

# School Nurse Workforce Assessment

Nebraska  
2020-2021



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# Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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## Introduction:

Healthy students are better learners, and School Nurses in Nebraska play a critical role in ensuring their health and academic success. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, School Nurses have played an even greater role in meeting the needs of individual students while taking active measures to keep all students and staff safe from infectious disease. While the importance of school nursing is well documented, data on employment and demographics of Nebraska School Nurses are limited. The DHHS School Health Data steering committee chose a workforce survey for their 2020-2021 Data Project to learn more about Nebraska School Nurses and provide new and valuable insight into the complex school nursing landscape in this state.

National Association of School Nurses (NASN) developed uniform data points as part of their Every Student Counts research initiative to advance student health through data. States participate by using the uniform data points and inputting their data to NASN's National School Health Data Set. The DHHS School Health Data Committee elected to implement the national survey in the 2020-2021 school year.

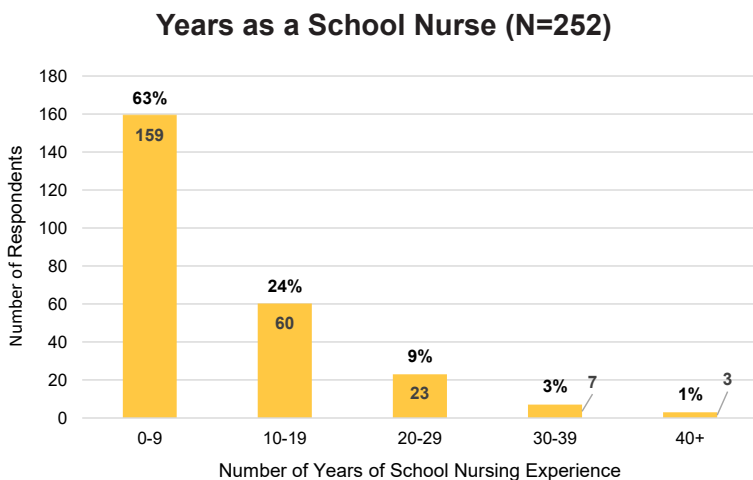
## Methods:

This survey was created in Survey Monkey, and a link was distributed via multiple emails on the DHHS School Nurse listserv during March 2021. In addition, emails were sent to all 326 School Nurses, representing 116 school districts and three Educational Service Units, listed in the Nebraska Department of Education directory in March 2021.

The survey had two distinct parts; both were voluntary and to be reported anonymously. Part 1 was for individual School Nurses on demographics and employment details, and Part 2 was for district-level responses, with one person answering per district. Part 2 questions came from NASN's [uniform data points](#) on school health staffing, and will be entered into its national data set. Both parts began with a consent to share information. Those who did not agree to share their information were removed from survey results. A total of 254 School Nurses and 95 districts responded, indicating a favorable response rate.

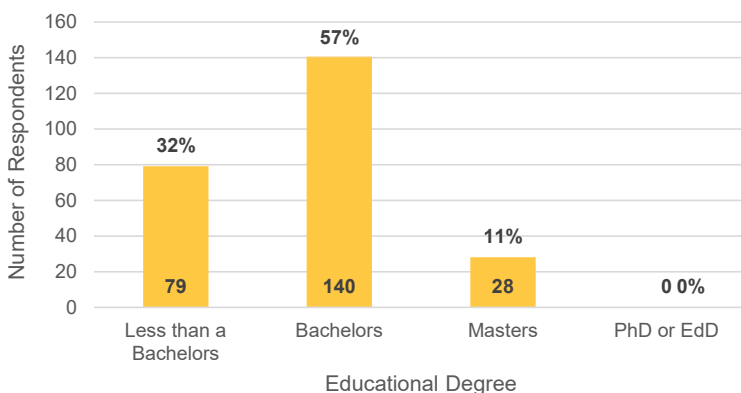
## Results:

**School Nurse Characteristics:** School Nurses in Nebraska are mostly Registered Nurses (RNs - 88%), with 11% of them LPNs and less than 1% APRNs. They have a wide range of school nursing experience (0 - 44 years), with the majority having fewer than 10 years experience as a school nurse. Broken down another way, we found that most (67%) of School Nurses had at least five years of school nursing experience. The average respondent had nine years as a School Nurse (N=252).



