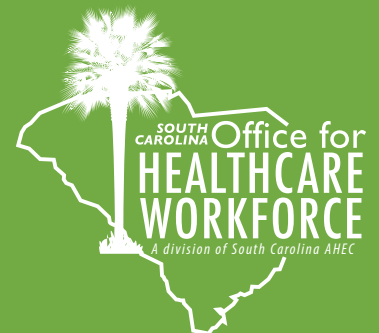


The South Carolina Nurse Practitioner Workforce | 2022

May 2025



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Report Preparation

This document was produced by the South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce (SCOHW) – a part of the South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium (SC AHEC) in Charleston, South Carolina. It contains information about the nurse practitioners actively employed as nurses in South Carolina as reported by the nurses themselves during their biennial license renewal process ending on April 30, 2022.

For additional information about nurses and many other health professionals in South Carolina, please call us at 843-792-4430 or visit our website: www.scahec.net/scohw.

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About the South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce

The South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce within the South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium is dedicated to coordinating the development and publication of policy-relevant workforce research across the spectrum of health professions in South Carolina. Funded by the state of South Carolina, SCOHW’s primary goal is the development and analysis of accurate, reliable information on the supply of healthcare professionals and the demand for health services in South Carolina in order to support a wide array of workforce planning efforts.

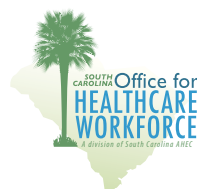


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Executive Summary

Nurses are the largest group of healthcare workers in the United States and South Carolina (SC). This report, produced by the South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce (SCOHW) at the South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium (AHEC), describes the Nurse Practitioner (NP) workforce in SC using data from the nursing licensure renewal process ending on April 30, 2022.

Data Highlights

- **Supply:** In 2022, there were 5,260 NPs working in SC. This is an increase of 757 NPs since 2020 and 3,586 since 2012.
- **Demographics:** The median age of SC NPs was 42 years, and 61% were 45 or younger. 76% of NPs identified as White and 92% identified as female.
- **Education:** In 2022, 82% of NPs had a Master's Degree and 13% had a Doctorate.
- **Employment:** Nearly one third (29.7%) of SC NPs worked in physician or medical offices in 2022. The most common national certifications reported among NPs were Family NP (70.9%), Adult NP (4.9%), Acute Care NP (4.5%), and Adult Gerontology Primary Care NP (4.3%). Most NPs (61.3%) reported working between 33 and 40 hours per week.
- **Demand:** NPs were projected to be the fastest growing healthcare occupation in the state between 2022 and 2032.

Key Takeaways

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are critical contributors to the healthcare workforce in South Carolina, bridging gaps in patient care by providing high-quality, cost-effective services. Their advanced clinical training enables them to diagnose, treat, and manage a wide range of medical conditions, thus enhancing patient outcomes, particularly in rural and underserved areas and counties with lower socioeconomic and health status. NPs work across various healthcare settings, from community-based primary care and hospitals to specialty clinics, filling vital roles where physician shortages exist.

Their ability to practice independently or collaboratively with other healthcare professionals makes them versatile and essential to addressing the growing demand for healthcare services. As the healthcare landscape evolves, NPs will continue to be key players in improving access to care and reducing healthcare disparities across communities.

The data in this report represent the activity status and practice location of NPs in South Carolina in 2022, *during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic*. Due to the disruptive influence of the pandemic on the healthcare services and employment patterns of health professionals, caution should be used in interpreting these data for current conditions.

