



Trends in New York Registered Nurse Graduations, 1996-2004



School of Public Health
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NEW YORK STATE REGISTERED NURSING GRADUATIONS, 1996 - 2004

BACKGROUND

To better understand trends affecting the supply of registered nurses (RNs) in New York State, the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the School of Public Health, University at Albany (the Center) annually surveys RN education programs in the state. The brief survey includes questions on applications, acceptances, and graduations for the current year as well as projected graduations through 2004. This summary presents the highlights of the survey conducted in the summer and fall of 2002.

Of the 106 nursing programs in New York State, 96 (91%) responded to the survey. Data for the 10 non-respondents were imputed from previous surveys; thus the following data reflects the enrollment and graduations of all registered nursing programs in the state. It is important to note that *not all RN graduations represent new registered nurses* as many RNs who have completed an associate degree or diploma program return to school to obtain a bachelors degree in nursing. Based on data provided on the survey, the Center estimates that in 2002, approximately 28% of 2002 bachelor degree graduates were already RNs. This translates into approximately 12% of all RN program graduates in the state.

KEY FINDINGS

1. After five years of decline, the number of RNs graduating in New York State stabilized in 2002 with the number of graduates (5,334) essentially unchanged from 2001. RN graduations in New York State are projected to rise by more than 700 in 2003 (13%) and more than 800 in 2004 (14%). The number of RN graduations expected in 2004 will be nearly 30% higher than the number of graduations reported in 2001 and 2002.

It is estimated that 5,334 individuals graduated from registered nursing programs in New York State in 2002, essentially unchanged from 2001. This number is nearly 31% lower than it was in 1996. This sharp decrease in the number of graduations has contributed to nursing shortages across the state. The increasing number of RN graduations over the next two years is encouraging. However, even with the projected increase in the number of RN graduations in 2004, graduations in New York State will still be nearly 11% lower than the number of graduations in 1996. Figure 1 and Table 1 present total RN graduations in the state between 1996 and 2004.

2. Graduations from *associate* degree RN programs are projected to increase by 49% between 2001 and 2004 while graduations from *bachelor* degree RN programs are projected to rise by just over 4% over the same period.

While associate degree graduations declined more rapidly between 1996 and 2001 than bachelor degree graduations, associate degree programs are also responding much more quickly to the need for new nurses. Between 1996 and 2001, associate degree RN graduations decreased by more than 35% while bachelor degree RN graduations decreased by more than 20%. Bachelor

degree RN program graduations are projected to increase beginning in 2003 but at a much slower rate (Figure 1 and Table 1)

Figure 1
New York State RN Graduations by Degree Type, 1996 to 2004

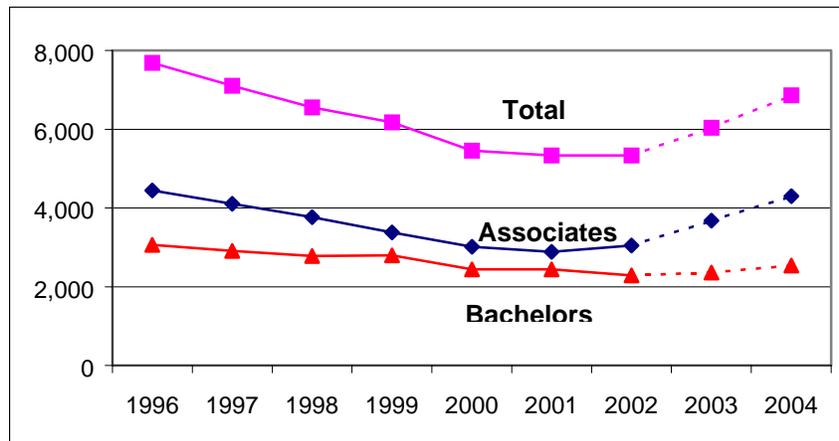


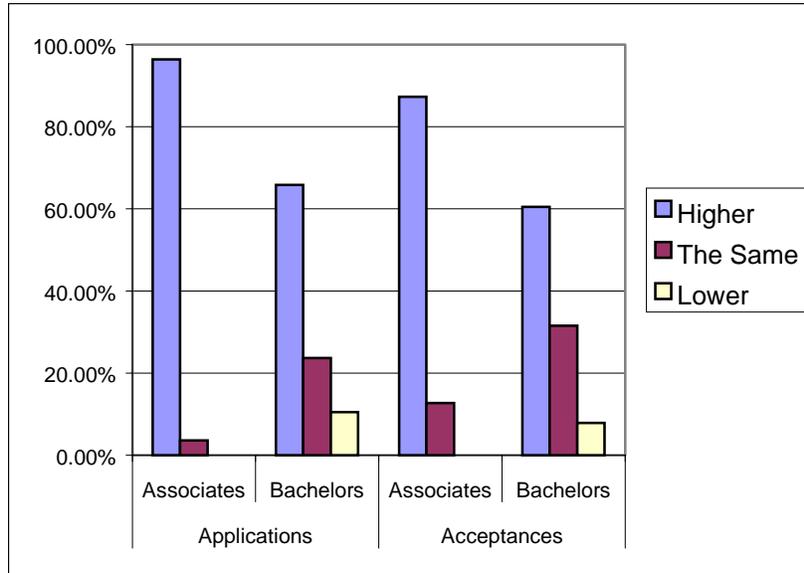
Table 1
New York State RN Graduations by Degree Type, 1996 to 2004

Degree Type	Actual Graduations							Projected Graduations	
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Associates	4,447	4,102	3,763	3,381	3,015	2,885	3,048	3,676	4,301
Bachelors	3,062	2,911	2,780	2,792	2,437	2,437	2,283	2,357	2,541
Diplomas	176	94	13	4	4	12	3	5	15
Totals	7,685	7,107	6,556	6,177	5,456	5,334	5,334	6,038	6,857

3. Both associate and bachelor degree programs report a significant increase in applications and acceptances to their programs.

