

**ARIZONA STATE BOARD OF NURSING
EMPLOYMENT OF NEWLY LICENSED RN'S
2013**

Pamela K. Randolph RN, MS
Associate Director Education and Evidence Based Regulation

Background

In 2010 the Arizona State Board of Nursing began receiving numerous concerns from new graduate RNs regarding difficulty securing employment. In response to these concerns and in an effort to quantify the problem, the Board initiated a survey of newly licensed nurses (Randolph, 2010). To ascertain if there has been any improvement in employment prospects for newly licensed RNs, new graduates have been surveyed every year since, providing four years of data.

Review of Problem

The National Student Nurses Association (Mancino, 2013) conducts a survey of employment among new graduates each year. In 2012 Mancino (2013) found that 45% did not have jobs within four months of graduation. There was more employment among baccalaureate graduates with 72% of those employed holding a baccalaureate degree versus 61% holding an associate degree. The most common reason for not having a job was that there were no jobs for new graduates in the area (49%).

In Arizona, there was a 3% increase in RN graduates in 2012 when compared to 2011 with the increase almost entirely in baccalaureate degree graduates. There was an overall 166% increase in graduates from RN programs between 2002 (1074) and 2012 (2761) (Randolph, 2012).

Efforts to increase the number of new nurses were supported both nationally and locally from 2002 through 2007. Funding for nursing programs and subsidies for students increased. Throughout the early and mid-2000's, a shortage was experienced and an even worse crisis predicted. The prime strategy for alleviating this predicted shortage was to increase the supply of new nurses. Future predictions were based on the average age of the RN and assumptions regarding retirement and economic growth (Buerhaus, 2009). Students were recruited into nursing with promises of easy employment, job mobility and high salaries.

However, with the recession and unanticipated growth in nursing program enrollments, those projections have been modified. Aurebach, Buerhaus and Steiger (2011) reported that the registered nurse supply is growing faster than projected due to younger individuals entering the profession. Mancino (2013) questions whether future demand can be measured using models of the past. She believes it is time to re-calculate the number of RNs needed for the future.

Arizona Supply and Demand for RNs--2013

In an effort to quantify the overall supply and demand in Arizona for nurses in 2013, the following methodology was used:

- The US Department of Labor (2013) predicts a national 19% growth in RN employment from 2012 to 2022, meaning that 526,800 new RNs will be needed in to account for job growth.
- Utilizing US Census Bureau (2013) estimates, Arizona is home to approximately 2.1% of the national population (6,626,624 (AZ pop)/316,128,839 (US pop),
- Arizona should be expected to produce 2.1% of the job growth total RNs needed by from 2012-2022 (11,062 or 1,100 per year).
- In 2014 there are 25,820 nurses with active RN licenses age 56 and older who may retire in the next 9 years.
- Arizona will need to replace retiring nurses at approximately 2,600 per year.
- Of approximately 17,400 RNs due to renew in 2013, 4,507 did not renew, indicating that not all attrition is due to reaching retirement age.
- Subtracting the estimated 2,600 nurses who are expected to retire, Arizona lost 1,907 nurses due to attrition which would include moving to another state, changing careers or leaving nursing practice before retirement age.
- In 2008 only 85% of the RN renewal population worked in nursing (*a 15% downward adjustment to demand is made for nurses not working in an RN job*) (AZHHA, 2009)
- Approximately 65% of nurses who renewed in 2008 were working full time (AZHHA, 2009) (*A 5% downward adjustment to demand is made for part-time workers needing replacement*)
- Based, in part, on longitudinal data gathered for this report, it is assumed that endorsing RNs and new graduates are seeking full-time employment in nursing.
- 127 RNs reactivated their license following a refresher course in 2012.

Table 1.

