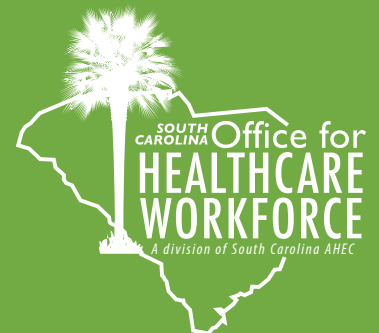


The South Carolina Registered Nurse Workforce | 2022

May 2025



www.scahec.net/scohw

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 registered nurses 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.

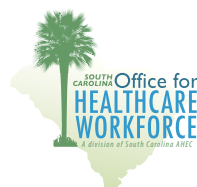


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Executive Summary

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 registered nurse (RN) workforce in SC using data from the nursing licensure renewal process ending on April 30, 2022.

Data Highlights

- **Supply:** In 2022, there were 45,164 RNs working in SC. This is an increase of 3,605 RNs since 2018 and 7,410 since 2012.
- **Demographics:** The median age of SC RNs was 44 years. One-third of SC RNs were over 50 years old. Over 78% of RNs identified as White and 92% identified as female.
- **Education:** In 2022, 57% of SC RNs had a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- **Employment:** More than half (57.3%) of SC RNs worked in hospital settings in 2022. The most common specialty areas reported among RNs were medical surgical (9.4%), perioperative (8.2%), critical care (7.6%), and general nursing practice (7.5%). Most RNs (60.6%) listed their position title as staff nurse/direct care/general duty nurse.
- **Demand:** In 2023, RNs were the most in-demand occupation in South Carolina according to the number of posted job ads.

Key Takeaways

- **The number of RNs in South Carolina is increasing.** The number of active RNs in SC grew by 19.6% between 2012 and 2022, faster than the growth of RNs across the US, which increased by 16.7%, and the state’s total population, which increased by 9.9%.
- **South Carolina RNs continue to seek further education.** The number of RNs who have at least a bachelor’s degree increased to 57% of the active SC RN workforce; this is short of a national goal of 80% of RNs. Further work is needed to understand the role of academic progression on RN distribution, work satisfaction, and retention, as well as patient care quality indicators.
- **Current demand for RNs remains strong in South Carolina.** There were more job postings in 2023 for RNs than any other occupation in SC. The average monthly number of job postings from January 2024 through November 2024 was 6,218, returning to pre-pandemic levels after peaking at more than 17,000 openings in September 2021.

The data in this report represent the activity status and practice location of RNs 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

Nursing is the largest healthcare profession in the United States and South Carolina (SC).¹ There are different types of nurses, including licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). Understanding the supply and distribution of nurses across the state, as well as their demographic, education, and employment characteristics, is critical for effective workforce planning, decision-making, and policy development. This report describes the registered nurse (RN) workforce in SC in 2022 using information collected during the 2022 nursing license renewal period ending on April 30, 2022.

The data in this report also represent the activity status and practice location of RNs in SC at the time of their license renewal in 2022, during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the disruptive influence of the pandemic on healthcare services and employment patterns of health professionals, caution should be used in interpreting data for current conditions.

What is an RN?

A registered nurse is a health professional trained to deliver and coordinate patient health care, provide health education, and work as part of the healthcare team to discover ways to improve outcomes for patients and the public.² There are several education paths to becoming an RN, including obtaining a diploma, associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree in nursing from an accredited education program. To work as an RN in SC, one must pass the National Council Licensing Examination for RNs (NCLEX-RN) and obtain a nursing license issued or recognized by the South Carolina Board of Nursing (SC BON). In SC, RNs are licensed to deliver care to patients. This care may include assessing patient conditions, recording health information, administering medications through IVs (i.e., intravenous), coordinating information between all healthcare team members, operating medical equipment, and teaching patients how to meet their health needs.² RNs also provide critical information to the care team and may supervise or delegate selected duties to LPNs and some allied health paraprofessionals. The median annual wage for RNs in SC was \$78,380 in 2023.^{2,3,4}

Defining the Registered Nurse Workforce

Data Source and Limitations

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 South Carolina Board of Nursing (SC BON) by RNs during the biennial license renewal period ending on April 30, 2022, or at the time of initial application for newly licensed nurses.

The analyses in this report include only those RNs who hold an active license issued by South Carolina and are currently employed as an RN in South Carolina. The results present a conservative estimate of the nursing workforce in South Carolina for several reasons:

1. Licensee information is updated on a biennial cycle, making it difficult to count RNs that enter or leave the workforce in between renewal periods.
2. New licensees are not required to report their employment location or practice status in their initial license application. Until they report a practice address and activity status during the biennial license renewal process, they are not captured in the active workforce definition. Depending on when new licensees receive their initial license to practice, they may be a productive part of the workforce for as long as two years before they are reflected in official workforce counts.
3. Self-reported data may contain errors from typos, incomplete answers, and misunderstood questions that may affect official workforce counts.
4. In previous reports in this series, only nonfederal nurses were included in the analyses because federal nurses serve specific populations (e.g., military members and families who live on base). Prior to 2020, RNs 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 RNs are no longer identifiable, so they are included in this report. In 2018, 462 RNs were employed in federal or military settings; this is approximately 1% of the active RN workforce in South Carolina.
5. As long as a federal RN is licensed in one state or territory, they can work under federal employment in any state.^{5,6} Federal RNs who work in South Carolina but hold a license from another state are not counted in this report.
6. South Carolina participates in the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC).⁶ RNs and LPNs in NLC states and territories may apply for a single-state or a multi-state license. A single-state license allows them to practice only within their state of permanent residence (home state). A multi-state license, much like a driver's license, allows them to practice within their home state and in any other participating NLC state without having to obtain additional licenses or registrations. Nurses who hold a current multi-state license with SC as their home state and indicate an active practice location within South Carolina are counted in the 2022 analyses. Because they are not required to register with the SC BON, NLC nurses licensed in a home state outside of SC are not captured in the 2022 SC licensure data. This may result in under-reporting the number of RNs in the workforce.
7. The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce cannot be determined from the licensure data alone. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a declaration that ended the pandemic portion of COVID-19 in the United States in May 2023.⁸ The data reported here describe

