



# 2019 nursing trends and salary survey results

You might be surprised by what your colleagues are saying about salary, workplace violence, and job satisfaction.

By Catherine Spader, RN

**A**merican Nurse Today's third annual Nursing Trends and Salary Survey is providing a lot of fodder for discussion among nurses. Despite ongoing challenges (such as increasing workloads) in the profession and healthcare in general, 84% of survey respondents say they would choose to become a nurse again (similar to the 85% reported last year). According to a PARADE/Yahoo! Finance Job Happiness Survey, only 41% of working Americans in general say they'd choose the same career again.

## Workplace violence: Is it getting any better?

More than half of survey respondents (59%) report having been verbally assaulted by a patient in the past 2 years, and 43% have been verbally assaulted by a patient's family member or visitor. In both cases, more than half of respondents who reported the incident weren't satisfied with how the situation was handled (51% for patient verbal assault; 55% for family verbal assault). One nurse commented, "There is too much emphasis placed on patient satisfaction,

## Survey highlights

- About **six** out of **10** respondents had a salary increase in the last year.
- **60%** of survey respondents report their workload has increased (slightly higher than the **58%** reported in 2018).
- **More than half** of respondents who were victims of violence, verbal assault, sexual harassment, or bullying on the job aren't satisfied with how the situation was handled.
- About **eight** out of **10** respondents are satisfied with their jobs and would pick nursing again as a career.
- **5,262** RNs responded to the survey.

and nurses do not feel empowered to have disruptive family members removed from the bedside or facility.”

In addition, physical violence from patients may be on the rise. Nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents have been physically assaulted by a patient, as compared to 20% last year. A total of 72% of respondents who were physically assaulted reported the incident, but only 44% were satisfied with how it was handled. One respondent said,



### What's most important to nurses?

Respondents were asked to pick three aspects of nursing that are most important to them. The most popular responses were\*:

- Salary ..... **70%**
- Providing patient care ..... **63%**
- Opportunity for career growth ..... **54%**
- Flexible hours ..... **53%**

Nurses added 283 additional responses, including autonomy, pride and satisfaction, vacation time, job security, making a difference, teamwork/unit culture, and providing current research-based education.

\*Answered: 3,387

“Workplace violence needs to be addressed, with nurses being confident that any reporting will not result in retaliation, but support and action.”

### Bullying and verbal assault by coworkers

Survey results show that bullying and verbal assault continue to be a problem in the healthcare workplace. The prevalence of verbal assault among coworkers hasn't changed much from the 2018

### Nipping workplace violence in the bud

More organizations are addressing workplace violence by creating protocols and offering staff training.

- **90%** of respondents report that a protocol exists in their workplace for handling violence.
- More than three quarters of respondents (**76%**) have received de-escalation training, with **83%** saying it is helpful.
- Many respondents (**73%**) who received training have had the opportunity to apply it in practice.

One respondent's experience: “My employer has implemented a harassment-free work environment, which includes policies on mutual respect, prohibiting sexual harassment, and [abusive] conduct prevention.”



### Nurses speak out about bullying and workplace violence

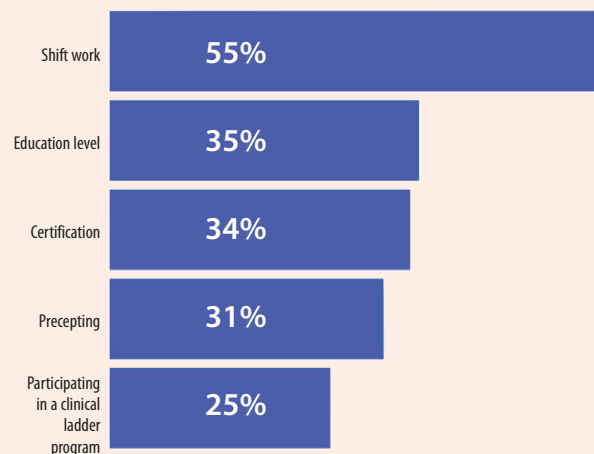
A total of 1,516 respondents voiced their feelings and experiences on these hot-button issues.