Estimate of demand for new RNs 2013	Numbers	Estimate of supply of new RNs in 2013	
Retire/ replacement	2,600	Endorsement (FY 2013)	2,100
New Job Growth	1,100	Exam (new grads)	2,700
Attrition	1,907	Refresher/re- entry	127
Demand Adjustment for Part-time and non-nursing	20% (-1220)	No supply adjustment	
Total Demand for FTE RNs	4,485	Total Supply FTE RNs	4,927

Currently Arizona appears to have a greater supply of RNs than jobs available, however these data should be interpreted cautiously and require additional exploration. Additionally, it is reported that employers are seeking experienced nurses (endorsement

nurses) rather than the more readily supplied new graduates. Therefore there is an imbalance between employer expectations and preferences (experienced nurses) and available nurses (non-experienced nurses). A more complex factor that cannot be fully accounted for is that nearly all newly licensed nurses are seeking full-time positions, however many retiring nurses are retiring from part time positions. However, these data are consistent with new graduate employment experiences in Arizona.

Employment of New Graduates

In an effort to understand employment of newly licensed RNs in Arizona and provide longitudinal comparison data, the Arizona State Board of Nursing surveyed all persons licensed by exam (e.g. new graduates) in Arizona between October 1, 2012 and September 30, 2013, a different time frame than past surveys. This different time-frame is expected to include more recently licensed nurses due to the increased number of May graduates. As in previous surveys, the queries asked volunteer participants to indicate if they were practicing as registered nurses and where they were practicing. From those who were not practicing, queries were focused on their perception of why they were not practicing, their efforts to obtain work, and what would be acceptable working conditions for them. Answers to the following questions were obtained from the surveyed population across 4 years of surveys.

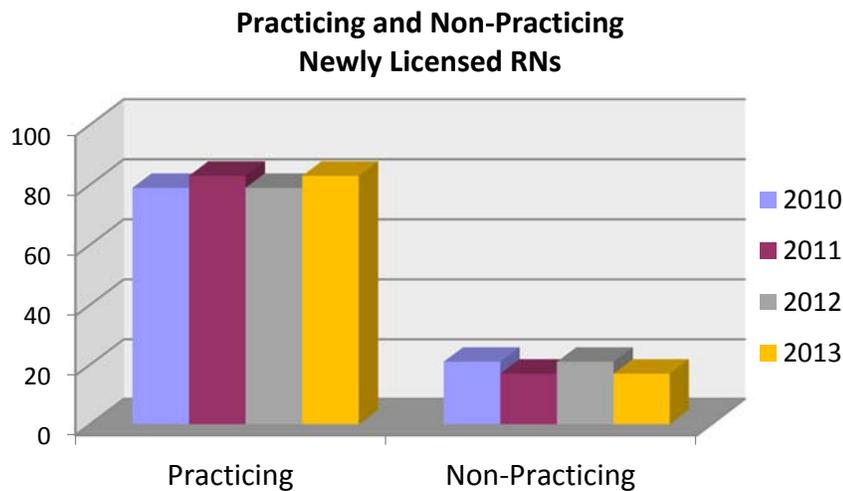
1. What is the percent of newly licensed RNs currently practicing and not practicing registered nursing?
2. Are there differences between practicing and not practicing RNs in terms of length of licensure and nursing program characteristics?
3. In which settings are newly licensed RNs practicing?
4. What are the reasons newly licensed RNs are not practicing?
5. How many applications/written inquiries for employment were made by non-practicing newly licensed RNs?
6. What workplace settings did non-practicing RNs apply to?
7. What are non-practicing RNs seeking in terms of shift, and salary?

In 2011 the employed RN group was also queried regarding residency (on-boarding) programs at their employment site. Residency programs to help newly licensed RNs adjust from the student role to the RN role are recommended by both the recent Institute of Medicine report on the future of nursing (Institute of Medicine, 2011) and the Carnegie Report on nursing education (Benner, Stupen, Leonard & Day, 2010).

In 2013, additional questions were asked of employed RNs regarding job satisfaction and factors important in selecting employment.

