



## 2007 SURVEY OF NURSE STUDENTS



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## **2007 SURVEY OF NURSE STUDENTS**

### **BASED ON 2006 DATA**

AMN Healthcare is a national health care staffing firm specializing in the temporary staffing of registered nurses and other clinical health professionals. Periodically, the firm conducts surveys of registered nurses to learn more about their career goals and concerns.

Following is a review of the results of AMN Healthcare's 2007 Survey of Nurse Students. The survey was conducted to learn more about the future career plans of nurse students, their concerns as they consider entering the nursing profession, and their awareness of "travel nursing" as a career option.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The 2007 Survey of Nurse Students was mailed to 10,000 nurse students in associate degree programs nationwide. Surveys were mailed in May of 2006 and 1,626 completed surveys were received by August, 2006. The list of nurses was selected at random and provided to AMN Healthcare by a national medical database firm. Surveys were scanned and manually checked against the machine-generated results for accuracy. Final survey results were released in April, 2007.

### **ABOUT AMN HEALTHCARE**

AMN Healthcare is the largest temporary healthcare staffing company in the United States. The company is the largest nationwide provider of travel nurse staffing services, locum tenens (temporary physician staffing) and physician permanent placement services and also a leading nationwide provider of allied healthcare professionals. AMN Healthcare recruits healthcare professionals both nationally and internationally and places them on variable lengths of assignments and in permanent positions at acute-care hospitals, physician practice groups and other healthcare facilities throughout the United States.

## Results Summary

Total surveys mailed: 10,000

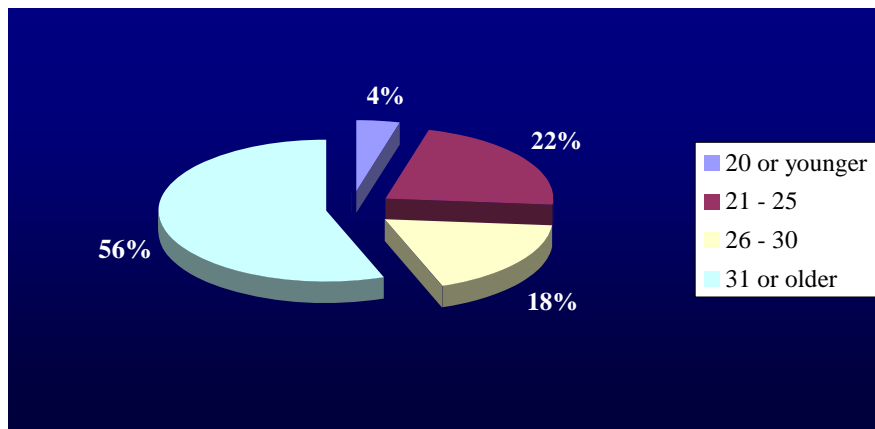
Completed surveys: 1,626

Response rate: 16.26%

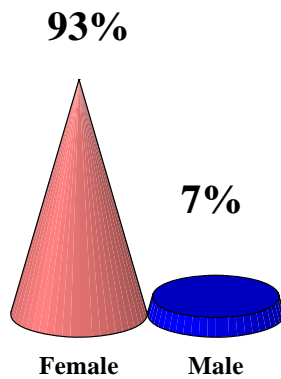
## REVIEW OF SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

### Profile of Respondents

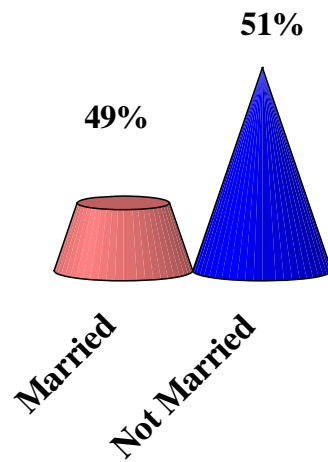
*Age distribution of survey respondents:*



