



2026

Nurse Salary and Work-Life Report

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INTRODUCTION

Navigating change across innovation, work, and well-being

As healthcare advances and expands, nurses remain at the forefront — constantly sustaining and elevating the system they support.

And the nursing profession continues to adapt with resilience in a time defined by rapid technological progress, shifting workforce expectations, and unprecedented organizational challenges.

The Nurse.com *2026 Nurse Salary and Work-Life Report* helps to illuminate some of these realities and how they're shaping nurses' professional lives, including workplace safety, compensation, job satisfaction, and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI).

This year's report captures the voices and experiences of more than 500 nurses nationwide across license types, including registered nurses (RNs), advanced practice registered nurses/advanced registered nurse practitioners (APRNs/ARNPs), and licensed practical nurses/licensed vocational nurses (LPNs/LVNs). Their feedback highlights the profession's priorities, concerns, and ambitions in a healthcare system that is constantly reshaping itself.

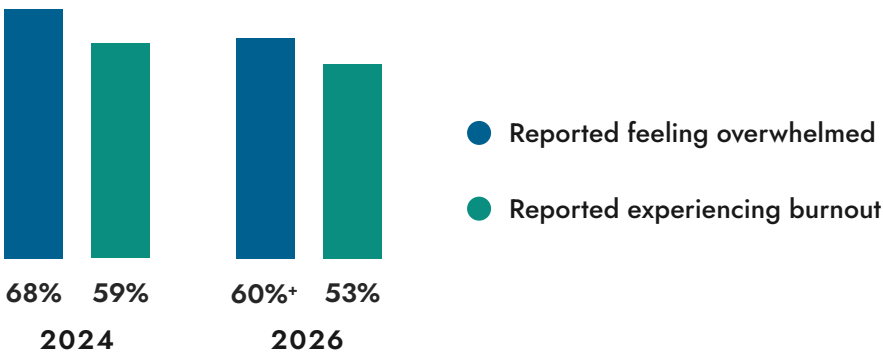
Healthcare innovation never ceases its momentum, even though widespread AI adoption has yet to be fully realized. Our findings show that only 27% of respondents work in organizations investing in AI tools, reflecting a growing — though still developing — adoption curve.

At the same time, nurses identified specific areas where AI could reduce burden, including streamlining administrative tasks and improving continuing education, highlighting potential openness to innovations that enhance efficiency and patient safety.

These trends mirror findings from a survey by McKinsey and the American Nurses Foundation, which reported that 69% of nurses believed that AI has the potential to improve clinical education, and 67% believed it can streamline administrative tasks and improve productivity.¹

Yet even as innovation accelerates, nurses still shoulder longstanding challenges. Burnout remains pervasive. In our 2024 report, 68% of nurses felt overwhelmed in the past two years, and 59% experienced burnout. Our current findings echo these concerns, with just over 60% of nurses feeling overwhelmed and 53% of them experiencing burnout.

BURNOUT
Remains Pervasive



Workplace violence also continues to be a pressing issue. Our survey shows similar trends as our 2024 report, with high percentages of nurses reporting verbal abuse and intimidation by a patient or a patient's family member — experiences that directly influence job satisfaction and retention.

Despite these challenges, compensation remains an influential factor in nurses' decisions to stay, advance, or even leave the profession. Our survey found that salaries slightly increased for most nursing professionals, whereas some salaries stayed the same. While a higher percentage of nurses reported being satisfied with their salary than in 2024, almost half of respondents shared that dissatisfaction with salaries or wage policies affected their overall well-being.

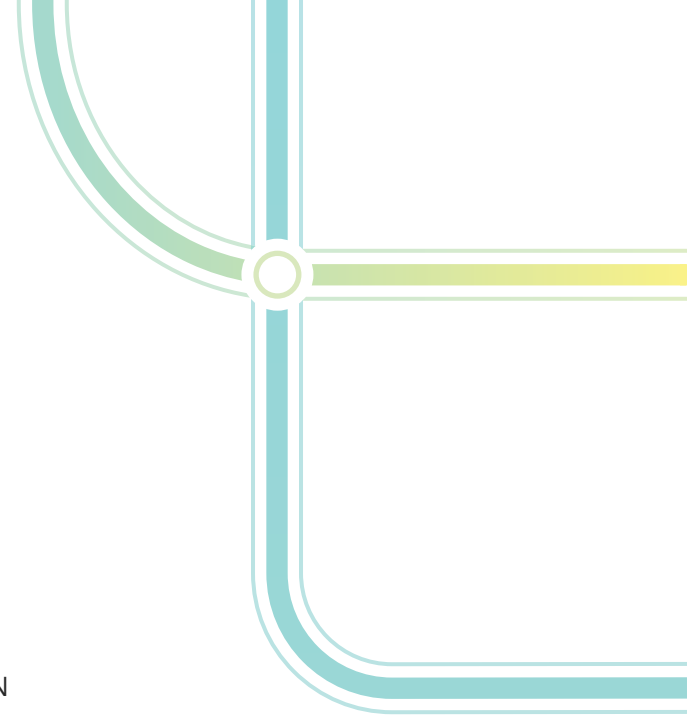
Amid rapid shifts in care delivery and workforce needs, nurses remain essential in identifying what supports — and what strains — the profession.

How nurses can use this report to support their careers

The Nurse.com *2026 Nurse Salary and Work-Life Report* offers data-driven insights to help you assess opportunities, plan next steps, and better participate in workplace discussions. You can use the findings to:

- Consider salary alongside benefits, workplace safety, and mental health factors to make more informed comparisons across roles and settings.
- Learn how education, certification, advanced practice, and role changes are associated with higher pay and job satisfaction.
- Understand nurses' perspectives on AI to learn how organizations are using these tools to support clinical practice and reduce administrative burden.
- Inform conversations with leadership about workplace improvements in areas like benefit gaps, workplace violence, and employer support for continuing education.

Let's start with the **key findings**, then explore the **detailed data** shared by nurses.



Key findings

1. RN salaries are steadily increasing, and so is salary satisfaction.

The median annual salary across all nurses surveyed was \$80,000, which is a \$7,000 increase from the 2024 report. RN salaries followed this pattern with a median annual salary of \$85,000, a 6% increase from 2024.

In terms of salary satisfaction, 47% of RNs reported being satisfied with their current salary, a 15% increase from our previous report. Despite this progress, 49% of all nurses still reported that dissatisfaction with salary or wage increase policies negatively affects their mental health and well-being.

2. Nurses want career growth, and employer support is rising to meet that need.

Career advancement remains a priority. Many nurses are actively pursuing professional growth opportunities, with 36% of nurses surveyed planning to pursue a degree and nearly half (46%) planning to pursue certification. Employer support is keeping pace, where 62% of nurses said they receive tuition reimbursement from their employer, and over half (56%) receive reimbursed or paid continuing education.

However, despite nearly half (45%) of LPNs/LVNs planning to pursue additional education or training, they remain the least likely to receive financial support from their employer. Male nurses (58%) were also more likely than female nurses (45%) to pursue certification.

3. As **AI gains momentum**, many nurses feel **unprepared or uncertain**.

Across all license types, only 27% of nurses reported that their organization has invested in AI tools. And 61% of all respondents expressed heightened awareness of AI in healthcare, but they had limited knowledge about its use. Millennial and Generation Z nurses reported the highest use of AI in their roles, with 60% of these nurses using AI tools daily.

While most nurses think AI could be most helpful in improving continuing education (54%) and streamlining administrative tasks (53%), many, especially RNs, shared concerns around AI making patient care feel less personal (61%) and potentially creating problems around patient data privacy and safety (54%).

4. Workplace **violence still exists**, but it isn't as common for some nurses.

While workplace violence continues to be a concern for many nurses, it isn't as present for others. More than half of nurses (54%) shared that they weren't aware of instances of workplace violence at their workplace. Yet, 83% of nurses reported being subjected to verbal abuse by patients or patients' family members.

These numbers were highest among nurses in acute care settings (89%) and among female nurses (83%), who were also more likely to report intimidation from colleagues compared to male nurses (52% for female nurses versus 41% for males).

5. Burnout remains high, with many nurses feeling overwhelmed and unsupported.

Most nurses in our survey reported experiencing burnout (53%) and feeling overwhelmed (62%) in the past two years. In addition to wage dissatisfaction, nurses across license types described a lack of responsive leadership, unmanageable nurse-to-patient ratios, and documentation workload among some of the top aspects negatively affecting their mental health and well-being.

This strain was more evident within certain racial and ethnic groups, where 67% of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish nurses reported feeling overwhelmed, and 59% of Asian nurses reported experiencing burnout.

Research methodology

540
nurse respondents

4.2%
margin of error

We surveyed nurses at all levels and across settings to gather information on compensation, benefits, education, work environment, employment characteristics, professional perspectives, and mental health and well-being. To better explore issues facing today's nurses, we asked questions related to employment opportunities and AI, which were not included in our previous survey.

The survey questions were developed by nurses and other industry experts at Nurse.com and our parent company, Relias. As an incentive for participation, respondents could opt in to a random drawing to win one of five \$150 Amazon gift cards.

In total, 540 qualified nurse respondents (margin of error 4.2%) successfully completed the Nurse.com survey, which was fielded from September 17 to October 6, 2025.

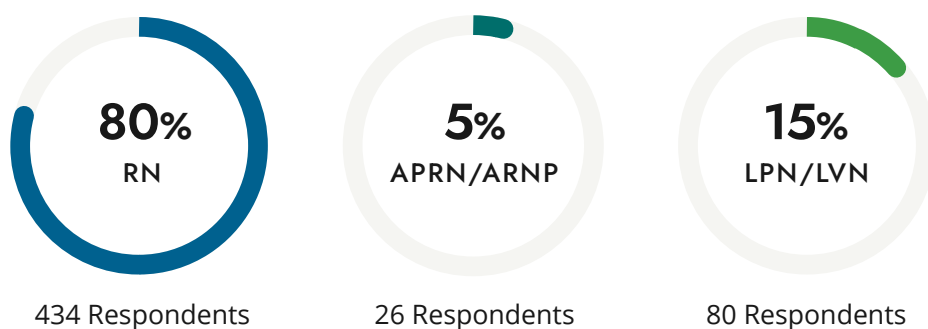
Demographics

As the nursing profession evolves,
so does the makeup of the workforce.

License type and setting

Most nurses surveyed were RNs, followed by LPNs/LVNs, then APRNs/ARNPs, reflecting a similar structure of the current nursing workforce across care settings.²

Breakdown by License Type



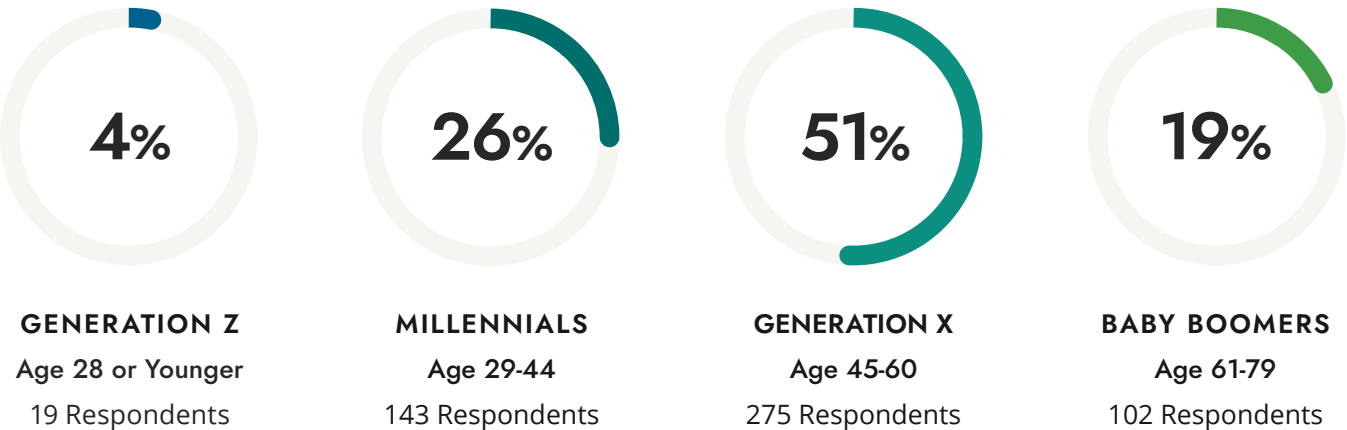
TAKEAWAYS

- Similar to 2024, the highest percentage of respondents (across all license types) worked in acute care hospitals or inpatient settings (34%), which was followed by ambulatory and outpatient settings (19%) and long-term care (11%).
- Most RNs were employed in either hospitals or ambulatory care settings (57%), coinciding with 2024 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).³
- Among LPNs/LVNs, 25% reported working in long-term care, followed by 16% in skilled nursing and 15% in home health, which also closely corresponds to BLS data.⁴
- This sample showed that the highest number of APRNs/ARNPs reported they were nurse practitioners (85%), with smaller percentages representing clinical nurse specialists (12%) and certified registered nurse anesthetists (4%).

Age and generation

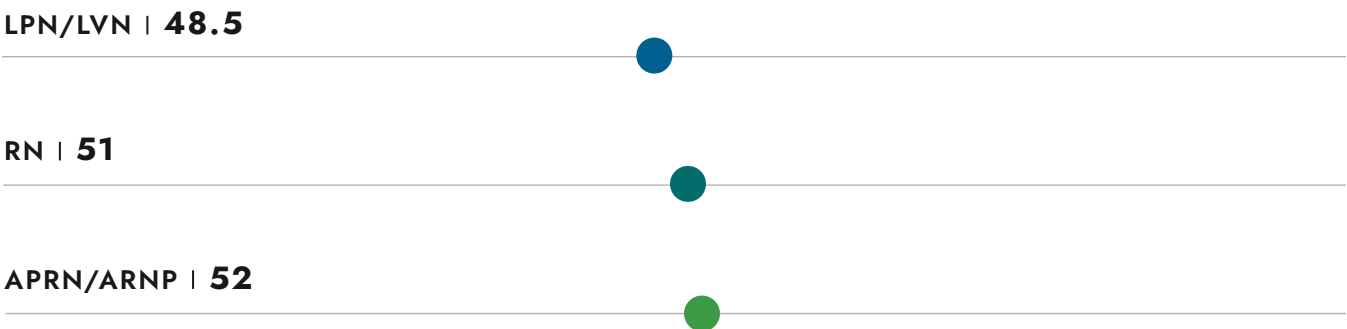
Of over 500 respondents, the median age of nurses in this survey was 51, which grew by a few years compared to our 2024 data. This increase aligns with the average age cited in the 2024 National Nursing Workforce Study by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN).⁵

Breakdown by Generation



Note: Generational definitions are based on data from the Pew Research Center.⁶ There was one respondent from the Silent Generation (0.1%).

