

2021–2022
ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS
In Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing

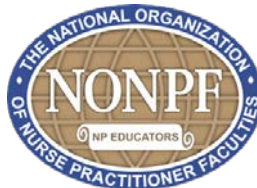
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All data in this publication pertaining to nurse practitioner educational programs are the result of a collaborative effort between the

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALISTS

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INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) was established in 1969 to answer the need for a national organization dedicated exclusively to furthering nursing education in America's universities and colleges. Representing nursing education programs at 850 public and private universities and colleges, AACN serves the public interest by assisting deans and directors to improve and advance nursing education, research, and practice.

The Department of Research and Data Services is the nucleus of the Association's authoritative national databank. Annually, the department reports the most current statistics available on student enrollment, graduations, and faculty salaries.

This is the 41st report on enrollment and graduations and the 24th report that includes detailed information about nurse practitioner (NP) programs, which is the result of joint efforts between AACN and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF). This compact to jointly own data on NP educational programs has resulted in the creation of the most complete repository of data on NP education in the United States. This report also marks the 19th enumeration of clinical nurse specialist (CNS) students and graduates by clinical specialty area and the seventh year of a joint data collection initiative between AACN and the National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists (NACNS). Both cooperative agreements are aimed at creating a single data source to support health workforce planning and policy analysis.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The definition of terms used in the questionnaires can be found on page x. Survey forms and instructions for accessing the survey website were emailed to 1,057 institutions with baccalaureate and higher degree programs in nursing on September 7, 2021. Responses to the enrollment and graduation surveys were received from 964 institutions by December 31, 2021.

To ensure the quality of the data, rigorous validity and internal consistency checks were programmed in the Web-based survey instrument. Additional validity checks were conducted prior to data analysis. Frequency distributions were obtained on all variables and inspected for outliers. If inconsistencies and misclassifications were detected, institutions were contacted to resolve the problems.

RESPONSE RATE

The overall response rate was 91.2 percent for the enrollment and graduation survey (Table 1a).

Questions about the survey in general, or requests for more specific data to meet the needs of individual institutions through AACN's customized report service, should be directed to Dr. Di Fang: (202) 463-6930 x225, dfang@aacnnursing.org; Jenny C. Keyt: (202) 463-6930 x244, jkeyt@aacnnursing.org.

HIGHLIGHTS

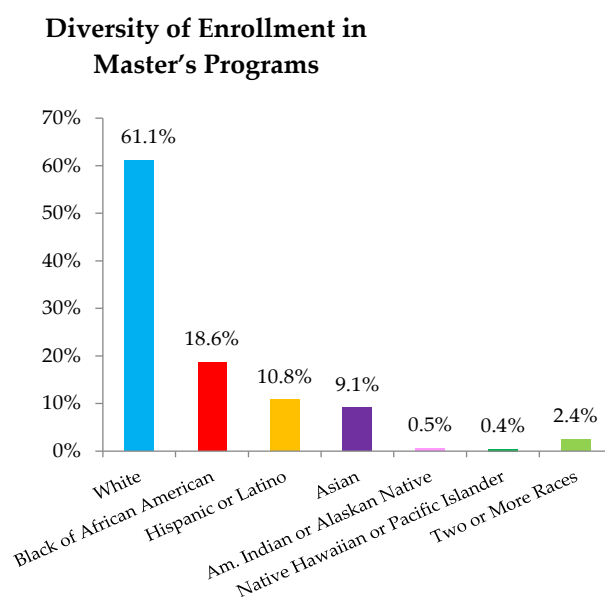
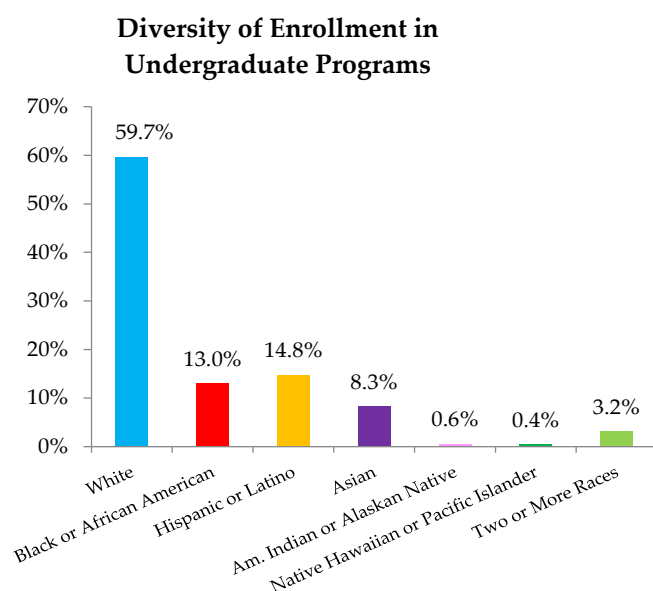
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND RESPONSE RATE

