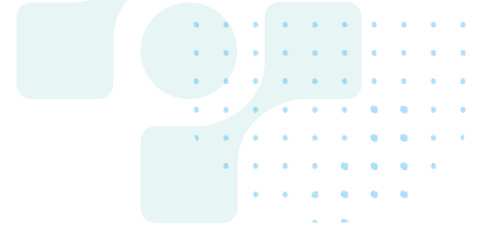


Nurse Well-being in the Face of an Ongoing Pandemic: A Survey

September 2021

Introduction



Since the spring of 2020, NurseGrid™ has actively been tracking the impact COVID-19 has had on nurses through a series of surveys. The initial Nursing Professionals Pulse Survey, released in April 2020, focused on personal concerns, confidence, and the equipment shortages clinicians were incurring. Additional Pulse surveys were conducted in September 2020 and January 2021, tracking these issues as well as new items such as the overall sense of well-being and fulfillment within the nursing profession.

The objective of this September 2021 update is to revisit these issues with active users of NurseGrid and trend changes in opinion since the three previous surveys. When this survey was conducted, healthcare organizations were absorbing the brunt of a Delta variant surge in COVID-19 that has led to hospitals reaching the limitations of their patient capacity and staffing resources to care for patients, who are mostly

unvaccinated. As a result, hopes of an early end to the pandemic in mid-2021 have been dashed, and the fear of a continued surge through the remainder of 2021 looms over healthcare providers and executives alike.

Over 10,000 nursing professionals in all 50 states responded to the survey in late August and early September 2021 to communicate perspectives on their well-being, COVID-19, and the toll the pandemic has on themselves and their colleagues. The survey was administered by NurseGrid, the leading mobile app for nurses. The survey results were analyzed by HealthStream™, NurseGrid's parent company.

Our goal since April 2020 has been to shine a spotlight on issues impacting nurses during the pandemic, with the hope that by raising nurses' voices we, together, can inform and empower healthcare leaders in their efforts to further support our frontline caregivers.

Key Findings

1 Nursing Shortage is Top Concern for Quality of Care

Almost all nurses (91.5%) are worried about the current shortage of nurses—especially younger nurses and those working in units where COVID-19 patients are treated. Other areas of distress are the shortage of beds and the high levels of burnout and mental health issues among care providers. A majority of nurses (76.7%) report working more shifts or hours than they did a year ago.

2 COVID-19 Alters Career Plans

Fifty-eight percent of nurses say they will remain in patient care at the end of 2021; however, four in ten nurses (38.6%) are now planning to leave at the end of 2021, up from 24.8% in January 2021. In addition, one in four (24.6%) say they will leave bedside care, 9.0% say they will change their career, and 5.0% say they will retire earlier than planned.

3 Career Fulfillment is Declining

Career satisfaction among nurses has declined over the past year. Some 41.4% of nurses gave high ratings to their level of fulfillment in September 2020 compared to 26.0% by September 2021. Younger nurses (18-34) are the most vulnerable to feelings of burnout and a lack of career fulfillment.

4 Many Nurses Resent the Unvaccinated

Many nurses resent both co-workers who are not vaccinated (46.5%) as well as unvaccinated patients (40.7%).

5 Nurse Confidence and Manager Support Can be Improved

Even though a little more than half of nurses (54.7%) report management has taken action to support nursing staff, there are still areas for improvement. And despite a year and a half of experience treating COVID-19 patients, just under half (48.5%) say they are more confident dealing with new or varying clinical situations.

Survey methodology

The information in this report is based on a survey of nurses conducted via the NurseGrid app from Aug. 27 – Sept. 6, 2021. A total of 10,022 nurses responded. Most respondents were RNs (84.8%). Respondents were somewhat younger than the nurse population as a whole, with 77.5% falling in the 18-44

age ranges. Nurses who responded to the survey worked in units heavily impacted by COVID-19—Adult Med/Surg (27.5%), Adult ICU (20.4%), and Adult ER (13.9%). The states most heavily represented were California (12.3%), Texas (9.1%) and Florida (7.4%).