Results--2013

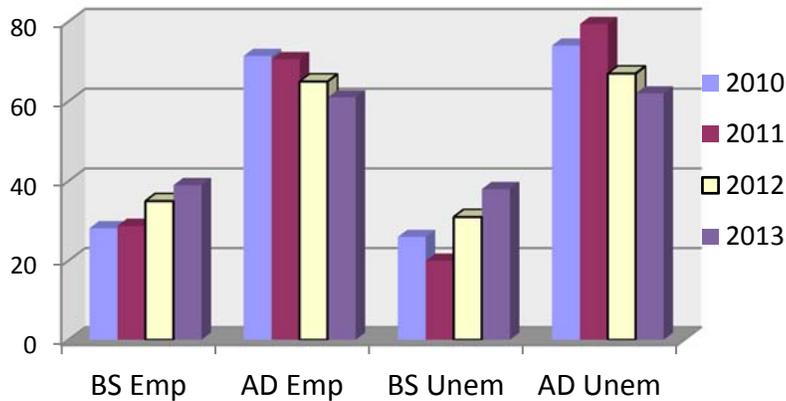
Electronic mail surveys were sent on October 7, 2013 to 2605 RNs with e-mail addresses who were initially licensed October 1, 2012-Sept. 30, 2013. Of that total, 165 surveys were returned undeliverable resulting in a surveyed population of 2,437 RNs. Respondents were informed that responses were anonymous and would be recorded as aggregate data only. Each respondent's survey consisted of 10 or fewer questions using Survey Monkey®. The survey was triangulated so the employed population answered different questions than the unemployed. There were a total of 709 respondents yielding a response rate of 29%. Of those responding, **83%** indicated they were practicing as an RN and **17%** indicated they were not currently practicing as an RN. This represents a slightly better employment outlook for newly licensed nurses when compared to previous years.



Type of Nursing Program

There were few differences between practicing and non-practicing RNs based on educational preparation in 2013. Thirty-nine percent of practicing nurses held BSN or higher degrees compared to 38 percent of non-practicing nurses, indicating little preference among all employers for BSN or higher prepared nurses.

**Newly Licensed RNs
Percent Employed
by Degree and Year**

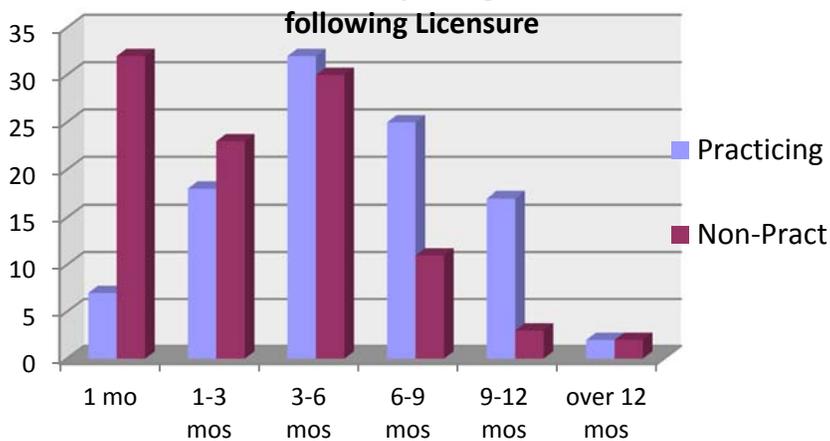


Length of Licensure

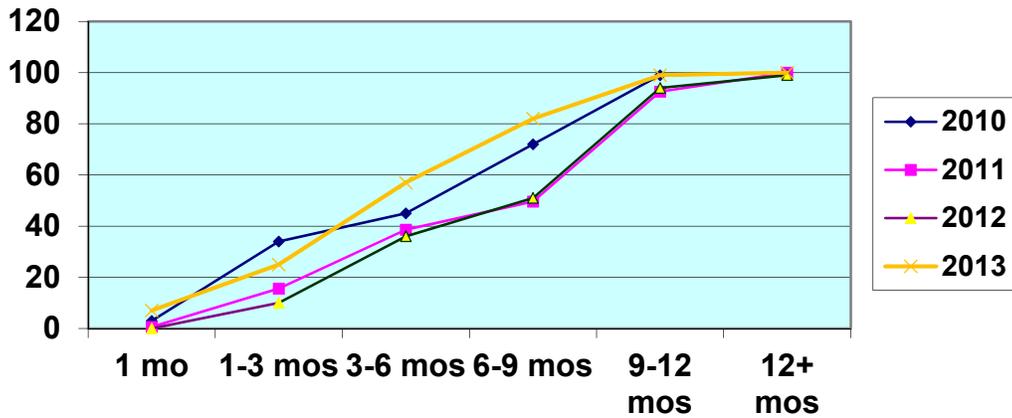
Length of licensure was different between the practicing and non-practicing groups with 85% of the non-practicing nurses licensed less than 6 months, versus 56% of practicing nurses. This result is quite different from previous years where the majority of practicing nurses were licensed 6 months or greater. The chart below illustrates differences between practicing and non-practicing RNs over length of licensure. The most common length of licensure (43%) for practicing nurses was 3-6 months, compared to 9-12 months 2011 and 2012 and 1-3 months (30%) in 2010.

