

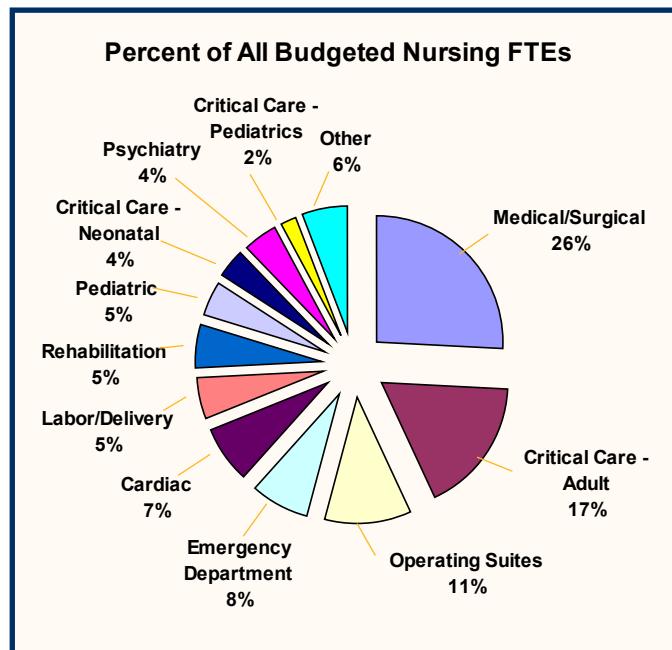
*Twenty-six hospitals in six counties – Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, Medina and Summit – participated in a survey by the Northeast Ohio Nursing Initiative (NEONI) on nurse staffing. Survey responses are based on 2004 data.*

**N**ortheast Ohio hospitals employ more than 15,000 nurses, which fulfill a total of 11,122 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. The majority, 9,544 or 85 percent, are registered nurses (RN). Licensed practical nurses (LPN) and advanced practice nurses (APN) account for the remaining 10 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

### Where do nurses work?

More than half, 54.2 percent, of hospital nurses work in medical/surgical units, adult critical care units or operating suites.

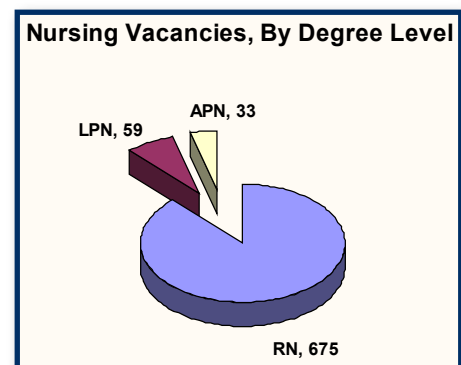
In 2004, 70 percent of all nurses in hospitals were classified as permanent full-time employees; 20 percent were permanent, part-time; and 6 percent were float pool (but permanent employees). Only 2.3 percent of nursing hours were filled with agency, temporary or traveling nurses. In 2002, 8 percent of nursing hours were filled with agency, temporary, or traveling nurses.



### How many nursing positions are vacant?

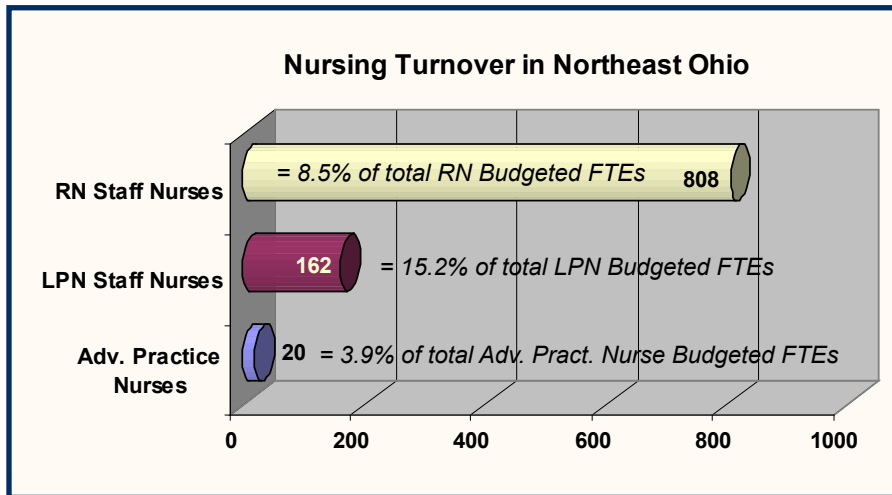
During the third quarter of 2004, hospitals reported a total of 767 vacant nursing positions, which equates to an overall vacancy rate of 6.9 percent. Rates are slightly higher for RNs than for LPNs or APNs. Of the total number of budgeted RN FTEs, 7.1 percent were vacant; 5.5 percent of total budgeted LPN FTEs were vacant; and 6 percent of budgeted APN FTEs were vacant.

