Ensuring a Diverse Nursing Workforce

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Background

- A diverse RN workforce is better able to provide equitable access and quality care delivery to diverse communities.
- The pandemic affected many RNs with increased workloads and high rates of burnout, and RNs from diverse racial and ethnic groups reported higher levels of intent to leave both before and during the pandemic.
- General US labor data shows little evidence of RNs leaving in substantially increased numbers following the pandemic, so understanding turnover versus leaving intentions is critical to addressing workforce issues.
- The purpose of this study is to compare employment and work characteristics of RNs before and after the pandemic, with a focus on RNs of diverse ages, races, ethnicities, and sexes, and to examine characteristics associated with leaving a primary job.

Methods

Design
- Retrospective cross-sectional study
- National Sample Survey of RNs (NSSRN)
- Nearly 50,000 RNs in the US
- Respondents provide information about current and past employment, educational preparation, and work experiences

Population
- 2018 and 2022 RN respondents who held a primary nursing job in the year prior to the survey and were not advanced practice nurses

Analysis
- Descriptive analyses of sociodemographic and work characteristics
  - AIAN/NHPI = American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander
  - LTC = long term care
- Estimates using provided sample weights
- Chi square comparisons of differences between years ('*' = significance at 0.95)
- Regression analysis examining factors associated with leaving a primary job

Limitations
- Some variables not available in both years
- 2018 weighting issues tend to underrepresent Black RNs and overrepresent Hispanic RNs

RN Workforce Shifts

Select demographics, education, and work characteristics of RNs

	2018	2022
	N=3,062,035	N=3,240,435
Mean age	46.8 ± 0.14	47.5 ± 0.28
Sex: female*	90.1%	87.0%
Race*		
AIAN/NHPI	1.2%	1.0%
Asian	5.7%	10.5%
Black	8.3%	12.4%
White	79.9%	71.1%
Multiracial	5.0%	5.1%
Ethnicity*		
not Hispanic	89.2%	91.2%
Hispanic	10.8%	8.8%
Education*		
Associates or less	61.1%	54.3%
Bachelors or more	38.9%	45.7%
Initial RN education location*		
US educated	94.6%	93.1%
Foreign educated	5.4%	6.9%
Work settings*		
Consultant/indirect care	5.5%	6.1%
Inpatient medical hospital	51.8%	53.1%
Ambulatory, community health	26.7%	27.3%
LTC, behavioral, home health	15.4%	12.6%
Remote/telehealth	0.6%	0.9%

> The % of Black, Asian, and AIAN/NHPI entrants doubled in 2022, with racially diverse RNs accounting for an additional 14.6% of entrants
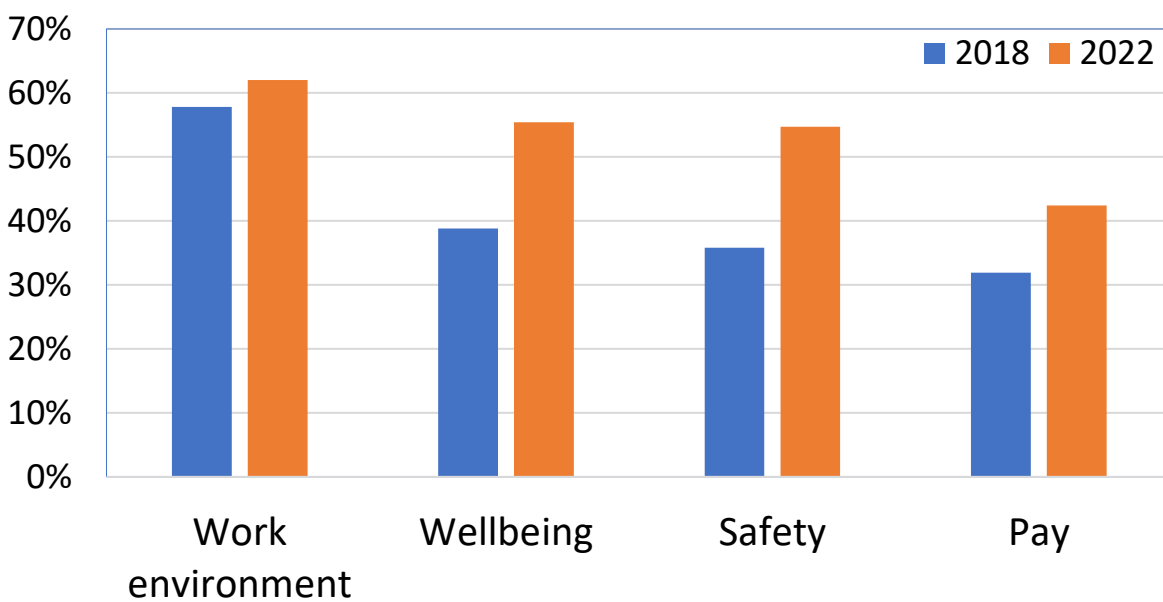
RN diversity across settings

