

Where are the Black Nurses? In response to this question I submit the following as an initial start to help me understand what we are faced with in the United States (U.S.). This response also looks at what we need to do to get to where we need to go.

The American Nurses Association (ANA), the strongest voice for the profession, holds the interest of the nation's 4 million registered nurses and boasts of members in all 50 states and the U. S. territories (<https://www.nursingworld.org/ana/about-ana/>). The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) represents 200,000 African American registered nurses, licensed vocational/practical nurses, nursing students and retired nurses from the USA, Eastern Caribbean and Africa, with 115 chartered chapters, in the U.S. (<https://www.nbna.org/>).

The mission of the NBNA is to serve as the voice for Black nurses and diverse populations ensuring equal access to professional development, promoting educational opportunities and improving health. (<https://www.nbna.org/>).

ANA exists to advance the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice; promoting a safe and ethical work environment; bolstering the health and wellness of nurses; and advocating on health care issues that affect nurses and the public. (<https://www.nursingworld.org/ana/about-ana/>)

According to the Nursing Fact Sheet by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), updated in April 2019, there are more than 3.8 million registered nurses nationwide (<https://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Fact-Sheets/Nursing-Fact-Sheet>). Registered Nurses comprise one of the largest segments of the U.S. workforce and the largest component of healthcare. Nearly 58% of RNs work in general medical and surgical hospitals and are the primary providers of hospital patient care and long-term care. There are three times as many RNs in the U.S. as physicians. Nurses deliver an extended array of healthcare services which include primary and preventive care by nurse practitioners in pediatric, family health, women's health, and gerontological care arenas. Certified nurse-midwives, nurse anesthetists, and clinical specialties work in areas of cardiac, oncology, neonatal, neurological, and obstetric/gynecological nursing. Nurses work in acute care and community settings. These settings include private practices, health maintenance organizations, public health agencies, primary care clinics, home health care, nursing homes, minute clinics, outpatient surgicenters, nursing school-operated clinics, insurance and managed care companies, schools, mental health agencies, hospices, the military, industry, nursing education, and healthcare research (<https://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Fact-Sheets/Nursing-Fact-Sheet>).

A survey conducted in 2017 by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) and The Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers shows that 19.2% of registered nurses are from minority backgrounds. The RN population is composed of 80.8% White/Caucasian; 6.2% African American; 7.5% Asian; 5.3% Hispanic; 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native; 0.5% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 1.7% two or more races; and 2.9% other nurses. Men represent 9.1% of the RN workforce. (<https://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Fact-Sheets/Enhancing-Diversity>). In 2020, the NCSBN nursing statistics show an increase in the minority nurse population as being comprised of 9.9% Black or African American (non-Hispanic) nurses, 8.3% Hispanic or Latino nurses, 1.3% of nurses who identify as two or more races, and 0.4% American Indian or Alaskan Native nurses. (<https://onlinenursing.cn.edu/news/nursing-by-the-numbers>).

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The Minority Nurse reported that as minority nurses self-identify, it is found that 9.9% of RNs are black or African American (non-Hispanic); 8.3% are Asian; 4.8% are Hispanic or Latino; 1.3% categorize themselves as two or more race; 0.4% are American Indian or Alaskan Native

(<https://minoritynurse.com/nursing-statistics/>). The minority nurses work in specific areas of the U.S. with the Pacific region having the highest percentage of self-identified minority nurses, with 30.5%. The Asian nurses comprise 16% of the minority nurses in the Pacific Region. The self-identified Black or African American (non-Hispanic) nurses are more prevalent among the nurse population in the South Atlantic (9.5%), West South Central (8.8%), and East South Central (7.7%) regions than anywhere else.

The number of minority nurses will continue to rise, most notably within the Hispanic population, according to a study conducted by The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). As the nursing profession expands, the HRSA projects that the field will continue to diversify. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has forecasted a faster-than-average 12% growth in nursing jobs by 2028. This percentage translates to potentially more than 371,000 new nursing jobs in the coming years. (<https://onlinenursing.cn.edu/news/nursing-by-the-numbers>).

In October 2019, there were 85,291 licensed RNs in Virginia. The RN population by race and ethnicity include 61% White; 19% Black, 7% Asian, 0% other race, 3% two or more races, and 10% Hispanic. This data is from the US Census, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States, States, and Counties: July 1, 2018 (<https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/media/dhpweb/docs/hwdc/nurse/0001RN2019.pdf>). On August 27, 2020 the NCSBN shows there are 109,567 RNs licensed in the state of Virginia. This is 2.26% of the 4, 949,573 licensed RNs in the U.S. jurisdictions (<https://www.ncsbn.org/Aggregate-RNActiveLicensesTable.pdf>).

It is not enough to know the percentage of minority nurses or where they work. There is a great need to diversify to be aligned with the minority groups (ethnic and racial) which makes up 38% or one third of the U.S. population. The minority population is projected to become the majority by 2043 (<https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/News/Factsheets/Enhancing-Diversity-Factsheet.pdf>). We must identify why the percentage of minority nurses is low. We must look at barriers to diversify, barriers for becoming a minority nurse. We must look at the education process and why minority students leave the nursing programs. But lest we forget, the minorities who become nurses are more likely to obtain baccalaureate and higher degrees. HRSA found that 48.4% of White nurses pursue degrees beyond the associate degree level while minority nurses surpass that with 52.5% Black nurses, 51.5% Hispanic nurses, and 75.6% Asian nurses obtaining baccalaureate and higher degrees in nursing (<https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/News/Factsheets/Enhancing-Diversity-Factsheet.pdf>).

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