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## Analytical Paper

### Analysis in Brief

# National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses 2005: Provincial Profiles

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# National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses 2005: Provincial Profiles

Margot Shields and Kathryn Wilkins, Health Statistics Division

## Introduction

The 2005 National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses (NSWHN) represents a collaborative effort involving the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Canada, and Statistics Canada.

The NSWHN was designed to examine links between the work environment and the health of regulated nurses in Canada, and is the first nationally representative survey of its kind. The survey's high response rate (80%) reflects the enthusiasm with which nurses involved themselves in the survey.

Nearly 19,000 regulated nurses, representing registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and registered psychiatric nurses (RPNs) across the country were interviewed on a variety of topics, including the conditions in which they practice, the challenges they face in doing their jobs, and their physical and mental well-being.

They shared their perceptions of work organization, including staffing, shift work, overtime and employee support. Nurses were also asked about work stress, role overload, respect, and quality of patient care. Information about their health status, such as chronic conditions, pain, self-perceived general and mental health, medication use, and the impact of health on the performance of nursing duties, was also collected.

This document presents key findings from the 2005 NSWHN for each province, as well as for the three territories combined.

The information provides a sampling of the rich variety of information collected by the 2005 NSWHN. The complete *Findings from the 2005 National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses* is available from the Statistics Canada website free of charge as a downloadable electronic publication in Adobe Acrobat format: [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca).

The publication is also available in print form (Statistics Canada catalogue number 83-003-XPE).

## **Newfoundland and Labrador**

Newfoundland and Labrador had about 7,800 nurses in 2005, 2.5% of the national total.

About 94%, or 7,300 of Newfoundland and Labrador's nurses, were women and 6%, or 500, were men.

Two-thirds (67%) of nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs), somewhat below the percentage in the other jurisdictions combined. The national figure was 79%.

Nurses in this province were relatively young. The average age was 42.8, 1.5 years younger than the national average.

Nearly four-fifths (78%) of nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador had full-time jobs, well above the figure for the rest of Canada. The national figure was 61%.

Working overtime was less common among nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador: 28% reported they usually worked paid overtime, and 29% worked unpaid overtime. At the national level, the respective figures were 30% and 49%.

Having more than one job was also relatively less common than elsewhere in Canada. About one in 10 nurses (9%) reported having two or more jobs; nationally the percentage was 19%.

Nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador were less likely to put in long hours, meaning more than 40 hours per week. Just over three in 10 (31%) said they usually put in long hours. At the national level, 37% of nurses reported long hours.

Nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador had little say in their work schedules, compared with nurses elsewhere. Only one-quarter reported having flexibility in their days of work, and 22%, flexibility in the hours. The respective figures at the national level were 38% and 31%.

## **Nursing care**

Nurses were asked if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed in the year before the survey.

Less than one-quarter (24%) of the nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador said that the quality of care had deteriorated, slightly lower than the proportion elsewhere in Canada. The national average was 27%.

Only 9% said that quality of care had improved, significantly lower than the proportion of nurses elsewhere who reported improvement. Across the country, proportions ranged from 9% to 19%.

One in 15 nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador (7%) said that in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose. This was the lowest reported rate of such errors in Canada. The national figure was 18%.

Nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador were far less likely to report injuries to themselves through needlesticks or other contaminated sharp objects. An estimated 40% said they had had such an injury at some point in their career, well below the proportion elsewhere in Canada. The national figure was 48%.

In contrast, more than one-third (36%) of nurses in the province said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year before the survey, the highest proportion in Canada. Nationally, 29% of nurses in Canada reported physical assault.

Nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador were much more likely than those in other parts of the country to express concern about their risk of contracting an infectious disease in their workplace. About 55% expressed this concern, well above the proportion elsewhere in Canada. The national figure was 48%.

## **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

More than one-third of Newfoundland and Labrador's nurses (35%)—the second highest proportion in the country—were classified as experiencing high job strain. The figure for all of Canada was 31%.

Although nearly four in 10 nurses (38%) in Newfoundland and Labrador reported low support from co-workers, this was actually a more positive picture than elsewhere in Canada. At the national level, 45% of nurses reported low co-worker support.

The vast majority (89%) of nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador said they had good working relations with physicians. And 84% reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and physicians.

The province's nurses were less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to be dissatisfied with their jobs; only 9% expressed job dissatisfaction. The national proportion was 12%.

## **Physical and mental health**

Of all nurses in Canada, nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador were the most likely to have experienced pain that had interfered with their ability to do their jobs.

Just under one in three of the province's nurses (31%) indicated that pain had affected their ability to work in the six months before the survey—far higher than elsewhere in Canada. The national figure was 24%.

While 9% of nurses across Canada experienced depression, only 5% in Newfoundland and Labrador did.

At the national level, close to one in five nurses (18%) reported that in the four weeks before the survey their mental health had made it difficult to handle their workload. Such reports were relatively less common in Newfoundland and Labrador, where only 13% reported a difficulty.

The proportion of nurses who had taken health-related time off during the year before the survey in Newfoundland and Labrador was the third highest in the country. About 69% reported a work absence due to a health problem. The national figure was 61%.

## Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island had about 1,900 nurses in 2005, less than 1% of the national total.

The vast majority of P.E.I.'s nurses (97%) were women.

Seven out of every 10 nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs), somewhat below the percentage in the other jurisdictions combined. The national figure was 79%.

Only 53% of nurses in Prince Edward Island had full-time jobs, well below the proportion for the rest of Canada. Nationally, 61% of nurses had full-time positions.

Working overtime was somewhat less common among nurses in Prince Edward Island: 25% reported they usually worked paid overtime, and 44%, unpaid overtime. The respective figures for Canada were 30% and 49%.

P.E.I. nurses were less likely to put in long hours, meaning more than 40 hours per week. In Prince Edward Island, 30% of nurses reported that they usually put in long hours. At the national level, 37% reported long hours.

Close to half (49%) of the nurses in Prince Edward Island reported that they had changed shifts at least once over the two weeks before the survey. Close to one in five (18%) reported three or more changes. Shift changes were far less common elsewhere in Canada. At the national level, 34% of nurses reported at least one shift change in the two-week period, and only 11% reported three or more changes.

## Nursing care

The survey asked nurses about problems with the quality of care delivered during their last shift worked. Only 4% of nurses in Prince Edward Island said their nursing team had delivered fair or poor care during the last shift they had worked, significantly lower than the figure for the rest of the country. The national figure was three times higher, at 12%.

Just over one-quarter of P.E.I. nurses (26%) reported that the staffing level where they worked was inadequate during the last shift they worked. Elsewhere in Canada, nurses were far more likely to report inadequate staffing. The national proportion was 38%.

Nurses were also asked if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed over the 12 months prior to the survey.

Only 15% of the nurses in Prince Edward Island said that the quality of care had deteriorated—the lowest rate in the country. For Canada, the proportion was 27%.

An estimated 13% of nurses in Prince Edward Island said that in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose. This was lower than the percentage in the other jurisdictions in Canada combined. The national figure was 18%.

Nurses in Prince Edward Island were much less likely to report occasional or frequent on-the-job injuries. Only 5% reported such injuries. The figure for all of Canada's nurses was 9%.

P.E.I. nurses were less likely than those elsewhere to report injuries from needlesticks or other contaminated sharp objects. An estimated 43% said they had sustained such an injury at some point in their career. Nationally, the percentage was 48%.

More than one-quarter (27%) of nurses in the province said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year prior to the survey. The national figure was 29%.

One in 10 nurses in Prince Edward Island felt that their organization was not taking sufficient precautions to prevent the spread of contagion. Nurses in other jurisdictions were somewhat more likely to express this concern. The proportion nationally was 15%.

The survey also measured whether nurses thought they were overloaded at work; for instance, they needed extra time to finish work or they had too much work for one person.

Although a substantial proportion of P.E.I. nurses reported feeling overloaded, the percentages were lower than elsewhere in Canada. Just over one-third (36%) reported not having enough time to do what was expected in the job, and 58% said there was often too much work for one person. The respective national figures were 45% and 67%.

### **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

Three in 10 Prince Edward Island nurses were classified as experiencing high job strain, in line with the national figure of 31%.

Similar to nurses elsewhere in Canada, the vast majority (89%) of nurses in Prince Edward Island said they had good working relations with physicians. More than eight in 10 (81%) reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and physicians.

The province's nurses were far less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to be dissatisfied with their jobs; only 6% expressed this feeling. The national proportion was 12%.

P.E.I. nurses were also less likely than those elsewhere to report a lack of respect from superiors; only 14% did so. They were also less likely to report a general lack of respect in light of their efforts and achievements; only 11% did so. The respective national figures were 18% and 17%.

### **Physical and mental health**

About 21% of P.E.I. nurses reported they had experienced pain in the 6 months before the survey that affected their ability to do their nursing job. The national proportion was 24%.

While 9% of nurses across Canada experienced depression, only 6% in Prince Edward Island did.

At the national level, close to one in five nurses (18%) reported that in the four weeks before the survey, their mental health made it difficult to handle their workload. Such reports were slightly less common in Prince Edward Island, where 15% reported such a difficulty.

About 65% of nurses in Prince Edward Island had taken health-related time off during the previous year, similar to the proportion for the rest of the country.

Nurses in the province who were absent missed an average of 14.2 days for health-related reasons, substantially less than the average number of days missed by nurses elsewhere. The national average was 23.9 days.

## **Nova Scotia**

Nova Scotia had about 11,900 nurses in 2005, 3.8% of the national total.

About 96% of Nova Scotia's nurses, or 11,400, were women and 4%, or 500, were men.

Three-quarters of nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs), somewhat below the percentage in the other jurisdictions combined. The national figure was 79%.

Nearly two-thirds (66%) of nurses in Nova Scotia had full-time jobs, well above the figure for the rest of Canada. In Canada overall, 61% of nurses were full-time.

Nova Scotia nurses were more likely to put in long hours, meaning more than 40 hours per week. Long hours were reported by 42% of the province's nurses. The figure for Canada was 37%.

### **Nursing care**

The survey asked nurses about problems with the quality of care delivered during the last shift they worked. Only 8% of nurses in Nova Scotia said their nursing team had delivered fair or poor care, significantly lower than the figure for the rest of the country. For Canada the proportion reporting fair or poor care was 12%.

