

## **2012 – 2013 California New Graduate Hiring Survey**

**January 2014**

The challenge for newly graduated RNs to find employment has been a concern, and continues to remain a pressing workforce issue for the fourth consecutive year in California. After several years of investing in building the workforce and increasing nursing program educational capacity, the economy is slow to recover continuing to impact hiring in the short term, and threatening to undermine the progress that has been made. This is occurring as the nursing workforce continues to age, the state's population ages and grows, and increased demand for health care arising from health reform moves forward. These factors will dramatically escalate the demand for nursing care in the near future, and California will again face a significant nursing shortage.

To better understand the employment experience of newly licensed RNs, a fourth annual statewide survey was conducted in fall 2013 through the efforts of the California Institute for Nursing & Health Care (CINHC), the California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN), the Association of California Nurse Leaders (ACNL), the California Student Nurses Association (CSNA), and the UCLA School of Nursing with funding provided by Kaiser Permanente Fund for Health Education at the East Bay Community Foundation.

### **Design and Sample**

A random selection of 5,412 (50%) out of the 10,824 nurses newly licensed by exam in California from September 2012 through August 2013 were invited to voluntarily participate in the survey. Each received a letter from the BRN in October 2013 requesting them to participate in the study and complete an on-line survey. No personal identification information was gathered and results were reported in aggregate. A total of 1,133 responses were received for a 20% survey response rate overall. The margin of error for questions for which the expected responses are evenly split (i.e., 50% will respond "yes") is 2.75 percentage points, with 95 percent confidence.

### **Results**

#### **Respondent Profile**

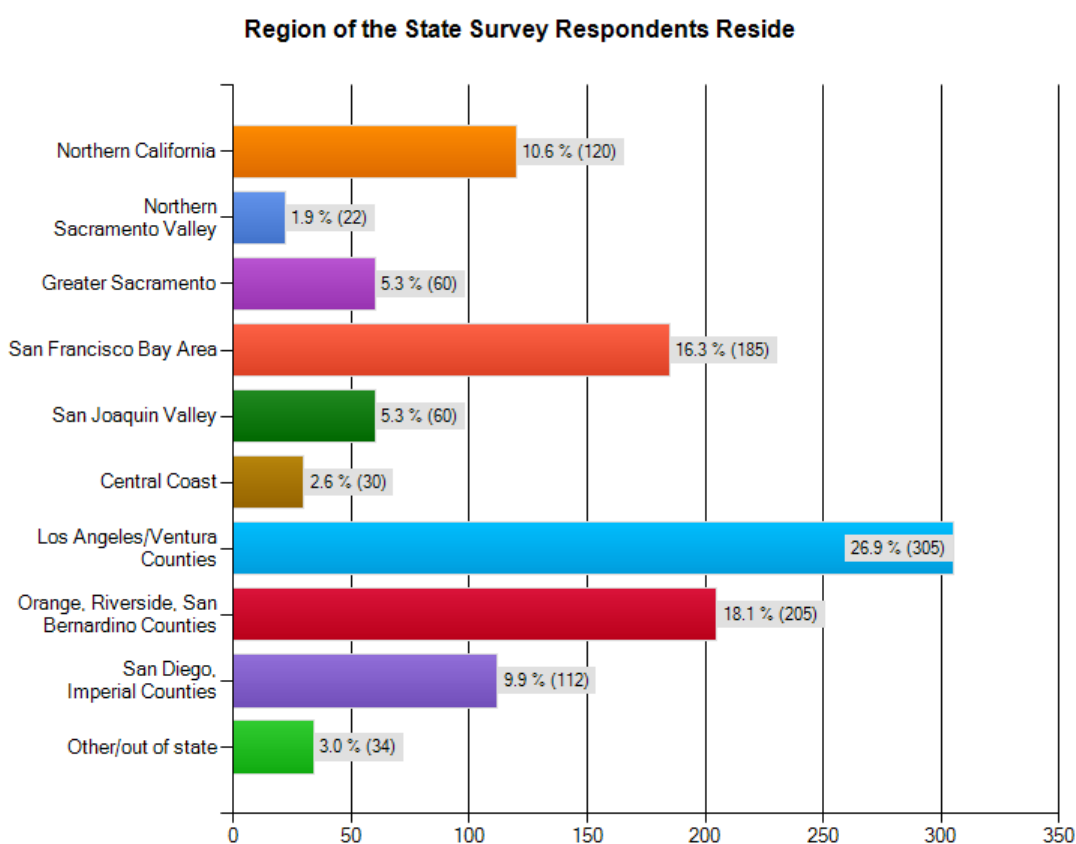
The participant profile of respondents in this sample survey included 88.7% (1,005) newly licensed RNs who graduated from nursing schools in California, 10.9% (124) that graduated from other states, and 0.4% (4) that graduated from another country. All were newly licensed by exam as an RN in California within the 12 months prior to the survey, between September 2012 and August 2013. Peak months of graduation were reported as anticipated in either December 2012 (29.8%) or May 2013 (38.7%) with the balance of graduations fairly evenly distributed throughout each of the remaining 12 month period

