

# ***Alaska Re-licensure Survey for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)***

***1996, 2000, and 2002***

*Alaska Colleagues in Caring*



A project supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Alaska State Board of Nursing, and contributions from the University of Alaska Anchorage School of Nursing.

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# ***Alaska Re-licensure Survey for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)***

***1996, 2000, and 2002***

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## *Consortium Members*

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The following agencies or organizations served as consortium members at some time between 1996 and 2002:

Alaska Board of Nursing	Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital (SEARHC)
Alaska Center for Rural Health	Municipality of Anchorage
Alaska Native Medical Center	Providence Alaska Medical Center
Alaska Nurse Practitioner Association	Sitka Community Hospital
Alaska Nurses Association	St. Ann's Care Center
Alaska Nurses Foundation	State of Alaska DHSS Section of Nursing
Alaska Region Veterans Administration	State of Alaska Pioneers' Homes
Alaska Regional Hospital	Theta Omicron Chapter, Sigma Theta Tau
Bartlett Regional Hospital	UAA, School of Nursing Steering Committee
Charter North Star Behavioral Health Systems	UAA Student Nurses Association
Denali Center/Fairbanks Memorial Hospital	Valley Hospital
Elmendorf Air Force Base Hospital	Wrangell General Hospital
HealthCorps Associates Inc.	Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation

## *Steering Committee Members*

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The following individuals were members of the Steering Committee at some time between 1996 and 2002:

Lynn Towner, Co-Chair Alaska Nurses Foundation	Elaine McKenzie State of Alaska DHSS Section of Nursing
Sheryl Washburn, Co-Chair Bartlett Regional Hospital	Camille Soleil Alaska Nurses Association
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## *Introduction*

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Efforts to describe the characteristics and work-related intentions of the Alaska licensed practical nurse population began in 1996 with the formation of Alaska Colleagues in Caring (ACIC). ACIC was established as a statewide consortium of individuals, agencies, and organizations to facilitate the development of an adequately sized and appropriately prepared nursing workforce to meet the high quality health and nursing care services needs of Alaskans. Between 1996 and 2003, the Project was funded with two grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and contributions from consortium members.

Since 2001, the Alaska Board of Nursing has provided increasing financial support to the ACIC Project. In March 2003, when funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was exhausted, the Board assumed full financial responsibility for ongoing project activities.

In 1996, ACIC took the first steps to ensuring an adequately sized and appropriately qualified nursing workforce by working with the Alaska Board of Nursing and the National Council of State Boards in Nursing to survey Alaska LPNs at their time of relicensure in 1996. Subsequent relicensure

surveys have been conducted every two years, with the most recent survey occurring in Fall 2002.

This reports presents a snapshot of the current Alaska LPN workforce with regard to demographic characteristics, educational levels, future educational and work-related intentions, and salaries. Although survey instruments have varied slightly over the four relicensure surveys, the instruments have been sufficiently similar to enable over-time comparisons to be made; those comparisons are also presented in this report along with comparisons with data from the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses 2000 (Health Resources Services Administration).

All of the licensed practical nurses who renewed their licenses in 1996, 2000, and 2002 were surveyed. However, for the years 2000 and 2002, the report excludes those LPNs who were employed outside of Alaska at the time of the survey. It should also be noted that some of questions asked in the 2000 and 2002 surveys were not asked in the 1996 survey and thus do not contain data for this year. Further information about the survey results can be obtained by calling 269-8402.

## *Key Findings*

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In 2002, the average age of respondents was 46 years, with a range of 23 to 76 years. About 8% were male and nearly 19% identified themselves as a member of an ethnic minority. Between 2000 and 2002, the percentage of Alaska Natives/Native Americans increased from 5.4% to 7.0%.

Nearly one half (48%) of the respondents planned to continue their education in nursing. Most of those respondents intended to obtain an associate degree in nursing (55%) or a BS degree in nursing (24%). The greatest barriers to further education identified were “need to work full-time” (42%) and “cost” (33%).

Most (81%) of the respondents were employed full-time in nursing, and around 65% worked in an office, long-term care, or acute care setting. The top factors given for deciding to stay in nursing were “salary” (50%) and “work environment” (43%).

In 2002, the average hourly salary of respondents was \$18.49 per hour, with a minimum of \$10.00/hr and a maximum of \$30.00/hr. When broken out by age

category, the mean hourly salaries in 2002 increased incrementally with each group, but decreased in the over sixty age group.

Comparing LPN hourly salaries from 2000 with hourly salaries from 2002 showed an average increase of \$1.69/hr. Between 2000 and 2002, the lowest increase in hourly salaries by age category occurred in the over sixty age group (\$1.17/hr), and the highest occurred in the 20-29 age group (\$2.17/hr). When broken out by region, the Southeast region experienced the lowest hourly salary increase (\$1.12/hr), while the Interior, North & West region experienced the highest (\$2.09/hr). Increases in hourly salaries categorized by employment setting showed the greatest variation. LPNs working in acute care settings experienced no hourly salary increase, while LPNs working in the following employment settings experienced increases that fell above the \$2.12/hr average: public health (\$4.55/hr) (note: this high number may be the result of a small sample size, n=7), long-term care (\$2.90/hr), home health (\$2.58/hr), and community (\$2.34/hr.).