About



NurseGrid is the number one rated mobile app for nurses, with 4.9 stars and over 60,000 ratings. Launched in 2016, NurseGrid has become a viral hit among nurses, with hundreds of thousands of nursing professionals relying on NurseGrid's mobile app to access their schedules, see who they are working with, connect with their colleagues, and more. Healthcare organizations use NurseGrid to distribute and update schedules, manage open shifts and shift swaps, and to engage their nursing staff. NurseGrid is available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play store.

KEY FINDINGS

Nursing Shortage is Top Concern for Quality of Care

91.5%

of respondents say they are experiencing a shortage of nurses. This number has increased from 78.5% in January 2021

56.1%

shortage of beds that nurses report in September 2021 compared to January of this year (46.7%)

77.2%

of respondents acknowledge high levels of burnout and mental health issues

4 in 10

nurses (39.1%) said they had a shortage of medical supplies in September 2021 compared to 30.3% in January 2021

1 in 5

nurses (20.3%) are working in facilities where patients are housed in temporary areas of the hospital, tents, field hospitals, etc.

FINDINGS BASED ON SURVEY QUESTION:

We are prevented from delivering quality care to our patients because...

(Select all that apply. Base = 9993)

We have a shortage of nurses	78.5% / 91.5%	We have a shortage of ventilators	11.7% / 13.2%
We have high levels of burnout and mental health issues	77.2%	We have a shortage of physicians	8.6% / 11.3%
We have a shortage of beds	46.7% / 56.1%	Some staff have been furloughed or laid off	10.1% / 6.4%
We have a shortage of other medical supplies	30.3% / 39.1%	None of the above	14.8% / 3.8%
Patients in temporary areas of hospital, tents, field hospitals, etc	7.6% / 20.3%		

■ Jan. of 2020 ■ Sept. of 2021

KEY FINDINGS

Nursing Shortage is Top Concern for Quality of Care

The District of Columbia, New Mexico, Delaware, and Kansas are the states cited as most likely to have a shortage of nurses; those in Maryland, Mississippi and Wisconsin are less likely to say there is a shortage. (Based on findings from states with at least 20 respondents.)

UNIT	# OF RESPONDENTS	% SAYING THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF NURSES
Peds ER	85	94.4%
SNF	33	94.3%
Peds Med/Surg	210	94.2%
PICU	188	94.0%
Adult ICU	1,897	93.4%
Adult ER	1,274	92.4%
Adult Med/Surg	2,512	91.9%
Other	1,673	91.6%
Mother/Baby	521	89.4%
NICU	358	87.3%
Behavioral	95	81.9%
OR	72	81.8%
PACU	63	78.8%
Long-Term Care	62	72.9%
Outpatient	40	67.8%

Younger nurses (age 18-34) are more likely than older nurses to say there is a shortage of nurses.

UNIT	# OF RESPONDENTS	% SAYING THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF NURSES
18-24	1,040	94.0%
25-34	4,271	94.9%
35-44	1,897	90.6%
45-54	1,180	86.1%
55-64	605	79.5%
65+	92	79.3%

KEY FINDINGS

Nursing Shortage is Top Concern for Quality of Care

Nurses in all departments are likely to say there is a shortage of nurses; however, nurses working in units where the most critical patients are seen, and where COVID-19 patients are treated are most likely to say nurses are in short supply.

STATE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% SAYING THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF NURSES
Vermont	8*	100.0%
District of Columbia (DC)	63	98.4%
New Mexico	55	98.2%
Delaware	32	97.0%
Kansas	81	96.4%
Utah	70	95.9%
South Carolina	134	95.7%
Washington	286	95.7%
Oregon	163	95.3%
Rhode Island	39	95.1%
Pennsylvania	352	94.6%
Ohio	314	94.3%
Nevada	75	93.8%
Alaska	44	93.6%
Missouri	130	93.5%
Iowa	57	93.4%
Idaho	41	93.2%
Montana	54	93.1%
Tennessee	218	92.8%
Louisiana	63	92.6%
Colorado	239	92.6%
New Jersey	249	92.6%
Alabama	180	92.3%