Median Age by License Type

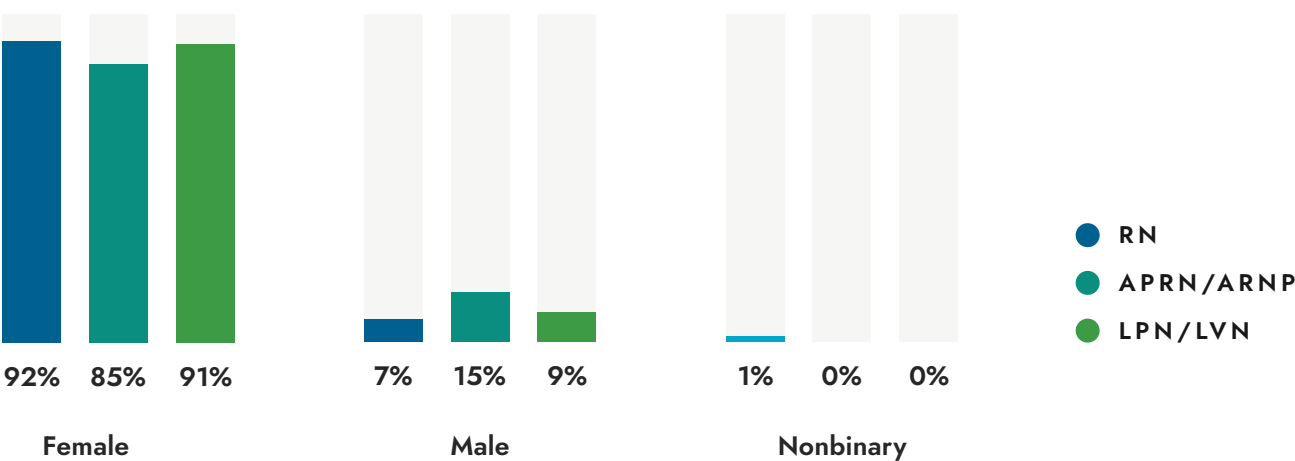


Gender

Almost three-quarters (73%) of healthcare occupations are held by female workers, according to the American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau.⁷

Our sample echoed this finding. The highest percentage of all nurses in the survey identified as female (91%), followed by 7% as male and 1% as nonbinary (1% of respondents preferred not to answer).

Gender Identification by License Type



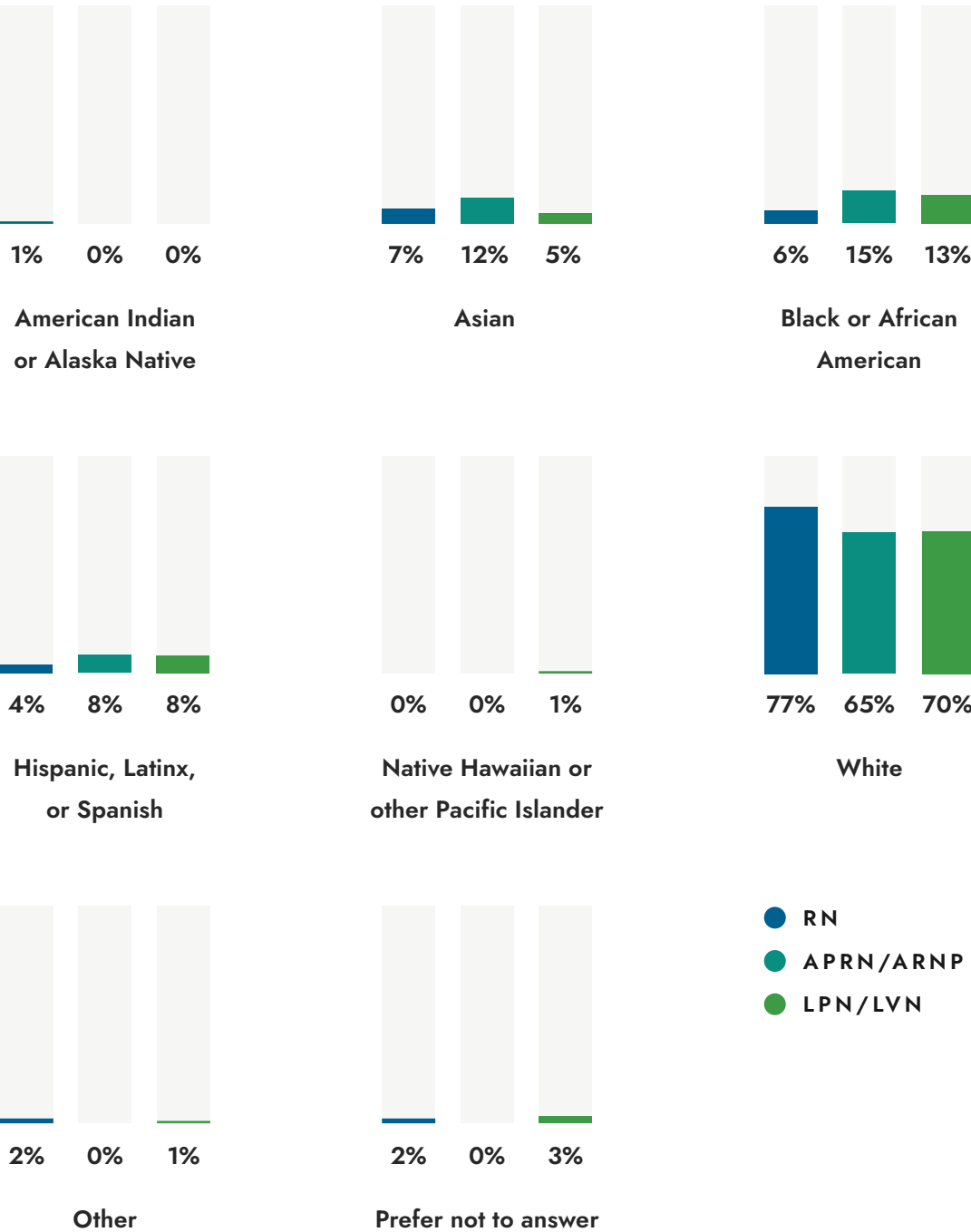
TAKEAWAYS

- There was a slight increase in the percentages of female RNs and APRNs/ARNPs from 2024 (89% for RNs and 83% for APRNs/ARNPs).
- The number of male LPNs/LVNs remains unchanged from 2024 — 9%.
- The number of male nurses in our sample sits slightly lower than the percentage (10%) found in NCSBN’s survey.⁵

Race and ethnicity

Because diversity is an important consideration in understanding nursing workforce composition, participants were asked to identify their racial or ethnic heritage (or choose not to answer) and were able to mark all that applied.

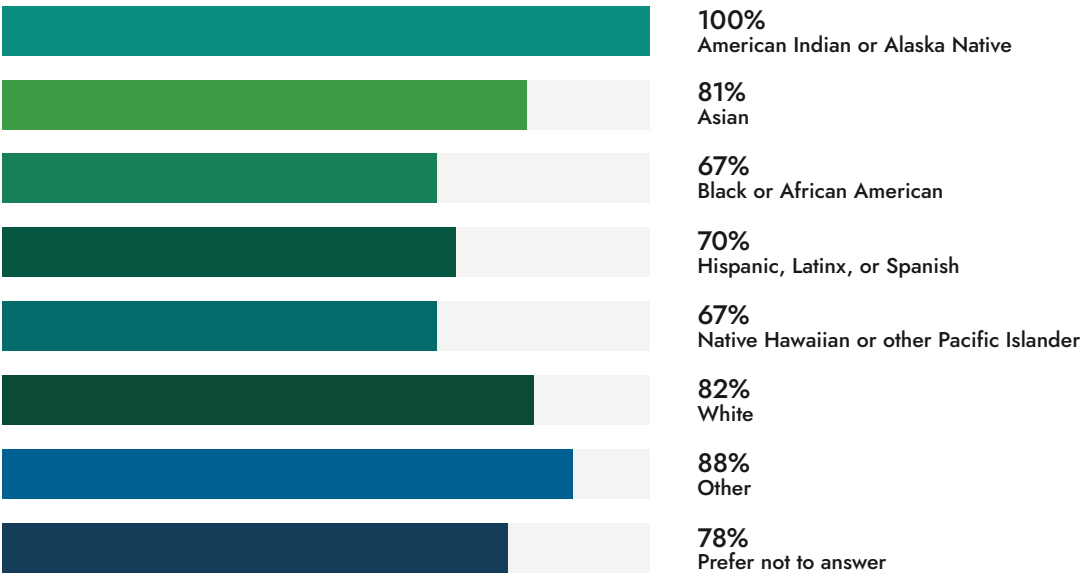
Breakdown of Race and Ethnicity by License Type



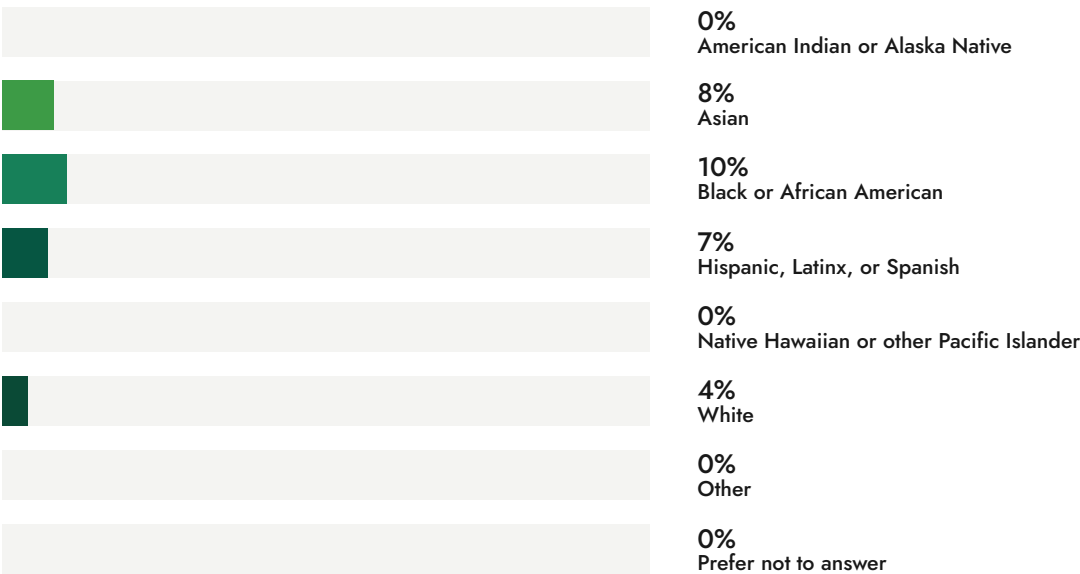
Breakdown of License Type by Race and Ethnicity

To better understand workforce representation patterns, our survey also examined how license types are distributed within each race and ethnicity category.

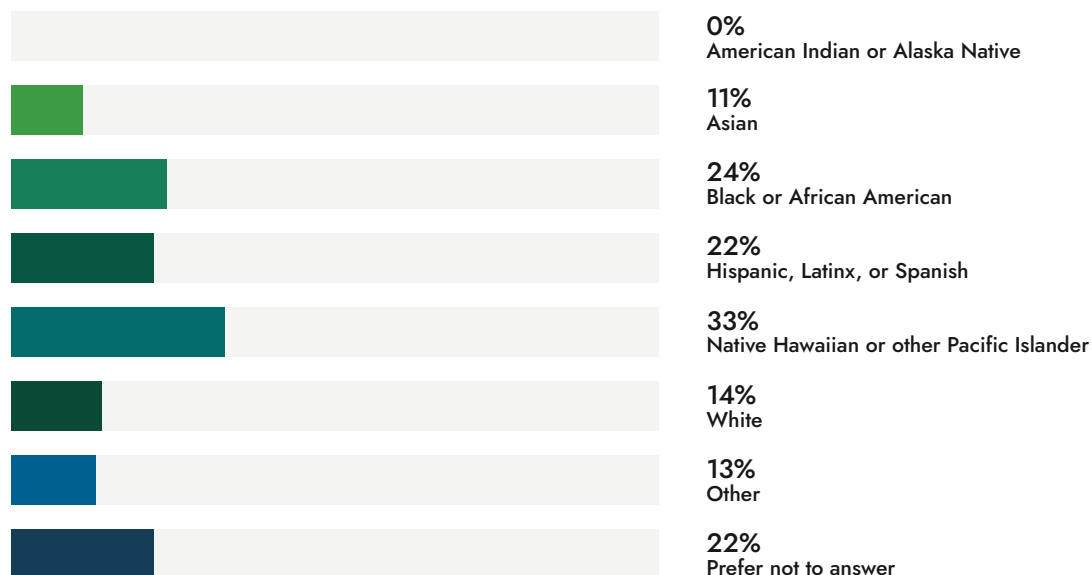
RN



APRN/ARNP



LPN/LVN



TAKEAWAYS

- LPN/LVN roles show higher representation among certain racial and ethnic groups. In our sample, 33% of nurses who identified as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander held LPN/LVN licenses, compared with 24% of Black or African American nurses and 22% of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish nurses.
- APRN/ARNP representation remains low across racial and ethnic groups. The proportion of nurses holding APRN/ARNP credentials was 10% among Black or African American nurses and 8% among Asian nurses, with all other groups at or below 10%.
- In our survey, 82% of white nurses were RNs, compared with 81% of Asian nurses and 70% of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish nurses.

Years of nursing experience

The median years of nursing experience across all respondents was 20. For LPNs/LVNs, the median was slightly lower, resting at 17 years, while the medians were 20 years for RNs and 25.5 years for APRNs/ARNPs.

In terms of current employment, respondents have been working in their current positions for a median of four years, increasing slightly from 2024 (three years).

Median Years of Experience in Nursing by Gender

FEMALE | 20



MALE | 17.5



NONBINARY | 7.5



Median Years of Experience in Nursing by Race and Ethnicity

WHITE | 23



NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER | 23



ASIAN | 17



HISPANIC, LATINX, OR SPANISH | 15



BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN | 13.5



AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE | 12



“Building and sustaining a **diverse nursing workforce** can improve patient experience and care outcomes. When healthcare organizations prioritize **inclusive hiring, retention, and advancement practices**, patients are more likely to receive care from providers they can relate to. This alone supports **clearer communication, trust, and engagement**. Embracing different backgrounds across race, ethnicity, age, experience level, and functional roles positions the nursing workforce to **adapt more effectively to evolving care models and patient needs.**”



Amanda Gibson, BSN, RN
Mid-Market Account Executive, Relias

How does my salary compare to my peers?