A project supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Alaska State Board of Nursing, and contributions from the University of Alaska Anchorage School of Nursing.

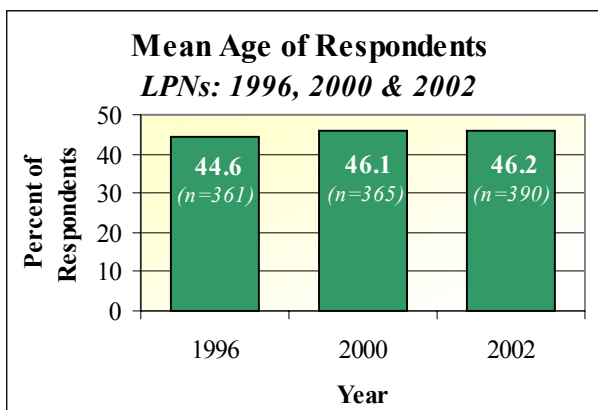
# Licensed Practical Nurses

## Survey Return Rate

Year	Renewed Licenses	Returned Surveys	Return Rate
1996	631	425	67.4%
2000	550	367	66.7%
2002	569	459	80.7%

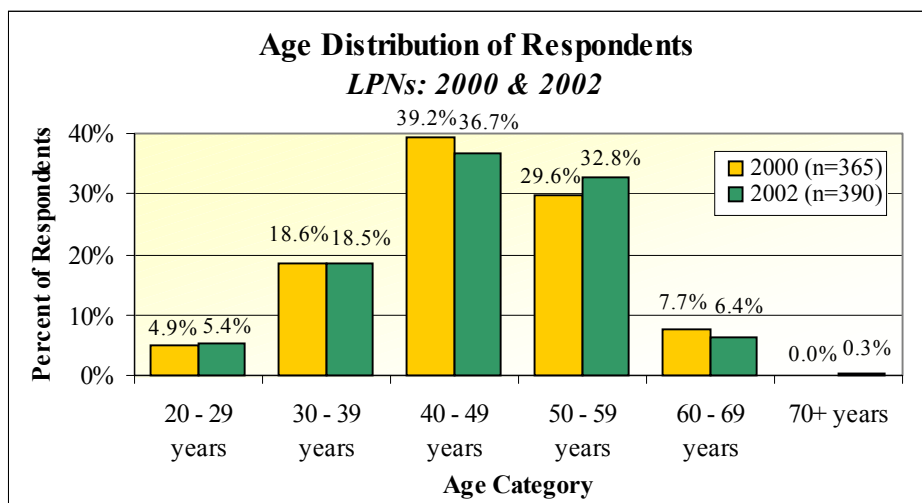
## Demographics

### Age

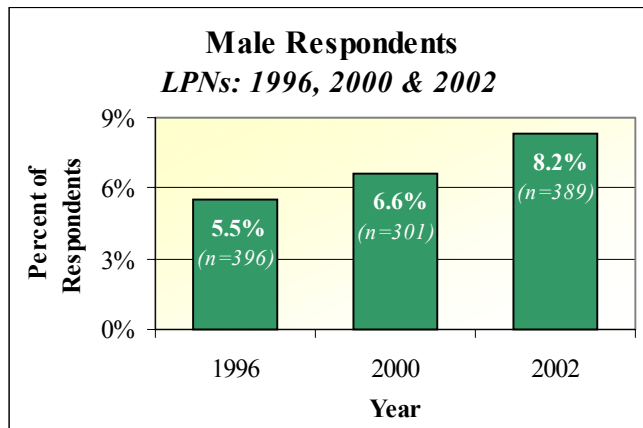


The licensed practical nurse population is aging. Between 1996 and 2002, the mean age of the LPNs surveyed in Alaska increased by nearly two years. In 2002, the average age of respondents was 46 years, with a range of 23 to 76 years.

In 2002, 40% of LPNs were over the age of 50, compared with 37% in 2000 and 31% in 1996.



