The Future of Healthcare Work Report 2023

This report is the third in a series of studies conducted by Vivian Health for the purpose of better understanding the rapidly changing healthcare-workforce employment dynamics.

As in the past, Vivian Health’s population for this study was the clinicians found in Vivian’s proprietary healthcare talent marketplace. Each year Vivian Health conducts this study to provide clients with timely and insightful data and information to enhance their recruitment and retention efforts.

In this report, you will find 2022 data about employment settings, wages and benefits, workload, clinician mental health, desired work environment characteristics, and insight into how to attract travel clinicians to permanent employment in your organization. This year, more than 1,600 clinical and clinical-support staff shared information about their current role, future career plans, what makes for a healthy work environment, and factors they consider when evaluating whether or not to return to a permanent position.

Vivian Health’s mission is to empower every professional to find their perfect job opportunity, faster and easier than ever before. The goal for this installment of our Future of Healthcare Work Report is to provide healthcare employers with actionable insights that help improve their current retention efforts, recruit travel clinicians back to permanent employment, and encourage them to make changes now to meet future healthcare workforce needs.
Vivian Health surveyed 1,663 clinical and clinical-support staff from across the country to better understand travel versus employed clinicians’ current perceptions about wages and their work environment.

Data was collected from November 15, 2022, to December 15, 2022. The survey included both multiple choice and open-ended questions to fully understand the respondents’ perspectives about their desires from future employers. Using a combination of emails to users of Vivian Health’s proprietary healthcare talent marketplace, online communities, and social media tools, we surveyed nursing, advanced practice, allied health, and support clinicians. The intent was to achieve a diversified, representative sample of the non-physician clinical workforce. Respondents completed demographic questions, selected most important work factors, and replied Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree for other factors. Of the respondents, 65% (n=1,085) were registered nurses. Of all respondents (n=1,663), 36% (n=599) were employed in travel positions with 44% (n=734) employed in permanent positions. Unless noted otherwise, the following results are for all respondents.
Of those surveyed, a majority work full-time in either a travel or employed position, and 65% of respondents work in an acute care setting. These clinicians have faced personal hardships and work challenges over the course of the three-year pandemic.

The respondents are nearly evenly split between travel (36%) and employed positions (44%).

Please note: Respondents could select multiple employment types.

I still enjoy my job as a nurse. I like the daily challenges and feeling like I make a difference in the lives of others.

Intensive Care Travel RN, California

I love what I do — the people, patients, teaching, and education are rewarding.

Medical-Surgical Per Diem RN, Florida

I left bedside for case management and I missed it too much. Now I’m going back to bedside as a travel RN.

Med Surg RN, Oklahoma

Healthcare is not the same and has become more dangerous.

ED Travel RN, Kentucky

Please note: Quotes that appear throughout the report were collected anonymously and the photos are not representative of actual survey participants.
Future Clinical Careers

The healthcare workforce, particularly professional nursing, has faced shortages over the past three decades that adversely impact our healthcare system.

Due to the stress and fatigue they experienced over the course of the last three years, clinicians are rethinking their life priorities and relationship to work. Yet, this year’s results reveal less intense negative feelings about clinical careers compared to early 2022.

This year’s survey revealed that clinicians who have been on long- and short-term travel contracts are more willing to explore permanent employment in 2023. A likely result of the decrease in average travel wages are this year’s findings indicating that 86% (n=520 clinicians, n=388 RNs) of clinicians under travel contracts in 2022 are open to accepting permanent employment in 2023 if offered a competitive wage.

While this is good news for employers who lost registered nurses over the past two years to more lucrative travel positions, the reality is that attracting clinicians back to permanent employment will require investments in wages, improved workloads (e.g., better staffing), flexible schedules, and healthier work environments. The remainder of this report provides insights into desired wages, benefits, and work environment improvements.

Travel Clinicians Currently on Assignments Consider Permanent Employment

Below is a breakdown of the average hourly wages sought by travel clinicians seeking to return to permanent employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advanced Practice (majority NP)</th>
<th>Allied Health and Therapies</th>
<th>CMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$47.27</td>
<td>$20.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNA</td>
<td>LPN/LVN</td>
<td>RN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$27.56</td>
<td>$37.67</td>
<td>$61.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am once again looking to pivot my career, this time to another speciality, either before or after taking a sabbatical to recharge after the burnout of the last three years.

Clinical Staff RN, Ohio
The Job Search in 2023

Clinicians ranked “feeling safe at work” and “the commute to work” as important in their job search.

After hourly wage and benefits, clinicians identified workload (staffing), commute time, and flexible schedules as most important. Last year, the most important factors included respect from leadership, workload (staffing), and support for mental health and well-being.

For the first time, clinicians indicate greater consideration for their work-life balance and safety. For example, interest in flexible work arrangements that fit into busy lives are important, as well as a safe and secure work environment free from incivility and violence. While these issues were found in last year’s report, this year these issues have taken on even greater importance.

