicated that there was not a transition to practice program available that addressed the specialty area they were interested in, and 10% (29) reported that they did not see the value in participating in a nurse residency/transition to practice program (Figure 17).

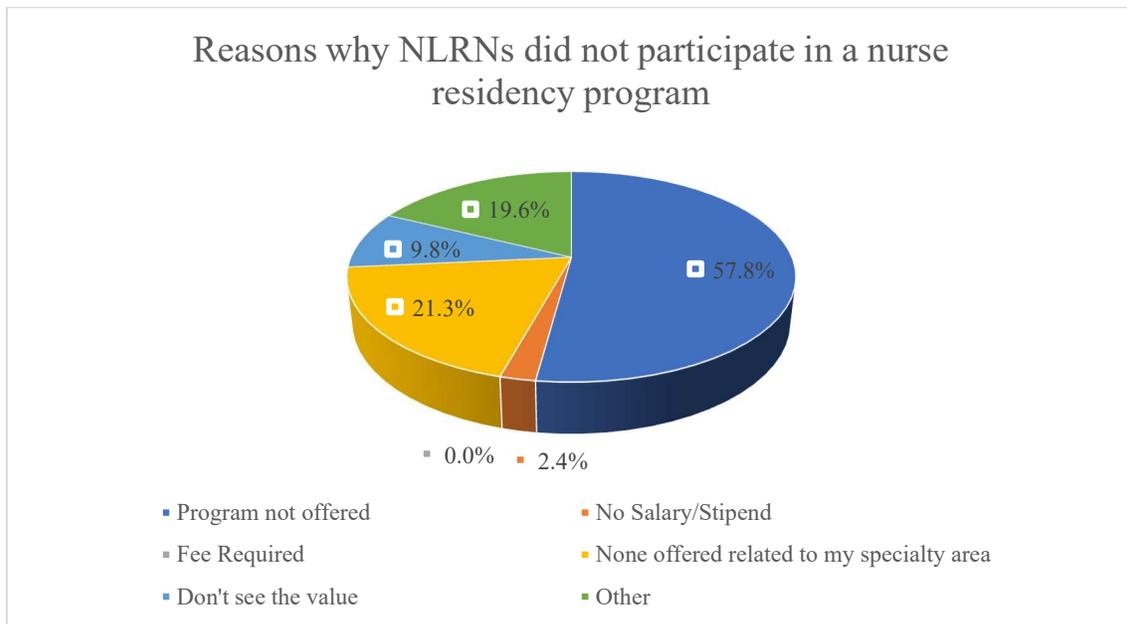


Figure 17. Reasons why NLRNs did not participate in a nurse residency/transition to practice program in 2021.

In 2023, the top two motivating factors for participating in a nurse residency program were increasing skills and confidence (64% of respondents) and receiving a salary/stipend (59% of respondents). Thirty-five percent of the respondents also indicated student loan deferment as a motivating factor (Figure 18).

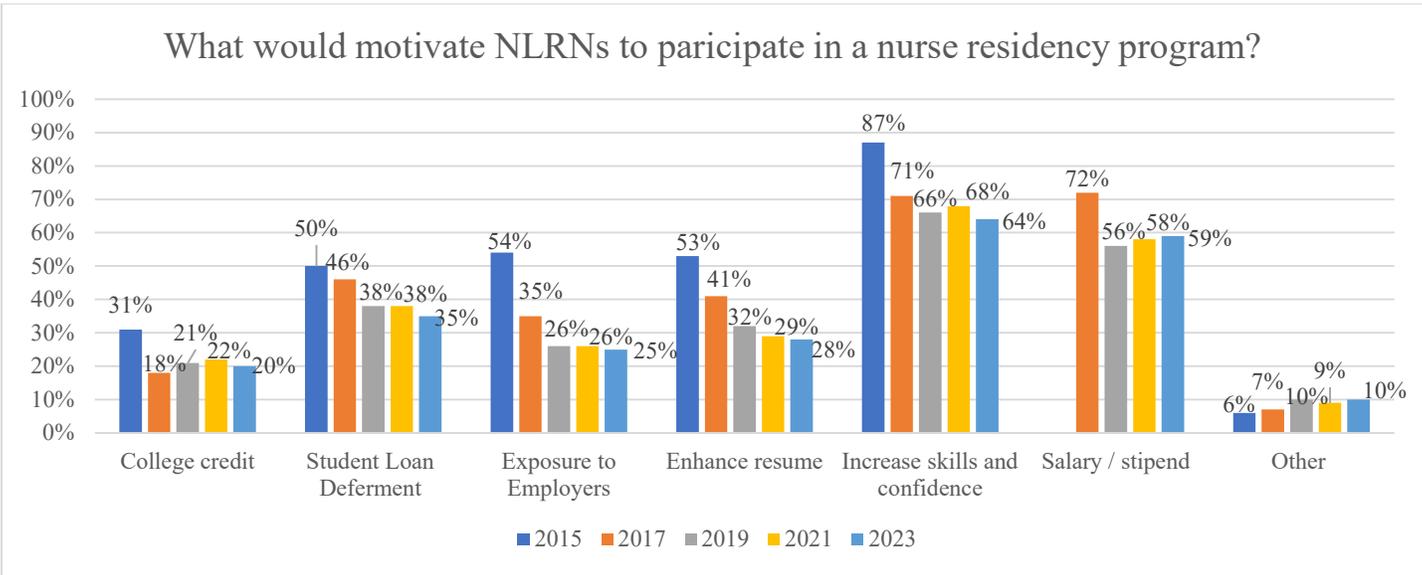


Figure 18. Motivators reported by NLRNs to participate in a nurse residency program.

