

2013 – 2014 California New Graduate Hiring Survey

January 2015

The challenge for newly graduated RNs to find employment in recent years has been a concern. With the economy slowly recovering, the employment landscape for newly licensed nurses is beginning to show promise of improvement, yet remains a workforce issue for the fifth consecutive year in California. After a decade of investing in building the nursing workforce and increasing nursing program educational capacity, slow recovery from the economic downturn continues to impact employment and hiring in the short term. This is occurring as the nursing workforce continues to age, the state's population ages and grows, and changes in health care driven by health reform present emerging demands for nursing care in diverse community based settings. These factors will continue to influence an escalating demand for nursing care in the near future, and California will again face a significant nursing shortage.

To better understand the current employment experience of newly licensed RNs, a fifth annual statewide survey was conducted in fall 2014 through the efforts of the California Institute for Nursing and 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 sample of 3,429 (50%) out of 6,858 nurses newly licensed by exam in California from September 2013 through August 2014, and provided by the BRN from the Breeze licensing system were invited to voluntarily participate in the survey. Each nurse received a letter from the BRN in October 2014 requesting they 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 634 responses were received for an 18.5% 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 3.8 percentage points, with 95 percent confidence.

Results

Respondent Profile

The participant profile of respondents in this sample survey included 99.5% (631) newly licensed RNs who graduated from nursing schools in California, 0.5% (3) that graduated from other states, and 0% (0) 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 2013 and August 2014. Peak months of graduation were reported as anticipated in May (36.5%) or June (13%) 2014, or December 2013 (32%), with the balance of graduations fairly evenly distributed throughout each of the remaining 12 month period

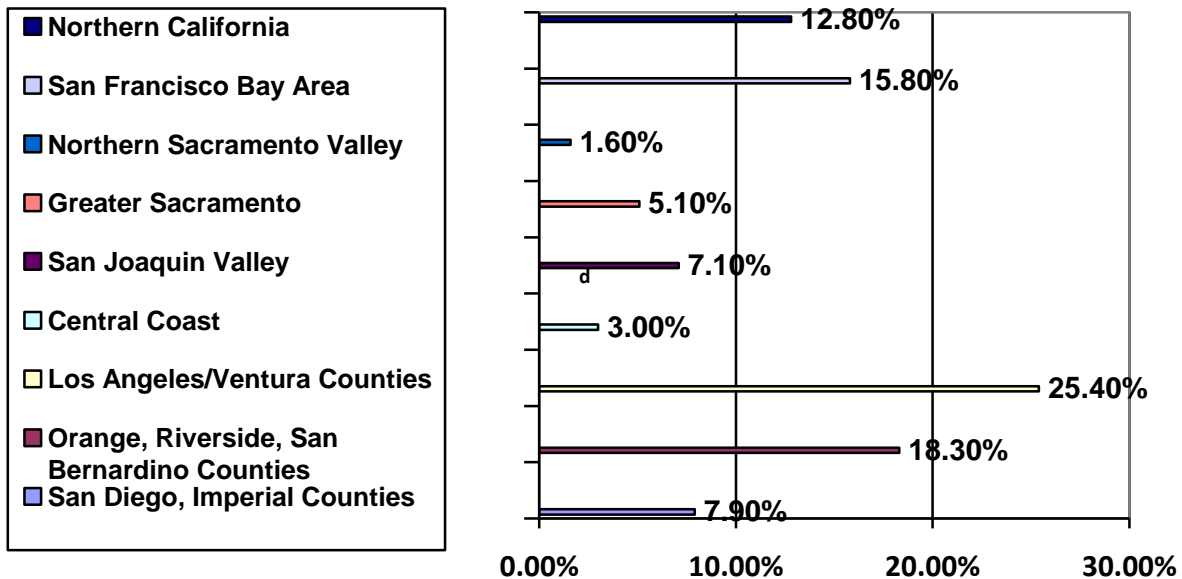
- 46.4% graduated in 2013, and 53.6% graduated in 2014
- 7.1% were licensed in California in 2013, and 92.9% licensed in 2014