STATE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% SAYING THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF NURSES
New York	660	92.3%
North Carolina	263	92.3%
West Virginia	69	92.0%
Indiana	172	92.0%
Massachusetts	257	91.5%
Maine	32	91.4%
Michigan	223	91.4%
Georgia	284	91.3%
Arizona	231	91.3%
Arkansas	52	91.2%
Oklahoma	81	91.0%
Florida	670	90.8%
Illinois	280	90.3%
Virginia	184	90.2%
New Hampshire	44	89.8%
Hawaii	43	89.6%
California	1,093	89.0%
Nebraska	40	88.9%
Texas	805	88.7%
Kentucky	103	88.0%
Minnesota	58	87.9%
Wyoming	29	87.9%
Connecticut	183	87.6%
Wisconsin	63	87.5%
Mississippi	26	86.7%
South Dakota	16*	84.2%
Maryland	169	84.1%
North Dakota	10*	83.3%

NOTE: Asterisk indicates a sample size of less than 20, which is below the threshold to say the results are representative.

KEY FINDINGS

Nursing Shortage is Top Concern for Quality of Care

Nurses Working More Hours in 2021

76.7%

of nurses in the study say they are working more shifts or longer hours than they did in 2020

12.4%

have stepped up to take on more responsibilities as charge nurses

3.6%

left bedside care, and 0.3% left the nursing profession entirely

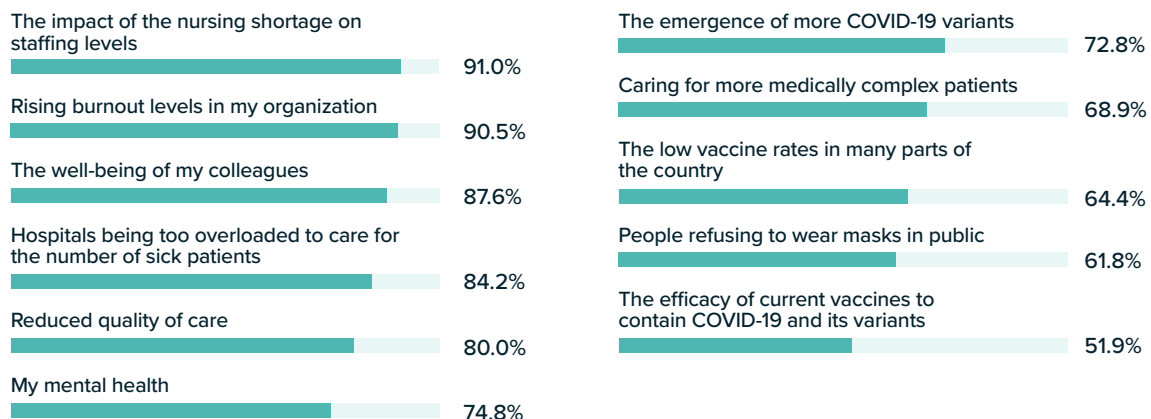
Nurses Are Distressed

Nurses are concerned about a wide variety of topics. In the table below, a majority of nurses express a high level of concern (a rating of 8-10) on every item. Items at the top of the list include:

- The impact of the nursing shortage on staffing levels (91.0%)
- Rising burnout levels in my organization (90.5%)
- The well-being of my colleagues (87.6%)
- Hospitals being too overloaded to care for the number of sick patients (84.2%)
- Reduced quality of care (80.0%)

FINDINGS BASED ON SURVEY QUESTION:

Looking to the future, how concerned are you with the following issues? Please rate each on a scale of 1 (not at all concerned) to 10 (extremely concerned). (Base = 9993) % Answering 8, 9 or 10...



KEY FINDINGS

COVID-19 Alters Career Plans

January of 2021, most nurses (73.1%) said that the pandemic had not altered their career plans. However, by September 2021, that number had dropped to

58.0%

24.6%

of nurses say they are currently leaving bedside care after this year

9.0%

say they are changing their career, and 5.0% are retiring earlier than planned

FINDINGS BASED ON SURVEY QUESTION:
Has the pandemic altered your plans to be an active nurse after 2021? (n=9939)

No	73.1% / 58.0%
Yes, leaving bedside care	18.0% / 24.6%
Yes, changing career	4.1% / 9.0%
Yes, retiring earlier than planned	2.7% / 5.0%
No, retiring as planned prior to the pandemic	2.0% / 3.4%

■ Jan. of 2021 ■ Sept. of 2021

Younger nurses age 18 – 24 (27.4%) and age 25 – 34 (30.6%) are most likely to say they will leave bedside care after 2021.

