



Trends in Nursing Education in the United States

1. Brief overview of nursing education pathways

- There are two broad categories of nurses in the United States: licensed practical nurses (LPNs) or licensed vocational nurses (LVNs, and registered nurses (RNs). In addition, graduates from RN programs can pursue further education at the master's (or doctorate) level to become Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs).

Table 1. Overview of nurse categories in the United States and related education requirement

Nursing Education Level	Nurse Categories	Education Requirement
Initial Nursing Education	Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs)	To become a LPN or LVN, students must pursue a 12 to 20 months accredited training program (part or full time). The qualification granted is a diploma.
	Registered Nurses (RNs)	To become a RN, students must complete one of the following three training streams (with the third stream now being the dominant stream): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in Nursing (2 to 3 years certificate from a hospital-based school) • Associate of Science in Nursing (2 years of college level study) • Bachelor of Science in Nursing (3 to 4 years of university study)
Advanced Nursing Education	Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)	To become an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, students must complete one of the following four training streams requiring at least a master's degree level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse Practitioners • Clinical Nurse Specialists • Certified Nurse-Midwives • Certified Registered Nurse Anaesthetics

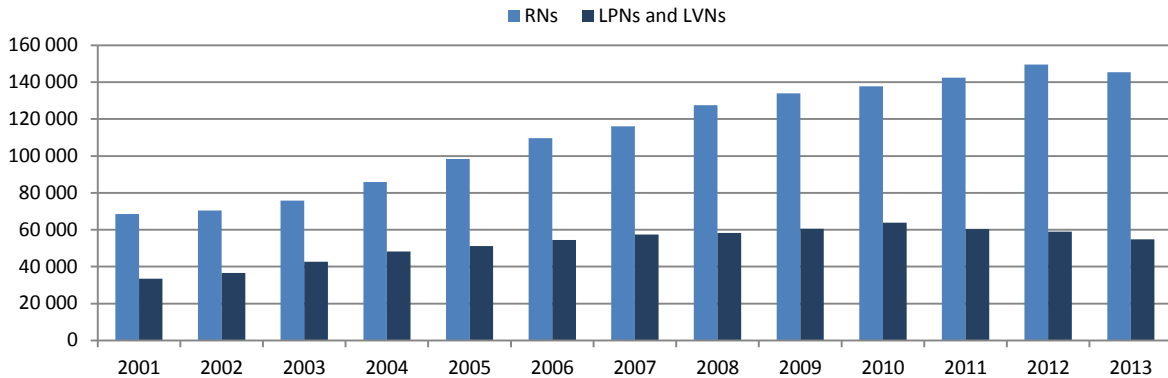
Source: US Department of State, Education USA, <http://www.educationusa.info/>; Department of Consumer Affairs, Board of Vocational Nursing & Psychiatric Technicians, <http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov/>.

2. Trends in number of graduates from nursing education programs

- Figure 1 shows trends in the number of graduates from RN programs and LPN/LVN programs. In the United States between 2001 and 2013. Overall, combining graduates from these various programmes, the number of nursing graduates has doubled between 2001 and 2013, rising from

102,000 in 2001 to over 200,000 in 2013. The number of graduates from RN programs has increased particularly rapidly, more than doubling between 2001 and 2013, while graduates from LPN and LVN programs have also grown but at a slightly more moderate rate.

Figure 1. Graduates from Nursing Programs, United States, 2001-2013

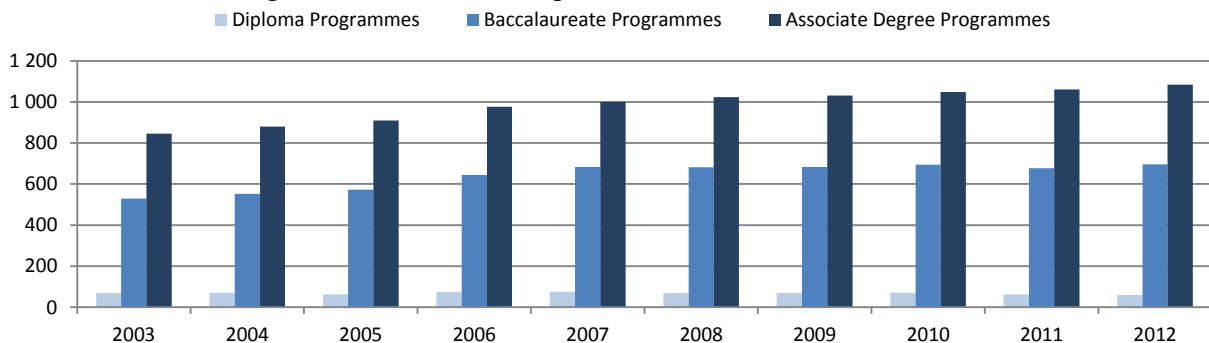


Source: (2001-2011) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), www.hrsa.gov; (2012-2013) National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), www.ncsbn.org.

Notes: 2012 and 2013 are estimates.

- Three main factors have contributed to this growth in the number of students admitted and graduating from various nursing education programs: 1) successful campaigns to promote the nursing profession given concerns in the early 2000s that there may be a huge shortage of nurses in the United States in the coming decades; 2) innovative approaches in education programs to attract both younger and older students; and 3) the expansion of the number of programs offered (Auerbach et al., 2009).
- Figure 2 shows the growth in the number of different types of RN programs offered in the United States from 2003 to 2012. The number of baccalaureate degree and college associate degree programs has increased by about 30% each from 2003 to 2012, while the number of hospital-based nursing diploma programs decreased slightly, representing a declining share of all RN programs.