Respondents indicated 46.1% had graduated with an associate degree in nursing, 44.0% with a baccalaureate degree in nursing, and 8.2% graduated from an entry level masters nursing

program. (1.7% of respondents indicated “other” type of degree and with variations of program types including accelerated bachelors or LVN to RN or LVN to BSN programs) The distribution of respondents by type of degree differs slightly from the distribution of new graduates in the state reported in the most recently reported 2012-2013 California BRN Annual School Report with 8.5% fewer responses from associate degree graduates, 5.4% more responses from baccalaureate degree graduates, and 1.4% more responses from entry level master’s degree graduates.¹

Geographic distribution of survey respondents indicate 25.4% live in the Los Angeles/Ventura area; 18.3% in Orange /Riverside and San Bernardino counties; 15.8% in the San Francisco Bay area; 12.8% in Northern California; 7.9% in the San Diego/Imperial county area; 7.1% in the San Joaquin Valley; 5.1% in the Greater Sacramento area; 3.0% in the Central Coast and 1.6% 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, the aggregate statewide survey results predominantly reflect the employment experiences within these three regions. There are notable employment differences unique to each of the 9 regions in the study that are important to understand. These are further analyzed and discussed in the employment section later in this report.

Regional Distribution of Survey Respondents



Information collected on the ages of survey participants indicate the largest age group to be between 25-30 years of age, with 34.2% reported, 26.5% were less than 25 years of age; 16.9% were between 31-35 years of age; 8.4% age 36-40; 7.4% age 41-45; 3.9% age 46-50, and 2.7% over 50 years old indicating the age range for entry into nursing practice to be consistent with historical and national trends in nursing as a younger, career oriented profession. Survey respondents were 83.7% female and 16.3% male.

The ethnicity of the nurses responding to the survey included: Caucasian/White 52.1%, followed by 17.5% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 14.2% Asian, 11.8% Latino/Hispanic, 4.1% African American/Black/African, and 0.3% American Indian/Native American/Alaskan Native. A detailed breakdown of specific ethnicities included in each category is provided.

¹ Waneka, R, Bates, T, Spetz, J. 2012-2013 Annual School Report: Data Summary and Historical Trend Analysis. Sacramento, CA: California Board of Registered Nursing, April 2014

Ethnic Distribution

Ethnic/Racial Category	Percent	Ethnic Groups Included
Caucasian	52.1%	Caucasian, White, European, Middle Eastern
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	17.5%	Fijian, Filipino, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, Other/Mixed
Asian	14.2%	Cambodian, Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian/Hmong, Pakistani, Thai, Vietnamese
Latino/Hispanic	11.8%	Central American, South American, Cuban, Mexican, Other Hispanic
African American	4.1%	African, Black
Native American	0.3%	American Indian, Alaskan Native

The survey this year included a new question for the first time to determine which languages were spoken fluently. There were 9 categories listed for participants to select from, along with an open answer selection for other languages to be written in. Other than English, there were 37 languages reported to be spoken fluently as listed in order of frequency in the following chart.

Languages Spoken Fluently

Language	Percent
English only	65.5%
Spanish	14.4%
Tagalog/Other Filipino dialect	4.6%
Cantonese	3.3%
Mandarin	3.2%
Vietnamese	2.2%
Other Chinese dialect	2.1%
Hindu/Urdu/Punjabi/other South Asian language	1.7%
Korean	1.1%
Other languages reported to be spoken by <1% each include: American Sign Language, Swahili, Turkish, Lao, Croatian, Hmong, Hebrew, Farsi, Assyrian, Bosnian, Fukienese, Russian, German, French, Japanese, Armenian, Romanian, Icelandic, Persian, Nigerian, Tamil, Twi, Fanti, Taiwanese, Hakka, Arabic, Burmese, Portuguese, Dutch, Yoruba	7.3%

Employment and Type of RN Jobs Obtained

A majority of respondents indicated being employed as an RN with 65.1% reported working in their first job, and 34.9% indicating they were not yet working as a registered nurse. These results provide evidence that a greater percentage of newly licensed nurses obtained jobs within the first year of licensure and are working as an RN compared with each of the four prior years with 59.3% reported to be working in 2013, 54% in 2012, and 57% in both 2011 and 2010. This data indicates a 5.8% improvement in employment from the prior study, for a cautiously optimistic indication of positive change in the employment picture for newly licensed nurses for the second consecutive year, and an early indication that the employment is beginning to change. The importance of this trend should be cautiously interpreted, as changes in the reported rate of employment year to year fall within the calculated margin of error rates when comparing the 2013 and 2014 surveys.