When compared to CHA's 2002 nursing workforce report, vacancy rates have declined. At that time, hospitals reported 13 percent vacancy rates for RNs and 20 percent for LPNs. The most recent APN vacancy rates are slightly higher than the 4 percent rates reported in the last survey. The 2002 report was based on the responses of 21 hospitals in six counties and captured 2001 data.



## What are turnover rates for nursing positions?

Expressed as a percentage of all budgeted FTEs, 8.9 percent of nurses separated due to some reason other than retirement in 2004. While in terms of sheer numbers more RNs than LPNs separated, LPNs made up a disproportionate number of those separations, with 15.2 percent of budgeted LPN FTEs, or 162, separating and 8.5 percent of budgeted RN FTEs, or 808, separating. Only 20 APNs, or 3.9 percent, separated. These rates are also down from those reported in 2002, when there was an 11 percent turnover rate for RNs and a 19 percent turnover for LPNs.



The most common types of RNs to separate for non-retirement reasons were in medical/surgical, at 13.8 percent of budgeted RN FTEs; adult critical care, at 19.9 percent; and rehabilitation, at 12.0 percent. The most common LPN non-retiring separations were in emergency departments, at 20.6 percent; cardiac, 22.8 percent; and rehabilitation, 20.5 percent. According to a 2001 survey, the most common areas for RN separation were medical-surgical, adult critical care, and cardiac. Comparable LPN separation data was not collected.

Only a small number of nurses retired in 2004. Fifty-two RNs, or 0.54 percent, and 32 LPNs, or 2.9 percent, retired. No hospitals reported APN retirements.

## How does Northeast Ohio compare?

When turnover and vacancy rates in Northeast Ohio are compared to state and national rates, some slight variances are found. LPN vacancies are lowest in Northeast Ohio, but the region's LPN turnover rate falls between state and national rates. For RNs, turnover is lowest in Northeast Ohio, and the region's vacancy rate, while 2.3 percent higher than the state rate, is 1 percent lower than the national rate.

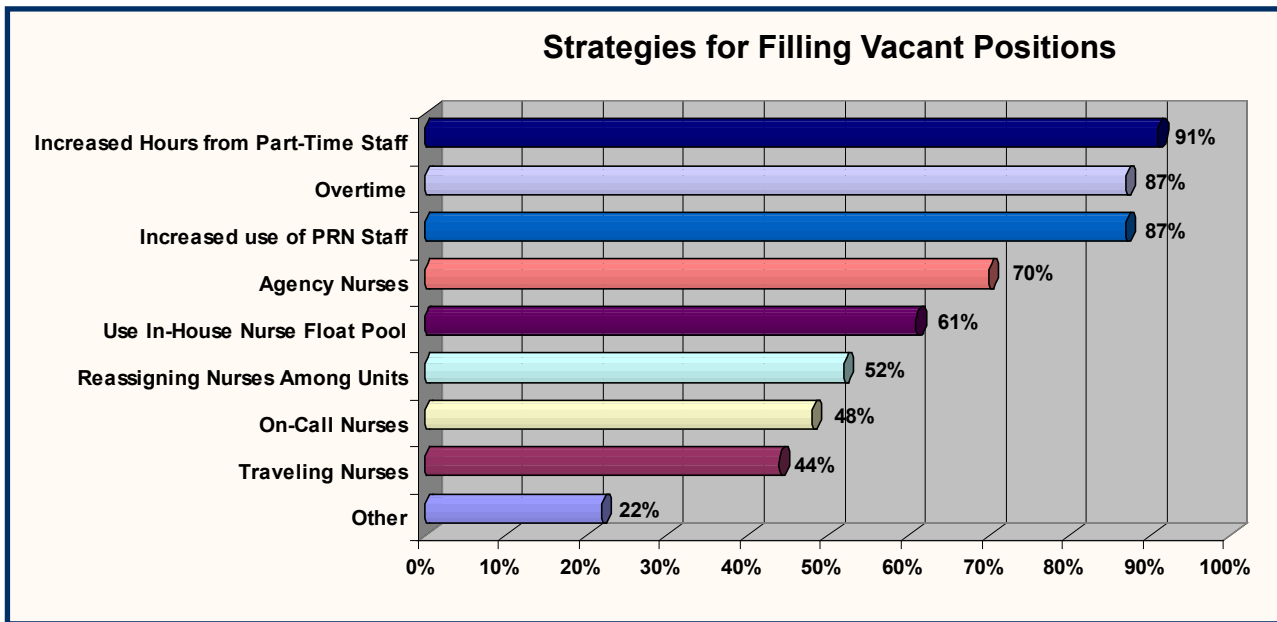
	Northeast Ohio	Ohio*	United States**
RN Turnover	8.5%	10.9%	13.6%
RN Vacancy	7.1%	4.8%	8.1%
LPN Turnover	15.2%	16.2%	14.3%
LPN Vacancy	5.5%	6.5%	6.7%

\*Source of Ohio data: Ohio Hospital Association \*\*Source of United States data: American Hospital Association and Hospital and Healthcare Compensation Service  
Note: Registered Nurse (RN); Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)

### What strategies are used to fill vacant nursing positions?

When nursing positions are vacant, hospitals still must find a way to fill these positions on a temporary basis, until the positions can be filled permanently, in order to meet patient care needs. Hospitals rely on a variety of strategies to compensate for nursing vacancies. Almost all – 91 percent – reported relying on increased hours from part-time staff in order to fill vacant nurse positions. The use of overtime and increased use of PRN staff each were used by 87 percent of hospitals to fill vacant positions. Fewer than half reported relying on on-call or traveling nurses.

