
Retirement Survey of Iowa's Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses

2004

CENTER FOR HEALTH WORKFORCE PLANNING
BUREAU OF HEALTH CARE ACCESS
DIVISION OF HEALTH PROMOTION
AND CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

BACKGROUND

The survey was conducted to collect current information about the segment of Iowa's nursing workforce aged 51-60 years old. The Iowa Council of Nurses previously surveyed this age cohort of nurses in 2001 and published findings in the Nursing Workforce Initiative Addendum Report in August 2002. The Center for Health Workforce Planning partnered with the University of Iowa, College of Nursing to replicate this survey in the fall of 2003.

METHODS

Names and mailing addresses for a randomly selected sample of actively licensed registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) aged 51-60 years old was obtained from the Iowa Board of Nursing. Of the 1,175 surveys mailed to the sample, 591 surveys ($n_{RN}=355$, $n_{LPN}=236$) were received for a response rate of 50%. The surveys were color-coded to track RN and LPN responses, but all returned surveys were anonymous. Data analysis was performed initially by University of Iowa biostatisticians with additional analysis completed at the Iowa Department of Public Health.

RESULTS

A summary of the data follows. The summary has been prepared using detailed results of both quantitative and qualitative data maintained in the Center for Health Workforce Planning.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

TABLE 1 Age of Survey Respondents

| | RN | LPN |
|------------|-----|-----|
| Mean Age | 55 | 55 |
| Median Age | 55 | 54 |
| Mode Age | 51 | 52 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Aged 51-55 | 204 | 152 |
| Aged 56-60 | 144 | 78 |

In this random sample survey of 1,175 nurses between the ages of 51 and 60, the mean age of the respondents was 55 for both RNs and LPNs.

Note: On July 1, 2003, there were a total of 38,091 RNs of all ages actively licensed in Iowa, 80% of whom were employed in nursing, and a total of 9,772 LPNs of all ages actively licensed in Iowa, 70% of whom were employed in nursing. The survey sample was randomly drawn from a population of 8,094 RNs and 2,089 LPNs in the 51-60 year old age cohort.

TABLE 2 Current Employment in Nursing¹

| ALL AGES | RN | | LPN | |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------|-----|---------|-----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| | n = 355 | | n = 236 | |
| Provide direct patient care | 234 | 66% | 193 | 82% |
| Employed in nursing but not in direct patient care | 93 | 26% | 15 | 6% |
| Not employed in nursing | 28 | 12% | 28 | 12% |
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 204 | | n = 152 | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Provide direct patient care | 132 | 65% | 126 | 83% |
| Employed in nursing but not in direct patient care | 59 | 29% | 11 | 7% |
| Not employed in nursing | 12 | 6% | 15 | 10% |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 144 | | n = 78 | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Provide direct patient care | 96 | 67% | 62 | 79% |
| Employed in nursing but not in direct patient care | 32 | 22% | 3 | 4% |
| Not employed in nursing | 16 | 11% | 13 | 17% |

The majority of RN and LPN respondents provided direct patient care. This applied to the total sample of nurses 51-60 years of age, and to the age subsets of 51-55 and 56-60. Almost 80% of LPNs between 56 and 60 years of age provided direct patient care.

¹ All percentages in this report are rounded to the nearest whole number and do not reflect missing responses.

TABLE 3 Provision of Direct Patient Care by Primary Area of Nursing Employment

| Primary Area of Nursing Employment | RN | | LPN | |
|------------------------------------|---------|-----|---------|-----|
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 132 | | n = 125 | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Acute care | 56 | 42% | 20 | 16% |
| Long-term care | 19 | 14% | 54 | 43% |
| Temp agency/private duty | 2 | 2% | 2 | 2% |
| School health nursing | 7 | 5% | 1 | 1% |
| Occupational health nursing | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory | 28 | 21% | 34 | 27% |
| Community/home/public health | 12 | 9% | 9 | 7% |
| Other | 7 | 5% | 4 | 3% |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 96 | | n = 62 | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Acute care | 46 | 48% | 9 | 15% |
| Long-term care | 13 | 14% | 33 | 53% |
| Nursing Education | 1 | 1% | 1 | 2% |
| Temp agency/private duty | 1 | 1% | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | 3 | 3% | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory | 21 | 22% | 15 | 24% |
| Community/home/public health | 8 | 8% | 4 | 7% |
| Other | 3 | 3% | -- | -- |

In the younger age subset (51-55) of nurses who provided direct patient care, the greatest number of RNs provided acute care, and the greatest number of LPNs provided long-term care.

