



**NursingWorld.org**  
**Health & Safety Survey**  
**September 2001**

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Health & Safety Survey

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From July 11, 2001, through August 15, 2001, the American Nurses Association conducted an on-line health and safety survey which was posted at [www.NursingWorld.org](http://www.NursingWorld.org). The primary intention of the survey was to evaluate nurses' exposure to workplace hazards in the current health care environment. Four thousand eight hundred and twenty-six (4,826) nurses from across the United States participated in the survey which was promoted by the constituent member associations as well as through advertisements in *The American Nurse* and the *American Journal of Nursing*.

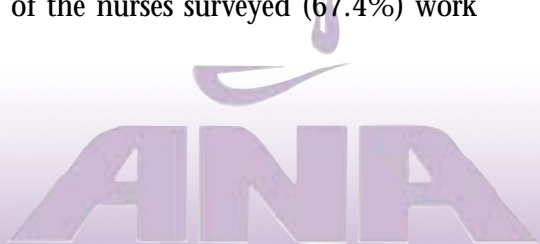
The ANA/NursingWorld.org Health and Safety Survey was divided into two separate sections and took approximately seven minutes to complete. The first section was comprised of nineteen multiple choice and yes/no questions pertaining to health and safety in the workplace. The second section consisted of ten demographic questions to ascertain a greater sense of who completed the survey.



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## *Executive Summary*

A total of 4,826 nurses throughout the United States took the confidential American Nurses Association/ NursingWorld.org Health and Safety Survey, which was posted at NursingWorld.org for four weeks from July 11, 2001 through August 15, 2001. The nurses who answered this survey represent a cross-section of nurses from every age group, years of experience, and types of care facilities. Considering the fact that the survey was conducted in the middle of the summer, a traditionally slow time for surveys, the total of 4,826 responses is statistically higher than anticipated. The highest percentage of the nurses partaking in this survey are between the ages of forty-one to fifty years old (44.9%) and more than two-thirds (70.9%) have worked more than ten years in the field. The majority (61%) spend more than half of their time engaged in direct patient care activities, and more than half (53.1%) work in acute care hospitals. A definitive majority (68.9%) listed their current position as their only job and indicated their average work week between 41 to 60 hours (50.7%). Over fifty percent surveyed (56.8%) work the 'regular daytime schedule,' which is five times higher than the second highest response, 'the regular night shift' (11.3%). While about half of the nurses (46.6%) work a standard eight hour shift, a larger combined percentage work shifts as long as 12 hours (22.8%), ten hours (19.4%), and more than 12 hours (6.2%). An increasingly large majority of nurses also share a statistic that has raised serious concern over the past year – mandatory overtime. Over two-thirds of the nurses surveyed (67.4%) work





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## *Executive Summary*

mandatory or unplanned overtime. When planned overtime is factored in, three quarters of the nurses (78.7%) work some form of overtime, of which only ten percent is actually planned. More than half of the nurses (51.7%) work anywhere from one to sixteen hours beyond their shift, and nearly ten percent (9.6%) work eight or more times of overtime per month.

Over seventy percent (70.5%) of nurses surveyed in the survey indicated 'acute/chronic effects of stress and overwork' as one of their top three health and safety concerns. While the staggering percentage of nurses who list stress as one of their top three concerns is disturbing on its own, other issues revealing themselves in this survey seem to support the supposition that today's nurses are overburdened, overworked and overstressed. The fear of developing a severe back injury (59.4%) or contracting a potentially deadly disease (45.3%) along with concerns of being assaulted (24.7%), developing a latex allergy (20.9%), or becoming involved in a car accident because of fatigue after a shift (18.8%) all contribute to the burdening stress nurses face in the workplace.

In addition to listing their top three health and safety concerns, nurses also had the opportunity to express their opinions on a variety of issues facing them in the workplace. When it is revealed that forty percent have been injured on the job in one year, it is not surprising that eighty percent of the





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## *Executive Summary*

nurses indicated that they do not feel entirely safe in their current working condition. Nearly half the nurses surveyed (48%) have contracted illnesses or their illnesses have been made worse at work, but at the same time more than three quarters of them (76.7%) refuse to miss more than two days of work. Also contributing to their workplace concerns is the fact that more than one-third of the nurses (38.1%) do not feel that their employers are doing enough to keep them informed about dangerous or unhealthy working conditions.

Nurses were also asked some specific questions about health and safety. Despite the considerable publicity about the dangers of contracting HIV and other life threatening diseases from needle pricks, almost twenty percent of the nurses revealed that their facilities do not provide safe needle devices for injections, IV insertions and phlebotomy. The argument cannot be made that nurses simply are not taking the necessary precautions, since ninety-two percent - the highest percentage in the entire survey - revealed they would use safe needle devices whenever possible. When asked about experiencing back pain during work, eighty-three percent revealed that they continue working even with the pain. More than half (53.9%) the facilities, according to the nurses surveyed, do not have lifting and transfer devices readily



available for moving patients, even though nearly three quarters (73.6%) of nurses would use them if available. As for the use of powdered latex gloves, which has been proven in some cases to cause severe allergic reactions, more than one-third of the nurses (38.6%) revealed that these gloves were still being used in their facilities; over twenty percent listed the fear of developing a latex allergy among their top three health and safety concerns which further lends support that this is a growing concern for nurses.

Physical assaults, threats and verbal abuse also may be contributing factors to the high level of stress for nurses in the workplace. Seventeen percent admitted experiencing physical assaults at work in the last year, and well over fifty percent (56.9%) have been threatened or verbally abused. The high incidence of threats and verbal abuse compounded with the concerns of contracting a deadly disease from needle pricks, experiencing a disabling back injury, and developing a latex allergy seem to be taking their toll on nurses both in and out of their working environment. For example, more than one in ten nurses (11.3%) feel they were involved with an automobile accident as a result of fatigue or shift work.

The question, therefore, that needs to be carefully reviewed is how these health and safety concerns are affecting the delivery of high quality nursing care. Over three-quarters of the nurses surveyed (75.8%) indicated that unsafe working conditions do, in fact, interfere with their ability to deliver quality care. And while the nursing field, overall, faces the problems of shortage and attrition, health and safety concerns have also emerged as contributing factors. Well over eighty percent (87.9%) acknowledged that health and safety concerns influence decisions about the kind of nursing work performed and their continued practice in the field of nursing.

