

# Exploring the Wage Disparity Between Nurse Educators and Clinical Nurses

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# Health Workforce Technical Assistance Center

- HWTAC is based at the Center for Health Workforce Studies (CHWS) at the College of Integrated Health Sciences, University at Albany, State University of New York
- Provides technical assistance to states and organizations that engage in health workforce planning
- Conducts a number of projects each year designed to provide expert assistance with health workforce data collection, analysis, and dissemination
- HWTAC's website houses the research of all 9 federally-funded health workforce research centers (HWRCs) in the US, and offers extensive resources including webinars, videos, and a state health workforce data collection inventory with survey examples
- Visit us at [healthworkforceTA.org](http://healthworkforceTA.org)

# Background

- Nursing education programs face persistent difficulties in the recruitment and retention of qualified faculty
  - A recent study found that almost 60% of nursing education programs in the US had full-time faculty vacancies during the 2024-2025 academic year
- Most frequently cited barrier to attracting and retaining nurse educators is low compensation
  - Most nurse educators can earn more money working in clinical settings
- No study to date has systematically documented these differences
- Primary objective of this study is to analyze and compare salaries between nurse educators and their counterparts in clinical practice positions and other roles

# Data

- This study utilized data from the 2022 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses (NSSRN)
  - Included nurses who were employed full time in December 2021 (n = 33,342)
- Nurse educators in this study were identified as those who reported their job title as “Academic Educator, Professor, or Instructor in a School of Nursing”
- Outcome variable was the annual pre-tax earnings from the respondents’ primary nursing position
  - “Please estimate your 2021 pre-tax annual earnings from your primary nursing position. Include overtime and bonuses, but exclude sign-on bonuses.”

# Methods

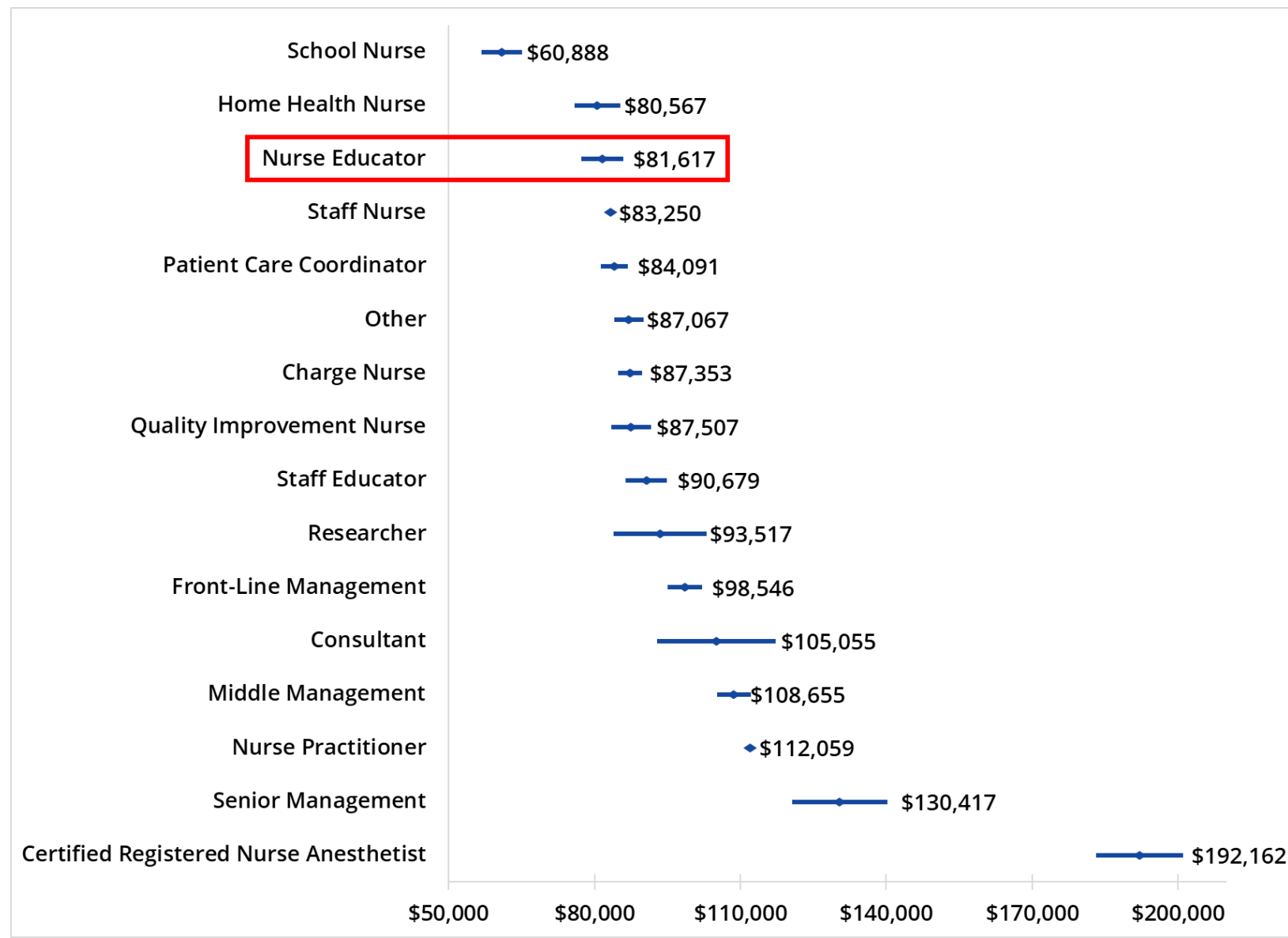
- 95% confidence intervals were calculated for annual earnings by job title
- Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were employed to examine differences in demographic and professional characteristics between nurse educators and nurses in other roles
- Additionally, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model was used to compare annual earnings of nurse educators to nurses in other positions
  - Model controlled for a variety of factors: sex, race/ethnicity, age, highest nursing degree, APRN status, work experience, employment setting, rural location, HPSA, clinical specialty, marital and children status, census division of residence, and hours worked per year