- “The amount of work and the constant shortage of nursing staff add to the risk of being a victim of violence.”
- “Hopefully, the new generation of nurses will help eradicate the ‘nurses eat their young’ mentality, and moving forward, will adopt a supportive work environment.”
- “I shouldn't have to be terrified and anxious to come to work.”
- “Nurses are still allowed to be verbally abused and assaulted with no consequence to the perpetrator. Reporting something is just paperwork, not action.”
- “Leadership has to be aware and has to take a zero-tolerance stance in order not to perpetuate the [bullying] culture.”
- “I am glad that there is finally effort towards reducing workplace violence against nurses and not just expecting us to take it as a part of our professional nursing duties.”
- “File a written report. Documentation is key to resolving acute and chronic issues.”
- “I think the hospital is more concerned with patient satisfaction than our safety.”

## Salary sweeteners

Answered: 3,524

Respondents report receiving additional compensation for the following:



survey. In 2019, 35% of respondents say they had been verbally assaulted by a healthcare provider in the past 2 years, as compared to 36% last year. A total of 64% reported the incident, but only 25% were satisfied with how the situation was handled.

Nearly 46% of nurses say they have intervened when they witnessed bullying, and 77% reported the incident. However, only 48% were satisfied with how the situation was handled. According to one nurse respondent, "More needs to be done to stop nurse-on-nurse bullying. Managers need more training, and victims need to quit being blamed as part of the problem when they report it."

## Me Too: Sexual harassment on the job

The percentage of responding nurses who experienced sexual harassment has dropped slightly from 10.5% last year to 9% this year. However, just as in other work environments, sexual harassment in healthcare is thought to be underreported and not handled satisfactorily. The survey found that 70% of respondents who were harassed didn't report the incident. Of those who did report it, many (69%) were dissatisfied with how the situation was handled. Fear of retaliation may be another factor. For example, one nurse stated, "I reported a physician for sexual harassment, and I was terminated after 21 years."

The sexual harassment of male nurses by females also may be underreported. One respondent said, "As a male, I get sexually harassed by female coworkers, and I'm embarrassed to report it because I feel it will make me less masculine."

## Salary is sweet

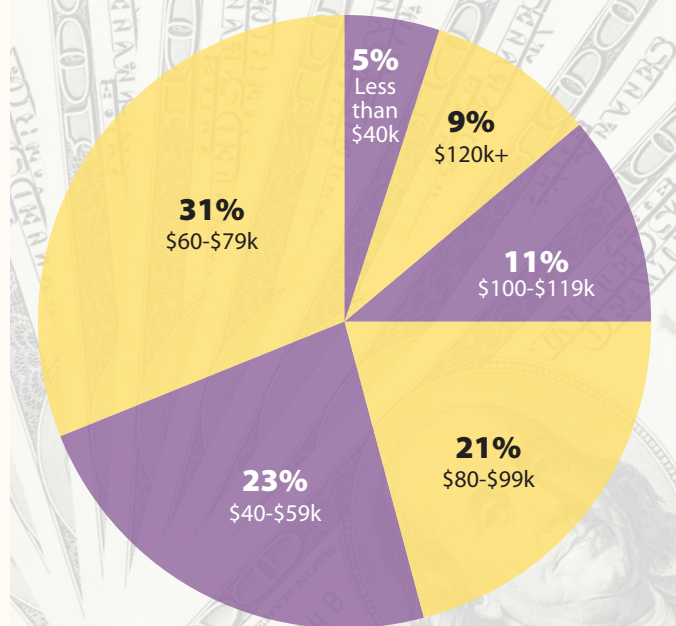
Demand for nurses is putting them in the driver's seat when it comes to salary. Respondents report that 62% (65% of managers, 60% of clinical nurses) have had a salary increase in the past year, up 2% from last year's survey. Despite this, compensation still may not be keeping up with the cost of living and the value nurses put on their skills. Only six out of 10 respondents say they're satisfied with their salaries.

## Current job satisfaction

Eight out of 10 survey respondents say they're sat-

## How much do nurses make?\*

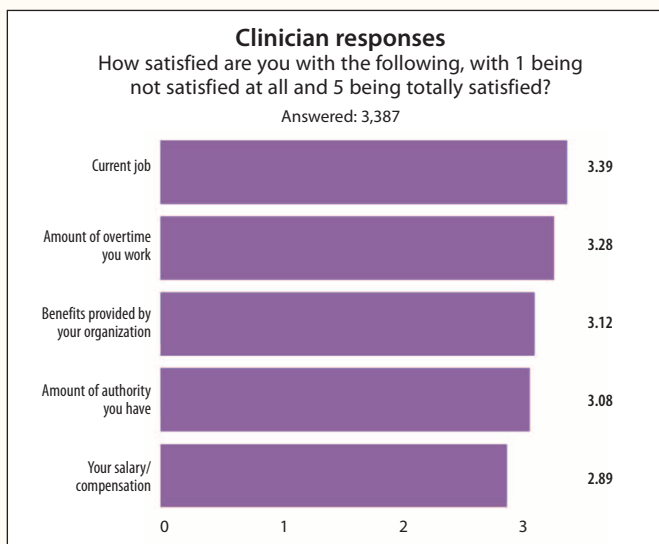
Answered: 4,424



\*Current base annual salary (before taxes and not including bonuses or overtime pay)

