



Examining the U.S. Nursing Shortage, Solutions, and Opportunities

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Nursing is one of the most in-demand professions in the United States today. People are living longer and chronic ailments are transforming the health care landscape.

In this ebook, we're examining why nurses are in demand and the efforts being made to attract candidates to this rewarding field. You'll also learn about the vast array of opportunities available to current and aspiring nurses.



Chapter 1: Nursing Shortage Statistics

The U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration [projects](#) that by 2030, seven states will have a shortage of registered nurses, and 33 states will experience a shortage of licensed practical/vocational nurses. Many factors contribute to this growing trend, including:

An Aging Population

An aging baby boomer population drives an increased need for health care services, including those from nurses. As of July 1, 2016, there were 74 million baby boomers in the U.S., according to the [Census Bureau](#). As the baby boomers age and have increased life expectancies, the need for service providers also increases.

Growing Rates of Chronic Conditions

Chronic diseases and conditions are on the rise. The World Health Organization [predicts](#) chronic disease prevalence will increase by 57% by 2020. Risk factors like poor diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, hypertension, and environmental parameters are all contributing to an increased rate of chronic conditions like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and stroke. The rise of chronic conditions increases the need for health care services.

Insurance Reform

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), enacted in 2010, requires certain private health plans to cover some recommended preventive services, such as well-woman visits. The ACA also increased the number of individuals who obtained health insurance, with nearly [20 million people signing up for insurance](#) through the ACA. The Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 established Medicare coverage for preventive services as well, which makes more types of health care available to more patients.

Nurses Nearing Retirement...

The [American Association of Colleges of Nursing reports](#) more than 55% of registered nurses are 50 years old or older. More than 1 million registered nurses will be eligible for retirement within the next 15 years.

...Coupled With a Diminished Pipeline of New Nurses

Unfortunately, while there are many people who aspire to be nurses to meet the growing demand, there is currently a lack of educators available. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing's report, [2016-2017 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing](#), found more than 64,000 qualified applicants were turned away from nursing schools in 2016 due to a lack of nursing faculty to educate them.

There are many proposals to help combat the nursing shortage, such as the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's proposal](#) to create efforts at improving academic pathways for nurse education. This effort and others are discussed in the next chapter.

More than 1 million registered nurses will be eligible for retirement within the next 15 years.

Source: [American Association of Colleges of Nursing](#)

Chapter 2: Nursing Shortage Solutions

Numerous health care and nursing advocates are working to create better opportunities for nursing students, push for better working conditions, and increase awareness of nursing recruiting efforts. Here are some of the ways the nursing shortage is being addressed throughout the country.

Financial Assistance and More Faculty for Nursing Students

- Health care providers can foster the next generation of nurses by offering tuition reimbursement plans for students earning a nursing degree. Some providers already partner with nursing schools to reimburse tuition when a student agrees to work for a particular health care system upon graduation.
- In addition to tuition reimbursement programs, nursing students may find access to a variety of [loan forgiveness programs](#). Each state has various opportunities.
- To accommodate more nursing students, more instructors are needed. There are several statewide initiatives designed to increase the number of nursing faculty. For example, the [Nurses for Wisconsin Initiative](#) provided fellowships and loan forgiveness for future nurse faculty, and the Minnesota VA Health Care System [committed \\$5.3 million](#) to help fund additional nursing faculty in Minnesota.

Work Toward Policy Change

A lack of nurses can lead to long work hours, high demands, and increased turnover due to stress and other factors, which negatively impacts the entire health care industry. Organizations like the American Nurses Association work to enact positive change for nurses on federal and local levels through bipartisan legislation advocacy.

Nurses can get involved with nursing associations on national and state levels to help gain support to pass positive legislation for nurses. Here is a [list of nursing specialties](#) and related professional associations you may consider joining.

Increased Emphasis on Employee Engagement

Job satisfaction for nurses has room to improve. According to [this report](#) from AMN Healthcare, while 85% of nurses are satisfied with choosing a nursing career, only 63% are satisfied with their current jobs.

Some ways employers can improve job satisfaction, work/life balance, and retention of nurses include:

- Offer flexible schedules and shift selection.
- Discover nurse strengths and empower them to use those in their roles.
- Provide benefits including vacations.
- Reduce overtime by making it an exception, not the norm.
- Support nurses with recognition and rewards.
- Provide nurses with paths for career growth.
- Offer tuition reimbursement for continued education.
- Invest in manager and supervisor training to improve management-nurse relationships.