Introduction

The nurse practitioner (NP) workforce plays an increasingly vital role in South Carolina's healthcare system, particularly as the state faces growing demands for accessible primary healthcare.^{1,2} Nurse practitioners are highly skilled, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) who work collaboratively with physicians, other nurses, and other healthcare providers, and can diagnose, treat, and manage acute and chronic illnesses.³ NPs are one of four types of APRNs – also including clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), and certified nurse midwives (CNMs). NPs make up the largest proportion of APRNs in SC (79%). NPs must hold a valid RN license, complete an accredited NP program, and pass a national certification exam in their specialty area. They must have a practice agreement with a physician and may apply for prescriptive authority from the South Carolina Board of Nursing (SC BON).^{4,5} They may bill for services under Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers, similar to physicians.⁶

In South Carolina, the supply of NPs has seen a steady increase over the past decade, driven by an increase in the number of educational programs and a rising need for healthcare services in both urban and rural areas. This report describes the NP workforce in South Carolina, based on data reported by nurses during their licensure renewal process in 2022.

Methods/Data

Licensure data were obtained from the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA), the official repository of data collected by the state's licensing boards under the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR). All data were self-reported to the SC BON by NPs during the biennial nursing license renewal period ending on April 30, 2022.

The 2022 NP workforce described in this report includes only active licensees with an APRN license indicating a primary practice location in South Carolina and who were currently employed in nursing in 2022. Prior to 2020, NPs with a South Carolina license who were employed in a federal or military setting could be identified in the licensure file and excluded from analysis. Starting in 2020, federal and military NPs are no longer identifiable, so they are included in this report.

Trends in NP Supply and Distribution, 2012-2022

In 2022, there were 5,260 NPs practicing in South Carolina, a 214.2% increase since 2012 ([Table 1](#)). This increase occurred across metropolitan, micropolitan, and nonmetropolitan counties, despite the fact that the population declined in micropolitan counties during that period. [Figures 1 and 2](#) show the distribution of NPs across the state.

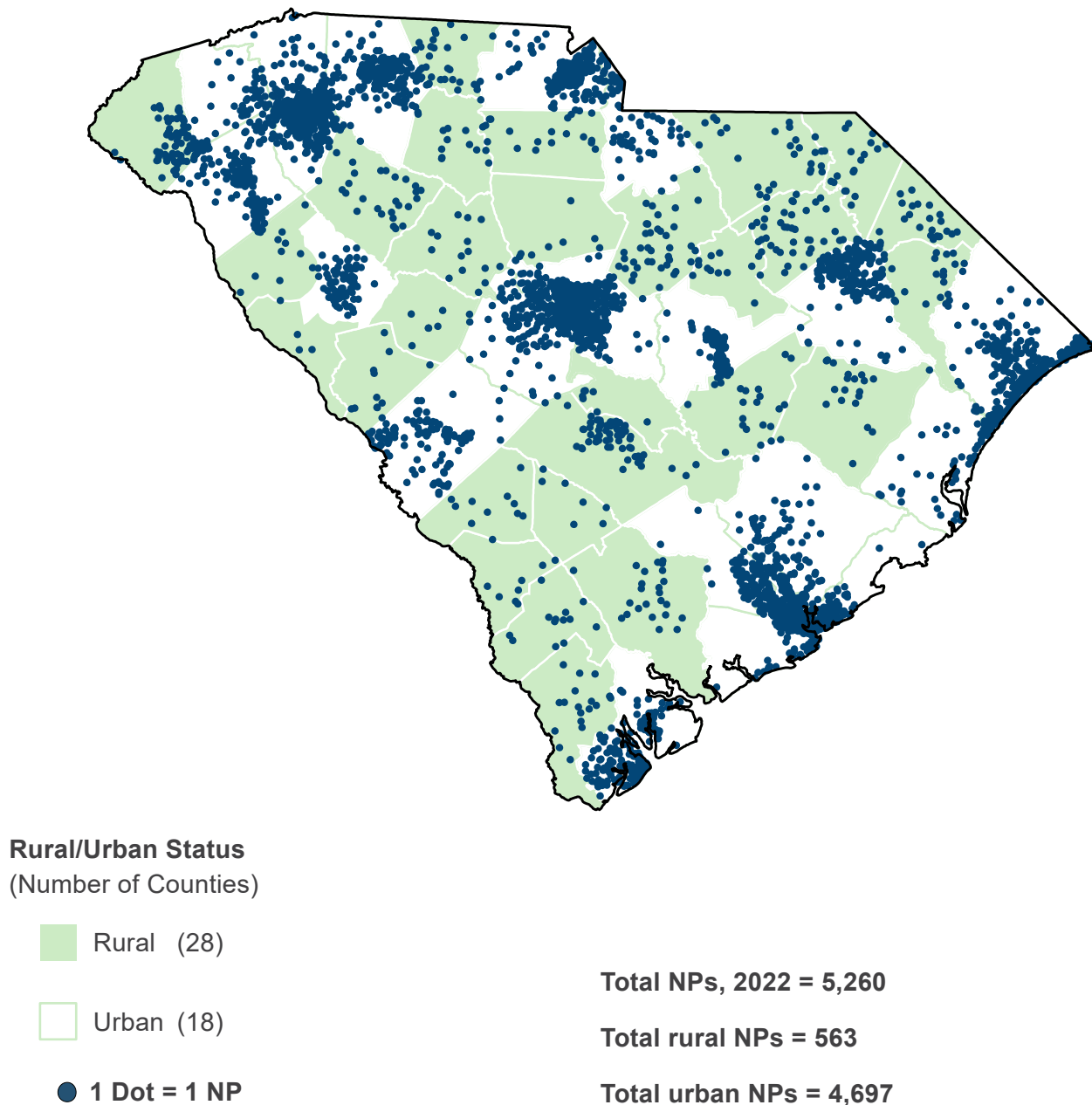
Table 1. Changes in the size of the South Carolina NP workforce, 2012-2022.