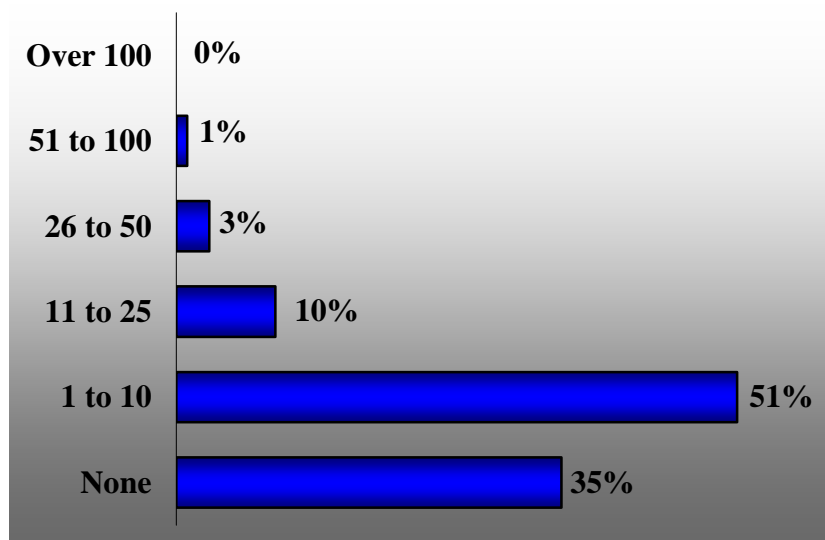
*Respondents by gender:*



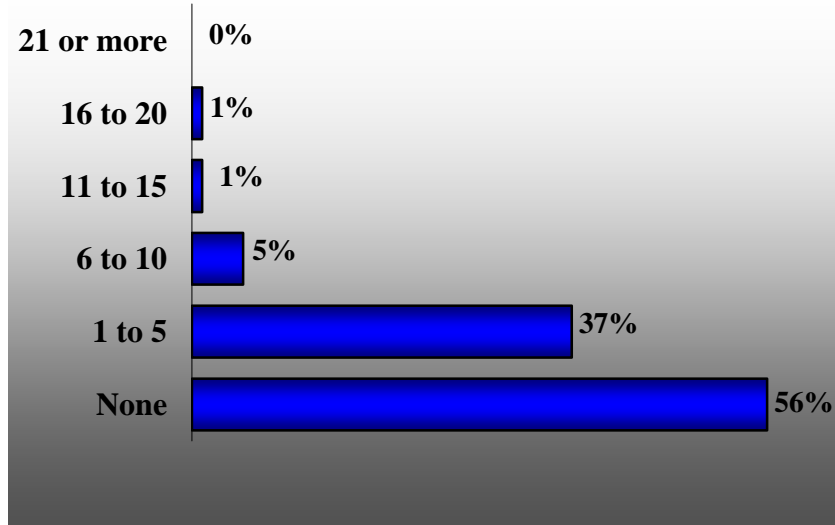
***Respondents by Marital Status:***



***1. During the course of your nurse training, about how many times have you been contacted by hospitals, staffing firms, or others interested in recruiting you?***



2. During the last 30 days, about how many times have you been contacted by people trying to recruit you?



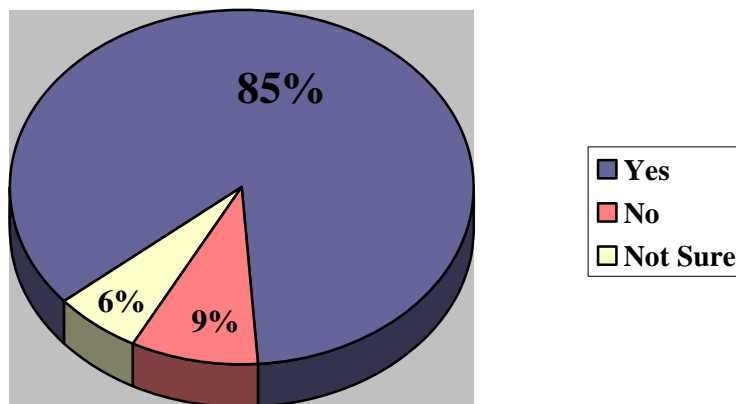
3. What are the most important ways in which you learn about nursing jobs? Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being the most important and 3 least important.