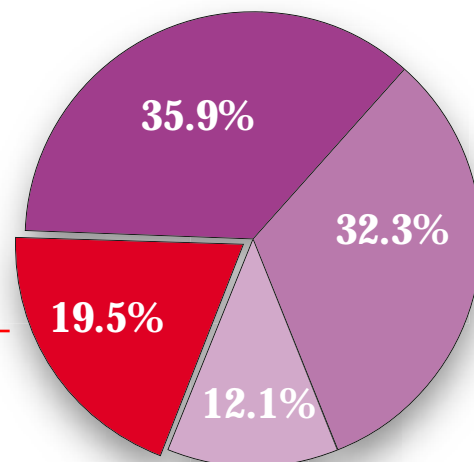


When asked if nurses feel safe from work-related injury or illness in their current working environment, 80% indicated that they were not entirely safe, with 12.1% selecting 'not safe at all,' 32.3% reporting that they were 'somewhat safe,' and 35.9% selecting 'moderately safe.'

## Question 1 Do you feel safe from work-related injury or illness in your current working environment?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage*</i>
Moderately safe	1727	35.9%
Somewhat safe	1553	32.3%
Very safe	938	19.5%
Not safe at all	584	12.1%

Total Answered: 4802



**Less Than 20% Feel Very Safe At Work**

\*Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding of numbers.

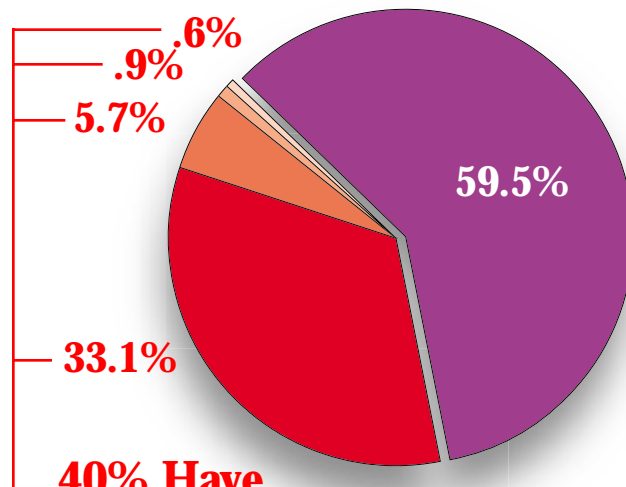


Over the last 12 months, 40% of nurses surveyed have been injured on the job, of which 33.1% were injured at least 'one to two times' and 5.7% were injured 'three to four times.'

**Question 2** Over the past 12 months, how many times have you been injured on-the-job, including needlestick injuries?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
0	2873	59.5%
1-2	1598	33.1%
3-4	276	5.7%
5-6	48	.9%
6+	31	.6%

Total Answered: 4826



**40% Have  
Been Injured  
On The Job  
Over The  
Last Year**



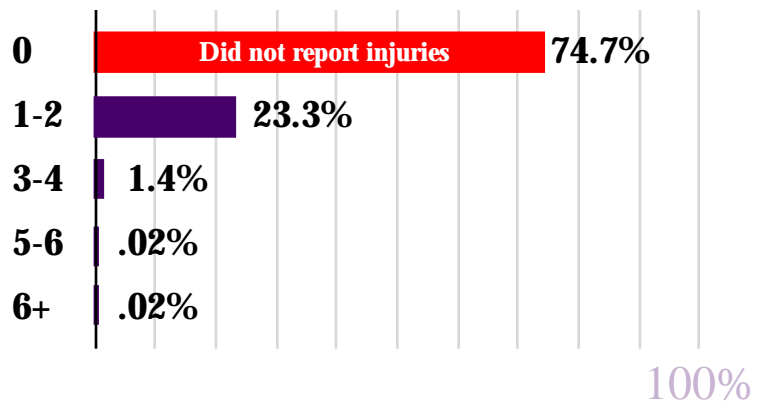


An overwhelming majority of nurses, 74.7%, did not report injuries. However, this percentage is statistically inaccurate due to the large number of respondents (4,440). The question asked for only the number of injuries of nurses who have been injured on the job, which was 40% (1,930). Some 3,318 nurses who had not been injured also answered the question, resulting in a disproportionately high percentage.

### Question 3 Of these injuries, how many did you report?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
0	3318	74.7%
1-2	1036	23.3%
3-4	66	1.4%
5-6	10	.02%
6+	10	.02%

Total Answered: 4440





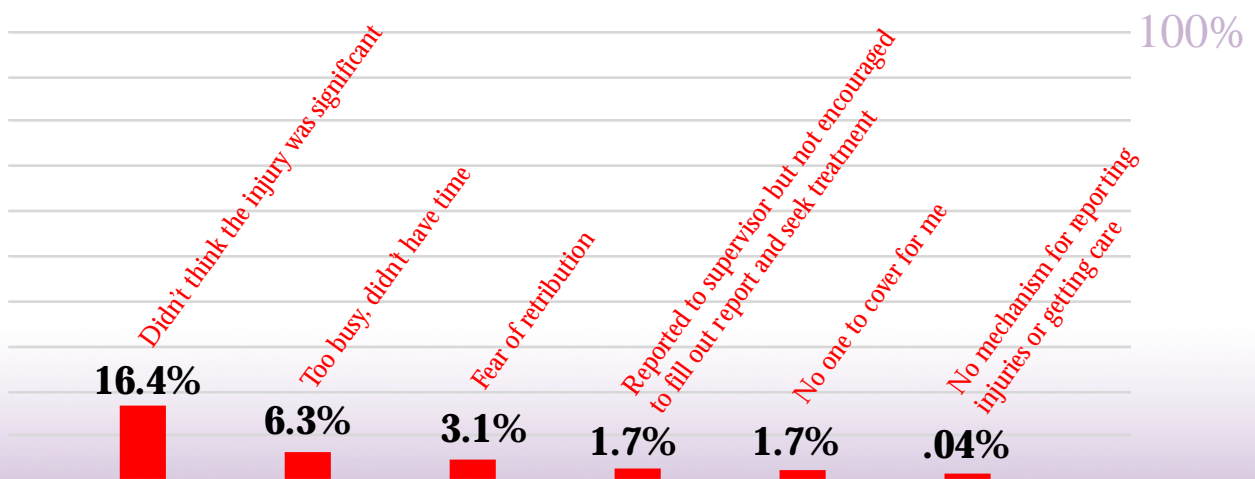
As to why such a large majority of nurses did not report injuries, 70% indicated that they 'didn't have any injuries' or that they 'didn't think the injury was significant' (16.4%). But, 6.3% of the nurses surveyed did not report their injury because they felt they were 'too busy,' and 3.1% were concerned with 'fear of retribution.'

