

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Findings from the Annual Survey of Schools of Nursing Academic Year 2010-2011

NLN Annual Survey Finds Unremitting Demand for Entry into Programs While Student Demographics Continue to Shift

For more than 50 years the NLN Annual Survey of Schools of Nursing has generated national statistics on the full breadth of US nursing education programs, including PN/VN, pre-licensure RN, and graduate nursing programs. As demand for data grows, the NLN is continually revising its research methodology in order to produce and deliver the highest quality data to those who need it to make critical decisions. For more information on the NLN Annual Survey methodology, please visit NLN DataView™ at www.nln.org/dataview.

New on NLN DataView!
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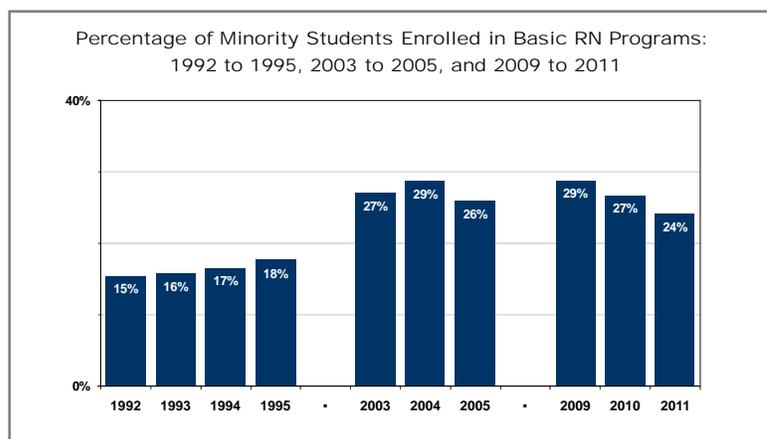


African-American enrollment drops; Hispanic representation, while still lagging, inches upward. The percentage of racial-ethnic minority students enrolled in pre-licensure RN programs has declined steadily over the past two years – ultimately dropping from a high of 29 percent in 2009 to 24 percent in 2011. The majority of that decline stems from a steep reduction in the percentage of African-American students enrolled in associate degree nursing programs, which dropped by almost 5 percent to 8.6 percent in just two years. BSN programs saw a small, but not significant drop, in African-American enrollment, down from 13 to 12 percent. Inversely, diploma programs saw a sharp rise in African-American enrollments, but because they represent just 4 percent of all basic RN programs the impact of diploma schools on the overall composition of the US nursing student population is relatively minor.

Hundreds of Annual Survey charts, maps, and data tables are now available at the **NLN DataView™** website, www.nln.org/dataview.

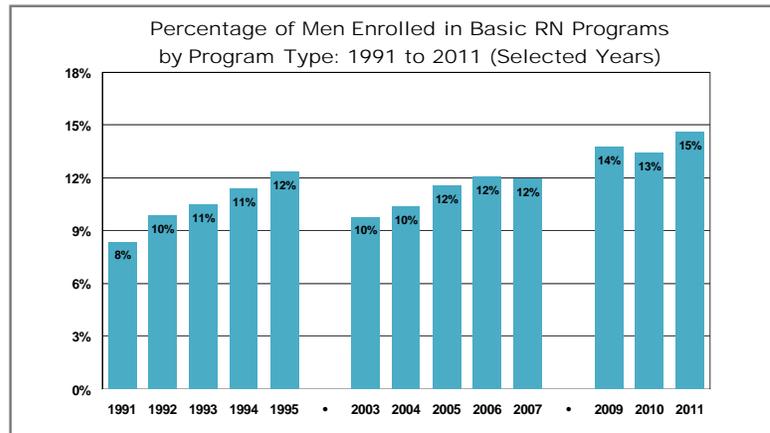
This fall off in African-American enrollment in nursing programs takes place at a moment when the percentage of African-American high school graduates nationally was inching upward, reaching a peak of 15.4 percent in 2010-11. Demographers predict that African-American representation among high school graduates will now decline, making the task of recruiting a diverse nursing work force more challenging in the future.

While the proportions of many minorities in pre-licensure RN programs are just slightly below the percentage of minorities found among US college students in general, Hispanics remain dramatically underrepresented among nursing students. Representing a mere 6 percent of associate degree and baccalaureate nursing students, Hispanics were enrolled in basic nursing programs at less than half the rate at which they were enrolled in undergraduate programs overall.

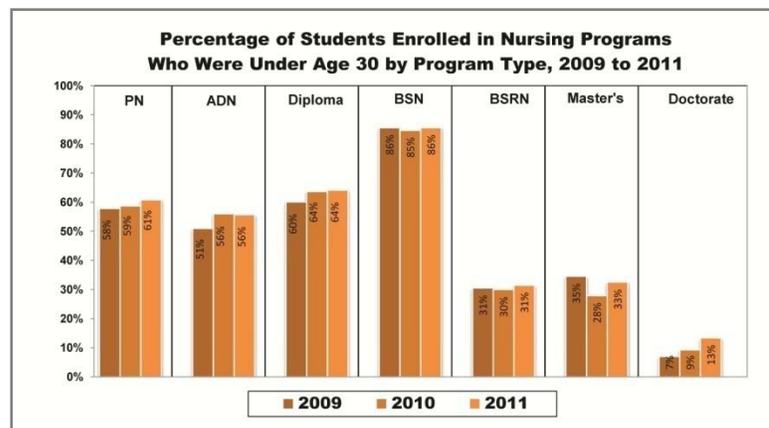


On a more promising note, the percentage of Hispanics enrolled in post-licensure programs has nearly doubled over the past two years at every level. Hispanic enrollment rose from five to 12 percent in BSRN programs, from 5 to 10 percent in master’s programs, and 3 to 6 percent in doctoral programs. Hispanic enrollment in PN programs also jumped – rising from 6 percent in 2009 to over 11 percent in 2011.