Nurses were also asked if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed over the 12 months before the survey.

One-quarter (25%) said that the quality of care had deteriorated, a similar proportion to elsewhere in Canada.

About 16% said that care had improved. Across the country, the proportions of nurses reporting improvement in care ranged from 9% to 19%.

About 12% of nurses in Nova Scotia said that, in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose. This proportion was lower than that for the other provinces and territories combined. The figure for Canada was 18%.

Nurses in Nova Scotia were slightly less likely to report injuries from needlesticks or other contaminated sharp objects over the 12 months before the survey. An estimated 8% reported such an injury. The national figure was 11%.

About one-third (32%) of nurses in the province said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year before the survey, slightly higher than the proportion elsewhere. The figure for all of Canada was 29%.

Just over 1 in 10 Nova Scotia nurses (11%) felt that their organization was not taking sufficient precautions to prevent the spread of contagion. The national figure was 15%.

The survey also measured whether nurses thought they were overloaded at work; for instance, they needed extra time to finish work or had too much work for one person.

Although many nurses in Nova Scotia reported feeling overloaded at work, they were less likely to feel this way than were nurses elsewhere in Canada. Close to 6 in 10 (58%) reported there was often too much work for one person. The figure for Canada was 67%.



More than one-third of Nova Scotia's nurses (37%) said they were not given enough time to do what was expected in the job. Across Canada, 45% reported not having enough time.

### **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

Nearly one-third of Nova Scotia's nurses (32%) were classified as experiencing high job strain, on par with elsewhere in Canada, but higher than the working population in general.

The majority (87%) of nurses in Nova Scotia said they had good working relations with physicians, similar to nurses elsewhere. About four-fifths (81%) reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and physicians.

The province's nurses were less likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs; only 9% reported job dissatisfaction. The figure for Canada was 12%.

### **Physical and mental health**

About 24% of Nova Scotia nurses reported that, in the six months before the survey, they had experienced pain serious enough to affect their ability to do their nursing job. This figure was similar for nurses elsewhere in Canada.

About 9% of nurses in Nova Scotia had experienced depression in the 12 months before the survey. This was also in line with estimates for other areas of the country.

The proportion of Nova Scotia's nurses who had taken health-related time off during the previous year was higher than in other provinces and the territories combined. Two-thirds (66%) reported a work absence due to any health problem. The figure for Canada was 61%.

Nurses in the province who were off for health-related reasons missed an average of 17.9 days. The national average was 23.9 days.

## **New Brunswick**

New Brunswick had about 10,200 nurses in 2005, 3.2% of the national total.

An estimated 95% of New Brunswick's nurses, or 9,700, were women and 5%, or 500, were men.

Three-quarters of nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs), slightly below the percentage in the other provinces and territories combined. The national figure was 79%.

Two-thirds of the nurses in New Brunswick (66%) had full-time jobs, well above the proportion for the rest of Canada. In Canada overall, the figure was 61%.

Compared with elsewhere in Canada, New Brunswick's nurses were more likely to report that they usually worked paid overtime and less likely to report unpaid overtime. About 37% worked paid overtime, and 36% reported unpaid overtime. The respective figures for Canada were 30% and 49%.

### **Nursing care**

The survey asked nurses if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed during the 12 months before the survey.

One-quarter of New Brunswick nurses said that the quality of care had deteriorated, similar to elsewhere in Canada.

But 12% thought care had improved—somewhat lower than the proportion of nurses elsewhere. In the country as a whole, 16% of nurses reported improvement, with proportions ranging from 9% to 19%.

An estimated 15% of nurses in New Brunswick said that in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose. This was slightly lower than in other areas of Canada. The figure nationally was 18%.

Nurses in New Brunswick were somewhat less likely to report injuries from needlesticks or other contaminated sharp objects. An estimated 44% said they had sustained such an injury at some point in their career, below the proportion for the rest of Canada. For the country as a whole, the figure was 48%.

Three in 10 nurses in the province (30%) said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year before the survey, similar to elsewhere in Canada.

About 11% of nurses in New Brunswick felt that their organization was not taking sufficient precautions to prevent the spread of contagion, somewhat favourable compared with the proportion in other provinces/territories. Nationally, 15% of nurses expressed such a concern.

The survey also measured whether nurses thought they were overloaded at work; for instance, they needed extra time to finish work or they had too much work for one person.

About 68% of nurses in New Brunswick said there was often too much work for one person, in line with nurses elsewhere in Canada. Although half (50%) of New Brunswick nurses reported that they often arrived early or stayed late to get work done, in the rest of Canada this was even more common. The figure for Canada was 54%.

## **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

One-third of New Brunswick nurses were classified as experiencing high job strain, on par with elsewhere in Canada, but higher than the working population in general.

Similar to nurses elsewhere in Canada, the vast majority (89%) of nurses in New Brunswick said they had good working relations with physicians. Four out of five reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and physicians.

The province's nurses were less likely to be dissatisfied with their job. Only 9% reported job dissatisfaction, while the national figure was 12%.

## **Physical and mental health**

Nurses in New Brunswick were slightly more likely to have experienced pain severe enough to interfere with their work than their counterparts elsewhere.