	<i>Most Important</i> 1	2	<i>Least Important</i> 3
<b>Personal networking</b>	63%	30%	7%
<b>Your training program</b>	48%	38%	14%
<b>Newspapers</b>	37%	39%	24%
<b>Internet job sites</b>	31%	41%	28%
<b>Nurse journals</b>	21%	43%	36%
<b>Nurse staffing firms</b>	16%	44%	40%
<b>Nurse societies</b>	13%	46%	41%

4. As you consider nursing jobs, how important are the following?

	<i>Most Important</i> <b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<i>Least Important</i> <b>3</b>
<b>Quality medical facilities</b>	84%	15%	1%
<b>Nurse to patient ratios</b>	80%	18%	2%
<b>Work hours/Shifts</b>	69%	27%	4%
<b>Pay rates</b>	66%	31%	3%
<b>Geographic location</b>	63%	31%	6%
<b>Supportive physicians</b>	59%	36%	5%
<b>Proximity to family</b>	58%	33%	9%
<b>Challenging work environment</b>	47%	48%	5%
<b>Ability to travel</b>	18%	33%	49%

5. Are you aware of “travel nursing” – an arrangement in which nurses work for staffing firms on temporary assignments (usually for 13 weeks at a time)?



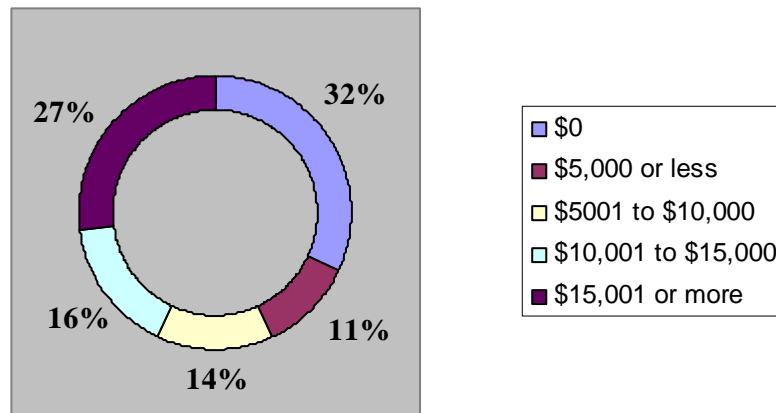
**6. Which type of job are you most likely to take when you complete your training?**

- A permanent position with a hospital, medical group or other facility . . . **81%**
- A “travel nurse” job . . . **9%**
- A non-nursing job . . . **0%**
- A per-diem position . . . **5%**
- Other . . . **5%**

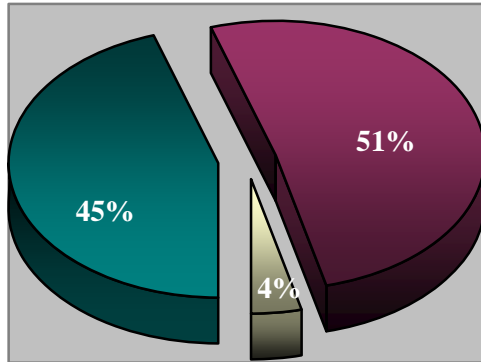
**7. What annual salary do you expect to earn in your first year working as a nurse?**

\$20,000 or less	1%
\$20,001 to \$25,000	2%
\$25,001 to \$30,000	5%
\$30,001 to \$35,000	13%
\$35,001 to \$40,000	22%
\$40,001 to \$45,000	19%
\$45,001 to \$50,000	16%
\$50,001 to \$55,000	10%
\$55,001 to \$60,000	6%
\$60,001 to \$65,000	3%
\$65,001 or more	3%

