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## **HRSA Study Finds Nursing Workforce is Growing and More Diverse**

The number of licensed registered nurses (RNs) in the United States grew to a new high of 3.1 million between 2004 and 2008 according to a report released today by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). This increase of more than 5 percent also reflects growing diversity in the backgrounds of nurses in the United States.

“We are encouraged by growth in the numbers and diversity of Registered Nurses, and HRSA is committed to continuing this trend to ensure an adequate supply and distribution of nurses in the future,” said HRSA Administrator and nurse Dr. Mary K. Wakefield. “HRSA supports increasing the diversity of the nursing workforce and we are working diligently to achieve that goal.”

The survey found that the RN workforce is gradually becoming more diverse. In 2008, 16.8 percent of nurses were Asian, Black/African-American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and/or Hispanic; an increase from 12.2 percent in 2004. The two largest groups represented were non-Hispanic Asian (5.5 percent) and non-Hispanic Black/African-American (5.4 percent).

Additional initial findings include:

- Half (50 percent) of RNs have achieved a baccalaureate or higher degree in nursing or a nursing-related field in 2008, this is compared to 27.5 percent in 1980.
- The number of RNs with master's or doctorate degrees rose to 404,163 in 2008, an increase of 46.9 percent from 2004, and up from 85,860 in 1980.
- The average age of all licensed RNs increased to 47.0 years in 2008 from 46.8 in 2004; this represents a stabilization after many years of continuing large increases in average age.
- Nearly 45 percent of RNs were 50 years of age or older in 2008, a dramatic increase from 33 percent in 2000 and 25 percent in 1980.

- Average annual earnings for RNs in 2008 were \$66,973. RNs' salaries rose almost 15.9 percent since 2004, which slightly outpaced inflation.
- An estimated 444,668 RNs received their first U.S. license over the period from 2004 to 2008.

Published every four years by HRSA's Bureau of Health Professions, the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses is the preeminent source of statistics on trends over time for the nation's largest health profession. The report, [\*The Registered Nurse Population: Initial Findings from the 2008 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses\*](#), includes comparisons from eight recurring surveys, 1980 through 2008. The 2008 survey was sent to 55,171 nurses with active RN licenses, with representation from all 50 States and the District of Columbia. Data in the survey cover educational background, practice specialty areas, employment settings, position levels, job satisfaction and salaries, geographic distribution, and personal demographics such as gender, racial/ethnic background, age and family status. A final report with the complete findings will be published in summer 2010.

HRSA, part of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the primary Federal agency providing policy leadership and grant support for health professions workforce development – helping to ensure the United States has the right clinicians, with the right skills, working where they are needed.

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