

# WWAMI CENTER FOR HEALTH WORKFORCE STUDIES

University of Washington • School of Medicine • Department of Family Medicine  
Box 354982 • Seattle WA 98195-4982 • phone: (206) 685-6679 • fax: (206) 616-4768 • <http://depts.washington.edu/uwchws/>

## Policy Brief

June 2008

### *Demographic, Education, and Practice Characteristics of Registered Nurses in Washington State: Results of a 2007 Survey*

**Background:** In 2007, Washington State surveyed all of the licensed registered nurses (RNs) in the state to obtain demographic, education, and practice information. The Washington Center for Nursing engaged the University of Washington Center for Health Workforce Studies to analyze Washington's RN data, and the results are presented in this report.

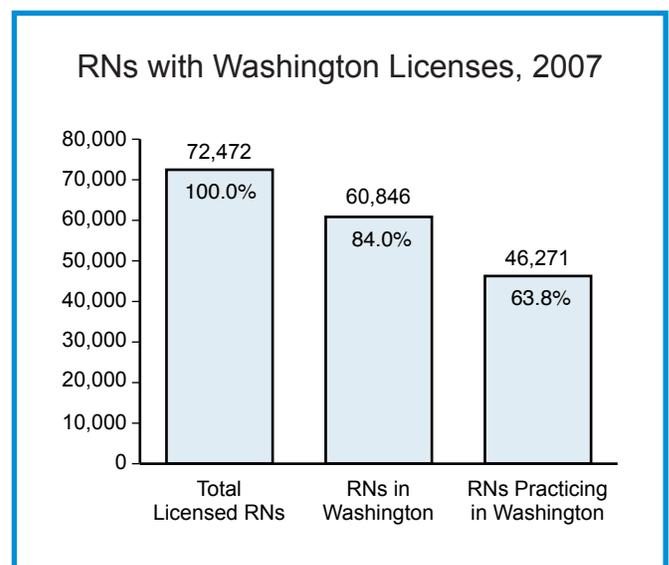
**Methods:** This report describes RNs in Washington using the 2007 survey responses, weighted to reflect the overall population. Of the 72,472 licensees, there were 21,201 responses to the survey, reflecting 29% of all licensed RNs and 56% of a one-third random sample who received multiple contacts.

**Major Findings:** Among all licensed RNs in Washington in 2007, 84% lived in-state, and 64% practiced in-state.

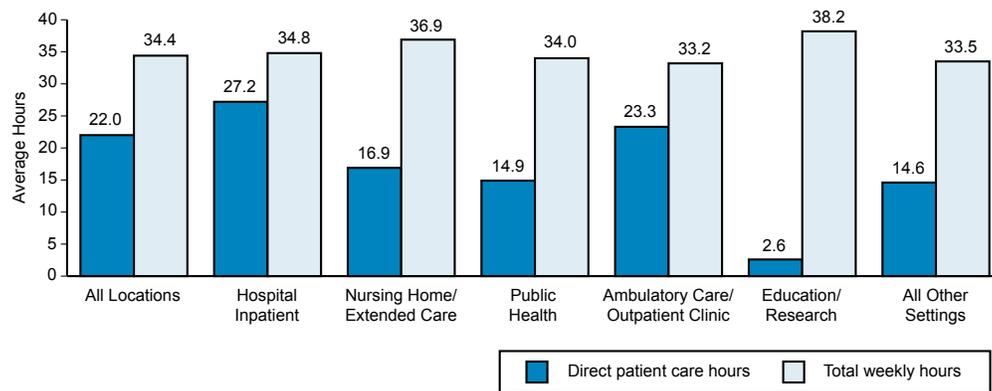
Among RNs living in Washington in 2007:

- ✘ Fewer than 10% are non-white, and 2% are Hispanic.
- ✘ 49% work in hospital inpatient settings.
- ✘ 62% provide direct patient care.
- ✘ The weekly average amount of time spent in direct patient care was 22 hours, out of an average work week of 34 hours.
- ✘ Hospice was the work setting with the oldest average RN age (53 years) and critical care the youngest (43 years).
- ✘ 57% obtained at least some of their nursing education in-state.
- ✘ More than 5% obtained their initial RN education out of the United States.
- ✘ The BSN was the highest nursing degree attained by 43%; the ADN was the highest degree obtained by 39%.
- ✘ Fewer than half of those working in ambulatory care/outpatient clinics, hospice, and nursing home/extended care had baccalaureate or higher nursing education.

