

'The New Nurse' Is the New Normal

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Key Findings:

- Between March 2021 and March 2022, median nursing tenure fell by 19.5%.
- Shifts covered by nurses new to the organization in the last 30 days increased in all regions.
- The number of 12-hour shifts filled by nurses new to the organization within the last year also rose by 55.5%.

With COVID-19's increased demands on healthcare workers, nursing staff shortages have been widespread^{1,2,3}. We evaluated data from more than 26 million 12-hour nursing shifts across 189 U.S. healthcare organizations to determine how much nursing staff turnover healthcare organizations are experiencing. One measure of turnover is the median length of time nurses have been at their current organization. We found that from March 2021 to March 2022, median tenure dropped 19.5% across all U.S. regions, as shown in figure 1.

Median Years at Organization for Nurses Working 12-Hour Shifts



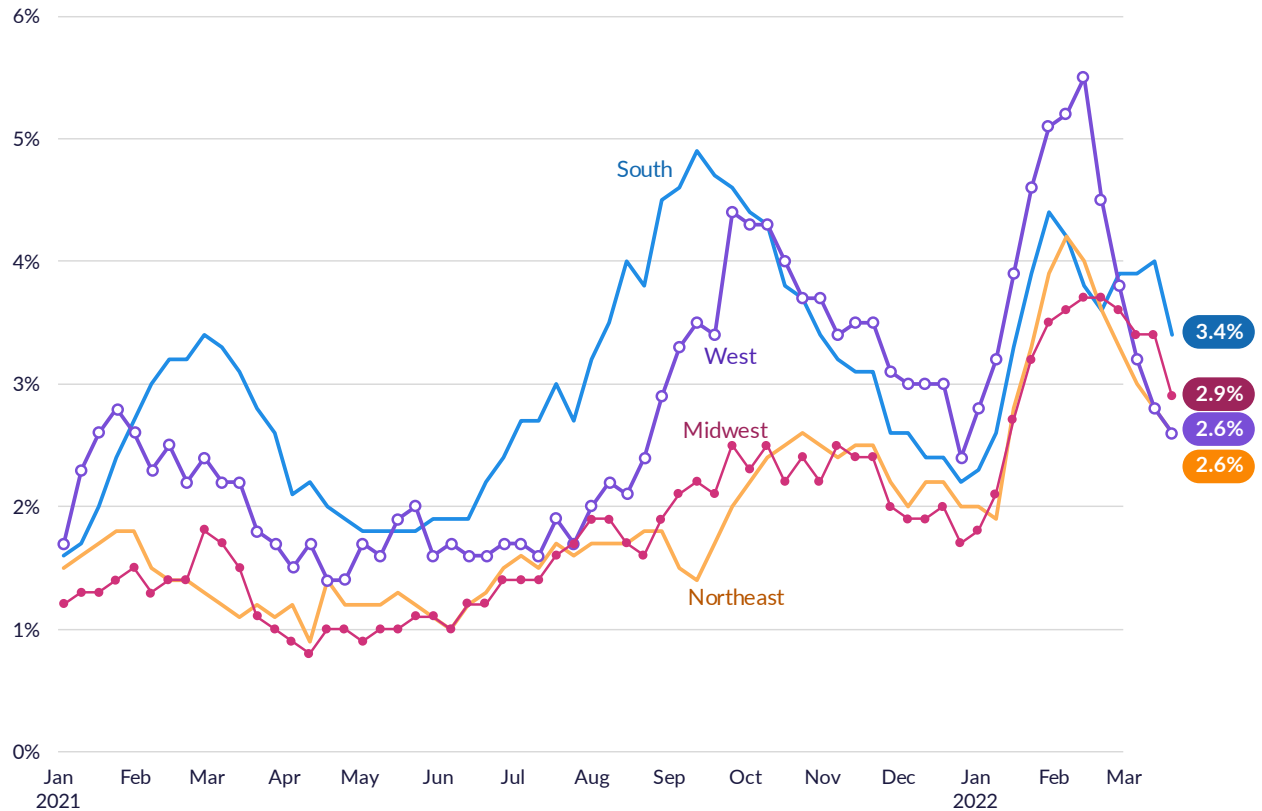
"Median Years at Organization for Nurses Working 12-Hour Shifts," 2022. EpicResearch.org

Figure 1. Median nurse tenure with their organization from January 2021 to March 2022 for nurses working 12-hour inpatient shifts.

While this decrease in median nurse tenure is seen across the U.S., the drop in tenure is most prominent in the West. Between March 2021 and March 2022, the median tenure fell in the West by 32.2%, compared to 17.7% in the Northeast, 16.4% in the Midwest, and 11.3% in the South.

Another measure of nurse turnover is how many shifts are covered by new nurses, defined as a nurse who started at an organization in the last 30 days. The percentage of shifts covered by new nurses increased across all regions, with the largest increases in the South and West, as shown in figure 2.

