The Hospital Nurse Staffing Survey (HNSS) assesses the size and effects of the nursing shortage in hospitals, Texas' largest employer of nurses. During the spring of 2014, the TCNWS administered the HNSS to 619 Texas hospitals. These included for-profit, nonprofit, public, and Texas Department of State Health Services-operated hospitals, as well as hospitals linked to academic institutions; military hospitals were not surveyed. The facilities surveyed were general acute care, psychiatric, special, and rehabilitation hospitals. 428 (69.1%) hospitals responded to the survey. The hospitals that completed the 2014 HNSS were representative of all Texas hospitals by region and bed size.

This report presents the relevant findings of this survey related to hiring practices at Texas hospitals.
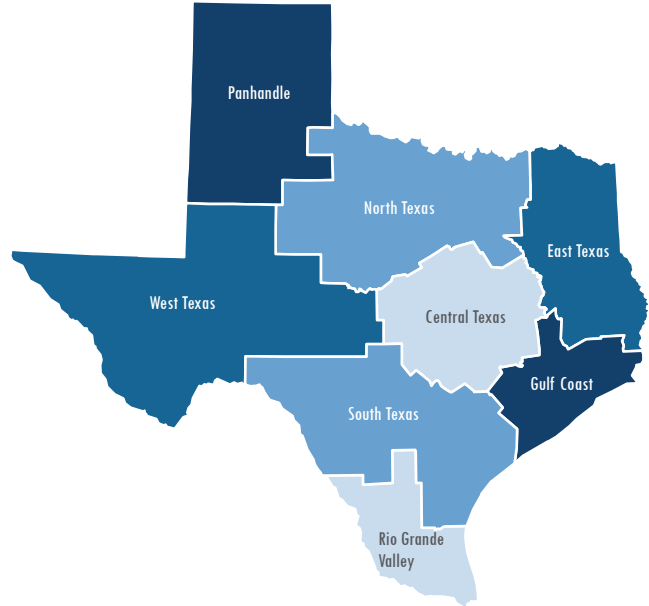
Hiring of Newly Licensed RNs

Newly Licensed RN Hires by Degree Type

Table 1 displays the number and percentage of newly licensed RNs hired by hospitals by their degree type.

Table 1. Number and percent of newly licensed RN hires by degree type

	n	# of Newly Licensed RNs Hired	% of Newly Licensed RNs Hired
Diploma	301	103	1.5%
ADN	334	2,384	35.3%
BSN	327	4,174	61.8%
MSN - Alternate Entry	300	96	1.4%

n = number of responding hospitals

- The largest proportion of newly licensed RNs hired by hospitals had a bachelor's degree in nursing (61.8%), followed by an associate's degree (35.3%).
- Very few newly licensed RN hires had a diploma in nursing or an entry-level master's degree (1.5% and 1.4%, respectively).
- In the Rio Grande Valley, East Texas, and West Texas, less than half of newly licensed RN hires had a bachelor's degree or higher.
- North Texas had the highest percentage of newly licensed RN hires with a bachelor's degree or higher (70.6%).
- As part of their *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* report, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) has recommended that the proportion of nurses with at least a bachelor's degree increase to 80% by 2020.[1] Figure 1 shows that the proportion of Texas RNs with a BSN or higher degree has increased over the past several years.[2]

[1]Institute of Medicine, Committee on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Initiative on the Future of Nursing. (2011). The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health. Retrieved from The National Academies Press website: http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=12956

[2]Center for Nursing Workforce Studies, "Nursing Workforce in Texas: 2013 Demographics and Trends," http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/chs/cnws/2013-Demographics-and-Trends-Report.pdf

Figure 1. Progress towards the IOM's 80% goal
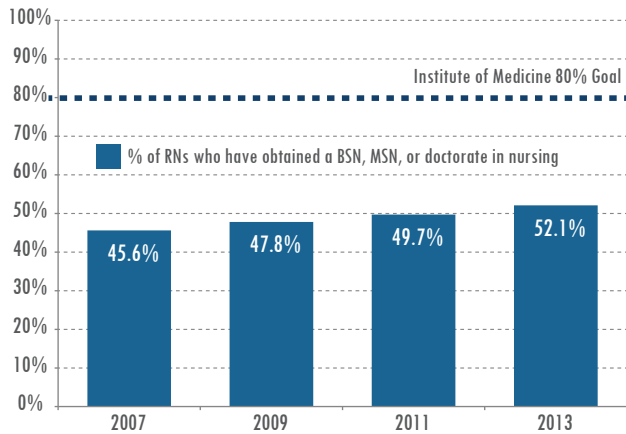
Changes in Hiring Practices of Newly Licensed RNs

