

# Trends in Own Illness or Disability-Related Absenteeism and Overtime among Publicly-Employed Registered Nurses:

## Quick Facts

Prepared for the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions  
by Informetrica Limited

The information below is derived from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) Public Use Microdata Files for selected years.<sup>1</sup> This document is part of a larger report providing analysis for the absenteeism and overtime of public-sector registered nurses and nurse supervisors in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector<sup>2</sup> in Canada.

When considering trends, one must take care with the data reported because each year's information is based on a different sample of respondents. Rates of absenteeism due to own illness or disability for 2010 are lower than reported for 2008; this rate was lower in 2005 than 2002. However, provincial rates of absenteeism in 2010 are higher than 2008 in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. When considering rates of absenteeism due to own illness or disability by age group, those aged 50 to 54 had higher incidences in 2010 than in 2008. Thus, several years of additional data are required before determining a change to the trend of absenteeism due to own illness or disability of public-sector health-care nurses.

As with the rate of absenteeism due to own illness or disability, the total rate of overtime reported for public-sector health-care nurses was lower in 2010 than 2008. Care must be taken for considering a reversal in the trend of increasing rates of overtime because the details of the aggregate values reported may provide different results. For example, paid overtime rates were lower in 2010 than 2008 but unpaid overtime rates were higher in 2010 than 2008. Total provincial overtime rates reported for Prince Edward Island, Québec, Manitoba and British Columbia were higher in 2010 than for 2008. When considering overtime by age group, those aged 50 to 54 had a higher total overtime rate in 2010 than

for 2008. As for paid overtime, those aged 45 to 49 had a higher rate in 2010 than 2008. For unpaid overtime, all age groups reported had a higher rate, except for 35 to 44 and 45 to 49 year olds whose rates remained unchanged from 2008. Additional years of data are required to establish a reversal of the trend of increasing rates of overtime.

### Public-Sector Health-Care Nurses

- There were 237,000 publicly employed nurse supervisors and registered nurses employed in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector in 2010, an increase of 2.7 per cent from 2008.
- The largest shares of nurses are employed in Ontario (32.4 per cent in 2010) and Québec (21.3 per cent in 2010). British Columbia and Alberta employed 14.4 and 13.7 per cent of nurses in 2010, respectively. These numbers are in line with the population that live in these provinces, relative to all provinces. The smallest shares of nurses are employed in the Atlantic Provinces. Prince Edward Island employs only 0.6 per cent of all nurses.
- In 2010, 87 per cent of nurses in Canada were unionized. Manitoba and Saskatchewan (93 per cent), and British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador (92 per cent) had the highest unionization rates. The lowest unionization rates were in Ontario (81 per cent) and Nova Scotia (83 per cent).
- The percentage of part-time public-sector health-care nurses was higher in 2010, at 24 per cent, compared to 22 per cent in 2008. This share was almost at the same level as in 2002 and 2005 (25 per cent for both years).
- Of the 237,000 public-sector health-care nurses, 179,100 were employed full-

time (30 hours or more per week), and 57,900 part-time. The number of full-time employed nurses in 2010 was one per cent lower than in 2008. There are 15.5 per cent more nurses with part-time hours in 2010 than in 2008.

- There has been an increasing importance of nurses over the age of 55; in 2010 they

represented 20 per cent of all public-sector health-care nurses. Those over the age of 45 maintained their share of the total: 47 per cent in 2010 compared to 48 per cent in 2008.

- Approximately 92 per cent of nurses are female. The share of female nurses has been relatively constant over the years.

**Table 1: Public-Sector Health-Care Nurses, Absenteeism, Overtime, Unionization, Selected Years**

	Public-Sector Health-Care Nurses		Absenteeism Rate [1]		Overtime Rate [2]		Union members	% Union member
	2008	2010	2008	2010	2008	2010	2010	
<b>Newfoundland</b>	5,300	5,300	11.2%	9.6%	31.3%	26.4%	4,900	92%
<b>PEI</b>	1,400	1,400	7.4%	8.6%	22.1%	24.5%	1,300	89%
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	7,300	8,400	7.4%	8.2%	26.6%	25.7%	7,000	83%
<b>New Brunswick</b>	7,400	6,900	9.5%	9.8%	29.2%	21.3%	6,100	88%
<b>Québec</b>	54,100	50,500	10.8%	7.6%	34.7%	36.4%	45,700	90%
<b>Ontario</b>	76,100	76,800	8.8%	7.4%	30.4%	25.6%	61,900	81%
<b>Manitoba</b>	11,700	12,300	10.4%	7.2%	29.2%	29.9%	11,400	93%
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	8,200	8,800	7.5%	9.8%	29.5%	28.0%	8,200	93%
<b>Alberta</b>	28,000	32,400	10.1%	7.7%	31.7%	27.4%	28,600	88%
<b>British Columbia</b>	31,100	34,200	7.1%	10.0%	28.8%	30.9%	31,300	92%
<b>All Provinces</b>	<b>230,900</b>	<b>237,000</b>	<b>9.3%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>29.0%</b>	<b>206,200</b>	<b>87%</b>

[1] Own Illness or Disability-related.

[2] Only includes those who were at work during the Reference Week.

Source: Special tabulation of Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey Public Use Microdata Files, selected years, by Informetrica Limited.