While the distribution by care setting was similar in the older age subset (56-60), the percentage of RNs who provided acute care increased by 6%, and the percentage of LPNs who provided long-term care increased by 10%.

TABLE 4 Provision of Non-Direct Patient Care by Primary Area of Nursing Employment

| Primary Area of Nursing Employment | RN | | LPN | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 59 | | n = 11 | |
| Acute care | 9 | 15% | 1 | 9% |
| Long-term care | 7 | 12% | 3 | 27% |
| Nursing education | 10 | 17% | 1 | 9% |
| School health nursing | 1 | 2% | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | 1 | 2% | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory | 7 | 12% | 2 | 18% |
| Community/home/public health | 8 | 14% | 2 | 18% |
| Self-employed | 1 | 2% | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | 4 | 7% | 1 | 9% |
| Utilization review | 4 | 7% | -- | -- |
| Other | 7 | 12% | 1 | 9% |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 32 | | n = 3 | |
| Acute care | 8 | 25% | -- | -- |
| Long-term care | 3 | 9% | -- | -- |
| Nursing Education | 4 | 13% | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | 1 | 3% | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | 1 | 3% | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory | 3 | 9% | 1 | 33% |
| Community/home/public health | 6 | 19% | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | 2 | 6% | -- | -- |
| Utilization review | 2 | 6% | -- | -- |
| Other | 2 | 6% | 2 | 67% |

Among RN respondents who did not provide direct patient care, the greatest number in the younger age subset (51-55) identified their primary area of employment as nursing education. In the older subset (56-60), more RNs identified their primary areas of employment as acute care and community/home/public health than education.

TABLE 5 Average Hours/Week Worked in Nursing - Direct Patient Care

| Average Hours/Week Worked in Nursing | RN | | LPN | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-----|---------|-----|
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 132 | | n = 125 | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| 1-9 | 3 | 2% | 2 | 2% |
| 10-19 | 7 | 5% | 4 | 3% |
| 20-29 | 15 | 11% | 17 | 14% |
| 30-39 | 42 | 32% | 54 | 43% |
| 40 or more | 65 | 49% | 48 | 38% |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 96 | | n = 62 | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| 1-9 | 6 | 6% | -- | -- |
| 10-19 | 3 | 3% | 3 | 5% |
| 20-29 | 19 | 20% | 8 | 13% |
| 30-39 | 23 | 24% | 25 | 40% |
| 40 or more | 45 | 47% | 26 | 42% |

In the younger subset of respondents (51-55) who provided direct patient care, 81% of RNs and LPNs worked 30 or more hours per week. In the older subset (56-60), 71% of RNs and 82% of LPNs worked 30 or more hours per week. More than 40% of RN and LPN respondents in the older age subset worked 40 or more hours per week.

TABLE 6 Average Hours/Week Worked in Nursing – Non-Direct Patient Care

| Average Hours/Week Worked in Nursing | RN | | LPN | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-----|--------|-----|
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 59 | | n = 11 | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| 1-9 | 1 | 2% | 1 | 9% |
| 10-19 | 1 | 2% | -- | -- |
| 20-29 | 1 | 2% | 1 | 9% |
| 30-39 | 10 | 17% | 3 | 27% |
| 40 or more | 46 | 78% | 6 | 55% |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 32 | | n = 3 | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| 1-9 | 2 | 6% | -- | -- |
| 10-19 | 1 | 3% | -- | -- |
| 20-29 | 1 | 3% | 1 | 33% |
| 30-39 | 4 | 13% | -- | -- |
| 40 or more | 24 | 75% | 2 | 67% |

In the younger subset of respondents (51-55) who did not provide direct patient care, 95% of RNs and 82% of LPNs worked 30 or more hours per week. In the older subset (56-60), 88% of RNs and 67% of LPNs worked 30 or more hours per week. The majority of respondents in all categories worked 40 or more hours/week.