- The findings in this report are based on responses from 964 of the 1,057 institutions in the United States and its territories with baccalaureate and graduate-degree programs that were surveyed in fall 2021. The overall response rate was 91.2 percent (Table 1a).

ENROLLMENT (FALL 2021) AND GRADUATIONS (AUGUST 1, 2020 TO JULY 31, 2021)

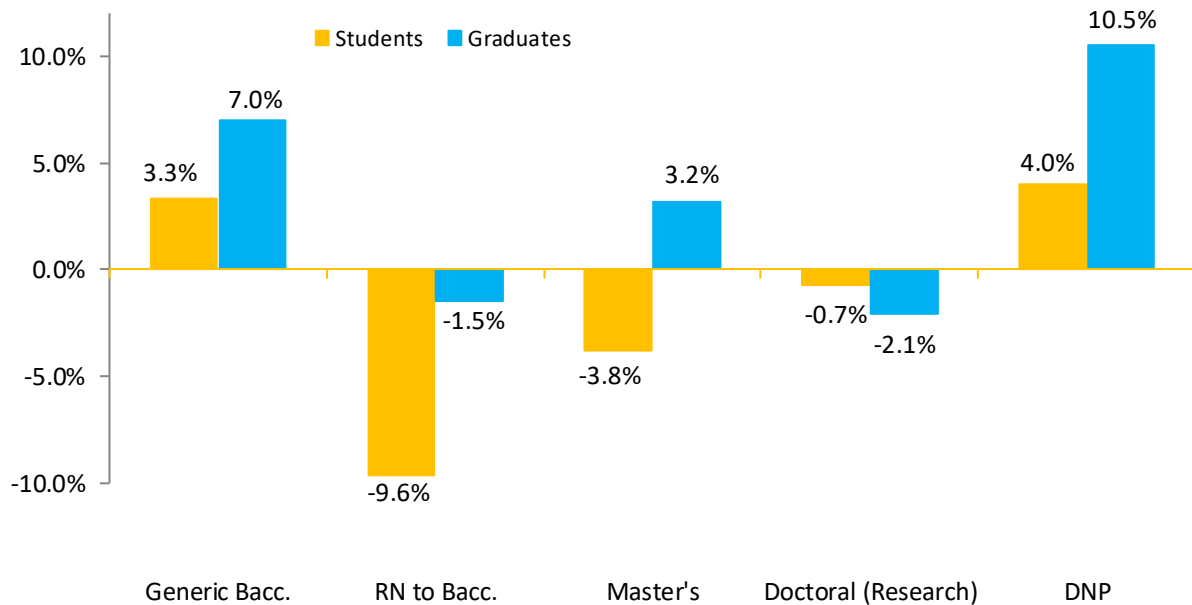
- A total of 256,578 students were enrolled in *generic (entry-level) baccalaureate* nursing education programs. *RN-to-baccalaureate* enrollment totaled 118,911 (Table 8).
- Enrollment at the *master's*, *doctoral (research-focused)*, and *doctor of nursing practice (DNP)* levels totaled 145,565; 4,476; and 40,777, respectively (Table 8).
- Generic (entry-level) baccalaureate graduates totaled 87,889 and RN-to-baccalaureate totaled 67,805. Master's, doctoral (research-focused), and DNP levels totaled 52,824; 733; and 10,086, respectively (Table 8).
- Males accounted for 13.6 percent of *all baccalaureate* graduates (*generic* and *RN-to-baccalaureate*). The percentage of men graduating from *master's*, *doctoral (research-focused)*, and *DNP* programs was 11.7, 10.6, and 13.2, respectively (Table 9).
- 40.3 percent of undergraduate enrollees and 38.9, 35.5, and 38.9 percent of enrollees in master's, research-focused doctoral programs, and DNP programs were from racial and ethnic minorities, respectively (Table 10).