**Question 4** If you answered zero to the last question, please check ONE response which best describes why you didn't report injuries.

Response Option	Total Selected	Percentage
Didn't have any injuries	2440	70.1%
Didn't think the injury was significant	572	16.4%
Too busy, didn't have time	222	6.3%
Fear of retribution	111	3.1%
Reported to supervisor but not encouraged to fill out report and seek treatment	61	1.7%
No one to cover for me	60	1.7%
No mechanism for reporting injuries or getting care	14	.04%

Total Answered: 3480

### Reasons Why Nurses Didn't Report Injuries:





Nearly half the nurses surveyed (48%) indicated that illnesses were contracted or made worse by their nursing job.

Question **5** **Within the past year, have you had any illnesses that you think were caused or made worse by any nursing job you had?**

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
NO	2464	51.9%
YES	2281	48%

Total Answered: 4745

Even though one in two nurses reported that their illnesses were made worse by their job, more than three quarters of the nurses surveyed (76.7%) did not miss more than two days of work.

Question **6** **Have you missed more than 2 days of work this year due to a work-related injury or illness?**

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
NO	3647	76.7%
YES	1104	23.2%

Total Answered: 4751



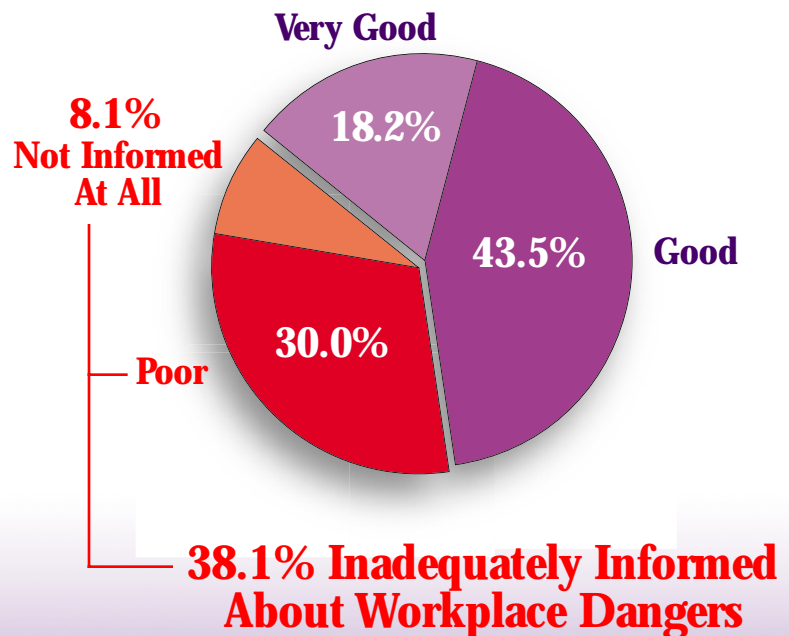


When asked about their employers' ability to keep them informed about dangerous or unhealthy conditions that they may be exposed to at work, over one-third of nurses surveyed (38.1%) indicated that their employers were performing inadequately in their responsibility, with 30% selecting 'poor - little information provided' and an additional 8.1% expressing that their employer 'does not inform me at all about dangerous or unhealthy conditions.'

Question **7** **How good is your employer at keeping you informed about any dangerous or unhealthy conditions that you might be exposed to at work?**

Response Option	Total Selected	Percentage
Good - has informed me about hazards I didn't know about	2077	43.5%
Poor - little information provided	1431	30%
Very good - alerts me of all possible hazards	868	18.2%
Does not inform me at all about dangerous or unhealthy conditions	389	8.1%

Total Answered: 4765





A total of 18.2% of the nurses surveyed indicated that their facility does not provide safe needle devices for injections, IV insertions and phlebotomy.

Question **8** **Does your facility provide safe needle devices for injections, IV insertions and phlebotomy?**

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
YES	3855	81.7%
NO	862	18.2%

Total Answered: 4717

Of the nurses who indicated that their facility provided safe needle devices, 92.4% use the devices when available.

Question **8a** **If so, do you use the devices whenever possible?**

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
YES	3840	92.4%
NO	315	7.5%

Total Answered: 4155





In response to a question about back pain experienced during work, 83.9% of nurses surveyed continue working while suffering from this ailment with 46.4% indicating 'often' and 37.5% indicating 'sometimes.'

**Question 9** How often do you continue working despite experiencing back pain?

Response Option	Total Selected	Percentage
OFTEN	2166	46.4%
SOMETIMES	1750	37.5%
NEVER	750	16%

Total Answered: 4666

Over half of the nurses surveyed (53.9%) indicated that patient lifting and transfer devices were not readily available for use in their facility.

**Question 10** Are patient lifting and transfer devices readily available for you to use?

Response Option	Total Selected	Percentage
NO	2480	53.9%
YES	2119	46%

Total Answered: 4599

If devices were, in fact, available, more than three quarters (73.6%) of nurses surveyed would use them whenever possible.

**Question 10a** If so, do you use the devices whenever possible?

Response Option	Total Selected	Percentage
YES	2510	73.6%
NO	898	26.3%

Total Answered: 3408





A total of 61.3 % of nurses surveyed revealed that powdered latex gloves were used at their facility, and 38.6% said they were not used.

Question **11** Are powdered latex gloves used in your facility?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
YES	2883	61.3%
NO	1817	38.6%

Total Answered: 4700

When asked about being physically assaulted at work, 807 nurses of the 4,722 who completed the question (17%), were assaulted.

Question **12** In the past year, have you been physically assaulted at work?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
NO	3915	82.9%
YES	807	17%

Total Answered: 4722





The follow-up question to physical assault indicated an equally disturbing trend in the current working environment. While 17% were physically assaulted, 56.9% of nurses (2696 in total) have been threatened or verbally abused at work in the past year.