TABLE 7 Influence on Number of Hours Worked for RNs

| Greatest influence on number of hours currently worked | Number of Hours Worked | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|------------|-----|
| | 1-9 hours | | 10-19 hours | | 20-29 hours | | 30-39 hours | | 40 or more | |
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 4 | | n = 8 | | n = 16 | | n = 52 | | n = 110 | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Personal choice | 4 | 100% | 8 | 100% | 13 | 81% | 30 | 58% | 39 | 35% |
| Job availability | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 6% | 3 | 6% | -- | -- |
| Required to maintain current position | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 12 | 23% | 57 | 52% |
| Responsible for dependent care | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 6% | 5 | 10% | 5 | 5% |
| Personal health | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 6% | 1 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| Other | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 2% | 8 | 7% |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 8 | | n = 4 | | n = 20 | | n = 27 | | n = 69 | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Personal choice | 6 | 75% | 3 | 75% | 16 | 80% | 17 | 63% | 30 | 43% |
| Job availability | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 5% | 2 | 7% | 2 | 3% |
| Required to maintain current position | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2 | 10% | 6 | 22% | 32 | 46% |
| Responsible for dependent care | 1 | 13% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2 | 7% | 3 | 4% |
| Personal health | 1 | 13% | 1 | 25% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Other | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 5% | -- | -- | 2 | 3% |

In the younger subset of RN respondents (51-55) in any setting, at least 80% who worked fewer than 30 hours per week reported they did so by personal choice. The highest percentage of those who worked 40 or more hours per week did so because it was required. This pattern was consistent in the older age subset (56-60).

TABLE 8 Influence on Number of Hours Worked for LPNs

| Greatest influence on number of hours currently worked | Number of Hours Worked | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----|-------------|------|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|------------|-----|
| | 1-9 hours | | 10-19 hours | | 20-29 hours | | 30-39 hours | | 40 or more | |
| 51-55 Years Old | N = 3 | | n = 4 | | n = 18 | | n = 57 | | n = 54 | |
| | N | % | n | % | N | % | n | % | n | % |
| Personal choice | 1 | 33% | 3 | 75% | 15 | 83% | 28 | 49% | 28 | 52% |
| Job availability | 2 | 67% | 1 | 25% | 2 | 11% | 8 | 14% | 6 | 11% |
| Required to maintain current position | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 6% | 15 | 26% | 14 | 26% |
| Responsible for dependent care | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3 | 6% |
| Personal health | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 4 | 7% | 3 | 6% |
| Other | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2 | 4% | -- | -- |
| 56-60 Years Old | N = 0 | | n = 3 | | n = 9 | | n = 25 | | n = 28 | |
| | N | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Personal choice | -- | -- | 3 | 100% | 6 | 67% | 15 | 60% | 16 | 57% |
| Job availability | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 11% | 3 | 12% | -- | -- |
| Required to maintain current position | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 11% | 4 | 16% | 8 | 29% |
| Responsible for dependent care | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2 | 8% | 2 | 7% |
| Personal health | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 4% |
| Other | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 11% | 1 | 4% | 1 | 4% |

In the younger subset of LPN respondents (51-55) in any setting, 67% of those who worked fewer than 10 hours per week reported that job availability had the greatest influence on their work hours. This is an exception when comparing this group to the same aged LPNs who worked 10 or more hours per week. In the older subset (56-60), the majority of respondents reported that they worked the given number of hours because of personal choice, regardless of the number of hours worked.

TABLE 9 Planned Years Remaining in Nursing by Primary Area of Nursing Employment – RNs

| Primary Area of Nursing Employment | Planned Years Remaining in Nursing | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----|------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| | 0-5 years | | 6-10 years | | 11 or more years | |
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 36 | | n = 57 | | n = 75 | |
| | N | % | n | % | n | % |
| Acute care | 10 | 28% | 4 | 7% | 29 | 39% |
| Long-term care | 4 | 11% | 11 | 19% | 11 | 15% |
| Temp agency/private duty | -- | -- | 1 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| School health nursing | 3 | 8% | 3 | 5% | 2 | 3% |
| Nursing education | 1 | 3% | 5 | 9% | 4 | 5% |
| Occupational health nursing | -- | -- | 2 | 4% | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory care | 8 | 22% | 12 | 21% | 14 | 19% |
| Community/home/public health | 5 | 14% | 8 | 14% | 7 | 9% |
| Self-employed | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 1% |
| Insurance industry | -- | -- | 2 | 4% | 2 | 3% |
| Utilization review | 1 | 3% | 2 | 4% | 1 | 1% |
| Other | 4 | 11% | 7 | 12% | 3 | 4% |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 55 | | n = 61 | | n = 12 | |
| | N | % | n | % | n | % |
| Acute care | 28 | 51% | 21 | 34% | 5 | 42% |
| Long-term care | 4 | 7% | 9 | 15% | 3 | 25% |
| Temp agency/private duty | -- | -- | 1 | 2% | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | 4 | 7% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Nursing education | 2 | 4% | 3 | 5% | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | -- | -- | 1 | 2% | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory care | 9 | 16% | 14 | 23% | 1 | 8% |
| Community/home/public health | 6 | 11% | 8 | 13% | -- | -- |
| Self-employed | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | 1 | 2% | 1 | 2% | -- | -- |
| Utilization review | -- | -- | 1 | 2% | 1 | 8% |
| Other | 1 | 2% | 2 | 3% | 2 | 17% |