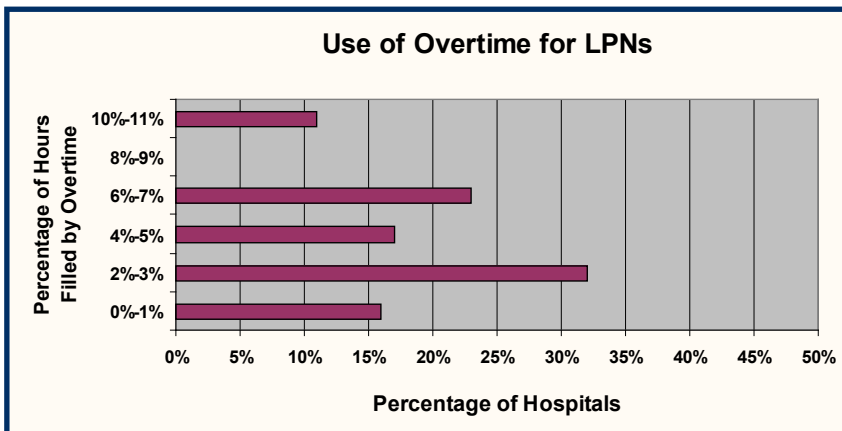
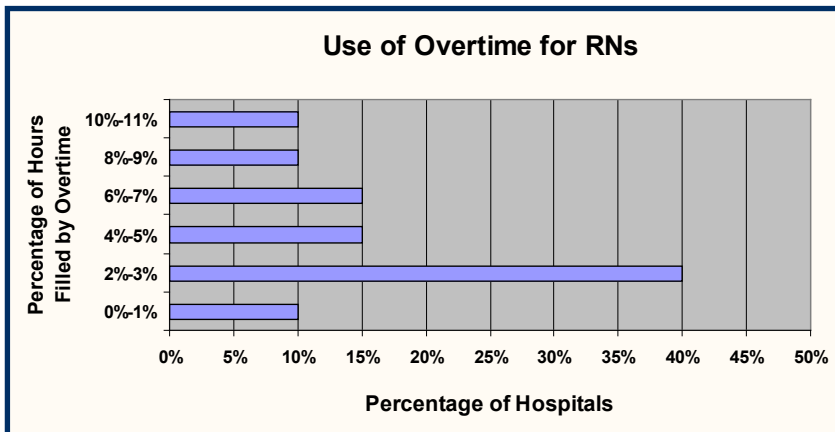
*PRN nurses are those who are not employed for an established number of hours weekly, but rather, are only scheduled as needed.*



When asked which were the most effective strategies for filling vacant nursing positions, hospitals said use of in-house nurse float pools and increased use of PRN staff, even though these strategies were not the most commonly used by hospitals.

## How often is overtime used?

While 87 percent of hospitals reported using overtime to fill vacant nursing positions, only a very small proportion of nursing hours worked are overtime. On average, less than 4 percent of nursing work hours are fulfilled by nurses working overtime. Forty percent of hospitals reported that only between 2 and 3 percent of their RN nursing hours were filled by overtime and 32 percent said between 2 and 3 percent of their LPN nursing hours were filled by overtime.



## How many nurses go on leave?

The use of family and medical leave contributes to nurse vacancies in hospitals. On average, 4 percent of staff nurses were on leave during 2004. Nearly one-quarter of hospitals reported that 8 percent or more of their nursing staff took a leave in 2004.

## What are the implications?

Overall, the nursing shortage has begun to improve. National and local efforts to draw more people into the field of nursing seem to be having an effect. In fact, a study released by NEONI at the end of 2004, *Measuring Student Capacity and Faculty Resources in Northeast Ohio Schools of Nursing*, found that the region's schools of nursing are full. In the 2002-2003 academic year, more than 550 qualified students were turned away from area nursing schools because the programs were at capacity. However, the country is about to face the largest ever retirement of nurses in the next 15 to 20 years. It is critical that efforts to recruit new individuals into the field of nursing,

and to expand the capacity of our schools to accommodate them, continue. A new crop of younger nurses will be needed to meet the demand for healthcare services as the baby boom generation moves into the age demographic that requires the greatest level of healthcare.