About 27% of the province's nurses reported they had experienced pain in the six months prior to the survey that affected their ability to do their nursing job. The figure for Canada was 24%.

About 9% of nurses in New Brunswick had experienced depression in the 12 months prior to the survey, on par with nurses elsewhere in the country.

Nurses in New Brunswick were somewhat more likely to have taken time off work because of a health problem in the 12 months before the survey. Just under two-thirds (65%) reported doing so. The national figure was 61%.

Nurses in the province who had been off for health-related reasons missed an average of 18.6 days. The national average was 23.9 days.

## Quebec

Quebec had about 77,300 nurses in 2005, one-quarter of the national total.

About 92% of Quebec's nurses, or 70,700, were women. The province had the highest proportion of male nurses in the country; 8%, or about 6,500, were men.

Nurses in Quebec were relatively young. Their average age was 42.9, 1.4 years younger than the national average age of nurses.

Four out of every five (80%) nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs); the proportion for all of Canada was 79%.

Six in 10 of the nurses in Quebec (59%) had full-time jobs, similar to the proportion for the rest of Canada. The national figure was 61%.

Quebec nurses were less likely (28%) than nurses elsewhere to work more than 40 hours per week. Elsewhere in Canada, the proportions ranged from 30% to 69%.

Compared with nurses elsewhere, Quebec nurses were about equally likely to report that they usually worked paid or unpaid overtime. About 31% reported they usually worked paid overtime; 49% said they worked unpaid overtime. The respective figures for Canada were 30% and 49%.

However, a substantially higher proportion of Quebec nurses (61%) said their employer expected them to work overtime. In Canada overall, the figure was 46%.

## Nursing care

The survey asked nurses if they thought the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed during the 12 months before the survey.

In Quebec, 27% of nurses said care had deteriorated, and one-sixth (17%) reported an improvement in care. The respective figures for Canada were close to those for Quebec: 27% and 16%.

More than one-quarter (27%) of nurses in Quebec said that in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose—by far the highest proportion in the country. Outside Quebec, the proportion reporting medication errors ranged from 7% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 18% in British Columbia.

Nurses in the province were less likely to have occasionally or frequently received complaints from patients or their families. One-third (33%) said they had received complaints, while the proportion for all of Canada was 38%.

Quebec's nurses were more likely to report that patients had occasionally or frequently been injured in a fall. In Quebec, 37% of nurses reported such an incident; in other jurisdictions the percentages ranged from 15% to 34%.

Quebec nurses were far more likely than nurses elsewhere to have experienced injury from needlesticks or other contaminated sharp objects. An estimated 58% said they had sustained such an injury at some point in their career. Outside Quebec, the proportions ranged from 40% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 47% in Nova Scotia.

About 27% of Quebec nurses said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year before the survey. This was slightly lower than elsewhere in Canada. The national proportion was 29%.

Nearly one in five nurses in Quebec (19%) felt that their organization was not taking sufficient precautions to prevent the spread of disease, well above the proportion for the rest of Canada. The national percentage was 15%.

Quebec nurses were somewhat less likely than those in other parts of the country to be concerned about their risk of contracting a serious infectious disease in their workplace. Less than half (45%) expressed this concern. For Canada overall, the proportion was 48%.

The survey also included questions to measure whether nurses felt they were overloaded at work. Compared with elsewhere in Canada, more Quebec nurses (70%) said they often had too much work for one person. The figure for nurses overall was 67%.

More Quebec nurses (62%) said they had "too much to do, to do everything well." Nationally, the figure was 57%. As well, more Quebec nurses (59%) were more likely to report that they often arrived early or stayed late to get work done. For Canada, the figure was 54%.

## **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

In Quebec, only 24% of nurses were classified as experiencing high job strain, one of the lower proportions in the country. Elsewhere, the proportion of nurses experiencing high job strain was as high as 37%. The figure for Canada was 31%.

About half (51%) of Quebec nurses reported that their jobs were very physically demanding. Elsewhere in Canada, proportions were higher—ranging from 62% in the territories to 78% in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Although a large proportion of Quebec's nurses (84%) said they had good working relations with doctors, it was smaller than elsewhere in the country. In Canada overall, 87% of nurses reported good relations with physicians.

In Quebec, three-quarters of nurses (75%) reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and physicians, but this proportion was also relatively smaller than elsewhere in Canada. For Canada, the figure was 81%.

About 13% of Quebec nurses said they were dissatisfied with their job. The national proportion was 12%.

## **Physical and mental health**

Nurses in Quebec were less likely to have experienced pain that interfered with their work, compared with their counterparts elsewhere.

Only one-fifth (20%) of Quebec nurses reported that in the six months before the survey, they had experienced pain severe enough to affect their ability to do their nursing job. The proportion for all of Canada was 24%; across the country, it reached as high as 31%.

However, 11% of nurses in Quebec had experienced depression in the year before the survey. This was a higher proportion than for nurses in the rest of the country combined. Nationally, 9% of nurses experienced depression.

About 48% of nurses said they had taken time off work in the 12 months before the survey because of a health problem, a lower proportion than elsewhere. The figure for Canada was 61%.