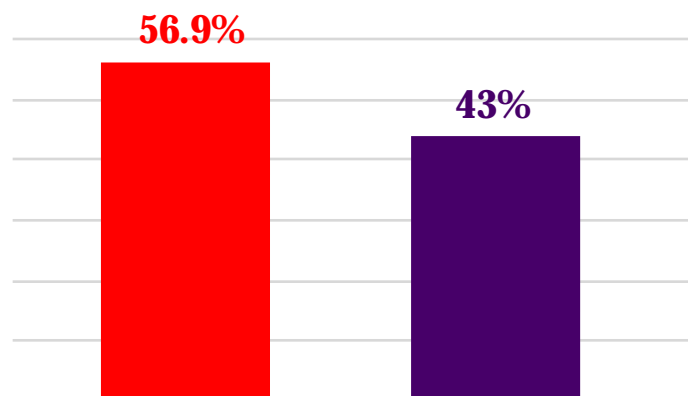
Question **13** In the past year, have you been threatened or experienced verbal abuse at work?

Response Option	Total Selected	Percentage
YES	2696	56.9%
NO	2034	43%

Total Answered: 4730

100%

## 56.9% Of Nurses Have Been Threatened Or Verbally Abused At Work In The Past Year.





Though not a question directly related to the workplace, question 14, which asks if nurses were involved in automobile accidents related to fatigue or shift work while driving to or from their job, indicates that work related stress may play a factor in accidents outside of their working environment. More than one in ten surveyed (11.3%) feel that they were involved in an automobile accident as a result of fatigue or shift work.

Question **14** **While driving to or from your nursing work have you ever had an automobile accident that you believe was related to fatigue or shift work?**

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
NO	4201	88.6%
YES	537	11.3%
Total Answered: 4738		

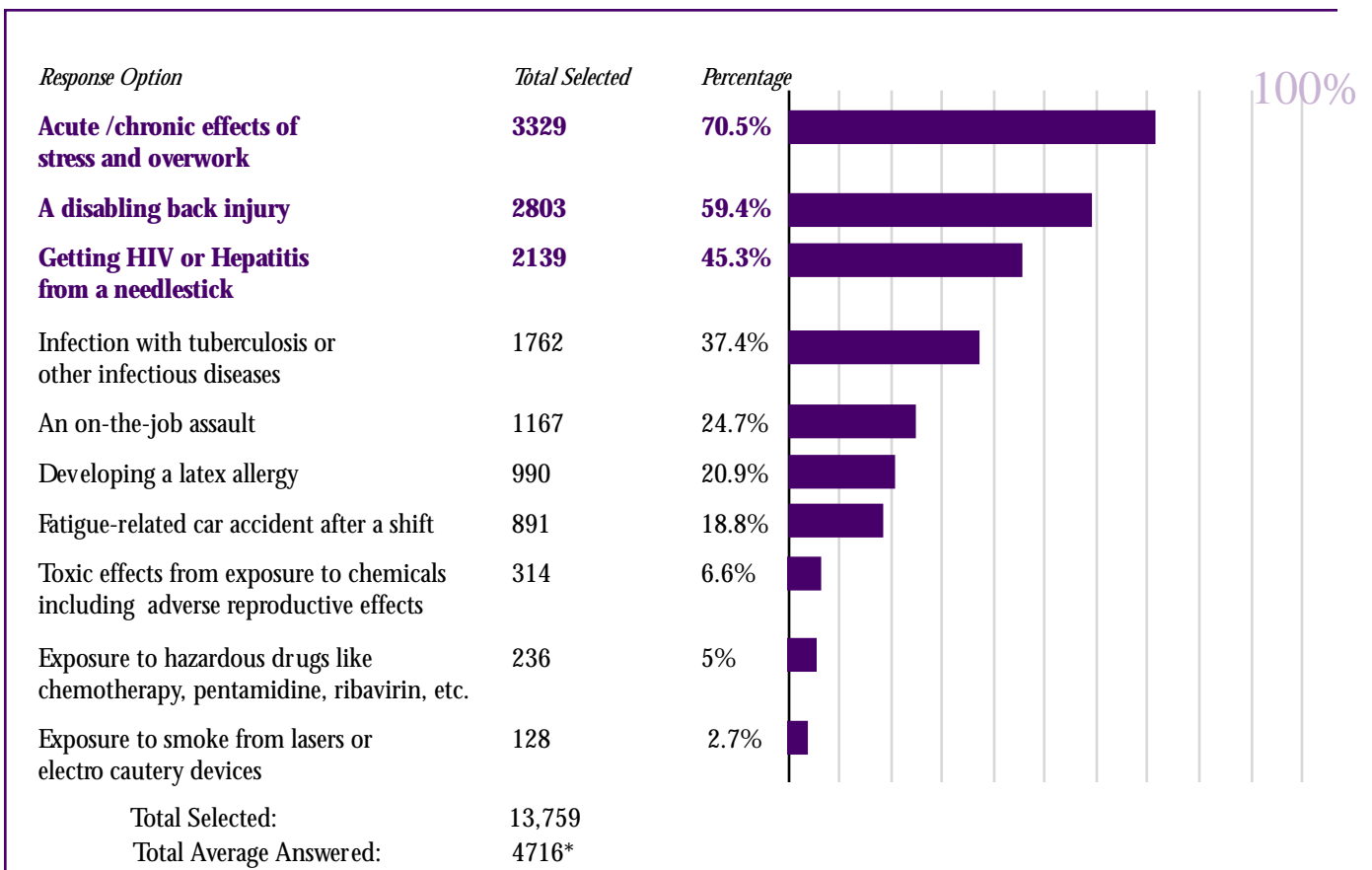
**More Than 1 in 10  
Nurses Were Involved In  
An Automobile Accident They  
Believed Was Related To Work.**





When given the opportunity to list their top three health and safety concerns, over 70% of nurses selected ‘acute/chronic effects of stress and overwork,’ followed by 59.4% choosing ‘a disabling back injury,’ and 45.4% listing ‘getting HIV or Hepatitis from a needle-stick.’ Other responses that garnered high double digit percentages were ‘infection with tuberculosis or other infectious diseases’ (37.4%), followed by ‘on the job assault (24.7%), ‘developing a latex allergy’ (20.9%), and ‘fatigue-related car accident after a shift’ (18.8%).

Question **15** From the following list, please check your top 3 health and safety concerns.