2013

Percent of Nurses Reporting Practice Status



Employment by Length of Licensure



Practice Characteristics

Employment hours/benefits

In response to a question about practice characteristics, practicing nurses overwhelmingly have full time nursing jobs with benefits (79%); 12% reported either full-time or part time work without benefits; 2% have a part-time job with benefits and 4% have more than one RN job with at least one job having benefits. One nurse reported working as a volunteer. These results are comparable to 2010, 2011 and 2012 data.

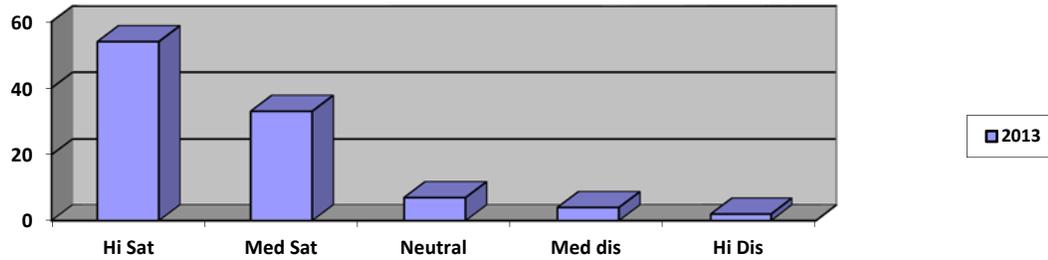
Practice Location

The majority of working RNs worked in acute care (72%); 12% worked in long-term care; 6% worked in psychiatric care. These results are similar to 2012.

Satisfaction

For the first time, newly licensed nurses were asked about job satisfaction. The majority of respondents (53%) reported being highly satisfied, with 33% reporting mild to moderate satisfaction. Only 6% of newly licensed nurses reported any level of dissatisfaction, with 2% being highly dissatisfied.

Satisfaction of Newly Licensed Nurses



Factors that influenced choice of employment

Respondents were then asked to check the top 3 reasons for choosing their current practice setting. The majority (52%) choose type of unit. The second most frequently cited factor was location of the worksite (41%). Five responses were chosen by 33-35 percent of respondents: salary (35.1%), hours (35%), availability of openings (34%) and staff attitudes (33%). Table 1, below, provides a list of the responses and the percent who identified the item as one of the top three factors in choosing employment.

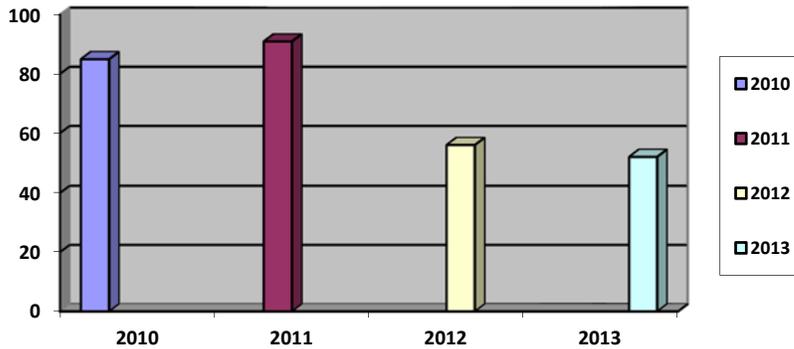
Workplace Factors most Important to newly licensed RNs	Percent
Type of unit	52%
Location of worksite	41%
Salary	35.1%
Hours	35%
Benefits	34%
Availability of openings	34%
Staff Attitudes	33%
Mentorship program	25%
Educational opportunities	25%
Evidence-based institution	13%
Previous Employer	12%
Magnet Status	10%
Clinical ladder	7%