- **Certifications:** School Nurses can be state or nationally certified. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) offers a Special Services School Nurse Certificate that School Nurses with the minimum education of a Bachelor’s Degree may apply for, but requirements are set by district and vary. School Nurses may also apply to be recognized as a Nationally Certified School Nurse (NCSN). The 2020-2021 workforce survey found six nurses to be certified nationally (NCSN), 69 nurses with Nebraska State Certification, and four School Nurses having both certifications. The majority of respondents (177) did not have either.
- **Education:** In Nebraska there is no state requirement for School Nurses to have a college degree, though some school districts require a Bachelor’s Degree. The majority of School Nurses in Nebraska (68%) have at least a Bachelor’s Degree. School Nurses with less than a Bachelor’s Degree (e.g. Associate Degree (ADN), Nursing Diploma, or LPN certificates) made up 32% of respondents. There are 28 School Nurses with Masters Degrees and no nurses with doctoral degrees.

**Highest Level of Education for School Nurses (N=247)**



- **Demographics:** Nebraska School Nurses largely identified as female (98%) and white (97%), Non-Hispanic (96%). The chart below breaks down respondents by race and ethnicity. The School Nurses in Nebraska do not reflect the diversity of the students, who, according to public data from the Nebraska Department of Education from the 2019-2020 school year, are 65% White, 20% Hispanic or Latinx, 7% Black, 3% Asian, 4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

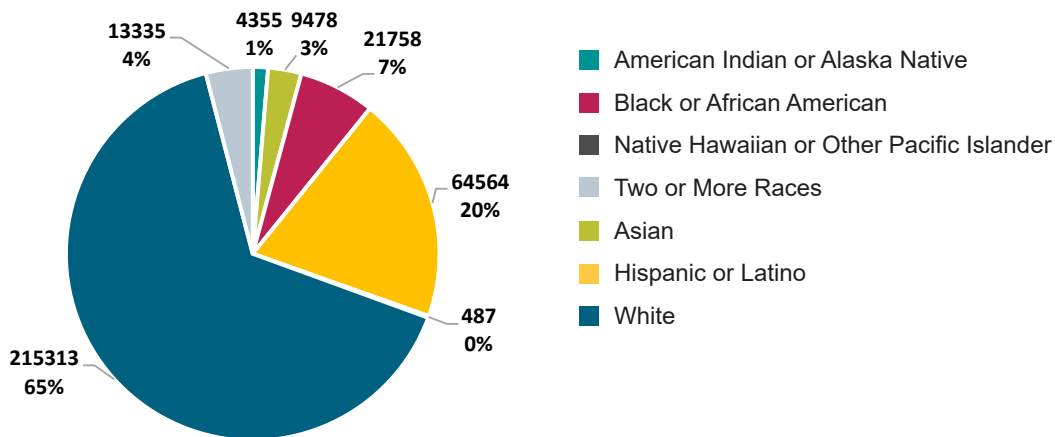
**School Nurses by Race**

Answer Choices	Responses	
White or Caucasian	96.85%	246
Black or African American	0.39%	1
Asian or Asian American	0.39%	1
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.00%	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
Multiple races	0.79%	2
Another race	0.39%	1
Prefer not to identify	1.18%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>254</b>

## School Nurses by Ethnicity

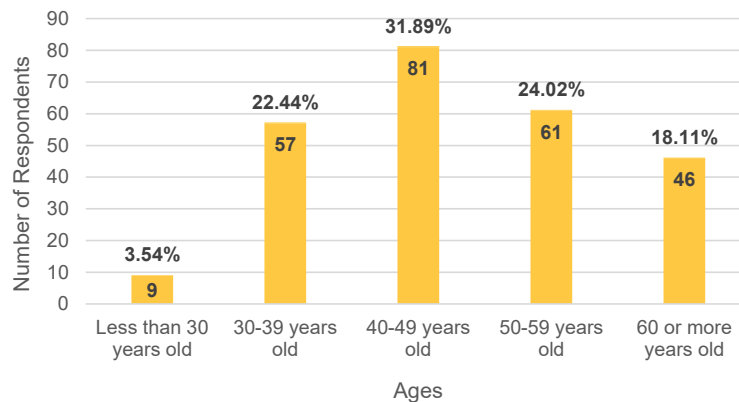
Answer Choices	Responses	
Hispanic or Latinx	1.19%	3
Not Hispanic or Latinx	96.44%	244
Prefer not to identify	2.37%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>253</b>

## Nebraska Students Race and Ethnicity 2019-2020



- **Age:** The ages of School Nurses are spread fairly evenly across decades as seen in the chart below, with the largest group (32%) being in their forties.

