



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

In August 2016, AACN conducted its seventh online survey of nursing schools offering baccalaureate and graduate programs in the U.S. to better assess the experience of new graduates in finding employment during these tough economic times. For the fifth 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 743 deans of nursing schools offering baccalaureate and graduate programs. A total of 576 valid responses were received, generating an 77.5% response rate.

The Employment of New Nurse Graduates

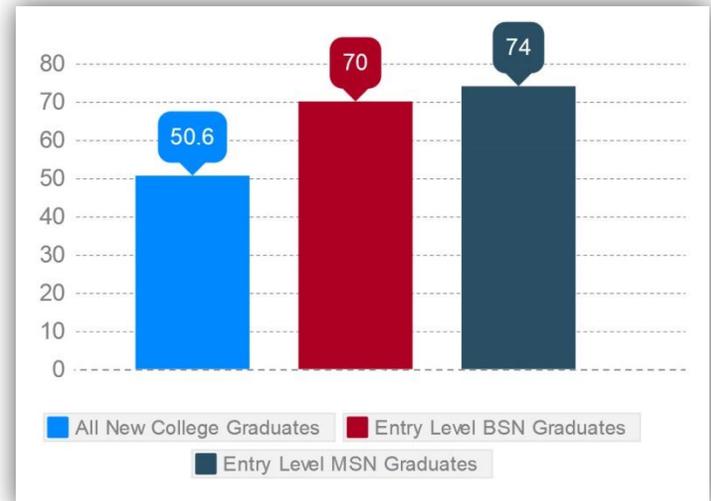
Regional reports suggest that nursing school graduates are having difficulty finding employment, which prompted AACN to take action to quantify these claims. Two questions were asked in the August survey about the employment of new graduates from entry-level baccalaureate and master's programs:

- What percentage of 2015 graduates from your nursing programs had job offers at the time of graduation?
- What percentage of 2015 graduates from your nursing programs had job offers within 4-6 months after graduation?

Job Offers at Graduation

Of the 576 schools that responded to the survey, 487 (65.5%) reported having an entry-level baccalaureate program (BSN) and 107 (14.4%) 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 70% for new BSN graduates and 74% for entry-level MSN graduates. By comparison, the National Association of Colleges and Employers conducted a national survey of 39,950 new college graduates across disciplines and found that 50.6% of new graduates in 2015 had a job offer at the time of graduation, the highest offer rate of any graduating class since the recession.

Percentage of Average Job Placement Rate of All New College Graduates and Nursing 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 77% followed by 71% in the Midwest, 57% in the North Atlantic, and 56% in the West. This rate is higher across the board for entry-level MSN graduates: 80% in the Midwest, 76% in the South, 72% in the North Atlantic, and 66% 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 92% and 92% for entry-level BSN and MSN graduates, respectively. Once again the survey found little variation based on school type and institutional characteristics. The job offer rate for BSN graduates did vary by region, from, 96% in the South, 93% in the Midwest, 87% in the North Atlantic, and 85% in the West. For entry-level MSN program graduates, the job offer rate at 4-6 months post-graduation ranged from 95% in the South, 94% in the Midwest, 89% in the North Atlantic, and 89% in the West.

Employer Preference for New Nurses with Baccalaureate-Level Preparation

Once again this year, AACN asked nursing schools to identify 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 by 2020, moving to prepare nurses at this level has become a national priority.

Based on completed responses from 576 schools of nursing, 54.0% of hospitals and other healthcare settings are requiring new hires to have a bachelor's degree in nursing (up 6.6 percentage points since 2015), while 87.7% 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.aacn.nche.edu/media-relations/EdImpact.pdf.

References

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

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2015, September). The Class of 2015 Executive Survey Report. Retrieved from www.nacweb.org/uploadedfiles/.../2015-student-survey-executive-summary.pdf.

Complete survey information and data tables are available to AACN member schools and stakeholders by contacting Manager of Data Services, Yan Li at 202-463-6930, ext. 236 or yli@aacn.nche.edu.