- 48.1% graduated in 2012, and 51.9% graduated in 2013
- 16.9% were licensed in California in 2012, and 83.1% licensed in 2013

The sample reflects 50.6% had graduated with an associate degree in nursing, 44.0% with a baccalaureate degree in nursing, and 3.2% graduated from an entry level masters nursing program. (2.3% of respondents indicated "other" type of degree and indicated variations of program types including accelerated bachelors or LVN to RN or LVN to BSN programs) The distribution of respondents based on the type of nursing program is consistent with the 2012 survey sample completed in 2012. This current sample differs slightly from the most recently

reported 2011-2012 California BRN Annual School Report of the actual distribution of new graduates in the state by type of degree obtained with 6.4% fewer responses from associate degree graduates, 7% more responses from baccalaureate degree graduates, and 3.2% fewer responses from entry level master's degree graduates.<sup>1</sup>

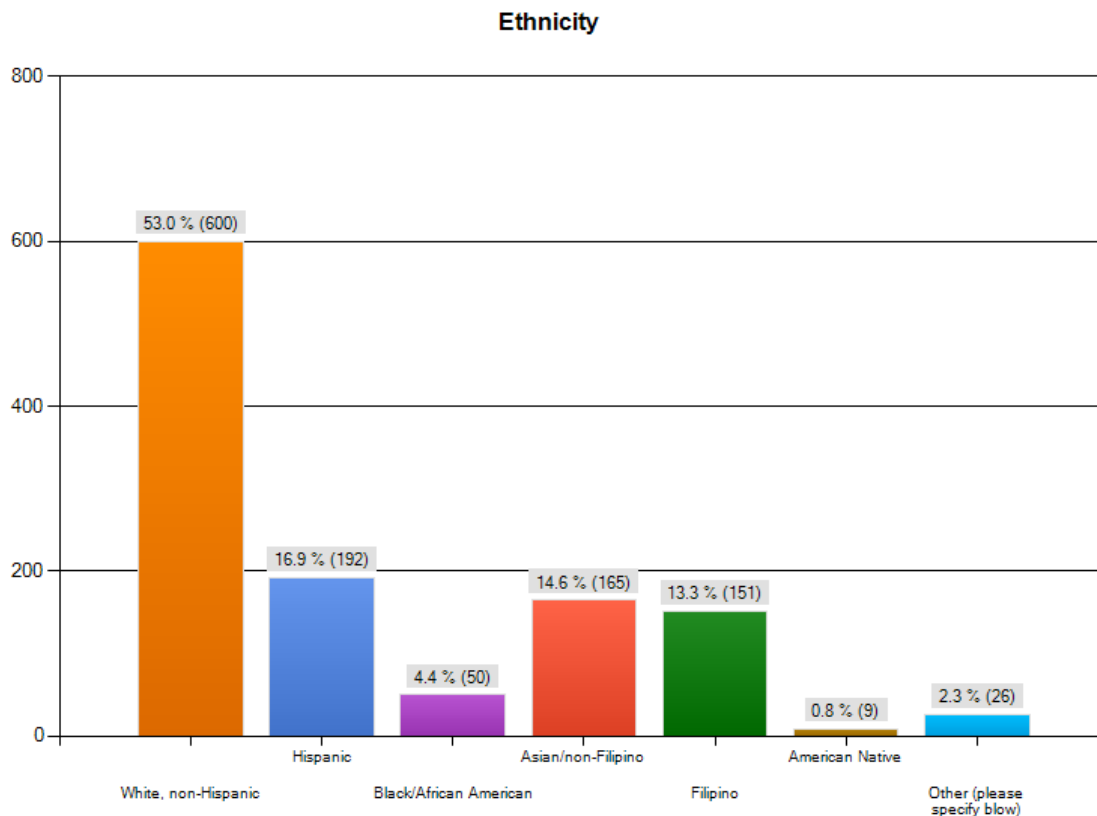
An analysis of respondents' geographic distribution indicates 26.9% of respondents live in the Los Angeles/Ventura area; 18.1% in Orange /Riverside and San Bernardino counties; 16.3% in the San Francisco Bay area; 10.1% in Northern California; 9.9% in the San Diego/Imperial county area; 5.3% in the San Joaquin Valley; 5.3% in the Greater Sacramento area; 2.6% in the Central Coast and 1.9% in the Northern Sacramento Valley. As densely populated areas have large numbers of new graduates participating in the study, specifically Los Angeles/Ventura, Orange/Riverside/San Bernardino, and the San Francisco Bay Area, it follows that the overall statewide survey results predominantly reflect the employment experiences within these regions. There are notable employment differences unique to each of the 9 regions in the study that are important to understand. These were further analyzed and provided in the next employment section later in this report.