NLRNs Working as RNs at the Time of Completion of the LCN NLRN Survey

A consistent and extremely positive finding for all LCN’s NLRN Surveys is that the vast majority of NLRNs were working at the time they participated in the survey; since 2015, more than 97% of the NLRNs reported working (Figure 19). 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 trend for new graduates finding jobs and employment opportunities in all areas of the country with the higher employment opportunities existing in the Central and South regions of the country.

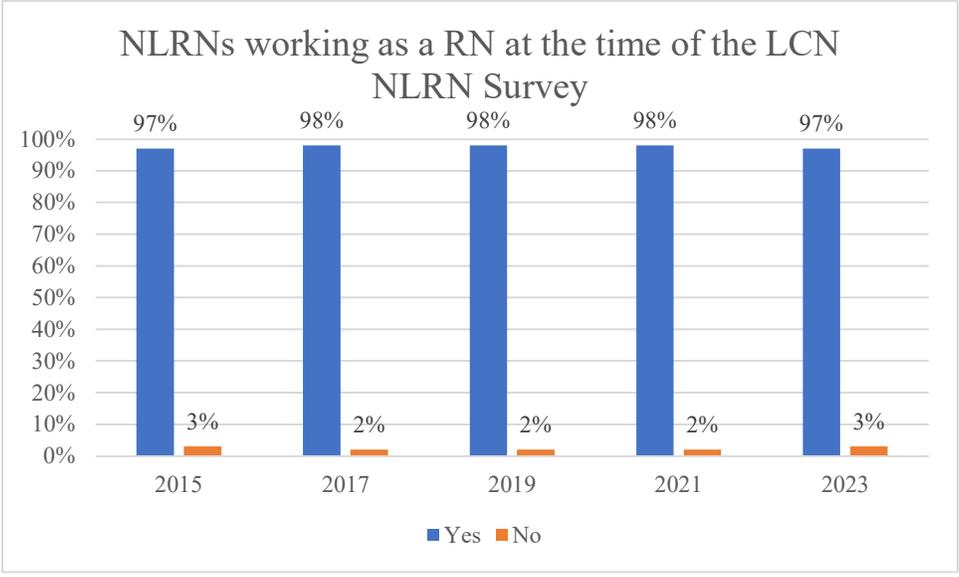


Figure 19. NLRNs that reported working at the time they completed the LCN NLRN Survey.

Length of Employment as a RN

In 2023, the majority (70%) of the NLRNs had been working as a RN for more than a year at the time they participated in the survey, followed by 12% that had been working ten to twelve months (Figure 20).

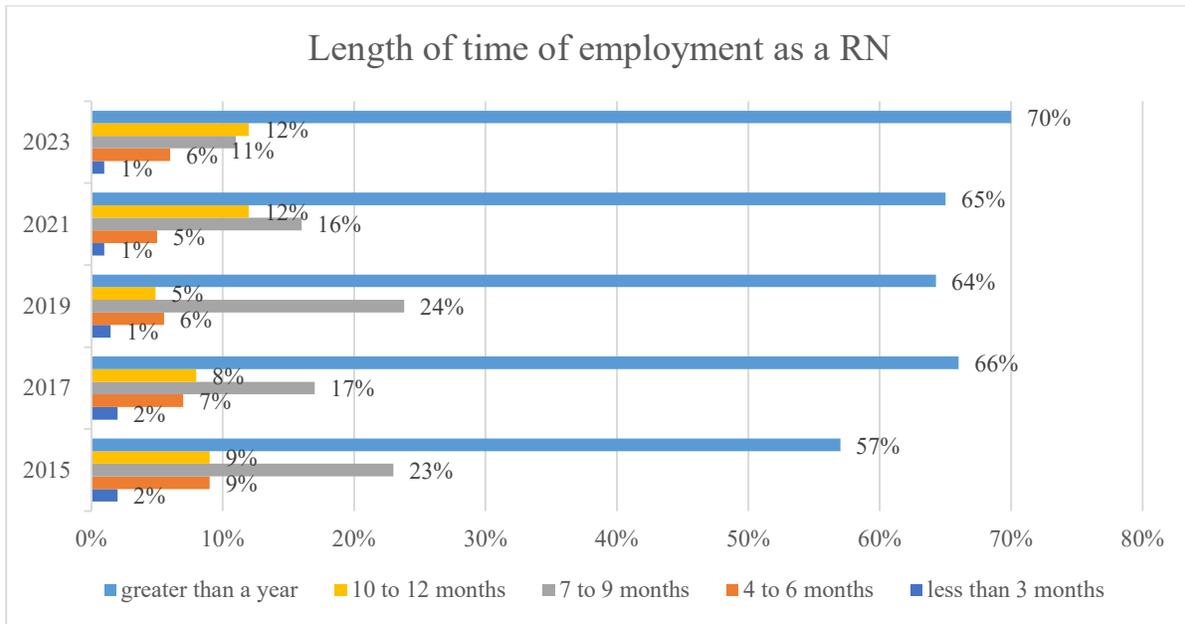


Figure 20. Length of time of employment reported by NLRNs completing the LCN NLRN Survey.

Employment Status as a RN

The majority of employed NLRNs were working full-time as a RN at the time they completed the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey; three percent reported working part-time and two percent were working on a per diem basis (Figure 21).