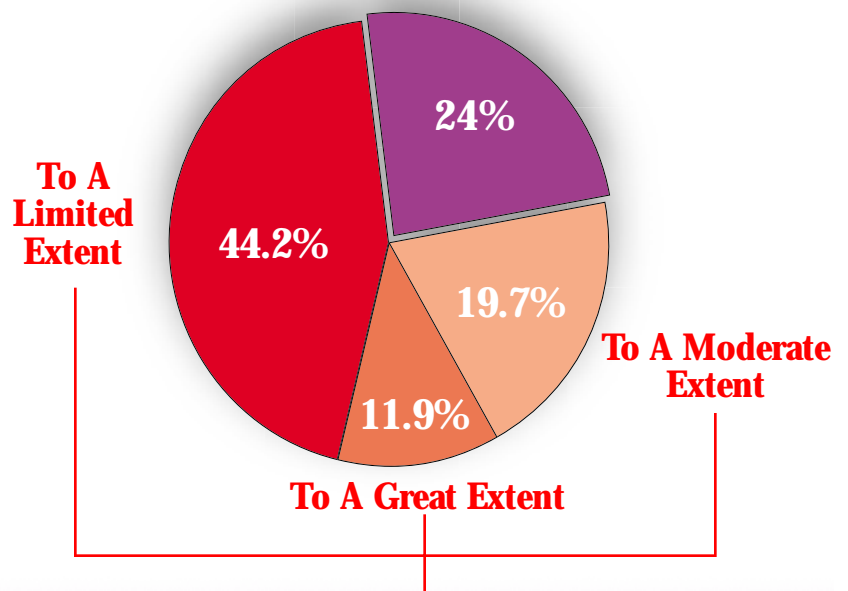
\*In question 15, even though the actual number of selections was 13,759 since respondents had the option to make multiple selections, an average of 4,716 was used to determine a more indicative percentage of nurses’ top three health and safety concerns. While a total of 4,826 nurses took the survey, they did not answer every question. The figure 4,716 is the average of 15 health and safety questions, excluding 3 qualifying questions such as “if you answered” or “if so” questions, which also do not reflect the total of nurses answering the majority of questions.



The next question sought to ascertain whether there was a relationship between unsafe working conditions and nurses' ability to deliver high quality nursing care. Over three quarters of the nurses surveyed (75.8%) indicated that unsafe working conditions do, in fact, interfere with the delivery of quality care, with 11.9% selecting 'to a great extent,' 19.7% choosing 'to a moderate extent,' and 44.2% identifying 'to a limited extent.'

Question **16** To what extent do you believe unsafe working conditions interfere with your ability to deliver safe, high quality nursing care?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
To a limited extent	2113	44.2%
Not at all	1150	24%
To a moderate extent	944	19.7%
To a great extent	570	11.9%
Total Answered:	4777	



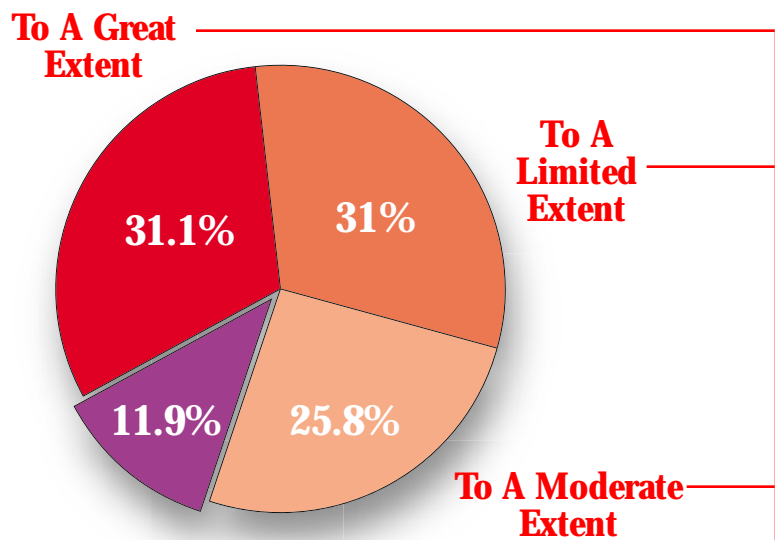
**75.8% Believe Unsafe Working Conditions Interfere With Quality Care**



In addition, 87.9% indicated that health and safety concerns have an impact on the kind of nursing work performed and on their continued practice in the field of nursing. Of those nurses that identified health and safety concerns as an influence on their decision-making, 31.1% indicated it affected them 'to a great extent,' with 25.8% listing its impact 'to a moderate extent,' and 31% 'to a limited extent.'

Question **17** **To what extent do health and safety concerns influence your decisions about the kind of nursing work you do and your continued practice in the field of nursing?**

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
To a great extent	1483	31.1%
To a limited extent	1482	31%
To a moderate extent	1230	25.8%
Not at all	571	11.9%
Total Answered:	4766	



**87.9% State That Health And Safety Concerns Influence Their Decision To Continue In Nursing**



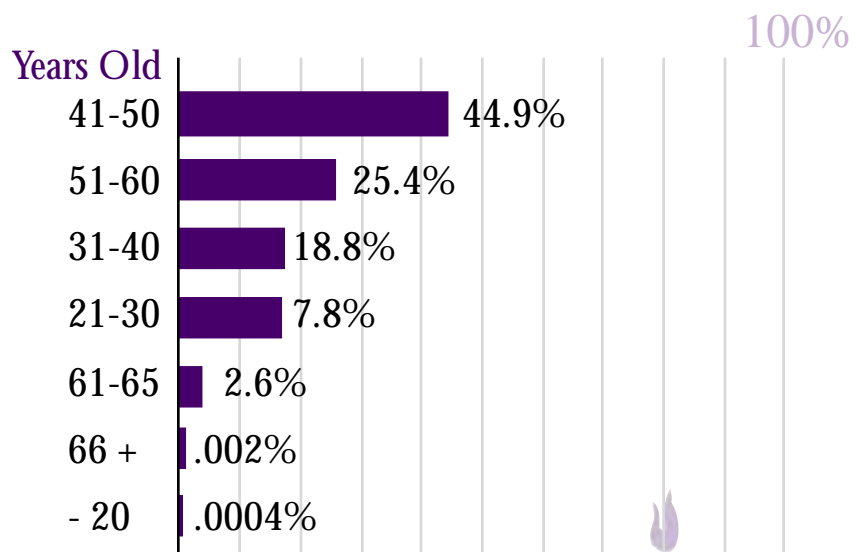
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## Demographic Questions

By far the largest percentage of nurses (44.9%) taking the ANA/NursingWorld.org survey were between 41 to 50 years old. A quarter of the nurses (25.4%) were between 51-60 years old, and under ten percent (7.8%) were 21-30 years old.