The largest age group of respondents or 37.1% were between the ages of 25-30; 22.2% were less than 25 years of age; 16.7% were between 31-35 years of age; 8.3% age 36-40; 6.8% age 41-45; 5.1% age 46-50, and 3.9% over 50 years old indicating the entry into nursing practice age is consistent with the national trend of nursing as a younger, career oriented profession.

The ethnicity of the nurses in the survey sample included: White, non-Hispanic (53.0%) followed by 16.9% Hispanic, 14.6% Asian/non-Filipino, 13.3% Filipino, and 4.4% Black/African American, and 0.8% Native American with 84.1% of the respondent's female, and 15.9% male.

<sup>1</sup> Waneka, R, Bates, T, Spetz, J. 2011-2012 Annual School Report: Data Summary and Historical Trend Analysis. Sacramento, CA: California Board of Registered Nursing, February 2013

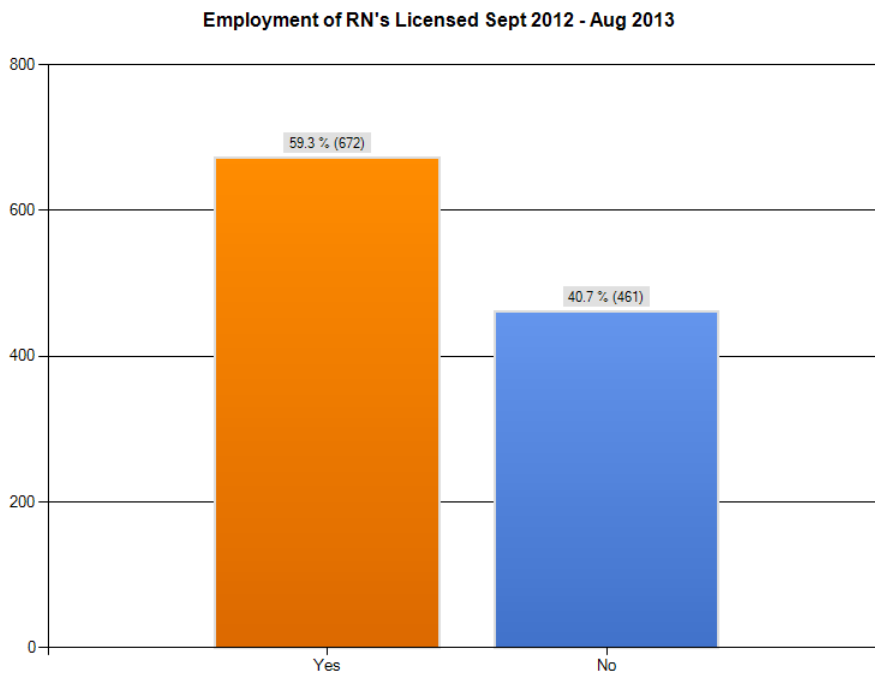


### Employment and Type of RN Jobs Obtained

A majority of nurses indicated being employed as an RN with 59.3% reported working in their first job, and 40.7% indicating they were not yet working as a registered nurse. These results provide evidence that a greater percentage of newly licensed nurses are working as an RN as compared to each of the three prior year sample survey findings which found 57% working as an RN in 2010 as well as 2011, and only 54% working as an RN in 2012. This data indicates a 5% improvement in employment from the prior year, and a cautiously optimistic indication of positive change in the employment picture for newly licensed nurses compared to the prior 3 year period. However, this trend should be interpreted with caution, because the changes in employment rates are within the margins of error of the surveys. It also should be noted that this survey of new graduates has consistently measured a lower rate of employment among recently-graduated nurses than has the Board of Registered Nursing's statewide survey of RNs.<sup>2</sup> For example, in the 2012 statewide survey, 64.4% of RNs who graduated in 2011 or 2012 were employed. The margin of error for that survey indicated that the true employment rate could range from 59.8% to 69.1%. Similarly, the Board of Registered Nursing 2011-2012 Annual Schools Report found that nursing school Deans and Directors estimated that 17.5% of their recent RN graduates had not been able to find employment, and among those employed only 69.5% were employed in California.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, while variation in sample results can be influenced by response bias, regional differences in the number of responses, availability of local employment, and other variables, the employment picture for newly licensed RNs appears to be improving.

<sup>2</sup> Spetz, J, Chu, L, Blash, L, Keane, D. 2012 Survey of Registered Nurses. Sacramento, CA: California Board of Registered Nursing, September 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Waneka, R, Bates, T, Spetz, J. 2011-2012 Annual School Report: Data Summary and Historical Trend Analysis. Sacramento, CA: California Board of Registered Nursing, February 2013



Employment patterns by type of nursing degree are of interest, and an indication of employer needs and preferences. Data indicates 55.5% (N=318) of ADN nurses report working in their first RN job, 62.7% (N=312) of BSN nurses, and 66.7% (N=24) of nurses graduating from an Entry Level Masters Degree program. While the survey indicates a greater percentage of nurses with higher degrees have found employment, it is also important to consider when these percentages are applied to the new graduate nursing population in California overall, a larger absolute number of ADN graduates have found employment, consistent with the statewide distribution of new graduates by type of program overall.

