
An Enumeration and Demographic Profile of Public Health Nurses in Oregon

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The Oregon Center for Nursing – About Us

OCN is a nonprofit organization created by nursing leaders in 2002. Recognized by the Oregon state legislature as a state advisor for nursing workforce issues, OCN fulfills its mission and objectives with help from its dedicated leadership, staff and community partners across Oregon.

OCN facilitates research and collaboration for Oregon's nursing workforce to support informed, well-prepared, diverse and exceptional nursing professionals.

- Conduct, analyze and disseminate research
- Encourage collaboration and build partnerships with diverse stakeholders to advance nursing
- Promote nursing and healthcare in all settings in which nurses practice

Study Background

- The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is exploring the expansion of some public health programs, notably the maternal and child health home visitation programs.
- Little is known about the nursing workforce practicing in local public health departments across the state.
- OHA contracted with OCN to conduct a study on the public health nursing workforce in Oregon.
- The purpose of the study was to count the number of public health nurses and to develop a demographic profile of this workforce.

Why this is harder than it sounds?

- The public health nursing workforce receives much less attention than the nursing workforce in other practice settings.
- What constitutes a public health nurse is ill-defined, and can vary across studies.
- Many national studies on the public health workforce includes the entire workforce, not just nurses.
- Available data is insufficient to identify and characterize the public health nursing workforce.

Getting Started

- Collaborated with the state health department (OHA) and the Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO).
- Partners assisted with a basic understanding of how local public health departments are organized and function within the state.
- Partners also helps refine study questions and delineate the scope of the project.
- They also assisted with the distribution of the survey instruments and with follow-up to respondents.

Defining a Public Health Nurse

- Because of the variation in how LPHAs are organized and function across the state, the population of interest needed to be defined.
 - Nurses practicing in the public health division/section of LPHAs were included.
 - Nurses providing direct patient care in a clinic or primary care office were excluded.
 - Nurses with the LPHA that practiced in another setting (e.g., school nurses) were also excluded.

Survey Methods

- For this study, OCN utilized a two-phase survey design.
 - In Phase I, the LPHA Administrators were surveyed to gather basic information (e.g., numbers, employment status, and program allocations).
 - In Phase II, all public health nurses working at LPHAs were surveyed. This survey focused on the collection of demographic, educational attainment, and licensure information.

Phase I Survey - LPHA Administratorss

- A brief (5 question) survey was emailed directly to all 32 LPHAs across Oregon.
- The survey was in the field for a month (Sept – Oct 2021), with numerous follow-up emails directed towards non-responding LPHAs.
- The focus on the survey was to collect data readily available to the LPHAs:
 - Headcounts of nurses employed in their LPHA.
 - Program allocation of staff nurses (RNs or APRNs only) across public health programs (e.g., communicable disease, MCH, etc.).
 - Program allocation of nurses serving in supervisory or managerial roles across the public health programs.

Phase II Survey - Public Health Nurses

- In Phase II – nurses practicing in LPHAs were surveyed.
- A link to the on-line survey was sent to each LPHA and to CLHO for distribution.
- LPHA administrators were asked to share the survey link with all nurses practicing in their LPHA.
- Members of the two CLHO committees (Access to Preventive Services Committee and the Communicable Disease Committee) also shared the survey link with nurses in their LPHAs.
- The Public Health Nurses survey was in the field for a month (Oct – Nov 2021).
- The Public Health Nurses survey focused on collecting demographic, educational attainment, employment, and licensing information.

Public Health Regions in Oregon

Region	Local Public Health Departments
Central Oregon	Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, North Central, Wheeler
East Oregon	Baker, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union
Portland Metro	Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Multnomah, Tillamook, Washington
West Coastal	Benton, Coos, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Yamhill

Note: North Central Public Health covers Gilliam, Sherman, and Wasco counties.

Note: Curry and Wallowa public health services are administered by the Oregon Health Authority.

Public Health Nurse Survey Response Rate

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
No. Responses	27	13	59	49	148
No. of PH Nurses	64	21	145	112	342
Response Rate	42%	62%	41%	44%	43%

Number of Public Health Nurses in Oregon

Region	No. of PH Nurses	No. of Staff Nurses	No. of Nurses in Supervisory Roles	% of PH Nurses Who Are Employees
Central Oregon	64	49	15	98.2%
East Oregon	21	16	5	100%
Portland Metro	145	124	21	77.5%
West Coastal	112	83	29	97.7%
State of Oregon	342	272	70	88.6%

