

NLN Faculty Census Survey of Schools of Nursing Academic Year 2020–2021: Executive Summary

The National League for Nursing (NLN) conducted the 2021 NLN Faculty Census Survey of Schools of Nursing to provide data to policy makers, planners, governmental agencies, regulators, and others that use NLN workforce data to design legislation, approve budgets, and formulate long-range nursing educational goals. This summary reports nurse educator demographics, vacancy status, tenure status, salaries, and challenges met by participating schools to hire qualified nurse educators to address the shortage of qualified nurse educators. The response rate was 41 percent of 964 NLN member schools invited to complete the survey ($n = 399$). Following are highlights of the findings with data compared to the 2019 Faculty Census Survey. (Details are available online at <https://www.nln.org/nlnNews/newsroom/nursing-education-statistics>).

DEMOGRAPHICS

The proportion of underrepresented nurse educators increased by 4.1 percent from 16.6 percent in 2019. Of full-time nurse educators, 20.6 percent were members of underrepresented populations: African Americans, 10.8 percent (up 1.8 percent); Hispanics, 4.0 percent (up 0.6 percent); Asians, 4.3 percent (up 1.4 percent); Native Americans, 0.3 percent (down 0.1 percent). Only 1.2 percent of nurse educators were described as multiracial (up 0.4 percent).

Male representation in nursing education also increased slightly, by 1.4 percent compared to 2019. Of full-time faculty, only 8.4 percent were male; 0.2 percent were transgender, genderqueer, or gender nonbinary, and 0.1 percent were gender unknown.

Among part-time faculty, the percentage of male faculty increased from 9 percent in 2019 to 9.6 percent in 2021. Only 0.04 percent of part-time faculty were transgender, genderqueer, or gender nonbinary, and 2.2 percent were gender unknown.

Most full-time nurse educators continued to be over the age of 45 (71.1 percent); 50.3 percent were 46 to 60 years of age, and 19.8 percent were age 61 or older. The percentage of full-time faculty under age 30 remained unchanged from 2019 at 1.6 percent. Less than one-third were 30 to 45 years old (28.4 percent).

TENURE, VACANCIES, AND SALARIES

Of 10,657 full-time faculty across all ranks, only 16.2 percent were tenured, a decrease of 0.8 percent compared to 2019; 13.5 percent were on a tenure track, a decrease of 0.5 percent. The majority of faculty (70.3 percent) were not on a tenure track, an increase of 1.3 percent from 2019.

The total number of faculty vacancies for the nursing schools that responded to the survey was 577 in 2021. The 2021 survey asked deans and directors to indicate if their nursing program sought to hire new faculty. Almost 80 percent of 399 respondents indicated that they sought to hire new faculty; 317 nursing schools continued to have difficulty in recruiting and hiring faculty. The reasons given were as follows: not enough qualified faculty (33.4 percent); not being able to offer competitive salaries (34.3 percent); faculty jobs less attractive than other jobs (12.6 percent); not enough budget lines available (8 percent); and other difficulties (11.4 percent). Salaries were presented according to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (<https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/>). Doctoral/research education institutions

paid nurse educators the highest average full-time salaries, followed by master's institutions and baccalaureate institutions. Colleges offering the associate degree in nursing paid, on average, the lowest salaries for full-time faculty.

SUMMARY

The survey indicates that underrepresented populations of nurse educators remained unchanged, while gender diversity increased slightly. It is encouraging to note a slight increase in the percentage of men as nurse educators. The survey results also revealed that most nurse educators are older, leading to a continuing need to increase the pool of nurse educators to meet increasing demands. Another study projected that one third of nurse faculty active in 2015 would be set to retire by 2025 (Fang & Kesten, 2017). The retirement of nurse faculty will have an enormous impact on the nurse faculty workforce, worsening the current shortage (National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, 2020).

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022) projects the employment of registered nurses to grow 9 percent from 2020 to 2030; hence the need to educate more nurses to meet the demand. The survey results indicate that budgeted, unfilled faculty positions continue to exist in most nursing schools due to factors including a shortage of qualified faculty candidates, and the inability to offer competitive salaries. The shortage of nursing faculty continues to be a major obstacle to recruiting and educating nursing students, which contributes to nursing workforce shortages. Therefore, continued support for Title VIII funding is critical to addressing the faculty shortage in nursing programs.

REFERENCES

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