Nurses in the province who were off for health-related reasons missed an average of 44.0 days. Outside Quebec, the average ranged from 13.0 days in the territories to 20.6 days in Ontario.

The average number of days' absence for health-related reasons among all Quebec nurses was 21 days. The national figure was 14.5 days.

## Ontario

Ontario had about 113,000 nurses in 2005, more than one-third (36%) of the national total.

About 96% of Ontario's nurses, or 108,500 were women, and 4%, or 4,500, were men.

Just about four out of every five (79%) nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs).

Nurses in Ontario had an average age of 44.8, slightly older than the national average age of 44.3.

Relative to nurses employed elsewhere, Ontario nurses were more likely to have permanent jobs. An estimated 88% of nurses in Ontario had permanent jobs. Nationally, the proportion was 84%.

About two-thirds of the nurses in Ontario (66%) had full-time jobs, somewhat higher than elsewhere in Canada. The figure for all of Canada's nurses was 61%.

Ontario nurses were more likely to put in unpaid overtime, but were less likely to report paid overtime. Over half (51%) reported that they usually worked unpaid overtime, while 27% worked paid overtime. For Canada as a whole, the respective figures were 49% and 30%.

Being covered by a union contract or collective agreement was far less common for Ontario's nurses. Less than three-quarters (73%) reported union coverage. Elsewhere in Canada, proportions ranged from 83% to 92%.

Nurses in Ontario were more likely to work more than 40 hours per week. Just over four in 10 (41%) nurses reported that they usually worked more than 40 hours. The figure for Canada was 37%.

## Nursing care

The survey asked nurses if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed over the 12 months before the survey.

More than one-quarter (26%) of Ontario's nurses reported that the quality of care had deteriorated, similar to elsewhere in Canada.

An estimated 17% said care had improved. Across the country, proportions reporting improvement ranged from 9% to 19%. The national figure was 16%.

In Ontario, 14% of nurses said that in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose. This was somewhat favourable, compared with the proportion in the rest of the country. The national figure was 18%.

Nurses in Ontario were less likely to report injuries from needlesticks or other contaminated sharp objects. An estimated 45% said they had sustained such an injury at some point in their career. The percentage of all nurses ever injured this way was 48%.

Ontario nurses were slightly less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to express concern about their organization's ability to control an outbreak. Just under half (49%) reported this concern. The national figure was 51%.

The survey also asked questions to measure whether nurses thought they were overloaded at work; for instance, they needed extra time to finish their work or they had too much work for one person.

More than two-thirds (68%) of Ontario nurses reported that there was often too much work for one person, similar to nurses elsewhere in Canada.

About 64% of nurses in Ontario said they often worked through their breaks to complete their assigned work. The proportion nationally was 62%.

### **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

In Ontario, nearly one-third (33%) of nurses were classified as experiencing high job strain. The figure for all nurses was 31%.

Close to two-thirds of nurses in Ontario (65%) reported that their jobs were highly physically demanding, slightly higher than nurses elsewhere in Canada and considerably higher than the employed population in general. The figure for all of Canada's nurses was 62%.

As was the case with nurses across the country, a high proportion of Ontario nurses felt positively about their working relations with doctors. The vast majority (87%) said they had good relations. And over four-fifths (82%) reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and doctors.

### **Physical and mental health**

Just under one in four of Ontario's nurses (23%) said they had experienced pain in the six-month period before the survey that was severe enough to affect their ability to do their work. This was similar to the proportion among nurses elsewhere in Canada.

Just under one-third of nurses in Ontario (32%) said their physical health had made it difficult to handle their workload in the month before the survey. And 19% attributed such difficulties to their mental health. These proportions were on par with the figures for the rest of Canada's nurses.

Just over six in 10 of Ontario's nurses (63%) had taken time off work for health-related reasons in the 12 months before the survey. This was similar to nurses outside Ontario.

Nurses in Ontario who were off for health-related reasons missed an average of 20.6 days. The national average was 23.9 days.



## Manitoba

Manitoba had about 14,000 nurses in 2005, about 4.5% of the national total.

About 93% of Manitoba's nurses, or 13,000 were women, and 7%, or 1,000, were men.

Just over three-quarters (77%) of nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs), slightly less than the percentage in the other provinces and territories combined. In Canada as a whole, the percentage of RNs was 79%.

Only half of nurses in Manitoba (50%) had a full-time job—a lower percentage than in the rest of the country. The national figure was 61%.

Working unpaid overtime was slightly more common in Manitoba than elsewhere. More than half of nurses (52%) said that they usually worked unpaid overtime. The national figure was 49%.

## Nursing care

The survey asked nurses if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed over the 12 months before the survey.

More than one-quarter of nurses (26%) thought that care had deteriorated, a proportion similar to that in the rest of country. The figure for Canada was 27%.

About 16% of Manitoba nurses said care had improved, which was also in line with the proportion elsewhere.

In Manitoba, 31% of nurses thought that staffing had been inadequate during the last shift they had worked, a higher proportion than elsewhere in Canada. Nationally, 38% of nurses reported this perception.

In Manitoba, 14% of nurses said that, in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose. This proportion was somewhat lower than that for the rest of the country combined. Outside Manitoba, the proportion of nurses reporting medication errors ranged from 7% in Newfoundland and Labrador, to 27% in Quebec. Nationally the figure was 18%.