## Ages of School Nurses (N=254)



**School and District Characteristics:** Of the survey respondents, 243 School Nurses worked in public schools and only nine in private schools. Most School Nurses (244) only serve one district, eight nurses served two districts, and six nurses served three or more districts. On the question “If you have multiple buildings/districts, how many miles apart are they?”, the majority of nurses (126 people or 81.82%) answered between 0-9 miles. Twenty-one nurses drove between 10-19 miles, three drove 20-29 miles, and four had districts or buildings 30 or more miles apart.

**Where School Nurses Work:** Sixty-four percent (161/252) of School Nurses in Nebraska work in multiple types of schools, with the majority of those nurses (90/161) serving students in preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school.

Nurses who work at one type of school only: 91

- Preschool only: 1
- Elementary only: 45
- Middle school only: 22
- High school only: 23

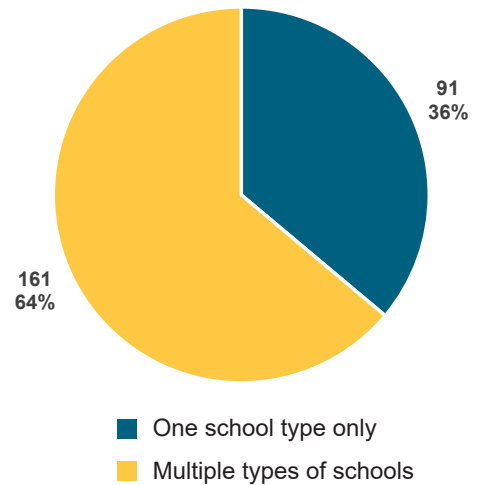
Nurses who work at multiple types of schools: 161

- Preschool and elementary school: 37
- Preschool, elementary, and middle school: 4
- Preschool, elementary, middle, and high school: 90
- Preschool and high school: 1
- Elementary and middle school: 6
- Elementary, middle, and high school: 17
- Middle and high school: 6

Total number of nurses who work in each school type

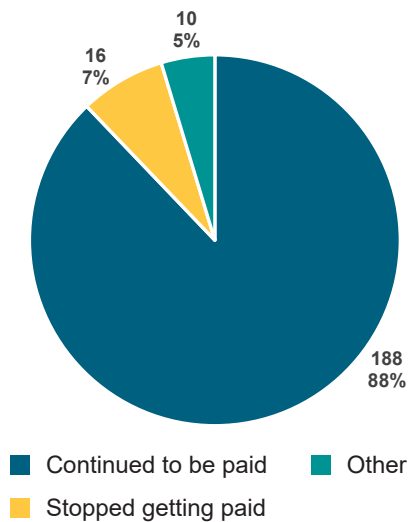
- Preschool: 133
- Elementary School: 199
- Middle School: 145
- High School: 140

**Where School Nurses Work (N=252)**

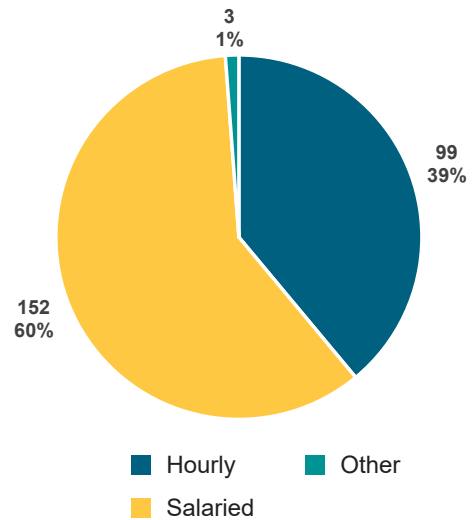


**School Nurse Pay and Employment Practices:** Sixty percent of School Nurses in Nebraska are salaried, with 39% of nurses paid hourly. The vast majority (88%) of School Nurses continued getting paid when schools closed during the early phase of the pandemic in Spring 2020. Forty nurses indicated that they were not School Nurses during this time and were not included in the analysis of this question.