Enrollment (Fall 2021) Diversity in Undergraduate and Master's Programs



TWO-YEAR COMPARISONS IN ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS (BASED ON DATA FROM SCHOOLS REPORTING IN BOTH 2020 AND 2021)

Percent Change in Enrollment and Graduations in Schools Reporting in Both 2020 and 2021.



- Enrollment of *generic (entry-level) baccalaureate* students increased by 3.3 percent (8,075 students, Table 12). The increase was 2.1, 1.8, 0.6, and 12.6 percent in the North Atlantic, Midwest, South, and West, respectively (Table 14). *Generic (entry-level) baccalaureate* graduates increased by 7.0 percent (5,697 graduates, Table 13). Despite this increase, 76,140 qualified applications were not offered admission to *generic baccalaureate* programs mostly due to insufficient clinical sites and insufficient numbers of faculty (Tables 39 and 40).
- *RN-to-baccalaureate* enrollment decreased by 9.6 percent (12,579 students) and graduations decreased by 1.5 percent (1,031 graduates, Tables 12 and 13).
- *Master's*-level students decreased by 3.8 percent (5,766 students) and graduations increased by 3.2 percent (1,629 graduates, Tables 12 and 13).
- Enrollment in *doctoral (research-focused)* programs decreased by 0.7 percent (32 students) and graduations decreased 2.1 percent (16 graduates, Tables 12 and 13).
- *Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)* programs experienced an enrollment increase of 4.0 percent (1,562 students) and graduations increased by 10.5 percent (959 graduates, Tables 12 and 13).

FIVE-YEAR TRENDS IN ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS (BASED ON DATA FROM SCHOOLS REPORTING EACH YEAR SINCE 2017)

Five-Year Trends in Enrollments and Graduations by Type of Degree (2017–2021).

DEGREE	STUDENTS		GRADUATES	
	AVERAGE CHANGE PER YEAR*	SIGNIFICANCE (p value)	AVERAGE CHANGE PER YEAR*	SIGNIFICANCE (p value)
Generic Bacc.	14,126	<0.001	4,121	<0.001
RN-to-Bacc.	-4,188		1,077	
Master's	2,855		2,310	0.003
Doctoral (Research)	-23		-14	
DNP	2,920	0.001	989	<0.001

* Bold values indicate a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) average change per year.

- The number of *generic (entry-level) baccalaureate* students increased by 21.8 percent in the past five years from 206,517 in 2017 to 251,639 in 2021. There was an overall average increase of 14,126 ($p < 0.001$) students per year (Table 21). Graduates also increased from 2017 to 2021 by 24.5 percent. Although the dramatic rise in enrollments and the increase in graduations over the past five years are encouraging, many more baccalaureate-prepared nurses will be needed to meet the healthcare needs of the population.
- The number of master's enrollees increased by 8.1 percent in 2017-2021. Graduations also increased by 22.4 percent in 2017-2021 (Table 23).
- At the doctoral (research-focused) level, enrollment decreased by 1.9 percent over the past five years. Graduations decreased by 6.7 percent between 2017 and 2021 (Table 24).
- The number of DNP enrollees increased by 41.2 percent in 2017-2021. Graduations also increased by 67.2 percent in 2017-2021 (Table 25).

MASTER'S PROGRAMS

- In fall 2021 there were 1,057 institutions with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs in nursing in the United States and its territories. Nationwide, 637 (60.3%) institutions offered *master's* programs; of these, 409 (64.2%) offered *master's-level NP* programs and 58 (9.1%) offered *master's-level CNS* programs. The AACN database contains data on 606 (95.1%) institutions with *master's* programs, 393 (96.1%) schools with *master's-level NP* programs, and 57 (98.3%) institutions with *CNS* programs (Table 1b).

MASTER'S-LEVEL ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS BY MAJOR AREA OF STUDY

- *NP* majors accounted for 62.72 percent (91,335 students) of *master's* enrollees, and 55.9 percent of *master's* graduates ($N = 29,527$). *CNS* majors comprised 0.5 ($N = 788$) and 0.5 ($N = 242$) percent of *master's* enrollees and graduates, respectively (Table 26).

