A Comparison of Nurse Workforces in a Small and Large State
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Abstract:

This study compares a sample of nurses from a small northeastern state, Vermont, to a large southern state, Florida. This comparison provides insight into the similarities and differences of nurse workforce needs by state population density. Projections of RN workforce contingent on regional-level data allows differences and trends to become more visible and guide health workforce planners, employers, and educators, developing policies/initiatives that impact nurse supply. This study is a secondary analysis of existing data collected in the National RN Workforce Survey 2013 conducted by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). This survey was mailed to a random sample, stratified by state. The survey utilized the Minimum Data set of nurse workforce questions. This study compares actively employed Vermont nurses (n=547) to actively employed nurses of Florida (n=623). Difference was noted in the mean age of Vermont nurses (56 years) compared to Florida nurses (51 years). Among the 96% that are actively employed in nursing in Vermont (compared to 86% in Florida), 57% responded that they hold full-time positions which is remarkably lower than Florida's full-time nurses (77%). Additionally, 18% of Vermont nurses reported working multiple jobs compared to Florida's 14%. Difference in the setting of primary practice was also noted as a majority (62%) of Florida's working RNs are employed in hospitals as their primary practice, compared to Vermont's 49%. In conclusion, these findings suggest that the state population, size and geographical location make a difference in nursing workforce composition and demographics. However, there is a possibility that the stratified sample of a small state does not accurately represent the current workforce. If the variances in the nursing workforce of Vermont and that of Florida are accurate, different workforce development strategies must be employed. This study is limited by the nature of a secondary analysis.