# Distribution of Full-Time Nursing Positions

- In 2021, an estimated 2,869,603 nurses were employed in full-time nursing positions in the US
- Most non-advanced practice registered nurses served as staff nurses (46%), charge nurses (9.5%), and front-line managers (4.9%)
- In contrast, only a small fraction (1.6%) of nurses reported working as a nurse educator

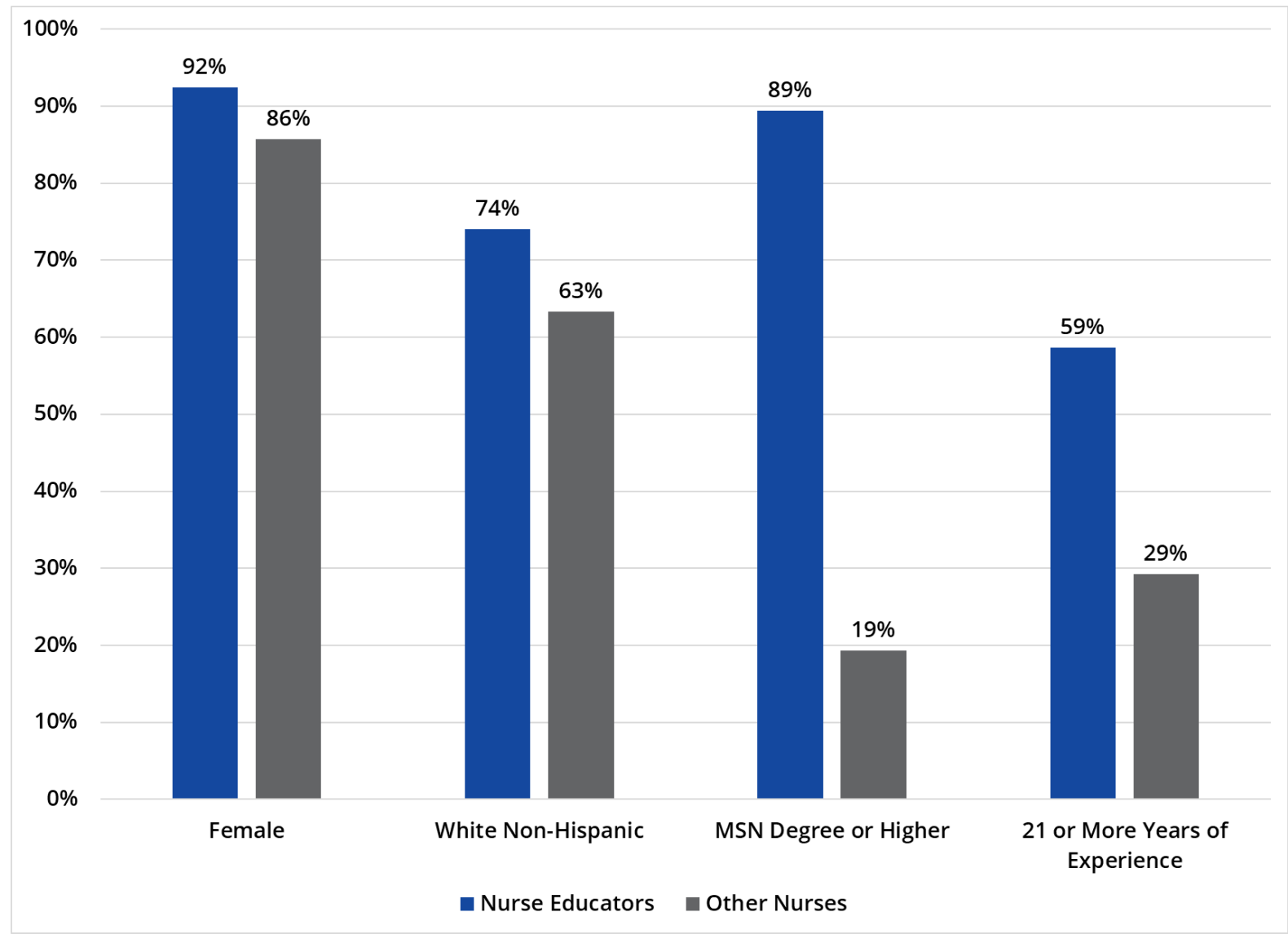
# Annual Income Comparison (95% Confidence Intervals)

- Mean annual income for nurse educators was \$81,617
- Staff nurses earned an average of \$83,250, charge nurses earned \$87,067, and front-line managers earned \$98,546



# Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Nurse Educators Compared to Other Nurses