At 15 percent, men enrolled in basic RN programs remained at the historic high reached at the start of the current economic recession. Across all levels of nursing education approximately one in seven, or 13-15 percent of nursing students, was male in 2011, with the exception of doctoral programs where only 9 percent of students were male.



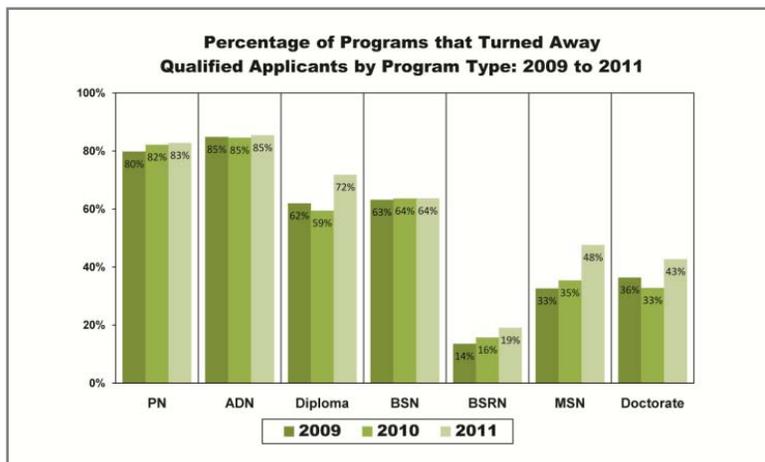
Age of doctoral students continues to fall. After years of concern over the aging nursing workforce and the imminent widespread retirements of both RNs and nurse educators, there is evidence that the trend toward late entry into nursing may be reversing. Between 2009 and 2010 the percentage of nursing students who were over age 30 declined in every type of nursing program except master’s. Among the majority of program types those age declines stabilized but did not deepen in 2011. However, in a notable exception, the fraction of doctoral students over age 30 continued to drop last year, declining from 93 percent in 2009 to 87 percent in 2011.



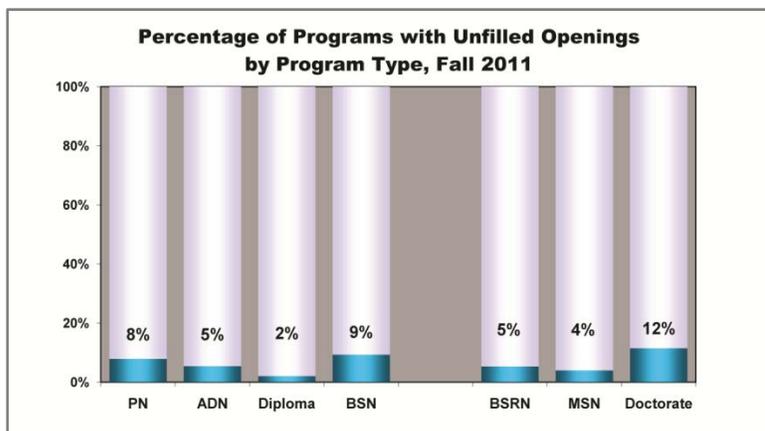
Competition grows for entry into master’s and doctoral programs. Despite a reported tightening of the job market for entry level RNs over the past few years, demand for spots in nursing education programs continued to outstrip supply in 2011. This was particularly true in associate degree programs, over two-thirds of which were “highly selective” in 2011. At 47 percent the fraction of BSN programs falling into the highly selective category also remained at a near-term high.

Additional evidence of a scarcity of vacancies in nursing programs emerges from program acceptance rates (a.k.a. selectivity rates), which were either down or steady in 2011 across all nursing program types. Whereas the average US four-year college accepted 66 percent of applicants in 2010, the overall acceptance rate for BSN programs was only 53 percent last year.

Although applicants seeking to enter post-licensure programs found more spots available than their pre-licensure counterparts, competition is increasing. In 2011, just over one in four MSN programs and about one in six doctoral programs were highly selective, and only 7 percent of BSRN programs met that criteria. However, the percentage of programs that turned away qualified applicants rose among every post-licensure program type between 2009 and 2011. Most strikingly percentage of MSN programs turning away qualified applicants jumped by 15 percent over the past two years from just one in three programs to almost half in 2011.



Capacity is constrained by shortage of faculty and clinical settings, but some spots still go unfilled. Lack of faculty remains the key obstacle to expanding the capacity of nursing programs, although the percentage of schools that pointed to a faculty shortage fell off slightly over the past two years from its 2009 peak. Among pre-licensure RN and PN programs, a lack of clinical placement settings continues to be a critical constraint, cited as the primary impediment to expansion by almost one-half of ADN programs (48 percent), 42 percent of PN programs, and 31 percent of BSN programs.



With a resurgence of demand for spots in nursing programs, the percentage of programs reporting that they were unable to fill all available spots dropped precipitously across all program types between 2010 and 2011. Still, a significant percentage of programs did operate at less than full capacity, most notably about 1 in ten doctoral, BSN and PN programs did not fill all seats in 2011. Schools most often cite a lack of qualified students as the primary impediment to filling vacancies in their doctoral programs. By contrast, tuition cost was the main obstacle to filling seats in BSRN and MSN programs, cited by about one-third of schools.

Acknowledgement. The NLN is extremely grateful to the hundreds of schools of nursing and thousands of nursing education programs that contribute their time and effort each year in order to make this invaluable resource available. Without their generous support, this project would not be possible.

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