### Question **1** Age

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
41-50	2046	44.9%
51-60	1157	25.4%
31-40	859	18.8%
21-30	357	7.8%
61-65	121	2.6%
66 +	12	.002%
Under 20 years old	2	.0004%
Total Answered:	4554	



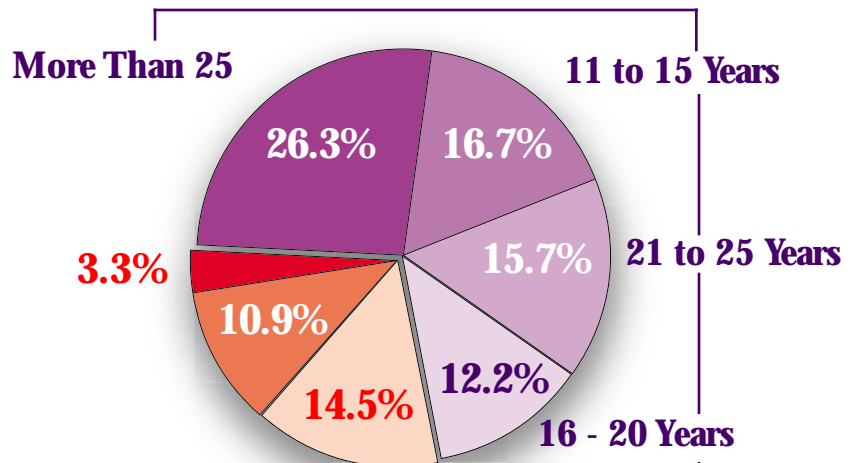


A majority surveyed (70.9%) have over 10 years of experience as a registered nurse, of which 26.3% have over 25 years experience, 16.7% have 11-15 years experience, 15.7% have 21-25 years experience and 12.2% have 16-20 years experience.

## Question 2 Years working as a registered nurse

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
25+	1189	26.3%
11-15	756	16.7%
21-25	709	15.7%
6-10	658	14.5%
16-20	550	12.2%
1-5	493	10.9%
Less than 1	152	3.3%

Total Answered: 4507



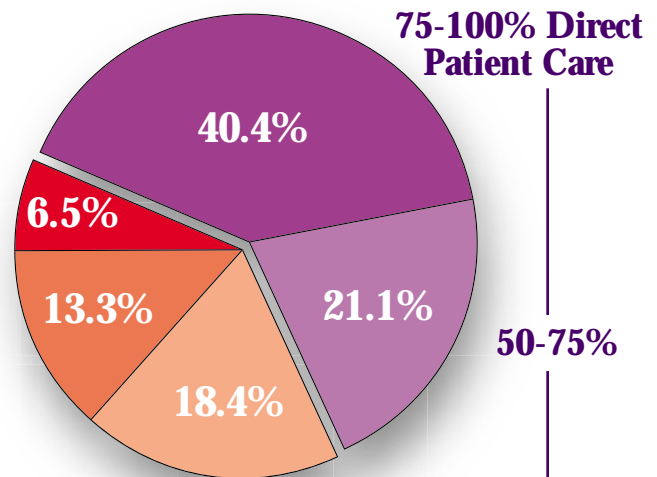
**70.9% Have More Than 10 Years Experience**



Over 61% of nurses who conducted the survey spend at least 50% of their time in direct patient care. Of these nurses, 40.4% spend as much as 75% to 100% of their time dedicated to direct patient care and 21.1% spend between 50% to 75% of their time.

### Question 3 How much of your work time is spent in direct patient care activities?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
75-100%	1835	40.4%
50-75%	958	21.1%
Less than 25%	839	18.4%
25-50%	607	13.3%
No patient care	297	6.5%
Total Answered:	4536	



**61.5% Spend Half Their Time in Direct Patient Care**

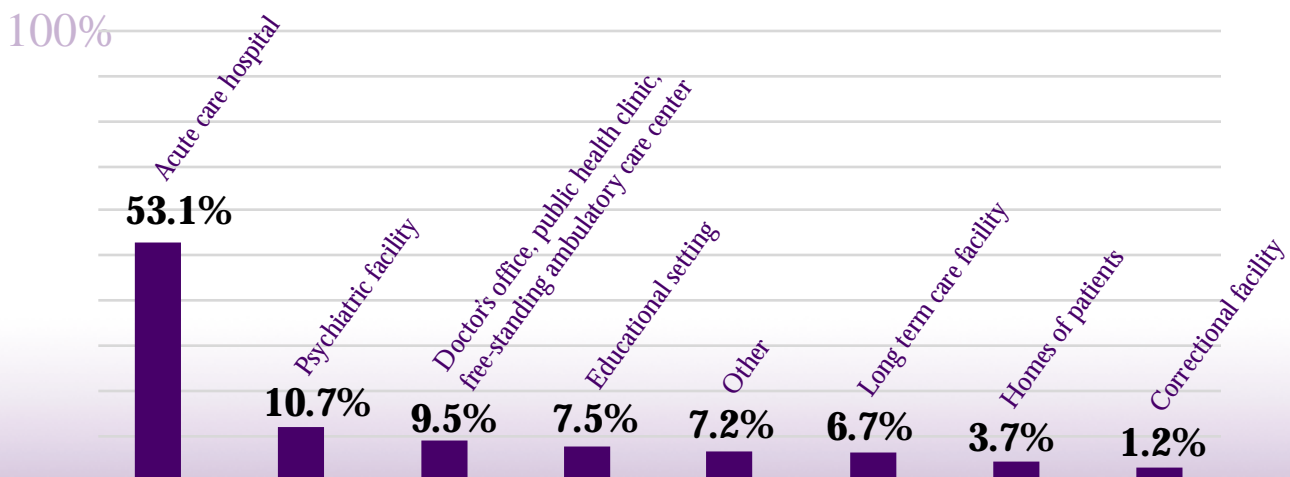


A clear majority of the nurses surveyed work in acute care hospitals (53.1%), followed by psychiatric facilities (10.7%) and doctor's offices, public health clinics and free standing ambulatory care centers (9.5%).