In the younger subset of RN respondents (51-55), the largest single group planned to work in acute care for 11 or more years. In the older subset (56-60), the largest single group planned to work in acute care for fewer than 6 years.

TABLE 10 Planned Years Remaining in Nursing by Primary Area of Nursing Employment – LPNs

| Primary Area of Nursing Employment | Planned Years Remaining in Nursing | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----|------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| | 0-5 years | | 6-10 years | | 11 or more years | |
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 18 | | n = 51 | | n = 66 | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Acute care | 3 | 17% | 6 | 12% | 12 | 18% |
| Long-term care | 5 | 28% | 20 | 39% | 32 | 48% |
| Temp agency/private duty | -- | -- | 2 | 4% | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 2% |
| Nursing education | -- | -- | 1 | 2% | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 2% |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory care | 8 | 44% | 15 | 29% | 13 | 20% |
| Community/home/public health | 1 | 6% | 4 | 8% | 6 | 9% |
| Self-employed | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Utilization review | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Other | 1 | 6% | 3 | 6% | 1 | 2% |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 16 | | n = 40 | | n = 9 | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Acute care | 4 | 25% | 5 | 13% | -- | -- |
| Long-term care | 6 | 4% | 21 | 53% | 6 | 67% |
| Temp agency/private duty | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Nursing education | -- | -- | 1 | 3% | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory care | 4 | 25% | 9 | 23% | 3 | 33% |
| Community/home/public health | 1 | 6% | 3 | 8% | -- | -- |
| Self-employed | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Utilization review | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Other | 1 | 6% | 1 | 3% | -- | -- |

In the younger subset of LPN respondents (51-55), the largest single group, planned to work in long-term care for 11 or more years. In the older subset (56-60), the largest single group planned to work in long-term care for 6-10 years.

Table 11 Employment Plans for Next Three Years - RNs

| Primary Area of Nursing Employment | Employment Plans – Next Three Years | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|
| | Employed full-time in nursing (≥30 hrs/week) | | Employed part-time in nursing (<30 hrs/week) | | Retire from nursing, employment permanently | | Employed in non-nursing, health related field | | Employed in non-health related field | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 150 | | n = 30 | | n = 4 | | n = 5 | | n = 2 | |
| Acute care | 50 | 33% | 13 | 43% | 1 | 25% | -- | -- | 1 | 50% |
| Long-term care | 22 | 15% | 4 | 13% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Nursing education | 9 | 6% | 1 | 3% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Temp agency/private duty | 1 | 1% | 1 | 3% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | 6 | 4% | 2 | 7% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | 2 | 1% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory care | 24 | 16% | 7 | 23% | 1 | 25% | 2 | 40% | 1 | 50% |
| Community/home/public health | 18 | 12% | -- | -- | 1 | 25% | 1 | 20% | -- | -- |
| Self-employed | 1 | 1% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | 3 | 2% | 1 | 3% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Utilization review | 3 | 2% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 20% | -- | -- |
| Other | 11 | 7% | 1 | 3% | 1 | 25% | 1 | 20% | -- | -- |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 81 | | n = 34 | | n = 11 | | n = 2 | | n = 0 | |
| Acute care | 35 | 43% | 14 | 41% | 5 | 45% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Long-term care | 12 | 15% | 4 | 12% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Nursing education | 3 | 4% | 1 | 3% | -- | -- | 1 | 50% | -- | -- |
| Temp agency/private duty | 1 | 1% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | 2 | 2% | 1 | 3% | 1 | 9% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | 1 | 1% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory care | 14 | 17% | 7 | 21% | 3 | 27% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Community/home/public health | 7 | 9% | 6 | 18% | 1 | 9% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Self-employed | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | 1 | 1% | -- | -- | 1 | 9% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Utilization review | 1 | 1% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 50% | -- | -- |
| Other | 4 | 5% | 1 | 3% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

Regardless of work setting, the majority of all RNs (94% of those aged 51-55 and 90% of those aged 56-60) intend to remain employed in nursing over the next three years, with 72% of the combined 51-60 years old age cohort planning to work full-time in nursing.