***Employment of RN's first Licensed From August 2012 – September 2013  
By Type of Nursing Degree***

Type of Nursing Degree	ADN	BSN	ELM
Employed as RN	55.0% (N=318)	62.7% (N=312)	66.7% (N=24)
Not Employed as RN	44.5% (N=255)	37.3% (N=186)	33.3% (N=12)

There are notable differences in employment rates of new graduates residing in different areas of the state. A broad range of employment rates were reported by newly licensed RNs in the sample study, from a low of 41.6% in the San Francisco Bay Area, to a high of 80% in the San Joaquin Valley. Generally these employment patterns are consistent with reports provided by hospital Chief Nursing Officers in the fall 2012 Survey of Nurse Employers.<sup>4</sup> Hospitals in rural areas were more likely to report they were experiencing some shortage of RNs, as were hospitals in the

<sup>4</sup> Bates, T, Chu, L, Keane, D, Spetz, J. Survey of Nursing Employers in California, Fall 2012. San Francisco, CA: Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies, University of California, San Francisco. April 10, 2013.

Inland Empire (San Bernardino and Riverside counties) and the San Joaquin Valley. In these regions, there are fewer nursing schools serving these areas. Conversely the employer survey found some evidence of nurse surplus in the San Francisco Bay Area.

***Employment Rate of Newly Licensed RNs by Area of California***

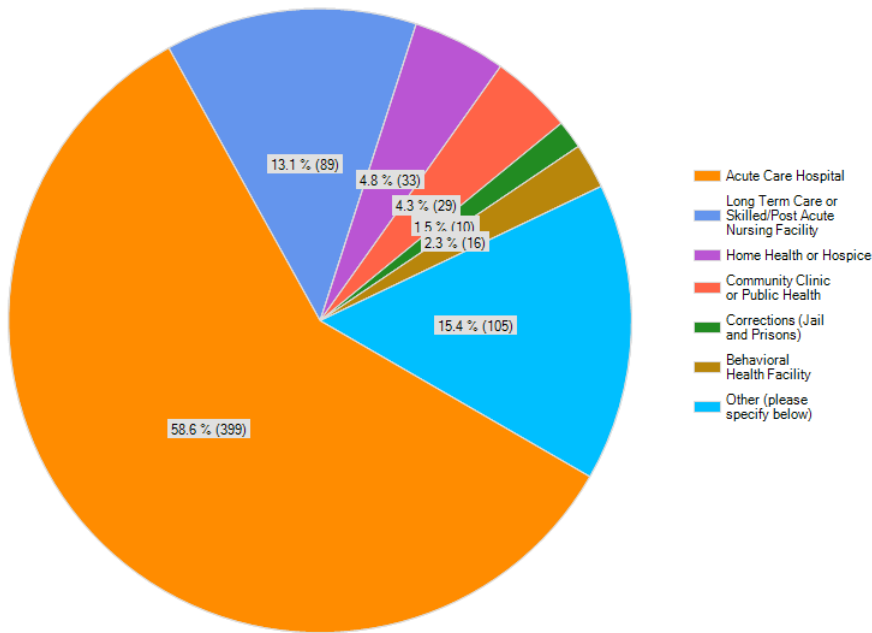
<b><i>Geographic Area</i></b>	<b><i>Employed as an RN</i></b>	<b><i>Not Employed as an RN</i></b>	<b><i>Survey Sample Size</i></b>
Northern California	67.5% (81)	32.5% (39)	120
Northern Sacramento Valley	77.3% (17)	22.7% (5)	22
Greater Sacramento	48.3% (29)	51.7% (31)	60
San Francisco Bay Area	41.6% (77)	58.4% (108)	185
San Joaquin Valley	80.0% (48)	20.0% (12)	60
Central Coast	70.0% (21)	30.0% (9)	30
Los Angeles/Ventura Counties	58.7% (179)	41.3% (126)	305
Orange/Riverside/San Bernardino Counties	62.9% (129)	37.1% (76)	205
San Diego/Imperial County	56.3% (63)	43.8% (49)	112

The type of employment settings in which new graduates are working is of interest. Of the respondents reported to be currently working as nurses, 58.6% are working in an acute care hospital, with the remainder working in long term care/skilled/post acute nursing facilities (13.1%), home health or hospice (4.8%), in a community clinic or public health setting (4.3%), behavioral health (2.3%), or corrections (1.5%). These employment patterns are similar to those of the statewide RN population, for which 63.6% were working in hospitals in 2012.<sup>5</sup> Employment in “other” settings was reported by 15.4% of respondents describing specific and varied settings. While the pattern of employment distribution remains comparable to prior years, a slight trend is observed reflecting a shift in new graduate employment from acute care hospitals to non acute and community health settings.