46% of clinicians that took travel contracts in 2022 plan to work in a permanent role in 2023.
Healthy work environments are becoming increasingly important in a competitive job market. Personal safety, support for mental health and well-being, and burnout play a major role in retaining current staff and recruiting travel clinicians back to permanent positions.

This year’s survey revealed mixed levels of satisfaction with employers related to having a healthy work environment, valuing clinician input, supporting mental health, and receiving adequate time off. There are indications that attitudes have improved from last year wherein <1% of respondents reported feeling like their unit is “never” short-staffed, to this year where 13% of clinicians reported having staff to ensure patient care 100% of the time.

Last year, 62% (n=2,207) of survey respondents indicated their intent to leave healthcare in the next five years. This year, 45% (n=769) indicated their intent to leave in the next three years, with the remainder indicating they had no plans to leave. Please note that measuring intent to leave one’s position or profession is different from those clinicians who actually leave. Rather, one might interpret intent to leave as the cumulative effect of a number of factors clinicians experience that lead them to consider leaving.

For example, in this year’s survey over half of respondents (n=935) were asked every week to work overtime. In addition, half of employed clinicians (n=412) took just five to 10 days of PTO in 2022. Excessive overtime, the inability to take Paid Time Off (PTO), too many consecutive shifts worked, inadequate rest between shifts, heavy workloads, unsafe work environments, and long work commutes all contribute to clinician stress and fatigue. Taken together, these factors depicted in the next section impact work/life balance and may result in burnout.

**Attitudes Toward Current Work Environments**

Nurse-to-patient ratios are too high. I’m unable to give adequate care to patients and the ratios are increasing.

PCU Travel RN, Florida
Attitudes Toward Current Work Environments (continued)

**OVERTIME FREQUENCY**
- How often are you asked to work extra shifts by your manager?
  - Daily: 19% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 5% STRONGLY AGREE
  - Weekly: 37% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 7% STRONGLY AGREE
  - Monthly: 25% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 8% STRONGLY AGREE
  - A few times per year: 26% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 9% STRONGLY AGREE
  - Never: 24% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 11% STRONGLY AGREE

- How often do you agree to work extra shifts?
  - Daily: 19% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 5% STRONGLY AGREE
  - Weekly: 37% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 7% STRONGLY AGREE
  - Monthly: 25% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 8% STRONGLY AGREE
  - A few times per year: 26% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 9% STRONGLY AGREE
  - Never: 24% STRONGLY DISAGREE, 11% STRONGLY AGREE

**TIME TAKEN OFF IN 2022 BY EMPLOYMENT TYPE**
- Staff: 51% 1-2 weeks, 30% 3-4 weeks, 22% 5-6 weeks, 17% 7-8 weeks, 9% 9+ weeks
- Staff – RNs: 41% 1-2 weeks, 29% 3-4 weeks, 20% 5-6 weeks, 14% 7-8 weeks, 6% 9+ weeks
- Travel: 51% 1-2 weeks, 30% 3-4 weeks, 22% 5-6 weeks, 17% 7-8 weeks, 9% 9+ weeks
- Travel – RNs: 41% 1-2 weeks, 29% 3-4 weeks, 20% 5-6 weeks, 14% 7-8 weeks, 6% 9+ weeks

**Travel clinicians tended to have a more negative view of their current employers.**
As the entire healthcare industry continues to recover from a "once in a lifetime event," the 2023 Future of Healthcare Work Report reveals work environment trends that will likely continue; primarily demands for increased wages and better staffing. While negative feelings related to healthcare careers are less intense in this year’s study, there remains work to do to improve healthcare work environments.

Our Recommendations for Employers

1. Increase Salaries
   To return to permanent employment, RNs are seeking $61/hour, down from last year’s $65/hour. As one option, consider offering higher hourly rates in lieu of statutory benefits.

2. Flexible Scheduling
   Consider using workforce optimization for nursing labor budgeting, staffing, and scheduling; offer a variety of shift lengths (4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 hours) and scheduling options (full- and part-time, per diem, travel, weekend, etc.).

3. Balance Workload
   Improve nursing workload by hiring additional nursing and clinical-support staff so that professional nurses provide the patient care that requires a professional license. This is the time to explore different patient care delivery models.

4. Seek Input
   Continue to seek nurses input into decision-making; use shared-leadership and a participatory leadership style.

5. Support Mental Health
   Improve and/or implement enhanced programming to support the mental health and well-being of clinicians. One simple strategy is to ensure staff have adequate time off. Monitor the number of consecutive shifts worked, time off between shifts, and the use of PTO to mitigate fatigue, stress, and burnout.

What could your employer do to increase your overall job satisfaction?

Excluding increases to wages and bonuses, the top five responses were:

- Increase number of support staff
- Increase number of nurses
- Allow adequate time for meals and breaks
- Offer more PTO
- Offer flex scheduling
Read the past reports

The State of the Healthcare Workforce 2022
The State of the Healthcare Workforce 2021

Post healthcare jobs on the site where over 1 million healthcare workers look for their next role.

VIVIAN.COM