Non-Practicing Nurses

Reasons for Not Practicing

Similar to the three previous surveys, the most common reason cited for not practicing was “not enough jobs for new RN grads in the area” (52%), similar to the 56% of respondents who chose this in 2012. This same response was chosen by 85% of nurses surveyed in 2010 and 91% in 2011. In the past two years, fewer nurses perceived a difficult job market. Similar to 2012, 28% of respondents chose “do not have the experience background employers are seeking”. The chart below depicts the percent of new nurses who state there are not enough jobs for new RNs from 2010 to 2013.

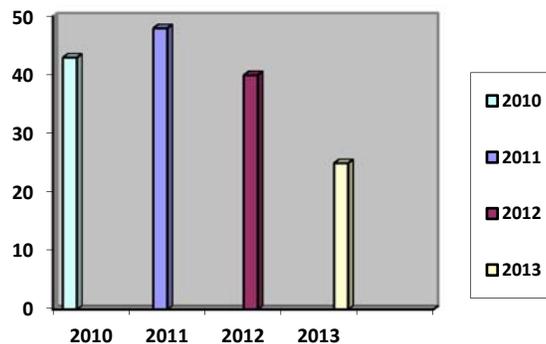
% of RNs who claim not enough jobs



Efforts of Non-Practicing RNs to Seek Employment

Twenty-five percent of non-practicing RNs have made over 50 applications or written inquiries for employment. This is significantly below the 40% that reported making over 50 applications last year and well below previous years, another indication that employment may be easier to obtain.

Percent of RNs who applied more than 50 places 2010-2013



When asked to select all settings to which they had applied, 92% of survey participants applied to acute care, 40% to state and federal facilities, 35% to long term care, 32% to home health and 30% to psychiatric care. Four percent reported not applying for an RN position.

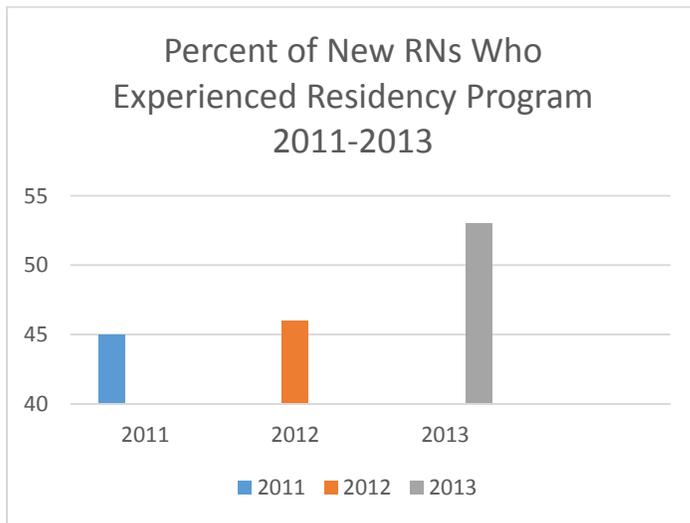
Acceptable Working Conditions

Non-practicing nurses were asked, “If you were offered an RN job, which shifts/working hours would you accept”. Overwhelmingly, this population would accept any shift including nights (84%) and weekends (89%). The lowest response for acceptable hours was part-time (64%) and nights (84%). The highest was for days (92%) and week days (92%).

As far as acceptable salary, 63% non-practicing RNs said they would only accept the same beginning salary as other RNs in the facility. Thirty-four percent would accept a lower salary during orientation/preceptorship for up to 6 months. Only 3% would work up to 6 months unpaid with a gradual increase in salary over a year. When compared to other years, fewer new graduates would accept a lower salary.