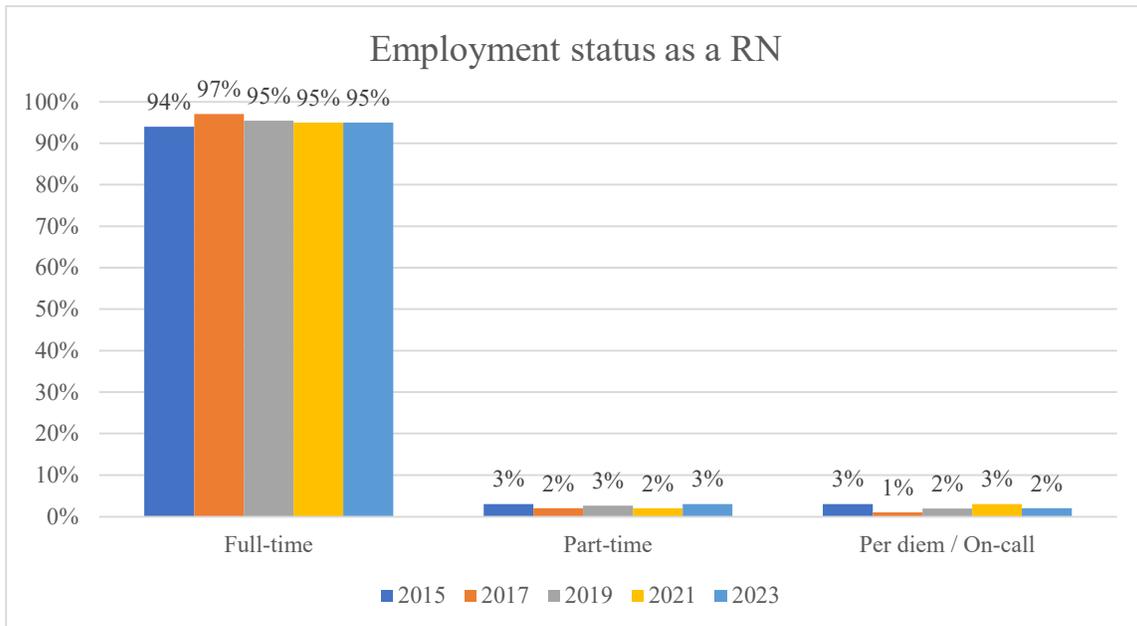


Figure 21. Employment status of NLRNs at the time of the survey.

Length of Time to Find a Job as a RN

As seen in Figure 22, in 2023, 96% of the NLRNs reported finding a position as a RN in less than three months, which is in alignment with what was reported in 2017, 2019 and 2021.



Figure 22. Length of time it took NLRNs to find a position as a RN.

Job of Choice

According to Figure 23, over the last ten years, the majority of NLRNs reported that they were working in their job of choice. Since 2015, the respondents reporting that they were not working in their job of choice decreased by ten percentage points.

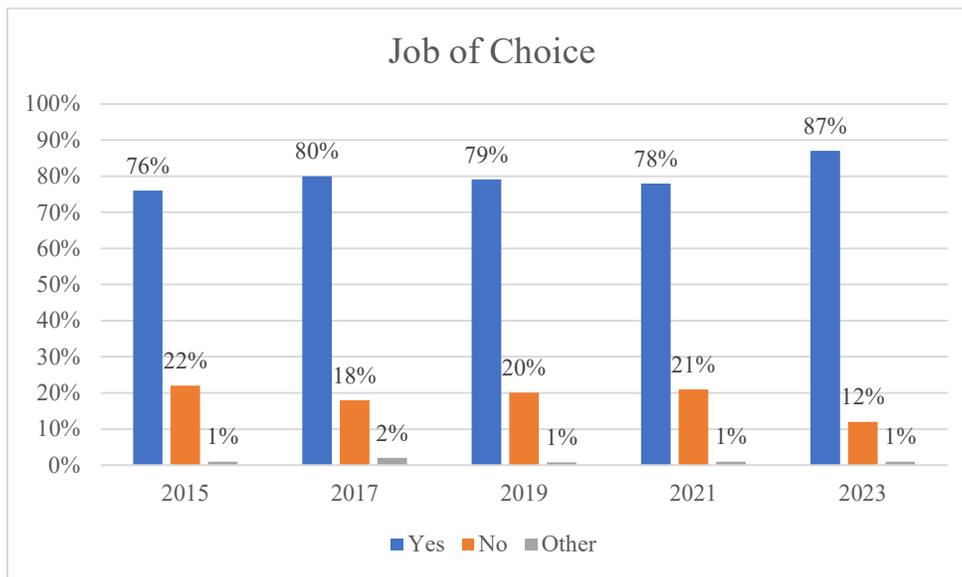


Figure 23. NLRNs reporting working in their job of choice.

Number of Jobs Applied for Before Finding Employment as a RN

In 2023, 91% of the NLRNs reported having to submit less than three job applications before finding a position as a RN compared to 74% of the respondents in 2015, a difference of 17 percentage points (Figure 24).

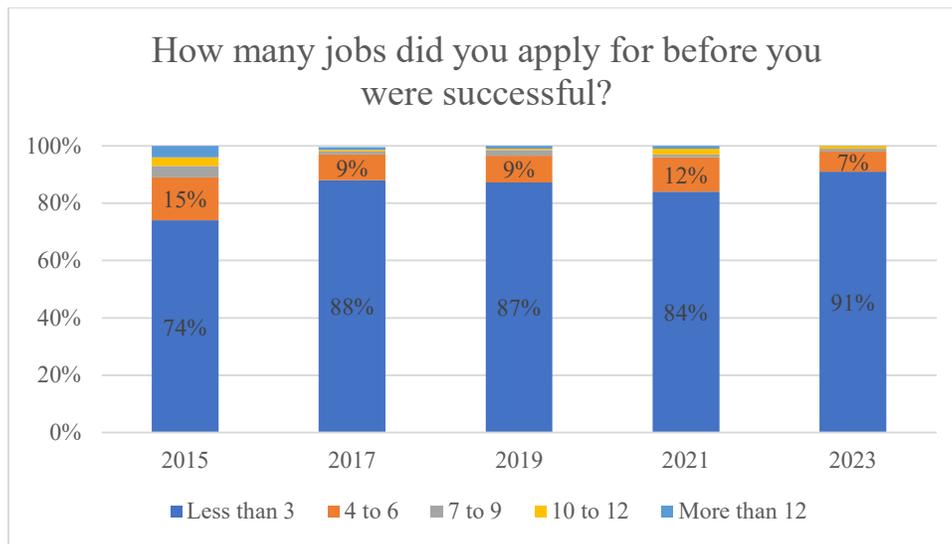


Figure 24. Number of jobs NLRNs applied for before finding a position as a RN.