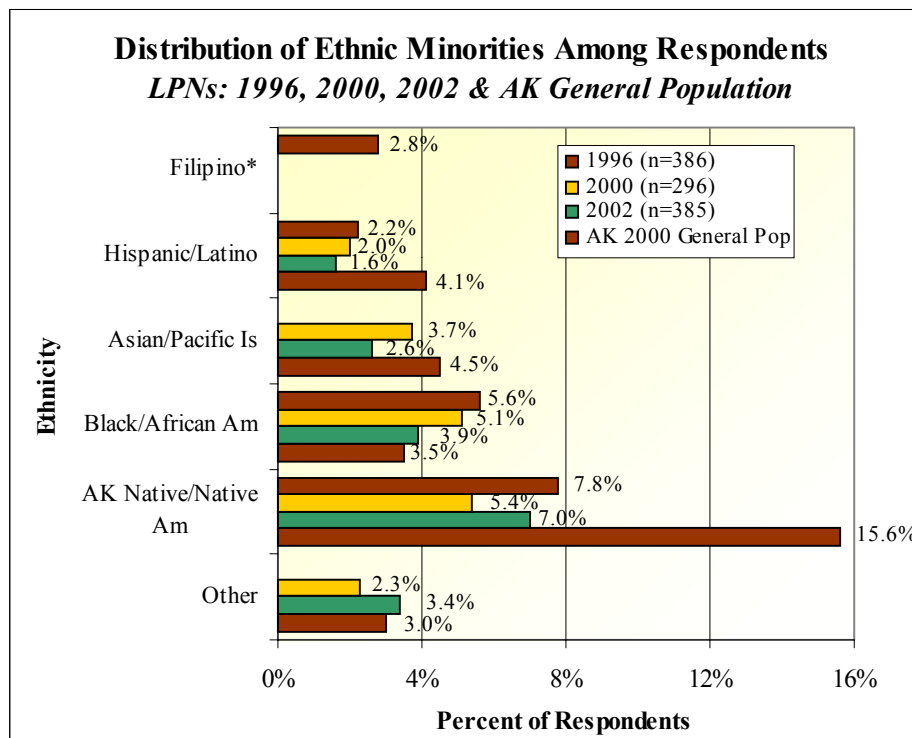
## ■ Gender



Since 1996, the proportion of male licensed practical nurses has steadily increased.

## ■ Ethnic Diversity

Between 2000 and 2002, the percentage of Alaska Natives/Native Americans increased from 5.4% to 7.0%. However, the percentage of Alaska Natives/Native Americans in the general Alaska population is more than double the percentage among surveyed LPNs.



\* Filipino was not listed as a separate category in 2000 and 2002.

### Percent of White Respondents

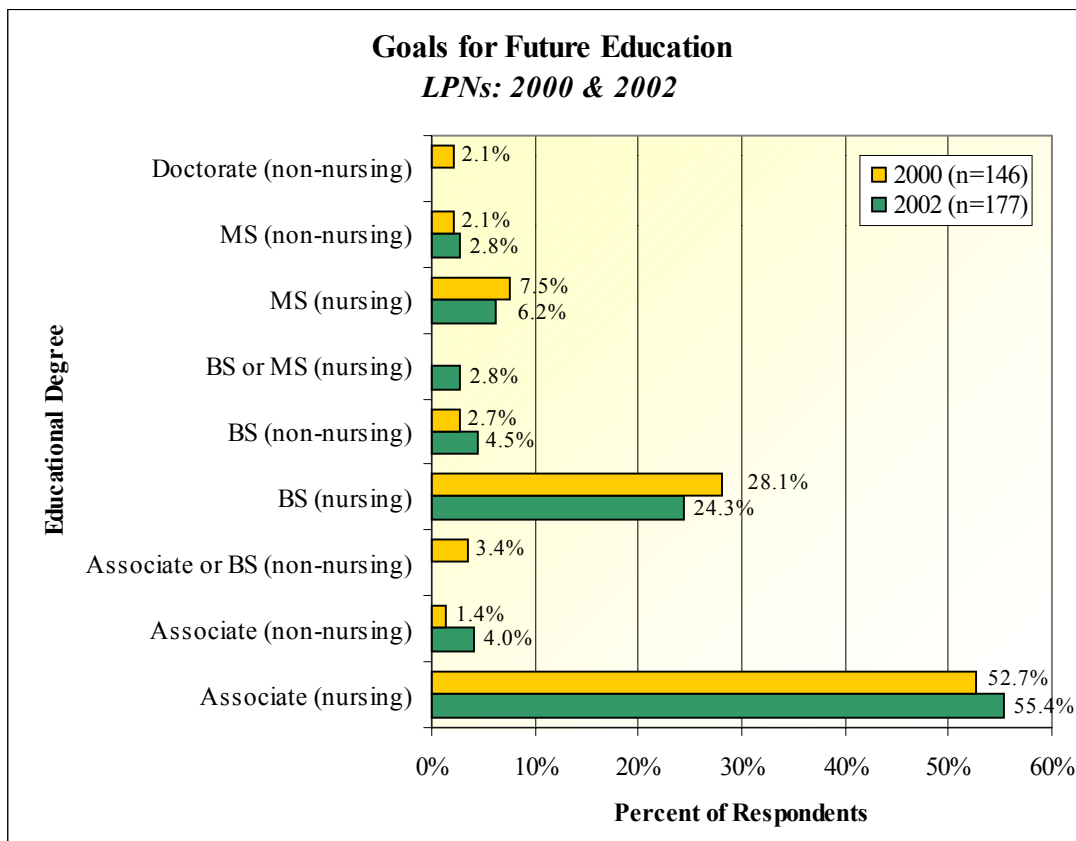
Year	Percent
1996	82.6%
2000	81.4%
2002	81.6%