**School Nurse Pay While Schools Were Closed in March - May of 2020 (N=214)**



**School Nurse Pay (Salaried or Hourly) (N=254)**

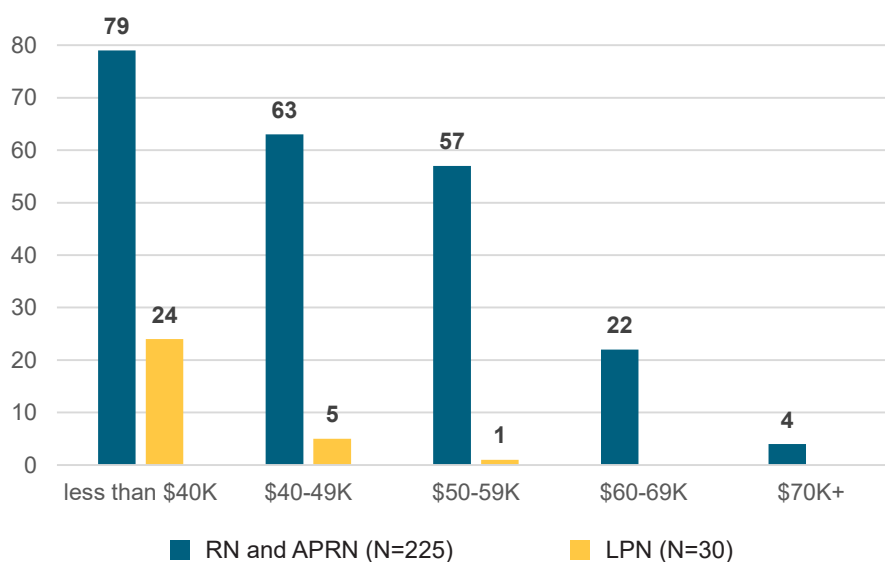


- **Employer:** Most School Nurses are employed by their School District (92%), with the rest being employed by Educational Service Unit, Local Health Department, Nursing Agency, hospital or by multiple employers.

Answer Choices	Responses	
School or district	92.13%	234
Educational Service Unit	2.76%	7
Local Health Department	0.39%	1
Nursing agency	2.36%	6
Hospital system	1.97%	5
Other (please specify)	0.39%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>254</b>

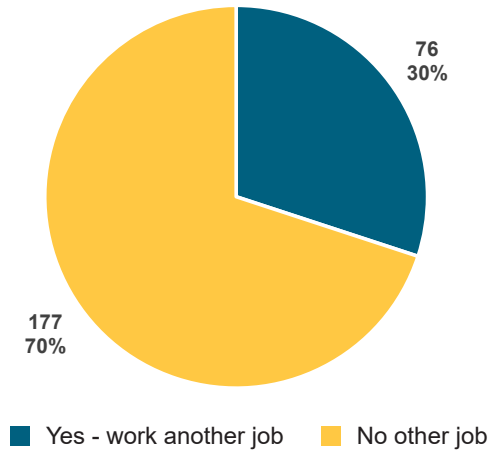
- **Income:** School Nurses were asked to report their annual income from school nursing, with nine categories broken down by \$5,000, starting at less than \$34,999 and ending at \$70,000 or more. There was a question for RNs and APRNs and a separate question for LPNs to report. The category with the largest total number of respondents for both RNs (51 out of 225) and LPNs (17 out of 30) was the lowest one of less than \$34,999. The survey originally had mistakenly left out income categories (45,000 - 49,999 and 55,000- 59,999) for both RNs and LPNs but it was corrected, with the first 87 respondents given seven categories and the last 171 given all nine; however, the mistake would not affect the percentages of those making more or less than \$35,000 annually. Further analysis revealed that of the 51 RNs making less than \$35,000 annually, only six of them worked 40 or more hours per week, and of the 17 LPNs making less than \$35,000, only four worked 40 or more hours per week. Overall, RNs were paid more than LPNs. The average salary of RNs in Nebraska was reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics to be \$69,480 in 2020. As evidenced in the chart “Annual Income from School Nursing,” the vast majority of School Nurses are paid below that average.