Nurses in Manitoba were more likely to report that, during the past year, they had been physically assaulted by a patient. Nearly one-third (33%) reported physical assault. The figure for Canada was 29%.

Manitoba nurses were also more likely to say that they had been emotionally abused by a patient over the past year. In Manitoba, 49% reported such abuse. The figure for Canada was 44%.

A greater proportion of Manitoba nurses (57%) were concerned about their organization's ability to control an infectious disease outbreak. The figure for Canada overall was 51%.

## **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

In Manitoba, three in 10 nurses (30%) were classified as experiencing high job strain. This was in line with nurses in the rest of the country.

A very high proportion of Manitoba nurses felt positively about their working relations with physicians. Nine in ten (90%) said they had good working relations. The figure nationally was 87%.

In addition, only 9% of Manitoba nurses said they were dissatisfied with their job, which was lower than the proportion for nurses elsewhere in Canada. The national figure was 12%.

## **Physical and mental health**

Nurses in Manitoba were much more likely than those in the rest of Canada to have experienced pain that had interfered with their job performance.

An estimated 28% of the province's nurses reported that in the six months before the survey, they had experienced pain severe enough to interfere with their ability to do their nursing job. The national figure was 24%.

Manitoba nurses were more likely than nurses elsewhere to report that their mental health had made it difficult to handle their workload during the past four weeks. An estimated 23% reported this problem. The figure for Canada was 18%.

Just over two-thirds of Manitoba nurses (68%) had taken time off work because of a health problem in the 12 months before the survey, higher than elsewhere in the country. The national figure was 61%.

However, nurses in the province who had taken time off for health-related reasons missed an average of 14.3 days, one of the lower averages across Canada. For nurses in Canada as a whole, the average number of days off was 23.9 days.

## Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan had about 11,400 nurses in 2005, 4% of the national total.

About 96% of Saskatchewan's nurses, or 10,900 were women; 4%, or around 500, were men.

Just under three-quarters (73%) of nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs), less than the percentage in the other provinces and territories combined. The national proportion was 79%.

Some 63% of the nurses in Saskatchewan had full-time jobs, similar to elsewhere in the country. The figure nationally was 61%.

Having more than one job was more common among Saskatchewan nurses than among those elsewhere in Canada. More than one in four (27%) reported having two or more jobs. The figure nationally was 19%.

Putting in long hours—meaning more than 40 hours per week—was more common among Saskatchewan nurses. An estimated 45% of nurses in the province worked long hours. In Canada overall, 37% of nurses did so.

## Nursing care

The survey asked nurses about the quality of care delivered during the last shift they had worked. About 6% of nurses in Saskatchewan acknowledged they had delivered only fair or poor care, higher than the figure for nurses elsewhere. The percentage for Canadian nurses overall was 4%.

Nurses were also asked if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed over the 12 months before the survey.

Nearly three in 10 Saskatchewan nurses (29%) felt that the quality of care had deteriorated. Across Canada, 27% of nurses reported deterioration, with proportions ranging from 15% in Prince Edward Island to 35% in British Columbia.

Only 12% of Saskatchewan nurses said the quality of care had improved, lower than the fraction of nurses elsewhere. The figure for all of Canada was 16%.

In Saskatchewan, 16% of nurses said that in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose. This was similar to the estimate for the rest of the country combined. Across Canada, the proportion of nurses reporting medication errors ranged from 7% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 27% in Quebec.

Nurses in Saskatchewan were slightly more likely than those elsewhere to report an on-the-job injury. More than one in 10 (11%) said they had been occasionally or frequently hurt on the job. The figure for Canada was 9%.

Nurses in Saskatchewan were slightly less likely to report injuries from needlesticks or other contaminated sharp objects. An estimated 44% said they had sustained such an injury at some point in their career. The figure for Canada was 48%.

Nearly one-third (32%) of Saskatchewan nurses said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year before the survey. This figure was higher than that for nurses elsewhere. The proportion nationally was 29%.

More than half of Saskatchewan nurses (52%) reported they had been emotionally abused by a patient over the past year. Across Canada, 44% of nurses reported receiving such abuse.

Saskatchewan nurses were more likely than their counterparts elsewhere to be concerned about their organization's ability to control an infectious disease outbreak. About 57% reported this concern. The national figure was 51%.

### **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

In Saskatchewan, 37% of nurses were classified as experiencing high job strain, a higher proportion than elsewhere. The national figure was 31%, with proportions outside the province ranging from 22% to 35%.

As was the case with nurses across the country, a high proportion of Saskatchewan nurses felt positively about their working relations with doctors. The vast majority (88%) said they had good relations. And over four-fifths (82%) reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and doctors.

One in 8 (12%) Saskatchewan nurses said they were dissatisfied with their job. The national figure was also 12%.

### **Physical and mental health**

Nurses in Saskatchewan were slightly more likely than those in other parts of Canada to have experienced pain that had interfered with their job performance.

Over one-quarter (27%) of the province's nurses reported they had experienced pain serious enough to affect their ability to do their job in the six months before the survey. The figure for all of Canada's nurses was 24%.