Salaries slightly increased for most license types. However, this sample revealed a similar pay gap between male and female nurses when compared to our 2024 data.

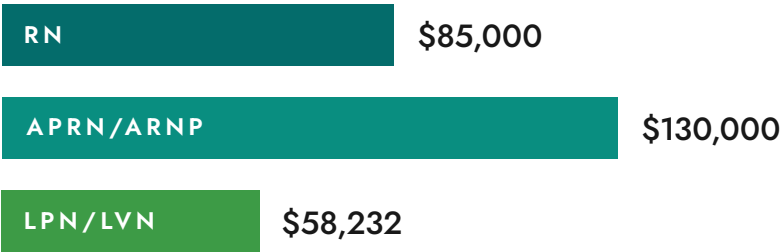
Salary by license type and education

The median annual salary across all respondents was \$80,000, which is a \$7,000 increase from 2024. APRN/ARNP salaries increased the most, by \$12,700. However, this group represented a smaller pool of respondents. RN salaries grew by \$5,000, while LPN/LVN salaries stayed relatively the same.

Median is typically a more representative indicator of salary for a population than the mean, or average, since the median is not affected by a small number of high or low outlier responses.

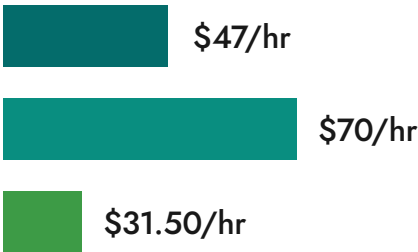
Median Salary by License Type for Primary Nursing Position

Median Annual Salary



APRN/ARNPs
earn approximately
53% MORE
than RNs.

Median Hourly Rate of Pay

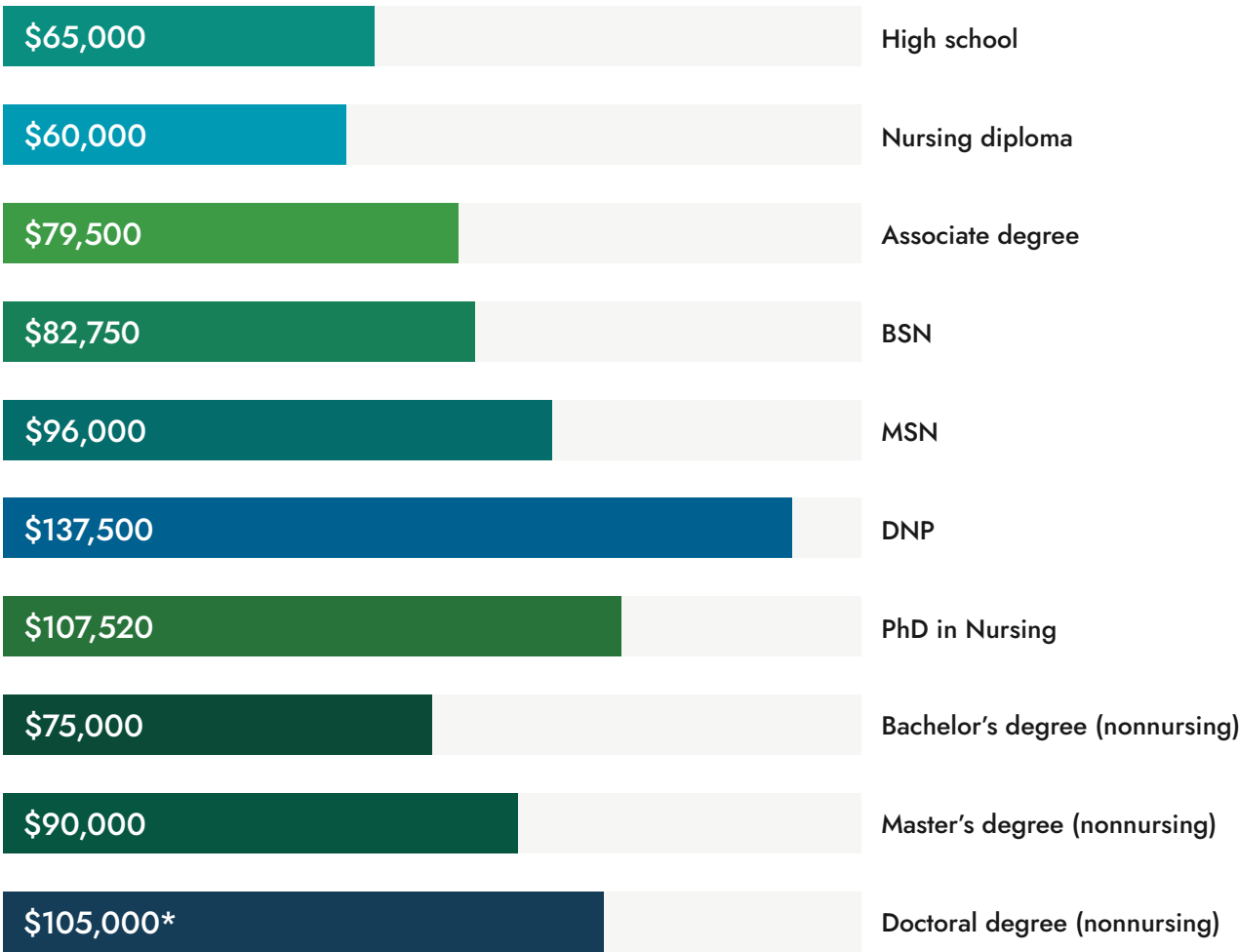


RNs earn
approximately
50% MORE
than LPN/LVNs.

TAKEAWAYS

- The results of our sample fell lower than the BLS data for 2024, which showed the median annual salary was \$93,600 for RNs and \$62,340 for LPNs/LVNs.^{8,9}
- Across all license types, nurses who had fewer than five years of experience had the lowest median annual salary at \$73,500. However, nurses with over 31 years of experience reported \$80,000 as the median annual salary.

Median Annual Salary by Education



**Only three respondents reported a full-time salary and having a non-nursing doctoral degree.*

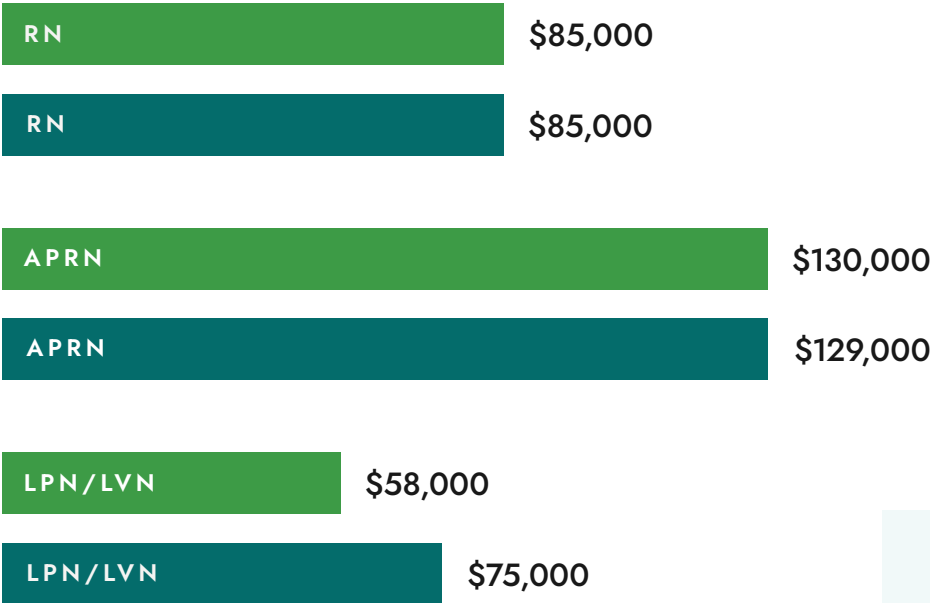
Breakdown of Salary by U.S. region

Move your cursor over
the map to see details
about salary information.



Salary by gender

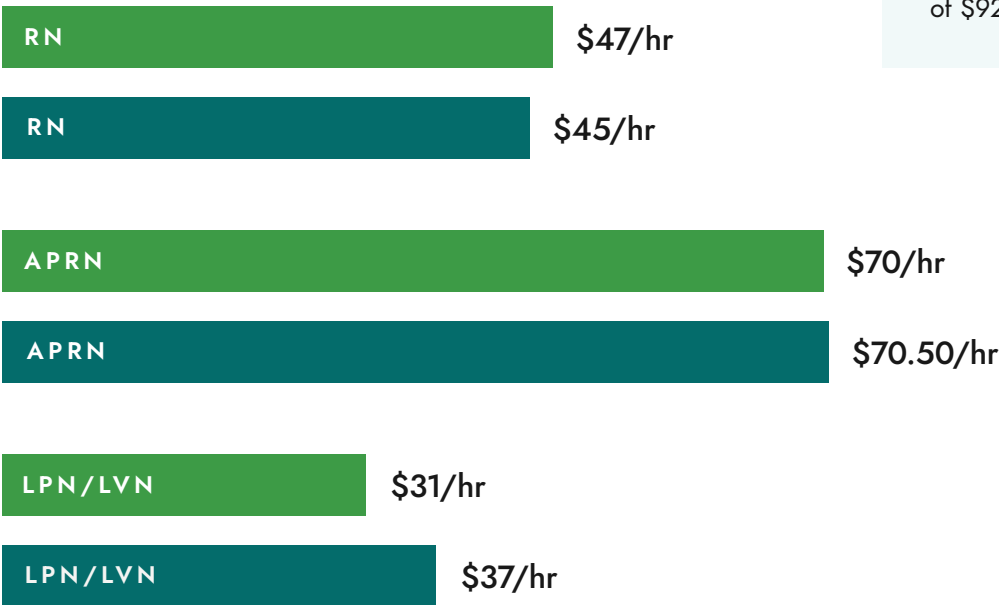
Median Annual Salary by Gender and License Type



- FEMALE
- MALE

Note: The nonbinary sample for this survey consists of four RNs with a median annual salary of \$92,250.

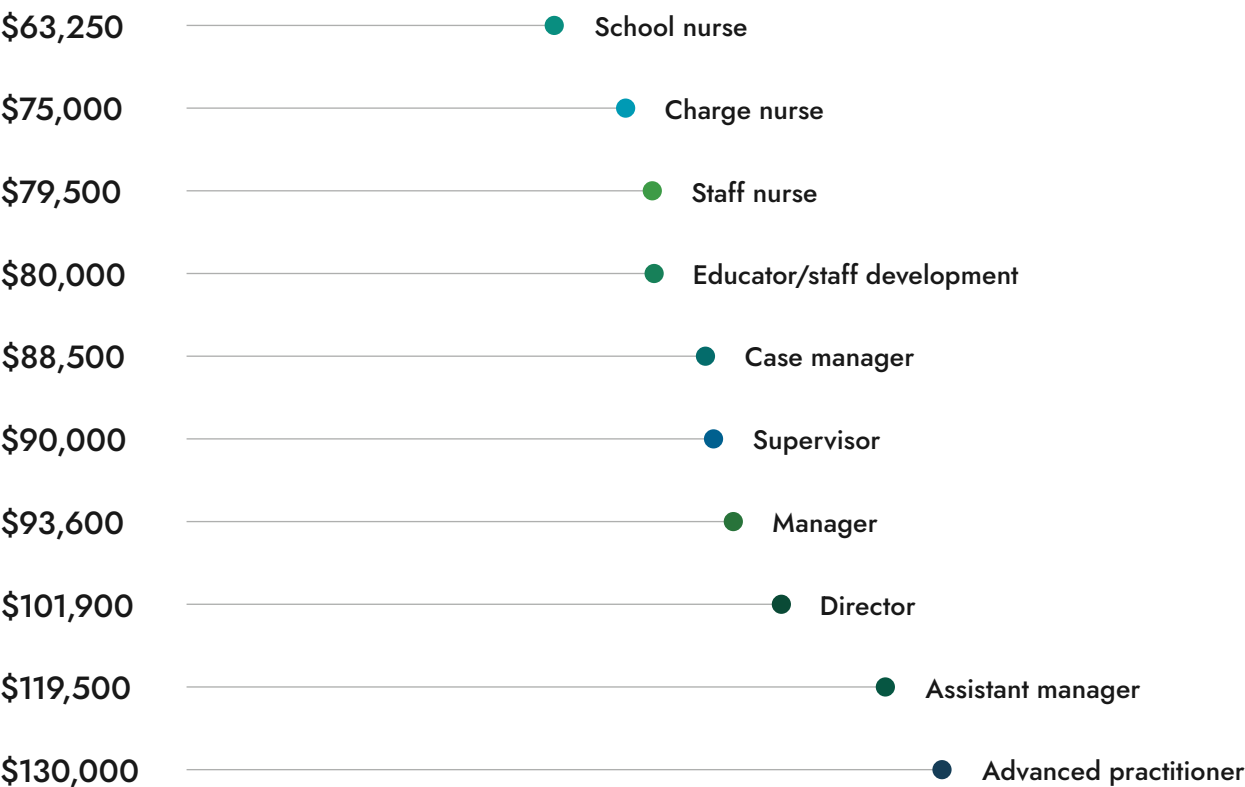
Hourly Rate of Pay



TAKEAWAYS

- Across license types, the median annual salary for male nurses was \$82,500 versus \$80,000 for female nurses, while the hourly rate was \$44 for male nurses and \$45 for female nurses.
- In our sample, the gender pay gap between male and female RNs evened out, with both groups earning the same median annual salary. However, in a change from our previous survey, female RNs now earn a higher hourly rate than male RNs.
- LPNs/LVNs showed the widest gender pay gap for both median annual salary and hourly rate, with a \$17,000 difference in annual salary and \$6 per hour between groups.
- Our salary data suggested some improvement in gender pay equity, such as among APRNs/ARNPs, where female and male nurses reported nearly identical median hourly pay (approximately \$70 per hour). However, disparities remain in other license types, signaling that further progress is still needed.

