

Minnesota's Licensed Practical Nurse Workforce, 2015-2016

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2015-2016 LPN WORKFORCE SURVEYⁱ

Overall

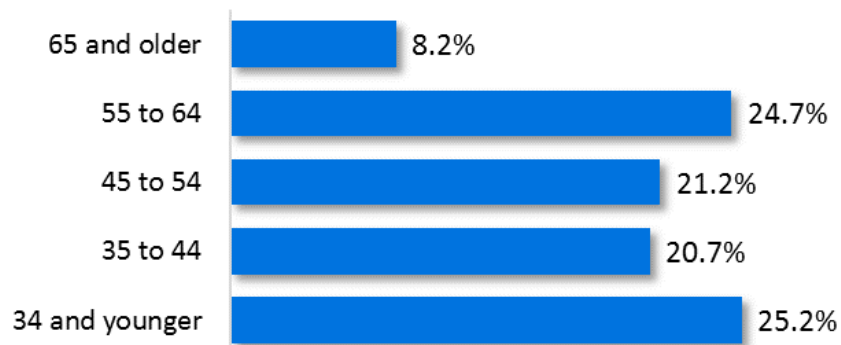
According to the Minnesota Board of Nursing, as of February 2017, there were **22,462** actively licensed practical nurses (LPNs) in the state. ⁱⁱ The number of licensed LPNs declined from **23,236** in 2015, as reported in the [2013-2014 LPN factsheet](#)—a difference of 3 percent.

Demographics

Sex. In general, health care professions tend to be female-dominated, and LPN data show 93 percent of the 22,462 licensees were women, while only 7 percent of Minnesota LPNs were male.

Age. Slightly more than half (54 percent) of LPNs were 45 years and older with a median age of 46 years. A high percentage of LPNs were 34 years and younger (25 percent), indicating the profession is gaining younger workers at a rate faster than older LPNs who are leaving to retire; however, this percentage quickly drops among LPNs in the 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 year age groups. This is likely because the LPN profession is a common pathway to starting a nursing career, and survey responses show younger LPNs today are more likely to leave the LPN field early in their careers to advance and become registered nurses.

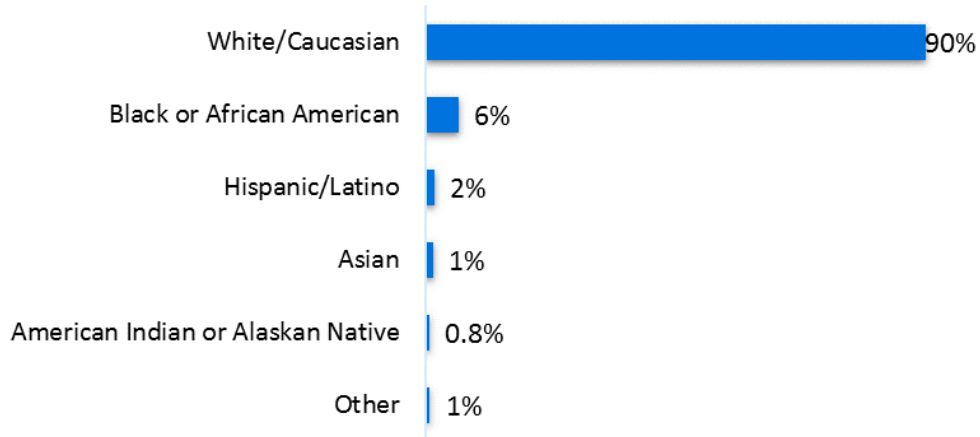
Age of Minnesota LPNs



Source: Minnesota Board of Nursing, February 2017. Analysis done by MDH. Percentages based on 22,462 Minnesota LPNs who provided valid birth dates to the Board

Race. The majority (90 percent) of LPNs indicated they were white, consistent with the patterns in other health care professions. Six percent of LPNs reported race/ethnicity as Black or African American. Licensed Practical Nurses are growing in diversity with younger generations entering the field. Licensed Practical Nurses who were 44 years and younger were more racially diverse, with 14 percent reporting a race other than White (data not shown).