AGE RANGE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% SAYING THEY ARE LEAVING BEDSIDE CARE
18 – 24	303	27.4%
25 – 34	1,379	30.6%
35 – 44	444	21.2%
45 – 54	228	16.6%
55 – 64	59	7.8%
65+	10*	8.6%

Nurses working in these units are most likely to say they are leaving bedside care at the end of 2021: Adult ICU, Adult Med/Surg, Pre-Op Assessment, PICU and Peds Med/Surg.

AGE RANGE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% SAYING THEY ARE LEAVING BEDSIDE CARE
Adult ICU	577	28.4%
Adult Med/Surg	751	27.5%
PICU	53	26.5%
Peds Med/Surg	59	26.5%
Other	429	23.5%
Peds ER	21	23.3%
Adult ER	293	21.2%
Mother/Baby	113	19.4%
NICU	62	15.1%

NOTE: Asterisk indicates a sample size of less than 20, which is below the threshold to say the results are representative.

KEY FINDINGS

Career Fulfillment is Declining

More than

1 in 4

nurses (26.0%) give high ratings (8-10) to their career fulfillment

52.1%

of nurses give a moderate rating to their career fulfillment (ratings of 4-7)

22%

of nurses give a low rating (a score of 1-3) to their career fulfillment

Nurse ratings of career fulfillment have fallen steadily since the first Pulse survey conducted in September 2020. The percentage of nurses who gave a high rating to their career fulfillment (a rating of 8-10).

	SEPT. 2020	JAN. 2021	SEPT. 2021
LOW RATING OF % 1-3	9.8%	18.7%	22.0%
MEDIUM RATING OF % 4-7	49.2%	51.2%	52.1%
HIGH RATING OF % 8-10	41.4%	30.1%	26.0%
MEAN SCORE	6.79	5.95	5.67

Younger nurses age 18 – 24 (27.4%) and age 25 – 34 (30.6%) are most likely to say they will leave bedside care after 2021.

AGE RANGE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% GIVING A RATING OF 8, 9 OR 10
18 – 24	1,102	17.0%
25 – 34	4,496	19.2%
35 – 44	2,089	28.8%
45 – 54	1,369	38.9%
55 – 64	758	44.7%
65+	114	39.6%

KEY FINDINGS

Career Fulfillment is Declining

Career fulfillment is highest among nurses in Wyoming and Alaska and lowest in Maine and Montana. (Based on findings from states with at least 20 respondents.)

STATE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% RATING THEIR CAREER FULFILLMENT AS 8, 9 OR 10
North Dakota	12*	41.7%
Wyoming	33	36.4%
Alaska	47	34.0%
New Mexico	56	33.9%
Louisiana	68	33.8%
Hawaii	48	33.3%
Mississippi	30	33.3%
California	1,226	33.2%
Maryland	200	32.0%
South Dakota	19*	31.6%
Arizona	252	30.6%
Wisconsin	72	30.6%
Delaware	33	30.3%
Nevada	80	30.0%
Texas	906	29.9%
Florida	737	29.7%
New Hampshire	49	28.6%
Kansas	84	28.6%
New Jersey	267	27.3%
Indiana	187	27.3%
Georgia	310	27.1%
New York	709	27.1%
South Carolina	140	26.4%
Arkansas	57	26.3%