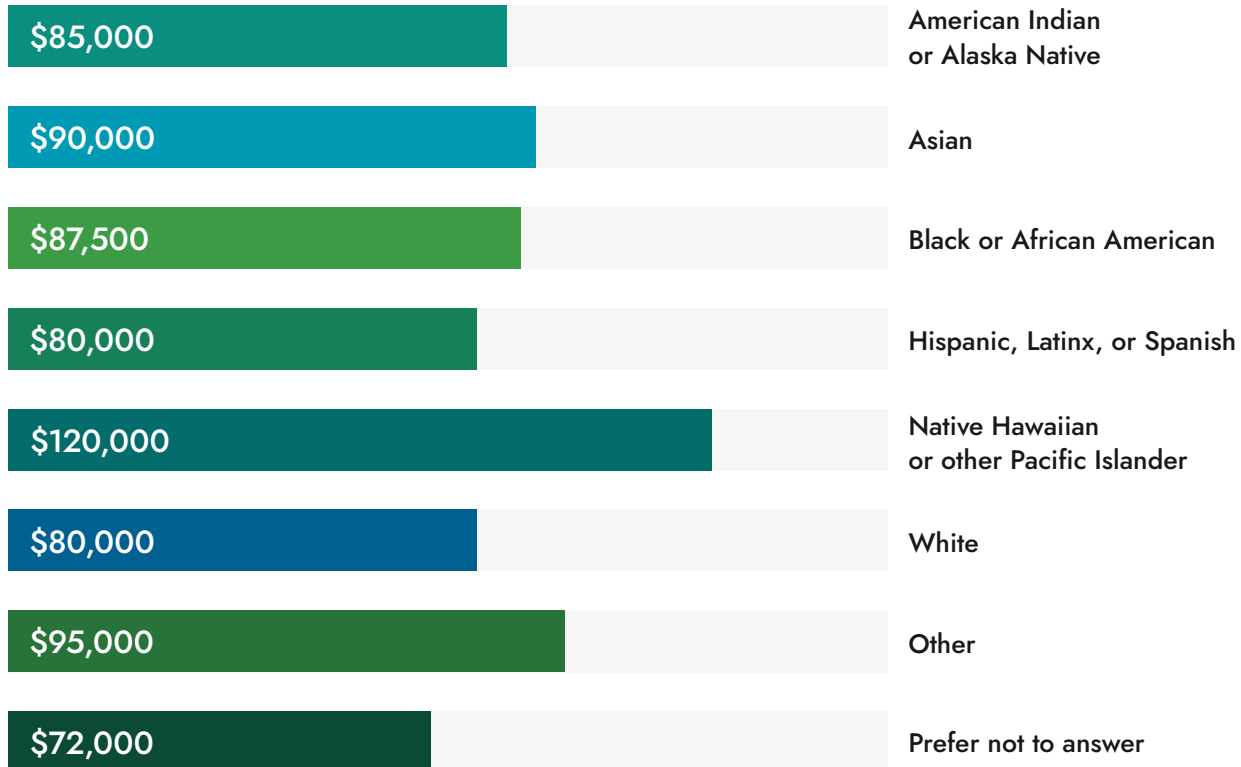
Median Annual Salary by Nursing Position



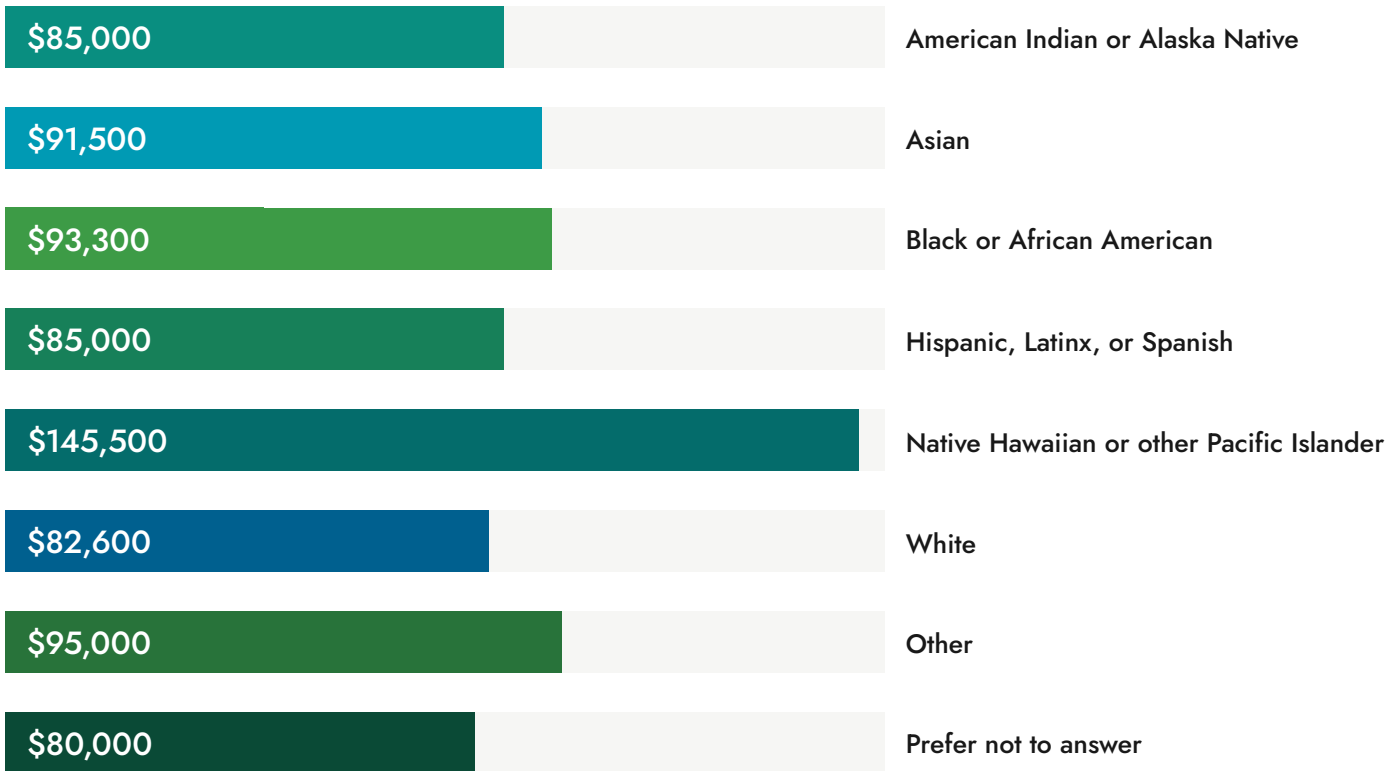
Salary by race and ethnicity

Median Annual Salary by Race and Ethnicity

MEDIAN SALARY ACROSS ALL LICENSURES



MEDIAN SALARY FOR RNS



TAKEAWAYS

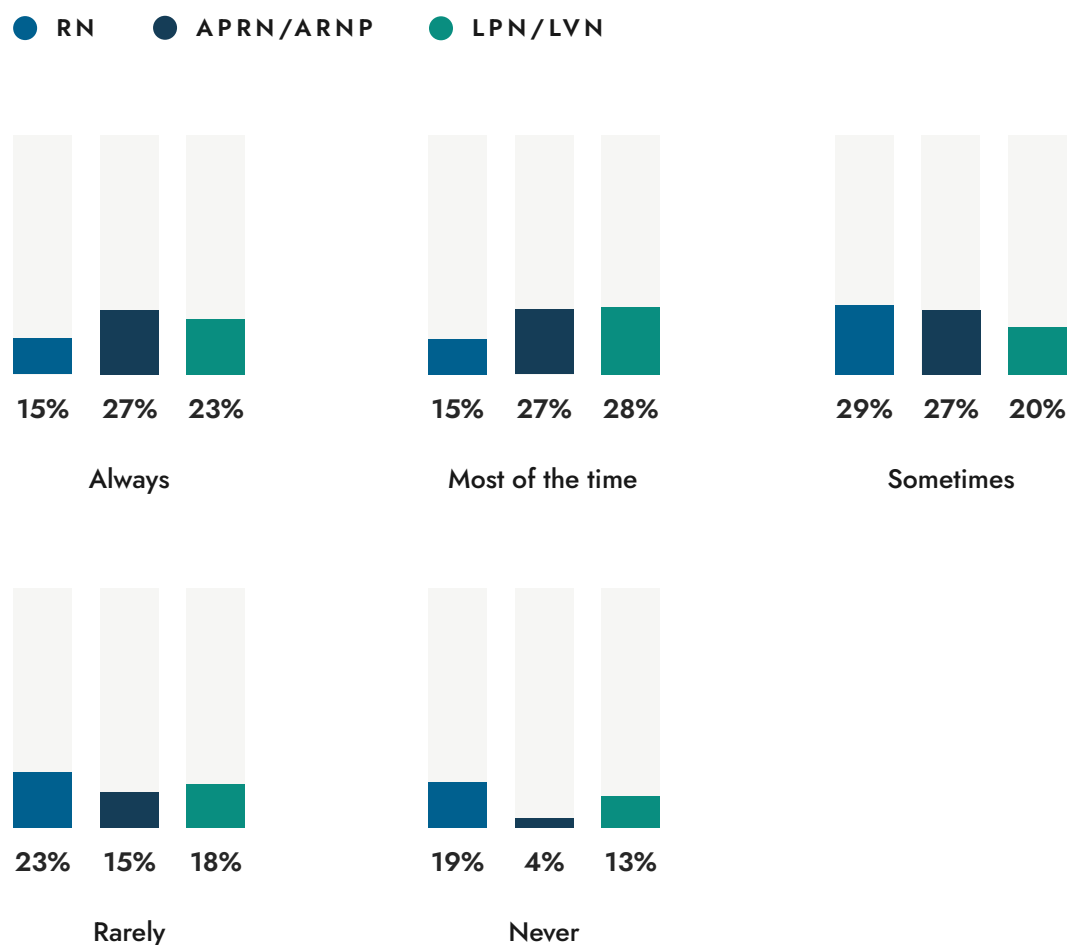
- Median salaries vary across racial and ethnic groups, with Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander nurses reporting the highest median annual salary (\$120,000), while several groups, including white, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish nurses, reported median salaries closer to \$80,000 across all licensures.
- Differences in median salary by race and ethnicity may, in part, align with how often certification results in higher pay. Among certified nurses, 37% reported a salary increase, with higher shares among Asian nurses (53%) and Black or African American nurses (44%) than among white nurses (33%).

Negotiating salary

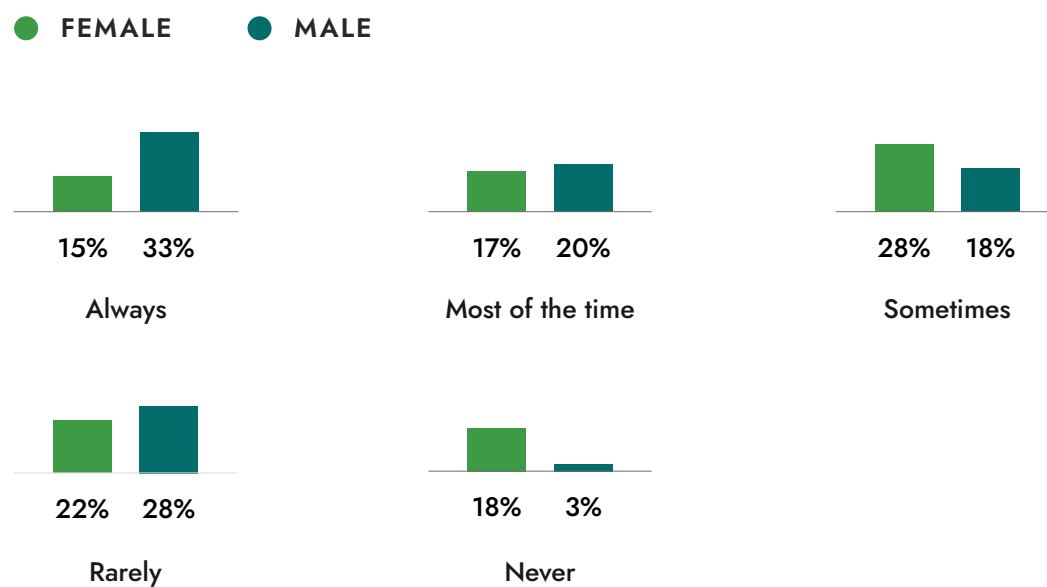
To better understand compensation discussions, we explored nurses' approaches to salary negotiations. In our survey, 34% of all nurse respondents reported that they always or most of the time negotiate their salary, while 39% said they rarely or never negotiate.

This distribution is similar to our 2024 findings, in which 36% of nurses said they negotiated frequently and 37% said they negotiated infrequently, showing minimal changes in overall negotiation behaviors year over year. These findings also illustrate how salary negotiation practices vary across licensure, gender, and generations.