- education comprised 12 percent of *master's* enrollees, followed by Administration (11.9%), generalist (4.1%), informatics (2.5%), clinical nurse leader (1.4%), nurse midwifery (1.1%), and nurse anesthesia (0.7%) majors. Administration graduates accounted for 17.2 percent of master's graduates, followed by education (13.3%), generalist (4.4%), informatics (2.7%), clinical nurse leader (1.8%), and nurse anesthesia (1.2%) majors (Table 26).

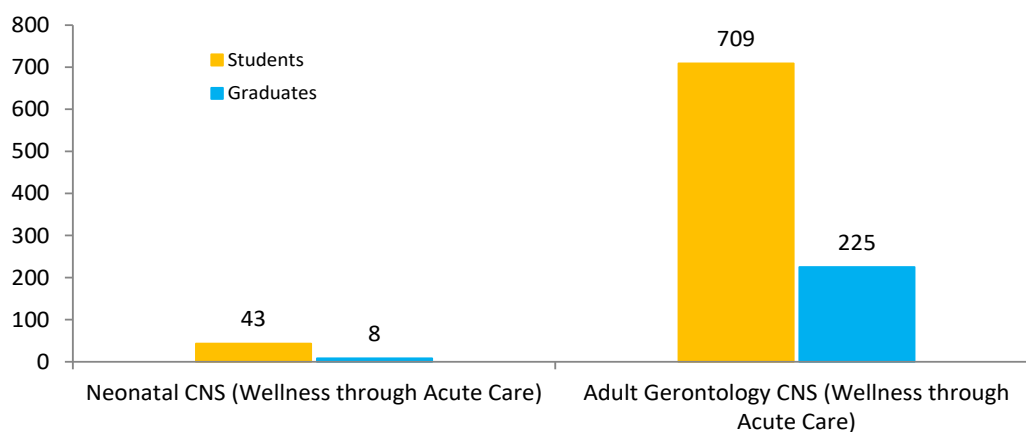
MASTER'S-LEVEL CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST ENROLLMENT (FALL 2021) AND GRADUATIONS (AUGUST 1, 2020 TO JULY 31, 2021) BY POPULATION FOCUS

- Fall 2021 enrollment in *master's-level and post-master's clinical nurse specialist (CNS)* programs totaled 872. Graduations/completions from these programs totaled 269 (Tables 28a and 29).
- Master's *Adult Gerontology (Wellness through Acute Care)* comprised 85.9 percent of CNS enrollees, followed by other CNS 4.4% and Neonatal (Wellness through Acute Care, (4.3%). The proportions for graduations of these three population foci were 83.9, 3.3, and 3.3 percent, for each (Table 28a).
- No national CNS-specific certification examination existed for 9.9 percent of master's enrollees and 9.5 percent of master's graduates for their respective population focus (Tables 28a and 28b).

POST-MASTER'S CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST (CNS) ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETIONS BY POPULATION FOCUS

- *Adult Gerontology (Wellness through Acute Care)* accounted for the largest percentage of *post-master's* CNS enrollees (81.7%) and completions (81.5%, Table 29).

Master's- and Post-Master's Clinical Nurse Specialist Population Foci Comprising the Largest Percentage of Enrollees and Graduates.



Note: Information in this report concerning clinical nurse specialists is the result of an agreement between the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists. All clinical nurse specialist data are jointly owned by the two organizations.

