The Hospital Nurse Staffing Survey (HNSS) assesses the size and effects of the nursing shortage in hospitals, Texas' largest employer of nurses. During the summer of 2017, the TCNWS administered the HNSS to 713 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. 348 (48.8%) hospitals responded to the survey.

This report addresses where hospitals recruited to fill open registered nurse (RN) positions, whether within Texas, a state outside of Texas, or internationally. If hospitals recruited outside of Texas, they were asked their reasons for doing so. Additionally, this report provides important data on the length (in days) that hospitals' RN positions remained unfilled.
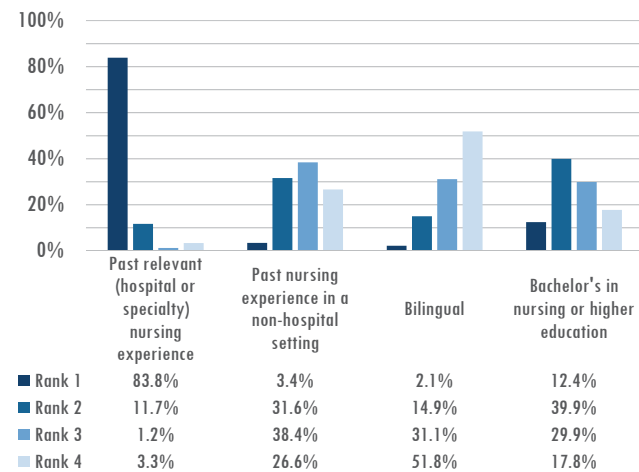
Note: Analyses by Texas region and geographic designation are not included in this report, as survey repondents were not representative of all Texas hospitals, but responding hospitals are still comparable to previous years' respondents. For more information, see the 2017 HNSS Design and Methods report.

Recruitment and Hiring Practices

RN Hiring Practices

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) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Importance of attributes when hiring RNs

	Past relevant (hospital or specialty) nursing experience	Past nursing experience in a non-hospital setting	Bilingual	Bachelor's in nursing or higher education
Rank 1	83.8%	3.4%	2.1%	12.4%
Rank 2	11.7%	31.6%	14.9%	39.9%
Rank 3	1.2%	38.4%	31.1%	29.9%
Rank 4	3.3%	26.6%	51.8%	17.8%

- 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.
- 251 respondents provided other key attributes they looked for when hiring RN staff, including positive attitude (n=41), interpersonal skills (n=29), and tenure with previous employers (n=25).

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of responding hospitals in Texas recruited RNs from Texas, followed by states outside of Texas and internationally.

Table 1. Where hospitals recruit RN positions

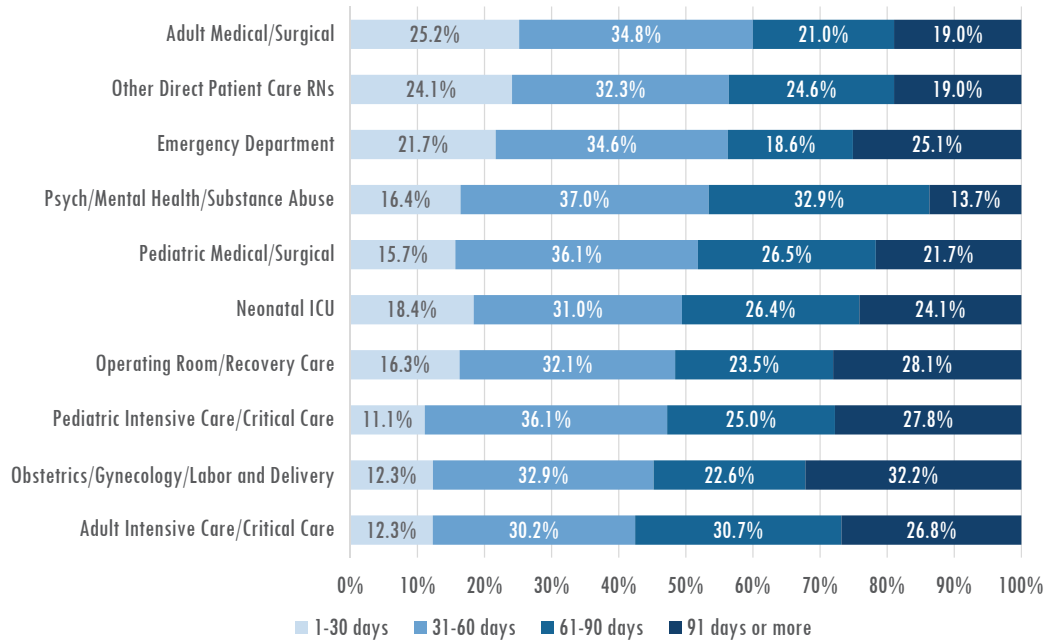| Place of Recruitment	# of Hospitals	% of Hospitals
Texas	343	98.6%
States Outside of Texas	118	33.9%
Internationally	40	11.5%

Respondents were asked what interventions would have the greatest impact on retention of nurses and other direct patient care staff.