## Question 4 Which of the following best describes the type of setting in which you work?

Response Option	Total Selected	Percentage
Acute care hospital	2476	53.1%
Psychiatric facility	502	10.7%
Doctor's office, public health clinic, free-standing ambulatory care center	447	9.5%
Educational setting	352	7.5%
Other	337	7.2%
Long term care facility	314	6.7%
Homes of patients	175	3.7%
Correctional facility	58	1.2%

Total Answered: 4765

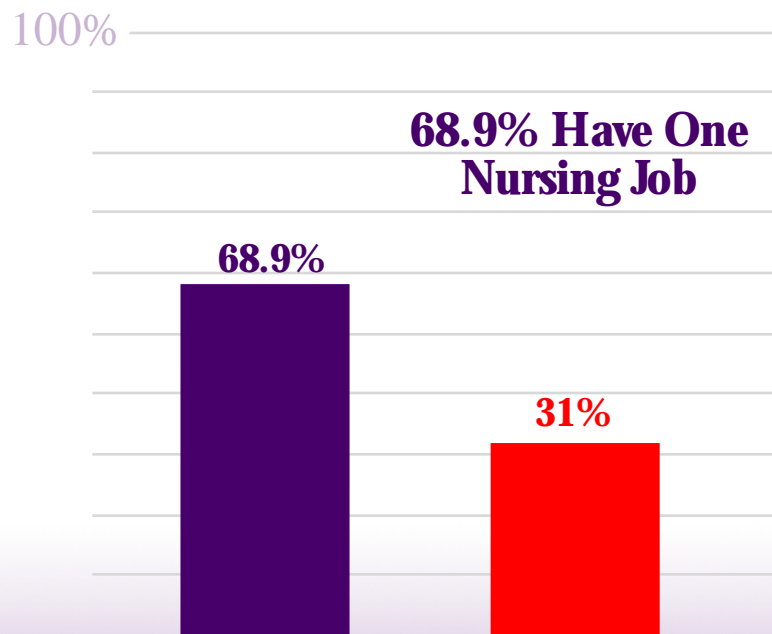




A definitive majority surveyed (68.9%) work only in their current nursing position and do not perform any other work for pay.

Question **5** Do you have any jobs besides your main nursing job or do you do any other work for pay?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
NO	3061	68.9%
YES	1379	31%
Total Answered:	4440	

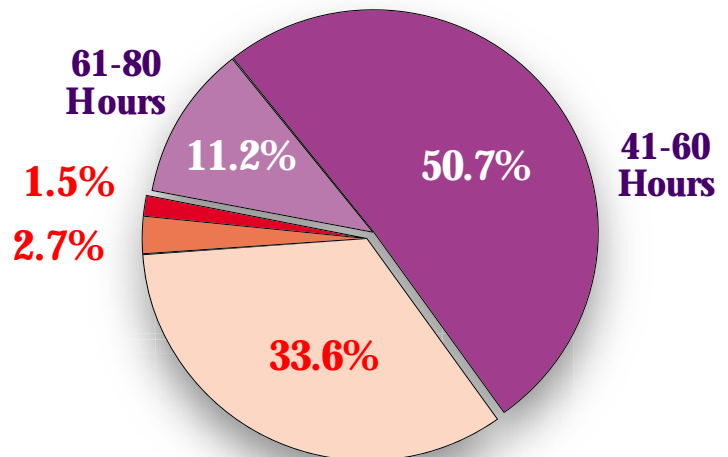




When asked about the average number of hours worked between all jobs, the majority of nurses (50.7%) indicated that they work between 41 to 60 hours per week, and 33.6% work between 21-40 hours. The average nurse who took this survey works as much as one to ten hours above the standard forty hour work week, and as many as 11.2% nurses surveyed work as much as 61 to 80 hours per week.

Question **6** On average, how many hours do you work per week in all jobs combined?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
41-60	2270	50.7%
21-40	1054	33.6%
61-80	504	11.2%
Less than 20	122	2.7%
81 +	70	1.5%
Total Answered:	4470	



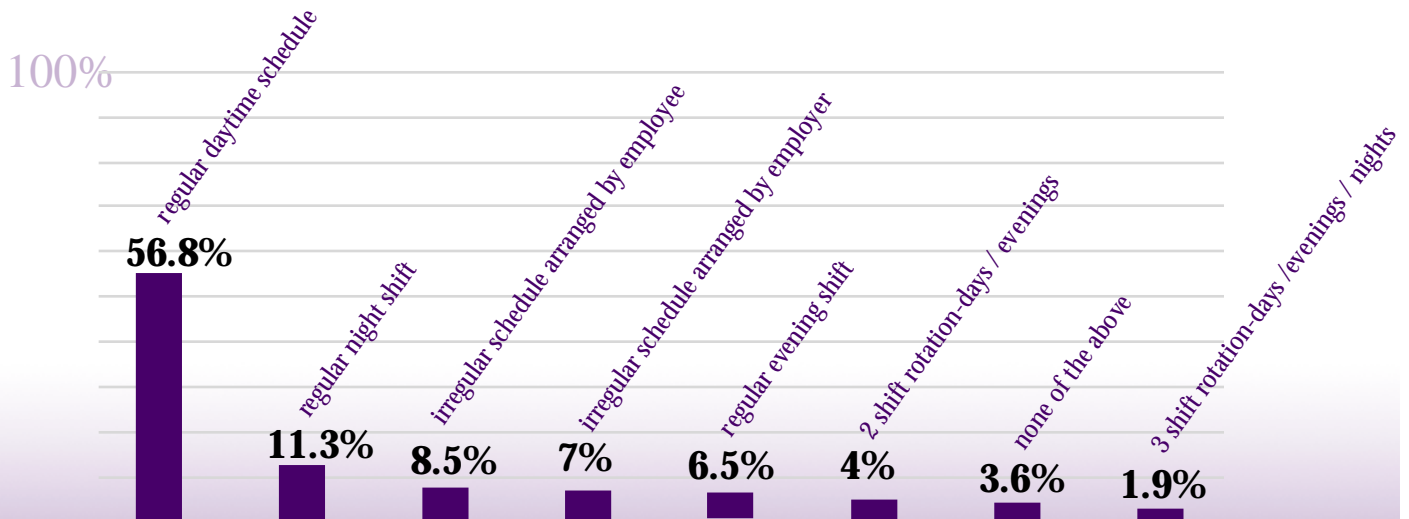
**Over Half Work More Than 40 Hours A Week**



Over fifty percent surveyed (56.8%) work the 'regular daytime schedule,' which is five times higher than the second highest response, 'the regular night shift' (11.3%).