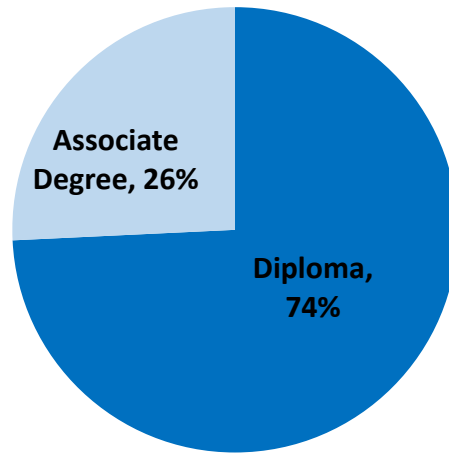
Race/Ethnicity of Minnesota LPNs



Source: MDH LPN Workforce Questionnaire, 2015-2016. Respondents could select as many races as applicable.

Education. Entry into practice as an LPN requires either a diploma or certificate. However, there were 26 percent of LPNs who had acquired an associate degree. LPNs age 44 years and less were more likely to report obtaining an associate degree (40 percent) when first becoming licensed (data not shown). Ninety percent of LPNs said they obtained their nursing education in Minnesota, underscoring that the labor market for LPNs is regional or statewide.

Education of Minnesota LPNs



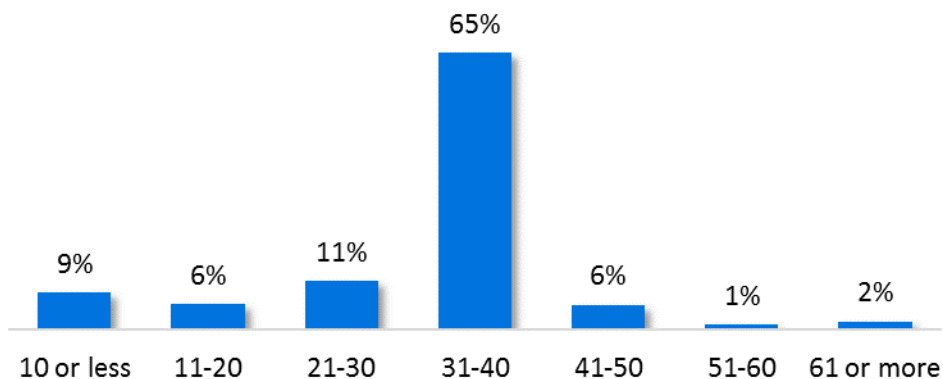
Source: MDH LPN Workforce Questionnaire, 2015-2016. Percentages based on 12,582 LPNs who responded to the question.

Employment

Share of LPNs Employed. An estimated **81 percent** of Minnesota LPNs reported on the MDH questionnaire they were “working in a paid position as a practical nurse.” Of the 19 percent who were *not* working, the largest share (44 percent) said they were not seeking work as a practical nurse despite being unemployed or working in another field.

Hours Worked. LPNs typically worked 31 to 40 hours per week. The median work week was 36 hours. Hours worked in a typical week differed by work setting. A median 35 to 36 hour week was most common for LPNs employed by organizations where working three 12-hour shifts per week is often considered full-time employment. This included skilled nursing or extended care facilities, hospitals, ambulatory or provider clinics, home health agencies, and rehabilitation facilities. LPNs working a median 40-hour week were typically employed at places like Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), group residential homes, or correctional facilities.

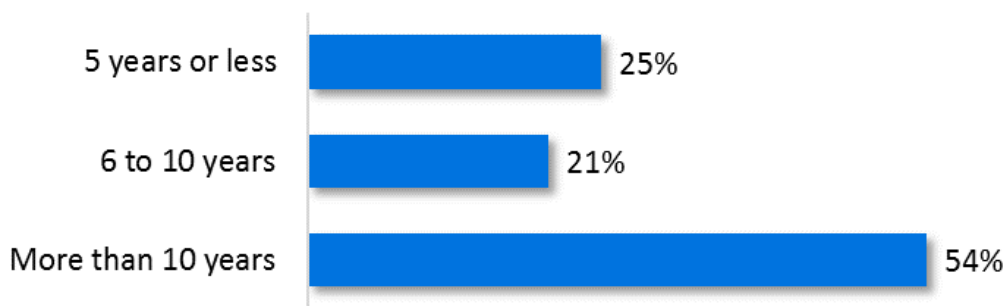
Hours Worked in a Typical Week



Source: MDH LPN Workforce Questionnaire, 2015-2016. The chart based on 11,860 survey responses.