**8. How much do you currently owe in student loans?**

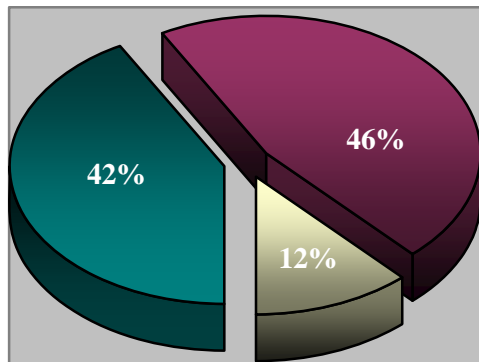


9. *How prepared are you to treat patients?*



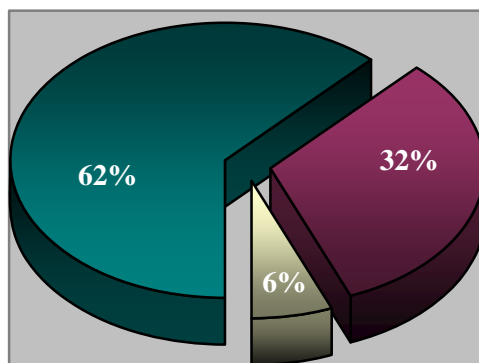
- Fully prepared to treat patients
- Somewhat prepared to treat patients
- Concerned/hesitant about treating patients

10. *How confident do you feel about working with physicians?*



- Fully confident about working with physicians
- Somewhat confident about working with physicians
- Concerned/anxious about working with physicians

11. *How confident do you feel about working with experienced/veteran nurses?*



- Fully confident about working with experienced nurses
- Somewhat confident about working with experienced nurses
- Concerned/anxious about working with experienced nurses

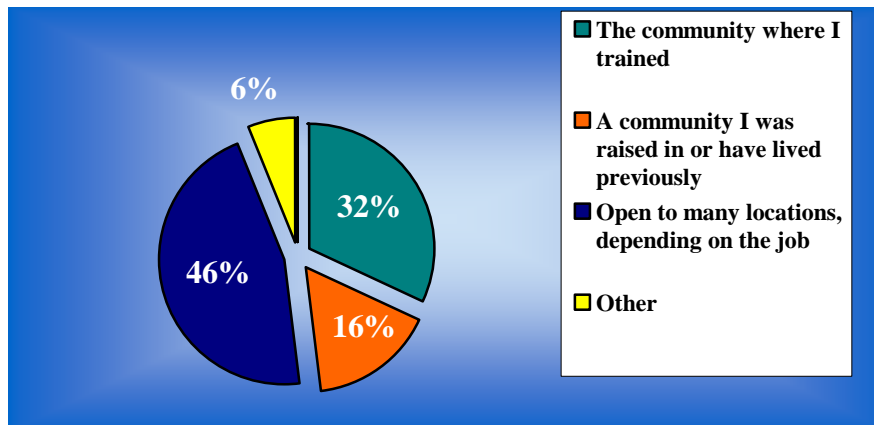
**12. What are your concerns as you prepare to begin your nursing career?**

	<i>Most Important</i> <b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<i>Least Important</i> <b>3</b>
<b>Pressure not to make mistakes</b>	62%	31%	7%
<b>Pay rates</b>	45%	46%	9%
<b>Rude/hostile nurses</b>	42%	42%	16%
<b>Rude/hostile physicians</b>	36%	46%	18%
<b>Burn-out</b>	37%	42%	21%
<b>Long hours</b>	28%	46%	26%
<b>Dealing with injuries/death</b>	20%	42%	38%
<b>Contracting illness/disease</b>	17%	44%	39%
<b>Sexual harassment</b>	3%	18%	79%

**13. Based on population, in what size community would you like to work in?**

<b>10,000 or less</b>	<b>4.7%</b>
<b>10,001 to 25,000</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>25,001 to 50,000</b>	<b>15.1%</b>
<b>50,001 to 100,000</b>	<b>21.3%</b>
<b>100,001 to 250,000</b>	<b>16.9%</b>
<b>250,001 to 500,000</b>	<b>17.2 %</b>
<b>500,001 to 1 million</b>	<b>10.3%</b>
<b>Over 1 million</b>	<b>5.4%</b>

**14. Where do you plan to work?**



**15. If you were to begin our education again, would you study nursing or would you select another field?**

Study nursing . . . **91%**

Select another field . . . **9%**

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

Nurse students today enjoy one of the most robust job markets available in any professional field. With nurse vacancies at hospitals running at over 8%, according to the American Hospital Association, and with nurse shortages projected to increase in severity in the next 15 years, nurse students can anticipate a great demand for their services for years to come.

