

Employment of New Nurse Graduates and Employer Preferences for Baccalaureate-Prepared Nurses

In August 2022, AACN conducted its 13th online survey of nursing schools offering entry-level baccalaureate and master's programs in the U.S. to better assess the experience of new graduates in finding employment. For the 12th consecutive year, AACN asked schools to identify if employers in their region were requiring or preferring that new Registered Nurse (RN) hires have at least a baccalaureate degree in nursing. A brief online survey was developed to solicit information from 835 deans of nursing schools offering baccalaureate and/or graduate programs. A total of 646 valid responses were received, generating an 77.4% response rate.

The Employment of New Nurse Graduates

Two questions were asked in the August survey about the employment of new graduates from entry-level baccalaureate and master's programs:

- What percentage of 2021 graduates from your nursing programs had job offers at the time of graduation?
- What percentage of 2021 graduates from your nursing programs had job offers within 4-6 months after graduation?

Job Offers at Graduation

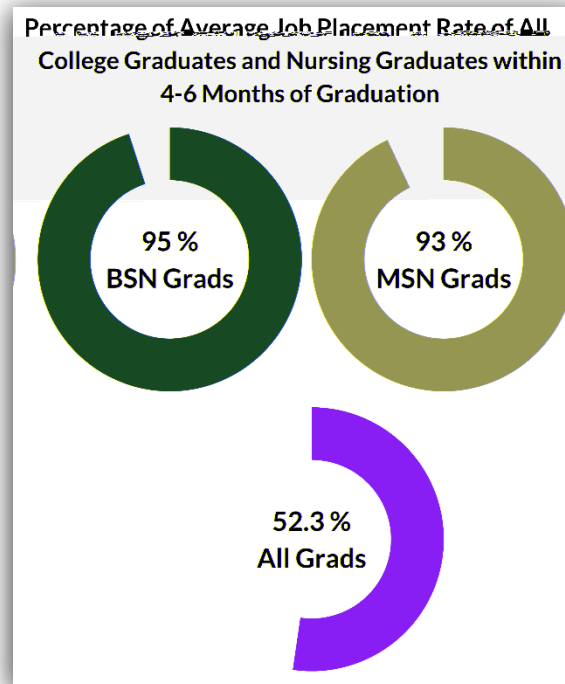
Of the 646 schools that responded to the survey, 559 (86.5%) reported having an entry-level baccalaureate program (BSN) and 85 (13.2%) had an entry-level master's program (MSN) for which employment data for new graduates were available. The survey found that the average job offer rate at the time of graduation was 77% for new BSN graduates and 67% for entry-level MSN graduates.

Looking closer at the AACN data, the survey found little variation in the average rate of job offers at the time of graduation by institutional type (e.g., large vs. small school; public vs. private school; doctoral degree-granting vs. non-doctoral). However, there is some variability by region of the country. For new BSN graduates, the job offer rate for schools in the South is 84%, followed by 80% in the Midwest, 71% in the North Atlantic, and 55% in the West. These rates for entry-level MSN graduates are 73% in the South, 85% in the Midwest, 52% in the North Atlantic, and 44% in the West. These findings indicate that employment of new graduates from entry-level nursing programs is more challenging in different regions of the country.

Job Placement 4-6 Months After Graduation

With respect to job offers for new graduates 4–6 months after the completion of their programs, the survey found this rate to be 95% for entry-level BSN and 93% for MSN graduates. By comparison, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducted a national survey of 509,000 new college graduates with baccalaureate degrees across disciplines in 2021 and found that 52.3% of were employed full-time six months after graduation.

Once again, the survey found little variation based on school type and institutional characteristics. The job offer rate for BSN graduates by region all reached similarly high levels, from 96% in the South, 97% in the Midwest, 94% in the North Atlantic, and 92% in the West. For entry-level MSN program graduates, the job offer rate at 4-6 months post-graduation ranged from 91% in the South, 94% in the Midwest, 95% in the North Atlantic, and 90% in the West.



Employer Preference for New Nurses with Baccalaureate-Level Preparation

Again this year, AACN asked nursing schools if employers in their region were requiring or indicating a preference for hiring new nurses with a bachelor's degree in nursing. A significant body of research shows that nurses with baccalaureate-level preparation are linked to better patient outcomes, including lower mortality and failure-to-rescue rates. With the Institute of Medicine (2010) calling for 80% of the nursing workforce to hold at least a bachelor's degree, moving to prepare nurses at this level has become a national priority.

Based on completed responses from 646 schools of nursing, 27.7% of hospitals and other healthcare settings are requiring new hires to have a bachelor's degree in nursing, while 71.7% of employers are expressing a strong preference for BSN program graduates.

Clearly, healthcare settings nationwide are seeing a difference in nursing practice based on the level of education and are making hiring decisions to enhance the quality of care available to patients. For more background information on this issue, see AACN's fact sheet on the Impact of Education on Nursing Practice, which may be downloaded at www.aacnnursing.org/news-information/fact-sheets/impact-of-education. Complete survey information and data tables are available to AACN member schools and stakeholders by contacting Data Manager Jenny Keyt at 202-463-6930, ext. 244 or jkeyt@aacnnursing.org.

References

Institute of Medicine. (2010). *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2022, October). *First Destinations for the College Class of 2022: Findings and Analysis*. Retrieved from <https://www.nacweb.org/uploadedfiles/files/2022/publication/free-report/first-destinations-for-the-class-of-2021.pdf>