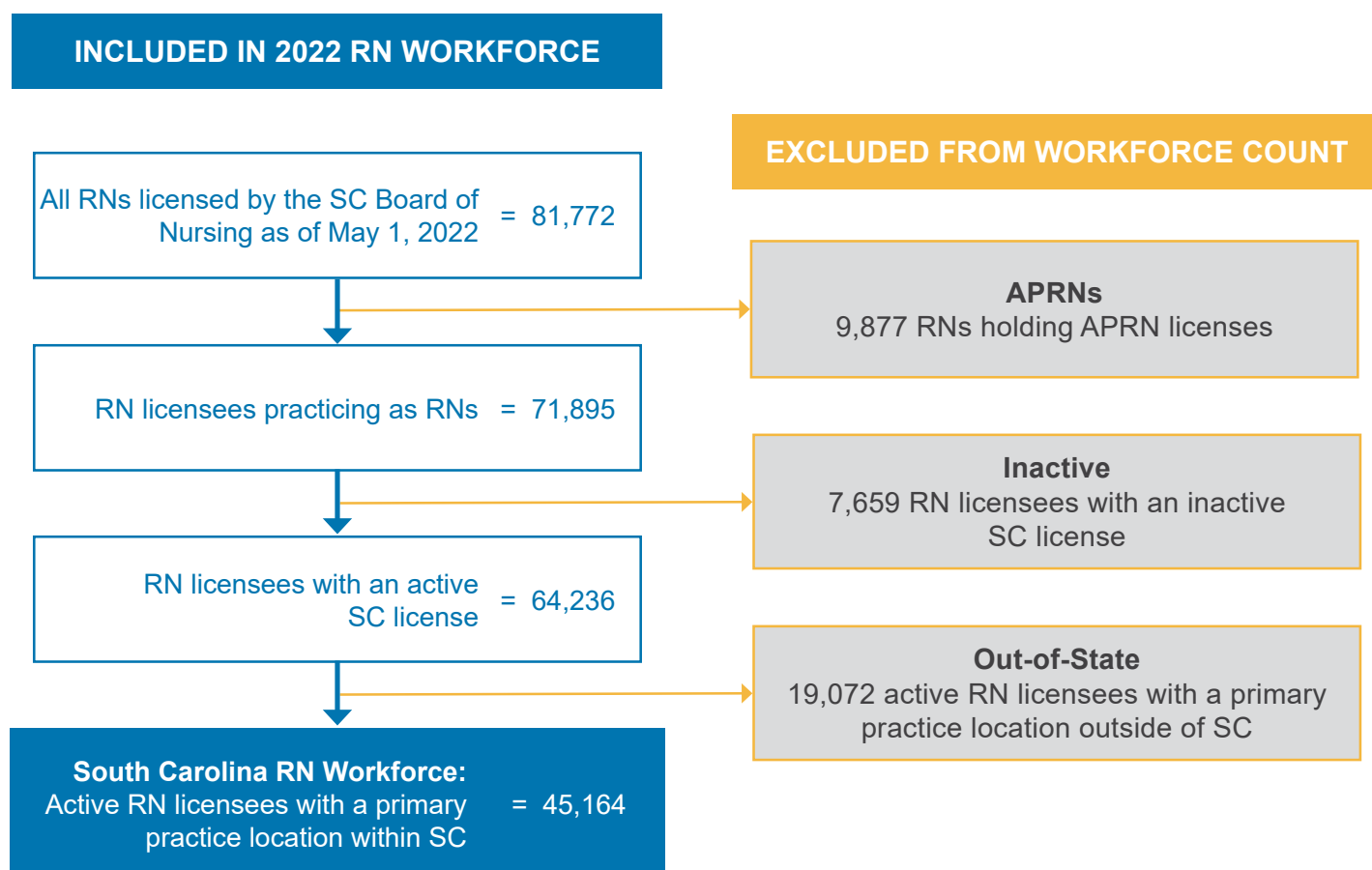
one point in time while pandemic conditions were still ongoing. The licensure data collected by the SC BON do not capture contextual information regarding employment changes, salary, or personal needs of nurses as the pandemic evolved.

Enumerating the South Carolina Registered Nurse Workforce: Who is Counted?

While registered nurses must be licensed by the South Carolina Board of Nursing or within an NLC state to practice in South Carolina, not all nurses holding a South Carolina license are actively practicing within the state. For the purposes of this report, RNs who were issued a license from the SC BON, reported working in the field of nursing, and listed a practice location in SC are included in the active SC RN workforce. This includes nurses not engaged in direct patient care, as they educate students who will enter the workforce, provide continuing education for those delivering care, contribute to nursing science, and perform countless other roles that ensure care is delivered. Nurses are excluded from the 2022 RN workforce if they reported practicing as an LPN or APRN. Prior to 2020, RNs employed in a federal or military setting could be identified in the licensure file and excluded from analysis. However, federal and military RNs are no longer identifiable in the data, so they are included in the active SC RN workforce.

Of the **81,772** RNs licensed by the SC BON in 2022, **45,164** (55%) were actively working as an RN in South Carolina – this is the total number used throughout this report. **Figure 1** illustrates how the RN workforce total was derived.

Figure 1. Identifying active, in-state registered nurses in South Carolina, 2022.



Trends in RN Supply and Distribution, 2012-2022

The number of active RNs in SC grew from 37,754 RNs in 2012 to 45,164 in 2022, a 19.6% increase. This is faster than the 16.7% growth of RNs nationally, which increased from 2,633,980 RNs in 2012 to 3,072,700 in 2022, and the 9.9% growth in the state's total population.⁹ **Figures 2 and 3** show the distribution of RNs across the state.

Between 2012 and 2022, metropolitan counties experienced the greatest increase in RNs, growing by 22.2%, compared to a 7.2% increase in nonmetropolitan counties and a decrease of 2.1% in micropolitan counties (**Table 1**). When accounting for population changes, the ratio of RNs per 10,000 population grew by 8.9% statewide. Despite the slight growth of RNs in nonmetropolitan counties, the ratio of RNs per 10,000 population decreased by 10.1% due to faster population growth.