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<sup>5</sup> Spetz, J, Chu, L, Blash, L, Keane, D. 2012 Survey of Registered Nurses. Sacramento, CA: California Board of Registered Nursing, September 2013.

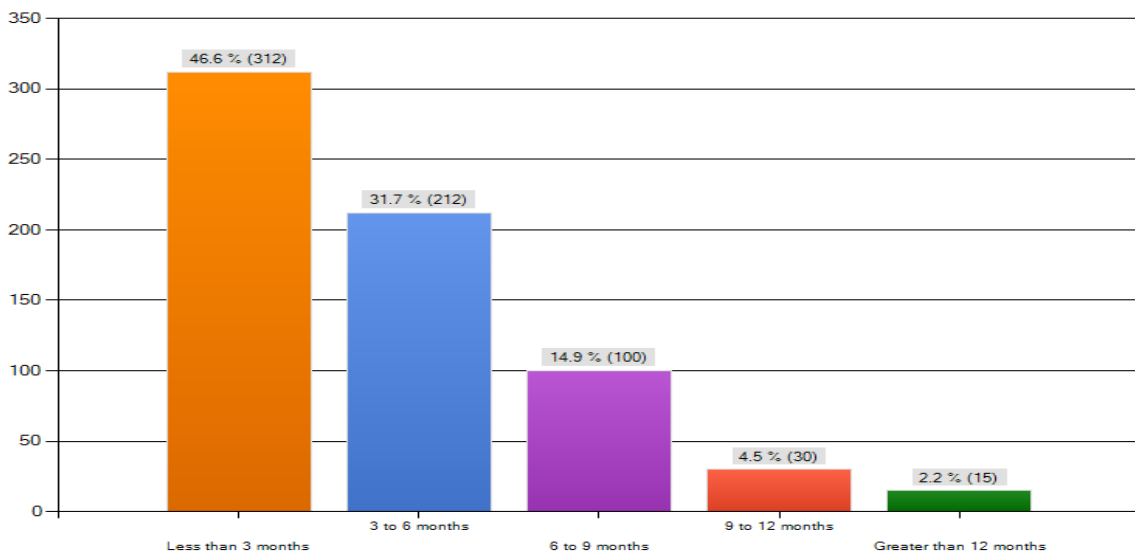
**Type of Health Facility New Grads Are Employed**



The majority of those working as an RN indicated they were working full-time (77.2%); 14.0% were working part time, and 8.8% working in occasional positions, per diem, or on call. 61.6% of respondents indicated they were working in a “job of choice”. This has declined slightly based on data collected in this annual survey over the prior 4 years with 64.5% working in a job of choice in 2012, 62% in 2011; these changes are within the margins of error for the surveys.

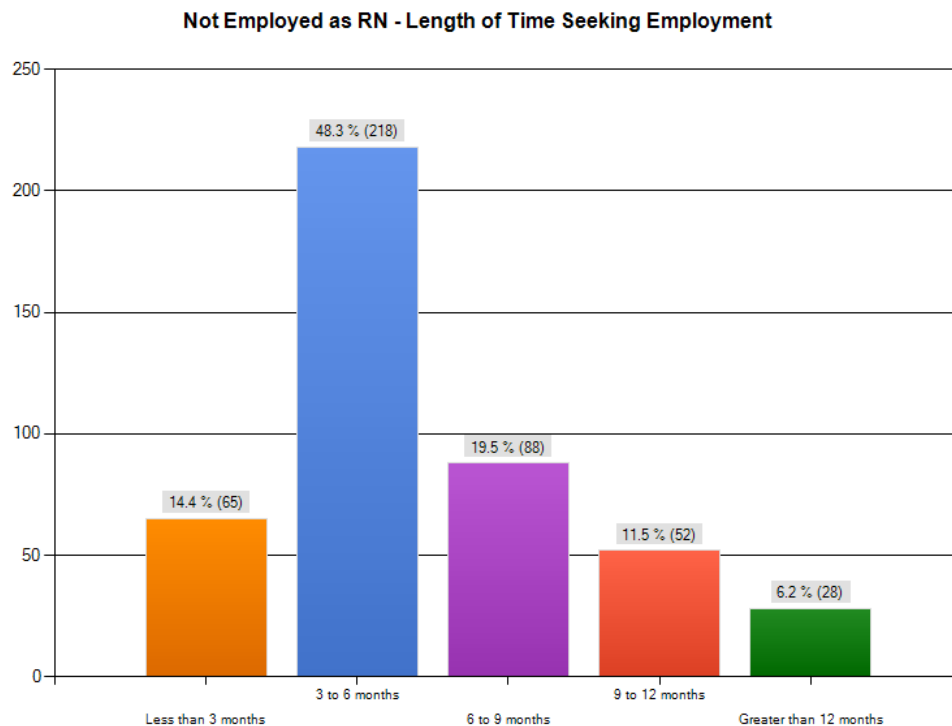
When employed nurses were asked how long it took to find their first nursing job, 46.6% of respondents indicated less than three months; 31.7% responded that it took 3-6 months to find their first nursing job, 14.9% indicated taking 6-9 months, 4.5% taking 9-12 months, and 2.2% taking greater than 12 months. A majority of nurses who found employment as an RN did so within the first 6 months after licensure with 78.3% of the survey sample of nurses employed. This data is consistent with results from the prior year.