Compared with nurses elsewhere, Saskatchewan nurses were more likely to say that their mental health had made it difficult to handle their workload in the month before the survey. Over one-fifth (22%) reported this problem. The national figure was 18%.

Seven in 10 Saskatchewan nurses (71%) had taken time off work because of a health problem in the 12 months before the survey. This proportion was higher than for nurses elsewhere. Among all nurses in Canada, 61% had been away for health-related reasons.

However, nurses in Saskatchewan who were absent for health-related reasons missed an average of 18.1 days. The national average was 23.9 days.

## Alberta

Alberta had about 31,900 nurses in 2005, 10% of the national total.

About 96% of Alberta's nurses, or 30,700, were women, and 4%, or around 1,200, were men.

Four-fifths (80%) of nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs), slightly higher than the percentage of nurses who were RNs in the other provinces and territories combined. The national figure was 79%.

Only 47% of the nurses in Alberta reported that they had full-time jobs, substantially lower than nurses elsewhere in the country. The national figure was 61%.

Over half of Alberta's nurses (53%) said that they usually worked unpaid overtime, more than was the case elsewhere in Canada. In Canada overall, 49% of nurses said they usually worked unpaid overtime.

Nurses in Alberta were also more likely to work paid overtime. Just over one-third (34%) reported that they usually worked paid overtime. The figure nationally was 30%.

## Nursing care

The survey asked nurses if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed over the 12 months before the survey.

Just under one-quarter (24%) said that care had deteriorated, about the same as nurses in the rest of Canada. Outside Alberta, the proportions ranged from 15% in Prince Edward Island to 35% in British Columbia.

About 16% of Alberta nurses said the quality of care had improved, in line with the rest of the country.

In Alberta, 26% of nurses said that, in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently been injured in a fall. This was lower than in other areas of the country. Nationally, the figure was 31%.

One-quarter (25%) of Alberta nurses said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year before the survey, lower than elsewhere in the country. Among all of Canada's nurses, the figure was 29%.

Emotional abuse from patients, however, was reported in somewhat greater numbers by Alberta nurses. Nearly half of nurses (47%) reported they had received emotional abuse from patients. The national figure was 44%.

Alberta nurses were less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to feel that their organization was taking insufficient precautions to prevent the spread of disease. About 12% reported this view. The national figure was 15%.

They were also less likely to express concern about their own risk of contracting an infectious disease at work. About 45% expressed this concern. The figure for all of Canada was 48%.

The survey also measured whether nurses thought they were overloaded at work; for instance, they needed extra time to finish work or just had too much work for one person.

A substantial proportion of Alberta nurses (60%) said there was often too much work for one person. However, nurses elsewhere in Canada were even more likely to report this problem. The national figure was 67%.

As well, a lower proportion of nurses in Alberta (37%) reported that there was not enough time to do what was expected in the job. The national figure was 45%.

### **Work environment**

A high proportion of Alberta nurses felt positively about their working relations with doctors. The vast majority (91%) said they had good working relations. About 84% reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and physicians.

Only 8% of Alberta nurses said they were dissatisfied with their job, which was lower than the combined proportion elsewhere. In Canada as a whole, one in eight nurses (12%) were dissatisfied with their job.

### **Physical and mental health**

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Alberta nurses had taken time off work for health-related reasons in the year prior to the survey, somewhat higher than elsewhere in Canada. The national figure was 61%.

Nurses in Alberta who were absent for health-related reasons missed an average of 18.8 days. The national average was 23.9 days.

## British Columbia

British Columbia had about 34,200 nurses in 2005, 11% of the national total.

About 94% of British Columbia's nurses, or 32,200 were women, and 6%, or around 1,900, were men.

Roughly four-fifths (81%) of nurses in the province were registered nurses (RNs), higher than the percentage in the other provinces and territories combined. The percentage of RNs nationally was 79%.

Six in 10 (61%) nurses in British Columbia reported that they had full-time jobs. The percentage nationally was also 61%; outside British Columbia the percentage ranged from 47% to 78%.

Having more than one job was more common in British Columbia than elsewhere in Canada. Over one-quarter (26%) of B.C. nurses had two or more jobs. The national figure was 19%.

Nurses in British Columbia were more likely to work long hours, meaning more than 40 hours per week. More than four in 10 nurses (42%) usually put in long hours. At the national level, 37% of nurses reported long hours.

British Columbia nurses were far more likely than nurses elsewhere in Canada to receive advance notice of their working hours. An estimated 70% reported that they always knew their weekly hours in advance. Elsewhere the percentage ranged from 41% to 58%.

## Nursing care

The survey asked nurses about the quality of care delivered during the last shift they had worked. About 16% of those in British Columbia acknowledged their nursing team had delivered only fair or poor care, the highest proportion in the country. The national figure was 12%.

They were also asked if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed over the 12 months before the survey.

In British Columbia, more than one-third of nurses (35%) said that the quality of care had deteriorated—by far the highest proportion in Canada. Outside of B.C., proportions ranged from 15% to 29%.

More than one-sixth of B.C. nurses (18%) said that in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose, roughly on par with the rest of the country.