RN Employment within 12 Months of Licensure

Survey conducted with nurses newly licensed in the 12 month period prior to the survey (Sept 1 and Aug 31)	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014
Percent Employed	57.0%	57.0%	54.0%	59.3%	65.1%

This survey of new graduates indicates a similar employment rate when compared with the Board of Registered Nursing's biannual statewide survey of RNs last reported in September 2013² when 64.4% of RNs who graduated in the prior academic year 2011-2012 reported being employed. The margin of error for the BRN survey indicated that the true employment rate could range from 59.8% to 69.1%. California nursing school Deans and Directors estimated 18.3% of new graduates from pre-licensure programs in the prior 2012-2013 academic year had not been able to find employment³. 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 factors, the employment picture for newly licensed RNs measured by the same survey compared over time indicates an improvement for the second consecutive year.

Employment patterns by type of nursing degree are an indication of employer needs and preferences. Data indicates 61.6% (N=180) of ADN nurses report working in their first RN job, 69.5% (N=194) of BSN nurses, and 57.7% (N=30) of nurses graduating from an Entry Level Masters Degree program. While a greater percentage of nurses with BSN degrees have found employment, a larger absolute number of ADN graduates obtain employment consistent with the statewide distribution of new graduates by type of nursing program overall.

Employment of RN's by Type of Nursing Degree

Type of Nursing Degree	ADN	BSN	ELM
Employed as RN	61.6% (N=180)	69.5% (N=194)	57.7% (N=30)
Not Employed as RN	38.4% (N=112)	30.5% (N=85)	42.3% (N=22)

Notable differences in new graduate employment rates are found 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 50.0% in the San Diego Area, to a high of 86.7% in the San Joaquin Valley. These employment patterns are consistent with reports provided by hospital Chief Nursing Officers in the fall 2013 Survey of Nurse Employers reported in August 2014⁴ where hospitals in rural areas were more likely to report experiencing some shortage of RNs, as were hospitals in the Inland Empire (San Bernardino and Riverside counties) and the San Joaquin Valley. These regions also have fewer nursing schools directly serving these areas or new graduates residing locally. Conversely, the employer survey also reported a nurse surplus in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Employment Rate of Newly Licensed RNs by Area of California

Geographic Area	Employed as an RN	Not Employed as an RN	Number of Respondents*
Northern California	61.7% (50)	38.3% (31)	81
Northern Sacramento Valley*	80.0% (8)	10.0% (2)	10
Greater Sacramento*	56.3% (18)	43.8% (14)	32
San Francisco Bay Area	55.0% (55)	45.0% (45)	100
San Joaquin Valley*	86.7% (39)	13.0% (6)	45
Central Coast*	63.2% (12)	36.8% (7)	19
Los Angeles/Ventura Counties	68.9% (111)	31.1% (50)	161
Orange/Riverside/San Bernardino Counties	65.5% (76)	34.5% (40)	116
San Diego/Imperial County*	50.0% (25)	50.0% (25)	50

*While regional results are of interest to local communities, as such data exhibits a smaller numbers of respondents per region, results may not be representative of the region overall.

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

³ Waneka, R, Bates, T, Spetz, J. 2012-2013 Annual School Report: Data Summary and Historical Trend Analysis. Sacramento, CA: California Board of Registered Nursing, April 2014

⁴ Bates, T, Chu, L, Keane, D, Spetz, J. Survey of Nursing Employers in California, fall 2013. San Francisco, CA: Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies, University of California, San Francisco. August 2014.

Two new questions added to the survey for the first time this year to determine the various types of facilities employing new graduates, and the clinical practice area and specialty where they worked. Results reflect a broad range of organizations hire new graduates, with a majority (71.6%) reporting to be working in their first job as an RN in an acute care hospital, predominantly in an inpatient care setting (58.4%), or emergency/urgent care department (9.2%). When these employment patterns are compared with the distribution of hospital based employment settings in the overall RN population statewide, 63.6% of RNs were reported working in hospitals in 2012.⁵ indicating emergency settings attract newly licensed nurses and hospitals consider hiring them. While the overall employment distribution pattern for new graduates remains comparable historically, slight trends year to year continue to reflect the ongoing shift in new graduate employment from acute care hospitals to a broader range of non acute and community health settings.