Health care organizations should include nurses in strategy development for a more engaged work culture and create an environment that is receptive to feedback from nurses.

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63%

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Expansion of Nursing Recruitment

Health care providers in need of more nurse talent should consider prioritizing recruitment diversity. Here are some aspects to consider:

- **Recruit more men.** While the percentage of men working as nurses has [tripled since 1970](#), only about 10% of the nursing industry today is male, [Nurse.org reports](#). Organizations have the opportunity to be more proactive about including men in their recruitment efforts.
- **Look overseas and out of state.** Nurses are increasingly migrating from developing countries to industrialized ones, according to the [International Journal of Nursing Sciences](#). This gives the U.S. tremendous opportunity in diverse recruiting efforts.
- **Actively recruit from physically diverse backgrounds.** American Nurse Today [reports](#) that nurses with disabilities often leave the nursing profession because they feel they have been discriminated against, even though the Americans with Disabilities Act protects employees with disabilities from discrimination. Health care organizations can promote diversity and inclusion in recruiting efforts to attract candidates who may have left unsatisfactory work environments or who are looking for a more inclusive setting.

There are likely many eager candidates in search of a great professional opportunity who can successfully be recruited. Health care providers can improve recruiting efforts to look for diverse talent on a global scale.

The opportunities for nurses abound, and are even greater when the efforts to support them are aligned.



Only about 10% of the nursing industry today is male.

Source: [Nurse.org](#)



Chapter 3: Opportunities for Nurses

As health care trends evolve, so does nursing. Nurses today can enjoy more career flexibility because positions are growing across environments, allowing for mobility and career growth.

Compared to other professions in the U.S., the need for [registered nurses](#) and [nurse practitioners](#) is growing at a much-faster-than-average pace. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports:

- 438,100 new registered nursing jobs are expected to be added between 2016 and 2026, a growth rate of 15%, which is much faster than average.¹
- 64,200 new jobs for advanced practice nursing roles are expected to be added between 2016 and 2026, a growth rate of 31%, which is also much faster than average.

The American Nurses Association reports by 2022, [there will be more registered nurse jobs available than open positions in any other profession](#). That's good news for nursing students or current professionals who are thinking about a career change to nursing. An increased demand for nursing specialties, the need for more community-based and preventive care, an aging population, and aging nurses are all driving the demand for new talent.

The more education a nurse pursues, the more credentials they can earn. This can also lead to increased opportunities for career growth. Some of the credentials a nurse can earn include:

- **Registered Nurse (RN).** An associate's degree is one path toward becoming an RN. Registered nurses may work in ambulatory care, community health, general nursing, medical surgical nursing, pain management nursing, and other roles.
- **Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN).** An APRN has earned a Master of Science in Nursing and may specialize as a family nurse practitioner, adult-gerontology nurse practitioner, adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner, nurse executive, or nurse educator. APRNs may work in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, and public health settings.
- **Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP).** This degree could lead to clinical and leadership positions and postsecondary faculty roles.

Nurses who aspire to hold leadership positions, create policy change, educate others, or serve in advanced practices roles may benefit from continued education.

Help Combat the Nursing Shortage—Study With Purdue Global

Nursing can be a rewarding career. Nurses are instrumental in helping people take care of their health and they can touch people's lives when they are at their most vulnerable.

Nursing is in high regard and demand around the world. The nursing industry is poised to see positive developments in the future, as populations across health care, education, and other industries unite to enact change.

If you are considering becoming a nurse or want to advance in your nursing career, learn more about the flexible [online nursing programs](#) offered by Purdue University Global.² Our convenient, online degree programs enable you to study on your schedule, so you can continue to work and meet family obligations. [Request more information](#) to learn how Purdue Global can help you pursue your professional and career goals.



HOW WILL YOU MAKE AN IMPACT WITH A NURSING CAREER?

Important Information: Please Read

1 National long-term projections may not reflect local and/or short-term economic or job conditions, and do not guarantee actual job growth.

2 Purdue Global cannot guarantee employment or career advancement. Certain positions/industries may require further certification and/or licensing by individual states. Purdue Global nursing programs were not designed to meet any specific state's requirements for licensure or certification, and Purdue Global makes no representations or warranties as to whether the degree or any individual courses meet such requirements.

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