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

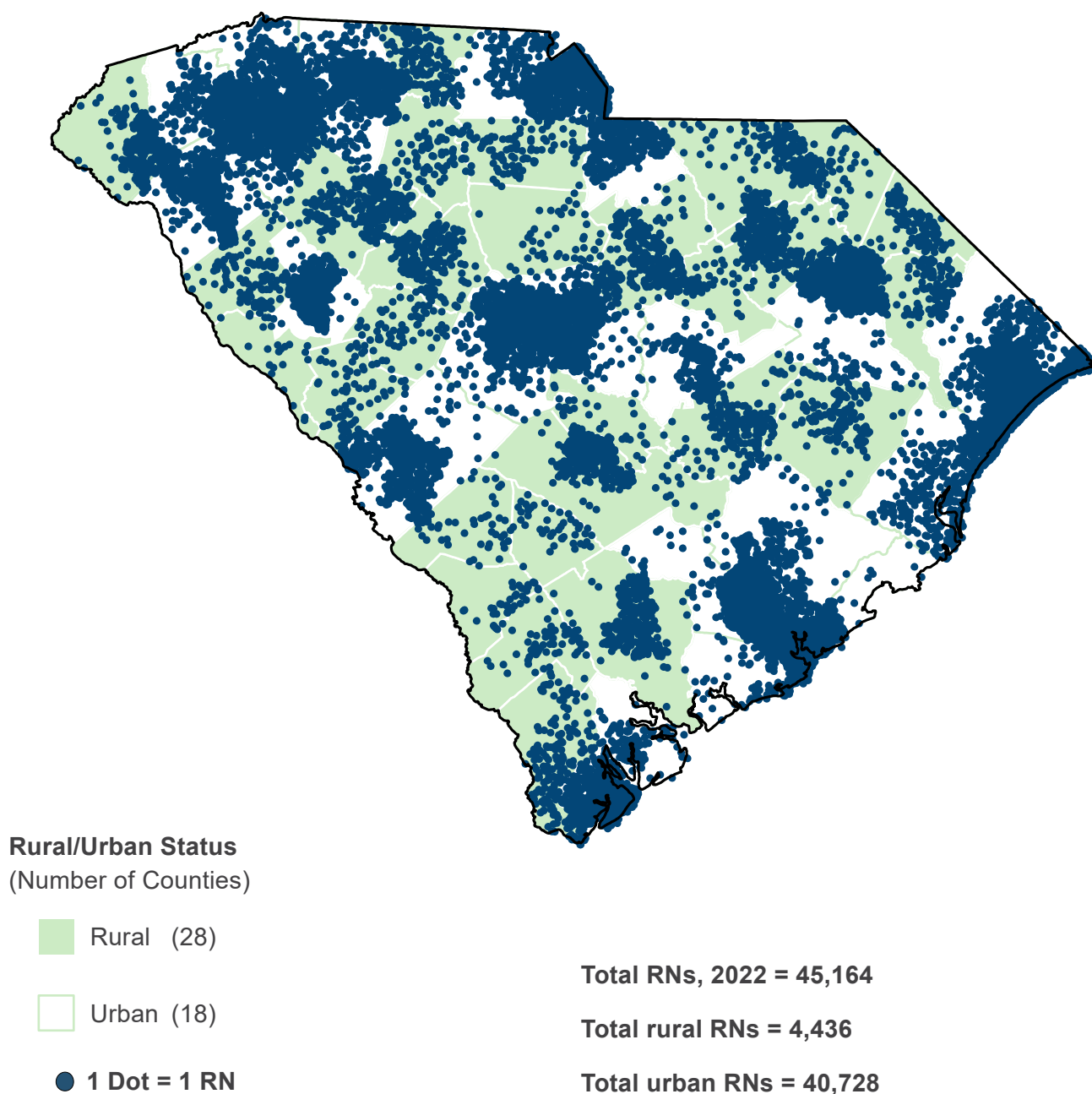
	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022	% Change 2012-2022
Number of RNs							
Metropolitan counties (n = 26 counties)	33,312	35,170	35,976	37,417	39,560	40,698	22.2%
Micropolitan counties (n = 7 counties)	3,184	3,198	3,073	2,961	3,013	3,118	-2.1%
Nonmetropolitan counties (n = 13 counties)	1,258	1,273	1,281	1,181	1,180	1,348	7.2%
Total state (n = 46 counties)	37,754	39,641	40,365*	41,559	43,753	45,164	19.6%
RNs per 10,000 Population							
Metropolitan counties	83.1	85.4	84.6	85.5	87.6	91.1	9.6%
Micropolitan counties	69.9	70.3	67.6	64.8	65.9	75.4	7.9%
Nonmetropolitan counties	48.1	49.3	50.4	47.3	48.1	43.2	-10.1%
Total state	79.9	82.0	81.4	81.7	83.8	87.0	8.9%
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%

*State total includes 35 RNs whose county location was unknown.

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, RNs employed in a federal or military setting could be identified in the licensure file and excluded from analysis.

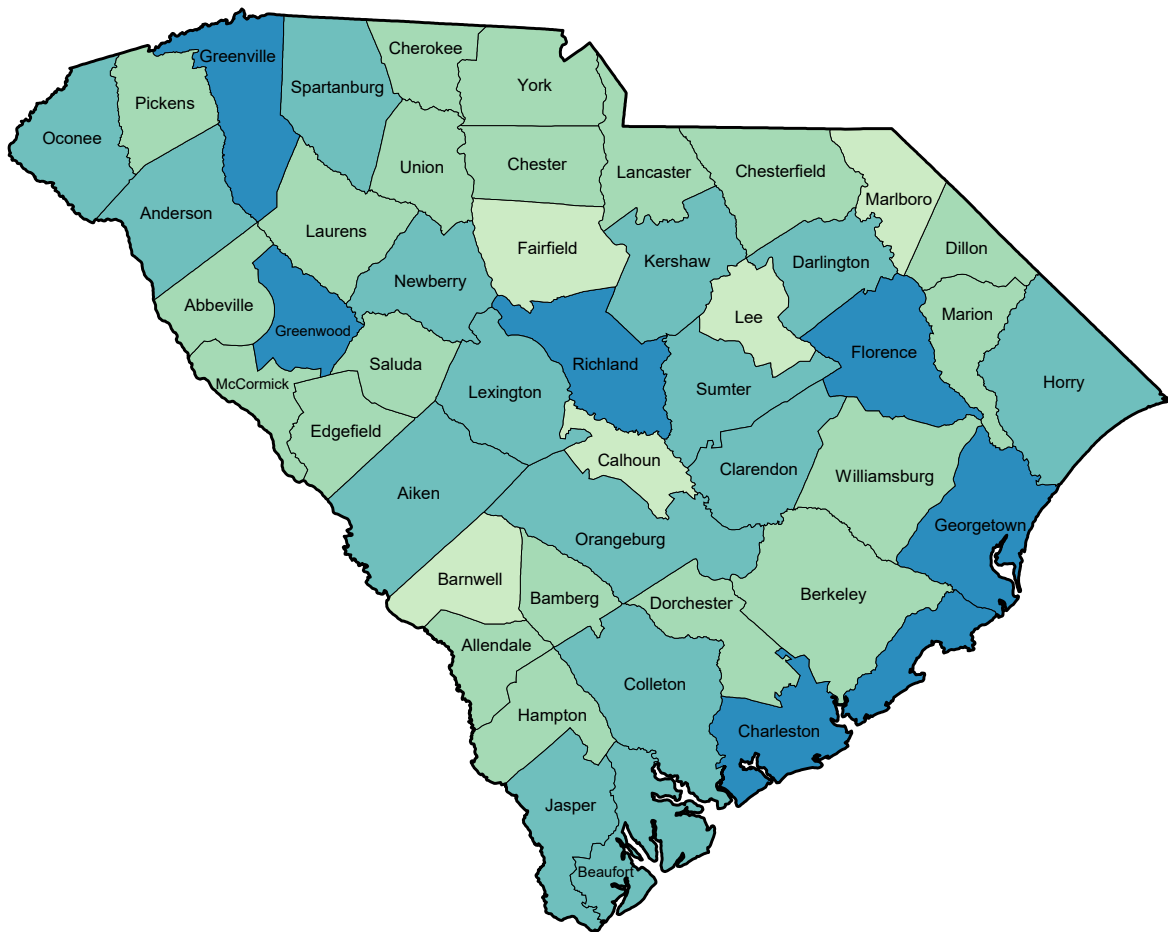
Figure 2. Active registered nurses by primary practice location, South Carolina, 2022.