# Educational Background

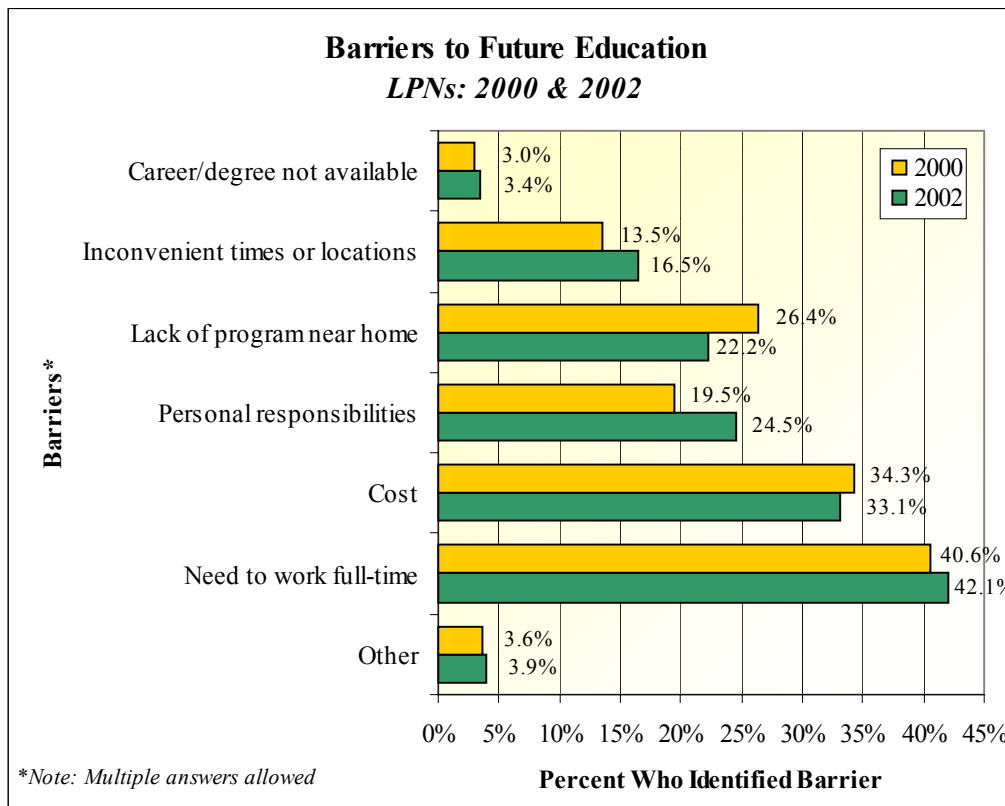
## ■ Educational Goals

In both 2000 and 2002, approximately half of the licensed practical nurses surveyed were planning to pursue further education. Most of these intended to obtain an associate degree in nursing or a bachelor of science degree in nursing. In 2002, of the 48% who were planning to pursue additional education, the majority (89%) intended to advance their nursing credentials. Only 21 of the respondents planned to pursue additional education in a non-nursing field. It is interesting to note that the percentage of respondents who planned to obtain non-nursing degrees went up in 2002, while the percentage of those planning to obtain nursing degrees went down (except for associate degree in nursing, which went up).



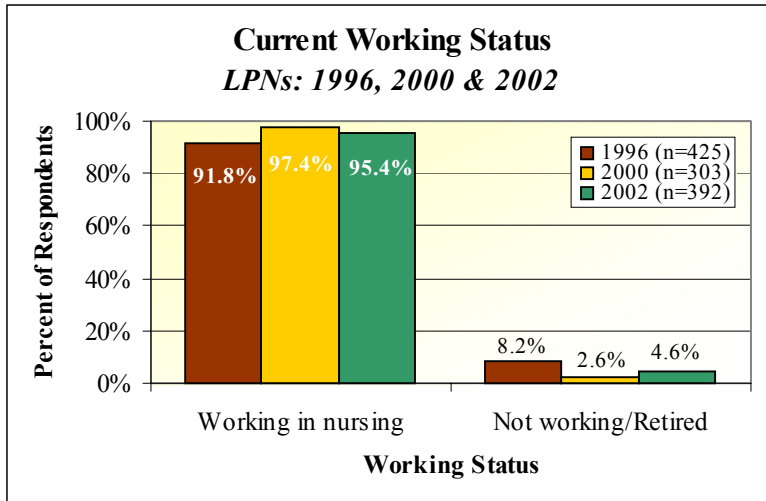
## ■ Barriers to Future Education

In 2000 and 2002, the most frequently identified barrier to obtaining further education for licensed practical nurses was the “need to work full time”; 41% identified this as a barrier to returning to school. Cost was another important influencing factor, with approximately 33% of respondents citing this as a barrier in 2002. Between 2000 and 2002, the proportion of respondents who identified “lack of a program near home” as a barrier decreased, perhaps reflecting the recent decision of the UAA School of Nursing to distance deliver associate degree nursing education to communities outside of Anchorage. This might also explain the lower percentage of respondents who sited “cost” as a barrier in 2002, since distance delivered courses would be less expensive for individuals living outside Anchorage.