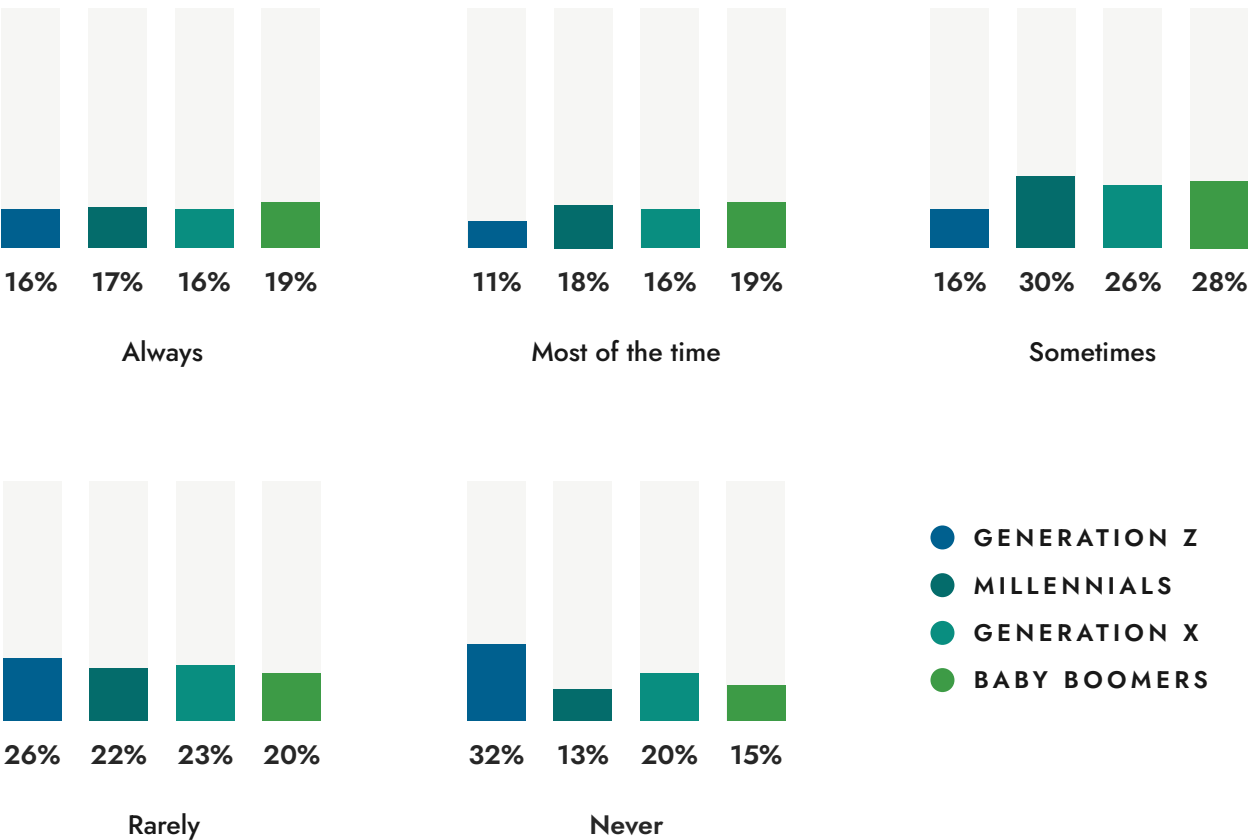
Negotiating Salary by License Type



Negotiating Salary by Gender



Negotiating Salary by Generation



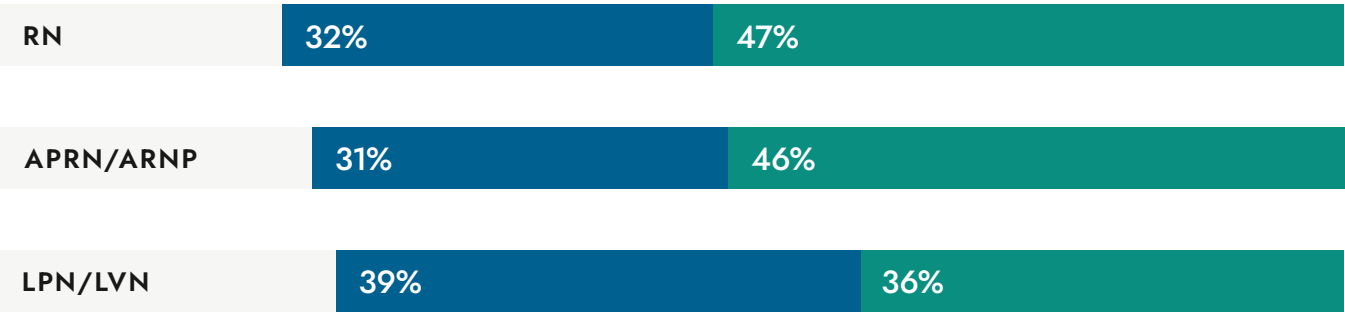
TAKEAWAYS

- Across all license types, nurses from the Millennial (36%) and Baby Boomer (37%) generations were more likely to negotiate their salaries, while 42% of Generation X and 58% of Generation Z nurses rarely or never negotiate their salaries.
- Like our 2024 data, male nurses (53%) were more likely to negotiate their salaries than their female counterparts (32%). However, in this sample, female nurses were more likely to report negotiating sometimes (28%) than male nurses (18%).
- APRNs/ARNPs more frequently negotiate their salaries than any other group (54%). However, a higher percentage of LPNs/LVNs are negotiating their salaries than before (50% in 2026 versus 38% in 2024).

Satisfaction with salary

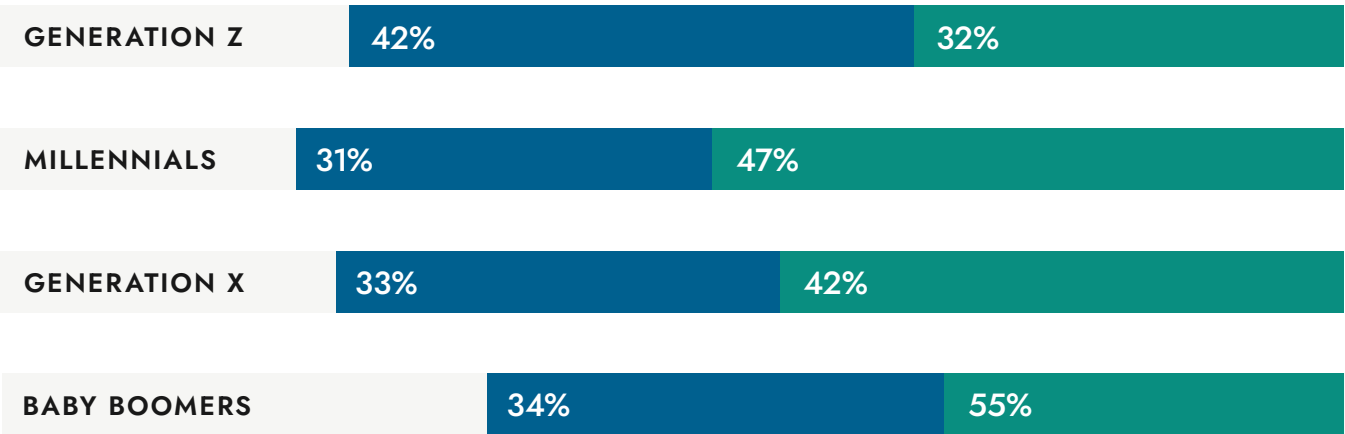
Satisfaction With Salary by License Type

● Unsatisfied or Very Unsatisfied ● Satisfied or Very Satisfied



Satisfaction With Salary by Generation

● Unsatisfied or Very Unsatisfied ● Satisfied or Very Satisfied



TAKEAWAYS

- Across all license types, 46% of nurses were very satisfied or satisfied with their salaries, an increase from 2024 (40%), while 33% were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.
- Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish nurses had the highest satisfaction with their salaries (48% satisfied or very satisfied), followed by white nurses (46%) and Black or African American nurses (45%).
- More than one-third of male respondents (35%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their salaries, compared with 33% of female nurses.
- Nurses with 11 to 15 years of experience reported the highest satisfaction (52%) with their salaries, whereas nurses with fewer than five years of experience (37%) and those with six to 10 years of experience (37%) reported the greatest dissatisfaction.

“It’s encouraging that more nurses are reporting **satisfaction with their salaries**, but many are still weighing whether their pay truly reflects the **scope, intensity, and responsibility** of the work they do each day. For nurses who feel dissatisfied, compensation often becomes part of a broader conversation about feeling **recognized, supported, and valued** within their organizations. That dynamic plays a **critical role** in whether nurses feel **motivated to stay** where they are.”

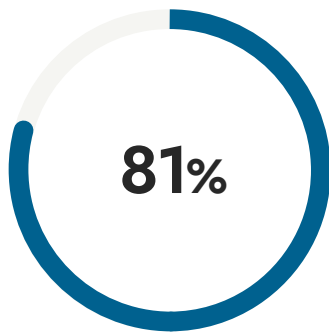


Cara Lunsford, RN, CPHON
Vice President of Healthcare Policy and Clinical Solutions, Relias

How do my benefits compare to my peers?

Consistent with our 2024 survey, nurses reported similar patterns in the benefits they receive. While most nurses receive benefits like paid time off and health coverage, many continue to desire additional benefits that support financial stability, professional development, and overall well-being.

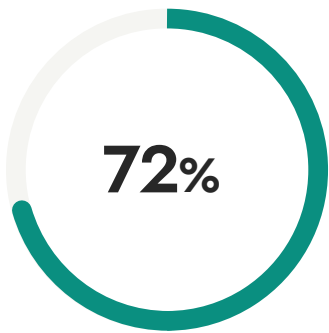
Top Received Benefits



PAID TIME OFF



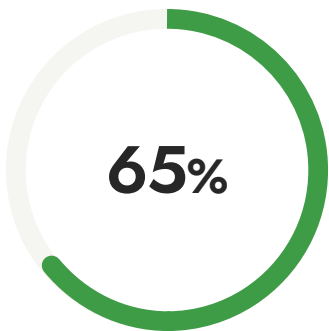
401(K)



MEDICAL

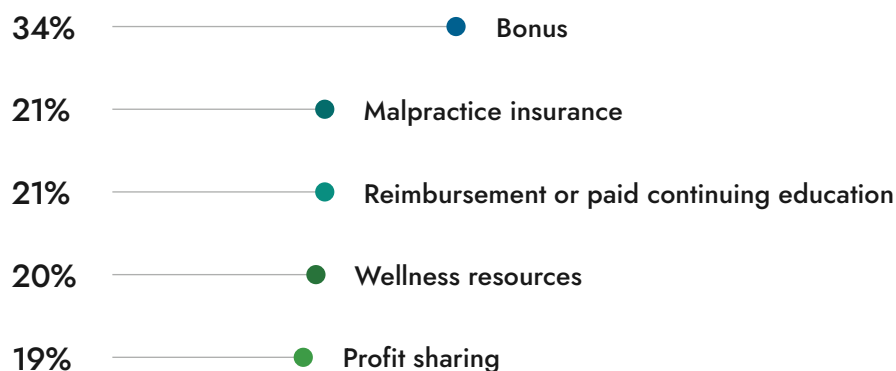


DENTAL



LIFE INSURANCE

Top Desired Benefits



TAKEAWAYS

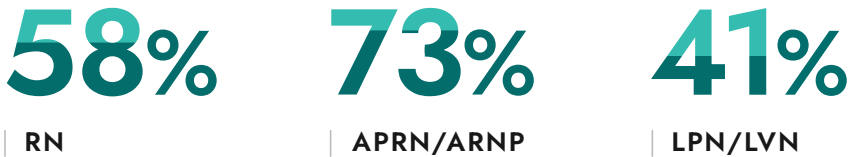
- Bonuses remain a top desired benefit and were relatively consistent among most racial and ethnic groups. Close to half (40%) of American Indian and Alaska Native nurses rated bonuses as a benefit they'd like to receive from their employers, followed by white nurses (35%) and Black or African American nurses (33%).
- Compared with other generations, Generation Z nurses expressed greater interest in malpractice insurance and additional unpaid or family leave as a desired benefit.
- One-third of LPNs/LVNs rated reimbursement and paid continuing education as their most wanted benefit, followed by bonuses (29%) and malpractice insurance (25%), while RNs ranked bonuses first (35%), then malpractice insurance (21%) and profit sharing (20%).
- Wellness resources are more desired by female nurses (20%) than male nurses (15%), while more male nurses wish to have malpractice insurance than their female counterparts (33% versus 20%).

Reimbursed or paid educational opportunities

More than half of nurses across all license types (56%) reported having access to reimbursed or employer-paid continuing education, and 62% reported receiving tuition reimbursement.

Education Support Benefits by License Type

REIMBURSED OR PAID CONTINUING EDUCATION



TUITION REIMBURSEMENT



“Benefits like **tuition reimbursement** and **paid continuing education** are an important part of the benefits nurses receive. Covering the cost of certifications, advanced degrees, and specialized training makes it easier for nurses to **grow professionally** and shows that employers are invested in their **long-term development**.”



Mary Lynch, MSN, RN
Curriculum Designer, Relias

Technology

Technology has always impacted how care is delivered, learned, and supported — a trend that will never disappear. Yet adoption and comfort levels with some recent advancements still vary across the profession, especially where AI is concerned.

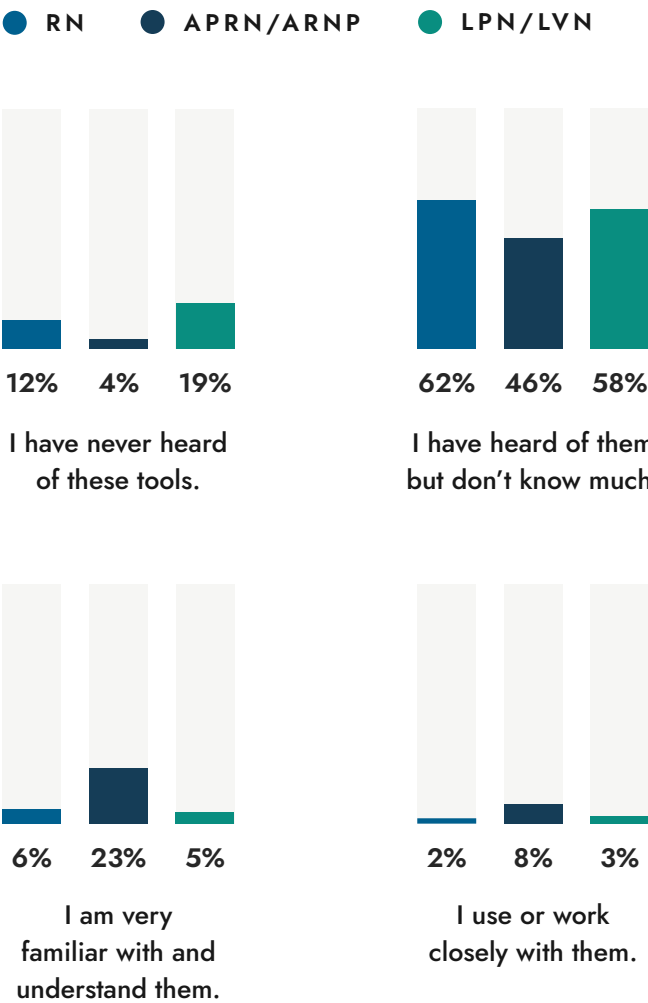
Artificial intelligence

In our sample, only 27% of all nurse respondents reported that their organization has invested in AI tools or solutions, with 73% sharing that their organization has not.

Among nurses who reported that their organization has invested in AI, usage of these tools varied.