Over 90% of the associate degree programs and over 60% of the bachelor degree report an increase in the number of applications in 2002 compared to 2001. Additionally, over 80% of the associate degree programs and over 60% of the bachelor degree programs report an increase in acceptances (Figure 2). Based on this, graduations should continue to rise for the next several years.

Figure 2
Percentage Change in the Number of Applications and Acceptances
By Degree Type Between 2001/02 and 2002/03



4. Every region in New York State had fewer RN graduations in 2002 than in 1996, but increases in graduations are projected for all regions by 2004.

The decline in RN graduations between 1996 and 2002 ranged from a low of 17% for Northeastern New York to a high of 40% for both the Western New York and NY-Penn regions. Between 2002 and 2004, RN graduations in all regions are projected to increase. Despite this, Central New York and Northeastern New York are the only regions projected to have more graduations in 2004 than it did in 1996 (Table 2).

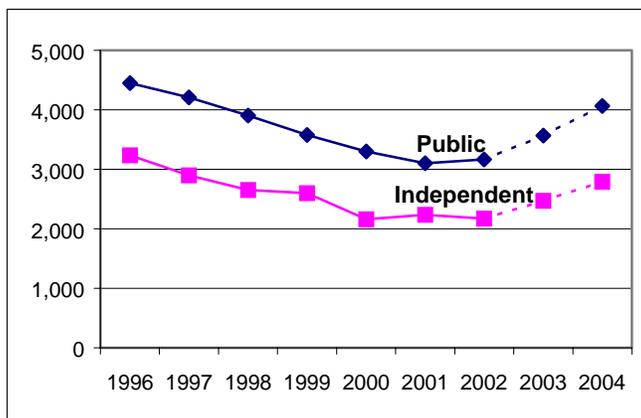
Table 2
Percent Change in the Number of RN Graduations by Region

HSA region	2002 Graduations	Percent Change		
		1996 to 2002	2002 to 2004	1996 to 2004
Western New York	535	-39.89%	10.09%	-33.82%
Finger Lakes	457	-30.12%	24.07%	-13.30%
Central NY	720	-25.08%	35.00%	1.14%
NY-Penn	55	-40.22%	45.45%	-13.04%
Northeastern NY	533	-16.85%	42.21%	18.25%
Hudson Valley	652	-38.37%	48.93%	-8.22%
New York City	1,539	-31.84%	29.89%	-11.47%
Long Island	679	-27.53%	23.56%	-10.46%

5. After experiencing declines in RN graduations between 1996 and 2001, public sector RN program graduations are projected to increase by over 31% between 2001 and 2004, while independent program graduations are projected to increase by 25% between 2001 and 2004.

Between 1996 and 2001, both public (SUNY, CUNY, and Excelsior College¹) and independent program (including hospital-based nursing programs) RN graduations decreased by more than 30%. Public sector graduations began increasing between 2001 and 2002 and are projected to significantly increase between 2002 and 2004. Independent program graduations are projected to increase starting in 2002. Despite these increases, projected public and independent sector graduations in 2004 remain below those from 1996 (Figure 3).

**Figure 3
Change in RN Graduations in Public and Independent Nursing Programs**



6. Nearly half of the RN programs in the state (47%) reported that they turned away qualified applicants in 2002, more than double the rate in 2001.

Forty-seven percent of the respondents (45) indicated they turned away qualified applicants. Over sixty percent (28) of those who reported turning away qualified applicants cited lack of faculty as the reason. Programs also indicated the limited number of clinical sites and the lack of classroom space as the other major reasons for turning away qualified applicants (Table 3).

Of those that indicated lack of faculty as the reason for turning away qualified applicants, 75% were RN educational programs sponsored by SUNY or CUNY. Eighty-nine percent of responding programs that indicated qualified applicants were turned away due to lack of faculty were associate degree programs. The Center estimates that over 1,000 qualified candidates were turned away.

¹ Excelsior College is a New York State program that provides distance-based education for students across the country. Only the estimated number of graduates from New York State is included in this report.

Table 3
Reasons for Turning Away Qualified Applicants
By Sponsor and by Degree Type

Reason for Turning Away Qualified Applicant	Total	Sponsor		Degree Type	
		Public	Independent	Associates Degree	Bachelors Degree
Lack of Faculty	28	21	7	25	3
Lack of Training Sites	4	3	1	4	0
Lack of Financial Aid	2	1	1	1	1
Other	11	7	4	8	3
Subtotal	45	32	13	38	7
No Students Turned Away	61	27	34	22*	39
Total	106	59	47	60*	46

*Includes one diploma program.

7. The number of RN graduations in 2003 and 2004 may not be sufficient to meet the future demand for new registered nurses in New York State.

Despite projected increases RN graduations in New York State in both 2003 and 2004, the increase in the supply of RNs may not be sufficient to meet the need for RNs in the state. The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that over one million new nurses will be needed in the United States between 2000 and 2010, or about 100,000 per year to fill new positions and replace other RNs who are expected to leave the practice. If this rate of growth (new and replacement RNs) is applied to New York State, the Center estimates the state would need more than 7,000 new nurses per year, substantially more than is currently or projected to be produced.

Should enrollments continue to increase and if new policies are put in place to constrain the increase in health care expenditures, the supply of RNs may be sufficient for several years after 2004 or 2005. Nevertheless, given the aging of the population, the continued growth of the health sector and the age profile of RNs, the need for new nurses is likely to rise by the end of the decade well beyond the level of graduations projected for 2004.