Methods Used by NLRNs to Find a Position as a RN

A variety of methods were used by NLRNs to find RN positions (Figure 25). In 2023, 36% of the NLRNs reported clinical experiences at healthcare facilities was helpful in finding employment as a RN, 34% reported previous employment, 31% reported hospital/health facility websites, and 19% indicated that knowing someone at the healthcare facility assisted them in finding a position. Job fairs (13%) and referrals (8%) were also identified as methods used for finding a position as a RN.

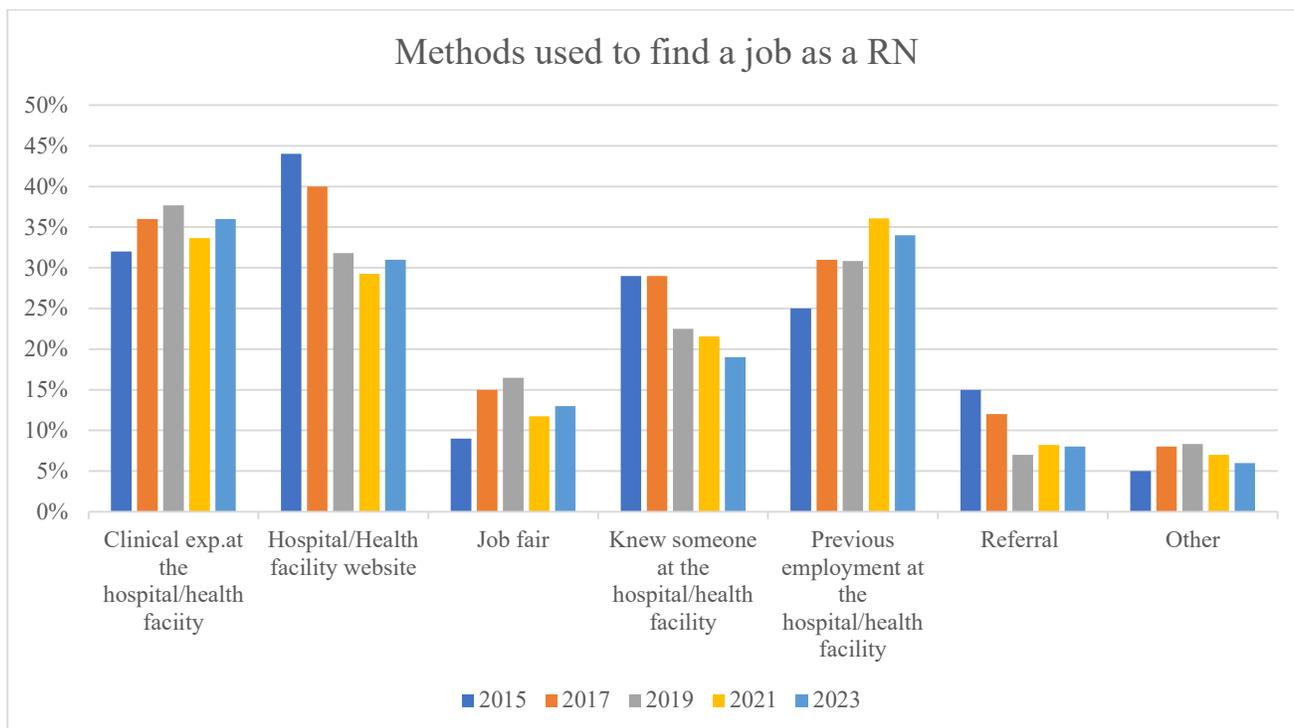


Figure 25. Methods used by NLRNs to find RN positions.

Types of Healthcare Facilities in Which NLRNs Found Employment

The majority of NLRNs reported finding employment in acute care hospitals (Figure 26). In 2023, 68% of the NLRNs reported that they were employed in an acute care hospital at the time they completed the NLRN Survey, a decrease of four percentage points when compared to 72% in 2021. Eight percent of NLRNs reported working in clinic/ambulatory care, five percent reported working in long term care/skilled nursing facilities, and four percent reported working in home health/community health/public health. The eight percent of respondents reporting ‘Other’ included settings such as critical access hospitals, mental health, school health and surgery centers.