	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022	% Change 2012-2022
Number of NPs							
Metropolitan counties (n = 26 counties)	1,477	1,809	2,240	3,031	4,069	4,728	220.1%
Micropolitan counties (n = 7 counties)	129	153	172	232	304	344	166.7%
Nonmetropolitan counties (n = 13 counties)	68	74	85	103	130	188	176.5%
Total state (n = 46 counties)	1,674	2,036	2,497	3,366	4,503	5,260	214.2%
NPs per 10,000 population							
Metropolitan counties	3.7	4.4	5.3	6.9	9.0	10.6	187.0%
Micropolitan counties	2.8	3.4	3.8	5.1	6.6	8.3	193.8%
Nonmetropolitan counties	2.6	2.9	3.3	4.1	5.3	6.0	131.9%
Total state	3.5	4.2	5.0	6.6	8.6	10.1	185.8%
State Population							
Metropolitan counties	4,006,331	4,119,187	4,252,203	4,377,070	4,515,013	4,467,738	11.5%
Micropolitan counties	455,626	455,028	454,776	457,114	457,548	413,499	-9.2%
Nonmetropolitan counties	261,766	258,267	254,140	249,943	245,479	312,029	19.2%
Total state	4,723,723	4,832,482	4,961,119	5,084,127	5,218,040	5,193,266	9.9%

Note: Metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas are geographic entities defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for use by federal statistical agencies in collecting, tabulating, and publishing federal statistics. A metropolitan area contains a core urban area of 50,000 or more population. A micropolitan area contains an urban core of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population. Each metropolitan or micropolitan area consists of one or more counties and includes the counties containing the core urban area, as well as any adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration with the urban core (as measured by commuting to work). Any county that is not designated a metropolitan or micropolitan area is designated as a nonmetropolitan area. These designations are based on 2020 delineations as updated in July 2023. See <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/metro-micro/about/delineation-files.html> for more information.

In previous reports in this series, only nonfederal nurses were included in the analyses. Prior to 2020, NPs employed in a federal or military setting could be identified in the licensure file and excluded from analysis.