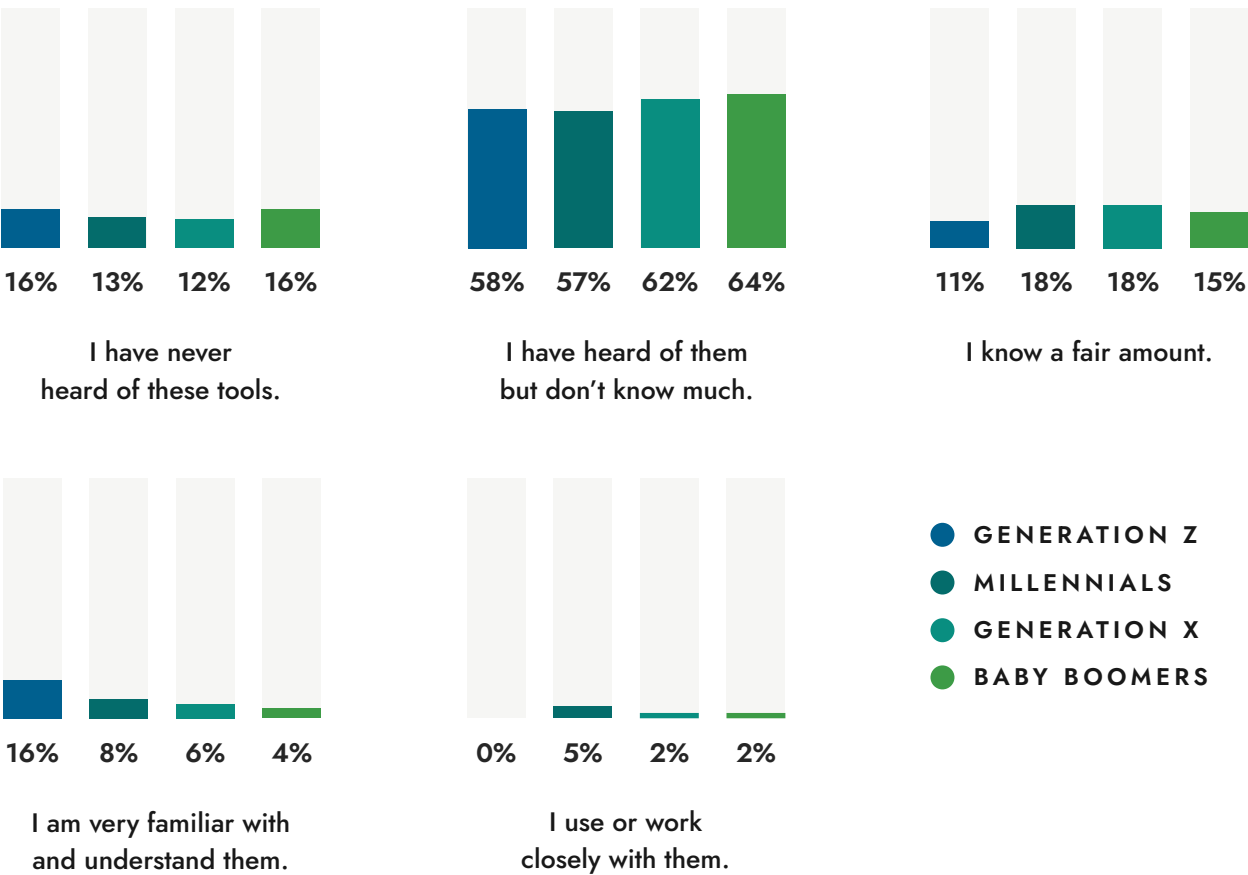
AI Familiarity by License Type



AI awareness and understanding

Over half of nurse respondents (61%) reported being aware of AI tools but not having much knowledge of them within their organizations.

AI Familiarity by Generation



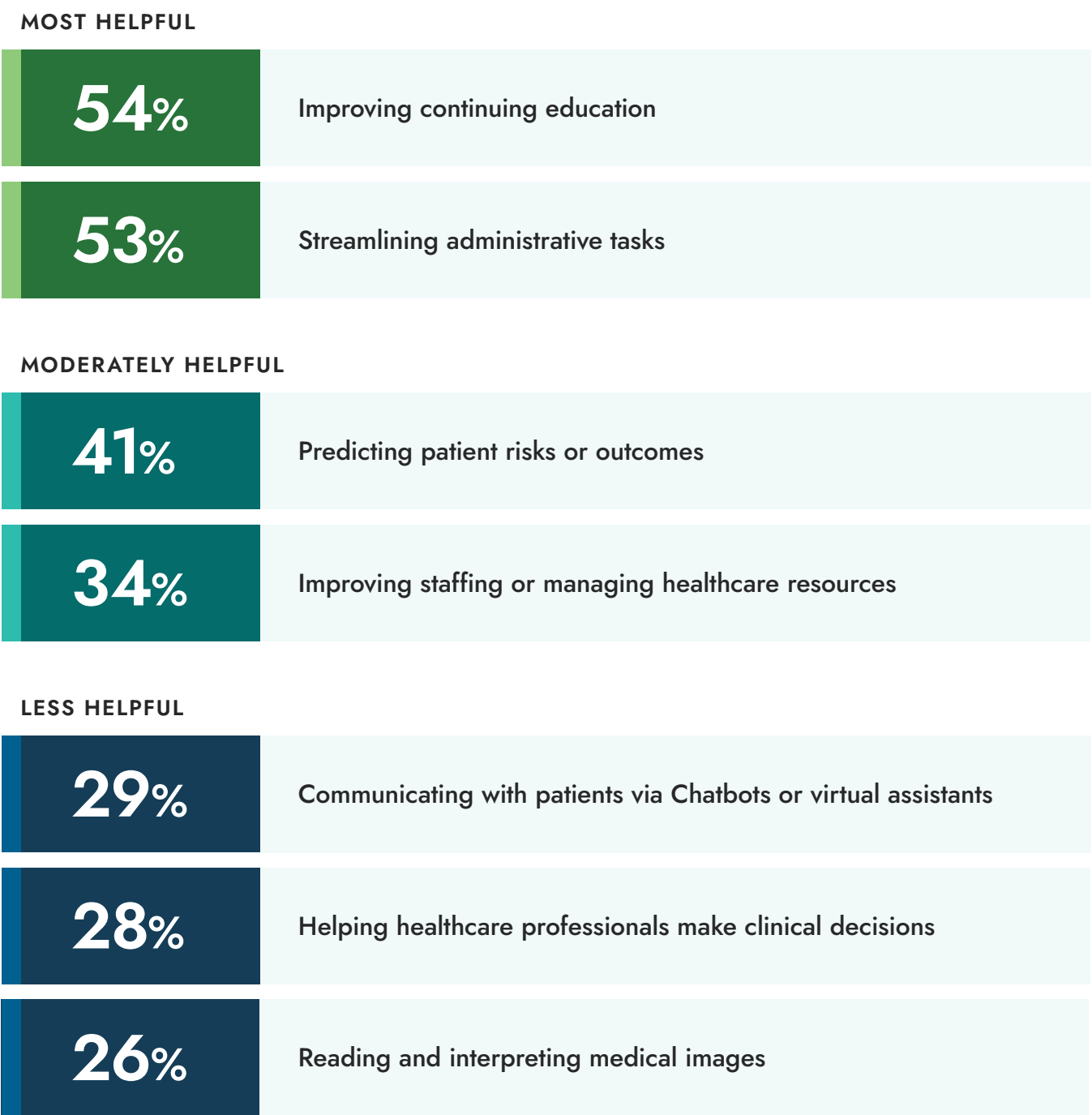
TAKEAWAYS

- AI awareness and understanding varied by nursing role. Only 21% of staff nurses reported higher levels of AI knowledge, compared with 48% of advanced practice nurses and 41% of nurse educators.
- Gender differences were minimal. Male respondents reported slightly greater knowledge of AI tools (28%) than female respondents (26%).
- Nurses working in rehabilitation settings reported the highest percentage with no exposure to AI tools (30%), compared with just 13% of nurses in acute care and 4% in ambulatory care settings.

Perceptions of AI

In our sample, nurses were asked about their perceptions of how AI could be most helpful in healthcare, as well as their concerns.

Where AI Could Be Most Helpful



Concerns About AI

61%

It could make patient care feel less personal.

54%

Concerns exist regarding patient data privacy and safety.

36%

It could replace certain nursing or healthcare jobs.

34%

It might be biased or unfair in how it makes decisions.

23%

Rules and regulations are unclear or not keeping up.

12%

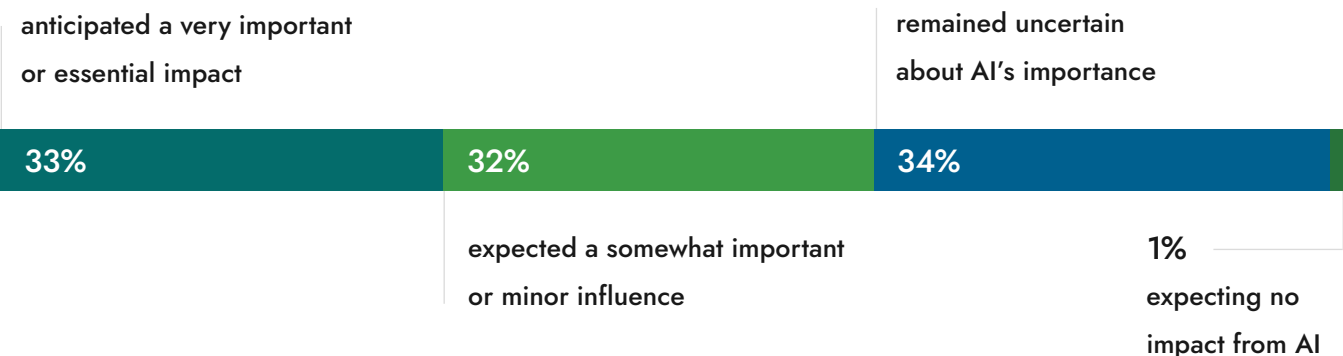
Tools may be expensive to set up or maintain.

TAKEAWAYS

- In our survey, RNs reported that AI could be most helpful in streamlining administrative tasks (54%), improving continuing education (53%), and predicting patient risks or outcomes (43%).
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of Generation X nurses reported that their greatest concern is that AI could make patient care less personal, which was shared by Baby Boomer (60%) and Millennial nurses (59%).
- Among racial and ethnic groups, 65% of Asian nurses shared their greatest concern related to patient data and privacy, while 52% of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish nurses and 45% of Black or African American nurses shared concerns surrounding bias and unfair decision-making.

The future impact of AI

When asked to look ahead, nurses expressed mixed expectations about AI's role in healthcare:



“AI is already operating in many organizations with predictive analytics, scheduling, and clinical decision support. But **few nurses have been supported to use it**. They’re not behind on AI because they aren’t capable — there’s a lag because they haven’t been included.

And the real risk isn’t that AI will replace nurses. It’s that organizations will implement it without nurse involvement and miss the chance to reduce burnout, restore humanity to care, and improve outcomes. **The future of nursing depends on whether we use AI to serve nurses or ask nurses to serve the technology.**”



Chris Coyle, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, NEA-BC
CEO & Founder, Nurse Leader Network

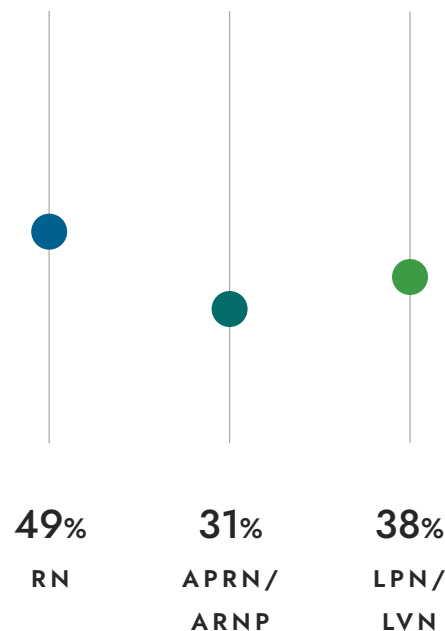
How can I advance my nursing career?

In our survey, many nurses shared that they're actively thinking about their next steps, whether that means pursuing certification, earning a degree, or building new skills.

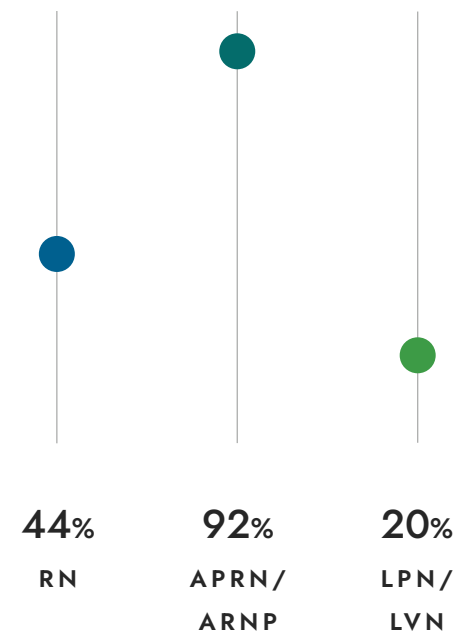
Pursuing certification

Across all respondents, almost half (46%) said they planned to pursue a certification.

Nurses Planning to Pursue Certification



Nurses With Certifications Specific to Nursing



TAKEAWAYS

- Across license types, 42% of nurse respondents shared they had a professional certification. However, only 37% of nurses said this resulted in a higher salary.
- After earning certification, APRNs/ARNPs saw the largest median boost of \$34,000, while LPNs/LVNs reported a \$10,000 increase and RNs reported a \$1,000 increase.
- Male nurses were more likely to pursue certification than female nurses (58% versus 45%), with half of male nurses reporting a salary increase following certification.

Pursuing a degree or training

Nurses expressed continued interest in advancing their education, with over one-third (36%) planning to pursue a degree or additional training.

Nurses Planning to Pursue a Degree or Training by License Type

● DEGREE ● TRAINING

RN



APRN



LPN/LVN



TAKEAWAYS

- Generation Z (63%) and Millennial (53%) nurses are more likely than other generations to plan to pursue a degree or training, with both groups most likely to pursue degrees over training.
- More than half (53%) of male nurses reported plans to pursue a degree or training, compared with 35% of female nurses. However, female nurses are more likely than male nurses to plan to pursue training specifically (34% versus 24%).
- Across all license types, nurses identified career advancement, increased compensation, and advanced clinical expertise as the primary perceived benefits of degree programs. RNs and LPNs/LVNs ranked career advancement as the top benefit, while APRNs/ARNPs identified advanced clinical expertise as the leading benefit.