## Absenteeism

- Every week in 2010, an average of 19,200 nurses were absent due to own illness or disability. Of all employed public-sector health-care nurses, 8.1 per cent were absent each week in 2010, on average, compared to 9.3 per cent in 2008.<sup>3</sup>
- On average, in each week in 2010, 9 per cent of public-sector health-care nurses who usually work at least 30 hours per week were absent due to own illness or disability, a 1.1 percentage point decrease to the 2008 incidence. However, this is nearly twice the rate of all other occupations, and remains higher than all other health-care occupations in 2010.<sup>4</sup>
- The annual cost of absenteeism due to own illness or disability decreased to \$711.0 million in 2010 from \$758.1 million in 2008.
- The highest own illness or disability-related absenteeism rates in 2010 were in British Columbia (10.0 per cent), New Brunswick and Saskatchewan (both 9.8 per cent), and Newfoundland and Labrador (9.6 per cent). In 2008, the highest rates were

in Newfoundland and Labrador (11.2 per cent), Québec (10.8 per cent), Manitoba (10.4 per cent), and Alberta (10.1 per cent), as shown in Table 1.

- The lowest absenteeism rates in 2010 due to own illness or disability were in Manitoba (7.2 per cent), Ontario (7.4 per cent), Québec (7.6 per cent), and Alberta (7.7 per cent). In 2008, British Columbia (7.1 per cent), Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia (both 7.4 per cent), and Saskatchewan (7.5 per cent) had the lowest rates.
- The rate of own illness or disability-related absenteeism was highest among nurses aged 50 to 54 years, and lowest among those younger than 35 years of age in 2010.
- The absenteeism rate due to own illness or disability was higher among unattached individuals (9.7 per cent) than among families (7.8 per cent).<sup>5</sup> However, single-parent families and single earner couple families had higher absenteeism rates than unattached individuals.

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**Table 2: Absenteeism Rate due to Own Illness or Disability, by Age Group, All Provinces, Selected Years**

Age Group	1987	1992	1997	2002	2005	2008	2010
<35	4.9%	5.2%	6.5%	8.2%	7.3%	7.1%	6.3%
35-44	5.3%	5.4%	6.0%	8.3%	6.6%	9.9%	7.9%
45-49	4.7%	4.3%	6.4%	6.8%	7.5%	9.2%	9.1%
50-54	7.3%	4.9%	9.8%	8.8%	8.8%	8.6%	10.5%
55+	7.3%	5.9%	8.1%	7.9%	8.9%	12.5%	8.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>9.3%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>

- Pre-1996 data are based on 2001 Census weights; data for 1996 and forward are based on 2006 Census weights.

Source: Special tabulation of Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey Public Use Microdata Files, selected years, by Informetrica Limited.

### Overtime

- The average weekly share of nurses who worked overtime was 29.0 per cent in 2010. This is lower than the share of 31.0 per cent in 2008.
- On average, nurses reporting unpaid overtime worked 4.4 extra hours per week. This is 0.5 hours higher, on average, than reported for 2008.
- On average, during 2010, 17.3 per cent of nurses worked paid overtime each week. The total annual cost of paid overtime was \$660.3 million. In 2008, 21.4 per cent of nurses worked paid overtime at a total cost of \$710.5 million annually.
- During the survey reference weeks in 2010, 14.5 per cent of nurses worked unpaid overtime, on average. The total annual cost of unpaid overtime, based on the weighted average wage rate and unpaid overtime hours for those reporting unpaid overtime, was \$230.7 million. In 2008, 12.9 per cent of nurses worked unpaid overtime at a

total cost of \$163.6 million.

- In 2010, public-sector health-care nurses worked a total of 20,627,800 hours of overtime, equivalent to 11,400 full-time jobs, at a cost of \$891 million annually. In 2008, public-sector health-care nurses worked a total of 21,430,900 hours of overtime, or 11,800 full-time equivalents, at a cost of \$874 million per year.
- The highest rates of nurses working overtime in 2010 were in Québec (36.4 per cent), British Columbia (30.9 per cent), and Manitoba (29.9 per cent). In 2008, the highest rates were in Québec (34.7 per cent), Alberta (31.7 per cent), and Newfoundland and Labrador (31.3 per cent).
- The lowest overtime rates in 2010 were in New Brunswick (21.3 per cent) and Prince Edward Island (24.5 per cent). In 2008, the lowest rates were in Prince Edward Island (22.1 per cent) and Nova Scotia (26.6 per cent).

**Table 3: Rate of Overtime for Public-Sector Health-Care Nurses by Age, All Provinces, Selected Years\***

Age Group	1987	1992	1997	2002	2005	2008	2010
<35	12.9%	10.9%	15.7%	24.4%	26.3%	29.8%	28.3%
35-44	12.5%	12.2%	15.1%	27.0%	30.9%	31.3%	25.0%
45-49	12.3%	7.6%	15.4%	24.8%	33.2%	27.3%	30.0%
50-54	9.5%	7.0%	18.4%	30.8%	30.6%	33.3%	35.4%
55+	9.7%	9.4%	13.1%	26.1%	25.9%	33.4%	30.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>29.3%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>29.0%</b>

\* Only includes those who were at work during the Reference Week.

- Pre-1996 data are based on 2001 Census weights; data for 1996 and forward are based on 2006 Census weights.

Source: Special tabulation of Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey Public Use Microdata Files, selected years, by Informetrica Limited.

## Notes

- 1 Note that these data are from a self-reported survey, and therefore, are not necessarily comparable to administrative data. Data are from Statistics Canada (2011): Labour Force Survey Microdata File, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 71M0001XCB (DVD containing monthly data for the years 1987 through 2010). All computations, use and interpretation of these data are entirely those of Informetrica Limited.
- 2 Here, and in the more detailed report, also referred to as public-sector health-care nurses.
- 3 Calculated as the number of public-sector health-care nurses with a reported absence from work divided by the total number of public-sector health-care nurses.
- 4 All other occupations also include all health-care occupations except public-sector health-care nurses.
- 5 Further detail regarding this group is included in the full report.