**Annual Income from School Nursing**

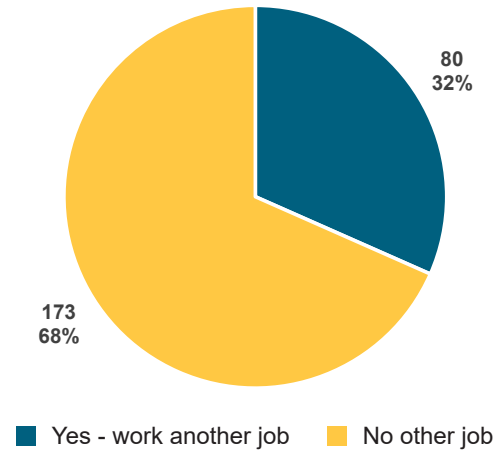


- Number of hours worked per week and other jobs:** The majority of School Nurses (64%) work 40 or more hours per week. While most do not work another job during the school year, 30% of School Nurses have an alternate job. Those numbers did not change much during breaks from school, when 32% of School Nurses worked another job.

**School Nurses Working Another Job During the School Year (N=253)**



**School Nurses Working Another Job During Breaks from School (N=253)**

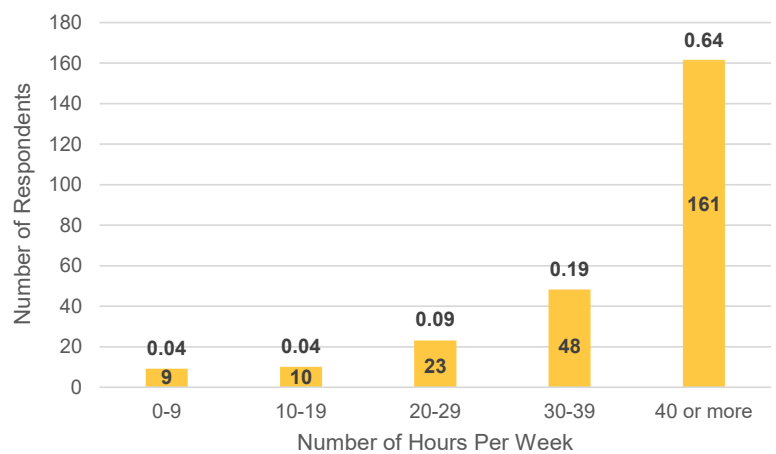


## Discussion:

The School Nurse Workforce Assessment Survey of 2020-2021 used self-reported data from School Nurses to give a current snapshot of School Nurse demographics - where they work, and how they are employed and compensated. These questions will help the School Nurse and administrator alike to better discern what the current practices are in Nebraska. The limitations of this study were that it only measured a moment in time and did not analyze trends, and that participation was voluntary so it did not capture all of the School Nurses in the state. And although the Nebraska Department of Education directory contains a very good list of School Nurses, there are some who are not listed because they are not employed by the district or ESU, or are not reported to the directory.

There was also an error in the income reporting question, which affected a third of respondents and limits our ability to draw conclusions. Further study on School Nurse income is warranted to analyze income correlations with education, certifications, and other factors. Also, pay scales and classifications should be assessed to determine how many School Nurses are paid as certified or classified staff. The School Health Data Committee will revisit this survey in two years to determine the need for repeating it at that time and in subsequent years.

**Number of Hours Per Week School Nurses Work or are Contracted For (N=251)**





## Recommendations:

The Nebraska School Nurse Workforce Survey results paint a picture of the average School Nurse in Nebraska who is white, female, experienced, educated, works full time or has a second job, and has an annual income below that of the average nurse in the state. We believe it would be advantageous to have more diversity in the school nursing workforce, and to have more School Nurses with Bachelor's degrees. We recommend participation in national efforts like the NASN Every Student Counts initiative to support student health through data. We also recommend a data system that would include contact information for 100% of School Nurses so surveys can be more complete.

## Acknowledgements:

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- Julie Frederick BSN, RN, NCSN. Health Services Coordinator for Lincoln Public Schools and National Association of School Nurses (NASN) Data Coordinator for Nebraska
- Felicia Martin RN, ESU 4 Health Services Director
- Staci Hergott RN, BSN, School Nurse, Thayer Central Community Schools
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