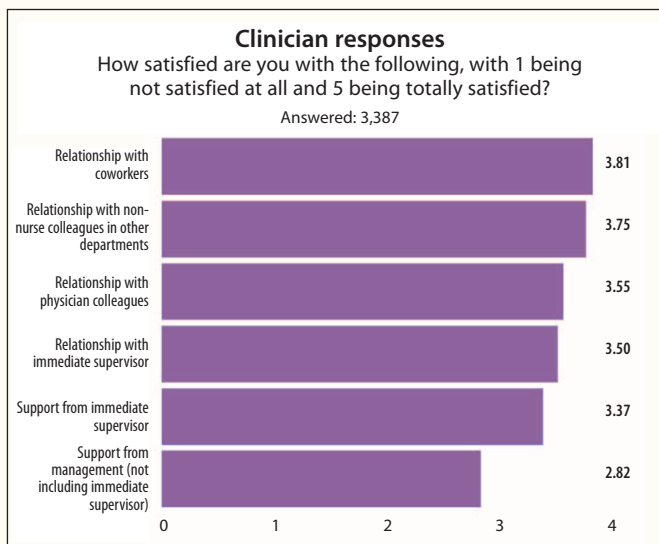
## Manager vs. clinician satisfaction: Job, salary, and benefits

Managers and clinicians were asked to rate their satisfaction with their jobs, salaries, and benefits. Here's how they compare.



## Manager vs. clinician satisfaction: Peer and supervisor relationships

Managers and clinicians were asked to rate their satisfaction with their peer and supervisor relationships. Here's how they compare.



isfied with their current jobs. This corresponds with the 84% of respondents who say they would choose nursing as a career again. In comparison, about half (49%) of American workers in general say they are very satisfied with their current job, according to the 2016 The State of American Jobs study by Pew Research Center.

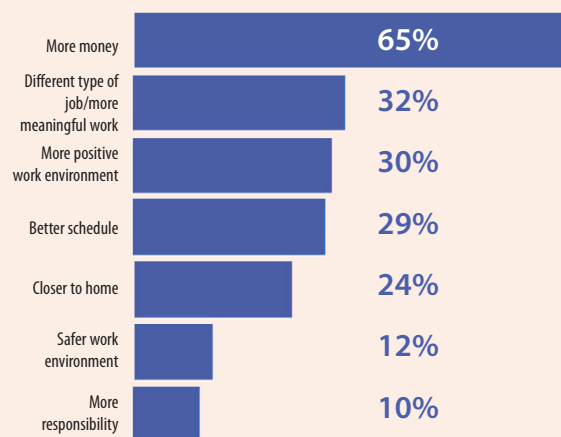
Satisfaction with other important factors related to job satisfaction varies:

- 9 out of 10 respondents are satisfied with their relationship with their peers.
- 7 out of 10 are satisfied with the amount of authority they have.
- 6 out of 10 are satisfied with the support they get from management who is not an immediate supervisor.



## What would make you change jobs?

We asked nurses who aren't currently looking for another employer what opportunities would make them change their minds. Here's what they said.\*



\*Answered: 3,903

## How are the benefits?

Most, but not all, survey respondents report receiving some employment benefits. Most receive major health benefits, including sick and vacation time (86%), health insurance (82%), dental insurance (77%), and retirement contributions (76%). Less than 60% receive bonuses, disability insurance, professional liability insurance, and reimbursement for tuition and certification. Only 5% of respondents receive no benefits, but a few of these nurses commented that they work part-time, as needed, or per diem. The percentages of all major benefits are similar among both managers and clinical nurses.

Other benefits respondents mentioned include loan reimbursement, local business discounts, gym memberships, flex spending, travel expenses, and life insurance.

## Workplace longevity and retirement

Although recruiting nurses remains an ongoing challenge, the good news is that only 10% of respondents plan to retire in the next 2 years. Almost 57% of clinicians and 52% of managers aren't planning to retire until after 2025. In addition, 42% of respondents say they plan to stay with their current employer for 5 years or more. However, in a different question, 76% say they're currently seeking a job with another employer or plan to in the next 3 months. Of those who are planning to stay, 65% would change their minds for more money.