“For many nurses, **pursuing additional certification or training** is less about immediate outcomes and more about **better positioning themselves for future opportunities**. These choices reflect long-term planning in **a profession that is continually evolving.**”



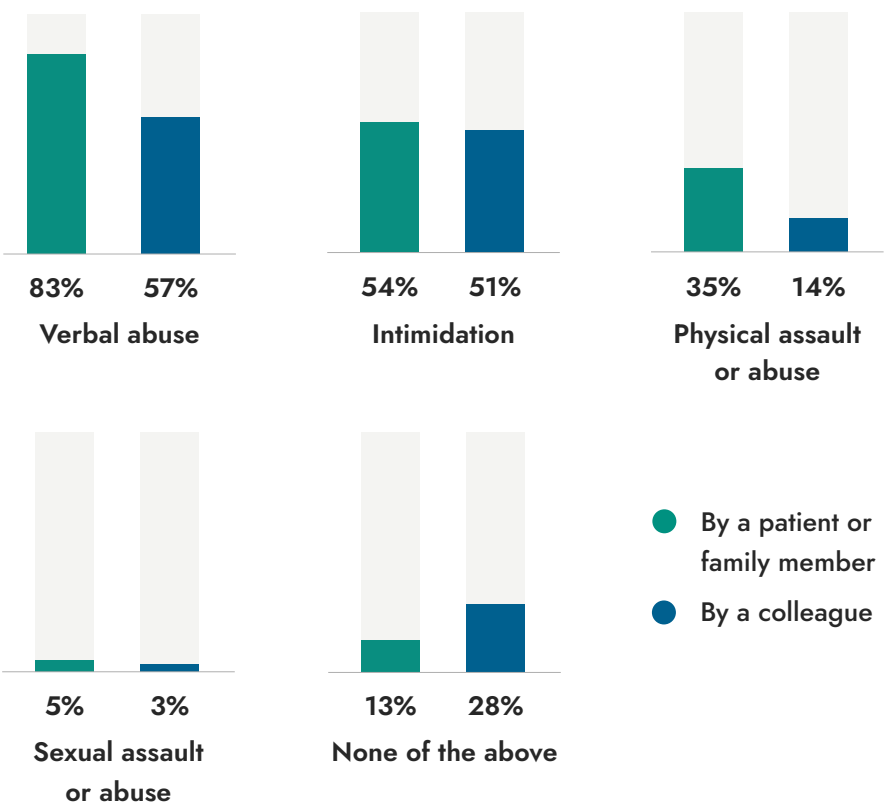
Mary Lynch, MSN, RN
Curriculum Designer, Relias

Workplace violence

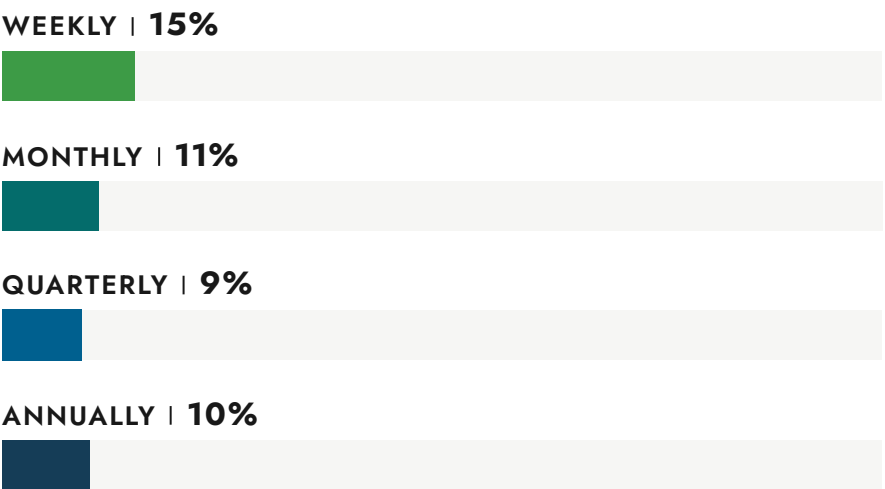
Most nurses (83%) reported experiencing verbal abuse by a patient or family member of a patient, with 35% experiencing physical assault or abuse.

This is a substantial increase from our 2024 data, where 64% of nurses reported verbal abuse by a patient or family member and 23% reported physical abuse.

Nurses Subjected to Workplace Violence



Instances of Workplace Violence



TAKEAWAYS

- Although LPNs/LVNs were less likely to report workplace violence at their organizations overall, they reported the highest rate of verbal abuse by a colleague (75%), compared with 55% of RNs.
- Consistent with our 2024 findings, most female nurses reported experiencing intimidation by a colleague and verbal abuse from a patient or family member.
- Advanced practitioners (93%), charge nurses (91%), and staff nurses (89%) reported the highest prevalence of verbal abuse from patients or patients' family members among nursing roles.

“When nurses face **increasing threats of violence** at work, it puts their **well-being — and patient care — at risk**. Ensuring physical safety for our healthcare workforce isn't optional. It's an imperative that we owe to those who care for our most vulnerable populations. Implementing **comprehensive workplace violence prevention programs** and enforcing zero-tolerance policies are essential steps to **protect those on the front lines of care**.”



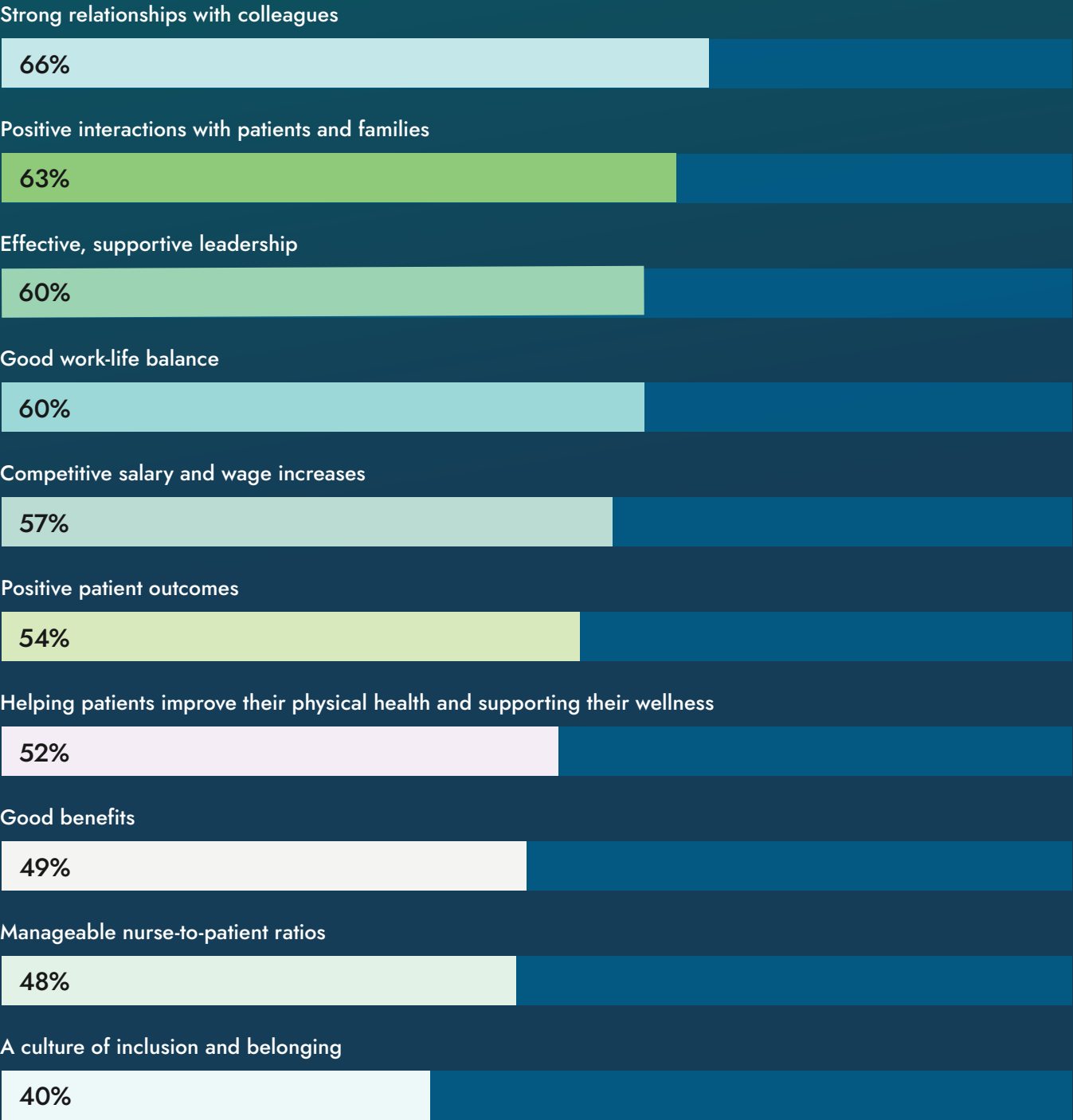
Felicia Sadler, MJ, BSN, RN, CPHQ, LSSBB
Vice President of Quality and Clinical Workforce Development, Relias

Mental health and wellness challenges

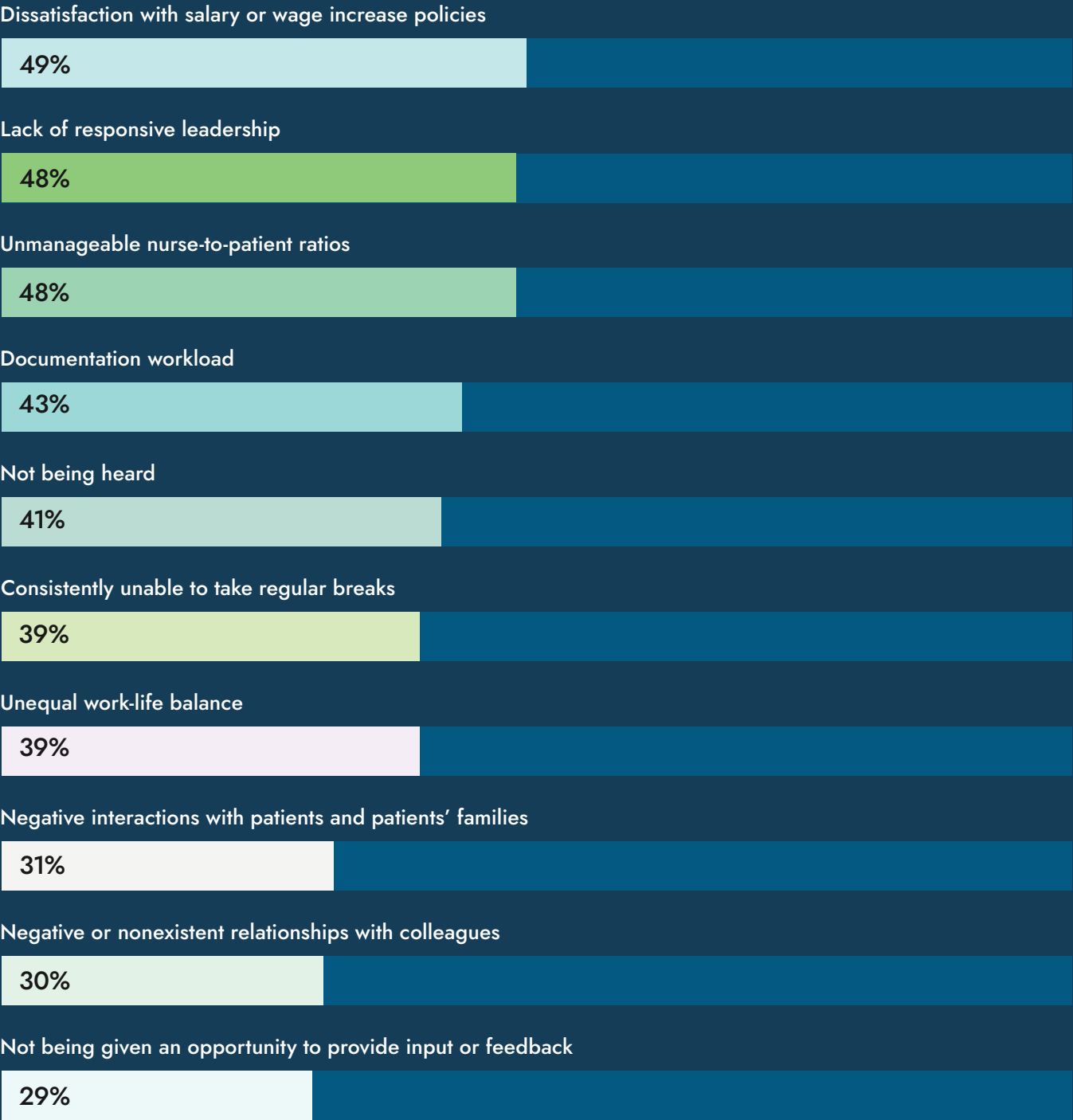
In 2024, 19% of nurses reported that they chose not to seek mental health support due to concerns that doing so could negatively affect their career. In the current sample, this number increased to 21%.

Nurses were also asked to assess how their work affects their mental health and overall well-being. Nearly three-quarters (72%) indicated that their work usually has a positive effect, but it can sometimes have a negative impact. An additional 16% said their work has a negative effect on their mental health, while smaller proportions reported that it always has a positive effect (9%) or no effect at all (2%).

Work Aspects Positively Affecting Mental Health



Work Aspects Negatively Affecting Mental Health



Top 3 Work Aspects Negatively Affecting Mental Health by License Type

● RN

Lack of responsive leadership | **50%**

Unmanageable nurse-to-patient ratios | **50%**

Dissatisfaction with salary or wage increase policies | **49%**

● APRN/ARNP

Not being heard | **42%**

Dissatisfaction with salary or wage increase policies | **35%**

Documentation workload | **35%**

● LPN/LVN

Dissatisfaction with salary or wage increase policies | **54%**

Unmanageable nurse-to-patient ratios | **49%**

Not being heard | **45%**

“Nurses report **better well-being** when workplaces invest in **supportive leadership, strong peer relationships, and realistic work-life balance**. Ongoing challenges like inadequate staffing, heavy documentation burdens, and limited opportunities to provide input create real opportunities for change that can both **reduce burnout** and **strengthen retention**.”