This information is based on all registered nurses (RNs) 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% or more of the population lives outside an urbanized area based on the 2020 Census.

Figure 3. Registered nurses per 10,000 population, South Carolina, 2022.



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

100.0 or More	(6)
50.0 to 99.9	(15)
25.0 to 49.9	(20)
0.1 to 24.9	(5)
No Active RNs	(0)

Total RNs, 2022 = 45,164
Total population, 2021 = 5,193,266
Overall rate per 10,000 population = 87.0
Counties in SC range from a low of 17.7 to a high of 193.5 RNs per 10,000 county residents.

This information is based on all registered nurses (RNs) 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 RN Workforce

The demographic makeup of SC RNs remained stable between 2012 and 2022 ([Table 2](#)). Of the total workforce, female RNs accounted for 92.3% of the workforce and White RNs accounted for 78.3%. The number of male RNs grew by 48.3%, but their proportion of the active RN workforce remains small. The age of RNs ranged from 20 to 92 years old, with 35.0% of RNs age 51 or older, and 5.0% age 25 or younger. The median age of SC RNs in 2022 was 44 years, slightly younger than the median age of 45 years in 2012.

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

	2012		2022	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Total	37,754	100%	45,164	100%
County of Primary Employment				
Metropolitan	33,312	88.2%	40,698	90.1%
Micropolitan	3,184	8.4%	3,118	6.9%
Nonmetropolitan	1,258	3.3%	1,348	3.0%
Missing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sex				
Female	35,401	93.8%	41,674	92.3%
Male	2,353	6.2%	3,490	7.7%
Missing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Race/Ethnicity				
African American	4,366	11.6%	5,350	11.8%
American Indian	69	0.2%	80	0.2%
Asian	734	1.9%	1,043	2.3%
Hispanic	224	0.6%	608	1.3%
Other	274	0.7%	488	1.1%
White	31,181	82.6%	35,375	78.3%
Missing	906	2.4%	2,220	4.9%
Age				
25 or Younger	1,770	4.7%	2,268	5.0%
26-30	3,898	10.3%	4,895	10.8%
31-35	4,386	11.6%	5,623	12.5%
36-40	4,614	12.2%	5,663	12.5%
41-45	4,645	12.3%	5,480	12.1%
46-50	4,855	12.9%	5,408	12.0%
51-55	4,812	12.7%	5,070	11.2%
56-60	4,613	12.2%	4,843	10.7%
61-65	2,724	7.2%	3,487	7.7%
66-70	960	2.5%	1,658	3.7%
71-75	349	0.9%	571	1.3%
76 or Older	113	0.3%	198	0.4%
Missing	15	0.0%	0	0.0%
Median Age*	45 years		44 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.

RN Education

Entry to Nursing and Highest Nursing Degree

To practice nursing, RNs must complete a pre-licensure nursing education program approved by the SC BON and pass the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). There are multiple education pathways available, including diploma, associate, baccalaureate, and master's education. Regardless of the education path taken, all RNs are trained and qualified to practice at the same level.

Table 3 shows the initial degrees SC RNs had when they first obtained their nursing license, by current age. **Table 4** shows the highest degrees RNs earned since their initial license. Younger nurses are more likely to have a bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN) or higher degree as their first nursing degree, while nurses with more experience are more likely to have started their careers with a diploma or associate degree. Nearly two-thirds (64.3%) of RNs received their initial degree from a South Carolina education program, and just over half (54.4%) received their highest degree in-state.

Table 3. RNs by original nursing degree and age, South Carolina, 2022.

Degree	Age Group						Total	Percent
	≤ 30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	≥ 71		
LPN School or Diploma	5	8	18	13	7	1	52	0.1%
Diploma	53	135	266	566	598	230	1,848	4.1%
ADN	2,768	6,819	7,740	6,770	3,322	419	27,838	61.6%
BSN	4,318	4,280	2,847	2,540	1,198	115	15,298	33.9%
MSN	13	22	6	9	6	2	58	0.1%
Doctorate	0	2	0	1	3	0	6	< 0.1%
Missing	6	20	11	14	11	2	64	0.1%
Total	7,163	11,286	10,888	9,913	5,145	769	45,164	100.0%

Table 4. RNs by highest degree, South Carolina, 2022.

	Count	Percent
Diploma	1,296	2.9%
ADN	18,036	39.9%
BSN	21,991	48.7%
MSN	3,292	7.3%
Nurse Practitioner Certificate	25	0.1%
Doctoral	466	1.0%
Missing	58	0.1%
Total	45,164	100.0%

Academic Progression in Nursing

Multiple organizations, including the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) have recognized that increased education improves patient outcomes.^{10,11} NAM originally set a goal for 80% of the RN workforce to have a BSN or higher by 2020. Overall, 57.1% of SC RNs in 2022 held a BSN or higher as their highest nursing degree, an increase of 25.6% since 2018.

While some research has shown that increased education can improve patient care outcomes, more information is needed to understand the impact of academic progression in nursing for workforce and staffing patterns. For example, a North Carolina study found that a cohort of ADN-prepared nurses were more likely than their BSN counterparts to practice in rural areas, closer to where they trained, and in practice settings such as long-term care, home health, and hospice.¹²

RN Employment and Practice

RN Practice Hours

The majority of RNs worked 33-40 hours (61.4%) per week in their primary jobs (**Figure 4**). The next highest number of hours worked by RNs was 17-24 hours (6.3%).

Figure 4. Total hours worked per week by RNs in their primary practice location, SC, 2022.