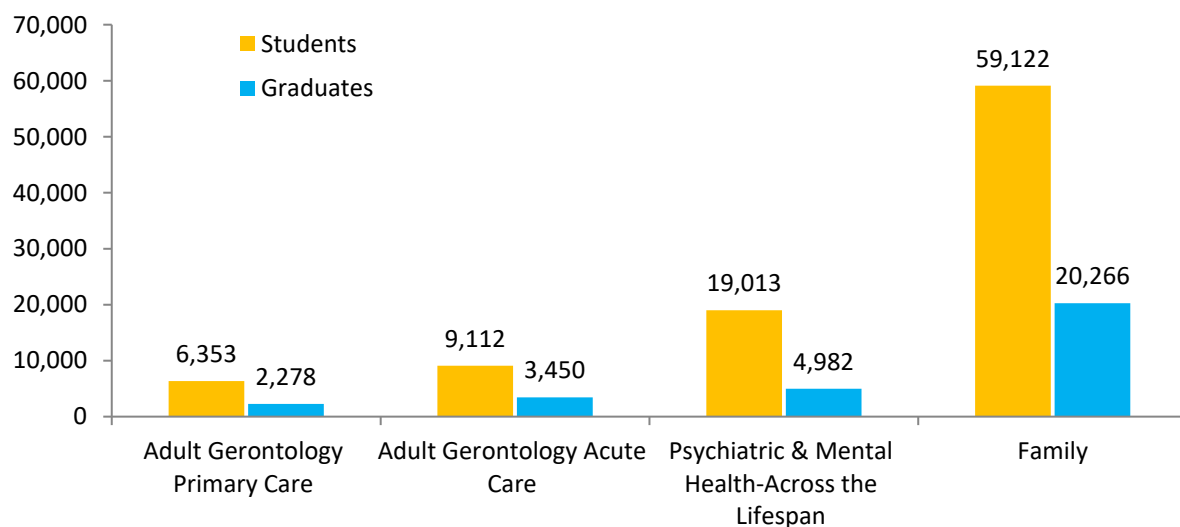
MASTER’S-LEVEL NURSE PRACTITIONER ENROLLMENT (FALL 2021) AND GRADUATIONS (AUGUST 1, 2020 TO JULY 31, 2021) BY POPULATION FOCUS

- Fall 2021 enrollment in *master’s-level* and *post-master’s nurse practitioner (NP)* programs totaled 100,001; and *Master’s-level* NP enrollees comprised 91.3 percent of all master’s and post-master’s NP enrollees (Tables 31a and 32).
- There were 33,180 *master’s* and *post-master’s NP* graduations/completions from August 1, 2020 to July 31, 2021; and *master’s-level* programs accounted for 88.3 percent of graduates (Tables 31a and 32).
- Master’s *family* (61.7%), *psychiatric & mental health-across the lifespan* (16.4%), *adult gerontology acute care* (8.8%), and *adult gerontology primary care* (6.5%) accounted for the largest percentages of the 91,335 *master’s NP* students (Table 31a).

POST-MASTER’S NURSE PRACTITIONER ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETIONS BY POPULATION FOCUS

- Of the 8,666 *post-master’s NP* students, 46.2 percent were enrolled in *psychiatric & mental health-across the lifespan* NP programs, followed by *family* (31.5%), *adult gerontology acute care NP* (12%), and *adult gerontology primary care* (4.8%). The proportions for completions of these four population foci were 42.3, 29.1, 17.8, and 3.9 percent, for each (Table 32).

Master’s-Level and Post-Master’s Nurse Practitioner Population Foci Comprising the Largest Percentages of Enrollees and Graduates.



Note: Information in this report pertaining to nurse practitioners is the result of a collaborative effort between the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties. All nurse practitioner data are jointly owned by the two organizations.

ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS IN DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP) PROGRAMS BY MAJOR AREA OF STUDY

- For students and graduates entered in DNP programs at the post-baccalaureate level, NP majors accounted for the largest percent of enrollees (74.2%, 17,542 students) and graduates (72%, 3,327 graduates, Table 35).
- For students and graduates entered in DNP programs at the post-master's level, *leadership* accounted for 39.2 percent of enrollees, followed by NP (25.4%), *major area not specified* (21.4), and *administration/management* DNP (4%). The proportions for graduations of these four majors were 37.6, 23.2, 25.3, and 4.4 percent, respectively (Table 35).