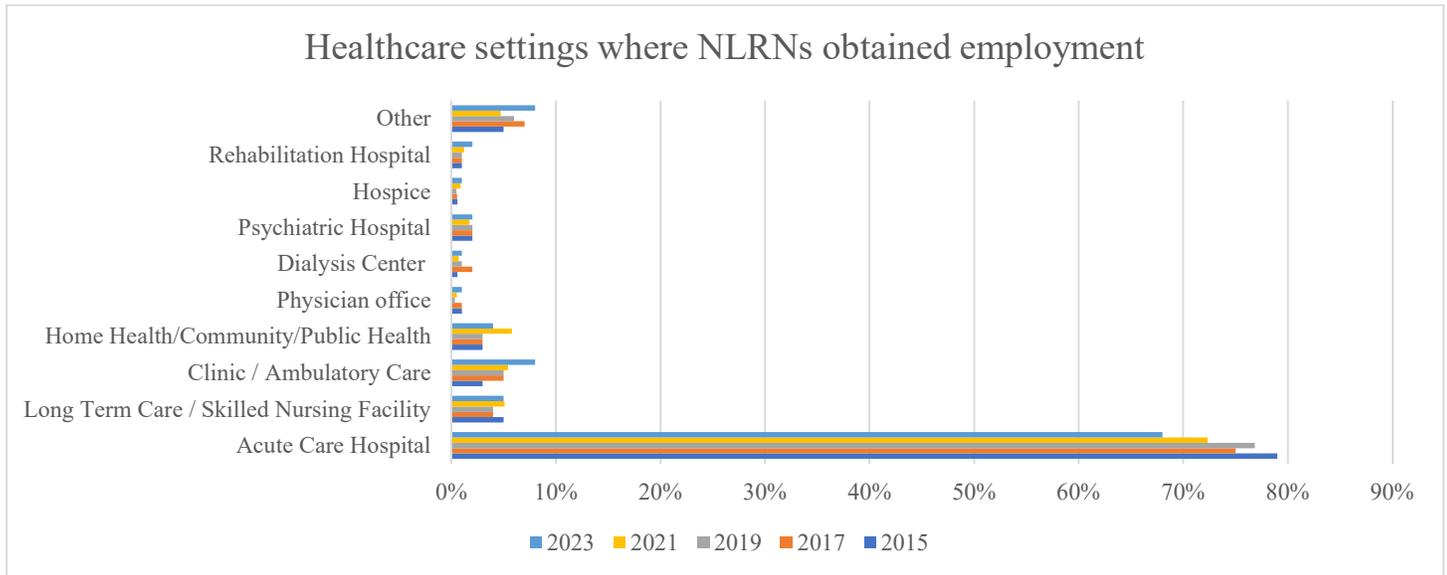


Figure 26. Types of healthcare facilities where NLRNs found employment.

Starting Salaries for NLRNs

In 2023, 8% of the NLRNs reported a starting salary of \$22-\$24 an hour (Figure 27), which represents a decrease of 26 percentage points when compared to 2021 (34%). Yet there was a 3-percentage point decrease in the number of NLRNs reporting a starting salary of \$25-\$27 an hour and a 29-percentage point increase in those with a starting salary of greater than \$28 per hour.

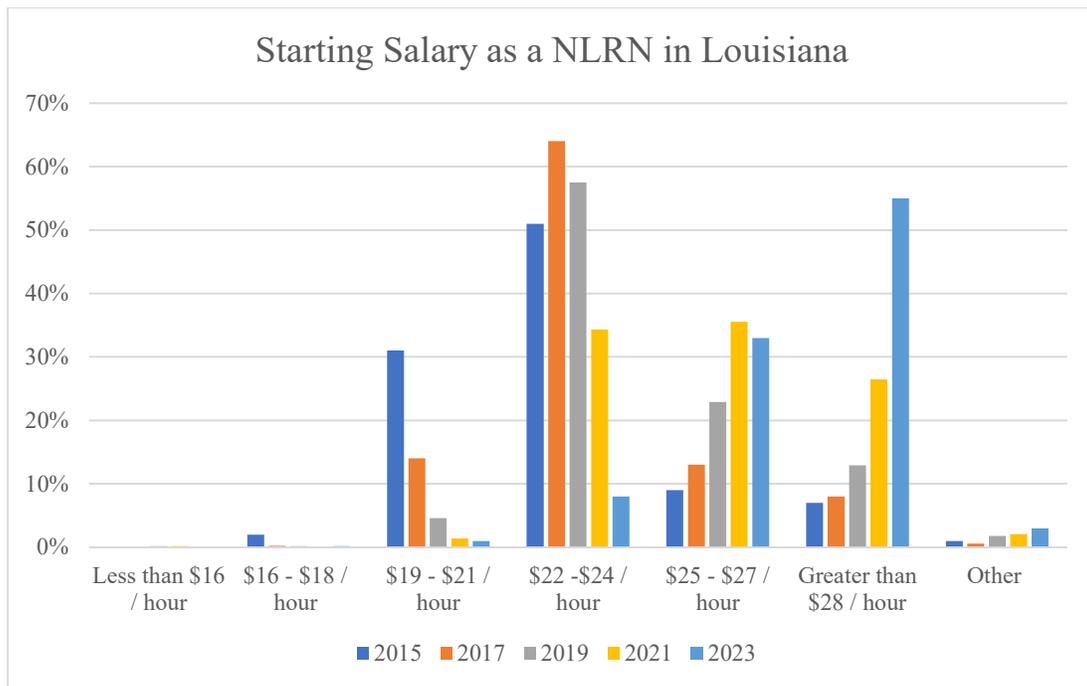


Figure 27. Starting salaries for NLRNs in Louisiana.

Change of Employment Settings

In 2023, NLRNs were asked if they had changed jobs since their initial employment as a registered nurse. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the NLRNs reported that they had changed jobs at least once since their initial employment as a RN (Figure 28). Reasons given for changing positions included uncomfortable work environment which encompassed bullying, inadequate training, unsafe staff/patient ratios and lack of support by management/administration (69, 33%); relocation (15, 7%); need for better pay/benefits (31, 15%); better opportunities (30, 14%); travel nursing (9, 4%); commute (8, 4%); and other (39, 19%). Other reasons given for changing employment included didn't like the specialty, the job was not their first choice and personal reasons.