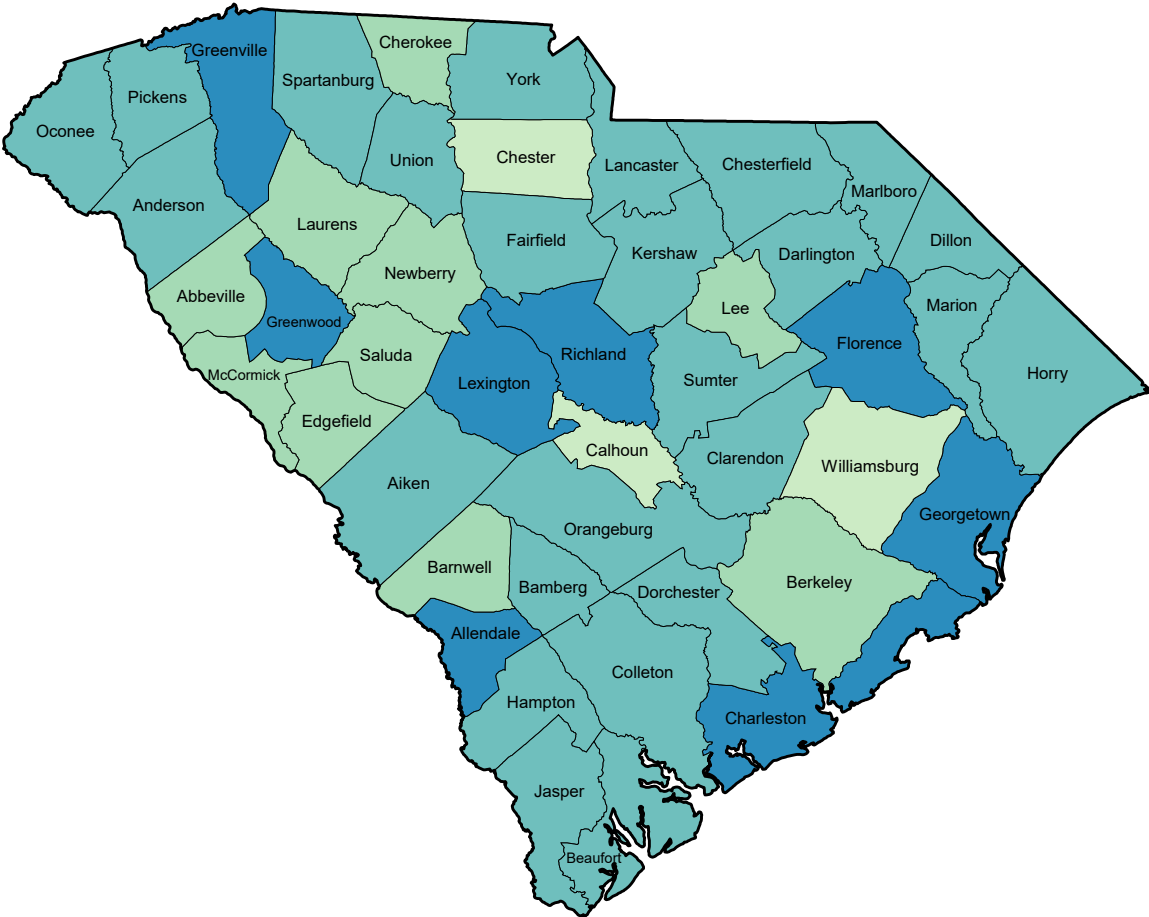
Figure 1. Active nurse practitioners by primary practice location, South Carolina, 2022.



This information is based on all nurse practitioners (NPs) with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in South Carolina as of 4/30/2022. Counts are based on best available self-reported practice location information. Dots are randomly scattered within the zip code area and may not represent the actual street address of the practice.

Source: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, SC AHEC, with data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA). Rural definition from the U.S. Census Bureau, Geography Division, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>. Rural counties are those counties where 50% of more of the population lives outside an urbanized area based on the 2020 Census.

Figure 2. Nurse practitioners per 10,000 population, South Carolina, 2022.