The majority working as an RN indicated they were working full-time or a minimum of 32 hours per week (79.4%), 13.5% report working part time or less than 32 hours per week, and 7.1% work in occasional positions, per diem, or on call. There has been a slight shift this year in the number of new graduates working full time compared to the prior year when 77.2% reported working full time. More respondents indicated they were working in a “job of choice” this past year or 70.2%, which has increased slightly compared with prior years when 61.6% reported working in a job of choice in 2013, 64.5% in 2012, and 62% in 2011. Trends reported with more newly licensed nurses working in a full time position this past year, along with increasing trends of working in a job of choice are both indications that the job market for new graduate nurses may be improving.

Types of Facilities New Graduate Nurses Report Being Employed

Hospital	71.6% (303)
• Inpatient Care	58.4% (247)
• Emergency/Urgent Care	9.2% (39)
• “Other” Type of Department	2.6% (11)
• Ambulatory Care (Outpatient Surgery, Clinic etc)	1.2% (5)
• Nursing Home Unit	0.2% (1)
• Home Health	0.0% (0)
Nursing Home/Extended Care/Skilled Nursing/Group Home	8.0% (34)
Home Health Agency (including hospice)	3.6% (15)
Rehabilitation Facility/Long Term Acute Care	3.1% (13)
Private Medical Practice, physician office, clinic	2.6% (11)
Inpatient Mental Health/Sub Acute Abuse	2.4% (10)
Ambulatory Surgery Center (free-standing)	1.7% (7)
Public Clinic, Rural Health Center	1.4% (6)
School Health (K-12 or College)	1.4% (6)
Occupational Health or Employee Health Service	1.0% (4)
Outpatient Dialysis Center	1.0% (4)
Public Health or Community Health Agency (not a clinic)	0.7% (3)
Urgent Care (non-hospital)	0.7% (3)
Outpatient Mental Health/Substance Abuse	0.5% (2)
Government Agency (other than public/community health or corrections)	0.2% (1)
Correctional Facility/Prison/Jail	0.2% (1)
Inpatient Hospice (not hospital-based)	0.0% (0)
University/College Academic Department	0.0% (0)
Case Management/Disease management	0.0% (0)
Call Center/Telemedicine	0.0% (0)
Self-Employed	0.0% (0)

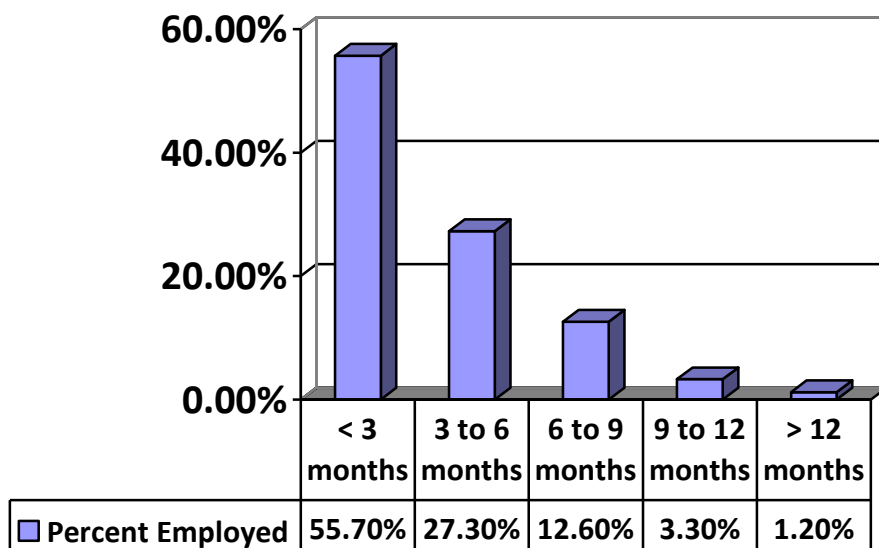
⁵ Spetz, J, Chu, L, Blash, L, Keane, D. 2012 Survey of Registered Nurses. Sacramento, CA: California Board of Registered Nursing, September 2013.