Table 12 Employment Plans for Next Three Years - LPNs

| Primary Area of Nursing Employment | Employment Plans – Next Three Years | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|
| | Employed full-time in nursing (≥30 hrs/week) | | Employed part-time in nursing (<30 hrs/week) | | Retire from nursing, employment permanently | | Employed in non-nursing, health related field | | Employed in non-health related field | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| 51-55 Years Old | n = 100 | | n = 26 | | n = 3 | | n = 2 | | n = 2 | |
| Acute care | 15 | 15% | 5 | 19% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 50% |
| Long-term care | 43 | 43% | 10 | 38% | 2 | 67% | 1 | 50% | 1 | 50% |
| Nursing education | -- | -- | 1 | 4% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Temp agency/private duty | 1 | 1% | 1 | 4% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | 1 | 1% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | 1 | 1% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory care | 26 | 26% | 8 | 31% | 1 | 33% | 1 | 50% | -- | -- |
| Community/home/public health | 10 | 10% | 1 | 4% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Self-employed | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | 1 | 1% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Utilization review | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Other | 5 | 5% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 56-60 Years Old | n = 46 | | n = 14 | | n = 3 | | n = 2 | | n = 0 | |
| Acute care | 5 | 11% | 2 | 14% | 1 | 33% | 1 | 50% | -- | -- |
| Long-term care | 27 | 59% | 5 | 36% | 1 | 33% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Nursing education | -- | -- | 1 | 7% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Temp agency/private duty | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| School health nursing | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Occupational health nursing | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Office/clinic/ambulatory care | 12 | 26% | 3 | 21% | 1 | 33% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Community/home/public health | 1 | 2% | 2 | 14% | -- | -- | 1 | 50% | -- | -- |
| Self-employed | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Insurance industry | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Utilization review | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Other | 1 | 2% | 1 | 7% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

Regardless of work setting, the majority of all LPNs (95% of those aged 51-55 and 92% of those aged 56-60) intend to remain employed in nursing over the next three years, with 74% of the combined 51-60 years old age cohort planning to work full-time in nursing.

Table 13 Most Important Aspect of Work Environment to Maintain or Return to Employment in Nursing – RNs

| Current Nursing Employment Status | #1 most important work environment aspect | #2 most important work environment aspect | #3 most important work environment aspect |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 51-55 Years Old | | | |
| Direct patient care | Salary | Control of my schedule | Congenial work group |
| Non-direct patient care | Salary | Salary | Congenial work group |
| Not presently employed in nursing | Control of my schedule | Realistic patient work load | Involvement in decisions affecting patient care/ congenial work group/involvement in change process |
| 56-60 Years Old | | | |
| Direct patient care | Salary | Control of my schedule | Congenial work group |
| Non-direct patient care | Salary | Flexibility in the work environment/care delivery model | Flexibility in the work environment/care delivery model |
| Not presently employed in nursing | Control of my schedule | Involvement in decisions affecting patient care | Realistic patient work load |

Of those RNs employed in nursing, whether in direct or non-direct patient care, salary was cited as the most important aspect of the work environment that would retain them in nursing. Control of schedule and congenial work group were reported as the second and third most important aspects for those RNs providing direct patient care. RNs in the older age subset (56-60) who were not providing direct patient care indicated flexibility in the work environment and care delivery model as the most important aspect of the work environment following salary.

Both age subsets (51-55 and 56-60) of those RNs not presently employed in nursing cited control of schedule as the most important aspect of work environment that would attract them to return to nursing. The differences between the second and third most important aspects in the work environment were negligible, with realistic patient work load and involvement in decisions affecting patient care rising to the top.