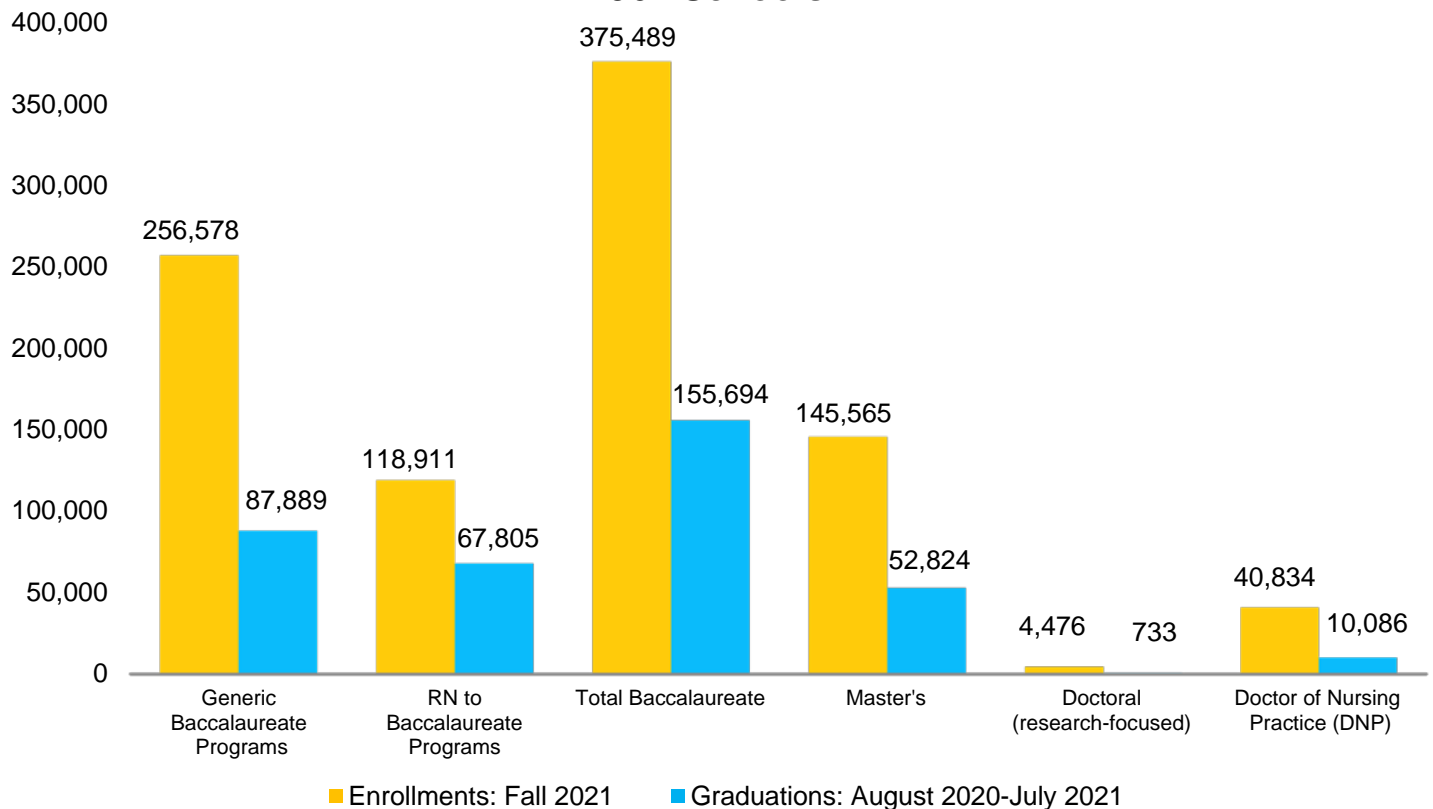
ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS IN NURSE PRACTITIONER-FOCUSED DNP PROGRAMS

- For students and graduates entered in NP-focused DNP programs at the post-baccalaureate level, *family* (53.7%), *psychiatric & mental health-across the lifespan* (13.9%), *adult gerontology acute care* (11%), and *adult gerontology primary care* (7.5%) NP population foci accounted for the largest percentages of the 16,947 students (Table 36).
- For students and graduates entered in NP-focused DNP programs at the post-master's level, most students and graduates are in the category *Previously Certified as NP* (62.4%, 2,626 students; 72.1%, 979 graduates), which indicates that students and graduates already had an NP certification and will not seek a new NP certification in their DNP education (Table 36).