STATE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% RATING THEIR CAREER FULFILLMENT AS 8, 9 OR 10
North Dakota	12*	41.7%
Wyoming	33	36.4%
Minnesota	66	24.2%
Oklahoma	89	23.6%
Alabama	194	23.2%
North Carolina	285	22.8%
Idaho	44	22.7%
Virginia	204	22.5%
Illinois	309	22.3%
Nebraska	45	22.2%
Washington	298	22.1%
Colorado	257	21.8%
Connecticut	208	21.6%
Pennsylvania	372	21.2%
Tennessee	235	20.4%
West Virginia	75	20.0%
Utah	73	19.2%
Massachusetts	281	18.9%
Oregon	171	18.1%
Iowa	61	18.0%
Michigan	244	18.0%
Ohio	331	17.2%
Kentucky	117	17.1%
District of Columbia (DC)	64	15.6%
Rhode Island	41	14.6%
Vermont	8*	12.5%
Montana	58	12.1%
Maine	35	11.4%

NOTE: Asterisk indicates a sample size of less than 20, which is below the threshold to say the results are representative.

KEY FINDINGS

Career Fulfillment is Declining

Nurses had higher career fulfillment scores in organizations where employers have implemented new initiatives over the past 18 months.

Mean career fulfillment score on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

6.10 Organizations where employer **has** implemented new initiatives

5.17 Organizations where employer **has not** implemented new initiatives

Career fulfillment is rated highest among nurses working in the Long-Term Care department and lowest among those who work in Pediatric Med/Surg.

ORIGINAL NURSING UNIT (PRE COVID-19)	# OF RESPONDENTS	% GIVING A RATING OF 8, 9 OR 10
Long Term Care	85	47.1%
PACU	80	37.5%
OR	88	37.5%
Behavioral	116	35.7%
Outpatient	59	33.9%
NICU	409	31.7%
Skilled Nursing Facility	35	31.4%
PICU	200	29.6%
Other Unit	1,827	28.1%
Mother / Baby	581	27.7%
Pediatric ER	90	25.8%
Adult Med/ Surg	2,729	24.5%
Adult ICU	2,030	24.4%
Adult ER	1,374	24.3%
Pediatric Med/Surg	223	23.4%

KEY FINDINGS

Career Fulfillment is Declining

Sense of Well-Being is Low but Steady

28.4%

of nurses give themselves a high well-being score (a rating of 8-10)

58.3%

of nurses give a moderate assessment of their well-being (a rating of 4 -7)

13.4%

of nurses assess their level of well-being as low

A sense of well-being increases with age. Nurses in the 18-24 range are least likely to give a high rating to their overall well-being; however, the percentage increases steadily as age increases. For example, while 17.2% of the youngest nurses rate their well-being as high (a rating of 8-10), nurses in the 55-64 age range (47.5%) and 65+ range (47.4%) have a much higher assessment of their well-being.

AGE RANGE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% GIVING A RATING OF 8, 9 OR 10
18 – 24	1,104	17.2%
25 – 34	4,498	21.8%
35 – 44	2,092	32.4%
45 – 54	1,369	40.8%
55 – 64	756	47.5%
65+	114	47.4%

Nurses had higher well-being scores in organizations where employers have implemented new initiatives over the past 18 months.

Mean career fulfillment score on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

6.36

Organizations where employer **has** implemented new initiatives

5.84

Organizations where employer **has not** implemented new initiatives

KEY FINDINGS

Career Fulfillment is Declining

Nurses working in Alaska, California, New Mexico, Florida, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Nevada and Texas have the highest assessment of their well-being, while nurses in Maine and Rhode Island are least likely to have a high assessment (a rating of 8-10) of their well-being. (Based on findings from states with at least 20 respondents.)

STATE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% RATING THEIR CAREER FULFILLMENT AS 8, 9 OR 10
North Dakota	12*	41.7%
Alaska	47	36.2%
California	1,226	34.1%
New Mexico	56	33.9%
Florida	737	33.6%
Mississippi	30	33.3%
New Hampshire	49	32.7%
Nevada	80	32.5%
Texas	906	32.0%
Hawaii	47	31.9%
South Dakota	19	31.6%
Maryland	200	31.5%
Alabama	194	30.9%
Louisiana	68	30.9%
Arizona	253	30.8%
New Jersey	267	30.7%
Georgia	311	29.9%
Oklahoma	89	29.2%
New York	710	29.2%
Nebraska	45	28.9%
Wyoming	33	27.3%
South Carolina	140	27.1%
Michigan	244	27.0%