About 12% of nurses in British Columbia reported that they had occasionally or frequently been injured on the job in the past year, the highest proportion in the country. The proportion nationally was 9%.

Nearly one-third (32%) of B.C. nurses said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year before the survey. The national figure was 29%.

British Columbia nurses were slightly more likely than their counterparts elsewhere to feel that their organization was not taking sufficient precautions to prevent the spread of contagion. About 17% reported this opinion. The percentage nationally was 15%.

They were also more likely to express concern about their risk of contracting an infectious disease in their workplace. More than half (53%) expressed this concern. The figure for Canada was 48%.

### **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

Compared with elsewhere in Canada, nurses in British Columbia were more likely to be classified as experiencing high job strain (34%). The percentage nationally was 31%, ranging from 22% to 37%.

A high proportion of B.C. nurses felt positively about their working relations with doctors. The vast majority (90%) said they had good working relations. About 85% reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and physicians.

### **Physical and mental health**

Relative to their counterparts elsewhere, nurses in British Columbia were somewhat more likely to have experienced pain severe enough to interfere with their ability to do their job.

Over one in four (26%) of the province's nurses reported they had experienced pain that affected their ability to work in the year before the survey. The percentage for all Canadian nurses was 24%.

About one in six (16%) British Columbia nurses had taken time off work because of a mental health problem in the 12 months prior to the survey, the highest proportion in Canada. The national figure was 12%.

B.C. nurses who were absent from work for any health-related reason missed an average of 18.3 days. The national average was 23.9 days.



## The Territories

The three territories—the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut combined—had about 1,300 nurses in 2005, 0.4% of the national total. The majority, 1,200, were women.

About 85% of nurses in the territories were registered nurses (RNs), higher than the percentage in the combined provinces. The national figure was 79%.

Seven in 10 (70%) nurses in the territories reported that they had full-time jobs, well above the figure for the rest of Canada. Nationally, 61% of nurses reported having full-time jobs.

Nurses in the territories were far more likely to work overtime. Nearly six in 10 nurses (57%) reported that they usually worked paid overtime, for an average of 13.2 hours per week. Elsewhere in Canada, proportions of nurses reporting paid overtime ranged from 25% to 37%.

Nurses in the territories were also far more likely to put in long hours, meaning more than 40 hours per week. Close to seven in 10 nurses (69%) usually put in long hours. At the national level, 37% of nurses reported long hours.

## Nursing care

The survey asked nurses if they thought that the quality of care delivered in their workplace had changed over the 12 months before the survey.

In the territories, about one-fifth (20%) of nurses said that care had deteriorated, one of the lower proportions in Canada. Across Canada, the proportions ranged from 15% to 35%. The national figure was 27%.

On the other hand, about 19% of nurses in the territories said the quality of care had improved. The figure for Canada was 16%.

About 12% of nurses in the territories said that, in the 12 months before the survey, patients had occasionally or frequently received the wrong medication or dose, one of the lower proportions in the country. Nationally, 18% of nurses reported such errors.

Nurses in the territories were far less likely than those elsewhere in Canada to report that patients had experienced injurious falls in the 12 months before the survey; only 15% reported occasional or frequent falls. Nationally, 31% of nurses reported such incidents.

About 45% of nurses in the territories reported that they had sustained injuries from needlesticks or other contaminated sharp objects at some point in their career. Some 10% reported such an injury in the 12 months before the survey. Proportions were similar in the rest of Canada.

Just over one-quarter (27%) of nurses in the territories said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the year before the survey, on par with elsewhere in Canada.

Reports of emotional abuse from a patient were far more common among nurses in the territories, where 59% reported such abuse. Nationally, the figure was 44%; provincial estimates ranged from 35% to 52%.

The survey also measured whether nurses thought they were overloaded at work; for instance, they needed extra time to finish work or had too much work for one person.

Nearly six in 10 nurses in the territories (59%) reported that there was often too much work for one person. However, this was somewhat lower than in the rest of Canada. The national figure was 67%.

### **Work environment**

Job strain results when the psychological demands of a job exceed the worker's discretion in deciding how to do the job.

In the territories, just over one-fifth of nurses (22%) were classified as experiencing high job strain, the lowest proportion in Canada. The national figure was 31%.

Similar to elsewhere in Canada, a high proportion felt positively about their working relations with physicians. The vast majority (94%) said they had good working relations. About 91% reported a lot of teamwork between nurses and physicians.

Nurses in the territories were less likely to be dissatisfied with their job; only 7% reported job dissatisfaction. The national figure was 12%.

### **Physical and mental health**

Fewer than two in 10 nurses in the territories (19%) reported that physical health problems had made their workload difficult to handle in the four weeks before the survey. In the 10 provinces, such reports were far more common, ranging from 27% to 37%.

About one in six (17%) nurses in the territories reported that mental health problems had interfered with their ability to work in the four weeks before the survey. The national figure was 18%.

Less than one-half (49%) of nurses in the territories had taken time off work because of a health-related problem in the 12 months before the survey—a lower proportion than anywhere else except Quebec. The national figure was 61%.

Nurses in the territories who were absent for health-related reasons missed an average of 13.0 days, far lower than elsewhere in Canada. The national average was 23.9 days, with provincial averages ranging from 14.2 to 44.0.