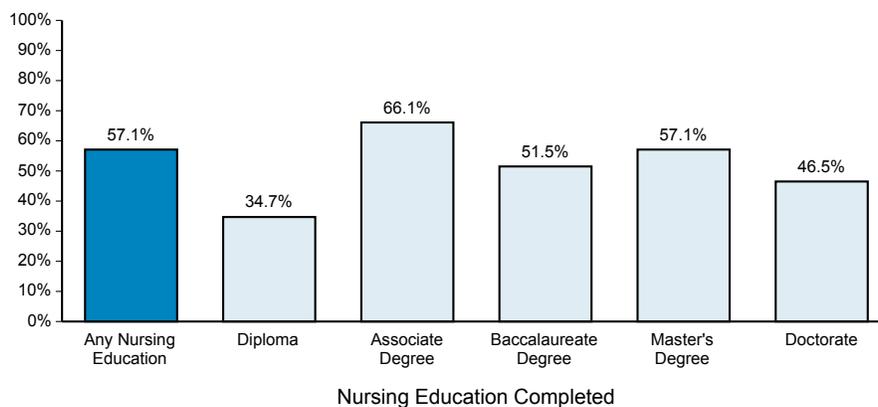
**Discussion:** In 2007 there were 767 practicing RNs per 100,000 residents of Washington compared with the 2004 national estimate of 825 RNs per 100,000 U.S. population. Washington RNs are roughly the same age as RNs nationally, and a higher percentage of RNs in the state are men than among RNs nationally. Washington's RNs, similar to RNs nationally, are predominately white and non-Hispanic. A higher percentage of Washington's RNs hold baccalaureate degrees in nursing compared with RNs nationally (41% vs. 32%), and the baccalaureate degree was the initial nursing degree for a larger percentage of Washington's RNs than found nationally (40% vs. 31%). These and other findings from this report were not available prior to implementation of this survey. Now policymakers, educators, employers, and planners in Washington have information for assessing the status of Washington's RN workforce.



### Average Weekly Hours in Professional Activities of RNs Practicing in Washington, by Work Setting



### RNs in Washington Who Completed Nursing Education from an Institution in Washington, by Program Completed



**Policy Implications:** The ratio of practicing RNs to population is lower for Washington compared to the national ratio, and the average age of RNs in the state is comparable to the rising national average for RNs, both factors that contribute to the current and future shortages of RNs in Washington. Washington's RN workforce is not as diverse as the population it serves, a finding which supports arguments for continuing efforts to increase RN gender and racial/ethnic diversity. The finding that 43% of RNs in Washington obtained their RN education out of state highlights the importance of

in-migration as a factor contributing to Washington's RN supply and the need for expansion of the state's capacity to educate and graduate more RNs. Additionally, knowing that more than a third of the state's licensed RNs do not practice in-state is new and useful information when making estimates, based on license data, of the available state RN workforce. With subsequent surveys of licensed RNs in Washington it will be possible to examine RN workforce trends over time and assess the impact of health workforce-related decisions and policies.

*Findings from this study are more fully described in WWAMI Center for Health Workforce Studies Final Report #120: Skillman SM, Andrilla CHA, Tieman L, Doescher MP, Demographic, Education, and Practice Characteristics of Registered Nurses in Washington State: Results of a 2007 Survey, June 2008.*