- 76.5% of responding hospitals reported they believe the recent economic recession has had no effect on their nurse staffing and hiring practices in regards to newly licensed RNs.
- Twenty-four (7%) hospitals reported that the recent economic recession has had a positive effect on their ability to hire newly licensed RNs. By geographic designation, this proportion was higher in non-metropolitan (9%) and border counties (12.5%). These 24 hospitals cite as benefits a wider applicant pool from which to hire, decreased turnover, and a greater number of second career RNs.
- Thirty-six (10.6%) hospitals reported a negative effect on their hiring of newly licensed RNs. By geographic designation, this proportion was highest in metropolitan (11.2%) and non-border counties (11.3%). Many of these 36 hospitals reported limited time to train new RNs, a decreased patient volume reducing need for new nurses, and a greater number of nurses seeking increased pay in urban areas through temporary or contract nursing posts.
- The proportion of hospitals that report that the economic recession has had no effect on their hiring and staffing practices has been increasing since 2010 (53% in 2010 and 58.2% in 2012), while the proportion that report that the recession has had a negative effect has been decreasing (16.1% in 2010 and 15% in 2012). This suggests that the lingering effects of the economic recession are no longer impacting hospitals' staffing and hiring practices.

Important Characteristics when Hiring RNs

Hospitals were asked to rank the importance of four different attributes they would consider when hiring RNs: past relevant nursing experience, past non-relevant nursing experience, bilingual, and bachelor's in nursing or higher education (1=most important, 4=least important) (Table 2).

Table 2. Importance of attributes when hiring RNs

	Past Relevant Nursing Experience	Past Non-Relevant Nursing Experience	Bilingual	Bachelor's in Nursing or Higher Education
Rank 1	92.2%	1.7%	0.2%	5.9%
Rank 2	6.8%	30.4%	12.3%	50.5%
Rank 3	0.7%	35.1%	40.1%	24.1%
Rank 4	0.2%	32.8%	47.4%	19.6%

- Past relevant nursing experience was the most important attribute overall, followed by a bachelor's in nursing or higher education, past non-relevant nursing experience, and bilingual.
- Most hospitals (92.2%) ranked past relevant nursing experience as the most important attribute they looked for in potential hires.
- Almost half (47.4%) of hospitals ranked bilingual as the least important attribute they looked for in potential hires.

Hospitals were also asked to rate the importance of a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing (BSN) for their staff (Figure 2).

- The highest percentage of hospitals (32.6%) said that the degree is moderately important.
- 46.6% said the degree is important or very important.
- Only 5.4% of responding hospitals said a BSN is unimportant for their nursing staff.

Figure 2. Importance of bachelor's in nursing education for RN staff
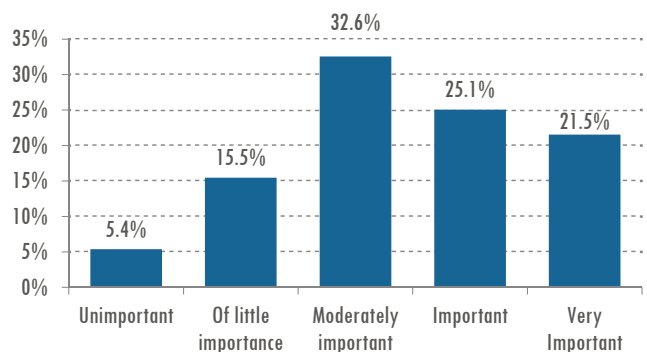
- The highest proportion of hospitals ranked a BSN as important or very important in the Gulf Coast (51.3%), followed closely by North Texas (50.4%).
- The lowest proportion of hospitals ranked a BSN as important or very important in the Panhandle (32.4%).

Finally, hospitals were asked to list other key attributes they looked for when hiring staff.

- 30.9% of responding hospitals looked for good communication and interpersonal skills.
- 10.3% wanted new RNs who would fit with the culture of the hospital.
- 9.9% looked for flexibility and availability in new hires.