Nevertheless, AMN Healthcare’s 2007 Survey of Nurse Students reveals, among other findings, that nurse students are not being recruited as aggressively as might be expected. Over one-third of nurse students surveyed (35%) indicated they had not received a single recruitment solicitation in the course of their nurse training. An additional 51% had received from 1 to 10 recruitment solicitations during their nurse training. A small minority (4%) indicated they had received 26 or more recruitment solicitations during their training.

By contrast, in a survey of resident physicians completing their final year of training conducted by Merritt, Hawkins & Associates (a division of AMN Healthcare), 52% of medical residents surveyed indicated they had received 50 or more recruitment solicitations during the course of their training. Only 4% indicated they had received 10 or fewer recruitment solicitations.

The Survey of Nurse Students suggests that hospitals and other nurse employers have an opportunity to reach nurse students with recruitment solicitations while they are still in training and are generally not yet being recruited aggressively.

### **LEARNING ABOUT NURSE JOBS**

Nurse students surveyed were asked to rank the ways in which they learn about jobs, from most important methods or resources to least. “Personal networking” was the most highly rated method of learning about jobs, followed by the nurses’ “training program.” Hospitals and other employers seeking nurses therefore may wish to put additional resources into developing relationships with nurse training programs through dissemination of written information, speaking presentations and other methods of contact.

Student nurses cited “newspapers” as the third most important way they learn about nurse jobs, suggesting that many student nurses are looking at the local market for jobs rather than regional markets or the national market. Local newspaper advertising would appear to be a must for employers targeting student nurses. In addition, nurse recruiters may wish to expand their range by advertising in large daily newspapers outside of their region.

The “internet” was rated as the fourth most important resource for finding jobs, presenting a forum for recruiters that is national and even international in scope. “Nursing journals” were rated as a somewhat distant fifth most important method for finding jobs, suggesting that nurse students may be too early in their careers to read clinical and practice-oriented publications directed toward RNs.

“Nurse staffing firms” were rated as the sixth most important resource for learning about nurse jobs. Most nurse staffing firms, including AMN Healthcare, are engaged in temporary or “travel” staffing. In general, clients will accept only experienced nurses for travel assignments, so nurse staffing firms do not typically make aggressive efforts to recruit nurse students. “Nurse societies,” which also tend to focus on in-practice nurses, were ranked as the seventh most important method by which student nurses learn about jobs.

### **WHAT STUDENTS SEEK IN A NURSING JOB**

Understanding the needs of student nurses is an important step in recruiting them. What do student nurses rank as important when they consider nursing jobs? The survey strongly suggests that the quality of the working environment is of primary importance to nurse students, superseding pay or the geographic location of the job.

The three factors student nurses ranked as the most important as they consider a job center on the quality of the workplace. The number one factor cited was “quality medical facilities,” followed by “nurse-to-patient ratios,” and “work hours/shifts.” “Pay”

was ranked as fourth most important and “geographic location” was ranked fifth. Nurse students surveyed appear to be seeking excellent medical facilities, settings where they are not overwhelmed with patients and the opportunity to work favorable hours or shifts. Pay rates have increased for nurses in recent years, and today it is quality of practice that may be the defining attraction of nurse positions for student nurses. Hospitals and other employers therefore may wish to make working conditions the main “carrot” they use in attracting nurses to their facilities.

“Supportive physicians,” another work environment factor, was ranked the sixth most important job consideration factor, followed by “proximity to family,” “challenging work environment,” and “ability to travel.”