Figure 2. Number of RN Programs, United States, 2003-2012

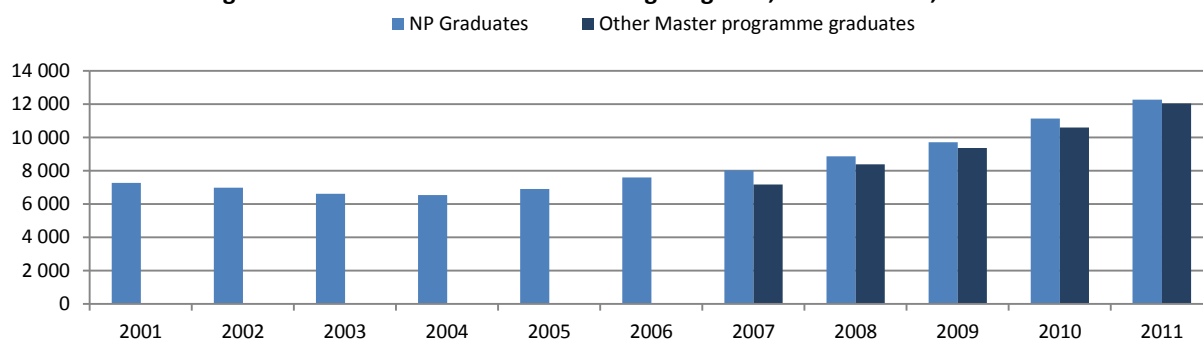


Source: National League for Nursing (2013), Annual Survey of Schools of Nursing, www.nln.org/research.

3. Advanced nursing education

- As already noted, advanced education programs for nurses comprise four types of programs (Nurse Practitioners, Clinical Nurse Specialists, Nurse Midwives and Nurse Anaesthetists) offered at the master level and also increasingly at the doctoral level.
- Figure 3 and 4 show trends in the number of graduates from master and doctoral nursing programs in the US since the early 2000s. Figure 3 shows that there has been a rapid increase in the number of graduates from NP and other master's degree programs in the US since 2004, nearly doubling in the case of graduates from NP programs between 2004 and 2011.

Figure 3. Graduates from Master Nursing Programs, United States, 2001-2011

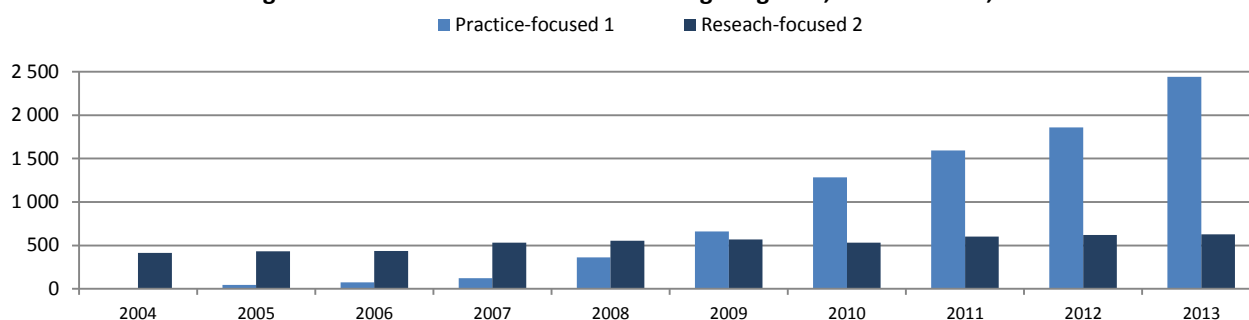


Source: National Center for Health Workforce Analysis (2013), *The US Nursing Workforce: Trends in Supply and Education*, Health Resources and Services Administration.

Note: Graduates from other Master programs include students who have successfully completed studies programs to become Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS), Nurse Midwives and Nurse Anaesthetists.

- Figure 4 shows that doctoral graduates have also increased since 2004, particularly for practise-focused doctoral programs. In 2004, only 7 people graduated from practise-focused nursing doctoral programs; by 2013, this number reached 2,443.

Figure 4. Graduates from Doctoral Nursing Programs, United States, 2004-2013



Source: American Association of Colleges of Nursing, Policy Briefs, www.aacn.nche.edu, Health Resources and Services Administration

1. Practice-focused doctoral programmes prepare graduates for the highest level of nursing practice beyond the initial preparation in the discipline and is a terminal degree.

2. Research-focused programmes prepare students to pursue intellectual inquiry and conduct independent research for the purpose of extending knowledge (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/downloads/ids/2013/EG12.pdf>).

4. Further issues

The rapid expansion in admissions and graduations from nursing education programs in the United States since the early 2000s was driven by successful campaigns to promote the profession and by a strong increase in the number of RN programs offered in response to previous concerns that there might be a huge shortage of nurses. However, following this strong expansion in domestic training capacity and the doubling of new graduates from RNs and LPNs/LVNs programs each year since then, there are now concerns that new graduates from nursing education programs may soon exceed the demand. The most recent projections estimate that, if student admission rates remain at their 2013 level, there will be an over-supply of more than 300 000 RNs by 2025. An over-supply is also expected for LPNs (Health and Human Services, 2014).

REFERENCES

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<http://www.oecd.org/health/health-workforce-policies-in-oecd-countries-9789264239517-en.htm>

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