Minnesota’s Licensed Practical Nurse Workforce, 2011-2012

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in cooperation with the Minnesota Board of Nursing, collects information on education, career and future plans of licensed practical nurses (LPNs). Minnesota LPNs completed workforce surveys during the two-year licensing renewal process from 2011 through 2012, and these responses were combined with licensing data from the Board of Nursing for February 2013. The overall survey response rate was 61 percent.

Overall
The Minnesota Board of Nursing issued 23,895 LPN licenses as of February 2013. Of these, 21,717 (91 percent) were renewed licenses, and 2,178 (9 percent) were first-time licenses. Of the total licenses issued, 22,186 had Minnesota mailing addresses, and are the main focus of this analysis. On average, LPNs had been licensed in Minnesota for 18 years.

Sex, Race and Ethnicity
The LPN workforce is predominately female (94 percent).

Eighty-six percent of LPNs identified as White and over four percent identified as Black or African American. Six percent of survey respondents did not answer questions about race, with the remaining four percent identifying as Asian, Multi-Racial, American Indian or Alaskan Native and Other, in that order. One percent identified their ethnicity as Hispanic.

Age
Thirty-two percent of Minnesota-based LPNs are 55 years of age or older (Figure A). While 26 percent are under 35 years of age, the survey revealed that a large segment of this age group was working toward becoming registered nurses and not likely to remain LPNs long enough to offset older LPNs leaving the workforce.

The median age of LPNs with Minnesota mailing addresses was 47 years (Figure B). LPNs in the central region of the state had the youngest median age at 43 years while those in the southeast region had the oldest median age at 51 years.

Training and Education
At the time of initial licensure, 89 percent of LPNs received their training at nursing programs within Minnesota, seven percent in bordering states, and four percent trained in other states or other countries.

According to the survey, 76 percent of LPNs had earned a nursing diploma, 21 percent an associate degree, one percent a bachelor’s and three percent did not answer the survey question.
Geographic Distribution
LPNs were unevenly distributed between urban and rural areas in Minnesota (Figure C). More than half (56 percent) had mailing addresses in urban areas while 44 percent were in rural areas.

![Figure C](distribution-by-rural-urban-area-N=22186)

Figure D displays the geographic distribution of LPN licenses throughout Minnesota. Many health professions tend to cluster in the Twin Cities and Southeast regions, but LPNs have a substantial presence throughout the state, particularly in the northwest and central regions.

![Figure D](geographic-distribution-by-region-N=23895)

Work Status and Future Plans
Many LPNs expressed plans to become registered nurses while working as LPNs. Forty percent of those younger than 35 reported they plan to work 10 years or less as an LPN (Figure E). Fifty-nine percent of that age group reported they plan to work more than 10 years, while 2 percent of survey respondents did not answer the question. Among those 55 years and older, 39 percent plan to work 10 years or less, suggesting they plan to leave the LPN workforce or retire.

![Figure E](lpns-predicted-length-of-future-practice)

Primary Work Settings and Activities
Statewide, LPNs reported working an average of 34 hours per week, with 53 percent reporting they worked full-time or more and 47 percent working less than full-time.

While survey data were incomplete for many LPNs, clinics and long-term care facilities (including rehabilitation facilities) were the most common places of employment (33 percent and 34 percent respectively of the 9,870 responding. Eleven percent reported working in hospital settings, eight percent in home health agencies, and the remainder in other settings.

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