Clinical Specialty or Population

General Medical-Surgical (inpatient)	16.8% (71)	Rehabilitation	2.9% (12)
Telemetry	11.1% (47)	Neonatal Care	2.6% (11)
Emergency Care/Trauma	8.8% (37)	Home Health	1.4% (6)
Critical Care/Intensive Care	8.3% (35)	Work in Multiple Areas	1.4% (6)
Geriatrics	7.1% (30)	School Health K-12, Post Secondary	1.4% (6)
Pediatrics	4.7% (20)	Ambulatory Care/Primary Care	1.2% (5)
Surgery/Pre-Op/Post-Op/PACU	4.5% (19)	Cardiology	1.2% (5)
Mother-Baby or Normal Newborn	3.8% (16)	Dialysis	1.0% (4)
Orthopedics	3.3% (14)	Ambulatory Care/Specialty	0.5 (2)
Labor and Delivery	3.1% (13)	Hospice	0.5 (2)
Psychiatry/Mental Health	2.8% (12)	Obstetrics/Gynecology	0.2 (1)
Step-Down or Transitional Care	2.8% (12)	Community/Public Health	0.2 (1)
Oncology	2.8% (12)	Corrections	0.2 (1)

When employed nurses were asked how long it took to find their first nursing job, 55.7% of respondents indicated less than three months; 27.3% responded that it took 3-6 months to find their first nursing job, 12.6% indicated taking 6-9 months, 3.3% taking 9-12 months, and 1.2% taking greater than 12 months. A majority of nurses found employment as an RN within the first 6 months after licensure with 83 % employed. It is noted that 10% more new graduates found jobs within the first 6 months this past year compared to 2013 when 78.3% reported employment.

Length of Time Between Licensure and Employment in an RN Role



Jobs were found in a variety of ways with the most common approaches including: 21.0% used a hospital or health facility website, 16.8% found employment through a referral, 16.8% had clinical experience at the health facility where they were hired, 14.8% indicated knowing someone at the hospital or health facility where they eventually went to work and 0.7% 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, general job advertisements, and through participation in a new graduate program.

Among the 34.9% (N=221) of respondents who indicated that they were not yet working as an RN, 23.5% had been looking for less than 3 months, 41.7% had been looking for an RN position 3-6 months; 20.8% had been looking, 6-9 months; 10.2% for 9-12 months and 3.8% 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 (83.3%), no positions available (41.3%), BSN degree preferred or required (38.5%), or their work experience was not applicable (21.8 %). Additionally 4.5% of new nurses were told their academic preparation was insufficient for the position scope or specialty, 4.3% indicated the applicant had a weak resume related to volunteering in health care or extracurricular activities that may enhance their experience or skills, 2.3% were told they were out of school too long, and 0.8% were told it was due to a low GPA.

Nurses who were not working as an RN were asked what they were doing. Data indicated 19.7% were working in non nursing/non healthcare jobs (13.9% working part time, and 5.7% full time), 18.2% indicated working in a health care job but not as a RN, 20.5% reported continuing their education, and 8.2% indicated they were volunteering in a health related service. Beyond these primary settings, 33.6% of respondents indicated they were doing something other than working as an RN, categorized in the survey tool as “other” with 120 open ended narrative responses submitted describing activities they are currently involved in while looking for RN employment. While these open ended responses cannot be formally quantified, they present compelling evidence of newly-graduated nurses motivated and eager to begin professional practice. Typical categories reported with the greatest frequency, and often in combination comparable to activities reported in prior years include: 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 and Internship Programs

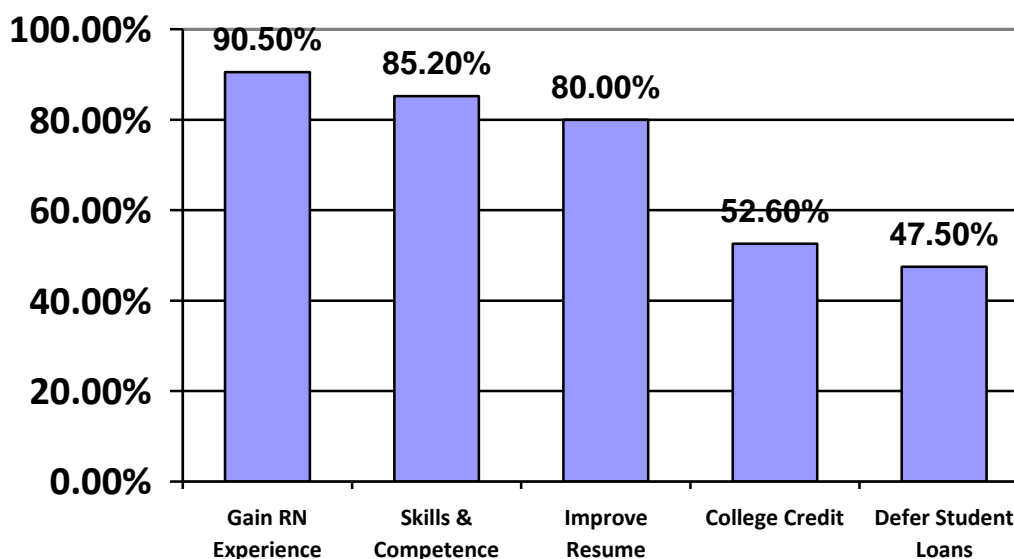
Respondents were asked about their level of interest in participating in a “transition to practice or new graduate residency program (internship) following graduation and prior to being hired”. Regardless if they participated in a program or not, new graduate nurses indicated:

- Interest in a program if it was an unpaid internship (66.1%)
- Interest in a program if payment of tuition was required (33.5%)
- Interest in a program if it provided opportunity to work in non-acute health care facility (51.0%)

There were 21.3% (N=117) of all respondents that indicated participating in a transition to practice or new graduate residency program (internship) following graduation. This finding helps to inform initiatives related to the IOM #3 goal that all new graduates should participate in a transition to practice or residency program as they enter practice. When asked if participation in a program helped them to obtain employment, 62.9% (N=66) indicated it did. Of these, 77.1% 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 (90.5%)
- Opportunity to increase skills, competencies, and confidence (85.2%)
- Improving resume (80.0%)
- Obtaining college credit applicable to BSN or MSN degree (52.6%)
- Deferment of student loans (47.5%)

Incentives to Participate in a New Graduate Transition Program



Statewide Survey Summary

This sample survey of newly licensed RNs provides a snapshot of the hiring experience faced by new RN graduates in California. Such evidence based findings provide useful information for nurse leaders seeking innovative ways to support nurses in maintaining and advancing their competencies until jobs can be found and by considering employment strategies to hire more recently graduated nurses. Caution in interpreting these results is advised related to the small sample size with a survey response rate of 18.5%, as the small sample may not be representative of the population of all newly licensed graduates. This is particularly true when results are analyzed and reported by region due to the much smaller number of respondents in each group. Nurses who have not found employment may have been more likely to answer the survey, and if so, the actual unemployment rate in the overall population of newly licensed nurses may be lower than reported. The survey methods have been consistent each of the 5 years the study has been conducted; with the survey instrument including standard questions to inform progress from year to year.

The results reflect the demographic pattern and regional distribution of new graduates reported in the annual BRN school survey, and also mirror data obtained from employer surveys of nurses. Data from this current California survey indicates an increased employment rate reported by newly licensed RNs for the second consecutive year within the past five years. As year-to-year changes fall within the calculated margin of error of the consecutive surveys, trends should be interpreted cautiously. This improved employment trend is consistent with national survey data reported by The National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA), which has collected new graduate employment data in an annual student survey since 2008. Their national fall 2013 survey findings indicated 76% of new graduates were employed four months following graduation and 87% by six months. When this national NSNA employment data was broken down by region, a broad range of employment rates were reported from a low of 64% in the Western Region to 84% in both the Central and Southern Regions of the country. Differences in national employment rates by type of RN degree were also reported with 72% ADN, 81% BSN, and 84% ELM employed at 4 months post graduation. (Mancino, D. Dean's Notes, 35 (4) March/April 2014).

While the national NSNA survey 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, with results comparable to those in this statewide survey. National trends across the past four years in each region of the country report an increasing percentage of new graduates are finding employment.

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. 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. With 11,292 new graduates in California from the 2012-2013 academic year, future workforce demand and current nursing education 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 deciding to retire occurs, the demand for new nurses will dramatically increase. This trend is further impacted by increasing demand resulting from health care reform and greater access to insured care. Hospitals have historically been the largest employer of nurses and new graduates. California hospital vacancy rates remaining have remained relatively low over the past few years and reported to be 4.1% at the time of this study.⁶ 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.

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 25 schools of nursing having conducted one or more programs for over 1,600 newly licensed RNs during the past 5 years. Aggregate data on hiring results following 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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⁶ Healthcare Workforce Survey Report, Second Quarter 2014, Hospital Association of Southern California.

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