# Employment Background

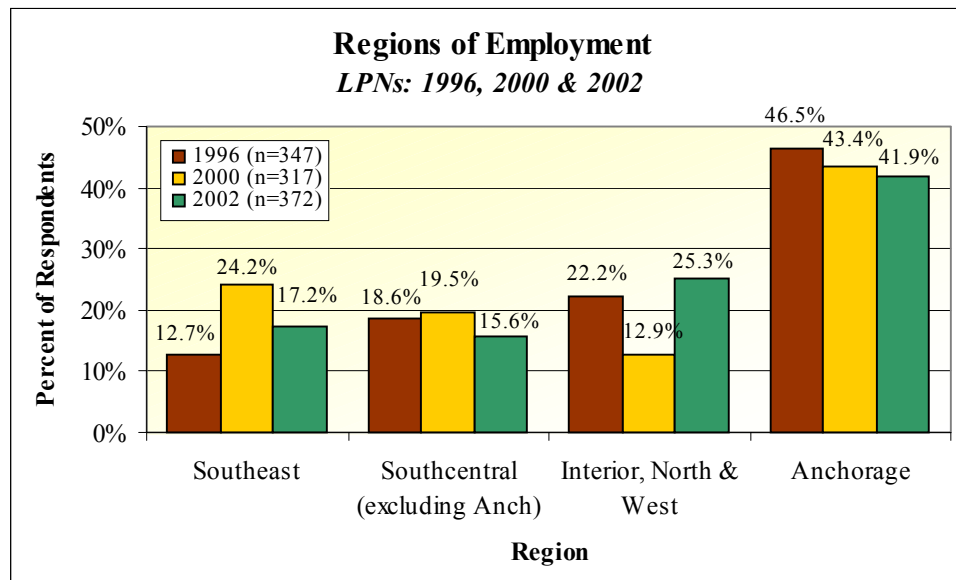
## ■ Working Status



Only a small percent of the LPNs surveyed were not working or retired at the time of each survey. It should be noted that the 1996 data included Alaska-registered LPNs who were living outside of Alaska during the survey. Since individuals may leave the state to retire or look for a job, this might explain the higher percentage of nurses in the 1996 “not working/retired” category.

## ■ Regions of Employment

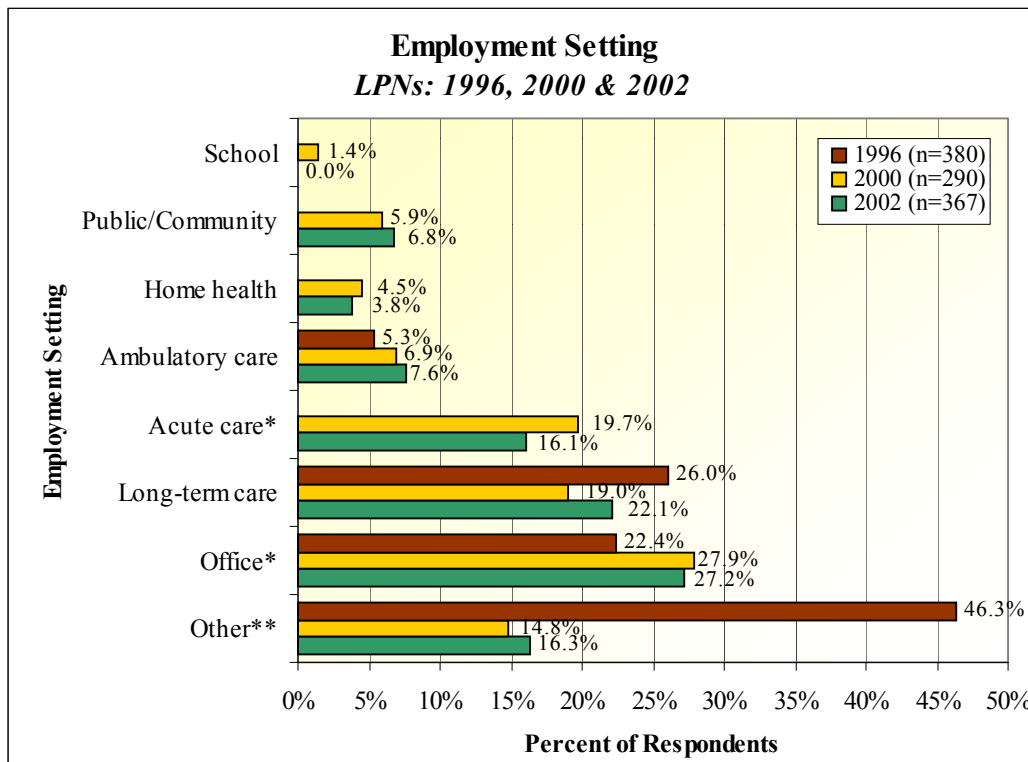
In all three surveyed years, the largest proportion of licensed practical nurses worked in the Anchorage area, the region with the highest concentration of people. Between 2000 and 2002, the percent of LPNs surveyed in the “Interior, North & West” region doubled. It is unclear whether this reflects an expansion of practical nursing positions in that region or an expansion of the workforce to fill previously unfilled positions.