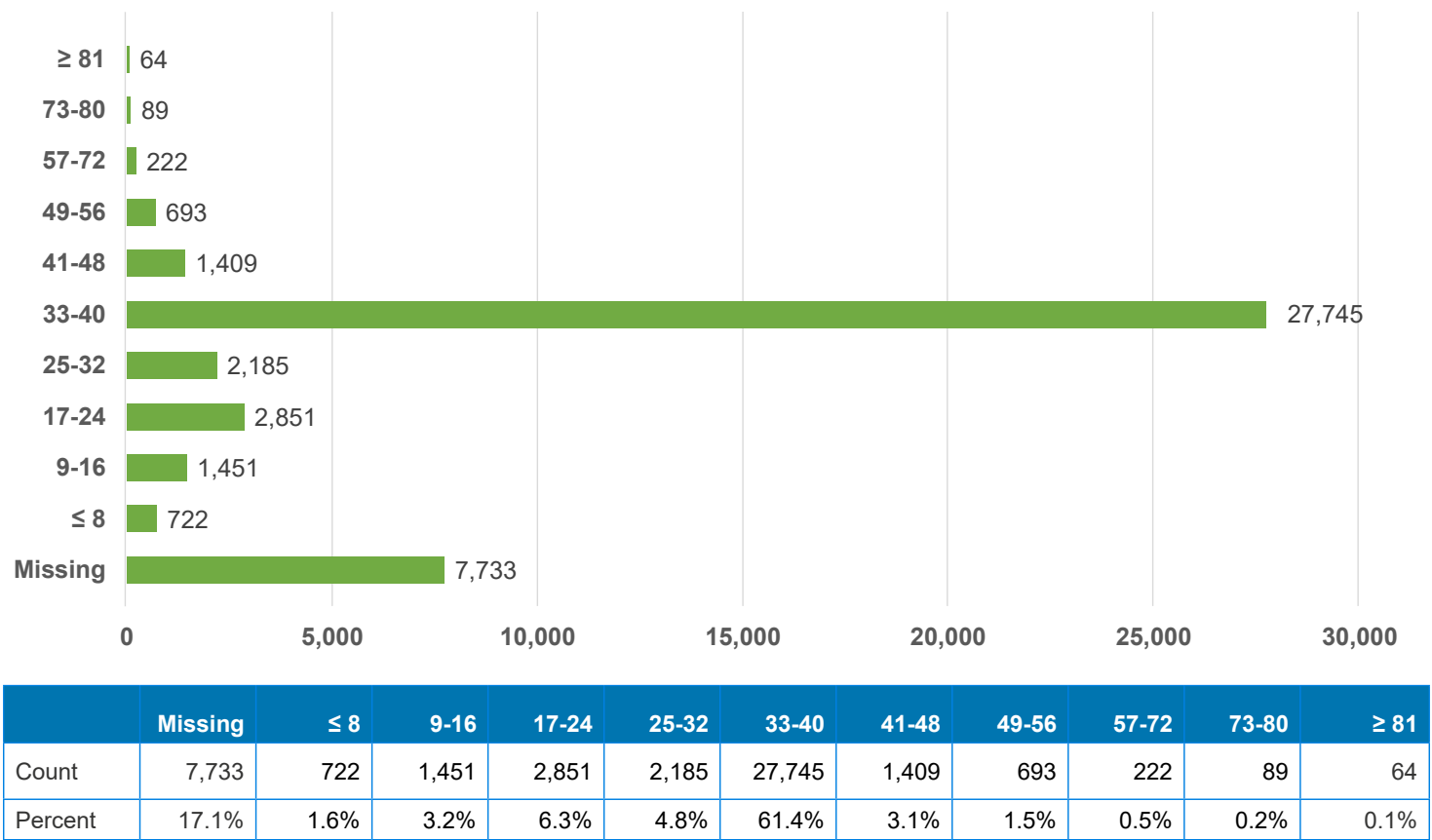


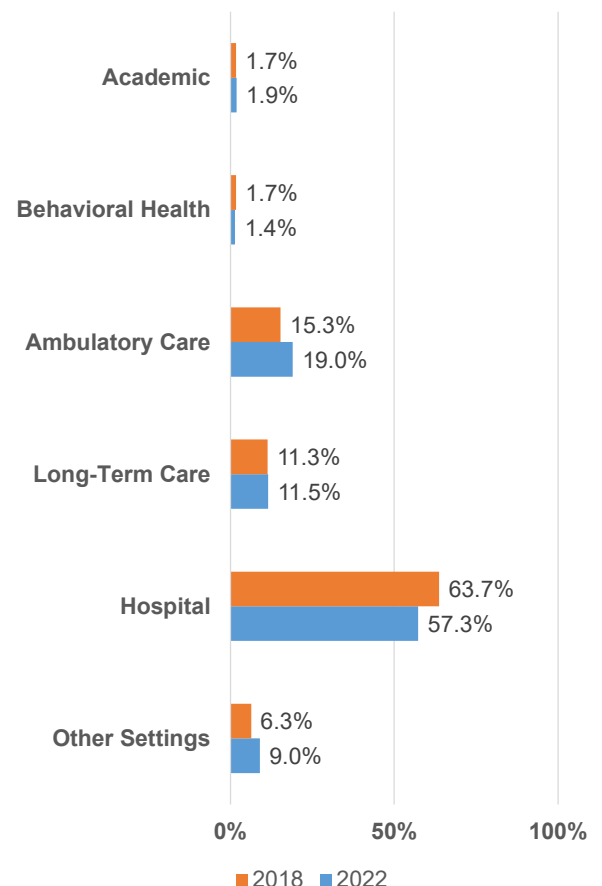
Table 5. Detailed RN practice settings, SC, 2022.

RN Practice Settings	Count	Percent
Academic	847	1.9%
Nursing Licensure Educators	670	1.5%
Other Nursing Education	177	0.4%
Behavioral Health	633	1.4%
Alcohol/Drug Detox Center	70	0.2%
Mental Health Care	563	1.2%
Ambulatory Care	8,559	19.0%
Ambulatory Surgery Centers	944	2.1%
Community Health	601	1.3%
Dialysis	917	2.0%
Federal Clinics	375	0.8%
NP Provider Clinics	17	<0.1%
Occupational Health	367	0.8%
Physician/Medical Offices	2,070	4.6%
Public Health Department	398	0.9%
Retail/In-Store Clinics	54	0.1%
Rural Health Centers	36	0.1%
School Health Services	1,723	3.8%
Other	855	1.9%
Urgent Care	202	0.4%
Long-Term Care	5,172	11.5%
Assisted Living Facilities	206	0.5%
Home Health	3,099	6.9%
Inpatient Hospice	256	0.6%
Nursing Home/Extended Care	1,611	3.6%
Hospital	25,859	57.3%
Hospital - Emergency Room	2,716	6.0%
Hospital - General Inpatient	10,866	24.1%
Hospital - Other Inpatient	5,275	11.7%
Hospital - Subacute Care	637	1.4%
Hospital - Administration and other Hospital Services	1,504	3.3%
Hospital - Outpatient	2,530	5.6%
Hospital - Surgical Services	2,331	5.2%
Other Settings	4,059	9.0%
Correctional Facilities	268	0.6%
Health Industry/Insurance Support Services	1,488	3.3%
Multi-Setting	172	0.4%
Policy Planning	58	0.1%
Other	2,073	4.6%
Setting Missing	35	0.1%
Total RN Workforce	45,164	100.0%

RN Practice Settings

Hospitals were the largest employer of RNs with 57.3% of licensees reporting them as their primary practice setting (Table 5), which is down by 2.2% from 2018. Only 4,239 (9.4%) RNs reported working in more than one setting. Between 2018 and 2022, the distribution of RNs across major practice setting types showed a slight increase in ambulatory care and other settings, with a corresponding decrease in hospital settings (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percent of RNs by practice setting, SC, 2018 and 2022



RN Specialty Areas and Position Titles

Nurses receive generalized clinical training across all specialty areas. Specialty areas (e.g., critical care, labor and delivery, surgical) can describe the type of nursing care provided by RNs. **Table 6** shows that the most common specialty areas of RNs include medical-surgical (9.4%), perioperative (8.2%), critical care (7.6%), and general nursing practice (7.5%).

Table 6. Specialty areas reported by RNs, SC, 2022.

