

# Office of Rural Health & Primary Care Health Workforce Analysis Program

## Comparing Minnesota's Health Professionals

The Office of Rural Health and Primary Care (ORHPC) collects information about certain healthcare professionals practicing in Minnesota. Surveys are conducted at time of re-licensing—every two years for LPNs and RNs—and annually for other professions. This data is from 2004 surveys for all professions except nursing, which is from the 2002-04 licensing cycle.

- Physicians
- Physician assistants
- Registered nurses
- Licensed practical nurses
- Respiratory care practitioners
- Physical therapists
- Dentists
- Dental assistants
- Dental hygienists

Each profession fills a different niche in health care systems. This fact sheet compares the demographics, geographic locations and practice sites of ORHPC workforce survey respondents.

### Age

- Dentists are the oldest of the professions surveyed by ORHPC, with a median age of 49. Physicians and registered nurses follow at 47. The relatively older age of physicians reflects in part the long duration of their training.
- Dental assistants, physician assistants and physical therapists are the youngest of the surveyed professions. The lower age of dental assistants and physical therapists probably reflects shorter training periods and possibly a tendency for practitioners to leave the professions after several years. The younger age of physician assistants, compared to physicians and nurses, probably reflects the more recent emergence of the profession.

PROFESSION	MEDIAN AGE
Physicians	47
Physician assistants	39
Registered nurses	47
Licensed practical nurses	46
Respiratory care practitioners	44
Physical therapists	40
Dentists	49
Dental assistants	37
Dental hygienists	41

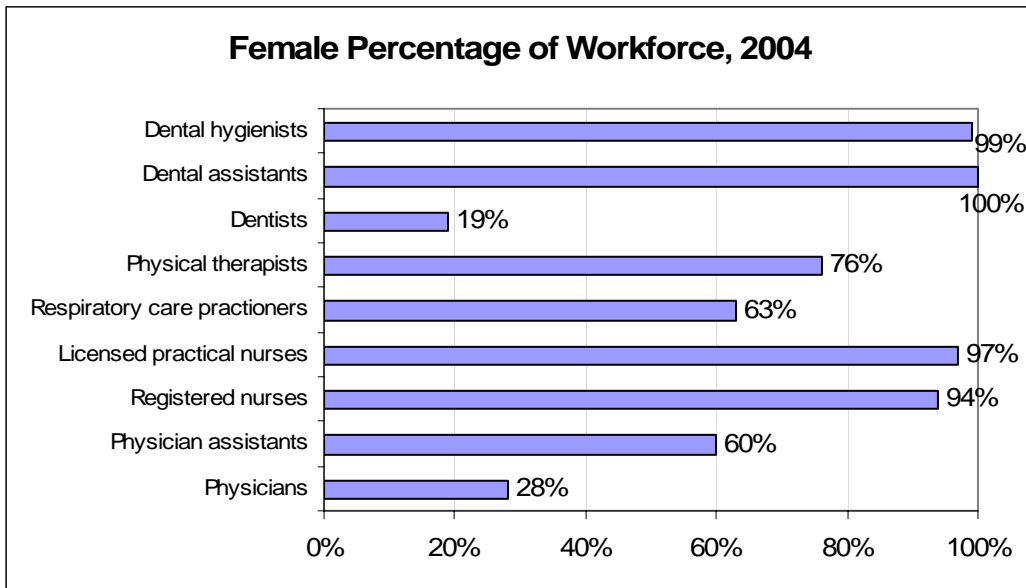


P.O. Box 64882  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882  
(651) 201-3838  
<http://www.health.state.mn.us>  
October 2005

### Gender and Race

- The nursing professions, and somewhat less physical therapists, are female dominated.
- The dental and physician professions remain male dominated. A majority of physician assistants are female.
- The dental hygienist and dental assistant professions are almost completely female.
- People of color remain heavily underrepresented in all professions for which workforce data is available.

#### Gender



#### Race

PROFESSION	% MINORITY
Physicians	3.0 %
Physician assistants	n/a
Registered nurses	n/a
Licensed practical nurses	n/a
Respiratory care practitioners	n/a
Physical therapists	2.2 %
Dentists	2.2%
Dental assistants	3.9 %
Dental hygienists	2.2 %

### Geography

- Health care practice sites are disproportionately located in cities and metropolitan areas.
- Physicians—especially specialists—are more concentrated in urban areas than populations would dictate. Metropolitan area counties account for 72 percent of the state's population, but 79 percent of primary care physicians and 89 percent of specialists. Rural counties, with 13 percent of the state's population, account for only 8 percent of primary care physicians and 2 percent of specialists.
- The geographic distribution of registered nurses matches closely that of primary care physicians, reflecting the fact that the two professions tend to work close together.
- Licensed practical nurses (LPN) are more widely dispersed. Rural areas have a disproportionate share of LPNs, reflecting the fact that LPNs are commonly employed in nursing homes and care facilities, which are often located in rural counties.

### Geographic Distribution

	URBAN	METROPOLITAN	MICROPOLITAN	RURAL
POPULATION	59%	72%	15%	13%
Physicians	80%	84%	11%	5%
Primary care physicians	73%	79%	13%	8%
Specialists	87%	89%	9%	2%
Physician assistants	69%	78%	11%	11%
Registered nurses	74%	80%	12%	8%
Licensed practical nurses	48%	59%	23%	18%
Respiratory care practitioners	81%	87%	9%	5%
Physical therapists	71%	79%	12%	9%
Dentists	69%	78%	14%	8%
Dental assistants	69%	79%	14%	8%
Dental hygienists	70%	79%	13%	7%

#### Definitions:

**Urban** – Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties, plus cities of Duluth, Rochester and St. Cloud.

**Metropolitan** – 21 counties in metropolitan statistical areas (Twin Cities, St. Cloud, Rochester, Duluth, Fargo-Moorhead, Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, La Crosse).

**Micropolitan** – 20 counties in micropolitan statistical areas (generally, counties containing small and medium-sized trade centers).

**Rural** – 46 counties outside metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas.

The Office of Rural Health and Primary Care has traditionally presented data for urban Minnesota defined as the seven counties within the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities, plus the cities of Rochester, Duluth and St. Cloud. The remainder of the state was defined as “rural.” This is the first ORHPC report to use the metropolitan, micropolitan and rural categories defined above.

### Practice Sites

- Nonhospital settings like clinics and private practices are the most common workplace for physicians, physician assistants, dentists, dental assistants and dental hygienists.
- Hospitals are the most common workplace for respiratory care specialists and registered nurses.
- A third of licensed practical nurses work in nursing homes or other long term care facilities.

### Type of Primary Work Site

PROFESSION	Hospital	Provider office, clinic solo or group practice	HMO	Nursing home or long term care facility	Other institution	Other
Physicians	23%	70%				2%
Physician assistants	14%	78%				7%
Registered nurses	59%	10%		9%		22%
Licensed practical nurses	20%	26%		34%		20%
Respiratory care practitioners	82%	4%		1%		13%
Physical therapists	34%	28%	11%			27%
Dentists	1%	90%	2%		1%	6%
Dental assistants	*	91%	5%		1%	3%
Dental hygienists	*	92%	4%		*	4%

\* less than .5 percent

Blank cells – these types of work sites were not included in questionnaire for the profession.

Percentages were based on sum of responses given by respondents. Some physicians selected more than one type of workplace to describe their primary work site. Some physical therapists, physician assistants and respiratory care practitioners did not answer the question.

---