Number of NPs per 10,000 Population
(Number of Counties)

10.0 or More	(8)
5.0 to 9.9	(25)
3.0 to 4.9	(10)
0.1 to 2.9	(3)
No Active NPs	(0)

Total NPs, 2022 = 5,260
Total population, 2021 = 5,193,266
Overall rate per 10,000 population = 10.1
Counties in SC range from a low of 1.4 to a high of 18.3 NPs per 10,000 county residents.

This information is based on all nurse practitioners (NPs) with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in South Carolina as of 4/30/2022. Counts are based on best available self-reported practice location information.

Source: SC Office for Healthcare Workforce, SC AHEC, with data collected by the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) and obtained from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA). Population data (2021) provided by the Data Integration and Analysis Division of RFA, based on the Vintage 2022 Estimate Series from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Demographic Characteristics of the NP Workforce

Table 2 shows demographic characteristics of the NP workforce in 2012 and 2022. The workforce remained predominately female, although the percentage of male NPs increased from 5.1% in 2012 to 8.0% in 2022. The NP workforce in 2022 was significantly younger than in 2012, with their median age decreasing from 48 to 42. In 2012, 44.0% of NPs were 45 or younger, and in 2022 that percentage increased to 61.0%. The majority (76.0%) of NPs actively working in SC in 2022 identified as White.

Table 2. The nurse practitioner workforce in South Carolina, 2012 and 2022

	2012		2022	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Total	1,674	100%	5,260	100%
Sex				
Female	1,588	94.9%	4,840	92.0%
Male	86	5.1%	420	8.0%
Missing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Race/Ethnicity				
African American	147	8.8%	726	13.8%
American Indian	4	0.2%	18	0.3%
Asian	10	0.6%	83	1.6%
Hispanic	11	0.7%	54	1.0%
Other	8	0.5%	46	0.9%
White	1,487	88.8%	3,999	76.0%
Missing	7	0.4%	334	6.3%
Age				
25 or Younger	2	0.1%	6	0.1%
26-30	102	6.1%	299	5.7%
31-35	221	13.2%	932	17.7%
36-40	210	12.5%	1,050	20.0%
41-45	203	12.1%	923	17.5%
46-50	223	13.3%	660	12.5%
51-55	259	15.5%	539	10.2%
56-60	260	15.5%	394	7.5%
61-65	130	7.8%	277	5.3%
66-70	53	3.2%	135	2.6%
71-75	9	0.5%	39	0.7%
76 or Older	2	0.1%	6	0.1%
Missing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Median Age*	48 years		42 years	

* Note: The median represents the midpoint of a set of data, where half of the datapoints fall below and half fall above the median.

NP Education

When nurses renew their license every two years, they are asked to indicate their original and highest nursing degrees. **Table 3** shows that most NPs in 2022 had an entry-level degree of a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing (62.2%), followed by an Associate Degree in Nursing (32.6%). **Table 4** shows that 81.7% of NPs in 2022 held a Master's Degree in Nursing and 13.3% held a Doctorate in Nursing (PhD, DNP, or DNS) as their highest degree. The percentage holding a doctorate degree has increased, while those with a certificate has decreased.

Table 3. NP entry-level nursing degrees, SC, 2012 and 2022.

	2012		2022	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Diploma	132	7.9%	145	2.8%
Associate Degree in Nursing	454	27.1%	1,714	32.6%
Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing	1,080	64.5%	3,273	62.2%
Master's Degree in Nursing	4	0.2%	22	0.4%
Other	1	0.1%	16	0.3%
Missing	3	0.2%	90	1.7%

Table 4. NP highest nursing degree earned, SC, 2012 and 2022.

	2012		2022	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
NP Certificate Program	109	6.5%	214	4.1%
Master's Degree in Nursing	1,446	86.4%	4,295	81.7%
Doctorate	70	4.2%	701	13.3%
Missing	49	2.9%	50	1.0%

NP Employment and Practice

NP Practice Hours

Table 5 shows the number of weekly hours worked by NPs. The median number of weekly hours worked was 40, with 61.3% of NPs reporting between 33 and 40 hours across primary and secondary practice locations.