### **TYPES OF JOBS, SALARY EXPECTATIONS, STUDENT LOANS**

In an encouraging sign, given the shortage of nurses, none of the student nurses surveyed indicated that they plan to take a “non-nursing job” when they complete their training. Though many nurses eventually do leave nursing for other types of jobs, the survey suggests that nurse students are unanimous in their intention to pursue jobs in the field in which they trained.

The great majority of those surveyed (85%) are aware of “travel nursing,” an arrangement in which nurses work for temporary staffing firms such as AMN Healthcare on temporary assignments, usually lasting 13 weeks. Nine percent of those surveyed indicated they plan to work as travel nurses when they complete their training, though the majority (81%) indicated they plan to take permanent positions with a hospital, medical group or other facility. Five percent of those surveyed intended to work “per diem,” an arrangement where nurses work for one or two days, usually for a local hospital or medical group.

Currently, only a small minority of nurses work as travelers. The fact that 9% of nurse students surveyed expressed interest in working as a traveler suggests that travel nursing may be growing in appeal among younger nurses.

The majority of student nurses surveyed (78%) expect to earn \$35,000 or more in their first year working as a nurse. Thirty-seven percent expect to earn \$45,000 or more while 22% expect to earn \$50,000 or more. In general, student nurse salary expectations are in line with market realities as pay for all nurses has steadily increased in recent years. According to the Federal Bureau of Health Professions, wages for registered nurses increased by 14% from 2000-04, with the average annual income for all nurses in 2004 at \$57,785.

A competitive salary will help many nurse students pay for their educational debt. Most student nurses surveyed (78%) owe at least \$5,000 in student loans, 43% owe \$10,000 or more in student loans, and 27% owe \$15,000 or more. Some form of student loan forgiveness therefore may be an important tool in recruiting nurse students.

## **AREAS OF CONCERN FOR STUDENT NURSES**

Student nurses surveyed expressed some ambivalence concerning how ready they are to take up their professional duties. Forty-five percent of those surveyed indicated they are “fully prepared to treat patients.” However, the majority (51%) indicated they are only “somewhat prepared to treat patients,” while 4% said they are “concerned/hesitant” about treating patients.

In addition, some nurse students surveyed are anxious about working with physicians. While 42% indicated they are “fully confident about working with physicians,” 46% said they are only “somewhat confident about working with physicians,” while 12% said they are “concerned/anxious” about working with physicians. Nurse students are relatively more confident about working with experienced nurses. Sixty-two percent indicated they are “fully confident about working with experienced nurses,” while only 32% said they are “somewhat confident about working with experienced nurses,” and 6% said they are “anxious/concerned about working with experienced nurses.”

When asked to rate their concerns as they prepare to begin their nursing careers, 62% of nurse students ranked “pressure not to make mistakes” as a “most important” concern. This underlines the growing patient care responsibilities of nurses and the increased complexity of their jobs. It is generally understood that physicians are under pressure to “do no harm.” Nurses must deal with similar pressure

“Pay” was rated at a “most important” concern by 45% of nurse students, while “rude/hostile nurses” was rated as a “most important” concern by 42% of nurse students. While pay is clearly an important concern for nurse students, workplace factors such as pressure, burn-out, and nurse/physician interaction also are leading causes for concern among student nurses. Nurse recruiters who can address these concerns and can explain how these stress factors are ameliorated at their facilities will be better positioned to recruit student nurses.

About half of student nurses surveyed (48%) plan to work either where they trained or in a community where they have previously lived, while 46% are “open to many locations, depending on the job.” To reach the broadest number of potential candidates, nurse recruiters must be adept at convincing nurse students to look beyond narrow geographic preferences.

## **WOULD THEY DO IT AGAIN?**

When asked if they would study nursing if they had their education to begin again, the great majority of nurse students surveyed (91%) answered yes. This reflects the generally more positive outlook nursing has achieved as a profession in recent years. In years past, it was difficult to attract students to nurse training programs. Today, the challenge is finding enough faculty to train the many students applying to nurse training programs.

**For further information about this survey and other health care staffing trends, contact:**

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