Specialty	Count	Percent	Specialty	Count	Percent
Acute Care	2,057	4.6%	Maternal-Child Health	1,366	3.0%
Administration	1,443	3.2%	Medical Surgical	4,227	9.4%
Adult Health/Family Health	734	1.6%	Neonatal	885	2.0%
Analytics/Research	94	0.2%	Occupational Health	375	0.8%
Anesthesia	74	0.2%	Oncology	1,178	2.6%
Cardiac Care	1,808	4.0%	Outcomes/Quality/Documentation Review	1,092	2.4%
Case Management	2,353	5.2%	Palliative Care/Pain Management	100	0.2%
Community	665	1.5%	Pediatrics	1,552	3.4%
Critical Care	3,432	7.6%	Perioperative	3,686	8.2%
Developmental Disabilities	77	0.2%	Professional Development	188	0.4%
Dialysis/Nephrology	1,041	2.3%	Psychiatric/Mental Health/Substance Abuse	1,258	2.8%
Emergency/Trauma	2,707	6.0%	Public Health	542	1.2%
Faith-Based/Congregational/Parish Nurse	24	0.1%	Rehabilitation	769	1.7%
Forensic/SANE	33	0.1%	School Health	1,531	3.4%
General Nursing Practice	3,390	7.5%	Women's Health	1,029	2.3%
Geriatric/Gerontology	1,327	2.9%	Wound/Ostomy/Continence	266	0.6%
Hospice	1,336	3.0%	Other	2,160	4.8%
Informatics	330	0.7%	Missing	35	0.1%
Total				45,164	100.0%

RNs hold many roles in healthcare. In addition to bedside care, which is frequently identified under the title of staff nurse, RNs work in other roles such as administration, education, and informatics. **Table 7** shows that the most common position title held by SC RNs in 2022 was staff nurse/general duty nurse (60.6%). The next most common titles were care coordinator/case manager/discharge planner (6.3%), and nurse manager (6.2%).

Table 7. Position titles reported by RNs, SC, 2022.

Position Title	Count	Percent
Care Coordinator/Case Mgr/Discharge Planner	2,854	6.3%
Charge Nurse/Supervisor	1,964	4.3%
Consultant (e.g., Legal, Edu., Prac. Standards)	278	0.6%
Faculty/Professor	649	1.4%
Information Nurse/Informaticist	311	0.7%
Nurse Educator (incl. In-Service, Prof. Dev.)	677	1.5%
Nurse Executive/Administration	1,282	2.8%
Nurse Manager	2,811	6.2%
Nurse Researcher	171	0.4%
Patient Educator	301	0.7%
Quality/Utilization Review (Incl. Accreditation)	1,664	3.7%
School Nurse	1,528	3.4%
Staff Nurse/Direct Care/General Duty Nurse	27,358	60.6%
Supplemental Staffing/Travel/VNS Nurse	727	1.6%
Telehealth Nurse	240	0.5%
Triage/Advice Nurse	299	0.7%
Other - Health Related (Org/Operations Focus)	416	0.9%
Other - Health Related (Patient Focus)	1,251	2.8%
Other - Non-Health Related	39	0.1%
Missing	344	0.8%
Total	45,164	100.0%

RN Years Licensed

Nearly 30% of the RN workforce have held their SC license for five years or less, and 9.6% have held their SC license for more than 30 years (**Table 8**). At the completion of the 2022 renewal cycle, the median length of time that SC RNs had held their license was 11 years. The longest number of years a SC license was reported as active was 64 years.

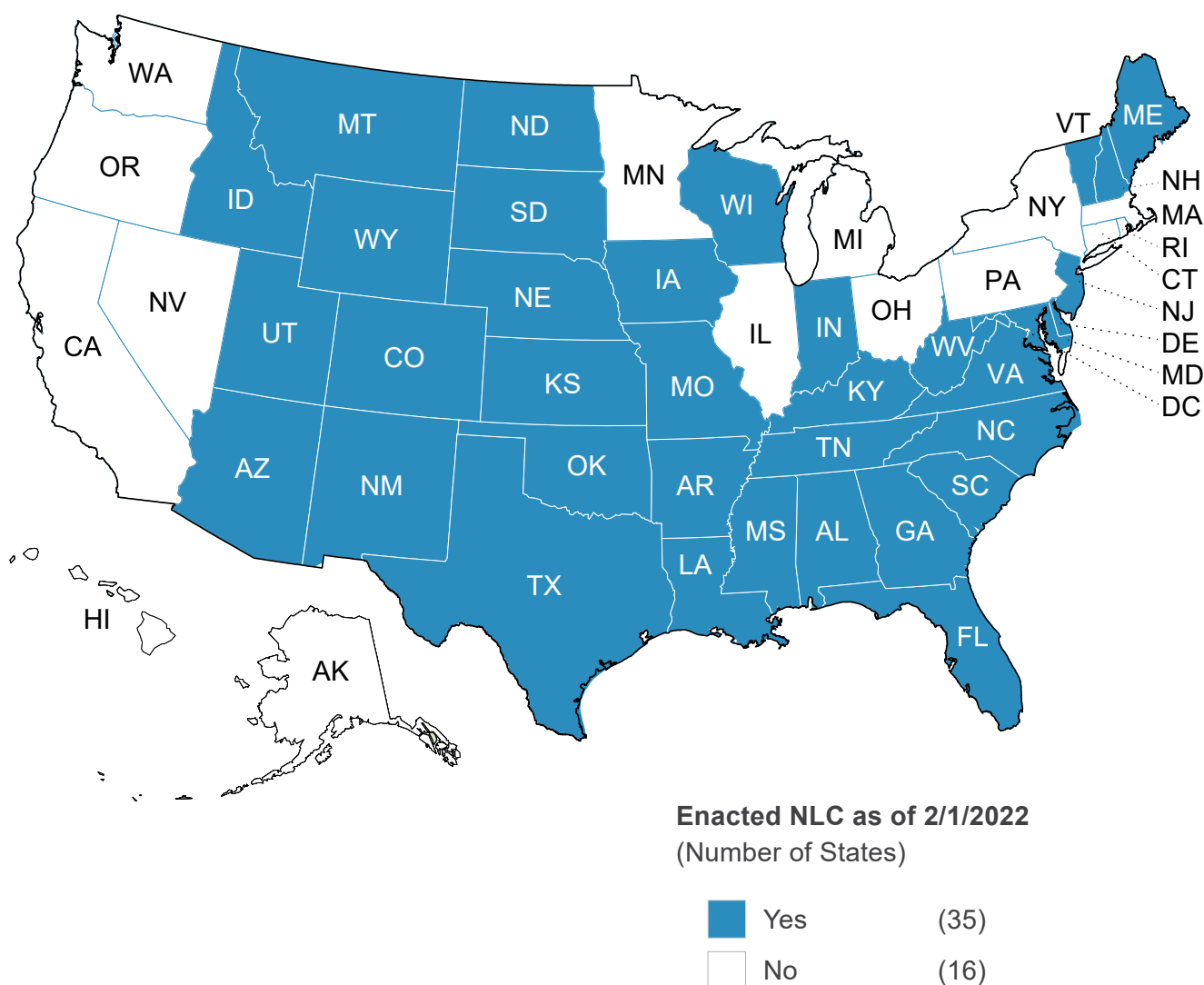
Table 8. Number of years since initial RN licensure was issued, 2022.