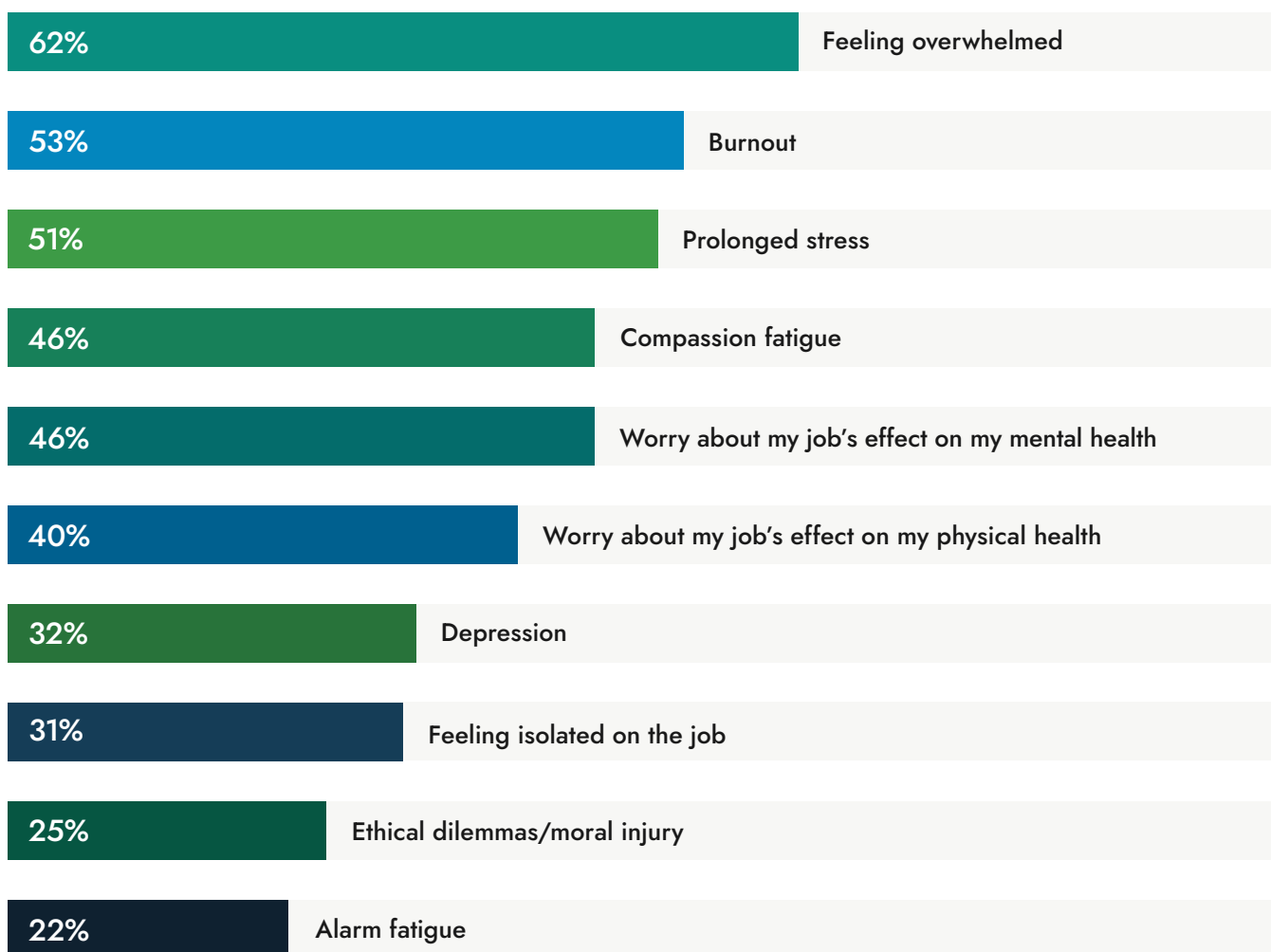
Cara Lunsford, RN, CPHON

Vice President of Healthcare Policy and Clinical Solutions, Relias

Prevalence of work-related stressors

In the two years since our last survey, nurses have reported experiencing a range of work-related challenges that have affected their mental health.

Nurses' Reported Experiences in the Past Two Years



Top Drivers of Negative Mental Health for Staff Nurses



TAKEAWAYS

- Nearly three-quarters of RNs reported that their work usually has a positive effect on their mental health but sometimes has a negative effect, with many experiencing feeling overwhelmed (62%), burnout (54%), and prolonged stress (52%) over the last two years.
- Female nurses ranked strong relationships with colleagues as the top work aspect that positively affects their mental health and well-being, while male nurses ranked good work-life balance highest.
- Among racial and ethnic groups, almost half of white (47%); Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish (44%); and Asian nurses (43%) reported experiencing compassion fatigue in the past two years, compared to one-third of Black or African American nurses.
- Staff nurses ranked unmanageable nurse-to-patient ratios (55%) as the work aspect that most negatively affects their mental health, followed by dissatisfaction with salary or wage increase policies (53%) and lack of responsive leadership (50%).

What would keep me in the profession?

In our survey, 61% of RNs reported being satisfied or very satisfied in their current roles. By comparison, the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses Job Satisfaction Report reported a job satisfaction rate of 80.1% (52.5% moderately satisfied and 27.6% extremely satisfied), exceeding the percentage observed in our sample.¹⁰

Job satisfaction

Nurses rated the importance of various factors to their overall job satisfaction using a 10-point scale, with 1 representing least important and 10 representing most important.

Most Important to Overall Job Satisfaction

Regular merit increases

74%

A horizontal bar chart with a teal bar representing 74% of the total length. The remaining 26% of the bar is light gray.

Ability to practice to full scope of nursing practice

63%

A horizontal bar chart with a green bar representing 63% of the total length. The remaining 37% of the bar is light gray.

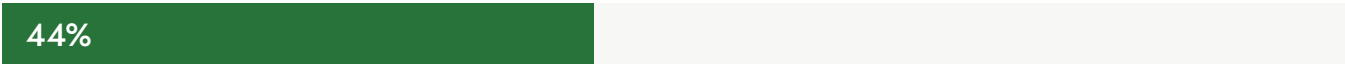
Manager

58%

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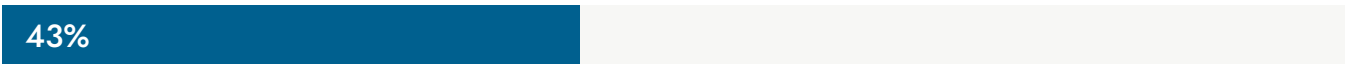
Mission of the organization

44%

A horizontal bar chart with a dark green bar representing 44% of the total length. The remaining 56% of the bar is light gray.

Advancement opportunities

43%

A horizontal bar chart with a blue bar representing 43% of the total length. The remaining 57% of the bar is light gray.

Tuition reimbursement

38%

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Overtime opportunities

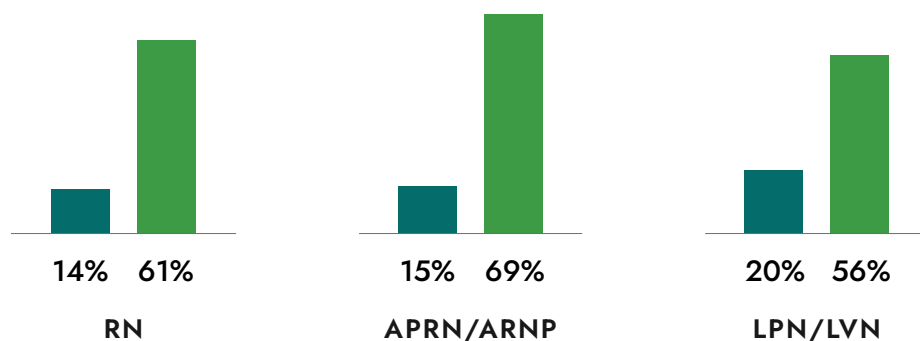
26%

A horizontal bar chart with a dark blue bar representing 26% of the total length. The remaining 74% of the bar is light gray.

Note: Percentages reflect the proportion of nurses who rated the item 8, 9, or 10 on the scale.

Job Satisfaction by License Type

- VERY UNSATISFIED OR UNSATISFIED
- VERY SATISFIED OR SATISFIED



TAKEAWAYS

- Across all license types, regular merit increases remained the top driver of job satisfaction, followed by the ability to practice the full scope of nursing practice and satisfaction with one's manager.
- Over two-thirds (67%) of advanced practitioners reported being satisfied or very satisfied in their current role, compared with 59% of staff nurses.
- Overall, six in 10 nurses reported feeling satisfied in their current roles, while 15% indicated they are unsatisfied.
- Nurses identified some leading factors that would increase job satisfaction: a more manageable workload (37%), better and more collaborative relationships with managers (34%), more of a voice in decision-making (29%), and more help with non-nursing responsibilities (29%).

“**Job satisfaction** can serve as an early indicator of whether nurses are likely to remain in their roles. Although most nurses report being satisfied, there are **significant opportunities for improvement**. Prioritizing **fair compensation, sustainable workloads**, and **strong leadership engagement** is key to turning staff satisfaction into lasting retention.”



Felicia Sadler, MJ, BSN, RN, CPHQ, LSSBB
Vice President of Quality and Clinical Workforce
Development, Relias

Leaving nursing and motivators to stay

Nurses were asked whether they were considering leaving the nursing profession, and 24% of respondents indicated that they were, a slight increase from previous results (23%).

**In our current sample, these groups
are considering leaving the profession:**

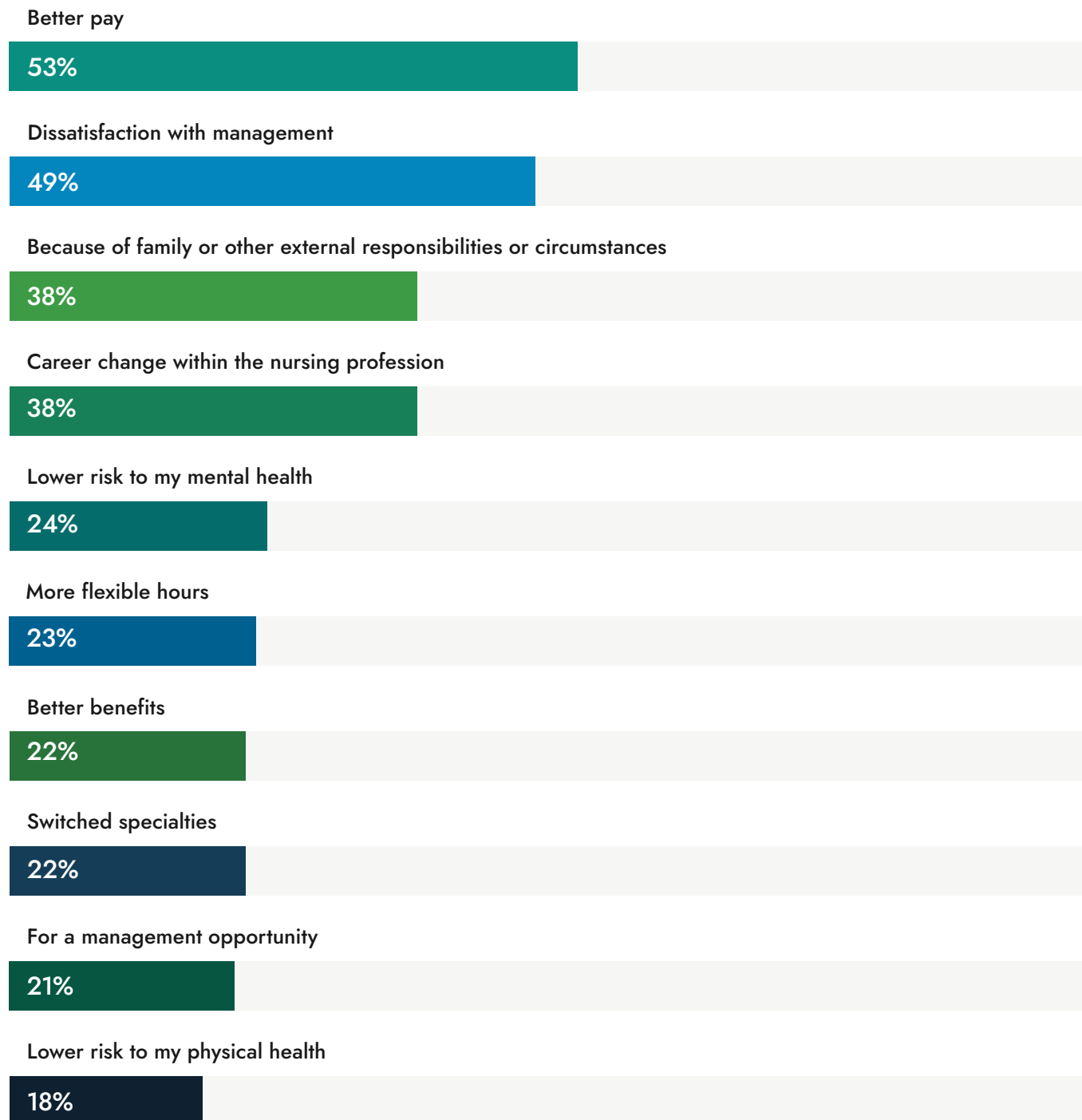
Baby Boomer nurses (30%)

Male nurses (30%), compared to 23% of female nurses

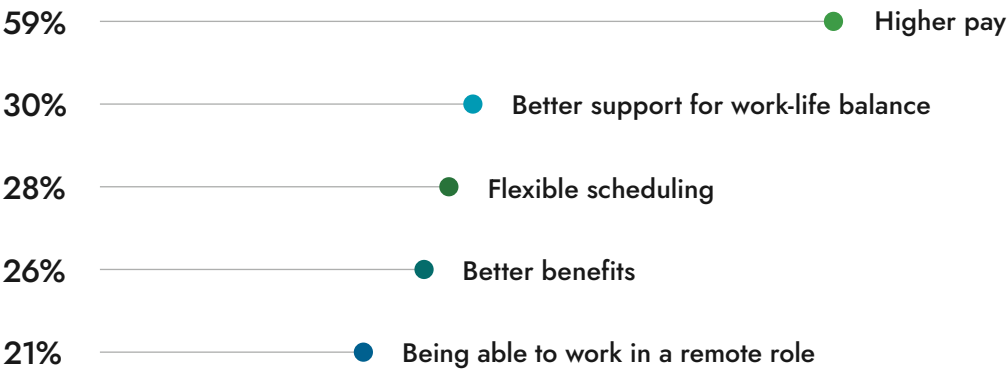
LPNs/LVNs (25%) and RNs (24%)

White nurses (25%) and Asian nurses (22%)

Top-Ranked Reasons for Leaving Last Position



Top 5 Motivating Factors to Stay in Nursing



TAKEAWAYS

- Similar to our 2024 data, the highest rated factors to stay in nursing were higher pay, better support for work-life balance, and flexible scheduling.
- Generation Z rated flexible scheduling highest, while Millennial, Generation X, and Baby Boomer nurses rated higher pay as their top motivating factor.
- Nearly half of Asian nurses (46%) ranked better benefits as a top priority, compared with just 23% of white nurses.
- Female nurses and nurses aged 24 and younger were most likely to cite flexible scheduling as a key motivator.
- While more male nurses said better pay was their reason for leaving their last position (68%), more female nurses cited dissatisfaction with management compared to their male counterparts (49% of female nurses versus 43% of male nurses).

Conclusion

The *Nurse.com 2026 Nurse Salary and Work-Life Report* highlights nurses' perspectives on compensation, education, career advancement, workplace safety, mental health and well-being, and the growing role of technology in nursing practice.

The findings are intended to support and inform career decisions, whether evaluating a current role, exploring new opportunities, or engaging in discussions about compensation and workplace improvements.

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