Table 14 Most Important Aspect of Work Environment to Maintain or Return to Employment in Nursing – LPNs

| Current Nursing Employment Status | #1 most important work environment aspect | #2 most important work environment aspect | #3 most important work environment aspect |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 51-55 Years Old | | | |
| Direct patient care | Salary | Control of my schedule | Control of my schedule |
| Non-direct patient care | Salary | Control of my schedule | Flexibility in the work environment and care delivery model |
| Not presently employed in nursing | Salary | Salary/decreased documentation and paperwork | Control of my schedule/congenial work group |
| 56-60 Years Old | | | |
| Direct patient care | Salary | Control of my schedule | Congenial work group |
| Non-direct patient care | Salary | Control of my schedule/salary/flexibility in the work environment and care delivery model | Personal growth and education |
| Not presently employed in nursing | Control of my schedule | Decreased documentation and paperwork | Realistic patient work load |

Of those LPNs employed in nursing (direct or non-direct patient care), salary was cited as the most important aspect of the work environment that would retain them in nursing. Control of schedule was reported as the second most important aspect for LPNs providing direct and non-direct patient care. For LPNs aged 56-60 years of age providing non-direct patient care, control of schedule, salary and flexibility in the work environment/care delivery model tied for the second most important aspect of the work environment. Salary was identified as both the first and second most important aspects of work environment for 56-60 year old LPNs providing non-direct patient care.

Of those LPNs not presently employed in nursing, the 51-55 year old subset identified salary as the most important aspect while the older cohort (56-60) reported control of schedule as most important. LPNs not employed in nursing cited decreased documentation and paperwork as the second most important aspect to re-enter a career in nursing. Congenial work group and control of schedule were third most important to the younger age cohort (51-55) while the 56-60 year old subset cited realistic patient work load as the third most important aspect of work environment.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Over one-third of all respondents (37% of RNs and 34% of LPNs) provided voluntary comments and feedback on their surveys. The diversity and recurring themes reflected in their comments offer valuable insight from the perspective of this nursing cohort in Iowa. A number of respondents (21% of RNs and 23% of LPNs) also identified their willingness to be contacted to address in greater depth issues related to retirement and retention of Iowa's nursing workforce. A detailed list of respondent comments is maintained in the Center. A synopsis of themes in the qualitative results follows.

Wages and Benefits

Of the respondents who provided qualitative data, 42% of RNs and 48% of LPNs identified wages and benefits as important factors impacting their decision to retire or remain employed. Poor retirement benefits and lack of affordable or available medical insurance prior to Medicare eligibility were cited repeatedly.

System Problems and Workplace Environment

System problems and workplace environment were identified by 38% of RNs and 18% of LPNs who shared comments.

Personal Reasons

Various personal reasons (e.g., husband's decision to retire or keep working, responsibilities to children and grandchildren, personal health) were identified by 7% of RNs and 16% of LPN respondents who provided qualitative data.

Rules and Regulations

Only 3% of RNs and 5% of LPNs who provided qualitative data identified burdensome rules and regulations as a barrier to continued nursing employment.

Successful Experiences

Of those respondents providing feedback, 15% of RNs and 6% of LPNs shared successful experiences from their nursing careers and identified aspects of the profession which entice them to remain employed.

Respondent Comments

“Medical insurance after retirement is a big concern. Nursing is very stressful, and I can't imagine working in the capacity I am now in 5 years. I'm concerned about the number and quality of future nurses.”

“The environment of nursing is getting more difficult – too many rotating shifts, working most holidays, increased acute care and decreased staff members. Most nurses enjoy patient care, but the work environment is worse.”

“I love patient care but hate the shifts. I don't mind documenting, but the endless paperwork and employer/government criteria to care for patients is mind boggling.”

“Health insurance is one of biggest factors affecting my choice to work. Currently, my husband and I pay over \$1,300 per month.”

“The amount of my retirement plan and employer contribution are important as are the age at which I’ll be able to collect Social Security if it still exists.”

“Our hospital has a really poor retirement plan/pension plan. It can’t compare to working in other professional businesses. I’ve been at my facility for 30 years and will have very little to show for it.”

“I can’t afford to retire. As an LPN, I am making more money in long-term care than in the hospital. It’s a trade-off: better wages and no retirement, or lower wages and retirement benefits.”

“There should be either a special tax or mandatory government-funded program for nurses’ retirement. Too many employers do not provide.”

