

**PRESS RELEASE**

**June 30, 2021**

**The Washington Center for Nursing Releases  
COVID-19 Impact on the Nursing Workforce Study**



Click [here](#) to read the study

(<https://www.wcnursing.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/reports/2021-June-WCN-SIA-COVID-19-Impact-on-the-Nursing-Workforce-Study.pdf>)

The Washington Center for Nursing (WCN), the state's nursing workforce center, recently released their COVID-19 Impact on the Nursing Workforce Study conducted by Survey Information Analytics (SIA). The study aims to understand better the challenges faced by Washington nurses responding to the pandemic.

Since the confirmation of the first U.S. case of the deadly coronavirus virus in Kirkland, WA, in Jan of 2020, nurses have stood front and center in the public health emergency, putting their lives at risk. As we move through the pandemic, it is imperative to capture nurses' experiences to inform necessary improvements to support and retain a resilient nursing workforce, both now and in the future.

The WCN completed the study at the request of the Washington State Department of Health. Through surveys and focus groups with nursing students, nursing faculty, CNAs, LPNs, RNs, and ARNPs, the study looks to capture a snapshot of the impact of COVID-19 on Washington's nursing workforce.

As a priority to WCN, the study process kept an equity lens throughout by reaching out to multicultural nurses' organizations to help promote participation in the study. As a result, the racial diversity of survey and focus group participants, in most cases, matched or exceeded that of the state's general population. Voices of diverse nurses are necessary to understanding inequities experienced by nurses through the pandemic.

Conducted between January and March 2021, SIA surveyed 418 nurses who held active nursing licenses about their experiences during 2020. Highlight findings from the survey found that of the nurses surveyed:

- 51% were laid off or furloughed from one or more nursing/healthcare jobs.
- 42% thought about or made plans to leave the field of nursing.
- 69% reported moderate or extreme COVID-19 related staffing concerns.
- 61% reported moderate or extreme concern for their friends'/family's safety.
- 42% believed their employers provided adequate quarantining for employees who may have been/were exposed to COVID-19.
- 67% agreed or strongly agreed their employer provided more telehealth nursing services during the pandemic in comparison to pre-pandemic services.
- 35% felt they were discriminated against in their primary nursing role because of accent/language barriers.

Additionally, SIA conducted nine focus groups (with a total of 67 participants) with nurses from multiple settings and licensure to collect data on nurses' experience working during the pandemic.

Among the report findings, fluctuating policy changes, inconsistent communication, lack of mental health resources, and unknown variables such as what workers were "essential" and what was adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), were identified.

"I think, going forward, they really need to set up actual crisis plans before the crisis happens. Instead of ... clear cut policies, there were daily and sometimes hourly policy changes. We need to work on better communication channels. ... crisis management failed ... instead of learning from history, we just kind of waited for it to happen.' (ARNP, 2021)"

"The pandemic completely exploded the adaptive system ... COVID has been such a mystery; it's been a year of being lost in the system ... it's just been this cluster of issues ... it just felt very scattered, rules all the time, no consistency; it's been taking a huge toll.' (Public Health Nurse, 2021)"

"I think that the word that I would use to describe the last year is chaos, constant change, constant adaptation, a high level of uncertainty. A year of challenge.' (Nursing Program Dean/Director, 2021)"

It is important to note that the size of this study means results are not generalizable to the entire nursing workforce in the state.