Shifts Covered by Nurses New to the Organization



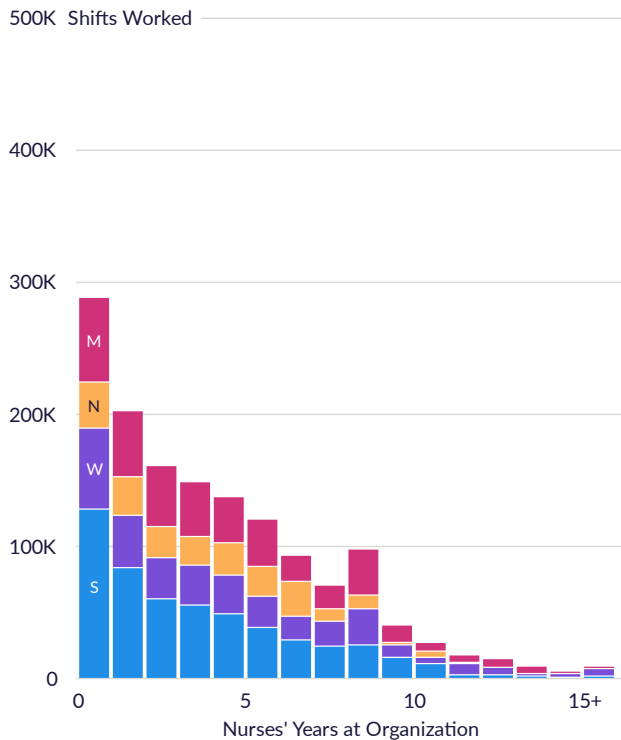
"Shifts Covered by Nurses New to the Organization," 2022. EpicResearch.org

Figure 2. The percentage of shifts covered by nurses who joined the organization within the previous 30 days increased for all regions.

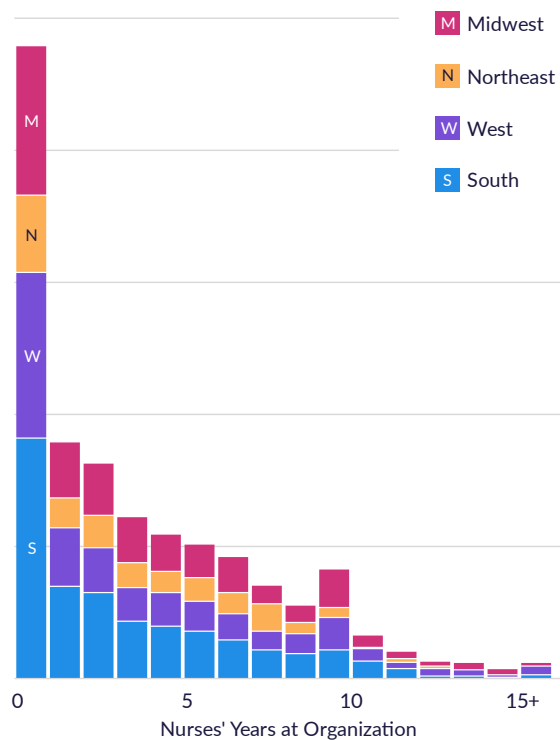
Finally, we reviewed the distribution of shifts based on how many years the nurse had been at the organization. The greatest number of shifts were filled by nurses with less than one year of tenure, and this number rose by 55.5% from March 2021 to March 2022. This change was consistent across regions, but most pronounced in the West and South.

12-Hour Nursing Shifts Worked by Years at Organization

March 2021



March 2022



"12-Hour Nursing Shifts Worked by Years at Organization," 2022. EpicResearch.org

Figure 3. The distribution of shifts changed dramatically from 2021 to 2022, with hundreds of thousands more shifts covered by nurses in their first year at the organization.

These findings show that nurses are changing organizations or leaving the profession more frequently, highlighting the need for organizations to invest in retention and onboarding programs for nurses. Bronson Healthcare is one example of an organization with a robust program for onboarding new nursing staff. They focus on developing strong mentor and preceptor programs. Learn more about their approach [on EpicShare](#).

These data come from the Nursing Efficiency Assessment Tool (NEAT), a data set of more than 26 million 12-hour shifts for 539,765 registered nurses across 189 U.S.-based Epic organizations, serving patients in all 50 states. This study was completed by two teams, each composed of a clinician and research scientists who worked independently. The two teams came to similar conclusions.

References

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2. Boyle P. Hospitals innovate amid dire nursing shortages. <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/hospitals-innovate-amid-dire-nursing-shortages>. Published 2021. Accessed January 10, 2022.
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Data Definitions

Term	Definition
12-Hour Shift	Shifts with a calculated EMR duration of 12 hours.
Shift	A calculated block of user activity whose endpoint is set at the start of a 4-hour (or more) interval where no activity happened by that user.
User Activity	Activity is determined by user keystroke, mouse movement, clicks, and scrolling within Epic Hyperspace and Mobile applications.
User Start Date / Organizational Tenure	These calculations were done from the date a given user's Epic security was initially marked as usable.
Region	Each user's account is attributed to an organization's service area. The state on that service area's record was used to map to a U.S. region in which the shift was worked.