STATE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% RATING THEIR CAREER FULFILLMENT AS 8, 9 OR 10
North Carolina	285	27.0%
District of Columbia (DC)	64	26.6%
Virginia	204	26.0%
Pennsylvania	372	25.8%
Minnesota	66	25.8%
Colorado	257	25.7%
Connecticut	209	25.4%
West Virginia	75	25.3%
Washington	298	25.2%
Illinois	310	25.2%
Indiana	187	25.1%
Wisconsin	72	25.0%
Iowa	61	24.6%
Tennessee	235	24.3%
Missouri	139	23.0%
Kansas	84	22.6%
Massachusetts	281	22.4%
Ohio	331	22.1%
Arkansas	57	21.1%
Kentucky	117	20.5%
Idaho	44	20.5%
Oregon	171	19.3%
Delaware	33	18.2%
Utah	73	17.8%
Montana	58	17.2%
Rhode Island	41	14.6%
Vermont	8*	12.5%
Maine	35	8.6%

NOTE: Asterisk indicates a sample size of less than 20, which is below the threshold to say the results are representative.

KEY FINDINGS

Career Fulfillment is Declining

Career fulfillment is rated highest among nurses working in the Long-Term Care department and lowest among those who work in Pediatric Med/Surg.

ORIGINAL NURSING UNIT (PRE COVID-19)	# OF RESPONDENTS	% GIVING A RATING OF 8, 9 OR 10
PACU	80	48.8%
Long Term Care	85	41.2%
OR	88	40.9%
Outpatient	59	39.0%
Behavioral	116	35.3%
Adult ER	1,374	31.3%
Pediatric ER	90	31.1%
NICU	409	30.1%
Mother / Baby	581	30.1%
Other Unit	1,827	28.8%
Adult Med/ Surg	2,729	27.4%
Pediatric Med/ Surg	223	25.6%
PICU	200	24.5%
Adult ICU	2,030	24.4%
Skilled Nursing Facility	35	20.0%

Nurse assessments of personal well-being were highest in these units:

- Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU)
- Long Term Care
- Operating Room (OR)

And lowest in these units:

- Skilled Nursing Facility
- Adult Intensive Care Unit (ICU)
- Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU)
- Pediatric Medical/Surgical

Compared to September 2020, nurse assessments of their well-being dipped slightly in January 2021. Assessments of well-being have rebounded slightly since January but are still lower than the scores obtained in the first Pulse survey in September 2020.

	SEPT. 2020	JAN. 2021	SEPT. 2021
LOW RATING OF % 1-3	8.6%	16.2%	13.4%
MEDIUM RATING OF % 4-7	63.1%	59.0%	58.3%
HIGH RATING OF % 8 - 10	28.4%	24.9%	28.4%
MEAN SCORE	6.37	5.87	6.12

As with Career Fulfillment, nurse ratings of Personal Well-Being is lowest in units where patients have highest acuity and where COVID-19 patients may be treated.

KEY FINDINGS

Many Nurses Resent the Unvaccinated

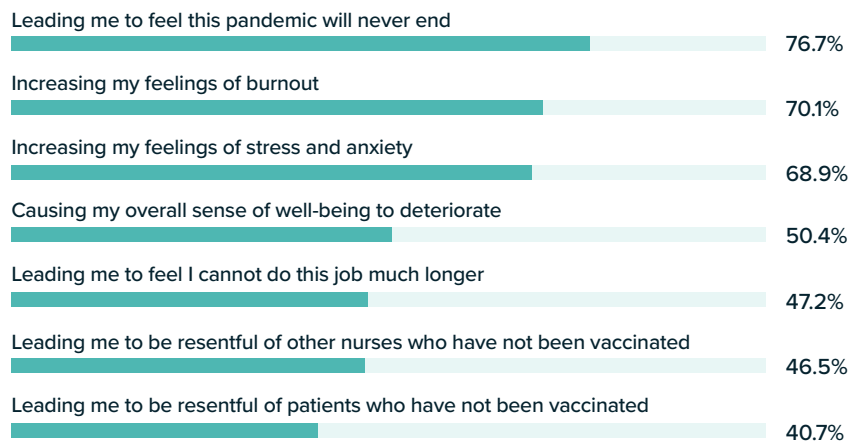
More than
3/4
of nurses feel that this pandemic will never end (76.7%)