“I foresee earlier retirements due to increased stress caused by added responsibilities, growing paperwork and lower wages.”

“Due to the cost of living and low LPN salaries and retirement benefits, I will have to work until I am no longer physically able.”

“Work choices for LPNs of my age are very limited. Nursing home work is available, but it is very hard work the older you get and the work is often fast paced due to not enough staff.”

“There is too much paperwork and less time for patients. There are too many risks in the health care field. The cost of insurance is too high, and floor nursing is harder for me to do with increasing age and health concerns.”

Respondent Suggestions

“Nurses need to quit eating their young. If we desire not to be overworked and short of help, we must be kinder to one another. Nursing is not a competitive sport.”

“I hear much today about recruitment of new nurses, which I understand is necessary. However, retention and career advancement of experienced nurses needs to be addressed.”

“It would be nice to utilize retired nurses for jobs such as skill testing, flu shots, TB testing, disaster drill patients, etc. as a way for retirees to keep up their skills and stay in touch with old friends.”

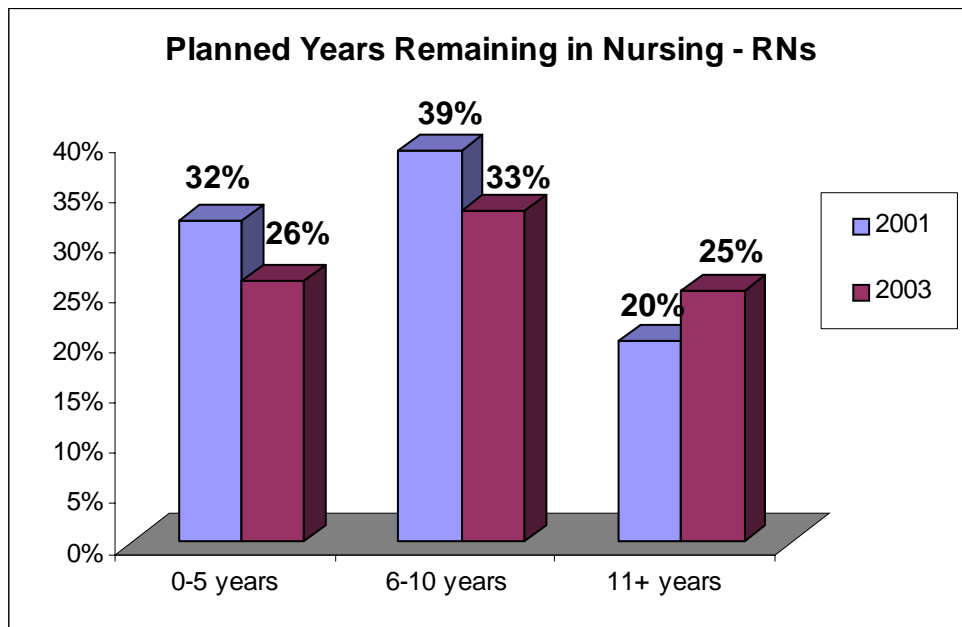
“Nursing has lost its focus. Nurses need to focus on what they have to offer not on what is due them. Nurses need to support and foster their young, new nurses.”

COMPARISON DATA

A retirement survey of registered nurses in this same age cohort (51-60 years old) was completed by the Iowa Council of Nurses in 2001. Comparison data from the 2001 and 2003 surveys follow²:

| Planned Years Remaining in Nursing | 2001 | 2003 |
|------------------------------------|------|------|
| 0-5 years | 32% | 26% |
| 6-10 years | 39% | 33% |
| 11 or more years | 20% | 25% |

² Percentages do not total 100% because not all survey respondents completed this item (91% completion in 2001 and 84% completion in 2003).



The 2003 retirement survey confirmed findings from 2001 on key factors that influence RNs to remain employed in nursing. Once again, the top factor was salary followed by control of schedule, realistic patient work load and flexibility in the work environment/care delivery model.

The 2001 survey conducted by the Iowa Council of Nurses did not include data about LPNs. For this reason, no LPN comparison data is included in this report.