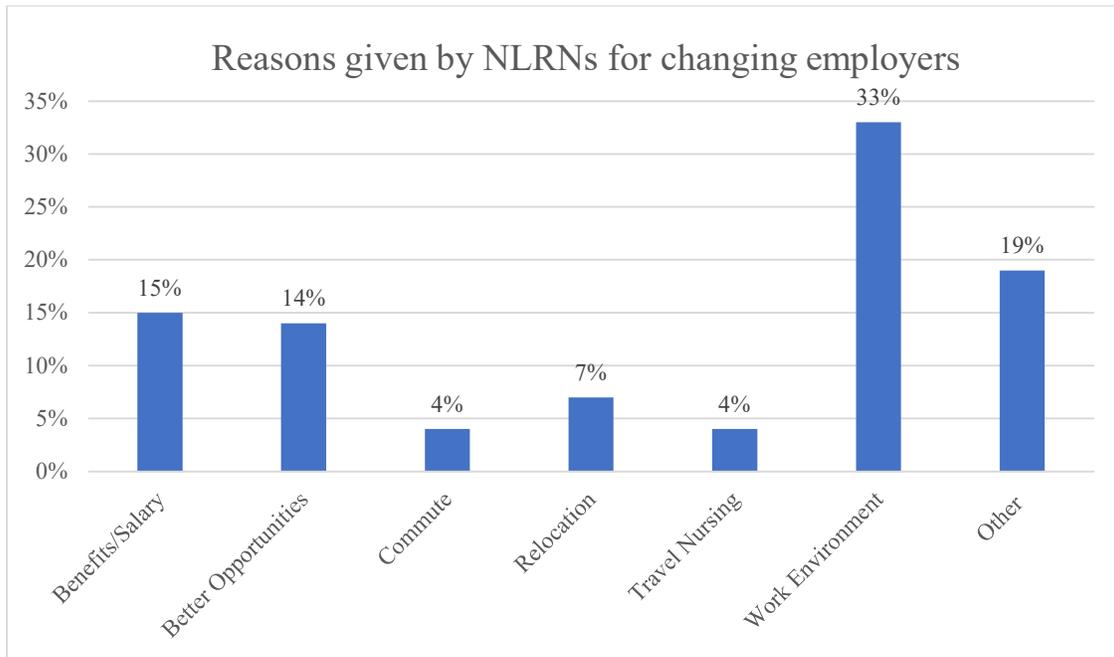


Figure 28. Reasons given by NLRNs for changing employers in 2021.

NLRNs That Were Not Employed

Three percent of the respondents to the 2023 LCN NLRN Survey reported that they were unemployed at the time they completed the survey (Figure 29). Beginning in 2013, NLRNs that were not employed at the time they completed the LCN NLRN Survey were asked how long they had been seeking a position as a RN and what were the reasons given by potential employers as to why they were not hired. In 2023, seventeen NLRNs reported that they were not actively seeking employment and three said they had been seeking employment for less than three months. Reasons given for not being hired included lack of experience and not vaccinated for COVID.

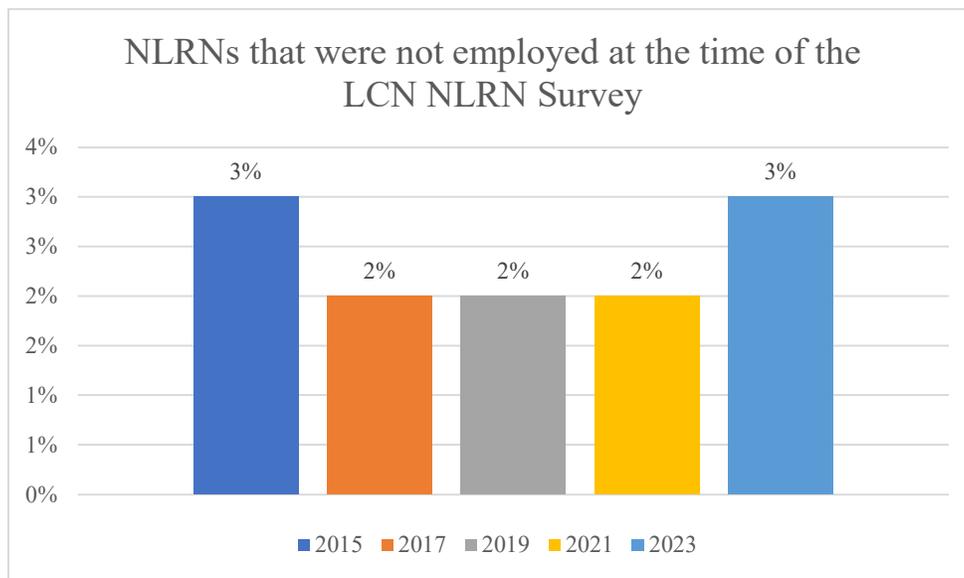


Figure 29. NLRNs that were not employed at the time they completed the LCN NLRN Survey.

Comments from Louisiana's NLRNs on their Successes and Challenges Pre and Post Employment

Each year the NLRN Survey has been conducted, NLRNs have shared hundreds of comments about their successes as well as their challenges during their pursuit of employment as a RN in Louisiana and their experiences as newly employed RNs. ***The following are a few of their comments presented in their authentic language without edits.*** To maintain anonymity, the letter 'X' was used when NLRNs referred to specific health care agencies or cities.

NLRNs that Found It Relatively Easy to Find Employment as a RN in Louisiana

- It's easy to find employment!
- There were minimal concerns/challenges finding employment in Louisiana as hospitals in X are kind, generous and welcoming to new licensed RN.
- Finding employment was no hard. In fact, most of the hospitals where we did clinicals were willing to hire before completing the NCLEX RN as long as we get it done within a certain time frame.
- It was very easy for myself and my fellow classmates to find employment in Louisiana. Many of us found jobs prior to graduation. I am very pleased with my education from X. I now have a nursing job that I love and am proud to be a nurse.
- I don't believe there's an issue with finding employment the market for jobs are pretty good.
- I did not have any problems finding employment as a new grad. Nurses are needed, and from my experience, most medical facilities are willing to hire new grads.
- It was easy finding a job and PRN work.
- There are many RN positions available for RN in LA.

Lack of Experience

- The pay is not great and it is hard finding a job for new grads without experience. Most jobs require hospital experience.
- As a newly licensed registered nurse, some specialty positions I were interested in were looking for nurses with experience in the specialty.
- Having trouble being hired for a new job in a different specialty as a med surg nurse with about 10 months of experience.
- All employers were looking for previous experience from new grads but there are not many transitional programs to get experience.
- Most applications require 1-year previous nursing experience to be eligible for employment. It is impossible for new nurses to get a year experience if this is a requirement on all applications. It's hard to find employers willing to give new nurses a chance.
- Allowed to go into specialties too quickly without standard skills/experience.