47.2%
feel they cannot do this job much longer

There is also resentment among nurses for co-workers who have not taken the vaccine (46.5%) and unvaccinated patients
40.7%

FINDINGS BASED ON SURVEY QUESTION:

*The recent resurgence in Covid - 19 cases due to the delta and other variants has impacted me by... Rate each statement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree)... (Base = 9965)
% Answering 8, 9 or 10...*



KEY FINDINGS

Nurse Confidence and Manager Support Can be Improved

Despite a year and a half of experience treating COVID-19 patients

48.5%

say they are more confident dealing with new or varying clinical situations

1/3

feel supported by their direct manager

18.9%

feel the pandemic has made managers more attuned to the needs of nurses

FINDINGS BASED ON SURVEY QUESTION:

Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being **STRONGLY DISAGREE** and 10 being **STRONGLY AGREE**. (Base = 9991) % Answering 8, 9 or 10...



Actions by Employers and Nurses to Improve Well-Being

More than half of nurses indicate their employer has taken action to improve their well-being (54.7%). Among employers who have taken action, the most common activities have been:

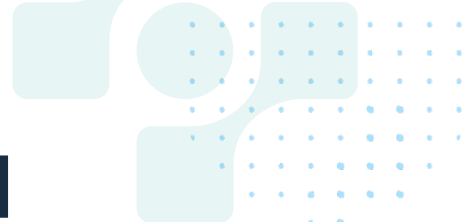
- Offering counseling services to help cope with burnout and mental health issues (31.5%)
- Hiring more staff (27.7%)

Among nurses themselves, nearly half (49.0%) have talked with a colleague or friend about mental health issues. Other common actions have included:

- Taking extra vacation time (36.2%)
- Increasing exercise (32.8%)
- Improving diet (30.0%)

KEY FINDINGS

Nurse Confidence and Manager Support Can be Improved



FINDINGS BASED ON SURVEY QUESTION:

What initiatives has your employer implemented in the past 18 months that benefit your well-being as a nurse? (Select all that apply.)
(Base = 9922)

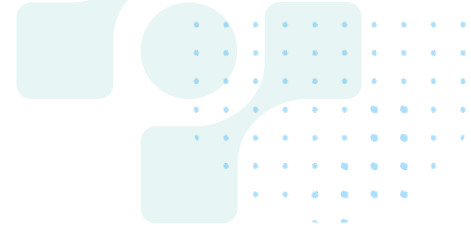


FINDINGS BASED ON SURVEY QUESTION:

What actions have you taken in the past 18 months to support your well-being? (Select all that apply.) (Base = 9922)



Conclusion



The current unsettled state of nursing, driven by the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, is apparent in the responses to nearly every question in this edition of the survey. Bedside nurses, particularly those of younger generations (18-34), find less career fulfillment and an increasing desire to leave the bedside. In fact, since the first survey in January 2021, nurses of all ages are 15% more likely to leave bedside after this year, climbing to an all-time high of 38.6%.

While three in four nurses feel the pandemic will never end, hospitals must be ready to support staff as COVID admissions wane. Only 18.9% of nurses think that the pandemic has made leadership more attuned to the challenges nurses face, while a majority do feel that management has taken action to support their needs. This leaves a significant opening for hospitals to engage with staff and retain some nurses who are planning to leave bedside altogether. Results indicating career fatigue and an intent to leave bedside care suggest that burnout is not unique to any one facility, rather a systemic problem for the industry only exacerbated by the pandemic.

Once the pandemic subsides, facilities that show the most improvement in their nurse engagement scores will likely retain more staff and have a better chance at providing adequate staffing levels.

Nurses of all ages are

15%

more likely to leave bedside after this year, since the first survey in January 2021

18.9%

feel the pandemic has made managers more attuned to the needs of nurses