**Length of Time To Find Employment In RN Position**



Jobs were found in a variety of ways with the most common approaches including: 18.3% used a hospital or health facility website, 15.9% indicated knowing someone at the hospital or health facility where they eventually went to work, 14.6% found employment through a referral, 10.4% had clinical experience at the health facility where they were hired, and 1.4% were hired through a job fair. It was possible for respondents to select more than one category in answering this question. Review of open ended responses indicated that many jobs were found through social media, networking, academic career placement services, military placement, and through participation in a new graduate program.

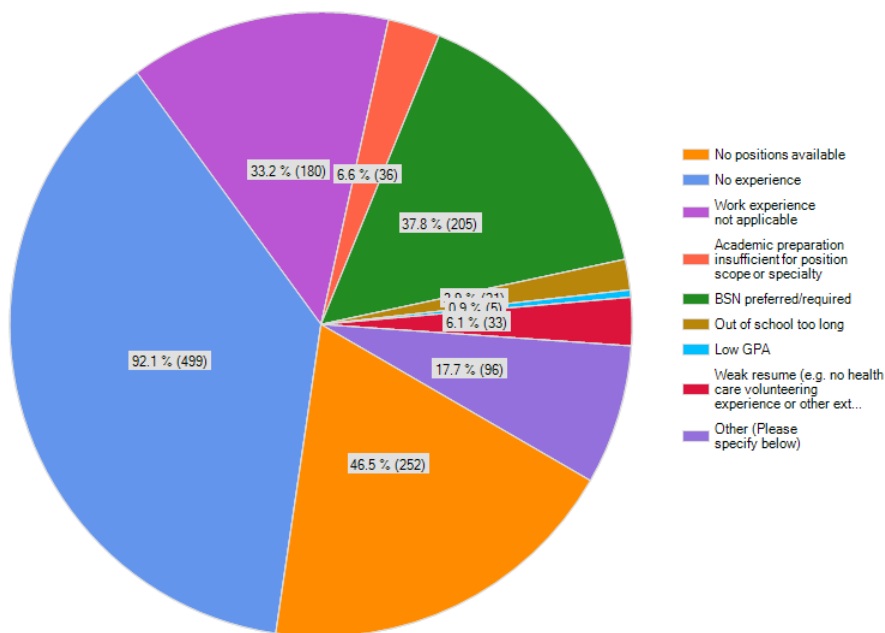
Among the 40.7% (N=461) of respondents who indicated that they were not yet working as an RN, 14.4% had been looking for less than 3 months, 48.3% had been looking for an RN position 3-6 months; 19.5% had been looking, 6-9 months; 11.5% for 9-12 months and 6.2% had been looking for longer than 12 months.



### Reasons for Difficulty in Finding Employment

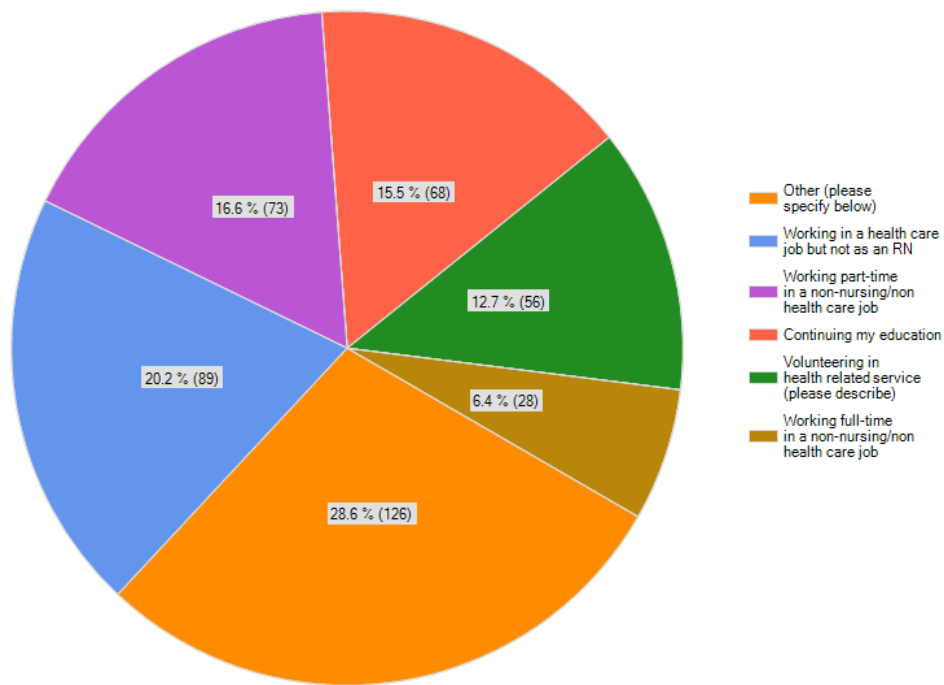
Respondents were asked to report what employers had told them about job availability. There were four main reasons given by potential employers for not offering a job to a new graduate. These included no experience (92.1%), no positions available (46.5%), BSN degree preferred or required (37.8%), or their work experience was not applicable (33.2 %). Additionally 6.6% of new nurses were told their academic preparation was insufficient for the position scope or specialty, 6.1% indicated the applicant had a weak resume related to health care volunteering or extracurricular activities that may enhance their experience or skills, while 3.9% were told they were out of school too long, and 0.9% were told it was due to having a low GPA.