Allocation of Nursing Staff FTEs

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Communicable Disease	14.1%	18.6%	20.0%	22.0%	19.5%
Reproductive Health	12.4%	32.9%	3.1%	4.7%	8.0%
MCH Home Visitation	37.2%	18.3%	24.6%	57.0%	39.5%
Immunization	12.7%	15.2%	1.5%	9.5%	8.1%
PH Emergency Prep.	1.4%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
WIC	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other PH Programs	21.9%	14.3%	50.8%	6.8%	24.5%

Allocation of Nurse Managers/Supervisors FTEs

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Administration	28.9%	22.2%	15.4%	6.6%	14.4%
Communicable Disease	27.3%	2.2%	20.0%	18.6%	19.5%
Reproductive Health	23.0%	4.4%	0.0%	10.0%	10.2%
MCH Home Visitation	18.4%	44.4%	23.1%	34.2%	29.2%
Immunization	1.6%	4.4%	3.1%	10.0%	6.3%
PH Emergency Prep.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
WIC	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	2.2%
Other PH Programs	0.0%	22.2%	38.5%	16.6%	18.2%

Gender Identity of Public Health Nurses

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Female	100.0%	92.3%	92.3%	90.9%	91.7%
Male	0.0%	7.7%	5.8%	2.3%	4.2%
Decline to Answer	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	6.8%	4.2%

Race/Ethnicity of Public Health Nurses

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Hispanic / Latino/a/x	4.5%	7.7%	9.5%	11.8%	9.4%
White	90.9%	92.3%	68.3%	76.5%	76.5%
Amer. Ind. & Alaska Nat.	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	2.0%	1.3%
Black / African American	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	3.9%	6.0%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	2.7%
Unknown	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.7%
Declined to Answer	4.5%	0.0%	1.6%	5.9%	3.4%

Age Distribution of Public Health Nurses

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
<25	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.3%	1.5%
25-34	18.2%	30.8%	23.5%	13.6%	20.0%
35-44	31.8%	23.1%	31.4%	34.1%	31.5%
45-54	9.1%	23.1%	19.6%	22.7%	19.2%
55-64	34.6%	15.4%	23.5%	27.3%	26.2%
65+	4.5%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
Average Age (years)	47	43	43	46	45

Year Since Initial Nursing Licensure

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Years Since Initial Oregon Licensure	15.3	13.9	11.5	11.4	12.4
Years Since Initial Licensure from Other State	29.2	26.8	11.9	17.2	16.9
Initial Licensure Outside of Oregon	22.7%	30.8%	41.2%	29.5%	33.1%

Years Practicing in Public Health & Current Position

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Public Health	11.7	6.3	9.4	7.8	8.9
Current Position	5.5	4.3	5.3	4.7	5.0

PH Nurses Serving in Managerial/Supervisory Roles

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Not M/S	63.6%	76.9%	80.8%	75.0%	75.6%
Serving M/S	36.4%	23.1%	19.2%	25.0%	24.4%

Public Health Nurse Wages

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Monthly Wage	\$6,163	\$5,261	\$6,993	\$6,248	\$6,422
% Difference – Statewide PH	-4.0%	-18.1%	8.9%	-2.7%	
% Difference – All Practicing RNs	-24.7%	-35.7%	-14.5%	-23.6%	-21.5%

Average monthly wage for all practicing RNs is \$8,183: from OED, 2021 Oregon Wage Information

Highest Level of Nursing Education

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Associate (ADN)	36.4%	30.8%	5.8%	18.2%	17.6%
Baccalaureate (BSN)	50.0%	53.8%	88.5%	65.9%	71.0%
Master's Degree	9.1%	15.4%	1.9%	9.1%	6.9%
Diploma	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.8%
Voc/Prac Nursing Cert.	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.8%
Other	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	6.8%	3.1%

Highest Level of Non-Nursing Education

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
Associate (ADN)	10.0%	8.3%	5.8%	14.0%	9.4%
Baccalaureate (BSN)	15.0%	16.7%	40.4%	32.6%	31.5%
Master's Degree	10.0%	0.0%	13.5%	9.3%	10.2%
Not Applicable	65.0%	75.0%	40.4%	44.2%	48.8%

Languages Spoken by Public Health Nurses

	Central Oregon	East Oregon	Portland Metro	West Coastal	State of Oregon
English only	85.0%	81.8%	52.6%	76.7%	67.9%
Spanish	15.0%	18.2%	29.8%	18.6%	22.9%
Portuguese	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	2.3%	2.3%
Russian	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	0.0%	1.5%
French	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	2.3%	1.5%
Mandarin	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.8%

Note: Some languages spoken by PH nurses are not included in this list, so totals may not add to 100%.

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