Not Feeling Prepared

- Recruiters are very slow. My first job I was hired on 5/29/23 and did not start working until 7/16/23. Almost applied elsewhere. The nursing shortage is causing rapid orientations sending nurses out on their own without all the training needed. One place I worked had me in 3 different positions in less than 4 months, not a bit of training. Needless to say, I left there. I was an LPN for 35 years before becoming an RN and now I feel displaced. I thought it would be different, but lack of training is the real downfall. At least I had a nursing background, what about those who don't.
- The lack of training and preparation is TERRIFYING. I was put in situations that should be ILLEGAL for a new grad with no experience. There's little surprise the nursing shortage is what it is- who would want to be in this field, with their livelihoods on the line? I would have benefited from literally hundreds of hours in a hospital (during school) that I was not provided. We aren't just drawing pictures with elderly- we have their lives in our hands. And the minimal training we receive is appalling. I will

NEVER again work in a hospital with those conditions. Schooling cares more about passing a test with made up situations where if you learn the test taking strategies you can pass. REAL LIFE HAS VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH THE NCLEX!! I passed the NCLEX- so what does that mean? I'm prepared to be a safely practicing, competent RN?? By no means- it means I learned how to take a test well. A PHARMACOLOGY CLASS SHOULD BE REQUIRED BEFORE GRADUATION. All the relatively meaningless stuff we did as students, and we graduate not knowing much at all about the medications we are administering. Shameful and scary. I'm grateful for my education and my field, but I am not currently practicing in it and not looking to.

- The current onboarding process for new graduates lacks a structured training program. It often involves inexperienced individuals instructing their peers, which can be likened to a situation where individuals with limited experience are guiding others.
- My program fully prepared me for boards, but I feel like it did not adequately prepare me for direct transfer to patient care directly out of school.
- I do not think there is an issue with finding a job in Louisiana, I do think there is a considerable inequity between what nursing school teaches you and on the job requirements that make new nurses contemplate leaving the profession as they are ill-prepared.

The Need for Nurse Residency Programs

- The transition from new grad into their career as a registered nurse can be an obstacle for people that aren't coming from a previous healthcare profession. Some direction just-before or right-after graduation would have been extremely helpful. What to do after you've acquired your license, what to expect after you've been hired, etc.
- Maybe just be prepared for a transition period of getting used to a unit. I feel like nursing school and working as a nurse tech prepared me for the intensity of the job so I knew it would take some time to settle in.
- There are many opportunities for employment, but some employers are hesitant to hire newly licensed nurses due to not having staff to train them thoroughly. I believe more transition programs would benefit new nurses.
- The new graduates need support and assistance during this transition. So many new graduates are ridden with anxiety, which is causing many to leave their first job as an RN so soon. New graduate nurses are treated very poorly in many cases, but they need to be given guidance and a chance to prove their selves to others.
- Residency programs should focus more on the transition from student to nurse.

Salary/Benefits

- Finding pay that's worth your time. We are all understaffed and having to basically work double the amount for the same pay as if we were properly staffed and practicing under safe conditions.
- Nurses should absolutely get paid more for what we do especially critical care areas as well as bonus shifts.
- This doesn't necessarily apply to only newly licensed RNs but LPNs & RNs across the board in Louisiana. The pay isn't amendable to the amount of work & stress that goes into nursing. I have been a nurse for 10 years (LPN for 8, RN for 2) & the pay in the state of Louisiana is poor in comparison to others.
- It's hard to find employment in Louisiana because the pay is absolutely horrible living in today's world.
- The pay in this state for STAFF nurses should be just as high as for agency/contract nurses. Then, maybe there would be no need for them. Staff nurses work just as hard, and deserve just as much financially.
- The nurses in a hospital setting are extremely underpaid and overworked. Something needs to be done.

- Pay is horrible in Louisiana
- Pay is terrible, move to a different state. Nurse shortage will burn you out quickly.
- The starting pay is much lower in the state of Louisiana. Looking elsewhere, I could have added anywhere from \$5-10/hr as a new graduate nurse. Lower wages increases the likelihood of nurses not staying in the state after graduation. I'm currently looking in other compact states for new job opportunities.
- Pay statewide needs to increase to keep nurses in Louisiana.
- Wages are lower than the rest of the country and conditions are worse.
- Hospitals are offering sign on bonuses and then not willing to pay the money that nurses deserve. Staffing ratios are unsafe, but when you take that bonus, you are stuck with that hospital or have to pay all of that money back.
- Finding employment after graduation was easy, but finding a position that paid a fair/appropriate amount in the X area was the challenging part of picking where I wanted to work. I had multiple offers for different units, and the rates were generally in the same range between \$26-\$28/hour.
- I find the starting pay for a licensed registered nurse is still a fairly low as compared to travel, agency and contract nursing jobs. I am aware budgets for each individual facility plays a role in that aspect.
- It was not hard to find a job. However, the pay rate for new graduates is extremely low. If I had the ability at the time, I would have sought employment in another state for better pay. As it is, I do plan to work out of state as soon as I finish school for advanced degree(s) if the pay rate does not improve.

Work Environment

- Research hospital for unsafe working environment, unsafe staffing ratios, lack of supplies on unit, lack of pay increases related to cost of living/inflation, administrative bullying of RN's.
- There is discrimination in specialties now. During Covid there was a true need for nurses so race didn't matter. Now that the pandemic is basically over specialties such as NICU, ICU, Labor and Delivery are not willing to accept African Americans.
- The pay is lower than you think. The racial discrimination is real by management. Sometimes training is rushed.
- There's a reason why studies show 60% of newly graduated RN's transfer jobs, bullying and a hostile work environment are real. Very real. It's why I'm leaving my unit currently.
- I believe find employment in Louisiana is easy for new nurses due to the fact majority of places are short staffed due to how they treat nurses. Unfortunately, the turnover in the medical field to me is very high right now.