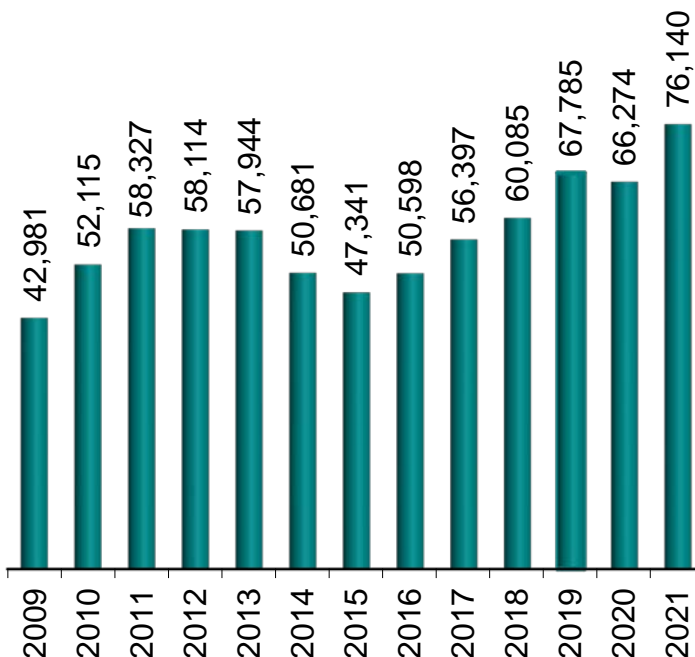
Key Indicators and Trends

Enrollment and Graduations in Nursing Programs

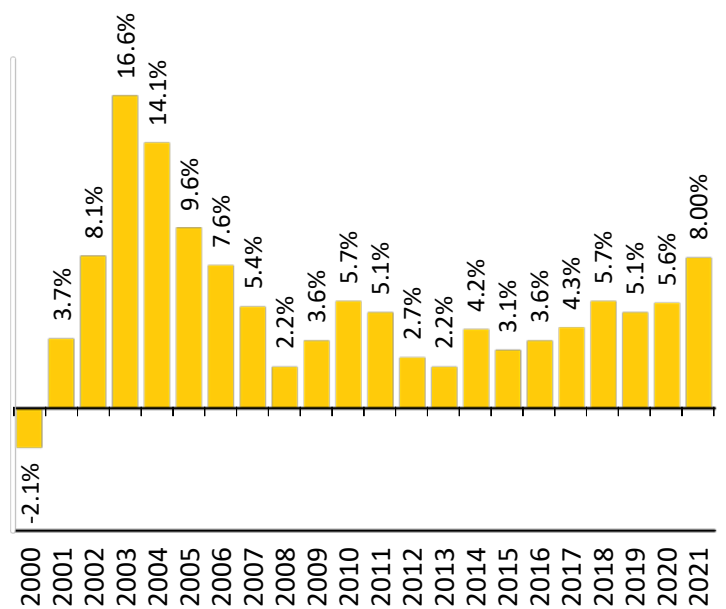
964 Schools



Qualified Applications Turned Away from Entry-Level Baccalaureate Nursing Programs: 2009-2021