In total, 71% of respondents have been with their current employer for less than 10 years (more than half for less than 5 years).

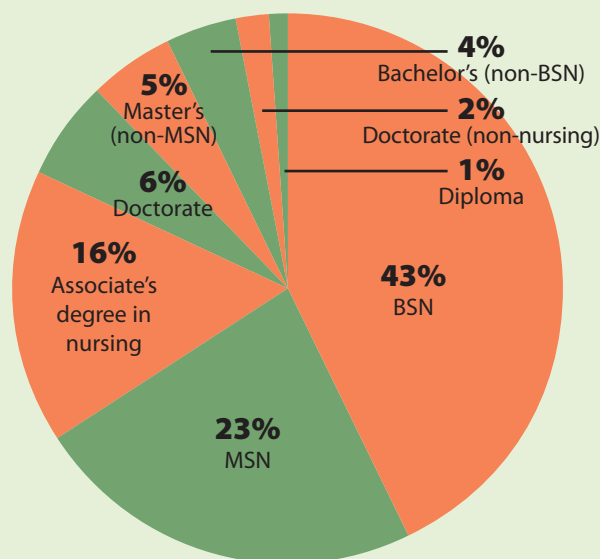
## Nurse managers share their perspective

Most survey respondents who are managers (77%) work in a clinical setting, such as a hospital, ambulatory care, or extended care, and 8% work in academia. Almost 25% di-

## How educated are nurses?

Answered: 4,469

Most survey respondents have a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN), followed by a master's of science in nursing (MSN), with 24% reporting that they're currently in school and 15% are planning to enroll in the next 6 months.



**36%** of clinical nurses responding are certified in their specialty.

**17.5%** of managers responding are certified in nursing leadership.

rectly supervise fewer than five employees, and 16% directly supervise more than 50 employees. Most managers (88%) report working 40 or more hours a week. Many of them regularly work long hours, with 23% working 46 to 50 hours a week, and 6% working more than 60 hours a week. Only 12% work less than 40 hours per week. Two thirds of responding nurse managers have been in their role for less than 10 years.

Staffing continues to be challenging for managers, and difficulty filling positions may be increasing. The survey found that 54% of respondents have seen an increase in open positions in the past 12 months, as compared to 52% last year. Additionally, 64% of this year's respondents (vs. 63% last year) report that recruiting nurses is more difficult, and 56% say that turnover has increased.

Other key takeaways from manager respondents include:

- **8 out of 10 are satisfied with their current job, but fewer are satisfied with compensation and opportunities for advancement.**
- **More than half (54%) aren't eligible for a bonus.**
- **9 out of 10 are satisfied with their relationships with peers, but less satisfied with support from management.**
- **19% of nurse managers use an acuity-based staffing system, but these respondents only include managers who work in a hospital setting.**



### Who took the survey?

**5,262** RNs responded to the survey.

- **90%** female
- **74%** clinical nurses in a variety of settings
- **26%** nurse managers
- **85%** work full-time

### Age of respondents

25-39	29%
40-54	36%
55-65	28%

### Geographic distribution

Northeast	18%
Midwest	22%
West	24%
South	36%

### The clinical nurse experience

More than half of clinical nurses who took the survey identify as clinical/staff nurses (57%). About nine out of 10 of all clinicians work in a clinical setting, such as a hospital, ambulatory care, or extended care, and 60% work in acute care. Respondents included 7% advanced practice nurses, 77% of whom are nurse practitioners. The most common specialties include medical-surgical, critical care, cardiovascular, emergency care, psychiatric/mental health, pediatrics, and perioperative services.

Most respondents work full-time, with 82% working 35 hours per week or more. About half of clinical nurse respondents work no overtime or less than 1 hour of overtime each week, and 22% typically work 1 to 3 hours of overtime. Mandatory overtime is required of 15% of respondents. About half work 12-hour shifts on a regular basis.

Other key takeaways from clinical nurse respondents include:

- **8 out of 10 are satisfied with their current job, but fewer are satisfied with compensation.**
- **9 out of 10 are satisfied with relationships with peers, but fewer are satisfied with support from immediate supervisors and management.**
- **Almost 9 out of 10 are satisfied with their relationships with physicians. ★**

Catherine Spader is an author and healthcare writer/editor based in Littleton, Colorado.