Table 5. Total hours worked per week by NPs across primary and secondary practice locations, SC, 2022.

Total Weekly Hours	Count	Percent
≤ 8	83	1.6%
9-16	137	2.6%
17-24	289	5.5%
25-32	420	8.0%
33-40	3,223	61.3%
41-48	510	9.7%
49-56	307	5.8%
57-72	138	2.6%
>72	59	1.1%
Missing	94	1.8%

NP Practice Settings

NPs must pass a national certification exam in their specialty area. **Table 6** shows the breakdown of national certification titles in 2022. The majority of NPs in 2022 were Family NPs (70.9%). Nearly a third of NPs reported their practice setting as physician/medical office (29.7%), 26.5% reported “other” settings, and 19.9% reported a hospital setting (**Table 7**).

Table 6. NP national certification titles, SC, 2022.

Certification	Count	Percent
Family NP	3,730	70.9%
Adult NP	258	4.9%
Acute Care NP	236	4.5%
Adult Gerontology Primary Care NP	225	4.3%
Pediatric Primary Care NP	222	4.2%
Adult Gerontology Acute Care NP	145	2.8%
Family Psychiatric Mental Health NP	129	2.5%
Gerontological NP	95	1.8%
Women’s Health NP	83	1.6%
Neonatal NP	80	1.5%
Adult Psychiatric Mental Health NP	45	0.9%
Pediatric Acute Care NP	10	0.2%
Adult Health NP	2	0.0%
Total NP Workforce	5,260	100%

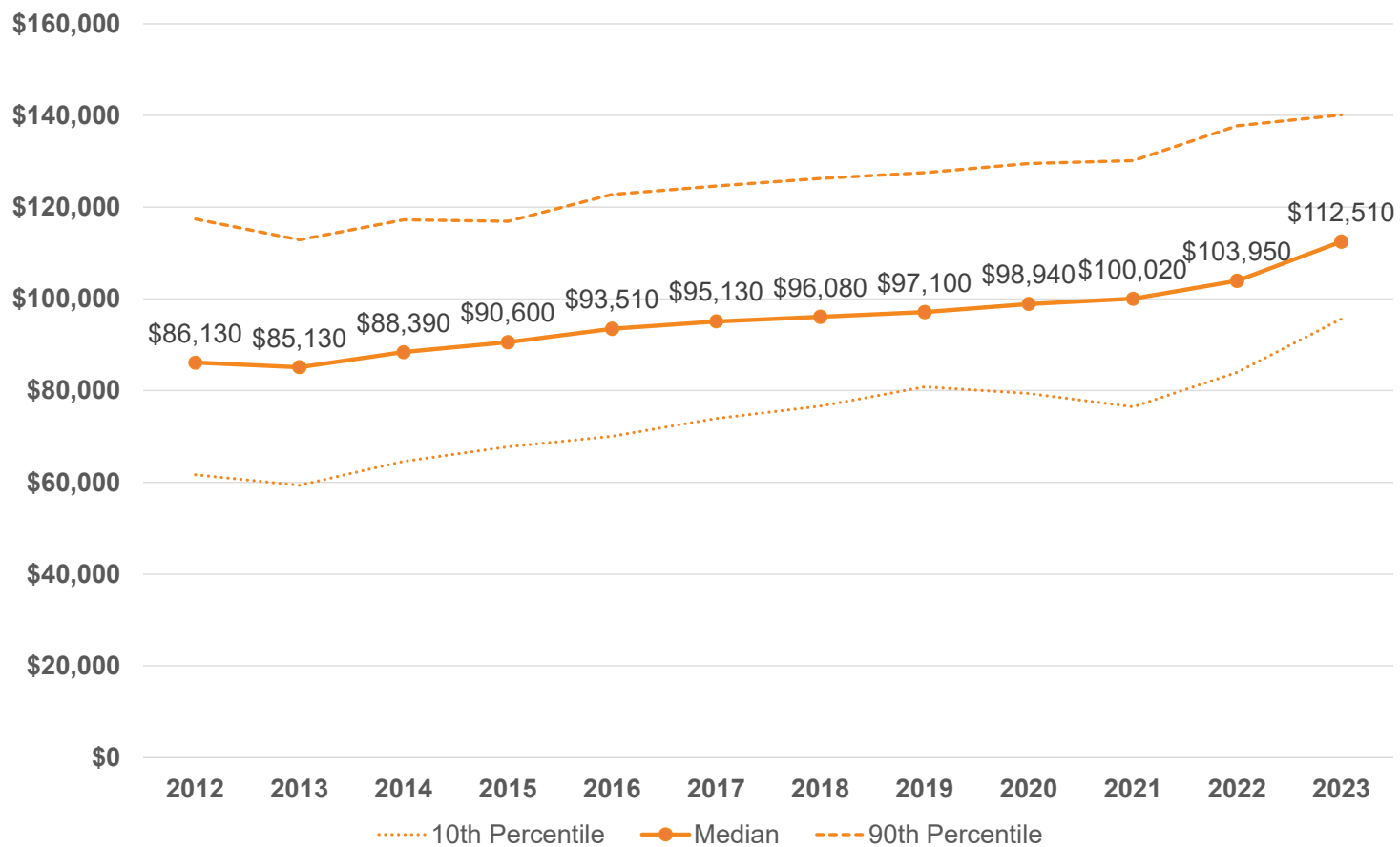
Table 7. NP practice settings, SC, 2022.