*Note: examples of communities in the regions are: “interior, north & west” – Fairbanks, Bethel, Barrow, Dillingham; “southcentral” – Palmer, Soldotna, Kodiak, Cordova; and “southeast” – Juneau, Sitka, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Wrangell.*

## ■ Employment Setting

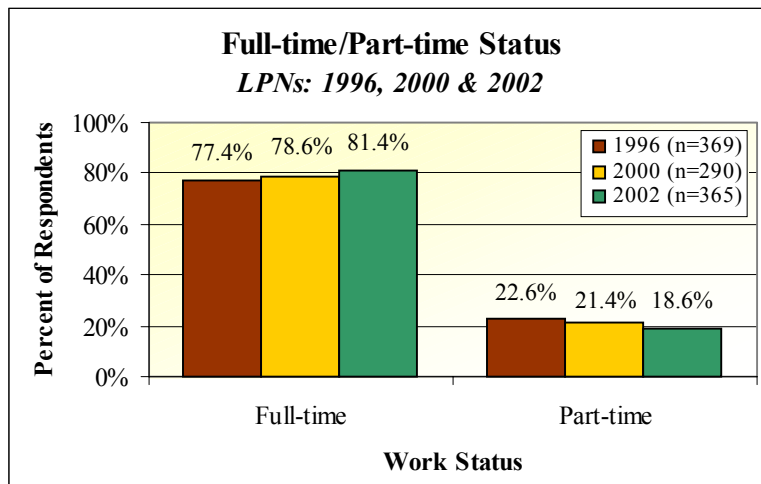
During all three surveyed years, most licensed practical nurses worked in offices, long-term care, or acute care settings. However, it should be noted that in 1996 the categories “acute care” and “office” were combined on the survey. In 1996, “other” made up a large percentage of the sample (46%), and mostly included staff/general duty/office nursing, but also included corrections, drug/alcohol settings, and clinics. In 2000 and 2002, the “other” category consisted mainly of LPNs working in correctional settings and mental health settings.



\*In 1996, the categories “acute care” and “office” were combined.

\*\* The “other” category includes respondents who indicated multiple employment settings (N2000=15, 5.2% / N2002=35, 9.5%).

## ■ Full-time/Part-time Working Status



In all three survey years, approximately three quarters of licensed practical nurses worked full-time. Note a small increase (2.8%) in full-time status between 2000 and 2002.

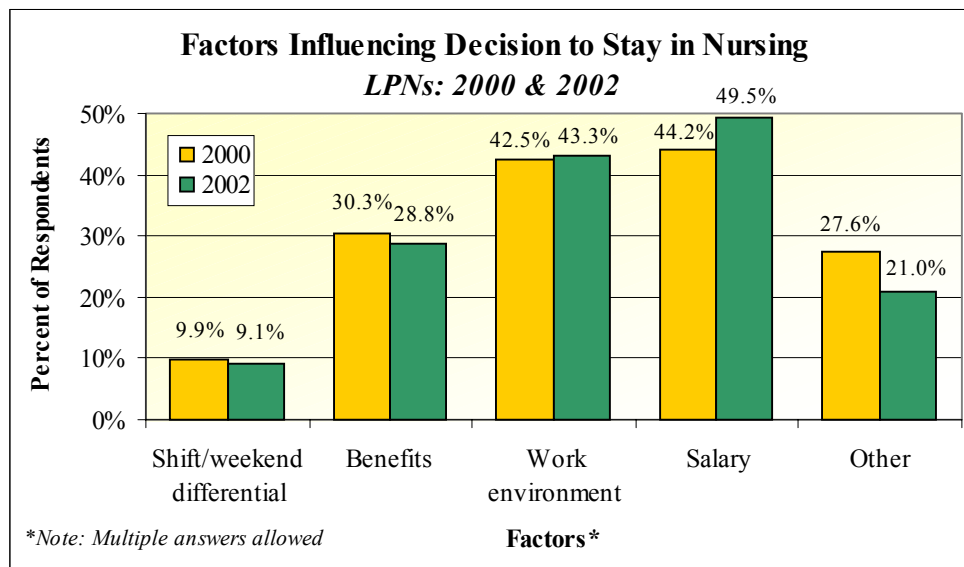
## ■ Years Planning to Work in Nursing

In 2002, licensed practical nurses reported that they plan to work in nursing approximately 13.7 more years, a decrease from 14.5 years in 2000.

Year	Mean Years LPNs Planning to Work in Nursing	Range (years)	N
2000	14.5	0.5 to 50	267
2002	13.7	0.5 to 40	330

## ■ Influences to Staying in Nursing

In 2000 and 2002, the largest proportion of survey respondents identified “salary” as the factor most influencing their decision to stay in nursing; in 2002, a higher proportion (50%) cited salary as an important factor than did in 2000 (44%). The next most frequently cited factor was “work environment,” identified by 43% of the respondents in both survey years.