**Question 7** Which of the following best describes the schedule you **USUALLY** work at your main job? (Please select only one.)

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
regular daytime schedule	2417	56.8%
regular night shift	482	11.3%
irregular schedule arranged by employee	363	8.5%
irregular schedule arranged by employer	298	7%
regular evening shift	280	6.5%
2 shift rotation-days / evenings	171	4%
none of the above	155	3.6%
3 shift rotation-days / evenings / nights	83	1.9%
<b>Total Answered:</b>	<b>4249</b>	

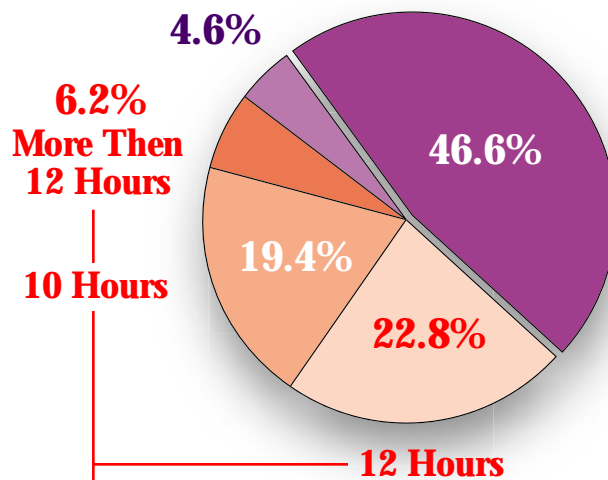




Almost half of the nurses surveyed (46.6%) work a standard 8 hour shift, but as many as 22.8% indicated that the usual length of their shift is 12 hours followed by 19.4% working a 10 hour shift.

## Question 8 What is the usual length of your shift at your main job?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
8 hours	1985	46.6%
12 hours	973	22.8%
10 hours	828	19.4%
greater than 12 hours	267	6.2%
less than 8 hours	199	4.6%
Total Answered:	4252	



**Almost Half (48.4%) Work Shifts Between 10-12 Hours Long**



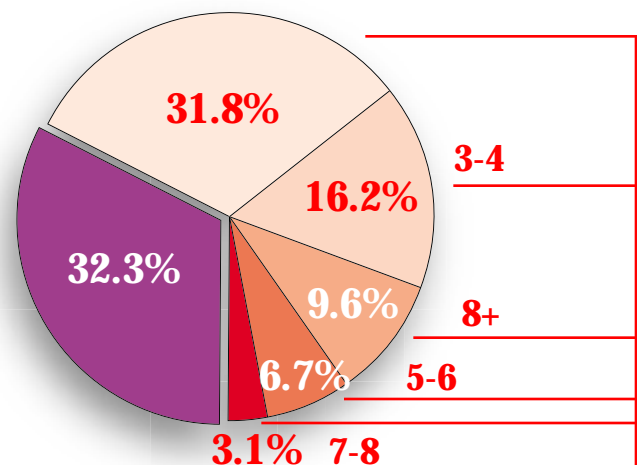
A decisively large number of nurses surveyed (67.4%) work mandatory or unplanned overtime per month. Of the more than two-thirds working mandatory or unplanned overtime, 31.8% work 1 to 2 times per month and 16.2% work 3 to 4 times per month. In addition, 9.6% worked mandatory overtime as much as 8 or more times.

## Question 9 How many times per month do you work mandatory or unplanned overtime?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Never	1368	32.3%
1-2 times	1348	31.8%
3-4 times	686	16.2%
8+ times	406	9.6%
5-6 times	287	6.7%
7-8 times	132	3.1%

Total Answered: 4227

### 1-2 Times Per Month



**67.4% Work Mandatory or Unplanned Overtime Per Month**

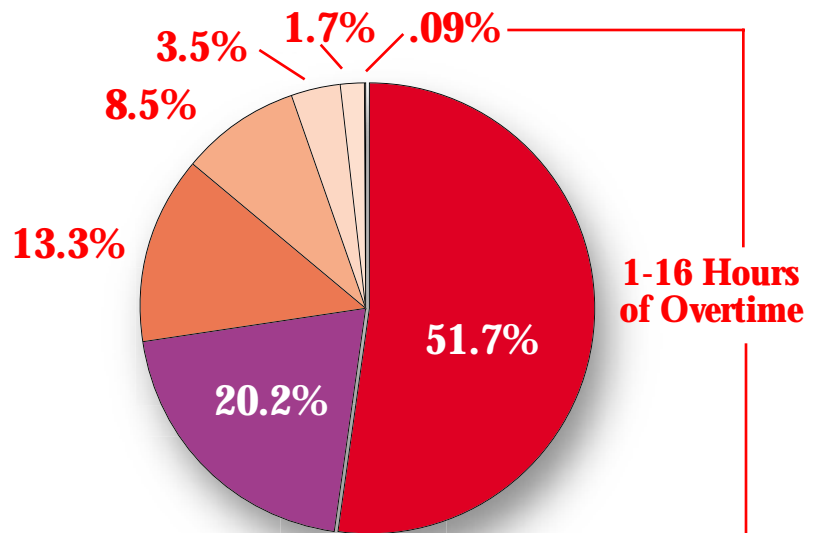


When 'planned overtime' was added to the question, the total percentage of nurses working some form of overtime rose by more than 10 percent. A total of 78.7% of nurses surveyed indicated that they work mandatory, planned or unplanned overtime per month, of which only 10% is planned. More than half of the nurses (51.7%) work anywhere from one to sixteen hours of overtime, and only 20.2% work no overtime at all.

Question **10** On average, how many hours of overtime (mandatory, planned or unplanned) do you work in a month?

<i>Response Option</i>	<i>Total Selected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1-16 hours	2170	51.7%
no overtime	848	20.2%
17-24 hours	561	13.3%
25-40 hours	357	8.5%
40-56 hours	147	3.5%
57-80 hours	73	1.7%
more than 80 hours	38	.09%

Total Answered: 4194



**78.7% Work Some Form Of Overtime Per Month**