Future Plans. More than half of LPNs practicing in Minnesota indicated they planned to practice more than 10 years. However, a quarter planned to leave the field in the next five years. Of that group, more than half plan to retire (54 percent) while 46 percent listed other reasons for leaving, the most common being to change professions (data not included). Licensed Practical Nurses often think of their LPN education as the first step to entering the field of nursing, with many going on to obtain additional education to advance as a nurse. Among LPNs stating other reasons for leaving, 84 percent specifically noted it was because they were advancing to become RNs.

“How many more years do you plan to practice in Minnesota?”



Source: MDH LPN Workforce Questionnaire, 2015-2016. The chart based on 10,628 responses.

Work Setting. LPNs most commonly reported their primary work setting as a nursing home or extended, long-term care facility. Another combined 35 percent reported they primarily worked in one of two clinic settings: a provider office or ambulatory care clinic. Only a very small share of LPNs reported employment at other facilities such as hospice, urgent care, or ambulatory surgical care centers.

The most common work settings for LPNs did not differ by urban and rural areas of the state. LPNs in urban areas typically reported working in a long term care facility (28 percent) followed by clinic or provider office (21 percent). LPNs in rural areas also most frequently reported working in long-term care facilities (33 percent) followed by clinic/provider offices (25 percent).

LPNs' Primary Work Settings

| Setting | LPNs working in this setting |
|---|------------------------------|
| Nursing Home/Extended Care/Assisted Living Facility | 29% |
| Clinic/Provider Office | 23% |
| Ambulatory Care Clinic | 12% |
| Home Health Agency | 8% |
| Hospital | 7% |
| Group/Residential home | 3% |
| Rehabilitation Facility | 2% |
| Chemical Dependency/Detox Unit | 2% |
| Hospice | 1% |
| Urgent Care Clinic | 1% |
| Correctional Facility | 1% |
| Adult Day/Foster Care | 1% |
| Ambulatory Surgical Center | 1% |
| Federally Qualified Health Center | <1% |
| Other | 10% |

Source: MDH LPN Workforce Questionnaire, 2015-2016. The chart based on 9,791 survey responses. Some of the recurrent settings among the 10 percent of LPNs who reported "other," included elementary or high schools, mental health centers, other types of long-term care facilities and insurance offices.

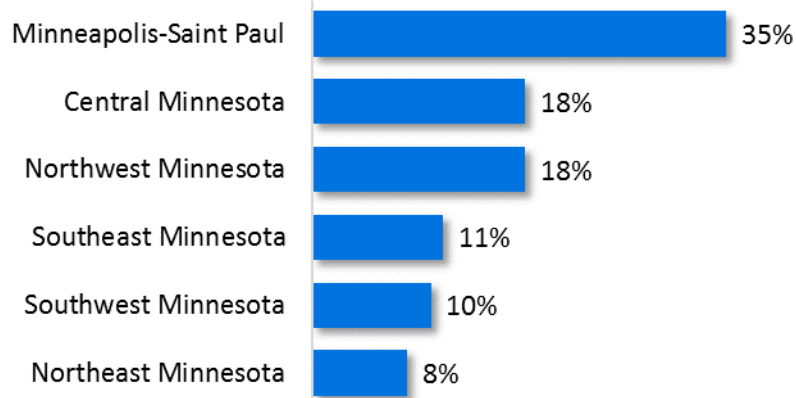
Geographic Distribution

To gain a sense of the accessibility of LPN services around the state, the next two charts provide two different views of the geographic distribution of LPNs. Analyses is based on geocoded mailing addresses supplied to the Board of Nursing at the time of license renewal.ⁱⁱⁱ

Distribution by Region. The first chart shows the distribution of LPNs across the six planning areas around Minnesota. As shown, over a third of LPNs (35 percent) were practicing in the Twin Cities metro area, followed by 18 percent in both the Central and Northwest regions. The remainder of the state was home to a smaller percentage of LPNs (11 percent in the Southeast, 10 percent in the Southwest, and 8 percent in the Northeast). For reference, the Twin Cities metro area houses approximately 54 percent of the state's population, with all other regions housing between 7 and 13 percent of Minnesotans. Regions outside the Twin Cities area combined show a much larger number of LPNs compared to the Twin Cities area (13,360 versus 7,228 respectively). There is a low percentage of LPNs in southeast

Minnesota despite the presence of Mayo clinic and contrary to the overrepresentation of other health care occupations relative to the region's population.