> Increased diversity in all settings; largest gains by Black RNs in telehealth, inpatient, and ambulatory settings and by Asian RNs in inpatient, ambulatory, and LTC settings

Legend: AIAN/NHPI, Asian, Black, Multiracial, White
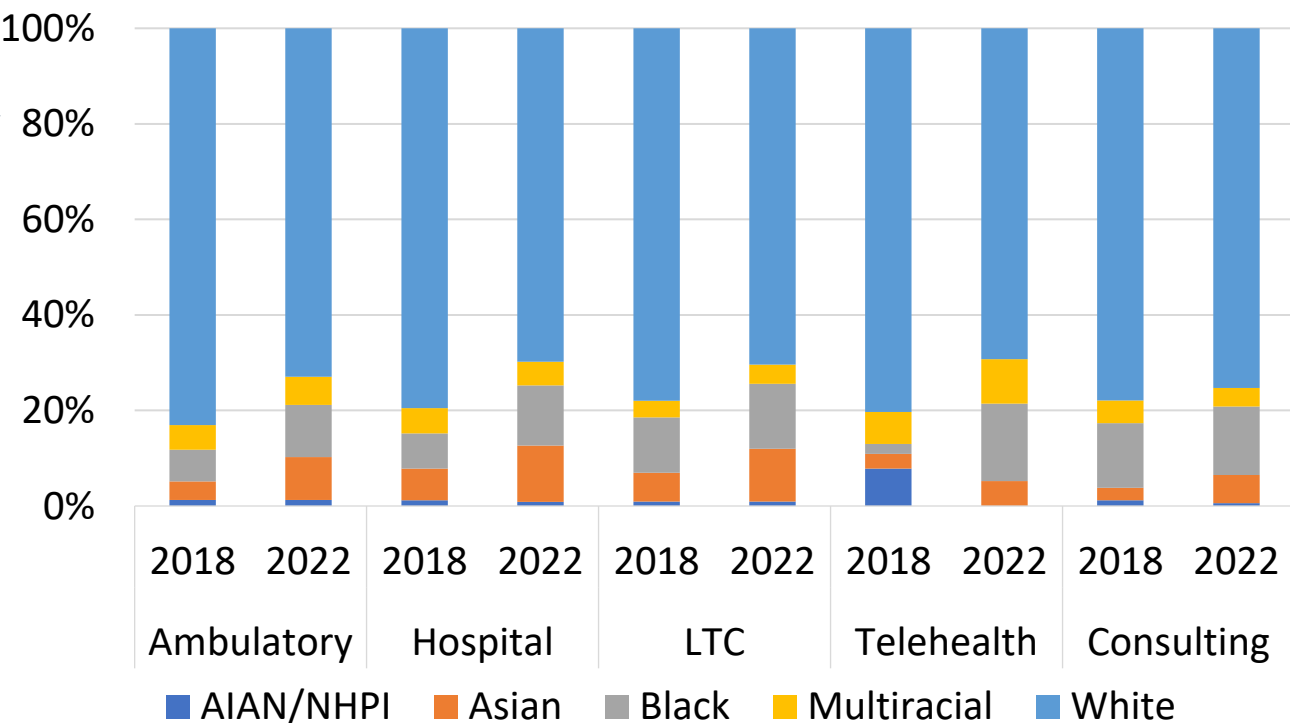
Why are RNs Leaving Jobs?

Reasons for leaving primary job for a different job

- RNs who changed jobs reported pay as a reason more often than RNs who left nursing
- 30% of RNs leaving for retirement also cited wellbeing and work environment as reasons for retiring now

Odds of leaving primary job not for retirement (2022)

INCREASED odds if
- Associate's degree or lower (1.18)
- Working part time (1.52)
- Hispanic ethnicity (1.24)

DECREASED odds if
- Foreign educated (.68)
- Ambulatory care (.87)
- Consultant/indirect care setting (.51)
- Asian race (.72)

Discussion & Implications

Vacancies versus shortages
- NSSRN data suggest an **issue with position vacancies related to workplaces and wellbeing** rather than a decrease in the number of available RNs.

RN turnover varies by setting
- The growth of diversity in settings such as ambulatory care may indicate job opportunities with more desirable schedules or benefits.
- Settings like long-term care are losing RNs and may need additional or unique resources to retain workers in that sector.

Retention
- There is a critical need to identify policies and practices that improve work environment and maintain RN wellbeing across settings.

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