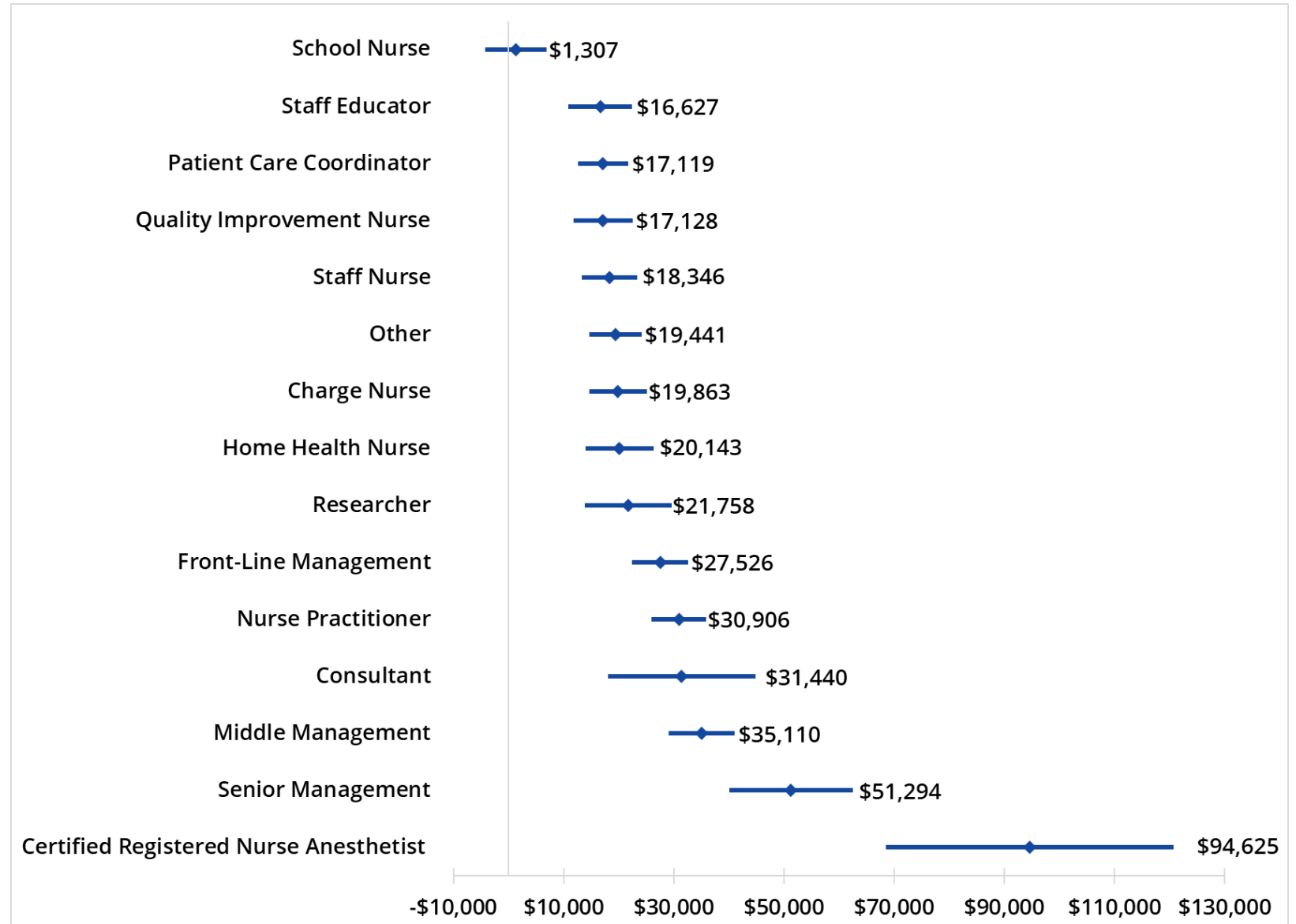
- Significantly higher proportion of nurse educators were female and White non-Hispanic than their counterparts
- Far more likely to hold an MSN degree or higher and to possess 21 or more years of experience in the nursing field





# Results From Regression Analysis

- After adjusting for a range of factors, nurse educators earned significantly less than nurses in most other positions
- Nurse educators earned \$18,346 less than staff nurses, \$19,863 less than charge nurses, and \$27,526 less than front-line managers



# Impact of Professional Characteristics on Income Disparities

- While nurse educators earn significantly less than other nurses, this income gap becomes even more pronounced when their qualifications and experience are considered
  - On average, nurse educators possess higher levels of education and greater professional experience than their counterparts—attributes that would typically command higher salaries in clinical roles
- For example, when a staff nurse is modeled with the same qualifications and experience as a typical nurse educator:
  - Staff Nurse: \$83,250 → \$94,132 (\$10,882 more)
  - Charge Nurse: \$87,353 → \$95,469 (\$8,116 more)
  - Front-line: \$98,546 → \$103,312 (\$4,766 more)

# Robustness Checks and Limitations

- Results from 2 robustness checks were largely consistent with the main findings
  - Excluded APRNs from analysis
  - Limited model to nurses working 40+ hours a week (alternative full time measure)
- Limitations
  - Information is self-reported
  - Job titles “Middle Management” and “Senior Management” include associate deans and deans respectively
  - 2022 NSSRN data does not include information of non-salary compensation or benefits, such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement contributions

# Conclusions

- This study highlights the significant income disparity between nurse educators and clinical nurses
- This income disparity becomes more pronounced when factoring in the higher education levels and greater work experience of nurse educators
- This compensation gap presents a major barrier for nursing education programs, which continue to face challenges in filling faculty positions

# Acknowledgements

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# Questions?

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