- Pay increase was the most commonly selected intervention (73.3%), followed by adequate staffing (67.0%) and employee recognition (55.7%).
- Other strategies included education/training opportunities (n=12), better benefits (n=8), and bonuses (n=4).

Recruitment Experiences

Figure 2 (page 2) shows the average length of time it takes responding hospitals to fill different types of RN positions.

Figure 2. Number of days to fill RN positions by specialty area

Specialty Area	1-30 days	31-60 days	61-90 days	91 days or more
Adult Medical/Surgical	25.2%	34.8%	21.0%	19.0%
Other Direct Patient Care RNs	24.1%	32.3%	24.6%	19.0%
Emergency Department	21.7%	34.6%	18.6%	25.1%
Psych/Mental Health/Substance Abuse	16.4%	37.0%	32.9%	13.7%
Pediatric Medical/Surgical	15.7%	36.1%	26.5%	21.7%
Neonatal ICU	18.4%	31.0%	26.4%	24.1%
Operating Room/Recovery Care	16.3%	32.1%	23.5%	28.1%
Pediatric Intensive Care/Critical Care	11.1%	36.1%	25.0%	27.8%
Obstetrics/Gynecology/Labor and Delivery	12.3%	32.9%	22.6%	32.2%
Adult Intensive Care/Critical Care	12.3%	30.2%	30.7%	26.8%

- For all position types, hospitals most commonly filled positions in between 31 and 60 days.
- Adult Medical/Surgical had the highest percentage of positions filled within 60 days (60.0%), while Adult Intensive Care/Critical Care had the lowest (42.5%).

Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Table 2 shows the number and percent of responding hospitals that use various strategies to recruit employees.

- Most-used strategies varied by full-time and part-time status.
- Other strategies included relocation assistance (n=2) and child care (n=1).

Table 2. Recruitment strategies used by hospitals

Strategy	Full-Time # of Hospitals	Full-Time % of Hospitals	Part-Time # of Hospitals	Part-Time % of Hospitals
Health insurance	334	96.0%	183	52.6%
Paid vacation days	332	95.4%	203	58.3%
Shift differential	332	95.4%	257	73.9%
Retirement plan	307	88.2%	190	54.6%
Employee recognition programs (employee of the month, staff dinners/luncheons, etc)	298	85.6%	231	66.4%
Tuition (reimbursement or direct payment for employees/new hires)	270	77.6%	134	38.5%
Reimbursement for workshops/conferences	257	73.9%	161	46.3%
Bonus for recruiting nursing staff to the agency	222	63.8%	146	42.0%
Financial assistance in receiving certifications or further education	218	62.6%	134	38.5%

Strategy	Full-Time # of Hospitals	Full-Time % of Hospitals	Part-Time # of Hospitals	Part-Time % of Hospitals
Flexible scheduling or job sharing	217	62.4%	178	51.1%
Merit bonus	216	62.1%	147	42.2%
Payback for unused sick/vacation time	195	56.0%	121	34.8%
Sign-on bonus	176	50.6%	36	10.3%
Career ladder positions for RNs/LVNs/APRNs	144	41.4%	87	25.0%
Career ladder positions for HHAs/Nas/CNAs/CMAs	59	17.0%	40	11.5%
Sabbatical	13	3.7%	12	3.4%
Other	32	9.2%	24	6.9%
None	8	2.3%	16	4.6%

Conclusion

Past relevant nursing experience was the most important attribute hospitals considered when hiring RNs, followed by a bachelor's in nursing or higher education, past non-relevant nursing experience, and bilingual. Pay increases were perceived to have the greatest impact on retention of nurses, followed by adequate staffing and employee recognition.

The majority of hospitals in Texas recruited RNs from Texas. The top three recruitment strategies used by hospitals for full-time employees were health insurance (96.0%), paid vacation days (95.4%), and shift differential (95.4%). For all position types, hospitals most commonly filled positions in between 31 and 60 days.