Number of Years Licensed	In Any State		In SC	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
≤ 5	9,946	22.0%	13,093	29.0%
6-10	8,124	18.0%	8,992	19.9%
11-15	6,987	15.5%	6,737	14.9%
16-20	5,227	11.6%	4,987	11.0%
21-25	4,099	9.1%	3,800	8.4%
26-30	3,887	8.6%	3,210	7.1%
≥ 31	6,753	15.0%	4,345	9.6%
Missing	141	0.3%	0	0.0%
Total	45,164	100.0%	45,164	100.0%

RNs Practicing in Other States

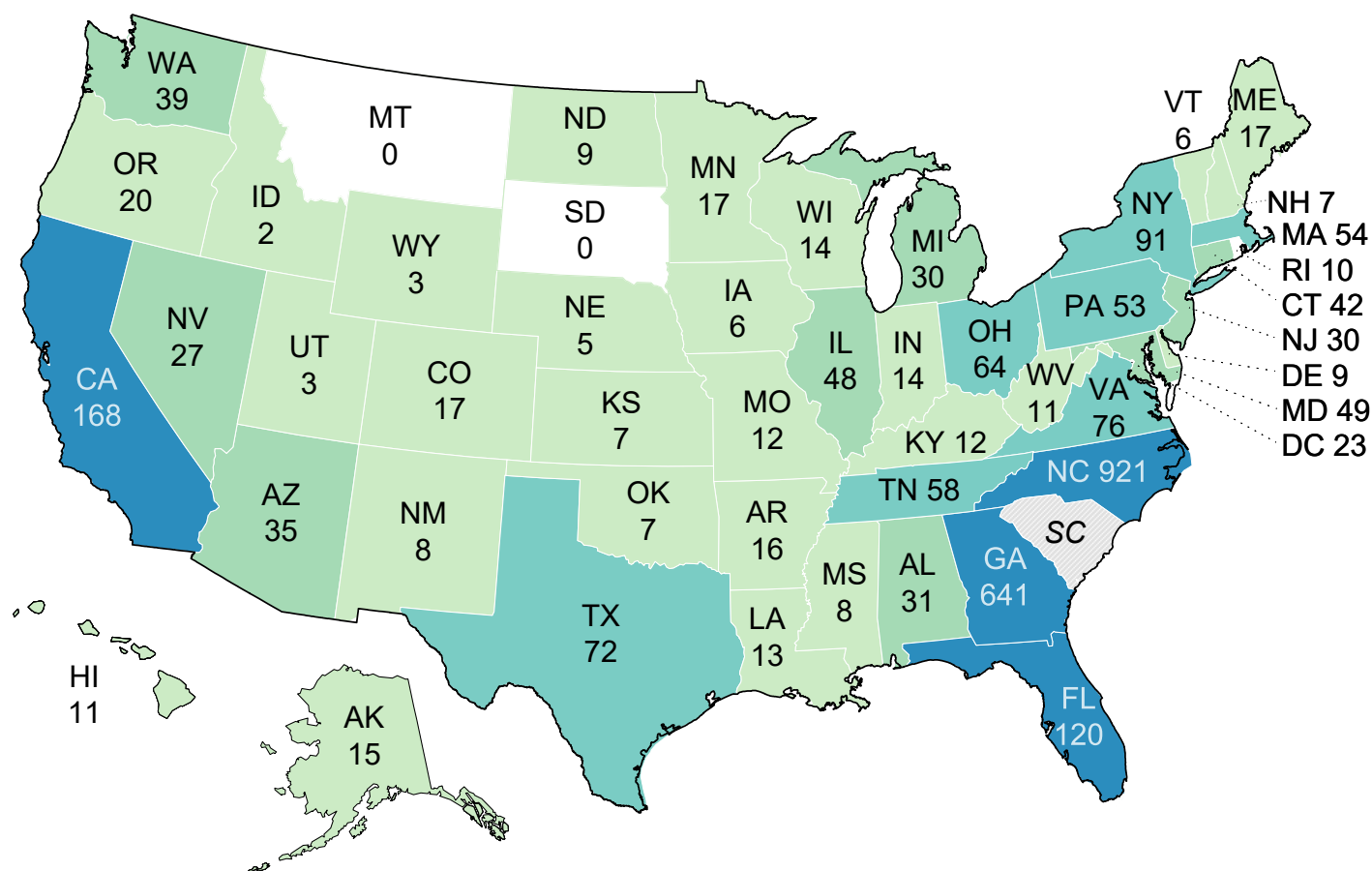
Working in telehealth, travel nursing, insurance companies, and other settings provides opportunities for RNs to practice nursing beyond SC borders while remaining part of the SC workforce. SC activated the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) in 2006,¹³ allowing SC nurses to more easily practice in multiple states. Some RNs will practice in other compact states using their SC license, while other RNs with a SC license will also hold nursing licenses from states that may not participate in the NLC or have laws that require them to obtain a single-state license for that location. While most SC RNs reported practicing in SC, NC, and GA, the data show they worked in all but 5 states (HI, IN, MT, OR, and SD). **Figure 6** shows the states that had implemented the NLC as of 2022. **Figure 7** shows in which states SC RNs reported practicing.

Figure 6. States with full Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) implementation as of February 1, 2022.



Note: The states shown here had fully implemented the Nurse Licensure Compact as of 2/1/2022. At this time, Ohio and Pennsylvania had enacted the NLC but had not yet implemented it. Guam (partial implementation), Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands (enacted, awaiting implementation) are not shown on this map. Source: National Council of State Boards of Nursing. NLC States 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20221001215502/https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/NLC_Map.pdf, retrieved 10/3/2024.

Figure 7. Additional states where South Carolina RNs reported practicing in 2022.