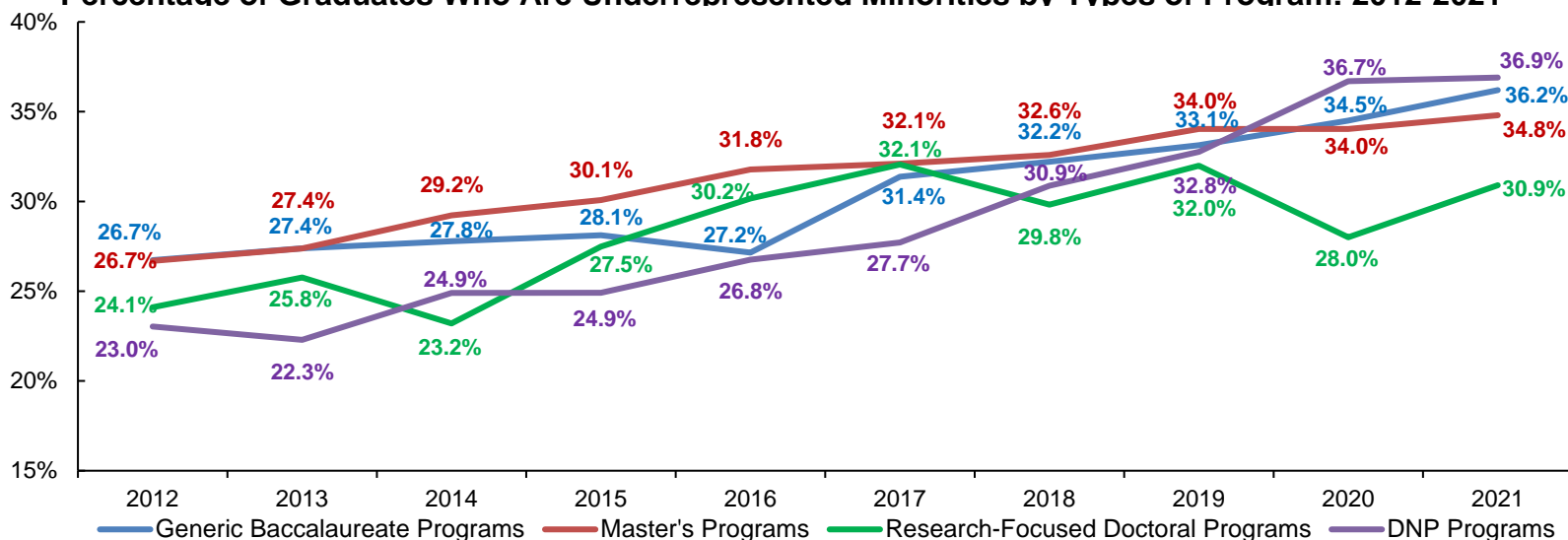


Percentage Change in Enrollments in Entry-Level Baccalaureate Nursing Programs: 2000-2021

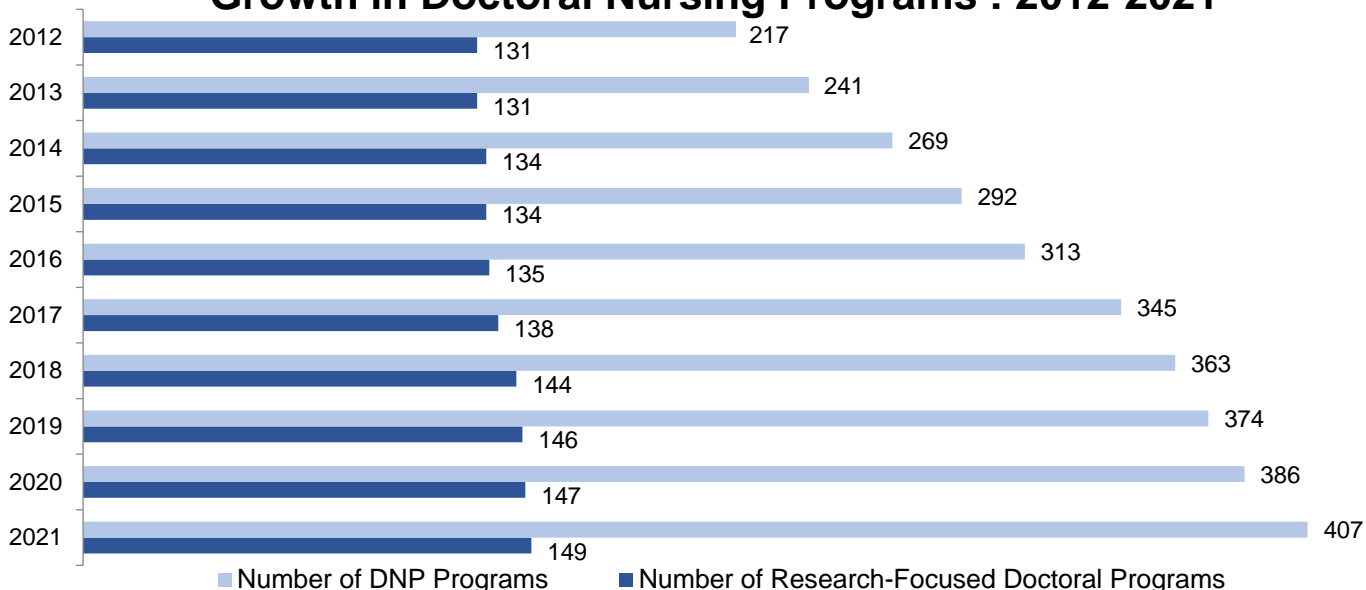


Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Education

Percentage of Graduates Who Are Underrepresented Minorities by Types of Program: 2012-2021



Growth in Doctoral Nursing Programs : 2012-2021



Enrollments in Doctoral Programs: 2012-2021