Reasons Employers Gave New Graduates for No Job Offer



Nurses who were not working as an RN were asked what they were doing. Data indicated 23.0% were working in non nursing/non healthcare jobs (16.6% working part time, and 6.4% full time), 20.2% indicated working in a health care job but not as a RN, 15.5% reported continuing their education, 12.7% indicated they were volunteering in a health related service, and 6.4% indicated they were working full-time in a non-nursing/non health care job.

What Are Nurses Doing Who Are Not Employed as an RN



Beyond these primary employment settings, 28.6% of respondents indicated they were doing something else categorized in the survey tool as “other” with 206 open ended narrative responses submitted describing activities they had been doing while looking for RN employment. While these open ended responses and statements cannot be quantified, they present compelling evidence of newly-graduated nurses who are motivated and eager to begin professional practice. Typical categories reported with the greatest frequency, and often in combination, were comparable to activities reported in prior years including: volunteering, continuing their nursing education to obtain a BSN, MSN or Advanced Practice degree, taking CE courses to increase skills, working in a temporary RN role or position, working in the healthcare field but not as an RN, working in a non health care job – often continuing in a prior job, continuing to work as an LVN, and participating in an RN Transition program or unpaid internship.

#### Attitudes and interest regarding Transition to Practice (internship) programs

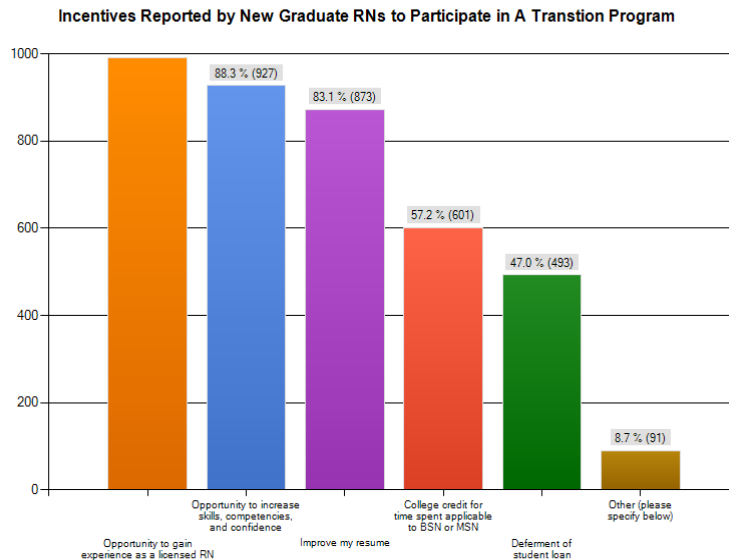
Respondents were asked about their level of interest in participating in a “transition to practice or new graduate residency program (internship) following graduation and prior to being hired”.

Regardless if they participated in a program or not, new graduate nurses indicated:

- Interest in a program if it was an unpaid internship (72.8%)
- Interest in a program if payment of tuition was required (40.1%)
- Interest in a program if it gave them an opportunity to work in non-acute health care facility (58.5%)

There were 18.1% (N=175) of all respondents that indicated participating in a transition to practice or new graduate residency program (internship) following graduation. A slightly higher proportion or 26.6% (N=151) of those who had found employment reported participation in a program. This finding helps to inform initiatives related to IOM #3 regarding the reported experiences of new graduates entering practice. When asked if participation in a program helped them to obtain employment, 63.7% (N=109) indicated it did. Of these, 73.2% of were paid a salary as an employee in the new graduate program they participated in. Incentives reported to influence participation in a new graduate program included:

- Opportunity to gain experience as a licensed RN (94.3%)
- Opportunity to increase skills, competencies, and confidence (88.3%)
- Improving resume (83.1%)
- Obtaining college credit applicable to BSN or MSN degree (57.2%)
- Deferment of student loans (47.0%)