Number of RNs

(Number of States)

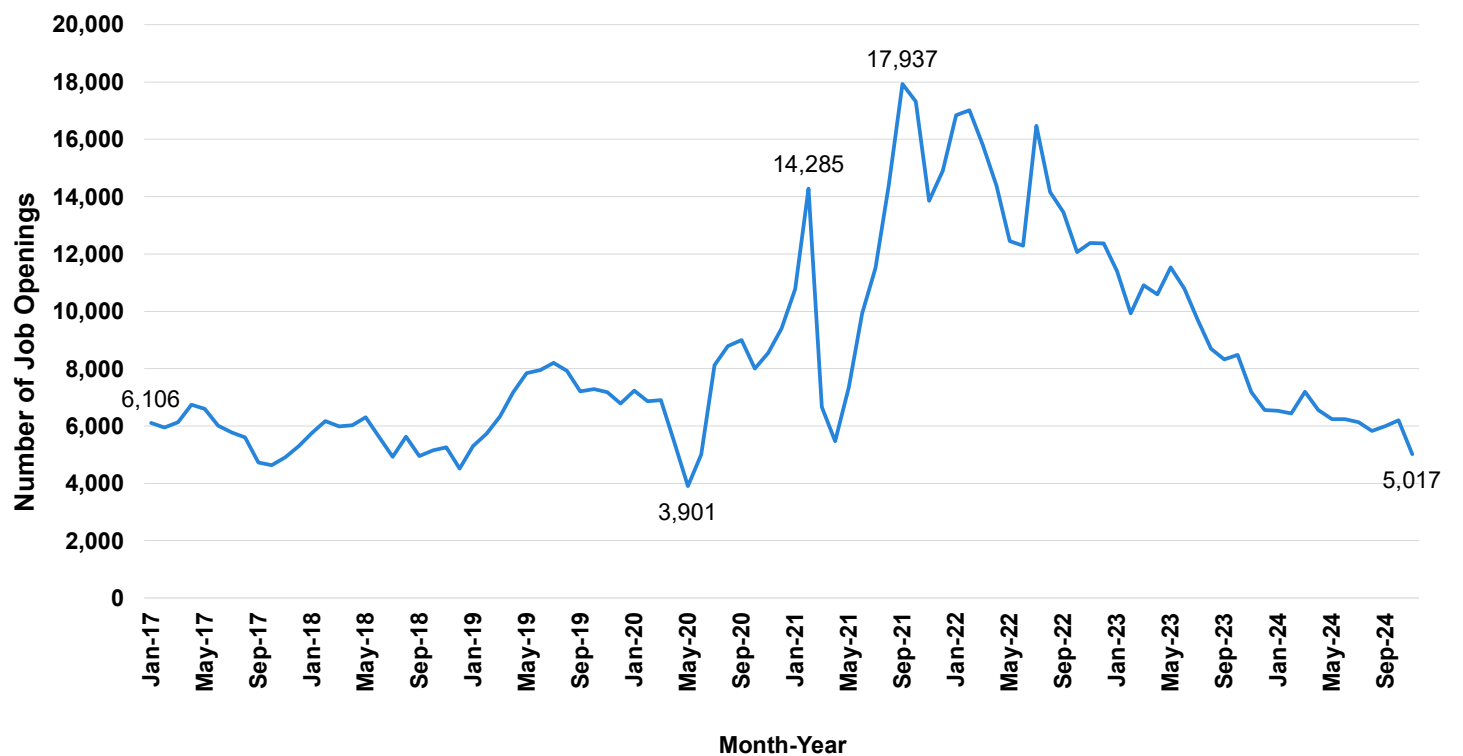
100 or More	(4)
50 to 99	(7)
25 to 49	(9)
1 to 24	(28)
0	(2)

Notes: Data include all registered nurses (RNs) with an active license to practice and a primary practice location in South Carolina as of 5/1/2022 who report additional practice states during the biennial license renewal period. 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).

Demand for RNs

The South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) tracks employment data, including the number of job openings in the state. DEW reported that RNs were the most in-demand occupation in South Carolina during 2022.¹⁴ **Figure 8** shows the number of job openings for RNs in South Carolina by month from January 2017 to November 2024.¹⁵ From January 2017 to February 2020, the average number of RN job postings per month was 6,155. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, that number increased to 9,996 between March 2020 and November 2024. This increase could be due to the creation of new RN positions or high job turnover.

Figure 8. Number of job openings for RNs in SC, January 2017-November 2024.



Source: Job Openings by Occupation Trends, SC Works Online Services, South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, <https://jobs.scworks.org/>, retrieved 2/3/2025.

Conclusions

This report has summarized the supply, distribution, demographic, education, and practice characteristics of RNs working in South Carolina. While the RN workforce continues to grow, more information is needed to gain a better understanding of how the workforce is changing and what can be done to ensure that there are enough nurses in the right places and roles to meet the needs of patients in the future. This is especially important in light of the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the nursing workforce and healthcare system.

The number of active RNs in the SC workforce increased by 3,605 between 2018 and 2022, growing faster than the number of nurses nationally and faster than the state's total population. However, demand for RNs remains high, and simply looking at total growth statewide masks variations in distribution by location, practice setting, and role. Due to the fact that over a third of the workforce is over 50 years old and under a third have held their SC license for less than 5 years, a comprehensive plan is needed to account for nurses of all ages entering and leaving the workforce.¹⁶

Finally, the number of SC RNs who are prepared at the baccalaureate or higher level is increasing. While the state is still short of the NAM's goal of at least 80% of nurses holding a BSN or higher, progress is being made. Employers of RNs can consider or continue taking steps to assist nurses who would like to pursue further education. At the same time, more work can be done to understand the impact of academic progression on the nursing workforce, employment patterns, and patient outcomes.

Acronyms and Definitions

Acronym	Meaning	Definition
ADN	Associate Degree in Nursing	One of the types of degrees that allow a person to sit for their licensure exam to be a registered nurse.
APRN	Advanced Practice Registered Nurse	A registered nurse who has completed a master's or doctoral degree and completed the requirements to increase the scope of nursing practice (such as writing patient care orders or prescribing medications).
BSN	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	One of the types of degrees that allow a person to sit for their licensure exam to be a registered nurse.
NLC	Nurse Licensure Compact	An agreement between state nursing governing bodies to recognize multi-state licenses of nurses from any participating state so that nurses can practice care in locations other than where they reside using their home state license.
NAM	National Academy of Medicine	Formerly the Institute of Medicine (IOM), it is one of the National Academies to drive science, policy, and improvement of medicine to advance health and well-being for all.
LLR	South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation	The South Carolina government agency that oversees professional licensure rules, regulations, and worksites.
LPN	Licensed Practical Nurse	A nurse who has a license to practice basic nursing care, defined by the nurse practice act in the state where they are licensed. The LPN has a smaller scope of practice than the registered nurse. LPNs may also be referred to as Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN) in some states.
MSN	Master of Science in Nursing	One of the types of degrees that allows a person to sit for their licensure exam to be a registered nurse.
NCLEX	National Council Licensure Examination	The examination used to qualify nurses for their LPN or RN license following completion from a state-approved school of nursing. There are two versions used to license nurses in the United States: NCLEX-PN for LPN licensure and NCLEX-RN for RN licensure.
NCSBN	National Council of State Boards of Nursing	The professional council for nursing regulation that oversees the NCLEX and NLC.
RFA	South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office	The South Carolina agency that provides financial and other statistical data for the state government, legislature, offices, and other identified stakeholders.
RN	Registered Nurse	A nurse who has a license to practice full nursing care, defined by the nurse practice act in the state where they are licensed.
SC BON	South Carolina Board of Nursing	The regulating agency for nursing licensure and practice in SC.

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