SUMMARY COMMENTS

The 2003 Retirement Survey of Iowa's Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses results demonstrate that:

- The majority of RN and LPN respondents provided direct patient care. This applied to the total sample of nurses 51-60 years of age, and to the age subsets of 51-55 and 56-60. Almost 80% of LPNs between 56 and 60 years of age provided direct patient care.
- In the younger age subset (51-55) of nurses who provided direct patient care, the greatest number of RNs provided acute care, and the greatest number of LPNs provided long-term care.
- While the distribution by care setting was similar in the older age subset (56-60), the percentage of RNs who provided acute care increased by 6%, and the percent of LPNs who provided long-term care increased by 10%.
- Among RN respondents who did not provide direct patient care, the greatest number in the younger age subset (51-55) identified their primary area of employment as nursing education. In the older subset (56-60), more RNs identified their primary areas of employment as acute care and community/home/public health than education.
- In the younger subset of respondents (51-55) who provided direct patient care, 81% of RNs and LPNs worked 30 or more hours per week. In the older subset (56-60), 71% of RNs and 82% of LPNs worked 30 or more hours per week. More than 40% of RN and LPN respondents in the older age subset worked 40 or more hours per week.
- In the younger subset of respondents (51-55) who did not provide direct patient care, 95% of RNs and 82% of LPNs worked 30 or more hours per week. In the older subset (56-60), 88% of RNs and 67% of LPNs worked 30 or more hours per week. The majority of respondents in all categories worked 40 or more hours/week.
- In the younger subset of RN respondents (51-55) in any setting, at least 80% who worked fewer than 30 hours per week reported they did so by personal choice. The highest percent of those who worked 40 or more hours per week did so because it was required. This pattern was consistent in the older age subset (56-60).
- In the younger subset of LPN respondents (51-55) in any setting, 67% of those who worked fewer than 10 hours per week reported that job availability had the greatest influence on their work hours. In the older subset (56-60), the majority of respondents reported that they did so by personal choice, regardless of the number of hours worked.
- Regardless of work setting, the majority of all RNs (94% of those aged 51-55 and 90% of those aged 56-60) intend to remain employed in nursing over the next three years, with 72% of the combined 51-60 years old age cohort planning to work full-time in nursing.

- Regardless of work setting, the majority of all LPNs (95% of those aged 51-55 and 92% of those aged 56-60) intend to remain employed in nursing over the next three years, with 74% of the combined 51-60 years old age cohort planning to work full-time in nursing.
- Of those RNs employed in nursing, whether in direct or non-direct patient care, salary was cited as the most important aspect of the work environment that would retain them in nursing. Control of schedule and congenial work group were reported as the second and third most important aspects for those RNs providing direct patient care. RNs in the older age subset (56-60) who were providing non-direct patient care indicated flexibility in the work environment and care delivery model as the second most important aspect of the work environment following salary.
- Both age subsets (51-55 and 56-60) of those RNs not presently employed in nursing cited control of schedule as the most important aspect of work environment that would attract them to return to nursing. The differences between the second and third most important aspects in the work environment were negligible, with realistic patient work load and involvement in decisions affecting patient care rising to the top.
- Of those LPNs employed in nursing (direct or non-direct patient care), salary was cited as the most important aspect of the work environment that would retain them in nursing. Control of schedule was reported as the second most important aspect for LPNs providing direct and non-direct patient care. For LPNs aged 56-60 years of age providing non-direct patient care, control of schedule, salary and flexibility in the work environment/care delivery model tied for the second most important aspect of the work environment. Salary was identified as both the first and second most important aspects of work environment for 56-60 year old LPNs providing non-direct patient care.
- Of those LPNs not presently employed in nursing, the 51-55 year old subset identified salary as the most important aspect while the older cohort (56-60) reported control of schedule as most important. LPNs not employed in nursing cited decreased documentation and paperwork as the second most important aspect to re-enter a career in nursing. Congenial work group and control of schedule were third most important to the younger age cohort (51-55) while the 56-60 year old subset cited realistic patient work load as the third most important aspect of work environment.

ACTION PLAN

Findings from this survey will be shared with the center's advisory committee, stakeholders, and the general public via its website at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/workforce_planning.asp.

In the summer of 2004, the center will develop a white paper and related issue brief, building upon the findings of this survey. Recommendations for action will be incorporated to guide the state of Iowa in retaining this valuable and experienced cohort of its nursing workforce.

The Center for Health Workforce Planning values and invites the input of nurses in every setting and every Iowa community. Comments may be directed to Eileen Gloor at egloor@idph.state.ia.us or Jeneane Moody at jmoody@idph.state.ia.us.