Residency Experience

Newly licensed employed nurses were asked about whether their employers offered a residency experience to help them transition into practice. For the first time since this survey began in 2010, over half the respondents (53%) reported that their employer offered such a program. Ninety-four percent of those whose employer offered a residency program worked in acute care settings; 2% worked in long-term care. For acute care nurses, the most common length of the residency program was 2-3 months (36%). However 20% reported a residency program of greater than 6 months, nearly the same as 2012 (22%). Six percent reported less than a month. For those nurses working in non-acute care settings, the length of residency was shorter with 54% reporting less than a month. Only one respondent reported a residency lasting longer than 6 months. Experts suggest (Instituted of Medicine, 2011; Benner, Stupen, Leonard & Day, 2010) that residency program be 6 months to one year in acute care and at least 3 months in non-acute settings.



Comments

The Board received over 200 comments which have not been analyzed.

Discussion and Conclusion

These findings, when compared to other years, must be interpreted with some caution as the licensees surveyed were licensed between October 1 to September 30, rather than April 1 to March 30, the time span for the other surveys. This year's population included a greater proportion of nurses who were licensed for a shorter period of time because the bulk of Arizona programs graduate students in May. One would expect to see less

employment in this group. However, 2013 survey results indicate that RN graduates had less difficulty finding employment than during any other period surveyed. Fewer survey participants identified “lack of jobs” as a reason for unemployment. Whether this is a sustainable phenomenon or the early warning sign of the next nursing shortage, remains to be seen. While there is no difference in overall employment between associate and baccalaureate prepared nurses, anecdotal evidence suggests that baccalaureate prepared nurses may have more employment opportunities in acute care hospitals. National level data suggests that baccalaureate nurses were employed more frequently (Mancino, 2013)

Newly licensed nurses who are employed are overwhelmingly satisfied with their employment, an unexpected finding when compared to job turnover statistics in the first year of employment, estimated to range between 35%-60% (Holfer & Graf, 2006). A mixture of characteristics about the work itself and employment conditions are important to newly licensed RNs. Foremost among these is the type of unit, indicating that new nurses are looking for jobs in a unit of preference. Location of the workplace, as the second highest factor, may indicate that new graduates are interested in quality of life issues and work-life balance.

The 2013 data on residency programs suggests that more employers are offering residencies, although, given the plethora of data supporting residencies, this growth is slower than expected. The length of the residency program remains sub-optimal and residencies are almost exclusively offered in acute care settings.

In conclusion, the employment outlook for newly licensed RNs appears to have improved to a small extent in 2013. New RNs were more optimistic about employment opportunities and, if employed, were satisfied with their jobs. RNs are being employed closer to the time of licensure. There was no difference in overall employment between associate degree educated nurses and baccalaureate degree educated nurses. Based on supply and demand estimates, Arizona is well positioned for the future as the supply of nurses appears to be greater than the estimated demand.

REFERENCES

- Auerbach, D., Buerhaus, P., & Staiger, D. (2011) Registered nurse supply grows faster than projected amid surge on new entrants ages 23-26. *Health Affairs*, 30 (12), 2286-2292.
- Benner, P., Sutphen, M., Leonard, V, & Day, L. (2010). *Educating nurses a call for radical transformation*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.
- Buerhaus, P., Staiger, D., and Auerbach, D. (2009) *the future of the nursing workforce in the United States: Data, trends, and implications*. Boston: Jones and Bartlett.
- Holfer, D. & Graf, E. (2006) Graduate nurse perceptions of the work experience. *Nursing Economic*. 2(3), 150-155.

- Institute of Medicine. (2011). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Mancino, D (2013). Recalculating: the “nursing shortage” needs new direction. *Dean’s Notes*, 34(3), 1-3.
- Nurse Executive Center (2008). *Bridging the preparation practice gap*. Washington, DC: Advisory Board Company.
- Randolph, P. (2010). Employment of newly licensed RN’s 2010. Available at azbn.gov/Education.
- Randolph, P, (2011). Employment of newly licensed RN’s 2011. Available at azbn.gov/Education.
- Randolph, P, (2011). Employment of newly licensed RN’s 2011. Available at azbn.gov/Education.
- Randolph, P (2013) Annual Reports from Nursing Programs—2012. Available at atazbn.gov/Education.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013). Occupational outlook handbook. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
- U.S. Census Bureau (2013) State and County Quick Facts. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/04000.html>