Hiring/Interview Processes

- I feel like nursing schools and LSBN should do more to help new grads find jobs, like hosting interview opportunities and job fairs.
- Finding employment was not hard. Infact, most of the hospitals where we did clinicals were willing to hire before completing the NCLEX RN as long as we get it done within a certain time frame.
- I did not have any problems finding employment as a new grad. Nurses are needed, and from my experience, most medical facilities are willing to hire new grads.
- I was encouraged to work as a nurse tech in the area I wanted to be a nurse in. This helped me to get my desired job
- I would recommend starting the application process early and applying to units/specialties that you are interested in.
- Start before graduation if you don't want to lag. Go on shadow shifts as well to meet the staff to see if the atmosphere will be a good fit

- I think it is great to work at a facility prior to working there as an RN or signing a contract so you know if it is the kind of job that you want.

Nurse Patient Ratio

- Finding employment isn't the difficult part, it's finding employers that will keep your license safe with safe staffing ratios. We all know there is a nursing shortage, but if you ask 80% of our staff if they would rather an increase in pay or better ratios, the answer is ratio. Caring for my patients is my #1 priority, but all is lost in what was taught in school when it's just about keeping them alive in critical ratios.
- Unless the nurse-to-patient ratio improves, I would avoid med-surg. Six patients is unsafe for one nurse. However, one exception is to work for a facility where pharmacists administer medications to med-surg patients.
- The biggest concern I have is that the staffing shortage...I work on a step down tele unit, at night, we do not have an aide at night, and there are only 2 nurses on the floor, we do not get uninterrupted breaks and are told we cannot ask for reimbursement for the time we get deducted from our check.
- Frequent complaints among all nursing staff about not feeling heard by management (this applies to most of my nursing school classmates as well). Nurse to patient ratio is often unsafe, as there is no limit or cap (as far as what we are being told). A safe limit on nurse-to-patient ratio would solve many issues for nurses, thus decreasing turnover rate in my opinion.

Other

- My concerns are the monopoly created by X and X, which prevents nurses having a clear choice in where they would like to work, it's either one or the other, and I believe nurse's will leave for an opportunity to have that choice in other states.
- The jobs don't work with having small children. There are not many employers that offers work from home positions for the parents that don't have help or can't afford childcare. I wished facilities would create daycares to accommodate the workers and more offices should offer RN positions. It's hard to get a clinic position because they only want to hire medical assistants or LPNs.
- Advice: As a nurse, it is okay not to be certain which specialty area you'd like to work in. Understand that you can transition into a place where you are comfortable working at any given moment. Nursing is beyond the bedside. Find your area of interest and advance your career. Be happy doing what you love to do to create a healthy environment for your patients and colleagues.
- Since there are young college students that are graduating and obtaining a serious career in nursing, I feel that it also needs to be an aspect of the maturity of taking care of other people as well. Some nurses now are taking care of loved ones but do not take the job seriously! They are there for the paycheck or instantly, do not like what they do. Nursing is a career of passion, not business, and it should be treated as such and should be looked out as people are graduating or near graduation for the community's sake.

Summary and Recommendations

In the eight years LSBN has been conducting the Newly Licensed RNs Survey, there have been improvements demonstrated in the findings. These include but are not limited to the following:

- There has been an 8% increase in the racial diversity of NLRNs.
- The number of LPNs enrolling in RN pre-licensure programs has more than doubled.
- The number of students graduating from accelerated RN programs has increased 8%.
- The number of graduates planning to pursue advanced nursing education has increased from 16% to 20%.
- The number of students seeking employment before graduation has improved from 62% to 78%.
- The number of NLRNs participating in transition to practice programs has increased from 15% to 54%.
- NLRNs working in their job of choice has increased from 76% to 87%.
- There has been a 50% increase in number of NLRNs making a starting salary of \$28 or more.

During that same time period, the following retrogressions have been noted:

- The majority of NLRNs graduate from schools in the major metropolitan cities of Louisiana and stay in those locations to practice: New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Lafayette, and Monroe. This leaves rural locations with greater nursing shortages.
- Males continue to account for only 10% of the NLRNs.
- Almost 20% of the US population is Hispanic/Latino, but only 4% of the Louisiana NLRNs identify as Hispanic/Latino.
- Education of NLRNs at the baccalaureate level has decreased from 56% to 48%.
- It is concerning that 10% of NLRNs do not see the benefit of participating in transition to practice programs.
- More than a third of respondents, 34%, changed jobs at least once since being licensed. This rapid turnover limits the NLRNs ability to learn their clinical position and develop confidence in their clinical performance.

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

- Implement collaborative innovative academic-practice partnerships between pre-RN nursing programs in universities and community colleges and healthcare systems that will create an environment that allows the NLRN to attain the critical thinking, clinical, communication and professional skills that are needed to become a safe, effective, compassionate member of the nursing profession.
- Develop accredited comprehensive nurse residency programs across the state that will allow for a seamless transition from academia to practice for NLRNs.
- Develop nurse mentoring / coaching programs for NLRNs 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 NLRNs 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 NLRNs can enhance their skills, feel valued and productive, and grow as leaders.
- Explore the role of repayment of student loans as a mechanism for keeping NLRNs at the bedside for at least two years before advancing their education.
- Repeat the NLRN Survey every two years to continue to monitor trends in hiring practices experienced by NLRNs as changes occur in the state's health care system, economy, and nursing workforce, to better inform policy makers, schools of nursing, prospective nursing students, and other interested stakeholders.

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