### **Statewide Survey Summary**

This sample survey of 50% of newly licensed RNs provides a snapshot of the hiring dilemma faced by new RN graduates in California. These findings are a resource for nurse leaders seeking innovative ways to support nurses in maintaining and advancing their competencies until jobs can be found, or by considering employment strategies to hire more recently graduated nurses. A possible caution in interpreting these results is related to the survey response rate of 20%, as the small sample may not be representative of all newly licensed graduates. Nurses who have not found employment may have been more likely to answer the survey, and if so, the actual employment rate may be higher than reported. The survey methods, sample selection and size, and survey instrument have been consistent each of the 4 years, and the response rate has risen over time.

The results reflect the demographic pattern of new graduates reported in the annual BRN school survey and their regional distribution, and also mirror data obtained from employer surveys of nurses. In 2009 a survey conducted by CINHC and the Hospital Association of Southern California (HASC) initially forecasted that up to 40% of new graduates may not be able to find future employment in California hospitals because of a lack of available positions. The annual survey of Nurse Employers in California conducted by the University of California San Francisco each fall since 2010 also indicated up to 50% of new graduates may not find employment in hospital settings.

Data from this current California survey indicates a modest increase in the employment rate reported by newly licensed RNs for the first time compared to each of the prior three years, although the year-to-year changes are within the margins of error of the surveys. Nonetheless, the improving trend is consistent with national survey data from other sources. The National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) has collected new graduate employment data since 2008. Their national fall 2012 survey findings indicated 66% of new graduates were employed four months following graduation. When this national NSNA employment data was broken down by region, a broad range of employment rates were reported from a low of 55% in the Western Region to 74% in the Southern Region of the country. Differences in national employment rates by type of RN degree were also reported with 61% ADN, 72% BSN, and 61% ELM employed at 4 months post graduation. (Mancino, D., Dean's Notes, 34 (3) January/February 2013).

In August 2013, AACN conducted an online survey of baccalaureate and graduate programs in the US to better assess the experience of new graduates in finding employment during these

challenging economic times. Their survey results from 515 schools nursing schools indicated 59% of new BSN graduates and 67% of entry level MSN graduates had a job offer upon graduation, with 89% and 90% respectively employed within 6 months after completion of their nursing program. The AACN study also indicated significant variation in employment rates by region of the country. Nurses with a BSN were reported to be employed upon graduation in the South 68%, Midwest 59%, North Atlantic 50%, and West 47%.

While the national NSNA and AACN surveys each had notably different survey populations, questions, and measures than this California New Graduate Employment Survey, findings and trends comparing four regions of the country provide evidence that the employment experience of new graduates is most impacted in the Western States. Results and trends found in these two national studies are comparable to the findings from this California survey.

## **Conclusions**

California needs to retain newly licensed RNs engaged in the nursing workforce as a critical resource for ensuring the state has the supply of nurses to provide needed health care in California. The California Employment Development Department (EDD) forecasts approximately 10,500 new nurses are needed annually for population growth and replacement of nurses who retire or leave the state through 2018. California had 10,814 new graduates in 2012 indicating that workforce demand and pipeline supply are in balance.

It is evident from the survey that newly licensed nurses are working hard to obtain employment, often working a combination of temporary or part time jobs, and considering options outside traditional hospital settings. As the economy improves and the expected exodus of experienced nurses occurs, the demand for new nurses will dramatically increase. This trend will be further impacted by the increased demand resulting from health care reform and insured access to care. Hospitals have historically been the largest employer of nurses and new graduates, with California hospital vacancy rates remaining relatively low and reported to be 3.4% at the time of this study. Nurse leaders from both academia and service must continue to share best practices and innovative strategies to ensure that new RNs maintain and gain essential competencies needed during this temporary employment hiring lull. The nursing shortage is not over.

This current survey also indicates the use of unpaid internships has been an effective way to maintain newly licensed RN engagement in the work force, providing opportunities to increase skills and competencies, while seeking employment. Lack of experience as an RN is reported to be the number one reason new graduates are challenged to secure employment. Community-based RN Transition Programs conducted by schools of nursing in partnership with service partners have been successful in providing additional education and clinical experience to newly licensed nurses in the state, with 26 schools of nursing now having conducted one or more programs for over 1,400 newly licensed RNs during the past 4 years. Aggregate data on hiring results from these programs consistently indicate 80-85% of participants have obtained jobs as RNs.

The research team wishes to thank all of the new graduates who took time to share their hiring experiences with us. These results will be discussed with nursing leaders and others concerned about the difficulty new graduates are having finding RN jobs and instrumental in informing strategies which support and improve the employment of newly licensed nurses going forward.

## **Study Team**

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(A copy of this report is available on the California Institute for Nursing & Health Care website [www.cinhc.org](http://www.cinhc.org) )