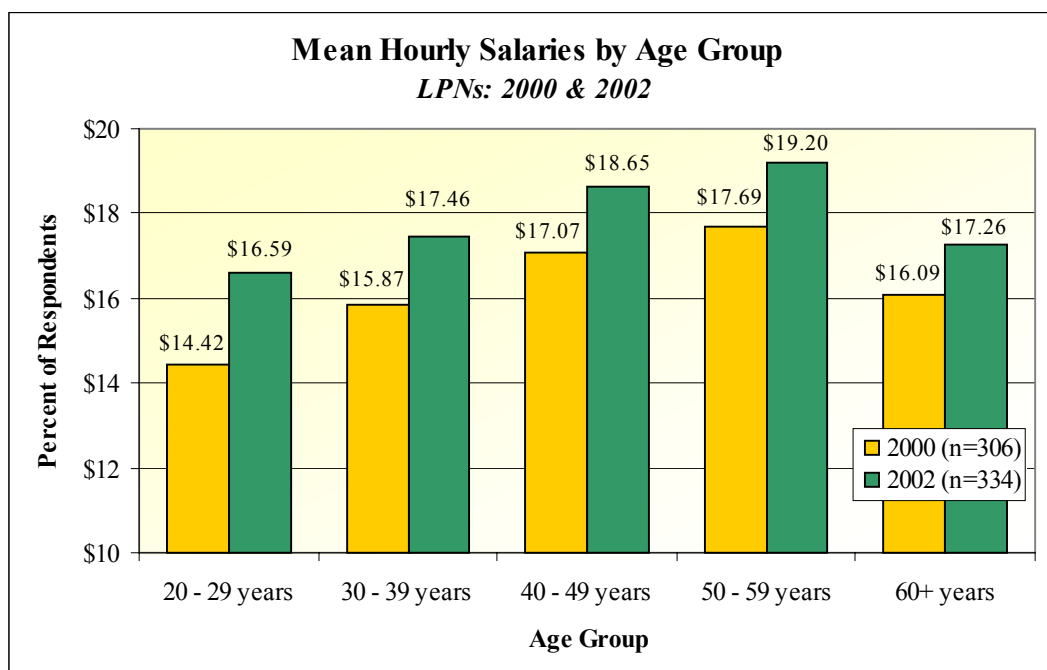
Of the approximately one quarter who selected the “other” category in 2000 (N=81) and 2002 (N=78), the majority said “love being a nurse” and “enjoy helping people” most influenced their decision to stay in nursing.

## ■ Hourly Salaries

In 2002, the mean hourly salary for all licensed practical nurses surveyed was \$18.49 (n=336), with a minimum of \$10.00 and a maximum of \$30.00. In 2000, the mean hourly salary was \$16.79 (n=266).

### 1. Hourly Salaries by Age Group

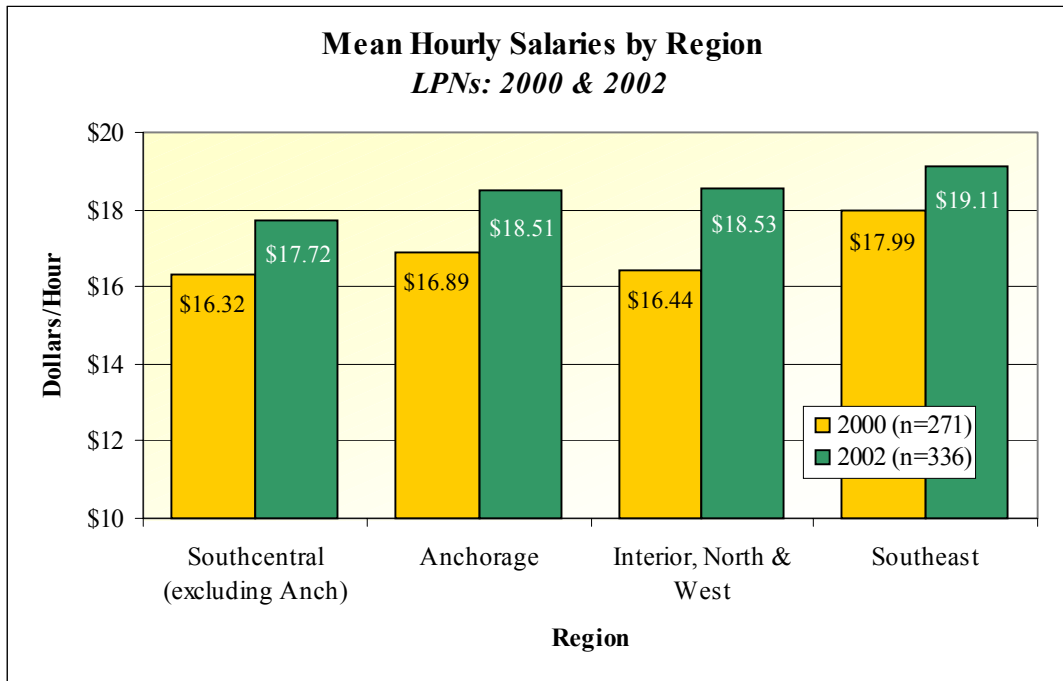
In both survey years, the mean hourly salaries of licensed practical nurses increased incrementally with each age category, but then decreased in the over sixty age group. Between 2000 and 2002, hourly salaries broken out by age category increased by an average of \$1.60/hour, with the lowest increase occurring in the over sixty age group (\$1.17/hr) and the highest in the 20-29 age group (\$2.17/hr).