Setting	Count	Percent
Physician/Medical Office	1,561	29.7%
Hospital - General Inpatient	514	9.8%
Hospital - Outpatient	313	6.0%
NP Provider Clinic	236	4.5%
Federal Clinic	235	4.5%
Urgent Care	221	4.2%
Hospital - Other Inpatient	218	4.1%
Home Health	210	4.0%
Nursing Home/Extended Care	164	3.1%
Ambulatory Care Setting	163	3.1%
Other	1,394	26.5%
Setting Missing	31	0.6%
Total NP Workforce	5,260	100%

NP Wages

South Carolina nursing licensure data do not include wage information, but the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks median annual salary. **Figure 3** shows the median annual salary of NPs in South Carolina from 2012-2023, as well as the 10th percentile and 90th percentile salaries. From 2017 to 2021, wages grew by 1-2% per year, but from 2021-2022 they grew by 3.9%, and from 2022-2023 they grew by 8.2%.⁷

Figure 3. Nurse practitioner wages, South Carolina, 2012-2023: 10th percentile, median, 90th percentile.

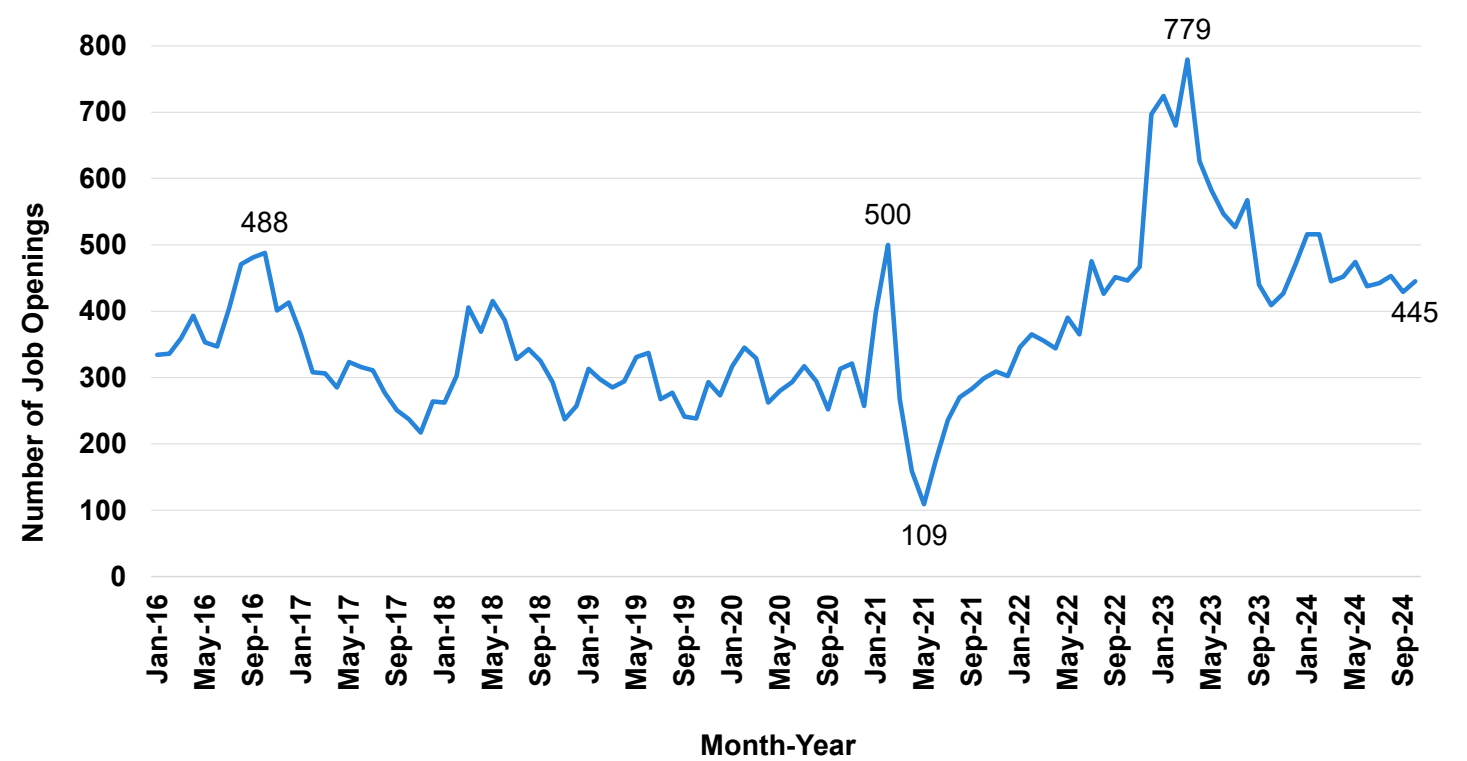


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_sc.htm, retrieved 7/11/2024.

Demand for NPs

The South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) tracks employment data, including the number of job openings in the state. In 2025, DEW reported that NPs were projected to be the fastest growing healthcare occupation in the state, with 60.7% projected growth between 2022 and 2032.⁸ **Figure 4** shows the number of job openings for NPs in South Carolina by month from January 2016 to October 2024.⁹ From January 2016 to February 2020, the average number of job postings per month was 325. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, that number fluctuated more, with a low of 109 in May 2021, a high of 779 in March 2023, and an average of 406 between March 2020 and October 2024. This increase in job postings could be due to the creation of new NP positions or higher job turnover.

Figure 4. Number of job openings for nurse practitioners in South Carolina, January 2016 - October 2024.



Source: South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, SC Works Online Services, <https://jobs.scworks.org/vosnet/default.aspx>, retrieved 12/14/2024.

Conclusions

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are critical contributors to the healthcare workforce in South Carolina, bridging gaps in patient care by providing high-quality, cost-effective services. Their advanced clinical training enables them to diagnose, treat, and manage a wide range of medical conditions, thus enhancing patient outcomes, particularly in rural and underserved areas and counties with lower socioeconomic and health status.^{10–12} NPs work across various healthcare settings, from community-based primary care and hospitals to specialty clinics, filling vital roles where physician shortages exist.¹³

Their ability to practice independently or collaboratively with other healthcare professionals makes them versatile and essential to addressing the growing demand for healthcare services. As the healthcare landscape evolves, NPs will continue to be key players in improving access to care and reducing healthcare disparities across communities.

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