LPNs by Minnesota Region



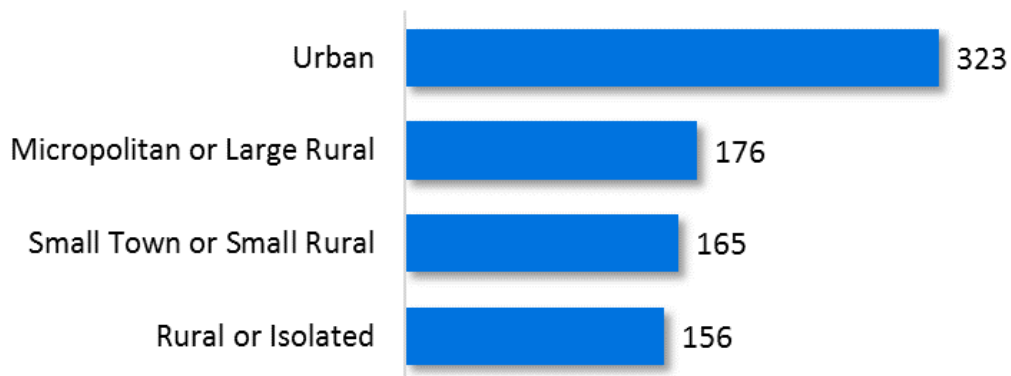
Source: Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) geocoding and analysis of February, 2017 MN Board of Nursing mailing address data. Percentages based on 20,588 valid Minnesota addresses. To see regions defined, go to <https://apps.deed.state.mn.us/assets/lmi/areamap/plan.shtml>.

Distribution across urban and rural areas. The chart below provides another view of the geographic distribution of LPNs, showing the size of the population for every one LPN in urban, micropolitan, small town, and rural areas. As shown, LPNs have some of the smallest population-to-provider ratios compared to many other health care professions indicating they are one of the largest workforces in the state.

There are 323 people for every one LPN in urban areas of Minnesota, compared to less than half as many (156) people in the most rural areas of the state. This pattern is unlike what is observed in the other health care professions, where the resident population per provider is often much higher in rural than it is in urban areas. For example, there are about 2,000 residents for every physician and almost 4,000 residents for every dentist in rural areas.

This may signal the declining availability of LPN positions in hospitals in the metro areas and reflect greater job availability in rural areas, causing a migration of LPNs from metro to rural areas, where more job openings in hospitals, skilled nursing centers, and home care exist. Recent anecdotal evidence from long-term care, ambulatory and home care organizations suggest the need for LPNs is growing in non-urban areas of the state. This combined with higher than normal turnover rates in the LPN field and an aging rural population in need of long-term care could be contributing to the rising demand for more LPNs in rural Minnesota.

Minnesota Population-to-LPN Ratio



Source: Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) analysis of February 2017 Minnesota Board of Nursing mailing address data. Percentages above based on 20,588 valid Minnesota mailing addresses. To see geographic areas defined, go to <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/orhpc/workforce/method.html>.

Visit our website at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/data/workforce/reports.html> to learn about the Minnesota healthcare workforce. County-level data for this profession is available at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/data/workforce/database/index.html>

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ⁱ The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in cooperation with the Minnesota Board of Nursing, collected information on demographics, education, career and future plans of licensed practical nurses during a workforce questionnaire in 2015 and 2016. Unless noted, all data are based on information collected from that survey. The response rate for the 2015-2016 LPN survey was 57 percent. Further analysis examining the age, sex, urban/rural location, and in-state/out-of-state addresses among LPNs renewing their licenses showed little to no variation in respondents that completed the survey and those that did not, increasing the probability the information provided is representative of Minnesota's licensed LPN workforce.

ⁱⁱ Of the total licensed practical nurses (LPNs), 1,874 listed an address outside of Minnesota; and based on survey responses, 19 percent of the total licensees were not currently practicing as a LPN. Thus, not all actively LPNs were part of the Minnesota nurse workforce.

ⁱⁱⁱ Addresses are mailing locations. Approximately 1,872 LPNs reported an out-of-state address (8 percent) to the Board; these professionals may or may not be providing services in Minnesota, but in any case, they could not be geocoded.