Age Group	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
20-29 years	\$16.59	\$12.00	\$23.30
30-39 years	\$17.46	\$12.90	\$23.00
40-49 years	\$18.65	\$13.47	\$30.00
50-59 years	\$19.20	\$10.00	\$27.00
60+ years	\$17.26	\$14.55	\$20.00

## 2. Hourly Salaries by Region

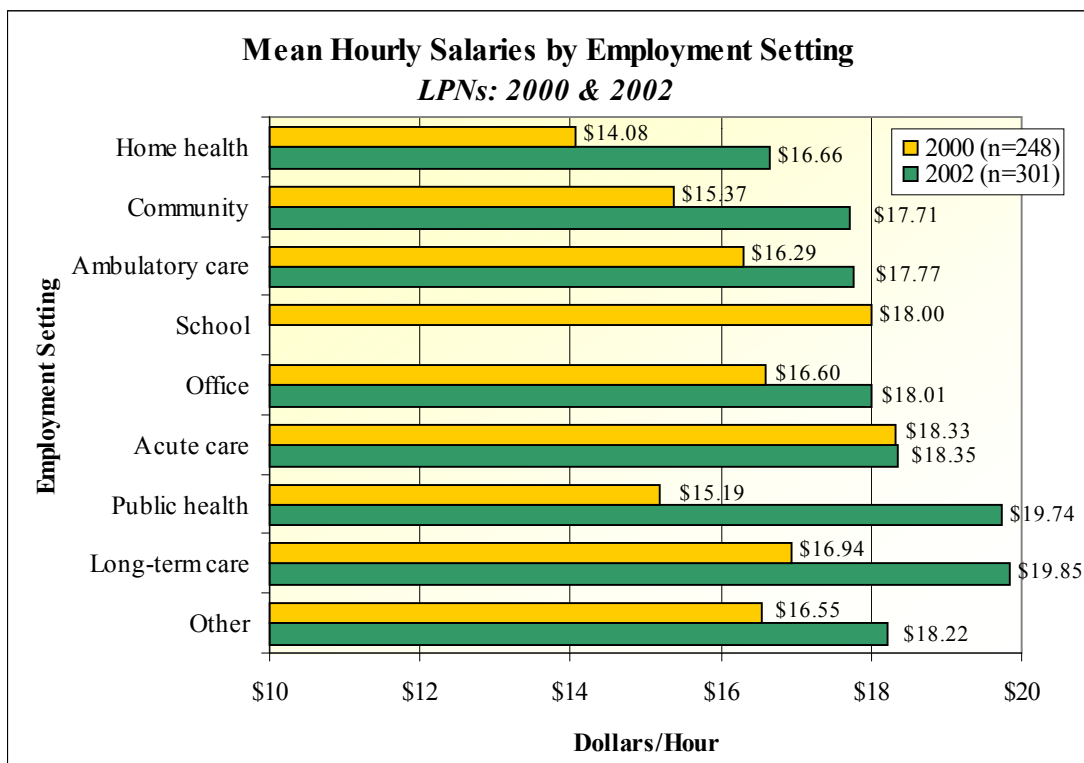
In both survey years, the mean hourly salaries for licensed practical nurses were comparable across the four regions of Alaska, with the lowest mean hourly salaries being in the southcentral region and the highest hourly salaries being in the southeast region. Between 2000 and 2002, the lowest hourly salary increase occurred in the Southeast region (\$1.12/hr) and the highest in the Interior, North & West region (\$2.09/hr), with an average increase of \$1.56/hr across all regions.



Region	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Southcentral (excluding Anchorage)	\$17.72	\$11.14	\$25.00
Anchorage	\$18.51	\$11.52	\$30.00
Interior, North & West	\$18.53	\$10.00	\$27.00
Southeast	\$19.11	\$12.90	\$26.00

### 3. Hourly Salaries by Employment Setting

In both 2000 and 2002, licensed practical nurses working in the community and home health settings earned the lowest mean hourly salaries. LPNs working in acute care and school settings in 2000 earned the highest hourly salaries, while LPNs working in long-term care and public health settings in 2002 earned the highest hourly salaries. Between 2000 and 2002, hourly salaries increased in all employment settings, with an average increase of \$2.12/hr. Hourly salaries in acute care increased the least (only \$.02/hr), and hourly salaries in public health increased the most (\$4.55/hr). It should be noted that LPNs working in public health made up less than 2% of the sample.



Note: "Other" consisted mainly of LPNs working in correctional settings and mental health settings.

Position	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Home health	\$16.66	\$10.00	\$30.00
Community	\$17.71	\$14.00	\$26.87
Ambulatory care	\$17.77	\$14.00	\$27.00
Office	\$18.01	\$12.93	\$25.50
Acute care	\$18.35	\$12.00	\$24.23
Public health	\$19.74	\$16.00	\$23.30
Long term care	\$19.85	\$15.00	\$26.00
Other	\$18.22	\$14.10	\$22.00



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